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Remembering Jeff and Don

by Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

It is with a fond sadness that we note the passing of two long-time members of our group: Jeff Bates died on January 24th, and Don Gruenther on February 25th.

For several years, I had picked up Jeff, who lived near me in Reston, and we'd head for NCTCUG meetings. On the way, we spent many trips discussing the challenges Jeff faced in getting a new edition of his book, "Writing with Precision" published. Jeff talked about having to find a new literary agent, then the process of enlisting a new publisher, and getting his word processor, PC and printer to cooperate in turning out a manuscript in the format in which he envisioned the new volume. Jeff spent some time in the Washington area during World War II posted at the Arlington Hall and Vint Hill Farms stations. We also had many conversations about the challenges of upgrading to new computers, and transferring software and data to the new machine.

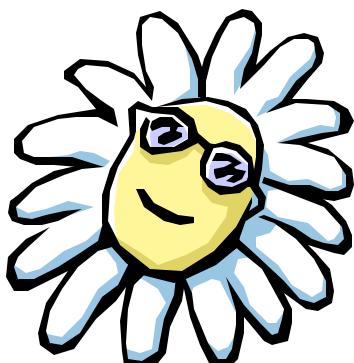
Jeff was always interested in new things, and spent considerable time attending "Learning in Retirement" classes at George Mason University. He also enjoyed looking around

at computer shows and visiting the book store at MicroCenter in Fairfax. He suffered a health setback in August, 2000, and was only able to attend one meeting after that, before moving to St. Petersburg, Florida, in May of 2001. Jeff donated a car load of books and equipment to the group before leaving the area. We've donated much of that material to programs recycling computers for disadvantaged children in Maryland. We've kept the computer Jeff passed along as a backup, which we've needed during a few meetings recently — our attempts to install Windows XP Professional on our demo computer have resulted in no progress to date over about four meetings of attempts, plus lots of time at Jim Rhodes' test lab. We miss you, Jeff!

Don Gruenther was NCTCUG's institutional memory, a member of the organization since its first or second meeting. He served as secretary from 8/79 to 1/87, and kept track of who attended our meetings in a pocket notebook ever since. In spite of moving to a Palm Pilot several years ago, knowing Don, I'm sure all the data

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Connecting Your PC to Your Stereo

By Bruce Fries — Author Of The MP3 And Internet Audio Handbook

If you've taken the time to put your music collection on your computer, you'll probably want to listen to it through a good stereo system. Even if your stereo isn't in the same room as your computer, there are several options for connecting the two, including direct analog cabling, USB Audio devices, wireless audio transmitters, and network audio receivers.

The most basic concept of connecting audio equipment is that inputs must always be connected to outputs. Sometimes you will still get sound if you mistakenly connect a sound card output to an output of a stereo receiver. When in doubt, connect the sound card output to the CD jack on your stereo—it's always an input. Connect high-level (also called line-level) outputs to high-level inputs, and connect low-level outputs (such as a microphone) to low-level (Mic) inputs. Do not use the receiver's phono input jack because this is designed for a very low-level signal and has a special equalization circuit. Avoid using the sound card's headphone or microphone jack to connect to other equipment unless you have no other choice. Most consumer sound cards have 1/8" mini phone jacks. A mono jack is used for the microphone input, and stereo jacks are used for the line-in, line-out and headphone. Better sound cards may have separate RCA jacks for the left and right channels. These are the same kind of jacks found on most home stereo systems. High-end sound cards may also have connectors for digital inputs and outputs. The simplest connection between a computer and a stereo system is to run a cable directly from the sound card's line output to a line input of your stereo. To record from your stereo system to your computer, connect a cable from a line-out (or record) jack on your receiver to the line-in jack on your sound card. If your sound card's line output is a 1/8" stereo mini-phone jack, you'll need an adapter cable (male 1/8" stereo mini-phone to dual male RCA). These cables can be purchased from most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fry's Electronics.

USB audio devices perform the basic functions of a sound card, but outside of the PC, and are less likely to pick up noise from the PC's electronics. USB audio devices can be used for both recording and playback and are a good solution for notebook computer users who want higher quality sound. The Roland UA-30 (www.edirol.com) is a

flexible USB audio device that supports both Macs and PCs. The UA-30 works great and includes just about every type of input and output connector you might possibly need.

Wireless audio devices can transmit a stereo audio signal up to 300 feet. These devices typically include a transmitter and a receiver with standard RCA line-level input and output jacks. Wireless audio devices provide more flexibility than hard cabled connections, but are much more prone to interference compared to other types of connections. The MP3 Anywhere Digital Audio Sender by X10 (www.X10.com) is a good wireless audio device for most users. It sells for under \$100 and uses the 2.4 GHz spectrum to reduce interference and provide a high quality connection. The MP3 Anywhere also includes a remote control and software, which allow you to control most popular player programs.

The ideal way to transmit audio from your PC throughout your house is by streaming the audio from your PC via a network. A network audio connection eliminates the loss of high frequencies, interference and hum typical of analog cable and wireless connections. The Rio Receiver (www.riohome.com) is a very capable network audio device that allows you to access individual songs and playlists from your PC anywhere you have a telephone or network jack. The Rio has an LCD interface that displays song title, artist name and other information, and also includes a remote control. Whatever your choice of PC to stereo connection, you will be able to use your computer as a digital jukebox and take full advantage of the latest digital music technologies to play high-quality music anywhere in your house.

For more information on connecting your PC to your stereo, pick up a copy of The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook (\$19.95) from www.TeamComBooks.com or read it online for free at www.MP3Handbook.com.

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

Demystifying Graphic File Formats

By Ben Luna, Coastal Area Users Group, Corpus Christi, TX



The purpose of this article is to briefly describe some of the most common graphic file formats for image files, as well as how to determine which file format to use for Web graphics and print publications. When an image is saved to a specific file format, you are telling your applications how to write the image's information to disk. The specific file format you choose depends on the graphics software application you are using (e.g., Adobe Illustrator, Freehand, Adobe Photoshop) and how and where you will use your image (e.g., the Web or a print publication.)

Graphic file formats can be broadly categorized into bit-mapped formats and vector formats.

Bit-Mapped Formats

This format is a representation, consisting of rows and columns of dots, of a graphics image in computer memory. This is sometimes called raster graphics. The value of each dot, whether it is filled or not, is stored in one or more bits of data. The density of the dots, known as the resolution, determines how sharply the image is represented. This is often expressed in dots per inch (dpi), or simply by the number of rows and columns, such as 640 by 480. To display a bit-mapped image on a monitor or to print in a printer, the computer translates the bit map into pixels for monitor screens, or ink dots for printer. Programs that manipulate bit-mapped images are called paint programs.

Following are descriptions of some commonly used bit-mapped file formats:

BMP: The Bitmap file format is used for bitmap graphics on the Windows platform only. Unlike other file formats, which store image data from top to bottom and pixels in red/green/blue order, the BMP format stores image data from bottom to top and pixels in blue/green/red order. This means that if memory is tight, BMP graphics will sometimes appear drawn from bottom to top. Compression of BMP files is not supported, so they are usually very large. When saving a file to the BMP format, add the ".bmp" file extension to the end of its file name.

GIF: The Graphics Interchange Format

was originally developed by CompuServe in 1987. It is one of the most popular file formats for Web graphics and for exchanging graphics files between computers. It is most commonly used for bitmap images composed of line drawings or blocks of a few distinct colors. The GIF format supports 8 bits of color information or less. In addition, the GIF89 file format supports transparency, allowing you to make a color in your image transparent. (Please note: CompuServe GIF87 does not support transparency.) This feature makes GIF a particularly popular format for Web images.

GIF, is a "lossy" file format. It reduces an image's file size by removing bits of color information during the conversion process. The GIF format supports 256 colors or less. When creating images for the Web, be aware that only 216 colors are shared between Macintosh and Windows monitors. These colors, called the "Web palette," should be used when creating GIFs for the Web because colors that are not in this palette display differently on Macintosh and Windows monitors. When saving an image to the GIF format, add the ".gif" file extension to the end of its file name.

PCX: Originally developed by ZSOFT for its PC Paint-brush program, PCX is a common graphics file format supported by many graphics programs, as well as most optical scanners and fax modems. When saving an image to the PCX format, add the ".pcx" file extension to the end of its file name.

TIFF: Tagged Image File Format is a standard file format for storing images as bit maps. It is used especially for scanned images because it can support any size, resolution, and color depth. When saving an image to the TIFF format, add the ".tif" file extension to the end of its file name.

Vector Graphics

The other method for representing images is known as vector graphics (or object-oriented graphics.) With vector graphics, images are represented as mathematical formulas that define all the shapes in the image. Vector graphics

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are more flexible than bit-mapped graphics because they look the same even when they are scaled to different sizes. In contrast, bit-mapped graphics become ragged when they are shrunk or enlarged. Programs that enable the user to create and manipulate vector graphics are called draw programs. Images stored as vectors look better on monitors and printers with higher resolution (bit-mapped images always appear the same regardless of a device's resolution.) Another advantage is that images in vector graphics often require less memory than bit-mapped images. Almost all sophisticated graphics systems, including CADD systems and animation software, use vector graphics.

Following are descriptions of some commonly used vector graphics file formats:

EPS: The Encapsulated PostScript file format is a metafile format; it can be used for vector images or bitmap images. The EPS file format can be used on a variety of platforms, including Macintosh and Windows. When you place an EPS image into a document, you can scale it up or down without information loss. This format contains PostScript information and should be used when printing to a PostScript output device. The PostScript language, which was developed by Adobe, is the industry standard for desktop publishing software and hardware. EPS files can be graphics or images of whole pages that include text, font, graphics, and page layout information.

JPEG: Like GIF, the Joint Photographic Experts Group format is one of the most popular formats for Web graphics. It supports 24 bits of color information, and is most commonly used for photographs and similar continuous-tone bitmap images. The JPEG file format stores all of the color information in an RGB image, then reduces the file size by compressing it, or saving only the color information that is essential to the image. Most imaging applications and plug-ins let you determine the amount of compression used when saving a graphic in the JPEG format. Unlike GIF, JPEG does not support transparency.

Use JPEG for scanned photographs and naturalistic artwork with highlights, shaded areas, and shadows. The more complex and subtly rendered the image is, the more likely it is that the image should be converted to JPEG.

JPEG, like GIF, uses a "lossy" compression technique, which changes the original image by removing color information during the conversion process. The JPEG file format supports millions of colors. In theory, JPEG was designed so that changes made to the original image during

conversion to JPEG would not be visible to the human eye. Most imaging applications let the user control the amount of lossy compression performed on an image, so you can trade off image quality for smaller file size and vice versa. Be aware that the chances of image degradation when converting to JPEG increase proportionally with the amount of compression you use. When saving a file in the JPEG format, add the ".jpg" file extension to the end of its file name.

Use the JPEG file format for images with only a few distinct colors, such as illustrations, cartoons, and images with blocks of color, such as icons, buttons, and horizontal rules.

PICT: The Picture file format is for use primarily on the Macintosh platform; it is the default format for Macintosh image files. The PICT format is most commonly used for bitmap images, but can be used for vector images as well. Avoid using PICT images for print publishing. The PICT format is "lossless," meaning it does not remove information from the original image during the file format conversion process. Because the PICT format supports only limited compression on Macintoshes with QuickTime installed, PICT files are usually large. When saving an image as a PICT, add the file extension ".pct" to the end of its file name. Use the PICT format for images used in video editing, animation, desktop computer presentations, and multimedia authoring.

PNG: The Portable Network Graphics format will likely be the successor to the GIF file format. PNG is not yet widely supported by most Web browsers. Netscape versions 4.04 and later, and Internet Explorer version 4.01 and later, currently support this file format. However, PNG is expected to become a mainstream format for Web images and could replace GIF entirely. It is platform independent and should be used for single images only (not animation.) Compared with GIF, PNG offers greater color support and better compression, gamma correction for brightness control across platforms, better support for transparency, and a better method for displaying progressive images. When saving an image to the PNG format, add the file extension ".png" to the end of its file name.

CGM: The Computer Graphics Metafile is a format developed by several standards organizations. CGM is supported by many PC Software products. When saving an image to the CGM format, add the file extension ".cgm" to the end of its file name.

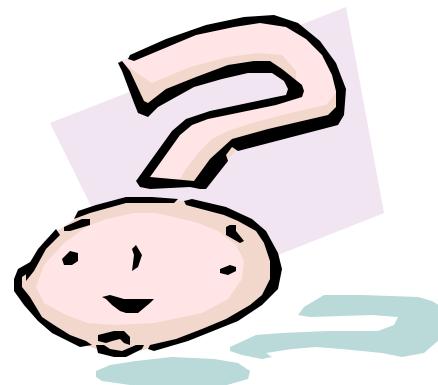
DXF: The Data Exchange File is a format developed by Autodesk. Almost all PC-based CAD systems support DXF.

Caveat Emptor...

Judy Lococo

I recently replaced an old computer with a brand, new, sparkling, whisper-quiet Pentium 4 speed demon. I asked the vendor to install Windows XP Professional, and I subsequently installed Office XP Professional. There was no other software on this "clean" machine, but because I have a local area network with another machine in the office, and the other machine is connected to an ADSL line, I decided I needed a firewall and an antivirus package on the new machine, too.

Symantec has always had my Antivirus (AV) software protection of choice, and although there have been a few problems with their products along the way, it was never enough of an irritation to provoke an article. But Norton Internet Security 2002 most definitely is. It is supposed to include a personal firewall to defend against crackers, antivirus protection, privacy control to keep your personal information private, and a parental control to keep your children safe on the Internet. It looks very similar to previous releases of Norton Internet Security (2000 and 2001), which I've used on other machines running Windows 95/98 and Windows NT Workstation 4.0, but the previous versions are not compatible with Windows XP. So I installed the latest version to protect my new workhorse.



The installation was not fun, and contained several error messages stating that some script or other was not able to run & did I wish to continue. I was finally able to reach the end of the line, and was prompted to restart the computer, and run a Live Update as soon as possible. My computer restarted, and then it restarted, and then it restarted again, and finally restarted again. I was wondering if I would ever be able to keep it on long enough to see the splash screen! But I did finally get to see the XP screen again, and noticed that the antivirus icon on the taskbar had a big red "X" through it. Being such a good little girl, and always doing as I'm told, <g> I started the Live Update, thinking possibly this was why the icon was inactive. But the software did not even try to update the antivirus definitions, and even after asking for all the latest bells and whistles Symantec had, it still was not en-

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GEM: The graphics file format used by GEM-based applications. GEM is a graphical user interface (GUI) developed by Digital Research.

HPGL: Hewlett-Packard Graphics Language is one of the oldest file formats. Although it is not very sophisticated, it is supported by many PC-based graphics products.

IGES: Initial Graphics Exchange Specification is an ANSI Standard for three-dimensional wire frame models. IGES is supported by most PC-based CAD systems.

PIC This is a relatively simple file format developed by Lotus for representing graphs generated by Lotus 1-2-3. PIC is supported by a wide variety of PC applications.

PICT: Developed by Apple Computer in 1984 as the standard format for storing and exchanging graphics files. It is supported by all graphics programs that run on a Macintosh.

WMF: The Windows file format is used for exchanging graphics between Microsoft Windows applications. WMF files can also hold bit-mapped images.

The debate over which format is better still surfaces once in a while. My opinion is that each format has its place, just as the native format of the various paint-and-draw programs. One format may be better than others in terms of quality; at other times, another format may be better in terms of size. Best way is to take the time to view and store your images in different formats and select the one optimum for your needs, storage capability, and ease of use.

Ben Luna's experience includes writing manuals for computers and software. Email him at akosiben@netscape.net. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

Jack the Giant Killer — CD Utilities

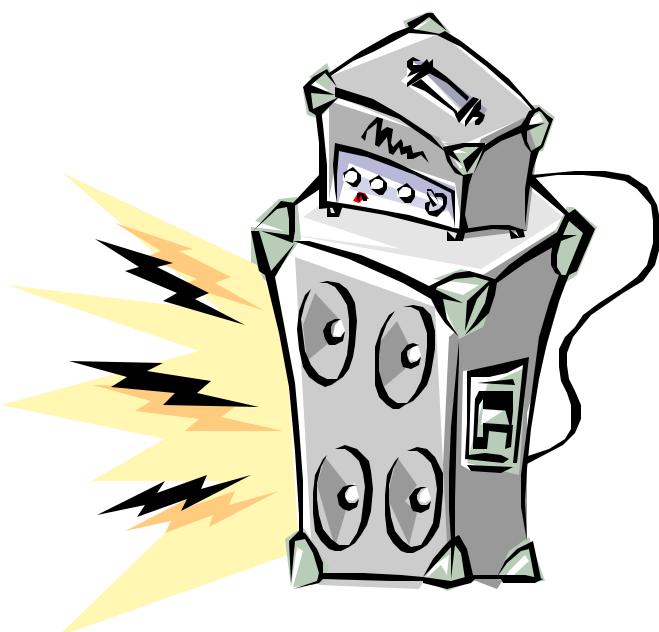
by Ira Wilsker, Golden Triangle PC Club

Reprinted from the I/O Port Newsletter, Tulsa Computer Society

An explosively popular aspect of personal computing is “burning” CDs. In the past, I have discussed using CDs for archival storage, and described a variety of backup software utilizing CDs as the media, and the importance of the proper storage of the discs. It seems that most users use the “limited edition”, “lite”, or “OEM” software that comes with their computers or aftermarket CD drives. For those people, I urge you to check the software publishers’ websites for free software updates, as there have been some substantial upgrades released. On my computers I had been using the Adaptec CD software that came with my aftermarket drives (updated at the new Adaptec site at <http://www.roxio.com>), as well as separate software packages for backing up data, and another title for fully functional music CD ripping and MP3 conversions.

Recently however, I found an all-in-one package from the little known publisher “Stomp”, which will be this column’s “Jack” this week. I am now using the Stomp software, instead of the Adaptec that came with my drive. Stomp is a privately held, five year old company out of Costa Mesa, California, producing a comprehen-

sive line of eight CD software and utility titles. In addition Stomp produces a line of accessories including a “Clutter Buster” monitor mounted organizer to help straighten a computer desk (something I very badly needed), and light weight and inexpensive “DiscSavers”, an effective substitute for CD and DVD jewel cases. Software is available in either PC or Mac formats. Stomp’s flagship product is their “Click’N Burn Pro” a comprehensive package of CD burning and related utilities. In one reasonably priced box is a simple to use, but very powerful music CD program that can interchangeably read, rip, convert, and write music CDs to and from any major format including MP3, WAV, WMA, or music CD tracks. Music from a variety of sources can be recorded directly to CD. In addition to processing music CDs, it also has the ability to write video CDs playable on most DVD players, which can be a huge money saver when compared to the price of the DVD writers now coming on the market. Of course standard data can easily be written and managed as well. Included is a CD copy utility, designed for fast and accurate backups of any music or data CD. Some of the other helpful utilities included are CD labeling software (for printing professional looking CD labels and jewel case jackets), music editing software, Veritas Simple Backup for making and managing backups of the hard drive, and Veritas DLA which is used to enable CD-RW discs to be formatted and function like a floppy or hard drive with its own drive letter. As a bonus, five of Stomp’s DiscSavers are also included in the box. I found Click’N Burn Pro on the shelf of several of our local stores for under \$50, about half the price of the “Giant” market leader Easy CD Creator 5 Platinum. More information can be found on Stomp’s website at <http://www.stompin.com>.



Windows XP: Why You Oughta Upgrade

By Carl Siechert, Co-Author, Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out

At a recent meeting of the Pasadena IBM Users Group, Ed Bott and Carl Siechert, co-authors of Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out, explained why Windows XP is such an important upgrade for most users. Carl did a follow up which included the key parts of the presentation, and graciously allowed the user group community to reprint it in their newsletters.

Why upgrade? At the meeting, several people commented that we didn't show the killer feature or the clear benefits of upgrading, especially from Windows 2000.

That's because, IMO, there isn't a distinct knock-your-socks-off feature/benefit. Instead, there are a number of minor enhancements that, collectively, make Windows XP a compelling upgrade for me. We tried to dash through them but perhaps didn't adequately demonstrate the benefit. Here's a brief summary of my favorites:

- *Stability.* Windows XP has the ability to run a large number of apps without running out of resources, without crashing. (If you're running Windows 2000, you already have this, so there's no gain.)
- *Security.* This is a huge topic that I can't adequately cover in a few sentences; suffice to say that security of your data and your privacy in Windows XP is leaps and bounds beyond anything available in Windows 9x. (Again, if you have Windows 2000, you already have most of the security capabilities of Windows XP.)
- *UI enhancements.* A variety of changes in Start menu, taskbar, Windows Explorer, and Control Panel make everyday tasks such as launching programs, switching between windows, and managing files just a little bit faster, easier, and more convenient. These features can each be customized, so you can use the ones you like and change others back to Windows 9x/2000 style. (Similarly, you can banish the new look of Windows XP while still enjoying its other benefits.)
- *Fast User Switching.* Great for shared computers, FUS lets someone else log on without requiring you to first close all your documents and applications.
- *Power management.* Standby and hibernation let me save power (on desktop PCs as well as portables) yet still have fast boot time, bringing me right back to where I left off. (That is, all the windows that I left open when the system powers down are already open when I power up.)
- *Digital photo support.* I was never a fan of digital photography until I got XP because it was such a hassle before. But the support for cameras and scanners, as well as the features built in to Windows Explorer for viewing, printing, e-mailing, and manipulating images have actually made it fun and practical to work with photos in new ways.
- *Remote Assistance.* The ability to actually see and work with someone else's screen while conversing with them through text, voice, and video chat is a killer feature for anyone who's looked upon as a computer guru and gets calls for support from relatives, friends, and neighbors. (I suspect that includes most PIBMUG members!)
- *Remote Desktop.* The ability to connect with my home computer from the office (or vice versa) is awesome. It looks and acts exactly as if I'm at that computer five miles away, and I have access to all its files, printers, and other resources. And like remote assistance, it's acceptably fast if you have broadband Internet ac-

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cess. I also use it to work with other computers on my own LAN; that's sometimes easier than hopping back and forth between two computers.

- *Better help.* It's easier to navigate, integrates information from the Microsoft Knowledge Base, and includes links to a number of diagnostic tools. (Of course, it doesn't have all the answers. You still need our book!)

There are dozens of other enhancements — built-in CD burning, built-in ZIP file support, Windows Media Player, Movie Maker, etc. etc. — but those listed above are the ones that I personally find useful.

What's Wrong With XP? Not Much

What's wrong with Windows XP; we promised to talk about "what bites" but some felt we didn't deliver. That's because there really isn't much I don't like; here's my full list:

- *Windows Product Activation (WPA).* I dislike it on principle, but in practice it's not a problem for me or for most users. It's anonymous, and it's a one-time operation that involves clicking Next a few times to get through a wizard — and then you never think about it again. Windows does NOT phone home on its own at any time to confirm your activation status, as has been reported. But as Ed mentioned, it's a classic Microsoft version 1.0 product.

If you want to avoid activation altogether, get XP preinstalled on your next computer from a major OEM vendor like Dell. Those versions of XP do not have product activation, so it'll never kick in when you change a number of components in your system — one of the major flaws in the current implementation. You should be aware, however, that Windows XP versions from major manufacturers are linked to the system BIOS — which means, for example, that you can't take the Windows XP CD that comes with your Dell and install it on a Gateway or a white box system.

- *Price.* Now that MS is enforcing the one copy/one machine limitation (it's always been part of the license agreement, but they've never had a way to prevent people from copying to all machines until WPA), I think the price — at least for copies after the first one — should be significantly lower, say \$50-75 for Home, twice that for Pro. OTOH, it is a pretty good value, even at \$100/\$200.

- *Messenger and Passport in your face.* I use them constantly, so it doesn't bother me that they always start. But I'd be frustrated if I didn't want to use them and discovered how difficult it is to vanquish them.

- *UI is too chummy in some respects.* Wizards have replaced some dialog boxes, advanced options are now further buried, etc. As a power user who knows his way around, these slow me down. Fortunately, there aren't many of these impediments in the areas that I use frequently.
- *Support for "legacy" hardware.* Some people mentioned HP products in particular, but there are a number of unsupported products that are not that old. Microsoft has always left device driver development to hardware manufacturers, and it supplies plenty of support to manufacturers. It's clearly in Microsoft's best interest to have all hardware supported.

Manufacturers, however, don't have any incentive (other than the wrath heaped on them by disgruntled customers) to provide drivers for discontinued products; they'd prefer that you buy their latest and greatest. Regardless of whose fault it is, it's a real problem that affects all of us consumers.

- *Networking.* It's a little difficult to set up a mixed network — one with Windows XP and Windows 9x workstations. (But it's not impossible, and the steps to successful networking are fully documented in our book!) Windows XP Home Edition uses only the Simple File Sharing model, which is indeed simple, but also somewhat inflexible. You can set up a folder to be private (so that only your user account can access it, either when logged on locally or over the network) or you can share it with everyone. But you can't, for example, easily set up a shared folder that you and your spouse can access but your kids cannot. (As we mentioned, there is a workaround — detailed in the book — that lets you set up more complex security arrangements using Safe Mode.)

Which Version Is Best For You?

Home Edition or Professional? The essential differences are these:

- You can't use Remote Desktop to connect to a computer running Home Edition. (BTW, the computer you connect from can be running any version of Windows 9x/NT/2000/XP.) You can, however, use Remote Assistance to connect to a Home Edition computer.

- You can't use Home Edition on a multiprocessor system.
- With Home Edition, your computer can't join a Windows NT/2000 domain. (You can, however, use all domain resources if you have a domain user account.)
- With Home Edition, you're essentially stuck with Simple File Sharing. You can share/protect only at the folder level, and you can only make a folder private or share it with everyone. The Windows 2000 security model that's available in Professional offers granular security control that lets you assign specific types of access to specific users for specific files. (Most home user won't need this level of control.)
- If you install Professional now, you won't be able to upgrade to the Home Edition of the next version of Windows, so you'll pay an extra \$100 now and again the next time you upgrade Windows.

Pro includes everything that's in Home. If you're unsure about which to get (that is, the points above don't seem to apply to you), try Home Edition. Worst case: you later decide to upgrade to Pro. The Home Edition-to-Professional upgrade is \$125, so you're only out an additional \$25 compared to purchasing Pro initially.

You can find Microsoft's advice on this choice at

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/choosing.asp>

What's The Bottom line?

- If you're buying a new computer, get XP. (Before you do that, however, run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor on your current system. Be sure that any software or peripherals you plan to use with your new system will work with XP, or can be inexpensively upgraded.) Don't fret too much about the learning curve for a new OS and its new features; nearly everything you know about your current system can be applied to Windows XP, and you can learn about the new features as you need them.
- If you're using Windows 9x AND if your computer has the horsepower (practical minimum: 300 MHz

processor, 128 MB RAM, 1.5 GB free disk space) and is compatible (run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor), strongly consider upgrading to XP.

- If you're using Windows 2000 and you're happy with it, hold off on upgrading until you get your next computer. If one of the nifty features like Remote Desktop, Remote Assistance, or digital photo support would make your life easier, pop for XP now.

I've decided that XP Professional is right for my newest systems (the rest run Windows 2000), but I don't mean to suggest that it's right for everyone. Besides, Ed and I have written books about earlier versions of Windows too. We'd be just as happy if you bought one of those books. :-)

Get Some Help

Here are a few URLs that'll help you with the upgrade:

Microsoft Product Lifecycle: This site tells you when support dries up for each version of Windows.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/lifecycle.asp>

Windows XP Upgrade Advisor: The program available at this site checks your computer for hardware and software that may be incompatible with Windows XP. When available, it includes links to upgrade information for the incompatible components.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/advisor.asp>

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Software Review

DriveCopy, Version 4.0

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Reprinted from the Sarasota PC Monitor, December 2001



This is the latest version of PowerQuest's DriveCopy software and is designed to work with drives up to 80GB in size. DriveCopy will work with FAT 16 or 32 partitions plus HPFS, NTFS and Linux under all versions of Windows (except XP and 3X), DOS and OS/2. It is also "power failure" safe in that should a power failure or hardware failure occur during the copy process, no data will be lost from the source drive. DriveCopy is one component of the DriveImage software. So if you have DriveImage, you don't need to purchase a separate copy of DriveCopy.

One change in this version of DriveCopy is that it can be installed to your hard drive or to two rescue floppy disks. Previous versions had to be installed to floppies. If you install DriveCopy to your hard drive it creates a "virtual" floppy that will run the next time your computer is restarted. The CD also has a PDF file with the DriveCopy documentation and a link to a Website that contains jumper information for most IDE hard drives. For SCSI drives you need to ensure that your SCSI adapter supports software Interrupt 13. You may need to contact the adapter manufacturer to determine this information.

Both the new and the old hard drives need to be installed in one computer. The jumpers need to be set so that one is the master and the other the slave. If you started with a single drive system and your new drive is to be bootable, then it should be set as the master. The old drive should be jumpered as the slave. I also recommend that the drives be installed on different cables. Most computers are provided with 2 IDE ports that can support two drives each. Putting both drives on the same cable for the copy process could potentially cause a data transfer error. Although this is not mentioned in the PowerQuest documentation, I have tried to follow this two cable system every time I have used this software.

Once the computer is restarted, DriveCopy will run from the virtual floppy. If you installed the application to two floppies, then you need to insert the boot floppy in the drive before starting the computer. The DriveCopy interface has changed very little from the previous version. The first screen allows you to verify your disk configuration, do a complete disk to disk copy or to copy only selected partitions. I suspect the most common use of DriveCopy is

to replace a small drive with a larger drive so you would be doing a complete disk to disk copy. The new drive would also become the bootable drive.

The next window allows you to verify the source and destination drives. You should verify that the drive/partition sizes are reported correctly in this window. Some older drives use Drive Overlay software to overcome BIOS partition limitations. If this is true of your drive, then you need to review the DriveCopy documentation on how to work with this problem. You may need to create the DriveCopy floppy disks. The documentation has several different scenarios that will help you walk through this process.

From this point on the on-screen directions are sufficient to allow you to complete the initial steps in the process for most situations. If you are going to do a partition copy then you need to consider other options. If the destination partition is larger than the source partition DriveCopy will either automatically resize partitions, leave the unpartitioned space as unused or allow you to manually resize the partitions.

The DriveCopy manual contains a number of different scenarios to simplify the overall process. I would suggest reviewing the manual before trying to install and use DriveCopy. For upgrading to a new hard drive, the process is really quite simple if each step is followed. If you are using DriveCopy to backup a partition, then I would recommend that you use DriveImage instead. All in all, DriveCopy is like the other PowerQuest software I have used. It does just exactly what it says it will do. It is easy to work with and if you need to copy one drive to another drive, you can't find better software to do it.

DriveCopy is available directly from PowerQuest at a price of \$49.95 from their Website: www.powerquest.com. PowerQuest Corporation, P O Box 1911, Orem UT 84059-1911, 1-800-379-2566.

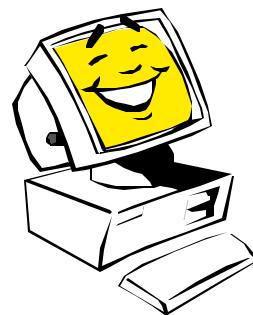
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My Amateur Computer Upgrade Adventure

Here's a cheap, easy way to speed up your PC

By Harry Kelsey, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Reprinted from the I/O Port Newsletter, Tulsa Computer Society



In this uncertain world, it's comforting to have a bulwark that never fails. PC World's "Home Office" column by my neighbor Steve Bass always has an idea or two that I can easily misunderstand and thus waste an hour when I should be working. Once or twice, thinking I was following his suggestions, I've corrupted the hard drive and had to reinstall everything. This was not the case with Steve's recent advice to try the PC Pitstop for a computer tuneup.

Pull Into the Pit Stop

The PC World web page is simplicity in its most basic form. There is nothing to type. Just push a few buttons and sit back while PC Pitstop checks your computer. For a few minutes, the familiar blue line will creep across the screen, followed by a message recommending steps to turn your computer into a 21st century dynamo. At this point I confess I was a little miffed with the advice: "Buy a new computer." However, the program also suggested changes I could make: (1) install more memory, and (2) install a better CPU. Suggestion number one seemed possible and cheap. Fry's ad that morning listed 128-megabyte PC 133 SDRAM memory chips for less than \$20 apiece, but the store is 20 miles away. Fortunately, the same chips were available at the same price in the local Office Depot. On the other hand, suggestion number two sounded expensive and difficult, but it was not. PC World Product Finder suggested several places to purchase the CPU on the Internet, with price comparisons. After a few minutes spent reading the specifications (some of which I actually understood), I ordered a 400 MHz AMD-K6-2 processor with built-in fan from Computers4sure for under \$70. Here's the shocker. I placed my order at 4 pm on Thursday. Friday morning I received an email from Computers4sure saying the order was on its way. Friday afternoon at 3 pm the part was at my front door, courtesy UPS.

Hey, Memory is a Snap!

Installation was almost too easy. Four steps cover the memory chips: 1. Remove the cover from the case (a step that usually puts my computer out of commission for two days, minimum). 2. Release the clips on the memory chips. 3. Pull the chips up and out. 4. Push the new ones into the same slots.

The CPU? Easy, too

The other surprise was changing the CPU. It was also simple to do. 1. Remove the clip from the CPU fan, unplug the fan wire, and take the fan out. 2. Lift the lever on the right hand side of the CPU and rotate it upward about 90 degrees. 3. Grasp the sides of the CPU and pull it out. 4. Note that several dozen pins stick out of the bottom of this chip. They form a perfect square, except that a pin is missing from one corner. This is the Coffin Corner, and it mates with a matching receptacle. 5. Install the new CPU in the same orientation. You don't have to push hard. If the CPU resists, check to see that the Coffin Corner is aligned properly. 6. Flip the lever down, and check to be sure the CPU cannot be pulled out. 7. Replace the fan and the computer's cover. You might want to try booting the computer before you put the cover back. That's what I did, and naturally, the machine did not boot the first time. The "Troubleshooting" section of the CPU booklet said, "Check the cable on your hard drive." I did, and it was loose. I pushed it in firmly, and this time the computer worked. Total upgrade time, 20 minutes. Three days ago I had a computer with 64 megabytes of memory and a 200 MHz CPU. Now I have a computer with 256 megabytes of memory and a 400 MHz CPU, and the total cost (including tax and shipping) was less than \$125. Thank you Steve.

Harry Kelsey lives in Altadena, California, is the author of *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate*, and a former WordStar aficionado. He can be reached at hekelsey@att.net.

From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Caligari software

I like Caligari software for the unique effects it offers. Last year they began sending me e-mail marketing messages for their products, often a special offer. When they came out with iSpace, I bought their introductory special. Two months later they introduced an updated version of iSpace, but if I wanted it, I had to buy it. I was upset and didn't buy it. I complained, but to no avail.

Several months later, I purchased a special they offered on version 5.1 of trueSpace with some plug-ins bundled (how soon we forget). Not even a month later, they introduced trueSpace 5.2, an updated version that I would have to pay \$99 for if I wanted it. I thought that was unfair and complained to their marketing department, saying that other vendors usually have a grace period for a free upgrade if you have just purchased their software, but it fell on deaf ears. I feel their marketing tactics are very unethical and I have now written off buying anything more from Caligari. I just thought I'd alert you to my experience.

Ink Jet Your Ink Jet

Susie McLean of Inksell.com contacted me about offering my readers a discount on their products. I know nothing about prices for this type of product, so you are on your own here. However, the Web site seems very professional and it sounds like they offer quality product. Here is Suzie's message:

"InkSell.com is a discount printing Supply Company that specializes in cartridges for all makes of ink jet and laser printers, solid ink printers, copiers, and fax machines. We sell brand names, new (not remanufactured) compatible cartridges, and refill kits. Our compatible cartridge quality is certified to match that of the manufacturer and our prices are up to 70 and 80% less. We would be happy to offer your readers a 10% discount on purchases at our online store.

"A discount coupon code will be valid through April 30, 2002. To redeem the 10% discount, (not valid with any other discount or offer), simply visit our site, [<http://www.inksell.com>], place your order and continue to 'check out' where there will be a blank to enter the discount coupon code (D0302). The discount will be automatically calculated. Should anyone have questions or need assistance, phone customer service at 1-800-255-0483, or send e-mail to [help@inksell.com]."

Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings



The May WAC Meetings will be held on Saturday, May 18, 12-4 p.m. at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 14640 Soucy

Place, Centreville VA. (See the web site for directions.) You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

Make Annoying Popup Windows Go Away

Popup Killer is a godsend if you hate those ads popping up all the time when you're on line. They are annoying and we can do without them. This is another one I found in the Macon Users Group newsletter. If this concept interests you, go to [<http://software.xfx.net/utilities/popupkiller/>]. It's freeware, but the article I read recommends you send the author \$7.00 to help keep him in beer and pretzels. I'm not sure if that would be the author of popup killer or the author of that article!

Clean Up Your Mail Before Forwarding

I'm sure you've received e-mail that has been forwarded several times and filled with all kinds of annoying marks. StripMail is just the ticket. It cleans up all those angle brackets and other marks from the e-mail before you forward it on.

StripMail will also format text into paragraphs and change the right margin by indenting. You'll find Strip-Mail at [<http://www.dsoft.com.tr/stripmail>]. It's free and only 265 KB.

SPAM Punisher

SPAM Punisher is an anti-spam tool that makes it easy for you to find out the address of a spammer's Internet Service Provider, then generate and send complaints. If an ISP receives enough complaints generated by SPAM Punisher, he may close Internet access to a spammer. Tech TV's The Screensavers recommended it as "a free download of the day." You can download the utility from [<http://biosolutions.hypermart.net/>].

PowerQuest and AccessData

Linda Barlow sent me this updated list of special prices on PowerQuest and AccessData products for user group people.

PartitionMagic V7 \$35 (list \$69.95)
Drive Image V5 \$35 (list \$69.95)
DriveCopy V4 \$25 (list \$49.95)
SecureClean \$25 (list 49.95)
CleanDrive \$20 (list \$39.95)

Gene Barlow has developed an educational CD called "Discovering Your Hard Drive" which includes four hours of information (Gene's description) about how to organize, upgrade, migrate to XP, backup and secure your hard drive. There are even product demonstrations on the CD. Having seen Gene's hard drive presentation a couple of times, I have to think his "Discovering Your Hard Drive" CD would be very useful. The price is \$20.00 (List \$39.95). Shipping and handling is only \$5.00 on each order. To order, go to [<http://www.ugr.com/order/>]. Use the code UGDEALS02.

Watch That Spyware

(from Charlotte Bytes, newsletter of Charlotte County Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.)

If you're thinking about using a program called Gator (a software that keeps track of user names and passwords for Web site logons and forms), be aware that it has a Trojan horse built in that will (behind your back) download spyware to report on your activities. A good firewall, though, will prevent it from dialing out to report. Surprisingly, Gator is a very popular utility. As has been said many times, read the EULA (End User Licensing Agreement) when installing. I just thought it would be good to warn you.

More on Antivirus

(From the Chautauqua Cyber Chat newsletter)

They mentioned a favorite Antivirus of their members, AVG, which can be found at [<http://www.grisoft.com>]. It is free for home users. Take a look. The article included Trend Micro's free "House Call" at [<http://www.housecall.antivirus.com>]. Also referred to was Computer Associate's new suite of protection software at [<http://my-etrust.com>] (I just heard CA was ending this free program, so check for sure). While I'm at it, Panda provides a free virus check at their Web site with the latest signatures. [<http://www.pandasoftware.com>]. I might warn you that for an AV check of your system on line, you must disable your firewall if you have one.

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@dealsguy.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, there are interesting articles from user group newsletters on my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading, with the author's



(Continued from page 1)

collected was transcribed to paper for archival purposes. Although we couldn't twist Don's arm to accept another position as an officer or director after he "retired" as secretary, he rarely missed a meeting, serving as elections commissioner for many years.

Given his military specialty as an artillery officer, Don was the self-selected operator of the saddle-stitch staple gun, when we began newsletter assembly parties. While Don was an expert at this task, any time a staple bent he'd hold it up with a twinkle in his eye, and proclaim the need to immediately fill out the appropriate Army form for malfunctioning ammunition. If by rare chance he should miss a board meeting when we assembled the newsletter, he'd gleefully harangue us at the next meeting about completing the inventory paperwork, since we'd obviously used up several more staples than the number of newsletters called for.

Don served as the SYSOP of the club's electronic bulletin board system for many years until it was made superfluous by the Internet in March of '99. He'd invoke "chat" mode when we struggled to invoke some feature of the BBS software, or call, "This is Don Gruenthal. Say, I noticed when you were on the board, ..." Always there to help!

An email I received from Bill Higgins probably shows that aspect of Don best:

"I am extremely sorry to get the news of Don's passing. He and Brigitta were always such good friends of ours; they always went out of their way each Sunday to get Higginses to Mass each Sunday after Marian had to give up driving after her first stroke June 1st, 2000. That means about forty-five to fifty Sundays until we left for Ohio July 6, 2001. The times he took me out to my dentist at the end of Vienna and sat and waited to bring me home.

That is truly tested friendship.

Marian and I will miss him, and I especially so. Many wonderful memories. I have more intimate reasons to remember him since the nights he drove me to my first club meetings in the days of our old president Rod Wright. The so many Sunday afternoons when we sat together in front of my old Model One TRS-80 for mem-

bers' weekly 'open house workshops' — learning and teaching SCRIPSIT, teaching us (especially) to learn how to get on the club bulletin board.

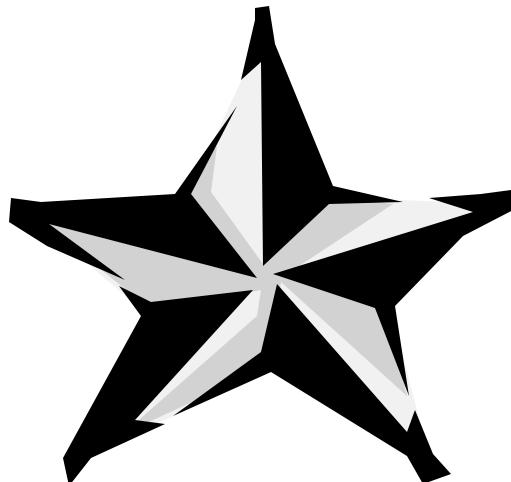
He was always willing to help any of us — any time. There were several times when we even drove out to members' homes just because they had asked for help. One especially I remember, a widower who had had a stroke, yet he was still desperately trying to help his daughter raise his grandson. All his professional material was on his hard drive, beyond his capability to retrieve.

Don patiently downloaded it all for several hours.

I'm not sure he would like it if I mention that he was a saint, is a saint.

We will truly miss him."

Don's funeral at the Old Post Chapel at Ft. Myer was a beautiful, moving service, including a quartet from the Arlington Symphony, and musical selections and readings, some performed by family members, and eulogies by Don's brother, a West Point classmate, and his daughter Lucy. Full military honors followed for the grave side service, including horse drawn caisson, band, escort platoon, riderless horse with reversed boots in the stirrups, seven man firing party, and trumpeter for taps. (See <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.com/customs.htm>)



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abled. I tried to enable the AV and it refused from any point I tried. After several hours of trying to get this product to work properly, and calling in the mounties (AKA resident Alpha Geek) to try to make it work properly, I gave up in exasperation.

My next strategy was to uninstall the program, as everyone knows by now that you cannot install one AV over another, and just maybe I could re-install the software and overcome the problems with the initial install. But it refused to let me uninstall it, saying I had to disable the antivirus part of it first. But I could not do that anywhere that I could find, as all it would do was inform me that it was already disabled. Finally, the Alpha Geek was able to convince the software through the XP side of things that, indeed, the antivirus had been disabled. However, this was all for naught, as it now said I could not uninstall it unless I logged in through the "Supervisor" account. There *was* no supervisor account! There were only two accounts on this machine, my account, and a guest account.

Panic. Desperation. Anger at a company who had always been a trusted friend, and now was just a shareholder's

country club. Finally, disgust at what choices I now had because of one piece of buggy software that was not ready for prime time.

I logged onto Symantec's web page to look for some tech support. After searching through all the FAQ's, and finding nothing that resembled the problems I encountered, I tried to contact them with a personal message. But there didn't seem to be any place to reach them with a personal message, only a "forum" where others could post their requests as well. So I left a public message in the forum, asking for guidance on how to uninstall Norton Internet Security 2002.

I did find a LOT of other messages from people who were having similar problems. Only a handful of them had any replies, and those replies basically said to use a file on their website to uninstall the software. But to do that, one had to hack the registry in order to disable the antivirus, etc., and the solution was quite convoluted. Definitely not for the fainthearted, and definitely not something you wanted to do to a brand-new computer. And the replies to previous messages were the standard party line, even after some of the participants explained

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NCTCUG Information

NCTCUG, Post Office Box 949, Arlington VA 22216

Club Information call: 301-577-7899 Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2002

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-280-1243
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Roger Arnold	301-946-7770

Director: term expires

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Blair Jones	2002	202-362-7344
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Fred Cook	2003	703-921-1749
JJ Davies	2003	703-379-9222
Sy Fishbein	2003	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2003	301-931-2400

Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome. They will be published soon after they are received. Priority is given to articles written by club members. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with C/R only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization founded in 1977 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS computers. The dues are \$25 per year. Dues include a \$5.00 annual charge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 10 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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COMPUTER CENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>

If you are moving

Please send your change of address to the club PO box as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

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that their party line did not work either. FWIW, the solution utility posted on their website was *not supported* by Symantec, so if you chose to uninstall the software, using the files off their website, you did so at your own risk.

I finally received a response from Aaron at Symantec. I got the same party line spiel that all the others did, which means I will have to spend a lot of time getting my machine back to a point where I can use it. So basically, they have wasted a lot of my time, and \$60.00 of my money to tell me that I now have to do it myself. Hmm. I believe they are the ones who caused it, why aren't they the ones cleaning up their own mess??? Why hasn't there been a recall of this product? Why don't they have a *legitimate* fix for the problems? Notice problems is plural. People are still being snookered into buying this joke, thinking it is compatible with XP, when plainly it is not.

I think it will be easier for me to just reformat and reinstall than to try to clean up this fiasco they have caused. I am perfectly capable of buggering up my own machine, without any help from the outside world. I will now move on to another company who is actually ready to protect my XP computer, and ready to accept responsibility for their mistakes. I have to wonder, though, if the term "class action" would hold any incentive for them to get their ACT! together. Pun not supported by author...

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

May 2002

1st Wed. (5/1) **7 p.m.** Virginia General Meeting

4th Wed (5/22) **7 p.m.** Internet SIG

3rd Monday (5/20) **7 p.m.**
Board of Directors

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.



Visit The Club Website

www.nctcug.org

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