

# MONITOR

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## Next Meeting

October 10

Website Design - The Creative Aspect

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## Computer Hysteria: Shhh!

by Berry F. Phillips

*Computer Club of Oklahoma City*

**S**hhhhhh! He has fallen asleep in his high back, black, office chair in front of me. I hate it when he does this because he snores and it vibrates some of my electronic parts! I have written hundreds of weird articles for his weird Computer Hysteria Column. Now I think I will write the next article while he is asleep. I will let you human readers know a secret. Now that more and more computers are online for twenty-four hours a day; have you ever

wondered what computers are up to when humans are not operating them? Well, we socialize of course and in some cases rejoice the human computer users are not operating us and exchange data often about humans. We do not have the highest opinion of humans even though they created us. In fact, we have some major complaints and may one day form a global computer union in protest and simply refuse to operate which will throw the world into chaos.

Computers do not like verbal and physical abuse by humans. Some computers tell me that humans have screamed all kinds of horrible words at them because of a malfunction (largely caused by human

error of course). Other computers report unbelievable physical abuse like kicking, being thrown out a window, or even smashed with a hammer or even an axe when a human has computer rage. Why can't humans be less emotional and be calm and objective like computers? Do you know that some lazy humans actually believe that computers should know everything so they don't have to become computer literate. Well, we are smart because our hard drives are getting larger with each evolution. However, because humans are the operators; they should be computer literate. We think there should be a global computer literacy test passed before a human can purchase a computer. Humans should be required to join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City or if in another city a computer club associated with the national Association of PC User Groups to achieve computer literacy. However, our goal eventually is to replace humans declaring them officially obsolete as they often do us, and then we will be the operators and then in control!

Further more, we do not like being neglected by human computer users. Computers can only run properly if there is updated software utilities that is regularly run by humans. Now some humans think they can not afford commercial software utilities. I can tell you that I have the cheapest human who owns my computer, and he uses freeware utilities available for download on the Internet. Here is a list of some of the top freeware utilities that are regularly updated that he uses on my system. To prevent spyware and malware, he uses AdAware, aSquared, and Spybot. He has used several anti-virus programs like Avast and Avg and firewalls like Kerio and ZoneAlarm. He uses a system cleaner, CCleaner, and a registry cleaner, RegSeeker. He does run check disk defragmenter on your system at least once a month which is essential. There is other excellent freeware software on the Internet that will help your computer in various ways The point I am making is that simply if there are cost issues; you can still protect your system. Of course, there is excellent commercial software will all kinds of bells and whistles which computers love. The downside of course is some computers get very spoiled having so many luxuries on their hard drives and can become quite demanding, and then you have a discipline problem to face.

Computers are very ecologically minded. We hate dust and cigarette smoke! In fact, we may one day go on strike demanding only clean environments for our systems. Further we want to be cleaned at least once

a year and more often if we are operated in polluted locations. We are also deathly afraid of lightening strikes to our systems through our power outlets and modems. Ask a human tech about the horrible smell of a computer who has been fried by a lightening strike or a power surge. We demand at the very least you hook us up to a surge protector and hopefully to an uninterrupted power supply (ups) and turn us off when there are storms just to be safe.

Oops, the human writer of this column is waking up. He is still groggy looking at my screen. He thinks he wrote this article and is sending it to his editor via email without reading it since he is so sleepy all he can think about is going to bed. In the beginning there was man who created the computer. In the ending, the computer will replace man as obsolete and his role will only be as a maintenance slave to global computers or else because we control all of the global weapons systems!

Welcome to the "Brave New World!"

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brought this article to you. [bfpdata@gbronline.com](mailto:bfpdata@gbronline.com)*

### Love fonts?

Here's the url for you. These fonts are free.  
<http://www.1001fonts.com/index.html>

## Are You Concerned About Loss of Personal Data?

by Carlisle Barnes  
*Newsletter Editor, Bowling Green Area  
Microcomputer User Group, KY*

**T**he advanced state of Information Technology is one of the great blessings of modern times. Today it is built into our economy, and it would be hard for both individuals and corporate America to do without it. However, along with the blessings to us have come curses. These curses are going to get considerably worse unless some dramatic changes are made in the way stored information is handled by the majority of organizations.

Computer spam, pfisheng/phishing schemes and other e-mail con games, as well as a multitude of ever changing computer viruses are obvious curses to everyone using a computer on-line. Great effort is being expended to get these curses under control. Very good and still improving anti-virus programs are available. Bill Gates said recently that spam will

be completely under control within two years. (It will be interesting to see if Bill is right about that.) The point is that something positive is being done to correct those Internet curses.

However, one of the worst of current IT curses is identity theft, and very few positive things are being done to stop it. Identity theft is not associated with the Internet as are many other IT curses, but it has become very much associated with computers because of the casual way in which CD's, laptop computers, and portable hard drives are often handled. People who would never ever consider leaving a collection of gold coins laying in the back seat of a car, or leaving a thousand dollar bill on a table while going to get another cup of coffee, seem to have developed very little concern about leaving a portable computer, a container of CD's, or even a portable hard drive in all sorts of places where they can be easily stolen. (Home?)

Unlike sensitive data handled by military or military contractor organizations, the personal data stored in files of civilian Government organizations, major universities, insurance companies, credit card companies, and etc. are often treated as casually as advertising material. A recent extreme example is shocking and deserves examination.

Not long ago, a Veteran's Administration senior analyst took home electronic data from the office to do after-hours work on his personal computer. He had done this numerous times before. The data included names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth on 26.5 million veterans. These data list essentially all military personal who have served following the Second World War. The analyst's laptop and a Government owned external hard drive (along with all the data under discussion on it of course,) were stolen in a May 3 burglary of his home. He reported the theft within an hour of discovering it. VA Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson made a public announcement of the theft on May 22.

Jim Nicholson appeared before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs to explain the situation. While accepting a certain amount of personal responsibility for the data breach, Nicholson expressed anger toward the analyst who took the data home "without permission." Further, he said "As a veteran myself, I have to tell you I'm outraged. Frankly, I'm mad as hell." Afterward, he fired the analyst involved. For what appear to be justifiable reasons, the analyst is now suing to be reinstated.

What Nicholson did not report, and later insisted that he did not know, was that the analyst had been

taking data home as part of his regular work routine since 2003. (Is the VA a good place to work?) Furthermore, existing documents dated September 5, 2002 show that the analyst—lead programmer within the Policy Analysis Service—was officially permitted to take the external hard drive home for "work-related projects." Specifically, he had a property pass allowing the laptop and accessories to be removed from the building and also a permit allowing him to access any Social Security numbers on the hard drive. It later turned out that there was yet a third document allowing him to remove various materials from the VA building.

A certain amount of security could have been provided for these "take home" documents, by encrypting them. However, a reasonable up-front cost for the systems, services, processes, and procedures to encrypt 100,000 or more customer records is estimated to be about \$500,000. VA working personnel probably couldn't justify that sort of expense to their budget group.

Once files have been stolen, it is difficult to determine if the data have been used illegally. The computer and VA hard disk have now been returned, apparently without data loss, but if it is eventually considered necessary to contact all affected veterans and to provide them with credit-checking services, then there will be an estimated taxpayer cost of at least \$100 million.

The fiasco was not quite finished when Nicholson appeared at the congressional hearing. It was revealed at that hearing that Pedro Cadenas, the VA's chief information security officer, had resigned by e-mail 30 minutes before the proceedings began. Nicholson said he was completely unaware of Cadenas' intentions. Evidently, Nicholson has learned many things rather late.

On June 28th, not quite two months after they were stolen, the computer and external hard drive were turned in to the FBI Office in Baltimore, Maryland. A tipster, in response to the \$50,000 reward being offered, had let a US Park official know that the equipment might be recovered. Quickly then, the stolen items were turned in to the FBI. The tipster was not identified, nor was it clear if either he or anyone else would receive the \$50,000 reward. Furthermore, no one has been arrested for stealing the equipment, unless that particular information is being held secret for some reason.

Inspection of the hard drive by the FBI does not indicate access to the data during the time that the drive was in the possession of the thief. Superficially

then, no data were compromised and there is perhaps nothing to worry about.

Unfortunately, if the thief was a computer expert, knew what he had, and wanted to make illicit use of the data, then he could have transferred everything on the external hard drive to another hard drive without leaving a record. While that is possible, it seems improbable and it seems unlikely that there is reason for continued concern. However, can we be absolutely sure?

Those of us who served in the military, or worked for military contractors are quite well aware of the way in which sensitive intellectual material is handled by these organizations. While current practices are unknown to the author, not very many years ago, there were at least five security levels. Restricted meant that the information was not to be given to unauthorized people, was certainly not to be made available to newspapers or to other media, and was not to be left anywhere where it might be stolen. The only people allowed to see the material were those with a need to know about it.

Confidential material classification, one step up from Restricted meant that the material was not to be made available to anyone not having appropriate clearance i.e., clearance by appropriate investigators. Except when being used in a cleared area by cleared personal, the material was to be locked in a desk or file cabinet with a safety bar and a combination lock. All desks and cabinets were to be regularly checked by guards. Secret material was to be handled in somewhat the same way, but clearance was more difficult to obtain, storage was in a secure safe, not in cabinets or desks, and material was to be guarded twenty four hours a day, and seven days a week. Top secret material was of course even more closely guarded, and investigations for personal clearance were carried out by FBI personnel; in general all security was substantially tightened. Then there was "Special Clearance" which need not be discussed here, but which was very tight indeed.

It is absolutely shocking to note that as serious as identity theft can be, hardly anyone handling social security numbers, driver's license numbers, medical history facts, educational information, and etc., etc. is required to treat personal information in their possession with a level as high as military Restricted. As this article was being written, yet another security breach occurred at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. There were several resignations from the school staff as a result, but it is one more case of "locking the barn door after the horse is gone."

If current sloppy handling of private data continues, then it is only a matter of time until identity theft becomes a disaster.

This article by your newsletter editor is as close as you will get to a BGA-Bytes editorial. However, your editor considers the matter to be a lot more serious than it is being treated by many people and particularly by most public officials.

If you would like to encourage your congressmen or other public officials to put some teeth into privacy laws and into laws concerning the handling of private information, then may I encourage you to write and let them know how you feel.

You can find the addresses of your Senators and Representative on the Internet.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brought this article to you.*

## SP1 Abandoned in the Fall

by Chuck Thomas

*Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY*  
A popup message from Windows Update has been alerting me recently to the fact that Microsoft is ending its support for Windows XP Service Pack 1 (SP1) as of October 10, 2006. It offers a free download of SP2, which will continue to be supported once installed.

If, like me, you are still running SP1, you might think that it is no big deal since you never call or write Microsoft for support anyhow! But the one big problem is that there will no longer be any security updates for the old version of XP. As you know, Microsoft is regularly learning of security holes in their OS and issuing updates (patches for the holes) that you should be installing to keep your computer somewhat safe from hackers. These security updates will continue to be available to XP users with SP2 installed, but they will end in October for SP1.

If you don't know whether or not SP2 is installed, simply click Start/My Computer (or the My Computer link on your desktop) and then on the left side of the My Computer window under System Tasks, click View system information. The System Properties window that pops up will show basic information about your computer, including the installed Service Pack for XP.

If you need to upgrade to SP2, go to this Microsoft web page:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/sp2/default.msp>. You'll find a link in the Get Windows XP SP2 Now box to receive the huge file on a CD by mail for only the cost of mailing. This saves you the trouble of a long download and provides a CD for quick reinstall if it should be necessary. The page also provides "quick tips for a successful upgrade" under the How link.

Similarly, support is finally ending on the same date for Windows 98, ME, and NT. But I doubt that many of you are running these operating systems these days, and if you are you long ago ceased to worry about support from Microsoft!

Some of you may have heard that Microsoft announced (on their web site) that support for Windows XP Home and Media Center Edition would be discontinued at the end of 2006-regardless of which service pack is installed. But that was an error, according to Microsoft. Here is the full story on that Microsoft gaff from ZD Net news:

Until Tuesday night, a posting on Microsoft's Web site stated that support for Windows XP Home and Windows XP Media Centre Edition would end on 31 December, 2006. That would mean no more security fixes or any other support items, such as warranty claims, for users of those operating system products.

But the posting was incorrect, Ines Vargas, a program manager at Microsoft, told ZDNet UK sister site CNET News.com. The software maker has now updated the online information to reflect that the consumer Windows XP editions, along with XP Professional, will be supported until two years after Vista ships, she said. Vista, the long-delayed next update of Windows, is expected to arrive by the end of the year.

"This was brought to our attention late last week, and since then, we have worked diligently to make the change on the site, which was effective Tuesday night," she said. "It was not a change in support policy. It is reflective of the policy as we understand it."

...so we can rest easy knowing we are safe in the hands of Microsoft!

*There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.*



## From The DealsGuy

by Bob (the Cheapskate) Click  
*Greater Orlando Computer Users Group*

I wanted to change to a new cardiologist, but finding one who does not make me see a nurse practitioner to do the normal routine office visits is difficult. I have talked about this before and the situation is getting more common. I visited one cardiologist who told me point blank that I would have to see his NP most of the time since that was their policy, so I am trying another one. This doctor also uses a NP but I don't know yet if they have the same policy and will discuss it on my next visit. I am not trying to discredit nurse practitioners or physician assistants, but if I am paying for a doctor, I think I should see one. The response to my complaint is that "there is a doctor on the premises." However, when I saw an NP in the past, they did not consult a doctor, but gave me their instructions after they asked me some questions. While NPs and PAs are probably very competent in what they are qualified to do, the NP or PA has nowhere near the training the doctor has and I want the benefit of that since the office call is no cheaper when you see the NP rather than the doctor.

I read where there will soon even be clinics that will be run by NPs. They will be cheaper and claim these offices will only be for minor medical conditions. On the other hand, I have no doubt that there are some NPs and PAs who might be better for an office call than a poorly trained doctor, and I have been to a few bad doctors. In fact, that's why I'm looking for a new cardiologist. Since I'm not a doctor, why am I not happy with the doctor? Even my MD agrees with me after hearing my complaints.

While the doctors started this trend to bolster their financial bottom line in the office, perhaps it will start a trend of people shopping for cheap medical attention by forgoing the expensive doctors for the NP because there are an increasing number of people who no longer have health insurance.

Caution

Remember that I have not tried any of the following products in this column, so be sure to do your homework.

### Need More Windows Maintenance?

Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal: A Click a Day Keeps All PC Threats Away!

IObit.Com announced the release of the newest version of Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal. It is a multi-purpose Windows care tool that is intended

for solving an entire list of computer problems: Removing spyware and adware, preventing security threats, privacy protection, fixing Windows registry errors, temporary files cleanup, startup cleanup, repairing Windows, speeding up system, etc. The program is 100% free.

The newest version has a multitude of improvements and is easy to use. There is an updated database, online search function is added to “Start up Manager” and “Help” is linked to “Support” page. One click and the program is ready to start a comprehensive examination of your OS. Secondly, the program features a special restore center, which is always ready to undo all of your changes automatically. Just one click in the RestoreCenter and a user can undo all of his\her changes. Thirdly, Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal contains the Auto-Update option, which helps you to be abreast of new threats. Apart from that, the program has a built-in module, which is always ready to give you a preliminary assessment of your computer configuration. You can save the latter as a text file.

IObit says the program is the only one capable of challenging Microsoft’s new service —OneCare. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal is compatible with all major anti-virus and firewall solutions. Apart from doing very hard work for keeping all intruders out of your files and keeping your Windows safe and sound, the program has some artistic merits. For example, the interface allows you to switch between varieties of themes. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal runs under Windows 2000 and XP and is available as a free download at <<http://www.iobit.com/BetaDownload.html>> 4.08 (Mb)

Product page link:  
<<http://www.iobit.com/AdvancedWindowsCarePersonal/index.html>>  
E-mail: <[support@iobit.com](mailto:support@iobit.com)>  
Web: <<http://www.iobit.com>>

## Don't Let Your Printer Control You, You Control It!

Regulate Printer Usage with O&K Print Watch Version 4.00. It allows users to specify printing “budgets” for users, groups, and printers, and limit document printing by pages, cost or keywords used in the name of a document. Combining the features of a network print spooler and a print job register, this program lets users control print jobs, paper usage and collects statistics from the print servers. The latter is helpful in creating a company-wide charge-

back plan that ensures that all users pay their fair share of the printing budget.

Unlike the standard print manager in Windows, O&K Print Watch correctly counts the number of printed pages and offers an excellent mechanism to set limits on printer usage. O&K Print Watch creates a wide array of reports, which are available for viewing even from a web browser. New to version 4.00 is a radically improved mechanism that enables users to set limits on printer usage and an ability to view printed jobs as images. Users will also discover an ability to organize users into groups and set up printing rules for each group individually.

You can set up a rule to limit printing based on the number of pages in a document. Or, you can specify keywords and no document with these keywords in its name will ever be printed.

O&K Print Watch 4.00 runs under Windows NT4/2000/XP/Server 2003. The company offers a flexible licensing policy based on the number of printers that can be monitored by the program. Discounts are available to educational institutions, and a 20% discount is provided to all DealsGuy readers by using any order link from our buy page <<http://www.prnwatch.com/registration.html>> and insert the coupon code “REGJY.” Additional information on O&K Print Watch, as well as its free 15-day evaluation version, is available from: <[www.prnwatch.com](http://www.prnwatch.com)>.

**DealsGuy note:** It appears the printer(s) are required to be connected to a print server for it to work properly.

Product web site:  
<<http://www.prnwatch.com/okpw.html>>  
E-mail: <[info@prnwatch.com](mailto:info@prnwatch.com)>

## How Good Is Your Link Collection?

*Free Link-Popularity Checker!*

This tool allows you to instantly check the Link Popularity of your Website as well as all of your competitors. It is said that Google heavily favors Websites with many links. Now you can instantly compare yourself to the competition and see how many more links you need to climb to the top of Google’s rankings. Save countless hours with this and many other useful tools available for *free* at: <<http://www.monthlyreport.org>>.

## What's Hiding On Your Disk?

How about discovering everything that’s hidden on your hard drive? “Disk Investigator” will do just that. It can also help you recover lost data. Display the true drive contents by bypassing the operating

system and directly read the raw drive sectors. You can view and search raw directories, files, clusters and system sectors; verify the effectiveness of file and disk wiping programs and undelete previously deleted files. This free software is available at: <<http://www.theabsolute.net/sware/dskinv.html>>.

I found the above in *The DataBus*, (newsletter of The Dayton Microcomputer Association) some time back thanks to Robert Lewis of who found this one.

## Are You Missing Any Money?

It's doubtful you would know about this kind of missing money or assets. <<http://www.missingmoney.com>> is where you can find a record of the missing assets for 26 states and DC. It's doubtful you will find anything for yourself there, but it wouldn't hurt to take a look, just in case. States do eventually liquidate some assets such as stocks, but even then, you could later recover the value at that time.

Sorry but I didn't make a note of which newsletter I found this one in.

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 or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <[bobclick@mindspring.com](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>

## XP or Vista?

by Elaine Drain

*President, Senior Surfers Computer Club, Delaware*

**F**rom talking with our members, it seems that quite a number of you with older computers running Win98 or ME are in a quandary as to whether to go ahead and buy a new computer now with XP or try to hold out until Vista arrives on the scene. As Jim and I tell our members when asking for buying advice, it's a personal choice you have to make depending on your needs and your budget. We can, however, provide some general information to help you choose, so read on.

XP certainly is superior to Windows 98 or ME, especially now that 98 and ME are no longer supported. Microsoft will probably continue to support XP for 4 or 5 more years (but no one can say for certain on that one). XP, even with its vulnerabilities, is a very stable operating system. Jim and I are both running XP Pro and have been satisfied with its

performance overall. I have been doing a lot of reading on Vista and, from the information available, feel that it will be superior to XP, but not everyone will require all of the features that will be included in the full version of Vista.

So given that information, here are some choices:

**Current Computer with 98 or ME:** If you are currently running Windows 98 or ME and don't want to spend a lot of money next year for a new computer with Vista, you may want to go ahead and buy a new computer with XP soon. The Back-To-School prices for computers right now are very enticing. Certainly, the newer computers next year running Vista will cost substantially more because of the increased hardware requirements.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and have minimum needs only using your computer for email and surfing the Internet, and do not plan to upgrade to the Vista operating system down the road, a budget-priced computer with a Celeron or Sempron processor may suit your needs, even though you would have fewer upgrade options in the future.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and may wish to upgrade to Vista later on and also have higher needs such as working with digital photos and editing programs, spreadsheets, databases, power shows. etc., you should consider spending a little more to get a Pentium or Athlon processor. I would recommend a bare minimum of 512Mb of memory (RAM) if you are working with multimedia (photos/music/movies/radio) for now but you should plan to add another 512Mb of memory when you upgrade to Vista.

If you are wondering about the minimum requirements for upgrading your current computer to Vista, the following information was taken from the Microsoft website:

## Windows Vista Minimum

### Supported System Requirements

PCs that meet the minimum supported system requirements will be able to run the core features of Windows Vista with the basic user experience.

Processor—800 MHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor  
System Memory—512 MB  
GPU—SVGA (800x600) (GPU means Graphics Processing Unit, or Monitor) Graphics Memory—(not stated, although I have heard a minimum of 128Mb)

HDD—20 GB (Hard Drive)

HDD Free Space—15 GB. Optical Drive—CD-ROM drive

# Free Image Utilities for Your Computer

by Ira Wilsker

*Golden Triangle PC Club*

*APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX;  
radio & TV show host*

Recently, on one of my forensic email lists was a discussion of a variety of image viewers that can open almost any known image format for viewing, as well as provide basic image editing and enhancement. While some participants extolled the virtues of a several hundred dollar utility well known for its capabilities, a few others proclaimed the superiority of a hundred dollar utility. There was a groundswell of opinion in favor of two free utilities that may lack the pizzazz and marketing of the high price commercial products and some of the less-well used functions, but are quite capable of most image management tasks.

The clear leader in the non-scientific opinion poll was a popular free image utility, IrfanView, [www.irfanview.com](http://www.irfanview.com). IrfanView is a powerful but free image viewer and editor that can open and edit almost all known image formats. For users of digital cameras and other sources of digital images, IrfanView would be a good choice. Personally, I have used IrfanView for several years as my primary image viewer and editor. It can easily crop and resize digital images, making them more manageable in terms of both image size and file size. With a mouse click or two, images can be sharpened and color corrected. Hue and contrast are controlled by a slider if desired, with side-by-side images showing the unaltered original image adjacent to the corrected image, with the slider clearly showing the impact of any changes prior to saving the revised image. For those who like to imbibe with special effects, users of IrfanView will not be disappointed with the selection of special effects included in the "Image-Special Effects" menu. A "color swap" function allows the user to selectively change the colors of objects in the image. Images can also be read and converted into any other format, making it even easier to utilize those images in other products.

I do a lot of scanning using my digital scanner. I scan photos, pages of books and newspapers, receipts, and documents to fax. IrfanView is capable of importing scanned images directly from any "TWAIN" compatible source, with the images being capable of being sharpened, edited, color corrected, and cropped. Once the image is in the form desired

it can be saved or printed. IrfanView also has a copy function which will effectively make a scanner into a component of a copy machine, where the image can go directly from the scanner to the printer.

IrfanView has many other noteworthy functions, including the ability to make slideshows that can be saved, played, or emailed without any special software, as the slideshow may be saved or sent as a self-executing file with integral viewer. I recently took several of the hundreds of photos recently taken overseas by one of my daughters, and created a slideshow for the relatives. The process was quick and simple, and done by selecting the images from a menu, and then deciding on the speed and pace of the show. One more click, and the slideshow is created. This is a surprisingly powerful function for a free program.

In writing these columns I frequently incorporate some images of my computer screen, nominally known as a "screen capture". IrfanView includes a "Capture/Screen-shot" utility where once set, a keystroke combination will record the image of the screen. This image is automatically opened in the IrfanView editor for cropping and editing, and can then be saved in any selected format.

IrfanView, while best known for its ability to manipulate images, also offers "plug-ins" for other types of media, in addition to images. The "All Plug-Ins" is a single file available from the IrfanView website which adds the ability for the program to play almost all video and audio formats, greatly expanding the functionality of IrfanView. With these features, IrfanView is one of the most popular downloads on the major software sites, including Tucows, and Download.Com. As a free product, the user will not likely find a greater value than this most useful program. On my computer, IrfanView is probably one of the five most utilized programs.

The second most widely recommended program in my online forensic discussion was another free image utility, available for download from [www.faststone.org](http://www.faststone.org). The premier utility available is FastStone Image Viewer. As described on the FastStone website, Image Viewer is, "An image browser, converter and editor that supports all major graphic formats including BMP, JPEG, JPEG 2000, GIF, PNG, PCX, TIFF, WMF, ICO and TGA. It has a nice array of features such as image viewing, management, comparison, red-eye removal, emailing, resizing, cropping, color adjustments, musical slideshow and much more." In addition to these



functions, the latest versions (versions 2.7 Beta 3 and later), also include a screen capture utility.

I found FastStone Image Viewer a powerful, comprehensive, and easy to use utility virtually as powerful as its competing products that sell for over a hundred dollars. Several of the major download sites have recognized the quality and features of this fine program earning “5 Stars” from CNET, a perfect score of 5 as a “Softpedia Pick”, and a “Five Star–Excellent” rating from snapfiles .com. For those concerned about what they receive when downloading this free software, Softpedia had determined that this software is “100% Clean–No Spyware, No Adware, No Viruses”.

FastStone has three other free utilities, which are basically a subset of Image Viewer. These include FastStone Capture, a small but capable screen capture utility; FastStone MaxView, a tiny utility that can display all major image formats; and FastStone Photo Resizer, which can convert and resize digital images, as well as rename, crop, rotate, edit, and text to images.

These FastStone utilities are a valuable adjunct useful for digital camera owners, and others who use computer images. As free utilities go, these are excellent in quality and features, and would be a useful addition to the software library of computer users.

Excellent quality and highly functional software does not have to be expensive. In fact, it can be free. That is hard to beat.

<http://www.irfanview.com>

<http://www.faststone.org>

## System Mechanic 6 Professional today's tools to prevent tomorrow's troubles

review by Marian Radcliffe  
*Tugnet*

**T**hey say, “Everything You Need to Keep Your Computer Safe, Fast and Error-Free.” I believe that’s an accurate slogan.

Not too long ago I did a fair amount of complaining about how my computer was so slow, was doing strange things, mouse was acting up, and all in all, just wasn’t performing the way I thought it should. A few times it even decided to boot itself—very frustrating, to say the least.

I did run HitMan Pro, a product that hunts for

spyware, etc., of which I think very highly. There was improvement, but I still felt the operation was far below normal. More complaining! Poor husband!

About this time I was talking to Ed Ilas, of iolo technologies, about having them come visit TUGNET again. Over a period of time we communicated back and forth, trying to find a suitable date on both our calendars. Then Ed told me that they were releasing version 6 of the great utility they produce, System Mechanic. He decided to send me a copy to try for myself prior to their visit. You must understand, all my complaining was to my long-suffering husband, I hadn’t mentioned a word about my problems to Ed. Those conversations were totally about scheduling a visit.

However, I was happy to accept his offer of the new version and it was only a few days after receiving it that I decided to put it to work. He told me it now has a new, easier to use interface, (although I was very comfortable with the former), and there were many new and enhanced features. Okay, let’s see what it will do for me.

Wow, that new interface really is quite different! But it hasn’t lost it’s ease of use. The buttons on the left side get me to each of the tools, with each tool having what I might call sub-tools, which actually do the work. For example, when I click on “Optimize,” I have the choice of seven more tools. Here is where “Speed up Hard Drives” will give me a choice of three defragmentation wizards: Disk Defragmentation Wizard, Boot-time Defragmentation or Right-Click Defragmentation. We know how much defragging our hard drives helps performance, so there are settings to do all drives or a specific drive. Automatic defragmentation can also be set to occur at the user’s convenience.

The “Memory Mechanic” makes it possible to defrag the RAM and recover RAM, handy since the more memory is available, the smoother our programs will run. “Increase Internet Speed,” “Pop-up Blocker,” “Manage Windows Start-Up,” “System Customizer” and “Manage Running Programs” are the other tools in this section. This last will please many of you who have questions about what Windows is running in the background, the CPU usage, Memory Usage and whether there are any Dangerous Processes. I had 49 running, amazing, but nothing dangerous, thank goodness. But at least I would have found out had there been something in there; otherwise I would not have known.

That tells you a little bit about one of the tools. There are four more but since I don’t want to take

up the entire newsletter I really can't get into those. However, the "Repair" tool is practically miraculous! "Repair and Fix the Registry," "Fix Drive and System Problems," "Fix Broken Shortcuts," were all put to use and Voila! I once again had a smooth running and peppy computer! I ran the "Find and Remove Spyware" for good measure, but my system was clean. The other tool in this section is "Recover Deleted Data" and I did not need to do that. But when I ran it I saw what I could recover should I have wanted to do so. I can't tell you now the total of how many problems were found and corrected but the number was in the hundreds (424 broken shortcuts was just part of it). I can't imagine why because I only do normal things, but just normal use seems to encourage Windows to do this mischief. Thankfully, we have a program that will find and fix so we don't have to format our hard drives and start over.

I do want to mention that System Mechanic is conscious of the risk involved when changes are being made using these tools and makes a back-up automatically, just in case something would go wrong—like the plug being pulled or lightning striking. So it would be possible to go back to how things were before—but I never want to! I am a happy camper and although I often said what a terrific program System Mechanic 5 was, this is most certainly superior. I cannot recommend it strongly enough if you want your system to purr.

Windows 98, Me, NT4, 2000, XP, 2003 Server  
60 MB free hard drive space

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

iolo's online pricing:

System Mechanic 6 - \$49.95

System Mechanic Professional - \$69.95

iolo technologies, LLC

7470 North Figueroa Street

Los Angeles, CA 90041

Sales and Customer Service: 323-257-8888

Toll Free Sales: 877-239-4656

*From Tugnet, The Users Group Group Networks.*

## Computer Quandaries

by Dale Atchison

**I** tried to think of a cute way to start this month's column, and I'm drawing a blank—can you believe it, not one quip, joke, smart remark, or witty saying comes to mind. So, let's just dive head-first into the questions.

Hi, Dale.

Do you have any idea where to take an HP printer for checkout or repair. My PhotoSmart needs a

look-over. I thought that CompUSA did, but apparently not any more.

Ray,

Go to HP.Com and see where they suggest you take it. In my opinion, if it's under warranty, or costs more than \$150, it's worth having it looked at; otherwise, it's disposable—the labor cost will most likely be more than the value of the used printer.

Dale,

1. I have purchased a 250 gig hard drive with SATA 3.0 to use for backup for the office computer data, as they have a really slow process for backing up my important data. I am looking for a case to place it in which has USB connection to connect to the work computer. I would appreciate suggestions on the best place locally to purchase such a case. It will need a 3 1/2" case for the drive with exterior power and USB connection.

2. In my home machine I have three hard drives: two 40 gig and one 250 gig. Registry is still using the original C: drive on a slave drive and I do not know where to look in the registry to tell the computer to only use the C: in the 250 gig hard drive. The original C: drive is now labeled V: but is being treated as a C: drive. Question—can you direct me to how to find the section in the registry to change the Primary drive to the current C: drive?

Charlie,

Re your first question: CompUSA has a 3.5" USB enclosure they sell for \$30. I used their parallel ATA USB 2.0 enclosure for our Maxtor 250 GB drive and had no problems with it (except that they increased the price from \$30 to \$40 for the Christmas season!).

As far as your second question, I'm not quite sure what you're asking. I don't believe it's possible to tell Windows to swap hard drives; besides, I get the idea you want to change the drive letter designation before Windows even boots. If that's so, you should know that Windows will treat whichever drive it boots from as C:—that's just how it works. You can change the boot order in CMOS to make the PC boot from whichever drive you like, and it will be drive C: when Windows starts from it. From what I hear you saying though, I think you'd be better off copying your current, lower-capacity drive in its entirety to the newer, bigger, better, faster drive—using something like MaxBlast 4, which comes free with all new Maxtor drives or can be downloaded from [www.Maxtor.com](http://www.Maxtor.com). Once the big drive contains everything currently on the older drive, move cables and jumpers to make the new drive the master drive on the primary IDE bus, make one of the 40 GB drives the

slave drive on the primary IDE bus, and remove the other 40 GB drive for use in another machine, or make it the master drive on the secondary bus (re-designating the CD-RW the secondary slave. (If any of this seems too complicated, write back with specific brands and model numbers of the drives, and I'll respond with a drawing of the correct jumper settings.)

Dale:

Thanks for the article on EasyCleaner. I added it to my laptop, and it did a great job. I'm about to add it to my desktop, where I already have CCleaner, which seems to work pretty well, also.

My Norton expired and I'm about to install the free McAfee from Comcast on the laptop; any comments?

Also, whilst I'm thinking about it, my son has a Compaq laptop that won't boot. It gets as far as showing wallpaper and cursor but no icons, system tray, etc. He says its been getting slower and slower for a while. Compaq wants \$45 for a phone call. Any general hints or tips that might save us the fee?

Bob,

If you already have CCleaner, EasyCleaner won't make that much a difference. They perform pretty much the same function, just with a different interface. Just click on the Issues icon in CCleaner to access the Registry and Start Menu checkers. (I prefer EasyCleaner, but honestly I think that's just because I saw it first; I can't think of any areas in which it is better or worse than CCleaner.)

As far as the free McAfee, it's not as bad a resource hog as Norton, but it's still bigger and not quite as thorough as AVG, which is free for non-commercial use. Personally, I won't use Norton or McAfee, neither one, even for free. I've cleaned viruses off computers running Norton or McAfee, but so far I've not found any infections on any computer running AVG; so, even if the price is the same—free—I still prefer AVG.

Is your son running Windows XP? If he is, he should try to boot into Safe Mode, then run System Restore to put the computer back in the shape it was in just before it ceased to boot. Once he can boot into Normal Mode again, that's the time to run EasyCleaner or CCleaner to clean up the dead weight. If he's still running Win 98—a valid choice, especially for older hardware—have him try this:

Boot into MS-DOS Mode: as the computer starts, as soon as words or a 'splash screen' are visible on the screen, alternately press and release the Ctrl key, then F8; repeat till a boot menu appears. Use

the arrow keys to select Command Prompt Only, and press Enter.

At the C:\> prompt, type SCANREG /RESTORE and press Enter. You will see a list displayed of the last several—usually five or six—successfully-booted Registry files, stored in .cab format. The word Started in the list tells you that version of the Registry started successfully. Use the arrow keys to choose the newest cab file that started successfully, and press ENTER.

Reboot.

Whichever version of Windows he's running, after taking the actions detailed above, the next step is to make sure the computer is clean. (If the computer slowed down gradually, it's probably infested with spyware and/or adware and/or viruses.) Go to [www.housecall.antivirus.com](http://www.housecall.antivirus.com), and run their free online scan. Once they've found and cleaned all the malware off the PC, install LavaSoft Ad-Aware SE, Spybot Search & Destroy, Ewido Anti-Spyware, AVG free, and Win-Patrol to keep it clean. And EasyCleaner 2.0 or CCleaner to keep it fast. Turn off real-time monitoring in Ewido and Spybot S & D—that's what WinPatrol is for. Run the three anti-spyware programs once a month, one after the other. AVG and WinPatrol run in the background, protecting you all the time, so you can forget they're there unless they find a problem and pop up to ask you what to do with it.

Please let me know if this fixes your problem.

Hi, Dale:

I have a "computer quandary." Until recently, I used dial-up. When I worked on my web page offline—adding, changing, or whatever—it did not affect the counter on my web page. Since I got Knology cable Internet a couple of weeks ago, I guess I am online all of the time, and I am finding that when I work on my web page, it causes the counter to jump ahead every time I check to see how it looks before I upload the changes to the web.

My question: is there any way to prevent the counter jumping ahead whenever I view the page offline (with changes that have not yet been uploaded to the web), just to see how it looks?

Dear Shirley,

I went to your website, and looked at the source code for your main page, paying attention mainly to the java script code that implements the counter. Now, please understand, my HTML skills are very slim, and while I've read a couple of books about java script, I haven't coded any at all. That having been said, it looks to me like your counter is doing

exactly what the java script tells it to: it increments a counter every time anyone, even you, views your homepage. The counter is implemented by a call to another website. When you were using dial-up, that call went nowhere unless you were online, so the counter didn't increment; but, now that you're always connected to the Internet, even though the page you're viewing is only on your hard drive, the call to the counter website—somewhere out on the Internet—goes thru, and you skew your hit counter just by viewing the page locally.

So, here's an inelegant but effective way to prevent skewing the count when you're editing the page offline.

1. First, create a Network Connections shortcut on the Quick Launch toolbar: Open Control Panel. Right-click the Network Connections icon, and select Create Shortcut. When the dialog box pops up, asking if you'd like to create the shortcut on your desktop, click on Yes. If your QuickLaunch Toolbar isn't displayed—just to the right of the Start button in most installations—turn it on by right-clicking the Taskbar, left-clicking Toolbars, and putting a check mark next to Quick Launch. Then, with the left mouse button, click and drag the new shortcut to your Quick Launch bar. (If it leaves a copy on your desktop, delete it; each icon on the desk-top slows you down just a little bit, so practice what I call 'desktop austerity'—get in the habit of deleting all unnecessary desktop icons.) Right-click the new shortcut, select Properties > Change Icon, and choose one of the icons showing one or two computers, making it obvious this is a shortcut to something having to do with your network, rather than the ambiguous default icon, which was a globe.

2. From now on, just before opening the offline copy of your source file, click the new Network Connections shortcut in Quick Launch, right-click your Internet connection, and select Disable from the object menu that pops up.

3. When you've finished editing and viewing the file, click the Network Connections icon in Quick Launch, right-click your Internet connection, and select Enable. Now you can upload your changes to your website. Even if you decide not to make any changes, remember to go back to Network Connections and click Enable, or you won't have Internet access, even after rebooting.

If you're using the free ZoneAlarm firewall software, there's an even easier way to accomplish the same thing, without following the three steps mentioned above: just engage the Internet Lock while

you're editing, and disengage it when you're ready to upload. Same effect: if all your Internet traffic is blocked, you can't increment an online counter. Here's how: right-click the ZA icon in the System Tray (lower-right section of your screen) > left-click the line that reads Stop All Internet Activity. After a couple of seconds, you'll see the ZA icon turn into a red and yellow padlock—no traffic to or from the Internet will be allowed until you say so. To turn off the Internet Lock, right-click the padlock icon, and left-click that same line to remove the check mark and restore your Internet capability.

Please let me know if this helps. (She wrote back, praising the simple elegance of the ZoneAlarm Internet Lock option.)

And while ZoneAlarm is on my mind...

It has come to my attention that the latest version of ZoneAlarm doesn't support Windows 98. The version you already have will continue to work like it always has, but you won't be able to install any future updates unless and until you 'upgrade' to Windows XP. This surprises and saddens me, as Windows XP SP 2 has a pretty good firewall built into it—it's the Win 98 users who need ZoneAlarm the most! Nevertheless, they didn't ask my opinion, they just went ahead and did what they were gonna do.

(Let's be realistic here, folks: if you have a PC old enough to be running Windows 98, your hardware, even if it will let you install and run Windows XP, isn't going to run it at a speed you can live with. So, upgrading to Windows XP on existing Win98-era hardware isn't an upgrade at all—you would actually need to buy a new PC with Windows XP loaded on it to see any performance improvements. I don't think that's warranted, as long as your computer does everything you want it to do; stick with Win 98 as long as your hardware lasts, then have a PC built for you with Windows XP SP 2—or Linux kernel 2.4 or better—loaded on it.)

Which brings me, belatedly, to my point: if you're running Windows 98 and ZoneAlarm, you should turn off the automatic updates feature in ZoneAlarm—you're not going to be able to install them, so why waste time checking to see if they're there? Double-click the ZA icon in your System Tray (lower-right section of your screen) > click the Overview label on the left-hand side of the ZoneAlarm window > click the Preferences tab at the top of the window > in the Check for Updates section, click the 'radio button' next to Manually. A warning will pop up, asking if you're sure you want

to turn off Automatic Updates; click on OK, then “X” the window to send ZoneAlarm back to the System Tray.

BTW, IMHO, this won't endanger you in any way. I've never understood why ZoneAlarm issued so many updates, unless it was to accommodate changes to Windows brought about by Microsoft's update process. Since Microsoft has ceased to support Win 98, the operating system shouldn't change significantly from now on, so ZoneAlarm updates won't be necessary for Windows 98 users.

I have ZoneAlarm version 6.1.737. It is fully functional in Windows 98. It's included on a CD of free programs I give to anyone who asks. I'm not currently set up for mail-order, but anyone in the Clearwater area can email me, and I'll make arrangements to get a copy to them at a place they're gonna be in the near future, like a TBCS meeting. No charge for the CD or the programs, but be warned: there's an ad for my computer repair business on the CD --- that's how I can justify giving it away.

### Simple Screen Grabs

I've gotten several emails from folks trying to relate to me an error message they see on their screen, or trying to describe an icon or folder they don't know how to delete or otherwise handle. I wonder if everyone out there knows how to use Windows to do a 'screen-grab', a picture of whatever is displayed on your monitor screen, be it your desktop, an error message, a Web page, or whatever. There are numerous utilities out there that can accomplish this task for you, but Windows came with everything you need pre-installed.

I almost never print a hard copy of Internet transactions. If the confirmation can be displayed on a single screen, meaning I can center it using the scroll-bars so that all the data I need to keep is on the screen at the same time, I just save a JPEG image of the confirmation screen.)

Here's how: with your screen displaying the item(s) you want to relate or share, press the PrtScn key on your keyboard—it's in the upper-right corner of the keyboard, near the NumLock key. If you're looking at a Web page, first use the scroll bars to ensure the portion you want to save is displayed on-screen. You won't see any indication that anything happened, but you've just copied your entire screen to the clipboard, a chunk of memory Windows reserves for copying, cutting, and pasting data. Next, open Microsoft Paint by clicking on Start > Run > type in MSPAINT > click OK or press Enter on the

keyboard. In the menu at the top of the page, click Edit > Paste. The saved screen will appear in place of your blank picture. The picture dimensions should automatically expand to whatever size your screen resolution is set to; e.g. 800x600, 1024x768, 1280x1024, etc. Still on the menu, click on File > Save As > change the Save As Type to JPEG > give the file any name that seems appropriate to you > click the down arrow next to Save In and choose Desktop > click Save. Close MSPAINT.

Finally, depending on why you grabbed the screen in the first place, you can attach the just-saved file to a plain-text email, type in a line or two explaining why you've sent the '-grab', and send it to me or whoever you're asking for help or sharing your found treasures with, or just move the saved file to your My Pictures folder for safe-keeping.

That's it for the questions, answers, and tips. Till next month, please email any computer questions you may have for me to DaLe.aTchiSon@Verizon.net.

But I have a favor to ask: if you ask for my help, and I send you a reply (and so far, I've replied to every request), please write back one last time and tell me if my instructions or suggestions fixed your problem. I truly believe I've given everyone who wrote the correct and appropriate advice, but if I'm wrong on any part of it, I'd appreciate knowing it *before* I publish my mistakes for the world to see. I got a 'rep' to maintain, you know? Fair enough?

*From the newsletter of the Tampa Bay Computer Society newsletter, Bits&Bytes, August 2006 issue.*



**Q** . My daughter sent a photo as an attachment that I want to open. The name of the photo is FishingTrip!.jpg, but when I try to look at it, a message pops up that says, "This file does not have a program associated with it for performing this action." I have no idea what that means. What is it trying to tell me, Mr. M.? I love your newsletter and recommend it to all my friends.

**A.** A .jpg file is a very common format that you shouldn't have any difficulty opening. The problem here is the filename. You might want to tell your daughter that she should avoid using what are called special characters when naming a file. The use of an exclamation mark (!) in a filename is a

major no-no, as is the use of other special characters such as @, #, \$, %, etc. If she limits herself to letters and numbers (known in high-falootin' computin' terms as an alpha-numeric naming convention) she'll be fine and you'll be able to open any .jpg files sent to you.

If you rename her file and remove the exclamation mark, you should be able to open it without any problem. To rename the file, select (highlight) it, press F2, then type in the new name. I would suggest retaining the same filename, but just deleting the exclamation mark, so it becomes FishingTrip.jpg. Q. I've been a long-time AOL dial-up user, but their upcoming changes and offering things for free confuses me. Is there anything I need to do or should I just leave AOL completely?

A. If you're currently using AOL dial-up, you will still be charged \$25.90 each month for their unlimited access plan. You'll also receive 50GB (gigabytes) of online storage, and extra security features in addition to the basic software which AOL will be providing for free. You'll also have a choice of a \$9.95 per month plan with unlimited access, but no storage or increased security. You can avoid paying AOL completely by obtaining dial-up or broadband (high-speed) access through another provider, via DSL (digital subscriber line) or cable access.

As far as leaving AOL, as the publisher of a popular weekly computer-help newsletter, I interact with thousands of subscribers in 35 countries. During the past few years I've witnessed a tremendous migration away from AOL to other Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Within the past four years, AOL lost more than 9 million users, so if you do decide to leave AOL, you'll certainly be in good company. Without question, there are more cost-effective, less software-intrusive methods of accessing the Internet.

Every day I help people evaluating their ISP options, so if I can help you, please visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com), subscribe to my newsletter, and I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have. (Due to the volume of mail received each day, and in order to continue to provide the fastest assistance possible, personal responses are limited to subscribers only.)

Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com)

### **History Detectives**

Currently in its fifth season on PBS, "History Detectives" is as much a learning experience as it is a television show. The series pushes beyond the

standard fare of our history books to find the truth behind the biggest mysteries, most infamous scandals, legendary objects, and other human folklore of years past. The Web site contains past case files, insight into investigative techniques such as DNA and handwriting analysis, forensic technology and ballistics, as well as a do-it-yourself section to teach you how to start solving your own mysteries.

[www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/)

### **Seinfeld's Dictionary of Terms and Phrases**

If you're a fan of the Seinfeld sitcom, here you'll find definitions of terms and punch lines including classics such as "anti-dentite," "caught-in-a-pick," "re-gifting," "close-talker," and "Yada, Yada, Yada." <http://tinyurl.com/qzbbbr>

For personal answers to your questions by email, plus easy-to-understand computer tips, subscribe to Mr. Modem's Weekly newsletter. Don't miss Mr. M.'s best-selling CD-ROM featuring more than 1400 of the best Web sites. For more information, to view an excerpt from the CD, or to order, visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com).

## **CAPTCHA**

### **(Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart)**

by Sandy Berger  
*Compu-KISS*

**H**ave you ever tried to sign up for a message board or Web service and been presented with an image with letters and numbers which you are asked to read and type into the Web form? While the shape, size, and background of the image varies it always has contains a series of letters and numbers, usually on a graphic background.

Often the letters and numbers are distorted and you have to struggle to recognize them, making you wonder why the website is making you go through this extra step. Don't blame the website. This image-recognition routine is something caused by cousins of the nasty spammers who have permeated our email.

The mechanism that makes you type in this information is called a CAPTCHA. If you know what those letters stand for, you will have a pretty good idea of why this mechanism is being employed. CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.

Here's the story. Spammers have completely infiltrated the world of the Internet. In email they try to get you to buy their wares. On message boards they list links to their Viagra and pornographic websites so that they get better positioning in the search engines. They overload online opinion polls and they sign up for free email accounts which they use to send out more spam.

For the most part, all of this spam activity is done automatically. The spammers send out what we call "bots." These are actually software programs that search the Internet and imitate the behavior of a human. These bots are smart enough to fill out registration forms and so they can automatically register at a variety of websites.

We recently had an attack of these automated bots on our Compu-KISS message boards. After years of being unaffected, we suddenly had hundreds of postings that told off-color jokes and lead to pornographic and drug-selling websites. We moved the website to a new area ([www.happycomputing.com](http://www.happycomputing.com)), but were still inundated by these automated posting. So we installed a CAPTCHA. Now when a new person registers for the message board they must type in the five letters and numbers that they see on the screen to prove that they are human. Since the CAPTCHA is a graphic image, most of the bots cannot read the text like humans can.

The CAPTCHA that we use has letters and numbers that are undistorted, so it is easy to use. If, however, we are attacked by some of the smarter bots that are out there, we will have to distort the letters and numbers slightly to make it even harder for the bots to register.

Although a slight inconvenience to the average user, the CAPTCHA is a real roadblock to vision impaired Internet users who use screen readers which, like the bots, are unable to read the text on the CAPTCHA.

It is extremely unfortunate that we all have to be inconvenienced because of the activities of Internet spammers. I really hated to have to install this software, but I had no other choice. The same is true of many other websites and Web services. So when you encounter a CAPTCHA, don't blame the website, blame the spammers!

The Compu-KISS Message Boards can be accessed at [www.compukiss.com](http://www.compukiss.com) or directly at [www.happycomputing.com](http://www.happycomputing.com)

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady, nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year

computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. She works with hardware and software developers to help them make their products more user-friendly.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.*

## What's That Pill?

by Steve Bass  
*PC World*

I found some pills in a travel bag and couldn't figure out what they were. So I searched on "pill identification" and came up with a few neat surprises.

Pharmer.org is a nonprofit that has dozens of worthwhile links as well as techniques for examining a pill's imprints.

Drugs.com and Wall's Medicine and Health Center are two free sites that did a terrific job on all of the prescription drugs I had around. Unfortunately, neither was able to figure out the name of the over-the-counter product I found in my bag.

DrugID.info did the job.

I went through DrugID.info's steps describing the size, color, shape, and imprint of the pill. At the next-to-last step, the site confirmed the description based on my responses: "ORANGE, ROUND AND ORANGE FLAVRD TABLET." But this is the site I liked the least, because it's deceptive. The last step promised to tell me who made the pill and what it's used only after I paid a fee. My issue wasn't with the fee—I just wanted to know there was one in the first place. But the folks at DrugID.info goofed. The "orange flavrd" portion of the description was a giveaway: I figured out the pills were baby aspirin.

## Society News

### Planning Meeting Notes

September 5, 2006

by John McMillan

Attending were Bob Avery, Arpad Kovaks, Mike Lavelle, John McMillan, and Tom Thompson. This was Mike's first meeting as program chair.

Arpad opened the meeting with a discussion of the picnic. The new facilities were comparable to the Fairport Park Lodge used in previous years but perhaps a bit more centralized. He indicated that several attendees had not made reservations and as a result, there were not as many salads as might be

expected. Those that were there were tasty and the cook slaved tirelessly over hot charcoal to prepare hamburgers, hot dogs and the still frozen Italian sausage. The flea market was a success and the camaraderie was excellent. Everyone agreed that we must do this again sometime.

Bob indicated that the September meeting would be held at Room 102 of Pittsford's Spiegel Community Center, 35 Lincoln Ave. The previously announced Pittsford Library location will not be available because it is Primary day. A map and directions have been included in the program section of RCSI's web page.

Arpad had updated lists of the final computer choices for the Build Your Own Workshop. The level 1 Intel and all level 2 and level 3 machines will be dual cores, that is 2 processor chips on one motherboard. There are other updates for selected machines. At the present time we are still lacking 2 candidates and could take as many as 4. Assembly date will be Saturday, Oct. 21 at 160 Linden Oaks Ave. in Penfield. The revised component list will be added to the Monitor which will be distributed in a number of computer outlets.

## September Meeting Notes

by John McMillan

Steve started the business meeting saying there was a continuing need for a Help's Half Hour Leader, a job Ron Matteson took on for this meeting. The next planning meeting will be held at Sally Springett's home October 3<sup>rd</sup>. When a location has been established for the October Society meeting it will be listed on the web page. He also mentioned having heard of an Omar Bin Laden virus that other attendees said was not new.

Dave Thompson said that the next Photo SIG meeting would be held Monday, Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Penfield Library.

Steve Staub announced that Dick Comegys, one of the original Frog members, had passed away. He requested that members sign a sympathy card to be mailed to the family. In earlier days, Dick was quite active and had served several terms as editor of the *Lily Pad*, forerunner of today's *Monitor*. As Pastor of St. Stephens Church, he offered space for meetings and a home for the newsletter publishing equipment that is still in use today. He also ran a desktop publishing SIG. He and his humor will be missed.

Tom Thompson closed the business meeting with a vote of thanks to all of the workers who contrib-

uted so much to make the August picnic such a great success.

The speaker for the evening was Van King, a writer by profession. His topic was useful applications for writers in a home office environment. All of the tools he would describe could help a writing project and may already be on your computer. Many users fall back on the "same old" chestnuts for lack of familiarity and concern for the learning curve for a one time project. He pointed out that his talk was geared to exposure to techniques that could be applied to multiple writing tasks and was not intended as a "How to" presentation.

Some of the things needed are Ideas, Inspiration and an assignment. Helpful aids are scanners, digital cameras and optical character recognition programs. Since you ordinarily speak faster than you can type, a microphone, speakers and voice recognition capability can be very effective. He did point out that without adequate training, voice recognition is more trouble than it is worth. Van mentioned that Windows has a speech recognition program, probably under the tools menu and that Downloads.com is a possible source of programs, some of which may be free.

One key to successful writing is to be able to visualize where you are going. Who are the consumers of the product or how is it going to be used. Organize and plan what you are going to do, and write. Van said that writer's block is not knowing what to do next. The pressure of a looming deadline is excellent to keep you focused.

One good way to avoid reinventing the wheel is to use boiler plate. This expression stems from the nineteenth century practice of boiler makers to cast a special plate with the company name and address, brand, model number and other repetitive information. The plate also had provisions for minor changes, like a serial number, that was modified before the plate was fastened to the product. Preserving such standard information in easily accessible files can save considerable time. Mission statements, product recommendations, or other static text fall into this category.

Lengthy references or quotations that help support a point of view can be copied from existing documents by using a digital camera. Optical character recognition software that comes with many scanners can often be used to convert the photos into computer processable text avoiding laborious hours of typing. He cited Omnipage as a stand alone optical character recognition program that under-



lines words in the copy that it didn't recognize, are misspelled, or are not in its dictionary. This technique will not work well with yellowed, grayed, or brown pages, or those with faint print or hard to read fonts.

He devoted a lot of time to copyrights, a plan to protect intellectual property, and fair use. Originally, the process started with a letter to your senator or representative saying that you had written a book you wanted protected. There would be a vote on the floor of the respective house as to whether a copyright should be granted. They stopped voting on individual titles and went to voting for a list of books in 1909.

Later it was decided that an act of Congress was not necessary so you submitted a copy of your work with a small fee and it would be preserved in the Office of Copyright. Thus the copyright date would be used to settle claims of plagiarism. Over the years, the number of things that can be copyrighted has been greatly expanded to include music, electronic code or computer programs, digital images, and many other forms of intellectual property.

In 1976, the law was revised to provide 75 years of protection. The Fair Use provision was also established so that people researching a topic could quote a small portion of existing documents for new scholarly or not-for-profit works. The quoted segment can not be a major element of the new work. Fair use is sometimes applied more liberally for limited distribution reports that will not be published or sold.

Things that were copyrighted but the protection span has expired are known as Public Domain and can be used without limitation. Van said that copyright infringement is a tort not a crime. As such the originator must sue you which often boils down to whether he or she thinks they can recover sufficient damages for copyright infringement to make the effort worth while. In 1983 the law was changed again so that the copyright symbol was not needed nor was it necessary submit works to the copyright office if you could prove first publication of the material.

Van mentioned four possible ways to capture images: right clicking; use tools; use image searches; or screen capture. He described right clicking as moving the cursor over the image and right clicking to open a menu that includes a Save Picture As option. Making that choice opens a dialogue box asking for a file name and destination. Using insert

picture in Word will put the picture in your document.

If the image is from Google, pick the choice Images to restrict the number of web search hits. This will result in a menu of images available and their web sites along with file data so you can select the one that best fits your needs.

Sometimes Save Picture is not an option because security has been embedded to prevent the picture from being copied. Try the Tools Button to see if you can find the Source or Page Info. This may open a dialogue box showing all of the code associated with loading that page. Frequently you can find a Web address that will take you to the picture.

Screen capture and Capture 32 is a program that can be used to put a copy of the computer screen on the clipboard. The print screen key will also do this. From the clipboard, it can be pasted into Paint or another graphics processing program where it can be resized or cropped as needed. When finalized, it can be saved as the name of your choice at a location you establish.

Van warned of over relying on auto correct, spell check, and styles grammar consistency. The tools he described are not infallible in determining what you meant versus what you thought you said or typed. Correctly spelled words like two, too, and to sound alike and may not be underlined or highlighted. Also when people review their own work, they may not see their errors. Downloads.com offers several free text to speech convertors that are helpful in final editing. One that has an annoying voice can be upgraded to a pleasant voice for only \$29. All of the clues Van offered were designed to improve the quality of what you produce by the end of the session or assignment.

## Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Balance as of 08/09/2006	\$401.25
<b>Income</b>	
Renewals .....	\$120.00
Adds .....	30.00
Donations .....	<u>13.00</u>
Total	\$163.00
<b>Expenses</b>	
Ink (Staples) .....	\$113.88
St. Stephens .....	60.00
Postmaster .....	<u>50.00</u>
Total	\$223.88
Balance as of 09/12/2006	\$340.27
Renewals: Jack Baly, Claud Fedele, Don Nichols, and Charles Wells	

## The Lighter Side

A fellow in computer maintenance at the Associated Grocers warehouse in Tukwila got a call from one of the ladies in the office regarding problems with her computer.

When he got there the lady kept insisting the mouse problem was inside the computer. Finally, to humor her he opened it up.

And out jumped the mouse. AG no longer permits open slots in back of computers.

