

Computer News

July 2005
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Displaying Computer Video Output on a TV Will Be Discussed at July 20 NVPCUG Meeting

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, July 20, 2005, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California.

Our July general meeting will consist of only two of our regular meeting segments: **Random Access**, an open-floor question-and-answer period, and **Computer Tutor**, a session in which you can learn how to accomplish specific tasks. Each of these segments will be longer than usual, allowing more time for discussion.

In the Computer Tutor session, **Jerry Brown** will discuss how to display video output from a computer and other devices on a television by using a Super-Video (S-Video) cable connection. Being able to display video output on a television is desirable because, for example, a television may be capable of producing a higher quality image than a computer monitor, especially one with a liquid crystal display (LCD) screen, or you may want to take advantage of a television's large screen or location to display information or to view a movie. To use S-Video, the devices sending and receiving video signals must support the format and have special S-Video jacks.



Jerry Brown

Jerry is a retired computer software engineer who was involved for many years in development and support work for the United States space shuttle program. He is a past NVPCUG director, has served since 2000 as our Investors SIG leader, and for the last year and a half has moderated the Random Access sessions at our monthly group meetings.

During the Random Access period, which will precede the Computer Tutor session, you can ask questions about specific issues you have encountered in using computer products and receive helpful information from other meeting attendees. Questions may be submitted in advance of our meeting by e-mailing them to Jerry Brown at Questions@nvpcug.org.

Need practical information that will enable you to make better use of your computer? Come to this meeting! Guests are always welcome.

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, on-line forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. Through its Computers-to-Schools program, members refurbish used computer equipment for donation to local schools. Since January 2003 the NVPCUG has donated more than 307 computers and 102 printers.

President's Message—

Providing Services

By Orion E. Hill



Help Is Appreciated

I would like to personally thank all of the NVPCUG members who worked to make our Used Computer Equipment Sale on June 3 and 4 successful and whose participation in the Napa County Computer and Electronics Recycling Event a week later helped make that activity successful. I would like to especially note the contribution of **Ray McCann**, who devoted many hours outside our regular weekly Computers-to-Schools program work parties to preparing for sale all of the notebook computers offered at our sale. The majority of the income at that event resulted from the sale of these computers.

Build Your Own Computer

At the conclusion of **Dick Peterson's** very informative presentation on building a state-of-the-art computer at our June 15 meeting, he offered to conduct a workshop during which participants would actually build their own computers. If you are interested in this workshop, let Dick know by calling (707) 259-1712 or sending e-mail to Winemaker@aol.com.

Annual Picnic Scheduled

Our annual potluck picnic featuring great food, competitive games, prizes, plenty of time to socialize, and lots of fun has been scheduled this year for Saturday, August 20. Our recent survey found that the greatest number of NVPCUG members and their families would be able to participate on that date, which coincides with the traditional timing of this event on the third Saturday in August. The picnic will be held in the redwood grove at **Dick and Sandy Peterson's** Christmas tree farm on Darms Lane. **Dianne Prior** has volunteered to coordinate the event and will be assisted by **Julie Jerome**.

Newsletter Disks Are Available

Computer disks containing all of the NVPCUG's monthly newsletters published in PDF format since January 2001 are again available and are being updated regularly. These archive disks allow quick searches for information on specific topics and provide a history of our group. To obtain the most recent CD-R disk, contact **Ron Dack** by sending e-mail to Webmaster@nvpcug.org. The cost of a disk is \$10.

Your Help Is Needed

I am very concerned about the future of our group. Since the current administrative term began last December with the key positions of Vice President, Programs Director, and Special Projects Director vacant, I have called each month for volunteers to serve in those positions. No one has volunteered yet or even offered to help our current officers plan and administer our group's activities. As a result, our current officers are overburdened and many important tasks, especially those concerning presentations at our monthly meetings, either are not being properly handled or are not being performed. In several months it will be time for us to elect a new board of directors and appoint new subordinate officers. Since there are no candidates for the current vacancies, I fear that this condition will continue and even worsen in the future, which could result in the demise of our group. The NVPCUG's current officers are committed to providing a high-quality education program, but to meet that goal we need your help. If you value the NVPCUG, please contact me to discuss how you can contribute to the success of our group, even if you can devote only one hour each month.

Sound Off!

Got a suggestion for improving an NVPCUG activity? Want to help with an activity? Send e-mail to OHill@napanet.net or call (707) 252-0637.

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Used Computer Equipment Sale Raises Nearly \$2,000

By Orion Hill, NVPCUG President and Sale Coordinator

The NVPCUG Used Computer Equipment Sale on Friday and Saturday, June 3 and 4, 2005, was very successful, with receipts totaling \$1,941. This amount is slightly more than the total for our last sale in June 2004. The sale was conducted in a vacant storefront at 1307 First Street, just east of Annette's Chocolate Factory, in downtown Napa.

The sale started with a small surge of customers eager to take advantage of bargain prices on a huge selection of equipment, including about 45 Pentium 2 minitower and desktop computers, about 30 notebook computers, and a great variety of monitors, keyboards, mice, disk drives, network cards, printers, scanners, modems, communication cables, and other peripherals, and then quickly settled down to a fairly even pace. Although all of the notebook computers sold as expected, very few of the minitower and desktop units were purchased, perhaps because the majority of the people who visited our sale seemed to be experienced computer users. They very likely already owned similar or more powerful large profile units.

The proceeds from this sale, which is the NVPCUG's primary annual fund-raising activity, will be used for our group's educational activities and for projects benefiting Napa Valley residents, including our Computers-to-Schools program.

This sale would not have been possible without the support of many organizations and individuals. Most of the sale items had been donated for our Computers-to-Schools program--though which we provide refurbished equipment to Napa County public schools and to disadvantaged students--and then were determined to be unsuitable for classroom use or in excess of school needs. Major equipment donors during the past year include **Dey, L.P.** and the **County of Napa**. Many additional items were donated by local businesses, residents,

and NVPCUG members. The NVPCUG is most grateful for the contributions of these organizations and individuals, as well as for the support of **Louis Sloss**, owner of **Morris Brown Realty, L.P.**, of Portland, Oregon, who provided free store space for our sale, Coldwell Banker Commercial Brokers of the Valley agent **Allan Wilke**, who arranged for our use of the storefront, and the **Napa Airport Pilots Association**, which loaned 15 six-foot tables.

This sale also required the work of many NVPCUG members and friends who tested and transported equipment, set up and took down sale tables, and assisted customers: NVPCUG members **Karla Bailey,* Susy Ball, Charlotte Bunnell, Hal Bunnell,* Cheryl Harris,* Elmer Harris,* Orion E. Hill,* Julie Jerome,* Bernhard Krevet, Roger Lewis,* Ray McCann,* Dianne Prior,* Jim Prior, Corinne Rau,* Tom Rhyme, Don Robertson,* Otho Rosado,* Davina Rubin,* John Simcoe,* Bob Simmerman,* Jim Stirling,* Dean Unruh, Roy Wagner,* Bill Wheadon,* and Rex Williams**; Karla Bailey's husband **Larry Bailey**; and former member **Larry Renner**. Members whose names are marked with asterisks worked multiple shifts. If I have overlooked naming anyone who helped, I apologize. □

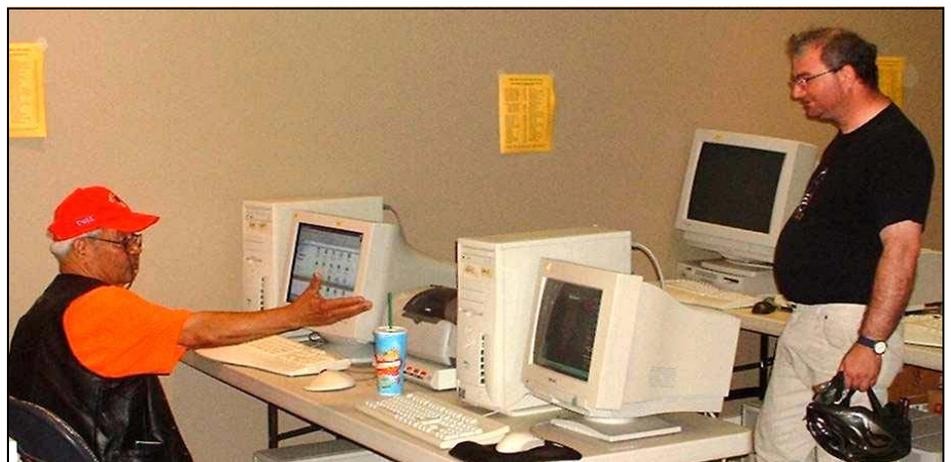


Ray McCann points out notebook features to Dianne Prior. Photo by Orion Hill.



Elmer Harris examines a surge protection power strip. Photo by Orion Hill.

Otho Rosado describes computer system features to a customer. Photo by Jim Stirling



NVPCUG Special Interest Groups

The NVPCUG currently has two special interest groups. By attending SIG meetings, you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings and can share your knowledge with other people. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change. For current meeting location information, see our Web site, www.nvpcug.org, or contact the SIG leaders.

Digital Photography SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Wednesday
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Piner's Nursing Home,
Conference Room
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa

Leader: **Susy Ball**
(707) 337-3998
SusyBall@aol.com

Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa

Leader: **Jerry Brown**
(707) 254-9607
bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net

For more information about
the NVPCUG,
visit our Web site:
<http://www.nvpcug.org>

Membership News

By Dianne Prior, NVPCUG Membership Director

The Napa Valley Computer Users Group welcomes new member **Pat Tayler** and returning member **William Kennard**.

As of June 30, 2005, the NVPCUG had 117 active members. A year ago we had 105.

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group Officers for 2005

Board of Directors

President	Orion E. Hill	252-0637	President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	(Volunteer Needed)		VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Julie Jerome	224-6620	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org

Other Directors: Dianne Prior, John Simcoe, James Stirling

Appointed Officers

Computer Equipment Sale Coordinator	Orion E. Hill	252-0637	Sales@nvpcug.org
Computer Recycling Coordinator	Bill Wheadon	224-3901	Recycler@nvpcug.org
Computer Tutor Coordinator	Mike Moore	255-1615	Tutor@nvpcug.org
Computers-to-Schools Program Coordinator	Orion E. Hill	252-0637	CTS@nvpcug.org
Facility Arrangements Coordinator	Steve Siegrist		Facility@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Greeter@nvpcug.org
Librarian	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Librarian@nvpcug.org
Membership Director	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Membership@nvpcug.org
Mentor Program Coordinator	Hilton Des Roches	224-6170	Mentors@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Circulator	Jim Hearn	224-2540	
Newsletter Editor	James Stirling	944-1177	Editor@nvpcug.org
Product Review Coord.	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Reviews@nvpcug.org
Programs Director	(Volunteer Needed)		Programs@nvpcug.org
Publicity Director	John Simcoe	258-8233	Publicity@nvpcug.org
Random Access Moderator	Jerry Brown	254-9607	Questions@nvpcug.org
Special Projects Director	(Volunteer Needed)		Projects@nvpcug.org
Webmaster	Ron Dack		Webmaster@nvpcug.org

NVPCUG Calendar

Wednesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
July 5	7:00 p.m.
July 11	5:30-7:30 p.m.
July 13	7:00-8:30 p.m.
July 18	7:00-9:00 p.m.
August 20	1:30-6:00 p.m.

Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer contact Orion Hill.
Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
General Meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Annual Picnic, Peterson Family Christmas Tree Farm, 1120 Darms Lane, Napa

208 Tons of Electronic Equipment Collected for Recycling

By Bill Wheadon, NVPCUG Computer Recycling Coordinator

Two hundred eight tons of computers and other equipment were collected at the fifth annual Napa County Computer and Electronics Recycling Event, held June 10 and 11 in the south parking lot of the Napa Valley College's Napa campus. This was only slightly lower than last year's record of 213 tons. Two-thirds of this year's tonnage came on Friday. I understand that at one time on Friday the Highway Patrol came very close to shutting down the event because the queue of vehicles waiting to unload extended briefly down Streblov Drive and onto the Napa-Vallejo Highway. It appeared many people chose to use their lunch hour for this errand. Saturday was much more relaxed, allowing NVPCUG volunteers more time to glean reusable items for our Computers-to-Schools program. Approximately 5 pickup truck loads—2 tons—of computers, monitors and peripherals were received.

Twenty-two NVPCUG volunteers helped make the event a success by directing traffic, surveying drivers, and identifying and pulling computer equipment suitable for reuse. The following members worked multiple shifts: **Susy Ball, Hall Bunnell, Orion E. Hill, Linda Kemp, Ray**



Bill Wheadon directs a driver whom he has surveyed to a drop-off line at the recycling event. Photo by Orion Hill.

McCann, Dianne Prior, Otho Rosado, Jim Stirling, Dean Unruh, Roy Wagner, and Bill and Jan Wheadon.

Also participating were **Karla Bailey, Al Edmister, Jim Hearn, Julie Jerome, Corrine Rau, Jan and Ray Riley, Don Robertson, John Simcoe, and Bob Simmerman.** Thanks to all of our volunteers □



Hal Bunnell, Orion Hill, John Simcoe and Otho Rosado look for and remove reusable computer equipment from a pickup truck at the recycling event. Photo by Susy Ball.

Search Engine Tips and Tricks

By Richard Johnson, TUGNET, Granada Hills, California

Part 1: Google

I don't have to tell you about Google, which has for many years been the search leader. Aside from the quality of its searches, a big plus is that all of Google's paid listings are clearly distinguished, and do not even appear in the same part of the page. Unfortunately this is not the case with other search services such as Yahoo, which intersperses undifferentiated paid and unpaid listings.

Newbies will want to know they can initiate a Google search at www.google.com. All of the services I'm recommending here, most of them from Google but a few from other sources, are entirely free.

Google Toolbar

If you don't already use the Google Toolbar, you're missing a terrific navigational aid. Its features are really too numerous to detail here, but I find especially useful its ability to readily bring up a parent Web page, search within a Web site, find pages similar to what you're looking at, find sites linking to that page, translate a page into English, browse by name (if you don't know the URL), highlight search terms on the page, find on the page your search terms or any other terms (more handily than with your browser's "Find" function), fill forms, and block pop-ups. (There are better pop-up blockers and form fillers, but Google's may suit you fine.)

The toolbar enables most of the standard Google tasks, including some described in the next section. Not only are all of these tasks easily accessible, but also you won't have to retype your search terms (for example, when you search for an image after a standard search).

I strongly recommend version 3, which adds many useful tools, the best of which will allow you to spell-check what you've typed on a Web form by clicking a toolbar button, bringing up a map page (using the im-

pressive new Google Maps--see below) just by clicking on an address, and track a delivery by clicking on its tracking number.

Since it's still in beta, version 3 is not publicized and won't automatically replace your present Google Toolbar. To get it, go to www.toolbar.google.com/T3.

Other Google Goodies; Google Maps and Google Local

Google has recently introduced its own map system, that's head and shoulders above the competition. It's available as a stand-alone service at <http://maps.google.com> and as an adjunct to the more established Google Local, at <http://local.google.com>.

Compared to other online maps, the area of a Google map is huge, taking up more than half the screen, and expanding to fill any additional space (for example, if you move to a full-screen view). Zooming (in or out) is very quick, and re-centering is instantaneous. A new feature brings up a birds-eye view if you click on "Satellite."

Google Maps and Google Local are now pretty much the same service: A page brought up by Google Maps has a link to "Local Search," which provides the local data on the same page; and a page brought up by Google Local includes the map (which, although smaller, can be expanded with one click). The local data includes the names, addresses, phone numbers, and Web sites of businesses, and, often, third-party reviews (like restaurant reviews).

You can now get to Google Maps by typing a location in the standard Google search bar. And you'll find a link to Google Local at the top of every page of Google search results.

The best of the rest

The following are, in my experience, the most useful (or most interesting) of Google's nonstandard ser-

vices. You do not need the Google Toolbar to employ them:

Google's image search at www.google.com/imghp, touted as the Web's most comprehensive, indexes (according to Google) over 880 million images.

Google will give you a business address and phone number. The easiest way is through the ResearchBuzz! form at www.researchbuzz.org/archives/001408.shtml.

Google will bring up one or more definitions for nearly any word. In the Google search box just type "define:" (without the quotes), followed by the word of interest. This service is now multi-lingual.

Reverse phone directory. In the search box type the area code and phone number (with a space between them), and there's a good chance you'll bring up at the top of the results page not only the person or company name for that number, but also the address.

Google offers special searches, limited (for example) to U.S. government or to Microsoft. Go to www.google.com/options/specialsearches.html.

For those who like to purchase through the use of catalogs, Google's catalog search is at <http://catalogs.google.com>.

Google will enable you to view a page that's been removed from the Web. Look for the "Cached" link after the description of the page in a search result. (Or click the Page Info button on the Google Toolbar.) This function will give you access to many closed-down sites not yet available via the Internet Archive. (The Internet Archive -- not a Google service -- is at www.archive.org.)

The Google Directory at <http://directory.google.com> combines the Open Directory Project (the Web's largest human-edited directory) with Google's proprietary ranking system. Use of the directory is helpful to nar-

row down what might otherwise be an overly broad search. (This tool is also available from the Google Toolbar.)

Google Answers at <http://answers.google.com/answers> is a paid research service--but users are free to browse previous answers, which can be quite helpful.

Weather forecasts are easily obtained by typing in the Google search bar the word "weather" followed by the city of choice (for example, "weather canoga park.") The forecast will speedily appear at the top of a page of search results.

Froogle, a comparison service for online shopping whose listed vendors pay neither for inclusion nor placement, is at <http://froogle.google.com/froogle>.

Google Print gives you access to books' contents and lets you search within those books. Look for the "book results" entry in standard search results, accompanied by the Google Print logo.

Google Suggest, at www.google.com/webhp?complete=1&hl=en, appears and acts like the standard Google search, except that as you start typing your search request, Google types its own suggestions. These could save you time and also point you to related searches.

Google Desktop, to search files on your own computer, can be downloaded from <http://desktop.google.com>. Unfortunately, it's available only for users of *Windows 2000* and *Windows XP*.

Gmail, which on March 31 started offering rich text formatting, has as of April 1 doubled its storage capacity to a whopping 2 gigabytes. Gmail is not yet open to the public, but invitations can be obtained from various sources, including this writer.

Note that without retyping you can extend your standard Web search not only to Google Local but also to Google Images and Froogle (as well as to Google Groups and Google News), by clicking on links at the top of every results page. Or you can skip the Google entry page and go to Xtra

Google at www.xtragoogle.com for a selection of twenty Google tools, all tied to one search box.

Google Tips

Toolbar tips: Use Alt-G to enter search terms in the search box.

For your news search, don't enable the separate news button, but instead use the Search News option in the drop-down Search the Web menu. That way you'll be able to use the Alt-G shortcut to enter your news search query, and to use the same query for news and general Web searching, without retyping. When using the word-find function, hold down the control key to find the exact whole word, and similarly use the shift key to move backwards.

Other Google tips: For academically oriented results (often the most useful), try typing *site:edu* either before or after your search terms. This will eliminate commercial sites and will limit results to those from educational institutions.

Although Google now implements "stemming" (where it automatically searches for variants of words as well as the words themselves), you can cover still more bases by using the tilde [~] symbol right before a search term (leaving no space). This will tell Google to use synonyms as search queries. For example, a search for ~food ~facts will turn up cooking information.

Don't worry too much about misspelled words. With any search engine, a search query with a misspelling might get you some good results that you wouldn't see otherwise! Google will suggest a corrected spelling along with its search results, but if the initial search comes up empty will correct the spelling on its own and re-run the search.

Google will ignore some common short words (like a, on, and by) in your queries. The best way around these so-called stop words in most cases is simply to enclose the phrase in quotes, which will force Google to

search for only the phrase as given. (A phrase search will of course come in handy on other occasions as well.) Otherwise, you can precede a suspected stop word with the plus sign (for example, +on).

Google recognizes the OR operator, or, in its stead, the vertical line. So if you're seeking search results concerning cats or dogs (but not both), you could type "cats OR dogs" or "cats | dogs" [without the quotes]. Use the minus sign right before a search term for "not." ("Animals - dogs" [without the quotes] would ignore dogs in the search.) For complicated queries, you can if necessary group search words within parentheses.

Instead of clicking on the main link at the top of each Google search result, try clicking on the word Cached. The page that will come up will now have your search words highlighted. (Don't use this technique if you need to see the most recent page revisions.)

Google supports word wild cards. That is, you can in your query use the asterisk [*] as a stand-in to represent any word. (This won't work in Google for parts of words.) □

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor and founder/administrator of Free for All, The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (<http://theskillspool.org>). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with *Internet Explorer*, *Outlook Express*, and *Gmail*. You may reach him at rj@theskillspool.org.

This article has been provided by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.

Where Did They Get That Name?

Legend has it that the company founders, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, intended to name it Googol, meaning a 1 followed by 100 zeroes. But when they approached an angel investor he made out a check to Google, and the name stuck.

Don't Fall for "Human Engineering"

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont, Texas
Radio Show Host; Police Officer

You receive the following urgent e-mail from someone you know with the subject line "Finally Captured!" You open this intriguing e-mail and see the message: "Turn on your TV. Osama Bin Laden has been captured. While CNN has no pictures at this point of time, the military channel (PPV) released some pictures. I managed to capture a couple of these pictures off my TV. Ive (sic) attached a slideshow containing all the pictures I managed to capture." Attached to the e-mail is a file "Pictures.zip." Eager to see the proof that the No. 1 most-wanted person in the world has been captured finally, you click on the attachment. No photos appear, so maybe you click on it again. It is now too late, because that first click on the attachment, rather than opening a zip file and displaying the photos, planted a nasty backdoor Trojan on your computer, *Nibu.D*. Through a process known in the industry as "Human Engineering," you were an innocent victim tricked into installing unwanted software onto your computer. In this particular case, the *Nibu.D* backdoor just installed a "keylogger" intended to capture user names, passwords, account numbers, and other sensitive information.

Nibu.D is also listed by Norton as a "bank info scarfer," a type of malware that explicitly looks for banking information when entered and sends that information to parties unknown. If you were one of the countless victims of this trick, and since opening the attachment and unknowingly installing *Nibu.D*, you have done online banking, checked your credit card accounts, logged onto eBay or other shopping sites, your personal information may have been compromised, and you may become a victim of identity theft.

Every day for the past several weeks I have received some appar-

ently urgent e-mails seemingly from my internet service provider (ISP). They come addressed from "administrator," "support," "customer service," or some similar official-sounding individual at the ISP. They carry dire warnings in the subject line that my e-mail account will be or has been suspended for a variety of infractions, ranging from failure to follow an unspecified rule, sending excessive spam, or some other major infraction. The poorly worded message is, "Once you have completed the form in the attached file, your account records will not be interrupted and will continue as normal" and has a 65k attachment "document.zip". Another slight variation refers to following directions in a file ranging from 43k to 65k in size, with the file name "instructions.zip." I depend on my e-mail, reading and sending dozens per day. It is important to me, and since it is from my ISP, I go ahead and click on the attachment. Bad choice; one or more of the dozens of variants of the *Mytob* worm is now infesting my computer, possibly killing or deactivating my antivirus and firewall software, preventing access to antivirus and other helpful websites, and creating a multitude of new threats to my cyber safety. Once the computer is infected, *Mytob* searches the hard drive for address books, and sends infecting e-mails to addresses found, geometrically increasing its distribution and degree of damage.

Recently, variations of *Mytob* in aggregate have made it to the top of the threat lists compiled by antivirus companies. In one recent day, antivirus company Sophos reported that over half of all new virus infestations detected were variants of *Mytob*. *Mytob* is a product of a group of miscreants going by the name "HellBot," who have allegedly stated that they are trying to develop some type of

"SuperBug," according to a recent article in *Computerworld*. On some days, several versions of *Mytob* have appeared; in recent months, slight variations have appeared so rapidly that *Mytob* has spread more quickly than antivirus companies' ability to protect against it, leaving units with even recently updated antivirus software vulnerable to attack.

Mytob, first discovered in February, and its many variants are especially nasty based on what they do. One factor in common is their ability to deactivate or destroy the antivirus software and firewall installed on the infected computers. It also blocks access to security Web sites that may provide information and utilities to kill *Mytob*. This malware may also prevent the running of the free online antivirus scans that could detect and remove *Mytob*. This makes it a self-protective piece of software. Some versions also lower or remove other security settings on the computer, making it even more vulnerable to attack. Some versions also may install spyware, adware, zombies, or other undesirable software, as well as broadcast over the Internet that the infected computer is vulnerable to further attacks. Trend Micro, the provider of the online free antivirus scan Housecall (housecall.antivirus.com), and PC-Cillin antivirus software, has stated that some variants of *Mytob* use the infected computers as a source of revenue for HellBot with their planting of adware and spyware.

Nibu and *Mybot* are just two of the thousands of currently circulating viruses, worms, and Trojans. *Netsky*, *Bagel*, *Sober*, and their many variations are a major threat to our computing security. As the virus writers continue to make more productive (for them) and destructive malware, it is now more imperative than ever that you keep your antivirus software updated constantly. Be suspicious about e-mails, even from known sources. If you get questionable e-mail from a possibly known source, before open-

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Another Silent Attack on Our Computers

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont, Texas; Radio Show Host; Police Officer

Web Sites:

<http://research.microsoft.com/rootkit>
<http://www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/rootkitreveal.shtml>
<http://www.f-secure.com/blacklight>
<http://www.f-secure.com/blacklight/rootkit.shtml>

Imagine a threat that would be undetected by the current antivirus, firewall, and anti-spyware software, yet be so powerful as to effectively take over our computers, without our knowledge. This threat, formerly considered solely as an unproven concept, is now known to be real and is implicated in taking over countless computers. It is known by the innocuous term "rootkit." It is a silent attempt to invade our computers for the purposes of installing viruses, Trojans, worms, or other malware devices.

A rootkit is defined on the Sysinternals Web site as, "The mechanisms and techniques whereby malware, including viruses, spyware, and Trojans, attempt to hide their presence from spyware blockers, antivirus, and system management utilities. There are several rootkit classifications depending on whether the malware survives reboot and whether it executes in user mode or kernel mode." The security software company F-Secure expands the definition with, "Rootkits for *Windows* work in a different way and are typically used to hide malicious software from for example an antivirus scanner. Rootkits are typically not malicious by themselves but

are used for malicious purposes by viruses, worms, backdoors and spyware. A virus combined with a rootkit produces what was known as full stealth viruses in the MS-DOS environment."

Because rootkits are currently very effective at hiding malware from our antivirus and anti-spyware scanners, it is quite possible or even probable that our computers are infected, despite repeated scans with updated software.

Microsoft, and other vendors, have acknowledged the threat and are now beginning to produce software that can detect and destroy the rootkits. The software is still in its infancy and lacks the ease of use, automation, and attractive graphical interfaces that we are used to with our antivirus software. It is inevitable that as word of the rootkit threat spreads, and more computers are identified as having stealthy rootkits hiding viruses and other threats, the small current crop of rootkit detecting software will improve. Other competitors, probably the major antivirus vendors, will join the fight. If rootkit technology continues to spread, the current crop of generally excellent computer security suites from the likes of Symantec (Norton), McAfee, Panda, Trend-Micro, and others will be forced to add rootkit protection to their respective suites or face competitive obsolescence.

Fortunately for us, there are a few rootkit detectors already available, mostly for free! This first generation of products still need much refining to enable the average person to scan for rootkits with ease, but they are still a very good first step. One free rootkit detector, "*RootkitRevealer*," is from Sysinternals, a company known for its excellent and often free software. It uses a patent-pending technology to detect rootkits and is available for download at www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/rootkitreveal.shtml. *RootkitRevealer* will run on almost

any Microsoft operating system, NT4 and later, which includes Windows 2000 and XP.

Another rootkit detector is from F-Secure, a well-known computer security company headquartered in Finland, with offices in the U.S. and elsewhere. F-Secure's product is "*Blacklight*," available as a free beta (pre-release) version (still available July 16) *Blacklight* can be downloaded at www.f-secure.com/blacklight.

I have recently tried both products, and I personally found *Blacklight* the easier to use. It seemed effective at detecting and eliminating rootkits.

Microsoft will shortly be making available its rootkit detector, the "*Strider GhostBuster*," details at research.microsoft.com/rootkit.

Persons unknown who wish to do us harm, either at a personal level such as stealing our account information and committing the crime of identity theft, or the impersonal level, such as cyber terrorists intent on shutting down our critical infrastructure, may use the rootkit technology to bypass our otherwise necessary defenses.

Until such time as the integrated computer security suites catch up with this threat, I will now have to add a rootkit detector to my recommended list of essential computer security utilities, alongside antivirus software, a good firewall, and a spyware detector. It is also imperative that all four of these utilities be frequently updated to ensure a reasonable degree of personal security. We will also have to add rootkits to our vernacular of cyber threats, along with the now ubiquitous terms "virus," "spyware," and "hacker."

I shudder to wonder what may be coming down the pike next. □

This article is provided by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.

(continued from page 8)

ing it or any attachments, check directly with the source. As I have pleaded in the past, we must be responsible for our own cybersecurity.

□
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This article is provided by the Editorial Committee of the APCUG.

Freecycle Network Offers Never-Ending Garage Sale (And It's All Free!)

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology

"It's not easy being green," sang Kermit the green Muppet frog. But it's getting easier, as people, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies recognize benefits of conserving and recycling resources of all sorts.

There have always been opportunities such as garage sales, flea markets, and thrift shops for casual/local exchanges of goods. Most of us have likely both bought and sold: giving new life to things we've enjoyed but no longer need, cashing in gifts we can't quite imagine using, and finding economical goods courtesy of neighbors and charitable organizations.

Before we recently moved (~http://www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/life_online/Articles/a2005-01-05~preserving_tech_moving.html), my wife and I took the opportunity to get rid of anything we thought was surplus. Fortunately, we beat the year-end crush at places like Salvation Army. But in December I did see 18-wheelers being loaded with goods from people who suddenly remembered the tax deduction for making such donations to charitable organizations. And I wondered how much of the tonnage being hauled would actually be sold and reused.

As in many other areas, the Internet lends new sparkle and efficiency to an old idea: using things until they're completely worn out. It's really true that one person's junk can be another person's treasure. In fact, the worldwide Freecycle(tm) Network [www.freecycle.org] offers goods at the Internet's favorite price (at least for buyers): free! Perhaps best of all, the Network offers in-person one-to-one transfers, making it likely that goodies will go places where they're cherished.

The Web site notes: "The worldwide Freecycle Network is made up

of many individual groups across the globe. It's a grassroots movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns. Each local group is run by a local volunteer moderator (good people). Membership is free.

The Freecycle Network was started in May 2003 to promote waste reduction in Tucson's downtown and help save desert landscape from being taken over by landfills.

The Network provides individuals and non-profits an electronic forum to "recycle" unwanted items.

Freecycling is interesting because, while it could only be done on the Internet, it has a very local focus. That is, while Web sites and discussion mailing lists draw worldwide clientele, physical transfer of free goods is constrained to relatively small areas.

So Freecycle operates as locally oriented mailing lists. For example, in the Washington, DC region, there's a huge list for the central city (one of the top ten lists with more than 6,000 people), and many suburbs have their own lists with dozens or hundreds of subscribers.

The main Freecycle Web site lists rules and etiquette, which are echoed by welcome messages to new subscribers. It's all simple and reasonable: Goods offered must be available for pickup in the local area; stick to recycling, avoid politics, spam, and off-topic messages; begin all e-mail subject lines with one of the words OFFER/TAKEN/WANTED/RECEIVED.

Rules such as "Keep it free, keep it legal, keep it safe for all ages" prohibit offering or requesting items such as guns, prescription drugs, "adult" material, alcohol, and cigarettes. Pets are OK, though. Only free and physical stuff is allowed; barter/exchanges/sales are barred, as are services offered or wanted.

I'm told that the list is best read in individual messages rather than digests (which collect dozens of messages into one e-mail) since offered items are often snatched up in just a few minutes. A reply in five minutes might be too late!

Messages are transmitted by the Yahoo! Groups Web site [groups.yahoo.com] so list archives can be searched. This allows making sure that no TAKEN or RECEIVED has been sent for the OFFER or WANTED you're about to answer.

Donors can decide which request gets the goods. First-reply-wins is a fine approach, but some decide based on why a person needs something. Businesses can use Freecycle to dispose of goods -- for example computing equipment that's usable but not marketable. A company with 25 monitors might offer them to a Freecycle list -- perhaps specifying minimum pickup of five. So smaller companies, recycling organizations, or community-minded individuals could collect and redistribute them where they're needed.

A very unscientific analysis of about 40 postings divided into 16 OFFERS, 12 TAKENS, 10 WANTEDS, and two RECEIVEDS -- a very respectable success rate for OFFERS and WANTEDS! As of when I'm writing this, more than 2,000 large and small communities have Freecycle groups with more than 700,000 members. And the Web site gives step-by-step instructions for starting one where there is none. Go forth and Freecycle! □

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Adventures in Linux-land

By Siles Bazerman, APCUG Representative,
Orange County IBMPC Users Group, California

As many of you know, I became bored with *Windows XP* awhile ago. Bored with both writing about it and actually using it. Windows went from “Gee, look what I found!” in *Windows 3* to using an appliance in *Windows XP*, with the release of SP2. Very usable, but not much fun to play with.

I decided to give Linux another try. The first time was with Red Hat 3 back in 1998-1999. At that time it was not ready for Prime Time and there was still a lot to discover in *Windows 98* and *98SE*. Also, there were only one or two other distros (distributions) available and little in the way of a GUI, so you used mostly command line.

Now there are many, many distros out there, some commercial and some free. Red Hat went commercial, but one, Fedora, is available for free download. One of the more popular free distros is *Debian* (Debra and Ian Murdock, authors). It too is available in several varieties. The two most useful for beginners to Linux are *Knoppix* and *SimplyMepis*. I use the latter. Both of these are downloadable, fit on one CD with a number of usable programs, and can run from the CD without installing on your hard drive. You can also install them if you so desire.

After downloading *Mepis*, using it and finally installing it, I decided I needed more information than was available online. I found a book, *Point and Click Linux*, by Robin Miller, that was written to exactly parallel the CD. For less than \$22 from Barnes and Nobel online I received the book, a CD (exactly the same as the download) and an instructional DVD. The distro uses the KDE (K Desktop Environment) and includes several editors, *Open Office Suite* (similar to *Microsoft Office*, but free), a CD/DVD writing program,

GIMP graphics program (GNU Image Manipulation Program) and *Mozilla* Web browser. There are numerous other programs included; these are the main ones. Also you can download and install many other programs free to enhance or replace the ones on the CD.

If all you want to do is send and receive e-mail, browse the Web, do some word processing or similar things, then you can use *Mepis* as installed. Web browsing is relatively virus free and almost totally popup free. Both *Mozilla* and its successor, *Firefox*, are also available for Windows, but Windows update will not work in any browser but IE. Linux is relatively free of viruses for two reasons. First, it represents a very small percent of desktop installations, and virus writers want the biggest “bang for the buck,” and don't bother. Second, you work in Linux as a user, but all changes to the system must be done as either an administrator or “super user,” both of which are not accessible from outside and are password protected. Also, the browser does not allow pop-ups. This would be labeled “easy.”

If you wish to do customization or add established *Debian* packages, then it can be easy or difficult depending on the need for the command line interface. Many of the commands are arcane and rather like in a foreign language, although they are really in English. I believe much is written in C, Perl, and Python. I am sure some other programming languages are involved also. Many of the free backup programs are written for Tape Backup Units, although they might be configurable for other media such as HD or CD/DVD. These things would rate “difficult.”

I have tried to port some Windows programs to Linux, using four different Windows emulators. The

commercial three all have free trials available that are time-limited but otherwise full. The free *qemu* (*QEMUlator*) requires an installation of *Windows 98* from a full install, and does not seem to ever access the CD drive or, for that matter, any drive outside the virtual machine. This prohibits the addition of other programs. Of the commercial ones, *Crossover Office* allows installation of *Microsoft Office* and a number of other programs whose hooks are built in. It will also allow the installation of some others, but it is hit or miss. *Paint Shop Pro 7* will install and work, but will not print, as an example; newer versions will not even install. *Photoshop 6* or *7* will work, but not later versions. *Crossover Office* does *not* require a copy of Windows to work. All the others do.

There are two versions of *Win4Lin*, regular and professional. The regular version works with all the DOS-based Windows up to and including *Windows ME*. The pro version works with *Windows 2000* and *XP*. I did find that loading *Windows XP* in the pro version was about like loading *Windows 3.1* on my old 286: S--l--o--w. It loaded *Windows 2000* at about the speed it loaded on my P3; I am running an Athlon Thunderbird 2600+ with 1G of memory. Under *Windows XP*, when I tried to load my program I received the message “Catastrophic Failure.” What the Hey? Under *2000* it installed, but when run it would fail with “ActiveX could not create a database module.” I spoke to one of the programmers of my problems and he had never heard of the first and could not suggest how to fix the second. As a matter of fact, he asked me to call him if I had any success in porting it over. He knows of no one else even trying. This whole area is very frustrating, but I will keep working at it. □

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Tech News

By Sue Crane, Vice President & Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, California
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AMD's antitrust suit against Intel

Advanced Micro Devices' complaint accuses Intel of maintaining its monopoly in the PC processor market by illegally coercing customers around the world into using its products. The 48-page complaint alleges that Intel used illegal subsidies to win sales, and in some cases threatened companies with "severe consequences" for using or selling AMD products. Meanwhile, hoping to win the support of U.S. legislators and average computer users, AMD is publishing full-page ads in 7 U.S. newspapers, explaining why it filed suit and encouraging readers to read the full text of its 48-page complaint. The AMD complaint is available online at http://www.amd.com/us-en/assets/content_type/DownloadableAssets/AMD-Intel_Full_Complaint.pdf.

Coming soon: 30Gb on a 1-inch drive

A Japanese university has shown a prototype 10GB 1-inch hard disk drive that packs data on the disk surface more densely than existing hard drives with an areal density--the number of bits per unit of disk surface area--of 138 gigabits per square inch. The drive uses perpendicular recording technology to achieve its higher areal density. The Japanese researchers project they will be able to boost the areal density of 1-inch disks to about 500-gigabits per square inch in 2007. This could enable 1-inch drives to have capacities as high as 30GB in a few years. Currently, the highest-capacity 1-inch drives on sale store up to 6GB of data.

Court rules against file swapping

In a unanimous decision justices ruled: companies that build businesses with the active intent of encouraging copyright infringement should be held liable for their custom-

ers' illegal actions. The decision will likely reshape the Internet landscape in which file swapping has become commonplace.

Man vs. supercomputer

Michael Adams, United Kingdom's strongest chess player, is the latest player to take on a supercomputer. Adams and the Hydra computer will play up to 6 games for a prize fund of \$150,000. Some experts are already predicting that Hydra will win the contest. But correspondence chess grandmaster Arno Nickel, who recently beat Hydra 2-0 in a correspondence match, has predicted that Adams could secure a 3-3 draw. According to the team that developed Hydra, it can calculate 200 million moves per second and see up to 40 moves ahead.

Tired of waiting for Windows XP?

Gigabyte Technology has stumbled upon a faster way to boot up PCs using the *Windows XP* operating system. The iRam is a PC add-in card with four DDR DRAM memory slots, designed to be used as a PC drive. Since iRam uses DRAM to store information, data can be retrieved up to 60 times faster. The iRam holds up to 4Gb of DRAM in four memory slots. The card fits into a standard PCI slot, which provides power, and it uses a SATA (Serial ATA) connection for data transfer. If the PC is unplugged, the iRam has an onboard battery for emergency power that can last up to 12 hours. The iRam was to be available in July.

Laptop batteries recalled

Batteries in some notebook computers from Fujitsu Siemens can overheat, with a risk of fire. The company has recalled the batteries in some of its Amilo notebook computers, and will replace affected batteries free of charge.

No Internet Explorer 7 for Win 2K

According to an unnamed employee, Microsoft will not be releasing *Internet Explorer 7* for *Windows 2000*, as this would involve a lot of work for an operating system that is in the later stages of its lifecycle, and some of the security work in *IE 7* relies on operating system functionality in *XP SP2*. *Win 2K* users argue that Microsoft is committed to provide extended support to *Windows 2000* through 2010. Microsoft was also criticized for building a Web browser that cannot run independently of the operating system. *IE 7* will be available in beta this summer, offering improved security features, basic tabbed browsing and improved standards support, including support for CSS 2 and PNG transparencies.

Digitally enhanced photos may be "too good"

Kacie Powell, a photographer for Centre College in Danville, Ky., tried to get some digital photo shots printed at Wal-Mart, but employees said they looked "too professional." She ended up signing an affidavit that included pictures of college employees who were authorized to print her pictures. When a colleague whose portrait was included among the authorized photographers went to Wal-Mart with some candid shots from graduation, she got turned down too.

Photo labs, fearful of being sued by professional photographers, are in a tough spot: should they anger their customers or risk a lawsuit? Don't be surprised if your digitally enhanced personal photos are turned down by WalMart and other fast-photo labs.

Do the walls have ears?

An experimental system--which consists of a series of sensors under a baby's mattress and a camera mounted on a wall--will monitor a

child's heart rate, temperature and movement; stream video of the infant; and even take pictures. Captured data is sent to a parent's PC. In another experiment, researchers have tagged all of the items in a person's house with RFID sensors that effectively will tell a remote computer whether the occupant has moved a spoon or turned on the television. Though it might sound Orwellian in the abstract, the system is being designed to provide relatives or professional caregivers information on the daily habits of the elderly.

\$100 computer

A little-known company called Novatium plans to offer a stripped-down home computer for about \$70 or \$75. Adding a monitor doubles the price to \$150, but the company will offer used displays to keep the cost down.

Porn gets its own domain

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) that oversees Internet addresses has approved a new online neighborhood specifically for pornographic Web sites: the .xxx domain. Proponents say this will help parents screen out the porn sites for their children, but other groups argue that it's not a reliable safeguard until it's mandatory.

Homegrown Star Wars, with big screen magic

Three years ago, graphic artist Shane Felux came home with a digital camera newly purchased on eBay and gave his wife Dawn a deadline: three months to write a 40-minute Star Wars script. Now, countless volunteer hours and \$20,000 later, comes the release of "Star Wars: Revelations," one of the most ambitious amateur films ever made and now the "toast of the Internet." The new Star Wars film was slated for release May 19. http://www.panicstruckpro.com/revelations/revelations_main.html.

Let the games begin

RoboGames, formerly Robolympics games launched at San Francisco University. 650 entrants from 15 countries gathered to show their stuff in several categories from Sumo to Soccer. Ultimately, the goal is to create robots that can do more tasks that normally, only humans can do.

Odd-shaped robots do more than housework

Engineers at IRobot certainly see house cleaning as a legitimate use of robots, although the company's popular Roomba Intelligent Floorvac vacuum-cleaning robot is disc shaped, not human shaped. Although the company has collaborated with toy-maker Hasbro on a lifelike doll, military robots have long been their focus. Military robots don't have a lot in common with the walking, talking robots of science-fiction movies. They're shaped more like mini tanks or golf carts than like humans. PackBots, for instance, have tracked wheels to navigate rough terrain and weigh about 40 pounds.

Get your LCD monitor or TV now!

Material makers are limiting production as a reaction to 2004 trends, and this could lead to a shortage later in 2005. Glass substrates used to manufacture large-size thin film transistor LCD panels are likely to be 8 percent to 10 percent short of demand and the shortage of color filters used in fifth- and sixth-generation LCD plants is projected to be between 7 percent to 12 percent toward the end of 2005.

Paralyzed man controls his PC and TV using thought alone

Cybernetics—the fusion of human beings and technology—is helping one paralyzed man control his environment by connecting his brain to his PC. Quadriplegic ex-American football player Matthew Nagle is using a system that converts his thoughts into actions on a computer. Nagle's brain is connected to his computer by the

BrainGate system, which detects thought impulses using a sensor implanted in the motor cortex of his brain. Now, neuroscientists monitoring his progress hope he will soon be able to use the system to control other devices, including electric wheelchairs.

Talk to your TV!

Agile TV aims to "change the way people watch TV" via the creation of its voice-controlled TV remote. The Promptu remote is designed to replace a conventional remote control and includes a "Talk" button and a built-in microphone, together with an infrared receiver used in conjunction with an existing cable box.

3D without glasses

Toshiba plans to bring color 3D displays to video game arcades late next year -- and there'll be no need to don special goggles. The company will market the wide-angle 3D displays for video arcades in the second half of 2006, and extend the technology to applications including family TVs by 2010.

Longhorn to support handwriting and touch screens

Microsoft plans to include touch screen functionality as a feature of the operating system in the next version of *Windows*, code-named *Longhorn*, in addition to support for pen-based input that Microsoft currently offers in *Windows XP Tablet PC Edition*. *Longhorn* will also include a new document format that rivals Adobe's *PostScript* and *PDF*. □

Windows Vista Beta Version to Be Released August 3

The name selected for the latest version of *Windows*, to succeed *Windows XP*, is *Windows Vista*, according to Brad Goldberg, general manager of *Windows* product development. He said the new name is aimed at "communicating the idea of clarity." Formal launch of *Vista* is scheduled for the second half of 2006.

Windows: Better Safe (Mode) Than Sorry

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

Though the Windows operating system isn't usually dangerous, it includes a special "Safe Mode." This is a handy way to boot a PC to investigate and fix problems. You may have read advice about when to use this, and even how to run it. But scarce and fragmented Safe Mode information can make it sound more exotic than it is.

Windows XP books' indexes provided surprisingly few entries for "Safe Mode." I found the best coverage in two O'Reilly books [www.oreilly.com], "*Windows XP Pro: The Missing Manual*" and "*Windows XP Home Edition: The Missing Manual*." Naturally, Google found a gazillion hits. But they're mostly "just the facts" writeups targeting people who already know "what" and "why" and just need "how" information. So this article provides background for this built-in Windows facility.

Over the years, as it became more powerful and reliable, Windows grew significantly from its slender 1992-era Version 3.1 self. There's no free lunch; learning new tricks required more software. But that complexity gets in the way when problems occur. Just as doctors rarely diagnose patients through heavy winter coats, Windows needs to shed layers to expose problems' causes.

Safe Mode slims Windows down, only loading and running specific pieces needed for basic operation. So your video display looks strange in Safe Mode because Windows doesn't load the monitor's specific driver program. This lets you recover from problems caused by buggy drivers you may have just installed. There are other restrictions: you likely can't get online and may not be able to print. But Safe Mode lets you perform tests, fix problems, and install/uninstall programs.

If you think your PC may have a virus or spyware, it's worth installing the antidote in Safe Mode, since some malware prevents installing antivirus software. If installed antivirus software can't remove a virus, Safe Mode may let it succeed. (Some experts recommend always running virus/spyware scans under Windows in Safe Mode.) If defragmenting your hard drive [www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/howto/Articles/a2004-06-16-defrag.html] never finishes, Safe Mode may remove programs that keep interrupting it. And it lets you erase files that Windows normally says are in use (though only do this when you're sure what you're doing).

Windows XP defines two kinds of user accounts: "administrator" and "limited." An administrator can install/remove software, change settings, etc., while a limited user can only run programs and use facilities. Even if only one account is defined, a secret companion called Administrator is available. Booting in Safe Mode lets you access this account, handy when normal accounts won't work: for example, uninstalling software that doesn't want to leave.

Enter Safe Mode by repeatedly pressing F8 as your PC boots, just after BIOS information displays; then select Safe Mode from the options list. Leaving Safe Mode is simple—just reboot via the Start button and your usual procedure. Windows will return looking normal again, not holding a grudge for being run in diagnostic mode.

Here's an important point: It's worth practicing booting into Safe Mode when you're relaxed and your PC is working properly. Consider running a PC in Safe Mode to be like starting your car's engine with the hood up at a service station. It's routine; there's nothing alarming about

it. But just as you wouldn't want to open the hood for the first time (Where ~ that latch release?) when something is wrong with your car, you shouldn't first use Safe Mode when you're already worried about a PC problem.

And a PS: It's sometimes hard picking between a dozen competing books on a topic. A helpful technique for evaluating choices is searching for a few topic—like Safe Mode—in the books' indexes and judging them on coverage. □

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U.S. Postal Inspection Service Offers Free Fraud-Prevention DVDs

Visit www.usps.com/postalinspectors/dvdorder.htm to sign up for a free Postal Service account to order these DVDs:

Work-at-Home Scams: They Just Don't Pay. Some job offers don't deliver. How to avoid being duped.

Identity Crisis: Protect Your Identity. Tips on how to protect yourself, and what to do if a victim.

Delivering Justice: Dialing for Dollars. Protect yourself from phony investment opportunities.

High Noon Films: 15 minutes.

Associate Members to Pay Dues

By Orion E. Hill, NVPCUG President

New NVPCUG associate members will be required to pay dues starting August 1, 2005. The NVPCUG board of directors has established a \$10 annual membership fee for associate members in response to increased annual operating expenses of more than \$1,000 our group has incurred for liability insurance coverage and meeting room rental since individual membership fees were last adjusted. Since the insurance and room rental fee amounts are partially based on group size, the board believes it is appropriate that associate members bear some of the costs.

Membership fees have been based mainly on newsletter subscriptions. Since newsletters have not been mailed (and will not be mailed) to associate members in order to avoid duplicate mailings to households, associate members have not previously paid dues.

To cover then-current expenses, primarily newsletter printing and mailing costs, regular member and student member annual dues were raised to \$30 and \$20, respectively, early in 2002. Our group's expenses increased dramatically, however, when in December 2002 we began purchasing annual liability insurance coverage at a cost of \$805 and the following February began paying annual meeting room rental fees, which have increased to \$201.

Any family member living in the same household as an active regular member may become an associate member. Any full-time student living in the same household as an active student member also may become an associate member. Associate members have all of the rights, privileges, and benefits of their sponsors.

Of the NVPCUG's 117 active members, 21 are associate members. They will not be affected by the new dues policy until their sponsors' memberships need to be renewed. For all, that will not be until January 1, 2006, or later. Members in other membership categories will not be affected.

Although the funds derived from associate member

NVPCUG Picnic Set for August 20

By Dianne Prior, NVPCUG Membership Director

Dick and Sandy Peterson have again graciously offered to host our annual potluck picnic. The location is the **Peterson Family Christmas Tree Farm**, 1120 Darms Lane, Napa. The date is Saturday, August 20, from 1:30 p.m. Signups will be available until the general meeting on Wednesday, August 17, but you may e-mail me before then at *Membership@nvpcug.org* telling me the member's name, how many people are attending, what you are bringing for the potluck, and what you will help with as far as setup or cleanup. Extra chairs are needed also.



Dianne Prior

The NVPCUG will provide barbecued beefsteaks and chicken. The group will also provide nonalcoholic beverages, ice, paper plates, cups, plastic ware and napkins. Alcoholic beverages are BYOB.

There will be games and prizes as well as time to visit with old friends and make new ones. We hope to see you there. The potluck picnic is always a lot of fun and the food is great and plentiful. □



fees will only partially cover our increased operating expenses, they will reduce our reliance on income from sales, raffles, silent auctions, and other fund-raising activities. □

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Address Service Requested