Good Testers Are Often Lucky
using serendipity in software testing

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Serendipitous Life

- Childhood
- Friends
- Education
- Job
- Family

It’s about creating opportunities for good luck
Serendipity Definition

“finding something valuable when looking for something else, thanks to an observant mind

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- Serendipität
- Serendipia
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- セレンディピティ
- سرنديپيتي
- Juhuslik avastus
Sampling & Serendipity

- We can’t test everything, we sample.
- We can observe carefully.
- We want to make many, rich tests.

- We change sampling strategy as we learn more.
Prepare for Serendipity

- Error-Prone Machine
- Background Complexity Heuristic
Vary for Serendipity

- Don’t run the same test twice (unless you really have to)
- Observe carefully, on many places
- Do One More Thing Heuristic
- Galumphing
- Also vary your testing techniques and approaches (Lessons Learned 283)
Serendipity Observation Examples

- Look carefully
- Notepad Heuristic
- Visualizing
Serendipity Observation Examples

- Look carefully
- Notepad Heuristic
- Visualizing
Ongoing Serendipity

- Things we know always matter, can be tested “for free”
- Make tests richer.
Connect for Serendipity

- Daniel Liestman wrote an article about serendipity for library research.
  - who wants to admit they found it by chance?

- Perseverance – thoroughness and hard work
  - Look often, and at many places, use variations.

- Altamirage – tacit knowledge
  - Hidden heuristics and invisible skills

- Sagacity – ability to make good judgments
  - Connect observations and experience, the more you know, the better...
Serendipity Quotes

- you can see lot by just looking (Yogi Berra)

- this serendipity is what makes doing qualitative research and analysis so much fun (Strauss/Corbin)

- chance favors the prepared mind (Pasteur)

- rely less on top-down planning and focus on maximum tinkering and recognizing opportunities (Taleb)

- computers are marvellous, but they suck at serendipity (Edgren)

- wouldn’t it be interesting to... (your next great idea)
Serendipity Summary

- Software testing is oozing with serendipity.
- Serendipity can be your friend and rescue, don’t hide it.
- Learn a lot, prepare, do many tests and observe!
Questions

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Further reading:

- Liestman, Chance in the Midst of Design: Approaches to Library Research Serendipity
- Edgren/Emilsson/Jansson, Software Quality Characteristics
- Edgren/Emilsson/Jansson, 37 Sources for Test Ideas
  http://thetesteye.com/posters/TheTesteEye_SourcesForTestIdeas.pdf
- Edgren: The Little Black Book on Test Design

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