

The NCTCUG Journal



www.nctcug.org

October 2003

Volume 26 Issue 6

Keeping Up

By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

In the middle of this issue, you'll find the latest edition of the group's informational brochure. We need your help — simply put, we need new members! Please pass this along to a friend or co-worker who'll find NCTCUG's newsletter and meetings useful in their quest to better use their PC hardware and software. You can also download an Adobe Acrobat version of this pamphlet from the web site home page. Click on "Sign Me Up" at the top of the page, then "brochure" in the 'How Do I Join' section.

Have you been keeping your anti-virus definitions up to date? The recent flurry of nasty worms and other assorted digital beasts speaks to the absolute requirement for guarding your computer with readily available tools that aren't that expensive. Right now, some of the Sunday ad supplements to the Washington Post are touting anti-virus and firewall

software package combinations free for upgraders, as are the anti-virus and spamblocker program packages of another major product family. Come tax time, there are always bargains to be had with rebates on dual purchases of popular tax software and anti-virus and internet protection packages. I'll probably add a firewall to the mix this year, although I need to do some research on the real value of that for dialup connections. The value of the dialup firewall may lie in catching malicious programs, as well as adware and spy-

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Siegel Reports

By George Siegel, PIBMUG's Special Correspondent

This month George Siegel tackles dumb applications he can do without, provides a way to prevent virus attacks, and tells users how to avoid hoaxes.

The Sorry State Of Software...

For the last six months or so, I've become increasingly irritated by the ever growing amount of junk that comes with every new software release. You know what I'm talking about—registrations, cookies, tray icons, background processes, pop-up screens, newsletters, affiliate programs, ad infinitum.

At first, I thought maybe it was just me; heavy workload and all that. Then, a couple of weeks ago, I helped an old friend set up his new PC and I reinstalled all of his 1997-vintage software including PhotoShop, PageMaker, MS-Office and a half dozen other major apps. I finished in record time. No hassles, no online anything, no sales pitches. It felt great.

Then, over the next few days, I had to deal with the following:

A PC that had suddenly slowed to a crawl after the installation of the 164MB printer driver. (Yes, 164MB of "full printing system" on a \$99 inkjet printer.) I replaced it with the 1.12MB file version from the vendor's website and all returned to normal.

A cheesy checkbook program that analyzes your entries in order to make recommendations on how to get out of debt, and apparently is in a position to offer you a bank loan. George Orwell would be proud.

A new computer that had no Internet Explorer and no Internet Connection Wizard. The two choices were to sign up for—and launch—the preloaded AOL or the preloaded DellNet. My cable-connected client didn't want either one. I finally found Internet

Explorer as a hidden file and set up the necessary icons but it was a sad waste of 45 minutes. And of course there were the usual viruses, spyware, pop-ups, etc.

In the midst of all this, I realized the cause of my frustration. My role has traditionally been to "add" software and configuration elements to make a computer do that which a client needed. Today's software does too much. (When was the last time you needed to imbed a sound file in your Word document?) I now spend my time loading additional software to block or remove features that no one wanted in the first place. This is nonsense and we shouldn't be accepting it.

So here's where you come in. As user group members, you've probably tested more versions of more apps than most users. Make a list of the most recent, stable versions of all the various applications that don't have all the junk features. The minimum requirements are that they be Y2K compatible and run on 32-bit Windows. Once you have the list finished, you can make it clear to your computing buddies that there is simply no reason to ever pay for newer versions of those programs until—or unless—the junk is removed, and any real needed improvements in functionality are needed.

Here's Where To Start:

MS-Office 97 does everything that most businesses will ever need. No reason to buy anything newer. If your new PC has Word 2002 bundled with it, remove it and load Office 97. You'll never have to spend another dime for an office suite.

Quicken 2000 (or thereabouts). It's just a checkbook! Whatever version you have, keep it. If your new computer has a newer version bundled with it, delete it and load your existing version. It will run faster and work just fine.

Okay, you get the idea, right? It will give you a great opportunity to tick off software companies while enhancing your user group position as champion of the little guys.

Hey, Protect Yourself, Willya?

You may remember the last time we had a beer, we briefly discussed the general gullibility of new and untrained Internet Users, and our ability, through experience, to quickly see through most of the scams and ploys one finds on the Web.

Recently, I was at the office of a client with about six employees, all of whom recently received e-mail accounts. In no time at all, they were receiving all sorts of spam. I learned that they had all been engaging in various risky activities including sending each other email greeting cards on a regular basis, each trying to outdo the other.

I explained that things such as e-cards are a no-no because they exist primarily to gather names for spammers. I went on to say that no one would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to put up a sophisticated e-card system unless they had a way to recover their costs. And that even on the web, you can't get something for nothing.

Their response? The sites seemed friendly. Indeed the sites themselves as well as the e-cards have been created with a disarming, warm and fuzzy feel.

Then the client asked me how to make the spam all go away. I had to tell them that it was too late. They had to either live with, and spend time and energy constantly fussing with spam blockers, or change their e-mail addresses.

I find that my admonishments to clients regarding safe practices are either ignored or rebelled against. It's probably that I'm pressed for time and tend to use a very direct approach ("Stop that, you idiot.")

The job of every user group member is to use your demeanor and verbal skills to present the best practices employed by experienced users in a positive, compelling way. Teach them what would be roughly the online equivalent to street smarts. The

idea is to not only give users the needed information, but also to convince them that doing things correctly is much "cooler" than being duped by every ploy that comes along.

Hey, I Got A Virus!

Want some golden rules to prevent getting a computer virus?



Don't trust any attachment; scan each one. (But what else is new...)

Update your anti-virus signature today.

Do a quick, free Internet scan with www.comandondemand.com

Or, if you use MS-Outlook and are tired of playing this silly game, then download and install the Outlook e-mail security patch, by itself or included in one of several other service packs. It blocks all conceivable active attachments and is nicely described at www.slipstick.com/outlook/esequip.htm.

© 2003 by George Siegel. Reproduced with permission. Article reproduction coordinated by Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group. George Siegel is a top-notch computer consultant specializing in networking, a long-time PIBMUG member, and advisor to the last four presidents.

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To Linux Or Not To Linux.....

**Nancy J. Cristolear, The Dayton Microcomputer Association, Inc.
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On July 13 the Linux SIG of The Dayton Microcomputer Assn. Inc. will be having another installfest. I've participated in quite a few and have seen many people leave either happy or disappointed. I thought by writing this article I could help you make your experience a positive one.

Should you or shouldn't you take the plunge? Well that depends on several things. We'll take a few minutes to go over some of the things you should consider.

First, what are your expectations? Are you a person who has been working with a Windows or a Macintosh and expect Linux to be the same thing? I can guarantee you will be disappointed.

Unlike Windows or Macintosh, the Linux distributions are not as refined. What do I mean? Well, if you are familiar with Windows, then you are also probably familiar with applications like WordPad, NotePad, Calculator, Paint, to name a few. Many of the Linux applications have names like GIMP, an acronym that stands for Graphics Image Manipulation Program. It would not jump out at you that this is a Photoshop clone would it? So, you will have to invest time into exploring the applications to see what they do. The good news is there will be LOTS of them. Ultimately, you may have to tweak the menu system so that you can find what you want.

OK, the next thing we will consider is your skill level. If you are the kind of user that expects to be able to buy something off the shelf and have it work, then Linux is not for you. Linux often requires a number of tweaks to make it work properly. However, if you are the kind of user that would throw the manual away, click a link to see what it would do, or take your box apart to see what is in there, then Linux might just be for you.

It will help if you are comfortable working with a DOS prompt. Most of the things Linux can do are more easily done from a prompt. In fact, most of the people I know have XWindows installed just to get a terminal window. [Editor: XWindow is a windowing system developed at MIT, which runs under UNIX and all major operating systems. It lets users run applications on other computers in the network and view the output on their own screen. XWindow generates a rudimentary window that can be enhanced with GUIs-Graphical User Interfaces.]

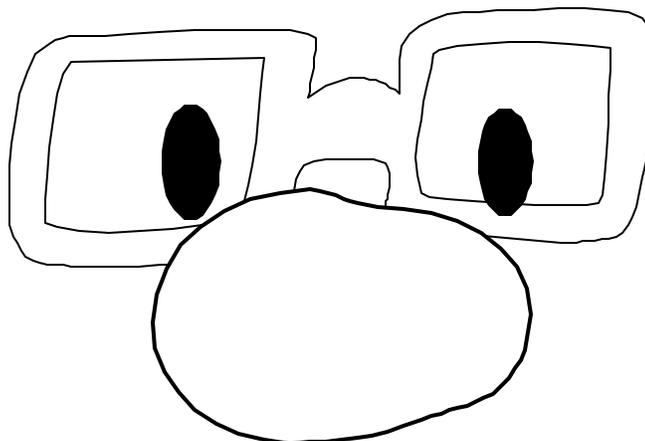
Then there are the Unix commands. They are the kind of commands that only a geek would love. Consider some of the names: grep, ls, mv, cp, ps, vi.

Lastly, what is your goal for your Linux system? Do you want to replace your Windows system? Or perhaps you just want to play around a bit. This last is where we lose

the folks who are more Windows oriented. If you do not have a commitment to Linux, you won't be inclined to wade through the setup and will just forget about it.

Are you ready to take the plunge? OK then, there are still a few things to consider. Do you buy one of the packaged distributions or do you take advantage of the free software available at the installfest. What kind of machine will you be using and what do you want it to do? How old is that machine? Do you have enough hardware? Memory? Processor?

Linux is famous for being "free", however, you may want to invest in one of the packaged distributions. They run around \$75. What is the difference? Well, often the commercial distributions will include tools and software that is not available for free. For instance, you might get StarOffice with all its tem-



plates and art as opposed to OpenOffice. It may come with special tools that will help with the installation and upgrade. Most important, the boxed distributions come with HELP! This help is in the form of a manual and on call technical support. This may be worth the money right here.

That doesn't mean you can't make things work with the available distributions at the installfest. They often come with a large amount of Open Source software. If you are willing to regularly attend SIG meetings, you can learn all you may need to know (or at least where to find it). In the long run though, you would probably be more motivated to work with something that you have money invested in. Either way, bring your software or not, it can all be installed at the installfest.

Next we will consider some of the choices you may want to make about what to install Linux on. Linux was originally written to run on a 386 machine with 4 Meg of memory and you can still run it on that kind of machine, in theory. However, just like Windows, as ability has been added, so has the level of machine that Linux runs best on. Most of the package distributions require at least a Pentium level machine with 64 Meg of memory. If you want to be able to install and run with a minimum of tweaking, you should have standard hardware, known components, and as much memory as you can afford (Linux is a memory hog). You can get by with about 6Gig of disk space for everything that comes with your distribution.

Next, will you run Linux on a standalone machine or will it share a system with Windows. The ideal system will run Linux and only Linux. However, many cannot afford a whole system for Linux so they share the machine with Windows. OK, do you use removable hard disks and swap them (ideal), or must you have both Windows and Linux on the same hard disk? Windows just does not do well with other operating systems on the same machine. That doesn't mean you can't do it, it just means you may have to work harder. If your skill level is lower, you will probably do better at installing Linux on a standalone or swappable disk. If you must install everything on one disk, do your Windows install first, then install Linux. Linux

comes with a couple of tools to manage and partition drives or you may want to invest in programs like System Commander or Partition Magic. People at the installfest can help you to get your system set up with either. OH, if this is your regular production machine, **BACK UP YOUR EXISTING DATA!** Some people have tried to install Linux and ended up wiping out the entire disk. **BACK UP EVERYTHING!!!!!!!**

What? You thought you could just use your 386 with a 40 Meg hard drive and 4 Megs of RAM that's sitting in the bottom of your closet? Well, don't throw it away. You can install a bare bones Linux OS with no bells and whistles. What you can't do is install XWindows and pretty graphics. You can still do a lot with it. Consider using it as a print server, mail server, or a firewall. (A 486 might be a better choice though.)

You just bought the latest and greatest thing? Well, it may be a good idea to wait a couple of months. Linux developers have to wait for hardware to be released for drivers to be written for it. So you may find that Linux is a little behind the state of the art.

Want to make sure you can install Linux on your machine? Or maybe you are just not sure you want to take the plunge completely yet. Consider getting a KNOPPIX CD. KNOPPIX is a single CD distribution that runs on the CD drive and doesn't touch your hard drive. If your hardware is all detected by KNOPPIX, then you can be confident that the Linux installs will find your hardware. You will also know if you have the patience to deal with some of Linux's idiosyncrasies. You can download KNOPPIX at <http://www.knopper.net/knoppix/index-en.html>. Choose the Order/Download link. Download sites are at the bottom of the page. [NCTCUG Ed. Note: as of 9/1/03, this is currently "closed" due to "Software-Patents" issues in Europe. See the page for more information — but no download links. But click on the KNOPPIX link

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Random Access Memory!

By Bob Elgines, CRCC Editor, elginesz@rraz.net

Core Memory 1950

Pictured [figure 1] is a single ferrite donut used in a core memory unit for one bite of memory. When the core is magnetized that is equal to a one and when it is demagnetized that is equal to a zero. This required a lot of power, so large DC power supplies were needed producing a lot of heat. Core memory units were built to a maximum of 48K and were used in the US until 1993. The last USAF tube type computer operating in the United States with a memory core unit was finally shut down in the summer of 1986. It was located in the Block house just outside the main gate of Luke AFB in Arizona. The computer tube type processor took up a room 40ft by 40ft with ten each 3ft by 8ft high cabinets and only 48KB of RAM to cover the South Western United States SAGE aircraft tracking system with multiple RADAR input feeds.

Chip Memory 1969

To speed up computers we now write and read more than one BIT at a time. Back in the sixties they decided a computer word would be a total of eight bits of data. Some of the first memory chips were 1Kb, then increasing to 4Kb, 16Kb, 32Kb, 64Kb, ETC. As the late eighties came along such as the IBM 286 machine they decided to go with a 16-bit word (but as far as memory is talked about really two eight bit words) using 256Kb individual chips directly on the mother board to a max of 1MB. Since you require a data line for each bit the DATA BUS was increased to 16 data lines.

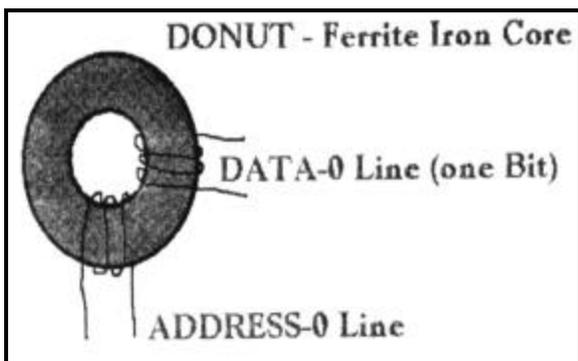


Figure 1: Ferrite Donut Core Memory

30-pin SIMMS 1989

They first came out with parity (requiring an extra chip for the parity bit) and then non-parity. Most of all your newer machines are capable of using non-parity (lower cost) type SIMMs. As the 386DX processor appeared, we now could shift a 32-bit WORD around, but most programs still operate using 16-bit words at this time. Memory chips were put on separate printed circuit boards with 8 chips for no-parity and 9 chips for a parity bit location. So for a 16-bit word machine you would need two SIMM boards or for a 32-bit word machine you would need four each of the SIMM boards ($32/8=4$).

72-pin SIMMS 1995

Of course now with WIN 3.11 (WIN 95 & WIN NT do the same thing) and the new programs and machines we can use true 32-bit word operation. In other words we can transfer 32 bits of data down the bus at any one time. This of course comes in handy mainly for graphics and internet operation. Otherwise there is not any difference other than you are required to have more memory to make this operation successful. Like with the 8-bit word, 64Kb of RAM was great, but with the 32-bit word, 16MB of RAM is great. The reason being is RAM is still calculated using the old eight bit word, why as now you need four times more places in RAM for each WORD ($4 \times 8\text{-bit} = 32\text{bits}$). The 72-pin SIMMs are a 32-bit setup so your machine would allow you too change or add them one at a time.

EDO SIMMS 1996



Figure 2

Then for the faster Pentium processors (now up to 266 MHz with MMX) and proper mother boards, the new EDO (Extended Data output) SIMM memory boards came out with an added cache chip to help speed up memory access due to the mother board clock speed, which now runs up to 75MHz.

168 pin DIMMS 1997

The new RAM boards out are called DIMMs, which is a 64-bit memory board @ 66MHz (like two 72 pin SIMMs on one). In 1998 and 1999 higher speed boards arrived at 100MHz and then at 133MHz.

184 pin DDR 2001

Some of the latest RAM arrived called DDR or PC2100 operating at 266MHz to aide in the operation of Intel's new P4 processor and AMD's 2100. Then in 2002 a higher speed DDR333 or PC2700 operating at 333MHz and DDR433 or PC3500 operating at 433MHz with CPUs over 1GHz.

184/232 pin RAMBUS/RIMM/RDRAM 2002

The latest type of memory operating up to 800MHz. Fast memory is finally here bypassing Motherboard speed. The type 1066 is a 16-bit, 184-pin module, and therefore must be installed as pairs. They are available up to 512MB per module (RIMM).

The type 4800 uses RSL (RAMBUS Signaling Level) technology to achieve transfer rates exceeding 4.8GB/sec of Bandwidth. They are 32-bit, a 232-pin module and available up to 256MB (RDRAM). The architecture of RDRAMs allows the highest sustained bandwidth for multiple, simultaneous randomly addressed memory transactions.

The separate control and data buses with independent row and column control yield over 95% bus efficiency. The RDRAM's multi-banks configuration supports up to four simultaneous transactions.

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Random Bits

Blair Jones, NCTCUG



Something fun to try— from a tip seen on the internet!

Go to <http://www.google.com>

Type in (but don't hit return): "weapons of mass destruction";

Hit the "I'm feeling lucky" button, instead of the normal "Google search" button

Humor From The Net —

Q. Since Linux is now over ten years old, maybe some general questions about it are topical for news:alt.folklore.computers? For example: Since the Linux kernel code is dependant on the C language extensions defined by gcc, what would be the best way to describe the language that it is written in?

A. GNU C, pronounced "gunk."

Q. Which programming language should I use for writing Linux application.

A1. Well, what will your app do?

A2. Dude, you've got your priorities all wrong. Here's the proper order for things:

- 1) Pick development platform: Linux
- 2) Pick language: Python
- 3) Pick GUI library: GTK or wxWindows
- 4) Write program
- 5) Figure out what program does

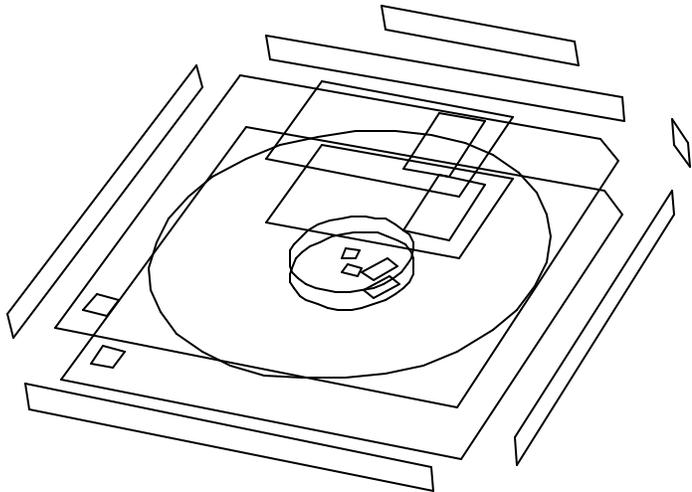
Happy Halloween!

Use Your CD Drive More Productively

By Ira Wilsker

Almost all newer computers come with a CD-RW drive, a CD drive that can write and rewrite compatible CD discs. For older computers, with a standard CD reader (play only, not write), the addition of a CD “burner” is a very popular and fairly inexpensive upgrade. A simple review of the Sunday sale books for the major electronics and office supply stores shows an abundance of CD-RW drives for between \$30 and \$100, often after rebate. These drives are typically easy to install, and may possibly be installed in addition to the existing CD reader (good for copying CDs), or as a simple replacement. If internal installation is not desired, there are several external CD-RW drives, advertised weekly, that connect to an available USB or fire-wire port. The external drives, typically the USB models, are also often a good choice for older notebook computers where internal installation is difficult or impossible. The Sunday ads often show the external USB drives for under \$100, after rebates.

Almost all CD-RW drives, whether factory installed, or after-market add-on, come with some CD burning software. The most widely distributed CD software provided with the drives is from Adaptec, or Adaptec’s successor (Adaptec sold their CD writing software division), Roxio. Another common software package included with some drives is from Nero, while other drives come with a variety of lesser-known software titles. As the price of blank CD discs plunges, often “free after rebate”, burning (writing to) CDs has become very popular.



Still, many PC (and Mac) users are not using their equipment to its potential; large number of users still only use their CD-RW drives in read mode to install other software, and not to burn discs.

As had been stated many times here in previous columns, the three most important words in computing are “Backup, Backup, and Backup”. Remember that “Murphy’s First law of Computing” states that “A properly backed-up hard drive will never fail; a hard drive that has not been recently backed up will always fail at the most inopportune time.” All too many users who have ready access to CD-RW drives have lost all of their important files to viruses or hard drive failures, despite the ease and low expense of copying important files to CD discs. The common blank discs hold from 660 to 700 megabytes of data, and are very inexpensive. Other than some time, there is no great investment to back up critical files at a minimum, or even better, entire hard drives.

There are a variety of excellent utilities available to backup hard drives. Some CD-RW drives come with a “lite” or “limited” version of popular backup programs. While minimally functional, these “lite” versions often lack useful functions such as compression (getting more data on a CD disc than its native capacity), or incremental backup (only backing up new files or files modified since the previous backup). I have been using “BackUp MyPC” from Stomp Software (www.stompinc.com), which was formerly known as Backup Exec, by Veritas (Seagate). This program is probably one of the most full featured backup programs, and easy to use. BackUp MyPC can backup to almost any type of device from CD-RW drives, tape drives, Jazz and Zip drives, and other devices. Some competing products are Roxio’s Go Back, Norton’s Ghost, and NTI’s BackUp Now (which I have also used). Since almost all computers can utilize some form of CD writer, and blank discs are cheap, there is absolutely no reason NOT to have at least critical data files backed up. The cliché “ounce of prevention...” is most apropos here. With over one in five PCs cur-

rently infected with at least one variety of the Klez worm, several versions of which are capable of destroying critical files on a hard drive, backups are imperative. The appearance and rapid spread of other destructive worms and viruses, such as the new "Hunch" worm which explicitly destroys the files in the Windows, My Programs, and My Documents directories, emphasizes the need for backing up hard drives. Still, probably the most damage is done by the old-fashioned hard drive crash. Remember Murphy's law, and always have a reasonably current backup of critical files. For long-term archival purposes, better quality CD discs are advertised as having a 100-year archival life.

There are other popular uses of CD burners. One of the most popular and most controversial uses is burning music to blank CD discs. Often in the popular MP3 format, or in native commercial music CD format, studies show that this is the most popular use of CD burners. Provided that copyright laws are rigidly obeyed, and we all know that they always are (snicker), homemade music CDs are very widely created and used. Online music or swap services, ranging from the now defunct Napster, to the very much alive and controversial KazAa and Morpheus, as well as the legitimate commercial music sites such as Sony, are popular sources of such music.

Another popular use is copying entire CD discs. Generally, it is considered "ok" to make a single archival backup of commercial CDs, provided that the copy is only used as a backup, and properly disposed of (destroyed) when the original software is no longer needed. With some software CDs, and an increasing number of commercial music CDs, this archival backup is becoming more difficult to create as sophisticated copy protection is being utilized more commonly.

Many use their CD drive, often with rewriteable CD-RW discs, as an additional, but removable adjunct to their hard drive. This allows archival and portable storage of massive amounts of data, at minimal expense. CDs are often ideal for moving large files between computers.

There are several other uses for the CD-RW drives now so common in our machines. Many other CD

drive utilities are readily available for download, such as from tucows.exp.net/system/cdrutil95.html or tucows.exp.net/mmedia.html. Use the drives as they can be used, but make absolutely sure that critical data is frequently backed up.

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in the paragraph to get to the "old" page with the other links. A Google search also shows some links that might work for sources.]

Even if you're just curious, consider coming out to the installfest. It will be at the Russ Engineering Center at Wright State University, July 13, 2003 from 12-6. There will be plenty to do. Presentations will be given and members will have their systems set up. You will definitely get something out of it.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

Foto Junkie Hooked On A Digital Camera

By Joan Stephens, CAUG, aka The Intrepid Traveler
jstephns@caller.infi.net

For quite some time I'd been toying with the idea of purchasing a digital camera. But didn't think I could justify the expense since I was happy using my 35mm Minolta 400si SLR in which I had invested approximately \$1,000, including the 28-200mm telephoto lens (very handy for "sneaking" fotos of natives, without asking permission) while traveling. But I finally succumbed after associating with some of my "computer buddies" who constantly were singing the praises of using a digital camera.

Before the shopping process could begin I had to do some (a lot of) research, because I knew absolutely zero about a digital cameras. Again, through the help of persons I met at the CAUG Digicam SIG group I obtained information to begin the shopping process.

First I went to Roosevelt Baker and got some good information from a clerk there. Of course, I didn't know what he was talking about part of the time. Bill D. suggested I search the web and pointed me in the right direction. I searched www.zdnet.com and www.cnet.com. D.B.Kline told me he bought his camera through www.buydig.com

I put a cap of \$500 that I was willing to spend. I found just what I wanted. I decided on an Olympus D-550, 3.4 megapixel, with optical zoom and LCD viewfinder. This camera came out in June 2002 and the list price was \$399. (It's now down to \$349 in the stores.) I found I could buy it online for \$306. This came with a 16MB Smart Media Card. I decided to upgrade to the "Executive Kit", which included a 64 MB Smart Media Card, camera case, etc. The price then was \$376. I also ordered four nickel-hydride rechargeable batteries and charger for \$69.99, a Smart Media Card Reader for \$49. Shipping was \$19.95, making a grand total of \$514. I received it in four days, shipped by Fed Ex.

So, now I have it, what do I do with it? Again, thanks to my computer buddies in CAUG (our computer user group) who helped me get started I'm trying to learn to use it. I was diligently reading the directions (few that there were) on how to begin.

The first problem: I couldn't figure out how to insert the batteries. I called Bill D., who was at the time, not feeling well and flat on his back in bed. I told him of the problem and he insisted that I come over and he'd help me. I did, and he did, and I took my first picture of "Sick Bill." I'm getting hooked fast!

Next hurdle was how to install the card reader. Knowing how "techno-logically challenged" I am, Jack Hord came out and installed it for me. So now I had my first successful attempt and am ready for another. I took another group of fotos and am on my way. I loaded them into the computer and couldn't bring them up. Called Bill D. again; he made a "house call" and discovered that I was omitting one crucial step.

But I'm feeling more comfortable with it now. While in California recently, I found some good buys at the Fry's stores there. Bought two more 128 MB Smart Media Cards on sale for \$39.99 each. They retail locally for \$79.99. I also bought two more sets of nimi rechargeable batteries and another battery charger. I now have one 16MB, one 64MB and two 128MB Smart Media Cards, as well as three sets of nimi-rechargeable batteries and two chargers so I am all set for my upcoming trip to S.E. Asia next month. I hope to get beyond the "point and shoot" mode and capture some good shots.

Those of you who know me well are aware of my penchant for travel. Due to personal circumstances, I haven't been able to indulge my travel bug much this year, so far only a trip to the Cayman Islands. Didn't get my annual "Cuba fix" this year.

Advantages of a Digital Camera

First of all, there is instant gratification. You can view immediately what you have shot, select the best and erase those not worthy of keeping. It does not require film or costs for developing prints. For example, depending on the resolution you shoot at, a 64 MB card will yield from seven (highest TIFF) to 664 (lowest JPEG) pictures per card. Roughly multiply that by 2 for a 128 MB card. Since your fotos are already saved

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Security Testing Online — Fraud or Not?

By Greg West, Editor of SCUG REPORT, Sarnia Computer User's Group (SCUG), Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. gjwest@sympatico.ca

Recently, while researching material I came across an article which discussed "Spring Cleanup" and computer maintenance. The first suggestion was to run your computer through an online test to see whether your system is secure or insecure. The current warnings of updating patches, spam attacks, and overall computer safety, prompted me to say, "why not" as I clicked into "NanoProbe Technology Internet Security Testing for Windows Users" that uses a program called: Shields UP!! (<http://grc.com>). Suspecting a scam of some sort I figured I would attempt to trick this program. I would run the test twice, once with my firewall turned off and another test with it operating.

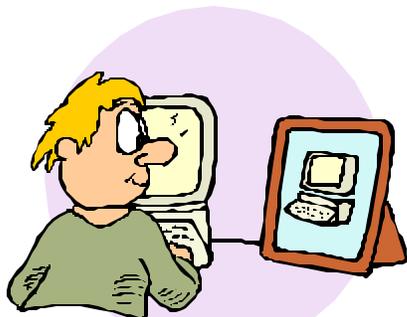
My curiosity peaked immediately after my first click when I received a message that I "was about to view pages over a secure connection", a more

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as electronic images, they can be e-mailed, put on a website or edited immediately through the use of various editing programs such as Paint Shop Pro, Adobe Photo Shop, Corel, etc.

That's where the fun comes in. I have much to learn in that department! A film-based camera is better for some things, such as for more detailed pictures. Therefore, I will take my Minolta on my trip and use it as a backup.

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which this user group belongs.



than familiar message indeed. So I continued on, yet still mostly skeptical that there was some sort of come-on to reach out and take my money. No sooner than I clicked the "ok" button, did I receive this strange message:

"Greetings Gregory! Without your knowledge or explicit permission, the Windows networking technology which connects your computer to the Internet may be offering some or all of your computer's data to the entire world at this very moment!

(For example . . . that's how I know your name!)"

Next I was given a choice of testing my "Shields" or "Ports"...I clicked on "Shields"... became even more skeptical when I received this message:

"Preliminary Internet connection established! Your computer has accepted an anonymous connection from another machine it knows nothing about! (That's not good.) This ShieldsUP! web server has been permitted to connect to your computer's highly insecure NetBIOS File and Printer Sharing port (139). Subsequent tests conducted on this page, and elsewhere on this website, will probe more deeply to determine the extent of this system's vulnerability. But regardless of what more is determined, the presence and availability of some form of Internet Server HAS BEEN CONFIRMED within this machine . . . and it is accepting anonymous connections!"

The message continued to give the full details of its findings, or non-findings:

"The rest of this website explains the implications and dangers of your present configuration and provides complete and thorough instruction for increasing the security of this system. At the moment, any passing high speed Internet scanner will quickly spot this computer as a target for attack. The phrase you must remember is: "My port 139 is wide OPEN!" Unable to connect with NetBIOS to your computer. The attempt to connect to your computer with NetBIOS protocol

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Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

This Author Is Unusual

I read a review by Larry Grannis in the Central Kentucky Computer Society's newsletter about a great computer book that has been given many accolades by well-known sources. Russ Walter wrote this book called "The Secret Guide To Computers." He even gives you his phone number and says to give him a call anytime. He wisely publishes the book himself, no publishing company involved. In fact, you can even read some of it right on the Web at <http://www.secretfun.com>. This book is good for beginner or advanced users. Russ Walter's phone number is 603-666-6644. E-mail is Russ@secretfun.com.

I talked to Russ about a deal and he said that user groups could use the discount on a bulk order as a fundraiser for their group. He has been publishing a help book since 1972 so he certainly goes further back than many of us. In fact, there are very cheap prices if you can use an older book. Standard shipping is free in the US. \$2.00 per book outside the US. Air is \$3.00 per book in the US. Check his Web site for information on quantity discounts and other shipping choices. For example, his latest edition sells for \$17.50 per copy, but buy two and they are just \$14 each.

When I received mine, the first thing I wanted to do is fix my network. Unfortunately, I was unable to find such a chapter so that project is on hold. However, looking through the book certainly shows that just about every-

thing else is covered. While reading through it, I did indeed find a couple of chuckles in the explanations. It looks great, and after seeing it, if your question is not covered, I would be astounded. However, if it isn't, you can always call him for the answer. I have not seen another book of this type with that offer. It is an 8 1/2" x 11" book with 639 pages.

Let The Gaming Begin!

I picked up a copy of Utah Computer Society's "Monthly Report" at the Comdex/APCUG activities and found a glowing review for "A Computerized One Armed Bandit," a game by Masque Publishing. <http://www.masque.com> There is much information on their Web site, including games for PDAs. Right now only "Slots From Bally Gaming" (ordering URL below) is on special. They have new releases for PC/Macintosh. The special would have ended in August, but since this is the September column, they agreed to extend it until the end of October.

Slots From Bally Gaming with over 40 slot machines can be purchased for \$19.95, regularly \$24.95, by going to <http://www.masque.com/SfBGsp.htm> to order. Shipping is \$5.00 in the US or \$10.00 to Canada. Best part is making bets (5 cents, 25 cents, \$1.00 to \$5.00), but not in real money. Think of it this way; look at the money you'll save by not having to go to Las Vegas to play those slots. You're already ahead of the game.

I just received my evaluation copy and I am enjoying it. The installation was faultless and it runs with no problem on my 900 MHz Athlon running Windows 98/SE. Had I known you need the CD to run it, I might have tried installing it differently. While I'm not ahead so far, the sound effects are very real and one slot has all of my favorite cartoon characters; Popeye, Blondie, Dagwood, Wimpy, etc. A couple of times when I won it became very entertaining, and led to more fun. I can't give that away, but I think you'll like it. It takes a few minutes to learn the games. Right now my wife is learning so I'm not sure when I'll be able to tell you more.

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bob-click@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. I have also been busy putting up some interesting new articles on my Web site, so take a look.



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meeting will be held on October 18th, 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000

Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia. You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

<http://www.wacug.org/>

Right Click

Try It — You May Like It

**Les J. Kizer, Greater Tampa Bay PC User Group,
Mid-Hudson Computer User Group. pc.Les@Juno.com**

My friends, there was a time long ago. It was way back in the early age as computer time is told. Even some of us old folks find it hard to recall; however, you know, for the children's sake we need to remember history. It was a time before the ascent of the rodent.

In those prehistoric PC days, when we copied text from one place to another, we blocked the beginning of the copy or move by pressing ctrl-b. Then we would use the up and down arrow keys to go to the end of the block. Again we would press ctrl-b to define the end of the block. Eventually someone, who is long forgotten, highlighted the area from the beginning to the end of the block and told us the text was now selected, not blocked.

Unblocking was done with ctrl-o, which today will help you open a file. Ctrl-b now causes selected text to become bold, which in those dark days before the rodent invaded, I can't remember having bold type at all.

Then while the text was blocked, or selected, we pressed ctrl-x for cut or ctrl-c for copy followed by using the up and down arrow keys to point to the place where we wanted the text inserted. Then press ctrl-v for paste. Ctrl-x, ctrl-c and ctrl-v still exist and are used by only the oldest among us.

When the rodent arrived and we plugged its tail into the PC, many advances came. The menu bar was enhanced buttons, and then the tool bar was added. Most application programs added rodent buttons for cut, copy and paste. With the index-finger pressing on the rodent's hind quarter, selecting text was easier, and highlighted also. Moving the rodent to the cut or copy button followed by a flick of the index finger gave the command to be. Then sliding the somewhat tamed rodent to the location of the insert, a quick flick and then back to the paste button for another flick of the index finger. Progress! Ease of Use! Fabulous! And rodents become famous, heralded throughout the land.

That, though, is not the end of the rodent's march to fame. For all this fame was obtained by pressing the rodent with only the left or index finger. What about pressing the rodent's other hind quarter?

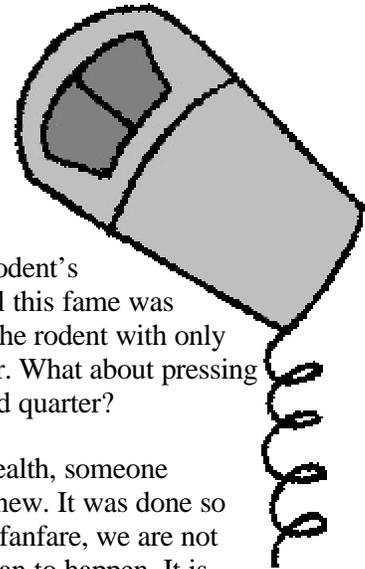
Silently, with great stealth, someone slipped in something new. It was done so quietly and without a fanfare, we are not even sure when it began to happen. It is called simply: right-click, as opposed to click.

Now we can select the text we want to cut or copy. Then without an arduous effort of guiding the rodent to the menu or tool bar, we simply right-click. Walla! A menu pops up on the spot giving us likely choices upon which to flick our index finger. Move the rodent to the insert point, and right-click again. The same or a modified menu pops up for us to flick our choice. Neat, and so effortless.

Today, we can right-click almost anything — desktop, icons, menu bars — or anywhere, and a small menu pops up containing the choices we are most likely to flick. Such is the added triumph of the rodent and right-click.

Is there any end to what we can accomplish simply by flicking a rodent's hind quarter—one side or the other. Long live the rodent!

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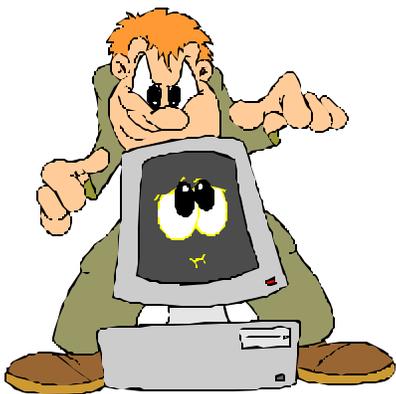
over the Internet (NetBIOS over TCP/IP) FAILED. But, as you can see below, significant personal information is still leaking out of your system and is readily available to curious intruders. Since you do not appear to be sharing files or printers over the TCP/IP protocol, this system is relatively secure. It is exposing its NetBIOS names (see below) over the Internet, but it is refusing to allow connections, so it is unlikely that anyone could gain casual entry into your system due to its connection to the Internet. Several of your private names are being served up to the Internet by the Windows networking system. (see below) While it's unlikely that this information can be exploited, you should know what anyone can learn about you and your system."

But the kicker was that my User Name, my Computer's Name, and my Workgroup was identified on screen...I knew I had to go to the next level and test my Ports. Here are the results of the Port testing:

It declared that my Port 80 (http) was open and that "having port 80 "open" as it is here causes intruders to wonder how much information you might be willing to give away."

The test program also found my Port 139 (NetBIOS) was open and I received this warning:

"As you probably know by now, the NetBIOS File Sharing port is the single largest security hole for networked Windows machines. The payoff from finding open Windows shares is so big that many scanners have been written just to find open ports like this one. Closing it should be a priority for you!"



Well, I must admit I was becoming a tad worried, but still I was skeptical towards the reality of these results. Next I wanted to run these test using my Zone Alarm Firewall operating. Here are the results of testing both my shields and ports:

On the Shield's test I got the same first "GREETINGS" message, only this time it did not contain my name. The results were amazingly secure. The Shield's UP test could not find my Port 139, nor was it able to connect with my NetBIOS to my computer. Here are the results of the Shield's test:

"Your Internet port 139 does not appear to exist! One or more ports on this system are operating in FULL STEALTH MODE! Standard Internet behavior requires port connection attempts to be answered with a success or refusal response. Therefore, only an attempt to connect to a nonexistent computer results in no response of either kind. But YOUR computer has DELIBERATELY CHOSEN NOT TO RESPOND (that's very cool!) which represents advanced computer and port stealthing capabilities. A machine configured in this fashion is well hardened to Internet NetBIOS attack and intrusion. Unable to connect with NetBIOS to your computer. All attempts to get any information from your computer have FAILED. (This is very uncommon for a Windows networking-based PC.) Relative to vulnerabilities from Windows networking, this computer appears to be VERY SECURE since it is NOT exposing ANY of its internal NetBIOS networking protocol over the Internet."

My firewall came through with shining colours and with full security. Next was the Port test with the firewall operating. This test reported my Port 80 was open (http), however this is my connection to the net and my firewall blocks the incoming attacks as they are produced...giving me the choice whether to accept or reject, but nothing comes through without my acceptance. So this warning is ok. The next warning I received was again concerning Port 139, this time I got the same message that it could not get through to this port and furthermore, "There is NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER that a port (or even any computer) exists at this IP address!"

Not a fraud, only success! My confidence in firewalls stands firm, sound and free of worry.

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ware, that attempt to send information out of your computer to lurkers on the net.

If you're networking with wireless components, I'm convinced you really need to pay attention to your system's security, and set up the wireless LAN security tools that so many folks chose to ignore. At a recent WACUG meeting, presenter Geof Goodrum outlined a substantial checklist of security hints. I suspect three of these will block the vast majority of casual attempts at penetrating your wireless LAN: change the default passwords for routers and access points; enable filtering for the Media Access Control (MAC) address; change WEP key regularly, or, hopefully, you'll utilize one of the more secure authentication schemes on your system.

We were speculating at a recent meeting about how soon your latest computer purchase is obsolete after you purchase it. My guess is that if you bought an affordable computer, divide the cost of the CPU by 100; the answer, in months, is how long before the

credit card came out of your wallet your computer was surpassed by better, faster models. If you spent three or four times more than you could afford, and bought a real, state of the art screamer, subtract two months from the previous answer <grin>!

And now, with Windows XP as your operating system, the computer will let you know you're technologically obsolescent! I plugged in a USB Lexar Jumpdrive Trio, a memory stick media reader I bought for my wife to use with the media for her new Sony digital camera. Up popped a window that whined about my using a USB 2.0 device with my computer, that has only USB 1.1 capability. So, throw in your cards, kiddo, digital life is about to pass you by.

I wonder if we'll hear any stories about the rocket scientists who tried to run their refrigerators on their computer UPS system after some of the recent thunderstorm blackouts?

NCTCUG Information

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Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2003

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Sy Fishbein	2003	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2003	301-931-2400

Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with CR only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501-c(3)] organization founded in 1977 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are \$25.00 (U.S.Funds) per year, with a \$5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 10 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>

If you are moving

Please send your change of address to the club PO box as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

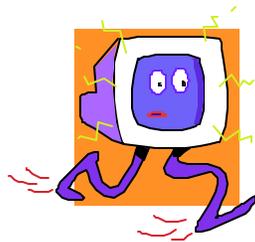
Thank You!

Election Notice

The NCTCUG Annual Meeting and election of Officers and Directors will be held at the regular club meeting on Wednesday, October 1, 2003, 7 p.m. at Carlin Hall.

Anyone interested in running for office, please contact one of the officers listed on page 15.

Thank you!



October 2003



1st Wed. (10/1) 7 p.m.
Virginia General Meeting

Club Elections!

4th Wed (10/22) 7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (10/20) 7 p.m.
Board of Directors

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St.,
Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of
Arlington Blvd/Route 50.



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