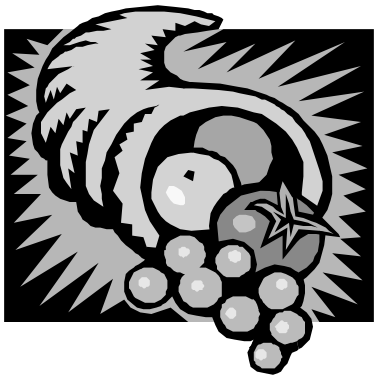
# The Outer Edge



Newsletter of the Channel Islands PC Users Group

November 2001 Whole No. 174
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**Visit our Web page at: www.cipcug.org**
**e-mail: helen@cipcug.org**
**OS/2:http://www.vcnet.com/os2-corner**

The Friendly Computer Club Helping Make Computers Friendly

Attendance at the
October general meeting
**Not listed**

**WE WELCOME**
**5 NEW MEMBERS**

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# COMMAND.COM

**By Andy Toth, President**

The October meeting exceeded my expectations. Jeff Levy's presentation style and content were invigorating. The meeting attendance was also higher than usual and resulted in five new members. Equally important, the "Check Up, Tune Up, and Troubleshoot" was also a success. About 20 members brought their machines in for the service. Rick was busy working into the Levy presentation. I want to express CIPCUG's thanks to Rick and Toby of Ventura County Computers for suggesting and providing the service. Hopefully, the turnout did not scare them off and there will be similar offerings in the future.

On a not so high a note, interest in the New Horizons Computer Learning Center (NHCLC) course offering was not sufficient to select a course. Sadly, there were not even enough voters to fill a class. Once or twice a year I attend computer-training classes. The content and presentation of the NHCLC classes is as good as it gets. This was a generous offering from NHCLC, and I wish to thank Dianne DeWinter for the effort. Craig Ladd will be contacting other area user groups to see if enough people can be assembled, but it is highly doubtful. For those of you who expressed interest, send me an e-mail, president@cipcug.org, on what you your interest was and maybe a SIG or three can be arranged.

I have received some e-mails regarding suggestions made and not hearing anything back. If a suggestion is made to me at the general meeting, I note it, or if it's sent to me via e-mail, it is presented at the monthly Executive Board meeting. I have not been the best at returning the decision to the suggester. Along those lines two were brought up at the October meeting. Raffle tickets are a fund-raiser for the club. It was decided that $10 would buy 13 tickets as opposed to the 12, previously. $20 gets 26 tickets and a big THANK YOU from me. A second item was a method to allow members who leave early to claim drawing prizes. This is a tough call. The committee decided that it couldn't be responsible for your selection. The committee suggests that you leave your tickets with a friend. If your ticket is called, your friend can select

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# Executive Committee Meeting Notes

*October 2001 By Laura Pacheco*

The Executive Committee meeting was held on Oct. 9 at Andy Toth's home in Ventura at 6:30 p.m. Those present were Andy Toth, Art Lewis, Craig Ladd, Helen Long, George and Arline Lakes, Toby Scott, Ken Church, Roland Fleig, Ralph Duchacek, David Minkin, and Laura Pacheco.

As always, reports on the Financial, Membership, Web, and SIGs, which were discussed at the meeting, are found in this TOE along with our president's report — Command.COM.

Further preparations and discussions regarding December's meeting at Ventura Hall in the Cowan Conference Center on Airport Way were brought up. One particular item, the use (additional cost) of their mikes and speaker system, called for another look this month at the system involved. Everything else would be improvised.

Andy ended the meeting shortly after 8:30 p.m.

Secretary's Note: CIPCUG would like to *officially* welcome our latest members: Doris Chaison (Santa Paula), Robert Krieger (Camarillo), Miguel and Marielle Levy (Camarillo), and Bob Weeks (Camarillo).

Please feel free to call upon us for any questions you might have.

Why join CIPCUG?
Here are just a few of the reasons: Monthly SIGs, a monthly program, a monthly newsletter, a discounted Internet Service Provider, a library of computer books and videos, discounts on a variety of books and software, access to computer help through F1—Your Help Key, friendships with other computer users and the chance to help others with your knowledge.

# Coming ups: Power Quest to show new product

## Programs

The Saturday, Nov. 3, program will feature Power Quest <www.powerquest.com/office/http://www.powerquest.com/office/>.

ServerMagic 4.0 for NetWare, the newest update to PowerQuest's most successful version of ServerMagic helps you protect your network storage while reducing downtime because of server deployment, hardware and software upgrades, or failure.

Small to enterprise organizations use ServerMagic 4.0 for NetWare for fast server deployment; day-to-day resource allocation management; hardware and software upgrades; quick disaster recovery and migration of server data.

Product benefits include the ability to easily copy, move or delete volumes or partitions; maintain Novell Directory Services (NDS) settings; resize, copy, move, rename, or create partitions and resize volumes without losing data; fast, effective, and complete solution for server deployment; disaster recovery; scripting common tasks; and an easy-to-use familiar interface.

Other coming meetings:

**Saturday, Dec. 1:** Toby Scott will discuss reference resources on the Intenet. We will meet at the James F. Cowan Conference Center at 550 Airport Way, at the Camarillo Airport. This is for the December meeting only, because of other commitments at the Eubanks Locale.

**Saturday, Jan. 4:** Windows XP, the new Microsoft operating system.

## SIGs

**SPECIAL NOTICE:** Just before this issue went to press, we learned that November is the last month we can have SIGs at Gateway Computers. This is the message Helen Long received from our contact there, Rabia Yeaman:

"Helen, I need to let you and the club know that after November, store management will not be able to host sigs. I know this is probably bad news, and I hate delivering it, but this comes from the store manager, not me."

Obviously, this mean we need to find another location. Anyone who knows of such a site should contact any of the officers.

Meanwhile, thanks to Rabia and Gateway for all the help and courtesy they have extended to us.

## November door prizes

2 copies of Norton Antivirus 2002
12X DVD drive with software
Estimated retail value: $180

We have two types of door prizes, those given by the presenter of the program and those bought for the raffle. Members get one ticket for the presenter's prize(s). Members and visitors may buy as many tickets as they wish for the raffle at $1 each or six for $5.

## SIG reminders available by e-mail

To keep members up to date on coming SIGs, Andy Toth has agreed to offer an e-mail reminder service to club members. Sign up and he will automatically send you a reminder about two days before each SIG, indicating the topic, location, and date.

We hope that this service will remind more people about coming SIGs. Check the front page of the CIPCUG Web site in the "Latest Page Revisions" or at the bottom of the SIG INFORMATION page.

Or, if you want to sign up without going to the Web page, send an e-mail to <siginfo@cipcug.org> with the subject line "subscribe" to be placed on the list.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are sponsored by CIPCUG and led by volunteers. There is no charge for members to attend. Signing up for the class is no longer necessary as our classrooms are large enough to accommodate our club's 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. Please note that we can not load any software into the Gateway computers.

Some SIGs are held at Ventura County Computers, 2175 Goodyear Ave. No. 117, Ventura. While the Gateway facility is larger, if we need to install software on computers, Toby is perfectly willing to let us use his VCC location and computer.

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# More about: Command.com

*(Continued from page 1)*

an item for you. It is also your responsibility to pick the item up from your friend. The committee appreciates the income, but there is no real way to make decisions for you.

The library should be routinely available starting January 2001.

# Q&A: My CDRW gets confused

Hosted by Toby Scott
Reported by Laura Pacheco

**Toby:** I would like to remind everyone that the December meeting will not be held in this hall. Instead of turning into Eubanks, you need to turn into Airport Way (it's the first signal if you are coming from Las Posas). Immediately turn right into the first driveway and park. It's the Cowan Conference Center. If there is not enough parking there, there will be directly across the street from it — parking will not be a problem. The "Ventura Hall" is a pretty good size meeting hall — it is not as big as this hall, but it will hold 120-140 people and it has one HUGE advantage over this room. It has a T-1 direct Internet connection. We are going to have fun. We will do a session on the Internet. I am going to talk about how to find information on the Internet, how to tune up your computer, a kind of potpourri of what you can do with a fast connection to the Internet, and some tips, tricks and just have a fun meeting. I know I will have a good time. We are going to give it a trial run and see how it goes. We might end up using that room a few more times. We do have to pay for it, but the Internet connection makes it worth it. The disadvantage to it is that there is no room in the back for the Libraries and other stuff. Coffee will be a bit slower and trickier, but it's a nicer room, carpeted, more modern than this room. (Check the CIPCUG Web site for directions, if necessary.)

**Q:** I installed a high speed CDRW and after I used my D drive to transfer data, my D drive, now when I put something in there just sits and spins and doesn't do anything.

**A:** This happens sometimes when you have a regular CD and you install a CDRW in it. Occasionally the computer will initially recognize both of them but can get confused and think it's all one device. Then only one will work while the other one doesn't. Sometimes it's the CD; sometimes it's the CDRW. Go into DEVICE MANAGER and delete them both, reboot the computer and see if it picks them both up. If it doesn't pick them both up, go in and unplug one of them, have your computer detect the other one, shut it down and plug in the other one and see if you can pick it up that way. You have to get Windows to pick them up. If you can't get Windows to pick them up, try putting them on different channels. In other words, a lot of times people will have their hard drive on one ribbon wire and then they will have both CDs on the other one. Try putting them as "slave" – one on ribbon 0 and one on ribbon 1. You can pick them up frequently that way and can't when they are both on the same DMA channel.

**Q:** When you put a new application on your desktop and you open it up, it generally opens up in a specific section on your desktop. Is there any way that you can go in and set it so it can open in another location?

**A:** I believe if you move it to where you want it to open it will remember next time and open it in that location. Most of the standard Windows ones will; some third-party programs hard code in there the coordinates, and then there is nothing you can do.

**Q:** What have you heard about IE6.1? Is that an improvement over IE6.0?

**A:** Probably, I really couldn't tell you. I have not had a chance to look at the particulars of IE6.1. I will read the reviews, probably tomorrow, and we will see what happens.

**Q:** My question has to do with DVDs. When I put the DVD in a Creative Labs 12 speed, I get audio and video disjuncture after running for maybe 5 or 6 minutes and it continues throughout the movie.

**A:** You have something that is interfering. You probably should go into the device manager and look at resources — not IRQ, but DMA — and the memory locations and see what it is sharing it with. See if you can't move something around. You probably have some video or some other sound event that has something else that is trying to use the same resources, and it's giving you problems.

Alternatively, you can have a loose cable, or a heat problem.

**Q:** Is that something that I can bring in my CPU here to have someone look at and fix? (CIPCUG now has appointed times when you can bring your CPU in for a tune-

*(Continued on page 5)*

# More on programs and SIG schedule ...

*(Continued from page 3)*

Be sure to check the location for each SIG. If no moderator is listed, the SIG is not officially scheduled. Check the Web page before you attend to make sure there will be a moderator.

Here's the SIG schedule for the end of October and the month of November:

Monday, Oct. 29: Music Match at Toby's office, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Andy Toth will walk us through the Music Match with Juke Box.

Monday, Nov. 5: Internet at Gateway, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Michael Shalkey will show you how to find bargain air fares for the holidays.

Saturday, Nov. 10: OS/2 at Toby's office, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (Check the Web site to be sure of this because the meetings have been cancelled several times recently.

Monday, Nov. 12: MS Word at Gateway, 6:30 -8:30 p. m. Alexandra Zuromski will show how to create labels using MS Word.

Tuesday, Nov. 13: HTML at Toby's office, 6:30-8:30 p.m. David Minkin will discuss Beginning HTML using Note Tab Pro and Validator.

# More Q&A: Back up registry when all is well

*(Continued from page 4)*

up for $10.)

**A:** If you can get a problem to appear on command, then we can fix it. If it's one of these things that sometimes does it and sometimes doesn't then we will never know if we fixed it.

**Q:** I put in Alienator2 Video card with 64 Meg. I thought that would make it play OK, but I heard one guy say that Alienator2 is not a good DVD card. I have gone out to the Internet, but Creative said that if I download the drivers that they would not guarantee their card, because they are overriding what Creative put on there.

**A:** If you get into a hardware "spitting" contest, you are in trouble. If you cannot download the latest video drivers because the DVD says it won't take them and the DVD doesn't want you to download Creative's, that can be a problem until the two companies get it resolved. Be prepared to install and uninstall video drivers a lot. That's going to be an ugly one. The fact that it will run for a while is probably a good sign. It probably means they will be able to fix it after a time. Whether you can get it to work today, I don't know. DVDs are tough getting them to work.

**Q:** Last time you made a statement that when your computer is running fairly well, and everything is doing what you what it to do, to backup the whole system. How do you do that and what does that mean?

**A:** I probably said the registry and not the whole system. When it is running well, you want to back up the registry. You can do that by going to START, RUN, and then type scanregw. That will make a backup copy of your registry. It puts it in a backup directory in the Windows tree. If you have a problem later on, you can go after that one.

**Q:** What do I do to bring it back up?

**A:** You go to START, PROGRAMS, APPLICATIONS, SYSTEM TOOLS, SYSTEM RESTORE.

**Q:** Do you recommend that we install all Microsoft Critical Updates?

**A:** Yes, I do recommend that you do. Understand that there are no guarantees in any of this, but the probabilities that it will mess up your computer are pretty small because of the way they do the critical updates packages. The prob-

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# More Q&A: How do I upgrade drivers?

*(Continued from page 5)*

abilities that can prevent some kind of intrusion into your system are fairly high and the risk/reward relationship is very good. Understand that whenever someone tells you that the risk/reward relationship is very good, that it is not a guarantee.

**Q:** If I want to upgrade my drivers, first, could you tell me how to upgrade and install, and, second, can I do this on one computer and install them on another computer?

**A:** First of all, you have to have exactly the same hardware on the two computers in order to install the same drivers. If you have a Creative Labs CD on one and a Toshiba on the other, you certainly don't want to install a Creative Labs driver on the Toshiba.

OK, assuming you are running the same thing, you download it, you stick it into a directory, run the virus checker on it — just to be safe — and then go to CONTROL PANEL, SYSTEMS, DEVICE MANAGER, highlight the device you want to update, go to PROPERTIES, UPDATE DRIVERS, point it to your download directory, and have at it. Once you have that in the download directory, if it's small enough to fit on a floppy, take it over to the other computer and do the same thing with it.

If it isn't small enough to fit on a floppy, then you can use LapLink, your network, if you have a home network, or a direct-connect serial-to-serial or parallel-to-parallel port connection. You can burn it onto a CD or you can just go to the Internet and download it onto the other computer. It all depends on what you have and how difficult those chores are for you.

**Q:** Are there any USB-to-USB computer connections?

**A:** There probably are because they have USB network cards. You can certainly do it that way, but I don't know of where you can just take a USB cable and plug it into the other computer and talk across them. I don't know of anything that works that way yet.

**Q:** This is a WinME question. I was ready to do a defrag and I received a Microsoft news note that said after the Defrag the WinMe will work, but when you try to reboot it won't. Have you had any experience with that?

**A:** This is not specific to WinMe, but let's talk a little about how you do your defrags. First of all, reboot the computer in safe mode. When it finishes the memory check, start tapping on the F8 key and you will get a menu. One choice (using down arrow to get to it) is for booting the computer in safe mode. It opens up without any of the stuff running in the system tray, which will prevent problems of both Scandisk and Defrag starting over when other programs write to disk. First run Scandisk. You do not want to run Defrag if there are any lost clusters or other problems on the hard drive. Fix everything on your hard drive so that it is operating correctly. When you finish doing that then run Defrag. Your computer should reboot; if it doesn't reboot, you have a hardware problem. It's probably a physical problem on your hard drive. You can try, not in WinMe, but in the other windows, to boot to DOS and try running a thorough Scandisk. If you have WinMe, you will probably have to reinstall over it and then run a thorough Scandisk and lock out the sections that have problems. It will do it for you automatically on a thorough.

**Q:** Two-part question: Difference between RDR and DDR and is DDR AGP a good thing to have?

**A:** Intel backed the Rambus memory spec initially; AMD backed the DDR memory spec. The battle is over and, as usual, AMD won. Intel is going to start manufacturing chips and motherboards that use DDR. I would not go out now and buy a Rambus computer simply because I think a year from now if your memory chip goes bad you might be in big trouble. I think it will be expensive and very hard to find a replacement chip for any other Rambus products.

I am doing exclusively, unless someone puts a gun to my head, DDRs. Rambus is actually slightly faster than DDR, but DDR ended up being much cheaper to manufacture. It was much quicker to get to market. They have the speeds up faster. It just was a more satisfactory platform, all things considered, despite the fact that Rambus had some technical advantages.

**Q:** What about the other question regarding an AGP graphics card with DDR?

**A:** That will be faster than regular memory, and faster is always better. One of the problems is that as you get out on the leading edge, you tend to be on the bleeding edge right now with video cards particularly with respect to DVDs. Some of the games or other stuff will have problems with certain of the other cards. There are some cards that are better for multimedia and other cards that are better for games. You can knock yourself out trying to keep track of all those. Certainly, on a theoretical basis, DDR will be faster and about doubles the speed of regular RAM. So that will be a better choice, but watch out for compatibility issues with the earlier ones.

**Q:** On that Defrag or Scandisk, I attempted to Scandisk my computer and it just goes as far as about 30,000….

**A:** Wait, I can tell you right now, if you have programs running in the background when you run Scandisk, whether it's a screensaver or whatever, Scandisk will run for a while and as soon as something writes to the hard drive it goes back to zero and starts over again. That is why I told you to go to safe mode because nothing in the background is running.

**Q:** When you are running Norton's Diagnostic utilities, do you do the same thing?

**A:** Norton has some more tools; it probably will not have the same problems. If you do notice any problems, just go to safe mode. Safe mode is kind of a nuisance, but with Microsoft products it's almost a requirement. With Norton sometimes it work and sometimes it doesn't. All I can say is

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# More Q&A: How do I dump network password?

*(Continued from page 6)*

give it a try. If you have any problems, go to safe mode.

**Q:** Just to go back to what you were discussing before with backing up — what are you backing up to?

**A:** It's simply a backup of the registry. In case your registry gets corrupted later, you can restore that backup. That is not a backup of your computer. A backup of your computer would require that you have another hard drive, a tape, a CDRW, Zip disk, but not floppies. Frequently what will happen is that you will install some program or something will happen to your computer, and all of a sudden it doesn't work very well. If that happens and you have a backup of the registry, you can go back to an earlier version of the registry that was working well and you will discover that suddenly your computer works pretty nicely. One of the disadvantages or sometimes an advantage is if in the meantime you have installed any programs you will just have uninstalled them by restoring to a registry that doesn't recognize that program. Now, if that program was the reason your computer is not operating very well anymore, then you would be happy to get rid of it. However, if it was not the cause of the problem, you may have to reinstall it. It does allow you a chance to go back to a previous version of Windows that was running in an admirable state.

**Q:** Since I installed DSL, I get as I boot the computer a box that says I need a network password. Can I get rid of that box?

**A:** First of all, I am not sure you really want to get rid of the box. What happens is that as soon as you put your computer on a network, you have a network installed, with a network logon. Of course, the Internet being the largest network ever created by man, when you plug directly into the Internet, you are on a network. Therefore, you need to log on to the network. If you don't log on, you won't get onto the network. It's one of the security issues. If you use no password and you just simply allow anybody to log on, then if anybody does tunnel in from the Internet, they don't have to worry about a password to get onto your computer. There is a program called TweakUI. If you have Win98 first edition, it's on the disk. It's not in SE or ME. The only time it was on disk was in the first edition of WIN98. You can download it from Microsoft and it will allow you to give yourself a user name and password to password-protect your computer and do an auto logon entering your password. You will see the box but you won't have to actually click on anything. It will just flash on for a second or two and disappear.

TweakUI lets you do a lot of things to your computer, only one of which is the automatic logon. It's in either boot options or logon options.

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**Don't buy another computer...**

**Until you read these facts about All-City Computers**

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# Jeff Levy on computers comes to CIPCUG

**By John Weigle**

<*jweigle@vcnet.com*>

Product recommendations, popular lessons, industry information and tips to keep your computer running the way it should were all part of October's presentation by KFI radio personality Jeff Levy, who began by saying, "There's an awful lot going on in the world of computers" and proceeded to tell us about a lot of it.

As a start, he suggested that prices could fall through the end of the year with the release of new AMD chips and the decision by Staples to stop stocking computers in stores. "They're going to do a build-a-computer routine" because

*(Continued on page 9)*

# More Q&A: Is this a good time to buy?

*(Continued from page 7)*

**Q:** With the world's economy the way it is now and with WinXP coming out, is now a good time to buy a computer now that I have my refund check? Or should I wait a month or two for the Win98 and ME machines to really get sold out at basement prices while they are waiting for the new ones to come in?

**A:** Very good question. I suspect we are not going to see any major platform improvements to computers for the next year and a half or thereabouts. The next platform improvement is going to be when we go to 64-bit operating systems. Manufacturers are pretty much going to be ramping up for 64 bit at the expense of the aging 32-bit systems. Intel has started to ship to manufacturers some really buggy, stay-up-for-only-a-few-minutes chips for testing purposes. That's going to be what we go to as the next major technological push. So, I don't think you are going to see any huge technological changes for the next year or so. Initially the 64-bit computers are going to be hugely expensive. So, given the usual utility of a computer three or four years before it is pretty long in the tooth, this is a fairly decent time to buy and your last good time to buy for the next two or three years.

**Member:** I was just wondering if I should do it this week or in three weeks. Does it matter?

**A:** You will probably get some stuff discounted for Christmas, which might be a good time for buying.

**Member:** But the release of XP isn't going to try to get people to get rid of their old machines?

**A:** I think the XP will be adopted widely by corporations. I think it will have very tough sledding with the consumer.

**Member:** If it comes automatically installed in a computer you are buying, you will not have a choice.

**A:** There are still computer dealers in Ventura County who will not install WinME, who are installing Win98, so I think you will discover that there are going to be more of them who are not going to install XP or will give you a choice. Ventura County Computers is not going to be an early adopter of XP. We may end up going to it if consumer demand tells us, but I am in no hurry with XP at all.

**Q:** Per your instruction, I try to keep my startup as bare bones as possible. When I go to Msconfig and uncheck it, it comes back. How do I get rid of Kodak Photo Transfer Pictures software in my start up menu?

**A:** If it keeps coming back, you have to go into the software setup and see if you can have it do a manual startup rather than an automatic startup. If it won't let you, the only other choice would be to uninstall, and that's a problem. Some programs are really nasty about insisting their programs run all the time on your computer even if you don't need them all the time. How often do you download pictures from your camera onto the computer? It's not an everyday thing. It's not a good idea that you have to run that software 24/7 when the computer is on. Nonetheless there are some programs that do insist on it and there isn't much you can do about it.

**Q:** I am looking to get me a CDRW drive. From your experience, are there any models that won't give me much trouble?

**A:** We have had good luck with Acers. Generally speaking, I like Acer products. It's the largest computer manufacturer in Taiwan — probably the fourth or fifth in the world. That's not to say we haven't had problems with some of their products. We do from every manufacturer occasionally. We have had good luck with Acers.

I have had a mixed bag with Sony and Toshiba. Yamaha is OK and tend to be a bit pricey. If you want to get the one that nobody has any problems with at all it is Plextor, but they are double the price of anyone else. Plextors are really nice but I've sold only two. Who in this day and age is going to pay $400 for a 16-speed CDRW when you can buy them for less then half? They do install neat and they don't have issues that other CDRs do.

**Q:** When I go on some Web sites, I get some message — run-time error has occurred and something about object expected. It says error such and such is undefined; an exception type MS J script run type error was not handled. (IE.5.5, service pack 2)

**A:** Go to your security settings. You may have your security settings set fairly high, and they won't let it run. The other place to go is on the TOOLS, OPTIONS, ADVANCED; there a number of things you can or cannot allow or ask permission. You may have turned off something that it needs.

# More Levy: Intel, AMD battle it out

*(Continued from page 8)*

it's cheaper and creates more profit, he said, which means there could be bargains as the stores empty the shelves.

He also said that the computer chip naming conventions have changed. Intel made the 286, 386 and 486, and then AMD and Cyrix, which no longer makes chips, started making chips with the same names.

"Well, Intel went to court and sued and said, 'You can't use our 486 name.' And the judge said, 'Are you nuts, it's a number. It's a random number.' So Intel decided when they brought out the 586 that they would call it the Pentium. Pent is Latin for five. That they could copyright. Then they brought out what they were going to call the 686. Anybody know what the Latin word for six is? Sext. You would have had a Sextium computer. And, of course, the marking department said, 'No, no, no, no.' Then they called it the Pentium Pro. That was a 686."

We've been conditioned to measure a computer's worth in terms of its speed, measured in "megahertz, gigahertz, it really hurts. I always thought a gigahertz was something Divine Brown did for $40."

AMD can't catch up with Intel because "Intel does the F word … better than anybody The F word in this case is fabricate." AMD rolled out its next chip – the XP – the Monday after our meeting. It's called the 1800 because it's a 1.5 gigahertz that AMD says will run as fast as Intel's 1.8.

"…They're trying to get us away from measuring a computer's worth by the speed of its processor," Levy said. Other factors, including the RAM and BUS are important.

When upgrading a computer, he said, think of it like a funnel. You can make the wide part of the funnel wider, but when the water gets to the thin part, it has to slow down. Adding RAM is probably "the most cost-effective upgrade you can do," but you have to know how much to get, where to get it and what kind to get.

"Before you go off to buy RAM you might want to look at a Web site called Crucial.com," he said. It's owned by Micron Electronics, the largest RAM maker in the country. If you put in the model and make of a major brand, the Web site will tell you what RAM the computer has, what it can take and what to buy. If you have a clone, you have to get the name and model of your motherboard by opening the box and get the same kind of information.

RAM is so cheap that "it's actually being sold at below the production cost just to get rid of it," he said.

As for how much RAM to get, he said, going from 32 to 64 megabytes gives "an enormous increase in Windows

*(Continued on page 10)*


# Used Computer Solutions

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# More on Levy: Rewriteable DVD drives coming

*(Continued from page 9)*

performance." Going from 64 to 128 gives a less dramatic change and going from 128 to 256 gives another less dramatic increase.

You don't need more than 256 "unless you're really into streaming video and really heavy duty graphics," Levy said.

What should you buy in a new computer? First, you have to know what you're going to use it for. "People buy things ass-backward," he said. "They go to the store and say, 'oh look at that. It's blue and it's yellow, and it's on sale and it's pretty.' " If you're going to do games, focus on graphics. If you're going to do homework, e-mail, Internet, "you don't need the newest, fastest, killer computer."

He recommends a Pentium IV, a 1.4 or 1.5 gigahertz speed, 246 Megs of RAM, a rewriteable drive because it's easier and cheaper to put in at the start, two CD drives if you're going to be making CDs so you can copy them. DVD rewriteables are around the corner, but the standards aren't set yet, he said.

We'll see rewriteable DVD drives in the next three to six months for under $500, Levy said, but "I personally don't much care for a DVD because I'm not going to watch movies on my computer. That's why I have a television set."

On flat monitors, he said the cost is coming down about 2 percent a month. They're set to work at a certain resolution and don't look as good when the resolution changes, however.

"If you're somebody that constantly changes resolution, like a gamer, you won't be a happy camper," Levy said.

They also don't take a lot of room and are beautiful to look at. "I have an 18.1-inch and I wouldn't give it back," he said.

He predicted that prices by November, "the prices are going to fall faster than Bill Clinton's boxer shorts."

Buyers of new computers will probably have their choice of Windows 98 Second Edition, Windows ME, Windows 2000 and Windows XP as an operating system, he said. "Most of you, 98 Second Edition is a good choice, ME would be a better choice, 2000 is really stable, but it's an NT environment so it's not real friendly with drivers and plug and pray. XP, I'd wait," he said.

"If you remember, Microsoft got sued. It's a monopoly. Bill Gates is a monopoly. Well, there were 19 states that were plaintiffs. One of them settled – New Mexico. The other 18 are still out there and there was a rumble that they were going to go to court and try to get an injunction to keep Microsoft from letting that system go, from rolling it out, so Microsoft said, 'no, we're doing it now.' I don't want it if you're doing it now. I want it when it's ready. So I think the jury's going to be out on that one for a while. I think a long while," he said.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," he said after a number of hands went up when he asked how many people don't back up their computers. To back up you need a backup media and software. "The best one I've seen is real cheap," Levy said. "It's about $25, and it's called Second Copy 2000." It lets users create profiles for different kinds of backups (such as when I shut the computer down or every hour).

Pulling a key chain from his pocket, he showed a device about the size of a small key chain flashlight and said it

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## For more Jeff

Jeff Levy's radio show is on every Sunday from 9 a.m. to noon on KFI, AM 640 on the dial. Most of the show is devoted to listeners' questions, but he also comments on computer issues, as he did at the meeting. His Web site is <www.jefflevy.com>; his e-mail is <jeff@jefflevy.com> and the Lessons are on the Web site (click on Learn).

### Recommended Web sites, products

To buy RAM: Crucial.com

For Microsoft patches: Microsoft.com

For backups: Second Copy 2000 at Centered.com

For e-mail: Eudora, to avoid Outlook and Outlook Express security problems at Eudora.com

For making it impossible to recover information from your hard drive: Ontrack's Data Eraser, available at Ontrack.com/jeff levy

For cleaning up Internet history, cookies and other tracks of where you've been: Ontrack's Internet Cleanup (same as above; also a special offer on System Suite 4.0)

For keeping your computer cool: 2CoolPC at 2coolpc.com

For transferring data from one computer to another: Bafo, a $30 USB and software package at bafo.com

# More on Levy: Your privacy important

*(Continued from page 10)*

was a 128 megabyte portable hard drive that plugs into a USB port and runs without a driver on Windows ME or 2000 and with a downloadable driver on Windows 98. By year's end there will be 1 gigabyte drives just like it, he said. The one he showed is cross platform and can be used on a PC or a Macintosh. It allows X Copy in DOS or drag and drop in Windows.

The small drives are great if you need data portability, he said, but if you don't Zip disks and rewriteables are the best choices for backups. Once you own the drive, the CDs are cheap but you can't use Windows to back up on them. "That's why I suggest Second Copy 2000. It just takes away all the misery," he explained.

People with high-speed Internet connections need a firewall, he said. Black Ice is good but Levy likes Zone Alarm by Zone Labs, a little better. Many people don't understand that with an always-on high-speed connection they're always on the Internet. "Can people get in to your computer? Yes. Can people get take things out of your computer and find things? Absolutely."

AOL, he noted, has just changed its privacy program so it can send cookies and little Web spy programs to watch where you go "so they can 'market' to you. I've been called the Rush Limbaugh of computers because when it comes to privacy issues I get really upset, really upset."

Users of Outlook or Outlook Express for e-mail, he said, face several e-mail vulnerabilities that allow worms to send themselves to everyone in your address book. Because of this, e-mail isn't necessarily safe even if it comes from someone you know, he said.

He recommends using Eudora because its address book "doesn't suffer the same as the Microsoft" address book. Three versions of the program area available on the Web, a free one with ad banners, a second one that's paid for and a third one that's sponsored with ad banners.

He suggested downloading and installing all patches for Windows and Internet Explorer because a patch means "oh, my God, we screwed up and we better fix this, but we don't call it a fix. It's a patch. Terminology."

If you have Windows 98 or 98 SE, there's no need to upgrade to Windows ME, he said. He noted that buyers of Dell computers that came with Windows 95 had problems upgrading to Windows 98 because Dell had changed the system, making it proprietary to its hardware. It notified its buyers a week later by snail mail and eventually sold versions of Windows 98 that worked.

*(Continued on page 12)*

# More on Levy: Hidden code in programs

*(Continued from page 11)*

"Please do not rush out and buy XP," he said. "Don't do it yet. If you want to get it on a computer that's preinstalled, then you've got somebody to whine and complain to. If you do it yourself you're not asking for trouble, you're saying get me, come on take me. Not a very safe thing to do."

By the first of the year, he said, XP "should be stable enough to where we can do it." He said he tells callers to the radio show to talk their neighbors into upgrading first. "When your neighbor's computer gets back on line then you'll know it's safe."

If you have Word or Notepad, type Q33NYC, make it large enough to see easily and change the font to Wingdings. The result is ✈🖹🖹☠✡👌.

On a related matter, he said that messages can be hidden in pornographic pictures that can be downloaded by those who know where the messages are and how to decode them. "It's almost impossible to stop," he said. The process is called stenography.

An Easter Egg is hidden code in programs. Office 97 has at least two:

Open Word, type "I'd like to see Bush kick bin Laden's butt," highlight it, click on tools, language, thesaurus and you'll get "I'll drink to that." The same thing happens with any sentence that starts with "I'd like to see."

Type "Unable to follow instructions" and follow the same procedure. The result: "Unable to have an erection."

In Excel, you can create what looks like the surface of a planet with you as the pilot of lunar lander controlled by the arrow keys. In the distance is a Palm Pilot that looks like a monolith that scrolls the names of the program's writers. "You ever wonder why our programs are so expensive and so big? That's a good part of the reason."

He didn't give the keystrokes but from <www.eeggs.com> come these instructions for either that egg or a similar one:

1. On a new Worksheet, Press F5
2. Type X97:L97 and hit enter
3. Press the tab key
4. Hold Ctrl-Shift
5. Click on the Chart Wizard toolbar button
6. Use mouse to fly around — Right button forward/ Left button reverse.

Levy recommends maintenance agreements for laptops because of the cost of replacing screens that go bad. Such warranties don't necessarily make sense on a desktop, he said.

If you're building your own computer, he said, be sure to buy the motherboard, RAM and CPU from the same seller. That should guarantee they'll work together. If you buy at a computer show, be sure the seller has a place of business when they're not at a show and make them write

**Photo by Jerry Crocker**

**KFI radio host Jeff Levy pauses to take a microphone at the beginning of his October presentation to CICPUG.**

on the receipt that you can return the merchandise within seven working days with no restocking fee. "If they won't do that don't write the check," he said.

On surge protectors vs. uninterruptible power supplies, he said, a UPS is better. Surge protectors don't protect against spikes or sags (power starts to fail but doesn't quite turn off). A good UPS is $50 to $100 and "is a very good investment." The battery in a UPS kicks in within one one-hundredth of a second if the power fails, but it also acts as a line conditioner, he said.

"If you're serious about your computer, a backup and a line conditioner or UPS are must-haves. You'll be very sorry when you have to call up and ask who can get this data back for me. I have all this stuff on here and I can't get it back."

Interestingly, however, data can be recovered, which creates a potential problem for people who donate or sell computers. Ontrack, a data recovery company, bought used hard drives and used computers at computer swap meets and shows. "I'll tell what they found. One company was a yacht broker, and they found accounts and contracts and social security numbers and credit card numbers. One company was a toy manufacturer, and they found a spreadsheet that had all the information that was proprietary and secret to using a certain technology. They found lots of personal information."

Files deleted from a computer aren't really deleted. The first letter of the file name is eliminated, but it's easy to recover files with unerase programs. Data can even be recovered from reformatted drives, he said. Ontrack's Data Eraser, a shredder, writes a pattern from one to 99 times on sectors of the hard drive that have deleted files (Norton Utilities has a similar program, he noted). The U.S. government requires three passes and Germany requires seven.

*(Continued on page 13)*

# More on Levy: Keep computer mean, lean

*(Continued from page 12)*

"If you're selling a computer, throwing it out, donating it, don't give away your information," he said.

Otrack also makes Internet Cleanup, which removes history, cookies and any trace of where you've been.

Jeff gives weekly lessons on his radio show, and the most popular one lets you pop a screen saver up immediately. To do this, right click on the desktop and click on New and Shortcut. Find a screensaver you like (*.scr), usually in the Windows or Windows\System directory. When you've made the shortcut, right click on it, go to Properties and Hot Key. Click on none and pick a key (he uses F12). Then if anyone walks up, you can hit the hot key and instantly get a screen saver.

Your hands are your best computer teachers, he said. Short of taking a hammer to it or dumping it in a bathtub, you won't hurt it, he said.

"And for God's sake don't choke it to death with all the things you download. We have become pack rats, we have become scavengers. Microsoft Windows gets unstable when you load it down with a bunch of things you don't need," Levy added, prompting a hearty "Amen, brother" from Rick Smith, who was still working on computers.

"There's a man who knows what crash means," Levy responded. "Keep your computer lean and mean. If you need to do any business where you keep information about yourself, keep it on a floppy disk, keep it on a Zip disk "

If you have password problems, click on Start, Find (Search in ME) Files and Folders and put in *.pwl. These are password files. Right click on each one and delete it. The next time you start up, you'll be asked for a user name and password. Put in a user name and hit Enter at the password. "If you really need to have passwords write the damn things down on a piece of paper and tape it under your keyboard," he said.

Even if you don't have a password list there, he said, turn your keyboard upside down every month or so and shake out the accumulated debris. He also recommended using compressed air to clean your computer twice a year. Take it outside and blow it out. If you have pets you'll probably find a lot of debris at the fan blow out.

When a computer gets hot from the CPU, main chip, RAM and video RAM, you'll get what's called chip bleed. "Don't be on your hands and knees looking for that crimson fluid," he said. "That's not what I'm talking about." Chip bleeding means a chip can't complete an instruction, resulting in "colossal error messages that tell you absolutely nothing."

If that happens open the computer and run it that way for awhile. If that solves the problem, install 2CoolPC, which will keep the internal temperature about 12 degrees above the outside air temperature.

Levy also described some Windows tune-ups.

If you right click on desktop you get an animated menu. You can go to effects and uncheck "animated" to speed up the process.

To gain space on your hard drive, right click on the recycle bin, click on properties and change the default setting, which is 10 percent of the hard drive, to something less.

Shutdown problems can often be helped with a shortcut, he said. Right click on the desktop, click on New, Shortcut. Type c:\windows\rundll32.exe user,exitwindows. Click OK, name it Shutdown and click Finish.

Click on Start, Settings, Printers. Open Printers and find the default (it has a circle with a black check mark). Right click on it, click Create Shortcut, put it on the desktop. You can then drag a document to the shortcut, and Windows opens the program that created it and prints it.

Levy then took questions.

**Q:** Are people deciding they don't need new hardware, software?

**A:** You and I know that we can find reasons to buy things if we really want them. "I want that new car because mine has a slight wobble in the front end at 170 miles an hour. I need a new car." If you have something that works well, don't fix it.

**Q:** Does Second Copy 2000 compress the backup?

**A:** No. It makes a direct copy. When you do a compressed backup it's useless unless you can uncompress it, so if you lose the software and can't install it on a new computer you're up a creek. Second Copy can span media – that is, if you use Zip disks and it needs four it will tell you when to insert a new one.

To transfer data from one computer to another, he recommends Bafo, a USB cable and software package at <bafo.com>. You get a split screen on each computer (one for each computer), and you can drag and drop from one computer to another. Transfer data, not programs, because installing programs makes changes to the registry. Bafo is not cross platform.

**Q:** Who makes the small hard drives you showed?

A: M-Systems makes the cheapest ones. The other two major makers are Agate Tech and USB Drive. The M-Systems drive will soon be bootable and costs about $160.

**Q:** What about voice recognition?

**A:** It's not what it should be in computers. Consider IBM or Dragon if you're interested. Dragon got in trouble with some stock trading fraud, but not with its software. "I'd say probably next year it'll be better. It's improving constantly."

**Q:** How do you feel about AMD chips?

**A:** I didn't like them until about a year ago because of problems with legacy software, but "as things stand now they're great chips. Their biggest problem is heat." The one that was to come out Monday has a lower drain of power so

*(Continued on page 14)*

# Scenes at October's computer clinic

Photos by Jerry Crocker

**At left, computers are lined up all across the back of the room while members register in the background. Immediately below, Toby's daughter, Jessica, signs in a computer and gets a description of the problems. Bottom, Rick Smth works on a**

The back of the CIPCUG meeting room looked like a large computer repair shop in October thanks to the successful computer tune-up clinic conducted by Ventura County Computers.

Members started hauling computers in as soon as the building opened (earlier than the usual 8:30 a.m.), and by the time the Ventura County Computers gang arrived about 8:30, it seemed computers were everywhere. A sign-in area was soon established, and things quickly got organized, even though computers were still coming in at 9:30 a.m.

Rick Smith announced that the most serious problem found by break time was a computer infected with the sircam virus and with no antivirus program installed. Both Rick and Toby emphasized the need for an antivirus program on all computers. Further

Furthermore, they said, users must keep the program's virus definitions up to date.

The work went on until noon – the original plan was to shut down before 11 a.m., when the program began – and 22 computers were checked out.

Rick said he and the crew could help with about 90 percent of the problems, either by fixing them at the clinic or giving the owners advice on how to fix the problems themselves.

Rick called the clinic "a big success" and said he'll probably try to schedule two a year, depending on the board's feelings.

Members who brought computers to the clinic paid $10 and received a $10 coupon for use at Ventura County Computers, making the work essentially free.

CIPCUG received half the fees.

# More on Levy: Internet connections

it's cooler.

**Q:** Do routers have trouble with firewalls?

**A:** They can. I prefer software firewalls. I haven't had Zone Alarm crash and I've set it up to do what I want. I want to know when REAL goes to its Web site.

**Q:** I have a problem with staying connected to the Internet.

**A:** Look at the modem in Control Panel and there are some settings you can change (check the lessons on the Web site for the exact settings). If you've done that and talked to your ISP, have the phone company run a continuity test on your line. If that doesn't work, try switching to an external modem. Cable is even better. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) depends on how far you are from the switch. Cable slows down as more people sign up, but the company can add nodes. I have cable and a dial-up with a sponsor. The cable is consistently faster. I'd start with cable if I could.

**Q:** Can you install new software in safe mode?

**A:** No, because you have no drivers for the CD-ROM.

# Letters: Microsoft's product activation routine

Can you image paying cash for a new car and having the manufacturer threaten you with a lawsuit if your spouse drives the car? This is basically what Microsoft and other software companies are doing. You buy their latest software for cash but are allowed to install it only on your home computer and not your spouse's or even your own second computer — a laptop. In fact, Microsoft is carrying it one step further; its latest operating system, Windows XP, will function only on the first computer that it is installed on.

I have been a strong Microsoft software product supporter for many years dating back to the earliest version of Windows. In fact, I'm a heavy supporter and user of Windows Me as it is the most stable Windows 9X product to date. Gone are the days of my Windows 95 and 98 crashes. But I cannot recommend the new Microsoft Windows XP or Office XP with their new Product Activation routine. For now when you reinstall Windows or Office on the same computer or add or removed certain hardware, Windows or Office will completely stop working, and you will be required to telephone Microsoft in order to obtain a temporary product activation code. This code is very similar to the product key code on the back of the jewel case of the Microsoft software CD. This new procedure reminds me of the infamous Lotus 1-2-3 security codes of many years past, and that was a failure and was dropped by Lotus and the other companies who attempted to employ similar security arrangements.

True, I will agree that there are dishonest people out there who make bootlegged copies of software, and those illegal copies are causing Microsoft a lost of potential sales. But why should we be penalized for the dishonest people in the world? What Microsoft needs to do is to (1) trust their home computer users who do not use any form of pirated software, (2) permit the home computer user to legally install their Microsoft software on more than one home computer located at the same residential premises, and (3) drop their product activation routine for the home computer user.

**— Jim Thornton**

# Imagine what's happening with computers

### By Alyce Radocay

*<Alyvet@aol.com>*

What is happening in the computer world is truly getting exciting. We are progressing toward some kind of interconnected world. Arthur C Clarke, the futurist writer, once made the observation: "Any sufficiently advanced computer technology will be indistinguishable from sheer magic."

Thanks to the remarkable talents and drive of Gordon Moore, founder of Intel, with its microprocessing chips, along with other scientists and engineers of Silicon Valley, the impact of computers is world-changing, as intelligence is being added to everyday devices, wherever we look, with micro-controllers to guide how they work. Such "brains" make devices more efficient and reliable.

Since 1965, these clever engineers have found ways to keep doubling the number of transistors on a chip. This is the result of thinking "smaller, faster, cheaper." This astonishing achievement has changed the world's economy and society. And the big changes have barely begun.

One of these days, a billion transistors will be put on a single chip.

transistors will be put on a single chip.

Making technology more affordable means we use it in more and more places and come up with entirely new ways of doing things. The use of chips will keep broadening as humans find new ways to embed them in things, including living things, such as us, to create more helpful devices.

And we are not just making everything smarter, we are giving them memory as well.

Disk-drive capacities are doubling ever year. Eventually, everything will be tied together to provide faster and faster data links.

This will truly be an interconnected world.

Whatever world finally emerges, it will indeed be magical.

## Helpful Web sites

Here, from the regular notices from Refdesk.com, are some Web sites related to the attacks of Sept. 11:

FBI: Most Wanted Terrorists at <www.fbi.gov/mostwant/terrorists/fugitives.htm>. United States government officials have announced the creation of the "Most Wanted Terrorists" List. The first individuals placed on this list are 22 people wanted for their role in crimes committed since 1985 that resulted in the death of innocent people around the world.

How to Handle Anthrax Threats at <www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10122001Handle/10122001Handle.asp>. Many facilities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. The purpose of these guidelines by the Center for Disease Control is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents.

Department of Defense Sites at <www.defenselink.mil/sites/> This site is the portal to the U.S. Department of Defense on the World Wide Web. It offers direct links to some of the most important and most popular DoD Sites, including DoD 101 — Introduction to DoD, Facts and Statistics, and Today in the DoD.

# Membership report: Is it time to renew?

**By Ken Church**

<*membership@cipcug.org*>

Welcome to the following new members:
Doris Chaison
Robert Krieger,
Miguel and Marielle Levy
Robert Weeks,
Total membership: 328

Renewal information
The renewal dues are
$25 for single membership,
$30 for two or more family membership.
Please send renewal payments to:
**CIPCUG MEMBERSHIP**
**P.O. BOX 51354**
**OXNARD, CA 93031-1354**
Or bring your payment to the Nov. Meeting.

**Sept 2001 renewals past due, final notice:**

| Mbr # | Last Name | First Name | Pd to Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1035 | Brooks | Richard | 200109 |
| 0499 | Chakires | Andy | 200109 |
| 1034 | Huen | Albert | 200109 |
| 1033 | Huen | Darryl | 200109 |
| 0990 | Mehr | Steve | 200109 |
| 0716 | Nichols | John | 200109 |
| 0609 | Traber | O.W. | 200109 |
| 0733 | Wall | Sinclair | 200109 |

**October 2001 renewals past due:**

| Mbr # | Last Name | First Name | Pd to Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0034 | Campbell | Gordon | 200110 |
| 0941 | Clark | Reagan L. | 200110 |
| 1039 | Davison, Jr. | Curtis | 200110 |
| 0385 | Forder | John | 200110 |
| 0385A | Forder | Carolyn | 200110 |
| 0993 | Ladd | Craig | 200110 |
| 0772 | Reich | Estelle | 200110 |
| 1040 | Shrage | Anne | 200110 |

**November 2001 renewals due:**

| Mbr # | Last Name | First Name | Pd to Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0388 | Armstrong | Bob | 200111 |
| 0516 | Cantarini | Billy | 200111 |
| 0944 | Coon | Donn | 200111 |
| 0268 | Douglas | John | 200111 |
| 0738 | Dutro | Georgia | 200111 |
| 0822 | Gieschen | Vic | 200111 |
| 0823 | Gieschen | Barbara | 200111 |
| 0635 | Godwin | John | 200111 |
| 0946 | Gorelik | Patricia | 200111 |
| 0945 | Gorelik | Donn | 200111 |
| 1041 | Hubbard | Yvonne | 200111 |
| 0664S | Johnson | Richard | 200111 |
| 0905 | Knauer | Hedy | 200111 |
| 0789 | Knauer | Wolfgang | 200111 |
| 0553 | LaHue | Philip | 200111 |
| 0820 | Laningham | Lynn | 200111 |
| 0634 | Mansfield | Arthur | 200111 |
| 0997 | Pacheco | Laura | 200111 |
| 0272 | Provart | Robert | 200111 |
| 0384 | Smith | Monty | 200111 |
| 1046 | Snyder | William | 200111 |
| 0273 | Valentine | H. W. | 200111 |
| 0046 | Wood | Bart | 200111 |

**Benefits of CIPCUG membership include:**

The Outer Edge, our monthly 20-page newsletter

Free tickets for presenters' prizes at our monthly meeting

A variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) every month

The society's Internet Service Provider for $15 per month

Discount prices from our presenters

The ability to sell at our annual Garage Sale meeting

# BEGINNERS CLASS

**October 2001**
**Mike Strecker roostermike.roosterm@gte.net**

## VIDEO & GRAPHICS

The picture we see on the monitor is the most important part of computing as all computers look the same, so the only thing we really look at is what's on the screen.

A device which has many names: *video adapter, video card, video board ,video display board, graphics card and graphics adapter*, is required to produce the picture on the screen.

Your video adapter is a circuit card inside your computer. The only part you can see is the port on the back of your machine that accepts the cable from your monitor.

In some systems, the video adapter is a card that fits into an expansion slot on the computer's motherboard. On many newer computers, the video circuitry is built right into the motherboard, and there is no separate video card.

The advantage of a separate video adapter is that you can replace it or upgrade it easily. Built-in video circuitry is usually less expensive to produce; it's one of the reasons that new computers offer so much horsepower for so little money. However, built-in video circuitry can be far more expensive to replace if it should fail or become outdated.

Your video board takes commands from your computer's CPU/ microprocessor and produces signals that drive your monitor's electron gun. Inside the monitor, the electron beam strikes tiny clusters of red, blue and green phosphors on the inside of the screen. Those phosphors light up to produce colored dots, or pixels. Your eye sees those patterns of dots as images.

If your video is set to 256 colors, you're not seeing the screen in all it's glory. If images look blotchy, grainy, and just not good in general, chances are you can improve your visual experiences.

You can change the settings easily. In Windows 95/98 just right click on an empty spot on the desktop and choose Properties. In the properties window choose the Settings tab. Depending on your graphics card it may say "Display" or may have a branded version of that, such as "Diamond" You can check and change your color display there.

Choose at least high color, but I recommend true color. You may have to reboot your computer for the change to take affect. If your computer was set for 256 color display you'll see a DRASTIC improvement in the way the images look.

If the option aren't there or are grayed out, your system probably doesn't support a higher color output, it maybe time to upgrade your video card.

# Why some pages are slow — revisited

**By Larry Hudson**

*<lhudson@west.net>*

I'd like to add a few comments to Helen Long's Web Page column that was in the October issue of TOE concerning slow Web pages. I would add that the key is not the image size, but the file size. I make this distinction because most photos on the Web or in e-mail attachments are JPEGs, and you can adjust the amount of compression that is used to store them. The minimum compression gives the highest quality but larger file sizes, and more compression gives smaller files with some loss of quality.

As a side comment, I would also point out that the JPEG format is best suited to images that contain a lot of continuous shades of colors, such as photographs. But the GIF format is more suitable for images with large blocks of single colors, such as drawings, graphs or charts. Besides, GIFs are limited to 256 (8-bit) color images.

A photograph that's stored in a GIF format will be reduced to 256 colors, but the file size is still usually larger than a JPEG. This is because there are generally only very small areas of single colors, and this gives less for the GIF compression algorithm (LHZ?) to work with.

When you're using a graphics program and bring up the Save As dialog box and select the JPEG format, there will usually be a button that allows you to adjust the compression.

In Paint Shop Pro that I normally use, it's labeled "Options," but in other programs it might be labeled "Advanced" or something similar. It might even be a menu selection. You will have to check out whatever program you're using, but it should be available someplace.

I have long known that the JPEG compression could be adjusted, but I had never checked it out before. Like most people, I just used whatever the program's default compression was set for. But after reading Helen's article, I got curious enough to make a few comparisons.

Here's a summary of what I found:

I started with a 3.5 x 5 snapshot that I scanned at 300 dpi and also at 600 dpi. The 600 was just for a comparison, if printed at 300 dpi it would result in a 7 x 10 printed image. I didn't actually print it, though; I was only interested in the file sizes. Notice that the 3.5 x 5 at 300 dpi is a 1,050 x 1,500 pixel image. On the screen, that's huge, but if printed at 300 dpi it's still only a 3.5 x 5 snapshot size. Also, since it's a 24-bit color image (3-bytes per pixel) this results in a raw image size of 1,050 x 1,500 x 3 = 4.5 MBytes (approx).

If it were saved in a non-compressed format, BMP for example, that would be the file size. (Obviously, *never* use BMPs for Web photos or e-mail!) The 600 dpi scan works out to about 18 Mbytes.

Next I saved this raw-image data as JPEGs using several different compression levels.

Then I reduced the image size to 400 x 280, which on my 17-inch monitor almost exactly matched the size of the original 3.5 x 5 inch snapshot. Finally I saved this smaller image with the same set of compression levels. I also saved both sizes as GIFs.

The compression adjustment in Paint Shop Pro is a slider numbered 1 to 99. It is just an arbitrary guide; the numbers don't have any direct numeric relation to the compression ratio.

Other programs are probably different, but the principles will be the same. The default compression level in this program is 15.

Here are the results:

Original raw image size: 1,050 x 1,500, 4.5MB

| **Compression** | **File Size** | **Ratio** | **% of Original** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1,170K | 4x | 26% |
| 15 (default) | 320K | 14x | 7% |
| 30 | 218K | 21x | 5% |
| 60 | 142K | 32x | 3% |
| 99 | 33K | 137x | 0.7% |
| | | | |
| GIF | 999K | 4.5x | 22% |
| | | | |
| Original raw image size: 400 x 280, 328KB | | | |
| 1 | 128K | 3x | 39% |
| 15 | 46K | 7x | 14% |
| 30 | 32K | 10x | 10% |
| 60 | 21K | 16x | 6% |
| 99 | 5K | 66x | 1.5% |
| | | | |
| GIF | 87K | 4x | 27% |

The quality of the maximum compression was obviously very bad, but that's to be expected. But by closely examining the rest, even by enlarging them 2 or more times on the screen, I could see very little difference even at the 60 level. There was some of course, but very little — I would describe it as slightly blockier. And the file size for the 60 level is only half of the default 15.

You can see that the GIFs gave slightly better compression than the minimum JPEG compression, but less than the default.

The image quality seemed to be worse than the 60 level JPEG compression for the 1,050 x 1,500 image and between the 30 and 60 levels for the 400 x 280 image.

Don't take these figures as gospel, of course. They are from one set of tests on one image, but they should be ballpark figures. The actual results depend on the individual images.

Run your own tests to find out what's suitable for you and your own pictures. However, using the variable JPEG compression does give you another tool for minimizing your image file sizes for the Web or e-mail.

# Editor's corner: If this issue looks different...

If this issue looks different, your imagination isn't playing games with you: It's both bigger and laid out slightly differently.

We lost a full-page national ad but picked up a half-page national ad and a half-page local ad, so that was a wash. Then we got another national ad, and the advertiser asked to be on the back cover (which is impossible for us) or the inside back cover, which we could accommodate by moving the editor's corner and treasurer's report to new locations. That much was easy.

We had so much activity at the October meeting, however, that there was much more news than usual to report, we had pictures from Jerry Crocker to illustrate the stories, and we had a few other items that belonged in this issue because of their timeliness. The result is my first 24-page issue of The Outer Edge. I can imagine the reaction of the folding committee when I show up with an even thicker issue than what we normally fold.

With any luck, however, it should be a good issue. Read it and enjoy.

* * *

In my last column, I asked for comments on the government's suit against Microsoft. So far I have received only one response and would still be interested in how the rest of you feel about the matter. Here's what I wrote:

Like everyone else who uses a computer, I have my opinions about the government's suit against Microsoft and the Justice Department's recent decision not to pursue the breakup of the company, but I'd be interested to know yours.

Do you think the suit should have been filed in the first place? Do you think the decision to drop it was correct? Do you think breaking up Microsoft would have been good or bad for the computer industry and computer users? What, if any, penalties do you think the Justice Department and/or state attorneys general should try to get now?

If I get any responses, I'll publish a roundup in the next issue of TOE.

* * *

This month's door prizes include two copies of Norton Antivirus 2002, considered by most reviews I've read and heard as one of the best such programs on the market.

The news of recent months about worms and viruses in e-mails should be enough to convince anyone who owns a computer that such programs are essential unless you enjoy long hours trying to bring a computer back to life. As Toby Scott has pointed out in so many question-and-answer sessions, he deletes most e-mail attachments without looking at them, and he checks every program he downloads before installing it. If he feels the need to take such precautions, why should those of us who are more casual users act any differently?

While a certain amount of paranoia is good, however, it goes too far if we all forward every virus warning we get via e-mail on the chance it just might be valid.

Such warnings that arrive in ALL CAPS, say this is the most dangerous virus ever, have lots of exclamation points (!!!!) and a request to FORWARD THIS TO EVERYONE IN YOUR ADDRESS BOOK!!!! are most likely hoaxes. If in doubt, check the Symantec (makers of Norton Antivirus) Web site at <www.symantec.com> to see the latest information on both real and phony viruses. There are a lot of other sites with background on virus hoaxes and urban legends that you can find by doing a Web search for urban legends. They're fun to read even if you don't have a specific question because they show how easy it is to fool so many of us with something that sounds scary – or even something that sounds good, like the reward from Microsoft to people who forward an e-mail message to X many people.

**— John Weigle,**
**Editor**


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2001

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**Nov. 11: Oxnard Community Center, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**
**Nov. 12: Oxnard Community Center, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**
**Dec. 16: Seaside Park, Ventura, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**
**Dec. 30: Oxnard Community Center, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**

Oxnard - Community Center
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So. 101 to Ventura Ave.

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# Web page news: More pictures coming

### By Helen Long

<*helen@cipcug.org*>

I didn't "tend to my duties" last month, and I apologize. Other commitments seemed to demand more of my time. I do have a lot of pictures to add to the Web site, and I will move heaven and earth to get them up before the next meeting, so have a look at all the picture sites.

The New Horizons survey has been completed and Toby indicated that there were only about 18 replies and not more than five or six for any one of the programs offered. We are maintaining the survey on the front page and hope that any of you who were considering the class but had not filled out your preferences will please do so NOW. If, after another month we have attained any particular goal, we will again contact New Horizons and see what they will be able to do for us.

Dianne went to a lot of trouble to present their program with some very low prices, but because our club is so diverse, it is hard to get 24 people to agree on any one class. The door is still open, so please, let's give it another try and the committee will see if we can still make this thing work.

The Jeff Levy presentation was well attended and seemed to be enjoyed by all. People who didn't know who Jeff Levy was before the meeting certainly know him now. Those of you who enjoyed the program might want to visit his site at <www.jefflevy.com> and sign his guest book. He has Links of the Week, including Government links, Companies we know and support, and History.

You can listen to his radio show every Sunday morning from 9 a.m. to noon PST on KFI AM 640.

The Computer Tune-up session hosted by VCC was very well attended, too. Rick Smith indicated that they had received about 20 computers to tune up and what wasn't finished on Saturday was taken care of the following week. Assisting Rick and Toby were Jessica Scott, Michael Wallace, Ruth Wilson and her son Josh, along with Jason.

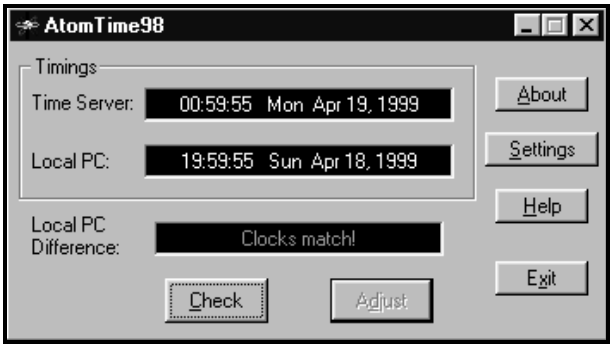
Jim Thornton has noticed that a listing under the TOC/ Education — the DLL Archive File is no longer a valid link. Dlls are not my cup of tea, but I recognize their value to the computer-literate. If there is a new location for this site, please let me know and I will re-post it.

# How accurate is your computer's clock?

### By Jim Thornton

<*jthorn@gte.net*>

A small shareware software program will compare your computer's time against the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) atomic clock, located in Boulder, Colo., and display the difference to the nearest second. Just click on the program's Adjust box, and your computer's time is updated. You may instruct this Internet-accessing time checking program — AtomTime98 — to check and compare your computer's time either manually (upon your request) or automatically (every 3, 6, or 12 hours).




The program's main screen displays three times — the NIST's time in a 24-hour format, your computer's time in the usual 12-hour format, and the difference that your clock varies from the NIST's. The NIST time is displayed in Greenwich Mean Time — GMT, also known as Coordinated Universal Time — UTC), and the program will automatically adjust for Daylight Saving Time.

You may select a different timeserver of your choice. One of your choices may be the U.S. Naval Observatory Time site in Washington D.C. <tycho.usno.navy.mil>. Note that this Web site doesn't have the www prefix.

The advance features include Help and Settings. The Help information is full of graphics, making it very easy to read and use. Under the Setting tab, you are given the choice of times to be displayed actual, local, or GMT, proxy server information, license information, frequency of time checking, and web address of your selected time server.

I like the program and have recommended it to relatives, friends, and group members. AtomTime98 works with Windows 95, 98, Me, NT4.0, and 2000 and is compatible with America Online, CompuServe and AT&T WorldNet. AtomTime98 is a shareware program, which means that you may use the full program free of charge for 45 days to determine if you like it. After the evaluation period, some of the program's features will be disabled. The license fee is $10, and it is available from <www.atomtime.com>.

# F1—Your Help Key

*(Revised Dec. 11, 2000)*

**CIPCUG INTERNET SERVICE**

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

Jerry Crocker, 486-0308, 6-10 p.m.
normsplumb@aol.com,
Roland Fleig, 983-8707, mornings
schwable@cipcug.org,
George & Arline Lakes, 983-2969, 2-10 p.m.
thelakes@cipcug.org,
Helen Long 642-6521
helen@cipcug.org
David D. Minkin, 484-2974, 5-12 p.m., weekends
dddave@compuserve.com,
Claude Whelchel, 482-4017, 8-12 a.m.
claude@cipcug.org

**COMMUNICATIONS/INTERNET (GENERAL)**

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

**DATABASES**

| | |
|---|---|
| dBASE. | GM |
| MS Access | LP |

**DOS** RP

**EDUCATIONAL / CHILDREN** TZ

**E-MAIL**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lotus:CCMail. | DM |
| Outlook | TS |
| Outlook Express | TS |

**FINANCIAL**

| | |
|---|---|
| Quicken | JD |

**GENEALOGY** TL

**HARDWARE, UPGRADING** JM, JD

**HTML** TS

**NETWORKS** TS

**OS/2** LZ

**SPREADSHEETS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lotus 1-2-3 | GM |
| Microsoft Excel | DM, LP |
| 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 |

**WINDOWS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Windows 3.1 | DM, JM |
| Windows 98, 95 | DM, JM |
| Windows 2000 | TS |
| Windows NT | TS |

| 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) |
| LP | Laura Pacheco | L5Enigma@Earthlink.net |
| LZ | Len Zakas | 388-8452 (b) |
| MR | Marvin Reeber | 984-1974 (b) |
| RP | Robert Provart | 498-8477 (b) |
| TL | Terry Lee | tdlee28@hotmail.com |
| TS | Toby Scott | 289-3960 (d) |
| | tech@cipcug.org | |
| TZ | Trish Zakas | 388-8452 (b) |
| WB | Dr. William Burger | 653-6889 (e) |

Phone: (d) = days; (e) = evenings; (b) = both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To sign up, contact one of the club's techies in the F1 — YOUR HELP KEY (page 17) under CIPCUG INTERNET SERVICE. Call one of them you may know or one in your area and they will be glad to provide you with the details necessary for signing up. Checks should be made payable to CIPCUG and forwarded to Treasurer, c/o CIPCUG, P. O. Box 51354, Oxnard CA 93031. Don't forget to include the $15 set-up fee in your first sign-up check. You may make payments in three-month, six-month or annual increments. (Renewals can also be mailed to Treasurer; just be sure to mention the dates that your check is to cover).

We have had over a year of flawless service to our club members. There is no program to install, you will be making use of the programs that are already on your computer. It is a simple matter to talk you through the set-up as it is today — much easier than it was in the past. If you are the least bit timid about setting up your computer for our service, 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.

# Treasurer's report

**September 2001**

**By Art Lewis**

*<treasurer@cipcug.org>*

| **Category Description** | **9-1 through 9-30 2001** |
|---|---|
| **Income** | |
| Advertising | $ 122.00 |
| ISP Income | 420.00 |
| New Members | 35.00 |
| Raffle | 21.00 |
| Renewals | 305.00 |
| **TOTAL INCOME** | **903.00** |
| **EXPENSES** | |
| Coffee-Doughnuts | -7.80 |
| ISP Expense | 523.00 |
| Misc. Expense | 23.51 |
| Storage | 45.00 |
| TOE | 377.34 |
| **TOTAL EXPENSES** | **961.05** |
| **TOTAL INCOME – EXPENSES** | **-58.05** |
| Unrestricted Funds | $6,586.98 |
| Restricted Funds | 1,206.00 |
| Voided Check #1521 | 135.00 |
| Bank Balance 9-30 | 7,927.98 |

# Help needed

Jim Wiens at (805) 241-4606 is looking for information and help with video editing. If anyone is into this fascinating field, please give him a call. He doesn't have e-mail.

## Some basics of safe computing

— Back up your data regularly.

— Use an uninterruptible power supply.

— Have, use and keep updated an antivirus program.

— Make a startup disk so you can boot from a floppy drive or your CD-ROM

— Whenever possible shut down your computer properly; don't just hit the power switch

— Use a firewall, especially if you have an always-on Internet connection

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*ODBC Import, toolbars, the Send Mail script step with mailapp and FileMaker Mobile are not supported under Mac OS X. Check www.filemaker.com/support for updates.

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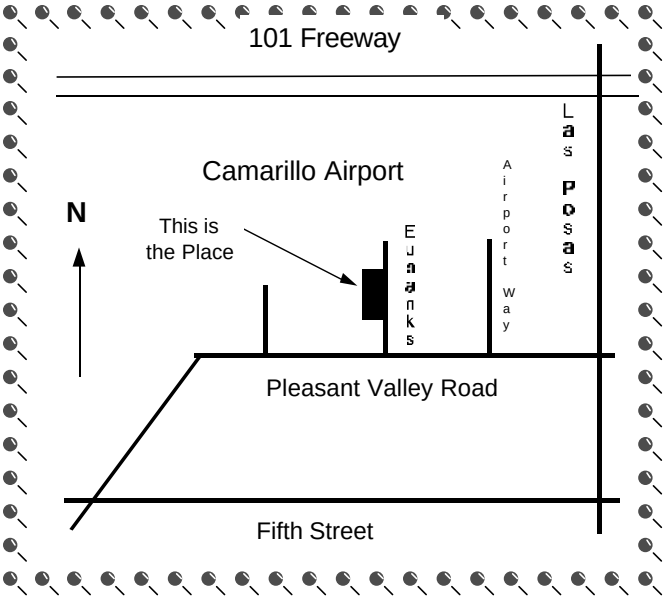
**DUES REMINDER**

If the number after your name is 0111, your membership dues are payable in October 2001

# NOVEMBER 2001 MEETING OF CHANNEL ISLANDS PC USERS GROUP




**Saturday morning, Nov. Nov. 3,**
**at**
**Freedom Center, Camarillo Airport**
**515 Eubanks (at Pleasant Valley Rd.)**
**Camarillo, California**

**Meeting Schedule:**
**0845-0930 Beginners SIG**
**0855-0930 Internet SIG**
**0930-0945 Business Meeting**
**0945-1030 Q&A Session**
**1030-1055 Break - Please contribute requested amounts for coffee & doughnuts**
**1100-1200 Program: Power Quest**