Epstein leaves to work on Java Junior

By Katie Mack

On the stroke of midnight, December 31st, 1999, the third planet from the sun erupted in something less than the apocalyptic fury which span-boarders and Y2K-doomsayers had predicted. Only fireworks and newspapers graced the peaceful night sky. By the time the line of darkness swept over the United States, most of us here already knew that we would have to return to our dreary lives on Monday.

It was as if the whole Y2K bug had been dreamt up in the first moments of some old-time COBOL programmers and accepted by a public so reliant on computers and putters yet so utterly ignorant of them. It certainly was a legitimate concern, as the clock errors at several nuclear power plants demonstrated, but blown far out of proportion.

The teeming masses of human beings and their Cardboard cutouts of famous public squares the night before woke up to hangovers and the realization that the last party of the “millennium” had failed to live up to the hype. Make-shift survivalists found themselves facing a glut in the portable generator market. New York found itself buried under several tons of garbage and con-fetti. The threat-to-actual-terror-ratio reached an all-time low, as New Yorkers woke up to hangovers which had crowded the dawn of a new year, the quietness of the streets and the realization that we’d be partying “like it was 1999,” nearly all of us Americans... expected nothing less than the Rapture itself.

The otherwise rather impressive celebration occurred in a very natural and non-chalant way. Pacific Islanders, reenacting a ceremony they perform each year, sent out one old man and a boy in a canoe to symbolize the changeover from one year to the next. In the face of fake-seeming billion-dollar Millennium Domes and skies filled with fire-works and smoke, this Pacific Islander ritual rang true. Terrorists apparently second-guessed law enforcement and chose not to use the opportunity to perpetuate their agendas. Once again, the great specter of the Mayor of Seattle to cancel the party at the Space Needle failed to materialize. Some pre-emptive arrests were made, but there was no clear evidence that the increased security really had anything to contend with. The supposed “Y2K” crisis, conceived by computer-savvy writers and snowballed into mass obsession by the mass media and government, disappeared with the merest whisper with the New Year.

The general public discovered that, though their computers and their lives were safe with the dawn of a new year, the overly hyped predictors of “Y2K” were cast into doubt. In the future, the public is more likely to remain skeptical when rumors of massive computer failure and apocalyptic surface. Until, of course, Y10K rolls around.

Professor Emeritus Dies

Hydraulics expert renowned for work

By Katy Isaac

Vito A. Vanoni, California Institute of Technology Professor of Hydraulics, Emeritus, died Monday, December 27, 1999, of congestive heart failure. He was 95 years old.

Prof. Vanoni was world-renowned for his work on transport mechanics of sentiments in streams and rivers. He did research and taught courses on sediment transport hydrodynamics, advanced hydraulics, hydraulic structures, and coastal engineering.

Vanoni started his career at Caltech as an undergraduate freshman in 1922. He graduated with a B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1926. He returned to Caltech to get an M.S. in 1932 and a Ph.D. in 1940 in the same field. He became an associate professor of hydraulics in 1942, an associate professor in 1949, and a professor in 1955. He was supervisor of the Cooperative Sedimentation Laboratory of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service and Caltech from 1935 to 1947. Afterwards, he was instrumental in the development of the present W.M. Keck Laboratory of Hydraulics and Water Resources. He retired in 1974.

"A recruiter came to his college and said 'there's this new place called Caltech' and he thought 'hey, that's for me,'" said N.H. Brooks, his former graduate student turned colleague, now a Caltech professor Emeritus himself.

After his retirement, Vanoni continued to do work as an expert consultant on river channel and sedimentation problems for several government agencies and consultant firms. These included serving on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers consulting boards for the river sediment inputs after the eruption of Mount Saint Helen's in 1980 and for the sediments problem of

The California Tech
Heading in soccer linked to brain stem warpage

by Jon Foster

As if Tech students need one more reason to not participate in sports, recent medical studies, including one in the Sept. 8th issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, indicate that playing soccer can cause brain damage. The culprit is heading, especially if not performed correctly.

The JAMA study was headed by Erik Matser of St. Anna Hospital. In it, he compared 33 adult soccer players with 27 swimmers or track and field athletes who served as the control. These athletes performed a series of standard tests to identify evidence of chronic traumatic brain injury (CTBI). The study concluded: Our results indicate that participation in amateur soccer in general and concussion specifically is associated with impaired performance memory and planning functions.

In the November 1st issue of Science News magazine, Mats Matser says how such damage occurs. In a correct heading of the ball, the front and back of the brain are affected as the brain sloshes back and forth and collides with the front and back of the skull. In an incorrect heading, the brain may be twisted with respect to the brain stem, breaking links between nerve cells.

As the Science News article goes on to point out, while a few other small studies have established similar results, other tests have failed to show any connection. Matser calls the cognitive damage the soccer players received mild, but concludes by saying that, Methods for surveillance and prevention of such injuries should be developed and adopted to maximize safety.

Naturally, any contact sport involves the risk of injury, and the health benefits of regular exercise vastly outweigh the risks. There is a legitimate question as to whether heading, deliberately pounding your head, represents a great enough health risk to be abandoned - and whether the sport of Soccer would suffer from such an abandonment.


The young Dr. Vanoni is pictured here before his graduation in 1926. Vanoni attended Caltech for his undergraduate education. 1973. A member of the student branch of the ASCE while an undergraduate at Caltech and a full member since his graduation, Vanoni became an Honorary Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1980 and the ASCE distinguished Hunter Rouse Hydraulic Engineering Lecturer in 1983. Vito A. Vanoni was born on August 30, 1904 in Somis, California. "I'm really fond of him," said Brooks. "He was a wonderful fellow, very smart, but very modest."
The Insider(A) rated for verbal proficiency, but hey, welcome to the real world.

I’ve always thought that the state of journalistic integrity was in peril; journalists are only human and human beings are fallible, thus it is difficult not to express at least a modicum of personal opinion under their duty to be objective in news-reporting. Ever since the media gained enough power to exercise influence over public opinion, the power to inform has always been a contentious matter which enfolds in the U.S. Bergmann finds an obscure tobacco chemist, Jeffrey Wigand (Russell Crowe), fired under shady circumstances. Ultimately, the sordidness we often associate with the paparazzi and aggressive journalism has a great opposite, capable of outwitting a massive corporate culture to preserve a greater American public.

The Insider’s humor interchanges between American journalist and alleged overseas terrorist providing a nice foil to the ensuing serious matter which reveals how the public of the duplicitous actions performed to enhance the addictive properties of cigarette in cigarettes, though tobacco industry execs swear themselves to negligence. Finding a niche to battle the tobacco companies in formal litigation as well, Wigand becomes the target of death threats and stalkers while his private life becomes the target of public mockery in an attempt by big tobacco to discredit him. The 60 Minutes segment becomes his only means of vindication, but for at least 2 months his testimony is denied public access while the legal system slaps gag orders due to corporate contracts. For the sake of saving Wigand’s livelihood, Bergmann is forced to discredit his employer through other news providers.

Based exclusively on fact, the film paints a less than glowing portrayal of Mike Wallace and CBS and, needless to say, the tobacco industry. Motivated more by appeasing his supervisors than truth-telling, Mike Wallace caved into the opposition of the initial airing of the whistle-blower segment, only later conceding once the full story had already appeared in the Wall Street Journal. The CBS media corporation was also in uproar with the release of this film, though The Insider is hardly manipulating the facts concerning the faux pas. The testimony provided by Jeffrey Wigand was never dis-proven nor were the scare tactics and yellow journalism used to discredit him any more indicative of a man’s follies than foolish measures undertaken by the tobacco industry to escape scrutiny. The Insider is a testament of individuals battling much grander and unscrupulous entities and triumphing, a veritable David and Goliath story.

Welcome back everyone! Hopefully, everyone had an enjoyable winter vacation. The Caltech Y will be sponsoring several events this month. I will discuss these events in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Since first term is now over, this year’s freshmen should remember that they can now work on campus. Thus, if you have Federal Work Study, you can now enjoy the pleasures of being compensated at $12/hour for volunteer work that you do for the Y. This includes, but is not limited to, tutoring middle and high school students, beach clean-ups, and trail maintenance.

If you’re interested about volunteering via the Caltech Y, please contact us at ext. 6163 for more information.

Adam Werbach: Next Friday, January 14, the Caltech Y will be hosting Adam Werbach in continuation of our Social Activism Speaker Series. Werbach, 26, is the best known conservationist of his generation. He was elected as the 46th president of the Sierra Club, the oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization in America, at the age of 23. His many accomplishments include the campaign to pass the strongest clean air standards in America’s history and the fight to protect more than two million acres of wilderness. In his two terms as President, Werbach has completely revitalized the membership of the Sierra Club (i.e., increasing membership to 600,000, bringing down the average age of a member by a decade, and guiding the organization back to financial health).

Werbach’s keynote talk entitled “Act Now; Apologize Later” will occur at the Beckman Institute Auditorium at 8:00 p.m. This talk is free and open to the public. From 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., there will be a grassroots organizing roundtable at the Avery Library. Space is limited for this roundtable so please contact the Y at (626) 395-6163 to sign-up.

Getty Museum Trip: On Sunday, January 16th, the Caltech Y will be hosting a trip to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m. The cost of admission is free and transportation will be provided. We have space for 50 people. Please contact the Caltech Y at ext. 6163 for more information and/or to sign-up.

General Info: The Caltech Y holds weekly meetings on Mondays at 12:15 p.m. in the Y Lounge which is behind Steele House. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about what the Y does or who wants to get involved. Bring your ideas, your friends, and your lunch.

If you would like to get e-mails about Y-events, Y-outdoor events, or Y-community service events, please e-mail Elisa Chiang at polars@its.caltech.edu with the e-mail mailing list you would like to placed on. Also, if you have further questions concerning any of the activities mentioned above, feel free to e-mail me at dogbert@its.caltech.edu.
I have once again ventured into the poisonous river of stupidity that is the outside world. I return with renewed conviction that man is an unworthy being — unworthy of the lucky gift of reason that was bestowed upon him by the invisible forces of chaos and chance, unworthy of his ability to shape the world and life as he sees fit, and especially unworthy of the title "intelligent being" that he so arrogantly has bestowed upon himself. The majority of our species is content to wallow in ignorance and fear — to seek refuge from the unknown in temples and churches and shopping malls. They scavenge the landscape of wealth and prosperity that was created by the few in search of the petty morsels of happiness that can save them from the boredom of their all-too-comfortable lives. They buy houses, and cars, and toys of all kinds, to shield them. They work for one reason: because they have to. The sad thing is that they themselves took no part in creating or even thinking about, yet many hold with enough conviction to kill for. Their religion and morals they proclaim to the world as truth and hate those who do not conform without putting any degree of serious thought into their convictions.

They hide behind these things — religion, morality, wealth — because they are afraid of the world — a world they do not or cannot understand. So they create false order to bring simplicity to the chaos and complexity of reality and rationalize with ideas of tradition and piety and justice. These ideas they learn from a society of people who learned the same things from one another and generation to generation. Lost in the web of unthinking action that they create — the system of thought that values ignorance and blind faith, that glorifies the "average guy" and outcasts the special or different, that prizes a "normal" life and values it with pride — they stumble over their frail thoughts, fear that which challenges them, and happily follow anyone that promises to lead them to some non-existent truth.

This is not all there is to humanity, however. There are a few, the elite, who rise above the doldrums of society and actually contribute to the world. There are some who use the power of rationality, not squared of countless others. These are the ones who change the world, who shape the future, who provide for those who simply take what they are given. Scientists are part, though certainly not all, of this elite. A true scientist does his work not to make a living or to acquire prestige, but to discover and to bring the light of knowledge to the world. Sure, money, prestige, or power sometimes go along with the fruits of discovery. But it's the act that's important. A scientist's true wealth is not in dollars or land or cars, but in knowledge.

It is with these convictions that I try to live my life. In the outside world, I fear, too many people think otherwise. So many think that education is a useful thing, a tool with no other virtue of itself. To add, this is true. We must learn order to function in society. But so many of those I rally against at the start of this article believe that only the ends of knowledge are important. Go to college for the sake of getting into college to get a good job to make money. Too many parents, when looking for a college for their children to attend, make the statement: "What will my kid get out of it when he's finished? How high paying a job can he get?" Most never even consider that the education itself is important — only what comes out of it. As a college is a magic portal that one can step through, come out with a diploma, and get a good job. Who cares about learning? You'll forget all that, anyway, when you're working, making money, and trapping yourself in the cycle of ignorance that propagates itself throughout history.

All those people who view education as a tool or a means to an end do not really want one, except to get a diploma to get a job. In most cases, they don't really need one either — a vocational school would provide ample skills. Why, then, do so many people go to college now? The reason is simple: because they have to. The sad thing is that there is no alternative to going to college in this country. Without a college degree, one can barely get a job waiting tables, and filing papers in an office is way out of reach. So the cycle is reinforced by this necessity to get and education that is growing year by year. Having a college education is not seen as a virtue or an honor bestowed upon those who have the drive to better themselves, but as a means to an end. To get into college to get a good job to make money. Too many people care too much about the pursuit of money to get into college, while everyone else can go to vocational schools, get good jobs, and make money. Education is not wasted on those who don't want it, and those who don't want it don't have to have it. The dream of making everyone a genius or better person by imposing a college education on these failed (it simply made education a joke, a part of society) kind of like the chicken pox, only more drawn out: you get it when you're little then you never have to deal with it again. This stupid cannot be forced to not become smart, no more than a depressed person can be forced to be happy. I say, let them do without the college education that does them no good; the education that, in itself, improves their lives in no way. Let them get their jobs and make their money and wallow in ignorance however much they wish. Return real education to those who want it and take it back from the unworthy who view it with disdain and fear. They don't deserve it.
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Friday, January 21, 2000

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January 7, 2000

The California Tech

Comics

DILBERT®
by Scott Adams

THE DATA MINER

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DAILY (12:10) 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:20

BASED ON CONNIE BY JOHN ING

DIRECTED BY EDUARDO ALMODOVAR

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER

DAILY (12:30) 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:20

BASED ON CONNIE BY JAN AUSTIN

MANSFIELD PARK

DAILY (11:30) 2:10 4:50 7:30 10:00

STARRING ED HARRIS

THE THIRD MIRACLE

DAILY (11:30) 2:10 4:50 7:30 10:10

DIRECTED BY TIM ROBBINS

CRADLE WILL ROCK

DAILY 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00

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By this time, we have all leaped over the imagined hurdle - Y2K, as the cosmic odometer brought us to the year 2000. Actually, the only day that I remember from my childhood was the day I came across a Jan 1, 1900. On Saturday, my 3 years old.

My tireless clone which, after all, is set the format of dates on my makeup not using it. I will frame it as a sumed moment of crisis, so I ended over the imagined hurdle - Y2K, as the day arrived promptly, but after the pre­dated calendar was a precaution, I tried and found out that it was linked instead to the birth of Christ, reckoned to have been on Dec 25 of the 75th year of the founda­tion of Rome, i.e. the calendar was set to start on Jan 1, 754. Unfortunately, the monk Dionysius Exiguus (Denys the Very Small), who did the calculations, failed to recognise that this was incorrect. Christ had to be born after the census ordered by Herod but before Herod died. Since these dates are apparently well es­tablished to what we would today call 12 and 4 BC respectively, the count of years should have started a few years earlier than it was, a fact only recognized relatively recently. Long before that, problems arose because a year which was 365.25 days long slowly goes out of syn­chrony with a solar year of 365.2425 days. To make things worse, leap years were not inserted properly, and so the correspondence between religious festivals and time of year drifted. It took much time to resolve that problem. Toward the end of the Sixteenth Century, a con­clave of astronomers and religious authorities assembled by Pope Gregory XIII settled on a year that was 365.2425 long, a much better match to the actual value, although still not quite right. To put things back into step with the seasons, Thursday October 4th, 1582 according to the Julian count, was followed by Fri­day October 15th in the Gregorian calendar. This new calendar was quickly adopted in Catholic coun­tries. However it took till 1752 in England and its colonies, and there were also long delays in other Prot­estant countries. This calendar was only introduced in Orthodox Rus­sia in 1918, i.e. after the Revolution.

Because the concept of zero was slow to pass from the Islamic to the European tradition, the first Century A.D. took place between Jan 1, year 1 and Dec 31, year 100. Thus the second Millennium should start Jan 1, 2001. However, since Christ was born several years earlier than cal­culated, the new Millennium can be argued to have started already. So much for the calendar used in those parts of the world where Christian­ity has had a strong influence.

On Jan 1st 2000, it was Tet 23, 5760 in the Hebrew Calendar, Rumad 24, 1420 in the Islamic Calendar and the 17th year of the 78th cycle in the Chinese way of counting. But these are stories for another time.

A bientot!

Jean-Paul Revel
Dean of Students

Jean-Paul Revel
Dean of Students

The California Tech

January 7, 2000

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CALTECH MINTS

January 7, 2000

The California Tech

Caltech guide books for the winter quarter will meet next week in SAC Room 1, starting on January 11 in the following groups:
Beginning Guitar Class 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Intermediate Guitar Class 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Advanced Guitar Class 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Class registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. The classes are free to Caltech students and other members of the Caltech community (proof of status permitted). Undergraduates carry a charge of $10 per class. The instructor, Daryl Deming, has been teaching at Caltech for over 15 years. Please arrive early for a tour of performance, teaching and recording (two of his CDs are available in the bookstore). Mr. Deming can be reached at (718) 284-0881 or by email at dcaltech@caltech.edu. The guitar home page is at www.ces.caltech.edu/~music/guitar.html.

Catholic students interested in meeting with the Gay/Lesbian community are invited to attend a confidential meeting and do not imply any under­representation of students. Catholic Big Brothers matches volunteers with beginning classes, i.e., for the second half of the ’99 classes, to provide positive adult influence in their lives. For more information, contact Jane McKinney at 323-761-8155, x405. Undergrads can receive 3 units for participating. Undergrads can receive 3 units for participating.

Nature of Intelligence*

Selected: Group: Catholic Big Brothers matches volunteers with beginning classes, i.e., for the second half of the ’99 classes, to provide positive adult influence in their lives. For more information, contact Jane McKinney at 323-761-8155, x405. Undergrads can receive 3 units for participating.

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Institutional Support: Catholic Big Brothers matches volunteers with beginning classes, i.e., for the second half of the ’99 classes, to provide positive adult influence in their lives. For more information, contact Jane McKinney at 323-761-8155, x405. Undergrads can receive 3 units for participating.

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