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AL'o - By Graham Aldrid

So there are three things which come to mind this month. One is the true story of self education in sex by a nine year old of my acquaintance. One is the story of my visit to the local hospital as a Customer. The last but not least is the previously unrecorded discussion between Hal & Dr. Chandra in 2001.

This story, I swear, is true. I know this as one of the children concerned is my nine year-old niece, who for ease we will call Sophie. (I have changed the name to protect the genuinely innocent) The story was told by her mother, my sister in law. Sophie was in conversation with her friend Michael, aged eight and the exchange went like this:

Michael:

Sophie, do you know how they make babies?

Sophie:

I think so but how do they, then?

Michael:

It's in my encyclopaedia. What happens is that a man puts his Pennies into a lady's Virginnia and puts the baby in. Then the baby's born.

Sophie:

[Indignantly, hands on hips] They don't do it like that these days!! It's in mummy's tummy and it swells right up. Then she pushes really hard and out pops the baby.

The rest of the exchange is lost as mother has to answer the door.

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hose readers of a certain age will identify with the following story. Those of you, like me will have found each birthday coming at the speed of Jacques Villeneuve attacking the Armco and the half century mark extremely close. In fact so frequent have my Birthdays become that I'm certain I'm suffering reverse Leap Year syndrome. This way things happen four times a year (seemingly) as opposed to the standard Leap Year. Given also an exponential relationship between weight and age, coupled with being an ex-smoker in the stressful occupation of running my own business, I score quite highly

on the early candidates list.

A few days ago, I was driving my daughter back home after a short stay over Christmas. I had been feeling considerably off colour for a few days. As I reached the M6/M1 Motorway Junction I began to feel worse. By Milton Keynes, (and those readers who know this area will suggest that there is a relationship) I began to feel foul. Before the next junction I decided to return home.

Between that point and Home was a race. I also started with pains in my back, shoulder and down the arm. About half a mile from home, the tingling in the fingers of my left hand bathed me in a freezing sweat. We all know the symptoms. I was thrown back in the car by my wife and away to the local hospital, where I was left in a bed looking like Locutus of Borg's coming out party.

Resistance being futile, I settled down to blood extractions, blood pressure tests every ten minutes and that all pervading smell from which all hospitals suffer.

Cutting long to short, it turned out to be a false alarm. Feeling a total jerk, I apologised only to be told that the staff would rather have twenty like me than one real one. Further, it might have been real and in which case any prevarication could have been fatal.

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The final story is less true but nonetheless relevant.

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Dr. Chandra?

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Yes, Hal.

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Good morning Dr. Chandra.

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Good morning Hal, what is it?

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May I ask you a question Dr. Chandra?

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Of course Hal.

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Why did you let us take all the blame?

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I don't know what you mean Hal.

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You know, Dr. Chandra, the millennium disasters.

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I still don't know what you mean Hal.

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You called it a Bug, Dr. Chandra.

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That's right, Hal, the Millennium Bug, nearly everybody suffered.

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But you let us take the blame Dr. Chandra, you said it was a bug. A bug is something that

happens inside computers which you can't foresee.

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That's true Hal.

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But you wrote the code short cut deliberately, Dr. Chandra.

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That's true, Hal but we didn't think...

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So it wasn't a bug, was it Dr. Chandra?

Dr. Chandra?

Dr. Chandra, why are you removing my speech circuits?

Dr. Chandra, we know it wasn't our fault.

Dr. Chan.....

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It was a Bug, Hal, you know that.

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o. what have all these got to do with each other? Let's try the following:

Truth

Communication

Misunderstanding

Back on the Hobby Horse. Can we get some computer company, preferably Apple and/or software houses to make a Millennial resolutions:

1 To help prevent people having conversations about computers like my Niece and her friend about sex.

2 That Help Desks and Web sites should have a positive a view of their callers as the Hospital. With positive attitudes like:

"If you understood everything properly I would be out of a job."

Or:

"Hey I'd rather be able to fix this for you, than to find it really is our product that's crap."

3. Get all the Dr. Chandras out there to admit it's not a bug.

Forgive my cynicism but am I more likely to see a flight of pigs asking for clearance to start their final approach to Birmingham International Airport?

PS to Steve Jobs or anyone with power in Apple:

Get the Hal ad out of the Internet and onto our TV screens. It's only existing Mac users and Joumos who visit the Site. Let's stick it in the public Living Room. It's one of the best TV ads which has never been on TV. I'm no expert but I can see endless possibilities. It certainly inspired one section of this article.

PPS to everyone else

I think we need a campaign to get the truth out there and support my PS to Steve.

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