

MAY 6 2003

## BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

I have been away too long. I did plan to have a return by April 15, but it seems writers block had a different idea. It is very depressing staring at a blank white screen and hoping for divine intervention and having nothing happen. Imagine being at a loss for words. But now I am renewed.

Another unfortunate thing happened which taught me a valuable lesson. Don't always believe that the software upgrade you are installing will be better than what you have. After my return, I upgraded my Quickbooks to 2003 Pro and for some reason all my historical transactions were lost. My Inventory dropped 98%, my GST calculation disappeared, and invoices that we present on the 15th were gone on the 16th. A quick call to Intuit and I found out it was going to cost me \$ 380 to talk to a technician who may or may not be able to help me. Needless to say, I am now using another Accounting package.

I have been getting a lot of feedback on this newsletter and it seems everyone likes the Surfing tips and the Questions (How To...) best. Therefore, I will devote more time to these topics and only include really worthy news tips when they come along. Some of you also take advantage of the Specials at the end so I will try to expand on them as well.

## SURF'S UP

The Internet is a storehouse of untold information, if you just know where to look. But that is usually the biggest problem... Where to look? Search engines such as Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc. are limited to only reporting on information they have found. There must be some way to look at more than one. Hop on over to <http://www.copernic.com> for a new method. Copernic Agent Basic is a free download that will search multiple search engines and return the most likely results of your query while filtering out most of the junk you don't want to see. It also ranks the results it finds so you don't have to page through tons of useless links to find what you want.

In the last issue I included a link to Free Fonts. I had also expressed a concern in a previous issue that the Algerian font used for my headings was a proprietary font in that it was not free. However, I have uncovered a free Algerian font you can install in your system to see the newsletter as it was originally designed. Click [Algerian Font](#) to download a copy of the file to install to your font library. To add this font, Save the downloaded file to your desktop, open the Control Panel and select Fonts. Next click File and choose Install New Fonts. In this dialog box, use the folders pane to navigate to where you saved the downloaded file. (Windows 98 C:\Windows\Desktop or Win XP C:\Documents and Settings\username\Desktop) The downloaded file should now be visible in the List of Fonts Window. Highlight the font to add, make sure the check box to copy the font to the library is checked, and click OK. The font will now be added to your system and be available for automatic use. Another neat font site is [Xtreme Fonts](#) where registration is required but it's like Video rental places, it's free.

How many people enjoyed the Jurassic Park books and movies? A show of hands is not required. However, if you enjoyed those, you may also enjoy [Jurassic Park Institute](#). Here is an extensive site dedicated to dinosaurs complete with Dinopedia, Entertainment, News, and even a lab. Check it out...

Disney is always trying to promote the family, and this site is no exception. [Family Fun](#) is a site to visit with sections on Raising kids, Activities and Crafts, Recipes, ideas for Themed Birthday parties... Check it out...

Everybody at one time or another has received a mini movie from a friend via email. These are usually obscure commercials or other nonsense to amuse and delight, and most people wonder where they

came from. [Here](#) is a good place to start looking. However, since there are literally thousands of clips on this site, and I can't possibly screen all of them, Enter at Your Own Risk...

Everyone knows that your system performance will begin to degrade as you add and remove programs from your system. This is because everything that happens on your system, passes through the Registry, and when the Registry is cluttered it slows everything down. There are many products available on how to keep it clean, some better than others, and some utilities actually remove entries they shouldn't. Only use software that performs as you know it should, or do the research to make sure you know what your getting into.

## TEKQUESTIONS (HOW TO...)

### **I want to keep my computer safe from power surges. How do I choose a good power bar?**

First off, there are probably as many different "power bars" available as there are opinions about them. But the primary selection criteria should be for a surge protector or surge arrestor, rather than just a power bar. Typically a "power bar" is just that, a series of electrical receptacles attached to an extension cord. While some of these units call themselves surge protectors they are simply made with a small fuse that trips when too much power is sent through the unit. While this is what you want, if the surge is great enough, the simple fuse can be tripped and then shorted together allowing current to continue running through the device and not protecting anything.

There are some special things to look for. First is price. Remember that you are buying insurance and protection for an appliance that you have spent over \$ 1000.00 for, and therefore you don't want to skimp on the protection you acquire. Expect a good surge protector to begin at \$ 30 to \$ 40 and increase in value depending on what else it protects.

The primary function of a surge suppressor is to suppress the intermittent "spikes" of power or transients. Generally the effective AC utility voltage is 110 to 120 volts, with peak voltage of 160 to 170 volts at a frequency of 60 hertz. Transients however can commonly reach peak levels of several hundred volts, or in the case of a thunderstorm, several thousand volts. And the lightning doesn't even have to strike your source directly. These pulses only last microseconds, but the damage can be fatal to your system. The "spikes" are also not limited to riding the electrical wiring. They can also travel along telephone wires or coaxial cable to your Internet connection. Therefore, a really good idea is to purchase a protector for all inputs to your system, not just the power cord.

No surge protector is 100% effective. There are several methods available for the sue of arresting surges. The most common is a Metal Oxide Varistor, or MOV, which diverts excess electricity away from the normal path. Another common practice is the use of a Gas Discharge Arrestor, also used to divert the electricity from the "hot" line to the "ground." As a backup, some suppressor also have a built in fuse. A fuse is a resistor that can easily conduct current as long as the current is below a certain level. If the current increases above the acceptable level, the heat caused by the resistance burns the fuse, thereby cutting off the circuit. If the MOV doesn't stop the power surge, the extra current will burn the fuse, saving the connected machine. This fuse only works once, as it is destroyed in the process. Some surge protectors also offer "line conditioning" to filter out smaller fluctuations in electrical current. The resulting current is more stable and better for your equipment.

Lightning is a big cause of spikes and surges, but there are others to be aware of as well. Faulty wiring and/or other electrical devices that share the wire can cause an unsteady voltage flow. A cycling refrigerator or air conditioner can upset the balance of current and cause damage to other appliances on the same circuit.

Therefore, the safest way to protect your equipment is to use your computer on a dedicated line, and implement a good surge protection system that also protects telephone line input and possibly coaxial cable. One last note, A surge suppressor must be plugged directly into a wall receptacle. Plugging it into an extension cord, and then into the wall defeats the purpose of the protector. Also, do not plug suppressors into other suppressors to extend their range. This also nullifies their effect.

**Whenever I receive an e-mail with a PPS attachment, I cannot open it. What does PPS stand for, and is there a freeware program out there that will allow me to view the file?**

A PPS file is a Microsoft PowerPoint file, and it stands for PowerPoint Show. the PowerPoint Viewer application from Microsoft? Microsoft's PowerPoint Viewer 97 can open PowerPoint 95 files right up to PowerPoint 2002 (XP), and the [download](#) will work for Windows 9x through Windows XP.

Is there any free software available for the Palm?

In our travels recently we found a program called [Crash Pad](#) which is freeware for the Palm. Once on that page, if you click on Software Connection Overview, and then search for freeware under all categories, you should find many pages that satisfy your request.

**I am using Windows XP and for some reason when I pop in a CD nothing happens. What happened to the Autoplay from Windows 9x?**

Occasionally, CD creation software can disable the autorun/autoplay feature in Windows XP. However, it may just be a setting in your Windows XP registry. We will identify the changes that should be made to the registry, but warn you that we take no responsibility for your system should you attempt this fix. The Registry is what makes your system work, and modifications should only be done by a trained professional. However, if you are going to make these changes, **BACKUP THE REGISTRY FIRST**. Microsoft Knowledgebase Article 256986 will help.

1. To open your registry, Start -> Run, type Regedit, and then click OK.
2. Navigate to HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE \ System \ CurrentControlSet \ Services \ CDRom.
3. Double-click Autorun and make sure the value is set to "1" under Value Data
4. Navigate to HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER \ SOFTWARE \ Microsoft \ Windows \ CurrentVersion \ Policies \ Explorer.
5. Double-click "NoDriveTypeAutoRun" and make sure the value was set to "91" under Value Data
6. Close the Registry and reboot your system.

## VIRUS UPDATES

Here are the latest Virus threats according to Symantec. If you or someone you know is having a systems problem due to a virus, please call MircoByte TekSolutions for immediate help.

**W32.HLLW.Fizzer@mm** was discovered May 8, 2003, and is a mass-mailing worm that sends itself to all contacts in the Windows Address Book. It contains a backdoor that uses mIRC to communicate with a remote attacker. It also contains a keylogger.

**Downloader.BO.B** was discovered on May 6, 2003, and is a Trojan Horse that downloads a Backdoor Trojan from predefined Web sites

**Downloader.BO.B.dr**, also discovered May 6, 2003, is a .html file that drops Downloader.BO.B

onto the infected system. The existence of the file error.hta is an indication of a possible infection.

**Backdoor.IRC.Lampsy**, discovered May 6, 2003, is a Backdoor Trojan Horse that uses mIRC to communicate with a remote attacker. It allows the Trojan's creator to fully control a compromised system.

If your system has these or other virus problems, please contact us immediately @ 771-8930 for help.