

Antelope Valley Microcomputer Users Group

AVMUG Newsletter

April, 2004

Next AVMUG Meeting:

- *Wed. April 21, 2004*
- *7:00 P.M.*
- *Lancaster Senior Center*
- *777 West Jackman*
- *Lancaster, CA*
- *Information: 661/942-1912*

April Meeting

This month's meeting will feature Mr. Gabriel Michael of A.V. Computer Center Inc. He will give a presentation on "Efficient Web Surfing" and selecting effective updates, Windows operating systems and discuss use of Java & Active-X on your Web browser.

Don't miss this meeting! In fact, bring a friend! You'll both be entertained and informed. See you there.



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AVMUG 661/942-1912

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How to safely troubleshoot your system

As long-term readers of this column are aware, I belong to a number of special interest Yahoo groups. Over the past few months I have been having a problem on several of them opening files. It finally dawned on me that it was with one particular file "server" (for lack of a better word, as I really do not know if it is a real server, a virtual server or a file folder at Yahoo). As Yahoo groups have grown they have been adding areas for storage. They now have f1 to f6. My problem was with f4 files.

Questions submitted to Yahoo Group Help were of no help at all as usual. This area is preprogrammed and will answer questions regardless of whether or not the answer is related to the question you asked. Apparently you are only supposed to have problems that fit in their preconceived program. This was not one of them.

By the way, this is being

written not to show how clever I am at problem solving, but to show an example of how to problem solve. The most important utility to use is the one behind your eyes and between your ears. Before you take any action think carefully, back up, and think again. Then take one step at a time. If you do several at once and it fixes the problem which one was the fix? What can be restored to before the fix?

Back to the task at hand. I did try to view the files using both HAL and Barbie. I received the same error on both; page cannot be displayed at this time. This occurred also in safe mode with networking where no drivers are loaded and most programs are not started. Even turning off all startup items was no help. Accessing the files from my son's computer was successful. This indicated the problem was at my end and not



How to safely troubleshoot your system(continued)

a glitch at Yahoo.

Now it was time to think. Even though both HAL and Barbie are both running Windows XP Pro, they have totally different programs loaded. This included the anti virus programs. So, why the similar results? Then I realized they both use the same router to access the DSL line. The next logical step would be to disconnect the router. Before we do, let us take a look at the rule of unintended consequences. What will happen if we connect to the Internet without the router?

First, my network would go down. No big deal as that is a temporary condition restored with the router reconnected. But, the router also serves as a hardware firewall. This function would be lost, and in today's atmosphere I would never run on the Internet without a firewall, even for a short test. There are just too many flakes out there trying to cause as much damage as possible. So, I made sure my anti virus pro-

gram had the latest updates. I also updated Ad-aware, and Spybot - Search and Destroy. I also enabled the built-in Windows XP software firewall. Then I created a new restore point and also backed up my C drive with V2i Protector. If I did somehow become infected with a worm or Trojan I had a way out. Since there were no other problems that I could see I removed the router and tried to view the files again. Success!

In order to protect the system while continuing to troubleshoot the problem I reinstalled the router. I also disabled the Windows XP firewall, as I really do not like it. It does have its functions however. The next step was to go to the web site of the router manufacturer, D-link, and see what information was available. Although there were no FAQs covering this problem, there was a firmware update. I downloaded the instructions for performing the update.

I printed out the instructions, as the upgrade cannot be accomplished with much else running. This is an online update that requires a reset of the router and a reconfiguration of it. I then reconnected with the web site and updated the firmware. Reset and reconfiguration followed. Now for the moment of truth. I again tried to access the problem files, and could now view them perfectly. I still do not really know why only some files were inaccessible before, but I had the cure. I can only assume that there was something in the address of the section that the router did not like.

I hope I have shown you something about how to proceed with trouble-shooting and about the hidden traps to look out for.

By *Siles Bazerman*, User Group Columnist, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, California

The Editorial Committee of

the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



E-mail is 32 years old

Spring has finally arrived and the winter weather is starting to give way to warm, sunny days. March was the anniversary of Email. Yes, in March of 1972 the very first basic e-mail program was written and the “@” sign was chosen for its “at” meaning. Here it is 32 years later and email is a mainstream means of communication and a normal tool for most businesses and for personal use.

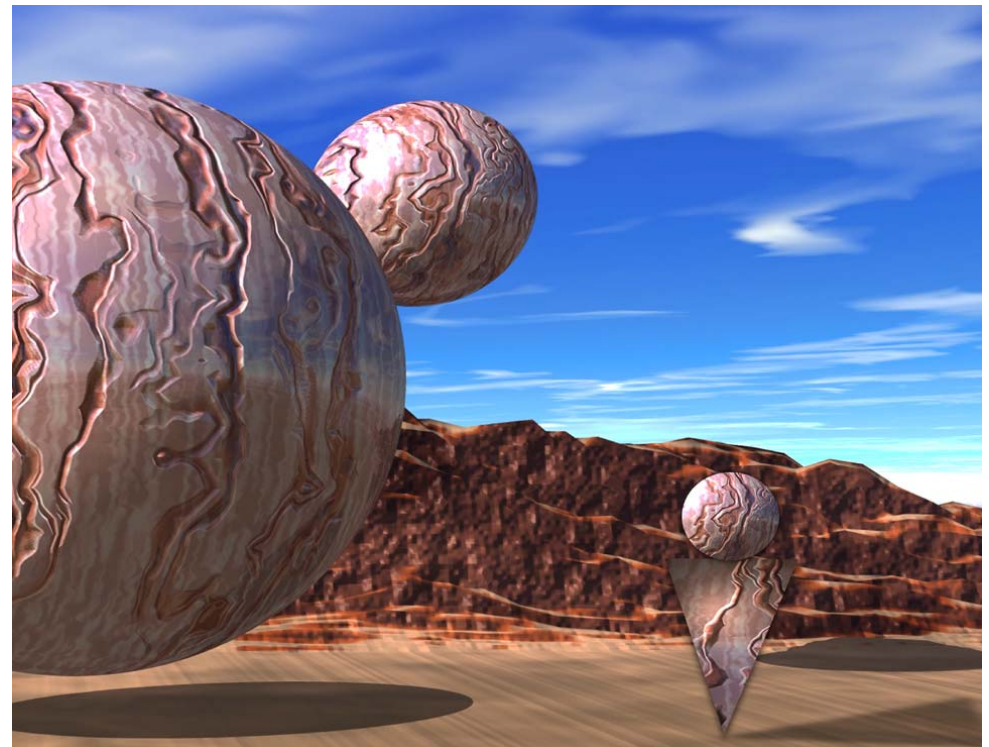
Naturally with this handy mainstream concept comes those wanting to abuse it. I would hope that most of you are aware of some of the tricks and hoaxes that can be offered via email. For the others, I’d like to review some of the more common ones so you won’t be tricked.

First, there are the obvious scams trying to get you to buy endless supplies of gimmicks that promise to make many of your body parts larger or somehow enhanced. Less obvious are sites that promise prescrip-

tion drugs for bargain rates and ones with Hormone Growth solutions, or great mortgages on-line or credit repairs and many others. Much like the snake oil sales team of yesterday, most of these are scams. The occasional one that is legit should also be considered suspect since anyone desperate enough to jump on the wagon with the snake oil sales team is not likely to be around for long enough to deliver anyway. Businesses that use unsolicited commercial email (spam) to sell their products should be viewed with great caution.

Then there are hoaxes that alert you to something that request that you spread it to everyone in your email address book. Any time you get an email that tells you to spread it around, think about it first! Most likely it is a hoax. The most recent one I’ve seen is the one that asks everyone to not buy gasoline from the big producers in order to prove a point. Searching on-line will give plenty of reasons why this is a

farce but it still doesn’t stop people from continuing to send it around. Of course there are plenty of hoaxes around about viruses that will eat your computer unless you send it along to everyone else you know. There are jokes that beg to be sent to everyone and there are emailed chain letters that promise doom and gloom for break-



E-mail is 32 years old (Continued)

ing the cycle. Don't continue to clutter up the email system with these.

Here's something to consider -- if you do what you are told and send these to everyone in your address book, and they turn around and add the addresses from their list, and it goes through that for a while, eventually it will likely land in the hands of someone that will sell all of those email addresses to junk emailers who will delight in sending a huge assortment of get-rich-quick and body enhancing scams to everyone listed. I get enough of those spams without friends adding my email address to those lists.

The other popular email hoax is the endless variation on the Nigerian widow with too much money from her late husband and looking for a trusting American with a bank account ready to enter into a business deal in exchange for a percentage. These scams have been around for longer than email has but, rather than using US

Postal Service and phones to deliver the pitch, email is a much cheaper way to fish for unsuspecting victims.

Speaking of fishing, there is another hoax that is known by its variation, "Phishing". Phishing is when someone tries to get you to divulge credit card or passwords by pretending to be legit. If you get an email from PayPal asking you to "Click Here" and confirm your account info or from Citibank asking you to verify your credit card number, or from eBay asking you to type in your password so they can keep your account active, these phishing trips are hoaxes! Do not fall for them no matter how legit they appear to be. If you are not sure of something like that, be suspicious. Assume first that it is a phishing expedition rather than assuming it is legit. With a keen sense of skepticism, many of these hoaxes will become obvious. They prey on our not thinking too much but just doing as we are asked. Most people that fall for them

are thoroughly embarrassed after it is over because they realized that if they had stopped to think about it they would have realized the absurdity of it. Don't be hooked in a phishing expedition!

So with 32 years of emailing behind us, there are many wonderful things about email and some things to watch out for. I've given you a few of them... it is up to you to stay alert to many of the other ones that are out there. BPMUG is a great resource for those wanting to find out whether something that sounds too good to be true, is true or not. Don't be taken in. Stop to ponder it first and then verify it. Then if you find an amazing deal to get rich quick that you just know will work... Don't share it with me. I probably won't believe it anyway.

Now get out from behind your computers for a few minutes and have a wonderful Spring!

By *Jim Smith*, President,
Business and Professional Mi-

crocomputer Users Group, Inc. (BPMUG), Connecticut

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



President's Corner

I hope Uncle Sam didn't take to big a bite out for taxes. On the bright side, our Poppies should be in bloom, and you might want to get out your digital cameras and make some pictures to enter into the fair.

This month, the club owes special recognition to Talent Pool Member Bob Swank. He designed the logo that the club adopted last month – Thanks Bob.

AVMUG continues to make strides with its webpage. Ray, our Webmaster and Librarian, has done a splendid job adding to the site each month. You may want to frequently check the Computer Tips and Tricks section to keep your PC up to speed.

The Notes section will give you an overview of all the programs on your club CD.

You can also see what other PC Clubs are doing by checking our Links section.

Also linked is our sister club, the Lancaster Photogra-

phy Association, which continues to provide a super Digital Imaging Workshop, which many of our members attend.

The ePubs section will take you to our newsletters, where you can look up the hardware, software, and other pertinent PC articles.

In the future, we will add the Members Only section, which will be password protected, and be especially useful when our PC workgroups form in May.

Ray also has plans to add a classified section so you can sell or buy PC items.

If you have any other suggestions, or would like to help on our projects, please contact me at president@avmug.av.org

Bob Lion



Photograph courtesy of member Dick Thompson