

What's New by Wm. Avery

Our October Meeting led off with our introduction of guests, and Ray Miklas's ex-planation of his experience with the "Win32/Magistr:29188" virus/worm. Ray thought Outlook Express had opened an email attachment automatically by displaying it as a ".jpg" file. But later he found out that he had launched the attachment himself, when replying to the sender of the message, who happened to be his son. Ray noted that the worm was not recognized, because he had not updated his copy of InoculateIT, the popular virus protection program, with the latest signature file, so it could not detect the infection. This variant of the worm was just 2 days old when Ray received the infected message, so he was caught unprepared, even though he is aware of this type of problem. He urged all of the members to install some protection as soon as possible, and maintain it with regular signature file downloads for continued safety.



The Magistr worm installs it's own email program to use SMTP to forward itself to addresses selected from the Address Book, and attaches itself to some random document from your hard drive, which appears as the body of the message. If not removed, it will delete folders from your hard drive, and then print a nasty message on your screen, according to reports from

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Choosing a Digital Camera

by Grant Fuller

The Newsletter of the Greater Victoria PC Users' Association - Web Edition
Volume 18, Number 10, October 2001

My intention isn't to offer tech info on digital cameras like consumer reviews. CNET has a complete section devoted to comparing brands and features. You can get all the data at www.cnet.com. The things I want to discuss deal more with the purpose and general use this type of camera has. I required a semi-professional camera for the purpose of taking high quality photos for reference material for paintings. The photos aren't the final salable product, so I don't need full blown pro equipment but I need to be able to get enough quality to enlarge an image for certain details. With this in mind, the following were my main considerations.

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CLUB CALENDAR

November 4th

1 pm
Early SIG's.

Main hall, Alan Raul
Kitchen Area, Jim Kilarity,
Windows Q&A

2:30 pm
Gene Barlow

Power Quest Products
&
Access Data's
SecureClean & CleanDrive

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ZDNet and Ray. After 3 months, moving icons replace the ones normally available, so you can't point to them, to click them.

The leading virus programs are from Norton, McAfee, and Symantec. There was another technique, using a bogus email address at the head of the Address Book, but later information indicates that this is not a very effective method, according to Alan (at the recent SNUG [SLONET Users Group] meeting).

This month's meeting varied from our usual Q&A discussion, because several of our members were showing off their Digital Cameras, and telling about their experiences with them. Ben Hansen brought his "free" camera, and Mike had his \$25,000 camera. Typical prices are in the \$1500 price range. Alan was showing his Sony MVC-CD300, which is about \$850. It has 3.3 Megapixels and 3X Zeiss zoom lens. His discussion included references to web pages that have short courses in Digital Photography which may be found on Alan's Hot Links list, on our SLOBYTES Web site, at: www.slobytes.org/alanhot.htm.

The main advantage of the digital technique is the instant gratification of almost real time picture results. Many people have tried the new Kodak Photo CD method of developing film, where film images are scanned into files on a personal CD ROM disc. Bob Ward recommends using the user's postings

on websites to help select a new camera, where average people express their views on new products. One shown by Jim Buenrostro and his son from Wal-Mart was around \$50, but still practical.

Here are some of the other cameras which were displayed for the crowd in the break room, and we shared our opinions with each other, for better or worse:

Bob Ward had his Olympus C2100, with a 1.92 Megapixel resolution and exceptional 10X optical zoom lens, costing around \$499 - \$599, currently. The 8 MB Smart Card is standard, but a 64 MB card is recommended. It uses a USB cable to interface with your computer, and has the standard NTSC video port for a TV or VCR. Bob suggests this site for rating your camera store: www.resellerratings.com.

Loren Schwiderski brought his D510 Olympus, which ranges from \$350 - \$399, locally, with a \$30 discount from Staples. Always have a backup set of batteries, which in this case are Nickel-Metal-Hydrize Energizer [Eveready], which provide about 200 images per charge. Loren uses a "Super High Quality" mode for shooting, and gets about 57 images on a 64MB SmartMedia Card, which runs about \$50 - \$60 per card. He can also use a 128 MB card, at about twice the price. His website has a digital gallery at: <http://webpages.charter.net/loren>.

Eugene Rheingans displayed a Canon PowerShot S100 Digital ELPH / Digital

IXUS, with 2.11 Megapixel CCD, equivalent to ISO 100 film rating, and a f2.8 wide angle or f4.0 telephoto lens. Like most of these cameras, the output file format for the captured image is JPG, with 3 levels of detail available: 640x480 and 1600x1200 (in Fine/Large or Super-Fine/Large) formats. The shutter speeds are listed as 1- 1/1500 sec., with flash and red-eye reduction. The cost was about \$500 at the time he bought it.

Ben Hansen contributed images taken with his FUJIFILM FinePix1300, a 1.3 Megapixel CCD design. The files are JPEG only, and are stored on an 8 MB SmartMedia Card, in 1280x960, or 640x480 formats. Each image was about 310 KB. A USB cable links the camera and computer.

The break room was also the site for a Cookie Fest, with hot coffee, as provided by Hostess Nancy Vrooman, along with the Digital Camera Show. At 2:30 PM, we went back to the Main Hall for our featured speaker, from Charter Communications, Ralph Perez, Advanced Products Manager.

Alan covered the club calendar, noting that 3 events in the first week were Linux related: Tuesday was the SLOLUG group meeting on virtual private networking and peer-to-peer computing. At Ray's house on Thursday, the SLOBYTES Linux SIG met to discuss Mandrake 8.1. On Saturday, the Cal-Poly Linux Club held their annual "Free Your Machine" event, with about 15 PCs converted from Windows to Linux systems. These

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* * * 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



Would your Internet friends and acquaintances like a different Christmas card? Find here cards for traditional and not-so-traditional, amusing Christmas and seasonal greetings, Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, Kwazaa and more. There should be something to please everyone – even “Bah, Humbug!” cards. Many of the cards are animated. They are all free. All of the sites below have other cards and features other than those mentioned – a few with reminder services. HP allows you to print your own cards from their designs, but you need to sign up first. Since Christmas is a busy card season, you may need to get your order in before the rush.

YAHOO GREETINGS <http://greetings.yahoo.com/greet/my> - A huge database of all kinds of online cards including Christmas cards.

MSN GREETING CARDS <http://www.egreetings.msn.com/category.pd?LO=60&L1=500&L2=1010&L3=50083&L4=0&L5=0> - Another database of cards, many with animations.

BLUE MOUNTAIN ECARDS <http://www.bluemountain.com/> - This site has lots of free electronic cards for every occasion, including Christmas. It includes several categories of Christmas including a Happy Humbug Day card that designates Dec. 21 as the day to vent Christmas frustrations.

REGARDS.COM <http://www4.regards.com/> - Sixty-two Christmas cards, both seasonal and traditional.

EXPRESSIT.COM <http://www.expressit.com> - A site where you can really express your creativity. Use blank cards, edit photos for cards and, also, a selection of ready-made cards.

THE CHRISTMAS PAGES <http://www.north-pole.co.uk/> - Peruse and use several pages of free Christmas cards categorized as Traditional, Scenic, Wildlife, and Other Cards.

GREETING-CARDS.COM <http://www.greeting-cards.com/> - More free Christmas cards in three categories: Humor, Traditional, and Naughty

AWESOME GREETINGS CARDS <http://www.marlo.com/card.htm> - Four pages of Christmas cards, including animated and flashcards.

WEBCARDS <http://www.codysoft.com/webcards/> - Eight, easy to send, free Christmas cards.

CARDMASTER.COM <http://www.cardmaster.com> - This site has 9 pages of Christmas cards in different categories.

GO GREETINGS <http://www.gogreet.com/step00.asp> - Look for Christmas cards in Holidays>Christmas, then under Humorous, Sincere, or Religious.

OHMYGOODNESS <http://www.ohmygoodness.com/Cards/christmas/index.htm> - If you want to send musical, animated Christmas cards, go here.

TESS' CASTLE IN THE SKY <http://tcastle.com/greet4.html> - This site includes 20 Christmas cards as well as Hanukkah and New Year's cards.

DIGITAL CARD <http://www.digitalcard.com/> - Nine free Christmas cards.

SOUTH PARK GREETINGS <http://www.arkworld.com/southpark/> - If you are a South Park fan these seven Christmas cards will amuse you.

BRISTO'S <http://www.bristos.com/> - Eight original flash, animated Xmas cards.

HP CARD STUDIO http://www.homeandoffice.hp.com/hho/us/eng/card_studio.html?role=&preview_date=&page_id=8276&subcategory=card_studio

These cards are not electronic, instead you can print them. You need to subscribe in “registration and profiling” and you also need Adobe Reader. Follow directions carefully. Click on the little arrow below the card to download and save.

Digital Cameras

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1. Megapixels This is the resolution or amount of information the camera is capable of sending to the flash card for each image. If your normal use is snap shot photos, 4 x 6" prints, then the equivalent digital photos will do fine with about 2 to 2.5 megapixels. If you need to take pictures which compare to 16 x 20' enlargements then 3 or more megapixels are needed. My camera has 3.34 megapixels. The latest models have 5 or more.

2. Batteries Digital cameras use a lot of power. Let's not blame the cameras. The batteries need to drive not only the usual light meter, auto focus, settings display, shutter, and flash (flash eats batteries), that film cameras do, but now we need them to drive a computer in the camera along with a monitor (admittedly an LCD, but it still uses power). One reason I chose the Nikon 990 is because it uses AA batteries. If I'm away from the specialty camera stores and I need batteries, I can get AA alkalines at the local grocery store to hold me over. Meanwhile, my solution to having continuous power is simply to have two sets of rechargeable Nicad or NMH and a pocket size charger.

3. Flash Cards This model uses Compac flash cards as a storage chip for the images. Most digital cameras use this method, but the consumer reviews state which models use which type. My point is, they come in different megabyte sizes, from 8 or maybe smaller to 128 mb or larger. Mine has a 16 mb flash card and it holds the equivalent of 330 four by six photos, or 77 eleven by fourteens and so on depending on my camera settings. That means a 128mb flash card will hold more pictures than I would ever want to download after a holiday. I have taken over two thousand pictures over the past year (downloading frequently) and have never filled my 16 mb card. A keen photographer will get into the

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what's new

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activities are related to our group, and attended by several of our members on a regular basis. Also the HTML SIG met at Ralph Sutters' home in A.G. on the Monday following this meeting.

Our Main meeting proceeded with Ralph Perez returning to speak to us for the 3rd time about Charter Cables' Pipeline Digital Cable. He was explaining the current state of broadband internet cable modem services, and whether DSL has better "latency" than cable. That depends on location, he said relative to your central office, and he noted that cable technology is more mature, so there is less "latency" than DSL. As long as the main connection to the Internet is large enough to serve your subscriber demand, there should be no slowdown as neighbors sign up for service.

Another topic was the current problems associated with server viruses such as Code Red and Nimbda. Charter and Cisco engineers are working one-on-one together to relieve the service outages caused by these viruses. The secondary effect of those problems is 20 to 30 minute hold-times on service inquiry responses on the 800-phone line. There is a regional call center, and Charter is trying to expand it to reduce hold time on support calls. Ralph recommended use of Zone-Alarm as protection for systems that are on static IP connections and always on the Net. Link-Sys hardware routers will also help, as well as Ad-aware from CNET, <http://download.cnet.com>, which monitors and removes spyware and unwanted advertising from your machine; use their local search engine to find the download page on their site. One of our members cautioned that he had to remove the Ad-aware to keep it from interfering with several of his

programs. Pete Lawn asked what was the cause of frequent flashing hard drive activity lights, when he was not using the Net. Ralph explained it was due to a bug in the Cisco software, which they are working to fix. Some flashing is normal, he noted, as the internal network pings the customers' modems to check status, but not to try to attack the hard drive.



Ralph Perez
fielding questions

Fiber technology was the subject of an inquiry from the floor. Ralph said they are now using Wave Division Multiplex [WDM], where the spectrum is split into 256 wavelength bands, with the next generation expected to double that capacity to 512 splits. This type of development is projected to support all expected

growth for the next 10 years, he said. There is a limit to the distance for fiber, but it varies from one installation to another, and Ralph said he did not know the exact formula to explain it.

Revisiting the previous topic of security, Ralph added that LockDown Millennium, from LockDown Corp., www.lockdowncorp.com, is an excellent Trojan virus program that he uses at home on his personal machine. It costs \$39.95 per year or \$99 for life, and there is a Professional Version for \$199.

Bob Ward inquired about the status of the Los Osos fiber installation, and Ralph said there will be service beginning soon, perhaps within 6 weeks. They are converting one node at a time from Falcon, and each neighborhood will need new boxes. It is possible to have cable modem without Pipeline, but it is cheaper to have both Pipeline and Digital Cable service, because they have a Cable modem access fee of \$10/ month.

Ray asked if you can buy the modem, and Ralph said that you could do that. The modem he recommends is Motorola Surfboard, either 3100 or

4100, which has a "Standby" button to suspend the link between the modem and computer, while leaving the modem on the Net. The 4100 also has a USB adapter, so you do not have to use a Ethernet network interface card [NIC] in your computer to connect to the modem. The other modem which works well is the Scientific-Atlanta Webstar, for about \$120, as compared to the Motorola for about \$150, from the Web.

Bob also wondered if the cable drops were being changed, and Ralph said that depended on the type of old cable installed. They now use double-shielded RG-6 to replace the old single shield braided copper wire cable. In 2003, the beta testing for POIP, which is telephone service over cable, will probably begin. One cable will support Telephone, Digital Television, and Pipeline Internet services.

One point was made that there can be no Windows Folder Sharing when using Cable Modem connections, under TCP/IP network connections, because your neighbors could see your shared resources, and breach your privacy unintentionally, so installers disable this feature when they setup a subscribers' service.

Irv Kogan asked about congestion during peak hours and he was told that it is not just one computer that is affected. During 5-7 a.m. and approximately 6:30-8:30 p.m., the peak hours for computer use, the servers are affected by infected computers. There is an effort to find those machines and get them cleaned up, to relieve the problem. Ed Glembotski asked if a technician was presently working on the server side, to clean up viruses, and Ralph replied that they were working with Cisco engineers to solve that problem. They are writing custom software for Charter and a whole team of engineers, because they are also working with other broadband carriers. As soon as they find a problem in one system, they distribute the solution to all the others.

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Ralph was emphatic about the reduced latency of Pipeline Digital Cable connections as compared to DSL, which has several extra steps between the subscriber and the Internet connection, apparently. He noted that college students and gamers prefer the Pipeline for speedy reactions in playing online games.

Bob Ward asked about using dual NIC cards, as is possible under DSL, with cable modems. The answer is no, but it is possible to get a hardware or software based router and hub, to make multiple computer connections.

The next question concerned short dropouts in video service, in Los Osos, and power surges, as related events. Charter has service techs available for emergencies, and the cable throughout the county is arranged as a matrix, so one failure will not take out the entire county. Jim Buenrostro asked whether the cable system repeaters are battery backed up, but Ralph did not know for sure if they are or not. Pete Lawn added the comment that " some are and some are not ".

Ray asked about the services Charter offers, and Ralph listed the following four broadband levels:

- 1) Best Value Package: speeds of 256K download, with 64K upload for \$24.95/month
- 2) Bronze Package: 768 download, with 128K upload for \$35.00/month
- 3) Silver Package: 1.0 MB download, with 265K upload, plus 1 static IP address, for \$60.00/month
- 4) Gold Package: 1.5 MB download, with 385K upload, plus 1 static IP address, for \$99.00/month.

The cable modem rental fee of \$4.95/month is in addition to the other fees, and if you did not have a TV video cable subscription, then there is an additional \$10.00/month cable access fee, which is waived if a cable account already exists.

A member wanted to know how many others do not have cable, but Ralph replied that he was more interested in the number of those who do have cable TV service, or a internet cable modem connection, and who has Pipeline. Many of those present raised their hands, but I did not note the actual count.

One of our members wanted to know when the Nipomo Mesa and Heritage Ranch would be on the cable system. His response was that there are four projects planned for completion later this year, after Los Osos.

Templton is next, then Cambria, Jardine, Santa Margarita, and Heritage Ranch, in that order, hopefully done by the first quarter of 2002.

Bob Ward inquired about the equipment setup fee, and it apparently depends on what promotional offer is in effect. Generally it is about \$29.95. Free installations come with Cable service, or upgrades on Pipeline. Some packages are on yearly contract basis, but that is on a case-by-case basis, where some services are bundled, such as Cable plus Pipeline service, which are generally term contracts, with a waived installation.

Alan Raul wanted to know about WebMail, and whether there is a toll-free number to access the mail server. The answer is that several methods were proposed, but none are in effect at this time. Pete Lawn had a comment that you can login to pop.charter.net from any text based Internet terminal, such as found in libraries or Internet cafes. Ralph noted that he checked his Charter email account from Mexico, while on vacation, by a similar method. [This is different than accessing Hotmail or AOL Mail accounts via browser.]

Jim Buenrostro was interested to know whether Pipeline would work if the location of the modem was changed, with in a given town. Yes is the answer, but only within the same

city, but not between different towns.

Pete Lawn had a question about Video-on-Demand [VOD], and whether that will affect subscribers' Internet speed. Ralph said no, because it is on a totally different frequency. This is expected to roll out in 2003, and allow downloads of a movie for 24 hour periods. Playback is totally within a subscribers system and one fee covers the entire rental period. In the current system in Alhambra, CA, there are about 300 titles, he said. Whether there would be any copy protection was another question, but no answer is known at this time.

Lastly, Guy Kuncir wondered about Ralph's local professional group, the " Association for Internet Professionals " [AIP]. That group has recently reorganized, and is planning to restart their meetings. Their web site is: www.association.org.

As the meeting came to a close we held our Pic-n-Win club raffle, and the prizes were: A calculator to Earl Gustafson; a " Guard Dog " PC protection program to Jack Baker [won first by Guy Kuncir, and graciously refused]; and a Brother P-Touch Label Maker [from Staples] for Bill Palmerston. Approximately 64 members attended this meeting, by Ray's count, with about a dozen unlucky early departures who missed winning their prizes!

Next month is a return visit by our friend, Gene Barlow of PowerQuest, makers of Partition Magic and Drive Image drive management programs. Their User Group prices and latest upgrades should be reason enough to be there. See you November 4, 2001.

SIGS

HTML (Internet) SIG
November 5th, 6:30pm

Linux SIG
November 8th, 6:30pm

Surfboard

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THE POSTCARD DESK <http://www.webjunkie.com/christmas/cardrack.html>

If you prefer postcards to greeting cards this is a very nice site. First choose a postcard and then a song to go with it.

CYBER-CARDS.COM http://www.cyber-cards.net/gbrowse.php?cat_id=26

Three pages of nice Christmas cards.

TAMIL PAGES GREETING CARDS <http://www.tamilpages.com/greetingcards/christmas.shtml>. This web site has a variety of Christmas cards, all appealing.

Take a look at their other beautiful cards, too.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.COM <http://www.christmasgifts.com/>

Watch Santa ice skate and listen to Christmas music as you browse this site.

Free greeting cards, art and a kid's Christmas page.

Digital Cameras

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routine of reviewing the shots at the end of the day and deleting the discards, thus opening that space for new photos. This also eases the pressure of sorting them back home. The camera has a TV connection which will help determine focus problems or softness due to camera movement (hard to see in an LCD monitor) and most hotels or motels have TV sets.

4. Extra Features. Once again, the pros review this aspect of digital cameras far better than I. I can only say that if you've never used a digital camera, you'll find they all have more features than you could ever imagine. This model will shoot a 40 minute video (no sound), shoots 10 in sequence and picks the best one for sharpness, or shoots high speed (30 fps) for action shots. It has an odd swivel body which is great for seeing the monitor in bright light. Those are only some of the features. I keep a spare 16 mb card in case I ever learn how to use this stuff. It won't make toast.

5. Zoom. I have a 3x optical, and 4x digital. This is the most I can handle without a tripod. The 4x digital is better than blowing up a smaller image on the computer but the usual telephoto softness is to be expected. There are currently 7x opticals available but they are quite expensive.

6. Hints. Save power by using the view finder instead of the monitor, save the monitor for those that need accurate cropping like our old "through the lens" SLR's. Before you buy, check to see if there is a delay between the time the shutter button is pressed and the time the camera actually fires, a delay will prove to be very annoying and will ruin many shots. Some early models suffered this problem, but I would check any camera to be sure.

7. Latest models. The market is full of high-end powerful cameras, as a result, the mid-range prices are slightly lower and the low end offers more variety. There are models designed to look and feel like the old SLR film cameras but you'll pay a premium for those. My suggestion would be to get the camera that you feel you need and study and learn to use it. Once you're comfortable with this new toy you'll have more fun than you ever had with your old film camera.

8. Newcomers. One detail to check first. Does your computer have a USB connection? Most cameras will download directly to the computer once the camera's software has been installed but other people I know have card readers which require removing the flash card from the camera and inserting it in the reader. This still uses a USB port but saves camera power.

Some cameras come with a DC adaptor which is useful for saving battery power while learning to download pictures. A process that can take time depending on your combination of brains and luck. I'm a little short changed on both.

Hard Disk info

by Gene Barlow

Orange Bytes PCUG, September, 2001

Your hard drive is the only part of your computer system that you can customize to your personal needs. Using PartitionMagic (by PowerQuest), you can organize your hard drive in many of the following ways. First, install a second hard drive on your system to improve performance and better protect your files. You can organize your system with only one hard drive, but a second drive will give you many more options. Second, convert all of your FAT partitions to FAT32 to maximize the use of your drive space. Third, keep your FAT32 partitions less than 8GB in size to avoid wasting disk space. Fourth, setup multiple partitions on each hard drive, keeping all primary partitions at the beginning of the first drive. Fifth, use primary partitions for operating systems and move all other files out of your primary c: partition, except the operating system's files. Sixth, setup a separate APPS logical partition to contain your application programs. Seventh, keep all of your important data files in a special DATA logical partition to better protect them from loss. Organizing in this manner will greatly improve your system over having all of your files in one c: partition.

Run Multiple Operating Systems

Running more than one Operating System on your computer will give you many of the following advantages. Again, PartitionMagic and BootMagic will let you do this easily and safely. First, setup a second operating system to try out some of the exciting new

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Hard Disk

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systems, such as Linux or Windows 2000. Second, use multiple operating systems to migrate to a new version of your operating system safely. Don't risk losing your current stable operating system in order to move to a new release. Instead, setup a second primary partition and copy your current operating system into this new partition.

Then install the new release on top of the copy and not on your original system. Once you have tested out the new version, you can easily delete the old operating system. Third, setup a new primary partition on your hard drive and install a fresh clean version of the operating system in it. Then install your most used applications in a separate APPS partition under this clean operating system. Download and install all of the patches for your operating system and applications. This clean system will run much more reliably than your old system with everything in it. Switch to the old system only for seldom-used applications or to test out new applications.

Protect Your Hard Drive

Hard drives are mechanical devices that are constantly in use on your system. As such, they eventually will fail and you'll lose your files. The best you can do is to frequently backup your files so that you can recreate your hard drive when it does fail. The following steps will let you better protect your hard drive from such failures. First, setup a backup partition on each of your hard drives. Hard drives are the best backup media to backup today's very large drives. Second, cross backup your entire hard drives each month using Drive Image, a full system backup utility. You'll create a condensed (50%) image of each of your partitions with all of their content, settings, and hidden files. This image

can quickly be restored to recreate your partitions and their content. Once a quarter, copy these backup images to a CD-R/RW and store these in a remote location to protect against fire or theft. Third, your data files need to be backed up on a daily basis. Use DataKeeper to monitor your important data files and to back them up immediately and automatically when they change. This makes sure you always have a current backup of your data files without having to remember to do it. Setting up multiple partitions on your hard drive and protecting them with current backups using Drive Image and DataKeeper will let you recover your system in minutes instead of days or weeks of effort.

This Month

Gene Barlow will give us another dynamite presentation of PowerQuest Products such as Partition Magic 7.0 and Drive Image 5.0. Gene also represents another company, AccessData Corp. He will show both **SecureClean**, which completely erases unwanted PC data, and **CleanDrive** which erases all file data stored on FAT12, FAT16, and FAT32 formatted drives without removing the drives'format. Check it out at www.secureclean.com

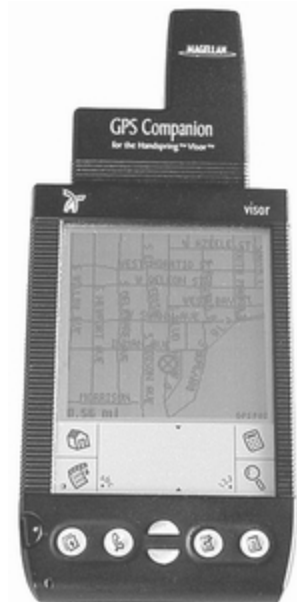
Magellan's GPS Companion

for the Handspring Visor
By William LaMartin, Editor,
Tampa PC Users Group, October 2001

I have had this new toy-the GPS Companion-for several months, a birthday gift from my wife and daughter, but am just now getting around to writing a review on it for the newsletter.

As pictured on this page, this device is a 12 channel global positioning receiver that attaches to the Handspring Visor's Springboard expansion port. Two pieces of software come with the unit: Map Companion and GPS Companion. They are installed from the Map Companion CD, which also contains maps of the entire United States. These maps are broken down by county within each state and then further broken down by individual municipality within each county. I think there are more than 20,000 such county and city files. For example, to cover all of Hillsborough County, FL, you will need to load into your Visor the Hillsborough County map, the Tampa map and the Temple Terrace map. The amount of memory your Visor has will determine how many maps can be loaded.

I have one of the early Visors with only 2 MB of memory. I have added an 8 MB Springboard memory expansion module but have found out that-although it is a great place to store files and programs-many programs cannot be run from there and data stored there cannot be accessed if that data must also be written to. Plus, obviously the 8 MB memory expansion module cannot be attached to the Visor at the same time the GPS Companion is attached. Thus, I am limited to 2



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GPS

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MB for my maps and any other Visor programs that I want to be loaded. My solution is to load all the maps I might need-a few at a time-and then move them to the expansion module along with programs that I also won't be using at the moment.

For example, I might leave only Hillsborough and Polk Counties in Florida, along with municipalities Tampa and Temple Terrace, in the main memory but have Pinellas, Highlands, Pasco and several other counties, along with their separate municipalities like St. Petersburg, all loaded into the expansion module. That way I would have all of Hillsborough covered, also Polk except for its municipalities. Of course, if you have a newer Visor with a much larger memory, that is even better.

So, how well does this GPS work? When you attach it to the Visor, the Visor turns on and the GPS Companion program starts. However, you must still start the GPS. It can take anywhere from less than one minute to almost 10 minutes for it to get a fix. However, it usually does it on the quicker end of the time scale. With the GPS Companion program you are given your heading, speed, longitude, latitude and elevation. If you switch to the Map Companion, you see your position on the map, which you can zoom in and out. And, as you change locations, the map scrolls.

It would be nice if the two programs were combined, where you didn't need to switch back and forth. And it would be nice if there were a map that showed the counties of each state. I know the positions of many of the Florida counties, since I have lived with them for many years. But on a recent trip to New York, I flew to New York City, spent a few days and then rented a car to travel to the country. I figured out I needed Westchester County, since I knew it was to the north, but

what about other counties? I didn't know the names of them. Then while driving through Westchester, I came to Sleepy Hollow and my map disappeared since I hadn't included the city of Sleepy Hollow. There are 29 separate municipality maps you need to include with the Westchester County map.

So I have concluded that while quite good when you are walking or when you are driving around a city like Tampa, the GPS Companion leaves a bit to be desired when used in a car on a trip spanning more than one county. For that I will have to rely on Street Atlas USA on my laptop and the GPS unit that came with that program. However, it is certainly not as compact a package as the little Visor device. I should note that on the plane trip, I sat by a window and tried to get the GPS unit to fix, but it didn't. I have read of others having no problem getting a fix with the same unit on their plane trips. It does, however, work well for me in an automobile.

If you are familiar with a city, then the GPS isn't of much use, since you can often walk a block and see a street sign and also look at the skyline to see where you are. But it would come in handy in a strange location. I certainly could have used it when I got turned around in the outskirts of Sleepy Hollow, but unfortunately I hadn't loaded that map.

The GPS Companion uses two AAA batteries which are supposed to last about 10 hours. But note that while the GPS unit is attached, the Visor remains on-and that also runs down the Visor's batteries. So take a lot of batteries on your trip. The unit costs around \$150. ?



Windows Tips

Michael Vincent, www.emazing.com

Auto Insert

Have you ever noticed that when you stick a CD into the CD drive that it automatically starts playing, or tries to begin the installation process? This is all well and good, but if you've already installed the program or don't want it to run right then, this feature can become a nuisance. You can turn off this auto insert feature in two ways:

1. Hold down the Shift key while inserting the disk. You will need to continue holding down the key until the disk activity stops. This deactivation is a temporary one as you insert each CD.
2. You can permanently turn off this feature within the Control Panel. First select the System icon, then select the Device Manager tab and press the (+) symbol next to where your CD is listed. Right-click the CD's name that appears and select Properties. Select the Settings Tab and remove the check mark next to Auto Insert Notification. You'll need to reboot for the changes to become active.

- Michael Vincent

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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.

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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 promptly at 2:30 p.m.

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

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for sale

Do YOU have some computer-related item you would like listed in this space? Contact Bob Ward, Editor at 756-2164.

treasurer's report



october 14, 2001

OPERATING FUND

Beginning Balance	\$2,540.40
Income	
Membership Dues	150.00
Interest income	12.43
Expenses	
Room Rent	75.00
Newsletter Copying	33.23
New Balance	<u>\$2,594.60</u>

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Beginning Balance	\$153.13
Interest Income	1.07
Balance	<u>\$154.20</u>



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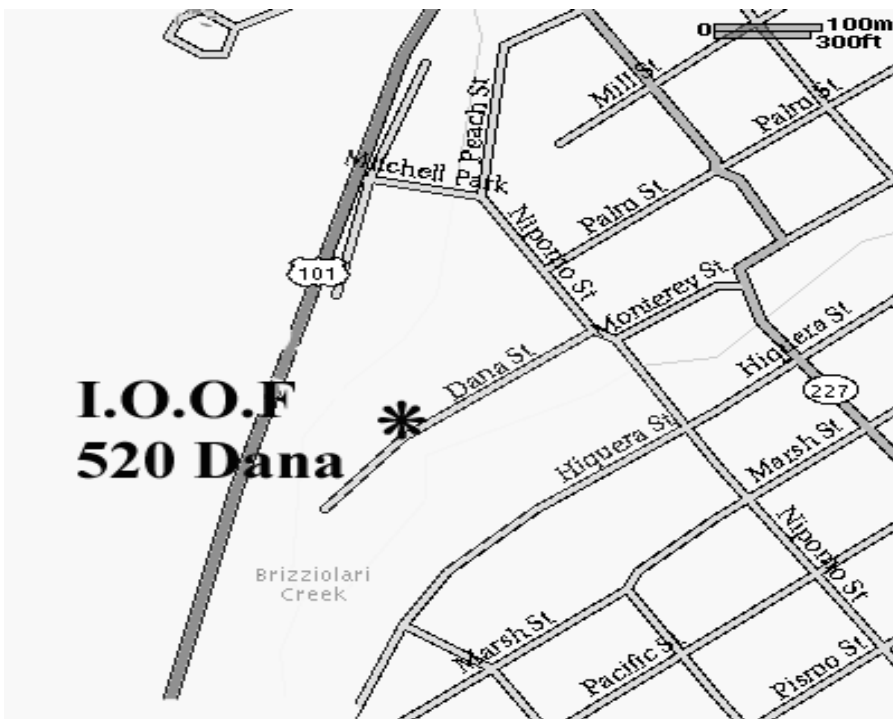
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Next Meeting

Sunday

Nov. 4th

1:00pm

Early SIGS

2:30pm

Gene Barlow

PowerQuest