



The

ROSE



BYTER

Next Meeting

Nov 20, 7 PM

Pine Grove

Community Church
1729 Buckhorn Rd

Agenda

1. Meeting starts at 7 p.m.
2. Intro's of members and guests
3. Old business
4. New business
5. Program: Another try at showing last month's video.
6. Questions & (maybe)Answers

How to develop a check list – NOT

Walt Pawley
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Those of you who either chose not to attend the last meeting, or simply forgot, may as well count yourselves amongst the lucky. One of the attendees pointed out that the comedy of errors that took place made him laugh aloud, so he didn't mind. But he lives a couple houses down the road and could walk the distance even with sore feet (nonetheless, he drove his truck).

I've mentioned a URL at which you can download the video about the state of privacy in our country, that was scheduled for presentation and subsequent discussion last month. Once this schedule had been set by a "bored meat" held at The Mark 5 one Saturday morning (good coffee

8 -->

YOUTUBYTER

by Dave Archer <dave@davearcher.com>



Fellow Members: FLASH! Just in. In South Korea, hybrid fish have developed patterns that resemble the human face. The owner of the fish said that their faces have begun to look more human over the past couple of years.

I know one thing.

If this had been anywhere near San Luis Obispo in the 40's and 50's, good old dependable dad would have brought home a human-face fish for dinner. It's true.

Dad would have loved face fish.

He was a Norwegian seaman. Odin – his chief Norse Sky-God – lived in Asgard, at the top of the world-tree, where, from the Valkyries, He

received the souls of half of the heroic slain warriors, feasting with them in his great hall, Valhalla. The rest feasted with Freya, goddess of love and wealth.

Face it bro. We got the wrong feast.

Dale would whisper, "Did you see the bucket of tentacles on the back porch?"

I'd whisper, "Why does mom cook ANYTHING dad brings home?"

Because if dad truly intended to eat some godforsaken snorkle-dragon, we knew another dark and stormy night lay ahead, like ... well ... a dark and stormy night.

"Clean your plates or you'll sit at this table until the sun comes up!"

2 -->

The **Apple Blossom Computer Club** (ABCC) is an Apple Computer Inc., registered Macintosh and Apple][family user group. The ABCC publishes *The RoseByter* newsletter monthly; it is posted to each paid-up member and to reciprocating user groups. ABCC participates in user group newsletter content exchange. The ABCC also maintains a Web site at:

<http://www.abccmug.org>

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<- 1 YOUTUBYTER If dad were alive today, Anthony Bourdain would visit him at 644 Mountain View and do an hour alone on stinking cheeses served with smoked oysters and buttermilk.

Dale agrees: some of our brotherly *kitchen moments* are the closest we ever came to true childhood fraternity.

You see, old “helmet horns” would have picked up a knife and fork and carved that nose right off the face, then chewed it to pieces and swallowed it down in front of his good wife and boys and said, “um ... good eatin’ nose ... needs a little Miracle Whip”.

Ah yes, our Viking boat master.

In deepest sympathy, to this day (going on 68) I can easily visualize ten year old Dale sitting across the table, gazing into my six year old eyes through a column of steam rising from the body of some hellish sea-beast.

Seriously, some of the creatures dad brought home were fit only for lab-jars,

“What is it, Palmer?”

“I don’t know, Marge ... better pressure cook it, huh?”

Our father, whom now art in Asgard (feasting in peace I hope), had lived through the Great Depression and W.W.II. For him, any “honest hunting and gathering” should supply the family game coffers – no matter gunny-sack of alien eyeballs or hairy

Plane Loses Wing. This YouTube was contributed by Walt. It is his opinion, after several views, that the pilot was a genius. I have to agree.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9b8anjS6Xs>

Dogs and Polar bears - I just saw a movie about DNA and common ancestors that mentioned that dogs are genetically linked to bears. That might explain some of this. Seeing wild polar bears and domesticated sled dogs playing together is amazing to me.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE-Nyt4Bmi8>

I feel like saying a beatnik poem. Ha! This is a great clip from the 1958 teen B movie, “High School Confidential.” This clip features Phillipa Fallon as a beat poetess. That’s Uncle Fester, AKA Jackie Coogan, on piano behind her.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVOXxDV5BdI>

Poem by W.B. Yeats / Byzantium: this is pure nostalgia for my school

Marilyn lips – all made for delicious feasting, the more simply prepared, the more authentic, the better. Essentially: pressure cook some as yet unclassified eel-snake and chow down. Sort of figure out the parts as you go. “This must be the mouth ... ah, no ...”.

“Have you tried a little Miracle Whip on your eel, Marge? Really good.”

Norwegian seafaring taste runs along the lines of, “Hey, Ollie, let’s scarf-down a couple’a really dead fish, than drag the boat over the mountain and take some slave women.”

YEA!!!

Mom cooled dad’s obsessive need for strong flavors with such recipes as wharf-anemone chowder, saltwater-gremlin stew, rock mussels with sea-cucumber, squid-sucker pie and, dad’s favorite, glowing plankton soup – a midnight snack he could read by.

The man was nothing if not economical.

Dad would have loved Japan, where once, in Nagoya, I was “forced” to eat a gigantic living lobster while the piteous beast waved its antennae over the table. I do not recommend it. I prefer it cooked. However, I was being honored. What do you do? I could hear dad laughing over my shoulder, “how is it son? What’s it taste like?”

Now that I’ve got you hungry for pickled herring and popcorn – this month’s YouTube Movie recommendations:



Are YOU Ready For This?

2

3 -->

Observations of a Peanut Provider

– An Addendum

For the past month the peanut feeding has been going on quite normally. The sucker provides the peanuts, the blue jays snatch and hide while the squirrels eat the ones they can find. Today the injured bird was back. His wing still almost drags the ground on one side, and he gets bullied by most of the others, what with his peanuts being taken away from him and such, but he can fly better now, and he'll get at least one peanut before he heads for cover. Today I watched the injured bird grab a nut and fly all the way into the lower branches of the cedar tree, something I've not seen him do since I first noticed he was injured several months ago. The last time I noticed him, he could only fly to the top of the fence, and then about the same distance into the cedar branches. Also today I saw that there are two jays that weigh each nut while the others grab and run. Perhaps there have always been two, but today was the first time that I've seen them both at the same time. Today they both continued weighing until each of them only got one nut, simply because the supply went away as they were checking weights. Another bird kept trying to get his beak to hold two, and in the end he/she/it (they all look alike) got only one peanut. So the three greedy birds each got only one while the snatch and run bunch got all the rest. These spoiled birds have been getting peanuts so long it has got to the point that some will grab a nut or two, and

3 then start eating seeds, ignoring the remaining nuts that are available to them. Which brings

me to two days ago.

I suspect it was 7:30 a.m. when I slipped into my romeos and went out to scatter some goobers for the flock. The jays were there; I could hear them talking, sounding like they were saying the same as every day, "Hey, here comes the sap with the peanuts, – come on in." Ordinarily when I turn my back and take a couple of steps, at least two birds start grabbing the goodies. Not that day. They were still talking, but no birds were coming in. I went into the house, got myself a cup of coffee and assumed my position by the window to watch. The birds were in the neighbor's cedar trees, above the peanuts and milo seeds, but none were coming to the nuts. I remarked to my wife that I'd spoiled those jays to the point that they aren't even bothering to come in to get their peanuts anymore. I couldn't see all of the jays all the time, but different birds would appear on the ends of branches, while others, hidden in the foliage, made the branches shake like there was a wind, which of course there wasn't, and the rain had stopped, at least for awhile. As I sat and sipped my coffee, those birds would not come and get a peanut. They continued to bounce from branch to branch, and I'll have to admit that it really had me puzzled, because they were not themselves. All the time that I'd been feeding them, they had never acted this way.

By the time I'd finished my first cup of coffee, and was about to give up on the bird watching, here came a few doves. The doves are cagey, and

by Dale Nelson
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quite flighty. They care nothing about the peanuts, but are just after the milo seed. The first dove will land half way down the driveway, and then cautiously walk up to the seed. More doves follow, but they generally will land a bit away and walk in, until finally a number of them will fly directly to the seed. On this day, there were about a dozen, perhaps 15, doves eating away on the milo. The jays are still up in the tree, chirping and chattering, but refusing to come in. The doves weren't keeping the jays away, I had never seen them bother the jays before. In fact I'd seen a jay try to run off a dove one time, and the dove puffed up really big and backed the jay down, but by the same token the pushy jay didn't leave. In a dove/jay confrontation, if anything backs down and flies off, it's the dove.

I was still scratching my head over the seeming indifference of the bluejays, and about to give up and pour another cup of coffee, then adjourn to the other room for a shot of the morning news, when from out of nowhere a hawk drills a dove on the outside edge of the group. The hawk wasn't much larger than the dove he caught, but I think speed was his key advantage. When the hawk hit the dove, I swear that it looked like he rolled that bird several times, (the dove probably didn't roll, it just looked like it, it was happening so fast) while loose feathers were flying everywhere. The hawk's talons had the dove's wings pinned, so the snagged bird wasn't flopping a bit. In much less time than it's taking me to tell this, with a mighty heave, the hawk was airborne and gone with his prize. "Wow!" was basically all I had to say. If the shed feathers hadn't been left behind I think I'd have trouble believing what I'd just seen, it happened so fast.

Well, what with that happening, I figured I now knew why the jays wouldn't come to the nuts, so at **7 -->**

<–2 YOUTUBYTER days. I would read a classic like this, and study hard trying my best to understand it, rarely ever doing so. I find it interesting to see how I feel about some of these poems now, after a long hiatus.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGrZNPYxRjs>

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Water Blogged Wump

Any trace of organization in these paragraphs is entirely coincidental

4



Bathroom Laptop

Move over attosecond; the zeptosecond is about to make its entrance. In an article about laser technology which reported the creation of 80 as (attosecond = 10^{-18} seconds) laser pulses, the article ended by claiming the zeptosecond (meaning less than one attosecond) light pulses might not be far behind. I have to admit such things puzzle me. The **80 as pulses are supposed to be able to “stop” the motion of electrons in atoms**, analogously to the concept of stopping motion on film with a camera. This sort of “stopping” basically means that during the sampling period, the amount of movement that occurs is small enough that something may be resolved directly. In the 80 as case, scientists believe they’ll be able to “watch” the way electrons behave in an atom when it is ionized or neutralized or how the electrons interact with photons. The latter is where my puzzlement shows its ugly head. Light pulses are composed of photons, or so I have been led to believe. In fact, I can’t see any way to generate short light pulses without multiple photons being involved in the pulse. The reason for this surmise has to do with harmonic analysis/synthesis and the fact that photons are both some sort of massless point non-thingy and some kind of wave that satis-

fies Schrodinger’s equation. To get short pulses, several waves must be combined with carefully orchestrated phase shifts (this is merely my opinion because I’ve not actually worked with or really even studied this stuff all that much – it just seems necessary given what little I think I do know). This means that several photons are bashing through the study region while another single photon is somehow doing its normal photonic dance with the electrons in the atom ... at least for a little while. Seems inherently a very tricky thing to me. Now, one thing about making pulses out of waves that seems to make this harder yet, is that one needs add even more carefully phase shifted waves to get from 80 as to 999 zs. Note that an attosecond is the time it takes light to move across three hydrogen atoms – about 0.3 nanometers – and a single cycle of visible light is on the order of 2000 as in duration. I can hardly wait for the gripping full length movie that shows actual pictures of a photon being absorbed, raising an electron to another shell and then its doppleganger being emitted as the electron falls back into its comfortable energy state.

What kind of a guarantee is, “Your money back if [product name] is not clinically proven?” How are you supposed to refute that it’s been “clinically proven,” whatever that actually means? I guess that whatever the product is, you won’t be getting your money back. Far worse is the likelihood that you might actually take some of the swill being advertised with such an assurance. **One would hope that the placebo effect is what you’d be getting** but it could be much worse than that – call it a supplement and it can have almost anything in it.

Quite an evening – deer have been herding their way through the backyard for something like a half an hour. They are way too tame, having become used to cohabitation with

humans. Connie was able to count 16 for certain but I suspect there may have been several more. For some years now, I’ve been saying that we need to start eating a few of them from time to time. That sentiment was based on periodic sightings of as many six deer at a time making the trek through our yard and the feeling that their numbers were on the increase. At this rate, they may soon be coming through our yard about like the herd I encountered in Griffith Park (you know - the one next to Los Angeles, CA) one evening in my youth. Back in those days, “security” was not so rampant. **Three of us had walked from Glendale, across the Los Angeles River, into Griffith Park, around the miniature train track and up to the zoo.** In those days, you simply walked into the zoo – the gates were open and no one was taking tickets. It was very nice. We messed around in the zoo, going way back up to where it ended against the base of the hills. The fence was easy to get through and we, naturally, went through the fence and up into the hills, where we stayed and played until we finally realized it was starting to get dark (kids did not wear watches in those days, much less carry cellular phones). By the time we’d come down to the zoo it was dark. I was worried we might not be able to get through the gate but it was still open – I don’t think they closed it as a rule. Unlike city streets, Griffith Park was not all lit up in those days. We could see lights through trees in the distance but around us, it was dark once we’d left the zoo behind. I could tell we were walking through the miniature train area from what little I could see and we began to hear some noises that were completely strange to us. As my night vision really set in, I began to see what was causing this noise. It was deer. Not a few deer. Hundreds of deer. They had quietly let us walk right into the center of their herd. I suppose it would have

5 -->

<--Water Blogged Wump

been rational to be afraid by that time but I wasn't. It seemed unnecessary at the time and it was. Years later I still marvel at the notion of a vast herd of deer inhabiting an urban-locked park, surrounded by freeways and valley girls. Maybe that's why Forest Lawn Cemetery is there – the deer keep the lawn cropped.

As I sit here in front of the TV, PowerBook on the Martha Stewart drying rack with fold-out legs across my lap, working on a number of things, I am suddenly aware that it's snowing. The realization startles me to attention ... whereupon I realize it's not snowing snow. Instead, it's snowing black walnut leaves through seemingly still air. All around me, **the leaves on the deciduous trees are changing color from their subtly differentiated greens to a host of browns, yellows and even reds.** Each type of tree seems to have its own schedule in the cycle of a year. For example, cherry trees seem to leaf out very early in the spring, so soon that even their flowers tempt the fates with threat of freezing and the cherry's leaves seem to hang on well into the fall when most other trees are bare. The black walnut trees are at the opposite extreme, remaining a hierarchical agglomeration of sticks perhaps until early summer, then dropping many of their poisonous bombs through their leaves before they shed their leaves in a great hurry. Perhaps black walnuts are somewhat auto-toxic? The squirrels don't seem to mind, creating midden piles of black walnut hulls and shell fragments below their favorite eating perches. In about another month, the infernal lights of my neighbors will once again impinge upon me and I'll be grieving for the return of the leaves.

Just in case you think the world of Internet marketing has finally got most of the kinks worked out, you should have **the USPS change your ZIP code out from under you.** I've recently had a debacle of gargantuan propor-

tions over a small purchase of some computer parts. As I write this, it's not really over yet though it's supposedly been handled by actual humans now (yeah, that's a big help). Since the Post Office decided to split 97470 into pieces and assign us to the brand new, never been used, 97471, I've run into lots of fun dealing with Web sites. Mostly, when I put in 97471, the site interrogates its database of ZIP codes and finds that 97471 is not in there. While annoying, there's a year that we can keep using the 97470 ZIP code before it won't work for us any longer. That's when these sites will get really annoying because they still won't have updated their databases but now things won't get delivered because we won't be "there" any more. But the order I'm really having fun with is a bit more complicated. As I was checking out, I was offered the opportunity to edit my account data. So, I thought I should see if they'd let me update my ZIP code to what it now is. I was surprised to see that it accepted 97471 without a hitch. Everything was OK. A few days passed and I checked into see how the order was progressing. It was supposedly shipped the day after it was placed but a tracking number never seemed to come up. After a few more days, I got two emails timed one minute apart. The first was an acknowledgment of the order. The second was an RMA for the same order. Of course, I had not requested an RMA. So, I pawed around their web site to see if I could make any sense of what was happening. Fat chance. I called the 800 number and got Leza (sp?) on the phone. Leza, after some mucking about at her end, told me that the first order had to be cancelled because it was to the wrong address. I pointed out that it wasn't the wrong address. After some more mucking about, Leza asked if I'd recently changed my ZIP code. I pointed out that, on the contrary, the USPS had changed my ZIP code without asking my permission a few months ago. Well, she understood the problem but couldn't fix it.

She offered to put in another order to the "right" (meaning wrong) ZIP code. That was OK with me. After more mucking, Leza pointed out that they no longer had enough inventory to fill my order. So I chose some alternative gizmos and she did her thing. Last time I checked my account status, I had two orders outstanding. The original one was still showing that it had shipped. The new one showed that our VISA card had been charged. One of these days, I might even get something ... besides several billing lines on our VISA bill. [PS: The package arrived today. It claimed to weigh 71 pounds – it puzzled me when I saw that in my account data and says that right on the label. It might have weighed in at 7.1 ounces or even 0.71 pounds.]

Ever hear this one, "Are UFO's real?" At the risk of annoying you all, I actually *know* the answer to that question (the embedded one, not the query about your personal experience). The answer is, **"Yes, Unidentified Flying Objects are real."** Surprised? Wonder how I actually *know* such a thing? Well, it's really easy. While one possibility for a explanation of what UFOs are is that they are alien spacecraft, the phrase Unidentified Flying Object means just what says: something of an unknown nature apparently flying. If UFOs were alien spacecraft, then they'd be referred to as alien spacecraft, not UFOs. People seem to be willing to ignore what words mean. Indeed, when they speak of their UFO experience they describe what they saw and then cap it off by saying something like, "Yep, what we saw was a real UFO." This is spoken like it has some meaning quite unlike what it actually means – that the speaker doesn't have a clue what the ding-dong they really saw.

Depressed? Suicidal? Add Abilify to your mix of pharmaceuticals so you can play roulette with your life and avoid the mess of blowing your brains out with a 12 gauge shotgun blast. Silly? I don't know. Lis- **6 -->**

<--Water Blogged Wump

tening to the advertisement on TV, they're telling you to take this stuff to decrease your depression even more than what you're already sucking down while at the same time telling how dangerous the stuff is at both making you more depressed so you'll pick up the shotgun or simply killing you outright. Why is this stuff being advertised at all? It may have some legitimate medical uses. But if that's the case, your doctor should be the one giving you the spiel in an examination room and explaining to you why you should be taking the crud. I can only think of two reasons for such advertising. First, there's one that occurred to me some time ago: manufacturers of drugs need to keep their cost basis up so they can justify the prices they charge – ever notice how expensive a television saturation ad campaign is? More recently I've been thinking that it's potentially a more insidious possibility: a large fraction of practicing physicians may be pill pushers. I have the greatest respect for doctors – being a good one is an incredibly tough gig for all kinds of reasons. The docs who have kept me alive so far have not been pill pushers, so I really have no direct evidence that pill pushers exist. That said, if I've a blanket indictment to make about doctors as a class, it's that the peer oversight they employ to regulate themselves does not seem to work very well for fixing such abuses. I have no clue how to improve the situation short of patients taking some responsibility for their treatment – something that doesn't seem particularly likely any time real soon now.

We've come to live in truly troubling times. I can recall once upon a time listening to some conversations about **whole factories full of people doing their work between pot breaks**. The conversations were amongst former managers of said factories, who also felt that toking up was an essential part of getting through the work day. Given the drug testing methodologies that are supposed to be in place in most work

places, such behavior should long ago have ceased. Despite that, the behavior I often run into when dealing with companies reminds me of trying to make sense with people who're well stoned. When one couples that sort of behavior with a web site and telephone system that are clearly designed to keep you from contacting anyone who might actually be able to help you, one has a recipe for expensive frustration. I wonder if it would make some sense for large numbers of us to buy one share of stock in a lot of these companies and then show up for stock holders' meetings. The insulation of such companies' top executives from the plights of their customers shows how we've canonized the creation of an imperial class in this country.

According to some recent editorial opinions in some techno-rags, AMD (Advanced Micro Devices) – the company that supposedly competes with Intel for the mainstream micro-processor business – can no longer afford to run a fab, ie. make their own chips. This is not a good thing. It's bad enough that the Intel architecture is ubiquitous – AMD makes more or less work-alike processors, so the “competition” is not fundamental, just economic. And like the case for IBM before the personal computer and Microsoft for Intel architecture personal computers, Intel is the defacto “choice” for making computers. Sadly, IMHO, even Apple chose to use Intel processors. I don't claim to know why such a choice was made, but I suspect it had more to do with Steve Jobs' personality than technical merit. For a company that repeatedly claims they're out to change the world, Apple seems to adopt more and more well-entrenched mechanisms to include in their equipment. So far, they've pretty much kept the consumer from realizing it. It does have some advantages – primarily the price of parts which are being sold at a loss to a mass market – if you buy the stuff from Apple, they benefit and if you buy it on the open market, you benefit. The squeeze

that's forcing AMD to abandon running a fab, won't necessarily kill the company ... immediately. But such attrition has serious deleterious effects. Management likely sees it as a loss of control, but they don't really count as much as the people who do the creative work. Creative work requires feedback: trial and error. Such things are more readily accomplished when people doing the work can communicate freely amongst themselves than when people are “managed” in their efforts, especially by the bean counters, who typically suck up every penny they can as payment for their tremendous expertise regardless of how bad they really are. Without some extraordinary event to turn this situation around, quite literally Intel will be the only remaining mainstream producer of computer processor chips, in the not too distant future. Considering their abysmal track record at designing processor architectures, this is truly a horrid state of affairs. I find it hard to believe that major changes are not afoot, though I have little idea what they will turn out to be.

Well, **you no longer need to get a college education, much less a PhD, to qualify for flipping burgers** or otherwise working behind the counter of a fast foodery. The necessary training has now been targeted at young children so they can get a head start. For just a hundred bucks or so, you can now provide a future for your children with Fisher Price's new plastic vocational course ... er, toy: Elmo's Restaurant.

We apparently have a **“... goal of scaling up FTTH to 100 megabits per second throughout the U.S. by 2015.”** In case you're not familiar with FTTH, it's the acronym for Fiber To The Home. FTTH has long been touted as “the next great thing,” but seems never to quite make it quite all the way to our homes. Not that the effort has been totally in vain – we benefit a great deal from the fact that fiberoptics have been more

6

7 -->

I recently wanted to automate part of some periodic activities. These activities involve using dates



for many purposes. This is not a big problem ... when I do things by typing the commands. But it seemed to be quite a problem to create commands with the numerous configurations of date-related data properly intertwined in the rest of the text.

Why? One problem is formatting. A number of commands needed peculiar formats for the data. Another problem is that today's date is not the only date the process required. Computing dates from the year, month and day can be a bit of a chore. It turns out that the date command has taken much of this difficulty into account. One just has to

<-3 Peanut Observations

this point I wanted to watch the jay's to see what they were up to, wondering if they would come in like they normally do now that the hawk was gone. So I filled my cup and sat back down at the window to watch. It didn't take long, and the first blue jay very carefully approached, landing first on the fence, then to the ground, snatching a peanut in one swoop and was gone back to the tree. The others basically did the same, never doing their

<--Water Blogged Wump involved in local distribution than ever before, though they usually don't make it to the service entrance box on the side of your house. According to the stated goal, the next seven years is going to be a whirlwind of laying new cables all over the place – literally millions upon millions of miles of the stuff. There's that and, of course, the nearly complete refitting of every sort of communication device with which we're currently familiar – telephones, **7** modems of all sorts, television, etc. – with new interfaces, to say nothing of just outright

learn how to use it.

Perhaps the most well known use Terminal users put the **date** command to is finding out what time it is at the moment.

```
$ date
Mon Nov 3 12:51:46 PST 2008
```

My initial thoughts about dealing with some of the problems I faced revolved around capturing this output and processing it into whatever mish-mosh I needed. But I knew that such processing would be problematic and thus time consuming to create correctly. Such considerations forced me to examine the “man page” for **date**. Good thing, too. The man page pointed out that one could use “seconds from the Epoch” as a parameter and the output had extensive formatting options.

The value of being able to use a time parameter in seconds is that computing things like “a week ago” is a simple

normal every day activity, and not more than one or two were exposed at a time. The next day it was almost a repeat. They came in, but very cautiously. Today I can report that everything is back to normal, the scout reported that the sucker was about, and the peanuts didn't last long.

I suppose that what I'm saying is I'm not much smarter than a dove, because I had no idea that the blue jay's were worried about a hawk, which was the

transformation of these things into things of some other sorts. There are some aspects of this goal that trouble me. May I use the word “ambitious” to describe it? I know we can manage all sorts of technological feats of legerdemain in a seeming nonce these days. I have little doubt the fiber can be produced – we've become quite good at it. But we still have to deploy the stuff. We're good at that too, but it's a messy business at best and not merely on a physical level. Then there's the bit about what we'll do with 10^8 b/s if we can get them. Getting them means they're coming from somewhere and

bit of arithmetic – simply subtract $7 \times 86,400$ from now. In bash, one can do something like this

```
$ x=$(date +%s)
$ date -r $(( x - 7*86400 ))
Mon Oct 27 14:26:26 PDT 2008
```

The first statement gets the time in the %s format, which is the number of seconds from the Epoch. The Epoch is a time chosen as the zero point for time numbers – Wed., Dec. 31, 16:00:00 PST, 1969 in the case of my PowerBook. One problem with Epochs is that at least every 4,294,967,296 seconds they must be redefined because time has “always” been kept as a 32-bit number. It's 136 years but practical considerations have occasioned it to change more frequently. It's one of the few reasons we “need” 64-bit computing – then we only have to worry about moving the Epoch about every 250 billion years or so. But we really don't care as long as

8 -->

last thing I was thinking about. However I did find it extremely interesting that the jay's knew that there was a hawk out and about, and that they cautioned each other to be careful, while the doves, like me, didn't seem to have a clue. It's funny how things work out: on the one hand, I'm feeding milo to the doves, and on the other I'm feeding dove to the hawk. My wife is not happy about that, but what the heck, I'm a hunter, I side with the hawk.

mostly, it's believed they'll come from a relatively small number of sources. The implication is that these sources will need to have astronomical bandwidth. Finally there's the bit about money. True, such bits will be very cheap by the each. But remember that one must multiply that minuscule cost by their astronomical number. I suspect the powers that be are of the belief that we'll all be willing to pay a great deal more than I suspect most of us are really willing, or even able, to pay. What do you think?



<--1 Check List

– food looked good – Irv ate breakfast – but a tad spendy for me – you should come and experiment at being bored), it seemed sensible to also acquire a folding view screen to go along with the group’s projector. After some research and discussion, one was decided upon and purchased. Now we can pretty much go anywhere there’s electrical power and put on a computer demo.

The screen was chosen to be as large as we thought might be reasonably carried in a car. My wife was skeptical about this, so while I was not paying attention, she decided to stick it in the car all by herself, thus proving her skepticism unwarranted. But it had the somewhat peculiar side effect of hiding the screen from me when it was my turn to pack the group’s goodies into the car to go off to the meeting. I wish I could blame all the subsequent events of the evening on this but that’s simply wrong: I managed to mess things up all by myself.

I generally leave very early for a meeting at the church out on Buckhorn Road because there are several people there I don’t get to visit nearly often enough to suit me (their opinions on the frequency may differ). Since I don’t get around all that much, I normally don’t wear street clothes much; just sweat pants and tee-shirt, I bring up this detail of my existence to set the stage for having bothered to check

my pocket contents. My pants are a bit like a women’s purse – which means I’m not the suave, debonair sort who’s form fitting slacks bulge only with the outline of the thinnest of money clips – they are chocked full of all sorts of stuff that I find useful from time to time. Note that this doesn’t include lipstick or a make-up compact with a mirror (I do carry an old plastic comb ... despite my having nothing much to use it on – it’s a habit I’ve yet to break – and a fingernail clipper that’s been with me for over half my life so far). I have keys for locks that I have no idea as to the current location, a set of vehicle keys, a copy of my wife’s car keys, three USB flash drives (each larger than the last), an assortment of knives, a magnifying loupe, a wallet and a wadded up old kerchief (it probably has moths living in it). Needless to say, I don’t care if change jingles in my pockets when I walk because all the other stuff manages to rattle like mad anyway. So, when I got dressed, I ran my hands over the pants pockets contents to inventory things. Yup, all was fine.

Next I began collecting all the stuff I have to bring to meetings. There’s the group’s hard drive (available for member use to put a presentation together) and the video projector. This is when I discovered the screen was “missing.” There was a plastic “foot” lying atop the projector box. The only thing I could think of that it could have come from was the screen. It had fallen off when my wife took the

screen to the car. The reason it fell off is that the plastic is split along a casting seam (going to have to fix **9 -->**)

<--7 Dread Terminal

date knows what Epoch it’s working with. In the second statement, a week’s worth of seconds are subtracted from “now” and provided as the time to decode into its constituent parts.

One of the things I needed for this process was the date in European format: yyyy-mm-dd. This is a more rational format for doing computations than the day-month-year format Americans typically use. It turns out to be easy with the formatting controls provided by the date command. For example

```
$ date -r $(( x - 7*86400 ))  
+ "%Y-%m-%d"
```

2008-10-26



produces an output in the form needed that’s one week prior to the time stored in the variable **x**. In case it’s not obvious why this form is convenient for computation, it’s that both arithmetic comparisons and textual comparisons result in the same outcome. Such things are very convenient for programs written in Perl or shell scripts, allowing one to do things without converting data from one form to another.

Coming Soon to an **ABCC** Near You!

For a change, we are planning to have October’s meeting in November. That means we’re tentatively planning to have November’s meeting in December.

After that, it’s back to someone asking, “What do you want to do?”

To which the inevitable answer is, “I don’t know. What do you want to do?”

So, I’m asking you first! (Hey – Mom always like you best. ;-)

Seriously, we have a new year coming up and need to have some programs defined for 2009’s meetings. Unwad your aluminum foil beanies, slap ‘em on your noggin to keep out distracting thoughts and come up with some stuff.



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←-8 Check List

that). Since I was showing a movie, I stole the amplified speakers off my G5 and packed them and a plug strip into doubled-up plastic bags, tossing in the plastic foot. By this time, I'd discovered that the screen was already in the car. I packed things out to the car, placing things in the trunk.

Then I came back in, got my hat and coat, went back to the car and put them in the passenger seat, got in ... and it occurred to me that I didn't have our tripod to mount the projector on. So, I went back into the house, hunted about for the tripod, failing miserably to find it. Like husbands are wont to do when they can't find something, I asked my wife where it was. She said it was in the closet ... where I had been looking. So, I looked again. There it was. I grabbed the box, went back to the car, stood the box on the passenger side floor, leaning it back against the passenger seat, tilting it out at the top so it would be less likely to swing over and club my right hand whilst shifting (it's not an automatic – once upon a time I raced a sports car). Again, I was ready to plunge the key into the steering column ... and recalled that I'd been mentally threatening for a few weeks to take the reciprocating saw into town to get a set screw for holding the saw blades in place to replace the one that had been lost. So, I went back to the house, got the saw, took it back to the car and put it on the floor by the tripod.

Finally, I was off. I stopped in at Oregon Tool & Supply and they graciously fitted a set screw. I got an extra and a wrench to fit the new screws. It's a strange thing. The wrench that went with the OEM set screw was very much larger than the one that works with the replacement. The original must have been very lightweight because it must have had very thin walls: cuts the reciprocating mass down, I guess. Anyway, I finally was headed out to Buckhorn Road. I'd not seen John & Judy Waller for

a some time and decided to drop in unannounced. But I wasn't successful – they actually read the newsletter! John's comment: "You're early." We settled in front of CNN, discussed the world's problems, etc., enjoying ourselves, lounging in comfortable chairs whilst Judy trundled the lawn mower about the yard. Ah, the good life. The clock ticked its way around to the point where I needed get down to the church to set things up, so I bade them farewell 'til 7.

Dale was just getting ready to go open the church when I drove up in his driveway. We both drove the distance of one lot over to the church. Dale went for the door and I started lugging stuff from the car to the meeting room. After I got it all in there, I got the screen out of its flimsy cover (anyone care to volunteer making a real cover for it?) and set it up. We'd chosen to use the room off the church's kitchen since it's more intimate than the main hall. It has a table, so we didn't need the tripod. I went to the box to pull out the projector when it suddenly dawned on me that I'd forgotten one rather essential ingredient – my laptop with the video on it.

After stewing about for a few minutes, pointing out that I was not going to drive all the way home to get the bloody thing and drive all the way back, it occurred to me that Dave Archer, who'd not yet arrived, had a PowerBook just like mine. Since I had the video on my 8GB USB flash drive in my right pants pocket, if he brought his PowerBook, we could still show the video. I called Dave. He'd forgotten about the meeting but agreed to bring his machine. Since he's just a few more houses down the road than Dale, he arrived in a few minutes. We set up his computer, bringing out the extension cord that Jim McClellan brought. I still had not decanted the projector, but that didn't matter yet because we had to get the video loaded onto Dave's computer. I reached into my right pants pocket, fishing around for the 8GB USB flash drive. After

some considerable pocket pool, changing pockets from right to left, from front to back and finally dumping the contents on the table, it was clear my 8GB USB flash drive was not present.

By now I'd already thought of downloading the file via the 'net. I could do it from a couple of sources at my place, including the PowerBook that was supposed to be with me, but was, instead, sitting on its Martha Stewart cooling rack on the table next to the couch in front of the TV. Worse coming to worst, I thought, maybe I could find the original source of the video once again. As it turned out, none of these alternatives was necessary ... because we could not access the Internet from the church anyway. Yes, we had a good, strong WiFi signal, but somewhere they'd decided to require a password to access it. Despite Dale having a key to the church he had no clue as to the password.

We were done. So, Dave took his computer and went home. By that time, some late comers who'd missed the whole insane unfolding of events, arrived. So, we sat and discussed whatever crossed our minds for about an hour. The consensus was that I should try again next month. OK. But this time I hope I've taken the time to make a list of everything I need to take and have printed it out and given it to my wife so she can thump me about the stuff I haven't managed to get right when the time comes ... again.

[Note: John Waller called about an hour after we got home to say he'd found the 8GB USB flash drive. So, we could have gone and gotten it ... if we'd known where it was ... sigh.]

PS: John dropped the 8GB USB flash drive off the other day. I plugged it in to my PowerBook. As I looked at the Finder window listing the top level directory of the flash drive, I wondered where the video was. Not seeing it, I reorganized the window to systematically determine where it was. Only, it wasn't. Sigh...

