



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

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February 2003

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Proxomitron

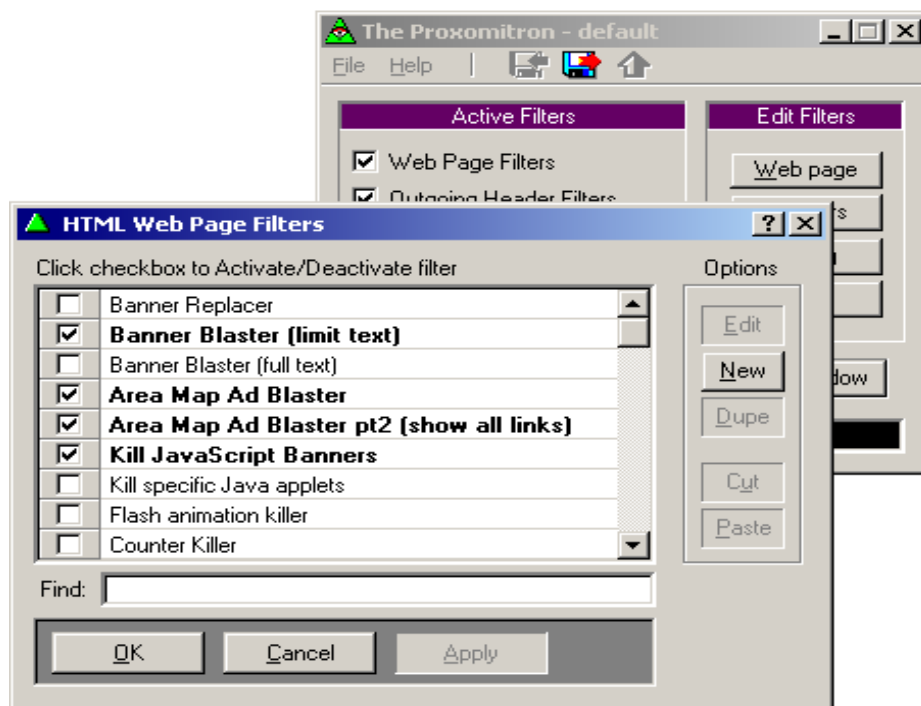
by Chris Taylor

When I first saw the World Wide Web back in 1993, my reaction was, "Well, it is kind of nifty, but it's not like it is going to change my life or anything."

Ok, so I won't make it as a futurist. But, to my knowledge, there is one thing few people predicted correctly about the web back then—the massive amount of advertising we now have on web sites.

I freely admit that I get a lot of free information on the web and I know a lot of it is supplied courtesy of advertising dollars. But I think things are getting out of control. We now have windows popping up over the middle of a page that can't be dismissed for a number of seconds. We have ads that float around the screen. We have pop-under windows that appear as you shut down the windows on top. We have banner ads running in the status bar. For the latest annoyance, read news.com.com/2102-1023-978616.html. It talks about a new technique whereby just passing your mouse over an advertising window will redirect you to the advertiser's site.

For years there have been programs that would do various tasks to eliminate pop-up windows, kill JavaScript banner ads, and more. I tried a few, and they may be OK. But I tried them in days when I was not quite so annoyed and I found they frequently prevented legitimate content from being displayed correctly.



Proxomitron kills web annoyances.

As my annoyance level rose and my tolerance for shenanigans dropped, I went looking again. And I found a terrific program called **Proxomitron**. Besides being completely free—and no, it is not full of spyware, adware, etc.—it is a fantastically configurable program. I downloaded and tested version "Naoko 4.4". Don't ask me about the odd version name.

Proxomitron installs itself as a proxy server. You reconfigure your browser to use a proxy server. You point it to *localhost*, which is your own machine, on port 8080. Proxomitron listens on

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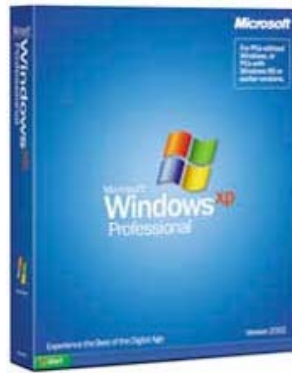
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Next Meeting: **MONDAY, February 10th, 2003**

February Raffle

by Chris Taylor

At the February, 2003 General Meeting, there will be a raffle. Thanks to the Microsoft Mindshare user group support program, we have a full (not upgrade) retail version of Windows XP Professional. This prize has a street value of approximately \$450. Raffle tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.



Coming up in February

Is This The Dawn Of The Ice Age For Desktops?
They're big, bulky and can't readily move to warmer climates. Sound familiar?

This February 10th, **Eurocom**, located here in Ottawa, is back and anxious to show the OPCUG its many exciting new products to keep us ahead of the coming ice age.



NOTICE February Meeting Date

This is a reminder that the February meeting will be
MONDAY, February 10th.

As usual, the meeting will be held at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. at 7:30 p.m.



Computer History Event

The club is about to celebrate its 20th anniversary and we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to reminisce about the things that we played with during all those years! So, if you have old computer memorabilia that you never dared to trash and that could illustrate the history of the computer and of the club, please let us know and we will try to setup a table with all those artefacts at our April History Event.

If you are interested, please submit your name, the description of the artefact(s) and the approximate year when it came out. All the objects are to be returned to the owner after the meeting.

Email the information to Jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca or in person at the OPCUG meetings.



CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Monday , February 10 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Monday , February 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Monday , February 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG	Monday , February 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	8:00 p.m. at Chapters in the Pinecrest Mall (at the Queensway)
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	3 rd Thursday each month 6:00-8:00 p.m.	Corel Bldg 1600 Carling Ave

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

NEWS BYTES

Can Outlook be Secured?

by Chris Taylor

Outlook has a reputation as an insecure e-mail client responsible for a large percentage of e-mail worms currently floating around. While there are many worms that target the Outlook client, rest assured there are many worms that do not rely on Outlook. They include their own built-in SMTP engine and are therefore able to spread regardless of the e-mail client you use. They can scour your hard drive for addresses to send to, looking in places such as the browser cache as well as various address book formats.

But many people do use Outlook and unfortunately, the default settings, particularly in older versions, certainly do not lean towards security. As well, there have been many security vulnerabilities in the code.

SecurityFocus reports that over the past three years, *Outlook 2000* has had 19 security vulnerabilities reported. *Outlook 2002* has had 9.



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SecurityFocus Online has a pair of articles on securing Outlook. See online.securityfocus.com/infocus/1648 and online.securityfocus.com/infocus/1652. If you use Outlook, it is highly recommended that you check out these two web pages.



ORPHANS' SIG

Dare to Database ?

by Bob Gowan

Databases have received lots of attention at the OPCUG over the past year. Regular Orphan's SIG members will remember the first of Bob Walker's two recent presentations, a few months ago, on the database design and development process for large "corporate" database applications. Then, in November 2002, Bill Hanigsberg of Montreal, showed us some of the features of the newest version of the Alpha Five Relational Database software that he uses in developing applications for Dawson College. Finally, at last month's general meeting, Bob Walker returned to give a presentation on developing small-scale (desktop) database applications using Microsoft Access.

One might think all that would be enough talk about databases, but lo and behold, the Orphan's group has asked for more. In each of the previous presentations, the emphasis has been on database development. SIG co-ordinator Henry Sims has asked me to prepare for the February 2003 Orphan's SIG meeting, following the OPCUG main presentation, a demonstration of databases from the user perspective. As someone largely self-taught over some 15 years in a number of database software products and applications, I have learned by making many mistakes. While I am certainly not an expert in database design and development, I hope to be able to help some Orphans make those first steps at putting this useful and powerful type of software to work for them. Do you dare?



Proxomitron *(Continued from page 1)*

that port and intercepts all requests for web browsing. It fetches the content your browser is asking for. But, before it passes the information back to your browser, it acts as a filter. It removes elements you have decided you would rather not see. If you happen to be using port 8080 for something else, you can configure Proxomitron to use a different port.

Proxomitron resides on your machine as a tray icon. Click the left mouse button to bring up the main configuration dialog box or click the right mouse button to bring up a context-sensitive menu.

Some of the capabilities of Proxomitron are;

- Stop or limit Pop-up windows
- Control MIDI music and other sounds
- Freeze animated .GIFs
- Kill advertising banners
- Stop Web-Branding and other scripts added by web space providers
- Stop Pop-up alert/confirm boxes
- Remove slow web counters
- Stop web pages and ads from "auto-refreshing"
- Remove Dynamic HTML
- Prevent getting stuck in someone's frames
- Remove frames or tables altogether
- Kill or change selected Java scripts and applets
- Remove off-site images
- Kill Flash animations
- Remove or replace web page and/or table background images
- Force popups to have browser controls
- Stop status bar scrollers
- Unhide URLs obscured by status line text
- Convert blinking text to bold
- Remove Layers and Style sheets



Web page before **Proxomitron**

We now have windows popping up over the middle of a page that can't be dismissed for a number of seconds.

There are many more, most of which I don't really understand yet. And if those are not enough, you can define your own filters. Be prepared to spend some time with the documentation, if you want to create filters. The documentation does appear to be well-written and the style is light-hearted and humorous, so who knows, I might actually get around to it.

The defaults for the program are a good starting point. As you get familiar with how the program operates, you can start fine-tuning it by turning various filters on or off. Right after installing Proxomitron, I loaded up a page from the New York Times web site. Proxomitron blocked a total of 11 ads found on the one page. Other than the missing ads, the page looked the same as the unfiltered version.

There is always a chance that some of the information that gets blocked will be information you want, rather than an ad for a wireless video camera from X10 or something. Two clicks are all that it takes to bypass all filtering. And, of course, it only takes two clicks to flip the filtering back on. As well, if you have some site you always want to see unfiltered, you can add the URL to a bypass list.

If you want to see exactly what the program is doing, you can bring up a log window. In colour-coded splendour you can then watch all traffic going back and forth.

If you are worried about the program burying its way deep into Windows and not permitting easy removal if you don't like the program, rest easy. The program installs absolutely no files outside its own program directory.

(Continued on next page)

Same web page after **Proxomitron**

It writes absolutely no information to the Windows registry. To get rid of the program, you simply exit the program, change your proxy setting in your web browser back to the way they were—in most cases this means simply telling the browser not to use a proxy, and delete the program directory.

If you want to try out Proxomitron, you can pick up the latest version at <http://www.proxomitron.org/>



Election Report for 2003

by Wayne Houston

In the November and December issues of Ottawa PC News, there was a call for nominations for members interested in being members of the Board of Directors for 2003. As election chairman, I received the nominations. As of December 31, I had received nominations from the following:

Jocelyn Doire, Chris Taylor, Maurice Duchene, Brigitte Lord, Morris Turpin, Bob Gowan, Vince Pizzamiglio, Bob Walker, and Ted May.

As there are nine positions on the Board and nine nominations were received, there will not be an election and the nine who were nominated are elected by acclamation. If you are interested in helping out with the running of the OPCUG in any capacity, please see any of the Board members mentioned above.



20th ANNIVERSARY

Historical Trivia Night

This spring, as part of our celebrations for the 20th Anniversary of the birth of the Ottawa PC Users' Group, Chris Taylor will be heading up a trivia quiz for a special Historical Trivia Night. Over the past 20 years (and more) of computing, there have been many fascinating milestones, interesting products, amusing pronouncements, fantastic (for their time!) breakthroughs, odd ways we had to use computers and more. Who can forget the statement by Bill Gates that "nobody needs more than 640K"? Do you remember what the key was used to get help in WordPerfect 4.2? Who remembers the name of the word processor that, when you pressed "PgUp" caused the page to move up and the cursor to remain stationary, meaning you moved down in the document?

We'll have lots of things to give away to the sharpest trivia buffs, and we want to have some real hum-dinger questions to try to stump the best. They could be about club activities, speakers, club members, or general questions about personal computers that would have been talked about at the club in earlier days.

So, we hope all of you will search through the deepest recesses of your memory, and start thinking up questions and answers for the contest. Send your questions, answers, and source - for verification - to Chris at

Chris.Taylor@opcug.ca. Please don't share with anyone else. The fewer people who know the questions, the better.

Should be fun.

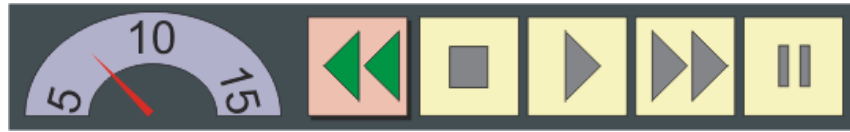


OPCUG History



Rewind ...

by Bob Gowan,
OPCUG Historian



This regular column attempts to summarize some of content of past issues of the club's newsletter. Thanks to the OPCUG members who brought in copies of the newsletter that I was missing, and to the readers who have commented on previous columns. I'm enjoying this "walk down memory lane" but it is your support that keeps the column alive.

5 Years Ago

Leading off the February 1998 issue of the **Ottawa PC News** is a "PUB II Update" by Chris Taylor, explaining the various ways of accessing the new system, and plans for phasing out the older PUB system. Bob Cross previewed the February meeting presentation by Centrepoint Technologies on **Concero Switchboard**, which is described as a "computer telephony micro-PBX communications command center" that allowed 6 extensions to share 2 lines and supports remote devices (cellular phones, pagers), faxes and modems. Another article by Chris Taylor introduces the "PIG SIG" – an "after hours" gathering for beer and wings that is still successful today. Bob Cross also provides a "Publicity Directors' report" that includes a "pep talk" for volunteerism that everyone should read.

There are two Product Reviews in this issue. A software review by Harald Frieze describes the many new features of the latest ('98) version of **New Deal Office**, such as an Internet Browser, an HTML import tool, a CD Player and a banking application. **NDO** also provides a full "Office" suite, but its most remarkable feature is that all of this works on a 286! Dunc Petrie's hardware review is entitled "Living with Iomega's Zip". He describes the various "flavors" of this "super floppy"

device, the software supplied, and some new 3rd-party software that provides boot capability. Dunc compares the Zip to some competitor products and correctly predicts that Zip "will 'hang tough' for many years."

Rounding out the issue are a DTP SIG report and a call for 'new blood' to help with the club's website. Some examples of the questions and answers handled at a Q&A session of the DTP SIG are given, and Adobe's planned February presentation is previewed. Budding HTML authors and graphic artists were being sought to work on the new website.

10 Years Ago

In his review of the January 1993 OPCUG presentation on operating systems by author, Mark Minasi, Jackson Hibler opines that the DOS/Windows combination "may dominate for quite some time" while OS/2 and the anticipated Windows NT "fight it out." Minasi was a firm believer in "the superiority of pre-emptive multitasking" as employed by OS/2 over Window's "co-operative approach to multitasking." Ultimately, the success of either would depend on applications being available.

The Chairman's annual report, by Harald Frieze, gives some highlights of the club's activities in 1992: completion of BBS upgrade, including "a new high speed (14.4K) modem"; participation in surplus computer refurbishing, establishment of three new SIGs, and growth (by 200) of membership, to 650. The Treasurer's Report by Stan McRobert showed increased revenues due to the membership growth, and an overall improvement in the club's financial condition.

The issue also contained columns by the Fox and DTP SIGs. FoxSIG's

Andrew Ross MacNeill provides part 1 of "a look at new commands" of Fox-Pro 2.5, particularly its new preprocessor functions. David Gerrior of the DTP SIG answers the question, "What is a desktop publication?" In his "Learning How" column, Beginners' Corner leader, Eric Clyde, explains the use of communications hardware and software to access the User Group's Bulletin Board.

15 Years Ago

Jackson Hibler's report on the previous meeting's main presentation provides a glimpse of the state of microcomputer use within the federal government in the 1980s. He reports that the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) had about 600 employees and more than 400 microcomputers. At that time, the growth of microcomputer use in government was recent – from about 12,000 micros in 1986 to twice that in early 1988, with "one out of four workstations ... microcomputer equipped". The investment in micro hardware was already \$60 million, while "all other related expenses (software, training, reorganization, etc.)" was estimated to cost six times that amount. By this time, the OAG had discovered that micros had "become a significant, widely-accepted tool without waiting for cost/benefit 'proof'".

The cover of the February 1988 issue featured two articles, on new enhancements for **Lotus 1-2-3** and the DOS utility, **XCOPY**, respectively. The free Lotus utilities were a macro recorder, **LEARN**, and **SPEEDUP**, which considerably improved spreadsheet re-calculations. André Cyr's article on **XCOPY** describes how the utility works, as compared to **COPY** and **DISKCOPY**, and explains its internal switches. His second article in this

(Continued on page 8)

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Diskeeper 7.0

by Ted May

If you don't remember the article on Diskeeper 6 SE, please read it in the newsletter for October 2001. It can be found at <http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/Diskeeper6Oct01.html> if you don't have your copy of the newsletter. Everything said in that article applies to this version of Diskeeper.

In addition, this version has added a button called 'Set It and Forget It'. When this button is clicked, it opens a dialog box where you can select all (or some of) your disk volumes (partitions) and set those to be analyzed and defragmented automatically. The timing is fully schedulable.

After it is set up, it operates invisibly in the background at a low priority and doesn't interfere in any way with or slow down the operation of the computer as far as running programs in the foreground is concerned. However, clicking on the Analyze button and then the Defragment button does impact foreground programs as it runs at a higher priority.

There is a second tab on the 'Set It and Forget It' dialog box, called 'Boot Time Scheduler'. It allows you to schedule directories' consolidation, run CHKDSK on the selected volume, reduce paging file fragments, and, if you are running an NTFS file system, it also can be set to defragment the MFT (Master File Table).

You can set it to 'Perform Boot-Time Defragmentation' 'On Next Manual Boot' or it can be done at any time you might want it to commence the Boot-Time defragmentation. At the scheduled time, the computer does a reboot and interrupts the boot up to do the boot-time defragmentation(s) and then does a reboot when it is finished.

Consolidating the directories improves hard disk access speed considerably. If your free space on a volume is low (below 10%) Diskeeper will complain

but it will defragment the volume. However, it will take a lot longer to do the job and probably will leave some files fragmented. After several runs it will completely defragment the volume.

In this version of Diskeeper, free space is completely consolidated into one chunk. However, like low free space, it may take several defragmentation runs before it is completed. Also, when you save a new file

or an updated file, it automatically begins consolidating any fragments that might occur when the file is saved.

It does it this way if it is set to continuously defragment volumes. Otherwise, it does it according to how you have set it up in the defragmentation dialog box.

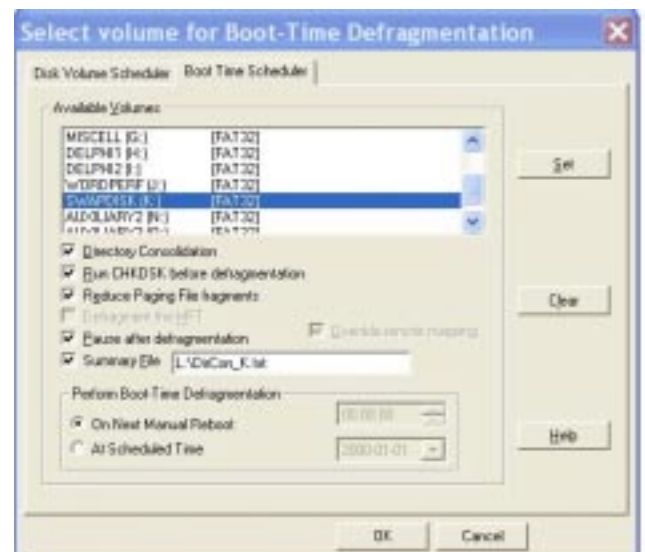
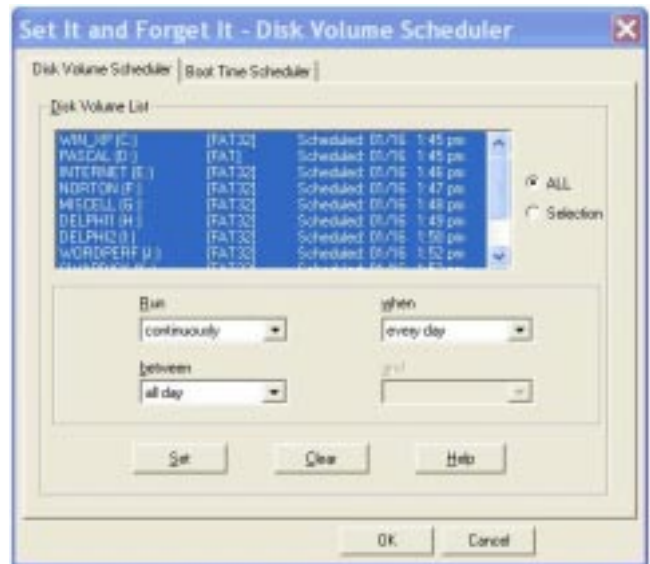
DK7 works on Windows versions from 95(OSR2 or higher)/98/ME/2000 Professional/NT 4.0 Workstation(SP 3 or higher)/XP Home and Professional. The 4K cluster size limit in NTFS volumes has been removed in Windows XP where Diskeeper can defragment NTFS volumes with cluster sizes up to 64KB.

In US dollars, the costs of electronically downloading the various versions of Diskeeper 7.0 are: Home Editions \$29.95, Workstation - Network edition (single licence) is \$44.95 and the Server Edition (single licence) is \$249.95. The packaged versions cost \$5 more except the Server version is \$10 more (plus shipping and handling, of course). There is also a Small Business Edition which includes 1 set of CDs and docs and costs \$399.95. You can find all the

pricing information at: <http://www.softwaresheff.com/products/display2.asp?p=5#buy>.

There is also a version called Diskeeper Server Appliance, priced at (1 licence) US\$249.95 either shipped or electronic download. This version is used with Server Appliances. You can find more information at <http://www.softwaresheff.com/products/display2.asp?p=5#dksa>.

Please note that everything I have said applies mainly to the Home Edition of Diskeeper 7.0. Other information was gleaned from the Diskeeper web site.



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged! If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Saturdays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

Fees: OPCUG annual membership: \$25 per year.

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Rewind... (Continued from page 6)

issue is about **Evaluate**, which he describes as “a small (24K) and slick public domain utility written by a local author, P. Asselin. The utility has a built-in table that give (sic) you the capability to assess the readability level and human ‘punch’ of your english and french texts.” As usual, the newsletter included descriptions of the content of the “Disk of the Month” and several “Specialty Disks” such as **DanCAD 3-D** (v2.0) for drawing and animation and “Taxes 1987” with two **Lotus 1-2-3** spreadsheets and a **Clipper** database application.



CLUB NEWS

Declining Membership

For several years, membership in OPCUG has been declining. Departing members have indicated a number of reasons for leaving: scheduling conflicts, demands of other activities, easier-to-use computer systems, access to information on the Internet, and so on. We have made several attempts to encourage the remaining membership to find new members. An annual membership drive, with prizes for sponsoring members, had modest success for a few years. Last year, it was ... , well ... , ... less so. Over the past few months, we initiated a trial “cash rebate” of \$5 for each new member sponsored by a current member. There were “no takers” in this campaign.

While our club's financial status is still quite sound, a continuing decline in membership will lead inevitably to the eventual failure of the club. We need to find new members, retain current members, and encourage former members to return if we wish to continue for another five – or ten – or twenty years. We need feedback from the membership as to what keeps them coming back. We need ideas as to what we might do to attract others.

There will be a brief (10 –20 minute) discussion on membership at the next (February 2003) general meeting. All members are encouraged to attend – and please bring ideas !!!