



August 2002

Volume 13, Issue 8

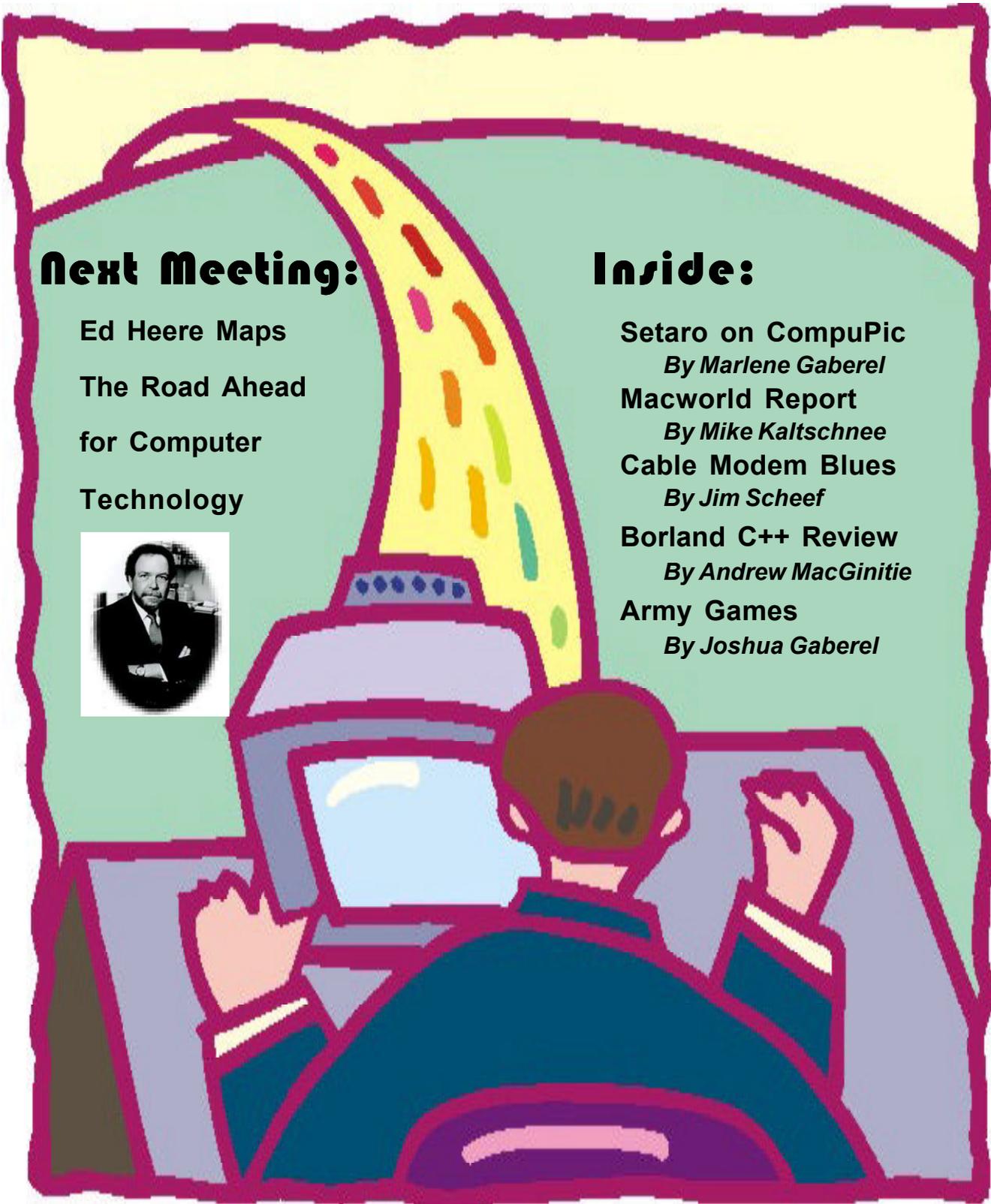
Next Meeting:

Ed Heere Maps
The Road Ahead
for Computer
Technology



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President's File



PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS ISSUE 0-3

Does your company have an "acceptable use" policy covering personal use of the Internet while at work? If they do, you should read it carefully. If they don't, you might want to inquire about how the company monitors Internet use and not simply assume that they don't monitor at all. Privacy has been one of my themes (rants?) so far and the cover article of the July, 2002, issue of PC Magazine is all about computer monitoring—make that spyware—programs. After reading the article, it would appear that the question is not if your company monitors your computer use, but how.

The PC Magazine article, "Watching you watching me," is an eye opener. Whether it is a company watching its employees or a vengeful wife gathering evidence against a wayward husband, monitoring software is easy to install and will run without your being aware. The most invasive monitors capture every keystroke you make into a log file which is then emailed for analysis. Some programs log every web site visited, every email sent and all your instant messages. So if you think that instant messages are safe from your boss, think again.

At work, your employer can monitor much of what you do without any extra software at all on your PC. Every email sent to and from your company email address passes thru the company email server where every message can be, and probably is, written to a permanent log. Many companies, such as banks, are legally required to log such communications. All Internet commu-

nications from your PC at work passes thru the company's routers and firewall, where it is quite easy to run usage monitoring software that rings alarms when it finds specific web sites or key words. Many companies run such software to guard against loss of trade secrets and protect the company from law suits. Ever think what might happen when you vent your anger in a flaming email to your friend across town, if you happen to use a few of the wrong keywords when describing what you would like to happen to your boss. Of course you're not serious, but the software reading your mail doesn't know that! The world changed last September.

So you might wonder if all this is legal. According to the article, the courts have repeatedly held that a company has the right to install any software it wishes on the computers that it owns, and to monitor its employees' use of those computers. Do you have any recourse? PC Magazine tested six monitor programs and three hardware devices. None of the software was so stealthy that they could not be detected using utilities included with Windows. That's the good news. The bad news is that the very act of searching for a monitor program could be enough to bring you under closer scrutiny. Are you paranoid yet?

Has anyone from the IT Department given you a new keyboard lately? One of the hardware devices they tested was a keystroke logger built right into a keyboard. Hardware devices are usually visible in some way. Most often they look like an extension of your keyboard cable.

So what's the bottom line here? What follows is my personal opinion. Anyone who uses a company email address for personal business is a fool, especially when there are so many free alternatives that don't leave a direct footprint on your company PC. Hotmail and Yahoo are probably the best, but there are others. So even if you do not have an account with an Internet service provider (ISP), you can avoid sending personal email to the company servers. Of course, your visits to Yahoo or Hotmail can still be logged by the company, but the content of your email is less likely to be recorded by the company.

Beyond the question of letting your boss, or perhaps worse, the network administrator, read your email, there is the problem of telling everyone your new email address when you change jobs. A Yahoo or Hotmail address is permanent, so long as you keep it semi-active. An even better

President's file *Continued on page 5*

Membership Information

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Don Neary
 APCUG Liaison
 203-746-5538

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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) 426-0484	(e)
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Q&A ver 3/4	Anthony Telesha	(203) 748-4478	(d e)
QuickBooks	Bill Sears	(203) 743-3367	(e)
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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 meeting of the DACS Board was held at the Resource Center on Monday, July 8, 2002. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Ostergren, Pearson, Preston, Scheef and Setaro. President Jim Scheef presided and Secretary Larry Buoy kept the record. The minutes of the meeting held June 10, 2002 were presented and approved with one correction.

Treasurer Charlie Bovaird reported cash and bank accounts totaling \$21,025.69, plus postage on hand of \$117.49, a total of \$21,143.18, less prepaid dues of \$8,444.00, a net of \$12,699.18. He also reported current membership of 473.

A critique and discussion ensued with respect to the initial attempt at altering the cover page of the newsletter, resulting in general agreement that background shading be eliminated and other technical changes.

Further discussion on the subject of the possible amendment of the Bylaws was initiated. It was the consensus that additional research be done on the subject with Bruce Preston and Larry Buoy agreeing to act as a committee to study the current status of the Bylaws and draft any amendments deemed advisable.

With respect to the replacement and updating of the projector currently being used at General Meetings and by the SIGs, it was agreed that Jeff Setaro be authorized to purchase same at a cost not to exceed \$4,000.00.

Addressed next was the schedule of presentations for General Meetings. Jeff Setaro advised that, barring cancellations, the balance of this year's programs were set. Discussed next were possible sources of programs for the future, given the scarcity of vendors now willing to offer presentations. Suggested were a survey of members as to appreciation of past programs and future subjects they would like to have covered. Also suggested was solicitation of possible subjects that individual members or SIGs could present and of "local" businesses or industries involved in technology, including Danbury Hospital itself.

Also briefly discussed was the effort being made to keep the DACS Web Page current and possible inclusion of discount incentives for DACS members and/or links thereto. In addition, the issuance of DACS membership cards was suggested and various tie-ins explored.

—Larry Buoy

Meeting Preview

Getting from Heere to There

A Road Map to the Digital Future

By Marlène Gaberel

DACS' NEXT GENERAL meeting, on August 6th, will feature a special presentation by our own seer, Ed Heere. A longtime DACS icon and past Chairman of the Board, Ed will discuss the current state and future prospects of the computer industry.

Ed is one of the pioneers of the IBM-PC industry, having designed, sourced, and imported one of the first IBM compatible PC computer systems in early 1983. This was less than 2 years after IBM introduced the first personal computer in late 1981.

Prior to 1987, Ed was Vice President of Marketing and Product Development for Berkey, Inc., a NYSE listed company that imported and distributed Electronic, Video and Photographic products from Europe and the Far East. He has since been President, and recently named CEO, of AMSYS, Inc. a Ridgefield, CT, business which provides computer consulting, computer services, computer networking and internet services. Ed lives in Redding, CT with his wife, Donna, and two daughters: Kristel, and Samantha (both avid computer enthusiasts).

In a little-known corollary to Moore's law, Ed once postulated that the increasing speed of computer processing has led to an equally rapid decline in smoking by PC technicians who no longer have the time to light up while waiting for their systems to boot.

Ed has many years of knowledge of the industry and will share his insider information with members and visitors. The general topics will be as follows, but be prepared to have Ed go in any direction as the meeting progresses.



- Hardware - Donate the old and buy new... PC upgrades are just not cost efficient.

- Operating Systems - W2000 / XP / Linux - Which is right for you? For your Business?

- Internet Broadband - DSL/ Cable Modem/ Frame Relay - Which is right for you?... For your business.?

- Monitors - Is bigger always better? How about Flat Panels? How about energy use, emissions, heat?

- Are Modems really dead?

- Is Wireless networking ready for the home? How about the Office? Should I wait for 802.11a?

- Are the wonderful careers in IT a thing of the past? What happened to all the "Consultants"?

- What brands of PCs are the Best? The Worst? Do any PC companies really offer Service?

- Will Handhelds (PDAs) replace PCs? Will they replace Cell Phones. Will they Replace Still Cameras? Will they replace Recorders? Will they replace Video Cameras? Will they replace Spouses? They may, if you are not careful.

- Do you really need a Notebook

PC with a GPS Receiver in your car?

- Imagine how your life would change if the Internet went away....

Plus Much, Much, Much, More... including the answer to the often-asked question: Does Ed Heere really have more sports cars than John Patrick has motorcycles? And do you really care?" Or, is there really a picture of Ed McMahon on the door of the restroom at AMSYS with the words "Heere's Johnny"?

Be prepared for an interesting meeting. Bring a guest, bring your significant other or your kid(s), as the August DACS meeting is the time to find out where the computer industry is heading. Ed brings lots of experience to the field and will share his industry insights with us.

Mark the date for August 6th at the Danbury Hospital Auditorium. The meeting will start at 7 pm with the questions and answer session and continue with brief club announcements. Ed Heere's presentation will begin at 8 pm.

Marlène Gaberel is a DACS board member and VP for Public Relations. You can e-mail her at: marlene_gaberel@yahoo.com.



President's file *Continued from page 2*

solution is a personal domain name. I registered my company domain name in late 1994 (I think), the same year that we set up the first DACS web site. Since first registering telemarksys.com, I've moved it from North American Internet to I84.net (now part of NetPLex) to 9NetAve (a web hosting service, now part of XO Communications) to Mags Net (easily my favorite local ISP - www.mags.net). All that time, my company email address stayed exactly what it is now: jscheef@telemarksys.com. Of course, your domain doesn't need to be for a company. I registered Scheef-family.com a few months back just for fun.

Also I've opened email accounts on Yahoo and MSN to use when registering on web sites and for strictly personal stuff. This helps reduce spam on the company server.

Now, on to a lighter topic: books. Well, lighter in some ways, but getting heavier all the time in others, especially price! A representative sample of some recent book purchases weighed an average 3 3/4 pounds each! They have list prices ranging from \$34.99 to \$59.99, and the most recent \$60 book did not even come with a CD-ROM! This is out of control! It

wouldn't be so bad if these books became references that could sit on your bookshelf for years and get worn from reference. Most are obsolete in only a few months. If you look, half the books on the shelves at Borders are out of date, and they still want to charge you full price! If you're not incensed by this situation, I certainly am!

Being a tight-wad starting from my genetic makeup, I have been trying to buy books at a discount for years. My long term favorite has been the Small Computer Book Club, now called Books Online (www.computerbooksdirect.com). I've been a member of this "book a month club" for more than ten years. [Hint: after you join, call them and ask to be put on "positive reply." That way, you get only the books you actually order]. Unfortunately, they were better when they focused exclusively on technical books. Now their parent company seems more interested in selling Steven King or Danielle Steel, so I have been moving to other sources. I really liked FatBrain.com until they were bought by Barnes and Noble. Oh well...

My newest favorite is www.BookPool.com. Bill Keane, leader of the Linux SIG, turned me on to this site

that has the "look and feel" of the old FatBrain (hmm...). They currently have a 40% off sale on books from Wrox Press. This is nothing to be sneezed at.

If you don't like ordering books on the Internet, Microsoft has a deal for user group members. A recent Mindshare Monthly newsletter carried a notice of a "User Group Discount on MS Press Titles". It reads:

"All user group members are entitled to 20% off all Microsoft Press books. To receive your discount, place your orders by phone by calling 1-800-MSPRESS. Give them the code MCPC to identify yourself as a user group member and receive 20% off." Yes, it's only 20% but it's something—and you don't have to stand in line at Borders. The Microsoft Mindshare web site is www.microsoft.com/mindshare, and MSPress is at www.microsoft.com/mspress. All of these links will be active on the DACS web site and you will find this column at www.dacs.org/dacs/presidents_message.htm.

Hope you're having a great summer!

—JIM SCHEEF

DACSPREZ@DACS.ORG

Product Review

America's Army

By Joshua Gaberel

HAVE YOU EVER wanted to join the army, but you knew/know that you can not possibly make it? Well, how about joining the army on the computer—with the new game the army has just released for free? The reason for this is because they want to recruit young computer-playing teens into the army. You can do that. You can go through all the things that the modern American soldier does. You must go through boot camp, and then later do other military training, such as sniper training, airborne training and ranger training. At the end of your training you can go on the internet and fight with other soldiers to accomplish a list of goals that you must complete.

You can play all of the multiplayer games at servers from gamespy.com.

But, unfortunately, the army made a big mistake by using gamespy at gamespy.com; the servers are horrifically unreliable. You can only load a



mission about one out of every ten tries. Most of the time, you get a "connection failed" sign at the top of the screen. And it cannot possibly be my computer, because we updated it to everything needed for the game.

It was also quite difficult to get the game onto the computer. The whole game takes a lot of space, which means a long wait to get it on the internet, even though I have a cable modem. So instead, we got the game from burnadisk.com. We only had to pay for shipping there. Here is a list of sites to be able to get the game from the internet:

<http://gigex.com/americasarmy.asp>

<http://www.goarmy.com>

<http://www.fileplanet.com>

<http://www.nvidia.com>

<http://www.pc.ign.com>

Overall, this game is probably not worth your time, even with the patches that the army is coming out with. This game is boring, and the multiplayer has to be considered absolutely nothing, next to a perfect multiplayer area like Nova World.

Next review will be of what I think a much better game, Medal of Honor Allied Assault.

Joshua Gaberel is the son of DACS Publicity Director Marlène Gaberel, and a regular reviewer of computer games.

Meeting Review

Setaro on CompuPic

By Marlène Gaberel

AT THE JULY 2ND GENERAL meeting Jeff Setaro made a presentation to DACS members on CompuPic, a photo management tool set that Jeff uses to maintain the DACS Web page. Jeff says that without CompuPic he would have no way of keeping track of all the pictures and photos that are on the site including all the archives. As a user,

photos. Of course, a professional photographer may see differences in picture quality, but most in the audience seem to agree that the pictures were pretty good. Jeff says that he still prefer to take photos with a regular camera even though he has a digital one.

One feature that was mentioned is the speed with which CompuPic responds to remarks from the users of its program. Other features demonstrated were that pictures can be e-mailed directly from the program itself. Photos can be uploaded to a service for development. It can create amazing post cards and poster prints as well as slide shows with sound and background. It can tile multiple pictures on the screen. At maximum resolution, the picture will bring its best results. The program can also create a picture index that can print right onto the printer or send them out for development.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Jeff gave away at the raffle some copies of CompuPic. I wonder what the people who got them think about the program. In my

case, even though I'm still a registered CompuPic user because I had at one point bought a copy but that never got installed on the present computer, the presentation made me want to explore the software that came with my digital camera. After years of being known as the person not to be trusted with a camera, I can now show some decent photos...of course after changes were with the computer.

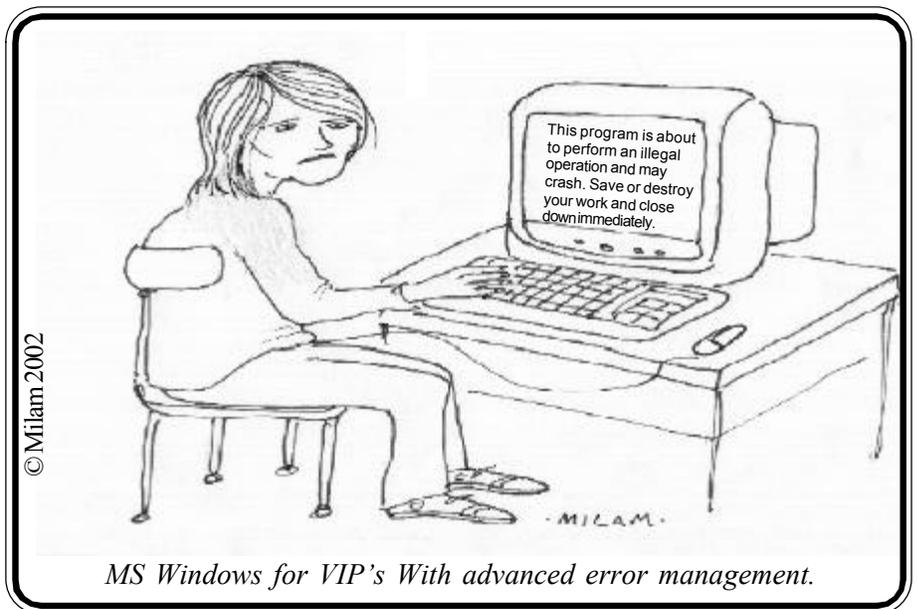
MARLENE GABEREL is a DACS board member and VP for Public Relations. You can e-mail her at: marlene_gaberel@yahoo.com.



Jeff gave us an unbiased view of the software. He admits that he does not know all the capabilities of the software, he uses the features that he needs for his application.

CompuPic can be quite elaborate, especially the higher end edition. As per Jeff, most users utilize the standard version. Using CompuPic, Jeff downloaded some pictures from his digital camera onto the computer. From the screen, pictures can be adjusted such as auto cropping, converting from positive to negative, reducing the red eyes effect and save the pictures to any types of format. Right from the program, web pages can be generated. Different thumbnail themes can be chosen and the background can be changed. Bubble talks can be added to photos. Jeff created a picture CD by simply grabbing the photos from his screen and clicked the Photodex picture CD.

At a certain point of the meeting, the quality of the pictures that Jeff displayed on his computer was vigorously debated. Jeff admitted that he was an amateur photographer doing his best taking family



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Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: August 2002

ACCESS. Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (bpreston@mags.net).

Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next meeting: Aug 13

ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS. Explores and develops OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For meeting notes and notices, follow link to Don's site on dacs.org.

Contact: Don Pearson, 914 669-9622 (pearson@attglobal.net).

Meets on Wednesday of the week following the General Meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY.

Next meeting: Aug 14

GRAPHICS. Create/print high-quality graphics and images.

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 (graffic@ntplx.net). Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo Imaging, Brookfield.

Next Meeting: Off for Summer

INTERNET PROGRAMMING. Programs for Web site/server.

Contact: Chuck Fizer (cfizer@snet.net). Meets on 1st Wednesday, 3-5 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center. Members' suggestions are welcome.

Next Meeting: Aug 7

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: Aug 15

LINUX. Helps in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Aug also be of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

Contact: Bill Keane (bkeane.nai@rcn.com) 203-438-8032

Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Aug 21

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: Aug 8

SMALL BUSINESS. All aspects of small business management.

Contact: Matthew Greger, 203 748-2919, (matthewg@thebusinesshelper.com).

Meets on last Wednesday, 1-3 p.m.

Next Meeting: Off for Summer

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 on 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Aug 7

VOICE FOR JOANIE. Provides and supports people with Lou Gehrig's disease with special PC computer equipment.

Contact: Shirley Fredlund, 860 355-2611 ext. 4517 (voiceforjoanie@juno.com).

Next Meeting: Suspended until further notice.

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: Aug 26

SIG News & Other Events

Graphics. The Graphics SIG is on vacation. Look for further announcements in September.

Internet Programming The August IP SIG will resume with a random access session followed by a continued discussion of ASP.Net programming technology. We will address issues involving ADO.Net and the implications of Null cells. There will also be a discussion of Web Service and a demonstration on the programming technology required to implement a Web Service.

Server and Networking. We had a fun meeting in July, attempting to set up a DNS server on Linux. The long term goal of this project is to build a complete Linux server that can replace a Windows server and provide all the services needed to manage the LAN. This SIG is truly an information-sharing opportunity, as I learn how to configure Linux while applying what I do know about networking services.

In August, we'll continue this effort. The plan is to set up a secondary DNS server first and then configure a new DNS domain. Should this go better than expected, we'll start to configure Samba. Samba is a set of services that allows non-Windows machines to integrate with systems running Windows.

The August meeting will be August 8th at 7pm, in the DACS Resource Center. Come help us all learn, and bring your random access questions!

Small Business. This SIG is in summer recess. Next meeting is September 25th.

Visual Basic. The August VB-SIG 8/7/02 7-9 PM which follows the Internet Programming SIG will resume with a random access session followed by a discussion and demonstration of VB 6 database access' using ADO technology. We will be talking about connection methods, and the retrieval of standard record sets and XML record sets. We will also be discussing the use of the DAO data control and binding to it with assorted other display controls including the Data Grid.



It's summertime! Please check the calendar and DACS Web site for meeting changes and cancellations.

August 2002

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	 7:00 PM GENERAL MEETING Ed Heere	3-5 PM Internet Programming Chuck Fizer 7:00 PM VISUAL BASIC Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996	 7:00 PM SERVER SIG Jim Scheef 860 355-0034	6	7
11	 7:00 PM BOARD OF DIRECTORS	 7:00 PM Access Bruce Preston 203 431-2920	 7:30 PM ADVANCED OS Don Pearson 914 669-9622	 7:30 PM INVESTMENT Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436	12	13
18	19	20	 7:30 PM LINUX Bill Keane 203 438-8032	21	22	23
25	 7:00 PM WALL STREET Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202	26	27	28	29	30
						31

Macinations

Macworld Report

by Mike Kaltschnee

THIS IS AT LEAST MY hundredth computer show. My first one was AppleFest '83 when I was just 19. I have attended many of the shows around the country: Seybold, Comdex, Internet World, PC Expo, SIIA, Network, countless seminars, and even a Linux show. I've even done time as an exhibitor for a few dozen events. What a pain.

I have to admit that Macworld, out of all of these shows, is the only one that I get excited about. Comdex is so huge that it's a hassle. Bill Gates, although well prepared, is an okay speaker (but how often can you hear a billionaire?). Traveling to shows, waiting in sometimes ridiculous ticket lines, and

nounced that a free service, iTools, was going to cost money (and be renamed ".Mac").



This charge was designed to make a service costing Apple serious money into a minor profit center. However, the Mac faithful were not used to bad news during a Jobs presentation. The good news is that you'll get 100mb of Internet storage, virus checking, and all sorts of other benefits (and at a half-price discount if you already have an account).

The new computer introduced was the expected, but still very cool iMac, with a 17" flat-panel display. Instead of being a typical square, Apple made it a "widescreen" model. When I got my turn to play with one, it made a lot of sense; you could have two documents open side by side. A cool \$2,000 will enable you to take home last year's high-end machine, worth at least twice as much 12 months ago.

New iPods with the barebones model now starting at \$299 made this the premier line of musical devices to own. The latest iPods sport a cool volume and playback control that makes this device more and more like a high-end portable CD

player at a quarter the size and weight. 10 and 20 gigabyte versions let you carry up to 4,000 songs, but they'll run you up to \$500. With the addition of calendar and address book functions, I might get an iPod instead of a new Palm soon.

On the show floor, I saw all sorts of neat things. Games are more prevalent than last year, and more Windows titles have been ported to OS X. I have my eye on Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds, since I like Half-Life and I guess I'm a Star Wars Fan. Lots of cool add-ons for the iPod, including chargers, cases and accessories.

I guess the coolest thing was the television adapter for the Mac that gives you 'Tivo-like' abilities for \$179. Plug it into your computer, install the software, and visit their Web page to configure the device. You can then record tv shows to your hard disk and even burn them onto CD for later viewing. No monthly fee like Tivo for the program guide.

I was impressed by the upcoming version of OS X. I don't really need a new instant messaging client (I use Audion and Fire under OS X) but I do like many of the 100+ updates included in the next revision, including enhanced printer support, Bluetooth, Sherlock 3 and especially iSync. The new program iSync will coordinate addresses and calendars between your Web pages, Palm, cell phone, and e-mail program. This feature is what will help complete Apple's 'Digital Hub' strategy and make the Mac the center of your computer-based toys.

Apple may have its faults, but they've been leading the computer business since the Apple II+. You may not like them, but if you want to see the future, you might want to go to Macworld once in a while.

Mike switched to the Mac long before those silly commercials. Windows users can bug him at: mikek@demorgan.com.



paying \$20 for a hamburger lunch makes a show a huge hassle. However, Apple does something right. Sure, you have the lines and hassles of a Show, but I go to Macworld to escape into Steve Jobs' world once in a while.

He has the ability to make you think that Apple is changing the world during his Keynotes. Maybe they are changing the PC business color, style, floppy (lack thereof), and adding a coolness factor to owning a box filled with chips and drives.

This year there was one moment when silence ruled, when they an-



Modems

The Cable Modem Won't Work or Wow, that Lightning was Close!

by Jim Scheef

ALMOST EXACTLY ONE year ago last summer, a lightning storm knocked out my cable modem. What follows is a recount of my trials to get things working again. Along the way, I'll give some hints on dealing with Charter Communications, from whom I get my cable modem Internet service.

Now, this was not your run of the mill lightning storm that gives a few rumbles and sends the dog hiding in the bathroom. This was a big storm, with lots of wind blowing tree branches down and scattered power outages. Perhaps unfortunately, my house never lost power. If I had been home, I might have pulled the plugs out of the wall—the ultimate surge protector.

However, when I did get home, the cable modem could not get an IP address. Since the cable television was working, I called the Charter phone number in the New Milford phone book. This was mistake #1, because this is the general number for all cable TV questions. Because of the storm, many people were experiencing trouble, so after a long hold, I was transferred to another hold queue to wait for someone in the Internet dept. [Hint: The phone number for the Internet Department is 203-426-6116. Call this number directly]. Once I was talking to a real person, it turned out to be a very helpful technician, who determined that my cable modem was damaged. The jolt had to have come in thru the cable TV cable, as every piece of equipment in my 'data center' is on an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) or a high quality surge protector. Even the LAN has a grounded surge device. Because of the holiday, they could not do the exchange until sometime after the 4th of July. At least this was not a long holiday weekend! On Thursday, I drove over to Newtown and made the swap.

Once I had the new cable modem, it would not 'link' to the router when plugged into the WAN port. Most ethernet equipment has a light that comes on when the device has a valid electrical connection to another device. This meant that the WAN (wide area network) port on the router had also been damaged by the lightning. Arghhh!

So I called SMC Networks, which manufactures the Barricade router. They have 24hr tech support, with knowledgeable support technicians. The pleasant woman at the SMC showed me how to do a "hard reset" of the router. This questionable design feature requires shorting two pins of the serial port and powering on the router. This task requires three hands and did not cure the problem. I opted to pay for overnight shipping of the replacement.

While waiting for the router, I needed to reinstall the 'official' NIC (network interface card) first used to install the cable modem. All ethernet cards have a unique number called the media access control (MAC) address burned into them at the factory. This NIC has the magic MAC address that identifies me to Charter's DHCP (dynamic host configuration protocol) server, so it will assign me an IP address. This exact card would be needed to program the new router so the router can fool Charter's server into thinking it is talking to the "official NIC". Got that?

Well, naturally, installing the card required debugging to avoid resource conflicts—both IRQ and i/o port in an old pre-plug and play PC running Windows NT. This was probably why I had pulled the card out! At least this gave me something to do while I had no Internet access.

By the time I got the NIC working, the router had arrived and I still could not get an IP address from Charter. Another call to Charter Internet support and this time the technician suggested that I reset the cable modem. This was easy to do, using a paper clip in a small hole. Within seconds the cable modem lights started flashing, and by the time

I could check, I had an IP address. What an effort!

So what did I learn from all this? Whenever your cable modem stops responding, give it a kick in the rear by unplugging it for a minute. Turn off the router as well (tell Charter it's a PC) and turn them back on together. This will clear up most trouble caused by problems in Charter's equipment. If you tell Charter you have a router, they will tell you to connect the cable modem directly to the PC. This is almost never necessary; they just don't



want to support routers that they do not provide, which I guess is fair.

So, why use the router at all? Why not just connect the cable modem to the PC the way Charter wants you to? The short answers are "fire wall" and "convenience". You need something to keep the bad guys out. There are many software products on the market that do an admirable job keeping the bad guys at bay, but a hardware router, like products from SMC, D-Link, Linksys and many others, are easier to configure and allow you to securely share your DSL or cable modem connection with the other computers in the house. The convenience side comes from the fact that the Internet Connection Sharing built into Windows ME, 2000, and XP requires the PC to be on if the other computers need internet access. With a router, every computer is connected to the router, so only the PC in use at the time needs to be on. Makes sense, eh?

JIM SCHEEF is the Mad Scientist at Telemark Systems Inc. where he develops custom software using Visual Basic and SQL Server and provides networking services using Windows NT/2000. He has been a DACS member since the day DOG became WC/MUG..

Product Review

Borland C++Builder 6.0 Professional

By Andrew MacGinitie

I GOT MY START programming PCs using Borland's Turbo Pascal—"back in the days," as the saying goes. But my first full-time programming job proved to be a harbinger of things to come: before I was hired, the decision had already been made to use Microsoft's Pascal compiler. Since then, although I've bought other Borland products (including the first version of Turbo C++), for the most part I have used Microsoft's compilers on the job—the decision to go with Microsoft usually having been made before my arrival. Ironically, I even used Microsoft's Visual C++ product—while working at Borland! The product I worked on, InterBase, was not originally developed at Borland, and the build process was never re-engineered after Borland acquired the product. As a business decision, it makes sense, considering the complexity of the build process, and the work that had been put into streamlining that process (if it ain't broke...). For a fan of Borland's products, however, it seems a little unfortunate. That's really the point of this introduction: by way of a disclaimer, I have to admit that I do consider myself something of a fan of Borland and its products. On the other hand, having worked in software Q&A., and perhaps because I'm a bit of a curmudgeon (smile when you call me that), I haven't shied away from pointing out some things I see as flaws. As a longtime user of Microsoft Visual C++ (most recently, the version 6.0 Enterprise edition), I've also used my experience with that product to draw some comparisons.

Installation

For this review, I installed the product onto a PC running Windows XP Home Edition. The installation process seemed fairly standard and went smoothly. The initial screen offers several options: the C++Builder product itself, InterBase 6.5 Desktop, Remote Debugger Server, InstallShield Express, an option to join Borland's community web site for developers and an option to browse the installation CD. Borland still follows the practice of including "installation notes" presented automatically by the installation

program, so they can be read before completing the installation. Microsoft seems to have done away with that practice, leaving users to locate and open any "readme" files on their own. Since those files may contain information about steps a user would need to take before installation—to keep the installation from overwriting customized settings, for example—I find the Borland approach preferable. On the other hand, most of the information really didn't apply to me, and that will probably be the case for most users installing the product for the first time (i.e., not as an upgrade to an earlier version).

I chose to install the product with the InterBase client option. I found the InterBase license information, presented during installation, somewhat confusing. Realistically, though, you'll probably want to contact Borland about licensing terms before distributing an application that relies on InterBase.

The first time I launched C++Builder after installation, it presented a registration screen offering online registration, as well as a "register later" option, which I chose. As soon as I realized that the dialog which informed me "you have chosen to exit..." was referring only to the automatic registration process, I chose "Exit" and the IDE proceeded to load. The program automatically opens a new project when you launch it. I couldn't find any way to change that behavior, unfortunately; I much prefer to have the program automatically load the last project I was working on, which Visual C++ can be configured to do. In place of the standard "MRU" list at the bottom of the File menu, C++Builder Professional uses a "reopen" menu option to present the list of projects and files recently worked on.

Maybe good help isn't so hard to find after all

Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the first things I checked out was the Help menu. One of the features I noticed there was a "Customize..." option, which offers the ability to customize C++Builder's help system, but a more complete description of that feature is beyond the scope of this

review. Navigating the help system, I easily found a nice tutorial that walks you through the process of developing a simple text editor. As it turns out, C++Builder's IDE has notable similarities to Microsoft's Visual Basic development environment. In place of Visual Basic's toolbox, C++Builder offers a Component Palette, arranged like a tabbed dialog of toolbars. It includes a large selection of reusable software components, organized into categories that can be selected by choosing the appropriate tab. The selection and arrangement of components and categories on the Palette can be customized using a Component | Customize Palette... menu option. Tool tips are provided for each component. You can select a component by clicking its icon; if you then click on the form, the selected component will be placed where you click; if you press the F1 key, a help window that describes the selected component will be displayed. Right-clicking a component you have placed on the form opens an editor specific to that component, allowing you to modify its properties. The IDE also provides an Object TreeView window, providing a tree view of the components in the application, and an Object Inspector window through which you can select components and edit their properties. For someone familiar with the Microsoft Foundation Classes provided with Visual C++, there will be a learning curve to get up to speed with C++Builder's application frameworks, called CLX and VCL (more about them below). Although I wouldn't say I'm up to speed yet, from what I've seen so far, the help system seems like it's up to the task of getting me there.

Portable applications

Not far into the text editor tutorial, I encountered one of the reasons people might want to consider choosing C++Builder over Microsoft Visual C++, namely to develop applications that can be ported to Linux. From the BCB6 text editor tutorial:

"The Action List editor is part of the Borland Component Library for Cross Platform (CLX) and should be used instead of the Action Manager editor if migrating to a different platform (such as Linux) is a future possibility."

"The Action Manager editor provides some special functionality, but is only available as part of the Visual

Component Library (VCL), which is specific to the Windows platform.”

(The Action List and Action Manager are software components C++Builder provides to facilitate the use of menus and toolbars in your application.) The help files delivered with C++Builder contain quite a bit of information about developing applications that can be ported to Linux. Here's another sample of some help you are not likely to get from Microsoft:

“An application that heavily uses Windows-specific technologies such as ADO will be more difficult to port than one that uses C++Builder database technology.”

Unfortunately, a comparison of these two database technologies falls outside the scope of this review.

Code reuse

Users of Visual C++ will be familiar with the various “wizards” available to assist you when you create a new project. Borland seems to have provided an even larger selection of templates, accessible through the File | New | Other... menu selection. I was surprised to notice that the main form for the text editor application I developed (using the tutorial) was automatically made available as a template. According to the help file, “You can create an inherited form from any existing project form.”

Complaint department

C++Builder comes with a conversion wizard to facilitate converting Visual C++ projects to C++Builder projects. I used it to convert the OpenGL cube sample application that ships with MSVC, but, unfortunately, the resulting project would not compile, and the error message did not prove helpful in locating the reason. On the positive side, the conversion was nondestructive; the application still compiled using Visual C++.

Visual C++ has a couple of nice features I miss in C++Builder. The first is the ability to get context-sensitive help by pressing F1 within the source code editor. C++Builder offers context-sensitive F1 help from other windows, including the Object TreeView and the Component Palette, so it's not hard to get the information you need, but I miss having that feature in the code editor. The other thing I miss is the extensive collection of sample applications Microsoft provides with its

product. Although many of those sample applications are getting rather “long in the tooth,” I like being able to read about and access all of them from within the Visual C++ help system. In fairness, it's possible that if I took more time to explore it, I would find that the reusable code available through the “File | New | Other...” dialog, mentioned above, fills the role of Microsoft's sample application library more than adequately.

C++Builder also seems to have a few rough edges (I can provide a complete list of those I've found if anyone's interested—like I said, I've worked in software Q&A), but so far I haven't encountered anything I would describe as a serious defect, only some minor annoyances.

And in conclusion...

For anyone interested in using C++ to develop Windows applications, I think C++Builder is well worth a look. Borland's component libraries appear to me to be more flexible and easier to work with than Microsoft's MFC framework. For anyone interested in porting Windows applications to Linux, C++Builder looks like an excellent option. I think that just might be my next project.

ANDREW MACGINITIE, is a welcome new contributor to DACS.DOC. A well qualified observer of the software industry he has been programming since the early days of CPM and Turbo Pascale and has put in his share of time on a Programmers Q&A help line.

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Random Access

July 2002

Bruce Preston, Moderator

MEMBERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE GENERAL MEETING may submit questions to "askdacs@aol.com" by the day prior to the meeting. We will attempt to get an answer for you. Please provide enough detail, as we will not be able to ask for additional information.

Q. A business associate emails an Excel spreadsheet to me periodically; when I open it up, the sheet is much larger than my screen—so much so, that I can't get at the scroll bars on the right or at the bottom. Is there a way to get it to resize to fit my screen?

A. Not built into Word, or many applications. The best you can do is to grab a resizing corner that is visible, say at the upper left, and drag down and to the right, so that it is near the center of the screen. Then grab the window's title bar and drag the whole window to the upper left corner. Repeat until you can see the whole sheet.

Q. Does anyone know anything about Paladium?

A. Other than that it is part of Microsoft's security plan, and that Intel has 'signed on', no. There is a lot of rumor and innuendo.

Q. Can I create a document in Word, and then "Send To" an e-mail recipient? My send—to is set up to go to Outlook; I'd really like to be able to specify Outlook Express.

A. During the discussion, several ideas were suggested, but upon testing after the meeting it appears that you can only send to the default email application. The problem is that the Send To entry in your personal settings folder (for Windows 2000, Me, XP) or in the \WINDOWS\SEND TO folder (for others) is not a creatable entry. It is a file of 0 size, although it is of type "MAPImail". You might be able to play with file extensions in *Windows Explorer / Tools / Folder Options*, and see if it is associated with your mail application there.

Q. Could you talk about what affects image quality when you print a photo image?

A. Starting with the basics—for good

photos you need good paper. Think of regular paper (such as used in copiers, laser printers, etc.) as being much like a paper towel. Think of the drop of ink being placed on the paper as writing with a felt-tip pen. The ink will 'wick' into the paper and disperse, blending with adjacent colors. To prevent this, photo-quality paper has a very thin coating of clay which prevents the ink from wicking. Next, consider the resolution of the printer and the image. A typical photo quality printer can support 1,400 dots per inch. If you are printing across the width of the paper, you have 8x10 paper; at 1,400 resolution, then your image would have (8"x1400) by (10" x 1400) or about 11,200 by 14,000 pixels in it. If you are working with 32-bit color, that would be about 4MB in size. If your camera doesn't supply that much information, then the printer driver is going to have to interpolate (or estimate) what color the missing pixels should be. So, if you are looking for quality, you have to have the data to support it. The next thing that affects quality is the quality of the printer driver—does it estimate so as to get better speed? and things like that...

Q. Is that why the same file when printed on the same printer looks better when printed from my Mac than from my PC?

A. Given the same data, they should come out the same. So it is either the photo-imaging software being different, the printer driver being different, or the settings in the printer control panel being different. On a PC, be sure to go to FILE, then PRINT so that you can examine the settings. Usually, just clicking the print button in an application goes to the default settings.

Q. I received an e-mail that has a little icon associated with it—the icon

looks like an envelope with a paperclip on it. What is that?

A. That is an attached file. To get at it, you usually double-click it and the file will be opened by the associated application. This presumes that you have the application that created the file. If you don't, there are some 'viewer' programs that will let you examine/read the file, but not modify it. A word of warning: never open an attached file unless you are expecting it. There are viruses out there that will send themselves as attachments, and forge the sender's name by reading it from the sender's address book. Just because you know who sent it isn't enough. Lastly, if the sender incorrectly stripped the extension off when sending the file, you will have to find out what it is before you can open it with the appropriate application program.

Q. Is there much of a difference between modems? I can't get a good connection.

A. There are two broad categories of modems - those with controller chips, and those without. When a modem is asked to work at speeds above about 14kbps it is pushing the limits of what can be sent over a voice-grade line. To get faster speeds, the data is "compressed". A simplistic example: If you are sending a report that has two columns, and there are a lot of blanks between the two columns on a line—instead of sending, say, 50 blanks, the modem will send a special character that says "repeat the next character," the character, and then the repeat count. Thus, instead of sending 50 characters, it sends 3. If there is a controller in the modem, then the compression is performed by the controller. If there is no controller, then the compression (and decompression) is performed by the device driver for the modem, which implies that the work must be done by your computer's central processor. This can take time. For a binary file transfer, it may require your computer to work fairly hard. External modems will always have a controller. Internal modems may or may not have a controller. If the modem says 'WinModem' it means that it is controllerless—and will work only on a Windows machine

where the device driver does the work.

Q. Similar question—is there much variation between telephone lines?

A. Yes—a voice grade telephone line is only ‘conditioned’ to support data transmission speeds of 28K. At one time this was more than sufficient, as other forms of data communications, such as fax, only used 9.6K. Conditioning refers to putting circuitry on the line to cut down echo, crosstalk (leakage of one conversation onto another circuit) and loss of signal strength. However, over time, the quality of a line may deteriorate as connections in the line (the splice blocks that you may see after every 5th or so pole) oxidize, etc. When you establish a connection, the two modems involved ‘negotiate’ the connection to determine how fast they may exchange data—this is the hissing, honking and beeping that you hear through the modem's speaker. Once the modems have negotiated a connection, if they detect errors, they may have to ‘retrain’ which involves negotiating a slower connection. It is rare that they will work up to a faster connection than the speed established at connection time. To get a nominal 56K connection, you must have a high quality phone line. US Robotics has a line test BBS system that you can call to measure the quality of your line—note that it is not a web site

that you access through the internet, as that would not measure your connection speed—you must dial it directly. You may read about it the page that comes up on this search: <http://www.usr.com/support/search-results.asp?search-section=%2Fsupport&search-terms=line+test&search.x=10&search.y=16> If you get a report that your line quality is bad, call your telephone company and tell them about it. If you have ‘numbers’ that is much more convincing to them than just a general complaint.

Q. The drive activity light on my drive is continuously on. Why would this be?

A. There are several things this could be. First, if you are running memory-intensive applications (such as a photo-editor, or a CAD program); then, if you don't have enough real memory (RAM), then Windows will use ‘virtual memory’ and take pieces of memory assigned to a program and write it to the swap file, a special area of your disk that is used to support virtual memory. If you have enough RAM, then it could be other things—such as utility programs like Norton Disk Doctor, Speed Start, Fast Load, etc. Microsoft loads a utility that indexes all of your Microsoft Office documents so that when you do a search it will find things. Other applications will partially load—for example Microsoft loads most of Office into

memory (the DLLs), even if you are not running Office at the moment. Other notorious users of RAM are all of the things that support various multimedia file formats, such as RealPlayer. You don't want these things to be loaded until you need them. If you have the RealPlayer blue ‘R’ next to your clock in the system tray, it's loaded. Download the free utility *StartStop* to see what has been launched in your machine.

BRUCE PRESTON is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. A DACS director and moderator of the Random Access segment at the monthly general meetings, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at askdacs@aol.com.

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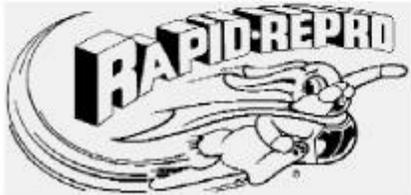


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