

# New Style



Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

Volume 22 Number 11

Holiday 2002

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## Computing Factoids

There are unrelated things I pick up in e-mail that are terrific-but not long enough for an article.

*Compiled by Steve Bass  
Pasadena IBM Users Group*

### Saving Paper? Ha!

I just bought a program (which I think is excellent) called "Cool Edit Pro" from Syntrillium ([www.syntrillium.com](http://www.syntrillium.com)) which is audio editing and processing program.

The registration card has a box to check that has this amusing statement:

"Yes! Please send me a hard-copy manual. (A complete manual is included on your CD. In the interest of paper conservation, Syntrillium ships hard-copy manuals only on demand.)"

So I can print it out (conserving their paper) or have them send me something that should have been in the box in the first place (conserving my paper, 225 pages for the manual plus 42 pages for the addendum). Since I paid \$399 for the program, I think I'll conserve my paper instead of theirs. —  
*Stan Slonkosky*

### Listen Up and Take Heed!

I always tell people to unplug their PC when working on the insides. It's something I never do. My unsolicited advice? Do it. All the time.

Here's why: I added a sound card to my wife's PC the other day. Easy enough, right? Then, while the system was up and running, I replaced the cover. I've done it that way since I started with PCs in 1983. This time it bit me on the butt. The case cover touched an add-in card and the systemboard fried. Better it should have happened to my PC, you know what I'm saying? —  
*Steve Bass*

## La Crosse PC Users Group (LCPC)

Treasurer's and Membership Report

October 2002

*Dick Dahlby, Treasurer*

Income received in October was \$80.00 from four membership renewals. Membership renewals were John Benton, Lita Bower, Paul Pfaff, and Betty Mullenbach. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

The only expense paid in October was: \$10.55 for 25 photocopies of the September LCPC Newsletter. This includes a \$5.00 charge for the electronic delivery of the newsletter to the printer via an email attachment, rather than us making a hand delivery of a hardcopy original.

The LCPC checking account balance as of 11/15/2002 is \$1,072.65.

We presently have 52 enrolled members in LCPC.

Members whose annual renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (August) Keith and Barb Barghahn, and Dennis Graves. (October) Arthur Osborn.

There are no membership renewals due in November.

Membership renewals due in December are: Bill Brockmiller, Ted Latham, and Ed Lietzow.

Annual dues are \$20 (individual or couple), and checks should be made payable to La Crosse PC Users Group. Dues may be mailed to either of the following addresses.

La Crosse PC Users Group	Dick Dahlby
P.O. Box 2991	501 Olivet St
La Crosse, WI 54601-2991	La Crosse, WI 54603-1318

Reminder to all members: If you become more than three (3) months delinquent in paying your membership dues, you will be subject to removal from the ListServ, and from LCPC. So please, be prompt with your renewal fees.

Also, if you change your email address, it is very important to inform LCPC of the change, so that the Membership ListServ can be changed accordingly. To do so, please send me an email with your new email address and I will make the change to the ListServ. If you haven't received an email from the ListServ within the last two weeks, please let me know that also, so that I can check on it. Thank you.

## Filling out the Family Tree

### October 30 meeting

We had a good turn out for the presentation on genealogy. First, though, there were some questions and problems put forth. Marian Havlik said that her Norton Anti-virus caught a virus but she couldn't dump it from the Recycle Bin. Chuck Whalen suggested that in Norton Anti-virus, go to Reports, open Quarantine Manager and dump the file from there.

There were several questions about the latest AOL. Someone asked what is the proper procedure to report Spam in AOL 8, is the e-mail opened first then reported? It was recommended that the suspected Spam should not be opened, instead highlight the address and click Report as Spam. Marian downloaded AOL 8 through her modem which ran at 33K, it took 270 minutes. Dick Dahlby says that ordering a CD from AOL is an option. Another question was an explanation of communication costs since AOL has a disclaimer of not being responsible for them. Chuck, wearing his telephone company employee hat, explained that if you dial up your modem with an LD number, there can be unexpected charges. Some 800 numbers can charge \$6 an hour if there is no local number to use. Also, some locations can have very expensive local call charges. Some states, like Florida for an example, have high continuing repair costs due to bad weather. It could be cheaper to call LD in those circumstances.

Chuck has some advice for those who are thinking of buying a high end computer (3 gigabytes)-get Windows XP Pro edition instead of home edition XP. 3 gig machines can have hyperthreading, Pro XP has the ability to use this capacity and can behave as if there are two processors. This means 15-25% more speed. Notice what is provided on the new machines, since Pro XP is more expensive than Home XP, some manufacturers might use the less expensive edition to save costs. By the way Windows 2000 support dual processors also.

Marian wants input on choosing a digital camera for her business. It will be constantly used outdoors in wet conditions, needs fast recovery and do both closeups and distance pictures.

The presentation that night had two speakers. Jim Warner, retired biology professor and Mary Ann Nelson, retired middle school teacher. Mary Ann started out by showing some interesting genealogical websites. A very good place to start is Rootsweb, it has many links to other sites, a free on-line newsletter and names, social security, and military record databases can be searched.

Ancestry.com has a subscription to search some sites. Dues are \$17.95/month, U. S. records are \$7.95/month and U. S. record and census images are \$11.90/month. These searches do not always pay off.

Some other sites of interest are Genealogytoday.com-information and hints of research family information;

Cyndislist.com, Familysearch.org, Worldgenweb.org Genealogyspot.com and Familytreemagazine.com.

Ms Nelson also showed some European sites. Many of them have English options. Geneanet.org, Feefhs.org (Federation of East European Family History Societies), Cgsi.org (Czechoslovak genealogy), Norwayfamily.com, Home.at.net/~weemonster (German). A very useful site, even if you are not Jewish is [www.jewishgen.org/shtetl/Seekeer/loctown.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/shtetl/Seekeer/loctown.htm). This site locates European towns, gives directions, miles from capital cities and tells if the town name is officially used for U. S. government purposes.

Other sites useful for research are [gloreCORDS.blm.gov](http://gloreCORDS.blm.gov) (Land patents), [ancestry.com/sski/advanced.htm](http://ancestry.com/sski/advanced.htm) (social security index) and state genealogical societies.

There are some family tree sites-Genealogy.com (Family Tree Maker) Saintclair.org/paf (Personal Ancestral File) and Mumford.ca/reportcard (reviews of nineteen different software programs).

A visitor made a comment that to beware of some pay sites. Some of them are frauds and just give a list of sites to research. Also don't neglect your local public library archives. There are many paper genealogy newsletters available there.

Jim Warner gave a presentation on Family Tree Maker. Version 10 now has an update for \$149 for the complete set. Partial packages can be had for low as \$19.99. The add-ons in the complete version include a very good printed manual, U.S. census from 1607 to 1880, other research material and a newsletter.

Jim gave a demonstration on filling the basic family page. Links to other family pages are created for offspring on the starting page. He showed some of the many and useful features of this program, like reordering the offspring list, auto save and the name index. There is a fact list about individuals that can show information like schools attended, interests, military record etc. The Scrap book is where scanned pictures, documents and anything else that is visual. A master source location can be created where sources can be cited and documented. Medical information can be entered and tracked.

He showed two different display styles of family trees-traditional and fan. You can pick the generation were the display can start. Maps can be added. The publishing center is a way to create a family book, print it or add to your home page. Family Tree Maker has it own site (Genealogy.com) which has links to members web sites. Information can be easily merged from one FTM document to another. At the end Mr. Warner showed his own genealogy home page.

## Preparing your Computer for a New Operating System

By Guenter Schoett, Fallbrook CC  
email schott@tbf.com

An easy and safe way to add and manage a new OS with System Commander 7 (?)

I have been debating for some time now how best to install the new Windows XP Professional operating system on my computer. Reading various articles and technical newsletters can be a virtual adventure and impress upon you the four most important facts before jumping into the arena:

1. Read all instructions very carefully and follow them
2. Back up your system because extensive changes will be made to your hard disk
3. Make a bootable diskette for your current OS. To create a new bootable floppy disk, click on Start, Settings, Control Panel, and then the Add/Remove Program's icon. Now click on the "startup Disk" tab at the top, and select Create Disk. You may be asked to insert the Windows OS CD. When you have a startup disk, it allows you to start your computer, run diagnostic programs, and fix many problems.
4. Clean up your machine's hard drive by deleting unnecessary memory hogs and run Scan Disk followed by defragmentation. Although the backup and boot diskette may never be necessary, they provide a safety net should you experience serious bugs or problems that overwrite critical areas on your hard disk.

I was not quite sure whether to add an additional hard drive on my machine and facilitating a clean install or simply to upgrade from my Windows 98 SE. One of our club members (Bill Wolf) suggested the use of a helpful automatic preparation software package for adding operating systems. It's called System Commander and widely recognized for quality and reliability. You can find more information and other related operating system management products on the company's Web site at <http://www.v-com.com>. The product can be directly purchased from VCOM for \$69.95.

OK, I got their software and installed it on my computer. I should have said "I was trying to install it". Seconds into that process a window popped up and informed me: "System Commander has detected a disk manager program such as EZ-BIOS or Ontrack installed on your system. These programs will not operate properly if System Commander is installed. The installation will be cancelled". So I checked to see if I had any of them but did not.

Obviously, something else was holding me up. But what? The extensive (200+pages) user manual for version 7 might give me the answer. Right? Not exactly! In chapter 9 (Troubleshooting) or anywhere else nothing refers to my first problem.

Contacting Technical Support was my next step. On page 195 of the manual you are encouraged to check the index to see if you can save yourself a phone call. Also mentioned is a troubleshooting assistance program called "SCIN" which allows you to press F1 or Alt-H in most places to get context sensitive help. Unfortunately, the program had not been installed as I mentioned above, and I couldn't take advantage of that lifeline. OK, let's go to the Website <[www.v-com.com/support](http://www.v-com.com/support)> and seek help.

I entered details about my problem, sent it as an E-mail and was informed that a support technician was going to respond within 3 days, and often much sooner. The answer came the following day!

It read:

"Dear Customer,

Downloading and installing v7.03 should solve that problem. This was an error that was corrected in v7.03."

Good. So I went back to the company Website and tried to locate version 7.03. Could not find it but instead discovered the System Commander 7 Maintenance Release page which indicates what you will need to update System Commander 7:

System Commander 7 in stalled on your computer

System Commander 7 Serial number

2 blank formatted 1.44MB diskettes

The Update file: sc703\_us.exe

Download size: approximately 4.2 MB

"Holy Moses" I said, wouldn't it be much easier to just let you download an update file? In my case, this wouldn't have worked anyway because I was unable to install this software in the first place.

But wait, this is getting more complicated. Next you find instructions on how to obtain the System Commander 7 update:

Fill out and submit the online Download Request Form. You will need your serial number to complete the form. (For DOS users only, click on the DOS Version Download Request Form). After you have successfully completed the form, you will be able to download the update file sc703\_us.exe.

Note: While not critical, for Windows 9x/Me users, please rename the file C:\SC\SC7.EXE to SC7OLD.EXE before running the sc703.us.exe update program. If you fail to do so, the older SC7.EXE utility program will not be updated.

This last bulleted item really raised my eyebrows. If it is not critical, why go through this whole process?

Well, since I am a fairly tolerant and understanding individual I filled out the online form to see where all this would lead me. My 56K modem had a good day and it took only 13 minutes for the download. And in order to follow all procedures, I sent another E-mail to the Support team

to find out how to interpret the "Critical" designation referred to in the note.

The following answer arrived on the next day:

"Dear Customer,

The reason it is not "Critical" is that you will probably not have to start over with the oldest file. Even if you do have to, the latest update will update the original file utility program when it is applied."

The good person who wrote that message completely ignored my initial question of how to rename that important original file that still resided on the CD and not on my hard drive.

Obviously, another message had to be dispatched in which I stated that the tech person completely by-passed this problem and that I could not see how this response could help me. I then suggested that we cut this run-around game and they should send me a new CD that included the update and will allow me to install System Commander. This was Friday evening.

Here is the answer that came Monday morning:

"Dear Customer,

Here is the latest full copy. (See attached file: SystemCommander7.exe)". Hurrah, no more problem! Think again. Just as it happened originally with version 7.02, the installer quit a few seconds into the installation procedure and a similar message appeared on my monitor screen:

"System Commander has detected the EZ-BIOS disk manager on your system. This program will not operate properly if System Commander is installed. The installation will be cancelled". Am I lucky or what?

So, again I went back to searching my computer by entering "EZ-BIOS disk manager" into the search box. 172 answers popped up but unfortunately none included EZ-BIOS. I had copied the installation message with Printkey 2000 and sent it together with the entire list of file names to the technical support team and repeated my request for help. Here is what I received the following day, which was Tuesday:

"Dear Customer,

You don't say what version of SC7 you have. This is a false error message It should have been corrected by the v7.03 update. If you do not have v7.03 installed, download it from our website. If you have installed it, let me know and we'll continue working on this issue".

I am beginning to feel as if I am writing the script for a cyber soap opera. BTW, what is a "false error message"? In my answer to the last customer support message I mentioned that I have been very patient for one week now, but would love to receive a solution to this software problem?

Let's see what tomorrow's mail might bring. Here comes the answer:

"Dear Customer,

It means that we are detecting something in the BIOS that appears to be a drive overlay (such as EZDrive or EZBios), but as we discuss this, we find that you have never had a drive overlay installed. Therefore we are displaying an error message that is "false." We are aware of this issue we don't know at this point what is triggering this error message, in some cases it seems to be related to Western Digital hard drives, but that is not true in your case. The issue is in Engineering and they will have a solution and a new update soon. I'm sorry it is turning into such an inconvenience for you. The only way I can narrow down the possibilities is to have you try the latest update, v7.03, and gather as much information as possible".

OK, now I know at least where the problem is located, namely in the engineering department for this software. But doesn't the last sentence sound a bit ridiculous? They sent me that update and it does NOT work. I dispatched another E-mail for an explanation on the last part and when this update will be available for customers like me. Here is the answer:

"Dear Customer,

I should have been more clear -QA is narrowing the cause(s) of this problem and Engineering is writing an update that will correct it/them. It was necessary to see if v7.03 will install or not. Several drive overlay issues were fixed in v7.03 and yours may have been one of them. We are being told about a month for the update".

Doesn't this sound as if I have been a guinea pig for this vendor? Well, I still want to finish this article and review the "working edition", and if everything goes well, the conclusion of this dramatic development will appear in next month' edition of our news magazine. Would have loved to install Windows XP by now but this has to wait for another month, I guess.

Guenther Schoett is the editor of the Fallbrook Computer club as well as I believe the Advertising Director. If you use his article please send him an email to let him know. Thanks.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

## Using a Digital Video Camera for Still Pictures or Two for the Price of One

*Don Atkinson*

Long time readers of this newsletter will recall that three years ago, on our return from Comdex, I wrote that digital cameras were "not ready for prime time". I found them to be under featured, over hyped and dramatically overpriced for what you were getting. At any price point your dollar was far better spent on a 35mm film camera, I still believe this to be true.

On the other hand, there are some legitimate uses for digital photography. It can even be a low ongoing cost teaching tool, especially if you the camera grants you some control over focus and exposure. Unfortunately, you still have to pay a premium for such control.

Unless...you have a digital camcorder with a still digital photo function. Most of the current generation of MiniDV (not digital8) digital camcorders allow you to shoot still images at 640x480 or 1024x768 pixel resolution. A camera that fits easily into a pants pocket now has the same capabilities as Sony's Mavica, a feature laden, but bulky, digital still camera from the last century. Plus your camcorder can do digital video taping. The newest, models have an honest megapixel capture.

The images are stored on a removable memory card or can be stored directly on tape at lower resolution. There are several different types of memory cards used on digital still cameras, our camcorder uses the MultiMedia card format, which is slightly larger than a postage stamp (and I do mean "slightly"), measuring 3/32x15/16x1 1/4 inches. Don't run off to find a ruler, a regular postage stamp is about 7/8x1 inch. Keep any additional cards in the plastic carrier they were sold in to ease storing and finding them.

My specific comments refer to my experience with our JVC DVM-90 in New York City. This camera allows you to use the 10x optical zoom, and auto or manual focus and exposure when shooting digital stills. Using JPG compression, a 1024x768 image goes to either 240k or 80k in size depending on your quality choice (actual file size will vary from picture to picture depending on the complexity of the image). Obviously, the lower quality setting allows you to shoot three times as many pictures.

Memory cards continue to drop in price, I paid \$30 for a 32Mb card last summer, a 64Mb card is \$29 (after rebates) in a recent Best Buy flyer. There is a certain amount of overhead for storing the images, so you won't be able to store the theoretical capacity of the card. I also noticed it took noticeably longer to store the images as the card filled up, why this would happen with solid state devices is beyond me, I only know what I observed.

The DVM-90 came with a 8Mb memory card, which I swapped for the 32Mb this summer. The manual did not contain warnings against using a larger size so I did not connect the larger

card with the problems I later had with the camcorder. During our trip to the Apostle Islands in August I nearly threw the camera into Lake Superior because of its incessant failures to operate.

When we went to NYC I swapped back the 8Mb card and the camera functioned flawlessly. So, it was a matter of putting in the 32Mb card only when I did not plan on shooting video. This is not particularly inconvenient since the card is so small, my main concern was not being able to find it. Slip it in your wallet.

For reasons beyond my comprehension some places do not allow moving video but will allow you to shoot stills. Some places allow flash, others do not. Most camcorders have a tiny built in flash, the DVM-90 has an adjustable output over a range of plus or minus three stops (1/8 to 8 times normal output). This means you can correct the automatically selected exposure, reach out to more distant subjects, or provide just a touch of fill flash to lighten shadows in contrasting light.

Like digital still cameras, camcorders allow you to review your images on the lcd screen and delete those that don't measure up.

I used the 1024x768 resolution and higher compression for 80k image sizes, allowing me shoot 278 pictures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the 32Mb card and have some room left. For web publishing you don't need anything larger than 1024x768, unless you're going to blow up a small portion of the image. With the long optical zoom, you should be able to frame your picture as you like. Even with the higher JPG compression this image resolution produces acceptable 4x6 or 5x7 prints, many of you would also find the 8x10s acceptable.

If you're traveling and have a card reader and laptop you can download your images as desired. The memory card is reusable, of course.

I'm coming around to the digital side as newer models with more features arrive at existing price points. You should be able to find 2 megapixel cameras around \$100 this season. Digital camcorders are available for \$600. If low light sensitivity is important you'll have to look harder and pay more for the camcorder.

Bear in mind that when considering costs you need to consider how you will share the pictures. If you're only going to web publish and e-mail you have minimal ongoing costs. For prints to pass around you need to consider the cost of ink cartridges and premium paper. Film, processing, and printing cost a bit under twenty cents per picture for 3x5 prints from 35mm (Fuji film and WalMart processing).

A word about digital vs. analog video: the cameras cost at least twice as much but video shot side by side is noticeably sharper and has more saturated color. Many in the MiniDV format are marvelously compact and lightweight, fitting easily in a front pants pocket.

## LCPC Board and Officers

**Marian Havlik**—President ..... 782-7958  
**havlikme@aol.com**

**Ernesto Brauer**—Vice-President ..... 787-6678

**Dick Dahlby**—Treasurer ..... 781-9356  
**Ddahlby@cs.com**

**David Donskey**—Secretary .....  
**Dondav@mw.net**

**Jack Storlie**—Programs ..... 788-6355  
**JStorlie@charter.net**

**Shane Lambert**—Newsletter Editor ..... 784-9696  
**shane@shanelambert.com**



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New Style is published eleven times a year, monthly January through October with a combined Nov-Dec issue. General meetings are held in the Overholt Auditorium at the Lutheran Hospital on the last Wednesday of January through October with a combined November-December meeting on the second Wednesday in December. A list of our upcoming meeting topics is available at our web site at <http://www.lcpconline.com>. 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.

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

The monthly newsletter is printed the Wednesday before the meeting, please submit advertisements and articles by the 13th of the month to [editor@lcpconline.com](mailto:editor@lcpconline.com). Unsigned articles are written by the editor. Other user groups are welcome to reprint with proper credit to the La Crosse PC Users Group and must include our web page address. Please contact the Newsletter Editor for commercial advertising rates. There is no fee for non-commercial advertisements placed by members.

**LCPC**  
**P.O. Box 2991**  
**LaCrosse, WI 54602-2991**