



# The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the  
Washington Area Computer Users Group

Meeting Location:  
NBC 4 Digital Edge  
Expo



Next Meeting:  
September 18, 2004



## Presidential Bits

By Paul Howard

### September Meeting

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**W**ACUG will be taking advantage of a unique opportunity September 18 & 19, and participating in the NBC4 Digital Edge Expo, held at the new DC Convention Center. Our September meeting will be held at 2 PM on Saturday, at the Expo. At 4 PM, Geof Goodrum will present "Setting Up and Securing a Wireless Home Network." Both are scheduled for Classroom #2, but be sure to check on-site signboards and literature for last-minute changes. Use Metro to get to the Convention Center - there's a Green Line station right there. The building is fabulous - be sure to take this opportunity to see it, and have a real technology outing.

In addition to 100 booths on the exhibit floor, there will be more than 40 seminar sessions over the two days on topics ranging from PDAs to HDTV, recycling to robots, digital photography to

driveby downloads. Speakers include Computer Guy John Gilroy of the Washington Post; Walter Mossberg of the Wall Street Journal; InfoWorld's Wayne Rash; Corey Greenberg of the Today Show, and representatives of Nikon, Kodak, and Sony, to name just a few. Check our web site and the Expo's site often for the latest updates:

- <http://www.wacug.org/meetings.html#next>
- <http://www.nbc4.com/digitaledgeexpo/index.html>

WAC will also have a booth on the exhibit floor, Hall A, on both Saturday and Sunday from 9 AM to 5 PM. Please volunteer as booth staff - shifts both days will be 9-12, 12 -2:30, 2:30-5. Please send me an email with your availability!

Last month, I mentioned putting a page on the Group's web site about computer protection. The topic has had extensive coverage in the press lately, with articles in the Washington Post and Consumer Reports magazine, among

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## Lu Spriggs Web Sites for Sept 2004

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Here is the current site for the Washington Area Computer Users Group. Visit it for past versions of Spriggs Web Sites w/hyperlinks.

1. <http://www.moogul.com/> At this site you can borrow, buy, or share many items, for a cost as low as 5 cents!
2. <http://www.vonage.com/> If you have DSL internet access, Vonage can replace your tele-

phone land-line with their Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) with plans priced at \$15 / \$25 / \$30, and providing over 15 special features without changing your phone number! A/C (703) is available.

3. <http://www.music.ebay.com/> Now you can purchase music by download from E-Bay!
4. <http://www.kanguru.com/> Talk about small (key-chain) memory devices. The Kanguru-Micro Drive 2.0 has a capacity of 2.0 Gigabytes plugs into your USB port, and is a 'flash' drive. Street price is \$279.95. Also available are flash drives having capacities of 16 MB to 1 GB.
5. <http://www.netscape.com/> Order Netscape 7.2 CD, including the manual, for \$14.95 + S&H.
6. <http://www.kidsnewsroom.org/> KIDS! At this electronic site you can file your own news

stories, also there are educational games to test your skills. For some ideas, please refer to the "KidsPost" page located in the Style section of the daily Washington Post.

7. <http://www.idtheftcenter.org/index.shtml/> Visit the Identity Theft Resource Center for tips on how to combat Identity Theft.
8. <http://www.funnies.com/> Here are free daily jokes, games, and fun pages. Have a laugh on me!
9. <http://www.retrovsmetro.org/> Is your persuasion "retro" or "metro"? Requires 145 KB download.
10. <http://www.omnimedical-search.com/> Here is a medical search engine for the medical search engines! Hungry for Health Info?



## The Computer Guy

from e-mail

I was having trouble with my computer, so I called the computer guy to come over.

He clicked a couple of buttons and solved the problem. As he was leaving, he gave me a bill for a minimum service call.

As he was walking away, I called after him, "So, what was wrong?"

He replied, "It was an ID ten T error."

I didn't want to appear stupid, but nonetheless, I inquired, "An, ID ten T error? What's that, in case I need to fix it again?"

The computer guy grinned.... "Haven't you ever heard of an ID ten T error before?"

"No," I replied.

"Write it down," he said, "and I think you'll figure it out."

So I wrote out ..... I D 1 0 T





## GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

### The Return of Commodore

Those of us who started with Commodore computers in the late 1970's and early 1980's may be interested to hear that the brand is about to reach the market again. Dutch PC maker Tulip purchased the rights to the Commodore name in 1997, and actually released the C64 WebIT (a MS Windows CE based C64 emulator) in 1998 (The Cursor, September 1998). Tulip formed Commodore International B.V., which is about to release several new products with familiar names.

The C64 Direct-to-TV (DTV) is a low-cost (~\$37) joystick with thirty classic C64 games built into it, including Summer Games, Winter Games, California Games and Impossible Mission. The joystick can be directly connected to the TV. The C64 DTV is expected to be marketed in Europe and the United States before the end of 2004.

The eVIC-20 is a portable MP3/WMA/WAV music player with

a 20GB hard disk and a backlit display panel. The eVIC includes a cradle to recharge the battery (Tulip claims a runtime of 10-15 hours) and transfer data from a desktop PC through a USB port.

The company also plans to market 128 and 256 MB f-Pet USB flash drives and m-Pet flash-based MP3/WMA/WAV players. The m-Pet runs off a AAA battery and includes an FM tuner.

Tulip has also created an online music and movie download service under the CommodoreWorld name. The main web site is <http://www.commodoreworld.com/> and the music download service (temporarily down for an upgrade) is at <http://music.commodoreworld.com/>.

### Z4CK

Z4CK is a new cyberthriller by Kevin Milne about a computer hacker accused of murder who must use his skills to clear his name. Part of this hacker's toolkit is the Sharp Zaurus handheld and the OpenZaurus Operating System, and the story incorporates actual web sites and hacker techniques. In fact, the author wrote the first draft of the book on his own Zaurus during his train commute. The first six chapters of the story are available as a free download in PDF, Plucker and PalmDoc formats. The entire novel can be purchased with PayPal for download, but should also be available in paperback this month. To download the book, visit the author's web site at <http://www.z4ck.org/>.

### Xybernaut® Introduces ATIGO® T with Linux Option

On August 30, Fairfax, Virginia based Xybernaut Corporation announced that their Atigo® T wearable computer now supports a Linux OS option.

Quoting Xybernaut's press release: "The LINUX OS adds considerable flexibility for Atigo customers through its Open Source features and its ability to be tailored for mission-specific applications. The Xybernaut LINUX OS has been optimized for the mobile/wearable Atigo platform and will be available offered as an OS option on the Xybernaut Atigo T. This adds LINUX as the third OS option for the Atigo in addition to Microsoft Windows® XP-Embedded (also for the Atigo T) and Microsoft CE.NET (available for Atigo M)."

The Atigo products include IEEE 802.11b WLAN wireless networking support and other options through standard PC Card or Compact Flash slots. The Atigo® T is powered by the Transmeta® Crusoe™ TM5800 Processor (1GHz CPU) and has 256MB SDRAM with Flash Memory configurations up to 1 GB. Atigo products have internal rechargeable Lithium-ion batteries (hot-swappable external batteries are optional) and 8.4-inch touch-screen enabled high-contrast 800 x 600 SVGA resolution displays.

More information is available

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from the Xybernaut web site at <http://www.xybernaut.com/>.

### Linux CD of the Month

In addition to the CD-R discs described below, I can provide any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora Core, Mandrake, Debian) on CD-R. Note: download versions of commercial distributions do not include official technical support or printed documentation.

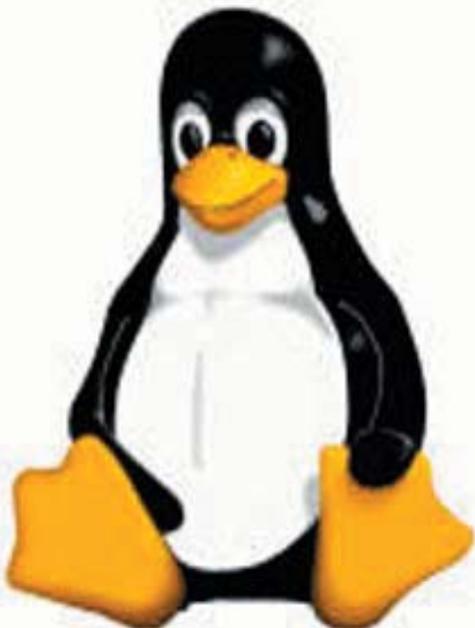
Beginning in 2004, each disc will contain incremental monthly updates for major GNU/Linux distributions instead of cumulative set of updates for one distribution. This will help distribute security patches quickly and, on average, leave more room for other software. If your distribution is not included, please request it.

Discs are available only to WAC members by pre-order. Contact me by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail ([ggoodrum@bigfoot.com](mailto:ggoodrum@bigfoot.com)) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single discs cost \$4 each; GNU/Linux distributions on two or three discs cost \$6 per set. All executable programs are for Intel x86 compatible Linux distributions unless stated otherwise. Your requests and suggestions are always welcome!

**Netscape - v7.2.** Free commercial executable binary from Netscape Communications Corp distributed under license. This is a web browser, web page editor, chat, and e-mail client.

Open multiple web pages with tabbed browsing, search the web by clicking on a word, easily save entire web pages with graphics, block popup ads, filter e-mail, and create maps of entries in your address book. The minimum requirements are Linux kernel 2.2.14; glibc 2.2.4; gtk+ 1.2.0 (1.2.5 or greater preferred); Xfree86-3.3.6; Glib 1.2.x; Pentium 233 Mhz; 64 MB RAM; 26 MB of free hard drive space. Netscape has been certified and is supported on Red Hat Linux 7.0 and greater.

**SuperTux - v0.1.2.** Free GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Red Hat and Fedora Core by the SuperTux Development Team. SuperTux is a classic 2D jump'n run side-scroller game in a style similar to the original SuperMario games. The Milestone1 release of SuperTux features 9 enemies, 26 playable levels, software and OpenGL rendering modes, configurable joystick and keyboard input, new music and



completely redone graphics. An editor is included so you can create your own levels.

**SystemRescueCD - v0.2.15.** Free GNU General Public License bootable CD image by Francois Dupoux et al. SystemRescueCd is a linux system on a bootable CD for repairing your system and your data after a crash. It also aims to provide an easy way to carry out administrative tasks on your computer, such as creating and editing the partitions of the hard disk. It contains a lot of system utilities (parted, partimage, fstools, ...) and basic ones (editors, midnight commander, network tools). It aims to be very easy to use: just boot from the CD, and you can do everything. The kernel of the system supports most important file systems (ext2/ext3, reiserfs, xfs, jfs, vfat, ntfs, iso9660), and network ones (CIFS and NFS).

**GNU/Linux Distribution Updates -** Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 1 and Mandrake 10.

**Kernel Source -** The latest versions of 2.4 and 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms.



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## Photography in the Digital Age – Part 2

by R E Lawrence

Unless prints are made at fairly large magnification, it is nearly impossible to tell if a good print was from an all-digital camera, directly from a conventional negative or slide with traditional techniques, or from a negative or slide that has been scanned and converted into a digital image. All five of these processes, with good care, can produce 8X10-inch and larger pictures of good quality. At this time, most photographers agree that the best photos made with conventional high-quality 35-mm film cameras are better than the best photos made with high-quality all-digital cameras, but the superiority of traditional film over all-digital is getting small. Large-format film cameras beat them all for ultimate quality, but the cost of film puts those generally out of the range of most amateurs.

According to Financial Times (July 6, 04) “Although there are still more conventional film cameras in use worldwide, shipments of new digital cameras have overtaken those of film cameras worldwide. Even Fuji Photo Film, the world’s second largest photographic film manufacturer, concedes that ‘in the not-so-distant future, digital still cameras will make up the majority of cameras in use.’” Last year Kodak announced that Kodak would shift the majority of its research

money from film to digital technology. Why is digital so suddenly popular? I think it has to do with convenience and instant gratification. Users can check the small displays built into their cameras to check on the appearance of an image, and in many cases they can immediately take the photo over again if they are not satisfied. At the end of the day they can download the photos into their computers in order to use the camera memory chips again, thus saving money. For those who like to use the internet, the photos are ready to send as e-mail attachments right away. In contrast, with conventional film cameras, especially slides, there is a delay of hours to days before the photos are returned from the photo-finisher and the results can be seen. And how many of us with conventional cameras have waited, perhaps months in some cases, for another opportunity to finish up a roll of film? Digital photography is a natural for people who already have a home computer, but services are widely available in drug stores, photo shops, and elsewhere, so that even the computer illiterate can get prints from their digital cameras easily.

### Digital Cameras

Since I submitted this article for The Cursor last month, I have sent that same family group photo (JPEG file, 2024X1622 pixels = 3.28 megapixels) as an e-mail attachment to Reliable Photo to be made into a 30-inch by 37.5-inch print (this preserves the 4X5 proportion of the earlier

prints). The results were far better than my expectations. Reliable Photo used a Durst 3-color (RGB) LCD printer onto conventional photographic paper (Fujicolor in this case) and they used interpolation to produce pixels too small to resolve. The individual spots that can be seen with a loupe with ink-jet prints are non-existent with the Durst optical printer. The cost was \$50 plus \$5.50 shipping, and the finished print was delivered to our house by FedEx six days after we e-mailed our order and data file. Not only is the visual quality better than the Langley Photo ink-jet print that I mentioned earlier, but the prices are better. If you can afford the delay of ordering out of town, I recommend Reliable Photo for large prints from your digital cameras. Prices and ordering information are at [www.reliablephoto.com](http://www.reliablephoto.com).

An article in the Washington Post (Aug 15, 04) points out that the number of pixels is not the only factor determining print quality from a digital camera. The article observes that the small pocket digital cameras have physically smaller photo arrays than do the large bulky SLR digital cameras (even though they may have the same megapixel ratings). The result is that large cameras have less digital noise at low light levels than do compact cameras, so that magnified prints do look better even if the calculated resolutions of the cameras are the same (e.g., in pixels per inch in the prints). To this, I can add that the small cameras

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use shorter-focal-length lenses to cover the same fields of view, compared to the large cameras, and they could run into optical resolution limits on their lenses. This is something that would need to be evaluated individually before you purchase a particular camera. It's another case of how good is good enough for you?

### **Scanners**

Perfectly good prints can be made from 35-mm negatives and slides by traditional optical and chemical techniques, so why would they be scanned to take them into the digital domain? Perhaps to prepare them for a Power Point lecture or a computer slide show. Perhaps to make it possible to produce prints cheaply at home. Perhaps to modify them in some way before printing. Perhaps to put them into a computer catalog system. Whatever the objective, a scanner must be used to make the conversion. There are adapters that allow large scanners (letter size) to scan small negatives and slides. However, despite how good the specs look on the large scanners, most people prefer to use special purpose scanners designed specifically for the 35-mm format. There are a large number to choose from, but we have experience with only two, relatively cheap models.

a. PrimeFilm 35mm Film & Slide Scanner 1800U, \$100 including shipping and handling. Costco.com item #423427. Scans at 1800 pixels per inch, or 4.2 MP total for a 35-mm original. Despite its low price, this scanner does an amazingly good job. We were excited with the quality of

our first 8X10-inch prints made from old slides with this scanner and our printer. If you are not seeking to retain every detail from your originals, such that you never intend to make any prints larger than 8X10 inches, then this is probably good enough.

b. Minolta DiMAGE Scan Dual III, about \$300. This model has been superseded by the Scan Dual IV, for about the same price, available at Micro-Center and elsewhere. Our Scan Dual III scans at 2800 pixels per inch, the Scan Dual IV scans at 3200 pixels per inch, so it should be about 14% sharper than ours. Otherwise the performance is probably similar, but understand we have not used the new model personally. We chose to buy our Minolta after trying out the borrowed PrimeFilm scanner, specifically because we wanted to squeeze as much resolution out of our digital conversions as possible. At the time, the jump in cost to go to higher resolution (more than 2800 pixels per inch) was considerable. 4,000 and 5,600 pixels-per-inch scanners are available. Our feeling was that if the Scan Dual III proved inadequate, then we would consider upgrading later. So far, we are very satisfied with the Minolta Scan Dual III for 99% of our photos. However, we have scanned one Kodachrome 64 slide where writing on a small sign is more readable (with an 8X loupe) on the slide than it is in a highly magnified print from the Minolta scanner. I conclude that 2800 pixels per inch in the scanner is not quite adequate to get the finest detail in Kodachrome slides. This slow-speed film has just about the highest resolution

available in slides, and if you are using higher-speed print or slide film, the Minolta would probably satisfy 100% of your needs. Be aware, scanning photos is time consuming. You would not want to want to scan all the films in a large collection simply to file them in a better way. Scan only photos that you need to process, but save your original films for archival storage.

The Minolta scans an area of 2688X4032 pixels, suitable for negatives, but slightly fewer pixels for slides after cropping out the cardboard mounts. We found that about 2400 pixels by 3800 pixels are available from slides. This is about 50% more pixels, length and width, than the 3.9-MP digital camera discussed above, suggesting that scanned slides and negatives should be excellent when printed to about 12X18 inches (this is not a standard frame size).

We prefer to save all of our files as TIFs from start to finish, even though the more common compressed JPEGs would take much less room. The TIF files from our Minolta are about 63 megabytes each. (That's a warning about going to the 4,000 pixel-per-inch scanners. Because the total pixel count goes as the product, at 4,000 pixels per inch the file sizes would be about 125 MB, each.) Large TIF-file size is not difficult to handle while manipulating the image, although you will need plenty of hard drive space for temporarily saving intermediate steps in digital processing, and since the final image will be stored on a

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CD, that is no problem either. Learn how to delete the intermediate recordings from your hard drive after you are done, of course, otherwise you will surely run out of free space eventually. However, when we took in a TIF file for a photo which we wanted made into an 11X14-inch print, Langley Photo discovered that their printer would not handle our TIF. Langley had to go to another computer and use Adobe Photoshop to convert our TIF into a JPEG in order to make our print (which turned out very good, by the way). We had used Microsoft Digital Image Suite to make some changes in the image, as well as to make the CD for recording our TIF, but we have no reason to believe that there is any difference in the way Adobe and Microsoft products handle their TIF files. There is another factor to be aware of in the processing of digital images: It is encouraging to talk of large sizes for prints as if there were no limit. However, going digital does not improve the resolution of your original photo nor does it remove the grain in the image. No matter how good your scanner, you can't get prints any sharper or less grainy than were contained in your original films. Depending on your film and camera, and other factors, defects begin to be noticed in prints from 35-mm film cameras after 11X14 inches (before cropping). For many purposes, grain and soft focus are tolerable in larger prints, so this is a matter of individual judgment.

Here's another approach for people wanting digital images to go

with their regular prints, but who don't want to buy a scanner: At the time you have Kodak development of your negative film, check the box for "Kodak Picture CD + 4X6-inch premium prints". This costs about \$5 more per roll than Kodak processing and the prints alone. (This is not available with slide development.) Our measurements show only 1024X1526 pixels = 1.56 MP total for these Picture CD photos, which is not nearly as good as with the scanners above, but it is very adequate for computer screens and the pictures are ready immediately for attachment to e-mails. On great enlargement we found that the Kodak Picture CDs contain considerable artifacts from JPEG compression, but these won't be noticed on a computer screen or in 4X5-inch prints. I prefer Kodak processing for all my negative film because they return the negatives in protective sleeves (some cut-rate "standard" development does not) and Kodak provides an index card with thumbnail prints corresponding to the frame numbers on the negatives. This Kodak processing with Picture CD is available at Safeway and Giant grocery stores as well as elsewhere in our area.

### Conclusions

All-digital cameras readily supply images suitable for enlarging to sizes appropriate for wall mounting. With good scanners and traditional 35-mm film photos, one can get good prints even larger than with most all-digital cameras, although the difference is not large for the latest digital cameras. Adjustments to

digital images using Adobe or Microsoft software are equally easy whether the image is from an all-digital camera or from film that has been scanned. We recommend using the highest resolution mode, with least compression available, for storing images in digital cameras, and we use TIF files once an image is in the computer, in order to avoid introducing artifacts into the image. JPEGs are necessary for transferring files between some systems, but not between others. Cheap digital cameras may be adequate for people making only small enlargements and for sending images over the internet.

Robert and Marjorie Lawrence are WACUG members with an intense interest in photography. We greatly appreciate the effort they expended in preparing their presentation for the group as well as writing this article for *The Cursor*. They may be reached by e-mail at [Lawrence@att.net](mailto:Lawrence@att.net)



others. Based on those publications, I added a number of links to additional software products for fighting viruses, spyware, and other ugly realities of modern computing. [see <http://www.wacug.org/protection.html> ]

Checking out the web sites for these products has been interesting, because the business is truly international. From Iceland, the home of one of our sentimental favorites, FProt, I found companies originating in Finland, Russia, Germany, Czech Republic, Romania, Cyprus, and Malta, in addition to the US. Some, like Eset, makers of NOD32, a highly-rated antivirus product, made uncovering their home base difficult, but I'm reasonably certain they're of Czech origin. Several of these companies offer "free for home use" versions, and software that will work from a floppy, for those times when your computer is really hosed up.

Technology prices keep falling. Just as the cost of 512 megabyte USB key chain drives seemed to settle around \$80 with a rebate, an ad arrived with an additional \$30 rebate on such a unit. I seem to recall the hard drive pioneers paying more than \$1000 for a 5 meg drive, and we all shook our heads trying to figure out how you could possibly ever fill one up.

The same set of ads included an offer of Scansoft's Paperport 9 for \$30 after rebates. This is a great program, in my opinion, for scanning things and turn-

ing them into PDF files that can be viewed on the web. It also includes a module that allows "printing to PDF" - so anything you send to a printer can be turned into a PDF file.

What's really surprised me is the apparent rebound in prices of CD-R media. For a while, the prices on even name brand media had dropped to the point where it was frequently possible to get a package of 50 CDs for \$5 or less, sometime even free after rebates. Lately, the low price of a 50 pack will be \$20, with deals reducing the cost to around \$10 with buy one, get one free promotions. So, has everyone taken to backing up so regularly the CD manufacturers can't keep up with demand?

### Upgrades

I've been doing a bunch of upgrading to my computers recently. My backup desktop system uses an AMD Duron 1300 processor, and has always seemed somewhat sluggish. I added a new video card from Micro Center with 32 megs of video RAM, to replace this machine's "video on the motherboard" which shared system memory. This system was using PC100 SDRAM, and I'd been keeping my eyes open for a deal to supplement this.

It's amazed me that this older memory is often priced higher than the "latest thing" - so I hadn't seen any tempting bargains. The motherboard only has two SDRAM slots, and they were occupied with 256 and 128 meg modules. Several weeks ago, an ad appeared for a 512 meg mod-

ule of PC133 memory, which this motherboard also supports, so I jumped at it and took advantage of a \$30 discount. This memory was from PNY, and surprisingly, I got the rebate back before I was able to publish this article.

Months ago, I responded to one of Chuck Robert's articles and demos on system backup by buying a housing for a USB backup drive and USB add-in card. I later discovered that I'd failed to scrutinize the box closely enough, and the card wasn't a USB 2.0 spec. Both my desktop systems had USB 1.1 ports.

I've now added cards to both systems that provide four external 2.0 ports, unfortunately on the rear of the system, and one internal port on the card. I probably won't be able to use the internal port, unless I find a flash card reader or another such device that will fit in a 3.5 inch drive bay - the only available space on either of my systems.

The installation of the cards went reasonably smoothly, although I had to change slots in my backup system for the card to be recognized. I also found that when I installed the USB 2 card in my primary system that the card slightly pulled out of the PCI motherboard slot, as I tightened the card mounting screw. During upgrades to other systems, I found similar problems with cards not fitting properly, and wound up doing surgery on the mounting bracket with a Dremel Mototool. Granted, the system

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case could be the problem, if the plane of the motherboard and the back of the case aren't at a ninety degree angle. However, I'm inclined to suspect poor quality control in production of the cards and their mounting brackets.

Now I have to drop a hard drive into the housing and start backing up !!

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## Get Rid of Spyware and Popups

By Ira Wilsker,

Next to spam mail and viruses, one of the most irritating facets of web surfing is the annoying popup ads that so many of us receive. What many may not be aware of is that about 80% of the popups that we get while online, and many that may also appear if we are offline, are generated by spyware that is unknowingly installed on our computers. Spyware are software programs that typically install without our knowledge or informed consent, and may also be a part of a program that we purposely installed. Spyware, as its name connotes, is software that often gathers information on our surfing habits and may send that information to third parties. At its worst, spyware may also be used to gather personal information from our computers, including passwords, user names, and other information, and send it to persons unknown who may illicitly use that information to

empty our bank accounts, charge goods in our name, and commit other various forms of identity theft. Spyware can get on our computers by visiting some unethical websites, or by installing some downloaded or commercial software. Several forms of spyware can infect our computers via viruses and Trojans. Among the most notorious sources of spyware are popular file sharing utilities such as Morpheus and KaZaA. Some of the "cookies" or small text files placed on our computers by some websites can also be used to create personal profiles on us, and distribute that information to third parties. It should be noted that some software titles will no longer function if their attached spyware is deleted, as the spyware is intended to provide a continuing revenue stream for the software publisher.

Fortunately, it is generally easy to detect and kill spyware, or otherwise render it inert. It should be understood at this point that as a general rule, even the best antivirus programs, while effective at detecting and preventing virus and Trojan infestations, are generally ineffective at dealing with spyware. Firewalls, if properly installed and configured, can prevent many spyware types from sending information from the computer, but many spyware programs utilize known security weaknesses, and other vulnerabilities in our operating systems. Contemporary thought is that we all need a good anti-spyware program properly installed, con-

figured, and updated, every bit as much as we need updated anti-virus software and a firewall on our computers.

One of the top rated anti-spyware programs is the recently updated "Spybot Search and Destroy", version 1.3, available for free (donations encouraged) at [www.saf-er-networking.org](http://www.saf-er-networking.org) and other major download sites. Spybot can detect and destroy over 13,000 spyware products, and immunize our computers from future infection by almost 1800 types of spyware. Spybot can also prevent some pesky websites from changing our "home" or browser startup pages, and make it difficult for spyware to write itself into our Windows registry. An integral utility makes it easy for Spybot to check for, and install the periodic updates necessary to detect and kill the latest types of spyware.

Another popular anti-spyware utility is "Ad-Aware", available for download at [www.lavasoftusa.com](http://www.lavasoftusa.com). The free version of Ad-Aware, the "Standard Edition", is possibly the most widely used anti-spyware program, with over 42 million copies downloaded since July, 2003. Ad-Aware comes in several versions ranging from the "free for personal use" Standard Edition, the \$27 "Plus" edition, and the \$40 "Pro" version. Ad-Aware frequently releases updated "reference files" which contain lists of newly created or revised spyware information.

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A popular commercial program, which is a “Swiss army knife” type of program comprising many different utilities, including an excellent spyware (parasite) detector and killer is the “SpyHunter” included with System Mechanic, version 4. System mechanic is available locally at retail (about \$49), and for download at [www.iolo.com](http://www.iolo.com). A fully functional 30 day free trial version is available for download. As does its free standing competitors, System Mechanic’s SpyHunter also checks for updated spyware listings, and installs them seamlessly. SpyHunter has been proven to be an effective spyware detector and killer, and the other utilities included in System mechanic make this a most useful program.

While not directly marketed as an anti-spyware product, “STOPzilla” is a very effective spyware remover that specializes in those spyware products that produce about 80% of the annoying popup ads that we may get while surfing the web. A recent update to STOPzilla also includes an integral utility that can detect and kill most other forms of spyware, including tracking cookies. With almost daily automated updates, and excellent 24/7 free tech support, including toll-free numbers, STOPzilla is available for \$30 at [www.stopzilla.com](http://www.stopzilla.com).

One of the most comprehensive spyware detecting and killing programs on the market is PestPatrol (\$40), available at [www.pestpatrol.com](http://www.pestpatrol.com).

This is an excellent program that can both detect spyware, and block many types of infection. PestPatrol has an integrated utility that enables all parts of PestPatrol to be updated on a regular basis in order to maximize the detection and removal functions. PestPatrol offers a free online scan that will detect, but not eliminate, almost all known forms of spyware.

While there are several other decent anti-spyware programs available, one caveat is appropriate here. There are some unethical purveyors of some anti-spyware programs that use spam emails, popup ads, and deceptive sales practices, including telling you that your computer is infested with spyware, and charging a fee to remove it.

Any of the titles referenced above will do a reasonable job of reducing popups, and securing your computer from spyware, provided they are frequently updated and run.

Ira Wilsker is a member of the APCUG Board of Directors and a personal computer advocate and supporter.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



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## NCTCUG

Visit our “sister” user group. The National Capital Tandy Computer User Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

<http://www.nctcug.org/>

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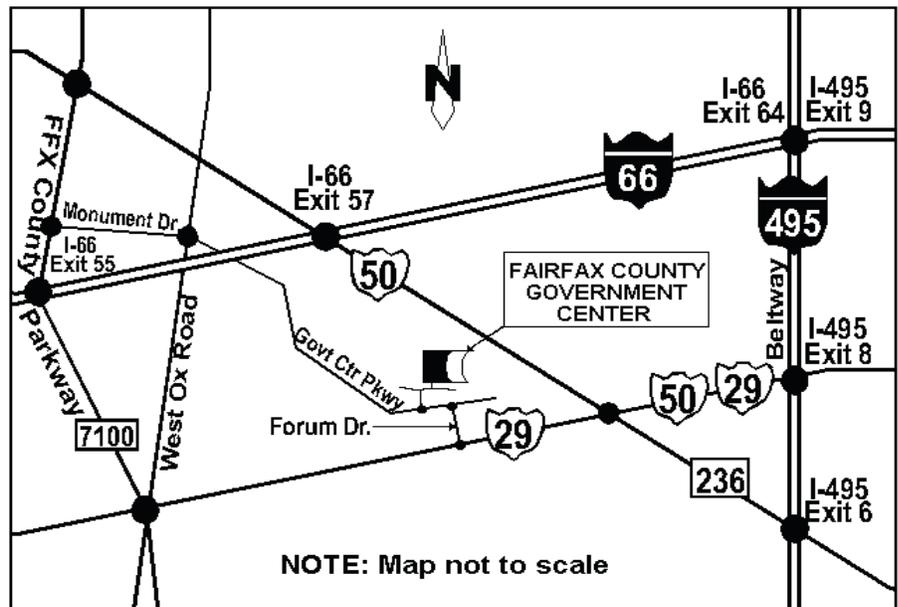
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Through Front Entrance to  
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