



Zen Mischievous Moments #1 December 14, 2001 00:00

They have almost got it right at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. In a bid to include minorities and people with disabilities in university life, the human resources department recently acquired a new Braille poster for the blind, which has been put on display outside its main office. Unfortunately, no one knows what it says because it has been put inside a display case with a glass front.

New Scientist; 10/02/2001



Zen Mischievous Moments #2 December 15, 2001 00:00

Identify this truly amazing gadget ...

It is easy-to-use, requires no electricity, fits in your pocket, and may be accessed in an instant.

Each sheet of this technological miracle is scanned optically, registering information directly into your brain.

A flick of the finger takes you on to the next sheet.

The "browse" feature allows you to move instantly to any sheet, and move forward or backward as you wish.

Many come with an "index" feature, which pinpoints the exact location for instant retrieval. Users can even make notes next to text entries with optional programming tools, Portable Erasable Nib Cryptic Intercommunication Language Styli, known as PENCILS.

What is it? Well what could be simpler than a book?



Zen Mischievous Moments #3 December 16, 2001 00:00

The 120-hectare horticultural marvel that is the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London had a card pushed through its office door recently advertising the services of a local landscape gardener. It didn't quite go as far as saying "no job too big".

New Scientist; 10/02/2001



Zen Mischievous Moments #4 December 17, 2001 00:00

Coming soon somewhere near you ...

Intelligent Coffee Cup

A smart coffee cup with a flexible LCD display around the outside.

A small electronics module in the handle controls the display and interfaces to your PC to download images and programs.

Now your coffee cup can display your next appointment, the date and time, today's Dilbert strip, time until next cup of coffee, today's menu, the webcam at home, etc.

One just fears that it may be Bluetooth enabled. :-)



Zen Mischievous Moments #5 December 18, 2001 00:00

FOOT-AND-MOUTH BELIEVED TO BE FIRST VIRUS UNABLE TO SPREAD THROUGH OUTLOOK

Researchers Shocked!

Scientists at the Centres for Disease Control and Symantec's AntiVirus Research Centre

today confirmed that foot-and-mouth disease cannot be spread by Microsoft's Outlook email application, believed to be the first time the program has ever failed to propagate a major virus. "Frankly, we've never heard of a virus that couldn't spread through Microsoft Outlook, so our findings were, to say the least, unexpected," said Clive Sarnow, director of the CDC's infectious disease unit. The study was immediately hailed by British officials, who said it will save millions of pounds and thousands of man hours. "Up until now we have, quite naturally, assumed that both foot-and-mouth and mad cow were spread by Microsoft Outlook," said Nick Brown, Britain's Agriculture Minister. "By eliminating it, we can focus our resources elsewhere."

However, researchers in the Netherlands, where foot-and-mouth has recently appeared, said they are not yet prepared to disqualify Outlook, which has been the progenitor of viruses such as "I Love You," "Bubbleboy," "Anna Kournikova," and "Naked Wife," to name but a few. Said Nils Overmars, director of the Molecular Virology Lab at Leiden University: "It's not that we don't trust the research, it's just that as scientists, we are trained to be sceptical of any finding that flies in the face of established truth. And this one flies in the face like a blind drunk sparrow."

Executives at Microsoft, meanwhile, were equally sceptical, insisting that Outlook's patented Virus Transfer Protocol (VTP) has proven virtually pervious to any virus. The company, however, will issue a free VTP patch if it turns out the application is not vulnerable to foot-and-mouth.

Such an admission would be embarrassing for the software giant, but Symantec virologist Ariel Kologne insisted that no one is more humiliated by the study than she is. "Only last week, I had a reporter ask if the foot-and-mouth virus spreads through Microsoft Outlook, and I told him, 'Doesn't everything?'" she recalled.



Zen Michievous Moments #6 December 19, 2001 00:00

In Japan, they have replaced the impersonal and unhelpful Microsoft error messages with their own Japanese haiku poetry, each with only 17 syllables: five in the first line, seven in the second, five in the third.

Your file was so big.
It might be very useful.
But now it is gone.

The website you seek
Cannot be located, but
Countless more exist.

Chaos reigns within.
Reflect, repent and reboot.
Order shall return.

Aborted effort.
Close all that you have worked on.
You ask far too much.

Windows NT crashed.
I am the Blue Screen of Death.
No-one hears your screams.

Yesterday it worked.
Today it is not working.
Windows is like that.

Stay the patient course.
Of little worth is your ire.
The network is down.

A crash reduces
Your expensive computer
To a simple stone.

Three things are certain:
Death, taxes and lost data.
Guess which has occurred.

You step in the stream,
But the water has moved on.
This page is not here.

Out of memory.
We wish to hold the whole sky,
But we never will.

Having been erased,
The document you're seeking
Must now be retyped.

I ate your Web page.
Forgive me; it was tasty
And tart on my tongue



Zen Mischievous Moments #7 December 20, 2001 00:00

A true tale ...

My boss had recently learned how to use spreadsheet software. He proudly called me into his office to show me a new trick he'd learned. At one point during his demonstration he was moving his mouse toward himself and it reached the edge of his desk. I watched in amazement as he deftly rolled his mouse around the edge of the desk and underneath. I stifled my giggling and politely said, "You know, you don't need to do that with the mouse." Whereupon he took offense and said, "I know. I usually grab a book and put it next to the desk and roll the mouse onto it, but I just can't reach my books right now." I said, "Yeah, that's what I do," and excused myself before I broke a rib trying not to laugh.



Zen Mischievous Moments #8 December 21, 2001 00:00

1. Do not walk behind me, for I may not lead. Do not walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. Do not walk beside me, either; just #\$\$%^ off and leave me alone.
2. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and a flat tyre.
3. It's always darkest before dawn. So if you're going to steal your neighbour's newspaper, that's the time to do it.
4. Don't be irreplaceable; if you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.
5. No one is listening until you make a mistake.
6. Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else.
7. Never test the depth of the water with both feet.
8. It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.
9. It is far more impressive when others discover your good qualities without your help.
10. If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a couple of payments.
11. Before you criticise someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when

- you criticise them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.
12. If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
 13. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat & drink beer all day.
 14. If you lend someone \$20, and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.
 15. Don't squat with your spurs on.
 16. If you drink, don't park; accidents cause people.
 17. Some days you are the bug, some days you are the windshield.
 18. The quickest way to double your money is to fold it in half and put it back in your pocket.
 19. Duct tape is like the force; it has a light side and a dark side, and it holds the universe together.



Zen Mischievous Moments #9 December 23, 2001 00:00

A sign outside the Nightingale Building at the University of Southampton says:

University of Southampton School of Nursing and Midwifery
Deliveries at rear of building

New Scientist; 02/06/2001



Zen Mischievous Moments #10 December 24, 2001 00:00

In an outbreak of political correctness, Japanese scientists are suggesting new names for animals that carry the adjectives "blind", "stupid" and "dwarf". Last year the Entomological Society of Japan decided that the name *Mekura kamemushi* (blind bugs) for beetles belonging to the Miridae family was insulting to the visually impaired. So it now refers to these insects as misty bugs, or *Kasumi kamemushi*.

Similarly, the Ichthyological Society of Japan decided to rename 30 aquatic species, including *Mekura unagi* (blind eels). As for *Kobito* (dwarf) penguins, the Kasai Rinkai Park Aquarium near Osaka thought that name might be insulting to people of limited stature. Aquarium officials believe that no one could possibly object to the new name: fairy penguins.



Zen Mischievous Moments #11 December 25, 2001 00:00

Reader Will Cairns has a suggestion for the genetic engineering industry. Why not put flounder genes into potatoes, he asks. Then they'd be easier to peel because all the eyes would be on one side. Boom boom!

New Scientist; 26/05/2001



Zen Mischievous Moments #12 December 26, 2001 00:00

I don't recall where I recently found this quote, but it made me smile...

My girlfriend and I were at Disneyland while they were building their new park. We were looking at the artist rendition of the future park on a poster, and from behind us we heard, "How do they know how to draw it if it hasn't been built yet?"



Zen Mischievous Moments #12a December 27, 2001 00:00

Here are some genuine announcements made by Tube Drivers on the London Underground.

[Thanks to Sue Frye for some of these.]

"To the gentleman wearing the long grey coat trying to get on the second carriage, what part of 'stand clear of the doors' don't you understand?"

"Ladies & Gentleman, upon departing the train may I remind you to take your rubbish with you. Despite the fact that you are in something that is metal, fairly round, filthy and smells, this is a tube train for public transport and not a bin on wheels."

Heard one lunchtime at Mill Hill East: "Hello this is John speaking, I am the captain of your train, and we will be departing shortly, we will be cruising at an altitude of approximately zero feet, and our scheduled arrival time in Morden is 3:15pm. The temperature in Morden is approximately 15 degrees Celsius, and Morden is in the same time zone as Mill Hill East, so there's no need to adjust your watches."

"Ladies and Gentlemen do you want the good news first or the bad news? The good news is that last Friday was my birthday and I hit the town and had a great time. I felt sadly let down by the fact that none of you sent me a card! I drive you to work and home each day and not even a card.

The bad news is that there is a point's failure somewhere between Stratford and East Ham, which means that we probably won't reach our destination. We may have to stop and return. I won't reverse back up the line - simply get out walk up the platform and go back to where we started. In the mean time if you get bored you can simply talk to the man in front or beside you or opposite you. Let me start you off: "Hi, my name's Gary how do you do?"

"Your delay this evening is caused by the line controller suffering from elbow and backside syndrome: not knowing his elbow from his backside. I'll let you know any further information as soon as I'm given any".

"Please mind the closing doors..."

The doors close ... The doors reopen.

"Passengers are reminded that the big red slidey things on the side of the train are called the doors. Let's try it again. Please stand clear of the doors."

The doors close...

"Thank you."

[In broad Cockney]

"This station is yer Euston. The Victoria Line goes as far norf as Walfamstow and as sarf to Brixton. Upstairs yer got yer Silverlink Metro trains to Watford, yer Silverlink County trains up yer Midlands, and even that Richard Branson's got some trains up there."



Zen Mischievous Moments #14 December 28, 2001 00:00

Taliban TV

Only available on Sky Digitaliban:

06.00 G-Had TV. Morning prayers.

08.30 Talitubbies. Talitubbies say "Ah-ah". Dipsy and Tinky-Winky repair a Stinger missile launcher.

09.00 Shouts of Praise. More prayers.

11.00 Jihad's Army. The Kandahar-on-Sea battalion repulse another attack by evil, imperialist, Zionist backed infidels.

12.00 Ready, Steady, Jihad! Celebrities make lethal devices out of everyday objects.

12.30 Panoramadan. The programme reports on Americas attempts to take over the world.

13.30 Xena: Modestly dressed Housewife. Xena stays at home and does some cooking.

14.00 Only Fools and Camels. Dhal-Boy offloads some Chinese rocket launchers to Hamas.

14.30 Green Peter. The total of Kalashnikovs bought by the milk bottle top appeal is revealed.

15.00 Madrasah Challenge. Two more Islamic colleges meet. Bambang Kaskhain asks the questions. 'Starter for ten, no praying.'

15.30 I Love 629. A look back at the events of the year, including the Prophet's entry into Mecca, and the destruction of pagan idols.

16.00 Question Time. Members of the public face questions from political and religious leaders.

17.00 Koronation Street. Deirdrie faces execution by stoning for adultery.

17.30 Middle-East Enders. The entire cast is jailed for unislamic behaviour.

18.00 Holiday. The team go on pilgrimage to Mecca. Again.

18.30 Top of the Prophets. Will the Koran be No.1 for the 63,728th week running?

19.00 Who Wants to be a Mujahadin? Mahmoud Tarran asks the questions. Will contestants phone a mullah, go 'inshallah', or ask the Islamic council?

20.00 FILM: Shariah's Angels. The three burkha-clad sleuths go undercover to expose an evil scheme to educate women.

21.30 Big Brother. Who will be taken out of the house and executed this week?

22.30 Shahs in Their Eyes. More hopefuls imitate famous destroyers of the infidel.

23.30 They Think It's Allah Over. Quiz culminating in the 'don't feel the Mullah' round.

00.00 When Imams Attack. Amusing footage shot secretly in mosques. The filmers were also secretly shot.

00.30 The West Bank Show. Arts programme looking at anti-Israel graffiti art in the occupied territories.

01.30 Bhuffi the Infidel Slayer.

02.00 The Gaza Strip. The adult hour where couples discuss their favourite strategic positions

03.00 A Book at Bedtime. The Koran. Again



Zen Mischievous Moments #15 December 29, 2001 00:00

"A few weeks ago we presented our research paper title of the month, concerning the well-known "nonsense-mediated decay factor". Now we discover that *The Psychologist* topped that with a whole two pages of titles collected by G Neil Martin of the *Annals of Improbable Research*.

"Some imply interesting research expenses claims, as with "Beer consumption as a function of music and the presence of others" (*Journal of the Pennsylvania Academy of Science* vol 65, p 134)

"Effects of alcohol and frustration on experimental graffiti" (*Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* vol 39, p 201).

"Others were probably cheaper, and possibly more fun; such as "Sex differences in sin preferences" (*Psychological Reports* vol 21, p 752)

"Gender differences in book carrying -- a controlled replication" (*Perceptual and Motor Skills* vol 76, p 349).

Yet others are plain weird:

"The hand vacuum cleaner: friend or foe?" (*Journal of Urology* vol 128, p 829).

"One of the above may, possibly, be the spoof sown among the 99 real titles quoted in the article ..."

New Scientist; 10/11/2001



Zen Mischievous Moments #16 December 30, 2001 00:00

Notice seen on the door to kitchens of a restaurant in Rye, Sussex ...

WARNING: Staff may contain traces of nuts!



Zen Mischievous Moments #17 December 31, 2001 00:00

Seasonal Greetings.

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit, my best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral, celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practised within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasions and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all.

I also wish you a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the onset of the generally accepted calendar year 2002, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped make humanity great, and without regard to the race, creed, colour, age, physical ability, religious faith, or sexual orientation of the wishee.

By accepting this greeting, you are accepting these terms: This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It is freely transferable with no alteration to the original greeting. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for her/himself or others, is void where prohibited by law, and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher. This wish is warranted to perform as expected within the usual application of good tidings for a period of one year, or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first, and warranty is limited to replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher.

Best (within reasonable limits) wishes to all ...



Zen Mischievous Moments #18 December 1, 2002 00:00

A sign to be seen on the road outside Bewl Water, a noted trout fishery, reads:

European open fly championships

New Scientist; 05/01/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #19 December 2, 2002 00:00

My thanks to Julian Allason for the following ...

How to Explain Enron to Your Children

Feudalism. You have two cows. Your lord takes some of the milk.

Fascism. You have two cows. The government takes both, hires you to take care of them, and sells you the milk.

Communism. You have two cows. Your neighbours help take care of them and you share the milk.

Totalitarianism. You have two cows. The government takes them both and denies they ever existed and drafts you into the army. Milk is banned.

Capitalism. You have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull. Your herd multiplies, and the economy grows. You sell them and retire on the income.

Enron Venture Capitalism. You have two cows. You sell three of them to your publicly listed company, using letters of credit opened by your brother-in-law at the bank, then execute a debt/equity swap with an associated general offer so that you get all four cows back, with a tax exemption for five cows. The milk rights of the six cows are transferred via an intermediary to a Cayman Island company secretly owned by the majority shareholder who sells the rights to all seven cows back to your listed company. The annual report says the company owns eight cows, with an option on one more.



Zen Mischievous Moments #20 December 3, 2002 00:00

A repeat of Zen Mischievous Moments #12



Zen Mischievous Moments #21 December 4, 2002 00:00

One must respect the concern supermarkets show in providing accurate and informative labelling on the goods for sale. For example, the Co-op store in Cranleigh, Surrey, sells 20-centilitre wine glasses at £2 each. The Co-op is then careful to inform customers that this represents a price of £10 per litre.

New Scientist; 23/02/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #22 December 5, 2002 00:00

Was a repeat of Zen Mischievous Moments #7



Zen Mischievous Moments #23 December 6, 2002 00:00

Maintenance complaint from USAF pilot to ground crew, and reply:

Problem: Autopilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 fpm descent.

Solution: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.



Zen Mischievous Moments #24 December 7, 2002 00:00

Each separate 21-day blister pack of the contraceptive pill Marvelon comes in an individual foiled wrapper with the wording "Child resistant pack".

New Scientist; 27/04/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #25 December 8, 2002 00:00

A few thoughts for those who take life too seriously ...

- Save the whales. Collect the whole set.
- A day without sunshine is like ... night.
- On the other hand, you have different fingers.
- I just got lost in thought. It was unfamiliar territory.
- 42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.
- 99 percent of lawyers give the rest a bad name.
- I feel like I'm diagonally parked in a parallel universe.
- Honk if you love peace and quiet.
- Remember, half the people you know are below average.
- He who laughs last thinks slowest.

- The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.
- Support bacteria. They're the only culture some people have.
- Monday is an awful way to spend 1/7 of your life.
- A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.
- Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.
- Get a new car for your spouse. It'll be a great trade!
- Plan to be spontaneous tomorrow.
- Always try to be modest, and be proud of it!
- If you think nobody cares, try missing a couple of payments.
- How many of you believe in telekinesis? Raise my hand ...
- OK, so what's the speed of dark?
- How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?
- When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- Hard work pays off in the future. Laziness pays off now.
- Everyone has a photographic memory. Some just don't have film.
- If Barbie is so popular, why do you have to buy her friends?
- Eagles may soar, but weasels don't get sucked into jet engines.
- What happens if you get scared half to death twice?
- Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?
- Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what the hell happened.



Zen Mischievous Moments #26 December 9, 2002 00:00

Children's books that did not quite make it:

- You Are Different and That's Bad
- The Boy Who Died From Eating All His Vegetables
- Dad's New Wife Robert
- Fun Four-letter Words to Know and Share
- Hammers, Screwdrivers and Scissors: An I-Can-Do-It Book
- The Kids' Guide to Hitchhiking
- Curious George and the High-Voltage Fence
- All Cats Go to Hell
- The Little Cissy Who Snitched
- Some Kittens Can Fly
- That's it, I'm Putting You Up for Adoption
- Grandpa Gets a Casket
- The Pop-Up Book of Human Anatomy
- Strangers Have the Best Candy
- Whining, Kicking and Crying to Get Your Way
- You Were an Accident
- Things Rich Kids Have, But You Never Will
- Pop! Goes The Hamster...And Other Great Microwave Games

[Contributed by Julian Allason]



Zen Mischievous Moments #27 December 10, 2002 00:00

Reader [A] recently bought a reversible jacket for her daughter from the Primark chain. The washing instructions say: "Wash inside out".

New Scientist; 06/07/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #28 December 11, 2002 00:00

Important: This email is intended for the use of the individual addressee(s) named above

and may contain information that is confidential, privileged or unsuitable for overly sensitive persons with low self-esteem, no sense of humour or irrational religious beliefs.

If you aren't the intended recipient, then social etiquette demands that you fully appropriate the message without trace of the former sender and triumphantly claim it as your own.

Leaving a former sender's signature on a "forwarded" email is very bad form and, while being only a technical breach of the Olympic ideal, does in fact constitute an irritating social *faux pas*.

Further, sending this email to a colleague does not appear to breach the provisions of the Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 of the Commonwealth, because chances are none of the thoughts contained in this email are in any sense original.

Finally, if you have received this email in error, shred it immediately, then add it to some nutmeg, egg whites and caster sugar. Whisk until stiff peaks form, then place it in a warm oven for 40 minutes. Remove promptly and let it stand for 2 hours before adding the decorative kiwi fruit and cream. Then notify me immediately by return email and eat the original message.



Zen Mischievous Moments #29 December 12, 2002 00:00

Sign in a shop window:

Ears pierced, while you wait



Zen Mischievous Moments #30 December 13, 2002 00:00

Sign seen in a Florida maternity ward: "No children allowed!"



Zen Mischievous Moments #31 December 14, 2002 00:00

The Silent Debate

Several centuries ago, the Pope decreed that all the Jews had to convert or leave Italy.

There was a huge outcry from the Jewish community, so the Pope offered a deal. He would have a religious debate with the leader of the Jewish community. If the Jews won, they could stay in Italy, if the Pope won, they would have to leave.

The Jewish people met and picked an aged but wise man, Rabbi Moishe, to represent them in the debate. However, as Moishe spoke no Italian and the Pope spoke no Yiddish, they all agreed that it would be a "Silent Debate".

On the chosen day, the Pope and Rabbi Moishe sat opposite each other for a full minute before the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers.

Rabbi Moishe looked back and raised one finger.

Next, the Pope waved his finger around his head.

Rabbi Moishe pointed to the ground where he sat.

The Pope then brought out a communion wafer and a chalice of wine.

Rabbi Moishe pulled out an apple.

With that, the Pope stood up and declared he was beaten, that Rabbi Moishe was too clever and that the Jews could stay.

Later, the Cardinals met with the Pope, asking what had happened. The Pope said, "First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there is still only one God common to both our beliefs. Then, I waved my finger to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground to show that God was also right here with us. I pulled out the wine and wafer to show that God absolves us of all our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of the original sin. He had me beaten and I could not continue."

Meanwhile, the Jewish community was gathered around Rabbi Moishe. "What happened?" they asked. "Well," said Moishe, "First he said to me that we had three days to get out of

Italy, so I said to him, 'Up yours!' Then he tells me that the whole country would be cleared of Jews and I said to him, Mr. Pope, we're staying right here." "And then what," asked a woman. "Who knows?" said Moishe, "He took out his lunch, so I took out mine."



Zen Mischievous Moments #32 December 15, 2002 00:00

"I once spent two weeks trying to explain to a senior manager of a group of geologists that I couldn't tell him how much an acre of soil weighed. He could not grasp the concept that you need to know the depth to make that calculation. Finally, in desperation, I asked him if a lower and upper bound would do. He agreed. I calculated the weight of an acre that is one molecule deep and another that extended to the centre of the Earth. That didn't convince him that a volume calculation needs three dimensions, but at least he started bothering someone else about it."

(With apologies to Scott Adams)



Zen Mischievous Moments #33 December 16, 2002 00:00

Calpol Sugar Free Infant Suspension for lowering temperature is "specially suitable for children under 6 years old". Reader Alison Gardner bought some recently for her two-year-old daughter when she was ill. She says her daughter was naturally very relieved to be told on the box containing the medicine: "You can use Calpol Sugar Free Infant Suspension while you are taking oral contraceptives..."

New Scientist; 23/10/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #34 December 1, 2003 00:00

Just for something slightly different; the answers below are of course mine! ...

Copy (not forward) this entire text and paste it into a new e-mail that you will send.

Change all of the answers so that they apply to you.

Then, send this to a whole bunch of people you know INCLUDING the person who sent it to you.

The theory is that you will learn little known facts about your friends.

Remember to send it back to the person who sent it to you.

LIVING ARRANGEMENT?

Small 1930s terraced house with wife, 2 cats, lots of fish and even more books

WHAT BOOK ARE YOU READING NOW?

Just finished "Spells for cats"

WHAT'S ON YOUR MOUSE MAT?

Virgin

FAVOURITE BOARD GAME?

I don't do bored games

FAVOURITE MAGAZINE?

New Scientist

FAVOURITE SMELLS?

Fresh bread, the sea, church incense

FAVOURITE SOUNDS?

Silence, the sea, Gregorian chant

WORST FEELING IN THE WORLD?

Travel sickness

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING?

How much longer can I stay in bed. Do I really have to go to work?

ROLLER COASTER, SCARY OR EXCITING?

Very scary.

HOW MANY RINGS BEFORE YOU ANSWER THE PHONE?

Either too few or so many the ansaphone does the job.

FUTURE DAUGHTER'S NAME?

Should such an unlikely event occurring: Lilac Pernod :-))

(Believe that and you'll believe anything!)

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN LIFE?

Health, wealth and happiness -- not necessarily in that order. Oh and another beer. :-)

FAVOURITE FOODS?

Curry

CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA?

Vanilla; chocolate is too sickly

DO YOU LIKE TO DRIVE FAST?

I don't drive, but there are a few people I'd be quite happy to be driven fast by.

DO YOU SLEEP WITH A STUFFED ANIMAL?

Always. Me.

STORMS - COOL OR SCARY?

Cool

WHAT TYPE WAS YOUR FIRST CAR?

A blue Alfa-Romeo Formula One ca. 1960.

IF YOU COULD MEET ONE PERSON DEAD OR ALIVE?

Hmm, difficult. Choose from William Byrd, Richard Feynman, Samuel Pepys and Anthony Powell.

FAVOURITE ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

Depends on my mood: beer if I'm thirsty; G&T is good and so is red wine.

WHAT IS YOUR ZODIAC SIGN?

Capricorn

DO YOU EAT THE STEMS OF BROCCOLI?

Doesn't everyone?

IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY JOB YOU WANTED WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Retirement (in comfort of course!)

IF YOU COULD DYE YOUR HAIR ANY COLOUR?

Grey

EVER BEEN IN LOVE?
So I'm told.

IS THE GLASS HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL?
The servants are slacking if it isn't completely full.

FAVOURITE MOVIES:
I hate movies.

DO YOU TYPE WITH YOUR FINGERS ON THE RIGHT KEYS?
Yes -- I don't make that many typos. :-)

WHAT'S UNDER YOUR BED?
Dusty drawers. Now just don't ask what's in them. :-)

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE NUMBER?
Whatever I choose at the time -- probably my age divided by pi.

FAVOURITE SPORT TO WATCH?
Cricket

SAY ONE NICE THING ABOUT THE PERSON WHO SENT THIS TO YOU
Think I'll decline that -- it'd probably constitute sexual harassment.

PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO RESPOND?
Let's just call them J. :-)

PERSON YOU SENT THIS TO WHO IS LEAST LIKELY TO RESPOND?
Oh, maybe I'll call them C.



Zen Mischievous Moments #35 December 2, 2003 00:00

As reader Chris Searle started to read the "user cautions" for his new Hitec battery charger, everything seemed fairly straightforward:

"1. Never leave batteries on charge unattended.

"2. Do not charge at too high a rate..."

But then he got to number seven:

"7. If the battery to be charged is attached to the charger 'backwards' or in reverse polarity, the entire structure of the Universe as we know it will be substantially altered as time will then run backwards and it will be your fault."

You know it always pays to read the small print.

New Scientist



Zen Mischievous Moments #36 December 3, 2003 00:00

Serpentine. n. A fluid for getting paint off snakes.



Zen Mischievous Moments #37 December 4, 2003 00:00

Can anyone help [a reader] with a linguistic enquiry? In the sentence "Pure cranberry juice drink - ingredients: water, cranberry juice (16 per cent), sugar, colour (anthocyanins), malic acid, citric acid, flavourings" what is the sense of the word "pure"?

New Scientist; 27/07/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #38 December 5, 2003 00:00

CIL ant poison displays the following puzzling wording on the front of the pack: "CIL ant trap kills ants. Ants enter traps and carry bait back to their nest - usually kills entire colony. Warning: May contain peanuts."

New Scientist; 15/06/2002



Zen Mischievous Moments #39 December 6, 2003 00:00

I can't now remember where I saw this ...

Recently the Southern Hemisphere was treated to a total lunar eclipse. During this event one individual standing in my street suggested that we photograph it. Someone explained that the moon would be difficult to photograph because it was completely darkened by the shadow of Earth. Her response was, "What about if I use the flash?"



Zen Mischievous Moments #40 December 7, 2003 00:00

From a sign in a Pennsylvania cemetery:

Persons are prohibited from picking flowers
from any but their own graves.



Zen Mischievous Moments #41 December 8, 2003 00:00

The developers of the Bowlingual dog translator device have continued their quest to bridge an understanding between different species with the introduction of Meowlingual, which they claim translates cat cries into human language.

Cat lovers can use Meowlingual as if it was an interviewer's mike to automatically interpret what their beloved pets are saying, according to officials of Takara Co.

The gadget, priced at 8,800 yen per unit, will hit Japanese markets in November. About 300,000 Bowlinguals have been sold in Japan since its launch last year. It went on sale in South Korea in late May and will be made available in the United States in August.

The dog translator was awarded the 2002 Ig Nobel Peace Prize for promoting harmony between the species by the US humour magazine *Annals of Improbable Research*.



Zen Mischievous Moments #42 December 9, 2003 00:00

Appropriately for #42 here's a little fun ...

www.freshsensation.com/samorost.swf

(Tho' sadly probably not advisable if you're on a dial-up line.)



Zen Mischievous Moments #43 December 10, 2003 00:00

When we were young ...

- According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the

50's, 60's, and 70's probably shouldn't have survived.

- Our baby cots were covered with brightly coloured lead-based paint, which was promptly chewed and licked.
- We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, or latches on doors or cabinets and it was fine to play with pans.
- When we rode our bikes, we wore no helmets, just flip flops and fluorescent clackers' on our wheels.
- As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags.
- Riding in the passenger seat was a treat.
- We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle, it tasted the same.
- We ate dripping sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy pop with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing.
- We shared one drink with four friends, from one bottle or can and no one actually died from this.
- We would spend hours building go-carts out of scraps and then went top speed down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into stinging nettles a few times, we learned to solve the problem.
- We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back before it got dark. No one was able to reach us all day and no one minded.
- We did not have Playstations or X-Boxes, no video games at all. No 99 channels on TV, no videotape movies, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no personal computers, and no Internet chat rooms. We had friends; we went outside and found them!
- We played elastics and street rounders, and sometimes that ball really hurt. We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth, and there were no lawsuits. They were accidents. We learnt not to do the same thing again.
- We had fights, punched each other hard and got black and blue, we learned to get over it.
- We walked to friend's homes.
- We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate live stuff, and although we were told it would happen, we did not have very many eyes out, nor did the live stuff live inside us forever.
- We rode bikes in packs of 7 and wore our coats by only the hood.
- Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law. Imagine that!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all. And you're one of them. Congratulations!

Please pass this on to others who have had the luck to grow up as real kids, before lawyers and governments regulated our lives, for our own good??

[If you aren't old enough to be one of the elite: read it and weep, you missed out. Thought you might like to read about us).



Zen Mischievous Moments #44 December 11, 2003 00:00

New Scientist wonders how many people are made any the wiser by the instructions that come with the Styline grease gun from Taiwan. They advise users needing to know how to work the gun as follows:

1. If the way of Cartridge Loading to be used, it could be cause Rubber Plunger transfigure and contract by squeezed long time which in inside of grease cartridge, and by soak of grease a certain period.
2. At this moment, if change the loading way to Dispenser Loading or Bulk Loading,

and then, there is a normal phenomenon that have a little amount grease is possible seep out from the bottom of Container Tube.

3. In order to avoid the above phenomenon happened, please decide use long period and a proper loading way initially (depends on variety of grease that your local supplier applied) and use it incessantly. (Do not use MULTI-LOADING alternately!!)

4. And now, puzzle of grease leakage been settled.

New Scientist; 24/05/2003



Zen Mischievous Moments #45 December 12, 2003 00:00

Spotted on my recent travels ...



Zen Mischievous Moments #46 December 13, 2003 00:00

From the latest *New Scientist* ...

This month's Macworld magazine includes guidelines on submitting tips on Apple computing. They tell readers: "Send your tips to ganda@macworld.co.uk. We cannot make personal replies, so please do not include a stamped addressed envelope."



Zen Mischievous Moments #47 December 14, 2003 00:00

If men can run the world, why can't they stop wearing neckties? How intelligent is it to start the day by tying a little noose around your neck?



First Posting January 3, 2004 00:00

This is my first posting and something by way of a test as I have no idea how this works. I'm using Easy Blogs to create this and I hope I'm going to be able to publish this to my Cix hosted webspace.



Zen Mischievous Moments #48 January 10, 2004 00:00

WestJet, a discount airline in Canada, has been promoting its new automated check-in, which uses touch-sensitive computer terminals. The service is being advertised as "Touch and Go Travel".

New Scientist; 15/06/2002



OK so we're online January 10, 2004 00:00

Yes, this weblog (I hate the work blog!) is online, but there ain't much here yet. Come back soon and hopefully you'll find something interesting! Keith



Zen Mischievous Moments January 11, 2004 00:00

I'm gradually adding here the back numbers of my Zen Mischievous Moments which I send to friends on an occasional basis. These started in February 2001 and to date we've got to number 48. In adding them to this weblog I have condensed the dates, putting all the back numbers in order but in December of the correct year; that way we don't have too many monthly archive files and you can read them more easily. So far I've posted the first 30 back issues; the rest will follow shortly.



Thought for the day ... January 11, 2004 00:00

Take heart amid the deepening gloom that your dog is finally getting enough cheese



That's All Folks ,,, January 16, 2004 00:00

All the back issues of my Zen Mischievous Moments are now here, the latest being #48. Enjoy!



Zen Mischievous Moments #49 January 27, 2004 00:00

If only everyone had as much brain ...

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3430481.stm>



Zen Mischievous Moments #50 February 8, 2004 00:00

I've not done anything special for ZMM #50 -- I suppose I should have. But here's a scan of a flyer which came though my front door today.

Read the yellow highlighted bit at the bottom carefully -- I know what he means, but this is how **not** to sell your services, isn't it?

PS. I blanked out the guy's contact details to save his blushes. :-)



Webpage Redesign February 8, 2004 00:00

I've just uploaded my Zen Mischief pages with a revamped design, which I think is an improvement. I've not changed a lot of the content -- just a few small changes here and there -- but I am conscious that the content of a number of the pages does need an overhaul. Hopefully I'll manage to do this over the coming weeks. What I have do is to check all the links and weed out the dead and dying. I think I've trapped all the gremlins, but if you do spot anything which is obviously broken, then please drop me an [email](#).

Zen Mischief Moments #51 February 18, 2004 00:00

A first-grade teacher was having trouble with one of her students. The teacher asked, "Little Johnny, what is your problem?"

Little Johnny answered, "I'm too smart for the first-grade. My sister is in the third-grade and I'm smarter than she is! I think I should be in the third-grade too!"

The teacher had enough. She took Little Johnny to the principal's office. While Little Johnny waited in the outer office, the teacher explained to the principal what the situation was. The principal told the teacher he would give the boy a test and if he failed to answer any of his questions he was to go back to the first-grade and behave. The teacher agreed. Little Johnny was brought in and the conditions were explained to him and he agreed to take the test.

Principal: "What is 3 x 3?"

Little Johnny: "9"

Principal: "What is 6 x 6?"

Little Johnny: "36"

And so it went with every question the principal thought a third-grade should know. The principal looked at the teacher and told her, "I think Little Johnny can go to the third-grade." The Teacher said to the principal, "Let me ask him some questions?" The principal and Little Johnny both agreed.

Teacher: "What does a cow have four of that I have only two of?"

Little Johnny: "Legs"

Teacher: "What is in your pants that you have but I do not have?"

The principal wondered, why she asked such a question!

Little Johnny: "Pockets"

Teacher: "What does a dog do that a man steps into?"

Little Johnny: "Pants"

Teacher: "What starts with a C and ends with a T, is hairy, oval, delicious and contains thin whitish liquid?"

The principal's eyes opened really wide but before he could stop the answer ...

Little Johnny: "Coconut"

Teacher: "What goes in hard and pink then comes out soft and sticky?"

Little Johnny: "Bubblegum"

Teacher: "What do men do standing up, woman do sitting down and dogs do on three legs?"

Little Johnny: "Shake hands"

Teacher: "Now I will ask some 'Who am I' sort of questions, okay?"

Little Johnny: "Yup"

Teacher: "You stick your poles inside me. You tie me down to get me up. I get wet before you do."

Little Johnny: "Tent"

Teacher: "A finger goes in me. You fiddle with me when you're bored. The best man always has me first."

The Principal was looking restless and bit tense.

Little Johnny: "Wedding Ring"

Teacher: "I come in many sizes. When I'm not well, I drip. When you blow me, you feel good."

Little Johnny: "Nose"

Teacher: "I have a stiff shaft. My tip penetrates. I come with a quiver."

Little Johnny: "Arrow"

Teacher: "What word starts with an 'F' and ends in 'K' that means a lot of excitement?"

Little Johnny: "Firetruck"

The principal breathed a sigh of relief and told the teacher, "Put his little ass in the fifth-grade. I got the last ten questions wrong myself."



London Bloggers February 20, 2004 00:00

Found this interesting site called [London Bloggers](#). It lists, well, London Bloggers of course, but arranged by their underground station. We're now listed there under [Sudbury Hill](#). And while we're talking about London Underground and weblogs you might also like Annie Mole's almost award winning [Going Underground Blog](#) -- a daily slightly sideways look at London Underground life.



This Week's Friday Five February 20, 2004 00:00

OK, so here's this week's [Friday 5](#)

When was the last time you...

1. ...went to the doctor?

Today. To get a prescription. I saw the receptionist. Last time I saw the doc was 2nd January.

2. ...went to the dentist?

A couple of weeks before Christmas so he could fit my two new gold crowns. Made a serious dent in the bank balance. :-(

3. ...filled your gas tank?

I never have as I don't drive. But I do pay for my friend to fill up his car sometimes when he's taking me places. The last time would have been in mid-January.

4. ...got enough sleep?

Durrhh ... never?

5. ...backed up your computer?

Last weekend.



I am a Hippy Atheist February 25, 2004 00:00

[Which America Hating Minority Are You?](#)

[Which Enemy of the Christian Church Are You?](#)

[Take More Robert & Tim Quizzes](#)



Lolley February 25, 2004 00:00

Just back from a business trip to Manchester. Had to have a chuckle to myself on the train going there on Monday: the trolley service on the train was staffed by a young lady whose badge said she was called Lolley, so we had "Lolley the dolly with the trolley". :-)



What You Can't Say February 29, 2004 00:00

[Quotation of the Day](#) today issued the following quote from Paul Graham's essay [What You Can't Say](#).

To launch a taboo, a group has to be poised halfway between weakness and power. A confident group doesn't need taboos to protect it. It's not considered improper to make disparaging remarks about Americans, or the English. And yet a group has to be powerful enough to enforce a taboo. Coprophiles, as of this writing, don't seem to be numerous or energetic enough to have had their interests promoted to a lifestyle.

I suspect the biggest source of moral taboos will turn out to be power struggles in which one side only barely has the upper hand. That's where you'll find a group powerful enough to enforce taboos, but weak enough to need them.

Which seems to me to fit quite neatly with my views on [Ethics and Morals](#) and religion.



Aliens Cause Global Warming March 2, 2004 00:00

Following on from the entry of a couple of days ago on "What You Can't Say" I've found another couple of interesting articles in a similar vein of looking askance at the world and questioning where we're at.

The first is the text of a speech given at CalTech by author and medic Michael Chrichton titled [Aliens Cause Global Warming](#). Don't be deceived into believing Chrichton is actually going to demonstrate some startling new scientific truth -- he isn't. This is actually a look at the emergence of "science by consensus" and "science by untestable theories" which, as Chrichton points out, are a nonsense of non-science.

The second article is by the distinguished physicist Alan Sokal. Back in 1996 *Social Text* published an article by Sokal entitled [Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity](#). If I've understood it correctly this paper purported to show a relationship between the belief in Cultural Studies that there is no "external world" and Quantum Physics. Unknown, and apparently unsuspected, by the editors of *Social Text* the article was a spoof -- a parody to test the prevailing intellectual standards, or lack of them, in the humanities. The article itself is fairly heavy going, however Sokal provides a *post factum* appraisal of his experiment in [A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies](#) which provides a certain level of amusement at the expense of the humanities establishment.



Photograph Gallery March 2, 2004 00:00

I've just put up the first gallery of my photographs. I hope to add others over the coming weeks. I don't pretend that any of the photographs are professional quality, wonderfully composed or executed; they are more a reflection of what interests me or which I found amusing at the time. They are here for enjoyment rather than for critical condemnation or acclaim. Click the Photograph Gallery link in the navigation frame at left (if you have it) or you can go directly to the [Gallery Entrance](#). Enjoy the pictures!



Timber and Wood March 4, 2004 00:00

The following quotation is the opening two paragraphs of *Timber Building in Britain* by RW Brunskill which I was reading the other evening. They struck me as a typical piece of English arcane knowledge and practice; specially designed of course to totally confuse.

This book is about carpentry, the craft which has been variously described as 'the theory and practice of framing timber' and 'the art of employing timbers in the construction of buildings'. Traditionally, carpentry involves timber and timber is not quite the same thing as wood. By timber is meant the material which was used for the construction and repair of the structural parts of a building, a bridge or a ship. In the case of a building this means such items as the roof members, the posts and beams of the wall and the joists and boards of the floor. Wood, on the other hand is the material used for furniture or tools or burnt as fuel on a hearth or converted into charcoal for a barbecue. The distinction between timber and wood was a very important one, enshrined in manorial customs and carefully set out in the lease which formed a contract between a landowner and a tenant farmer. Buildings, therefore, were constructed of timber though they may have been finished with woodwork.

Building in timber was the province of the carpenter though the joiner might be involved in the fitting-out of a timber structure and, in time, the cabinet-maker developed his craft in finishing it. The craft of joinery developed from that of upholstery but eventually the joiner took over the finer parts of working in wood. Thus screens and panels were joiner's work and as the production of doors and windows became more complicated, requiring specialist tools and a certain skill, they were made by the joiner rather than the carpenter. Fixed furniture, such as cupboards, might be made by the joiner but the cabinet-maker emerged as the specialist in loose furniture, often of a very delicate construction. But at all times structural timber was worked by the carpenter.



This Week's Friday Five March 5, 2004 00:00

OK, so here's this week's [Friday 5](#)

What was...

1. ...your first grade teacher's name?

Not a clue

2. ...your favourite Saturday morning cartoon?

Was never allowed to see them

3. ...the name of your very first best friend?

Derek

4. ...your favourite breakfast cereal?

Weetabix

5. ...your favourite thing to do after school?

Not have to do homework.



Zen Mischievous Moments #52 March 7, 2004 00:00

Pun warning

- Those who jump off a bridge in Paris are in Seine
- A backward poet writes inverse
- A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking
- Dijon vu - the same mustard as before
- Shotgun wedding: A case of wife or death
- A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy
- A hangover is the wrath of grapes
- Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?
- Reading while sunbathing makes you well red
- When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I
- A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired
- What's the definition of a will? (It's a dead giveaway.)
- Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana
- In democracy your vote counts. In Feudalism your count votes.
- She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but broke it off
- A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion
- If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed
- With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress
- When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds
- The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered
- You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it
- Local Area Network in Australia: the LAN down under
- He often broke into song because he couldn't find the key
- Every calendar's days are numbered
- A lot of money is tainted - it taint yours and it taint mine
- A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat
- He had a photographic memory that was never developed
- A plateau is a high form of flattery
- A midget fortune-teller who escapes from prison is a small medium at large
- Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall
- Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis
- Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses
- Acupuncture is a jab well done



Friday 5 March 12, 2004 00:00

OK, so here's this week's [Friday 5](#).

1. What was the last song you heard?

Not a clue

2. What were the last two movies you saw?

Not a clue about that either as I don't watch movies, even at Christmas. I last recall going to the cinema in 1973.

3. What were the last three things you purchased?

Can of Diet Coke, some small "inter-space" toothbrushes, cup of tea

4. What four things do you need to do this weekend?

Eat, drink, sleep and sleep. Or should that be sleep, sleep, sleep and sleep?

5. Who are the last five people you talked to?

Sophie, Howard, Peter, Melanie and Roger.



Physical Attraction Test March 13, 2004 00:00

Via a couple of other weblogs I've found the [Match.com](#) dating agency's [Physical Attraction Test](#). It works for boys and girls of both same- and other-sex orientation. It takes a while to

do but you end up with some clues as to what your ideally attractive mate looks like. The picture on the left is, they say, my ideal girl; must say I think they got that pretty close. Just better hadn't tell my wife -- or mistress! ;-)



Zen Mischievous Moments #54 March 13, 2004 00:00

Sorry, I can't resist this one for sheer topicality.

Leicester City FC's main sponsors, Walkers, have decided to cash in on the publicity of the team's recent trip to Spain and are releasing a new range of crisps, which they hope will prove popular. The new flavours are:

- Assault and Vinegar
- Ready Assaulted
- Pokey Bacon
- Sleaze and Onion
- Gang-roasted Chicken
- Porn Cocktail



Zen Mischievous Moments #53 March 13, 2004 00:00

Some, possibly apocryphal, metaphors perpetrated by students ...

- His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a tumble dryer.
- The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease.
- Even in his last years, Granddad had a mind like a steel trap, only one that had been left out so long it had rusted shut.
- The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a lamppost.
- He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a dustcart reversing.
- She was as easy as the Daily Star crossword.
- It hurt the way your tongue hurts after you accidentally staple it to the wall.



News Haiku March 19, 2004 00:00

The Guardian is running a weekly competition for the best [topical haiku](#). For instance there is the following contribution from a couple of days ago:

Status Quo budget
from a Labour chancellor
oh how seventies



This Week's Friday 5 March 19, 2004 00:00

OK, so here's this week's [Friday 5](#).

If you ...

1. ... owned a restaurant, what kind of food would you serve?

Good European peasant food made from real ingredients: traditionally cured bacon, real cheese, humanely reared meat, organic vegetables.

2. ... owned a small store, what kind of merchandise would you sell?

Delicatessen, selling the ingredients I would want for the restaurant.

3. ... wrote a book, what genre would it be?

Not "if" I write a book, "when" I write my book it will be biographical/historical/literary ...

something about [Anthony Powell](#) but I'm not yet sure what it will be.

4. ... ran a school, what would you teach?

Common sense, logic and all the fascinating things in the world: biology, physics, historical buildings, complementary medicine, meditation, early music.

5. ... recorded an album, what kind of music would be on it?

Early music: plainsong, Gregorian chant, English Tudor mass settings.



Reality, but not as we know it!

March 19, 2004 00:00

Lovely exchange which my wife heard on a daytime TV programme today (replacement for Kilroy, I think):

Interviewer: Why do you drink?

Subject: Well it abstracts your reality.



Female Middle Garments

March 20, 2004 00:00

I spotted this letter in the latest issue of a curious little magazine called [The Chap](#) ...

Sir,

While walking recently across Piccadilly Circus I was enthusiastically surrounded by four barely post-pubertal young fillies who were clearly much taken by my sartorial turn-out. With admiring chatter they fingered every inch of my exquisite attire, from toe to trilby, clearly amazed at the quality of the fabric and tailoring on display. I, in turn, was much impressed by one quite intriguing feature of their own, less formal attire. Their midriffs were consistently turned out in a most remarkable fabric, so carefully manufactured that it gave every impression of being real human skin.

This middle garment, a name for which I have struggled in vain to find, commenced with a slight frontal shadow effect just above the fly-zip and ended with twin hints of youthful globularity as it disappeared into their upper reaches. At the rear, its fabric was decorated in a finely etched V-shaped motif, rising high above their denim-clad derrieres. The finishing touch was a solid silver ring, delicately pinned into the front of the garment at the point where nature had once joined the wearer to mother.

I wonder whether any readers might know of what fabric such a garment might be made? It was certainly not tweed, for there was no hint of weave; quite the wrong colour for flannel; too pale even for the most heavily-washed cavalry twill. My own guess is that it may have been some rare oriental silk. The only surface feature which I could identify was an extremely fine, pale golden down with which the seamstress had finished off the material. In order to examine it, I was forced to kneel on the pavement and squint closely at their middle quarters through my strongest reading monocle. Our little social gathering attracted quite some attention from passers-by, several of whom paused and shouted encouraging comments at us. One group called my little quartet of admirers a "right bunch of Bakewells".

As I headed for my club, I could already imagine the Sanatogen Martinis which awaited, whose heady aromas would keep the puzzle of those midriffian sights fresh in mind for hours to come.

Yours,

Arbuthnot P Weathercock, Barnet



Trojan Condoms

March 26, 2004 00:00

There are lots of ads for Trojan condoms on bus stops etc. around here at the moment. While it's a well-known brand in the US one's first thought is of the Trojan Horse. But the idea of naming a condom after a wooden horse which was used to hide an army of little people until the horse was inserted into enemy territory, at which point they escaped to create havoc ... Well, it does seem a little less than bright by the makers.



Nude Day at Work March 27, 2004 00:00

I found this cartoon amongst the files on my PC. No idea where it came from originally. But what a good idea!

[This has been replaced by the post "Nude Day at Work" dated 25 June 2010]



Zen Mischievous Moments #55 March 29, 2004 00:00

Once in a while it falls to someone to get one back at the girlies. Today the Fates have chosen me.

25 Rules That Guys Wish Women Knew

1. Crying is blackmail.
2. Ask for what you want. Subtle hints don't work.
3. Don't cut your hair. Ever.
4. Sometimes, we're not thinking about you. Live with it.
5. Get rid of your cat.
6. Anything we said six or eight months ago is inadmissible in an argument.
7. Anything you wear is fine. Really.
8. Christopher Columbus didn't need directions, and neither do we.
9. You have too many shoes.
10. If you think you're fat, you probably are. Don't ask us.
11. Learn to work the toilet seat; if it's up, put it down.
12. Mark anniversaries on a calendar.
13. Yes, peeing standing up is more difficult than peeing from point blank range. We're bound to miss sometimes.
14. Yes and No are perfectly acceptable answers.
15. A headache that lasts for 17 months is a problem. See a doctor.
16. Don't fake it. We'd rather be ineffective than deceived.
17. Sunday = Sports.
18. If you don't dress like the *Victoria's Secret* girls, don't expect us to act like soap-opera guys.
19. If something we said can be interpreted two ways, and one of the ways makes you sad and angry, we meant the other one.
20. Let us ogle. If we don't look at other women, how can we know how pretty you are?
21. Don't rub the lamp if you don't want the genie to come out.
22. You can either ask us to do something or tell us how you want it done -- not both.
23. Women wearing Wonderbras and low-cut blouses lose their right to complain about having their boobs stared at.
24. You have enough clothes.
25. Nothing says "I love you" like sex.



Thought for the day ... March 29, 2004 00:00

Whether you can hear it or not, the universe is laughing behind your back.



Zen Mischievous Moments #56 March 31, 2004 00:00

At New York's Kennedy airport yesterday an individual, later discovered to be a school

teacher, was arrested trying to board a flight while in possession of a protractor, a T-square, a slide rule, and a calculator.

At a morning press conference, Attorney General John Ashcroft said he believes the man is a member of the notorious Al-gebra movement. He is being charged by the FBI with carrying weapons of math instruction. "Al-gebra is a fearsome cult," Ashcroft said. "They desire average solutions by means and extremes, and sometimes go off on tangents in a search of absolute value. They use secret code names like "x" and "y" and refer to themselves as "unknowns", but we have determined they belong to a common denominator of the axis of medieval with coordinates in every country. As the Greek philanderer Isosceles used to say, there are 3 sides to every triangle," Ashcroft declared.

When asked to comment on the arrest, President Bush said, "If God had wanted us to have better weapons of math instruction He would have given us more fingers and toes. I am gratified that our government has given us a sine that it is intent on protracting us from these math-dogs who are willing to dis-integrate us with calculus disregard. Murky statisticians love to inflict plane on every sphere of influence," the President said, adding, "Under the circumferences, we must differentiate their root, make our point, and draw the line."

President Bush further extrapolated, "These weapons of math instruction have the potential to decimal everything in their math on a scalene never before seen unless we become exponents of a Higher Power and begin to factor in random facts of vertex."

Attorney General Ashcroft said, "As our Great Leader would say, read my ellipse. Here is one principle he is uncertainty of: though they continue to multiply, their days are numbered as the hypotenuse tightens around their necks."



Zen Mischievous Moments #57 April 2, 2004 00:00

The overwhelming majority of people have more than the average (mean) number of legs.
[E Grebenik]



Does Everyone Worry? April 9, 2004 00:00

I'm going into hospital on Tuesday morning for a supposedly routine minor operation -- a simple arthroscopy on my right knee to repair what appears to be a small tear in the cartilage. Unfortunately this means a general anaesthetic, and I'm beginning to worry about it. Does everyone worry about having even a light general anaesthetic for a simple operation? Or am I just paranoid?

Well I know the answer to that. Yes, I'm sure everyone worries. But I am also paranoid. And in this case possibly rightly as I am very overweight -- like I weigh 150Kg! I wish I didn't, but equally I know I don't have enough will-power to do anything about it.

Anyway I thought I'd try to keep a record of what happens, so there may be further postings here about the saga.



This Week's Friday Five April 9, 2004 00:00

This week's [Friday 5](#) is ...

1. What do you do for a living?

IT Project Manager

2. What do you like most about your job?

Working on IT infrastructure projects as I am at present is interesting: I get to work with lots of different teams (data network, voice, real estate, ...) and consequently I've learnt a lot about all these areas.

3. What do you like least about your job?

Unrealistic deadlines and requirements. Paperwork.

4. When you have a bad day at work it's usually because _____...

Some idiot senior manager has imposed an unrealistic deadline, unsupportable requirement or otherwise moved the goalposts ... and can't see why they're unrealistic or that they're screwing their chances of getting the project completed.

5. What other career(s) are you interested in?

Retirement. Winning the lottery. Being a dilettante researcher -- ie. doing whatever I want! :-)



A Few Questions to Ponder ... April 11, 2004 00:00

The other day I can across these few questions to ponder ...

- Can you cry under water?
- How important does a person have to be before they are considered assassinated instead of just murdered?
- Once you're in heaven, do you get stuck wearing the clothes you were buried in for eternity?
- How is it that we put man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?
- Why is it that people say they "slept like a baby" when babies wake up like every two hours?
- Why do people pay to go up tall buildings and then put money in binoculars to look at things on the ground?
- Why do doctors leave the room while you change? They're going to see you naked anyway.
- Wouldn't it be nice if whenever we messed up our life we could simply press Ctrl-Alt-Delete and start all over?
- If the world didn't suck, would we all fall off?



Knee Operation April 14, 2004 00:00

Had an interesting, if at times apprehensive, day yesterday for my knee arthroscopy. This was done privately as day-care (I get insurance provided by my employer).

Arrived at the hospital just before 0700hrs and was checked in by the nursing staff. After a while the anaesthetist came along to see me. She had already been warned about my weight but I had to tell her about my obstructive sleep apnoea which needs treatment while asleep and under anaesthetic! This was a good move, as she suggested giving me a spinal anaesthetic rather than a general to avoid the breathing complications. Saw my surgeon for 2 minutes, and missed my #1 slot for the operating theatre (they had a diabetic they needed to do early). I was eventually wheeled away about 1015hrs. No pre-med, so I was fully awake.

At the theatre the anaesthetist checked me again for the spinal anaesthetic and was excellent at explaining what was going to happen. The worst bit was having a cannula put in my hand especially as the first one didn't take (for a drip to prevent dehydration) and the apprehension waiting for the anaesthetic injection. We all agreed that the fear of the unknown is usually the worst and why most people worry at such times. The spinal anaesthetic was preceded by an injection of local anaesthetic. After about 2 minutes I started to feel my toes going tingly, and after about 5 minutes I had lost all sensation of hot, cold and pain (but not touch).

Wheeled into the theatre and manhandled onto the operating table. By this stage I had lost all sensation (except touch) from about nipple level down; my arms were working but not on full power, 'cos as the anaesthetist said, I'd also been given a dose of some "whoopee drug". I was told the nurse was doing the pre-op scrub on my leg. Could I feel anything? Well I was aware of being touched, but it felt almost as if my leg as being gently stroked through a Wellington boot!

I have no clue when the incisions were made. I wasn't even aware of the instruments they said they placed on my stomach. While the surgeon didn't explain as he went along, I didn't ask, and the TV monitor wasn't in my line of sight. After about 10 minutes the surgeon said I had a large tear in the cartilage (much bigger than shown on the MRI scans) and a small amount of arthritis. At the end (after 20 minutes) he showed me a couple of pictures of the damaged areas.

I was out of theatre at 1100hrs and into Recovery, where I spent just over an hour chatting with a lovely Kiwi nurse while the anaesthetic started to wear off. Also had some more chat with the anaesthetist (another Kiwi). It seems that spinal anaesthetic is much more commonly used in other countries (especially NZ) than it is here. I was glad to have found a Kiwi anaesthetist.

Back in my room by 1230 to lots of tea, a sandwich and a couple of bananas. Anaesthetic gradually wore off from the top down and feet up; the last to clear was my bum at about 1530hrs. Quick visit from the surgeon and anaesthetist; followed by the physiotherapist at 1500 to make sure I could walk OK and to give me exercises. I was let out about 1730.

I would definitely suggest a spinal anaesthetic to anyone who has to have this type of surgery -- apparently they can (and do) even do hip replacements this way! It is much nicer than a general anaesthetic both at the time and afterwards -- as well as being interesting to talk to the medics. Today I'm just a bit tired with a stiff, slightly sore knee, but none of the after effects of being drugged to sleep. Super job guys!



Thought for the Day April 14, 2004 00:00

The conviction had grown on him that men do not escape from life because life is dull, but that life escapes from men because men are little.

[Thomas Wolfe]



Knee Update April 16, 2004 00:00

Knee progressing well. I've had almost no pain from it; as the surgeon said I've just had a sore knee for a few days and it's wearing off now. I'm walking much more freely and the full movement is coming back. Dressings have to stay on until next Tuesday so we'll see how it's like then, but so far it seems the team did a top job. So sadly I shall have to go back to work on Monday. :-(



Zen Mischievous Moments #58 April 17, 2004 00:00

What is solvent ink?

It is an assortment of inkjet ink when assorted by medium diluted with. When the medium is an organic solvent, it is assorted as solvent ink. In the case of water, it is aqueous ink, in the case of oil, it is oil ink. As ink there are 2 colouring elements, dye and pigment. The Real Solvent ink for JV3 is assorted as solvent pigment ink. The aqueous pigment ink is used for JV4 and JV2. Aqueous dye ink is used for art work.

This brilliant example of Japlish is taken from the Mimaki JV3 printer (or 'plotter' as the site keeps calling it) FAQ page at: www.mimaki.co.jp/english/sq/inkjet/jv3/jv3_faq.php. Anyone that enjoys Japlish will find no end of entertainment there.

[Contributed by cody@cix]



Zen Mischievous Moments #59 May 3, 2004 00:00

Albert Einstein, when asked to describe radio, replied: "You see, wire telegraph is a kind of a very, very long cat. You pull his tail in New York and his head is meowing in Los Angeles. Do you understand this? And radio operates exactly the same way: you send signals here, they receive them there. The only difference is that there is no cat."



It's a Medical Day May 5, 2004 00:00

Also today I had to see the specialist who did the operation on my knee. He seems to think it is progressing OK, despite the fact that I aggravated it walking too far one day last week. But the function is coming back and I need to increase the exercise gradually. The bad news is that I have some arthritis starting in my knee (top of my tibia) and on the knee cap. That ain't good news knowing how my father (OK he is 84) has almost no knees left due to arthritis. But anyway I don't need to see the specialist again, at least for now.



Broken Front Tooth -- Result! May 5, 2004 00:00

Over the weekend I managed to break off a large vertical slice off one of my front teeth -- about 1/4 to 1/3 of UL1 -- eating the infamous cheese sandwich. Why do these things always happen eating soft food? The fragment was so large I had visions of another crown appearing quickly from the distance ... and I was considering whether to be totally eccentrically English and have a gold or silver front tooth. Fortunately there was no pain, 'cos I didn't manage to get to the dentist until today. And then success ... no crown (at least yet anyway). My superlatively skilled dentist put a couple of pins in the tooth and built a complete new filling. In just 10 minutes! Price: under £25. A definite result!



The Four Rs of Learning Power May 15, 2004 00:00

I've read some pseudo-academic bollocks in my time, but the following, which my wife was given the other day, really takes the biscuit. I don't even know what this guy is trying to say; half his terms seem to bear no relationship to their definitions (at least not in the English language as I understand it), or indeed to any other part of this waffle ...

The Four Rs of Learning Power by Guy Claxton

Resilience

Being ready, willing and able to lock on to learning
Absorption flow; the pleasure of being rapt in learning
Managing distractions recognising and reducing interruptions
Noticing really sensing what's out there
Perseverance stickability; tolerating the feelings of learning

Resourcefulness Being ready, willing and able to learn in different ways

Questioning	getting below the surface; playing with situations
Making links	seeking coherence, relevance and meaning
Imagining	using the mind's eye as a learning theatre
Reasoning	thinking rigorously and methodically
Capitalising	making good use of resources

Reflectiveness Being ready, willing and able to become more strategic about learning

Planning	working learning out in advance
Revising	monitoring and adapting along the way
Distilling	drawing out the lessons from experience
Meta-learning	understanding learning, and yourself as a learner

Reciprocity

Being ready, willing and able to learn alone and with others	
Interdependence	balancing self-reliance with sociability
Collaboration	the skills of learning with others
Empathy and listening	getting inside others' minds
Imitation	picking up others' habits and values



Zen Mischievous Moments #60 May 22, 2004 00:00

Motivational posters you don't see at the office ...

Rome did not create a great empire by having meetings;
they did it by killing all those who opposed them

If you can stay calm while all around you is chaos
then you probably haven't completely understood
the seriousness of the situation

Doing a job **right** the first time gets the job done
Doing the job **wrong** fourteen times gives you job security

Eagles may soar
but weasels don't get sucked into jet engines

Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity

A person who smiles in the face of adversity
probably has a scapegoat

Plagiarism saves time

If at first you don't succeed
try management

Never put off until tomorrow
what you can avoid altogether

Teamwork means never having to take all the blame yourself



Zen Mischievous Moments #61 June 20, 2004 00:00

Returning after a break, 'cos I've been on holiday (photos later!), here is ZMM #61 ...

The recent World Poultry Congress took place in Turkey. A number of further possibilities present themselves ... Why don't we have a world ecology congress in Greenland, a world lubricants congress in Greece and a world cryogenics congress in Chile?



Zen Mischievous Moments #62 June 26, 2004 00:00

Walking can add minutes to your life. This enables you at 85 years old to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at \$5000 per month.

My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60. Now she's 97 years old and we don't know where the hell she is.

The only reason I would take up exercising is so that I could hear heavy breathing again.

I joined a health club last year, spent about 400 bucks. Haven't lost a pound. Apparently you have to go there.

I have to exercise early in the morning before my brain figures out what I'm doing.

I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.

I have flabby thighs, but fortunately my stomach covers them.

The advantage of exercising every day is that you die healthier.

If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.

And last but not least ... I don't exercise because it makes the ice jump right out of my glass.

[Contributed by Sue Frye]



Googlewhack June 27, 2004 00:00

Just got my very first Googlewhack! So let's have a round of applause for **speleological crumhorn**. This is registered at [The Whack Stack!](#).

You can find the rules for valid Googlewhacks at www.googlewhack.com/rules.htm. Your words need to be in this dictionary <http://www.dictionary.com/> which you can actually check when you try your whack as explained in rule 1.



Zen Mischievous Moments #63 August 14, 2004 00:00

After a long silence (I blame work!) here are two absolutely wonderful pieces from the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* on Friday 13 August!

RAF gets a new fighter with a gun it cannot fire

Attempts by the Ministry of Defence to save money will leave all 232 of the RAF's new Eurofighter aircraft with a gun they cannot fire. The MoD decided five years ago that it could save £90 million ... by not having a machine cannon in the British version of the Eurofighter ... Senior RAF officers defended the decision by saying that the use of guns on aircraft was outdated and would be a waste of money. But engineers found the only way to preserve the aircraft's aerodynamics was to have something that not only weighed the same as the gun but was also shaped exactly the same. To make matters worse, each individual part of the makeweight's shape also had to weigh exactly the same as the real thing ... the cheapest option was to fit the cannon. So all 232 of the RAF's Eurofighter aircraft will be fitted with the gun at a cost of £90 million -- but in order to save what is now a mere £2.5 million they will have no rounds to fire.

[Full story](#)

Owzat! Rabbit sets cricket club on fire

It seems a rabbit decided to hide in the bonfire pile are a west country cricket club. When the bonfire was lit, exit bunny with burning tail only to take refuge in the groundsman's hut. Yes, you guessed ... the rabbit set the hut alight destroying all the equipment therein.

"Suddenly, this rabbit shot out, on fire ... We ran to see where it had got to but couldn't find it. We can only imagine that it bolted inside the hut because, shortly afterwards, it started burning ... When we told the fire brigade how it

started it certainly raised a chuckle."

...

Pip Flowers, the Devizes fire station commander, said ... he regretted that it had been impossible to save the rabbit. "It's very sad for the poor thing," he said.

[Full story](#)



Hysteria about Sexual Matters September 1, 2004 00:00

Interesting article in The Times last Friday (27 August) by [Jane Shilling](#).

Shilling has just returned from holiday in Corsica and was stunned to re-encounter the British hysteria about sex. On the Continent -- indeed almost everywhere except here and America -- they have a much healthier, *laissez faire*, attitude to matters sexual, both inside and outside marriage.

As Jane Shilling points out ... If Sven-Goran Eriksson (single) wants to screw an FA secretary (also single) then where's the problem? Similarly if one of our teenage footballing heroes wants to pay for sex, and hopefully learn some sexual technique, in a brothel, then why shouldn't he. Young men with money have always behaved thus.

All this was borne out by a young Swedish couple I know. They couldn't believe that we British didn't discuss sex or our bodies, in anything other than a sniggering way. And that we would never be seen dead in a sauna without our swim-wear. In Sweden no-one bats an eye-lid at sitting nude in a sauna, or at discussing sex openly, whether inside or outside the family circle.

Surely the continental attitude is much the healthier. They have a better adjusted relationship with their bodies. In consequence they have more open relationships, with each other and with their doctors, which leads to better health, better healthcare and a lower teenage pregnancy rate. Where is the teenage pregnancy rate highest? -- In repressive, pseudo-religious, Britain and the US. And lowest? -- In liberal Holland and Sweden. See for instance: [Darrochet al](#), [Schaeffer](#), [Joneset al](#), [Scottish Needs Assessment Programme](#). QED.



We've Moved October 1, 2004 21:07

Everyone will no doubt have noticed by now that we've moved from my old domain at www.mctigger.co.uk (for which there are other plans) to the more appropriate www.zenmischief.com.

But this is the same old intermittent weblog. And I must apologise of the intermittent nature; I just plead that work and life have intervened as I've been away a lot over the last couple of months on business and a holiday and been swamped with other things which need doing (like running the [Anthony Powell Society](#)).

Oh and by the way, I know the RSS feed isn't working. I'm trying to work out what the problem is. The service will be restored as soon as possible.



RSS Feed -- Fixed October 2, 2004 08:26

It looks as if the RSS feed is fixed. An upgrade of my weblogging tool seems to have sorted it out. I hope. :-)



Zen Mischievous Moments #65

October 25, 2004 22:15

Interesting Useless Facts

- Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite
- The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing
- A shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes
- There are more chickens than people in the world
- All of the clocks in the movie *Pulp Fiction* are stuck on 4:20
- No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver or purple
- An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain
- Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur
- An average chocolate bar has 8 insect legs in it



Zen Mischievous Moments #66

November 3, 2004 21:44

Road sign seen today on a lamppost in the Marylebone Road, London ...



Sauce for the Goose

November 10, 2004 22:48

I quote ...

Budget airline Ryanair's appeal against a court judgement which found it was unlawful to charge a disabled passenger for a wheelchair is in its second day. Bob Ross, from Islington, London, won his case in January after being charged £18 to use a wheelchair at Stansted Airport, in Essex.

... ..

Proceedings were delayed because the court had no wheelchair for Mr Ross.

Full story one [BBC News](#) website.



Anti-Religion

November 13, 2004 20:53

I've recently been catching up on some newspaper articles from some weeks ago which I'd not had time to read properly.

The first was an interview in *The Times* of 11 October with polymath Jonathan Miller about his BBC TV series on religion. Like me Miller does not believe in religion, and expresses some particularly trenchant anti-religious views, which do go somewhat beyond what I would say (at least seriously). For instance:

"At the moment there happens to be a hideous concatenation of idiotic, mindless, suburban, patriotic Christianity in America and atrocious zealotry in Islam."

Yeah OK, think that's fairly self-evident to most people, but then ...

"Still less can I conceive of a vast, supernatural Mega-Mind which was there at the beginning, and which said: 'Let there be matter ... er, whatever that is.' The notion is infantile. I'm amazed that people who can find their way to the toilet without advice can entertain such logically incoherent ideas."

Well even for me that was a bit trenchant. I may think it infantile, but at least I will countenance why it may not be so for others: after all how is this different from Science's "Big Bang" where we can't tell what was before it or why it happened?

And finally Miller quotes Emile Zola who

Famously declared that a "civilisation will not achieve perfection until the last stone from the last church falls on the last priest."



"Yes" Parents November 13, 2004 21:11

Another article I had to catch up on was a *Times* interview with anthropologist Desmond Morris on 6 October. While somewhat sycophantic and self-congratulatory, Morris had one interesting point about parents bringing up children, which hadn't struck me before:

Scratch the surface of any cheerful extrovert, says Morris, and you will find that he had "yes" parents. Children of "no" parents, the sort of mothers and fathers who are invariably too busy to play games, grow up believing that life has little joy to offer.

Yep, I'll buy that. It probably explains why my father is so like Victor Meldrew and it is something I have had to work hard to rise above (and some would say failed).



Zen Mischievous Moments #67 November 13, 2004 22:22

Can you imagine if major retailers started making their own condoms and kept the same tag-line ...

- AA condoms - for the 4th emergency service
- Abbey National condoms - because life is complicated enough
- Andrex condoms - Soft, strong and very very long
- Burger King condoms - Home of the whopper
- Cadbury's condoms - Because the lady loves Milk Tray
- Carlsberg condoms - probably the best condom in the world
- Coca Cola condoms - The real thing
- Domestos condoms - gets right under the rim
- Ever Ready condoms - keep going and going
- FCUK condoms - no comment required
- Galaxy condoms - Why have rubber when you can have silk
- Goodyear condoms - for a longer ride go wide
- Halfords condoms - we go the extra mile
- Heineken condoms - reaches parts that other condoms just cannot reach
- HP condoms - invent
- KFC condoms - Finger licking good
- Kodak condoms -- Share moments. Share Life.
- Minstrels condoms - melt in your mouth, not in your hands
- Muller light condoms - so much pleasure, but where's the pain
- Nike condoms - Just do it
- Pepperami condoms - it's a bit of an animal
- Pepsi condoms - dare for more

Peugeot condoms - The ride of your life
Pizza Hut condoms - Grab a slice of the action!
Polo condoms - the condom with the hole
Pringles condoms - once you pop, you can't stop
Renault condoms - size really does matter!
Ronseal condoms - does exactly what it says on the tin
Ronseal quick-drying condoms - it's dry and waterproof in 30 minutes
Royal Mail condoms - I saw this and thought of you
RSPCA condoms - a dog is for life not just for Christmas
Safeway condoms - Lightening the load
Sainsbury condoms - making life taste better
Tesco condoms - every little helps

[Contributed by Sue Frye]



Zen Mischievous Moments #68 November 18, 2004 18:34

The following is supposedly an actual question given on a University of Washington chemistry mid-term.

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic [gives off heat] or endothermic [absorbs heat]?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there is more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially.

Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added. This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.
2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, "it will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you", and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number 2 must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over.

The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct ... leaving only

Heaven thereby proving the existence of a divine being, which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting "Oh my God."

This student received the only "A" grade.

[Contributed by John Monaghan]



A Comment on Our Times? November 19, 2004 18:08

"Of all the tyrannies a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated, but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience."

[CS Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*]



Zen Mischievous Moments #69 November 27, 2004 15:30

"To use a finger as a metaphor for the nonfingerness of a finger is not as good as using nonfingerness as a metaphor for the nonfingerness of a finger."

[Chuang Tzu]



Zen Mischievous Moments #70 November 28, 2004 10:00

[From *New Scientist* 13/11/2004]

Unusual units continue to flood in. There appears to be an inexhaustible supply -- though how could we be sure, since we lack (so far) a unit unit?

During the eight-and-a-half minutes of a launch, NASA declares in an email it sent to Gary Collins, "the shuttle's three main engines produce energy equivalent to 23 Hoover dams -- about 37 million horsepower". But what, we want to know, is that in candlepower? Or newtons?

Steven Pinker in *The Language Instinct* compared the probable 60,000-word vocabulary of a typical US high-school graduate with the 15,000 words used in the complete works of Shakespeare, thus defining the "tetrabard" as a unit of vocabulary. We suspect that David Ridpath, who reminded us of this, may be a jaded teacher: "I can think of a few centibards I have known," he grumbles.

Geva Patz, meanwhile, proposes that the Department of Improbable Units should establish a Laboratory of Analogies You Don't Want to Think Too Hard About. A recent visit to a hardware shop revealed toilets with a capacity of "over two dozen golf balls per flush". Comforting to know, next time we have a lot of, um, golf balls to get rid of.

"The heaviest species of otter is the sea otter," observes a sign at the aquarium in Portsmouth UK, "which can reach a total weight of over 45 kg or 100 lbs!" So why is Thomas Cutts telling us this? "That's nearly as heavy," the sign concludes, "as Kylie Minogue."

All of which is really by way of background to ...

[From *New Scientist* 27/11/2004]

We bemoaned the lack of a unit for units (13 November). Andrew Fry reckons

that we have touched on "one of the few genuinely self-referential concepts that come to mind" -- like the set of sets, which naturally includes itself as a member. "The unit for units," he proposes, is the "unit" -- which is in turn a unit. But, he adds, "I'm having trouble with the concept of 200 milliunits."



Zen Mischievous Moments #71 December 6, 2004 19:18

All doors on the ground floor of the government's Department for Education and Skills building in central London bear the sign:

These doors are alarmed and monitored by short circuit TV

[New Scientist; 04/12/2004]



Seven Questions for Christmas December 22, 2004 18:42

In *The Times* on Monday 20 December Tim Hames posed the following seven questions for Christmas ... questions which are of fundamental importance to the running of the universe:

1. If three wise men could be found 2,000 years ago, why does it seem so difficult to locate even one such person now?
2. What do you do with frankincense and myrrh, anyway?
3. What was it about 1973 that two of the most famous Christmas pop songs were released within seven days of each other in that December.
4. Why do you receive round-robin letters at Christmas only from people with exceptionally dull lives?
5. Why is the Queen's Message always aired at 3pm on Christmas Day?
6. Why has Christmas Pudding not been abolished?
7. Why are the sales customarily held after Christmas Day, not before it?

You can read the whole article in the [Times Online](#).



A Little Book of Bollocks December 24, 2004 18:04

There's a wonderful article in today's *Times* about how Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell is waging war on her cabinet colleagues over their less than transparent language by collecting their gobbledegook in her own *Little Book of Bollocks*. Needless to say she's failing! The article includes some brilliant snippets quotes:

... new theories of economic sovereignty across a wide range of areas ... the growth of post-neo-classical endogenous growth theory and the symbiotic relationships between growth and investment in people and infrastructure.
[Gordon Brown]

If authorities passport on the additional resources and you then ring-fence, the additional £2,000 uplift will be available on a ring-fenced basis.
[David Blunkett]

We will move towards pooling housing spend in regional pots. We are publishing nine regional daughter documents ... The whole philosophy of our approach is to strengthen local responsibility and to have a bottom-up approach.
[John Prescott]

In this next period accountability needs to move downwards and outwards to consumers and communities. The new principle at the heart of public service

governance should be one of subsidiarity.
[Alan Milburn]

While one can guess at what some of these fools are on about, don't ask me what Brown is on! And they make Norman Lamont's 1994 comment (also quoted) look stunningly sane and appropriate:

It seems to me to be absurd that the Government should be held to ransom
by a taxiful of flotsam and bobtail.

You can read the whole article in the [Times Online](#).



Lost Emails December 31, 2004 07:33

I appear to have lost some emails from my system in the last week or so. If you have emailed me recently (and I know some people have) please could I ask you to resend the emails to me at kcm@cix.co.uk.

Many thanks, and apologies for the inconvenience.

Best wishes for 2005 ...

Keith



Zen Mischievous Moments #72 January 1, 2005 19:29

In the year 2004, The Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in Canada, and said, "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save two of every living thing, along with a few Good humans." He gave Noah the blueprints, saying, "You have six months to build the Ark before I will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights".

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard, but no ark.

"Noah", He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?"

"Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah. "But things have changed. I needed a Building Permit. I've been arguing with the inspector about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbours claim that I've violated the neighbourhood zoning laws by building the Ark in my yard and exceeding the height limitations. We had to go to the Development Appeal Board for a Decision."

"Then Transport Canada and the Departments of Highways and Hydro demanded a bond be posted for the future costs of moving power, trolley and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I argued that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it."

"Getting the wood was another problem. There's a ban on cutting local trees in order to save the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls. But no go!"

"When I started gathering the animals, I got sued by animal rights group. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. As well, they argued the accommodation was too restrictive and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space."

"Then Environment Canada ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they'd conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood."

"I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Human Rights Commission on how many minorities I'm supposed to hire for my building crew. Also, the trades unions say that I can't use my sons. They insist I have to hire only union workers with Ark-building experience."

"To make matters worse, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species. So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least ten years for me to finish this Ark."

Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?"

"No", said the Lord. "The Government beat me to it."

[Contributed by John Monaghan]



Zen Mischievous Moments #73 January 16, 2005 14:54

Ambiguous Headlines ...

Include your children when baking cookies
Something went wrong in jet crash, experts say
Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers
Drunks get nine months in violin case
Iraqi head seeks arms
Panda mating fails: vet takes over
British left waffles on Falkland Islands
Teacher strikes idle kids
Clinton wins budget: more lies ahead
Plane too close to ground, crash probe told
Miners refuse to work after death
Juvenile court to try shooting defendant
Stolen painting found by tree
Two sisters reunited after 18 years in checkout counter
War dims hope for peace
If strike isn't settled quickly, it may last a while
Couple slain: police suspect homicide
Man struck by lightning faces battery charge
New study of obesity looks for larger test group
Astronaut takes blame for gas in space
Kids make nutritious snacks
Local High School dropouts cut in half
Typhoon rips through cemetery: hundreds dead.

[Contributed by Jill Weekes]



Zen Mischievous Moments #74 February 6, 2005 12:01

This ZMM comes courtesy of www.chm.bris.ac.uk/sillymolecules/silnymols.htm.

In Pharmacology all drugs have two names - a trade name and a generic name. For example, the trade name of *Tenormin* has a generic name of *atenolol*, *Hedex* is *paracetamol*. *Amoxil* is also called *amoxicillin* and *Neurophen* is generically *ibuprofen*. In the US the FDA had to find a generic name for *Viagra*. After careful consideration by a team of government experts, it announced that it had settled on the generic name of *mycoxafloppin*. Also considered were: *mycoxafailin*, *mydixadrupin*, *mydixarizin*, *mydixadud*, *dixafix*, and of course, *ibepokin*.

Placebos raise a problem in these days of the pharmacist labelling pill bottles with their contents. One cannot admit that the pill is nothing but sugar if it is to work, so a fancy brand name is needed. Among the proposals made i have been *Confabulase*, *Gratifycin*, *Deludium*, *Hoaxacillin*, *Dammitol*, *Placebic Acid* and *Panacease*. Apparently, *obecalp* is also used.



Zen Mischievous Moments #75 February 7, 2005 22:09

Cat and the Buttered Toast Theory

An American magazine recently held a competition, inviting its readers to submit new scientific theories on ANY subject. Here is the winner:

Subject: Perpetual Motion

When a cat is dropped, it always lands on its feet, and when toast is dropped, it always lands buttered side down.

Therefore, if a slice of toast is strapped to a cat's back, buttered side up, and the animal is then dropped, the two opposing forces will cause it to hover, spinning inches above the ground.

If enough toast-laden felines were used, they could form the basis of a high-speed monorail system.

The ensuing discussion, by mail, included ...

I've been thinking about this cat/toast business for a while. In the buttered toast case, it's the butter that causes it to land buttered side down -- it doesn't have to be toast, the theory works equally well with Jacob's crackers. So to save money you just miss out the toast -- and butter the cats.

Also, should there be an imbalance between the effects of cat and butter, there are other substances that have a stronger affinity for carpet.

Probability of carpet impact is determined by the following simple formula:

$$p = s * t(t) / t?$$

where p is the probability of carpet impact, s is the "stain" value of the toast-covering substance -- an indicator of the effectiveness of the toast topping in permanently staining the carpet. Chicken Tikka Masala, for example, has a very high s value, while the s value of water is zero.

t? and t(t) indicate the tone of the carpet and topping -- the value of p being strongly related to the relationship between the colour of the carpet and topping, as even chicken tikka masala won't cause a permanent and obvious stain if the carpet is the same colour. So it is obvious that the probability of carpet impact is maximised if you use chicken tikka masala and a white carpet -- in fact this combination gives a p value of one, which is the same as the probability of a cat landing on its feet.

Therefore a cat with chicken tikka masala on its back will be certain to hover in mid air, while there could be problems with buttered toast as the toast may fall off the cat, causing a terrible monorail crash resulting in nauseating images of members of the royal family visiting accident victims in hospital, and politicians saying it wouldn't have happened if their party was in power as there would have been more investment in cat-toast glue research.

Therefore it is in the interests not only of public safety but also public sanity if the buttered toast on cats idea is scrapped, to be replaced by a monorail powered by cats smeared with chicken tikka masala floating above a rail made from white shag pile carpet.

[Contributed by John Hein]



Zen Mischievous Moments #76 February 20, 2005 15:47

Many thanks to Julian Allason for drawing my attention to the following.

Jockeying for names

If the Jockey Club didn't already exist, someone would have to invent it. One of the duties performed by racing's governing body is to ensure that horses are named appropriately. And so it was that it recently happened upon a horse - registered more than a year ago - by the name of Cosy Dunce.

"We were hauled up by the Jockey Club and asked if the name was a spoonerism," explains co-owner Bernard Gover. "We had to admit that it was, and that it actually referred to them."

The powers-that-be, sad to say, failed to see the funny side and promptly ordered that the horse be renamed.

[Daily Telegraph, 19/02/2005]



Free Window Cleaner Anyone? February 24, 2005 19:06

www.clean-your-screen-for-free-now.com



Zen Mischievous Moments #77 March 1, 2005 20:04

Found in a shop called The Nut House in Bethnal Green ...



[Contributed by Noreen Marshall]



Funny Old World March 9, 2005 13:59

Here we have a Government who spend months of parliamentary time on the rights of foxes. Then they try and shred Magna Carta and the rights of British subjects (I don't live in a city, so I can't be a citizen, OK, comrade?) in 48 hours.

I'm so pleased they didn't manage to destroy the House of Lords who are rapidly assuming the position of people's champions and brake to the tumbil. Keep it up, chaps (of both genders, obviously)!

[With thanks to Dr Rowland Cottingham]



13 (Scientific) Things That Do Not Make Sense March 18, 2005 19:46

New Scientist has this week published an article on [13 things that do not make sense](#). This is an interesting article about 13 areas of scientific enquiry in which observations do not line up with current theory. From the placebo effect to dark matter, it's a list of areas in need of further research and explanation. Here's the list:

1. The placebo effect
2. The horizon problem
3. Ultra-energetic cosmic rays
4. Belfast homeopathy results
5. Dark matter
6. Viking's methane
7. Tetraneutrons
8. The Pioneer anomaly
9. Dark energy
10. The Kuiper cliff
11. The Wow signal
12. Not-so-constant constants
13. Cold fusion

They're not all unintelligible to the layman, although be prepared to have your mind boggled.



Progress Inhibitors March 2, 2005

There are four things that hold back human progress: ignorance, stupidity, committees and accountants.

[Sir Charles James Lyall]



Argument March 2, 2005

He who establishes his argument by noise and command shows that his reason is weak.

[Michel de Montaigne]



Life's Tapestry March 12, 2005

All lives are secret tapestries that swirl and sweep through the years with souls and strivings as the colours, the threads. And there may be little knots of tangled meaning everywhere beneath the surface, tying the colours and threads together, but the little knots aren't important finally, only the sweep itself, the tapestry as a whole.

[Edward Whittemore, *The Jerusalem Quartet*]



Schools March 19, 2005

The intellectual level of the schools can be no higher than the intellectual level of the culture in which they float.

[Richard Gibboney]