



August 1999

Volume 10, Issue 8

The Little Program That Can

IF YOU KNOW or have heard about Unix, you may also know about Linux, the Unix-like operating system that continues to be developed by a cooperating worldwide team of unpaid developers.

Linux (pronounced *Lee-nux*) is the brainchild of a man named Linus Torvalds. Back in 1991, when he was a 21-year-old college student in Finland, Torvalds decided that he was not too happy with his operating system, DOS. So he started to write his own. Since then Linux has undergone continual development. It works on almost every kind of computer, provides a robust platform for a wide variety of applications, and may be used for a many purposes, including networking, software development, and as an end-user platform.

Unlike other operating systems, Linux is free in almost all respects. One can download it from the Internet at no charge, pass on copies to friends, and even modify its internals. Its cost-free availability, one of the most critical reasons for its success, has turned heads in the industry and attracting the attention of mainstream media.

Even though Linux software is totally free to those with the inclination and time to download it, not every-

one can afford the patience and effort it takes to get it from the Internet. Enter Red Hat, Inc. a company that makes it easier for people to use Linux. Red Hat distributes the program for a fee, but it gives you your money's worth by simplifying installation and the use of applications, and by including all the bits and pieces to make it a cohesive and comprehensible program. Red Hat offers

technical and installation support, printed manuals, and Linux on CD-Rom. Red Hat Linux 6.0 contains all of the software you need as a desktop client—e-mail, browsers, publishing tools, calendars, Internet tools, and more.

At the DACS general meeting on August 3, Gene Callahan, whose company, St. George Technologies, is one of a growing number of firms specializing in Linux programming, will present Red Hat Linux. Don't miss the opportunity to learn about this revolutionary OS and see for yourself what all the hype is about.

DACS is a Greater Danbury area

computer society. Its general meetings take place on the first Tuesday of the month at the Danbury Hospital auditorium, 24 Hospital Avenue, and are open to the public. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. with casual networking. At 7 p.m. members can ask their most pressing computer questions during Random Access. The featured presentation starts at 8 p.m.



Linus Torvalds, pioneer of Linux

Meeting Review

The Local Boys

By Bill Stevens

THE JULY general meeting of the Danbury Area Computer Society coincided with the area record 102 F. that perhaps accounted for the light turnout at the Danbury Hospital auditorium. Those not deterred by the heat enjoyed a dual program presented by two of DACS' own officers. Wally David led the Surfin' Safari segment featuring Internet portals, and Jeff Setaro gave us a well-informed update on his favorite topic, virus prevention. A cool experience! Both presenters

used the bright projector system, driven by Jeff's computer.

An Internet portal, we discovered from Wally, is the hot new term for a Website that points by way of electronic links to other destinations or activities. A portal is a critical entryway to the Web. It is the site you visit first, the one that organizes for you the chaos of information that is the Internet, and that customizes it in such an attractive and personal way that you feel you have

Portals & Viruses Continued on page 4

President's File

High summer is typically a low time for DACS. Offices are on flextime; some of our editors and writers are vacationing in Alaska or East Africa; SIG activity is slow or fast asleep. It's at these times that the *.doc* can shrivel up like parched grass, and one month's copy merges inexorably into the next. But the show still must go on. Wally David and Jeff Setaro staged their own bang-up presentations at our July meeting when our scheduled presenter canceled out, and Bill Stevens came forward with a great review of the proceedings. Marlène Gaberel turned out her usual sterling preview for next month, and did double-duty as well by sitting in for Secretary Larry Buoy to do the minutes at our Board meeting. Thanks to some more great bylines from our roving reporter Mike Kaltschnee and the editorial contributions of APCUG, we have sufficient copy. And to tie it all together, our indomitable editor, Frances Owles, took her laptop out between the rows of the gardens she tends for her landscaping business, to pretty it all up for the pages of *our newsletter*.

MacWorld Expo

In something of a turnaround, Apple has lately been taking a bite out of the computer market. The designer model iMac and its new laptop sister the iBook were the stars of the show, and Mike Kaltschnee was there to write about it. You'll find these and other Apple innovations in Mike's review of MacWorld

Expo on page 5. It's part of a revival of our column *Macinations* that we hope will help stimulate new growth of our Mac SIG. Incidentally, if you're curious about the iMac, come down to the Resource Center for the next Mac meeting August 17 to see our loaner model.

WP foils macro virus falls to Murphy's Law

Some readers will do a double-take when they see a repeat of last month's John Heckman article on WordPerfect and the macro virus. That's because several paragraphs fell out of the copy, and we decided to run the entire piece again to get it right. No macro virus or worms involved this time, just some clumsy pasting of text. John is not just a terrific writer, but—an increasingly rare commodity these days—an unreconstructed WordPerfect user. And being also of that ilk, I thought it was appropriate to rerun the story in its entirety.

Be a DACS Ambassador

I've had some members ask me lately for a card or a flier to give to others interested in computing so they can learn about DACS. My answer was that *dacs.doc* is the best introduction any volunteer group could have, and they should pick up copies at the Resource Center or ask Charlie Bovaird for some at the General Meetings.

That sparked an idea that could help us grow and give us the additional skills and resources to provide even more services to our membership: become a DACS Ambassador. Every one of us knows someone who could benefit by joining us. Simply ask Charlie for a few extra copies of the newsletter each month and distribute them to your friends and colleagues. Tell them about our meetings and SIGS, about Voice for Joanie and the awards we have received. They will thank you for the referral, and perhaps become faithful members—and future ambassadors—of DACS.

—ALLAN OSTERGREN
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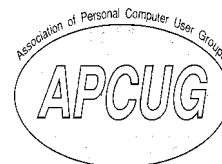
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HelpLine

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

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Directors' Notes

The monthly meeting of the Board of Directors was held on Monday, July 12, 1999, at the Resource Center. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, David, Ostergren, Preston, Setaro, and Mrs. Gaberel. Chairman Wally David presided. Mrs. Gaberel recorded the proceedings in the absence of the secretary. Minutes of the June meeting were approved.

Finance & membership

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported combined checking and postal balance of \$14,989.04 and postage on hand of \$58.50 for a total of \$15,047.54. We have no outstanding obligations. Membership is 550.

IG/PCExpo review

While reviewing the attendance at the InterGalactic and at PCExpo events, it was suggested that DACS consider chartering a bus next year after comparing prices from bus operators. Also suggested was soliciting members to attend much earlier than we did this year, and the possibility of sharing transportation costs with the Heritage Village Computer Club. President Ostergren reiterated the awards presented to both *dacs.doc* and to *dacs.org* at InterGalactic.

APCUG support

President Ostergren commented on full-page ads by national advertisers in *dacs.doc* under the APCUG Initiatives program. He mentioned that, in addition, APCUG offers DACS and other member groups the use of articles for newsletters and can arrange for speakers for user-group programs if due regard can be given to scheduling conflicts.

News-Times tech column

The News-Times is fast depleting the questions and answers from Random Access in its High-Tech section and says that no new questions are coming in from readers. In addition to pursuing similar arrangements with other regional publications, as was discussed at the June meeting, the directors were asked to consider establishing protocol—permissions, payment, time for updating or amending stories—for any submissions created by DACS writers.

New software & upgrades

It was mentioned that software upgrades or new applications added to the the Resource Center computer would help in the production of the newsletter and that sources should continue to be pursued.

Resource Center lease

The board must decide soon whether to renew the lease for the Resource Center, which expires at the end of the year.

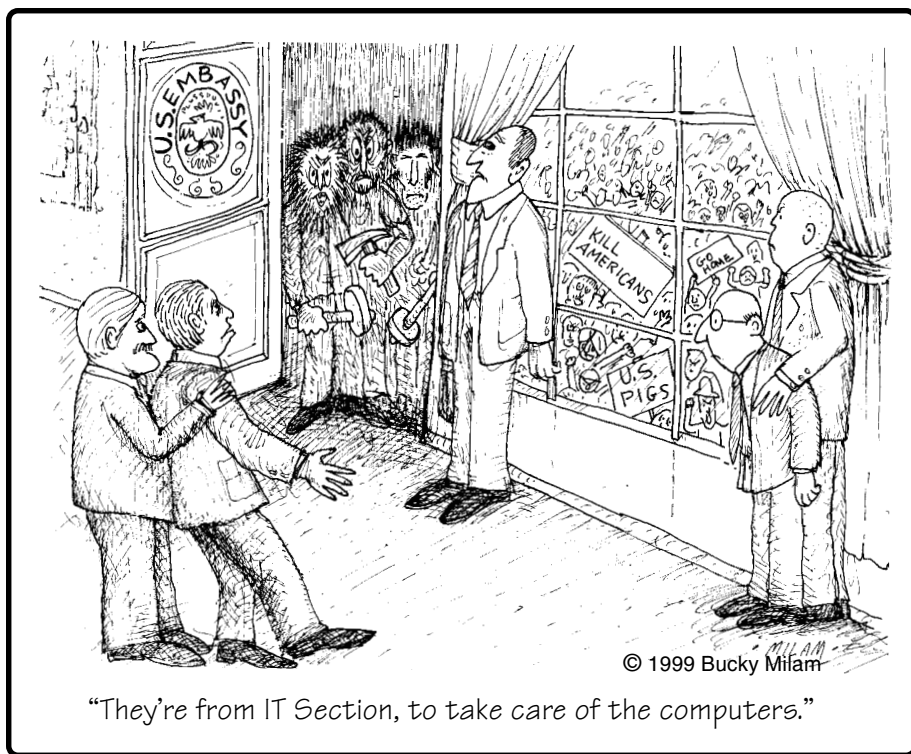
—MARLÈNE GABEREL (for Larry Buoy)

Meeting Review *Continued from page 1*
become an elite member of an exclusive online community.

Wally based his Surfin' Safari presentation on the informative portal page at www.el.com, a site chock full of links to a great deal of other portals and search engines. Familiar with his subject and much at home on the dais while running the program at the computer, Wally described the various features of the [el.com](http://www.el.com) portal, explaining how to use and customize it, and showing examples of its numerous links. With his self-deprecating humor, Wally drew the audience into his corner. Interest level was high, and members had many questions, which Wally fielded skillfully and knowledgeably, both during and at the end of his presentation.

Following Wally, Jeff Setaro gave his presentation on virus prevention. His program, created with MS Power Point, is available for viewing and downloading on the DACS home page. You'll need Acrobat 4.0 to acquire it (you can download this free from the Adobe Web site). Jeff knows his subject well, and it was obvious that he has given this presentation more than once. His pictorial program gave the audience a full picture of virus problems and prevention, colored with his very own style of positive ideas and opinions. Jeff first defined viruses, then described them, told us how they do their work, and advised us how to avoid infection, recommending various antivirus programs. He also told us about some of the various companies and individuals who write antivirus programs and fixes.

A comprehensive discussion followed, comparing the qualities of the pro-



grams Jeff had recommended with those of the more popular commercial products. (The whole subject of virus/antivirus is rather esoteric in the software community, and the experts involved make up a small group, seemingly well known to him.) In response to the many audience questions, Jeff gave examples of and links to the lesser-known antivirus programs.

DACS was well served by these two presentations. The group is fortunate in getting this depth of knowledge and experience from within.

BILL STEVENS is a retired pilot, writing his first review for dacs.doc.



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Further information?
Call Jim Finch @ 203 790-3654

Live from MacWorld iMac puts polish on Big Apple Expo

by Mike Kaltschnee

I'M A MAC FAN, so it was with great excitement that I got up this morning to take the 7 a.m. train to New York City for MacWorld Expo.

I attend a lot of trade shows, but none will have the impact of my first: Apple Fest 83, held in Boston. I had just bought an

Apple IIe computer, and was totally amazed at the products, the people, and the excitement about computers I saw there.

So even though I'm not a morning person, I left with a spring in my step wondering what interesting things the day would bring.

I usually avoid the keynote speaker, relying instead on the summary that comes out later in the day, and spend the hour or two I've saved more productively on the show floor. This time was different. There was a rumor about Apple launching a new portable computer and maybe even a new Internet portal with Disney. In the past, Steve Jobs has stunned the crowds with amazing new products such as the iMac, deals with Satan, er, Microsoft, and other such surprises, so I had high expectations for today.

The keynote started late, probably due to the huge line of people waiting to get in. The first announcement was for QuickTime TV, a way of viewing content from ABC, Disney, VH1, Fox News, HBO, and many others. The details were sketchy, but I'll be watching this closely—I want to watch E.R. when I want to, and catch up on episodes I miss at my convenience.

The second introduction was for Apple OS 9, scheduled to ship in September. Steve teased us with a comment about 50 new features, but only showed a shopping feature called Sherlock for comparing prices for books, music, and other consumer products. Sherlock is a great

technology that lets you scan multiple search engines to find the information you're looking for; but although there was a lot of applause, it wasn't what we were waiting for.

Next we were treated to two product demos. Steve talked about what's behind

the changing focus at Apple about games, and then Bungie Software showed a new game, Halo. Halo is the most realistic game I've ever seen, even better than the upcoming Quake 3 Arena. We were warned that it was a "live" demo and not a QuickTime movie. I can understand why now. Check it out on the Web at halo.bungie.com.

Next IBM gave a brief demo of ViaVoice for the Mac, a great new voice recognition program. It's good to see Apple and IBM working together again.

Steve next talked about the upcoming one-year anniversary of the iMac. Apple has sold more than 1.9 million iMacs, most of them to new users. The fact that stunned me was that more than 89% of the users were on the Internet. This is a sure sign that Apple has rebounded and is making inroads into the crucial new-user market.

Finally Steve showed us the new portable, called the iBook. Expected to ship in September, it is a \$1,599 notebook that is designed in a manner similar to the iMac. Available in Blueberry and Tangerine, the latest notebook offers a 300 Mhz processor, 3.2 GB hard drive, 32 MB RAM, 56k modem, and 10/100 Ethernet.

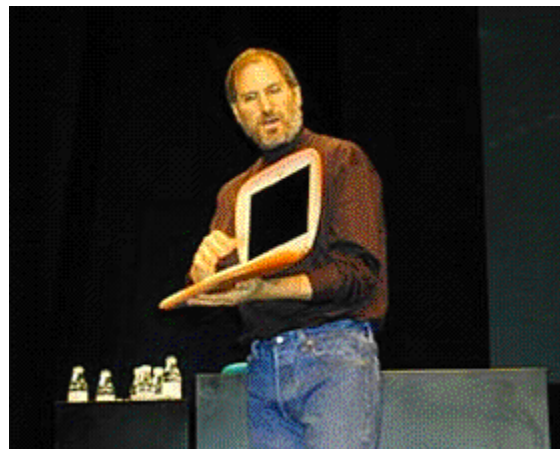
A quick price check of competing PC notebooks showed a price of more than \$2,000 for similar features. Apple looks like they've done it again. My only question is Why have we

(consumers) waited so long for computer companies to realize that we appreciate style and design? When he showed us a slide with the leading PC notebook, the difference in design was stunning.

The final surprise was the lack of cables during the demo. Steve had to use a hula hoop to show that there weren't any—that the big surprise in the new iBook is a new wireless technology called Airport. This involves a wireless hub you connect to your network or modem. The new iBook has a \$99 card that enables wireless operation within 150 feet. You can now surf in the kitchen, living room, or even the bathroom. The Airport costs \$249 and will also ship in September.

I spent time looking at the rest of the show, and although there were interesting products and demos, nothing beat Apple. Look for PC manufacturers to try and keep up with Apple. The industry can only get better because of Apple. I just hope they get to share in the profits for the major advances they've given us so far.

MIKE KALTSCHNEE is a partner in DeMorgan Industries Corp, the leading provider of Web graphics. You can reach Mike online at: mikek@demorgan.com or www.webspice.com



Steve Jobs checks out the Apple website with his iBook, moments before the audience realizes he's doing it wirelessly
From MacWorld promotion on www.apple.com

Operating Systems

All ABuzz About BeOS

By Mike Kaltschnee

THE TIMING for our BeOS presentation at the June meeting couldn't have been better, with Be, Inc. slated to go public at any minute. Unfortunately, I was busy getting our latest products ready to ship with Microsoft Office 2000, so I was unable to attend. However, after speaking with several DACS members who were there, and reading Wally's article, I felt the BeOS wasn't given a fair presentation.

I have been interested in the BeOS for many years and have watched its progress closely. It has been working on the next-generation operating system since the company formed in 1990. Its goal was to start fresh and create a multimedia operating system, building a new product not dependent on old technology. After using it on an old, "useless" Pentium 133, I'm inclined to believe they've succeeded.

Last year we joined the BeOS developer program and have been looking for the right time to enter the BeOS market. BeOS is definitely gaining momentum and is being used to replace Windows on free or low-cost computers because the license fee is much lower (or even free). You'll be seeing more deals like the ones they've done with AST, iDOT.com, and Microworkz. The AST computer is especially interesting, because they're selling BeOS as a dual processor, 1 gigahertz machine because BeOS takes full advantage of the two processors, unlike Windows NT or other multiprocessor operating systems.

Be recently sent a free copy of BeOS 4.5 to all of their developers, and I'll be taking a close look at this first public release of BeOS in this article. I had an extra Pentium 133 computer lying around, and since it had Windows 95 on a 2 gigabyte drive with a lot of free space, I figured I'd install the BeOS on a portion of that drive. BeOS comes with a special version of Partition Magic, and it takes less than 15 minutes to add a BeOS partition to your computer. Partition Magic creates a special section of the drive for BeOS without disturbing your current operating system. When you boot, it gives you the choice of which operating system you want to use.

Installation was fast and easy, and the only real configuration I had to do was to set up my display and network card. The display settings worked great, and I was able to change the resolution and color depth easily. The original network card I used didn't work correctly, but when I replaced an old ISA 3Com EtherLink with a generic PCI NE 2000 compatible card, it worked immediately. Unlike Windows, you don't need to reboot after making changes—saving a lot of time when configuring a new system or adding new hardware. The hardware choices are very limited for BeOS, and you should visit www.Be.com to make sure your system will work with Be before buying.

I spent some time playing with the system, changing settings, running demos that came with the BeOS, and just having fun. The BeOS is stable, but it is not without quirks. It runs very well on my old, slow Pentium, but I had a few rare occasions where programs acted strangely—but there were no major crashes. One of the quirks that bothered me was the choice to reverse the OK and Cancel buttons in dialog boxes, almost causing me to lose data or make a bad decision.

The one thing that makes or breaks an operating system is the number of applications that are available. The main reason Apple is still around is the large number of devoted developers, with Microsoft leading the pack. It's rumored that Microsoft makes more money on each new Mac than Apple does. I truly believe that Office 98 was a key deal that helped save Apple. There are hundreds of thousands of applications for Windows, tens of thousands for Macs, and only a thousand for BeOS. I expect the number of programs to grow as Be becomes more widely available, but this should be the primary focus of Be right now. Without a large development commitment to the platform, it will surely die.

The first large commercial developer to commit to the BeOS platform is Metacreations. They are porting Bryce 4 to the BeOS, and I believe that many more announcements will follow. We're looking at marketing our Web site, www.webspice.com, to the Be commu-

nity. I tested using our Web site and art with the BeOS, and it worked flawlessly. Getting in early on a new operating system is risky, but can pay off if the platform gains a lot of users. The Web browser, NetPositive, is not as advanced as the latest version of Navigator or Internet Explorer, but it handled forms and secure pages easily. BeOS is well suited to surfing the Internet, and it includes ftp and telnet programs as well. I even had BeOS up and running as a simple Web server in minutes, but the Poor Man program is limited.

The key application that has kept BeOS alive is Gobe Productive. The nice folks at Gobe sent me a review copy, and there is a free limited demo on the BeOS 4.5 disk. Very similar to Microsoft Works, it includes several key applications, including Graphics, Word Processing, Spreadsheet, Presentation, and Image Processing. Every BeOS user should purchase this program—it does everything that's missing from the BeOS for basic computer tasks.

The Word Processing application is probably sufficient for most users, specially novices, but I miss some of the advanced features in Microsoft Word, such as real-time spellchecking, Visual Basic for Applications, and some of the advanced editing features. It does about 90% of the important features of Word, and if you're writing letters or creating simple business correspondence, you'll be fine. The documentation is well written and is in HTML format.

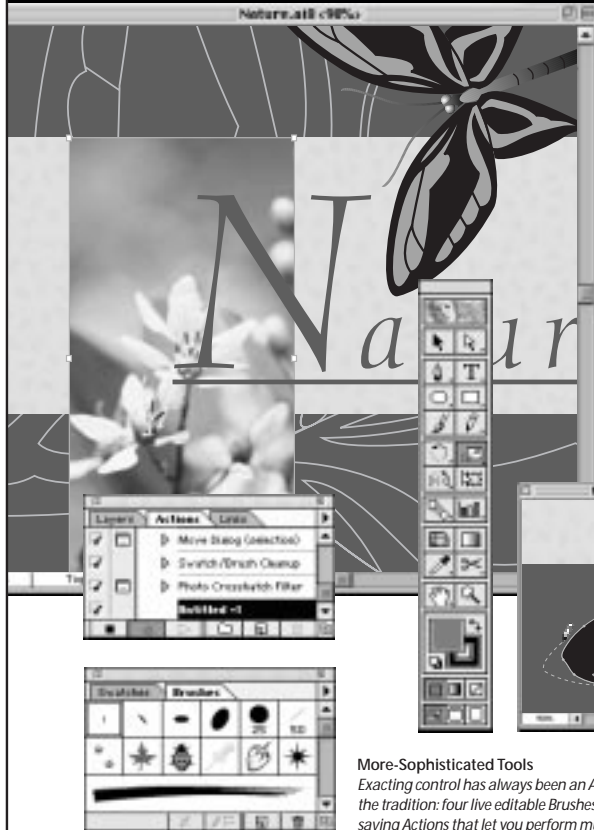
The Spreadsheet is a powerful program capable of most tasks, and that can even create charts. Graphics is a simple vector drawing program, enabling you to create simple diagrams. The real star of the suite is Image Processing. While it's not PhotoShop or PaintShop Pro, it's fun to watch how fast it performs the filters that take much longer in PhotoShop. You can do most of your image editing in this program, and only a pro will miss the high-end features in PhotoShop. You can pick up Gobe Productive for around \$79 from www.bedepot.com.

You can purchase the BeOS online for around \$69 if you're interested in trying it out. Visit www.Be.com for more information. Don't write them off yet—I think we'll be hearing a lot more from Be soon.

MIKE KALTSCHNEE is a founder of DeMorgan Industries Corp., the leading developer of Web graphics and themes at www.WebSpice.com. You can reach Mike at mikek@demorgan.com.

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Special Interest Groups

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

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920. Meets on 2nd Tuesday at 7p.m. at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next meeting:** August 10.

ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS. Explores and develops OS/2, BSD UNIX, and NT operating systems.

Contact: Don Pearson, 914 669-9622. Meets on Wednesday of the week following the general meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY. **Next meeting:** August 11.

EDUCATION. Coordinates DACS education classes.

Contact: Charlie Bovaird (203 792-7881). Meets as needed.

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

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667. Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo, Brookfield. **Next Meeting:** Fall.

INVESTMENT STRATEGIES. Discusses various investment strategies, emphasizing careful selection to maximize profits and limit risk.

Contact: Paul Gehrett (203 426-8436). Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown. **Next Meeting:** August 19.

INTERNET. Acquaints DACS members with the Internet.

Contact: Larry Stevens (LStevens@usa.net) or Richard Koser (rkoser@worldnet.att.net). Meets on 3rd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next Meeting:** August 18.

MACINTOSH. Discusses Macintosh hardware and software.

Contact: Chris Salaz (203 798-6417). Meets on 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next Meeting:** August 17.

VISUAL BASIC. Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

Contact: Chuck Fizer (203 798-9996) or Jim Scheef (860 355-8001). Meets on 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next Meeting:** August 4.

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

Contact: Shirley Fredlund (860 355-2611 x4517). Meets on last Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at Datahr, Brookfield. **Next Meeting:** August 31

WALL STREET. Examines new Windows stock market software.

Contact: Phil Dilloway (203 367-1202). Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next Meeting:** August 30.

WEBSITE DESIGN. Designs and maintains dacs.org, the DACS Website.

Contact: Jeff Setaro (203 748-6748). Meets on 2nd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next Meeting:** August 11.

WINDOWS. Explores all aspects of Windows 95 and 3.1.

Contact: New SIG leader needed. Meets on 1st Friday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury. **Next Meeting:** To be announced.

SIG News

ACCESS The Access SIG continues with its 50-50 blend of theory and problem solving. The August meeting will feature VBA debugging techniques-breakpoints, watches, step-through code, etc.

INTERNET The SIG is taking the summer off and will resume meeting in September, on third Wednesdays, as usual. Tentatively planned for September and October are Internet financial sites and genealogy research on the Web. Your suggestions and expertise are always welcome; e-mail them to Richard Koser (RKoser@worldnet.att.net) or Larry Stevens (LStevens@usa.net). Have a nice summer.

GRAPHICS The SIG will be taking the summer off. Meetings will resume the last Wednesday in September. Have a nice summer.

MACINTOSH In August, we will be exploring and comparing Netscape and IE Web browsers.

VISUAL BASIC During the opening Random Access session, members asked a few How do I do it? questions, and other, more difficult, ones involving Microsoft procedures and methods. A technical session about program/process to program/process communication followed.

The technical segment of the Visual Basic SIG involved two sample test programs. One acted as the InterrogatorRequestor, the other as the Respondee. Communications functions for both programs were handled using Win32 APIs. The principle of was the SendMessage API, which is the same one used by Windows for all window-to-window communications. A key factor in using the program is the message number and the possibility of a collision with other Windows functions. This makes it necessary for the RegisterMessage API to be able to guarantee a unique message number that will become the handle passed between the programs.











The Respondee program was the simpler, needing only to respond to the SendMessage API, which arrived by way of the unique number and contained a question it expected the Respondee to reply to. There were several questions possible by program definition. We demonstrated these and saw the code behind the functions in the programs. The Requestor program was a little more involved, because it was designed to send a message to the specific Respondee program. Hence the Requestor needed to know the specific program handle, process ID and Thread ID of the Respondee program. The Requestor could have broadcast a general message, but we chose to use a specific Respondee just to convey concepts of program/program communication. The sample test scenario used a Windows GUI program as the Requestor and a non-GUI program as the Respondee. We chose these techniques to further illustrate the differences between a Window program with controls and a non-Windows program running in the background.

VOICE FOR JOANIE During the nine years it has been in existence helping those suffering from ALS, Voice for Joanie has assisted 225 people in 104 Connecticut towns and eight people in seven New York State towns. At the present time we are helping 52 people. We are always in need of technical assistance and it would be especially helpful to have volunteers who would learn the programs we offer. These people could help with teaching, or be available to answer questions. Contact SIG leader Shirley Fredlund.

WINDOWS The SIG needs a new leader. Ben Carnevale, who has so faithfully and expertly run this SIG for so long, is moving to Cape Cod, a bit far from the Resource Center. He wishes to thank those who have attended the SIG for the great experiences. Says Ben: "I really enjoyed being active with these activities." Please step forward if you would like to head up the Windows SIG.

August 1999

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	 <p>7:00 PM GENERAL MEETING Red Hat Linux Danbury Hospital</p>	 <p>7:00 PM VISUAL BASIC Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996</p>	5	6	7
8	 <p>7:30 PM BOARD OF DIRECTORS</p>	 <p>7:00 PM ACCESS Bruce Preston 203 431-2920</p>	<p>7 PM WEBSITE DESIGN Jeff Setaro 203 748-6748 ... 7:30 PM ADVANCED OS Don Pearson 914 669-9622</p>	12	13	 <p>NEWSLETTER SIG NEWS DEADLINE</p>
15	16	 <p>7:30 PM MACINTOSH Chris Salaz 203 798-6417</p>	 <p>7:00 PM INTERNET Koser/Stevens Lstevens@usa.net</p>	 <p>7:30 PM INVESTMENT Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436</p>	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	 <p>7:00 PM WALL STREET Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202</p>	 <p>7:30 PM VOICE FOR JOANIE Shirley Fredlund 860 355-2611</p>	<div> <div> July S M T W T F S 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div> <div> September S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 </div> </div>			

Tips

Put File Extensions To Work For You

By Carol Daniels

Since Windows 95 was released, many computer users have tidied up their computing lives by hiding away those messy little bits that hang off the end of a file name. They haven't done away with file extensions, they've just put them out of site—and out of mind.

My life isn't tidy. So not surprisingly my files are displayed, extensions and all. Let's face it, I use my Windows desktop just like I use my actual desktop, to store bits and pieces, works in progress, notes, reminders, things I want to read, stuff I want to check, all there right up front, where I can't miss it. And just like my actual desktop, things accumulate on my Windows desktop, until I've used up all the space. Then I start chucking things into the recycle bin, or putting them away into folders. So it is equally predictable that I choose to display file names with those messy little bits right out in the open.

Why?

Because it's extra information for me to use. And I do use it, all the time. This isn't the most earth-shattering tip, but it does make my computing life easier.

How?

That depends on whether we are talking about standard extensions, or my own "custom" extensions. I use custom extensions as a simple, at-a-glance version control system. By glancing at the extension I can tell exactly how far I have gone in the writing or editing process for any submission on my computer. I use a different code for different types of projects too. So by using the standard sorting options, I can group files by type, project, and status, along with the standard name, date, and size choices.

I use standard extensions as a safety net to prevent me from deleting needed files. Also, because I don't allow any programs to launch attachments automatically, keeping file extensions visible is a secondary safeguard against me accidentally executing an infected file. I also use file extensions for the purpose for which they were intended, to tell me what sort of file I'm about to open, view or use in some way.

Yes, I know Windows can do that for me. But not with the kind of flexibility I need. I often have several programs that "can" be used to open a particular file type. Which program I want to use—for example, on *.GIF or *.HTM files, depends on what I want to do with the files. Visible extensions make it easier and quicker for me to choose the right file, and then the right program. Finally because I try to use a common project name for all elements of a project, extensions, nestled right up there, next to the file name, make it much easier for me to see which compost files are notes, documents, tables, definitions, archives, or library items.

If you want to put this sort of information to work for you, you'll need to do two things. First you'll need to adjust your file display settings to show extensions (file types). Here's how you do that:

- Double-click on My Computer.
- Select View, Options.
- Click on the View Tab.
- Remove the check from the box next to "Hide MS-DOS file extensions for file types that are registered."
- Click Apply, then close.

The second thing you need to do, is learn something about the standard/registered file extensions. The accompanying chart will help you with that. It's not exhaustive, just a selection of the more common file types I've come across. No need to memorize them either, just keep the table or this article where you can find it.

Now, if you are really keen, and want to study file types...

- This page has an extensive list of Windows 95 file names and functions
<http://web2.airmail.net/darylcl1/windows.htm>

- This one has a search engine on which you can query 1,353 file extensions:

<http://kresch.com/exts/ext.htm>

One final note on the subject of file extensions: The recent spate of Trojans/viruses spotlighted a deficiency in the general computer user's understanding of the term "executable file." Many messages that were accurate on all other

counts, identified executable files as .EXE files only. While *.EXE files are, most definitely executable, they are not the only executable files. Word documents can contain executable macros, and although they may seem like a blast from the past to some, *.BAT and *.COM files are also executable. As are *.SHS and *.VBS files, and of course, MS Office documents containing Word Macros.

This article is furnished as a benefit of our membership in the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which DACS belongs. The author, Carol Daniels is a freelance writer and editor specializing in science, technology computers, computing, business, health, medicine, food, and agriculture. She is on the Management Committee of the Melbourne PC User Group and a member of APCUG's Board of User

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A Glossary of Common File Extensions

386	Windows Virtual Device Drivers	MDB	Microsoft Access database
AAM	Macromedia Shockwave	MID	MIDI sequence
AI	Adobe Illustrator file	MIF	MIDI instrument file
ARC	Archive file	MOV	QuickTime movie
AVI	Video Clip	MPG/MPEG	Motion Picture Experts Group video format
BAK	Backup File	NLS	Natural Language Services driver
BAS	Visual Basic Code Module	OCX	ActiveX control
BAT	Batch File	PCX	PC Paintbrush file
BCF	Briefcase File	PDF	Portable Document Format
BMP	Windows bitmap	PDX	Paradox database
CAB	Cabinet file	PIF	Shortcut to MS-DOS program
CDB	Clipboard file	PJ	HP PaintJet file
CDR	Corel Draw 3 - 7	POT	PowerPoint template
CFG	Configuration file	PPD	Postscript Printer Description file
CHK	ScanDisk file	PPT	PowerPoint Presentation file
CLS	Visual Basic class module	PRV	Extensis PagePreview
COM	MS-DOS executable file	PS	PostScript output file
CPI	International code Page information	PSD	Adobe Photoshop file 3.0/4.0
CPL	Control Panel applet	PWL	Password list
CPP	C++ compiler source file	QT	Quicktime movie
CUR	Windows Cursor file	RA	Real Audio data file
DAT	Data file (used by several applications and system functions)	RAM	Real Audio file
		REG	Exported Registry patch file
		RTF	Rich Text Format file
DCX	FaxView document	SCR	Screen Saver file
DFB	Dbase/FoxPro database file	SHS	Scrap object
DLL	Dynamic Link Library	SIG	Signature file
DOC	MS Word document	SIT	Stuffit archive
DOT	MS Word template file	SPL	Shockwave Splash file
DRV	Device driver		(also Windows 95 extension for temporary printer spool files)
DWG	AutoCad file	SWP	Swap file
EPS	Encapsulated PostScript	TAR	Unix archive format
EXE	Executable file	TIF/TIFF	Tagged Image File Format
FH3/FH4/FH5/ FH6/FH7	Freehand 2.0 - 7.0	TMP	Temporary file
FON	Bitmapped font file	TTF	TrueType Font
FOT	Font metric for TrueType fonts	TXT	Text file
FRM	Visual Basic form file	UU	UUencoded file
FXD	Winfax file	VBX	Visual Basic Custom Control File
GEM	Graphics Environment Manager	VXD	Virtual device driver
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format	WAV	Waveform file
GZ	Gzip file	WCM	WordPerfect macro file
HLP	Help data file	WKS	Lotus 1-2-3 worksheet
HQX	BinHex archive format	WMF	Windows Metafile
HTM/HTML	Hypertext Markup Language file	WP/WPD	WordPerfect Files
ICO	Windows icon	WPG	WordPerfect Bitmap
INF	Setup Information file	WPT	WordPerfect Template file
INI	Configuration settings file	WRI	WordPad file
JPG/JPEG	Joint Photographics Expert Group Format	XBM	X Window System bitmap
KBD	Keyboard layout data	XLM	Excel macro file
LGO	Windows logo driver	XLS	Excel worksheet
LIB	Static-link library file	XLT	Excel template
LNK	A Desktop shortcut	XLW	Excel Workspace
LOG	A log file	XWD	X Windows System dump
LZH LH	Arc compressed file	Z	Compressed Unix file
MAK	C/C++ make file	ZIP	Compressed archive file

Viruses

Is Your PC a Can of Worms

WordPerfect Gives you Wiggle Room

By John Heckman

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to a technical error, part of this article *was* missing in the Jukly issue of dacs.doc. We are reprinting the article in its entirety here, and apologize to the author for the omission.

WITH THE MELISSA VIRUS a few weeks ago and now the more deadly "Explorer/Zip" worm virus, those using e-mail to the outside world have to take a close look at what the real risks are and how to best protect themselves. The Explorer virus infected major corporations, including Microsoft, Boeing, AT&T, and General Electric, forcing some of them to shut down their e-mail systems in order to deal with virus infection.

The Explorer virus not only replicates itself through the e-mail system, but tries to overwrite files on any accessible drives, including network drives, thus potentially destroying documents on the entire network.

Right now, these viruses work through and attack Microsoft products: Outlook, Exchange, Outlook Express, Word, etc. The Explorer virus also attacks Excel spreadsheets, Powerpoint presentation files, and various other types of files. Macro viruses are effective because the structure of Microsoft products requires macros to be contained in and run from documents. Thus if you open a Word file called "word.doc," it can contain and run a virus. The recent viruses have two "innovations" that make them particularly lethal:

- The Melissa virus reads the Outlook address book and sends messages to the first 50 listings (including groups, which are sorted first) so that an e-mail appears to the recipient to come from someone they know or to be a response to an e-mail message they have actually sent. The Explorer

virus continues to reply to new e-mail you receive, sending itself out as a reply.

- The Explorer worm virus ups the ante, destroying files (and potentially all your data), whereas the Melissa virus did no actual damage other than causing a tremendous bottleneck.

WP Immunity

Current users of WordPerfect have not had to be very concerned about these vi-

ruses because WordPerfect has a macro strategy and structure different from that of Word. In WordPerfect, macros exist as free-standing files and cannot be incorporated into or run from documents. While macros can run from WordPerfect templates, these must have

a .wpt extension in order to function. It is therefore impossible to disguise a WordPerfect template as something else and fool the recipient into opening it.

However WP 9, part of the just-released WordPerfect Office 2000 suite, is partially changing this by incorporating Visual Basic into WordPerfect, thus potentially opening WP to Word-type viruses. For the moment, however, the capabilities of the Corel set of Visual Basic commands are limited, restricting the ability of macro viruses to spread. In addition, VB is not installed by default when you install WordPerfect 9. We strongly recommend not installing VB with WP 9 until you are certain that you have adequate virus protection.

What Next?

Things will get worse with Microsoft's Office 2000. At present, you can avoid macro virus damage by not opening any attachments, but only viewing them (macros do not execute when documents are only viewed). However, the "tight integration" of Outlook 2000

with Internet Explorer means that under certain conditions it will be possible to have macros execute when a simple e-mail message is opened, eliminating what from a virus-writer's point of view is a "loophole" through which his potential victims can escape. Thanks, Microsoft!

Are You Safe?

Some may be lulled into a false sense of security by the "fact" that they have an antivirus program on all their PCs. There are two fatal flaws in this logic. First, having such programs do not necessarily protect your server. You also need to be running antivirus software on the server. More important, many people purchase new PCs with antivirus software installed and then never update the software! This means that they are "protected" for (at best) the first week or so after they receive the PC. With the speed at which viruses are being created and spreading, this is basically worthless. Many vendors install antivirus software and never make any provisions to keep it updated, thus in effect leaving their clients helpless in the future.

People using Microsoft products, Word and Outlook in particular, are at serious risk if they do not take aggressive antivirus measures. People using WordPerfect will realize a new benefit to this program: they are not at immediate risk from the current outbreak of macro viruses (of course, this does not obviate the need for up-to-date antivirus programs as well).

Do's and Don'ts

- Don't routinely open e-mail attachments. View each one to make sure it is safe to open. You may want to save it to a specified directory and run antivirus software against it before you open it.

- Do keep your antivirus software up to date for both PCs and the server. This will cost money and time, but what will it cost you if key documents on your server are destroyed?

- Do find out what antivirus protection your ISP (Internet provider) is offering in terms of e-mail. Consider switching to one that will do a virus scan of all your e-mail before you receive it. Companies such as DotOne (800 826-4666) and Allegro Net (800 209-6245) offer such services. Or contact Heckman Consulting at 203 831-0442 or heckman@heckmanco.com for more information (DotOne, my e-mail provider, scans all my mail for viruses).

JOHN HECKMAN is president of Heckman Consulting, specializing in software integration for law firms, and a frequent contributor to dacs.doc.



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Instant replay: June 1999

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Q. My wife has an IBM Aptiva, which freezes every once in a while. Even after restarting it will freeze at the Windows clouds-and-flags screen, so I have to reload the operating system. The CD provided requires reformatting the drive. Is there a way to reload—or to repair the problem—that doesn't require complete reformatting?

A. Once you get the machine going, it was suggested that you remove the MS Office Toolbar, since it is grabbing a lot of resources. Now to resolve the problem: First, try to get into Safe Mode by tapping the F8 key several times when the machine powers up (way before you see anything about Windows). Often, just starting in Safe Mode and then restarting the machine will repair problems. Included in 98 is a utility called SCANREG, which can repair your registry or reload a previous version. After you have run it, you can then reinstall from a standard MS Windows 98 CD. You should also create a recovery diskette. You do this from My Computer/Control Panel/Add/Remove Programs. Click the Startup Disk tab and follow the directions to create the emergency recovery diskette, which will let you boot and make repairs. Another suggestion was that the Aptiva only goes into "sleep mode" if you use the power switch on the front. Try to do a full power off by using the switch in the rear of the machine.

Q. I have an old IBM ThinkPad 350. Since I can't find the system diskettes that came with it, I don't have the diskettes with the PCMCIA card support. Does anyone know where I can get the diskettes?

A. Several people offered to provide copies. In addition, you may be able to download the drivers from the IBM site: <http://www.pc.ibm.com/support?page=brand&brand=IBM+ThinkPad%7CThinkPad+350> or try www.drivers.com, which is a

user-supported index to drivers. This site doesn't maintain the drivers but provides links to the sites that do have the appropriate drivers. You need to "register" to use the site, but you may opt out of getting their e-mail newsletter and other notices.

Q. Once in a while the functionality of the buttons on my mouse gets reversed: All of a sudden the normal (left) mouse button takes on the characteristics of the right button. The mouse came with my Gateway machine. Do you have any idea why this happens and how I can prevent it?

A. The only recommendation was to make sure that you have the latest drivers for the mouse.

Q. I put Windows NT Workstation on a machine, placing it on Drive D: and now it won't boot. If I bring up the machine with another OS, I see a file called pagefile.sys on the C: drive. It is 15MB, and I don't have any room left on the drive. Can I get rid of this file?

A. You have inadvertently found the reason for the boot problem. Pagefile.sys is the swap file used by NT. Unless you specify otherwise, it goes on the first partition of the active drive, which is invariably C:. That you put NT on D: doesn't matter—the OS can be anywhere—but the boot tracks (for your boot manager) are on C:, so that's where the swap file went. And since the drive is already full, you don't have enough room for a true swap file, so you lock up. You will need to move the file to another drive, and tell NT that you did so. Take a look in boot.ini, which is a hidden file on C:, and you will probably see a pointer to it. The file should be about four times your physical RAM size. If you are running a memory-intensive application, such as PhotoShop or CorelDraw, you should have a page file of about

200MB.

Q. I am trying to move files from an old machine to a new machine using the "Direct Cable Connection," and although both machines start the application, I can't move any files.

A. A "catch" in Windows 95 Direct Cable Connection (and maybe in 98 too) is that if you are using the serial cable for the direct cable connection, both machines must be on the same serial port, i.e., both on COM1, or both on COM2. This is probably your case. If you can't switch one of the serial ports, then you will need to use the printer port configuration. Even if you can use serial port connections, you probably should use the printer port configuration, which is considerably faster. Make sure that your BIOS settings for the printer port are set to "bidirectional." Get a LapLink cable at any computer store. It will provide the special wiring for a parallel printer port to parallel printer port connection. The cable should cost less than \$10. If you are going to be doing a lot of transferring, then you probably should look at getting the LapLink product by Traveling Software (www.travsoft.com), since it is much more powerful than the direct connection. For example, it can synchronize files and/or folders, sending across only those files that have changed. It is wonderful for keeping your notebook drive contents in synch with your desktop machine, and includes sending only the portions of a file that have changed, if possible. There is a version of Laplink for Windows 3.x/Windows 95/Windows 98, and a version for Windows 9x/NT. If you don't have to support Windows 3.x, get the 9x/NT version. Lastly, if this is a one-time-only operation, you might see if someone has a parallel port ZIP disk drive that you can borrow.

Q. In last month's Random Access, it was mentioned that some telephone central offices are still analog. Is there a way to identify which ones? I would like to know so I can determine if I can get ISDN service.

A. The telephone company doesn't publicize this. However, if your local central office isn't digital, they will run the line from the nearest

digital office at no additional charge to you.

Q. I have a Pentium 100 machine. Sometimes there is a considerable delay between a mouse movement and the machine actually performing the activity requested (such as moving a scroll bar.) What causes this and how do I fix it?

A. Internally Windows has an "message event queue," which is a list of actions that have been requested. If your applications are doing a lot of work, and/or if you have several applications running in the background, then the queue may be very deep. If you are memory bound, then each time a message is processed, it may be necessary for Windows to swap an application out of memory to the swap file, then bring in the requested application to perform the event, then return to the previous event. You can detect this if your hard disk activity light is on continuously. The first recommendation is to add memory to the machine. Defragment the

hard drive. See if you can temporarily remove or disable some background applications. This might improve the situation.

BRUCE PRESTON is the president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. A DACS director and moderator of the Random Access sessions at the general meetings, Bruce also leads the Access SIG.

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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 modem, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting. Fax your ads to Charlie Bovaird at 203 792-7881.

Leave hard-copy classifieds with Charlie, Marc, or whoever is tending the members' table at our monthly meeting.

New Members

07/17/1999 thru 08/17/1999

- 1) Bill & Lisa Hernandez
- 2) Elaine Kruzansky

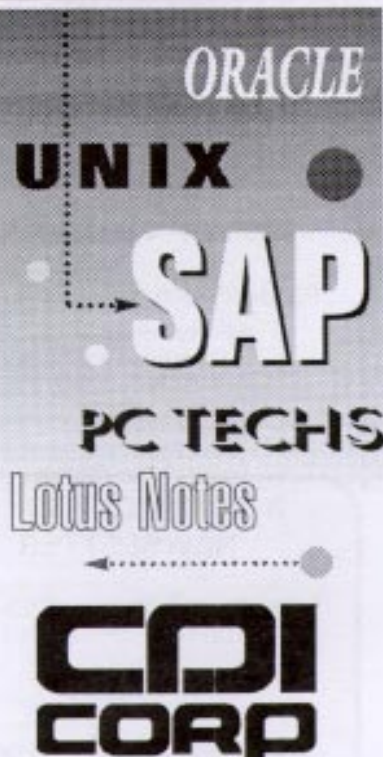
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