



PRAVDA?



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An open editorial policy

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Ways to Intimidate Video Clerks

By Kirstin Connors, 2nd VP, Video Rental Star

These strategies apply whether or not you actually turn a video late or not. Though it is good not to make a habit of lying to the poor high school video clerks. I developed these strategies after my local rental store's computer began to go on the fritz for two years.

Scenario #1:

A while back, I rented Camelot. It was a good movie and I enjoyed it in all it's glorified technicolor. The store only had one copy. I returned the video on time of course.

The next time I rented a movie the following scene happened:

Video Clerk: You have a fee for never turning in a movie.

Me: Which movie?

VC: Camelot.

Me: Of course I turned it in!

VC: It says here that the video was never checked in.

Me: [walks two steps back and picks the video off the shelf] You mean this Camelot?

VC: Eep!

Moral of the Story: It helps to have concrete proof. In the event that you don't, or it a Blockbuster and there are 8 million different copies, the following story might help.

VC: It says here you have a late fee.

Me: No, I don't.

VC: [looks confused] But it says here on the computer...

Me: [with force] Computers are wrong.

VC: Eep!

Moral of the story: High Schooler can be intimidated by anyone who might be five minutes older than them. Look like you know more than them and they will believe you. Another variation if you are feeling nice...

VC: I see here you turned in a video a day late that was checked out on the 17th.

Me: [smile sweetly] Someone must have fallen behind in checking in the videos. I could have sworn that was turned in well before the due date.

VC: [also smiles] Alright, I'll see about removing that charge.

Moral of the Story: The customer is always right. Same story different variation.

Finally:

VC: There is a late charge for this movie on the 8th.

Me: That is incorrect.

VC: I am sorry. It says...

Me: Do you wish to incur my wrath?

VC: Eep!

Moral of the story: OK, I made that one up. But, it would be so cool if I was over 6 feet tall and had a black trenchcoat. Then I could really scare 'em.

Know Your Officers: Cort Stratton, 1st VP

We recently caught up with Cort Stratton, KGB's beleaguered First-Veep, for this exclusive *Pravda?* interview. Here, Cort shares a few thoughts with a sock puppet, perched attentively on his left hand.

Sock Puppet: So Cort, what's your name?

Cort: My full name is Cort Danger William Folberth Stratton. Yes, "Danger" really is my middle name. No, I didn't steal it from Austin Powers: I did it first. Here's the deal: I was born with the name Courtney William Folberth Stratton. Around 2nd grade, I got tired of being teased for having a "girl's name," and started going by just Cort. By the time I was 17, half my forms legal identification listed me as Cort, and the other half as Courtney. This presented a problem when I tried to renew my passport (Courtney), when the only legal ID I could produce said I was Cort. So I had to go down to the local magistrate and have my name legally changed. While I was there, I was impulsively struck with the thought, "Hey...I could add a middle name while I'm here, couldn't I?" And the rest is history. Or at least, a good ice-breaker at parties.

Sock Puppet: Interesting. And why are you here?

Cort: Um...that is...well, you see, puppet...when a mommy and a daddy REALLY love each other, they have a special grown-up way of coming together, where the daddy puts his...

Sock Puppet: NO! Good gravy...I mean, like, what brings you to CMU?

Cort: OH! Well, why didn't you say so? Well, let's turn this into a little exercise in applied logic. Given the following evidence:

1. I'm from Boston, originally.
2. I'm a computer science major.
3. I'm at CMU.

can you figure out how I ended up at CMU? Give up? I'm here because MIT (the only tech school in the world, when you're growing up in Boston) turned my punk-ass down, that's why! But I'm really not bitter; I'm much happier here than I would have been there, and you should be too. Remember: I'd rather flunk out of CMU than graduate from MIT!

Sock Puppet: What do you do in your spare time? What are your interests?

Sock Puppet: Why do you like CMU so much?

Cort: It's the atmosphere, man. This is a great place to be a geek. CMU turns high school on its ass: here, the jocks are openly ridiculed. No one gives a turnip about the football team (well, except the Kiltie band, but top behavioural scientists are investigating this phenomenon as we speak). And the nerds get special treatment. Live it up, I say!

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Schroedinger's Dog: The Way of the Samurai: Part 2

A samurai should serve his master well and faithfully. Life, death, Internet access—all mean nothing next to service. Service...with a smile.

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In a dingy corner of the mighty concrete colossus known around CMU as Wean Hall lies the Physics Department Graduate Lounge. Inside, music is playing, champagne is flowing, and people are laughing, dancing and generally whooping it up and having a good time, as Professor Quinn celebrates the graduation of another one of his graduate students.

Buoyed by the ebullient mood in the room, Quinn cheerfully makes his rounds of the room, until he stumbles across a man he did not expect to see. An old man, sitting uncomfortably in a ratty, once-plush chair, with his legs propped up on a small, wooden coffee table, watching Betty Boop cartoons on an old television set.

"Dr. Edelstein?! What a surprise...hey, what are you doing here, I thought you retired as head of the Physics Department last year."

The old man turns heavy eyes to the bearded professor as the television plays Felix the Cat, and with a sigh says, "You should know by now, Brian—an old physicist doesn't die, he just gets lost in the error. Anyway, Brian, I've heard you've been slipping."

"What?? Me? I wouldn't say that..."

"I've been hearing rumours that you've made a couple...mistakes...lately."

"Oh, well, I'll be quick to assure you, sir, that it's nothing significant."

"That's good, Brian. There's no room in this business for sloppy physicists."

"Yes, sir."

* * * * *

Off in the bright, cheery confines of Schenley Park, a tall, pale man swathed in a black trenchcoat sits on a bench, reading a book. We switch scenes just in time to see a young child, about fifth grade, walk up to the man. The girl stares at the man, disturbing his concentration. Looking up in confusion, he says, "What?"

"Hello."

"Hello."

The moment drags on, and the man is about to return to his reading when the child says, "Hey, mister, how come I always see you here at the same time every day, with the same bag lunch, reading a book?"

The man pauses for a moment, then says, "I like reading. Don't you like to read?"

"Oh yeah, I like to read lots. My mom's always telling me to stop reading so much, and do my homework, but I always get it done on time, so I don't know why she always makes such a fuss over it. But, you know, the way you do it is kinda weird."

Pause. "It's good that you like to read. It's a sign that you're smart."

"But if you're out here so much, then why don't you have a tan at all?"

Longer pause. "Here, why don't you come over and meet one of my friends?"

The man starts walking over to an ice cream truck which has set up shop along the road. After a moment of indecision, the child follows. As they approach, a scruffy European man

hails them from the truck: "Hallo, mein Freund! Wie geht's dir heute?"

The pale man replies: "Hi, Jens. How's it going?"

"Gut, gut. Möchtest du die übliche?"

"Yeah, I'll just have whatever."

"Sehr gut, mein Freund. Hey, ich hab' gehört am Radio, dass Eis ist gut für die Gesundheit. Sehr interessant, sagst du nicht? Oh, nein, nein. Wir sind feste Freunde. Es ist immer frei."

The pale man withdraws the cash he proffered, then takes the two ice cream cones and hands one off to his younger companion. Puzzled, the child takes the cone and asks, "You can understand what he's saying?"

The coated man shook his head. "Nope, not a word. He moved here a couple years ago, from Germany I think. He hasn't had a chance to learn English, though. Tried night classes a couple of times, I think, but never had the time to do much about it. We're pretty good friends, though. I think we understand each other pretty well."

The germanic man leaned over towards the child and said, "Meine kleine, dieser Mensch, hier, er ist mein beste Freund in die ganze Welt. Aber, er ist so blöd. Ich kenne einige English, aber ich spreche es nicht mit er, weil ich er verwechseln möchten. Ah, was kann man sagen? Es geht, so es immer ist."

The pale man nodded and said, "See, he's pretty smart, too." He then bent down, pulled out a big red book entitled *Principles of Quantum Mechanics, Second Edition*, and offered it to the child saying solemnly, "I want you to do something for me. I want you to take this book, and read it, and when you're done, come back and tell me what you think of it."

The child nodded silently.

"Good," the cloaked man said as he stood up and looked at the pigeon perched on the bench he was sitting at. "Because I think I have a job to do."

"Auf Wiedersehen, mein Freund!" the German called after him. "Mach Spass! Wirklich, ich weiss nicht, warum der Verfasser mich in diese Geschichte einsetzt. Ich hab' keinen Zweck! Gott in Himmel, was für Schweinkopfen!"

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And again we are back to Wean. This time 7316. 7:10PM. Friday evening. A make up class. Professor Quinn stares at the blackboard in confusion at a mess of mismatched Fourier transforms and linear vector whatsits describing things in some far-off Hilbert Space.

"Well, maybe this is prime instead of this...which makes this..."

The students leap out with suggestions: "You need to put a negative sign there." "No, there!" "Shouldn't the derivative go on the other side of the delta function?"

The Professor sighs in frustration. "I just wish I hadn't drunk the other glass of champagne! I mean, individually, all these parts are right, it's just when I try to claim that they're all equal to each other..."

All of a sudden, the room falls quiet as everyone notices the barely audible strains of cheap-Yamaha-keyboard-demo-mode music creeping down the hall outside. All eyes in the room wing towards the door just in time to catch the trademark swath of black trenchcoat as the stranger enters the room. After just one glance, he swiftly moves to the board, rearranges the ticks that mark primed variables, and, with a flourish, pockets his chalk.

Professor Quinn breaks the silence again: "Amazing...but, how? Why? For that matter, why me? I..."

Because All the Other Candidates for President Are Wimps



Vote Megatron! Student Body President

This message not brought to you in any way shape or form by your Student Activities Fee

Optimus Prime and Megatron to Hold Debates at CMU

By Karen Adams, Press Secretary and Propagandist Extrordinaire

Many preparations are underway anticipating the arrival of Optimus Prime and Megatron on campus. The two Student Body Presidential candidates are scheduled to debate on Nov 17th. (No other candidates will participate, as recent polls show only Prime and Megatron with greater than 15%.) Tickets to the event are free and available from KGB meetings—as well as at the door of West Wing TV Lounge before the debate.

Some controversy arose regarding housing for Prime and Megatron. Due to a computer error both are classified as Baggers and have been assigned to Morewood 6D11. Dick Nixon, International Man of Mystery and Moderator for the debate, released the following statement:

“Preparations for the upcoming debate were going smoothly until this week. As to this alleged computer glitch, I’d normally say it was just some drunk GSIA student going for a cheap laugh via interplanetary incident. But as of this week, this has got to be an attempt by the Democrats to get the candidates out of the way, insult them, and maybe have them stay quiet about the whole thing. With eyewitness reports of ‘Secret Service’ agents crawling all over campus, there can be no doubt this is the case.”

Before Dick left the press conference, he was heard to mutter “Haven’t they learned anything since my day? My Watergate cover-up was a CIA black-op compared to this. If the Democrats wanted to pull off a dirty trick, you’d think they’d’ve looked up their old pal Dick. But NO! They know better! Kids today...” A black helicopter then flew Dick Nixon to an undisclosed location for practice debates between Ironhide and Megatron.

Chick Nixon is in charge of security and catering for the event. “I thought we’d just kill two birds with one stone and get some Dan Hook clones. They’re expendable security agents, and they each come with a dozen cookies.” Negotiations with CBI are expected to conclude this week.

Civilians wishing to help with the debates are invited to help in poster the campus with flyers.

The Wean Monster

By Michael Moiseyev. Scary, isn't it?

A long time ago, an evil spirit dwelled in a dark and fearsome wood. It survived by eating the souls of children, bunnies, and other cute things. But one day, an expedition of ancient heroes was mounted against the unsightly beast. After a mighty battle, the villain was defeated, and went into hiding. It kept a small following of worshippers that kept it healthy through the millennia with virgin sacrifices.

But eventually, the following died out, and the beast was again on its own. It needed fresh, untainted blood, so it sought a place where there was an overlap in the concentration of darkness and evil, along with an abundance of virgins. Naturally, Wean Hall was first on the creature’s list. It hid in the shadows for years, snatching the unwise and unwary.

Once, a coupe of decades ago on the 6th day of the 6th month, while hunting in the hallways of the 6th floor, the creature stumbled upon a couple of already aging professors, Juan Schaffer and Victor Mizel. “I will eat your soul!” the creature roared, to which Schaffer replied, “...and as to the matter of the convexity of that specific family of mappings, that can be trivially substantiated through repeated application of the group reduction process developed by ...”

“I will crush your puny mortal shells!” the monster interrupted.

“Excuse me, but we were talking,” responded Mizel. “Do you have a question?”

Surprised, the monster thought for a moment, then replied “What in the name of the unholy is convexity?” Upon hearing that question, Schaffer’s eyes lit up brighter than a small child’s, and he went into a detailed explanation of the world of bijections, compactness, and quotient mappings.

Sometime later, while pillaging through the 100 corridor of that same dreaded 6th floor of Wean, the monster ran into a distraught Dr. Walker. “Fear my wrath, puny mortal!” growled the monster.

Cort: Oh, you know, just typical college guy stuff. Video games, reading, windsurfing, graphics programming, macrame, cooking, taxidermy, polo, interpretive dance, deep-sea fishing, Gregorian chant, community service, anthropology, stamp-collecting, drag-racing, modelling (but just to pay the bills), screenwriting, fencing, amphibious warfare, racquetball, watercolors, pork futures, Hastur worship, marksmanship, particle physics, tax evasion, Tantric sex, gardening, web design, performance art, jogging, Anglo-acoustics, vigilante justice, system administration, pest extermination, gambling, romance novels, conspiracy theory, WW2-era aviation, and boxing. I think it's important not to spread oneself too thin.

Sock Puppet: Okay, that was a load of crap, right?

Cort: No! Well, mostly not. Okay, so I made up the part about Anglo-acoustics; I'm really not involved in any research regarding the fascinating acoustical properties of white people.

Sock Puppet: I figured as much. So, as an officer of the KGB, one of your chief responsibilities is to ensure the eventual rise to power of the Party and all that it stands for. What are some of your strategies to guarantee KGB's place in the new world order?

Cort: He who controls the worms controls the Spice. He who controls the Spice...

Sock Puppet: Well, now that you've finished flexing your nerd balls...care to try again?

Cort: Well, without giving TOO many of my trade secrets away...I used to have a strong interest in linguistics, before creative differences with my professors forced me into a torrid life of physics. But I learned one very important thing during my years of linguistic studies: to control a culture, you must control its language. Now, I think we'd all agree that English is the lingua franca of the emerging global economy. Now, as everyone knows, there are 26 letters in the English alphabet. So far, KGB only controls three of them. I think the road to victory is clear enough. Expect a hostile takeover of the letter "D" in the near future.

Sock Puppet: What else do you contribute to the KGB as an organization?

Cort: Well, traditionally, the primary goal of the 1st Vice President is to wait for the President to die, and subsequently replace him. But Dan Hook has so many clones running around, and they'd make much better replacements than I would. In fact, President Hook could quite possibly have been assassinated long ago and replaced with one of his bionic minions, and none of us would ever know, would we? And so my responsibilities have been expanded: I'm now responsible for KGB's web presence (<http://www.cmukgb.org/>), and for "membership issues" (whatever the crotch THAT means). I'm also going to be organising this year's edition of Secret Society Wars – stay tuned for details!

Sock Puppet: What's your favourite food?

Cort: Beef. Very rare.

Sock Puppet: And your favorite animal?

Cort: Beef. Very rare.

Sock Puppet: You mean, cows?

Cort: You say potato, I say potahto. Mmmm...potato...

Sock Puppet: *sigh* What's the geekiest thing you've ever done?

Cort: I made a serious attempt to learn INTERCAL (the "Compiler Language With No Pronounceable Acronym") once. If you

haven't had any experience with a programming language that lets you specify a probability for each line that that line will actually be executed, a language that uses COMEFROMs instead of GOTOs, a language that requires you to say "PLEASE" every once in a while in order to compile...well, I can't say you're missing much. Oh, another thing: I once hacked my own computer. Literally. As in, using a hacksaw. I had an PCI card that just wouldn't fit against my motherboard...

Sock Puppet: Well, that about wraps up our interview. I just have one more question.

Cort: Shoot.

Sock Puppet: Can you take your hand out of my ass now?

Cort: I had no idea that bothered you.

"I am your retainer," the other man breaks in, "You saved me once, and by the code of the samurai, I must repay you. Therefore, I serve you as best I can. I am yours to command." With a bow and flourish, he left the room, with the fading strains of cheap music marking the only sign of his existence.

"Retainer, of all the..." Quinn sighs again, and rests his head on his hand. "And I got it right the first time again...just switched...those...two...variables..."

* * * * *

If you push a certain type of oscillator too much, it begins to move chaotically. The samurai is the simple harmonic motion in the chaos of life. Or something like that. I think my sensei was drunk when he said that...

To this, Walker replied "Unless you have knowledge of advanced set theory, I have no business with you." Interested, the monster replied that he did in fact have knowledge in the unholy field of set-theoretic algebra that he had picked up from two creatures as bizarre as himself.

"Excellent!" shouted the jubilant Walker. "How would you like to teach a couple of classes for me?"

"I want souls!" roared the monster.

"That can certainly be arranged" replied Walker. "We have plenty of students for whom the need is not immediate. I just need someone to pick up a few classes here and there, I'm really desperate." The monster agreed, and has since then been a full staff professor of mathematics at Carnegie Mellon.

His intentions are still evil, his goal is still the devouring of souls, but now he goes about his dark ways by teaching math classes to foolish undergrads and first year grad students. He is paid bi-weekly in virgin human blood, of which there is a plentiful abundance in the halls of Wean. He can be identified by his ungainly appearance, mathematical prowess, and appetite for souls. Unfortunately, this is the mark of quite a few mortal professors in the same department, so the powers that be have lost track of which one exactly he is. If you have a class taught by such a professor, you are encouraged to get as much mathematical wisdom from him as time allows, then run a steak through his demented heart. You will have no choice, it's either his life or yours, so don't take any chances, smite him while you can!