



READLINE

FEATURING ARTICLES BY COMPUTER CLUB MEMBERS

"GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR COMPUTER"

LESSONS FROM THE FUTURE™

Futurists Must Be First

By Frank Ogden, aka Dr. Tomorrow™

Since I am a futurist and resident of Canada, I have to be ahead of my fellow Canadians as the third millennium dawns. And, hopefully, be doing something unusual. Although in my 80th year, I haven't experienced a millennium change before, so I decided to let past millennia guide my 31 December 99 combined research and celebration. Where could I find all the essential ingredients required in a relatively small area?

I wanted to open my celebration at a minus-Y2K (second millennium BC) place of prominence. To be followed by my appearance at a birth of Christ era monument from around Year Zero (which actually never existed; that's why the real third millennium begins at midnight 31 December '00).

Third would have to be something special, celebrating both the start of the Christian and western period and yet incorporating modern festivities at midnight on this incorrect but publicly and media-demanded occasion.

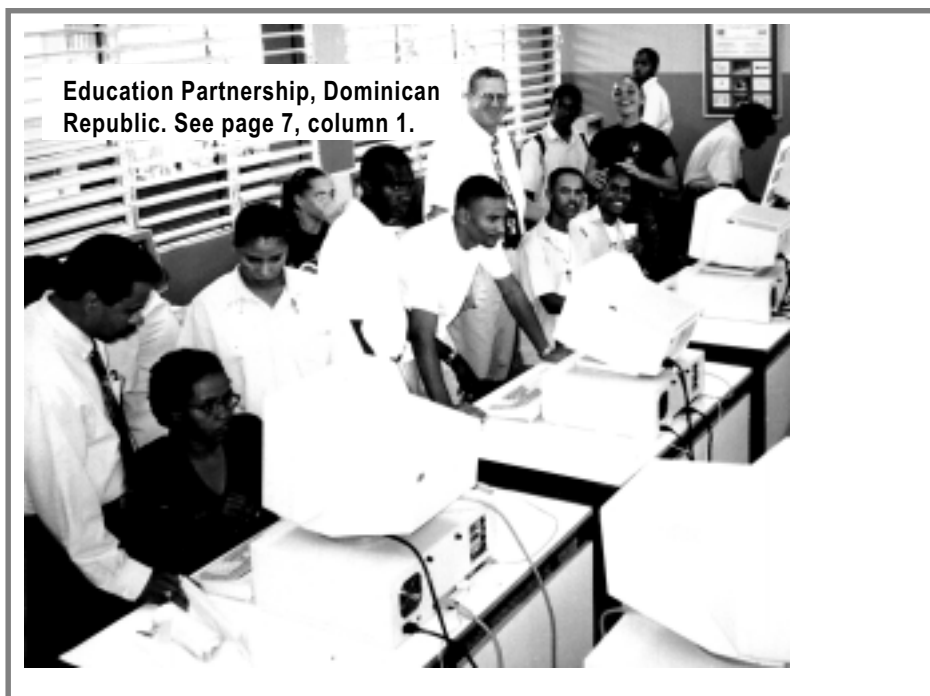
And I would close the night at the London Jet-setters' Ivy Garden, which happens to be in the same neighbourhood as my other celebrations.

All locations are in or around Pollensa, on the Spanish Mediterranean island of Mallorca, one of the world's great getaways. The island's 600,000 inhabitants receive 12 million visitors a year—six million Germans, three million British and another three million mostly from the Spanish Mainland.

I wanted to complete my millennium entry within 100 minutes.

Ever start a millennium opening/ending race in a pre-bronze-age burial cave? I did. At the pre-Talaiot necropolis at Cala San Vicenc. In these caves

The third stop was at the well-lit and decorated town plaza, where the town council picks up the tab for fireworks, champagne, hats and horns. It was supposed to tie-in with the tradition of eating one grape with each clang of the cathedral chimes



4000 years ago, our forebears buried their dead. Makes one think.

My second stop was the Roman bridge in Pollensa, a 10-minute drive away. For 2,000 years, people have been walking across this beautiful bridge, built at the time of Christ when the Romans were colonizing Mallorca. This bridge makes me contemplate our civilizations past, present and future—both back to the origins of Christmas and forward to our citizens of future millenniums

at midnight. But the fireworks were so spectacular, so low overhead, and so loud that no one heard the church bells. The sounds ricocheted in the square surrounded by high solid masonry walls and echoed for several seconds, leaving scant time for acoustic recovery. The nearness of the fireworks would astonish North Americans whose rigid laws lessen this kind of fun. The exploding rainbows and stars of light

Concluded on page 6

MARCH 18TH MEETING

Intuit's Quicktax featured at March meeting:

With spring come May flowers, however unfortunately it also brings the taxman...One application that has flourished in the personal computing field is both professional and consumer level tax preparation software. Today's tax prep packages are more than just calculators, they also provide online tax information through multimedia video, allow one to prepare multiple returns if required and even provide the ability to E-file your tax statement electronically.

Intuit's tax preparation program, Quicktax will be the focus of the March meeting lead by Karl Stanley, CGA who also just happens to be club President. Join Karl and PCCT members in a review of the current release of the Deluxe version of this program.

IN APRIL: Mr. Mike Gurski, from the Provincial Privacy Commission will be speaking to the PCCT about Privacy and security on the Internet—something that has been getting a lot of attention in the media recently!

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March 2000



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SIG Attendees please note: the entrance we should use for meetings at Beth Torah is at the back of the building off the Parking Lot.



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General Meeting March 18th, 2000

Admission for non-members – \$5.00

6:30pm: Meet and discuss—your ideas for PCCT with some of our Board members and volunteers.

7:00pm: General Meeting—starts with a Question & Answer session.

The Personal Computer Club of Toronto



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The Personal Computer Club Of Toronto (PCCT) is an independent, not-for-profit association for people who use PC microcomputers. Our philosophy: *Users helping Users.*

"read.me" is the newsletter of the PCCT, published 11 times a year, featuring articles by club members and members of other user groups from around the world. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of the PCCT.

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Please note: Fees, dates, and specifications are subject to change without notice.

The PCCT does not assume responsibility for damages arising from the publication or non-publication of any advertisement in this newsletter. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement by the club.

Special Interest Groups

The Basics SIG

Leader: Frank Latchford (416) 340-0999

Learning Windows 95/98 SIG. This SIG is intended for those who are new to Windows 95/98. We will discuss how Windows works and how to use it on a daily basis. The intention of this SIG is to teach—not to entertain. We will start at the beginning and go to the end. You should have learned to use some aspect of Windows by the end of the evening.

DayTime SIG

Leader: George Chambers (416) 751-7559

This is a discussion group that covers a wide range of topics relating to IBM and compatible computers. It is for novice, intermediate and advanced users.

Digital Imaging SIG

Leader: Ron Caine ron_caine@msn.com

Interested in scanners, photography, digital cameras and the software to run all that? Then this SIG is for you. We will go over all facets of manipulating pixels to give you the results you want.

Investment SIG

Leader: Ken Morgan (416) 491-1932

Analytical techniques, use of spreadsheets, graphical display of investment analysis all play an important part in these meetings. Also, considerable use is made of video training tapes on investment subjects.

Internet SIG

Leader: David Paikin (416) 225-1057

This SIG concentrates on how to access and utilize the various resources of the Internet. If you are having difficulties using the Internet or simply wish to learn more, then this SIG is for you. The first 15 minutes of the SIG are used to answer general communications issues.

Linux SIG

Leader: Brendan Birmingham (905) 883-5127

Linux for Beginners, How to Install, Configure, Use and set up a Graphical user interface. It is almost free, robust and reliable. Come on in and have look see.

New Users SIG

Leader: Henry Crane (905) 884-5443

This is a group arranged specifically for novice computer users. It holds informal friendly discussions on the essentials of personal computing. You will get clear concise explanations of computer terms on your personal level of understanding, help with what to learn and how to learn it quickly and cheaply, purchasing, upgrading and problem solving advice that can save you many hours and dollars.

Office SIG

Leader Andy Hagan ad.hagan@sympatico.ca

Learn how to use the Microsoft Office suite of programs: Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Access. A SIG geared to helping small business make effective use of this software.

Visual Basic SIG

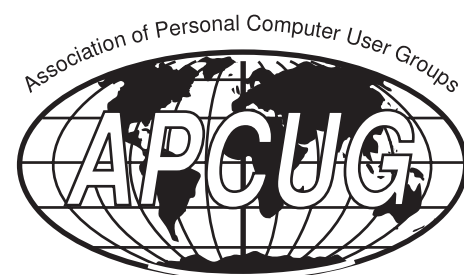
Trevor Pedley 416-751-2396 trevor@idirect.com

Learn Visual Basic, a popular programming language. This group follows a beginners' level text with a structured learning environment. Easily learn sophisticated ways to program applications in the Windows environment by attending this group.

Windows SIG

Leader Steve Rakus src@fht.net

Here is where you can learn how to get and use the maximum from MS Windows. You will enjoy an information-packed, entertaining evening while you learn how to use all the Windows tools, and make Windows run more efficiently on your machine. You can participate in the monthly training session and become an expert user in less than a year. You will learn tips and tricks that will save you hours. You will meet many power users, see the latest Windows products and perhaps win a valuable door prize.



Minutes of the January Meeting of the Board of Directors of The Personal Computer Club of Toronto

Date: Monday, January 3, 2000 – 7:00 PM Location: 23 Paulvale Crescent, Toronto, Ontario. Amended.

1. Call to Order.

Present: Karl Stanley Otto Lang Robin Wright Clive Apps
Arthur Robertson James McIntosh Doug Colquhoun Dorene E. Jacobs
Jack Grossman (7:15) Regrets: (no one)

Meeting commenced at 7:05 pm. KS took the chair.

2. Minutes of November 22, 1999

Moved by KS, seconded by AR that: the minutes of the meeting of November 22, 1999 be adopted. Carried.

3. Business arising from the Minutes of November 22, 1999:

OL dropped the issue relating to the web site.

4. Minutes of December 14, 1999

Moved by AR, seconded by DC that: the minutes of the meeting of December 14, 1999 be adopted. Carried.

5. Treasurer's Report

Joyce is on vacation, so she has not given us the December figures. AR: The December meeting renewals were poor. Renewals, in general, are not good enough. The increase from \$50 to \$65 may have caused members to decide not to renew. We decided to postpone purchases because of an anticipated crisis of cash flow, as follows. Moved by AR, seconded by JG that: the purchase of a new computer be postponed for 2 months, then reviewed. Carried. Moved by AR, seconded by CA that: the purchase of a new CD-ROM burner be postponed for 2 months, then reviewed. Carried. Moved by AR, seconded by OL that: the treasurer's report be adopted. Carried.

6. Board Policy on Spending by Members.

Moved by AR, seconded by OL that: an amount of \$50 may be spent or allocated by any one director, but, if more than \$50, then discuss with the Treasurer, and, if over \$100, it must be approved by the Board. Moved by OL, seconded by DJ that the motion be amended for each amount to mention 'within budget', and 'including taxes'. Carried. The amended motion was: "Moved that an amount of \$50 (within budget, including taxes) may be spent or allocated by any one director, but, if more than \$50 (within budget, including taxes), then discuss with the Treasurer, and, if over \$100 (within budget, including taxes), it must be approved by the Board."; it was called and defeated. RW, on a point of information, stated that the motion of the September meeting continues to be operational.

7. Appointment of John Mahler to vacant Board Position. Moved by JMc, seconded by DJ that: John Mahler be elected to the Board by acclamation. Carried.

8. Directors Responsibilities.

DJ volunteered to be SIG Co-ordinator. John Mahler (not present) volunteered to be Marketing Manager. CA volunteered to be the General Meeting Manager. OL has volunteered to assume responsibility for online services. OL stated that, in his opinion, his responsibilities included web page, BBS, information line. CA mentioned OneList, and pointed out that last year, the web site was not considered part of online services. JG has volunteered to take responsibility for members services.

9. Directors Reports

Lloyd Lindsay's report was distributed. Copy attached to the minutes.

10. Motions by Otto Lang

MOVED by Ottokar Lang/no seconder, THAT WHEREAS all members of the PCCT Board should be prepared and equipped to dispatch their responsibilities on a level playing field, and use proper rules of order, and WHEREAS the Board

in a previous decision has decided that its meetings be governed by Wainberg's Rules of Order BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT at every Board meeting an "instructional" item (5 minutes) be put at the beginning of the agenda about one or more "Rules" prepared from Wainberg's for the education of B of Ds members. A handout, which must not violate copyright, could be prepared for a binder.

11. Other Business: Membership Roster

KS stated that the Boards has strictly controlled distribution of membership names, telephone numbers, and addresses. Yet more than half our members subscribe to OneList, which has an ad following each message. Some members use HotMail, which inserts an ad following each message. How can people claim to be averse to ads, when they behave this way? Can the data be stored on the web site somewhere? Daniel ffolliott has reported that our web site is not secure enough to be trusted. Moved by KS, seconded by CA that: we consider making the membership roster available to members. OL suggested that this should be handled in committee. DJ suggested a subcommittee. AR was opposed, because nobody has ever asked for it, so why spend time creating something that nobody wants. RW urged that we proceed cautiously; he is uncomfortable about the thought of publishing personal data without first asking permission, subject to the approval of the individual member.

This is an open Motion, unnumbered, by KS/ seconded by CA and there was a discussion, but no vote was taken. Neither was there a procedural motion to postpone the main motion.

read.me

RW: Joan Latchford asked, as editor, about members who move away, but would be interested in subscribing to read.me, but not being a member. KS asked RW to delay until next meeting, and make a motion.

Shareware library

A director reported that TUCOWS has an excellent library of software, so the sale of our software is down, and suggested that we could sell TUCOWS CD-ROMs, preferably at a discount.

12. Next Meeting:

February 7, 2000, Arthur Robertson's house, 23 Paulvale Crescent, Toronto. Generally the Board will meet on the first Monday of the month. Exceptions: July and September are holiday weekends on the first Monday, so in July, we will meet on the 2nd Monday instead, and the last Monday of August in place of the 1st Monday of September.

9:20 pm meeting adjourned. ❖

As per the motion passed at the
Annual General Meeting
Expences Over \$100, Sept-Jan. 2000

Christmas Party	\$177.24
Coffee, Pop, Cookies	163.27
Computerfest	244.00
Equipment	213.54
Insurance	889.92
Mail Box	240.75
Meeting Space-General	1748.00
SIGs	1192.00
Membership Postage	106.04
Newsletter-Editor	1500.00
Handling, Mailing	1172.38
Printing	2069.38
Office Supplies	220.22
Storage	132.99
Telephone-BBS and Info	282.25

Peter McMartin, Teacher, Trainer and Friend



Peter died on Wednesday, February 16th, 2000. As an active member of the club he shared his wry sense of humour with many. The club continues to benefit from the relational databases that Peter generously developed as the keystone of the club administration.

Peter was a great teacher and trainer. He had the ability to lead a SIG to learn by asking salient questions and allowing us to think through the task and reach the correct conclusion. This gift Peter willingly shared, particularly at the Office SIG when he taught us about many of the details of this suite of programmes.

We will miss Peter's presence, but all members will continue to benefit from his efforts, skills and friendship.

Robin Wright

Advertising in read.me

By popular request the members only business card advertising will become a regular feature of each edition of Read.Me. The regular price for one time business card size advertisement is \$25.00.

Special members only price \$10.00. If you would like to pay in advance for the next 9 editions \$75.00. The next 9 editions will include 3 ComputerFest Shows and COMDEX in July.

Payment must be made to the Treasurer, cash or cheque for PCCT. You may also pay month by month. Please let me know which payment option you have chosen.

Content should be forwarded directly to the Editor. Deadline for each edition is the general meeting prior to publication.

Confirm that it is your intention to advertise in each edition and your preferred payment option.

I'll Call It Minnie...

By Craig Faichney (PCCT)

Santa was nice to me. No lumps of coal, but I did get a lump of plastic, gray with a little taillight. Hmm, not a piece of art nor a paperweight. The Microsoft logo gave it away... it's an IntelliMouse Explorer. Again, MS names something Explorer. They must not own a thesaurus. Anyway, this is one cool mouse. Its main claim to fame is it is ball less. No mechanisms to get gummed up with leftover pastrami sandwiches or Persian cat hairs.

The Explorer uses IntelliEye® Optical Sensors to do the work of the ball and roller mechanisms in traditional mice. What does this mean? Basically, it's a small camera, built into the base of the mouse, which, through the software drivers, tells the mouse where it is. There are red LEDs to give the camera the proper

amount of light. The "tail light" is an clear plastic bubble that allows some of the LEDs to shine out the back. Actually, kind of handy. No



light and you know something isn't right.

With all this high tech, you now have the freedom from a mouse pad. Any surface that isn't transparent or reflective will work. No more skidding on hard plastic or falling off

the pad as you try to maneuver your little tethered soap bar.

Does it work? You betcha! The tech isn't cheap, so Microsoft made this mouse their top-of-the-line model, with all the bells and whistles. This means it has the scrolling wheel and extra buttons on the side where your thumb goes and is ergonomic in the extreme. My former mouse was a Logitech FirstMouse, 3 buttons and a simple arch. This thing is twice the size, with funky bends and arches and most definitely for right-handed people only. That said, it's a dream. Those funky bends and arches really do work, allowing your hand to fall into place readily. If you're still using that cheap thing that you brought home from the store with your computer, you really owe it to yourself to get this mouse. ❖

Computer Errors Haiku:

In Japan, some companies have replaced the impersonal and unhelpful Microsoft error messages with their own Japanese haiku poetry.

Windows NT crashed.
I am the Blue Screen of Death.
No one hears your screams.

A file that big?
It might be very useful.
But now it is gone.

The Web site you seek
Can not be located but
Countless more exist.

Chaos reigns within.
Reflect, repent, and reboot.
Order shall return.

ABORTED effort:
Close all that you have worked on.
You ask way too much.

Yesterday it worked.
Today it is not working.
Windows is like that.

First snow, then silence.
This thousand dollar screen dies
So beautifully.

With searching comes loss
And the presence of absence:
"My Novel" not found.

The Tao that is seen
Is not the true Tao,
until You bring fresh toner.

Stay the patient course
Of little worth is your ire
The network is down

A crash reduces
Your expensive computer
To a simple stone.

Three things are certain:
Death, taxes, and lost data.
Guess which has occurred.

You step in the stream,
But the water has moved on.
This page is not here.

Out of memory.
We wish to hold the whole sky,
But we never will.

Having been erased,
The document you're seeking
Must now be retyped.

Serious error.
All shortcuts have disappeared.
Screen. Mind. Both are blank.

Submitted by Kash

I'd Like to Hurt My Computer...

By Ken Fermoyale

(The following was forwarded to me some weeks ago, and I just had to share it with you. It expresses frustrations we all share at times. I tried without success to backtrack and find the author. So I will just credit it to that famous writer, "Anon." If you are, or know of, the actual author, please write me at kfermoyle@earthlink.net so I can give credit where credit is due! Ken Fermoyale)

I want to hurt my computer. I want to buy a software program that, when run, causes my computer to suffer grievously, though not permanently. When my screen freezes or turns blue, I want a special button I can push to make the CPU start squealing like a motherboard.

I want a device that stores an electrical charge in my telephone. For every minute I spend on hold waiting for technical support to answer, the charge would increase in intensity. When the guy from tech support finally answers, the electrical bolt of energy would be discharged into him. This should not affect my ability to hear what's going on at the other end of the line, of course. And a special function would allow the volts to double every time a tape-recorded message urges me to continue holding. "Your call is important to us," the featureless voice always claims.

I want my phone to be outfitted with a translation program which will reconstitute this irritating reminder into the truth: "Actually, we already have your money, so we couldn't care less about you. Our technical support department consists of two college kids, both of whom are busy playing Doom. Eventually, one of them will

come on the line, but it will be the one who doesn't speak English."

I want my modem to sense when my PC has committed an "illegal function" and issue a warrant to arrest Bill Gates. When my system crashes and I lose a file that has taken me more than an hour to create, I want someone from the computer company to come out and retype it for me.

I don't understand why new, "up-graded" software creates files that cannot be read by old, reliable software with the same name. Is there no one in the computer industry who has noticed that word processor files all look alike once they are open? Why can't 6.0 recognize a 7.0 file? It's all just words, isn't it? There should be a rule that when software engineers buy a new car, their old cars should cease to function. If they don't understand why this is happening, they should call me and I will explain it to them.

How come when my computer catches a virus, I'm the one who misses work? I want to know why my printer always jams on the last piece of paper or the last sheet of checks. When this happens, it makes me want to put sandpaper into the manual feed and print the Emancipation Proclamation.

I recently bought a program that is supposed to tell me if my computer files are Y2K-compliant. The program won't work because—get this—my CD-ROM player is too old (I bought it 34 months ago). The manufacturer doesn't sell an "updated driver." Thus, to find out if my computer is Y2K-compliant, I need to buy another computer.

I want to know what good is a Web search engine that returns 324,909,188 "matches" to my keyword. That's like

saying, "Good news, we've located the product you're looking for. It's on Earth."

I want to know why, when I had a tiny hard drive, my operating system was virtually crash-proof and took up so little space. My new operating system is five times the size of my original hard drive. With every "upgrade," it seems to grow 75 percent. That's as if every time your mother-in-law came to visit she weighed another 500 pounds. Now I've found out that my PC no longer "recognizes" my floppy drive. How could they not recognize each other? They live together!

Please understand: I don't hate my computer. I just want to hurt it every once in a while. ❖

A Tip From Kash

Have you ever wanted to slightly adjust the size of some text in Word? For instance, suppose you create a heading and decide it needs to be just a tiny bit larger. If you want, you can make the change by highlighting the text and selecting the desired point size from the Font Size dropdown list on the Formatting toolbar.

However, a quicker way is to simply highlight the text and press:- Ctrl+] until text is the desired size. Each time you press this key combination, Word will enlarge the text by one point.

To make the text smaller, highlight it and press (you guessed it):- Ctrl+ [keys until the text is the size you want.

I tried it while writing this tip in Netscape Mail and it works here too. Could it be that it works in most programs working under Windows 95/98. Try it. ❖

QuickTax

By Karl Stanley (PCCT)

QuickTax is the beneficiary of the shake out in the Personal Home Tax Preparation market. A couple of years ago there was CanTax, Home Tax, QuickTax; and a couple of other lesser knowns. Then TaxPrep, owner of Home Tax, purchased CanTax. Then CCH purchased TaxPrep. Now CCH has sold the customer list of Home Tax and CanTax to Intuit the developer of QuickTax. CCH has retained the software and the right to re-enter the field.

We received the "Deluxe" edition of QuickTax for evaluation; and therefore are comments are restricted to that version. The Deluxe edition requires a 486 or better, Windows 3.1 or later. NT is not supported. 8 MB of memory with 16 MB recommended. 10 MB free space on your hard drive is required. A 6x CD-ROM drive but faster is better. You do not require a printer if you are net filing your return.

We began by reading the manual that was supplied by the developer. This is considered a novel step; but is the one I usually use. <(:<)} I then proceeded to use the program recommended by Joan in the February issue of read.me called "End-It-All". I have found that closing all programs in the task bar except systray and explorer is an absolutely required step for installing Income Tax Software.

We inserted the disk into the CD-Rom drive, auto-install immediately brought up the program, and I had nothing else to do; but say "yes" to printing the readme.txt. After installing, we logged onto the internet and tried the live update function. This went as smooth as the proverbial baby's bum.

We were then ready to begin our first tax return. If you prepared your return last year using QuickTax 98, you can bring forward your information. Also, you can import from CanTax 98 or Home Tax 98, as well as Quicken or QuickBooks.

When you open the program, a calendar comes up. This calendar has all the tax dates from December 1, 1999 through to April 30, 2000. The closing date for Self Employed is June 30, 2000; but this is ignored by Intuit. The final date for crystallizing stock market losses is noted in December correctly.

We began using the EasyStep Interview. For maximum effect, you require a sound card and speakers for the Easy Step Interview. We began with a couple known as Billy Bob Gates and Steve Bullroar. The program accepted the couple with two males and an incorrect SIN number; which we found surprising. Most professional programs as well as CanTax 98 would not accept and allow you to proceed without a valid SIN number. We gave the couple three children. We followed the interview and recorded T4 income, Commission Income, Self Employment Income and expense. Farm Income, Fishing Income (yes—the boat's name was Jenny) We gave Billy Bob a former wife to whom he is paying support. Steve attended York U and had tuition credits. We put in just about everything we could think one taxpayer could reasonably endure in one tax year.

Using the summary feature we were able to track what was happening on a dynamic basis as various items were entered. Thus we knew what are income, taxable income, taxes payable, and refund due for each taxpayer.

When you go to print, you must have the CD Rom in the drive. This reminded us of our first version (1A) of 123 that required us to have our disk in the drive. The program then runs a diagnostic on each schedule pointing out various options to use such as carrying forward to next year donations etc. that can not be deducted in the current year because of limitations. If you wish to qualify for Net filing, you must complete a form with additional information. Before you can Net File, you must have received your WAC from CCRA (Formerly Rev Can). In filing your 1998 return, you must have used a qualifying Tax program and met other requirements and limitations. About 3.8 million taxpayers were WAC'd by CCRA.

The deluxe version of the software is available from the Business Depot at \$14.99 plus tax after giving the in store discount coupons effect. For a cost of \$17.24, tax included this software gets a six cow rating!!

Overall I found the program to be easy to use. I suggest you have a copy of the CCRA Tax Guide handy. The guide is available free from the Canada Post. A copy of the T1 form from Canada Post is also helpful. If 3.8 million taxpayers purchase this program at \$14.99; that would be \$56,962,000. The taxes would be \$ 3,984,400.00 in GST and \$ 4,556,960.00 in OST. ❖

A Timely Warning

By Martin Moss, PCCT

AOL plans to reorganize the calendar and clock as we know it.

The year is to contain 730 days a year, except on leap years when it

will be 731 days.

There will be 24 months and 104 weeks, each week containing 14 days and each day containing 48 hours.

This is to accomodate the next wave of offers which will be 1080 free hours of Internet access before they charge you \$60 a month for 30 hours "unlimited" use + \$1.80 US for any extra hours.

This will be charged to your VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS or OHIP card, which you gave the numbers for when you initially signed up for your "FREE" 540 hours.

THE PCCT HARDWARE/SOFTWARE BARGOON AUCTION TABLE



Do you ever ask yourself the question.... "what can I do with my used equipment now that I have upgraded?"

Well, here at PCCT we have an answer to that, the PCCT Bargoona Auction Table.

"Can I bring in my old XT as well as my Pentium III 800mhz?" The answer is always YES! "What is it worth?" I have a good handle on what it is worth and offer my advice.

It makes money for the club as a whole as well as the individual member selling his/her own "old" equipment or software. Please see me, Martin Moss, for details. smarty@3web.net

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Solving PC Problems

By Dick Mayback

All of us have experienced problems with our PCs, and most of these can be solved quickly. But we seldom talk about the easy fixes, so you tend to hear only the horror stories, and you may have the impression that all PC problems are nasty. Before you pack your equipment off to the shop, there are some quick and simple things you can do to find what is wrong. Even if you don't solve the problem, it will help you to describe the symptoms accurately, which will save the shop time and you money.

First, be sure it's really broken. Windows sometimes becomes confused, and a reboot is all that's needed to correct this. It's best to shut down and turn off the power for a few seconds before you try a restart. If the PC has stopped communicating with a peripheral, turning the power off will get everybody's attention.

Before you do anything else, stop and think. If you made a change recently, most likely it caused the problem. For example, if you install a new printer driver and your CD-ROM stops working, you should suspect the printer driver, not the CD-ROM. This also implies that you shouldn't make any change you can't undo. Before you install that new printer driver, save the install file on a diskette and note on the label what it is and when you installed it. Put this in a safe place, because months or years later when you install a new driver that doesn't work, you'll need the old install file to recover.

Your most important tools when working on your computer are paper and pen and a recent backup. (A little paranoia is a good thing when working on your PC. Use a pen rather than a pencil, write-protect your backup, and don't throw away anything.) Before you make any change, write down the state of your PC and the change you propose. Immediately afterwards, record what resulted. Without good records you will soon have no idea where you are, much less how to get back to where you started.

In this year's September, November, and December Tech Columns, I talked about how to find out how your PC is configured. If you've made notes while you did this, you have a much better chance to quickly find out what has changed. Your notes should include how the exterior cables are connected, especially if you've added something not covered in the PC owner's manual. You should also have recorded how your BIOS is configured (basically the contents of the CMOS set-up screens) and what software is installed and how it's configured. Finally you should have a recent backup of everything on your hard disk. This is especially important if you take your PC to a shop, since they will be more concerned with getting it working than with saving your data.

Rerun the tools you used when you explored your PC, probably the Windows Device Manager and the Microsoft Diagnostic (MSD). Look for anything that has changed, and pay special attention to any exclamation points with yellow backgrounds that appear in the Device Manager screens. Run Windows' Scan-disk to see if your hard disk has errors. If you have been using Norton Utilities, try that. Don't buy it after a problem shows up; you can't learn much by trying a new program on a broken PC. (I have mixed feelings about Norton; it seems to cause as many problems as it solves.) You should also download RegClean from Micro-soft's Web site. This will clean up the errors in your registry that result from adding or deleting programs, although it won't repair a registry that has become corrupted. Again, you should begin using this before you have problems. I run it every time I install or uninstall software, and it usually reports that it has corrected something. Often by now you have a very good idea of what is wrong, and you can skip some or all of the following procedures.

You've now taken the easy steps, and you have to begin thinking and taking careful notes. Shut down all your applications. You should also remove all the shortcuts from the Windows start-up folder. The fastest way to locate this is right-click on Start, double-click on Programs, and double-click on Startup. Create a folder in Startup and move all the shortcuts into it. Now when you boot, you will see the shortcuts on your desktop, but the programs won't be running. If the PC boots normally, you can double-click on each of these shortcuts to see if one causes the problem. Unfortunately, Windows has other ways to start programs besides putting shortcuts in Startup. Ziff-Davis, who publishes PC Magazine and many others, offers a free program to control what starts at boot-up. With this you can prevent any application from running. Go to <http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/specials/free.html> and search for "startcop". Again, you should install this and play with it before you experience a problem.

Most of my problems have been software ones, but if I don't have a clue about what is wrong I prefer to look at the hardware first, because hardware changes are usually easy to undo while many software changes are irreversible. To do this you need either some hardware experience, or a good hardware tutorial and some courage. *Upgrading and Fixing PCs for Dummies* is not a bad choice to start with. There are only a few components in your PC. (I define a component as anything that has to be replaced because it can't be repaired; this includes motherboards.) Open the system unit and remove all but the essential hardware. That is, all but the mother-board, key-board, hard disk, and video controller. Of course, you take good notes so you can put everything back exactly the way it was. If the system now works normally, add one component at a time until

the PC fails. If the problem persists, it's either one of the components still installed or software.

Tackling software problems is similar, except instead of removing everything at once and installing programs one at a time, I prefer to uninstall them one at a time. Uninstalling software sometimes corrupts Windows, and reinstalling it can often be time consuming. Also, unless you've been extraordinarily careful to keep your data separated from your programs, you will probably lose some data in the process. Taking good notes here is even more important here than when working with hardware. Also, be sure you have your data backed up. If you reinstall Quicken but lose all your check data, you're in for a lot of tedious work.

If you uninstalled all your applications and checked your hardware and the problem persists, Windows is the likely culprit and you will have to reinstall it. There are three approaches you can try, and each one is more drastic than the previous.

- Reinstall Windows without removing it from the disk. This takes little time, but it's never worked for me.

- Delete the Windows directory and everything it contains and install Windows. It seems as though this should work, but I've had no luck here either.

- Format C: and install Windows and all your applications. Then restore your data from a recent backup. This always works, but it's nasty. If you have a lot of experience, and have a recent backup, expect to spend two full days before you have your system configured. With less experience it will take longer; without a backup you will lose all your data.

A fourth approach that seems promising is to format C: and restore both the software and your data from a recent backup. The problem here is that software problems develop slowly, and you will most likely restore the problem along with the programs. Also your backup software won't run until after you have Windows running, and the process of restoring programs is much more intricate than restoring data.

This hasn't been a set of step-by-step instructions on how to get your system running. Instead, I've tried to give you some ideas on useful approaches. ❖

Dick Maybach is a member of the Brookdale Computer User's Group, Lincroft, NJ.

Concluded from page 1

overhead dramatically heralded the arrival of the new millennium here. Nine hours before it would hit Canada's west coast.

My last stop was the Ivy Garden, run by 40-year old British chef Billy Silvester and Keely, his restaurateur wife and fashion model. This is THE London jet setters *must dine* spot when they come by the thousands every summer with a sprinkling throughout the rest of the year. December 31st is St. Sylvester Day on the Spanish calendar. The Ivy Garden, loaded with TV celebrities and local castle owners like Cedric Moulton, whose outlandish El Cid 30-years-in-the-building-castle even includes Native North American teepees and totem poles that help cover a Pollensa mountain. Julia, Cedric's constant companion, says she thinks that the only book he ever read all the way through is mine, *The Last Book You'll Ever Read*. She says it's always at his bedside. Love that guy!

The Ivy Garden provided a great opening to the 21st century (which happens to be the name of my company, 21st Century Media Communications Inc., set up 21 years ago).

As I told the gathered crowd I wouldn't be able to accept Billy's invitation to return same time next year. But I will be back. I'm already booked to speak and perhaps webcast TV daily from aboard the Crystal Harmony as she sets sail from Miami on 22 Dec 2000.

This millennium cruise will call at several Caribbean ports and then sail south to north through the Panama Canal, while actually going east to west from the Atlantic to the Pacific—and from the second to the real third millennium. The Crystal Harmony, top-of-the-line in luxury cruising, will visit ports along the Mexican Pacific Riviera before docking in the New Year, New Century and New Millennium on 05 January 2001 in Los Angeles.

Published with permission from Frank Ogden.

Your Deadline for read.me submissions

In an attempt to get read.me out in time to give advance information on upcoming club events you are reminded that the deadline for submissions is the General Meeting—all submissions must be in by March 18th for the April issue.

While I believe we have put together an interesting issue this month, let's see more PCCT members original articles and reviews in future.

We have lots of good writers and I think that we are probably all equally busy so aim to send us something at least every two or three months. *Editor*

See Front page image

The following letter was received by Robin Wright in October and sifted to the bottom of my desk: I have spoken with Mr. Hopkins and he would be very happy if you would get in touch with him directly. Editor.

Request For Assistance— Donations of Used 14.4 & 28.8 External Modems

Further to our recent telephone conversation, the following letter and attachments are included for your information and consideration.

The project was successful in setting up 24 used computers to a poor public school in the Dominican Republic, solely on donations and my own resources, without anyone receiving tax receipts benefits. This project will provide the opportunity for over 2000 impoverished children to have the opportunity for access to modern computer technology, greatly improving their opportunities for future employment and/or post-secondary education.

I have been successful in getting an offer of assistance from a research organization (<http://funredes.org>) that is researching the "social impact of the Internet" in the Caribbean and Latin America. To participate in this project, which will provide free Internet services, we are looking to acquire 24 used 14.4 or 28.8 external modems through donations.

As discussed on the telephone, I would appreciate being able to solicit donations of used modems from your membership.

Yours sincerely,
Wally Hopkins

703-9 Four Winds Drive
Downsview, ON M3J 2S8
telephone #416-736-8038
e-mail: hopkinsw@hotmail.com

Linux SIG Update

At the February meeting of the fledgling LINUX SIG, decisions were made to ensure its continuing success (many thanks to Dorene Jacobs for advice on SIG "rules"). First, the new SIG leader is Brendan Birmingham (many thanks to "Kash" Kashyap for getting the SIG started last Fall). The new meeting time is 7.30 pm on the last Wednesday of the month (this will be the 5th Wednesday for March, May, and November this year). A first concern is equipment. Two SIG members have kindly offered to loan various computer parts to assemble a "LINUX box" for the March meeting. The focus of the SIG is newbie LINUX users (see the SIG description on the 2nd page of Read.me). If you are interested, join us in sorting out the LINUX facts from the hype and myth every last Wednesday.

Posted by Brendan Birmingham
(you also can contact me at bromser@hotmail.com)

I just subscribed to the Virus Tips part of Tipworld. Here are the first two I read. Perhaps you should do this too. (rhm) Bob Mitchell.

Can Someone Steal Your Password with a Trojan?

A reader wrote: "I came home and tried logging onto the computer. I couldn't. After trying several times and continuously receiving the message 'Incorrect password,' I decided to call my ISP. They told me I had been kicked off the system as that day I had sent 500 pieces of pornographic e-mail in a 15-minute period to people all over. I tried telling them I didn't do it but they wouldn't even listen to me. They told me my account had been terminated and I could re-apply in 6 months (something I will never do). No one lives with me or has access to my account, ID, or password, yet mail was sent using it. I think something should be done to computer hackers instead of the innocent person having to pay."

Yes, there is a way to stop hackers. Don't run or open file attachments sent to you. From what you have written, it appears that at some point you did so, and that file attachment was a password-stealing Trojan, which sent your password out. Using your password and your ISP's software, the hacker was able to log in as you and do whatever he or she wished with your account. ❖

When A Hoax Can Become The Real Thing

A reader wrote: "In a previous tip, you wrote about Elfbowl and Frogpult, describing the fact that these programs were victimized by erroneous virus reports. Late last month I was watching a computer segment on the television news that described how the host received a copy of Elfbowl from a friend that the friend had added a virus to. That got me to thinking, isn't there a danger that once a virus is reported as a hoax, a virus could be added? The perfect opportunity for someone to do damage would be once everyone had let their guard down."

It appears that you are correct—someone can play copycat, even with what started out as a hoax. As a matter of fact, I recently heard from an IS manager in a very large corporation that a Trojan related to the hoax was actually circulated in Australia, late in December. Here's what he wrote: "The second-wave December version of frogapult did play the game if started through My Computer in Windows, so I can only assume it was a wrapper around the original. It also installed itself into the start-up menu (when started through the start-up menu, it didn't play the game!). On December 24, the boot sector was erased, plus, as we found out, it was using TCP/IP for some unknown purpose."
—Bob Mitchell Toronto ON Canada
RCAF (Ret'd) Per Ardua ad Astra.

Release from: Sheldon Rose, BPR, APR, Senior Consultant The Communications Group Inc. srose@tcgpr.com

TAXWIZ now Netfile Certified

Tax Filers can now electronically send returns from home using TAXWIZ

RICHMOND HILL, ON, February 3, 2000 ... Eligible tax return filers using TAXWIZ, the income tax software for Canadians, can now file their returns directly over the Internet from home to CCRA (Revenue Canada).

"We are now Netfile certified, allowing Taxwiz users to download Netfile capabilities from our web site at <http://www.taxwiz.ca>, and have the option of forwarding their returns themselves to CCRA without involving a tax preparer—saving time and money," says TAXWIZ president Syd Hazan.

TAXWIZ is sold by major retailers across Canada (except Québec) including: Business Depot, Future Shop, Chapters, Compucentre, Multimicro, MicroAge and many other software retailers. The retail package comes bundled with a free Small Office/Home Office (SOHO) software bonus (valued at over \$500.) and a copy of The Turner Report, the personal finance information newsletter by Garth Turner. TAXWIZ can also be purchased and downloaded from the TAXWIZ website. "After your return is automatically checked by TAXWIZ, one click of the mouse will securely send your tax details to CCRA in Ottawa," adds Hazan. "If you're expecting a refund, Netfiling can speed delivery of your cheque if it's already in their system."

The retail version of TAXWIZ allows users to prepare an unlimited number of returns—a unique feature in the marketplace. Other features include real forms on screen, CCRA approved forms, RRSP calculator, CCRA tax guide and other easy-to-use options including "My Taxes Profile Wizard". ❖

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- 10 monthly Special Interest Groups (SIG) meetings;
- Access to a software library with the best of shareware and freeware programs; communications software;
- Monthly issues of the club newsletter you're holding right now!

FREE ADMISSION . . . the night is on us !!!

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WHERE: North York Memorial Centre
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TIME: 7 p.m.

WHEN: Third Tuesday of the month.
 see the calendar below.

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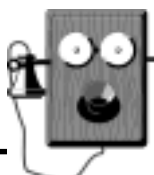
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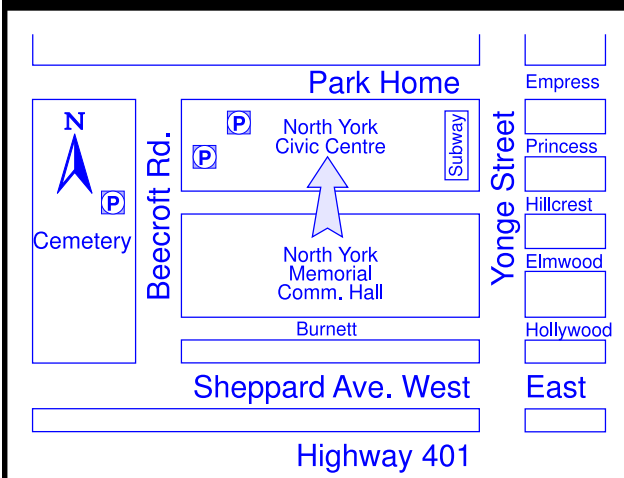
Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
	1 Investment SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	2 The Basics SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	Please note onetime changes of dates/or location for the Office and New User SIGs. Call Help Line to confirm.		
7 Windows SIG BTS 7:30 p.m.	8 Digital Imaging SIG BTS 7:30 p.m.	9 Visual Basic SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	4 Windows SIG BTS 7:30 p.m.	5 Investment SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	6 The Basics SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.
14 The Daytime SIG St. A, 1:00 p.m. Linux SIG, BTS, 7:00	15	16 Office SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	11 The Daytime SIG St. A, 1:00 p.m. Office SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	12 Digital Imaging SIG BTS 7:30 p.m.	13 Visual Basic SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.
21 General Meeting NYC 7:00 p.m.	22 New User Group BTS 7:30 p.m.	23 Internet SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.	18 General Meeting NYC 7:00 p.m.	19 New User Group 700 Lawrence Ave W 2nd Floor 7:30 p.m. N/E corner	20
28 Daytime SIG St. A 1:00 p.m.	29 Linux SIG, BTS, 7:30		25 Daytime SIG St. A 1:00 p.m.	26 Linux SIG, BTS, 7:30	27 Internet SIG BTS 7:00 p.m.



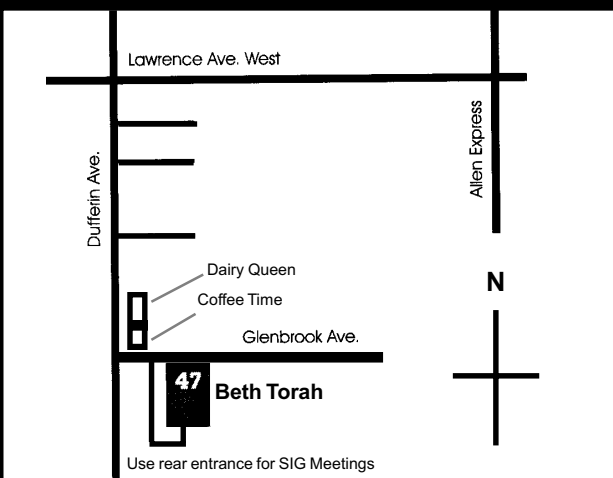
INFO LINE!

Find out what is going on at the PCCT each week by calling the club hotline at: (416) 633-6971 for the latest news on meetings.

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