

Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

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MP3 Downloads

Cass Lewart (rlewart@monmouth.com), ACGNJ



With the demise of the cassette recorder and emergence of reasonably priced (\$50 - \$100) MP3 players, where can one get material to listen to? Personally I am not interested in storing and listening to hundreds of songs on my MP3 player, something the music industry thinks is the thing to do. I am much more interested in listening to documentaries, science programs, plays, audio books, classical music and educational programs. I also, if possible, do not want to pay for the material I listen to and do not want to break any copyright laws.

I found a variety of sources which satisfy my wishes, each one different with respect to the type of material and to technology required for downloading. Some material can be downloaded as MP3 files ready to be transferred to your MP3 player. Some material can only be listened to on line in real time, and the streaming audio can be captured and converted to MP3 files with a program such as Total Recorder from <http://www.highcriteria.com>. Some downloads are treated as a book loaned from the library which has to be "returned" after a few weeks. You don't actually return it, it just expires and fails to play when the "loan" period is over. Some of the URLs listed below require that you register giving your email. Here is a short list of a few "gems" I discovered over the last few months. I am sure that you will find many more. If you find any worthwhile URLs, then please share them with readers of this newsletter.

A great source of documentaries, plays and news stories is the BBC World Service. Go to Documentary Archives or to Radio Programs A - Z: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/>, which has links to the BBC - Radio - Download and to the Podcast Trial. You can also get there directly by entering <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/downloadtrial/>, which leads you to BBC 1 through BBC 7, each with a selection of downloadable programs. For example, BBC 3 has a selection of music lectures on major symphonic works under Discovering Music.

Every week you can listen to and capture a new 2 hour radio play performed by the L.A. Theatre Works company. The URL is that of a California FM station 89.3 KPCC that carries the program: <http://www.scpr.org/programs/latw/>.

If you are a member of the Middletown Public Library you can download from a selection of about 1,000 audio books. Make sure that your MP3 player can accept the secure WMA audio format - iPod which uses

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...sometimes the best things in life are free!



<http://www.acgnj.org>

Founded 1975

ACGNJ News will not be published during July and August — We'll be back in September.

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Vice President	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
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Secretary	Mike Redlich	(908) 246-0410
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Through 2007	Malthi Masurekar	(732) 560-1534
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C Languages	Bruce Arnold	(908) 735-7898
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Newsletter	— open —	
Trenton ComputerFest	Scott Vincent	(973) 539-8169
Vendor Liaison	Bill Farrell	(732) 572-3481
Webmaster	John Raff	(973) 560-9070

ACGNJ News

Editor

Barbara DeGroot
145 Gun Club Road
Palmerton PA 18071
Tel: (570) 606-3596
bdegroot@ptd.net

Publisher

Associate Editor

Bill Farrell
(732) 572-3481
wfarr18124@aol.com

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Tips for reviewers: Why does anyone need it? Why did you like it or hate it? Ease (or difficulty) of installation, learning and use. Would you pay for it?

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Address Changes should be directed to Martin Rosenblum (m.rosenblum@ieee.org) and/or to his attention at ACGNJ at the address below.

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E-Mail Addresses

Here are the e-mail addresses of ACGNJ Officers, Directors and SIG Leaders (and the Newsletter Editor). This list is also at (<http://www.acgnj.org/officers.html>).

Bruce Arnold	barnold@blast.net
Mike Barlow	barlowm@bright-ideas.com
Barbara DeGroot	bdegroot@ptd.net
James Ditaranto	ExcelVBA@hotmail.com
Mark Douches	pcproblems@pobox.com
Rick Elbanna	rick@nobella.com
Bill Farrell	wfarr18124@aol.com
Manuel Goyenechea	goya@servertec.com
Sheldon Koepf	sheldonk@intac.com
Sol Libes	sol@libes.com
Malthi Masurekar	masureka@umdnj.edu
Gregg McCarthy	greggmc@optonline.net
Andreas Meyer	lunics@acgnj.org
Arnold Milstein	mrflark@yahoo.com
Jim O'Keefe	okeefejim@yahoo.com
John Raff	jraff2@optonline.net
Lela Rames	lrames@att.net
Mike Redlich	mike@redlich.net
Matt Skoda	som359@aol.com
Keith Sproul	ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu
Lenny Thomas	lennythomas@technologist.com
Scott Vincent	scottvin@optonline.net
Frank Warren	kb4cyc@webwarren.com
Evan Williams	nhpressgo@blast.net

Requiem for a Floppy (Part Two)

Robert Hawes (r_d_hawes@hotmail.com), ACGNJ

Before resuming my eulogy for the floppy disk, I need to make a few general remarks. So here goes: I got my first PC because I'd wanted to have one for a long time (years), and I finally figured out a way that I could afford to buy one. I shopped around, and I chose the one with the best price I could find, but (as I mentioned last month) it still cost me more than my first three cars combined. At the time, none of my professional activities involved computers or electronics, so I actually had no firm plans about what I would do with one once I had it (maybe I had some vague ideas about becoming a programmer), but I just really, **really** wanted to have my own personal computer. The dot matrix printer I bought to go with it used tractor-fed continuous fanfold paper. (Remember that?) One of the first things I made (using a banner creation program called "BANTASTIC!" that came bundled with the computer) was a ten foot long sign that said; "Happy Birthday Dad". The first non-play, sort-of professional job I used it for was maintaining membership lists for two clubs I belonged to (a car club and a train club). I also published a snail-mail newsletter for the train club. That newsletter was a lot of work, and a lot of fun. I still miss the feeling of accomplishment I'd get when I could finally hold a stack of finished copies in my own two hands. Unfortunately, the train club fizzled out after a few years, taking my newsletter with it.

Last month, I finally got to experience that feeling again. The ACGNJ newsletter is published monthly (except for July and August), but only in digital PDF file format. With one exception. Each year, the April edition is also professionally printed on real 11x17, folded-and-stapled-in-the-middle paper, as a handout for the Trenton Computer Festival. I submitted my first article for the May 2005 issue, so I just missed it last year, but I made it this year. I'm sorry, Adobe Acrobat fans, but there's nothing like holding a piece of hard copy in your hands and seeing your own work on one of the pages.

Speaking of my own work, why don't I settle down and actually get back to it? My closing remarks last month implied that we'd come to 1995, but there's really quite a bit more early

nineties stuff to get through first. Take operating systems. I've only owned IBM PC clones, so I missed CP/M completely. I can't say anything about the MAC, because I've never used one. I've hardly ever even seen one. I had two versions of DR-DOS. You'd think I would have wanted to see how the people who actually created DOS thought it should be done, but I never set up a complete hard drive installation of either one. I'll pass over OS/2 in silence. It was a good idea whose time never came. I **did** experiment with boot floppies of various flavors. However, up to the mid nineties, all my hard disk experience, both personal and professional, involved different incarnations of MS-DOS.

In the good old DOS/Win3.x days, "Sneaker Net" was still in its glory. The Internet was actually a quarter century old, but the World Wide Web was just a baby. Most people caught their viruses the old fashioned way, by personal contact (floppy swapping) or by downloading infected files over phone lines from local bulletin boards. (Remember **them**)? I had sets of boot floppies for several different anti-virus programs. I updated them regularly and I carried them **everywhere**. On most customer calls, I routinely re-booted every one of their computers from one of those sets and scanned them for viruses. I often found something, even if it was just a few weeks since my last visit. Much of the time, it was NYB, a boot sector virus. NYB really got around, especially for a virus that could **only** be spread by booting from an infected disk, and I grew to know it well. If someone said that the floppy drive on a computer was giving them certain kinds of problems, I could be pretty sure I'd find NYB on the master boot record of their hard disk. Even in 2002 (well after routine plagues on the Internet should have caused everyone to use some kind of virus protection), when a customer called and told me he was having trouble formatting floppies, I **knew**. That NYB virus had exceptional staying power. The jerk who wrote it can be really proud.

I also had several non-booting floppies that I carried everywhere. One was for Profinder, my favorite DOS file

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MP3 Downloads, *Continued from page 1*

proprietary software will not work with these audio books. URL: <http://www.mtpl.org/>

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Another source of audio books is the Audio Books for Free site. The title is somewhat misleading as only the 8 Kbits/sec MP3 format is free. For higher quality audio, e.g., 24 or 48

Kbits/sec you have to pay a few dollars per book. URL: <http://www.audiobooksforfree.com/download/>

For WBAI listeners I would recommend the archive of Professor Michio Kaku, Exploration programs. URL: http://www.kpfa.org/1pro_bio/1b_explo.htm

When downloading MP3 files notice the relation between the sound quality and bit rate. At 8 Kbits/sec the audio book quality is poor and music quality is unacceptable, at 24 Kbits/sec the quality is good, at 56 Kbits/sec and above it is superb. The following formula relates the approximate file size in Mbytes, the play time in minutes and the bit rate in Kbits/sec.

$$\text{File size} = \text{play time} * \text{bit rate} / 140$$

For example, the size of a 30 minute good quality MP3 file with bit rate of 24 Kbits/sec will be 5.1 MBytes.

manipulation utility. Profinder didn't work right when run from the floppy, so if I wanted to use it on a customer's computer, I had to copy the seven files that made up Profinder to their hard drive first. Then, I had to delete those files when I was done. I automated this process by writing two batch files. The first (XPF.BAT, for Xfer Pro Finder) ran from the floppy. It checked for the presence of a DOS directory on the hard disk, then checked for the presence of files already bearing the same names as any of Profinder's files. If the DOS directory didn't exist, or if one or more of those filenames was already in use, the batch file simply aborted itself without doing anything. Otherwise, it would copy those seven files, plus the second batch file (RPF.BAT, for Remove Pro Finder) from the PF directory on the floppy to the DOS directory on the C: drive. I designed it this way because Profinder had to be in the system's PATH to operate correctly, and on a standard DOS computer, whatever other directories there might be, C:\DOS was **always** in the PATH. I designed RPF.BAT so that if it was run from the C: drive, it would erase the seven Profinder files, and then itself. (That would cause a 'batch file missing' error, but since it was finished at that point, I didn't care). If RPF.BAT was accidentally run from the floppy, it would only look for files on the A: drive, so it couldn't have any effect the C: drive at all. Therefore, it would just display eight "file not found" errors, because it wouldn't be able to find target files for any of the eight "delete" commands that it ran, since the files on the floppy were in the PF directory, **not** the DOS directory. I was confident that I'd eliminated all destructive possibilities from those two batch file designs, and it seems that I was right. Using that floppy disk, I successfully installed and then removed Profinder many times, on many different customer computers, without ever causing any problems.

I had several DC2120 tape drives, one of which was portable. Having found out the hard way that I couldn't depend on some customers to back up their own hard disks, I often used the portable drive to make my own contingency backups. Since the tape software only worked when run from the C: drive, I made it a floppy similar to the Profinder disk. It had batch files named XTD.BAT and RTD.BAT.

I had a floppy that ran a program to test a computer's internal components, including memory, control circuitry, and integrated peripherals such as serial and parallel ports. PC to cash register communications were done via serial ports. PC based restaurant management systems used multitudes of forty column serial printers, to print out orders in their kitchens and to issue receipts at their waiter workstations. Over the years, I used that disk to check out a **lot** of serial ports.

The PC based restaurant management systems that I serviced used Lantastic as their network software. Only **one** of the computers at each location had a hard drive (the Server/Back Office). The others booted from floppies and logged on to the network, then loaded the rest of their workstation software over the network (and since they had touch screen monitors, they didn't get their own keyboards either). When servicing those customers, I carried a special purpose Lantastic boot disk, for network troubleshooting. That disk could also be copied, then easily edited to create a replacement boot disk for

any workstation, if one was needed. I brought along an extra keyboard as well.

I mentioned batch files earlier. I wrote a bunch of them over the years, one big one that I consider to be my masterpiece. It grew so complicated I had to split it up into three batch files; a main "program" and two called modules. It also had over a dozen auxiliary data files that were used as part of its operation. The final version was **huge**. The fastest hard disk available at the time couldn't process all those lines of batch code quickly enough to meet the design requirements. (Every two seconds, it had to initiate one of eight possible actions). However, even a tremendous batch file is just a long string of simple text lines. It could still fit on a floppy. So an old computer with no hard drive was given some extra memory and booted from a floppy, which used that extra memory to create a RAMDISK, then copied all of the batch file's components into it. Once on that RAMDISK, the batch file could finally run fast enough.

So, technically, the batch file didn't really run from the floppy, and this article is about floppies. Maybe someday, if I do a nostalgia piece about batch files, I'll go into more detail about my masterpiece. Maybe I'll even tell you what it did.

My first PC came with an unexpected bonus - a "Getting Started" manual by an author who not only knew computers, but also knew how to write good tutorials. Within a week, I was definitely "up and running", producing useful output from all nine bundled programs, including WordStar (at that point, still a top rated, leading edge word processor). I learned a lot about PCs and DOS on my own after that, but I also took formal instruction occasionally. In 1994, I took a course that included programming for database applications. One of the exercises involved retrieving data from database files containing only two-digit date fields, and sorting the results from 00 to 99. **No one**, not the instructors or any of the students (including me) noticed that we were very near the end of that range, or wondered what might happen when we got there. During a break, one of the instructors showed us an interesting program he'd found. It produced a single file containing a bit-for-bit copy of a floppy disk, including all the files and their exact physical locations on the disk. That was my first exposure to the concept of backing up a disk as an image file. (Of course, I'd been routinely transporting data stored in ARC, ARJ or ZIP archives for years, including the complete contents of floppy disks and even entire hard drives, but that was just a bunch of files compressed into a single file. The structure of the source disk wasn't preserved. Later, I found I actually **did** have an early floppy disk imaging program, for almost as long as I had my computer. It was on the "Bonus" floppy I received when I joined my first computer club, only I didn't notice it then. Coincidentally, I took that course at just about the same time that the late, great PowerQuest Corporation began work on their hard disk partition imaging and manipulation software, ultimately producing three revolutionary products I'd often use in the future: DriveCopy, DriveImage, and Partition Magic. Other pivotal events were also happening in 1994. Three years after version 0.01 hit the net, Linux kernel 1.0 was released. And, of course, the

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Machiavellian Minions of Microsoft were deep into their sinister plot for world domination.

Now we get to 1995. Here's a recap of reference points from last month's article:

- The three MS-DOS 3.30A system files (IO.SYS, MSDOS.SYS and COMMAND.COM) took up just 76 KB, leaving **93.5 %** of a 5 ¼ inch, 1.2 MB HD (High Density) boot floppy (or **94.6 %** of a 3 ½ inch, 1.44 MB HD boot floppy) free for any programs or data the user wanted to add.
- The three MS-DOS 5 system files took up 116 KB, leaving **91.8 %** of a 1.44 MB HD boot floppy free.
- The three MS-DOS 6.22 system files added up to 130 KB, leaving **90.8 %** of a 1.44 MB HD boot floppy free.
- At some point, Microsoft modified the SYS command so that it also installed a fourth file - a compression driver for DriveSpace or DoubleSpace, depending on the version. I **always** deleted those files, and **never** considered them to be part of the operating system. **None** of the total system file sizes given here or below include any compression files.
- Soon after I got my first tape drive, I created my first "total replacement" DOS boot floppy, designed to work with the tape drive to completely replace a crashed hard disk. I was ready for any disaster, and I was sort of disappointed that I never got to use it except for practice.

You might deduce, from that last point, that I once experienced a hard disk crash, and you'd be right. It was **before** I got the tape drive, and it was sudden and catastrophic. I had to get a new hard drive. Fortunately, I'd used the DOS BACKUP program to make backups to floppies (using about 40), so I did a minimal DOS installation to my new drive, then used DOS RESTORE to put everything else back. I lost some data (my latest backup set was several days old), but not much. It made me a firm believer in frequent backups. When I first checked out Windows 95, I wasn't at all impressed by the pretty pictures (they kind of turned me off), but what made me most leery was that Windows 95 backup programs actually had to run under full Windows 95 for both backup **and** restore. There didn't seem to be any provision for restoring an existing installation to an empty hard drive. That went against my one-time personal experience, and a lot more professional experience since. Most backups are made and never used, and that's the way it should be. An occasional accidentally erased file is one thing, but usually, when you really need a backup, it's to replace **everything**.

I did manage to work out two ways to transfer a complete system from a tape to an empty drive, but both were kludges. Nothing I'd want to stake my professional reputation on. Ultimately, I solved the problem by ignoring Windows 95 until after SR2 came out (the first version supporting FAT32).

Before Windows 95, Microsoft didn't have much to say about bootable floppy disk design. In addition to all the other floppies mentioned earlier, I always made what I called a "general purpose" boot disk for whatever version of DOS I had installed on my main computer. The first one, for DOS 3.30A, was just a copy of the distribution disk because all the files for 3.30A came on one High Density floppy, with room to spare.

For DOS 5 and 6.22, I had to pick and choose what I could include. With Windows 95, Microsoft included the option to have them make you a "Startup Disk". With SR2, I finally got around to seeing how their selection of boot floppy files compared to mine.

They included only eighteen files, leaving 437 KB of disk space free. Of those files, fourteen were files I would have chosen. Of the remaining four, I deleted DRVSPACE.BIN (a compression driver) immediately. The second file, EBD.SYS, was a zero length file, meaning it was just an entry in the File Allocation Table, and didn't actually use any space on the disk. Since it didn't take up any room, I left it in, just in case Microsoft had arranged for some sinister consequences if it was deleted. The third and fourth files were new. You could guess their functions from their names, but I decided to look them up in Help. By version 6.22, MS-DOS had evolved a **really** excellent command line Help system. For Windows 95, Microsoft didn't bother to include **any** of it. The only advice Windows Help gave was to run the command with /? after it. They don't seem to have done much testing, because this didn't work for **either** of those commands if you accessed the floppy from a Windows command line. REGEDIT.EXE went right into the Windows Registry Editor, and UNINSTALL.EXE immediately tried to un-install Windows 95. Only if you booted from the floppy in a computer with **no** hard drive installed did you actually get the help messages. Then you learned that the floppy version of REGEDIT.EXE couldn't actually edit the registry. It could only replace it with a different (hopefully good) copy, **if** you had one. I kept REGEDIT.EXE, just in case. I got rid of UNINSTALL.EXE.

Then, I added six programs that I considered critical for a boot floppy, but Microsoft **hadn't** included: DELTREE, FC, LABEL, MORE, MOVE and XCOPY. Finally, since there was still more room left, I added nine more files that I often used on hard disks, but hardly ever on floppies: CHOICE, DISKCOPY, DOSKEY, EMM386, FIND, MEM, MODE, SORT and SUBST. That filled the disk, but there were still a few more hardly-ever-used files that had fit on my last MS-DOS 6.22 "general purpose" disk, but couldn't fit here. Why? Part of the reason was creeping bloat. Newer, "updated" versions of files just kept getting bigger. However, most of the reason was the size of the system files. Where the MS-DOS 6.22 system files took up 130 KB on the disk, the Windows 95 system files gobbled up 301 KB. That's well over two times bigger, and most of that increase can be blamed on the enormous ego of Microsoft. Previously, IO.SYS and MSDOS.SYS had been about the same size, and each did about half the work. For 95, Microsoft reduced MSDOS.SYS to a pitiful afterthought and moved all the work to IO.SYS. They didn't stop there, though. They also gave it a pretty picture, of Microsoft's "curvy window" logo flying across a sun-lit sky above the words Windows 95. They liked that picture so much that they also included a separate version of it in the root directory of the hard drive, under the name LOGO.SYS. That file measures 127 KB. Subtract that from the 301 KB and you get 174 KB, only 44 KB larger than the 6.22 system files, and a much more reasonable evolutionary

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increase. That's what should have been but never was. The reality is that the three system files on a 1.44 MB HD Windows 95 boot floppy took up 21.2 % of the disk, leaving only **78.8 %** free, compared to 90.8 % for MS-DOS 6.22. That works out to 3 % of the disk lost to inevitable upgrade bloat, and **9%** of the disk gratuitously wasted on eye candy.

If you booted from a Windows 95 floppy and ran the VER command, COMMAND.COM would return the message; "Windows 95. [Version 4.10.950]" for the original release or for SR1. From SR2 you'd get; "Windows 95. [Version 4.10.1111]". If you scan COMMAND.COM with a binary editor and look for text messages, you **will** see that VER message among the stream of unprintable characters. Near the end of the file, you'll also find; "MS-DOS Version 7 (C)Copyright 1981-1995 Microsoft Corp". As far as I know, this phrase hidden inside each release's COMMAND.COM is the only place where Microsoft admitted the existence of MS-DOS 7.

Microsoft and I don't agree on many things, but neither of us saw any need to include CD drivers in our designs for Windows 95 boot floppies. That changed for me in 1997. At about the same time, I got my first CD burner and PowerQuest's DriveImage program. They proved to be a powerful combination, finally giving me a straightforward way to restore a Windows 95 system to an empty hard drive. I erased those nine hardly-ever-used files from my boot disk, and replaced them with CD drivers. Now, I could burn a backup image to a CD, boot the target computer from my re-designed "general purpose" boot disk (thus loading the CD drivers), switch to the floppy containing the DriveImage program, and use it to restore the image on the CD to an empty replacement hard drive. I could also do this for Windows NT 3.51 and 4.0 drives. Even NetWare drives, though they were trickier. A network-only installation of Windows 95 (one that didn't store any data files locally) could fit on a 100 MB hard drive, and a full installation fit easily on a 500 MB drive. Often, I was able to put several drive images on a single 700 MB CD.

The DriveImage floppy was, in fact, bootable by a non-Microsoft operating system whose system files actually took up even **less** room than the MS-DOS 6.22 files. For reasons I'll explain later, I didn't like using it. At first, I just erased those files so they couldn't be accidentally accessed, and booted first from a Windows 95 floppy as above. Later, I worked out how to fit DriveImage and the CD drivers on the same Windows 95 boot disk, despite the larger system files. I used that boot disk happily for the next three years. The boot disks for PowerQuest's other two programs (DriveCopy and Partition Magic) also used a non-Microsoft operating system. They were easier to move to Windows 95 boot disks because neither had any need for the CD drivers.

Microsoft doesn't simplify something by actually making it simpler. They "simplify" by making things more complicated underneath. Microsoft added **eight** CD drivers (seven SCSI, one IDE) to their Windows 98 "Startup Disk", and then they did more. They removed a dozen files from the floppy's root directory, and put them into an archive named EBD.CAB. Then, they had the floppy create a RAMDISK when it booted,

copy the files from EBD.CAB into the RAMDISK, and run them from there. Quite similar to the way I ran my "masterpiece" batch file. (Had they been spying on me?) In this case, though, it was completely unnecessary. When I eliminated the RAMDISK, removed the CAB file, and copied its contents back to the floppy individually, I wound up with **more** free space on the floppy, enough to add all six of my critical programs from above and still keep the eight new CD drivers.

For original Windows 98, the VER command displayed; "Windows 98 [Version 4.10.1998]". For Windows 98 Second Edition, it displayed; "Windows 98 [Version 4.10.2222]". But if you looked inside COMMAND.COM, you still found; "MS-DOS Version 7". The Windows 98 SE system files took up 21.7 % of a 1.44 MB boot disk, leaving **78.3 %** free, down just half a percent from Windows 95, but still wasting **9%** of the disk for the sake of a picture that (when booting from a floppy) flashed on the screen and disappeared again so quickly that some people didn't even notice it.

Windows 98 SE came out in 1999. Like just about everybody else, I had boot floppies for Y2K testing. However, for this article, I'll ignore Y2K. Maybe it'll get a column or two all by itself someday. Aside from those disks, I was down to three "special purpose" utility boot floppies: DriveImage, Partition Magic and SpinRite. I'd recently upgraded SpinRite, but the other two were getting a bit long in the tooth. (I didn't use DriveCopy at all anymore. It didn't do anything DriveImage couldn't do). I'd been told interesting things about a drive imaging program called Ghost, by a company called Binary Research, and I'd seen firsthand a program called Partition Commander, by V Communications (makers of System Commander), but I was happy enough with DriveImage and Partition Magic. So I had no great urge to switch, but I didn't particularly feel like upgrading them, either.

Earlier, I mentioned non-Microsoft operating systems on the floppies that came with those programs. I had three of them. The system files from two were slightly smaller than those from MS-DOS 6.22. The third was only 6 KB bigger. The Caldera OpenDOS 7.0 system files took up 110.7 KB, leaving **92.2 %** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free. DR-DOS 7.05 system files took up 112.4 KB, leaving **91.4 %** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free. PC-DOS 7.1 system files took up 136.7 KB, leaving **90.4 %** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free. (In comparison, MS-DOS 6.22 left 90.8 % free). Why didn't I use them? In a word, FDISK. Or rather, **no** FDISK. All three came with **none** of the auxiliary files, just the three system files. Now, FDISK is a primitive utility compared to DriveImage, Ghost, or Partition Magic, but it does **one** thing better than any of them. In a system with more than one hard disk (as most of mine do), it presents option 5. "Change current fixed disk drive". Select it, and in the upper left hand corner of the screen is an overview of the whole system that's better than anything those supposedly more sophisticated programs give. You get Disk Numbers, Drive Letters, MB Used, MB Free, and Percent Usage, all in one place. I always go there first, then to the less wide but more detailed views that the main programs give.

In 2000, I took a job with a company that used Ghost **a lot**. That settled it. I upgraded Partition Magic but switched to

Continued

Ghost, now made by Symantec and called Norton Ghost. That job also exposed me to Windows ME. I didn't think much of ME itself, but I liked the system files on the "Emergency Boot Disk" that came with it. For the first time, they got smaller, taking up 204.9 KB, leaving **85.6 %** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free. (In comparison, the Windows 98 SE system files took 308 KB, leaving 78.3 % free). They finally got rid of the picture. Of the 9 % previously lost, we now got 7.3% back, losing just 1.7 % to evolutionary bloat. For Windows ME, the VER command displayed; "Windows Millennium [Version 4.90.3000]", and if you peeked inside COMMAND.COM, you found "MS-DOS Version 8 (C)Copyright 1981-1999 Microsoft Corp". ME's C:\WINDOWS\COMMAND directory had all of my favorite auxiliary files, including FDISK. I quickly switched my three "special purpose" boot disks over to MS-DOS 8.

The ME "Emergency Boot Disk" itself was even more complicated than either 98 disk, because they included boot disk access to their new System Restore feature, as well as the RAMDISK. As an exercise more than anything else (because I hadn't used any of my other "general purpose" boot disks in a **long** time), I took the RAMDISK out, but left System Restore in. As with 98, I actually wound up with **more** space than before, and could add my six critical files.

When Windows XP came out, it contained a lame "MS-DOS startup disk". XP's Help system said; "The MS-DOS startup disk only allows the system to boot into an MS-DOS prompt. The disk contains no additional tools". In addition to the three system files, a zero-length AUTOEXEC.BAT and a zero-length CONFIG.SYS, it contained four display drivers, five keyboard drivers, and MODE.COM, leaving 868 KB of free space. It must have been a last-minute, quick-and-dirty addition to XP, because if you look at it with a utility that can

view the File Allocation Table, you'll see deleted entries that match the files on the ME disk. I could have gotten rid of those entries in about two minutes, but whoever threw this disk together from an erased ME floppy didn't even bother. It did have one interesting feature, however. COMMAND.COM was the exact same file as on the ME disk, but IO.SYS was different. The one on the ME disk displayed; "Starting Windows Millennium Emergency Boot..." as it booted. This one just said: "Starting...". I liked that better, so I stuck it on my disks instead.

Now, six years after ME came out, I've hit a snag. Hard disks have grown bigger than MS-DOS 8's FDISK can handle, so my overview display is all messed up. I need to find a new DOS, and I think I've got one: FreeDOS. I downloaded their Beta 9 version a while ago to experiment with, and it all looks good. So I'll probably be switching my three disks to it soon. In fact, one already is. I recently upgraded to the latest floppy version of SpinRite. I was surprised and pleased to find that it came from the factory with FreeDOS already installed. FreeDOS has only **two** system files, KERNEL.SYS and COMMAND.COM. Together, the Beta 9 versions take up just 137.8 KB, leaving **90.3%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free (half a percent less than MS-DOS 6.22).

I'll close (at last) with a question and an answer. If floppy drives are becoming a thing of the past, why am I working on new versions of my boot disks? Because even if a computer doesn't have a floppy drive, you can still boot it from a floppy, if that floppy is installed as the boot image on a bootable CD. It's not as versatile as a boot floppy, because you can't edit it. You have to edit the image and then burn a whole new CD, but it'd doable. So my floppies can march boldly forward into the future, booting my customers' computers via CD proxy. ☐

Back Issues Needed

The editor is attempting to build a CD containing all issues of ACGNJ News in pdf format, but our collection is incomplete. We're hoping some faithful reader has been hoarding them and will be willing to lend them to us just long enough to scan them. We promise to return them quickly. Thanks Joseph Gaffney, who loaned his collection for scanning. Below is a list of what we still need.

1985: June, July, August, September

1984: August

1976: January, February, March, April (pamphlet-size booklets)

1975: All issues (pamphlet-size booklets)

If you can supply any of these missing issues (or scanned images or good copies), please contact the Editor by email (bdegroot@ptd.net). Those who supply missing issues will receive a free copy of the resulting CD as our thanks for your help. ☐

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From The DealsGuy

Bob (The Cheap skate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

I worked the National Sign Association show and it was interesting. Most of the outdoor electronic signs were using very bright LEDs that are easily seen, even in bright sunlight. The LED's brightness can be adjusted either automatically or manually. The one I saw up close was composed of modules 19 inches square that can be easily changed to repair it. If a hurricane is approaching it is easy to dismantle the modules and safely store them (if your storage survives). It was a large show. There were many types of giant printers, and other machines that would stamp out all kinds of parts for signs.

Memphis PC Users Group Inc. has a great newsletter, thanks to the Editor Jin Yang. An interesting article in the January 2006 issue caught my eye called "A Letter from China", by Judith Bogan, working in Shanghai, China. There are other interesting articles, but look for that issue on their newsletter archive page. <http://www.mpcug.org>

I have developed other health problems (numbing toes among other things), but I have a lot packed in the column for you this month so you don't need my health problems. I edited much of the wording out so I suggest you check for more product information on the Web sites. Remember I have not tried them and know nothing about these products, but thought they were interesting. Be sure to check their privacy statements, if they have one. Also, I need more opinions on my using these announcements in the column.

*Games Anyone?

TameStorm Games unveiled the newest version of "Filler". The inner structure of the game reveals features of puzzles and strategies combined, so they have a few games to put on the same list.

What you are to do here is to occupy half, or the majority of, the flowers on the field. The field is a meticulously crafted meadow picture, in which flowers are fresh and live and their petals still remember the touch of an artist's brush. You always start a game from the left side. The computer always starts from the right. You always make the first move. The game field has flowers with coins, which you need to seize. The more coins you have, the more bonuses you can buy. If you have gathered enough money, you can repaint flowers in the color of your zone, randomize unoccupied space, and make your opponent miss one turn and more. Two modes of the game are available: classic puzzle and advanced puzzle. In advanced puzzle mode you will see black flowers that you can't seize.

Filler Features at a Glance (Full Version):

- Unlimited game play time;
- 100 layouts of the field and 100 levels in advanced game;
- 100 levels in classic game;
- 11 special bonuses;
- Interesting game for your children;
- Graphics designed by masters of Russian Khokhloma painting;
- Splendid relaxing game.

Pricing and Availability: Filler 1.2 runs under Windows98/ME/2000/XP and costs \$14.95 (USD). TameStorm Games offers user group members 15% discount. Use the coupon code TAME-HQBL-FILL on the order page. Additional information on Filler, as well as its evaluation version with 30 minutes of the game play and several locked levels is available as a free download at: www.tamestorm.com/games/filler_puzzle_game/filler_demo_setup.exe.

Product page : http://www.tamestorm.com/games/filler_puzzle_game

Web: <http://www.tamestorm.com>

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*Get Rid of Those Duplicate Files

We are the producer of NoClone, a file utility which uncovers true duplicate files and recovers valuable disk space. Reasonable Software House is offering a 20% discount to user group members on NoClone, a file utility which uncovers true duplicate files and recovers valuable disk space. For the discount, follow link: <http://noclone.net/mybuy.asp?promo=HF89AW>. Don't buy a new hard drive, buy NoClone. Uncover duplicate files; recover valuable disk space. Information at <http://noclone.net>.

Continued

Why Do You Get So Much Spam?

Vinny La Bash (labash@spcug.org), Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., www.spcug.org

The earliest recorded instance of what may be described as spam occurred on May 3, 1978. A sales representative for Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) named Gary Thuerk sent a message to everyone on the Arpanet data base (now known as the Internet) on the West coast of the United States. Thurek wanted to notify the recipients of an open house that his company was hosting a demonstration of new models of the DEC-20 computer.

In 1978 the Arpanet had a certified "acceptable use policy" which said it couldn't be used for anything except research and education. Thuerk's action was a very clear violation, and when DEC got a very strong response from the Arpanet community objecting to the misuse, the company promptly promised to stop. Spam would not appear again for many years.

Today, estimates of the amount of email that is defined as spam range from 66% to 94%. Whatever the actual figure is, the good news, if you want to call it that, is that spam appears to be leveling off.

Congress has passed anti-spam legislation. Spam receivers are angry, Internet Service Providers try to filter out spam messages, and spammers are loathed by the general community of internet users. Why do spammers continue to operate in the face of all this general repugnance?

In an article for Wired Magazine, Brian McWilliams provides a very depressing answer. McWilliams discovered a security flaw on a website operated by a group selling pills guaranteed to enlarge the male sexual organ. The reporter found that over 6,000 orders for the product had been placed in a time span of about a month. Business and medical

Continued

DealsGuy, *continued*

*Reasonable Software House (a Monthly Service)

An online permission-based newsletter management system called Reasonable Spread, also from Reasonable Software House, can help with your newsletter management. By using Reasonable Spread, you can communicate with your members by sending newsletter/latest news/announcements. Or it can be used as an electronic publishing tool by sending users news and articles written by group president or members. For the free trial: <http://spread.reasonablesw.com/> To order at 20% discount: <http://spread.reasonablesw.com/mypages/discounts-20.aspx>. Phone: 852 35204490 Fax: 852 35204492 Mobile: 852 92276779. Address: Suite 332, InnoCentre, 72 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

*More Product Announcements

Almeza Research has released MultiSet 2.0 and Captain Tray 6.0. MultiSet is a solution to the problem of automatic program installation. MultiSet has been created to free you from routine work such as program installations. All you have to do is install the application only once on your PC and MultiSet will record all your actions. MultiSet will install all the applications you need automatically, either on your original computer or on a new one; it's ideal for rebuilding your systems quickly!

MultiSet automatically starts the installation procedure, takes care of all necessary buttons, like "Next", "I agree", and "Finish". This installation robot will specify the path for the installation and automatically configure all attending settings. Registration codes and license keys will also be entered in a self-acting mode. Once you have done it, you can playback the whole process and create your installation CD/DVD disc! Website and Info: <http://www.almeza.com/>. Get 50% discount (MSRP \$44.95, although I am unsure about that MSRP) https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=13741-1&ss_coupon=ALME-XEHN

Captain Tray Pro: Turn system tray into your PC central command center. Captain Tray Pro is a tiny software application

that makes a difference when it comes to organizing favorite programs, customizing the system tray and creating shortcuts for instantaneously minimizing windows, changing captions and doing a number of other tasks. Essentially, any user who invests an hour into investigating this tool is likely to completely abandon the traditional way of endless window browsing and using the Start menu to open documents and launch applications.

Many users need several applications running simultaneously. Some of those applications are used quite frequently, others only when they are needed. So the Windows taskbar can get fully packed and everything seems to be necessary, and you have no desire to close any programs. Some applications can be minimized to the system tray, but what shall we do about 'Notepad', 'Calculator', 'Microsoft Word', 'Microsoft Excel' and our other favorite programs? Captain Tray Pro is there to help you.

Here are two other products with a discount.

Program: Captain Tray Pro Website and Info:
<http://www.captaintray.com/>. 50% discount URL:
https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=13741-2&ss_coupon=ALME-XEHN

Product: Time Assist Pro (A project manager)

Web: <http://www.mytimeassist.com>. 50% Discount link:
https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=13741-4&ss_coupon=ALME-XEHN

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Be sure to check for new announcement pages on my Web site. 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. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>. ☒

Web 2.0 and Portable Computing

John Abbott (John@bgrcc.com), Bentsen Grove Resort Computer Club, Mission Texas, www.bgrcc.com

Portable Computing has always lagged behind the rest of the computing market. This is probably because there are currently less mobile devices than computers. But that is about to change. According to Steve Rupel (leading PR company) billions of mobile devices will reach the market this year and by 2010 there will be 50 million of them sold quarterly.

Mobile device? You won't be calling them Pocket PC or Cell Phone long; maybe PCC for Personal Communication Center. The merger of all forms of digital communications is rapidly taking shape. Cell phones now contain very limited access to the web, receive very limited email, and take limited resolution pictures – oh, and they work as phones too. With smaller and more low powered devices quickly coming on scene these limits will expand exponentially.

My project over the past month has been the installation of an Operating System on a USB Flash-memory Device (UFD). I started with a full blown Linux distribution on a USB 80 gigabyte micro hard drive. After some real torture and lots and lots of reading I managed to get it operational. However, in editing the boot file I managed to misspell something and now I've got to start all over again.

But I did find a couple of small Linux distributions: Damn Small Linux and Puppy Linux. I downloaded the ISO files for each and started working on a flash drive. Today I managed to get the thumb drive fully functional. Along the way I've learned a lot about what I still need to learn about executing from a CD or a UFD. But DSL in a tube really works.

Why do this? Well because I know that Web 2.0 is going to dominate the future of the web. With more and more of the platform being located on the Internet, less and less will be required on your local computer. The computer will take on more and more of the role of thin client (from a client/server relationship where all the applications are on the server). This

in turn will have a direct impact on the cost of computers which will no longer have to come with expensive 3rd party software. So I created a portable thin client.

Web 2.0 (platform on the web) will take away a great deal of the chest thumping over O/S because the web interacts with all operating systems. The feature rich web already offers on-line mail processing that works perfectly with thin client or host computer. I am an advocate of Google's Gmail. I can access it on the web where it neatly threads my messages and stores up to 2.5 Gigabytes of mail in the in-basket or in the search able archive. From within that mail system I can also originate chats with my friends and maintain my calendar. I can make my calendar or part of it accessible to colleagues for event coordination.

I can use Zohowriter.com for my word processor. Zoho is a full strength word processor with all the power you find in Works, Word or Open Office (or any of the dozen or so word processors available. I am able to store documents on-line, download them to my computer, publish them on the site so they can be collaborated by associates whom I have previously arranged access. I can upload files from remote files (my computer or yours) and modify and store or simply store them on-line. And I can use Zoho as a mail client; sending, receiving and originating email. Zoho automatically assigns you an email account when you register (free).

There will be some who say: "well I can have several programs open at once on my desktop." And my response would be, fine, I have multiple web pages open on my computer as I use Zoho to write this. I have a page set up with Wikipedia to check facts, the weather, my Google mail, my personal mail web account, XM radio playing great jazz. And in a few moments I'll open another and watch the news on TV — all from

Continued

Spam, *Continued*

professionals, athletes, and even women bought the pills. Many buyers made multiple purchases at \$50 per bottle, despite an obvious lack of credit card security on the site. The web site provided no way to contact the company except by placing an order.

Being a good reporter, McWilliams was not deterred by the company's efforts to hide behind fake registration data, disconnected phone numbers, and phony email addresses. Eventually he revealed that the company was owned by a 19 year old high school dropout, and a neo-Nazi adherent.

The business appears to be highly profitable, net costs being about \$15 per bottle of pills, but according to the FDA, there is no credible evidence that the product works.

Now you know why you get so much spam. It's because people who should know better respond to it and buy products from these companies.

Selling products of dubious value is not the only kind of spam on the net. This week alone I have won three European lotter-

ies, and there are at least a dozen people in Nigeria who each want to give me \$12 million dollars for helping them launder money. Notification came just yesterday that Bill Gates is going to give me \$500,000 because I forwarded a few emails for a good cause.

Perhaps the best way to reduce the number of people buying from spam is to educate people about the problem. Unfortunately that takes time, but if we don't take the time to tell people why they shouldn't buy from spam, they will continue doing it.

If you are responding to spam, please stop. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

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

Traveling with a Video Camcorder

Joseph Asling, (Jasling@pacbell.net), Monterey Bay Users Group – Personal Computer, www.mbug.org

Summer is coming and it's time to go somewhere interesting and photogenic. Many people carry cameras when they travel and not a few of us take camcorders. Here are a checklist and a few suggestions for coming back with better video.

Pre-Departure

Equipment Checkup - Make sure your camcorder is in good shape. Run a few minutes of tape and see that it looks and sounds OK, otherwise take it in for cleaning. Allow at least two weeks for turnaround.

Camcorder Size - If you haven't bought your camcorder yet, consider the following: if you plan to do candid shots of people, buy a small, unobtrusive camcorder. Not only will it fit better in your carry-on luggage, but it will attract less attention. Also, some museums allow them in where they will reject larger camcorders because the big ones look professional.

LCD Screen - I usually shoot through the viewfinder, but an LCD screen is useful.

Computer Connection - Make sure your camcorder has an IEEE-1394 ("Firewire") or USB2 connector, whichever you need to capture to your computer.

DVD vs Tape - Some newer camcorders record to a DVD instead of tape; since it is more difficult to do computer editing with these, I recommend a camcorder which uses mini-DV tape.

Filters - Always keep a filter on your lens – a scratched filter is cheaper than a scratched lens. A transparent or UV filter is fine for most uses; tinted lenses are of less use because the auto-white balance of the camcorder tries to compensate for it. For sunny days I like a circular polarizer to suppress reflections on glass and water and to make the sky appear bluer. It also doubles as a neutral density filter. Pay the extra for good double-coated glass filters.

Sunshade - If your camcorder has a sunshade with an atypical connector, buy a sunshade which screws onto the front of the filter (I use a round rubber collapsible one).

Camcorder Stand - Tripods are big, heavy, and slow to set up. A monopod gives you much of the stability of a tripod, and if you buy one with a quick-release extension it takes only five seconds to set up. Plus, it doubles as a walking stick on difficult terrain. Spend an extra \$20 for a quick-release for the camcorder.

Lights - I don't recommend you travel with any lights. Unless you're on a professional shoot they aren't worth the trouble.

Tape Supply - Take plenty of tape – I take at least 10 hours' worth! Buy good quality brands such as **Sony** or **Panasonic**

(people I trust have said bad things about **TDK**). I buy Sony at www.taperesources.com but there are other reliable websites which will sell packs of five for as little as \$3 per tape. (As an aside, **never** record with the extended time setting on your camcorder – you may not be able to play it on any other camcorder.)

Head Cleaner - Carrying a head-cleaning tape is probably a good idea, although I've never had to use it in the field.

Batteries - If you run out of power you are going to be distinctly unhappy. Buy **at least** one high-capacity extra battery. And don't forget to pack your recharger. If you are going abroad make sure you have **two** plug adapters (research what type of adapter you need for where you'll be), and that your recharger is multi-voltage.

Headsets - These are nice to have but not essential. If you have a microphone monitor output, take a compact headset (like Walkman earphones) for monitoring music. Make sure the plug is compatible.

Weatherproofing - Bring some paper adhesive tape – if you are going to be in a dirty or sandy environment seal the tape door with it so you don't get sand into the works. If you may be in the rain figure on bringing some kind of plastic cover (maybe large plastic zip lock bags).

When You're There

Rule 1: tape is cheap! - If you *might* want a shot, shoot it! Every shot should be at least ten seconds long if possible and if you are going to zoom, shoot several seconds before and after the zoom. You'll thank yourself when you're editing. When you put a fresh tape in your camera, run about a minute of "throwaway" video. Most dropouts occur at the beginning and the end of a tape, and some capture programs can't handle the first few seconds of a tape.

Watch the Background - Many a shot has been ruined by a telephone pole growing out of someone's head or a distracting item behind the subject. Often moving a few feet to one side will fix the problem. A corollary to this is to find a good angle: one with clear sight lines and no-one in the way. And don't get in the way yourself. Years ago, I was in Chichicastenango and a funeral procession happened by. The mourners stopped in front of the Church – and a German tourist with a big camcorder shouldered them out of the way and started videotaping the coffin and the deceased! I cheered when the locals drove him away with rocks.

Tricks for Big Crowds - If you are in a crowd which you can't see over, hoist the camcorder up on your monopod. If you open the LCD screen and tilt it down you can see what you're shooting (so, there *is* a use for that screen).

Continued on page 16

Web 2 & Portable Computing, *continued*

my thumb drive. I sure hope my Gizmo or Skype phones don't ring during the news!

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the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you. ☺

Online Librarians Never Say Shhh!

Gabriel Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

Libraries have improved since baby boomers attended grade school. Research assistance once only available in person or by telephone is blossoming into diverse online “ask a librarian” services, handling questions ranging from general curiosity and homework-related to business research. Friendly Online Librarians Never Say Shhh!

Growing up, I was lucky to live just a few blocks from a great neighborhood library. I fondly remember the children’s librarian encouraging my love of reading and books. The library was rebuilt while I was in elementary school; I was recently shocked that the “new” library was undergoing renovation and improvement. Then I realized that what seems like yesterday was five decades ago!

The good news for us all — near libraries or not — is that librarians have greatly improved in that 50 years. Research assistance once only available in person or by telephone is blossoming into diverse online “ask a librarian” services. These handle all sorts of questions: general curiosity, homework-related, business research, etc. Just don’t expect medical or legal advice.

E-mail assistance has been available for some time. Librarians sometimes like it because they can answer questions as they have time, and it avoids people waiting on line or holding on the phone. But it can be slow if a question must be clarified — that’s important, since people often don’t ask what they really want answered! And online interaction lacks face-to-face intimacy, voice tone, body language, which all help communication.

In addition to accepting e-mail, libraries use Web forms for submitting queries, take questions via instant messaging, and offer interactive Web chats. Highly interactive instant messaging and Web chats allow quick conversations, often providing answers within a few minutes. Newer technologies such as VoIP (voice over IP, Internet telephony) and MS (cell phone text messaging) may soon increase research availability. Library policies vary regarding answering non-resident questions; some specialized queries (local history, obituaries, newspaper clippings, etc.) must be handled by a library near the area of interest. That brings genealogy questions from far away as people research their ancestors.

Most queries are handled at no cost, though some searches incur charges. A library card usually isn’t needed. Some libraries currently mail printed research results; e-mailing images will provide faster service and reduce costs.

Behind-the-scenes technology helps librarians manage queries, ensuring that all questions are answered and eliminating duplicate responses. Shortcuts fill in frequently used answers.

The same sorts of questions are asked online as are posed by phone or in person, with addition of sensitive areas such as sexual issues. Queries often deal with homework — math, science fair challenges, etc. — and country reports. Librarians enjoy the occasional obscure gem, such as being asked about “modeling the economic infrastructure of railroads in Great Britain”.

The geek expression “24x7” means that something is available all day, every day. Since people expect this full-time

access to e-mail, the Web, shopping, banking, and other on-line services, they’re enthusiastic about being able to ask questions whenever they occur. But it’s hard for libraries to provide this never-anticipated level of service, especially when off-hours demand may be limited. So they support each other locally/nationally/ internationally by sharing round-the-clock assistance chores. Questions are entered locally and routed to on-duty librarians — who sometimes work from home in pajamas, answering off-hours long-distance queries.

Even librarians sometimes need help — so their world-wide Stumpers mailing list lets them share baffling questions.

Librarians and the public are learning together to use electronic tools. New technologies facilitate supporting diverse clientele by — for example — facilitating non-English services.

Here are a few tips regarding online queries: provide your name/e-mail/phone for answering and clarification; use plain text (not formatted) for easy reading; don’t nag, allow time for an answer — but follow up in a week or so. Finally, contact the correct library. A library in Plymouth, Michigan has received queries about Plymouths in Massachusetts and England!

Using online library services is easy once you have an Internet connection. Some libraries favor PCs with Windows and the Internet Explorer Web browser, but Linux and Macintosh systems are increasingly supported. There’s generally no software download or install. Browser pop-up blockers or firewalls sometimes get in the way but they’re easily customized.

Start by finding your library’s Web site For example, I locate my library by submitting “fairfax county” library to Google www.google.com. Or I could click from my county government Web site to the library pages. Or Googling library questions yields many library sites offering answers. Then look for links like Ask-A-Librarian! or “Homework Help!”. Links and services will vary; when I click Ask-A-Librarian, I can choose between chatting, e-mailing, or (of course) actually visiting a library.

In researching this article I challenged my library with two questions. I was delighted that they quickly named the obscure British TV show whose name I couldn’t remember (The Duchess of Duke Street) and found a science fiction book containing a short story I wanted to reread. No matter how they evolve, whether as buildings or online, libraries’ core mission is everlasting: providing timely information in a customer-friendly format.

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Free Software - Programs I Use and Love

Cass Lewart (rlewart@monmouth.com), ACGNJ

Remember the old saying: The best things in life are free! It also applies to software. Much of the free software is written according to the rules of the Free Software Foundation (FSF) under the GNU license. In case you wonder what GNU is - it is a large African antelope having a head with horns like an ox and a long tufted tail. Another cryptic definition of GNU: GNU is Not Unix.



FSF, established in 1985, is dedicated to promoting computer users' rights to use, study, copy, modify, and redistribute computer programs. FSF promotes the development and use of free software. Free software is a matter of liberty not price. You should think of "free" as in "free speech", not as in "free beer." FSF encourages volunteers to work on the development and documentation of free software programs.

The GNU license under which the programs are released allows for free distribution, study, modification and use of the programs. Access to the source code is a precondition for this. Free programs are often released under the so called copyleft (as opposed to copyright) license. This license simply confirms the above principles. To find more about GNU and FSF enter these terms into Google.

Now let me give you some specific examples of three free utilities which I use and love. I found these gems by entering the appropriate phrases into the Google search engine.

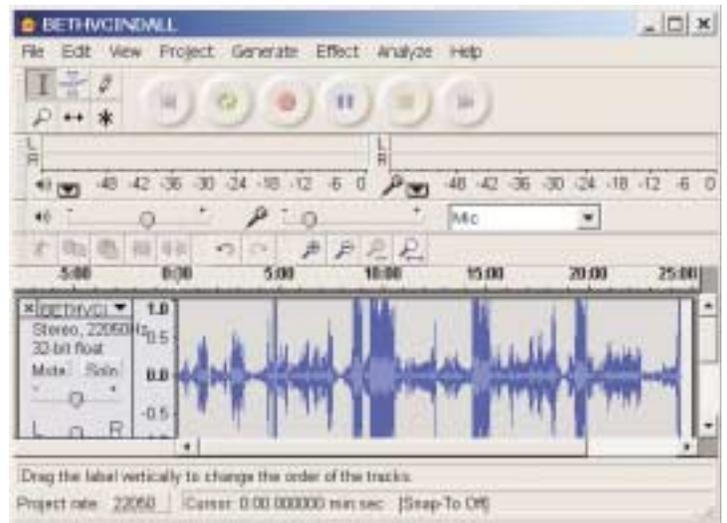
Crimson Text Editor — If you want to find what is really hidden in your Word document or if you want to manipulate text files you will need a text editor. To find such a program I entered "free text editor" into Google and wound up with the Crimson editor.

If you have ever used Notepad - and who hasn't - switching to Crimson is like moving from the middle ages into the 21st century. Crimson has many features of modern word processors including a spell checker, optional word wrap, multiple windows, line numbering, optional DOS, Unix or MAC formats and search capabilities. It does not have the file size limitation of Notepad, which probably has not been updated since its inception. Crimson has literally hundreds of features of which I just mentioned a few, but it is still easy to use.

XVI32 Hex Editor — If you are into binary file viewing and editing, then the proper tool is a hex editor. I found it by entering "free hex editor" in Google and came up with the XVI32 program. The program lets you take a binary file, view and modify it using hex or ascii codes. Viewing a word processor

file you will see both text and control characters (e.g., Carriage Return or Line Feed) — you can edit them as you wish. A hex editor will often help in repairing a damaged file or extracting data from damaged files. The picture shows an XVI32 display with hex and ascii side by side.

Audacity Sound Editor — I recently recorded some audio files on my MP3 player/recorder. After listening to the recordings I wanted to splice and to amplify some sections. There are many commercial programs to do it, such as Roxio, but they are not free and are relatively difficult to use. To find a program to my liking I entered "free sound editor" in Google and came up with the Audacity sound editor. It does everything I need and much more. I can change volume, pitch and many other sound parameters. I can copy and paste sections of audio files. I can also fade in and out, change tempo, see the frequency spectrum, record streaming audio and much more. After editing I can save an audio file in WAV or MP3 format. Because the MP3 format is proprietary generating an MP3 file requires downloading of the free LAME_ENC.DLL plug in. The picture shows how an audio file looks on the Audacity screen.



Other Free Utilities

Besides these three utilities I use many other great free programs of less general interest. The two I often use are the GIS converter, which converts between GIS coordinates found on state maps and the standard latitude and longitude. I also use the yEnc decoder which decodes the yEnc format found in many newsgroups.

Though I extoll free programs that I use, don't get me wrong. If you find a commercial or shareware program that satisfies your needs and gives you good value, then grab it. ☐

SIG News

Investing

Norm Wiss (cut.up@verizon.net)

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_investment.html

The Investment SIG continues with presentations on how to use analysis programs TC2000 and TCNet. Large charts are presented on our pull down screen and illustrate the application of computer scans and formulas to find stocks for profitable investments. Technical analysis determines buy points, sell points and projected moves. Technical analysis can also be used on fundamentals such as earnings, sales growth, etc. **Our next meeting: June 8.** ☐

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)

<http://www.NJGamers.com>

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be June 6, 6 p.m. to Saturday 12 noon — 18 hours for 5 bucks!

BYOC - Bring your own computer

BYOF - Bring your own food.

and if you don't like sitting on metal chairs... BYO chair! ☐

Window Pains

John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)

<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/winpains.html>

This meeting is a combination of the older PC Symposium, PC User Group and Random Access Session which are now defunct. The intent is to provide the members with Windows oriented application discussions both Microsoft and Linux style. The presentation will be directed toward the more heavy technological level of attendee, although newbies are welcomed. **Next meeting June 16: "Video Editing".** ☐

Main Meeting

<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/mainmeet.html>

Evan Williams (nhpressgo@blast.net)

June 2: Transferring Old Home Movies to DVD. ☐

Visual Basic

Rick Elbanna (rick@mastersofthecode.com)

<http://mastersofthecode.com/html/sig.htm>

This is a public Special Interest Group sponsored by Online Marketing Network LLC and Ricardo Capelli Associates LLC. This is a co-operative meeting with the Excel VBA and WebDev group. **Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at East Brunswick Public Library in East Brunswick, New Jersey.** Meeting times vary depending on the busy schedule of the Library. Times will be emailed to interested developers — send email to Rick to put your name on the notification list. Because of limited seating, those expecting to attend should email Rick prior to the meeting. Walk-ins are welcome, but are not guaranteed a seat. ☐

LUNICS (Linux/Unix)

Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)

<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/lunics.html>

LUNICS is a group for those who share an interest in Unix and similar operating systems. While we do quite a bit with Linux, we've also been known to discuss Solaris and BSD too. We generally meet on the first Monday of the month at 8:00 PM at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information. **Next meeting June 5.** ☐

Web Dev

This SIG is intended to be an open forum for all Website Development techniques and technologies, to encourage the study and development of web sites of all kinds. All languages will be considered and examined. Anyone interested please contact the Chairperson in charge. The current project is a CMS for the club. Anyone interested in starting a new project, come to the meeting and announce / explain. Provide as much detail as possible. One can also send projects to the ACGNJ Newsletter editor for inclusion in the next volume.

WebDev should be an all-encompassing development and examination forum for all issues, applications, OS, languages and systems one can use to build Websites. We currently have two Web dev languages .NET and Java as SIGs but the other languages and OS need to be investigated, examined and tested; Windows, Linux, UNIX, DEC, Vax, HP etc. Intel-PC, Motorola-MAC etc. **Our next meeting June 21.** ☐

Human Networking

<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/hns.html>

Mark Douches (mad-networking@pobox.com)

The purpose of this SIG is to expand the number of professionals that we know so that connections can be made into different markets or industries when a career change or business need is necessary. We are not just a group of people who like computers or technology. Our membership consists of Information Technology professionals from various industries. We will discuss over a time period the tools and skills that are necessary to cross a bridge advance your career. **Meetings are held 2nd Wednesday of the Month at 7:00 P.M.** ☐

Genealogy

Frank Warren (kb4cyc@webwarren.com)

<http://www.webwarren.com/kb4cyc/gensig.shtml>

Genealogy SIG is for genealogists interested in computers and computer users interested in genealogy, and is a forum to assist members in furtherance of both endeavors. Meetings usually focus on genealogy more than on computers. We meet at 8 PM on the fourth Thursday of the month, but we do not meet in November or December. In addition to our Web page, we also have an electronic mailing list. Messages to the list should be addressed to gensig@webwarren.com. To subscribe, include the line "subscribe gensig" in the body of the message. **Next meeting June 22** ☐

Java*Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)*<http://www.javasig.org>

The Java Users Group covers beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Java programming. Primary focus is on developing useful/practical applets and applications, but can include related topics such as Java I/O, JavaBeans, Reflection, object-oriented programming and software design issues. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month starting promptly at 7:30 PM.

Next meeting June13: RSS, Atom, APP, and All That: A Course for Developers. Elliotte Rusty Harold will be making a presentation entitled, **RSS, Atom, APP, and All That: a Course for Developers**. XML based syndication is moving from its foundations in weblogs to unexpected arenas: source code control systems, audio narrowcasts, e-mail, bug tracking, stock tickers, and more. News readers like Vienna, NetNewsWire, RSSOwl, and Newsgator are replacing classic web browsers for many uses. This session explores the fundamental technologies underlying this explosion of content: the various versions of RSS, Atom, and the Atom Publishing Protocol. Learn tricks and techniques for integrating these XML applications into your products as both clients and servers.

Elliotte is an adjunct professor of computer science at Polytechnic University where he teaches Java, XML, and object oriented programming. His Cafe au Lait web site has become one of the most popular independent Java sites on the Internet, and his spin-off site, Cafe con Leche, has become one of the most popular XML sites. His books include Java I/O, Java Network Programming, the XML Bible, and XML in a Nutshell. He's currently working on the XOM Library for processing XML with Java, the jaxen XPath engine, and the Amateur media player. ☐

Layman's Forum*Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com)*<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/laymans.html>

We meet on the second Monday of the month (no meetings in July and August) to discuss issues of interest to novice users or those who are planning to get started in computing. Watch our Web page for updates and announcements. ☐

Lotus Notes*Mike Barlow (mwb@injersey.com)*http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_lotusnotes.html

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the offices of Bright Ideas Software, 1060 Amboy Avenue, 2nd Floor, Edison NJ at 7 PM (Random Access 6:30). Call (732)417-5778 for last-minute changes, cancellations, information on future meetings, locations, directions, etc. Directions are posted on our Web page. ☐

DotNet*Jim Wong and Jim Boyd*<http://www.jimw.net/acgnj/>

This group is no longer meeting.

C/C++ Programming*Bruce Arnold (barnold@blast.net)*<http://www.blast.net/barnold>

This group is devoted to discussing programming languages in general and C, C++, and C++ for Windows programming in particular. Each month a small but hopefully useful program (complete with source code) is presented for discussion.

May: C++ Tips, Tricks, and Workarounds, VC++ 6 Compiler, CodeProject Snapshot. At the meeting, we are going to discuss an excellent article by Nishant Sivakumar called "C++ Tips, Tricks, and Workarounds", which I found while browsing www.codeproject.com. The author explains a number of areas which cause trouble for Visual C++ programmers. Some topics include hidden modal dialogs, stealing focus, always on top dialogs, going full-screen, expanding and contracting dialogs, removing task bar icon, context sensitive help and many other useful tips and tricks.

<http://www.codeproject.com/dialog/dlgboxtricks.asp><http://www.voidnish.com/articles/ShowArticle.aspx?code=dlgboxtricks>

Our next meeting June 20. ☐

Macintosh Users*Keith Sproul (ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu)*

This group is no longer meeting, but Keith is still available to help Mac users via telephone or email (see page 2). ☐

MCP

(Microsoft Certified Professional)

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_mcp.html

The MCSE SIG is a study group with the goal of preparing for the Microsoft Certification Exams. In February of 2000 "Windows 2000" debuted along with new MCSE tests. It's two years later and we have settled somewhere between W2k Pro/Server and Windows XP in our studies. Windows NT while still viable, is history as far as Microsoft is concerned. Windows .NET server should be out this year and should look like Windows XP-Server.

The books we will be using are "Mastering Windows 2000 Server" by Mark Minasi and the "MCSE Self-Paced Training Kit" from Microsoft Press. These books are important because as a study group we won't have a teacher to explain the concepts. We'll **need** to discuss them in the group. This is a study group, not a class taught by a teacher. Since hands-on training is crucial in acquiring the skills needed for these tests, we try to focus on lab work as well. The Microsoft training kits are good for labs.

We meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 7 pm to 10 pm. Attendees are encouraged to bring a PC properly configured with NT, 10BaseT network card, and Netmeeting 2.1. For more info, reading assignments, course schedule, visit our website. ☐

Guru Corner

Jo-Anne Head (tinarock@aol.com)

If you need help with any of the technologies listed below, you can call on the person listed. Please be considerate and call before 10 PM.

	Hardware	
	Scott Vincent	973-539-8169
	Software	
HTML	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
CSS	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
Java	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
C++	Bruce Arnold	908-735-7898
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
ASP	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Perl	John Raff	973-560-9070
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
XML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
e-Commerce	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Networking	Scott Vincent	973-539-8169
Home Automation	Charlie Huffsmith	732-549-1734
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	Operating Systems	
WindowsNT	Scott Vincent	973-361-5793
Windows95	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Windows98	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Windows3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942
	Charlie Huffsmith	732-549-1734
	Macintosh	
Mac O/S	Keith Sproul	(732) 821-4828

Discount Computer Magazine Price List

As described by the DealsGuy

	1 yr	2 yr	3 yr
Computer Games	\$10.95	20.95	29.95
Computer Gaming World	14.95	28.95	41.95
Computer Shopper1	16.97	32.95	47.95
Dr. Dobbs Journal	15.95	30.95	
Mac Addict	10.97		
Mac Home Journal	15.97	29.97	
Mac World	12.95		
Maximum PC	9.95	18.95	27.95
Microsoft System Journal	21.95	39.95	
PC Gamer	12.95		
PC Magazine (22/44/66 Issues)	25.97	48.95	68.95
PC World	16.95		
Wired	6.00	12.00	17.00

These prices are for new subscriptions and renewals. All orders must be accompanied by a check, cash or Money Order. Make payable to Herb Goodman, and mail to:

Herb Goodman, 8295 Sunlake Drive, Boca Raton, FL 33496

Telephone: 561-488-4465, e-mail: hgoodman@prodigy.net

Please allow 10 to 12 weeks for your magazines to start. For renewals you must supply an address label from your present subscription to insure the correct start of your renewal. As an extra service I will mail a renewal notice about 4 months prior to their expiration date. I carry more than 300 titles at excellent prices — email for prices. ☐

ACGNJ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Sign up online at <http://www.acgnj.org/membershipApplication.html> and pay dues with PayPal.

	US/CANADA	FAMILY OF MEMBER (No Newsletter)	Dues	FOREIGN	STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	\$25	\$10		\$55	\$20	\$20
2 Years	\$40					
3 Years	\$55					\$45

Mail this application and your check to:
 AMATEUR COMPUTER GROUP OF NEW JERSEY, INC., P.O. BOX 135, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076

New Member Renewal Address Change

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ URL _____

What topics would you like to see covered at club meetings? _____

Other Local Computer Groups		
Princeton Macintosh User Group: 7:15 pm 2nd Tuesday, Jadwin Hall, A-10, Washington Rd, Princeton, (609) 252-1163, www.pmug-nj.org	NY/NJ/CT Relational Database User Group: Corporate and independent users. (212) 839-0125	New York PC: 3rd Thurs, 7 pm, PS 41, 116 W 11th St. For info call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC, http://www.nypc.org
Computer Education Society of Philadelphia: Meetings & Workshops at Jem Electronics, 6622 Castor Ave, Philadelphia PA. www.cesop.org/	Brookdale Computer Users Group: 7 pm, 3rd Friday, Brookdale Community College, Bldg MAN Rm 103, Lincroft NJ. (732)-739-9633. www.bcug.com	NJ Macintosh User Group: 8 pm, 3rd Tuesday, Allwood Branch Library, Lyall Rd, Clifton NJ. (201) 893-5274 http://www.njmug.org .
PC User Group of So. Jersey: 2nd Mon., 7 pm, Trinity Presb. Church, 499 Rt 70 E, Cherry Hill, NJ. L. Horn, (856) 983-5360 http://www.pcugsj.org	Hunterdon Computer Club: 8:30 am, 3rd Sat, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington NJ. www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org , (908) 995-4042.	NY Amateur Computer Group: 2nd Thurs, 7 pm, Rm 806 Silver Bldg, NYU, 32 Waverly Pl, NYC. http://www.nyacc.org
Morris Micro Computer Club: 2nd Thurs., Bill Traywick, (201) 635-5393	Central Jersey Computer Club: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, Trenton St. College. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	NJ PC User Group: 2nd Thurs, Monroe Rm at Wyckoff Public Library, 7 pm. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432, www.njpcug.org
Philadelphia Area Computer Society: 3rd Sat, 12 noon Main Meeting, groups 8 am-3 pm. Upper Moreland Middle School, Hatboro PA. (215) 842-9600. www.pacsnet.org	Fairlawn Computer Club: Last Monday, Fairlawn Senior Citizen Center. Joe Mathias (fair.lawn.computer.club@juno.com)	Princeton PC Users Group: 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, http://www.ppcug-nj.org
Workshop, Hands-On: 2 P.M. to Midnight on last Saturday of the month. First United Methodist Church, Church and Atlantic Streets (one mile from GSP exit 117A), Aberdeen NJ. Bring your project, computer and extension cord. For information call Burke Mawby, (908) 566-7445.		

Classified

FREE TO MEMBERS. Use our classified ads to sell off your surplus computer stuff. Send copy to Classified, ACGNJ NEWS, P.O. Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076 or e-mail to the editor, bdegroot@ptd.net. Classified ads are free to members, one per issue. Non-members pay \$10. Send check payable to ACGNJ Inc. with copy. Reasonable length, please.



<http://www.apcug.net>

Radio and TV Programs

Computer Radio Show, WBAI 99.5 FM, NY, Wed. 8-9 p.m.

Software Review, The Learning Channel, Saturday 10-10:30 p.m.

On Computers, WCTC 1450 AM, New Brunswick, Sunday 1-4 p.m. To ask questions call (800) 677-0874.

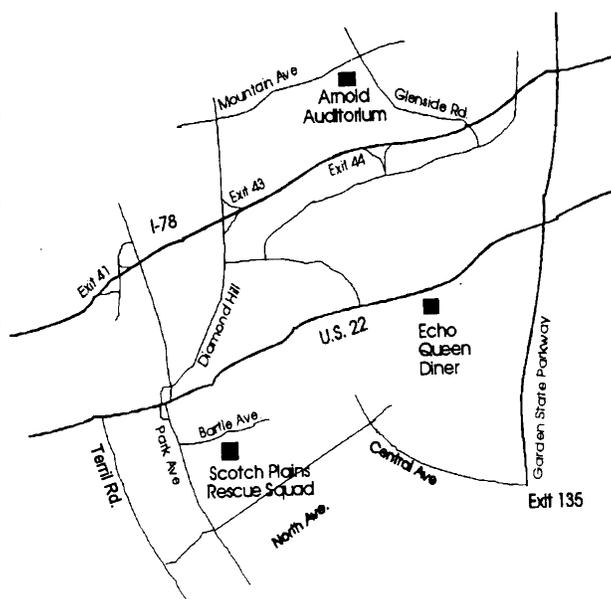
PC Talk, Sunday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., 1210 AM Philadelphia. 1800-876-WPEN, Webcast at <http://www.pctalkweb.net>.

MarketPro Shows

<http://www.marketpro.com/>

June 3-4: NJ Convention Center, Edison

June 24-25, Meadowlands Expo Center Secaucus



Directions to Meetings at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains NJ

From New York City or Northern New Jersey

Take Route 1&9 or the Garden State Parkway to US 22 Westbound.

From Southern New Jersey

Take Parkway north to Exit 135 (Clark). Stay on left of ramp, follow circle under Parkway. Bear right to Central Avenue; follow to Westfield and under RR overpass. Left at light to North Avenue; follow to light in Fanwood. Right on Martine (which becomes Park Ave). Right on Bartle Ave in middle of shopping district. Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is located on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed.

From I-78 (either direction)

Take exit 41 (Scotch Plains); follow signs to US 22. Turn right at light at bottom of hill and use overpass to cross Rt. 22. Follow US 22 Westbound directions.

From US 22 Westbound

Exit at Park Avenue, Scotch Plains after McDonalds on the right, diagonally opposite Scotchwood Diner on the left, immediately before the overpass. After exiting, turn left at the light and use overpass to cross US 22. Bear right at bottom of ramp to continue south on Park Avenue. Turn left at the second light (a staggered intersection). Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed. We meet on the second floor, entering by the door at the right front of the building.

From Western New Jersey

Take US 22 Eastbound to the Park Avenue exit. The exit is about a mile past Terrill Road and immediately past the overpass. Exit onto Park Avenue South and follow the directions above to the Rescue Squad building. ☐

Traveling with a Video Camcorder, *continued*

Tricks for the Kids - One more use for the LCD screen — see if you can reverse it so that the people you're shooting can watch themselves while you are recording. You'll get terrific reactions from kids.

Candid Camera - *If you are trying to take candid shots, hold the camera at waist level and watch the subject through the LCD screen. Before you do that go into the menu and turn off the red recorder indicator light so your subject won't know you are recording. It doesn't always work — in Morocco, one sharp-eyed fellow noticed from 30 feet away what I was doing and came over with his hand out for money. I paid him, of course.*

In the Rain - Check the lens frequently when shooting in the rain. Raindrops on your video are understandable but disconcerting.

Narration - *If you are shooting something which needs describing, just dictate in a low voice while you shoot; your voice will be audible on the tape. Of course you'll have to cut out the audio when you edit, so you don't want to do this over anything you will want to hear as well as see. Consider what you will say on the voiceover when you edit the video, and make sure you have names and events correctly. I write them down in a little journal every night.*

Music - *Think about the music you'll use with the video and record it if you hear local musicians. I have sometimes let a tape run most of an hour just to capture live music (another reason to have plenty of tape).*

Background "Chatter" - *When traveling with friends, I delicately remind them that anything they say will be picked up by the camcorder. It cuts down on extraneous conversation and four-letter words in your audio!*

Documentation - *Make sure you label each tape with the trip, location, and tape number. When you put it back in the plastic*

cover, slide the little switch to lock it so you can't accidentally record over it. I keep camcorder, tapes and critical accessories in my carryon baggage. The accessories I can't fit in the carryon go in the checked luggage.

X-Ray at Security - *The X-ray machines at security checkpoints have never hurt my videotape, but I'm not sure about the more powerful X-rays of checked luggage.*

Bon Voyage!

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



ACGNJ MEETINGS

For the very latest news on ACGNJ meetings visit the ACGNJ Web Page (<http://www.acgnj.org>)

Friday, June 2, 2006

8 P.M. - Main Meeting, Evan Williams (nhpressgo@blast.net).

Monday, June 5

8 P.M. - Lunics (Linux/Unix). Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org), cancelled.

Wednesday, June 7

7 P.M. - MCSE Study Group, Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net).

Thursday, June 8

8 P.M. - Investing, Norm Wiss (cut.up@verizon.net).

Friday, June 9

6 P.M. to 5 A.M.- NJ Gamers. Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net), 732-721-6507. Break 8 to 10 P.M.

Monday, June 12

8 P.M. - Layman's Forum, Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com), 908-359-8842.

Tuesday, June 13

7:30 P.M. - Java, Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net) 908-246-0410.

Wednesday, June 14

7 P.M. - Human Networking, Mark Douces (mad-networking@pobox.com)

Friday, June 16

8 P.M. - Window Pains, John Raff.

Monday, June 19

8 P.M. - VBA, Jim Ditaranto (fryr92a@prodigy.com), 201-986-1104

Tuesday, June 20

8 P.M. - C/C++ Users, Bruce Arnold (barnold@blast.net), 908-735-7898

Wednesday, June 21

7 P.M. - WebDev SIG

Thursday, June 22

8 P.M. - Genealogy SIG, Frank Warren ☐

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains, N.J.
Directions and map inside back cover.