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Franken-Floppy-Stein (A Halloween Story)

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Founded 1975

Ideally, a title should be instantly understandable to all readers, and should clearly advertise the author's main topic. As far as *I'm* concerned, my original title: *Franken-Floppy-Stein-Cula* (with nothing afterwards) did the job just fine. However, my sense of humor is definitely *not* in the mainstream, so maybe I'm the only person in the entire world who would have gotten the joke. (Think about floppy disks coming back from the dead; at least for a little while. After all, it's *not* Rabbit Season, Duck Season, or even Elmer Season. It's Halloween Season). Whatever the case, I'm going to start this article (as has often been my practice lately) at a point that has absolutely nothing to do with the title, anyway.

One of my favorite activities in the sixties and seventies was reading the late, great Isaac Asimov's monthly science *fact* columns in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. They were educational and entertaining. He was always informative, and at the same time just plain fun. In that series, he'd usually start out with a personal anecdote, before getting down to the business at hand. Now, I can't claim to have his talent; but, from time to time, I've ripped-off his format. (After all, "they" say that you should always steal from the best). A year or two ago (unfortunately, I can't place the time any closer than that), while working on one of my other newsletter articles, I had an idea for such an opening sequence; but I wound up not using it then. So I put it in a file named SAVESTUF.DOC, and I'm going to resurrect it now:

I was in the US Air Force for four years, as a Ground Radio Communications Equipment Repairman (affectionately known as "Dirt Radio"). We weren't the lowest of the low, but we were definitely *not* among the maintenance elite. Aside from basic training, tech school, and other such temporary postings, I was stationed at two Air Force bases during my enlistment; the first in the US, the second overseas. This was in the Viet Nam era, but neither assignment was directly concerned with the pursuit of the war. On my US tour, I worked on communications systems in use every day for things that weren't necessarily critical, but were still fairly important. On my overseas tour, I maintained standby radio transmitters. Except for periodic test runs, they weren't used during the time I was there, but they would have been needed on short notice if the direct lines had ever gone down. (Remember, this was before satellite commu-

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tions became every-day reliable. Basically, you had either land lines and undersea cables, or radios). Since I wasn't involved with equipment used by control towers, air traffic controllers, and command posts, or anything installed on the airplanes themselves, I didn't get to see any of the cutting edge, golly gee, whiz-bang stuff. My duties involved solid, reliable, time-tested middle-of-the-line machines. I studied manuals for currently deployed integrated circuit radio components as part of my continuing training, but the equipment I actually worked on contained transistors, tubes, or a combination of both. That's right! There were transistor/tube hybrids; and they worked quite well, too.

At about the same time, I knew some hard-core audio enthusiasts who claimed that tube amplifiers just sounded "richer" than transistor amps. I haven't kept in touch with any of those people, but I recently got a chance to refresh my knowledge of the subject. At an ACGNJ meeting before our summer hiatus, Bill Machrone (the featured speaker) mentioned that he was an audiophile. After his talk, I asked him if there were still tube fans out there. He confirmed that they still exist. He also told me that there are two sub-genres, preferring either triodes or pentodes. A triode is the simplest vacuum tube design that can be used as an amplifier. (There are vacuum tube diodes, but they can only rectify, *not* amplify). As its name would imply, a pentode comes with two more elements than a triode. (In the good old days, a lot of engineers got their doctorates by doing some pretty interesting stuff with those extra connections). In a similar old tech vs. new tech vein, *Monty Python* once did a sketch in which a group of people exiting a room suddenly discover (to their horror) that they're on film. They hurriedly jump back inside, where they're safely on videotape again. They try a different door, and they're back on film. They run to a window - more film. They've been trapped in a room that's "surrounded by film". Being Python, things went to absurd (and, of course, funny) lengths from there; but the basic premise itself was brilliant. You don't see anything if you stick to just videotape or just film; but if you mix those media (as I guess the BBC might have been doing at the time), the difference is noticeable. To have not only observed that effect, but also to have used it as the basis for comedy, was sheer genius.

Except for the new Machrone-related additions to the second paragraph, that's as far as I got originally. When I put these rejected "opening remarks" away, I had vague plans to someday continue along the following lines: While it doesn't make sense to buy a new CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) monitor any more, it makes just as little sense to throw away an old CRT monitor as long as it still works right. Granted, it's bigger and heavier, but it's *already there*. You have to spend *money* to replace it; and the visual quality of a CRT is still better, especially when viewed from an angle. Like the Air Force, I believe that "if it still works, keep using it". While this continues to be my opinion, those four sentences pretty much cover the entire concept. There's not enough meat on which to hang a whole article. So those two paragraphs languished unused (until now).

Things changed due to advances in the tide of obsolescence, both planned and unplanned. Last year, I wrote two articles bemoaning the "death" of the floppy disk (*Requiem for a Floppy, Parts One and Two*; in the May and June, 2006 issues of ACGNJ NEWS). However, I concluded that series on an upbeat note, since I could still use **images** of my boot floppies to produce bootable CDs. I should have kept my big mouth shut. Now, I hear that motherboard manufacturers want to eliminate IDE drives from the CMOS settings (and also from the motherboards themselves, I guess). The motherboard part doesn't bother me all that much. Most 386 and 486 motherboards didn't have built-in IDE controllers, but they still booted just fine using expansion cards; and PCI EIDE cards **already** exist. It's the CMOS part that has me worried. Without that, **no more booting from IDE CD drives**. So much for optimism. That covers the planned obsolescence. Aside from wailing and gnashing of teeth, there's not much I can do (except, of course, to *not* buy any of those products). On the unplanned obsolescence front, there *is* something I can do. Since it involves floppy disks, it'll probably be ultimately just as futile; but at least it gives me a central subject for this news-letter article.

Near the end of *Requiem for a Floppy, Part Two* (June, 2006), I said that I'd probably be changing the operating system on the floppy boot disks I use for Ghost and Partition Magic to FreeDOS Beta 9 soon. (Norton/Symantec currently has no plans to release another DOS version of Ghost, or **any** kind of new version of Partition Magic; but I really like those programs, and I intend to keep using the versions I've got for as long as I can). That announcement of mine turned out to be just a little bit premature, because I ran into a bug in the FreeDOS CONFIG.SYS (the user-editable boot settings file). The Partition Magic boot disk required **no** external input drivers, while the Ghost boot floppy needed three (CD/DVD, USB and Parallel Port). I started work on the more difficult Ghost disk first, and hit my bug almost immediately. I never even got to the USB or Parallel Port drivers, and never actually transferred the Ghost program to the new floppy. The problem was: if I created CONFIG.SYS correctly (following their instructions **and** my many years of boot disk experience), the CD/DVD drivers didn't work at all. If I did it slightly **incorrectly**, the drivers loaded and FreeDOS could read CDs and DVDs just fine. While admittedly tiny (and work-around-able), that bug just troubled me too much. I decided to put off the change for a while. (I didn't have a choice for my other must-have utility, SpinRite. Its latest version came with FreeDOS already installed. Surely, that's a big vote of confidence from the manufacturer). Now, the inadequacies of my previous operating system have become even more apparent, and FreeDOS 1.0 has been released. It's time for another look.

Good News! The two FreeDOS 1.0 system files take up only 110 KB! While that's more than the three MS-DOS 3.30A files took up way back in the Stone Age, it's 6 KB **less** than MS-DOS 5 used in 1991, and **95 KB** less than MS-DOS 8 (my current boot floppy operating system, which came with Windows ME in 2000). It just barely squeaks by Caldera

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OpenDOS 7.01 (1997) and DR-DOS 7.05 (2000), and it's *way less* than any OS (floppy or otherwise) has used since. (Actually, FreeDOS wasn't really designed for floppies. It's primarily intended for use on hard disks and embedded systems). Now, we'll start experimenting all over again, using FreeDOS 1.0 (FD10 from now on).

This time, I'm doing Partition Magic (PM from now on) first. Because I never even started on its FreeDOS Beta 9 floppy, we'll begin by examining my MS-DOS 8 disk. When designing my own versions of special purpose boot floppies, I group their files into four categories: System, Auxiliary, Program and Utility. System Files, of course, are files having to do with the operating system. Auxiliary Files are drivers, batch files, and other items that support the function of the main program, but aren't actually part of it. They usually come from *non-OEM* sources. Program Files are the main program, and come from the manufacturer. When more than one file is involved, they often carry identical time/date stamps. Utility Files are DOS utility programs. They're the most expendable files, and have to be content with whatever disk space wasn't already used up by the other categories.

On my old PM floppy, the System Files take up 205 KB. The three MS-DOS 8 operating system files (IO.SYS, MSDOS.SYS and COMMAND.COM) come first. Usually, they'd be followed by CONFIG.SYS (which contains commands for loading most drivers), but this disk didn't require it. The last System File is AUTOEXEC.BAT. This particular file doesn't actually do anything except show an opening message, made by invoking multiple instances of the ECHO command. Basically, it just says, "Hi" and tells you to press "P". It looks very nice when displayed on a character based screen running from a DOS command prompt. Unfortunately, ample previous experience with our Newsletter's desktop publishing program warns me that if I try to reproduce a copy for you here, it will come out terribly deformed. Much as my misshapen assistant Igor wants a playmate, I just can't do that to such a sweet, innocent young file.

The disk's three Auxiliary Files (MOUSE.COM, MOUSE.INI and P.BAT) take up 37 KB. The mouse driver files must be supplied separately on the disk, but the commands needed to *load* it are built into PM. This is the only program I've ever seen that works that way. (In the dim, dark recesses of the ancient past, there once lived mouse drivers that were loaded by CONFIG.SYS. I haven't seen ones like that for *many* years). P.BAT is a simple batch file. It displays a message telling you that it's loading PM, then it loads PM. I could have included those commands in AUTOEXEC.BAT. I could even have had it display a menu with a list of choices, including options to run various Utility programs before invoking PM. I used to write batch files like that all the time. The trouble is: that would have produced a *big* AUTOEXEC.BAT. Primitive though it may be, this way consumes less disk space; a vital consideration on a boot floppy.

The seven Program Files take up 999 KB. The seven Utility Files take up 164 KB. That leaves 11.5 KB of disk space free. We'll go into more detail about the Utility Files later. Now,

let's slip through the secret door and descend to my laboratory. In preparation for this task, I sent Igor over to the floppy disk graveyard (on a dark and gloomy midnight), to dig up some fresh subjects for experimentation. My plan is to transplant PM's aging brain into a strong, healthy new body.

As I said earlier, the two FD10 system files take up only 110 KB. Up until MS-DOS 6.22, and in my first few MS-DOS 7 boot disks, I always loaded the HIMEM driver from CONFIG.SYS. Then, I stopped doing it. I vaguely remember hearing something about MS-DOS 7 automatically loading itself high no matter what. Whatever the case, it didn't seem to matter then, or later with MS-DOS 8. Now, though, my "Old DOS Guy" instincts are telling me to create a new CONFIG.SYS, and use it to load the current FD10 equivalent. Even after re-using the old disk's AUTOEXEC.BAT, that only requires 111 KB; giving us an additional 94 KB to work with. However, now we have **four** Auxiliary Files to worry about; the same MOUSE.COM, MOUSE.INI and P.BAT, plus FD10's new HIMEM.EXE. Even so, that adds up to 45 KB; still leaving 86 KB extra. The seven Program Files take up the same 999 KB. That brings us back to the Utility Files.

The Utility Files on my Ghost and PM boot disks are hold-overs from the "General Purpose" boot floppies I once made. Basically, their inclusion is an attempt to use any leftover free space to add some additional functionality to the disks. On my MS-DOS 8 floppy for PM, the seven extra DOS utilities that could be squeezed in were: ATTRIB, CHKDSK, DELTREE, FC, FDISK, LABEL and MORE. On my MS-DOS 8 floppy for Ghost, the six extra DOS utilities that could be squeezed in were: ATTRIB, DELTREE, FDISK, FORMAT, LABEL and SYS. Quickly: ATTRIB handles file attributes. CHKDSK checks disks. DELTREE deletes directory trees. FC compares files. FDISK handles partitions. FORMAT formats disks. LABEL handles floppy and hard disk volume labels. MORE displays another program's output in 25 line chunks (useful with FC). SYS copies the operating system files to another disk, and makes it bootable. As you can see, I put the most useful programs on both disks, and split the less-used ones between the two. As far as actual *use* goes, I probably could have gotten by with only one of those utilities. Naturally, that was the one that betrayed me.

The specific inadequacy that led up to this project involved the DOS utility FDISK. I definitely *don't* use it to make any changes; but in a multiple hard disk environment (where I usually work), its option 5: "Change current fixed disk drive" gives me a much better overview of the drives and partitions on all the equipment involved than anything the DOS versions of Ghost or PM provide. Granted, each program goes into a lot more detail (after all, that's why I use them), but *not* in any one single place. That's the major reason for the separate existence of P.BAT; so I can have the option of running FDISK before PM. Unfortunately, the MS-DOS 8 version of FDISK can't properly display the contents of hard disks with a capacity of over 80 GB. (*Finally*, we get to the "unplanned obsolescence" that I referred to earlier). Due to my personal belief in keeping operating systems "lean and mean" (and as data-free as possible), all of my OS hard disks are smaller

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than that (some a *lot* smaller); but my data hard disks have been growing like they're on steroids.

The FD10 files, however, have all shrunk. They say that open source code, by the "everybody's watching" nature of its development, will tend to be refined and compact. Surely, these files support that theory. The seven previous MS-DOS 8 Utility Files took up 164 KB. The FD10 equivalents of the *nine* utilities from both the old Ghost and PM floppies take up only 145 KB. Counting the extra 86 KB mentioned above, that leaves 105 KB of additional free space for even more programs. (Because floppies store files in 512 byte sectors, if even one byte of a file crosses over into the next sector, all 512 bytes of that sector are lost. Thus, we won't get to use all of that space; just most of it). The "Golden Oldie" utilities EDIT (plus its associated help file) and XCOPY add up to 103 KB. Maybe they'll both fit.

They did, thanks to the other 11.5 KB of free disk space that I mentioned about five paragraphs ago, but forgot to include in my calculations here. Good thing, too. My final (?) floppy layout lost a lot more space to sector waste than I'd thought, leaving only 4.5 KB free. This boot disk will likely require tweaking in the future, so that little bit of wiggle room may come in handy. When tested, ATTRIB, DELTREE, FC, LABEL, MORE and XCOPY performed as expected. I had a bit of trouble using FDISK, FORMAT and SYS to create a 2 GB FAT16 bootable hard disk from scratch. The problems I encountered might have come from actual program bugs, but could just as easily have been caused by my unfamiliarity with this new version of DOS. It doesn't really matter. I only use FDISK for its overview screen as described above, and I'll probably never use FORMAT or SYS at all. (They were included mainly out of nostalgia for the "good old days"). Two of my choices, however, had significant deficiencies.

CHKDSK is still a Beta release that doesn't recognize FAT32 disks. That 2 GB FAT16 hard disk above was created mainly to provide a subject for this version of CHKDSK to be tested on. It passed that test; but ultimately, who cares? Hopefully, an upgrade will be available soon. EDIT, on the other hand, has a *real* bug. EDIT is mouse-aware; but if you run it without a mouse driver loaded, the only way to get to the File menu (and thus the Exit command) is to hold down an Alt key and press the F key. Unfortunately, if you're a touch typist (or a two-finger hunt-and-peck wizard like myself), nothing will happen when you do. In the back of my mind, I was vaguely aware that the left Alt key and the right Alt key send different codes; but I'd never known it to matter before. In this case, right Alt-F gets you nowhere; left Alt-F gets the menu. The least awkward way to do that is to use two fingers on the *same* hand. I can see how such a blasphemous idea might never even occur to a veteran touch typist. To eliminate the possibility of a local keyboard fault, I booted *three* other computers with my FD10 floppy, ran EDIT, and got the same result each time. I'll be sending FreeDOS a bug report on this one.

I almost forgot to say: PM itself worked fine under FD10.

Now we have to dip our toes into a legal quagmire: the License. (I'll be careful, and brief. Some subjects are just *too*

frightening, even for Halloween). According to that draconian document, I am only authorized to "use one copy", plus I may "make one copy of the Software for archival purposes". The sub-directory ENGLISH\DOSMAKE\DISK2 on the PM distribution CD contains the 7 Program Files plus the mouse driver. If I boot from a floppy that has CD drivers, access the CD, go to that sub-directory and then launch the executable, PM *will* run. So, even though I didn't "make" it, the OEM CD qualifies as my "archival" copy. To stay in strict compliance with the PM License, I can have only one other "use" copy. So, before I could make my new floppy boot disk, I had to destroy my old one.

Generally speaking, I'm an honest person. So, while doing it that way seemed unnecessary and stupid, that's what I did. Note, though, that I've maxed out the "use" provisions of the license without even installing PM on a hard disk. According to their documentation, though, the hard disk installation of PM is the most important part. To them, the floppy "Rescue Disk" is an add-on feature useful only for emergency situations. Their installation instructions plainly state that I'm allowed to have both. Not that I would. I've made it quite clear in past articles how absolutely, completely and totally *absurd* I think it is to install a low-level utility like Partition Magic on the C: drive of a high-level operating system like Windows, and then run it from there. However, the point is moot. According to my strict reading of their license (which I'm sure is how *they* would interpret it in court), I couldn't legally do so even if I wanted to. Don't you just love lawyers?

As I mentioned last month, this article was pretty much finished by mid-June. The long winded introduction was done, and the giant hulking Appendix was done. What needed more work was this section concerning FreeDOS 1.0. I had no idea that I'd use so much space for the (much easier) PM disk. Talk about irony. This is my "Halloween Episode", and *I don't have room for Ghost!!!* Its new boot floppy will have to be held over until next month. However, there's a lot of other spooky stuff still to come. So march right up to the front door of that gargoyle-covered creepy old castle, and enter of your own free will.

Appendix I: More Stuff Back from the Dead

I threw in a few "Halloweeny" remarks above, but I saved the real wackiness for this appendix. Maybe it's the full moon that's shining down on me as I write this, but I feel like going completely loony. (I won't say that I've turned into a werewolf or anything, but the claws and extra hair on my hands sure make it a lot harder to type). As I've mentioned before; while I included what some people might consider to be *way* too much detail in my September, 2006 article *How I Spent My Summer Vacation*, it was nothing compared to all the stuff I decided to leave out. However, that was all in notes on paper. I was content to just bundle up those pages and file them away. (Hmm. That's sort of like wrapping something in a shroud, then burying it in a tomb, isn't it?) When I've already gone to all the work of typing things into the computer, though, it's different. Whatever information I wind up cutting from one

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file, I'll usually save in another; and it really irks me if I can't figure out some other way to use those words.

Aside from the personal anecdote I resurrected earlier, there were three other excerpts in SAVESTUF.DOC. Since I've got a sort of necrophilia theme happening here, and there's not much chance this stuff can be used elsewhere, I decided to print it all now. Plus, there's something extra going on. As everyone who reads my articles has surely suspected, my brain is weird. For some time (possibly as much as **forty** years), for some unknowable but undoubtedly off-kilter reason, I've had in the back of my head a set of names that the Three Stooges might have used in a movie where they played vampires. Three undead names, three unused topics, and a spooky holiday coming up; such an epic cosmic convergence should *not* be ignored. Besides, it's not as if I'll get many more opportunities to use those names, either. So let's grab our shovels and start digging:

Introduction Number 1:

I can't determine the exact age of the following two paragraphs. Some sections are similar to bits in my December 2005, May 2006 and June 2006 articles. Maybe they were originally chopped out of an even older source, and parts of them were then cannibalized and used in those articles. After all this time, I just can't remember what actually happened. (Anyway, that's my story, officer, and I'm sticking to it).

Undead Creature Number 1 (Moe-cula):

By the time Windows 95 came out, I was on my third motherboard, and I had removable drive drawers installed so I could swap hard disks (and thus operating systems). I had multiple installations of Windows 3.x. One hard drive held my "normal" setup. Another drive had **five** different "special purpose" setups (selected by renaming their individual directories). If a customer was having mysterious problems, I could pull their drive and test it in my "known good" computer. (I didn't have to worry too much about viruses because I had to turn the computer completely off before I could change drives, and while their drive was in, my drive was **gone**). Colorado Backup made a version for Windows 3.x, but I never used it. I always ran all my computer and file maintenance utilities, including backups, from a clean boot of DOS.

I made a removable drawer for Windows 95, but I just wasn't impressed by the pretty pictures. (In fact, they kind of turned me off). What made me most leery was their new Registry. Windows 95 backup programs had special "Back up the Registry" options, treating it as some kind of mystical entity that couldn't be handled by older DOS backup programs. Of course, the Registry was really just two more ordinary files, located in the Windows directory.

Introduction Number 2:

I decided to remove the following passage from the **BSD** paragraph under APPENDIX I: DEFINITIONS in *Preserved for the Ages?* (December, 2006). It *wasn't* completely accurate in and of itself, and it didn't even come *close* to telling the whole story. Rather than adding the additional information

required to get nearer to what actually happened, I decided that it wasn't really necessary to go into that extra level of detail for that particular paragraph. (Although I thought I might try it again someday, in a future article). It was easier to eliminate the whole offending section instead. However, now it's come back from the grave, seeking revenge. (Cue the "Norman Bates" music).

Undead Creature Number 2 (Larsferatu):

In 1992, BSD got sucked into a lawsuit between AT&T and another proprietary UNIX vendor. The suit wasn't resolved until 1994. Unfortunately, those two years when the rights to the BSD code were in doubt coincided with the first two years that GPL licensed Linux distributions became available. BSD has been playing catch-up ever since.

Introduction Number 3:

This detailed exposition on the relative definitions of disks, drives, and partitions started life as a short note intended for my *Dual-Boot Revisited, Part 2* article. It was supposed to be inserted into the bottom left-hand paragraph on page three of the March, 2007 issue of ACGNJ NEWS (beginning with "Nit-Picker's Note"). However, as I explained in that same paragraph; "...it passed 300 words and wasn't even half done. I realized that it was much more than a note, so I pulled it." Even after that, it kept on growing and growing, consuming innocent words at a frightening rate. (That's when it exuded a second paragraph). It just couldn't be destroyed. Finally, it was transported to a secret location north of the Arctic Circle. So far, the intense cold there has kept it in check; but it's *still not dead*. If it ever gets back to a warm climate, it could consume us all!!!

Undead Creature Number 3 (Curly Vlad):

There are only two types of partitions: primary and extended. Any one hard disk can have a maximum of **four** partitions. All four can be primary partitions, but only **one** of those possible four can be an extended partition. However, operating systems don't actually interact with partitions. They interact with the **drives** that are contained **inside** the partitions. In turn, those drives can be formatted into at least ninety-one different file systems. (Relax. We won't be going into that much detail here). There are **two** types of drives: physical and logical. Since a physical drive can only exist inside a primary partition, and a primary partition can contain one and only one physical drive, the terms have become synonymous. Hardly anybody says "physical drive" anymore, and they're still correct; because the two terms do, in fact, describe the same thing. If I want to say; "a primary partition containing a physical drive formatted in the Linux Ext3 file system", I can instead say; "an Ext3 primary partition". I've used a lot less words, but I haven't said anything that's inaccurate. It's different with extended partitions and logical drives. These terms are *not* synonymous in any way. There is only **one** extended partition, and it's *not a drive of any kind* at all. That one allowable extended partition can contain many logical drives, but *not a single one of them is any kind of partition* at all. If I want to say; "an extended partition containing a logical

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drive formatted in the Linux Ext3 file system”, the least I can accurately say is; “an Ext3 logical drive in an extended partition”. If I say; “an Ext3 logical partition”, I’m just flat out **wrong!** Like many other things in the world of computers, this set-up wasn’t invented all at once. The primary partition/physical drive combination came first. The extended partition/logical drive modification wasn’t added until the inability to put more than four drives on a hard disk became more than a minor inconvenience.

Speaking of inconveniences: Nowadays, when we think of a hard disk, we envision a small thing you can hold in one hand; but this wasn’t always so. Here’s a story from January of 1967, when a GE-645 mainframe computer was being installed at MIT. (It would become the first machine to run Multics, the ancestor of UNIX). One of the components was a hard disk from Singer called a General Precision Librafile, which was nicknamed “the firehose drum”; supposedly for its then extremely high rate of data delivery. The disk and controller were in a case seven feet high, three feet wide and about twenty feet long. (That was unusually long and narrow compared to other computer cabinets of the time). Similar units were rumored to have been used on Polaris guided missile submarines. It was also **too heavy** for the computer room’s existing floor. A huge girder had to be brought in by crane to distribute the weight. The firehose drum was water-cooled, which no doubt contributed to the weight problem (maybe to the nickname as well); and also required that a plumber be added to the emergency technical support phone call list. Its total capacity was (drum roll, please) **sixteen Megabytes**. (Excerpted from www.multicians.org, a Multics History Website).

(Crypt Door) Closing Remarks:

Summoning this article’s opening sentence back from the great beyond, operating on it a bit in my laboratory, then letting it escape to terrify the local villagers: Ideally, a joke should be instantly understandable to all readers, and should clearly tickle their funny bones. If it has to be explained, it probably wasn’t all that humorous to begin with. Take my Vampire Stooze names. (I always liked the Three Stooges best when they were in absurd situations, such as haunted houses. For me, the closer they got to real life, the less funny they became). At first, those names all followed the exact same form: Moe-cula, Larry-cula, and Curly-cula. Right this very moment, I thought of Shemp-cula. Previously, that one never even occurred to me. Maybe I should have been content with that original warped inspiration. (Abbott and Costello combined slapstick comedy with surprisingly intellectual word games. The Stooges: not so much). However, soon afterwards, I decided to “improve” things by basing each name on a different bit of vampire lore. I had alternate candidates for the first two (basically, as you’ll see below, just switching suffixes); but I always considered my revised third name to be ingenious and **perfect**. Then, in the course of preparing this article, I showed them to my chief proof reader. (That’s my brother. He grew up with me, and thus was exposed to all the same bad influences. If there’s anyone out there who

understands my wacky sense of humor, it should be him). He **didn’t** get number three.

Well, I’m **not** going to reach down, pick up an ax somehow conveniently left lying nearby, and hack those names out. (Odds are, I’ll never be able to fit them in anywhere else); but I guess I’d better explain them a little. The “cula” suffix, obviously, comes from Dracula. He, of course, needs no introduction (although he’s going to get some coverage further below). The alternate suffix I tried next was “sferatu”, producing Moe-sferatu, Larry-sferatu and Curly-sferatu. Not quite as obviously, the source for this is *Nosferatu* (1922), director F.W. Murnau’s chilling and eerie black and white silent masterpiece of terror. This was the **first** filmed version of *Dracula*. To this day, many critics and film historians consider it the most striking and frightening adaptation of Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel. Of the new names, I preferred Moe-sferatu, but not by much. It was **too similar** to *Nosferatu*. The “audience” for my imaginary movie might not be able to hear the difference. Besides, as Head Stooze, Moe deserved the more prestigious Moe-cula. That left Larry-sferatu or Curly-sferatu, and **both** had too many syllables. Then I came up with Larsferatu. It had one less syllable but was still identifiable with Larry; and it would sound sinister, even to a listener who’d never heard of *Nosferatu*.

(Announcer): We interrupt this insipid drivel for a gratuitous digression:

I saw *Nosferatu* once, on a surreal occasion in my youth. The college I attended had an “Art Cinema” club. I wasn’t a member, but the public was always invited to their weekly screenings. When the subject sounded interesting enough (or dirty enough), my friends and I would attend. This film was advertised as “dubbed in German, with sub-titles”. That wasn’t a lie, because it **didn’t** say “English sub-titles”. I guess nobody in the club (or maybe even at the film distribution company) realized it at the time. Maybe the sub-titles came first, or maybe whoever added the sound added them as well, for hearing impaired **Germans**. That evening, we all got a lesson in German grammar and spelling, as we read their lines along with the actors; but (since we were watching a classic film that was, in fact, originally **silent**), it turned out to be an entertaining (and certainly memorable) experience.

(Announcer): We now return you to our regularly scheduled nonsense:

Finally, I needed another suffix for Curly. Then, inspiration struck again. Why add a suffix? Why not a whole word? Like they made Curly Joe, why couldn’t I make Curly Vlad? That name refers to Vlad II and Vlad III, two princes of Wallachia (now part of Romania). Vlad II was known as Dracul (The Dragon) because he belonged to a fraternal society of knights called the Order of the Dragon. His son, Vlad III, was known as Vlad Tepes, Vlad the Impaler, and Vlad Dracula (which loosely translates as Vlad, Son of Dracul). I’d always heard that Vlad III was the model for Dracula; but according to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org), this is now considered unlikely by literary scholars. Up until a few weeks before its 1897 publication, the *Dracula* manuscript

Continued

Understanding Your Computer's BIOS

Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D. (bwsail@yahoo.com), Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group (www.spcug.org)

The computer's basic input/output system (BIOS) is a major key to its proper operation. The BIOS differs from one computer to another depending on the make of the motherboard and the make of the computer itself. So let's look at what it does and why it is so important for the operation of your computer.

When you wake up your computer by turning on the power, the first component to be activated is the computer processor. The CPU is preprogrammed to look for a location in the RAM memory, usually near the end of system memory. This location contains a jump instruction to the location in memory of the BIOS program. On activation the BIOS starts executing a series of diagnostic instructions to verify that the computer is functioning properly. One of the first tests is the power-on self test (POST). If there are any fatal errors the computer will shut down and not proceed further. Some computers have a series of "beep" codes that can help a technician in determining the cause of the failure.

On some computers one of the first indications that the boot process is proceeding normally is the graphics card display on the video screen. This is because the BIOS has found and loaded the video BIOS. Then you will see either a manufacturer's splash screen or the sequence of messages from the BIOS. The BIOS also looks for any other connected devices, such as SCSI or SATA drives, that have a BIOS Read only Memory (ROM) and those instructions will be loaded into memory. If the manufacturer's splash screen isn't hiding the start-up info, you will see the memory count, the floppy, hard drive and CD/DVD drive identification lines appearing on the screen.

The BIOS carries out a system inventory that includes determining the memory timing information, connection of the keyboard, hard drive parameters, plug & play settings, etc. Further it loads the interrupt handlers, initializes the registers and resets the power management. The BIOS also displays a

text-based summary screen. This includes the CPU and its clock speed, the drives that have been identified, their size and type, system memory size and configuration, video, com ports and parallel ports. Finally the BIOS looks for a boot drive.

Most modern BIOSes can boot from a wide array of devices, not just hard drives. They can boot from CD/DVD, flash drives, or external drives. In every case the BIOS uses the boot sequence information that is stored in the CMOS ROM. This is information that can be changed by the user. The term CMOS stands for Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor. Now you see why the name is abbreviated. Once the BIOS identifies the boot drive it searches for the master boot record and starts the operating system boot process on the drive. At that point control of the boot process is taken over by the operating system. Many functions relating to device drivers and plug & play devices handled by the BIOS are now handled directly by Windows.

All of the processes carried out by the BIOS are required to allow the hardware to interface with the operating system. Since the basic hardware in a computer can vary widely depending on the make and model, there must be a common interface for it to communicate with the operating system (OS). The OS cannot incorporate all the necessary low level routines for all the possible combinations of computer hardware. The BIOS provides this common interface.

The BIOS programming is usually contained in a chip on the motherboard referred to as an EEPROM chip. This is a programmable chip that can be altered by using software from the motherboard manufacturer. However, anytime you try to change the programming in this chip you can change it in such a way as to prevent your computer from booting. So great care should be taken anytime you need to upgrade your BIOS. It is always advisable to make a copy of the original BIOS on a removable disk so you can restore it if necessary. So when

Continued

Franken-Floppy-Stein, *continued from page 1*

was titled simply *The Un-Dead*. The villain's name was originally intended to be Count Wampyr, but while doing historical research, Bram Stoker found the name Dracula (which he apparently thought meant Devil). There are sections in the novel where Dracula refers to his own background.

These speeches show some knowledge of Romanian history, yet make no mention of impalement. Given Stoker's use of historical background to make his novel more horrific, it seems unlikely he would have failed to mention that his villain had impaled *thousands* of people. Furthermore, Vlad III was an ethnic Vlach. In the novel, Dracula claims to be a Székely, saying; "We Székelys have a right to be proud..." It seems Stoker didn't know much, if anything, about the historic Vlad III. Maybe he just liked the name, the way I like Curly Vlad. So I'm **keeping** him!

Speaking of horrible misdeeds, I just spent over **eight hundred** words defending three silly names; and I'm not finished explaining my cinematic references yet. (At least I got to throw in another personal anecdote as well). The "Norman Bates" music cited in *Introduction Number 2* was Bernard Herrmann's famous and memorable score (featuring shrieking, harpy-like piercing violins) for Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960); and *Introduction Number 3* contained a pretty much complete plot summary of that early Steve McQueen movie, *The Blob* (1958).

Last Words (Yeah, Right):

What did you think of my Halloween Issue? Did I throw enough creepy crawly clichés at you? Were there sufficient ghastly ghoulish goings-on? See you soon. (When you think you're safe, have let your guard down, and least expect it).
Boo! ☹

should you need to upgrade your BIOS? In some cases manufacturers will make BIOS upgrades available which will allow you to upgrade your CPU with a newer version. Or they make a change to allow the BIOS to recognize faster system memory or more memory. You must always ensure that the BIOS upgrade you plan on installing is specific for your motherboard. So you need to know the manufacturer and the motherboard model. Just remember, a mistake may make your computer unusable, requiring a major repair such as replacing the motherboard. Unless, of course, you made a backup of the original BIOS.

The CMOS portion of the BIOS is also very important to the proper function of your computer. The settings in the CMOS are retained by use of a low-voltage battery on the motherboard. In some few modern motherboards you can no longer find the battery. That's because it is integrated into another chip and is non-replaceable. Although the battery may have a long life span (more than five years), some computers are still going strong after ten years. Some motherboards may use nonvolatile RAM that doesn't require a battery to keep the information safe. In this case the battery, if one is present, is used only for the real-time clock. So when the battery fails, the computer can still boot.

In order to change any of the CMOS settings you have to use a key stroke, or series of key strokes, during the early part of the boot-up process. The most common keystroke is that of the AMI BIOS that uses just the DEL key to access the setup program. However, some manufacturers use other specific keystrokes and may even vary the combination from one model to another. So it is advisable that you check your owner's manual for specific instructions on how to access the setup program in your computer. This setup may be called the BIOS setup, the CMOS setup or some combination of these terms.

The setup program allows you to change some parameters related to the operation of your computer. Generally you can set the system time and date in the CMOS. As mentioned earlier, you can change the boot sequence in the CMOS to select the order in which the BIOS will look for a bootable drive. The CMOS setup allows you to specify how fast your computer reads from memory, whether or not your CPU's cache is enabled or disabled and how fast your PCI bus communicates with its adapter cards. In the advanced settings, you can modify other parameters such as power management, USB settings, and enable or disable I/O ports. You may also be able to set the computer to turn on in response to an incoming call on a modem or a request via a local network. In some motherboards the CMOS settings allow you to "overclock" your system. This means that you can set your CPU and/or system memory to operate at a frequency higher than the standard manufacturers' values. Unless used with great care, changing these values can destabilize the computer operation. The settings in the CMOS will vary depending on the computer manufacturer and the make of the BIOS. Some manufacturers make their own BIOS chips while others purchase them from companies such as AMI, Phoenix or WinBond. Reading your

user manual or motherboard manual will give you a better idea of just what is included in your setup program.

The setup program uses a "CMOS checksum" as an error-detecting code. Each time you change the BIOS settings, the checksum is generated by adding all the bytes in the CMOS memory and then storing the lowest byte of the sum. Then, each time the system is booted, the system recomputes the checksum and compares it with the stored value. If they are different, then the system knows that the CMOS has been corrupted somehow and will warn you with an error, typically something like "CMOS Checksum Error". Then you need to enter the setup program and check the settings. Usually, once you save the settings and exit setup, the computer will boot normally.

Most of the preceding information applies when you first start the computer after it has been off for a time. This is called a "cold boot". If you restart your computer from Windows using the "restart" selection, or the "three-finger salute" (CTRL-ALT-Del), or the "reset" button, then this is a "warm boot". Then most of the POST is omitted and the BIOS reloads interrupts, device drivers, checks the CMOS and loads the peripheral BIOSes. Then the memory, drives and summary are displayed on the video screen.

As I hope you now realize, the BIOS and its associated CMOS are essential for the operation of your computer. Always be cautious in making changes in the setup or in updating your BIOS. That way you can ensure continued operation of your system.

There is another thing I should mention. Use of the BIOS originated with the IBM AT some twenty-five years ago. As computer technology has changed radically in this time span, there is a move afoot to replace the BIOS with what is referred to as "UEFI" or Unified Extensible Firmware Interface. The specifications for this interface were first published in October 2006 and revised in January 2007. The statement of purpose from the UEFI organization is as follows: "The Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) specification defines a new model for the interface between operating systems and platform firmware. The interface consists of data tables that contain platform-related information, plus boot and runtime service calls that are available to the operating system and its loader. Together, these provide a standard environment for booting an operating system and running pre-boot applications."

Currently the companies involved are working on producing motherboards using the UEFI firmware in place of the BIOS. However, there is also some consideration that some users may need to have both a BIOS and the UEFI firmware. Since this process is still in flux, keep tuned for future developments.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at bwsail@yahoo.com. This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above). ☐

Would You Sign This Contract?

Rob Rice (articles@isp.com), Computer Club of Oklahoma City (www.ccokc.org)

Ok, here's the deal; I offer you a big, 56-inch, shiny new Filch Plasma Screen TV and I will sell it to you if you will agree to have a camera installed in your home so I may watch you watching the new television. Sound fair? You also agree that should you disable or inhibit the free operation of the camera in any way, you forfeit the television and your money. Neither am I responsible for any damages to your home from the equipment or its use nor do I guaranty privacy or even that the television will work.

Would you sign such a contract? Many of us, in a sense, have already agreed to something like the above scenario when we clicked on the End User License Agreement (EULA), the contract that accompanies most software these days.

It pretty much goes without saying that most of us do not read EULAs. They are often long, dry, and hard to understand documents written in a very small type face and crammed in a tiny window. Even if there is something bad in it, what are the chances it will have any real affect? After all "I'm one among millions".

We may often think of ourselves as just one among many cattle feeding in the pasture, so "The chances of lightning striking me are remote". But lightning did hit hundreds of folks in the form of a Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) lawsuit. Hundreds of persons have been sued for allegedly downloading music illegally. For example, RIAA filed a lawsuit against 12-year-old Brianna LaHara, whose mom had paid a \$29.99 service charge to KaZaA for the company's music service, said Brianna, "I got really scared. My stomach is all turning," "I thought it was OK to

download music because my mom paid a service fee for it. Out of all people, why did they pick me?" (1)

But what we have learned since Brianna's case came to light is that many intellectual property owners are using eavesdropping techniques to monitor end user compliance. Whether it's intercepting data traffic over an Internet connection or placing spyware on your computer the name of the game seems to be intimidation through litigation. Of course heavy-handed tactics do tend to produce mistakes and bad public feeling, such as RIAA's disastrous lawsuit where they sued a deceased great-grandmother who reportedly had never owned a computer. (2)

But what is interesting is that software that tends to operate in a dubious manner will typically tell you up front, or give you some hints in its EULA. Take for example this classic EULA that was analyzed by Benjamin Edelman back in 2004, he is an assistant professor at the Harvard Business School and a member of the Massachusetts Bar. It is Gator, an advertising pop-up software that often came embedded in weather monitors, organizers and clock synchronizers, (The company changed its name to Claria Corporation. GAIN stands for Gator Advertising Information Network) The EULA, with over 5,900 words of text, informed the user that:

"You agree that you will not use, or encourage others to use, any unauthorized means for the removal of the GAIN AdServer, or any GAIN-Supported Software from a computer."

That includes removing it with Adaware or SpyBot, which listed it as spyware.

Continued

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 except #1 (June). These are also pamphlet-size booklets.

If you can supply any of these missing issues (or scanned images or good clear 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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“Any use of a packet sniffer or other device to intercept or access communications between GP and the GAIN AdServer is strictly prohibited.” Meaning you cannot monitor what it is doing while it is on your computer!

Mr. Edelman’s website is a very good resource for the wary and worth a look, (www.benedelman.org/news/112904-1.html).

Sony has faced some embarrassing headlines as of late with their music CD’s EULA and rightly so. Take for example these observations by the Electronic Frontier Foundation regarding the contents of the Sony EULA:

If you file for bankruptcy, you have to delete all the music on your computer.

The EULA says Sony-BMG will never be liable to you for more than \$5.00.

If your house gets burgled, you have to delete all your music from your laptop when you get home. That’s because the EULA says that your rights to any copies terminate as soon as you no longer possess the original CD.

You must install any and all updates, or else lose the music on your computer. The EULA immediately terminates if you fail to install any update. No more holding out on those hobbles-downgrades masquerading as updates.

If you move out of the country, you have to delete all your music. The EULA specifically forbids “export” outside the country where you reside. (3)

Most EULAs that I have read place all of the burden and financial responsibility upon you. You pay the money, you take the risk, and you take the liability. The software company decides everything in its favor and takes no responsibility what-so-ever even for the software doing what it claims to do! It would seem that you in effect given up your legal rights in exchange to use a piece of software.

Ok, so you read the license agreement but the mind numbing experience had you re-reading the same sentence over and over and by the time you were done you felt like the first documented case of someone having actually died from boredom. What is worse, you still don’t know what it said! But cheer up, there is help available. For example, The Electronic Frontier Foundation has a helpful article titled, “Dangerous Terms a User’s Guide to EULAs” by Annalee Newitz. (4) It describes some of the more dubious terms found in some EULAs and what to look out for. Such as:

1. “Do not criticize this product publicly.”
2. “Using this product means you will be monitored.”
3. “Do not reverse-engineer this product.”
4. “Do not use this product with other vendor’s products.”
5. “By signing this contract, you also agree to every change in future versions of it. Oh yes, and EULAs are subject to change without notice.”
6. “We are not responsible if this product messes up your computer.”

You can also use some of the EULA analyzers that are available. While they are not a substitute for carefully reading a user agreement they can be very helpful by flagging suspect

sentences, especially when you have an insanely long contract such as the over 32,000 words found at the Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum’s web site. Figuring this would bring any EULA analyzer to its knees, I put it through the Spyware Guide’s on-line EULA Analyzer. It performed beautifully and flagged areas that the Analyzer thought suspicious, including:

You agree to pay us three thousand dollars per unsolicited e-mail sent, or prohibited comment posted to the CPRR Discussion Group, or telephone call and fifteen thousand dollars per e-mail address added to your commercial mailing list in violation of the foregoing, plus damages. The CPRR Museum participates in Project Honey Pot which allows us to track and help catch spammers who harvest e-mail addresses from our web pages.

One analyzer that I have been using for several months now is the EULalyzer by Javacool Software LLC, who also publish SpywareBlaster. This is an application that is very simple to use, just click analyze and then drag the application’s pointer over the EULA and automatically copies it into the program. Click the “Analyze” button and it gives you its assessment almost instantaneously.

The EULalyzer personal is free for educational and personal use and a Pro version with added features is also available.

If you are still not convinced of the importance of reading the EULA, you might consider this; the folks over at PC Pitstop (<http://pcpitstop.com>) decided to see just how many people read the agreement. In their EULA they actually offered monetary compensation for reading the document! It stated:

Special Consideration: A special consideration which may include financial compensation will be awarded to a limited number of authorize licensees to read this section of the license agreement and contact PC Pitstop at consideration@pcpitstop.com. This offer may be withdrawn at any time.

Unfortunately it took four months before anyone collected. Doug Heckman was the first person to email them in 3000 downloads! For his efforts PC Pitstop gave him \$1000. So there you have it, incentive to read the license agreement!

Reading EULAs can actually be quite an interesting experience. Read enough of them and you quickly learn how bold some companies have become in trying to thwart trade laws. But don’t take my word for it, take a look at some of the Microsoft, Google, or as the hardware industry attempts to apply the same yoke on its customers, Lexmark EULAs and see what they have to say, you may be amazed!

- (1) Fox News, *12-Year-Old Sued for Music Downloading*
- (2) BetaNews, *RIAA Sues Deceased Grandmother*
- (3) Electronic Frontier Foundation, *Now the Legalese Rootkit: Sony-BMG’s EULA*
- (4) Electronic Frontier Foundation, “Dangerous Terms A User’s Guide to EULAs” <http://www.eff.org/wp/eula.php>
- (5) Spyware Guide’s on-line EULA Analyzer, <http://www.spywareguide.com/analyze/analyzer.php>
- (6) EULalyzer, <http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/index.html>

From The DealsGuy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click (bobclick@mindspring.com), Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

*Feedback

I heard from several readers who said they have been successfully traveling with only a "special" flash drive for some time. I hadn't seen a review on this, or read about it as a meeting presentation last year if they were available. I read a lot, especially the UG newsletters I get. I only learned about the USB U3 drives last spring when I purchased a San Disk Flash Drive that I thought was a bargain. When I plugged it into the USB port just to take a look, I thought it was installing something on my HD. I was upset and wanted to know what was going on without my permission. Then I read the enclosed folder about the software preinstalled on that "U3" drive, and other software available on their Web site for it. I was confused and tried unsuccessfully to learn more about it. Around the first of the year was the first I read a review, but without understanding it, I was still confused. Last month I included the article about that topic because I know I'm not the only person behind on new technology knowledge.

*Lets Look At The Pluses!

I reviewed Microsoft Money a few years ago and started actually using it when my favorite money program, "Managing Your Money," turned to providing software for banks. I have differences with some Microsoft policies, such as Genuine Advantage, and their product activation process, but when it comes to MS Money; that tech support is the best in the business. Each version I have used came with three years of support via an 800 number. They try hard to answer your questions and do not speak broken English. So far, I've talked to tech support in Newfoundland three times, and they have resolved my questions, followed by an e-mail thanking me for using MS Money and saying that if the issue was still not resolved, they are there to clear it up. The phone waiting time has never been long. What a great value for a product that costs so little. There are things I would like to see improved; such as when I back it up before closing the program, it doesn't limit the number of backups on my external USB flash drive, but that's a minor problem.

*Emergency ID And Medical Information

What if you were traveling and became involved in an accident leaving you incapacitated! How would an ambulance medic and ER facility know how to correctly treat you if your medical condition was special, or you had preferences? In my case, I'm diabetic and now take Coumadin (blood thinner) so

it would be important for the medic to know that. Identification Devices L.L.C. offers a compact USB Flash drive to hold vital information that could help a medic make the right decisions. Wear it around your neck, or even put it on your key chain so a medic can see it (the Medical logo is on one side) when examining you, they can then plug it into the USB port on their laptop. Instantly, it gives the default choice to open your information screen. That instantly brings to their computer screen a form with your necessary medical and other information, along with your picture. You simply type in all the necessary information yourself, no complicated instruction to follow, just fill in the labeled blanks.

The company sent me one to try and I was impressed with how easy it was to use and type in the necessary data. The data includes your personal information with emergency phone numbers for whomever you designate, and your doctors, drugs, important medical warnings (if necessary), your insurance companies and also your attorney information. There is a spot for your picture in the upper corner, and even a way to load PDF files for important documents such as a living will, power of attorney, your own personal instructions and other important documents if you want them there. I was impressed that most of the blanks in the form could be expanded to a larger space by double-clicking them to insert additional information, such as additional doctors, medications and other vital information. It can be password protected if you desire, but I wouldn't want that. The MSRP is \$24.95 + \$4.95 S & H.

They are offering DealsGuy readers a \$2.50 discount, but only if you call 1-866-955-0535 to order and mention the DealsGuy column. Larger orders can get a better discount. Ignoring the discount, you can order it on their Web site <http://www.identificationdevices.net> using your credit card. I think this product is a great value.

*Be Aware

If you are interested in either of the products below, be sure to do your homework and check their Web site for further information because I edited a lot of information out of them to make them fit. I have not tried either product.

*Hope My Wife Doesn't Use This Remote Control Stuff On Me!

Anyplace Control Software released version 4.0 of Anyplace Control, an acknowledged remote monitoring solution. The new version extends the frontiers of remote control and now

Continued

Would You Sign This Contract?, *continued*

This article's reference to the Electronic Frontier Foundation should not be construed as an endorsement of the organization by the author. Rob Rice is a computer specialist living in Anchorage Alaska and a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. Rob can be contacted at articles@isp.com.

<http://www.spywareguide.com/analyze/analyzer.php>

<http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/index.html>

<http://www.benedelman.org/news/112904-1.html>

<http://www.eff.org/wp/eula.php>

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10 Steps to Safe Computing

by Sandy Berger (sberger@compukiss.com), compuKISS.com (www.compukiss.com)

Unfortunately you must be proactive to protect yourself from today's bad guys. Here is my down and dirty list for PC users.

1. **Install a good anti-virus program** and make sure that it is updated regularly. While most of today's programs update automatically, you should check occasionally to make sure they are working properly.

2. **Don't open email attachments** even if they are from someone you know. Open only if you are expecting them, you know the person sending them, and you know what the attachments contain.

3. **Don't fall for phishing schemes** or other email where they try to get you to confirm or retype your personal information.

4. **Update your operating system regularly.** In Windows and Mac OS X you can turn on automatic updates, but you also need to download and install the updates as soon as possible. Often the bad guys take advantage of new operating

system holes as soon as they are discovered. Companies like Microsoft, Apple, and others find a way to plug the whole and issue an update. If you wait a week or two to install the updates, you are giving the hackers and spammers time to attack your computer.

5. **Be careful about the websites you visit.** Don't visit porn sites or other suspicious websites. Don't download software from any website unless you are sure it is safe.

6. **Use a firewall.** As I stated in a previous column, a hardware router is a very good unobtrusive firewall. If you don't have a router, turn on the firewall that comes with Windows. The Vista firewall is pretty good, and the XP firewall is better than nothing. If you are an expert user, you can use a software firewall like Zone Alarm, but for the uninitiated user, these complex software firewalls can be difficult to use.

Continued

DealsGuy, *continued*

can bypass routers and firewalls, as well as support PCs with dynamic IPs.

Anyplace Control displays the desktop of the remote computer, letting you use your own keyboard and mouse to control it remotely. At any point in time, and to any place in the world that has Internet connection, you can monitor your PC and get data transferred to or from it. The program can be used in a LAN, and it doesn't need a Web connection. Anyplace Control can connect to multiple computers at a time. With Anyplace Control, you will get the smoothest remote connection experience along with full control over the system without an external static IP address. Another good thing is that the program can automatically bypass routers and firewalls that lie between the remote computer and your machine.

You no longer need to spend time sending files via e-mail because it's easier to transfer them directly. The program can transfer any kind of data, and you can be sure that the information you send will be delivered immediately with no response delay. Home users can use the program to get access to their office computers and work from home, or check their own PC while away from home.

Anyplace Control runs under all versions of Microsoft Windows and costs \$22 (USD) for a single-user license. Licensed customers are entitled to free technical support and upgrades. More information , as well as a free trial copy is available free of charge from <http://www.anyplace-control.com>.

"I'd like to offer your group a 10% discount. Please contact me at info@anyplace-control.com and name your group to get the discount." (DealsGuy comment: take a close look at their refund policy and the discount!) Regards, Goncharuk Yuriy Chief Executive Officer, yura@anyplace-control.com

Direct download link: [AnyplaceControlInstall.exe](#) (2.7 Mb)

*A Freebie For Managing Your Downloads

FreeDownloadManager.org announced the release of a new version of their Free Download Manager. The list of FDM features includes accelerating downloads up to 600%, resuming broken downloads, simultaneous downloading from several mirrors, http/https/ftp/bittorrent support, flash video downloads support, video conversion and more. FDM 2.5 is released under the GPL license and is now open-source software.

The new version of Free Download Manager stands out due to its expanded possibilities. Now, FDM works as an upload manager as well, making it easy to share files with other people. FDM now allows downloading files using Bittorrent protocol, as well as downloading video from video sites, such as YouTube, Google Video, MySpace videos, etc. The video can be saved in native .flv format or converted to one of more of the popular video formats.

The FDM Team has also added more flexibility to the software providing an opportunity to control FDM remotely, via the Internet. Another new feature, portable mode, will be especially appreciated by users who want to always have the program close at hand. They can easily create FDM portable version and enjoy the software on every computer without another installation.

For more information on FDM, visit the product web site: <http://www.freedownloadmanager.org>. Download link: <http://www.freedownloadmanager.org/fdminst.exe>

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my Web site (most not offering a discount). Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. 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>. ☐

Open Source Software – Mostly Free to Use and Modify

Ira Wilsker (Iwilsker@apcug.net), APCUG Director

Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-source_software) defines Open Source Software as, "... computer software which source code is available under a license (or arrangement such as the public domain) that meets the Open source definition. This permits users to use, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is often developed in a public, collaborative manner."

Open Source software has been around in its current context since 1998, and hundreds of titles are available for almost any computing need. As a general rule, Open Source software is free to use, modify, and redistribute as the user sees fit. For this reason it has evolved from products that only a geek could love to software that is widely used in corporate, academic, and home environments.

Some Open Source software, such as the comprehensive and free office suite, Open Office (<http://openoffice.org>), has in some places taken a substantial market share from its pricey commercial competitors with hundreds of millions of users. Much of the Open Source software is now in the mainstream, and is no longer in the exclusive realm of nerds.

Open Source software should be seriously considered as an alternative to commercial software. One website that lists almost 500 categorized Open Source products is online at mashable.com/2007/09/23/open-source. This website contains a wealth of resources that are mostly free for the taking. All businesses, and many households, need some type of accounting software, and Open Source is a viable choice. Some of the

accounting programs listed provide budgeting help, personal finance assistance, point of sale (POS) applications that work with barcode readers, inventory control, and other fiscal functions.

Many businesses are now dependent on "Customer Relationship Management" software, known in the industry as CRM. About 20 CRM titles are listed on the mashable.com site listed above. Generally, these titles allow for the recording and utilizing of customer data. One product intended for charitable or religious use, is listed as "CiviCRM - The world's first downloadable constituent relationship management system; fund raising software that allows users to manage information about donors, volunteers, etc." CRM software generally allows for the creation and maintenance of mailing lists, client tracking, project management, and other customer related information.

Many of us would like the opportunity to customize what we see on our Windows desktops, and not be forced to utilize what Bill Gates provides us. Open Source obliges by providing about a dozen "Desktop Environments and Shell Replacements". Some of the functionality added to Windows by these programs includes enhancements like minimizing windows to floating icons, freeing the taskbar, controlling wallpaper and icons, real-time wallpaper effects, and other customizable functions. For those who like to tinker with Windows, these desktop environments and shell replacements can be a lot of fun to play with.

Continued

10 Steps to Safe Computing, *continued*

7. If you are using Vista or Mac OSX, or even Linux you should **create an account for daily use that does not have administrative rights**. That way, if a piece of malware gets into your system during an average computing session, it will have restricted rights. Using an account with administrative rights, gives the malware administrative rights as well.

While this is also a good practice with Windows XP, most users, including myself, find that because of the way XP is engineered, it is almost impossible to perform average tasks unless you are logged on as an administrator. Fortunately, with the Vista operating system, you can easily perform day-to-day operations when logged in as a non-Administrator.

8. Even with good habits, it can be useful to occasionally **run a good anti-spyware program** to scan and remove spyware from your computer.

9. **Shop at Secure Sites**. If you shop on the Internet, enter your personal information and credit card number only on a secure Web page. If you use Internet Explorer, a secure site will show a yellow padlock in a closed position on the toolbar at the bottom left-hand side of the screen. Netscape will show a closed darker colored padlock somewhere on the bottom toolbar. In

both browsers, a secure site will have https: rather than http: in the Web site address at the top of the page.

10. **Don't give your Social Security number** out on the Internet. Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes because computers and the Internet make stealing an identity from an unsuspecting victim easy. So don't be an unsuspecting victim! Your social security number is the golden key to your identity. Never keep your social security number anywhere in your computer. Never give it out over the Internet, even in a secure site. Some sites, like online banking, may require you to use your social security number as a password. Take a pass on any such site or service that makes you send your social security number over the Internet. Keep your identity secure by keeping your social security number as private as possible.

One more thing— **don't buy anything from spam or unsolicited email**. While this won't keep your computer any safer, it might help to lessen or eliminate spam. If no one bought anything from spam, it would take away the financial incentive to send spam and it would probably disappear.

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Attack of the Clone

Mick Topping (mickt@mtopping.us), Interactive Computer Owners Network (www.iconusersgroup.org/)

I have been dragging my feet on Vista. I really don't see much in it that I think I need. However, it is getting time for a new laptop, the hard drive on the old one is getting a little crowded, and a little busy, and slow on startup. What I really needed was a way to distract myself from how much I wanted a new LT, and maybe delay getting a new one until Vista gets a little more debugged.

Here we go—a really good deal at a local store on a laptop hard drive, I never could resist a good deal. The staff guy had a hard time finding the special. A bit of confusion on the sale circular. But finally found it. Then he says “you are not going to install that by yourself!?! We have a fine technical staff that can do that sort of thing for a small fee”. I had done a similar

install before, and did not remember much of a problem, so I politely declined.

The first surprise on opening the box was, right on top, a big yellow card, with bold print: READ THIS! Q. Can I install this drive myself? A. This kit is designed for professional installation ONLY! None of the temporary storage devices, hardware, software, specialized tools, or instructions that may be needed to install this drive is included in this kit.

All right, a challenge—the only thing I love more than a good deal, is a technical challenge. I then worked about 4 hours on studying, preparing and executing stuff like partitioning, formatting, managing, drive-imaging, copying, followed by several more hours of FIXMBR, FIXBOOT C:, copying

Continued

Open Source Software, *continued*

One computing function that almost all of us deal with on a daily basis is email. While the industry leader, Microsoft's Outlook Express is free (bundled with Internet Explorer), and its commercial big brother Outlook is commonly bundled with Microsoft Office, there are some excellent alternatives in Open Source software. One of the most popular Open Source email clients is Mozilla's Thunderbird, which is a very full featured email client with millions of users. Thunderbird can be downloaded (free) from www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird.

Thunderbird has much of the look and feel of Outlook, but provides many advanced features not available in Outlook. Thunderbird is compatible with almost all email services, and is easy and quick to configure. Thunderbird generally provides better security than Outlook, and includes some protection from phishing (identity theft) scams. Spam email is the bane of email, and Thunderbird offers active spam filtering which routes suspicious email to a junk mail folder for quick review and deletion, if desired. It is also a universal email client in that it can run on Windows, Mac OS-X, and Linux, and is currently available in over 30 languages. Thunderbird would be a great alternative for those who want to get away from Microsoft products. Thunderbird, as popular as it is, is not the only Open Source email client listed; there are about a dozen email clients listed. The selection is good, and the price can not be beat.

Another computing function that many of us partake in is ripping music, and converting it to formats that can be utilized by our portable music players. Some of us edit videos, such as the ones we take with our camcorders. The Open Source website at mashable.com/2007/09/23/open-source lists over three dozen ripping, music editing, and video editing utilities. Formats supported by some of these Open Source utilities include MP3, MPEG, MPEG1, MPEG2, DivX, WAV and several other formats. Some of the software will edit and repair damaged audio and video files, while others allow for the conversion of DVDs to other video formats. There is an impressive selection of audio and video utilities available as Open Source, and they are worthy of consideration. Once media is available in digital formats, some means of playing it

may be necessary, and this website lists several dozen media players.

Another popular computing task is file sharing and “FTP” (File Transfer Protocol), and there are about three dozen free utilities listed. While some are for traditional file swapping, others allow for the remote access and synchronization of computers.

Many of us are artistic and graphically inclined, but the major commercial graphics design programs are often expensive. Open Source can come to the rescue with about 40 titles to choose from, allowing for an excellent selection. Some Open Source graphics utilities are simple photo editors, while others include 2D and 3D animation. Other Open Source utilities provide sophisticated webpage authoring tools where a novice can produce a professional appearing webpage.

Adobe's PDF (Portable Document Format) has become the de-facto standard for saving and distributing documents in “What you see is what you get” (WYSIWYG) format. While Adobe Acrobat (writer) is an expensive utility, there are about a dozen Open Source programs that can perform a similar task for free.

A lot of busy individuals need a “PIM” (Personal Information Manager) to keep track of their personal information, appointments, calendars, address books, to-do lists, and other daily mundane tasks. About a dozen “Personal Information and Task Managers” are available as Open Source, which may provide some help in controlling our often hectic lives.

There are several other categories of Open Source software listed, including project managers, reporting tools, RSS (news) feeds, system utilities, office suites, office programs, and web browsers such as Firefox. Open Source is here to stay and may be a key player in the future of software. It is definitely worthy of a serious look and consideration.

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NTLDR...and generally suffering extreme frustration. Things that worked in years past seemed to no longer work. After I slept on it, I realized, there may be an easier way. This new drive is a Seagate Hard Drive, a product of the most advanced HD company on earth! (says so right on the box) They must know that they could sell more HDs if they make it easy to transfer stuff to the new HD! Off I go, to <http://www.seagate.com/www/en-us/support/downloads/> after a bit of poking around, I find MaxBlast 5, a Maxtor program. (Maxtor is now a Seagate subsidiary) However, MaxBlast looks really promising. It is a free download; it is a product of Acronis who makes several high quality disk cloning and data-backup products.

Now we are making progress. I download and install Maxblast 5, Maxblast has a 60 page manual on line, which I read thoroughly (OK, maybe 10 minutes) then run it. One of the choices is Bootable Media Builder. This allows the creation of a CD that is "bootable". Flash or other USB also supported — but your BIOS must support USB booting to use it. Note that Windows is **always** using the disk it is booted from, making this disk hard to copy, but by using a bootable CD it is possible to start the computer while the existing hard drive is not in use by Windows, so it can be more easily copied. Maxblast has two modes for Bootable Media Builder: The Full version, and the Safe version. The "full" version seems more appropriate for using USB devices, which I will need to use, (for externally attached USB drive) so that is what I choose. And since I wish to make a bootable CD, I choose the ISO image, which is the standard format for this capability.

About ready to make a clone of my hard drive. Since the laptop has no capability to add additional internal drives, the new drive is connected externally through a USB-IDE cable (under \$20 for a cable that will interface with 2.5 and 3.5 internal drives).



After the bootable CD is created, Power off the computer, then connect the cable to the computer, and the new drive. Put on your good glasses, and examine the large end of the cable closely. There is a set of holes that match the pins on the disk drive, and where is one pin missing on the drive, there is one hole that is plugged on the adapter. If you have an adapter for



3.5 as well as 2.5 drives, there will be one set of holes for

either type of drive. Some (about 4) of the pins will remain exposed. (no holes)

In theory, this setup should work when plugged in after the power is on, but with a weak USB power, there have been reports of the drive not spinning-up fast enough and the drive logic indicating a bad drive. Turn on power, and quickly insert the CD. If the computer boots to Windows, you can shut down and retry. Note that you may have to change the BIOS set-up to boot from the CD before the HD. BIOS setup procedures are different on every machine, but are usually accessed by hitting F2 or Delete while booting, but before Windows starts. (Check your user's manual)

The Clone Disk is the choice, and if you are happy with your existing disk setup (no partitions, or like the existing proportions) the default may be best. I was able to increase several of my partitions for some slack, and have room for a 20GB spare. After you have finished the cloning process, it is time to swap the internal hard drive with the external drive.

Remember that laptops have a battery — don't do ANY work on the inside of the laptop without first removing the battery. In fact don't do anything without reading the appropriate sections of your particular laptop's user manual. They are all a little different.

Laptop HDs are usually in a small slide-out tray, my tray was held in place by two screws. The drive is held in the tray by two more screws. If you try really hard, the removal and replace process can be extended to 10 minutes, but most folks will finish the task in about 5. Note that these screws are frequently tiny, so it is a good idea to do this work on a light-colored surface, in a well lit work area.

In addition to the screws holding the drive in place, there will likely be a small adapter that fits over the pins on the IDE drive and makes it compatible with the connector inside the laptop's tray holder. This figure shows the HD naked connector pins, on the left, and the pins with the adapter installed on the right. This adapter has the same hole pattern as the USB-IDE cable adapter. Note that there are two groups of pins, the 4 pins (on the right) separated from the larger group (on the left), and the 4-pin group is not used in this application, either for the internal drive adapter, or the USB-IDE connection.

Be careful when handling the drive to avoid static discharge. Hardwood floors and leather soled shoes are preferred over carpets and sneakers in the work area. Also, the drives should never be squeezed on their flat surface—when inserting the pins in either the USB-IDE connector, or the internal adapter, grasp the drive by the edges to avoid placing too much pressure on the flat surfaces of the drives.

The ability to easily replace a a HD is very valuable. This gives you a way to do risky experiments, such as using questionable or incompatible software, or perhaps editing the registry while minimizing the risk of having to do a total system reinstall.

The MaxBlast program, system requirements states: At least one Seagate Technology or Maxtor disc drive, as well as several other pretty easy-to-meet requirements. I did not try

Continued

Checkmate

Berry F. Phillips (bfpdata@laccess.net), Computer Club of Oklahoma City (www.ccokc.org)

Man-vs-machine has been a theme that has intrigued the public for many ears. The Turk was a chess playing automaton that was a sensation in Europe in the 1770s. The Turk was a wooden cabinet with a chess board on top played by a life-sized mannequin dressed in Turkish style. This mysterious device could play against and often defeat human chess opponents including Napoleon Bonaparte and Benjamin Franklin.

In truth, the Turk was a clever illusion as the cabinet concealed a human chess expert who moved the Turk's arm and played the games. The Turk was created by Wolfgang von Kempeler and was not only a success in Europe but later in the United States. Eventually the Turk was no longer popular and was destroyed in a fire in Philadelphia in 1864. Edgar Allen Poe wrote a widely read 1836 essay proposing that the Turk concealed a human chess player.

The best known of the man-vs-machine devices was the world-famous Deep Blue. Deep Blue began as a chess program named Chipset (later Deep Thought) and was created by Fenghsuing Hsu and Thomas Anantharman at Carnegie Mellon University. The creators later joined IBM Corporation which supported the development of the system.

Deep Thought was eventually renamed Deep Blue, a twist on IBM's corporation nick name, Big Blue. Deep Blue was a RS/6000 SP parallel processor with specialized microchips for chess and calculated 200 million chess moves per second. Deep Blue lost a six-game match to world chess champion, Gary Kasperov, in 1996. But in the 1997 rematch, Deep Blue made history by defeating Kasperov 3.5 games to 2.5 games.

Many in the chess world believe that Gary Kasperov is the greatest human chess player. He had never lost a game previously and was unnerved at his loss and began ascribing almost human features to the computer. While Deep Blue had access to all of Kasperov's games, Kasperov was not allowed to see

Deep Blue's previous games for study. He received \$400,000 for his loss and would have received \$700,000 if he had won. IBM retired Big Blue after the match.

Another famous chess playing computer was Deep Fritz backed by a German company ChessSise and written by two programmers, Franz Marsh and Mathias Feist. The word, deep, is a nod to IBM's Deep Blue. Deep Fritz was in the news in 2001 when a chess match ended in a 4-4 tie with Russian chess expert, Vladimir Krammick.

In 2003, the long awaited chess match between Gary Kasperov and Deep Junior, a three-time world champion computer developed by Amir Ban and Shay

Bushinsky who were both from Israel was played in New York City. The match ended in a 3.0 to 3.0 tie. Kasperov quipped to his mother, "at least I didn't lose."

Well, this subject is getting too "deep" for me. Now I don't have to worry about anymore literary "moves" since I have been officially "checkmated."

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Continued

Attack of the Clone, *continued*

to see if it would work on other drive brands, and I don't know if it checks. It is a pretty nice feature though, particularly for laptops, where there is no space to add a HD, only to replace a HD.

I would personally not recommend this as a primary data backup, as it is a little tedious, and backups should be as easy as possible. So, HD replacement could be thought of as a way to upgrade the system, as well as a sort of super system-restore. If your laptop is seriously important, such as work related, for a business, get it set-up well, functioning smoothly, and then (after making a separate back-up of your data) create a clone of your hard drive, and swap it to make

sure it is a good copy. Then, if the worst happens, your hard drive dies, just swap in the the original. Maybe even take the spare with you on trips, along with a little screw driver... Just don't loose it!

References:

<http://www.harddriveupgrade.com/>,

http://www.fonerbooks.com/laptop_1.htm,

http://www.seagate.com/support/maxblast/mb_ug.en.pdf

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SIG News

C/C++ Programming

Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)

<http://home.earthlink.net/~barnold2002/Acgnj/index.html>

This group is devoted to 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.

September: Process Whois, a utility for processing raw text data. This program processes a website history log file. The goal is to summarize the data by counting the number of times the site is hit from each unique user based on their IP address.

The code uses the latest C++ compiler in Microsoft's Visual Studio 2005 so there are many discussion points and C++ changes. The program may also be compiled using the free C++ Express compiler.

Some of the items that discussed were Windows Programming with Microsoft Managed code, Microsoft Visual Studio 2005, Debugging, Text Processing and Storage, Internet Whois, The Windows Clipboard.

Our next meeting October 16. ☐

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.

September: Getting Groovy with Java! Looking into this exciting, relatively new scripting language for the Java programming language. Tasks such as quick database access/result set retrieval and file I/O that would normally require about 40-50 lines of code with Java can be condensed into only a few lines (if not one) with Groovy. This is indeed very powerful. Groovy code can be embedded in Java code (and vice-versa) and can even be used with the Spring Framework.

Our next meeting October 9 ☐

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 PM at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information. **Next meeting October 1.** ☐

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 October 10.** ☐

Main Meeting

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

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

October 3: Firefox (Any Topic) David McRitchie

November 7: Comparison of Excel 2007 and Word 2007 With Older Versions Paul Natanson ☐

Window Pains

John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)

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

Our 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.

October 17: Creating Macros to Automate Routine Tasks in Excel and Word, Paul Natanson

November 21: Programming Languages Shootout, Committee ☐

Investment Software

Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org)

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.

We're no longer focusing on just Telechart -- if you are using (or interested in) Tradestation, eSignal, VectorVest -- or just in learning how to select and use charting and technical analysis, come join us !!

Our next meeting: October 11. ☐

Dufferdom - Tales from the Kingdom of the Ordinary User

Faxing

David D. Uffer (Daviduffer@sbcglobal.net), Chicago Computer Society (www.ccs.org)

It may be that there are curses saved by the PC minigods for assignment to some PC users, myself among them. Not always, of course, but just often enough to keep us humble and on edge.

Let's review a part of a sea change that led us to where we are now. In August of 1981, IBM released the original IBM PC, an "Entry Level System" in IBMese. Don Estridge was an engineer of some standing in IBM and had wangled their powers to assign him a small group (14) of developers to create a personal-scale computer with substantial backing to outshine then-current machines like the Commodore. Estridge was himself fired-up on the potential of personal computers and was the right group leader for this special project.

IBM must have viewed his project as less than crucial since they let him depart from their traditional all-internal sourcing for parts and components. The corporate policy was that if a project needed new components or software, they would invent and patent them in due time. Using NIH parts (Not Invented Here) was a no-no. Citing urgency, economy, and

ready availability of perfectly good parts, Estridge was able to skirt the NIH ban and produce the prototype that IBM accepted, manufactured, and released to the world, with open architecture so users could make their own adaptations. They did, in droves, Other makers did, in ample numbers. The essential early IBM PC was born and the world changed.

So there we were, messing about with *VisiCalc*, *Lotus 1-2-3*, and various word processors. In those days before a graphical user interface, we assailed the black DOS screens, pecking in our little green characters and watching the results. Sometimes we messed up and lost a lot of work. A hero waited in the wings. The brilliant Peter Norton had developed a relatively easy way to retrieve and resurrect the lost — or most of it. A savior was at hand, idolized and trusted as he developed more aids and tools. We were infused with hope by the prospect of help. Or some were.

My first experience with the Norton salvation was different than expected. It was a farewell to data, by degrees. Step by step, it waved hello and goodbye. The black screen of fate.

Continued on page 22

SIG News, *continued*

PHP?

Anyone interested in a new PHP SIG (Interpreted Script Programming Language), please get in touch with John Raff (jraff@comcast.net).

PHP is a widely-used general-purpose scripting language that is especially suited for Web development and can be embedded into HTML. If you are new to PHP and want to get some idea of how it works, try the introductory tutorial (<http://us2.php.net/tut.phpv>). ☐

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 ?*

Due to work schedule conflicts, the SIG Leader cannot make the meetings. If anyone else would like to pick up the baton, carry the banner, help the SIG along, please let us know. ☐

October 2007

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. ☐

Firefox Activity

Firefox@acgnj.org

This SIG is intended to be an open forum for all Firefox and Mozilla techniques and technologies, to encourage the study and development of web sites of all kinds. All the browsers will be considered and examined. *Meeting third Monday of the month at 7 PM. Next meeting October 15.*

The first meeting of the Firefox Activity was led by David McRitchie to discuss, argue and kick around many concepts and ideas. Web2 is definitely in the mix. All are encouraged to "think out of the box" about new web site design. All members and guests are invited to check out the design concepts and voice their opinion. ☐

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)

<http://www.NJGamers.com>

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be October 12, 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! ☐

ACGNJ News

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Guru Corner

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.

Software

HTML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
CSS	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	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
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Home Automation	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Operating Systems		
Windows 3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942

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	Linux Users Group in Princeton: 7 pm, 2nd Wednesday, Lawrence Branch Mercer Library, Rt#1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrence NJ http://www.lugip.org	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: 7 pm 2nd Thurs., Morris County Library, Hanover Ave, Morristown NJ, (973) 267-0871. http://www.morrismicro.com	Central Jersey Computer Club: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, College of NJ. 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) 764-6338. www.pacsnet.org	NJ Computer Club: 6:15 pm, 2nd Wednesday except Jul & Aug, North Branch Reformed Church, 203 Rt 28, Bridgewater NJ. http://www.njcc.org	Princeton PC Users Group: 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, http://www.ppcug-nj.org

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>.

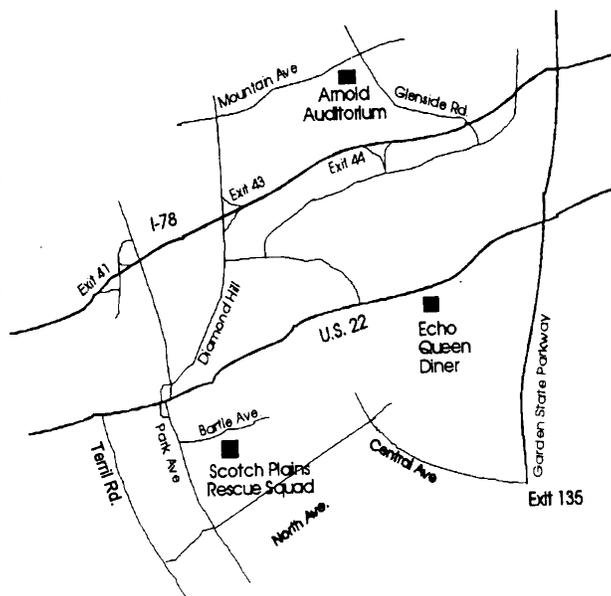
MarketPro Shows

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

Sep 8 - 9: NJ Convention Center (Raritan Center), Edison

Sep 29 - 30: Meadowlands Expo Center, Secaucus

Oct 27 - 28: 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. ☐

Redo the work, maybe better the second time. And I did learn the personal salvation: save your work. So for this duffer, Norton developed a tarnish early on. Later, I came to be using only the antivirus application.

The tarnish deepened and developed pits on the firewall firing line. It was near the start of their general acceptance and Norton's *Personal Firewall* seemed a reasonable choice. Not for me, as it turned out, though it did protect my e-mail. It did so by gradually denying me access to mail until I had no access at all. Complete, 100% protection. Subsequently, I was told that the program was not inherently evil and should have offered me, the user, an acceptance / denial option at every point and that I must have missed them all. Maybe I did. That's what duffers do.

But worse was yet to come. One of the ways *Personal Firewall* had seemed a reasonable choice was that it promised that it could be turned off. I could not determine how or where the secret exit was. OK. I could remove the program from the PC's mind. Or so I thought. But the MS System software removal utility could not find it. Norton, now part of Symantec, had subverted Microsoft. One of my unused Norton utilities was a program scrubber tool. That would do it. It did not, though it did acknowledge its existence. But Norton would not touch Norton. Maybe it was a privacy issue. I found a program that vowed removal of any other program and used it against the firewall. It reduced the PC's functionality to that of a gibbering idiot. OK, off to the lobotomy shop for total wipeout formatting. Some fun? Sort of. With minor satisfaction, I later heard I was not alone in my disgust.

Now to the present, additional interplay with Symantec, and some suggested name modifications.

Just the fax. The first stage I recall of melding personal computers and faxing was enabling PCs to send existing digital files as faxes to recipient fax machines, which printed them out on funny paper which was repellant to the touch. Sort of like sending telegrams on nasty paper. Users could also em-

ploy an expensive and touchy scanner and an expensive and variably accurate OCR program to read certain type fonts and convert them into digital files to send either to fax machines or other PCs and their printers using regular paper.

Then, when massive increases in memory arrived, along came the graphical interface and transmitting images was possible. Users could send pictures of any text or handwriting as well as pictures of pictures, using better scanners integrated into better fax transmitters / receivers / printers. Wow. Now, to my shallow understanding, the pre-eminent PC faxing program is *WinFax PRO*, from Symantec. Mine has worked reasonably well, albeit unreasonably complex, until recently. That brings up the question of a curse again.

Briefly put and in serial order, my *WinFax* would no longer send a fax. It would not reinstall without my uninstalling the existing program. It will not uninstall and has no recognition of itself as an entity. A search for the program under its normal name does not yield the normal icon. Opening the similarly named file folder icon unleashes a confetti burst of scores of petty parts, none of which do anything useful. Trying to install it on a second machine, which does not have any version of it, set off the same hissyfits. I suggest for at least my own usage that *WinFax* should be titled *LoseFax* and Symantec should be SighMatic since it seems to bring an automatic sigh to this duffer, who is currently considering a stand-alone HP fax/scanner/printer under \$100 or the new trend in e-faxing. May the minigods please be pleased or at least compliant.

Dave Uffer has been a member of the Chicago Computer Society for somewhere near twenty years. He considers himself less than expert in many PC specialties but at least functional in several he believes important enough to qualify him as an ordinary user, courted and often slighted by the industry. This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above). ☐

ACGNJ MEETINGS

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

Monday, October 1, 2007

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

Tuesday, October 2

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting.

Friday, October 5

8 P.M. - Main Meeting, Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net).

Monday, October 8

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

Tuesday, October 9

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

Wednesday, October 10

7 P.M. - WebDev SIG, Evan Williams (tech@evanwilliamsconsulting.com)

Thursday, October 11

8 P.M. - Investing Software, Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org).

Friday, October 12

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

Monday, October 15

7 P.M. - Firefox Activity, David McRitchie (firefox@acgnj.org)

Tuesday, October 16

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

Friday, October 19

8 P.M. - Window Pains, John Raff (john@jraff.com).

Thursday, October 25

8 P.M. - Genealogy SIG, Frank Warren, **no meeting**.

Tuesday, October 30

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting.

Monday, November 5

8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org) ☐

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