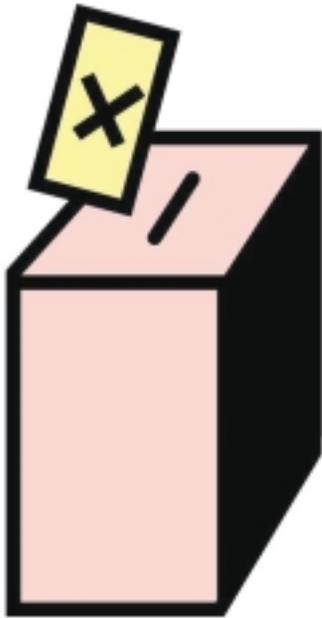


# Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

Volume 33, Number 09

November 2008

## The Board Reports



At tonight's ACGNJ BOD meeting (November 4), after cancellation of last week's Special Meeting due to inclement weather, the Board finally accepted and approved the By-Laws Committee's Final Report.

The Board decided to post the proposed revisions on the club website now, and announce that fact at Friday night's meeting. We'll publish them in the newsletter AFTER they are approved (we hope) by the members present at the December meeting.

Also from tonight, here are the Nominating Committee's candidates for the December elections:

### Officers

- President ..... Mike Redlich
- Vice-President ..... Mark Douches, Paul Syers
- Secretary ..... (open)
- Treasurer ..... Malthi Masurekar

### Directors (through 2010)

- ..... Bill Farrell
- ..... David McRichie
- ..... Lenny Thomas
- ..... Don McBride

As usual, elections will be held at the Main Meeting on December 5. Nominations will be accepted from the floor until the actual voting begins, and yes, you can nominate yourself. ☺

**Voting on By-Laws Revisions and Officers and Board Members will be on December 5 — plan to be there to cast your vote!**



<http://www.acgnj.org>

Founded 1975

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## Officers, Directors and Leaders

### Officers

President	Mike Redlich	(908) 246-0410
Vice President	Mark Douches	(908) 889-2366
Treasurer	Malthi Masurekar	(732) 560-1534
Secretary	Paul Syers	(732) 388-1345
Past President	Evan Williams	(908) 359-8070

### Special Interest Groups

.Net	Manuel J. Goyenechea	
C Languages	Bruce Arnold	(908) 735-7898
Firefox Activity	David McRitchie	
Genealogy	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
Investing	Jim Cooper	
Java	Michael Redlich	(908) 537-4915
Layman's Forum	Matthew Skoda	(908) 359-8842
LUNICS	Andreas Meyer	
NJ Gamers	Gregg McCarthy	
VBA & Excel	James Ditaranto	(201) 986-1104
Web Dev	Evan Williams	(908) 359-8070
Window Pains	John Raff	(973) 992-9002

### Board of Directors

Director Emeritus	Sol Libes	(609) 520-9024
Through 2008	Bill Farrell	(732) 572-3481
	David McRitchie	
	Lenny Thomas	
	Don McBride	(732) 560-0369
Through 2009	Gregg McCarthy	
	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
	John Raff	(973) 992-9002
	Bob Hawes	

### Standing Committees

APCUG Rep.	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
Facilities	John Raff	(973) 992-9002
Financial	Mark Douches	(908) 889-2366
Historian	Lenny Thomas	
Membership	Mark Douches	(908) 889-2366
Newsletter	— open —	
Trenton ComputerFest	Mike Redlich	(908) 246-0410
Vendor Liaison	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
Webmaster	John Raff	(973) 992-9002

## ACGNJ News

### Editor

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

### Publisher

### Associate Editor

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

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

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

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**Typographic Note:** The ACGNJ News is produced using Corel Ventura 5. Font families used are Times New Roman (TT) for body text, Arial (TT) for headlines.

### E-Mail Addresses

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

Bruce Arnold	barnold@ieee.org
Jim Cooper	jim@thecoopers.org
Barbara DeGroot	bdegroot@ptd.net
Mark Douches	pcproblems@pobox.com
David Eisen	ultradave@gmail.com
Bill Farrell	wfarr18124@aol.com
Manuel Goyenechea	Goya@acgnjdotnetsig.org
Robert Hawes	r.d.hawes@hotmail.com
Sol Libes	sol@libes.com
Malthi Masurekar	masureka@umdnj.edu
Don McBride	don@mcbride.name
Gregg McCarthy	greggmc@optonline.net
David McRitchie	dmcritchie@hotmail.com
Andreas Meyer	lunics@acgnj.org
Arnold Milstein	mrflark@yahoo.com
John Raff	john@jraff.com
Mike Redlich	mike@redlich.net
Matt Skoda	som359@aol.com
Keith Sproul	ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu
Paul Syers	paul.syers@acgnj.org
Lenny Thomas	lennythomas@technologist.com
Scott Vincent	scottvin@optonline.net
Frank Warren	kb4cyc@webwarren.com
Evan Williams	tech@evanwilliamsconsulting.com

# Turkey with Gremlins

Robert Hawes ([r.d.hawes@hotmail.com](mailto:r.d.hawes@hotmail.com)), ACGNJ

In the USA, at least, the Thanksgiving holiday is synonymous with a turkey dinner. That's not the kind of "Turkey" I mean, though; but you'll have to wait a bit before I go into detail about the words in my title. First, I want to talk about a man I never met, but who had a significant affect on my life; and who *did*, in fact, feel sort of like a beloved but distant relative who would always have been welcome at Thanksgiving Dinner. He entertained me almost every day for *many, many* years, he gave me a feeling of comfort and familiarity when I was in strange and unusual places, and he made my life a *whole lot less* painful than it otherwise would have been. I'm talking about the late, great Johnny Carson.

The entertainment part is obvious; but what about the rest? I was in the Air Force from 1968 to 1972. Now, my enlistment was a "walk in the park" compared to the experiences of many of my Vietnam-era contemporaries. I'm *not* claiming "traumatic and deadly". I *am* claiming "strange and unusual". Most nights, though, either on local TV or AFRTS (Air Force Radio and Television Service), there was Johnny; a familiar and comforting presence. The "less painful" part is going to take a bit more explaining.

One night, possibly as far back as the mid sixties, one of Johnny's guests (I think it was Danny Thomas, but I'm not absolutely certain) demonstrated how to *instantly* relieve a "Charlie Horse". (That's a cramp in your visible calf muscle, also known as the Gastrocnemius and/or "that big fat muscle below and behind your knee"). He said to reach down, grab your toes, and pull up on them. I remembered this the next time that I had one; and, by golly, it worked! The theory behind this action was that if you forcibly stretched out the tightly clenched leg muscle (thus relaxing it), then blood could flow freely into that muscle once more, the starved muscle cells would stop dying, and the pain would disappear. Before that, I had to suffer through the several *long* minutes of agony it would take for a Charlie Horse to go away on its own. Never again!

Now, I didn't (and still don't) get leg cramps every day, but they weren't a "once in a blue moon" occurrence, either. So, over the years, I've had occasion to refine my technique. Since I usually get them while asleep in bed, I came up with a way to use that situation to my advantage. I'd sit up, swing my legs over the side of the bed, and put both of my feet on the floor. On the cramped leg, of course, only my toes could actually touch the floor. My heel and ankle would still be quite a bit up in the air. Then, in a sitting position, I'd put *both* of my hands on the knee of the affected leg, and push down steadily. I'd be pushing my heel *down* rather than pulling my toes *up*, but the effect was the same. By forcing my foot to go flat against the floor, I'd stretch out the clenched muscle, and the cramp would go away. If I could get to a standing position without falling over, I could use the whole weight of my body to push my heel down, and it worked even faster. It takes less time to do it than it took for me to describe it here.

Another type of cramp that I'd occasionally get probably also has a nickname, but I don't know it. It's the one you get in

your arch that makes your foot try to curl up like a bird's claw does when gripping a branch. (A Charlie Bird?) I applied the "get it stretched" theory to that one by standing and pushing down on the affected foot; slowly and gently, but firmly. (Not too fast! You don't want to break something). I reasoned that if the cramping muscle wanted to curl up my foot, then the way to relax it was to push my arch as flat as possible. That worked, too.

My third most frequent kind of leg cramp was the infamous groin muscle. Here, there's no obvious way to do anything. However, standing had worked for me twice before. So why not a third time? Muscles *can't* push. They can only pull. Once contracted, they can't expand again unless *another* muscle pulls them out. They *always* come in pairs. (Though often, one of that "pair" is a whole lot bigger than the other). Therefore, the cramped groin muscle *had to* be connected in opposition to another muscle. Maybe there was a way I could stand that would force that opposing muscle to pull on the affected muscle enough to at least partly relax it. I found such a stance about halfway between the military positions of "Attention" (feet touching each other) and "At Ease" (feet about a foot (as in 12 inches) apart). Yet another victory over pain.

Very rarely, I've had muscle cramps in other parts of my body; and I've found ways to apply the "get it stretched" theory there, too. All in all, as far as my quality of life goes, that one night's viewing paid off *really, really* big. So why am I crediting Johnny rather than Danny? Well, actually, they *both* have my eternal gratitude; but I didn't watch the Tonight Show for the guests. I watched it to see Johnny. *He's* the reason I was tuned in that night. I thought maybe this topic would make a letter interesting enough to actually be passed on up to the man himself, so I always meant to write him about it "someday". I'll always be sorry that I never did.

OK, so why did I tell that particular story here? Well, maybe by doing so, I can improve the quality of someone else's life; but also because now, to segue to my next point, I have to criticize Johnny (or at least his staff). I wanted to make my feelings about him very clear. This criticism is a *rare* exception, *not* the rule. Another time, almost certainly not quite as many years ago, an actor (whose name I know, but have decided *not* to say) told Johnny that his family's original last name (before it was changed by the bureaucrats at Ellis Island) had contained the "f-word" in the middle. He said that he knew he couldn't say it, but maybe he could spell it. Except that when he came to what should have been "f", a clumsy edit changed it so that he seemed to say "t".

Now, I'll agree that the Tonight Show censors had a tough call to make. It's sort of ridiculous to bleep a letter, especially when everyone has *already* been told *exactly* what that letter is going to be. I'd have either shut off the sound for *all four* letters, or bleeped all four letters. Either of those actions would have been all right, because the Tonight Show had no obligation to broadcast *everything* he said. However, even if we credit them with brilliance rather than stupidity (not the most likely case in real life), and assume that their audibly bad edit

*Continued*

still completely unacceptable. They crossed a line, because they changed what he actually said. In other words, they *deliberately* misquoted him. That's actionable. If I'd been that actor, I would have sued. (Since I don't read any of the "trade" papers, maybe he did and I missed it).

### Slicing Up a Turkey

At last, that brings us to our "Turkey". You've probably guessed that I intended to use it as an insult; and who or what do I most often want to insult? That would be Microsoft. In both our September and October 2008 issues, I described the various "adventures" I went through as I labored at setting up Microsoft's Hotmail as an outgoing e-mail client for club-related messages. My goal was to send out monthly multi-recipient announcements to our members. I have years of experience with Hotmail because (up until now, anyway) I've used it exclusively for my own stuff. I never even bothered to set up the default e-mail account that came with my DSL connection. Now, however, I've discovered that Hotmail has been sticking a sneaky Microsoft spam advertisement on to the end of *every* message that I send out. This makes me livid. By changing the contents of my messages, they're in effect deliberately misquoting me in much the same way as the Tonight Show did to that actor. I can't be certain (not being a lawyer), but it seems to me that by turning my e-mail into spam, they may possibly be making me complicit in a criminal act. Furthermore, there could even be First Amendment issues involved.

Now, the First Amendment itself applies only to Congress (and the Fourteenth Amendment has been interpreted as extending that applicability to State Legislatures, too); but *not* to Corporations. As far as "freedom of speech" goes, the laws that *are* applicable pretty much favor Corporations. So I probably don't have much of a chance there; but "freedom of the press" is a different matter. There, "bloggers" have been winning a lot of cases lately. When I send out official club announcements (especially when they contain a link to our newsletter), I *am* a member of the press. In that arena, I might have a shot. Then there's that "criminal act" thing. I wish I had the resources (time, money, etc.) to sue Microsoft and find out.

### Murphy's Gremlins

"Cloud Computing" has been getting a lot of attention lately. Basically, it all boils down to keeping even more stuff on the Internet and even less stuff on our individual computers. This sounds like a good idea to some people; but *not* to me. Allow me to quote Finagle's Law of Dynamic Negatives (also known as Finagle's corollary to Murphy's Law); "Anything that can go wrong, will - at the worst possible moment". (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). Nobody seems to be planning for disaster any more. What would you do if you just flat out couldn't get your stuff *back* from the Internet?

What can history tell us? Look at New York City, for example. We hear about broken water mains and shorted underground electrical cables all the time, there. We only oc-

asionally hear about Internet equipment failures right now; but as that infrastructure grows older, outages will inevitably happen more often *there*, too. (Don't believe the Internet Service Providers when they promise to keep all their equipment up to date, either. Years ago, that's what the water and power people said). Then, there's deliberate physical sabotage; and virtual sabotage as well, such as DDOS (Distributed Denial Of Service) attacks. Finally, there's the kind of weird thing that happened to me last month.

From late January 2008 until early May, I more or less simultaneously worked on my "SIG History" and "Newsletter History" projects. *Not* full time, but as the spirit moved me. In May, I dug in and sped things up, intending to include both histories in my June 2008 newsletter article. I'd just barely gotten into the Nineties, and my deadline was "breathing down my neck", when I made a horrible discovery. Somehow, I'd missed at least *eight* years of one Special Interest Group's meetings. Furthermore, I'd also managed to lose *every single bit* of information I'd collected about two others. Who knew what else might have gone wrong? I had no choice but to go back to the beginning and start again. Fortunately, I knew that our current newsletter Editor had taken the job in 1995. Thus, in the four or so years I still had left to cover, there couldn't be that many more newsletter-related surprises left. So I still had a good chance of completing my "Newsletter History" in time (I did, see the June 2008 issue of ACGNJ News); but I had to abandon work on the "SIG History" project, postponing it for another date.

The reason I've brought this up now is that my data source was our collection of old newsletter PDF files. Ever since John Raff showed me how to find them via the Internet, I'd accessed *at least* 150 of those files, most of them probably a lot more than once as I researched my two projects. In all that time, I don't remember having any trouble reading any of those files. Not even once. (If only I'd made prudent use of the "Save a Copy" function back then).

After that postponement, I became involved in other matters, so I didn't return to the "SIG History" project again until September. When I did, I made a *new* horrible discovery. I couldn't get into most of those files. Now, the way Adobe Acrobat Reader was designed to handle an Internet PDF file is that it opens itself on screen right away; and simultaneously begins to download that file's contents to a temporary location on the local computer's hard drive. As soon as it can, it displays the first page, even as it continues to download the rest of the PDF in the background. However, on most attempts this time, I never even saw page one. Only *once* when I actually did get a first page was I able to scroll all the way down to the last page of the file without crashing. (Having learned my lesson the hard way, I hit the "Save a Copy" icon then).

In frustration, I un-installed Adobe Reader 7.0, and installed Foxit Reader 2.3 in its place. Foxit *doesn't* try to open itself right away. Instead, it displays a download indicator, then loads and displays the file after the download is completed. Usually, I like Adobe's way better, but this time, Foxit's method clearly showed me that my downloads were hanging

*Continued*

up partway through the process *every single time*. I couldn't get even *one* file to open with Foxit. (This was the first time I tried using Foxit. No doubt unfairly, given Adobe's similarly wretched performance, I *wasn't* impressed). Even more frustrated, I un-installed Foxit and installed Adobe Reader 5.0 (an earlier, less intrusive, less bloated version that I sometimes prefer). In multiple tries, version 5 also let me save only one usable PDF copy.

A less bloated and intrusive Reader hadn't helped, but what about an operating system less bloated and intrusive than XP? Coincidentally, I'd just recently loaded Windows 2000 onto a spare hard disk. At an ACGNJ meeting, a member had asked if anyone had tried to install XP into a Microsoft Virtual PC that was running under Windows 2000. One of the many things I've wanted to do but never had the time for was to experiment with Virtual PC. So I'd grabbed the opportunity to answer that question, but hadn't actually progressed to the Virtual PC part when this other use for a Windows 2000 system came up. So I shut down my computer, pulled the XP hard disk, and replaced it with the Windows 2000 drive. In two hours and thirty-seven minutes, while running Adobe Reader 7.0 under Windows 2000 SP4 URP1, I managed to save good copies of just twenty PDF files before I became too discouraged to continue. (Incidentally, that URP1 is *not* a digestive disorder. It stands for Update Rollup Package 1. That's what Microsoft released instead of Service Pack 5). By the way, the short answer to that Virtual PC question is "yes", but with several caveats. We don't have room for more details here; but there's enough "meat" on that topic that I'll probably write up my experiences in another newsletter article someday.

Incredibly, it had taken me *one whole day* to download a total of twenty-two files that added up to a measly 38.3 MB. The next day, down but not defeated, I decided to try an even-more-different operating system: Linux. I downloaded the ISO CD image for Slax version 6.0.7 and burned it to a CD. Why Slax? Well, it's a Linux distribution that I'd downloaded images for several times over the years, but had never actually got around to using. So I "owed" it. Furthermore, it's a live-CD, so I wouldn't have to install it to a hard disk. In addition, its image file is only 189 MB, so I could burn it to one of the 211 MB mini-CDs that I've been playing around with lately. For reasons you'll understand in a minute, I decided to leave my newer PC (still running Windows 2000) up and running this time. So I set up my older "experimenter" computer with an empty FAT32 hard disk, and booted it from the Slax CD.

Slax booted up nicely, then launched KDE (the K Desktop Environment). That name, coined in 1996, was a play on words (letters?) spoofing the already existing but proprietary CDE (Common Desktop Environment). The K doesn't actually stand for anything, but that letter shows up in the names of a lot of the components that ship with KDE. Like in Konqueror, the default program that handles both the file management and the web browser functions.

Most of the time, I kept two Konqueror windows open. One was set to the web page where our files are listed, the other

was set to "hda1". That's Linux-speak for the IDE primary master hard disk's partition number 1. (Also known to old DOS guys like me as the C: drive). In other words, my empty FAT32 target for storing my downloaded files. My procedure was to click on the PDF file I wanted to download. Then, I'd click on the "Save As" button in the small pop-up window that would appear. That, in turn, brought up a larger "Save As" window, where (after the first time) the correct destination and file name would already be filled in. I just had to click the "Save" button. That launched yet another pop-up window; "Copy File(s) Progress". This was where the action was. It had a sliding progress bar with a "?? %" indicator, a "?? MB of ?? Mb completed" indicator, and a KB per second indicator. It also had a little "Keep this window open after transfer is complete" check box. My last act was to click on and thus put an X in that box. (There was probably a configuration option buried somewhere to keep that box always checked. I didn't take the time to search for it. Remember, I booted from the Slax *live-CD*. Obviously, as a CD, it's read only. Even if I'd found the correct option, there was no guarantee that Slax or KDE had provided a means by which I could save my change. It was quicker and easier to just check the box manually each time).

There, in the KB/s indicator of that progress window, I could finally see my problem. My downloads were arriving in spurts. The speed measurement would alternately go up and then back down, like it was following a wave. Or like a motor vehicle repeatedly revving up and then backing off on the throttle. That behavior looked suspiciously familiar. A major news item I'd seen between last May and now had announced that Comcast was imposing bandwidth restrictions on its Internet customers. I *don't* have cable myself, but it's always fun to blame things on the cable company. Unfortunately, that idea wouldn't fly. John Raff informed me that our club web site is *not* hosted by Comcast. Furthermore, he did some tests from the club computer (which *does* connect via Comcast) and he had no trouble accessing our PDF files. I went to the tech support website of the first computer manufacturer whose name popped into my head, and I accessed the first PDF manual that I could find. It measured 8 MB (*much* bigger than any of our files), and I could read it right away. The problem seemed to be specific to my DSL connection, but *only* for the ACGNJ PDF files. What was going on? That's when the Gremlin theory started making a lot of sense to me. Perhaps there were Gremlins out there who had something against *me* personally. (Cue the eerie background music, and lay in a long sinister laugh).

Before you send the mobile unit from the funny farm after me, let's take a closer look at my symptoms. Compared to my usual performance, even the fastest speed displayed as a club PDF downloaded was ridiculously slow. Now, I've had to endure slow speeds before, especially when downloading from some out-of-the-way place like Luxembourg; but it was a consistent, *steady* slow. This time, the KB/sec figure kept varying wildly; from a high that was usually in the mid twenties or low thirties (and never quite hit fifty) to a low in the single digits before it climbed up again. Worse, it would occasionally come to a complete stop. Then, instead of displaying

*Continued*

# From The DealsGuy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

## \*Proper Credit

I wrote [last month] about Hewie Poplock and Mike Ungerman of Central Florida Computer Society working on the live meeting technique whereby members could join the meeting on line if they couldn't make it in person. I also gave you the URL to see the video of a meeting. They wanted everybody to know that it was not originally their intention to do this work, but Dave Dockery of Tampa Bay Computer Society <http://www.tampa-bay.org> convinced them to give it a try since he has been doing it successfully for some time. They are still trying to get the technique perfected and <http://www.ustream.tv> is just one of the URLs they use for a monthly or SIG meeting, but while it's a lot of work, it has its rewards. Check <http://www.cfcs.org> for meeting information.

## \*Another Type Of Upgrade

As most of you know, I live in a hurricane prone area. In self-defense, I've been installing hurricane protection on my

windows and doors that are not already hurricane code rated. Remembering the year we had those three hurricanes one after another pass right over our heads, I recalled the dungeon affect with the plywood on the windows. I decided that Lexan would be a better covering as it would let the light in, and I could also see outside with little problem. It's taken a while, and some dollars, but I'm happy with the results. Even my wife can easily install the panels in just a few minutes to be ready for a storm. It also helps lower the price on my insurance, although my "hip" roof lowered that the most. A hip roof is a roof slanted on all four sides, with no gable ends.

Updating the insulation in our attic has helped lower our power bill considerably, although it took a lot of questions for the insulation companies before we chose the right one. We wanted one who would also find and seal other spots where air could leak from the living area into the attic, and they found several important places that needed to be sealed. Our A/C ductwork had already been serviced for leaks a few years ago.

*Continued*

## Turkey with Gremlins, *continued*

a KB/s figure, the progress window just said "Stalled". Often, after a couple of seconds to a couple of minutes, it would come alive again; but sometimes it would stay dead forever. Most heartbreaking was a download that permanently Stalled at 99%, with 2.1 MB of 2.1 Mb completed. With *at most* only 20 KB left to go, it never re-started.

I developed a routine. I'd start a download, then go over to the other computer and play a few hands of Solitaire. (*Now* you see why I left the Windows 2000 machine up. I didn't want to take any chance of interfering with a download by running any other programs on the Slax PC). After a while, I'd go back to the Slax computer. If it said 100%, I'd just start another download. If it said Stalled, I'd write down the filename, kill the hung-up download, start another, then go back and play some more Solitaire. Eventually, an idea occurred to me; and here (in my opinion) we have absolute, positive, scientific proof of the Gremlin theory. As soon as I thought; "Instead of just playing Solitaire, why don't I do something useful and install Virtual PC now?", I *couldn't* do it. Because things on the Slax machine started going *a lot* better.

On that second day, in one marathon twelve hour and eight minute session running Slax, I downloaded 175 files totaling 213.1 MB. On the third day, in four hours and fifty-five minutes, I downloaded 50 more files totaling 102.8 MB. In a total of sixteen hours and three minutes, I'd successfully copied 225 files in 315.9 MB. In that same time, I'd "missed" 28 files (for a just over 12% failure rate). Then, still on day three, I re-processed those 28 files, repeating as many times as necessary. That took another two hours and thirty-five minutes. My three-day total: 275 files in 414.6 MB.

Even though Slax did *a whole lot* better than either version of Windows, that performance was still appallingly abysmal compared to my usual standards. As a last test, I downloaded a 682.8 MB ISO CD image file. This time, Konqueror's speed

stayed between 340 and 349 KB/s the whole time. Much more like it. (Not great, but adequate). As an even-more-final test, I visited five different "Check DSL Speed" websites. (Splitting the task between the two computers). I got speed measurements of 2,520 Kbps, 2,742 Kbps, 2,681 Kbps, 2.674 Mbps and 2.844 Mbps. Don't panic! For some reason (that probably made some sort of sense to somebody, somewhere, sometime), transfer (download) speeds are shown in KB/s (Kilobytes per second), while connection (throughput) speeds are shown in either Kbps (Kilobits per second) or Mbps (Megabits per second). As we all should know, one byte equals eight bits. Furthermore, while most computer-related "Kilo" and "Mega" units of measurement are binary-based multiples of 1024, Kbps and Mbps are decimal-based multiples of 1000. (Maybe the same wacky committee made both those decisions). Doing the math, I obtained results of 315, 342.75, 335.125, 334.25 and 355.5 KB/s. All consistent, and matching the ISO image download above.

All in all, I finally got the files I needed for the "SIG History" project, even though it took a lot more time than I could really afford. (I just barely finished in time for inclusion in our October issue). Most of the "Gremlins" part of this article was supposed to have been used then, as well (until it grew *too* long and had to be put off until now). As I was writing this last paragraph, I decided to check and see if anything had changed. So I put my temporary Slax computer back together again, and re-downloaded some of the PDF files that had given me so much trouble last month. Now, everything performed perfectly. (Well, as adequately as usual, anyway). After appearing for at least three days just when it could cause me the most trouble, the problem just vanished. So what had actually happened? I don't know. Was it a so-far inexplicable technical fault? Or was it *Gremlins*?

See you next month. ☐

Our power bill is now much lower than last year. The next project was new windows with low-E glass filled with argon gas, making them more energy efficient. Before long the power company will be paying us each month. I am also looking into a small photovoltaic system in the hopes it will help with our effort. Finding reliable installation and purchase information has been difficult.

*A Word of Caution; I have not tried any of the items listed below so do your homework if you're interested.*

### **\*Share Your Artistry With The World**

Acoustica (<http://mixcraftlive.com>) has introduced a free service allowing anyone to upload their music, podcasts or sonic creations to share with the world. Artists can create an account, upload artwork and publish up to 100 megabytes of music. Each artist account has a forum and a blog to help foster a community and fan database. Each song can be ranked and, if popular enough, can appear on the top song charts. Artists can update an event calendar with their "gigs" so that their fans can find out when the next performance is. The service is completely free and can be used by anyone wishing to showcase their sonic creations recorded with Mixcraft.

Mixcraft is a multitrack music recording studio for Windows and has recently been awarded the Computer Music Value Award and the Keyboard Magazine Key Buy Award. It is seen as the Windows equivalent of Apple's Garage Band for price and functionality. MixcraftLive.com adds even more value to the software and is intended to showcase the musical skills and talents of artists recording with Mixcraft. Mixcraft now includes an additional 574 new music loops and over 300 new sound effects which are automatically downloaded on demand free to all Mixcraft customers. The loops include 13 exciting new Song Kits; Breakbeat, Crunk, Drum N Bass, Electro House, Film Score, House DJ, Jungle Drum N Bass, Progressive Euro, Southern Hip Hop, Synth House, Tribal House, Underground Hip Hop, and Urban Street Mix!

### **\*Would You Believe Eyeball To Eyeball?**

(I can't remember where I read this one.) Eyeball Chat is a free product that you can use for talking on the phone and seeing each other at the same time; that is, if you are both using the product. At <http://www.eyeballchat.com>, you can download the software to accomplish all this. Of course, there is more to it than that, but at least this product is free for you to experiment with. Check their Web site for more information.

### **\*Do You Love Games?**

MyRealGames has launched a free gaming portal that provides downloadable and online casual games. The portal <http://www.MyRealGames.com> is aimed to ensure a great pastime for audiences of all ages. Arcade, puzzles, shooters, dress-ups, sports and more are all free now. The portal also features free games, which were only available in "try-before-you-buy" versions before. MyRealGames.com can be recommended to those who are tired of advertisements in games because they don't have disturbances like annoying banners between levels. The only thing obligatory is a visit of the site after a user exits a game. The games are available in both 2D and 3D, and have three working languages.

With more than two hundred games, MyRealGames.com has something in stock for everybody. If you're an arcade game lover, don't forget to check out Space Bubbles. There are extraordinary power-ups and amazing bonuses to discover within every puzzle! Enjoy endless hours of bubble blasting action: <http://www.myrealgames.com/files/space-bubbles.exe>.

Exercise your billiard skills with the help of Billiard Masters or Cool 3D billiards, which you can play against computer or friends. The atmosphere of a comfortable place makes the game even better. Join billiard club at: <http://www.myrealgames.com/files/billiard-masters.exe>.

Try Nuclear Bike. Complete levels as fast as possible to achieve maximum score points. Speed up! Traffic police can't catch you here:

[http://www.myrealgames.com/en/play\\_online\\_nuclearbike.html](http://www.myrealgames.com/en/play_online_nuclearbike.html).

### **\*Here Is Another Free Defrager**

This One Has Rave Reviews! IObit is proud to announce the release of Smart Defrag. Smart Defrag was in development for 1½ years, tested by over one million users, and is now available to all PC users for free. Most users cannot clearly know the current fragmentation status of their hard disk, and have no good control over performing the defragmentation. "We have taken care of PC users' needs in our free Smart Defrag" says Hugo Dong, president of IObit.

Smart Defrag features include:

- An "install it and forget it" feature that works automatically and quietly in the background.
- Besides defragmenting, it also places the frequently used data into the fastest area of the disk.
- Smart Defrag has the industry's leading defragmenting engine, specially designed for modern, large hard drives.
- Free for home, organization, and business and 100% safe from any spyware, adware and virus.
- Designed for Windows 2000, XP, Vista and future Windows 7.

Smart Defrag is now available in English and other languages. More information and free downloads are available at <http://www.iobit.com/iobitsmartdefrag.html>.

### **\*Everybody Talks About It, Here is More Than Talk**

Other than spam, a frequently discussed subject is the privacy of your computer. There is a place on the Web where there is help. Check into <http://www.saltmeadow.com/privacy> where you will find seven tools for working on the privacy of your computer. Some of them you may already know about them, and others you may not. Best of all, it is a collection of all freeware for your use.

*That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>. 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.* ☺

# The Last HOPE (2008) Hacker Convention in NYC

*Cass (rlewart@monmouth.com) and Ruth (rlewart@comcast.net) Lewart, ACGNJ*

If you ever wondered about computer data security and access to databases by unauthorized people, then this Convention was the place to be. It was named The Last HOPE (Hackers On Planet Earth) because of the expectation that the Hotel Pennsylvania, a once classy hotel that has hosted recent HOPE Conventions, would be razed in the near future, and that no alternate location would serve as well. This sentiment was expressed in the admission badges, functional RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags, that allow personal information to be tracked by others at the Convention who shared your interests. Note the shape of the badge! A single battery powers the circuit for weeks. Though the tombstone suggests the demise of the Convention in 2008, the Badge is still flashing (see the image), so how can HOPE be dead?



*The badge, front and back.*

The Convention was organized by Emmanuel Goldstein, editor and co-founder of 2600 magazine and host of Off the Hook on WBAI. The credo of a hacker is to penetrate the barriers of passwords and access restrictions, expose security flaws, and do it without malice, personal gain or harm to others. Still, there is an occasional clash between hackers and the powers-to-be resulting in some hackers spending extended periods of time in Federal penitentiaries. Hacking, which originally started as attempts to penetrate the telephone network, is now more oriented towards computer networks, civil liberties and privacy protection.

The Convention drew close to three thousand mostly young and enthusiastic participants. In over an acre of space on two floors there were simultaneous talks, panel discussions and movies between 10 am and well past midnight each day. All the talks, panels, and keynote addresses took place primarily in three large Conference rooms on the 18th floor. There were 40 scheduled talks on Friday alone, 38 on Saturday, and 21 on the final day!

Most other HOPE projects and activities took place on the 2nd floor. This floor of the hotel was dedicated to a computer network, book and T-shirt selling areas; a track for running a Segway scooter. There was also a Lego Table to compete with Legoland in The Mall of America and a lock-picking workshop and movie presentations. The participants were warned not to mess with the hotel phone and computer systems. The

advice was — if you want to cause chaos, there is a whole city out there. Other areas of interest: a lock-picking village with free lock picking tool kits and demos; a bookstore for the open-source crowd; and a T-shirt table. Ruth succumbed to two T-shirts with cryptic binary messages; and she enjoyed the computer art.

Ruth watched a movie with a screen placed in front of several rows of hammocks. Unfortunately no one told her how to get out of the hammock. Nevertheless it was a wonderful place to take a break. Breakout sessions and seminars also took place on the 6th floor, but we never had time to investigate these.

Here are some highlights from talks and panel discussions Ruth and I attended during the three days:

Several talks focused on high-security locks. A well attended session on lock-picking, actually a sport officially recognized in many European countries and in Canada, showed the latest techniques to open locks — without having the proper keys. The speaker from Denmark demonstrated how the most secure locks can be opened in less than a minute, using a \$2 screwdriver. These locks are certified by independent laboratories that limit tools allowed to open those locks. When they presented their exploits to the lock-testing laboratory, they were told that a screwdriver was not on the approved list of tools, therefore the lock was still considered secure. The question asked was whether potential intruders sign a declaration that they will not be using screwdrivers.

In the Privacy Is Dead Get Over It panel, the main speaker Steven Rambam, a well known private investigator, showed how easy it is to find details past and present of any person with a minimum amount of information to start with. Rambam was arrested at the previous HOPE by the FBI before giving his talk. Subsequently all charges were dropped and the prosecutor lost his job.

For the frequent traveler there were two interesting talks. One was about always bringing and declaring a gun in the checked baggage. Such baggage is then handled with more care and its contents are better protected against theft. A second talk showed a video taken by a camera hidden in a suitcase next to a hole. You can see how your luggage is mistreated by attendants and baggage handlers.

In the Hacking Democracy talk, two researchers who investigated electronic voting machines in the US, concluded that the security of those machines was poor; e.g., the same two keys for machines by ES&S Voting Systems would give access to every one of their machines — whether in New York, California, Alaska, or Hawaii. Also, the secret ink used by the ballot scanners could easily be duplicated by any ink jet printer.

In the Grid Voice/Data Communications talk the speaker showed how to communicate without using traditional networks; e.g., a radio built into an Altoids box can communicate over hundreds of miles. Bernie S (hacker extraordinaire, known to listeners of WBAI's Off The Hook) led this discussion on modern two-way radio that can provide effective and reliable short-range and global voice/data communications for little cost and none of the pitfalls that beset

*Continued*

# Hacking 101

Marjie Tucker (mcug (at) dnet.net), Editor, Macon Computer User Group ([www.mcug.org](http://www.mcug.org))

We are being bombarded with warnings about securing our data and the entry to our computers. Do you ever wonder what the big fuss is all about? How can a hacker possibly get into your data? And, what would he be looking for? Let's spend some time answering those questions.

## How Does A Hacker Get In To Your Computer?

When you give your computer access to the Internet, you need an IP (Internet Protocol) address. The IP addresses that we are currently using have 4 octets with periods between them. They will be something like 192.168.100.1. When you access the Internet, that address is read by the router, modem, whatever that links you to your Internet Service Provider. Then it is read by the routers that route all the data through the Internet. This address makes it possible for you to send data, such as e-mail or requests for web pages. And, in turn, that same address is used to direct incoming e-mail and web pages into your computer. There are several websites and programs available that will translate these IP addresses into the name of the company that purchased them. In many cases, like our residential usages, the company name will be the ISP. For commercial use, it will be the name of the company that rents the block of IP addresses. Hackers use this IP address information to find their targets much like we use a physical address to find a house or office.

Once a hacker finds out your IP address it's relatively simple to send your computer a Trojan horse program, spyware, or a virus that will open a port that you usually don't use. Once that port has been opened, he can freely enter into your operating system and browse around just like he was there in person. He would look for programs that store valuable data like social security numbers and credit card account numbers. (Do you have that information entered into your Quicken or Money program?)

He would look through your My Documents folder for password lists and search your Internet Explorer favorites for financial sites where you saved the username and password. And, before he leaves he usually plants another Trojan horse

that will give him the ability to take control of your computer in the future.

## Commercial Websites

The most common way to hack into a company's website through the Internet is by using a Denial of Service attack. These DoS attacks use multiple computers to overload a website with bogus requests for information. The hacker usually creates a Trojan horse program that he sends into the computers of unsuspecting people (remember that program that was left behind when your computer was invaded above?) The message that he creates usually contains a header saying that it comes from an IP address that doesn't exist. When he is ready to attack, he calls up all the computers that he infected with his Trojan horse and tells them to contact a specific IP address. Those computers follow his instructions and send his preprogrammed message to that website. Servers that control websites always check to verify that IP addresses requesting information or webpage downloads are legitimate addresses. When a server is hit by a bombardment of these false address requests, it tries to track down every one of the fake addresses. Before long the server becomes overwhelmed by the fruitless process and crashes. When it crashes, the website will vanish and the hacker will be given access to a prompt for the server. He can then use Linux or DOS commands to request and view information on that server.

## How About Wireless?

Let's put this hacker into an airport where hundreds of people are sharing a wireless network. It's like leaving a child alone in a candy store. In this case the airport's wireless system usually provides the IP addresses through DHCP and he can easily look at the list of addresses that have been supplied. He can test each of the addresses for available ports and it's quick work to access the most vulnerable. The same principles apply in hotels and restaurants that provide wireless Internet access. If you have a wireless network in your home, our hacker can drive down your street using a laptop or PDA to search for wireless networks. This process is called

*Continued*

## The Last HOPE (2008) Hacker Convention, *continued*

corporate-owned, government-regulated voice/data networks. In 1995 Bernie S was imprisoned for over a year for merely possessing communications hardware and software. Today he continues to use his skills to investigate and report on technologies and government activities.

Simulating the Universe, a talk not related to hacking, described a large computer project in which the whole universe evolved from the Big Bang. The resulting computer generated pictures of emerging galaxies looked very much like actual pictures taken with large telescopes.

The meeting was a lot of fun. Ruth and I really enjoyed it. If you want to find out more about hackers listen to Off the Hook on WBAI-FM (99.5), Wednesdays at 7:00 pm. This year most of the talks and panel discussions were recorded and will be

available on DVDs for a fee and as MP3 audio files for free downloading. The URL for downloading audio files is <http://www.thelasthope.org>. Click on Talks at the top of the screen, and download any of the talks to your MP3 player. Have fun.

Final Thoughts: Though the tombstone on the badge suggests the demise of the Convention, perhaps the enthusiastic participation of hackers from all over the world has caused the organizers to soften their gloomy predictions. Besides, the Hotel Pennsylvania expects to be around in 2010 to host the next HOPE! We loved the Convention this year as in the past, enjoyed all the excellent talks, panels, and other activities, and fully expect to join hackers from everywhere at the 2010 HOPE Convention. ☞

Wardriving. If he finds one that has not been secured at all, he doesn't even have a challenge. If you have added a password, he simply has to crack the password.

### What Tools Do They Use?

It's very easy for a potential hacker to find the tools of his trade. There are many websites that offer program tools and tutorials for using them. Here are some of the popular:

**Anonymizers and Remailers** - Anonymizers are online services that eliminate the trail of information that is left behind. These sites use anonymous proxies that a hacker can use to access computers and servers without leaving his IP address on any log. Remailers strip the header off a message and replace it with a meaningless header that can't be traced.

**Command.com** - When this command is typed into a server it will basically give you administrative rights. You can then see all the folders and files. It's also very easy for the hacker to create a new administrative account that he can re-use in the future.

**Password Crackers** - These programs try random passwords at lightening speeds. They are usually very successful.

**Key Loggers** - Hackers frequently install these on computers, especially public PCs. The programs actually record every stroke that you make. Hence, when you type in a username and password, it has been captured.

**Port Knocking** - This is a method of externally opening ports on a firewall by mimicking the process you normally use to add a port to your firewall.

**Wireshark** - This popular program captures and analyzes the data on a network. It's used by hackers to find information they want and it's also used by network administrators to manage networks.

**Aircrack** - This program is used to crack wireless WEP and WPA passwords.

**Metasploit Framework** - This is a tool that can be used by hackers to search the Internet for sites that have dubious code. These are the sites that are the easiest to hack - especially when this program does the searching for you.

**NMAP** - This is a port scanner. Since a hacker knows that he needs to use a port to access your computer or network, he can use this program to see which ports you have open.

**NetStumbler** - This program finds any wireless networks that are in range. Wardrivers drive through residential neighborhoods using NetStumbler to search for available wireless networks.

**Kismet** - This program takes NetStumbler one step farther. It searches for wireless networks that are not broadcasting their SSID.

**NSLookup** - If you type a domain name into this program, it will give you the company's IP address

**Traceroute** - This is a very valuable troubleshooting tool for technicians. It will trace a packet on its route through the Internet. It shows every IP address it visits along the way.

**Snort** - This is an open-source intrusion detection system. It shows traffic analysis and packet logging on networks.

**TCPdump** - This is the most widely used network sniffer/analyzer for UNIX networks.

**Net Cat** - This has been called the Swiss army program for hackers. It performs many sniffing and cracking tasks.

This was really just some of the basics. But, if we know why security is so important, we may remember to take the right precautions. Hope your web surfing stays secure.

*This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).* ☐



### 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](mailto:bdegroot@ptd.net)). Those who supply missing issues will receive a free copy of the resulting CD as our thanks for your help. ☐

# Tales of Woe

*Pim Borman (swipcug(at)gmail.com), SW Indiana PC Users Group (swipcug.apcug.org)*

## Spinrite 6.

Son Mike's computer recently refused to boot, and his main concern was the potential loss of some recent data files that he had not yet backed up. Regrettable, but it happens to the best of us — literally. The local school system lost all the students' test results of the current term because the computers crashed. The data were not securely backed up. Whom to blame? No one other than the operator, IBM, symbol of computing excellence. According to the local paper, the IBM representative claimed that this had never happened before and could not be explained. Sound familiar?

Back to Mike. When it was clear that he could not boot from the hard drive, not even in safe mode, the next step was to use a Windows XP setup disc and use its Repair function. Windows labored mightily, trying to repair his drive, but kept getting bogged down with a variety of obscure error messages. At one time he got a DOS prompt that allowed him to list the files on his computer, but when he tried to copy them he was denied access. When we booted his computer with a Live Ubuntu Linux CD he could also see his precious files, but access was again denied.

There is a lesson to be learned from this. The Windows XP operating system runs on a partition configured in the NTFS format. When data files are saved in that format, Windows XP (and Vista) by default protect those files from access by others. That is a nice safety feature for those who really need it, but it makes the data unavailable over your network, or evidently even from a DOS prompt. You can beforehand designate specific data files to be shared, but it is a lot of bother, easily forgotten. Here is the lesson: store all your data files on a separate partition set up in the older FAT32 format, and they'll be available whenever and wherever you need them. Even better, also back them up to an external drive in FAT32 format.

At this point I remembered reading about a terrific file recovery program, Spinrite 6, available for \$89 from Gibson Research Corporation, owned and operated by Steve Gibson, the well-known computer guru ([www.grc.com](http://www.grc.com)). We downloaded the program and converted it to a bootable disc. After booting Mike's computer with the Spinrite disc it immediately announced that his drive was subject to imminent failure. Well, that's what we spent the \$89 for. We started the file recovery mode, with a warning that this could take a loong time, think 24 hours or so.

Several days later, after running something like 60 hours during which the program every so often would get bogged down and had to be restarted, the program had progressed to 93% completion and refused to go any further. No indication that any files were available to be recovered.

Mike installed Windows XP on a new drive and put the old wreck in an external hard drive enclosure connected to a USB port of his computer. The old drive was unreadable at this point. Still unwilling to give up, Mike tried the old standby, Windows' checkdisk with the /F parameter (for "fix") to let Windows try to repair salvageable parts of the drive. It

worked! After several repeats of the procedure he was able to recover most of his lost files that meanwhile also had become accessible. So much for Spinrite, mark one up for good old DOS.

## Acronis

After creating the Spinrite disc, and before using it on Mike's computer, I tested it on my desktop computer by doing a routine check of my hard drive, expecting it to be in perfect shape. To my surprise Spinrite halted about 5% into the inspection because the hard drive was overheating. Newer serial (SATA) hard drives are equipped with a SMART program that reports many operating parameters of the drive. Windows can't read SMART, but Spinrite can. On inspection I found that the cooling fan for the hard drive compartment was kaput. It was easily replaced by the local people who built my computer, but even then the drive continued to overheat, a clear warning that it may fail any time.

I bought a new 500 GB Maxtor drive (on sale for \$99!) which came with a utility, "MaxBlast" to copy an exact image of my setup to the new disc, avoiding the necessity to reinstall everything. The way it wanted to go about it was to do a three-way partition of the 500 MB drive, similar to the 3 partitions in the old (250 MB) drive, but twice as large. It was going to copy everything on the old drive to the new drive, including my Linux programs in their partition, with the warning that the Linux system would no longer be bootable. That was not what I had in mind, I just wanted to copy an image of the C: partition from the old to the new drive. Since MaxBlast turned out to be version 10 of disk manager Acronis, I gave Acronis-11 a try in the hope that it would be more flexible. I uninstalled MaxBlast and tried to install Acronis 11, but it balked. I tried to remove all traces of MaxBlast from the Registry, but Acronis still wouldn't install. I uninstalled as much as possible of Acronis and tried to reinstall MaxBlast. No luck; darn. So much for Acronis.

After clean installations of Windows XP and Ubuntu Linux on the new drive, Windows could not find my Internet connection. After struggling several days I finally realized that my motherboard needed to be software-configured and that I did not have the correct drivers. Thanks to the local availability of the guys who originally built the system I got the correct drivers and all was well. Ubuntu never had any problem. It downloaded and installed the required Linux drivers automatically.

## Ubuntu

Windows Vista is not the only operating system with compatibility problems on installation. Ubuntu and other Linux distributions have more than their share of installation problems. Most of these appear to be due to proprietary graphics systems for which Linux has no drivers (yet). I have been recommending for years that people ought to start using Linux, but on both occasions where I convinced someone, it turned out that Ubuntu was incompatible with their systems. Computers with integrated graphics and many laptop computers

*Continued*

# The Art of Keeping Cool, Part 1: Computer Fans

Jerry Goldstein ([attygoldstein\(at\)tiac.net](mailto:attygoldstein@tiac.net)), *The PC Users Group of Connecticut* ([www.tpcug-ct.org/](http://www.tpcug-ct.org/))

With the cold weather you may not be thinking of the need to cool down. No matter how cold it gets outside your personal computer still needs to be cooled. Computers generate a great deal of heat and need a means of dissipating it. Heat reduces the life of your computer parts. Block your computer vents and your motherboard will fry. Inadequately cooled computers suffer crashes and freeze-ups as the parts overheat.

You can check your computer's temperature during startup by going to Setup when your computer starts. Do it through a reboot after you have been on the computer for a while so you get a true reading. There is software available to monitor your CPU's temperature. Constant temperature monitoring is probably not needed unless you are overclocking your computer (running your CPU faster than it is set for at the factory) or have packed in way too much gear.

To combat the heat, users have a wide selection of choices, some that work better than others. This article will introduce you to a variety of means of keeping your computer cool.

As computers get faster and smaller the parts are getting hotter and hotter. The smaller the computer case gets the less space that heat has to go. For a while computer cases were getting bigger. About eight years ago I had a nice full size tower that had plenty of room for lots of gear and open space for the heat to dissipate. I still had extra fans running on that computer but the computer ran cool to start with because it had space for the heat to go. In the last few years the over-the-counter computer started to be made with smaller cases which meant parts are being crammed closer together. That also meant there was less room for the excess heat to move away from the equipment. Adding fans is becoming more of a necessity as more is crammed into less space.

The standard computer comes with at least four small fans built onto the case walls and the CPU. These fans are self-contained units that either blow cold air into the computer or hot air out. You will find these fans spread throughout your computer with their location depending on the manufacturer's design. There is also a fan made to blow cool air directly onto an add-on video card, a notorious heat monger for gamers. The fan uses one or two expansion slots and sits over the video card forcing cool air onto the card. When adding fans think about placing some fans to bring in the cool air while having other fans suck out the heat. Good airflow will keep things cool and lengthen the life of your computer.

For gamers, who always want the latest and greatest equipment, (meaning heat generating stuff), there's nothing like a

huge fan built right into the top of the computer. These fans are larger than standard computer fans, usually as large as the case is wide. They sit on the top of the computer sucking the heat up and out as it rises through the computer. Way cool.

Of course a fan cooled computer will do you no good if you pack your computer into too tight a space. Be sure to keep a few inches for air to circulate in and out of the computer fan vents and don't put your computer in a closed cabinet. There is a reason computer desks come with an open back cabinet. Air circulation is also the reason why internal computer cables are no longer flat. They found the flat cables blocked air flow. The round sata cables now in use cut back on air flow restriction. Sata cables are also made thinner to further increase airflow. Check how your cables run and maybe move them to the side to increase airflow. Air circulation equals good. Closed-in, tightly packed computer equals bad.

One drawback to fans is that they run off your computer's power supply. The more fans you put in your computer the shorter the life of your power supply. Power supplies are a lot cheaper to replace than a motherboard, CPU, hard drive, or video card. In fact, you should always invest in a couple more good fans to aid in cooling your computer. The manufacturers are looking to save costs so they are never generous enough with those fans. You'll always save money in the long run with longer lasting parts kept cool by those extra fans. That is if you remember to install them. Those extra fans won't help while they sit on the shelf waiting to be put in.

Fans also have a bigger drawback — noise. When you start up your computer that noise you hear is the fans starting up and running. The more fans you use the more noise you get. Its worth spending a bit more to get a better quality quieter fan. Check the computer magazines or on-line for reviews. Using one large fan that moves more air than two small ones will also save you noise. The law of diminishing return comes into play with fans. At some point adding another fan will not help any more as the enclosed space can only move so much air.

The lower you keep your computer parts temperature the longer they will last. Taking the time to strategically place computer fans will save you time and money shopping to replace those overheated blown parts. Keep cool year round.

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## Tales of Woe, *continued*

have low-cost proprietary hardware (made in China) that is attuned to Windows, but unlikely to have Linux drivers. Standard graphics cards from major manufacturers are more likely to have Linux drivers available, and those based on the NVidia chip set have Linux support from the manufacturer.

You can try to run Ubuntu from the CD-ROM without installing it on the hard drive, a so-called "live" installation. If that works, your system is probably compatible and you can pro-

ceed with a permanent installation. If it doesn't work, not much is lost since the distribution is free. In any case, Linux is a large program and requires at least 256 MB of RAM and 10 GB of hard drive space.

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# Why I Like the Ubuntu Operating System

Phil Vogel ([director3\(at\)olymug.org](mailto:director3(at)olymug.org)), The Olympia Microcomputer User Group, Washington ([www.olymug.org](http://www.olymug.org))

My interest in alternative operating systems started 20 years ago when I worked for the State of Maryland during a year of computer chaos. We had a good office system using WordPerfect but some high State official(s) made a decision to go with Microsoft Word. At our facility WordPerfect was no longer funded and we were no longer able to use it. Yet our mental facility didn't have the budget to buy all the copies for all of our computer, only a few.

Thus my co-workers and I became interested in alternative sources of software. One of the writing programs that we used was the predecessor of OpenOffice and not very good. And because of the high prices charged for an inferior product (Word compared to WordPerfect) at the time, we looked to finding an alternative Operating System to Microsoft products. I remember investigating Red Hat distribution of Red Hat Linux at the time. But at the time it was not up to par with Microsoft's Windows 95.

When I joined OMUG, I was delighted to find that there was a Linux SIG. "Linux" is a term for many operating systems (OS) using the Linux "kernel" or "heart" or "engine." The kernel "drives" the system like a car engine powers a car. Conrad Schuler, one of the leaders of the Linux SIG was promoting SUSE, a "distribution" of Linux which originally came from Germany. Paul Braget, another leader, liked Ubuntu. When joined, I found I was totally lost. However, I stuck it out and some of the understanding and data is beginning to stick to the walls of my mind.

I listened, worked on the Linux programs on the computers in the Senior Center and became convinced that I wanted to try it out for myself. I like laptops. I can grab a computer and move it to a room or across the country easily. In this country all computers are Microsoft friendly but only some brands and some models of the other brands such as Dell are Linux-compatible.

I decided after some research to take a chance on a new Toshiba Qosmio. We had difficulty installing SUSE and because of inexperience it became corrupted. However, it was easier to install Ubuntu.

"Ubuntu" is a South African word which means, "I am because you are." I am using Ubuntu because a lot of people around the world contribute to its innovation, maintenance, and security. By the way, the Toshiba came with Windows Vista Home Edition. I can boot into Vista when I need to, but use Ubuntu most of the time.

I use Ubuntu to surf the web because it has a very secure hard kernel. It is almost impossible to attack a Linux based machine because all the software programs are attached to the outside of the kernel. At most a particular program will become dysfunctional but not the operating system. For this reason about 90 percent of the servers around the world use Linux based software. Some servers are so reliable that service is minimal.

The Linux kernel is simple, clean and fast, allowing me to turn it on and be on the web in a fraction of the time required by my Windows machine. My web browser is FireFox, an excellent free program.

I am writing this article with OpenOffice because it is another excellent writing program that is on a par with Microsoft Office. And it is a free program also. I must admit that Microsoft's "Access" program is superior to OpenOffice's "Data." All the above programs are "open source" which means that you can obtain them for free by a download, or on DVD or CD for a nominal charge. However, there are also companies that will supply a person with disks, manuals and service contract just like Microsoft. But everyone is bound by the EULA of the "open source" contract, including companies and also users like me. For instance anyone who comes up with a change or improvement must make it available to any one else for free.

So this is why I like Ubuntu, FireFox and OpenOffice. I also use other features such as watching movies, burning DVD's, and WiFi — and they work well. Plus Ubuntu has an extensive Internet support system. New programs and updates are coming out all the time. It is an example of a technology rising up from the grassroots rather than from the top down.

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# Hewie's Views and Reviews

*Hewie Poplock (hewie (at) ymail.com), The Central Florida Computer Society (www.cfcs.org)*

Welcome to this issue of Hewie's Views & Reviews. Be sure to visit Hewie's Favorites at <http://www.hewie.net/>.

## My iPhone choice

Recently the new iPhone 3G was released. Since I have one of the original units, I watched with anticipation for news about the new units and services. With the release, the faster web speeds was enticing, but spending more for the same service just didn't pass the justification test.

I have decided to keep using my iPhone 2G. (I don't know if that is an accurate description.) There are several reasons for my decision. With the new phones, came an updated operating system, which is a free upgrade for my unit. Even though there were some Apple system-wide down times, I was able to upgrade my unit from version 1.1.4 to 2.0.0 on the release day. I did get some errors and had to try a second time, but it upgraded successfully.

With the upgrade, I have much of the same functionality of the new 3G phones. I can download and install any of the third party programs that are now available. The new 3G is not needed to use them. I will discuss some of those programs in a future column.

I don't have the increased connection speed of the 3G network, but much of Florida is not covered anyway. The I-4 corridor from Daytona to Tampa has 3G coverage, but if I get a few miles off of the Interstate, I will not be able to take advantage of the new speed.

The older unit cannot do GPS, but does access Google maps and I have a separate GPS unit, anyway. Other than it being newer, the iPhone 3G holds no advantages for me to pay an extra \$10 for the same service. If I want to keep the 200 per month text messages there is an additional \$5, plus the \$199 or \$299 for the phone. I will keep using my original iPhone.

## When a Special isn't and really is

(My Homer Simpson Moment)

Last month I talked about the 2 Logitech USB optical mice that I bought from 1saleaday for about \$5 each plus \$5 each for shipping. One of the mice worked great and the other was DOA (dead on arrival). When I e-mailed the seller, they offered to credit my account if I returned the bad one. That's nice of them, except the shipping would equal the refund, so I kept the useless unit.

At a tech meeting that I attended (The Tech SIG of CFCS), I talked about the situation and mentioned that the good mouse didn't have a battery and wondered how it worked. Everyone said that it must have a battery. I searched Google for the model to see if I could find a manual. The mice were shipped in plastic zip-locked bags with no documentation or product information. I not only couldn't find any info, but found that the model was a Canadian unit, and not available in the US.

When the good mouse died, I decided to open one of them. I pushed and pulled all of the buttons and cracks and a cover came off. Inside, there was a battery. I replaced the battery and the mouse again was working.

I then retrieved the other mouse from the throw-away box and opened it up. There was no battery inside and inserted the one AA needed. When I connected it to my laptop, the DOA mouse worked! "Duh" was my reaction.

I want to publicly apologize to 1saleaday.com (<http://www.1saleaday.com>). They were generous in offering me a refund and I was being a Homer Simpson by not realizing there should be a battery inside and to check it. I guess that's why tech support always asks if the computer is plugged in before trying to solve a problem.

## New Additions to Hewie's Favorites

**USA.gov** (<http://www.usa.gov>): U.S. Government's Official Web Portal for all government transactions, services, and information. It provides direct online access to federal, state, local, and tribal governments.

### HP Smart Web Printing:

([h20247.www2.hp.com/hho/cache/482779-0-0-225-121.html](http://h20247.www2.hp.com/hho/cache/482779-0-0-225-121.html)):

Software to print usable web pages without cut off edges and blank pages

**By-expression** (<http://by-expression.com/content/resources.aspx>):

Expression Web forum and tutorials

**Spam Return** (<http://www.spamreturn.com/>): Protect your privacy and avoid spam. Use Spam Return where no registration is required No Sign-up

**Elnance** ([www.elance.com/p/landing/buyer.html](http://www.elance.com/p/landing/buyer.html)): Outsourcing to freelance programmers, web & logo designers, copywriters, illustrators and consultants

**Timeanddate.com** (<http://timeanddate.com/>): Info that is time and date related, such as yearly and monthly calendars, count-down counters and world clock which shows current time in cities all over the world.

**Jooce.com** (<http://www.jooce.com/#>): Private online desktop with public sharing capabilities. View listen or share files photos music & video

**Zamzar** (<http://www.zamzar.com/>): Convert files. Zamzar supports conversion between a wide variety of different file formats

**Wordle** (<http://wordle.net/>): Generate "word clouds" from text that you provide to use however you like.

**PlanningWiz Online Room Planner** ([v3.planningwiz.com/](http://v3.planningwiz.com/)): Software for Furniture Retailers and Manufacturers, Building Contractors, Realtors and more

**bobble yourself** (<http://www.xmbaseball.com/>): Create a bobble head of you

**Volition®** (<http://www.volition.com/index.html>): Oldest Free Stuff site on the Internet. Includes Coupons & mystery shopping info

**Password Chart** (<http://www.passwordchart.com/>): Convert an easy to remember password. It works anywhere on any computer or offline & done in your browser

**JOLT** - Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (<http://jolt.merlot.org/index.html>): JOLT is a peer reviewed online

*Continued*

# Windows Vista Performance

Lynn Page (newsletter(at)crug.com), Crystal River Computer Group, FL ([www.crug.org](http://www.crug.org))

While here in Wyoming for the summer I have only my laptop for all of my computing needs. This means that keeping Windows Vista performing well is important. I have noticed a slowdown at times. So I thought this would be a good topic to discuss. Just how much my laptop is slowing down versus my perception is hard to determine. While in Florida I use my desktop for many of the functions that I am using the laptop now. I did notice that when I got my new DSL connection and associated software there was a distinct change.

So here are some standard ideas to get the best possible performance from your Windows Vista computer. Most can also be said for other versions of Windows but the actual procedures may vary.

## Delete Unused or Never Used Programs

Many new computers come loaded with programs or trial programs you won't use. The trial and limited editions of programs are provided with the hope that you will try them and decide to upgrade to full versions. So hunt through the computer and see what is installed. Try out the programs if you want but when you are done with your look and see uninstall those you will not use or upgrade. Having unused or unwanted software on your computer might slow it down by using memory, disk space, and processing power. This is especially true if the program loads and runs in the background.

This is also true of software programs that you purchase or download. If you try a program out and don't like it or have one you like better uninstall it. I am familiar with this particular problem because I purchase almost every digital editing application that I see. I really only regularly use three but have several more installed on my home desktop.

So uninstall all the application programs you don't use. Both manufacturer-installed software and those you installed but don't use anymore. It is important to keep have good

security and/or utility applications. But remember that these virus scanners, spyware detectors, disk cleaners, and backup tools may load automatically at startup and run in the background. So select the applications you need, keep them up to date and uninstall any others.

To uninstall a program click the Start button and then Control Panel. In Control Panel under Programs click Uninstall a program. In the list of installed programs select the one to remove and then click Uninstall/Change and then follow the instruction in the dialog boxes. Some applications come with their own uninstaller that is listed in the All Programs listing. I generally check there first and use the manufacturers uninstaller if it is available before using Windows uninstall.

## Control Which Programs Load at Startup

Software manufacturers design many programs to load automatically when Windows starts. These programs open in the background so they're readily available. You want that for your critical security software like virus protection and firewall and it can speed opening of programs you use all of the time, but for programs you seldom or never use, it wastes memory and slows Windows loading. Decide which programs should load at startup and stop others from automatically loading.

To see which programs load automatically start by looking at the icons in the notification area on the taskbar. Click the Show hidden icons button (greater than symbol at the left of the notification area) to see all icons and mouse over each to see the program name. Then look deeper with Windows Defender to be sure you know every program that loads automatically at startup. You view and disable them in Windows Defender.

The Software Explorer screen in Windows Defender shows startup programs which load automatically when you launch Windows. Disable programs that shouldn't open

*Continued*

## Hewie's Views and Reviews, *continued*

journal that addresses the scholarly use of multimedia resources in education.

**Audiko** (<http://audiko.net/>): audiko is a simple service which helps you to make a ringtone of your favorite song

**JotForm** (<http://jotform.com/>): Web Based WYSIWYG Form Builder. Create and publish web forms using your browser

**Mygazines** (<http://www.mygazines.com/>): Free to browse, share, archive and customize unlimited magazine articles uploaded by the Mygazines community.

### Florida Computer Crime Center

(<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Fc3/index.html>): Florida Department of Law Enforcement Computer Crime Center

**Picnik** (<http://www.picnik.com/>): Edit photos the easy way - online in your browser

### Starting in Second Life

(<http://www.thinkerer.org/SLintChan/SLintroch.htm>): What you need to know to get started in Second Life. Lots of good help.

**Buzzillions** (<http://www.buzzillions.com/>): Product reviews from Verified Buyers about Digital Cameras, Sporting Goods, Appliances, Mens and Womens Shoes, Toys and Video Games, and more.

**ZabaSearch** (<http://www.zabasearch.com/>): Free People Search and Public Information Search Engine - Telephone Numbers and Addresses Revealed Free. No Registration Required. Instant Results

**YouMail** (<http://www.youmail.com/home/index.do>): YouMail is a free online voicemail replacement with personal greetings

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automatically at startup. Restart the computer, check that they don't automatically load, and then open the programs and use them manually. If there is a problem go back and re-enable to start the program/programs automatically.

### Defragment the Hard Drive

Fragmentation of files makes the hard disk work to reconstruct them and can slow down the computer. Disk Defragmenter rearranges fragmented data so your hard disk works more efficiently. I have Disk Defragmenter set to run on a weekly schedule, but you can run it manually.

Disk Defragmenter is found in System Tools under accessories on the All Programs listing. Be sure to defragment all disks. It is especially important to defragment data partitions.

### Clean Up the Hard Disk

With the large new hard drives it would seem that freeing up hard disk space would not be very important. But it is. With the ease of digital photography and the increasing size of digital files hard disks can and do fill up. So it is important to reduce the number of unnecessary files on the hard disk. Freeing up disk space can help the computer run faster.

Before worrying about using a cleanup utility take a look at your data files. Review old original digital images, letters and other files. Delete those that are no longer necessary. Develop a filing system to save and store important files off your hard drive. I use external hard drives, CDs, DVDs and Zip disks. After deleting unneeded files and storing others off the hard drive use Disk Cleanup to remove temporary files, empty the Recycle Bin, and remove a variety of files no longer needed.

Another idea is to reduce the size of the Recycle Bin. Right click on the icon on the desktop and click properties. Review the settings and set the Recycle Bin size for each drive to an appropriate amount. Remember it should only be an exception when you need to retrieve something that you sent to the Recycle Bin. Don't consider this another storage location.

Disk Clean Up is found in System Tools under Accessories in the All Programs list. In the Disk Cleanup Options dialog box, choose to clean up your files or all of the files on the computer. Select the hard disk drive to clean up, and click OK. On the Disk Cleanup tab select the check boxes for the files to delete, click OK, and then click Delete files to confirm the operation. The More Options tab lets the administrator clean files from all users on the computer.

### Don't Run as Many Programs at the Same Time

How you use the computer has a big impact on its performance. If you're like me you keep several programs and browser windows open at once. I almost always have Internet Explorer, Outlook, Outlook Express and Word open. Then when I am working with photos add at least Adobe Elements and Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo. Its worse when I am working on the CRUG newsletter because then I add Adobe GoLive to this mix. With all of this going on my poor laptop is truly toiling. Keeping all of these applications going really uses the memory.

So if your computer is slowing down, see if you really need to keep all of the programs and windows open at once. I find it hard to do but when I am working with large applications like GoLive, Elements, Paint Shop Pro Photo and Word I sometimes close my email and browsing applications. Then when finished with the newsletter and web site I can check for new email and browse all I want.

### Turn Off Visual Effects

If Windows Vista is running slowly, consider disabling some of its visual effects. These neat appearance goodies take resources. They are a large and nice part of Vista but if performance is affected trade the appearance for performance. This is especially important if your computer is just barely powerful enough for Windows Vista.

Control which visual effects to turn off, one by one, or let Windows make a selection. There are 20 visual effects you can control, like the transparent glass look, the way menus open or close, and whether shadows are displayed.

Open Performance Information and Tools by clicking the Start button and then Control Panel. Next click System and Maintenance and then Performance Information and Tools. Click Adjust visual effects in the left pane of the Performance Information and Tools window. Select the Visual Effects tab. I have selected the Let Windows choose what's best for my computer selected but you can make your own choices by selecting Custom. Or select Adjust for best performance, and then click OK.

### Restart

This is simple and something I have done a lot on my home Windows XP desktop and even on my Vista laptop. If the computer is really running slowly or freezing up for long periods of time try closing unnecessary or even all the currently running programs. If that doesn't help restart the computer.

### Check for Viruses and Spyware

Any time my computer starts running slowly, I worry about the possibility that it might be infected with a virus or spyware. I always run antivirus, firewall and anti spyware programs but I still worry. So if I see an unexpected slowdown I manually run my antivirus and antispymware programs. I don't wait for the next scheduled weekly scans.

So be sure you are using antispymware and antivirus programs. And that they are up to date. I do checks for updates at least daily. Then set a schedule to run each. If you cannot schedule automatic scans set a day and time and regularly start a manual scan.

A virus might make computer performance slower-than-normal. Other things to watch for are unexpected messages popping up, programs starting automatically, or the hard disk constantly working. I sometimes get worried when performance slows and the hard disk is working only to remember that a scheduled scan is running and using computer resources.

Spyware is a program that is installed with or without your knowledge, to watch your activity. Check for spyware with

*Continued*

# Screen Magnifier from ZoomWare

Cass Lewart (rlewart@monmouth.com), ACGNJ

As we approach the “golden” age our vision often gets progressively worse. Text on the computer screen is becoming more difficult to read and we start looking for help. Even if your vision is adequate, watching the screen for several hours a day may lead to fatigue and eye strain.

## Software To The Rescue!

A program from ZoomWare ([www.getzoomware.com](http://www.getzoomware.com)) may help to alleviate your vision problems, at least as far as reading the computer screen. After installing the program you will see a window looking like a rectangular magnifying glass sliding around on your screen. The position of the magnifying glass window on the screen is controlled by the mouse movement. You will also see the fully operational cursor inside the magnifier window. E.g., double clicking on an icon will start that application. The feature which allows you to control the cursor inside the magnifying window is called “dynamic” mode. (The free, open source program, which I often use, “The Virtual Magnifying Glass” (see Google for more details) does not allow for cursor control in its current version. The ZoomWare program also lets you control magnification inside the window, cursor size and shape, and screen contrast and color schemes. Another nice feature of Zoomware is that characters in enlarged text remain smooth and are not pixillated as in other programs.

## Reading Text On Screen

One of the major problems when trying to read text on screen is that a screen magnifier like the one from ZoomWare requires constant scrolling left and right to be able to read a line of text. Text does not flow inside the magnifier window as you change magnification. I find that reading text on screen is easier by simply copying and pasting the appropriate text into a word processor such as Word. All you then have to do after pasting is to select it (Ctrl-A) and to change to a larger font size in the word processor. Text will then automatically flow into a page. Also most browsers support text magnification with automatic flow into the displayed page. If you want to see your text enlarged in FireFox or Netscape just press Ctrl+. Instructions for the Internet Explorer vary from version to version. Check the Help instructions.

## OS Requirements

Windows XP SP2 or higher or any version of VISTA

Cost Cost of the ZoomWare is fairly steep at \$149 for self downloaded copy or \$175 for a packaged CD. The license is good for up to 3 computers. Club members are eligible for a 25% discount. ☐

## Windows Vista Performance, *continued*

Windows Defender or other anti-spyware programs. I use Windows Defender, Ad-Aware and Spybot. Again remember to keep the programs updated and run regularly scheduled weekly scans.

### Add Memory

If your computer is too slow, likely that it doesn't have enough memory for the tasks you are asking it to perform. A hardware option to speed up your computer is to add more memory. I added 1 G of memory to my Windows XP desktop and the change was tremendous.

Windows Vista can run on a computer with 512 MB of RAM, but is better with 1 GB and for optimal performance use 2 GB or more. My laptop has 1 GB and could use more. Adding memory to my desktop was simple. Just be sure to buy compatible memory for your computer and if you're going to open up computer case add all that you might be able to use. For a Vista computer I would go to at least 2 GB probably more. Another option is to use Windows ReadyBoost to boost the amount of memory to the. This uses storage space on some removable media devices, such as USB flash drives, to speed up your computer. I have a 2 GB flash drive that I have reserved 1840 MG of space to speed up my laptop. It's easy to plug a flash drive into a USB port. So if you don't want to open up the computer case can and plug memory modules into the motherboard get a large ReadyBoost capable USB drive.

### Check Your Computer's Speed

Windows Vista can check and rate your computer's speed with the Windows Experience Index. This index rates your

computer on five key components and gives a subscore for each, and an overall base score that is only as good as the worst-performing component score.

The Windows Experience Index measures the capability of the computer's hardware and software configuration and expresses this measurement as a number called a base score. A higher base score indicates the computer will perform better and faster than a computer with a lower base score.

The Windows Experience Index is designed to accommodate advances in computer technology so the base scores currently range from 1 to 5.9. As hardware speed and performance improves, higher base scores can be introduced.

To view your computer's base score open Performance Information and Tools from Control Panel. If you have upgraded your hardware click Update my score to see if the scores have changed. If subscores and a base score are not shown, click Score this computer. My laptop has a mediocre base score of 3.1 due to its limited graphics abilities.

### Check for Manufacturer's Updates

Check your computer manufacturer's web site to see if they have released any updates for your specific hardware and software. If users are reporting the same problem, the manufacturer might have issued a fix, or provided information about the problem.

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# SIG News

## C/C++ Programming

Bruce Arnold ([barnold@ieee.org](mailto: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:** This is an exciting time for the C Language programming since Microsoft now has 4 different language compilers: C++, C++ Express, C-Sharp, and C-Sharp Express. All are capable of creating Windows programs. The newest versions are designated Visual Studio 2008. There are "Express" versions a.k.a. "Free" as well as the commercial versions. The Express versions are fully functional for creating Managed Code. Unless you work in a large program development company, you probably won't need the broader features of the commercial versions.

In order to demonstrate the C++ Express Compiler I have expanded a program from last season called CPU Usage History. This uses 2 of the Windows Performance Counters provided in the operating system (Windows 2000, WinXP, and Windows Vista). A utility was created using this concept to display the current activity of the CPU (Central Processing Unit) of the computer, and we explored this counter mechanism and demonstrated a program utility for displaying some of the counters.

Our [download site](#) has code and programs from most meetings.

**Our next meeting November 18.** ☞

## Window Pains

John Raff ([jraff@comcast.net](mailto: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 21:** Programming Languages Shootout, Committee ☞

## Layman's Forum

Matt Skoda ([som359@aol.com](mailto: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. ☞

## LUNICS (Linux/Unix)

Andreas Meyer ([lunics@acgnj.org](mailto: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. **Our next meeting December 1.** ☞

## Web Dev

Evan Williams ([tech@evanwilliamsconsulting.com](mailto:tech@evanwilliamsconsulting.com))

This SIG is an open forum for all Website Development techniques and technologies, to encourage study and development of web sites of all kinds. All languages will be considered and examined. Anyone interested please contact the Chairperson. 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. 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 10.** ☞

## Java

Mike Redlich ([mike@redlich.net](mailto:mike@redlich.net))

<http://www.javasig.org>

The Java Group covers beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Java programming. Primary focus is on developing useful/practical applets and applications, but can include topics such as Java I/O, JavaBeans, Reflection, object-oriented programming and software design issues.

**October:** Paul Furbacher presented a technical overview of the Google Web Toolkit (GWT). Writing web apps today is a tedious and error-prone process. Developers can spend 90% of their time working around browser quirks. In addition, building, reusing, and maintaining large JavaScript code bases and AJAX components can be difficult and fragile. GWT eases this burden by allowing developers to quickly build and maintain complex yet highly performant JavaScript front-end applications.

**Our next meeting November 9.** ☞

## Investment Software

Jim Cooper ([jim@thecoopers.org](mailto:jim@thecoopers.org))

[http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig\\_investment.html](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 11.** ☞

# Computhanksgiving

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

The Computer Club of Oklahoma City recently celebrated "Thanksgiving in August" at our monthly General Meeting when we celebrated all the members past and present who have given of their time and talents in the evolution of our computer club. As I was preparing for the General Meeting, I thought how far we have come from our humble beginnings in a small house where a few people attended to try to master DOS. Today, the Computer Club of Oklahoma City enjoys a high tech facility complete with a computer lab and is partnered with Senior Net.

The first computer club was the Homebrew Computer Club which had its humble beginnings in a garage in the Silicon Valley in California in March 1975. The club was an informal group of electronic enthusiasts and technically-minded hobbyists who gathered to trade parts, circuits, and information pertaining to computer devices. The club evolved rapidly to a large auditorium. The 1999 made-for-television movie "Pirates of the Silicon Valley" (and the book on which it was based, "Fire in the Valley: The making of the Personal Computer," describes the role of the Homebrew Computer Club in creating the personal computer. Engineers working on very expensive main frame computers in those days dreamed of developing a personal computer that would be so affordable that almost everyone could have one in their home. The rest of course is technological history.

SeniorNet was founded in 1986 by Doctor Mary Furlong in San Francisco, California and was later moved to Santa Clara, California. Dr. Furlong believed that telecommunications could enhance the lives of older adults. She faced considerable opposition in getting the project funded. The Merkle Foundation realized the potential of the project and funded it based at the University of San Francisco. Five learning cen-

ters were opened with twenty seniors, and computers were furnished by Apple Computers. Today SeniorNet has won numerous national awards and has 200 learning centers both nationally and internationally with a membership of approximately 20,000. SeniorNet is the leading technological educator of older adults and has benefited millions of seniors since its inception.

The birth of the personal computer was due to the development of the microprocessor, a single chip with all the circuitry that formerly occupied large cabinets. The early personal computers were called microcomputers and were sold as electronic kits with programming done by toggle switches and output was provided by front panel indicators such as neon bulbs. One remembers the Altair which you couldn't do much with but was of interests to hobbyists and technicians. Today due to the considerable evolution of the personal computer in 2008, one billion were sold worldwide and a projected two billion by 2014.

I am reminded of the Virginia Slim commercial, "You have come a long way, baby!" I wonder how often do we think of the thousands of our fellow citizens who have been involved with the development as well as the teaching of how to use these amazing technological devices that have so transformed our lives and indeed become a necessity and our very windows to the world? Perhaps, it is time to celebrate together a well deserved "Computhanksgiving."

Happy Thanksgiving from the Computer Club of Oklahoma City.

*This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).* ☐

## SIG News, *continued*

### 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. 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. **Our next meeting November 15.** ☐

### NJ Gamers

*Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)*

<http://www.NJGamers.com>

[www.lanparty.com](http://www.lanparty.com)

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

BYOC - Bring your own computer

BYOF - Bring your own food.

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

### Main Meeting

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

*Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)*

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

# 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
<b>Operating Systems</b>		
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](mailto: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		
<b>Princeton Macintosh User Group:</b> 7:15 pm 2nd Tuesday, Jadwin Hall, A-10, Washington Rd, Princeton, (609) 252-1163, <a href="http://www.pmug-nj.org">www.pmug-nj.org</a>	<b>Linux Users Group in Princeton:</b> 7 pm, 2nd Wednesday, Lawrence Branch Mercer Library, Rt#1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrence NJ <a href="http://www.lugip.org">http://www.lugip.org</a>	<b>New York PC:</b> 3rd Thurs, 7 pm, PS 41, 116 W 11th St. For info call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC, <a href="http://www.nypc.org">http://www.nypc.org</a>
<b>Computer Education Society of Philadelphia:</b> Meetings & Workshops at Jem Electronics, 6622 Castor Ave, Philadelphia PA. <a href="http://www.cesop.org/">www.cesop.org/</a>	<b>Brookdale Computer Users Group:</b> 7 pm, 3rd Friday, Brookdale Community College, Bldg MAN Rm 103, Lincroft NJ. (732)-739-9633. <a href="http://www.bcug.com">www.bcug.com</a>	<b>NJ Macintosh User Group:</b> 8 pm, 3rd Tuesday, Allwood Branch Library, Lyall Rd, Clifton NJ. (201) 893-5274 <a href="http://www.njmug.org">http://www.njmug.org</a> .
<b>PC User Group of So. Jersey:</b> 2nd Mon., 7 pm, Trinity Presb. Church, 499 Rt 70 E, Cherry Hill, NJ. L. Horn, (856) 983-5360 <a href="http://www.pcugsj.org">http://www.pcugsj.org</a>	<b>Hunterdon Computer Club:</b> 8:30 am, 3rd Sat, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington NJ. <a href="http://www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org">www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org</a> , (908) 995-4042.	<b>NY Amateur Computer Group:</b> 2nd Thurs, 7 pm, Rm 806 Silver Bldg, NYU, 32 Waverly Pl, NYC. <a href="http://www.nyacc.org">http://www.nyacc.org</a>
<b>Morris Micro Computer Club:</b> 7 pm 2nd Thurs., Morris County Library, Hanover Ave, Morristown NJ, (973) 267-0871. <a href="http://www.morrismicro.com">http://www.morrismicro.com</a>	<b>Central Jersey Computer Club:</b> 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, College of NJ. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	<b>NJ PC User Group:</b> 2nd Thurs, Monroe Rm at Wyckoff Public Library, 7 pm. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432, <a href="http://www.njpcug.org">www.njpcug.org</a>
<b>Philadelphia Area Computer Society:</b> 3rd Sat, 12 noon Main Meeting, groups 8 am-3 pm. Upper Moreland Middle School, Hatboro PA. (215) 764-6338. <a href="http://www.pacsnet.org">www.pacsnet.org</a>	<b>NJ Computer Club:</b> 6:15 pm, 2nd Wednesday except Jul & Aug, North Branch Reformed Church, 203 Rt 28, Bridgewater NJ. <a href="http://www.njcc.org">http://www.njcc.org</a>	<b>Princeton PC Users Group:</b> 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, <a href="http://www.ppcug-nj.org">http://www.ppcug-nj.org</a>

## 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](mailto: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>.

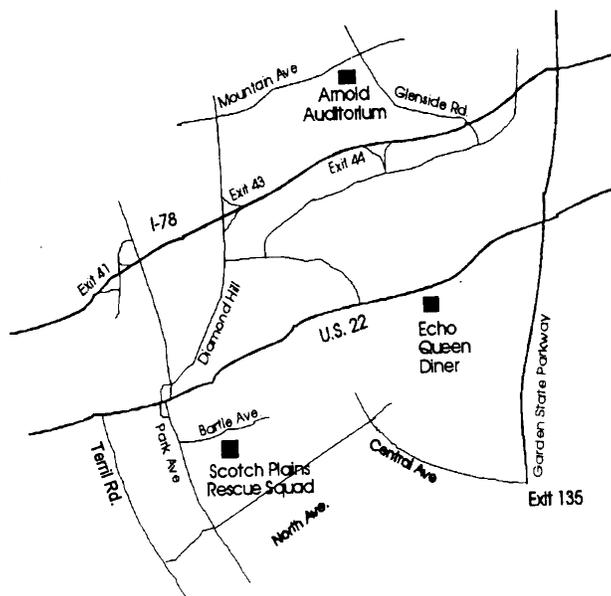
### MarketPro Shows

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

**November 9:** Hanover Marriott One-Day Show Whippany

**November 22-23:** Raritan Center, Edison

**November 29-30:** 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. ☐

# Uniblue Registry Booster 2

Terry Currier (*Tcurrier(at)aol.com*), *WINDOWS usERS (WINNERS)*, CA ([www.windowsusers.org](http://www.windowsusers.org))

I've tested a number of programs on my secondary test computer over the years. I've also installed and uninstalled a number of programs. At start up the computer loads up my anti-virus, anti-spyware, firewall, UPS monitor, motherboard monitor, QuickTime, Intel graphics monitor, Maxtor storage monitor, printer software, TV software, and others. It takes a while for it to boot up. I turn it on when I need it, go away to do other things, and come back after it's ready.

Rebooting is even longer with it shutting down everything and restarting. So I thought Uniblue RegistryBooster 2 would be something good to try. Rebooting took 4 minutes 45 seconds. When I first ran RegistryBooster it found 459 Problems/Errors. The vast majority being Missing or Invalid Path.

The Windows Registry in a broad sense is a database of the hardware and software on your computer. It contains all your settings for windows and other software. Whenever you install new software it creates new settings in the registry. When you uninstall software it removes all those registry settings associated with the software, right? Well it does uninstall the programs, removing it from the hard drive. Most really do very little removal from the registry. So the software is removed, but the settings are still in the registry and you have a bunch of orphan links.

Even before I installed RegistryBooster 2 I did a backup, for safety sake. It also can create a backup of the registry before you have it do any repairs. It can create up to eight backups, keeping the most recent. Before running it my reboot time was 4 minutes 45 seconds. After running and fixing what it

said were problems I also used it to defrag the registry. Using RegistryBooster 2 (twice) my reboot time was down to 3 minutes 39 seconds, saving 66 seconds. Okay that's great, but for a program like this you want to make sure there are no problems later. So I've used this for two months now and I can say I've had no problems. I've run it about ten times total. Each time I chose to trust the program with what it said was a problem.

## Conclusion

RegistryBooster 2 is very easy to use, and at \$29.95 it is a good value.

<http://www.liutilities.com/products/registrybooster/>

Recommended Requirements:

- Intel Pentium 4 1GHz or Equivalent processor
- 512 MB RAM
- 200 MB free hard disk space
- Graphics mode 1024x768 true color (highest 32-bit)
- Microsoft Windows 2000 / XP / Vista (32-bit)
- Internet Explorer 6

Terry Currier is currently Vice-President & Editor of *WINNERS – WINDOWS usERS* which meets in Fountain Valley, California. He has been a member of computer user groups since 1984 (months before he even brought a computer).

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above). ☐

## ACGNJ MEETINGS

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

### Monday, November 3, 2008

8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer ([lunics@acgnj.org](mailto:lunics@acgnj.org))

### Tuesday, November 4

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting.

### Friday, November 7

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

### Monday, November 10

8 P.M. - Layman's Forum, Matt Skoda ([som359@aol.com](mailto:som359@aol.com)), 908-359-8842. No meetings in July or August.

### Tuesday, November 11

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

### Wednesday, November 12

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

### Thursday, November 13

8 P.M. - Investing, Jim Cooper ([jim@thecoopers.org](mailto:jim@thecoopers.org)).

### Friday, November 14

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

### Monday, November 17

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

### Tuesday, November 18

7:30 P.M. - C/C++ Users, Bruce Arnold ([barnold@ieee.org](mailto:barnold@ieee.org)), 908-735-7898

### Friday, November 21

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

### Monday, December 1

8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer ([lunics@acgnj.org](mailto:lunics@acgnj.org))

### Tuesday, December 2

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting. ☐

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