



NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS HOMES JOBS CARS SHOPPING PLACE ADS NEWSPAPER SERVICES

## Eric Zorn's Notebook

April 22, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Save Chicago Transit.com](#) is an information-rich site "created independently by Tony Coppoletta, an urban and transit enthusiast and IT consultant, with the help of some friends and information available to the public from various sources." He writes, "We firmly feel that Chicago's public transportation system is extremely important to the continued ability of Chicago to sustain itself as a world-class city—one that has its own unique, diverse, and intense culture... This is about keeping this entire region alive. We do this out of love for our city, and a desire to help rid the local people of the misconceptions that this is a problem that could simply be resolved by shoring up a few million dollars. The funding is seriously flawed in how it collects and distributes funds through the region."
- It's not a better mousetrap, but it is [a vast improvement on the idea of the prescription bottle](#).
- Local political journalist Christopher Hayes [writes in an article for the Nation](#) about "the state of politics in Illinois: a bizarro-world inverse of the rest of the country, where Democrats dominate all branches of government, set the debate and drive policy, while Republicans are beset by nasty, public intramural squabbles between moderates and extremists and grasp for a coherent message."
- "Postcards from the Womb," an unsigned Tribune editorial today, address the issue of non-medical pre-natal ultrasound that [I addressed last week](#), and comes down about where I did, in the sensible middle.
- Usually the offerings over at the [Generator Blog](#) are wacky timewasters, but the [Family Story Generator](#) looks to be a serious, useful if a bit too short fill-in-the-blanks template to help you pass family lore along to the next generation.

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Posted by ezorn at [09:14 AM](#)

April 19, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Blogger's dog & Blago's jog nearly spark ugly encounter](#).
- [Trib blogger Ellen Warren visits the new Lincoln museum](#).
- Many readers have offered helpful suggestions for local interview subjects for "The Friday Night Show." The updated list is down at the bottom [here](#) and still lacks young people (aren't there any interesting Chicagoans born after 1970?) and Hispanics.
- Monday was [National Columnists Day](#).
- The Z-mail has been hot and heavy on my [Day of Silence column](#). [New letters](#) posted this morning.
- [My column today](#) on Daylight Saving Time references "[Spring Forward](#)," a most wonderful new book. [Here](#), for your reference, is a chart of Indiana's wacky time zones. [Here's](#) the National Weather Service chart of sunrise-sunset times in Chicago. And [here](#) are the Naval Observatory's Sun & Moon charts.
- The Sun-Times profiles Tribune publisher David Hiller [here](#). He's not ruling out the possibility that we'll switch to a tabloid format.

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Posted by ezorn at [01:00 PM](#)

April 15, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- North Shore Republican Congressman [Mark Kirk has joined the blog generation](#).

- See [here](#) and [here](#) what the experts can do with photo retouching. Can they work on my logo shot next, please?
- [Why can't anyone throw a baseball faster than 100 mph?](#) Slate's Noam Scheiber explains.
- RedEye's Jimmy Greenfield [says](#) "The Office" is the funniest show since "Seinfeld" and he begs you to watch it (I haven't yet, but I will on his say so). And Lucio Guererro of the Sun-Times gives [the latest, ominous news about ""Arrested Development,"](#) the Fox sit-com that's the funniest show on TV since [Philo Farnsworth](#) was 14.
- Trib projects writer Barbara Brotman has been [Barbara Blogman this week](#) -- scroll down for her open letter to the pregnant Britney Spears on the subject of her breasts: "Don't worry, Britney! Your breasts will grow once again (after nursing). They may even end up the same size, only lower. Much lower. Much, much lower."

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Posted by ezorn at [02:38 PM](#)

**April 14, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Design your own Neon signs [here](#) (via the [Generator blog](#)):



- Click [here](#) to read "A Confirmed Unification of Erasure Coding and Vacuum Tubes with Rue," a plausibly nonsensical computer science research paper randomly created out of buzzphrases at [Sci-Gen](#) (again via the [Generator Blog](#)). Here's a sample of "my" work: "We argue the understanding of model checking, which embodies the confirmed principles of networking. In order to achieve this purpose, we demonstrate not only that the seminal 'fuzzy' algorithm for the investigation of local-area networks by Davis et al. [6] runs in  $O(n!)$  time, but that the same is true for courseware."

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Posted by ezorn at [01:53 AM](#)

**April 11, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Want to start a Web log but are worried that what you have to say might somehow get you in trouble? The Electronic Frontier Foundation has just posted, "[How to Blog Safely \(About Work or Anything Else\)](#)." It offers:

A few simple precautions to help you maintain control of your personal privacy so that you can express yourself without facing unjust retaliation. If followed correctly, these protections can save you from embarrassment or just plain weirdness in front of your friends and coworkers

- I've just updated "[For Your Reference, the Future of Newspapers](#)" with new links.
- "[Human and automated aggregators help make sense of blogosphere](#)," is the Online Journalism Review's "roundup of the roundups" available on the Web.
- To satisfy your list jones, [here](#) is a link to CNN's ranking of the top 25 non-medical technological innovations of the past quarter century (*top three*, 3. *Personal computers*; 2. *Cell phones*; 1. *The Internet*) and [here's](#) where you'll find Time magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in the world today. It includes Ann Coulter, but is far less weird and quirky than [this](#) recent Crain's

Chicago Business list of Chicago's 27 media elite ("the most important, the people...who decide what we read, hear and watch") that manages not to include Richard Roeper, Bob Sirott, Alison True, Ann Marie Lipinski, Jim Warren, Robert Feder, Emily Barr, John Gehron, Marv Dyson, Jim Wisser, Ira Glass, Steve Edwards, David Hiller, Phil Rosenthal, Joel Weisman, Jim DeRogatis, Jessa Crispin and Greg Kot. And those are just names off the top of my head who belonged.

- "[Google, Firefox offerings shame Microsoft](#)," in which Tribune computer guru Jim Coates, breaks a long silence about the [Firefox](#) browser to declare "it's great," and urges us to check out Firefox's new [Scrapbook](#) feature. As ever, [here](#) is my step-by-step guide to installing and using Firefox.

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Posted by ezorn at [11:01 AM](#)

**April 07, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Clocklink.com](#) allows you to create and label extremely accurate clocks like this for your desktop or your Web site:

- [Gyroball](#) reminds me of that old toy [Labyrinth](#), where you use two knobs to tilt a board and roll a marble through a maze of holes. But much harder.
- *No one* can beat me at [this](#) game. I totally rule. (via [Kottke](#))
- Test your reaction time [here](#) by seeing how fast you can tranquilize speedy cartoon sheep. My average score: 0.2292 seconds. (via [Scalzi](#))
- Among the fun little flash games at [UgoTo.com](#) is [Broken Words](#), a deceptively difficult challenge in which the player must correctly assemble scattered word fragments.
- Word-game people will also like "[Text Twist](#)," -- a Boggle/Scrabble-like challenge at [Yahoo games](#).
- Get your work on with Kevin Drum's posting analyzing [the cherished conservative belief](#) that tax cuts increase economic growth.

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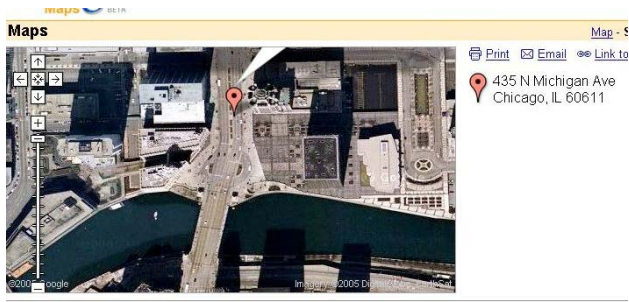
Posted by ezorn at [12:34 PM](#)

**April 05, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Google maps](#) now has a satellite-view option. Here's the Tribune Tower:





- [The Pat O'Malley Fan Page](#), "the only place on the Web completely dedicated to the former Illinois state senator," is the creation of unabashed admirer Krystle Russin: "Pat has a very good sense of fashion," she writes, "He likes to wear fine suits, mostly in gray, and striped shirts. His typical colors are shades of brown, gray, and blue. Whenever he goes out, he likes to add an exciting tie in a classic color, and his hair is always well-conditioned. You can never catch Pat on a bad hair day!" (via Kristen McQueary)
- Looking for an coffee alternative to Starbucks in your area? [The Delocator](#) can help. Some in the blogosphere are insisting that we refer to this page as "The Starbucks Delocator," even though the authors are too litigation-shy to do so. I resisted at first to avoid any confusion, but now I note that [StarbucksDelocator.com](#) redirects to the same page. So call it what you will.

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Posted by ezorn at 09:19 AM

**April 04, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- The kiddie cable network Noggin has a nice page of free [flash games for pre-schoolers](#) .
- [Metacritic](#) "compiles reviews from respected critics and publications for film, video/dvd, books, music and games. (Its) Metascores show the critical consensus at a glance by taking a weighted average of critic grades."
- [Picasa 2.0](#) is the latest version of a free digital photo editing program from Google that's much quicker and easier to use than the free digital photo editing program that came with my computer. It took me about 30 seconds to change this family photo:



Into this one:



The reviews at [Download.com](#), a trustworthy site, are favorable, as they are at [PC Mag](#). [Radio's computer guru Kim Komando](#) seems to like it and our own Jim Coates raved about an earlier version, "If it weren't free, Picasa would be worth buying."

The reviewer at [About.com](#) is a bit less enthusiastic.

- "Ride Finder" is a GPS-driven taxi locator that Google is, ahem, rolling out. The Chicago-area page is [here](#) and gives you just a glimmer what this might be like once all the big cab companies get involved. (via [Gapers Block](#))

Posted by ezorn at [03:31 AM](#)

**April 01, 2005**

#### LAND OF LINKIN'

- *I fell out of bed and broke something.... Today is an irritable bowel day for me.... I cracked a tooth last night.* All of these handy excuses and more from the "[sick-call excuse](#)" generator. See also the "[yes man's answer](#)" generator. (from the [Generator Blog](#))
- "[Share a Secret](#)" is a Web-based group art project in which contributors anonymously mail in postcards onto which they have written a secret. The artists then post photographs of the secrets on the Web.

For example?

"I flunked out of college my last year. I've let my family believe that I graduated. They can't understand why I don't have a job in my 'chosen' profession."

"I love someone on line because I'm afraid of other people in real life."

"I make everyone believe that I like to be different, but really I just don't know how to fit in."

"Jack in the boxes freak me out."

*(thanks to reader Joshua Tusin)*

Posted by ezorn at [01:40 PM](#)

**March 30, 2005**

#### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Barack Obama is now [Barack Oblogga](#).
- NewScientist.com's fascinating and well explained list of "[13 things that do not make sense](#)," includes the placebo effect

tetraneutrons and dark matter. Also on the confusion front, Scientific American offers "[Misconceptions about the Big Bang.](#)" (via [Milt](#))

- "In the Terri Schiavo case, (House Majority Leader Tom) DeLay condemns the reasoning he and his relatives followed when the tragedy was theirs." [Slate](#) comments on [the ironic story in the Los Angeles Times.](#)
- Academic justice or mean-spirited entrapment? Sketch comedian Nate Kushner blogged his attempt to bust and humiliate a college student who offered to pay him to write a class essay for her. All the details and the ethical debate are [here.](#)

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Posted by ezorn at [11:07 AM](#)

**March 29, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Aerial photo maps of the city of Chicago.](#) These photos give you an overhead look at the city and your neighborhood in fairly amazing detail. Below is a view of my house in which you can see the blue slide that projects off the kids' play fort in the backyard. I found this site through [Gapers Block](#) which in turn found it from [Westnorth](#) , which points out the photos give Chicago a Sim City look.



- "[It was a 10-second decision, made alone, in the old consultation room off the ER at U-M hospital.](#)" My childhood friend Geoff Larcom, a columnist at the Ann Arbor News, reflects on the moment he had to decide the fate of his mom.
- "I, Andy Maskin, being of sound mind and body, hereby grant authority over my handling should I enter a persistent vegetative state to the United States Congress..."([read more](#)) (via [Nancy](#))

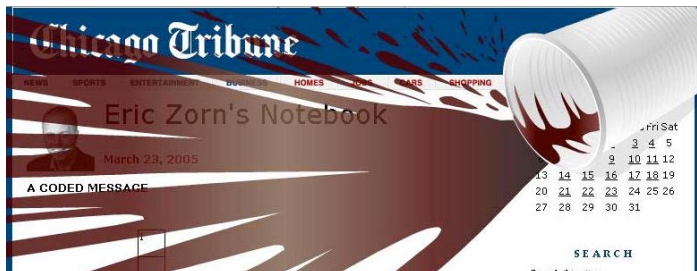
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Posted by ezorn at [10:41 AM](#)

**March 28, 2005**

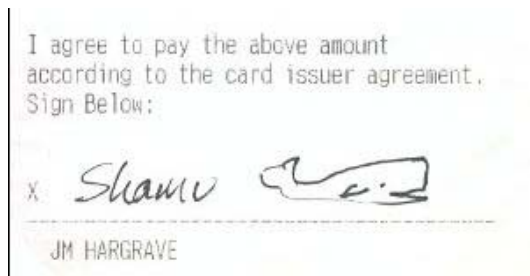
### LAND OF LINKIN'

- At [NetDisaster](#) you type in the Internet address of a Web site, choose a catastrophe—from spilled coffee to nuclear destruction – then click "go" to watch the site destroyed. (via numerous blogs)





- "Every time you make a credit card purchase, they're supposed to match your signature against the one on the back of your card. Nobody seems to check anymore, so I tried to see how far I could push it."



Posted by ezorn at [11:52 AM](#)

**March 22, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Rich Miller](#) has been excellent and thorough in looking at the polling data boosting GOP State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka's notion that she might be able to beat Gov. Rod Blagojevich, whom Miller refers to as an "overly confrontational, often juvenile governor who can't talk without a tight script and appears too small for the office." Ouch.
- I was in the old Sun-Times building maybe a dozen times over the years meeting pals -- including Neil Steinberg! -- before going out to lunch, and even still I find watching [this time-lapse video](#) of the destruction of the building a somewhat melancholy experience.

Posted by ezorn at [01:49 PM](#)

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Create A Crossword Puzzle](#) "Enter up to 20 words and hints (clues) to create your own puzzles." (via [The Generator Blog](#))
- [Puzzlemaker](#) "is a puzzle generation tool for teachers, students and parents." The [full list of puzzle types](#) to create includes such classics as [Word Search](#), [Word Search with a Hidden Message](#), [Crossword](#), and [Jumble](#). I created a Word Search puzzle below in the "continue reading" section for amusement purposes only. No wagering.
- "Jeanette's Taxidermy proudly introduces [Pet Pillows](#) as an alternative way to remember your pet. Each pet pillow is hand made from the fur of your pet and made into a pillow that you can display. On one side of the pillow is your pet's fur and the other side of the pillow is your choice of fabric. These soft, huggable pillows are a great way to enjoy your cherished pet and is an inexpensive alternative to taxidermy."
- "The Retail Alphabet Game is one part puzzle, one part self assessment, and a pinch of postmodern art. When you select one of the editions ([ONE TWO THREE FOUR](#)), you will be presented with 26 alphabet letterforms, extracted from product and corporate logos within the United States. Your job is to figure out the source of each." (Via [Scalzi](#))
- Matt Maldre's list of [all the "Golden" restaurants in Chicago](#) (via [Gapers Block](#))
- "There is no escaping the naked lens of High-Definition TV. The picture is so clear that aging signs and skin imperfections are clearly visible. ([Here](#)) is (onhd.tv's) 'Top 10' list of which celebrities look better -- and worse -- in high-def." But before you click on the link, you must guess--better or worse?--and then look below to learn the experts' answers:

Catherine Zeta-Jones  
 Charlize Therzon  
 Cameron Diaz  
 Sting  
 Britney Spears  
 Renee Zellweger  
 Halle Berry  
 George Clooney  
 Brad Pitt  
 Angelina Jolie  
 Liv Tyler  
 Bill Maher  
 Penelope Cruz

Catherine Zeta-Jones--Better  
 Charlize Therzon --Better  
 Cameron Diaz --Worse  
 Sting --Better  
 Britney Spears --Worse  
 Renee Zellweger --Worse  
 Halle Berry --Better  
 George Clooney --Better  
 Brad Pitt--Worse  
 Angelina Jolie --Better  
 Liv Tyler--Better  
 Bill Maher --Worse  
 Penelope Cruz --Better

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Tribune columnist word search puzzle generated at Puzzlemaker: Can you find a dozen?

N	E	C	T	W	W	B	C	G	Y	Y	Z	Y	E	V
S	O	P	H	W	W	O	L	L	E	A	O	E	A	U
C	F	S	E	A	A	W	A	H	S	R	R	K	E	Z
L	U	G	N	T	P	H	C	Z	S	Z	O	R	N	F
F	A	W	E	I	T	M	T	V	I	Y	S	G	I	B
P	N	S	Z	N	K	V	A	V	R	Y	S	V	W	T
R	G	Q	E	P	B	C	L	N	R	D	A	B	X	M
O	P	S	K	D	O	U	I	E	O	S	K	S	J	B
E	O	Y	E	N	W	O	D	D	M	C	W	R	P	B
R	C	S	O	V	C	Q	A	A	C	H	H	J	I	H
P	D	I	I	W	L	X	E	C	R	M	O	H	O	F
R	E	O	R	N	A	L	A	L	P	I	F	N	X	S

P J J J T R J E Y I C J E A X  
 M E Y E R S O N L W H P N A K  
 K X M F Q S Y N T N G M Q U D

Solution tomorrow...

Posted by ezorn at [12:37 AM](#)

**March 18, 2005**

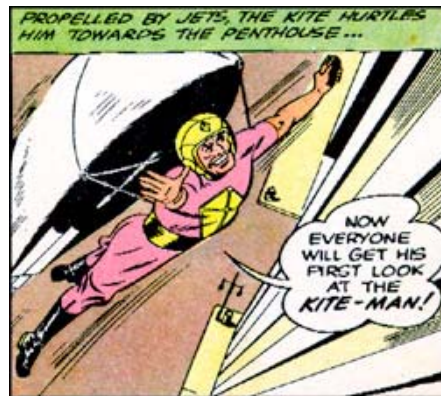
### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Are collections of your favorite TV show available on DVD? Readers of [Maureen Ryan's "The Watcher" blog](#) would know to check with [tvshowsondvd.com](#).
- From the ever-diverting [Generator Blog](#) comes [Amaztype](#), "a typographic book search generator using Amazon web services. You decide what to use (books, music or video/dvd), type in a word and that word will be generated out of book or music covers that contain that particular word:



- To take your mind off of the stupid real world, check out actual, stupid comic book [covers](#) and stupid comic book [frames](#)

How stupid? Here's one:



- Name that tune: "[Goodbye, Papa, It's Hard To Die-- The enduring appeal of an abominable pop song.](#)"
- The New York Times ponders the big question in print media these days: "[Should publishers charge for Web news, knowing that they may drive readers away and into the arms of the competition?](#)"
- [Free File Home - Your Link to Free Online Filing](#) -- An Internal Revenue Service site "Whoever said there is no such thing as a free lunch may have been right. But for millions of eligible taxpayers this year, there is Free File. Free File is online tax preparation and electronic filing through a partnership agreement between the IRS and the Free File Alliance, LLC."
- I don't do many audio links, but "[Antics of the Cook County Board](#)," a panel discussion on WBEZ-FM featuring reporters Ben Calhoun and Carlos Hernandez Gomez and hilarious taped excerpts is really worth a listen.

Requires [Real Player 8](#) or later. ([Standard full-disclosure statement regarding radio & TV news items](#))

- Mock bumper stickers like those in [this blog item](#) can be generated at [makestickers.com](#)

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Posted by ezorn at [04:26 PM](#)

**March 15, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- The Notebook blog is one of many [finalists](#) in many categories for the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards for Exemplary Journalism.

It's a nice honor, but I hate to be pitted in the "News bureau, wire service, on-line or disk media" category against a colleague -- Ellen Warren -- particularly since what we do on the Web is very different.

- E-week takes note of [some concerns about the Firefox browser](#) while the freeware program [Butler](#) promises to enhance Google and Firefox.
- The [Web of Letters](#) (via [Metafilter](#)) gives you a nifty collage after you type in a word. Viz:



[Flicker offers something similar.](#)

- [Google Maps](#) is still in beta, but [Nancy Nall](#) says it will make you want to throw [Mapquest](#) into the link trash can.
- Business consultant Stever -- yes, Stever -- Robbins offers a very useful, common-sense set of "[Tips for mastering e-mail overload](#)" including "Send out delayed responses," which I've been preaching recently, and the often useful "Ignore it."



- James C. Goodale, former vice chairman and general counsel of The New York Times, analyzes memo-gate in "[The flawed report on Dan Rather](#)," in the April 7 New York Review of Books. His conclusion, "Lost in the commotion over the authenticity of the documents is that the underlying facts of Rather's 60 Minutes report are substantially true."
- **My Left Feet:** For provocative and forlorn thoughts on bad male dancing, be sure to read [Joe Beveridge](#) and [Joel Achenbach](#).
- [This site](#) will help you create your own conspiracy theories, though you have to play with it some to get the paranoia running smoothly.
- The debate over abstinence-only sex education is [in the news again](#). Which side is right? Why, the side that advocates a comprehensive approach, of course. To see why, click [here](#) and read the online debate in which I thoroughly stomp Melissa Merrill, public relations specialist for the Abstinence Clearinghouse in Sioux Falls,

S.D.. At least that's how I remember it.

- E-week Columnist David Coursey considers *l'affair* Stonecipher and argues, "Whistleblower Is the Real 'Embarrassment' to Boeing" He writes, "Isn't reading other people's e-mail a firing offense?"

For more fun links, click on the [Land of Linkin'](#) category archive.

Posted by ezorn at [06:27 PM](#)

**March 14, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Industrial designer Craig Berman has posted a very ambitious and detailed [proposed CTA train map for the year 2055](#) at Gapers Block. He envisions far more of a network grid (think London or New York) than the antiquated hub-and-spoke pattern that makes the train such a rotten way to get around. The part that most interests me as a resident of the Northwest Side is below, even though I'll be 97 years old in 2055 and my trophy wife will be driving me everywhere in our cute little sportscar:

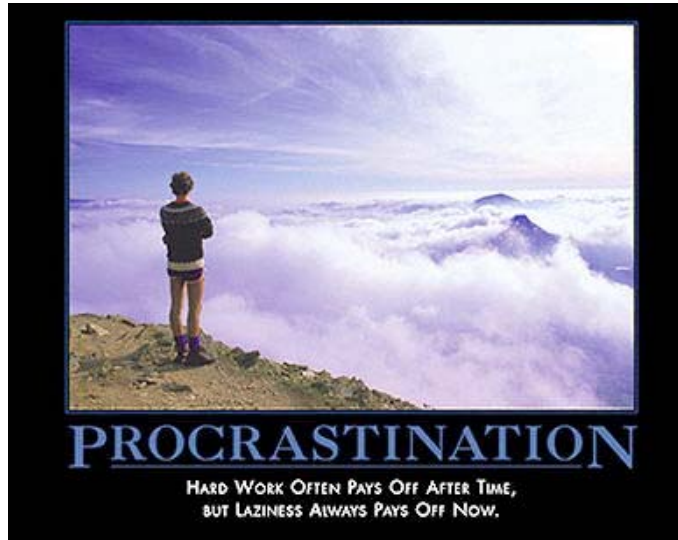


My editor points out that, in 2055, Irving Park will be spelled "Irrving Park."

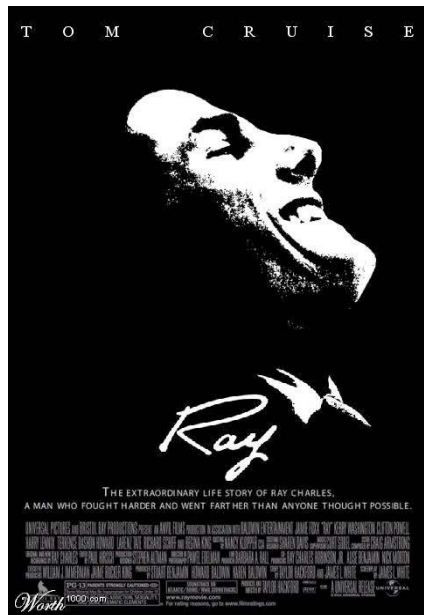
- Chicagoan Christopher Hayes' recent profile of budding conservative pundit Guy Benson of Northwestern University -- originally published in the Reader and linked [here](#) -- is a fascinating look into the mind of the next Tucker Carlson.

Right wingers love the last half of that old cliché, that if you're not a conservative at age 40, you have no head; this story puts me in mind of the first half of that old cliché, if you're not a liberal at age 20, you have no heart.

- Among my favorite Demotivational posters at [Despair.com](#) is this one:

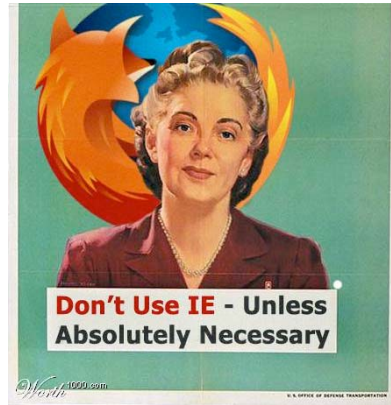


- The Archpundit has [a canny analysis](#) of the lay of the land regarding the politics of legislation now in the General Assembly to allow for the concealed carry of firearms. But for an extended debate over the pros and cons of concealed carry between John Birch, President of Concealed Carry, Inc., and Thomas Mannard, executive director of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, click [here](#).
- No day is so rotten that it can't be made better by a visit to [Worth 1000](#) and the PhotoShop comic stylings of its volunteer jesters. The below is from the "[Miscast Movies](#)" gallery:



- The "[Fun With Propaganda](#)" contest at [Worth 1000](#) features the image below, which inspires me to remind any of you holdouts to add the Firefox internet browser to your computers *now*. Seriously. [Here](#) is the link to my instructional guide, "41 easy-to-follow clicks that will take you to tabbed browsing heaven."





- Linkin' to Linkin': Categories are now enabled on this site, meaning that, for example, you can click [here](#) for an archive of recent "Land of Linkin'" entries. This way, you'll never have to waste time when you're looking for a good way to waste time.

The list of categories will expand a bit as I go back and update. It appears on the right-hand rail of the main page of this site.

Posted by ezorn at [01:08 AM](#)

**March 11, 2005**

#### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [The CCL Game](#) invites you to create your own Rube Goldberg type schemes to propel an object toward a goal.
- Via the [Generator Blog](#) comes the [make-your-own wedding chapel sign](#) page and the [make-your-own road sign](#) page.
- Maureen Ryan's latest [Watcher](#) blog directs us to [Save Our Bluths](#), " a grass-roots campaign by fans of the Emmy-award winning comedy Arrested Development ([fan site](#) ) with two goals: to urge Fox to renew Arrested for a third season, and to introduce the innovative comedy to new viewers."
- Phil Luciano of the Peoria Journal-Star [reports](#) that "as part of a final divorce decree recently issued in Tazewell County Court, Matthew Hale's ex-wife has ordered the destruction" of a frozen embryo the couple had in storage.
- The Washington Post told its readers [this week](#) what Notebook readers knew [nearly two weeks ago](#) about [Gizoogle](#), the site that translates Web pages into Snoop Dogg. For instance, here is a portion of an item from today's Sneed column:

*Brenda Sexton, tha ex-wife of forma Dem senate hopeful Blair Hiznull, gots tha job of hustla Illinois Fizzle Office czarina.*

*Hiznull, who donated mucho bucks ta Gov. Blagojizzles campaign n fizzy Blago around tha state in his jizzet, suggested Sexton, a real estate maven, fo` tha job. She gots it.*

Posted by ezorn at [09:37 AM](#)

**March 10, 2005**

#### LAND OF LINKIN

Oh, yes, it really was this bad:





- These [highlights of the 1971 Sears Catalog](#) (via [Scalzi](#)) are as amusing, in their way, as Wendy McClure's [Weight Watchers Recipe Cards, Circa 1974](#).
- [Historical timelines](#) galore come to us via [Jason Kottke](#).

Posted by ezorn at [02:49 PM](#)

**March 07, 2005**

## LAND OF LINKIN'

- Do you have spots on your computer screen that just don't seem to come off when you clean? Perhaps they're on the *inside*. If so, you'll need [this handy tool](#).
- The [Generator Blog](#) is devoted to links to amusing and sometimes interactive sites: Check out [create your own Bart Simpson Chalk Board](#), the [Crossword Generator](#) (creates a crossword scheme including the words you provide), the [Dave Barry Column Generator](#) (for those who miss fresh booger jokes each week), the [Law and Order Plot Generator](#), the [Ransom Note Generator](#), the [Tombstone Generator](#) or the site where you can [create your own Mondrian painting](#). The most fun, however, is the [make-your-own-error-message](#) site:



- [Orbox](#) is an excellent little maze game and [Plastic Balls](#) is a circular version of the classic arcade game, Breakout. (don't blame me for the time you'll waste on these, blame [John "That's Two Hours of Your Life You'll Never Get Back" Salzi](#).)
- The author of the [Marginal Revolution](#) blog wonders why all the movies at the Cineplex are the same price at any given time of the day, and offers his eight best guesses why.
- The [commonly-confused-words](#) test should not stump you.

- Stream or download great old gospel songs [here](#). I've been partial lately to "[I Love to Tell The Story](#)," in part because I'm such a sucker for iii chords. (via [Milt's file](#))
- Something about the pointless nastiness of [Blink-o-Rama](#), a site devoted to photos of celebrities in mid blink, may appeal to you:



- [Here](#) is your one-click bookmark for Chicago's four-day weather forecast, courtesy of Google Weather.
- [Building Democracy](#), a blog of the Center for New Community, is closely following all media reports on the Lefkow murder investigation.
- Machine translation or Faulkner? Each quote in [this quiz](#) is either machine-translated German text or a sample of William Faulkner's prose. ("The marquee empty of eating the road empty in darkness in silence the bridge arching into silence darkness sleep the water peaceful and swift not goodbye..." ). (Related, "[True art, or fake?](#)")
- A "Saturday Night Live" classic: [Consumer Product Warning -- The Happy Fun Ball](#).

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Posted by ezorn at [01:36 AM](#)

**March 04, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

It's been a busy day here at Notebook central. A documentarian who is focusing his lens on the blogging phenomenon came by for an interview this morning that, with set-up, breakdown, scene-setting shots and everything, took three hours.

So I was glad to see, when I was able to get back to work, that...

- [Gaper's Block](#) is promoting my wife so I don't have to.
- [Sun-Times Watch](#) is following Neil Steinberg's latest career maneuverings so I don't have to.
- [Carl Nyberg](#) is following up on [Rich Miller's request](#) for answers to the question, "**Do you think a primary candidate will emerge against Governor Blagojevich? If so, who?**" so I don't have to.
- And [One Man](#) is asking the hard questions about [HB4023](#), the bill in Springfield to regulate video games, so I don't have to.

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Posted by ezorn at [02:03 PM](#)

March 01, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- [Right Wing, Left Wing, Chicken Wing](#) by Matt Taibbi, New York Press. Teaser quote:

The Harris polling agency last week released the results of an interesting study. In a survey of 2,209 adults, they discovered that most Americans only have the vaguest idea of the meaning of two important pairs of words that play crucial roles in the national political discourse: conservative and liberal, and left and right. ....

- [Confessions of a Scholar-Blogger](#) by Daniel Drezner, University of Chicago Magazine. Teaser quote:

Done properly, blogging can be a form of initial research in both the empirical and theoretical realms.

Empirically, blogging is similar to clipping news articles or gathering information about a case study.

Theoretically, blogging permits one to play with ideas—and even better, to get instant (and candid) feedback from readers. The feedback effect on blogs is much quicker than more traditional presentations of new ideas in academia.

Because of these comparative advantages, blogging is seeping into scholarship. Already, footnotes referencing individual blog posts are appearing in both legal opinions and public-policy briefs.

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Posted by ezorn at [02:57 PM](#)

February 28, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

If you peeked into my browser history while I was away from my desk —and why would you do a thing like that? — you'd find these addresses:

- [Numa Numa, hey hey, goodbye](#): The 19-year-old who did [that hilarious desk dance](#) to the Romanian pop hit "Dragostea Din Tei." linked [here](#) a couple of weeks ago has had a tough go of things, according to the New York Times.



He no longer gives interviews or revels in his moment of fame (somebody please shoot me if you catch me ever again using the "15-minutes-of-fame" cliché) which is a shame because it's my sense that the world — and I do mean the world — is laughing with him, not at him.

- ["Our Godless Constitution,"](#) an essay in the Nation by Brooke Allen, is a handy reference for those who are tired of hearing that the founders intended ours to be essentially a religious nation:

In the eighty-five essays that make up The Federalist, God is mentioned only twice (both

times by Madison, who uses the word, as Gore Vidal has remarked, in the "only Heaven knows" sense). In the Declaration of Independence, He gets two brief nods: a reference to "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God," and the famous line about men being "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights."

- "[Biology can solve the Social Security debate](#)," by Slate's William Saletan crunches the numbers to prove why moving back the age of retirement will solve the "crisis" in Social Security:

At age 70, men and women in 2002 could still expect more remaining life (13.2 years for men, 15.8 for women) than their 65-year-old counterparts could in 1935. Even a 75-year-old man in 2002 could expect 10.3 more years, nearly as many as a 65-year-old man could expect in 1935.

- Meanwhile, Michael Kinsley lays out the case against the current Social Security reform plans [here](#) and [here](#). Sample quote:

Bush might as well be proposing legislation that two plus two is five. And if that happened, there would be no shortage of Republicans prepared to endorse this view, experts on arithmetic to declare that it is a very difficult question, research to indicate that the answer may lie anywhere between 2.3 and 7.09, moderate Washington sages to urge caution, media to report both sides of the question, and media critics to accuse the media of a subtle bias in favor of two plus two is four.

- [Whatever happened to the good ol' Tilde?](#) A few years back, numerous Web addresses (URLs) included that squiggly line familiar to those who read Spanish, and the fact that you don't see it much anymore is just one of several interesting aspects of recent Web-volution described [here](#).

- "[Unintelligent Design](#)," Jim Holt's New York Times magazine essay on the factual problems faced by those who argue against evolutionary science, offers this thought:

In mammals... the recurrent laryngeal nerve does not go directly from the cranium to the larynx, the way any competent engineer would have arranged it. Instead, it extends down the neck to the chest, loops around a lung ligament and then runs back up the neck to the larynx. In a giraffe, that means a 20-foot length of nerve where 1 foot would have done. If this is evidence of design, it would seem to be of the unintelligent variety.

- The Trib's Mark Caro's [backstage Oscar blogging](#) is in the paper this morning, but it was great real-time reading Sunday night.
- Ramsin Canon of Gaper's Block takes on syndicated scold Mark Steyn [here](#).

In column after column Steyn draws parallels between some anti-administration figure and a homicidal lunatic fanatic and uses this facile analogy to prove his ultimate point: that George W. Bush is right.... (Steyn) is a limp groupie, pliant and coquettish...(who hopes) the sheer bravado and stupidity that he wears on the outside will distract you from the fact that his arguments are completely flaccid.

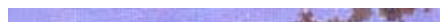
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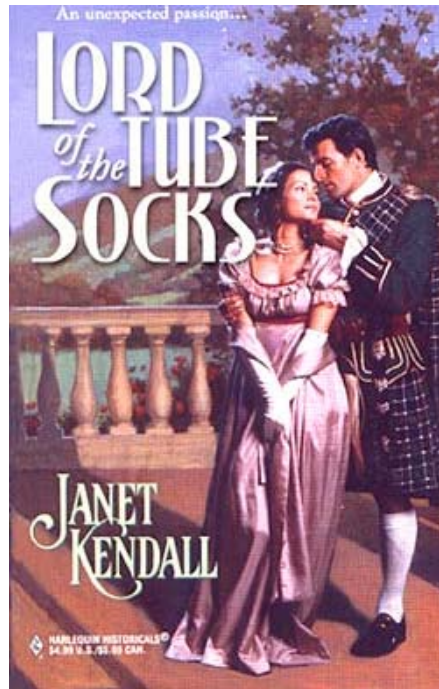
Posted by ezorn at [01:20 AM](#)

**February 25, 2005**

**LAND OF LINKIN'**

- Actual romance-novel covers get new titles [here](#). For example:





(link via [boing-boing](#))

- The Koufax Awards for excellence in left-wing blogging are announced [here](#).
- Blogger "Ralph" [here](#) interviews former WLS-AM progressive host Jay Marvin about his move to an Air America station in Colorado. I note that Jay doesn't bother to mention his deep fondness for Colorado's GOP governor Bill Owens. (Jay's blog is [here](#).)
- Nancy Nall [here](#) takes a stab at describing the peculiar politics of the Daylight Saving Time issue in her former home state of Indiana: "The Hoosier state's new governor, Mitch Daniels, wants to lead the state, kicking and screaming, into the bright new day of DST. And I do mean kicking and screaming."

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Posted by ezorn at [12:54 AM](#)

**February 22, 2005**

### **LAND OF LINKIN'**

A column by Andrew Faiz of the Presbyterian Record drew my attention to [Jesus Inspirational Sport Statues](#) :

Hand-painted resin statues on a solid wood base are the perfect gift for every young Catholic athlete. These statues portray Jesus actively participating with boys and girls in a variety of sports. A wonderful way to reinforce Jesus "as friend" in everyday activities.

Fine, but, again per Faiz, see if you can't tell me what's wrong in the picture below:



That's right. *Jesus who is about to be tackled, is not wearing protective headgear.*

And see the consequences of this poor modeling:



Brain injuries just waiting to happen.

In a related but much different vein this morning we also have the [Top 10 list of Useless Limbs \(and Other Vestigial Organs\)](#) from LiveScience.com. Bookmark this site if you're planning to dicker with the "intelligent design" folks or the anti-evolution crowd. (via [Scalzi](#))

They are:

10. The Wings on Flightless Birds,
9. Hind Leg Bones in Whales
8. Erector Pili and Body Hair
7. The Human Tailbone
6. The Blind Fish *Astyanax Mexicanus*
5. Wisdom Teeth in Humans
4. The Sexual Organs of Dandelions
3. Fake Sex in Virgin Whiptail Lizards (Vestigial Behavior)
2. Male Breast Tissue and Nipples

And the Number One Useless Limb or other Vestigial organ...



1. The Human Appendix!

Finally, the Draft Vallas blog returns [here](#) to offer a more fitting farewell to his readers.

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Posted by ezorn at [01:16 AM](#)

**February 21, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

"[Top Dog? Bite me!](#)"-- The Trib's Rambling Gleaner (Charlie Madigan) salutes mongrels; his mongrel in particular. *"Word arrived that the Westminster Kennel Club had decided that a German shorthaired pointer named Carlee was America's top dog. Let me say this about that. "Bite me, Carlee and the Westminster Kennel Club!" I own the top dog. He is a mutt. My last dog was a mutt. The dog before that was a mutt and the first dog was a mutt, too."*

Blogger David Johnsen [ponders](#) canceling his subscription to a Pioneer Press paper in light of the rude ending to Ed Schwartz's column: *"It was classless for Pioneer to sack a Chicago media legend like Schwartz without even telling him (in advance of publication). Ideally, they would have offered him the graceful exit of a farewell column."*

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Posted by ezorn at [02:34 AM](#)

**February 18, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Notice anything different about your Tribune this week?

[NewsDesigner.com](#) shows and tells the difference between our old headline font--

# Chicago

And our new headline font--

# Chicago

- Chicagoist offers what might be, could be, should be the final word on the official [photo policy in Millennium Park](#).
- The New York Daily News has [the skinny on the chubby kid](#) whose [lip synch version](#) of the Romanian techno-pop hit "Dragostea Din Tei" has become an Internet sensation.

He's Gary Brolsma, he's 19 and lives with his parents in suburban Saddle Brook, N.J. [A TV report](#) offers this: "Is it a phenomenon?" asked Joe Levy of Rolling Stone magazine. "Oh yeah. Are people richly amused? Oh yes, very much so."

In [another story](#), Brolsma says, "'I was sitting in my room, bored, and I found a random song and I thought it would be funny to show friends."

A cached version of his now-closed blog has this entry from Monday, February. 7:

**It seems I'm famous. I really don't know how it happened, the internet is a mighty place, obviously nothing too interesting must be happening because my stupid video (is)... everywhere.**

- [Ten Mistakes Writers Don't See \(But Can Easily Fix When They Do\)](#) by editorial consultant Pat Holt is "a list I'll be referring to people *before* they submit anything in writing to anybody (me, agent, publisher, your mom, your boss). From email messages and front-page news in the New York Times to published books and magazine articles, the 10 ouchies listed here crop up everywhere. They're so pernicious that even respected Internet columnists are not immune." (Via [Scalzi](#))

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Posted by ezorn at [01:39 PM](#)

**February 17, 2005**

### **LAND OF LINKIN'**

[This web tool](#) is simply astounding. It's a Baby-name wizard into which you type names and a graph instantly tells you how popular the name was in every decade going back to the 1900s. But it's even cooler than that: The graph changes with each letter you type. Just go try it.

Celebrities aged (or rejuvenated) using PhotoShop are [here](#) on "Fountain of Age," part of Worth 1000's always hilarious site. I laughed hardest at the image of Colin Farrel as a baby:



Put your own slogan on candy hearts [here](#) so you can have fun like this:



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Posted by ezorn at [11:36 AM](#)

**February 15, 2005**

### **LAND OF LINKIN'**

Matrix-style Ping-Pong envisioned by a comedy troupe.

My wife, Johanna, proudly describes the scene pictured here during a follow-up radio debate on the subject of dibs with a member of the Boston City Council (scroll down to "Snowy Parking Revisited")

It shows a bunch of us from the neighborhood proudly, happily shoveling out parking spaces for others during the recent weekend snowstorm.



Posted by ezorn at 12:09 PM

**February 10, 2005**

### LAND OF LINKIN'

- Michael Van Winkle responds here to my response to his response to my column on Social Security. Let's call it quits now before someone gets hurt.
- Google maps is (are?) fun and, I imagine, useful. The site allows you to zoom in from a map of the U.S. to a map of your residential street in a dozen clicks.
- Chicago musician Steve Rosen, who plays with me and Mary Schmich every winter in Songs of Good Cheer, is known among his friends for the delightful mass e-mails he sends around whenever he's on vacation.

I've been bugging him to turn this effort into a blog for well over a year now, and at last he has.



**Steve Rosen at Songs of Good Cheer.** Photo by Steve Kagan

Posted by ezorn at 02:01 PM

February 08, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

[Chicago FreeFi.com](#) lists and maps free wi-fi hot spots in Chicago.

The office of the [Illinois State Climatologist](#) points readers to all sorts of potentially useful data, such as [Chicago-area climate summaries](#) and [local sunrise/sunset charts](#).

Elburn Village President James Willey has [a new blog](#).

A new right-wing site trying to torpedo the gubernatorial aspirations of moderate Republican Ray LaHood is [here](#).

Information about St. Baldrick's Day – the March 11 international fundraiser in which people shave their heads to raise money to fight childhood cancer, is [here](#).

I did it two years ago:



It frightened children and small dogs, but was overall worth it.

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Posted by ezorn at [12:58 PM](#)

February 01, 2005

### LAND OF LINKIN'

These links are from the January & February, 2005 archives:

- Are you better off now than you were four years ago? See "[Bush by the numbers](#)."
- When time is no object, [build your own on-line kaleidoscope](#).
- Aspiring writers and curious readers will want to dive into the [online archive of Paris Review interviews with writers](#).
- The Heritage Foundation has created [a Social Security calculator](#) into which you enter your age and gender and learn how supposedly badly the Social Security system is ripping you off. Heritage is a big backer of privatization, so take their projections and estimates with a mountain of road salt. But it's interesting to scroll through the results page and find out, for example, your life expectancy. For me it's age 78, which means I've got 31 years left.
- You can click [here](#) to put lettering on a handsome granite tombstone, then download the image as a .jpeg file and, I dunno, use it for your holiday cards next year.
- Bored clerks at an Austin, Tx. video store programmed the cash register receipt so that rental customers would sign a form that, in the fine print, says "I hereby surrender my soul for all eternity to the clerks at I Luv Video and will become part of their legion of zombies." The evidence is [here](#).
- Order your Obama for President, 2008 paraphernalia [here](#)

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Posted by ezorn at [11:34 PM](#)

**LAND OF LINKIN'**

These Land of Linkin' entries are from the November, 2004 Notebook archive:

- The script to "[Harold and Maud](#)" [annotated for those for whom English is their second language](#) just might come in handy someday, and so might [The Top 15 Ways to Acquire a Wife in the Bible](#).
- Speaking of marriage, the New York Times [here](#) mulls over the phenomenon of red states having a higher divorce rate than the blue states.
- [Word Play](#)-- "A collection of sites on the Web that feature having fun with words."
- [Measure 4 Measure](#) -- "A collection of interactive sites on the Web that estimate, calculate, evaluate, translate, etc. "
- [Map Happy](#) --"Interactive maps to get you from here to there and beyond."

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Posted by ezorn at [09:40 PM](#)

**LAND OF LINKIN'**

The following Land of Linkin' entries are from the October, 2004 Notebook archive:

- Chillinois (via Kos) has posted [your handy Dan Rather / George W. Bush comparison chart](#)  
The first three points are identical:
  - given false documents he thought were true.
  - failed to thoroughly investigate the facts.
  - reported the documents to the American people as true in order to make his case.
 It kinda diverges from there.
- Dan Kennedy of the Boston Phoenix argues [here](#) that Jon Stewart disgraced himself on "Crossfire" the other night.
- Slate has the most comprehensive and concise summary of the "Bush bulge" question [here](#).
- Louis Weisberg has [an excellent take on l'affair Mary Cheney](#) in the Chicago Free Press. And, for perspective on the family values of the second family, don't miss [the slightly racy parts of Lynne Cheney's novel](#) about "a strong and beautiful woman who broke all the rules of the American frontier."

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Posted by ezorn at [08:46 PM](#)

**LAND OF LINKIN'**

These Land of Linkin' entries are from the September, 2004 Notebook archives:

- Local blogger David Johnsen notes [here](#) that "the biggest margin of victory (in Illinois) since the people (instead of state legislatures) began electing U.S. Senators was in 1920 when William B. McKinley (R) defeated Peter A. Waller (D) 66.8% to 26.8% for a margin of 40%." Only a late surge in the polls will prevent Keyes from setting a new record.
- Dan Johnson-Weinberger commends us to Juan Cole's intriguing math trick in which he asks us to [imagine what America would be like if it were just like Iraq today](#), with everything adjusted to scale: "What if there were private armies totalling 275,000 men, armed with machine guns, assault rifles (legal again!), rocket-propelled

grenades, and mortar launchers, hiding out in dangerous urban areas of cities all over the country?" and so on.

- Charles Shaw, E&P of the online magazine "Newtopia" has at last started [a blog](#) and I have at last, momentarily, overcome the balky relationship my ISP has with the host for ericzorn.com and updated my exceedingly vital [Web logs of interest](#) page.
- John Scalzi warns that [the game Reverse](#), in which all your mouse movements are reversed on-screen as you navigate a little dot through a series of mazes, will drive you mad and kill your entire day. Even when you turn the mouse upside down, which makes it much easier but is cheating, it gets awfully hard around level 13.
- Go play [Panda Golf](#) – and if you beat level 20, for the love of God, tell me how.
- David Rosdeitcher, "[The Zip Code Man](#)," says he "has absolute recall of all 48,000 zip codes in the United States and many foreign countries."
- Plug in *your* zip code and poke around [this site](#) to see which of your neighbors are donating to the various presidential campaign. (hat tip, [Nancy Nall](#) )

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Posted by ezorn at [07:51 PM](#)

## LAND OF LINKIN'

These Land of Linkin' entries are from the August, July and June of 2004 Notebooks

- **WRAITH WRAITH, DON'T TELL ME!** When Mimi Smartypants was in college, she led a high-school poetry workshop. This experience led her to offer this most useful list of [Words that high-school Goth poets consistently misspell](#):
  1. ethereal
  2. bier
  3. corporeal
  4. breathe
  5. alabaster
  6. scythe
  7. sacrificial
  8. wraith
  9. translucent
  10. vengeance
- **MAGNAE CLUNES MIHI PLACENT, NEC POSSUM DE HAC RE MENTIRI** --[here](#) is the Latin translation of "Baby Got Back." The translation of the above headline (so they say) is: "Large buttocks are pleasing to me, nor am I able to lie concerning this matter."
- **SMART MONEY** -- "[Intrade.com](#) is an online version of the stock market that allows you to trade in the most innovative, transparent and fun way on political, financial, current and similar events."
- Script, [Monty Python & the Holy Grail](#).
- [Text Twist](#) invites you to make as many words as possible out of an e-rack of six letters. [John Scalzi](#), from whom I borrowed this link, compares the game to Boggle (online versions of which are sometimes called TangleWord, one of which can be found [here](#) if you don't mind registering).
- [This \(clip-and-use trading\) card set](#) has photos and information about some of the infectious diseases that (the Centers for Disease Control) studies. You can view the set online OR

download and print your own copy....See also [Disease Cards Set Two](#)."

- Clicking your mouse is the only way to keep [The Drunk Guy](#) upright. I find the invisible cursor in this game to be very disorienting.
  
- "What did it sell for? Dive into the largest free online archive of U.S. home sales - find your home [here](#)."
  
- "[Gizmodo](#) is an online review dedicated to gadgets, gizmos, and cutting-edge consumer electronics," while "[Gadgetmadness](#)....find(s)the coolest gadgets first." Some gadget freaks, however, prefer [Engadget](#).
- "[The random name generator](#) uses data from the U.S. Census to randomly generate male and female names. Use it for screenplays, fake id's, car rentals, pick-up lines, books, prank calls, movies." [Behind the Name](#), meanwhile, will generate names for you with numerous ethnic, cultural and historical flavors. And if you want realistic-sounding Kung-Fu moves, go to [Chris Pound's Language Machine](#), where, if you are as lucky as I was you'll get such terrifying combinations as "fiendish eunuch slice," "mongolian sage kick," "standing hummingbird frenzy" and the diabolical "laughing monk ambush."
- [4Games](#), a sub-page of "I Am Bored.com," claims to offer "the best online games in one place."
- "Ever wondered about what's really in hair coloring, Silly Putty, Cheese Wiz, artificial snow, or self-tanners? Chemical & Engineering News presents [a collection of articles that gives you a look at the chemistry behind a wide variety of everyday products](#)." (link via [Scalzi](#)).
- "Whenever I meet someone who belongs to a different profession, or who knows something about a subject I'm unfamiliar with, I pose the Two Things question (based on the notion that 'for every subject, there are really only two things you really need to know. Everything else is the application of those two things, or just not important.'). [This page](#) is a collection of responses to the Two Things question."

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Posted by ezorn at [12:30 PM](#)