



## February 5, 2004 Meeting Announcement Nick Chase on Digital Video

DVPC's own professional videographer, Nick Chase, will describe and demonstrate how to take, edit, and burn your own video movies to DVD. Nick will address that nagging question that everyone has when they plan to create their first video: "How the heck do I do *that*?" Well, our February meeting will answer that question, and lots of others as well. Nick will tell us about the options for video hardware, starting with the camera: what's the difference between analog and digital, what features will simplify the task of making video movies, what features will make it easier to transfer your videos to your PC for editing. Next, Nick will talk about the hardware you need on your PC to transfer video from your camera. Then we'll learn about the different video editing software, from inexpensive packages like Muvee autoProducer 3 (which Dave Whittle demonstrated at the December DVPC meeting) to expensive semi-pro packages like Adobe Premier. Once your video has been edited you need to have the right DVD burner and Nick will talk about the newest DVD +/- R/RW drives on the market and the importance of compatibility with DVD players. Finally, if you want to view your DVD creation on your PC, what software is available?

The February DVPC meeting is the place to find out how to make your own professional quality home videos!

DVPC meetings are held in the lobby conference room in Building B at the Bank of America Technology Center office complex in Concord, located near the northeast corner of Clayton Road at Galindo (see the map on page 4). Please use the entrance that's on the south side of the building. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings. We'll also have the Networking Table from 6:30 to 7:00; if you have something to sell or trade, need technical help, or just want to exchange views, visit the Networking Table. Also, as usual, we'll have library disks and those great DVPC mugs (version 2) for sale, SIG news, and some of our usual great door prizes.

### What's Inside

DVPC Calendar	Page 2
Email Notification	Page 2
Information About DVPC	Page 3
Membership Application	Page 4
Directions and Map to DVPC Meetings	Page 4
PC101 and PC201 Information <i>Craig Peterson</i>	Pages 5-6
SIG News <i>Nick Chase</i>	Page 7
January DVPC Meeting with Alan Mildwurm <i>Tom Krauss</i>	Page 8
Still Annoyed by Your PC? <i>Steve Bass</i>	Page 8
DVPC Board Meeting Minutes <i>Tom Krauss</i>	Page 10
Accessories for Your Digital Camera <i>Ira Wilsker</i>	Page 9
California Copy Source Ad	Page 10
Computer Crossword is On Vacation this Month <i>Craig Peterson</i>	
Cooking on the Web <i>Ira Wilsker</i>	Page 11
Online Information for the Elderly and Disabled <i>Steve Rosenthal</i>	Page 13
Take Rest Breaks <i>Ken Fermoyle</i>	Page 14
To Upgrade or Not to Upgrade <i>Timothy Everingham</i>	Page 15
Special Raffle Promotion	Page 15
Versalaser Hardware Review <i>Alan Mildwurm</i>	Page 17
Byte the Beast <i>Alan Mildwurm</i>	Page 17
Computing Factoids <i>Steve Bass</i>	Page 18

### President's Message

by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

This month we welcome our own Nick Chase who will show us the magic of DVD creation and a host of other audio and video wonders. Of course, we will be using our new projector so that even Peggy and Stan in the back of the room can see! As we announced at the last meeting, we would like to give our old projector a good home and if you are interested, please talk to either myself or Ron. Our adoption counselors are ready for you! (We would like to get \$200.00 for it.) For those of you who won product at our Microsoft meeting (November) and haven't collected it yet, I will bring your prize to the meeting. Please claim it—the vultures are circling!! (Just kidding- I want to stop carrying it to meetings!)

In March I expect to have a Home Networking Presentation and am working on some requests. Feel free to let me know if there is a speaker you would like to come to the club OR if you know someone who might do a presentation for us OR if you have something you could present to the group!

See you in February!

## DVPC February 2004 Calendar

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2	3	4	5 DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 p.m. New User's SIG 6:30 p.m.	6	7
9 Windows SIG 7:30 p.m. <i>Different night this month</i>	10	11 DVPC Board Meeting 7:00 p.m. Alan Mildwurm's house	12	13	14
16 Genealogy eSIG See SIG News on page 5	17	18 Internet SIG 7:00 p.m. Clarion SIG 7:00 p.m.	19 Advanced Users SIG 7:30 p.m.	20 <i>Diablo Blue deadline: Email articles and ads to the Editor: rogg@value.net</i>	21 PC101 and PC201 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Concord Library <i>No classes this month</i>
23	24	25	26	27	28
					<i>See SIG News starting on page 5 for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations</i>

### **Email Notification**

We provide an email notification service for the current month's *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC monthly meeting, and information about SIG meetings as well. You have to be a current, paid-up member to receive this service. To read the current month's issue of *Diablo Blue* on-line you need to receive these monthly email messages, so print this page, fill out the form, and mail it to DVPC, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583, or bring it to the sign-in desk at the monthly meeting. Or, if you prefer, you can send an email message to [nopaper@dvpc.org](mailto:nopaper@dvpc.org) with your name and email address and your favorite SIGs.

Send me email notification of each monthly *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC meeting, and the following SIGs:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Advanced Users SIG		New Users SIG
Clarion SIG		PC 101/PC 201 Classes
Genealogy eSIG		Windows SIG
Internet SIG		

### **Diablo Blue Article and Ad Information**

*Diablo Blue* needs articles from the members of DVPC. See your name in print! Achieve fame and fortune! (Well, maybe just some limited fame in Contra Costa County...) We are particularly interested in product and book reviews and stories about your PC experiences. Send your articles or member ad copy as email attachments to the Newsletter Editor, [rogg@value.net](mailto:rogg@value.net).

Commercial advertising is available in *Diablo Blue*. Prices are \$75 for a full page, \$40 for a half page, and \$25 for a quarter page for one insertion – or get three consecutive insertions for the price of two. For more information, call editor Ronald Ogg, at 415-281-0431 (days). Members of DVPC can submit personal classified ads that will be printed in *Diablo Blue* for three insertions at no charge. The rules are simple: up to 9 lines (as we format it), material must be suitable for publication (the editor is the sole judge of suitability), the member must be in good standing (current dues paid), and ad space is available on a first-come first-served space available basis only. If you want fewer than three insertions note that on your ad copy. If members want their business card reproduced, the rate is \$10 for one insertion, or \$25 for three insertions. The card must be horizontal and must be scannable. Send your ad copy as email attachments to the Newsletter Editor, [rogg@value.net](mailto:rogg@value.net). See the deadline information in the Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*.

### **DVPC on the Internet**

DVPC has a Web site on the Internet – thanks to our Web Team: Ron Ogg and Stan Umlauf. You can surf your way to our own domain and home page by starting your favorite Web browser and typing the following URL; be sure to save it in your browser's hotlist so you don't have to type it each time: [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org).

### **DVPC Officers and Directors**

Alan Mildwurm, President/Programs 510-770-5770 (work), [awm@mildwurm.com](mailto:awm@mildwurm.com)

Nicholas Chase, SIG Coordinator 680-4211 (home), [nachase@yahoo.com](mailto:nachase@yahoo.com)

Will Crites, Publicity 938-1291 (home), [bugkiller@aol.com](mailto:bugkiller@aol.com)

Charlie Crothers, At Large 829-2237 (home), [ccrothers@attbi.com](mailto:ccrothers@attbi.com)

Dick Curry, At Large 376-5541 (home), [racorinda@pacbell.net](mailto:racorinda@pacbell.net)

Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary 676-7522 (home), [pegszone@aol.com](mailto:pegszone@aol.com)

Tom Krauss, Secretary 689-9960 (home), [tkrauss@astound.net](mailto:tkrauss@astound.net)

Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer 829-5858 (home), [jess@mildwurm.com](mailto:jess@mildwurm.com)

Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor and Web Site 415-281-0431 (work), [rogg@value.net](mailto:rogg@value.net)

Craig Peterson, Librarian 671-7025 (home), [compmail@pacbell.net](mailto:compmail@pacbell.net)

Stan Umlauf, Web Site 458-5560 (home), [stanu@honeybee.com](mailto:stanu@honeybee.com)

The Board of Directors usually meets the week following the general meeting. Check the DVPC Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*, or the DVPC calendar page, for the meeting date, time, and location. You can reach any of the officers and directors by talking to them at the DVPC monthly meeting, by email to [bod@value.net](mailto:bod@value.net), or by leaving a message on the DVPC voice mail system.

### **DVPC Voice Mail System**

DVPC has a computer-based voice mail system. The phone number for the DVPC VMS is 925-556-1449. Hear up-to-date information about monthly and SIG meetings, information about DVPC for potential new members, and a message center for Board of Directors members and SIG Leaders.

*Diablo Blue* is the monthly Web-based newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users' Group.

Editor: Ronald Ogg, Membership: Peggy Johnson

Please submit articles and columns to the Newsletter editor by email at [rogg@value.net](mailto:rogg@value.net)

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The Diablo Valley PC Users Group is a non-profit corporation.

DVPC is a member of APCUG, the Association of PC Users Groups, [www.apcug.org](http://www.apcug.org)

**Get Involved! Learn! Join a SIG today!**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Print this page, fill out this form, and enclose it with your check for \$30.00 for one year's dues with access to the Internet edition of *Diablo Blue* (\$20.00 for students who must enclose a copy of current Student ID), made payable to DVPC, and mail to: DVPC, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Referred by current member? Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company/School: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

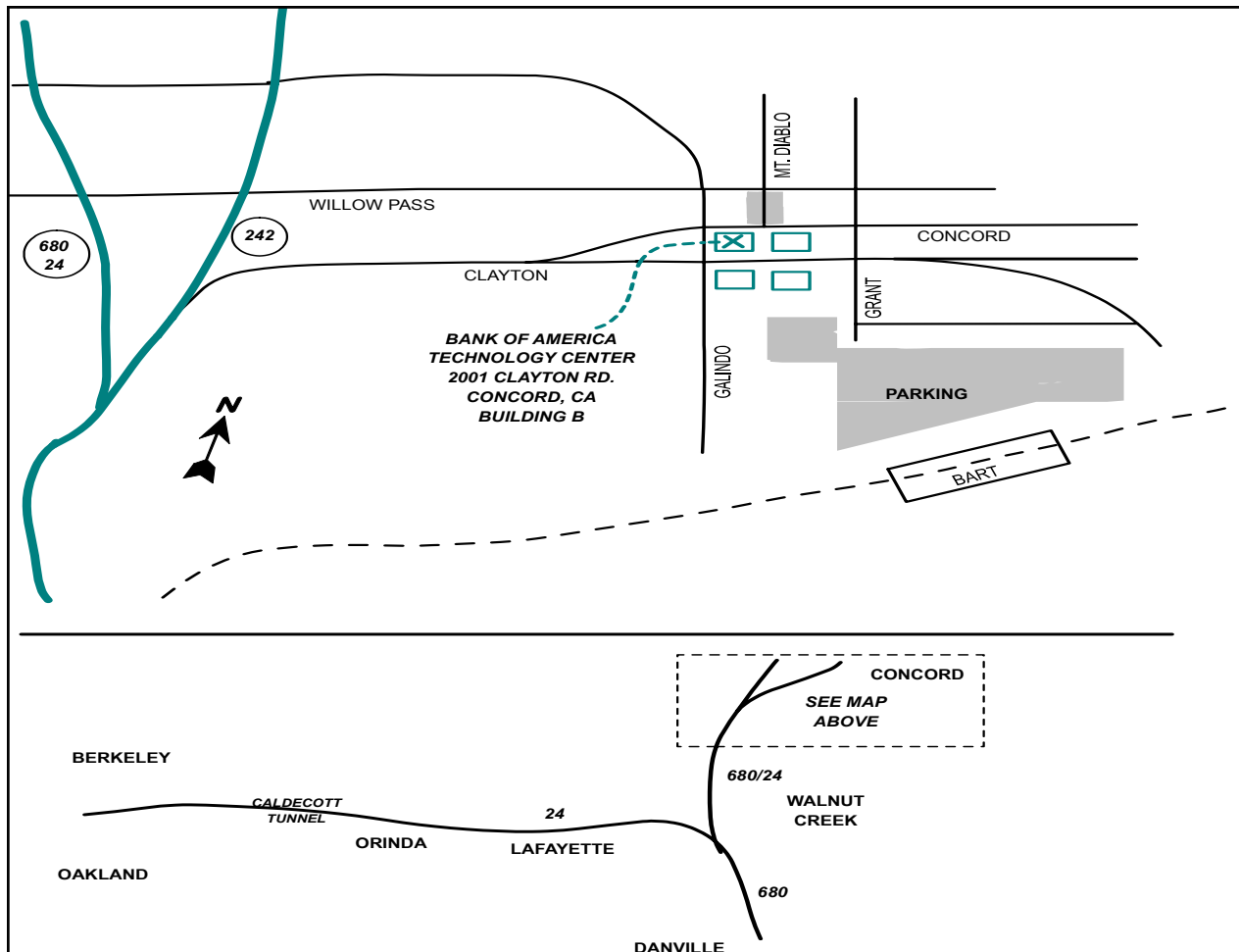
On occasion DVPC publishes a list of members for distribution to DVPC members only. Please check how you would like to be listed: No listing \_\_\_\_\_ List Name and Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ phone number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

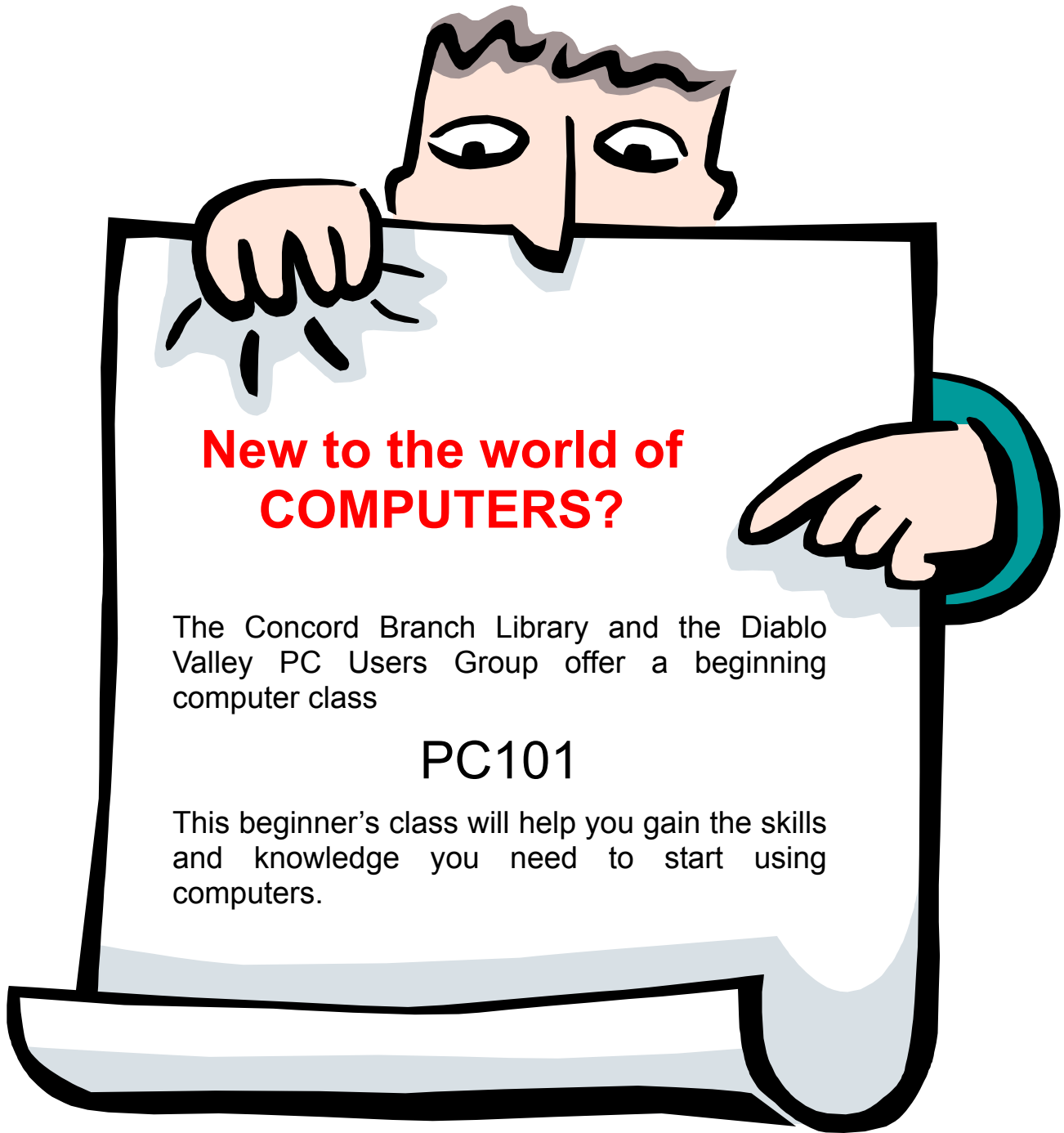
I'm also interested in these SIGs: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions to Bank of America Building B in Concord**

Take the Clayton Road exit off of the 242 Freeway and go east on Clayton Road. After about 1½ miles you'll come to Galindo, and you'll see the Bank of America complex of four high-rise buildings. Parking: Turn left on Galindo then right onto Concord Avenue to find street parking. Or turn right on Grant Street (the first block past Galindo), then right into the BART parking lot at the back of the BofA complex. Building B is the building at the northeast corner of Clayton and Galindo. Enter the door on the south side of the building.

**Be sure to observe parking regulations! Concord parking officers are very efficient!**



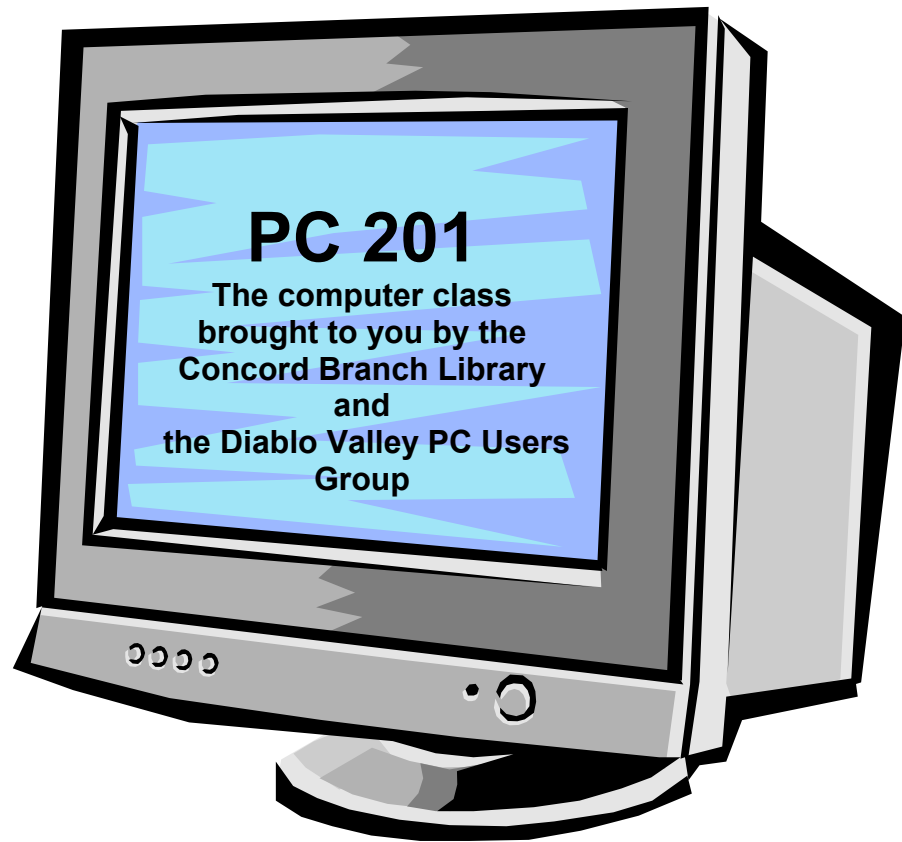


***There will be no class on February 21th.*** PC101 and PC 201 will be back on March 20th.

The PC101 class is usually held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Concord Branch Library's Community room, 2900 Salvio Street, Concord, CA.

This free class is brought to you by the Concord Branch Library and the Diablo Valley PC Users Group. Space is limited, so sign up at the information desk at the Concord Branch Library.

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## SOFTWARE

***There will be no class on February 21th.*** PC101 and PC 201 will be back on March 20th.

The PC201 class is usually held from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. in the Concord Branch Library's Community room, 2900 Salvio Street, Concord, CA.

This free class is brought to you by the Concord Branch Library and the Diablo Valley PC Users Group. Space is limited, so sign up at the information desk at the Concord Branch Library.

**Advanced Users SIG** Jeff and Sharon Noyer, SIG Co-Leaders – 778-4348

The Advanced Users SIG meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at 4208 Amargosa Drive in Antioch. The Advanced Users SIG is for anyone interested in discussing advanced topics such as hardware and software issues, cutting-edge technologies, networking, servers, troubleshooting, etc. Please join us to participate in this very informative and educational forum. We hope to see you at the meeting!

Directions: Go east on Highway 4 through Antioch to the Hillcrest Avenue exit. At the light at the end of the exit ramp, go right onto Hillcrest Avenue, and then stay towards your left. At the 3rd light, Hillcrest Avenue turns to the left. Go left and stay on Hillcrest. (Landmark: “The Crossings” Shopping Center is at intersection). At the 4th light, go left onto Wildhorse Drive. (Landmark: 7-Eleven on corner at intersection). At the 2nd left turn, go left onto Meadow Lake Drive. At the 4th right turn, go right onto Amargosa Drive. 4208 Amargosa Drive is the 3rd house on your right, blue and white one-story.

**Clarion SIG** SIG Leader Bill Morris ([wcm@soft-trak.com](mailto:wcm@soft-trak.com))

The February meeting will be held on the 18th. See the Clarion SIG page on the web at [www.desine.com/svcug/sv\\_meet.htm](http://www.desine.com/svcug/sv_meet.htm) for meeting location, dates, and time, or send an email to Bill Morris ([bill@soft-trak.com](mailto:bill@soft-trak.com)) asking to be put on his email announcement list for the Clarion SIG.

**Genealogy eSIG** Peggy Johnson, SIG Leader – 676-7522

The DVPC Genealogy SIG is a group of computer genealogists who share helpful websites, databases and source information found on the internet. It's an opportunity for members seeking help to put forth a question or problem to the SIG and receive suggestions and advice. When you locate a useful website, database or visit a research facility, please email the group of the details so we also can take advantage of this information. If you wish to be included in the Genealogy eSIG, please email Peggy Johnson, [pegszone@aol.com](mailto:pegszone@aol.com).

**Internet SIG** Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

After the long break, I'm sure that all members will be looking forward to the next meeting of the Internet SIG. Once again we will be joining together at Computer Renaissance (959 Contra Costa Blvd. Pleasant Hill, CA) so that we can share tips and solutions to problems we have encountered as we explored the “Wild Wild Web.” This month we will be having one of those wonderful “TBA” presentations – “To Be Announced!”. Hope to see you all there at 7:00 p.m. tools for doing so. For more information, please call Craig Peterson at (925) 671-7025 or e-mail him at [compmail@pacbell.net](mailto:compmail@pacbell.net).

**New Users SIG** Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at Bank of America building B. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to each DVPC monthly meeting.

**PC101 and PC201 Classes** Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

PC101 usually is held from 10 am to 2 pm, and PC201 is usually held from noon to 2 pm, at the Concord Library, 2900 Salvio Street, on the third Saturday of each month. Look for information on these classes on the DVPC web site.

**PC101** is a beginning class on computers. Offered in conjunction with the Concord Branch Library, it helps introduce computers to and empower the person not comfortable with the technology. Class space is limited, so sign up at the information desk at the Concord Library, 2900 Salvio Street, Concord, CA 94519-2597 from 10 am to 2 pm in the community room of the Concord Branch library. For class meeting dates, times, and topics, see page 5 in this issue of *Diablo Blue*.

**PC201** is a series of lectures that will be given by experts in different areas of computers and technology. This month we are back from vacation and will have a class on everyone's favorite computer topic, “Everything you ever wanted to know about Software”. The class will take place on January 17th from noon to 2 pm in the community room of the Concord Branch library. For class meeting dates, times, and topics, see page 6 in this issue of *Diablo Blue*.

**Windows SIG** Ron Ogg (415-281-0431) and Walt Parsons (934-0775), SIG Co-Leaders

The Windows SIG usually meets at the Community Room at the Concord Police Department building on the first Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. We discuss the latest version of Windows, demonstrate interesting shareware and freeware, and have random access sessions where we all try to answer SIG members' questions. Everyone who uses, is interested in, or is curious about Windows on their PC is invited to attend. Directions: The Concord Police Department is at 1350 Galindo Street in Concord. From the 242 Freeway take Clayton Road east to Galindo and turn right; the Police Department building is 3 blocks south on your left. From 680 Freeway take Monument Blvd. east and continue to where it changes to Galindo; the Police Department building will be on your right a short distance past the signal at Cowell Road.

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## *January DVPC Presentation* by Tom Krauss, DVPC

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### *Alan's Annual Awesome and Complete Comdex Compendium*

When I strolled, uncharacteristically early, into the meeting I did a double-take to make sure I was in the right room because an "Austin Powers" movie was playing. Then I realized that Alan was giving us all a first hand look at what a fine piece of electronic wizardry our new projector is. This was brought home through the course of the evening as it was not necessary to dim the lights for good viewing. In fact, even with the room lights on, the image on the screen was sharper than the old projector was in the dark. I have not always been an enthusiastic proponent of upgrading our projector (this is the third time since I joined the club), but this time there really is a noticeable improvement in quality. Our Projector Committee of One (Ron Ogg) did good on this one.

Random Access was devoted primarily to Norton Antivirus and conflicts between it, the operating systems and other software. And then we moved on to the main attraction.

Every year Alan goes to Comdex. He manages to pick up an impressive number of gadgets so that his wife thinks he spends all his time with other computer nerds, and this year was no exception despite a significantly smaller array of vendors. Alan was there in the heyday when Comdex filled several hotels. This year the convention did not fill the main floor of the Convention Center (granted, it's a huge are, but still...), and estimated attendees numbered only 50,000 to 60,000. I got the impression Alan missed the free meals and parties formerly hosted by the vendors rather than the crowds of propeller heads.

Still, and to his credit, Alan found some really interesting products.

The first one he showed was a \$15 breathalyzer. Alan obtained it purely for its presentation value. He brought a small sample of cognac to test the device. (At least only a small sample was left when he demonstrated.) He held the device over the cognac and it worked! It detected the presence of alcohol. However, when Alan said that it costs about twenty cents to manufacture the item in China, I decided as a political statement in support of the downtrodden Chinese peasants not to buy one

Next was a USB Massager. No, this does not massage your USB ports. It plugs into your USB port and then you use the 3 inch pad to massage yourself. List price: about \$10.

Then there was a Blue Tooth PAN (personal area network) device which let's you "connect" wirelessly to a printer within about a 30 foot range. Alan then showed a WiFi Detector that lights up when it detects a strong WiFi signal. This will allow you to cruise slowly down the street and identify which of your neighbors have WiFi that you can eavesdrop on .

Next came a pen (it really writes on paper) which captures your writing and feeds it to your computer as a graphic. You can right notes in a meeting and the save them graphically on your computer. If you remove the ink, you can "write" invisible notes so the guy next to you can see what you're writing down! This device also interfaces to your PDA.

The final gadget was a six inch scanner that scans business cards directly into a PC. Not only the image is captured: it also uses character recognition to detect names, addresses and phone numbers and import them directly into your Contacts. Even if you put the card in upside down!

And so, despite the diminishing magnitude of Comdex, there was still a lot to see, and Alan has a way of finding the more interesting stuff to bring back and share with us. Next time you find yourself looking at some new gadget on the Internet and wondering if it works, check with Alan: he probably already has one.

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## *Still Annoyed by Your PC?* by Steve Bass

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You know the drill – readers send me the PC behaviors that annoy, irritate and aggravate; I spend countless hours finding fixes.

Here are another four egregious examples of Windows annoyances—and fixes. I'll also provide a few time-wasting, deadline avoiding (and often weird) Web sites I've discovered.

The big collection of annoyances – over 100 of them – are in *PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things About Your Personal Computer*. (Caution: another shameless plug to follow.) If these annoyances are annoying – and you like the fixes – well, maybe you'll buy the book. You can get a copy here at [snipurl.com/annoyed](http://snipurl.com/annoyed).

### *Boot Boring IE Icons*

**The Annoyance:** Internet Explorer's Favorite's icons are nothing more than Microsoft's dull, blue "e" emblem. I'd much prefer anything other than these tiny logos reminding me how much I've spent on Microsoft products.

**The Fix:** This one's easy (and if you like it, you really, really need to buy my book – there are dozens of fixes just like this one.) Start by right clicking on any icon, then on Properties. Choose Shortcut, select Change Icon, then Browse, and click on any file ending in EXE. You'll likely see an icon (maybe not; not all EXE's have icons). Find an icon you like and click OK and OK again. If you have the time and inclination, poke around in other folders in \Windows and \Windows\System for other EXEs that have icons you can use.

**Kill Some Time:** You'll find these images from the Hubble more than just incredible – they're just stunning. Find them at:

[snipurl.com/hubble](http://snipurl.com/hubble).

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Still Annoyed by Your PC?...

(Continued from page 8)

### Search Animations Begone

**The Annoyance:** I was annoyed with Office Clippy and your book showed me how to dump it. How about the irritating animation in XP's Search feature?

**The Fix:** Start a search from the desktop by clicking F3 and then take one last look at the dumb animation. Click Change Preferences at the bottom of the Search pane, press "Without an animated screen character," and say adios to the creature.

### Zap Microsoft's Passport

**The Annoyance:** I just bought a new PC and don't plan to leave the country. So how in the world do I stop that annoying icon from asking me if I want to sign up for a Passport.

**The Fix:** By now it's probably stopped – Microsoft's perky Passport account.net Messenger appears the first few times you access try to connect to the Web. If it doesn't – or you're impatient – click the Passport message and when the window appears, select Cancel.

**Kill Some Time:** Almost everyone jokes that the number one way to fix any PC annoyance is to switch to a Mac. Before you do, check out their new *iToilet*, a little something that may change your mind. It's at [snipurl.com/i\\_toilet](http://snipurl.com/i_toilet).

### Disable the CapsLock Key

**The Annoyance:** I keep accidentally hitting the darn thing on my notebook, and I'm getting mighty sick of typing things that look like a dumb ransom note. When I'm in Word, of course, AutoCorrect fixes the problem (usually), but in other apps, it's a pain in the butt. Can the CapsLock key be disabled?

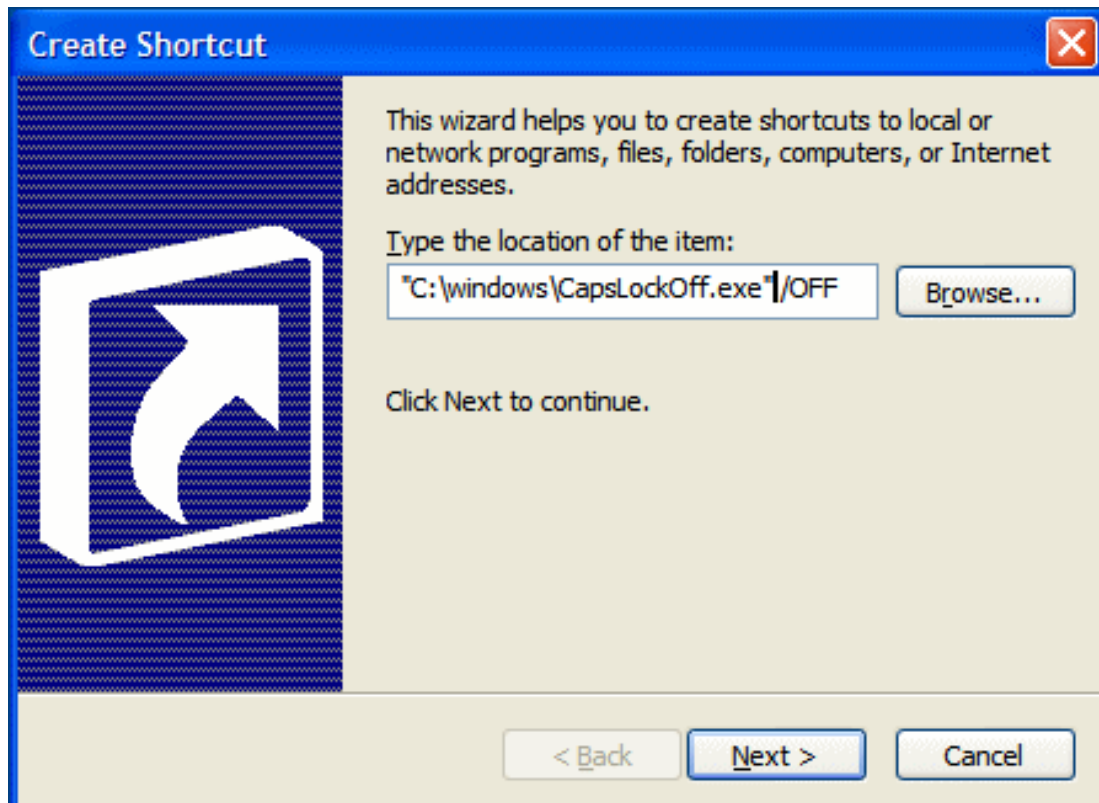


Figure One: Here's what you'll see when you create a CapsLock shortcut on your desktop

**The Fix:** Whenever I get a chance to circumvent something Microsoft should have built into Windows, I get a warm, content feeling. The fix will cost you ten minutes, including downloading "Disable the Caps Lock key," an aptly named free utility. The utility

(Continued on page 11)

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**DVPC Board Meeting Minutes** by Tom Krauss, DVPC

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“Just a reminder,” read the email from Alan, “in honor of my mother’s birthday, we are not having a BoD meeting this month.”

Just my luck.

I had been looking forward to this meeting. It would have been on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the Wednesday after the delayed January general meeting. That happens to be my birthday, and I was looking forward to blowing out the candles on the pizza and opening gifts from my fellow Board members. I had even been saying nice things about the annual drive to buy a new projector, just so Ron and Charlie would be more disposed to buy me expensive gifts. But with three little words—“Just a reminder”—Alan ruined it. His mother’s birthday is probably really in August, and he is making up an excuse to stiff me.

But I’m not bitter. I’m used to being stiffed on my birthday. This year my whole family is doing it. That’s because we are planning a surprise birthday party the following weekend for my father-in-law on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. We’ve been planning menus, cleaning and decorating since the day after Christmas in anticipation of this event, and I don’t have time to celebrate my own birthday. Frankly, after Sunday I don’t want to see another broom, hors d’oeuvre or relative for a few months.

We have been preparing to entertain since early October, first Thanksgiving, then Christmas, and now the surprise party, and my wife and I both need a break. I am beginning to see the attraction of being a hermit. I nod my head in solemn agreement with the sentiments of Scrooge: “Bah, humbug!” I cringe when the phone rings, and refuse to answer the door. I stay awake late at night because it’s quiet, and there’s no one moving about. It’s time to let the dust build up on the furniture again.

Plus, I’ve replaced a hard drive that crashed the day before Christmas (c: drive, of course) and still have a lot of hours to go reinstalling software. Thanks to the assistance of my son, who is more technically proficient than I, not only is my machine working better than ever, I was able to recover the few data files that weren’t backed up to my second drive. In particular, my email and contacts. That was scary for a while. There were email addresses which I haven’t had to type for years in my Contact file, and in some cases that’s the only way I know how to reach those people.

So no Board meeting tomorrow night. Maybe I’ll not tell my wife. I’ll just head off into the darkness around 6:30, pick up a Starbucks beverage, park the car in the Safeway lot and read a book for two hours. Ah-h-h. Truly quality time!

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**Accessories for Your New Digital Camera** by Ira Wilsker, Golden Triangle PC Club

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Last month I wrote about the features to look for in a new digital camera. That column was most timely as many in the national media are predicting that digital camera sales will soar this holiday season. It is also common that many of us “accessorize” our gifts to others to enhance the enjoyment of the recipient. Appropriate accessories would include cases, memory, photo editing software, photo printers and paper, rechargeable batteries, and other useful items.

Cases for digital cameras are usually available from the camera makers as well as a broad assortment of third parties. The primary function of a case is to provide protection for the sensitive instrument. Other functions include a means of conveniently carrying the camera, and a place to store accessories. In shopping for a case, look for proper fit and good protection from harm, as this is the function of a case. This protection may be in the form of padding, water resistance, and a variety of other factors. Do not practice the fine art of “buying cheap” and trusting a several-hundred dollar camera to a five dollar case, unless that case can provide adequate protection and convenience, which will not be likely.

Additional camera memory may be one of the most valuable adjuncts to a new (or already owned) camera. Almost all new cameras come with integral memory which can only store a very limited number of images before it must be downloaded to a computer, or the images in memory must be deleted to make room for more. While some cameras, such as several of the Sony models, use a floppy disk or mini-CD-R disc to store images directly to a universal media, almost all other digital cameras use some type of nonvolatile memory card or stick to store images. These cards or sticks are inserted directly into the camera, and provide additional storage for images. In shopping for camera memory be absolutely sure that the proper type is selected for the camera, as there is often little interchangeability between the types. Common types of memory are “CF” compact flash, smart memory, multimedia cards (MMC), “SD” secure digital cards (sometimes interchangeable with MMC), tiny “xD” cards, memory sticks, and several other formats. Normally, “more is better” applies to memory capacity, but price must also be balanced with capacity. If photos are taken at full resolution (not normally a best practice), a 2 megapixel camera uses about 900k for a single JPEG format image, so a 32meg memory card will hold

*(Continued on page 12)*

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## Still Annoyed by Your PC?...

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*(Continued from page 9)*

works in Win 95, 98, SE, and XP (I haven't tested it using NT or Windows 2000, but it's benign and won't do any harm if it doesn't work.) Get the zipped files at [snipurl.com/capslockoff](http://snipurl.com/capslockoff). Unzip it to any folder using Windows Explorer. (My example shows it in C:\Windows. See figure One.)

Now you'll need to create a shortcut on the desktop that points to the utility. Right-mouse-click any empty spot on your desktop, select New, and choose Shortcut. In the "Command Line" (98 and ME) or "location" (2000 and XP) field, type

```
"C:\Windows\CapsLockOff.exe" /off
```

making sure to include the quotes. (Substitute the location of the utility if it's not in "c:\Windows.") Click Next and you'll see a new shortcut with the name "CapsLockOff" on your desktop.

Now it's an easy task to drag the desktop shortcut over to the Start menu and hover until you see All Programs (Programs in Windows 98 and ME); continue hovering until the Startup icon appears and drop the icon onto that folder. "Disable the Caps Lock key" will now automatically run when you boot your system.

If you're an advanced PC user, pick up three REG files (small pseudo-programs that modify the Registry) that change the Capslock key to shift, completely disables it, and changes it back to normal. The files are available at <http://snipurl.com/capslock2>

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## Cooking on the Web by Ira Wilsker, Golden Triangle PC Club

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No, this is not about using the Internet to cook your food, but instead as a resource for culinary information. Whether you are looking for some novel way to re-serve your abundant holiday leftovers, or some novel new meal, the internet may be a valuable resource.

A quick review of the Yahoo cooking directory at [dir.yahoo.com/Society\\_and\\_Culture/Food\\_and\\_Drink/Cooking](http://dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Food_and_Drink/Cooking) reveals over 3000 websites with recipes, and thousands of other websites with related topics. The directory is divided into subdirectories with headings such as "By Ingredient", Cookbooks, Cooking Methods, Drinks, Ethnic and Regional, Holidays and Occasions, Humor, Name Brands, Special Dietary Needs, Specific Courses and Dishes, and Web Directories. My oldest daughter recently called asking for help for a housewarming she was hosting at her new condo in Miami. She had special requests for vegetarian, low carbohydrate, Kosher, and other specialty dishes. Not being a gourmand herself, she needed help. This Yahoo directory provided the resources that she needed to meet the needs of all of her guests.

A brief review of the ten most popular recipe sites as determined by Yahoo show the diversity of tastes that can be satisfied by using the web as a resource. The most popular recipe site, according to Yahoo, is [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com). This site is self-described as "Your home for great recipes, meal ideas and cooking advice." At this single website, in addition to thousands of recipes being directly available are recipes and links to other well known resources and brands, such as Hershey, Borden, Keebler, Kellogg, McCormick, Nestle, Crisco, Herb-Ox, and Smuckers. Recipes from popular magazines including Southern Living, Cooking Light, Sunset, and other magazines and periodicals are also available or linked directly from this site. Additional resources are also available for special dietary needs. With the information available on this site, one could feed his family for years without duplicating a menu.

The website [topsecretrecipes.com](http://topsecretrecipes.com) has a secret recipe of the week, which is only on the site for a week, with a new "secret recipe" appearing every Monday. As I type this, the weekly secret recipe is Olive Garden's excellent Tiramisu, described on the site as, "A delicious combination of mascarpone cheese, cream cheese, lady fingers, espresso and Kahlua". I am getting hungry just reading the page!

Where would our kitchens be today if it were not for the ubiquitous Betty Crocker? [BettyCrocker.com](http://BettyCrocker.com) has an outstanding and large selection of recipes for every taste. Recipes can be easily browsed by categories such as appetizers and snacks, breakfast and brunch, lunches, dinners, desserts, beverages, breads, side dishes, and other scrumptious and delectable choices. For those interested in what others are cooking, there is also an updated list of the most popular dishes selected from the site. [BettyCrocker.com](http://BettyCrocker.com) also offers a convenient free online service (registration required), "Your recipe Clippings", and an electronic file of individually selected recipes. By using this service, a customized web based cookbook can be created. Buried deep in my kitchen are several small file boxes with rough edged clippings from a variety of sources collected over decades. With the online clippings service, these old boxes are approaching obsolescence.

I have frequently been at a restaurant, and liked what I had to eat. I had wondered if these dishes could be easily duplicated at home. A site [CopyKat.com](http://CopyKat.com), which proclaims on its banner "You've tried it in the restaurant; now make it at home" offers this opportunity. As I opened up this site I was greeted with the recipe of the day, "Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Hash Brown Casse-

*(Continued on page 12)*

## **Cooking on the Web...**

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*(Continued from page 11)*

role". One of my coworkers is a faithful Luby's patron, and frequently brags about the fine meals she and her family has at Luby's. [CopyKat.com](http://CopyKat.com) has several Luby's recipes, including Hawaiian Pie, Butternut Brownie Pie, Italian Chicken Breast, Macaroni and Cheese, and many others. Nearby in the list under "L" are Luther's BBQ sauce, and Lindy's Famous Cheesecake. A quick look at the "O" category revealed a multitude of recipes from Olive Garden, Outback, Otis Spunkmeyer, and other highly recognizable names. The site is easy to navigate, and a pleasure to browse, except for the popup ads which I found annoying.

A most interesting and comprehensive site is [www.recipesource.com](http://www.recipesource.com), where there is an outstanding collection of ethnic and national foods listed both by region and by type of dish. I have traveled extensively, both domestically and internationally, and it is on this site that I found many of the unusual dishes that I enjoyed. Persian, Indian, and Vietnamese dishes are but a few of the many listed. With Chinese food being very popular, this site has 899 recipes for both authentic and Americanized Chinese foods. French, Greek, Swiss, Mexican, and Italian are but a few of the nationality based directories on [recipesource.com](http://recipesource.com). In addition to the ethnic listings, this site also offers a cross-reference based on the type of dish. What I found especially interesting was the section for restricted and specialty diets, including baby food, diabetic, gluten free, and vegetarian. Of the many websites I reviewed for this column, this one was my personal favorite.

Enough for this week; I think I gained 10 pounds just fantasizing about the delights I found. Until next week, *bon appetite!*

*Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.*

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## **Accessories for Your New Digital Camera...**

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*(Continued from page 10)*

about 35 images, while a 128meg card will hold about 142 images. Other resolutions and amounts of memory will be somewhat proportional. A 4 megapixel camera uses about 2 megs of memory for each image at maximum resolution. Another factor which varies among different models of memory is the speed (faster is better) and power consumption (less is better). Along with a new memory card, an external reader, typically with a USB connector, is a great convenience which enables photos to be transferred without the camera.

Almost all digital cameras come with a "lite" or limited functionality photo editing software. The included software may be adequate for normal snapshots, but often we want to do more to enhance or improve our photos. Near the top of the price range of popular photo editing software is the Adobe PhotoShop at around \$600, and its lesser brothers from Adobe including PhotoShop Elements (about \$90). One of the other powerful photo editing and enhancement utilities is Jasc's PaintShop Pro 8, available locally for around \$60. I especially like PaintShop's "One Step Photo Fix" that can automatically perfect almost any reasonable digital image. For the bargain hunters who want a powerful editing and enhancement utility, without paying big bucks is the very popular Irfan Viewer, which is available for free download from [www.irfanview.com](http://www.irfanview.com). Personally, I use both Irfan and Paint Shop Pro about equally. Other editing software is available from other publishers.

Most color printers on the market today can print plausible color images using stock inks and decent quality paper. Some printers offer enhanced photo printing capability for a moderate price, while there are also dedicated photo printers on the market. Good photo grade paper is a necessity to produce quality prints. Some printers on the market print directly to Polaroid film, giving real photos from a digital camera. Many users prefer both the quality and economy of having their local photo finisher print digital prints, a service which most now provide, often at prices less than "do it yourself".

My digital camera eats batteries. Using AA alkaline batteries would be a major expense, if it were not for the now common NiMh or Lithium rechargeable batteries. Many cameras utilize the common AA size, and as an added advantage, the better NiMh rechargeable batteries typically offer many times the photos of disposable alkalines, at a far lower cost per picture. Spare batteries, especially if fully charged, can be a godsend.

Other popular accessories for digital cameras may appeal more to the advanced user than the amateur. These include tripods, accessory lenses, external flash devices, and other items. Just be sure that the accessories are compatible with the user's camera.

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## **Online Information for the Elderly and Disabled** by Steve Rosenthal, Space Coast PC Users Group

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On Tuesday, July 22, 2003, Kim Komando ([www.komando.com](http://www.komando.com)) had a link to a site that is of major interest to EVERYONE approaching retirement, Social Security, and/or who is permanently disabled for any reason. The site is sponsored by the National Council on the Aging, and hosted by AOL's GovernmentGuide.com. It is called [benefitscheckup.org](http://benefitscheckup.org), and is a comprehensive guide and list of any and all programs that are available to the "older generation," i.e. adults who are ready for Social Security or on permanent disability. This is a "must see" site for anyone with questions of importance about their benefits at or near 65.

The opening page has several choices: 1) How to Use the Site, 2) Tips, 3) Sponsors, 4) Support for N.C.O.A. (National Council On Aging). The first place to go on the site would be the "Benefits CheckUp" button, which will take the reader to several pages that ask important and pertinent questions about the individual, spouse and any dependents living in the household. There is a second button that takes the reader to a page for prescription drug information and savings.

I would suggest starting with the Check Up button, and going through the questionnaire, filling out ALL the questions as accurately as possible. The reader will need information on: A) State & Zip Code, B) Dates of birth for individual and spouse, C) Type of residence, D) Length of time living there, E) Veteran status, F) Employment History as it refers to governmental employment, G) Prescription Medication List (very important), H) Current income and their sources, I) Current Expenses.

Get this information together BEFORE entering the site, as it will speed the process of filling in the blanks. The reader has only 20 minutes to answer all the questions, before the site times out, meaning the reader will have to start all over from the beginning. Once the reader has started the questionnaire (Click the 'Click Here' button), there are about 35 or so questions, on approximately 10 different pages, some of which will require detailed information on medications, household income, work status, marital status, and the like. A detailed questionnaire on current medications will probably take the longest, so it is advisable that a current list of medications be written out and by the computer when answering this part of the questionnaire. Not all drugs are listed; some are listed as generic meds.

After filling in all the information, the site will then take a minute or so to assess the input, and select a list of sites and contact addresses/phone numbers for applications for various programs that would be valuable to the individual, assist limited income individuals who need help with their bills and even suggest further research for available programs for the retired and limited income families.

The federal government offers tax breaks and some private companies offer reduced price medicines for individuals and families on fixed incomes, which help retirees and the disabled cope with month-to-month living expenses and 'survival.' As far as I can tell, none of the information is stored -- it is erased after the 20-minute time period has elapsed. It doesn't appear to be 'collected,' and if it is, it would only be for statistical purposes, since the site does not ask for a name, address, phone number, Social Security Number, or any other personal identifying information directly traceable back to the individual. Answering the questions honestly simply retrieves information for the reader. In total, there are about 40 questions, and the most comprehensive is the one about prescription meds.

With ALL of your personal information at hand, it should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey, and another minute or two for the site to retrieve the pertinent information for your specific situation. The results will vary according to each individual's input and can list a few or several sources for further printing out the final results, as names, addresses, phone numbers and web sites can be extensive and comprehensive, depending on the individual's answers to the questionnaire. Examples of the results may include:

1) Golden Access Passport, 2) Food Stamp Program, 3) Medicare Counseling through the SHINE organization, 4) Real Property Tax & Other Exemptions, 5) Homestead Property Tax Deduction (for CA residences in particular), 6) Earned Income Tax Credit, and other qualifying programs, depending on income status.

These are by no means the total list; you will get a list that applies directly to YOUR specific needs and income level. Anyone with a computer can access this information, and if you don't have a computer at home, your local library (or even a neighbor, friend or family relative) can access the site, fill in the required information, retrieve the results, and print out the information for you to follow up via letter or phone call.

The Internet is chock full of, and a FANTASTIC source of information if you know where and how to look for it. This particular information might take an individual months to collect separately, but on the Internet, it took only 20- 30 minutes to gather, print, and store in a file that can be referred to over and over again.

I was able to download the PDF file with ALL the information in text form, which I can then read at my leisure or constantly go back to as a reference source. Anyone who is interested in available benefits should access this site, and do the questionnaire for themselves. Again, the name of the site is [benefitscheckup.org](http://benefitscheckup.org) and is available 24/7.

Take advantage of what the Internet has to offer; you'd be surprised at the wealth of information available. If you need further information, my Email address is [stever43@bellsouth.net](mailto:stever43@bellsouth.net). Feel free to contact me, and I will do my best to help you find the information you are seeking. Good luck with your search, and use the Internet to its fullest capacity, you'll be pleasantly surprised at what it has to offer.

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**Take Rest Breaks** by Ken Fermoye, Fermoye Publications

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Between us, my wife and I offer a catalog of physical ills caused by long hours of working on computers: repetitive stress injury (RSI), neck pain, backaches and vision problems. Liz underwent surgery twice for carpal tunnel syndrome and still has frequent wrist and hand pain.

I have suffered from aggravated neck and back injuries. My vision has deteriorated from 20 years of staring at a monitor, although admittedly age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and cataracts have been more damaging.

The sad truth is that if we knew 15 years ago what we know now, these problems need not have occurred. Or if they had, they would have been less severe. Even sadder is that prevention of many computer-related ailments is neither difficult nor especially time-consuming.

Frequent rest breaks are vital, says my chiropractor, Kurt W. Rice, who is also my son-in-law, God bless him. (He has helped me more times in recent years with neck and back problems than I care to remember!)

The breaks needn't be lengthy. Dr. Kurt recommends that we get up from our chairs every half-hour or so, stretch our backs and walk for a minute or two. Other experts offer different opinions about frequency and duration of breaks but all agree that they are vital.

Sitting and working at a computer creates more tension and stress on muscles, nerves, tendons and joints than most of us realize. Our bodies fight gravity every minute that we're seated. Breaks alleviate this tension and stress.

To prevent the dreaded carpal tunnel syndrome, during your break let your hands go limp at the wrist and wiggle them vigorously in what some call "the clerk & typist exercise."

Some people use voice recognition programs to cut down on their need to use a keyboard and mouse. I find that difficult; after more than 50 years of banging away at typewriter and computer keys, dictation comes hard to me. Now that voice recognition is improving and more reliable, however, I've resolved to use it more often. A major benefit is that you can use a microphone or headset while standing or even lying down. I plan to try dictating drafts, then to rewrite and edit as necessary from the keyboard.

Vision experts warn that we should take "eye breaks" even more frequently. Every 10 or 12 minutes, look away from the monitor at objects 10 to 12 feet away. When I'm working with a word processor or any other program that allows me to increase type size easily and temporarily, I do it. Working with 14- instead of 10-point type prevents squinting and straining to see my work. It also allows me to sit up straight, not bent over the keyboard, and you can always reduce point size before printing or sending e-mail.

I mentioned my neck and back injuries earlier. The neck problems began about 17 years ago. I was riding my bicycle when a large tree limb broke off and fell on me. (Fortunately I was wearing a good helmet or the freak accident might have killed me.) That caused some damage, which increased with age and was aggravated by working on computers and long-distance cycling. The pain got so bad I could not turn my head to either side more than 12 or 15 degrees. Dr. Kurt came to the rescue, with manipulation, ultra-sound and heat packs. He recommended several simple exercises, which I try to do regularly.

My back injuries were computer-related. The first came when I installed a second drive in one of our machines. I crawled under a desk to get at the computer case. After removing all the cables, I tried to lift the box and slide it out to where I could work on it, not waiting to shift to a position that would give me more leverage.

Bad move. I heard a pop and was in instant agony. It took several weeks of Dr. Kurt's ministrations to recover from that one. I injured it again in October 1999 after conducting my monthly desktop publishing/word processing SIG. I took a computer and 17-inch monitor out of a car trunk with a high lip that made it impossible to lift them properly. I had to bend and lift with my back – and pop, there it went again! This time, recovery took even longer.

I mention these details to make a point. The first instance was pure accident. No way could I foresee that a brittle, rotted pepper tree branch would break off and fall just as I pedaled under it. The second injury occurred because I didn't take time to position myself properly. The third case was avoidable too; I should never have tried to lift heavy objects out of that particular car trunk. Trouble is, I forget my hard-used back is more vulnerable now than it was even 20 ago, and I think many of us who have reached senior citizen status do the same.

I just caught myself in a no-no a few minutes ago. I wanted a book from a built-in shelf high and to the right of my home office workstation. I started to reach up, twisting my back at an awkward angle. Various muscles prepared to scream in protest, so I did what I should have done in the first place. I moved my chair out of the way, got a step stool I keep folded behind the door, set it firmly in place and climbed up to find the desired book. It took a few extra minutes, but it kept me from aggravating my previously-injured back.

The book, by the way was *Zap! How your computer can hurt you – and what you can do about it*. Written by Don Sellers (edited by

*(Continued on page 15)*

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## **Take Rest Breaks...**

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*(Continued from page 14)*

Stephen E. Roth). You can find *Zap!* and the condensed version, *25 Steps to Safe Computing*, also by Sellers, at [micronite.com](http://micronite.com). Either book would be a good addition to your library.

Meanwhile give yourself, and your body, a break... at least once every half-hour!

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## **To Upgrade or Not to Upgrade** by Timothy Everingham, TUGNET

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To upgrade or not to upgrade, that is the question. Whether it is nobler to upgrade the computer you have or to put aside the invested fortune of your current computer and get a new one? Or yet do you even need to put your cash into computer hardware? Even Shakespeare didn't have to deal with these questions, which in recent years have become even more complicated to answer.

Where you should start is by determining what your present and future needs and wants are going to be. Don't try to project over five years. I am not talking about what hardware you may drool over, but what you will want or need to do with your computer. Will it be word processing; web surfing; email; burning CD and DVDs; database or list management; software development; photo, graphics, video editing and creation; or something else? Then you look at the application software that will accomplish those tasks. Also look at how long will your current application software and operating system(s) be supported by the manufacturer. Also, if you have software that is known to be troublesome, like Windows ME, the need or desire to upgrade it should be considered. Then you look at the system requirements to run these applications: hardware, operating system, and other supporting software (software that is required to be installed on your system in order for your application to run).

Remember that the companies want to sell you the software or hardware, resulting in the minimum software requirements listed being as low as possible and may not reflect real world conditions. If you have a system that is exactly listed as the minimum system requirements (it is the minimum system requirements if only one is listed) consider that this product will run extremely slowly and crash at times. Some manufactures list both minimum and recommended system requirement, and you do not want to be too far below the recommended requirements. Also, some system requirements listed do not change the RAM requirements for different operating systems. They list as minimum RAM the one for the oldest operating system. A program may run on Windows 95, 98, 98 SE, ME, 2000, and XP; but the amount of RAM needed in reality is more for Windows 98, 98 SE, and ME than Windows 95 and more for Windows 2000 and XP than Windows 98, 98 SE, and ME.

### **General Upgrading Guidelines**

There are some general guidelines. If you have a Pentium II computer, AMD equivalent or older and are doing anything else than word processing, simple web surfing and email you are looking at having too many things needed to upgrade for it to be worthwhile. With Macintosh or notebook computers, upgrade options are more limited than desktop PCs so, unless it is fairly new, you should be looking at getting a new computer. Also, you have to look at how many of your computer's components are close to or past their expected lifetimes. If your computer's components are five years or older, your computer is living on borrowed time. Where the upgrade option looks better is with Pentium 3, Pentium 4 or Athlon-based desktop computers. However, software activation has made this more complicated. With activation the software takes a snapshot of your computer's hardware configuration. If you try to run it after doing too many upgrades the software decides that it is not the same computer; violating the software license and shuts itself down. You then have to go to the software manufacturer and try to convince them that the computer you upgraded is not a new computer. The most famous of the programs that includes this feature is Windows XP, but there are a growing number of application software packages that also have this feature.

Of course this has bred a lot of fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD) about upgrading computers, which the people who sell new com-

*(Continued on page 16)*

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## **To Upgrade or Not to Upgrade...**

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*(Continued from page 15)*

puters are happy to take advantage of. If you do a combination motherboard (main circuit board) and processor replacement, activation should be a problem for you.

If your current computer fits your system's requirements of your expected needs and wants, congratulations; you are done without having to spend any money.

### **Alternatives to a New Motherboard**

Upgrading your RAM is probably the thing that can be most effective in putting off the need to buy a new computer. The others would be a new video card and a new hard drive.

Installing a CD or DVD R/RW drive is also a good option in order to backup things on your hard drives and being able to take data and media files off your drives that you use infrequently.

### **Upgrading Your Motherboard**

However, if you still are considering upgrading, the next thing you want to do is get out your motherboard manual (may be contained in computer manual). It will tell you what components can be installed on it. If you can't find your manual, there is likely to be a PDF of it on the manufacturer's website. While you are there check to see if there are any BIOS updates available that may give the motherboard new features that you may need. If the motherboard does not support the processor; type, speed or amount of RAM; or the type of plug-in card (AGP, PCI, EISA, ISA) you want to install, you will have to install a new motherboard that will. For drive (IDE, ATA, SATA, SCSI), IEEE 1394 (Firewire), and USB interfaces you can get plug-in cards instead of getting a new motherboard. Don't forget to calculate your power requirements and have the case be able to fit the motherboard.

### **Do You Need a 64 Bit Processor?**

With AMD releasing their Athlon 64 bit desktop processors, one of the issues in upgrading or buying a new computer is "will I need a 64 bit processor." For most people the answer is "not until the later part of this decade". To get the most out of a 64 bit processor you need 64 bit applications running on top of a 64 bit operating system. Of course if you have a Mac G5 system running Panther (Mac OS 10.3) and some of the recent versions of the high level Apple content creation applications you are already there, but for the PC world only 64 bit applications programs now are very high level server based or scientific applications.

There is 64 bit Linux, but the Windows XP version is still in beta and won't be out until spring 2004. There will be 64 bit versions of some games in 2004, but do not look until 2005 for a significant amount of 64 bit software for Windows XP. Because there will be a lot of 32 bit computers around for a while there should be plenty of 32 bit software. The 64 bit Athlons and what rumors say Intel is developing as a 64 bit desktop processor will be able to run 32 bit applications well, which should also keep the 32 bit software market healthy for quite a while. So unless you are a high level gamer, run high-level scientific or content creation applications, or run Macs you should wait on getting a 64 bit processor computer.

### **Downgrading Your Wallet**

After you make up a list of your proposed upgrade parts, add up the cost of them. Then compare this cost to the cost of a similar system to what your upgraded system would be. If you are doing a lot of upgrading you will find that the totally new computer will be close to or cost less than the cost of upgrading (there is a discount for buying an entirely new computer rather than just the parts of one). If you find yourself in this position you should lean toward buying a new computer. With this type of consideration you should also be looking at how you will transfer data and applications from your old computer to your new one (remember software activation issues).

### **The Upgrade Bottom Line**

Making the decision on whether to upgrade your current computer or buy a new computer has become more complex than it was a few years ago. A systematic step-by-step approach is appropriate. First determine your needs, then what will support filling those needs, and then weigh the costs of upgrading or buying new. May the wisdom of the Great Elizabethan Bard be upon you, resulting in a fruitful bounty of computer buying.

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**Bring a Friend to a DVPC Meeting – Help Them Grow their PC Knowledge – Help Grow DVPC Membership**

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**Versalaser Hardware Review** by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC
 

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My first printer could only output text. It was really more of a typewriter on steroids than a “printer”. It had an IBM type Selectric ball and was connected to the computer with a flat multicolor ribbon cable with very breakable pins on each end. I think it printed something speedy like 15 words a minute. You had to manually feed it paper – one sheet at a time. The great American novel would take an eon to print out on this wonder of the computing world. Needless to say, it was great to upgrade to an Epson RX80 dot matrix printer with fanfold paper. While the output was slightly less in quality than the “typewriter” I could change fonts and use of fan fold paper meant that I could do other things when printing. From there I progressed to inkjet, laser and dye-sublimation printers. So what’s next?

While a Versalaser ([www.versalaser.com](http://www.versalaser.com)) is not really a printer, it sure seems like one. You can use it like a printer from Word or other software, it connects by USB; it just doesn’t output onto paper. It cuts, marks and engraves wood, metal, stone, leather, plastic and lots of other materials. Imagine making your own engraved plaque as easily as you design a greeting card. Check out their website and the video on TECHTV (you can reach it from their website) to see some of the things you can do with this machine. While at Comdex I watched as they cut out a ruler in wood and metal for me with all the markings in just a few minutes. It is really simple to use: put in the material and tell your computer to print!

This is not for everyone! The MSRP is \$9,995.00 for the small (16x24” work area) and 25 watt laser. The larger and more powerful models cost even more. The introductory materials kit “with just enough to get you started with the basics” is \$595.00. That includes a prep kit, plastics kit, wood kit, name badge kit, clip art kit, foil decorating kit and award kit. The laser is replaceable if it wears out. Not quite a Star Trek replicator, but pretty cool and perhaps the basis for a thriving home business! Of course, you’d have to sell a lot of rulers to cover the price of this marvel!

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**Byte the Beast** by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC
 

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As usual the weekend always gives me the time to do the things I don’t get done during the week – like cleaning out the rain gutters. Happily, I also make some time to play with my toys. Last week I saw a segment on TechTV regarding two outlook add-ons that looked very compelling. The segment was on the ScreenSavers; here is a link to the article:

[www.techtv.com/screensavers/windowstips/story/0,24330,3593893,00.html](http://www.techtv.com/screensavers/windowstips/story/0,24330,3593893,00.html)

Both add-ons are from Microsoft, and they are free. The first adds a new BACKUP feature to Outlook that allows you to do a one click backup of your pst files. It works on Outlook 2000, 2002 (XP) and 2003. Get this add-on!

The second add-on is for Outlook 2003 only and adds a new VIDEO EMAIL function. Of course you need a web cam attached to your machine and this little program allows you to send a video email of up to 15 seconds. The recipient clicks on the attachment and voila – you are there in living color! Very cool.

Of course, this video email program finally got me to install Office 2003 which has been sitting on my desk for quite a while– lots of gutters.

Before I installed 2003 though, I had some questions. I was reasonably certain that installing Office 2003 over Office XP (2002) would go painlessly but I didn’t want to “lose” my copy of Office XP. In other words, could I load Office 2003 over Office XP and then take my Office XP disk and load it onto another machine without violating any EULA agreement? I called Microsoft (on a Saturday, no less) and was told that doing that was legal. I am writing this article on a machine that had Office 2000 on it and now happily runs Office XP. Not a hiccup in either installation or authentication. The computer that had Office XP is now running Office 2003 with no problem as well. What Microsoft couldn’t answer yesterday (because the Office tech support had closed by the time I

*(Continued on page 18)*

## **Byte the Beast...**

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*(Continued from page 17)*

got around to calling) was this question: my Office XP suite had components in it (FrontPage 2002) which were not in my Office 2003 Professional suite, and I didn't want to install Office 2003 and lose FrontPage 2002 on that machine. Since fools rush in...I can tell you that FrontPage 2002 is still on my machine along with all the new Office 2003 Professional components. Same for the Office 2000; it's components remain along with the new Office XP installation!

I received a special offer from O'Reilly, the computer book publisher that gives such great support to user groups, including DVPC. They offered us a free O'Reilly Press book for our raffle if we would put a banner ad on the DVPC home page ([www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org)) with a link to the web page for their upcoming Emerging Technology conference (<http://conferences.oreillynet.com/etech/>). I was on the phone with Ron yesterday and he said the ad was on our web site. However, I could not see the graphic or the link at the bottom of our homepage. At first I thought it was a glitch with Internet Explorer 6, but I could see it on one of our other computers so that wasn't the problem. After a bit of digging, I realized the problem was being caused by my Norton Anti-Spam program, which has an ad/banner blocker.

Interestingly, even after turning off the blocker this banner still does not show up. I know the Anti-Spam program is the cause since I find the banner listed in the log that it creates. I am now trying to see if there's a way that I can "authorize" the site (in other words, stop it from blocking anything on [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org)). It appears some sort of 'whitelisting' (authorizing a site/ad) is possible, but I haven't gotten it to work yet.

Guess it's time to get back to those rain gutters.

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## **Computing Factoids** by Steve Bass

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### ***Saving Paper? Ha!***

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

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

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

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

### ***Listen Up and Take Heed!***

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

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

### ***Better Backups***

After using tapes and zip drives for back ups, I finally decided to just back up to another hard drive. To simplify the process, I installed two mobile mounts and connected the IDE cables so that the upper mount or drawer is an IDE1 master and the lower drawer is an IDE2 Master. I purchased two drives of the same capacity. Both are jumpered as masters. The original is in the upper drawer, and the backup will be placed in the lower drawer.

I use "Drive Copy" which with installation generates a 3.5" floppy "Drive Copy" boot disk. The boot disk is used to start the copy process. Make certain that your 2 hard drives are labeled such that you will copy from the original to the backup, and not from the backup to the original.

Remove the backup and set it aside for that sad day when the original fails or is infected with a virus. The reason that I like this approach is that if the original drive fails, I can just power down and remove it from the drawer and insert and boot the backup, which is already jumpered as a master drive, and you are immediately up and running. Whereas if you were using a tape you have the problem of trying to salvage the original from the tape, hoping that it works. The same is true of Zip disks.

I will usually start the backup when I go to bed and it is done in the morning. The cost of a 2nd hard drive is probably cheaper than a tape drive or Zip drive and the cost of the tapes and zip disks just add even more cost. —*Clifford Ford (kb6ia@earthlink.net)*

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