Essays from the funniest man in Microsoft Research

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James Mickens has written a number of essays for *;login:* magazine. The wall-of-text presentation is kind of scary, and the first time I encountered them, I skimmed the essays rather than reading them through. As a result, my reaction was, "I got tired." But if you follow the path and read the essays through, you realize that they are all brilliant.

> November 2013: The Night Watch.

>> You can't just place a LISP book on top of an x86 chip and hope the hardware learns about lambda calculus by osmosis.

and in the "so funny because it's true that it wraps around and isn't funny any more, but then wraps around a second time and is funny again, but with a tinge of sadness" category:

> I HAVE NO TOOLS BECAUSE I'VE DESTROYED MY TOOLS WITH MY TOOLS.

> September 2013: The Slow Winter.

>> … because in those days, you could XOR anything with anything and get something useful.

> July 2013: Mobile Computing Research Is a Hornet's Nest of Deception and Chicanery.

>> When researchers talk about mobile computers, they use visionary, exciting terms like "fast", "scalable", and "this solution will definitely work in practice."

> May 2013: The Saddest Moment.

>> With careful optimization, only 14 gajillion messages are necessary.

One of my colleagues found the stash of columns in the "Miscellaneous Excellence" section on Mickens' Web site and reacted with "This is better than getting free cookies." Here's an interview with "the funniest man in Microsoft Research". I would have done this for *TechNet Magazine* if I had known this was possible. Also if I had the talent. Mostly the talent part.

Bonus Mickensian reading: What is art?

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