



## Let's never forget the first king: DOS

Written by Rick Smith, a member of the Channel Islands PC Users Group, CA

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Oh where, oh where has my little DOS gone.  
Oh where, oh where can it be,  
with its life cut short and windows cut long  
Oh where, oh where can it be?

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Some might say that I'm losing it, but you cannot lose what you never had.

Where has DOS gone? Some might say it's still around in the various forms of Linux. Others might say it's buried deep in Microsoft operating systems waiting to be called out by a powerful wizard to cast potent spells with a command prompt. But most of us just believe that it's just lost, never to found again. Like a lost pet that you once had affection for, once it's gone you seem to remember only the good times and seem to forget all the problems that it caused you.

DOS does that to people. There are still a few of you "old-timers," and you know who you are! Those who sit at the doughnut table at club meetings and reminisce about the "good ol' days" when all you needed was a Northgate keyboard and a monochrome screen to have absolute power over your world. You know what I'm talking about. Way back when people spoke about computers with fear and awe. They were things better left to experts and shady government entities. The quickest way to kill a conversation in those days was to talk command line technobabble. It always made everyone in the room feel uncomfortable that they couldn't understand you, like you were speaking a different language.

On the flip side, though, it gave you an incredible feeling of power, that you, and you alone, could master the savage beast and control your own destiny. Neh Ahh Ahh Yahh. (Sometimes I think all those comic books I read have permanently warped my thinking.) But really, didn't you feel special? That you and you alone, could master something that would make others wince and shirk away. You didn't have to be popular at school. You didn't have to be good looking. You didn't have to be wealthy. You did not have to have any of those things that everyone else needed to be important. You had knowledge.

And knowing the secrets of the PC universe, did you use that knowledge to gain wisdom or for greed? I think most of you, unfortunately, like me, used it for personal greed. We gave ourselves over to the dark side of the force and used our skill to enrich ourselves financially. But eventually as we all grew older, and some of us wiser, we started using our skills to teach and help others, which led you to me, to read these words and words of others in this tome. You all became a band of brothers forming the fellowship of the DOS.

And just! And just as your powers were at their peak, everything came crashing down like the Jedi of old. A new power rose in the universe to supplant the old ways. Windows came rushing down like a wind from heaven with trumpets blazing and fire and smoke billowing up in great clouds. And when this behemoth came to rest, its great weight crushed the last vestiges of DOS underneath its feet.

A new group came forth to rule the PC world. A group of men, and, yes, women, too, who knew nothing of the old ways but were formed from clay in the new ways. These new acolytes grew up in the ways of the PC, each having their own since they were young.

(Continued on page 5)



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### **Meetings**

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# Speed Demons

Written by Bill Roman, Advisor to the Board of Directors, The PC

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There is an issue that I feel must be addressed, since the issue continues to come up on a regular basis. As a PC technician I constantly get asked why the clients' computer has become so slow, and if there is anything wrong with it.

The first thing I tell the client is that there are two main culprits that contribute to a PC becoming very sluggish. The first being lack of RAM memory. This answer usually elicits a quick response from the user that they "only do e-mail, Internet and word processing" or some similar response. I then go into a discussion with the user that there are two kinds of memory in a computer: hard drive storage, which holds all their music, pictures, documents, etc. and RAM, or working memory. A user could have plenty of hard drive space to store all of their documents and stuff, but when they don't have

enough RAM, the computer will, over time, become slower and slower.

Why you ask? When the computer was originally purchased (usually somewhere between 2 and 5 years ago) Windows XP, in this case, required about 512MB of RAM to run properly. As Windows critical security updates and service packs are installed, as well as upgrades and updates to all sorts of programs used on a daily basis (antivirus, Internet Explorer, AOL, Adobe Reader and Flash Player, printer updates, etc), the programs NEVER get smaller, always bigger.

Now, several years later and the programs being used are double or triple in size, but the computer is the same one with the same specs as when it was purchased. Adding more RAM memory is a quick, cheap way to improve performance to an aging computer, and extend life before a replacement is in order. Windows XP should have at least 1024 MB (1GB) of RAM to run properly, and Windows Vista (32bit) needs 3GB of RAM. More is not better in the case of Vista for technical reasons I will not go into in this article.

This is only half the battle. The other half is to beat down what I will call the "moochers". Years ago when I would inspect a computer for sluggish performance, it was usually because of a rogue game that was in-

(Continued on page 10)

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The image shows three issues of the magazine 'Smart Computing'. The top issue is titled 'Smart Computing in Plain English'. Below it is another issue with the title 'Smart Computing' and a subtitle 'The Perfect Home Network: A Step-By-Step Guide'. The third issue is partially visible behind the others. The magazine covers feature various computer hardware like laptops and routers, along with text describing the content of the issues.



## Robin's RAMblings

Hope you're all having a wonderful summer!

Thirty-three people attended our June 13th, 2009 program: "Skeletons in our Closet: Researching a Family Scandal". We hope everyone enjoyed the program and that first time visitors will return and join our club.

Upcoming meetings are:

August 8-Nintendo Wii demonstration

September 12-Show and Tell, and Ask the Gurus; computer cleaning

October 10-Staples of Mundelein on the latest technology

November 7-TBA

December 12-Holiday party-State Bank of the Lakes, 50 Commerce Drive, Grayslake; 1-5 pm

January 9, 2010- Show and Tell, and Ask the Gurus

We have very exciting news. Our 2009 holiday raffle prizes are:

**1<sup>st</sup> prize-Toshiba Satellite 17" Notebook** with Pentium Dual-Core Processor T3400, 3GB of RAM, 250GB hard drive, webcam and microphone, dual layer DVD±RW/DVD-RAM/DVD±R, and Windows Vista Home Premium-SP1 (eligible for free upgrade to Windows 7)

**2<sup>nd</sup> prize-Acer Aspire One 10.1" Netbook** with Intel Atom N270 1.6GHz processor, 1GB of RAM, 160GB hard drive, and Windows XP Home-SP3

**3<sup>rd</sup> prize-Flip Ultra 120 minute digital camcorder** with 2" LCD screen

**4<sup>th</sup> prize-One year LCACE membership**

Tickets are \$1 each; 6 for \$5, and 25 for \$20. The more tickets you buy, the better your chances of winning one of these fabulous prizes. Winners do not need to be present so plan to sell tickets to out of town family and friends.

Raffle tickets will be available for sale at our August meeting. In addition to buying tickets for yourself, please plan to pick up tickets to sell. The person who sells the winning first prize ticket and also the person who sells the most tickets will receive prizes at the holiday party.

For those of you who are new members, our holiday party is always a lot of fun. Of course, we all want to win one of these four great prizes. We also have many door prizes (You need to be present to win door prizes.). LCACE has some terrific cooks. We all look forward to tasting everyone's special recipes.

Please note the new location, date, and time of our holiday party. State Bank of the Lakes is on the southwest corner of Center Street and Commerce Drive in Grayslake. You will find directions and a map on our website <http://lcace.org/News/stateBankOfTheLakes.htm>. We plan to have a "drive by" at the conclusion of our November 7<sup>th</sup> meeting to show everyone how to get there. It's just a few minutes away from the Grayslake Area Public Library.

If you are looking for tech bargains, go to <http://www.slickdeals.net/>

Happy computing!



"Skeletons in our Closet: Researching a Family Scandal"



Let me start this month with some eye opening rumors. It's been rumored that the next generation of iPods will include a digital camera and video capabilities. The iPhone already has these features, which I didn't opt for when I purchased my iPod Touch because I didn't want to switch my cell phone service to AT&T. Even though I own a FlipVideo camcorder, it would be nice to have a camera and video features in my iPod Touch.

Are you waiting to win the new netbook from the club's Holiday Raffle? If not, you might want to look into the new generation of netbooks with twice the memory and hard drive space and an 11.6 inch screen. They are still a toy for those with extra play money in their budget, but oh so handy if you are tired of lugging around your monstrous laptop.

With some many new digital cameras on the market, it will be impossible to me to give a review of all, so I'm going to tell you what my favorite brand is doing. Point and Shoot cameras are great but if you want to get serious about photography, take a look at the new dSLR's. The one in particular I'm going to mention is the Nikon D5000. Now when I first heard about a dSLR capable of doing video, I said WHY? Then I received an email from one of my photography newsletters, saw what Canon was doing, and said WOW. It has the ability to show HD Video with a dSLR and the ability to slip on your favorite wide-angle or telephoto lens. What else could you ask for? Now I'm seeing a gambit of accessories to allow you to use and hold your dSLR just like a video camera. Don't run out and buy, but it's worth looking into.

If you missed my Digital Photography class at the Greenbelt Cultural Center, then log onto HP learning Center and take a FREE course. Want to save on printing, learn the basic functions of your computer, and learn how to restore your family photos or basic scanning techniques, check out what HP has to offer.

Need more Digital Photography Tips? Sign up for Digital Photography 101 from Ritz Camera. My latest episode of Digital Photography 101 included Summer Road Trips, Photographing Theme Parks, Scenic Photos and The Road.

One of the most unlikely places to find photography tutorials is YouTube. Yes, YouTube, and it's not just for the kids to upload stupid videos. I was somewhat surprised to find camera reviews as well as tutorials on composition, lighting and posing.

If you are serious about photography or just taking pictures, then you should get serious about backing them up. With the price of hard drives being so low, think about getting a drive which will allow you to store all your photos and other files in one location and access them from anywhere. Western Digital's My Book World Edition provides you with automatic and continuous backup for all the computers on your network; it is available in 1 or 2-terabyte capacity and lists for \$229 (1TB); \$449 (2TB).

If you are looking to purchase a new digital camera in the near future, don't let megapixels be the determining factor. Manufacturers continue to increase the number of megapixels, or the millions of tiny squares that make up a digital image. Generally, the more megapixels, the better the photo quality. But you must realize that you are going to have to put these pictures somewhere at some point in time and the larger the files, the more room it's going to take up on your hard drive. Now you see the reason for that 1 terabyte hard drive.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Gone was command prompt. In was the mouse. The wizards of old became legend. And after time they have become forgotten to be remembered by only a few at computer club meetings. There are still a few prophets preaching to us not to forget the old ways. I saw one at last month's meeting giving a history lesson at the club meeting. But they are old and feeble now with most of their words echoing on deaf ears.

So I say to all today! Remember the DOS! Don't let the old ways die, as you never know when you will be called upon as I have this week to use my skills again. Fortunately, I have not been found wanting as I was able to vanquish the beast with my skill at the command prompt. I have beaten down one enemy, but more are waiting to attack.

So be on your guard, be ready, and be faithful to the cause. Put away your mice as they are no use against such foes. Operate your PC only with the keyboard and keep yourself ready for the fight. For it shall come. It shall come.



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# HOLIDAY RAFFLE 2009



## 1st Prize:

### Toshiba Satellite 17" Notebook

- Pentium® Dual-Core Processor T3400
- 3GB of RAM
- 250GB hard drive
- Webcam & Microphone
- Dual layer DVD±RW/DVD-RAM/DVD±R
- Windows Vista Home Premium-SP1

## 2nd Prize:

### Acer Aspire One 10.1" Netbook

- Intel Atom N270 1.6GHz
- 1GB of RAM
- 160GB hard drive
- Windows XP Home-SP3.



## 3rd Prize:

### Flip Ultra 120 Minute Digital Camcorder

- 2" LCD color screen
- Convenient flip-out USB arm plugs
- Built-in FlipShare software

## 4th Prize:

### 1-Year's Membership LCACE

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**Drawing December 12, 2009**

Winner need not be present



# The Disintegration of Service.

Written by Jerry Goldstein, Vice President and Newsletter Editor, The PC Users Group of Connecticut

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Want to make a free over sea calls to India? Just call for technical support on your computer, Internet service, or cable service. You are likely to be routed overseas to India. You then get the pleasure of talking to the "well trained" script readers. About the only thing they are trained for is to tell you: "Yes, very much I can help you". You hear this phrase whenever you call for tech support. The techs use that phrase to hide the fact that they are spending that time to check their index sheets for key words in what you told them was your problem. They then turn to that page in their script book and start reading off a page that is supposed to match your problem. The key word is "supposed". Reality is far from tech support fantasy.

Tech support used to mean reaching a person knowledgeable in the problem you were calling about. Now it is a means the manufacturers and utility suppliers use to avoid dealing with customers. There was a time when the support staff knew and understood computers. But then the corporations came up with the idea of making support calls difficult. They figured we would be less likely to complain if doing so was difficult. It is not bad enough instructions are written by non-English speaking people. Now we have to get the instructions interpreted by someone who failed a course in English as a second language. Which is pretty tough to do in India, a country where English, along with Hindi, is the official language. (I won't even go into how all those people in India suddenly have American names like Jack and John when they join tech support.)

know my patience has a limit. I test it regularly when I call for Tech Support. Thanks to the service quality of my utility, cable, and Internet providers I get to test my patience all too often.

Tech support did get smarter, though not for the better or to the benefit of the consumer. Used to be you could ask for a supervisor and be moved up to someone in the states. Now tech support in India has their own supervisors who are as good as the base level worker at helping. Pretty much no help at all.

If you are lucky enough to be moved up the ladder to what is often called the "corporate escalation department" you will find your anger escalate as well. Corporate only works business hours and Monday through Friday, sometimes. Holidays or any other excuse, means you won't reach corporate help. What will corporate escalation do when you get there? Route you to the technical support staff in the states you needed from the beginning. But first you need to wait 24 hours for a return contact. Oy.

How do I know so well how tech support fails to work? I am my family and business's IT person. That means I am often on the phone with tech support. I recently spent five days without Internet service thanks to Earthlink's outsourcing it's tech support to India. After days of trying to get Earthlink to fix the problem I called the line provider that Earthlink uses and had them fix the problem myself. Total outsourcing.

Is there a way to avoid all this? There are less chances everyday as corporate America outsources its human interface with its customers. Can we do anything about it? Sure. When looking at what to buy, or a service to use, take into consideration how the manufacturer or provider will support its product. Use products and services that support you as a human and not as a joke.

# SPOTLIGHT: Jack Frost

by Angus MacTavish



Little did J.J. know when he handed Jack and Winnie Frost an LCACE card at Computer City that he was talking to a future LCACE treasurer and her multi-talented husband. Jack Frost's "day job" is a mold maker who makes molds for plastic parts. Besides the usual glasses, plastic bottles, etc., he makes medical molds ("most of the items at the hospital that you do not want to recognize").

In his "other life", Jack plays the saxophone. He started playing a saxophone in grade school, continued in high school, and played for a while with his own band after that.

Jack picked up his student horn and started playing again when he was 54, after not playing for over 30 years. He then joined the Round Lake Community Band. Winnie bought him a new tenor saxophone for his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. As he improved, he had a friend from the Community Band who introduced him to other people. He accompanied his friend to practice and did a gig with the Deerfield Big Band.

Jack has been taking lessons since he got the new tenor sax. As he improved, it was suggested that he replace a man in the Last Dance Band who could no longer drive or play. He then played as a substitute for the Jazz Wave. When another person could no longer play, Jack was asked to be a permanent part of this band, too.

Jack has played gigs at nursing homes, senior homes and a country club in Waukegan. The Community Band has concerts at the civic center in Round Lake Beach on Sunday afternoons. The Jazz Wave played every other Sunday night at Aleks' in Lake Bluff. The Last Dance Band practices for a few weeks before their gigs.

If you want to see and hear Jack playing at Aleks' in May, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5499KtB1MU>

Over the Memorial Day weekend, he was part of a combo that gave a free concert for the community in Princeton, Wisconsin at the Fox Note Jazz Club. As this is written, Jack is scheduled to play at the Taste of Wisconsin in Kenosha on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. What is next? Remember we met Jack before he became a famous saxophone player.



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Chop each component into small pieces and blend together. Add a little pepper and salt.

Place fish on cookie sheet which has been covered in aluminum foil and greased with olive or canola oil.

Cover fish with salsa mix

Bake at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes (depending on thickness of fish filet)

Finely chopped basil or thyme can be added to the salsa for a distinctive flavor.

## LEW'S COOKBOOK

### BAKED FISH WITH SALSA

Any fish fillet can be used, but tilapia or orange roughy work well

Assemble equal portions of onion, ripe papaya and Italian tomatoes

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**Cut Down On Wrist Strain:** If you find that after an extended session working at your computer that your wrists are tired and achy, consider investing in wrist rests. For not much money, you can get models for both your mouse and your keyboard to help ease the strain put on your wrists while you type and manipulate your mouse. Rests come in a variety of shapes and are made out of different materials, so you're sure to find one to suit your needs.

**Power-Saver:** Note that even when their power switch is in the off position, some electronic components aren't actually turned completely off. Instead, they continue to draw a small amount of current, sometimes referred to as vampire power. If a component has an LED display

that's always on, or if it spends its downtime in standby mode, ready to receive a signal from a remote control, then it's continually sipping electricity. To keep these devices from using electricity, it is often necessary to unplug them completely.

**Know Your Callers:** If you frequently receive phone calls from the same people on your cell phone, try assigning your friends and family different, distinctive ring tones. Not only will this help you identify who's trying to get a hold of you, but you can quickly determine whether or not a call is worth picking up right away.

**Easier On The Eyes:** As we get older, our vision isn't as stellar as it once was. For that reason, you may find adjusting your monitor's contrast settings will help you read text easier. Look for your PC monitor's settings menu, which can often be activated via buttons on the monitor itself, and find your monitor's brightness or contrast settings. Adjust these levels until you find the text and images on your monitor are easier to see, and you may not have to strain your eyesight any longer.

**Speed Up Your Internet Connection:** The first things to examine whenever system performance slows to a crawl are the tasks, or processes, your PC is running. No matter how fast of a CPU you have, running too many apps at once can slow everything down.

Check running applications. Use the Windows Task Manager to check on hidden apps that could be starving your browser of precious time. Right-click the Taskbar, select Task Manager, and click the Processes tab. You'll see a list of every process running on your PC; you can sort the list by name, amount of CPU time, or memory usage.

If you sort by CPU time and notice a couple programs trying to grab all the CPU, it's a clue something has gone awry. If you identify an unknown program hogging all the CPU, you can stop it by right-clicking the name and selecting End Process. But be careful: Accidentally killing a valid Windows process may cause other problems, requiring a reboot to fix.

**Be Good To Your Hearing:** The next time you take a flight and want to listen to some tunes, consider using a noise-canceling pair of headphones. Plane cabins are noisy, and in order to compensate, you're likely to turn up your audio to levels that can be harmful to your hearing. Because a noise-canceling pair of headphones will drown out ambient noise, you'll be able to enjoy your songs at a comfortable hearing level.

stalled. Back then quite a few games adopted the theory that the only reason you owned your \$3000 or \$4000 computer (yes, it was that much back then, even more depending on how far back you go) was to play some ridiculous \$49 game. The game would change many settings that allowed the game to work properly, but made it miserable to perform simple tasks like type a letter.

Now, in 2009 every program under the sun assumes that they are the main focus, and must be given priority at all times. What does this mean to you, the end user? Each time when an upgraded revision of Adobe Reader comes out it always wants to include the new "MSN Toolbar" or "Yahoo Toolbar" etc. This adds unnecessary junk to your browser, which slows down getting online. In addition, many of these programs load an additional program when Windows starts to speed it up when starting it. This is just lousy practice that is a very poor substitute for tight efficient programming. If the program was small and lean there would be no need for "speed loaders," which make your computer take an exorbitant amount of time for Windows to start.

Not to pick on, but a classic example of this is how much Apple's iTunes has grown through the years. iTunes 6 which was released in January 2006 was about 35MB in size. iTunes 7.5 was 52MB and iTunes 8.1 (the current release) is now up to 70MB. The program is twice as large only three years later, and loads a number of programs when Windows starts to aid loading this memory hog.

What to do about this? In short be mindful when installing updated programs to unselect add on toolbars and, if available, to kick them out of starting up when Windows loads. I have discussed at our local computer club meetings to do your best to keep running processes to a minimum. By clicking control, alt, delete once (with no programs active) will bring up the task manager and show how many processes are running. A good number for Windows XP is less than 35, and for Vista it's about 45.

Startup Cop and the free CCleaner utilities have the ability to disable or remove programs from starting, but I would check online in a Google search before disabling anything unless certain. I do hope this article sheds some light on the subject of pokey computers. Remember, it's not so much the hardware as it is software that kills a computer! Until next time!



Robin Seidenberg giving "Skeletons in our Closet: Researching a Family Scandal", which everyone enjoyed.

Your thoughts  
Opinions  
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"Members Helping  
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