

# 2003

Spine.cx posts from the year 2003.

- [Christmas Oddities](#)
- [Company non-denominational holiday party 2003](#)
- [The holiday meal of champions](#)
- [Pay what you want for music](#)
- [Captain Morgan Private Stock](#)
- [Personal computers as home entertainment centres](#)
- [Rememberance Day](#)
- [I have a confession to make](#)
- [Steve goes to Wisconsin](#)
- [Hurricane Juan](#)
- [HRM drops Clayton Park speed limits](#)
- [Springtime Fall = new roommate](#)
- [Nigerians get wise](#)
- [New sections to the website](#)
- [Ryan & Sarah's housewarming](#)
- [Nova Scotia International Air Show](#)
- [Spine.cx is two!](#)
- [Two weddings in as many weeks](#)
- [Camping in the rain sucks](#)
- [Tucker Max suit dropped by plaintiff](#)
- [Frequent masturbation lessens risk of prostate cancer](#)
- [Low-volume flush toilets are crap!](#)
- [Happy Canada Day!](#)
- [At least we have our priorities straight](#)

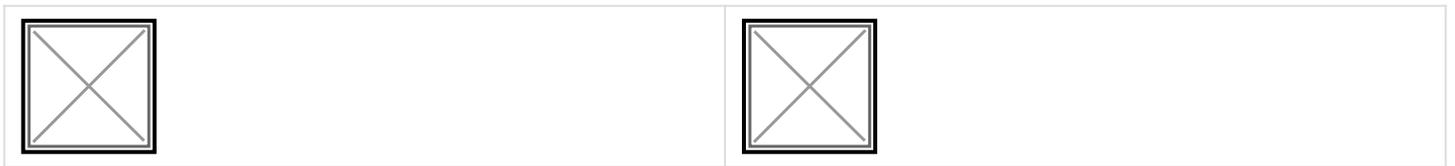
- [Some people are just weird](#)
- [What's there to do in Halifax in the fall?](#)
- [Why do I always get the crazy ones?](#)
- [Ownership of Montreal Grill](#)
- [TABU: Forbidden Fruit](#)
- [Palm Zire 71](#)
- [Group wants you to donate your \\$155 cheque to charity](#)
- [Greekfest 2003](#)
- [FNP 7: The Matrix Get-Loaded](#)
- [Bacardi Cyclon](#)
- [I am the champion](#)
- [FNP 7: Crawl updates](#)
- [Camping trip 2003 redux](#)
- [Somebody's getting a littering ticket](#)
- [The only thing worse than software problems...](#)
- [Ads?! WTF!?](#)
- [Steve's Trip to Newfoundland](#)
- [No smoking in public in 2008](#)
- [It's spring, and that means Pub Crawl](#)
- [New Photos of the FARK Party and New York](#)
- [A day with Steve in Manhattan](#)
- [Gone again - This time to NYC](#)
- [Back from D.C.](#)
- [Updates from the American Capital](#)
- [Software Developer Union](#)
- [Roll up the Rim is back!](#)
- [Should elevator buttons be toggleable?](#)
- [Unsolicited email is the least of our worries](#)
- [Anyone want to buy a '95 Taurus?](#)
- [They keep building up, don't they?](#)
- [Yo, peeps. This be a throwdown.](#)
- [The weather sucks](#)

- Television is to blame, yet again
- Holy crap it's cold
- Post your poll suggestions
- Crappy hardware free-for-all
- Free tickets to see old men play hockey!
- Smoking in the HRM
- Virtual Beer Bash?
- Pub Crawls
- Happy New Year!

# Christmas Oddities

Merry Christmas (or insert appropriate holiday here) to all you crazy kids out there. Hopefully everyone got what they wanted, whether it be material, spiritual, or emotional.

This Christmas certainly was an unusual one, even if you're only speaking about the temperature. I mean, 14 degrees (at the peak), what's up with that? I happen to have some photos for comparison taken three years apart of the same scene out my front door. One of them, you'll notice, is covered in snow. The other is being bathed in rain.



On top of that weirdness, my dad displayed a fantastic rejection of his conservative roots by giving me a book written by a lesbian muslim. I may be giving him too much credit; he didn't know she was a lesbian. I've read the first chapter and it's pretty good so far. Maybe I'll bookcross it after I'm finished.

I received a generous helping of the standard cookies, candies, and some leftover turkey to take home, but the gift I'm looking most forward to using is my Futureshop gift card ;)

*Originally posted on Friday, 2003-12-26 at 14:30:23.*

# Company non-denominational holiday party 2003

Good times were had by all this past Friday night at the Halifax Curling Club...well, the people who can remember Friday night at least. I managed to have my share of fun while spending only about \$8 on coke and ginger ale by bringing a handy flask of rum with me. That, and coming away from the gift swap with a half-pint of Crown Royal ;)

I also continued the now-three-year-running tradition of me winning stuff. This year, tradition was a two-year-old video card whose drivers render my Windows 2003 machine non-bootable. If anyone has any newer drivers for an ASUS V7100 Deluxe Combo please email me. Basically, it's a GeForce2 MX with a TV tuner.

I know that people are expecting photos, and although I \*did\* take some, they turned out very dark and I don't really think they're worth posting :(

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-12-15 at 09:22:45.*

# The holiday meal of champions

Thanks to some bold reporting by [Outersurf](#) and some trepidacious link clicking of my own, I now know what is the ultimate holiday meal: [The Turducken](#).

What better way to celebrate the holiday season with friends and family than by eating a chicken in a duck in a turkey? Really, you're just being more space effieient. So if you've got a bachelor apartment or something this is really the way to go. Or perhaps you were planning to eat a turkey, and were going to let that chicken and duck go to waste; problem solved!

What other animal combinations would be good to eat?

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-12-08 at 12:56:02.*

# Pay what you want for music

I have recently found what I consider to be the most fantastic website that nobody's ever heard of. From this website, I learned two things: (1) A website *does* exist that will charge a reasonable amount for downloadable CD-quality music; and (2) Courtney Love is not as wacky as you think.

Just like Magnatune's slogan implies, they are not as evil the as major recording labels. Their take on music sales is more like the donation bin at an art gallery than the cash register at the record store. You can listen to music (in 128 Kbps mp3 format) before you buy anything, and when you *do* buy it, you can **choose** to pay anywhere from \$5 to \$18.

This is the first instance, I believe, of the software's "shareware" type of model in the record industry. Seven genres of music, loads of artists, each with multiple albums -- there is plenty of music to browse through and listen to. With the try-before-you-buy model that they have, there's no chance of buying some thing that you're not going to like.

Downloads are available in MP3, the original WAV, OGG Vorbis, MP3 variable bitrate, or FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec). Get more information about the site here.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-12-08 at 11:00:14.*

# Captain Morgan Private Stock

I don't know how many of you Spine Dorks are rum drinkers, but I surely am. Until recently, I thought Captain Morgan Deluxe was just about the best dark rum out there...that is until I discovered Captain Morgan Private Stock.

It only comes in 750 mL bottles, which cost about \$35 each. That's a little steep for a bottle of rum, but this isn't just any bottle of rum. This is simply the smoothest, fullest-flavoured, spiciest-romaed rum I have ever tasted. It is absolutely delicious. I have not yet found the need to even mix it with anything -- it's that smooth.

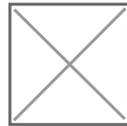


*Mmmm...mmm. This is some of the best rum that money can buy.*

You know how you can tell the classy wine from the crappy wine? The classy wine comes with a cork while the crappy wine has a screw off top. Well, apparently it's the same with rum. Once you remove the foil-like wrapper at the top, there's a cork stopper in the bottle. That, and the shape of the bottle itself, gives you that authentic feeling that this was really smuggled out of some caribbean island.

Even if you're not a regular rum drinker, I highly recommend that you pick a quart of this up for whenever I come over.

Steve gives  
Captain Morgan Private Stock  
Thumbs Up!



*Originally posted on Sunday, 2003-11-30 at 21:25:01.*

# Personal computers as home entertainment centres

It's been mentioned [in the forums](#) a few times, so I'll bring it to the forefront. I think it's pretty much inevitable that personal computers are going to play a bigger role in the houses of tomorrow than they do today. While today, I have a personal computer controlling my lights and playing my media, this is not the norm. The masses are still using physical vs. virtual media.

For me, this transition was natural, mainly because I'm lazy. I mean, who wants to keep shuffling around CDs all the time just because I want to listen to a different band? Pointing and clicking for audio is where it's at. With a big enough hard drive, you can rip DVDs as you purchase them and view them on-demand at any time as well. Not to mention the TiVo-like applications that can turn your computer into a personal video recorder.

The most vocal objection I hear to this paradigm is, "I don't want to watch movies on my computer." My response: Has nobody ever heard of TV-out? Most video cards will at least have a composite out, if not S-Video. After all, TiVos are basically a subset of a personal computer with respect to their abilities and functionality, and people use those with reckless abandon.

If more people *\*did\** watch movies and television on their computers (while hooked up to their television), the most vocal objection I would expect to hear is, "There is too much fan-noise." And I would agree. S2K and others have brought up some fantastic solutions to this problem [in the forums](#), so I won't duplicate them here.

My question to you is: What is necessary to help speed this into the mainstream? The faster this becomes the norm, the sooner I can say something like, "Hey, I missed CSI last night, can you upload it to me?" I can *\*almost\** do this now, mainly because my social circle is comprised of a lot of geeks like me :) Still, I can't wait for this attitude to become more prevalent.

If the network is the computer, then the media is the network.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-11-25 at 11:22:33.*

# Remembrance Day

If any of you guys are planning to be at a Remembrance Day ceremony, maybe we could meet there. I'm planning to be at the ceremony at the Grand Parade in downtown Halifax. I generally get there around 10:15 or so, to try and secure a parking spot and get a coffee beforehand :) If you're interested, lets meet at the Tim Hortons on Barrington and Sackville Streets at 10:30.

I think that Remembrance Day is one of, if not the most, important holiday that we, as Canadians, can celebrate. It is completely independant of religion, and truly, if it were not for the things we remember on Remembrance Day, we would probably not have the freedom of religion that we enjoy today.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-11-10 at 11:38:24.*

# I have a confession to make

I did something I'm not proud of this weekend. It made me feel kind of dirty. Tainted. Unclean. I went to the Palace. And it was all that I hoped it could be.

Unfortunately, gone were the Sunday night \$1 drink specials. The "promo" bar was selling beer for exactly the same price that the rest of the place was: a hefty \$4. Fortunately, the clientele hadn't changed much. Still there were the women not dressed in much (read: 'skanks') and the lecherous old men (read: 'me'). Somehow, it just wasn't the same without Jerry's though.

But the best part of all? The Palace is now completely non-smoking (except for the man-made stuff released over the dance floor).

Completely by accident, I happened upon a DJ competition. The competitors were not really remarkable, with the exception of the last two (who ended up placing first and second). The second last guy performed his entire, flawless set without the use of headphones. I still have no idea how he was able to cue up the next record or to beat mix with the previous song. Truly amazing.

The last guy, who goes by the name of "Skratch Bastard", did some of the craziest mixes I have ever seen. Imagine the line "Shake that thing" taken from Led Zepplin's "Black Dog" mixed with Sean Paul's "Shake that thing" and you have some idea of what I'm talking about. Done live, it's even more impressive. Without a beat missed, he mixed in a new baseline and turned Guns'n'Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" into the newest dance hit. If Skratch Bastard is ever playing, I highly encourage you to go see him. I will definately be seeking him out again.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-10-14 at 10:48:29.*

# Steve goes to Wisconsin

Even though I went to Wisconsin before Juan hit, I thought that Juan was bigger news. The astute among you may have noticed that I have also posted [pictures of my trip](#) in the photos section. It was a fun time. I got to hang out with State-side Spine Dorks [Emily](#) and [Dr. Nick](#) in their natural habitat.

Over the course of this trip, I visited some strange and wonderful places, such as [Milwaukee Brewers](#) baseball games, and the local watering hole, [the Brazen Head](#).

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-10-01 at 20:15:13.*

# Hurricane Juan

So, I guess we had a hurricane. I almost wish I was here for it, but instead, I was stuck in a Howard Johnson's in Newark. My flight home got cancelled because of our friend Juan. As of Tuesday night, my house still does not have power (I'm writing this at my brother's place on Lady Hammond Road) and isn't scheduled to have it restored until Wednesday night.

Since there was nothing to do at home, I jumped in the car and drove around to take pictures of the carnage. My car was also the only place I had to listen to the radio, so I wasn't being \*totally\* voyeuristic :) What really pissed me off was that I lost my nearly-year-long uptime for spine.cx :(

[Here](#) are the photos of the carnage. Remember to rate them!

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-10-01 at 00:08:43.*

# HRM drops Clayton Park speed limits

The speed limits for quite a few streets coming off the Bedford Highway have been reduced to 40 kph. These streets include Bayview & Flamingo, two of the most travelled roads in that part of the city. I can understand why they're doing it. I mean, I've seen cars that are trying, hopelessly, to back out of their driveways in the morning among all the rush-hour traffic. These streets were obviously not designed to handle the amount of commuter traffic that they now do.

The real problem, in my opinion, is the lack of ways to get off of the Halifax peninsula. Currently there are only three: The armdale rotary (and we all know what a traffic snarl that can be), the Bi-Hi entrance on Joseph Howe Drive (recently made much better by some modifications), and the Windsor Street exchange leading to the Bedford Highway (which was widened, but still sucks).

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-09-04 at 16:29:35.*

# Springtime Fall = new roommate

So it seems that every year for the last 4, the ~~spring~~ fall brings with it the promise of a new roommate for Steve. This year, it's my friend Brent Rockwood. He's a computer guy too, and he's bringing with him all sorts of hardware and wireless networkingly good things. I'm excited.

Together we will form a geek stronghold the likes of which have never been seen! And we will call ourselves Tenacious D! No, wait...I think somebody has that name. Well, whatever.

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-08-28 at 10:10:45.*

# Nigerians get wise

For the first time in months, a Nigerian spam email has broken through my spam filter. It seems they finally got wise to the fact that we're basically ignoring and/or ridiculing them so they decided to write a new template for spam. It has similar elements to the original Nigerian Spam, but it's different enough so that my spam filter didn't count a single hit against it.

You can read it below.

*Date: Fri, 22 Aug 2003 21:20:27 -0600  
From: aaezie toby <aaezie1@123.com>  
To: aaezie1@123.com  
Subject: good home needed*

*Sir*

*I wish to use this medium to introduce myself and express my Client's desire buy a living house in your country.I am Aaezie Henry Toby an Attorney in Nigeria and my client is looking for a trust worthy man that take care of his future investments overseas.He is a former Liberian Director Auditing & Accounting Department of Ministry of Defence Headquarters presently on assylum in Nigeria.*

*If you know that you can help,get to me and so that I will give you the necessray information that will enable us to proceed.Once you have contacted me,you should bear in mind that it should be confidential and private.*

*Barr.Aaezie Henry Toby N/B.Bear in mind that it is not only house that he wishes to buy and you shall be compensated adequately for your help.*

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-08-23 at 02:04:12.*

# New sections to the website

So there are parts to PHPNuke that I've never used yet, but I think I might start. Mike has written a review of a video game he's bought recently. and I have integrated the subway thing into the main site. They're there, and I don't presently take advantage of them, so I said, what the hell?

You can also get links to these things in a little box on the left side, below the calendar thingys.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-08-19 at 09:51:48.*

# Ryan & Sarah's housewarming

Photos from the kick-ass party I was at on the weekend past. There was much beer. I think I drank most of it, or at least that's the way it felt. I took some photos.

There were a number of people there I didn't know, which was cool. Too many parties I go to now have all the same yokels that I see everyday. There definately needs to be some new faces in the photo gallery. Gotta mix it up. Gotta keep it interesting.

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-08-14 at 10:01:50.*

# Nova Scotia International Air Show

Those of you who are in the know will already be aware that the Nova Scotia International Air Show is taking place at CFB Shearwater on September 6th and 7th. It's usually a good time, and it looks like they've actually put some effort into planning it this year. Hopefully it will actually be sunny for this event -- not like the dripping-sky ass weather that we've had for the past week.

Might be a great place to organize a flash mob. I say we do it near the Americans with the large guns.  
*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-08-12 at 10:11:45.*

# Spine.cx is two!

Today is the second anniversary of when I installed PHPNuke on spine.cx and made it the site it is today. Since then, there have been just over 730,000 page views, 3000 comments, and 6300 forum posts. Thanks for putting up with the ads and all that garbage. The site has grown a hell of a lot in the last year, and hopefully, it'll grow even more in the next.

Shout outs to all you playas with the low user IDs and the high post counts ;)

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-08-11 at 10:32:08.*

# Two weddings in as many weeks

One on July 26th, another on August 2nd. I'm actually kind of flattered that I got *invited* to two weddings. I would like to wish Peter and Ian the best of luck in their new states of matrimony.

I took some pictures at Peter's wedding, but at Ian's, I forgot my camera :( Don't forget to comment and rate those photos!

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-08-11 at 10:25:27.*

# Camping in the rain sucks

So, as the title of this article suggests, this weekend, I was camping in the rain and experienced the full magnitude of suck. Thankfully, I was sleeping in the Element and I stayed quite dry -- at least while I slept.

Friday night we sat and drank around a fire. Saturday, it was raining, so we decided to go into town and catch a movie. We saw *American Wedding*. It was very funny and I highly recommend it to anyone who liked the first two. This one is even more "Stifler-centric". Saturday night we sat and drank around a fire.

I also attended the wedding of a friend and coworker of mine, Ian Frosst whom you should all encourage to post more often because he has some completely nonsensical points of view that I'm sure would make S2K's head spin ;) It was a nice ceremony, but it was on the far edge of Upper Middle Eastern Bumblefuck.

I have never seen as much food as I saw at this wedding. Seeing as the majority of their family is vegetarian, they are to be commended for having such a varied array of meat and meat products available. This barbecue wasn't simply hot dogs and hamburgers, but rather succulent steaks and marinated chicken breasts. Delicious.

And the desserts! I nearly went into a diabetic coma. They were so good. I hope he gets married again soon.

*Originally posted on Sunday, 2003-08-03 at 17:46:42.*

# Tucker Max suit dropped by plaintiff

Tucker Max, internet personality, is generally regarded as an asshole -- he'll even admit it himself. He hooked up with this chick named Katy Johnson one night and the encounter was so interesting to him, he wrote about it on his website. She wanted to maintain her squeaky clean image, so she filed suit against Mr. Max.

The big news now is that she has now dropped the suit. Guess she figured she didn't really want to lose in court

*Originally posted on Friday, 2003-07-25 at 00:19:55.*

# Frequent masturbation lessens risk of prostate cancer

From [an article](#) at [CBC.ca](#): "*Scientists in Australia determined that men in their 20s who ejaculated more than five times a week were a third less likely to develop aggressive prostate cancer later in life. The study suggests ejaculation by means of masturbation provides better protection than ejaculation in sexual intercourse because men can pick up infections from intercourse that actually increase the risk of getting prostate cancer.*"

That is all. Please continue...uh...whatever it was you were doing. Nudge nudge, wink wink ;)

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-07-22 at 08:36:49.*

# Low-volume flush toilets are crap!

My dad has just renovated his house. New siding, and a completely new kitchen and bathroom. It looks fantastic, as new and shiny things do. But when shopping for a new toilet (the old one was yellow and just doesn't fit the new colour scheme), the problem of selecting one came up. It's not like you can just go into the store and ask to have one of them hooked up so you can take a test-dump.

And it's not even simply about comfort. (I think I would sit on a prospective toilet for a good 15 minutes and see if my legs go to sleep.) While seat contours are certainly an important qualities to look for in a toilet, there is also the question of LPF (litres per flush).

Traditional toilets would use as much as 20 or 30 litres of water per flush, but recently, environmentalists and hippies have been complaining that too often everything is going down on the first try. They have lobbied government and toilet manufacturerers to produce toilets that use less water. Some use as little as 7 litres per flush. While this may be enough to make a number 1 go away, sometimes it's just not sufficient for a number 2.

I wanted to help out my dad, so my brother and I investigated this problem further. We found an extremely helpful website called [Toiletology.com](http://Toiletology.com) that answered all our questions and then some.

Turns out it is a widely-held opinion that the Toto Ultramax model is the best toilet out there today, and that the Toto brand in general is held in high esteem among plumbers and cloggers alike. I believe this is because of their G-Max flushing technology.

If you'd prefer to keep your existing toilet, you can simply add a pressurizing device to your tank. In study after study FLUSHMATE® emerges as the clear winner in water-closet performance.

So many choices. Who would have ever thought that the toilet industry was so competitive? Between government regulations and the black market in high-volume-flush toilets, it's an interesting game we're playing here, isn't it? I think my dad is going to scrap the Kohler he has now and try to find a Toto Ultramax. Man, those things are flying off the shelves faster than Tickle-Me Elmo.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-07-21 at 11:22:41.*

# Happy Canada Day!



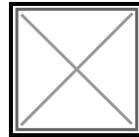
Spine.cx wishes Canada a happy 136th birthday. To give people something to comment on, how are you spending your holiday?

**Edit 07/02 0051h:** Just got back from watching the fireworks. They sucked. But I did take some photos. The most interesting things I saw that night were this and this. And some lesbians. Wanted to get a photo of them kissing, but didn't want to be too conspicuous.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-07-01 at 00:00:20.*

# At least we have our priorities straight

I thought, I'll test my theory of buying beer on Sunday and go down to the Cold Beer Store on Agricola Street. It was closed. But wait! There's a sign telling me to go down to Water Street to the Keith's brewery store. To the Stevemobile! I park and walk in, and there is a line up of no less than 50 people in front of me.



I see some curious sights. I meet some cute chicks, and talk to them whilst in said line. We bitch together about the state of affairs and how long it is taking us to get through to the cashier. This guy is trying to stuff a 2-4 into his backpack to ride home on his bike. Humerous.

Although I'm sure that being Canada Day weekend, this was the exception rather than the rule, maybe this will convince the powers-that-be that being able to buy alcohol on Sundays would not be a bad thing. Surely there are enough people interested in the idea to make it worthwhile.

*Originally posted on Sunday, 2003-06-29 at 18:38:15.*

# Some people are just weird

This actually happened a couple of days ago, but I forgot to mention it on the site. Something today jogged my memory. Anyway, I'm in a restaurant, and I finishing my meal, and this guy at one of the nearby tables is in the same boat. He's just getting served his coffee. Everything is normal up to this point, but just you wait.

He opens the sugar packet *lengthways*. What. The. Fuck. I simply do not understand this man's process of reasoning. It couldn't have been a fluke, because I saw him do it to more than one packet. How do you maintain flow control with such a large opening? I mean that's why they make them rectangular; so you can open the small end. Otherwise they would make them square, like a throw pillow.

I think he was a closet anarchist.

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-06-26 at 09:02:28.*

# What's there to do in Halifax in the fall?

*Christine writes: "This coming October (I know, it's pretty far away) I will be travelling out east with some friends. We are heading to Cape Breton for the Celtic Colours Festival but on our way back are hitting Halifax. From what I hear about your wonderful city it's a great place to go on a pub crawl. I'd like to go on an organized crawl, so we wouldn't be alone. I hear Halifax has such tours. I found your site but it seems we will be way late for your crawl but do you have any suggestions for me? I would so so so so so much appreciate any info you could offer."*

Do it up.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-06-21 at 11:35:33.*

# Why do I always get the crazy ones?

All I wanted to do was get some groceries. I finish going through the isles and head up to the checkout with my cart full of goodies and hope to be on my way fairly soon. Unfortunately the cashier apparently has other plans. She tells me about how she really regrets being an only child and how her friend got beaten up in university, but *she* had a big sister who came to her rescue (big sis played rugby). Then she tells me about how the population at large is part of a growing conspiracy to steal her pens and she shows me the one currently tethered to her belt. This girl is nuttier than trail mix. "They're not getting this one! Huhhuh!" she chortles. And I believe her. I wouldn't go near that pen with *someone else's* ten-foot-pole. Thankfully she only makes me sign the credit card slip with the pen that she's *woven a cover for out of yarn* bearing her name.

Next time, I'm going to pretend I'm mute.

Don't even get me started about taxi drivers. Most of the time, when I get in a taxi, I just want to be driven to where I want to go and get out when I get there. I'm not hiring them for conversation. If I want that, I'll go buy some groceries.

I realize these people are mostly just trying to be polite, and in some cases trying to garner a larger tip, but chances are, I'm happy sitting in my cone-of-silence and just want to be left alone. If I'm taking a cab, chances are I'm drunk anyway. I don't think I'd make very good conversation at that point.

I think people in these positions should leave it up to the customer whether they should engage in conversation, which is really just meaningless banter about the weather, sports, or current events anyway. It'll save them the headache of talking to someone who gives only marginal responses, and it'll save me the headache of giving marginal responses.

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-06-18 at 08:22:22.*

# Ownership of Montreal Grill

The ownership of the Montreal Grill (the restaurant in the basement of the Bank of Montreal building on Hollis & George) has changed hands. It is now owned by the Greek couple that owned the Soup'er Sandwich a few years back. They have promised to bring back Souvlaki Thursdays. I was planning to put a menu in this article, but they don't really have one that I could take and scan.

Consider this a P.S.A. Go down there and show them some business.

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-06-11 at 07:56:27.*

# TABU: Forbidden Fruit

Here is the second review of an alcoholic beverage ever done on Spine.cx. I'm not doing Baja Tango, like I said I would, basically because I didn't feel like drinking that stuff right now. I was buying some beer (Keith's has the 15-packs back for the summer), and this stuff in a curious metal bottle caught my eye. It's called TABU (complete with weird backwards and upside down letters and a funny accent over the upside down 'U'. Don't tell me I'm going to find **that** one in the ASCII chart :)

Despite the obvious puns I could make with the name 'Forbidden Fruit', I'm going to try and make this a serious review and give this beverage some thought.

So, anyway, the metal bottle is what inticed me to buy this. They sell it in individual 500 ml bottles for  \$3.95. It's 7.0% alcohol by volume. The main alcoholic ingredient is vodka. It has a bottlecap, which I thought was kind of strange. I expected a screw-off plastic cap for this kind of drink. From the look of it, it strikes me as a cooler-style of beverage.

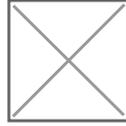
Oh well, here we go. First impressions: It smells a bit like grapefruit or some kind of fruity punch...Definately some grapefruit in there. Tastes like candy...a little too sweet. This drink makes me think of what it would taste like if someone decided to add alcohol to one of those crazy energy drinks like Red Bull or something.

I've decided that I'm going to drink it out of the bottle because I don't want to know what color it is. Upon reading the ingredients, I'm sure it's some sort of dye anyway. The only natural thing in this drink is water, and maybe the vodka; everything else is artificial this or synthesized that. Kind of makes you wonder how they came up with this drink. Some mad scientist stirring a cauldron of stuff and when a drop of it can eat through a steel plate, he knows it's ready. Still, it's almost encouraging that they can create something that approximates fruit from scratch. What will they think of next?

It's not hard to taste the vodka if you're looking for it, but I don't think you'd notice it otherwise. All the same, I'm not even halfway through the bottle yet, and I'm kind of getting sick of it. Maybe it's the artificiality-ness of the whole thing. Maybe it's a carcinogen. Maybe I'm rotting away from the inside. But I digress...

I don't really taste anything particularly forbidden about this "taboo" drink. Kind of girly. Maybe something to sip on before you chase it down with a bottle of Boone's. Whatever the case, I don't think it's for me. It certainly is a neat bottle though. I'll bet you could use it for a candle-holder or something. I won't break if you drop it. That's good to know. At least it's recyclable.

Steve gives  
TABU: Forbidden Fruit  
Thumbs Down



*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-06-07 at 21:04:52.*

# Palm Zire 71

At first, I was cheesed off because I had purchased an [m515](#) about a month before the Zire 71 was announced by Palm because, at the time, the m515 was the best price/performance value, in my opinion. Since the Zire 71 was offered with a built in camera and MP3 playing functionality for only \$50 more than the m515, after I got over my original bout of swearing and disappointment, I decided to bite the bullet and attempt to trade up.

Inside is my review of the [Zire 71](#).

So, first impressions: The screen is amazing. Very low-glare, at 320x320, it's 4 times the resolution of the m515. It's plastic, where the m515 was mostly metal, so it can feel kind of cheap and flimsy. The stylus, which is also plastic, doesn't have the proper weight to sit in your hand. It's much too light. In addition to the normal four function buttons on the bottom and instead of the usual up and down buttons, is a 4-way joystick. This offers a little more flexibility, but it can be hard to tell if you've actually pressed it, so you can end up going further down in your document than you thought.

The processor is completely different. As with all Palm OS 5 devices, the Zire 71 uses an OMAP Arm processor running at 144 Mhz. It is reams and reams faster than the 33 Mhz DragonBall processor than ran the M515. Even though I had mine overclocked to 66 Mhz most of the time, the Zire 71 still puts it in the dust. Menu changes happen *instantly* instead of waiting for that split second.

The built in software is pretty much the same as every other Palm, with the exception of the camera software and photo viewer. The accompanying software is pretty neat though. It comes with a video player, MP3 player, and some other stuff I didn't really look at.



Kinoma Video Player has a PC-based part for converting MPEGs, AVIs, etc. into a Palm compatible format (and reducing them to 320x320), and a Palm-based part for actually playing and managing them on the device. I have a [256 Megabyte SD card](#) so I managed to cram on a whole bunch of crap. *Tripping the Rift* played surprisingly well. I was impressed.

The MP3 player did not fare so well.

Unfortunately, Palm has decided to bundle the piece of shit that is RealPlayer, or rather now [RealOne](#) with their devices. Real is second only to [MusicMatch](#) on my list of despised media players. I didn't even bother installing this one on the Palm. I got as far as the splash screen of the installation and cancelled it.

Obviously, I still want to play MP3s, so what do I do now? Sureley there is a shareware or open source MP3 player for Palm OS... My search ended much better than I had hoped. I found [AeroPlayer](#), which not only plays MP3s, but also [OGGs](#)! This was fantastic. I installed it and it worked without a hitch. I had no qualms about purchasing the lifetime upgrade key for this piece of software.

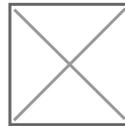
Battery life appears to be very good. Playing OGGs during my 35 minute bus ride into the office, the battery meter didn't drop at all. Thankfully, AeroPlayer allows you to turn the screen off while it runs in the background, saving valuable battery life.

The camera is no prize, it only takes pictures at 640x480, but for the time it takes to write them to the card, I wouldn't want them to be any bigger! The digital camera I bought three years ago, the Kodak DC480 is much better in quality and resolution, but it's a little bulky to carry around with me 24/7. The Palm is light, small, and very easy to fit in a pocket so I'll never again have to say, "I wish I had a camera." If I'm ever planning to take pictures, however, I bring my real one.

In conclusion, I wish I had known that this device was going to be released, because I would certainly not have purchased the m515! The Zire 71 completely destroys it in every way I could ever want. WiFi support would be nice, but [the Palm that supports that](#) is nearly twice the price. I can live without it....for now.

**Edit 06/06/03@22:43** Oh yeah, the thing I forgot to mention is that trasferring files to the SD card via a hotsync is *retardedly* slow. I mean *stupidly* slow. I waited twenty minutes for a 60 meg album of OGGs to transfer over before I gave up. The same album transferred to the card via a card reader took about 25 seconds. Go figure.

Steve gives the  
Palm Zire 71  
Thumbs Up!



*Originally posted on Friday, 2003-06-06 at 10:05:41.*

# Group wants you to donate your \$155 cheque to charity

According to several articles, including [this one](#), a coalition of church groups want you to donate your \$155 forthcoming cheque to charity, to help the homeless. I wonder if this is something that people will actually do? How exactly is it vote-buying if you hate the Hamm government to begin with? Discuss.

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-06-05 at 12:24:56.*

# Greekfest 2003

This coming weekend (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) is the planned date for [Greekfest 2003](#). Experience what a donair should \*really\* taste like! Have your own piece of baklava! The possibilities are endless.

Come on down and drink your fill of Ouzo and do some of those silly dances. You know you want to.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-06-02 at 16:57:44.*

# FNP 7: The Matrix Get-Loaded

I know you're all waiting for them with baited breath, so [here are the photos](#). Don't forget the comments and ratings!

I had more people ask than usual if there were any extra shirts this time, so the design is going to change slightly to not so much reflect a pub crawl, and the shirts are going to go on sale [here](#). I'll get them printed if I get more than 30 ordered.

*Originally posted on Sunday, 2003-05-25 at 00:00:45.*

# Bacardi Ciclon

Here at Spine.cx, we feel that it is important to provide the viewing public with not only reviews of frivolous things like CDs, movies, and pop bottles on the street, but also important things like alcohol. It is with that sentiment that I give to you the first Spine.cx review of an alcoholic beverage: the brand new (at least to me) Bacardi Ciclon (there's an accent or something over that 'o', but I don't know how to do that. Anyway, it's pronounced "see'-clone"). It is "Bacardi gold rum infused with blue agave tequila and a natural lime flavour".

Click inside for the review.

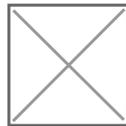
Well, I guess the first thing to do is smell it. I'll just crack open the bottle here...Mmmm. It smells pretty good. Maybe I'll just have a taste. \*sip\* I think we have a winner. This stuff tastes pretty damn good just on its own...I find my mind racing to think about what this would mix well with. For any of you who have tried Bacardi Limon, it's a little like that, but you can definately taste the tequila in it; not overpowering tequila, as I'm sure some of you are definately thinking, but rather the nice subtle tequila, like you'd find in a margarita. I love saying that: Marguarrrrita! Salsa! Chi Chi Rodriguez!

Anyway, back to the topic at hand. I believe I shall try Sprite as a mix. \*Pour\* \*Mix\* And the verdict is good after the first sip. I think it's the artificial lime in the sprite that blends well with the artificial lime in the alcohol. I could really get into this stuff sitting on the beach, with a lot of hot chicks around. Or as a backup, I could really get into this stuff sitting in my room typing on my computer, which is basically what I'm doing now. It's a poor substitute for option #1.

This stuff is very smooth. Not a bad aftertaste or anything. I think I would buy it again, perhaps in a larger quantity, so I get, like, more of it.

So anyway, tune in next time for my review of Baja Tango, kind of like Baja Rosa, but made with oranges instead of strawberries.

Steve gives  
Bacardi Ciclon  
Thumbs Up!



P.S. If there are any people reading this from any large liquor corporations that would like to donate some product, and maybe get a favourable review, \*nudge\* \*wink\*, I can be reached by email 24/7.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-05-19 at 14:53:27.*



# I am the champion

They say necessity is the mother of invention, and I guess they were right about that one. Being at work when you don't want to be there; on a Friday afternoon; when it's sunny outside; can make your mind do weird things. We invented a new sport: Carpet Surfing.

See, we recently had our office renovated and we got brand new cubicles. They suck. They were designed by sadists. Ergonomic they are not. Their keyboard trays were attached to the desks via hydraulic arms that any person of substantial height could not help but continuously smash their knees against upon sitting down. So they were promptly removed.

Step 1. Run and jump onto a keyboard tray and slide acrosss the carpet. Go for distance. Step 2: ???  
Step 3: Profit.

So far, I have the record.

*Originally posted on Friday, 2003-05-16 at 18:24:32.*

# FNP 7: Crawl updates

Some further information for you crawlin' peeps to dig. The printers tell me the shirts will be ready on the 22nd of May. I have called all the bars to let them know we're coming and to see what deals I could get out of them for the crawl.

Click inside to hear what they all had to say.

<b>Moustache</b> <b>1730 - 1900</b>	Joe Murphy (whoever he is) will be playing when we're there. There is a \$1 cover charge, but the guy I talked to said that he's 99% sure he could get it waived for anyone in a t-shirt. Because of this guy playing there, he said it would probably be standing room only on the inside. The deck will only be open if the weather permits. If the weather is inclement, I suggest a detour to the Thirsty Duck.
<b>Maxwell's</b> <b>1900 - 2000</b>	The downstairs portion of the bar will be reserved for us.
<b>Breakers</b> <b>2000 - 2130</b>	Happy hour prices as long as we're there for anyone in a shirt.
<b>Boomers</b> <b>2130 - 2230</b>	The manager said that they are not fully staffed (i.e., no DJ and only one bartender) until 2130h, so I suggest that we simply stay at Breakers for an extra half hour. The drinks are Happy Hour prices there anyway :)
<b>Pitchman's</b> <b>2230 - 0000</b>	No cover. Happy hour starts at 2300h. The guy also said he won't let crawls in after 2300h, so make sure you get there in a timely fashion.
<b>Mecury</b> <b>0000 - 0200</b>	No Cover. \$1 off shooters at the promo bar on top of the dance floor.

*Originally posted on Friday, 2003-05-16 at 18:00:23.*

# Camping trip 2003 redux

Just letting everyone know that the group campsite at Blomidon has been booked for the weekend of August 1st through the 4th for around 20 people. So if you care, you should make sure you can get that Friday (August 1st) off.

If you don't know what I'm talking about, you may want to reference the previous article that was posted on this subject. Also, you should let us know that you intend to be there, so we can make different arrangements if need be.

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-05-14 at 10:46:58.*

# Somebody's getting a littering ticket

So, I'm standing on Hollis Street, minding my own business when out of nowhere, this truck drives by and starts dumping empty plastic bottles of every sort all over the road right in front of Province House. And NOT by accident. Nearly the entire street was covered. Luckily, crack Spine.cx reporter Raymond Seto was there with his camera.

Check out the photos inside.



*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-05-13 at 14:02:27.*

# The only thing worse than software problems...

Are hardware problems.

I was very happy to finally get a new, up-to-date machine (2.4 GHz P4) machine at work last week, complete with a shiny new 40 Gb hard drive. I installed the newly-gold Windows Server 2003 and the slew of applications that I need to do my job and I was off to the races. Everything was going smoothly until I came in Monday morning and pressed a key to break the machine out of its screen-saver hibernation. Beep! Reboot. Fuck.

Half an hour of trying unsuccessfully to boot, I gave up. Shortly thereafter, I began hearing strange clicking noises coming from the drive. Ack. Another drive, another install of W2K3, and the better part of a of a day later, I'm back where I started, pretty much the same, save a large ball of cynicism I've yet to remove from my ass.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time I have had a drive fail on me, but all that have failed have been Western Digitals. Typically, at home, I would buy Fujitsu, but I'm told that they don't make desktop drives anymore, is that correct? Right now, at work, I have a Seagate, and at home, I have a WD (it was a present) and a Quantum.

What does the population at large recommend for hard drives? Has anyone else out there experienced the craptacular experience that is a hard drive failure? Did you have backups? ;) What drives have good warranties now? Which ones have the best MTBF (mean time between failures)?

I'm curious.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-05-13 at 00:36:11.*

# Ads?! WTF!?

I have taken a big step with the website today. I decided to try offering textual ads for sale on Spine.cx. I don't really see any reason why it would piss anyone off, but that's what I find myself worrying about. It's not like they're as bad as banner ads, or popunders, or those ones that seem to float across what you're trying to read. The last thing I want to become is one of those Internet hypocrites who goes on and on about free this and open source that, and then turn around and start having huge, gaudy ads on my site. That would really be offensive to me.

Hopefully, textual ads will be a happy medium; they'll don't attract much undue attention and they're only on the right side, so if you're not looking for them, they'll stay out of your way :)

Also, I bought a new keyboard for my PDA. I wrote this article on it. It is hard to get used to typing on it because it's even smaller than a laptop keyboard. I suppose that I will get used to it though. It's a hell of a lot easier than trying to write all of this in Graffiti. The worst thing is that the right shift key is just a \*little\* too far to the right. Where I would reach for the right shift key with my pinky on a normal keyboard is the 'cursor up' key on this one. For size and weight, it's fantastic. Lighter than the PDA itself, it folds up to be not much bigger than than the PDA. It becomes its own case. The PDA/keyboard combination is WAY easier to lug around than a laptop. Granted, there are more than a few things that you can on a laptop that you can't on a PDA, but for the difference in weight and ease of manipulation, I'll take the PDA any day.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-05-03 at 17:22:45.*

# Steve's Trip to Newfoundland

I'm back from Newfoundland. Saw a lot of relatives and made a lot of new acquaintances. Drank a fair amount of beer.

What you are about to experience is basically my stream of consciousness during the time I was in Newfoundland. It may not be easy to follow. I make no apologies.

Sunday:

We had Easter Dinner at my grandmother's place; aunts, uncles, the whole bit. I heard on the radio an ad for The Grumpy Stump Pub - 753-BEER. There are two black people in Nfld., I saw them both.

Monday:

Newfoundland is very rocky. Snow still abounds in most places. I visited the communities of Petty Harbour & Maddox Cove on the north side of the Avalon Peninsula, ate at the Captain's Table restaurant, and had the biggest piece of fish I have ever seen. Went into the Colony of Avalon (population 171) where there's an archeological dig unearthing a British settlement (Lord Baltimore) from 1620 or so. Took a few pictures. Saw a Neon w/ a big spoiler

There are only 2 places that I can find in St. John's that offer public internet access. One appears to be out of business and their space is for lease. The other is the Public Library which is, being a government building, closed for Easter Monday. I am going insane without the internet. I am glad I made the decision to buy the Palm that I'm using now. Hopefully I'll be able to at least check my email before the week is out.

My cousin David has finished his last exam of the year so he and his classmates are going on a big tear. I've been invited. Tomorrow I'll fill you in on whatever I can remember :)

Tuesday:

It's about 0400h. I am drunk @ a pizza place in Mount Pearl. I have no idea what time it is. I've just spent my last \$5 of cash to get a greasy slice.

Woke up before my alarm around 7:15 or so. That always seems to happen after a night out. Big glass of water and a coffee later and I am involved in a futile attempt to try and get my handheld to work with my cousin's computer. I have a feeling it will take much patience. I actually don't feel too bad; kind of surprising given how much I drank. I definitely know I was out last night, but I think that could be the lack of sleep rather than the alcohol.

There is so much snow on people's lawns that they've taken to shoveling it onto the street just so it'll melt more quickly.

Attempted to use MUN's public access Internet terminals. What pieces of utter & complete shite. We're talking \*minutes\* to render a web page; not to mention that the right-click menus were disabled. Needless to say, I was not impressed.

So, anyway, I'm sitting at the terminal and the guy on the computer next to me goes to GAY.com. I couldn't tell if it was a porn site or not, but I did catch a glimpse of more than one shirtless man. I'm not one for eavesdropping but this was difficult not to notice. Then he starts chatting with his (presumably) gay friends even though the sign over both our heads plainly says "no chat". Some people.

Ate some seal flipper. Think of the most gamey meat you know, then add 50% more game and a few cups of rubber and you will begin to approximate the texture and taste of seal flipper. I guess it's some sort of delicacy. Mmmm...flipper. Sounds like I'm eating a friendly dolphin. I wonder what dolphin tastes like? Damn them for being endangered.

Wednesday:

Visted the brand new GeoCenter at Signal Hill. There are certainly a lot of rocks there. I can understand where Newfoundland got the nickname.

Until today I was sure that Signal Hill was named for Marconi's wireless message across the Atlantic. I have since come to find out that it has that name because the British military called it that in the 1700s.

Halifax has got nothing on St. John's when it comes to windy and narrow streets. Along the roads approaching the battery, which are skinnier than Bedford Row at George Street, there are enough tightly-packed houses to please even the most frugal of urban planners. And when there aren't any houses on the side of the road, there's a cliff as sheer as yer mammy's bloomers.

Saw the movie "Holes". It wasn't bad but you could definitely tell it was a Disney movie. Not one damn cuss word in the whole thing.

Thursday:

Looks like we're driving east today. Going to visit Conception Bay.

Crossed over to Bell Island on the ferry. I now have definitive proof that what I'm smelling while crossing Halifax Harbour is not the ocean. I smelled the ocean today and Halifax Harbour certainly isn't it. There isn't much to see here really, we drove around the whole thing.

There was maybe four cars on the ferry on the way over, but the way back was a different story: we arrived about 3 minutes before the ferry was scheduled to leave and it was chock full. To the ferry operators' credit, it took little coercion to get them to maneuver the existing cars enough to squeeze ours on. I didn't really feel like spending another 40 minutes looking at nothing.

Went through the communities of Bauline, Flat Rock, and Torbay. Got some very scenic photographs. Visited the Ocean Sciences Centre (unfortunately, it doesn't really open until June) in Torbay & took pictures of the seals. Check out the webcam. If I could only find some decent public internet access, I'd check it out myself.

I can't believe I've talked my dad into listening to a heavy metal radio show on the MUN radio station CHMR. It's certainly interesting to see his reactions to the titles of the songs as the DJ reads them out: "And that was 'Bring out Your Flesh' by Church of Misery." Or something like that.

Supper at my grandmother's house: delicious salmon, vegetables, and potatoes; but most curious was the dessert. It was cheesecake made with "bakeapples," or cloudberryes, I believe they're called here. They have a very curious taste to them; curious but not unpleasant. Apparently they're expensive.

Went to a bar called The Republic. You can probably guess it's an Irish bar. Had a drink called a "car bomb." It's half a pint of Guinness with a shot of Bailey's dropped in and chugged. It really is better than it sounds. I think I may have inadvertently introduced a certain pattern of speech into the environment where it's probably suited best: "ass over teakettle". Some of my cousin's friends hadn't heard it before and now they're off to the races with it.

Friday:

I don't think much is going on today. The local media is all abuzz with the news of the closure of the cod fishery. I have been invited to my aunt & uncle's place for supper and my cousin has invited me out with his friends again. I don't know if I'm going to go, only because I really don't like flying while hung-over.

It's four o'clock and boy was I right about not much going on. I guess I'll be heading out to my aunt's place soon, at least I can look forward to getting on the Internet there.

BBQ at my aunt's. I ended up hanging out with my cousin Alison, her Finnish boyfriend, Petter (that's pronounced "Peter"), and some of their friends at Don Cherry's and watching the Ottawa/Philadelphia hockey game. Three periods and several beers later, the crowd dispersed and I caught a cab home. I am definitely looking forward to getting home tomorrow.

Saturday:

Woke up late, around 1030h. A shit ton of my dad's fiancé's relatives came over for lunch and to meet me. Some of them had met me the last time I was here. I was tired and it was a little too much for me.

I took refuge wherever I could.

And that brings this journey to a close. I am currently on the plane back to Halifax. All in all, it was a pretty good trip. If I'm sensible I'll have uploaded my photos from the trip so I can link to them from this story, but we'll see how "together" I am when I actually get home.

If you've read this far, then you deserve to see the photos. They are [here](#).

It's been fun,  
Steve.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-04-26 at 21:18:28.*

# No smoking in public in 2008

Halifax council has passed a legislation that will disallow smoking in public places except for special "smoking chambers" and ban it altogether from public places in 2008.

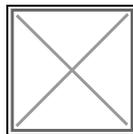
I say 2008 can't get here quickly enough. I know this will probably piss off the smokers, but I say fuck 'em, they're going to die first anyway. If cities like New York are doing it, then the rest of the major metropolises (metropoli?) can't be far behind. It's good to see that we're taking a leading role in this issue (as opposed to our 18th-century-style stand on Sunday shopping).

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-04-16 at 10:53:34.*

# It's spring, and that means Pub Crawl

The preliminary rounds are over and now we're getting to the meat of this, the 2003 pub crawl season. I believe we've settled on the theme for the seventh incarnation of Feelin' No Pain and it shall be The Matrix. Originally it was thought to be a good idea to try and co-ordinate the crawl with a showing of the movie, but then it was decided that the logistics of such an undertaking would be prohibitively complex. I'm still going to go myself anyway...

T.J. has done his usual masterful work and whipped us up another fantastic t-shirt design, which you can see for yourself by clicking on the link below. The semi-confirmed date is Saturday, May 24th. Click on that link and go sign up.



Here also, is a link to a close up view of what the back will look like. Note that the bar list isn't finalized...those are just on the shirt for a "proof of concept" if you will :)

**Update 11 April 2003 08:33:** Yes we will still have baby-t's available.

**Update 12 April 2003 10:45:** Go here to purchase a shirt.

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-04-10 at 22:46:29.*

# New Photos of the FARK Party and New York

Finally, I am home and I have had a chance to get all the photos I have taken off of my camera and onto my website. I'm not exactly what you would call a photographer, but I have an eye for pictures. Unfortunately, there are some of the pictures from New York where I think the camera caught a moving car and tried to focus on it instead of what I was actually shooting and as a result, the entire picture is kind of blurry. Oh well, it's better than nothing.

Here are links to the [FARK Party album](#) and the [New York album](#). **Update 21:11** Don't forget about rating the pictures. The rating formula is specified on the bottom of the [Top 10 page](#). Photos need three votes to make it into the top 10.

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-04-02 at 01:07:31.*

# A day with Steve in Manhattan

Rants isn't really the right category for this, but I don't think an appropriate category exists...

My flight back home has been delayed until Tuesday night, so I get to spend the weekend in New York. I decided to head back to Manhattan so I could check it out in the daylight. Nighttime was cool, but I didn't have a lot of time there before, and there were a number of attractions that I still wanted to check out. Come live vicariously with me as I recount my experiences.

My hotel is in Long Island, which is about a half hour drive from Manhattan, so instead of driving and having to deal with both traffic on the way there and parking when I got there, I opted to take the Long Island Rail Road. I got stuck sitting with two old Jewish ladies who rambled on and on about basically nothing. I took note of a portion of their conversation regarding why one of the ladies had so much junk in her purse. I happened to think she carried too much as well. Forty-five minutes and \$9.50 later, I arrived at Penn Station in central Manhattan.

Right above Penn Station is Madison Square Garden. Unfortunately, I didn't realize that when I was leaving the station, so I didn't even check it out. The first place I checked out was two blocks east: the Empire State Building. It costs \$10 to get to the observation deck on the 86th floor. At around 1000 feet high, you can certainly see a lot; the view was absolutely incredible. You can see everything from the Statue of Liberty (although it's very small from that distance) to the Chrysler building to the Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges crossing the East River. The view helped me plan what I was going to do; I decided to walk south. Heading down 5th and 6th Avenues, I passed the Flatiron Building (that's the triangle-shaped one that is often featured in pictures), and continued through the mess of construction and traffic that is Soho and Tribeca.

The aim of this journey south was to see Ground Zero, where the twin towers of the World Trade Center once stood. I didn't think it was so far away, but walking 60 blocks is a good way to put distance in perspective. It is so crowded with people and traffic down there, that even without all the workers in those office buildings, I cannot imagine the chaos that ensued when all that crazy shit went down. I got some pictures of the big gaping hole that is currently there, and read some placards at the site commemorating the people who died during the attack. At Ground Zero, I met a nice couple from Denver, Colorado who gave me a map of Manhattan that I put to very good use.

Proceeding around the southern tip of the island, I walked through Battery Park and saw where the ferries for Liberty and Ellis Islands were docked. It was starting to drizzle, so I decided not to go across

to the Statue of Liberty. I took a picture from the shore, but I'm pretty sure it was too far away to turn out very well.

I was as far south as I was going to get, so I turned back up north. I walked past Wall Street in the Financial District and got pictures of Trump Tower and the New York Stock Exchange building. It started to rain a little harder now, so I decided to get somewhere with a roof. I took the subway all the way up to 72nd street west & 9th.

By the time I exited the subway, it wasn't raining so hard anymore. I walked east through Central Park, which is quite a nice place. There was a bunch of people swing dancing while wearing in-line skates; definitive proof that in New York, no matter how obscure your interests, there will always be a shitload of other crazy people who share them.

The east side of Central Park is bounded by 5th avenue. I was much further north than my original position, so southward was my direction of choice once again. I got about five blocks when the sky just opened up and brought buckets of water from the sky upon the unwary pedestrians below. I took refuge in T.G.I. Friday's, but not quickly enough to avoid getting extremely wet. After supper, it was still absolutely pouring, so I got a cab back to Penn Station to catch my train to Long Island.

Remember the old Jewish ladies from the way down? The way back was no better. I rode home behind two middle-aged lesbians with mullets. Ack. I never want to see that ever again.

Unfortunately, even though I took a schwack of photos, I do not have my compact flash card reader with me, so I can't get them off of my camera. You will all have to wait until I get home to see them. I think I took about 60 of them, give or take.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-03-29 at 22:58:13.*

# Gone again - This time to NYC

I wasn't even back at work for a whole day before they decided to ship me off again to New York City. I'll be damned if I don't get to see something that's worth taking a picture of this time. I really want to get to see the Statue of Liberty and Times Square and the Empire State Building, and other touristy New York stuff.

Have any spiners been to N.Y.C.? What's good to do? Give me the low-down. I want details.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-03-25 at 20:03:32.*

# Back from D.C.

Finally, I am home after leaving for two days and getting back a week later. The trip was useful for the customer, I believe I fixed some of their problems. That was nice. The sucky part was that I never got out once during the day to do any of the touristy stuff that someone visiting D.C. for the first time wants to do. I didn't get to see the White House; I only saw the Washington Monument from the roadside (no thanks to Crazy Tractor Guy there); I never even got to go to a store to look for those slick-ass bluetooth headsets.

The only cool part of the trip was when I was sitting in the D.C. airport waiting for them to announce boarding for my flight. I looked over and recognized Theo from Gob. As it turns out, they had just got advance screening presses of their new CD, "*Foot in Mouth Disease*". They let me listen to it on the plane. I whipped open my laptop and ripped it. Sweet.

Don't forget about the FARK Party this weekend. It should be a good time. You should come.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-03-22 at 00:26:27.*

# Updates from the American Capital

Traffic is fucking insane. Worse than the 401 in a snowstorm. I was stuck in it about an hour before Bush is supposed to make some sort of address to the nation. About half an hour to go now. I'm in my hotel preparing for the St. Paddy's day Washington nightlife I've heard so much about.

So the U.S. is probably going to start bombing. That's my prediction. The cops are out in force, barricading all the streets around the White House and that's why I couldn't go and visit any of those places. Fuck. I'm a little bitter. It's not like I get to go on business trips that often, and when I do, I tend not to ever get to see anything :(

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-03-17 at 20:33:03.*

# Software Developer Union

This may have been brought up before, but what the hell, lets bring it up again. First off this includes everyone that works in the industry, programmers, quality control, tech writers, managers, IS, support reps etc.

How many times have you, or someone you know, been stuck working for long hours, evenings and weekends. Without any compensation, or even so much of a thank you?

Sometimes it is unavoidable, but the rare instances are not what I am talking about. I am talking about when some sales guy in butt fuck no-where that promises a feature to a client tomorrow just so they can collect the commission. Should the software developer not get part of that commission? Do they not deserve it? I mean if they didn't put in the extra time then the sales guy wouldn't get the commission.

I am also talking about the unrealistic deadlines that are always imposed on us without any sort of consultation. In what other industry are delivery dates given without asking the people doing the work, how long they think it is going to take?

Do others feel that the industry takes our willingness to work long hours for granted? Or is that expectation automatically placed on us when we take a job in this industry? Is the fact that we take pride in our work, to the point that we are willing to go the extra mile, expected?

Generally the pay is pretty good, but it is not always about the money? Or are you one of those people that for an extra \$1000 a year you are willing to put in 60-hour weeks. No wait you don't just get money, you get stock options. We have all had the "golden handcuffs" on at one point or another, but the realization of any large amount of money from options is very rare.

How much would this industry change if a Union were formed? Would the quality suffer from the institution of a Software Developers Union? Generally the people that work in this industry are smart people, why do we continually stand for the mistreatment? Or are stupid people the only ones that will stand up for them-selves?

I posed a lot of questions, but the main point is, do you think there should be a Software Developer union, and if there were a union would you join it? Do you agree with what I have said here, or not. What is your opinion on the subject?

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-03-11 at 08:30:26.*

# Roll up the Rim is back!

Your favourite contest has re-appeared at your favourite coffee-and-donut shop. Yes, Roll-up-the-Rim is back at Tim Hortons. If it's anything like last year, I'll buy at least one coffee a day for the two or three months that this contest is on, and I'll win a coffee and one or two donuts. That would suck. I want the car. Not for the car itself, of course, they are hideous. I just want something to trade in for my new car because I haven't been able to sell my old car yet :(

Of course I wouldn't turn down the 53" Panasonic widescreen television or \$1000 cash either ;)

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-03-03 at 08:21:48.*

# Should elevator buttons be toggleable?

A co-worker of mine posed an interesting question about elevators. (Wouldn't my object oriented programming professor be excited if he knew we were about to discuss elevator theory.) Have you ever wanted to take back a button that you pressed in error on an elevator? I know I have. It's a pain visiting the floors that the punk kid pressed just before he got off, isn't it?

Should you be able to turn off elevator buttons by pressing them again? I.e., Should elevator buttons be toggleable? In all circumstances? Why or why not? Discuss.

*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-02-27 at 00:20:52.*

# Unsolicited email is the least of our worries

Most, if not all, of us receive some spam in their email. And we hate it. We curse the people who would use such an underhanded tactic in their attempt to advertise to us. Whether it be for a no-hassle loan, or for porn, or maybe even for that penis enlargement you've always wanted, spam is unwelcome, annoying, and resource-hogging. Sure, that one email in your inbox isn't that big, but think about how many mailboxes are on your mail server, and then think about how many other mail servers are out there. It truly boggles the mind.

But there is something worse still than email spam. Something even more devious, insidious, and calculating. It is...



It is companies like **Internet Search Registry** and their deliberate attempt to trick you into paying for a service that you really don't need. Instead of sending out email spam, which would probably be immediately deleted, they rely on order forms which look remarkably (some might say "suspiciously") like invoices such as the one on the left. The only thing that tips you off to this scheme is a small block of text in the upper right corner that states, "*This statement is a solicitation and receipt of your payment will confirm annual subscription.*"

Not only are they soliciting this payment in an (in my opinion) unethical way, but it is an **annual** fee, which will be charged again and again unless they are explicitly told by the client to stop.

I can understand how an individual would not be fooled by such a ploy, but consider the corporation: Who would receive these sorts of things? Probably the accounting department, right? They probably wouldn't look twice at it. It's an invoice. Pay it. I shudder to think how many people and/or companies have been taken in by their shell game.

I haven't submitted this website to a single search engine, but it still appears on them. The "service" that this company provides is simply not useful or needed. The surreptitious way in which they try to drum up business just makes it worse.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-02-22 at 21:05:28.*

# Anyone want to buy a '95 Taurus?

Yeah, I'm selling my car. I could only find one photo of it and it's of the rear. I'll try and take a few more. Anyway, it's a '95 Taurus, blue in colour. It's got power everything; seats, mirrors, brakes, steering, & door locks. Air conditioning for those hot summer days too. And low mileage, don't forget that.

"My god," you're probably thinking, "I'd mortgage my home for the chance to own a fine machine such as that. Why, the ladies would flock to me if I cruised the strip in such a magnificent automobile." And you wouldn't be all wrong. I am only asking for the paltry sum of \$3900. Then all this (and more) can be yours.

Email me if you're interested. **Update!** If any one of you refers to me the person who eventually buys my car, you shall receive not only my gratitude, but also (drum roll) a set of computer speakers!

**Now you too** can help Steve sell his car! Download this Word document or this PDF and post it on your office bulletin board!

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-02-17 at 12:15:38.*

# They keep building up, don't they?

I don't think I'll ever run out of things to rant about. Let me set the scene for you...

It snowed last night, as most of you will have realized by the time you read this. Ray and I head to the ski hill. It's promising to be a glorious day. The temperature is about -7 at the top of the hill, and it's noticeably warmer at the bottom. The sun is shining and the new snow is beautifully covering the hill. What could possibly ruin such a wonderful day?

**Update! 10 Feb 03 12:04** *Check inside*

**Update! 12 Feb 03 14:55** I was called just now by the sales guy from SportChek and he has found me replacement skis! (more inside)

**Update! 15 Feb 03 17:25** I got new skis!

Some of you know that I bought a pair of skis a few weeks back at the huge SportChek sale. I got a fantastic deal on a set of Nordica W65s (only mine were yellow) just because they were last year's model. I had skied on them about 4 times previous to this day and I was loving them. They were my first pair of shape skis and I was getting very comfortable with them.

Well, one fateful run down the hill, I turned rather hard (well, I guess, in retrospect it was hard), and I found that the rear binding on my left ski (which was up until this point found directly behind where my heel is) had lost interest in following me down the mountain and had started to make its own way. The departure of this rather necessary piece of equipment, thus allowed my left foot to move about the slope unfettered.

For the non-skiers reading this, what I have just described is not at all conducive to staying upright. My ski, the rear binding, and I all decided that we'd had enough of each other and continued in our separate directions. Since the "emergency brakes" of a ski are on the rear binding, the ski without one doesn't exactly stop on its own. Since I am sliding down the hill headfirst on my back, I am in no condition to stop it either. I finally managed to compose myself, dig my ski out of the woods, pick up my now unattached half-binding and continue feebly down the hill on one ski.

This was all before lunch.

Being determined to finish out the day, I went to rent some skis. Rental skis suck. I went from feeling elated at being on the slopes on such a wonderful day, to being distraught and downtrodden. I swore a lot. Ray laughed at me. I swore at Ray.

Meanwhile, back in Halifax...

Remember how I said I got a great deal on those skis? Well here's the problem I have now:

I have a few choices

1. Wait to see if SportCheck can come up with another pair of these skis, which may not be possible because they were last year's model.
2. Get store credit. But since I got such a great deal, I'd have to chip in some more cash to get a ski of equivalent performance.
3. Take the money and run. I'm back where I started and no worse for wear. But I have no skis. I could, of course, use this money to buy skis at another establishment.

And that's where we stand today. [Here](#) is the link to the rest of the photos.

**Update! 10 Feb 03 12:04** I also feel like ranting about how Cleve's Sporting Goods does not seem to have a website. I mean, come on. Who the hell doesn't have a website in this day and age? All I'm trying to do is look at potential replacement skis and they are one of only two chain stores in Metro that sell downhill skis. There's always Aerobics First, but I haven't yet been able to get there while they're open. I can't even email somebody to complain because they don't appear to have email addresses either. Stupid Cleve's. Does somebody want to bring them into the 21st century?

**Update! 12 Feb 03 14:55** I was called just now by the sales guy from SportChek and he has found me replacement skis! They are being couriered from somewhere on the west coast. Unfortunately they probably won't get here in time for the weekend. That sucks, but I suppose it's unavoidable. I will have to take my old skis when I go (hopefully) on Saturday.

**Update! 15 Feb 03 17:25** I got new skis! The [album of photos of my broken ski](#) has been updated with pics of my new ones.

*Originally posted on Saturday, 2003-02-08 at 23:43:11.*

# Yo, peeps. This be a throwdown.

I don't know how many people outside my own office ski, but you are welcome to join Ray ([who won't login](#)) and I at [Wentworth](#) on Saturday. There are two more spots in my vehicle for anyone who would like to come with us.

[Drop me a line](#) if you are interested. Tell your friends too. Should be a good time. [Weather looks great.](#)  
*Originally posted on Thursday, 2003-02-06 at 09:18:55.*

# The weather sucks

It wasn't long ago that I was remarking how cold it was, but I would gladly trade the craptacular weather out today for a sharp drop in temperature. I can't believe that it's 6 degrees out. Just think, if we went back to Friday afternoon, and if it was below freezing, all this rain would have been snow. It would have been glorious. Maybe I even would have been able to go skiing this weekend.

It seems that even in the winter, the old joke still holds true: "What follows two days of rain in Nova Scotia? Monday."

*Originally posted on Sunday, 2003-02-02 at 13:22:26.*

# Television is to blame, yet again

Two brothers in California strangled and dismembered their mother, and *obviously* it is the result of watching The Sopranos. I can't begin to express how messed up that last statement is. Anybody who kills and dismembers *anybody* is a pretty twisted fuck. If you don't have some of that instinct in you, watching a TV show isn't going to push you over the edge.

The obvious connection the article draws between this murder and watching the Sopranos isn't exactly going to help the case of video games' alleged connection to violent behaviour (i.e., Columbine) either.

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-01-28 at 10:51:38.*

# Holy crap it's cold

Does it seem unusually cold to any of you other Haligonians? Maybe it's just me, but I think it is cold. Silly cold. Shit ass damn cold.

Some people have been saying that it's not any colder than it should be, but the the past three or four years have been warmer than average so we're a bit spoiled. I don't know if I agree with that...I think -17 is cold no matter what's going on. I've even talked to people from out west (in the prairies) where it's routinely in the -20's during the winter. They say it's way colder here; something to do with the humidity or something.

What do *you* do to combat the cold? What if you *\*have\** to be outside?

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-01-22 at 22:09:20.*

# Post your poll suggestions

It's clear that I suck at coming up with new polls. Post your suggestions for new ones here. There's a maximum of 12 choices, and one of them should probably be "Other", unless there is really a finite number of choices.

I'll consult with my colleagues, and one of the suggested masterpieces will probably be the next poll.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-01-20 at 10:43:16.*

# Crappy hardware free-for-all

I am giving away a bunch of old hardware that is not necessarily crappy, as the title of this article implies, but is stuff that I just don't need or use anymore. This is including, but not limited to, two pairs of computer speakers, two monitors (a 15", and a 14") and numerous cases. Make me an offer on a K6-2 350 Mhz computer as well (sans ram and hard drive)....no, I'm not giving that computer away.

Feel free to drop by and pick stuff up. If you really want something, post here and I'll hold it until you can come and get it. First come, first served.

If you need directions to my place, [drop me a line](#).

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-01-13 at 14:49:33.*

# Free tickets to see old men play hockey!

First person to post in this article (that wants them) gets two tickets:

“ *Oldtimers' Hockey Challenge (14th Anniversary)*  
*Legendary Hockey Heroes vs. Law Enforcement Allstars*  
*Saturday, January 11, 2003 @ 6:00 pm*  
*Halifax Metro Centre*

Oh what fun.

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-01-08 at 17:08:17.*

# Smoking in the HRM

As many people know (and relish!) a new bill concerning smoking in public places has come into effect as of 01 Jan 2003. [This website](#), has all the information you should need about these new regulations, including [the bill itself](#).

The thing I find the most interesting are the fines (\$200 for an individual or \$500 for a corporation), and the fact that "[any member of the public can report their concerns to the HRM By-law enforcement office at 490-4000](#)".

*Originally posted on Tuesday, 2003-01-07 at 13:59:19.*

# Virtual Beer Bash?

What do you all think about attempting a virtual beer bash?

Webcams, headphones, Yahoo Messenger and the OH- of your choice? Meet online at a given time, etc. Hey! No cab costs. No line-ups. No bad weather. Cheap booze.

I'm such a loser.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-01-06 at 18:59:51.*

# Pub Crawls

Late last year, a number of people were asking me when the next pub crawl was going to be. If you recall, however, I had quite a bit of trouble rounding people up for the last one. I have no real desire to put one on if only a few people are going to go; we might as well just get drunk together and totally forgo the shirts.

If that's what you guys are into then, great, I can stop doing all this work :) But if you'd rather have a full-blown crawl, with the shirts and everything, then I need at *least* 40 people to make it worth while. I would love to have one on the scale of the Survivor crawl, which I still consider the most successful to date.

Talk about this potential crawl in the comments. What did you like about previous crawls? What should be different this time? What can I do to raise attendance? Bar suggestions? The sky's the limit.

*Originally posted on Monday, 2003-01-06 at 08:29:08.*

# Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2003. It doesn't really feel any different, does it? And where the hell are the flying cars? Aren't we supposed to have them by now?

*Originally posted on Wednesday, 2003-01-01 at 09:50:04.*