

September 1983
PLAYBOY

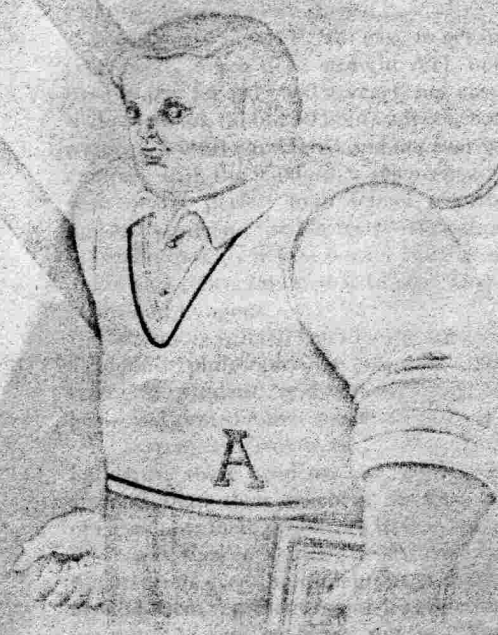
they are the chosen, the fair-haired inheritors of the high-tech age—if they can just get through m.i.t. without jumping

TECHNOPARLINGS

article by **BRADLEY STEIN**

THE FOOTBALL TEAM at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology played eight New England Collegiate Conference games last year and lost five of them. Worcester State beat them 42 to three. Bentley College beat them 46 to naught. But if there was a moment when the English majors and the econ majors and the prelaw majors in the stands got all puffed up because their team was pushing the nerds around on the gridiron, it must have taken the fun out of it when they heard the yell that comes from the MIT side on such occasions. It's the kind of yell that must haunt the arts majors later on, when they're out on their first job interviews or when they read the papers and see everybody from Ronald Reagan to Jerry Brown slobbering over the new technology and its young wizard. It's a cruel yell. It goes: "M-I-T... Puh-Duh... M-O-N-E-Y."

The truth of it, of course, is that America's new illiterates are those who speak and read and write only English or one of the world's other human-to-human languages. It's all very nice to know a little Shakespeare, or perhaps the history of the republic, or perhaps the difference between a fort



and a felony; but it won't necessarily get you a job. And if it does, the M-O-N-E-Y is likely to be P-E-A-N-U-T-S.

And if that yell seems a little arrogant, it is. But then, the kids at MIT, the technodarlings who are warming up to design the systems that will see us into the 21st Century, figure they've earned it.

It's not easy at MIT. Not easy to get in (you pretty much need straight A's), not easy to pay for (\$15,000 a year), not easy to do the work (about 40 hours a week, not counting lectures and labs) and not easy to compete with the 9500 other scienceheads with nearly perfect high school records and big scores on the big tests—the other kids who took their first pocket calculator apart and reprogrammed it to play Dungeons and Dragons.

The seniors will tell you that the school's academic philosophy is to take the strongest student and crush him—or her—and that the first couple of years resemble trying to drink from a fire hydrant. Suddenly, these students are no longer smarter than their teachers; in fact, as often as not, their professors have written the books they're working from. And for the first time ever, the students at the desks around them represent major-league competition. As one professor put it, "You know these students are serious when you walk into class and say good morning and they write it down."

Altogether, MIT tends to shatter whatever confidence its students have come in with. And sometimes it's worse than that.

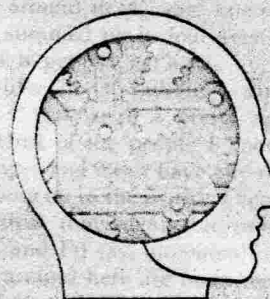
"We get a few suicides every year, it seems like," one grad student told me while I was on campus for a couple of weeks last spring. "A few days ago, a guy hanged himself in his room at Burton House. He borrowed the rope from a friend of mine, who is feeling pretty terrible by now."

Jeff Kletsky, an electrical-engineering senior, told me that several years ago, the administration put the freshmen on a pass/fail system to ease the initial pinch, and it closed the roof of the 20-story Green Building, which had been a favorite for jumpers over the years. The Green Building was so notorious, in fact, that several years ago, someone crept into the courtyard below it and painted two large targets on the pavement. The first was for upperclassmen, and its concentric circles read ABCDE. The other was for freshmen, two circles only: PASS and FAIL.

There was a time for Kletsky, however, when it all came a little too close to be funny. He was crossing McDermott Court, under the Green Building, on his way to an exam in computer science. All of a sudden, a lounge chair shattered an upper-story window, and he heard a voice behind him say, "Oh, my God." He looked up, saw someone trying to jump—and, he says, he just put his head down and kept walking. The jumper was restrained, but

TECHNOVALUES: A GUIDE TO THE SYSTEM

when the technodarlings inherit the earth, what kind of culture will the rest of us inherit?



INDUSTRIAL AGE

HISTORY—The sum of recorded human experience

LONG TERM—A period of time corresponding roughly to a generation or the life of a corporate bond

EASTERN CULTURE—Those goddamned Japs and all the inexpensive, high-quality goods with which they're flooding our markets

L.L.D., PH.D., M.B.A.—The men of letters who run the world

TAKING STOCK—The act of reflection and self-criticism that precedes important career moves

DRESS FOR SUCCESS—A prescriptive code of corporate dress based on the belief that you are what you wear, and if you want to be a big shot, you should dress exactly as the big shots do—in suits and ties of conventional cut and color

THE LOST GENERATION—Members of the post-World War One generation who were tragically incapable of dealing with the realities of 20th Century American life

FAITH—The leap required to arrive at a belief in certain things, such as God or justice

CREDENTIALS—Where you prepped, what college and grad school you attended, the names of rich or influential relatives or ancestors, the clubs to which you belong

FRIENDLY—The quality of a human who is pleasant to other humans

CAREER MOVE—A calculated risk in which the security of an established job is sacrificed for the hazards of a new one in hopes of long-range advancement and benefit. Like bachelorhood and divorce, frequent job moves are seen as a sign of instability.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE—A corporate v.p. or a law-firm partner in his early 40s

MARRIAGE—A holy state entered into for love or money, often with a passion. A sign of stability required for corporate advancement and favorable insurance rates

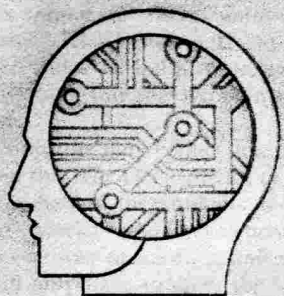
RAISING A FAMILY—One of the conventional ingredients of a fulfilled life—a given

CHERISHED MEMORIES—Family photo albums and home movies

WORKAHOLISM—The pattern of compulsive striving and relentless stress, common among corporate executives and other overachievers; often leads to professional and financial advantage, coronary thrombosis and early death

RETIREMENT—Being put out to pasture at the age of 65 whether you like it or not

get EPCOT Center. The real world of tomorrow is being shaped in the hands of communities where high-tech firms have staked their claims—along Route 128 in Boston, in the Research Triangle of North Carolina and, most prominently, in California's Silicon Valley. This is where tomorrow is being lived, not just displayed. It doesn't take more than a few days in the Valley to see that today's young engineers and entrepreneurs are doing more than redesigning the way we receive our info—they're also rewiring some of the basic beliefs that generations of American careers have been built around. Proceed with care—the plug is hot.



HIGH-TECH AGE

HISTORY—The world since the discovery of the silicon chip

LONG TERM—Five years at the outside

EASTERN CULTURE—Yale, suits and ties, the University Club, the New York Social Register

"DOUBLE E"—Not the shoe size but the degree (in electrical engineering) held by the guys who are designing our future

TAKING STOCK—The act of establishing equity—preferably founders' stock—by moving from an established high-tech firm to a smaller new company

WEAR CLEAN UNDERWEAR IF YOU'RE GOING TO THE DOCTOR—A code of corporate dress in which neither conformity nor formality matters. The necktie-to-income ratio is probably lower in Silicon Valley than in any other place outside the Arab world.

THE LOST GENERATION—Members of the post-Vietnam generation of computer illiterates and technophobes who are tragically incapable of dealing with the realities of 21st Century American life

LOGIC—The steps required to arrive at a belief in certain things—any things, in fact

CREDENTIALS—Once you're in the game, the only thing that matters is what you've done to produce a profit for yourself and your company. Age, lineage, diplomas count for naught.

FRIENDLY—The quality of a machine that is pleasant to humans

THE SILICON SHUFFLE—As a matter of course, technokids change jobs the way young lawyers change their rotation of suits. The rate of turnover is astronomical—33 percent a year is not uncommon among Silicon Valley firms.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE—A 26-year-old corporate president; a 32-year-old E.E.C.

MARRIAGE—An arrangement created rationally and maintained as long as it doesn't interfere with work. No stigma is attached to the termination of marital bonds—or to the failure to establish them in the first place.

"DOING" KIDS—A decision to expand the family unit, made almost like a marketing move and followed by copious study of the literature on birthing and parenting

CHERISHED MEMORIES—Bubbles and floppy disks

MEGAWORK—The pattern of extraordinary productivity achieved during grueling stretches of 12-to-16-hour workdays that are broken up by periodic long weekends or extended leaves; common among the elite band of competitive young engineers and marketing experts who work to earn big money and substantial wealth

THE FUTURE—A couple, possibly on the verge of divorce, looking at their future together

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somehow, that didn't help Kletsky concentrate any better on his exam.

Vignettes like that travel the grapevine hard and fast on any campus, but most of the kids who get into MIT don't kill themselves and they don't flunk out. Something like 90 percent of them graduate. But by the time they are seniors, the combination of the work load and the pressure to do well has usually put a certain cynicism into their outlook. "The ambitions of most students around here," said one of them, "can be summed up in four gets: Get in, get through, get out, get a job."

"We live in a bubble," said Eric Shrader. "And we're a pretty apathetic crowd. Most of the people I know don't read a paper and don't have any real idea what's going on in the world. There aren't any political movements on campus to speak of, and I'd say, in general, that the students around here are more motivated by money than they are by causes."

Shrader, who is in mechanical engineering, had decided to go on to grad school instead of to work. For one thing, he'd been interviewed by 12 companies on campus over the winter and the spring and he hadn't had an offer from any of them.

"In 1979," he said, "there were so many jobs out there that the grads around here interviewed the companies instead of the companies' interviewing them. But it's a buyers' market now, so you put on a suit and a tie and what you hear most is that they're not sure they are going to be hiring at all. It's tight."

Jim Cannon, an aero-astro senior, said he thought that a decent starting salary for his major would be \$27,000 to \$28,000 a year but that these days, those who were getting offers at all were taking more like \$24,000 to \$25,000. But he said he realized that things could be a lot worse. He could have gone to Harvard, for instance, and majored in the arts. "I really can't imagine spending all that time and money to study something like *history*," he said. "And then have to take a job at McDonald's."

No matter how much the technical-job market may have shrunk recently, though, most seniors at MIT seem to have a calm sort of faith that they will get a job and that it will pay relatively well, even if it isn't exactly the one they want and even if they have to go off to a place like Houston for a while. And if they do begin to doubt that, they need only remember the unwritten instructions on how to sport their class ring. It's made of brass and has a beaver—nature's engineer—on top. They call it the brass rat, and the lore of it goes that while you're an undergrad, you wear it so the beaver shits on you. When you graduate, you turn it so the beaver shits on the world.

"You don't really need a watch around here," said Kletsky as we made our way across campus to a class of his called Aerials, Antennas and Receivers. "If

the parade is going toward the great dome, it's ten of. If it's coming back, it's ten after."

The great dome is a pompous-looking building right off the back of a nickel. It sits on Massachusetts Avenue and Memorial Drive, on the bank of the Charles River, and it's the rough architectural center of 30 buildings on the east campus, all of them connected by a vast series of indoor passages, some of them underground. "They say," Kletsky told me, "that there are more miles of hallway around here than anywhere but the Kremlin and the Pentagon."

That's not the only connection between MIT and the War Department, of course. Well over half of the students there will eventually work for the Department of Defense in one way or another, and some of them will only have to cross the street to do it: to The Charles Stark Draper Laboratory. The MIT-catalog description of the work they do at Draper makes it sound as if its main business is the exploration of space and the deep seas. The truth, however, is symbolized by a steel pole in the lawn out front. It's the zero point from which the trajectories of all of America's nuclear missiles are calibrated, and it's there because the guidance systems for those missiles are designed at Draper.

The students I talked with didn't seem to have any moral problems about doing war work. All of them had pretty much accepted the old red-white-and-blue arguments that you imagine hang in cross-stitch in those endless Pentagon hallways: AMERICA MUST BE STRONG TO BE FREE; YOU OWE YOUR COUNTRY SOME SORT OF SERVICE, AFTER ALL; SCIENTISTS DIDN'T INVENT WAR, THEY JUST MAKE IT EFFICIENT; IF WE'RE LUCKY, WE'LL NEVER HAVE TO USE THESE DAMN THINGS; and, of course, SOMEBODY HAS TO DO IT.

One senior told me he had changed his major from marine engineering when it became clear that the only work he would get with that degree would be designing aircraft carriers and submarines. But in that same conversation, an aero-astro major told me that he was into the technical joy of high-performance aircraft and that the Department of Defense was the only outfit that had any need for that sort of engineering. "So, mostly, you try not to think about the moral issues," he said. "You just focus on the science of it. You concentrate on the pieces. You say to yourself, 'Wow, this is neat. It works!'"

Kletsky and I went through the lobby of the main building, past a pair of students and what must have been somebody's class project. The students were hopping from one square to another on carpet pieces that were cut to look like a giant piano keyboard and were wired to a speaker. They were playing *The Star-Spangled Banner*. We walked down the long main corridor—infinite hallway, they call it—climbed a set of well-worn steps, then

crossed a covered bridge to another building, and on our way down another long passage, we passed three professorial-looking men, one of whom actually said, on his way by, "Then I guess it's back to the drawing board."

"This is it," said Kletsky as he opened a door. Then, "Oops. Wrong floor, I guess."

On the way down one flight, I said, "Is this class a sometime stop for you, Jeff?"

"They're all sometime stops for me," he said.

There are only two kinds of students at MIT, they say—the very smart and those who work their butts off. Kletsky's friends will tell you that he is in the first group. He goes to only about half of his classes, does only about half of the assigned problem sets and still has better than a B average. Stereo is his passion, and in the summer of 1982, he worked at Texas Instruments, helping develop a quadrasonic system. This semester, he has a part-time job at a Boston hi-fi store for the fun of it and for the pocket money.

"I take my three days off a week and an extra day at the end of vacations, and I usually blow off Monday or Wednesday night or both," he said. "I decided a long time ago that there was more to life than grades; and around here, if you don't relax, you'll crack up. But, really, I think I just hide my studying better than most people. Right before finals, I shut my door, don't talk to anybody, then I pile up the problem sets and the books and work my way through them. It makes for a bad couple of weeks, but it's better than grunting along for the whole semester."

Grunting is a piece of slang out of a larger glossary, some of which is particular to this campus. Grunge is busy work, such as chasing long columns of numbers through a formula to an answer. To flame out is to break under pressure, and to punt something is to blow it. A hack is a prank, usually involving some degree of technical skill, or someone who spends too much time with computers. A tool is anyone who has grown narrow and dull from excess study, also called a troll and, sometimes—but not often around here—a nerd.

They call Kletsky's cram-it method power tooling at MIT, and there's a current saying on campus that credits authorship of the ancient technique to the Big Engineer Himself. "God didn't make the world in seven days," it says. "He fooled around for six and then pulled an all-nighter."

When we got inside the small classroom, 22 students sat over their notebooks while a balding radio astronomer in a white shirt and a tie returned corrected problem sets and began lecturing. He translated such phrases as cassagran system, ideal parabolas and far fields into the vaguely Greek cryptology of science, and within ten minutes, he had filled three blackboards. No one asked any questions, and when his

multifunction digital watch squealed, the professor dismissed the class.

Back in the corridors, Kletsky offered to show me the secret place known as The Tomb of the Unknown Tool. As we walked, I asked him about the hierarchy of nerds on campus.

"The people over in artificial intelligence—if you can call them people—are the worst of the tools," he said. "They can sit for 24 hours with a keyboard on their laps and never move. Some of them even *speak* in computer languages. Like, if you say something they don't understand, they'll look at you and say, 'Syntax error, syntax error.' I hate that."

Almost as bad, he said, are the tools who live in the Student Center Library on the fifth floor of the Union building. Literally *live* there. Some of them have no other rooms, and since the library is open 24 hours a day, they eat, study and sleep at the enclosed desks (called toolboxes), shower in one of the labs or bathe in the Charles, and if they don't own clocks, they get wake-up calls from the librarian.

We took an elevator into the bowels of the main building, a set of subbasement corridors lined with labs and storage rooms, hung with huge overhead pipes and full of groaning machine sounds. At one point, we passed a hand-lettered sign that read, **DISARM THIS DOOR.**

"That's the hackers," said Kletsky. "A group that has this campus completely wired. They can go anywhere they want, through every security system and lock in the place. It used to be easy, because the whole campus was on a master key that had only three pins. You could duplicate it with a file. Now they're using one of those ugly Yale Z blanks, so it's a lot harder."

We made several more turns, walked a long, straight stretch, then Kletsky squeezed through a small vertical opening where the underground corners of two buildings didn't quite meet. I followed him into a tall cement shaft, about 6' x 4', where the light came from above and the walls celebrated the kind of moments that don't make the yearbook: **BOOMER JACK AND TZ MADE LOVE HERE 12/14/81. . . . VIDI VICI, VENI—I SAW, I CONQUERED, I CAME.** There were the Greek letters of several fraternities, a list of names commemorating something called The Great Institute Hack Night and a set of conflicting imperatives, one of which read **NO TOAD SEXING ALLOWED**, the other **TOAD SEXING ENCOURAGED.**

"Well," said Kletsky, "I think that's probably biology-department humor. If you want to find out the sex of a toad, you have to get it down and spread its little legs wide open."

I was going to ask him whether or not the men at MIT really thought of the women there, who constitute about 20 percent of the student body, as toads, when I spotted a drawn dot that said below it,

PUSH THIS MAGIC BUTTON AND ALL THE TECH COEDS WILL TURN INTO FEMALES.

The women at MIT chuckle at jokes like that. Outnumbered four to one as they are, they can afford to. And they have a few laughs of their own:

• "Why can't women be civil engineers?" one of them asked me. When I shook my head, she held her thumb and forefinger about an inch apart and said, "Because all their lives, they've been told that this is 12 inches."

• "How do you know if you're sleeping with an electrical-engineering major? It isn't hard."

• "What's the difference between an MIT man and a toilet? A toilet doesn't follow you around after you flush it."

"That's terrible," said one.

"But true," said another. We were at a Chinese restaurant in Cambridge for lunch, and all three of them agreed that the women at MIT held almost all the cards socially. Which, they said, was not without its problems.

"A lot of girls come here out of high school, where they never had any dates at all, and they move into a dorm like Baker House and all of a sudden, there are guys coming out of the woodwork. But not necessarily the guys you want," said Julie Foster, a mechanical-engineering senior. "A lot of them are overwhelmed by it."

Baker House is a 350-student dorm that sits on the edge of campus overlooking the Charles, and it generally has a reputation as the hardest-partying dorm at MIT. It's sometimes called the largest fraternity on campus, which seems to be true in spirit except that it is cheek-by-jowl coed. The men and women here live next door to one another, eat and sleep with one another, and they even use the same bathrooms.

"That was the hardest adjustment for me," said Dawna Levinson. "I grew up with sisters only, and it was hard to get used to using a bathroom where there was a guy in the stall next to you."

"It's like a small town," said Foster. "Everybody knows everybody else's business. The women know more, because each of them is going out with, like, five guys and they tell one another all about them. The guys are going out with maybe one or two girls, so they don't have as much information. It gets difficult at times, when you break up with somebody or when a friend wants it to be more than a friendship. But I think it's good overall. It forces you to be open and honest, because the lines of communication are instantaneous—like superconductors."

Most students tend to stay on campus to socialize, they said, partly because of the nerd stigma they suffer at the hands of their preppie contemporaries around the Ivy League. And when they do go off-campus for fun, they don't usually wear Tech sweat shirts or otherwise flash their school

colors, because when they do, they hear the same things over and over: "You're from MIT—you must be smart" or "What are you a genius at?" or "Where's your calculator?" or "Say something in FORTRAN." Sometimes, in situations like those, they just flat-out lie about where they go to school; and now and then—at a Wellesley dance, for instance—you can overhear a guy from MIT saying he is from Harvard to a girl from MIT who is saying she goes to Smith.

In general, though, any woman at MIT can have a date just about any time she wants one, as long as she isn't too particular. If you are choosy, one Baker House senior said, MIT probably isn't very different from any other campus: "It may be four to one, but in there you have two nerds and one gay, so you're back to even."

The wide-open dorm life at MIT is only one part of what the administration intends as a sort of dendering process for its students, many of whom were shut out or chose their way out of the normal social ebb and flow in high school. While others dated and danced and played baseball, these kids sat alone building ham radios or watching for comets or playing fantasy games on their home computers. Many of them have no team experience at all, and without it, no matter how bright they are, the fast-lane real world of the technical-job place is likely to overwhelm them. All most of them really needed was a benevolent atmosphere in which to try their hands at some of the things they missed.

Around four o'clock on a bright Friday afternoon, an eight shell and a four shell pulled away from the dock at Pierce Boat-house into a stiff, cold wind on the slate-blue Charles. There were coveys of small sailboats out, a half-dozen wind surfers, and as the eight shell picked up the beat, the coxswain read to the crew with great feeling through her megaphone from a trashy romance novel. "She arrived in Chicago in 1868, heiress to a vast fortune, the only woman who could make him fall helplessly in love. . . ."

This was the women's lightweight crew, and as they slipped under Longfellow bridge, the coach paralleled them in her launch and spoke to them through a red bullhorn: "With the legs, not the back. You're timid; you're rowing as if you were on cracked eggs. All right, in the race tomorrow, about this point, your lungs will start to burn, your legs will start to burn and you will ask yourselves that age-old question 'Why am I doing this?'"

Cady Coleman, a chemical-engineering senior on the number-three oar in the four shell, had told me earlier that afternoon why she did it. "I didn't play any sports at all in high school, and neither did a lot of the other kids who come here. But the great thing is, at MIT, you don't have to

be good to compete. Almost nobody is ever cut from the varsity teams. If you show up for practice, you're on."

She said that being on the crew had increased her self-esteem and had given her a metaphor for hard academic work. "It's difficult to do well out there," she said. "It takes as much finesse as it does strength. The races are about a mile long, and when it starts to hurt, you have to tell yourself that you get to the finish line one stroke at a time, which is something like those moments when you have what seems like an impossible amount of reading to do for an exam. And I like the camaraderie of being on a team and the feeling at six in the morning that you're up and working hard while the rest of the slime is sleeping."

Crew is one of 32 sports that MIT offers for varsity athletes, along with an intramural system that's run by the students and that may be the most enlightened athletic program at any school in the country. There are almost 1300 intramural teams, 30 hockey teams alone, and about two thirds of the students play one or another of 25 sports that include football, softball, fencing, water polo and Frisbee. There are four leagues and the novice level requires only that you have the desire to step up to bat or lace on the skates. And intramurals, they say, generate more student interest than the intercollegiate sports.

While I was on campus, I watched an A-league hockey game between Sigma Alpha Epsilon and mechanical engineering that was hard and fast and noisy and full of the kinds of bad feelings on both sides that make for a good match. About 100 spectators sat in the stands at the new athletic center and yelled things like, "Mech E., what a concept!"

And a petite math major from Baker House told me that although she could barely skate, she had played D-league hockey this year and loved it, though it got a little rough at times. "The guys are usually pretty helpful," she said. "But it gets a little strange when some hulk smashes you against the boards and then asks for a date while he's helping you up."

Finally, for those who like the new-age no-team sports that don't require you to get the wind in your hair, there's the video-game room in the Student Union. You can't get a place at one of those machines most afternoons, and if they are training modules for the next generation of fighter pilots, as the President suggested not long ago, we'd better hope to God we don't go to war against the Asians. Because the list of immortals celebrating the highest scores on those machines reads like a page out of the Hong Kong phone book.

They said they were meeting to plan The Great Institute Hack Night. Remember when somebody put a giant happy face

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TECHNODARLINGS

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on the radar ball up on the Green Building? Well, that was us, they told me, and as they passed a picture of it, a visible pride swept the room that seemed to characterize the fun they got from using their knowledge of how things really work to a mischievous end.

The group had found me at happy hour, a sometime Friday event at Baker House where 150 or so men and women crowd the bar in the lobby of the dorm for 50-cent Scotch and 25-cent beer while they talk and laugh and try to figure out what to do with their weekends from here. They don't date much at Baker House. They don't have to. They just sort of hang out till something develops.

Not long after the party started, a man in a brown coat and glasses introduced himself and said that if I had a minute, there were some people he'd like me to meet. While we walked, he asked whether or not I had ever heard of hacking; and when I said yes, he opened a dorm door and a dozen shy faces, three of them women's, said hi and introduced themselves as The Technological Hackers' Association.

It was a game, they said. The institute, including the campus police, pretty much knew who they were, but they were almost never caught. When they were, it usually meant no more than a \$50 fine and the confiscation of the sophisticated equipment they used to foil the sophisticated equipment that the school used in a vain attempt to keep itself secure from its own.

The year before, they had pulled off one of their favorite hacks. In the dead of night, they had used a crane and a pulley system to put a working phone booth on top of the great dome. They monitored the police radio, and in less than two hours and to the delight of several hundred students who watched from the rooftops of nearby buildings, they hoisted the booth, ran the necessary cables up to it, then folded their equipment and were gone. Then they listened to their radios as the police discovered it.

"What is it?" asked the cop at the command post when another cop got to the roof.

"It's a phone booth," came the answer.

"What the hell is it doing up there?"

"It's ringing," said the cop on the roof.

"Well . . . answer it," said the first cop.

So now it was just past ten o'clock Friday night, and the intense young man who was pressed flat against the wall next to me said, "Make as little noise as possible, and remember—when the elevator doors open, we have to get in before they close."

We were somewhere in the basement, and we were on our way to the roof of the Green Building, a forbidden

destination. There were six of us in the group, including scouts, lockpicks and alarm specialists, all of whom had made this trip many times before. So many times, in fact, that they had named the route we were about to follow "the Green line." When the elevator arrived in the basement, the six of us piled in and rode it to one of the upper floors. A scout checked the hallways before we got off, while another of the hackers went to work defeating an alarm system that was connected to a smaller elevator that we then rode the rest of the way. When the elevator doors opened, we were 20 stories above the campus, in the cool night air, next to the big plastic ball that protects a gaggle of weather equipment. They pointed out campus landmarks, including the dome below us, and after some discussion, decided that while we were out, we probably ought to breach it, too.

We rode the elevators back to the basement; and while we threaded our way through the labyrinthine hallways, I asked how they knew so much about the layout of the buildings.

"We have floor plans and technical drawings of every building on campus," one of them said. "Seven million, two hundred twenty-four thousand, three hundred and ten usable square feet, to be precise."

Another elevator got us to the top floor of the dome building. "Highly illegal," said a smiling hacker as he produced a set of lockpicks and undid the big padlock on the steel grating that prevented window access to the roof. A ladder waited on the outside landing of the dome itself and was lifted into place. We scrambled 50 feet up it to the sandstone curve of the dome, and with a little duckwalking, we were on top.

We stayed about ten minutes while the tech commandos laughed and talked among themselves about past hacks and about what they might do this year (a Volkswagen up here, maybe?), and I couldn't help thinking that it was a good thing that they thought of this as a game, because there was no doubt in my mind as I listened to them that if they wanted to, they could make their way into and through the maze of corridors at the Pentagon to put a live pig or a live bomb in the war room.

Because, unlike most of us, these people are not tyrannized by the machines that run our world. In fact, they like them; can fool with them; can do them and undo them; can make them play *The Star-Spangled Banner* or launch a flight of last-chapter warheads.

And I thought that of all the roofs on all the campuses in America right now, this was the catbird seat: with the lights of Boston across the Charles, the lights of Massachusetts off to the west and, beyond that, a whole country full of circuits and chips—all just waiting for these kids to get out and start fiddling with them.

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TECHNOVALUES: A GUIDE TO THE SYSTEM

INDUSTRIAL AGE

HEROES—Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Vince Lombardi—men of epic achievement in highly traditional endeavors

BEST SELLER—Robert Ludlum

MATURE COMPANY—*Fortune* 500. A stable enterprise with a well-established market, steady (if modest) growth, long-term stability. Hearing that a company is mature is music to the ears of pension-fund managers, who favor the safest possible stocks.

LADDER—Abstract representation of the corporate structure in which ambitious employees must gradually climb—and down which all decisions are passed

CAMPUS—The grounds of a college or a university, often designed after the fashion of such venerable Eastern institutions as Princeton and Yale

SABBATICAL—The yearlong relief from teaching responsibilities often granted to tenured university professors, generally every seven years

GOLF—The game that greases the wheels of industry; played at a pace that allows plenty of time to talk business

CADILLAC—The traditional luxury car and, more than that, the very quintessence of excellence—and not understated excellence, either

MORTGAGE BURNING—The ceremonial conflagration marking the end of the long, slow march toward permanent home ownership and freedom from debt

SUCCESS—A steady, hefty pay check from a secure, comfortable job with the usual trimmings (medical and dental), all leading to a pension and a modest stock portfolio

NERD—A frumpily dressed, socially inept science major, probably more comfortable with equations or electrical circuitry than with other humans

HIGH-TECH AGE

HEROES—Nolan Bushnell (Atari), David Packard and William Hewlett, Robert Noyce (Intel), Steve Jobs (Apple)—postindustrial pioneers who have blazed the high-tech trail and have amassed major fortunes

BEST SELLER—Visicalc

MATURE COMPANY—Any firm no longer on an ultrasteep growth curve nor on the extreme cutting edge of the business. Hearing that their company is mature can be the death knell for young techies who want to hook up with only rising enterprises.

LOOP—The number of people with whom you need to clear an idea in order to bring a project to completion. For high-tech go-getters who want to be close to the action, the size of the loop is a key factor in deciding whether or not to join a given company.

CAMPUS—Corporate facilities, including pools and fitness centers, often designed after the fashion of such venerable Eastern institutions as Sony and Mitsubishi

SABBATICAL—The 17-week paid leave given to employees every five years by many people-oriented, paternalistic high-tech companies

RACQUETBALL—When your basic unit of time is a nanosecond, you don't take leisurely strolls around the greensward for business meetings or for exercise.

BMW—You never hear a data-processing system referred to as "the Cadillac of computers." Techies prefer understated elegance. Porsche and Mercedes qualify, too.

ZEROING OUT—The manipulation of numerous 30-year mortgages on investment properties so that tax deductions equal income; marks the rapid arrival by affluent techies at complete freedom from Federal-tax debt

SUCCESS—Making a quick fortune by establishing an equity position in a new company is crucial, but it is only the by-product of the real mark of accomplishment: leaving your mark on the market place, having your name on a company, a computer, even a component—"getting your fingerprints on the murder weapon," as they say.

NERD—A liberal-arts major

