

Shrink Rap Radio #172, September 8, 2008, The Dave and Jerry Show #12

Tweets for Twits

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” and Jerry Trumbule, MA, ABD
(Transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Susan Argyelan)

Introduction: Hi! What you have here is another session between Jerry Trumbule and me. For the moment, I’ve decided to back off from calling these episodes Shrink Rap Radio LIVE! since we’re no longer doing the call-in format. So, rejecting the few renaming suggestions I received, I think I like The Dave and Jerry Show. In this episode, we discuss two articles that appeared in the New York Times. The first is from September 7, 2008, and is titled “Brave New World of Digital Intimacy.” It touches upon themes near and dear to the two of us. The second is from the September 5 New York Times and is titled “For the Brain, Remembering Is Like Reliving.” It describes groundbreaking brain research on memory and touches upon issues that I knew would be relevant to Jerry’s research in the past. I’m getting this out mid-week as sort of a bonus episode and therefore, will forgo the usual announcements and reading of listener e-mail and such. I hope you enjoy our banter and reflections, so here we go.

Dr. Dave: Well, hello everybody! Here we are again, my good friend, Jerry Trumbule and myself, to do another Shrink Rap Radio LIVE!? (laughs) I’m alive!

Trumbule: I’m alive too, here, Dave!

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Trumbule: Or what passes for it.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, what passes for it, kind of still early in the morning. Well, we have a focus.

Trumbule: Yes.

Dr. Dave: Having done this a number of times, we sort of came to the conclusion that it helps to have a focus rather than to just kind of ramble around.

Trumbule: Yes.

Dr. Dave: And in fact, we’ve been inspired to dwell upon two different topics that were stimulated by articles in the New York Times. The first was called to my attention, actually, by one of my listeners, Michael Furst, in Illinois, who called to my attention this New York Times article of September 5, 2008. It’s titled “For the Brain, Remembering Is”...oh, no, that’s not the one. Excuse me. (laughs)

Trumbule: No, no.

Dr. Dave: No, it's the other one!

Trumbule: Yes.

Dr. Dave: It's the September 7 article, "The Brave New World of Digital Intimacy."
And this kind of taps into a topic that you and I continue to talk about in one way or another, and we continue to explore, which is the whole impact of the digital lifestyle, both for each of us personally and our prognostications for the culture, and how it intersects with psychology and all.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: Right?

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: And in fact, you had read this article independently of my suggesting it.

Trumbule: Yes, I subscribe to New York Times, er, yeah, New York Times' feed. So, every morning, I get up. Then I scan the New York Times, Washington Post, and a number of other papers. And caught my attention, the whole idea of Facebook and formerly, same space occupied by...

Dr. Dave: MySpace.

Trumbule: MySpace.

Dr. Dave: MySpace, right. Do you have a MySpace page?

Trumbule: I think I'm on both of them.

Dr. Dave: Really?

Trumbule: Yeah, inspired by people friending me and so and so forth, I wanted to see what it was about, so I went in. I think I've got some kind of funny picture up there. I haven't really paid much attention to it. And, I know we both were apprised of the situation and believed that we could somehow promote our activities – in your case, podcasting, and in my case, blogging – by somehow expanding our activities in these social networks.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. They would make us rich and famous.

Trumbule: And, in my case, it didn't work out. I didn't attend to it. You know, I have, like, three friends, one of whom is my granddaughter. Maybe you're another one; I don't know. But...

Dr. Dave: Oh! No! (laughs)

Trumbule: I never really, I never really paid much attention to it, although I saw that indeed, it was another venue. It was another rapidly expanding, part of this rapidly expanding universe. I'm just so expanded as it is now... I (laughs)...

Dr. Dave: I know. It's hard to keep up with it all, isn't it?

Trumbule: Yeah. Now, you tried Twitter, right?

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. And, I'm also, like you, I have a MySpace page, and I have a Facebook page. I might even have two Facebook pages, I'm not sure. I think I have a Facebook page that I created – I think. And then, one of my listeners created a Shrink Rap Radio Fan Club page.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: That's got some people on it. And, I routinely get requests to be friends with someone.

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: I'm also on LinkedIn. I think you're on LinkedIn too, aren't you?

Trumbule: Yeah, that...that finds you, doesn't it? I mean, you don't have to join? I don't remember.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I think you have to join.

Trumbule: Oh. Okay, I'm not in it, then.

Dr. Dave: But, it's more of a business-networking site...

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: ...and seems to me to... It's more serious and earnest and less frivolous, and actually proved to be of use to me on at least one occasion, and probably could be a lot more useful to me if I would just kind of work at understanding it better...

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: ...and using it more.

Trumbule: So, you have two Facebook pages? Does that make you a two-faced person?

Dr. Dave: (laughs) I resent the implication. Yes, it probably does.

Trumbule: Uh-oh. Okay.

Dr. Dave: It probably does. And yeah, I... Well, you know, I have different hats that I wear.

Trumbule: Oh.

Dr. Dave: So, I need different faces to go with each hat.

Trumbule: There ya go.

Dr. Dave: And, in terms of the LinkedIn, the time when it was useful to me, I was wearing my market-research consultant hat. And, I needed to find somebody who had a deeper understanding of SPSS than I do. That's a statistics package that you're probably familiar with...

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: Statistics – what is it? – Social Science...SPSS. Statistics Package for the Social Sciences, is what it stands for.

Trumbule: There ya go.

Dr. Dave: And so, sure enough, I went out on my LinkedIn network, and I sent to my first order of people, saying, "I'm looking for a consultant who knows something about SPSS..."

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And so, they sent that out to their folks, and I got two or three leads.

Trumbule: Good.

Dr. Dave: So, I was able to find my consultant. So, there are useful ways to use that one in particular.

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: And, I think that Facebook... Facebook has kind of eclipsed MySpace, it seems.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Dr. Dave: They seem to be particularly useful for bands and performers, you know, who are trying to promote themselves and get audiences. Some folks like that have been able to use them very successfully.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: I've had trouble, you know, putting the time in to really figure out how to use them very effectively. For example, I get messages, "So-and-so has written on my wall in Facebook."

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And, I don't know how to write on anybody else's wall.

Trumbule: (laughs) Yeah.

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: Uh-oh...Dave...

Dr. Dave: Or whether I should be writing on their wall. (laughs)

Trumbule: I was taught never to write on a wall.

Dr. Dave: I know! I know. And then, I get these invitations on Facebook. I guess there are all these little gimmicky kinds of little programs. So, somebody says, "So-and-so has sent you a drink of beer," or something like that. "Do you want to send a drink of beer to your friends?"

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And, of course, you can't really send them a drink of beer, so it's, it's just kind of a little novelty/friendly thing.

Trumbule: Yeah. We kind of got stuck in the podcasting/video blogosphere, and in truth, as you well know, there's only a certain number of hours in the day for all of us...

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: And, you have to focus your priorities. And, for example, right now I'm involved in a video-editing project of a city council meeting. Very boring stuff – two hours long; I have to go in and cut out little pieces of it to try to put a cohesive whole together...

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Trumbule: ...because the state of Colorado is passing regulations which make it okay to dump radioactive materials into our local lakes. So, I'm concentrating on that, and of course, the world of electronic communication is passing us by as we focus in on one aspect, which is now – what? – three years old. It's kind of passé by now, and everybody's Tweeting and Twittering and we're not.

Dr. Dave: Well, actually, I am. I've just started to tweet...

Trumbule: Oh, no –

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Yes, to Tweet and Twitter, and that's a lot of what I wanted to talk about. Because this article kind of really touched on a lot of the elements and the places that I had kind of gone through in my mind as I contemplated becoming a Twitterer. And in the article, they – I'm probably going to want to read a few passages from it, just give you warning –

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: - heads up. They start off talking about Facebook, and I guess Facebook, in a way, was the precursor for Twitter.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: Because at one point in Facebook's evolution, they set it up so that people could be kind of constantly updating what they were doing from moment to moment.

Trumbule: Yeah, the "news feed."

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Yeah, and that's not something that I've subscribed to. It's not a part of Facebook that I've ever experienced, nor would I think I would want to experience. (laughs)

Trumbule: Well, that brings up a basic question, and we've talked about this before. And, it starts with cell phones. And, of course, that was, what, 10, 12 years ago, and of course, I, being an early adopter, got a cell phone, started grooving on the cell phone. This was way before any of this other stuff started happening. And, then I got my second-generation cell phone, and it was smaller, which was more inconvenient. And, now, of course, the iPhone and the third-generation is out. I decided not to participate in that, because I didn't want this "electronic leash." Basically, what happened was I was driving, and I tried to answer the phone, and I almost had an accident. And, I realized at that time that this was a mistake. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: Yeah, right.

Trumbule: And, I cancelled my cell phone and haven't looked back. And, of course, now, I'm some kind of an old fuddy-duddy that doesn't have a cell phone. "What's your cell number?" "Oh, I don't have one." "What?"

Dr. Dave: "What??"

Trumbule: This kind of silence...

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Trumbule: "What?" (laughs)

Dr. Dave: "Oh." (laughs) Move on, in the cocktail party. Find somebody else to talk to. (laughs)

Trumbule: Yeah, and so I haven't participated in that at all, and I feel kind of funny talking about it. On the other hand, I have kept abreast of what's going on in that world. And, it makes me think of, in the olden days, land lines – or, even in the beginning of cell phones, you know, there were always these people – usually, they were new lovers or married people or something – they were always checking in with their wife or their partner. It used to be one time a day, you know, there would always be the call, "Hey, dear...how are you doing?"

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: And then you would always, they would always, in an embarrassed fashion they would always kind of at the end, they would say, "I love you, too." Yeah. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: And then those phone calls seemed to start increasing. I always wonder, when I walk around and I see everybody's talking on their cell phone, who are they talking to? Maybe they're talking to the other people that I see on a cell phone, but how many times have you seen in, let's say, the supermarket...and you're walking down the aisle, and there's a person on a cell phone going, "Well, I'm looking at the canned beans..."

Dr. Dave: Yup.

Trumbule: "...and there's 15 different kinds. What color is the label?" And they're getting instructions from someone else – obviously, their partner or somebody...

Dr. Dave: Right.

Trumbule: ...who's telling them which kind of canned beans to buy. And, I'm going, like, do we need this? Is this really...like, can't we make a decision on our own? (laughs)

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. And then, while we're burlesquing things here, there are the people walking around, looking like the Borg. And I'm one of them; I'm guilty of everything that we're talking about, with a little bug in their ear...

Trumbule: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: ...so that they can talk on the telephone. So, it's hard to tell who are the schizophrenics among us anymore, you know...

Trumbule: (laughs) Exactly.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Because you see these people walking around the supermarket or walking down the street, and they're talking to themselves, and this automatic judgment kind of clicks in, you know, like, oh, mentally disturbed or something...(laughs)

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: And then you see the other side of their head, and oh!

Trumbule: Yeah, they're actually participating in an important meeting at this point in time.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, right. So, just to read a little bit from this article, he says, "Facebook users didn't think they wanted constant, up-to-the-minute updates on what other people are doing. Yet when they experience this sort of omnipresent knowledge, they found..." Oh, my goodness, just a second, here. Did I get the pages out of order? Or didn't it... Oh. "...they found..." Here we go. My staple is in the way. "...they found it intriguing and addictive. Why? Social scientists have a name for this sort of incessant online contact. They call it 'ambient awareness.' It is, they say, very much like being physically near someone and picking up on his mood through the little things he does — body language, sighs, stray comments — out of the corner of your eye." So, that kind of leads into Twitter, which starts off with this basic question, which says, "What are you doing now?"

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And, I kept hearing people say, "You need to be on Twitter."

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: And, I kept asking, why? Why do I need to be on Twitter? I don't get it! And now I'm on Twitter; I still don't *quite* get it. I almost get it. I'm going to give it more of a shot. For example, I was just on Twitter – just before we started – and I wrote, “Jerry Trumble and I are about to do one of our live podcasts, in which we will discuss Twitter.”

Trumbule: Mm-hmm... Did you get any responses to that yet?

Dr. Dave: Well, you know, the way it works is, I don't get responses. Now, I have... I don't think I, there's one person who's given me a response once or twice.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: You have, there are the people who follow you and the people that you're following. Currently, I'm following ten people. On the advice of a friend, I decided, okay, I would follow some very active, people who are really active in the podcasting and Internet-marketing space...and Macintosh space, just because these are knowledgeable, trendsetter-type people, and maybe they'll have valuable things to say.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: So, I'm following ten, and at this point, I have 31 followers...

Trumbule: Okay.

Dr. Dave: Anybody listening, it's Twitter/ShrinkRapRadio, if you want to follow me. So, presumably 31 people... By the way, I don't even know if all of those 31 people actually have a relationship to me in any way, because evidently there are people out there who will follow other people just as a way to get them to look at who they are and what their marketing message is. When I get a notice that somebody wants to follow me, then I click to see who they are. Somebody suggested that I do this, and you can see how many people are following them...

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: ...and if they have a website, you can see their website. So, people are using it in that way to market themselves.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm... Yeah, and in fact, there's also something new called lifecasting. I don't know if you're up to speed on that.

Dr. Dave: No.

Trumbule: But, I can send you a link. But basically, it's an instantaneous version of podcasting, as well as blogging. It's in a written form, so I guess it wouldn't be

podcasting... but diary lifecasting. And it's used for the purpose you just mentioned – building a business is the basic thing. So basically, are you saying that most of Twitter is basically somebody trying to build a social network with a business goal in mind? Or, would you say it's mostly kids just Tweeting around for fun and enjoyment? I don't have any idea.

Dr. Dave: I doubt that it's... I think there are different networks that are probably more heavily populated by kids. For example, there's one called Dopplr and another called Tumblr...

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: ...and these web 2.0s, they drop the "e." (laughs)

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: The way they spell these things. And there's another one – I'm blocking on the name of it; it might even be more likely to be used by young people. One of my sons told me about it...where people can kind of figure out – and this is a feature of the iPhone, too, with its geolocation stuff...

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: ...that you can figure out, "Oh, you've got friends nearby! They're over at this club, or this coffee shop." And so, you can just kind of drop in on them.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: This has no appeal to me or me, I think...that feature.

Trumbule: Well, actually, for me, it's kind of a negative implication...

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Yeah.

Trumbule: ...that these "geofinders" are really a way to keep track of where you are, by friends or enemies. I don't want to be paranoid about this, but I – and I don't go places...I don't think I do. Let me think for a second. No, I don't really go places that I would not want to be found at, and yet I just don't like the idea of having a little transponder on my person that knows the exact longitude and latitude of where I am.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, someday Big Brother will be able to launch a missile precisely at *you*.

Trumbule: Well, that day is already come, and we're already doing that in Pakistan, and we already did it in Afghanistan, where we actually homed in on people's cell phones and blew 'em up.

Dr. Dave: Yes...(laughs)...right.

Trumbule: But that day is already here.

Dr. Dave: I know.

Trumbule: And, I guess the so-called terrorists have learned not to use their cell phones. So now they've reverted back to the old "tennis-shoe network," as we used to call it where they have runners to carry the information.

Dr. Dave: Okay. But we digress.

Trumbule: Yes.

Dr. Dave: To get back to your earlier question, I don't think most people are using it for business. I think a lot of people are using it to kind of keep up with friends. I can see where it would be very useful. I would... I think you ought to follow my Tweets, and you ought to start Twittering. And, just so that we could learn either how dumb it is or how interesting and useful it is, to just kind of... It's kind of like a diary, as you say, for day-to-day activity.

Trumbule: So, I... without a cell phone, I would just get that stuff on my computer, I presume.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, and as a matter of fact, I'm really not using my iPhone – I'm a big iPhone devotee, as you and, increasingly, the rest of the world knows. And, I do have a program called Twitterific installed on the iPhone. But actually, I think I'm doing and following most of my Twitters *not* on the iPhone, but on my main machine, at Twitter.com, on my desktop, where I have the Window open right now.

Trumbule: Okay.

Dr. Dave: And, now, if you have a lot of followers – and this has a real appeal to me – there are people who have 5,000 followers.

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: And they give this example in this article, kind of skipping ahead over some other stuff. They give this woman, this example of the woman who, she's a social-media consultant. Her name is Laura Fitton, or something like that. She has more than 5,300 followers.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And the great thing is, is when, if she's thinking of buying something, she just puts it out on Twitter to ask for advice. And yes, the followers can communicate back. I think what you have to do is, if you wanted to communicate with me directly, you would – when you're on Twitter – you would say, "@shrinkrapradio."

Trumbule: Mm. Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And then that sends the message to me directly.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: So, I'm following some people who are vastly more famous and influential than I am. I've tried doing a direct "@" when I thought I had something relevant, and they have not replied. So, you know, whether or not they read it, whether or not they cared, I don't know at this point.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: So, I'm still exploring all of that, but I think it would be wonderful if I could get advice on a gadget or a program or something I was thinking of buying, from a whole lot of people very quickly.

Trumbule: So, this sounds like what we used to call "social climbing." In other words, you want to follow people that are further down the road than you are in some aspect of life.

Dr. Dave: The popular kids! I want to follow the popular kids.

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: Bad news, Dave. I'm sorry for ya. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: I'm worried about you, dude! (laughs)

Dr. Dave: Well, I hadn't thought of it in those terms until you said that, but I do, it does have a certain high schoolish element to it, I suppose.

Trumbule: Yeah, yeah. Now, if I was in love – if I were in love – maybe I would like this stuff, to keep track of my significant other. But, I don't want to know where these people are and what they're doing. I mean to me, it would just be a distraction. And maybe, once again, not being a participant, I can't really criticize

it. But, I have gotten friends who treated the regular phone this way, and they would call me once or twice a day and tell me stuff I didn't want to know.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, right! (laughs)

Trumbule: (laughs) And, I tried to get rid of those people! (laughs)

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. And something that I remember about you is that you're kind of phone-averse, and so it's been very interesting that you and I have been able to have this, to really rebuild our relationship via Skype.

Trumbule: Yeah, that's true.

Dr. Dave: It would not have happened on the phone, for some reason...

Trumbule: That's very true.

Dr. Dave: But it's okay on Skype. Why is that? What's the difference for you?

Trumbule: Well, for me there are two things. One, when I'm on Skype, I'm using a headset and a microphone, as opposed to a telephone device.

Dr. Dave: So, you don't have to do the work of holding the receiver up to your head.

Trumbule: Yeah, that's, actually, that's more important than you would think, given my diminishing auditory sensitivity. In other words, I can't hear as well as I used to; I found that it's much better if I have a headset on. Now, of course I could get a phone that has a headset, but I haven't. And so...

Dr. Dave: I remember talking to you on the phone long before there was any hearing decrement. (laughs) You were...

Trumbule: Okay...

Dr. Dave: ...phone-averse.

Trumbule: Yeah, that's true. Yeah. I mean, I think... I always use the phone for the transmittal of important information...

Dr. Dave: Uh-huh...

Trumbule: And although –

Dr. Dave: Uh-oh...

Trumbule: What?

Dr. Dave: Skype just cut out a little bit.

Trumbule: Oh, sorry. If I'm talking to my sister, obviously, that's a different kind of a situation, and we chat. And then there's a second aspect to the Skype vs. normal phone, and that has to do with the lack of pressure. You know, remember back in the old days, someone would say, "There's a long-distance phone call for you." And long-distance took precedence over everything else. You had to drop what you were doing...

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: Answer the phone, and then you had to be kind of terse and let's-get-this-done, because you're being charged by the minute...

Dr. Dave: Right.

Trumbule: My father always used to say, "You don't want to be buying the telephone company, now!"

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: You know, as the call would stretch on, and I used to always tell him, "Well, it's cheap entertainment, Dad, talkin' to you. It's cheaper than going to the movies." But those considerations are out the window now. That's not part of the deal. So, maybe I should just quit grousing, get a cell phone, start Tweeting – I'm glad they changed it from... otherwise, it would be Twitting, which wouldn't sound too good. So, I would have to start Tweeting, and then I would have to start... Now, see, suppose you had more followers than people you were following.

Dr. Dave: Yes, many people do. Some people do.

Trumbule: That would be a measure of your importance, in some way.

Dr. Dave: In some way, yes.

Trumbule: Yeah, so...

Dr. Dave: I suppose.

Trumbule: So, in other words, you would be one of the populars if you had 1,000 people following you.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Trumbule: Ah...I don't know that I would want that.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. You know, we used to... I liked the point that this article made. We used to, there was this oft-quoted thing, "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Trumbule: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And, they point out that with all of this social networking that's going on now, privacy has really gone out the window...

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: ...and everybody knows that you're a dog. (laughs)

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: And they gave some very explicit examples. (dog barks in the background) In fact, one sort of chilling one was this young woman – I guess she had broken up with her boyfriend – and he started posting stuff about her on Facebook...

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: ...and pictures from when they were together, and so on, and she has to spend large amounts of her time trying to erase and stamp out this information.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Dr. Dave: So, now there can be information about us out there on the Web that ultimately, we may find embarrassing or inaccurate, and we may end up just kind of being stuck with it.

Trumbule: Yeah, in fact, the whole privacy issue, as you point out, seems to have been erased with the younger generation. And, when the Internet first got started and people were asking me about that issue, I told them, "Forget about it." Their privacy is gone.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: When you get on the Internet, you can assume that your every move is being recorded, because it is. Perhaps it's not being looked at – because you're not important enough. And the same thing with the telephone – this whole business about warrantless wiretapping is raised as if it were a new issue. And, actually, this started way back in the 60s with a program called Echelon. And it was considered to be at the time, people said, "Oh, that's a conspiracy theory," and so on and so forth, but no, it's not. There's actually a giant building near Washington, D.C., where all communication is funneled through and examined by computers.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: For certain keywords, whether it's a written or e-mail or voice conversation, or whatever. And then, each day, at this time – and this was years ago – there were 1,000 people poring over the computer output to see if any of them were worth following. So, my approach has been to assume that you have no privacy on the phone, your e-mail, your...even your faxes, and so on. It's not a private medium; it's a public medium, so...

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Trumbule: ...you're basically out on your front porch, screaming. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: And your neighbors are going, "What is he talking about?" So, and I always tried to assure people that they weren't important enough to be followed, so not to worry. But now, we've taken this following thing down to the micro level – literally – and people feel good about being followed.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah! I'm trying to get followers, and you know, on Twitter, you are restricted to 140 characters. So, it's possible to look at it as an art form. And, I'm trying not to do Tweets that are along the lines of, "I just had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich." (laughs)

Trumbule: (laughs)

Dr. Dave: And instead, I'm trying to – well, I'm putting things like, recommending movies that I've just seen. Are you still there?

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...yeah, yeah, I'm here.

Dr. Dave: Okay, recommending movies or good books, or... I was hoping that I could come up with little profound bits of wisdom. So far, those have not happened to me in abundance. But it is a challenge to figure out, okay, what can I say in 140 characters or less that could conceivably be of value to the people who are following me?

Trumbule: Sort of a haiku format, is that what you're...?

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, I'm kind of thinking about that. And as a matter of fact, in this article, they talk about that there is the potential of it being almost a metaphysical question. The question – I'm right here on the Twitter page – and the question that's always there is, it says, "What are you doing?" And of course, that's not a

bad question to ask oneself, an existential question about your life. You know, “What am I doing right now?” What am I, what *am* I doing?

Trumbule: Well, then you discover that what you’re doing is totally unimportant...

Dr. Dave: Yep.

Trumbule: ...has no meaning, and is of interest to no one.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) And so, you might reorient yourself then. (laughs)

Trumbule: (laughs)

Dr. Dave: Now, the other thing that I have to say about Twitter, here, is, I am taking it on faith at this point, because so many people have said, “There’s no way to explain it; you just have to do it. You won’t get it until you do it, and then after you do it for a while, then you’ll get it, and you’ll be hooked.”

Trumbule: Yeah. No, I understand that, and that’s why I’m kind of reluctant to be even talking about this...

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: ...something I know nothing about. And maybe... Who knows? I am going to get a cell phone, mostly because I think the advantages when you’re traveling outweigh the disadvantages. And, I guess I can try it out, you know? What the heck.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: We are the kind of people that jump into stuff, so let’s not be reluctant here.

Dr. Dave: There you go, there you go. Now, maybe we should move on to our second topic...

Trumbule: Okay.

Dr. Dave: ...which is the brain! Something that you know well.

Trumbule: Brainchild...(inaudible)...

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Right.

Trumbule: (laughs)

Dr. Dave: Nobody will understand that reference but you and me! Me...me, me, me...

Trumbule: The brain –

Dr. Dave: You know, the funny thing is, that sort of “brainchild...child...child...child...child...” goes back to some joke back when we were undergraduates at the University of Pennsylvania...

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: ...and you said it in relation to something or other. Well, you know, I have a tool that I’ve created in my market research work, a threaded-discussion online focus-group tool that I call The Brainchild Forum. (laughs)

Trumbule: (laughs) Invented in 1958...we were definitely ahead of our time!

Dr. Dave: It goes somewhere way back.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: So, this article of September 5 in the New York Times called “For the Brain, Remembering Is Like Reliving...” And, they make an astounding claim here, according to Dr. Kahana, a University of Pennsylvania professor, where you and I went to school. Was Dr. Kahana there then?

Trumbule: No.

Dr. Dave: No.

Trumbule: No, all the people we remember are now dead.

Dr. Dave: Oh, great. Okay. (laughs)

Trumbule: (laughs) Not really. Not all of them.

Dr. Dave: We will...we should Twitter about them, and that will keep them alive.

Trumbule: In fact, it’s interesting that you mention that, because this new work that you’re referring to – and also, I think it’s reflected at the University of Pennsylvania – most of it’s coming out of the medical school and the hard-biology people, the neurophysiologists, and not the psychology department.

Dr. Dave: Oh, really?

Trumbule: Yes. And that brings me back to my original premise on one of the early, early shows about psychology moving away, even from the term, “psychology,” into the neurobiology term. And I think that’s reflected in this particular article. But, I’m digressing, because the article is actually the answer to the problem that led me to leave physiological psychology. And earlier, I sent you a little clip from a novel that I’m writing, which kind of describes my situation back then. And when I got to the forefront of the world of physiological psychology, and I realized that inserting these tiny electrodes into brains was a very crude approach – sort of like trying to figure out how a radio works by jamming a large screwdriver into the back of it, and then when it stops talking, you say, “Well, I’ve hit the voice center...”

Dr. Dave: Yes. (laughs)

Trumbule: “...of the radio.” But now, they have refined that technique. What I was waiting for was a way to read the output of an individual neuron at a distance without surgical intervention. Well, we haven’t quite gotten there...because I wanted to be able to keep track of maybe 10,000 neurons in a particular brain center without having to open the brain up. Well, these people are talking about, well, putting electrodes into brains – into human brains – and they’re able to do it with a great deal more refinement than I was able to do, back in the past. And, to get to the heart of the matter, what they’ve discovered is that the brain cells that are activated during an act, such as watching a little TV show, are reactivated during the memory of that act.

Dr. Dave: Yeah – well said. Yeah.

Trumbule: Does that pretty much cover it?

Dr. Dave: Yeah, you summarized that really well. Now, let me hasten to add here that they did this study with people suffering from epilepsy. And, they needed to go into their brains anyway, to try to relieve the epileptic symptoms. And while they were in there, they were able to do these kinds of, this kind of research. So, they weren’t just sort of randomly grabbing people and opening up their brains...

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: ...and inserting electrodes. So we want to hasten to point that out. Yeah – let me just read some little pieces here. They say, “Scientists have for the first time recorded individual brain cells in the act of summoning a spontaneous memory, revealing not only where a remembered experience is registered but also, in part, how the brain is able to recreate it.”

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: Skipping down further, it says, “The new study moved beyond most previous memory research in that it focused not on recognition or recollection of

specific symbols but on free recall – whatever popped into people’s heads when, in this case, they were asked to remember short film clips they had just seen,” which is what you referred to.

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: And they go on to say, “...a team of American and Israeli researchers threaded tiny electrodes into the brains of 13 people with severe epilepsy.”

Trumbule: Right.

Dr. Dave: And then, “The patients watched a series of 5- to 10-second film clips, some from popular television shows like ‘Seinfeld’ and others depicting animals or landmarks like the Eiffel Tower.” And, “In each person, the researchers identified single cells that became highly active during some videos and quiet during others. More than half the recorded cells hummed with activity in response to at least one film clip; many of them also responded weakly to others.”

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: “After briefly distracting the patients, the researchers then asked them to think about the clips for a minute and to report ‘what comes to mind.’ The patients remembered almost all of the clips. And when they recalled a specific one – say, a clip of Homer Simpson – the same cells that had been active during the Homer clip reignited. In fact, the cells became active a second or two before people were conscious of the memory...”

Trumbule: Ah, that part –

Dr. Dave: *That’s* the exciting piece, isn’t it?

Trumbule: Yeah, that’s what I love.

Dr. Dave: “...which signaled to researchers the memory to come.” So, in other words, the researchers actually, in a sense, saw that the memory was about to come forth...

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: ...before the person even experienced it.

Trumbule: Well, that’s been reported before, that idea that your brain has to have a second or two of start-up time before any action is taken. And you may or may not be aware of that start-up time. I think we even mentioned this on another show. If you think I’m going to get up and go into the kitchen, that thought is... Before you actually have that thought, the areas that need to be alerted to the fact that you’re

going to stand up are alerted, so that when you do stand up, you don't fall over from lack of blood pressure to your brain.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Trumbule: So, clearly, our brain is a little bit ahead of us in our conscious awareness of what we are doing. And let's... I mean, so in other words, your brain is operating on the future of your activities. Do you think we could say that?

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: And that's kind of interesting and scary at the same time. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Trumbule: As long as you're the only one that has that information, I guess you're okay.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: But once we learn how to read these brain cells at a distance – which, of course, the military has been working on since, at least in my experience, since the early 60s, and I saw actual proof of this – this whole idea of brain at a distance has both very interesting positive ramifications as well as negative.

Dr. Dave: Yes, yes. We all...

Trumbule: Much easier to disable a soldier by messing with his brain than it would be to kill him.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Well, we will reserve that discussion for some future podcast, and I think it's probably time for us to wrap this up. Any last thoughts or observations here? Be sure to get on Twitter and let me know what your Twitter name is. And, by the way, Twitter – they didn't drop the "e." It's actually all there – Twitter.

Trumbule: Yeah.

Dr. Dave: And so, I'm shrinkrapradio, and you let me know what your name is when you're there and we'll start... It will be almost like monitoring the brain cells.

Trumbule: Ah...there we go! A cell phone that monitors your brain.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Trumbule: Knows what you're doing before you do.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, it –

Trumbule: That's coming soon. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: And by the way, that memory stuff, they were monitoring the good ol' hippocampus. The hippocampus keeps cropping up in our discussions.

Trumbule: Yes, strange, isn't it?

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Trumbule: Before we go, I did want to alert listeners to another website that I created some time ago. It's another blog where I'm actually trying to write a biographical novel...

Dr. Dave: Great.

Trumbule: And it's called www.Landlordland.blogspot.com. And in that first chapter (that I posted in 2005, so you can see that I haven't been working on it) there's some discussion of how I felt about leaving the world of physiological psychology.

Dr. Dave: Okay. I'll put a link to that in the show notes, hopefully –

Trumbule: Mm-hmm...

Dr. Dave: I've made a note to myself, so hopefully I'll remember to do that. Hey, Jerry, thanks for hanging out here again.

Trumbule: Good, uh, chewing the fat with you, Dave. That's what they used to call it: chewing the fat. It's kind of an Eskimo term.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) Yeah, yeah. Goes back to when we were all Eskimos. (laughs)

Trumbule: (laughs) Later –

Dr. Dave: Bye-bye. Well, that's it. Let us know what you think. Let us know if you'd like us to continue these sorts of sessions. You can do so by leaving comments on the website or by sending e-mail to shrink@shrinkrapradio.com. That's it for now. This is Dr. Dave saying, "It's all in your mind."

