Wed, 31 Oct 2007

2:31 PM

Halloween, at work

no costumes, no candy. And if it weren't for my calander, I wouldn't even know today was any different. Luckily, my desk calander, Peanuts, has a great picture of Snoopy sleeping on the top of a Jack O'Lantern, just like it's his doghouse.

Speaking of my desk, this seems like an opportune time to describe where I work, and, more importantly, where I plan to update this blog.

My cube is number 1069 in a carpeted field of small work spaces just like mine. I have two lamps, one for rainy days, and one for when I need to feel productive. The Banker's lamp at the end of my desk, with it's 55-Watt bulb casts a comforting light on my Buddha statue and my AM/FM alarm clock radio.   Other than telling me the time, it serves no real purpose. I had adopted it on the off chance I could listen to day baseball games, but there is too much static surrounding me to get a real reception -- must be all the carpeting.

I have one of the only IP Phones left on the campus. After failing miserably, the VP, aka Bossman, took them all down, replacing them with the phones that weren't good enough to begin the whole ordeal. I like it because it times my phone calls. It amazes me how a call breaks down, and how, on average, the length of a call is constant based on who is on the other end.

I have two computers -- a Pentium III desktop and my mac mini. But I'll elaborate more on those another day.

While the top of my desk is organized and neat, it is the complete opposite underneath. There are cables everywhere making the top part of the desk possible. Also hidden under there is a 24-port switch, a usb scanner, and even an electric pencil sharpener!

I use pencil whenever possible, the pens they buy here are globby and, since I'm left-handed, annoying to write with.

Throughout the entire day, you can hear music here in my cube. The mini is a great jukebox of tunes playing all my favorites from Rusted Root to Tegan

Security: Public
Location: Not Specified
Mood: Not Specified
Music:

4:15 PM

and...

as in AND sara. Apparently the symbol I used truncated my last posting. insert sad face here.

OK, so as I learn more, my posts will get better. For now, they are a single paragraph sans any strange characters.

And... once again, thanks for reading, check back soon, and Happy Halloween.

Thu, 1 Nov 2007
4:59 PM

my mac mini, part 1

My mac mini shipped for the manufacturing plant on April 4th, 2005. It shipped with Mac OS 10.3, but I wanted widgets, so as soon as I was able to get my hands on a copy of Tiger, I upgraded the OS to 10.4. To date, I have 306 widgets, and am using 14 of them at the moment. And it's these 14 that I want to talk about today... On the top left, is my weather widget. It displays the 6-day highs and lows for Lexington, MA. Currently, it's 61 degrees and cloudy, and it looks like the rest of the weekend will follow suite. Just out of curiosity, I have a sunset and sunrise widget. It uses a circle which looks like a clock with one hand to differentiate between night, day, sunrise, sunset, dawn, and dusk. I had a choice for twilight but decided civil would be better than nautical or astronomical. Was I wrong? Underneath my weather widget is my sports scores. All summer it was MLB, but since there's only one fall classic, and only one October, I opted to swap it out for the NHL one by what appears to be the same author. I'm able to see all the games and start times, last night's scores, and even the standings for any division. It's quite handy! The Bruins are playing The Sabres tonight at 7. On the bottom right, I have the Mystery Science Theatre 3000 silhouette. It's Joel, Tom, and Crow sitting in their usual seats, only this time the movie they are stuck watching is my work. And they still don't have any control over when it starts. To their left is my pseudo inspiration quotation machine. It spews out pithy maxims no one wants to take credit for like "start every day off with a smile and get it over with." Standing on top of that one is a small Ignignokt from AquaTeenHungerForce. He looks perturbed, like someone just woke him up after a bender. I think the most random widget i have, is my Scrabble spell checker. You type in a string of characters, it tells you if it's a word or not. QOPH is a word, and if you play Scrabble, it's a good word to keep in your back pocket. We're not all like Dogbert who burns new tiles midgame of the letter he needs! The smallest of the group reports free hard disk space. Currently, I have 2.81G free. Good thing I don't plan on migrating to Leopard in the near future for I'm 6.19G short of the minimum requirements. Occassionally, I refresh the button on my CNN widget. The RSS feed I have it set to is "Top Stories" and right now the top of the list is an article stating that "Stocks slump, oil soars." Across the top of the screen is my iStat Pro with red lettering. I have it customized to show me memory, network, uptime, CPU, and the 5 most current processes. FYI, my mac mini has been up for 35d 23h and 47 minutes. It also has a swap file currently at 1.5GB. I really need to log out and back in. One of my favorite widgets is the root cause for all my widgets! It's called "More Widgets" and just like the name suggests, it reports all the newest widgets out there! Just today, I downloaded "calculate 1.0.1" and "Orange Liveradio 1.0.0." It's like having a genie and wishing for more wishes. Finally, i have a lightbulb on a string. That's right! it hangs down and can be turned on or off. Simple, silly, and pointless. Seems like the perfect bookend for my weather widget's practicality and usefulness. Don't you think?

Tue, 6 Nov 2007
5:42 PM

THE Vegas

I've been in Vegas since Friday morning. I got back today around 3AM after a series of flights from Las Vegas to St. Louis to Nashville to Hartford. It was supposed to be a direct flight but a series of thunderstorms and a tornado forced the pinball action across the country. We stayed at THE Hotel at Mandalay Bay. I learned first hand about the PBR (not the beer), and even got to meet a few of them. I played poker. I played roulette. I tried my luck at penny slots. I saw parts of the hotel most guests don't even know exist. I walked away with a cowbell, a signed program from the PBR World Finals, a CD of two of Kailin Garrity's songs, a shot glass, and $150 in winnings. And that's my Vegas story...

Security: Public
Location: Not Specified
Mood: Not Specified
Music:

Fri, 9 Nov 2007
11:50 AM

selling out

At what point does compromise become selling out? Is it dependent on time?
Principles, standing your ground, fighting for what you believe to be correct, and just plain trying to get others to agree with you are all several ideals brought forth to hold on true. And yet, what's supposed to be "safety in numbers" turns out to be the villagers storming the castle of ethics crazed with dollar signs in their burning eyes.
Passion, conviction, and a steady course of action usually lead to success. But at what cost? And who will end up defeated in the end??
The giants are stiring, the boss is conspiring, and the all the king's men are working towards the next big thing. So where does it put the little guy, the mouse, the underdog? Alone, in an army of one, no where. The lone mouse is lost in the shuffle and excitement of the plan. But banded together. These mice, these little guys, these underdogs can pull through and make their mark -- they can succeed. Right?
But who decides what they fight for? The biggest and loudest of the smallest? The one with the most time? Or maybe the mouse who stands to gain the most influences the others like an ironic pied-piper amongst friends.

I don't expect this to make sense, but I'm NOT SELLING!!!! This is not the answer, this is not the right way to settle. Selling now is no different than running. And I'm not backing down to these giants. I'm standing for what I believe in, I'm protecting my home, and even if I have to start my own band of mice, I'm not selling out for maybe 3%. Flood plane? Who cares, this is our domain. Don't sell out. Don't run away.

Security: Public
Location: Not Specified
Mood: Not Specified
Music:

Sun, 23 Dec 2007
9:23 AM

two days before Christmas

It's Sunday. Plans changed again. Supposed to be in CT for a big party at 3. Everyone is going to be there. We're bringing wine, fudge, and presents. I want to go, and at the same time... :/ (my version of the face)

Anyway, things are going well otherwise. As the year closes, many new challenges are presenting themselves to me! I hope to share more of them here, but, just when I was getting a rhythm going for writing, it all changed. Keep checking for updates. And Merry Christmas to any and all who read my ramblings!
 2008 will be different!

Tue, 1 Jan 2008
1:16 PM

h.264

My new hobby! Well, not really a hobby, more like what's going on in the background while I do other stuff. Television episodes are good for during the night, and I find movies I start before I leave for work, are ready by the time I get home...

My first test was A Charlie Brown Christmas. It took a little over 4 hours to encode, and I quickly transferred it to my new iPod. It looked awesome :)

Going through our DVD library, I've been mostly picking at random: The first disk of the first season of the X-Files, Mission Impossible, Pride

Mon, 7 Jan 2008
7:19 PM

"it's really me"

today was monday. It was like most days, with moderate traffic driving to work as a way to fully wake myself up. I spent the day making progress on tangible items. Too much of my time lately has been setting the scene or doing the stuff leading up to the items that are quantifiable. Today, I did all the things that could easily be scratched off of a todo list. If I put it off even for 20 minutes last week, I made sure to just do it today. Stupid things, little things, close the gap things, and other things around the office that aren't any big deal.

I took a short break for lunch where I finished the puzzle of the day from my desk calendar, and then read an article on the Internet about The Walt Disney company and its beginnings. br>

Back to work for round two. I setup a router so I can experiment in the lab. If I don't try it out there first, I could easily have 300 of our locations around the country wondering why they suddenly can't get to the "home page." I had two brief meetings after that, one to talk about a project that had no lab and will be pushed out to the masses in 9 days, and another to discuss why 9 employees decided to open their own office 10 miles north of the Corporate building. If they didn't want to print, we might never have known. The last thing I did today was clean a third of a large room so tomorrow I can inventory some equipment. This equipment is going to be used in the best possible way. In about three weeks, we're going to double our Internet connection. In 4 more months, we'll be doubling it again. By December, it will be close to 8x what it is now. Gotta love the country's mentality about excess and short-sighted thinking.

I concluded the day by driving home in heavy traffic.

There is one more thing...

 Inspiration just shows up one day and tells you what you want to know. It doesn't leave a trail, and you can't find it whenever you're looking for it. And for some, when inspiration finally does strike, it isn't in the form they were hoping for, and, alas, it is ignored.

Fri, 11 Jan 2008
7:55 PM

There's something in the air

And I think it's something new, something different, and somerhing that will live up to expectation.   The next big thing... Not too long ago it stood for modern medicine, or automobiles, or even simple ideas like sending a telegraph across the Atlantic Ocean, but today, in "Twenty Oh Eight," there is little speculation on just how big "next" will be. Everywhere else, there is a mentality of 'when it comes, it comes." For others, myself included in that collection, playing a guessing game up to the night before is as much fun as watching to see what was finally announced. And so here we are trying to out think and over think the scenario before us. There is something in the air, and the jokes on us for thinking those words in that sentence will clue us in on where to point our projections. Hype. A lot of hot hype floating in the air, while there is a calm behind the curtain, and a smirk on their collective faces.
... Dareh Meyod

Sat, 12 Jan 2008
11:47 PM

Maintaining Perfection

No! This is not about football, the Patriots, or being 17-0 after yet another win this evening. The is about a quest to be perfect, and how one of the easiest things to do is slip up on such a path.

Perfection is more than a goal, it's a journey that needs constant attention and dedication to the cause, or, just like that, it's gone. One step that wasn't planned, one forgotten task, one missed conversation, one passed ball and all that hard work, no matter how much time it represented no longer can be classified as 'perfect.'

There is a universal understanding that everyone loses sometimes and that eventually the law of averages catches up with us.

For me it was 8 years and 8 months of perfection. 100% without a hint of negativity thrown my way. And then, just like that, those one hundred and four months were for not, as the tide rushed in and knocked me off my feet and onto the harsh sands of mediocrity. The waters retreated, the sand softens in the warming sunlight of the new day, but the damage is done. Nothing can reverse the slip mishap, and now the journey begins anew -- with an * or a remark, or a caveat attached.

I'm dissapointed in myself because this pebble that got in my way could have been avoided and the allusive perfection could still be mine...

Thu, 27 Mar 2008
11:00 PM

Since Lost wasn't on tonight

First, I'd like to call attention to the fact that I haven't written in months. I really don't have an excuses other than I'm not sure I had anything worth writing about. But tonight, I accomplished something and I felt like sharing.

If you don't know me then this will probably sound really random and maybe even a little insane. But for those of you who do know me, well, you'll understand! heehee

For the first time tonight, I went to a web site called iLikeâ?¢. It seems like a simple enough concept: have stuff people are interested in, and they'll stop by and check it out. They did. They put REM's soon to be released album up for anyone to listen to. No annoying announcers or sound bytes of advertising, and nothing was edited -- this was the complete album a full 5 days early.

Not since "Up" has one of their albums been this anticipated, and after listening, I can see why. This is their best stuff in years.

In an alternate reality, Bill Berry would still be in the band, the year would be 1998, and this album would be arriving on store shelves across America. It feels so natural as the follow-up to "New Adventures in Hi-Fi." The guitars are loud and prominent, and the drums are mixed forward.   But if the similarity of this album to "New Adventures" is its raw sounding power, the difference lies in the lyrics. And the lyrics remind us all that it's not 1998 and things aren't what they were supposed to be. This is a different time and a sign of these times is the almost science fiction fear that surrounds and clouds. There is something in the delivery that strikes hard and with a conviction that's both believable and trustworthy. And in what might actually be just a tad too obvious, the song "sing for the submarine" reminds us that the future ahead of us draws heavily from the past behind us. The last track on this short but mezmorizing CD finally decrees "music will provide the light you cannot resist"

After listening to the entire 11 songs, I had an idea. How can I bridge the gap between tonight infront of my computer and Tuesday afternoon when I'm at the store buying the CD? Thanks to my 10 year old Powerbook G3, I got my answer. I booted into OS 9, and using an application called "sound edit 2," I was able to record each track in 16-bit, 44Hz stereo sound, and saving the files as WAVs. A file transfer between G3 and G4, and several minutes later, I have, in my hand, a copy of "Accelerate" :)

So, until next time, Good night!

Mon, 5 May 2008
7:20 PM

Leopard, another chance

I bought Leopard the day it came out. I installed it on my 5 year old Powerbook G4. It didn't work.

And now... I'm trying it again. I'll be sure to give a full report.

Wed, 7 May 2008
12:01 AM

powerbook woes, take 3
Back to Tiger goes I. It's better but still not good. Nintendo games are choppy, movies play back at 2x, and iTunes can't play a song without skipping.

 Sigh...

Thu, 8 May 2008
7:55 AM

paranoia
it is as bad as you think, and they are out to get you.

...as I write with one eye looking over my shoulder

Sun, 11 May 2008
11:49 AM

When the Tigers Broke Free
There's an interesting definition of insanity: doing the same, expecting different results. And to that, I ask this: what is same?

Same can be focused and descript, but it can also be vague and general. Obviously, the simpler the task the easier it is to be same when repeated. But what if the task is overly complex with several moving variables, the order in which it's completed, and the unidentifiable things outside the realm of our control? Are we still branded "insane" for having tried the same thing twice, hoping the second time through it's going to be different? I don't think so, because it wasn't the same. Here's a concrete example, and one, that shouldn't come as a surprise.

Simple: i installed Leopard on my Powerbook and it didn't work. I tried it twice more, and twice more it didn't work. I shouldn't be surprised.

Complex: the first time I installed it, I replaced the hard drive with a faster spinning one, and I tried to carry over my 5 year old profile. The profile was from Jaguar and the hard drive's power consumption made the computer run much hotter. When this didn't work, I went back to the drawing board and tried to isolate variables.

My next attempt started with a clean profile. No old files and settings, and nothing pre-Leopard. NEW NEW NEW and let's see how well my OLD OLD OLD powerbook likes it. It didn't. The exact same errors I got the first time

through were present this time as well.

I gave in and tried a third time. This attempt was now with the old slower hard drive, one I knew had worked in this exact laptop for 5 years without a glitch. Leopard installed and... no change; still getting the faulty playback in iTunes, and the DVD player would play at 2x.

Three attempts to get it to work and thrice failed. Am I insane for trying three times? I say it depends how closely one was watching me.

I'm not happy it didn't work, but I am happy that I was able to reclaim the Tiger. I know now that for whatever reason, Leopard does not work on this Powerbook, contrary to what everyone has told me. I won't try it again, because that would make me insane for there is nothing else technical that I can alter that could justify another failed attempt without thinking "DUH"

Thu, 15 May 2008
3:49 PM

progression of thought

This morning I went to Wikipedia as I always do to read up interesting subjects before my work day takes over, leaving no time for anything outside the scope of my job. On the main page there was an article talking about the Royal Blue Line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. I clicked on it, and after it made references to both the Reading Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad, I found myself asking "what was the 4th railroad in Monopoly?" In my head I was walking around the board, but I just couldn't remember that last railroad; the one that sits between the greens and the dark blues on the expensive street.   "Wait a minute, I got all the time I want I got a time machine" and quickly realized all I had to do was search for Monopoly (game), and just like that I had my answer.
 I continued reading about Monopoly for a few minutes after I had found "Short Line" and discovered that there is an official "London" edition to the American's "Atlantic City" original classic. One of the most fascinating things I learned was that during World War II, the British version included a cardboard wheel in place dice due to a materials shortage.

I collect widgets for my macintosh. One of my newer ones is "How Many Xs Can You Name In Y Minutes?" It generates a list of websites, updated daily, of these quizzes you can take. The tests are relatively short and simple, but some can be very difficult. There is one asking how many presidents of the US you can name in 10 minutes. There's another asking how many Beatles Albums, or how many Chinese Dynasties you can list off. All of them are very well engineered and are fun to play.

So, as I was reading about Monopoly, I was thinking it would be fun to see a quiz asking how many Monopoly places you could list off in some time limit.
And just like that, this afternoon, when the widget updated, the two new quizes on Sporcle.com are about the American and Brittish versions on Monopoly! What are the odds, I thought that the very day I'd want to see it, it shows up?

But is it? Couldn't it be that "Royal Blue" sparked the same Wikipedia path for the creator of the game as the one that got me asking for such a game?