

The SAGATUG

INTERFACE

Volume 22, No. 12

December, 2001

The San Gabriel Valley Technology Users Group. The Club for TRSDOS and MS-DOS

Everybody's "Knowledgeable Club Member"

Allen Jacobs

SAGATUG meets just 12 times a year, (once a month). That is as often as it is practical to meet, since we couldn't get our meeting hall more often than that, anyway. However, when something goes wrong with our systems and we need advice immediately from a fellow club member on how to fix the problem, we have all wished that the meeting was that very night. At times like these, it is at least reassuring to know that we can get free telephone advice from a knowledgeable source, at least once a week rather than once a month. The source is named Jeff Levy. He hosts a show on radio station KFI, AM 640 KHz, from 9 AM to 12 Noon, on Sundays. The name of his show is "On Computers". Many weeks, he broadcasts live from swap meets. I have heard that it is interesting to watch him walk from exhibit to exhibit while giving keystroke by keystroke advice to a listener who is sitting at his computer, while Jeff Levy, in fact, is not at one himself.

While some of his opinions, approaches, and advice are understandably somewhat commercial, his ability to diagnose the system problems of callers to his show is quite good. His advice is often quite specific and helpful. If you listen to him regularly, you'll find yourself anticipating many of his answers, which simply means that you have learned how to troubleshoot and repair your own system more efficiently.

His program is made possible by sponsors. So, for this reason, his somewhat commercial approach to some solutions is forgivable. This is especially true because people often demand the simple approaches provided by programs that do what an informed user can do, without

Memory Jogger...

See you at the next SAGATUG meeting this Friday, December 14, 2001 from 7 to 10 pm at the Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center, 405 S. Santa Anita Ave. (See page four for directions and more upcoming events.)

the utility. It is simply "safer" to use the recommended software.

In addition to his computer advice, he also presents techniques, shortcuts, and keystrokes that are often very helpful to computer users, generally. He calls each of the items that he presents weekly, his "Lessons". Since he has been on the air for a number of years, he has stockpiled almost 200 of these lessons on his website, www.JeffLevy.com. They can be found at the site by clicking on the "Learn" button. Some of these lessons are quite useful. He sells these lessons in a book, along with a subscription to his newsletter and membership in his user's group, called "Jeff's User's Group", or "JUG". Club members will find that it is a valuable resource if they visit the site.

For those members who are unable to access the Internet, or just simply lack the time, it might be interesting to evaluate some of those lessons, in the Interface. From time to time, it may be useful to present some of the more interesting techniques he describes. That way, everybody can become a knowledgeable club member.

If any member is interested in meeting Jeff Levy in person, he often broadcasts directly from either the Buena Park or Pomona, L.A. Computer Fair swap meets. To find out more specifically when these meets occur, look in the "Upcoming Events" Section of the Interface, on the last page. Otherwise, he broadcasts from the studio, (wherever that is). He claims that he stays at the swap meets for at least an hour after most shows he does on location. I have been to the Pomona swap meet, but I have personally never seen any broadcaster's booth. Next time, I'll look for him.

If anybody actually sees him, it is hoped that they can provide the rest of the club members with an apocryphal story or two about the experience. Maybe they can even relate the essence of one of his bits of advice or shortcuts that was never on a broadcast.

A "Jeff Levy" Radio Show for the Internet

Allen Jacobs

There is another radio show on Sundays that group members may find useful. The name of the show was the "EarthLink Internet Hour". Actually, the two-hour show, being called an "Internet Hour" is a misnomer which they have recently corrected by referring to it as the "EarthLink Internet Show". One could think of "Surfer Val" and "Mr. Alex", the hosts of the show, as the "good guys" of the Internet. I only consider them in that light as my judgment of the overall character of the show, relative to the show I will cover in the next article.

The show is on the AM radio station, KRLA 870 KHz, from 12 Noon to 2 PM. That means that on Sundays, I find myself walking around carrying a little portable radio with me, with headphones, listening to Jeff Levy and then to Surfer Val and Mr. Alex, from 9 AM to 2 PM. Admittedly, that doesn't make me the most sociable person imaginable, during those hours.

The show is about the Internet. While that is a big subject, they handle its various aspects by having different themes for each week's show. During the show they will cover questions related to Internet service, customer-provider relations, browser problems, software utilities, troubleshooting, search engines, website recommendations both for content providers and for consumers, Internet privacy issues, e-business, viruses, and just about any other subject related to the Internet.

Additionally, they handle a good number of calls into the show from listeners with questions about browser problems and just about any other question a listener could ask. Together, they both provide fairly good, basic answers to most of these questions on air. Those that they can't answer, they ask the caller to send in an e-mail to the show that identifies them and their question. The hosts usually promise that the caller will receive a specific and comprehensive answer to the question in a reply, by e-mail. Surfer Val's favorite saying on the show is: "There is no such thing as a dumb question, no way, no how".

The greatest value of the show is probably to those listeners who are not very familiar with the Internet. It is also useful to those who do not use the Internet a great amount of the time, or to those who use it in a limited manner and would like to expand their knowledge in an area of the Internet with which they are not very familiar. It is also useful to ask the hosts questions about transferring favorites from one browser to another and the like.

To give the nationally broadcast show a "local" appeal, the hosts often originate the show on location. The locations range across the country and, in themselves, add nothing to the show because, if they didn't tell you that the show was originating from Podunk, Iowa, the listener would have no idea that such was the case. They seem to do it only to satisfy the various local radio stations that carry their program. However, in their defense of this criticism, they do host annual listener parties in a few of their larger markets. Since the call-in number is of the '800' variety and never changes from week to week, it doesn't really matter from where the show is being broadcast.

I, personally, have never gone to any local listener parties and do not feel the need or desire ever to do so. If you want to see what a listener party looks like, they have pictures of their previous listener parties on their website. I have, however, called into the show with an occasional question. After approximately a 20 minute wait, they have courteously answered my question or the call screener has explained why a particular question is not appropriate or answerable by the hosts. Also, they only permit one question per caller. That being the case, it is a good idea to think about your question and to make a note about it, before going "on air".

The hosts also have a website for the show at: <http://radio.EarthLink.net>.

There, they have various resources for listeners to the show including a listing of links they have covered during the show, for each week. These resources are often interesting and useful, as is their advice. If, however, you are an expert to the Internet, know how to set up your computer and install or change Internet software such as firewalls without assistance, and have a working knowledge of how to troubleshoot installation of a new browser without assistance, then you might find the show somewhat basic and repetitive, over time. Nonetheless, the banter of the hosts, callers, and occasional guests makes for a pleasant and variably informative couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon, which most club members should probably enjoy.

You might as well give the show a trial listening, and hear for yourself. However, if you decide to go to a listener's party, you're on your own. As I said, I have never bothered to attend one myself, "no way, no how".

The Notorious Kevin Mitnick, Now “Reformed”, Presents: “The Dark Side of the Internet”

Allen Jacobs

Anyone who has read the interface on a regular basis has heard of Kevin Mitnick. From time to time, Roy Beck has written a number of articles regarding his antics consisting of Internet hacks into private and government databases, documents, and other projects into which he clearly did not belong. Those activities, at one time before his capture, placed him on the FBI's Most Wanted List. It also netted him a federal conviction, prison time, and a five-year parole that includes an injunction from him using a computer during that time for any reason. He is also enjoined from any use of or entry on to the Internet. Nonetheless, now that he is out of prison, Kevin Mitnick is hosting a radio show, co-hosted by Alex Casper, on radio station KFI, AM, 640 KHz, on Sunday mornings, at the unlikely hours of 5:00 AM to 7:00 AM. The name of the show is: "The Dark Side of the Internet".

From comments in Roy Beck's articles, the news, and comments from Kevin Mitnick, himself, it appears that his major talent, along with an extensive and intimate knowledge of the Internet, is his talent of "social engineering". Social engineering is described by him as his ability to convince people on the telephone that he is entitled to passwords that protect web pages, databases, etc., to which he has no legitimate access. For example, he stated that he would convince a secretary that he was one of the investigators writing a classified document to which he had forgotten the password. He was apparently convincing enough that most secretaries would, in fact, give him the passwords he sought. He stated that he never actually did anything to any of the files he entered except to leave a notice that he had been there. Nonetheless, those breaches of security were apparently quite costly and worrisome for the government to protect against. That is apparently the reason the FBI went after him, and considered him to be so dangerous.

The show is well documented. Mitnick has definitions, explanations, techniques, and Web links to every subject and resource that he discusses. They are noted and hyperlinked on his Web site. His Web site is: <http://www.kfi640.com/darkside>. He apparently began his show in July of this year. Therefore, in a table on his site, the month and show number within the month identify the notes he has provided for each show. Not every show has its link to notes active, nor did I look at the links to every show. Nonetheless, the notes that I did look at seemed comprehensive enough that it is almost not necessary to have listened to the show in order to understand what the

subject of the show was about.

On the show that I heard, the co-hosts, discussed Trojan horses. They began with a brief review of the history of the Trojan horse from ancient origin, and then proceeded to explain how the new digital incarnations work, what they do, how they can be bound to other software, how they can be used, why one would want to use a Trojan horse, and also a resource for defending against Trojan horses. He gave a reference to a Web site that provides software that checks for Trojan horses and will allow one to rid them from their system. However, he also gave references to Web sites one could go to find Trojan horses, written by others, that can be "bound" to other programs and sent to unsuspecting victims. He also explained how to use them to read every single keystroke, password and, potentially the entire contents of a victim's computer.

He stated that he is presenting all this information so that listeners will know the capabilities and power of oversight of others, that these techniques can provide the sender of a Trojan horse. He even noted that standard virus protection software is often ineffective in detecting Trojan horses because they work differently than viruses. The reason he gave for providing all this information is that if the listener understands the workings of such programs, he or she will be better able to defend their privacy. Additionally, they will be aware that this sort of activity can occur. While it is understandable that the publication of such information can make the average listener better able to defend their privacy, it also provides the potential user of such technology, a basic knowledge of the resources they can seek to initiate a Trojan horse attack upon others. He also mentioned that the FBI has a project called "The Magic Lantern", which they seek to obtain the authority to use as a form of computer-based "wire tap" for suspected criminals and terrorists.

My opinion of the show is that, regarding the inner workings of the Internet, Kevin Mitnick is, in fact, an extremely knowledgeable person. He is also intelligent, an excellent speaker, and overall, well worth listening to. It must be noted, however, that the information he covers and the specifics he gives are useful not only to the victims of computer crime but also to its perpetrators. In a way, I am glad that he didn't study nuclear physics during this period in our history. Nonetheless, it appears that Mitnick is swinging a powerful sword. It is up to the listener to realize that its blade is most certainly "double-edged".

**Next SAGATUG Meeting
Time and Place:**

7 to 10 p. m., Friday, December 14, 2001
Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center
405 South Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia.
(In the park just south of Huntington Drive)
Meetings are on the second Friday of every month

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Upcoming Events:

TRW Swap Meet

Last Saturday, monthly, Manhattan Beach
Pomona Fairplex, December 1 & 2, 2001,
also, December 29 & 30, 2001
(Sat. & Sun.) Bldg. 4 LA Fair grounds, Gate 14)-
Admission \$7 plus parking

Buena Park, December 22 & 23, 2001,

at the Sequoia Conference Center,
7530 Orangethorpe, (Beach Blvd exit from 91
Freeway) \$3 admission

Reseda, December 8 & 9, 2001,

at the Sherman Square Entertainment Center,
18430 Sherman Way. Admission \$3.

Glendora Seniors Computer Club

La Fetra Senior Citizens Center, 333 E. Foothill
Blvd., Glendora, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

Deadline for the Newsletter

The deadline for the INTERFACE is the last
Saturday of the month.

Republication:

Articles may be republished if credit is given to
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