

## **Upgrades for 32 Bits**

Everybody is sick of DOS, and even sicker of that big slob who sits on top of DOS--Windows. For that reason, 32-bit operating systems--which promise greater stability when they don't crash--are generating a lot of excitement.

Since I last examined the world of 32-bit operating systems late in 1992, the situation has changed considerably. Back then, OS/2 was worshipped by a small but fanatical group of followers, Unix was a confusing collection of incompatible flavors, and NT was a promise on Microsoft press releases. Today, the OS/2 worshippers are threatening to get violent, all varieties of Unix are beginning to taste bitter, and the Microsoft press releases are talking about Windows 95.

But what does that smorgasbord of 32-bit operating systems mean to the average user? Let's examine these environments and see just why they inspire such an undying devotion to DOS.

### **OS/2 Warp**

Last year, IBM gave OS/2 a major facelift to attract more Star Trek fans. To make the environment easier to use, Big Blue has added a 12-hour tutorial and developed more colorful icons. In the biggest change, OS/2 will now let you select and move an icon with the same mouse button. With Warp, IBM has broken serious ground, making it the first 32-bit operating system to put nuns on television.

In addition, OS/2 Warp comes with a wide range of Internet tools, giving you full access to the Information Superhighway for little more than what it would otherwise cost you. Also included with Warp are several modest applications to help you to forget the lack of full-featured alternatives.

Because of the few native applications available, OS/2's worth is totally dependent on how it runs Windows 3.1 applications. Try running a Windows app

in OS/2 and you'll be amazed at how fast it appears to move once you get it back into Windows.

### **Windows NT**

If you already know Windows 3.1, Windows NT's user interface will fit like an old glove--worn, full of holes, and frayed around the edges. After you've been wearing this glove for awhile, however, you'll notice that it's too big and behaves as if some of the fingers have been glued together.

When you load NT, the first thing you're asked is to press Ctrl-Alt-Del. Do so, if only to get the desire out of your system. NT will tempt you to press those three buttons many more times.

Because of the few native applications available, NT's worth is totally dependent on how it runs Windows 3.1 applications. NT handles this chore with the grace and speed of a gazelle--a dead one.

### **NextStep for Intel**

NextStep for Intel is the perfect choice for software developers who wish to create easy-to-use, object-oriented applications for a market of twelve. A few years ago, NextStep was sold only with specialized NeXT Workstations, the third most popular type of computer in a market where the number of viable platforms equaled one. Today, you can run NextStep on a standard, Intel-based PC--if you've got a very fast machine, 20MB of RAM, and a working knowledge of Unix.

Because of the few native applications available, NextStep's worth is totally dependent on how it runs Windows 3.1 applications. Here, NextStep for Intel is in a class by itself: It only runs Windows apps through an extra-cost, third-party utility that helps your Pentium emulate a 286.

### **Windows 95**

The common wisdom is that Windows 95 will finally take us out of the 16-bit world of DOS. What

advantage does this newest operating system have that puts it so far ahead of OS/2, NT, and NextStep? Simple; it hasn't shipped, yet. As long as Microsoft can maintain that condition, Windows 95 will be the premiere 32-bit operating system.

Luckily, Microsoft appears determined to maintain that position indefinitely. Microsoft's current goal, to release Windows 95 simultaneously with Encarta 96, seems every bit as realistic as congress' goal of lowering taxes and balancing the budget. It's therefore safe to assume that Windows 95 will enjoy its status as DOS' ultimate successor for a good many years to come.

Because of the few native applications available, Windows 95's worth is totally dependent on how it will run Windows 3.1 applications. According to Microsoft, '95 will, "on the average," run existing apps about 10% faster than does Windows 3.1. This assumes that the "average" application is a specially-designed, Microsoft-written benchmarks.

### **Making the Right Choice**

We've been waiting for something better to replace DOS for over eight years now, and some of us are getting desperate. We've reached the point now where it is imperative that the computer-using public choose a 32-bit operating system and stick to it. Otherwise, those of us in the computer press will be forced to write Windows 95 previews for another eight years.

But what operating system should you pick? You'll want one that is shipping now, enjoys universal popularity, and runs Windows apps at least as fast as Windows. Sorry, but you're still stuck with DOS.

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Gigglebytes: August 8

Frequently Asinine Questions

by Lincoln Spector

This document answers frequently asked questions about the ExonNet--what it is and how it differs from the Internet that preceded it. If you find any mistakes, please notify us immediately so that we can demonstrate how you were in error.

Copies of this document can be obtained by using the COPY command at any DOS prompt.

*Q: What exactly is the ExonNet?*

A: Often referred to as the Information Super Roadblock, the ExonNet came into being late in 1995, after the passage of the Communications Decency Act, the Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act, the Family Leave of Sanity Act, and the Great American Prayer in Schools Without Flag Burning or Unnatural Acts Act. The goal of these laws was to ensure competition without endangering corporate interests [[and]] to protect America's family values by keeping computer users ignorant about procreation.

*Q: The Internet had a very loose structure. How is the ExonNet built?*

A: The ExonNet is centered around a series of domains created and controlled by small providers such as Microsoft, AT&T, Disney, and so on. For

instance, you would subscribe to the Microsoft Network if you wanted technical support on programs from various software vendors, along with recommendations for competing products by Microsoft. The AT&T Connection lets you speak to a great many people--some of whom are willing to sell you something. On Disney's Magic Server, you can have videos piped directly into your home for only \$50 a showing. These services illustrat[[e]] why we need strict decency controls in electronic communications, since any child will be able to order any available movie through his or her parents' expense account.

*Q: Is it possible to access all of these domains?*

A: Very easily. Merely install 4 separate phone, coax, and ISDN lines in your house[[, each of them attached to]] your PC, TV, phone, and fax machine.

*Q: Can the domains talk to each other?*

A: Of course. For instance, if you subscribe to Murdock and I subscribe to Time Warner, you can send me text-based e-mail for a small fee per character.

*Q: What provisions are there to allow schools, libraries, and the poor to access the ExonNet?*

A: The ExonNet is conceived as a tool for enhancing our democracy by giving everyone access to corporate information. All of the companies involved have sworn that they will give full access to the most disadvantaged consumer as long as he or she has a good credit line.

*Q: If I wanted to start my own small publication on the ExonNet, how would I go about doing it?*

A: Invest about ten billion dollars in creating an information infrastructure. You may also want to make a down payment on some lawyers, since it is almost certain that at some point you will offend someone.

*Q: What sort of information can get you into trouble?*

A: Anything that could be interpreted as obscene, indecent, suggestive, or in favor of taxing the rich. In order to test for offensive material, every notice, picture, and private e-mail message is examined by a crack team of specially-trained 14-year-olds. If any of them giggle, the guilty parties are arrested.

*Q: Who are considered the guilty parties?*

A: The people who posted the crime, as well as anyone who downloads it. Online providers on both sides of the communication are also liable, as are the owners and handlers of any computer system that the offending material has passed through. If software was used to create or read the material, we'll be able to snag a few engineers, as well. We need to constantly be on the lookout for pornographers.

*Q: What punishments are involved?*

A: First-time offenders have a choice: ten years of hard labor or debugging Microsoft operating systems. Repeat offenders will be used as human guinea pigs at IBM's usability lab.

*Q: Aren't there certain exceptions to the rules?*

A: Yes. Bob Dole has added a waiver exempting any messages posted by movie stars known to contribute to the Republican party. And a provision inserted by an unidentified Congressman lightens the sentence of those making obscene jokes about Cher.

*Q: Was there too much sex on the old Internet?*

*A: Technically speaking, there never was any sex on the old Internet. Some things just can't be transported through a digital gateway.*

*On the other hand, there was a tremendous amount of sexually-oriented material on the 'Net-- everything from birth control discussions to the works of William Shakespeare. Clearly, something had to be done.*

*Q: Senator Exon has recently called for stiffer penalties, claiming that there is still too much sexually-oriented material online. How can that be?*

*A: Even the most dedicated 14-year-old will miss some sexual innuendos that can only be spotted by an experienced Senator.*

*Q: Aren't the laws governing the ExonNet a flagrant violation of the First Amendment?*

*A: Sorry, but I'm not allowed to comment on that.*

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*"Gigglebytes" is a satirical column loosely based on computer industry events, trends and people. The opinions expressed in this column are the writer's and do not necessarily reflect those of Computer Currents.*

## The Last Preview

Dek: One last chance to review Windows 95 without seeing the final product.

If everything goes according to plan (a big *if* in this industry), Windows 95 will appear in stores this week. People who don't write about computers for a living can't possibly imagine what a paradigm shift this is. Who knows how many of us will be laid off when there are no more operating system previews to write. With that recession in mind, I thought it was time to get in one last piece of speculation:

Windows 95 is a full 32-bit operating system, and as such works its magic by doing something totally new and revolutionary: It boots DOS and then loads Windows on top of it. This unique design allows the new operating system to run old, antiquated, 16-bit drivers, therefore insuring a level of stability and dependability at least equal to Windows 3.1.

Before you decide whether you should upgrade, you must consider Microsoft's goals in designing Windows 95. Basically, the company wanted to create an operating system that would 1) be 100% compatible with existing hardware and software, 2) crash less often than Windows 3.1, 3) crash more often than Windows NT, 4) crash in a more graceful manner--or at least with a new error message, 5) allow the sort of multitasking that Microsoft has been promising since Windows 1.0, 6) help Bill Gates take over the world. These are not listed in order of priority.

How has Microsoft succeeded in meeting these goals? Let's look at the product one more time before we have a final product to look at:

**User Interface:** What do you notice the first time you launch Windows 95? Or at least the first time you get it working properly? That's right--a revolutionary new user interface unlike anything ever seen outside of the Mac or OS/2. Program Manager, File Manager, Task Manager, Clock, and Ubiquitous Application Errors have all been replaced by a single bar at the bottom of the screen. At the left end of this bar is a button



labeled “Start,” which you must press to exit the system.

In the screen’s upper-left corner is an icon called “My Computer,” which Windows 95 won’t allow you to remove from the desktop. A useful reminder for people who think their system is a toaster.

Finally, there are *shortcuts*, so called because of their resemblance to Robert Altman movies. Click on a shortcut, and you’ll open the file that it’s a shortcut to. View a shortcut, and you’ll see the inside of that file. Copy a shortcut, and you’ll make another shortcut. Delete the original file, and you’ll have an orphan.

**Plug and Play:** Gone are the days when installing new hardware meant hours of sniveling, sweating, and swearing. Now, all you need do is upgrade to Windows 95, buy a new computer, and replace all of your peripherals, and you’ll be able to slide in a new board without even turning off your computer. Microsoft recommends, however, that you avoid doing this while standing in a bucket of water.

**Microsoft Exchange:** If you’re using too many Email programs now, Windows 95 is about to add one more. Exchange gives you a single inbox and outbox for accessing all of your Email and fax services, whether it’s Microsoft Mail, Microsoft Fax, or the Microsoft Network. Within a few months, front ends are expected for Microsoft CompuServe, Microsoft cc:Mail, and the Microsoft Pony Express.

**Performance:** Microsoft claims that Windows 95 will run as fast or faster than Windows 3.1 on a 386DX with 4MB of RAM. Of course, it’s pointless to test such claims without the shipping code, but who wants to wait for that?

I didn’t, so I pitted a beta copy of Windows 95 against an old beta of Windows 3.1, running a complex series of automated Word for Windows, Norton Desktop, Corel Draw, and AutoCAD routines on a 386DX with 4MB of RAM. As we go to press, the results are still inconclusive, and will remain so until the tests are finished.

In the meantime, there's no reason to doubt Microsoft's claims. After all, Microsoft's reputation tells us plenty about the company's respect for the truth.

**Long File Names:** No longer will you need to give files strange tags like LT2J44BP.DOC. Now you use meaningful names, such as "This is my letter to Jack of April 4, where I tell him that his plan for the Brigands Project is all wrong and that he's a stupid clod for thinking that Marketing has the last say on Development's plans, which is totally wrong.doc." Such a file will be instantly identified for what it is, and never mixed up with, say, "This is my letter to Jack of April 5, where I tell him that his plan for the Brigands Project is all wrong and that he's a stupid blob for thinking that Marketing has the last say on Development's plans, which is totally bogus.doc." And, in case you're still using Windows 3.1 applications, such files will still be easily identified as THISIS~1.DOC and THISIS~2.DOC.

Windows 95 will totally change the entire computer industry. But don't worry--we'll all be able to start writing about Cairo soon enough.

## The Programmers of Chelm

*(In Yiddish folklore, the village of Chelm is renowned as a town of fools--a place where wisdom, learning, and inspiration need never be hampered by common sense. The people of Chelm can, therefore, be considered the spiritual ancestors of all software designers.)*

One day, the programmers of Chelm decided to write a new database for the synagogue. "It must keep track of every family in Chelm," pointed out Shmul, who liked to think of himself as the project leader. "We need to know who's married to who, who are their children, and every first and second cousins."

"I see," said Mendel. "It must be a relational database."

"But who should we relate to who?" asked Moshe.

"Well, I certainly don't want my son marrying your daughter," objected Avram.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," called out Shmul, "let's remember what we're here for. Now I say we need a table for men, a table for women, a table for families, and a table for children."

"Does the rabbi get his own table?" asked Avram. Everyone agreed that he should, as he was wise.

"What about the user interface?" asked Moshe.

Everyone looked at Shmul. "There should definitely be one," he said. "Otherwise, who would use it?"

"Yes, but should it have a speedbar, smarticons, or a floating toolbar? And what kind of Help should it have?"

"Does it need help?" asked Mendel. "Does not the Talmud say that we should study? Let us write documentation that scholars can pour over and discuss at length."

But Moshe still wasn't satisfied. "What happens if Yussel and Shandel have another baby? How does Mordcha, the rabbi's best student, make note of that?"

“Everyone knows what he does,” answered Avram. “He writes it down on a piece of paper.”

“Which he then uses to wrap fish,” added Mendel.

“Yes, but what will he do when our system is complete?” Everyone agreed that this was a very good question.

It didn’t take Shmul long to come up with an answer. “He’ll turn on his computer, enter our database, and type in the name of the new baby.”

“But how will the database know that Yussel and Shandel are the parents?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” said Avram. “Chelm is a small village. Everyone knows everyone else. When there’s a new baby, how can someone not know the parents?”

“How do people know?” asked Mendel.

“That’s easy,” Avram answered. “Before the baby is born, they can tell by looking at the father. Why can’t our program do the same?”

“Because a computer doesn’t have eyes.”

“Ah!,” cried Shmul. “The computer doesn’t have eyes, but Mordcha does, and Mordcha can tell the computer everything he sees. And if he says ‘Yussel looks very happy’ one day, and ‘There’s a new baby in town’ on the next, the program will figure it out.”

Mendel considered this. “Perhaps, but I don’t like depending on Mordcha telling the computer everything he sees. If he forgets to tell the computer that he saw the rabbi eat, will the program think it’s Yom Kippur? It would be better if we write a query routine that will help Mordcha find a family. After all, are we not programmers? Mordcha could run the query from the main menu, and that will bring him to a view of Yussel and Shandel’s family.”

“Will he be able to enter a new baby from this view?” asked Moshe.

“Of course not,” said Mendel. “For that, he’d need to go to the New Baby form, which he can get to from the main menu. So after he’s done a query and found Yussel and Shandel, he can click a button to go back to the main menu. From there, he can go to any part of the database he wants.”

Moshe suspected there was something flawed here, and after a few minutes he figured out what. “But if he leaves the query and goes back to the main menu, how will the computer know that the new baby belongs to Yussel and Shandel?”

This question so greatly troubled the programmers of Chelm that Avram was moved to ask “Does Maimonides say anything about this?”

“Ach,” cried Moshe. “Who cares about Maimonides--he used COBOL.”

Just then Shmul found the solution. “It’s simplicity itself! We’ll put a button on the New Baby form that will let Mordcha do a query on the family table. When he finds Yussel and Shandel, he can press the button that will bring him back to the main menu, and from there return to the New Baby form.”

“That’s brilliant!” cried Moshe. Then he thought about it. “But when he goes back to the New Baby form, will the computer know that Yussel and Shandel are the parents?”

“Of course not. But he can always push the query button again.”

Moshe wasn’t too sure. “What if he doesn’t like being part of an infinite loop?”

“Let him complain. He’s studying to be a rabbi, isn’t he? He needs to learn about the infinite.”

“I have a better idea,” interjected Moshe. “We can simply make all the new babies belong to Yussel and Shandel.”

The programmers all agreed that this was the best plan yet. They were congratulating themselves when

Avram had a thought. “Oy vey! There’s something we overlooked. What will Mordcha wrap his fish in?”

Moshe laughed. “But that’s so simple. We’ll add an option for him to print a special report.”

## **A Child's Garden of Bugs**

SH: For the family that hacks together

Have you noticed all of the software aimed at children lately? Scarcely a week goes by when my family doesn't get a catalog advertising educational software or hyper-violent games--or even hyper-violent educational games. Most of these catalogs read something like this:

### **Marlboro's Encyclopedia of Health**

Interactive animated videos (click them and they actually move!) show you the workings of the lungs, heart, and respiratory system. Cute, animated camels pop up from time to time to guide you through your study. An absolute must for future doctors and patients. *Ages 9-18; list price \$49.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

### **Reader Rhinoceros**

Learning to read is an absolute must if your child's aspirations go beyond becoming the head of a Hollywood studio. With Reader Rhinoceros, children are encouraged to learn to read with fun-filled games like "Pin the Word On the Teacher" and a specially-licensed, easy-to-read version of "Doom." If you're vexed by college freshmen who can't read, here's the answer to your question. *Ages 5-18; list price \$99.95, estimated street price \$59.95*

### **What's in Mommy's Computer?**

Children need to know about computers if they're to function in today's world. With What's in Mommy's Computer?, they learn where microchips are made, how to format a hard disk, and what passwords can do for them. Bit Flipper, the special, animated disk editor, will give them hours of joy. An alternate version, What's in Daddy's Computer?, is available for members of the religious right. *Ages 4-18; list price \$79.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

### **SimCitadel**

Can your daughter get accepted into a macho, masochistic military academy? Why would she want to? Help her make up her mind in this college

preparation game. Great for guys, too...if they're man enough to take it. *Ages 17-18; list price \$99.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

### **The Berenstain Bears Meet Barney**

When the world's cutest family of suburban ursine Americans meet public television's most beloved Tyrannosaurus Rex, who will survive? Let your pre-schoolers decide for themselves as they learn family values, their ABC's, and the nature of extinct and endangered animals. *Ages 2-18; list price \$119.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

### **Imitation of Excellence**

Need something to perk up your grade-point average? This priceless CD-ROM contains over 15,000 outstanding term papers that may have earned A's for their original authors. All you have to do is cut, paste, and add your name! Impress your math teacher by turning in Einstein's Master thesis in the original German! And since modern teachers expect modern papers, Imitation of Excellence comes with 48 multimedia presentations to spice up your virtual effort. *Ages 14-18; list price \$129.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

### **My Very First Dissection**

Little Tommy and Taria learn all about the animal kingdom as Amy Amoeba and Jeremy Germ guide them through this colorful program. Even if your child never gets as far as dissecting the family cat, he or she will have hours of entertainment watching Dougie the Dog work his way through Tiny the Tiger's digestive system. *Ages 2-18; list price \$149.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

### **Where in the Hell is Carmen Miranda**

You're an agent for the Dante Detective Agency, and your assignment is to go through the seven circles of Hades looking for a singer with questionable taste in hats. In the course of your investigation, you learn history, geography, choreography, discography, and clinical psychology. If you don't buy this game, your child may end up in purgatory! *Ages 8-18; list price \$169.95, estimated street price \$39.95*



**America the Multimedia**

Let your kids learn about American history the fun way, with actual videos of Theodore Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson. Now your children won't have to read to find out what happens when they click the photo of Madonna. Comes in Right Wing, Traditional, 3rd World, and Possibly Accurate Editions. *Ages 8-18; list price \$259.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

**Parent Protector**

The Internet has opened an amazing world of information, but are you comfortable with everything it's bringing to your family? Neither is Sufferin Software, developers of Parent Protector, the only program that allows *you* to control where on the Web your parents go. Remember, it's up to you to protect Mom and Dad from information they're too old to handle--such as what their kids are doing on the Net. *Ages 1-18; list price \$19.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

**Moral Kombat 2.0**

CyborGandhi Systems is now shipping the ultimate passive resistance tournament game! Can you face onslaught after onslaught of determined pacifists with nothing to protect you but your own sense of right and wrong? After defeating his minions, you must face the Mahatma himself--a skilled non-fighter who can outmaneuver you in any boycott--and he's more photogenic than you. *Ages 9-18; list price \$1,259.95, estimated street price \$39.95*

## **Nevada Purgatory**

Dek: Suppose they gave a Comdex and nobody came

Most people avoided seeing *Showgirls* because they heard it was a lousy movie. I had a better reason. Why waste \$7.50 to spend an extra two hours at Comdex?

Last year, thanks to a herniated disc, I managed to get out of Chaos By the Sand altogether, but this year I wasn't so lucky. I spent three days navigating casinos, waiting in cab lines, and inhaling cigarette smoke to see what the computer industry is up to. And basically, it's up to no good.

In the two years since I last attended, Comdex was bought out by a company called SoftBank--you know, like semi-dry land that's about to slide into the river. SoftBank decides where every one of the show's 180,000 attendants gets to sleep, and they stuck me in the Tropicana, a casino/amusement park about three miles from the convention center. SoftBank recently bought Ziff-Davis, making it a direct competitor to my own employer, IDG. I hate to think where they'll put me next year!

The new rule in Las Vegas is that each hotel must have a theme--be it pirates or ancient Egypt or the Wizard of Oz--since losing money is no longer attractive enough on its own. The Tropicana's South Pacific theme is authentically created by employees in Hawaiian shirts and the giant Tiki identified as "Kala Nui, God of Money." At the hotel's entrance, a continuous recording in a bad Polynesian/Jamaican/generic islander accent reminds you that "Winning is everything at the island of Las Vegas."

### **Bad I/O**

Actually, getting a cab is everything at the Asylum of Comdex. You spend half your time waiting in line, hoping that if you wait long enough the show will end before you reach your destination. Through some major piece of civic oversight, there are no slot machines at the taxi lines.

When you finally get a cab, the chain-smoking driver will lecture you about why *he* hates Comdex, which he probably blames on you. After negotiating two or three miles in bumper-to-bumper traffic, he'll eventually bring you to your destination, where you'll promptly get lost.

And believe me: You haven't been lost until you've been lost in Las Vegas. Enter a hotel and you'll spend several hours trying to find your way out of the casino, which was probably designed by M.C. Esher. And if you're trying to find something in the Las Vegas Convention Center--well, just remember that the meeting rooms on the first floor are identified with the letter *L*, presumably for "Lower floor," while rooms on the second floor are identified with the letter *N*. "Not the lower floor?"

### **Show Biz**

Did I see anything interesting? Not much. These are lean years for the computer industry, and there's not much money left over for Elvis impersonators.

So instead I had to occupy my brain by looking for new technology. There wasn't much of that, either. But I did notice was that every display somehow involved the Internet. There were Web browsers, mail programs, Net-enabled databases, URLs, and TCP/IP-aware defraggers. And, of course, every booth needed a direct hookup to the Net in order to display its auto-updating advertising feature. It wasn't a good week to check your E-mail in Las Vegas.

I avoided the Net, but I did wander too close to a virtual reality booth which was, to my great disappointment, really there. Someone noticed my press badge, pulled me past a line of people waiting for a demonstration, took off my glasses, and stuck a big helmet on my head. When I pointed out that I couldn't see without my glasses, I was told to focus the helmet's eyepieces until I could see clearly. This was theoretically possible, but it involved getting my hand into the helmet in a space that was already occupied by my nose, then turning it 180 degrees.

So what was the game like? Basically, I flew around, trying to remember whether the orange blurs were the walls or the spaces in-between, while shooting at some fuzzy things in the distance. I think they were civilians.

But by far, the stupidest thing I saw at Comdex was Insights Software's SuccessWare Line of motivational programs, which interrupt you every few minutes with inspirational messages from best-selling self-help books. (And folks, as Dave Barry says, "I'm not making this stuff up.") Yep. When Excel crashes on you five minutes before the big financial report is due, you'll really want to be reminded that "There are literally no limits to what you can obtain."

These packages, which include *The Magic of Thinking Big*, *Super Self*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, can also be used as screen savers. Now that's more reasonable. If my computer is going to tell me to "Expand your mental limits and you'll expand the limits of your life," I'd just as soon not be looking at it.

Finally, on Wednesday, I was allowed to catch a plane and fly return to normality--or at least to the Bay Area, which is about as normal as my life ever gets. Maybe I'll go see a movie. I understand there's one currently playing called *Leaving Las Vegas*.

## Ask Dr. Deeram

*What's the difference between 32-bit disk access and 32-bit file access?--U. Simpleton, Kansas City, Kansas*

These two essential parts of Windows are as different as an object-oriented programming environment and a frog. Basically, 32-bit disk access improves Windows's performance by giving you faster access to your hard disk, while 32-bit file access speeds up Windows through faster access to your files.

To make either of these work dependably, you must have a standard IDE hard disk with a C: partition no larger than the physical drive. If you have an Extended IDE or SCSI drive, you will need a special VxD which you can probably download from your hard drive manufacturer's BBS. Since this VxD will almost certainly conflict with your BIOS, expect to spend at least three days on the phone with a motherboard factory in Taiwan.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*What exactly does it mean when Windows gives me an "Out of Memory" error message?--I. Claudius, Rome, NB*

I asked several of Microsoft's error-message authors, most of whom started out writing headlines for the National Inquirer, exactly what was meant by an "Out of Memory" error. None of them could remember.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*I've become completely addicted to Minesweeper, to the point where I'm not getting any work done. What should I do?--O. Suzzana, St. Louis, MO*

There's nothing wrong with Minesweeper, as long as you take enough occasional time out to sleep. The game is a lot like life: Sometimes you lose because you guessed wrong, sometimes you lose because your fingers didn't do what your brain wanted, and

sometimes you lose because you're bonehead stupid. On rare occasions you win. But the vast majority of times you lose before you can really start to play.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*We're about to buy a computer for our kindergarten-age daughter. Pentiums look like a good choice, but we've heard that they're not accurate. Should we be concerned about this?--R. Mizbrooks, Los Angeles, CA*

The famous Pentium floating point problem won't really be an issue unless your daughter runs an application on her Pentium that requires mathematical precision to the sixth decimal point, such as Iggly Piggly Goes To the Wiggly.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*What's the best, cheapest, easiest, and most secure way to hook up to the Internet?--B. Ware, Hackensack, British Columbia*

Through a modem. Although it's certainly not the fastest.

Unfortunately, you'll also need software. You can easily write this yourself, especially if you have four or five years experience as a Unix programmer, plus four or five years with nothing to do.

Otherwise, you'll need a TCP/IP stack, a SLIP or PPP account with an Internet service provider (or ISP), an E-mail management program, a Web browser, a newsreader, FTP and gopher clients, and 53 books on using the Internet. It's not as bad as it sounds. Configuring your TCP/IP stack, for instance, is a simple matter of setting up your POP mail server, domain name server, subnet mask, gateway address, NNTP server, SMTP server, and network class. Oh, and don't forget coming up with passwords for your SLIP/PPP User ID, Shell User ID, and POP Mail User ID.

Another option is to subscribe to a commercial on-line service that provides an Internet gateway, such as CompuProd or America Onhold. These will give you access to any part of the Internet you wish to visit, provided it's a place that the on-line service is willing to send you.

If this is impractical, you can simply buy every magazine available at your local newsstand and read all of the articles on the Internet. Chances are you'll find something more entertaining than the reality.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*I hear a lot of talk about Lotus Notes. Can you explain exactly how it will improve my business?--C. Noevil, Furd, NJ.*

No.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*Can I use a spreadsheet to balance the federal budget?--N. Gingrich, Washington, DC.*

Of course. List the entire budget in column B, and the expected revenue in column D. Then, in cell E5, enter "@Idobelieveinfairies(B..D)".

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

*When should I upgrade to Windows 95?--A. Gurnseycow, New York, NY*

This isn't something you should rush into. You'll want to be absolutely sure ahead of time that your hardware will work with the new operating system. Therefore, it's best not to upgrade until you have tried out Windows 95 thoroughly by buying and installing it.

Luckily, Windows 95 should clear up this entire problem.

**Feeling left behind by the information revolution?  
Send your questions to Ask Dr. Deeram and we'll  
soon have you fighting in the streets. If we use  
your question, we promise not to print your real  
name.**



## Ask Dr. Deeram

SH: More Questionable Answers For Your  
Unanswerable Questions

*I recently had to repartition and reformat my hard drive. How do I restore my files from a tape backup made with Windows 95's Backup program?--B. Keaton, Piqua, Kansas*

It's a good thing you have a backup; users who don't backup their systems are like trilobites trying to work a modern dishwasher--they just don't get it. Luckily for you, Windows 95 Backup makes the job a snap.

Simply launch Backup from Windows 95's Start menu and...Okay, first you'll have to reinstall your DOS-based CD-ROM software. Find the software and documentation that came with your CD-ROM drive (be sure to check your garage), and try to remember how you configured the drive. Once you have the CD-ROM drive working, make sure the upgrade disk is in it and from Program Manager select...Actually, first you'll have to reinstall Windows 3.1. Dig out your original installation floppies and...I'm sure you can remember this routine from the last time.

Then it's a simple matter of loading Backup and following the prompts. Feel like snapping yet?

*My lack of an Internet e-mail address has become a major source of embarrassment at parties. What should I say when people ask me for it?--J. E. Brown, Holgate, OH*

Give them the address

"john.jacob.jingleheimer.smith43568@westcoast.eastcoast.polysci.accounting.edu.gov.com." Say it very fast when they don't have a pen or paper handy.

*A number of new keyboards are supposed to be better for your hands, keeping them in a more natural position. Are they worthwhile?--W. C. Fields, Philadelphia, PA*

Some of the new keyboards are quite wonderful. I recommend the All-Natural Cybortronic Organic Mechanic Fingerboard, by Nature's Own RSI Corp. For maximum flexibility, the All-Natural breaks down into 101 separate pieces, each of which can be arranged and reassembled in whatever layout you find most comfortable.

For maximum effect, I recommend arranging the keys so that they are at least six inches away from each other. That way, you can put the absolute minimum strain on your hands by typing with your forehead.

*My computer has 8MB of RAM in the form of eight 60-nanosecond 4-megabit SIMMs. What's the easiest way to upgrade to 16MB of RAM?--C. Chaplin, London, England*

Buy a new computer.

*Over the course of the last fifteen years, I've bought an Apple II, an Osborne I, an XT, an AT, an early Compaq portable, a Lisa, and a PS/2. Now they're all keeping each other company in the closet. What can I do with them?--H. Lloyd, Burchard, NE*

First of all, get them out. The closet is not an emotionally healthy place for a computer to spend its life.

Once out, upgrade them all to Pentiums and Power PCs. For instance, to upgrade the Osborne, carefully open the front panel and remove all of the internal cables you can reach. Then buy a Pentium motherboard, hard and floppy drives, graphics and I/O boards, a power supply, and a case. Carefully assemble the new pieces, using the Osborne's cables. If you're careful, you should also be able to use the Osborne's screws.

There's another option if you don't have the technical know-how for assembling hardware: You can donate the systems to the charity of your choice. Not only will you get a tax write-off, but the charity in question will never bother you again.

*As a parent, I'm very worried about pornography on the Internet. Where can I find it?--G. Marx, New York*

After many hours of extensive research, I am forced to conclude that there is an enormous supply of pornography on the Internet. It may even be inexhaustible, although I can't say for sure until my research is complete.

Finding it should be no problem. Ask your kid.

*I just bought a 1-gig hard drive for my PC. Should I use it as one big drive or partition it into several small ones?--O. Hardy, Harlem, GA*

The answer depends on how you intend to use the drive. A 1-gig partition uses 32K clusters, which wastes an average of 16K per file--more if the file contains useless information. On the other hand, multiple small partitions have their own problems: As you install applications into "drives" D:, E:, and F:, most of their files will still end up in C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM.

What it comes down to is this: If you plan to store files on your hard drive, use multiple partitions. If you plan to store information, use one.

*How do you get a "rippling" effect with Corel Draw?--M. West, Brooklyn, NY*

Throw the documentation into a body of water.

*Why did Microsoft select the Stones song "Start Me Up" for the Windows 95 commercials?--D. Kaye, New York*

There was considerable debate at the Microsoft offices as to what Rolling Stones song would best represent the new operating system. Early on, "19th Nervous Breakdown" was the front runner, coming in just ahead of "Let It Bleed," "Beast of Burden," "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," and "Shattered." Bill Gates personally lobbied for "Heart of Stone." In the end, "Start Me Up" was selected for the line "You make a grown man cry."

**“Ask Dr. Deeram” appears in this space at irregular intervals--whenever Lincoln Spector can’t think of anything better to write. If you send a question to “Ask Dr. Deeram,” you must be very desperate.**

## The First (Or Seventh) Annual Pentium Awards

As some of you may have noticed, I didn't end 1994 with my traditional "Friday Awards," given to those companies and individuals without whose tiresome efforts this column wouldn't be possible. Sorry to disappoint you, but here are the awards --with a new time slot and name.

I've moved the awards from the last issue of the old year to the first issue of the new for one simple reason: My new editor, Robert Luhn, told me to. Tradition is one thing, but this guy approves my pay checks.

The name is a different matter: Ashton-Tate's fabled and failed flat-file database Friday lived its short life many, many years ago. Few people remember it now, and even Ashton-Tate is a fading memory. I needed a name that spoke to the fast-paced, powerful computing world of today.

So, to honor last year's most questionable achievements in computer science and marketing, welcome to the first annual Pentium Awards, so called because, in this industry, some things just don't add up.

And the winners are:

### **The P. T. Barnum Award for Overused Hype**

This goes, hands down, feet first, and peddle to the metal to the famed *Information Superhighway*, the only computer-industry buzzword ever to be pounded into the ground by the general interest media. In fact, on Sunday, July 17, it was mentioned in three syndicated comic strips: Pluggers, Dilbert, and Shoe. Only Dilbert's author, Scott Adams, showed signs of having the faintest inkling about what the term means. And although it avoided the "I" word, that day's Doonesbury had a father leave his son

at camp with a reminder to “E-mail us every day.”

### **The Titanic Award for Special Achievement in Technology**

Who could possibly win this but Intel, whose Pentium chip changed everything from the name of these awards to the basics of math. Isn't it comforting to know that if you buy a brand-new Pentium next month, you'll have a slight chance of getting a dependable chip?

### **Best Achievement In Naming an Operating System**

This is a tough one. How do you chose between IBM's call to “get warped” and Microsoft's attaching a year to the former Chicago? In the end, I had to give the bronze raspberry the Microsoft. Why? In two years, “Warp” will sound no sillier than it does today, while the name “Windows 95” will be downright embarrassing, especially if the program hasn't shipped yet. Personally, the name I was rooting for was Windows for Godot.

### **The US Post Office Excellence in Service Award**

A matching set of bad sectors go to Symantec's Central Point division, which decided that 30 days of free technical support was more than their customers deserved. (Remember when software came with a lifetime of free support?) To help educate the public, Central Point continued to sell boxes that promised the 30 days, thereby teaching novice users not to believe everything they read.

### **Best New Acronym**

Intellicorp wins this traditional award with a methodology called Object-Oriented Information Engineering (OOIE). I believe it runs on your GUI. Let's hope it doesn't go kablooie.

### **The Ollie North Legal Award for Justice Served**

This one goes to the U.S. Justice Department for its quick and decisive slapping of Microsoft's wrist. At least other companies will be allowed to sell their own software--for now.

### **Best Technology That May Someday Serve a Purpose**

There's little RISC in giving this to the PowerPC, a phenomenally powerful processor for which people may someday find a use. Actually, the PowerPC's already a success on the Mac platform--so much so that it may even help slow Apple's slide into oblivion. Otherwise, the PowerPC has IBM's unwavering support, which is enough to kill off any promising technology.

### **The Big Flap About the Big Flap Award**

What size footprint will Windows 95 have when it finally ships? Will you have any room left on your hard disk? Microsoft gave members of the press a hint this year when they sent us Windows 95 mouse pads that measured an enormous nine by eleven inches. Time to clear some desk space.

### **Best Performance In a Buyout**

This spring we had Novell buy WordPerfect, Adobe buy Aldus, and Symantec buy Central Point (thereby guaranteeing that there would be no competition in the utilities field). But the prize must go to Microsoft for their (not-as-yet-approved) buyout of Intuit, a small company that dared to remain Number One after Microsoft entered their market. As Billionaire Bill might say, "If you can't beat 'em, buy 'em."

### **The Award for Proper Use of the English Language Award**

From a letter that Jane Bator & Associates sent Robert Luhn last February: "The design and architecture of the RUAC makes Raidtec the only RAID developer/manufacturer who has engineered a RAID solution based on a state machine approach. With Raidtec's RUAC Parity Generator and its method of calculating parity on-the-fly, Raidtec is the only RAID supplier to

eliminate the read-modify-writeback sequence associated with parity generation in RAID 3 and 5 configurations.” What more can I say?



## **Plug and Swear**

The day finally came about a month ago: I knew I had to buy a new hard disk. Maybe I needed cheering up after the long, wet winter. Maybe prices had dropped low enough even for me. Or maybe it was the revelation that, in order to make room for more clipart, I had deleted my DOS directory.

Whatever it was, I knew that my once vast expanse of 250MB no longer cut it. So I went out and splurged: I bought myself a Conopopolus Model 251684694--a one-gigabyte Enhanced IDE drive. This was really going to town!

But before I could go to town, I had to climb inside my computer--and that's really a bad neighborhood. First I removed the monitor and my beagle, both of which tended to live on top of my computer. Then I unplugged fifteen cables, picked up the computer, and carried it to the kitchen table, where there was room to work.

After carefully removing five screws and searching for them on the floor, I opened up the case. I knew I had to remove my old drive, since two IDE drives get along inside one computer about as well as would two cats.

Within minutes, my new drive was in place. I closed up the computer, bent the hard metal of the case this way and that to get the screws back into place, carried the system to my desk, plugged in fifteen cables, put the monitor back where it belonged, and turned on my computer.

Well, yes, all of my files were still on the old hard drive. So I removed the monitor, unplugged fifteen cables, carried the system to my kitchen table, removed five screws and searched for them on the floor, swapped the drives again, put everything back together, carried...to make a long story not quite as long, after five trips between the study and the kitchen, I had a full backup in hand and a new working hard drive in the computer. Well, sort of working.

## **Enhanced Incompatibility**

If your BIOS is more than a year old, it refuses to see anything above 528 megabytes of hard disk space. Since my BIOS is an ancient 13 months, I called its manufacturer to ask about an update. I figured it wouldn't be difficult, since my system was supposed to have a "flash" BIOS. "Oh, yes," I was told, "that one's a flash BIOS. Replace it and your motherboard goes up in a flash."

Luckily, the Conopopolus came bundled with just the software I needed to fix the problem--DiskOTech, by DriveN Software. With DiskOTech, you can trick your old, antiquated BIOS into recognizing a hard disk large enough to hold two or three applications.

That is, assuming you can find two or three applications that are compatible with DiskOTech. Okay, to be honest, none of my applications had trouble with DiskOTech. DOS and Windows did.

By this time I needed to get some work done, so I removed DiskOTech, reformatted my hard drive, and restored my backup to the world's most expensive half-gigabyte drive. I also shelled out \$123 for a GUM 440 I/O-U card, which, when placed between my motherboard and drive, would give my antiquated BIOS Enhanced IDE capabilities.

So I backed up my hard drive again, removed the monitor and beagle, carried the system to the kitchen table, removed the screws, picked them up off the floor, opened my system, and gazed at the layer of cables that protected the inside of my computer from the harsh elements of my understanding. It was nice to know that, no matter my operating system's shortcomings, at least my hardware was multi-threaded.

After a half hour of meditation, I figured out where the cables went, closed up the system, carried it back to my desk, plugged everything in, turned on my computer, and watched as thick clouds of smoke billowed out. This was followed by seventeen more trips back and forth, plugging in this and that, removing and restoring that and the other thing, and

attempting to reinsert several cards upside-down. Nothing would make the damn thing boot properly--at least until I allowed my beagle to return to his rightful place.

With my new I/O-U card also in place, I no longer needed DiskOTech! Without any special software, I could now access...a full 250MB.

I called GUM Technical Support to see if they had any advice about letting me do better. The technician listened quietly as I explained my problem, then asked "Did you use DiskOTech before installing our board?"

"Yes."

"That's your problem. You have to remove DiskOTech completely or our board won't work." I told her that I had removed it, but she didn't agree. "The only way to thoroughly remove DiskOTech is to FDISK your system, remove the hard drive, run it over a bulk eraser, run over it with a Mac truck, return it to your system, remove your I/O-U card, FDISK again, remove every other card in your system, scrub out your motherboard with warm, soapy water, run FDISK, re-install all of your cards, do an FDISK, and get rid of that beagle."

"And then everything should work?" I asked.

"It should," she reassured me. "There are two programs we know of that won't work with the GUM 440 I/O-U card."

"And they are?"

"DOS and Windows."

## Frequently Asinine Questions

This document answers frequently asked questions about the ExonNet--what it is and how it differs from the Internet that preceded it. If you find any mistakes, please notify us immediately so that we can demonstrate that it was you who is in error.

Copies of this document can be obtained by using the COPY command at any DOS prompt.

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Q: What exactly is the ExonNet?

A: Often referred to as the Information Super Roadblock, the ExonNet came into being late in 1995, after the passage of the Communications Decency Act, the Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act, the Family Leave of Sanity Act, and the Great American Prayer in Schools Without Flag Burning or Unnatural Acts Act. The goal of these laws was to insure competition without endangering corporate interests, while protecting America's family values by keeping computer users ignorant about procreating.

Q: The Internet had a very loose structure. How is the ExonNet built?

A: The ExonNet was designed around a series of domains created and controlled by small providers--Microsoft, AT&T, Disney, and so on. For instance, you would subscribe to the Microsoft Network if you wanted technical support on programs from any of many software vendors, along with recommendations for competing products by Microsoft. The AT&T Connection allows you to speak to a great many people--some of whom are willing to sell you something. On Disney's Magic Server, you can have videos piped directly into your home for only \$50 a showing. These are a good example of why we need strict decency control in electronic communications, as any child will be able to order any available movie through his or her parents' expense account.

Q: Is it possible to access all of these domains?

A: Very easily. You just get seven separate wiring systems installed in your house, your television, and your computer.

Q: Can the domains talk to each other?

A: Of course. For instance, if you subscribe to Murdock and I subscribe to Time Warner, you can send me text-based Email for a small fee per character.

Q: What provisions are there to allow schools, libraries, and the poor to access the ExonNet?

A: The ExonNet is conceived as a tool for enhancing our democracy by giving everyone access to corporate information. All of the companies involved have sworn that they will give full access to the most disadvantaged consumer--just so long as he or she has a good credit line.

Q: If I wanted to start my own small publication on the ExonNet, how would I go about doing it?

A: Invest about ten billion dollars in creating an information infrastructure. You may also want to make a down payment on some lawyers, since it is almost certain that at some point you will offend someone.

Q: What sort of information will get you into trouble?

A: Anything that could be interpreted as obscene, indecent, suggestive, or in favor of taxing the rich. In order to test for offensive material, every notice, picture, and private Email message is examined by a

crack team of specially-trained 14-year-olds. If any of them giggle, the guilty parties are arrested.

Q: Who are considered the guilty parties?

A: The people who posted the crime, as well as anyone who downloads it. Both of their 'Net providers are also liable, as are the owners and handlers of any computer system that the offending material has passed through between the two. If software was used to create or read the material, we'll be able to snag a few engineers, as well. We need to constantly be on the lookout for pornographers.

Q: Are you saying then that pornographers are responsible?

A: No, not at all. They tend to be very irresponsible.

Q: What punishments are involved?

A: The maximum penalty for first offenders is ten years of hard labor, debugging Microsoft operating systems. Repeat offenders will be used as human guinea pigs at IBM's usability lab.

Q: Aren't there certain exceptions to the rules?

A: Yes, in fact. Bob Dole has added a waiver exempting any messages posted by movie stars known to contribute to the Republican party. And a provision inserted by an unidentified Congressman lightens the sentence of those making obscene jokes about Cher.

Q: Was there too much sex on the old Internet?

A: Technically speaking, there never was any sex on the old Internet. Some things just can't be transported through a digital gateway.

On the other hand, there was a tremendous amount of sexually-oriented material on the 'Net--everything from birth control discussions to the works of William Shakespeare.

Q: Senator Exon has recently called for higher penalties, claiming that there is still too much sexually-oriented online. How can that be?

A: Even the most dedicated 14-year-old will miss some sexual innuendo that can only be spotted by a Senator.

Q: Aren't the laws governing the ExonNet a flagrant violation of the First Amendment?

A: Sorry, but I'm not allowed to comment on that.

## Stalled Install

Dek: For all I know, the program might be easy to use

I hate writing thank you notes. In fact, I have three cousins I haven't dared speak to since my wedding. So I thought I could make good use of MicroManager Software's 98 Thank You Notes For 97 Occasions 96 for Windows 95. I figured it would be worth using for at least a year.

Okay, there was another reason I wanted this particular program. When I had upgraded to Windows 95, my system crashes dropped to an average of three a day. That was pretty impressive, but I was hoping that if I started using some Windows 95 applications, I could get the number down to two.

Once I got the package home, I tore open the shrink-wrap, broke the seal, opened the cardboard box, removed the inner cardboard box, picked the registration card off of the floor, tore the plastic bag holding the floppies, and tossed the documentation into the garbage. Then I popped the first floppy into drive A: and waited.

After ten seconds, I remembered that Auto Insert Notification only works with CD-ROMs. I selected Run from the Start menu and typed "A:SETUP." Then, just before I pressed Enter, I remembered that that whole, long process was unnecessary. So I canceled what I was doing, popped up the Start menu, selected the Settings menu and from that the Control Panel, double-clicked Add/Remove Programs, clicked the Install button, clicked Next, and waited while Windows found SETUP.EXE on the floppy. I'm sure glad such things are automated these days.

After a few seconds of staring at a blue screen, SETUP.EXE started asking me a few questions. It wanted to know my name, who I worked for, and what I was doing in the vicinity of the Alameda Naval Base on the night of the 23rd. Then it asked me if I wanted a Standard Installation, a Non-Standard Installation, a Complete Installation, an Incomplete Installation, or a



randomly-generated new set of wallpaper. I picked “Installation Without a Name” and went on.

Next it needed to know what directory it should install itself into, the default being C:\. Always a bit of a loner, I chose to install it to “C:\Applications\New Applications\Applications I Think I Can Really Use\Thank You Notes\98 Thank You Notes For 97 Occasions 96 for Windows 95.” I love long file names.

SETUP.EXE, on the other hand, wasn’t sure how it felt about them. It told me that the directory I requested didn’t exist, and it asked if I wanted the program to create it. Wondering what else I could possibly want--aside from a smarter setup program--I clicked “Yes” and waited for the next disaster.

The actual installation went without a hitch--as far as I could tell. Then SETUP.EXE asked me if I wanted to read the README file. I said I did, and the program promptly rebooted Windows 95.

As soon as I could, I loaded 98 Thank You Notes and got to work. When the program came up, it gave me a list of thank you note types to choose from--you know, “Thank You To Brother, Thank You To Sister, Thank You To Uncle Ernie, Thank You Boss For the Totally Tasteless Ceramic Pottery,” and so forth.

I picked “Thank You Aunt Mabel For the Lovely Prints You Sent Us Seven Years Ago” and was rewarded with a “File not found” error message. I was given two options: “Close” and “Ignore.” I picked “Close” after discovering that when I clicked “Ignore,” the program ignored the fact that I had clicked it. I also discovered that every other thank you note type I picked gave me the same error.

So I called MicroManager’s technical support line, waited on hold half an hour, carefully explained my problem in full detail to a receptionist, waited another half hour, then explained it again to a technician. “You’re missing the files THANKYOU.DLL, YRWELCOM.BAT , and NOREALLY.INI--the setup routine must have failed to install them,” she explained. “The only reliable solution is to uninstall

the entire program and reinstall it from scratch.” She paused. “You know, I’ve never heard of this problem before.”

I did as I was told. After the installation was complete and the computer rebooted, I looked for the files and, sure enough, they were there. So I confidently clicked the 98 Thank You Notes item in my Start menu and waited while Windows 95 searched in vain for THANKYOU.EXE. Seems that the setup program had left out something else of importance.

So I removed it and installed it again. This time, no .DLLs. And again. No files beginning with the letter *K*. The third time: No Uninstall program. With installation number four, the system started crashing. By the time I got to number 8, Windows would crash if I waived the floppy in its general direction.

I called technical support, waited, and explained the situation. “It’s simple”, he responded. “SETUP.EXE has successfully gotten its ‘Kill Everything’ instruction into the registry. The only fix is to format your hard disk and restore everything from a backup, which is of course impossible under Windows 95.” He paused. “You know, I’ve never heard of this problem before.”

Oh, well; at least he was nice about it. Maybe I should send him a thank you note.

## Day of the Lotus

It looks like it's really going to happen. IBM, having outbid AT&T, Pacific Gas and Electric, and my neighbor Norman, is actually going to buy Lotus Development Corp.

Does anyone realize what a horrible loss this will be to the computer industry? One of the most innovative companies we've got--the great popularizer of copy protection and look-and-feel lawsuits--is about to be swallowed up by the corporation that gave us DisplayWrite IV.

Perhaps I'm being too alarmist. After all, this buyout has done wonders for the emotional well-being of Phillippe Kahn and Adam Osborne. Before any judgments are made, we need to examine this situation more closely and help muddy the waters.

First of all, what's IBM's motive? That's simple. Lotus is the only major software vendor developing for OS/2. IBM, following its normal corporate policies, must therefore behave in as hostile a manner as possible.

But how hostile is it? Let's face it, if Lotus really hadn't wanted IBM to take over, there's a certain federal judge who would have stopped it pronto. The whole thing was probably just hostile enough to keep the price up.

So what will IBM do with its new subsidiary? How will this effect Microsoft, Novell, and any other competitors. Are there any other competitors? And most important of all, what will I write about for the remaining three quarters of this column?

To answer that last question, I borrowed a Cray Supercomputer from the U.S. Weather bureau, and am now ready to make a few predictions:

\* IBM will promise to keep the Lotus group as an autonomous subsidiary working with a great deal of freedom in their old Cambridge offices. Big Blue will make the same promise after moving the subsidiary to Baton Rouge, Armouk, Little Rock, and Death Valley.

\* By the end of this year, users will have a choice between buying the Windows 95 application suite that runs best under Windows 95, the Windows 95 application suite that runs best when your Windows 95 workstation is on a Novell network, or the Windows 95 application suite that would run best on OS/2 if it were only an OS/2 application to begin with.

\* Microsoft, feeling threatened by a company with ten percent of the operating system *and* application markets, will release a new logo policy for Windows 96, disqualifying applications that work in an operating system where shortcuts are called “shadows.”

\* Major warfare will break out within IBM as to what to rename the various Lotus programs. At first, the Warp contingent will get the upperhand, and a media campaign will be devised to sell the database Impulse, the word processor Holodeck Pro, and the spreadsheet Enterprise. But the Warp people will be over-ruled by IBM traditionalists, and Ami Pro will be 43X7b and Approach 86X3w. They will, however, have difficulty finding the right number to represent 1-2-3.

\* Following the marketing lead of their new subsidiary, IBM will repackage OS/2 in a bright, yellow box. This will cause great confusion in the marketplace, where people will assume that it's a Symantec product.

\* The Lotus applications will all receive a facelift, acquiring new, easier user interfaces. For instance, you will be able to define an Approach object by right-clicking the existing object, selecting “Create Object” from the pop-up object, finding the new object on the desktop object, right-dragging it to the appropriate object, and filling it with the objects of your desire. Right-clicking the object's object and selecting “Object” will then give you a twenty-page tabbed dialog object for defining the object's objects.

\* The object most Approach users will utilize immediately is the shredder.

\* To kick off a new marketing campaign touting Smartsuite for OS/2 as “The International Choice,” IBM will throw a big roll-out party at the South Pole.

\* Novell, realizing that an application suite can't survive on a NOS, will release its own desktop operating system, Graphical CP/M. Kaypro owners the world over will rejoice.

\* Microsoft, feeling threatened by a company with ten percent of the operating system *and* application markets, will buy Novell, Symantec, Borland, LL Bean, and the U.S. Justice Department.

\* Notes and cc:Mail will be combined into a single, extremely ambitious communications product called LaForge 3389Q, which will make sending a binary file over the Internet as easy as writing a container in C++.

\* Fanatical OS/2 users will riot in cities that are not doing their municipal budgets in 1-2-3.

\* IBM Notes will be advertised on TV with Italian nuns asking Arabic businessmen "Where would you rather have gone today?"

\* Microsoft, feeling threatened by a company with ten percent of the operating system *and* application markets, will announce a new version of OLE that uses your modem to report any violations of its licensing agreement's "Microsoft-Only" clause.

\* Within three years, only old-timers will remember that there was once a company called Lotus. Within five years, few will remember IBM.

## Betazoid Software

*April 16, 1998*--Microsoft announced today the shipment of M38, officially touted as "The Real, Absolute, No-Questions-Asked Final Beta of Windows 95."

According to Personal Systems Division Senior Vice President Rob Lowe, "Windows 95 is still on target for a September release. Our troubles are behind us, and I look forward to completing the project without further unfortunate incidents." Lowe was no doubt referring to the recent outbreak of ritual suicides among his staff.

As with past betas, M38 will be sold directly to the public through standard retail channels, although the price will go up to \$70. "Simple inflation," was Lowe's explanation for the change. "Microsoft can't afford to continue selling \$50 betas forever." For that price, beta testers will receive the complete beta CD-ROM and access to technical support for only \$45 a phone call.

Lowe also answered users concerns about "standard retail channels," since M38 is only being sold in Microsoft Retail Stores. "Microsoft would be perfectly willing to sell M38 and all of our products through other outlets, if such outlets existed." Microsoft is refusing other software companies access to the M38 beta for similar reasons.

"People have been stuck with Windows 3.11111a for too long," Lowe asserted. "When Windows 95 ships in September, we'll get to work on Cairo in earnest. By next spring, we should be able to go on-sale with a beta."

\* \* \*

*April 30, 1998*--In a long announcement released yesterday to the press, Microsoft responded to a recent review of the Windows 95 M38 beta in Better Homes and Micros.

The announcement began with a quote from Personal Systems Division Senior Vice President Brad Pitt. “Microsoft is still on target for releasing Windows 95 in September. You have to remember that M38 is only beta, and that bugs are bound to crop up. The Windows 95 beta program is vitally important to Microsoft, and not only because it comprises the company’s single largest source of income.”

Microsoft admits that M38 has a structural problem that may render the beta inoperable. “As BH&M pointed out, in certain rare cases M38 will produce a Compatibility-Related Absolute System Halt. The reason for this CRASH is simple: In order to assure complete backward compatibility, when you launch a program in Windows 95, the operating system loads it into RAM, a volatile and dangerous place filled with other applications. Luckily, this is a very simple problem that we have already isolated and fixed. We will make samples of the corrected version available to the press as soon as we’ve rewritten the kernel.”

The announcement then countered BH&M’s review point by point:

*“Running two applications at the same time can crash M38.”* This is not strictly true. M38 will only produce the incident described if you launch one program while another is in use. And even then, this anomaly won’t occur unless both or one of the applications takes overt advantage of certain Windows 95 features, such as file access or icons.

*“The fatal flaw is fundamental to Windows 95’s memory management, and will take considerable work to correct.”* Windows 95 manages most of your memory with aplomb. The few known problems are limited to the first 640K of RAM.

*“M38’s installation program is appalling, requiring you to continually remove and re-insert the CD-ROM into its drive.”* This was done for backwards compatibility with older, legacy installation routines.

*“M38 is painfully slow. The simple job of launching WinWord 8.0 took three hours. When compared with*

*Windows 3.1111a, this is a decrease in performance of over 20 percent!*' Not in our tests. We found that on a Septuagenarian 300 with 98MB of RAM, M18 loaded WinWord nearly twice as fast as it did on a 486.

*“Overall, M38 is slow, buggy, difficult to use, and totally unreliable. We wouldn’t recommend this operating system to anyone.”* There are bound to be a few bugs. Keep in mind that M38 is still beta, and shouldn’t be looked upon as shrink-wrapped code. Besides, we have heard nothing like these complaints from the hundreds of thousands of users who have bought this beta.”

\* \* \*

*September, 1998*--Microsoft announced today that the shipment of M39, officially touted as “The Real, Absolute, No-Questions-Asked, Final, This-Time-We-Mean-It Beta of Windows 95,” will be delayed until December.

*“Windows 95 is still on target for the May ‘99 release,”* promised Personal Systems Division Senior Vice President Macaulay Culkin. “However, we wish to be absolutely sure that we ship a clean beta. So before M39 goes to market, we will be running a very thorough alpha test program, allowing users to buy a preview of this beta before it ships commercially.”

After making the announcement, Culkin emphasized his commitment to M39 development by disappearing into his office with a small, ceremonial dagger. Chairman Bill Gates then paid tribute to his former employee. “When M39 ships, millions of people will thank Macaulay for his actions.”



## Marching To a Different Clock Speed

Dek: Paranoia in the cybernetic heartland

Who are these people? What can drive ordinary citizens to such paranoid beliefs and violent acts? Today, we examine one of the most frightening trends on the current American scene: OS/2 militias.

\* \* \*

"I don't think there's something fishy goin' on," says "Blue" Bob Ballou, a friendly, soft-spoken accountant from Wearza, Indiana. "I *know* there's something fishy goin' on. I spent the last two years developing the perfect order entry system--the program that would finally make the world switch to OS/2. Last week, my system crashed and I lost everything. Who else could have done it but Microsoft?"

Ballou is the founder and president of Citizens For a Warped America, an organization devoted to proving how Microsoft, in collusion with Ziff Davis, the United Nations, the NAACP, and the American Society For the Preservation of Ernie Kovaks, is out to control the thought processes of all Americans. "If you don't believe me, consider this: Microsoft just released a CD-ROM staring Kevin Costner. Now, doesn't that seem suspicious?"

"What people don't understand," explains Ballou, "is that no one actually uses Windows. How could they? It's designed to crash every time you type the letters 'IBM'. Everyone is secretly using OS/2 on the side, but they're afraid to tell anyone."

What, according to Ballou, is Microsoft's intent? "The company has a secret plan calling for Disney troops to take over America--that's why they're so busy promoting mice. Special areas are being set up as concentration camps throughout the Internet. Once they have us there, they'll implant mind-controlling microchips inside our buttocks to make us zombie-slaves of the Windows Architecture. Don't laugh--I've recently discovered very similar microchips right inside my computer."

## Guns and Clutter

Each summer, the Blue Guns Militia, a noted paramilitary organization, holds a two-week “boot camp” in the woods around Armouk, New York. “Basically,” explains leader Frank Frankle, “we want to make sure our people know how to boot properly, and what the proper tools are to do it.”

Security is taken very seriously here. Members of the press were searched before entering, and any notebooks running Microsoft programs were confiscated. “Last year we caught Stephen Manes using NT, and we had him tarred and feathered. We also tarred and feathered John Dvorak--we know he’s an OS/2 user, but it felt like the right thing to do anyway.”

At the camp, recruits learn such strategic guerrilla warfare techniques as disk-reformatting and E-mail spamming. Frankle hopes one day to teach marksmanship, but he’s waiting for a rifle with a truly object-oriented user interface--“It shouldn’t matter whether you shoot your actual target or its shadow.”

Indoctrination is another important part of what goes on in the camp. For hours on end, recruits sit together and chant “Windows 95 will never ship, and when it does, no one will buy it,” and “OS/2 has an intuitive user interface...you just have to read the documentation.” Three years ago, a picnicking Mac user who wandered too close to the proceedings barely got out with his life.

One can learn much about the OS/2 militia culture with a trip to the camp store. There you’ll find video cassettes espousing various conspiracy theories (“The Microsoft/Borland Cartel,” “The Real Reason Windows 95 Has a ‘Start’ Button But No ‘Finish’ Button,” “The Coming Post-Apocalyptic Downtime”), tee-shirts (“My parents upgraded to Windows 95 and all I got was this stupid error message”), and even a joke book (“If you’re going in for open heart surgery, would you rather hear the nurse say ‘OLE’ or ‘OpenDoc?’”).

But for the real flavor of the place, you must talk to the recruits. "We're all in this together--especially now that Warp Connect is out," says Tom Ahalk, a 28-year-old mechanic from Fern, New Jersey who asked to remain nameless. "I want to write OS/2 software, but no one's buying it. The conspiracy must be huge!"

"Exactly" agrees \_\_\_\_\_, who apparently really is nameless. "I want to buy OS/2 software, but there isn't any available. That sort of thing doesn't just happen."

"I firebombed a local record store last year because it was in league with Microsoft," brags Robert ("Never call me 'Bob'") Somethingorother, who prefers to remain brainless. "They actually arrested me for it! That's when I knew that the police were in on the conspiracy."

\* \* \*

What turns seemingly normal users into dangerous, doc-toting OS/2 fanatics? Perhaps they were raised by abusive parents who forced them to use CP/M. Or maybe they hold Microsoft responsible for some perceived slight in the distant past--say, an overlong wait on hold. Maybe they're looking for someone to blame for their own failures, and they just can't get worked up over Novell. Then again, perhaps they've noticed what Microsoft has been doing lately.

Gigglebytes: Feb. 21

LAN's End

by

Lincoln Spector

You're never really prepared for tragedy. Let me tell you about the horrible events that occurred at the offices of Belligent, Belligent, Belligent, and Wetherbather on...the day the network died.

It started out like a normal Wednesday: long wait at the printer queue, slow response on the database, 1,500 unread E-mail messages. By the time I broke for lunch, I had read 750 of those messages, and had only 1,295 to go.

Nor did I notice anything unusual when I returned from lunch. My desktop had turned into a still life--a sure sign that Windows had crashed during my absence. Like I said, nothing unusual.

When I rebooted, my logon procedure didn't work. With sweaty palms, I tried again. Slowly, the horror of it dawned on me: My computer was shipwrecked--cut off from the rest of the world. I wanted instinctively to E-mail Hal in MIS about this, but what was the point? I phoned him, instead.

"HI!," said the recording, "this is Hal in MIS. I won't come to the phone right now, but if you leave

your message after the beep, I promise to skip over it. If you prefer, you can press zero to speak to a receptionist who can't answer your question, either."

Misery loves company, so I walked into the cubicle next to mine. "Meg," I asked, "are you having problems with the network?"

Meg looked at me with huge, frightened eyes. "I can't do it," she cried. "I can't get this report to Harry." She was pointing to an on-screen document. "I can't print it, and I can't E-mail it, and I can't...I can't..."

"Okay, stay calm. You can always take it to him on a floppy."

She wasn't sure. "A floppy? That sounds so...so primitive. Can I at least use a CD-ROM?"

I shook my head. She nodded weakly. She rummaged around her desk until she found a floppy. She put it in her A: drive, formatted it, and copied the report to it. But when she popped it out of the drive, she froze. It was as if she had suddenly realized that everything she had ever believed in was just so much virtual reality.

"Meg. Meg! You'll have to carry the floppy to Harry's office," I explained. "It's called SneakerNet; people used to do it all the time."

She just looked at me, shaking slightly. So I gently took the floppy out of her hand. "It's okay. I'm going that way, anyway." I glanced at the floppy's label.

It read "Egbert's Utilities:  
Emergency Boot Disk."

Walking through the office was like a journey with Dante, the constant screams and cries occasionally broken by wails and the scraping of fingernails on metal. "No!," cried Ted's soul from the pit, "you can't go down now! I was just about to save; really, I was!" Spitting sounds shot out of Susan's cube, while Sam repeated his mantra "Gotta work! Gotta work! Gotta work! Gotta work!"

Neurotic Net

The door to Harry's office shut off the sounds of purgatory. Inside, Harry seemed unfazed, busily playing a game of Boom! that was installed on his local drive.

"Harry, I'm dropping off this report for Meg. She couldn't E-mail it to you with the network down."

He glanced at it. "On a floppy? Why didn't she print it?"

"Because the network's down," I explained again, noticing the personal color laser printer attached to Harry's computer.

He turned around, surprised. "The network's down? What'll happen next? Windows crash?! I'm sending a notice to Ms. Belligent right now!" Harry turned to his computer, then stared at it uncertainly. "Uh, how do I send E-mail when the network's down?"

Before I could answer, Ms. Belligent herself came bursting into the room. "Harry," she cried, "what's going on here? I need the ETA on the FYI report ASAP or the whole company's DOA."

"The network's down," I explained.

Ms. Belligent looked at me blankly, as if I'd just asked her to hand me a grand piano. "The network's down," Harry repeated, filling in the proper chain of command.

"Oh," she said, with some understanding of the problem. "I just thought that Windows crashed. Has anyone called Hal?" she asked.

Just then Hal staggered into the office. His clothes were torn and his face was bloodied. "The network will be up," he panted, "sometime next week." He collapsed on the floor.

Then we heard the chanting.

It was barely above a whisper at first, but grew louder and louder. "Pass-word, pass-word, pass-word, pass-word!" We opened the door to find a ragtag group of workers blocking our way, waving floppies in a threatening manner. When they saw us, they fell quiet.

"What can I do for you?" Ms. Belligent asked. I think she'd been to a seminar on handling this kind of situation.

"No one can do anything for anyone," someone shouted.  
"Everything is ruined!"

They began chanting again. "Pass-word, pass-word, pass-word, pass-word!"

Ms. Belligent smiled and raised her hand. "Take the rest of the week off with pay."

There was a moment of stunned silence. The workers glanced at one another suspiciously, then, with a single yell, they were gone.

"Can we afford this?" Harry asked.

Ms. Belligent shrugged. "Why not. We're bankrupt anyway. Someone get Hal off the floor."

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*"Gigglebytes" is a satirical column loosely based on computer industry events, trends and people. The opinions expressed in this column are the writer's and do not necessarily reflect those of Computer Currents.*

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## Non-Operational System

It was a typical California spring day--overcast and drizzly--and I was enjoying the sunshine on my latest screen saver. Flowers grew, birds sang, and bunnies frolicked on the fractal grass. I was wondering what would happen if I added a fox to the mix when the doorbell rang. I should never have answered it.

You guessed it--my neighbor Norman, president and CEO of SoftPop Software, the only software company too small to distribute by shareware. "Hi, Lincoln, I was wondering if you would mind dropping by to..."

"Sorry, but I'm really busy at the moment. I've got two big articles due tomorrow and my editor wants me to wash his dishes."

"I was just wondering if you might want to come over and see my new puppies?"

Well, I never could resist puppies (despite my wife's pleas). I followed him into his house, where he led me immediately to his computer.

"Where're the puppies?" I asked, beginning to suspect that I had been tricked again.

"Have you seen our new operating system?" he asked, ignoring my question. "It's in final beta now and I'm hoping to ship it in August. I'm calling it Brick Wall 94."

"94?"

"I felt obliged to keep the name after the last five delays. But I really will ship it in August this time. Of course, if it's not *ready* to ship in August...well, I'll just ship it, anyway."

"And the puppies?"

"They'll be ready to ship in July. But wait until you see this interface." He started messing with his mouse.

"Let's say I want to move a file from my Work That I'm

Doing Today folder into my Work That I'll Do Tomorrow If I Get Around To It folder. I can just..."

"You support long file names," I observed.

"Of course! Well, sort of. In a sense. It depends on how you define 'long file names.' Actually, no." He thought a bit. "Let me explain. You can't actually assign long names to your files, but Brick Wall will let you use them in your conversation. On the other hand, we do support long files.

"So, where was I? Oh, yes. Let's say I want to move a file from Work That I'm Doing Today to Work That I'll Do Tomorrow If I Get Around To It. I just click on the file and drag it over. Pretty nifty, huh? We're calling that feature 'sturm und drag.' Now, how do you think I move a file to drive A:?"

I made a guess. "You drag it over to that floppy drive icon?"

He thought about that for a moment, pulled a crumpled piece of paper from his shirt pocket and made a notation on it with a handy pencil stub. "Our studies have found a way that's much more intuitive: You click on the file, then right-click it, click the Cut option, confirm your move by clicking Yes, right-click the little icon in the upper-left corner, check the Allow Next Move to Other Drive option, close the folder you're in, click the top-right corner of the desktop, click Removable Drives, click Floppy Drives, click A:, wait for a window of your A: drive to appear, click Edit, click Paste, click Yes, click File, click Close, and click Really Done with Drive A:. Simple, huh?"

"Wow. And I used to type 'copy something A:.' Norman, weren't you going to show me some puppies?"

"And watch what happens when you Control-Shift drag a file onto the desktop. Brick Wall 94 creates a shortcake. Mouth-watering, isn't it?"

"Yes, very. Now..."

“Wait! Watch this!” He double-clicked a document icon; the screen went blank. “We can do that because it’s an object-oriented operating system. It objects to everything.

“It’s all very well protected,” he assured me as he rebooted. “You see, your data resides in Ring 0, where it’s protected from your applications, which stay in Ring 3, with overflow into Rings 4, 5, and 6. We don’t use Ring 7 because it doesn’t exist. In order to keep your applications from clobbering each other, we run them in a virtual machine which resides about three feet to the left of your real one.”

“Norman, about the puppies...”

“Did I tell you about our new on-line service, the SoftPop SuperStation? The front-end is integrated directly into Brick Wall 94. It’s great!” he enthused, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet. “Millions of users will join, our competitors will have to market their products and support their customers on our service, and we’ll be able to watch everything they do. We can censor their ads, we can read their Email, we can...Of course, we wouldn’t do anything of that nature, but we have the right to if we ever get caught.

“So tell me, exactly how are you planning to cover Brick Wall 94 in Computer Currents? I expect at least four cover stories, starting with early previews under our code name, East Podunk. You can do your benchmarks with the final beta, which won’t have all of that pesky code we’ll have to put in the final product. Now, for the first spread, I see...”

“Norman, do you or don’t you have any puppies here.”

He considered that for a moment. “Oh, yes, the puppies.” He made a quick move with the mouse, replacing his desktop with an adorable, canine screen saver. “Cute, huh?”

## Browse Beaten

Dek: Neighborly Norman and the Net Nul

I was settling down to a web page of what I hoped would be a good book when I heard a friendly, familiar knock on the door. I dashed to the back of the house and climbed out the kitchen window.

Too late. He was waiting for me. You remember my neighbor Norman, don't you? President, CEO, Product Manager, and Vice President of Washroom Sanitation for SoftPop Software, a company whose Gerbilation boasts nearly a one percent share of the Atari market for snakefood processing software.

"Lincoln," he cried, "good to see you. Have you checked out our new web browser?"

"Uh, no, but I was just on my way to Siberia to pick up a copy."

"You don't have to do that," he assured me. "You can just download it." Before I could say a word, he climbed through the window. "Come on in and I'll show you," he said, closing the window behind him.

After going around the front and letting myself in with the key, I found Norman in the home office, launching my NetWorth web browser. "This software is so antiquated," he was mumbling. "Now wait 'til you try out WebFoot, SoftPop's top-of-the-edge browser. It's the new standard; within six months, every page worth looking at will require it."

As soon as the program was up, he typed in an URL and waited. "Have you seen our home page? You're going to love it. It starts off with this gorgeous, 32-bit photo of me, and has elaborate drawings for every program the company offers." He waited a moment. "You don't have ISDN, do you?"

The page was up a mere twenty minutes later. After a bit of scrolling, he clicked a bitmap of a frog's foot with the title "Brand New!! Version 1.0!!." This brought up a message box: "Download time: 3 hours and 20

minutes. Do you want to continue?" Before I could say anything, he clicked "Yes."

Norman's life was spared by the next message box: "Sorry, but this page requires the WebFoot Internet Browser for a proper download."

Norman laughed. "I forgot. In order to make WebFoot a standard, we've created a new FTP protocol that only WebFoot will understand and that all web sites much adapt to. Of course we've already adapted."

"I understand," I said, patting him on the back and leading him to the door. "I promise you that I'll download a copy of WebFoot to try out just as soon as I have a copy of WebFoot to download it with."

"That's great!" he cried with that enthusiastic voice that sends my heart plummeting. "Here it is on floppies!"

### **Feature of the Weak**

Twenty minutes later, he was loading the program. "WebFoot has several features that make it unique among web browsers. It's got security, a news reader, bookmarks. And the whole thing is free. We're giving the software away."

"Really? How will you make any money on it?"

"Technical support phone calls. They're built into the design."

"Speaking about making money, we're boasting a whole new standard to using your credit card on the Net: FTSS."

"FTSS?"

"Financial Transactions, Semi-Secure. It works like this: What if you want to buy something over the Net-- say, the Queen Mary or something from the SoftPop Software catalog. You click on the product you want, and if you're using WebFoot and the vendor is using our server edition, WebFeet, up comes a dialog box

where you enter in your credit card number. Lincoln, what's your credit card number?"

I gave him Robert Luhn's and he entered it from right to left. "That's the security mechanism. If you enter the number backwards, no one will ever break the code. Your copy of WebFoot sends the credit card number to us, we turn it around so that it's accurate, then we pass it back to the vendor. As an added bonus, we can sell mailing lists of our customers' credit card numbers."

"That's security," I had to admit. "Okay, Norman, thank you for the demonstration. But I prefer to look at programs by myself, so if you'll just leave me alone for a while I'll..."

"Did I tell you about the object automation. We've developed a new, cross-platform object model called Guava. It allows you to send specially-coded batch files--every bit flipped the other way--across the Net. Then the batch files are run in a special DOS session.

"That's very nice, Norman, but I think I..."

"And it's multitasking. You can download a large file while accessing another page on your second computer."

"Norman, I think I hear your dentist calling."

He jumped up. "Where?!" He climbed out the window and disappeared.

### **Waste Removal**

After Norman left, I sat down and uninstalled WebFoot. To my amazement, it removed itself without protest.

But when I next attempted to load NetWorth, an error message told me that "the WebFoot uninstall routine has removed all Internet-related software. No new software can be installed"

I called Norman and explained the situation. "You uninstalled WebFoot?" he asked.

“Yes, and doing so seriously damaged my system.”

“You uninstalled WebFoot?”

“Of course, and I’d like to know how to get my computer back to normal.”

“You uninstalled WebFoot?”

Once again, it was time to reformat my hard disk.

## **Technology For the Worst of Us**

According to recent surveys, most people make their computer buying decisions based on “friends’ recommendations.” This begs the question: Can one really call people who make these recommendations “friends?”

To find out, we undertook an exhaustive survey, looking for people who offer free computer advice. After countless false leads, dead ends, and attempted suicides, we narrowed our focus down to one individual: Quentin T. Snodgrass, Jr., a man who has given endless hours of free advice to novice computer users. We interviewed Mr. Snodgrass in his San Bruno home shortly before he was lynched by an irate group of former novices.

### **Computer Currents: Mr. Snodgrass, how did you get started giving free advice?**

Quentin T. Snodgrass: Well, it sort of just happened. I was a \$75-an-hour computer consultant, but my clients rarely stayed solvent long enough to pay me.

### **What type of computer do you generally recommend people buy?**

An IBM PC XT. They’re sturdy, reliable, inexpensive, and they’ve proved the test of time.

### **But don’t your friends complain that they can’t run modern software?**

Only after they’ve made the purchase. Then I recommend they replace the motherboard, disk drives, power supply, graphics card, and case.

### **What kind of computer do you have?**

I just replaced “Edna,” by old 386SX, with “Bertha,” a dual processor Pentium. She’s great; cut the response time for a DIR command in half.

### **A DIR command? Then you still use DOS?**



Of course. I tried using Windows once, but it kept drawing these pictures all over my screen.

**Do you ever recommend another kind of computer-a Mac, say?**

Absolutely not. I gave up on Macs back in '84; they're slow, lack hard disks, and there's no software available for them. And I never did find the COPY command. On the other hand, I often recommend UNIX to friends, especially if they're buying a gaming computer for the kiddies.

**What software do you use?**

I do my word processing in EDLIN, which I enhance with batch files of LaserJet codes. It's all very fast and efficient, although it used to give me trouble when I needed to share files with other people.

**Why was that?**

To put it bluntly, they refused to adapt. My system adds an extra bit to every character, which means you have to do a little mental arithmetic to read my documents. Once people have this explained to them, of course, they instantly see the advantages to the way I work.

**Which are?**

It's fast, efficient, and totally logical once you get in the habit of thinking like I do. I mean, how many professional word processors can, by passing a few parameters to a batch file, quickly and irrevocably delete a sentence?

**Not many. You said a little while ago that sharing these files "used" to give you trouble. How did you solve the problem?**

You know, I can't remember. I guess it's been a long time since anyone asked for one of my files.

**Getting back to our original topic, do you ever recommend your EDLIN word processing setup to friends?**

No. Their needs are generally more basic than mine, so I recommend that they create their programs in Basic. If that doesn't work, I recommend DEBUG.

**In your many years of helping friends get started with their computers, does any particular incident stand out?**

Besides the death threats? Well, there was that internal modem I installed for a cousin. I set it to work on COM5:, but my cousin's software didn't support that port, so...

**Uh, there is no COM5:.**

I know, but I figured out a really cool work-around and I wanted to try it. You see, all you have to do is...well, I'd have to open up her system and look around to remember exactly what I did. Where was I?

Oh, yeah. Her software didn't support COM5:, but luckily I have the AT command set memorized, so I showed her how to send instructions to the modem via DEBUG. Within days, she was able to dial any phone number with only ten minutes of work.

**And does your cousin still use her modem?**

No. She eventually sent me the modem as a gift. It was very sweet--she pinned it to a little rag doll that looked just like me.

**Over the years, you've built a reputation as someone who is willing to give out endless free advice about computers. Has this ever become a problem for you?**

I can honestly say it hasn't. A lot of people come to me for advice, but they generally don't bother me for very long.

**Thank you for your time, Mr. Snodgrass. Any final advice you'd like to give our readers?**

Yes. Trust IBM. Always. There's a good reason they made it to number one.

How many people have reached that breaking point with their Federal Government--and are they acting alone or together.? If you count just the people who are arming themselves against the day when U.N. tanks roll through the heartland to establish the one-world order, estimates range only as high as 100,000.

The U.S. government has a secret plan calling for United Nations troops to take over America. Coded markers are being placed on the backs of road signs so that the Blue Helmets will know which way to turn to get to the concentration camps in which they will be holding normal Americans, whose buttocks will be implanted with mind-controlling computer chips, turning us all into zombie-slaves of the new world order.

A little paranoia can be good -- especially for a police officer walking a beat or a child examining a bag of trick-or-treat candy. But how does a healthy distrust of government, which is the birthright of every American, turn into an unshakable conviction that the U.S. is about to be overthrown by a United Nations force made up of Hong Kong police and Russian troops? It is tempting to dismiss people with such paranoid beliefs as sick, demented individuals. But that doesn't explain the widespread membership in militias and other extremist groups. Experts in psychology and group behavior warn that anyone can fall prey to paranoia -- given the right combination of peer pressure and repeated exposure to one viewpoint.

"I don't think there's something fishy going on," says Al Thompson, a friendly, soft-spoken Indianan. "I know there's something fishy. Right now I'm asking myself which `alphabet agency' of the federal government might have done it."

The Thompsons are completely open about their views, and they don't sound crazy, though Linda does dish out her theories with a slightly wheels-off intensity.

Within the last year, he said, militia members have come to attention by resisting attempts in neighboring townships to enforce zoning laws and require residents to clean their properties of old cars and other blight. In

two cases, Redman said, those fingered by the townships have identified themselves as militia members and argued that the government does not have a right to dictate the use of their property.

Linda says "it's already been announced on CNN" that someone, probably the government, had installed a microchip in McVeigh's buttocks, so he might have been a Manchurian Candidate.

TOWANDA, Kan.--There is something touching in fledgling militiaman John Walters' unshakable faith in the cause, in the way his hope triumphs over experience.

Ken Lippert, undersheriff of Osage County, coughs out a smoky laugh as he tells the story of the night two weeks ago when he encountered Walters and a tiny band from the Kansas Citizens Militia on a country road outside of town.

Walters, a 34-year-old Topeka auto mechanic and a recent convert, had donned his camouflage uniform, daubed paint on his face and gathered up his weapons without hesitation when the call came from Topeka militia leader Morris Wilson late on the night of April 17. Wilson had received a frantic plea for help from fellow militiaman Roger Thornbrough.

"They are coming after me. They are in the trees. They are stealing my pigs. They are shooting," Thornbrough screamed. "The sheriff won't help me."

Wilson mobilized his troops--which consisted of Walters and two other men--and headed for Thornbrough's isolated farmhouse 30 miles outside of Topeka. But when they arrived, they found Thornbrough shooting wildly into the empty bushes and trees around his house.

# Lincoln Spector

2211 Sacramento  
Berkeley, Ca 94702  
(510)845-8751

March 21, 1995

Mark Wigginton  
The Oregonian  
1320 SW Broadway  
Portland, OR 97201

Mark:

Enclosed, as I promised over the telephone, are tearsheets that prove both my authorship and ownership of the *2001* parody you printed, and discuss the illegal appearance of that column on the Internet. All of the tearsheets are from *San Francisco Bay Area Computer Currents*. They are:

- From the December 13 issue, my original column, 2001.267.
- From the January 10 issue, Editor-In-Chief Robert Luhn's column, where he discusses the Internet appearance of 2001.267. Also on this page are two letters praising my column.
- From the February 7 issue, two letters on the issue of theft of intellectual property, written in response to Robert's column.
- Also from the February 7 issue, a column of mine commenting on, and fictionalizing, the incident.
- From the March 7 issue, a letter responding to my column of February 7.

My column, *GiggleBytes*, has appeared byweekly in *San Francisco Bay Area Computer Currents* since 1986. It now also appears in Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, and Atlanta. As the copyright holder, I have the right to sell individual columns and the running feature in other cities.

As we agreed to over the phone, I would like very much to settle this matter in a friendly manner, and without the help of any lawyers. I expect the following compensation for your accidental publishing of my column:

- My usual \$150 reprint fee.
- A notice, printed in the same section of your newspaper as was my column, giving me credit and acknowledging your error. (I would like to see a tearsheet on this.)

I would also greatly appreciate it if you could publish an editorial on on-line theft of intellectual property in your newspaper, using my experience as an example. I'd be happy to cooperate in writing such a column. You

can reach me at the above phone number and address, at  
(415) 978-3218, or at [lincoln\\_spector@pcworld.com](mailto:lincoln_spector@pcworld.com).

I appreciate your cooperation in this regrettable incident. The so-called Information Superhighway is causing all sorts of problems for owners of intellectual property, and it may take some time before it is all sorted out.

Yours truly,

Lincoln Spector

cc: Robert Luhn  
Computer Currents

**Edgar Allen Poe**

Once upon a midnight dreary, while my eyes turned  
red and weary,  
Followed I a thread of query on the Wordwide Web's  
outflow;  
As my mind was quick eroding, something strange  
began downloading,  
Filled my heart with great foreboding as on my disk it  
did grow.  
"Tis some video," I muttered, "on my hard disk that  
does grow.  
"I'll delete it; spare the woe."

Of its end I grew desirous, give up keyboards for  
papyrus,  
When I saw I had a virus, virus that might lay me low.  
For this bug there was no thwartin', no retry and no  
abortin',  
Was not fazed by Scan or Norton, to my browser it did  
go.  
Starred at me from 'top my browser, the one place  
where it did go.  
Starred and sat like Quattro Pro.



## A CHILD'S GARDEN OF WORSE

For the family that hacks together

by Lincoln Spector

Have you noticed all of the software aimed at kids lately? Scarcely a week goes by when my family doesn't get a catalog advertising educational software or hyper-violent games--or even hyper-violent educational games. But there are some companies who truly give a darn about values and education, without sacrificing corporate profits. Consider some of these titles from the Wee Windows Edutainment line:

### Marlboro's Encyclopedia of Health

Interactive animated videos (click them and they actually move!) show you the workings of the lungs, heart, and respiratory system. Cute, animated camels pop up from time to time to guide you through your study. An absolute must for future doctors and patients. Ages 9-18. List price \$49.95, estimated street price \$39.95.

### Reader Rhinoceros

Learning to read is an absolute must if your child's aspirations go beyond becoming the head of a Hollywood studio. With Reader Rhinoceros, children are encouraged to learn to read with fun-filled games like Pin the Word On the Teacher and a specially-licensed, easy-to-read version of Doom. If you're vexed by college freshmen who can't read, here's the answer to your question. Ages 5-18. List price \$99.95, estimated street price \$59.95

### What's in Mommy's Computer?

Children need to know about computers if they're to function in today's world. With What's in Mommy's Computer?, they learn where microchips are made, how to format a hard disk, and what passwords can do for them. Bit Flipper, the animated disk editor, will give them

hours of joy. An alternate version, What's in Daddy's Computer?, is available for members of the religious right. Ages 4-18. List price \$79.95, estimated street price \$39.95

### SimCitadel

Can your daughter get accepted into a macho, masochistic military academy? Why would she want to? Help her make up her mind in this college preparation-cum-psychoanalysis game. Great for guys, too--if they're man enough to take it. Ages 17-18. List price \$99.95, estimated street price \$39.95

### The Berenstain Bears Meet Barney

Who will survive when the world's cutest family of Suburban Ursine Americans confronts public television's most beloved Tyrannosaurus Rex? Let your pre-schoolers decide for themselves as they learn family values, their ABC's, and the joys of natural selection. Ages 2-18. List price \$119.95, estimated street price \$39.95.

### Imitation of Excellence

Need something to perk up your grade-point average? This priceless CD-ROM contains over 15,000 outstanding term papers that may have earned A's for their original authors. All you have to do is cut, paste, and add your name! Impress your physics teacher by turning in Einstein' monograph on the photoelectric effect--in the original German! And since modern teachers expect modern papers, Imitation of Excellence comes with 48 multimedia presentations to spice up your virtual effort. Ages 14-18. List price \$129.95, estimated street price \$39.95

### My Very First Dissection

Little Tommy and Taria learn all about the animal kingdom as Amy Amoeba guides them through this colorful program. Even if your child never gets around to dissecting the family cat,

he or she will have hours of entertainment watching Amy work her way through Tiny the Tiger's digestive tract. Ages 2-18. List price \$149.95, estimated street price \$39.95

Where in the Hell is Carmen Miranda?

You're an agent for the Dante Detective Agency, and your assignment is to go through the Seven Circles Of Hell looking for a singer with questionable taste in hats. In the course of your investigation, you learn history, geography, choreography, discography, and clinical psychology. If you don't buy this game, your child may end up in purgatory! Ages 8-18. List price \$169.95, estimated street price \$39.95

America the Multimedia

Let your kids learn about American history the fun way, with actual videos of Theodore Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson. Comes in Right Wing, Traditional, Third World, and Possibly Accurate Editions. Ages 8-18. List price \$259.95, estimated street price \$39.95

Moral Kombat 2.0

CyborGandhi Systems is now shipping the ultimate passive resistance tournament game! Can you face onslaught after onslaught of determined pacifists with nothing to protect you but your own sense of right and wrong? After defeating his minions, you must face the Mahatma himself--a skilled non-fighter who can outmaneuver you in any boycott-- and he's more photogenic than you. Ages 9-18. List price \$1,259.95, estimated street price \$39.95

Parent Protector

The Internet has opened an amazing world of information, but are you comfortable with everything it's bringing into your home? Neither is Sufferin' Software, developers of Parent Protector, the only program that allows kids to

control where their parents go on the Web. Remember, it's up to you to protect Mom and Dad from information they're too old to handle--like what you're doing on the Net while they watch "Murder One". Ages 1-18. List price \$19.95, estimated street price \$39.95

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## NEVADA PURGATORY

*Suppose they gave a Comdex and nobody came*

by Lincoln Spector

Most people avoided seeing *Showgirls* because they heard it was a lousy movie. I had a better reason. Why waste \$7.50 to spend an extra two hours in Las Vegas, home to the Comdex computer show?

Last year, thanks to a herniated disc, I managed to avoid Chaos By the Sand, but this year I wasn't so lucky. I spent three days navigating casinos, waiting in cab lines, and inhaling cigarette smoke to see what the computer industry is up to. And basically, it's up to no good.

In the two years since I attended, Comdex was bought out by a company called SoftBank--you know, like semi-dry land that's about to slide into a river. SoftBank decides where every one of the show's 200,000 attendants gets to sleep, and they stuck me in the Tropicana, a casino/amusement park about three light years from the convention center. SoftBank recently bought Ziff-Davis, making it a direct competitor to my own employer, IDG. I hate to think where they'll put me next year!

The new rule in Las Vegas is that each hotel must have a theme--be it pirates or ancient Egypt or Tooth Decay Through the Ages--since losing money at the slots is apparently no longer fun enough on its own. The Tropicana's South Pacific theme is authentically created by employees in Hawaiian shirts and the giant Tiki identified as "Kala Nui, God of Money." At the hotel's entrance, a continuous recording in a bad Polynesian/Jamaican accent reminds you that "Winning is everything at the island of Las Vegas."

Bad I/O

Actually, getting a cab is everything at the Asylum of Comdex. You spend half your time waiting in line, hoping that if you wait long enough the show will end before you reach your destination. Through some major piece of civic oversight, there are no slot machines at the taxi lines.

When you finally get a cab, the chain-smoking driver will lecture you about why he hates Comdex, which he probably blames on you. After negotiating two or three miles in bumper-to-bumper traffic, he'll eventually bring you to your destination, where you'll promptly get lost.

And believe me: You haven't been lost until you've been lost in Las Vegas. Enter a hotel and you'll spend several hours trying to find your way out of the casino, which was probably designed by M.C. Escher. And if you're trying to find something in the Las Vegas Convention Center--a huge Hostess snowball-shaped dome that could hold the Pentagon *and* Newt's ego--just remember that meeting rooms on the first floor are identified with the letter L, presumably for "Lower floor," while rooms on the second floor are identified with the letter N, for "Not the lower floor".

### Show Biz

But bottom line: did I see anything interesting at Comdex? Not really. With an annual growth rate of 71%, these are lean times for the computer industry, and there's not much money left over for Elvis impersonators or huge booths that look like giant floppy disks.

So instead, I had to search out new technology. There wasn't much of that, either. But I did notice was that every display somehow involved the Internet. There were Web browsers, mail programs, Net-enabled databases, URLs, and TCP/IP-aware defraggers. And, of course, every booth needed a direct hookup to the Net in order to display its auto-updating advertising feature. It wasn't a good week to check your E-mail in Las Vegas.

I avoided the Net, but I did wander too close to a virtual reality booth which was, to my great disappointment, really there. Someone noticed my press badge, pulled me past a line of people waiting for a demonstration, took off my glasses, and stuck a big helmet on my head. When I pointed out that I couldn't see without my glasses, I was told to focus the helmet's eyepieces until I could see clearly. This was theoretically possible--assuming I could get my hand into the helmet in a space that was already occupied by my nose, then turn it 180 degrees.

So what was the game like? Basically, I flew around, trying to remember whether the orange blurs were the walls or the spaces in-between, while shooting at some fuzzy things in the distance. I think they were civilians.

But by far, the stupidest thing I saw at Comdex was Insights Software's SuccessWare Line of motivational programs, which interrupt you every few minutes with inspirational messages from best-selling self-help books. (And no, I'm not making this stuff up.) When Excel crashes on you five

minutes before the big financial report is due, you'll really want your PC to chirp, "There are literally no limits to what you can obtain!"

These packages, which include *The Magic of Thinking Big*, *Super Self*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, can also be used as screen savers. Now that's more reasonable. If my computer is going to tell me to "Expand your mental limits and you'll expand the limits of your life," I'd just as soon not be looking at it.

Finally, on the third day of the show, I was allowed to catch a plane and fly return to normality--or at least to the Bay Area, which is about as normal as my life ever gets. Maybe I'll go see a movie. I understand there's one playing called *Leaving Las Vegas*.

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## STALLED INSTALL

For all I know, the program might be easy to use

by Lincoln Spector

I hate writing thank you notes. In fact, I have three cousins I haven't spoken to since my wedding in 1982. So I thought I could make good use of MicroManager Software's 98 Thank You Notes For 97 Occasions for Windows 95.

Okay, there was another reason I wanted this particular program. When I upgraded to Windows 95, my system crashes dropped to an average of three a day. That's pretty impressive, but I figured if I started using some Windows 95 applications, I could get the number down to two.

Once I got the package home, I tore open the shrink-wrap, broke the seal, opened the cardboard box, removed the inner cardboard box, picked the registration card off of the floor, tore the plastic bag holding the floppies, and tossed the documentation into the garbage. Then I popped the first floppy into drive A: and waited.

### The Setup

After ten seconds, I remembered that Auto Play only works with CD-ROMs. I selected Run from the Start menu and typed A:SETUP. Then, just before I pressed Enter, I remembered that this complicated process was unnecessary. So I canceled what I was doing, popped up the Start menu, selected the Settings menu, then the Control Panel, double-clicked Add/Remove Programs, clicked the Install button, clicked Next, and waited while Windows found SETUP.EXE on the floppy. I'm sure glad Windows 95 automates this stuff.



After a few seconds of staring at a blue screen, SETUP.EXE started asking me a few questions. What was my know, who did I work for, what was I doing in the vicinity of the Alameda Naval Air Station on the night of June 23rd? Then it asked me if I wanted a Standard Installation, a Non-Standard Installation, a Complete Installation, an Incomplete Installation, or a randomly-generated new set of wallpaper. I picked "Installation Without a Name" and went on.

Next, the program wanted to know what directory it should install itself into, the default being C:\. Always a bit of a loner, I chose C:\Applications\New Applications\Applications I Think I Can Really Use\Thank You Notes\98 Thank You Notes For 97 Occasions for Windows 95. I love long file names.

SETUP.EXE, on the other hand, wasn't sure how it felt about them. It told me that the directory I requested didn't exist, and it asked if I wanted the program to create it. Wondering what else I could possibly want--aside from a smarter setup program--I clicked "Yes" and waited for the next disaster.

The actual installation went without a hitch--as far as I could tell. Then SETUP.EXE asked me if I wanted to read the README file. I said I did, and the program promptly rebooted Windows 95.

No Thank Yous

Eventually, I loaded 98 Thank You Notes and got to work. The program gave me a list of thank you note types to choose from, such as Thank You To Brother, Thank You To Sister, Thank You To Uncle Ernie, Thank You To Boss For the Totally Tasteless Ceramic Pottery, and so forth.

I picked "Thank You Aunt Mabel For the Lovely Prints You Sent Us Seven Years Ago" and was rewarded with a "File not found" error message. I

was given two options: "Close" and "Ignore." I picked "Close" after discovering that when I clicked "Ignore," the program ignored the fact that I had clicked it. I also discovered that every other thank you note I picked gave me the same error.

So I called MicroManager's technical support line, waited on hold half an hour, carefully explained my problem in full detail to a receptionist, waited another half hour, then explained it again to a technician. "You're missing the files THANKYOU.DLL, YRWELCOM.BAT, and NOREALLY.INI--the setup routine must have failed to install them," she explained. "The only reliable solution is to uninstall the entire program and reinstall it from scratch." She paused. "You know, I've never heard of this problem before."

I did as I was told. After the installation was complete and the computer rebooted, I looked for the files and, sure enough, they were there. So I confidently clicked the 98 Thank You Notes item in my Start menu and waited while Windows 95 searched in vain for THANKYOU.EXE.

So I erased everything and installed it again. This time, no .DLLs. And again. No files beginning with the letter K. The third time: No Uninstall program. With installation number four, the system started crashing. By the time I got to installation number 8, Windows 95 crashed if I waived the floppy in its general direction.

I called technical support, waited, and explained the situation. "It's simple", he responded. "SETUP.EXE has successfully inserted its 'Kill Everything' instruction in Windows 95's registry. The only fix is to format your hard disk and restore everything from a backup, which is of course impossible under Windows 95." He paused. "You know, I've never heard of this problem before."

Oh, well, at least he was nice about it. Maybe I should send him a thank you note.

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## Ask Dr. Deeram

SH:More Questionable Answers For Your  
Unanswerable Questions

I recently had to repartition and reformat my hard drive. How do I restore my files from a tape backup made with Windows 95's Backup program?--B. Keaton, Piqua, Kansas

It's a good thing you have a backup; users who don't backup their systems are like trilobites trying to work a modern dishwasher--they just don't get it. Luckily for you, Windows 95 Backup makes the job a snap.

Simply launch Backup from Windows 95's Start menu and...Okay, first you'll have to reinstall your DOS-based CD-ROM software. Find the software and documentation that came with your CD-ROM drive (be sure to check your garage), and try to remember how you configured the drive. Once you have the CD-ROM drive working, make sure the upgrade disk is in it and from Program Managerselect...Actually, first you'll have to reinstall Windows 3.1. Dig out your original installation floppies and...I'm sure you can remember this routine from the last time.

Then it's a simple matter of loading Backup and following the prompts. Feel like snapping yet?

My lack of an Internet e-mail address has become a major source of embarrassment at parties. What should I say when people ask me for it?--J. E. Brown, Holgate, OH

Give them the address  
"john.jacob.jingleheimer.smith43568@westcoast.eastcoast.polysci.accounting.edu.gov.com." Say it very fast when they don't have a pen or paper handy. A number of new keyboards are supposed to be better for your hands, keeping them in a more natural position. Are they worthwhile?--W. C. Fields, Philadelphia, PA

Some of the new keyboards are quite wonderful. I recommend the All-Natural Cybortronic Organic

Mechanic Fingerboard, by Nature's Own RSI Corp. For maximum flexibility, the All-Natural breaks down into 101 separate pieces, each of which can be arranged and reassembled in whatever layout you find most comfortable.

For maximum effect, I recommend arranging the keys so that they are at least six inches away from each other. That way, you can put the absolute minimum strain on your hands by typing with your forehead.

My computer has 8MB of RAM in the form of eight 60-nanosecond 4-megabit SIMMs. What's the easiest way to upgrade to 16MB of RAM?--C. Chaplin, London, England

Buy a new computer.

Over the course of the last fifteen years, I've bought an Apple II, an Osborne I, an XT, an AT, an early Compaq portable, a Lisa, and a PS/2. Now they're all keeping each other company in the closet. What can I do with them?--H. Lloyd, Burchard, NE

First of all, get them out. The closet is not an emotionally healthy place for a computer to spend its life.

Once out, upgrade them all to Pentiums and Power PCs. For instance, to upgrade the Osborne, carefully open the front panel and remove all of the internal cables you can reach. Then buy a Pentium motherboard, hard and floppy drives, graphics and I/O boards, a power supply, and a case. Carefully assemble the new pieces, using the Osborne's cables. If you're careful, you should also be able to use the Osborne's screws.

There's another option if you don't have the technical know-how for assembling hardware: You can donate the systems to the charity of your choice. Not only will you get a tax write-off, but the charity in question will never bother you again.

As a parent, I'm very worried about pornography on the Internet. Where can I find it?--G. Marx, New York

After many hours of extensive research, I am forced to conclude that there is an enormous supply of pornography on the Internet. It may even be inexhaustible, although I can't say for sure until my research is complete.

Finding it should be no problem. Ask your kid.

I just bought a 1-gig hard drive for my PC. Should I use it as one big drive or partition it into several small ones?--O. Hardy, Harlem, GA

The answer depends on how you intend to use the drive. A 1-gig partition uses 32K clusters, which wastes an average of 16K per file--more if the file contains useless information. On the other hand, multiple small partitions have their own problems: As you install applications into "drives" D:, E:, and F:, most of their files will still end up in C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM.

What it comes down to is this: If you plan to store files on your hard drive, use multiple partitions. If you plan to store information, use one.

How do you get a "rippling" effect with Corel Draw?--M. West, Brooklyn, NY

Throw the documentation into a body of water.

Why did Microsoft select the Stones song "Start Me Up" for the Windows 95 commercials?--D. Kaye, New York

There was considerable debate at the Microsoft offices as to what Rolling Stones song would best represent the new operating system. Early on, "19th Nervous Breakdown" was the front runner, coming in just ahead of "Let It Bleed," "Beast of Burden," "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," and "Shattered." Bill Gates personally lobbied for "Heart of Stone." In the end, "Start Me Up" was selected for the line "You make a grown man cry."

***"Ask Dr. Deeram" appears in this space at irregular intervals--whenever Lincoln Spector can't think of anything better to write. If you send a***

question to **“Ask Dr. Deeram,”** you must be very desperate.

## **Rommy**

*The opera opens with an overture of thunderous, loud, epic rock music building to a crescendo. Then it quiets down to a single guitar and a narrator's voice.*

Captain Squawker  
 Didn't upgrade;  
 His 3-8-6  
 Will never run Myst.  
 His 2-D spreadsheet's  
 Not too profound;  
 Don't expect  
 To hear any sound.

*Captain Squawker adjusts to life with his underpowered 386, Rommy. But somewhere in the back of his mind, he knows that everything isn't as it should be.*

### **Tune: Amazing Journey**

Old-fashioned PC  
 It's in a quiet frustration land.  
 True to its code this one little node  
 Is oh, so bland.

Four years aged  
 No sound engaged, and no CD.  
 Windows slow, but that's how it goes  
 With antiquity.

Software can surely take PCs  
 Where bandwidth allows them to go.  
 You're stuck with an obsolete system  
 Where the programs load so slow.

Tidal waves of frustration  
 Break over me  
 All at once the old C: prompt I suddenly see.  
 I've just sixteen colors  
 Not much of a look;  
 If I want to check Grolier's  
 I must open a book.

No video, no audio,



Nothing SCSI.  
 Pictures are slow, res' is so low  
 Text looks fuzzy.

Software can surely take PCs  
 Where bandwidth allows them to go.  
 You still have that obsolete system  
 though your needs continue to grow.

Its screen is a size that  
 Won't show you a lot.  
 Animations won't run; at the best they may trot.  
 Five minutes time  
 Just to show you a page  
 On an obsolete system that is showing its age.

*One day, Captain Squawker wanders into a computer store. There he is seduced by a beautiful CD-ROM that he knows Rommy could never handle.*

### **Tune: The Acid Queen**

If your system's just for working now  
 My code can make it fun.  
 Come ask me why I'm smirking now  
 You'll know by Level One.  
 I'm the Gamester--the VR Queen.  
 Brainless, but never dumb.  
 The Gamester--upon your screen  
 I'll make your mouse hand numb!

Pop in my disk and close the door  
 We load from my CD.  
 New worlds are yours, here to explore;  
 It's fun, but never free.  
 I'm the Gamester--the VR Queen.  
 Brainless, but never dumb.  
 The Gamester--upon your screen  
 I'll make your mouse hand numb!

Our play is done now look at you  
 Your wrists are all in flex.  
 Your eyes are wide your breath is short  
 You like this more than sex!  
 I'm the Gamester--the VR Queen.  
 Brainless, but never dumb.

The Gamester makes life supreme  
 You've overworked your thumb!

*Determined to use games like the VR Queen, Captain Squawker buys a multimedia upgrade kit for Rommy. Reluctant to install it himself, he brings Rommy and the kit to a Specialist. But after hours of frustration, the Specialist must admit to, and sing of, his failure.*

### **Tune: Pin Ball Wizard**

Ever since I was a young man,  
 I've fixed PC's; it's true.  
 From XT's to P-90's;  
 Just name your CPU.  
 But I ain't seen nothing like this  
 In DOS or OS/2.  
 That sound/CD-ROM kit  
 Takes every IRQ!

First I changed your CONFIG.SYS file,  
 Then your AUTOEXEC-dot-BAT.  
 The modem keels over,  
 and your mouse acts like a rat.  
 Now Windows runs in text mode;  
 There's nothin' I can do.  
 That sound/CD-ROM kit  
 Takes every IRQ!

It's a resource hogger  
 That's all that I can say.  
 This resource hogger  
 Will plug but it won't play.

Why do you think it does it? I don't know  
 What these errors mean?

I plug in the I/O board,  
 That's when the system dies.  
 I change a little jumper;  
 A resister near it fries.  
 Your hard disk's out there somewhere,  
 But its throughput won't put through.  
 That sound/CD-ROM kit  
 Takes every IRQ!!!!

*Dejected, Captain Squawker brings Rommy home and nurses the computer back to life. But when the Captain runs PC Tools' Mirror utility, Rommy sees himself in the Mirror and recognizes himself as far more powerful than anyone had known. He bursts out, singing enthusiastically of his new powers.*

**Tune: Sensation**

I overwhelm with all your programs  
Video at thirty frames!  
Multimedia's nothing for me  
Give me your wizards, reference and games.

You'll feel my power  
If you on this spree come.  
My heat is rising  
I'm a Penti-um,  
I'm a Penti-um!

They'll work on me; yes all your programs  
I'm the king--so now anoint.  
What'er you want, I'll get it for you  
Just don't ask for floating point.

You'll feel my power  
If you on this spree come.  
My heat is rising  
I'm a Penti-um,  
I'm a Penti-um!

For tracking text or drawing windows  
Anything, I know the tricks.  
I'm the fastest, have the power  
At least 'til they ship the P6.

You'll feel my power  
If you on this spree come.  
My heat is rising  
I'm a Penti-um,  
I'm a Penti-um!

*Alas, it was not to be. As a Pentium, Rommy proved unstable, and he is rejected by the world. Once again a lowly 386, Rommy sings sadly of his limitations. Then,*

*realizing that he is still of value, he bursts into a joyful, rousing finale.*

**Tune: (I think you know what it is)**

Plug me, boot me,  
Watch me, shoot me.  
Plug me, boot me,  
Watch me, shoot me.

Working with me you run WordPerfect.  
Booting from me watch Windows freeze  
Logging on me download your Email  
You enter data through my keys!

In front of me pictures are meeker  
From me old VGA.  
With me a tinny speaker  
You'll get your job done anyway.

*Last two verses are repeated ad nauseam as the music fades.*

**copyright@screwed.com**

The night was as gloomy as a Borland stockholder. I had just solved another case--some guy in over his head in one-to-many relationships--and I was about to crawl into another bottle of Jolt Cola.

The name is Rowe. Mack Rowe. Private consultant.

I was ripping off the twist-top cap when my visitor arrived. He had a pointed beard, longish hair, and was carrying a quill pen. I knew the type.

“Mr. Rowe,” he said, “my name be William Shakespeare, and I needeth thy help. I did write a play called Hamlet, and but two days after it did open, it appeareth on the Internet, in the alt.revenge.greatdane newsgroup, with naught my name attached to it.

“I ownth the copyright, sirrah, and must protect it. I hath worked hard, and now people be reading my play without e’en knowing tis mine.”

“And you’d like me to find...”

“Aye, sir, the wretched nave who hath done it.”

It’s not how I’d have put it, but we came to an agreement on price. As soon as he left I got to work.

I logged onto the ‘net and checked out alt.revenge.greatdane. Nothing called “Hamlet,” but I found Bill’s piece in an article called “Small Town, Prince of Denmark.” I checked who’d posted it. No surprise--it was Frank Bacon.

I sent the sysop a note, telling him to kill the article or I’d FTP him a couple of strong-armed viruses. Then I set out for Bacon, who I found trying to sneak out of a cheap dive on the bad side of the World-Wide Web.

“Hey, Frank,” I typed .. “Read that funny piece you wrote. You know, the Denmark thing.”

. “I don’t know what you’re talkin’ about.” He seemed scared

I refreshed his memory. “Boy meets mom, mom meets uncle, boy meets ghost, everybody dies.”

“Oh, that. I got it on the Bloody Revenge mailing list. I liked it and wanted to share it.”

“Any idea who wrote it?” I asked.

“Wrote it? No one writes these things; they just appear.”

“Well, a guy named Shakespeare thinks otherwise, and he’s mad as a COBOL coder learning C++.”

“So he wrote it. Does that make it his? He should be flattered someone thought it was good.”

I was about to massage his I/O ports with a brass mousepad when Bill came busting into my office. “Good Rowe,” he cried, “I hath received it, again.”

I told Bacon I’d deal with him later, signed off, and gave Bill my attention. He explained himself. “Good Ben Johnson hath sent me E-mail this day, including a play he thought I might enjoy. Twas my Hamlet.”

“Know where he got it?”

“Aye. He doth subscribe to ye Oedipus Mailing List.”

Whoever had posted Bill’s piece knew what he was doing. I figured I’d better go see an expert.

### **Farewell, My Lawyer**

The next day I paid a visit to Isa Tort, a cute little copyright lawyer who likes me--I can tell.

“Hey, baby,” I said, “if you help me out with a case, I’ll let you come over and rummage through my private files.”

“Buzz off, Rowe.” Like I said, I can tell. She waited a few minutes to see what I’d do. When I didn’t kiss her,

she sighed. "Tell you what. I'll answer a few questions if you promise to leave me alone."

I told her about Bill and Hamlet. She shrugged. "Happens all the time. Tell 'im the exposure will do him good."

"Not likely, sweetheart. They didn't bother to post his name."

That got a reaction. "Really? Most people at least credit who they steal from."

"I deal with the muck of the sewer." Girls love that kind of talk.

"Well, despite what some people say, his copyright's still good, even in cyberspace. He could sue everyone involved--assuming he has as much money as Paramount or Playboy."

She was talking my kind of language. Then she added "Now get lost."

I dropped in on Bill backstage at the Globe. "Bad news, amigo," I told him. "About the only thing you can do is post a message wherever you see your Hamlet on the net. You'll get flamed by the lunatics, but at least a few folks'll read your name."

"Pray tell, didst thou find the vile toad who did post it?"

"Sorry, kid, but that's the toad that got away. No way around it, Bill; what happened to your Hamlet is a tragedy."

I was feeling pretty bad as I left him. When I got back to the office, I decided to cheer myself up with a little quality time on the Infobaun. I checked into one of my favorite haunts, fic.detect.filmnoir, and grabbed a story that I thought would amuse me. It opened like this:

"The night was as gloomy as a Borland stockholder. I had just solved another case--some guy in over his

head with one-to-many relationships--and I was about to crawl into another bottle of Jolt Cola.”

Whoever he was, he was working fast.

*(A note to my readers: Within a week after my column 2001.267 appeared in Computer Currents, it was in at least three locations on the Internet--without my permission, the proper title, or my name. Please understand: I hold no animosity towards the vile, wretched toad who stole the fruits of my labors. I understand that you did what you did out of appreciation for my work, and I hold you in the same high moral regard as I do Microsoft's legal staff.--Lincoln Spector)*



## Waylaid On the Highway

There's some amazing stuff on the Internet, these days. Papers by economic students on the finer points of nuclear physics, lunch menus for elementary schools in Des Moines, Kenya, historical peace treaties so obscure that no one ever thought to break them. Plus megabytes of original, anonymous literature posted in the public domain for free.

I've been picking up a lot of that lately, and I've found some incredible stuff. A five-act play in iambic pentameter about a vengeful Danish prince, a poem describing a bird on a bust of Pallas, even a novel involving dinosaurs loose in an amusement park. I was fascinated by the fact that people were taking the time to compose these works, then giving them away for free.

Not that everything was a masterpiece. In one newsgroup I found an allegedly funny article about how silly computers can sometimes be. It was dull, preachy, high-handed, and clumsy. Worse than that, I'd written it.

Well, it wasn't exactly what I had written, which had appeared only three days earlier in *Computer Currents*. Someone else, in a burst of creativity, had removed my name and misspelled half the words. The article was followed by half a dozen responses, all of them praising the guilty party for his wonderful wit. I don't know; maybe I should use more misspellings.

I responded to this discovery with the cool, urbane, and civilized reaction of a mother bear defending her young. I posted my own response, flaming the article's "author" as a thief and a dirty cur, making suggestions about the legitimacy of his birth, and threatening him with more lawsuits than Microsoft fights in a year.

I learned something very important: Never threaten a lawyer. When I checked the newsgroup again a few days later, I found a long and wordy response from the man who had posted the article, informing me that a) he was ignorant of its origin, having received it via E-mail from a friend, b) I couldn't possibly own it since it

was posted on the Internet without a copyright symbol, c) Nothing could justify the sort of flaming abuse I had subjected him to, and d) I was nothing but a low-down, chicken-stealing skunk.

His response was followed by 57 others, most of them debating the nature of copyright law in an electronic society, the moral imperative of “finders, keepers, losers, weepers,” and the eventual effect on the Infobaun of Newt Gingrich’s Contract On America. There was also a fair amount of skepticism expressed that a professionally-written work would have that many misspellings.

Most importantly, the newsgroup’s sysop wrote me a personal apology, promising to remove the article as soon as he could figure out how to do it. That made me feel somewhat better--at least until I checked the newsgroup again a week later and found the article in the same old place. I also found it in three new places within the newsgroup, accompanied by responses praising the wit of the three new “authors.”

### **The Quest**

Meanwhile, I searched for a lawyer. After all, I didn’t really believe the original culprit’s story that it wasn’t his fault. Claiming a friend had sent him the column! Really? As if the piece were floating all over the Internet!

The next day, a friend sent me a copy of the article, which she’d picked up floating all over the Internet. She thought it would amuse me. By the end of the week, seven other friends had sent me copies and wondered why I hadn’t laughed.

By now I realized that millions of people were reading mistake-ridden versions of my work and attributing them to some ghostly, electronic bard. Meanwhile, I was developing a tick and assuming that every piece of E-mail was a potential act of plagiarism. By the time I was caught screening a party invitation for resemblances to past work, everyone I knew was telling me to accept my fate as an anonymous creator of folklore.

My response? I spent the next three days examining countless nooks and crannies all over the 'Net. Everywhere I found the article, I posted protests. That was on 17 newsgroups of computer humor, 36 shareware forums, four mailing lists on copyright issues, and a Web site specializing in kinky sex (maybe it was time to re-evaluate my original column).

Finally I could relax, with the sure knowledge that a full percent of the people who read my article would know that I had written it. As my life returned to normal, I sent my column to the *Wohah Computer Rag*, a very local publication that occasionally reprints my columns.

A few days later I got a not-altogether-surprising response:

“Lincoln:

“I’m shocked that you would sink so low, sending us a column that everyone knows is in the public domain. We’ve ran that story as soon as we picked it off the Internet, and we see no reason to pay anything for it. Please don’t bother to send us anything in the future.”

The same day I received an interesting message from a total stranger:

“Dear Mr. Spector--

“You have absolutely no sense of humor! You should be flattered that someone took the trouble to post your article anonymously on the 'Net. Don't you want the fame and exposure that will bring? I'm a writer, too, and I would consider an anonymous posting on the 'Net to be my biggest break.”

It was not signed by John Dvorak.

## Billy the Chilly

*(With thanks to Dr. Seuss)*

In the far-away island of Redy-Mond-Ross,  
Billy the Chilly was king of the DOS.  
A nice little DOS with a great big Window  
Where programs of all sorts would come and would go.  
The vendors flocked to it--for none were afraid.  
From that DOS and that Window much money they  
made.

They did until Billy, the king of that clutch,  
Decided the vendors were making too much.  
"I'm ruler," said Billy, "of all that I own.  
But I don't own enough," he let out with a groan.  
"I own the DOS and the Window--that's true.  
Then how come my network is still number two?  
I make the most money," he said with no glee,  
"But no one should make any money but me.  
I must have it all, whether Big Blue or clone.  
What a king! I'd be ruler of all that I own."

So Billy the Chilly his minions did hail,  
And Billy, the Chilly king, sent some E-mail:  
He ordered nine vendors to give him their code--  
To put it in DOS, not to lighten their load.  
"If you give me your programs," he said with a smile,  
"When I ruin your market, I'll do it in style."  
Then Billy put all of those programs in DOS,  
And said "Of defraggers and backups, I'm Boss."

"All mine!" Billy cried, and he started to sway.  
"I'll control all the apps!" And he shouted "OLE!  
From former King Blue, finished now my divorce is;  
While Word and Excel will use all the resources.  
I'll buy out that Fox, and I'll reap what he's sown,  
For I am the ruler of all that I own."

Then Billy cried "No one can sell a PC,  
Unless he is willing to pay me a fee."  
But as he was speaking, he heard with great dread  
A meek little voice coming from a mild Fed.  
"Excuse me, great King, I wish not to alarm,  
But I think there's a danger you'll do us all harm.  
Be nice, and please tell us you never would cheat,  
And that other vendors can truly compete.

Please tell us, King Billy, so we won't think of suing,  
That your right hand knows not what your left hand is  
doing."

"SILENCE!" yelled Billy, his face a bright red.  
"I'm king, and you're only a meek little Fed.  
We've worked much too hard to let you guys demote us;  
I'm bigger than Novell, I'm bigger than Lotus.  
Get out of my way; it's a shame you can't see  
That your boss was elected to serve men like me.  
You'll never get me 'cause my bandwidth is tough,  
And I've power! Though still not near power enough."

Then Billy, he smiled and explained what he meant.  
"I just want my fair share--that's one hundred percent.  
If it takes a computer, I must have no equal  
In spreadsheets, games, CDs, words, Basic, or SQL.  
Home finance is one place where I really blew it--  
But that doesn't matter; I'll just buy Intuit."

But that meek little Fed made a meekish attack.  
He asked "Have you settled with that fellow, Stac?"  
"I have," laughed King Billy, "it ended just fine.  
I bought part of Stac; he won't get out of line."  
Then the Fed humbly asked as he fell in a swoon  
"Can you say why your apps all had OLE so soon?"  
Then Billy the Chilly switched to angry mode;  
"Are you saying I let myself read my own code?  
Such things do not happen, and I don't like your tone.  
For I am the ruler of all that I own."

But as he was planning himself to enshrine,  
He noticed that millions were going on-line.  
"If they talk will their talk be a squawk that goes my  
way?"

I must buy control of the Info-Net Highway.  
I'll build my own turnpike, and I'll charge the toll.  
And what is said on it, that I will control.  
Millions will use it; my network will thrive,  
I'll make it a part of Windows 95.

Then the meek little Fed made a meek little noise.  
"Perhaps we'll agree to let you keep your toys.  
A big courtroom battle we'd hate to prolong,  
So let us just say that you've done nothing wrong."  
"I like that," said Bill, "And to make it quite plain,

What I haven't done--I won't do it, again."

So Billy shook hands with the meek little Fed,  
And signed an agreement that left him ahead.  
The Fed smiled at Billy and thought them both  
blessed.

But one little judge found it hard to digest.  
He thought about Billy as his stomach, it turned.  
And that little judge--well, his money, he earned.  
For that little judge did a curious thing:  
He decided,  
And thus shook the throne of the king.

And Billy the Chilly, the king of the DOS,  
The king of Excel, the NT albatross,  
The king of Encarta and that C++ tool...  
Well, that was the end of the Chilly King's rule!  
For Billy, he failed, then retried to abort,  
Fell out of his Office and *plunk* into court!

And today the great Billy, who never atones,  
Is King of QBASIC, that's all that he owns.  
And the vendors and users, well all are now free.  
Don't you wish, in this world, that's the way it could  
be?

## **Webbed Feet**

It was a typical morning at the office: 53 new e-mail messages, 86 games of telephone tag lobbed into my court, and a mass of Post-Its reminding me about 18 missed deadlines. So I knew exactly what to expect when my boss appeared.

“Good morning,” she said cheerfully. “I need complete information on how soy cheese is affecting Wisconsin’s trucking industry. Drop everything else until this is done.” She disappeared as quickly as she had materialized.

I considered my situation. I would have to put off finishing the Forbin Project, for which I’d dropped the Morbius Proposition the day before. Of course, Morbius had forced me to set aside the Kinsey Report, for which I had delayed the...? I had trouble remembering farther back than that.

Luckily, I had a new weapon to help me in my research project: The Worldwide Web. With the help of my new web browser, Odysseus, I was sure to sneak into any server, then find my way home in no time.

I launched Odysseus, entered my password, and clicked the button to go online, and waited as my modem dialed, made contact, hissed at my Internet server, and exchanged more civilized protocols. Then I repeated the process, using the right password.

The second time around, Odysseus successfully made contact with the Worldwide Web, affording me a chance to wait some more. In the upper-left corner, a small icon of a bronze-age ship circled the Mediterranean, while the text for Odysseus’ own Hollow Horse Home Page wrote itself out. Then, line by line, twin murals of the Iliad and Odyssey formed on screen.

## **Home Runt**

But since I didn’t want to read about the latest offerings from Mythological Software, the Hollow Horse Home Page was not where I wanted to be. So I pressed

my Hot button (I love saying that) and selected the Brobdingnagian Black Widow Web Searcher Page from the University of Michigan in Denmark.

Net traffic must have been light that day, because in less than four minutes I had a window full of instructions, prompts, and the requisite cartoon of a giant spider attacking the world. I set up my search criteria, "Soy AND trucking AND Wisconsin," clicked the Search button (I don't like saying that anywhere near as much), and got up for a coffee break.

After three cups and a few revelations about office romances, I returned to my PC just as the search was finishing. There were 83 hits, the most promising of which was "Truckers, Soy Beans, and Wisconsin," a page emanating from a data processing plant in Honolulu. I clicked on it, and five minutes later found myself staring at a photograph of three cats named Truckers, Soy Beans, and Wisconsin. The accompanying text filled me in on their favorite foods and pastimes.

After taking a few notes on cat care that might one day prove useful, I backtracked to my search results, and started working my way through the other 82 hits. After 14 additional pet pages, three obscene illustrations, one trap set up to steal my password, and 42 "Address Wrong or Go Back to America Online" error messages, I found something interesting: a discussion on the use of beans in the Wisconsin area's pre-Columbian art. I leaned forward and started reading.

It was fascinating stuff. Did you know that there is absolutely no evidence that beans were used in the Wisconsin area's pre-Columbian art? That's the sort of information you can only find on the Web.

At the bottom of the article was a link to the Artifacts of Ancient Civilizations That May or May Not Have Existed Home Page. Who could resist? I clicked, then got up and jogged around the block.

**Ramblin' On**



By the time I got back, the page was just beginning to appear. I browsed a few topics on the similarities between Mayan and Martian cultures before discovering the Foods of the World Home Page. This was amazing! I could actually click on a carrot and watch it grow. Or place an order with a pizzeria fax-back service. There was even an article on how soy cheese is affecting Wisconsin's trucking industry, but I abandoned it for the piece on eggplant as an aphrodisiac.

I'm not sure how the connection was made, but somehow I found myself at the US Census site, examining data tables of people broken down by age and sex. Finding myself on both lists, I clicked on the first available link, which brought me to a catalog selling replacement parts for 19-century steam engines.

Odysseus was just finishing the catalog's pictures when I returned from lunch. Soon I was pondering exactly where in my office I'd put a 400-pound water pump, and how many people would get access to my credit card number if I ordered it.

I was deep in thought when I became aware of someone standing behind me. It was my boss. I turned around quickly, flicking on my screen saver in hopes that she hadn't seen my screen.

"Hello," she said cheerily. "I need to know how rainfall in British Columbia is affecting the tourist trade in Malaysia. Drop everything else until this is done."

## **Future Shuck**

DEK: A first look at Windows 97

Last Thursday, only two years after the originally-announced ship date, Microsoft released Windows 97 in the most spectacular product roll-out since Cleopatra emerged from her rug. Over 800,000 spectators cheered as Microsoft chairman Bill Gates sacrificed a bull on-stage, while the Hallelujah Chorus was sung by the entire U.S. Senate.

Under the big top, elephants did tricks balanced on stacks of CD-ROMs while guests tried their luck at Whack a Soul and Pin the Tail on the Macintosh. And at the smaller stage, fans danced as the reunited-for-the-occasion Beatles sang "Sergeant William's Only Source Code Band."

Those were only the local festivities. To celebrate the occasion worldwide, a bank holiday was declared in India, a cease-fire in Bosnia, and a riot in Sweden. China and Texas held special, simultaneous executions. Microsoft bought the entire daily run of the New York Times and Washington Post, paying for an enthusiastic review in the popular Unibomber column. And to the delight of the entire computer industry, Microsoft announced that this year there would be no Fall Comdex.

But is the long-awaited successor to Windows 95 worth all of the hoopla? Is this really the greatest technological advance since the invention of the dribble glass? Or is it just another rip-off of Apple, IBM, Sun, NeXT, Lotus, Novell, Symantec, Time Warner, General Motors, the U.S. Justice Department, and all those other companies that once competed with Microsoft?

Let's take a look at what's different about the latest version of Windows:

### **User In Your Face**

The first thing an experienced Windows 95 user will notice about Windows 97 is that very little has changed. There's the same Taskbar, the same Start

button, and the same tendency to freeze up at a moment's notice. There are differences, however. For instance, in the quest for technical accuracy, the icon in the upper-left corner has been renamed "Bill's Computer."

The user interface has been simplified in other subtle ways. For instance, usability studies have shown that 38% of test subjects did not know how to change their wallpaper. To make things easier for these unfortunates, Microsoft has simplified the process, leaving users permanently with the worry-free cloud design and friendly "Buy Microsoft Products Exclusively" logo.

Everyone complained about the flaws in Windows 95's Internet tools, so Microsoft has fixed these once and for all by removing the TCP/IP interface and keeping you from installing your own. Not to worry, though. You can easily access the Internet through the Microsoft Network for a modest fee. And no, Microsoft has no plans to institute any censorship of Internet information going through the company's on-line service. "Such a policy is out of the question," company spokesperson Benita Mussolini assured us, "and wouldn't even be considered unless it becomes a viable business decision."

But what about reports that Windows 97 won't allow you to access competing on-line services, such as America Online and its subsidiary, CompuServe? There is a simple explanation. Microsoft has upgraded its WinModem4Us interface standard, and these other companies have yet to follow up. "They can't expect to access modems through their own proprietary interfaces," explained Mussolini. "But we're sending them the six-CD-ROM set of documentation free of charge, and we're promising not to change the standard while their products are in beta testing."

### **Office Party**

Another area that's been greatly improved is Windows' integration with the new Microsoft Office 98 for Windows 97. The operating system comes with many

hooks that the various Office applications can take advantage of.

For instance, the Windows 97 installation program places icons for the Microsoft Office applications directly on the desktop. If you don't have one of the applications installed, double-clicking the icon will remind you that your new Windows environment isn't complete. What's more, if you launch a Perfect Office or SmartSuite application, you'll get a similar reminder immediately before your system crashes.

Microsoft Office 98 For Windows 97, which will sell for \$96.95 as long as there's competition, will come with many special enhancements to Windows 97. These include Explorer, Backup, Control Panel, and WIN.COM.

Windows 97 handles applications better, thanks to its new *discriminating* multitasking. Now, the operating system can truly control how much CPU time each application can receive, giving priority to those with an appropriate copyright.

Will Windows 97 be the major best-seller that Windows 95 was? It certainly seems likely, with every computer manufacturer in the world including it with every system they sell--a first for Apple. It also helps that Microsoft has threatened to sue any user who doesn't upgrade. But whether it's a success or not, Windows 97 proves that Bill Gates still knows what he's doing with our money.

## **I Came, I Saw, I Purchased**

Subhead: Redmond Foreign Policy

*With a major new operating system about to ship, another in the works, an emerging online service, the leading suite of business applications, a best-selling line of CD-ROMs, and a really lousy home finance program, Microsoft has achieved what could definitely be described as success. But what are the company's long-range plan?*

*To find out, we attempted to arrange an interview with Bill Gates. Unfortunately, our medical insurance doesn't that kind of abuse, so we instead met with Dexter Sinister, Microsoft's Vice President in Charge of World Domination.*

**Lincoln Spector: Dexter, Windows 95 is finally going to ship after many long delays. Does Microsoft feel satisfied with the new operating system?**

**Dexter Sinister:** Very much so. Windows 95 is at the center of our entire strategy. We've now got it as solid and bug free as a tropical rain forest--and we expect it to last just as long. We expect big sales out of both Windows 95 and the subsequent quick fix.

The important thing to remember about operating system delays is the maturing effect they have on the entire industry. When users are waiting for a new operating system, they tend to avoid buying new software, thus helping to shake out small, insignificant companies like Lotus and IBM.

**What about a company like, say, Intuit?**

Intuit is a special case. Now that the feds won't let us buy Intuit, we'll just have to go back to plan A and crush it.

**Many people have accused Microsoft of using its position in the operating system market to help it dominate in applications. What're your feelings on that?**

Sheer jealousy! No other company in the history of American business has shared as much information with competitors as we do. Could you imagine General Motors giving Chrysler any of the technical details when they redesign America's roads?

What people don't understand is that Microsoft has built a brick wall between our OS and application groups, and that brick wall is well-insulated with fiber optic cable. Our application developers don't know a thing about our operating system that we wouldn't tell any other Microsoft employee.

### **What about Cairo?**

Cairo is at the center of our entire strategy. We can't say much about it at the moment, however, as it's still more of an idea than a product. I can tell you that Cairo will be a fully object-oriented version of NT with an entirely new UI and API, giving everyone a chance to rewrite their Windows 95 code from the ground up. But at this point, no one outside of its own developers have seen Cairo.

### **But this past spring you publicly demonstrated a version of SQL Server running under Cairo.**

Are you implying that our SQL Server developers have advanced information on Cairo? How dare you?! Is this a historical document or a newsweekly?

### **Neither; it's a humor column. Let's turn for a moment to the Microsoft Network, the online service that will ship with Windows 95. What are Microsoft's long-range plans with MSN?**

MSN is at the center of our entire strategy. Basically, we want to be at the hub for all information flowing through our operating systems.

### **Some people feel that by integrating MSN's front end into Windows 95, you're placing CompuServe and America Online in an unfair position--that they can't possibly compete.**

Of course they can compete. Nothing's stopping either of them from integrating their front ends with their own operating systems.

Besides, we only went for that level of integration to make MSN that much easier for our users. When the online environment is identical to the operating system around it, users need never worry about when they're incurring service charges.

**What about the accusations that MSN allows Microsoft to track detailed information on everyone using Windows 95?**

It's true that the MSN registration routine sends us all sorts of data on the computer being used, and that we track our customers' likes and dislikes, but we do it all with the public's privacy rights firmly in mind. Let me promise right here and now that we will not share user information with AT&T, General Electric, the U.S. Government, or any other competitor.

**Then it's safe to say that you're spying on your customers for Microsoft's own profit?**

Not unless you want your wife to know what what forums you've been frequenting.

**Let's move on to another subject. What direction is Microsoft Office going in?**

Microsoft Office is at the center of our entire strategy. As small, third-party developers like Symantec and Novell find less and less that they can add to Windows itself, they'll be able to create new tools for Office. For instance, WordPerfect could become a viable add-on to Microsoft Word, giving Novell a decent profit until we decide to clone it.

**One last question: What other markets does Microsoft plan to enter?**

Well, we've been thinking a lot about locally-published free magazines. We figure there's got to be a profit in them somewhere.