Computer Connection

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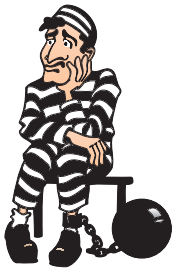
COMPUTER CRIME



DO YOU EVER WORRY ABOUT THE SECURITY OF DOING BUSINESS ON THE INTERNET? Is online banking really safe? Are all internet investment opportunities scams? COMPUTER CRIME. It is with us and if you are on the internet you need to know about it. Paul Crowe of Data Forensics in Pearl River, NY, will be giving a presentation at the June meeting dealing with this ugly side of the internet and how to guard against it.

MEETING SCHEDULE

COMPUTER CRIME

by Data Forensics
General Meeting, Tuesday, June 8, 7:30 PM

Meetings are held at
The Palisades Center Raso Community Room
West Nyack, NY 10994

SLATE OF CANDIDATES FOR THE JUNE ELECTION

Remember that nominations for the elected offices of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer will be taken from the floor, so be sure to attend so you can cast your vote. In the event that you cannot attend and would still like to vote, contact Gary Fitzgerald (GJFitz1@aol.com), member-at-large at for an absentee proxy ballot that can be carried on your behalf.

Presented at the April meeting by the nominating committee:

President: . . . . . Sondra Coulter
Vice President:. . . . . Eugene Frank
Secretary: . . . . . Charles Wendler
Treasurer: . . . . . Thea Zendell

THE SECRET GUIDE TO COMPUTERS

25th edition

Reviewed by Steve Weinberg

5/23/99, ISBN 0-939151-25-1

The Secret Guide to Computers by Russ Walter, "The only book rated best by all popular computer magazines." Here's a book that is worthwhile reading for computer novices and experts alike. This 25th edition claims to cover everything important about computers in 639 pages.

Russy Poo, as the author prefers to be called, explains computer jargon, operating systems, word processing, communication, spreadsheets, programming, tricky applications and how to buy and fix a computer. In this age of thousand page books that cover just one of these topics for a very specific subject, it is refreshing to find a book that

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Rockland PC Users Group is located 35 miles northwest of New York City. Our tax-exempt organization is dedicated to community service and public education with demonstrations, special interest groups (SIGs) and individual help with all facets of IBM-compatible personal computing.

FROM THE EDITOR

Ten years ago, desktop publishing was a lot like brain surgery - only those brave enough to tackle Xerox Ventura, CorelDraw, Framemaker or the like could apply. Those of us who married ourselves to these software have stayed very close to them. But now, very nice work can be produced by much simpler means - word processors such as MS Word and Corel WordPerfect, simple layout software such as MS Publisher. These packages do not handle complex documents with ease, but can be used to produce very presentable simple newsletters. I hope there is someone among our members who would welcome the unique opportunity to produce the Computer Connection as a new and perhaps, simpler document. It's a wonderful way to make friends with your software without the criticial eye of a boss who is paying for your time.

When I became involved with this newsletter, it was to be for a short time, as my personal situation does not allow me the time to do it justice. This issue will be my last. Since there were to be no summer issues, we have almost three months to find a enthusiastic volunteer to take over this position. Give it a try! As Sandy says, we are all friends here. I will continue to help and advise as I am able, and the group will assist with software.

Those in this group who join because they like the newsletter must become a part of it; if they don't, there simply won't be one. Sy Ribakove won awards for this newsletter because he gave it his all, and his all was WONDERFUL. But times have changed, and it's hard to find anyone with that combination of time, talent, and dedication. From here on it has to be a group effort; no one can do it alone.

I wish the group and your future efforts the best. I hope there are enough members who care about both to rise to the occasion and support your new editor.

Marian Baade
Newsletter Editor

PHOTOSHOP IN A NUTSHELL

by Donnie O'Quinn; O'Reilly
632 pages; $24.95; ISBN 1-56592-565-3

Reviewed by Sy Ribavoke

I have bought, browsed or borrowed dozens of third-party books about Adobe's Photoshop. (For any readers who haven't heard, Photoshop is the unchallenged king of image manipulation programs—massive and totally opaque to the casual user.) Most of these costly books are as gargantuan as Photoshop itself, purporting to explain color theory, resolution, color-depth while at the same time trying, with limited success, to provide tutorials demonstrating Photoshop's seemingly magical capabilities.

O'Reilly's *Photoshop in a Nutshell* takes an altogether different approach. It describes every menu choice, tool, command and palette option and, unlike other Photoshop books, clearly sets forth the implications of the choices you make. I have always wondered, when trying to do the tutorials in other books, why the author suggests this setting or that. How did he *know* what the tolerance should be? This book lets you know the range of each value you may need to set, and the output implications of choosing a lower setting or a higher one.

One of the book's most useful features is Common Uses and Misuses of Photoshop's tools and techniques. The reader is thus protected from costly or time-consuming errors. Better alternatives are suggested and less obvious but more efficient ways of doing production tasks are offered.

The author writes in a colorful but not obtrusive style and there are ample illustrations. There are no color illustrations, but in truth they

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The Rockland PC Users Group, a tax-exempt educational organization, meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday. Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. The Rockland PC Users Group supports the computing interests of the community as well as the interests of its own members. The latest information about meeting programs and dates is available on the Internet at ***http://www.rpcug.org.***

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

mcbaade@aol.com

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PRESIDENT'S DESK

By Sandy Coulter

As the fiscal year comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the events of the past 12 months. There have been frequent changes to the makeup of the board and changes in some policies. It seems that almost every time we have taken one step forward, it is followed by a step or two backward. In reality, all we need are a few more reliable and dedicated people to get it going strong. This is the first time I have been able to look at the RPCUG board of directors and think, "it is not the the same people doing all the work anymore…we have new people and we have good people…just not quite enough of them." It seems that the brass ring is always just out of reach and that is frustrating!

However, I do want to thank Gary Fitzgerald, Jack Marsella, Phil Van Riper, Steve Weinberg and Charles Wendler who have been working with me from the start, and many others who have also been very supportive all along. I especially want to thank Jonathan Hauff, president of the Westchester PC Users Group, who has always been quick to offer his valuable time and assistance to us, often on a moment's notice.

Our May presentation of Microsoft Office 2000 by Brett Davis was excellent and well attended. Many thanks to Brett and to program director Jon Olson for arranging it.

Those who attended the May meeting also know that this will be the last issue of Computer Connection until a new Editor and group of assistants are found. Due to lack of assistance, our Editor Marian Baade can no longer continue. Her agreement to do the Newsletter was contingent upon having an assistant who would learn from her and take it over within a few months. Unfortunately that did not happen. I want to thank Marian for her efforts, and for agreeing to do postcards for a while or until enough members come forward to help. Meanwhile, postcards or e-mail will have to do.

I also must inform you that there will be more cutbacks in services if we do not get more people we can count on to follow through on their promises and commitments. June is our annual election and beginning of a new fiscal year. I agreed to be nominated because the committee found a qualified candidate for VP who has promised to share my workload. However, I must again stress that it would be better if there is a new candidate for president. Doing the best I can has meant personal losses in other areas, including financial ones. I can no longer personally afford to keep the same pace in doing my best for the RPCUG. I have made the job easier for the next president, but not quite easy enough for myself.

New Users SIG

Remember that the New Users SIG (Special Interest Group) is held on the same evening and location as the general meeting. The last in a series of seven monthly workshops will take place on Tuesday, June 8, at 6pm sharp. The topic will be (coincidentally) computer crimes and viruses. For further information on the NU SIG, contact Frank Palmeri at 914-634-2966, or e-mail to palmshet@aol.com.

Volunteers

I would like to welcome a new RPCUG board member, Sy Berber, who has volunteered to be our product review coordinator. I would also like extend a warm thanks to Alain Lajoux for volunteering to be our shareware/freeware librarian. Expect to see some exciting new program offerings (mostly freeware) that have been tested for usefulness, reliability and for all known computer viruses. You can make requests for program disks by contacting Alain directly at 914-942-2857 or by e-mail to allx@juno.com

Sadly, I must also say a fond farewell to our membership chairperson, Phil Van Riper, who has held the position for more years than I can count. He is stepping down from this responsibility in June but is still our "equipment person" and will continue to store and carry some equipment to our meetings. Many thanks to Phil for all the years of dedication to both of these vital positions.

Stepping up in Phil's place is Frank Palmeri, who has managed the membership of the New Users group over the last seven months. Frank has clearly demonstrated his organizational abilities and I am confident he will do a fine job. Welcome aboard, Frank!

Opportunity!

In addition to needing a newsletter editor and committee, we have an opening on the board of directors for a public relations chairperson. The candidate should be a well-groomed people person who has access to a fax machine or knows how to send faxes from his or her computer. Contact vice president Gene Frank for more details and to learn the benefits of volunteering for the RPCUG.

Executive Board

I would like to remind you that members are always welcome to join us for executive board meetings. We usually meet the fourth Thursday of the month from 7-9pm at the W. Nyack Library, Strawtown Rd., W. Nyack. Please contact any board member if you intend to join us in case of a last minute change.

New Members Wanted!

Don't forget about our Member Referral Program. If you refer a new member you will get a 3-month membership extension (except student memberships). Four new members equals one free year! Just be sure that the new member puts your name down as their referral on the application.

Final Thoughts

With the recent onset and spread of the Melissa and CIH viruses, computer crime has come into the spotlight. Unfortunately, it goes beyond the destruction of a computer and data or the piracy of a software program, into the dark and often unspeakable fringes of civilized society. Are you or your children potentially at risk? What can we do to protect ourselves and our families? What can we do to help authorities fight computer crime? Don't miss this important presentation by Data Forensics that could save you from becoming a cyber-victim.

SECRET, *continued from page one*

cuts to the heart of frequent topics of discussion that interest many of us. It cuts through the bull, but gets you the direct answers you need and humor is thrown into the bargain ($15 list price).

Call the author directly, any time, day or night, with your computer problems and he freely (yes, that means you just pay for the telephone call to New Hampshire) dispenses a knowledgeable response. I repeat, "While you wait!" He encourages this as it is how he builds his own expertise in all things computer PC.

Looking at the "Repair" section, there is a great collection of tidbits of advice related to both hardware and software. Russ says, "Simplify the display." He tells us how and why to turn off the screen pattern, wallpaper and screen saver. Set the color palette to "256 Colors" and choose the "Windows Standard" scheme. This combination provides compatibility and the best performance while reducing memory requirements. Russ is a minimalist. He tells us all how to get the most from hardware and spend the least on unnecessary extras.

There is similar "house cleaning" advice to reduce the task load on our PCs for DOS, Windows 3.1 and Windows 95/98. He even puts in a plug for his preferred hardware vendor and puts down two of the most popular vendors when he talks about how systems are overburdened with task lists that result in poor performance. He's right on the money on this one. I've heard those complaints myself many times from friends, neighbors and RPCUG members. I've seen sub-optimal hardware performance that results from poorly configured software. Follow the advice in the "Repair" section and you're on your way to improving and simplifying your computer's performance.

I explored further into the book to a chapter that must be of great interest for many of us, "Word Processing." MS Word, MS Works, Word Perfect and Q & A Write are all covered. First, there's a dash of history, definitions and advice on what to buy. I use MS Word at home and at work. I found a straight forward explanation of all the Word functions that I will probably ever need. I followed one of the less used topics to find out how to create a multi-column document. There are simple instructions on how to create up to six columns, force text to the next column and return text to a single column. Information on "tables," a more frequently used Word element is just as informative and easy to follow. Russ includes version specific features so you know if a particular feature is available in your current software.

Explanations are short and to the point. It's great for those among us who haven't the time or patience to read through a lengthy or inscrutable printed or online manual. By far, this is one of the best values and a very effective way to spend a few bucks to expand your general computer savvy and get most of your common computer-related questions answered.

The Curse of a Thousand Chain Letters

Beware the plague of chain letters,
e-mails which pass from person to person,
growing in size and spreading
misinformation along the way.
This site explains the dangers of e-mail
forwards and offers frightening examples
of them. You will read about how people
are deceived, bandwidth is clogged and
your friends are terrorized. —
That is, if you dare.

http://www.chainletters.org/

THE CHUCKLE PAGE

M I C R O S O F T

SHOULD MAKE CARS.

GM

SHOULD MAKE SOFTWARE●

At a recent computer expo, Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated:

"*If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving twenty-five dollar cars that got 1000 miles to the gallon.*"

In response to Bill's comments, General Motors issued a press release stating the following:

"*If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would be driving cars with the following characteristics:*

1. For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash twice a day.
2. Every time they repainted the lines on the road, you would have to buy a new car.
3. Occasionally, your car would die on the freeway for no reason, and you would accept this, restart, and drive on.
4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart; in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
5. Only one person at a time could use the car, unless you bought 'Car95' or 'CarNT.' Then you would have to buy more seats.
6. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was more reliable, five times as fast, and twice as easy to drive, but would only run on five percent of the roads.
7. The oil, water, temperature and alternator warning lights would be replaced by a single ' 'general car fault' warning light.
8. New seats would force everyone to have the same butt size.
9. The airbag system would say 'Are you sure?' before going off.
10. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.
11. GM would require all car buyers to also purchase a deluxe set of Rand McNally road maps (now a GM subsidiary), even though they neither need them nor want them. Attempting to delete this option would immediately cause the car's performance to diminish by 50 per cent or more.
12. Every time GM introduced a new model, car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.
13. You'd press the 'Start' button to shut off the engine.

MOUSE BALLS

This is (supposedly) an actual alert to IBM field engineers that went out to all IBM Branch Offices. The person who wrote it was very serious. The rest of us may find it rather funny.

MOUSE BALLS AVAILABLE AT FRU
(FIELD REPLACEMENT UNIT)

Mouse balls are now available at FRU. Therefore, if a mouse fails to operate or should it perform erratically, it may need a ball replacement. Because of the delicate nature of this procedure, replacement of mouse balls should only be attempted by properly trained personnel.

Before proceeding, determine the type of mouse balls by examining the underside of the mouse. Domestic balls will be larger and harder than foreign balls. Ball removal procedures differ depending upon manufacturer of the mouse. Foreign balls can be replaced using the pop-off method. Domestic balls are replaced using the twist-off method. Mouse balls are not usually static sensitive. However, excessive handling can result in sudden discharge. Upon completion of ball replacement, the mouse may be used Immediately.

It is recommended that each replacer have a pair of spare balls for maintaining optimum customer satisfaction, and that any customer missing his balls should suspect local personnel of removing these necessary items.

To re-order, specify one of the following:

P/N 33F8462 - Domestic Mouse Balls

P/N 33F8461 - Foreign Mouse Balls

LOST & FOUND V 1.0

A Powerquest software product

Review by Sandy Coulter

Lost & Found by Powerquest is a new, very reasonably priced data recovery utility that promises to recover deleted files after the Recycle Bin is emptied, after a disk or partition has been reformatted, if the FAT (File Allocation Table) is destroyed or the disk has been damaged. It will function with any Intel compatible x86 or higher processor, any drives connected to IDE, EIDE or SCSI controllers and either FAT 16 or FAT 32 file systems. It requires a 3.5" floppy drive and DOS 5.0 or later is recommended.

When I hear the name *Powerquest*, I think of the words like "innovative", "safe" and "reliable". As a registered and experienced user of Partition Magic version 2, I expected Lost & Found to be just as thorough and perfect in every way. In many ways it performed as expected, but there are some flaws that need to be addressed.

Lost & Found comes as 2 diskettes and runs directly from them. Though it is possible to run it from a hard disk, I prefer to run from diskettes whenever possible so I liked this feature. Unlike some other recovery programs, it does not need to be installed prior to disaster, nor does it need to run resident in memory.

The diskettes have to be write-enabled before using and will register the program for use on that machine only. This limitation generated complaints because some people get new computers fairly frequently and would not be able to use it if they upgraded to a new system. Powerquest has subsequently released a patch that removes this limitation, but since floppies are easily corrupted, I write-protected the originals, made copies, archived the originals, and then applied the patch to the copies.

The first diskette contains the Lost & Found program and the second diskette contains utilities that are supposed to assist with data recovery. One is called Refresh.exe and the other is Renew.exe. The former is to restore long file names (LFN's), the latter restores compressed recovery "savesets" from floppies or other disks in addition to LFN's. They both can run from windows.

One of the problems with reviewing software like this is that it can be difficult to simulate a disaster without actually having one and putting your system at risk. Fortunately, Powerquest offers some good suggestions of safe ways of testing their product by using floppy diskettes instead of your actual hard drive. I proceeded as per their suggestions by copying some critical data from my hard drive onto a fully formatted floppy diskette, maintained directory structures and continued until the disk was full. I also made an exact copy of the diskette for comparison purposes.

I actually read most of the 35 page manual (not including the index or table of contents), but found it to be less than adequate when compared to the manual that came with Partition Magic, which was over three times the size and read like a comprehensive text book on disk structure and partitioning for several file systems. The Lost & Found manual is more like a step by step procedure that doesn't clearly explain everything along the way. I think if Powerquest intends to market this to the average computer user, then the manual needs to be more user friendly and comprehensive. After all, data recovery is something that most computer users have paid others to do for them.

I need to explain my hard disk setup so the reader can understand what was happening. I have 2 physical hard drives. The first is a Maxtor 6.8 gigabyte disk divided into 7 drive partitions, labeled C through I, the first being a primary partition. The second is an older NEC 1.6 gigabyte disk divided into 2 equal drive partitions labeled J and K, with no primary partition. (This was intentionally done to avoid the crazy drive mapping that occurs when 2 partitioned physical drives are present.) This setup leaves a small amount of unusable free space at the beginning of the second hard disk.

I ran the first 2 tests simultaneously by deleting all the files from one of the directories on the diskette I made and then deleting another separate entire directory. I put the Lost & Found diskette #1 in the A drive and restarted the computer. The diskette is bootable because it contains the Caldera DR DOS operating system on it. I am willing to bet that this was done to ensure Y2K compliance.

At the A: prompt I typed 'LF' and hit <enter> and got a warning about possible display problems as the program was loading. The program opened up full screen but was off centered to the right by about ½ inch. This was easily adjustable with my external monitor controls and could be returned later on to the center the same way. The interface was typical of a DOS menu-driven program and had no mouse support.

I followed the screen prompts, selecting my floppy A: drive to be the source containing the erased data and the NEC drive as the destination for recovery. (Note that you cannot select the same drive for source and destination even if the media is removable.) After disk analysis was done and I elected to begin recovery, the program bombed out. It reported the NEC drive as having invalid partition and boot sectors and I got error messages. (Note

that Lost & Found did see the NEC drive as a whole initially.) I started over several times, but executing disk analysis and attempting recovery was an endless loop.

I attempted to get technical support but the Powerquest website support feature was not working. By the time a help desk person got back to me (10 days), he did not have the answer and I could not delay the review any longer. I suspect the problem had to do with the lack of a primary partition on the second drive, but I did not have time aat that point to experiment further.

I repeated the same procedure but this time chose the first physical drive as the destination. I was allowed to pick any partition to recover the files to so I chose the last one on the hard disk labeled as drive "I". The recovery went smoothly and I was able to open all recovered files from Windows, though the long filenames were truncated to the 8.3 DOS format. I repeated the process after doing a quick format on the diskette and it also went smoothly. (Note that a full or unconditional format is not recoverable as the manual indicates.)

I proceeded with several more tests trying different recovery options so I could test the refresh utility. Unfortunately, it did not work at all when I chose the "single directory" option for recovery, and only restored one LFN in one directory when I chose the "maintain directories" option.

My final diskette test was not on the list from Powerquest, but I couldn't pass up trying it anyway. I decided to format and then damage the floppy (this was fun!). I moved the sliding door to expose the floppy disk surface and then scraped it in several places with a small magnet. Even though some damaged files could be recovered, they either did not open or caused error messages. However, all the good files could also be recovered and that is what the program offers; data recovery from damaged disks.

I thought it was important to test recovery from a hard drive as well, especially the NEC drive since it would not recover files to it earlier. As per Powerquest's suggestion, I created a small partition (about 6 megabytes) at the end of the hard drive using Partition Magic. Then I booted into Windows95 and moved directories of files from the Maxtor drive into the new partition labeled "L". I rebooted, ran Fdisk from DOS and deleted the new partition "L". I verified it was gone and then rebooted with the Lost & Found bootable floppy. This time I wanted to recover to diskettes using the compressed data option. I had to manually search to the end of file list to find the files that had been in the deleted partition and mark them for recovery; but recovery did go smoothly and created a "saveset" on two floppy diskettes. I was then able to run the renew utility from Windows and restore the files to any drive on either hard disk.

While this program apparently has some flaws, I would definitely consider it an invaluable tool to have on hand. One of the caveats I noticed when recovering from the deleted partition was that Lost & Found had to scan the entire physical drive and list all files whether recoverable or not. It took about 10 minutes, but could take considerably longer on today's larger hard drives. Also, locating the erased files was tedious as there was no search or sort feature in Lost & Found.

I liked that I was able to select individual files from the recovery list which were color coded to indicate recoverability. I was amazed that I was seeing files on this drive that I thought were long gone dating back to 1996 and many were indeed recoverable! The one lesson I learned was that files are recoverable after deleting a partition and that previously deleted partitions are still visible. I was under the false impression that deleting a partition wiped the data clean, so this took me by surprise.

Although I would not recommend Lost & found to the novice computer user, it seems pretty safe and shouldn't hurt to give it a try. Its claim on the box to "Easily recover lost data on your PC in minutes!", is only true in some cases.

Overall, it gets a thumb's up for bringing reliable data recovery into a price range that almost anyone can afford. I am personally very satisfied with it and thoroughly enjoyed reviewing it despite the problems I had.

Suggested retail price is $69. User Group members may purchase Lost and Found at a special price of only $30 by ordering from the secure website at www.ugr.com/order/. Indicate the special price code of UGEVAL99 with your order.

PHOTOSHOP, *continued from page 2*

are not needed and could not be expected in such an inexpensive and comprehensive reference book.

For those who like Photoshop "recipes," an 80-page appendix provides them for Common Techniques. Want to create a seamless image pattern for a Web page? Reduce moiré in a scanned halftone? Create a photo vignette or a custom image frame? You'll find quick ways to do these and many more bread-and butter Photoshop tasks in Appendix A.

For those who already own the earlier first edition of *Photoshop in a Nutshell*, this revision covers all of version 5's new features including the History palette and editable text layers, two of my favorites.This book is one of the few I keep right next to my computer. If you are deep into or only newly into Photoshop, grab a copy.

BeOS Release 4

By Sy Berber

If you're interested in a Real-time Operating System (OS) targeted for digital media and digital audio, read on.

Be, Incorporated was formed in 1990 to address issues for professional users, "prosumers". They are headquartered in Menlo Park, CA, north of Stanford University. These prosumers are comprised of: digital designers, amateur and semi-professional musicians, videographers who are searching for new solutions in areas of video data streaming, 3-D models and visualization, and graphical data.

The company states that the OS was built from the "ground up." This means that the OS did not inherit inefficient portions of programming code or as they stated, it was started with a blank slate avoiding layers of sediment of other OS's . The Operating System was built with a foundation of base products that would allow it to grow for many years to come. BeOS networking capabilities are based upon TCP/IP and designed as an Internet-native system. It features fully multithreaded graphics for fast 2-D & 3-D operations. It comes ready for multiple IP addressing, multiple ethernet cards, has dial-in support through PPP, has extensive modem support, built-in FTP server for file transfers, built-in telnet server permitting remote logins and launch of applications from the command line. Additionally, changes to the network do not require restarting. BeOS supports up to 9 virtual workspaces. This feature allows you to organize based upon how you work with applications. One such use might be previewing graphics in different color depths - desktop viewing vs. internet viewing.

The installation of BeOS was a snap and it took about 5-10 minutes to install onto a clean partition. The desktop has the look and feel of MAC OS. The GUI (graphical user interface), the folders, context sensitive menus, and drag & drop were very similar to our systems today. It supports symmetric multiprocessing from kernel to application and was tested for up to 8 processors dynamically. This will mean that by adding additional processors to the system, some significant gains can be achieved. With the right application(s) multiprocessor performance improves to nearly 100%. It comes with a basic set of applications for Audio & Video processing. The fonts that are part of the system are scalable in real-time, can be rotated to 360 degrees, and the fonts can be sheered.

The demonstration video showed the operation on a dual Pentium 266MHz, with 64MB RAM, 3GB Hard Drive, and 2 video capture cards ($70 each). The demonstration showed CPU utilization of both processors during the various executions. It ran multiple tasks as the same time (audio, video, text manipulation, heavy compute video modeling, ...) until they reached a full 100% utilization of both CPU's. And to demonstrate the performance of the software kept on going. To further illustrate its rock solid control, removed one processor. This only degraded the 3D modeling application while all the other applications continued to perform without any noticeable degradation.

Bottom line: the BeOS sells for $69-79 and appears to be an excellent OS for the digital audio & video arena. A few questions come to mind: Does it have the applications of your particular interest? Will they be there down the road?

News Update: To raise some capital Be, Inc. is planning an initial public offering (IPO) next month. For more info see: www.wired.com/news/news/business/story/19631.html

Windows 95/98 Tip

There are several ways to rev up the performance of Windows 95/98 on a standalone PC. One easy way is by double-clicking on the Control Panel's System icon, then clicking on the Performance tab. Next, click on the File System button. You will see two settings in the resulting Hard Disk dialog box: The setting labeled Typical Role of This Machine determines how much space is set aside in main memory to handle path and filename caching.

The default Desktop Computer choice allocates space for a paltry 32 paths and 677 filenames, whereas the Network Server choice bumps those settings up to 64 paths and 2,729 filenames. Even if your computer is used strictly for desktop applications, change the Typical Role box to Network Server.

Unfortunately, if you are using the original release of Windows 95 (not the updated versions known as Windows 95B or 95C)—you will have to take an additional step to correct a bug in the registry.

First back up the registry by running the ERU (Emergency Recovery Utility) or making a copy of the files System.dat and User.dat located in the Windows directory. Using the Windows 95 Registry Editor, change the value of HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\FSTemplates\Server\NameCache to a9 0a 00 00, and \PathCache to 40 00 00 00. In other words, reverse the values.

If you are uncomfortable with tampering with the registry, then don't do it. Your computer will still run as usual.

FINDING & FIXING Y2K PROBLEMS

PART THREE: SOFTWARE

By Ray Isenson, Editor of the 4C'er, Central Coast Computer Club, Santa Maria, CA

[This is Part III of a multipart article on preparing one's personal computer for a smooth transition into the year 2000 (Y2K). The preceding parts addressed that which is generally described as the hardware aspect, the BIOS chip and the "real time clock" This, the third and final part considers the software aspects of the problem.]

[For the protection of the Rockland PC Users Group, Rockland County, NY and the Central Coast Computer Club and their respective members, the following disclaimer is established: Testing and upgrading your PC to achieve Y2K compliance will require running some programs and adding software patches and making other changes to your system. Within the several sections of this document various programs are identified as being designed to correct the deficiencies that you may find to exist in your machine. The software and patches come from generally reliable vendors. They have been tried in machines belonging to members of the Central Coast Computer Club without creating any observable, unfavorable consequence. Introducing the programs into your machine shouldn't cause any problems, if properly done. However, neither the Central Coast Computer Club nor the Rockland PC Users Group can accept any responsibility for losses to your PC, hardware, data files or software, resulting from such introduction.]

OPERATING SYSTEMS & Y2K:The OPERATING SYSTEM (O/S) is the software that couples the computer's hardware to the application program; the word processor, the spreadsheet, the data base or a shoot'em up game. They include familiar names like MS/DOS or Windows, 3.1, 95, 98 or NT. In common, they share the requirement that they must be Y2K compliant or the computer on which they function will not be. In discussing patches or upgrades, the convention established in the preceding section will apply. The bracketed number following a patch or upgrade identification refers to a source listing in the appendix.

MS/DOS 6.22: This, the last of Microsoft's stand alone DOS systems is, with one major exception, relatively free of Y2K problems. The exception is the built-in MSBACKUP. MSBACKUP creates a catalogue using a YYMMDD format. It does not recognize dates greater than 1999. MS/DOS , itself, recognizes dates to CY2035. It does not display the full year in a file listing but it will sort files correctly. If a 2-digit date is entered the O/S assumes that the date entered is in the 20th century. The MS/DOS DATE is the only O/S command that accepts dates. It does not correctly handle 2-digit dates from 00-79. This command returns the error message, "Invalid Date". Dates entered using a 4-digit year are handled correctly (e.g., 01-01-2000). There are no patches to enable a 2-digit entry as it isn't considered to be a significant problem.

Windows 3.1, 3.11, Windows for Work Groups 3.1 and 3.11: These O/Ss are functionally dependent upon MS/DOS 6.22 so the above comments and limitations apply. Additionally, however, there are minor quirks in the file manager that are easily corrected with an updated version of WINFILE.EXE. Windows 3.x, if not corrected, will report out the date 01/01/2000 as 01/01/;000. A similar discrepancy results from using a noncompliant version of WINFILE.EXE with WorkGroups.

The patches, available at no cost from Microsoft, are contained in W31FILUP[10] and WFWFILUP[11], respectively. These self extracting executables contain the proper version of WINFILE.EXE and a short text file describing the installation. The versions are not interchangeable.

To verify the need for and effect update for Windows 3.x, check the date for the file, WINFILE.EXE in the Windows directory. If it predates October '97 rename it "WINFILE.OLD", expand W31FILUP.EXE to extract the 10/14/97 version of WINFILE.EXE and copy it to the Windows directory. Similarly for the Windows for Work Groups 3.x, find the old version, rename it to WINFILE.OLD and copy in the 12/02/97 version from WFWFILUP.EXE.

After making those changes, select the "Main Program Group" and "International." In the box showing date format, click on change, if necessary, and modify the date format to show the year as 4-digits.

WINDOWS 95: As of this writing, three updates and a change in the specified date format are known to be required to bring Windows 95 into compliance. The three updates are:

WIN95Y2K.EXE[12], W95FILUP.EXE[13] and 401COMUPD.EXE[14]. 401COMUPD, when installed, updates the existing COMCTL32.DLL and addresses known Year 2000 issues on the Windows 95, Windows 98 and Windows NT 4 platforms. The other two updates are unique to Windows 95. W95FILUP is an improved version of File Manager. In its absence the file manager displays an incorrect date.

WIN95Y2K corrects problems in COMMAND. COM involving DIR and DATE. It is installed by copying the file to the Windows folder and, finding it in Microsoft Explorer and double clicking on it. W95FILUP is treated just the same. It, too, is self installing. Copy 401COMUPD.EXE to the Windows

folder and do a 'START > RUN. In the open box enter "401COMUPD /r:n /q:a"; without the quotes.

To adjust the date format, go to Control Panel, click on the Regional Settings Icon and reset the "Short-Date Format from mm-dd-yy to mm-dd-yyyy. It is a way of telling your applications programs to run in a four-digit calendar year mode.

WINDOWS 98: As previously noted, this O/S also requires 401COMUPD[14]. It installs just as for Windows 95. And, as in 95, the short-date format must be reset. A CD-ROM containing other patches[15] has been and will be mailed to registered users. They may also be downloaded from Microsoft's WEB pages.

APPLICATIONS: In addition to the real time clock (RTC\BIOS ROM combination and the operating system (DOS or WINDOWS) being Y2K compliant each application program must be able to handle the millennium transition.

With, undoubtedly, some few exceptions, CY1999 versions of application programs; spreadsheets, data bases, word processors, will be Y2K compliant. However, many of us have old favorites with which we are familiar and whose continued use we prefer. Additionally, many of us may be confronted by extensive files prepared with these older programs; files so voluminous that conversion to a new program might not be economically feasible.

Fortunately, some of the programmers of these older applications did envision the possibility that someone might be using their "brain child" past the millennium. Prior to discarding your older data base or spreadsheet you are well advised to first investigate whether that program is Y2K compliant or whether and how to modify it to achieve compliance.

Where the program came from a major publisher such as Microsoft, Lotus (IBM), Symantec or Intuit, for examples, look to their Internet WEB pages for information detailing Y2K compliance or the availabilty of patches to make them so.

Lotus's 123 Spreadsheets and Borland's DB3+ Relational Data Base are examples of applications that have been very popular for 10 years or more. Both will be useful without major change until the year 2099; probably far enough into the future for most of us.

Lotus 123, whether the DOS or Windows version was designed for a life span of 199 years. If you are using the "@NOW" function, your spreadsheet on the first of January, 2000 will report "1-Jan-2000" or in one of the other possible formats selected by you. For the "@DATE(yy,mm,dd)" function you'll need to input the year as 100 plus the last two digits of the year. Thus, March 3, 2013, would be input as "@DATE(113,03,03)". The computer will output that command as: 3-Mar-2013. Sorts on dates or comparisons will work satisfactorily.

Users of Borland's DB3+ will have a little work to accomplish to get that program into Y2K compliance. In the directory (or folder) containing the DB3.exe file there's a small file, "CONFIG.DB". Bring this file up in a text editor such as Edit or Notepad .. It probably has three or four line; e.g.,

" STATUS=ON",

"COMMAND=CLEAR",

"COMMAND=SET DEFAULT TO A"

To bring DB3+ into compliance with Y2K needs, one only has to add the line "CENTURY=ON" to the existing list. Having done that, the program will modify the date field's size to encompass a 4 digit year and will change all existing dates to a dd/mm/yyyy format. It will, the first time data are displayed, show all dates as being in the 20th century; i.e., 19xx. The user will have to go through the data base, record by record, changing the year field to 20xx where appropriate. This need be done just once. And the data base is compliant and accurate. DB3+ will recognize the four digit year for display and calculations.

Because of the broad use of Microsoft Works ver 4.0 its compliance with Y2K requirements was examined. Although the spreadsheet is partially compliant, having a useful life until the year 2079, it has other deficiencies. To bring the Works 4.0 or 4.5 into compliance Microsoft offers a free update, WORKSY2K.EXE[16]. Installing the update will bring either to a ver. 4.5a status.

Among other major software producers most have been trying to protect their customers against problems emanating from the century roll over. In addition to Microsoft and Oracle, for example most big names are to be commended.

Intuit Corporation has made an obvious and concerted effort to insure Y2K compliance for their many products. Not only are the 1999 versions of Quicken, QuickBooks, QuickPay and Quicken Financial Planner compliant but attention has been paid to prior versions. Quicken for DOS, versions 5 through 8 and Quicken for Windows, versions 1-5 allow for dates from 1901-2027; although for dates beyond 2000 the year entry must be four-digit; i.e., dd/mm/yyyy. More recent versions of Quicken for Windows allow the user to enter the date with two digits for post 2000 years but require a four-digit year entry for years 1900 - 1927. Lotus, too, has demonstrated a deep concern for the Y2K compliance of its products. By and large all recent versions of Lotus Notes and the Lotus Suite are compliant. For information regarding a specific, older product see

<www.lotus.com>. The greater problem arises when the software comes from now defunct or custom software houses.

Where the computer is the mainstay of a business accounting system and the origins of some of the software is questionable, there are aids to help one ascertain compliance of the entire system. A freeware program, "Y2KAudit"[17], downloadable from the Internet, claims to be able to check up to 1000 files on a hard drive to test for likely Y2K problems and prepare a report.

The program was not extensively tested for this report.

A commercially available program, McAfee 2000 Tool Box, was referenced above. It, too, claims to compare the software it finds on your hard drive to a built in list of known programs with the Y2K compliance of each and prepare a report as to which on your drive need attention.

Another, very well received, software auditing program, Norton2000 was reviewed. All things considered, if your livelihood depends significantly on your computer it may be the best way to go. One way or another, the application programs on your computer should be evaluated and updated or replaced as necessary to insure Y2K compliance.

APPENDIX

SOFTWARE PATCH AND UPGRADE SOURCES (FOR PART 3):

10) ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/Softlib/MSLFiles/w31filup.exe
11) ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/Softlib/MLSFiles/wfwfilup.exe
12) ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/Softlib/MSLFiles/win95y2k.exe
13) ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/Softlib/MSLFiles/w95filup.exe
14) http://msdn.microsoft.com/developer/download/files/401comupd.htm
15) Windows 98 upgrade patches; http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com
16) WINDOWS WORKS ; http://support.microsoft.com/support/downloads
17) Y2K Software Audit v 1.08; http://www.pcmag.com (Search for: Software Audit)

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- The editor in charge of business books for Prentice-Hall, 1957

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