MIT’s history of hacking

By Michael Tain
(Editor’s Note: This is the first part of a two-part article. The second part will appear tomorrow.)

"Hack - n. A trick or prank. For example, welding a street car onto the tracks or getting elected UA President are fine hacks."

So says this year's copy of HoToGAMIT. Of course, there are only two of a wide myriad of hacks that have been perpetuated throughout MIT's existence. It might be said that hacking is an integral part of life at MIT. At least, that's what freshmen of the class of '81 were told last year at their Freshman Picnic when several upperclassmen strung up a banner on the great dome overlooking Killian Court reading "Welcome to Hahvahd -- Hackto Ergo Sum."

While the great dome is generally inescapable, the small dome has been the butt of many jokes in past years. One popular recurring prank, so popular that it might not even be a hack anymore, is simply taking people up to the dome. This is done each year by knowing upperclassmen who take willing freshmen up for a tour. The campus police have stated many times over the past several years, however, that they disapprove of this practice.

Not so typical are the hacks that try to do something to the dome for the entire campus to see. Several banners have spouted their messages to the world over the years. Favorites, though, are the hacks which make use of the dome for some greater purpose than as a glorified billboard. These are usually original and well-planned. An example is the painting of a face on the dome.

The second part will appear tomorrow.

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