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Something Spooky?

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(Disdainful Note: The International Congress of Humorless Drudges recommends that any and all readers who are *not* in a frivolous mood skip the next six paragraphs and begin their reading at *Mostly Serious Technical Content*. Furthermore, the Pan-American Society of Disruptive Lexicographers affirms that the word “disdainful” does *not*, in fact, have a “t” in it).

In October of 2007 I went crazy, and produced an article (*Franken-Floppy-Stein*) that I called my “Halloween Episode”. (For *inconsistency*, I *also* called it my “Halloween Issue”). In October 2008, with *Halloween and History*, I did it again. (Internally, I had a schizophrenic relapse and referred to that article as *both* my “Halloween Issue” and “Halloween Episode” as well). This year, will I repeat myself once more? We’ll soon find out; but first, lets go a bit wacky and apply selective hindsight to my *other* previous October articles. We’ll see if revisionist history can be employed to redefine them as “Halloween Episodes”, too. We can’t count 2004 and earlier, because my first article (*Linux Dual Boot Experiments*) didn’t appear until the May 2005 issue. My second article (*Paranoid Computing - An Introduction*) also appeared in that issue. (That one, a single-pager, would have been a good fit for our April TCF issue. Too bad I didn’t think of it a month sooner).

In a way, my fifth article (written for the October 2005 issue) was appropriate for Halloween, because it was a phantom. In other words, it *wasn’t there*. Now, I *did* submit it before the deadline, but Barbara (our editor) was forced to put it off until the next issue. Its title was *Much Ado About A Bad Ethernet Cable*, and it had to do with shoddy workmanship, technical incompetence, and mysterious intermittent problems with Ethernet networks. Scary stuff, so

it *could* have fit the concept. I was disappointed with that postponement, but because Barbara *definitely* had “good and sufficient” reason, there’s really nothing more to say. However, for seasonal purposes, let’s imagine that an ominous, harsh and disembodied voice suddenly shouted “Get out! **Get out!! Get out of this issue!!!**”; and that my poor little article ran home screaming, and then (quite understandably) hid under the bed until November. That scenario puts it right in line with the Halloween spirit.

My article for October 2006 was titled *Unpleasant Realities*, and it dealt (in part) with the inevitable upcoming extinction of desktop and tower PCs as we currently know them. Great! A somewhat sinister title, and impending annihilation as the subject matter. Close enough. Retroactively counting 2005 and 2006 as “previously unrecognized harbingers of doom”, that would make this my fifth “Halloween Episode”. Unless, of course, I’ve finally *run out* of silly stuff. Could that even be possible? As I’m writing this, I can only think of two things. For one, the Gremlins got me again, big time. In May and June (of 2009), I “took one for the team”. Several, in fact. In what I think might be a club record, I was the featured speaker *four* times in a row. That comes out to a full **20%** of all our meetings for the club’s September-to-June “year”. (25% if you include my hosting of the Main Meeting on December 5th, 2008). Surely, that qualifies as service “above and beyond the call of duty”. (Anyone who thought “Don’t call me Shirley” may award themselves an imaginary gold star for excellent *punmanship*).

Anyway, the Gremlins got me *all four times*. On May 1st, they infiltrated my PDF reader. On May 15th, they permanently crashed my computer. (I described those first two incidents in a previous article. For further details, please see *Two Days in May* in the June 2009 issue

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of ACGNJ News). At our June 5th Main Meeting, I brought along a different computer; but they sabotaged it again. This time, everybody in the room could actually smell smoke. I hurriedly shut it down; and now I had experience to guide me. So, as I did on May 15th, I pulled my computer's hard disk, installed it in the club computer, then continued as planned. I've done such *non*-identical computer swaps of Ubuntu drives quite a few times now, always successfully (at least so far). For any of Microsoft's NT family of operating systems (that's everything *except* Windows 95, 98 and ME), such a hard disk swap could only work with *absolutely* identical computers. Given even the tiniest difference, it would bomb. Score a *really* big one for Linux.

For our June 19th Window Pains Meeting, I decided to use the club computer right from the start. My demonstration required only one HTML file, but I brought several copies (on different media) with me, just in case. In response, the Gremlins got more creative. They caused the *whole meeting* to be moved to a different room on a different floor. That effectively barred me from using the club computer; but *not* from using the club projector (which we simply carried to the temporary replacement room). Several of our members now routinely bring their laptop computers to meetings. So I borrowed one, copied my file into it, con-

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tent providers". The rights of their users come second, if at all. On the other hand, I've been using Ubuntu Linux almost exclusively for more than six months now, and it hasn't fouled me yet. In fact, I've gone over to the ABM (Anything But Microsoft) side in a big way, because I've become so disgusted with Microsoft's *other* recent antics. Unfortunately, I don't have room to go into any details here. Indeed, I wouldn't have the space to go into sufficient detail even if I had *ten* newsletters worth of room. (Although I will say that Microsoft's current misdeeds are *so* horrible that they'd be a *perfect* fit for a Halloween Episode).

I've said before why I think that there's no such thing as "Digital Rights". Briefly, that's because each and every digital file is also just one single unique (though *very* large) number; and you *can't* copyright a number. (Thinking otherwise is as wrong-headed as that legendary legislator who proposed that a law be enacted changing the value of pi to 3; and as I've also said before, if you *can* copyright a number, I've got dibs on 28). Now, when you translate the contents of that digital file back into analog signals, any copyrights on that information *may or may not* still be enforceable. I say this because of a recent Supreme Court case involving Microsoft and a patent. That case isn't quite "on target", but I think it's the closest ruling so far involving transmission of computerized information. I don't have time or space to go into further details here; but I believe it should count as a precedent against DRM. (Although not

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nected it to our projector, and proceeded with my presentation.

My remaining thought is about a serious problem that can be restated in a "Halloweeny" way: Ghost may have come to the end of its "life". (That would be Ghost for DOS, the premier product that Symantec stopped releasing in 2003). There *is* such a thing as Ghost for Windows (for XP, Vista, etc). In my opinion, that's a misshapen, mutated abomination; a barely second rate clone of *Acronis True Image* at the very most. It's best that we not mention it again. (Unless, maybe, if it's late at night; and we're in the middle of a deep, dark forest, huddled around a camp fire, telling scary stories. There, it might fit right in).

Mostly Serious Technical Content

My plan for the rest of this article is to describe the difficulties I've had with Ghost for DOS, then examine two Linux contenders to replace it: Clonezilla and Partimage (also known as Partition Image). However, we need to cover some background first. About two years ago now, two things happened, more or less simultaneously. Microsoft turned on its customers like a rabid dog, and Linux finally became "ready for prime time". First, we'll take Microsoft: the latest Windows versions (Vista and Windows 7) are built on DRM (Digital Rights Management) technology. Thus, they are primarily concerned with the rights of "con-

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being a lawyer, it's certainly possible that I'm *totally* wrong about this). In any case, just the mere possession of any one single number itself; or, indeed, copying and/or distributing that one single number as many times as you want, shouldn't be considered an offense against *any* law. (As far as the file *name* goes, filenames are *not* actually part of the file itself, and are only associated with it by the Operating System. Anyway, you can't copyright a *title*, either). Oh well, maybe someday our legal system will recognize reality; and to the Copyright Gestapo I say: It's easy. If you want to preserve your copyrights, simply *don't* convert your stuff into digital form. If you *do*, then quit being crybabies and accept reality.

What about Ubuntu? Sure, it has its idiosyncrasies; but I've encountered and mastered such things before, first with DOS, then with Windows. So in fairness, I can't count them against Linux (or against UNIX and/or Unix-like operating systems in general, either). Then there's my favorite Windows annoyance: Time Bugs. (I've ranted on and on about them in at least *five* previous articles. Luckily for you, I can't afford to give them any more space here). Suffice it to say that Linux *does* have time bugs, but less of them. So while I haven't completely won the battle by switching, at least I've come out ahead. As I've mentioned in previous articles, my main computer has been set up with removable hard disk drawers for some time now. I've got two exchangeable drawers for operating systems, and one commonly accessible drawer for data. These days, I take it

as a personal defeat any time that I have to shut down Ubuntu and re-boot my computer from the XP drawer. (Although, since it took me fourteen years to collect all the tiny but useful auxiliary programs that I had under Windows, it really shouldn't be too much of a surprise that I haven't found suitable Linux replacements for all of them yet).

However, I still shoot mental lightning bolts in the direction of Redmond, Washington any time that I have to swap drawers. (Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer should feel *really* thankful that I *don't* have any actual psychic powers).

Now, let's dismiss the servants, pull the hidden lever that opens the secret panel, and stealthily descend the winding stone stairs to my dungeon laboratory for this evening's "entertainment". The unwitting subject of tonight's experiments will be my current main (operating system *only*) hard disk. It's a so-called 10 GB drive, which (as we all should expect by now) actually contains only 9.5 *real* GB. (This foul conspiracy among computer equipment manufacturers to over-inflate their capacities has been *so* wide spread and *so* consistent for *so* long that nobody but me even bothers to mention this fundamental dishonesty anymore). It contains a 9 GB Linux Ext3 primary partition (with only 3.9 GB actually in use) that boots Ubuntu 9.04, and a 0.5 GB swap partition. Our objective is to transfer its essence into a new body, so that it will *never* die. Ultimate power is

within my grasp!!! (Cue the eerie background music, and lay in claps of thunder with a long sinister laugh on top).

Pardon me. I must have had a relapse. To continue: Our tools will be Ghost 2002 for DOS (booted from a floppy), and the latest available downloads of the two CD-booted Linux programs that I previously tested (and found deficient) just about two years ago: Clonezilla version 1.2.2-26 (last released July 24th, 2009 on its own live-CD), and Partimage version 0.6.7 (last released February 3rd, 2008, included as part of System Rescue CD version 1.3.0, itself last released on September 14, 2009). To protect my data "just in case", I removed my usual 320 GB data hard disk, and replaced it with an empty 80 GB hard disk containing a single FAT32 partition. During backups, that was my destination drive for file creation. During restorations, that was my source drive, and my target was an empty hard disk that I inserted in place of my 10 GB Ubuntu drive. My usual practice has been to store Ghost Backups on CD or DVD. For simplicity, though, I skipped that step this time, and worked only with hard disks.

Speaking of hard disks, something weird has been going on recently in Linux (and, for all I know, elsewhere). Some distributions have been messing with disk names. Previously, the IDE primary master was given the name hda, the primary slave was given the name hdb, the secondary master was given the name hdc, and the secondary slave was

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given the name hdd. SCSI disks were given the names sda, sdb, etc. (I won't describe the complete partitioning nomenclature, but the first partition on hda was called hda1). It wasn't just hard disks, either. On my last few computers, both the IDE slaves have been CD/DVD drives; but they were still called hdb and hdd under Linux. This system took a bit of getting used to for an old DOS guy like me, but I quickly grew to appreciate its major feature: consistency. In DOS, drive names are relative. If your only hard disk is the IDE secondary slave, its first partition will still come in as the C: drive. (You *can* do something like that. Why you'd *want* to is another matter). In Linux (up until now), that partition would *always* have been hdd1, whether it was on the first hard disk or the last. This system broke down a bit when it came to disks connected by other means, such as add-on IDE cards and USB connections. Instead of newly invented first letters, they got "sd" names too. With motherboard manufacturers bent on eliminating the built-in IDE controllers, those "hd" names *will* go away eventually; but some Linux distros are rushing that extinction by giving all their drives "sd" names *now*. System Rescue CD (containing Partimage) and Ubuntu are doing this; but Clonezilla (or more accurately the Clonezilla live-CD) is *not*. So much for consistency.

One further digression: Back when I got my current data hard disk (the aforementioned 320 GB IDE drive), I was worried that it might be too big for my motherboard; but my BIOS seemed to recognize it correctly. However, when

I ran Spinrite to check it out (as I always do), I got a Spinrite Critical Error, saying; "Spinrite is having unexpected trouble accessing drive D: and cannot proceed with operations on this drive at this time". Now, I've been using various incarnations of Spinrite for almost twenty years, and I trust it implicitly. On the other hand, I've had multiple experiences with overconfident manufacturers. (One 486's manual swore up-and-down that it had LBA compatibility. It didn't). So while there *could* have been something wrong with the hard disk, my prime suspect was the motherboard. So I got a new high capacity add-on card and connected through it. Then, Spinrite ran just fine, and proclaimed my new drive to be perfect; but under Linux, even though it was an IDE hard disk, it was given the SCSI name sda because it was on an add-in card. (Its first partition was sda1).

Enough minutia. Let's get down to business. The first up was Ghost 2002. It gave me a "successfully finished" message in not much more than a second, and produced an output file measuring just 6,258 bytes. I tried my hardly-ever-used Ghost 2003 floppy, and got an output file of 5,720 bytes. Opening both files, I confirmed that each contained an *empty* Ext2 partition. Since my source disk contained an Ext3 partition, my conclusion was that Ghost for DOS can *only* recognize Linux Ext2 partitions. Faced with an Ext3 partition, it couldn't read the contents, so it ignored everything and simply created an empty output file. Now, there is *one* rare instance in which I might still use an Ext2 partition, but it *wouldn't* be bootable; and I only make

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image backups of operating system boot drives. So, for all of my practical Linux purposes, Ghost for DOS is dead. (I still have two Windows drives, one XP and one 98SE; but my ultimate goal is to eliminate *both* of them, so Ghost doesn't have much of a future there, either). RIP, old friend. Next up: Clonezilla.

At the Clonezilla (CZ from now on) website, I counted seventeen "stable" releases and nine "testing" releases in the last two years (and it's quite possible that I could have missed a few). As far as the user experience is concerned, I didn't see much difference. I wrote up my previous experiments with CZ in *Hold That Ghost*, published in the November 2007 issue of ACGNJ News. Because I went into a lot of details there, I'm not going to do so much here. As the CZ live-CD booted, I had to make *fourteen* choices; but for each, a clear list of options was given. For my backup operation, CZ guessed my source and destination drives correctly. So I just hit Enter to accept the default each time, including the level of compression (gzip) and their automatically generated filenames. (That's right, *names*. More about that later). Only at the last did I have to use another key. Then, I had to press "Y" (for Yes) before I hit Enter, to tell CZ to continue. When it finished, CZ had produced a new directory on my destination hard disk, with a name based on the date and time created. Inside it were *twelve* files, eleven of which were small text files carrying

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can move the mouse pointer over a selection button and click all you want, but *nothing* will happen. You have to navigate from the keyboard, using the Tab and arrow keys).

Inside its terminal window, PI presented text-mode color screens (like we used to see a lot in the good old DOS days). On the first screen, I accepted the already selected "sda1" as "Partition to save/restore". I typed in "/mnt/dest/pitest01" as the "Image file to create/use", and I accepted the default "Save partition into a new image file" as the "Action to be done". Then I pressed F5 (Next). On the second screen, I accepted the default Gzip under "Compression level", and just pressed F5 (Continue). It took a few minutes, and there was one point where nothing seemed to be happening for *so* long that I thought my computer might have hung up; but in the end, PI created my image successfully: A single 1.4 GB file named pitest01.000.

On to restoration: At first, my initial CZ restore seemed to go well. Once again, I accepted most of the defaults, except that I selected restoredisk instead of savedisk under "mode selection". Both my image name and my target disk came up as default selections automatically. Only after I'd pressed Y and hit enter for the last time did I get an error. My target disk was *too small!* I'd selected an empty 10 GB hard disk as my target. It was from the same manufacturer as my Ubuntu 10 GB hard disk, and looked the same; but when I dug into the fine print on the labels, I saw that the

cryptic names. I'm sure they make sense to the CZ developers; but for me, only the remaining file counted. It was a 1.5 GB image named hda1.ext3-pcti-img.gz.aa.

Partimage was a much less user friendly experience. Once it started booting, SystemRescueCD paused only once to offer choices for keymap. (I took the default). Then, like two years ago, it dumped me at a command prompt. At that time, my two partitions were hda1 and hdc1. This time, they should have been hda1 and sda1; but they *weren't!* Through trial and error (with *no* help from SystemRescueCD), I worked out that my destination *wasn't* sda1 any more. That was now my source; and my destination had now become sdb1. So I entered the following commands:

```
mkdir /mnt/dest
mount /dev/sdb1 /mnt/dest
startx
```

The first command created a directory named /mnt/dest. The second mounted sdb1 as that directory, thus making sdb1 accessible for file read/write operations as /mnt/dest. The third started the X.org graphical environment. Through X, I got a graphical desktop. I moved the mouse pointer to a blank area of the screen and right-clicked to get a menu. I selected the System sub-menu, then clicked on Partimage (PI from now on). That opened PI version 0.6.7 in a terminal window. (As before, PI itself isn't mouse aware. So you

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empty drive *was*, indeed, a tiny bit smaller. This wouldn't have been a problem for Ghost; but both CZ and PI *can't* change sizes. Furthermore, they both seem *proud* of this deficiency; and list it in their documentation as if it were a *good* thing. (There's some developer overlap between the two projects. Maybe that's why). So I restarted with an empty 40 GB hard disk as my target, and everything went OK. What's more, it booted just fine, too. Examination by Linux-booted Gparted showed a 9 GB Ext3 partition, a .5 GB Swap partition, and about 30 GB of empty space. Everything was as it should be.

So I needed another target for my PI restoration as well. I chose an empty 30 GB hard disk. I booted SystemRescueCD as before, chose the default keymap, and entered the same three commands when I got to the command prompt. From the desktop, I right-clicked and started PI as before. However, the first PI screen was *not* as before, because there was only one partition listed for selection as "Partition to save/restore"; and that was sdb1, which contained my image file. At first, I thought that the empty hard disk was defective, and that my computer hadn't detected it. Then I realized that if *only* my second hard disk had been detected, it would have come in as sda1. So I'd have selected it, and then proceeded without knowing that I was trying to overwrite a mounted partition (a *big* no-no). Obviously, the empty disk was there, but PI wasn't listing it. Maybe *because* it was empty? I dropped out of PI and started Gparted (also included on SystemRescueCD).

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Gparted saw my 30 GB disk just fine, so I used it to create a 9 GB Ext2 partition there.

When I reopened PI again, I saw both sda1 and sdb1 listed. I don't remember having this problem with PI two years ago, and there's nothing in my notes about it, so this glitch could be something new. If so, it's a step backwards for PI. Anyway, I selected "sda1" as "Partition to save/restore", I typed in "/mnt/dest/pitest01.000" as the "Image file to create/use", and I selected "Restore partition from an image file" as the "Action to be done" (instead of "Save partition into a new image file"). PI then overwrote the Ext2 partition with my backed-up Ext3 partition. Unfortunately, my restored 30 GB hard disk *wouldn't* boot.

I'd been sort-of expecting this, since PI never even mentioned the MBR (Master Boot Record). Without an MBR, no booting. To make this disk bootable, I'd have to install GRUB in the MBR. Someday, I'll learn how to install GRUB after-the-fact. Really I will. For now, though, I decided to cheat. I needed a hard disk whose MBR *already* had GRUB installed. So I took the 40 GB disk that I'd restored with CZ, and used Gparted to delete all its partitions. Now, only the MBR written by CZ remained. Next, as with the 30 GB disk, I used Gparted to create a 9 GB Ext2 partition. Then, as before, I used PI to overwrite the new Ext2

partition on the 40 GB disk with my backed-up Ext3 partition. Finally, the restored PI image booted and ran correctly.

In conclusion: For my Linux purposes, which I now see as most (if not all) of my future, I've lost Ghost; but I've gained Clonezilla. Even with its size-changing limitations, it's an adequate substitute. On the other hand, Partimage still has a way to go before it can come in second; and there are also a few more contenders. We'll talk about *them* in my next article.

Appendix I: First Words

I had trouble finding a suitable first word for the first sentence of my first paragraph. I was looking for something with a killjoy-ish feel to it. After rejecting several unsuitable candidates, I came up with "Disdainful". Its root word, disdain, has to do with contempt. Not quite 100% on target, but close enough. Its spelling surprised me, though. However, the word *distain* *does* also exist. It has to do with staining (usually metaphorically, such as staining a reputation). For my purposes, the "d" version works much better. Boy, you never know when, where or how you're going to learn something new.

Appendix II: Last Words

See you next month. ☹

From The DealsGuy For October 2009

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

A month off makes me lazy and I've wondered if it would even be worth my while to continue the column because I am not getting many new product announcements lately. However, I do have one for this month. I was browsing some items I've saved while reading newsletters I receive; most I've had for ages, but if the product is still a good one, and I've only seen it in two or three newsletters, it should be usable. Perhaps I can keep DealsGuy going a bit longer.

Like many others across the US, I have my own adjustments to make. For me, its because of the GM bankruptcy. I don't know how many benefits I'll end up losing, but I'm glad my wife and I still have a part-time job to bring in a few extra bucks. However, we get less security work lately because some trade show management officials feel that old grey-haired people don't look good working in their shows, and sometimes our employers must listen to what the customer wants or lose business. Even if discrimination is against the law, employers must please the client to survive.

Also, some of our co-workers are vocal that since we have pensions, we shouldn't be working and taking money away from our younger counterparts who do not have a pension. Those people have not tried to live on a pension, especially a pension rate established 25 years ago when I retired. Most

young people don't know that pensions don't grow much over the years. Some of our co-workers also only get a small pension to live on and could not make it without other income. Trade shows are fun to work, but the job doesn't pay much. There aren't many jobs available for seniors, except volunteer work. Right now (August), we have no security work scheduled until at least October. Some jobless people are taking these part-time security jobs with several companies in an effort to make them full-time by running from show to show with various companies.

*I Used That Good Tech Support Again!

I seem to get a lightning strike each year and in spite of having adequate protection, I still lose some equipment. It knocked out my favorite toy again, (my weather station), my router and a few other items. It's hard to safeguard the weather station because the wind anemometer sits on the roof, a vulnerable place for lightning. It seems the DSL filters saved my phones because two phones wouldn't work until I replaced the DSL filters in their phone lines. The phone line for my DSL modem was protected through the UPS, but my router no longer worked, so I finally replaced it. The new D-Link router had a disk with a setup wizard on it that worked fine for the setup, also configuring the

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security. However, I later found that my Ricoh printer wouldn't print. Other routers I've used sent print jobs just fine without any special configuration. After a lot of "trial and error," I decided my router wasn't talking to the printer, which connects to the network, so I called Ricoh.

A guy named Larry answered immediately and we went to work. He tried many things that included pinging the printer, which worked, but the printer still refused to print, even though the computer was now talking to the printer. He said my new router, a D-Link, didn't like my printer and he would have to keep trying port changes. After an hour, he found the right combination and I was printing. As before, Ricoh tech support answered in Atlanta and was easy to work with. He kept his cool, even when his new settings didn't seem to work, or I made a mistake when instructed to punch certain keys.

I noticed my DSL was running slower than usual, but running the computer directly from the modem worked fine. I was unable to find the D-Link free tech support phone number on the Web site so I e-mailed them for a phone number and finally was able to call their tech support. After some difficult time, they improved it. They said they were based in California, but didn't sound like it. Seems the modem and the router both had the same IP address.

However, I now couldn't print again, but another call to Ricoh fixed that. I told a friend about the good experience with Ricoh and he asked if I had talked to HP's tech sup-

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port for applications with aiCharts. Online documentation will be updated frequently.

A subscription guarantees fast feedback, access to the internal bug tracking system and the latest solutions. Any problems that may occur will be reviewed and resolved as soon as possible, and solutions and/or patches will be available before the release of the next version. aiCharts creators assure that all users will get feedback and the ArtfulBits team will do everything possible to meet customers' demands, and to perfect aiCharts.

This opportunity seems more interesting considering the recently announced ADC 2 (Android Developer Challenge 2) launched by Google aiming to support developers in their efforts.

Get a 50% discount by using the code "DealsGuy-Customers-Choice" when ordering. Bonus is an added 1Year Subscription. Limitations are: code works from September 01, 2009 until November 01, 2009. The code works on a Developer License, Bundle 3 and Bundle 5 and does not work on a Subscription only. That would help a lot on the MSRP of \$299.

Product page: <http://www.artfulbits.com/products/>

YouTube demo: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ho5wiV-o8g>

Purchase: <http://www.artfulbits.com/Products/Purchase.aspx>

***From an Anonymous Sender**

Ever wonder if somebody might have plugged a USB device into your computer for some reason? People sometimes like playing tricks on you (like a surprise midi

port lately. He said he called HP tech support recently and talked to a guy in India. He had problems understanding him and nothing they tried was working. He said the guy finally hung up on him; and still no solution. My friend is quite computer literate so I doubt he was the problem.

***All About Charts**

This product is said to be for software developers, but I'll pass it on because it has a discount and I don't know how many readers develop software. This had the most confusing write-up so I have edited out the hype and tried to make sense of what's left.

ArtfulBits aiCharts for Android is intended for software developers to use as an easily integrated part of their applications to allow representing and visualizing charts of different kinds. It is developed especially for the Android platform and is compatible with Android version 1.1, Cupcake 1.5 and Android 2.0. Presently, it supports the following chart types: Line, Spline, Point, Bubble, Column, Stack Column, Stack Column 100%, Bar, Stack Bar, Stack bar 100%, Area, Spline Area, Stack Area, Stack Area 100%, Pie, Polar, HiLoCandlestick, Funnel, Pyramid.

aiCharts does not use any low level native libraries and is 100% safe for Android OS users as it runs in a completely safe managed environment of Dalvik Java VM. Online documentation with samples and tutorials gives developers all the necessary information to easily integrate and provide

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file you didn't expect), or might browse through your HD and even copy items to, or from, a flash drive or some other media, but this product might provide some details if a flash drive was used. USBDeview finds out what USB devices are currently connected to your computer and also sees which devices were connected before. It tells you the time the device was plugged/unplugged (if the machine hasn't been rebooted). Other information possible is; device name/description, device type, serial number (for mass storage devices), VendorID, ProductID, and more.

USBDeview allows you to uninstall USB devices that you previously used, and disconnect USB devices currently connected to your computer. Unfortunately it can't figure out which files might have been copied from, or to, your machine, or even if that actually happened. Use your best judgments if you suspect that. Check this out at http://www.nirsoft.net/utills/usb_devices_view.html. This is a freebie and works on newer Windows systems. The Web site says no need to install it, just run the .exe file. I thought it sounded interesting.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>

Dozens of Free Utilities from Camtech

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

I will admit that I am a junkie when it comes to free utilities. I enjoy trying new software, especially if it is legitimate freeware from a reliable source. Occasionally I have a special need for a utility, and there are a few places that I typically check to see if such a freeware utility is available. One of those websites is Camtech2000 (camtech2000.net).

Camtech2000 has dozens of freeware utilities available, many of which will run on most versions of Windows, from Windows 95 to Vista. The Camtech2000 download page is broken down into categories, such as desktop enhancements, assorted games, screen savers, desktop themes, internet related, utilities, and system related. The website is very easy to navigate; clicking on the name of a program will bring up a program specific webpage with information on the selected program, often including screenshots demonstrating how the program functions. Clicking on the "DL" on the right side of the listing downloads the program. According to Camtech2000, "Camtech Freeware is developed for free personal use and is NOT supported by Banners, Adware or Malware of any type!" For those desiring to support Camtech2000, a PayPal link is provided for donations. My personal choice (and recommendation) is to make a donation to Camtech2000 via PayPal whenever I download a program that I find useful, and intend to use on

a periodic basis. Some of the utilities displayed are free to download and fully functional for a limited period of time, but request a fee to register the programs for continued use. In my experience, I have always found Camtech2000 software very intuitive and easy use, requiring no special skill or knowledge.

In the category "Desktop Enhancements" are 16 programs that can be used to customize the users' desktop or Internet Explorer. With these desktop enhancements, the user can easily customize the appearance of folders, create MP3 play lists, create and manage desktop icons, change the appearance of the desktop and toolbar wallpaper, and create customized logos to display on Internet Explorer rather than the default Microsoft logo. For those who like to customize the appearance of Windows, and would like features not otherwise included in Windows, some of these utilities would be appropriate, as well as fun to play with.

I am typically too busy to play games on my computer, but I do know that a lot of users enjoy simple but entertaining games to pass the time. Camtech2000 offers five games free for the taking. Gamers can play darts, or manipulate squares in an obvious knockoff known as "Cubik's Rube". Word Finder is a common word game for those wishing to practice their observational skills and gamblers may appreciate "Camtech Slots" which has some of the excitement of a slot

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machine, without actually losing money to the "one armed bandit".

While they are functionally obsolete, many computer users still like to use screen savers. In the early days of computing, it was somewhat common to burn-in an image on the CRT if it was displayed too long. While typically unlikely with a modern monitor and video card, burn-in is still theoretically possible, and this is where screen savers are of use. (For the record, I do not use a screen saver on any computer that I use, and choose to turn the computer off if I am not going to use it for any reasonable length of time).

Camtech2000 offers an even dozen screen savers offering a variety of shapes, colors, images, music, and other visual treats. I have seen the Camtech Space screensaver in use, and it is very attractive as it changes between a series of astronomical images. For those who like and use screen savers, and would like some variety, these may be a worthwhile addition to their collections.

I have made some use of the "Internet Related" utilities, of which Camtech2000 offers 30 titles. The one that I have used the most is Password Reveal Pro 2.0, which displays the hidden passwords in programs that display a password as "*****". Loading Password Reveal Pro 2.0 and dragging the lock image over the asterisks displays the underlying password. Another neat utility that I have used on some of the web pages I have created or edited is

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RedirectEm, which generates a small script file to be placed on a webpage that automatically connects the user to another webpage. This is especially helpful when the new webpage has a different address than the old page. You may have noticed that some email users have fancy signatures at the bottom of their emails; it is very easy to create your own professional looking email signatures using Camtech2000's Signatures 2.0. With this program the user can create custom email signatures with a choice of colors, fonts, and graphics. Additional graphics, both static and animated are included with the program. Another especially helpful and possibly even profitable program is Multi-Stock Browser, which can display stock quotes and charts. While the basic version of Multi-Stock Browser is free, a registered version is \$20.

Camtech2000 offers 45 miscellaneous utilities which can be used for such tasks as cleaning up startup files to creating and storing passwords. I just had the occasion to use UnlockMe, a utility to unlock files which may have been used by another program. Many users complain about how slow the computer boots, and seems to run slower than it did in the past. This problem may be quickly and easily resolved by cleaning up the startup files by using Ultimate Startup Manager. This program displays all seven places that contain startup information, not just the three sources displayed by some competing programs. While the program is free, a registered version is \$20. With 45 utilities

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available in this category, most users will likely find something useful here.

There are nine system related utilities available including a System Restore Control, XP Repair Install, RegKey Backup, MemCheck Pro, CT Attrib (file attributes), and a Visual Basic Runtime Library. I used CT Attrib to manage a troublesome folder on my hard drive, and it worked admirably.

Camtech2000 has an impressive list of useful utilities available for download. Users of all levels will likely find something useful to download and try.

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Beneath the Surface: DeepPeeping the Web

Jerry Goldstein (jerryg (at) attygoldstein.com), The PCUG of Connecticut (www.tpcug-ct.org)

Last summer Google announced it had passed the one trillionth mark in its list of known and searchable Web pages.

If you think Google does the best job of searching the World Wide Web you will be in for a big surprise. By 'big' I mean a search engine that goes way beyond standard search engines like Google, which only look at the surface of the Web compared to the vast, deep, and so far uncharted depths of the Web. I say "you will be in for a big surprise" because a deeper search engine is only in its initial research stages.

Standard search engines only skim the surface of the Web. Kind of like you're looking over the surface of the ocean, instead of looking into its vast undersea life. The plan is to create a search engine that will open 90% of the Web to searches.

A study at the University of Utah is trying to find a way. The study searches typed text rather than the hyperlinks that the present search engines use. A beta version of DeepPeep is available at: <http://www.deeppeep.org/>.

We have a long way to go but eventually almost the entirety of the Web will be searchable. Web pages exist already that tell you the best taxi fare, flight schedules, and shopping catalogs. DeepPeep wants to give you access to this information. A whole new way of searching has to be worked out first.

Scientists have said that 90% of what we know was discovered in the last 50 years. DeepPeep is working out a way to get that knowledge to you.

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Adobe Photoshop Elements 7, Classroom in a Book

Willis Irons (wbirons(at)earthlink.net), Tucson Computer Society (www.aztcs.org)

This book is part of the official training series from Adobe graphics and publishing software developed by Adobe product experts. Eleven lessons in this book are made up of a series of self-paced projects that give a hands on experience using Photoshop Elements 7. An included CD contains all the image files used in this book.

The book covers the basics of learning Adobe Photoshop Elements and provides countless tips and techniques to help become more productive with the program. Each lesson has clear explanations and step-by-step instructions. The book contains approximately 370 pages allowing in-depth study of many topics.

The approach is definitely from a technical how-to-do-it. Very little mention is made about using a camera for recording a scene or composing an ideal visual photograph. Encouragement is given to starting with the best conditions possible.

I began using Elements during the earliest versions and was using version 7 prior to receiving the book, so I felt that I was reasonably proficient. However I decided that I would not skip even one step of any lesson. That was a good deci-

sion. I continually was introduced to a new or more efficient technique, a time saving automated workflow or working with multiple files in batches.

For example, the Organizer is much more complex than I had been aware of. The suggestion is made to work with multiple catalogs, each with a separate project to provide a more efficient workflow. Catalogs can then be combined. The search portion is much more sophisticated than I had discovered. A wonderful new option for me was to discover the method for capturing frames from digital video. Do you know that you can import whole pages or just selected images from a PDF document?

One lengthy lesson is devoted to creating projects. The slide show editor is very adequate for most creations. Many options are available for an appealing show. While assembling a complex photo montage from a blank screen the subject of layers is introduced. The artwork library is also introduced and explained. Several methods of sharing are discussed including Online Album. This service can also be used for backup of all photo files.

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The lesson about adjusting color in images is in depth. The three Edit modes are demonstrated and explained. Each has advantages. Guided edit, Quick Fix and Full edit were each used with the same files for comparison. Applying multiple Smart Paint adjustments to a drab sky was illuminating. No pun intended.

The more techniques that you are to master, the more likely that you can meet the challenge of fixing a difficult photograph. At this time sophisticated selection methods were introduced as well as a more in-depth look at layers. The next lesson was concerned with fixing exposure problems. Adjustment layers and blending modes were explained and demonstrated. Multiple images can be automatically fixed in batches with good results. Several methods and approaches are shown.

One lesson explores working with text. Included is a section on overlaying text that provides the ability to add a copyright of various appearances. Creating a type mask is demonstrated. Another lesson is devoted to combining multiple images easily. The lesson learned: do not believe any

image that you see. And another very good lesson is provided regarding editing RAW images.

Overall, this was a very interesting and informative book. Time-wise I spent the best part of three days reviewing each lesson and completing suggested assignments. Now, if I can just remember and use what I have learned! Practice. Practice.

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<http://www.adobe.com/na/products/ps7/elements/elements.html>

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How to Tweak Firefox & Thunderbird to Be As Great as People Say They Are?

Gabe Goldberg (Tiptet (at) gabegold.com), Computers and Publishing, Inc.

One of the Internet's many beauties is the diversity of choices available — for everything. There are multiple search engines, Web browsers, ISPs (Internet service providers), operating systems (Windows, Linux, Mac). This means that no two people have precisely the same computing setup or online experience and leads to hours of fun-filled arguments about whose choices are best.

In fact, competition works to everyone's advantage: no matter what your choice is for a given function, the vendor or manufacturer knows that you have alternatives and must hustle to keep your loyalty. The "browser wars" — first when Microsoft pushed Internet Explorer (IE) development to catch innovator Netscape and more recently with Mozilla Firefox stealing market share back from IE (and, of course, with contributions from Opera, Chrome, and other contenders) — have generated beneficial innovation and evolution.

Recent reports show Firefox taking market share from Internet Explorer — but Microsoft is introducing Internet Explorer Version 8, so the horse race continues. So it's worth exploring (pun intended) why software like Firefox, which must be added to Windows systems which by default include IE, can be so successful.

In addition to speed and security superior to at least earlier IE versions, Firefox and its Mozilla sibling email client Thunderbird provide powerful customization tools. In

Firefox, click Tools and then Options. Explore the tabs: Main, Tabs, Content, applications, Privacy, Security, and Advanced; within Advanced, subtabs address different functions. For each options group, the Help button displays specific information describing choices available.

You needn't study and learn all options at once but it's worth occasionally browsing what you can tweak. Firefox defaults are certainly pleasant and workable but by making your own decisions, you can customize the browser to accommodate your unique preferences. On the Advanced/Update tab, I recommend checking all three boxes to check for updates, and then selecting "Ask me what to do" about updates. That way you'll find out about available updates and control when they're downloaded and installed.

But there's more! Click Tools, then Add-ons, then Get Add-ons, to open a wonderful catalogue of small tools you can add to perform new functions. These are available because Firefox is open source software, meaning it's developed, supported, and maintained by volunteers. While the most important browser functions are included in the basic browser, hundreds of developers produce add-on modules to extend it.

You'll initially see a few Recommended add-ons; click See All Recommended Add-ons to visit the Web site of

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all-things-add-ons. On the left, you'll see broad categories (e.g., Appearance, Bookmarks, Search Tools); the main display shows the most popular tools.

Explore categories in which you're most interested. But before installing any, browse for alternatives, since several add-ons may perform similar functions. Look at ratings (number of stars) and number of downloads reported — obviously a highly-rated add-on being downloaded 150,000 times a week is a safer bet than a less-popular lesser-rated choice. And read reviews for real-people descriptions of how add-ons work — or don't. Note which Firefox versions an add-on supports, since some may need a relatively new version and others may not have yet been updated for them.

Thunderbird handles options and add-ons in a similar fashion. For perspective, I have 15 Firefox and 9 Thunderbird add-ons installed and occasionally shop for yet more to improve my browsing and email experience.

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Back Issues Needed

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

1985: June, July, August, September

1984: August

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

1975: All issues except #1 (June). These are also pamphlet-size booklets.

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

Install Those Updates

Marjie Tucker (mcug (at) dnet.net), Mountain Computer User Group (www.mcug.org)

Are you taking every precaution to safeguard the data on your computer? If you answer "yes" because you have turned on the Windows Firewall and use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, that's great. However, you may be forgetting something very important — installing software updates.

Software usually contains bugs that are not found until the general public uses it. Because of this, all companies including Microsoft and Apple periodically make updates available to fix the bugs that have appeared. Many viruses and worms are written specifically to take advantage of holes that appear in operating systems and other programs. If you don't install the latest updates to your computer, those holes will remain and your data will be vulnerable to the malware.

Both Windows XP and Windows Vista have the ability to automatically download the most important updates as they are posted. To ensure that this is happening on your computer use the Control Panel to go to the Windows Security Center and make certain that the Automatic Updates are turned on. If Automatic Updating shows a green On color, then the updates will be downloaded. If the function for

Automatic Updates is disabled, use the setting available to turn it on.

When the updates have been downloaded to your computer you are notified of their presence. This usually occurs with a small golden icon in the lower right-hand corner of your taskbar that reads "Updates are ready for your computer." If you click on the icon and give permission, the update will install immediately, usually in the background so you can continue working. After it is installed you may be asked to give permission for your computer to reboot.

However, if you tell the computer not to install this update, the message that it is available may stay on your computer permanently, as it waits for you to click that it can now be installed. If you see the gold icon on your taskbar, check to see if you have updates waiting right now so you can protect your computer.

There May Be Additional Updates

Sometimes there are optional updates available that won't be downloaded automatically. For that reason it's a good idea to check the Microsoft Update website periodically. The easiest way to check is to use the link you can find on your Start Menu.

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Install Those Updates, *continued*

That link will take you directly to the Microsoft Update site where you can choose between the Express or Custom method of installing available updates. Custom is preferable so you can determine if there are any updates you don't want to install.

Click on the Custom button and then wait while the Microsoft site compares your computer's software against the Microsoft database. Eventually you will see a list of updates that are missing from your computer. Any High-Priority (important for security) updates will already be selected to be downloaded. However, you need to look at the Optional Updates to choose the ones you want to include. Click on Software, Optional and choose all that are shown. You should need all of these. If any Hardware, Optional updates are shown, you should be a little choosier. If your hardware is working properly, you may want to skip these driver updates. But if you are suffering any hardware problems, these updates may solve your problems.

After you have chosen the updates you want to download, click on Install Updates at the top of the screen and the download will begin. This may take quite a bit of time, depending on the number and size of the updates being downloaded. This would actually be a good time to take a coffee break or make that important telephone call.

You can view a list of the updates you have installed on your computer at the Add or Remove Programs location on

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especially important if you have any difficulty while working with a program. The solution may be as simple as installing the latest patch.

Apple Software Updates

Apple also frequently releases updates that you can download and install. To check your Mac for patches, use the Apple menu and choose Software Updates.

You can also set your Mac to get Automatic Updates by choosing System Preferences from the Apple menu. Choose View and Software Update. One of the choices is

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your Control Panel. At the top of the screen you will see a small box labeled "Show Updates." Click in that box and all your Microsoft updates will be displayed.

This screen is very useful if you encounter difficulty after installing an update or service pack. You can always find the update and uninstall it through this screen.

You can also easily see if your computer contains the latest Windows Service Packs by looking at the Properties of My Computer. Right-click over the My Computer icon and choose Properties. The most recently installed Service Pack will be listed on this screen.

Don't Forget Your Anti-MalWare Programs

Of course, it's also critical to constantly update your anti-malware programs. Viruses, worms, and spyware are constantly being developed and these protection programs work hard to provide fixes. When possible, also set these programs for automatic updates and regularly perform a manual update just to make certain that you don't miss any patches or new program features.

And, Remember Your Other Software

We've spent most of our time talking about Microsoft software. Your other programs, such as Adobe Reader and Java also receive regular updates. Look at the settings for those to be sure they are updating automatically. This is

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Automatic and you can also choose a time for the computer to check the Apple website.

Stay Secure

Remember to set your operating system and programs for Automatic Updates, install those updates, and periodically check the websites manually to ensure that you have all the latest patches. This is an easy and inexpensive way to help protect your data.

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Computer Speed, RAM and Virtual Memory

Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D (bwsail at yahoo.com), Sarasota PC Users Group, Inc., FL (www.spcug.org)

One of the more frequent questions raised is: "will adding more physical memory (RAM), speed up my computer"? The answer is a qualified "maybe". The first thing you need to be aware of are the built-in bottlenecks that can slow your computer. Programs and data move through your computer at different speeds in different locations. The central processor (CPU) is usually the fastest data handler in the system. The hard drive is the slowest and everything else, including the RAM, is intermediate in data handling speed. The speed of processing data in RAM is measured in billionths of a second, or nanoseconds, and the speed of

accessing data on the hard disk is measured in thousandths of a second, or milliseconds. So, ideally, you want all the processing to go from RAM to the CPU and back to RAM. Unfortunately, that's not always possible even if your system has the maximum amount of RAM installed.

Every computer running Windows, from several generations back, uses virtual memory in addition to RAM. The definition of virtual memory is based on redefining the address space to "trick" programs into thinking they are using large blocks of contiguous memory. Virtual memory is a

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space on the hard drive, frequently called a “swap file” or “page file”. This is a block that is mapped for temporary storage of programs, data, and operating system essentials. This technique gives an application program the impression that it has contiguous working memory (address space), while in fact it may be physically fragmented.

Virtual memory was designed at a time when RAM was much more expensive than hard drive. Although RAM is now much less expensive, the latest versions of Windows (XP & Vista) still depend on virtual memory. In fact, much of the operating system kernel ends up in virtual memory. This kernel memory also controls the allocation of data to virtual memory. So it is not really possible to eliminate virtual memory when you are running Windows XP or Vista. If you disable virtual memory, Windows becomes unstable.

In a 32 bit computer running Windows, the maximum memory that can be accessed by the CPU is 4 gigabytes (232). It can not access addresses beyond 4 gigabytes (GB). (A gigabyte is a billion bytes.) Not every computer can accept 4 GB of RAM. Some older computers are limited to 512 megabytes (MB) and still run Windows XP quite successfully. However, if you have a newer computer whose motherboard can accept 4 GB of RAM, you may not be able to fully access all of that RAM. In some cases, RAM is shared with the graphics system. This is usually referred to as an “integrated graphics card”. In such a case, up to 1 GB of your RAM may be used by the graphics leaving only 3

GB for the rest of the system. Then Windows takes 2 GB of space leaving only 1 GB for user space (programs and data). Even if some of this is placed in Virtual memory, the CPU still has only 4 GB of addresses. If you have a graphics card with its own memory, Windows will allocate 2 GB to kernel memory and 2 GB to user memory. Since some of the kernel memory will be in virtual memory, your total memory will be a combination of physical memory (RAM) and virtual memory (hard drive), but the total will not exceed 4 GB in a 32 bit computer. Remember, the 4 GB limit applies to the number of addresses that can be accessed by the CPU. Those addresses can be on the graphics card, the hard drive or in physical memory (RAM).

Windows sets up the memory system by dividing memory into pages. The most recently accessed pages are in RAM. Any pages that have not been referenced in a while are written to the file on the hard drive. According to Microsoft the paging file in a 32 bit system can be a maximum of 16 terabytes (one terabyte equals 1000 gigabytes). So the total virtual memory pagefile system can exceed the 4 GB limit by a considerable amount. However, no more than 4 GB can be actively handled at time. The inactive pages are stored on the hard drive.

Virtual memory not only operates at the speed of the hard disk data access, it also requires special handling before it can be used by the CPU or sent to the video screen. Pages on the hard disk have to be read into RAM to be used. That

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also means that the space they will take in RAM must be vacated. If there was data there, it must be written to the hard drive, before the new pages can be read into RAM. This paging process must also be managed. Some memory is used just to keep track of which pages are in RAM and which are in virtual memory. This is the role of the Virtual Memory Manager. All of these processes of reading and writing to and from RAM require time. As a result, virtual memory use does slow the computer more than the amount that is just due to the slower speed of disk access.

Before you decide you need 4 GB of RAM to solve your speed problem, you must determine how much RAM your computer will accept. Computers in today’s market are sold with from 1- 4 GB of RAM. But only a few years ago, computers were designed to accept a maximum of 1 GB of RAM or less. So you must check the owners manual to see what the maximum RAM is for your computer. Then, if you don’t know how much is installed in your computer, bring up the device manager window from the control panel. The first page will tell you how much physical memory you have. You can also see the distribution of physical memory and virtual memory by bringing up the task manager (Ctrl-Alt-Del) and clicking on the Performance tab.

There are several other possible solutions to this problem. One is to look at your hard drive. If you have an older computer with an IDE drive, replacing it with a drive that has a SATA interface will speed up data handling in virtual memory. Another change would be to purchase a graphics card with 256 – 512 MB of RAM and install it in place of

the integrated video. That would release the RAM that was being shared with the video card.

The best, most expensive, alternative for speeding up your computer is to replace your 32 bit computer with a 64 bit system. A 64 bit computer can access 16 exabytes of RAM (264). That is 16 million GB of RAM. Most 64 bit computers in today’s market do limit physical RAM to anywhere from 8 to 256 terabytes. Not that we’re getting into any really large numbers here, but the amount of RAM in a 64 bit machine is more than adequate to reduce virtual memory to a bare minimum. The catch is that 64 bit machines have other problems, especially with the limited availability of 64 bit software and drivers for peripheral devices. So before you decide to switch to 64 bit computing you need to check out whether or not drivers are available for your peripherals.

Finally, if your hard drive is heavily fragmented, this will also slow down data reading and writing. Simply defragmenting your drive will speed up the drive input and output. It may also improve the computer’s boot time. As you can see, there are a number of things to consider if you need to speed up your computer.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems. 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). ☐

Open Office.Org 3.0

An Evolutionary Improvement

Bill Wayson (bwayson (at) gmail.com), Channel Islands PCUG (www.cipcug.org)

OpenOffice.org (OO.o) is Free and Open Source Software's (FOSS) premier alternative to the Microsoft Office productivity suite. It offers a high level of compatibility with many of the ever-changing MS Office formats, provides many of the same features as MS Office, and works similarly to MS Office. This month, we will explore the recently released OpenOffice.org 3.0, which is available for Microsoft Windows, Linux, Apple's Macintosh, Sun's Solaris, and several other operating systems. Many, if not most, users of MS Office who require the broad, deep range of features of MS Office could change to OO.o and become productive after a very shallow learning curve.

If your requirements are more for just compatibility with Microsoft's Word document formats in a word processor, you can consider more streamlined FOSS alternatives such as AbiWord.

OO.o is a full-featured office productivity suite comprised of six integrated applications: the Writer word processor (which also has a Web page editing mode), Calc spreadsheet, Draw graphics program, Impress presentations program, Base database program, and Math equation editor. OO.o 3.0 is an evolutionary improvement on the application suite, with new features, enhancements, and user

interface improvements. Users of Apple Macintosh OS X systems benefit greatly from OO.o 3.0, which will now run as a native OS X application.

OS X users will also have support for Microsoft's VBA macro language and the Calc Solver component, which allows solving optimization problems where the optimum value of a particular spreadsheet cell has to be calculated based on constraints provided in other cells. Both of these features are missing in MS Office 2008 for Mac OS X.

All users of OO.o 3.0 benefit from its improvements, including the two above. Another area of significant improvement is one where OO.o is breaking out of Microsoft mimicry mode: support for open document standards. OO.o 3.0 supports the latest OpenDocument Format (PDF) specification. In fact, ODF is the OO.o default document format. ODF is gaining wider acceptance worldwide, being adopted by more companies and governments as the standard for documents, and becoming supported by an increasing number of applications. OO.o will also read and write many other formats, including those of various versions of MS Office and Word, plain text, and several PDA document formats.

Continued above right

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Additionally, it will read the newest formats introduced in MS Office 2007. Exchanging documents with users of Microsoft's products should not be an issue. The Writer screen now sports a handy zoom slider control, making it quick and easy to change the zoom level of the view. Additionally, it will automatically display multiple pages of the document as the zoom level is lowered. Writer now displays notes — notations added to a document that are not necessarily meant to be printed — at the edge of the editing window to the side of the document, making it easier to read them and see their context in the document. In addition, notes from different users are displayed in different colors, together with the editing date and time, facilitating collaborative work on a document.

Calc sees some useful improvements. One is in the charts feature. Now, custom error bars can be included, and regression equations and correlation coefficients can be displayed right in the chart. Another is a new feature, spreadsheet collaboration through workbook sharing. This feature allows multiple users to work collaboratively on a spreadsheet while avoiding editing conflicts. The users share a spreadsheet, each adding their data. The spreadsheet owner can then easily integrate the new data with a few clicks. And Calc now supports 1,024 columns per worksheet.

Draw now lets you crop images the same way that most other graphics programs do, by dragging handles located at the edges and corners of an image. This same improvement appears in Impress, too. Additionally, Impress now natively supports inserting tables into presentations. Tables can be added directly into the presentation and edited within Impress as native Impress objects.

Improvements affecting the entire suite include a new set of icons, expanded feature support when exporting to XML, and a new gateway to the suite called the Start Center, which makes it more intuitive to get to where you want to go in the suite.

There is nothing revolutionary in OO.o 3.0. What is new are several improvements and enhancements that will keep the suite in contention with its competitors. And we have not touched at all on the features OO.o already had before 3.0. If you need a productivity suite with both a broad and deep set of features and, particularly, if you are not married to Microsoft Office, you should give OO.o a look. It costs you nothing to try, you may just like it, so it just may save you hundreds of dollars.

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SIG News

C/C++ Programming

Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)

<http://acgnj.barnold.us/index.html>

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



September: “Tphoto - Photo Title Creator”. Object Oriented Programming (OOP) languages like C++ have special characteristics. Two very important ones are “Inheritance” and “Polymorphism”. We discussed Inheritance at the June meeting. We will get back to the subject at future meetings, but for September I planned something simpler. It’s a graphic program that displays a photograph and a small text based data file containing photo titles.

The program developed because I was creating a slide show with 846 photos. A simple text file called “Subject.txt” contained the titles of each photo. (You can see the text file at the left side of the screen shot.) I used notepad to edit the text file but quickly became exhausted when I constantly had to correlate the photo filename with the title. Hence, the new application called Tphoto. We discussed the code for this program at the meeting. It uses Microsoft Visual C++ 2008.

Our [download site](#) has code and programs from most meetings. **Our next meeting October 20.** ☞

Window Pains

John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)

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

Our intent is to provide members with Windows oriented application discussions, Microsoft and Linux style. Presentation to be directed to more heavy technological level of attendee, although newbies are welcomed.

Our next meeting October 16: Brian Welch on “Social Networking - Introduction to FaceBook”. ☞

October 2009

Web Dev

Evan Williams (ewilliams@collaboron.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 October 14. ☞

Java

Mike Redlich (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 13 : Subject to be announced. One (1) free pass to Computing Among the Clouds conference along with two (2) licenses for IntelliJ IDEA will be raffled off at the end of the meeting! ☞

Main Meeting

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

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

October 2: Bob Hawes — “More About Scribus, the fabulous, fun and free Desktop Publisher” — He’ll be picking up where his presentation at the June 5th, 2009 Main Meeting left off. ☞

Investment Software

Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org)

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

The Investment SIG continues with presentations on how to use analysis programs TC2000 and TCNet. Large charts are presented on our pull down screen and illustrate the application of computer scans and formulas to find stocks for profitable investments. Technical analysis determines buy points, sell points and projected moves. Technical analysis can also be used on fundamentals such as earnings, sales growth, etc. We’re no longer focusing on just Telechart -- if you are using (or interested in) Tradestation, eSignal, VectorVest -- or just in learning how to select and use charting and technical analysis, come join us !!

Our next meeting: October 8. ☞

ACGNJ News

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Hardware Activity

Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)

This group is dedicated to repairing, refurbishing and/or recycling older computers.

On **May 28th**, ten people attended the first meeting of the ACGNJ Hardware Activity; showing that there is, in fact, still a market for this type of event. One guy even came all the way from the Bronx! Although we did look at some of

Layman's Forum

Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com)

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

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

Firefox Activity

Firefox@acgnj.org

This SIG is intended to be an open forum for **all** Firefox and Mozilla techniques and technologies, to encourage the study and development of web sites of all kinds. All the browsers will be considered and examined. 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 October 19. ☐

Book Review: How to Be a Geek Goddess

Sandy Berger (sandy (at) compukiss.com), CompuKISS (www.compukiss.com)

I am an old hat when it comes to technology. I was a computer programmer back in the seventies before computers came into the home, and I've kept my hand in the technology arena all these years with my own computer consulting business and my technical writing career. Yet I've never considered myself a “Geek Goddess”. As a matter of fact I have often been a little aggravated to hear Kim Komando refer to herself as “The Digital Goddess” — like she is something really special.

But Christina Tynan-Wood in her book, *How to Be a Geek Goddess*, isn't advocating that a Geek goddess is someone above everyone else. She says that being a Geek Goddess is “a simple matter of embracing the incredible innovation that's going on in our times and harness it for our own purposes”.

Oh yes, and Christina understands the differences between how men and women look at, and deal with, technology. She starts the book off with the sentence, “My husband is a pompous ass.” Many of us have noticed how men seem to pound their chests and promote themselves as the technology heroes of the day. Women, on the other hand, just want to use and enjoy technology.

Christina's book is filled with good information about technology with everything from how to choose a computer

the older equipment stored in the back room, most of our time was spent in “random access”: talking about past experiences and planning for the future. Hopefully, we can establish a viable long-term schedule of projects, and keep the interest of those who attended this inaugural meeting.

Our next meeting October 22.

LUNICS (Linux/Unix)

Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)

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

LUNICS is a group for those who share an interest in Unix and similar operating systems. While we do quite a bit with Linux, we've also been known to discuss Solaris and BSD as well. We meet on the first Monday of the month at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information.

Our next meeting October 5. ☐

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmajestic@gmail.com)

<http://www.NJGamers.com>

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be October 9, 6 p.m. to Saturday 12 noon — 18 hours for 5 bucks!

BYOC - Bring your own computer

BYOF - Bring your own food.

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

sales person to hooking up with others online. There are tips on everything from controlling your email to trouble-shooting a wireless connection. Chapters include: Getting in Touch with Your Software Side, Where the Stores Never Close, The Wireless Home, Keeping It Safe, Geek Parenting, Groovy Gear and Gadgets, and Your 200 Closest Friends.

The information in this 315 page book is all accurate and informative. Yet, this is not a reference book. It is rather like a free-flowing novel with technical information. If you want a book where you can look up how to do things, you will have to look elsewhere. This is a book for women who want to absorb some pointers here and there while reading about all the things you can do with your computer. If you are already very familiar with computers, you can skip this book. But again, if you want to immerse yourself in technology and pick up some knowledge and useful tidbits on the way, you will love this book. And you may even become a Geek Goddess yourself!

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Guru Corner

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

Software

HTML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
CSS	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
Java	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
C++	Bruce Arnold	908-735-7898
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
ASP	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Perl	John Raff	973-560-9070
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
XML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Home Automation	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Operating Systems		
Windows 3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942

Discount Computer Magazine Price List

As described by the DealsGuy

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

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

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

Telephone: 561-488-4465, e-mail: hgoodman@prod-igy.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	Dues	STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	\$25	\$10		\$20	\$20
2 Years	\$40				
3 Years	\$55				\$45

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

New Member Renewal Address Change

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ URL _____

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

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

Classified

FREE TO MEMBERS. Use our classified ads to sell off your surplus computer stuff. Send copy to Classified, ACGNJ NEWS, P.O. Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076 or e-mail to the editor, bdegroot@ptd.net. Classified ads are free to members, one per issue. Non-members pay \$10. Send check payable to ACGNJ Inc. with copy. Reasonable length, please. Deadline: 1st of preceding month. (For example, April



<http://www.apcug.net>

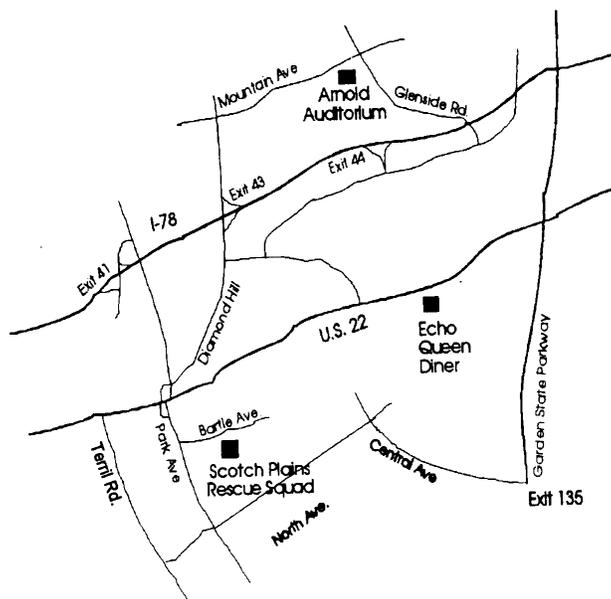
Radio and TV Programs

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>.



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. ☺

Wolverine F2D Slide Scanner

Joe Nuvolini ([nuvo\(at\)juno.com](mailto:nuvo(at)juno.com)), Pikes Peak Computer Application Society (<http://ppcompas.apcug.org>)

Over the years, I have amassed about 3,000 color slides. I have wanted to scan them into my computer, but had not seen a scanning product that would allow me to get the job done in a reasonable time. One day I came across the Wolverine F2D 35mm Film to Digital Scanner while surfing the Internet. It looked like the answer I was looking for.

I read a number of reviews and found a wide variety of opinions. People seemed to love it or hate it, but the positives were greater than the negatives so I decided to try it. I was not disappointed. The unit is self-contained, but you can connect it to a computer USB port for power. However, no computer is required to use it. I am using it on an island in my kitchen. The unit comes with two film holders; one for slides and one for color or black and white negatives. The images are saved to an SD card in JPG format. Before saving, they can be mirrored or rotated, if necessary.

The package includes the unit, the two film holders, an AC adapter you can plug the USB connector into for power, a brush to clean the internal screen, a 1-GB SD card, and a 19-page manual. The first thing I did was go to the Wolverine Website (<http://wolverinedata.com/f2d>). I downloaded a PDF copy of the manual so these tired old eyes could better read it. I also downloaded the latest firmware update and installed it. I then started my project. I can scan 125 slides in about 30-35 minutes. The more images that need to be rotated before saving, the longer it takes. They advertise

5-MP images and I found the file sizes ran from 900 KB to just over 1 MB.

There are a couple of things to watch out for. Most important is to make sure your slides (up to 4) are properly seated in the tray. If they are not, the tray will bind up in the scanner. I have had a couple of close calls on this one. Also, I have found that for no good reason the image on the screen of the unit will shift to black and white or have some goofy colors. In most cases pressing the mirror button twice will fix it. If not, turning the power off and back on will do the trick for sure. There is one other item the manual warns about, and that is not to tip the unit backward to better view an image on the unit's screen. The small USB connector on the USB power cable, like the one on your camera, plugs in near the bottom on the back of the unit. Repeated tipping can place stress on the connector causing it to fail.

Pricing varies. A Google search for "Wolverine F2D" brought a range of prices from \$119 at the Wolverine site to \$99.99 on the Costco site. I am quite satisfied with the product. If you take care in using it, you will be too.

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ACGNJ MEETINGS

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

Tuesday, September 29

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting.

Friday, October 2

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

Monday, October 5

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

Thursday, October 8

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

Friday, October 9

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

Monday, October 12

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

Tuesday, October 13

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

Wednesday, October 14

7 P.M. - WebDev SIG, Evan Williams (ewilliams@collaboron.com)

Friday, October 16

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

Monday, October 19

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

Tuesday, October 20

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

Thursday, October 22

8 P.M. - Hardware, Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)

Monday, November 2

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

Tuesday, November 3

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.