



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
May 21, 2005

Presidential Bits

By Paul Howard



Please make every effort to attend our May 21st meeting and welcome our guest speaker, Ashley Hannant, from Sandhills Publishing of Lincoln, Nebraska. We'll hear about the Smart Computing user group program, and learn about *Smart Computing* magazine, along with the firm's other publications directed at computer users and hobbyists: *PC Today*, *Reference Series*, *Computer Power User*. The firm also publishes *CE Lifestyles*, a magazine of tips and advice for getting along with today's high-tech consumer electronics.

Subscribers to any of these publications gain access to Smart Computing's extensive web site, which includes access to the entire editorial content and archives of all the publications, more than 22,000 articles. We'll also hear about Smart Computing's Tech Support Center, offering access to the publication's on-line resources, and, when you're unable to find it on line, toll free telephone support as well.

The presentation will step our members through an issue of the magazine and then conduct a live dem-

onstration of our Web site. During the presentation, Ashley will also be asking members for ideas and feedback on ways Sandhills can improve their products. Their editors realize that user group members portray the key characteristics of a target reader of our magazine, and therefore any feedback they can get is invaluable to their staff. They'll bring issues of Smart Computing and Web site guides for everyone in addition to door prizes. Information about their subscription plan for WAC members is available on our web site at: <http://www.wacug.org/smartsub.html>

If you have a conflict for the May 21st meeting, Ashley will also be presenting on Wednesday, May 25th, to our sister group, NCTCUG, at 7 PM in Carlin Hall Community Center, 5711 4th Street South, Arlington. <http://www.nctcug.org>

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Lu Spriggs Web Sites for May 2005

<http://www.wacug.org/> is the URL site for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past versions of Spriggs Web Sites w/hyperlinks.

1. <http://www.NatureMade.com/> – This site provides the latest on nutrition and wellness to help you evaluate your current nutrition needs.
2. <http://HospitalCompare.hhs.gov/> – This site will provide data for 4,200 hospitals nationwide, and let you compare 17 measures of success. It was established by the Hospital Quality Alliance, and maintained by Health & Human Services.
3. <http://hogsearch.com/> – This site provides many hyper link fields, for your searching convenience.
4. <http://web.tickle.com/tests/> – Visit this site for brainteasers!
5. http://www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/common_cents/index.html/ – Can you tell which is the real penny, without looking it up first?
6. <http://maps.google.com/> – After your address is displayed, click on the link “Satellite” for a view from space!
7. <http://teraserver.microsoft.com/> — This service can provide an aerial photo or a topo map of your address.
8. <http://www.petools.com/>– Registry Mechanic 4.0 for Windows.
9. <http://www.uhftips.org/> – UHF Tips are provided by United Health Foundation to provide support for peoples health decisions. Example: If you exceed the recommended daily dosage for any medication, either prescription or OTC, your major organs may be affected!
10. <http://www.abisource.com/> – A free word processor! Version 2.2.7 is available, 4.9 mbyte for setup.exe file. Available for Windows, Mac, or Linux.



NCTCUG

Visit our “sister” user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User’s Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4th Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

<http://www.nctcug.org/>



GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Introducing Mandriva

On April 7, 2005, Mandrakesoft officially changed its name to Mandriva (pronounced “Man-dree-vah”). Likewise, their GNU/Linux distribution, previously known as Mandrakelinux, is now Mandriva Linux™. The change was prompted by the recent merger of Mandrakesoft with Brazilian GNU/Linux company Conectiva and to move past a trademark lawsuit with the Hearst Corporation.

A week later, Mandriva announced the release of Mandriva Linux Limited Edition 2005, a distribution release featuring support for x86-64 bit and dual core processors, better support for removable devices, full support for Adaptec Host RAID controllers, extended recognition for the most recent flat screen monitors, support of the XBox console, and DKMS, which allows kernel modules to be dynamically built. The Mandriva Linux Limited Edition 2005 includes kernel 2.6.11.6, KDE 3.3.2 plus backports from 3.4, GNOME 2.8.3, GCC 3.4.3, and OpenOffice.org 1.1.4.

More information about Mandriva Linux can be found at <http://www.mandrivalinux.com/>.

New Tool to Manage Kernel Code

Members of the Linux Kernel development team had a chance to tell Linux founder Linus Torvalds “We told you so!” in April.

Three years ago, Linus was looking for software to help him organize all of the Linux kernel code submitted by developers all over the world. While there were some Open Source code management (SCM) applications available, none seemed particularly well-suited to the task. Larry McVoy of BitMover Inc. (<http://www.bitkeeper.com/>) offered the Linux kernel developers a free license to use his company’s commercial BitKeeper code management software. Despite objections by many developers that Linux, the most widely recognized Open Source project, should be developed with Open Source tools, Linus took Mr. McVoy up on the offer because of the advanced and useful features in the product. However, many developers refused to adopt the closed source product.

In April, Mr. McVoy discovered that Andrew Tridgell, a highly respected Open Source developer on sabbatical from IBM (and the only other Fellow besides Linus at the Open Source Development Labs, <http://www.osdl.org/>) was working on a reverse-engineered Open Source tool to extract information that developers needed from the BitKeeper source code database (<http://sourceforge.net/projects/sourcepuller/>). While there is no indication that Mr. Tridgell did anything wrong (reverse engineering is legal, and he never used BitKeeper so was not in violation of the product license), Mr. McVoy demanded that OSDL fire Mr. Tridgell. When this failed,

Mr. McVoy summarily revoked the free BitKeeper license for kernel developers.

This left Linus and the kernel developers without an infrastructure to manage patches and additions to the kernel source code. While most developers supported Mr. Tridgell, Linus appeared to blame him for creating this mess. Several Open Source luminaries, including Bruce Perens (<http://perens.com/>), shot back criticisms that Linus made the mistake.

Linus took a week off to consider the current crop of Open Source SCM tools, including Monotone and GNU Arch, but was not satisfied with them. He quickly cobbled together a tool called GIT that allows him to identify and browse code branches submitted by developers and commit them to the kernel source tree. A GIT mailing list was quickly formed to support development of the tool (<http://vger.kernel.org/vger-lists.html#git>), and the main kernel distribution web site now has a web interface that allows anyone to view code managed by GIT (<http://kernel.org/git/>).

The bashing seems to have settled down now. GIT is developing rapidly and is already being used to continue kernel work.

WACUG Gets Ubuntu

I was surprised and pleased to receive a package from the Netherlands containing at least one hundred CD kits of Ubuntu Linux, a GNU/Linux distribution based upon Debian Linux. Although first released in October 2004, it is already the fifth most popular distribution listed on DistroWatch.com.

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Distributed free of charge, the CD kits contain both a LiveCD version of Ubuntu release 4.10 that can be run directly off of the CD-ROM without installation to a hard drive (great for trying it out at no risk), and another CD to install Ubuntu on hard drives. For MS Windows users who aren't ready to try Linux but are still interested in Open Source software, the LiveCD also contains installable Windows versions of the AbiWord word processor, Firefox web browser, GIMP image application, Audacity sound editor, Thunderbird e-mail client, PDFCreator utility and OpenOffice.org office applications suite.

While newer versions of Ubuntu Linux and the applications are now available, this is a great way to sample Linux and Open Source software. Ubuntu has new releases every six months with security updates for at least 18 months afterward.

The CD kits will be available for free at WAC General meetings. Anyone is welcome to try it out and make copies to give to others. The CD kits are sponsored by Canonical Ltd (<http://www.canonical.com/>), which offers paid technical support services for Ubuntu. However, the Ubuntu Linux software and updates will always be free of charge. For more information about Ubuntu Linux, see <http://www.ubuntulinux.org/>.

Linux CD of the Month

In addition to the CD-R discs described below, I can provide any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora Core, Mandrake, Debian, Knoppix) on CD-R. Note: download versions

of commercial distributions do not include official technical support or printed documentation.

Discs are available only to WAC members by pre-order. Contact me by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail (ggoodrum@bigfoot.com) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single discs cost \$4 each; GNU/Linux distributions on two or three discs cost \$6 per set. All executable programs are for Intel x86 compatible Linux distributions unless stated otherwise. Your requests and suggestions are always welcome!

Cogito – v0.8. Free GNU General Public License source code and RPM executables by Petr Baudis. Cogito is a tool that enables human beings to work with the GIT database similar to other software code management tools like CVS or Monotone.

GIT – v0.7. Free GNU General Public License source code and RPM executables by Linus Torvalds and Petr Baudis. The GIT is an extremely fast and flexible file-system-based database designed to store directory trees with regard to their history. The Linux kernel developers are currently using GIT to manage multiple branches of kernel source code.

Globulation 2 – v0.8.14. Free GNU General Public License source code and Debian executable by the Ysagoon Team. Globulation 2 is an innovative, high quality real time strategy game. Despite the war oriented objective of wiping out the opponent, the game is not violent. The units are abstract X-shaped globules; there are no violent images, sounds or text. The player chooses the number of units for different tasks, and the units will do their best to satisfy

the requests. This allows the player to manage more units and to focus on strategies. It can be played by a single player, through your Local Area Network (LAN), or through the Internet thanks to Ysagoon Online Game (YOG), a meta-server. It also features an integrated map editor and a scripting language for versatile gameplay or tutorials.

Mozilla Calendar – v20050111. Free Mozilla Public License source code and installable extensions for the Mozilla Application Suite, Firefox browser and Thunderbird e-mail client. Mozilla Calendar helps you keep track of your appointments, birthdays, holidays and tasks. Since Calendar uses the iCal standard, you can share event schedules with other iCal compatible programs, and publish and subscribe to online calendars. A couple of the features currently depend on the underlying product: Open URL works with Mozilla and Firefox. E-mail alarm works with Mozilla and Thunderbird.

GNU/Linux Distribution Updates - Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 3.

Kernel Source - The latest versions of 2.4 and 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms.





Figure - 1
Globulation 2
<http://epfl.ysagoon.com>

The Latest on DVDs

By Bob Elgines, Colorado River
 Computer Club Editor, Lake
 Havasu, AZ

The DVD world is going crazy. The price range on DVD Recorders is from \$59 to \$130 well within most of our budgets. DVD blanks are down to 50 cents a piece, almost as cheap as CDs. The top four recorder manufacturers are Plextor, Toshiba, Pacific Digital, and Memorex.

Speed is up to 16X, which is max on the outer part of the disk, but only 8X blanks are readily available.

Dual layer (8.5 GB of data space) is labeled as the latest big deal, but is it really? These disks are hard to manufacture and are very expensive. The most important thing is, what will they play in? Well not much of anything. Most DVD players will not recognize the format and neither will your older recorders. So I don't

look for this to do anyone much good even in the future.

What is in the future (next year)? The digital world has still been undecided on DVD-R and DVD+R formats, so most of your recorders will do both. Now we come to the future of introducing two new formats named "HD-DVD" and "Blu-ray". These new formats have been developed to use the new blue-laser, where has, they have been using the red-laser in our present recorders. Red laser single level DVDs have 4.7 GB of capacity where the Blue-laser single layer DVDs will have a capacity of 15 (HD-DVD format) to 25 GB (Blu-ray format) at present.

A HD (High Definition) two hour movie uses about 17.4 GB with out max compression. The compression schemes (MPEG-2, MPEG4, etc.) will be the same for both, so there

will be no big difference in playback quality. Here we go again, new DVD players will be needed and this reminds us of the old video tape war on formats "Beta" and "VHS". Remember VHS won out due to more recording time and lower costs. Will this be true of the two blue-laser formats? Only time will tell.

These Blue-laser recorders and players will be coming out near the end of this year or the start of next year, but I think we are going to have to wait and see if they can decide on a format for the blue-laser.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Five More Annoying PC Annoyances

By Steve Bass, Contributing Editor, PC World; by Steve Bass, author of PC Annoyances, 2nd Edition

When I wrote PC Annoyances, I thought I'd soon run out of annoyances to fix. Ha! No sooner had the book landed in bookstores than I was barraged with email from--who else?--PC World and O'Reilly readers, tossing me more annoyances to handle.



That led to the second edition of PC Annoyances. I've added 160 more annoyances--and fixes--to the new book.

(You can grab a copy on Amazon at <http://snurl.com/annoyed2> or see at a chapter sample at: http://snurl.com/sample_annooy.

It didn't take long (nothing does with computers, right?) for readers to send another batch of irritating problems. So, for your reading pleasure, here are yet more annoyances. (These are actual annoyances contributed by annoyed PC World and O'Reilly readers.)

Speed up Adobe Acrobat Reader

The Annoyance: I use Adobe's Reader 6 to read Acrobat PDF files, and it takes aeons to load on my already slow PC. Isn't there a way to

speed it up?

The Fix: There's a quick-and-dirty fix that will make the Reader fly onto your screen. It's a free tool--Adobe Reader SpeedUp--that removes many of the add-ins the Reader ordinarily loads and few of us need. Get the tool at the http://snipurl.com/adobe_speedup.

Kill Some Time: The guy's (almost) a marketing genius. He's been covered all over the internet. Too bad he doesn't have an area code on his truck, eh? <http://www.snurl.com/plumbtruck>.

SP2 says "Reboot now"

The Annoyance: OK, so I have Automatic Updates set to Automatic in Windows XP. But no matter what I'm doing, this last upgrade keeps smacking a message in the middle of my screen asking if I want to reboot now or wait until later. It's happening every ten minutes and driving me nuts, and no, I can't turn off this alert.

The Fix: Unpleasant as it is, when

"May the fleas of a thousand camels infest the crotch of the RealPlayer developer who decided to stick icons in my system tray, Startup menu, and desktop, and may his arms be too short to scratch. --Snarfed from Internet, author unknown.

Microsoft has an update it considers critical for you to install, Automatic Updates slams an icon in your system tray. That's its not-so-subtle way of informing you that upgrades are available to download and install. But here's the rub: on these oh-so-very-critical updates, Windows wants you to reboot your system once the installation is com-

plete. And like a pouty three-year-old, it doesn't care what you're in the middle of doing.

So when you click on the icon in the system tray and choose either Express Install or Custom Install in the dialog that appears, you're stuck. XP will keep reminding you to reboot until you're so aggravated that you throw in the towel, close all your open apps, and reboot.

My recommendation? Wait till the end of the day before clicking on the icon and agreeing to take the update.

Kill Some Time: How about reminiscing back to the time before web bugs, spam, and, well, the internet. Remember "NYC's Bozo Show," "Wonderama," and "The Felix the Cat Show"? (Didn't think I was that old, eh?): <http://www.tvparty.com/lostny2.html>.

Unfreeze Windows XP

The Annoyance: You're happy because your recent upgrade to Windows XP Service Pack 2 went like a breeze. But all of a sudden, your system freezes.

The Fix: I know, you want me to tell you why XP crashed and how to prevent it from happening. You could try switching to a Mac or waiting for me to write a 1,600 page-tome (neither of which I suspect will happen). In the meantime, here's a quick way to get yourself out of the jam. Even though Windows XP is locked up solid, chances are good you can still open Task Manager

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by pressing Ctrl-Alt-Del. In Task Manager, click on the Processes tab, choose Explorer.exe, and click on End Process. Then select File -> New Task (Run), type explorer, and click on OK. No harm if it doesn't work; nifty rescue if it does.

Kill Some Time: The best I could do on Escape (<http://snipurl.com/dodgeit>), a tough and deeply annoying game, was 9 seconds. I could probably do better with my eyes

"I want to thank Bill Gates, his Microsofties, and the entire Redmond Empire. Without them, this book wouldn't be possible (or even necessary)."

closed. You'll find out right away that bumping the black frame ends the game.

AOL Idle Terminator

The Annoyance: I've about had it with America Online. Even if I'm downloading a big file, I have to respond to that pesky "You have been idle" warning. Hey, AOL, I'm not idling!

The Fix: You need the Terminator. And no, it's not the California governor. It's a tool that keeps your AOL connection cooking past the 46-minute envelope allowed by AOL. And it doesn't matter whether you're downloading a humongous file or just sitting and, yes, idling. The program's free to try and costs a mere \$5 if you keep it. Grab a copy at http://snipurl.com/AOL_terminator.

Kill Some Time: I'm often accused of offering links that are too cerebral. That, of course, just ain't true. Witness Blacksheep (at <http://snipurl.com/blacksheep>), a cool mouse-clicking Flash game. The trick is to pass the cursor over just the black squares, never the red ones. (Warning: lower your PC's volume.)

Importing DVD presentations in PowerPoint

The Annoyance: I'm well experienced with PowerPoint and can import most everything—except DVD videos. I've been hunting high and low for a way to do it; is there a trick I'm missing?

The Fix: You can call off the dogs. The trick is to spend \$99 for Visible Light OnStage DVD for PowerPoint. The handy utility adds itself to PowerPoint, and with it you can import DVDs to your heart's content. For details--and a trial version—visit <http://www.snipurl.com/visiblelight>.

Kill Some Time: You know what happens when you get to a web page that no longer exists, right? You get a 404 error. Here's a 404 that's a huge waste of time and will keep you busy past at least one deadline: <http://www.ukpaganlinks.co.uk/404.htm>.

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TECH NEWS

By Sue Crane, Vice President / Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, CA
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Traditional 911 Services not available from some VOIPs (check with your local VOIP vendor)

The Texas attorney general filed a lawsuit against Internet telephone service Vonage, saying the company fails to clearly tell consumers about the limits of 911 emergency calling over its service. The suit stems from an incident last month in Houston where a husband and wife were shot by burglars while their daughter tried to call 911 on a Vonage line and reached a recording. Independent VOIP providers typically do not have access to the traditional 911 system which carries calls to emergency dispatchers and transmits data about the caller's location. As a work-around, Vonage tells customers they need to activate a 911 service, but that service directs calls to administrative telephone lines that in some cases are unanswered.

MRI in a Pill

A South Korean semiconductor manufacturer has announced an image sensor for pill-size cameras that doctors can use to obtain accurate information about a patient's digestive tract. The image sensor can take up to 50,000 photographs in an eight-hour tour of the patient's insides by taking two pictures a second. Mass production will begin in the second half of 2005.

Mouse Adaptor for Shaky Hands

IBM has developed an adjustable

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Protecting Your Internet Passwords

by Gene Barlow
User Group Relations
Copyrighted April 2005

The internet plays an important role in our lives today. Almost everything we do has an internet possibility to it. We can access our bank accounts over the internet. We can pay our bills and loans using the internet. Every business that we have an account with lets us access our account and update our records over the internet. We can purchase airline tickets, reserve hotels, and rent cars over the internet. Each of these offers us personalized accounts to make these tasks easier to do. We can even buy groceries, tickets for movies, and order our prescriptions over the internet. How much easier it is today to do all of these things with our internet access. Of course, having access to these internet accounts requires that we set up a private ID and password for each of them. A typical user may have 20 or 30 of these account IDs and passwords to keep track of. So, while the internet has made our life easier in many ways, keeping track of these security codes has gotten harder to do.

Some users will try to bypass these methods set up to protect their privacy and personal information. To avoid keeping track of many codes, some individuals will use the same ID and password on all of their accounts. This is certainly not very secure. Once these common codes are discovered, they open up the hacker to all of your personal accounts. Others will write their codes down on yellow sticky notes and paste them to their computer display. This is also not very secure. Anyone that

walks by your computer will see these codes and be able to get into your private accounts without any problem. The real solution is to set up difficult and different passwords for each of your accounts and keep these in a very secure place. That is exactly what WhiteCanyon's MyPasswordVault helps you do.

MyPasswordVault is a database program that stores its information on your computer in an encrypted format so that nobody can find this file and see all of your codes. You still need to remember a password to gain access to MyPasswordVault, but all of the rest of your codes are guarded safely inside the vault. So, when you need to access an account on the internet, you simply open up MyPasswordVault, find the ID and Password for that account, and copy and paste it into your account access fields. You will be able to safely and quickly access the many accounts that you have set up on the internet. This is a great software utility that will let you safely and quickly enjoy all of the advantage of using the internet for your financial transactions.

MyPasswordVault is offered by WhiteCanyon software at the list price of \$25. You can purchase this valuable product at the user group discount price of just \$17. Look for it in our User Group Store at [_](#) and click on any of the yellow "Buy Now" buttons to get to our secure web order form. Complete the form including the special user group code of UGNL0405 and submit it. You may share this discount offer with your immediate family and close friends. These prices are not available to others not involved with a user group.

I hope this month's newsletter has

made you aware of an exciting new software offering from User Group Relations to make your computer usage more productive. Let me know if you have questions about anything in this newsletter by sending me a note to gene@ugr.com. Thank you for your attention.

Gene Barlow is the president of User Group Relations, a consulting firm specializing in promoting computer products to the user group community. He has over 40 years of experience with computer systems. He worked for IBM for 34 years in various technical and marketing positions. He managed IBM's user group support organization when IBM introduced the IBM PC till he retired 14 years later. In this role, he helped hundreds of user groups get started and is sometimes called the Father of User Groups for his involvement. He was the first sponsor of the Association of PC User Groups and was a guiding influence on this organization for many years and funded many special projects for them. When he left IBM, he set up his own consulting firm and has represented many software clients to the user group community the past 9 years. He currently represents Optimal Access, Acronis, WhiteCanyon, and Spearit software companies and their exciting products. He is an outstanding speaker, writer, and helper of end users and loves working with user groups. He may be contacted at gene@ugr.com.



Double Threat

Online Travel Scam

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Most of us like to travel, and would especially enjoy a travel bargain. We may have checked with reliable travel resources such as our local travel agents, airlines, cruise lines and hotels but were unable to find the deal that we wanted. We check the major travel sites such as Expedia, Orbitz and Travelocity, but still can not find a deal that makes us happy. Since we are experienced Internet users, we go to the major search engines such as Yahoo, Google or Alltheweb, and search for bargain travel sites. We notice some websites that appear at the top of the listings, sometimes in the premium paid listings on the search engines, that allege airline tickets, hotel rooms, and cruises at far below the prices charged by the reputable sources that we are familiar with, so we click on the links. One link may be for CheapClouds.com, claiming deep discounts off published airfares; another link may be for Busysky.net that offers comprehensive travel services with fares far below those offered by travel agents or other online travel websites. Two other websites offering unbelievable travel bargains that appear in the paid or premium listings on the search engines are Crazytickets.net and Submitprice.net.

Tasting a good deal, we click on one of these sites and see a travel site similar to the better-known and reputable sites with which we are already familiar.

We search for airfares and find tickets for about half of what we

would pay elsewhere; we find hotels and cruises similarly priced. Unable to resist such bargains, we select our trips and we are asked to enter our credit card information. A familiar window appears that asks us for our credit card number, security code (the three or four digit code on the credit card), expiration date, and name on the card. With a sense of excitement, we eagerly await the confirmation, which we are told may take a few minutes, but are instead presented with an official looking window that says that our credit card information could not be processed. We are then presented with an option to pay with another credit card, or pay by an alternative means. Thinking that it is just a simple glitch, and not wanting to lose the opportunity for a glorious vacation at a bargain price, we enter the required information for another credit card. We are again greeted with the same screen that it could not be processed, and are then told to contact customer service by email, utilizing the link and transaction number provided on the screen.

A short time later, we will receive an email from the travel company apologizing for the inconvenience, and claiming that their bank is having trouble processing credit cards. Since the price quoted is only valid for a very short time, the traveler is asked to use alternative methods of payment – wire the proceeds via Western Union. Readers of this column may feel a hint of skepticism at this point, remembering that sometime ago I wrote that while a legitimate method of sending money, wiring money via Western Union to pay for Internet purchases should raise a red flag of suspicion. Still, eager not to let the bargain of

a lifetime get away; we follow the instructions on the email from customer service. The address to wire the money to may raise more suspicions, as the destination is not in the United States, but instead in Bulgaria, Romania or Thailand. An inquiry email back to customer service may bring a prompt canned reply that the reason why the deal is so good is that these prices are only available for tickets purchased outside of the U.S., along with an assurance that they will be honored by the airlines, cruise lines, and the hotels. Still not wanting to lose out on this dream vacation, we send the money via Western Union, exactly as requested. We will then receive an email stating that it will take several days to receive our tickets, and are provided with a web link and tracking number to show our tickets are on the way.

After not receiving the tickets in the time specified we click on the tracking number, and are given another canned response that they are being processed, and should be delivered in the next few days; following up clicks several days later display the identical statement. An email reply from customer service reiterates the message. By the date of the dream vacation, no tickets have arrived, dashing any dreams of a good time.

We have become the victims of another very nasty scam circulating on the Internet. What is especially insidious about this scam is that it is a “double whammy,” in that we are not only out of the money for the trip, since the money sent via Western Union is virtually unrecoverable, but we have also given unscrupulous unknown parties our credit card information!

See *Travel Scam* page 10

This is not some fictitious scenario by a mystery writer but a documented scam. The scam has become so pervasive that even some of the anti-virus companies have posted warnings about it on their websites. There is anecdotal evidence that, in several of the cases, the victims' credit cards had been illicitly charged for a variety of goods and services in the days immediately following the fraudulent transaction, possibly committed by the same travel thieves.

The websites mentioned above were real, and are well documented, but are currently offline (as I type this). Based on their success at defrauding countless victims, it is likely that they will reappear under different names.

In order to be safe when shopping for travel bargains, be sure to use a reputable resource, such as a local travel agent, airline or hotel website, or trusted third party website. If you pay with a credit card, there is some degree of protection from fraud from the credit card company. Never wire money, especially overseas, to pay for a travel bargain. We work too hard for our money to have miscreants steal it from us under the false pretenses of a travel bargain.

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mouse adapter that compensates for the shakes of patients with hand tumors and other causes of uncontrollable shaking. According to the International Essential Tremor Foundation, in the US alone nearly 10 million people are affected by essential tremor, the most common form of hand tremors. This adapter will plug in between the mouse and computer and is compatible with existing mice.

Cell Phone Helmets for Bikers

Motorcyclists are now able to talk and ride by using a mobile-phone headset for crash helmets, demonstrated at the CeBit trade show. The headsets (full-face, open-face and flip-up), have audio capabilities at speeds up to 62 miles per hour.

Now You CAN Return Unwrapped Software

In the settlement of a California lawsuit Microsoft, Symantec, Adobe and others have agreed to publish EULA agreements on their websites for their respective products, while CompUSA, Best Buy, and Staples agreed to allow consumers to return unwrapped software for full monetary refunds, even if the shrink-wrap has been opened. Details of the settlement can be found at: <http://www.techfirm.com/AmendedComplaint-Filed.pdf>

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When Chuck D and the Fine Arts Militia released their latest single, "No Meaning No," They encouraged everyone to view, copy, mix, remix, sample, imitate, parody and even criticize it under a new licensing scheme called Creative Commons

that some say may be better suited to the electronic age than the controversial copyright license. More than 10 million other creations -- ranging from the movie "Outfoxed" and songs by the Beastie Boys to the BBC's news footage and the tech support books — have been distributed using Creative Commons licenses, which allow artists to keep "some rights reserved" rather than "all rights reserved". Online users can go to www.CreativeCommons.org and search its archives.

WinFS to be included in WinXP Update

Microsoft has said it plans to add support for WinFS to Windows XP. The operating system will support all three key Longhorn components WinFS, Avalon, and Indigo. Win FS is built on top of the fundamentals, which would include security features and technology to make sure applications and drivers don't conflict. A first beta of Longhorn is set to ship by the end of June. Microsoft plans to have a beta test version of WinFS available when Longhorn ships, probably late next year, and add it as an update to WinXP later. Microsoft is expected to handout a pre-beta preview release at the Microsoft Win HEC Conference.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



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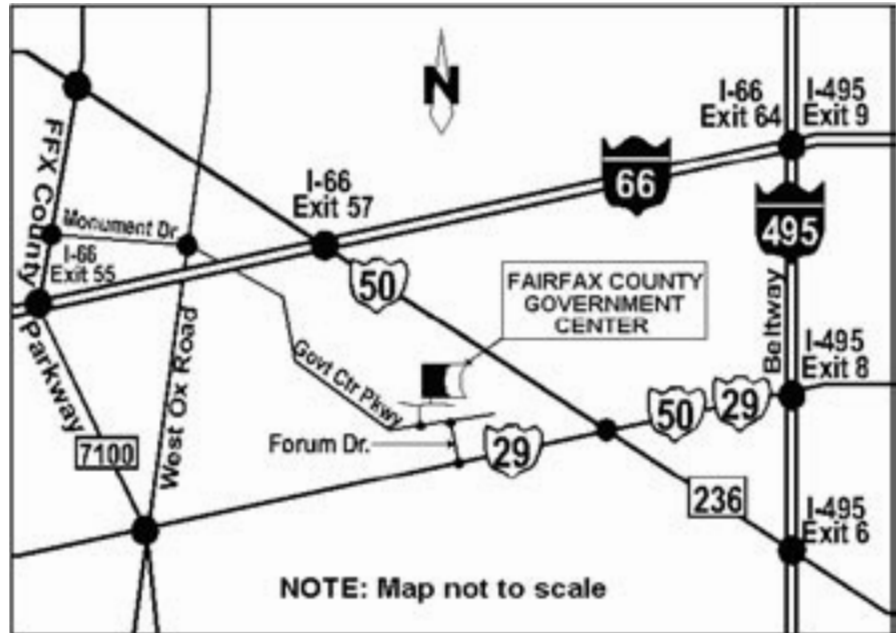
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