

Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

Volume 32, Number 9

November 2007

It's Election Time Again



ACGNJ Needs Volunteers

“The world is full of willing people, some willing to work, the rest willing to let them.” Robert Frost said that — which category describes you? ☐



<http://www.acgnj.org>

Founded 1975

In addition to the slate of officers and directors to be elected, there is also a proposal for a change in the Constitution and By-Laws to be voted on by the members.

This change, proposed by Bruce Arnold, will allow the SIG Leaders to vote at BOD meetings. The exact wording of the amendment will be presented at the Main Meeting, December 7.

As usual, elections will be held at the Main Meeting on December 7. Nominations will be accepted from the floor until the actual voting begins, and yes, you can nominate yourself..

The Election Slate

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<Open>	1 year term
Gregg McCarthy	2 year term
Arnold Milstein	2 year term
John Raff	2 year term
<Open>	2 year term

Obviously we need volunteers to fill the open seats on the Board — we urge you to consider volunteering some of your time — it's only one evening a month! ☐

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

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Hold That Ghost

Robert Hawes (r.d.hawes@hotmail.com), ACGNJ

That would be the computer program, not the supernatural being. I “borrowed” this article’s title from a 1941 Abbott and Costello film that I saw over and over again as a kid, on “Million Dollar Movie”. (Anyone else out there remember it?). Usually, when I make a pun on somebody else’s title, I change the words in a (hopefully) funny way. This time, the words are the same but the joke is in the two different ways that I interpret them. First: I really did it. I ran out of space last month, so I had to hold Ghost over until now. Second: It’s a losing battle. In the long run, I *won’t* be able to hold on to Ghost.

As I explained in our September issue, I actually started writing this material in late June, but ran into problems and wound up postponing it until November (skipping both September and October). Originally, this article (under a title I’ll probably use next month) started with some Linux-based experiments. Then, it went on to other topics (which I’ll probably also use next month). Now, the Ghost-related material that I couldn’t print last month fits together with that Linux material quite nicely. So I wound up with a better article here, I got to use a silly title, and I still have enough text left to cover December. Talk about a win-win-win situation.

Of course, the Ghost I’m referring to makes images of computer hard disks. I bought my first software of this type in the mid-nineties. That was Drive Image, produced by the late, great PowerQuest Corporation. A while later, I heard some interesting things about a rival program called Ghost, made by a company named Binary Research; but I didn’t try it. Then, in 2000, I switched jobs; and my new employer used Ghost *a lot*. To maintain home-to-office consistency, I got a copy of my own (now from Symantec and called Norton Ghost). I’ve upgraded several times since then, but I *won’t* be doing it again. In 2004, with version 9, Symantec converted Ghost to XP-only. Apparently, they’re now up to version 12, but I *don’t care*. I’m only interested in a version that will run under DOS. So first, we’ll look at how FreeDOS 1.0 (or FD10) could be used to improve my current Ghost boot floppy. Then, using Ghost as the standard for comparison, we’ll look at two possible Linux CD-booted *replacements* for Ghost.

Before that, though, we need a quick floppy boot disk operating system refresher course, mostly cribbed from my previous article *Requiem for a Floppy, Part Two* (June, 2006):

- In 1988, the three MS-DOS 3.30A system files (IO.SYS, MSDOS.SYS and COMMAND.COM) took up just 76 KB, leaving **93.5%** of a 5¼ inch, 1.2 MB HD (High Density) boot floppy (or **94.6%** of a 3½ inch, 1.44 MB HD boot floppy) free for programs or data the user might want to add.
- The three MS-DOS 5 (1991) system files took up 116 KB, leaving **91.8%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free.
- The three MS-DOS 6.22 (1994) system files took up 130 KB, leaving **90.8%** of a 1.44 MB floppy free.
- Turning to non-MS operating systems: In 1997, the three Caldera OpenDOS 7.01 files (IBMBIO.COM, IBMDOS.COM and COMMAND.COM) took up 111 KB, leaving **92.2%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free.

- Those files in DR-DOS 7.05 (7/2000) took up 112.4 KB, leaving **91.4%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free.
- Those files in PC-DOS 7.1 (11/2000) took up 136.7 KB, leaving **90.4%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free.
- From 1995 to 1999, the MS-DOS 7 system files (IO.SYS, MSDOS.SYS and COMMAND.COM again) gobbled up 301 KB, leaving only **78.8%** of a 1.44 MB HD boot floppy free. That’s because the geniuses at Microsoft added a 127 KB picture of their “curvy window” logo to IO.SYS. That works out to 3% of the disk lost to upgrade bloat, and **9%** gratuitously wasted on eye candy. MS-DOS 7 is the true name of the DOS version released with all versions of Windows 95 and 98. If you scan any 95/98 COMMAND.COM (counting Y2K upgrades, there were at least **six** variations) with a binary editor and look for text messages, you’ll find; “MS-DOS Version 7 (C) Copyright 1981-1995 Microsoft Corp” near the end. As far as I know, these hidden messages (**exactly** the same, even for 98 and Y2K releases) are the only places where Microsoft ever admitted to the existence of MS-DOS 7.
- In 2000, the three MS-DOS 8 system files took up just 204.9 KB, leaving **85.6%** of a 1.44 MB HD boot floppy free. That’s because they got rid of the picture, thus restoring 7.3% of the 9% disk space previously wasted, while losing just 1.7% to evolutionary bloat. This give-back of 96.1 KB additional free disk space caused me to quickly convert **all** of my boot floppies. MS-DOS 8 is the true name of the operating system installed on the Windows ME “Emergency Boot Disk”, and on the lame, almost-completely-useless “MS-DOS startup disk” that came with XP. If you scan either’s copy of COMMAND.COM (they’re identical) with a binary editor for text messages, you’ll find; “MS-DOS Version 8 (C) Copyright 1981-1999 Microsoft Corp” near the end of the file. As far as I know, **this** message is the only place where Microsoft ever admitted to the existence of MS-DOS 8.
- In 2004, the two FreeDOS Beta 9 system files (KERNEL.SYS and COMMAND.COM) took up just 137.8 KB, leaving **90.3%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free. (That’s **0.5%** less free disk space than MS-DOS 6.22, **11.5%** more free space than MS-DOS 7 and **4.7%** more free space than MS-DOS 8).
- In 2006, the two FreeDOS 1.0 system files took up only 110 KB, leaving **92.3%** of a 1.44 MB boot floppy free. That was better than anything since MS-DOS 3.30A.

I created my existing Ghost 2002 boot floppy in 2002, and tweaked it slightly in 2005. That’s also when I decided **not** to “upgrade” to Ghost 2003. I found two very big (in my opinion, anyway) deficiencies in the DOS version of Ghost 2003, compared to only one so-so (and easily work-around-able) advantage it had over Ghost 2002. Ultimately, though, my decision was based on the size of the newer executable file. At .98 MB, it was 379 KB bigger than Ghost 2002. Add the 206 KB MS-DOS 8 operating system files, and it came to 1.18 MB. Add drivers for CD/DVD, Parallel Port and USB access

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(313 KB), and it came to 1.49 MB, exceeding the 1.44 MB floppy disk capacity (which is, in fact, *really* only 1.37 MB) without adding the mouse driver (37 KB) or any of the necessary batch files and auxiliary programs. Re-created in its entirety, but using Ghost 2003, a new boot disk would have been 354 KB too big to fit on a 1.44 MB floppy. Sacrificing everything that wasn't absolutely essential for minimally acceptable operation, it would still have been 193 KB too big. That left me with four choices: use compression, use a bigger disk, use *two* 1.44 MB disks, or (of course) don't use it at all.

First, I tried some compression experiments. The Ghost 2003 DOS executable file was probably manufactured with some form of internal compression built-in, because it could hardly be shrunk at all. No combination of the other files I tried could be compressed anywhere even close to meeting that minimal 193 KB requirement (and that wasn't even counting the size of the decompression software I'd have needed to add to make such a disk work). So much for compression. Second, I thought about using a bigger disk. At one time, that would have been a viable option. Some of you young whippersnappers might not know this, but there used to be 2.88 MB floppies. Somewhere in one of my piles of stuff, I've got one of those drives, and five (count 'em, five) disks. While I wouldn't want to pin all my back-up hopes on one drive (what if it went bad?), my Nero CD/DVD creation program can use the image of a 2.88 MB disk to make a bootable CD, which they say will work on any computer. However, that wouldn't have given me a boot *floppy*, so I put that idea "on the back burner". Third, I considered using two disks; but that just wasn't an elegant solution, so I tabled that notion as well. That left option four: reject Ghost 2003. Which I did.

For this article, with a new operating system available, I took another look at Ghost 2003. The FreeDOS 1.0 system files take up 94.9 KB less than the MS-DOS 8 system files. That's a significant reduction, but not nearly enough to overturn Ghost 2003's 379 KB surplus. Even considering compression, it's closer, but still "no cigar". The bigger disk option is still workable, even without using a 2.88 MB floppy. For no other reason I can think of except pure malice, Microsoft purposely made it so you can't boot a hard disk from MS-DOS 8. FreeDOS, however, was actually designed for hard disks and embedded systems. They hardly mention floppy disks at all. A few years ago, as an experiment, I made a CD that could boot from the image of a 6 MB MS-DOS 6.22 hard disk. A similarly sized FreeDOS 1.0 hard disk boot image could combine everything I would ever want to do from a DOS boot disk into a single source. Such a consolidation might make up for the fact that it wasn't on a floppy. I think I may actually try this one day (and I'll probably write it up here if I do), but *not today*. So for now, Ghost 2003 stays rejected.

Sometimes I think I can feel myself getting older. For example, I used to love taking things apart to see how they worked. Not so much any more. Part of this can be ascribed to the incontrovertible fact that less stuff is take-apart-able these days. In the "good old days", just about everything was designed to be repaired if necessary. That's definitely not the case anymore. In the early seventies, when I got my first

electronic calculator, I remember being shocked that the manufacturer didn't even *try* to fix a unit that was returned for service. They just trashed it and sent out a new one. Now, thirty-five or so years later, this business model seems to have spread all over. With it comes an inevitable decrease in quality. Things that are never intended to be repaired can be made *a lot* more flimsy to begin with. Unfortunately, I can't blame it all on shoddy merchandise. Some of it is me. I'm just not as adventurous as I used to be. More and more, I find myself subscribing to the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy. In addition, procrastination has become one of my favorite hobbies. Right now, I'm telling myself that I probably *will* create that small FreeDOS hard disk someday; and when I do, *that* will be the time to do all the tedious and repetitive testing required to insure that the CD/DVD, Parallel Port and USB drivers still work correctly under FreeDOS 1.0. At this time, I should confine myself to fixing what's actually broken.

So what exactly is broken on my Ghost boot floppy? Not the drivers, or Ghost itself, or most of the few auxiliary DOS programs. All in all, I put together a pretty good package back in 2002. Those tweaks I made in 2005 *only* involved minor edits to some of the batch files. In five years of frequent operation, I've never had any driver trouble. My policy is to keep operating system partitions lean, mean, and as data free as possible, and I use Ghost to back up individual partitions rather than entire hard disks. Therefore, I probably won't hit Ghost 2002's capacity limit (whatever it may be) while I can still use this boot floppy at all. My problem is with FDISK. It's the only auxiliary program on the disk that I actually use a lot, and the one tool that I *do* use to examine entire hard disks, and it doesn't handle disks larger than 80 GB. (It looks to me as if it *can* still read the information, but it can't properly display it). If only I could just replace FDISK.

Well, maybe I can. I've always thought that there was no purely technical reason for the "Incorrect MS-DOS version" message you get if you accidentally mix components from different MS-DOS releases. After all, they're just computer programs, not integral parts of some mystical whole. It seemed much more likely to be a malicious "self-destruct" lock-in mechanism on Microsoft's part. Maybe FreeDOS, being a free and open source project, doesn't have such paranoid design underpinnings. So I replaced the MS-DOS 8 FDISK with the newer FreeDOS 1.0 FDISK, and it worked *just fine*. That one small replacement gave my (still mostly) MS-DOS 8 Ghost boot floppy a whole new lease on life.

While I was at it, though, I made one further change. The maximum size file that Ghost can produce is 2 GB. When creating an image larger than that, Ghost will split it up into 2 GB chunks. There's no way to get around this size limit, and that's actually a *good* thing; but there *is* a way to set the limit smaller. When I created my original Ghost boot disk back in 2000, I only had a CD burner. So I created a batch file called SPLIT.BAT. If I entered SPLIT rather than GHOST at the command line, Ghost would still run, but only after it was set to create its output files in 690 MB increments. That way, each image segment could be written to its own CD, and there was still a little bit of room left on each individual CD for any

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“overhead” files I might want to add. (While I haven’t used SPLIT.BAT in quite a while, I’m leaving it in just-in-case). Now, however, I’ve got a different “size problem”. Writing a very large image divided into 2 GB sections to multiple DVDs wastes over 400 MB on each disk. That really bothers my parsimonious nature. Therefore, I’ve created a batch file called DVD.BAT. If I enter DVD at the command line, Ghost will produce its output files in 1,493 MB chunks. Since the true capacity of a “4.7 GB” DVD is actually 4,483 MB for DVD+R disks and 4,489 MB for DVD-R disks, *three* of these new image segments (at 4,479 MB total) will fit on either type disk, with a tiny bit of free space left over.

That takes care of Ghost. Amazingly, I wound up not making a completely new FreeDOS based Ghost boot floppy, and it *still* took me over 2,500 words to get to this point. Imagine where we’d be if I *hadn’t* avoided all that work. Now we come to Linux. On July 6, 2007 I downloaded two ISO CD images from the Internet. One was gparted - clonezilla - 2.0.iso (a combination CD containing Gparted - livecd - 0.3.4-8 and Clonezilla 1.0.3-18). The other was systemrescuecd - x86-0.3.6.iso, an “emergency repair” CD containing PartImage 0.6.4. I ran tests using Clonezilla and PartImage, and neither did well. So I gave up for the moment and went on to other things. One of the reasons I had so much trouble is that I performed my first set of experiments on the *wrong* subject. I had a computer with a C: drive that was due for a Ghost backup. So I thought; “Why don’t I do a real-world test, using an actual computer that’s in use every day?” As it turned out, that was a *big* mistake. Rather than list my failures now, I’ll save the details for later on.

Both CDs I tested in July are totally out of date now, so I got new versions on October 9, 2007, and wrote each ISO CD image to its own CD-RW disk. I had to download clonezilla-live-1.0.5-8.iso from the Clonezilla web site instead, because the Gparted/Clonezilla combination CD site seemed to be broken. (I don’t remember having any trouble in July, but this time, nothing on the screen made any sense). I had no problems getting systemrescuecd-x86-0.4.0.iso (containing PartImage 0.6.6). My experimental subject this time was very simple: a 2.5 GB IDE hard disk containing a single FAT32 partition with Windows 98 SE installed. I don’t remember running that particular hard disk for several years, so I started it up once now to make sure that it still booted properly. The plan was to back up that subject two or three times with each program (using all available compression settings), write the images to a DVD-RW disk, and then restore each image from that DVD to an empty 6 GB hard disk.

My test computer was the same AMD Athlon 1.7 GB system I used in previous articles. The primary master (hda) was either the 2.5 GB subject disk or the 6 GB target disk. The primary slave (hdb) was a CD/DVD reader that ran whatever boot CD was required. The secondary master (hdc) was a 40 GB hard disk that was the destination for the newly created images. The secondary slave (hdd) was a DVD-RW drive. After all the image files had been created, hdd would be used to burn those files from hdc onto the data DVD-RW disk. Then, hdc would be physically removed from the computer (so files read by

hdd from the data DVD would be the *only* possible source for the restoration procedures). First, though, I booted the computer from my revitalized Ghost floppy and backed up the subject hard disk twice for reference. (Once using “fast” compression and once using “high” compression). Then, I re-booted from the Clonezilla CD. Here’s what happened after that:

The GParted/Clonezilla live CD from July had an opening screen featuring *twelve* GParted boot options, five Clonezilla boot options, and seven hard disk boot options. Back then, I chose “Clonezilla live 1.0.3-18”, the first Clonezilla option. The new Clonezilla 1.0.5.8 live CD has four Clonezilla boot options, plus a local hard disk boot option, a memory test option, a FreeDOS boot option, and an Ethernet network boot option. This time, I chose “Clonezilla live” (the default). After that, the CD booted for about two minutes before offering a choice of two languages: English or Traditional Chinese. I chose English (the default).

Next came a screen with four keymap options. I chose “Don’t touch keymap” (the default). Then came a Clonezilla/command line selection screen. I chose “Start Clonezilla” (the default). Then came a source/destination screen with two options. I chose “device-image” (the default). Then came a mount selection screen offering six options. I chose “Mount local device” (again the default). Then came a partition selection screen, offering two choices: hda1 (the first and only partition on hda) or hdc1 (the first and only partition on hdc). I chose hdc1 (*not* the default). With that, the system automatically mounted /dev/hdc1 as /home/partimag. (That’s the *only* partition that Clonezilla will work with). Then came a mode selection screen offering five options. I chose the default once again: “savedisk” (meaning save the entire hard disk). Then came a “Clonezilla advanced extra parameters” screen containing multiple options, about half of which were pre-selected. I accepted them unchanged. Finally, a screen came up offering four levels of compression. I didn’t bother with -z0 (none), but I re-ran the entire program three times from start to finish, once each for -z1 (gzip), -z2 (bzip2), and -z3 (lzo). Creating an image using lzo compression took just over two minutes, gzip took about four minutes, and bzip2 took over *twenty-two* minutes. Clonezilla automatically generated names for the images, based on the dates and times of creation. I could have replaced them with my own filenames if I’d wanted to, but I didn’t. All three images were created without any problems.

System Rescue CD took about a minute and a half to boot, with only one pause to select a keymap (I chose the default). It ends up at a command prompt, after having displayed about half a screen full of useful instructions and suggestions. I entered the following commands there:

```
mkdir /mnt/hd1
mount /dev/hdc1 /mnt/hd1
startx
```

The first command created a directory named /mnt/hd1. The second mounted hdc1 as that directory. The third started the X.org graphical environment. In the resulting desktop, I

Continued

moved the mouse pointer to a blank area of the screen, right clicked to get the “Applications” drop-down menu, then clicked on the PartImage entry. That opened Partition Image 0.6.6 in an xterm window. It’s slightly confusing, because the mouse pointer stays visible if you move it around inside that window. It looks as if you can make your selections with the mouse, but you can click all you want. Nothing will happen, because the program itself is *not* mouse aware. You have to navigate from the keyboard, using the Tab and arrow keys.

On the first screen, I selected “hda1” as the “Partition to save/restore”. I typed in “/mnt/hd1/pitest11” as the “Image file to create/use”, and I selected “Save partition into a new image file” as the “Action to be done”. Then I pressed F5 (Next). On the second screen, there were three options under “Compression level”: None, Gzip and Bzip2. The first time through, I selected Gzip and pressed F5 (Continue). Then, I did it all over again for Bzip2. I didn’t bother with None. Gzip took about five minutes; Bzip2 took over *twenty-three* minutes. Both images were created without any problems.

Now, let’s compare sizes. Using fast compression, Ghost produced a 792 MB image file. Using lzo compression, Clonezilla produced a 788 MB file. Pretty close. Using gzip compression, Clonezilla and PartImage each produced 703 MB files. (The PartImage file is actually 175 KB larger). Using high compression, Ghost produced a 686 MB image file. Using bzip2 compression, Clonezilla and PartImage each produced 688 MB files. (The PartImage file is actually 4.9 KB larger). In its XP-only version 9, Ghost added a “middle” compression speed. From these figures, it was probably based on gzip.

To restore a Clonezilla image from my data DVD, I had to go “off the road” at one point. I went with the defaults on the first four screens. However, on the fifth screen (mount selection), instead of the default “Mount local device” (which only recognizes hard disk partitions), I had to select “enter_shell” (exit to the command line) and enter the following command:

```
mount /dev/hdd /home/partimag
```

(I didn’t need to run mkdir first because the program still created the /home/partimag directory automatically). After I ran that command, I got a bunch of ominous looking messages; but when I ran the ls /home/partimag command, I saw the contents of my data DVD, so it did, in fact, mount the DVD-RW drive correctly. Then I typed exit to return to the regular screen sequence. In the mode selection screen, I chose restoredisk instead of savedisk, and then accepted the pre-set “advanced extra parameters” again. In the next screen, I chose one of my three Clonezilla images. Finally, I got a target screen with only hda1 listed (as it should be). The restoration took about seven minutes. Unfortunately, the resultant hard disk wouldn’t boot. FDISK /MBR didn’t help. (Not the new FreeDOS 1.0 version, or the old MS-DOS 8 version). Finally, in desperation, I resized the partition with the DOS version of Partition Magic 8. At last, Windows 98 SE booted correctly.

To restore a PartImage image, I just had to do a few small things differently. At the post-boot command prompt, I entered the same three commands, except that I substituted hdd for hdc1 in the second line. Then, under “Action to be

done”, I selected “Restore partition from an image file” instead of “Save partition into a new image file”. The restoration took about five minutes. Unfortunately, this resultant hard disk wouldn’t boot either. Right away, I resized it with Partition Magic 8, and then it worked.

So: Two more failures. Fixable minor failures, but they’re failures nonetheless. My failures in July all happened during restoration, too. As I said earlier, I picked the wrong subject. It was a 20 GB NTFS partition, containing a Windows XP boot installation with about 7 GB of files. That gave me two problems with Clonezilla. First, Clonezilla doesn’t back up NTFS partitions itself. It calls another program called ntfsclone. So I wasn’t actually testing Clonezilla at all. Second, even with the highest compression, the files that made up the multi-segment images produced by both Clonezilla and PartImage were just too big to fit on a single DVD. Each needed two DVD-RW disks. Clonezilla bombed with a totally *uninformative* error message about two-thirds of the way through. In my estimation, that’s just about when the DVDs would have needed to be swapped. I couldn’t even get PartImage to *start* a restoration. It kept bombing with overlapping (and thus incomprehensible) error messages every time I tried.

This time, I actually re-booted both CDs and restored all five test images, with the same resulting hard disk boot problem each time (which Partition Magic always fixed). In between those restorations, I used Ghost to restore the image of a 3 GB NTFS partition containing Windows XP to the target (to wipe out any possibility of lingering Windows 98 file traces). I booted XP once each time, just to verify that the target hard disk was bootable before I overwrote it again.

You may remember from my dual-boot tests earlier this year that Partition Magic *couldn’t* fix any of the partition errors encountered then (while Linux-booted Gparted could). Whatever this error is, and whether it’s caused by each program coincidentally, or by Linux itself, it’s simple enough that Partition Magic *can* fix it this time.

In conclusion: Right now, neither Clonezilla nor PartImage is “ready for prime time”. Hopefully, one of them will have graduated before Ghost for DOS finally bites the dust.

Appendix I: Trivia Questions:

Last month, I decided to take what seemed almost certainly the only chance I’d ever get to see my silly Vampire Stooze names (Moe-cula, Larsferatu and Curly Vlad) in print. (Hah! Got ’em in again. That’s twice now). Having invoked the spirits of those eternal knuckleheads, there’s one more thing I can do with them. Here’s a slightly modified version of a trivia question that I originally thought up about thirteen years ago:

What are the eight names of the six “Three Stooges”?

Of course it’s a trick question; but part of the puzzle is figuring out exactly what the trick is. Here’s another:

Were there ever Four Stooges?

I’ll unveil the answers next month. See you then. ☐

From The DealsGuy

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

Thanks for all your messages about my well-being. Because of somewhat nagging pains in my chest I was very worried that night and decided to send the column out early, just in case. Seven years ago, the doctors told me to get my final affairs in order because of all the artery blockages, but I believe my frequent walks have prevented my wife from spending my insurance money so far. Problem is, I can't walk much right now because of a bone spur. A few editors welcomed the column being early, but I don't usually accomplish that.

*Check This Out!

Macon Users Group <http://www.maconusersgroup.org> has an excellent newsletter (MUG Monitor) and their president is one of my favorite writers. Louis Vitale has written "Lou's Views" for ages and he is my kind of writer because he tells it like it is and minces no words. In their August issue, he wrote about the data mining capabilities of Vista, and mentions his source for the information. I never miss reading his monthly column and can't remember ever disagreeing with his view, just cheering for him. I have that article posted on my Web site for your perusal. www.dealsguy.com/Articles_column.html

*A New APCUG Event In The East

I read that APCUG is considering an eastern event because many eastern members don't want to travel to Las Vegas. That's a great idea, but finding a suitable show to coincide with it and help entice attendees could be a challenge. I liked the event tied to PC Expo a few years ago, but it didn't last. The expensive hotel was one problem. Conflicting views on how to run it also created hurdles. I especially liked the leisurely way they met for the meals though.

There are lots of computer-oriented shows in the east, but nothing as immense as CES. Microsoft has had a large show in Orlando during June the last few years that brings in a lot of big name vendors. The Photo Marketing Assn. (PMA) show that used to be in Orlando would have been excellent, but it moved this year, as has the Home Electronics Show, which would have been smaller, but an interesting one. Finding the right show might be tough. I don't agree that the show must be computer oriented. I have worked plenty of shows that were just as interesting, but most trade shows move around.

Timing also complicates it, but some feel that without a good show it might not attract enough attendees. How about using a cheaper hotel and meeting place, and inviting vendors without making them buy a meal and spend a fortune for the booth, which might bring in more of them if they had a reasonable attendance to talk to. Their absence proves they don't want the expense of the meals. Catered meals are very expensive and attendees should pay for their own meals. Attendees can get their favorite food at a modest price close by or maybe box lunches could be brought in for lunch. Roundtables done by vendors are popular. These ideas might not work well either, but it has never been tried because it is assumed that we are so cheap that we won't show up without free meals. I disagree

and overly frugal attendees don't help any event. We don't ask vendors to buy anything when they present at our UG meetings so why do it at our APCUG and regional gatherings. The regional events have only a few vendors, but most are only a two-day event so it's more the camaraderie than the vendors. A five-day event is lengthy and not all stay the full time. Maybe surveys would help provide ideas for arranging such an event. Let APCUG know your opinions and ideas. My views may not be popular, but they are another way to attract vendors.

*Be Aware

I have not tried or checked out any of the following products or claims.

*Why Not Try File Encryption?

BluestSoft introduces Bluest CryptShield 1.5 that can encrypt files, folders or drives to protect them from unwanted access. CryptShield uses one of three types of encryption algorithms, such as Rijndael (AES), Twofish (AES finalist), or Blowfish (448 bit) to scramble the data and create secure file-based virtual drives or entire storage drives. Once the encrypted drive is created, it gets completely invisible for other people until it is mounted. The hidden drive can be mounted either manually or automatically (with password authentication) and can even be shared with other network machines. In automatic mode, the drive can be set to mount when you log in, and unmounted when you log off, or when the application is closed, or after a time duration of inactivity. Since the encryption is on-the-fly and has almost no impact on system resources, you will hardly notice the encryption. Restrict the connection of removable devices like USB drives and optical disks by registering only accepted devices. The CryptShield application verifies the validity of the drive and if it sees it's a non-registered device, it is not detected by the system.

There is another layer of security for documents you create on public computers. After copying an important file to the encrypted USB drive, you can shred the original document completely by overwriting it by 0x00. CryptShield renders the file completely unrecoverable even for the most advanced recovery software.

Bluest CryptShield 1.5 runs under Microsoft Windows 2000/XP/Vista and sells for \$39.95 (US) for a single-user license. Users group members get 50% off the purchase price of the new Bluest CryptShield until the end of November. Use coupon code; cs50nov. Additional information and a free evaluation copy are available at <http://www.bluestsoft.com>.

Product page : bluestsoft.com/en/products/cryptshield.html

Download : bluestsoft.com/en/download/downloadrequest.html

Postal address: 2102 Business Center Dr., Suite 130, Irvine, California 92612, Tel: 949-253-5763

*Freeware Is Always Nice

A new free all-in-one system utility that helps protect, repair and optimize computers with a single click of the mouse has

Continued

The AntiSpyware Revolution Starts Here

Lou Torraca (Af06hi(at)gmail.com), President, The TUG, Hawaii (<http://www.the-tug.org/>)

CounterSpy V2 was completely rebuilt with a revolutionary new design. More powerful and effective than ever, CounterSpy's award-winning spyware detection and removal is now merged with our all-new VIPRE™ antimalware technology to create the industry's first hybrid antispyware engine.

Heavy-duty antispyware protection treads lightly on system resources.

Kernel-level active protection.

Hybrid design combines antimalware technology with our award-winning spyware detection and removal.

Deep-rooted malware is exterminated at boot time, before Windows loads.

Incremental definition updates greatly reduce update downloading time.

Vista compatible: Integrates seamlessly with the Vista Windows Security Center.

Sounds pretty good doesn't it? The description above from Sunbelt Software caught my eye and I decided to check it out. What follows is a list of the features, system requirements, some suggestions before your install and a blow by blow that recounts my download, install and use of CS. As always, I

recommend you backup your files and/or set a restore point before you begin.

Features

System Scan - The scanning engine checks your entire computer by using in-depth scans of your computer's hard drives, memory, process, registry and cookies. It uses a continually updated database of thousands of known spyware signatures to provide you with ongoing and accurate protection. You can scan for spyware manually or schedule times for CounterSpy to scan your computer.

Active Protection - Active Protection guards your computer's privacy and personal information from hidden spyware threats before they can attack. Active Protection acts as a series of security checkpoints, comparing any unknown activity with the most up-to-date database of spyware threats at Sunbelt's Research Center - stopping new spyware in its tracks.

System Tools - My PC Explorers let you explore and manage key elements of your system that are normally hidden and difficult to change. My PC Checkup helps secure your computer by updating your computer settings to recommended security levels. The History Cleaner is a privacy tool that removes all

Continued

DealsGuy, *continued*

been introduced. The product is called Advanced WindowsCare V2 Personal. IObit, the software company that developed it, says it's vital that users maintain and optimize their PCs on a regular basis to keep computers free from Adware and Spyware. This freeware is designed to be the first point of call in solving these issues. Advanced WindowsCare Personal offers four major benefits:

- Defends Windows: Scan and remove Spyware and Adware with the latest definitions; prevent spyware, hijackers and bad websites from being installed; erase the history of all activities in computer including traces of online site visit activity.
- Cleans Windows: Boost system performance by deep scanning and cleaning out all missing, unwanted, obsolete and corrupt registry entries and junk files.
- Keeps peak performance: Fully optimize Windows for ultimate system performance and top Internet speed, based on how users use computer and what kind of network they have.
- Fixes system errors: Repair system configurations, eliminate system bottlenecks and prevent crashes, keeping your PC stable and roaring at peak efficiency.

Advanced WindowsCare Personal works on Windows Vista/XP/ 2000. It is 100% clean and safe, free of adware and spyware (DealsGuy comment: their words, not mine). For more information, and to download a copy, visit: <http://www.iobit.com/AdvancedWindowsCarePersonal/>.

*Keep Those Freebies Coming

ESTsoft Corp. released ALZip v7.0 beta, the full featured zip archiving utility for Windows 98/Me/2000/XP/Vista, with new features for faster extracting, updating, and restoring backups. The new Speed Extractor functionality in ALZip gives users one-click extraction, making ALZip the fastest way to extract files from archives. A second Speed Extractor option gives users a clean and simple menu, free from clutter that gradually creeps into Windows Explorer right-click context menus. Those looking to restore projects/file sets to a previously known good state can now overwrite files on disk with only the older, good files from their backup archives. Well known for its cute "Egghead" characters, ALZip follows up with a robust set of functionality, including support for extracting 36 archive formats and creating 8. ALZip is available in 25 languages.

Free for home users, commercial users can purchase licenses on the honor system for between \$20 for a single license and \$3 per seat for volume orders. Current licensees can upgrade for free. Free downloads are available at www.alttools.net.

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. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>. ☺

Internet History usage logs and 75 different activities. The Secure File Eraser is a powerful deletion tool that completely erases any files you want removed from your computer.

First Scan - Before your computer completely boots up, CounterSpy deletes tough to remove or locked files and catches spyware before it has a chance to run on your computer.

VIPRE - VIPRE is an antivirus technology that enables CounterSpy to further analyze each suspect item, using heuristic and detection definition files.

System Requirements

Make sure your computer meets the following system requirements in order to run CounterSpy effectively:

- Windows 2000 Professional and Windows XP Professional/Home SP2, Vista

Minimum:

- Intel Pentium II processor (or compatible) at 133 MHz or higher with at least 128 MB of RAM
- 32 MB of available hard disk space
- Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher Recommended
- Intel Pentium III processor (or compatible) at 1Ghz or higher with 256 MB of RAM.

(I wouldn't recommend the minimum and as for the recommended, I'd go for at least 512 MB of RAM.)

Before Installing CS make sure to uninstall any other anti-spyware programs and restart your computer. Also, close all other Windows programs, including programs displayed in the Windows system tray. (I didn't uninstall my other antispyware as I don't have them scheduled to run, I do it manually.) One note — CS turns off Windows Defender, but you can turn it back on as I did, and I didn't have any problem running it.

Installing CS

I downloaded CS to my desktop, then did a scan with my AVG and clicked on it to open the installation wizard. After CS is installed and you have restarted your computer, double-click the icon on your desktop or click Start; then, select All Programs>Sunbelt Software>CounterSpy>CounterSpy. The Getting Started setup wizard opens. The wizard guides you through the initial steps needed to configure CS. After you complete the Wizard and open CounterSpy, the main page is displayed.

It provides general summary information — the last time you ran a scan, when the next scan is scheduled to run, important information, etc. It also contains buttons for you to access the three main features that are covered next — System Scan, Active Protection, and System Tools. You can also update your security risk definitions by clicking the link in the Important Information box. The updated version is displayed above the current status box along with the software version number. The key thing to note on this page is the red text next to Current System Status: Some Items Require Attention. This text alerts you to the status of key items in the list below; for exam-

ple, if you have not run a scan, or if Active Protection is disabled.

System Scan

Click the System Scan button on the main page to open the System Scan page. Scanning is CounterSpy's main function. The System Scan page allows you to set scan options, perform scans, access the scanning schedule page, access the Manage Quarantine page, view scan details, and extend your subscription for updating security risk definitions. Take a note of the Scan Options listed on the left side of the System Scan page. You can select from three system scan options: Full System, Quick, and Custom. For the purposes of this review, you should use the default setting, a Full System scan, to scan your computer's processes, registry, drives, and folders.

To scan your computer: Click Spyware Scan on the main page; then, set the scan options on the left side of the page. I recommend you select Full System scan.

Click Scan Now. CounterSpy starts scanning your computer. After the scan is complete, the CounterSpy Spyware Scan Results summary window opens.

Review the summarized information; then, click View Results. You go to the Spyware Scan results page.

Scan Results: After your computer is scanned, a scan results dialog box is displayed. Click OK to open the Scan Results page. Review the items listed on the page; then, take actions against spyware threats. The dropdown lists under recommended actions provide you with several options. You have four options to choose from when managing the scan results: Ignore, Quarantine, Remove, and Always Ignore. To set a single action for all spyware threats, click the link: Set a single action for all spyware threats; then select the action from the Recommended Action drop-list.

Scheduling Scans: The Manage Schedule link on the System Scan page allows you to set the scanning schedule. The Spyware Scan page offers four main selections: Add a new schedule, view/edit a current schedule, enable/disable a current schedule, or delete a schedule.

When you click the Add New or View/Edit buttons, the schedule wizard opens. Use this wizard to set the dates and times as well as the scan options for the scheduled scan. The options below the Scheduled spyware scan drop-list change depending on the selection you make. Also, CounterSpy must be closed for the scheduled scan to run.

Working with Active Protection

When software is installed, or when a change is made to your computer, an internet setting, or an application setting, Active Protection quickly reacts to analyze the change. CounterSpy decides to allow the change if it is not threatening, block the change if it is known spyware, or ask you to decide.

Click the Learn about Active protection monitors... link to open a page with detailed information about Active Protection Monitors. Active Protection helps protect your privacy and identity, as well as prevent unauthorized programs from taking control of your computer. It works much like a series of

Continued

security checkpoints in your computer. It monitors system changes, application changes, and internet activity, watching for anything that could be potentially hazardous.

When Active Protection prompts you for action, a small Notice alert window is displayed in the bottom right corner of your computer screen that includes information concerning the change. This enables you to make an informed decision regarding the notice. You can quarantine the item, allow the action, or block the action. You also have the option of remembering the action you select and/or sending feedback to ThreatNet, a community that connects hundreds of thousands of CounterSpy endusers together so they can share and identify spyware risks. These popups will probably bother you, as they did me, at first, but I think they should show up less frequently as the programs learns which are ok based on your checking the remembering box.

System Tools

CounterSpy contains four unique system tools to help you maintain a clean, smooth running computer: My PC Explorer, My PC Checkup, History Cleaner, and Secure File Eraser.

My PC Explorer: My PC Explorers enable you to explore and manage key elements of your system. Use them to view and modify settings on your computer that are normally hidden and difficult to change. My PC Explorers are powerful tools. Use them to find out what applications are currently connected to the internet, what programs automatically start when Windows starts, to see and modify which applications are changing your Internet settings, and much more.

My PC Checkup : My PC Checkup helps tighten computer security. It updates your computer settings to recommended security levels. It thoroughly scans your computer for over

1000 different settings, suggests recommended changes, then, allows you to execute the recommended changes.

The first time you run My PC Checkup; there could be many recommended changes. Subsequent My PC Checkups will contain mostly suggested changes.

History Cleaner: The History Cleaner is a privacy tool that removes all Internet History usage logs and 75 different activity histories from the most popular windows and Internet applications. History Cleaner enables you to delete your Web browsing and search history, and Windows temporary folders and your search history. You can also erase the history stored by many popular applications, such as Windows Media Player and MSN Messenger.

Secure File Eraser: The Secure File Eraser is a powerful deletion tool that completely destroys files you want to remove from your computer. The Secure File Eraser completely removes all traces of selected documents, images, music, movies, or applications under 10MB in size.

Summary

As you can see, this program does a huge bunch of stuff in addition to just protecting your computer from spyware, malware, etc. The more you use it and review the help program, the more features you will find. To get your fully functional copy of CS, visit www.sunbeltsoftware.com.

That's it for now, until next time, have fun with all those computer and electronic gadgets, but remember to be careful out there on the 'net!

Aloha, Lou

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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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1/8 page	3¼ x 2½	30	Material should be sent to ACGNJ, PO Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076
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10% discount for 3 or more consecutive insertions			

Fix That Fan

Jim Sanders (jsanders-at-ligasmicro.com), North Orange County Computer Club(www.noccc.org)

Cheap (Sleeve Bearing) fans die young. Bet on it. The cheaper the system, power supply, cooler, etc., the cheaper the fan. A cheap ball bearing fan may be just as bad. When you hear that sleeve bearing fan (or a ball bearing fan for that matter) rattle, notice a fan is barely turning, or not turning at all, fix it!

As shown in photo #1 of a fan out of a power supply, get the fan out where you can work on it. On the side where the wires go into the middle, carefully peel back the label/sticker that covers the shaft area. The round item in the middle of the sticker in photo #2 is a metal hole plug. The better fans have a rubber plug that seals well and is almost invisible at times. The really cheap fans don't have a plug over the shaft area. If the fan still turns without much effort, just oiling it may make it well again. Apply a few drops of a good light machine oil such as, 3in1, Singer sewing machine, even ATF, but not the 30wt for your car engine, in the shaft hole. Sewing machine oil works well. Be careful not to get any oil on the surface where the label/sticker needs to be re-applied. This has to be put back in place to cover the opening and keep the oil in place.

If you get oil on the fan surface, it can be removed with acetone or MEK. If the label gets wrecked, I have found that on a clean surface a piece of black electrical tape works well. If you don't have a good applicator, see photo #3, use a toothpick.

Spin the fan some to work the oil onto the shaft. Re-assemble and you are likely to have a fan that quietly moves air again. If the fan is so gummed up that it is hard to move the blades, you will need to remove the retaining ring (C-ring) on the shaft. This allows the shaft to be pulled out of the bearing, see photo #4, so that both can be cleaned with a good strong solvent before oiling. I like the effectiveness of Methyl Ethyl Ketone or MEK. A pipe cleaner works well for cleaning the inside of the bearing, especially on the smaller fans.

Arguably, this is more work than it is worth, but it is not always easy to find a replacement fan.

The video card fans and the motherboard chipset fans can be near impossible to locate. Even if you find a replacement fan, oiling the fan before putting it into service may be a good idea as manufacturers seem to be chintzy about the amount of oil in new fans.

PS - Clean the crud off the fan before you replace it. In fact, if you have access to an air compressor regulated at about 90 PSI, it is a great idea to take a blow gun attachment on the end of an air hose and blow out the entire system keeping the tip about six inches away from parts. The little duster cans are better than nothing, but really don't have the horsepower to do a good job.

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Irfanview 4.0

Freeware Image Editor and Media Player

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

Imagine a free (for non-commercial use), full featured utility that can display and edit almost all known image formats, and convert from any one format to any other. Imagine a utility that can play almost every known audio and video format with its free “Plugins” file, all in a small and very efficient software package. Some skeptics may say that this sounds too good to be true, but lucky for us, it is indeed true. The program that can do all of the above, and more is the very popular Irfanview, version 4.0 (www.irfanview.com), written by a Bosnian named Irfan Skiljan. This outstanding program is not a well known secret, as the popular download site Download.com alone reports over 26 million downloads of Irfanview (including previous versions), with probably tens of millions of copies downloaded from countless other download resources, and over a million additional copies downloaded every month.

People send me several emails every day with images or videos attached, and I have Irfanview set as my default viewer and player for almost all images, audio files, and videos. Using Irfanview is fairly simple, straight forward, and somewhat intuitive. After downloading (www.irfanview.com) and installing the file, I recommend that the companion file “Irfanview Plugins” also be downloaded and installed. After installing the “plugins” the user is given the option to selectively choose Irfanview as the default for any or all of the file extensions it supports. It may not be a bad choice to allow Irfanview to be the default for those extensions, but the decision can be reversed if decided later.

One frequent function that I use Irfanview for on a regular basis is image editing. Recently, a relative sent me several unedited JPG digital photos of her new puppy taken at maximum resolution with a 6 megapixel digital camera. Each image was huge both in file size (several megabytes), and in viewing size. I have a big-screen monitor running at a high screen resolution, and still could not view the entire image without scrolling, as the image size was greater than my monitor resolution. Since I opened the attached images in Irfanview, it was but a few mouse clicks to edit them down to a more manageable size; I clicked on IMAGE - RESIZE/RESAMPLE and then selected a percentage of the original size, and then saved the image in its reduced size. It is good netiquette to reduce the size of multi-megapixel images, and then email the digital images in a more reasonable size such as 800x600 or 1024x768. It is also good netiquette to crop the image, which can be done simply by clicking and holding the left mouse button on a corner of the desired image, and then dragging it in a frame to the desired borders of the cropped image. EDIT - CROP SELECTION will instantly produce the cropped image which can be saved or further edited.

Another purpose of Irfanview is to improve the quality of digital images by enhancing the colors. The command IMAGE - ENHANCE COLORS opens a dual pane window that shows the unedited original image and the new image with the changes applied. Possible changes that can be made include brightness, contrast, color balance, gamma, and saturation. By using a slider or manually entering values allows the user to see the effects of any changes before saving the edited image. Another selection I often utilize is the “sharpen” command on the image menu to automatically sharpen a fuzzy image. Other image commands include red-eye reduction, and a panorama function where separate images can automatically be knit together to make a larger panoramic image.

Readers of this column will notice that sometimes images are displayed along with the text. Most of these images are screen captures made with Irfanview. By selecting OPTIONS - CAPTURE/SCREENSHOT a hot key is then used to capture the image on the monitor. I use the default hotkey (Ctrl-F11) for image capture, crop the image as desired, and then save it in the desired format.

While there are many other image editing features included in the program, Irfanview also shines as an audio and video player if the plugins are installed. Popular audio formats, such as MP3, RA, and WAV are fully supported, allowing this single program to play almost any audio format, with full control of volume and other technical details. There are many video formats in common use, such as MPEG, AVI, and WMV that are often used for the videos that people email or display on a webpage, and Irfanview can handle almost all of them interchangeably, and can serve as an able substitute for Windows Media Player, and most other media players. Audio and video on CDs and DVDs can also be played with Irfanview.

Irfanview 4.0 will work well on all versions of Windows from 95 to Vista, and is simple enough for beginners, and sophisticated enough for professionals. The software is free for non-commercial use, and the author encourages purely voluntary contributions via PayPal. I suggest that readers of this column download it and try it. There is no adware or spyware embedded in it, and the program has a clean and uncluttered interface. I have personally used Irfanview on an almost daily basis on all of my computers for several years, and can strongly recommend it. Try it, and you may end up liking it as much as I enjoy Irfanview.

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Digital Camera Lessons

Pim Borman (Swipcug(at)gmail.com), Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

My first digital camera was a 3.1 megapixel Olympus C-730 Ultra Zoom. With its 10x optical zoom lens I hoped to take candid pictures of squirrels feeding at the corn spike on the back fence. To my disappointment they turned out on the fuzzy side. I blamed the optics, until it was pointed out to me that a hand-held camera is too unsteady at that zoom level.

Lesson #1: It takes a tripod for best results at elevated zoom levels.

Indoor pictures, especially those I took at our monthly meetings, were never as bright and sharp as some of those taken by others, even after processing with a photo editor. The pictures were underexposed due to the inadequate flash and small lens diameter. To compensate, the camera used a large aperture (affecting sharpness) and amplified the signal from the CCD as much as possible (to an equivalent of ISO 400 maximum in this camera). Amplifying the signal also amplified the electronic noise inherent in all electronic systems, resulting in a mottled background. The camera minimized the mottling by blurring the image.

Lesson #2: Higher ISO specifications are meaningless unless the CCD chip has a higher signal-to-noise ratio. Otherwise it takes a stronger (external) flash, and/or a larger lens for better light gathering. If you already have an old SLR film camera with several large lenses you may be better off with a new SLR camera body that accepts your lenses. More expensive and bulky, but it will get the best results.

Digital pictures don't always turn out as intended. Taking a picture of a roomful of people may end up with people in the back of the room barely visible while the ones up front are overexposed. Often a part of the picture can be rescued by severely cropping to retain the group in the foreground only. Unless you start out with a large excess of pixels, the remaining edited version may not have enough pixels left for a sharp image of reasonable size, resulting in blurriness or even pixelation. 7 megapixel images can be cropped smaller than 3 megapixel ones.

Lesson #3: Get as many pixels as you can afford. You can always discard the excess later.

My next camera was a Casio EXZ-750 with 7.2 megapixels and no more than 3x optical zoom. I already knew that higher zoom levels gave unsatisfactory results. Much more compact than the Olympus, with a large LCD screen and an optical viewfinder for bright outdoor use. According to the PC magazines it provided outstanding image quality. I did see a comment somewhere that its low-light performance was marginal and I should have paid heed to that. As it turned out, the camera performed beautifully under daylight conditions, but flash pictures taken in semi-dark rooms invariably showed the multicolored mottling due to background electronic noise in the chip. I have not found a photo editor (yet?) that corrects that problem, other than by blurring the picture to make the mottling less visible.

On the other hand, with the higher pixel count I took a daylight picture of a squirrel on the back fence from the kitchen

door with 3x zoom and cropped it back tightly without losing quality. One night I surprised a raccoon raiding the bird feeders. It may have been a youngster, at least it did not show any fear and allowed me to walk right up to it and snap some flash pictures. Under these close-up conditions, with plenty of light from the flash, the pictures were sharp without mottling of the dark background. Still, the new camera did not solve my problem with the unsatisfactory performance in open areas under low light conditions.

Lately many camera manufacturers have started to emphasize higher light sensitivity of their cameras in terms of ISO values. Both my Olympus and the Casio had a maximum of ISO 400 speed. I took some trial pictures with both my cameras, changing the ISO setting from 100 to the maximum 400. As a target I used my 40-year old, seldom-used, set of Encyclopedia Britannicas, in dark-brown imitation-leather bindings and gold lettering on the spines. Sitting in their own bookcase in a dark corner of the den they make a perfect test image. It only confirmed lesson 2: higher ISO settings by themselves don't help. They just amplify the noise as much as the signal.

And then I read about the new Olympus SP-550 UZ camera. All-new technology! 18X optical zoom! Includes wide-angle! New Dual Sensor-Shift and Digital Image Stabilization! Up to ISO 5000 sensitivity (with reduced image size) and up to 1/2000 second shutter speed! I liked my old Olympus and this seemed to be everything I needed to solve my problems. I was ready to order but hesitated at the last moment. It sounded almost too good to be true, and frequently that turns out to be true.

Lesson #4: First find out all you can about a new camera from an independent source.

PC World and PC Magazine were no help, since the camera had only recently become available. I found a terrific Web site, Digital Photography (www.dpreview.com) with in-depth reviews of just about any digital camera on the market. More detail than you knew existed, sure to uncover any shortcomings. Its summary opinion of the Olympus SP-550 UZ was deadly. In essence: a camera designed by the marketing department, out to establish the best-looking list of specifications without regard to actual performance. A detailed series of test images showed how the performance of the camera rapidly degraded with increasing ISO values, even well below ISO 1000, let alone 5000. The dual image stabilization didn't work well at the high zoom levels where it is most needed. Even under the best conditions, images were not as sharp as with competing cameras.

Lesson #5: Image stabilization may not work as well as promised, especially at high zoom levels when it is most needed.

Having found dpreview to be a goldmine of information about cameras, I checked to see which make and model they liked best, especially under low-light conditions. Their clear choice was the Fujifilm FinePix F31fd camera, a minor

Continued

Why Update your Computer?

Kathy Jacobs (president@phoenixpcug.org), President, Phoenix PCUG (www.phoenixpcug.org/)

For Christmas last year, we gave my father a piece of software that requires Windows XP SP2. Imagine my surprise when he emailed back that he didn't have SP2.

Besides getting him a copy of SP2, I found out that I would need to explain to him why he needed it. I thought some of you might benefit from the information as well.

Like many computer users, my father views his computer as something that he should just be able to use. He doesn't think he should have to put any time into maintenance of the computer. I hear this quite frequently, but don't understand it. Would you buy a car and never put gas in it or never change the oil in it? Computer maintenance is just like the maintenance of your car.

The first line of maintenance for your computer should be Microsoft Update or Windows Update. Security holes are being patched every month. Those patches are made available to you for free from Microsoft for your benefit and for mine. Mine? Yes mine. If you don't keep the security holes on your machine patched, then you make it easier for someone to use your machine to attack my computer — even if I am patched. Also when I send you an email the programs can harvest my email address and add it to lists so that I get more spam.

The second line of defense is a good anti-virus program. Again, you can't just buy it and expect it to run forever. You need to update it regularly, and run it regularly. If you don't have your anti-virus up to date, you will only be catching the viruses that were out when you bought the program. That means that any virus that has come out since you bought the package can still sit on your computer and attack from there.

The third line of defense is anti-spyware software. This software will prevent someone from coming in and "owning" your computer. What do I mean by owning? Spyware programs are frequently used to keep track of what you do on your computer. A common misconception is that anti-spyware is only needed when you are on the net. In reality, spyware can be installed in seconds while you are downloading your email and then it will run while you are off-line. When you get on-line again, the spyware will call home and send back everything it has learned about your machine.

The final line of defense is your firewall. If you have Windows XP SP2, you have a firewall installed. By installing and activating your firewall, you make yourself less visible to the bad guys out on the web. If they can't see you, they may not spend the time to come find you. Especially if your neighbor has an open, unpatched, unprotected system. Adding the protection of an outbound firewall to Windows can also help plug leaks and alert you to behavior by friendly programs that you may still want to control.

The way I look at these four lines of defense is the same way I would if a bear is after me. I can't outrun the bear. What I can do is make it less likely that the bear will come after me. That is the same attitude I want you to take: Make your computer less open to the bears coming after it.

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Digital Camera Lessons, *continued*

upgrade of the previous F30 (dpreview.com/reviews/fujifilmf31fd/). In many respects it looked and acted like so many other compact digital cameras, but it boasted of having a Super CCD and a new Real Photo Processor. Also, ISO 3200 maximum, 6.3 megapixels, 3x optical zoom. The review showed that, as in other cameras, the image quality at the highest ISO settings was unacceptable, but it still found that "this camera has Class-leading high ISO performance; superb results up to ISO 400, surprisingly good ISO 800 performance." This is presumably due to a higher signal-to-noise ratio of its CCD chip. As a result its performance at low light levels is superior. In other respects the camera is unremarkable. It lacks an optical view finder and its LCD screen is hard to see in bright light. It uses more expensive XD picture cards that have lower writing speeds than SD cards.

Lesson #6: Digital cameras come with a minimum of built-in memory. Buy at least 512 MB of removable additional storage. SD picture cards are less expensive and faster than XD cards, but are not interchangeable. Check to see what the camera uses.

At half the (street) price of the new Olympus, I bought the Fujifilm camera. Test pictures of my encyclopedia confirmed its superior low-light performance. That is also clear in the first indoor group pictures I have taken with it. For outside pictures I still prefer the Casio, mostly because of its convenient optical view finder.

Lesson #7: An optical or miniature LCD viewfinder is essential for accurately framing pictures under bright conditions.

Finally, if you are a stickler for perfection get a digital SLR camera with a set of high-quality lenses. You'll never be satisfied with the small pocket cameras. But even with less than absolutely perfect technical quality, an interesting picture is still worth at least a thousand words!

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OpenOffice

Ronnie Ugulano ([ronnieuggie\(at\)mail.com](mailto:ronnieuggie(at)mail.com)), Fresno PC Users Group (<http://fresnocomputerusers.org>)

I didn't have time to monkey around. It **had** to work out of the box. I got an email from the FPCUG Board saying that they would like to be able to offer the newsletter in PDF for easy printing, pretty please. To be honest, I knew this was coming, but it now was time to implement. OK, what are my options? What do I **already** have that I can use to do this? I could copy and layout the text and graphics in *Microsoft Word*, but I'd still need to convert it to PDF. I've been working with Linux (<http://www.ubuntu.com/>) lately, and it has available Scribus (<http://scribus.net/>), a lovely Desktop Publishing program, but I already have everything for the newsletter set up on my Windows computer, and wasn't ready to flit back and forth with that, yet.

Oh, yeah, I remembered! OpenOffice, the available-free office suite program has a PDF converter built into its word processing program, and there's a Windows version! The big questions are: "Can I use what I know about *MS Word* enough to make it work as fast as I need it to?" I hope so. So, I rummage through my collection of downloaded, saved utilities and programs, and find it right where I left it. Double click, install and open the program.

Well, the tools appear familiar. I just may get this to work, after all.

I want the printed newsletter to look as much like the html version as much as possible, so the first order of business is to convert some of the CSS "graphics" to jpgs or gifs, which I do using *Paint Shop Pro 9*. The next job is placement. How do I insert a graphic file? Ah, there it is, similar to *MS Word*, under **Insert > Picture > From File**. OK, place them where I want them, size them to proper dimensions, and it's good.

Next, every newsletter has certain features that appear in every issue, such as *The Fine Print*, the *Sanity Savers* and the list of board members/officers. All that is specially formatted with tables. How will I migrate that? I try clicking, dragging, and pasting thinking "I'll just have to fix the formatting later", and *bam!* Much to my surprise, the formatting holds up. Not only that, but the specialized shading does too. I mentally throw a little confetti in celebration. What about rather standardized, simple keyboard commands like **Ctrl + Z (undo)**,

Ctrl + C (copy), Ctrl + V (paste), Ctrl + B (bold) and Ctrl + I (italics)? No surprises there, things work as usual.

Then of course, you never know what you'll get when you right click on something, right? Hmm. Right click gives you the tools menu seen at right, and double clicking on the graphic itself (In OpenOffice Writer - in the html version, you'll get the full sized graphic) once it's placed, allows you to set how much space you want around the graphic, among other things.

The newsletter has colored headers, and font color is in almost exactly the same place as *MS Word*, so finding that is a no-brainer. There are about 100 colors to choose from there, and I choose the one closest to the color I use on the html version of the newsletter.

Next, was page numbers. The html version doesn't need them, but the printed edition will. In *MS Word*, choosing to add page numbers will almost automatically place those numbers in the margin as you specify. With *Writer*, you choose to create the footer first, by going **Format > Page > Click Footer Tab > OK**, click in the created footer and then click **Insert > Fields > Page Number**. Doing this automatically places the page number consecutively on each page.

There are plenty of other word processing tools, including *columns, mail merge, macros* and so forth, and they are outside what I need for this first time around, but they are there, and findable, when I need them.

The last tool I'll need, and the whole purpose of this exercise, is the PDF conversion tool. For this, I initially created this document in a separate file so I can test drive this option before I use it on the newsletter itself. It's time to click that button now, and just like magic, a PDF is created!

You know, I've never progressed past my copy of *Office 97*. I've just never bothered to upgrade - probably because I'm too cheap. Every new computer I've built, I've just reloaded the old *Office 97* as part of my setup ritual. It may be that on my next computer, I'll be loading OpenOffice.org instead.

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Can't Play Online Videos — Here's What To Do

Sandy Berger ([sandy\(at\)compukiss.com](mailto:sandy(at)compukiss.com)), CompuKISS (www.compukiss.com)

Recently I was installing some software at a local business when one of the workers approached me with a problem. She could not play a video on her computer even though co-workers could play it on their computers. The same problem appeared a few days later when I was troubleshooting some computer equipment for a local church and the Pastor could not view a news video on his computer. Since this seems to be happening all over my town, I thought it would make a good topic for a column. So here's the scoop.

Generally, each video you find on the Web will play only using the software that it was formatted for. If you try to play a

video and you don't have the proper software, you won't be able to view the video. The area where the video would normally appear will be blank, usually showing either a gray or black square. However, on or near the blank video screen you will see a link that will lead you to the website where you can download the necessary software.

Many of the online news services are now using software called Flash for their videos. To view a Flash video, you need software by Adobe called Flash Player. Just click on the link to get to the proper place on the Adobe website to download the software. If there is no link available, you can access the

Continued

Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist 2.0

Tom Ekvall ([tekvall\(at\)new.rr.com](mailto:tekvall(at)new.rr.com)), Northeast Wisconsin PCUG (www.webpages.charter.net/newpcug)

Can someone create a photo art masterpiece from a snapshot within a matter of minutes without going through a lot of training and reading manuals?

This was my challenge for this month's column of Creative Imaging and the subject of this review of Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist 2, developed by Streetwise Software. The company promotes that anyone can create a masterpiece in just minutes even if someone who is a beginner.

Unlike some image editing programs that apply filters to create "instant" artistic effects, those using Instant Photo Artist use their mouse to paint over the picture with a cursor that actually looks like a paint brush. The result is a painted look based on the style desired.

Version 2 of this interesting software recently was released and is designed to be compatible with Microsoft Vista as well as all other previous OS releases including Windows 95. I first became interested in this product when it came out a number of years ago. The new version supports high resolution images and sports a redesigned interface that keeps most of the tools readily at hand.

The software was shipped on a CD with a four-page quick start guide. No problems in installing the software. The product is very intuitive to figure out and I was able to start photo painting without needing to access the help section or user guide.

Photo artists have their choice in painting in the artistic styles of Van Gogh, Cezanne, expressionists, pointillists or creating watercolor, acrylic, charcoal, and crackle antique images.

Each style from the "styles of the Masters" browser has its own pre-set brush, color, opacity, and added effects.

You can also select one of the painting tools on the palette, such as the airbrush, paint brush, colored pencil, and tip style associated with the painting tool.

Or if you want to get creative, you can use the freehand tool and apply color manually.

For me, I prefer using the "styles of the Masters" palette and then selecting the brush size, which is based on a series of five dots graphically representing the size of the brush. No custom controls here to tweak the size settings. The different types of painting styles is also significantly more limited than in high end programs, but give you a decent selection to choose from to create your masterpiece without feeling overwhelmed.

A nice feature of the program is what is referred to as the "realistic" mode which when selected will paint back the actual photo image as it looked before you started the painting activity. This is particularly helpful when you want to feature specific detail without it looking somewhat abstract. An example of this is facial features. I took a photograph from my wedding, applied oil paint effects and then restored my face with the "realistic" brush. Nice touch. The brush also helps to remove flaws created when painting.

The brushes (also known as the mouse) create strokes based on the direction and speed of each movement. This simulates how an actual artist would create a picture. If you move the mouse in random directions, it may create unwanted effects.

Continued

Can't Play Online Videos, *continued*

download by clicking on the "Get Adobe FlashPlayer" button on the front page of the Adobe website at www.adobe.com. It's a free program and it will provide additional functionality to your computer, so don't hesitate to download it.

To get the player, click on the Download or Download Now button. You may have to scroll down the page to see the button, and you may have to agree to their policy. In most cases, the software will download and install automatically. (If it does not install automatically there will be step-by-step instructions for installation.)

One thing that the website may not tell you is that you may have to restart your computer for the new video software to be fully integrated with the computer. So if the software seems to have downloaded and installed, but you still don't see the video, close all the open windows and programs, and restart the computer.

While many online videos use the Flash software that I just talked about, others may use Windows Media Player, Real Media, or a program called QuickTime. If you are using a Windows computer, you will have Windows Media Player already installed. It comes with the Windows operating system.

The Real Player is a free program that can be found at www.real.com. The QuickTime Player is a free program from Apple that can be downloaded at www.quicktime.com. Even though it is an Apple program, it runs on Windows computers as well as on Macs. Both of these pieces of software are downloaded in a manner similar to that of the FlashPlayer.

Be aware that both RealPlayer and QuickTime will offer you an advanced version that you can purchase for a fee. Although you may want to purchase these programs in the future, it is perfectly alright to start with the free versions. The additional features in the paid versions will give you the ability to handle advanced video functionality, but everything you need to play online videos is included in the free versions.

You can download these video software programs as the need for them arises. Or if you like you can download all of these programs before you need them so you will be able to play almost all of the videos on the Web. These programs do not interfere with each other and will simply stay on your computer until they are needed.

Now you're all set to watch all the videos on the Web. Enjoy!

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Blurbs from Bass

Steve Bass ([Stevebass\(at\)earthlink.net](mailto:Stevebass(at)earthlink.net)), PC World Columnist and Author

Wonderful: Microsoft's free Virtual PC

I've been using it for three weeks. It's perhaps the best way to play with new utilities, for instance, try out a different anti-virus program, or just fiddle with Windows.

I run another copy of Windows XP within Windows XP. Some people load up Vista in the virtual machine while others play around with Linux.

It takes no super skill set to install or use, and provided you have enough RAM (I'll say about 1GB), the VPC will run happily. I was worried that it would slow down my PC. I have just one VM window running, and even at that, it's open only when I was using it. Overall, with 2GB of RAM on my PC (and 512RAM allocated to the VM when it was running), I didn't experience any sluggishness.

If it doesn't suite you, or it slows down your PC, just uninstall VPC like you would any other application.

You can get around the XP licensing issue (and activation) of two versions of XP on one PC easily. Some people (not, uh, me) call Microsoft for an activation and try to explain to the overseas tech person that yes I have this copy running on a PC, but all I'm trying to do is set it up on the same PC using Microsoft's VM product. Chances are good they won't un-

derstand a word you're saying, not be able to find "VM Product" on their tree-based help chart, say screw it in their language, and give you the activation code.

Or you could just rely on XP's 30 day activation deadline. As the deadline approaches, delete the XP virtual machine (it's only a big swap file) and start again with a new installation.

Get Microsoft's Virtual PC: <http://snipurl.com/virtualpc1>

Read how to install and use VPC: <http://snurl.com/usevpc>

Gotcha! Geek Squad Caught Stealing Porn

In a three-month sting, the Consumerist loaded a PC with porn, set it up with a keylogger, and asked the Geek Squad to install iTunes. The hidden program recorded everything and produced a very revealing video. Watch as the tech pokes around, finds what he wants, and copies files to his flash drive. <http://snurl.com/geekpornsquid>

Assorted short blurbs

Have you ever heard a Mockingbird outside your window? It's the bird that sings mostly at night and mimics other birds. The Superb Lyrebird goes one better by imitating, with eerie accuracy, everyday sounds, such as chain saws, car alarms, and well, just listen and be amazed. <http://snipurl.com/Lyrebird>

Continued on page 19

Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist, *continued*

The secret behind creating your new artwork is a blue outline created of the picture selected on the canvas. This provides the basis for selecting brushes and seeing how the image will look as it is being painted, accessing the color of the original painting rather than choosing paints to use and mess up the results. You can though select to choose colors and manually paint, which may be a desirable situation when creating a monotone print. Another option is creating paper texture effects, such as canvas.

Once the picture is finished, Streetwise Software offers another exciting product to jazz it up. It's called Instant Photo Effects, which also has been improved in the present Version 2. Instant Photo Effects creates a wide variety of edge effects, frames, accents, photographic effects such as antiquing, and even artistic images similar to that created by Instant Photo Artist.

The special effect options are fabulous and easy to apply to create a piece of "fine art" ready to be framed and hung on the wall.

The difference between the two products in creating painted effects is that Instant Photo Artist requires applying brush strokes whereas the Instant Photo Effects "instantly" creates the image with little outside intervention.

You can even apply multiple effects to the same image for some interesting artwork.

Both programs also allow you to add text to the picture with varying levels of effects, controlling size, type style, warp effect, color, and transparency.

I installed both software on an Acer Laptop Aspire 5570Z running Vista Premium OS with Intel Pentium dual-core processor at 1.6 Ghz and 2 gigabytes of RAM. The products operated without problems, although the RAM quickly gets consumed as more effects are added to the image.

Each product sells for \$59.99 and is available from the software manufacturer through their website at www.swsoftware.com. A special deal for both products is available for \$99.99. I have talked to the company and they are willing to give APCUG member groups a 10% discount through August by entering the word "PCUG" in the promotion code on the purchase order form. Trial copies can also be downloaded from the site so that you can check it out first.

Here's how to use the coupon...

Go to www.swsoftware.com, choose the software you want and add it to your shopping cart. On the CHECKOUT PAGE, under SALES AND DISCOUNTS, please enter the code: PCUG and hit APPLY. You need to hit APPLY, then proceed.

The discount only applies to the two products.

The verdict. Both products are great for those who want to create "painted" photo art with little effort and training. However, just remember that the selection of styles and brushes is limited, which in some cases may be an asset.

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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.

October: 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 November 20. ☞

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.

October 9: When you create an AJAX-enabled Web site, it helps to use a good IDE. Eclipse has two AJAX frameworks: RAP (Rich AJAX Platform) and ATF (AJAX Toolkit Framework). Both help you to create AJAX-enabled Web pages by leveraging common third-party AJAX APIs, like Dojo, Prototype and Scriptaculus. In his presentation, Barry demonstrated the first draft of the his presentation, comparing the two frameworks and discuss their applicability to several AJAX APIs. The final presentation can be seen at EclipseWorld in November.

November 13: Technical Overview of Maven 2, presented by Paul Shemansky. ☞

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 November 5.** ☞

Web Dev

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

WebDev should be an all-encompassing development and examination forum for all issues, applications, OS, languages and systems one can use to build Websites. We currently have two Web dev languages .NET and Java as SIGs but the other languages and OS need to be investigated, examined and tested; Windows, Linux, UNIX, DEC, Vax, HP etc. Intel-PC, Motorola-MAC etc. **Our next meeting November 14.** ☞

Main Meeting

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

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

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

December: How to Build a Web Site Using Easy Tools, 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.

November 16: Digital AutoCAD, TBD (Bill Farrell)

December: No meeting ☞

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: November 8. ☞

Blurbs from Bass, *continued*

Do you have any idea what's holding up your cursor? I think you'll be quite surprised. Click on the link below to find out. Make sure to move your cursor quickly and double click every so often. <http://www.1-click.jp/>

The Real Group is very entertaining. They remind me a little of Manhattan Transfer. Listen to them sing the Five Song Basie Medley and don't miss it when the lead singer imitates an instrument. It's at about 3:17 minutes. [Thanks, Gus.] [youtube.com/watch?v=URpLESNyydE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URpLESNyydE)

If you enjoyed the first video, here's another with them working impromptu. Watch the beginning for the setup and skip past Yesterday until they start doing pseudo-opera at 2:40 minutes. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcRIBQF2AYc>

Hassle-Free PC: Smart Fixes for Gnarly PC Problems: http://snipurl.com/HF_0707

I'll bet your Start Menu is messy because it's jammed with programs. There's probably a good chance you can't even remember where any of the programs are on the menu. Try popping up Launchy (alt-space), type the first few letters of the program you want, hit Enter, and Launchy launches it. <http://www.launchy.net/>

They know damn well they're breaking the law. Yet I get at least three automated calls from them a week. I have a plan —

make an appointment to have my carpeting cleaned and then slap a small claims court notice to appear into the hand of the guy arriving at my door. Read more on my blog: <http://snipurl.com/BestCarpet>

Rate PC World Magazine: Here's the PC World survey page for the current issue. You don't have to be a subscriber; give it a whirl and be eligible for a \$500 Amazon certificate (which accounts why I haven't had a raise in a while). http://snipurl.com/PCW_Survey

Time Killing Videos: Check out "High Power Job," a video about an occupation that makes me grateful I'm a safe and sound writer. <http://www.glumbert.com/media/highpower>

The Slinky Humans video held my attention for the full five minutes. (But what in the world it's doing at a Sea World Amusement Park is beyond me.) But it appears they've taken a cue, so to speak, from Mummenschanz.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAPBaXLJvYI>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO3B6hESM3I>

You know how I like magic, right? Well here's a brilliant bit of it with just the correct amount of misdirection.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voAntzB7EwE>

Two Useful Tools

SIG News, *continued*

New SIG -- Mobile Devices

David Eisen (ultradave@gmail.com)

Starting on November 21, and meeting on the third Wednesday of every month. ☞

DotNet

Manuel J Goyenechea

<http://www.acgnjdotnetsig.org/about.html>

<http://www.acgnjdotnetsig.org/index.html>

Meetings will resume on the Third Thursday of the month — **November 15**. ☞

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. ☞

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 November 19.**

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 November 9, 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! ☞

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>.

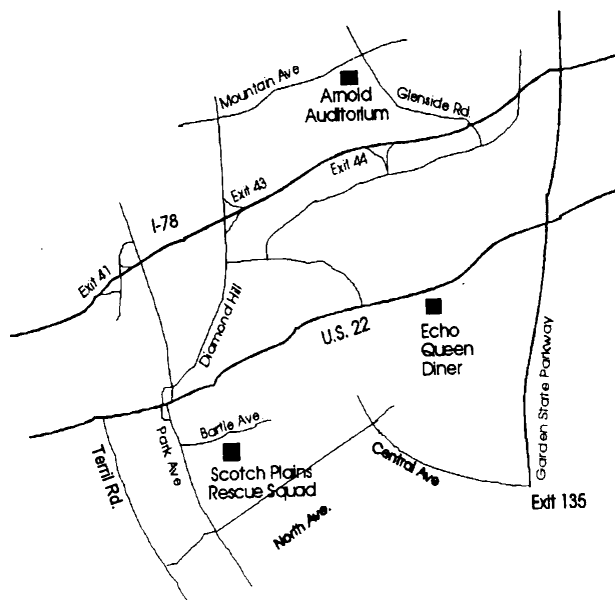
MarketPro Shows

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

November 10 & 11: NJ Convention Center (Raritan Center), Edison

November 24 & 25: Meadowlands Expo Center, Secaucus

December 15 & 16: 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. ☐

This and That — Broken Icons

Elizabeth B. Wright ([wright599new\(at\)sbcglobal.net](mailto:wright599new(at)sbcglobal.net)), Computer Club of Oklahoma City, www.cokc.org

Have you accessed the WindowsXP “Restore” option to reset your computer to an earlier time? We often need to do this when things go haywire after installing some new software. Fiddling around with old programs or offbeat wares can sometimes land you in hot water operating wise. I found myself in just such a mess not long ago. Fortunately I had made a restore point prior to installing the renegade software, so I was able to use it to get things back to normal. Well, almost.

What Happened Next

One of my oldest and most valued programs is CorelPaint. Suddenly, after going through the restore procedure, I began getting an error message plus having the program refuse to open when I double clicked on the desktop shortcut icon. This applied to CorelDraw as well. The error message said something about trying to install the program, then it would go through some strange digital machinations before rolling everything back and giving up. Strangely enough though, if I double clicked on a .jpg or .tif file in Explorer, the files would open the program with no difficulty. Several days were spent opening graphic files in this manner when it suddenly dawned on me that perhaps the programs might open from the executable files directly. Sure enough, when I went to them, again in Explorer, they both opened like clockwork. So why did it take me several more days to figure out that the icons on my desktop had some way become corrupted? I don’t want to know the answer to that one.

Anyway, after deleting the icons, new ones were put in place by right clicking on the executable files in Explorer and double clicking the “Send to desktop” option from the menu. Usually the names given icons made in this way are not the best, so they usually get changed to something more useful on my computer. Often part of the name is “shortcut”. Who needs that? It’s fairly simple to change the name. Just click

once on the icon, wait long enough so that the computer doesn’t interpret the next click as a double click, then the icon text will be in “Edit” mode. You may have to experiment with the timing for this since not all “mice” are set for the same response time. The two clicks need to be fairly close together, but not close enough for a double click. Once in “Edit” mode you can type in whatever name that makes better sense to you.

We should all know by now that if there is a curved arrow in the lower left corner of the icon, the icon is a shortcut to the executable file, not the program or file itself. Be very careful. Sometimes there are icons for executable programs placed on your desktop when the programs are installed. Those icons will not have the curved arrow. Don’t delete them unless you want to get rid of the program itself. This applies also to other things you might have placed on the desktop yourself, such as graphic or document files. It might be wise to leave those names in their original form. It might also be a good idea to examine the icons on your computer to see how many, if any, **do not** have the curved arrow. Chances are there won’t be many, possibly none. It is helpful to know if there are any that reflect actual programs or files, just to keep yourself informed about your own computer system.

It always pays to figure out what your computer is up to. Since it lives a life separate from yours it is often not possible to tell just what it has been doing in your absence. With the new powerful operating systems, many, many things go on in the background when the machine is powered on, whether you are there or not. Supernerds probably have eliminated many of the automatic actions, but most of us just muddle on, thankful that the computer runs at all.

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ACGNJ MEETINGS

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

Friday, November 2

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

Monday, November 5

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

Thursday, November 8

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

Friday, November 9

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

Monday, November 12

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

Tuesday, November 13

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

Wednesday, November 14

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

Thursday, November 15

8 P.M. - Dot Net, Manuel J Goyenechea

Friday, November 16

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

Monday, November 19

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

Tuesday, November 20

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

Wednesday, November 22

8 P.M. - Mobile Devices, David Eisen

Monday, December 3

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.**