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Shaq-Kobe Highlights Playoff Push Out West

Five games in the standings separate the nine best teams in the NBA's Western Conference, all of which have won more than 60% of their games. Those nine teams are fighting for eight playoff berths, however, making the usually lackadaisical final 30 games of the NBA schedule feel like a truly meaningful regular season.

Shaq smiles as he anticipates making Phil Jackson regret saying his former player's new role would be taking the ball out of bounds. (Associated Press

Two of the top three West teams meet tonight, several games into respective overhauls through trades. The Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant now plays alongside Pau Gasol; each scored 23 points last night in a 122-93 rout of the Atlanta Hawks — L.A.'s sixth win in seven games since the deal. The Lakers are a game behind the Phoenix Suns, whom they visit tonight. Floor leader Steve Nash no longer is running the court with Shawn Marion, who was shipped to Miami in a multi-player swap that yielded Shaquille O'Neal. Yes, once again, the Fix and all other sports columns are hyping Shaq vs. Kobe. "Folks here in the Valley of the Sun have always disliked Kobe Bryant, and they're more than happy for Wednesday's visit to coincide with the Suns debut of Shaquille O'Neal, who from all indications will be in the starting lineup, an arrival that has energized not just the team but the entire state of Arizona," Michael Wilbon writes in the Washington Post. "Want to see the game in person? No problem, \$3,800 will get you a ticket on eBay. It feels more like a Game 5 of the playoffs than Game 54 of the regular season." (The Fix agrees about the anticipation, though it found cheaper seats for sale.) Orange County Register columnist Jeff Miller is particularly excited about the rejuvenated Lakers. "The Lakers didn't have a lot of hope or expectation at one point," Mr. Miller writes. "They have so much now that Pau Gasol used two languages Tuesday in an attempt to express it all. This once near-vacant team again is full of so many things, like the delicious anticipation of Andrew Bynum's return, the emergence of its youth and the postseason potential that reasonably extends to Memorial Day. And beyond? What a difference a

complete, staggering overhaul can make." But Matt McHale says the playoff-like atmosphere shouldn't distract from the real deal, and the prospect of the Lakers without Bryant for the postseason should be enough to convince their star not to postpone surgery on his right pinky. "With surgery, he can return by the first week of April, fine -tune with some games against conference heavyweights New Orleans and San Antonio and be ready for the postseason," Mr. McHale writes in the Los Angeles Daily News. "Stay the course and get hurt again, and the Lakers don't get out of the first

But opting for surgery now runs counter to Bryant's

games for the Lakers over the last three years. His former teammate, O'Neal, has missed about 85 games during that span. The Orange County Register's Kevin Ding reflects on O'Neal's new fragility. "The guy who used to dive gratuitously after balls just for the grand theater of it—the reporter next to me on press row one night in Seattle paid the price when one of O'Neal's size 23s cracked his laptop screen — tried diving for a ball in January, hurt his hip and hasn't played since," Mr. Ding writes. "Dwight Howard, so similar in size and speed to the young Shaq who also started in Orlando, even assumed O'Neal's beloved Superman' identity in winning the dunk contest Saturday night."

But Shaq still can help the Suns. Mr. Ding explains: "Keep it fun. The self-proclaimed 'Big Cactus' now expects to hurt and needle people while in the desert, and he needs people around him who don't take things too seriously. Alert the public-relations staffers that he is highly likely to pick them up and throw them into trashcans. Warn the local reporters standing in the locker room that he might well bearhug them and dance with them ... while he's

Last year the University of Denver's men's basketball team was ranked 335th out of 336 Div. I teams. This year, it's tied for first in the Sun Belt - making the Pioneers by no means a national powerhouse, but certainly a surprise success. Yet attendance remains paltry, John Henderson writes in the Denver Post. Denver coach Joe Scott "has taken the nation's second-worst ranked team that no one cared about and turned it into a first-place team that no one cares about," Mr. Henderson writes.

In Washington-area girls' high-school basketball over this season and last, 174 games have ended with the losing team down by 40 or more and having scored 20 or less. That's happened just 25 times in

Why the blowouts? "The bottom line, coaches say, is that even as participation has exploded in the past 20 years, the talent pool of girls is smaller than boys and not big enough to sustain all of the high school teams in the area," Jeff Nelson writes in the Washington Post. But Mr. Nelson adds, "Even on the court, even in a blowout, there are lighter

NFL teams aren't happy with the mushrooming coverage of the sport's annual draft combine, during which prospects attempt to impress scouts and coaches. Philadelphia Daily News columnist Paul Domowitch, who recalls being the only reporter attending the 1987 combine, writes that team officials are "here to gather as much information as they can on the players, and they feel the presence of

gaining more and more control over the combine, and hundreds of reporters with never-ending questions, makes it more difficult for them to do their job."

Liverpool continues to confound European soccer fans. Against top continental teams in the Champions League, Liverpool is a perennial force - winners of the club-soccer championship in 2005, runners-up last year and in good position to advance to the quarterfinals this year after winning the first leg of their round-of-16 contest yesterday against Inter Milan, which had been unbeaten in its prior 30 matches. Yet to qualify for Champions League, teams must excel in their domestic leagues, and Liverpool stands in fifth there. Compounding the confusion, the club lost to a team from a lower division in the domestic equivalent of Champions League, thus failing to advance to the quarterfinals. The focus today is on Liverpool's beleaguered coach and his debt-ridden American bosses, who have floated the idea of replacing the coach and are rumored to be selling the team. "It means that Rafael Benitez is, yet again, back from the deepest crisis," James Lawton writes in the Independent. "How, his American owners must now ask, can you fire a man who has just beaten the masters of Italian football?" Before the game, Martin Samuel explained how the owners' cash crunch is putting perverse pressure on Mr. Benitez to step up his team's shoddy Premier League performance. "Benitez, as an intelligent man, will appreciate the viciousness of this circle," Mr. Samuel wrote in the Times of London. "He needs the best players to qualify for the Champions League, but if he does not qualify he will not get the funds to buy the best players.'

Bob Howsam, an architect of the Big Red Machine's 1970s baseball dynasty, founder of the Denver Broncos and a founding father of the Colorado Rockies, died yesterday of heart failure. He was 89. As Reds GM, Mr. Howsam pulled off a deal that brought Joe Morgan to Cincinnati at the time, genius in retrospect. He also hired Sparky Anderson to manage the club, and Mr. Anderson was crushed when he heard the news yesterday from the Cincinnati Enquirer's John Erardi. "As he began to talk about Howsam, Anderson began to cry, gently and not for long, before regaining his composure," Mr. Erardi writes. 'Gradually, his voice gained strength as he talked about the beloved former Reds general manager who had hired him." Mr. Anderson credited his former boss with giving him a chance when local headlines

asked, "Sparky Who?"
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Pulsar's Explosion May Show Rare Stellar Evolution

(Wired Science)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 10:12:09 AM

Astronomers watching a young neutron star explode with X-rays think they've spotted a phenomenon that will help them better understand the life cycles of these incredibly powerful objects.

Neutron stars are the super-dense cores left behind when a massive star explodes as a supernova. They generally emit regular pulses, produced by a rapid spin, giving them the name of "pulsar."

Many of them have strong magnetic fields as well, but a particular kind called magnetars get their

energy from extraordinarily powerful magnetic fields – so strong that they can break the star's crust as it spins, producing "starquakes" that release

violent bursts of X-ray energy.

Astronomers don't know how the different types of neutron stars are related. But new observations are giving them some ideas.

Researchers have been studying the youngest-known neutron star, apparently created no more than 884 years ago, which was seen to emithugely powerful X -ray bursts in May and July of 2006. Although thebursts lasted no more than .14 of a second, they each had the energy of about 75,000 of our Suns.

This seemed to be the behavior of a magnetar, although the star (called PSRJ1846) had previously been classified as a regular pulsar. Researchersnow think the star may be changing from one form to another, or shiftingback and forth, showing a previously unseen evolutionary process for these

powerfulobjects.
"We are watching one type of neutron star literally change into another right before our very eyes. This is a long-sought missing link betweendifferent types of pulsars," says Fotis Gavriil, of NASA's GoddardSpace Flight Center.

A paper on the observations was published in the Feb. 21 issue of Sciencexpress. But scientists will be watching closely to see if this, or any other apparently ordinary pulsar, winds up developing these characteristics again.
Powerful Explosions Suggest Neutron Star Missing

(Image: An image of the supernova remnant Kes 75, taken by the ChandraX-Ray Observatory. The pulsar being studied is in the center of theblue area, top. Credit: NASA/CXC/M. Gonzalez/F. Gavriil/P.

It's too easy to criticize hope

(Seth's Blog)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 3: 22: 38 AM

And in the end, cynicism is a lousy strategy.

Pitcher's Apology Is Contrast to Clemens Furor

(WSJ.com: The Daily Fix)

Submitted at 2/15/2008 12:49:00 PM

Roger Clemens grabbed the headlines with his angry denials that he's ever used steroids or HGH, but there's been another theme weaved through baseball's scandal: that of players admitting what they did and why they did it.

Both themes were at work in this week's hearing before a House committee: The Rocket's defense against accusations by former trainer Brian McNamee was complicated by the fact that two former Clemens teammates — Andy Pettitte and Chuck Knoblauch — said Mr. McNamee told the truth when he said he'd injected them with HGH. But with clubs opening spring-training camps in Florida and Arizona, mea culpas have been on display elsewhere as well.

For example, the Los Angeles Dodgers' Gary Bennett, named in the Mitchell Report, said yesterday that he'd indeed taken HGH in 2003 in hopes of speeding his recovery from a knee injury: "Was what I did wrong? Absolutely. Do I regret it? Absolutely." A day before that, Colorado Rockies coach Glenallen Hill said he'd used performanceenhancers while with the Anaheim Angels and apologized. (Mr. Hill had told George Mitchell he'd bought steroids but hadn't used them.)
The Colorado Rockies' Matt Herges. (Associated

And then there was Rockies reliever Matt Herges, who said he was glad his name was in the Mitchell Report, because he knew he had to let go of "a dirty little secret" he said he'd kept from his wife and parents - namely, that he'd used HGH during his time with the San Francisco Giants and Arizona Diamondbacks

The Fix was hoping some columnist or blogger would have weighed in with a thoughtful examination of Mr. Herges and the soul-searching he's said he went through (holler if you've found one), but the Cirque d'Clemens seems to have squeezed his story off many sports pages. But that's OK, because fortunately we have Mr.

Herges' own words.

"I feel like I've been shown mercy in all of this," Mr. Herges told the Associated Press. "If I'm not standing there naked in front of the world with my big secret, I'd still be holding onto it, hiding it. It would still be eating at me. It's not fun by any stretch holding onto something like that, so secretive, so dirty. I'm grateful it's out there. I'm

freed a little bit, a lot actually." Mr. Herges said he'd been unable to sleep before the Mitchell Report came out — but when it finally did appear, he slept like a baby. It strikes the Fix that there's a lesson for baseball in that.

California Democrat Henry Waxman now says he wishes the hearing featuring Clemens and Mr. McNamee hadn't been held, contending it embarrassed both men unnecessarily — and saying the hearing was only held because Clemens and his isisted on it (Predictabl Clemens attorney Rusty Hardin blasted out some verbal magma to the semi-contrary. By the way, look at this picture and tell the Fix Clemens attorney Lanny Breuer isn't a dead ringer for the Blue-Haired

Lawyer on "The Simpsons.")
On the Dugout, Jon Bois's examination of the hearing begins with Clemens not knowing what a vegan is (one of the day's few light-hearted moments) before considering the hearing's low point: the discussion of whether Clemens bled through his pants from a needle wound in his buttocks. Asked if he has any recollection of that, the Clemens of the Dugout's alternate reality pulls out a day planner labeled "2001: BUTT-RELATED HAPPENINGS," then admits that "it's possible that for a time i wasn't as diligent in keeping up my rump diary, that was a strange time in my life" But Mr. Bois then has Clemens step out of character to deliver a pointed critique of the hearings, and where baseball and steroids should rank on the roster of things Congress ought to be worried about. Like the best Dugouts, the results are riotously funny, but

Joe Juneau spent 12 years in the NHL, long enough to earn him an opulent house outside of Quebec City. So what is he doing 800 miles north of there in Kuujuuaq, a town of 2,100 in northern Quebec's Nunavik region?

As Sports Illustrated's Michael Farber writes, he's bringing "grassroots hockey to a place where there are no grass roots," in hopes of helping an Inuit region beset by alcoholism and a sagging safety net. 'Juneau is not merely teaching hockey to these children, some of whom recently learned to skate by pushing chairs on ice. He is also proselytizing, selling the therapeutic power of pucks as a way to education, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle."

If that doesn't seem like a typical postseason calling for an NHL star, Mr. Farber observes that "in the hockey fraternity, Juneau was always considered a freak. He played drums and read books and pondered the environment at a time when going en in the NHL meant a trip to Hartford the Whalers. The son of a forest ranger, he had a love of space that went beyond the 200-by-85-foot parameters of the rink and some of the narrow thinking that envelops the game. ... Juneau took the road less traveled. Now he works at the 58th parallel, in a place where there are no roads other than the streets of Kuujjuaq. Except one. Curling past the Forum atop the hill, this road snakes by the occasional home, curls past a dump filled with rusting Ski-Doos and other detritus of northern life, meanders near patches of tamaracks and then, after 15 miles, dead-ends. Just like that. The locals refer to it as The Road to Nowhere, which is where a life here can end if you are not careful."

Life is not very fulfilling right now for the Tampa Bay Lightning, mired in mediocrity without much hope of rescue. In the St. Petersburg Times, Gary Shelton mourns that "the owner will not pay. The front office cannot trade. The minor leagues do not develop. It has been a very long time since an important piece was added, whether through the draft or free agency or just plain luck. And so the mediocre seasons run together, one after another after another, until the Lightning begins to look like the Groundhog Day all-stars.

That frustration finally boiled over — a bit — this week, when forward Vinny Prospal ripped coach John Tortorella for how long he spent on the team's second line. Which earned Mr. Shelton's sympathy: 'Don't you think they feel it, too? Even now, even in the relief of a small hot streak, don't you think that professional athletes, competitive by nature, are as frustrated by the holes in the roster as the rest of us? Of course they are."

Next month ESPN will show "Black Magic," Dan Klores's four-hour exploration of basketball players and coaches at historically black schools during the civil-rights era, commercial-free over two nights. In the Washington Post, Mike Wise walks away from a screening as a big fan — and having enjoyed a night history even before the film

"A forgotten ballplayer walked into a small reception room last week at the Reagan Building, had the privilege of meeting the famous Earl Monroe — and promptly told the Pearl a story," he writes. "While Monroe was becoming NBA royalty in New York, Perry Wallace played for a pittance in the Eastern League, a basketball minor league, and moonlighted as a math teacher at the Pearl's alma mater, Philadelphia's John Bartram High School. And at the same time, Joe Bryant — Kobe's father — attended that school,' Wallace said. 'Isn't that something?' From the Pearl to Perry, to Jellybean Bryant and on to his son, the entire evening became a game of human H-O-R-S-E. They bonded over coincidences and zero degrees of separation, of events of 30, 40 and 50 years ago, all told by living historians before the screening of 'Black Magic.' Tip of the Fix cap to reader Don Hartline.

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Samsung files a gaming phone patent... again

(Engadget)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 5: 25: 00 AM

Filed under: Cellphones, Gaming If we didn't know better, we'd say Samsung really wants to develop some type of hybrid gaming / phone device. One need only look back on the

plethora of patent applications from the electronicsmaker to realize that something game-related is going on over at HQ. Whatever the case may be, the Korean company has applied for another iteration of device, this time taking a more modular approach to the layout of buttons and screen. In this new configuration, a RAZR-like clamshell would

actually house a swiveling screen which allows the unit to flip open, thus placing the display squarely between two "wings." The resulting arrangement would be a symmetrical device that would encourage a more familiar hand position for gamers. Of course, like those other designs, these are just images on paper -- though it does spark the

imagination considerably.

[Via Unwired View]

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(The Huffington Post Full Blog Feed)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 1:22:41 AM

The novella 'Coming to Los Angeles' continues as a serial this week.

WHEN DID I BEGIN to let them still the emotional core of my artistic nature?

I must take responsibility for my own complicity in the act - no one forces a conservative Mennonite to remain. But my peers and I were at a disadvantage, and they had the tools to quiet us - guilt, ignorance, our need for authoritarian approval.

Most of my peers stayed. I remained until I was 25, made compliant by the community's use of control rods, which were lowered into my emotional core at

THE CONTROL RODS used to tame a nuclear reactor are filled with cadmium pellets, which absorb the free neutrons, whose movements begin a

Machines lower control rods into the nuclear core. When the rods are pulled out, free neutrons begin to move. Eventually, a stray neutron strikes a 235U atom, which releases more neutrons, which starts a

chain reaction, which creates energy. If the control rods are completely withdrawn, a chain reaction spins out of control, and you get Three Mile Island. Lower the rods - activity slows. Withdraw the rods - activity speeds up. If every control rod is dropped into the core - all energy

WHAT KIND OF pain does an artist with an overheated core experience within a conservative Mennonite community like ours?

My sister Marjorie - just three years older than I was born with real talent in music and drama. Unfortunately, her skittish energy didn't blend into the community's mosaic of emotion - she was called a showoff, too emotional, childish. These are adjectives that could describe almost any diva onstage today.

I cannot know what Marjorie went through. She was a casualty of my community's battle for control, a young woman in a society that privileged males. I was a young man, learning different lessons, perhaps.

I responded to her behavior by joining the pack - criticizing her, trying to control her, annoyed that she stood out. I'm not assigning blame - the fault is the system, the way it repressed individuality.

The gift of an artist - or perhaps the curse - is her ability to perceive the world through different eyes and respond instinctively. What an artist sees can sometimes destroy her - as can the reactions of a community addicted to control.

Had Marjorie attended an Ohio public school, the choral director would have worked with the guidance department to create an academic schedule that complemented her gifts.

My sister's musical talents would have been valued not ignored. The school would have provided academic counseling and tutoring, perhaps medication, if needed. My sister would have been praised for her ability to perform, rather than shamed for her academic struggles. Upon high school graduation, she might have been guided into a conservatory of music, or drama school.

Marjorie's physicality would have been valued, disciplined through voice and acting lessons instead of severe corporal punishment.

Today I grieve for the pain my older sister experienced. Her emotional core could not be stilled. Marjorie kept throwing up every control rod, no matter how many were lowered into her soul.

I WAS COMPLICIT with the community's authoritarian leadership. In an effort to distance myself from my sister, I accepted the control rods they kept lowering. Marjorie was an embarrassment to my already eclectic family, I thought. How foolish I was.

And then Marjorie left, and I remained. It would be years before I realized what she had known intuitively: an artist cannot begin to find his voice until the control rods are raised. My acceptance of the control rods also sprang from my need to avoid the pain I felt whenever I spoke out - and felt the pack nipping at my heels, bringing me back into

I WAS IN MY third year of college when one of our five pastors reprimanded me during our twice-annual, private confession of faith ("I have peace with God and my fellow men and would like to partake in communion"). I got up, thinking we were

finished. But my pastor remained seated. Refusing to look in my direction, he reported that they had been hearing reports. Some of the young men attending college were "hugging women a lot." I tried not to laugh. My minister thought we were having wild sex - in reality, I was attending a Christian evangelical college, singing in a choir whose primary venues were church concerts, and enjoying the warm family atmosphere of a group in which hugging meant acceptance.

I looked at my pastor. There was no explaining this. He finally released me, uncomfortably

THE REALITY IS that I loved my family deeply. I still do. And it's a hard, distressing thing to find that the cost of growing up will be rejection.

No child wants to lose his family. All my life, I've wanted to please my parents, make them proud of me. It's difficult to grow up.

Did I flee from the pain of being true to myself because of what my actions would generate? In a community that values cohesiveness and rejects individuality, it's a hard, distressing thing to become

I RECOGNIZED IN MY friend Kim an artistic core that was white-hot. I remember arguing about whether or not we should mike our student leads during The Pirates of Penzance. It was not an option - Kim was a purist who believed that opera demanded a natural voice, not one electronically

transmitted. Kim knew who she was, and she was driven by what she believed. She demanded the best from her choir students - and they gave it to her. She collaborated with me - accepting my eclectic nature and

respecting what I brought to the partnership - and she made each production more than a high school

Her dreams stretched beyond her teaching career. As she began to give recitals within the North Canton community and perform with the Akron Lyric Opera, I realized that Kim intended to become an opera singer. I admired her individuality, passion for excellence, free spirit, and ability to empathize with

She was a wakeup call to my creative side, the most alive person I knew.

BY JANUARY 2000, John David Drake had showed that he was serious about my offer to produce an original musical - the book was finished and in my hands. He titled it Lost in LaGrange.

Setting the show in the world he knew best, Drake told the story of a high school with a problem - they have never staged a musical. When a math teacher volunteers to direct it, the kids jump aboard. The choir director collaborates unwillingly. The result is a comedy of errors.

In addition to composing the music, composer Kendrick Strauch also put a band together onstage and performed with them. The show attracted over 600 audience members three nights in a row.

ACROSS MY YEARS at Hoover, I had forced myself to adopt the habits of a Type A personality. Besides teaching five or six classes of 25+ kids each day, I was also advising the drama club, directing up to four shows a year, and running a yearbook program with an annual budget that eventually climbed to \$87,000.

remember one day in particular. That afternoon I had met with my editors and yearbook representative to turn in the final pages of the 1998 Viking yearbook. Immediately afterwards, I walked

down to the theatre to open a new show. Why did I feel the need to do so much? Maybe I was keeping myself too busy to think. Perhaps I was searching for meaning. Possibly I was beginning to raise a few of the control rods in my life, and the rush of energy needed an outlet.

I know now that writing focuses my energy best, calms me - I sink down into the chair and move through the computer screen into another world. The endorphin rush is powerful, healing. After a good day of writing, I'm at peace.

But back then, I didn't have the discipline or commitment to find and enter that place. I wasn't ready for the silence of creativity. My energy was frenetic, scattered - a shotgun blast of pellets into the universe, rather than the clean, hard shot of a rifle bullet aimed at a specific target.

MY INABILITY TO SAY no and my need to become the Golden Boy had a dramatic impact on my personal life. For example, in the summer of 1996, I had fallen in love with Wendy Wagler dark, curly hair, upbeat. Over the next six months, I had grown to love her. Marriage loomed.

But Wendy saw with clear eyes that what I loved most was not her, but my work. I had no vision of a family. I was too self-absorbed. Things came to a head after Hayward talked to me about directing South Pacific, and I agreed to do it. When I shared

my plans with Wendy, she put her foot down.
"If you direct this show, we're finished," she said. She considered me. "The way it is - you barely have time for us.

Shortly afterwards, I ended the relationship.

KIM SOMETIMES TOOK a break in the midst of her hectic schedule to visit me on the other side of the building. She said it calmed her down.

She would sit and watch as students approached me where I was seated at my desk, always working creating playbills, correcting yearbook spreads, grading papers. Students interrupted me constantly, asking for advice or help.

would chat with Kim between interruptions, and then she would return to her room. She must have been relieved that someone else had a schedule more hectic than her own.

But the nature of my drive came out of a different place than Kim's. Whereas she was focused on what she loved, I was throwing the years of my life against the wall of the Universe, hoping something would stick. I was speed-dating my talents teaching, acting, directing, producing, advising. Each gave me pleasure, but none of them produced the kind of passion that burns white. knew next to nothing about love.

ON THE LAST NIGHT of my spring break in April 2000, I was on the phone with Laura Schmidt, a girlfriend with whom I had a long-distance relationship. I don't remember what we were arguing about, but she caught my attention with a comment. "Steve, I think we knew each other in a previous life," she said, "and I think we're still trying to work

out our differences. I hung up and sat quietly for several minutes, thinking. Her words had given me an idea. What if I were a young man - no, what if a young man were in love with a woman - what if he left her after promising God he'd give up everything for the priesthood in order to save his own life? Martin

Luther had done that.

I opened up a new Word document. And in 15 minutes I had written a summary for The French Inquisitor, a screenplay that looks at eternal love through the metaphor of past lives. It was my first original story idea.

The next day I went to Borders and picked up Syd Field's books on screenwriting - all formula and plot points - and I began writing.

AT THE END of the school year, I flew to Orlando, Florida, to read AP Literature Essays for the College Board. Approximately 800 English teachers were hired that year for an eight-day stint. We were housed in excellent hotels. We ate delicious food and worked at tables set up in a gigantic gym, about nine readers each, marking AP essays during the day and exploring Orlando's nightlife with our colleagues during the evenings.

When I arrived, I bought a couple of tee shirts. Since I usually stood to read, most people eventually saw them. My favorite showed a picture of a bright green alligator with the caption "Bite me!"

Shortly thereafter, I ran into Genevieve Morgan

from Los Angeles. I immediately mistook her name for Guinevere of the Arthurian myth. She didn't find my mistake funny, but we still became friends.

Sournal

When Genevieve found out I was writing a screenplay, she told me a story about a reporter from Los Angeles who interviewed everyone coming out of a grocery store. He asked each of them: "Tell me about your screenplay." Nearly everyone was able to talk about a screenplay they were writing.

During one of our many conversations, Genevieve

offered to introduce me to a screenwriter she knew when I finally completed The French Inquisitor. And when I told her I was thinking about moving to Los Angeles, Genevieve reminded me that her school was always looking for good teachers.

I thought Genevieve might be able to advise me as I looked for a teaching position to support myself while I broke into film. At the end of the trip, we exchanged email addresses and phone numbers.

I KNEW NEXT to nothing about the inner life of a writer - even less about generating creative ideas. Like most English majors, I had had little competition in college classes, so I believed writing fiction would also be easy. How little I knew.

In the years since that first attempt at a screenplay, I've learned that writing takes significant downtime. It takes a commitment to reading and researching and thinking and brainstorming and chasing ideas up and down blind alleys.

In addition, a writer needs to have passion for his story - the intensity cannot end until the story is finished. Most important, a writer of fiction must enjoy solitude. The writer has only himself and the maginary world of his story for company. Of course, you soon learn to prefer that world.

BACK HOME, I DECIDED to press ahead with my screenplay idea. I invited two friends to be my cowriters - and we began working together. Using all the bad writing habits I had learned over the years, I decided to give myself a deadline. I set a date and invited actors I knew to my house to read my new

screenplay, which had not yet been written. My friends showed up to read. While some cooked in my kitchen, the rest of us gathered in the living room and labored through what I had mostly pounded out the night before.

Perhaps the writing sounded okay to them. Perhaps. Maybe they didn't know any better. I doubt it. After all, the story idea was a good one, and the dialogue kinda sounded like people talk to each other. Perhaps. I know better today. The writing was crap.

WE ALL BELIEVE that we want people to tell us the truth about our work. But few of us do.

I recently talked to Drew Struzan, whom The Boston Globe called "the last of the great poster artists." He's currently creating the art for Steven Spielberg's new Indiana Jones film.

We were discussing how a teacher inspires his students - when Drew told me that he refuses to grade the work of his students. I was surprised. What if an administrator insists?

'I give them all A's," Drew said. "How do you judge a young artist? How can you even evaluate them when it takes years for an artist to even develop to a point when he can produce anything substantial?

He had a point. An artist becomes who he is because of the unqualified support he gets from those who love him. Our dearest friends and sometimes our family love us for our flaws. They tell us we're

It's not that they're lying. It's just that they love us. An artist's growth is an organic process. As any mother and father will attest, you don't go to your daughter's dance recitals because you love art.

I ENTERED my sixth year of teaching, completely unprepared for the event that was about to take

I had grown up under my father's dogma, which stated that the only true faith is found in the conservative Mennonite community. Any denomination other than our non-conference, conference conservative Mennonite church - well,

you're taking a chance. Since then, I had rejected that belief. Although I didn't know who was going to get into heaven, I knew my father's standards were too high.

But how does one go about rewriting the Book of God in his life, rethinking death, life, birth? I remember the moment in therapy when I realized that my childhood map of the Universe didn't match the truth of the world I knew - what I saw, heard, smelled, felt, tasted.

Could I abandon the myths I had been taught? I finally gave up trying to make sense of it all. So I wasn't prepared for what happened next.

LATE MORNING, August 24, 2000, second day of school - I was teaching English when an announcement came over the loudspeaker. Would all choir students please meet in the choir

room. Several students got up to leave. I watched them go. Students were called out of class for a variety of reasons. I kept teaching. Only after class did I find out what had happened.

My friend Kim was in a coma. There had been a car accident. As I faced the reality of what had happened - my world collapsed.

I thought back over the last few days. The past Monday had been our annual Convocation Day filled with the sort of long speeches and seminars that all teachers dread but tolerate.

Kim had gotten permission from Campbell to miss that day, which allowed her and Mike to spend additional time vacationing with Mike's family in Edmenton, Alberta - sightseeing through the Canadian Rockies and attending the wedding of

Mike's first-grade buddy.
Tuesday was Teacher Work Day, and I spent it in my classroom, preparing for the year. Theodore Leaf, a junior and my costume designer, stopped by to talk - I would later cast him as one of the leads in the fall play. Suddenly, Kim walked in. The moment lingers in my memory. Kim looked fit,

tanned in a little summer dress. She was finally driving the choral program. She had established her leadership during the first year, had strong plans for the second.

Dramatic as usual, Theodore's jaw dropped as he

looked at Mrs. Melin. He remarked on "how chic" she looked. His flattery was normal - and Kim ate it

It is the last memory I have of Kim before her world turned over.

KIM HAD AWAKENED earlier than usual that morning because the school had changed its schedule. She had a half-hour drive from West Akron to school. She was adjusting. No more sleeping in.

But when Kim got out to her car in the morning, something looked out of whack. She went back in to talk to Mike - the cars apparently weren't parked as usual - but then she returned and took her own car, a

1992 Buick Skylark, aqua blue. She left the house and turned onto Pershing. As she approached the intersection of West Market, she saw that the red light was still blinking. Or maybe she

ABOUT A BLOCK from the intersection was a fire station. They heard the sounds of a crash.

"She was hit by a jeep first on her left, which threw her into the other lane," said Mike. "Then she was hit on the right by another car. A third car got involved as well."

The fire station dispatched "an EMS unit there almost immediately," said Mike. "They took her by ambulance to Akron General. She was brought in as a Jane Doe - apparently her I.D. got knocked under the seat. They called the school when they found something connected to it, and the school gave them my number.'

"IT TOOK a half-hour to get her out of the vehicle," Mike said. "She stopped breathing in the vehicle. They gave her CPR while she was still in the car, using a 'bag' - something that simulated her breathing. If the fire station hadn't been so close, she wouldn't be here."

Back at the school, the news devastated the students and teachers. Rumors ran rampant. Students organized prayer circles. Teachers sent cards - they felt helpless, out of control. They desperately wanted to DO something.

There was nothing anyone could do. "For 12 days we didn't know if she was going to live," said Mike. And so the report came back every day - Kim was still in a coma.

Mike sent out daily email reports - he had a long list of people to notify, including friends and family. But Mike and the family didn't allow anyone else in to see Kim, not even her closest friends. And that included me.

NOW FOR THE first time in years, the rigidity of my emotional core began to loosen, broken up by the pressure of caring about my friend.

My first meltdown occurred the weekend of the accident. On Saturday morning, Mike called me - his voice oddly sterile - and asked me if I could drive to the Cleveland-Hopkins airport that evening to pick up Kim's sister Jill.

I agreed, happy to be able to do something. As I drove, I thought about random moments. Kim screaming with laughter as she told her husband about my latest directing faux pas. Kim sitting in a restaurant booth, listening intently - Mike's arm around her - as I told her about my new story idea. Kim at home, worried, upset, as she told me and Mike about a choir student who was making bad choices, and was dropping out of school.

And then, inexplicably, I began sobbing as I headed up Rt. 18, just outside of Medina. I couldn't face Kim's sister. I pulled off to the side of the road. I sat there, alone in my car. I tried to gain control of my emotions.

That unexpected release of grief returned several days later. I was talking to Amanda Swineheart, 19, brown eyes, intensely loyal. Amanda had become a close friend, but still called me by my formal title. She phoned one evening to find out what had happened to Kim.

Suddenly, she asked me how I was doing. I didn't expect her question. One moment I was the emotionally detached teacher she knew, and the next minute, I was fighting sobs. Through my grief, I could hear the worry in Amanda's voice on the other end of the line.

'Mr. D," she said. "Are you okay? What's wrong?" They don't give you lessons for this, I thought. I didn't know how to feel. The utter lack of control I had in the situation sent me lurching towards emotional corners.

One of my closest friends lay at death's door, and I could do nothing.

WHEN KIM FINALLY came out of her coma, her body had returned to Go. She had to learn all over again how to eat, how to drink, how to talk, how to

Even how to sing - her voice had lost every bit of its hard-won polish. For Kim this was the worst. Her dream career had been opening up in front of her. Then it was snatched away. Why? Because Kim's condition was kept so private, the

community had the impression that it took months for her to come out of the coma. The reality was more complex. 'It took three weeks for her to come out of the coma,

but it took another month before she gained awareness or was able to communicate verbally," Mike said.

"She opened her eyes for the first time on the twelfth day - September 5," Mike said. "She squeezed my hand that day, and then she went back into a deep sleep. On September 6th she actually shed a tear looking at me.

It was the last time Kim cried. "Her tear ducts are fine," said Mike. "It's the high-level emotions and connections controlled in the brain - those which create the physical event of tears - that were injured '

MIKE IS STILL haunted by his memories of one night, September 7, when he believes the crucial brain injury took place - well after the accident itself.

Kim was in the Intensive Care Unit - and Mike was the only one with her. The doctors had just taken her off the ventilator that day.

Jason Kidd Seeks Better Fit in Return to Dallas

(WSJ.com: The Daily Fix)

Submitted at 2/19/2008 12:51:00 PM

After several false starts, a rare appearance in the headlines by Dallas Mavericks guard Devean George and the interruption of the NBA All-Star Break, it appears that Jason Kidd really will be leaving the New Jersey Nets and returning to the Western Conference. The latest trade reports have the nets sending Mr. Kidd and Malik Allen to Dallas for Devin Harris, DeSagana Diop, Maurice Ager, Trenton Hassell, semiretired forward Keith Van Horn (more on him a moment) and two first-round picks.

Presumed future teammates Dirk Nowitzki and Jason Kidd chat during the All-Star Game about strategy and Avery Johnson's coaching style. (AP

Mr. Kidd, who turns 35 next month, began his career in Dallas, left a decade ago for the Phoenix Suns, and then came to New Jersey seven seasons ago. In all three stops on his tour, Mr. Kidd has struggled in the playoffs against the West — a lifetime record of 10-25 in the playoffs, including just one series victory in eight tries. "There is one important difference this go-round: He gets to play with the league's reigning MVP," J.A. Adande writes on ESPN. "Kidd's game is about eliciting the best from his teammates. He'd much rather try to get the best out of Dirk Nowitzki than a broken-down Penny Hardaway or an aging Clifford Robinson. Dallas is the best destination for the point guard."

Dallas coach Avery Johnson better hope so; he's finally gotten his marquee point guard after three years of carping about his own slate. "Adding Kidd to the roster would give Johnson the leader on the court he's always wanted, which means he can focus more on strategy, player rotations and the subtleties of each game instead of calling plays," Jean-Jacques Taylor writes in the Dallas Morning News. "Devin Harris had that responsibility for only 20 games before Johnson snatched it away, the biggest indicator he didn't believe Harris could lead Dallas to a championship."

The reports last week of a trade, followed by its quashing by Mr. George's surprising no-trade clause, made a deal, some deal, inevitable, Gil LeBreton writes in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "Imagine young Harris, if he were to have returned to the lineup next month and point-guarded the Mavericks to... another first-round playoff exit," Mr. LeBreton writes. "The howls over his shortcomings would have been unbearable. ... Had this Humpty Dumpty of a deal not been pieced together again, Harris would have been measured for the rest of his Mavericks career against the future Hall of Famer Kidd."

For the Nets, the deal is nearly "equal value," Chris Mannix writes on SI.com: "Call it a clinic on rebuilding a team on the fly."

were announced. The teams have fulfilled all the

requirements of registration with the competition

(including writing a check for the \$1,000 entrance

fee) and are now in the running for the \$20 million

prize for the first private robotic mission to the

moon that can rove 500 meters and send a

The second place team can rove away with \$5

million of their own and another pot of \$5 million is

available for completing "bonus" task such as

finding ice, or surviving the 14 lunar night. Space Florida also announced that they are offering a \$2 million dollar bonus if the winner takes off from

Cape Canaveral. All the prizes expire December 31,

The nine new teams are: Astrobotic, Red Whittaker's

team from Carnegie Mellon which has already been in the headlines; ARCA, a Romanian team that also

competed for the Ansari X Prize; Chandah, whose founder is CEO of the largest retail electricity

provider in Texas; Frednet, a group of open source

developers who want to bring that solution to

support lunar exploration; LunaTrex, a gro formed

of previous Ansari X Prize competitors, universities

and companies; Micro-Space, a company that has

been competing for the Northrop Grumman Lunar

bipropellant liquid rockets; Quantum3, led by Paul

Carliner, a senior executive in the aerospace

industry; Southern California Selene Group, taking

an "elegantly simple design that is relatively

inexpensive to implement", Team Italia, lead by Prof. Amalia Ercoli-Finzi, it is a collaboration

between several universities. More on each team

X Prize's press release has this to say about the ten

Aeronautics and Cosmonautics Romanian Association (ARCA): Based in Valcea, Romania and

led by Dumitru Popescu, ARCA was also

acontender in the Ansari X PRIZE. Two of ARCA's

most innovative projectsto date have been the Demonstrator 2B rocket and Stabilo, a two-

stagemanned suborbital air-launched vehicle. The

craft they plan to enter in he Google Lunar X PRIZE

will be called the "European Lunar Explorer."
Astrobotic: Team Astrobotic, led by Dr. William

"Red"Whittaker, was formed to coordinate the

efforts of Carnegie MellonUniversity, Raytheon

teams now competing for the prize:

after the jump.

'mooncast" back to Earth.

That's tougher in the NBA's Byzantine salary-cap system, one that will require the Nets to take on their former player, Mr. Van Horn, even though he's effectively but unofficially a former player. In the New York Sun, John Hollinger attempts to make sense of the NBA rules that governed the intricacies of this deal.

Such rules are to blame for the Minnesota Timberwolves' hopeless position as a franchise with no rebuilding in sight, Patrick Reusse writes in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. "Somehow, the NBA has to modify its cap rules so that a bottom-feeder can trade a high-priced veteran for nothing more than prospects and draft choices," Mr. Reusse writes. Then again, even with simpler rules bad general managers can set a team back. Witness the New York Knicks under Isiah Thomas, a disaster which, coupled with the Nets' trade, will leave the New York area without a single player from this year's All-Star roster. New York's hoops struggles extend to the local college ranks, NBC Sports' John Walters laments

The All-Star Game, incidentally, was won by the East and MVP LeBron James, who had pined for his Cleveland Cavaliers to trade for Mr. Kidd. Cleveland Plain Dealer columnist Bill Livingston says James is great, but can be greater — witness his ill-advised three-point attempts and errant free throws

* * *

The truth has set Andy Pettitte free from the barbs of some sportswriters, much like "The Moment of Truth" audience members cheer unaccountably when contestants admit to acts of malfeasance. Yet others still hold the New York Yankees pitcher to task for his prior falsehood and drug use. And Mr. Pettitte's team and his government may yet ask for more from him than an hour-long display of apparent honesty before sportswriters in New York. Yesterday Mr. Pettitte spoke publicly for the first time since Roger Clemens, his former teammate — and, stunningly, current friend — testified on Capitol Hill about his alleged use of steroids and human growth hormone. Mr. Pettitte told Congressional investigators under oath that Clemens told him he'd used HGH; Clemens denied it and said Mr. Pettitte had "misremembered." Mr. Pettitte also revealed to Congress that he'd used HGH twice, in 2002 and 2004; to prior inquisitors from the Mitchell Report and the media, he'd copped only to the first usage.

"Pettitte has played a bit loose with details in the recent past, but Monday he seemed chastened, horrified, by his public exposure, and seemed to need a public forum to set himself free," George Vecsey writes in the New York Times. "Always quick to note that he is not very smart, Pettitte did it four or five times during a news conference that was remarkable not only for its length of 57 minutes, but

Google Announces Nine New Lunar X Prize

vill be named"Shehrezade.'

also for its tone of humility."

But Baltimore Sun columnist Dan Connolly writes that Mr. Pettitte had little choice but to come clean once he was under oath. "Let's not lionize Pettitte for his performance yesterday," Mr. Connolly writes. "Sure he's sorry he did it, but is that primarily because he got caught?"

Noting that Mr. Pettitte was accompanied at the news conference by long-time Yankees teammates Mariano Rivera, Jorge Posada and Derek Jeter — and former teammate and current manager Joe Girardi — Yahoo Sports' Jeff Passan argues that the franchise is in denial about the drug taint on its prior decade-plus of success. "During the news conference," Mr. Passan writes, "general manager Brian Cashman sat to Pettitte's left and manager Joe Girardi to his right, each looking inward and nodding his head, affirming Pettitte like a kid who goofed rather than a 35-year-old man who has won 201 major league games and willingly allowed another man to inject him with illicit drugs through the belly button."

Nothing absolves cheating like success, and Mr. Pettitte better deliver it, especially after the Yankees bowed out of bidding for Johan Santana. "Pettitte cannot go 9-12 with a 5.00 ERA now," Joel Sherman writes in the New York Post. "That will unleash more than nasty cynicism that Pettitte could not excel without illegal drugs. It would likely leave Cashman unemployed and deepen a fissure between the Steinbrenner sons that could unsettle the Yankees organization for years. And we have not even mentioned the potential for Pettitte to have to testify against a person he was still describing yesterday as loving 'like a brother.' For Clemens is still moving forward with his defamation case against McNamee. Their lawyers are due in a federal court in Houston in April. Additionally, there is still the potential for the Justice Department to serve perjury charges against Clemens, at which point it is hard to see Pettitte as anything short of a hostile witness against the Rocket.

* * *

Here's another Clemens-Pettitte scandal: That prestigious pitching award the former won seven times, and the latter has almost won several times, should be known as the Lefty Grove Award. Or perhaps the Christy Mathewson Award. On Hardball Times, Eric Seidman explains why, if the Cy Young Award had been awarded during its namesake's career, he would have won fewer than several contemporaries.

- Tip of the Fix cap to reader Don Hartline.

Found a good column from the world of sports? Don't keep it to yourself — write to us at dailyfix@wsj.com and we'll consider your find for inclusion in the Daily Fix.

STEVEN

"There were fewer nurses at night," he said. Suddenly, Mike saw Kim's readout numbers begin to drop on the life machines monitoring her progress, and she went into convulsions.

"Her body lost its ability to breathe," Mike said. He ran for help, approached a nurse.

"Something is wrong, you need to come over here," he told her. But the nurse had no time. "I had to go over and get another nurse," Mike remembers. "She finally came over - and then they pushed me out to work on her."

"That was probably the worst moment of the whole thing, except for the accident," Mike said. "It haunted me for three to four years - would pop up like a memory."

"Could this have been the time when that injury occurred?" Mike still continues to ask himself. "Because before, when she first woke up, she was able to cry."

WHEN KIMBERLEY FINALLY opened her eyes for good on September 8, she found that she was helpless - the only motor skills she had were those of a newborn baby. Her prognosis was bleak. The doctors suggested that Kim might live out her life in a nursing home - since half of her body was paralyzed.

But Kim surprised everyone, including herself, with her will to recover. As Kim became fully aware of the challenges she was facing, she determined that the nursing home scenario was not going to happen. "She smiled on September 8 with the half of her face that wasn't paralyzed," Mike said.

ON SEPTEMBER 12, they flew Kim from Akron General to HealthSouth in Erie, Pennsylvania, where she underwent extensive therapy.

she underwent extensive therapy.
"It was my birthday," said Mike. "She was transported by ambulance to Akron-Canton Airport - right out on the tarmac. I was with her."

The single-prop plane she flew in had barely enough room for the nurse, medic, pilot, and co-pilot. Mike said he ended up being "wedged into the tail of the plane - the ass end of the body - just a knapsack with me, due to weight restrictions of the plane's cargo." All this time Kim remained protected from the rest of the world - in the hands of her husband Mike.

THEN CAME A MOMENT I can't explain. Neither can Kim, and neither can Mike - although he was creeped out enough by the situation to record the details in his journal.

Mike had been sleeping in a motel room close to HealthSouth. Suddenly his cell phone went off. He awoke and looked at the caller ID screen, which was lit up.

"It was September 16, 2000," he notes, referring to his journal. "That would have been four days after she was transported to HealthSouth in Erie. It was 1:30 AM."

When Mike had left Kim earlier that night, "she was in a deep, really unresponsive condition. Her body was lifeless and still, and appeared to slip back into a coma-like state," he said.

The nurses told him later that Kim had been "really fussy" that night. She was on anti-seizure medicine, and the side effects were a really high fever.

But what Mike heard and saw on his Caller ID made him "get up and go over and turn on the light by the bathroom vanity to make sure I wasn't dreaming."

"It sounded like the scene of an accident," said Mike. "Voices, really strange noises" - and above it all, the sound of "a baby's cry."

all, the sound of "a baby's cry."
"I remember looking in the mirror while I talked on the phone," said Mike. "There was no conversing with whatever it was. No one was addressing me-

but something was on the other end."
He looked again at the number on his cell phone. "It was the same as her room number," he said.

THE IMPACT KIM'S accident had on me was profound. I became more empathetic to the pain others were going through. The accident changed me. And only recently have I begun to see how. I had turned the microscope of grief upon my memories of Kim. I recalled the way she embraced life head-on. It empowered me to do the same.

For the first time in years, I openly expressed my grief. I stripped off the cocoon wrapped around me since childhood - and for the first time, I began to feel

Within my emotional core, the control rods were slowly being raised.

THE GRIEF I felt had broader implications. It took me back to a place I resisted. In my insular community of conservative Mennonites, I had lived out what I thought was life. However, the artist in me had been trapped in a virtual coma, my emotional core stilled.

The silencing of my artistic voice was as pointless as Kim's. We had both been shut down by forces neither of us could understand, forces too powerful for either of us to fight against.

I knew what it was like to be hidden away - only in my case it wasn't a hospital room. It was a conservative Mennonite community that took pride in its separation from the world.

I realized I had become a bookworm as a child and teenager - not because I didn't like people, or didn't want to be around them, but because I needed to find a world where I could escape from my community's constant evaluation

We live through the heart, and a heart can take only so much caring. You have to protect it - and I had, but the cost was my soul.

I UNDERSTOOD VERY little of this as the impact of Kim's accident exploded across the landscape of my life. But the aftershock transformed the way I related to people.

For the first time, I began to connect with others on a different emotional level. I found my voice - and realized it could be heard most clearly through the keys of my computer. It was Kim's accident that had ripped the calluses from my heart, causing deep emotional pain, but also creating within me a burning need to write.

When I recovered my balance, I decided that I needed to do something with the students who were grieving Kim's absence.

To be continued . . . NEXT WEEK - Chapter 3: The Pain of Caring

Teams

(Wired Science)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 3: 29: 23 PM

Today at Google headquarters in Mountain View California, nine new Google Lunar X Prize teams

Of Carnegie Mellon's specialties is autonomous navigation through stereovision and other technologies. This enables Carnegie Mellon's robots to to automatically avoid obstacles and select their own route acrossummapped terrain. Astrobotic will

and "Red Rover."

Chandah: Chandah, meaning "Moon" in Sanskrit, was foundedby Adil Jafry, an energy industry entrepreneur. He is now chairman and CEO of Tara, the largest independent retail electricity provider in Texas. Jafry's goal is to catalyze commercialization of space, andbring advances in space travel, tourism, sciences, and technology tothe general public at large. Team Chandah's spacecraft

route acrossunmapped terrain. Astrobotic will compete for the prize using their "Artemis Lander"

FREDNET: Headed by Fred J. Bourgeois III, this multi-nationalteam is comprised of systems, software, and hardware developers whoserve as the leaders and overall coordinators of an international groupof Open Source developers, engineers, and scientists. Their goal is tobring the same successful approach used in developing major softwaresystems (such as the Internet, and Linux) to bear on the problems associated with Space Exploration and Research.

LunaTrex: Led by Pete Bitar, LunaTrex is comprised of severalindividuals, companies, and universities from all over the UnitedStates, some of whom were also competitors for the Ansari X PRIZE. Eachteam member brings their own history to the mix: rocket science,high-altitude near-space R&D, defense directed-energy technology, aviation design and development, robotics, trajectories, and non-conventional propulsion expertise. The name of their competing craft will be "Tumbleweed."

Micro-Space: Helmed by Richard Speck and based inColorado, Micro-Space, Inc. has a 31-year history of producing worldclass, high tech products. Since focusing on the development ofspaceflight systems, they have flown 17 innovative, bipropellant liquidfuel rockets, three near-hover rockets with vectored thrust guidance, scores of flights with telemetry and radio tracking, and severalinnovative life support systems. Micro-Space has been a competitor inthe Ansari X PRIZE as well as the Northrop Grumman Lunar LanderChallenge. Their "Human Lunar Lander" will compete for Google

Odyssey Moon: The first team to register for the competition, Odyssey Moon is a private commercial lunar enterprise headquartered in the Isle of Man and founded by Dr. Robert

Richards.Odyssey Moon's business plans are actively in development for a seriesof missions to the Moon during the International Lunar Decade insupport of science, exploration and commerce. Their Google Lunar XPRIZE craft is titled "MoonOne (M-1)."

Quantum3: A U.S.-based team, Quantum3 is led by PaulCarliner, a senior executive in the aerospace industry. They propose tofield a small spacecraft launched from an East Coast range usinglaunch-coast-burn trajectory for a propulsive soft landing on thesurface of the Moon at the Sea of Tranquility. Quantum3 is taking apartnership approach to the mission, utilizing the unique capabilities of the private sector and academic communities. Their craft will becalled "Moondancer."

Southern California Selene Group: According to team leaderHarold Rosen, the approach taken by the Santa Monica Selene Group canbe succinctly summarized as "an elegantly simple design that isrelatively inexpensive to implement." The architecture for their "Spirit of Southern California" spacecraft will combine the control and communication systems used in some of the earliest communicationssatellites with the latest in electronic and sensor technology.

Team Italia: Based in Italy and led by Prof. AmaliaErcoli-Finzi, Team Italia is a collaboration between severaluniversities. The team is currently running a prototype of its systemat Politecnico di Milano. The architecture of the robotic system isunder study: a single big rover or a colony of many robots, light andmobile, with many legs and wheels, able to be compacted in the landerand distributed quickly on the Moon's surface with cameras and sensorysupport.

For more details about each team, and weekly updates on the competition, you can go to the Google Lunar X Prize site.

Private race to the moon (and money) takes off [MSNBC]
See Also:
• Carnegie Mellon Rolls Out Lunar Rover

Prototype, Lays Groundwork ...
• Robotics Professor Pushing Ad Supported Moon

• Lunar Rover Makes Appearance at NextFest

Image: Google Lunar X Prize

Full disclosure, I am the 'Director of Communications' for the Odyssey Moon team

ATI's mix-n-match CrossFire X technology gets official, tested

Submitted at 2/22/2008 5:03:00 AM

(Engadget)

Filed under: Desktops, Gaming, Laptops Sure, SLI technology is fine and dandy, but ATI's hoping to remove some of the restrictions found on current multi-GPU setups with its forthcoming CrossFire X technology. As we've seen before, the idea here is to "take two, three or four GPUs and use their power to render one game faster than you otherwise would be able." Over at PC Perspective, those kind folks were able to pick AMD's brain on the topic, and aside from getting confirmation that CrossFire X "supports multi-GPU configurations of any combination of RV670- and R680-based products," we also found that a public release was

just weeks away. Better still, there's a full report detailing the results of putting the technology to the test, and yes, initial impressions do seem quite positive. Hit the read link for the full spill, cool?

[Thanks, sizewise]

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Shaq, Kidd Come Up Short With New Clubs

(WSJ.com: The Daily Fix)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 11:29:00 AM

As the old saying goes, sometimes the best defense is a good offense: Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers won a road game against Shaquille O'Neal and the Phoenix Suns in the big man's Suns debut,

Bryant, dislocated pinkie and all, did his part with 41 points, with newcomer Pau Gasol adding 29 and Lamar Odom contributing 22. Shaq scored 15, nine in the final quarter, with nine rebounds, supporting Amare Stoudemire (37 points), Steve Nash (26) and Leandro Barbosa and Grant Hill (17 each). The win gave L.A. the season series; the two teams are now tied atop the Pacific Division and narrowly trail the New Orleans Hornets for best record in the NBA's bruising Western Conference.

Kobe and Shaq, together again. (Associated Press

In the Los Angeles Times, Helene Elliott writes that Shaq "wrestled and writhed, diving for the ball all over the court and trying to squeeze a few more gallons of diesel from a body running as much on adrenaline as on muscle memory." Mr. O'Neal, she says, "sometimes looked like the dominant Shaq of old. Sometimes he looked just plain old, lumbering upcourt while the game around him accelerated to a breathtaking pace. Yet, he got stronger as the evening got later, an encouraging sign for a man who believes there are championship chapters left to be added to a career that brought him three NBA titles with the Lakers and one with the Miami Heat.' The Orange County Register's Jeff Miller hopes for more Kobe-Shaq reunions in May, waving away standings and tiebreakers to write that "the big picture was too big on this night, a night when the focus was contained by the four lines that define the court. This was the new Lakers against the old Laker, the glorious memories of O'Neal vs. what remains of O'Neal. This was a collision of the Lakers' past and their future, a bunch of storylines tangling in one magnificent mess. ... Sadly, what felt like a Game 1 actually was a Game Done. Unless they meet in the playoffs, these teams won't face each other again until sometime around Halloween, at the earliest. Too bad, because the NBA needs more of what these four quarters delivered, and we don't just mean the 254 total points.'

The view from Phoenix?

The Arizona Republic's Dan Bickley writes that "O'Neal's debut in Phoenix felt as if it was 40 years in the making. It felt as if the smallest kid in school had just befriended the schoolyard bully. It was so over the top that O'Neal received a standing ovation after his first dunk. That's just nuts. But it speaks to all the bitter disappointments, the heartbreaking runs at a title and the Quixotic search for a big man that began the moment the Suns lost the coin flip for Lew Alcindor and didn't end until Wednesday's

But Mr. Bickley warns the night's excitement masked "a frightening realization: This tweaked, improved team from Los Angeles is pretty awesome. And just like Shaq, the Lakers are going to get better, too. ... The addition of the highly mobile Pau Gasol has changed everything, so much that his surname should be changed to Gazelle. The Lakers now have all the raw materials to win a championship, including a coach who knows his way to the finish line.

Another NBA star's relocation also began last night with a loss: Jason Kidd returned to the Dallas Mavericks, who lost in New Orleans to the Hornets,

Mr. Kidd arrived from the New Jersey Nets Tuesday in a long-delayed eight-player swap that returned him to the Mavs 14 years after being a No. 2 pick. He had just one practice with his new teammates; not surprisingly, the restructured Mavs weren't always in sync. The Mavs will figure that out, but may have more trouble finding an answer for Hornets point guard Chris Paul, who just missed a

triple-double (31 points, 11 assists, nine steals). The Fix imagines the Dallas Morning News's Jean-Jacques Taylor began his evening expecting Mr. Kidd to dominate his column. But he wound up singing the praises of Mr. Paul, whom he calls "the game's best point guard. That's right, the best. Better than Kidd, Steve Nash, Tony Parker and anyone else you want to throw in the conversation, like Deron Williams, Allen Iverson, Chauncey Billups or Baron Davis.

What worries Mr. Taylor is the days flying off the calendar: "We all know Kidd will have better games than he did against New Orleans. He had eight points, six rebounds and five assists in nearly 37 minutes. Though he wasn't pleased with his performance, he also understands he's had exactly one practice with his new teammates. That's not nearly enough time to learn the Mavs' offensive and defensive principles, let alone execute them flawlessly against New Orleans. Dallas needs as much practice as it can get in the next couple of weeks so it can find a rhythm. The problem, of course, is there are so many good teams in the Western Conference that Dallas simply can't afford to lose many games while Kidd and his new

teammates learn to play together."

Yesterday was the first chance for Detroit sportswriters to watch Miguel Cabrera hit wearing the team's famous Old English "D" — and the Detroit Free-Press's Drew Sharp came away very,

"Miguel Cabrera doesn't just hit the ball," he writes.
"He burns the stitching. There are precious few hitters who add another dimension to the art; the force of contact so great that it's not just what you see but, more important, what you hear. Turn your back to the action, and you'll know that Cabrera is taking his swings simply from the sound.

The Hurricanes improved their chances of an atlarge bid to next month's NCAA tournament in dramatic style last night, beating No. 5 Duke, 96-95, behind Dwayne Collins's career-high 26 points. It was just the third win against a top-five team in Miami hoops history — the Hurricanes beat No. 2 Connecticut in 1999, and these same Blue Devils back in 1962. (Which the Fix supposes means by any rational measure they weren't these same Blue

'No longer must Frank Haith hear the question that had to sting every time somebody brought it up.' writes Mike Berardino in the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, adding: "No longer must the fourth-year coach privately wonder if his Miami basketball program has what it takes to play with — and beat the national elite. Beating regal Duke took care of that. Yes, Duke.'

When you think of professional fishing, the image you have in mind might not be Skeet Reese. There's the dyed hair, the famed prowess as a dancer, the tales of teenage years spent fishing while wearing earrings and eyeliner.

But as Ray Glier writes in the New York Times, "buzz around a lake in a bass boat with him for eight and a half hours — with the wind chill down to zero – and it is easy to see that it is a mistake to think of Reese as a circus act. He can skip a mop jig in the one-foot alleyway between a dock and a moored boat, and he can do it with either hand." Tip of the Fix cap to reader Garey G. Ris.

Found a good column from the world of sports? Don't keep it to yourself — write to us at dailyfix@wsj.com and we'll consider your find for inclusion in the Daily Fix.

Brent Kessel: I'm A Slave To My Thoughts

(The Huffington Post Full Blog Feed)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 4:23:29 AM

Last Saturday, as with virtually every Saturday for the last eight years, I woke up with the intention that would not do any work of any kind - no email, no talking about work, no thinking about work issues until Monday morning. My kids and their friend who'd had a sleepover awoke at 5:40am, dressed up in camo costumes, and began playing the loudest game of Secret Agent I'd ever heard. I clearly wasn't going to get back to sleep, so I stumbled the twelve steps from my bed to our closet, pulled my cushion off the shelf above my shoes, and plunked myself down for my morning meditation.

To me, meditation is not about stopping all thoughts and insisting on a warm honey-like love syrup circumambulating my spinal column. Ideally, meditation is about surrendering control more than increasing control. Control is what the mind is seeking in virtually every waking moment. It wants to be more secure, happy, still, and positive.

But as I sat there and meditated this morning, I watched the thoughts arising with their little pleas of "Follow me, I can make you happier." And most of them were about my work, notwithstanding my commitment to have a day free of any professional toil or thought.

Why was this? As I evaluated the content of the thoughts themselves, I noticed that most of them were just continuations of the thoughts I'd been having Monday through Friday of this week. There was a momentum to my thinking, a sled track that I'd been skimming down all week, and now, sitting on the top of the hill and hoping to go down a different path, the well-worn tracks of my week were sending me careening past all-too-familiar scenery. Why had I expected anything different? One of my favorite poets is Rumi, and one of his poems says "Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened. Don't open the door to the study and begin reading." I feel as though I'm waking up and even before the experience of empty or frightened hits my conscious mind, my thoughts are all about avoiding 'empty and frightened.' The 'study' I'm opening the door to is my business life and all its strategies for achievement and meaning. The thought arises "I've got too much to do in the limited amount of time available." All last week, I believed that thought. And I would feel a constant sense of being behind the eight-ball, unable to catch up. I so badly wanted to be able to complete things almost as fast as I thought of them. "I've got this to do and that to do and oh yeah, there's still those four

things from this morning."
And then, in the midst of my yoga practice, I realized that this too is just a thought; a thought with no more and no less value than many other thoughts. The only thing which gave it a sense of urgency was itself.

With that realization, all my to-do's for today suddenly lost their urgency. I asked myself "what happens if I don't get fully prepared for the review I'm conducting?" The answer was "Nothing, we'll just reschedule it."

"And what happens if I don't get my blog written in time?" Again, "Nothing, it will just post a little later.'

Then my mind raised the stakes. "And what if the stock market is down 500 points today and three clients call to say they just can't take it anymore and are leaving?" I realized I'd lose some money, and possibly have to make some strategic decisions to eep the company financially sound, but the level of life-and-death fear which accompanies my usual todo urgency was gone. None of these were life-ordeath

But my most repetitive thoughts about money, what I call the "Financial Core Story" in my book, do have a sense of urgency about them. From a very young part of myself, this Core Story believes that if 'get it all done', I'll accumulate enough money to never have to worry again, never be abandoned by a father or stepfather, and be secure for the rest of my days. This is one of the refrains of the Saver, one of the eight financial money types. As I sat there in the early morning hours, the roosters just beginning their usual call, I wondered how I could get some relief from this endless litany of inner demands. Just then, it dawned on me that what I most need is the financial money type I'm most resistant to, the one I've lived out least of all: the Innocent . I needed to surrender all this need for control. I needed moment, to have faith that whether I fulfill all the todo's or not, life will work out as it should, the refrain of the Innocent.

With that realization, my shoulders dropped a quarter inch and my jaw unclenched ever so slightly. I felt deeply peaceful for the first time in days. That which I had most resisted throughout the week had become my very salvation. And I saw more clearly than ever before the grace and peace which can come from embodying that which I've avoided for so very long.

Brent Kessel is the author of the HarperCollins book, It's Not About the Money (forthcoming April 1st), and the co-founder of Abacus, one of the nation's top sustainable investing firms. Brent is teaching his It's Not About the Money workshop over Easter weekend at Kripalu.

43 Folders: Best of GTD

(43 Folders -)

Submitted at 2/19/2008 2:23:09 PM

NPR: Tech Junkies Crazy About 'Getting Things Done

As an insufferably hugepublicbroadcastingnerd, I was happy to hear (via our pal, Ryan) that 43 Folders was mentioned in tonight's All Things Considered story about Getting Things Done. Since this may be the first time some folks have visited the site, I wanted to highlight a few of my favorite GTD posts from the past four years. We talk about lotsmore than GTD here, but it's definitely a lot of my readers' favorite topic.

Thanks for stopping by. Ton of links after the

- · Getting started with 'Getting Things Done' "So you sprint from fire to fire, praying you haven't forgotten anything, sapped of anything like creativity or even the basic human flexibility to adapt your own schedule to the needs of your friends, your family or yourself. Your 'stuff' has taken over your brain like a virus now, dragging down every process it touches and rendering you spent and virtually useless. Sound familiar?
- How does a geek hack GTD? "So I wanted to start a conversation about how geeks handle their lists, their projects, and their agendas—not so much in terms of the tool they use to store the information, although that's fair game-as with how they segment the information and decide when to break it into
- Next actions: Both physical and visible "But, for me, turning anxieties into projects and projects into discrete physical behaviors has a lot of appeal. It takes all the pressure off your brain and puts it back where it belongs: on your eyes, on your hands, and on that fat ass you need to get into gear

"I've noticed that there are often items on my 'next actions' list that hang around a lot longer than they should. I scan and rescan and sort and add and delete, but there's always a few stragglers who hang out there for a week or more. Eventually this starts to vex me, and I try to debug why things aren't getting done.'

• Mental dialogues, yak-shaving & the triumph of the 'mini-review' - "My mini-review falls somewhere between the glances I give my lists throughout the day and the comprehensive weekly review I do each weekend. It's basically a 10-minute metamoment where I stop working and just try to refocus on my goals, and the tactical adjustments needed to get them moved forward today.

What are you 'waiting on?' - "The thread that runs through all of these is that the onus is on me to a) make sure these items represent part of a commitment I've made, and b) make sure they actually get done (even if it's not my direct responsibility); otherwise, they should get moved onto my 'Maybe/Later' list, right?"

 A Year of Getting Things Done - (3-part series: 1, 2, 3) - "I recently realized that this month marks one year since I started using Getting Things Done in earnest. With the calendar year closing, it seems like an apt time to look back at what's worked, what hasn't, and where I'd like to see GTD heading in the

· Choosing a daily GTD action plan - "I employ an informal Getting Things Done action strategy that's similar to the one Chris lays out in his post. I often have a theme for a given day, where I choose an approach that's suited to my mood, my energy level. and the kind and amount of work on my TODO list. (I'm especially a fan of days where I knock down 'mosquito tasks' as Chris calls them.)"

where it belongs: on your eyes, on your hands, and on that fat ass you need to get into gear."

• Does this 'next action' belong someplace else? -

drawing from its best practices to get more of the important things in your life accomplished, then you'll be a happy kid. For real. But if, like a seeming majority of people I encounter these days, you allow yourself to obsess endlessly over the minutest details of implementation and maintenance—well, you're screwed. You're wasting your time."

• Inbox Zero: Processing to zero - "The more email you have been neglecting in your inbox, the more

drastic and ruthless your processing must be."
• Do a fast "mind-sweep" - "By and large, you'll discover, your head is flooded with this stuff that you aren't or haven't been doing anything about. Not coincidentally, this is almost always stuff that represents some kind of incompletion, functional fuzziness, or procrastination on your part.

• Simplify your contexts - "If you feel a gnaw about the loss of your old contexts, try to shunt some of the mental load into sub-projects and better verb choices in your tasks."

 Folders for organization and action - "But, as ever, if you're fussing and thinking and fiddling and wondering about this stuff, you aren't doing it, and dammit, that's what this is all about.' • Priorities don't exist in a vacuum - "Unless you

can always satisfy the big red letter commitments you've created for yourself — as well as the ones that are constantly being generated for you by others an obsession with priority alone is pointlessly stress-inducing, unhealthy, and unrealistic."
• 6 powerful "look into" verbs (+ 1 to avoid) -

"Decisions can only be delivered after you've nourished them with timely and thought-provoking information.

• Productive Talk Compilation: 8-episode podcast with GTD's David Allen - "Hope you all enjoy hearing the whole series, in order, all in one place. There's some nuggets of GTD gold in there, if I do

Video: Merlin's New Time & Attention Talk

(43 Folders -)

Macworld '08: Merlin Mann / "Living with Data" Last month, I premiered a new presentation at Macworld San Francisco 2008 called "Living with Data" (previously). Since this talk was part of the "Vision" track, I used the opportunity to start gathering some threads around the idea of time and attention that had been floating around my head for a while (I think you can see the genesis of some of this stuff in my IDEO visit).

The IDG folks were kind enough to post a movie of my slides + the audio. Unfortunately a lot of folks were having trouble getting to the page (it doesn't appear to have a permalink), so here's a Flash version you can watch from right here: N.B.: The first slide is white; the video is fine, and

you are not tripping. Presumably.

As I say, this was the first edition of a talk that's already starting to evolve rather quickly. The slides are available at Slideshare, and you can yoink yourself an embeddable version right here: Thanks to Paul Kent and Kathy Moran at IDG for

being such wonderful hosts. And very special thanks to MikeMonteiro (and his now-famous meeting tokens) for inspiring the talk in the first place.Addendum: Related links (to stuff mentioned

• Meeting Tokens & "The Red Merlin" by Mike Monteiro

• Mule Design's "Feed Store" - Those awesome shirts (and, eventually, where you can buy your own meeting tokens)

• Evidence Based Scheduling - Joel on Software - "A schedule is a box of wood blocks."

• New College of Florida - Merlin's alma mater [which would never in a million years admit him today], where you don't actually get credit for doing macramé. As far as I know.

• Inbox Zero posts and free video - Merlin's popular

posts and talk on dealing with high-volume email
• Merlin's IDEO visit - Popular video from my talk with Scott Underwood at the storied design firm's Palo Alto HQ • The Now Habit - Excellent book on

procrastination • Getting Things Done - Merlin's favorite book on personal productivity

The Sullivan Nod - Would you like some cheesecake? Yeessssss...

• Opportunity Cost - If you do this, then you can't do that. • Defensive driving - "Its aim is to reduce the risk

of driving by anticipating dangerous situations, despite adverse conditions or the mistakes of others." • Peter Drucker - "Peter Ferdinand Drucker

(November 19, 1909–November 11, 2005) was a writer, management consultant and university • Neckbeard - "Also known as a Scarf, Trevor or

Throatee. Pejoratively, a beard grown to hide a double chin. Andrea Bocelli - "Andrea Bocelli (born 22 September 1958) is an Italian operatic pop tenor and a classical crossover singer who has also performed

in operas. Walter Sobchak and entering a world of pain. -"Smokey, this is not 'Nam. This is bowling. There are rules.

• Merlin Mann: Speaking - Sure, you can hire Merlin to speak to your group. Here's how.

Advice for real estate agents (quit now!)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 7:23:46 PM

I had the good fortune to speak to a large gathering of real estate agents last week. Here's my best advice (everyone knows an agent or two, so feel free to forward this along).

Plan A: You should quit selling real estate.

I'm serious.

Quit being an agent. Get a job doing something else. Some of you have been waiting to hear that. My

Now, if you're still with me, you'll be glad to know that the competition for attention just got smaller. The agents who built their business on low interest rates, easy money and speculation (the order takers)

have left the building.
The ones that are left, that's you, can consider Plan

If you're not going to be able to make a living by taking orders, by selling houses the way everyone else does, by using the never-ending rise in real estate prices to make sales, then what are you going to do? Whining is not an option.

In fact, I think this is an extraordinary opportunity

for you.
Without a frenzy, without short-term competition, you can actually build assets that will pay off for the long run. I have two in mind:

The first is to become the expert in what you do. Which means micro-specialization. Who is the single-best agent for condos in your zip code? Or for single family homes for large families? Who is the one and the only best person to turn to if you're

looking for investment property in this part of town? As I wrote in The Dip, you're either the best in the world (where 'world' can be a tiny slice of the environment) or you're invisible.

This means being Draconian in your choices. No, you can't also do a little of this or a little of that. Best in your world means burning your other bridges

and obsessing.
The kids at Squidoo just built a promotional tool that lets you get started. Mayor of your zip code is a way to start a discussion group/info page about what's happening in your slice of the world. You become the source of information, the watercooler, the person to turn to. Of course, if you spend ten minutes on it and then move on, it'll fail. But, if you spent 30% of your time working on your page (building it, curating it, promoting it), what do you think would show up in Google searches? What sort of interactions would you start having with people thinking about your little part of the world? Even better, what if you built a blog about your town, as good as any local paper, with high school sports and tax controversies and everything... don't you think the right people would read it? "I have no time!"

Of course you have that time available. Remember nine months ago when you were three times as busy with incoming calls as you are now? Invest that time in building up your expertise and becoming the person people who don't even like you turn to for

Or, consider this: Take half your office (the half made vacant by the people following Plan A) and turn it over to local groups. Let the active (and nascent) clubs and organizations meet in your office.

Not once in a while. Regularly. All the time. Become the hub. Because, after all, you're the

The second asset to build is permission. It turns out (according to the NAR) that 91% of all Realtors never contact the buyer or the seller of a home after the closing. Not once. Wow. Someone just spent a million dollars with you and you don't bother to call

The opportunity during the current pause (and yes, it's a pause) is to find, one by one, the people who would benefit from hearing from you and then earn the right to talk to them. Earn the right to send them a newsletter or a regular update or a subscription to your blog. NOT to talk about what matters to you, but to give them information (real information, not just data) that matters to them. Visit dailycandy.com to see an example of what people like to hear.

The opportunity is to reinvent the way you interact with citizens, with prospects, with the mildly interested and with your past clients. The opportunity, in other words, is to stop waiting around for the phone to ring and instead figure out how to do what you do best... connect buyers and sellers in a way that makes them both confident. Some of you will stick with the standard business card with the standard photo, the standard office and the standard ad strategy and the standard approach to making the phone ring. It's going to be a long haul if that's your route.

I'm betting, though, that the best of you will end up with a business model that will survive, thrive and prosper. Best time to start is right now.

Organization have announced the first annual World Glaucoma Day, to be observed on March 6, 2008. The day will be marked by awareness and educational events organized by glaucoma institutions and local patient support groups worldwide, as listed on www.wgday.net. A driving force behind this first annual observance is Robert Ritch, MD. An internationally renowned

undeveloped nations.

Dr. Rock Positano:

Glaucoma: The Thief

(The Huffington Post Full Blog Feed)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 4:12:00 AM

That Can Rob You Blind

It is a leading cause of blindness around the globe.

Yet more than half of the people who have the

disease don't even know they have it. No wonder Glaucoma is known as "the sneak thief of sight."

It is a disease characterized by gradual loss of vision resulting from death of the cells in the eye which

transmit visual images through the optic nerve to the

brain. As the optic nerve becomes increasingly damaged, permanent vision loss and blindness can

occur. While early detection is the key to treating

and halting the effects of glaucoma, current

worldwide estimates reveal that more than 50 percent of glaucoma sufferers in developed countries

remain unaware of having the disease. This startling

number is as high as 90 percent in many

In an effort to fight the disturbing lack of knowledge about this serious health threat, the World Glaucoma

Association and the World Glaucoma Patient

expert on the nature and treatment of glaucoma, he is a leading member of the World Glaucoma Day committee for the World Glaucoma Association and co-founder of the World Glaucoma Patient Association. Dr. Ritch is also professor and chief of glaucoma services at The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, and has co-authored five textbooks and over 1,000 medical and scientific papers, book chapters, articles and abstracts. He frequently lectures and conducts charitable glaucoma medical programs in a wide range of countries, and has trained nearly 100 clinical and research fellows, many of whom occupy academic positions

worldwide. "Because glaucoma strikes so silently and gradually, it is absolutely crucial to educate people about the value of early detection," said Dr. Ritch. "For a disease that causes permanent blindness, it is truly unacceptable that so many people remain unaware of its impact and consequences. Individuals in our country need to be much more vigilant about glaucoma, especially if they fall into one of the

higher risk groups.

Persons at high risk for glaucoma should have their eyes examined for the disease at least every two years by an eye care professional. In the United States, at risk groups include: people with a family history of glaucoma, African-Americans over the age of 40, people who are very nearsighted or farsighted, and all persons over the age of 60. In the early stages of glaucoma, there may be no symptoms and vision can appear to be normal until a large amount has been lost. If undetected and untreated, glaucoma will gradually claim all peripheral vision and move on to cause total blindness. With early detection, glaucoma can be treated with eye drops to lower intraocular pressure. Other standard methods of treatment include laser and operative surgery. Treatment can usually halt the disease, but it cannot reverse the damage that has been done. Glaucoma can develop in one of both

A Valentine Treat from Google

By Eric Case (Official Google Blog)

Posted by Scott Giambastiani, Executive Chef

This recipe pairs well with Roederer Estate, Anderson Valley Brut sparkling wine for a Valentine's day treat for two.

Ingredients:

Yields about 4 cakes

1 tbsp. butter (You may substitute olive oil.)

4 shallots, minced

¹/₄ cup mayonnaise 1 fuji apple, peeled and grated on a cheese grater,

juice reserved

1 tsp. lemon juice, fresh

2 tsp. tarragon, minced 2 tbsp. parsley, minced

1 cup Dungeness crab meat, picked free of shells

¹/₄ cup breadcrumbs, finely ground Tabasco sauce

kosher salt

cooking oil (rice bran, canola, vegetable, etc.) metal heart shaped cookie cutter, large size (About 4 Roast Pepper Sauce:

8 oz. pimento peppers in the jar (You may substitute with Spanish piquillo peppers,

or 3 each red bell peppers roasted over an open flame, peeled and seeded), chopped into 1-inch

2 tbsp. sherry vinegar (You may substitute with any vinegar)

2 tbsp. water

2 tbsp. butter (Optional)

Procedure:

In a sauté pan, sweat the shallots in butter over medium-low heat until sweet, but with no color forming. This will take about 5 minutes. When sweet, allow the shallots to cool in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Add the mayonnaise, grated apple with juice, lemon juice, herbs, and picked crab to the

With a spatula, gently fold the mixture together, so as not to break up any whole crab meat. This will give the cakes a better texture. Fold the mixture just until evenly mixed. Add enough breadcrumbs to bind the cakes. You might need more or less breadcrumbs than stated,

depending on the moisture of the crab. Season the cakes with salt and Tabasco to taste. Using a teaspoon, spoon crab mixture into a metal, heart-shaped cookie cutter. Gently press the crab into the

mold. Repeat this process until all cakes are molded. Keep the crab cakes refrigerated until ready for service. Prepare the sauce.

To prepare the sauce, place the prepared peppers into a small non-reactive sauce pan with the vinegar and water. Bring contents to a simmer and transfer to a bar blender. Add the butter to the blender, cover and puree the sauce until it is smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

To finish the crab cake, heat a sauté pan over medium-high heat, add a teaspoon of cooking oil, and sear the crab cake over medium heat until golden brown. This will take 1-2 minutes. Using a spatula, flip the crab cake over and repeat for 1-2 minutes until the crab cake is golden brown on both sides and warm in the center. Piercing the center of the crab cake with a toothpick and feeling the temperature of the toothpick under your lip will give you a good idea how warm the cake's center is.

To plate the crab cake, pour about two heaping spoonfuls of warm pepper sauce over a warmed plate. Place the warm crab cake over the sauce and garnish with baby mixed greens (mâche, upland cress) and/or freshly picked herbs (Italian parsley, chervil, tarragon, chives...). Enjoy!

The First 10 Teams in the Lunar X Prize An Odd Lot

(Wired Science)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 3:16:34 PM

The first 10 teams in Google's \$30 million robotic race to the moon include a Jesus freak, a Linux geek and a guy who recently bought 30 books on space exploration.

Each promised to be the first to send a privately funded rocket to the moon and deploy a rover that will explore that distant hunk of rock. Joining them are heavy hitters in robotics and aeronautics, including the Carnegie Mellon University crew that won the DARPA Challenge and the Romanians who made a run for the money in the Ansari X Prize. It's only been six months since Google and the X

Prize Foundation announced the Lunar challenge, but 567 teams from 53 nations - someone in Kazakstan made an inquiry just yesterday - have expressed interest in signing up. Ten actually have. "I was floored," Google co-founder Sergey Brin expectation that ju months after announcing so ambitious a goal as going to the moon that we'd have so much interest."
The 10 teams the X Prize folks introduced Thursday (press release here) represent an eclectic mix of engineers, rocketeers and dreamers so confident of winning they made reaching the moon sound easy. "The risks, costs and requirements of space travel have been systematically overstated," said Richard

Speck, head of the Micro-Space team that also competed in the Ansari X-Prize. Spreck rattled off a description of "biopropellant liquid-fuel rockets (and) three near-hover rockets with vectored thrust guidance" before thanking Jesus while holding aloft a picture of a cross. He's named his spacecraft 'Crusader" and said the moon is merely the first stop on the way to Mars. None of the teams offered much detail on how

they'll reach the moon and deploy a rover that doesn't shatter into a lot of very small and very expensive parts on impact. The most unusual strategy has to be the "open source" approach of FREDNET, a bunch of systems, software and hardware developers who want to do for space exploration what Linux did for operating systems. We want to demonstrate that open source is an ideal method of solving complex, real-world problems," team leader Fred Bourgeois said. Everyone involved in the project spoke of space ation with the wide-eyed olds, but none so much as Adil Jafry, the energy industry entrepreneur from Texas who seems to have entered the contest because it sounds like a really cool thing to do. He's named his team 'Chandah," which is Sanskrit for "moon."

"I googled the contest and ordered about 30 books on space," he said. "I've been reading up on space and here I am."

It's tough to say which team has the best shot, but some of them clearly have better odds than others based upon their track records.

The Aeronautics and Cosmonautics Romanian Association has already built a rocket and two-stage manned sub-orbital air-launched vehicle. The Astrobotic team led by William "Red" Whittaker of Carnegie Mellon has help from Raytheon and may be second-to-none when it comes to autonomous vehicles. And Quantum3 is led by three guys who together have more than 50 years' experience in the aerospace industry, including stints at NASA. They plan to launch a rocket next year and land on the Sea of Tranquility.

The remaining teams are:

LunaTrex, a consortium with expertise in everything from rocket science to near-space R&D. Some team members competed in the Ansari X Prize

Odyssey Moon, first team to register. The team is based on the Isle of Man, which team leader Robert chards called "the next space superpower.

Southern California Selene Group, which promises an elegantly simple design that is relatively inexpensive to implement.

Team Italia, a collaboration of several Italian universities. The team is currently running a prototype of its and exploring two ideas for a lunar rover - a single big rover or a colony of many robots, light and mobile, with many legs and wheels.

Vote for the Funniest **Protein Names**

(Wired Science)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 1:17:48 AM

History may be written by the victors, but proteins are often named by geeky developmental biologists. When they discover a new molecule, some of them jump at the opportunity to inject a little goofy humor nto their otherwise dry research projects.

Many of the most appalling titles come belong to the fruit fly Drosophila melanogaster, which is one of the most well-studied organisms on earth. Others can be found in exotic African fruit or even our own bodies.

Please vote for your favorites and add more to the

Show proteins that are: appalling | ridiculous | hilarious or submit your own funny enzyme

Submit a Protein

While you can submit as many proteins as you want, you can only submit one every 30 minutes. No HTML allowed.

Back to top

Image: Sonic Hedgehog protein from the Wikimedia Commons rendered by Peter Znamenskiy

FeedJournal Reader Is Launched

By Jonas Martinsson (Jonas Martinsson Blog)

Submitted at 2/18/2008 8:51:00 PM

The time has come for FeedJournal Reader to get rid of its private beta scaffoldings. All users are now able to try the free service I've spent many nights on. Welcome in!

I dislike beta tags so I am not sticking that label to FeedJournal Reader, despite it being a young solution. While I consider it to be stable, I will closely monitor how my web hosting provider handles up-scaling the traffic.

The launch doesn't mean that I am planning to start to go to bed early. Far from it, I'm eager to continue working on new features for both the Reader and Publisher services. So please keep those feature requests, bug reports and comments coming. I'm

solution, both in terms of usability and usefulness and I won't be able to do it without passionate users. A big "Thank You" to the testers for their comments and encouragement! Here's the press release

FeedJournal Reader Launches Free Service for Generating Personalized Newspapers

FeedJournal Reader lets web surfers generate a personalized newspaper from any web source, using award-winning technology. The free Internet service allows users to fetch news content from more than 100 million blogs and other news sources worldwide, and print it out in newspaper format. Tel Aviv, ISRAEL - February 19, 2008 -FeedJournal today announced the general availability of FeedJournal Reader, an Internet

service for generating your personal newspaper. Users of the free service can select web feeds from more than 100 million bloggers as well as many other web resources.

'The realization of FeedJournal Reader turns every blogger into a journalist", says Jonas Martinsson, who founded FeedJournal in early 2006, and has since managed the software development based on his original idea. "The long tail of the blogosphere has finally reached printed traditional media. Today's newsrooms cater to a general audience while FeedJournal puts the editorial decisions in the hands of each reader."

FeedJournal Reader accepts all RSS and Atom feeds, and transforms them into a PDF file, in the format of a traditional newspaper. The user can then

print it out and read it offline, where interruptions are typically less frequent. Research has shown that reading on paper is 25% faster then reading on screen; and reading comprehension is much higher for reading texts on paper.

About FeedJournal

FeedJournal was founded by Jonas Martinsson and is the original solution provider of personalized newspapers. In 2006, the prototype to what is today FeedJournal Reader won First Prize in Microsoft's "Made In Express Contest". FeedJournal also offers a Publisher version where content providers, such as bloggers or non-printed newspapers, can offer visitors a printable version of their content in newspaper style.

A pilot with the Cleveland Clinic for health information access

By Eric Case (Official Google Blog)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 7:46:00 AM

Posted by Alan Newberger, Engineering Manager

I suffer from poor eyesight and intense seasonal allergies, but I'm thankful that health issues occupy just a small portion of my life. Even though I'm rather healthy, I sometimes find myself needing access to accurate health information. I can get a long way by searching for health facts online, but I also need to incorporate what I find with my own history of conditions and treatments. I didn't even realize I had allergies until my early twenties -- for more years than I care to admit, I'd forget that the "cold" I came down with in April was suspiciously similar to the one I had at exactly the same time the year before. I've often been overwhelmed when trying to determine or track a condition, because my personal record of health information is either nonexistent, or it's spread on forms and receipts from (at least) a dozen doctors and five insurance

Working as an engineer here on the health team, I've been excited to participate in building tools that will help me and others manage our personal health information more effectively. Many innovators in the healthcare industry have worked hard to make results of doctor visits, prescriptions, tests and procedures available digitally. By using the GData protocol already offered in many Google products, and supporting standards-based medical information formats like the Continuity of Care Record (CCR),

our health efforts will help you access, store and communicate your health information. Above all, health data will remain yours -- private and confidential. Only you have control over when to share it with family members and health providers.

This week, we hit another important milestone. We launched a pilot with a medical institution committed to giving patients access to their own medical records: The Cleveland Clinic. A large academic medical center, Cleveland is one of the first partners to integrate on our platform. Because of their size and reach with patients who already have access to their medical records online, Cleveland has been a great partner for us to test out our data sharing model. Patients participating in the Cleveland pilot give authorization via our AuthSub interface to have their electronic medical records safely and securely imported into a Google account. It's great to see our product getting into the hands of end users, and I look forward to the feedback that the Cleveland patients will provide us.

Cleveland is just the first of many healthcare providers that will securely send medical records and information via Google APIs at your request. We've been hard at work collaborating with a number of insurance plans, medical groups, pharmacies and hospitals. While this pilot is open initially to just a few thousand patients, I see it as an important first step to show how Google can help users get access to their medical records and take charge of their health information.

AdSense for video now in beta

By Eric Case (Official Google Blog)

Submitted at 2/21/2008 7: 29:00 AM

Posted by Shamim Samadi, Product Manager and Ryan Hayward, Product Marketing Manager

In a very short time, watching videos online has become a common pastime, and the imagination of artists and other content owners continues to fuel this trend. Meanwhile, across the industry, advertisers and video publishers continue to look for the best solution that balances the needs of video fans with the need for video sites to generate the revenue that enables them to continue to be creative

Enter, stage left: the AdSense for video beta. This approach takes the same non-intrusive InVideo ad format used on YouTube and extends it across video partner sites on the Google Content Network. This enables advertisers to run a single campaign across the largest network of online video content.

Unique to AdSense for video are text overlay ads contextually targeted to a combination of signals in your videos and on your site. With these overlay ads, the user's experience is not interrupted; users determine how much they want to interact with the

We have two major goals: to make it easier for

publishers to monetize video online, and for advertisers to learn how to reach the video community. Towards these ends, today we're also launching a single destination with an overview of various options to expand online video opportunities called Google Video Advertising Solutions. We hope this will be your starting point to understand how to leverage the Google Content Network and YouTube to make the most out of the online video experience. You can also see our overview videos for advertisers and publishers -- because isn't video the best way to experience video?

We've been working with a number of video partners (e.g. popular destinations like BobVila.com, eHow, MyDamnChannel, ExpertVillage, PinkBike, TheNewsRoom, and social video aggregators like Revver, blip.tv, and GodTube). And we're also working with several key video platform solution solutions like Brightcove, Yume, Tremor Media, and Eyespot Network, who have plugged our ads into their platforms.

There are some criteria that publishers have to meet to participate in AdSense for video, which you can learn about on the Inside AdSense blog.

As with many things we do around here, we'll keep testing various ad formats, iterate and expand, so keep an eye on us.

Superdelegate layer in Google **Earth**

By Eric Case (Official Google Blog)

Posted by Rick Klau, Strategic Partner Development Manager and Elections Hipster

I'm a political junkie, and as Super Tuesday neared it seemed likely that the race for Democratic nominee would extend well past that big day at the polls. I started looking around for information about the so-called "superdelegates" (the party leaders and elected officials who make up 20% of the vote at the convention) -- and was disappointed to find no single resource that provided details on who they were, which candidate they'd endorsed (if anyone) and where they are located

So I went ahead and registered 'superdelegates.org', installed MediaWiki and started populating the site with the info I could find. Thanks to a terrific extension to MediaWiki (KML Export, written by Juliano Ravasi), it's possible to map the wiki pages to a Google Earth layer, which helps to visualize Since the superdelegates site launched two weeks ago, it has been featured on CNN, and tens of thousands of people have stopped by to learn more about superdelegates, understand the process, and add information. Over 60% of the delegates are now on the map and are associated with their endorsed candidate, with more info coming in every day. It's tremendously gratifying to see a community grow around this timely subject- hope you find it useful!

Disclaimer: Since superdelegate endorsements are not binding, we can't ensure that the endorsements listed are indicative of future events. But we're excited that people are engaging in politics online by drawing from a compilation of candidate endorsement lists on Roll Call, CNN's Election Center and other sources to update the site on a daily basis. Other groups and publications may have different superdelegate counts, including candidates' campaigns, the New York Times, and the AP.

FeedJournal Reader Updates

By Jonas Martinsson (Jonas Martinsson -Blog)

Submitted at 2/4/2008 1:48:00 PM

Those of you who follow the FeedJournal updates in the discussion forum know that quite a few updates have trickled in lately. The most significant of those is probably the free inclusion of images for all users of FeedJournal Reader. I was initially toying with the idea to try to charge money for image support, but have since come to my senses.

The feedback from the private beta testers have been

very positive and the ride has been surprisingly smooth so far. I expect to launch the service within the coming weeks. The features I want to get in

• Global image switch when generating your

newspaper (handy when you want to save ink) JavaScript optimizations

So, all in all, we're very close to a launch - crossing

Erica Jong: POLITICS BY ORDEAL

(The Huffington Post Full Blog Feed)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 6: 17: 18 AM

What is this foolishness? Obama is pure and not a politician and Hillary is "tainted"?

Does anyone get to be a presidential candidate in our

country without being a politician?

Does anyone run for political office--a humiliating and exhilarating marathon--without wanting power

Come on. Get real. You and I could never endure the punishment of debates, of columnists who don't factcheck, of swift-boaters, of dumb pundits and corrupt colleagues, without the lust for power being the

overriding emotion in your life.

I do a book tour of six cities and come down with the flu--and I'm pretty strong and healthy. I can hardly imagine what candidates go through. Yes, they fly on private jets. Yes, they don't take their shoes off at the airport, but they don't sleep either. I'm amazed they can even croak a coherent sentence. I once did a lecture tour of Australia and New Zealand with bronchitis and laryngitis. I caught it in Hong Kong, I think, and it lingered for three weeks. My voice barely functioned. But I spoke anyway. And I signed hundreds of books after every appearance. Once I got home, I took to my bed for two weeks. The jet lag was awful and the bronchitis turned into a resistant infection. No antibiotic worked. I was silenced for six weeks and my vocal

chords still have their off days. How do these candidates do it? I still can't understand. They must be bionic. By the end of a booktour, I'm so sick of answering questions about myself that I start to interview the journalists about what they like to do in their spare time--skiing, sailing, snowboarding, golf? The intensity of being interviewed by hostile reporters is absolutely exhausting. No wonder people misspeak. It's amazing they don't throttle the press. And the public. By the time they get in office they must hate the public. Why do we put them through this torture? Shouldn't they be thinking about governance, coming up with new ideas for the commonweal rather than being flogged by the press?

This is no way to audition for "the most powerful job on earth." I doubt that the ordeal helps anyone-neither the candidates nor the public.

Marketing HR

Submitted at 2/19/2008 5:23:39 AM

Yesterday's post led to some good email about Human Resources.

Understand that in days of yore, factories consisted of people and machines. The goal was to use more machines, fewer people, and to design processes so that the people were interchangeable, low cost and easily replaced. The more leverage the factoryowner had, the better. Hence Personnel or the even more cruel term: HR. It views people as a natural resource, like lumber.

Like it or not, in most organizations HR has grown up with a forms/clerical/factory focus. Which was fine, I guess, unless your goal was to do something amazing, something that had nothing to do with a factory, something that required amazing programmers, remarkable marketers or insanely

talented strategy people. So, here's my small suggestion, one that will make

some uncomfortable. Change the department name to Talent.

The reason this makes some people uncomfortable is that it seems like spin, like gratuitous double speak. And, if you don't change what you do, that would be BUT.

What if you started acting like the VP of Talent? Understanding that talent is hard to find and not obvious to manage. The VP of Talent would have to reorganize the department and do things differently all day long (small example: talent shouldn't have to fill out reams of forms and argue with the insurance company... talent is too busy for that... talent has

people to help with that.)
Microsoft and Google both have a very healthy focus on finding and recruiting Talent. McDonald's recently announced that they want to hire people who smile more. The first strategy works, the second won't. Talent is too smart to stay long at a company that wants it to be a cog in a machine. Great companies want and need talent, but they have to

NYT on a Paperless World

Submitted at 2/10/2008 12:44:16 PM

Pushing Paper Out the Door - New York Times Is it just me, or is the Times tossing softballs for organizational nerds on purpose? Today's story on the ways people are purging paper from their lives gives lots of ink (digital, of course) to our friend, the Fujitsu ScanSnap, and comes with the kind of grand statements that no trend piece should be without:[M]any families may be closer to entering a paperless world than they realize. Paper-reducing technologies have crept into homes and offices, perhaps more for efficiency than for environmentalism; few people will dispute the convenience of online bill-paying and airline e-

Not that I disagree. I like the way Brewster Kahle, who knows a thing or two about digital archiving, puts it: "Paper is no longer the master copy; the

digital version is." That isn't too far removed from what Merlin wrote back in October: When we rely on a paper document as the final, unique destination for information, we create physical and cognitive limitations that seem crazy once you've spent a chunk of your life living on Google. No one disputes

Those statements by themselves may make some of you index card shufflers sweaty, but the value that all of us have found in paper isn't as the permanent storage medium to which the Times is delivering last rites; rather, it's in that Platonic scratchpad we all need sometimes to shake out a good idea. As Merlin said, "As an intermediary medium between thinking and a final draft, I still just love what you can do with a stack of index cards and a little spare time." Even when used as part of a trusted system, paper works best when its data storage duties have a limited life span.

More from Peter Walsh on clutter, quality of life

Submitted at 2/19/2008 9: 26: 32 AM

Oprah's Clutter Man: "It's Never About the Stuff" Clean Sweep's Peter Walsh (previously) has a new book out, and Mediabistro had the chance to chat with him while he was out promoting it. While I wish Peter had held out for a more

cromulent title ("Does This Clutter Make My Butt Look Fat?" Ouch.), I so admire this guy's grip on what clutter does to your mind. Or at least what it does to mine.

Typically swell quote:

Our show was never about the stuff. I told the producers early on that you can only organize so many closets and garages before people lose their minds... We all have stuff. What we had to do was tell people's stories through their stuff, and see them realizing what their relationship to the stuff had

What is your vision for the life you want to live, and do your life choices reflect that vision? Specifically:

Is your home a space for the life you want? Ours is a culture based on the idea that whenever you run out of space, you should just pull up stakes and move five miles west. Then you can be happy. Is it any wonder that we seek organization rather than deletion as the solution to an overwhelming problem? Yeah, I think this goes well beyond not being able to find a business card in your junk

Capacity is only worth building when it'll be used in the service of stuff you really want. Whether that's calendar events, your Fabergé eggs, or those crusty Lean Cuisine plates from last summer, the quality of matter that you allow to stay anywhere in your life eventually starts rubbing off on everything it

Reaction Engines' A2 supersonic jet could easily humble the Concorde

(Engadget)

Submitted at 2/22/2008 4:06:00 AM

Filed under: Transportation

Concorde, schmoncorde. At least that's what we assume Reaction Engines' A2 would utter if it could in fact speak. The supersonic jet, designed by Oxfordshire's own Reaction Engines, could one day shuttle passengers from Europe to Down Under in less than five hours, cruising at up to 4,000 milesper-hour along the way. Granted, the aircraft is still in concept mode at the moment, but if all goes to

plan, it could be operational "within 25 years." Reportedly, the 156-yard long jet could maintain a speed of 3,800 miles-per-hour -- over twice that of the famed Concorde -- and could carry 300 guests on each trip. Who knows how much a seat would cost, but we're guessing the sky's the limit.

[Via Engadget Spanish]

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60GHz wireless chip promises 5Gbps of throughput, instant tumors

Filed under: WirelessSo this team of über-nerds NICTA -- out of Austrlia's Information and Communications Technology Research Centre of Excellence (or ICTRCoE for "short") announced the

preliminary results of their Gigabit Wireless Project. Here's a hint: they were able to transmit gigabits of data -- five of 'em -- per second wirelessly over 60GHz / millimeter-wave CMOS-based transceivers. Of course, range on a system with that high a frequency isn't very far, but feel free to enjoy this moment of fantasy-future news for what it is.

Oh, and NICTA crew -- hate to break it to ya, but your countrymen at CSIRO broke the 10Gbps wireless barrier a couple years ago (as did the U of Essex), might be time to up the ante.

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Sournal

No user servicable parts inside

(Seth's Blog)

Submitted at 2/19/2008 3:13:00 AM

That's what it says on countless electronic and mechanical devices. "Don't touch this," it says, "you're way too dumb to open it... you'll get hurt" The problem, of course, is that pretty soon you start looking at the entire world that way. Whether it's web design or Google analytics or backing up your hard drive or just talking to the guys in the plant about your new ideas, it's really easy to see the world as a black box.

Here's a simple secret of success: ignore the sticker. Figure out how to use the tools that the most successful people in your field understand innately.

Images Temporarily Disabled in Reader Due To **Heavy Traffic**

By Jonas Martinsson (Jonas Martinsson -Blog)

Submitted at 2/20/2008 7: 27: 00 PM

I wasn't prepared for the massive amount of traffic influx that suddenly hit FeedJournal Reader yesterday. I know that some of you ran into errors due to the heavy load, and I apologize for that. As a temporary measure I disabled image support in FeedJournal Reader. But don't worry, images will return soon! I am working hard to find a new and better scalable solution.

