

The SAGATUG

INTERFACE

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

Forgotten Files

Roy T. Beck

We seem to have two kinds of problems relating to our computer files. These fall into two categories. Lost Files, and Files We Wish We Could Lose.

On a day-to-day basis, I am sure the former category is the most frequently experienced trouble. I have plug-in hard drives, some of which have bootable OS' on them, some are just storage files. I had until very recently, tried to stick with Win 98 SE, as upgrading to ME or XP creates new problems. For example, many utilities are written very tightly around a version of the OS. When a new OS comes out, you must buy an upgrade to the utility in order to use it. And then there is the problem of drivers for various auxiliaries.

I recently tried to upgrade to XP. It works, but its Desktop is quite different, and I have to hunt for things which I know should be there, but are hidden in a different way than in 98. And then some just seem not to be there. Example, DOS is no longer accessible. Of course Windows XP is a DOS. After all, DOS just means Disk Operating System. Every machine has an Operating System, and since all current machines have

Memory Jogger...

See you at the next SAGATUG meeting this Friday, January 11, 2002 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.)

Disks, then they have a DOS, whether it is MS-DOS, any version of Windows, Linux, or you name it. But XP suddenly has no DOS command interface, and if I wish to use DOS commands for some purpose, or want to run an old program which requires DOS commands, what am I to do except go back to WIN 98 via a different plug-in drive.

Also, with XP, I had to hunt to find Device Manager and Disk Defragmenter. Hidden away under My Computer, Computer Management, and a couple of other sub-levels. I have not yet found CheckDisk, although I am sure it's there somewhere.

A nice feature is that there is a version of

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SAGATUG MEMBERS YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS IS ESSENTIAL!

**IT'S HOW WE MAIL THE INTERFACE.
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Send your e-mail address to:

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Send us your current mailing address too,
just in case.

Secrets of the Trade

Allen Jacobs

Having been the interim editor of the Interface for the last two months, I have had to acquire some knowledge about how to actually produce a completed issue. The only way to produce an issue is to actually sit down and do it. For me, it was an interesting experience, although there were some exasperating moments. The methods I employed to accomplish the task were incorrect at times, but the net result worked out nicely, anyway, thanks in part to the assistance of others. I'll explain what my mistakes were, later on in this article.

I believe that the current design for the Interface was created by Roy Beck when he took over the reins of editor, a number of years ago. At that time, I recall that the box containing the word, Interface, was shaded 50 percent gray. The problem he had, at the time, was that the gray did not copy well or consistently when the Interface was printed. Thereafter since he corrected it, and to this day, the box containing the word, Interface, has remained un-shaded.

Since the Interface is currently e-mailed, one would think that concerns about copying it to paper no longer exist. That is not true. Many members prefer to convert the e-mailed issues of the Interface to hardcopy. Printer variations would create different looking copies of the same issue. Also, some copies of each issue are still mailed. For that reason, and for a desire to maintain the tradition the Interface already enjoys, I believe that the box containing the word, Interface, should remain un-shaded.

When I took over the Interface, as interim editor, I was not left with a formatted file to use as a template upon which to format subsequent issues. Therefore, I had to make one for myself. Since I used WordPerfect and had not used Word or Publisher up until this point, I took a former

issue of the Interface in printed form and used it as a template with which to format a similar looking document in WordPerfect. However, upon a cursory reading of some of the help files in Adobe Acrobat, I noted that it stated that it was compatible with Microsoft Office Products, but it did not mention compatibility with Corel products. Therefore, I erroneously assumed that the document would have to be converted into a Microsoft Word or Microsoft Publisher document, in order for Adobe Acrobat to be able to convert it into a file in .pdf format.

When I discovered that Microsoft Word would not read the WordPerfect file I had created, I finally convinced it to accept the file in the form of a Microsoft Word document, saved from the "Save As" feature of WordPerfect. Nonetheless, the converted file required a great deal of additional formatting.

This especially occurs because Word handles text boxes differently from WordPerfect. Both methods of dealing with text boxes are logical, within the framework of their respective programs, but they are sufficiently different as to be confusing when you have learned only one, (in my case, WordPerfect), and not the other one.

A problem WordPerfect has that is not a problem in Word, is that the help files in WordPerfect do not seem to be well synchronized with the program. When you consult the help file in WordPerfect, some of the menu choices recommended in the help file do not, in fact, exist on the pull down menus, as stated in the help file. Sometimes, the subject matter is not even relevant. Fortunately, since the program seems to work better than its associated help file, it is usually possible to discover the proper methodology within the program for performing

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A Darn Site Better

Allen Jacobs

As the saying goes, “You get what you pay for”. At the December meeting, a motion was passed after being proposed by our group’s Web master, John Calhoun, that we obtain the obvious domain name for our group’s Web site. Also, he proposed that we host the group’s Web site at a fee based hosting company. He stated that the total cost, to the group, for the domain name and Web hosting of the site will be \$89 per year. It was determined that the term of the lease will be for one year, as a trial to determine whether or not this arrangement will be of service to the club and the community.

John said that he made this proposal because of all the advertising that is attached to our current Web site, which is thus “free”. Also, our current domain name, <http://sagatug.cjb.net>, is difficult to remember. It is constantly being redirected to various free web hosts that either associate increasing numbers of pop-up and banner ads with their “free” hosting plan, shift their hosting agreement to a fee basis, or go out of business.

John also stated that it will be easier to promote our group on the Web, if it has its own domain name and the fee-based Web site he proposed. It was agreed that the proper name for the Web site should be, <http://www.sagatug.org>.

Apparently, as of the day of the December meeting, there had been only 112 visits to the Web site since it was initiated in August of this year. Some members may not even know of its existence. As members, please visit the site under its current name and also under its future name. Decide if it’s useful to you, to the club, and if its features are what you want. If you want some improvement, write that in an e-mail or come to the club and express yourself. Get some feedback or opinions about what you think to the Web master and to the president. It’s your Web site,

and now it’s also your money.

Forgotten Files

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GoBack included (Me had this, also). Since I manage to screw up Windows 98 rather frequently, I have been pleased to discover that XP is much more resistant to my finger-fumbling. It sometimes takes a while, but it so far has managed to unravel itself and get back to normal operation every time. Hurray for that!

XP has a built-in driver for the PlexWriter CD-ROM burner; that’s nice. But it has a built-in problem. CDrescue worked nicely with 98, but bombs out with XP. A friend told me it is because XP does not include the ASPI layer, whatever that is. There is a utility floating around that is supposed to add this, which then allows CDrescue to function. I will soon try that.

Another problem is my HP R60 printer/copier/scanner came with all necessary drivers for use with WIN 98, including an OCR function. Well, when I tried to OCR scan a document with XP, it referred me to the HP Website. When I got there, HP informed me that they don’t have an OCR scanner for use with the R60 under XP, and I should go buy one somewhere else. Bah. I think this is evidence of HP’s somewhat shaky financial position, but I really don’t know. Obviously I’ll have to plug in WIN 98 to scan the article.

I seemed to have digressed from Lost Files over to Windows. Sorry for that. I meant to talk a little about lost files.

As many of you know, the “DEL” function in MS-DOS and by extension, in Windows, really does not truly delete much of anything. MS-DOS was originally a rewrite of CP/M. How many of you remember, or even know what that was? Anyway, the CP/M Delete function was a marvel of simplicity. To delete a file, the 256 byte sector containing the 16 byte Directory entry was brought into memory, the first byte of the directory entry was changed to a control

character, and the sector was written back to the disk. Now, when you tried to access the deleted file, the parser reported there was no such directory entry. But in fact, the file was still on the drive, and 15 bytes of the 16 byte directory entry were still intact. All the knowledgeable user had to do was to use a utility to change the first byte of the directory entry to the correct alphabetic entry, write it back to the disk, and Hey Presto, the file was recovered. Of course, if you write over the old file before recovering it, then this technique fails.

When MS-DOS was created, the directory structure was kept very much the same, and the recovery capability was still there. Where do you think the Norton Utility program got its start?

As MS-DOS went along, and Windows came along, upward compatibility was important, and much of today's WINDOWS directory structure is traceable back to CP/M. Many people still assume that if a file is "DELETED", it's GONE. Obviously not so. Col. North of Iran-Contra fame learned this the hard way.

A long time ago, I bought some R/S hard drives from a fellow in North Dakota, who had in turn bought them from a lawyer in Florida who was changing to MS-DOS machines. When I went to check out the drives, I used a utility to read the hard drive sectors, just out of curiosity. What to my wondering eyes did appear but the lawyer's files, including his letters to clients, etc! I promptly reformatted the drives to my desired configuration, but I was quite disturbed to find that lawyer had sold his old drives with all of their contents accessible to Super Utility. If one reformat a hard drive (or a floppy), the old files are gone, not recoverable by users such as me.

However, when money is available and the need is desperate, even reformatted disk files can be recovered. My understanding of this is that the magnetic heads of a hard or floppy drive read and write along a somewhat fuzzy path on the disk. So long as the head always follows the same path on a track, uses the same write current,

and erases with the same current, then the drive appears to be blank after deletion or reformatting. But, if the read head is mechanically adjusted to follow a slightly different path, it may still be able to read the last data recorded on the drive due to the essentially fuzzy path of magnetic domains on the disk. Adjusting the head to be slightly off the centerline of the track allows it to read one edge of the data track.

A sharp lawyer friend who is a member of a local club says the only way his firm will let an old computer out of the office when upgrading is to remove the hard drive and literally smash the drive with hammers, etc, to insure the drive is not readable. In the days when small drives cost kilobucks, this would have seemed overkill; now, however, the low price of hard drives plus the real need for privacy justifies physical destruction of old drives.

But time marches along, and we now have to deal with the Internet. Any time data is moved over telephone, radio, fiber optical circuits, etc, it is vulnerable to being trapped and read by outside parties. Such entrapment may be virtuous, evil, or some combination. The destruction of computers in the recent World Trade Center catastrophe is a case in point. Every large business establishment dependent upon computerized data files saves backup copies of their files in offsite locations, so as not to lose their business files in events such as 9/11. I understand there are many such sites in New Jersey and on Long Island which serve just such functions, and it is due to the existence of such backup sites that large companies survived, even though many of their employees did not.

Obviously such backup files serve a legitimate and worthy purpose. But we all know about various kinds of viruses which can penetrate computer memories and "rebroadcast" data to illegitimate hackers, to the possible vast detriment of the owner of the machine. As individual users, many of us use Quicken or similar programs for our own bookkeeping

functions. If a hacker penetrates our machine and looks for the data files associated with Quicken or some other bookkeeping program, he may obtain sufficient data to access our credit card files, life insurance files, Medicare files, and who knows what others. This can lead directly to Identity Theft, to our great disadvantage.

I, personally had a rudimentary version of this happen. In my case, someone, (I never learned who), got my Master Card number, and began purchasing tires, gasoline, batteries, etc at a couple of service stations east of Los Angeles. Fortunately for me, MC keeps an eye out for "strange" transactions. After a couple of these, they called me by telephone and inquired if the purchases were valid. After some cross-checking, I assured them the purchases were fraudulent, and no more such purchases were accepted by MC. They then sent me new cards with new numbers, and that was the end of that. Since I never throw away the credit card tissue copies, I don't know how the crook got my number. Probably a crooked waiter somewhere simply wrote down my number and then passed it along to a friend.

But, another event once occurred. I opened a long distance credit card account (I don't remember the company name, now). When the first month's billing came in, there was about \$3000 worth of charges to places all over the world. Initially, the outfit suspected I was attempting to pull a fast one on them, but when they examined the billing closely, they saw there were multiple calls at the same instant to different places, which clearly indicated the number was being used by multiple persons simultaneously. They cancelled the fraudulent charges.

But I digress. Recently, an article in the Los Angeles Times revealed how difficult it can be to suppress information which has gotten, by hook or by crook, onto the Web. As a result of 9/11, several government agencies decided they had been a little free with information, and tried to suppress stuff that they had previously placed on

their websites. To quote the Times, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry rushed to pull a suddenly sensitive report from its Web site titled "Industrial Chemicals and Terrorism." The report had described some sources and techniques for home-brew nerve gases and explosives. But even though the agency killed off the report, the material is still accessible at several other sites, some government, some personal, some perhaps even malicious.

One such website is the Internet Archive, a non-profit venture which has the stated objective of storing the Web's history in the form of archived copies of some 10,000,000,000 (that's 10 billion) pages of stuff that has appeared on the Web. In this case, the objective seems worthy, and I might some time have to seek its services. Many, if not all the common search engines can look into the Archive. They even offer one of their own named "Wayback Machine". Actually, any Website owner can insert a piece of code into his site known as a "robot exclusion" which will cause search bots to pass over the site without recording the contents. Further, the Internet Archive itself will allow site owners to retroactively remove copies of files from the Archive if the site owners also put the "robot exclusion" code on their own sites. But this is closing the barn door after the horse is gone, and may not accomplish much.

All in all, there is a heck of a lot of data which some might wish had never been published out on the web, and of course, even if that data is suppressed on all the Websites, copies may still reside on desktop machines, or on CD-ROMs burned by users. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it's difficult to restore him and insure he stays in!

Secrets of the Trade

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a given task. The only problem is that it takes excess time to achieve the desired result.

Characteristically nonetheless, WordPerfect tends to maintain its functions in an intuitive manner that Word does not. In WordPerfect, I tend to work with the "reveal codes" window on. I find it easy to work this way. Also, I can correct spurious codes as they occur. Microsoft Word requires three or four different views of the current document that I know of to visualize its various formatting features. Also, WordPerfect has an additional justification choice that Microsoft Word does not have. It can be achieved but you have to know how to do it. The only problem is that the help file does not state how it can be done. I had to learn that by asking Lance Wolstrup.

In WordPerfect, justification is either: Right, Left, Centered, Full, or All. The All justification choice means that the short, last line of a paragraph is justified to extend across the entire margin. This usually gives the last line of a paragraph a very strange look. To allow the last line to remain left justified, simply mark the paragraph and click Full justification.

In Word, the help file states that to fully justify the last line of a paragraph, placing the cursor at the end of the line and pushing Shift Enter, spreads the last line from margin to margin. The help file never mentions, however, how to remove that "excellent" feature. After toying unsuccessfully with a couple of misbehaved last lines in some paragraphs, Lance showed me how to make the offending codes visible in order that they may be removed. Additionally, I have found that hitting the enter key at the end of an offending paragraph, achieves the desired result. Learning one or two essential techniques such as these, makes working with a new word processor much less frustrating.

Thus, through heavy use of the help files, and the suggestions from Lance Wolstrup, I learned enough about Microsoft Word to enable me to complete the task of creating the Interface through production of a properly formatted Microsoft Word document. Characteristically, the extension for these files is .doc.

Thereafter, when I completed the December issue of the Interface, I worked for two days trying to get the Adobe Acrobat Distiller to accept the file and to turn it into a ".pdf" file. To my disappointment, however, the Distiller would not even accept the first line of the ".doc" file without complaining about it in the form of an error message.

It did this by complaining about virtually every piece of code it encountered within the completed .doc file. I thought that it might be because the version of Word I used had incompatible codes within it. Therefore I converted the original .doc file I had created into Word files from earlier versions of Word. When that didn't work, I took an early version of the .doc file and read it back into Word Perfect. From there, I saved it as a Word file, from an early version of Word, output from the WordPerfect processor. That didn't work either. Of course, I also tried WordPerfect files from both Word and Word Perfect. By now I had run out of ideas and energy to think of new ones.

After explaining all this to Roy Beck, and complaining to him about the length of time it took me to try to solve the problem, Roy looked at the program and, five minutes later, had produced a nearly error-free .pdf file from the originally formatted .doc file from Word!

Upon hearing his explanation as to how he was able to accomplish this, I discovered that the Adobe Acrobat Distiller, as installed with the suite, is designed to work directly with Adobe's own Post Script .ps files, only.

The proper way to use the Distiller is to simply select it as the output device of choice, from any program that outputs to a standard Windows printer. What Adobe Acrobat does is to install into Windows, its Distiller as an available Windows printer. Therefore, the output of the Adobe "printer", from ANY Windows application that generates printable output, is a file that has been converted into the .pdf file format.

And, there you have it. With just the knowledge of how to use Microsoft Word, and access to an installed Acrobat printer file, anyone can create an issue of the Interface that is both a printable and publishable .pdf file.

Notice to the next Interface editor:

You are welcome to the Microsoft Word files that generated the previous issue of the Interface, and this one.

Good luck!

Swap Meet Musical Chairs

Allen Jacobs

Southern California entertains the largest number of swap meets, anywhere in the United States. That is very fortunate for those of us who live here, because the more participants there are in the market, the more competition there is. That competition has the benefit of keeping computer related prices, for both hardware and software, as low as they can be. Think of multiple vendors as a "swap meet cushion" for prices. Nonetheless, California is as subject to the high tech slowdown and generalized recession that is being experienced by the entire United States and the world, as anywhere else.

What that means to us is that, when fewer computers are sold, computer vendors are going to go out of business. Since the demand for computers has been decreasing in the last couple of years, we can notice the effects of our failure to constantly purchase faster machines, especially on the swap meet circuit.

The Interface does not list all the swap meets in Southern California because it would not be practical for us to get to all of them. However, of those in our area, we lost the Super Show

Productions swap meet at the Glendale Civic Auditorium, over a year ago. If you go to their website, you can find that they even canceled their show in Riverside, for May of 2000.

About a month ago, I discovered that the American Mega Shows swap meet at Cal State, Northridge, recently failed to post a schedule. When a brick and mortar company goes out of business, they don't answer the phone, the sign goes off the building, and you see white paint covering the windows of their store. With a website, the characteristic signs of a dead company appear to be that the website looks the same as it had been, but its stated maintenance date has not advanced, its schedules do not change with the passing of time, and thereafter, links from the website go to non-existent pages. Eventually, the website itself goes away, yielding a "page not available" error message in your browser. The nonexistent browser page for the Mega Shows schedule told me the entire story.

Because I have always enjoyed that swap meet, although it is relatively small as they go, I was motivated to call Cal State, Northridge to confirm what I already knew. Unfortunately, my suspicions were correct. I was informed that American Mega Shows was out of business. Fortunately, I was told that a company called Market Pro took over their venue at the student union, 10 to 5, one or two weekend days a month. Unfortunately, the admission went from \$3 to \$6. More unfortunately still, most of the vendors had closed up and left by 4:00 in the afternoon on Saturday, Dec. 15th (only ten days before Christmas). At that rate, it is difficult to know how long even that swap meet will last.

With, this swap meet shakeout, we may be witnessing the end of an era. I will sorely miss those occasional weekends I have enjoyed, just shopping and buying things that I didn't know I needed, and others that I knew I didn't need. Anyway, I will look back on these times fondly. Here's hoping that we will still find a nice, soft, "swap meet chair" to land in, if and when the "swap meet music" stops.

**Next SAGATUG Meeting
Time and Place:**

7 to 10 p. m., Friday, January 11, 2002
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

Club Officers and Board Members:

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Upcoming Events (Continued):

Upcoming Events:

Manhattan Beach, Last Saturday, monthly, TRW Swap Meet, Admission Free.
Santa Ana, last Sunday of each odd month, ACP, 1310 E. Edinger, Admission Free.
Pomona Fairplex, January 19 & 20, 2002, at LA Fair grounds, Gate 14, Admission \$7, plus parking.
Buena Park, January 12 & 13, 2002, at the Sequoia Conference Center, 7530 Orangethorpe, (Beach Blvd. exit from 91 Freeway), Admission \$5.
Reseda, January 5 & 6, 2002, at the Sherman Square Entertainment Center, 18430 Sherman Way, Admission \$3.
Pomona Swap Meet 3rd Saturday, monthly, at Cal Poly Pomona, 3801 W. Temple Ave., Admission Free.
Costa Mesa, January 26 & 27, 2002, at Orange County Fairgrounds, Admission \$5.

Santa Monica, March 9 & 10, 2002, at Civic Auditorium, Admission \$5.
Santa Barbara, March 16, 2002, at Earl Warren Fairgrounds, Admission \$5.

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Deadline for the Newsletter

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

Republication:

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