The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Presidential Bits

June 2005 Meeting

By Paul Howard

In May, we had a great presentation from Ashley Hannant of Sandhills Publications, covering *Smart Computing Magazine* and their web site, which allows subscribers to access more than 23,000 articles from four computer and consumer electronics publications. Of particular interest is the ability to establish a "library" of articles under your user ID on the web site, for speedy reference to particular topics. The site includes powerful search functions for researching topics in the article archive. If you missed the May meeting, there are still a few copies of the attendee package available – check with me at the next meeting.

Our June 18th meeting will feature our PC Clinic – where we seek to assist our members with hardware and software problems directly by working on their machines in a lab environment. We can help install new hard drives, CD / DVD drives, and other hardware products, or help with operating system installations and upgrades. Be sure to back up your data before bringing equipment to the Clinic, since time doesn't allow backup and installation in one sitting.

Check the Clinic ground rules on the meetings page of the web site. You need to call the WACUG info line, 703-370-7649, and let us know what you'll need help with, several days in advance of the Clinic, so we may gather any resources necessary to be of assistance.

For members who won't be bringing in a system for attention, or working on systems that are "in surgery" we'll have the "Backing Up Your Hard Drive" presentation available from User Group Resources, a multimedia presentation on a variety of backup strategies to protect your valuable computer data.

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Happy Father's Day
June 19th

Lu Spriggs Web Sites for June 2005

http://www.wacug.org/ – is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past versions of Sprigg's Web Sites w/hyperlinks.

1. http://www.expedia.com/ – Visit this site to plan your next trip, with hotels.

2. http://www.asthma.com/ – Take the Asthma Control Test and learn your Asthma Score, and how to handle your Asthma. Sponsored by American Lung Assn.

3. http://www.fueleconomy.gov/ –– Get the mileage and emissions ratings for all current cars here.

4. http://www.edmunds.com/ – Edmunds has compiled a list of the ten most efficient cars and SUV's.

5. http://www.fullofink.com/ – Inkjet cartridges and laser toners up to 85% off Retail with free shipping. MD residents pay 5% state tax.

6. http://www.ameritechconcepts.com/ – Save money on remanufactured cartridges with free delivery. Springfield, VA 703-321-4944.

7. http://www.opera.com/ – Opera 8.0 is now available free, download is 3.59 MB. Available for Windows, Mac, or Linux.

8. http://www.openoffice.org/ – Free, OpenOffice 2.0 is here. Will read Microsoft Word files. Download is 9.4 MB.

9. http://www.ihealthrecord.org/ – Use this site free to store your health records to simplify your life. You can provide access to a physician, who must pay $5000 per month for access to this system. More than 90,000 physicians normally use this system, at my.medem.com.

10. http://www.classmates.com/ – Do you have an urge to contact a college or high school classmate? Visit this site for details.

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HandiApped Independence: Part 1

By Frank Petrie
Freelance writer, Macsimum News contributor, Curmudgeon

I am a Mac user. I am a reviewer for Macsimum News and numerous newsletters. I also suffer from multiple sclerosis.

Recently, I allowed my boneheaded pride to 'cometh before eight falls,' resulting in a four day stay at the Bland Food Hotel. When I returned, I viewed my environment with new eyes. I realized that I needed to pace myself in a more efficient manner. I was pushing to hard.

So, I started to monitor my daily activities and evaluate the layout of my house. First, I noticed that I used about 80% of my energy getting across the carpets. Wasted energy. I had set my drinking glasses out of reach, my food on pantry shelves that were too high. More wasted energy. And on and on. Clearly I had to completely rethink my procedures.

What did I do the most? Where did I create paths?

How can I create an environment to facilitate my independent lifestyle without unnecessarily wasting energy getting to things?

While thinking about this, something triggered a memory of a visit to the 1960's NYC World's Fair. At the GE Pavilion, they predicted that in the future (probably the late 80's) we would all have robotic servants to take care of our common household chores. Remember Rosie on The Jetsons (ask your Grandmother)? She looked somewhat

GNU/Linux SIG
By Geof Goodrum

AntiPhishing Toolbars for Firefox

New functions can be added to the Firefox web browser easily through extensions (Tools > Extensions > Get More Extensions). With the growing prevalence of fake web sites designed to trick people into giving out their account information (a.k.a. phishing), there are now free extensions to help warn about potentially fraudulent sites.

Spoofstick, by CoreStreet, Ltd., is the smallest and simplest of the three extensions described here. Spoofstick prominently displays the current web site's domain (e.g. Amazon.com) on the toolbar, which quickly reveals fake web sites that use similar names (e.g. Amazon.x.com) or disguised Internet Protocol addresses (e.g. 192.168.24.5). If the displayed name isn't clearly the site name you expected, don't enter personally identifiable information.

Trustbar provides another layer of assurance by adding a toolbar that clearly identifying web sites that don't use a certificate service for authentication. Unfortunately, that applies to most sites. However, for sites that use a certificate authority (most banks and commerce sites that require secure transactions),

the toolbar displays a confirmation that the site has been verified by the certificate authority. This is a step better than checking the "lock" indicator in the status bar before entering account information.

Netcraft, a long-established authority that provides statistics on web sites, introduced an anti-phishing extension for Firefox on May 24. This is the most sophisticated of the three extensions presented. The Netcraft Toolbar is not available from the Firefox Extensions page, but from Netcraft's site at *http://toolbar.netcraft.com/*. Instructions are provided on how to configure Firefox to enable installation of extensions from this site (Firefox blocks software installation from unknown sites by default). The Netcraft Toolbar blocks access to fraudulent web sites identified by other users and confirmed by Netcraft. If you do find a suspected fake site not blocked by the Toolbar, you can click a button to submit the site to Netcraft for review. The Toolbar also provides information about the site, including a risk rating, that also provides some assurance about valid sites. ***Screen shot on page 6***.

Since the extensions are free and easily uninstalled later, you may wish to try all three and keep the ones you find most useful.
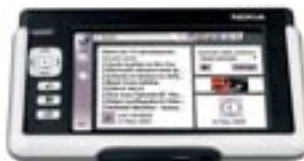
Nokia 770 Internet Tablet
Nokia announced their first Linux-based wireless device for web browsing and e-mail on May 25. The Nokia 770 Internet Tablet features an 800x480 widescreen, 65,536 col-

or display in a 5.5 inches x 3.1 inches x 0.70 inch package weighing 8.1 ounces. The 770 includes USB for PC connections, 802.11b WiFi for wireless networks and Bluetooth® Specification 1.2 for wireless connections through compatible mobile phones. Standard memory is 64MB DDR RAM, 128 MB Flash (>64 MB for user data); memory expansion is supported with RS-MMC (reduced size multimedia card). Besides a web browser and e-mail client, the 770 includes Internet Radio, News Reader, Media players, Image viewer, File Manager, Search, Calculator, World Clock, PDF-viewer, Notes, Sketch, and Games software. Input is via a stylus and on-screen keyboard. Sound output is via loudspeaker and 3.5mm stereo headphone jack. The rechargeable Li-ion battery is estimated to run 3.5 hours while browsing or 10 days on standby.

"Linux is a logical choice for the Nokia 770 Internet Tablet as Linux and the Open Source development platform provide us with fast and efficient solutions to build products for this new, Nokia product category. This is the first step in creating an Open Source product for broadband and Internet services. We will be launching regularly updates of the software. The next software

release planned for the first half of next year will support more presence based functionalities such as VoIP and Instant Messaging", said Janne Jormalainen, Vice President of Convergence Products, Multimedia, Nokia.

The Nokia 770 Internet Tablet is scheduled to ship in the third quarter of 2005, but will be available only direct from Nokia by online order. Yahoo!/AP News reports the price will be $350. FCC authorization is still pending.

More information and registration for e-mail updates are provided at *http://www.nokiausa.com/770/*.

Senior Application Developer Needed

Job Description: Mid to Senior Level Linux/C developer required to maintain and develop new features for a C application in a generic Linux environment.

The following experience is required:

- 7-10+ years software development; 2+ years with Linux

- C programming experience

- Linux compiling

- experience in porting applications to other operating systems/hardware a plus (application currently runs on 32bit Intel architecture - desire to run on AMD x86-64 Opteron)

- TCP/IP and socket programming

- familiar with the GCC environment

- Linux device driver or kernel space programming experience a plus

- Administering CVS or similar

software versioning system experience

- Scripting languages (shell, perl, php) a plus

Location: Reston, VA

Full/Part/Contract: Full-time

Salary: $80-$100k based on experience

Education: BS in CS or EE preferred

Clearance: None required

Citizenship: US

Travel: None to very little

Clearance: No

Start Date: Immediate

Contact: Please email resume to Mike Sullivan at *msullivan@paxfire.com*

Press Release: Security concerns propel Web browser switch - but many users still unaware of risks

Only 11% of users have already switched to a more secure browser

Oslo, Norway - May 31, 2005 - More than half of Internet users believe browser choice is a key security factor. In research carried out by Opera Software, 51 percent of the U.S. online population thought their choice of browser can influence whether they get malicious software such as viruses and spyware on their computers. The findings confirm that security is a critical reason for Internet users to switch to alternative browsers.

The safety of Internet use is a growing concern for consumers and businesses as they become increasingly aware of browser security issues. Nevertheless, of the 2,800 regular Internet users quizzed by Harris Interactive for the survey, a significant number (49 percent) did not believe that browser choice is a key

factor in protecting their computers from malicious software attacks: 17 percent thought it had no effect and 32 percent admitted they don't know whether the choice of browser makes a difference.

Most participants said security would prompt them to change browser, however, with 66 percent confirming they would consider using another browser for improved security. The number who had already changed browser (11 percent) indicates a distinct group of discerning Web users. However, the majority could still protect their online activity better if they had more information, for example knowing that security measures vary between browsers.

"Changing to a more secure browser is one of the simplest ways for Web users to make surfing safer and minimize the risk of falling victim to virus, spyware or phishing attacks," said Håkon Wium Lie, CTO, Opera Software. "Many Internet users are putting themselves at risk without knowing it. Simply changing to a browser with better security features will significantly reduce the risk posed by malicious software, giving people peace of mind to surf safely."

Opera Software makes security a top priority and recently launched the latest version of its browser, Opera 8 for Windows and Linux. Opera 8 allows Internet users to surf the Web faster, safer and easier than before. It includes new and advanced features such as a unique security information field that is automatically activated to indicate a Web site's level of security and display its owner's certificate. This allows users to compare the certificate

against the information shown in the site (including its URL) and use those details to evaluate the Web site's trustworthiness. The user can decrease his or her vulnerability to online fraud by using the given information to assess whether the site is really what it claims to be.

By maintaining this priority, Opera continues to hold the best of all browser track records with Secunia (Secunia.com), an Internet security firm that monitors vulnerabilities in various Internet products. According to Secunia reports, Opera has required less security advisories and has recorded faster response time as compared to other browsers that have existed for a mere fraction of Opera's 10-year lifetime as well as those that have been around for much longer: a testament to Opera's quick learning and professional upkeep of security standards.

More: *http://secunia.com/vendor/12/*

In March 2005 Opera Software commissioned Harris Interactive to survey 2800 individuals within the US adult online population.

Download Opera 8 at *www.opera.com/download*

Opera 8 Reviewers' Guide: *www.opera.com/press/reviews*

Opera 8 is available free of charge with an unobtrusive banner at the top of the user interface. To remove the banner users must register the browser for USD 39, though various discounts are offered.

About Opera Software ASA

Opera Software ASA is an industry leader in the development of Web browser technology, targeting the desktop, smartphone, PDA, home media and vertical markets.

Partners include companies such as IBM, Nokia, Sony, Motorola, Adobe, Macromedia, Symbian, Canal+ Technologies, Sony Ericsson, Kyocera, Sharp, Motorola Metroworks, MontaVista Software, BenQ, Sendo and AMD. The Opera browser has received international recognition from users, industry experts and media for being faster, smaller and more standards-compliant than other browsers.

Opera's browser technology is cross-platform and modular, and currently available on the following operating systems: Windows, Linux, Mac OS, Symbian OS, Windows Mobile, BREW, QNX, TRON, FreeBSD, Solaris and Mediahighway.

Opera Software ASA is headquartered in Oslo, Norway, with development centers in Linkoping and Gothenburg, Sweden. The company is listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol OPERA. Learn more about Opera at *www.opera.com*.

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 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!

DROD – v1.6.6 (Architect's Edition). Free Mozilla Public License source code and executable by Caravel Software. Deadly Rooms Of Death is a top-down view 2D dungeon exploration game where you must grab your sword and start chopping your way to the bottom of a vast dungeon. Learning how to play is simple - you move Beethro in one of eight directions or rotate his sword. You can wait as long as you like before moving and logical problem-solving is paramount, but the game still has a sense of action

Explosions

as you lay waste to hordes of nasties. When you finish exploring you can also build your own dungeons with the level editor.

DROD: Journey to Rooted Hold – v2.0.7 demo. Free Mozilla Public License source code and executable by Caravel Software.

A sequel to DROD, DROD: JtRH has an improved open source game engine and demo game levels. A complete set of game levels is available as a shareware download or CD-ROM. Swordplay and puzzles combine in this thinking man's dungeon crawl. It's simple to learn, with just a handful of commands to master. But the unique gameplay provides an amazing depth. A detailed

overhead view shows monsters, obstacles, and other game elements. You have as much time as you like to contemplate your next move. So this is a good game for relaxing, but also terrifically involving once you get started. You'll be hooked by the story of Beethro and his troublesome nephew, Halph. Our heroes set off on a harmless jaunt, but end up far below the surface, chased by a clownish madman. They begin to uncover a vast, underground bureaucracy, and things only get stranger the further they delve. The complete game has over 350 rooms ahead—each one a singular challenge for you to conquer.

jGnash – v1.9.2. Free GNU General Public License Java source code by Craig Cavanaugh. jGnash is a personal finance application written in Java. jGnash supports several account types, including investment accounts. jGnash has support for split transactions, nested accounts, scheduled transactions, commodities, and currencies. jGnash can import QIF files, excluding investment accounts and transactions. Data is stored in an XML format so it is easy to manipulate and read the data external to the program. jGnash also has scripting support to add custom reports and functionality. This release fixes the GnuCash import. The client/server mode now

More screenshots from the DROD game **DROD: JtRH** .

Invisible Man

Meet Your unmaker

Welcome Wagon

Netcraft Toolbar installed with Firefox

handles Reminders and split transactions correctly. A couple of small Reminder bugs were fixed. A Java Virtual Machine of 1.4 or greater is required (free download from *http://www.java.com/*).

Qingy – v0.6.0. Free GNU General Public License C source code by Michele Noberasco. qingy is a replacement for getty (Qingy Is Not GettY), the program that handles system login. It provides a fast, themeable graphic screen that allows the user to log in and start the session of his choice (text console, GNOME, KDE, wmaker, etc.). This release added support for encrypting communications between qingy and its user interface. Various other security enhancements were made. A drop-down mouse menu for sessions was implemented along with customizable key binding support. Theme handling was changed so that they look the same at all resolutions. The TTY guardian is now nearly completed.

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.

Another Silent Attack on Our Computers

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

At the recent computer security symposium in Corpus Christi, one of the speakers mentioned something that I was vaguely aware of as a threat. The threat is considered as a silent attempt to invade our computers for the purposes of installing viruses, Trojans, worms, or other malware devices. This silent threat may be used by terrorists to launch a coordinated attack on our infrastructure, steal our personal information, or otherwise wreak havoc. So insidious is this threat that it would sound like the content of an urban legend, yet it is documented as real. Imagine a threat that would be undetected by the current antivirus, firewall, and anti-spyware software, yet be so powerful as to effectively take over our computers, without our knowledge. This threat, formerly considered solely as an unproven concept, is now known to be real. This threat is also now implicated in taking over countless computers. This contemporary threat is known by the innocuous term "Rootkit".

A rootkit is defined on the Sysinternals website as, " … the mechanisms and techniques whereby malware, including viruses, spyware, and trojans, attempt to hide their presence from spyware blockers, antivirus, and system management utilities. There are several rootkit classifications depending on whether the malware survives reboot and whether it executes in user mode or kernel mode." The security software company F-Secure expands the definition with, "Rootkits for Windows work in a different way and are typically used to hide malicious software from for example an antivirus scanner. Rootkits are typically not malicious by themselves but are used for malicious purposes by viruses, worms, backdoors and spyware. A virus combined with a rootkit produces what was known as full stealth viruses in the MS-DOS environment."

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

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

Fortunately for us, there are a few rootkit detectors already available, mostly for free! This first generation of products still needs much refining to enable the average person to scan for rootkits with ease, but they are still a very good first step. There are a few rootkit detectors available which are currently free. One "RootkitRevealer" is from a company known for its excellent and often free software, Sysinternals. This software uses a patent-pending technology to detect rootkits, and is currently available for download at *http://www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/rootkitreveal.shtml*. RootkitRevealer will run on almost any Microsoft operating system, NT4 and later, which includes Windows 2000, and XP.

Another rootkit detector is from F-Secure, a well-known computer security company headquartered in Finland, with offices in the US and elsewhere. F-Secure's product is "Blacklight", available as a free beta (pre-release) version until July 1. Blacklight can be downloaded at *www.f-secure.com/blacklight*.

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

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

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

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

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

WEBSITES:

http://research.microsoft.com/rootkit

http://www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/rootkitreveal.shtml

http://www.f-secure.com/blacklight

http://www.f-secure.com/blacklight/rootkit.shtml

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.

Tech News

Sue Crane, Vice President & Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, California
Sue.crane@charter.net

Homegrown Star Wars, with Big Screen Magic

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

Let the games begin

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

Odd-shaped Robots Do More Than Housework.

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

Get Your LCD Monitor or TV now!

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

Paralyzed man controls his PC and TV using thought alone

Cybernetics - the fusion of human beings and technology - is helping one paralyzed man control his environment by connecting his brain to his PC. Quadriplegic ex-American football player Matthew Nagle is using a system that converts his thoughts into actions on a computer. Nagle's brain is connected to his computer by the BrainGate system, which trigger thought impulses using a sensor implanted in the motor cortex of his brain. Now, neuroscientists monitoring his progress hope he will soon be able to use the system to control other devices including electric wheelchairs.

Talk to your TV!

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

3D without glasses

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

Electronic Pill Boxes

Two health companies have teamed up to distribute an electronic pill box that does much more than help patients organize their medicine. The Med-eMonitor reminds pa-

tients when to take medicine and makes patient-specific inquiries about health measures like blood glucose levels, side effects or just general well-being. The device sends this information to a secure Web server, where practitioners monitoring a patient's care can see the information and intervene quickly if the patient stops taking medicine or reports ill-effects. The Web server also updates the device with new alerts, like upcoming doctor visits or changes in dosages.

RealNetworks Launches Napster Challenger

Streaming-media giant RealNetworks has launched an updated version of its Rhapsody subscription music service to challenge competitors such as Apple Computer's iTunes and Napster To Go. The new Rhapsody, which offers subscribers access to more than 1 million songs, will come in three flavors, one of which is free and provides 25 song downloads each month.

Longhorn to Support Handwriting and Touch Screens

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

VoIPs to get 911 Access

VoIP companies still can't successfully route a 911 call to the right emergency calling center or provide emergency operators with the caller's phone number and location, but Verizon Communications, the largest of the Baby Bells, said it plans to open its 911 emergency calling infrastructure to providers of Net-based phoning and Qwest Communications International struck a deal with Vonage for access to Qwest's 911 infrastructure. The developments are major for all Net-phone operators, including cable operators, AT&T CallVantage and Net2Phone, which are facing mounting pressure to 911 services.

A Word to President Bush

After U.S. students earlier this month made their <u>worst showing</u> in the 29-year history of the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest, David <u>Patterson</u>, a computer science professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and president of ACM has a suggestion: "(Our presidents) meet the winners of the football championship (Super Bowl), right?" Patterson says. "Gee, wouldn't it be wonderful if the presidents would meet the winners of the programming contest?". The top U.S. school finished in a tie for 17th place, while students from China's Shanghai Jiao Tong University took the top honors.

human and wore a hat and apron. Aaaah - the future!

As fate would have it, this memory came flashing back as I was watching TV. The Honda commercial, where robotics arms were spot welding chassis on the line, came on. Wait a tick! At the GE Pavilion, function followed form. So our servants were anthropomorphic. But the commercial proved that the exact opposite was true - form had followed function! The welding robots didn't look like my uncle in overalls, after all. They were big, hulking steel arms, working 24/7!

Quick - switch gears. Enter my daughter. She is an avid fan of those shows where friends exchange houses for a weekend to renovate one or two rooms. Once I told her about what I had been doing since my return from the hospital, she was all aglow. Here was her big chance to do like the TV shows without the fear of someone destroying her room.

Well, obviously, I use my computer the most, so this would have to be the focal point of my renovation. What I hadn't counted on (although I wasn't really surprised) was that most of my life, work and play involved my computer. Then it hit me! My computer was my robot! It helped me shop, pay bills, keep photo albums, and talk to people face to face. It saved my failing legs a lot of mileage. My computer/robot is an important part of my independent lifestyle.

This will hopefully be a series that goes beyond the ergonomic charts that we have all seen, and instead focus on hardware and software (in-

cluding OS X's Universal Access) that can benefit the handicapped (and the baby boomers who will soon slide into retirement; they'll be having bits fall off or stop working soon, as well). We'll revisit our workspaces, look at special mice and keyboards, the benefits of Bluetooth and dictation software for those with arthritis or dexterity problems. In short, how to layout your office for maximum workflow and the least amount of physical discomfort.

So, here's your first assignment. For the next several weeks, keep a mental or physical diary of your habits and routines. Perhaps your computer and bills don't have to be in that spare bedroom way in the back of the house. Notice where you spend most of your time, where your paths intersect most and such.

Once we have our information at hand, we'll get to work. Good luck.

Oh and please post comments. Let's begin a dialogue and share ideas. Reach me at phranky@mac.com, Subject: HandiApped.

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Book Reviews

By Chuck Roberts
WACUG Vendor Contact and
Newsletter Editor

Beginning in August, we will begin to see book reviews in *The Cursor* and/or on our web site, depending on the length of the review. This is a great way for a WACUG member to obtain a copy of an recently published technical reference book for free!

The only requirement to obtain a book for free, is that you must commit to write a review of the book for publication in our newsletter or for our website.

Writing the review is not very difficult or complicated. There are references and guidelines available and hyperlinks are included below to provide some guidance and suggestions.

For tips and suggestions on writing book reviews, go to:

http://ug.oreilly.com/bookreviews.html

Another reference is:
Slashdot book review guidelines.

One last link that is useful for writing a review of either books or other products is: *http://www.apcug.org/reports/apr01/r010428.htm*

Here is one last reference. It is an actual book review that is posted on a User Group website. Please examine this sample of a book review: *http://www.ncmug.org/reviews/photohacks.php*.

For example, what made you request a particular title? Why did you decide to request that particular book? Something or someone said something that caught your interest or otherwise made you think that book would be of value to you. See, it is the 'to you' part that is most im-portant.

When writing a review, the most important points to include or reference are those that are important to you. If you feel additional information should have been included, then state that. If you feel the technical level was too elementary, then state that. If the book addressed the primary points you needed, then say so.

The most valuable points are how you feel about the book after reading it and to whom are you going to recommend it?

In review. Visit the O'Reilly website frequently to see the newest titles in the realm of technology books. If you see one that interests you, simply send me an e-mail with the title and the ISBN number and I will try to obtain a copy for you to review and keep. The only requirement is that you agree to write a review of the book for publication in *The Cursor* or on our website.

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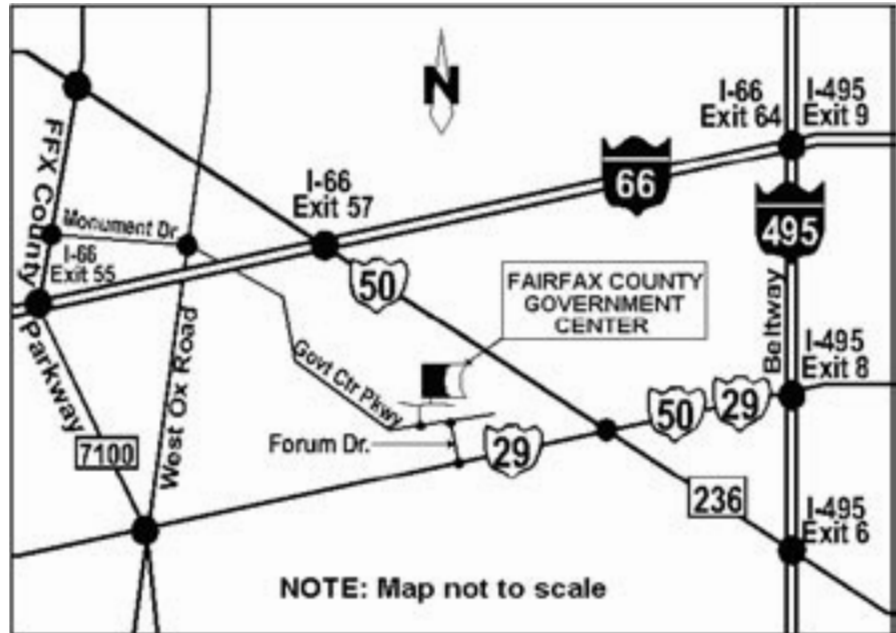
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