

May 6, 1999 Meeting Announcement Symantec and Enfish

Our May, 1999 meeting will feature **Symantec** and their newly released *SystemWorks 2.0*. This latest, award-winning, #1 rated system utility set combines several previously separate Symantec and Quarterdeck packages into a single, completely unified utility set. The utilities included are Norton AntiVirus 5.0, Norton Utilities 4.0, Norton CrashGuard, Norton Web Services, and Norton CleanSweep. CleanSweep was a Quarterdeck product; Symantec purchased Quarterdeck several months ago. We'll also feature **Enfish**, and see a demonstration of their unique document management package *Tracker Pro*. See the review of this package in the January, 1999 issue of *Diablo Blue* (at www.dvpc.org/blue/jan99/page11.html). It is a program that automatically indexes your files, email, and web pages in the background as you use them (and deletes references when you delete files), and provides an interface for locating any piece of information in those files.

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 to Monthly Meetings on page 15). Please use the main entrance of the building, which is in the center of the front of the building that faces Clayton road.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the main meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. From 6:30 to 7:00 we'll have the *New User's SIG* meeting; you can visit the Networking Table if you have something to sell or trade, need technical help, or just want to exchange views; and, as usual, we'll have library disks and those great DVPC mugs (version 2) for sale. The main meeting will include SIG news, random access, our program, and some of our usual great door prizes. See you at this month's meeting!

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President's Corner

By [Alan Mildwurm](#), DVPC

With elections behind us, your Board is working hard to assume their duties of running the club. To give you an idea of hard we work – and how diligent each of us is in our tasks – I can proudly report that we exchanged 27 emails – including two original poems – just to move the Board meeting ahead one week to accommodate the spring break. My guess is that there isn't another club that can boast of this level of Board participation. Speaking of participation, we are now up to our full complement of 11 Board members ([see page 14](#)). With this many on the Board, we may need to order another pizza at our meetings. I am sure many weighty discussions will go into that decision. Beyond that, we hope that with the extra people on the board, we can expand our activities in the "PR" realm and ultimately increase the membership.

We have a rather full and interesting calendar of presen-

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President's Corner...

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tations coming up. (See the calendar elsewhere in this issue). We are also planning a Y2K presentation and a board presentation of favorite shareware/freeware. I have also received an email or two asking us to run a swap meet. A few volunteers would help make that happen! We are also looking for Mentors for our volunteer program. Please sign up at the next meeting!

As always, feel free to contact us if there are presentations you would like for the club. Remember, this is *your* club. Lastly, I want to thank everyone who has volunteered so much of their time to make DVPC the success that it is.

Curmudgeon's Column *by Walt Parsons, DVPC's Official Curmudgeon – Accept No Substitute!*

This month I'm going to nominate a couple of vendors and one Internet Service Provider to "Walt's Hall of Shame!"

Parsons' Technology

The first one to achieve notoriety is Parsons' Technology. (Fortunately no connection to the Walt Parsons family.)

Way back on February the 7th I received a special offer, via e-mail, to buy Calendar Creator, version 6.0 at quite an attractive price. Being a long time Calendar Creator user I immediately brought up their web page and placed an order expecting to receive my package within a week to ten days. Incidentally the price quoted in the e-mail advertisement wasn't shown on the web page, but I was instructed to insert the special order number so that I would be charged the offered price.

Two weeks later nothing had arrived, so I fired off the first of several e-mails asking what had happened to my order. Finally on March 2nd I got a response saying that they were out of stock on that item and would be shipping by March 12th. To date NOTHING has been received. Neither the software nor an explanation of why the second shipping date had been missed.

The US Government says that ordered merchandise has to be shipped within 30 days UNLESS a later shipping date is stated in the original advertisement. If there is a problem and the merchandise can't be shipped then the vendor MUST notify the buyer and offer to cancel the order and refund the buyer's money. Parsons' Technology did none of these required actions.

At the time of this writing (April 7th) nothing further has been received, nor have I heard anything from them.

What do you think, people? Does Parson's Technology not deserve to be inducted into "Walt's Hall of Shame?"

BUY.COM

The second nominee is none other than e-commerce vendor BUY.COM.

This time I had ordered a copy of Microsoft Word. Within a couple of days the software did arrive HOWEVER I had apparently misread the advertisement thinking that what I was buying was the complete MS Word Suite. What I received was just the Microsoft Word *word processing software*. I had goofed! So I looked up their money back guarantee and followed the instructions to return the software. (I had to obtain an RMA number from BUY.COM and ship it insured back to the address given for returns.)

Shortly thereafter I did see a credit on my Visa credit card account – BUT it was only for the base price, not the price plus sales tax. It took a couple of messages to get them to credit me for sales tax.

WARNING, WARNING – If you return merchandise to BUY.COM make sure you are credited for *both* the merchandise cost *and* the sales tax.

Your choice – Should BUY.COM also go into the Walt's Hall of Shame?

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Curmudgeon's Corner...

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PacBell.Net

The third nominee is a shoe in, PacBell.Net internet provider.

Why, you ask should PacBell.Net be a nominee?

Well, I don't know if you share my dislike for a company that won't own up to their poor planning and/or mistake, but I feel that it is reason for being inducted (or even indicted) into the "Walt's Hall of Shame."

Starting about a month ago I started getting error messages from PacBell.Net almost every time I accessed the POP part of PacBell.Net in order to get my e-mail. It sometimes took 15 to 20 attempts before I was able to download my e-mail.

The POP (Post Office Protocol) is the part of the ISP's computer that identifies who you are in order to find your e-mail that has been received by the ISP and stored until you decide to download the accumulation of e-mail.

Doing a little investigation, I found that it wasn't just my computer that was getting these error messages. That ruled out a problem with my computer or software. Next I noticed that this problem usually occurred during the busy times for the ISP.

My next step was to go to the ISP's status web page and check to see if there was any known problem with sending and receiving e-mail. The Status condition was "NORMAL."

My third step was to go to the support people but their only response was that I had some problem with my computer even though I had told them my suspicions that their POP was overloaded. Other PacBell.Net users got the same type of response and were put through numerous trouble shooting techniques to find the problem with the user's software or computer. Of course nothing was found.

So it appears that PacBell.Net probably had experienced a sizeable growth in subscribers and had carelessly allowed the POP equipment to be overloaded. You would have thought this would be the first thing that the tech people would have checked so my belief is that they were told to confuse and lead astray the users until the PacBell.Net people could install more equipment.

For the last two weeks I have had absolutely no problems accessing the POP server to get my e-mail. I HAVE NOT CHANGED ANYTHING IN MY EUDORA SOFTWARE.

Well I don't know about all of you, but this computer user does not like to be lied to! Nor do I like being led on a wild goose chase. Under these circumstances I would have expected to be told that some equipment was overloaded and that the problem would be corrected within a couple of weeks.

I'm not even going to ask for a vote on this nominee. They are now official members of "Walt's Hall of Shame."

Nominees Wanted

Do *you* have any nominees for "Walt's Hall of Shame?" If so, send me the name of your nominee and the details of why the company should be "honored."

Windows 95/98 Networking Tip by [Bruce Feld](#), DVPC

Having hell with a Windows 95/98 network? Give TCP/IP an IP address, even one you have to invent, and bye-bye problems! Here's how: Go to Control Panel, Network and find TCP/IP (*not* TCP/IP for Dial-Up Networking) in the list box on the Configuration tab. Click the Properties button, and on the IP Address tab click the radio button that reads "Specify an IP address" and enter an IP address in the spaces provided, such as 10.10.10.10. Restart your computer, and enjoy your network!

SIG NEWS *Compiled by [Bill Earl](#), SIG Coordinator, DVPC, 939-5874*

See the DVPC Calendar on [page 16](#) for the date and time of each SIG meeting.

Access/Visual Basic SIG [Ron Ogg](#) (283-7900 Ext. 201) and [Ted Armstrong](#) (939-4096) SIG Co-Leaders

The Access/Visual Basic SIG meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Gateway Group's offices, 3687 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 350, in Lafayette. We're continuing to enhance the DVPC membership roster program to add a feature that will let us automatically generate the monthly meeting announcement email messages. Even though this is an Access program, we'll be working in Visual Basic (VBA). If you are interested in Access or Visual Basic, be sure to join other programmers at this month's Access/VB SIG meeting.

Check out the Access/VB SIG on the web for information about each month's meeting at www.dvpc.org/sig_vbaccess – or navigate there from the DVPC home page (www.dvpc.org), select SIGs from the menu bar at the left, then click on the Access/VB SIG icon. See the web page or the Clarion SIG announcement below for directions to the meeting.

Advanced Users SIG [Jeff Noyer and Sharon Clark](#), SIG Co-Leaders – 937-5282

The Advanced Users SIG meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at 336 El Divisadero Avenue in Walnut Creek. Directions: From downtown Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road toward John Muir Hospital. Continue past Walnut *Boulevard* and John Muir Hospital. At the intersection of Ygnacio Valley Road and Walnut *Avenue*, turn right onto Walnut *Avenue*. At the first traffic light, turn right onto Blackstone Drive, then make the first right onto El Divisadero Avenue. Follow the road as it curves to the left. 336 El Divisadero Avenue will be on your right, immediately after the curve. It is a one-story, gray/brown house with white trim. The Advanced Users SIG is for anyone interested in discussing advanced topics such as hardware and software issues, cutting-edge technologies, networking, Windows NT Server and Workstation, troubleshooting, etc. Please join us to participate in this very informative and educational forum. We hope to see you at the meeting!

Clarion SIG [Ron Ogg](#), SIG Leader – 283-7900 Ext. 201

The Clarion SIG meets at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Gateway Group's offices, 3687 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 350, in Lafayette. Check out the Clarion SIG on the web for information about each month's meeting at www.dvpc.org/sig_clar. TopSpeed's Clarion 5 is a powerful object-oriented database development tool that competes with products like Visual Basic and Delphi and even products like PowerBuilder. If you are an advanced Clarion developer you are invited to join the SIG. This is a SIG for advanced users, so beginners will want to get some hands-on experience before joining. Be sure to come early for a good seat; the meetings are very well-attended.

Directions: take Highway 24 west to the Central Lafayette exit, and keep to your left to the stop sign at Deer Hill Road at the end of the exit ramp. Turn left onto Deer Hill Road, and continue to where it dead ends at Happy Valley Road. Turn left onto Happy Valley Road. Turn right at the traffic signal at Mt. Diablo Blvd. Take Mt. Diablo Blvd. through the next traffic signal and turn left into the driveway at 3685/3687. Immediately turn right into the parking lot in front of 3687. Take the elevator to the third floor to the door on the right just before the end of the hallway. See the Clarion SIG's Web page for a map. If you get lost, call Ron Ogg at 283-7900 Ext. 215.

Education and Entertainment SIG [Alan Mildwurm](#), SIG Leader – 510-770-5770

The Education & Entertainment SIG meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Montevideo School in San Ramon at 7:30 p.m. Call Alan at (510) 770-5770 (work) to confirm the date. The E&E SIG is oriented to exploring the best in education and entertainment software for the PC. Everyone is invited to attend our meetings, and bring your kids along – they'll have a great time, too! Directions: Take 680 to Bollinger Canyon Road, go west to San Ramon Valley Blvd., go south to Montevideo Rd. and turn left. Proceed east on Montevideo about 3 blocks to Broadmoor and turn left. The school is 1 block on the right. We meet in Room 22.

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SIG NEWS...

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Internet SIG [Craig Peterson](#), SIG Leader – 671-7025

The Internet SIG meets at 7:30 p.m. (*new time!*) on the third Wednesday of each month at Computer Renaissance, 959 Contra Costa Blvd. in Pleasant Hill. We cover everything about the Internet, from browsing and email to creating your own web site and the tools for doing so. For more information, please call Craig Peterson at 671-7025 or him an email message at compmail@pacbell.net.

Microsoft Project SIG [Elias Asmar](#), SIG Leader – 299-8500

The Microsoft Project SIG meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month at InterPro ADF's office at 3569 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 210. Park in the lot behind Radio Shack. The entrance to suite 210 is at the back of the building. Enter through the door marked "210" at the parking lot end of the walkway from the street and take the stairs to the second floor. Everyone who is interested in Microsoft Project and project management is invited to attend. If you plan on attending, please call Elias Asmar at 925-299-8500, Fax 925-299-8511, or send an email message to him at: elie.asmar@iadf.com.

New Users SIG [Bill Earl](#), SIG Leader – 939-5874

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.

Photo SIG [Chuck Graham](#), SIG Leader – 680-1333

The Photo SIG meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Graham Family Photo, 5100-35 Clayton Road, Concord, in in the Vineyard Center, next to Kmart, at the corner of Ayers and Clayton. The Photo SIG is for anyone who is interested in digital photography, and the software that's used to manipulate photo image files. The March meeting is the kickoff meeting for this new *DVPC* SIG. If you are interested in digital photography and image editing software, be sure to attend the Photo SIG meetings each month.

Real Estate SIG [Bill Thompson](#), SIG Leader – 693-0174

The Real Estate SIG meets on the third Monday of each month. Because we're still tying down the meeting location, you will have to check with Bill Thompson for the time, location, and directions. We have limited seating so you **must RSVP for the meetings**. Please contact SIG Leader Bill Thompson at 925-998-8530 or email him at thompson@DLSNetwork.com.

Windows SIG [Ron Ogg](#) (283-7900 Ext. 201) and [Walt Parsons](#) (934-0775), SIG Co-Leaders

The Windows SIG meets at the Community Room at the Concord Police Department Building on the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Everyone who uses, is interested in, or is curious about Windows on their PC, is invited to attend. See you all at the next Windows SIG meeting.

Here are 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 Highway 24 take Monument Blvd. east and continue on Monument Blvd. to where it changes to Galindo; the Police Department building will be on your right a short distance past the signal at Cowell Road.

New SIG?

Are you interested in starting a new SIG? It's easier than you probably think! To get started, just see our SIG Coordinator Bill Earl at the monthly meeting, or send him at email asking about starting your new SIG at bearl@pacbell.net.

Word 97 Tip – Default File Location by [Bruce Feld](#), DVPC

I had a problem with Word 97. Whenever I set my File Locations for Documents to be C:\Documents\Docs, it didn't take. When I hit function key F12 (Save As) it always defaulted to the C:\Documents folder.

I found that when I replaced the "My Documents" folder with what I thought was a folder named "Documents," in the Windows Explorer, I had accidentally replaced it with a briefcase, not a folder, which I named "Documents." Word was unable to default to a folder named "Docs" inside the briefcase named "Documents." Instead, Word defaulted to the briefcase "Documents" itself. Solution: I created a new folder named "Documents" and moved all the subfolders I had in the "Documents" briefcase to that folder. Word was then able to default to the Docs folder. To do that, I had to rename the briefcase "Documen" (or anything other than "Documents") to allow creation of the new "Documents" folder. Upshot of all this is that in Word apparently you cannot set up a default file location to a folder residing inside a briefcase, because the default will be to the briefcase itself. At least, that's what happened in my situation.

Switch to the Diablo Blue Web Edition

*"I am a real computer person and as such recognize the ultimate reality of the 'Paperless Society'. In keeping with this spirit and in an effort to help DVPC reduce overhead costs, I say "Nay" to a written newsletter. Give it to me electronically, I want to get my copy of DVPC's *Diablo Blue off the Web*. (I can always print it out on blue paper and don't have to admit that I did!)"* Turn in this form at the monthly meeting, or email your info to nopaper@dvpc.org

N a m e :

A d d r e s s :

C i t y :

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Support *Diablo Blue* Advertisers!

Membership Drive!

Bring a Friend! Bring a Co-Worker! Bring a Neighbor! Bring Several People!

Get Them to Join DVPC!

For Each Guest You Will Receive an Extra Raffle Ticket!

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes by [Tom Krauss](#), DVPC

Meeting Date: 4/14/98 **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Location:** Alan Mildwurm's house

Bank Account: \$1,000 (Approximately)

Upcoming Speakers:

June: [American Power Conversion](#) – Uninterruptable Power Supplies and [Trend Micro](#) AntiVirus Software

July: [Corel](#) – WordPerfect 9 and WordPerfect Office 2000 and your Board of Directors member's favorite shareware to show-and-tell

August: [Lernout and Hauspie](#) – Speech Recognition Software

After a two week discussion in twenty-eight emails (see my detailed record of that process elsewhere in this issue), the Board finally gathered at Alan's home, one week later than usual. There was a warm-up discussion of favorite incidents on "Antique Road Show", and then we got down to business.

Old Business:

Diablo Blue: The Newsletter Editor can use articles. Here is your chance to get your name in print. As a bonus, you will then also show up on many search engines when you and your friends search the Web for your name! Prove to your high school English teacher that they were wrong: you are literate, after all. No topic is too obscure, no opinion too inane. (Look at the all of the stuff that **I** write that gets printed!)

Projector: Charlie Crothers showed up at the meeting for the first time in a while. Rumor has it he was in town because he has been banned from all the major airlines at the request of the stewardesses union. Sounding remarkably like the Charlie of one and two years ago, he began whining about the need to buy a new video projector, and Ron chimed in. I think they were doing it to irritate me, but I am above such pettiness and refused to let these two despicable weasels get me going.

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Email Meeting Notification Available by [Ron Ogg](#), DVPC

We're providing an Email Notification service for the DVPC monthly meeting, and for SIGs as well, for all current, paid-up members. If you're interested in receiving an email message announcing each monthly meeting, and for the SIGs you attend, fill out this form and mail to the address on page 16 of this copy of *Diablo Blue*. Note that there's no separate notification for the New Users SIG since it's held on the same night as the monthly meeting.

Send me Email notification of each monthly DVPC meeting:

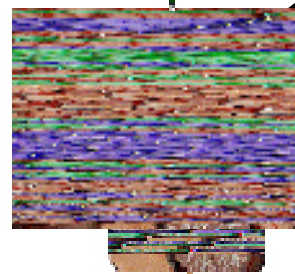
Name _____

Email Address _____

Also send me Email notification of each of the SIG meetings I've checked below:

Access/VB SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Microsoft Project SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photo SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarion SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Real Estate SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Entertainment SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windows SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

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Get a Friend to Join DVPC!

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes...

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New Business:

Kiting, DVPC Style: Peggy gave Alan a batch of checks to deposit. She originally mailed them to him. He in turn opened his mail, saw the checks, and handed them to her at the last meeting. It is our fervent hope that they make it into the bank this time before Charlie can get his hands on them and buy something with incredible bandwidth.

Library: Craig, who just can't find enough to keep himself busy (thank goodness!) is in the process rebuilding our library of shareware. He is even validating that the new additions work. It seems some of our older DOS-based favorites don't run very well under Windows 98.

This led to a suggestion the Board bring some of their favorite shareware to a meeting and demonstrate it. This is tentatively scheduled for the July meeting as filler (or as a fill-in when snow yet again keeps Corel from attending).

Membership Cards: Peggy announced that she is getting low on card stock. The other Board members, helpful as always, promptly suggested twelve vendors, stores and methods of dealing with this. Stan even announced he has been working on a design revision. If your next membership card shows the moon partly hidden by a beehive, you'll know why.

Membership Database: There are three copies of the membership database in use by three different people, and it is getting difficult to control. Ron volunteered to put it on the Web (secured, of course) using Access 2000 so those Board members who need it to perform their assigned tasks (yes, some of us *do* real work each month) can be assured of having the current, up-to-date information.

Ron's Microwave: We've all heard stories of people receiving radio signals with their dentures and things like that. Well, our own Ron Ogg has his own *X-Files*[®] incident going on. His microwave oven receives and plays audibly the neighbors' cell phone conversations. I know what you're thinking, and No, this is not part of the Windows 2000 beta. Ron reports that there is no evidence that his microwave transmits. It was suggested that he needs to put his head in the oven and turn it on for it to send. Ron said he had tried that, but with his head in the oven he couldn't see which button to push to turn it on.

Windows SIG Meeting Notes by [Walt Parsons](#), DVPC

The Windows SIG met on March 26, 1999 at the Concord Police station. (Until further notice, the Windows SIG meets on the fourth Friday of each month.) Presentations this month were by Ron Ogg and Walt Parsons

During the Random Access session, one person reported problems with the Word 2000 beta we all received at the DVPC general meeting in March.

Ron presented a report on *Power Desk Utilities* from [Mijenix Corp.](#), a substitute for Windows Explorer or Norton Navigator, but with many additional features. Power Desk Utilities integrates over 300 features including zip/unzip, file viewing, advanced file finding, encryption/decryption, e-mail attachment decoding, hard drive space management, file tracking, and quicker access to programs. Also included is a built in file viewer for 80 different formats. For more details about this program access the PC Connection web page listing at URL www.pcconnection.com and do a search on the words "Power Desk." PC Connection sells this program for \$25.95.

Operating System Requirements – Windows 95/98 or Window NT

Memory Requirements – 8MB RAM for Windows 95/98, 16MB for Windows NT.

Hard disk requirements – 19MB of disk space.

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Windows SIG Meeting Minutes...

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After a Q&A session about Power Desk, Walt presented a shareware program called *Buzof*.

Buzof 1.44 is a shareware program that answers the barrage of questions when ever your try to run a program such as "Do you really want to exit the spelling checker?" or "Do you want to fix this problem?", etc, etc, etc. The answer in almost all cases is OK or YES. The question that takes the prize for stupidity is when bringing up your browser you get the question "Do you want to dial up the ISP?" (Nooo – I'm just bringing up Netscape because I like to see Netscape's logo!!)

After you have downloaded Buzof from the www.basta.com/prodbuzof.htm web site and installed the program you can have most of these questions answered automatically.

Let's say I want to do some web browsing and start my browser and get the brilliant questions, I click on the Buzof icon and drag a target over the YES button of the Netscape dialog box and then click on the Buzof "HIDE" button which puts Buzof back to the taskbar and out of your way. In the future every time I try to bring up Netscape I will no longer have to answer the questions. It appears momentarily and then goes away having been answered by Buzof.

The program is a shareware program which you can try out for free but until you pay them their \$15.00 registration fee you do get a nag screen every time you boot up your computer.

I heartily recommend this program. Presently I have about 20 different dialog boxes I tell Buzof to answer.

For further information about this program to the 9 March issue of Computer Currents and look for the article by Melvin Motogawa.

Civilization: Call to Power by [Alan Mildwurm](#), DVPC

A Software Review

If the pyramids were never built and man didn't go to the moon, would we still have the World Wide Web? This question is posed by this latest generation of strategy games by Activision. I must admit I just got this game and haven't had enough time to really work through all of its intricacies – but I will.

I've been playing Civilization for years (it was first released in 1991), and this latest incarnation seems to be a winner. It is not for an older computer. The fact sheet's system requirements section talks about a Pentium 90 with 16 MB of RAM. The fact sheet must predate the box, which calls for a Pentium 133 and 32 MB of RAM (and 320 Megs of uncompressed hard drive space and 80 Megs of swap file). Even those specs are a little on the light side. It runs on Windows 95, 98 and NT (but increase the minimum system to a Pentium 166 with 64 MB of RAM when using Windows NT). The graphics are stunning.

This game is similar in concept to its predecessors. The goal is to start from primitive beginnings and progress into the future – 3000 A.D. – with alien archeology and cloaking technology (I'm nowhere close to *that* part of the program yet). As your empire advances, you make decisions on how you wish to proceed. Every decision has a future repercussion. In addition to the typical military options, there are several new types of warfare such as biological terrorism or religious conversions. Players can choose how they will approach the game-warlike, peaceful, etc.

This is a thinking game. Just selecting the site to settle on makes a difference – food, water, transport, defense, natural resources. You can pick one of 41 historical civilizations or create your own. You can select the number of opponents (3 to 8), the map size, the shape of the world (the world connects the west and east edges), the barbarian threat, pollution, etc.

This game also supports multi-player mode – which I haven't tried yet. Only the host needs the disk to play over a LAN, so I hope Jess will have some time to try this option with me! We plan to demo this game at an upcoming Education and Entertainment SIG night, so be sure to attend our SIG meetings.

Eliminate the Office Assistant for Good! Really! by [Ron Ogg](#), DVPC

Saying Goodbye and Good Riddance to the Office Assistant

I absolutely **HATE** the Office Assistant in Microsoft Office 97. It annoyingly pops up when I start any of the Office programs, and makes me turn it off. Even if I disable all of its options (by clicking on the little beast, selecting Options, and unchecking everything) it perversely persists on popping up at the most inopportune moments.

If the Office Assistant gets on your nerves too, here's how you can disable it semi-permanently – so it won't ever pop up to annoy you again.

First, disable all of its options as described above. Then, move all the Actor files (*.act) in the Actors folder (you'll probably find them in C:\ProgramFiles\MicrosoftOffice\Office\Actors). Don't delete them: move them to a separate folder where you can keep them but prevent them from working. No more Office Assistant! Huzzah! If you ever want to restore the Office Assistant, simply move the files back to the Actors folder.

New Ways to Send Mail – A Review by [Walt Parsons](#), DVPC

For years people have had two ways to pay for the mail they sent.

First and oldest way was to put a stamp on the envelope but the big problem here was to have the right combination of stamps available at home when that important piece of mail just has to go out. That's why a lot of people put two 33 cents stamps on a two ounce envelope thereby donating 11 cents to the post office. (It costs 33 cents for the first ounce and 22 cents for each additional ounce.)

The second common way is to use a postage meter, most frequently one leased from Pitney Bowes. This is usually restricted to businesses. When new postage is needed somebody has to take the machine to the post office so it can be reset to reflect the postage bought. Recently Pitney Bowes as come out with a Personal Post office that can be reset by phone but this machine is very expensive to use. The monthly lease is \$19.00, it costs \$5.00 per time to download new postage, and it uses a special ink cartridge costing \$25+ each and lasting only 300 stamps. I recently returned my Personal Post office to Pitney Bowes.

Now two new systems are showing up and are now being put thru Beta testing by some companies and the Post office. There are two main systems. One requires you to access a secure web page to subtract the postage needed from postage you've paid for. The program then allows you to print an envelope using your computer and your own printer. The other main system has you use an "Electronic Vault" that keeps control of the postage you purchase. This system also uses your own computer and printer to address and print the postage indica on the envelope.

The Contra Costa Times ran a big advertisement this week for Neopost. This system appears to keep the postage in a label printer that prints your postage on labels which you attach to envelopes. This system is NOT cheap. The advertisement leaves out more than it tells you. Yes, They do donate \$50.00 worth of postage but just by chance the "membership fee" is \$49.99. A digital scale and label printer is provided. The monthly fee is \$17.95. What isn't said is what happens to the printer and scale if you drop your "membership"? The web page isn't too much more informative.

The system that I am beta testing is the e-stamp device so I can give a lot more details based on my experience.

During the beta phase, there is not charge at all. They say that the future fee will be no more than 3% of the postage cost. Here is how this system works.

An "Electronic vault" is provided that fits between the parallel port and the printer and the software to make it work. A CD is included which verifies that the address you want to use is correct and provides the 9 digit zip code. It also modifies the address you provided to the format that the post office wants, i.e. in all caps.

After installation and approval of your permit by the post office, postage is purchased on their web page. The postage

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New Ways to Send Mail...

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cost is taken directly from your checking account. (You have to provide the account number, routing number, and a approval for them to debit your account.) The postage amount is then installed in the Electronic vault ready for you to use. They say that they may accept credit cards in the future.

Now I'm ready to send a letter. I input the address I want to send the letter to, the type mail, i.e. First class, Priority, Express, etc., and the weight of the envelope. The address is verified and you are allowed to print the envelope complete with return address, addressee, and the postage indicia. The bar code of this indicia includes information about the addressee. See the sample envelope below.

There are some nice side features such as a report that shows where you spend your postage and the ability to print special labels that can be used to pay the postage for packages or large flats. It is quite an easy program to use.

As a beta tester I have to respond to some survey information and at the end of the test I'll have to return the "Electronic Vault".

During the beta test their web page response has been lousy. It has taken me 5 to 6 attempts to get through to their postage system server in order to complete the setup and purchase postage. Other than that I really like their system.

I'll withhold final judgement on the E-Stamp system until the beta trial is complete and prices are announced. At the moment my feeling is that Pitney Bowes is going to have to do some fancy advertising to retain their postal meter business. They are said to be also coming out with an e-postage system but I've been unable to find out any information.

How to Reschedule DVPC Board Meeting by [Tom Krauss](#), DVPC

The Gang That Couldn't Communicate did it again. Actually, it's all Alan's fault. On April 1st (coincidence?) he sent out an email to the Board announcing he would be out of town on the 5th, the night of the regular Board meeting. He offered us three choices: "1- we bag the meeting, 2- we postpone 1 week (to the 14th), or 3- the rest of you meet at a place of your choice".

Well, this was at least two choices too many for us to be able to make a decision. In fact, it took twenty-eight email messages to finally select option 2.

(Continued on page 13)

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How to Reschedule DVPC Board Meeting by [Tom Krauss](#), DVPC

(Continued from page 12)

Less than twelve hours after Alan started this, in Email #4 Stan announced that the 21st was as good for him as the 14th, sending the Board off on a tangent. Craig soon followed, suggesting the 20th or 22nd. By Email #12, a mere forty-eight hours since the start, Stan was suggesting May 12.

Ever calm and collected, in Email #14 your humble Secretary wrote: "I thought I'd sit back and let the rest of you confuse yourselves on this burning issue. Now that it has occurred, I will ring in with a vote for the 14th."

Alan, Peggy, Nick and Stan responded over the next two hours, agreeing to the 14th, and by Email #19 it seemed we were through. Then Ron entered the conversation for the first time with Email #20 and announced "The 21st works for me." With typical good humor, Stan quickly responded: "This is good! Here we go again!"

Referring to Email #15 which Alan aptly, if optimistically, titled "it's the 14th, it's the 14th, it's the 14th, it's the 14th", in Email #22 Ron asked "Does this mean it's REALLY on the 14th??" Stan graciously offered: "Yes Ron, I think so. But perhaps we could discuss the virtues of it at greater length via email."

All this occurred in the space of four days. A week of quiet now passed. It appeared the Board was finally on top of things and everyone knew that the meeting was postponed one week to the 14th. And then, just when you thought it was safe to open your email, Nick wrote "Just in case I do not go to Vegas, are we meeting on the 14th (Day after tomorrow) as in this Wednesday?"

Alan was quick to clarify things with Email #26: "where am I?, where was I? am I here yet? does anyone need a map of Roswell? yes the meeting is Wed which I think is not today"

All this stress and confusion tends to make one reflect, and your Board is no exception. Unfortunately, some of us do more than just think when reflecting: we turn to poetry! The last two emails in this cycle were poems by Craig and Nick. I am sure they will not mind my sharing a few lines from each so that you can better appreciate the depth, the passion of these two gentleman.

First, the closing stanza from Mr. Craig Peterson:

And if you can't make it
On that lovely Spring night
We'll just vote to give you a job
That will fit you "JUST RIGHT"

And now, an obviously troubled Mr. Nick Chase announces he will not be able to attend the Board meeting after all:

Just found out Tuesday, I'm flying Thursday,
hope the paycheck, comes on payday,
see you later, I'm no waiter,
Back on Monday, so it's fun-day.

Become a Mentor by [Alan Mildwurm](#), DVPC

DVPC has a large number of knowledgeable members who are intermediate to expert users of various software packages. We're going to resurrect our Mentor program and take advantage of this storehouse of knowledge and let members share their knowledge with other members. If you use particular software packages, and would like to help other members when they have questions about any of those packages, you are a candidate for becoming a Mentor. Check the web site and look for a Mentor Information Form at the May meeting, and help your fellow DVPC members

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 articles about your PC hardware and software experiences.

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 283-7900, Ext. 201 (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 typeset 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 articles or member ad copy as email attachments to the [Newsletter Editor](#), or mail to: Editor, *Diablo Blue*, P.O. Box 2222, Orinda, CA 94563-2222. 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:

<http://www.dvpc.org>

DVPC Officers and Directors

Alan Mildwurm, President/Programs 770-5770 (work) Mark Allen, Publicity 680-7746 (home)
Nicholas Chase, Special Events 680-4211 (home) Charlie Crothers, At Large 829-2237 (home)
Bill Earl, SIG Coordinator 939-5874 (home) Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary 676-7522 (home)
Tom Krauss, Secretary 689-9960 (home) Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer 829-5858 (home)
Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor 283-7900 x201 (work) Craig Peterson, Librarian 671-7025 (home)
Stan Umlauf, Web Site 458-5560 (home)

The Board of Directors usually meets on the Wednesday evening following the general meeting each month. Check the *DVPC* Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*, or the *DVPC* home page on the Internet (www.dvpc.org) 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, or leaving a message on the *DVPC* voicemail System.

DVPC Voice Mail System

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

Diablo Blue is the monthly newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users' Group. Editor: Ronald Ogg, Mailing: Peggy Johnson

Please submit articles and columns to the Newsletter editor by email at rogg@value.net or mail them to:

Ronald Ogg, P.O. Box 2222, Orinda, CA 94563-2222

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Support *DVPC* – Get a friend to join!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Enclose a check for \$30.00 for one year's dues with printed edition of *Diablo Blue* or \$25.00 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:

Diablo Valley PC Users' Group, PO Box 667, Danville, CA 94526

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Company/School: _____ Email address: _____

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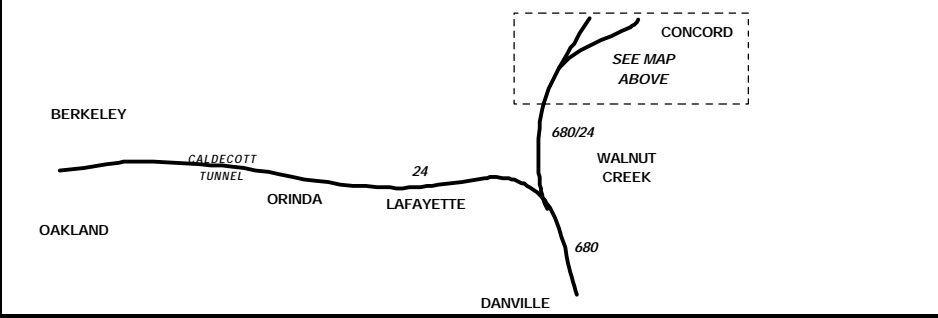
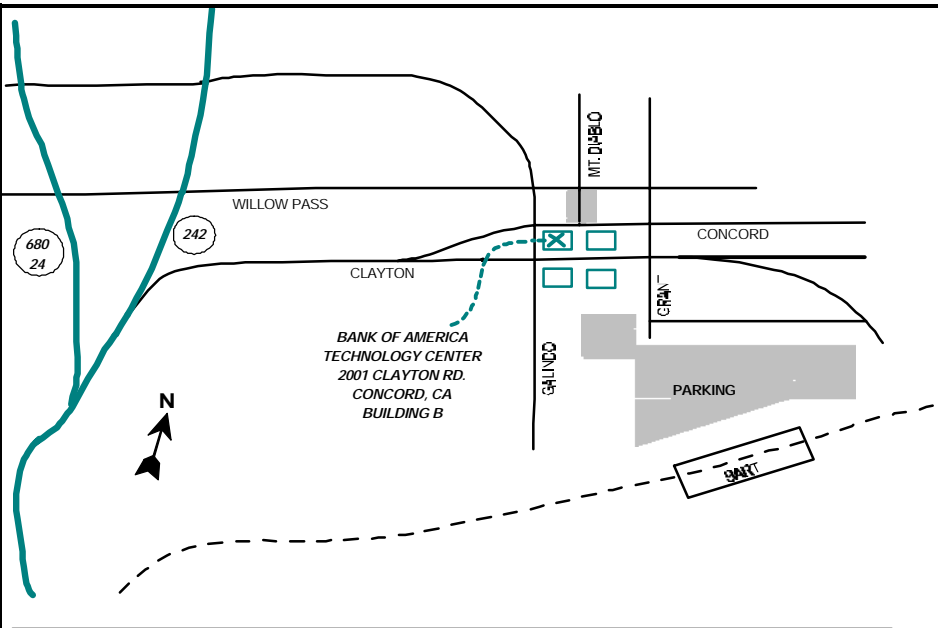
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On occasion DVPC publishes a list of members **for distribution to DVPC members only**. Please check how you would like to be listed: **No listing** _____ **List Name and Home** _____ **Work** _____ **phone number(s)** _____

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 office buildings.

Building B is the first building on your left, at the northeast corner of Clayton and Galindo.

Parking: Turn right on Grant Street (the first block past Galindo), then right into the BART parking lot at the back of the BofA complex. Or turn left on Galindo then right onto Concord Avenue to find street parking.

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

DVPC May 1999 Calendar

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
3 <i>See SIG News starting on page 4 for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations</i>	4	5	6 DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 p.m. New User's SIG 6:30 p.m.	7
10	11 Photo SIG 7:00 p.m. New SIG	12 Board Meeting 7:00 p.m. Alan Mildwurm's house	13	14 <i>Diablo Blue deadline</i> Email articles and ads to the Newsletter Editor: rogg@value.net
17 Microsoft Project SIG 7:30 p.m. Real Estate SIG 9:00 a.m.	18	19 Internet SIG 7:30 p.m. New time	20 Advanced Users SIG <i>No Meeting in April!</i> 7:30 p.m.	21
24	25 Access/Visual Basic SIG 7:30 p.m.	26 Education & Entertainment SIG 7:30 p.m. Clarion SIG 7:30 p.m.	27	28 Windows SIG 7:30 p.m. <i>New night starting this month</i>
31				

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