

February 2006

Volume 17, Issue 2

*Are you left out
in the cold
when your
programs
encounter
unexpected
problems and
need to
close?*



*At our
rescheduled
meeting, February 7,
find out how open
source can let you
keep your apps
warmed-up and
running without
having to close
your Windows.*

Inside:

*Jim Scheef on how the moguls want to muzzle your media
Richard Ten Dyke reveals his hand in Texas Hold-em
Bruce Preston on moving your system to a new PC*

President's File



PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

It won't be long now... It's February, and I'm one step closer to that spring day when I'll be able to dust off my whooping sticks and put a peg in the ground.

Meeting Cancellations

I was hoping we'd make it through the year without canceling a meeting. Unfortunately Mother Nature didn't get that memo, so I thought this would a good time to remind everyone where to look for information about meeting cancellations.

Your first stop should be the DACS Website. We'll post information about meeting cancellations or postponements on-line as quickly as possible. Second, check your e-mail we'll try to notify members by e-mail as soon as possible.

Third, check major media outlets. The primary outlets we use are WTNH TV Channel 8, WFSB TV Channel 3 and WTIC Radio 1080 AM. Secondary outlets are WVIT TV Channel 30 and WLAD Radio 800 AM.

When all else fails, call me at the number listed in you newsletter or e-mail me at jasetaro@mags.net or jasetaro@yahoo.com.

News Bytes

E-commerce - According to a report from Goldman Sachs, Nielson/NetRatings and Harris Interactive online holiday sales rose 30% in 2005. The top five product categories were clothing and apparel, computer hardware and peripherals, consumer electronics, books and toys/video games.

In related news, Amazon.com reported its best holiday sales ever, with more than 108 million items ordered.

Sony Settles - Sony BMG Music has reached a settlement in one of the class action law suites filed in the wake of the DRM rootkit scandal. Under the terms of the settlement, consumers who purchased one of the affected titles can get free replacement, \$7.50 in cash, and a free download from one of three music-download sites including Apples iTunes. Customers who don't want to bother with the small check can opt for three free album downloads instead. Consumers who purchased CDs in 2003 and 2004 that contained an earlier version of Sony's copy-protection software will be offered a free download of the disks contents.

As part of the settlement, Sony BMG will bring in an independent auditor to monitor its digital rights management software to ensure that it respects consumer's privacy.

Next Generation Macs - Apple CEO Steve Jobs revealed several new products at Macworld Expo in January. Among them were the company's first computers based on Intel microprocessors, the Macbook Pro and a new iMac.

Both systems are based on Intel's new Core Duo microprocessor. The Core Duo is essentially a dual core version of the Pentium M microprocessor. Apple claims the new Macbook Pro is roughly 4 times faster than the current Powerbook notebooks, while the new Core Duo-based iMacs are roughly twice as fast as the current iMac G5.

Will Windows run on the new Macs? No, not yet anyway. Apple's new Macs rely on Intel's EFI (Extensible Firmware Interface) for boot-up, rather than the older BIOS that PCs use. Windows XP doesn't support EFI, but the next version, Windows Vista, which is scheduled for release later this year, should.

End Notes

My winter reading list keeps growing the latest additions are:

- *The Unknown Battle of Midway: The Destruction of the American Torpedo Squadrons*, by Alvin Kernan

- *Mary, Mary*, by James Patterson

Unfortunately, I have to cut this month's column short and head off to meeting. Your questions, comments and book recommendation are always welcome. You can reach me at jasetaro@mags.net or jasetaro@yahoo.com.

—JEFF SETARO

Membership Information

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Postmaster

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Editorial Committee

Managing Editor:	Allan Ostergren
Associate Editor:	Ted Rowland
Production Editor:	Marc Cohen
Technical Editor:	Bruce Preston
Editor-at-large	Mike Kaltschne

Contributors

Charles Bovaird	Larry Buoy
Richard Corzo	Jim Scheef
Jeff Setaro	Richard Ten Dyke

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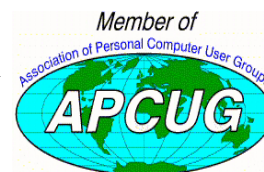
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Don Neary
APCUG Liaison
203-746-5338

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Officers

PRESIDENT: Jeff Setaro (203) 748-6748 (jasetaro@yahoo.com)
Vice Presidents: Gene Minasi, Jamie Yates, Gloria Arnold
SECRETARY: Lisa Leifels • **TREASURER:** Charles Bovaird

Directors

dacsboard@dacs.org

Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	cbovaird@dacs.org
Howard Berger	(860) 355-9837	hberger@dacs.org
Richard Corzo	(203) 797-1518	rcorzo@dacs.org
John Gallichotte	(203) 426-0394	gallichotte@dacs.org
Sean Henderson	(203) 837-0308	shenderson@dacs.org
Lisa Leifels	(203) 270-7584	lleifels@dacs.org
Bill Keane	(203) 438-8032	bkeane@dacs.org
Bruce Preston	(203) 438-4263	bpreston@dacs.org
Jim Scheef	(860) 355-0034	jscheef@yahoo.com
Jeff Setaro	(203) 748-6748	jasetaro@yahoo.com
Jamie Yates	(203) 746-0892	jyates@dacs.org

Committees

NEWSLETTER: Allan Ostergren: (860) 210-0047; dacseditor@dacs.org
PROGRAM: Jamie Yates • **WEB MASTER:** Scott Preston (spreston@mags.net)
PR: Gloria Arnold (pr@dacs.org) • **APCUG LIAISON:** Don Neary (203) 746-5538
RESOURCE CENTER: (203) 748-4330 • **WEB SITE:** <http://www.dacs.org>

HelpLine

Volunteers have offered to field member questions by phone. Please limit calls to the hours indicated below. Days means 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; evening means 6 to 9:30 p.m. Please be considerate of the volunteer you are calling. HelpLine is a free service. If you are asked to pay for help or are solicited for sales, please contact the dacs.doc editor; the person requesting payment will be deleted from the listing. Can we add your name to the volunteer listing?

d = day **e** = evening

Program	Name	Phone #	
Alpha Four	Dick Gingras	(203) 775-1102	(d e)
APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
C/UNIX/ObjC	Kenneth Lerman	(203) 426-4430	(d e)
Clipper	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
Dbase/DOS	Alan Boba	(203) 264-1753	(e)
DOS	John Gallichotte	(203) 426-0394	(d e)
Electronics	Andrew Woodruff	(203) 798-2000	(d e)
Focus	Jim Scheef	(860) 355-0034	(e)
Hardware	John Gallichotte	(203) 426-0394	(d e)
Interface-Instrumentation	Andrew Woodruff	(203) 798-2000	(d e)
Microsoft Access	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
Newdeal	Marc Cohen	(203) 775-1102	(d e)
Paradox	Alan Boba	(203) 264-1753	(e)
PhotoShop/Dreamweaver	Anna Collens	(203) 746-5922	(e)
Statistics/Data Analysis	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(d e)
SQL Server	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
Viruses	Jeff Setaro	(203) 748-6748	(d)
Visual Basic	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
HTML/Java	James Costello	(203) 426-0097	(e)
Windows	Nick Strother	(203) 743-5667	(e)

Directors' Notes

A regular meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, January 9, 2006. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Corzo, Gallichotte, Henderson, Leifels, Preston, Setaro and Yates. President Jeff Setaro presided and Secretary Lisa Leifels kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held on December 12, 2005 were approved.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$13,438.38, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$13,323.79, plus postage on hand of \$114.59. Subtracting a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$4,693.00 left a net equity of \$8,745.38. He also reported that the current membership is 338. Jeff asked if it was possible to tell how many members have signed up for a three-year membership. Charlie said he could find out what percentage of members have signed up for one and three-year memberships.

Jim Scheef's Open Office presentation originally scheduled for the January General Meeting, that was cancelled because of the weather, has been rescheduled for February. Jeff Setaro mentioned that Mike Kaltschnee has offered to do another presentation on Blogging. Jim Scheef wasn't at the meeting, but emailed the idea of presenting Mozilla's Firefox as a future topic. Richard Corzo offered the topic of High Definition TV. Jeff Setaro suggested discussing what you can do today with an ipod.

A new 15 minute "What's New" section will be added to the General Meeting format. This will take place after the Random Access question and answer session. The new section will include either interesting hardware or software announcements of what's currently happening in the computer industry or a brief presentation on a new technology. The Board Members will send their ideas to Jamie Yates, who will narrow down the list. Jamie has volunteered to be the initial person to introduce the selected "What's New" topic at the February General Meeting.

Richard Corzo brought up the calendar discrepancy problem between the website and the newsletter. Jeff Setaro stated that when there are SIG meeting changes, an email needs to be sent to both Allan Ostergren and Scott Preston. Allan updates the information in the DACS newsletter and Scott updates the information on the DACS website. Jeff said he was going to ask Jim to set up a SIG leader mailing

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Continued on page 4

list, so he can easily communicate important information to the SIG leaders.

Jeff Setaro brought up the subject of the election of DACS officers. The election of officers would take place in March and the officer term would take effect in April. Jeff said he would like to find someone to be the VP of Marketing and Public Relations.

A brief discussion on how last month's meeting cancellation process went. Scott was able to add the meeting cancellation very quickly to the DACS website. John Gallichotte said it would be helpful to tell the members that the meeting cancellations will be announced both on the website and also which radio stations.

—LISA LEIFELS

New Members

11/25/2005 - 1/19/2006

Lambert Wixton

THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

If the membership date on
your mailing label reads

**EXP 11\2005
or earlier**

You need to renew your
DACS membership

NOW

Are you
up to your
nose with
computer
questions?
DACS Special
Interest Groups
may have the
answers. If not, let us
know, and we'll try
to create a new
SIG that helps
fulfill your special
needs.



Meeting Preview

Alternatives to Microsoft Office

Jamie Yates

YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE of your document, and the message comes on the screen "This program has encountered a problem and needs to close down. . . ." Well, that's the message DACS members received on the radio, in their e-mail and on the Web site on January 3, as a winter storm intensified and the slush turned to ice.

In this case, the meeting was simply postponed and rescheduled to February 7. But when that message comes in Windows, it means you are about to lose your file, and if you haven't saved your work, you're out of luck. It's the same as the illegal operations or black screens of death that policed earlier editions of Windows, but this time the blame is placed more on the offending application than on the innocent user.

Applications created for other operating systems miraculously seem to avoid these kinds of error messages and keep on running. But these have typically not been fully compatible with Windows, or achieved the acceptance among average users to encourage application developers to create Windows versions. Well, that's changing.

So, unless you look out your windows and see a *white screen of death*, on Tuesday, February 7, former DACS president Jim Scheef will return to present several free, compatible alternatives to Microsoft Office. It's hard to believe that there are a number of offerings out there that are both free, Microsoft compatible, and run on multiple platforms, such as Linux, Windows and Mac. The two offerings he will focus on will be:

1. OpenOffice.org 2.0
2. ThinkFree Office Online beta

OpenOffice.org 2.0 is the productivity suite that individuals, governments, and corporations around the world have been expecting for the last two years. Easy to use and fluidly interoperable with every major office suite, OpenOffice.org 2.0 realizes the potential of open source.

With new features, advanced XML capabilities and native support for the OASIS Standard OpenDocument format, OpenOffice.org 2.0 gives users around the globe the tools to be engaged and productive members of their society without having to use Microsoft products.

ThinkFree Office Online?

Think you can't open Office documents without paying hundreds of dollars for software? Think again! Just visit ThinkFree Office Online and you can open, edit, and create Office documents with this easy and convenient online service, new from ThinkFree.

With ThinkFree Office Online you can:

- Create Microsoft Office-compatible documents from the Web
- Open and edit your Office documents anywhere and anytime
- Post documents directly to your blog without any conversion
- Create powerful Web presentations using a familiar interface
- Convert your existing documents to PDF format

ThinkFree Office offers all this in an online fashion, so you can create, input, and modify Office formatted documents from any Internet terminal world-wide. It also allows you to save your documents in the widely used PDF format.

ThinkFree Office is currently in beta test.

For those interested in an alternative to the very expensive Microsoft Office line of products this will be an excellent way for you to learn about some of the free packages available out there.

This meeting is open and free to everyone so invite anyone you know who would be interested in this topic.

JAMIE is DACS program director, and a prolific volunteer in the area community



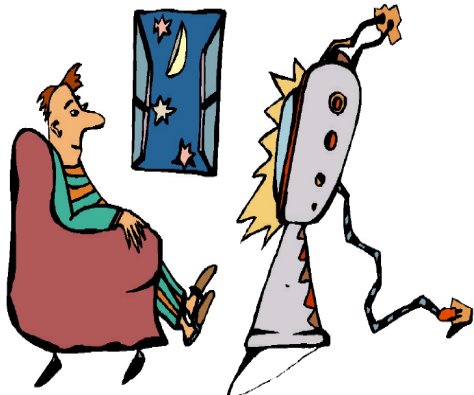
Commentary

Circuit Rider Version 3.8

By Jim Scheef

The Analog Hole

DO YOU LIKE TO record television shows and watch them later? Whether you use an old VCR tape machine or a new disk-based digital video recorder, these “older” devices will become obsolete soon as digital TV takes over, so you will need new equipment. A bill (H.R. 4569, the Digital Transition Content Security Act of 2005) was recently introduced in Congress by Representatives Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Conyers (D-MI) to make sure your new recording and viewing devices all function the way the movie industry wants them to function. Eventually you will need to replace your old analog devices, which will close this loophole. Why call this a loophole? Because according to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), this is what allows those vicious hacker devices (home recording machines) to function. The bill would mandate that all recording and playback devices honor proprietary security information (aka: the broadcast flag) embedded in cable as well as over-the-air broadcasts in the form of a digital watermark developed by VEIL Interactive Technologies, of St. Louis, MO. This would allow the following scenarios: you’re going away on vacation, so you set your DVR to record *Desperate Housewives*. When you return a few days later and start to watch the show, a message shows on the screen that the recording must be viewed within two days and will be erased. Or you just recorded the Super Bowl on your computer and now you want to transfer it to your new Video iPod. The system message says that this program can only be viewed on devices from a certain manufacturer. Or you set your machine to record a new first-run movie so your family can enjoy it the next nite, only to be told that the program is for broadcast viewing only and cannot be recorded at all.



So what, you say? You’ll just keep using your old VCR. Well, that my friends, is the analog hole. It is based on the principle that if you can see or hear it, you can record it, and it drives the big movie studios crazy.

It may be the last vestige of fair use you have to broadcast programming and any digital content. The studios realize that the transition to digital broadcasting and high-definition television is their big chance to take total control over broadcast content, and they are lobbying hard to get this control. They

may not have Jack Abramoff anymore to spread their money around, but that will not slow them down. The only thing that might slow them down is you communicating your wishes to your Congress-people by phone, email and letter. You can find resources on this on the Electronic Freedom Foundation’s web site (www.fff.org).

Given the entertainment industry’s recent history with digital rights management (DRM) software, you can bet that their solution will be safe, bug-free, and will not pose any security risk to your computer or other digital devices. Sure... The technology mandated in this bill is, as noted earlier, a proprietary system that has not been opened to expert review. Naturally, the bill makes it a crime to reverse engineer the DRM software for any purpose, including security research. They do allow access to the source code, but only after paying \$10,000 for a “license” and signing a non-disclosure agreement that prevents you from saying anything if you do find a problem.

The Washington lobbying scandal and your digital rights

Here is how the scandal in Washington affects you personally. Believe it or not, Jack Abramoff had clients beyond Native American nations and others surrounding the gaming industry. Back in the late 90’s he also represented several information technology companies. Would it surprise you to learn

that Microsoft was a client? According to an article in *eWeek* magazine (Jan. 16, 2006), Abramoff lobbied Congress, the White House, and various federal agencies for Microsoft in 1998 on issues including encryption, online commerce and network security. From 1998-2000 Abramoff lobbied for the Business Software Alliance (BSA) “on issues including encryption, copyright protection, export controls and trade.” So here we have an example of how laws such as H.R. 4569 above get passed. Given Abramoff’s methods on behalf of the Indian tribes (and sometimes, concurrently those working against the same tribes), one can assume that he did “an effective” job to ensure that someone other than you controls how you use digital content.

What you can do

Please do not sit on your hands. There are two things that politicians listen to: money and their constituents. They need both to get reelected. If you don’t want your next TV to be a brain-damaged device run by the movie studios, then you need to call your Congress people now. Tell them you want them to protect your right to fair use of the digital content that you purchase on DVD or record from broadcast. It is most important that you call your representative. For most of us that is either Christopher Shays (202-225-5541) or Nancy Johnson (202-225-4476). Tell them that you are against H.R. 4569 and that you want them to oppose the bill. You can also send them email from their Congressional web sites (www.house.gov). Don’t sit on your hands, we need to stop this now – we are fighting big money.

I’m from the government and
I’m here to help you

In another news item from that same issue of *eWeek*, there is a note that the Department of Homeland Security plans to spend \$1.24 million of our tax money to audit the source code of several widely used open-source products. The project, called the “Vulnerability Discovery and Remediation, Open Source Hardening Project”, is part of a larger federal goal to audit the security of products such as Linux, Apache, MySQL, FreeBSD, Mozilla and SendMail. Using automated code analysis techniques from Coventry, Inc, a San Francisco-based company, Stanford University engineers will scan source code for vulnerabilities and report their findings on a publicly accessible database. I don’t know about you, but I feel safer already.

Jim is past president of DACS.

Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: February 2006

Access. Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access, and with SQL Server as a back-end to the database program.

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (bpreston@mags.net).
Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Feb 14

Advanced Operating Systems. Explores OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For info, follow link to Don's site on dacs.org.

Contact: Bill Keane (wbk@mags.net) 203-438-8032.
Meets 2nd Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Feb 8

dotNET. Programs for Web site/server.

Contact: Chuck Fizer (cfizer@snet.net).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Feb 1

Excel/Math. Review of mathematics with emphasis on programming spreadsheets for business applications.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (aam@mags.net).
Meets on 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Feb 16

Digital Imaging. All about digital cameras, retouching and printing.

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 (graffic@bigfoot.com).
Meets last Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Mar 25

Investment Strategies. Discusses various investment strategies to maximize profits and limit risk.

Contact: Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436, (pgehr4402@aol.com).
Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.
Next Meeting: Feb 16

Jobs. Networking and discussion of the jobs search environment.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (aam@mags.net).
Meets by e-mail.
Next meeting: TBA

Linux. Provides Help in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

Contact: Bill Keane (wbk@mags.net) 203-438-8032
Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Feb 15

Macintosh. Focuses on all aspects of the Mac operating system.

Contact: Richard Corzo (macsig@dacs.org)
Meets 1st Thursday at DACS Resource Center at 7 p.m.
Next Meeting: Feb 2

Microcontroller. Investigates microcontroller applications from theory to hands-on implementation and member projects.

Contact: John Gallichotte, 203 426-0394, (tlclotus@ieee.org).
Meets on 4th Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: In hiatus until further notice.

Open Source Web Programming. Focuses on open source tools for Windows and Linux.

Contact: John Lansdale, 914-533-2002.
Meets on 3rd Monday, 7:00 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Feb 20

PC Maintenance. Review of PC hardware and OpSys maintenance and use.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (aam@mags.net).
Meets on 4th Thursday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Feb 23

Server. Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook.

Contact: Jim Scheef (jscheef@telemarksys.com)
Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Feb 9

Visual Basic. Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (cfizer@snet.net) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (JScheef@Telemarksys.com).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Feb 1

Wall Street. Examines Windows stock Market software.

Contact: Phil Dilloway, 203 367-1202 (dilloway@ntplx.net).
Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Feb 27

Web Design. Applications for designing and creating Web sites.

Contact: Anna Collens, 203-746-5922 (acvo@annagraphics.com).
Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Feb 21

SIG News & Events

Macintosh. In January we started off with a video iChat using an iSight camera. In order for this to work, you may need to open up ports in your software and/or hardware firewall as described in the Apple support document "Using iChat AV with a firewall or NAT router" at <http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=93208>. When I initially tried to have a video iChat at home my friend and I found that our chat invitations were being refused. Opening up the ports resolved this.

The next thing I demonstrated was a scanner. Using the shareware program VueScan (<http://www.hamrick.com/>), which comes in both Mac and Windows versions, I previewed the scan of a magazine cover, and found the Auto crop setting did a good job of finding the edges. The program can be set up to automatically open a program, such as Photoshop Elements, to edit the scanned image. One thing I learned recently in the Digital Imaging SIG is that for many purposes (such as posting to a Web page) you can scan at a lower resolution to save to a more

manageable file size. VueScan comes in both a Standard and Professional Edition, the latter including unlimited upgrades. You may find you like VueScan better than the software that came bundled with your scanner.

Next month, we'll get a presentation on a database program. Peter Wehr will be giving an overview of FileMaker Pro. Since FileMaker is cross platform, we invite any interested Windows users to attend. FileMaker Pro is a versatile, easy-to-use relational database and rapid application development environment. It is used for everything from managing recipes to advanced e-commerce web sites. We will have a brief overview of the product line, followed by an introduction to single user database development.

Server. January at Server SIG was play with Linksys month. Bill Kean brought in his Linksys WRT54G wireless router that has

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February 2006

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																				
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Programming

Texas Hold-Em an Evolutionary Approach, Part 2

By Richard Ten Dyke

IN PART 1 OF THIS series, I described the goal to build a computer program that will use object-oriented programming to learn how to play a decent game of Texas Hold-Em. In Part 2 we discuss the first of the programming efforts

In Object-Oriented Programming, an "object" is a piece of code that operates like a small special purpose program. It holds its own data and methods that operate on the data. Objects send messages to and receive messages from each other, just like separate individuals might if they were working on a project together.

An object, also called a "class" contains the methods and holders for the data, but itself does nothing. An "instance" of a class will be created for a specific purpose. An "uninstantiated" class has no operational capability. Only instances can do anything. Unfortunately, the terms "object" and "class" are sometimes used interchangeably. The term "class" usually refers to the abstract description while "object" might be used to mean either the abstract "class" or an instance. An important part of the process of using object-oriented programming is the creation of instances when needed, and destruction when they are no longer needed. Instances should be destroyed when they are no longer needed to free up memory. A class can have more than one instance existing at any time, as we shall see.

When setting up a program using Real Basic, the development system immediately creates two classes and their instances. One is the Application class, which serves as the container for all classes in the application. The second is the Window class and a single instance. The window has built into it many of the tools needed for establishing a user interface, such as buttons, menus and displays. One of the values of object-oriented programming is the ability to re-use code. and this is a good example of that.

In creating a program to play Texas Hold-Em, I used the Window to display the cards being played and buttons to control

the action. My first pass at the program is a simplified version of the game, created to get the feel of the game and of the programming techniques. The user, called Player1, plays the game against two opponents. There is no betting strategy to speak of, since the betting is preprogrammed. It costs Player1 one "dollar" to play, two dollars to see the flop, three to see the turn, four to see the

river, and five to see the opponents' cards and to win. If you, Player1, go all the way, you will have bet a total of \$15, and if you win, you will receive \$30. So the payoff is one-to-one, while the odds against your winning, are two-to one. If you play each deal to the end, you will soon lose all of your money. However, you have the advantage of being able to fold at any point along the way. This gives you an advantage that your two opponents do not have, and if you are smart or lucky enough, you should be able to win against them.

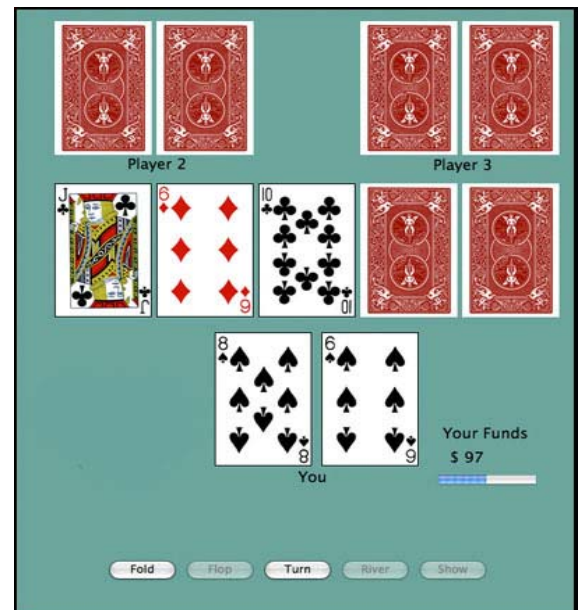
In order to build the logic of the game, I created two additional objects, the Deck object and the Hand object. The Deck object represents a deck of 52 cards. The data contained in the Deck object is a list of the cards that are remaining in the Deck after each card has been randomly "dealt." The object contains a method for randomly selecting a card from the Deck. To get a card, another object can send a "pick" message to Deck and will receive, in return, a randomly selected number from 1 to 52. Deck will remember which card had been dealt, and will not return the same number again. Deck

also contains a method that will shuffle the deck, and start dealing over again.

The second new object is Hand. Each instance of the Hand object contains a list of up to seven cards that have been selected by sending a pick message to Deck. Each card is represented by a number from 1 to 52. For each card Hand will place a "1" in a 4 column by 14 row grid indicating a particular value of that card and its suit. If the card is numbered 1, 14, 27, or 40, it is an Ace of one of the four suits, and a "1" will be placed in row 1 as well as row 14, because in analyzing the Hand, the ace is treated as both high and low.

Hand also contains a method for evaluating the hand itself. It can determine, by adding across a row, how many cards there might be of a single value: one card, a pair, three of a kind, or four of a kind. It can also add the number of cards in a column to determine how many cards are in a particular suit. Five cards in a suit would constitute a flush. It can look down the columns for all suits and determine if there are five entries with no empty gaps, indicating the presence of a straight. The evaluation method goes through these operations and places a value into a special memory location belonging to the Hand, called a "property" which can be retrieved by another object. The value is determined to be consistent with the ranking of Hands, so the value for a flush is greater than the value for a straight, for example.

The mechanism for playing the game is included in the Window object, and specific actions are triggered by



mouse-clicking buttons on the Window interface. When Window opens, the program creates one instance of Deck and three instances of Hand, known as Player1, Player2, and Player3. When the "Deal" button is clicked Deck is asked to pick two cards for each Player and send them in Player1, Player2, and Player3. Pressing "Deal" also subtracts one dollar from Player1's money. When the "Flop" button is clicked, Deck delivers three cards to the table, and places those same three cards to each of the Hands. Each Hand will now hold five cards, the two "hole" cards belonging to each player and the three "table" cards belonging to all. Pressing "Flop" subtracts two dollars from Player1's money. Instead of pressing Flop, the user could press the "Deal" button again, only at this point the word "Deal" has been replaced by the word "Fold". At any future point in the play, the user can click "Fold" and start over with a new deal. Doing so, the user will lose all the money that has been subtracted from his account.

Window also contains place-holders for card images which are gathered from a separate file of 52 card images and a card back.

The user can also press "Turn", "River" or "Show" in the proper order. Turn and River will each place an additional card on the table, and insert them into the Player's Hands. They will

also cause funds to be subtracted from Player1's account. Finally, the user can click "Show." Having done this, the Window will ask each of the Hands for the value that has been determined by Hand's evaluation method. If the value of Player1's Hand is the greatest, 30 dollars will be added to Player1's funds.

The Window contains a progress bar to show a visual indication of the amount of funds remaining, as well as a printed dollar amount. Player1 starts with \$100, and when the funds are gone, a message appears "You Have Lost Everything." and the program terminates. Too bad. Winning enough so that the value of funds goes above \$200 prompts a message "You are the big winner tonight, Congratulations!" But your reward is fleeting, because the program terminates this time as well. However, in either case you can always start over with another \$100.

In playing around with the program, I personally find it sort of addicting. It is a real challenge to win, and luck plays a role as important as skill. I lose most of the time, but I am getting better.

RICHARD TEN DYKE has previously contributed to this newsletter on the topic of Digital Photography and computer creativity. He is retired from IBM and can be reached at tendyke@bedfordny.com. All opinions are his own, and he welcomes comments

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SIG Notes, Continued from page 6

been "upgraded" with new open source firmware. All current Linksys routers run a version of Linux as the OS, with a friendly web-based user interface that provides a limited set of features. There are several open source projects that have produced "enhanced" versions of the OS with a user interface that exposes many more settings. These projects also allow adding entirely new features like an SSH (Secure Shell) command line interface. It was really cool to poke around and see what these routers can actually do.

The February meeting will continue with routers, as we explore building a wireless router using a regular PC as the base. We'll also continue to explore the expanded capabilities of Bill's router

The next Server SIG meeting will be Thursday, February 9th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. See you there.

Coming in March to the
DACS General Meeting

What's New?

A 15-minute summary of the latest happenings in hi-tek, along with hints at what to look forward to in coming months. Right after Random Access.

Guest Cartoonist



Alanna Raph (14) is a student at Danbury High School. A talented performer, she plays piano, flute (with the Sons of Portugal Band), and saxophone.

As a cartoonist, Alanna is under the tutelage of Bucky Milam. She is a certified scuba Diver, and has been to Australia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Ireland.

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"Don't cha just love Schubert?"

Product Review

PCmover by LapLink

By Bruce Preston

[Editor's note: Last month, we ran a guest column on "Move-Me" a utility from Spearit Software that migrates applications between computers. The review below on another migration utility, is by our own Bruce Preston, editor of Random Access, which was cancelled on account of snow]

I'VE LIVED IN Connecticut for 30 years, so while I'm not a native I think that I've acquired some New England traits such as being a bit frugal. For example, more times than not I've run up more than 100,000 miles on a car before I even think about trading it in on a new model. There's a similar situation with my computers—my company records show that my main desktop machine was purchased from AMSYS in 1996, but that I've over time extensively rebuilt it—I've replaced the motherboard, processor, memory, video card, sound card, CD drive, hard disks and power supply. Some components I've upgraded several times. I think the only original parts are the case and the 3-1/4" floppy drive. There are several reasons that I've done upgrades—in no particular order: I like to tinker under the hood to see how things work (my Linux server is named Igor because it's completely assembled from recycled parts,) it's easy to put in a larger primary drive if the drive comes with the appropriate upgrade software such as MaxBlast, and it's a bear to have to re-install applications.

The latter point is very significant to me. I'm a consultant who also does an extensive amount of custom application development for clients. Sometimes development requires licenses for 3rd party tools—Active-X controls, compilers, distribution builders such as InstallShield, etc. These in turn often imply updates acquired via web services—so while I have

the original CDs, have saved the downloaded updates, and it is legal for me to install on a new machine if I 'retire' an old machine, the process is very time consuming. I just counted 231 first-level items in my Program Files folder—and Microsoft Office, for example, has several releases within since I have clients running—Access 97, Access 2000, Access XP, and Access 2003—and each has subtle differences that have to be supported.



However, there comes a point where it just makes sense to move to a totally new machine. I had reached that point, so I picked up a nice machine over the Thanksgiving weekend. I set it up the following Monday evening with basic networking, firewall and anti-virus, and then addressed the task of doing the migration from my old machine. For many clients I have just used the File and Settings Transfer Wizard that is part of Windows XP (Start / Programs / Accessories / System Tools). It does a fine job of moving your e-mail account, browser bookmarks, and contents of My Documents, but doesn't move end-user applications such as Microsoft Office, or any developer tools etc. If you look on the shelves of retail outlets, usually you will find Intellimover, and it has gotten very good reviews; but it claims to only know how to move about four dozen or so common applications—not nearly enough to make it worth my while.

Then I remembered Gene Barlow describe LapLink software's PCmover in his presentation for DACS last summer. PCmover claimed to move everything, so I checked their site: <http://www.laplink.com/products/pcmover/overview.asp> and liked what I saw - especially the part about applications and associated registry settings. I brushed the cobwebs off my credit card and ordered a copy from Gene's site

on Monday evening. It arrived Friday, which was just as good because I didn't want to try doing the migration on a business day.

Saturday afternoon I installed PCmover on both machines. It lets you transfer via local area network (the method I used); LapLink parallel cable (I have one somewhere), LapLink USB cable (nope); an intermediate computer's hard drive (e.g. a server, but it would take twice as long); ZIP drive (I've got more than 50GB of stuff to be moved—not practical); or CDs (that would be about 70 CDs, again, no thanks). You install it on the receiving computer first, then on the sending computer. Once installed, you control things from the sending computer. It requires web access from the sending computer, as it needs to be activated, and the activation is only good for one sending computer (additional move licenses are available). I pushed the button and sat back. After about 10 minutes it had completed taking inventory and told me that it was starting the move. It estimated that it would take 10 hours. I broke for dinner and came back and found a progress meter which reported that it had completed about 1/10th of the work. I left the machines running over night.

Sunday morning, I checked in and it reported that it had completed the move in 10 hours 15 minutes. I booted the new machine, and it came up with my old desktop with all of my icons right where I expected to find them. My old machine had two physical hard drives with several partitions (left over from when Windows couldn't handle large partitions). PCmover had created folders on my single new drive, and named them DRIVE_D, DRIVE_E, ..., DRIVE_J and moved things from the old partitions into the folders. I happened to know that the NetBeans Java development environment had been on logical drive J: on the old machine, and would thus be a test to see how well it resolved things; so I went to my start menu and clicked on NetBeans. It came right up. PCmover had changed registry entries that previously had J:\NetBeans to read C:\Drive_J\NetBeans. Things looked very good.

I didn't mention that when the new machine first came up after the move that there was a startup program, called Start This that listed the things that were not moved. Examination of the list revealed why things weren't moved. For example, my old machine had an ATI video card. ATI provides a little utility ATITray that resides in the system tray—it lets you do a

rapid change of display resolution, rather than having to go into screen properties / settings. Since the new machine doesn't have an ATI display adapter, it wouldn't have worked and PCmover rightly disabled it. My old machine had a Hauppauge WinTV board. Because I didn't want to disturb anything in my old machine, I hadn't moved it to the new one prior to the migration, so PCmover didn't install its drivers. There were a few other things like this, all quite reasonable.

Sunday after lunch I pulled the WinTV board from the old machine and put it into the new one. I installed the drivers and immediately had a working TV-in-window. Next I connected my LCD display and installed Pivot Pro—a utility that was bundled with the flat panel, it supports rotating the display 90 degrees, such that your display is in portrait mode. PCmover had reported that it couldn't be moved. Upon boot the machine came up in CGA mode (yikes!) with only 16 colors. Windows reported that there was something wrong with the display (I'll say!) and suggested that I re-install my video drivers. I uninstalled Pivot Pro and booted, and it came back SVGA as it had been before. I tried installing Pivot Pro one more time, same results, so I removed it. After some searching on the web I found that Pivot Pro has a problem when Symantec's pcAnywhere is present. They both attach to the video driver, and the installation sequence matters. I uninstalled pcAnywhere (having saved the "address book"), installed Pivot Pro successfully, rebooted, then re-installed pcAnywhere, and all was well. Once I had completed evaluating all of the items in the exception list I uninstalled PCmover from the new machine to get rid of the Start This dialog box. Yes, there's a check box to hide it, but I'd rather remove it to keep the machine clean.

I've been running on the new machine for about a week now, and haven't run into any non-functional applications, broken registry settings, or missing data. The first time I started Microsoft Office 2003 components, the Windows Installer program kicked in briefly, but it did not require me to re-activate. The only problem I've run into is habitual—most of my client's files were located in folders below J:\CLIENTS. They are now in C:\DRIVE_J\CLIENTS and I have to make the adjustment. Because the new machine has built-in card readers for

most formats, I still have a J: shown within My Computer and click on it—but it's an empty memory card slot. Over time, I will move things out of various C:\DRIVE_x folders and clear them out. But some will require care, since there are a few applications installed on those former drives.

I would guess that it took me about 4 hours of sitting in front of one machine or another to do the migration, including the time to resolve the display issue. PCmover took 10-1/4 hours. At list price of \$39.95 (members of user groups can get a discount via Gene Barlow at User Group Relations - <http://www.ugr.com/>) that works out to \$3.90 an hour – which is well below the Federal Minimum Wage of \$5.15 an hour.

The old machine isn't going to go to waste. I've already got a new motherboard, processor, memory and power supply for it. I'll wipe the drives, and use it as a test bed for Windows Vista when it goes gold. If PCmover supports Vista, I'll probably use it to migrate from my new, now current machine to the Vista machine. Heck, I will even spring for a new copy without griping.

BRUCE PRESTON is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT specializing in database applications. A DACS director, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at askdacs@dacs.org.

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DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in *dacs.doc* at no charge. Ads may be placed electronically by fax or by modem, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting. Fax your ads to Charlie Bovaird at 203 792-7881.

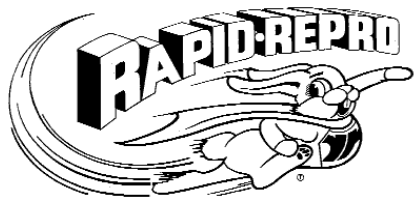
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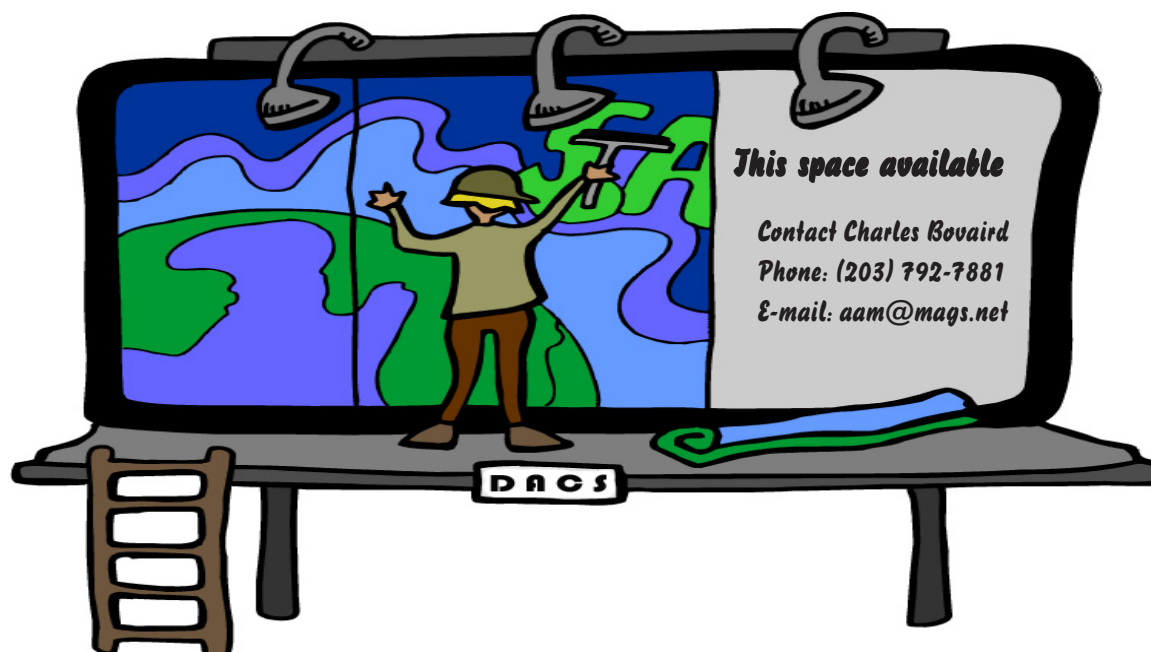
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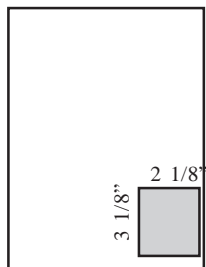
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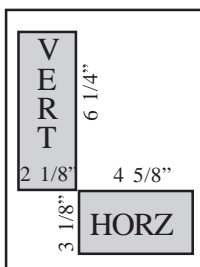
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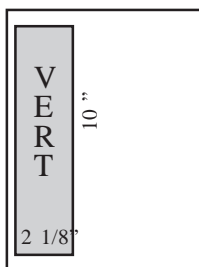
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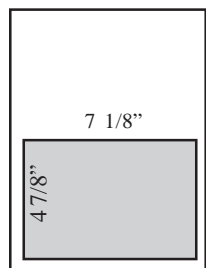
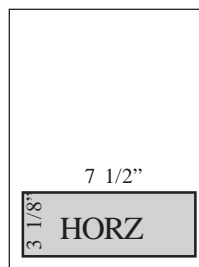
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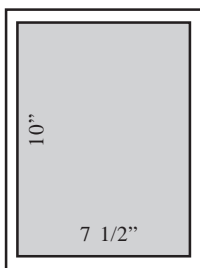
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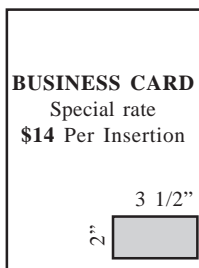
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We sponsor or participate in community support projects by collecting, repairing, and redistributing used computer equipment and software to community service providers such as schools, libraries, and patient/client support groups. DACS members provide pickup, refurbishing, installation, and training assistance as needed. Firms or individuals with equipment to donate should leave a message on the DACS Infoline (203-748-4330). or send an email to recycling@dacs.org.

The Voice for Joanie program was created in 1992 through the initiative of DACS member, Shirley Fredlund. This program provides computer-assisted speech for victims of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis ("Lou Gehrig's Disease"). DACS members have contributed volunteer time and technical assistance since the program began. Voice for Joanie and DACS have earned national computer industry recognition and financial assistance for this vital collaboration.

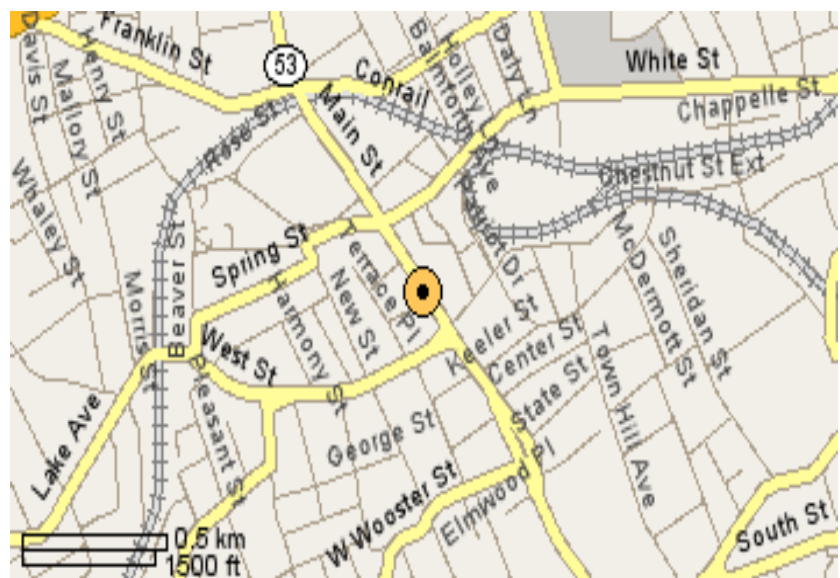
Our general meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. The main presentation is scheduled from 8-9:30, preceded by casual networking, announcements and Random Access, an informal question and answer session. A free product raffle is often held at the conclusion of the main presentation.

In addition to the general meeting, DACS sponsors many special interest groups (SIGs) where members can learn and share information about a specific topic. Each SIG plans its own meeting schedule and program topics.

Our newsletter, *dacs.doc* is published monthly for our members, and mailed to arrive before the general meeting. It features articles written by members and others on timely topics including product and software reviews, issues and trends in personal computing and "how-to" articles on sound, video, digital photography, etc. In addition, each issues includes the calendar of meetings, announcements on SIGs and other DACS events. *dacs.doc* has won numerous prizes over the years for its design and content.

Through its activities, DACS offers numerous opportunities to network both professionals and computer hobbyists. Our Special Interest Groups are an excellent way for members to both learn and share application or hardware knowledge. Any DACS member can form a special interest group on any topic where there is interest. Most SIGs meet in our Resource Center in downtown Danbury.

If you have concerns, requests, or suggestions regarding DACS or its programs, please contact dacsprez@dacs.org. DACS officers and board members' phone numbers are listed on page 3 of *dacs.doc*.



The DACS Resource Center is in Ives Manor, Lower Level, 198 Main Street, Danbury, CT 06810 (203-748-4330).



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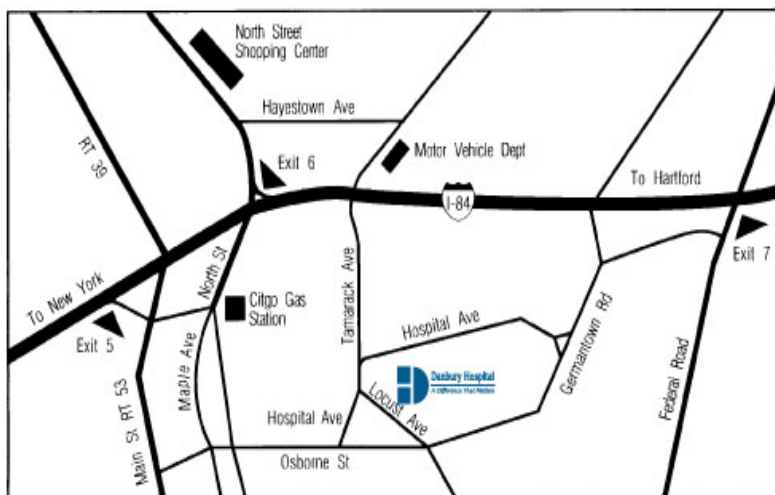
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Jim Scheef jscheef@telemarksys.com
www.telemarksys.com



Arthur E. Crane
Principal
(860) 350-8848

Capstone Services
HUMAN RESOURCE ADVISORS

18 Wanzer Hill Road • Sherman, Connecticut 06784
Phone: 860-350-8848 • Fax: 860-350-8898

Print
Media

Allan Ostergren
president

2 Crooked Furrows Lane
Sherman, CT 06784

Tel: (860) 210-0047

ostergren@worldnet.att.net