

9-10-79

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Hi Dave,

Well, you are the recipient of first letter I have ever written. The ARPAnet is fine for short messages but lacks permanence (besides, this gives you the chance of decoding my handwriting). I'm not writing this in any organized fashion -- I'm just going to write stuff as I think of it. But it will be sort of chronological.

There is a real housing problem in Boston. There are 250,000 students here in a teeny town. The buildings are old and show it. It took me 2½ weeks just to locate and get into an apartment which already had 2 other people.

I pay \$175 a month rent. Utilities run another \$20 a month. That is included in the rent. The apartment is called a triple decker. We have the bottom floor, some has the middle floor and someone else has the top floor.

The apartment itself is above average in amenities. - We have a garbage disposal, (this is a rarity) a working dishwasher (another rarity), new ceilings, 2 refrigerators, and a recently remodeled bathroom.

I have two apartment-mates. One is a female who works at BBN. (Want a job at BBN? They're looking for people) She works on ~~sundry~~ various projects. One of the things she showed me was the manual for a new ~~text~~ formatter. It is great.

It's to ~~stuff~~ noth as PASCAL is to algol 60 - neat, clean, very easy to learn and use, and immediately useable by anyone. I would use it above all others. She is also on the PASCAL standardization committee - in particular she is secretary to the extensions chairman. So if you have any ideas on extensions to PASCAL, give them to me and I'll give them to her. (It seems that WIRTH asked the committee to include dynamic arrays (arrays whose size is computed when a procedure is invoked) in standard PASCAL. However, his request arrived late so it will

probably be an extension.)

My other-apartment mate is a graduate student in AI. He's doing a PhD thesis on Natural Language - he has a program which generates english text from a nonenglish data-base (frames and so forth). He will be finishing his thesis soon.

The apartment is located about 2 3/4 miles from campus. I bought a ten-speed and ride it to and from campus. During the winter I will use a bus. Walking and riding around Boston is a trip. Traffic laws are not enforced! As long as no one dies or is injured by either a ~~pedestrian~~ pedestrian or automotive maneuver it's legal (No harm, no foul, as Chick Hearn would say). There's no such thing as a stop-sign or red-light. Even if police witness your maneuvers they won't ticket you - it's anarchy.

(Boston does have intelligent elevators, though. The ~~slow~~ doors close when you hit the "door close" button. They are also fast. This may seem trivial, but it's a real pleasure.)

I visited MIT the first day I got here. The first thing they did was give me an office and an account. Actually getting an account on any machine is no problem - you just login! If you don't have an account you are given one. The philosophy is that if you can get on a terminal you belong on the machine.

~~Please~~ There are no passwords unless one logs in via dial-ups or over the net.

The lab itself (by lab I mean Laboratory for Computer Science Lcs) is not in a normal MIT building. It is at the edge campus in a quasi-commercial building. We, along with the AI people, have the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> floors and part of the 2, 4, 6, and 7<sup>th</sup> floors. There are only 9 floors. Security is really good. My office is on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and has a window. We look out over MIT.

I have 3 office-mates in a room  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's the size of the VU math lounge.

One of them has written and published an APL text book - in Hebrew!

There are only about a dozen students in the theory group. I am one of 2 new graduates in the group. There are about 8 professors in theory group (this includes some the "math" professors). So the student/faculty ratio is good. One of the students in the group is Alan Baratz. He (the ~~one~~ one who designed the LSITE editor for CANTOR's CS1-11. He also had ERF for 123B. You might tell CANTOR I found him.

Speaking of befriending UCLA people, a weird phenomenon keeps happening. New graduates students keep approaching me and asking me if I ~~just~~ went to UCLA. One person had fluid dynamics with David. One person had some physics classes with David. One person asked me if he was the guy with the twin that kept hassling the professor in 31B!! These were all engineers.

This is being written 20 hours after the stuff so far. I just finished my first day of classes at MIT. So far so good. Since I'm an RA I'm only allowed to take 2 courses a term (semester), but I'm attending 4 till I figure out which 2 I want.

Graduate courses generally meet 3 hours/week in 2 1/2 sessions. Today I attended an ~~Algorithms~~ Algorithms course (instructor Vaughn Pratt, t.a. Alan Baratz, book The design and analysis of Computer Algorithms by Aho, Hopcroft, Ullman), a ~~theory~~ ~~course~~ theory course (instructor Len Adleman), and a ~~new~~ new course, called "Issues in the design of programming languages." This last course is pure lecture ~~and~~ is (no design) and is taught by Barbara Liskov (who created CLU) and John Guttag, who did the axiomatics for EUCLID. I really don't know how they're going to get across what a pandoras box designing a language can be.

It's sort of ~~is~~ interesting that the last course I finished at UCLA was an Algorithms course (math 118) and the first one I started at MIT ~~is~~ is an Algorithms course. However, right now it appears that one of the courses I'm dropping will be the algorithms course.

Tomorrow I'm going to sit in on the Semantics course taught by ~~Fran~~ Irene Greif, according to the catalogue it's a lot tougher and more varied than the one I took from Martin.

There is a history class taught by Bill

However MIT really stresses research over coursework. I'm in the process of searching for some research (They're paying me over a grand a month so I'd better find some soon). One area which seems interesting is work Vaughan Pratt is doing with the Logics of Programs. He's working on a totally new verification system.

The MIT environment ((cambridge)) is a lot different than UCLA's environment. Cambridge is a real student town. For one thing, there are ~~student~~ students in it. Harvard square is geared toward the student population. I don't remember seeing any first run movie theaters anywhere! ~~Chinese~~ (although LSC (the people who put on movies at MIT) does show recent films - Superman (70 mm dolby), Heaven can wait, Lord of the rings, Watership down, Harold & Maude, Interiors to name a few THIS term - for 75¢ !!?)

Good Chinese restaurants abound as well as bookstores.

There are some constants in the Universe - like the kind of people that inhabit a Computer Club. The resemblance (sp) is

amazing - right down to the (as Linda merims put it) "resident twit." However, the MIT version gives out tine for free!

MIT they even have an undergraduate math club (UMSA, but more "professional"). all members of it have a ~~the~~ blue t-shirt which reads "mathematicians do it continuously."

Bridge here is played on thursdays and tuesdays. The Tuesday games are ACBL games.

Well, that about does it. I'll discuss business (TOPS) with you later. I don't think Elm going to proof read this letter, so I hope you had fun deciphering it. (There's an interesting change of tense in that last sentence). Enjoy your <sup>last</sup> (hopefully) ~~last~~ year at UCLA; don't let 241B (databases, right?) get you down. Say hello to everyone for me (congratulate Michelle for me on her ~~amazing~~ success so far with Muntz, I should have done so well ~~to~~ with him).

Be seeing you,  
your friend,

Daniel