



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Volume 21, Number 3

March 2004

PRODUCT REVIEW

PTB Sync

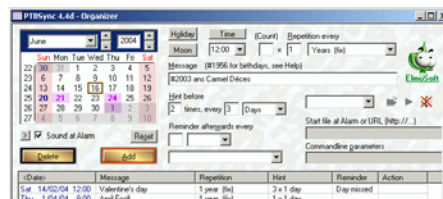
by Jocelyn Doire

Have you ever wanted to keep the clock of your computer accurate? What about being reminded when somebody's birthday is approaching? Do you want to see a calendar? All those things have one thing in common; time. There are many programs out there that do just that, but I've never seen one that does it better than PTB Sync, and for that, all the author asks is to make a donation to any non-profit organization. The program has no spyware, no adware nor any of "these parasites", as the author calls them.

The main purpose of PTB Sync is to keep the time on your computer clock accurate using one of the atomic clocks available on the Internet. That feature is fairly easy to use, simply select whether you have dial-up connection or a permanent connection, and then let the program do the work in the background. If you wish, you can change many of the options such as which time server to use, how often you want to update the clock, set the time zone, and so on.

The second main function it does is to remind you of any event you wish. For example, to be reminded of April Fool's day one day in advance every year, you select the day with the calendar, set the repetition to "1 year", enter the message, and finally set the "Hint before" to "1 times every 1 days".

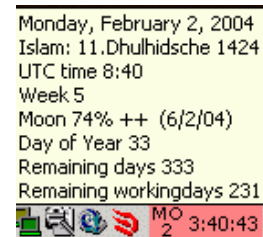
If you want, you can set the program to do a number of things when the time arrives, such as sounding an alarm, show a message, or even start a program to do any number of functions such as starting a backup. PTB Sync has a fairly extensive list of holidays that can be added using the Holiday button. The program can adjust the dates depending on the moon for example, or display the age in the case of a birthday.



If you want, you can also add many kinds of calendars to your desktop. In the image below you see the date, the lunar phase, a calendar and a list of upcoming events. The calendar function can also generate printed or HTML versions.



It can also change the look of the system clock and display much more info such as the number of remaining days in year.



Finally, I have to mention the cute little green man that moves his eyes in a funny way, visible in all the configuration screens, and contrary to MS Clippy, I think you will like him.

The program is available at <http://elmue.de.vu/>.



Inside this issue:

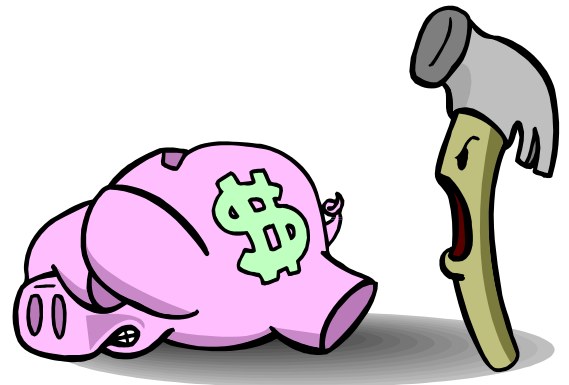
Calendar / Coming Up / Raffle	2
Review: PTB Sync	1
Review: Personal Firewall Plus	3-4
Tips & Tricks: Thwart Spammers	5-6
Club News: PUB II now PUB II.5?	6.8
Internet SIG: Google, Part 2	7
Contact Information	8

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 10th, 2004**

March Raffle

At the March general meeting, due to the generosity of Microsoft Canada's Ottawa office, we have what is probably our best raffle prize ever – a copy of **Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003!** This is the complete Professional Edition including Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Access, Publisher, and Business Contact Manager for Outlook. This package has a local store price of \$650.00.

Don't miss out on a chance on this terrific raffle prize. Break open the piggy bank and bring your loonies, toonies, or folding money to the March general meeting. As always, raffle tickets are only \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or the bargain basement rate of \$5 for ten!



For more information about Microsoft Office 2003, see <http://www.microsoft.com/office>.

Coming Up...

Our presenter for the March 10, 2004 meeting will be Josh McPherson of the Microsoft Office 2003 Team. They plan to showcase some of the new features of Microsoft Office 2003, and particularly how to use them effectively on the new Tablet - style of PC. The presentation will include a main stage demo and showing Office 2003 on Tablets in smaller groups. Should be a fun evening.

Visit <http://www.microsoft.com/office/editions/prodinfo/tabletpc.mspx>.

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, March 10 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, March 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers' SIG	Wednesday, March 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG	Wednesday, March 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Digital Imaging SIG	Wednesday, March 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	TBA
PIG SIG (Wing SIG)	Wednesday, March 10 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Woodroffe Ave. at Baseline Rd. (formerly Shoppers' City West)

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

PRODUCT REVIEW

Personal Firewall Plus *by Alan German*

Yet another review of a McAfee product; I'm soon going to be on their payroll, or their black list! Actually, I have few complaints about this package, and lots of kudos to McAfee for a well-designed product so, who knows, if they are lurking somewhere in cyberspace reading my words of wisdom, perhaps they will sign me up as a beta tester.

Personal Firewall Plus is a stand-alone version of McAfee's Internet firewall product. The instruction manual said to uninstall any other firewalls before installing Personal Firewall Plus – as I found out when reading the manual as the package was installing. I hadn't uninstalled the firewall portion of McAfee's VirusScan Home Edition, the most recently reviewed package, but the new version of the firewall installed just fine.

Kudos to McAfee for a well-designed product

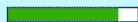
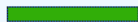
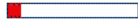
The installation routine dutifully reported that the firewall was configured and ready to use, and then offered a wizard to customize the program's operation. The steps were very easy to follow, with the default choices being mostly appropriate in my case. One is able to select a level for alerts to be issued (only red alerts for me), specify the type of network and the level of access afforded to other machines on the network. Interestingly, the recommended choice is "Don't trust my local network" which, in any case, was the item of choice where there is no LAN. The final setting was for recognition of application programs which I left set at "Use smart recommendations" which blocks any new applications until allowed by the user.

I did find one small glitch in the installation routine. After the initial installation I was instructed to "Remove any CDs or floppy disks and click Restart". Like a good reviewer, I did precisely as I was told, took out the installation CD, pressed Restart and Windows promptly indicated that I should insert the missing CD!

After rebooting, my old friend McAfee's SecurityCenter loaded, with its array of pretty coloured bars (see <http://www.opcug.ca/public/Reviews/SpamKiller.htm>). As might be expected, my anti-virus and anti-hacker ratings were both fully green at 10.0, but my overall security index stood at only 8.5. The reason for the latter was that my machine was sadly deficient in the anti-

My Security Index

These indices measure how secure your computer is. An index value of 10 is best, while 1 indicates a potential security risk.

My Security Index	8.5		
My AntiVirus Index	10.0		
My AntiHacker Index	10.0		
My AntiAbuse Index	1.0		
My AntiSpam Index	1.0		

abuse and anti-spam departments, both deep in the red at 1.0. The recommendation was in part to obtain Spam-Killer; however, given my earlier experience with this particular product, I don't find this an optimal solution. I can live with being in the red in this case.

Another oddity, a pop-up window warned about a medium-risk advisory for the worm W32/Bagle@MM. Why should I worry? I do have VirusScan installed? Pop-ups with McAfee seem to be almost the norm. I notice that when one visits their web site for program support, or help with a given feature, in addition to viewing the web page of interest, there is a steady bombardment of adverts in pop-up windows. I guess my one general complaint about McAfee is that they are

very egocentric, always pushing more of their products, and indicating potential problems even when you already have the solution. Hey, we're already paying customers guys. You should treat us nicely!

With the boxed package installed, and knowing what we do about the currency of shrink-wrapped software, it was time to update the "new" firewall package. This was a fairly straightforward process – register a name, E-mail address and password with McAfee's web site, and let the instant updater rip. One of McAfee's wizards indicated the various steps involved for downloading and installing the updates; however, unfortunately, there was no indication of the number of files to be transferred or their sizes. So, it was time to sit back, keep one eye on the monitor, and read the instruction manual. The process ran completely automatically, save for a couple of reboots. Eventually, the updater reported that API version 5.0.1.5 was installed and that "All McAfee Security Services are up to date". Success!

One of the options on the program's main menu was to "Test My Firewall" which sounded like a good idea. By default the program goes out to HackerWatch.org, a McAfee web site which will probe the ports on your machine. To give McAfee credit where due, they also provided links to dsreports.com and pcflank.com, two other sites that provide similar functionality. My newly-installed firewall passed all the tests at all the locations, including those at ShieldsUP! which I also visited for good measure.

The SecurityCenter interface for Personal Firewall Plus is an improvement over that for VirusScan Home Edition since it tightly integrates both VirusScan and the firewall. Basically, one icon in the system tray provides ready access to both programs. Large icons for McAfee's individual products, including VirusScan and Personal Firewall+ are shown on the main SecurityCenter menu screen.

(Continued on page 4)

Personal Firewall Plus

(Continued from page 3)



Clicking on the icon for Personal Firewall+ takes you to a secondary menu screen with a modern web-like design. The menu system is clean and colourful, with individual icons and explanatory text for the various functions, and links to other options such as updates, web-based support and help files. The page has four main tabs: Summary, Internet Applications, Inbound Events and Utilities. The firewall summary page provides a simple overview of the program's status and activity, with links to various functions providing more detail. The list of Internet applications and their settings allows changes to be made to these settings for any particular program. Similarly access is provided to a

detailed log of events tracked by the firewall, probably giving more detail than most of us want to see but, no doubt, useful for some. Finally, the utilities tab lets the user change the alert, security, port and log settings, create a set of trusted and banned URLs, and see a graphical representation of Internet traffic on the machine over time.

One of the graphical features of the program is Visual Trace that supposedly allows the user to see where hacker attacks originate. Every time I tried to trace any of the alerts, a map of the world was displayed, there was lots of pinging recorded, but the map didn't seem to change, and it certainly didn't tell me anything. So, I regret that I can't see any benefit to this process. The other item that provides graphs and charts is the traffic monitor. This shows a graph of web traffic by the minute or by the hour, and records statistics on such items as rates of transfer, the number of bytes transferred, and the bandwidth occupied by the most frequently used applications. Again, personally, I don't find such data useful,

but perhaps it's a must-know item for others.

However, scanning the events log was somewhat reassuring. There were lots of ping attempts, DCE endpoint resolution services trying to access TCP port 135, and programs trying to access TCP port 6129, to say nothing of "Kuang2 The Virus" evidently knocking on the door of TCP port 17300. All such intrusion attempts were noted as having been firmly rebuffed by the ever-watchful firewall.

So, overall, for me the package is a hit, with more-or-less trouble free installation, a really clean user interface, and mostly just working away in the background doing its job keeping the bad guys at bay.

Bottom Line:

Personal Firewall Plus 2004 ver. 5.0
CAN \$49.19 (1 year subscription, downloadable version, or physical shipment)

McAfee Security

<http://ca.mcafee.com/?CID=5819&langid=34>

Shields UP! website: <http://grc.com>



February Raffle Winners

At our general meeting on Feb. 12th:

Our raffle prize winner was Keith Martinsen who took home a copy of McAfee virus scan.

The door prize winner of a copy of Corel Draw was Martin Pagnan.

Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to Corel and McAfee for the prizes.



TIPS & TRICKS

Mail Server: a good way to thwart potential spammers.

by Jocelyn Doire

Have you ever been to a web site that requires you to enter an email address with the distinct feeling that you will get tons of spam the moment you click on "accept"?

Ideally you would like to enter a unique email address that could identify the source of the spam, and easily cancel it when needed.

One good way to do just that is to ask your internet service provider (ISP) to give you a new email address, which can be used at places you don't quite trust. That way if you get spam at that email address, you just cancel it and ask for a new one. The problem with that is that it takes time to get and cancel the email address, and you can usually get only a few email addresses.

Alternatively, you could open a group on Yahoo, and have all the messages transit by Yahoo, but then you also get the advertisement with every message.

A more complicated way to thwart potential spammers, but much more flexible, is to run your own email server! That may sound like a lot of trouble, but actually it's not that difficult.

The first thing you need is to check if you are allowed to run a server; unfortunately most ISPs don't allow it, but some do.

The second thing you need is a domain name, and here sites like DynDNS.ORG can provide one for free, whether you have a fixed IP address or a dynamic one (see my previous article at <http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/0301.txt> for more info).

You can run an email server on a dial up connection but you might lose some emails when the other email servers try to send you email and give up because you were not responding for a certain amount of time. A permanent connection like cable and ADSL is definitely better.

There are many mail servers that are available on the web such as the venerable SendMail, but if you using Windows, probably Mercury at <http://www.pmail.com/> is a good choice, and it costs nothing. Mercury has a lot of features, including mailing list, automatic messages, spam filters, and more, but here I will only explain what is needed to send/receive emails and how to create users.

When installing the program, you will be asked if you want to install the Netware module, in most case you won't unless you happen to be running a Novell network.

The next choice is more interesting: what modules to load? One of the important things to understand is that the program can be seen as both a server and a client; it is a server because

it delivers email to email programs such as Outlook, but it is also a client because it receives email from the other remote servers on the internet. So... you need to load a number of modules.

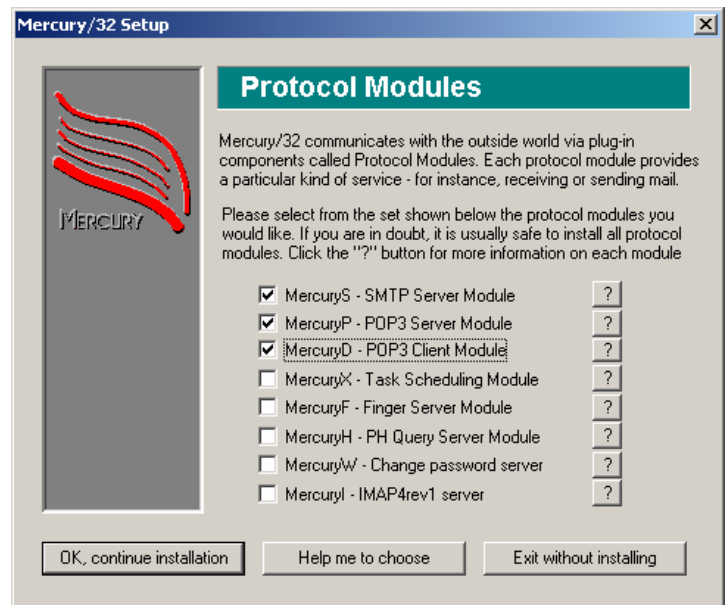
Think of it as a four-step process to deliver emails: 1) from the outside world to your server, 2) from your server to your client 3) and 4) same thing but in the reverse direction.

(internet > Mercury > Outlook > Mercury > internet)

For the first one you will need MercuryS - SMTP Server Module, which will be in charge of receiving emails from the outside world.

You will need also the MercuryP -POP3 Server Module, which allows people to get their emails; this is the module that email programs such as Outlook talk to when you retrieve your emails.

The third one you will need is the MercuryD -POP3 Client Module to distribute the emails you wrote to the outside world.



Finally you will be asked to install either MercuryC if you are on a dial-up connection, or MercuryE if you are on a permanent connection (see screen shot next page).

There are other modules, but those are the essential ones to send and receive emails.

The next step is to configure the "Core Module", this is where you enter your "internet name for this system" under the general tab (for example joc.ods.org), and your "local host" and internet name (for example "Joc" and "joc.ods.org").

(Continued on page 6)

CLUB NEWS

PUB II becomes PUB II point 5 *by Chris Taylor*

Just kidding.

But we did upgrade the hardware used to run the OPCUG on-line presence – PUB II. We had been running on rather ancient hardware by today's standards. Purchased in the spring of 1998, PUB II hardware was a Pentium MMX running at the blazing speed of 200 MHz. It had 64MB of RAM and a 4GB hard drive. Microsoft donated a copy of Windows NT 4 Workstation. With a 15" monitor, it cost the OPCUG \$1,926.25.

Over the years, it has performed admirably. But recently, the hard drive started making whining noises, which is generally not a good sign. So the Board of Directors decided to replace the 6 year old machine entirely, rather than simply replace the hard disk. This should put us in a good position for the next few years.

The monitor and mouse were the only parts that were salvaged from the old system. Even the keyboard had to be replaced as the old machine used the big 5-pin DIN connector, rather than the newer 6-pin PS2 connector.

The new system has an ASUS motherboard with video, audio and LAN on-board. For the processor, we chose the Intel Pentium 4 running at 2.8GHz. For RAM, we went with 1GB of Kingston memory. For hard disk, we went with a 7200 rpm Western Digital 80 GB drive with an 8MB cache. Add in an ASUS CD-ROM and an LG CD-ReWriter and put it all in an ATX mid-tower case with a 350 watt power supply and we were done.

On the software side of things, we are continuing to run Santronics' WINServer, which provides Web, FTP, Telnet, POP3, NNTP, SMTP, and Listserver all in a nice integrated package. Microsoft kindly donated a copy of Windows XP Professional.

On the old computer, firewalling was provided in software by WinRoute Pro. While software firewalls still work fine, I much

(Continued on page 8)



Mail Server... *(Continued from page 5)*

The next step is where you play God, that is, where you give life and death to email accounts: under the "configuration", select "Manage Local Users...", and then add as many users as you want.

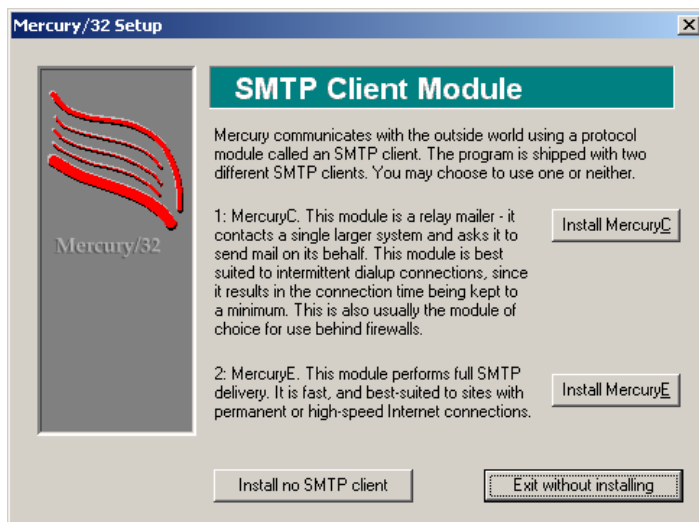
To make things easier to manage, you can then create "Aliases" under the "configuration" menu to redirect all the emails for the

various users to your main email account (remember to send emails using the newly created users name if you don't want to have your main email address revealed).

The final step is to create a new account in your regular email client program to retrieve and send email to/from your new server.

So, now if you get to the site of company X that requires you to enter an email, all you need is to create a new user called companyX, enter an alias for it, and if later you start to get spam, not only will you know where it came from, but also you will be able to terminate that source of spam permanently.

Hasta la vista, Spammers!



INTERNET SIG

Internet Search Engines for Beginners, Part 2

by Eric Clyde, Coordinator of the Internet SIG

Google, Part 2

The first part of this series of articles discussed how search engines work in general, then went on to briefly describe some basic ways in which to use Google to search the world wide web, using keywords and the operators [...and ...], [... - ...] (meaning “not”), and [... OR ...]. Common words such as “if”, “and”, “or”, etc., are not indexed by Google (and thus not directly searchable), but may be taken into account in the results presented either by including the search phrase in quotation marks, [“war or peace”], or by prefacing the word with a “+”, [war +or peace].

But Google has many other search features, a few of which are touched on below:

- Similar pages: When search results are displayed, one of the options presented is “Similar pages”. If only a few results are highly relevant, clicking the button [similar pages] on one of these may lead to better results.
- Thesaurus: If there are many terms for the same concept, e.g. “taxis” OR “limousines” OR “cabs”, they could be searched by inserting “OR” between each, but it is simpler to preface one of the terms with “~”, e.g. [~taxis]. Incidentally, this also equates “taxi” with “taxis”, solving the problem of them being two different search terms.
- Definitions: Use the word “define:” in your search, e.g. [define: USB]. The source of the definition is given as well.
- Calculator: [2456*3523] (where “*” means multiply), [sqrt(456)] (where “sqrt” means square root), and even [half an imperial gallon in litres].
- Phone book for the U.S., and
- Travel information for the U.S. Check the status of flights, air delays, and weather conditions.
- Web page translation: This may give an idea of the content of a page in, e.g. Japanese, but results may be very misleading. Use cautiously!

There are many other features. For a complete list with explanations, go to <http://www.google.com/help/features>.

As well as the help available directly from Google, there are many excellent tutorials available. Chris Taylor has uploaded two of these to the files area of the OPCUG user group. These are:

Google 101: Stop Searching and Start FINDING (1.57 Mb). Sick and tired of looking for information about the Civil War

and ending up with 1,247,672,286 hits for stuff like sheet metal fasteners or naked pictures of Ernest Borgnine? This presentation is for you! In this one hour presentation you'll learn the advanced searching tips and techniques that will help you actually FIND what you are looking for on Google.

(GOOGLE1.ZIP—<http://opcug.ca/file/area35/GOOGLE1.ZIP>).

and

Google 201: Advanced Googology (3.51 Mb). Ready to take your Googling to the next level? Beyond the world of plusses, minuses, and quotes lies a whole universe of secret Google tips, techniques, and tools. This quick, one-hour workshop introduces you to little known Google features like pipes, stop-word workarounds, full-word wildcards, and query modifiers - features that will instantly make you the envy of your friends and the center of attention at cocktail parties.

(GOOGLE2.ZIP—<http://opcug.ca/file/area35/GOOGLE2.ZIP>).

If you don't have PowerPoint, you will have to install the PowerPoint viewer to use these. It can be downloaded without charge from Microsoft. Use [powerpoint viewer] or [powerpoint viewer XP] in Google to easily get to the set.

For those with a PUB II account, it is available in area 68.

(PPVIEWER.EXE—<http://opcug.ca/file/area68/PPVIEWER.EXE>

Future articles in this series will describe a few of the many other search engines, pointing out any special or unique features.

Google website: <http://www.google.ca> or <http://www.google.com>



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 membership:	\$25 per year
Mailing Address:	3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6	
Web address:	http://opcug.ca	
Bulletin board — PUB II (BBS)	http://opcug.ca/default.htm	

President and System Administrator

Chris Taylor chris.taylor@opcug.ca 727-5453

Meeting Coordinator

Bob Gowan bob.gowan@opcug.ca

Treasurer

Alan German alan.german@opcug.ca

Webmaster

Brigitte Lord opcug-webmaster@opcug.ca

Secretary

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer mark.cayer@opcug.ca 823-0354

Newsletter

Brigitte Lord (editor) brigitte.lord@opcug.ca

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca

(e-mail distribution):

Public Relations

Morris Turpin morris.turpin@opcug.ca 729-6955

Historian

Ted May tamay@rogers.com

Facilities

Bob Walker 489-2084

Beginners' and Windows SIG coordinator

Duncan Petrie gdpetr@hotmail.com 841-6119

Internet SIG coordinator

Eric Clyde eclyde@rogers.com 749-2387

Delphi SIG coordinator

Martin Pagnan mpagnan@cyberus.ca

Director without Portfolio

Vince Pizzamiglio vince.pizzamiglio@opcug.ca

Orphans' SIG Coordinator (Interim)

Alan German alan.german@opcug.ca

Developers' SIG

Bob Thomas bobthomas@msn.com

Digital Imaging SIG

Chris Taylor chris.taylor@opcug.ca 727-5453

© OPCUG 2004.

Reprint permission is granted* to non-profit organizations, provided credit is given to the author and *The Ottawa PC News*. OPCUG requests a copy of the newsletter in which reprints appear.

*Permission is granted only for articles written by OPCUG members, and which are not copyrighted by the author.

...PUB II.5 (Continued from page 6)

prefer sticking a hardware device directly behind the DSL router. I happened to have a Linksys BEFW11S4. It is a snap to open just those ports required to operate PUB II and keep everything else shut down tight.

For backup, the old system had an On-Stream tape unit. It had always been a bit of a pain to deal with and over the years I had actually stopped using it except for a once-a-year backup of the entire system. For regular backups, I only worried about the PUB II configuration and data files. I copied those over the network to my machine and then to CD-R for off-site storage.

We added an LG CD-ReWriter to the new computer to make this task simpler. I won't worry about backing up the entire system. In the event of a disaster, I can re-build the system from original media in a matter of a couple of hours and then just copy over the latest backup of the PUB II data and configuration.

The actual transition from the old hardware to the new was accomplished in the early morning hours of February 15th. The transfer went smoothly with no significant problems at all.

The old PUB II computer will be pressed into service as a resource for the Orphan's SIG, where they can feel free to do horrible things with it. One suggestion given by Vince was to see just how far you can over-clock a 200MHz Pentium chip. If you want living proof that computers run on smoke, be sure to attend that session. I guarantee that, as soon as the smoke leaves the CPU, it will not function any more.

The final bill for the new system was \$941.85. In six short years, we bought ourselves fourteen times the clock speed, sixteen times the memory, and twenty times the disk space. For half the money. Thanks to Tim Mahoney for procuring the hardware. And thanks to Microsoft Canada for providing the copy of Windows XP Professional.

