

2012 year-end link clearance

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Another round of the semi-annual link clearance.

Snark

- *New! Improved! Shape Up Your Life!*: The New York Times book review of Timothy Ferriss's *The 4-Hour Body* reads like a recap on Television Without Pity, but this time they're making fun of a *book*! “The 4-Hour Body’ reads as if The New England Journal of Medicine had been hijacked by the editors of the SkyMall catalog.” A few months later, they did a less snarky profile of the man.
- There’s nothing more embarrassing than showing up for a sleepover with the same pod as everyone else. I wasn’t that interested in the article, but that one line is a winner.
- Something to prepare you for the summer movie season: Coming Soon to a Theater Near You (Unfortunately). Actually, I think the comments are funnier than the main article.
- I recall that one time while waiting to board my flight, I heard the statement “Before we begin primary boarding, we’d like to invite X members to board at this time” for about five different values of X.
- The Annotated White House Flickr Feed.
- Some questions about Newsweek’s sexy asparagus.

Tech

- The Defrag Tools show digs into the early history of the MSConfig tool. You can see the original bar napkin on which MSConfig was designed, and learn how I got involved. (Answer: Timecode 5:50.)
- StarCraft: Orcs in space go down in flames. I love these stories from the trenches. Remember, the purpose of these stories is not so you can say, “Ha ha, what a bunch of idiots.” It’s so that you can say, “Gosh, thanks for the warning.”
- Learn to Read the Source, Luke. One of the overlooked skills of a developer is the ability to follow code into a foreign code base. The fact that hitting F11 takes you into a file you’ve never seen before is no excuse for throwing up your hands and saying, “I give up.”

- [High-Performance JavaScript on Modern Engines](#) gives you a peek behind modern JavaScript engines and how you can arrange your code so it optimizes well.
- [Windows 95 Tips, Tricks, and Tweaks](#) is brilliantly twisted.
- [How to take an alias on outlook.com and make it your primary account](#). Here's a [step-by-step version](#).
- [How scammers make money from people who click Like on Facebook viral links](#).
- I love the tradition (begun by [Tony Chor](#)) of the Internet Explorer team sending a congratulatory cake to the Firefox team for each new release of Firefox. It's also very nice to know that [the Firefox folks return the gesture](#).
- This arrived too late for me to include it in my Microsoft Research quarterly update, but it was too awesome to hold for another year. [Speech recognition demonstration](#). At 3:17, you can see the speech recognition system doing live transcription. I have to admit, when the presentation reached its punch line at 7:30, I got a little choked up.
- By the way, the Microsoft Research project to develop the time machine [may want to get tips from this guy](#), who has not only [teleported to a secret government Mars colony](#), but also claims that [his traveling companion was Barack Obama](#).
- Do you know who Russell Kirsch is? [You will soon](#). (Read the [follow-up](#), too.)
- There's still time to get your [free Windows Media Center add-on for Windows 8 Pro](#).

Culture (or what passes for it)

- A while back, I realized that [material goods are a burden](#). Americans in general have yet to figure this out, [and all their stuff makes them unhappy](#).
- [Ken Levine's tribute to Shari Lewis](#).
- [The Honor System](#): Teller (the less boistrous half of the Penn and Teller illusionist team) invokes copyright law to protect one of his signature illusions. Bonus link: [Teller Reveals His Secrets](#).
- [Wally Feresten is Saturday Night Live's cue card guy](#), one of the few remaining in the business.
- [Helicopter Parents Hover in the Workplace](#).
- Jerry Seinfeld [explains how he writes a joke](#), using his Pop-Tart joke as a subject. This video was created to accompany [a very long article on the comic](#).
- [Slate's Reader Takeover](#) directed staff critic Troy Patterson to [review cheap beers](#). And Bud Light doesn't even count; it's not cheap enough. Pull quote: "Natural Light is among the cheap beers sold by the 30-pack, which, based on my own experience as an undergraduate, constitutes a single serving." Along the way, you actually learn something about the economics of cheap beer.
- [The making of the Gangnam Style add-on for Dance Central 3](#). There appears to be an unwritten rule that people with Japanese-sounding names who work on Kinect [must wear sunglasses indoors](#). (I was surprised to learn that Kudo is the brother-in-law of one of my childhood friends. So my Kudo number is 3, possibly 2.)

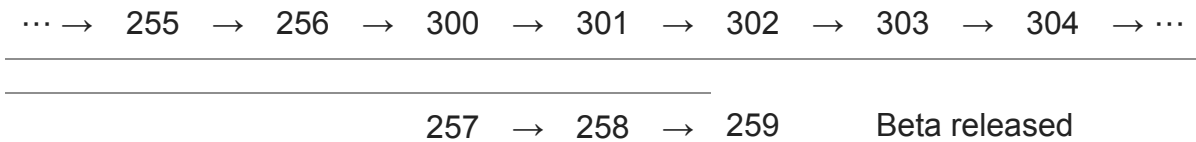
Other Stuff

- [How to spot an amateur](#). As one commenter noted, a common theme is that amateurs tend to overdo whatever it is they're doing.
- [Facilities Management behind the Olympics](#). I'm fascinated by logistics.
- [Everything Is Different Now](#): Funny and touching. (The photo caption won it for me.) I wish them the best, even though I don't even know their names or what they look like.
- Another tribute to the wisdom of our elders: 61-year-old retired potato farmer Cliff Young wins one of the most grueling endurance races by being the tortoise, not the hare.
- [Marathon Man](#): The mystery of Kip Litton's marathon runs.
- [An ATM technician's tips on simple ways to detect that an ATM has a skimming device installed](#).
- [QP Fukairi Deep Roasted Sesame Dressing](#). In case you wanted to give me a gift of salad dressing or something.
- [The GIF Guide to how the U.S. gymnastics team won gold in London](#).
- Spoiler alert: If you've never taken [The Marshmallow Challenge](#), then don't click through. It's much more fun if you don't see how people solved the problem. Here's one impressive solution (the page is in Slovak, but the picture doesn't require translation). Here's another solution. (When I took the challenge, I was part of a team consisting of two mathematicians, an accountant, and an economist. We won, though our solution was much less impressive. I set expectations at the start by saying, "Okay, we're not going to win. Let's try not to lose." We ended up winning because nearly everybody else lost.)
- A former inmate describes life in a minimum security Federal prison. Answer: It's so nice, some prisoners don't want to leave.
- [The Lying Disease](#), also known informally as *Munchausen by Internet*. Fascinating and horrifying.
- [Snow Fall](#), a multimedia art/H^H^H^Hmini-book on the Tunnel Creek avalanche.
- Stereotypes about what men and women really want in a mate were confirmed in a speed-dating exercise.
- A less academically-rigorous experiment was conducted by Rob Fee: He set up a fake profile on OK Cupid with a photo of a cute girl, accompanied by text that is utterly insane. Will guys realize that this girl is a total basket case? Of course not. (Risqué photos at bottom of page may be NSFW.)
- The difference between men and women: As part of the divorce, this couple had to divide their art collection, and the judge asked each to submit how they think the collection should be divided. The woman described her emotional reaction to each piece or how the scenes related to her life. The man said that he needed the artwork to secure a line of credit, and "I have a lot of wall space to cover."
- Extremist who advocates harrassing and even killing people who disagree with him and who mocks legal means of trying to shut him up becomes targeted by... oh you know where this is going. [Wallow in the Schadenfreude](#). (NSFW for strong language.)

- [Ira Glass teaches how to make balloon animals](#) while answering questions about relationships and sex. No, really! (Sex questions NSFW.)

And, as always, the obligatory plug for my column in [TechNet Magazine](#):

- [Aliens Ate My Software](#).
- [Living and Dying by the Demo](#). Long Zheng [fell into this trap](#) when he saw a *Missed calls* tile in a sample and concluded, “Windows 8 will have cell phone calling capability.” (Except that he used [the question mark escape hatch](#) which lets you start a rumor and call it news.) I don’t know where he got the idea that these samples were from built-in apps. I went back and listened to Kip’s talk again, and he says (timecode 12:23), “Here’s examples from our template catalog.” In other words, they were all fake!
- [In Triplicate, Please?](#)
- [The Service Pack Shuffle](#)
- [The Numerology of the Build](#). Note that the build sequence diagram got corrupted. Here’s what it’s supposed to look like:



- [The Hidden Variables](#)

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