

Preventive Maintenance

B.S.O.D.

by Russell James
Alamo PC Organization

Is there anyone who has a computer and does not know what these letters stand for? The cursed Blue Screen of Death. The message tells you that something has caused a fatal exception in some ridiculous number that doesn't mean anything to most humans. The end of the message tells you that you may be able to continue with your Windows session but the "any key" usually has no effect and we end up pushing the reset button and rebooting our system. What can we do about the errors and what exactly is a fatal exception? I thought this was a peaceful operation. Isn't working on the computer supposed to be fun? Where do you start to try to figure out what is going wrong and how to correct it? These are some of the questions that we will try to answer this month.

Fatal exception errors are codes that are returned by a program when invalid code, data, or illegal instruction is accessed by an application, or when an operation is executed or tries to execute, on a wrong level. They will usually occur when you attempt to shut down your computer, start Windows, or start a program in Windows. The exception is generated by the processor and passed on to the operating system, which promptly stops all action on your system and gives you the prehistoric blue screen of death. Sometimes you will be able to hit a key and continue with your programs. Most of the time, the fatal exception will cause the entire system to crash and you will be forced to reboot the computer. When this happens, you will have lost whatever had not been saved before the crash. This is why you are always being

hounded to save your work. Nobody plans for his or her system to crash, it just happens. You have two choices when working on your computer. To save or not to save, that is the question.

There are many different reasons why you might get a fatal exception. There are two types of problems that we have discussed in the past, hardware and software. According to Microsoft, Windows does not cause these errors but has the exception-handling routine for that particular processor exception, which displays the error message.

There is always a possibility that faulty hardware is causing the error, but there is also a chance that it could be caused by corrupted software or some new flaky software program that you just installed. The key to correcting the errors is to have an open mind about what could be causing it. Pay attention and make notes about what changes you have made with your system recently. Newly installed programs or updates to old programs. Newly installed hardware or updated drivers for your hardware.

Write down the error message, especially any file names that appear in the message. It could be that the new addition to your system is conflicting with other programs or hardware. If you have a corrupted .dll or .vxd, you might be able to correct the problem by extracting the file that is causing the problem from your original Windows disks.

For those of you with Windows 98, you can use the System File Checker program to extract the file. You can access the program through System Information or by typing sfc in the Run line. The program will ask you if you want to back up the file that you are replacing and you should answer yes. This way you can change the file back if it does

not correct the problem. If you are using Windows 95 you will need to learn to use the extract program.

What do these messages tell us that will help us? The typical message would look something like this:

A fatal exception <XY> has occurred
in xxxx:xxxxxxxx

The X's and Y's would be hexadecimal numbers. The <XY> is the exception that has occurred, a number going from 00 to 0F and the other would be the memory address in which the exception occurred. The memory address is usually not going to be relevant to finding a solution to the problem. You want to take notes on the error so you will be able to tell whether it is the same message or a random message. If you want to know what the exception codes stand for, you can look it up in the Microsoft Knowledge Base (<http://search.support.microsoft.com/kb/c.asp>) on the web, you can search for Q150314.

What Are Fatal Exception Errors?

You will be able to get a much more in-depth look at what the errors are and what causes them. Within the article is a more in-depth look at troubleshooting Fatal Exceptions. By looking at the exception, you might be able to get a general idea of what area the problem is occurring. What is the exception and why was it generated? What files are associated with the error message and what programs were you running at the time of the error?

There are 16 different processor exceptions that are listed in the Microsoft article. There is the Divide Fault, Overflow Trap, Double Fault, Stack Fault, and twelve others that are too numerous to mention by name. The most common error that I see is OE.

This error refers to a Page Fault or when Windows asks for a program to be recalled to memory and an error occurs.

Windows uses a swap file to allow you to multitask between the different applications that you might have running. Whichever program is being used will be loaded into the available ram for your system. Any programs that will not fit into ram will be paged to the swap file until they are called to the front. This paging of programs from RAM to swap file and back is where the Page Fault errors occur.

Errors can occur when the programs that you are using try to access the same memory space in which another program is being stored. You cannot have two programs in the same space as this will result in a Page Fault or a Fatal Exception OE.

How do you go about correcting errors that you might encounter?

The first step would be to try to recreate the error. Try loading the same programs and see if the error occurs again. Try booting your system up in Safe Mode and see if you can recreate the error. If the programs run in Safe Mode and the error continues to occur, then you might need to start looking at whether you have a hardware problem.

Take a look at the names of any files that are referenced by the error message. Search your computer for the file name and look at the properties of the file to see what type of file it is. Is it a file that is used by the printer or one of your programs? It could be that it is a problem with the software that is trying to run your hardware. It could be your modem driver conflicting with your video or sound card drivers. Updates to drivers for your system are usually available on the website of the company that made the individual cards.

MarketPro **SAVE UP TO 80%** COMPUTER Shows & Sales

 Buy Now for the Holidays! 

SAT DEC 15 - ROCHESTER
The Dome Center 

HENRIETTA I-90 E. Exit 46, I-390 N. (Exit 13) to Hylan Dr. Turn right, follow to end. Left at light onto Calkins Rd. Dome is 1.5 miles on right.

SUN DEC 16 - BUFFALO
Hamburg Fairgrounds

I-90 W. (NY Thruway) exit 57. Take Rte. 75 S. (Camp Rd).
Left on Scranton Rd. Right on South Park Ave.

Hours 9:30am - 4:00pm



NOW SAVE EVEN MORE!

\$1 OFF EACH
Up to 2
Admissions
with Ad
Adm. \$7 per day

Hardware • Software
Accessories • Upgrades
CD ROMs • Multimedia
CPUs • Memory
Printers • Scanners
And MUCH MORE!
Hundreds of Vendors

www.marketpro.com (800) 53-COMPUTER

MarketPro "Promoting Computer Shows & Sales over 15 years!"

Take a look at the brand name of the card or the name that is listed in Device Manager. Try searching on the Web to see if there is an updated driver that will correct your problem. Start by looking on the Website of the company that made your computer. If you cannot find updated drivers with the manufacturer, try <http://www.windrivers.com/>. They have links to most of the company Websites and you can search for your particular card or search by manufacturer.

If the problem cannot be recreated in safe mode, take the note that you made about the error message and look it up in the Microsoft Knowledge Base. Look at the articles that are retrieved with your search. There will be a small part of the article on the page that will give you a general idea about what the article is about. Look at what programs each of the articles talk about and see if any of them have some of the programs that you use. You will need to become somewhat of a detective in most cases. It could take you a while to find the article that points you in the right direction. Most of the error messages that you will encounter have been encountered and fixed in the past by someone else. All you have to do is access the information that others have gathered and follow the instructions to correct the errors.

Most of the information that you can get by calling and talking to a company tech support person is available free on the web. They would rather you find the information and correct the problem yourself, than call them. This saves them and you time and money. You don't have to spend so much time on the phone waiting for them to tell you what to do, and they don't have to pay the Tech Support to talk to you. It is a win-win situation for the company and for

you. Don't just put up with the errors that can occur in Windows. Take the bull by the horns and search for the solution. When you find the solution and are ready to tackle the problem, remember to have a plan and be able to get back to where you started. If you make the problem worse by trying to fix it you will just drive yourself crazy. Take your time and have a plan. And don't forget that this computer stuff is supposed to make our lives easier.

Reprinted from the March 2001 issue of *PC Alamode*, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, Inc. Russell James is Operations Manager at BJ Associates of San Antonio.



Net Nerds

Get Smart

by Susan Ives

Alamo PC, San Antonio, TX

Some friends and I recently read *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell. The book is about how change happens and in it he describes three types of change agents. Connectors are people with fat address books. Salesmen sell ideas. Mavens are people who know stuff. Lots of stuff. Off the wall stuff. All heads spun to stare at me. I'm a maven.

It must have been something in the drinking water when I was growing up, because my brother is exactly the same way. We are both compulsive learners and the effect of the two of us in the same room is staggering. It should come as no surprise that I've been intrigued by the capability of the Internet to teach me stuff.

There are many formats of online learning. Some are free, some charge. Some are for joy, others for credit. Some have set start and end times, others have "rolling admission," meaning you begin and end at your convenience.

nience. Before you whip out your credit card, I recommend signing up for a free class to see whether this style of learning suits you.

Barnes and Noble University has a clear and clever marketing strategy: they use their courses to sell books. Every class has a required text, which you can conveniently buy online. I signed up for *Our Western Heritage: From 1500 to Today*, which is based on Jacques Barzun's book, *From Dawn to Decadence*. The bookstore isn't making any money off of me: I bought the book and had it autographed by the author, now a San Antonio resident, when he spoke at Trinity last year.

The B&NU has eight campuses: literature and languages, history and society, home and leisure, arts and entertainment, business and education, science and technology, health and family, life improvement.

Class offerings range from Shakespeare to tarot reading. Tech classes include introduction to Access 2000, Adobe Photoshop and several programming courses, including C++ and Java.

Each class has an instructor; mine is an historian from Washington, D.C. I get eight lessons. The seventh is, "In the first half of the twentieth century, Western Civilization turned on itself in an unprecedented fury of destruction." Can't wait! Class length ranges from a one-time seminar to six weeks.

You can take as many classes as you want, and it's free. I signed up to get a reminder every time the instructor posts a new lesson, which I read, online. I can participate in a discussion board where I can ask the instructor questions or interact with other students. The student body includes people from all over the world. I also have access to a calendar, where I can schedule my studies,

and a student notebook, an online journal used to organize notes.

The Third Age Learning Center has a similar structure but the content is lighter. It is designed for Baby Boomers, so classes include looking great, how to meet people online, smart Web shopping, fitness workout (I signed up for this one) and finding travel bargains. They also have qualified instructors and online discussions and the ability to e-mail the instructor for assistance.

The first lesson in my fitness class had three assignments. First, I took a fun quiz to test my knowledge about the benefits of exercise. Then, after reading an article about exercise, I learned to calculate my body mass index (BMI) and set realistic goals. Total time, about a half an hour. Now I just wait for the next lesson.

I also enrolled in a 10-week walking program sponsored by About.com. The Walk of Life newsletter arrives in my mailbox every day. It reminds me to walk, with a new goal or hint every day, plus gives me a daily fitness and nutrition tip and a healthy recipe.

My friend and fellow Alamo PC member Jim Collier recently took a class from Writer's Village. Their setup is different: membership is \$59/year, and you can take as many of their 130+ courses as you can handle. Jim took *The Writers' Way to Creativity*, a 12-week course dealing with creative blocks and enjoyed it immensely. Another for-fee model is Learn2. They offer hundreds of short courses, most of them costing \$19.95 each.

Susan Ives, a past president of Alamo PC, is a fount of (mostly) useless information. Reprinted from *PC Alamode*, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, Inc., San Antonio, TX.

Three Rules for Faster Troubleshooting

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

When you're providing in-person or on-the-phone tech support, you can fall into the trap of overanalyzing a problem if you're not careful. You can wind up spending an hour solving a problem that could have been resolved in seconds if you'd approached the task differently.

I'd like to share some of the common-sense rules of thumb I use in supporting my friends and consulting clients. I invite you to add to this list of rules by posting an e-mail to me, Bill Petitt, at b.petitt@home.com.

Rule #1: Rule out the obvious first

The problem with some technical support professionals is that they're too smart for their own good. They focus too much on possible explanations and fixes instead of getting to the business at hand.

Here are some examples of what I mean by ruling out the obvious first:

Is it plugged in? You've all heard this one. The user says, "My computer won't work." Did you check the power switch? "Oh, I thought the 'O' stood for 'On.'"

Is it connected? Looking at the back of a device isn't good enough. Reach out and touch the cables and plugs to confirm that your connections are tight.

Is it grossly abnormal? If smoke is coming out of the device, or if the device is making loud noises, rebooting is probably not the best first line of defense if the device contains data that hasn't been backed up elsewhere.

Recently I showed up at my doctor's office, and he asked me to help him with his computer. For a week, he hadn't entered any

data because he was afraid the hard drive was going to go out. "Do you have a backup copy of your data anywhere?" was my first question, and he produced a week-old Iomega disk. When I asked what the still-under-warranty, Windows 98 PC was doing, he told me: The PC was going into ScanDisk every time it was turned on. ScanDisk always ended abnormally, displaying an ominous message about having tried 10 times. Loud, fast, clicking noises were coming out of the area of the hard drive.

Chkdsk told us he had a relatively small number of bad sectors, 16 KB or so, but Windows couldn't fix or work around them. We ran an antivirus check, which stopped on the bad sectors as well but was able to ignore that area and check the rest of the disk, which came up clean.

Folks, I didn't have to search the TechRepublic forums, DejaNews, or Microsoft's KnowledgeBase to get information to support my opinion that this hard drive was hosed. "If it's still under warranty," I recommended, "get it replaced."

On my next appointment, he told me, "I should have listened to you." He had paid a local tech support company to send out an A+ certified technician. The bill for three hours and \$300 came back with this notation: "Ran ScanDisk, installed Windows twice, still can't fix. Recommend replacement."

Next time, I guess I should charge \$300 for technical advice, even if seems pretty darn obvious to me.

Rule #2: Double-check your facts (and your drivers)

I have weekly support visits scheduled with my church. On a recent visit, the administrative assistant asked me to take a look at

her Lexmark printer. “My hand did something, and now it won’t print my thank-you notes anymore.” Specifically, the text for the thank-you cards was starting in the middle of the form and printing off the margin. In addition, before each print job on regular paper, the device was spitting out a “garbage page” with a single ASCII character at the top.

I suggested what seemed to be the obvious explanation: The printer driver needed to be updated. The agency’s executive assistant told me she had already been to Lexmark’s Web site and installed those drivers. “It must be something they did to the network,” she concluded, “and I’ll have them back tomorrow to look at it.”

Relying on Rule #2, I decided to double-check the assistant’s facts and surfed out to Lexmark’s site. I noticed that there were several drivers available for this particular printer, each specific to a different operating system. I downloaded and installed the one for NT, and the director printed a perfect card the first try.

The executive assistant was embarrassed, having been absolutely certain she had downloaded the right driver. In hindsight, she could have resolved this problem very quickly. As soon as the first printer tests failed, she should have immediately said to herself, “Maybe I grabbed the wrong file. I’ll go try it again.”

Rule #3: Don’t assume that input from others is 100 percent accurate

This rule is closely related to #2. In addition to being willing to double-check your own facts, pay close attention to what others say, especially when you’re working the phones. Many users get so nervous about talking about computer problems that they

omit important details when they describe the problem.

Here’s a problem you might run into when you support clients who use FrontPage. The first time some users try to update a Web page, they’ll call in a huff, saying that none of the changes are “sticking.” Chances are, those users have opened the page with a browser instead of with FrontPage. Be gentle with those users when you ask, “What do you see in the top left corner of the main window?”

From the November 2001 issue of *The Umbrella Online*, the online journal of the Hampton Roads, Virginia, computing community

Software Review

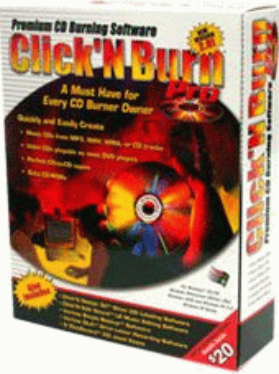
Click ‘n Burn Pro 2.01

by Herb Goldstein

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Sweetheart software. That’s the definition for a software application that is so completely intuitive and works so well that you just don’t believe it. It’s something that is too good to be true, yet true it is! But, we’re getting a little ahead of ourselves, so let’s start at the beginning.

CD recording drives (CD-RW or CD burners as they are more commonly called) are a way of life today. Users are routinely and frequently copying music, backing up data and performing other common functions on recordable



CD’s. Up to relatively recently, a speed of 2x or 4x in these procedures was the norm. That norm has changed. Today, 12x, 16x and 20x are common in CD burners. Unfortunately, CD recording software has lagged behind the appearance of the faster hardware. Programs that we recommended yesterday just don’t have the sophistication to keep up with today’s hardware. Some of those applications either will produce a faulty burn, or in some cases will not recognize the hardware at all.

There are some (not many) programs that have tackled the problem and will do the job with varying degrees of success, but we’ve had the opportunity recently to look at one in particular that is

nothing short of amazing. It is “sweetheart software” in every sense of the word. It is, without a doubt, the easiest, most efficient, innovative, beautifully designed and effective CD recording software on the market. It’s called Click ‘N Burn (CNB). We don’t often get carried away with software, but this one deserves it. CNB is truly sensational! In fact, it is simply the very best and fastest CD burning software available. CNB is published by Stomp, Inc. You may never have heard of them before, but they are a name to be remembered. They are currently producing a number of amazing software applications,

some of which we will be bringing to your attention down the line.

CNB Pro is actually a suite of applications, each designed to do specific jobs. The first of these goes under the graphic heading of Click ‘n Burn PRO. After a simple installation, you need merely to click on its icon, and away you go. Every choice in the program is offered on the opening screen in graphic

icons with brief text explanations alongside. Although a small manual is provided, every choice is fully intuitive and requires only a mouse-click. CNB’s graphic starter interface presents three choices:

Disc Copy – Makes an exact

CD to CD copy. You can copy from a CD-ROM drive directly to your CD recorder. If you have only a CD recorder and no CD-ROM drive, that’s OK. CNB will create an image of what’s on the disk you place in the recorder, allow you to remove that disk and insert a CDR blank, and then automatically record the image on to your blank. This super-great feature allows you to use your CD recorder as both a CD-ROM and a CD-RW drive. Furthermore, if you have both a CD-ROM and recorder drive attached to the same data cable (a certain buffer underwrite problem), CNB will detect it and create an



image file to automatically record from, so that you are not forced to attempt to record directly from your CD-ROM drive. Pure innovative intelligence!

Data Disk

Puts up a Windows Explorer type of dialogue box for you to select the folders and files you wish to copy to a CD. Hit the record button and the job is done.

Audio Disk

Creates a playable audio compilation CD from Wave and MP3 files or from other Audio CD tracks. You can burn video and all forms of multimedia, video and digital cameras, and burn to CDR, CD-RW and DVD. You can place music and data on the same CD's and transfer music for records, tapes, etc.

In all cases, CNB will permit you to either test (to be sure) and record, or just record directly. You can produce identical recordings on a number of disks and record to several CD recorders simultaneously. The program works very fast and efficiently, and will choose the fastest speed your recorder provides to do the job properly. You can erase CD-RW disks, and button bars are present to make all your choices simple-click. You can also choose between creating single and multi-session CD's.

CNB doesn't choke on using faster speed recorders to produce an accurate CD. What you will save in the cost of ruined CD's may well pay for the program in time. The test modes available in the various modules do not appreciably slow down the burn, so you can be super-safe by electing to test and record simultaneously. You can even elect to have the software check to verify an accurate

burn after you have completed your recording. The results are flawless!

Veritas DLA (drive letter access)

Stomp has taken over, improved, and is producing a number of apps that formerly appeared under

the banner of Veritas Software. This module of the suite will format CD-RW disks like floppy disks, and format, drag and drop, write and delete or perform other functions on files as though they were sitting on a floppy disk.

Click 'N Edit Sound LE

Full-featured, direct-to-disk music recording and editing application. Records music through your sound card to hard disk and performs editing of music before recording to CD. Customize volume levels, trim silence and add effects to your music. Special effects include noise removal, delay, reverb, pitch shifting, time stretch and lots more.

Veritas Simple Backup

From Veritas (the former publishers of Backup Exec) and improved by Stomp comes a quick, easy and effective backup program to backup what's on your hard drive to CD's.

Click 'N Design 3D Silver

Create beautiful and professional-looking custom CD labels and jewel case inserts. Includes such unique features as 3D text, circular text, barcode, and more for insertion on to all major CD label makers' labels and applicators.

CNB occupies some 50MB of hard drive space. It runs with most recorders, but if you want to be sure (as well as to obtain further product information), visit their Website at clicknburn.com. The software works just fine on Windows 95,98, 2000, or ME. Stomp also produces the new ultra-thin CD jewel cases that are experiencing such great popularity among users today. Five of these cases are included with the software. Cases of 25 cost \$14.99 at office supply stores and in most places where software is sold.

Click 'N Burn Pro 2 is available at \$69.99. A manufacturer's rebate of \$20 is included in the box bringing the price down to \$49.99. If you have a CD recorder, this is a must-have program and is more than worth its cost. It will make the use of your CD-RW drive a "whole 'nuther ball game." It has our highest recommendation!

Stomp, Inc., www.stompinc.com, 1000 Brioso Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92627

Reprinted from the September 2001 issue of the Sarasota PC Users Group *Monitor*, the official monthly publication of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.



Software Review

GoBack 3 Deluxe

by Vinny La Bash
Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Is this science fiction, or what? GoBack 3 Deluxe is the closest thing to time travel you can experience and still stay within the bounds of reality. If you've inadvertently reformatted your hard drive, fallen victim to a virus attack, or accidentally deleted a crucial folder, it's GoBack to the rescue. Roxio Inc.'s utility reverts your PC's hard disk to an earlier state, undoing all the evil that has befallen your system.

A lot of things about GoBack have changed since its introduction two years ago. Buyers will appreciate the reduction in price from \$70 to \$50 for a better product. Developers have added support for Windows NT, Windows 2000 and removed GoBack's quirky tendency to sometimes lose files between the time you changed your system and then later used GoBack to undo the change.

GoBack still wants 10% of your hard drive, but with the size of today's drives that shouldn't be a problem for anyone who isn't still living in a technological stone age. You can compensate somewhat by reducing the amount of space available to the Recycle Bin from its default of 10% to 2%. According to Roxio, GoBack's new developer, 10% of your drive should be enough space to store a week's worth of file logs. If you want to allocate more space, you should specify the amount you want during installation, otherwise you will have to reinstall GoBack.

When GoBack engages, it loads from the master boot record, making it a relatively simple process to recover from a corrupted operating system. You don't need an emer-

gency startup diskette even if Windows won't boot.

GoBack keeps track of every keystroke and every change in your system. You will notice a lot of disk activity as it records all these changes. You would think that all this extra activity would slow down your system, but during the review period there was no significant changes in performance in either direction.

Previous versions of GoBack relied on a dorky main screen that only a true geek could love. It showed every change made to your system. Does anyone care what changes are made to the browser cache? Tracking to this level of detail gets very dense very fast and really isn't needed.

Those who use Easy CD Creator 5 or any other Roxio product will regard the main Option Selector screen as intuitive and easy to use. Any GoBack function can be reached from this screen with only a few mouse clicks. You can restore any combination of lost files and folders up to and including a full system restore.

The screen provides a simple push button scenario that directs you to either a "safe point" or a hard disk snapshot. Choose one or the other and wait a few minutes while GoBack brings your system back to a point where the disaster never happened.

GoBack has an "auto revert" or fresh start feature which I decided to try out on some of my classroom machines. Usually I get a different pack of "newbies" in my classroom every week. I set the auto revert feature to restore the system to a freshly installed version every Monday morning. This eliminated the need for manual cleanup and saved a considerable amount of time. Similar scenarios in public libraries, office lobbies and

comparable locations could benefit from this feature.

One downside to the program is its incompatibility with the standby mode in some notebooks. Roxio has announced that a fix is under way and may be in place by the time you read this.

Other than that, GoBack is like having a magic wand that automagically restores your system to a time when it was free from all defects.

GoBack 3 Deluxe (\$50), Roxio, Inc., 461 South Milpitas Blvd., Milpitas, CA 95035

Reprinted from the September 2001 issue of the Sarasota PC Users Group *Monitor*, the official monthly publication of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Pictures on Computers ~ Part II

Specifics of Organizing / Archiving / Displaying / Sharing

by Alex Dumestre
1960 PC Users Group

Last month we took something of an overview of how computers can change the way that you deal with photographs. We emphasized that the computer can be used as an important adjunct to your photographic hobby even if you don't use a digital camera. Of course, if you do have a digital camera then the computer is just about an absolute necessity. This part of the article will go into more details about organizing, storing, showing and sharing your pictures. Although digital cameras and scanners can both lead to similar digital image files on a computer, I've found that there are several practical differences about how they end up being used. For this reason I will

treat these two sources differently in what follows.

Digital Cameras

Digital cameras, like other digital micro-electronic equipment, are getting cheaper every month. That is starting to expand the market so that people who, two years ago, would not have dreamt of spending \$900 for a "pretty good" consumer grade camera, now find themselves sorely tempted by improved versions of that camera that now sells for \$499. If, last year, your sights were set on a less glamorous \$500 camera, you can now find it for \$350. I have had a digital camera now for a little over a year and a half after decades of using a 35mm SLR camera. How has it changed my picture taking? There are two major ways, both of which result in my taking many more pictures than I ever did in the past:

1. My digital point-and-shoot is much more compact, rugged and portable than my SLR and, therefore, I am much more likely to have my camera with me when a photo-op appears.
2. I find myself snapping dozens of pictures where I may previously have taken only three or four.

On the other hand I don't spend any more time seeing life through the viewfinder than I used to because I can rely on "rescuing" many less careful shots by doing my own processing in my "digital darkroom" if the exposure or composition is less than ideal. Also, I find that I take numerous "panorama-ready" shots — ones that I can later stitch together to make a long panorama.

Scanned Photos

One advantage that scanners have over digital cameras is that you can work with old

photos as well as with ones that you are taking today. Other than that, scanning is more time-consuming than inserting the digital camera memory card into a reader connected to the computer. My USB flash card reader transfers high-resolution pictures from my camera's flash card at about a picture per second.

How does this affect the number of photos that I put onto the computer? Let's compare it with film. Because film and development costs are not negligible, I usually limit how much I shoot. I then pour over the prints at the drugstore and discard the poor ones because then I don't have to pay for them. Then, when I'm at the computer preparing to scan for e-mailing or to make a digital photo album, I pick only the best ones because I don't want to spend a lot of time scanning prints that I might later decide to discard.

The net result of all of this successive snap, print and scan <i>high grading</i> means that I have many fewer pictures that ever make it onto the computer than if I simply fired away with my digital camera and transferred the whole batch to the computer.

It is this significant difference in number of photos that affects the way that I select and use the various organization and display programs available. Programs of this type usually come bundled with your scanner and/or your digital camera. As with most bundled software they will probably do the job well enough to get you started and the experience you gain using them will soon allow you to judge whether or not they are the ones you want to live with. Many times all of the following functions are combined in a single program but I will discuss organization, display and sharing separately because

they are sometimes performed by separate programs.

Organization Software

Software of this type allows you to create folders or albums or galleries in which to store your pictures. They usually provide small thumbnails of all of the pictures in the folder or gallery to aid you in finding the particular picture that you are looking for. They often allow you to attach titles, comments and keywords to individual pictures or to batches of pictures. This "keyword" feature allows you to more readily find pictures of Aunt Bertha, when you have that need, simply by using the program to do a keyword search for "Bertha". Likewise you can add the keyword "Birthday" to all photos taken at various birthday parties. Searching for "Bertha" and "Birthday" will find all photos taken of Bertha at birthday parties.

A few of these programs contain features that are especially useful to digital camera users. One is a *batch rename* feature and the other is *lossless editing*. They often also provide features that ease and/or speed the task of uploading pictures from your digital camera. One that I have used is CompuPic Pro by Photodex.

Let me give a simple example of how batch rename helps. Let's say that you went

to your child's soccer game on Saturday and snapped 30 pictures. Then you attended your folks' anniversary party on Sunday afternoon and took 45 more. Sunday evening you load all 75 pictures onto your computer and find that the file names are "P0723001 through P0724045". With a few keystrokes you can rename these to "Soccer Jul 23 ~01 through ~30" and "Anniversary Jul 24 ~01 through ~45". These programs frequently include some or all of the display capabilities covered in the next section.

Display Software

If your only experience with viewing photos on your computer consists of searching

for the desired file using Windows Explorer and then clicking on it to open it in Paint or perhaps your browser, then you will probably be pleased at what is available in display programs. Using these, you select entire groups of pictures, e.g., your trip to Disney World (but with the fuzzy ones omitted) and then easily control full-screen display of single pictures or automatic timed slide shows of selected groups of pictures. Some of these programs are rather bare boned while others add very interesting bells and whistles such as transitions (fades, wipes, dissolves, slides, etc.), voice narration, background music, etc. Some provide a collage of multiple pictures which come and go from the screen



Find Sound Bytes every Saturday on WHAM 1180 from 12:30 to 2 p.m.

individually, while others provide realistic album covers and loose leaf pages which flip with a convincing motion and sound as you proceed, either manually or automatically through the album.

Photo Sharing Software

By sharing I mean the ability to send photographs to relatives and friends. Most of the Display programs mentioned above are capable of easily attaching selected photos to an outgoing e-mail. Some of them give the ability to burn album content onto a CD-R using your burner - and they even include a reader on the CD so that your friends need not have that software on their computer. If your Display software lacks this capability then you can buy standalone programs to do that. This puts awesome power in your hands, so consider carefully if your friend or cousin "really" will be thrilled to receive a CD containing 1800 or so of your photos from last year. The use of this feature to archive your precious photos is obvious.

Many of the Organization and Display programs also provide the ability to upload selected photos to a page on their (or your, or other) Web site. You can then e-mail the URL to family and friends (and provide the password if applicable) and they can view the photos in their Web browsers at their leisure without having their e-mail bogged down. Of course, particularly if you are connected by dial-up phone line, you will probably limit the size and number of photos that you upload. Think of snapping a picture of your newborn at the hospital nursery and posting it on a Web page that afternoon to be viewed by relatives spread worldwide.

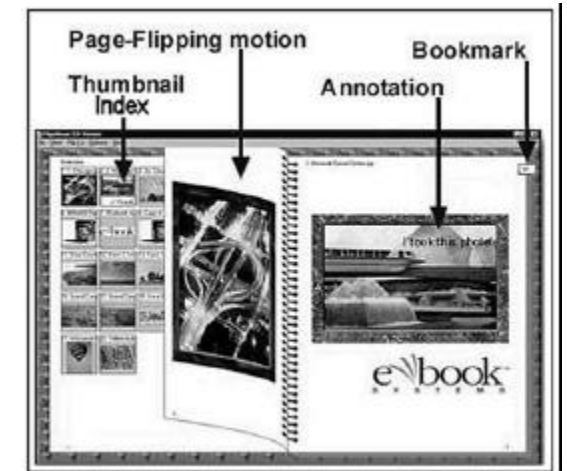
Many of the Web sites that provide free space for your pictures are more than willing to sell you or your friends glossy prints of

any of your pictures or even print your photos on cups, mouse pads or tee shirts. But remember that low resolution pictures that look pretty good on the screen can turn out pretty bad when printed - whether on your home inkjet or on the Web site's more professional equipment. You can't (nor can the commercial site) get a nice 5 x 7" print out of a 75KB JPEG file!

Some Names

I'll make no attempt to give a representative list of these useful programs, I will only list a few that I happen to be somewhat familiar with. You can find most of them on shareware sites free for a trial period.

FlipAlbum - A neat photo album that looks and sounds like flipping pages in a real album. Note that you will need to get a separate FlipAlbum CD Maker to distribute your album on CD-R.



Flip Album screen shot

PhotoJam (Shockwave.com)

A nice shareware slide show program with optional music and fades.

Media Center Plus (JASC)

Is an excellent organization/display program and supports images stored on removable media better than most. Does not support writing to CD-R.

CompuPic Pro (Photodex)

My current favorite. It is a browser that will handle multiple folders. Has very nice batch rename and batch format converter. Provides a nice slide show that is writeable to CD-R.

ACDSee

Also an excellent, full featured organizer/viewer program noted for its speed.

BatchThumbs (Freeware)

Batch renamer, batch format converter, thumbnail maker.

An Interesting Piece of Hardware

Although it has been around almost a year now, I have only recently become aware of a piece of hardware made by Iomega, named FotoShow (www.iomega.com). I have no experience with it but the ads make it sound like just the thing for the digital camera owner, especially on vacation without a laptop.

There may be competing products out there but I haven't run across them. I might just have to try this thing out. It is a multi-purpose gadget (if you call a \$200+ item a gadget) that is advertised mainly for doing slide shows on a TV screen. You plug it into the video input on your TV, insert a 100 or 250 MB Zip disk containing your pictures into it and, using a supplied remote control, do a slide show. You can even do editing such as rotation, cropping, red-eye removal, exposure adjustment, etc. right on your TV without the aid of a computer.

How do you get your pictures onto the Zip disks? You can transfer your images from

your computer by plugging FotoShow into its USB connector <i>or</i> FotoShow has slots for CompactFlash I and II and SmartMedia flash cards and can copy images from these camera cards directly onto the Zip disk. Here's the neat part, it can do this even when it's not hooked up to the TV or computer. All it needs is power, either AC or, using an available adapter, your car's cigarette lighter. With a handful of Zip disks you could travel for weeks without access to a computer and use this device to unload your camera memory. Boy, could I have used this device a couple of years ago in France! If I do buy it I'll let you know how it works out.



Next month

I intend to finish up this series of articles by telling a bit about graphics editing (Digital Darkroom work) programs and about some specialized programs for making panoramas and virtual reality presentations for the Web.

Alex Dumestre has been associated with computers since the mid '60's, most of the 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 PC's. He is a member of the 1960

PC Users Group and can be contacted by e-mail at DumestreA@PDQ.net.

Review

Memturbo

by Alan Lynn

North Orange County Computer Club

Memturbo is a program that you, as a Windows user, need and you don't even know it. Memory management or resource management was critical with DOS and it was common to run out of memory and resources with Windows 3.XX. Programs would take a piece of memory when they started and either would not release it when they closed or it would not be seen by Windows. The only cure was to restart Windows. That was of course solved when Windows 95 came along. Well, not really. Win 9X is better but it still uses many programs that are very similar to their 16-bit (Win 3.XX) versions. Here is an example; it can take several minutes after MS Word is closed before all the memory is returned for use.

When you start Windows, you probably have a number of programs that start automatically. Even with cheap memory and larger than ever amounts of memory you can run out of resources. I have 128MB of RAM (this used to be a huge amount) and my machine can be down to 15 or 20 MB after boot up. You could go to the taskbar and close some programs, but the idea is that you want those programs. Also, even when the memory stabilizes it can be in a noncontiguous or fragmented state. Plain English, you have bits of memory in small pieces, which are not always useable by programs. This low or fragmented memory can make Windows unstable or cause Windows to use virtual memory. Virtual memory is your hard drive,

which is much slower than RAM. So what do you do?

Memturbo by Silicon Prairie is an inexpensive program, only \$19.95. It can be ordered on CD or downloaded.

There is a free trial version at <http://www.memturbo.com>. This program has been working very well on my machines for many months. You get a little button in your tray telling you how much memory you have. You can set the amount you want to have as a minimum before autorecovery. There is also a timed autorecovery. You can quickly recover memory with a simple key combination, kind of like doing a save in word processing. You can tell it how high to go in recovery. This program watches your CPU usage and doesn't come on when your CPU is very high (unless you want it to). When it recovers memory it also defragments your memory, which means it is useable by your programs. You can see a difference in performance after a recovery.

Memturbo works with Windows 95, 98 (SE and ME), NT 4, and 2000. Of course there are some features for Win 9X that NT with its different architecture doesn't use. Memturbo doesn't necessarily recover the most RAM of any of the RAM recovery programs, but it does its recovery without removing needed files such as .dlls and kernel files. Your machine is more stable and often faster than it was before.

Memturbo <http://memturbo.com> \$19.95 for download there is a shipping fee for CD. It is a small program and easy to download.

Reprinted from *Orange Bytes* the newsletter of the North Orange County Computer Club, Orange CA.



Cool

Merriam-Webster OnLine (www.Merriam-Webster.com), has added a new audio feature to its on-line version of the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary. When you see a red audio icon next to an entry word, click on it to hear the word pronounced by real voices.

From the October 2001 issue of *The Umbrella Online*.

Floating Web References at a Click

by Paul Shapiro
Capital PC Users Group

You are surfing the World Wide Web and come across a word or acronym that is a mystery. Do you reach for a dictionary, an encyclopedia, a thesaurus, or decide to take your time and chances with a web search engine, taking you far afield possibly from what you were trying to do when that word or acronym was encountered?

There May Be an Easier Way

There is a program out there in cyberspace, called GuruNet (www.gurunet.com) that speeds up the whole process without you losing your place on the current screen.

Download and install this program (I used beta version 1.0.1.43) and try it for yourself. Click on the program icon when ready for use the first time. Then hold the <alt> key down while clicking on the word or acronym of concern. I went to the CPCUG Web Page and tried this out on "CPCUG."

The program couldn't recognize this as a word so it did a limited web search, permitting two new links, referred to as keywords. I naturally chose the "CPCUG" keyword to see what happened: it took me directly to the web page showing the *Monitor* list of issues

that are directly downloadable in Adobe .pdf format.

Many well-known references are consulted for you in a hurry. These are listed in the AboutGuru.html file furnished with the installation.

From the October 2001 CPCUG *Monitor*, newsletter of the Capital PC Users Group.

Shareware

Jouni Vuorio's RegCleaner 4.3. This is a small (less than 1MB), fast, elegantly designed product that does multiple duties. It'll automatically clean up dead Registry entries in the SOFTWARE hive, remove broken Uninstall Menu listings, edit your Startup list, remove dead OLE references throughout the Registry, look for shared .dll files that aren't in use (a very powerful feature), and many more. It even works in multiple languages, and will make automatic backups of any changes you make!

From the October 2001 issue of *The Umbrella Online*.

Getting Started With Internet Music

by Bruce Fries
Capital PC Users Group

New audio compression technologies, such as MP3, allow you to use your computer as a digital jukebox that can hold thousands of CD-quality songs. You can quickly find and play any song with a click of a mouse and never have to worry about tapes wearing out or records getting scratched. Instead of spending hours making tapes or programming a CD changer, you can compile customized playlists in minutes.

Audio compression also makes it practical to download music from the Internet, where you can access thousands of songs

from artists all over the world. With MP3, you can download a four-minute song in less than 15 minutes (with a 33.6 kbps modem), compared to more than 3 hours for the same song in CD audio format. Now you can sample a wide variety of music from the comfort of your home and find some great music from independent artists you might not otherwise be exposed to.

Music on the Internet

On the Internet, you'll find music in the form of files that can be downloaded to your computer, music that you can listen to as it's "streamed" over the Internet (similar to the way you listen to AM and FM radio), and physical media, such as records, tapes and CDs, that you can purchase and have shipped to you.

Downloadable music is simply music in the form of a computer file (usually MP3 or WMA format) that you can download from a Web site to your computer. Downloadable music can be played on your computer, a portable digital audio player like the Rio 800, or newer CD players like the Rio Volt (www.riohome.com).

Streaming audio enables you to listen to digital music without having to wait for the entire file to download. Streaming audio is used by many online music stores to play short clips from songs so you can listen to samples before they release the record or CD. To listen to streaming audio, you need a sound card and an Internet connection.

Digital Audio Formats

MP3 (technically, MPEG Audio Layer-III) is a standard format for compressing digital audio. MP3 squeezes audio files to about one tenth of their original size, while maintaining close to CD quality.

RealAudio was the first widely used system for streaming audio and video over the Internet. It is a proprietary format, but it is used by many online music stores for sample clips of songs, and by many Internet radio sites.

WAV is the default format for digital audio on Windows PCs. WAV files usually contain PCM format audio, which means they are uncompressed and take up a lot of space (10MB/minute for CD quality audio). Windows Media Audio (WMA) is a proprietary format developed by Microsoft. WMA is supported by most full-featured player programs and by many portable players.

Internet Radio

Internet radio is a form of streaming audio, usually in Real Audio or Windows Media Audio format. MP3 can also be streamed, but is more commonly used as a downloadable format. Spinner (www.Spinner.com) provides a nice tuner interface with access to dozens of stations and programmable presets. Sites like Live365.com and Radio.Sonicnet.com allow you to set up a personal radio station, which you customize by selecting the artists and the types of music you want to hear.

Hardware Requirements

To listen to music on your PC, you need a sound card. To play MP3 files you need at least a Pentium PC (133MHz or faster recommended) or a PowerPC Macintosh. A CD Recordable (CR-R or CD-RW) drive is recommended for recording audio (Redbook format) or MP3 (data format) CDs.

You will need plenty of RAM, lots of free disk space, and a modem to download songs or listen to music streamed over the Internet. To convert your existing CDs into MP3 files, you'll need a CD-ROM drive that is capable

of digital audio extraction (DAE)-commonly called ripping.

Software Requirements

To play MP3 files, you need a player program or a portable player that supports MP3. The latest versions of the Windows and Mac operating systems come with built-in players, but you'll be better off using an all-in-one program like MusicMatch Jukebox (www.musicmatch.com) because it has more features and is easier to use, even for non-technical users

MusicMatch Jukebox includes everything you need to create, organize and play MP3 files. Music-Match supports ripping from CDs, analog recording from records and tapes, and burning MP3 files directly to a CD. MusicMatch also automatically organizes your MP3 files into separate folders by artist, album, genre and other categories.

To listen to Internet radio you need a program that supports streaming audio. At the very least, you should install the latest versions of the RealPlayer (www.real.com), Windows Media Player (www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia) and a full-featured audio player, such as MusicMatch Jukebox. These programs will allow you to listen to the majority of Internet radio sites.

Downloading Music

To obtain songs in MP3 format, you can download them from the Internet, create them from prerecorded music or obtain pre-made MP3 CDs. Web sites like MP3.com and EMusic.com offer thousands of downloadable songs in MP3 format. Many of these songs are free, and those that aren't usually cost only a dollar or so.

Napster (www.napster.com) is an MP3 file sharing service that maintains a central directory of shared MP3 files that exist on

individual user's computers. Users search by song title or artist name and Napster displays links to matching files on the computers of other users. Each link lists the file's resolution and size, and the speed of the user's Internet connection. The first user then selects and downloads the MP3 file directly from the other user's computer.

Creating Your Own MP3 Files

To create MP3 files from records or tapes you'll need to record them in real-time, using a sound card. You should use a good stand-alone recording program like Cool Edit 2000 (www.cooledit.com), since the sound recording applications that come with most computers are fairly limited. Cool Edit also has a nice audio clean-up plug-in that can remove clicks, pops and hiss from the sound before you convert it to MP3 or burn it to a CD.

When you record using Cool Edit, the song will end up as an uncompressed WAV (pronounced wave). The advantage of a WAV file is that you have the option of editing it to adjust the volume or trim off unwanted silence before it is converted to MP3 or burned to a CD. MusicMatch can also record from analog sources like records and tapes, but lacks the advanced editing features of Cool Edit.

WAV files can be recorded directly to an Audio CD or converted to MP3 files. The process of creating an MP3 file is called encoding. Encoding compresses the audio by removing sounds that most people can't hear. The size and sound quality of the MP3 file is a function of the bit-rate used-the higher the bit-rate, the larger the file and the better the sound quality.

To create MP3 files from an audio CD, the best method is to bypass the sound card

and rip the audio directly to your hard disk. Ripping is better than recording through a sound card because it results in a perfect copy without added noise or distortion. Because it is a digital process, ripping is also much faster than recording. For example, a system with a fast CD-ROM drive can rip a four-minute song in less than 30 seconds. Recording the same song through a sound card will always take at least four minutes.

Most audio CDs do not contain information, such as artist names and album and song titles. To save you from having to enter this information manually, programs, such as MusicMatch, can automatically get this information from the CDDb (www.cddb.com) and use it to automatically name the files.

Organizing Your Music

Now that you've downloaded or created MP3 files, you need a way to organize them. MP3 files can be organized in one big folder that contains all files, or they can be grouped in separate directories with similar music. It's up to you to decide which method to use, although if you have more than a few hundred songs you should organize them in separate directories.

Playlists are optional text files that contain the name and location of each audio file. Each playlist is like a tape with unlimited capacity, where songs can be added, deleted or moved around without the need to re-record the tape. Playlists can be created and read by text editors and programs like Music-Match.

Playing Your Music

You can play songs from Windows Explorer or Mac Finder by double-clicking on them. If your system is set up properly, this should automatically launch the player

software (if it's not already running). You can also play individual songs by launching the player and using its "File Open" function.

If you have created playlists, you can load one into MusicMatch, set the "repeat" mode on, and sit back and enjoy hours of continuous music. You can use the player controls to jump forward or backwards in the list, and you can click on individual songs to play them out of order. Music-Match's playlist manager allows you to add, delete and change the order of songs and even save the playlist to a new file.

Recording Your Own CDs

CD recordable drives (CD-R and CD-RW) can be used to record create music CDs with compilations of songs from different albums and to back up data from your computer's hard disk. CDs are usually recorded in either audio or data formats.

Audio format CDs have the advantage of being playable in most CD players, though the capacity is limited to 74 minutes of music (approximately 18 four-minute songs). MP3 files are just data files as far as a CD recorder is concerned, so you will need to record them to a data format CD.

With MP3 files, you can record more than 12 hours (about 200 songs) of high-quality music on a single CD, in less than 20 minutes with a 4X CD-R drive. You can also use MusicMatch Jukebox to uncompress MP3 files and record the music to an audio format CD.

For More Information

For more information on recording and playing music on your computer, pick up a copy of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook* (\$19.95) from www.TeamComBooks

.com or read it online for free at www.MP3Handbook.com.

Bruce Fries is a writer, technology consultant and entrepreneur who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the founder of TeamCom Books, a customer-focused publishing company that combines the best of traditional print publishing with new media, such as e-books and the Internet. This article was reprinted from the October issue of the *CPCUG Monitor*.

Mobile Computing

On the Road, Again

by Chuck Horowitz

Houston Area League of PC Users

IBM's Cupertino CA research facility, called alphaWorks, is working on some interesting technologies in a 2002 Ford Explorer. The car, called "TechMobile," has a voice interface that can unlock doors, operate controls, and check your email, all using IBM's ViaVoice technology. The car also has its own Web server and handheld Linux PC. Both items use an IBM technology called Tspaces that allows Java-enabled devices to exchange data, with minor programming needed. The idea is to bring network services to devices that have a small amount of memory. The TechMobile also uses "BlueEyes," a technology that senses when a driver is dozing off and sends a wake-up alarm. Also included is a Bluetooth interface that lets onboard systems, PDAs and cellular phones exchange data.

It seems as though there's been a drive in the computer industry for some time now to push ruggedized notebooks, specifically, since Desert Storm. Panasonic Computer Solutions Company has the Toughbook CF-28 as their current model. It comes with a 600MHz Mobile Intel Pentium III processor, 128Mb of RAM (expandable to 384MB), a 20 Gigabyte

hard drive, two Type II PC Card slots, a 13.3-inch XGA "Daybrite" anti-reflective TFT touchscreen, a Lithium-Ion battery, ports for USB, PS/2, S/P, audio in/out, SVGA, replicator, infrared, RJ-11, CD/DVD, CD-RW, floppy drive and superdisk options. The cost for this unit is \$4,799. For another \$100 you can get a 12.1-inch transfective TFT screen. Ruggedized notebooks can range up to \$14,000. I prefer to buy less rugged notebooks with 1 or 1.6 Gigahertz Pentium processors, 30 Gigabyte hard drives, 15-inch screen and all the drives and ports built-in for less than \$2,500. They're out there! I can replace such a setup twice for the price of the Toughbook. In any event, Panasonic can be contacted at 800-662-3537 or www.panasonic.com/toughbook.

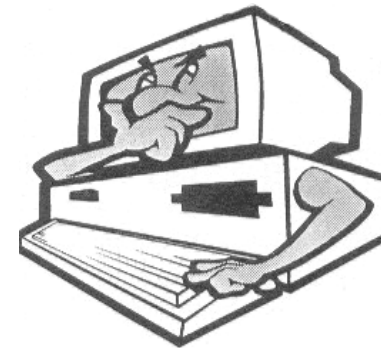
A good example of an under \$2,500 notebook is the Toshiba Satellite 2805-S603. It comes with a 1 Gigahertz (1GHz) Pentium III processor, a 30 Gigabyte hard drive, 256MB of RAM (expandable to 384MB), a 15-inch diagonal TFT active matrix color screen, two PC Card slots, a SmartMedia slot, two USB slots, PS/2, composite audio/video-out, iLink (IEEE 1394), RJ-11 and RJ-45 ports, modem, Ethernet LAN port and DVD-ROM/CD-RW. Also included is Toshiba's SensationSound with subwoofer. All this for about \$2,300. Who needs ruggedized? Toshiba can be reached at 800-867-4422 or www.toshiba.com.

Palm, Inc. (Santa Clara, CA) just received approval from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for its new wireless device. The Palm i705 will offer always-on email capability. The i705 will use Palm's universal connector for synchronization, and will also include the SD slot that is in their m500 and m505 devices. Palm can be contacted at 800-881-7256 or www.palm.com.

By the way, if you are a Palm user you may be interested in the Solutions Guide for Palm handhelds that has all kinds of goodies for the Palm. Hardware and software abound in this publication (for a price, of course). You can subscribe to Palm Solutions at www.solutionsguide.net and see all you can do with the Palm.

Have you noticed the variety of Pen Tablets out there lately? Well, Fujitsu PC Corporation has the Stylistic 3500. This 500 MHz Intel Celeron processor tablet has a 15 Gigabyte hard drive, 64MB of SDRAM (expandable to 256MB), a 10.4-inch TFT XGA screen, VGA port, USB port, sound card, a 56Kbps modem and two IRDA ports. A Type II PCMCIA Card slot comes on a docking station and an Ethernet jack and legacy ports require a Mini-Dock and a port replicator, which are extras. A floppy drive is also an extra. At a \$3,900 base price, I recommend that you get a notebook if you don't have to roam about to collect your data. Make sure that a handheld (either Palm or Pocket PC) isn't the answer to your needs before you go for a tablet. If you need one though, Fujitsu can be reached at 800-831-3183 or www.fujitsu.com.

Chuck Horowitz is a HAL-PC member and can be reached at chuckh@hal-pc.org.



Book Review

by Susan Ives
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Fatal Practice

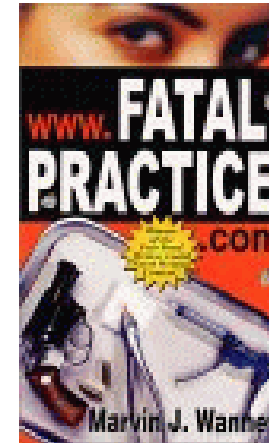
by Marvin J. Wanner
paperback, Bookmark Publishing
2001, 466 pages, \$7.99

Robert Isen leads a boring life as a dentist in Corpus Christi, filling cavities and shyly fantasizing about his beautiful Costa Rican assistant. He world collapses when his brother-in-law and nine-year-old niece are killed in a New York mob hit. In his pain and rage he links up with a group of cyber-vigilantes who exchange revenge fantasies in Internet chat rooms. Although he soon comes to his senses, his identity lingers on the Internet and he is forced

to flee to escape the wrath of the Mafia.

This first novel lacks polish but the characters are believable and the plot compelling. It's a good read. A nasty rival for the beautiful Amanda's affections clones the dentist's laptop hard drive and keeps the vigilante identity alive long after the protagonist lost interest. An FBI agent feeds the chat room flames. A too briefly dipped into the dark side of the Internet can turn into a life-threatening nightmare. You have been warned.

Reprinted from the October 2001 issue of *PC Alamode*, the Magazine of Alamo PC Organization, Inc., in San Antonio, TX. Susan Ives, past



president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her.

Changing a File Association

If you frequently open files in applications other than those with which they're associated, it's time for a change. An association change, that is. You can change a file's association and double-click it to open the file in your application of choice. Suppose you prefer to open *.txt files in Microsoft Word, not in Notepad. Click any *.txt file once to select it, then hold down Shift as you right-click this file. In the menu that appears, select "Open With." Select the application in which you want to open *.txt files — in this case, Winword. Select "Always Use This Program to Open This Type of File," then click OIC. When you double-click any *.txt file, it will now open in Word automatically!

Instant Screen-Saver Access

Have you ever wished your screen saver would kick in on command — for example, when you walk away from your desk? Set up a shortcut to it, and you can invoke your screen saver at any time with one quick click.

Open an Explorer window and locate your favorite screen saver (*.scr) in the Windows\System folder. Now create a shortcut to it: Right-click and drag the *.scr file onto the desktop or Start menu (or anywhere else you want it). Release the mouse button and select Create Shortcut(s) Here. The next time you step away from your desk, double-click the shortcut.

Reprinted from *A Bit of a Byte from the Ocean*, newsletter of the Computer Club of Ocean County, Toms River, New Jersey.
Society News

Program Meeting

November 13, 2001

Charles Grover, Secretary

We met at Element K in Brighton, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Ron Matteson chaired Helps Half Hour, and in the absence of President Joe Varga, Ron also chaired the meeting.

Ron announced we still need volunteers. He then reported briefly on the recently formed SIG on Digital Photography.

Door prizes were displayed and described.

Following a short break, our program on installing SuSE Linux 7.3 was presented by Tom Bond and Tim Favreau. They hoped to get into the KDE desktop and application installation as well, but questions along the way kept us focused on the installation of the operating system itself. Interest was high and we worked as late as we could and still leave the building by 9 p.m. Tom Bond suggested a return engagement or a group visit to Annexa to continue our introduction to SuSE Linux 7.3. The Board may consider these suggestions at its next Planning Meeting.

We adjourned at 8:50 p.m. after the usual drawings.

Planning Meeting

November 20, 2001

Charles Grover, Secretary

Only Sally Springett, *Monitor* editor and hostess; Steve Staub, Treasurer; and Charles Grover, Secretary, were present. We did not have an actual meeting of the Board, but noted that President Joe Varga had indicated that for a December program we would have either the Sheriff's

Deputy or Joe's own program on Windows XP. We also chatted about our Society's shrinking size and our apparently not reaching people who might be interested in a users' group.

Treasurer's Report

Steve Staub, Treasurer

Balance as of 10/21/01	\$1,837.53
Income	
Dues	\$133.00
Expenses	
St. Stevens (2 mo.)	\$200.00
Copy paper	48.59
Food	18.41
Lease (folder/stapler)	86.72
Total	\$353.71
Balance as of 11/20/01	\$1,610.81

New Users

Bill Statt

The New User's SIG of the Rochester Computer Society met at the Monroe Developmental Center on Tuesday, the 2nd of October at 6:30. The first question concerned burning Mp3's. John thought that with the Adaptec Software, he was supposed to format the CD before he burned it. When he tried to format the CD in his CD burner, the computer froze up and he couldn't get the CD out. He E-mailed the manufacturer. They told him that there was a small hole under the input deck of the CD and he should use a paper clip to push in there and the unit would eject the CD. This was successful. Then he had Bill come over to his house and they did a simple search with the Adaptec software and were successful in copying a file that John wanted on to a re-write able CD. John still doesn't know why the original CD froze up. But it might be useful to know that

some drives have a pin hole under them to manually eject the CD.

Then a question was asked about Virus software. A member said he was having trouble with things slowing down on his computer and wondered if he might have a virus. He said he had Virus software and he thought it was on all the time. We asked if he had updated the software and he said he didn't think he had to because he had just bought it. We explained that new Virus's came out almost each day. Most computer experts suggest that you update your Virus software two to three times a week. It turns out that most people don't know how to update their software. Then, even if they update, they don't realize that it has to be run to check files if you have unfortunately activated a Virus. Each Virus program has it's own operating system and we advise all users to become familiar with their program. If you are wondering if the program is working, you can go to your manufacturer's web page and usually download a "practice" virus to see if your install and program are working correctly. The answer again is, if you haven't updated your DAT files, you aren't running an effective anti-virus program.

Another member asked about the new Internet Explorer 6. He wanted to know how to download it and if he needed to uninstall the current Internet Explorer program he was using before installing it. It turns out he was using Internet Explorer 5.0. We explained that there were many security holes in 5.0 and he should at least go to 5.5. He thought that if he just clicked on the download at the Microsoft home page, that was all he needed to do. We told him that when he clicked on the download, that downloaded the program. He needed to actually install the program after he downloaded it. Unfortu-

nately, a Casino program is also sent to the computer as an extra page. Don't click on the X on the tiled Casino page. That installs the Casino program. Click on the X on the page just under the tiled Casino page to close the page.

When Real Player's Download Express comes up, just click on Install and it will install the new version of the browser over the old version. There is no need to uninstall the old version first. Greg said that the new Explorer 6 was a little faster and more stable than the old. He thinks it is about a 16 meg download. On cable modem, that would take only a couple of minutes, but on regular telephone modem at 56K, that would be about 3 megs a minute or a little under an hour. One of the advantages of 6 is that you have more control over cookies and Active X programs that come into your computer.

Another question came up about write only CD's. Did you have to completely fill this CD before you could read it? Greg thought that these CD's were readable on the CD drive they were recorded on before they were closed. So you could copy some files now and then some later. The key was to not close the CD. Close the CD only when the CD was full. Before it was closed, it could only be read on the recording drive. After it is closed, it is readable on any CD ROM drive. Remember, that once you close a write only CD, you can't go back and open it to record more on it. You do that with a re-writeable CD.

Also, if you write music on a re-writeable CD, that can only be read on a computer CD ROM. If you want music to play on your home stereo system, use write only CD's. Also, some of the older CD ROM, 1x and 2x, may not read the recordable CD's. We had another question about re-writeable CD's as backups. If you had a Quicken file and you

used the re-writeable CD as a back up, what would happen if you updated the file on your hard disc and then wanted to go to the re-writeable CD to make a back up. Would it re-write the existing file or would it create a new file. We did not have an answer for that. We thought it would create a new file, but no one was sure. Greg thought that the old file would be destroyed and that space made unusable on the re-writeable CD and a new file would be created.

Then a question came up about the cookie files. A member went into his cookie files to delete them and noticed that the first file was a DAT file. He wondered if it was safe to delete that file. Greg was unsure of what the DAT file was in the member's cookie list. Another member thought that if you went to the edit command on the menu board and highlighted "Select All," and then went to the file command and selected Delete, Windows would inform you with a dialogue box if any file was in reality a program or something that might be necessary for your operating system. In the dialogue box you could choose to delete those files individually. This also works on the Temp files and the Temporary Internet files. If you don't know, leave it alone, it isn't taking up that much space anyway.

Another question was asked about Napster. People have been using Napigator which uses its own servers and the Napster software. But it is sometimes very difficult to get on the Napigator servers. Another member said he had been using Audio Galaxy. This did not identify the user. It was very fast. When you did a search on an artist, it brought up a song list with songs identified by popularity. Then you clicked on the satellite icon and it started downloading your

songs. It could also be used as a FTP site, but you had to download FTP software. This site pointed you to FTP software to use. With the FTP software, you could even download whole movies. One members son had downloaded the whole movie Hannibal. It took over a gig. He let his son see it once and then deleted it. But Audio Galaxy did not identify users, so maybe there is no way to shut it down.

WinMx was another file sharing program that allowed users to download music. There was a lot of problems with songs being in "Q." Then you had to wait in turn to get your download. WinMx would also download video files, avi's etc. But the same problems came up with the "Q's." Other members were worried about violating the copyright laws. But if a song was on the radio and you used your cassette player to record it, you are protected for a single use. That seemed to be an inconsistency.

On television, you can videotape a whole concert and use it. We do think it is wrong to take your downloaded music and make a CD as a gift for another. But to make a CD for yourself would be OK. It is the ease and volume that seems to be the problem with the computer downloads. This was Napster's argument to the Supreme Court, but they lost.

Now programs like Audio Galaxy are doing the same thing Napster was doing, but they seem to have found loopholes in the way they process the file sharing. One member using Audio Galaxy downloaded 22 songs by David Benoit in a little less than half an hour. Another benefit for Audio Galaxy was that if you had an incomplete download, it would search out another site and complete the download for you.

One person was interested in getting a new computer and turning in his 486. He wanted to know about the new operating system Windows XP. It was pointed out that Window XP was only "rented" for three years and then you had to renew your subscription. If you didn't, it shut down. Also, you don't get a code number. If you have to reinstall, you have to call Microsoft, convince them that you have a legal copy to get a new code number. Also you have to register it within 30 days of starting it or it shuts down. We advised the person to look for Windows ME or Windows 98 second edition. Unfortunately, all the systems at Comp USA are now being sold with Windows XP only. The same thing also goes with the new XP software, like Office XP. That is also a rental. This might increase the usage of Linux. Microsoft has not set a price for the renewal at this time. With Linux, you can download Sun Microsystems Star Office for free and never have to pay a fee.

The Lighter Side

**How To Install Software
A 12-Step Program**

by Dave Barry
from his book *Dave Barry In Cyberspace*
Fawcett Books, paperback
ISBN: 0449912302

1. Examine the software packaging until you find a little printed box that explains what kind of computer system you need to run the software.
It should look something like this:
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2386 PROCESSOR OR HIGHER
628.8 MEGAHERTZ MODEM
719.7 MB FREE DISK SPACE
3546 MB RAM
432323 MB ROM
05948737 MB RPM

ANTILOCK BRAKING SYSTEM
2 TURTLE DOVES

NOTE: This software will not work on your computer.

- 2. Open the software packaging and remove the manual. This will contain detailed instructions on installing, operating, and troubleshooting the software. Throw it away.
- 3. Find the actual software, which should be in the form of either a 3.5-inch floppy diskette or a CD-ROM, located inside a sealed envelope that says:

LICENSING AGREEMENT:

By breaking this seal, the user hereinafter agrees to abide by all the terms and conditions of the following agreement that nobody ever reads, as well as the Geneva Convention and the U.N. Charter and the Secret Membership Oath of the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks and such other terms and conditions, real and imaginary, as the Software Company shall deem necessary and appropriate, including the right to come to the user's home and examine the user's hard drive, as well as the user's underwear drawer if we feel like it, take it or leave it, until death do us part, one nation indivisible by the dawn's early light, finders keepers, losers weepers, . . .

- 4. Hand the software to a child aged 3 through 12 and say, "(Name of child), please install this on my computer."
- 5. If you have no child age 3 through 12, insert the software in the appropriate drive, type SETUP" and press the Enter key.
- 6. Turn the computer on, you idiot.
- 7. Once again type "SETUP" and press the Enter key.
- 8. You will hear grinding and whirring noises for a while, after which the following message should appear on your screen:

The Installation Program will now examine your system to see what would be the best way to render it inoperable. Is it OK with you? Choose one, and be honest:

+-----+ +-----+
|YES | |SURE|
+-----+ +-----+

- 9. After you make your selection, you will hear grinding and whirring for a very long time while the installation program does who knows what in there. Some installation programs can actually alter molecular structures, so that when they're done, your computer has been transformed into an entirely new device, such as a food processor.

At the very least, the installation program will create many new directories, sub-directories, and sub- sub-directories on your hard drive and fill them with thousands of mysterious files with names like "puree.exe," "fester.dat," and "doo.wha. . ."

- 10. When the installation program is finished, your screen should display the following message:

CONGRATULATIONS

The installation program cannot think of anything else to do to your computer and has grown bored. You may now attempt to run your software. If you experience any problems, electrical shocks, insomnia, shortness of breath, nasal discharge, or intestinal parasites, you should immediately *!@!\$) \$%@&*^)\$*!#\$\$_\$*^ &

- 11. At this point your computer system should become less functional than the federal government, refusing to respond even when struck with furniture.
- 12. Call the toll-free Tech Support Hotline # listed on the package and wait on the line for a representative, who will explain to you, in a clear, step-by-step manner, how to adopt a child aged 3 through 12.

