

The Outer Edge

Newsletter of the Channel Islands PC Users Group

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The Friendly Computer Club Helping Make Computers Friendly



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Attendance at the
March General Meeting
120 MEMBERS &
7 GUESTS

WE ALSO WELCOME
2 NEW MEMBER

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COMMAND.COM

By George A. Lakes, President

Are we adequately serving the needs of all of our members? This is the question recently asked by one of our members who classifies himself as having somewhere between beginner and intermediate skills. He believes he has seen a decrease in the number of attendees at the monthly meetings, which is true. He also believes many who come have high computer skills and are very knowledgeable, which is also undoubtedly true. Their questions and answers are quite technical and go beyond the comprehension of many in the audience.

We know there are some people who are not asking questions because they are too embarrassed to ask, afraid they will appear stupid. I can relate to that, but I don't ask the questions at the meetings because I have a personal guru I turn to when I need help to avoid any perceived embarrassment regarding the simplicity of the questions and/or answers.

The member who raised the issue wonders if there should be more emphasis placed on the needs of those with lower computer skill levels and the devotion of some time to the basics. This may be appreciated by some of those new to computers, both beginners and intermediates. However, those members with high computer skills will find this a little boring. It is difficult to please everyone.

My wife, Arline, and I, while longtime club members, have not reached that high level of expertise. We share the feeling with many of you that some of the questions and answers are beyond us. I recall before buying our first PC (an XT with a 20 Meg hard drive), I started subscriptions to several of the monthly computer magazines and found all I could do was look at the pictures as it seemed they were

(Continued on page 4)

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Executive Committee Meeting Notes

March 2000 By Laura Pacheco

The March 2000 Executive Committee meeting was held at the home of George and Arline on Tuesday, March 7, at 7 p.m. George and Arline Lakes, Helen Long, Robert Provart, Toby Scott, Ralph Duchacek, Art Lewis, John Godwin, Jim and Dianna Thornton, and Laura E. Pacheco attended. Financial, Membership and TOE reports were given as published in TOE.

John Godwin, membership chairman: Renewals -- 30, New members--2, percentage of renewals: January -- 77, February -- 80, and March -- 64. Note: If you haven't renewed your membership, and you are overdue; please pay your dues. Thank you.

Art Lewis, treasurer: We have received our resale license and will be paying sales tax on tangible items that we sell. The prices will always include the sales tax. He also suggested that the

club consider, in the near future, purchasing a very good projector that will be able to take the data directly from a laptop.

Jim Thornton, chairman, garage sale: He reviewed his proposal of the Garage Sale set for July1 (Fourth of July weekend). His general guidelines and suggestions were discussed at length and proved to be very thorough and very impressive. His hard work and well-organized approach to this huge task was greatly appreciated by all the members of the board!

George Lakes, president: He discussed the coming election for the club's officers and the need for a nominating committee. Possible suggestions are pending confirmation.

George brought up the subject of meeting the needs of beginning PC users (of which, I am one) in regard to the Q&A session. Lately, the

questions have been very high-tech and might leave some members feeling lost or out of place. John Godwin came up with an excellent suggestion: that we have members fill out a form to submit questions, any computer/Internet questions, no matter how simple, without having to give their names. Toby Scott can read the questions and answer them during the Q&A session. This could help those who are too shy or think their questions are not important enough problem. It was suggested that we start doing this with next month's meeting.

Personal Note: I know I am also speaking for everyone; however, I especially would love to thank these people personally for making my job easier. Lord knows, I need all the help I can get! And these "angels" have unselfishly and without a word, volunteered to get up very early just to do their jobs behind the scenes. My deepest thanks to Henry Tanner, our sound technician, who also tapes the meetings for me, Michael Shalkey (who also gets the donuts) and John Weigle, both of whom run those mikes all over the place just so I can "hear" the questions asked, and Barry Creasap, Arthur Jensen and Dick Otterson, who make sure all the equipment is set up. They have made my transcribing so easy I am ashamed to act like it's a lot of work. If I have left out anyone, forgive me and double thanks. OK, where is my Oscar? //

Help needed, help offered

(This information was submitted by Westview Services. - Editor)

Westview Services is a non-profit organization providing services to anyone with barriers to employment. We are in need of volunteers to assist our staff in classroom, social, or on-the-job training for the disabled. Perhaps you know of people with a desire and passion to help these individuals.

We will accept anyone for flexible, on-call or part-time hours. Since we opened our training center, we are also in need of furniture, computers, or other equipment.

Thank you for considering us.

More information may be obtained from Rosanne Bell, senior program manager, Westview Services, 5550 Telegraph Road, No. A, Ventura 93003; phone 650-5238 //

April meeting to feature graphics program

Our April 1 meeting has been changed from the earlier announcements. It will feature a presentation on Photo Suite 3 and Video Wave 3. Also, Jerry McCloud will have an assortment of The Learning Co. software available at discount prices. As usual, the meeting will be at Freedom Center at Camarillo Airport, 515 Eubanks (at Pleasant Valley Road), Camarillo. The meetings are from 9:30 a.m. to noon. The doors open at 8:30 and the pre-meeting Beginners SIG and Internet SIGS start at 8:45 a.m.

Other coming programs:

May 6: Linux <<http://www.linux.com/>>

Linux came about because of the cooperation of thousands of developers working in concert to make what they consider the world's most advanced, best operating system. VA Linux Systems has supported the community from the beginning. VA Linux Systems' machines have been used to create and forward the operating systems from the kernel to the desktop.

Linux will be demonstrated by Charles Hibbits of Technicolor Video Services of Camarillo.

June 3: Higher Ground Software

<<http://www.highergroundsoftware.com/>>

Higher Ground Software makes software that can protect your data quickly, effectively, and easily and perform tests such as crash recovery, hardware drive upgrades, and all without having to call a technician or get a Ph.D. in computing. Be it power surge, bad software installation, virus damage or whatever—Hard Drive Mechanic is the only program that will work after a catastrophe.

July 1: The first CIPCUG Garage Sale of the millennium. See announcement elsewhere in TOE for some details and watch future issues for more information. //



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.....**COMMAND COM** ... (Continued from page 1)

talking in another language (computerese). Discussions at the first few club meetings were confusing, and we had a difficult time comprehending what they were talking about. Eventually, we began to understand more and more of what was being said. Today with Windows, the learning curve has been simplified in that people can become computer operators without knowing much about the operating system.

Many people are satisfied when they can use the computer for their required needs. This may involve e-mail and the Internet, games, word processing, graphic arts, paint programs, genealogy and/or a home finance program and the list goes on and on. They are not interested in knowing what is "under the hood" so to speak. However, there is a percentage of those who are interested in what goes on and continue to ask questions in regard to solving the problems that do require knowledge about the hardware and the operating system, etc.

One of the members suggested we make a survey of the level of expertise of our members and whether our Q&A sessions are adequately answering their needs. To do so, we have sent out an e-mail to each of you to "reply" asking you to help us by answering the following questions: 1. What is your level, beginner, intermediate or advanced? 2. Do you want more questions asked for beginners and intermediate users? and 3. What are your comments and suggestions for future Q & A's, SIGs and programs, etc.?

We have a more detailed survey questionnaire on our Web page, but no recent responses. By getting this information, we hope to be able to fulfill the needs of as many club members as much of the time as possible. If you haven't already done so, please do now.

Thank you for responding! We are going to try once again to have people fill out a form when they arrive at the meeting, asking a question which will be included in the Q&A for the day. This may be easier for those who are shy or embarrassed in asking their questions in front of the audience. Remember, though, we need to ask questions in order to gain knowledge.

We also need more volunteers to sit with guests and new members. Volunteers can then explain to them more about the club, the benefits, what will go on during the meeting and

answer their questions. Please check with Helen Long at the guest table if you can help.

At the General Meeting on March 4, I introduced Jim Thornton, who will be our organizer and chairman for our July 1 Garage Sale. We have been in e-mail communication with Jim regarding his thoughts on how the garage sale should be conducted. He and his wife, Dianna, came to the directors' meeting on Tuesday evening, March 7. We went over the outline of detailed plans for the event. He had supplied an e-mail letter of general guidelines to each of the board members prior to the meeting. The plan is very well thought out and was approved unanimously by the board. The board will help any way it can to aid in implementing this event. Let the entire membership get behind Jim to help make it a success! If he should ask any of us to help out, let's go for it!

//

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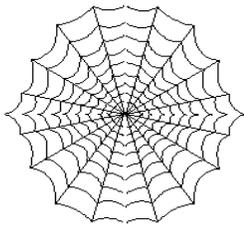
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CIPCUG'S Web Page News

By Helen Long

Did you see my special notice on the Web Page about CIPCUG'S first full-fledged GARAGE SALE to be held at our July 1 meeting? Jim Thornton is the chairman of this exciting event. Please look elsewhere in this newsletter for a few of the preliminary details on the rules and regulations for participation either as a vendor or a buyer. In the meantime, look around your den, your garage, your attic or wherever you "hide" your replaced equipment or software and drag it out and polish it up! This is your opportunity to do a little housecleaning and get rid of some of those relics collecting dust!

The OS/2 SIG for April is back to its usual date on the second Saturday of the month. Check out their site to see what is on the menu for this month.

The SIG dates are posted for March. All the dates are confirmed.

Remember, if you are not online, please don't hesitate to call me at 642-6521 to find out the schedule, subject, or location of the classes.

I am now wearing the ISP hat. I have cleaned out a lot of dead wood and we now have 20 active club members signed up for this service. We have changed our ISP provider to ISWest (Internet Specialists West), which is a major regional carrier. The transition period may be a little bumpy, but we would appreciate your patience.

It has been decided will accept only cash or checks as payment for our ISP service because we did get a little confused on the credit card payments.

Information did not get passed along in a timely manner, and that is why some of our record keeping had a few holes in it. This way we have a paper trail to follow up on.

We are so very successful with our core of volunteers, but one place we seem to always be begging for support is for moderators for our SIGs. It is not a difficult task; surely there are some of you out there who have a pet program that you like to use. You needn't be a certified teacher. Let's face it, if it's a program you enjoy using, you tend to be a little more

adept at it, certainly enough so to share your knowledge with your fellow club members. We need some fresh new ideas, and some assistance from the club members to once more step up to bat and take your turn. It is amazing how much benefit you will get out of it yourself.

I have noticed that the Club Photo Page and the SIG Photo Page take an awfully long time to load. It is because there are so many photos. I will one of these days be cutting those two pages down and just including the most recent photos. This will mean that you won't have to wait so long for the pages to load. I have a print out of all of the pages and will keep the full shebang in my Photo notebook that I bring to the club meetings. //

SIG information

(Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are sponsored by CIPCUG and are taught by volunteers from the club membership. There is no charge for members to attend the SIGs, just a willingness to learn and share. Signing up for the class is no longer necessary as our classrooms are large enough to accommodate our clubs needs.)

Most of our SIGs are held at the Gateway Computer store, 1700 Ventura Blvd. in the Oxnard Auto Center (behind the Red Lobster and Fresh Choice Restaurants). They are held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., and we must vacate the premises promptly by 8:30 p.m. Have your conversations in the parking lot after class.

Some SIGs are held at Ventura County Computers, 2175 Goodyear Ave., No. 117, Ventura.

Be sure to check the location of each SIG on the Web page at <<http://www.cipcug.org>>. Also, if no moderator is listed for a SIG, it's not officially scheduled. Check the Web page before you attend the SIG to make sure there will be a moderator.

If we want to continue the SIG program, many volunteers are needed. You don't have to be a real expert; you can turn it into a "show and tell" and just have a general sharing of information on a particular program or software that you like. We can use Gateway's demo (instructors) computer. Unfortunately, we can not load any software on the computers, so if you want to demonstrate anything outside of the MS environment you will have to bring your own computer and the club's overhead equipment. //

Q&A:

“Free DSL” to Windows 2000 ... and beyond

By *Laura Pacheco*

During the Internet Q&A session, Toby was asked about the “free DSL” ads. The subject was also brought up during the regular Q&A. The following is a combination of both answers.

Toby Scott: Two questions in particular were discussed at length because of additional questions regarding the subject from other members.

Several people had questions about Windows 2000. Toby decided to answer them all at the beginning of the Q&A.

Q: Should you upgrade to Windows2000?

A: I would venture a guess that for all but a couple of people here, the answer would be “No”. Let’s talk a little about what Windows2000 is. Microsoft is basically maintaining two Windows platforms: Win 95/98 platform and the Windows NT 3.51, NT 4.0 and the new version, NT 5, which they have renamed Windows 2000. Why did they do that? Northern Telecom has the copyright on NT and Microsoft would have to pay them a royalty for every box they sold. So they dumped the Win NT designation and went to Win 2000, which they have the copyright to. Nonetheless, think of Windows2000 as NT5.

There will be a new version of Win 95/98/ (new version) out this year. The announced name is Millennium Edition, or Windows ME. Almost certainly, Win ME will be a better platform for most of you than NT5, AKA Windows2000.

Why? First of all price. WinME will be the typical Windows price, something around \$90- \$100, depending on where you go or what kind of deal you can get. Win 2000 Professional, which is the equivalent of NT Workstation, runs around \$270 retail. You can probably pick it up for \$220 to \$240. A lot of us think that it is going to be hard to get a computer system for under \$1,000 with Windows2000 on it because the operating system is that much more expensive. So, for most of us, price alone would be a dictating issue.

Secondly, NT brings to the table considerably greater security than Win 95/98. It’s good if, for instance, you are a business with personnel records on the file server and you want to make sure that only those people who have the proper permissions to them can get in and read them. You definitely do not want to have that system resting on Win 95/98, because anyone can read anything. NT has real authentication of users and real permissions, the ability to say who can see what

and who can use what. These are really good reasons a business would need Win 2000 (Win NT5). For home users, it’s not too attractive because it does have a burden. For instance, most of you either do not see your logon screen, or if you do you hit ESC or CANCEL. You cannot do that as effectively in Win2000 (NT5). There are all kinds of things that are dependent upon your settings, or passwords. If two people are sharing a computer, they end up with two completely different personalities. If one person wants to take over your computer, you have to log off and they have to log on with their ID and password. It’s not as convenient for a home user with all the passwords and security measures. You can bypass it or get around it, but what did you buy it for?

The other tradeoff that you have for the Win 95/98 versus the NT platform is that NT is inherently more stable. It will crash less, NOT that it won’t crash, but it will crash less than Win 95/98. However, there are a lot of games that it won’t play. Any games that require direct access to the hardware will not run under any version of NT. NT will not allow any program access to the hardware. They MUST go through the operating system, and to get speed a lot of games bypass the operating system and go directly to manipulating the hardware. Those games will not run under any version of NT. So you lose the ability to run a lot of older games, although many newer ones are written for NT. If you or your children have a lot of older games, Win 2000 is not for you.

If you have a lot of problems with crashing and you want to get a robust system and you don’t play games, you might consider getting Win 2000. One other thing: Win 95/98 is quite tolerant of hardware that, more or less, conforms to the Windows standard. Nearly anything that was designed to run in Windows will run on Win 95/98. There is very little in the way of hardware that will create severe problems. For NT, this is not the case. NT has a much more restrictive list of things that will run, so it’s a good idea to check the HCL or Hardware Compatibility List.

If you are thinking about putting Win 2000 on an old machine, you need to go to CONTROL PANEL, SYSTEM, DEVICE DRIVER and print out a list of everything you have and check it against the compatibility list at the Microsoft Web site. If you have any hardware on your system that is not on the HCL, plan on getting a new one because it probably will not run. There are some things that will run that are not on the HCL but that will run on Win 2000, but don’t plan on that. The chances are quite high that, if it is not on the HCL, it won’t run. .

Win 2000 is nice; I have it myself. It has some very nice features.

Q: What about Windows Millennium edition?

A: Windows ME will be the successor to the Win 95/98 system. First of all, the thing that nobody wants to talk about is that the primary thing that Win 98 was all about was a “bug” fix. Ninety percent of the enhancement or improvement in Win 98 were simply Win 95 bug fixes. It’s “marketing” when they make you pay for your bug fixes, successfully. ME will also be a bug fix with a few enhancements. It will run most older games.

At the Microsoft Windows Web site you can download all the patches and fixes to bring your Win 98 up to 98 SE level, or you can buy the CD for \$20 and upgrade it from the CD. Unless you have a cable modem or DSL, it will take at least an hour to download. There are things that will make the system more stable. There are things that if you are on the Internet will provide much better protection and privacy. You really ought to avail yourself of many of them, even though they don’t say it all that clearly. If you know that Microsoft does this, a lot of the patches are really bug fixes. They will never say, “this is a bug patch,” except the Win 98 SE shut down patch. If you have Win 98 SE and you turn it off and it hangs up instead of saying, “It’s now safe to turn off your computer,” you should go to their Web page and download this patch. That will fix the problem 75 percent of the time.

Q: I just loaded the Win 98 Second Edition. I’m not really sure what I am buying but was told it is a lot more stable. I still have the shutdown problem with it. If you download the Win 98 SE from the Web site it’s \$20 plus shipping/handling, if you buy it from a local computer store it runs \$89. What is the difference?

A: If you buy the upgrade from Win 98 to Win 98 SE for \$20, you get everything, including all the bug fixes, except you do not get Internet Connection Sharing. If any of you want your computer to share the connection with other computers in your household, one of the software tools you can use is ICS. However, ICS comes only with the full-blown version of Win 98 SE. It does not come with Win 98 and is not in the upgrade to Win 98 that states it brings you up to SE level. I think other programs work better than ICS. There are even freeware ones if you are not into all the bells and whistles. If you have only a few connections, Wingate is probably a better solution and is cheaper than the full-blown Win98SE.

If you do have Win 98 SE, the ICS works pretty well. It is not a bad solution and you are better off not mixing and matching and just using it. If you

don’t have it, I wouldn’t advise you to spend the \$89. I think there are better solutions for less money.

Q: Does the Win 98 Full Edition include the OEM version?

A: OEM is a full version of Win 98, not Win 98 SE. The only difference between Win 98 retail and the 98 OEM is whether there are the tools for the person who is selling it to you to put logos on the Windows splash screen or Internet Explorer and couple of other personalization things.

Q: Every time that you download a 98 fix you have to restart your computer. Therefore, if you have a cable modem, that means you will have to go into numerous restarts, right?

A: No. There are a few fixes that you will have to install separately. However, most of them will install in one go. You check the boxes of the ones you want downloaded and then after they are all downloaded it will tell you to reboot.

Q: Getting back to Win 2000, I installed it as a dual boot configuration. I am playing with it to see what programs I can run and what hardware it will see. When I installed it I passed by the opportunity to enter in a Domain name and now I have Win 2000 up and running well. It sees the Ethernet card and it knows when I am connected, but it doesn’t hook up to the Internet. Where can I tell it to hookup to the Internet? (GTE)

A: On the desktop, right mouse click on Network Neighborhood, go to properties, then properties second tab, and put the domain as GTE.net. Go back to the first tab; highlight TCP/IP for your network card. Then click on properties. There is a tab for DNS, IP address, etc. It’s properties for your network card.

MEMBER: There is an 800 number for GTE 24 hours a day and they will talk you through it. They will stay on the line as long as you want. They will have you pull out your card and check it, etc. to make sure you get connected. They are wonderful.

Q: I am confused. Are there two ways of getting your high-speed line, one through your television set and one through your telephone line or are they the same things?

A: Basically, you can get a high-speed line through any wire that comes into your house and also through a couple of satellite systems. In a mad rush to make money, companies that have wires that go to your house are deploying methods of sucking money out of you in return for connecting you to the Internet, which everyone seems to want to do. So your telephone company has developed a thing called DSL, which runs on top of a twisted pair of copper wire—what we euphemistically call

POTS, or plain old telephone system. You can have a DSL line run on top of your existing telephone copper wire. The wire comes out and you have two jacks. One is your regular telephone, the other is your DSL line that plugs in to a DSL modem and you are up and running with a little bit of IP configuration. The other possibility is your cable company. It will take the cable that runs into your house, which happens to be a higher-speed system than your twisted pair of copper wire. The cable company will run the cable in, put a splitter on it and run it out to your computer. It will give you a couple of IP address configuration items and away you go.

Cable modem will be faster, at least initially. DSL is throttled and you have your own dedicated wire that goes to the phone company. (Not being technical here). On cable you share bandwidth. All of your neighbors who get on cable are all going down the same pipe; they are all sharing a common bandwidth. The more that get on, the slower your system runs. With DSL, you have dedicated wires to the telephone system. Now at that point, they may share. Ultimately, everybody on the Internet shares. You will maintain a more consistent throughput with DSL than you will with cable modems. Cable modem will be faster until you get to a threshold of share points at, which time, they will be slower, probably, especially during Internet rush hour.

Q: I hooked up Win2000 and had a problem with AOL. What other ISPs work with Win 200 that you are familiar with?

A: Every and any. AOL is not an ISP.

Here is why AOL will not work with Win 2000. Most of you know what files are, right? They're the library files that Window's applications share. So (by installing AOL) many people were replacing Microsoft's files with their own proprietary's.

A lot of the instability in Windows is not Microsoft's fault except for the fact that it let other people get their fingers on the operating system. Microsoft got tired of this, so Win 2000 won't let you replace its files.

AOL5, if you install it on a Win 98 machine, replaces 220-plus files with its own versions. Fred Langa did it, and you can read the results on his Web site <www.browsertune.com/hotspots.htm>. He took a brand new box, did the install of Win 98, did a complete inventory of every file on the computer, then installed AOL5. At this point it is no longer Windows.

How many files are in a basic installation? There are about 400 files total. Once you have done this exercise, your computer will no longer run, at least not reliably, any other Internet provider software system. AOL has rendered your system completely and totally AOL specific. OK, so you say you are going to reinstall Windows again over it. When you do that, Windows assumes that if there is a file of the same name but a later date that it is an

updated version, and Windows will not replace it. The only way you can get rid of them is to manually go in and delete the 220-plus files. So Windows will not boot, you have to do that in DOS then install Windows from scratch. When Windows does not find those files, it will put its version on. Then, of course, you have to go back to the Window's Web site and do all the updates to bring your Windows up to snuff. Now at our place, we have a policy, if you have a problem with a machine with AOL5 on it, we won't touch it.

Q: So are you saying I should get AOL? (Members love teasing Toby)

A: You can do whatever you want!

Q: My second question: Is it better to use FAT32 or NTFS or is it just a security when you use Win 2000?

A: If you dual boot and you use NTFS you won't be able to dual boot anymore because Windows 98 cannot read NTFS. NTFS is a much better file system. It has much higher integrity. It uses much smaller cluster sizes. It has the ability to do a user level share so it can restrict who can get in and who can't as opposed to the standard Windows password shares. There are a lot of good reasons to use NTFS with one exception. If your Windows system dies and you are NTFS, you can't read it with anything because you cannot boot to anything that will read NTFS.

You really have to be very, very careful if you're in the Win 2000 or the NT arena to keep your emergency repair discs up to date. As long as you do that, you're OK.

Q: What about this "free DSL"?

Free DSL? We all know that, first of all, there is no such thing as a "free lunch." right? Here's how free DSL works. The company is scheduled to go operational in April. Originally the date was April 1, but it appears they will not make that date for sure. Second, to get the free account you have to get 10 friends to join you. Then, they have to get 10 friends who are not on the first "10 list." This is pyramid marketing; and we all know how that works. Will the last person to sign up, please pay the entire bill? Third, so far the company does not have a single contract signed with a single telephone company or anyone else who owns any wires anywhere in the world. I think your chances of getting free DSL are slim. I think the cost is too high even if it works. I think I would pay for DSL rather than have 10 friends mad at me.

Several companies have announced free DSL schemes that are not called free DSL. So far not one of them has signed a deal with anyone who has owned one inch of copper wire. Well, "figuratively" speaking. I suppose someone has got some in their "pockets" somewhere but not plugged into any telephone system. //



BEGINNERS CLASS

March 2000

Mike Strecker roostermike.roosterm@gte.net

IF WINDOWS FREEZES

Here are some things to try if windows freezes.

- ⊙ Press the Esc key twice.
- ⊙ Press **Ctrl+Alt+Delete** (be sure you press them all at the same time). A pop-up window appears. If the dialog box indicates that a program isn't responding, select that program that's giving you problems and click **END TASK**.
- ⊙ Push the Reset button, which is an actual physical button somewhere on the computer. (Unfortunately, it's in a different place on every computer. Even more unfortunate, some of the latest PCs don't even have one).
- ⊙ If all this fails, turn the power off and wait for 30 seconds, then turn it back on!

CD AUTORUN

My CD starts automately, how can I stop this?

1. Hold down the shift key when you put the CD in.
2. Go to the Control Panel
3. In the Control Panel window, double-click the System icon.
4. In the System dialog box, click Device Manager.
5. Then double-click the CD-ROM icon and then click on the CD-ROM drive.
6. Next click Properties, then click Settings.
7. Deselect the Auto Insert Notification option.
8. Click OK repeatedly to close these windows.

HOW FAST IS MY CD-ROM DRIVE?

CD-ROM Drives use X to indicate their speed. The original CD-ROM drives ran at 150 KBps (kilobytes per second). Thus a 4X drive moves at 600 KBps. So now you can figure out how fast a 50X is running.

WHAT DO ALL THESE ACRONYMS MEAN???

SMTP=Simple Mail Transport Protocol. MIME=Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions. TCP/IP=Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol. VGA=Video Graphics Array. RAM=Random Access Memory. ROM=Read Only Memory. SIMM=Single in-line Memory Module. SIG=Special Interest Group. HTML=HyperText Markup Language. SCSI=Small Computer System Interface. PnP=Plug and Play. OS=Operating System.

We can discuss these acronyms in class.

9

Aladdin programs make life easier

By John Weigle <jweigle@vcnet.com>

Murphy's Law (whatever can go wrong will) struck again at our March meeting.

Peter L. Tempel, technical support specialist at Aladdin Systems, had to demonstrate the company's Windows programs on a Macintosh. "When I woke up this morning, my NEC laptop was no longer a computer. It was just a hunk of plastic," he said. (And at lunch after a successful presentation and good sales, he said with a laugh that it might be the first time the company sold a lot of PC programs after demonstrating them on a Mac.)

Aladdin is best known for its Mac programs but has been doing Windows programs—which, he assured us, operate the same way on Windows that they do on the Mac—for several years. He demonstrated DropZip, DragStrip, FlashBack, Private File and SunDial. The firm's other Windows programs are DropStuff, which is similar to DropZip; Expander, which opens compressed files; and Stuffit, the Mac world equivalent of Zip.

Because of his machine problems, Tempel emphasized Aladdin's customer support policies. Owners of Aladdin programs can call tech support for free support of all versions of programs as long as they own them. And if the programs don't work as he showed them, Tempel said, members can reach him personally at (831) 761-6200 or by e-mail at <tempel@aladdinsys.com>. The programs also have a 30-day money back guarantee, whether they've been opened or not.

DropStuff, DropZip, the StuffitExpander and the Aladdin Expander all come on the same CD-ROM. Stuffit Expander works on the Mac, Aladdin Expander on the PC and the other two on both platforms. As noted above, Stuffit is the Mac equivalent of Zip; both are compression programs.

Why use a compression program? Compressed files save space on your hard drive or your backup media and speed up the sending of files by e-mail. Conversely, most programs of any size that you download from the Internet have been compressed, usually in Zip form in the PC world. Unless the person who compressed the files made them self-extracting, you need something to expand them. DropZip is the compression agent; Expander, as the name suggests, brings the file back to its full size.

DropZip contains both PC and Mac commands, so you can compress a file on your PC with the Mac

format, send it to a friend with a Mac and your friend will be able to open it easily. (Both expander programs may be downloaded from the Aladdin Web site at <<http://www.aladdinsys.com>>.)

As its name suggests, DropZip allows you to drag and drop. If you have a folder you want to compress, you drag the folder on to DropStuff or DropZip and it compresses the folder into a file stored in the same folder. You can set another destination if you wish.

It also contains a Zip and Mail function that compresses the file, launches your e-mail program, creates a message and attaches the compressed file. All you have to do is add the recipient's address and send it on its way. If you have more than one e-mail program, you can pick the one you want to use. Netscape mail, however, won't work automatically because the program has to be MAPI-compliant (MAPI is Messaging Application Program Interface).

The files you send can be unzipped by any of the several unzipping programs if you don't have the Aladdin product, he said. The Aladdin Stuffit Expander comes with all Mac systems, Tempel said, and Aladdin is working with Microsoft to include it in Windows.

He said 99 percent of files sent by e-mail or downloaded from the Net can be opened with Expander.

Users can set the program to automatically delete the original files, but Tempel urges caution in using that option. "It works 99 percent of the time, but when it doesn't I get called," he said. A power surge or other problem near the end of the compression might make the program think all the files have been properly compressed when they haven't, he said. But he's had only five such calls in three years, he added.

As an example of how the program compresses – and this will vary with the type of files – he showed how a 2-megabyte folder compressed to 272 K with DropZip. Sound files and GIF and JPEG graphics files are already compressed, he noted. TIF graphics files are not compressed.

DropZip doesn't let you look inside the compressed file, but some other programs do, and Aladdin is developing a more complex version to allow that, he said.

Drag Strip is a launcher program that works with programs, folders, files and Web addresses. "You may end up replacing your task bar with it because it's so much better," he said.

DragStrip puts a strip on your desk with three tabs – applications, documents and folders. You add items to the strip by dragging the shortcut, program or item to a button and dropping it. (The program has one

unusual feature. On the right hand side, under the Close box, is a down arrow. If you click on it, you get a menu of several items, including File. After you prepare your buttons, you must save the file or the buttons will all come up empty when you restart Windows.)

DragStrip lets you have several strips, each with many buttons, and you can add tabs (or pages) by clicking on Pages in the menu. A screen shot in the catalog shows a strip with the pages letters, files, applications, documents, Stuffit archives, Web sites, pictures and sound files and 16 buttons on the first page. Obviously, the size of the strip can be adjusted, and you can organize the pages in several ways.

If you have a Folders page, holding your mouse over a folder tells you the name of the folder.

If you have a file and don't know what program will open it, you can drag and drop the file to the program icon to see if the program will open it.

You can put Web addresses of frequently visited pages on DragStrip, and clicking on the button will open your Web browser to that page.

SunDial is a collection of desktop images from California or Hawaii that change with the time of day (or you can speed up the operation and see the pictures as a slide show). The programs have 10 scenes that you can run from CD-ROM or your hard drive (figure 25 Meg per scene). If you set the program to your time zone and get deeply involved in working on your computer, you can check the desktop image regularly. "That way you can know if the sun went down," Tempel joked.

Aladdin is working on a version of the program that will let users put in their own scenes, he said.

Private File is a drag and drop, 128-bit encryption program. But, as is always the case with such programs, you must remember the password you pick because "there is no back door," he said. Both the FBI and Scotland Yard have called Aladdin to get the back door to open encrypted files, and Aladdin tells them there is no way to open the files without the user-chosen password.

FlashBack, he said, "protects you from the Number 1 cause of data loss ... FlashBack protects your from yourself."

It gives you a chance to have "unlimited undos in any application," he said. It tracks changes in documents you decide to protect and lets you go back to any one of the versions you want. "It only saves the differences between what you had before and what you have now," he said, rather than keeping the full text of every document at every save.

You can save up to 999 revisions of any file.

FlashBack does not automatically protect every document you work on, however. You must pick the ones you want to protect and drag them to the FlashBack screen for it to work.

After the presentation, Aladdin issued a press release to all user groups that says members can download free demos of SunDial from <<http://www.aladdinsys.com/sundial/>>.

Choose your favorite scene, and Sundial displays the scene in time-lapse photography, synchronizing the scene with the local time of day.

The California Collection features the Golden Gate Bridge, Yosemite Valley, the rugged Northern California coast, Mount Whitney, Death Valley and more. The Hawaiian Collection includes Oahu's North Shore, Waikiki Beach, Lumahai Beach, Alau Island, Hawaiian palm trees, waterfalls and more.

SunDial also has:

- Movie preview feature for easier scene selection.
- Auto-switch feature to change the scene as often as users like.

- Support for more still picture formats, allowing more options for users' desktops.

- Improved interface, making it easier to identify user's locations to synchronize the time of day.

- Added new Windows NT and 2000 support.

Sundial requires a CD-ROM drive, color monitor, and QuickTime 4.0 (available on the CD) for Windows 95/98/2000 and Windows NT machines; or a color Macintosh with a CD-ROM drive and minimum of 68030 processor, System 7.6 or greater and 4Mb of installed RAM.

Sundial is available from major retailers and catalogs, or direct from Aladdin. Each collection sells for \$29.95 direct from Aladdin. //

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Membership report

By John Godwin

Please welcome the following new members:

Beverly Teperow
Margaret Barrett

Total Membership: 367

Attendance at the March 2000 General meeting:

128 Members
7 Visitors
2 New members

February 2000 renewals due:

You will receive TOE through April 2000

| Member # | Last Name | First Name |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| 564 | Fottler | Jef |
| 765 | Gonzalez | Al |
| 852 | Gonzalez | John |
| 412 | Guess | John |
| 851 | Malloy | Gene |
| 659 | Skeeters | Ann |
| 187 | Tracy | Bob |

March 2000 renewals due:

You will receive TOE through May 2000

| Member # | Last Name | First Name |
|----------|------------|------------|
| 963 | Anderson | Arvid |
| 962 | Funck | Toni |
| 426 | Guyton | Wayne |
| 961 | Hersh | Alan |
| 855 | Housley | Mitzi |
| 857 | Keenan | Bob |
| 573 | Kelly | Scott |
| 177S | Ross | Donald |
| 316 | Sexton | Christine |
| 417 | Shepherd | Cindy |
| 575 | Van Sickle | Michael |
| 761 | Walker | Denis |
| 969 | Wilson | April |
| 861 | Wilson | Dave |
| 968 | Wilson | Joan |
| 771 | Zuromski | Alexandra |

April 2000 renewals due:

You will receive TOE through June 2000

| Member # | Last Name | First Name |
|----------|-------------|------------|
| 688 | Arriola | Kirby |
| 865 | Carter | Steve |
| 687 | Clark | Lewis |
| 776 | Darnielle | Jack |
| 964 | Faue | Warren |
| 775 | Gleeson | Bill |
| 439 | Jeffreys | Robert |
| 202 | Kleeburg | Hank |
| 965 | Kreitzer | Shlomo |
| 918 | Leighton | Charlie |
| 210 | McMurray | Richard |
| 317 | Mulligan | Champ C. |
| 676 | Pearson | Floyd |
| 142 | Peck | Darrell |
| 452 | Simon | Hal |
| 919 | Sundberg | Ralph |
| 868 | Webster | Ed |
| 777 | Williams | Shirley |
| 967 | Wright | Ward |
| 332 | Wright | Don |
| 864 | Wright | John |
| 966 | Wright | Margret |
| 863 | Zapf D.P.M. | Michael |

Treasurer's report February 2000

By Art Lewis, Treasurer

Income Feb. 1-29, 2000

| | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Advertising | \$ 75.00 |
| New members | 260.00 |
| Renewals | 425.00 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 760.00 |

Expenses

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Coffee-Donuts | - 4.50 |
| Misc. expenses | 33.00 |
| Publication | 223.00 |
| Storage | 57.00 |
| TOE | 445.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | 763.50 |

TOTAL INCOME - EXPENSES 6.50

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Unrestricted funds | 3,687.96 |
| Restricted funds | 2,043.50 |
| Bank Balance 2-29-00 | 5,732.46 |

Computer radio programs

By Jim Thornton (jthorn@gte.net)

Here is a revised list of the locally heard listener call-in personal computer radio programs. The previous abbreviated list was published in the November 1999 issue of TOE. This expanded list provides the telephone numbers, Web sites, e-mail addresses and remarks. Some of the changes include the renaming of Jeff Levy's program and a change to his e-mail address, the removal of the tape-delay notations from the Computer American program, and the deletion of the Sunday night repeat broadcast of the Komputer Klinik program on station KLSX.

Saturday:

"Komputer Klinik"

(national from Phoenix—live)

Host: Kim Komando

Time: 7-10 a.m.

Station: 990 AM KTMS (Santa Barbara)

Station: 97.1 FM KLSX (Los Angeles)

Telephone: (888) 825-5254

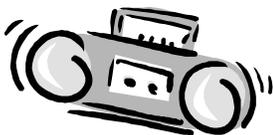
Home Page: <http://www.komando.com>

E-mail: helpmekim@komando.com

Remarks: Has a monthly article in Popular Mechanics magazine, has written several books, and produced video learning tape series.

Provides a free (but slow) help service via e-mail (you must list the station you hear her on).

Publishes a free weekly e-mail newsletter.



Sunday:

"Jeff Levy On Computers"

(local from Los Angeles—live)

Host: Jeff Levy

Time: 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Station: 640 AM KFI (Los Angeles)

Telephone: (800) 520-1534

Home Page: <http://www.jefflevy.com>

E-mail: jefflevy@jefflevy.com

Remarks: If the caller's question is too technical, he will call the caller after the broadcast and provide the solution.

Provides a weekly computer lesson from his Web site.

Publishes a monthly for-a-fee newsletter.

Sunday:

The KABC Computer Showogram: with The Marck Brothers" (local from Los Angeles—live)

Host: Marc Cohen and Mark Oleesky

Time: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Station: 790 AM KABC (Los Angeles)

Telephone: (800) 222-5222

Home Page: <http://www.kabc.com/custom533.html>

E-mail: computershow@kabc.com

Remarks: if the caller's question is too technical, they will request the caller to e-mail the question and they will e-mail the solution.

"Komputer Klinik"

(national from Phoenix tape-delayed)

Time: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Station: 1450 AM KVEN (Ventura)

Remarks: Three hours from her Saturday morning program. See the Saturday KTMS/KLSX listing for host, telephone, home page, e-mail, and remarks.

"The EarthLink Network Internet Show"

(local from Los Angeles—live)

Host: Val Whalin and Alex Gray

Time: 12-2 p.m.

Station: 97.1 FM KLSX (Los Angeles)

Telephone: (800) 392-7447

Home Page: (none)

E-mail: (none)

Remarks: (none)

"Computer America"

(national from Palm Beach, Fla.)

Host: Craig Crossman

Time: 1-3 p.m.

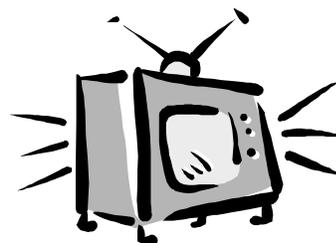
Station: 1520 AM KVTA (Ventura)

Telephone: (877) 266-7469

Home Page: <http://www.computeramerica.com>

E-mail: ccrossman@computeramerica.com

Remarks: Last two hours of his three-hour program. Has weekly contests with a hardware or software prize each hour. //



Review: **Visual Café Version 3.0**

by **Symantec - Standard Edition**

By *Jerry McLoud*

Hey, Virginia, let's talk Java. You know, it ain't just coffee!

When I saw that Visual Café was available for evaluation I thought I would give it a try. I am a professional software developer and Java is one of the few languages I have not used. Java is very popular today, so I need to add it to my programming tool kit. You read about Java and hear about it all over the Internet. Java applets do the animation on your Web page. Java beans combine to form Java applets. However, Java is more than a language for the Internet; it is or can be a full-fledged development tool for today's applications. Anyway, we use Visual Café at work and I have wondered from time to time what it is all about. I'm still in the land of C and C++ so it is time to expand my horizons.

Visual Café is a development environment for Java, Java Beans and Java applications or applets. Visual Café comes in three flavors, Standard Edition (black), Professional Edition (latte) and Database Edition double latte with mocha). Since I was going to evaluate this product, the first thing I did was open the User's Guide, something I seldom do. I learned that the Standard Edition provides an environment suitable for Web development and a good development environment for programmers new to Java. Please notice I said programmers. This means you already know how to program. Professional Edition is for developers; developers are one step ABOVE programmers, who need the latest and most powerful Java features in the development environment to develop full-function applications. Finally, the Database Edition provides all the features of the Professional Edition, with Database support as well.

Visual Café does come with a tutorial/demo to familiarize you with the development environment, but it does not teach you programming. It assumes you are familiar with programming concepts and terminology. The demo takes about an hour and covers the following topics: Creating Applications, Creating Applets, Creating JavaBeans Components, and Using Javadoc Utilities. The manual will also help familiarize you with the development environment. In keeping with the paper reduction that seems to be part of all software programs today, the CD-ROM that comes with Visual Café contains manuals in PDF format. The first point I will make about Visual Café is that if you want to learn Java

you may want to look elsewhere. To quote the User Guide, "This manual assumes that you're familiar with Java programming or are learning how to program in Java. It's beyond the scope of this manual to teach Java programming, although you can learn more about Java by using Visual Café." This looks like double talk to me.

Can I learn Java or not by using Visual Café? Well, maybe. However, your best bet, if you don't already know C or C++ is to sign up and attend one of the local community colleges and take a programming class BEFORE attempting any programming language, Java or anything. Programming can be very rewarding; it can also be very frustrating. Even to use Java on Web pages you need a basic understanding of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) so you can develop relationships between your Java applets and the Web pages where you wish to use Java. As you can see, nothing is free and/or easy.

Well, on with the evaluation. Visual Café took about 5 minutes to install. It installed 5,612 files, 959 directories and 165,998,211 bytes of disk storage. Just think of it, this is the Standard Edition. I wonder how big the Database edition is? Oh, yes, before you can use Visual Café, you must reboot your computer.

Once started, it brings up a visual environment similar to Visual Basic. Now, there is a language that is as far from the original programming language as a language can possibly be without a name change. Enough about VB; we are talking about Visual Café. When started, Visual Café provides desktop windows, but they do not cover the entire desktop. This is workable, but I like a blank screen with open windows over the background rather than placing windows on the desktop where icons show through and appear to clutter the programming environment. First, there is the project window, where you define and set up your project. Next, a Form Designer for your applet, a windows view. Next, a Property List for your applet for application properties, and, finally, the main window, which resides at the top of your screen.

You begin by placing Starting a Project. Then you can place Windows controls on the Form Designer Window, and Visual Café adds code to the project to handle the object. Of course, you must customize the object to do what you want, but the basic code is written for you. Java resembles C++ with its class structure and object programming. Visual Café performs many of the housekeeping tasks for you like obtaining memory for variables and the cleanup of the memory after the

(Continued on page 16)

Garage SALE

The first CIPCUG Garage Sale of the millennium

It's a new millennium and time for the July 1, 2000, CIPCUG Garage Sale. Come to this special sale where you can buy used computers, printers, monitors, multimedia, modems, memory, games, education software, digital cameras, tape cartridges, supplies, books, furniture, and more from fellow club members.

This special event will be held after the regular Q&A session at the July meeting from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Watch the next issue of the TOE for more details. //



.....*VISUAL CAFE* (Continued from page 15)

applet executes. Since the properties of the Windows controls are available for editing in the Properties List window, many cute things can be done with Java that would be tedious with C++. Visual Café does provide many samples, and if you know C or C++ you should be able to pick up the structure of the language very quickly.

Visual Café seems more than adequate for the task of creating Java Applications, Applets, Beans etc. and the environment is function-rich and in some ways a little overpowering for a novice or beginner. So, if you want to learn Java, buy a book. If you know Java, consider Visual Café. Oh, by the way, like most cafes you can buy your Java in various flavors, Standard, Professional and Data Base. The only thing that disappointed me was that I was evaluating Version 3 and Version 4 is on the street. Version 4 comes in two flavors, Standard and Expert. The cost of Version 4.0 Standard Edition is \$99.99 at CompUSA on the Web. I did some additional research and the Web prices ranged from \$66 to \$88. The price for the new Expert Edition 4.0 is a whopping \$700. //

PHOTO GENETICS

Need some help with your graphics?

By Helen Long

This little program is a shareware program, and it is a real help for those of us who do not have enough computer savvy to figure out the complexities of Paint Shop Pro or Photo Adobe. It does things to a picture that you and I are not clever enough to do.

The principle is the same as when you go to the optometrist for an eye exam. He shoves this gizmo in front of your eyes, flips a couple of lenses in place and says, "Is this better?" Then he flips more lenses and says, "Or is this better?" Incredibly, it is that simple.

In less than 10 minutes you can install the software and learn how to optimize an image. Subsequent images can be processed in 1-3 minutes. What takes a professional hours to accomplish with high-end applications can be done with PhotoGenetics in just a few minutes.

It starts out by placing your original picture to the left of the screen, with a duplicate beside it to the right. Then you start your evolution fun. You see the action take place right before your eyes. You can go through several evolutions of corrections at first just to see how it works.

The program is called PhotoGenetics and can be found at <http://www.q-res.com/>. Hit the PhotoGenetics icon for all the particulars, plus Q&A and tutorial.

The trial shareware basic program is free for 30 days and \$19.95 if you want to continue to use it. It only does the evolution thing. The full-blown version is \$29.95 and will include extra features such as "red eye removal" and "cropping."

It is the best value for the bucks as far as a small graphics program goes. It is not something you would use instead of Paint Shop Pro, but it gives you an additional tool that may improve the looks of your graphics. This little program will make a professional out of a rank novice! Try it — you will love it!



Odds and Ends

By Jim Thornton (jthorn@gte.net)

IS YOUR ANTI-VIRUS PROGRAM WORKING? What actually will you see if your anti-virus program detects a virus? What will your screen look like? What choices will you have? All of these questions may be easily answered by testing your anti-virus program with a special file that looks like a virus to your anti-virus program but really is not a virus. Just go to the Online Eicar Library Web page <www.eicar.org/anti_virus_test_file.htm> and near the bottom of the page, click on the Anti-Virus Test File and watch your anti-virus program go into action! My Norton SystemWorks 3.0's Anti-Virus program gave me a short audible warning and the screen promptly changed into the DOS mode with a Norton Anti Virus Auto-Protect window identifying the found virus. It gave me the choices of Stop, Continue, Repair, Delete, Exclude, or Quarantine the infected file. I selected Repair and the Norton Anti Virus Auto-Protect window next reported that the virus had been successfully removed and the infected file had been repaired. Give it a try and learn how your anti-virus program behaves when it discovers a virus.

* * *

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ARE A HIDDEN WEALTH OF INFORMATION: My wife and I recently attended the Microsoft Access Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting conducted by Rabia Yeaman in her Gateway classroom in Oxnard. SIGs provide priceless information to club members, and what we learned that evening would typically cost over \$200 per person at any professional computer-training center. I can recall several years ago when I was very proficient in DOS, I decided to attend one of Robert Provart's basic DOS SIGs held at All-City Software & Computers, in Camarillo, to see what a SIG was about. I knew the DOS commands backwards and forwards, but Robert's explanation of DOSKEY aided me in future years in providing professional technical support to several large companies. Rabia's informal presentation was very good and her answers to the audience's questions were complete and understandable. In fact, right now, we're converting several Excel spreadsheets into Access database files.



Are you tired of looking at all the ads on your free Internet or free E-mail Service? Are you looking for a reliable ISP at a reasonable price? How does \$15 er month plus \$15 processing fee sound to you? You will also have the advantage of a special DOMAIN name; however, it may not be a name of your own choosing. It is the name of the club that provides this service to its members: CIPCUG.

To sign up, contact one of the club's Techies on the Web Page listed in the left column under CIPCUG ONLINE - Tech Support. Call one of them you may know or one in your area, and they will be glad to provide you with the details necessary to sign up. Checks should be made payable to CIPCUG and forwarded to Art Lewis, 6363 Burnett Court, Ventura, CA 93003. Don't forget to include the \$15 set-up fee to your first sign-up check. You may make payments in three-month, six-month or annual increments. (Renewals can also be mailed to Art; just be sure to mention the dates that your check is to cover).

We have changed our ISP provider to ISWest (Internet Specialists West), which is a major regional carrier.

As in the past, CIPCUG will provide tech support for our own club members. There is no program to install; you will be making use of the programs that are already on your computer. If you are the least bit timid about setting up your computer, a club member will be glad to come to your house and make the necessary set-up arrangements. How many ISPs do you know who will do this? Our agreement will also give you a 5 MB Web Page allowance.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call any of the Tech Support team, and they will either answer the questions or find out the answers for you.

F1—Your Help Key

(Revised March 13, 2000)

COMMUNICATIONS/INTERNET

(See *Cybernet Professionals Online Service Support for the technical support group for our Internet Service Provider agreement*)

World Wide Web... DM, TS
 Compuserve.... DM
 Note Tab Pro... TS
 Procomm Plus.... DM, WB

DATABASES

dBASE... GM

DOS...

RP

EDUCATIONAL / CHILDREN...TZ

E-MAIL

Lotus:CCMail... DM

FINANCIAL

Quicken.... JD

GENEALOGY...

TL

HARDWARE, UPGRADING...JM, JD, RP

NETWORKS...

TS

OS/2...

LZ

SPREADSHEETS

Lotus 1-2-3... GM
 Microsoft Excel.... DM
 Quattro Pro... DM

UTILITY PROGRAMS

Norton Utilities... DM, JD
 PCAnywhere... DM
 PC Tools... WB
 XTree Gold... DM

WORD PROCESSING

Microsoft Word... BW, DM, MR
 WordPerfect.... DM, GM, JD
 WordStar... TS

WINDOWS

Windows 3.1... DM, JM
 Windows 95... DM, JM
 WindowsNT... TS

CYBERNET PROFESSIONALS ONLINE SERVICE

(For general Internet and Communications - programs, see Communications/Internet)

Jerry Crocker, 486-0308,
 NormsPlumb@aol.com, 6-10 p.m.
 Roland Fleig, 983-8707,
 schwable@cipcug.org, mornings
 James "Al" Gonzalez, 659-3573,
 jgonzalez@cantd.ang.af.mil, Mon 9-6 p.m.
 Bob Kumler, 482-4087,
 borbj@juno.com, afternoons
 George & Arline Lakes, 983-2969,
 thelakes@cipcug.org, 2-10 p.m.
 David D. Minkin, 484-2974,
 dddave@compuserve.com, 5-12 p.m.,
 weekends
 Claude Whelchel, 482-4017,
 claude@cipcug.org 8-12 a.m.

| Initials | Name | (805) |
|----------|--------------------|---|
| BW | Bart Wood | 482-4993 (e) |
| DM | David Minkin | 484-2974 (e); (d: voice mail) 339-1729 |
| GM | Gracia Marks | 484-7572 (e) |
| JD | John Daily | 650-0029 (b) |
| JM | Jerry McCloud | (818) 889-6176 (e) |
| LZ | Len Zakas | 388-8452 (b) |
| MR | Marvin Reeber | 984-1974 (b) |
| RP | Robert Provart | 498-8477 (b) |
| TL | Terry Lee | 981-1224 (d) |
| TS | Toby Scott | 289-3960 (d) |
| TZ | Trish Zakas | 388-8452 (b) |
| WB | Dr. William Burger | 653-6889 (e) |

Phone: (d) = days; (e) = evenings; (b) = both



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Editor's column

While I understand the philosophy of saving trees by putting all software documentation on CD-ROMs, I also know it's terribly frustrating to have to use online help every time I need an answer to a question. – especially if I can't get the program to load properly to start with.

My most recent experience with the problem is with Symantec's Visual Page, a program to design Web pages, which came as a bonus with SystemWorks 2000. It looks like an excellent program that is reasonably easy to use, but it doesn't come with a manual, and none is available to buy separately. The Symantec Web page points out that the manual is on the CD-ROM (or on your hard drive when you load the program) in PDF format, which means it can be viewed in and printed from Acrobat Reader.

I have Acrobat Reader (it comes with a lot of programs and can be downloaded for free from several spots on the Web), so that's not the problem. But I also have a dot matrix printer, and I'm not quite ready to try to print a long, long manual with graphics on it. (At the last meeting I bought a used Canon bubble jet but haven't had a chance to hook it up yet).

Bookstores and the book sellers at the computer shows don't have any aftermarket books on the program, so it appears I either have to sit and read all the online documentation and bookmark the parts that seem like I'll need to refer to them, abandon the program or not use it until the new printer is working. None of those options is especially appealing to me.

Very popular programs like Windows, Microsoft Office and similar software can easily come without documentation because someone will always write books on them. Visit any bookstore with a computer section and look at the number of books on Word, Office, Windows, Quicken and even the Corel and Lotus suites. And if you really want to build up your library, stock up on all the books written about Linux.

It's true that many of the manuals that do come with software aren't terribly helpful. They seem to be written by people who are so familiar with the programs that they assume we know as much as they do. And that's seldom the case. But at least they're a start.

I don't have a solution – just the gripe. If readers have any ideas, I'd love to publish your letters on them.

-- John Weigle, editor

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