

W N N E R S

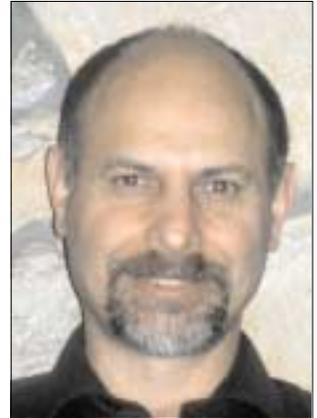
Wotepad

WINDOWS USERS JULY 2004

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One of those days 2 (“too”)



By Terry Currier

Comdex Is History

Comdex was inflated, owners were arrogant, and since 1998, it was clear the show was destined to fall into the bit bucket.

By Steve Bass, PC World; Author, PC Annoyances.

In a downward spiral for the last five years, Comdex is finally kaput. The show owners declared it dead when they cancelled the November, 2004, event. Many of you have been attending Comdex since close to forever, and most of you knew the show was destined to fall into the bit bucket.

Good riddance. In the last few years, the show's become an empty shell of its previous life. So much so that room prices on the Strip were as

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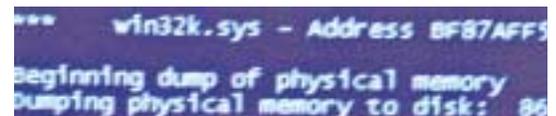
Okay, I settled the problems with my computer. Well, sort of—it does still lock up. I brought a new computer. I decided I was in a losing fight and to move on. I started to look around at prices from the usual places such as Office Depot, Costco, Fry's, Best Buy, and Micro Center. I also checked into Dell, and gave up on them. The price was not bad, but they had a delay of five weeks for getting a unit. Add to that the power supply was a mere 200 watts, and I looked elsewhere.

I checked out Compuxress, a computer store near me that always has a booth at the ACP swapmeet and has been around for a while. I brought a 3.0GHz with 512MB of RAM, 160GB hard drive, DVD, a 5800 nVidia (clone) video card with 128MB, Firewire card, a media reader, and a 420 watt power supply. I already had Windows XP Pro so I did not buy that from them. They had it ready for me the next day. When I picked it up, he told me he actually put in a 480-watt power supply and a serial hard drive. Cool, I thought.

Now I'm ready to start adding programs on the new computer.

That's odd, I thought...in going through the Windows XP install, it locked up. I figured I must have done something wrong. Yet, while installing other programs I will use, I kept getting the blue screen of death. Okay, something is wrong here. It gives the blue screen and starts the dump to physical memory on the disk. There is more than one message, but the first one I took care of was a problem with NTFS.SYS. It may have become corrupted during the install when it crashed. The fix was simply renaming the file and copying a good file from the installing CD. A reboot and that problem was gone.

The other problem, and most common, was WIN32K.SYS and



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Telephone Help Line

PROGRAM/SOFTWARE	NAME	PHONE	TIME
CompuServe	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
CorelDraw 5	George Margolin	949-645-5950	Most times
CorelDraw & Ventura & PhotoPaint	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends
Hardware	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Internet	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Novell, NT & Networking	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Quicken & Quickbooks	Max Lockie	949-720-8170	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Windows 95,98,Me,Xp	Siles Bazerman	714-897-2868	9 a.m.-8 p.m.
Word for Windows	Cathy Grammar-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
WordPerfect Windows	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends

**General Meeting July 10
Orange Coast College
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
in Science Room #149**

FREECOM

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PURPOSE

WINNERS, a computer association, is a volunteer organization providing a forum for sharing information and experiences related to Windows-based software, encouraging ethical use of computers and software, and offering service to our communities.

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership is \$20.00 for individuals; \$5.00 each additional family member.

MEETINGS

WINNERS generally meets the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Orange Coast College in the Science Building, Room #149, 2701 Fairview, Costa Mesa.

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FUTURE MEETING DATES

- ★ July 10
- ★ August 14
- ★ September 11
- ★ October 9

President's Message

By Steven Dela

As we enter the summer months, many members are on vacation and meeting turnout is sometimes low. However, that does not mean our programs presented and our Q&A sessions are not interesting and enlightening. Terry Currier manages to find knowledgeable and informative presenters for members to enjoy each month. Thanks Terry!

At the June Board of Directors meeting, we discussed our need for high-speed Internet access during our meetings. We've spoken with the college community service department and found that no high-speed access is available for public use at the college, and none is planned. We feel that high-speed access is essential and would add much to our speaker's presentations and our Q&A sessions.

With that in mind, we decided to look for a meeting facility that has high-speed access and would meet our needs for member participation and access. We looked into the Orange County regional libraries and found that wireless high-speed will be installed in about 10 months time. We were looking for something a little sooner, so our search continues. If you know someplace that offers high-speed access and can accommodate our meeting requirements, let any of the board members know your ideas.

On the technical side, updated and faster versions of DVD writers have been released. Sony released their new dual layer DVD writer in June. Some drawbacks are the cost the dual layer disks (\$15) and a backward playing compatibility with DVD players. A hardware fix is due sometime in the near future. Sony has also just released a 12X +R writer (DRU540A). Like the Plextor 12X writer, only certain 8X media can be used after 12X rate.

It was officially announced in late June that Comdex 2004 was canceled. This is not a surprise to many of us who attended the Comdex 2003 show. Organizers of the show said they needed more time to address some problems and the show should reappear in 2005. There was already movement underfoot by many computer and software companies to display at the Consumer Electronics Show that runs in early January in Las Vegas. The show has become what Comdex used to be.

Be sure to attend the next general meeting on July 10, and share your tips and tricks with other members. See you there.

Steve

COMDEX IS HISTORY

Continued from page 1

low as \$50 a night during Comdex week in 2003.

The problem was I couldn't *not* attend. Even though I didn't enjoy myself and couldn't find lots of really nifty products to write about, I still drove in from Pasadena and stayed for two nights. Call it nostalgia. Or maybe I was just hoping there would be one more chance that Comdex would get back on its feet.

But nope, it's really over.

Dig Into the Files

I dug around and found some of the Comdex missives I sent in the last few years.

December, 1998: Comdex is toast. It's fading rapidly and while it'll always be with us, it's never going to be "bigger than ever."

I polled lots of people and all agreed. The attendance was dismally low. Softbank's claim of 250K attendees was a lie. It was based on registrations—not attendees—something made lots easier because the normal \$100 "Exhibits Only" fee was waived when you registered on Softbank's Internet site.

My best sources are the cabbies, and all emphatically said 60K to 90K tops. And it was easy to see. I never had to wait more than five minutes for a cab. Ever. Even at 5:00 p.m. Parties weren't well attended. In fact, for the first time ever, there was actually walking-around room at the exclusive Spencer party.

Iomega was back promoting their Klik gizmo. But wait, weren't they doing that last year? And Castlewood was pushing their 2.2GB ultra SCSI removable storage disk that wouldn't ship until next summer.

The quality of the show was also disappointing. The Sands was filled mostly with OEM stuff—lots of system boards, drives, memory checking devices, and other boring equipment. Joe Bohannon nailed the entire Sands Convention Center in five hours,

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something that ordinarily takes a day and a half.

I couldn't even find anything very inspirational.

For instance, Creative Labs had a second generation Live sound card. Wow. Sure, there were some booths with interesting things—wireless networking was cool, as was HP's Jornada, their oddly named sub-notebook—and I found a few products to write about. But overall, I could've done just as well surfing the web.

Why has Comdex slowed down? Simple: Games went to E3, anything about the Web went to Internet World, and e-commerce apps also needed their own specialized trade shows.

Worse, it appears Softbank's jacked up the price on everything. That's happened before, but my hunch is vendors aren't going to take it much longer. (That happened to the Food Show when Pepsi and Coke pulled out, literally destroying the event. And Deere, the largest exhibitor of the Machinery Show, left the show high and dry when told they'd be charged double—the new policy put them into both agriculture and machinery.)

At Comdex, the newly remodeled Las Vegas Convention center was missing Intel, IBM, and other big vendors. The Lotus exhibit consisted of a bus in the parking lot with a box of Winchell's donuts on the table. One of the Lotus reps said this is their last Comdex.

On the exhibit floor, the Japanese companies were slugging it out, with Sony and Samsung making lots of noise, each trying to impress the other. Phillips created a small, loud

city, and Microsoft was in their corner with more vendors than spectators.

Me? At \$329 a day for the hotel room and the five days lost...I dunno. It may also be my last Comdex.

October, 2000: Comdex is struggling. That's because most other trade shows specialize while Comdex tried to cater to everyone. Funny, in the past Comdex charged an outrageous \$100 for admission just to the exhibit floor. This year they're offering a free exhibits pass. (Too bad the hotels haven't caught on to this trick...) This is my last Comdex, for sure.

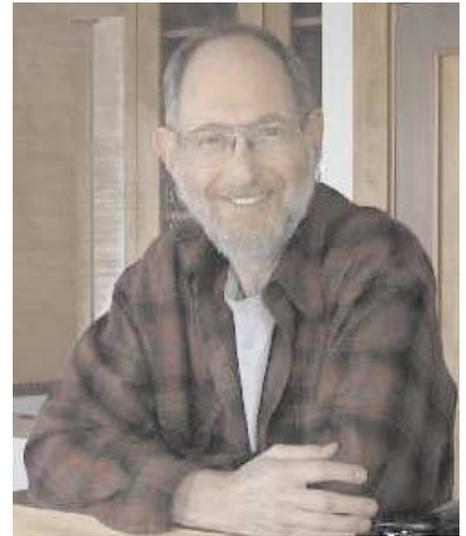
December, 2001: The Comdex mood this year was all business, with somber overtones. Journalists clustered around in small groups, talking about layoffs, and concerned with the dozens of freelancers gone missing. Lots of PR people didn't make it to Comdex; many of those who did were kvetching about having to share sleeping rooms with colleagues.

I don't know that I'll be back next year. While the exhibit floor didn't have the sizzling array of

"It's bad. In 1998, the Lotus exhibit consisted of a bus in the parking lot with a box of Winchell's donuts on the table..."

products I saw at previous Comdexes, like last year, the place to be was the evening press events: Showstoppers, Digital/mobile Focus, and Silicon Northwest.

December, 2003: Sleeping rooms are under \$60. The show floor at the Convention center has lots of curtains and barriers to make it look as if there are lots of vendors. The aisles are narrow so it feels crowded. There are practically no big vendors, except for Microsoft, and even their exhibit is small.



Steve Bass

I've said it every year, but this time I really mean it. This is *definitely* the last Comdex I'm going to attend. (And I'll see some of you at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, 2005!)

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23-year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press. It's available on Amazon for \$7.98 at <http://snurl.com/annoyances>



with IRQL_NOT_LESS_OR_EQUAL. I know there are those saying that they would have just taken the computer back right away. Remember, though, I installed the operating system and wanted to prove (or figure out) what the problem was. Besides, taking it back right away wouldn't teach me anything, and is not as much fun.

I really felt it had to do something with the RAM. I checked on Google.com for a memory tester. Yes, I also looked for a free program. Guess what? I found one, and it was from Microsoft (yes, that Microsoft). I downloaded it from

After downloading the file and double-clicking, it asks if you want to create a startup floppy or create an bootable CD image on the hard drive. You then insert the disk into the drive of the computer to test and reboot.

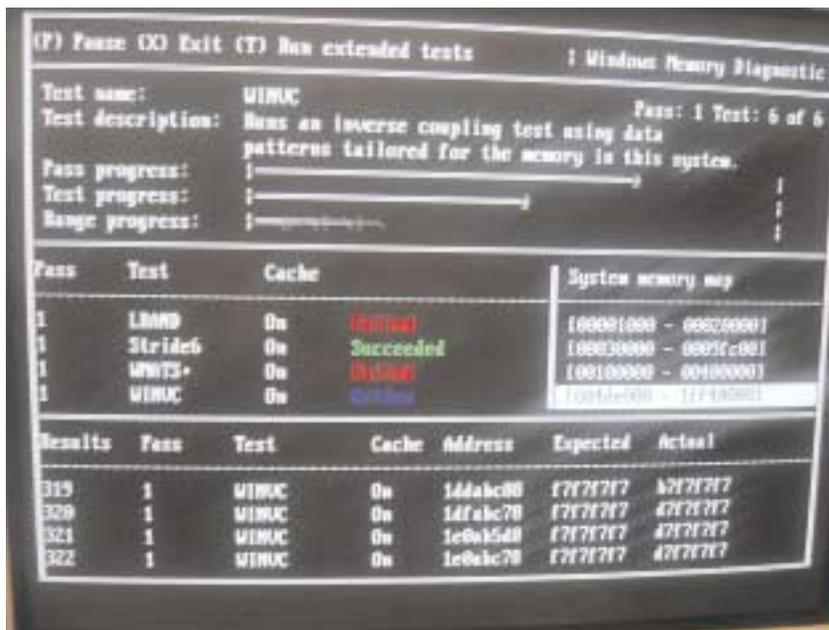
This description is from the Microsoft webpage: "The Windows Memory Diagnostic tests the Random Access Memory (RAM) on your computer for errors. The diagnostic includes a comprehensive set of memory tests. If you are experiencing problems

while running Windows, you can use the diagnostic to determine whether the problems are caused by failing hardware, such as RAM or the

memory system of your motherboard."

The results showed the memory to have failed. I took it back to the store and they replaced the memory strip and checked it out. They also found a conflict with the Firewire card and replaced that. Since then, I have had no problems.

By the way, I did also run the memory test on my old system, but it passed as I figured it would. I will probably get a new motherboard and use it for my reviews.



Southwest User Group Conference

The 11th Annual Southwest Computer User Group Conference will be held from Friday evening, August 6, through Sunday, August 8, at the Hilton Hotel-Mission Valley in San Diego, CA. Activities will include: workshops on Saturday and Sunday; vendor-sponsored presentations & meals; a Vendor Faire; numerous prize drawings; as well as up close and personal time with participating vendors. In addition, attendees will receive a T-shirt and Welcome Bag.

Attendees will have an opportunity to interface with user group leaders having similar interests to share ideas and experiences, as well as solutions to problems.

The conference began with 45 attendees and has grown to over 250 in 2003, representing 62 user groups.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEE - \$40.00*

Includes

- Admittance to all Workshops & Vendor Fair
- 6 Meals
- Breaks
- T-shirt
- Welcome Bag

Registration deadline is:

- *July 16 - \$40.00
- July 23 - \$50.00
- July 24 through start of conference - \$60.00

For registration info, contact Judy@swugconf.org

Getting to Know



By Billy Mabray
Oklahoma City PC Users Group

These days, whether you consciously choose it or not, your Web search engine is probably Google.

<http://www.google.com>

That's because most search sites, whether they admit it or not, are powered by Google. And, why not? Google rose to the top of the search engines because its formula provided more relevant search results than any other. Also, its deceptively simple page makes it fast and easy to use.

I say deceptively simple because, underneath that friendly, colorful logo is a powerful search system that can accept queries as complex as you want to make them. Many people don't realize that if they do not find what they want on the first try, there are techniques they can use to improve their results. There are also ways to search Google that are more appropriate for certain specialty queries. And, Google is hiding a few extras that take it beyond a search engine into an amazing reference tool.

Let's start with an example. We're cooking dinner tonight, and we need a recipe for spaghetti sauce that does not use sugar. We might go to Google and type in this:

no sugar spaghetti sauce recipe

Google tells us we have about 56,000 results to wade through. A daunting task, considering the first page doesn't seem to contain anything relevant. The first thing we will try is grouping our search terms into phrases, using double-quotes. This tells Google that certain words should be searched for together. So, we try this:

"no sugar" "spaghetti sauce" recipe

That certainly narrowed things down, didn't it? This is a good technique to use when your search contains a lot of common words that could appear together in different contexts than what you are looking for. Unfortunately in this case, our first page of results is still not as relevant as we would like. The next thing we will try is searching for pages that do not contain a certain term:

-sugar "spaghetti sauce" recipe

This tells Google that we want pages that are about "spaghetti sauce" recipe, but specifically do not contain the term sugar. That seems to have done it. Our first page of results is chock full of spaghetti sauce recipes that don't use sugar. "Subtracting" a term can also be useful when what you are searching for has multiple meanings. For example, if you are researching the "Holy Grail," you might want to add "Python" to your search to eliminate all the references to the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

Now, maybe spaghetti sauce is too specific—we might want to also consider marinara sauce. In that case, we use Google's or syntax:

-sugar ("spaghetti | marinara) sauce" recipe

When there are multiple words that will satisfy our search, we can group them with parentheses and separate them with the "pipe" character—a vertical line that is most likely on the right-hand side of your keyboard. Google will then search for references to "spaghetti sauce" or "marinara sauce."

At this point, we've become so intrigued by what we can find with Google, we've completely forgotten about dinner. Now we are interested in just how many different chicken

casserole recipes we can find.

Here's one way:

"chicken *casserole" recipe

Notice the asterisk. This is called a wildcard. It tells Google that we don't care what word comes between chicken and casserole, but there should be something there. This can be particularly useful when you know most of a title of something, but are unsure of all the words. This particular search brings back all kinds of chicken casserole recipes. Something tells me we better just eat out tonight.

Besides its standard Web search, Google has many specialty searches that are triggered either by a keyword or simply by what you are searching for. For example:

site:microsoft.com "Internet Explorer" patches

This searches for references to "Internet Explorer" patches on microsoft.com only. If your favorite Web site does not offer a search function, this is a pretty good substitute.

Maybe we want to know which sites on the Web link to the OKC PC User's Group Web site:

link:okcpcug.org

We can also tell Google that what we are looking for is in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file:

filetype:pdf refrigerator manual

Google pays attention to what you are searching for, and offers helpful services based on what it thinks you want. For example, have you ever noticed Google shows your search words in the blue bar above your results? The search terms that are underlined link to a definition of that word at dictionary.com. If you spell a word wrong, Google will prompt you with the correct spelling

and ask if you would like to search for that instead.

Google has many tricks like this up its sleeves. Search for a phone number, and Google will do a reverse lookup on the number. Search for a name with a city and state and/or zip code, and Google will look up their phone number. Search for an address and you will get links to maps of that location. Include a zip code with your search terms, and Google will offer you local results—Web sites for locations near the zip code, ordered by distance. You can even type in a shipment tracking number, and Google will figure out who the shipping company is and give you a link to the tracking information.

Google offers some services that have nothing to do with searching. Try this:

$68.12 + (68.12 * .2)$

The Google calculator will return the result of this computation. Fun, although, admittedly, not particularly useful. The Google calculator can be useful though, for things like conversions:

68mm = ? inches

You can do all kinds of conversions using Google—a handy tool whenever you get around to making that spaghetti sauce.

Google is much more useful than most people realize. We've only scratched the surface of what Google can do. If you are interested in more, check out *Hacking Google* by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest. It includes many more search tips, and information for programmers who want to include Google search results in their applications. As you explore what Google can do, you will probably discover that Google feels like more than just a Web site.

In fact, Google is your friend.

Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a local software development and web design business. They are members of the OKPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: billy@smartgoat.com.

Whither the Yellow Box?

By Moe Norris, Topeka PC Users Club, Kansas

Eastman Kodak Company, an icon in the photographic industry for more than 100 years, dropped a bombshell last September when it announced that the company would shift its focus from film and film-based products to *digital* equipment and processes! And it has resolutely continued down that path. In January 2004 the company announced that by the end of this year it would no longer be selling re-loadable film based 35mm cameras, including APS models, in the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe. The “throw away” (i.e., one-time use) cameras will be the only Kodak film camera available in the west. The number of different films provided to retailers will be reduced, concentrating on just the most popular lines. Production of its Carousel film projectors was scheduled to cease the end of 2003.

Kodak said that it plans to continue providing 35mm cameras in emerging markets, such as China, India, Eastern Europe and Latin America, and will introduce six new film cameras in those markets this year. It predicts rapidly growing markets for cameras and film in those countries, in contrast to what is being seen in the west where the demand for film-related products is shrinking much more rapidly than anticipated, while purchases of digital cameras continue to grow dramatically. Kodak's array of digital cameras now extends from point and shoot consumer models to high-end professional (read very expensive) digital cameras and camera backs. It will increase its production of inkjet printing papers, and plans to introduce a new line of consumer ink jet printer models to go head-to-head with the well-established offerings from HP, Epson, Lexmark, etc.

Kodak's landmark shift in focus represents a profound change for the world's largest filmmaker, and a huge gamble. The success of the move remains uncertain. Just when Kodak needs increasing film revenues to underwrite the costs (in the billions) of this transition, film sales are dropping substantially.

Since 1997 Kodak has reduced its workforce by more than 30,000 jobs. Another 15,000 jobs will be eliminated in the next two years in a further effort to reduce costs.

Success is not a given. If fortune does not smile on Kodak, then not only may the Yellow Box disappear, but the company itself may go down the same

path—and it won't be a Yellow Brick Road!



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.

July 10 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Orange Coast College

Science Building Room #149



Dave Glassman from Freecom coming to show us their great USBCard flash drives, CD/DVD, and external hard drives. Their Classic DVD +/-RW writer is less than two inches in height. It is a DVD 8x writer / recorder, connects with USB 2.0.

You may have heard that the 8.5GB double layer drives are starting to come out. Well, Freecom has their internal Hi-Speed DVD +/-RW double layer drive. It records up to 16 hours of video on a single double layer disc. External hard drives include USB 2.0 their classic 160GB, or look at the FHD-XS 40GB. The XS is the world's smallest mobile hard drive (1,8" hard drive). They include a SYNC function for one button data synchronization, and Acronis True Image software.

The Freecom USBCard is a flash drive the size of a credit card, and not much thicker. It comes in 128, 256, 512 megabyte (MB), and 1 gigabyte (GB) capacity. There is a convenient push-out connector, and comes with password protection software.

Anyone renewing or joining at the meeting will get a disc with great software Terry has checked out.

***PIG SIG: After the meeting we will go to Mimis
on the corner of Harbor and Newport Blvd.***

