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

I finally finished my article about creating trade shows and should have it posted on my Web site about the middle of August. Its lengthy, but you may find it interesting.

I'm not a very ambitious person so I often do things the hard way until I finally give in and see about doing, at least something, easier. One example is with my computer's cursor, which I often lose on the page, and have to find it. I always use a large arrowhead cursor, which works fairly well for me, but a printed page makes the cursor harder to follow because it changes into a thin I-beam. After fumbling for the cursor that way for a few years, I was finally prompted by a newsletter article to check in the Control Panel > Mouse, and the pointer options tab where I found a box to check to show the location of the pointer with a series of concentric circles emanating from the cursor when pressing Ctrl. It was so simple to find and how stupid of me not to have looked into that long ago, and it only took me about a minute to do it. I hope you aren't that lazy. I've mentioned it to a couple of other people and they said they were unaware that you could set up something like that. I knew it, but a newsletter article finally pushed me to do it.

Sometimes a confusing experience needs a fix that can't be put off. One night I had a problem with a flash drive that I keep my DealsGuy files on. If I'm working on a DealsGuy column, I normally plug that flash drive in first and it becomes my D drive. Each

evening when I'm shutting down my machine, I plug in a larger flash drive for my backup, which becomes my E drive since the DealsGuy flash drive is D. That larger flash drive "has" to be my E drive when I use it because that's where the backup is set to backup my data files.

However, one evening when beginning my session, I plugged in my DealsGuy flash drive and it became my E drive, in spite of the fact that there was no D drive. I wondered why it did that, but all my tries, including rebooting the computer, failed to give it the drive letter I needed. I rebooted with that flash drive plugged in, and without it, then plugging it in, with no success. I even tried different USB plugs on the computer. I had used it the night before as an E drive simply to retrieve a file, but how would it get stuck on being an E drive? I had no idea, but needed help.

Maybe I needed to juggle my flash drives somehow, but I was stumped. I looked everywhere I could think of for instructions to try changing the setting of the drive's letter, and the computer's help was a lost cause for me. I knew "changing drive letters" was possible because I used it to establish my DVD drive letter when I originally set up this computer.

I called several friends who didn't have the answer, and finally called a friend in another state who I knew would have the answer if he was home. He thought my request was stupid, but finally humored me with the step-by-step procedure, and it was simple: My OS is XP and he had me go to Control Panel, Administrative Tools, Computer Management, and then Disk Management; and there was the procedure to accomplish the drive

letter change. It was simple, but not to me until I was shown where to do it. My problem was solved. Thank God for my user group friends! My limited computer knowledge has come from my user group friends, and I have learned very little from “Help” (F1). On the other hand, I’ve seen the gurus do well with Help.

Good Help To Organize Your Desktop

A while back Hewie Poplock <<http://www.hewie.net>>, who heads the Windows SIG for Central Florida Computer Society, and also writes a monthly column called “Hewie’s Favorites,” demonstrated something called “Fences” and several in the group liked it. I can’t adequately describe this product except to say that it offers a unique way to organize your desktop. With Fences, you can create categories that include only certain icons, making it easier to find whatever you might be looking for. You can also hide certain icons, leaving fewer choices when you are picking the icon you want to work with. The Web site says “simplify your desktop by creating shaded areas which become movable and sizable containers for your icons. Double click blank spaces on your desktop and all your fences will fade out, or come back. You can create an unlimited number of fence areas on your desktop.”

Fences can be found at <<http://www.stardock.com/>> and there are videos that describe what it does. “Fences” is free for home use. A Pro version is available for \$9.99 at this writing and the advantages of the Pro version are listed. I didn’t pay much attention to Fences at first, but soon even the gurus started using it, so I’m passing it on to my readers. When even the consultants

like a product, I think the rest of us should pay attention. There are certainly other ways to accomplish the task, but Fences may do it better. There are other products available there.

Is That Web Site Safe To Visit?

The above-mentioned users group has some interesting gurus who never fail to impress me at a monthly meeting or at a SIG meeting. At a monthly meeting, Mike Ungerman advised me that Reimage, the company I tried for improving the performance of my computer, had only a fair rating on “Web of Trust,” but I had no idea what Web of Trust was. He advised me it would be a good idea to always use Web Of Trust when looking at products and services. It seems Web of Trust has a browser add-on you can download for Internet Explorer or Firefox that will give you a rating on the worthiness of many sites and their products when you access the URL.

You can also offer your own comment for a Web site or product on Web of Trust and it will be used in the rating. You might say their ratings are done by a jury of your peers. If you download and install their browser add-on, your browser will show a small circle with a color in it that rates the site you are visiting. The Web site is <<http://www.mywot.com/>>. There are a couple of sites nearly the same that are not good, so be sure you get that right.

I installed it and noticed that when I did a Google search for batteries, all of the URLs found had the WOT colored circles beside them. When I clicked on a URL with a red one, a window came up telling that the site did not have a very good reputation so I would enter at my own risk. Some URLs had the circle, but with a question mark, telling

you it was not rated. I assume the rating depends on feedback about a site, but not necessarily for malicious code. It looks like Web Of Trust rates a site according to people's comments. Take a look and see what you think.

Hewie Poplock <<http://www.hewie.net>>, was answering a few of my questions on the use of Web of Trust and, during our conversation, he mentioned another URL of interest that will simply check the safety of a URL for you. That one is <<http://browsingprotection.f-secure.com/swp/>>, which comes from F-Secure, who most of you are familiar with. To check the quality of a certain URL, type it in to the box where indicated and click for it to rate your requested site.

You are probably familiar with McAfee's free Site Advisor <<http://www.siteadvisor.com/>>, and Link Scanner, free from AVG <<http://linkscanner.explabs.com/linkscanner/avg/>>, which I have previously written about to warn on the safety of a URL. The F-Secure product checks a URL free, but except for the 30-day trial versions of their products, the pricing is on their site. According to their Web site, their Internet Security offers many great features so if you don't mind the price, it may offer you peace of mind.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. 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 at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.



**Probably the Best Free
Security List in the World
(Website)**

By Ira Wilsker

In a previous column I wrote about "Gizmo's Freeware," a very popular site that compiles lists of free software, categorizes thousands of freeware titles, tests, and rates much of the available freeware. Unlike many of the other freeware websites, according to Gizmo himself, "Gizmo's Freeware is a non-commercial community website staffed entirely by volunteers. ... The best freeware programs are as good as or better than their commercial counterparts but finding the most appropriate program can be challenging. Sure, there are dozens of freeware download sites on the web, but few of these actually help you select the best program for your needs. That's what we do here. No downloads, just honest advice and useful guidance. It's honest because this is a community-based site staffed by volunteers and we have no commercial affiliations."

One of the most frequently asked questions that I receive requests information and recommendations about free security software. Computer users often seem to be on the lookout for that gem of a free program that will protect their computers from threats. I have reviewed and written about several freeware security programs, some of which I can personally recommend, but I must candidly admit that I have not tried all of the available titles. This is where Gizmo shines, in that a knowledgeable community of users has tried all of

the programs listed, and posted their evaluations and recommendations. What is more startling, is that this list is remarkably up to date, in that new releases and upgrades appear on a daily basis.

Gizmo's "Probably the Best Free Security List in the World" is available online at <<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/probably-best-free-security-list-world.htm>>. This comprehensive list is indexed into 25 security categories ranging from real-time protection, tools for virus removal, firewalls, browser security, network and system monitoring, system cleaning, system rescue, data recovery, and several other types of security software. One interesting component in the index is "Doing time in jail" where software is listed that is not recommended for specific reasons; while one title "in jail" is a rogue software product, all of the other inmates listed are the very popular IObit series of products. Sometime ago there was a controversy that alleged that IObit had pirated parts of the MalwareBytes malware signature database, and incorporated those signatures into the IObit security software, a dispute that has not been totally resolved. Another noteworthy feature on this Gizmo list is that security software that is compatible with the increasingly more common 64-bit operating systems (Vista 64 and Windows 7-64) is clearly labeled, such that 64-bit users can be sure to get the most compatible software.

In the early days of computing, only antivirus software was considered necessary; later, a firewall and anti-spyware software became essential components of PC security. Today, there are still many free-standing antivirus

programs available, both commercial and freeware. Sadly, spyware and other types of malware have eclipsed viruses as the primary threats to computing security, such that a free-standing antivirus-only product, no matter how good it is at protecting from viruses, does not give adequate protection from contemporary threats. Most programs currently available that are listed as "antivirus" also provide some degree of spyware protection. Gizmo currently lists and rates over a dozen free antivirus programs that offer real-time protection. Popular titles that are reviewed and rated on Gizmo include Avast!, AVG, Microsoft Security Essentials, Panda Cloud, and Avira. Several other less known free antivirus products are also listed.

Since many of the antivirus utilities only provide limited protection from other types of malware, it will likely be necessary to run an anti-malware utility along with an antivirus program. Gizmo lists six free anti-malware programs that run alongside antivirus software, providing an extra level of protection.

A firewall should prevent unauthorized access to the computer from across the Internet, and also prevent rogue programs that may have made it onto the computer from sending data to persons unknown. Gizmo lists over a dozen free firewall products that include the free versions (often of limited capability) of commercial firewalls, totally free firewalls, and utilities that can improve the firewalls incorporated in most modern versions of Windows.

In commercial (pay) security products, my personal choices are the comprehensive security suites offered by the major security companies like

TrendMicro, Kaspersky, Norton, and McAfee. For the many who prefer free security suites, compound utilities that include integrated antivirus, anti-malware, and firewall software, Gizmo has tested and rated two free security suites, Comodo Internet Security and Forticlient. I have had some experience with the free Comodo Internet Security <<http://www.comodo.com/home/internet-security/free-internet-security.php>> and found it a capable and comprehensive security suite; the only factor against the free Comodo suite is that some people question Comodo's privacy policies.

Many of the malware threats in current circulation are intended to penetrate and neutralize the security software that is installed on the computer, and this includes both commercial and free security software. Some published reports have indicated that currently updated antivirus and anti-malware products can only detect about one-half of the latest threats, so it is often necessary to perform a security scan with a third party product to dramatically improve the detection and removal of any malware that may have penetrated the computers' defenses. Gizmo lists over a dozen free antivirus scanners, nine anti-malware (anti-spyware) scanners, eight portable anti-malware scanners that can be run from a USB or similar external drive, eight free utilities to create bootable CDs that can detect and kill infections, a dozen rootkit detectors (rootkits are often hidden from traditional virus and malware scans), and a variety of other free detection and removal utilities. The user of free detection software should be aware that while most of the free titles will both detect and remove malware, there

are some products that are free while in the detection mode, but then have a fee for the removal component. For those who prefer to use an online scanner rather than a software product, Gizmo lists a dozen free online scanners. Just like the software scanners, while most of the online scanners will both detect and delete malware, a few only detect malware, and require the use of a paid service to remove the malware. My personal favorite free online scanner and killer is TrendMicro's Housecall, at <<http://housecall.antivirus.com>>.

Gizmo lists dozens of other free utilities, including anti-phishing (online identity theft protection), link scanning (protection from dangerous websites), privacy utilities, cookie managers, password managers, keystroke scramblers (protect from key logging spyware), and many other security utilities. While I have not seen all of the other security software list websites, of those that I have viewed, Gizmo's "Probably the Best Free Security List in the World" may have rightly earned its self-described moniker.

WEBSITE:

<<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/probably-best-free-security-list-world.htm>>

<<http://www.techsupportalert.com>>.

<<http://www.comodo.com/home/internet-security/free-internet-security.php>>.

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Can You Really Watch Free TV on Your PC?

By Ira Wilsker

You may have seen ads on the Internet or on TV that tell you that you can watch free TV on the Internet, and that you do not need cable or satellite to watch thousands of TV channels. Some even go as far as to say that you should cancel your cable or satellite, and use the free services, rather than paying for expensive TV service. Several others advertise software or hardware devices (for a fee) that allow you to watch hundreds of TV channels online for free. There are even websites that allow you watch TV in your browser or on your desktop, either for free, or for a subscription fee. While these offers are generally real, they should not be confused with the selection of channels available on your local cable system or satellite service as they generally do not offer the major commercial channels, and rarely offer the major local channels. Some services, generally located overseas, offer illegally pirated feeds for a fee, and should always be avoided. Other services, such as the well respected Hulu <<http://hulu.com>> legitimately offer thousands of already broadcast and older TV shows and movies provided by the networks and movie studios that are either advertiser supported (for free), or without commercials (by subscription, sometimes for a fee).

One service that I frequently use is TV-Fox, or its sister product, LIVE TV. The selection of channels on LIVE TV is virtually identical to those on TV-Fox. Alternatively, for those who do not want to download a toolbar or

plug-in, these same channels can be viewed directly online at watch-live-online.tv. It may be necessary to have Windows Media Player (or some similar compatible player) installed to view these stations. Most of the stations can either be viewed in a small window, or opened to full screen by double clicking on the video.

TV-Fox is a free plug-in for the Firefox browser <<http://toolbar.tv-fox.com>>, and currently offers “2780 Live TV Channels sorted by country & category, the TV-FOX allows you to watch thousands of TV channels freely available on the Internet.” It is installed as a short toolbar, and includes a pair of directories that display the available channels. The first icon (purple) opens a directory containing a listing of about 100 countries; moving the mouse cursor over the country displays the currently available TV stations that stream online. If the selected station has a circle icon with a right arrow (triangle), that indicates that the selected station is always online; if the icon is a small clock, that means that the station is only available for specific hours. The viewer should be aware of the time differences around the world, as what is prime time in the mid-east, for example, may be the early morning here. While I enjoy watching live foreign TV, I am not capable of understanding all of the languages, so I prefer the English language stations available in many of the countries listed. Under the listing for the United States is approximately 60 stations, all but a few being broadcast in English. These US based stations include such well known stations as Bloomberg Business, CBN, CNBC, Home Shopping Network (HSN), Fox News, MSNBC, NASA, NBC News,

and several prominent local stations from a variety of cities.

The second icon (green) on the TV-Fox toolbar opens a directory based on genre. Categories include sports, news, business, music, kids, lifestyle, government, religious, education, shopping and weather, as well as a listing of about 50 live web-cams from around the world. Personally, I am a news and information junkie, and spend significant time on the news listing, which has live news feeds from about three dozen news sources from about 20 different countries, many of which are in English. Sports fanatics may enjoy the sports selection, consisting of 28 stations from about a dozen countries. While I may not understand the announcer on many of these sports stations, the live or recorded sports events are often quite understandable to the viewer. Music fans would appreciate the almost 50 TV stations that stream music. While many of the music stations are from France, Italy, Poland, and India, the viewer will almost always find music of interest. I have found that many of the foreign music stations which play their native music are very intriguing and entertaining.

Investing and business is of universal interest, and TV-Fox offers 19 business channels, including Bloomberg-UK, Bloomberg-Asia, and Bloomberg-USA. Those stations, along with CNBC and NBR can provide business and economic information for the majority of investors and others interested in business.

Sometimes we need content to entertain our children, or the child in us adults. The kids section contains a dozen channels, three of which are American, two of which are cartoons. My favorite

kids channel is the “Classical Cartoons” which shows old time cartoons, many of which are from the 30’s and 40’s, most of which today’s children would not otherwise have an opportunity to view.

There are 22 movie channels listed, of which eight are from the US, and include sci-fi, comedy classics, thrillers, and WSTV (White Springs TV, also known as “The Golden Age of Movies Channel”) which is a Florida and Oregon based network that streams old movies over satellite and on the air in about a dozen cities, as well as online. If I feel like watching a movie stream on my computer, I can usually find something of interest on one of these movie channels.

The two dozen religious TV channels that stream over the Internet cover almost all of the world’s major religions, in a variety of languages. There are 27 educational channels available, many from major universities around the world, including Texas A&M’s KAMU-TV. Shoppers may like to see what the 22 shopping channels offer, including the six American shopping channels. Some of the products promoted on the foreign shopping channels are very interesting, despite the frequent language barrier; the foreign sales techniques are often very entertaining as well. The 14 weather channels, including nine American weather channels provide more weather information than most viewers can utilize.

Sometimes it is interesting just to see a live webcam from some notable location. The live webcams available on TV-Fox include such diverse places as Times Square (NYC), the Hogs Breath Saloon in Florida, France, Germany, Kathmandu (Nepal), Israel,

Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and other US locations.

While not a complete substitute for local TV and the domestic cable and satellite services, there is enough free TV available online to entertain and inform almost everybody.

WEBSITES:

<<http://toolbar.tv-fox.com>>.

<<http://www.watch-live-online.tv>>

(Live TV)

<<http://www.hulu.com>>.

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Another "Free TV" Utility By Ira Wilsker

A few weeks ago [Editor's Note: See previous column, "Can You Really Watch Free TV on Your PC?"] I wrote about some web-based utilities that could display over 2000 TV channels that stream live over the Internet. I have had a lot of positive response about that column, and was asked by several readers if there was a free standing utility that could stream TV directly to the computer, and possibly even connect to a TV. While doing a search, I found several utilities that claim that they could do precisely those tasks, but my security software blocked access to those sites alleging some type of danger or risk. One site that seems to pass security muster is <<http://zinc.tv>>. This free service, currently in beta (not yet a final release), combines feeds from several resources, including Hulu, ABC,

NBC, Fox, ESPN, National Geographic, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, ABC Family, and many other sources. Zinc also offers free music videos from MTV and VH1. The user needs to understand that these so-called "channels" are typically not the live feeds as seen by cable or satellite subscribers, but are past, usually very recent, shows. While most of the content on Zinc TV is totally free, there are links to commercial content which includes such sources as Netflix, and Amazon's streaming content.

The Zinc viewer can be downloaded (free) from <<http://zinc.tv>>, and will run on modern Windows or Mac computers, as well as a NetTop box, or using a wireless HDMI device. When I downloaded the 20.6mb file, it downloaded and installed without any problems. The Windows version requires Windows 7, Vista, or XP with service pack 2 (or later) installed, and a capable video card. Zinc TV will also run on a Mac with OS X 10.4.11 (Tiger) or later, with an Intel processor, and a compatible video card.

The Zinc player initially opens in full screen mode, and has very sharp and colorful graphics. At the top of the default window (which is customizable), the latest "Featured" shows are displayed. As I type this, the featured shows are Boston Med, Downfall, The Gates, Rookie Blue, and Scoundrels. Generally, the featured shows are the full episodes that recently appeared on TV, along with links to past episodes. This is a very good way to view again any favorite episodes, or episodes that were missed. Below the Featured shows are the categories of shows. Shows are sorted by genre, and include TV shows (29783 episodes),

movies (519 full length and trailers), news (2437 shows), sports (1159 events), kids (35 channels), comedy (973 shows), web (21917 items from YouTube, Break.com, Yahoo! video, and more), technology (418 shows), Yahoo! Connected TV (5792 items), and Music (1340 channels and videos). The “Most Popular” TV shows available on Zinc TV are Glee, Dancing With The Stars, House, Lost, and Modern Family.

Below the “Categories” heading is the “Recently Added” which displays any newly added networks. Two of the most notable new networks available on Zinc TV are The WB and Spike. Many of the commercial entertainment sites that offer streaming video are accessible individually by going directly to the websites, or the user can use Zinc TV to access many of these sites from one link. Among the networks accessible and searchable with Zinc TV are CBS, ABC, Fox, Hulu, The WB, MTV, The CW, CNN, MSNBC, ESPN, Fox Sports, Fox News, PBS, Cartoon Network (CN), national geographic Kids, Nickelodeon, ABC News, Spike, Comedy Central, VNET, NASA, The Whitehouse (presidential broadcasts), HBO, NFL, NBA, TV Land, Univision, VH1, and many more.

Clicking on the TV network logo opens up the lineup of available shows. Clicking on CBS, for example, displays a directory of the full length episodes available. CBS currently has 4385 episodes available, including such popular shows as Survivor, 48 Hours Mystery, 60 Minutes, the CSI trilogy, Amazing Race, 90210, Star Trek, and Twin Peaks. The ABC link opens up to display over 400 episodes, including 20/20, All My Children, the

Bachelorette, Boston Med, Desperate Housewives, Grey’s Anatomy, Lost, ABC Primetime, One Life to Live, and many more. The other networks listed have similar directories of TV shows that can be viewed on demand.

One of my personal favorite categories is the news category. This category includes the latest evening news from ABC (ABC World News), NBC Nightly News, and CBS Evening News with Katie Couric. CNN has 947 present and past shows available, and MSNBC has 237 shows online. Popular news shows from PBS include the Jim Lehrer Hour (281 episodes), and Bill Moyers Journal with 330 episodes. Individual shows include Fox News’ The O’reilly Factor, Glenn Beck, and Sean Hannity. The White House Channel, and Obama Weekly broadcast presidential speeches and other executive branch presentations.

Children can be well entertained by several Kids channels. Nickelodeon has 12 different popular full length kids’ shows including Avatar, Danny Phantom, The Fairly Odd Parents, iCarly, and the widely popular Sponge Bob Square Pants. The Cartoon Network has full online episodes of 55 of its shows including Batman, and the Transformers. Newly added to Zinc TV is the JAROO kids’ channel, which includes 261 full length children’s movies and classic cartoons.

Sports fans will appreciate the wide assortment of sports channels available, including ESPN, NHL (Hockey), NBA (Basketball), Soccer, NASCAR, NFL Football, MLB (Baseball), a Fitness channel, and a Sports and Recreation channel. In aggregate, 1159 sports shows are available on Zinc TV. This

should be enough to provide any sports junkie his fix for quite a while!

Since Zinc TV will run on most computers, as well as on a variety of TV and home entertainment devices, and carries an enormous variety of content, it should satisfy many of the entertainment needs of today's society. While the shows, most notably the news and sports shows, are not live, many are very current, often from the same day. Zinc TV is a worthwhile utility to download and install; just don't blame me if you watch it too much!

WEBSITE:

<<http://zinc.tv>>.

Ira Wilsker is an APCUG director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Program Director of Management Development at the Lamar Institute of Technology, Beaumont TX; and a radio and TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.



Of Interest Links (OIL)
Fred Acerri

We're Running Out of Internet Addresses

<<http://www.cnn.com/2010/TECH/innovation/07/23/internet.addresses/index.html?hpt=CI>>

Super Computer Reproduces a Cyclone's Birth, May Boost Forecasting

<<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100721121701.htm>>

Data Mining Made Faster: New Method Eases Analysis of 'Multidimensional' Information

<<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100722075013.htm>>

Conduct Virtual Explorations of Mars with New Worldwide Telescope Feature

<<http://www.universetoday.com/2010/07/12/conduct-virtual-explorations-of-mars-with-new-worldwide-telescope-feature/>>

<<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100726085422.htm>>

Out of the gait: robot ranger sets 'untethered' walking record at 14.3 miles

<<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100722143905.htm>>

Data mining made faster

<http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-07/uou-dmm072110.php>

New method for synchronizing clocks

<http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-07/aiop-nmd072010.php>



**APCUG Meeting in
Second Life
By Warner Mach**

On July 13, 2010 we had our second APCUG meeting in Second Life at the APCUG office, which is now much improved, including the addition of a fountain. Attending was Don Singleton (avatar D.J. Ershaw). Warner Mach (avatar Warner Magneto). Elizabeth Stenger (avatar Callie DelBoa). James Ievans (avatar Jim Orchard).

The meeting went well. Text discussions centered on the issue of bringing members into Second Life. Ms. Stenger outlined some of the things that she has done to bring commercial clients into Second Life.



**Another Low Cost
Internet Phone Device—
NetTalk DUO
By Ira Wilsker**

I am always on the lookout for bargains, and ways to save some money. Like many of my readers, I am not using my telephone landline as much as I have in the past, but still receive a sizeable monthly phone bill. I have not used my landline phone for long distance calls in eons, because of the easy long distance access on my cell phone, supplemented by the MagicJack Internet phone service that I wrote about in early 2009.

There has been explosive growth in the popularity of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), much to the chagrin of the traditional telephone industry. Millions of customers have forgone the convenience and cost of traditional phone service, in favor of cell phones, and VoIP services. It is nearly impossible to turn on the TV and not see an ad for a cell phone carrier, or Internet based phone service. None of my four adult children have a traditional home phone, but use their cell phones and VoIP phones exclusively at home.

For the past 18 months I have been using the widely advertised and inexpensive MagicJack to supplement my cell phone for making long distance phone calls from home, as well as a method of making calls while traveling away from home. At home, I have been using the MagicJack to make long distance calls during the day on weekdays, rather than burn prime cell phone minutes; evenings and weekends, with unlimited cell phone minutes, the cell phone is my chosen device. My landline is only occasionally used to make local calls, and rarely to send or

receive a fax; financially, with such little actual use, my landline is becoming an expensive anachronism. When traveling, I have sometimes taken my MagicJack with me to use to make local phone calls from the Internet in my hotel room, without expensive hotel phone charges, or consuming prime cell phone minutes.

Mostly, I have been happy with my MagicJack. I have the base unit of a multi-handset cordless phone plugged into it, which allows us to use the MagicJack throughout the house, with cordless handsets in most rooms. My only issues with it have been that it takes a lot of time to load after I boot my computer, and that the computer must be on in order for it to function, as it must be connected to an active and powered USB port in order to work. Since I turn my computer off when I am not using it, the MagicJack is unavailable, unless I boot my computer. Other than that, the MagicJack works well, offers unlimited local and long distance calling, was extremely easy to install and setup, and does everything that it is advertised to do, for a very low cost (\$39.95 for the device and the first year's service, \$19.95 per year thereafter - that is the advertised \$1.70 per month).

In July, a lesser known competitor, NetTalk <<http://www.nettalk.com>>, released its second model of a competing device, the NetTalk DUO. Just like the MagicJack, the NetTalk DUO is very small (2.7 inch x 1.5 inch x 0.9 inch), extremely easy to setup, requires a broadband Internet source, and has a phone jack which can connect to any standard corded or cordless phone. Similarly, the NetTalk DUO offers unlimited local and long distance calls to the U.S. and Canada, at a low fixed

price. Where the NetTalk DUO primarily differs from the MagicJack, is that it can connect directly to a broadband router, and does not require a connection to a computer. Since a router connected to a broadband service is typically always on, the NetTalk DUO is also always on, providing 24/7 VoIP service, without the need to have a booted computer. As long as there is a functional router, there is actually no need to even have a computer connected to the Internet in order to use the NetTalk DUO. For those cases where there is broadband Internet service but no router, such as in a hotel room, Internet cafe, hotspot, college dorm room, or other such location, the NetTalk DUO also has the ability to connect to the USB port on a computer, just like the MagicJack. Apparently the "DUO" in the NetTalk moniker means it has the ability to connect via two methods; USB or router. The NetTalk DUO comes complete with all necessary cables, and an AC adapter.

This enhanced functionality comes at a price, though not a very high one. The NetTalk DUO sells for \$69.95, and includes the first year of unlimited local and long distance phone service; subsequent phone service is \$29.95 per year, or about \$2.50 per month. Even though the device itself is \$30 more than the MagicJack, and the subsequent second year of service is \$10 more (per year, not per month), there have been some pundits who have claimed that the NetTalk Duo is actually less expensive to operate than a MagicJack, when energy savings are considered. Since the NetTalk DUO does not require that a computer be turned on, the extra 80 cent additional monthly cost of the NetTalk DUO (less than 3 cents additional per day) would be more than made up in

energy savings. I have not personally verified this claim, but it does not seem unreasonable.

The NetTalk DUO offers a free U.S. Phone number at activation, but according to some published reviews, local phone numbers are not yet available for all locations. According to a NetTalk support forum response, NetTalk will try to add more local numbers as they are requested. NetTalk also offers call waiting, 3 way calling, caller ID, free 411 (directory assistance), enhanced 911 service, priority call forwarding, and works with most fax machines to send and receive faxes (subject to the limitations of VoIP technology). Free voice mail service is included, as well as the capability to automatically send the voicemail message to the recipient via e-mail. Calling other NetTalk customers anywhere in the world is free, and calls to other international destinations are deeply discounted. The NetTalk DUO can be used in a home or office environment as a replacement for traditional phone service. At present, phone number portability is not yet available, meaning that users of the NetTalk DUO will receive a new phone number, rather than be able to use an existing phone number. This lack of phone number portability may be changing, as most competitive services either already have or will shortly have phone number portability, so I will assume that NetTalk will have to follow suit. About the only con of replacing a traditional landline with NetTalk (or any other VoIP provider), is that NetTalk requires that there be power, and will not work during a power failure, or if the Internet connection is

[Continued on Page 21](#)

SEMCO Meeting Pictures



(Above): Wesley Arnold talks about the GIMP photo editor. (Below): Tom Callow reports on useful utilities to maintain your computer.



SEMCO Meeting Pictures



(Above): Mike Bader, Bette Gay, Bob Clyne, and Richard Jackson in discussion. (Below): Members during the break.



SEMCO Meeting Pictures



Post-Meeting feast at Shield's Pizzeria. (Above): Before the meal. (Below) After the meal.





BOARD MEETING
8/08/2010
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Mike Bader, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, Publications Committee Chairman Warner Mach, and Member-at-Large Bob Clyne. Also present were past president Gary DeNise, presenter Wesley Arnold, and member Renee Jacques. Arriving late was SIG-Linux Chairman Michael Rudas. The board meeting was called to order at 12:17 p.m.

Old Business

Bette Gay reported that the current treasury amount equaled a total of \$9,765.98 with \$5,024.79 in the checking account and \$4,741.19 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership currently is 77. It is time for Mickey Gilhool and Carol Sanders to renew their membership.

Richard Jackson reported that the Meetup site is attracting interested parties. There are already eight members. Richard Jackson is encouraging SEMCO members to join.

New Business

A discussion took place regarding the SEMCO fliers and business cards. They both need to be updated to reflect current activities and meeting places. Bob Clyne offered to print one page of business cards for those interested in giving one to prospective members. Richard Jackson will send the flier file to the board members so that they could print and distribute them.

Renee Jacques suggested to the board the idea of offering members a choice of receiving the DATA BUS as a PDF file or a paper copy. This could possibly be cost effective. Bob Clyne mentioned that the DATA BUS is already on SEMCO's web site. He also stated that a significant reduction in the print run might result in our printing becoming unattractive to our printer. No action was taken at this time.

Tom Callow moved to adjourn. Bob Clyne seconded the motion. The motion was carried. The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.



Useful Resources
By Mike Rudas

Mike Rudas, chairman of SIG-LINUX, has had a web site for some time with useful resources. Check it out:

* Articles at:

<<http://tinyurl.com/27s7mwe>>.

* Recommended sites for downloading useful software:

<<http://tinyurl.com/5qrsxx>>



AUGUST
REFRESHMENT
DONORS

Coordinator: Gary DeNise

Donors:

Brian Brodsky
Gary DeNise
Warner Mach
Roland Maki
Carol Sanzi

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow

September 12: 1:45 p.m. MIDI: Musician Bob Stead will talk about the MIDI interface. MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) was first conceived in 1983. In 1991, General MIDI was released. The General MIDI standard has prevailed for almost 20 years. Come and learn the elements and uses of MIDI and see where MIDI is heading in the not too distant future ... Mr. Stead plays in the Michigan Flute Orchestra and is webmaster of the Michigan Accordion Society



SIG-IBM
INTERMEDIATE
Paul DeAthos

September 12: 3:45 p.m. Desktop Improvement: Make Your Desktop Your Own: Tom Callow will discuss and demonstrate a number of utilities which allow you to change the “look and feel” of your Windows Desktop and have Windows measure and display on it a wide variety of information.

Pics: Recent SEMCO Meets:

<<http://www.tinyurl.com/y8cm99e>>

Video: Recent SEMCO Meet:

<<http://www.tinyurl.com/363vnbd>>



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

September 29 (Wed): 5 p.m.: At the Madison Heights Fire Department; located at 31313 Brush (near 13 Mile & John R). Meet in Administration Section of building. Park in lot south of building. Enter through glass door on south side. Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.



SIG-LINUX
Michael Rudas

September 29 (Wed): 7 p.m.: At the Madison Heights Fire Department; located at 31313 Brush (near 13 Mile & John R). Meet in Administration Section of building. Park in lot south of building. Enter through glass door on south side. Topic: General discussion.

Sept. 2010 DATABUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)

SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Sept. 19, 11:59 p.m. Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <warnermach@gmail.com>. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.

Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact Editor (address Page 2).

Warner Machwarnermach@gmail.com

(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS****COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)**

Oct. 6, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday) Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 or Pam Raisanen

E-mail info: <compinfo@greatlakes.net>. Web: <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>.

Topic: "Making a DVD Video."

Focus: Hope IT User Group

Sept. 11, 9:30-11:30 a.m., 1400 Oakman, Detroit, MI. 48238. Web info <<http://www.fhitug.org>>.

Topic: "Big Business Resources For Small Businesses."

HUG (Holly User Group)

Sept. 18, 9:00 a.m.; Groveland Twp. Fire Hall, 3085 Grange Hall Rd. & Dixie

Hwy., Holly, MI. 48442.

MacGroup- Detroit

Sept. 19, 3:00 p.m., Birmingham Temple, 28611 West 12 Mile Rd., Farmington

Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 248-569-4933. <<http://www.macgroup.org>>.

Topic: "Photoshop CS5 Tips and Techniques for Digital

Photographers and Graphic Designers." SIGS: 2:00 p.m.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Sept. 18, (3rd Saturday); See web site for meeting time and location. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>).

JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: "Word Processing."

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Sept. 11, 12:30–2:30 p.m., (2nd Saturday); MDLUG meetings will be at

The Gaudior Academy located at 27100 Avondale Avenue in Inkster. Web:

<<http://www.mdlug.org>>. Topic: TBA.

MUG (Michigan User Group)

Sept. 14, 6:00 p.m., (2nd Tuesday): MUG meetings are at The Farmington

Community Library–Main Branch, 32737 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI.

48334. <<http://www.mug.org>>. Topic: TBA.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Aug. 12, 7:30 p.m., (2nd Thur.); Westview Office Park, 26100 American Dr., Suite

100, Southfield MI. 48034. Avi Drissman 248-232-7865. Web: <<http://www.themichiganapple.com>>.

Topic: TBA.

Oak Park Computer Club

Every Fri., 10:15 a.m. at Oak Park Library, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

Royal Oak Computer Club

Every Wed., 12:30 to 2:30 PM at Mahany/Meininger Senior Community Center,

3500 Marais Ave., Royal Oak, 48073. Near Crooks & 13 Mile. Guest speakers

& regular monthly speakers. <<http://tinyurl.com/royaloakcc>>.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

Sept. 7, 7:30 p.m. (1st Tues); Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg.

K, 14500 E. 12 Mile Rd. Don VanSyckel <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232;

Web: <<http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>>. Topic: "Ford Work

Solutions - The Future is Now." with Dave Roberts from Ford Motor.

Continued from Page 14

otherwise unavailable; most landlines do not require an external power source. NetTalk does not require an annual contract, unlike some of the other VoIP providers.

For those who travel internationally, the NetTalk DUO can be used anywhere there is a broadband connection, allowing the user to call the U.S. and Canada for free, as well as receive calls from the U.S. and Canada without the caller incurring international long distance charges.

NetTalk uses the trademarked expression "Fire your phone company!" If it works as well as my early experiences show, that may be a viable option.

WEBSITE:

<<http://www.nettalk.com>>.

<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voip>>.

<<http://www.magicjack.com>>.

Ira Wilsker is an APCUG director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont

TX; Program Director of Management Development at the Lamar Institute of Technology, Beaumont TX; and a radio and TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.

Steve Wozniak Appearance

American Ingenuity: Embracing the Freedom to Dream September 25-November 21, 2010 Macomb Community College - Center Campus Featuring speaker Steve Wozniak, Apple co-founder Friday, November 12, 2010 Meet & Greet and Presentation 5:30-6:30pm An opportunity to meet Steve Wozniak, shake hands and even take a photo with him! \$30 includes a beverage , appetizers and admittance to the presentation. Presentation only 7-8pm \$15; \$5 Seniors/Students/Military To learn more visit <<http://www.LorenzoCulturalCenter.com>>.

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

AutoCAD: Comptois

Genealogy: Cook

IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz

Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz

MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

Security: Bader

MS Office for Windows: Callow

MS Word: Clyne

Networking: Callow

Novell Netware: Yuhasz

Quicken: Clyne

Geocaching: Cook

Relational Database Programming: Lis

Bader, Mike—586-573-7330, 9am–8pm.....mdbader@flash.net

Callow, Tom—248-642-5770, 9am–5pmtcallow@monaghanpc.com

Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pmclyne@mich.com

Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime

Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves.....scook48227@ameritech.net

Lis, Bernie—248-669-0101, 10am–8pmBerLis@comcast.net

Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pmjvanders@comcast.net

Yuhasz, Steve.....Help@yuhasz.org



**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

SEMCO CALENDAR

**Engineering Society of Detroit
20700 Civic Center Dr., Suite 450, 4th Floor
Southfield, MI. 48076**

September 12–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

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

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM, 1:45 p.m., MIDI: Musician Bob Stead will talk about the MIDI interface. MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) was first conceived in 1983. In 1991, General MIDI was released. The General MIDI standard has prevailed for almost 20 years. Come and learn the elements and uses of MIDI and see where MIDI is heading in the not too distant future ... Mr. Stead plays in the Michigan Flute Orchestra and is webmaster of the Michigan Accordion Society

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 p.m. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must continue to maintain a neat environment.)

SIG-IBM Intermediate, 3:45 p.m., Desktop Improvement: Make Your Desktop Your Own: Tom Callow will discuss and demonstrate a number of utilities which allow you to change the “look and feel” of your Windows Desktop and have Windows measure and display on it a wide variety of information.

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October 10–SEMCO Sunday

<http://www.semco.org>

SEMCO Meetings at Engineering Society of Detroit
20700 Civic Center Drive, Suite 450, 4th Floor
Southfield MI 48076



From I-696 exit at Evergreen. Take Evergreen south to Civic Center Drive. Civic Center Drive is about halfway between I-696/Eleven Mile Rd. and 10 Mile Rd. Turn west, right if you are coming from the north, onto Civic Center Drive. Follow Civic Center Drive, watching the number signs on the right. When you get to the 20700 sign turn right, north, and follow the drive until you arrive at the southwest corner of the brown building with the Engineering Society of Detroit sign near the top. Turn right, east, and go past the front of the building. When you reach the end of the building, turn left, north and go to the back of the building and turn left, west, again. The parking lot will be on your right. The entrance is in the center of the building. Park in back of building. Enter the rear door. The ESD office is on the fourth floor.



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

**SEMCO (future meetings)
September 12
October 10**

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Helping People for the 21st Century**