NARCISSISM TODAY

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GREENSPUN WORKED 100 HOURS/WEEK IN 1990 AND ACCOMPLISHED VIRTUALLY NOTHING

Melrose, MA, February 1 -- Despite his success in the field of narcissism, Philip Greenspun's life in 1990 was a bleak landscape of incompetence and futility.

Lynnell Stern's New Year's party was a falsely auspicious start to 1990. Cathy Sullivan was unfortunate enough to meet Greenspun at Lynnell's. Despite years of prosecuting violent criminals, Cathy was taken in by Greenspun and, at his instigation, adopted a neurotic Shepard-Collie mix (Betsy). For Greenspun, the party interrupted frantic preparations for the consumer electronics show, where Isosonics first exposed itself to the public. Those same weeks brought heroic efforts to get the VidCode TV commercial recognition system working. This is 2000 little boards around the nation that watch TV, recognize encoded commercials and compile reports for advertisers on where, when and with what quality their commercials were aired.

Greenspun stepped back 20 years and learned C, a loathsome product of the 1960s currently enjoying a vogue here in the technological Third World. Learning to use C, the IBM PC and the $2 computer on the VidCode board took an entire weekend during which Greenspun was heard howling with despair. Actual programming took only a week, but left our subject moaning for months about the sorry state of the US.

If You Can't Do ...

Bright spots during January included two short IAP courses at MIT organized by Greenspun, one on how to bankrupt a small company and one on taking bad pictures using $30,000 of equipment. Students, inured to low quality at high prices by the price-fixing Ivy League, loved both courses.

~~Sun~~ Drenched Hawaii

February found our subject taking Rebecca Schudlich, the woman he'd loved for two years, on a three week trip to Hawaii. They planned to hike in the mountains and take pictures with the 100 lbs of cameras Greenspun schlepped out there; Mother Nature planned otherwise.

It was sunny on the first and last days. Period. The "always sunny" sides of Kauai and Hawaii were grey and the "sometimes rainy" sides were drenched by endless torrential downpours (1 inch per day for two months).

As the clouds began at 10 feet above sea level, Rebecca and Philip thought it best to snorkel at the beach and take underwater photos. Swimming with 70 dolphins, who zoomed directly underneath Philip about 20 feet underwater, was exciting. So was swimming three miles through the open ocean to and from a famed snorkeling spot, emerging from the water and being told of all the people who'd died swimming in the same area during the last month.

"We lived the lazy Hawaiian lifestyle, driving onto deserted beaches in our Isuzu Trooper 4WD and camping. Despite the rain, we found the trip extremely relaxing due to the attitude of the residents. It was relaxing to be among people who think of work last," noted Philip.

Final day perfection: terrace breakfast at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel ("Where old Republicans go to die"), snorkeling off the hotel's white sand beach under a blue sky, and illegally chasing protected green sea turtles to get better photos.

Too Much Togetherness?

Upon returning to Massachusetts, refreshed and unconcerned with the merely material, Philip was asked for his views on marraige by Rebecca. He mildly noted that he'd rather kill himself. Philip forget this conversation; Rebecca did not. Four months later, on July 1, Rebecca noted that "it is perfectly possible for a woman to be happy without the society of a more or less coarse-minded person of another sex." Greenspun was crushed, but knew he had it coming. Epilogue: Rebecca is finishing her ocean physics Ph.D. and starts her new job in June doing physical modelling at U. Washington in Seattle. Greenspun spent months singing "My Baby's Turnin' Cold and the Fo'cast Calls for Pain."

Spilling Into Living Rooms

Greenspun exposed himself to the nation when he testified before the Senate Commerce Committe to oppose the DAT Bill of 1990 mandating technology and a pricing structure for digital audio record-

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NARCISSISM CROWN SECURE

Cambridge, MA, February 1 -- Back in the self-absorption capital of the world, Philip Greenspun has retained his position at the forefront of narcissism. Although 1990 was mostly a year of bankruptcy and shame, Greenspun sailed through with his ego intact. Not only did he apply for readmission to the Ph.D. program in electrical engineering and computer science at MIT, but he mailed out another incredibly obnoxious New Year's recitals of his achievements.

Dr. Donald Goethe of the Jung Institute in Zurich said that "once again we are in awe of his typesetting and sending out the newsletter late."

1991 FORECAST OPTIMISTIC

Experts agree that 1991 looks good for Greenspun. MIT's refusal to admit incompetence in admitting Greenspun to begin with means that he'll be back in the warm bosom of Technology Square, concentrating on writing *Automating Earthmoving*, possibly travelling to Japan for research.

Philip's brother, Harry ("doctor bro"), has invited Philip to join him, wife Julie and two other doctors on a chartered sailing catamaran off St. Lucia (near Grenada) in March. Philip gets seasick and agrees with Jackie Mason: "there's nothing sadder than a Jew with a boat."

Working with Bruce and Henry at Cambridge Video Engineering should be satisfying. All Greenspun has to do is engineering -- big, rich, smart companies do the financing, manufacturing and selling.

Periodic business trips to Paris may be in the offing, to be supplemented by European vacations.

Invitations from Marion (to Alaska), Chicca (to Rome) and Suzanne (to Cairo) will also likely be accepted. 1991 will be restless, but fun.

1990: OPENING A DECADE OF MEDIOCRITY

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ers. Sen. DeConcini (D Az), one of the Keating Five, introduced the bill and wearily pushed it even though it was clear that the only people who would benefit were Japanese electronics vendors. Despite spending a lot of money and hiring numerous American shills, the Japanese did not prevail and the bill died. Several times in June and July, CSPAN dumped the entire spectacle into America's living rooms.

Isosonics Bites the Dust

After three years of being "one month from bankruptcy," Greenspun & fellow Isosonians fired each other on August 30, 1990 and threw themselves on the Commonwealth. Although depressing, the actual demise was a relief.

Nordic Despair

In Switzerland in September, Philip took advice from Mark Roberts and read Knut Hamsun, the light-hearted Nobel laureate (1920 Prize for Nordic Despair). *Hunger* (down out lonely and deranged in the city) and *Pan* (down out lonely and deranged in the woods) prepared Greenspun to spend October futilely attempting to resurrect Isosonics or at least sell its bones. On October 23, Greenspun mailed out a death notice to those who had ordered machines, along with 100% refunds, even to people in complicated foreign countries.

Meg Hunnewell, a dazzling combination of New England breeding, European style, Los Angeles glitz and New York hustle, nursed Greenspun through his difficulties with Isosonics. Meg's years of experience spending hordes of other people's money on pictures like *The Cotton Club* enabled her to put a penny-ante failure such as Isosonics in perspective.

Cousin Harry Gittes was a big help as well. Greenspun, fishing for a little sympathy from Harry, said "we needed to raise a million bucks or so, which I know isn't a lot by your standards ...". Harry replied "that's right, Philip, it's chicken feed."

Making? it in Massachusetts

Bruce Keilin, Greenspun's partner in Isosonics, started a company that reflects their newfound wisdom: 1) don't do anything that requires raising money, 2) make sure that all you have to do is engineering. Greenspun is merely a consultant to Cambridge Video Engineering (Dirty Harry: "A man has to know his limitations").

CVE is in a Harvard Square townhouse (stop by 12 Gerry Street, across from the Mount Auburn St. Post Office, 354-9880).

CVE is designing video circuits for Go-Video, the Scottsdale, AZ company that constitutes the American consumer electronics industry. Go-Video has made headlines with their dual-deck VCR and antitrust lawsuits against the Japanese consumer electronics cartel.

Shooting it in Arizona

Greenspun and long-time partner Henry Wu flew out to Arizona at the end of October. New friend Robin Leatherman, studying EE at Arizona State University, welcomed them over some sushi and ice cream. After a productive weekend meeting with Go-Video, Greenspun struck out alone for the desert, 100 lbs of camera on his shoulders.

"The combination of the red rock of Canyon de Chelly, cottonwood trees in fall yellow, and a deep blue sky was unforgettable." Greenspun made friends with another photographer, MIT Class of 1944. After a day touring the canyon, he suddenly decided to give Greenspun the benefit of a lifetime of engineering wisdom: "learn C"; Greenspun wept.

Greenspun also visited Petrified National Forest and the painted desert, but the most spectacular shooting was in the Corkscrew, a "slot canyon" 80 feet deep but only 3-10 feet wide.

Standing on the dry floor of the canyon, Greenspun put his Rollei on a tripod and pointed the camera up toward the inner canyon walls. No direct sunlight reaches through the circuitous canyon and exposures were up to 10 minutes. Plenty of sand does reach the floor, resulting in the sickening sound of grit in the focusing mechanism of $2000 lenses.

The resulting photos were fabulously eery. Shown contact sheets at a brunch, Gerard McCullough noted that some of the photos looked very sexual. Greenspun said "yes, they do look like volvos"; the guests all looked confused until Greenspun explained that "only Swedish women have them."

Tech Tip for Nerds: Never shoot Kodak slide film. Use new Fuji Velvia.

New Year's 1991

Greenspun co-hosted a benefit for the Big Brother Association at the snooty Algonquin Club in Back Bay. Glamorous Meg came up from New York to demonstrate how frumpy are Bostonians. Scott Brazina and Roxanne D'Ambolo showed up to rescue Greenspun from the tiresome upper crust.

Ragheads, Camel Jockeys

Brother-in-law Jeffrey Goode finally achieved his goal of working in foreign aid. Rather than join the Peace Corps (rich Jews from Scarsdale goto poor countries to teach poor people how to be poor), Jeff chose AID, part of the US foreign aid apparatus (tax poor people in rich countries to help rich people in poor countries).

Your tax dollars at work: AID can hire only those who speak a foreign language, so they paid Jeff to study Spanish for a year. On January 2, 1991, they sent Greenspun's sister Suzanne and nephews Norman and David to accompany Jeff on a four year stint in the Spanish capital of the Levant: Cairo.

AID didn't even give them basic Third World education: learning to tell the difference between ragheads and camel jockeys. Nor did Suzanne and Jeff learn how to locate moderate Arabs (ones who have run out of ammunition).

No Francesca? Bomb Iraq

Chicca De Marco showed up for a ten day visit on January 1, bringing her Italian sunshine and poetry to bleak, frigid and prosaic Boston. Chicca helped Greenspun build a photo studio in the diningroom, add four huge cabinets to the kitchen, enjoy Boston's art and culture scene, recover from a cold, and enjoy the new year. Chicca charmed every American with her soft, deep Roman voice, her lasagna, her poetic soul and her thoughtful consideration. We were so upset after she left that we had to carpet bomb the Iraqis.

The Last Word

1990 was a year of bewilderment for Greenspun, who stumbled blindly from catastrophe to disaster. "I am only glad that I did all this while I was still young. If I had left a professorship at MIT for the greener grass of the start-up world, ignored and impoverished a family, only to ultimately fail, I might not be smiling."

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BANKRUPT IN SWITZERLAND

As so many presidents of nearly-bankrupt corporations do, Greenspun made a trip to Switzerland in September. He stopped off in Paris for two days to visit Matra, which is developing some new 3D modelling software. Greenspun was impressed by the depth of knowledge and foresight among the senior management at Matra, so different from the harlequinade at the top of American software firms.

The high point of the Parisian trip was dinner with Susie Wiegand and her French lover Maurice, described by Susie's mom as "rude, dirty and lazy, like all the French." Naturellement, he turned out to be charmant. Greenspun tortured Parisians with his junior high school French in a midnight to 2 am trip via subway, R.E.R., bus and foot back to the hotel, 30 miles SW of Paris. "People complain that the French are rude, but never do anything about it. I got a C in French 15 years ago and enjoy walking up to complete strangers and asking 'Is it that I love potatoes at raining on 39 Boulevard Barbes?' You can hear them grinding their teeth," said Greenspun.

Swiss Movement

Greenspun spent a week in Switzerland, including a charmed visit to Gruyeres, a medeival hill town NE of Lausanne where the French Suisse make the best cheese in the world (the Schweizer Deutsche 30 miles east make the world's worst). Greenspun had been invited to this romantic town by beautiful and sophisticated Linda Banks, a Connecticut architect he'd met on the NY-Orly flight.

Geneve, Lausanne, Berne and Lucerne were clean, sterile and a bit misty. A cruise on Lake Geneva with Dr. Ouzifa Trabelsi, 35, newly wed to a 19 year-old Algerian nearly resulted in Greenspun's marriage to the beautiful, but alas reluctant, 21 year-old sister-in-law. On the same boat, Greenspun had the good fortune to meet a real rocket scientist: Masashi Okada from Japan's NASA and his wife Mariko. Masashi shattered Greenspun's illusions of Japanese infallibility by confessing that their rockets also blow up.

Three days of hiking around Grindelwald, a train ride with the warm, friendly, beautiful and blond Cornelia Schumacher, and a gracious dinner hosted by Marc-Henri Christinet in Morges were sufficient fortification for the return flight.

Frogs Love Greasy Nerd

Ever the diplomat, Greenspun sent the Matra's head of research ten pages explaining that "everything you are doing makes perfect sense, assuming you are a total pinhead." The man, one of Bezier's colleagues, was sufficiently enraged to demand Greenspun's consulting services.

Greenspun is going to help Matra build systems that capture constraints from the designers, such as "this frobnitz must be tangent to that geegaw and half its length." Travel to Paris will regrettably be required.

MIT DECLINE ACCELERATES

MIT was a top trade school for nearly a century until it began to practice race discrimination in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Vietnam protests hampered instruction. In the 1980s, MIT noted that smart alums tended to become professors or engineers while stupid alums tended to gravitate toward business and marketing, make piles of money and donate it to MIT. Thus, MIT enrolled more stupid ("well-rounded") people. However, nothing has tarnished MIT's reputation so much as Philip Greenspun's readmission to the Ph.D. program in electrical engineering and computer science. Dir. of Admissions Ira Shatz: "Ve didn't vant to look like real putzes for letting him in to begin vith, so ve had to let him come back."

Citing Greenspun's strong background in mathematics, MIT denied his request to help teach 6.041 (probability for EE juniors). Consequently, Greenspun will be forced to finish his master's thesis -- a requirement in the Ph.D. program.

Presented with a list of ambitious research to be conducted for the master's thesis, Greenspun's advisor Gerry Sussman noted that "your brain has deteriorated well beyond the point where actual technical work should be attempted. Why don't you just write up the work you did on computer-aided earthmoving for ConSolve?"

Greenspun was not content to watch his thesis collect dust in the MIT library. "I want my thesis to collect dust in bookstores worldwide, so I'm making this a book: *Automating Earthmoving*. The Japanese will read this and be able to change the way the world pushes dirt around. Maybe they'll think I'm famous and invite me to speak in Japan."

THANKSGIVING WITH JEWS

Belmont, MA, Thanksgiving -- Philip's parents in Bethesda, Jean and Nat, are so fond of his company that they requested he stay in Boston for Thanksgiving. Thus, did Philip end up at an (almost) all-Jewish pseudo-Sedar hosted by Jill Eskenazi and attended by three attractive single women: Abby, Marion, and Nomi.

Abby sat next to Philip and only bit him once; ten days later, Philip had his first date with a Jewish girl in years. Things went perfectly. Philip: "We were sitting on the sofa at 9 pm, listening to some Mozart, and what do you think the effect of being so close to me was?" Philip's best friends (without hesitation): "She puked." Philip: "She got up and left."

Small ... : Big Camera

To compensate for his sexual inadequacy, Philip purchased another medium format camera ($700) and went to Marion and Nomi's party. He expected to be greeted warmly since, at Jill's, it had been love at first sight with Marion. Marion: "I thought he was gay." Philip: "She was good looking, scantily clad and seated where I couldn't talk to her; I naturally assumed she was stupid."

Attempting to smooth over his rough edges and develop more appeal to women, Philip went for a sophisticated, low-key approach: "Why don't you and Nomi strip naked and pose with the dogs for some photos?" Marion was impressed enough to fly to Alaska.

Personal Injury and Food

Marion Kelly is a woman whose life revolves around personal injury and food. Dad is a personal injury lawyer in hometown Anchorage, Alaska. Marion was run over by a car when she was 14 then worked her way through UC Berkeley as a *sous chef* and studied at the Cordon Bleu in London. Marion now works as a personal injury paralegal by day and studies law by night at Suffolk University [Ed: pronounced "So Fuck U"] so that she can join the ranks of full-fledged ambulance chasers.

We asked the beautiful Marion what she saw in the homely, self-centered Greenspun: "Product liability litigation has made most engineers extremely careful to design safe products. An engineer with Philip Greenspun's talent could support our firm for years."