SEMCO

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IN THIS ISSUE

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**DEALS COLUMN
from the DealsGuy
Greater Orlando Computer UG
by Bob "The Cheapskate" Click**

Last month I wrote a little about the American Water Works Assn. show, and here's more about it this month. I briefly watched the "tapping" contest, which was fun. There was seating for a small audience, and the competition teams came from all over the world. There was a 20' length of approximately 8" steel pipe mounted on pedestals, and it was capped and pressurized with water at about 45 psi. When a three-man team was ready, a signal was given, and they were to quickly install a special tapping device around the pipe tightly, then drill and tap a hole, then install an outlet valve on that 8" pressurized steel pipe. At the same time, one of their team was cutting a 6' length of 1" copper tubing, forming a proper bend, and connecting one end to a pressure gage mounted on a stand, and the other end to the newly installed valve when the tapping device was removed. When they pressurized the gage, it stopped the clock. This procedure had to end up without any leaks.

Improper bending of the copper tubing, any leaks, and a couple of other rules, if infringed upon, were assessed extra seconds penalty to determine the official time. A Hawaiian team performed the fastest time I saw, in 1 minute 55 seconds. I can tell you that there were hands and elbows flying everywhere for those sessions. Unfortunately, I only got to watch a few contestants, but it was held every day of the show. When I watch our own local utility workers, there are never any record times. In fact, I worry about the quality of the shovel handles they are leaning on.

I Was Impressed

This is only human interest, but it is something that I felt should be passed on. We just finished working an event that greatly impressed us. It was not a trade show, but was the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod 2004 Youth Gathering. It is only held every three years, but what an event for the youth. There were over 37,000 attendees from 38 countries, including USA (most were from USA), and, of course, they were mostly youths. I was somewhat wary of trying to work with a group that was mostly kids, but was very pleasantly surprised. All of us working the event remarked to each other on the great attitude, manners, and camaraderie of those kids.

In one building was a so-called Café where they met (all 37,000) each morning for their prayer event; and in the convention center on our side there was a large area set up for recreation. It was filled with a small carnival and games of all types, along with crafts and many other things for young people. Games even included volleyball and a large twister square. They had a ball for five days, and so did we. There was not one incident that I heard of, and

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everybody involved had a wonderful time. What a great job the parents must have done at raising those kids. My hat is off to those folks. I have not heard of other churches hosting such great events, but they certainly should. When I was complimenting one of the volunteers, she said for me to come join them some time, because they know how to party, and it is always good clean fun. From my observances, I can attest to that, although I was high-fived so many times that my hand eventually began to sting a bit. Those kids really mean it!

News From Binary

I have not heard from Binary Research for two years, but the following was recently sent to all user groups. If you did not see it posted on my Web site, here is their information:

"Universal Imaging Utility: With the UIU you can create an image file that is deployable to any computer, regardless if it's a Dell, Compaq, HP, or even a white box. No longer will the release of software updates and patches mean endless updating of numerous cloning images. The UIU also eliminates the burden of hunting for Plug-and-play IDs and the frustration of the post-cloning Blue Screen. Finally, you can create hardware-independent image files with any cloning utility. Try the UIU and see for yourself how truly effective it is <http://www.binaryresearch.net/UIU.htm>." (You can look at the various prices on the Web site, but I saw no specials.)

"Death2Spam: With all the hype surrounding Anti-Spam/Anti-Virus products, how do you separate the gibberish from the truly useful solutions? For starters, you can try it on your e-mail account. Binary Research is excited to present Death2Spam, a third-generation Anti-Spam/Anti-Virus utility with a true accuracy rating that puts other Spam products to shame. Death2Spam exceeds 99% accuracy in both Anti-Spam and Anti-Virus filtering. Because it employs an adaptive, probabilistic Anti-Virus engine, D2S does not require any signature updates, meaning there is no lag time while you wait for your AV vendor to update for the latest threats <http://www.binaryresearch.net/Death2Spam.htm>." [I only saw corporate prices on the Web page, but you can look for yourself.]

Let This Do The Checking For You

Formula Software has introduced a new product that is interesting. I have noticed that people use Excel for many things; it is not just a pretty spreadsheet for a CPA. For example, if you use it to formulate price sheets, how do you know you have the latest one if you keep updating them? I guess the date and time would help, but Formula Software has introduced "Excel Compare 2.0" to help resolve this problem. It can compare them, and with the results you will have the information at your fingertips. You can find out more about the product and download a demo version at <http://www.formulasoft.com/>.

I won't take the space to better describe it here, but take a look and see if it suits your purposes. It is for Windows 95, 98, NT, ME, 2000, or XP, and if you would prefer to purchase it, they have offered user group members a 30% discount off the $34.95 retail price of a personal license ($39.95 business license) by using the discount coupon code 45GT-88RR-UZ67. The links, in case you want to purchase

this product at a discount are as follows:

Business License
<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=167952&cartcoupon=1&COUPON1=45GT-88RR-UZ67>.

Personal License
<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=167951&cartcoupon=1&COUPON1=45GT-88RR-UZ67>.

The discount codes are imbedded in the URLs.

Nab That Spam

I have complained about spam, and Paul Witheridge says I should try POPfile to conquer that problem. He claims it is 99% successful for him, and best of all, it is free. Beyond that it is also antivirus software. Download it at <http://sourceforge.net/projects/popfile/>. I have not tried it, since I have another philosophy about spam filters. After it has filtered your e-mail, you will probably take a look at what it filters out to make sure it didn't remove something you would have wanted. If I have to look it over anyway, I might as well just do it all in the first place. However, Paul says it is easier and quicker to look at the filtered e-mail, and with the amount of spam I am now receiving, I may try it.

Be aware that there are limitations. It does not work with Web-based mail, as the name POPfile suggests. Anyway, I'm including his suggestion for your perusal. I thought the Web site was confusing, but I'm told the help file in the software is much more understandable for setting it up. There is also a good help forum at <http://sourceforge.net/forum/forum.php?forum_id=213100>.

Paul says K9 is another popular software—smaller, simpler, less capable than POPFile, but quite popular, and also free. Check it out at <http://keir.net/k9.html>.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound.

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com> for interesting articles from user group newsletters. I also posted some interesting NEW Web site pages for your viewing. They contain new product announcements that I received over a period of time. More will be forthcoming when I get the ambition.

"UPS," Uninterruptible Power Supplies and Your Computer
By Ira Wilsker

As I explained in my article last month, the electrical power utilized by our computers can be both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because it is necessary to power our computers and peripherals, and a curse when "dirty" power and power outages damage our machines and data, or render them unusable.

Fortunately, there is a solution to almost all of the power problems that we will likely encounter, and that is

the "UPS," or uninterruptible power supply. A UPS is typically a brick or mini-tower shaped device that connects the wall outlet to the computer. At a minimum, a UPS has a small rechargeable battery that can allow the computer user to quickly and safely shut down the computer in the event of a power failure, preventing the loss of data or damage to the computer. At its best, many UPS devices also provide protection from other power line hazards, in addition to power outages. Readily available locally, and manufactured by such companies as Belkin, Tripp Lite, Cyberpower, Powerware, APC, Energizer, and others, street prices of personal computer UPSs range from about $30 for a minimal unit with a low capacity rechargeable battery, to about $200 for a unit that has numerous features and a large capacity battery. Larger, more powerful and expensive UPSs are available for corporate and other power-critical users. One proviso necessary is to be sure that any UPS has the battery capacity to power your computer until it can be shut down. This ability to power computers is standardized in the industry by labeling each UPS in terms of "VA" and watts. All of the major UPS manufacturers' websites have a calculator to determine the proper minimum capacity for your particular computer and monitor, and most UPS packages have a table with this information printed on the box. A UPS with inadequate capacity will not be able to power the computer long enough to ensure a safe shutdown.

The basic UPS, which is typically the least expensive, is referred to by some manufacturers as a "Category 3" model because it provides protection for the three most common power problems, power failure, power surge or spike (sudden increases in voltage), and short-term low voltage also called "power sag." This type of UPS simply provides power to the computer to enable a proper shutdown in the event of power failure, as well as some protection from power surges. Some of these UPSs also have a serial or USB connector to automatically save running programs, and shut down the computer in an orderly fashion in the event of a power failure. These UPSs may also provide surge protection for phone, coax, and network lines. Some of these will also filter electrical line noise. A Category 3 or basic UPS should be considered as a minimum necessity for all computer users, since they typically provide protection for the most common power problems.

The mid-grade UPS is referred to by some as a "Category 5" and provides all of the features of the category 3, plus the additional protection of "AVR," or "Automatic Voltage Regulation." The AVR adds protection from under- and overvoltage, the "4" and "5" features of a Category 5 device. Undervoltage, commonly known as a "brownout," occurs when line voltage drops below normal, and can last from minutes to days. Brownouts can cause physical damage to computers and other sensitive electronics. Brownouts have occurred when electrical demand exceeds capacity. Overvoltage occurs when line voltage is increased, either for short or long periods of time. Overvoltage will likely cause damage to hardware and loss of data, unless an AVR type device is utilized. A UPS with AVR provides a safe and somewhat constant voltage to the computer

regardless of the voltage coming from the wall outlet. The AVR utilizes the battery of the UPS to supplement low voltage, and reduces the voltage if the voltage is too high. Many AVR systems also provide some protection from lightning damage, and many manufacturers also include some form of insurance coverage protecting from loss if connected equipment is damaged through the power line. In my house, this is the minimum level of protection I would have on my computers.

The premium UPS, sometimes referred to as "Category 9," provides the maximum level of power protection, but also at a premium price. The four additional protections provided by these UPSs, over the category 5 type, are strong filtering for line noise and protection from frequency variations, harmonic distortion, and transient voltages. Basically, this UPS totally isolates the computer from the power line, and only provides clean power to the computer. While all of these power line threats are real and can cause damage to computer components and data, they are not as common as the other perils. This type of UPS is most appropriate for mission critical equipment where cost is not an issue.

In addition to protecting our computers, there are several other uses for UPSs that are not commonly considered, and the less expensive UPSs are quite capable of satisfying. In the event of a power failure the base unit of our cordless phones will cease to function; and we may be incapable of satisfying our addiction to TV. Even the smallest UPS can power a cordless phone base unit for a period of time, as well as power small TVs, and recharge our cell phones. The duration that these devices can power our non-computer devices is determined by the power needs of those devices. I have a small 9" B&W TV that takes 15 watts, and could be powered by my computer's 800VA UPS for several hours, while my 7 watt cordless phones can be powered for almost twice as long.

Uninterruptible power supplies are something you might think about during this season of peak power usage and severe storms.

Ira Wilsker is the APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for the Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He can be reached at <iwilsker@ih2000.net>.

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. TheEditorial 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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Global Positioning System
Where Exactly Are You?
By Joe Schmitt
Tampa Bay Computer Society, Florida

For centuries, man has relied on the most rudimentary of tools to navigate. Things like a compass or sextant, and later a timepiece, were the best he had. In the past, the most difficult task of a ship's captain was to maintain the location and heading of a ship pounded by winds and currents. As time went

on, those tools were perfected and improved. Though they worked well, they were not perfect. It was a time consuming process to mark position; early airplane pilots often navigated using existing landmarks and roads because the speed of their craft made traditional methods cumbersome.

A system called Loran (Long Range Navigation) was developed in the 1940's that utilized radio pulses and displayed location of a ship on a cathode ray tube, similar to your computer monitor. Though accurate to a degree, this system was expensive and offered only a limited area of use.

The global positioning system is a revolution in the way we navigate today. The global positioning system is a set of satellites that, just like Loran, uses radio signals to determine position. Popularly known as GPS, the system uses a "constellation" of 24 satellites in high orbit to determine position in latitude and longitude. In addition to position, the system can also determine altitude and speed.

GPS was first implemented in the early 1970s as a way for the military to improve its ability to navigate and position vehicles. This system eventually evolved to include civilian as well as military uses. In the early days of GPS the signal was intentionally diffused to deteriorate the accuracy of civilian receivers. This use of "selective availability," as the Department of Defense (DOD) calls it, rendered civilian receivers accurate only within a hundred yards or so. Imagine having the unit telling you to make a turn on the next road after you've passed it. In 2000 President Clinton's administration took a serious look at the system and its potential for the civilian population.

Selective availability was disabled on May 2, 2000, making the system for civilian use as accurate as for the military, within thirty feet or so.

So how does all this work? Well, as mentioned previously, there are 24 satellites orbiting the earth that broadcast radio signals. To better understand the system, a simple idea of two-dimensional navigation must be explained. Suppose you are in a field with one of those sign posts that point to a bunch of different places with distances. The top arrow of the sign says Montgomery, Alabama – 139 miles. The next arrow down says Savannah, Georgia – 217 miles. The third arrow points to Nashville, Tennessee – 231 miles. Now sit down at your favorite map and draw a circle around Montgomery with a radius of 139 miles. Next draw circles around Savannah and Nashville with the radii the distances on our imaginary sign post. Where those three circles all intersect is roughly Atlanta, Georgia, where you are. Easy enough to understand, huh?

GPS works with the same principle. The receiver determines its location by its distance from the satellites. But hold it one minute! Those satellites aren't stationary. The satellites move, but on a predictable path and within a consistent time frame. Inside each GPS receiver, is a programmed almanac of the position of each satellite based on time. Each satellite broadcasts a signal which moves at the speed of light. By measuring how long the signal takes to reach the receiver, distance from the satellite is determined. Using three or more satellites the receiver can then triangulate its position very much the same way we did with our imaginary signpost.

These kinds of accurate calculations with radio signals require precise timing, so on each satellite is an atomic clock that is monitored and corrected by ground stations. Using the accuracy of the atomic clock, a code pattern is broadcast from the satellite at a starting point. The receiver knows what time the signal left the satellite based on the portion of the code it is currently receiving. Measuring the time it took for the signal to reach the receiver by comparing the segment of code received with the time in the receiver, the distance to the satellite is determined. The distances from three or more satellites are compared and the position is formulated. That position is then displayed on your receiver as a set of coordinates, or graphically on an electronic map.

Using this pattern the receiver checks and adjusts its internal quartz clock to match that of the atomic clock. So, in addition to knowing where you are, you also know the precise time. Imagine having an atomic clock in your pocket! The receiver also can determine speed by measuring its change in position over time. This is a three dimensional arrangement, so altitude is also calculated.

This is all great and wonderful, but there are some issues. Gravitational pulls from the sun and moon affect the orbits of the satellites. Changing atmospheric conditions also can affect how well the signal travels from the satellite to the receiver. To combat this, the DOD has several ground stations that constantly monitor the signals and make adjustments in the satellites as necessary. In addition, there are two geo-stationary satellites which are in a fixed position in the sky on both sides of the earth. These systems are called WAAS, or Wide Angle Augmentation System. This system's sole purpose is to correct for the issues that affect the accuracy of the broadcast code.

Now with a simple receiver, John Q Public can use a multibillion dollar DOD system with accuracies of less than 3 feet. At this time it is estimated that there are approximately 200 civilian users for each military user of the system!

In a future article, I'll discuss the different types of receivers available to you as a consumer and some neat things that can be done with them. In the mean time, check out these interesting sites:
Official page for GPS management
    <Gps.losangeles.af.mil>
NASA page on GPS
    <Gpshome.scc.nasa.gov>
U.S. Navy GPS Timing Operations
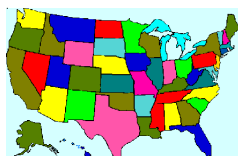   <Tycho.usno.navy.mil/gps.html>
Block II specifications:
    <http://www.spaceandtech.com/
    spacedata/constellations/navstar-
    gps-block2_conspecs.shtml>.

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Route Mapping On Your PC, PDA, or GPS
By Ira Wilsker

We are now in one of the high travel times of the year, and many of us will want to find the best way to get to our destinations. Since the advent of personal computing, mapping has been one of the popular uses. Detailed maps can be created from online resources, or by software installed on the computer. For those of us who use notebook computers, mapping GPS (Global Positioning System) units, or handheld PDAs, the traditional paper road atlases and folded gas station highway maps are approaching obsolescence.

One of the most popular software programs for highway mapping has been the Street Atlas series from DeLorme (the latest being Street Atlas USA 2005) available locally in the PC version for under $50, and in a Palm or Pocket PC PDA version for under $40. Street Atlas USA 2004, which I use, has extremely detailed and easy to read maps, accurate to street-address level. By entering a street address, a map is promptly shown with that address clearly marked. Maps can be created, printed, saved, or e-mailed in any scale. Maps can also be customized to show points of interest, such as restaurants, hospitals, hotels, shopping centers, or other such locations.

Where Street Atlas USA 2004 shines is in its ability to rapidly calculate and produce detailed and customized routings. As a uniform test to compare several online and software products, I chose my home address, and the address of my kids' homes in Georgia, Florida, and Texas. Street Atlas USA 2004 consistently generated the shortest

(miles) or quickest (time) routes, and produced the cleanest and easiest to read maps.

I chose to print the complete routing map sets, with all of the options. Street Atlas USA 2004 allows the user to select the scale of the maps produced and printed, as well as the features and points of interest desired. The first page of the printout was a full color map showing the starting and destination points, distance, time, and selected stops. The following page showed a detailed table with turn by turn directions, distances, and times for each leg of the trip. I chose routing maps on a 50 mile per page scale, with maps available on scales from 1 mile per page to 500 miles per page. Each 50 mile map page also had detailed turn by turn directions. For example, the 50 mile scale maps from home to the Atlanta area, a "quickest" driving distance of 704 miles, projected to take 12 hours, 31 minutes, was printed on 16 pages. I then chose to print the same route using the popular "auto-club" format strip maps, using a 1 inch to 14 mile scale. These strip maps showed the detailed routing, with annotations to the sides showing key points and detailed turn and directional information. In this format, home to Atlanta printed 18 pages.

For those who sometimes get confused at intersections, or with printed directions, the next option produced extremely detailed maps showing each turn and exit. These maps were on a scale of about 1 inch to 1000 feet, and were about 4 square inches each, printed sequentially, 6 maps per page. Printed under each map were the same directions printed on the larger scale maps, but enabling the traveler to clearly

visualize each turn or exit, thus minimizing the chances of a wrong turn. If selected as an option, gas stations, motels, shopping, campgrounds, hospitals, restaurants, or other locations can be displayed on these small maps, as well as the larger scale maps. These small but highly detailed turn and exit maps, showing each turn or direction change in the 704 miles between home and Atlanta, were printed on 3 pages.

I faithfully still use my now obsolescent Garmin Emap GPS when traveling, and it has hundreds of waypoints that I have explicitly recorded and stored in its memory. The DeLorme Street Atlas USA 2004 was able to connect to and communicate with my Emap, downloading all of my waypoints in the Street Atlas, even though my GPS was made by a different company. There are varying degrees of compatibility between different GPS makes and this software, but there is near-universal compatibility if the GPS is connected to the computer to determine location in real time. Many trucking companies, delivery and courier services, and others who spend a lot of time on the road have found that an inexpensive GPS device connected to a notebook computer or PDA can give extremely accurate locations in real time, using the Street Atlas software. As an added bonus, re-routing around detours or traffic jams can be instantly calculated and shown. Using my Emap, I was able to plot my location on the screen within about 25 feet of accuracy. For those desiring to use Street Atlas 2004 USA with a notebook computer, but not currently owning a compatible GPS unit, DeLorme produces the excellent Earthmate GPS, which is designed to specifically connect to a notebook computer or PDA for real time tracking and routing. The Earthmate GPS device is available separately for under $100, and can often be found bundled with Street Atlas 2004 USA, or other Delorme products, for slightly more.

Ira Wilsker is the APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for the Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He can be reached at <iwilsker@ih2000.net>.

Use Run Commands For Fast Access To Almost Everything

By Linda Gonse, Editor, Orange County PC Users Group, California

Did you know that the Run command is the Swiss Army knife of Windows' built-in apps? Using it can make your computing time move along more quickly and smoothly.

Available since Windows 3.1, the Run command is often overlooked by users except as an option for installing programs, although techies use it frequently to access various system diagnostics and information.

The average computer user should

take a closer look at Run for its versatility to start programs and utilities, to open files and folders, to open web sites (when connected to the Internet), and as an alternative to placing shortcuts on the desktop.

To use Run, left click on the Start button. Click on Run. If you hate to take your fingers off the keyboard to access Run, you can avoid using the mouse by pressing the Windows key on your keyboard and the letter "r." Commands are typed into the open box.

For example: In the open Run box, type 'msconfig' to give you quick access to the Startup Configuration tab. Click on the StartUp tab, and check or uncheck boxes of programs you want to run on Startup. (You will be prompted to restart your computer. If you want your custom startup to take effect immediately, click OK.) Msconfig is one of the Run commands you will probably use often.

Following are other Run commands for you to try out. (If you get hooked on Run, you can search Google for "run commands" to find others. There are lots of them! Many will include "switches," familiar to DOS users, that will allow some of the commands to be customized.)

calc (opens calculator utility)
cdplayer (opens cd player)
charmap (opens character map utility)
clipbrd (opens clipboard utility)
command (opens DOS window at command line)
defrag (opens defrag utility)
drvspace (opens drive space utility to compress drives, etc.)
dxdiag (for DirectX, sound, input devices-joysticks, etc. info)
freecell (opens freecell game)

mplayer2 (opens Windows Media Player 6.4)
msconfig (accesses programs that run on startup)
mshearts (opens hearts game)
msinfo32 (accesses system resources info)
notepad (opens program)
regedit (accesses command to edit the registry)
rsrcmtr (loads resource meter utility in system tray)
scandskw (accesses scan disk utility)
scanregw (registry scan)
sndrec32 (opens sound recorder)
sndvol32 (opens sound volume utility)
sol (opens a solitaire game)
sysedit (accesses the System Configuration Utility)
sysmon (opens system monitor utility)
win.ini (accesses file that loads some Windows components)
winipcfg (displays Internet connection/adapter info)
winver (displays the Windows verson installed on the computer)
wmplayer (opens Windows Media Player)
wordpad (opens program)
wupdmgr (connects Windows update)

Using the Run box can also give you a jump start on addressing your e-mail messages. Go to Run and type in 'mailto:<desired email address>' and press OK. (Example—mailto:editor @orcopug.org.) Your e-mail application will open to display a blank new message that already has the e-mail address you typed in the 'To:' field! You can even check websites by typing in a web address in Run. (Example: <http://www.orcopug.org>.) When

connected to the Internet, you will be whisked to wherever you want to go.

Among the commands that accept switches and that you can type in the Run box to customize tasks are 'attrib,' 'move,' and 'xcopy.' DOS command and switches, and instructions on how to use them in conjunction with Windows Run, are at <http://www.Techiwarehouse.com/ DOS/XP_DOS__Tutorial.html>, and <http://www.computerhope.com/ msdos.htm#02>.

As you type commands in the Run box, a list of your Most Recently Used (MRU) commands—a history of the commands you've used—accumulate. The growing list can come in handy, because you can just click on any command to activate it without retyping it.

On the other hand, you may not want to wade through a long list, or you may not want others to have access to the visible commands. In these cases, you need to clear the MRU commands. Here are two ways you can do that:

1. Right click the start button and go to properties. Click on the radio button next to Start Menu and click on the Customize... button. Then, click on the Advanced tab. Locate the Run box and check the box on the left. Then, click on clear history.

2. You can navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\ RunMRU. This is where you will find all the commands in the Run history. Delete the ones you don't want. But, backup the registry first!

Linda Gonse can be contacted at <editor@orcopug.org>. Or, visit her user group's website at <http:// www.orcopug.org>.

Cyber Terrorism
A Portent of Things to Come?
By Ira Wilsker

The news is heavy these days with warnings of terrorism and potential terrorist attacks. While the news is emphasizing possible attacks on our physical infrastructure, including business, government and transportation, there has been nearly nothing published in the mass media about another potentially devastating terror attack, an assault on our cyber and electronic infrastructure. To those involved with cyber security this is not news, but something that we have been trying to train and prepare for, as well to inform others of the risks, so that they can also prepare, and harden their systems.

According to Dr. Magnus Ranstorp, the Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, and a CNN consultant, Al Qaeda is very involved in the use of computers and the internet to promote its cause. In his published report, "Al-Qaeda in Cyberspace: Terrorism Challenges in the Information Era," he describes some of Al Qaeda's cyber activities. Al Qaeda uses the internet as one of it primary methods of communication, recruitment, mobilization, and propaganda. It is also used for

theological teaching and hidden communication between its covert cells. It is well known in security circles that Al Queda uses the free e-mail services of Yahoo and Microsoft's Hotmail to communicate, using a variety of innocuous user names and apparently non-sensitive e-mails. Al Queda uses common vernacular as disguised code words, often with pre-arranged meanings, as well as the practice of "steganography," or hiding messages in plain sight, typically in an image that would not otherwise attract any attention. By remaining in open sight, and without any unusual content that would attract attention, Al Queda can exchange information that is nearly impossible to identify in a timely fashion.

According to John Hamre, Deputy Secretary of Defense under President Clinton, many of the notebook computers belonging to Al Queda operatives captured or otherwise seized, have significant information about the programming and operation of "supervisory control and data acquisition" (SCADA) systems commonly used in industry to control electrical, pipeline, refinery, power company, and other automated systems. By cracking into these often under-protected systems, a potential terrorist can effectively take control of those systems. The implications of this vulnerability are enormous, and the potential for economic and other damage is incalculable.

Osama bin Laden is no stranger to computer security, and is personally well educated and experienced in dealing with computer security issues. Osama is reported to have had a hacker school involving the faculty in the electronics department during his university education. He was also instrumental in creating a "cyber university" in Pakistan with an emphasis on SCADA systems controlling water utilities, pipelines, nuclear power plants, and dams, according to John Hamre.

The infamous terrorist group Hezbollah also has contemporary information and the talents and abilities to launch electronic attacks against the soft American and European infrastructure. Israeli infrastructure has already been hardened, making such attacks by Hezbollah there much more difficult, according to Dr. Ranstorp. He also states that Al Qaeda will likely coordinate a cyber attack with a conventional terrorist attack, enhancing the economic damage, resulting in crippling losses.

Professor Yonah Alexander, Director of the International Center for Terrorism Studies, a recognized leading expert on terrorism stated, "We can expect to see an escalation in terrorism on a global scale with a continuation of conventional acts of terror… There will also be a move towards the use of non-conventional weapons… and cyber-terrorism, whereby perpetrators will try to disrupt power supplies and air traffic, for example, at the touch of a button."

I am not disclosing anything here that is not already well known in security circles, and that has not already been widely disseminated on the internet and in written form in the various Al Qaeda and other terrorist training manuals.

We, as businesses, government, consumers, and citizens, need to be aware of the threats we face to our sensitive and often "soft target" infrastructure, and take necessary and appropriate steps to harden our systems.

From an individual's viewpoint, we all must be certain to have current and frequently updated antivirus, firewall, and anti-spyware software installed on our computers, and verify that it is properly functioning. Our personal computers can be taken over by zombies placed on our machines by viruses and Trojans, and used to launch "distributed denial of service" (DDOS) attacks, where millions of computers simultaneously launch an attack against countless servers, websites, governmental entities, and other such facilities, effectively shutting them down. Similar attacks can also be launched from personal computers against some of the SCADA systems controlling our vital systems.

Information on protecting our systems is readily available and often free on the internet. There are many websites on the so-called "info war" and what we can do about it. One excellent site is the British Information Warfare site at <www.iwar.org.uk>, which has hundreds of links to American, British, Canadian, Australian, and other resources, including many free government produced booklets and information from private businesses and other organizations. The left column on the site has a directory of topics that covers these critical areas, ranging from home computer security, to hardening corporate SCADA systems.

Regardless of our personal political beliefs, it appears that terrorism is a fact, and cyber terrorism is a very real threat. Using a now common cliché: it is not a matter of "if," but a matter of "when."

Ira Wilsker is the APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for the Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He can be reached at <iwilsker@ih2000.net>.

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. TheEditorial 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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Pixifun
A Review
By Arthur L. Laramie
SEMCO Member

Pixifun Digital Creations is a program that you will have a lot of fun with. This is a program that you can use to take a picture that you have in digital form and print it in a size and layout that will fit into a photo key ring.

Pixfun is a very easy program to load on your computer. As soon as it is installed, you can start using it. The brief startup guide will get you started on how to run the program. The first thing that you will do is manipulate a photo so that it will fit into the key chain holder that comes with the kit.

When you first decide to get into this type of program, make sure that you buy the starter kit, as this is the only kit that has the installation CD in it. All of the rest of the kits are refill kits.

When you first start up the program, you will find it listed as Aniprint 2.0 for Key Rings. Just click on it and get started. The first screen that you see asks you which format you want to use.

You have a choice of either the portrait or landscape layout. Once you have made your choice, it gives you a blank project icon so that you can start your project. In the main screen you have a lot of the things that you have seen in other programs. There is the command bar on the top with the pull downs that you are familiar with. There are some added blocks that you will use as well. They are the Draw and Edit tool bars, as well as the background bars.

When you are ready to start your project, go to the file command and pick the Import Picture command. I have some photos on a 3.5" disk, so I just clicked on one of the pictures and imported it to this program. When the photo was on the screen, I just sized it to fit the layout that will fit into the key chain holder. You can change or modify the photo with the tools that are in this program.

On the CD that comes with the starter kit there is a PDF file that is the instruction book, so that you can operate the program to it utmost.

This is a very easy program to use. It is not a very expensive program, but it is loaded with a lot of extras. The program costs $12.99 and is available over the Internet.

The address on the Internet is <http://www.pixifun.com>.

System Requirements:
Windows 95 or better
A Color Monitor
64MB of Ram
A CD-ROM drive

Art

America the Beautiful Online
By Sherry Zorzi
Cajun Clickers Computer Club, Louisiana

Three cheers for the red, white, and blue! Now is a perfect time to renew your commitment to civic involvement, and the Internet makes it easy for you to stay informed, to communicate with your leaders, and to get involved in the process of government at the local, state, and national levels. Be sure to get out and vote!

Every agency of the federal government has a website. The "U.S. Government's Official Web Portal" at <www.firstgov.gov> is a great jumping-off spot for finding links to all manner of government offices and information. There are links to various agencies, links to important publications, and links to contact information from federal officials. The site even has links to each individual state site.

You can take a tour of the White House, learn its history, find out about pending presidential appointments, or read transcripts of the President's speeches at <www.whitehouse.gov>. There's even a special area for kids, <www.whitehouse.gov/kids>, with educational quizzes and games and videos of the presidential pets.

Want to let your U.S. Senator or Congressman know your opinion on an issue? Try <www.senate.gov> or <www.house.gov>. There you'll find easy links for sending e-mail to your elected representatives. You can also read the text of pending legislation, find the makeup of various legislative committees, or view artwork housed in

the U.S. Capitol. You'll find the full text of the U.S. Constitution here, along with the Congressional Record. You can even read about some of the "urban legends" surrounding the U.S. Congress.

If you're anxious about your family's security in light of the global terrorism threat, you might check out <www.fema.gov/areyouready> for A Guide to Citizen's Preparedness. It has useful information to help you prepare for all manner of events, including natural disasters like hurricanes and floods. I've used the information here to prepare a nifty Emergency Kit for my own home.

If politics is your cup of tea, all of the major political parties host robust websites, where you can read the party's platform, volunteer to work on political campaigns, request yard signs, or make a contribution. Visit <www.democrats.org> (Democratic Party) or <www.gop.com> (Republican Party) or go to <www.politics1.com/parties.htm> for links to some of the "third party" websites.

The main portal for government agencies in Michigan is <www.michigan.gov>. Here you'll find links to maps, various state agencies, and government publications. You can renew your driver's license or vehicle

Letter From The Editor

Have You Ever Wondered...

■ What kind of pleasure is gained when someone hacks viruses into our computers or smashes mailboxes? Both acts are anonymous, and no money or glory is acquired.

■ How they make politician candidates' signs that adorn all our sidewalks and yards? There are many fonts, sizes, and colors. Are they computer-generated and printed on a laser printer?

■ Why the rubber handrail on an escalator or moving sidewalk always moves at a different rate than the steps or walkway? If you rest your hand luggage on the rail in the airport, it may not reach the end at the same time as you.

■ Why silos are shaped the way they are—the diameter and the height? Who decided long ago that they should be that way—an engineer, or architect, or farmer? Is the height determined so that weight of corn produces sufficient pressure at the bottom to aid fermenting, and the volume sufficient to contain the corn from a given size field? Why are they disappearing?

■ Why SEMCO members don't send more comments, letters, articles, e-mails, reviews to the DATA BUS editor?

Haven't you wondered? I have,   Bill

registration, register to vote, purchase a hunting or fishing license, or search for a job. You can contact the Governor or any of the legislators. Read the bills in the Legislature or see the laws of Michigan. Check the Michigan Lottery. There is lots of travel and recreation information and business services.

Finally, for a quick review of that high school civics lesson you may have slept through, visit <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12>. This excellent tutorial explains the structure of our three-branched government, how laws are made, and how the election process works.

Sherry Zorzi is Secretary of Cajun Clickers Computer Club. She can be reached through the club's website <www.clickers.org>.

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BOARD MEETING
8/8/04
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present:
President Gary DeNise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Roger Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier, Publications Committee Chairman Bill Agnew, and Members at Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. The meeting was called to order at 12:12 p.m.
Old Business:
Due to a network malfunction, the Treasurer's report was not given. Bob Clyne moved to reimburse Warner Mach $9.38 for refreshments. Franz Breidenich seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Bob Clyne moved to amend last month's motion to include the purchase of a box of 500 number 10 envelopes at a combined cost not to exceed $25.00. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Richard Jackson made telephone contact with those whose membership is expiring. He made a summary of the responses to the survey questions. A discussion followed. Tom Callow suggested that calls be made only after the second renewal notice has been received.
New Business:
Richard Jackson moved to authorize $20 for filing the annual report to the State of Michigan. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Bob Clyne reported that due to new policies at Community Media Network, they will no longer broadcast the SEMCO promotional material unless SEMCO becomes a member. Membership costs $25 per year. It was decided not to become a member.

Bob Clyne reported that Rick Broida, writer and editor of the Tech Savvy column at the Observer & Eccentric, has software and peripherals he'd like to donate. It was suggested to have Rick Broida contact Arthur Laramie, as the Rochester Lion's Club may have a use for the donated items.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

September 12: SIG-IBM: Reclaiming Your Computer: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to clean spyware out of your computer, using such free programs as Lavasoft's Ad-Aware, Spybot-Search & Destroy, and Hijack It.

August Meeting Attendance: 22

Gary DeNise was impressed with a speaker demonstrating computer topics to handicapped and senior people. He will make inquiries as to his availability and possibly ask him to be a guest speaker. He will contact a SIG-Chairman to arrange a date.

Bob Clyne reported that the APCUG Conference is January 3rd through January 6th, and CES (Consumer Electronics Show) is January 6th through 9th in Las Vegas. More information may be found at <http://www.apcug.net> or <http://www.cesweb.org>.

Roger Gay moved to adjourn. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Jack Vander-Schrier

September 12: Paint Shop Pro 8: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will show how to edit and modify photos and do all kinds of fun things with Paint Shop Pro 8.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

September 12: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

October 4:(first Monday), 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. **Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.**

October 2004 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., September 19, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <agnew@bignet.net>. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Mail **unfolded** camera-ready copy; payment in full made out to SEMCO, to the Editor (address Page 2).

Bill Agnew
agnew@bignet.net
(to post monthly computer group info)

CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)
Sept. 25–Saturday, 10am (4th Saturday); W. Bloomfield Twp. Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., 1 mile west of Orchard Lk Rd. Jack Lockman at <thunder@tir.com   or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)
Oct. 6–Wednesday, 7pm (1st Wednesday); Rm 201, Clara E. Mackenzie Library-Science Bldg, St. Clair Community College, 323 Erie St., Port Huron. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187. Web: <http://www.bwcomp.org>.

DCOM Computer Club
Sept. 10–Friday, 6:30–8:30pm (2nd Friday); Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602.

DPUG (Detroit Palm Users Group)
Sept. 9–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kelly Services Bldg, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver, Troy. <http://www.dpug.org>.

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)
Sept. 14–Tuesday, 6:30pm (2nd Tuesday); Kettering Univ. Academic Bldg. Rm I-817 (enter Security Door, back of building by parking lot). <http://www.gfn/FACE/index.html>.

MacGroup Detroit
Sept. 19–Sunday, 3pm–5pm (3rd or 4th Sunday); Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (at Telegraph Rd.). Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. <http://www.macgroup.org>. Topic: Digital Music with Concert Pianist David Syme.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
Sept. 18–Saturday, 11:00am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30) (3rd Saturday); Washtenaw County Library, 4135 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor (Possible Change). <http://www.mactechnics.org>). Cassie at <cassiemac@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743. Topic: Appleworks.

MCUG (Michigan Computer Users Group)
Sept. 16–Thursday, 7pm (3rd Thursday); 35271 Rockingham Dr, Sterling Hts., MI 48310-4917; Info: Jerry Zinger, Pres., <kahuna15@comcast.net> 810-792-3394.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group
Sept. 9–(2nd Thur), MAC SIG; Sept. 9–(2nd Thur), Golden Masters SIG; Sept. 16–(3rd Thur), Green Apple SIG; Eagles Hall in Clawson, 174 Bowers St (one block North of 14-Mile and one block East of Main). Carl Pendracki 248-647-8871 <carlpen@aol.com>. Web: <http://www.themichiganapple.com>. Topic: Upgrade Demo

Oak Park Computer Club
Meets every Friday, 10:15am at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)
Oct. 5–Tuesday 7:30pm, (1st Tuesday), Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Heights. Pres. Don VanSyckel at <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232; Web: <http:/www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>.

SVCA (Saginaw Valley Computer Assoc.)
Sept. 9–Thursday, 6:30–9:00pm, (2nd Thursday); Zauel Library, Shattuck & Center Rds., Saginaw. Web: <http://www.svca.org>.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group
Sept. 11–Saturday, 10:00am–Noon (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny MeLampy 248-477-0190.

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

This is a list of members willing to be resources for other members to call when they have hardware
or software questions.
Are you willing to help members learn?
Which software programs are you familiar enough with?
It is not necessary to be an expert, but just have some familiarity with the program and be willing
to help someone starting to learn it. Please give this some thought and volunteer at the next group meeting.

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier	**MS Office for Windows:** Callow
AutoCAD: Comptois, Gay	**MS Word:** Clyne
Genealogy: Cook	**Networking:** Callow
IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Gay, Yuhasz	**Novell Netware:** Yuhasz
Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz	**Quicken:** Clyne, Gay
MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz	**Geocaching:** Cook

Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pm .... clyne@lodden.com
Callow, Tom—248-642-1920 9am–5pm .... tcallow@vmddlaw.com
Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime .... jerrycandotoo@juno.com
Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves .... scook48227@ameritech.net
Gay, Roger—248-641-7799, 9am–10pm .... rgay@voyager.net
Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm .... jvanders@myself.com
Yuhasz, Steve .... Help@yuhasz.org

SEMCO CALENDAR—September/October

**ELLIOTT HALL, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN**

September 12–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

SEMCO **Board** Meeting at 12:00 noon, **Room 235.** For Officers and SIG Chairpersons. Other members are invited to attend.

SEMCO **General** Meeting at 1:30 pm, **Room 235.**

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 235. Program: SIG-IBM: Reclaiming Your Computer**: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to clean spyware out of your computer, using such free programs as Lavasoft's Ad-Aware, Spybot-Search & Destroy, and Hijack It.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm, **Room To Be Announced At The General Meeting.** Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 pm, **Room 208 or 210. Program: Help And Q&A Discussion Directed By The Audience.**

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 pm, **Room 235. Program: Paint Shop Pro 8:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will show how to edit and modify photos and do all kinds of fun things with Paint Shop Pro 8.
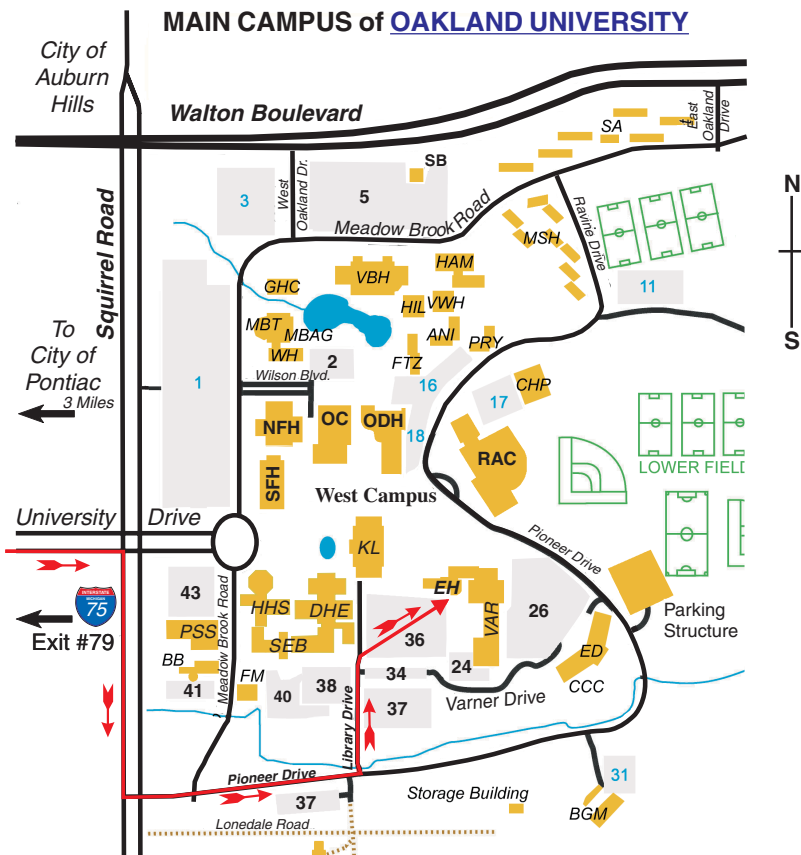
SIG-ADVANCED , **October 4–MONDAY, 6:45 pm ,** Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd.,Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd. and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

October 10–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday). **SEMCO**, 1:30 pm. **Topics: To Be Announced.**

http://www.semco.org

PUBLIC INVITED

(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)
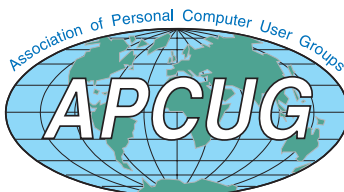
MAIN CAMPUS of OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

MAP LEGEND

EH   Elliott Hall
VAR   Varner Hall
DHE   Dodge Hall of Engineering
KL   Kresge Library

DIRECTIONS

Driving north on I-75 (from Detroit and suburbs), take Exit 79 (University Drive); stay to the right on University Drive to campus entrance. Turn right (south) on Squirrel Road (at traffic light that is just outside campus); turn left on Pioneer Drive (next street to left). Turn left off Pioneer Drive onto Library Drive (second left) toward Kresge Library. When you get to parking lot 36, proceed to the far (northeast) corner of the parking lot. After parking, go into the nearest entrance. Follow the "SEMCO" signs.

Member of

Association of Personal Computer User Groups

APCUG

**SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.
P.O. Box 707
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0707**

SEMCO (future meetings)
September 12
October 10

**SEMCO: A Community Organization
Helping People for the 21st Century**