

Almost all of us now are aware of Linux, that alternative operating system. The one that comes from places other than Redmond, Washington.

The point I want to make in this piece is that there is more than one “kind” of Linux. The one most people are aware of is used for all kinds of commercial work. It is practically impossible to find an application that Linux can't be used for. All the way from planning the placement of railroad tracks to figuring out how many nails to use on a roof of a given size. Real nice, that one, for making estimates of material costs if we are in the building or home repair biz. Most of us aren't.

But there's another kind of use for Linux. It's what we want to do at home— whether we are working or just enjoying ourselves. We need a different kind of Linux. It's the one that Windows users are looking for, the alternative to Bill Gates' offering. It exists, but finding it is not all that easy, especially for Linux beginners.

Many professional Linux users are at least slightly amused at the thought of Windows users trying to put Linux through its paces. By their lights Windows is a poor excuse for an operating system. And it promises to get a lot worse before it gets better. Linux, on the other hand, can do anything. Why, in their view, futz with Windows?

The point missed here is the usual one: Windows users are in droves looking for an alternative. But not just any alternative. Windows users aren't interested in calculating fuel requirements for an airline's fleet of jumbo jets for the month of April. Instead, they want to do the same things with Linux that they are now doing with Windows. But they want to do it without the constraints and generally sour faced legions of people answering the help lines at Microsoft. And, given that they can learn Linux, those same users would be willing, maybe even really interested, in doing things with Linux that are at least difficult to do with Windows. Maybe even impossible to do with Windows.

These folks see Linux as the answer to their prayers. What they don't realize right away is that they have been “ruined” by Microsoft. They've had it really easy but didn't know it. It's like this.

Let's use photographic cameras as an example. We all know about those simple cameras made for people who just want to take pictures. They aren't interested in making photos suitable for publication or for hanging in competitions. Those simple point-and-push cameras are just right for them. No one would call those people “photographers,” they're just folks who want to take pictures at their kids' parties or graduations, etc. Or they want to catch ancient grandma at the holidays before she goes the way of all flesh. Windows offers this kind of use. And even it is a challenge for some people.

For example, when Judy and I visited California while my mother was still alive, she would take pictures of us sitting on the couch. She had wonderful pictures of the wall and where the wall met the ceiling. Our heads would be at the bottom of the shot – most of the time. Sometimes she missed us altogether. She had real trouble dealing with her point-and-push camera. She is not alone.

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Then there are those other cameras. They require a lot more from their users. Users have to know about f-stops, about focal length, about film speed, about lens filters, and all the kind of stuff that is the professional photographer's stock in trade. They can produce wonderful pictures. Including those slightly out of focus shots that can look so nice. In general they require a lot more of the user than simply pointing the lens and pushing the shutter button. The number of folks who deliberately stay away from “fancy” cameras is legion. They find them too hard to use.

It turns out that Linux is like the fancy cameras. If one is going to use Linux, one needs to learn a lot more about an operating system than many Windows users care to know. In every case learning about how Linux relates to our video cards or operates our printers or whatever requires a lot more of us than Windows ever thought of.

That's what I mean when I say that Windows has spoiled us. It's made the point-and-push camera type of computer the standard for so many of us. When we need more or different, we suddenly find that we need to know a lot more than we do now. Or than we care to know.

When we stop to think about it, we realize that we can't have it both ways. We either have to face learning about which Linux directory to place our applications in. Or which desktop we want to use. But we don't have any idea of what to do because at this point we are shooting in the dark. It can be very discouraging at first blush.

Such discouragement is fully justified. But about the time we are ready to bag the whole thing, along come some folks who know something about Linux. They offer to teach us how to use it. Gratefully we accept. Then we learn the folly of our decision.

Most of the folks who are willing to teach us about Linux are the kinds of folks who use it for various commercial applications or who are expecting to use it for such applications. Their hearts are warm. Their hands are gentle. Their guiding us along is wonderful. We are grateful to them. But, sooner or later we find that they are going in a direction quite different from where we want to go.

After a while we are brought up short and realize that we aren't where we wanted to be. The tendency is to blame the person teaching us. Sometimes even get a bit bent out of shape. Before we blow up I hope we realize that the problem is not our teacher's. It's ours. We want something most Linux users can't imagine anybody wanting. Why, they ask, would anyone want to do with Linux the kinds of things people do with that poor excuse for an operating system, Windows? They scratch their heads and wonder. They are prepared to teach us how to use Linux, but we, ungrateful wretches that we are, find that we really aren't much interested in what they have to teach.

We have to be clear here. This is not a matter of deciding that the point-and-push camera approach is what we need. A lot of us really are willing to learn about the fancy camera type of operating system. But our interests are the same as those that got us into computers in the first place: word processing, spread sheets, database management systems, etc.

Many of us are quite willing to learn alternatives to WordPerfect, especially those that are pretty inexpensive. Like StarOffice or Emacs. But we are really committed to word processing as a major activity, as a major part of our time at the computer. The same with QuattroPro or Excel, its Microsoft equivalent. Etc.

What we want is an operating system that will allow us to do what we've always done with Windows. Linux will do that for us. But it requires a good bit more than we're used to from Windows. Further, when we get the Linux moves down nicely, we can spin across the dance floor very well indeed. With flowers tossed to us from an appreciative audience. In the meantime we struggle to learn those aspects of Linux that will allow us to do what we want to do.

Since we want what we want when we want it, we'll have to devote some effort to the task. More than we have learned to put in with Windows. But when we're well along the way, we will be much better off than we are now. We will have some flexibility and some choices in how we approach and tackle our work.

We can also expect another thing to change. Microsoft will decide that we Linux users are potential customers and that we need to be courted in an effort to get us to return to Windows or its successor. Won't that be a nice change!



Print Shop
by Jean Bradt
RCS

I'm always looking for a good editor, so I decided to try Print Shop. The program comes in three parts: the Idea Guide, Ensemble II, and Graphics Exporter.

First I tried the Idea Guide. It contains quite a few "ideas" for cards, gift labels, whatever. It spends five minutes showing you an "idea" – the front of the card, the inside, how it can be cut to stand up, etc. Then you're supposed to click on How To and follow the detailed instructions how to create this idea yourself. That's not my style. I like to come up with my own ideas. (The ideas were very pretty, though.)

Then I tried making address labels (the eight-to-a-page kind) using Ensemble II. I did manage a nice-looking label, but WordPerfect can do that too.

I selected Customized Greeting Cards. I think they have too many options. They have pages of instructions to do all sorts of fancy things, but they neglect to tell you the simple things, such as that if you want to put in text you have to double click on the chosen spot.

The Graphics Exporter is what I was most interested in, since I'm always looking for new Clipart images. But I was disappointed as most of the images were of animals. I guess if I want images that are relevant to my corporation I'll have to look at other editors.

Ken's Korner
by Ken Fermoye

(Note: The following was forwarded to me some weeks ago, and I just had to share it with you. It expresses frustrations we all share at times. I tried without success to backtrack and find the author. So I will just credit it to that famous writer, "Anon." If you are, or know of, the actual author, please write me at kfermoyle@earthlink.net so I can give credit where credit is due! – Ken Fermoye)

I want to hurt my computer. I want to buy a software program that, when run, causes my computer to suffer grievously, though not permanently. When my screen freezes or turns blue, I want a special button I can push to make the CPU start squealing like a motherboard.

I want a device that stores an electrical charge in my telephone. For every minute I spend on hold waiting for technical support to answer, the charge would increase in intensity. When the guy from tech support finally answers, the electrical bolt of energy would be discharged into him. This should not affect my ability to hear what's going on at the other end of the line, of course. And a special function would allow the volts to double every time a tape-recorded message urges me to continue holding. "Your call is important to us," the featureless voice always claims.

I want my phone to be outfitted with a translation program which will reconstitute this irritating reminder into the truth: "Actually, we already have your money, so we couldn't care less about you. Our technical support department consists of two college kids, both of whom are busy playing Doom. Eventually, one of them will come on the line, but it will be the one who doesn't speak English."

I want my modem to sense when my PC has committed an "illegal function" and issue a warrant to arrest Bill Gates. When my system crashes and I lose a file that has taken me more than an hour to create, I want someone from the computer company to come out and retype it for me.

I don't understand why new, "upgraded" software creates files that cannot be read by old, reliable software with the same name. Is there no one in the computer industry who has noticed that word processor files all look alike once they are open? Why can't 6.0 recognize a 7.0 file? It's all just words, isn't it? There should be a rule that when software engineers buy a new car, their old cars should cease to function. If they don't understand why this is happening, they should call me and I will explain it to them.

How come when my computer catches a virus, I'm the one who misses work? I want to know why my printer always jams on the last piece of paper or the last sheet of checks. When this happens, it makes me want to put sandpaper into the manual feed and print the Emancipation Proclamation.

I am really tired of hearing about all the horrible things that will happen with the Y2K problem: sewers will regurgitate, all of my fillings will return to the dentist, my high school reunion will be held in Spanish, etc. Why doesn't anybody ever ask these computer programmers how in the world they didn't know the year 2000 would follow the year 1999? Software engineers are supposed to be pretty bright people -what did they need a memo or something?

I recently bought a program that is supposed to tell me if my computer files are Y2K-compliant. The program won't work because – get this – my CD-ROM player is too old (I bought it 34 months ago). The manufacturer doesn't sell an "updated driver." Thus, to find out if my computer is Y2K-compliant, I need to buy another computer.

I want to know what good is a Web search engine that returns 324,909,188 "matches" to my keyword. That's like saying, "Good news, we've located the product you're looking for. It's on Earth."

I want to know why, when I had a tiny hard drive, my operating system was virtually crash-proof and took up so little space. My new operating system is five times the size of my original hard drive. With every "upgrade," it seems to grow 75 percent. That's as if every time your mother-in-law came to visit she weighed another 500 pounds. Now I've found out that my PC no longer "recognizes" my floppy drive. How could they not recognize each other? They live together!

Please understand: I don't *hate* my computer. I just want to hurt it every once in a while.

*Ford Supports Tech Goals,
Offers Computers to Employees*

As an old Ford man, with ties that began in 1951 and spanned 25 years, off and on, I was impressed to learn that Ford Motor Company is making good its promise to stay on the leading edge of technology and connect more closely with its customers. In support of this goal, Ford reports that eligible employees worldwide will be provided a computer, printer and Internet usage at home for a mere \$5 per month.

"We're committed to serving consumers better by understanding how they think and act. Having a computer and Internet access in the home will accelerate the development of these skills, provide information across our

business and offer opportunities to streamline our processes,” Ford Chief Executive Office and President Jac Nasser said.

Delta Airlines followed quickly on Ford’s heels, announcing a very similar program for its employees. It will be interesting to see if other companies follow suit, especially hi_tech firms. None of the big computer_related corporations offer anything nearly as attractive, as far as I know. (If some do, please correct me.)

Enlightened self_interest? Sure. But smart. I hope those of you at Ford or Delta who read this will send me e_mail to let me know how these deals work out for you –A Ken’s Korner TidByte from Ken Fermoye

Professionals — A Primer
by Harold Holmes
President
The Association of Shareware Professionals

The Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP) was formed in April 1987 to strengthen the future of try_before_you_buy software as an alternative to conventional retail software.

Today, it’s a vibrant international organization with almost 700 shareware authors, distributors, and marketers who can help shareware professionals create and run their businesses. The ASP’s members create and market some of the finest software available today.

ASP members’ software spans the spectrum, from high_quality accounting and inventory programs for business, to award_winning utilities and games for all computer users. While some of our members’ programs, such as WinZip and Paint Shop Pro, are international best_sellers, there are thousands of other excellent business tools, Internet applications, games, educational programs, graphics, and multimedia programs that are top_shelf, and available at moderate prices.

Shareware is a method of software distribution, and not a type of program. In fact, try_before_you_buy software is being discovered by traditional “shelfware” companies, and will soon dominate the marketplace.

If you’re looking for moderately priced, high_quality software, please visit the ASP’s web site at <http://www.asp_shareware.org/membersearch.asp>. You can do a keyword search and, for most programs, you can purchase them securely online, directly from the author’s web site. Or you can visit our members’ web sites and download free trial version of their programs. We encourage you to try our software before you buy it.

Do you have questions about specific shareware programs, or about shareware in general? The ASP maintains a public newsgroup on our news server. You’re welcome to visit the newsgroup, and post your questions or comments. Hundreds of our members visit this newsgroup every month, and would be happy to try to answer your questions. Just point your web browser to <news://news.asp_shareware.org/asp.Public_Discussion>. ASP members are always looking for beta testers. They need people who would be interested in trying their programs before they’re ready for prime time. Beta testers get to see programs months before anybody else, get their ideas incorporated into the programs, and most end up with a free copy of the program for their efforts. If you’d like to become a beta tester, visit our public newsgroup, and post a message that mentions the types of programs that you’re interested in.

If you’re a software developer, we hope you’ll consider joining the ASP. We offer a wealth of information about how to start a software business and how to market shareware, as well as technical programming information. Our members_only newsgroup has more than 22,000 messages on threads about all areas of program development and marketing. ASP members are always eager to help other ASP members.

We hope you’ll visit the ASP web site, and try some of our members’ fine software.

Mr. Holmes may be reached at president@asp_shareware.org.

Back to Basics

A (Digital Camera)
Innocent Abroad
by Alex Dumestre
1960 PC Users Group

This month I will harken back to two articles of mine from the recent past. A couple of months ago I wrote about on_line shopping and just last month I gave marvelously astute advice on selecting a digital camera (even though I didn’t own one myself). Let’s see how these come together.

I was preparing for a long_anticipated vacation trip to the south of France and thought that it sure

would be fun to have a nice digital camera instead of the 35 mm SLR that has served me well for the past 30 years. One incentive was the fact that, in recent years, I've found carrying the bulky camera and its necessary accouterments to be increasingly burdensome. So into the selection process I went. I classified myself, following the scheme of the November article, as a Hobbyist who is interested in occasionally making large prints. My chart informed that I could expect to pay somewhere in the \$700 to \$1000 range, gulp! I pretty much knew that I wanted something in the vicinity of 2 megapixels and that I must have at least 3x optical zoom and auto focus. When I looked in two or three of the local camera stores I found several cameras that seemed to meet my needs and budget. Then came the hard part.

I knew I would be spending almost three weeks in the provinces of France, far from major cities and I had no idea how easy it might be to find a service to transfer my photos from the camera memory chip to a CD or a ZIP disk (I wouldn't have a laptop with me). I didn't find much help on the Internet. Worry, worry, worry. The Sony Mavica might be a way to go because it uses 3.5" floppies as its storage media, however that excellent line of cameras failed to meet one of my criteria – it is almost as bulky as my trusty 35 mm. Also, the one that best met my requirements was 1.3 megapixels – I could live with that – and using 24 bit color depth a single raw image would be about 5.2 megabytes. Obviously considerable compression is required to fit even four or five of these on a 1.44 megabyte floppy! I could visualize a suitcase full of floppies to hold the 400 _ 500 pictures I would possibly take. On the other hand it should not be nearly as hard to find a computer service store that could transfer floppy to ZIP, even in *les Boondoques*. Still I was bothered by the bulkiness. What to do? Procrastinate.

Then I came across a real bargain on an Internet auction site. True, it was less camera than what I had in mind but I rationalized that it was inexpensive enough to see if I really liked digital and I could always move up latter on. So make a bid. Yikes – I won! I owned a real digital camera for only \$389. Then buyer's remorse set in. It really wasn't as much camera as I wanted – how would life be without all those shiny bells and whistles? But the auction rules are: You bid – you pay. Two days later FedEx delivers my camera. I unpack it, load batteries and the 4 Meg chip that came with it, shoot a few test shots and start to feel better about the whole thing. I then inventory all of the cables and manuals and software that was part of the package and discover that the CD containing the software for downloading the pictures to the computer is missing. No sweat, the manufacturer would be happy to ship it to me free – in five to seven work days. Problem: I was due to leave on my vacation in four days. I couldn't really check that the camera was working properly without this capability. UBid was very helpful and ruled that I could declare the camera DOA and return it. They had FedEx pick it up the next day and canceled the whole thing.

Now I had run out of time and couldn't possibly shop for a camera in the remaining four days – could I? I could. I rushed to a retail store and paid retail price for one right off the shelf. Visions of lost \$200 discounts from Internet sources haunted me but the main thing was that I had my shiny new camera and I hadn't compromised my standards. I had, however, violated one of the cardinal rules of camera buying, whether film or digital; I had bought a new complicated camera without the chance to get to know it before leaving on vacation. How had I settled my uneasiness about unloading images from my camera while in France? I hadn't, I was still uneasy. I rationalized that surely I could expect to find such a service every week or so. My camera came with an 8 Megabyte card and I dug deep and bought another 32 Meg card. At maximum resolution and no compression TIFF, I could fit only five pictures on the 32 Meg card but by dropping to medium resolution (1024 x 768) and reasonable jpeg compression this jumped to 156 pictures on the 32 Meg card and another 38 on the 8 Meg card. That ought to hold me for a week or so!

This sounded like a good plan. It failed to consider two things, 1) there are no end of cathedrals, chateaux, castles, medieval walled cities, Roman arenas, Riviere beaches; 2) digital cameras haven't penetrated Europe to the same extent as in Japan and the USA. It soon became obvious that the two cards that I had might have to do me for the entire trip without unloading. If there were service bureaus to do the transfer of my pictures, my French wasn't good enough to unearth them. I reluctantly switched to plan B. Standard Quality is a euphemism for 640 x 480 resolution and while that held out no hope for 8" x 10" glossy prints, I could put 489 SQ pictures on my 32 Meg card! That ought to hold me. If I wanted to shoot a particularly impressive subject I could always switch to a higher resolution for selected shots and still get 400 or so pictures on the card. Sounds like a winner. Wrong! – see point 1) in the first sentence of this paragraph.

Two weeks into the trip my cards were approaching being full. I had the option of going through the 400 pictures I already had and deleting my least favorite ones but it was not an inviting thing to contemplate when viewing them only on a 1.8" LCD while running through batteries like mad. But we were arriving in Nice, the largest city we had visited. Surely I could find a copy_to_Zip service here. Three hours of looking turned up

nothing. In desperation I bought another 32 Meg card (for only 80% more than I had paid for the one in Houston). Sweat's off but still I stuck mostly with Standard Quality for the rest of the trip.

I presume that if you have read this far it is because you hope to find that there is a point to this story. What was my conclusion about digital cameras on a foreign vacation? Would I do it again? Would I do anything different? Would I change anything in my article about online shopping? Would I change anything in my article on selecting a digital camera? Read on.



I am thrilled with my new toy. I know that I took many more shots than I would have with film and the ability to view the pictures just taken allowed me to retake some pictures that I would have otherwise missed. Everyone was intrigued by the ability to view the picture I had just taken of them. Due to its small size I had the camera with me more times than I would have had with a larger camera. I took many more multi_shot panoramas than usual due to the automatic panorama stitch software that came with the camera. Lots of fun.

I'm sure that I would not have had much trouble transferring pictures to Zip if I had been able to speak the language (see the technical discussion in the final paragraph). Would I do anything different? Not much. I would have given myself more time to shop the Internet for my selected camera so that I could have saved some money. I was satisfied with my auction experience (in fact I am awaiting shipment from UBid of a digital camera that I just bought as a gift). I turned up no serious problems with what I had written about buying a digital camera. Best of all, the vacation was wonderful and I have 560 pictures to prove it.

To finish up I will go into some details about the technicalities of transferring pictures to disks. One can transfer images by connecting a cable from the camera to the serial port of the computer but that is rather slow. My camera uses removable SmartMedia cards. I bought (for under a hundred dollars) a SmartDisk adaptor that looks just like a floppy disk. With the SmartMedia card plugged in a slot in the SmartDisk, and with that adaptor stuck into the A:/ drive of a computer the whole thing acts like a floppy disk with a 32 Meg capacity. Therefore, all I needed was access to a computer with a Zip or a CD_R drive and permission to install a driver for the adaptor. Then it would be a simple file copy to the Zip. Alas, even that exceeded my ability to communicate.

Alex Dumestre has been associated with computers since the mid '60s, most of that time developing geophysical applications for use on mainframes, minicomputers and work stations. He is a bit of a nut about graphics but is a perpetual novice on PCS. He is a member of 1960 PC Users Group and can be contacted by e_mail at <DumestreA@pdq.net>. This article was reprinted from the 1960 PC Users Group December 1999 newsletter *PC News*.

Computer Mysteries
reviewed by Susan Ives
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

murder@maggody.com

by Joan Hess

Hardback, Simon and Schuster

2000, 253 pages, \$22.00

The town of Maggody, Arkansas (pop. 755) spins into a tizzy when they get a government grant to wire the town for the Internet. Ruby Bee wants to post her diner's menu on the Web, Brother Verber of the Voice of the Almighty God Assembly Hall has visions of setting up a cyber shopping cart to salvation and folks are speculating that the local moonshiner is ordering mason jars over the 'Net. They worry about the specter of pornography entering their town, but the grad student hired to administer the network assures them that he can block all the nasties. He can't. A young mother is murdered, naked pictures of the town worthies are slithering around on e_mail and it's up to sheriff Arly Hanks to sort it all out.

This is the 12th of Joan Hess's Maggody books, and her rowdy rural humor is wildly popular among mystery readers. I am not a Maggody fan (although I do enjoy Hess' Claire Malloy mysteries), finding the plots weak and the humor grating. It does give an accurate and sympathetic picture of what happens when a community too small for even cable TV plugs into cyberspace. Maggody groupies will love it.

Digital Fortress
by Dan Brown
Hardback, St. Martin's Press
1998, 373 pages, \$24.95

A fired National Security Agency cryptographer, distressed at the NSA's ability to intercept and decode everyone's e_mail, claims that he has developed an unbreakable cryptographic privacy algorithm. He threatens to unleash it unless NSA admits that it has developed a secret supercomputer capable of breaking all other encryption schemes with brute force. Head cryptographer Susan Fletcher is called in to track down a suspected duplicate key, while her fiancée, a linguistics professor, is dispatched on a mission to Seville to recover the original key. Surrounded by intrigue, betrayed by those they trust most, the country's intelligence databases are within seconds of being penetrated when they crack the code.

The first edition of *Digital Fortress* sold out in nine days and was in its fourth printing within six weeks. Published two years ago, it has yet to be released in paperback. It has been the number one nationally best selling E_book for 15 weeks. In other words, this is a very popular and successful book, and with reason. The technical aspects are engrossing, with detail about computers_ based code breaking and virus tracking, blocking and recovery. There's fast paced action, but I cracked the code before the NSA geniuses figured it out. The author's web site, www.digitalfortress.com, has lots of supplementary material and is worth a visit. Highly recommended.

Poetry on the Internet
by Susan Ives
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

I am married to a poet. A few months ago I dragged John to a poetry reading – his first – at the Center for Spirituality and the Arts, where my friend Tom Keene read poems for peacemakers. Tom started an anecdote about having a beer with a friend . . . John nudged me. "He drinks beer!" John said. "Poets can drink beer!"

John was transformed, on the edge of his seat for the rest of the reading. Before we left, Tom challenged everyone to write a poem and send it to him. John did. He had never written a poem before, and now he's hooked. He writes one poem a week. His second one was about beer. I'm still waiting for the love poem to the wonderful wife who introduced him to poetry, but maybe he's honing his skills on more prosaic topics first.

I expanded John's horizons by introducing to haiku. Haiku is a 17_syllable verse form consisting of three metrical units of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. If you are not familiar with haiku, simple starting places are the Haiku Essence <www.mit.edu/people/chekmate/Haiku/haiku.html> or Haiku For People <www.toyomasu.com/haiku/>.

Traditional haiku is a beautiful discipline but the Internet has spawned a litter of funky, weird and just plain awful haiku. One of my favorites is Computer Haiku <www.qni.com/~rgadd/computerhaiku.htm>.

Serious error.

All shortcuts have disappeared.

Screen. Mind. Both are blank.

Haiku Headline of the Day puts each morning's news into verse. <www.coolwebsite.com>, then follow the link to Haikucaracha. A sample from December's news:

chernobyl turned on

as ukrainians dance with

the apocalypse

As added bonuses, you can sign up to have the daily haiku e_mailed to you, and each little poem is linked to a reputable news source giving the full background story.

My next didactic device was magnetic poetry. I gave John a box of 440 magnetized words <<http://www.magpo.com/>> so he can assemble poetry on the refrigerator. The chain bookstores in San Antonio usually carry the "original" kit, but at the online store you can but all of them, from cat poetry to romantic words. The site also has a curriculum guide for teachers, and a poetry gallery where users can submit their own creations.

There are other companies that make poetry magnets, including Cowboy Poetry <www.northernwrites.com> and LockerLingo for teens <www.lockerlingo.com>. Several virtual refrigerators are online – no magnets required. Try Shocked Poetry <www.shockedpoetry.com>; Wingnut <www.wingnut.com> or Click and Drag Poetry <prominence.com/java/poetry>.

I think his next assignment will be a limerick, which is a five line stanza in spondaic hexameter, alternating with amphibrachs and amphimacers. Well, that just took all the fun out of it! Start your exploration of limericks at Pentatette, the web site of the Limerick Special Interest Group of MENSA <www.limericks.org/pentatette/reply.html>. In addition to their limerick search engine and appropriately brainy explanation of the limerick form, they offer a series of beautifully illustrated free e_mail postcards. The techies in the group might want to review the results of the 1997 American Physical Society's first physics limerick contest <www.aps.org/apsnews/11855.html>.

The casual dipper might want to peruse Loony Limericks <www.hooked.net/~kristena>, a collection of more than 1,000 limericks submitted by web surfers over the last three years. Many limericks are bawdy, but this collection thoughtfully divides them into "naughty" and "nice" categories.

There are more poetic forms than haiku and limericks, of course. To learn about all of them, turn to The Glossary of Poetic Terms <web.wwa.com/~rgs/glossary.html>, where you can learn the difference between PAEAN and PAEON, get the pronunciation of those pesky Greek terms, and view examples, such as: ENALLAGE (en_AL_uh_je) The effective use of a grammatically incorrect part of speech in place of the correct form, e.g., present tense in place of past tense, plural for singular, etc., as in the Punch magazine's, "You pays your money, and you takes your choice."

If you are looking for your favorite poet, a good starting point is the About.Com poetry guide <poetry.about.com>. I have found these guides, for all topics, to be well_maintained and thoughtfully compiled. There are dozens of topics, from a long list of poetry journals to entries for individual poets, arranged by decade. Everything is here.

Contemporary poetry lovers should visit The Academy of American Poets <www.poets.org>. They have a lively discussion forum and a poet finder, which includes a biography of and several poems by San Antonio's own Naomi Shihab Nye; an audio archive, with about 100 poets reading their own stuff, and several special exhibits, worth visiting.

Many poets self_ publish on the Web. A good place to start looking for them is on poetry webrings. Go to <www.webring.com>, and search for poetry; more than 600 rings are listed, the biggest being Poetry Haven, with more than a thousand poetry sites listed. As a general search tip, web rings are often good places to start looking for personal (rather than corporate or institutional) sites on almost any topic.

The Internet is ideal for tracking down an elusive line of poetry. Use one of the search engines, such as HotBot or AltaVista, which attempt to capture every word in the World Wide Web. In HotBot <www.hotbot.com> use the drop_down menu to search by exact phrase; in AltaVista <www.altavista.com> place the phrase within quotation marks. Try it: Type in "I went out to the hazel wood" and you should be taken to the text of W. B. Yeats "The Song of Wandering Aengus," one of my favorites.

Susan Ives, in previous lives, wrote poems galore, but she doesn't no more.

WordPerfect Office 2000 Suite
by Clarke Bird
Alamo PC

The suite of Corel business applications offers subtle improvements to WordPerfect Suite 8. The component parts contained in the WordPerfect Office 2000 Standard edition are aptly named WordPerfect 9, Quattro Pro 9, Corel Presentations 9, CorelCENTRAL 9 and Trellix 2. This review will focus primarily on WordPerfect 9 although, space permitting, I will touch on new features of other components of this suite of programs.

First and foremost, reveal codes are still with us as an integral part of using WordPerfect 9. I have absolutely no idea of how MS Word users get by without seeing the formatting codes that can make lines/words/columns, etc. misbehave on the page. A very pleasant surprise: for the first time, we have the ability to open a Word document in WordPerfect without any glitches whatsoever, and without having to save it as a WordPerfect 5.0 document or as a RichText document first. Furthermore, you can open file formats created in earlier versions: 6, 6.1, 7, and 8 in WP9 without a problem. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

The "Professional Edition" includes Paradox 9 (database originally written by Borland) and NetPerfect, a server-side network support for document exchange on the Internet/ intranet.

A first thing you notice after installation is the classic WordPerfect pen nub icon that sits on your tool bar is now silver instead of gold. Also the other WordPerfect 9 icons on your tool bar are slightly different than those same WordPerfect 8 icons – just in case you have both programs still installed on your hard drive.

System requirements

Since this is a suite of programs, WordPerfect Office 2000 Standard is going to occupy a lot of real estate on your hard disk; about 280 MB for a typical install. Luckily, you are presented the option, Install-As-You-Go, which allows you to install applications that you require – only as they are needed. You can get by with as little as 170 MB hard disk space. WP9 requires Windows 95/98 or NT to install – sorry Windows 3.1 users. It also requires at least a 66 MHZ CPU and recommends a minimum of 32 MB RAM.

I have been a long-time user/fan of WordPerfect, starting with version 5x DOS, then migrating to 6.1, skipping version 7 and upgrading to WordPerfect Suite 8. The thing I loved about WP8 was the ability to create multiple address books. My main concern about upgrading was an ability to import my address books to WP9. I checked with Corel technical service to find out if I would have to uninstall WP8 before installing WP9. The tech service representative said I would have no problems running both versions on the same PC. When I first installed WP9, several things didn't get installed, particular Corel Central, Corel's answer to MS Outlook. I then "exported" each of my five WP8 address books to a floppy disk uninstalled WP8 and installed WP9. Corel Central showed after the installation.

Corel Central "gets in your face" a bit more in WP9 in that a three inch wide "My Calendar" appointment/to do list open up when you boot your computer each day. A click of the X the upper right closes this narrow list. Those with busy schedules will learn to appreciate this PIM within a program. Another feature new to Corel Central is a little **Alarm Clock** icon in your tool bar below your active screen. This quick alarm clock is always there, whether you have WordPerfect open or not. Click on the alarm icon and a small window pops up with a space to type in the subject for the alarm (call Marilyn) and many choices for the alarm to alert you – five minutes later, up to seven days later. At the appointed time, a window pops up on the screen, no matter what program you are working in, with the reminder you entered.

A click on the Corel Central icon in your tool bar opens the three inch wide, screen high "calendar! to do list" mentioned earlier. At the bottom of the "to do list" are four icons: **Address Book(s)**, **Calendar**, **Card File**, and **Memos**. **Card File** is a mini database manager for those who do not have Paradox database manager packaged within WordPerfect Professional. Card File can be used as an enhanced address book or to record almost any type of information. This function looks very interesting to me and I plan to explore its capabilities in more detail in the future.

The **Memos** icon opens a small memos. I've not experimented much beyond writing a one line memo and printing it. You can choose a different size paper prior to printing. The printed "memo" has a "Corel CENTRAL Memos" header with a line border running around the edge of the paper. I'm not sure how I'll use the memo feature in the future as I have several existing memo templates carried over from WP8.

A new tool on the WP9 Application Bar is the AutoScroll tool. You must click on this tool each time you want to use it to scroll up and down your document using your regular mouse. AutoScroll has the functionality of an IntelliMouse without the expense of buying one. In other words, keep the 40 bucks you save in not buying an IntelliMouse and buy someone flowers.

Make It Fit has been enhanced to expand or condense a document in a user-defined space, i.e., condense a page and a quarter of copy to one page – or expand a page and a half of copy to fill two pages. Make It Fit has become a valuable tool to most WordPerfect users.

Print Preview is now fully editable. You can use editing commands to make changes, to your document directly in print Preview to view results before printing.

For those with DeskJet printers, a Print Upside Down feature allows the user to print return addresses closer to the edge of the envelope. Seems like Corel has been listening to its users. There are more than 100 new shapes in Graphic objects. **Text in Shapes** allows the user to insert text in a variety of shapes such as the thought bubble shown.

For foreign correspondence, you can choose from a wide variety of languages for use with Spell Checker, Thesaurus, and Grammatik.

The Scrapbook, something I had not used in WP8, has been redesigned in WP9. It can provide you with lots of clip art (this is a Corel product, right?), photos, sounds, and movies. It lets you search and preview images, drag and drop, copy and paste; organizes images by category, and create your own categories. You can also click on the

Corel Web Site icon to take you to the Corel Business Applications Community to search for even more clip art selections and add them to your Scrapbook.

Corel Presentations 9, for slide shows, allows you to send files to and from other presentation applications such as MS PowerPoint. Presentations 9 has redesigned toolbars, giving users access to frequently used features. Using CorelDRAW technology, several new image tools such as Brightness, Contrast, Watermark, Coloring Book and Transparent now available within the product.

Quattro Pro has been enhanced with several spreadsheet construction improvements. Menus have been restructured to access the most frequently used features. SpeedFunctions such as @SUM, @MIN, @MAX and @AVG are readily available on the toolbar. Row height is automatically adjusted after you enter data in the row. The Euro has been added to the currency numeric format. RealTime Preview lets you experiment with formatting, such as font and font size, to preview your formatting before you apply it to spreadsheet data. Page Breaks shows where a page will break on the spreadsheet when printed. It allows you to change the margins in this view by simply dragging borders.

While WP9 offers a number of subtle improvements over WP8, the greatest change is Word Perfect's snuggling up to the web. The ability to design web pages and to publish documents to the web without knowing HTML has been made far simpler, thanks to Trellix 2. Gone is "Barista." I've not used Trellix other than to convert this review to an HTML document ready to be published on a web page. Trellix 2 bears more investigation. You can start Trellix from the desktop or from within WordPerfect. You can take a Trellix Quick Tour multimedia overview of how the program works, which I recommend to those users interested in publishing to the web.

Here are my Top 10 Reasons for Upgrading to WordPerfect 9:

10. Reveal codes.
9. Been a long-time user of WordPerfect and I ~~can't~~ don't want to switch.
8. Multiple address books.
7. Need to be able to open MS Word documents without a hassle with strange formatting.
6. I have a lot of customized templates that I hate to lose.
5. I have several WordPerfect macros that I love.
4. The AutoScroll tool should save some time.
3. Make It Fit is used almost daily.
2. RealTime Preview will save mucho time undoing wrong formatting choices.
1. Did I mention Reveal Codes?

WordPerfect Office 2000 Standard Edition lists for \$99.00. Office 2000 VoicePowered Edition lists for \$149 and Office2000 Professional Edition lists for \$199. Corel Corporation, 150 Isabella St., Suite 700, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 1V7. Web site: <www.corel.com>.

Clarke Bird uses WordPerfect to edit all copy received for publishing in *PC Alamode* and spends considerable time removing unwanted formatting codes using the Reveal Codes tool, his favorite.

Tips and Tidbits
by Joe Pia

This column-ette will list things discovered by either me or by our members who tell me about them. The aim is to keep us abreast of the little things that appear here and there. Things that are of interest and/or use. If you have encountered something that would be of interest to other members, please let me know. Here are some for this month.

1. WordPerfect 9 Service Packs.

The latest version of WordPerfect seems to have been released a touch early. The fix-ups are available as Service Packs. One of my friends, Ken Cauthen, put me on to this. I would never have found it. I would have just limped along, putting up with some of the idiosyncracies of the program, hoping for improvements in the next version. But waiting of that sort is not required. Lots of waiting of a different kind, of course, comes with the downloading process.

There are three files. Service Pack 1 must be copied into the WP directory first. Then SP2 can be added. Then another SP2 may also be copied into WP. Which means that you download first SP1 and set it to installing itself. When that's all finished, you return to www.Corel.com and download the next one. There's a little fussiness in

getting into the downloading part of the site. You have to answer some questions. But patience will get you through to the site and to the Golden Fleece of the Service Packs.

I should note that I used the Netzip Download Demon that I bought off the Web. Can't remember the details, but my guess is that you can get them from <www.netzip.com>. It may also be available at CompUSA. You can usually call them ahead and ask for sales. The person there would be able to find it in the database of products they sell if they sell it. If the search comes up zero, you can get on the Web to find it.

You get the Service Packs this way: Go to the Corel site <www.Corel.com> and scroll down to the Word Perfect box. Click and it shall be opened to you. You can download the Service Packs from there. They are big files so that they will take a long time even with a 56K modem. My friend said his adventure took a couple of hours for one of the files. With RoadRunner I found that they each took about twenty minutes to a half hour to download. The whole thing, all three files and their installations, took me about two hours in the middle of the night. Figure two to four times longer with a regular modem. And maybe longer still during the day when the lines are busy.

It's useful to remember that you don't get any virtue points by doing it all in one day. Or all in one sitting. Spreading the task over a couple of days will enable us to stay relatively sane and not bark at people, especially people we love.

2. Linux Mags

There are two magazines now devoted to Linux: (1) *Linux Journal* which bills itself as The Monthly Magazine of the Linux Community, and (2) *Linux Magazine* whose subtitle is *The Chronicle of the Revolution*.

The *Journal* is the larger of the two. It has been around longer and has, therefore, lots more advertisers and just simply more text. The *Magazine* is considerably smaller and has what may be a smaller readership. It's only a year or so old. Having the two of them is a Good Thing. We get a range of opinion, largely from the *Magazine*, and good solid information from the *Journal*.

Some articles of interest in the February 2000 issues: "The Microsoft Hit Squad" in the *Magazine*. It talks about how Microsoft starts to twitch pretty badly at the very mention of Linux and even has put out false information in its effort to denigrate Linux and make Windows look great.

The *Journal* includes two review articles on KDE and Gnome on the Linux Desktop. It also includes a review article comparing StarOffice and Applixware, both are suites like Microsoft *Office* and Corel's *WordPerfect Office Suite*. Pretty neat to have this information.

I found the mags in the periodicals section of Barnes & Noble in the Greece Ridge mall. My guess is that they are also at the other B&N, at both Borders stores, and at World Wide News on St. Paul. If your local library doesn't have them, you might want to talk to the folks there with a view to getting them onto the periodicals subscriptions list. If the librarian responds that there aren't enough readers to justify it, you might want to buy a subscription for yourself and put the copies in the library for others after you have read them. You might have to clear this with the librarian – not to mention the spouse, but you will find most of the library folks are quite reasonable people if you are.

Enough for this month. Let me know what you've found by the end of the third week of each month so I can include it. Unless you want to write about it in a separate piece yourself.

The Dealsguy
by Bob Click
Greater Orlando Computer User Group

If you're thinking about a motherboard upgrade only, consider this: many of the new motherboards now offer only PCI slots. That might mean that if your old motherboard has any ISA boards in it, they would be unusable in the new motherboard unless it has ISA slots as well as PCI. What a great excuse for upgrading other peripherals. Like I always say, do your homework. Wish I always took my own advice.

How about this for a vicious circle . . . I bought a Matsonic motherboard for a good price at Comdex a couple years ago that gave me problems and eventually died. Since it was guaranteed for two years, I sent it back to the company via US Postal Service insured. After no response from Matsonic, I inquired at the post office. I was told to obtain a letter from the company saying they never received the package. Then I could apply for the insurance.

I called the company, and after persisting, I was asked who signed for it, but was told, point blank, that without a return authorization, I was probably out of luck. Since I hadn't asked for a return receipt, I didn't know who had signed and received no cooperation.

Back at the post office, I was told that an insured package had to have been signed for. To find out who it was, I must apply for that information at a cost of \$7 to research it. All that runaround because I didn't spend the extra money for a return receipt. I seem to learn everything the hard way. No doubt it was signed for so forget the insurance. I think I can forget any action from Matsonic as well. I won't forget that name very soon.

Perhaps next month I'll talk about Best Buy with whom I am in a dispute right now, and it looks like I may take them to court over the warranty on my laptop. Now, let's get on with the column.

Assistance For Web Surfers

SurfSaver 2.0 from "askSam" simplifies gathering information from the Web and turning it into a searchable database on your PC. New feature lets you save selected links (or an entire page), and all linked pages, easily turning any list of hypertext links on the Web into a searchable database on your computer.

SurfSaver 2.0 includes several powerful new features for organizing Web pages. In addition, the new version is available as a free download at <<http://www.surfsaver.com>> thanks to advertising included in the software. Download multiple levels of a Web site and browse (or search) the site off_line. Organize information using a Filing Cabinet and Folder metaphor. Create your own filing cabinets, and place folders in these cabinets, then search across multiple folders in multiple filing cabinets.

A professional version, SurfSaver Pro, adds the ability to share SurfSaver folders in a network. SurfSaver Pro does not contain advertising and costs \$29.95 per user. I'll check on the possibility of a special for the Pro version next month. Visit askSam at <<http://www.askSam.com/>> or call 1_800_800_1997 for more info. My thanks to Bea McKinney of askSam for notifying me of this.

Things You Didn't Want to Know

When You Were a Kid,

Besides Other Stuff

Jay Hogan sent me this one and I don't know his user group. Go to <<http://www.learn2.com>> to find out all the things your parents didn't remember to teach you. In fact, send your kids there because one of the courses teaches you how to brush your teeth. I didn't have time to dig down, but he said they offer user group discounts. Thanks Jay.

Help For Photoshop Users

O'Reilly & Associates have announced the release of a new edition of the book "Photoshop for the Web." In this new edition, author Mikkel Aaland includes important new techniques and workarounds for the latest release of Photoshop version 5.5. You can check their Web site to find out more. <<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/photoweb2/>>. Remember that O'Reilly Publishing always offers user group discounts. Free GIFs are available at <<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/photoweb2/chapter/ch03.html>>.

Call O'Reilly & Associates at 1_800-998_9938 and mention your user group, or e_mail them at <order@oreilly.com>

Let's Continue With The Free ISP

Discussion I Started Last Month

NetGenie

This service hopes to have a new promotion started by February, so check it out at <<http://www.netgenie.com/>> which will be about when you read this. I was unable to get any more information from their site.

Juno Has Joined The Crowd

Yes, the venerable Juno is now offering free access to the Internet. A person I talked to says it has its' quirks but it works. You have to develop a technique for using your browsers or it cuts you off. That was from just one person I knew using the free version. I didn't check their access numbers but I think Juno will do OK in that regard because of it has been around. I assume from what it says that there is a better selection of access numbers for the Premium version.

The regular service is free and offers free "online" tech support and 12 megs (more than my Mindspring) for your Web site. The Premium version costs \$9.95 per month and offers free phone tech support. Both offer file attachments and fax and voicemail capability in the mailbox. Look for it at <<http://www.juno.com>>. Current subscribers need not fill out any forms.

How About a Blue_Light Special!

You guessed it, Kmart has enlisted the help of Yahoo for it's new FREE Internet service. While it is certainly meant for your shopping, it actually looked pretty good. I felt it had a fairly good selection of access numbers,

especially for rural towns. Blue- Light also offers e_mail accounts and space for your home page. They even offer tech support by e_mail or a phone call.

There is not much information on the Web site but it costs nothing to try it out. You can even download it to floppies instead of your hard drive. With the help of Yahoo, you should find plenty of resources. You can download the software, or order it at Blue-Light CD Request, P.O. Box 468, Lake Orion, MI. 48361. Kmart is so well known that they wouldn't actually need much advertising. When you see the familiar red Kmart logo flash by, it is a sort of "subliminal" reminder. The same as when your car seems to pull it on its own when you pass your favorite store (or tavern).

Tritium Network

Tritium offers free access to the Internet through a nationwide network of local access numbers. You can find this one at <<http://www.tritium.net>>. I found access numbers only in the major cities. Only supports Windows presently. Offers limited tech support. Supports 56K/V90 modems. They plan to increase access number availability. E_mail accounts available.

Jump.to/FreeISP

This one may have been sent to other user group officers when it was sent to me recently. I thought it had an impressive Web site. Look this one up at <[http://jump .to/FreeISP](http://jump.to/FreeISP)>. This site is both comprehensive and up_to_date (their words) and there's also a good Web ring for Free Internet Access: <<http://move.to/FreeISP>>.

This site is very interesting, so I suggest you visit it and draw your own conclusions. It actually lists dozens of free ISPs that you can check out, as well as many other free services. Some are just for a certain area. One service listing surprised me, but I guess it shouldn't have these days. You'll see it, I'm sure. There is plenty of information, too much to categorize here.

Last Minute Special From JASC

Just in time for tax season, if you upgrade to JASC Paint Shop Pro 6 and buy the book "Creating Paint Shop Pro Web Graphics" for only \$79, you'll get TaxCut, the number one rated tax prep software, from H&R Block FREE! This offer is a \$114 value – a saving of over 30% off the suggested price! To order, go to: <<http://www.jasc.com/jascstore/22722>>.

This month's column was sure done hastily but I hope you get something out of it. Next month I'll continue with some free ISPs and perhaps even talk about an upcoming FREE DSL service. My thanks to Central Florida Computer Society President "Bud" Stonaker for searching out a few of these and passing them on to me.

This column is written to make user group members aware of special pricing I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <dealsguy@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <[http:// www.dealsguy.com](http://www.dealsguy.com)> for past columns.

President's Column
by Joe Pia

The year moves along, and so do we. So far this season we have not been snowed out, for which we can be grateful. March is usually the last meeting of the season for which there is any significant danger of too much of the white stuff. So, as the calendar pages turn, we look forward to more green in leaf and program.



Elections

The elections people tell me that they have not been overwhelmed by people running up to them with nominations. It might be useful for members to think some more about potential officers. And, quickly let members of the nominating committee know of your thoughts. Come June, Frank and I will be less visible. We will fulfill our obligations to serve in an advisory capacity through the summer. We will continue to do so through the fall when we're asked. But come the end of this year, we will be around as everyone else is: at our convenience and when we want to be at a particular program. We have considered running Venezuela. So, please be advised, again, of our ardent desire to turn the officerships over to someone else. It would be a shame if all our hard work and our getting incorporated was followed by an organization without leadership and therefore without status. We would lose our not-for-profit status with both the State of New York and the Feds.

The Pesky Federal Application

Got a call this week from John Heveron, our CPA who is shepherding our application through the IRS maze to a 501(c)(3) designation. It seems that the Feds have essentially approved the application but will give us the final word when we have modified our by-laws. The modification is adding a single sentence to the effect that we

are a not-for-profit charitable, educational and scientific organization as specified by paragraphs 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We will vote on this issue at the March meeting.

Mr. Heveron is pretty sure that that change will satisfy the IRS. This has taken longer than it should have. In part a change in the personnel at the office in Cincinnati has contributed to the delay. But John feels confident that we're over the humps now. Why the Feds are asking us to put this statement in our by-laws is not clear to John, but they are making this request. So, we, desiring the exempt status, will jump through one more hoop.

Increasing the Membership

Now that we are pretty sure of our status with the Feds, it is time for us to start making some real serious moves toward increasing our membership. You will be hearing about them some more. We will no doubt be asking you to help out in some as yet unspecified way. Please decide now that you will turn to and do your part to see our organization grow. With new people, especially new users, we will have larger attendance at our meetings. With that larger attendance we will become an item of interest to vendors of various kinds. Getting programs will become a lot easier. And there will be more people ready to serve as officers.

Varga a New Board Member

One more thing to report: At a recent meeting the Board elected Joe Varga to fill the vacant trustee slot left by Tom Bowllan. He will serve until the end of the current year. We will sort out all the terms of office stuff in June.

Finally

Enjoy the weather, especially the warming up that is well underway. We look forward to hearing about such things as Windows 2000 in the next few months. As well, of course, about Linux and how it serves as an alternative to Windows. Until the next meeting

New User Group
February 1, 2000
by John McMillan

Five fearless fellows fought frigid frost and freezing flakes for February 1st's New Users Meeting at the Monroe Developmental Center. To kick the ball off, one user who maintained a file of frequently changing names, addresses, phone numbers and e_mail addresses for a small group, asked if it was necessary to use lower case in e_mail addresses. He wanted to use all caps for better differentiation between i's and l's.

Greg Wolfe said e_mail addresses are case sensitive which was born out by samples from the New Users Membership File. Font changes were suggested, particularly to those that simulate handwriting or script, with more pronounced differences; or the use of note entries to identify potential problems. Since the target group was small, other thoughts included issuing floppy disks rather than printouts; posting the list to a web page; and sending members an e_mail with the list attached.

The list is being kept in Excel and when an e_mail address is typed, it has a blue underline and opens the AOL logon screen. It was thought that this could be stopped by encasing e_mail addresses in parenthesis or by going to Properties in Excel and looking for a way to change the actions.

Bill Statt also mentioned making a table in Word to accomplish the same objective or using control + alt + delete (the three finger salute) to see a Close Program dialogue box that lists programs running in the background but may not include programs shown on the task bar at the bottom of the screen. If AOL was running in the background it should be shut off.

The above dialogue box would help another user who wanted to determine if Norton's AntiVirus was running before installing new programs. Opening Norton's AntiVirus presents a dialogue box that allows you to identify the drives or select a specific file to be checked. Options opens a screen with nine tabs that lead to different conditions. Virus list identifies the viruses that the program checks for. Scheduler lets you preset a time for the program to run. Norton's AntiVirus keeps a log of scheduled scans which can be viewed at the press of a button.

There is also a button that points to data and program updates. Free virus data updates are only available for a period of 90 days and after that you need to subscribe to an update service though program changes may be downloaded for a longer period. After the meeting broke up, Bill Statt demonstrated similar screens for McAfee.

The topic of image saving came up with a question of whether repeated reading /saving of .jpg files caused deterioration. As an intensive graphics user of both clip art and photographs, I have favored .jpg over .bmp files for the significant reduction in file sizes with no noticeable degradation. Repeated reading is less likely to result

in loss than continued rewriting. Perhaps more important is the resolution which is chosen but also affects file sizes.

The conversation turned to recording music using Zip drives and their accompanying software. While the software provides four different levels of recording quality the greatest improvement came from using a SCSI card versus the parallel port. Digitizing and compression techniques are apparently the culprit since data recording has not been affected. Real.com was mentioned as another means of getting music to the machine by tapping into radio stations simulcasting via the internet.

Free e_mail and internet services, dependent upon advertising income, were also mentioned. One Juno user recapitulated how ever growing advertising files fill the hard drive unless periodically purged. One easy way to do this is to use File Manager to delete and then reinsert the advertising directory. Free computers were also cited as having a significant unerasable portion of the hard drive filled with adds as well as two inch banner adds on all sides reducing the available screen size.

A request for information on dealing with attachments led to a comparison of AOL and Juno methods. While mechanically different, both identified the presence of attachments and allowed a choice of displaying (opening), storing, or ignoring. It was recommended that unless the sources was well known, saving for virus scanning was safer than opening. Juno lets you choose the storage site but an AOL user wished for the same capability.

		Treasurer's Report by Steve Staub
Income		
	Dues	\$284.00
Expenses		
	St. Stephen's printer usage	\$100.00
	Paper Supplies	77.76
	APCUG dues	50.00
	Post Office	34.65
	Pizza and Soda	<u>13.47</u>
Total Expenses		\$275.88
Balance as of 2/29/2000		\$2,344.26

The Lighter Side

Microsoft to Allow Changing Blue Screen of Death

In a surprise announcement today, Microsoft President Steve Ballmer revealed that the Redmond_based company will allow computer resellers and end_users to customize the appearance of the Blue Screen of Death (BSOD), the screen that displays when the Windows operating system crashes.

The move comes as the result of numerous focus groups and customer surveys done by Microsoft. Thousands of Microsoft customers were asked, "What do you spend the most time doing on your computer?" A surprising number of respondents said, "Staring at a Blue Screen of Death."

At 54 percent, it was the top answer, beating the second place answer "Downloading XXXScans" by an easy 12 points. "We immediately recognized this as a great opportunity for ourselves, our channel partners, and especially our customers," explained the excited Ballmer to a room full of reporters. Immense video displays were used to show images of the new customizable BSOD screen side_by_side with the older static version.

Users can select from a collection of "BSOD Themes," allowing them to instead have a Mauve Screen of Death or even a Paisley Screen of Death. Graphics and multimedia content can now be incorporated into the screen, making the BSOD the perfect conduit for delivering product information and entertainment to Windows users.

The BSOD is by far the most recognized feature of the Windows operating system, and as a result, Microsoft has historically insisted on total control over its look and feel. This recent departure from that policy reflects Microsoft's recognition of the Windows desktop itself as the "ultimate information portal."

By default, the new BSOD will be configured to show a random selection of Microsoft product information whenever the system crashes. Microsoft channel partners can negotiate with Microsoft for the right to customize the BSOD on systems they ship.

Major computer resellers such as Com-paq, Gateway, and Dell are already lining up for premier placement on the new and improved BSOD. Ballmer concluded by getting a dig in against the Open Source community.

"This just goes to show that Microsoft continues to innovate at a much faster pace than open source. I have yet to see any evidence that Linux even has a BSOD, let alone a customizable one."