

New Style

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Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

volume 20 number 3

March 2000

This Month: March 29th 7PM in the Overholt

Current VP and former President Chuck Whalen will present "WIndows Bootcamp". Be prepared to rise at 4AM and go on a twenty mile march with full field gear after a cold shower...er, sorry, that's military bootcamp.

As Marian says in her message, she won't be on hand to keep Chuck at an understandable level. It will be the responsibility of the members present to try to keep Chuck's explanations at a level that everyone can follow. By all means, ask questions and get the answers in a form you can understand.

To my knowledge, Chuck has never killed a questioner, although there was that incident requiring reconstructive surgery back in 1976 at a meeting of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Society of LaCrosse and La Crescent (Sciffilis).

We are fortunate to have Chuck as a member of our group as he has an intimate knowledge of the various incarnations of Windows. He has also worked as a development Beta tester (Am I allowed to mention that? If not, please ignore the preceeding sentence)

Chuck is a fine presenter and you're guaranteed to walk out with a lot more knowledge than you walked in with. It's just that he can assume certain knowledge that the audience may not possess.

(Note from the publisher's better half:{YEAH, RIGHT} personally I think Chuck is a great presenter and has increased my knowledge of Windows and computers in general over the years. Besides, that scuffle in Sciffilis was an accident.)

For the humor impaired:nothing happened at Sciffilis.

President's Message

Marian Havlik

We're glad Chuck Whalen's recovering from his accident, slowly but nicely. For our March meeting Chuck will take us through Windows 98 Bootcamp, and tell us everything we ever wanted to know about Windows, but were afraid to ask (I'm still using Windows 95, Ver.4.0.1111 because that's what came with my laptop in March 1998). I probably won't be at our March meeting, so Chuck, who is also our VP, will conduct the meeting.

All of the hard work of Carol, Don, and others at the Computer Show, and other

forms of publicity, is beginning to pay off. It was nice to see a number of new faces at our February meeting. We welcome you all, and hope that you return often.

In February we learned about continuous cable internet access from Charter Pipeline. Rick Langhaus and 2 other representatives of the former Jones Cable Company explained about their new services. It appears as though this type of internet services will be cost effective only if you use the internet a great deal, and especially if you download numerous large files. Charter is just getting

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Rick Langhaus of Charter Pipeline



Visit our homepage at <http://www.wi.centuryinter.net/lcpc>

started with this service, mostly in Onalaska and Holmen right now.

Eventually they will expand into the La Crosse area because Charter has purchased Bresnan Cable.

Leap Year

My old 486-66 did just fine and showed the Leap Year date. Ditto for my Compaq laptop. Both machines run on Windows 95. Did anyone have problems with the Leap Year date?

Guest article

The article on how Bits and Bytes were created really gave me my laugh for the day. Hope you enjoyed that February article too. The article was submitted by Bob Hansen. For you LCPC newcomers, Bob was president of LCPC before I took office. Bob now lives in Rochester and works for Ciber which contracts with IBM. We want him to tell us what he's doing at IBM, at one of our meetings.

Upcoming meetings

April: DeSoto, WI High School computer students and teachers

May: Office 2000 Part I (MS Word)

APCUG Articles

Gary Stelzig

The April of issue of APCUG Reports is now available. Various articles about what is happening at APCUG(our national org.) headquarters. Included is an article about **UCITA - the Uniform Computer Information Transaction Act**. This is part of some legislation that is currently trying to be passed in Virginia and some other states - did not see Wisconsin listed. If this legislation passes, vendors do not have put details on the outside of package about what the hardware and software requirements are to use their software. The requirements could be in the inside of the box. Most vendors do not allow returns if a package has been opened. So this would be more of a problem for users. To go to this report use the web site: www.apcug.org/reports/apr2000/r0004.htm and click on the April report, which use Acrobat Reader, and you will find the article on page 10.

Membership Info and Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig, Treasurer

Thanks to those who paid their renewal dues last month: Robin Alexander, Paul Shie, Carol Frank & Don Atkinson, and David Madson(for March). Welcome new member Dr. Earl Heartt who plans to join our club and paid half of the dues at our last meeting. Renewals for March include: Alvin & Monica Fritz and Chuck Whalen.

We had several guests at our last meeting: Paul & Kathi Woods, Shane Lambert, Arm Rony, Chuck Hosler, and Dr. Earl Heartt.

Our checking balance as of 03/13/2000 is \$371.22. This includes a \$90 deposit and photocopy expenses of \$12.66. Some good news. I was able to switch our checking account at First Federal to a new non-profit organization fee structure from our previous business account. This means no monthly fees for deposits, checks written, or account fees. This will save the club about \$50 per year.

Computer Festival— You're Invited

Gary Stelzig

We have been invited by the president of the Trenton Computer Festival(TCF) to attend their silver anniversary of the Trenton Computer Festival. They claim this computer festival is the oldest, largest, and the best computer show for personal computer users.

The festival will be held May 5-7 in Edison, New Jersey—a little off the beaten path unless you were heading that way. The president of this organization would like organizations to send a representative to attend The User Group Officer's Conference.

Check out their web site at: www.tcf_nj.org

Member E-mail addresses

Please check over your e-mail address carefully for accuracy. If it isn't right let us know!

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February 26 meeting

Carol M. Frank

We had six visitors attend our February meeting, Chuck Hosler, Shane Lambert, Arm Rony, Tad Schockner, and Paul & Kathy Wood. Welcome!

Al and Monica Fritz had a monitor problem with the picture too large. Chuck showed how to adjust picture size by using the buttons on the front of the monitor. He also mentioned some keyboard tricks. The Fritzes also had a diagnostic window that comes up. Marian suggested that they bring in their computer and monitor next month to have Chuck go over it as part of his "Windows Bootcamp" presentation.

There was some discussion about tax programs. Darrell Garner announced that he saw a sign in Best Buy that the Wisconsin tax forms are not in *Quicken* and will cost \$17. Shane Lambert and Marian (who both do interstate business) talked about interstate business and taxes. Marian advised that a problem can have several contradictory solutions—pick the one that suits you. Three different IRS agents had given her three different answers to a question.

MS Tax Saver, *Quicken*, *Turbo Tax* and *Kiplinger Tax Cut* were the tax programs mentioned. Shane Lambert highly recommends *Kiplinger Tax Cut*. Chuck does his taxes electronically while his wife does it on paper and they compare and catch each others errors.

Shane Lambert described how *Stamps.com* works. The envelope needs to be at least a #10 size and a postage meter license is required. The license is part of the program and need 72 hours to be processed.

Our guest speaker, Rick Langhaus, is a representative from Charter Pipeline, formerly Jones Intercable, which has recently bought Bresnan Communications. He was assisted by Mike Laughton and Pam Nickleson.

Charter offers 500K unlimited access for 49.90 a month. Some of the benefits are—

- on-line all the time
- up to ten e-mail addresses
- very fast download (27 mg took only five minutes)
- no special wiring
- accept network behind modem
- service will not effect TV picture quality

It would be best to be on-line all the time since it could take from five minutes to two hours to get back on-line. This service is for people who are on-line all the time and do a lot of downloading. The casual user might not need this.

This led to a discussion on firewall concerns. The 300 model cable modem that is provided has a built in firewall. Mr. Langhaus recommend turning off the file print sharing option off. This is suppose to be 90% effective. There is a free personal firewall available from Gibson.

There is a possibility of Charter Pipeline offering more services in the future. Current cable has enough bandwidth for Stock quotes, video conferencing, and telephone. There is a 2 meg bandwidth available for commercial users.

Shane Lambert has a way to make money for doing nothing. Put up an *All Advantage* banner at your site and earn 50 cents per hour up to 25 hours. People click this banner for referrals which can create more referrals. Shane had enough referrals to help pay for his website monthly costs.

Ted Lambert's computer lost its internet password three times. Shane sometimes has this problem with Windows98 losing the password. Chuck recommend to Windows update site to find unpublished fixes. He also recommend a clean install—back up everything and you will need to reinstall all programs.

Microsoft PhotoDraw was available for review. A drawing was held and new member Earl Heartt won it. He needs to write a review of it by the end of this year. Jack Storlie brought back *Via Page* since he would not have time to practice and review it. *Via Page* is a web page design program and is available for a volunteer to review. Come to the next meeting and pick it up.



Chuck Whalen describing how to use the monitors buttons to adjust the image

Coming Reviews!

These members took software for review we look forward to their articles.

- Arlene Weise *Quicken 2000*
- *TurboTax*
- Ernesto Brauer & Marian Havlik
- *Microsoft Office 2000 book*
- Kathy Gallagher *Star Office*
- Bill Brockmiller *Go Back*
- Marian Havlik Inkjet refill
- & *On-track*
- Darrell Garner *Final Data*
- Chuck Whalen *Adobe ImageStyler*
- Earl Heartt *MS PhotoDraw*

Via Page, website designing software is available for review.

On The Internet

Jerry Crow, Phoenix PC User's Group

Windows 98 Redux

My fascination with Windows 98 continues. My experience can best be summarized as follows: hours and hours of useful, pleasant work interspersed with occasional periods of extreme frustration. Yes, Windows 98 is the most useful operating system I have ever worked with. Yes, it can also be frustrating at times. Case in point:

I decided to use the Windows Update feature. Worse, I decided to use it to fix something that wasn't broken. And, of course, the results were less than optimal but, let's begin at the beginning.

Having worked with computers and computer software since the days of the huge mainframes and their operating systems, I tend to embrace software updates. I will install an update that purports to fix problems even if I have not experienced some, or in certain cases, any, of them. Software updates are generally a good thing. So it was that I elected to try, for the first time, the Windows Update feature of Windows 98. I was motivated to this by the advent of a Customer Service Pack for Windows 98 on the Windows Update page. Ah, yes, the Windows Update Web page. Let me digress ...

Microsoft used to have all of the downloadable updates available for Windows organized by category on a single web page. They still do, although the format has changed and the page is a bit harder to find than the prior one. Most attempts to find updates, however, at least in my experience, lead one to the Windows Update page. Let me say right up front that the Update page is a good thing. It uses a Java applet to scan your machine and determine what software complement is present thereon. It then lists all of the software updates that are available for the software that is installed on your machine. You can even choose an option that will show you which of the updates are already installed; in some cases, you can even opt to have a previously installed update uninstalled. And the "automatic" download and install is, well, automatic, more or less.

I had long resisted the urge to use this facility, because, in spite of my overall embrace of software updates, I was wary of this particular mechanism for acquiring and installing them. One could argue, with, I readily

concede, some validity, that using an automated tool such as the Windows Update capability is functionally no different than downloading a self-extracting ZIP file and executing it locally. But downloading a file and then executing it somehow seems safer, more comfortable, more ... you choose a word ... to me than allowing a Java script acquired on the fly to pull some software down to my machine and then proceed to install it. Yeah, OK, it's probably all in my head, but, well, there it is. So, I shied away from the Windows Update facility until just recently.

And then there is the issue of my choice of update. Again, one could argue that I should have started with something mundane, something simple, something like, say, the Science Fiction Desktop Theme - this instead of debuting the facility on my machine by electing to install updates to the core software of the operating system itself I offer no excuses—in for a penny, in for a pound.

So, I clicked on Windows Update, waited for Internet Explorer to load, then waited a bit more while the active component of the page inventoried the software on my machine. I noted with interest the popup box that states that "No information is sent to Microsoft" during this scanning phase. I waited until all of the available items were listed, then began my perusal. I noted that one of the available updates was Windows 98 Customer Service Pack. The accompanying text ("Read This First") states that this is a service pack type release for Windows 98 that includes a lot of bug fixes and a bunch of Y2K stuff. What hooked me, though, was mention of security patches. Yep. Information technology security is what I do; I live and breathe IT security and work with it every day. So, my awareness of issues and vulnerabilities is well above average. Bottom line: I decided to install the update.

The Windows Update web page of available updates for one's machine is presented as a check list. One can check the various updates desired then click on download and the updates will be downloaded and installed, one by one. Certain updates, however, are marked as being of a type that must be downloaded and installed solo - no other updates can be executed during the download/install. That fact in and of itself should be at least a mild warning to pay close attention - and I

did, deciding, nevertheless, to continue. The decision process was required, of course, because the Windows 98 Customer Service Pack was one of these "must install alone" updates.

Windows 98 Customer Service Pack. Check. Download. Click. Software transfer begins. The entire CAB file is downloaded, stored, unpacked, and the install process runs. Everything seems to proceed just fine. A reboot is required, of course, because active DLL files have been updated. OK. Reboot. And then, sigh, the bubble bursts.

As Windows 98 comes back up I get a warning popup that indicates a very important DLL cannot be found and that the following capabilities will not be available: "Microsoft Networking". What? Say again? Well, I certainly can't get along without networking. And, the error message is very accurate: I have no networking capability at all vis a vis access to an Exchange server to get my email, access to the NT server that I use for file sharing and printer sharing, etc. Yes, the network interface adapter is working and I can ping and do other TCP/IP things, but the entire segment of Windows that supports Microsoft based networking is gone. Well, clearly something has to be done about this. And, by the way, this problem means, for some reason that I could never quite fathom, that I can't use a browser either, which fact means that I can't get to the Microsoft support pages and Knowledge Base to check on this situation

.But, hey, I'm a power user, right? Indeed. So, I use the Microsoft File Information tool (one of a collection of awesomely powerful and useful tools that is included in the Windows 98 Resource Kit; I'll talk about and demo these tools at a future PCUG meeting if asked) to track down this particular DLL and, more importantly, determine in which CAB file in \windows\options\cabs the file is resident. I find the file just where the tool said it would be, extract it, and reinstall it in the \windows\system folder. Reboot. No error message. Sigh, again. Would that it were that simple. Yes, I have Microsoft networking capabilities back again. But, I have no Domain Name Service (DNS), which means that my browsers (I have both Netscape and IE installed) are still useless. I do some analysis and determine that every DNS query (a request to turn a name like www.microsoft.com into an IP address for

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actual use in contacting the site) by any application is receiving a "host unknown" response. This is the response normally received when one attempts to resolve a bogus name - one that truly doesn't exist.

Worse, I subsequently discover that several of the most important control panel applets, including the ones that manage network settings, modem settings and system settings, no longer work. The CPL files are there and they load, only to immediately terminate. Obviously, something is seriously wrong. I guess it's time to call Microsoft support. Which I do, to find out that since the version of Windows 98 I'm using came installed on the machine it carries an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) product ID and the manufacturer of the machine is responsible for support. This is all well and good, but I knew that this problem was sufficiently complex that the OEM software support was going to tell me to call Microsoft - which is exactly what happened when I spoke with them. In the end, I elected to pay for Microsoft support in order to get my machine back on line (and, to avoid any misunderstanding here, note that I had no problem with this).

After an extended discussion with a Microsoft support person who clearly knew what he was talking about (it really is delightful to interact with support people who really do know, in great detail, about the product(s) they are supposed to be supporting), the two of us agreed that the best thing to do was for me to completely reinstall Windows 98. This was possible because I had all the CAB (sorry; I've been remiss in explaining acronyms here: Windows cabinet file—a compressed format used by Windows for information storage; functionally equivalent to a ZIP file, but formatted differently and employing a different compression scheme) files on my hard drive. This is standard practice for pre-installed versions of Windows that are shipped without a Windows 98 CD. And, even when you install Windows 98 from a CD, you are given the option of copying all the CAB files to the hard drive. Just say yes. Trust me: given the average size of hard drives in contemporary PCs (usually 15GB or more), you definitely want the CAB files on your hard drive.

So, I wandered into the `\windows\options\cabs` directory, double-clicked on "setup.exe", and the install process for Windows 98 began. I was a bit

troubled by the fact that, when started in this manner, the setup process presented me with no choices it just began copying files. Well, OK, my machine was clearly not usable in its current state, so, away we go. The process took about 30 minutes and completed without any error report. It was with some trepidation, I admit, that I let the reboot process begin, dolefully wondering what kind of state my machine would be in when it came back up. Hmm. Looks good. Boot process is running OK. Here it comes—ah, looks good. At least the desktop is there and everything is as it was.

Let's check things out. Control Panel applets all work. Networking is there and the DNS works. I spent about two hours checking on things, looking at some registry settings, etc. I found a few things that were changed, but, for the most part, Windows 98 was back in action again, and, impressively, the re-install process had managed to retain virtually all of my personal settings - colors, fonts, screen saver, etc. There were a couple of things that had changed. I managed to get all but one back the way it was. I had to call Microsoft to ascertain what registry setting to change to "fix" the other item (normally, if a network card adapter is present and "Client for Microsoft Networks" is installed as a service, a network logon dialog box appears when the system is booted; this wasn't happening), but that only required a quick change to the registry once the Microsoft tech support person told me which entry needed to be changed.

So, let me summarize here: I still love Windows 98. It remains the most useful operating system I have ever worked with. And, the combination of Windows 98, Office 97 and Outlook 98 collectively form the most powerful, useful software suite it has ever been my pleasure to use on a daily basis. Am I still using the Windows Update function? Yes. I have downloaded and installed several other items since the events chronicled above occurred. But, I no longer use it to "automatically install" major operating system updates.

As I said ... powerful, useful, incredibly featured ... and occasionally terribly frustrating.

Have a great and a happy Y2K.

Jerry Crow is Senior Technical Architect with EDS in Phoenix, his specialities include the Internet, wide area networking, electronic commerce, information technology security and information protection.

Two bits from Jack Storlie

Part I of this story was in the October, 1999 issue of New Style and it detailed the story of Darrell Garner helping me diagnose a problem with my granddaughter's TI notebook. He took the system apart and found that the cable assembly from the processor unit to the display was shorted. We worked at my card table from 8:00 PM to 11:00 PM on August 23. The unit was reassembled and, by connecting a monitor to the serial port it was clear that the computer had survived the operation.

I called the TI technical support number and discovered that Acer was the new support for the TI line of laptops. Their quote on price/shipping was almost \$100 and they said there were third party providers that might do better and gave me three numbers of same. The second number I called verified they had the part and would ship it within a week at a total cost \$35. I gave them my Visa number and waited. And waited. And waited. I started a series of calls to them (my nickel) and was assured that the ETA was a few days off. This went on until early February when I was told by a kind techie that I might try other avenues. I called Acer again and the new quote was for \$45 and it would be in La Crosse within five working days. It was here in four days.

At Darrell's request I called him when the part came and he came a few days later and within an hour the system was disassembled and reassembled and in working condition.

As Darrell said last summer, "A group such as ours is a sharing type of thing". It sure is and we need (and actually have) other members such as Darrell. Hats off.

A question

I uninstalled McAfee Office 2000 Suite as it caused problems, particularly in the Nuts * Bolts module. Upon restarting the system I got some system errors for missing files. I got rid of all of them, but when the system came back, I get a pop-up menu on the Desktop that called for the Chat Room. I looked for the program reference in the Start-Up file, but it did not show up there. I did a Start-Find and found the file in `C:\Windows\Chat\cchat.exe`. I renamed that to "cchat.bak" and now I get a pop-up menu that asks what program I wish to use to open the program "cchat.bak". Any thoughts on how to get rid of this reference? Jack

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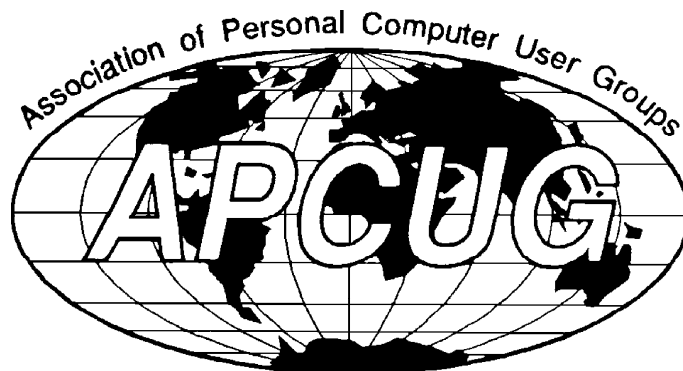
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LCPC is a member of APCUG

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General meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month in the Lutheran Hospital, either in the Overholt Auditorium or conference room 1 in the basement, check page 1 for location. The combined November-December meeting is held the second Wednesday in December. Meetings begin around 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome, attend a meeting or two with no obligation to join.

Dues are \$20 for one year following payment. Membership entitles you to attend meetings, tap into the corporate wisdom, receive special user group discounts from publishers and others, receive (and contribute to) this newsletter. You may also obtain software provided by publishers for review of the product. Unsigned articles are by the editor.

Other user groups are welcome to reprint with proper credit.

The newsletter is printed the Wednesday before the meeting, submit articles by the 13th of the month. Upload to deapublish@aol.com or phone me at 784-0150 if you want to deliver the article. Submit in ASCII, AmiPro, or WP5.

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