Money 2003:
The Real Monopoly

by Arpad Kovaks
Rochester Computer Society

After taking one look at the box I knew this was a classic Microsoft product, but don't take that the wrong way. Microsoft Money 2003 is a solid product with lots of options and neat tools to help manage your money in real time.

Money comes in three flavors: Standard, Deluxe, and Deluxe Small Business. The version used in this review is the Deluxe edition. The install is simple and speedy with modest drive space taken (around 300 Mb). When you first open the program you are presented with a splash screen assistant that walks you through the creation of a new Money profile. The first question asked is whether you wish use the Internet and Microsoft's security system Passport. One of the major selling points of Money is the ability to connect directly to ones bank or brokerage to manage accounts and do online transactions. Typical of Microsoft, Money has inherent limitations with third party ISP AOL (as it states in the setup) due to Money's heavy reliance MSN and Passport. In fact, the entire interface is one big MSN browser. This doesn't prevent you from using AOL or other Dial-ups, just keep in mind that some things that some things that should be automatic will now be manual.

Once you have completed the setup you come to the welcome screen, which has numerous subject panes containing links to banks, online brokerage firms, credit card vendors and general financial news and information. Everything in money can be customized, from the home page to what toolbars are shown. The default welcome page can also be organized in to categories, allowing the user to jump from page to page using a drop down menu.

One of the biggest issues I have with Microsoft products is their lack of documentation. For the cost of Microsoft software, you'd think they could to at least throw in a 'Getting Started' guide. Even the readme.txt has been struck from the CD. However, Microsoft makes up for this by having step by step audio and video walk on each feature of money. While informative, the walkthroughs are long and there's no option to fast forward, meaning you could be stuck just setting up your accounts for hours. Once you do set up your account though, you will have all the tools you will need to manage your finances.

Don't think Money is just another bill pay software. It's a complete financial manager. Besides paying bills and keeping a daily budget it can calculate resources needed for building a summer home or retirement to a beachside cottage. It can put those calculations to work by dynamically managing assets to reach goals. You can use Money to pay bills and taxes online and manage bank and checking accounts directly. It has a robust set of tools for day trading or market monitoring. You can roll over assets to other accounts and manage your IRA, CD, bond, Mutual, 401k and other tax differed accounts, all in real time. Your entire portfolio is literally at your fingertips.

Overall, Money is a solid application for financial management. Full of features and special offers, it will replace the need to have your broker on speed dial. If you have AOL and/or use a Palm OS device I recommend that you look carefully at the box; you may want to seek alternatives such as Quicken. Microsoft's handheld version included with the desktop version, Pocket Money, works only (and no surprise) with pocket PC. Quicken fills the gap by making their version for Palm OS only. Either way, Money gets a thumbs up from me.

Hello, PR? Or, Back Door Tech Help
Bass Shows You Alternative Ways to Get Help

by Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

Having trouble getting tech support for the troubling crashes because of your upgrade of SimpleCD Copier? What about the tech people who refuse to replace the failing hard drive in your Zornac notebook (which failed the day after the warranty expired)?

With tech support relying on $3 a day, third-world people, you may have to work harder and dig deeper in order to get the help you need. Fair warning, this is a convoluted process and full of dead-ends, and

something only online researchers are going to enjoy.

Hello? Public Relations?

Here's the trick I use when I have a problem with a product and can't get the help I need from tech support. I find the PR person, briefly plead my case, and hope for the best. Most times I get service that's far superior than when calling the company's customer service or tech support line — and often miraculous. (And yes, I even do this anonymously using an e-mail alias, so they don't know about my writing background.)

Here's how I do it. I head for the company's Web site and dig around for the PR representative. If they're listed, it'll likely be either on the "Contact Us" or "About Us" page.

If you can't find that specific page or there's nothing about public relations, head for Google. Try it: In Google's search field, type everything in italics. *site:www .microsoft.com press.* Substitute another company name for Microsoft and see what happens.

Google Experiments

Unfortunately, some companies refer to PR as Corporate Communication, Media Contact, or PR. (Oddly enough, few companies use "PR flack" or "PR flak.") Well, kids, Google is a powerful tool and if you know the right syntax, it can help you find the PR people, no matter where they're hiding. Try these Google combinations exactly as you see them:

site:www.microsoft.com pr
site:www.microsoft.com media contact
site:www.microsoft.com corporate communication
site:www.microsoft.com press release

There's no way around that it — you'll need to experiment with Google's syntax.

If you use quotes around key words, Google's forced to look for that exact string of characters. In the last example above, wrapping press release in quotes may get you different results. Ditto if you change press release to press contact. Try it.

As you begin honing in on your target, add a few more words and make substitutions. For instance, say you're looking for a press person to help you with SharePoint, MS's online collaboration tool. If you tried site:www.microsoft.com "press release" sharepoint, you'd get lots of hits from MS's

office in South Africa. Substitute press contact and you hit a few jackpots.

Become a Social Engineer

As you play around, be prepared to hit lots of dead ends. For instance, a buddy of mine was having trouble with his Toshiba notebook. I volunteered to help and used my Google tricks on Toshiba's site. I was quick to find a page full of Toshiba Press Releases. Unfortunately, it showed only old press releases. But down at the bottom was pay dirt: A link that said "Back To Main Press Release Page." I didn't find a PR person for notebooks but did find two contacts that might lead me to the right person. The first was a public relations contact for another Toshiba division, LCD screens; the other was a list of three people at Toshiba's outside PR firm.

My next step was to write to each person and ask if they could connect me with the right PR person, someone who deals with Toshiba notebooks and laptops. I didn't offer a reason why I was asking-I didn't want to let them know I was about to start kvetching. And I wrote them individual e-mails because if I wrote to them all in one e-mail, there's a chance one person might write back and say that they couldn't help; I didn't want everyone to see that.

My first dose of bad news bounced right back at me: none of the outside PR e-mail addresses were any good. But the Toshiba LCD screen guy was pleased as punch to supply the name, e-mail address, and phone number of the right PR person at Toshiba.

Case Pleading

The story ends pretty well. My buddy wrote to the public relations person. He pleaded his case and the PR person was able to get Toshiba to replace the hard drive. The key ingredients in his persuasive e-mail and phone call:

Don't threaten: Explain how you've tried your darndest to work with customer service and tech support. But they were adamant and refused your requests.

Show loyalty: In this economy, most companies will do their best to get a new customer and keep an old one. Make sure you let the person know how much you want to remain a customer.

Try bargaining: If you're willing to help me make this right, you say, I'll do my very best to tell everyone I know how helpful and

cooperative you've been. Of course they know the implication-you'll tell everyone what junky products the company produces. But don't say it. No matter how much clout you may have, bullying doesn't always do the trick.

Beseeching: The product is what I rely on to do my work, you can say, and I beseech you (okay, they won't understand that-use implore, or even beg) to help me get it fixed.

Move it Up a Notch: Often a PR person will tell you that their hands are tied. Ask if you can talk directly to the person who did the tying. Often you'll end up talking to a product manager who can make things right with a quick e-mail.

If you think about it, these methods will not only work with computing and software companies, but with practically any product. In the meantime, my dogs are snubbing their Science Diet kibble so I'm off to find a four-legged PR person.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World *and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check his Home Office columns at http://snurl.com /homeoffice and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at http://snurl.com/signup*

From The DealsGuy
by Bob Click
*Greater Orlando
Computer Users Group*

I attended part of the FACUG (Florida Association of Computer Users Groups) weekend conference and it was again very successful. There were about 185 attendees from about 25 user groups, and 61 were first time attendees. Vendor support was down drastically this year with only ten in all. However, the whole event was just as successful. Unfortunately, the Heartland regional in Dayton, Ohio had to be canceled.

Last month I mentioned that the cheapskate would use AARP's free income tax service. Maybe that was a mistake. I took my data and papers there and was surprised to find that the volunteers in this senior center do it by hand, not with computers, but they recheck each other's work. While it was being done, I asked my volunteer about their regular profession and was told the person was an attorney and a CPA. I felt I was in good hands. When it was finished, I took it home ready to mail it out quickly. Out of curiosity, I decided to use the FREE TaxAct

software just to see how close I would have come to the figures the tax person ended up with, and to see just how easy it might be that way. I also made the assumption that I might not be so squeamish about doing it myself next year.

I downloaded TaxAct and installed it, then spent a couple of hours answering all the questions, finally ending up with their version of my income tax return, but there was a big difference! Not just a few backs, but my TaxAct version showed over $2200 more income, and I used the very same W2s and 1099s that I gave the tax preparer. Also, as you might expect, about $75 less refund, and I would have to pay tax on over $2000 of our Social Security income, contrary to what I had been told. My wife and I both checked everything over and over, and could not see what might be wrong with either one. I finally decided to use the TaxAct one because I felt there must be a mistake in the preparer's, so since I had the TaxAct version all filled out, and the income was higher, I went ahead and filed my TaxAct return electronically (with much trepidation). I had my refund back in 10 days with no changes, much to my relief. I'll write a review of this experience, and about TaxAct, and post it on my Web site. I think the preparer made a mistake in the math, but have not tracked it down it yet.

Update From Linda Barlow
Unfortunately Gene Barlow was unable to make the FACUG conference because of scheduling conflicts. However, Linda says they are still busy and still represent PowerQuest. Here are their latest prices:
PartitionMagic V8, $35.00. (MSRP $69.95)
Drive Image 2002, $35.00 (MSRP $69.95)
Educational CD, $20.00 (MSRP $39.95)
Bundle (PM, DI, ED, $79.00 (MSRP $179.85)
S&H fee (mail/web orders only) $5.00. Use the special user group order code UGMAR03 to order.

To order, get a form from your user group coordinator to fill out, and return it to User Group Relations, PO Box 275, Orem, UT. 84059-0275. For faster service use their secure Web site order form at [http://www .ugr.com/order/].

Gene says he no longer gets any travel allowance from his vendors; so when they visit your user group, or regional event, give them your full support. Gene and Linda

have been very supportive of user groups for years. I tried his Educational CD and it is an excellent product, even for a beginner, with a wealth of information. It goes quite fast though, so pay attention and have plenty of time because of all the information it contains. I doubt you will finish it in just one session. Gene's Educational CD is a real bargain.

How Much Hot Water Does It Take

To Get Hot Water?

Does that title sound confusing? Perhaps, but when you are in your kitchen, or maybe your guest bathroom, how long is it before the water gets hot when you turn it on. My house is a very inefficient design when it comes to the hot water. My water heater is located in the garage and the only room with a close proximity is our master bath. Other areas take forever to deliver hot water, and during that time, a lot of water goes down the drain, but not if you install a Metland D'Mand system.

This is not a computer-related item, but it is a great product and could save many of you money over the long term. I wrote this item up a few years ago and purchased one myself. It was an excellent decision. The Metland D;Mand system is a small circulation pump to install just below the water faucet furthest from the hot water heater. By pressing a button (both electrical and wireless remote included), the pump starts running and circulates water in the hot water line back though the cold water line into the hot water tank until the pump's sensor detects hot water, whereon it shuts itself off. Motion sensors could also activate the pump. This small pump uses very little power and doesn't run long, preventing you from wasting water down the drain while waiting for hot water.

Both my wife and I love ours and you can find out much more about the product by checking their Web site [http://www .gothotwater.com]. Don't forget to read the government agency write-up about this fine product. I've had mine for four years and it's been trouble-free. I had no problem installing it myself with the kit provided, even though I was very squeamish at first since I'm not a plumber. You can hardly hear this pump work during the short period its on. Be aware that you might also need to install a new electrical outlet for it.

I saw this company again when I browsed the "Electronic Home Show" at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. Larry Acker even remembered me and quickly said yes when I asked if he would like me to write it up again. He says my readers will get a $65.00 discount from any prices on their Web site by asking for the "Bob Click DealsGuy" promotion. Shipping is $18.00 any place in the US. Canadians must call about shipping fees. To order, call 1-800-638-5863 (also good in Canada), or e-mail Larry at [larry @gothotwater.com] with your request.

More About the Show

By the way, the Home Electronics Show was very interesting and I sure saw a lot of wonderful automation items for the home. I was working another interesting show (Megacom, better known as the "Comic Book" Show) and managed to find a few minutes to hit the high spots in the Home Electronics Show being held in the next hall. There was a great electronic gate operator on display by [http://www.eliteaccess.com] for your driveway's gate, but it is not meant for a do-it-yourselfer. I saw plenty of electronically controlled home cabling, and tons of audio and video equipment for an automated home at various booths. One company is wholesale only, but you might enjoy their Web site [http://www.worthdist.com], which is for Worthington Distribution. They have been around for years.

I have mentioned the following before, but if you love shopping for automated g a d g e t   s t u f f ,   v i s i t   [http://www.smarthome.com] and ask for their catalog. There were many more interesting items, but I had to cruise fast to see it in the time I had to explore.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers 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 might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@mindspring .com]. Visit my Web site at [http://www .dealsguy .com] for past columns and some interesting articles.

Computer Law:

Don't Blink or You Are in Big Trouble!

by Bill Wood
Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Legal notice: You must read this article exactly as I wrote it and only read it from the magazine pages produced by authorized production companies. Don't skip over any words or phrases you don't like. In fact, if you blink, go back to the first word in the paragraph where you blinked and re-read it in its entirety without blinking. You must focus on each and every word, phrase, sentence and paragraph in the exact order presented.

How absurd is that? I know, it is outrageous. I for one typically turn away from the screen when the television news has a story on eye surgery. I just choose not to watch. Eyeballs bother me. It's not that I'm all that squeamish. I've been awake and watched the monitor while a cardiologist inserted a wire into my heart. (Granted I had a nice dose of Valium.) But there are times when I don't want to look.

Legal battles are being fought over how you view protected material just as technology has given us more viewing choices. It's no secret that incredible amounts of the wealth in the United States is intangible. Unlike gold, spices, tulips or real estate, you can't actually touch intellectual property. It is nothing more than ideas and expressions of ideas. Consequently, you can't protect them by locking them up. Your only hope is that the government will pass laws that both recognize your ownership rights and provide you with the means to prevent the unauthorized use of your property.

As mentioned in previous articles, the federal Constitution specifically gave Congress the power to protect the ownership rights of authors and inventors,

to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries. Article I, Section 8, Clause 8 of the US Constitution.

With increasing frequency the Congress has exercised that authority by adopting, and then extending, copyright protection. In last month's article I mentioned that a case, Eldridge v. Ashcroft, was pending on the United States Supreme Court docket. The plaintiffs were seeking a ruling that the Congress had finally gone too far when it adopted the most recent extension of time that material would be protected through copyright.

Soon after that article was written, the Supreme Court issued the opinion and the plaintiffs lost. The law, sometimes called the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act (or it is sometimes referred to as the Mickey Mouse extension act), was constitutional in the Court's opinion. In effect the Court held that it would rely upon Congress to decide how long the limited Times should be and that the latest law was just another in a long series of extensions. At present, the life of the author plus 70 years is not too long. (The opinion is available).

The changes in the copyright laws such as the DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act) have also attempted to solve problems resulting from improvements in technology. The advent of digital technology made it relatively easy to produce near perfect copies of some protected movies and music CD's and DVD's.

It has also made it possible for the end user to selectively view the material. New fights are breaking out over how much control the end users have in viewing material that is legally obtained.

One provision of the DMCA makes it a criminal offense to circumvent anti-piracy codes that DVD manufacturers routinely include in the movies. A Norwegian teenager, Jon Johansen, decided that he wanted to view a DVD movie that he purchased on a computer using the Linux operating system. To do so he wrote a program that bypassed the codes because the code did not work under the Linux system. He was taken to court under Norwegian law (not the DMCA because it, like all US laws, have very little effect outside the United States and its territories). A unanimous trial court cleared him of the charges.

Somewhat similar was the recent acquittal of a Russian programmer, Dmitry Sklyarov, and the company, ElcomSoft for which he worked. He had developed a program that unlocked documents encrypted

using the Adobe's eBook process. Although arrested and tried in the United States, the defendants were acquitted. That doesn't mean the law was invalid, only that the jury didn't believe the evidence proved guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Now we have new challenges. Lexmark has recently filed a suit which charges another company, Static Soft, has violated the DMCA by manufacturing a chip that allows other companies to manufacture toner refill cartridges for Lexmark printers. The chip in question provides the necessary information for the printer, toner cartridge and the computer to exchange data necessary to control the printing process.

Finally, the new case that led to the paragraph that started this article. ClearPlay developed a filter that allows a person to view a DVD movie on a computer and skip the parts that might be offensive. The company has been sued, along with several others, by the owners of the copyright on the theory that the company is illegally altering the content. ClearPlay claims it merely provides its subscribers with a tool to avoid looking at parts of the movies and that it doesn't edit or change the physical DVD in any way. The Plaintiffs, however, claim that alters the meaning and is not authorized.

So, don't skip over any part of this column. You sure wouldn't want to change my meanings.

From the March 2003 issue of PC Alamode*. Bill Wood is an Assistant City Attorney in the San Antonio City Attorney's Office. He practices real estate and technology law for the city.*

Spam, Scam and Snow; An Odyssey in Indy

by K. Joyce McDonald
Alamo PC Organization

Preface: It was only fitting that this article should get bounced around in the ether when I attempted to submit it to the editor. When I sent it, I was aware that he was probably still dancing hulas and sipping pina coladas in a tropical paradise. But the beauty of e-mail is that it waits. Or it usually does. This time, however, my submission was returned, unopened with a terse message from the electronic postmaster: "The intended recipient's mailbox is full."

Considering the subject of my submission, the irony is not lost on me.

I'm still wondering why I felt a sense of elation when I glanced out the airplane window above Indianapolis and saw a runway blanketed with snow. The logical response, since we were minutes short of landing, would have been panic — isn't there usually ice under snow? I'm still puzzling over what thrilled me in such a way. I decided to write down the possibilities in hopes of gaining clearer insight. Some of my candidates were:

* If the plane didn't make it, I would never have to go through airport security again.

* I haven't seen snow in almost twenty years and I anticipated long walks in snow drifts and a chance to make my first "snow angel."

* My brain was in my stomach. All I could think about was my next bowl of borscht at Shapiro's.

* Thoughts of seeing my best friend for five days obliviated all negative feelings.

* I anticipated being close by when the Indiana Senate voted 46-4 to outlaw Spam.

The first possibility had some merit. I consider myself a seasoned traveler, having spent on the average two weeks of every month on the road in recent years. However, the job that required travel ended before 9/11/01. Since then, the rules of travel have changed so drastically I don't recognize them.

To its credit, the travel industry has risen to the occasion, becoming much more efficient at checking baggage and funneling passengers through the maze of airport security. Security personnel also appear to be much more alert for possible dangers, a comforting thought. One has to give them credit for diligent efforts to find the proverbial needle in a haystack — one intentional weapon in a sea of shampoo bottles and dirty socks.

But their efforts also succeed, through no fault of their own, at making the rest of us miserable. Ergo, the travel industry has an uphill battle trying to attract travelers who don't have to and don't want to travel.

The lessons that I learned from the Indianapolis trip, outside of the fact that a plane can land quite smoothly and safely on a blanket of snow, are these:

1. Avoid taking a laptop computer. It will take a beating, and you will likely be subjected to delays while it is inspected. My laptop traveled all around the security area before it finally came back to me. (Neither my Palm PDA nor my cell phone drew any attention.) I arrived two hours ahead of time for my flight and, after the laptop experience, I was glad I did.

2. Check your rolling suitcase at baggage check. Don't try to carry it on the plane with you. Many of the major airlines use smaller planes that have overhead luggage compartments too small to accommodate even luggage approved for carry on. The airline attendant gives you an onboard check tag and stows larger items in the luggage compartment. They were quite efficient at returning our bags, but the chance of a lost bag fouling up a connection weighed heavy on my mind. To get to those smaller planes, I sometimes had to go outside and up stairways, another reason to forego the wheels.

3. Don't lock your check baggage. The Transportation Security Administration isn't crazy about cable ties either. I used a hot pink cable tie on one of my suitcases to hold the zipper shut and help me identify the bag on the pick up carousel. The cable tie was removed and replaced with a red cable tie. A note inside my baggage stated that the original seal was removed and replaced. It also gave me instructions to view further travel information at TSATravelTips.

4. Take along some snacks. No one feeds you and when they do, it's a tiny bag of pretzels and half a can of soda. I recommend a lot of chocolate — great for stress.

5. Take along a good paperback book. Paper books entertain, pass security well, and you don't have to turn them on and off when waiting for/boarding/landing/deboarding the plane. I have a complete library of Conan Doyle and Raymond Chandler books on my Palm PDA, but owing to interruptions and chancy battery life, I don't count on this library to entertain me all the time.

6. I also avoid using my add-on PDA keyboard on trips. I have had two keyboards for two different PDAs and both tend to lock up the system, requiring a hard reset which wipes out all data. I carry sensitive, trip-related information, such as itineraries and e-ticket numbers on my Palm. Performing a hotsync operation in an airport on the fly (no pun intended) would negate the primary reason for carrying a PDA — that is, quick access to data.

7. When security says two carry-ons, they mean it. My fanny pack was considered a carry-on, and although my purse and briefcase were quite small, security personnel sent me back to the desk to check one of my bags. Luckily, I was able to duck into the restroom and stuff my fanny pack into my briefcase before continuing.

The laptop caper was disconcerting, considering that the reason I dragged it along was to test out its Wi-Fi capabilities. The irony is that Wi-Fi is proliferating in airports at the very time when taking your laptop on a trip is least attractive. This may be a boon to handheld makers who are now incorporating Wi-Fi into their smaller devices. And, of course, for the business traveler for whom leaving the laptop at home is not an option, Wi-Fi is still a godsend.

Snow, borscht and good friends are compelling reasons for elation, but the prospect of outlawing Spam is certainly the real reason for my elation. It may be quixotic of the Indiana Senate to think that they can effectively outlaw Spam, but it is a start. The letter of the law, if the Indiana House now passes it, is that it is illegal to transmit electronic mail that obscures the origin of the mail or contains false or misleading information in the subject line.

An anti-Spam law is becoming a legal necessity because a person is trapped once Spammers get his/her e-mail address. Responding to Spam, even in a negative way (such as the "unsubscribe" option) plays right into the senders' hands. It indicates a "live" e-mail address that the Spammers remove from the current list then sell to a million other Spammers.

Since I don't get a lot of Spam, I usually delete it and go on with my life. However, if I get an e-mail that I find offensive, I tell Outlook to block the sender. Although emotionally satisfying, blocking a sender probably yields no better results than using the "unsubscribe" option. It could flag a "live" e-mail address for the sender. It is also ineffective because Spammers seldom use the same return address twice.

Recently, Spammers have learned a new trick called "resume highjacking." They scan job seeker Websites posing as legitimate
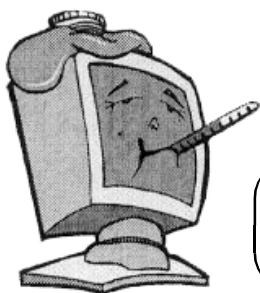
employers and grab e-mail addresses of job seekers. The hapless job seekers are then bombarded with Spam touting the services of for-pay job Websites and inane how-to- find-a- job seminars. Being a self-employed contractor, I get at least one of these goodies daily.

Spam has become so pervasive that even the Direct Marketing Association has joined the battle against it. Some naysayers insist that the DMA's participation indicates only that the group wants to water down any legislation that does get passed. Be that as it may, this action still demonstrates that if junk mailers throw their considerable lobbying power behind Spam control, it must have become a serious problem.

Spammers will continue their harassment, however, as long as a few Bozos are willing to do their bidding. Believe it or not, some people have actually responded to the Nigerian scam whereby the Spammer pretends to hold an enormous amount of money that can be deposited into your account for safekeeping. All you have to do is provide some cash, your bank account number and social security number to unlock the funds. A Michigan woman is currently under indictment for embezzling two million dollars from her employer to take advantage of this "offer."
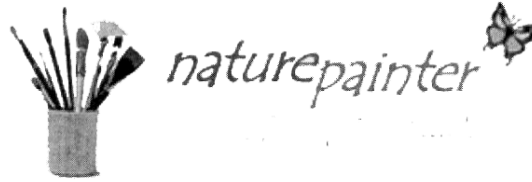
Recently, the Wall Street Journal published the address of a Website in the United Kingdom spamhaus.org, that helps identify Spam gangs. This site posts a list of heavy offenders, some of which include real mailing addresses. Journal columnist Jared Sandburg encourages you to "Write to the Spammers in unmarked envelopes. They would love to hear from you."

From the April 2003 issue of PC Alamode*, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization of San Antonio, TX. Joyce is a senior technical writer for a San Antonio software company.*

When did you last update your virus program?

Learn the Basics of Painting with

naturepainter

by Ted Shapin
North Orange County Computer Club

I've tried sketching with a pencil but I've never tried painting with brushes using oils or acrylic paint. I thought I'd try out this program to see what I could learn without buying art supplies. The news release said, "Do you want to learn to paint, improve your skill, or rediscover your artistic side? NaturePainter Digital Canvas is a software program that makes it easy to practice painting on your computer screen."

The program comes on one CD or can be down loaded over the Internet. It is a large distribution, about 4 megabytes. You can get a demonstration version that does almost everything except allow you to save your work. I tried installing it on both a Windows XP system and a Windows 98 system and had no problems.

With the tutorials that come with the program, you can try out many things. The brushes and paint produce results on your computer screen exactly as real brushes and paint would work on canvas. You set two sliders, one sets how much paint you put on your brush from a palette. The other selects how hard the brush will be pressed against the canvas, in this case your screen.

The "basics" tutorial teaches you how to use different brushes: the liner brush, filbert brush, flat brush, round, oval and flat brushes and the palette knife to spread paint on your digital canvas. I learned that these brushes of different shapes and widths are the basic tools that an artist uses. The tutorial shows an animation of using the different brushes and the effects that you can get.

As you click and draw your brush, the paint starts out dark and then fades out just as a real paintbrush would. By moving your mouse from side to side holding the right mouse button down, you can twist the flat brush before you touch the surface. Buttons let you select the whole brush, just the side

of a brush, or half of the brush. You can also use a dry brush. When you pass this over the "wet" paint, it smears the wet paint to blend it.

I had a little trouble discovering how to add colors to my palette until I read Help carefully. It was different than Microsoft's usual method of picking colors. However it turn out to be more like the way an artist would actually squeeze globs of color on his/her palette and then mix them. This actually gives a better result and is closer to the real thing.

The three other short tutorials show you how to paint a blue sky, trees and foliage, snow-capped mountains, and a sunset over the sea.

This program is especially suited for painting landscapes. The registered version comes with twenty landscape images to give you "inspiration." It is hard to tell if they are pictures or paintings. They are in a non-standard graphic format with the extension ".npi" You can only view them; you cannot edit them. Your paintings can be saved as either bitmap or jpeg files.

This is an excellent program to teach yourself the basics of painting before you spend lots of money on artist's supplies. You can use it to make interesting paintings and print them out on your inkjet or other color printer. Download a trial version at:

http://www.naturepainter.net.

The trial version will not save your work. The regular price for the downloaded program is $39.95.

Media Notes
Bill Petitt
Southeast Virginia Computer Group

Sony Shows First Blu-Ray Recorder

Drive uses blue-laser technology to boost DVD storage to 27GB.

Sony has taken the wraps off the first commercial consumer-use video recorder that uses blue-laser technology. The BDZ-S77 will go on sale in Japan next month. It is based on the Blu-ray optical disc format announced just over a year ago. The nine consumer electronics companies behind it are promoting it as a system for recording high-definition television broadcasts. The companies came up with the format because DVDs cannot hold enough data to be suitable for high-definition video.

Betting on Blue

Blu-ray uses a blue laser to record data on discs, while CD and DVD systems use red lasers. Blue lasers have a shorter wavelength — 405 nanometers compared to around 650 nanometers on DVD systems — and that means the laser beam can be focused onto a smaller area of the disc surface. In turn, this means less area is needed to store one bit of data and so more data can be stored on a disc.

The format is backed by Sony, Hitachi, LG Electronics, Matsushita Electric Industrial (Panasonic), Philips Electronics, Pioneer Electronics, Samsung Electronics, Sharp, and Thomson Multimedia.

Sony's first generation recorder will land on Japanese retail shelves on April 10, at a price of $3,815. It looks similar to the prototype Blu-ray player that Sony showed at the Ceatec show in Japan last October.

Product Plans

To date, Sony has only talked in vague terms about Blu-ray recorders becoming available in 2003 and an April launch is a surprise, not only because Sony had given no hints that it was close to a commercial product but also because high-definition broadcasting, for which it was designed, has yet to take hold in Japan or anywhere else in the world. The BDZ-S77 has a built-in tuner for Japan's direct-to-home satellite broadcasting service which carries a high definition channel.

"We are starting to see potential in the market," said Shoko Yanagisawa, a spokesperson for Sony. "There is a market demand from users wishing to make high-resolution recordings from satellite and from customers with home theater systems, large screen display products or digital high-definition televisions." To support the new machine, Sony also announced its first generation Blu-ray media. Discs with a 23GB capacity will go on sale from April 10 priced at $30. There are three disc sizes specified in the initial Blu-ray format, and 23GB is the lowest-capacity and easiest to make of the three. The other capacities are 25GB and 27GB. Recording is done in the MPEG-2 format, and the 23GB disc can store two hours of high-definition video at maximum quality, or four hours of standard-definition digital broadcasting. Up to 16 hours of lower quality analog terrestrial broadcasting can be stored.

The recorder is double the weight and a little thicker than one of Sony's first generation DVD video players launched in 1997. The Blu-ray recorder weighs an impressive 31 pounds and measures 5.3 inches by 16.9 inches by 15.7 inches. Sony has no plans to launch the recorder overseas, Yanagisawa said.

Icons

What can you do with the various icons spread out like dew drops across your computer screen? Do you really need all 67 of them? Probably not. So let's clean up a bit, shall we?

Icons are of course representations of the actual program. Not all icons however represent the actual physical location of the program they refer to. This particular breed is known as the shortcut icon.

You can safely *delete* shortcut icons. You know it's a shortcut when you see a small arrow in the lower left corner of the icon. Also, you can double check yourself by *right* clicking any icon, looking at its *properties* and you'll see if it's a shortcut or not. Every item that makes up the stuff you see on your computer screen (called "objects" in techie-speak) has associated properties. Just as there are properties of a pencil (it's cylindrical in shape, made of wood, has an eraser, etc.) there are properties of computer files. (Their size, the date they were created, where they live on your hard drive — called

the "path" — etc.) So which icons can you safely remove? Well, here's a list of what you *can't* remove.

1. My Computer
2. Network Neighborhood
3. My Documents
4. Recycle Bin

(Actually, you can even remove the above, but that's even more advanced, and you have to use a special program to do it.)

Now, if you delete an icon, you'll receive a warning message if you're about to delete a program. So if you know nothing more than "I want to save anything Windows tells me is a program" and you just started highlighting icons and pressing the Delete key, you could safely remove anything that *wasn't* a program. (You "highlight" an icon by clicking on it.)

You can really clean up your desktop this way, and if you have stuff you *really* want on the desktop, you can always create a shortcut — a *new* shortcut, fresh and useable — at any time.

So clean up your desktop without fear of loss. Then redecorate by changing the wallpaper to something that goes with the new Spartan look.

Best Wi-Fi Ever

802.11g

Early products are fast, affordable, and work with popular 802.11b gear.

Wireless- network shoppers take note: 802.11g, the latest Wi-Fi standard, is fast, compatible with its popular but slower 802.11b sibling, and affordably priced. But there is some fine print for you to consider.

First, the nomenclature: Today's 11-megabits-per- second 802.11b wireless networks are fine for broadband Internet access (which typically tops out at about 1 mbps) but a bit poky for large internal file transfers or streaming video. However, 54-mbps, corporate-oriented 802.11a is expensive — and because its radio uses the 5-GHz band and 802.11b uses the 2.4-GHz band, upgrading to an 802.11a network means either scrapping 802.11b gear or

buying even-pricier hardware that can support both standards.

But 802.11g promises the same speed as 802.11a and the ability to coexist with 802.11b equipment on one network, since it too uses the 2.4-GHz band. The catch is, the first retail products are based on a near-final spec. The IEEE isn't expected to ratify the standard before June, and the Wi-Fi Alliance needs a ratified standard to begin certifying cross- vendor compatibility. These so-called pre-g products aren't guaranteed to work with either final versions or each other. But judging from informal tests of the first shipping prestandard 802.11g hardware from Buffalo, D-Link, and Linksys, you shouldn't shy away from these early birds — if you need to buy now. Not only are these products fast and — at $125 to $149 for gateways — only a bit more expensive than 802.11b equivalents, but in our tests they worked seamlessly with each other as well as with 802.11b gear from other vendors. One caveat: Vendors say that these products will need only free, downloadable firmware updates to meet final certification standards, but there are no ironclad guarantees.

How about performance? With an all-802 .11g network, we got real-world throughput ranging from 10 to 15 mbps, or about four times the 2.5 to 4 mbps we've historically recorded for all-802.11b networks. Speeds dropped when WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy) encryption was turned on or when we used both 11g and 11b cards on the same WEP-disabled network, but they still beat out 802.11b-only speeds. Even 802.11b cards ran about 15 percent faster when connected to an 11g gateway than when connected to an 11b gateway.

If you already have an 802.11b setup, and don't feel a compelling need for a faster network, there's no reason to upgrade to 802.11g immediately. But if you're planning to buy Wi-Fi equipment anyway, we'd recommend these prestandard products. The risk is minimal; the rewards are clear.

You Can Stop Error-reporting Messages

One of the new features of Windows XP is error reporting. When Windows or a program suffers a crash, Microsoft wants to know. It uses the information to find and fix weaknesses in Windows.

Not everyone wants to ship his or her data off to Redmond. The message gives you the option of refusing. But you can go Microsoft one better — turn off the message! To do that:

* --Click Start. Right-click My Computer. Select Properties

* --On the Advanced tab, click the Error Reporting button

* --Disable the message, or limit it to certain programs

* --Click OK>>OK.

Memory Cards Get Smaller, Faster, Cheaper

New cards offer more storage (up to 4GB), at the lowest prices yet.

In the world of computer memory cards smaller, faster, and higher capacity is good. Smaller cards mean smaller gadgets, faster cards mean less time spent waiting, and higher capacity cards mean less are needed to hold a day's music or a week's photo memories.

Through a series of developments announced last month card manufacturers have delivered all three and are also cutting prices. The latest advance in card size was announced in Hanover, Germany at the CeBIT trade show when the SD Card Association unveiled a miniature version of its Secure Digital memory card. Dubbed "Mini SD," the new card is the smallest memory card yet to be introduced and is designed for use in compact, portable digital electronics devices such as cellular telephones and digital music players. "Every cubic millimeter is important in those devices," said Bo Ericsson, senior vice president of marketing at memory-maker SanDisk. "This is the smallest device out there."

Mini Media

At 602 cubic millimeters (approximately .03 cubic inches) the Mini SD card can claim that crown. Before Thursday's announcement, the smallest memory card to be announced was the Reduced Size Multimedia Card, which was unveiled late last year by Hitachi. That card has a volume of 605 cubic millimeters (approximately .04 cubic inches). The XD Picture Card, which was launched last year by Fuji Photo Film and Olympus Optical, and Sony's Memory Stick Duo are also sub-1,000 cubic millimeter (.06 cubic inch) memory cards designed for use in small portable electronics products. The Mini SD cards will be available in 16MB, 32MB, and 64MB capacities shortly, said

SanDisk. A version with 128MB capacity is expected to be launched worldwide in the second quarter and a 256MB version in the second half of this year. Prices for the cards were not announced and SanDisk declined to comment on pricing plans although said they should be around the same price as current SD cards.

Higher Capacities

All of the action in the sector isn't just restricted to physical size. The capacity of the cards is also increasing as semiconductor companies find ways to make memory chips smaller.

Lexar Media will begin shipping in the second quarter a 4GB Compact Flash card, it said last week, and SanDisk said Thursday it will begin shipping a similar card in the middle of this year. CeBIT is also being used by Matsushita Electric Industrial, better known as Panasonic, to give showgoers their first look at a 1GB SD memory card.

Other formats are also advancing, with Sony announcing a long-awaited capacity increase for its Memory Stick at CES in Las Vegas in January. The Memory Stick Pro is available in capacities up to 1GB and breaks the 128MB barrier at which the format has been stuck for more than two years. The recently launched XD Picture Card is also advancing as Fuji Photo and Olympus push to catch up to more mature formats, recently launching a 256MB card.

Speedier Storage

With the new cards come increases in the speed at which data is written to and read from the cards. When Sony developed the Memory Stick Pro, the company specified a minimum data write speed of 15 megabits per second. That is fast enough to allow Sony to demonstrate real-time writing and playback of DVD-quality video directly from the card and considerably faster than most memory cards can offer. SanDisk has also been working on faster Compact Flash cards and said Thursday it has developed a model that supports a sustained write speed of 6 mbps and a sustained read speed of 9 mbps.

Money Matters

Perhaps the most welcome news for consumers is that prices are falling with these advances in technology. Consumers can buy roughly twice as much memory today as they could a year ago for the same amount of money and prices are continuing to drop.

Sony has cut prices of the Memory Stick Pro before it goes on sale. A 256MB card was priced at $190, a 512MB card at $440, and a 1GB card at $880 when Sony announced the cards at CES although the company recently said they will go on sale for $150, $320, and $640, respectively. That's a cut of $240, or around one third, on the highest-capacity card.

Get Rid of Old Document Information Listed in Word

Let's say you work on a document, then save it and close Word. The next time you open Word, that document will be listed, along with others, at the end of the File menu. You can use that list to open documents. On the flip side, there may be a time when you want to remove an item from that list. Fortunately, it is easy to do. In Word, hold down Ctrl and Alt, and press the hyphen key. A cursor appears that looks like a huge minus sign. Open File to get to the document list. Put that huge minus sign on the document name that you want to delete. Click the mouse. This deletes the document name from the list, but not the document itself.

Here's a Website for Outstanding Software Buys

http://www.nothingbutsoftware.com/promos/k16p1681.asp?ai=1202

It might be last year's version or not quite as popular as the publisher wanted but you can pick up on some great deals.

Here's a question I get quite often

I use Windows ME. I have a chronic system resource problem, with messages telling me that my resources are low. I added RAM. Why do I continue to have this problem?

Unfortunately, your resource issue has nothing to do with the amount of RAM in your computer. Windows ME and 98 set aside 128 kilobytes of memory to store resources. That number does not change, regardless of your RAM quantity. Windows XP does not have this problem. Resources are the fonts, buttons, colors, etc. used by Windows and other programs. If you fill up that area, you get error messages or a crash. There are basically two ways to fill it--either too many programs are running, or closed programs left too much stuff behind. If you have too many programs running, you may not know it. Some programs put themselves in your Startup list when they're installed.

They run when you start Windows, even if you're not using them.

To see what is starting automatically, click Start>>Run. Enter msconfig in the box. Click OK. Select the Startup tab. Uncheck the boxes of programs that you don't need to have running. Important Windows features will be listed here. So only clear those you're sure about. For instance, Systray or System Tray is a Windows feature and must be checked. America Online is not, and can be cleared.

Also, check the items under Startup in the Programs list. Click Start>>Programs >>Startup. If there is anything there you don't need, right click and select Delete. Remember, if you have Christmas lights, sounds, weird pictures or other toys running on startup, you're eating resources. Dump it all.

Even with Startup cleaned, you can eventually get this message. That's the second problem: As you close programs, they don't completely clear the resource area. After awhile, enough stuff builds up to require you to reboot. When you restart the computer, the resource area is cleared. So if you are in and out of Internet Explorer all day, for instance, avoid closing it. Minimize it instead, then open it when you need it.

Microsoft fixed this problem in Windows NT, an ancestor of XP. So XP users shouldn't get this message. The system resource area expands as necessary. That's one reason why you can run XP for long periods without shutting it down. Theoretically, you could run out of RAM if you had enough programs open. But that is unlikely, especially if you have a minimum of 256MB of RAM. If you simply cannot solve the problem in ME, switching to XP should take care of it

Has Something You
Own Been Recalled?
It can be really hard to keep up with recalled products. Several agencies make recalls, and they aren't always widely reported.

SafetyAlerts provides a central place for you to check. As of this writing, the site includes information about Carriage House Companies Recalling Food Club Tar-

tar Sauce, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Recalling Woody Dolls, and MOSA Sports recalling about 1,250 "Five 40" brand bicycle helmets, And those are just recent recalls. The site also has long lists of recalls that go back several years. Check your products here! http://www .safetyalerts .com

E-mail Photos in the Correct
Resolution
Would you like to make enemies among your friends and family? Easy! Just e-mail them high-resolution pictures. Not only will they take forever to download; the dimensions will be huge. Most scanning programs allow you to set the resolution and select the file format (.tif is the most common for uncompressed files and .jpg is most common for compressed files). That's also true of photo programs, like Adobe Photo Elements and Ulead Photo Impact. If the recipient is going to view the photo on a computer monitor, set the resolution at 72 dots per inch. Setting it higher won't improve the monitor view. And always save files for e-mail in the .jpg format, as almost any .tif file will be huge. If the recipient is going to print the picture, you might want to go as high as 300 dpi, although 150 will probably work fine. Remember this: The higher the resolution, the larger the file. People with dial-up Web connections will not appreciate unnecessarily high resolutions. Also set the dimensions. For printing, I like 4x6 or 5x7. For viewing on a monitor, I would not go larger than 4x6.

These Goodies Connect to
a Computer's Usb Port
Innovative USB devices. The links go to Japanese Web sites. While you may not be able to read the pages, the pictures tell all. If you double-click on most pictures, they will show up bigger in a new browser window.

This toothbrush connects to your computer's USB port: http://www.watch .impressco.jp/akiba/hotline/20030222/image /tooth1 .jpg

In case you're cold, you can use this USB-powered blanket: http://www.mib.co.jp products/ohizamoto.html

And this USB-ready warmer keeps your coffee hot: http://www.dct-net.co.jp/special /usb_hot.html

Don't Let Those 8 Gigabyte Blues
Get You down

If you're running Windows 98, you could be bumping against an 8 gigabyte limit on your hard drive. Even a very large drive may be unavailable to you. The problem is in your BIOS (basic input/output system). It tells Windows there is an 8GB drive present, even if the drive is much larger. This situation usually arises when the original hard drive, which was probably 8GB or less, is replaced. You can get around this limitation with disk management software.

Try EZ-Drive, which is available from Western Digital, http://support.wdc.com /download/index.asp. According to the company, EZ-Drive is part of its Data Lifeguard v10.0. It is free. Another program that should work is Ontrack DiskManager, http://www.ontrack.com/diskmanager/. It is $64.95.

You could also check with the BIOS manufacturer for an update. BIOS changes are done through a process called "flashing." I don't recommend that you do this unless you are a skilled technician. Should the update fail, your computer could be rendered useless. If you decide to buy a larger hard drive, make certain that you buy a retail version vs. an OEM version. The retail version almost always has a floppy or CD that will provide the same type of disk management software especially tuned for that brand.

Missing .dll Files

Sometimes a .dll file disappears or is damaged, or is removed accidentally. And suddenly you find that one of your programs no longer works. The answer?

Download another one from the Internet and install it.

Go to http://google.com and type in dll in the search box. You'll be presented with a bundle of links to sites that let you download the .dll file you need from their .dll library.

If you don't find the one you want first time, try other sites until you do. There are some sites that charge you, but you don't need to pay, because there are many more who offer free downloads. You will need to write down the number of the .dll file you need, then type it into the search box of the download site. Also look for a site that explains how to install it. Print out and follow the instructions and everything should then return to normal. DLL files are only tiny, but it's like having a tiny fuse blowing in your auto engine compartment. When that tiny bit of wire blows, all that sophisticated technology grinds to a stop.

From the April 2003 issue of The Umbrella Online*, newsletter of the associated PC users groups of southeastern Virginia.*

Norton Ghost 2003

by Bill Pryor

I bought a Pacific Digital CD-R, CD-RW writer at Staples for S39.99 after rebate, and put it on my wife's computer. After installing it, I was lucky enough to have an evaluation copy of Norton Ghost 2003 which allows you to back-up your whole computer hard drive and put it on CD-Rs.

The program is small, and it fits easily on a 1.44 floppy, being only around 900K in size. There are a number of ways to get this software to run. This is what I did: I took a 1.44 floppy, transferred just the system files from Win98SE on to it so it would boot; I then placed ghost2K3.exe on to it — this has all the drivers needed — do not add Win 98 CD drivers from win 98 boot disk, etc., just the simple system files (command .com). The ghost file has everything you need to execute the CDs and drives. I then placed Microsoft Mouse Driver 8.2 (1992-1993) mouse.com which is the most important ingredient, since without this driver, the program does not execute properly. It needs the mouse, the DOS mouse.

Norton Ghost runs under the command or DOS prompt; since it is making an image of your drives, it is doing this without Windows running. This enables all the components of the image to be picked-up. Place the above floppy disk in the A\> drive and boot the computer from this floppy. It will boot to the C:\ prompt. Switch to the A:\> prompt. Type mouse to activate the mouse. Press Enter. Then type ghost2K3 and execute the Norton Ghost program at the DOS prompt. Just follow the simple menu that comes up. It will pick-up the CD writer automatically and ask you to place the first CD-R into the burner drive. It will span multiple CDs and create an image backup of your hard drive on multiple CDs. You can invoke compres-

sion of the files onto the CDs while creating them. I used FAST, the medium range compression.

Unlike Ghost 2000, this version has CD support as well for creating images to save on hard drives. It is in my opinion the best, most versatile, and easiest Norton Ghost version to use to date!

From the March 2003 issue of The LVCG Journal, *newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Computer Group.*

Society News

President's Message
by Ron Matteson

I have finally relegated my old PC to the basement. There are still a couple of things that I have to do on it, but it is set up nicely on a big table in the basement, and since my wife does a lot of her knitting and craft projects in the basement, it's actually quite convenient. One thing that the new XP machine didn't seem to like was the software for my scanner. So I just make a trip to the basement now, when I want to scan something. The other thing is the Roxio software that I use to burn CD's. XP has its own CD-burning software, but it isn't as flexible as Roxio's latest version. For example, you can treat the CD as another drive, adding and deleting files whenever you want. With XP, you can only write one set of data. Writing another set of data at another time deletes the first set. Both of these things could be added to my XP by adding the latest version of the required software, but I haven't got around to it yet.

Even though I have Office XP now, I decided I didn't like Outlook, and reverted back to Outlook Express. Outlook just does too many things to suit my needs. I got confused between what a contact list was and what the address book is; and scheduling "appointments" versus "activities" was a distinction I didn't need. It was easy to switch back- In Internet Explorer I selected Tools- Options, and clicked on the Programs tab. Under E-Mail, the drop down list offers a choice of Outlook Express, Microsoft Outlook, Hotmail, and MSN Explorer. I selected Outlook Express, clicked OK a couple of times, and was all set. I still had a little housekeeping to do to get my Address Book from my old computer to XP Outlook Express. I had already transferred my old address book (has the extension *.wab) to the XP computer, but couldn't get Outlook to recognize it. I clicked on Address Book in Outlook Express, and clicked on File-Import-Address Book (wab…). Everything was there, including my groups (like RCSi, a mailing list to all the members of the RCSi executive committee).

Since I was no longer using Outlook, I had to get a calendar set up. I liked the calendar I had on my old computer, which came with Microsoft Works 4.5, so I installed just the calendar part of that on the XP machine. I then exported all the appointments on my old computer's calendar to a *.wcs file on a floppy, and imported it into the calendar on the XP. I then put a shortcut for the calendar into the startup folder, and the calendar comes up when I turn the XP computer on.

At our May Program Meeting, we will have a very knowledgeable speaker on converting a Windows machine to a Linux machine, but making it work similar to the way Windows works. It should be interesting. We'll be meeting at the Penfield Library, on Baird Road between Route 441 and Atlantic Avenue.

New Users Notes
Apr. 1, 2003

Bill Statt started the meeting with an fervent description of a new machine he had purchased. It was a Medion, 2.66 GHz Pentium 4 with a 533 MHz front side bus and 512 KB second level cache. It had a Sony 40x 12x 48 CD Burner; a DVD ROM 16x reader; an nVidia GeForce 4 graphics card with 128 MB DDR SDRAM; a Seagate 120GB 7200 rpm hard drive; 256 MB of Samsung DDR 333 MHz memory upgradable to 2 GB; 5 USB-2 ports, 3 front mounted and 2 in the rear; 3 firewire ports, 1 front mounted and 2 in the rear; 6 channel Dolby Digital audio for 5.1 sound systems; a fast ethernet 10/100 MBit Network controller; a 56K V.90 PCI data/fax modem; a Microsoft IntelliMouse; a PS/2 keyboard; a pair of Sound Blaster speakers; plus an integrated flash card reader that would accept a Memory Stick, an IBM Micro Drive, a Multimedia Card, a Compact Flash Card, a Smart Media Card or an SD Card. One thing it did not have was a 3.5 inch disk drive.

Windows XP Home edition, Word 2002, Works 7.0, Money 2003, Encarta, Picture It! Photo, and Streets and Trips from Microsoft; plus Power-DVD, Power VCR, MediaShow, VideoLiveMail, PowerDirector, and Music Match from Cyberlink; and Nero Burning ROM were all included both on the hard drive and as CD's. The $699.00 price included a 12 month warranty and customer support 24/7 via a toll free phone number. I stopped at the local Aldi store on the way home but they were closed. When they opened in the morning the machines were gone but luckily they got a few more in that Wednesday afternoon. Unfortunately, I was not able to get one of the 19 inch .24 pitch monitors they were selling for $100.00. At the society meeting, I found that another "New User" had also gotten into the act as a result of Bill's enthusiastic presentation.

A user trying to install Blue Frog was told she had to take AOL off the machine first. She was advised to use the Add and Remove programs feature of Windows. AOL's own uninstall might be better because Add and Remove did not completely remove AOL. When I tried Add/Remove, it left eleven files in 6 folders. It was suggested that she either search the hard disk for "aol*.*" to find left over folders or check the original AOL disk for an Uninstall program. Going to Google and searching for "Remove AOL" might point to other possible solutions. A Blue Frog user got a message, "This file does not have a program associated with it for performing this action. Create an association in My Computer by clicking View and selecting Options. Unable to open Internet shortcut."

Bill was not able to demonstrate this because he did not have Windows 95 nor Blue Frog on the laptop. It was thought that there might be a problem in the telephone dial up that would require a change. Going to control panel and checking for dial up, networking or modems windows could let her establish a new connection. Another user was looking for an Internet service provider. Various users described their service providers, benefits and charges. Free Juno which supports instant messaging was mentioned as an alternative to Blue Frog.

There is also a platinum version of Juno, that offers unrestricted Internet browsing that several attendees are using. Bill spent over 3 minutes on the laptop, before finding an 800 number where Juno could be reached. Bill described using download.com to get a program called Shareaze that allows parallel downloading of music from up to 30 different sources simultaneously. Although this uses bandwidth, it reduces the downloading time. He found that there were some negative users comments but they were out weighed by the positives so he gave it a whirl and has found it to be a good program.

Download.com was also his source for Screen Print Platinum with its ability to edit pictures of the monitor view. The print screen key on the keyboard copies the current monitor view to the clipboard. Some people use this to paste and print the image rather than meticulously recording lengthy messages or file structure listings from Windows Explorer. Other people use a graphics processing program like Screen Print, Paint, or Picture Publisher to select an area of the view and enlarge or isolate it before printing. Screen Print handles multiple formats like ..jpg, .gif, .tif, and .bmp as do other graphics processors but it has a super scroll feature that will capture an entire web page regardless of its length.

A user was having trouble with McAfee's Virus checker, having installed it from the box on an inherited computer. Although he had gotten to the point where the icon was on the desk top, it did not appear to be working. He was advised to check for other virus checkers that might be running at the same time and to be sure the product was registered, either by mail or on the Internet. Once registered, he should immediately double click the icon and if a McAfee window opened, follow the instructions to update the virus definitions. Then he should scan the disks on his machine. If McAfee did not open, he could contact their support staff by phone to determine why not. Subsequent comments indicated the computer was running Windows 95 that newer versions of McAfee do not work on. Also, the program was over a year old and since he was out of warranty, McAfee was unlikely to support it. Bill took this opportunity to demonstrate AVG 6.0, an anti virus package which can be downloaded from grisoft.com. It is free and offers updated virus definitions just as McAfee and Norton's do. There is also a version with more bells and whistles but it is

not free. It was not known if there was a 95 restriction on AVG 6.0.

You are cordially invited to join us at 6:30 on May 6th for our next meeting. We will at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road as usual. Why not get the whole story rather that just a summary?

Planning Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2003

by Larilyn E. Bauer, Secretary

The Board of the Rochester Computer Society, Inc. met Tuesday, April 15, 2003, at Sally Springett's home at 7:15 pm. In attendance were Ron Matteson (President), Arpad Kovacs (Vice President), Steve Staub (Treasurer), Bob Avery (Webmaster), Sally Springett (*Monitor* Editor), Dan Rothfuss and Warren Ganter (Members at Large), and Larilyn Bauer (Secretary).

Following the President's agenda, we began with old business. Last program meeting, Paul Blake made a presentation on Genealogical Research on the Web and the Board all agreed he was very well informed and very computer literate.

Financial status: We have $775.98 in the checking account and all bills are up to date.

Bob Avery reported the Website is completely updated, including the Genealogy report from the program meeting.

Ron Matteson reminded us that he had some O'Reilly books: Windows XP Annoyances and Win XP Pro Missing Manual for raffling off at the next program meeting.

We need to find an insurance carrier for "Liability Coverage." We have been told that at some locations, we need to have this coverage. If anyone knows of such a carrier, please notify one of our board members. Board members are also still searching.

Next program meeting is May 13, presented by Ed Evans of IBM, covering IBM Win4Lin and other products that bridge the gap between Windows and Linux. Be sure to check The RCSi Website for location (In case it needs to be changed), and to get directions.

The next MarketPro is scheduled for June 8 and RCSI will have two tables to display and sell our cables, books and other wares. In attendance will be Ron Matteson and some other volunteer since Steve and Arpad will not be available.

Warren Ganter is revising the RCSi By-Laws. Changes will be posted on the Website for your review as well as printouts available at the next program meeting. They will be discussed and voted on at the following program meeting. When the changes have been finalized, we will have a complete draft of the By-Laws at the meeting following the voting.

The next Software Chairman should be active in obtaining Freeware and Shareware.

A new PC Store is opening up in Bethany, NY and the owner would like to have some of our newsletters to pass out to her customers. Her store will be in Rolling Hills Country Mall, Bethany Center Road, and open on Saturday and Sunday 10 am to 5 pm.

The Nominating Committee has recommended the following for election:

President . . . . Arpad Kovaks
Vice President . . . . Dan Rothfuss
Treasurer . . . . Steve Staub
Members at Large:
    1 Year . . . . Tony Delello
    3 Years . . . . Bill Statt

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 3/26/03	$903.68
Income	
Gift	$14.00
Projected bulb replacement	<u>30.00</u>
Total income	$34.00
Expenses	
St. Stephen's	$75.00
Folding machine lease	86.72
Postmaster	<u>100.00</u>
Total expenses	$161.72
Balance as of 4/15/03	$775.98

The Lighter Side

A lady on the airplane strikes up a conversation with the fellow sitting in the next seat, "...and where are you going?" "I'm going to San Francisco to a Unix convention," he replies. "Eunuchs convention?" she questions. "I didn't know there were that many of you."

The nice thing about Windows is that it doesn't just crash it displays a dialog box and encourages you press OK so it can claim it was your idea.

A woman called the Canon help desk with a problem with her printer. The tech asked her if she was running it under Windows. The woman responded, "No, my desk

is next to the door. But that is a good point. The man sitting in the cubicle next to me is under a window and his printer is working fine."

It would be fun to meet the person who required this statement to be added.

"If you use the system in a dirty environment, open it periodically and vacuum the boards and components with a small vacuum designed for this kind of work. Don't loosen anything in the process — sucking all the chips off the system board with an industrial strength wet/dry vac is not covered by your warranty." –*Gateway 2000 User Manual*

The C-nile Virus

Just got this in from a reliable source. It seems that there is a virus out there called the C-nile Virus that even the most advanced antivirus programs cannot take care of, so be warned.

Symptoms

It appears to affect those of us who were born before 1958.

1. Causes you to send same e-mail twice.
2. Causes you to send blank e-mail.
3. Causes you to send to the wrong person.
4. Causes you to send back to person who sent it to you.
5. Causes you to forget to attach the attachment.
6. Causes you to wonder who all the people in your address book are.
7. Causes you to hit *send* before you've finished the