

New Style

Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

volume 21 number 11

Holiday 2001

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Next meeting

Wednesday December 12, 2001
Gundersen Lutheran, Overholt Auditorium

Toys in Action

Don and Carol will have just returned from their trip and demonstrate how they have used a laptop with mapping programs, a GPS in combination with a Palm and a digital video camera.

We hope to have an interesting and entertaining program.

Elections

Board elections are this month. If we don't have more people willing to give their time we can expect this organization to close up. As I wrote last issue, I've seen much larger groups than this one die for that reason. It's not a matter of having "free time" it's about allocating the time.

This Issue

Was produced by Carol alone, I've been sick since before Thanksgiving.

The Parts Man Shows his stuff

Carol Frank, Secretary

October 2001 meeting

We had nominations for the board. Shane can't be on the board next year since he will be in Rochester taking the Sysco class at night for many weeks. (He had to get a bank loan in order to pay for it) Gary will be stepping down as treasurer. The only nominations are Marian and Carol. We need more volunteers! Please! The LCPC will buy the new treasurer the software of his choice for this task.

There was some talk about Windows XP. Shane found out that he can't use CenturyTel Dialup if XP is on his home computer. Positively, XP takes less memory and uses less resources. Marian has XP on her new laptop and has had lock up problems.

There was also some talk about AOL, Marian doesn't like versions 6 or 7 since to completely delete e-mail it takes two or three steps. As much as possible she uses version 3 since only one step is needed to delete e-mail.

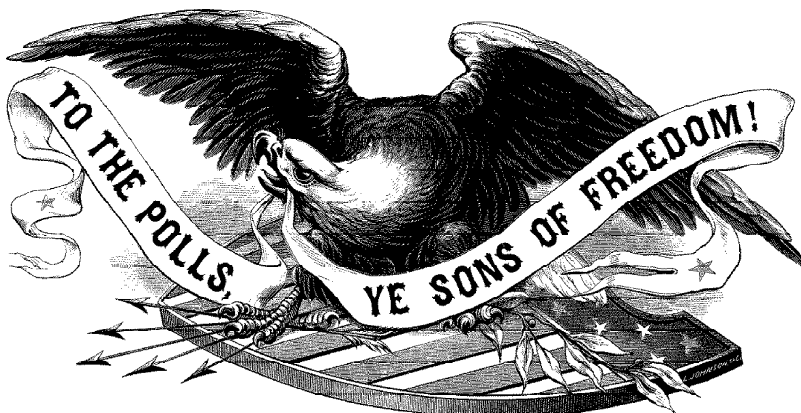
According to Shane, Netscape can be set up to auto-

matically dump the trash folder every time it is turned on.

If you want AOL 7, have a CD sent to you. On a 56 K modem it can take three hours to download. The modem needs to be watched to make sure it doesn't go off line in the meanwhile. AOL will time out after about 20 minutes without mouse activity.

Bill Brockmiller gave his third annual computer upgrade presentation. This time he brought parts along to show what they looked like. The parts are from a Packard Bell 286. He cautioned about the need to

Bill Brockmiller shows an old motherboard



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have the computer sit some time unplugged so that any static electricity can be dispersed.

First Bill showed the motherboard and where the CPU, (computer brain) is put. Currently there are two manufacturers of chips-AMD and Intel. In Bill's opinion, AMD is better. Current boards can only accept one or the other brand of chip. So what you initially choose will determine what you will use for upgrading in the future.

Both manufacturers have two classes of chips, the better grade which is faster and for high end users and the lesser grade for normal applications. The higher grade ones are Pentium (Intel) and Athlon (AMD). The lesser grade ones are Celeron (Intel) and Duron (AMD). In Bill's opinion AMD's Duron is superior to Intel's Celeron.

Next Bill showed where the cards are slotted in. Sound cards, video cards, and modems can be added to these slots. Cards have different slot patterns so make sure they are compatible with your motherboard. This particular old motherboard had a riser card to slot the accessories in. This was because the some of the old style of personal computers where horizontal to fit on the desk. New computers use towers which have more room and sit on the floor.

Beware of built in modem, sound and video cards! They take up space and make it difficult to upgrade. They are of "average" quality and need to be disabled, (not always possible) before the new one can be added and used. A built in video card doesn't have its own memory. Advertising often uses the term "shared architecture" for this feature.

The CMOS battery is about the size of a quarter and is used to keep the time, date and boot up information. CMOS batteries often outlast the computer itself and if by any chance it does go bad, it is easy to replace. Most problems are not with the battery itself, but with the programming (BIOS) the battery keeps alive. The BIOS can be upgraded easily. This is known as flashing the BIOS. A word of caution, during the upgrade, if the power goes off, you have SERIOUS trouble! Most BIOS flashing takes only a few minutes to do.

Many manufacturers design their computers to discourage upgrading. They'd rather have the user buy a new computer. This is why Bill recommends custom built computers (his night job). Custom builds can use the best parts you can afford and are easily upgradable. Besides, the builder lives in your

community and can help out with any problems.

Computer performance is enhanced by upgrading to more RAM (random access memory). Newer computers use the SD-RAM style of memory chips. They have thinner slots and can't be used in older computers. RAM is so cheap these days there is no reason not to upgrade to more if needed.

The power supply converts AC to DC in the computer. The old eight key power supply is almost extinct and needed to be shut off manually. The new ATX power supply can shut itself off. Beware of proprietary power supplies that can fit in only certain cases.

The Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) is not a substitute for the wall outlet. In an emergency power outage, the UPS can keep the computer on long enough for the user to save his work and shut down properly. This is a device that is bought separately and attached to the power supply.

Hard drives and CDRom drives are connected to the motherboard with a ribbon cable. Most motherboards have two IDE channels and two devices can be on each channel. Cards can be added to allow for more devices. The ribbon cable has two connections to attach the devices. There is a primary and secondary channel. The boot device, (usually the main harddrive) MUST be on the primary channel. If you have both a CD drive and a CD burner, it is best if they are not on the same channel (sharing a ribbon cable) and the burner should not be on the primary channel along with the boot device. If this precaution is taken, extensive CD burning causes fewer bad burns and fewer CDs are wasted.

Floppy drives are not IDE devices and have their own channel.

Laptop computers, because of their small size need specially designed parts to fit which makes them harder to upgrade. But even without upgrading, laptops keep their value better than desktop computers.

At the end Bill gave away literature and T-shirts provided by AMD.

Members also indulged in "I remember when" anecdotes about the capacity and cost of computer hard drives, memory and devices. The general consensus is that they are costing less all the time and there is more for the money.

Membership and Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig, Treasurer

The club checking balance as of 11/13/2001 was \$821.09. We had income of \$100.00 from four renewals - Betty Mullenback, May Borgedahl, John Benton, and David Donskey - thank you - plus \$20 from Art Osborn who joined our club

Art Osborn has a HP 8580c 500 MHz computer with 128 MB memory and a 20 gig hard drive. He is interested in software that handles amateur radio transmission and software that handles pictures from a digital camera. He just wants to learn more about computers. Welcome Art.

After 11/13/01, I received \$40 for two renewals from Paul Pfaff and Lita Bower - thank you.

Expenses paid in October were \$13.60 for stamps and \$22.16 to photocopy the newsletter. Renewals for Nov/December: Bill Brockmiller, Mike Henderson, Ted & Jean Latham, and Ed Lietzow Past Due: Dennis Graves, Shirley Bryhn and Arlene Wiese

Our modest \$20 renewal fee for LCPC can be mailed to our lock box 2991 or to my address at 2032 South 30th LaCrosse, WI 54601 OR bring to the next meeting.

Remember, you must be a paid member to vote at our December election.

E-mail updates

John Benton

Old: bentjohn@means.net

New: bentjohn@acegroup.cc

New member:

Art Osborn—w0jdc@juno.com (2nd position is a zero)



Give Your Portal Some Pizzazz

By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Customize your browsers home page and increase your productivity

I was at a buddy's house recently and spotted something alarming. His home page—the screen his browser automatically opens with—was MSN. Yeah, you heard me. Not only hadn't he switched to another home page, he wasn't even aware that he could modify the page and get rid of much of the useless junk. With an ad-blocking program, he could also avoid all of Microsoft's blaring, shameless self-aggrandizements.

My hand started twitching. I was about to lunge towards his mouse and try to single-handedly change his home page, when his wife shouted "barbecue's ready."

I was on my third beer when two things struck me. I'd had enough to drink and I had to help this guy out.

Dumping the Ads

You can decide for yourself whether blocking ads is ethical. As far as I'm concerned, ads that are deceptive (the one that looks like a download gauge and says "click here"), pop up boxes (or worse, those damn X-10 camera *pop-under* boxes), and blinking Flash animations are all fair game.

My favorite ad jamming utility is WebWasher (www.webwasher.com). It's free for personal use and if you accept the defaults, easy to use. Of course you can tweak WebWasher in dozens of ways, fine-tuning it to, say, allow some cookies to be released while withholding others.

Point Me Home

Changing your Home page is a five minute operation. It's straightforward in Internet Explorer (IE). Go to the Web site you want to use as your Home page. Then from the Tools menu, choose Internet Options and click *Use Current*.

In Netscape, go to the Web site you want to use as your Home page. From the Edit menu, choose Preferences. (I'm using version 6.01; your Netscape version may have slightly different menu settings.) You'll need to find the *Navigator* category or a dialog area that shows the Home Page option. Click the *Use Current Page* button and you're

done. But while you're there, examine the Toolbars section of the Options area. Uncheck the buttons Netscape automatically adds, things you might not need or want.

Presto Change

You may encounter a sleazy web site that changes your Home page without permission. It's happened to me and it threw me for a loop. Not only couldn't I figure out how they did it, I couldn't change it back to my original Home page. First try the previous instructions. If that doesn't fix it, you'll need to change a setting in your Registry. Fred Langa has a way to do it and he explains the process here:

<http://www.langa.com/newsletters/2000/2000-07-10.htm#2>

Playing Around with Portals

I think of my browser-and Home page-as the center of my online activity, sort of a control panel that gets me to other places quickly and efficiently. I've never counted the hours but I'm guessing my browser's on screen about 40 percent of the time. (Probably another 40 percent is with Eudora and the balance in Word and PowerDesk.)

By the way, a portal isn't something mysterious or esoteric. It's simply a single integrated point for access to information, people, and other Web sites; a personalized and customized user interface.

While I'm not happy with Yahoo's emulation of Microsoft (they bought eGroups only to make it a complicated chamber of horrors), their portal is terrific. My bias towards using Yahoo is twofold:

Yahoo provides a variety of information, more than most portals, and it's blessedly easy to customize a page. Better, I have five separate Yahoo pages, each serving a different need. For instance, my main page includes the following:

- * News: Technology, local, science, world, and others.
- * Calendar: A quick view of my upcoming events with access to my calendar.
- * E-mail and messaging: I get to see my Yahoo mail account and who's online for an instant message.

- * Local area events.
- * Bookmarks: I use this handy category to jump to sites that I want access to but aren't important enough to add to IE's Links bar.
- * Weather.
- * Financial portfolio: A small, password-protected box that lets me see my daily losses.
- * Mapping: Similar to MapBlast.com but with a pull-down history.
- * News clipper: Yahoo automatically searches its news database to find articles that I'm tracking. I have other Yahoo pages, each accessible from my Home page.
- * Entertainment: with a listing of movie show times for theaters in Pasadena and an evening's worth of TV listings.
- * Yahoo Search Tools: I have all my lookups here—Yellow Pages, E-mail and phone searches, as well as bookmarks that link me to people and reverse phone directory pages. Yahoo's a Flex Champ

Page layouts are simple to design. Most Yahoo modules—calendar, Maps, E-mail, Weather, for instance—can be placed on either side of the Home page. Bookmarks Portfolio, News, and other modules can be removed from the page to become a separate, temporary floating boxes. And the content can be set into either two medium sized columns or two narrow and one wide column.

Creating a Home page Portal is a fun project, has the potential to let you navigate the Web faster, and unlike installing a new operating system, is guaranteed not to hose your PC.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. Write to him at steve-bass@pcworld.com. Check PCW's current edition at www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter

MacDrive 2000

Pete Tinagila, from *Hard-Copy*, Journal of the Chicago Computer Society, August 2001

This is slick. I wanted to find out if it is really seamless, and you know what? It is.

My computer is a Pentium II 450 with 256 MB of memory, ASUS motherboard, 30GB IBM IDE hard drive, Internal Zip IDE drive, CD-ROM and CD-RW, running Windows 98 Second Edition, and Office 2000.

Back a while ago I got an e-mail from Sue Nail, our rep for a software company called MediaFour. She asked me to describe the make-up of our organization, wondering if anyone could be interested in a program allowing Mac files to be read and used on a PC Windows platform. I explained that we have a wide range of users including IT specialists working on many types of computers including Apple, Sun, Linux, and PCs, and that I was sure it would interest many. She offered to send me a product called *MacDrive 2000*, which she said does that and more, and it arrived in the mail.

So, I treated it just like any of you would treat it. I cut open the box, threw the mini-manual on the floor, put the CD into my machine and let it install automatically. It asked me a couple of questions like do I agree to their legal blah-blah, whether I wanted to install it in a special directory folder, and maybe a little more, and then it installed itself in less than 5 minutes. I was asked to let it automatically restart my computer so the new settings-whatever they were-would take effect, so I let it. And, you know what? It did. No trouble, no problems, nothing new except a folder called *MacDrive 2000* on my Startup Menu containing icons for Help, Properties, Updates on the Web, and Register the program. But I didn't mouse-click on anything at all. I wanted to see just how automatic this was going to be. I did not even open the 31 page 6 x 6 inch mini-manual.

I had previously acquired a couple of 100 MB Zip disks, factory formatted for Mac use, and was ready to reformat them in PC mode so I could use them. So, luckily I had a real live application to test the new program.

Next, I opened Windows Explorer, put one of those Mac Zip disks in my drive and mouse-clicked on the drive icon. Well, as it quickly read the disk, the Zip drive icon changed a little and grew a red apple on it (I guess that indicates that the disk is in Mac

format) and in the right pane of the Explorer desktop-lo and behold-Mac files appeared on my screen. Prior to this, whenever I put one of those disks in my machine it said it wasn't formatted and asked me if I wanted to do so. But this time real Mac files were on the screen! So I clicked on one image that had an extension I recognized, .TIF, and it opened the file just like it was supposed to. That's it; that's all there was to it; and it worked. I can open a Word for Mac document, edit it, save it in the same format, and another computer, Mac or a PC with this program installed, can use it also.

Just to check, I wrote a Word document on a Mac Powerbook laptop, saved it on a 3.5" floppy in native format and opened it on my PC computer in *Word 2000*. It read it just like normal, but when I made a change in the document and tried to save it in the Mac format, my Office Assistant popped up and told me to get my Office disks and install some necessary files into *Word* I did so, walked over to the Mac with floppy in hand, tried to open the PC-modified document and it worked like a charm. There may be peace in the computing world at last.

I found that in Windows Explorer, when I right-click on a removable media drive (floppy or Zip drive), now there is a menu option to format that drive as a Mac disk. I put an unformatted 1.44 disk in my A: drive, did so, and then tried to read the disk in the Mac laptop. That worked too. It was beginning to look too good to be true. Everything so far was working as you would expect and I hadn't opened the manual yet. (There had to be a hitch somewhere, there always is; otherwise there would be no version 2.0 of any software.) Next I copied onto the floppy the most often used graphic format on a Windows PC today, a .JPG graphic, and tried to read it on the Mac. No dice; finally, a flaw. Now I'd read the mini-manual.

This is somewhat beyond the capabilities or intent of the program. Our word processor would need a way to save the .JPG in a Mac format or the Mac would have to be able to open a PC format file. It means, in a way, that the Mac has to be able to read the PC file system, and it can't do that. *MacDrive 2000* allows us to take the Mac hard drive

out of the machine and put it in a PC as a secondary or storage unit, and I would be able to read or copy everything on it, modify and save data files, but not run the Mac programs installed on it. One would need another program, a converse of this one, to install on the Mac machine enabling it to read PC files. I understand some of the newer Mac machines have this feature already built in to their operating system but this laptop is an older one and I am happy it is because I would not have known about this issue if it weren't.

Another detail that shouldn't be overlooked was that I couldn't read a Mac factory-formatted double density 3.5" disk on my PC. I consider myself at least a power user on a Windows machine, but when it comes to a Mac, I am an eager novice.

MacDrive 2000 does what it says it does, is easy to install, maintenance free, and seamless to use. I also installed it on my laptop in Windows 2000 and found similar results. There are some warnings in the manual, about PC disk defragmenters and some software utilities, intended to remind you that you are using a Macformatted disk and selected utilities may view it as a PC disk with partition problems. If you do use some of these PC utilities on a Mac disk without heed, you will probably lose the information stored on that disk.

MacDrive 2000 for Windows 95, 98, 2000, and NT4 normally sells for \$49.95, but CCS members can download it at [<http://www.digitalriver.com/Mediafour/Usergroups>] for only \$29.95

For more company information, go to www.mediafour.com.

Want to eXPerience?

Terry Houle, *The Digital Viking*, newsletter of the Twin Cities PC User Group, September 2001

Microsoft is getting stricter in its enforcement of licensing. I guess one might even say they are going into the policing business. With the new XP operating system they will force families to buy a separate, full-price copy for each computer. This is really nothing new-except the method of enforcement.

New feature

They have created a new feature called "product activation". Microsoft will create and store a particular machine profile. That allows them to "lock" that operating system (OS) to one specific machine. If you choose not to activate the OS will stop working in 30 days.

A lot of hardware changes on a machine could also cause it to stop working and you would have to contact Microsoft to ask them to reactivate their software. This feature is already in Office XP but you can install it on two computers.

If you have a machine malfunction and have to reinstall, you will have to eXPLAIN to Microsoft. These rules are probably no different than what has been buried in the fine print licensing. What is new is the method of enforcement and the assertive policy by Microsoft.

Policies

The problem is that Microsoft has never really educated home users of the policy. They call it "casual piracy" if a home user installs their software on an additional machine. Also, corporations may get bulk-purchase pricing and may not be subject to activation.

Microsoft does claim that the database of PC configurations they collect won't contain any personal information and will be encrypted. That does make me feel much better...

Microsoft does own the intellectual property and can decide how they want to license

and police their product. As these new products roll out, these licensing policies and procedures may be somewhat different than the preliminary information I have indicated here.

So, my main point: be aware of some enforcement changes *before* you buy. Then you can make an intelligent purchasing decision. As always, it is *caveat emptor*-and especially so if you happen to be dealing with a monopoly. I do think you will have to look deeper than the box cover; I don't think it will be there in big letters.

I do hope my Windows 2000 and Office 2000 keep running a long time cause it does not look like I will want to eXPerience some of these new features....just seems too much like 1984 rather than 2001 to me. I also plan to make sure I add Linux and also Star Office from Sun Microsystems on the next computer I purchase. Both are either free or very affordable and open source.

Seen on a T-Shirt

Contributed by Harris Mallory, *The Digital Viking*, newsletter of the Twin Cities PC User Group, September 2001

1. "Procrastinate now."
2. "Rehab is for Quitters."
3. "My dog can lick anyone."
4. "A hangover is the wrath of grapes."
5. "Stupidity is not a handicap. Park elsewhere!"
6. "Party My Crib Two a.m." (On a baby-size shirt)
7. "Frankly, Scallop, I don't give a clam." (Seen on Cape Cod)
8. "That's It! I'm calling Grandma!" (Seen on an 8 year old)
9. "Wrinkled was not one of the things I wanted to be when I grew up."
10. "I have a Degree in Liberal Arts. Do you want fries with that?"
11. "Finally 21, and Legally Able to Do Everything I've Been Doing Since 15."
12. "Arkansas: One Million People, and 15 last names."
13. "Failure is not an option. It comes bundled with the software."
14. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a cash advance."
15. "Discourage depression-ban country music."
16. "My wild oats have turned to shredded wheat."
17. "Quoting one is plagiarism. Quoting many is research."
18. "Moosehead: A great beer and a new experience for a moose."
19. "They call it 'PMS' because 'Mad Cow Disease' was already taken."
20. "He who dies with the most toys is nonetheless dead."
21. "Time's fun when you're having flies... Kermit the Frog."
22. "Police station toilet stolen.. Cops have nothing to go on."
23. "Heck is where people go who don't believe in Gosh."
24. "The Meek shall inherit the earth... after we're through with it."
25. "Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana."
26. "Welcome to Kentucky. Set your watch back 20 years."
27. "The trouble with life is there's no background music."
28. "The original point-and-click interface was a Smith & Wesson."
29. "Computer programmers don't byte, they nibble a bit."
30. "Computer programmers know how to use their hardware."
31. "Mop and Glow-floor wax used by Three-Mile-Island cleanup team."
32. "Nyquil The stuffy, sneezy, why-is-there-room-spinning medicine."
33. "Ham and eggs-a day's work for a chicken; a lifetime commitment for a pig."
34. "A picture is worth a thousand words, but it uses up a thousand times the memory."

LCPC Board

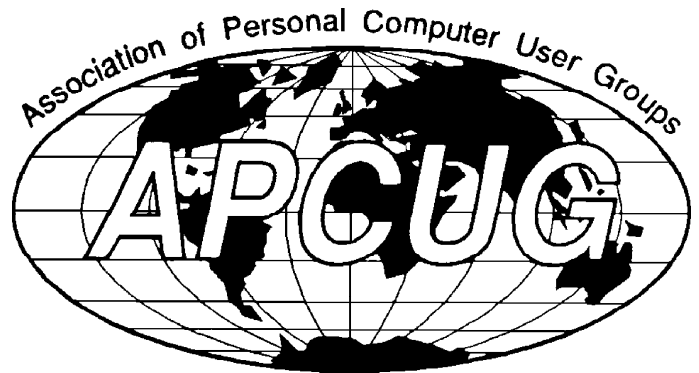
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LCPC is a member of APCUG

w Style is published eleven times a year, monthly Jan-Oct and a combined Nov-Dec issue

General meetings are held the last Wednesday of Jan-Oct in the Overholt Auditorium at the Lutheran Hospital. The combined November-December meeting is held the second Wednesday in December.

Thank you, Gundersen-Lutheran, for making this wonderful facility available.

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, please submit articles by the 13th of the month. Upload to:

lacrossepcug@aol.com

Commercial advertising rates available upon request. Member's personal ads are free.

LCPC

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