What's New
by William Avery

Our March SLOBYTES Meeting [in the dark!] featured Alan Raul's Quickly Answered Questions, and a visit by Ben Brady from Brady & Associates, LLC, author of ClearICE, ClearZone and ClearRoute Firewall Log Analyzers. [http://www.y2kbrady.com/ firewallreporting/]. Even without any PG&E power, we dished some light on firewalls and their reporting logs, which Ben's programs analyze.

Alan and Ray started our early meeting discussion with a review of Debbi Schmidt's Defrag problem, which turned out to be a virus infection [W95.MTX] that lasted 4 months ! …. Cliff Buttschardt also noted that Dara Hadley [SLONET Customer Service] actually detected an infected message, and notified him of that problem. Nancy Vrooman asked about a new installation of Netscape, which was not notifying her about cookies, and we suggested reviewing her settings to find the check-mark which controls that option, under Edit/Preferences. The latest version of Netscape, version 6.1 is now out, and Alan noted that 80% of the browsers in use are currently Internet Explorer.

A member asked about web-bugs, or snoop-ware and Ray Miklas recommended Steve Gibson's web site [http://www.grc.com] for a small program Opt-Out which warns users of such programs and removes them.

Kiplinger Taxcut 2000 Deluxe
A Software Review
by Herb Goldstein
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

It's that most unhappy time of the year. For the majority of us, tax time is just that. To make things a little less unhappy and a lot more productive, Block Financial (a subsidiary of the popular tax experts, H&R Block in conjunction with the venerated and renown financial advisor Kiplinger) offers a dynamite tax preparation program, Kiplinger TaxCut Deluxe. In fact, if it were not for the end result of parting with your hard-earned bucks to Uncle Sam, TaxCut actually makes dreaded tax preparation fun. TaxCut will also prepare your state return

CLUB CALENDAR

April 1st

1 pm

Early SIG's.
Jim Kiraly, General Windows SIG (in Kitchen)
Alan Raul, General Q&A (main hall)

2:30 pm

Dave Kastner will be speaking on "Digital Cameras - Revisited". He gave an excellent presentation about a year ago on digital cameras.

in this issue…

what's new

Alan noted that there are freeware, shareware, trialware, and spyware, which includes Netscape, Real Player, and Gozilla. They all report patterns of use to their host sites, without notifying the users. For Netscape users, Alan notes that there is a web site, [http://www.netfaq.com] to explain the differences in versions of that browser.

Another comment, by Alan, was on Windows XP, previously code named Whistler [the latest combination of Win2000 and NT]. He indicated that it will be out in Beta by next month and will be copy-protected by a limited-use method so copies will not work beyond a fixed limit without registration.

A question was posed from the audience, about making a listing of directories , from Windows Explorer and no way was suggested.

Debbi Schmidt was curious about why the external modem lights are active when the dialup connection is not established. Cliff and Bill suggested that this is related to the serial link between the modem and the local computer.

Guy reported that his cable modem connection was being interrupted by a setting on his firewall, Zone Alarm due to periodic changes in his IP address by his service provider which the firewall could not accept. He reduced his security level setting to medium to fix the problem. Alan suggested

considering a Linksys hardware router, whose pricing has been coming down recently. Ray also noted that a static IP address is not always provided with every form of high speed connection. Some machines are stealth and some are not, which means they may not have static addresses assigned unless the provider wants to do that. The connection of the future will not be modem based, according to Alan, but rather the new wireless style WAP connection will be common, as portable computing improvements continue.

The opening of the SLONET Community Resource SMART Center, which provides free Internet classes on Tuesday nights, was noted. SLONET is a local non-profit Internet Service Provider [www.slonet.org], serving the Central Coast from Paso Robles to Santa Maria.

The last question concerned the lowest cost hard drive, currently available. Alan reported his purchase of two Western Digital 40 GB, ATA 100, 7200 RPM drives for $149.95. The newest Staples opened in San Luis Obispo, with a Maxtor 20 GB, 5400 RPM special, after rebate, $59.95. Ray also mentioned a good web site for hardware, www.googlegear.com. Fry's offered a complete computer system after rebates and ISP contracts for $50! A trivia question posed by Alan, in closing, asked about which Operating System Gateway Computers chose for their Corporate computers ? Answer: Windows 95 !! So don't feel bad, if you still see the same old clouds, when you turn on your machine.

Neal had a 386 desktop system with math co-processor + 8 MB RAM, available for donation [free!] to anyone who could take all the pieces, without a hard drive. It went to the lowest bidder. The other item available is a 150 MMX Laptop, offered by Alan Raul, at the end of its warranty period, in a few months. He will be upgrading to a better machine, so see him for details.

A Tea Break provided by Nancy, our Intermission Hostess, was held in the naturally lit Chat Room, with goodies such as sweet rolls, cookies, and small talk, until our brave guest, Ben Brady, called us back into the darkness of our Main Hall, for exploration of the March main topic, Personal Firewalls, and his product report on Firewall Data Log Analyzers.

Ben's experience in computing began in 1971, when he was only 14. Through a private school scholarship, he learned about programming on a DEC PDP-8. Those were the days of Teletype printers and paper tape punch readers, using FOCAL8 and an early version of BASIC. Ben noted the advent of the MITS Altair Kit Computer from Percom Computer, in 1975, in Albuquerque, N.M., where he was living at the time. Popular Electronics magazine announced the kit in a front page article, and the Apple and the TRS-80 computers appeared rapidly, in a rush of events that changed the world.

Ben worked days, selling at Radio Shack, and late nights programming on those same day-customer's comput-

## * * * people helping people * * *

NAME	PROGRAM(S)	PHONE NO.	HOURS TO CALL
Bill Roch	Ami Pro	466-8440	anytime
Dan Logan	Internet, MS Publisher	927-0515	M-Sat 8-6, Sun 12-6
Jim Kiraly	Win 98, Office 97, Quicken, Map Programs	556-0301(pismo)	anytime
Bob Ward	Win 98, DOS, Internet, Eudora	528-0121	evenings
Ray Miklas	Any PC hardware or software questions	541-5633	anytime

We could use more volunteers here. If interested, contact Bob Ward!

The Surf board
by Dorothy Kirk
ibm/pcug, redding, ca.
kirk@snowcrest.net
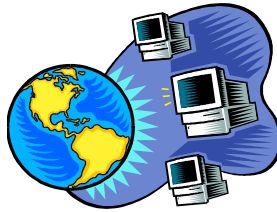
The sites this month are drawing and painting programs for kids from 2 years old and up.

Just because these are programs aimed at kids doesn't mean that they're not as good as a "grown up" program. In fact, the opposite is true — Child's Play has more tools and special effects than most programs aimed at adults! The secret to these programs is that they make even the hard stuff fun and easy. Several of the programs also teach you how to draw and paint. Strictly speaking, a paint program is a bit-mapped (pixels) program and a drawing program is a vector (lines) program for easy scaling. Most of the sites below use the terms interchangeably. The programs for the very little ones are fun and easy to use. Some of the included programs are freeware, but most are shareware, which means you can try them for awhile, but then you need to pay for it.

CHILD'S PLAY http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/stories/info/ 0,,000UXU,.html A shareware program for children that is truly a great program. It has many options including support for 24 bit color and sound. You can use any texture for polygon fills, take advantage of transparent pasting from any other program, and enjoy new background images.   Actually , it You can use any texture for polygon fills, take advantage of transparent pasting from any other program, and enjoy new background images.

DISCOVER PAINTING FOR KIDS http://www.crescentvision.com/dpaint.html Not just for kids! Young children will find the coloring pages easy to use and the "Toy" tools loads of fun, while older children (and adults) will marvel over the cool special effects that can be created with the 3D "Bump" and "Magic" tools.

DRAWING FOR CHILDREN http://www.cs.ruu.nl/~markov/kids/draw/ - kids will love being creative with Drawing For Children. It features stamp collections, clipart, backgrounds & special effects, the ability to choose fonts, rotate text, insert symbols, and more! Freeware.

PAINTER http://www.bol.ucla.edu/~permadi/java/spaint/ - A little fun program in which you can drag the cursor around the screen and make kaleidoscope-like images.

PEPPER BABIES COLORING BOOK ftp://ftp.gamesdoman.com/pub/kidstuff/ pc/pepbabcl.zip - For ages 2 - 7. Spend a while flipping through a 25-page coloring book. This is a book for beginners, because a click of the mouse will completely fill each space with a burst of color. Kids just click on the 10-color palette and then a space.

BAXTER SKETCH ftp://ftp.gamesdomain.com/pub/kidstuff/pc/ baxtersketch.zip - This is a computer version of the old stand by Etch-a-sketch. It even looks like an Etch-a-sketch, but you have more options than the original toy. There are various speeds and colors for the pen and two separate screen colours to choose from. You have the choice of using the mouse and/or keyboard to control the pens. Freeware.

COLOR WIZARD ftp://ftp.gamesdomain.com/pub/kidstuff/pc/colwiz10.zip - Color Wizard is not just your typical coloring program. It is a storybook, a coloring book with over 700 colors to choose from and also teaches art techniques such as shadows, texture and lighting. With the Art lessons section you can watch the demos of how to apply the different techniques before attempting them on your own. Limited access, but it is very inexpensive to buy.

DOODLEWORKS ftp://ftp.gen.com/pub/users/m/mr-matt/software/ dw32100.exe - Another kaleidoscope program.   Easy and fun to use.

BUGS AND VIRUSES:
Which files are safe to open?

by Scott Spanbauer,
contributing editor, PC World.
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If you were stung by the I Love You virus, you experienced one of the worst effects a virus can have: inconvenience Whether the virus is pernicious or benign, cleaning it off your system takes time. Many viruses are capable of destroying data on your computer or stealing it from your PC, but most do neither and are written merely to prove the existence of flaws in the operating system or e-mail software they infect.

Of course, much of the flawed software comes from Microsoft, which has triggered more than one Gates basher to call for a boycott of Windows, Internet Explorer, and Outlook as a way to ensure security. Whatever the merits of this approach, the issue is not that simple, and just switching to Linux, Eudora, or Opera won't protect you from every Internet security threat that's lurking out there.

Viruses can use various means to insinuate themselves into your computer through a floppy disk, a program copied from a different PC, or software downloaded from AOL or the Internet. Alternatively, they may be introduced via a macro or other script file that runs within a standard application such as Microsoft Word, Outlook, Netscape Navigator, or Eudora. Ordinarily, you have to take some action to start a program, macro, or script running on your computer, but many viruses trigger the application automatically. Recently e-mail viruses have turned up that launch as soon as you view the message they are embedded in—no other action is required on your part.

ers! This was followed by the introduction of the IBM PC, Model 5150, with assembly language, which lead him to dBase programming, serial networks, and programming in Clairion, for project development and management.

The aspects of network security which are important today were barely considered in those early days. Now, the Internet is the Wild, Wild West [WWW], and our systems are open to attack from open ports on our computers. Firewalls are the common method of defense against these intrusions, and Ben mentioned **Black Ice Defender, Zone Alarm, Tiny Personal Firewall, Concealed Personal Firewall, CyberGen's Secure Desktop, McAfee's Personal Firewall**, and **Symantec's Internet Security** as popular products.

Intrusion detection is the main function of the first program, similar to a home burglar alarm, whereas the others are only gates, like a white picket fence in front of a home. Ben noted there is no firewall product which is 100% effective, because of human invention and human error.

When he installed Black Ice Defender, Ben found the data logs to be comma separated value, CSV files, which were difficult to use, so he wrote an analyzer tool. After posting an early version to the Web, he received 15,000 hits on his Mindspring site, in January, 2000. Soon afterward, he lost $600,000 worth of copies to hackers, which forced a review of the product's security. Now, a year later, the code has been safely sold at $20 - $25 a copy.

Although the firewall program, Zone Alarm is free, Ben's software tools are not. He explained that the firewall program has two actual costs, namely a registration data collection requirement, and a **More Info** button which allows a web bug to be activated. As an example of web bugs, Ben mentioned

Tower Records Web Site, and noted that the bug reads the entire Outlook Express Address Book, and sends it back over the web, without any notification. Also, in Internet Explorer, there is a Information Back Channel, which can be used to send data back to the server, without any warning to the user.

As Ben continued his product development, other companies became interested in promoting his analyzers, and now he has a good set of reporting tools for Black Ice, Zone Alarm, and Tiny Personal Firewall. The Internet Service Providers receiving attack reports, from Ben's users, are generally happy with them. Some tests run by security test sites generate reports in excess of the amount required, and these tests have caused Ben some distress. Hopefully, the problems which he mentioned will be resolved soon.

For his own systems, Ben uses two products: Black Ice Defender, and Tiny Personal Firewall in tandem. He recommended setting the Black Ice Defender to Paranoid and set Zone Alarm to Medium. If these values are not used, Zone Alarm will give an alarm before Black Ice Defender, and Black Ice will never see the attack.

An attack report from Zone Alarm gives 5 things: Date & Time, Source IP Address, Source Port, Destination IP Address, and Destination Port, but not enough information about the type of attack to determine level of threat to a user's machine. Black Ice Defender provides this information and assigns a severity level to an attack. The other programs think all attacks are the same; either it is an attack or it is not. Intruder alarm programs know the difference between an attack with PC Anywhere products, a Netbus probe, a Sub7 probe, or a lost connection to a website's dropped IP address, pinging in error. Black Ice will report the differences between these intrusions, helping the user to determine the level or severity of the threat. Hardware routers use complex rule sets, and one such method is called NAT [Network

Address Translation] for private networks. They are fast, but not easy to use. The IP addresses that you normally use are non-routable addresses, which means they can not go out past the first router en-countered on the Internet, because those addresses do not exist in their router tables. This gives a very good advantage if you want to stay invisible to the outside world. Ben recommended not to implement a hardware router firewall with the default rule sets, because often upgrades are required to flash the router BIOS, and new rule sets are created periodically to protect a system from certain types of attacks. You can not just turn on a router, plug in your link to a network card, and ignore the rest of the setup. People that use hardware firewalls must always update their setups, for maximum security.

Ray inquired about the Gibson Shields-Up test, and Ben informed us that it only tests 10 out of 65,535 ports available on a PC's machine. He noted that most Trojan virus use ports above 1,024. Ben mentioned the website, www.doshelp.com, to see a list of other sites that do port testing on the web.

Pete Lawn, asked about the activity he observed during his system boot-up. Ben explained that Zone Alarm's protection does not begin to work until the Zone Alarm engine has been initialized, after the Windows boot-up. Tiny Personal Firewall protects from the time before Windows starts, and throughout the boot process.

For maximum protection, Ben recommends that you should do at least three things:

1. You need to be running a virus scanner, and update your virus definitions at least every week.
2. You should run a Personal Firewall, such as Tiny Personal Firewall, preferably in tandem with Black Ice Defender .
3. You should run The Cleaner, a Trojan detection program, from

what's new

www.moosoft.com. Cost is $30 for registration.

To purchase any of Ben's programs, go to his web-site: www.firewallreporting.com. Licenses are specific to an individual machine. Laptop combo discounts are available. Multiple drives are also covered. The CPU serial number is not used to generate the program key codes.

Our raffle was for 5 Licenses, and the winners need to notify Ben to receive program keys. The lights came on just as we concluded our meeting! All's well that ends well. See you on April Fools day, no kidding.

P.S. Don't forget to set your clocks forward one hour Sunday or miss the first part of the meeting.

Bugs

Although the situation may sound hopeless, it is not. You can still use the software of your choice, and you can still open e-mail attachments. Here are several basic rules that can help you protect yourself from viruses.

Use antivirus software. I generally dislike installing utilities on my computer because they conflict with other programs and the operating system itself, and they make trouble-shooting much more difficult. Antivirus programs are among the worst offenders, but just the same, most people should install one and keep that program updated. Doing so will protect you from the vast majority of viruses. Skip this step at your peril. (Look for a feature on viruses and antivirus programs in December 2000's PC World.)

Update your software. In the last couple of years, software makers have become increasingly responsive to reports of security flaws in their

tax cut

using figures that you can automatically transfer over from your federal.

This year, H&R Block/Kiplinger has partnered with Microsoft Money to make TaxCut even better. The tax program now coordinates with the financial info gathering features of Money to provide seamless integration and transfer of data between the two.

If you join the more than 20 million folks who use tax prep software each year to prepare their return, the first step in the process takes place before you even turn your computer on. You need to get all your paper work together and organized, 1099's, W-2's, everything and anything that you need to declare or deduct. Then, having easily installed TaxCut, the rest is almost effortless. TaxCut will take you through a logical series of steps by asking you simple questions. Abundant and easy to understand help is provided at every step along the way. When they are all answered, it will audit and search for errors and inconsistencies, then print out a completed accurate return that looks exactly like it came from the office of a professional tax preparer. In fact, the same type of software is exactly what professionals use to produce your return, only in this case you have saved their fee. It is a very practical example of what computers were meant to do! TaxCut has earned top rating from Money Magazine, PC Magazine, PC World, MacWorld, the Wall Street Journal and more. A number of user friendly enhancements have been added this year to make the product even better. They include:

1. **MY TAXES** - A new interview feature which provides a customized personal pathway through the program based on user input. The program then organizes and simplifies your tax forms and additionally points out potential money-saving credits.

2. **PROGRESS BAR** - Tracks your progress through the tax preparation process. Provides continuous readout of where you have been and where you are going.
3. **SEAMLESS IMPORT**- Imports data seamlessly from all of the afore mentioned financial programs.
4. **ENHANCED TAX PLANNING** Provides year-round financial and tax planning tools. It includes expert advice on tax savings and increased deductions.

Continued new from last year is a Click-and-Fix Auditor, enhanced help features, and lifestyle videos from the experts at Kiplinger. The program continues to offer two excellent services, the Electronic Refund Advance (ERA) program which electronic filers can use to receive an electronic refund advance in 48 hours of up to $5,000, and a Refund Reward program which offers you the option of receiving your refund on pre-paid spending cards from Master Card which provide for significant discounts from participating dealers.

In every step along the way, TaxCut provides a variety of reliable, up-to-date, context-sensitive help and advice. It offers the gospel straight from the federal instructions, or you can use its more easily comprehended nstructions from the tax experts at Kiplinger. The deluxe version also provides over 40 specialized IRS publications for some in-depth reference in various areas. When your return is completed, TaxCut will scrupulously check each and every item for any discrepancy that will attract the suspicious audit eye of the IRS. The Click and Fix auditor provides a split screen view of both the flagged discrepancy and the exact area on your return where you can make corrections. Additionally, a FAQ function provides answers to what perplex most people in any particular area you are homed in on. TaxCut provides complete electronic filing capability. Using it will provide a refund in 7-10 days, vs. 6-8 weeks if you mail in your return. Also provided

is a summary of advice and suggestions you can use for both this and next year's return to save taxes. This includes a Awhat if@ table where you can make hypothetical changes to see what effect they may have on your tax liability.

In case you are really impatient, TaxCut's Tax Summary Meter provides a running summary of your bottom line at every step along the way. Why worry later when you can worry right now? And in case you are concerned about your tax info not being up to the very minute, not to worry! TaxCut's Auto-Update feature provides the very latest breaking tax news, IRS forms and program updates and automatically downloads them for you. A Fast Forms feature based on a short and simple interview will create a customized list of all the necessary forms to complete your return. Experienced preparers can use this to go directly to the forms, rather than through the lengthier interview process.

TaxCut can also accurately import data into your return from a variety of sources which include your last year's TaxCut or TurboTax return, MS Money, Quicken, or Managing Your Money. If you are using or thinking about a Roth IRA, TaxCut includes a specific Roth IRA Assistant that will advise you on using or switching. The program keeps you accurately advised of your potential areas of deduction. It will determine whether you are eligible for the Child Tax Credit and automatically calculate it for you. It will also see if you are eligible for a Student Loan Interest deduction and make the necessary calculations.

Splendid videos are abundant in TaxCut Deluxe. They cover of a variety of topics and offer tax advice in areas such as first time investors, newly married, recently divorced, death in the family, new business, new or selling a home, and newly retired. These videos may be accessed at any time or are offered during appropriate sections of the return. A Quick Tour video will take you through the necessary steps in preparing your return.

You can select from any of several different methods offered in the preparation of your return:

* Interview Method- Answer the specific questions all along the way.

* Fast Lane Method- Tailor the interview to include only those areas which you know are applicable to you.

* Fast Forms Method- Answer a few questions and TaxCut will present only those forms that apply to you. Then go directly to and fill in each form.

* All Forms Method- If you are experienced and know exactly what forms you will need, you can select and go to each.

TaxCut's Navigator, Interview and Forms Buttons are always available in the bottom right hand corner of each screen. You can use these to skip or return to any area of the interview. A Rapid Find search button will bring you information on the topic of your choice.

A test of the product using figures gleaned from my last return proceeded flawlessly. TaxCut has our highest and most enthusiastic recommendation. The only word of caution involves some taxpayers, and not the software. Some people have tax pictures and problems that require individualized and specialized attention of an accountant. However, for the vast majority of us, TaxCut is more than up to the task. Considering all that it does so easily, accurately and efficiently, perhaps the most amazing thing about it is that you can purchase it most anywhere at a price of only $19.95. This incredibly low price, which is $10 less than that of last year, includes one free electronically filed return and one free TaxCut state program after you mail in your rebate form. The stand-alone state program is normally $19.95, and the electronically filing, $12.95. That they are included free with the $19.95 TaxCut Deluxe is the 8th wonder of the world!
www.taxcut.com.

software. The whole issue has moved out of the realm of obscure discussions buried in Usenet newsgroups and onto the pages of the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and of course, PC World's Bugs and Fixes column. These days, software vendors often post security fixes to their Web sites before a real-world threat has even materialized.

To update Netscape Navigator, select Help, Software Updates. To update Internet Explorer or Windows 98, 2000, or the new Millennium Edition (Me), choose Start, Windows Update, or cruise directly to windowsupdate.microsoft.com. This Microsoft site will determine what software versions you are currently running and will assist you in downloading and installing required updates.

Understand and use security settings. Most applications that host macro code or scripting languages have security settings that let you control when and how the scripts run. Know what those settings are and make sure they meet your security needs. In Internet Explorer, choose Tools, Internet Options, click the Security tab, and then select the Internet zone. Click the Custom Level button to browse security options, or click the Default Level button to make sure security is set to Medium. To find Netscape Navigator's security settings, choose Edit, Preferences, and then select Advanced in the Category window. Don't forget your application's macro security settings. In Word, Excel, or Outlook 2000, choose Tools, Macro, Security, and make sure your setting is at least Medium. If your Word files

Bugs

don't rely much on macros, choose High.

Another important security setting in Windows Explorer relates to file extensions that have been hidden on such file types as .vbs (Visual Basic script). Several Outlook e-mail attacks have tricked users into launching .vbs attachments by giving them names such as filename.jpg.vbs. Since the .vbs extension disappears, the file looks like a nonexecutable, nonscriptable .jpg image file that is safe to open. To protect yourself from this trick, open an Explorer window, choose Tools, Folder Options or View, Folder Options (depending on your version of Windows), select the View tab, remove the check from "Hide file extensions for known file types," and then click OK.

Don't launch executable or scriptable files. Executable or scriptable file types include those with .exe, .com, .bat, .xls, .doc, and .vbs extensions. Your best bet is to scan all downloaded files for viruses before running them. If an arriving e-mail contains a Word (.doc) document, assume the document will infect your system. Don't open it until your antivirus software has scanned it and declared it virus-free. Just because the document comes from your boss or your mother doesn't mean it's safe. If you want to view the contents of a file without triggering any macros it may include, open it in Notepad or Quick View. Regrettably, the Quick View utility is not included in Windows 2000 or in Windows Me, but you can buy a third-party copy of Quick View Plus 6 from Jasc Software for $49 downloaded or $59 boxed.

The major shareware sites scan programs for viruses before posting them for download, and of course legitimate software vendors ensure that the applications they post to their Web sites are free of viruses. Software posted to pirate (so-called "warez") sites or newsgroups may be infected, however, and the pirated applications floating through such file-sharing systems as Napster and Gnutella must also be considered virus hazards.

Product Information
Quick View Plus 6
$49 for download
$59 for boxed version
Jasc Software
800/622-2793 www.jasc.com/product

(This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer Users Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which your user group belongs.)

My CDROM is Unreadable
by John R. Clark,
WebMaster
NWA-PCUG, January, 2001

Those four little words may give one heart murmurs, if not that at least a bad case of depression. At least it did for me because I had some one time copies of files on that disk. What should I do, for the CDROM appeared to be suitable only for a beer coaster.

As usual to solve this type of problem I jumped one the big wire and sent out a request for help from people who have more experience that I have. Immediately the word came back — check out www.CDROM-Prod.com.

They have a little 30 day test product called CD-R-Diagnostics and believe me, It works. It is set up to run under W/95, W/98, W/98SE, W/ME, W/NT4.0 and W/2000. Supposed to work on a CD, CD-R & CD-RW type platters. Will also run on a regular CD drive. It will identify files it has found that appear to be retrievable. Now you have to make a decision to determine if it is worth trying to save the files.

To extract the files you will need a registered copy of CD-R-Diagnositcs. You may obtain one from the site listed above using e-commerce rules. The system is only 837260 and will be downloaded to you. If on the other hand you do not trust e-commerce and/or your credit card is not on their list, you may call NorthStar Solutions at 1-800-699-6395 and they will accept most any credit card and act as a middle man for you — same price. I went the NorthStar route and within an hour I had a system.

There are a couple of items to watch out for when you run the program

1. It takes a long time to scan the CD and if you interrupt the scanning mode you get to start over. When you start the scan, you may as well plan to do something else for at least a couple of hours. There are a lot of sectors on a CD.

2. Make sure you have room on your HD to move the files or the system locks up and you get to start over.

3. In my case there were several files marked as 'Unnamed_nnnn' where nnnn is a number. I found most of these files to be intact and with a bit of work was able to identify and rename the files correctly.

I would recommend this product for anyone who is working with CD-ROMS. It appears now that there are four things you are guarented in life: Death, Taxes, Hard Drive Failures and CD Failures.

Remarkable Hand-Held Scanner

by Judy Lindley

Fallbrook PC User's Group
Coastal Computer News
February, 2001

The quickLink Pen is a hand held scanner; which can hold 1000 pages of text. This is measured by 12-point font text of 8 1/2 x 11 page. It scanned very easily. However, it took me a few tries time to under-stand all the commands and to use the pen efficiently. It's got left-handed and right-handed settings, so it'll work either way, great for the left handed person.

Documentation: It came with an operation manual of 104 pages, a QuickLink Pen Quickstart Guide, and a Quick reference card.

Important: You must install batteries in the pen and connect the cable be-fore you install the software.

Installation: Insertion of the CD-ROM will automati-cally start up the setup window. Then follow their in-structions. It allows you to use one of four lan-guages, English, French, German and Spanish. There are 3 default programs on the CD. I in-stalled them all taking up 2688K of space. A complementary copy of Ligature Ltd's Omnifont OCR desk-top software is included. It took two tries to get my computer and the pen to talk to each other. It was a simple fix; I changed the Baud rate.

Product Support: They provide a North American E-mail support team at usa.suport@wizcomtech.com. General information can be obtained Toll Free 888-777-0552 or FAX 978-929-9228.

Product Performance: Scanning crisp text on a plain back-ground was no problem. Sharp, con-trast texts on any pale backgrounds, in fact with fuzzy, ill-defined letters on a gray background - hmm, not so good. Exotic fonts, hand-written text, arty text on a dramatic background that muddles the contrast forget it. The QuickLink user interface is, unavoid-ably, rather clunky; the lit tle screen can only display one major menu item or two minor ones at a time, and you only get four arrow buttons plus, "ENT" and "ESC" to work with. So getting to the mode you want can be frustrating. But the scan process itself is painless enough. If you're grabbing a block of text, you use the QuickLink in its standard Note mode, where scanned text is added, line by line, to a single file in the scanner. The pen has 4Mb of flash memory. If a scanned line doesn't come out properly you hit the ENT button to erase it and try again. The pen feels cumbersome at first, but with very little practice it's easy to scan text in with the QuickLink at about the rate of skilled typist.

Address Book - allows you to scan business cards and syn-chronize your records

Tables and Charts — maintains integrity of individual cells with direct input into a spreadsheet. I did not try this option.

Internet Links - collects Internet ad-dresses and transfers them directly to your browser or bookmark.

System Requirements: Windows 95/98 and Windows NT CD-ROM Drive (for Desktop Application)
16 MB of RAM
8MB available hard disk space

What's in the Box?
QuickLink Pen
User Manual
Quick Reference Card
Tutorial Video on CD
Quick Reference Card
PC Data Cable (RS 232, 9 pin)
Carrying Case (plastic) with Opticard.
2 "AAA" batteries

Source/Cost: I found you could purchase the pen on the Internet for $189.00 from the vendor at www.wizcomtech.com The product is made in Israel.

Summary: What is really outstanding about this little pen is that it is a line by line scanner. The hand held pen scanner is ideal for someone doing genealogy research (my hobby) because every thing that is scanned into the pen can later be transferred into a laptop or a desktop computer via a serial port connection. This is an ideal way for researchers who ex-tract random bits of information from library books and journals if a copy machine or your digital camera is not available. It has some limita-tions, you need good contrast, so a dark blue back ground with black letters will not scan, old newspaper print was a problem. If a scanned line doesn't come out properly you just hit the ENT button to erase it and try again. It feels cumbersome at first, but with a very little practice it's easy to scan text. Oh yes, you also need to learn a few new computer words: delete is now called flush and when I checked the index on how to transfer the files to my computer, I could not find how it was listed. I looked at link, down load, up load nothing worked, and then I found it listed as *PC Con-trolled Communications.*

Tip

brought to you by Michael Vincent
www.emazing.com

Create A Toolbar

If you want an instant tool bar for a specific folder that you already have on your desktop, simply grab the folder and drag it to the edge of the screen, either left, right, top or to the current tool bar menu along the bottom. An instant tool bar will appear showing all the contents in that specific folder. You can also do this from Explorer by dragging the folder to the edge where you want the new tool bar to appear.

club information

HARD COPY is a monthly publication of SLO BYTES PC User's Group located in San Luis Obispo, California. Information in this Newsletter is derived from both our own membership and other PC User Group Newsletters. The purpose of this publication is to inform our members of meetings and provide information related to the use of IBM PC's and compatible computers.

Membership: Dues are $25 per year. Full membership entitles you to our monthly newsletter, full use of the public domain software library software drawing at the end of the meetings.

Article Submission: Deadline for submission of articles is the 15th of each month. Articles should be provided in ASCII format without any type of formatting from your wordprocessor including tabs, indents, extra spaces, or highlighting. We prefer articles on disk but will accept hardcopies if necessary.

Disclaimer: Neither SLO BYTES PC User's Group, its officers, editors, or contributors to this newsletter assume liability for damages arising out of this publication of any article, including but not limited to the listing of programming code, batch files and other helpful hints.

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Member of

APCUG
Association of Personal Computer User Groups

meeting times

GENERAL MEETINGS are held the 1st Sunday of each month. Our meeting location is the San Luis Obispo I.O.O.F. Hall on Dana Street.

The general meeting starts promply at 2:30 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGS) meet at 1:00 p.m.—2:15 p.m.

slobytes website

WWW.THEGRID.NET/SLOBYTES/

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M. Baxendale (Tres) marvin@surfari.net
B. Ward, editor

treasurer's report

march 11, 2001

OPERATING FUND

Beginning Balance	$2,135.11
Income	
Membership Dues	200.00
Refreshments	16.00
Expenses	
Room Rent	75.00
NL Xerox	26.75
Refreshments	21.46
Postage	3.81
New Balance	$2,224.09

EQUIPMENT FUND

Beginning Balance	$64.16
Miscl Donation	12.50
New Balance	$76.66

SPRING FORWARD

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS
April 1st

SLO Bytes PC User's Group
c/o Marvin Baxendale
543 Guiarte Road
Arroyo Grande, CA. 93420
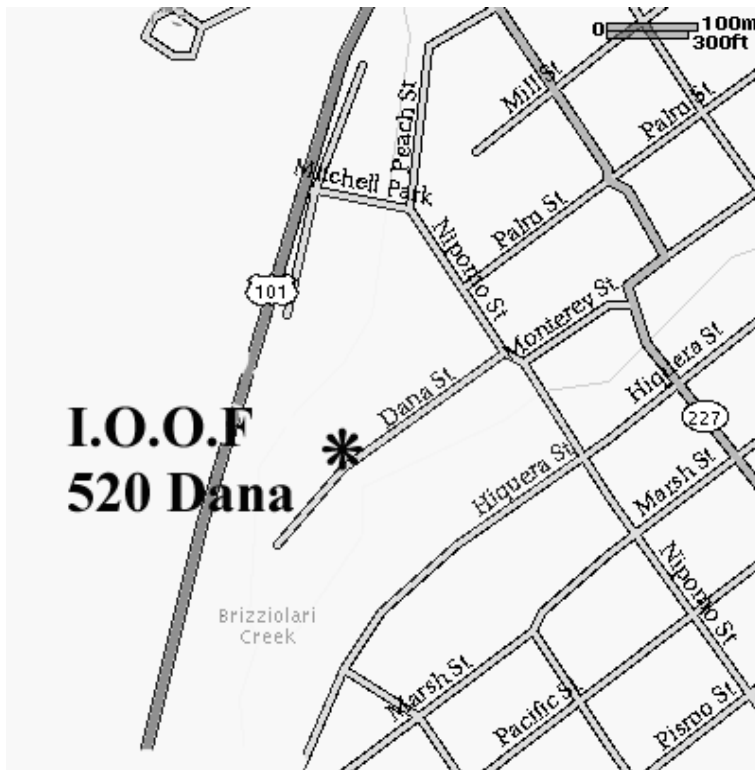
I.O.O.F
520 Dana

Next Meeting
Sunday
April 1st

1:00pm
Early SIGS

2:30pm
Digital
Cameras