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Creative Commuting – Why Not?

What are some other applications for NonStop fault-tolerant information processing?

How about in a creative car pool. In December 1981 I started commuting with **Kim**, 3 1/2, and **Super Lance**, 5, to a Montessori school near Tandem Cupertino. Since my hobby is learning, they welcomed the opportunity to teach me daily from the backseat. Kids (*and adult equivalents*) love to teach, learn and explain.

The first Creativity Dividend went to Super Lance when he summoned me from a book to the big color-coded map of San Jose to ask if we stayed on Stevens Creek Blvd. or went to Highway 280 for the dark blue route. He was on his knees mapping the seventh route on his just-drawn route maps and needed more data.

I always explain the symbols and main streets on the map to them. We trace beforehand whichever route Kim selects on Tuesday and whichever one Super Lance selects on Thursday. They know that Wall Street Journals can be picked up at a rack near Lucky's, Denny's, or at the Post Office downtown.

An awards ceremony was initiated immediately with, “Kim, come and see what Super Lance did.”

“Son, a map is rather complicated model,” I told him. “You just mapped a map. I'm impressed. I've told you this many times as you've built trains and train tracks, cars and cities, that you were very creative and had far greater insight and patience than I have. The two quarters to you and one to Kim are to encourage more creativity. We'll call it a *Creativity Dividend*. Now, let's see the dark blue route goes...”

Kim won her first one a few hours later when she looked at the exit sign at Pizza Hut and said, “Dad, that's part of Texaco – T-E-X.”

On our very first commute to work together, we noticed a big Texaco sign which I read. Next came a 7-Eleven sign. A game began, and the next Texaco sign was pointed out. I rewarded with Smokehouse almonds: Three almonds to the one who sees Texaco first, two to the other. With eleven routes-two now have variations and a third has a built-in 5-10 minute stop by the Southern Pacific Train Depot-there are many 7-Elevens and Texacos that I've paid off on.

They won too many nuts (a sales manager's challenge right?), so I set a max of 10 nuts going to school and five coming home. They have to carry the info on how many nuts are left.

“How many nuts do you have left, guys?” I ask. “Two Dad.” “How do you know?” “I got three and two and three...”

Some days they want to save earned nuts for later. On one commute day, Kim said, “Hey, Dad, I can spell Ford backwards.”

No Ford signs or pickups were nearby and she did it on her first try. Super Lance very calmly responded, “I can spell Chevrolet backwards.” He did. First try and rather fast. How did he do it? I asked the same question. He smiled and said he saw it in his imagination. (Kim and Pooh Bear, the fourth member of this trinity, just walked into my home-office. You see, it's 4:45 a.m. And Pooh is not your typical *ursus hibernatus*).

We added pickup trucks to the nut incentive program, since several routes are on the freeway: three nuts for each after they had spotted three Chevys, three Toyotas, three Datsuns, or three Fords. The little guys carry all their own inventory. ****

If you too LEFT and took out the F, you'd have the last part of Chevrolet.”

“Wow! You're right, Lance. If you took CHEVRON and took out the N, you'd have the first part of Chevrolet. So if you took LEFT and CHEVRON and took out the F and the N, you'd have Chevrolet.”

“Dad, I think that should be a creativity dividend, don't you?”

I'm easy. (He has *refused* CDs when he felt they were too easily earned). Yesterday, as they were discussing communication, Kim said “Lance, when you're talking you can't listen to what I am saying.”

On the practical side, I'd hesitated to assign chores, though the chores index cards which I made in December are still on my desk at home. One day I decided to give a *Helpfulness Award* of two quarters to the one most helpful, and one quarter to the other. Kim won the first one. They both win sometimes. They're quite helpful and still enthusiastic about helping.

It's really interesting to watch Kim's expressions as she explains to Super Lance the “reasons why” of something. She musters all of the reasons which she feels pertain. He listens. What a sobering lesson.

They each have a great sense of humor and tease me a lot. Kim is one of the *WORLD'S* best negotiators! Super Lance is one of the most insightful and creative people I know. My commuting class with them runs for about 35-45 minutes going, and about the same length of time coming home.

Peter Drucker, Chet Karrass, Joyce Brothers, or Wayne Dyer provide “filler” and topics to discuss in between front-to-backseat interactions. The final 10-15 minutes are spent

scanning the Wall Street Journal at traffic control lights and replaying my lessons of the past in too few minutes. Perhaps the commute is too short.

“Hey Dad, do you know what *Ias quesantes* is?” asked Super Lance.

“No” I said. He told me it's *peas* in Spanish. Six or seven more examples with the articles and he had another creativity dividend. The director of the school and his teacher got thank notes. At last I found out where they got their info.

One commute was typical. After we'd buckled up and were leaving the house, Super Lance said, “Dad, this is a little book so so that's why I'm taking two things.”

The rule is two things-books counting as a half-a-thing: about a dozen books stay in the car in a box on the back arm rest, as do spiral notebooks with pencils attached by strings. He had just convinced me that this little book should not count. He had two other things – a bluesheet (his *talisman*), and a clean pair of my gym socks rolled into a football.

“Do you guys want the interior light on, or flashlights?” I asked. They chose flashlights. Peter Drucker was on the portable cassette player and a pre-recorded music tape on the stereo. Why Drucker? He's far less demanding than my two other teachers. A few Texacos and 7-Elevens later, Lance said, “Dad, do you feel something on your ear?” Ohh, the flashlight beam. Then I, the pupil, asked my teachers if they knew why I couldn't feel the light beam shining on my ear. Their answers were, “It's not hot enough.” “It's not hard enough.”

I explained the wave theory of light only. (The particle theory can come later in the week.) I pulled out the radio's volume control button and, as the antenna rose, I explained that we could hear music from the radio waves without “feeling it.” Huygens might explain it somewhat differently. (I know some music is to be felt and not listened to, but that's another lesson), hopefully some light years away.

On two occasions, at least, I displayed my brilliance: I failed miserably. One day, as we were driving in, I said, “Okay you guys. Both *ONE* and *TEN* have three letters. Which letter do they both have?” One of my backseat teachers replied, “E” the other said “N”.

Then there was the day I said to Kim, “Chevron has the same first four letters as Chevrolet.” I'd hardly paused when Super Lance said, “The first six, Dad.”

Three of four hugs (apiece) at Montessori Academy and I was on my way to Tandem with Peter Drucker on tape. He teaches the same way twice. Still, I live with a *one-to-three* student-to-teacher ratio