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PC Madness

By Les J. Kizer, Greater Tampa Bay PCUG, Mid-Hudson Computer UG, SeniorNet PCUG - USF Tampa. gtb.Les@Juno.Com

The causes for insanity are only recognized by looking backward at one's tracks in the snow. What contributed to such a state? Would insanity have occurred if one didn't experiment with various application programs and even the operating system itself? Or is Microsoft the cause? I'm not sure. In looking back, however, I discovered madness.



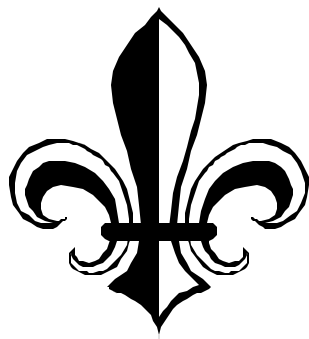
Possible Causes of Madness

1. Top of the list is the Microsoft Windows operating system. I like stability, to do a job once and know that it is finished. Since the children left home, this fool operating system is the most unstable thing in my life. Each version promises improvements. Yes, it improves, but it continues to act as someone who is sick or changed their medication by breaking in new ways. When will they really fix the darn thing?

2. Another contributor to insanity: the ever increasing insecurity of the Internet with its email. We have viruses and threats of viruses that go beyond amusement to sabotaging our lives. Just for protection, we need several applications, such as: credit card protection, GRC leak tests, Kookaburra's Cookie Pal, Lavasoft's Ad-Avare, McAfee's Antivirus, a pop-up stopper, SPAM protection, SpyBot checker, Symantec's Norton Antivirus, web-link validators, and a ten dozen others.

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Tech TALK

By Brian Jacobs, CAUG

This month's subject is the trials and tribulations of doing simple things with a Windows computer.

My wife wanted some pictures off our web site to send to her grandfather, who doesn't own a PC. Seemed a simple enough request. Since I produce the web site on my "Purple Haze" Win NT box, I thought I would use it, without thinking about the problems this might engender. It was easy enough to bring up Dreamweaver and then copy the pictures over to Word. There I discovered that you are extremely limited as to where the pictures would be placed, leaving enough room for text explanations of each picture.

No problem, I thought, I'll just fire up MS Publisher and then place the pictures where I wanted them, leaving text boxes for position holders. Thought I might even show my wife how to use Publisher to type in the text, rather than write it out by hand after printing. Of course, when I went to browse for the pictures, I get an error message from Publisher to the effect that this part of Publisher is broke — did I want to repair it. Sure, why not. Went through my CD's to find the install disk for Office 2K, put it in and was then told that it was the wrong CD—please insert the proper disk. I think the name it is looking for is data2.msi while my CD insists the file is called Data2.msi. Did you see the difference? Took me a few tries, I'm slow, but one is in caps and one isn't. So no repair this time. And how Publisher screamed and threatened when I tried to not repair it, with dire warning of impending program failure if I didn't repair it Now!

So far so good, but now the problems mounted. I was going to browse for the Save as location, intending to put a copy on hard drive, then another on a floppy. It was only two pages and 10 pictures so the file shouldn't be too large. Wrong! Turns out the file is way too large for a floppy, even in zipped format. No prob, I'll just burn a CD. No, that won't work. I have an Iomega CD-RW that I got on special at CompUSA a few years back after being told by both Iomega and CompUSA that it would run under NT. Of course, it didn't. Runs fine under Win2K but not

NT. Which meant breaking open the box, installing my Win2K drive, changing jumpers and slaving the NT drive and then burning the CD. Instead I decided to send the file email. Yahoo chocked twice on attaching the file, so I went to my ATT account. After waiting a long time for the file to attach here, I decided that the easy way to print this file was to crawl under my wife's desk and unplug the printer, attach it to Purple Haze and print it, then put it back on her machine.

After looking at what I would have to move to get the printer cable out from behind the desk and filing cabinet, I decided to just move over to her PC, using the backup CD of the web site. Discard the file on Purple Haze, end the internet connection and redo everything on her PC.

I am almost positive that next month's column will be the hoops I learned to jump through as I try to network several boxes, to prevent this type of problem in the future. Of course, I could buy another printer, but that would be too easy. And her printer works perfectly well for what little printing we do. Maybe go wireless network? Nah, too much money for wireless this soon after the holidays. Think I will get a 5 port hub, a few Cat 5 cables and a few Link-Sys or 3Com 10/100 cards to install. Then I can have Purple Haze (Win NT), my Dell laptop (Win2K), my wife's PC (also Win2K) on my own mini network. I'll also install my Win2K HD in Purple Haze and make sure that connection also works. And I won a copy of Win XP Pro at the CAUG holiday party, so I think I'll find a spare HD and install XP on Purple Haze and network that. Humm. That means two network cards and drivers, three OS's, a mini-hub and my laptop. Should be a breeze... Go on, just shoot me now...

Brian is a roving PC technician with over 15 years of Help Desk experience. It has provided an income and an endless source of "dumb user" anecdotes to share with his wife at the dinner table. Email him: brianjacobs@yahoo.com
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Getting Advice On A Digital Camera

Give And Take In A Computer Users Group —

A Collection Of Email Advice From The Coastal Area Users Group (CAUG)

Reprinted from Coastal Computer News (CAUG), Corpus Christi, TX, via APCUG

OK, camera folks, is the camera a good deal, and does it have everything I would want?

CANON
PowerShot A40 Digital Camera
\$249.00

The Chief Nerd

David,

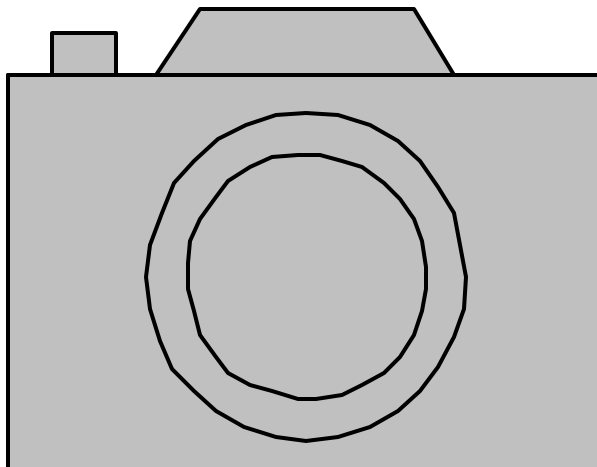
Only you can answer, "Does it have everything I want". Sounds great for the money. Where do you get it for that price? I would search DPR-view for references to how close the 16cm macro focus can get: 1-to-2 or what. You should plan on never wanting anything bigger than 5x7 size printouts and never getting just-the-right-moment action shots because of typical digital camera shutter-lag time. Also, remember you need a bigger CF card (\$20 per 64MB I good), a set of NiMH AAs for \$15, an intelligent battery charger (a 1-hr possibly), and perhaps a CF card-reader for about \$20. A multi-card-reader might come in handy later on for \$10 more.

'Tis the season to get free compact flash cards and gift cards with purchases so look out for those deals. H-E-B will be open for getting a newspaper with all the after-Thanksgiving ads, if you don't already subscribe. How about writing a brief on what you have found for Bill to put in the newsletter? The features and price of the Canon Powershot A40 sound superb.

Bruce Switfa-la-la-la-la, la la la la
(Bruce Switalla \Email: bswit@usa.net)

Hola Chief,

David, this looks like it would be just fine. The main personal caution I have on it right off the bat is the use of conventional batteries. This drives me nuts on the low to medium end cameras. Manufacturers oughta be shot for even thinking of designing alkalines into a digital camera. They just don't work well. Not even the ones that say they're for digitals.



Balderdash and hogwash. If you can't get a camera with a lithium battery (best), spend \$60 extra dollars for two sets of rechargables and the charger/conditioner (always keep a backup set of batteries in the chute). Don't even think of using alkalines. Waste of time and money. You won't believe how fast you can go through them once the shooting frenzy begins. We're talking minutes here, quite frequently.

Not hours. Rechargables will last a lot longer, even using the flash (which REALLY eats up battery juice).

Also, immediately purchase at least one additional flash memory card. You can get 16MB or 32MB; but don't. Get a 64MB. That's really the smallest capacity you want to mess with. A 128MB card is better. Sounds massive, but once you start shooting, remember that your images are going to be about 700KB or so each at a 2.0 megapixels resolution. and the math becomes more evident. If you play with the MPEG function, it'll eat up space like a tapeworm on speed. Forget the free 8MB; use it for an emergency backup only. You won't get nearly enough pics on it before you run out of room and get frustrated. Trust me on this point. <grin!>

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Otherwise, looks like you get a lot of bang for your buck for this baby.

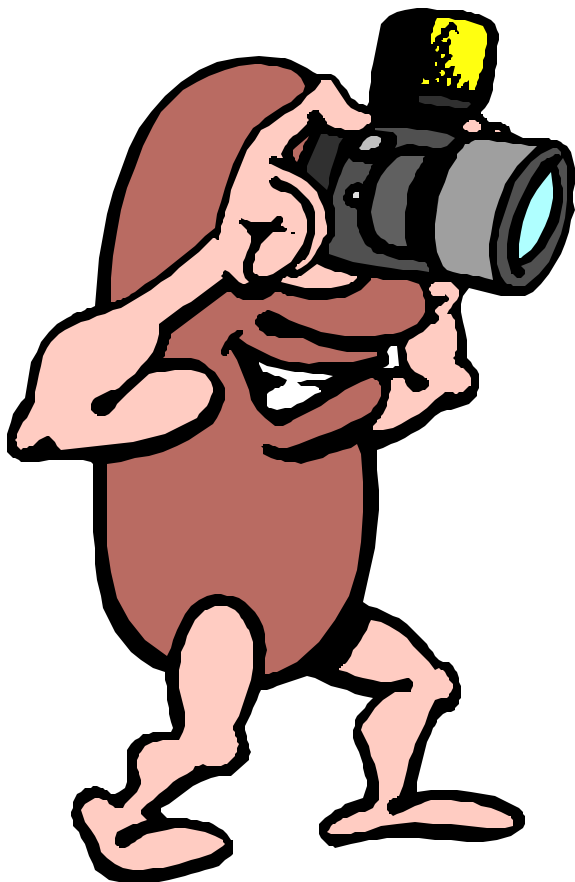
By the by, Digital E-Tailer lists the camera for \$222.

Cheers,
Patty
Patty Beasley
Email: patty@ccbirding.com

Thanks for the input, since I have a digital camera (very weak, cheap) and I am not collecting them I want to get one, period, that will last for 20 or more years ;-)

The Chief Nerd

Uh, do you use the same computer you did 20 years ago, ;-)? Technology constantly changes and I'm quite happy with 35mm, actually, but I got my second Canon from Best products since all I had to do was add a body to go automatic exposure. Then they added auto focus and now my lens collection is old tech.



For a digital purchase, I would go for a recent price drop like the letter I forwarded you for Gary Spencer. We are, however in a deflationary state with this technology and only recently, I think, have digital price drops affected the stagnant 35mm pricing structure. I think everybody wants sharp 8x10s which necessitate at least 3 Megapixels.

I prefer zooms that include 28mm equivalent because you never know when you need to shoot in a tight room. The Minolta D7 series does this but not as sharply to a very critical eye as the Nikon 5700 that John Hoffmann just bought. But the Nikon only widens to 38mm. I checked out dpreview.com to find that out.

Some very exciting things are on the way in digital, like the ability to pile all color information into one pixel instead of three, as the new Sigma SLR. It uses one-third the file space. And the new Canon and Fuji (Nikon lenses) SLRs that use a larger CMOS, so there's no wasted lens or "tele-photo effect" on all your lenses which focus on a too-small area, on all the top digital SLRs except, those mentioned.

So, just like computers, there's always going to be a "carrot" out in front of us we never catch up to. Plan on giving your cameras to someone who will appreciate them...just like you replace computer parts. I feel good about spending only \$99 for my HP when it was similar to \$600 models when they came out.

Bruce Switalla

(These responses to our president's request for advice on a digital camera are a good example of what takes place in a computer user group hundreds of times a year. We constantly call on each other, aware that out there in our membership is someone who has had a related experience and is willing to tell it like it is.

As a digital camera wannabee player, I was privileged to be copied on these delightful responses to our president's request for feedback on his choice of a digital camera. — Ed.)

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Homeland Security on the Net

By Ira Wilsker

There have been a lot of hoaxes and urban legends mixed with the facts about our current threat level, and things that we as citizens can do to protect ourselves. At a time like this, it is imperative that we get our important and critical information from reputable sources, and not from spam emails or rumormongers.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has set up a website at www.dhs.gov where the latest news and information on the topic can be found.

A variety of topics are available from this official source, including information on the new "Operation Liberty Shield". According to the DHS web page, "Liberty Shield is a unified operation that integrates selected national protective measures with the involvement of federal, state, local and private responders and authorities from around the country Operation Liberty Shield is a comprehensive national plan designed to increase protections for America's citizens and infrastructure while maintaining the free flow of goods and people across our border with minimal disruption to our economy and way of life. Operation Liberty Shield is a multi-department, multi-agency, national team effort." Included in the "Liberty Shield" statement is information explicitly on increased security at our borders, stronger transportation protections, and ongoing measures to disrupt threats, greater protections for critical infrastructure and key assets, and increased public health preparedness. Detailed information about these and other important topics is available on the DHS site.

Many of us are justifiably concerned about possible personal threats from terrorists. From the "Threats & Protection" link on the DHS site is comprehensive information compiled from a variety of resources, including the FBI, CIA, National Security Agency (NSA), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Department of Defense, and other resources. On this web page is also informa-

tion explaining the Homeland Security Advisory System, which, as I type this, is at "Orange – Threat Advisory High – High Risk of Terrorist Attacks". Advisories are also posted on cyber-risks, and other public health and safety threats. Tips are available for home and community protection, schools, computer protection, and the mail service. Threats from biological, nuclear, and radiological resources are also included. Risks encountered by our telecommunications, power, water, and other utilities are discussed, as well as possible threats to our transportation system, and our agriculture. Financial threats, such as counterfeiting and credit card fraud, as well as identity theft and other financial threats are explained, and precautions to protect against such risks are disclosed. Potential threats to leadership and symbolic targets are posted.

An affiliated website from the DHS is online at www.ready.gov. With the heading "Terrorism forces us to make a choice. Don't be Afraid – Be Ready". This site contains a variety of personal protection resources, including emergency supplies, emergency planning, and information resources. Details on appropriate emergency supplies needed in an "Emergency Kit" include food and water, air quality and safety items, materials necessary for first aid, a supply checklist, and special needs items. The special needs' listing includes items for babies, family medical needs such as prescriptions, contact lenses and accessories and eyeglasses, dental needs, and related materials. Some seniors and disabled individuals may also have special emergency requirements, such as communication and mobility necessities that must be provided for in times of emergency. Appropriate additional resources are listed, with links on the web page.

The necessity of an emergency family plan is explained, including information on what to do if a terrorist attack or natural disaster occurs while at home, school, in a vehicle, or in a high-rise building, with an emphasis on "common sense" planning. Information on decision making about

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Ask Not What You Can Do For Your Computer But What Your Computer Can Do For You

By Elise M. Edgell, North Orange County Computer Club, CA

For many years I have been looking for hardware and software that I could buy for my computer to make it faster, smarter, have more colors, give it more memory, and be able to run more printers, scanners, modems, and various other gadgets. It always seemed that I never had the funds to purchase what I really needed to be able to edit photographs, print high quality photos, have a computer fast enough to run the software to do all the marvelous things available.

Now it seems that computers have evolved to the point where the necessary CPU speed, sound, video, RAM memory, monitor, broadband connection to the Internet, and printers are powerful enough and inexpensive enough to enable people to do all the wonderful things that were previously out of reach. The use of the Internet and digital photography are two very popular uses of the home computer.

But what else can we let the computer do for us? It is obvious in our club that we have an aging membership. It is time to let the computer start assisting us in the things we do. There are some features built into Windows that can make life easier. It is possible to enlarge the size of the type on the monitor. The speed that the mouse moves can be changed to compensate for a hand that is not as steady as it once was. The color scheme in Windows is changeable. There are many choices as to what appeals to you or as to what makes it easier for you to read the text on the screen. Also, many programs let you change the color scheme to make it easier for you to read the screen.

Have you ever thought about having the computer read to you? There are programs that are able to read any text file. This means that any text that you can copy into Windows Clipboard can be read to

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whether to evacuate or stay at home in a time of crisis is also included.

Critical information on a variety of explicit threats, and what to do in the event those threats become reality is listed. The types of threats covered include biological, chemical, explosive, nuclear, and radiological.

For those wanting a detailed printed brochure on this information, the DHS has a comprehensive one available for download on the ready.gov website, titled "Preparing Makes Sense. Get Ready Now". This brochure is illustrated and in color, prepared in the Adobe PDF format, and suitable for local reproduction and distribution. Alternatively, the brochure is available for free in a published format by calling 1-800-237-3239.

If anyone is interested in being trained in dealing with these threats, or wishes to volunteer for com-

munity service, links are available on the ready.gov site.

Other useful and related official links are available on the ready.gov site. These links include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (www.bt.cdc.gov), Department of Education Emergency Preparedness Plans for Schools (www.ed.gov/emergencyplan), the FBI (www.fbi.gov), Department of Health and Human Services Disasters and Emergencies (www.hhs.gov/disasters), Disaster and Terrorism Help (disasterhelp.gov), Environmental Protection Agency Emergency Preparedness (www.epa.gov/ebtpages/emergencies.html), Federal Emergency Management Agency (www.fema.gov), and other similar links.

Unlike any other major threat previously faced by our country, the Internet has now become a valuable resource of reliable information that may literally be lifesaving. As has been said many times in the past, "information is power", and in this case, information may mean survival.

you. It can read your e-mail, help files, documents, books, web pages, etc. One such program is iSpeak by Fonix. It also has a place where you can enter your town text and the program will say each letter as you type it and each word as it is completed. Then the text can easily be copied and pasted into your favorite word processing program or e-mail program. The thing that I found very interesting is that when I did some searching on the Web for information about the program there was a whole list of things that it can do for you, none of which indicated that it would be very helpful for anyone with impaired vision.

There is a program called Zoom Text by AiSquared that is aimed at the vision impaired market and has an add-on which will read the text out loud, but it is a much more expensive program.

Do you have a problem with carpal tunnel syndrome or are the joints just not working as well as they once did? Are you not a touch typist and have trouble seeing the keyboard? Programs such as Via Voice by IBM and Dragon Naturally Speaking allow you to write text by dictation and even control the functions of the computer with voice commands. In the past these programs weren't very efficient because they take a very powerful computer to work properly. I think the current computers are approaching the necessary computing power.

Many programs can also be used on a PDA such as a Palm or a Pocket PC. Such devices can be very useful because they are easy to take with you when you leave your computer. A PDA can remember megabytes of names, addresses and phone numbers that you are having trouble remembering (Senior moments?). They can be easily programmed to remind you of appointments (time to take pills?), lists of things to do, directions on where to go, etc. About the only requirement is that a person has the ability to read.

E-mail is getting very popular with Seniors but how many people are using the Internet to order groceries? Shopping can be a major problem if you can no longer drive. Public transportation leaves a lot to be desired. Being able to place an order from your computer and have it delivered is more than a convenience for many people. Also, many pharmacies

allow you to order refills of prescriptions on their Web sites. There are many other sites that will mail your prescriptions to you. Using a search program such as Google is also a good way to get information about any medication that you are taking (and about anything else that interests you). You can do all of your shopping using the Internet. Not being able to walk around a shopping mall is no longer a bar to the Shop Till You Drop syndrome.

There are other devices that can be used in the home in conjunction with a computer or in a stand-alone capability that can make life much easier. When it is difficult to get around, it is handy to have a remote control device to turn lights on and off, control a fan, room air conditioner, or any other small appliance. Having a remote video camera in position to show who is at the door is also very handy. There are also devices that can be worn on a cord around the neck so in case of an emergency help can be summoned at the press of a button. Telephones for hearing impaired are available for free in California (with the proper documentation).

The many helpful uses of a computer are not restricted to the elderly. People of all ages may have a disability. And, you don't have to have a disability to let your computer make life easier and more fun.

I would really like to hear from anyone who is using or knows of interesting programs or devices that can be used to improve the quality of life for so many of us. Please e-mail me with any suggestions or ideas at EliseME@aol.com.

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Did Microsoft Send It?

By Siles Bazerman, siles.bazerman@gte.net, APCUG Representative, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, CA orcopug.org

Return-Path:

<1.spar.metzger@wanadoo.fr>Received: from mel-rto6.wanadoo.fr ([193.25.19.25]) by orval.sprint.ca (InterMail vM.5.01.02.00 201-253-122-103-101-20001108) with ESMTPid

<200300225200401.DVU126901.orval.sprint.ca@mel-rto6.wanadoo.fr> for <xxxxxxxxx@sprint.ca>; Tue, 25 Feb 2003 15:04:01 -0500Received: from mel-rta10.wanadoo.fr (193.252.19.193) by mel-rto6.wanadoo.fr(6.7.015)id 3E0C343F02651838; Tue, 25 Feb 2003 20:59:47 +0100Received: from JJE1GO (81.50.38.12) by mel-rta10.wanadoo.fr (6.7.015)id 3E26DAA6016CCA66; Tue, 25 Feb 2003 20:59:46 +0100Date: Tue, 25 Feb 2003 20:59:46 +0100 (added by postmaster@wanadoo.fr) Message-ID: <3E26DAA6016CAA66@mel-rta10.wanadoo.fr> (Added by postmaster@wanadoo.fr) FROM: "Microsoft Corporation Internet Security Division" <zyegdwd201593@AvVyZc.com> TO: "MS Customer <SUBJECT: Newest Internet Security Update> Mime-Version: 1.0 Content-Type: multipart/mixed; boundary="cGwarduOGAAVvQYBK"

From: Microsoft Corporation Internet Security Division
To: MS Customer
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2003 2:59 PM
Subject: Newest Internet Security Update

MS Customer this is the latest version of security update, the "February 2003 Cumulative Patch" update which eliminates all known security vulnerability affecting Internet Explorer, Outlook and Outlook Express as well as five newly discovered vulnerabilities. Install now to protect your computer from these vulnerabilities, the most serious of which could allow an attacker to run executable on your system. This update includes the functionality of all previously released patches. System requirements Win 9x/Me/2000/NT/XP. This update applies to Microsoft Internet Explorer, version 4.01 and later.

Recommendation: Customers should install the patch at the earliest opportunity. How to install Run attached file. Click Yes on displayed dialog box.

How to use: You don't need to do anything after installing this item. Microsoft Product Support Services and Knowledge Base articles can be found on the Microsoft Technical Support web site. For security-related information about Microsoft products, please visit the Microsoft Security Advisor web site, or Contact us. Please do not reply to this message. It was sent from an unmonitored email address and we are unable to respond to any replies. Thank you for using Microsoft products. Best wishes from Microsoft Corporation Internet Security Division

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NOTE: the attachment was deleted.

Is this a legitimate message or a hoax or worse?

I am sure some of you have received the above message and attached file. It has been circulating the internet for over a month.



The message is a hoax, and the attachment is a **worm/virus** that is particularly virulent. It not only replicates itself but starts deleting files on your hard drive.

Let us look at the message and see how we can tell it is a hoax.

Watch out for FIZZER – Another Dangerous Computer Worm

By Ira Wilsker

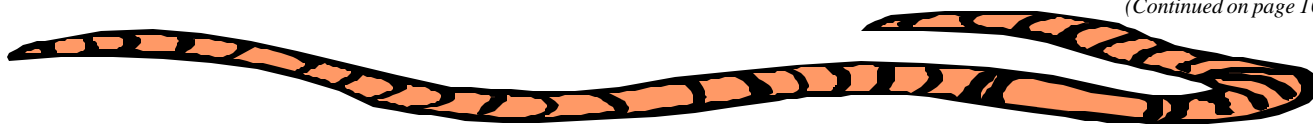
The Fizzer worm, one of hundreds of newly created computer viruses and worms may reach endemic proportions if more of us do not protect our computers from its potentially damaging payload. Fizzer was first detected by the major antivirus and cyber-threat services on May 8. As I type this, one of the major email filtering services, MessageLabs, has reclassified Fizzer to “high-level alert status”, as it is currently infecting one of every 312 emails. Other services are showing that as many as 3 percent of all PCs are already infected with Fizzer. Email is not the only source of Fizzer infection, as it can also be transmitted by AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), and across networks from computer to computer. Many of the documented cases of infection came from file sharing networks, predominately the KaZaA service.

One of the reasons why Fizzer is so dangerous is that it has adopted the tactic used by many of its predecessors, such as the Klez, Bugbear, and Yaha

viruses and worms, where it immediately disables any antivirus and firewall protection installed on the infected computer. It is also polymorphic, in that the code can mutate, generating different digital signatures possibly capable of sneaking by recently updated antivirus software. Fizzer is also capable of “dropping” varying code on infected computers, causing a variety of problems. Some antivirus publishers have found that some of the malicious code is itself “buggy”, and capable of crashing a computer, which although damaging, was not the original intent of the code.

Once a computer is infected, the worm replicates itself by sending out copies of its mutating-self using a variety of resources likely on the computer. It can send copies of itself using its own integral “SMTP” or email engine, without the need to load whatever email software is utilized on the computer. Fizzer can harvest email addresses and other contact infor-

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- ❖ Microsoft NEVER-NEVER-NEVER sends out messages with patches or attachments, especially unsolicited ones. At the most, Microsoft will refer you to a secure site where the patch can be downloaded. (Did I say NEVER?)
- ❖ This is a rather good copy of the format used by Microsoft, but look at the first line. There is no capital letter to start the sentence. Also there are a number of grammatical errors as well as format errors.
- ❖ The message is not sent through a Microsoft site, but from a melrto6.wanadoo.fr (a french site with no Microsoft connection).
- ❖ Microsoft does not have the named division, although it does have units that deal with security, internet or otherwise.

If you receive this or any other similar message, do not immediately install or run the executable file. Check it out. There are numerous sites devoted to security as well as many usenet groups which report on these matters. Your first line of defense is to contact your User Group officers and ask them. They will know or will have access to resources to verify or debunk the claims.

Remember to practice “Safe Hex.”

[NCTCUG Ed. Note: this is still going around (Oct. 03). Be Careful!]

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mation from the Outlook or Outlook Express contacts list, Windows Address Book (WAB), almost any email addresses found on the computer, as well as from IRC, AOL-IM, KaZaA, and other resources. In addition to replicating itself to all of the email addresses found, it also has the capability of updating itself, changing its code and payload, whenever the computer is connected to the net.

If arriving at the targeted computer via email, it will, again similar to its predecessors, arrive with a "spoofed" or forged "From:" address, concealing the real source of the infection. Since the real sender is difficult to identify, those his computer is infecting will not likely inform the owner of the infected computer. The subject line and message are variable, as are the names and file types of the dangerous payload. The payload will likely carry any one of the common executable file extensions such as .exe, .com, .scr, and .pif. The filenames selected by Fizzer are often the names of legitimate files found on the infected computer. The message bearing the payload may also appear as a "FWD:" (forwarded message) from an acquaintance, as the worm may hijack both the "TO:" and "FROM:" addresses from the infected address book; this is yet another example of how human engineering is utilized to trick a victim into opening or activating the payload. Some of the subject lines reported by the antivirus companies also appear to contain religious messages. One possible hint of an infected email is that many of the messages are sent in German, or use German phrases, as well as English.

Once activated, Fizzer checks for files installed on the computer, and if vulnerable, installs multiple copies of itself to the Windows directory, using a variety of filenames. It also installs utilities to monitor and intercept the software running on the computer, and enables "keylogging", where keystrokes typed by the user can be stored, possibly enabling the theft of passwords, account numbers, email addresses, credit card numbers, and other personally sensitive information. Since Fizzer can access the net and file sharing networks, it is capable of sending this information to a large number of destinations. The antivirus publisher McAfee has detected literally hundreds of possible locations that may receive this stolen data. One method used by Fizzer to dissemi-

nate the victims' information is to connect online to an IRC or AOL-IM server, remotely join a chat, and post the information; it is not known if these chats are being monitored to capture this information, or to simply provide a means of randomly disclosing what is stolen from the victim. Fizzer can also connect itself to KaZaA and make the information available to unknown individuals by simple download.

Most of the antivirus websites have a free utility available for download, which can detect and kill most versions of Fizzer. Please do not totally depend on the antivirus software already installed on your computer to protect against Fizzer, because since it is polymorphic, and may have deactivated the antivirus software if the infection preceded the appropriate antivirus update, many users have infected computers and are unaware of it, despite the fact that they believe they are protected. I strongly recommend that one of the free online virus scans be run frequently to detect and kill anything that may have slipped by the antivirus software installed on the computer. Many of these free utilities are listed on my website at www.mycomputershow.com.

Free online scans are available at housecall.antivirus.com, www.pandasecurity.com, www.ravantivirus.com, www.bitdefender.com, and www.mcafee.com. If one of these scans finds that Fizzer is installed, it may be necessary to reinstall your antivirus software and firewall after Fizzer is killed. Again this reiterates the absolute need to have antivirus software installed, running, and updated very frequently.

[NCTCUG Ed. Note: this is just one sample of the kind of thing we all have to watch out for! Be careful!]

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Did You Know?

By Bob Elgines, Editor, Colorado River Computer Club, Lake Havasu City, Arizona elginesz@redrivernet.com

Audio Or Sound Problems?

Double click on the little Speaker Icon located on the right Task-Bar! Up pops an Audio Mixer allowing you to set all level inputs and the volume output. Make sure they are set between mid and full range. Some programs will set the Wave level to zero and all of sudden your sound doesn't work. Also you can go to Options, then Properties and select record. Here you can adjust record levels and what to record from such as CD, Mike, etc., by selecting which one is active.

How much Memory or RAM (Random Access Memory) is needed? This depends on your OS (Operating System). [See Chart below.]

Is there something wrong with this picture? Yes, the new OS can do more, but less of the old routines. Also programmers have gotten very sloppy, and of course that is why more errors are generated. Their feelings are properly, "Well Memory is cheap, who cares!" I believe XP has finally improved as a working OS without too many blue screens of death.

OS MEMORY CHART

<u>OS</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED MIN MEMORY</u>	<u>DATA BUS</u>	<u>HD FORMAT</u>
MS DOS	1980	640 K to 1 MB	8	na
WIN 1.0	1990	640 K to 1 MB	8/16	FAT16
Win 2.0	1991	640 K to 1 MB	16	FAT16
WIN 3.0	1992	2 to 4 MB	16	FAT16
WIN 3.1	1993	4 to 8 MB	16	FAT16
WIN NT	1993	8 to 16 MB	16/32	NTFS
WIN 3.11	1994	8 to 16 MB	16/32	FAT16
WIN 95a	1995	16 to 32 MB	32	FAT16
WIN 95b	1996	16 to 32 MB	32	FAT32
WIN NT4	1996	32 to 64 MB	32	NTFS
WIN 95c	1997	32 to 64 MB	32	FAT32
WIN 98	1998	64 to 128 MB	32	FAT32
WIN 98SE	1999	64 to 128 MB	32	FAT32
WIN ME	2000	128 to 256 MB	32	FAT32
WIN 2000	2000	128 to 256 MB	32	NTFS
WIN XP	2001/02	256 to 512 MB	32	NTFS

What Speed CD-ROM Should I Buy?

Well this is a good question since most CD disks operate lower than 16X (1X is the original speed of an Audio CD of 150 bits/sec of data transfer, therefore a 2X is 300 bits/sec, etc.). The biggest problem today is the delay in the Start Time in reading data from a CD. If you time it, most take 8 to 9 seconds to start; if it is longer than 10 seconds problems will occur with programs and windows trying to transfer data. It could destroy a CD-R disk while you are recording by letting your CD-R (Recorder) Read Buffer go dry (new CD-RW drives and software have protection for this), because with an empty buffer your CD-R will quit writing and then you just produce a coaster (bad CD). So anything above a 16X doesn't mean much, just a sales thing, but you need a Multi-Read CD-ROM or DVD that will read all types of CDs, CD-Rs, CD-RWs (Read/Write CD-Rs).

How do you read what version of DirectX that is installed in your system, and how much memory is on your video (or display) card used to drive your monitor? These are some questions asked when installing certain types of programs. For Windows '98, go to Start/Run and type in DXDIAG, then click on OK. For all Windows, go to Programs/Acessories/System Tools, then click on Tools/DirectX. Here you can find out all kinds of information. Don't you wish you knew this before you purchased your machine. The latest DirectX Driver is version 9 (nine), but beware some video programs will not operate. Click on the DISPLAY tab and read your Video Card memory. You should have at least 2 MB, some new programs require 4 MB minimum. Of course you can have more and what this means is larger blocks of video can be transferred without interrupts, giving you better looking video output and larger screen operation. I recommend a min of 8 MB for 15 inch monitors and a min of 16 MB for larger ones.

Most video cards now start with 64 MB of DDR RAM.

(Continued on page 13)

Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Our Friend Dave is Baaaack

Dave Whittle was kind enough to remember the DealsGuy and his readers. He sent this message the other day. "... Here are some great deals on great software you can offer your readers:

"3D Album PLUS DVD Converter (Animation Capture) [www.3d-album.com]. Create beautiful, eye-popping 3D slide shows from your digital photos. Share by saving the show and music as an executable file or a folder containing everything you need to burn an auto-run CD. You can also convert the slide shows to movie formats for use with a DVD authoring program such as VideoWave 5.

Low Internet Price: \$39.95 + \$24.95 + \$7.70 S&H = \$72.60. User Group Price: ONLY \$35!

"muvee autoProducer DVD Edition [www.muvee.com]. Process any raw video footage (such as your home movies) quickly and easily, converting it into a fascinating movie or music video in one of over a dozen different styles, automatically! Save it as an .AVI, .MPEG, .MPG2, or a variety of other formats. This software is the perfect complement to any video editor or DVD authoring software. Includes manual and CD not available when you order direct from the muvee web site.

Low Internet Price: \$59.95 + \$14.95 for CD + S&H = \$74.90. User Group Price: ONLY \$35!

"iSeeMedia PhotoVista Panorama 3.0 [www.iseemedia.com]. Create fully immersive, interactive, 3D panoramas automatically from a series of digital photos. Upgrade to Version 3.0 to get improved workflow and the ability to stitch an additional layer vertically.

Low Internet Price: \$59.95 + \$9.95 S&H = \$69.90.
User Group Price: ONLY \$35!

"ALL THREE OF THE ABOVE: ONLY \$95! INCLUDING Shipping and Handling FREE if your readers say they saw the offer in your Deals Guy column. Save over \$114! Offer expires October 30, 2003 (or a few days later; call to check and be sure to mention you saw this in the Deals Column — *NCTCUG Ed.*)

"To order, simply provide us with the following:

Name
Shipping address (and billing address if different)
Credit card # and expiration date (VISA or MasterCard only)
Which product(s) you want

"You can e-mail the above information to [orders@webworkingservices.com] or mail it with a check to Webworking Services Corporation, 653 N 600 East, Suite B, Springville, UT 84663, or fax it to (801) 489-0609." Voice phone is (801) 489-0605.

DealsGuy note: While I have not heard of any problems, be aware that sending a credit card number by e-mail may not be the most secure method. If you are unsure about any pricing or S&H, contact Dave for clarification.

Let Freedom Ring — On My Computer, That Is! (Should have used this in July)

I don't have to tell you that patriotism has become first and foremost in most people's eyes since the 911 disaster. How many now fly the flag at your home or have one on your car? What would you think about having your nation's flag on your computer? I'm referring to a screensaver flag. A year ago Tim Hoke of Alamo PC Users Group wrote about several great screensavers and the American Flag screensavers caught my eye in the August 2002 edition of PC Alamode. I checked [<http://www.zdnet.com>] at that time and found plenty. Unfortunately I kept this item until I had room



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

Power and water outages (due to Isabel) at the Fairfax County Government Center will prevent our September meeting from being held. Meetings for the remainder of the year will be held at a different venue—Verizon Online, 1880 Campus Commons Drive, Reston.

WAC Meeting will be held on November 15th, 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. 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

<http://www.wacug.org/>

and things have now changed on ZDNet. When I first considered this, searches on the ZDNet site found 22 items for American Flag Screensavers. A few were for historical landmarks and I also found a screensaver commemorating the Twin Towers. Most were free and some were shareware. It was interesting that some had uninstallers and others didn't. At this point I'm leaving for a cruise so I can only include what my proofreader said; "A search for 'flag screensaver' (without the quotes) and then clicking the 'More Freeware' link, produced 25 hits of which a several appeared to be US flag screensavers." Since this item was merely a suggestion, I'll leave the searching to my readers, but I would think there are some good flag screensavers kicking around someplace.

A search for Canadian Flag screensavers on ZDNet didn't find any, but a simple search (that's the only kind I know) on Google found them along with some other interesting Canadian items for you folks to the north. Paul Witheridge of Sarnia (Ontario) PC Users Group told me he likes Flag3D found at [<http://www.improbable.ukgateway.net/flag3d/flag3d.htm>] and it comes with at least a dozen 3 dimensional Canadian flags. You can adjust size, movement, spin and wind speed. Choose a flag or let them appear randomly. The 3D effects are spectacular! Oh, and it's FREE.

Free Software That Is Also Popular

Many people use Serif products. In fact, they are very affordable and I have been getting some incredible special offers (as a customer) from Serif lately. I read in the Macon Users Group newsletter about being able to download some absolutely free fully functional older versions of their software right from their Web site. Check out [<http://www.freeserifsoftware.com>] where you will find PagePlus 5, DrawPlus 4, PhotoPlus 5.5, 3Dplus 2 (on linked pages) and WebPlus 6 almost beckoning for you to download them to try. If you prefer, you can get the free software sent to you on a CD for just \$2.95 shipping.

But how about this; Serif sent out flyers recently saying they would send you PagePlus 5, DrawPlus 3, GraphicsPlus, PhotoPlus5, 3Dplus (a \$250 value) and also a free wheel mouse for nothing more than \$3.95 shipping and handling. Is that a deal, or not? Simply call 1-800-55-SERIF to order. They asked me for some codes when I ordered so I hope I have them right. Customer reference number is X00486045. The Quote Code is FFF512.

I called for permission to print this offer and they said to use the same codes. I feel this is an incredible deal. They will offer you manuals for three of the programs for \$27

if you wish. Since I am a person who needs a manual, I bought them. Wouldn't hurt to mention you read this in the DealsGuy column if you call.

The thinking is that if you like the free products, you'll want to upgrade to their latest versions with more capabilities, and of course, will tell your friends. Makes sense to me!

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]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. I have also been busy putting up some interesting new articles on my Web site, so take a look. My thanks to the authors I was able to reach. However, they don't all answer their e-mail so I often must give up on many good articles for lack of response.

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How Do I Get Rid Of Those Icons On The Right Task Bar?

Most of these icons have a little program running in the back ground and use up valuable memory resources. The Speaker & Monitor icon do not use up any memory resources, but most of the others do. To get rid of them temporarily do a right mouse click and select Close, but to get rid of them for good in Windows go to Start then Run. Type in MSCONFIG and click on OK. Now go to the tab on top and click on Start-Up. This brings up a list of all those icons. Do not uncheck the following four items: Taskbar Display Controls, ScanRegistry, SystemTray, and Load-PowerProfile. After un-checking the ones you don't want to come up on startup, click on Apply, then OK. You can restart windows now or wait until later. If you use a CD-R this is very important. Also if you are going to defrag your hard drive some of these items should be turned off (or closed, along with your screen saver) or the Defrag Program will keep starting over and over and never complete the job.

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When will they really fix the darn thing? And all these protection programs must be kept constantly up to date, like we have nothing else to do with our time.

3. As a generality, most application manufacturers produce higher quality products than Microsoft; however, all applications have bugs. Bugs require us to occasionally check for updates to those programs. Most of these programs are so much better.
4. And then there is that huge thing within Windows called a "registry." Almost every action passes steps through this giant table. Every time an application program is installed, the registry becomes larger. Uninstalling the same application might reduce its size but never to the smaller size it was before. Just using an application may grow the registry still larger. As the registry grows, response time slows. So, now we need iv16 Power Tools, Microsoft System Tools to monitor what is happening, Symantec's Norton System Works, and a host of other small programs to shrink the registry and still it contains useless junk. And if you edit the registry yourself, your system is in mortal danger. When will they get rid of the darn registry?

In just maintaining the PC, the operating system and its application programs, how do we manage to have time to use it for something useful. Is there any wonder that for an experimenter, like me, madness lurks in the wings?

Operating System

Early in the Justice Department monopoly suit against Microsoft, Justice proposed breaking Microsoft into five companies along product lines. Myron Kandel, CNN, suggested an alternative breakup: Yes, setup five companies; however, give each company the entire product line and let the five companies compete against each other in the market place. (Can you imagine what our automobiles would be like if they were all made by the same company?)

There is nothing I, as an individual, can do about the operating system because there is not yet an alternative desktop operating system of merit. I'm stuck, you are stuck, we all are stuck with whatever Microsoft gives us.

Mad Logic

By compartmentalizing the usage, I could reduce the size of the registry, eliminate some of the Internet and email problems, and have a place to experiment.

Ah! My kingdom for more than one PC. That's it! When I buy a new PC, I'll keep the old PC for a toy. But then all of the latest hardware is on the new PC, and, shucks, I wanted to experiment with the latest stuff. In addition, I do add and change hardware as the spirit moves. Well, at least it sounded like a good idea.

Initial Stages Of Madness

About then I saw an ad for swappable disk drives. Why not have several swappable C drives: one for very stable bread and butter applications that never see the Internet, one for Internet and email, and one for experimenting. To swap a disk requires a power off reboot; that is, it is necessary to turn the power off, physically swap the disk drives and then turn the power on.

What Needs To Be Shared

To share data, a few applications need to be common among the three systems. This was accomplished with another physical disk drive, installed as the D disk.

On this D disk are installed the applications common to all three C disks, not many: Corel Office, Juno email (because it is not an Internet exposure as some other Internet products are), and several testing programs. This installation allows data produced while using a program from one C disk to be available when using another C disk. To easily accomplish this feat, I designed a base operating system with the applications that are common to all three disks. This

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base operating system is stored on another disk drive. Since I expect the operating system to fail, on failure or even slowness, I simply copy the base operating system over the failing operating system, add the few applications that are unique to that PC and continue.

Backup

As you know, there are many ways to backup a system. I choose to install a third disk drive to contain a mirror of my data. This third disk drive also contains the base operating system. Since it is so easy to replace an operating system with the clean base operating system and there are so few applications running on each operating system, I no long backup the actual operating system.

Upgrades

Each time I replace a defunct operating system with the base operating system the latest Microsoft upgrades are installed on the base operating system. It is done by copying the base operating system to the C disk, doing the upgrade, and then copying the upgrade C disk to the base operating system.

Because of all the problems Microsoft has with the Internet, I upgrade the Internet C disk religiously. As for the other two C disks, unless there is a problem, I don't upgrade.

Experimenting

Experimentation has become a delight. The most positive thing: I can install a program on

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NCTCUG Information

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COMPUCENTER 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.

Thank You!

the experimental PC, learn the program, play with it, and only then decide if I want the program installed on the bread-and-butter PC or the Internet PC. If the experimental system blows up, the base operating system is installed immediately on the experimental PC.

Conclusion To Madness — Not Really

In this example, the latest hardware is available to all three systems. Since fewer applications are installed on each PC, registry problems are drastically reduced and performance is good. This combination has worked well for several years.

The End To Madness


No way. An inventive mind can always do more. Stay tuned.

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TURKEY TIME!




November 2003

1st Wed. (11/5) 7 p.m.
Virginia General Meeting

4th Wed (11/26) 7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (11/17) 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.



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