President's Note

April 2014
Recap of the 2014 Trenton Computer Festival
Michael P. Redlich, ACGNJ

I hope you had a chance to attend this year's annual Trenton Computer Festival (TCF) on Saturday, March 15 and/or the TCF IT Professional Conference on Friday, March 14 at The College of New Jersey in Ewing, NJ.

I was pleased with this year's attendance as there was a constant flurry of activity in the hallways of the Education Building where the talks, keynote address, and vendor fair were held. In a world where computer show attendance is not what it was 20 years ago, it was good to see the attendance at this year's show. The TCF Steering Committee has worked hard to generate a suite of talks to focus on the **Multimedia in a Post-PC World** theme. The tracks on **Robotics**, **Mobile Computing**, and **Arduino Workshop** along with the talks on **Google Glass**, the **Android Workshop** (both by our own Barry Burd) and **Python and Raspberry Pi** (by our

http://www.acgnj.org

Founded 1975

This newsletter was made by *100% pure* Linux!
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ACGNJ Meetings

For the very latest news on ACGNJ meetings, please visit the ACGNJ Website (*www.acgnj.org*).

Board of Directors Meeting: Tues, April 1, 7 PM
   Mike Redlich (president (at) acgnj.org)

Main Meeting: Friday, April 4. 8:00 PM
   Mike Redlich (president (at) acgnj.org)

Lunics (Linux/UNIX): Monday, April 7, 8 PM
   Andreas Meyer (lunics (at) acgnj.org)

C/C++: Tuesday, April 8, 7:30 PM
(Note: C/C++ and Java switched meeting dates).
   Bruce Arnold (barnold (at) ieee.org)

Mobile Devices: Wednesday, April 9, 7:30 PM
   Brenda Bell (mobdevsig (at) acgnj.org)

Investing: Thursday, April 10, 8:00 PM
   Jim Cooper (jim (at) thecoopers.org).

NJ Gamers: Friday, April 11, **6**:00 PM
   Gregg McCarthy (greggmajestic (at) gmail.com)

Layman's Forum: Monday, April 14, 8:00 PM
   Matt Skoda (som359 (at) gmail.com)

Java: Tuesday, April 15, 7:30 PM
(Note: Java and C/C++ switched meeting dates).
   Mike Redlich (mike (at) redlich.net)

Window Pains: Friday, April 18, 8:00 PM
   John Raff (john (at) jraff.com)

Web Browser: Monday, April 21, 7:30 PM
   David McRitchie (firefox (at) acgnj.org)

Board of Directors Meeting: Tues, Apr 29, 7 PM
   Mike Redlich (president (at) acgnj.org)

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave, Scotch Plains, New Jersey. Directions and map on last page. 💻

In This Issue

Officers, Directors and Leaders

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Layman's Forum	Matthew Skoda	(908) 359-8842	Financial	Evan Williams	(908) 359-8070
LUNICS	Andreas Meyer		Historian	Lenny Thomas	
Mobile Devices	Brenda Bell		Membership	Bob Hawes	
NJ Gamers	Gregg McCarthy		Newsletter	Bob Hawes	
Web Browser	David McRitchie		Publicity	Gregg McCarthy	
WebDev	Evan Williams	(908) 359-8070	Trenton Computer Fest	Mike Redlich	(908) 246-0410
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ACGNJ News

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Submissions: Articles, reviews, cartoons, illustrations. Most common formats are acceptable. Graphics embedded in the document must also be sent as separate files. E-mail submissions to newsletter@acgnj.org preferred. **Always confirm**. Date review and include name of word processor used, your name, address and phone and name, address and phone of manufacturer, if available.

Tips for reviewers: Why does anyone need it? Why did you like it or hate it? Ease (or difficulty) of installation, learning and use. Would you pay for it?

Advertising: Non-commercial announcements from members are free. Commercial ads 15 cents per word, $5 minimum. Camera ready display ads: Full page (7 x 10 inches) $150, two-thirds page (4.5 x 10) $115, half-page $85, one-third $57, quarter $50, eighth $30. Discount 10% on 3 or more consecutive insertions. Enclose payment.

Publication Exchange: Other computer user groups are invited to send a subscription to ACGNJ at the address below. We will respond in kind.

Address Changes should be e-mailed to *membership@acgnj.org* or sent to ACGNJ at the address below.

Membership: Regular (now includes *all* family members who reside at the same address): 1 year $25, 2 years $40, 3 years $55. Student: 1 year $20. Senior Citizen (over 65): 1 year $20, 3 years $45. Send name, address and payment to ACGNJ, PO Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076.

Typographic Note: This ACGNJ News was produced using Scribus 1.3.3.13. Font families used are Times New Roman (TT) for body text, Arial (TT) for headlines.

E-Mail Addresses

Here are the e-mail addresses of ACGNJ Officers, Directors and SIG Leaders (and the Newsletter Editor). This list is also at (*http://www.acgnj.org/officers.html*).

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own "Wild Bill" Brutzman), were a move in that direction. Even the keynote address by Joe Salvo was on the **Internet of Things**.

Barry's **Android Workshop** had 13 attendees, and his **Google Glass** talk was extremely well attended. It was reported that there were **79** attendees! For his debut TCF presentation, **Python and Raspberry Pi**, "Wild Bill" had 38 attendees. I am always amazed how my C++ talks continue to be well-attended. It's nice to see there is still interest in a language that is approaching 30 years old!

I was happy to present two Hobbyist-of-the-Year awards this year. The first was made at the end of the day on Saturday and before the banquet to the 2013 honoree, Bob Hawes (yes, our own newsletter editor), who couldn't attend the banquet last year or this year. Then, at this year's banquet, I presented the award to the 2014 honoree, Keith Sproul.

Please mark your calendars for TCF 2015 - March 14, 2015, a more true Pi Day (31415). I look forward to once-again serve on the TCF Steering Committee and present all of my talks! ⌨

At the TCF Banquet, Mike Redlich (left) presented Keith Sproul (center) with the 2014 Hobbyist of the Year Award (right). *Photos by Eric Hafler.*

Earlier in the day, Mike presented Bob Hawes (right) with the 20<u>13</u> Hobbyist of the Year Award. *Photo by Wendy Bell.*

ACGNJ Announcements

Main Meeting

Friday, April 4, 2014, 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM
Scheduled Topic: Geocaching Event.
Scheduled Speakers: Don McBride & Frank Warren. ⌨

Window Pains Meeting

Friday, April 18, 2014, 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM.
Scheduled Topic: Getting Started with Meteor.
Scheduled Speaker: Mike Redlich. ⌨

ACGNJ Mini-Reports

Java Users Group Report
Mike Redlich, ACGNJ

At the Tuesday, March 11, 2014 Java Users Group meeting, there were seven (7) attendees. Paul Furbacher presented "Designing and Implementing RESTful Web Services with Spring." Paul demonstrated the web services offered by the Spring Framework complete with a source code review.

This was most-likely Paul's last meeting with the Java Users Group as he and his family are relocating to Boston. Paul attended a total of 96 meetings and presented at 15 of them. He was indeed a very active member of the group.

He will indeed be missed. 🖳

Main Meeting Report
Mike Redlich, ACGNJ

On Friday, March 7, 2014,, we held our monthly Main Meeting, with 6 persons attending. Our topic was "Mobile Medical Devices", presented by Brenda Bell. Her presentation was indeed very informative and included demonstrations of medical device apps on her personal cell phones. 🖳

Window Pains Report
Bob Hawes, ACGNJ

Our March 21 Window Pains Meeting was hosted by Donald McBride, whose topic was "Vintage Computer Meeting Workshop & My Web Page". We had 7 people in attendance, and we learned a lot. Don sent us an e-mail of his handout for this event, which we've reproduced directly below. 🖳

Handout From Don McBride
(Reproduced as best we can)

Here's the handout from last nights presentation.
There's more information at *http://donsnotes.com/tech/computers/history.html*

First popular personal computer - Altair 8800 - 1975

First portable - Osborne 1 - 1981

First popular laptop -
Radio Shack TRS-80 Model 100 - 1983

First popular graphical interface -
Macintosh - 1984

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Model	Year	Price	CPU	RAM	Display	Media	OS
Apple II	1977	$1,298 (4K)[3]	1 MHz MOS 6502	4K	280 X 192, 40 X 24 text	5-1/4" Floppy 143K each	Woz Integer BASIC
IBM PC	1981	$1,565.	4.77 MHz 8088	64K	24 lines of 80 characters 320x200	5-1/4" Floppy 160K each	PC DOS
Osborne OCC 2	1983	$1,995	4.0 MHZ Z80A	124K	6" 24 lines of 80 characters [1]	5-1/4" Floppy 91K each	CP/M
TRS-80 Model 100	1983	$1,099 (8K)	2.4 MHz Intel 80C85	8K & 24K	8 lines, 40 characters (240x54 pixels)	none	custom
Original Mac	1984	$2,495[2]	8 MHz 68000	128K	9 in 512×342 pixel (72 ppi)	40K 3.5" floppy	Mac OS 1.0-3.2
Mac Classic	1990	$999	8 MHz 68000	2 MB	9 in 512×342 pixel (72 ppi)	40 MB HD, 1.44MB 3.5" floppy	Mac OS 6.0-7.5.5
Nexus 7 tablet	2013	$229	Quad core, 1.5 GHz, Krait	2 GB	7 in 1920x1200 pixel (323 ppi)	16 GB or 32 GB internal flash	Android 4.4

1. Osborne has an RCA output jack for an external monitor.
2. Original 1984 Macintosh was $2,495 ($5,555 in 2012 dollars).
3. 48K Apple II was $2,638.

ACGNJ Investment Meeting SUMMARY (Mar. 13, 2014)
Philip Lees, ACGNJ

We had a great March meeting on Thursday, 3/13/2014 and we had **15** attendees in total. Again, there was a lot of interaction with the presenters, loads of questions and interesting discussions, which makes for excellent meetings.

John Valentine started with a presentation of some interesting features available on Google Finance, which is another great financial resource tool. A lot of this is similar to Yahoo Finance, which is how I tend to use it, too, but it also has some Google-specific charts on Google searches. This generated a lot of questions and discussion, which was great.

Ernest Andalcio did an impromptu presentation and discussion on the dough.com website and platform from tastytrade.com. The dough.com interface is an incredibly nice visual representation of options trades with probabilities of expiring OTM, probabilities of profit etc. This brief presentation generated a lot of interest and discussion, too, because of the easy-to-read visual representation of the option trades.

We then had pizza, loads of trading questions, a lot of fun and a very nice evening. Thanks to everybody who attended.

Once again, please attend the meetings, everybody learns from them. We hope to see you at April's meeting, **4/10/2014**. Thank you.

Philip Lees

Distros Revisited (Part 1)

Bob Hawes, ACGNJ

Note: A Distro is a Linux Distribution. (Also note that, as I'll explain in more detail further below, it took me about **six months** to prepare and write this article. Translated into Distro time, that's an eternity. While some of the text below is new, a lot of it is, shall we say,"just a **tiny** bit out of date"; but we'll proceed as best we can). More than eight and a half years ago, I was in our clubroom, and I witnessed an event that literally "changed my life". I described it in the very *first* paragraph of the very *first* article that I wrote for this newsletter (*Linux Dual Boot Experiments*, in our May 2005 issue). Here's what I said:

"Last month, John Raff ran into some difficulty while adding a Linux dual boot option (in this case, Fedora Core 3) to the club computer. Now, I've got years of computer experience, but I'm a Linux newbie, so I wasn't any help. I could only watch from the sidelines as he wrestled with GRUB (the FC3 bootloader). Of course, John finally got the

computer to work the way he wanted, but not before he gave me an idea. He had to be very careful not to do any damage to the club's existing XP SP2 system, but I can recklessly and irresponsibly blow out all the hard drives I want, and that's exactly what I decided to do**"**. Now for a slight digression:

In a few recent articles, I've mentioned that, for several years in the late eighties and early nineties, I used my good old DOS desktop publisher to create a snail-mail newsletter for the Bayonne Train Club. There, I edited articles written by other people, and I wrote my own articles as well. (See *Forgotten Secrets From The Ancient Past* in our August 2010 issue for a fairly good overview of my activities during those long lost days of yore). However, after that newsletter "bit the dust", I pretty much dropped the idea of writing for publication. If that experience watching John hadn't inspired me to perform my own dual boot experiments **and then to write about them**, I almost certainly **wouldn't** be editing this

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newsletter (or writing, at last count, 116 articles for it) today.

OK. Let's get down to business. I made my permanent move to Linux in 200<u>9</u>. I chose Ubuntu, and I was quite happy with it. Until, that is, the Ubuntu developers had an attack of Gates-like behavior, and tried to force me to switch to the Unity desktop. Now, I really, *really*, **really**, **REALLY**, **<u>REALLY</u>** don't like the Unity desktop, so that wasn't an option as far as I'm concerned. In *Revenge of the 13 Things* (my article in our April 20<u>13</u> issue), I described how I managed to keep Unity away from my boot hard disk until April of 20<u>15</u>. If the Ubuntu developers haven't come to their senses by then, I'll have to find another Linux distribution for my own personal use. So I'd better start looking for candidates **now!**

Therefore, I did exactly the same as I did in 2005: I went to *www.distrowatch.com* and looked at their Page Hit Ranking list. (Since they track by "hits-per-day", averaged over the previous six months, these aren't necessarily the most downloaded releases, but

they *are*, at least, the most looked-at). The top five were: Mint, Debian, Ubuntu, Mageia and Fedora. In 2005, Ubuntu was number 2, Fedora was number 3 and Debian was number 6. (Mint wasn't started until 2006. Mageia didn't exist in 2005, either; but it's descended from Mandriva, which is in turn descended from Mandrake, which was number **<u>one</u>** in 2005).

Since Ubuntu is off my list by definition, what could I replace it with? Well, in 2005 MEPIS was number 4. Now it's number 75 (out of **297**); but it's still the highest ranking of my original distro picks that's **not** on our current list. Plus, it's my sentimental favorite. This goes back to 2005, when I ran its version 3.3 live/install CD for the **very first time**. A feeling of euphoria swept over me, and I thought; "This is it! We can do it! We can send Microsoft to the Scrap Heap of History!" Surely such a profound emotional experience warrants a second look. (Anybody who thought "Don't call me Shirley" should be ashamed of themselves).

In 2005, SUSE was number 5. Right now,

openSUSE is number 7. Normally, that would give it precedence over MEPIS. Unfortunately, as I'm writing this, it's next release is scheduled for *one month* in the future. Thus, for the moment, MEPIS gets the number five slot. If this article still *isn't* finished when that next release of openSUSE comes out (as it **very** likely won't be), I'll probably *keep* MEPIS and add an extra sixth slot for openSUSE. So (for now, at least), ranked in "hits-per-day" order, the downloads for my first group of candidates are:

linuxmint-15-mate-dvd-32bit.iso (1.1 GB)
debian-live-7.0.0-i386-gnome-desktop.iso (1.3 GB)
Mageia-3-LiveDVD-GNOME-i586-DVD.iso   (1.4 GB)
Fedora-Live-Desktop-i686-19-1.iso (919.0 MB)
SimplyMEPIS-1.5G_11.9.92_32.iso (1.4 GB)

Four of these downloads used good old MD5 checksums for verification, but Fedora used an SHA256 checksum instead. Right now, at this point in time, I'm pretty sure that I *won't* be able to test all five downloads this month. (I'll be lucky if I can fit in three). So I probably *won't* get to Fedora in this

article, Therefore, I'm going to wait until I actually review Fedora before I tell you why I think that using SHA256 in this particular case was an extremely **_BAD_** idea. Instead, let's start with Mint.

But first, another digression: Would you believe that I downloaded the five files listed above back in 2013, starting in the middle of *October*? Well, it's true. At the time, I was working on the November 2013 newsletter during the day; and most nights, I set my computer to download one of those files while I slept. A few times, a download bombed, and I had to re-do it on another night; and a few more times, I was so tired that I just decided to "skip it". So it shouldn't be surprising that I didn't actually get all five of those files until the end of October. (Just about the same time as I finished editing the November newsletter).

Then, in November, I ran into a lot of trouble with our December issue. Just before the Main Meeting (which included our annual elections) we took the unprecedented step of publishing an incomplete two page newsletter, containing our slate of candidates

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and the following message: "Editor's Note: Due to circumstances that *shouldn't* have been beyond our control, our regular December newsletter is not yet finished. So this abbreviated supplement was hastily produced instead. Please accept our apologies". (The final full version wound up coming out *two weeks* late).

So there I was, two months after I'd started my downloads, and I hadn't installed even *one* of those files. In fact, after I wrote "let's start with Mint" above, I hadn't even written *a single word* since. So much for my plans to include this proposed two part review in the January and February 2014 newsletters. Luckily, as far as my own articles are concerned, I've been "writing ahead" whenever the spirit moved me. Thus, I had parts of several other articles "in the bank". Indeed, I had enough material to cover January, February *and* March. However, I *still* needed to proceed with *this* article.

I found a spare 40 GB hard disk for the Operating Systems to be installed on (one at a time, of course); and, as you may remember, I always keep my data files on a separate hard disk. So I dug up an old *2*

GB disk for use as a common data drive. Essentially, it will contain only *two* files: One will be a small audio file, to test each distribution's sound capabilities The other will be DisRev1b.odt (my LibreOffice word processor file for this very article). Part of the test experience for each installation will be accessing that file and recording my observations therein. (This may be the *last* time I can ever say this; but a 2 GB drive is *plenty* big enough for that job).

Right now, as I write this, it's *January first*. (Happy New Year!) But the very earliest that you'll be reading this is April 2014. Just about six months since I first thought about downloading those files. Shirley, at least one of those distros will have released a new version by then. (Anybody who thought "Don't call me Surely" should be *even more* ashamed of themselves). In any case, though, there's nothing I can do about it right now, so we'll just continue.

As I said above, I was asleep during all of my downloads. So I can't give you any file download times. Afterwards, creating install DVDs from those

files (using K3b) took about five minutes each. (*Including* the "Verify written data" step. Believe me when I tell you that this **non**-default option is *definitely* worth doing). Installing Mint on my empty 40 GB hard disk took 23 minutes. 5 to work my way through the start-up screens, and 18 for the rest. GParted (the GNOME Partition Editor) reported that the install routine had created a 35.27 GB primary Ext4 partition containing 4.14 GB of files, and a 2.00 GB extended partition containing a 2.00 GB logical swap partition. (That's 37.27 GB total. As usual, the manufacturer had *lied* about the true size of this "40" GB hard disk).

In 2005, each of my experimental Linux installations had to pass only two initial tests. They had to access the Internet "out-of-the-box", and their sound systems had to work "out-of-the-box" as well. Back in 2005, those tests presented significant obstacles. These days, I didn't expect either of them to cause any problems; and, indeed, Mint's Internet and sound both worked perfectly. However, I had to *install* GParted before I could use it to measure my

partitions. When I made the move to Linux in 200**9**, *every* Linux variant that I thought about using installed GParted as a matter of course; but *not* any more, it seems.

While *I* still consider GParted to be an essential tool, apparently not everyone else thinks so nowadays. Since we're playing by *my* rules here, though, I intend to penalize any installation that omits anything that I consider essential. So the initial installation of Mint gets one demerit; but only one, because LibreOffice **was** automatically added. (I'm writing this criticism on it right now). Anyway, that's enough of Mint for the moment. Let's take a look at Debian.

The reason we can do this is because I came up with two *more* "spare" hard disks. They're both "18" GB in size, so they both now fall into the "small but not yet *too* small" category. Each still contained an operating system that I haven't used in a *LONG* time. (Indeed, both operating systems had originally been installed on "10" GB hard disks, and were later transferred to these larger disks when they began

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generating "Full" messages).

One was Ubuntu 10.04, which I'll probably *never* need again. The other was XP SP2, which could possibly date back to my previous motherboard (and thus, thanks to Microsoft's user *un*friendly designs, wouldn't work right anymore, anyway). Nevertheless, I backed them both up with Clonezilla before I deleted their contents, just to be on the safe side. Now I can experiment with (and write about) *three* operating systems at the same time. Back to Debian:

About a minute after I started booting from it, the Debian DVD presented a "**Boot menu**" with seven options. (I say "about a minute" because I was timing from my wrist watch, and that's the best I could do). I chose the first option, "**L**ive (486)". After about six minutes, my monitor displayed a greenish screen with a white curlicue symbol in the center. (Sort of like a *very* stylized rendition of the letter "P"). Other than that, *nothing!* No buttons or icons on the screen, and no response to any keyboard combination I tried. After wailing, gnashing my teeth, and banging my head against the wall a few

times, I gave up and rebooted.

The second time, I chose "**I**nstall", because that's exactly what I wanted to do. It took me about 15 minutes to get through their fill-in screens. (I'm *VERY experienced* with partitions, but their "guided" partitioner confused me *a lot*). Then, about 23 more minutes later (after I entered my newly created password), I got the same greenish screen, the same white curlicue, and the same *NOTHING ELSE!!!* When I rebooted the computer from my special GParted Live-CD, I saw a 16.88 GB hard disk with a 16.15 GB primary Ext4 partition containing 3.85 GB of files, and a 751 MB extended partition containing a 751 MB logical swap partition. (Those figures *are* correct, because 751 MB *does* equal 0.73 GB).

The third time, I tried "**G**raphical install". Now wise to the wacky ways of their partitioner, it only took me 5 minutes to get through the fill-in screens this time. 23 minutes later, more of the same. After I got my blood pressure back under control, I wracked my brain to come up with a *polite* explanation for this. The best I could do was as follows: Maybe there

were a lot of icons, buttons and/or drop-down menus being shown, but Debian had gotten my display resolution *wrong*. So they *were* all there, but just beyond the boundaries of my monitor's screen. (Who knows? This *might* even actually be true). Whatever the case, though, this was the third strike, so Debian was *OUT!*

Now for SimplyMEPIS. After booting from the MEPIS DVD, it took about 7 minutes for the "Live" desktop to appear. After that, I double-clicked on the "MEPIS Install" icon, and that started my hard disk installation. A partitioner screen showed up soon after, but it only contained two options. Since I accepted the default for both, this only took me a few seconds. (Unlike Debian, MEPIS *didn't* drag in extraneous stuff like LVM and RAID). It wasn't until the *end* of the install routine that the fill-in screens for networking, time zones, user passwords, etc. popped up. (This was about *50* minutes after I clicked that icon, so this installation took a *lot* longer than Debian or Mint).

This time, GParted *was* automatically installed (as

was LibreOffice), and showed a 15.98 GB primary Ext**3** partition containing 3.85 GB of files, and a 1.03 GB primary swap partition, for a total of 17.01 GB. (Having *two* primary partitions and *__no__* extended partition is, in fact, an *__un__*usual but perfectly legal arrangement). **Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Behold Ye The Rules Of Partitioning:** A hard disk may contain up to *four* partitions at *most*. All four may be primary partitions, or *__one__* may be an extended partition. Each primary partition may contain one and only one physical drive, but a single extended partition may contain *many* logical drives. Those physical and logical *__drives__* are what actually interact with the Operating System. **Here Endeth The Rules**.

The trouble is, computers use the word "drive" to describe too many different things. So current common usage is to *forget* about those physical drives c*ompletely*, and just talk about primary partitions. Also, to refer to those logical drives as logical partitions (or just partitions), and to *ignore* as much as possible the presence of the extended partition containing all of those logical partitions. As

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a hidebound, reactionary old fogey, I *don't* like this inaccurate language, but as Walter Cronkite used to say; "That's the way it is".

At this point, we've passed 2,500 words, so it's time to wrap things up until next time. As far as conclusions go, Debian just flat out *failed*. I was surprised and disappointed, because Debian is the *second oldest* surviving Linux distro in existence. (Only Slackware has been around longer. *One whole month* longer). You'd think they would have gotten their installation routine right by now. Both MEPIS *and* Mint are based on Debian, and *their* installs didn't fail. So what happened? Who knows? Speaking of those new MEPIS and Mint installations, I've got a few minor quibbles about

each (which I'll mention next time), but nothing critical.

MEPIS has been displaying a message saying that 104 updates are available, while Mint has been recommending *280*; but there's no real point in updating them. Or, in fact, doing anything more with *either* one. As I write this, it's still the first week in January; and "next time" won't be until our *May* issue at the earliest. In the Linux world, things can change *very* fast. To be as up to date as possible, I can't even *begin* working on Part 2 until April, almost *three* months from now. Who knows what will be even more different by then? However, I'll still close with my traditional tag line:

See you next month. 🖥

Clouded Judgment
Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood UG, California
Newsletter: DriveLight (www.uchug.org) president (at) uchug.org

The latest trend in computer operation and data storage is "in the cloud". This refers to storage of files not on your local computer hardware, but on

remote servers which are accessed through the Internet. The cloud can be used to store your files so they can be accessed from anywhere, not just from

your own computer. Applications can be stored and run through the cloud, requiring less sophisticated local hardware.

Almost all computer users today presently use the cloud, and many probably don't realize it. There are of course the online file storage sites which many use for storing and sharing photos. Any photos you view that are not in your computer, tablet or smartphone's local memory or hard drive are coming from the cloud. Videos you watch from YouTube, Netflix or other web sites originate in the cloud. All the information you posted to Facebook about your personal activities now resides in the cloud. Anytime you play one of the games associated with the Google Doodles, those changes made to the Google home page logo to celebrate or commemorate something, you are play a game in the cloud. In reality, the cloud is the Internet.

Silver Linings

There are a lot of advantages to cloud storage and operation for the computer user. With your files stored on a hard drive in someone else's server, you don't need to have as much hard drive space of your own. Most online services, including Google, Yahoo and Amazon, provide some free cloud storage to their account holders. Having your files in the online storage provided by these companies allows access to your files from any computer connected to the Internet. If your computer is stolen or fails, your files are still safe in the cloud. This can be a great means of data back-up, and most software back-up programs now include a cloud option and online storage space for their customers.

Watching media content from the cloud has many advantages over local content. A vast array of movies and videos can be available to view over the Internet without the hassle of loading and storing on your local hard drive.

Many programs that you might otherwise have had to install and run from local storage space on your computer can now be run over the Internet, often through a web browser. Web mail is one example of a cloud application. With an email client like Outlook or Thunderbird installed on your computer,

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you can download and read your Gmail email and store it on your PC. Should something happen to your PC, however, your stored messages may be lost. By using the web mail online application for Gmail instead, you can always access your new and stored messages from any PC connected to the Internet.

More and more companies are providing cloud-based applications. Cloud software allows users to save local disk space, avoid installation issues, buy on a subscription basis and always have the most current version. For software makers, cloud subscription software lowers distribution costs and provides continuous revenue streams. In addition to the traditional versions installed on your PC, Intuit now provides a web version for all of its TurboTax programs. Office 365 is Microsoft's cloud version of its Office software suite. It allows users to buy a subscription to their productivity software and run it from the Internet, with access for up to five PCs and five mobile devices. This allows users to have access to the most current Office software on a yearly or

even monthly basis, with 20 GB of online storage for documents.

Another advantage of cloud computing is that the hardware requirements are lower, allowing computing devices that are less expensive and more mobile to be used. Tablet computers and smartphones don't have internal hard drives and their internal Flash memory space is limited, so cloud file storage is almost a necessity. Google's low-cost Chromebook computers are specifically made for cloud computing. The latest version, built by HP, has 16 GB of Flash memory, no hard drive and is priced at $279. It runs Google's Chrome OS and relies on applications that run online like Gmail and Google Docs, with most data files stored in the cloud. With lower hardware requirements, cloud devices like this can be cheaper, lighter and have greater battery life.

Dark Clouds

Unfortunately, there are a number of downsides to the cloud computing scenario. All those files you stored on someone else's server are now no longer

fully under your control. Cloud services companies are occasionally acquired, sold and shut down, so you may not be able to depend on your data being there when you need it. Cloud providers can also have access problems outside of your control, causing you to lose access to your data, perhaps at critical times. If your web email provider is down, you lose all email access. If you instead use an installed email client, you at least have access to the email archived on your PC.

With your data in the cloud, not only can there be problems for you to access your data, there can also be unintended access to your data by others. Since the terms of service are often unintelligible, you may not have full certainty that your data won't wind up in places you didn't intend it through intentional actions by the cloud companies. And you really don't know what might happen to your data if the company's servers are hacked. It is therefore risky to put sensitive personal information in the cloud, even if it is encrypted, as it could be compromised through no fault of your own.

Another problem with cloud computing is that it requires an Internet connection (often through Wi-Fi only) to do anything useful. If you can't get online, all those files and photos of yours in the cloud might as well be on the moon. That Chromebook laptop may be small and light, but unless it can get a Wi-Fi signal (it has no wired Ethernet connector), it is pretty much useless dead weight, as most of its apps run over the Internet. Other Wi-Fi devices like most tablet computers have the same issue. Even with a cellular-connected tablet or smartphone, a good connection is never guaranteed. I recently found this to be the case in the lower decks of the U.S.S. Midway Aircraft Carrier Museum. If you want to be sure you can watch a movie on your tablet during your next plane flight, you'd better load it on the device.

The performance of web-based applications is often much worse than that of apps running on your local hardware. This is especially true if your Internet connection is poor. Even with good connections, some web sites always appear to be slow. I much

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prefer to use a local email client for my email as my email provider's web mail site is so slow to respond.

Clearing the Air for Personal Clouds

In spite of the drawbacks, the trend towards computing devices that are more mobile yet storage-limited, like tablets and smartphones, is accelerating this push into the cloud. External USB hard drives and Flash drives may be popular storage accessories for laptops, but few tablets have USB connections. A new class of external storage devices promises to expand the local storage for Wi-Fi devices like tablets, smartphones, Chromebooks and even laptops. These devices combine the bulk storage of a hard drive or Flash memory with a Wi-Fi hot spot to create your own personal cloud.

The Gigastone Smartbox (*www.gigastone.com/*; $45)

combines an SD memory socket with an 802.11 b/g/n hot spot and a lithium ion battery. It allows up to six Wi-Fi devices to connect and share up to 32 GB of SDHC memory, providing handy file sharing and streaming. It can even provide a back-up power source for USB-powered devices.

The Sony WG-C1θ Portable Wireless Server

http://www.sony.net/Products/ws/en_us/pwsintro;
$80) does all the Smartbox does for eight simultaneous users, and adds a port to share a USB Flash drive.

SanDisk's SDWS2 Connect Wireless Flash Drive

(*www.sandisk.com/products/wireless/flash-drive*, $60) does the same as Sony but can't charge other devices. The Kingston Digital MobileLite Wireless Flash Reader (*www.kingston.com/us/usb/wireless*; $60) and Wi-Drive ($60 for 32 GB) are similar products.

Another class of mobile storage devices uses a hard drive instead of Flash memory, providing much more storage capacity. This includes the Patriot Aero Wireless Mobile Drive (*www.patriotmemory.com*;

$150 for 500GB), a 500 GB or 1 TB USB3 external hard drive that serves to up to five wireless users. Other similar devices include the Corsair Voyager Air (*http://www.corsair.com/voyager-air*) and the Seagate Wireless Plus (*www.seagate.com*).

In spite of drawbacks, a greater use of portable devices means an increase in cloudiness in the computer world. To avoid operating in a dangerously obscuring fog, good judgment must be used in determining how and where to access the cloud and what data to store there. Personal clouds like the wireless mobile storage devices now available can be a safe and convenient storage alternative for use with mobile devices.

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Follow These Points Before Calling Support
Tom Allen, Publisher / Editor, Mountain Computer User Group, Georgia
Newsletter: Mountain Bits & Bites (www.mcug.org) bunkerhilltom (at) yahoo.com

Today, it is possible to contact companies in numerous different ways. However, when planning to call or e-mail a computer company, keep the below recommendations in mind. If you are calling for support on a particular product make sure you have all applicable numbers written down. For example, the Serial Number and Model number of the particular device or computer.

If you are calling for support for a computer product, make sure you're next to the product in case you need to follow directions.

Have a piece of paper and pencil prepared in case instructions are given or additional contact information is given.

If you have Internet access, try finding the answer to your question online before calling or e-mailing support. Many questions can be found online by using a search engine such as Google.

Make sure you have at least 30 minutes of available time, not only for the wait but the time likely required to troubleshoot the issue.

If you believe the product in question is bad or needs

to be replaced, have all purchase information available.

If you are planning on purchasing or the support call is fee-based, have more than one credit card ready to be given over the phone.

Finally, once you've connected with support make sure to write down the support representatives' name in case you need to get back in touch with him or her.

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Our Tech Support Crew In Action

SIG News

LUNICS (Linux/Unix)

Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/lunics.html

LUNICS is a group for those who share an interest in Unix and similar operating systems. While we do quite a bit with Linux, we've also been known to discuss Solaris and BSD as well. Recent meetings have followed a Random Access format. See our web page for further information. (We meet on the first Monday of each month, at 8:00 PM). 🖥

Main Meeting

Evan Williams (president@acgnj.org)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/mainmeet.html

We meet on the first Friday of the month, at 8:00 PM. Each December, this meeting includes our Annual Business Meeting and Officer Elections. *No* meetings in July or August. 🖥

Layman's Forum

Matt Skoda (som359@gmail.com)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/laymans.html

This SIG discusses issues of interest to novice users or those planning to get started in computing. Watch our Web page for updates and announcements. We meet at the same time as the Hardware Workshop. (On the second Monday of the month, at 8:00 PM). *No* meetings in July and August. 🖥

Hardware Workshop

Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)

This group is dedicated to repairing, refurbishing and/or recycling older computers. Ten people attended the first meeting, so there is still a market for this type of event. Although we looked at some of the older equipment stored in he back room, most of our time was spent in talking about ast experiences and planning for the future. Hopefully, we can establish a viable long-term schedule of projects, and keep the interest of those who attended this inaugural meeting. If you have a hardware problem, bring it in and we can all help fix or demolish it. (No guarantees either way.) We meet at the same time as the Layman's Forum. (On the second Monday of each month, at 8:00 PM). 🖥

Java

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)
http://www.redlich.net/javasig/javasig.html

This SIG covers beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Java programming. Primary focus is on developing useful/practical applets and applications. (We meet on the second Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 PM). 🖥

Mobile Devices

Brenda Bell (mobdevsig@acgnj.org)

The Mobile Devices SIG focuses largely on current-generation cellphones and smart phones (such as Blackberry, Android, iPhone) which bridge the gap between basic cell phones and traditional computers, and how they can help you manage and organize your life. Our membership ranges from those who have recently acquired their first, basic cellphone to those who develop applications for today's modern smart phones, iPods, and ultra-portable computers. While we expect to spend much of our time investigating the built-in features and specialized applications available to modern smart phones, if you bring your basic (or multimedia) cell phone, iPod, or other mobile device with questions on how to use it, where to find applications, or what features they have, we are always happy to help! Meet and greet and plan where this event goes. Bring all your ideas, PDAs, fancy phones, etc. (We meet on the second Wednesday of alternate months (we get the even ones), at 7:30PM). 🖥

WebDev

Evan Williams (webdev@acgnj.org)

This SIG is an open forum for all Website Development techniques and technologies, to encourage study and development of web sites of all kinds. All languages will be considered and examined. The current project is a CMS for the club. Anyone interested in starting a new project, come to the meeting and announce/explain. Provide as much detail as possible. WebDev should be an all-encompassing development and examination forum for all issues, applications, OS, languages and systems one can use to build Websites. We currently

have two web development language SIGs: .NET and Java; but other languages and OS need to be investigated, examined and tested; Windows, Linux, UNIX, DEC, Vax, HP etc. Intel-PC, Motorola - MAC etc. (We meet on the second Wednesday of alternate months (we get the odd ones), at 7:30 PM). 🖳

Investment Software
Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_investment.html

The Investment SIG continues with presentations on how to use analysis programs TC2000 and TCNet. Large charts are presented on our pull down screen and illustrate the application of computer scans and formulas to find stocks for profitable investments. Technical analysis determines buy points, sell points and projected moves. Technical analysis can also be used on fundamentals such as earnings, sales growth, etc. We're no longer focusing on just Telechart. If you are using (or interested in) Tradestation, eSignal, VectorVest, or just in learning how to select and use charting and technical analysis, come join us!! (We meet on the second Thursday of the month, at 8 PM). 🖳

NJ Gamers
Gregg McCarthy (greggmajestic@gmail.com)
http://www.NJGamers.com
www.lanparty.com

The Friday Night Frag starts at 6:00 PM on the second Friday of each month, and keeps going until 12 Noon on Saturday - 18 hours for 5 bucks!
BYOC - Bring your own computer.
BYOF - Bring your own food.
And if you don't like sitting on metal folding chairs... BYO chair! 🖳

Web Browser (Formerly **Firefox**)
David McRitchie (firefox@acgnj.org).

This SIG is an open forum for all Firefox and Mozilla techniques and technologies, to encourage study and development of web sites of all kinds. All browsers will be considered and examined. All members and guests are invited to check out the design concepts and voice their opinion. (We meet on the third Monday of each month, at 7:30 PM). 🖳

C/C++ Programming
Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)
http://acgnj.barnold.us/index.html

This is a forum for discussion of programming in general, beginning and intermediate level C, C++, C-Win programming, hardware, algorithms, and operating systems. We demonstrate real programming in a non-intimidating way, presenting complete code for working programs in 3-5 sheets of paper. (We meet on the third Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 PM). *No* meetings in July or August. 🖳
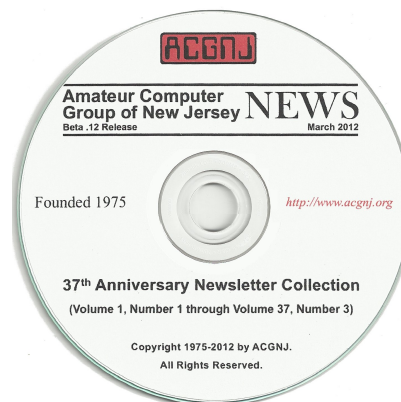
Window Pains
John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)
http://www.acgnj.org/groups/winpains.html

Intended to provide members with Windows oriented discussions, Microsoft and Linux style. Directed to more technological level of attendee, but newbies are welcomed. (We meet on the third Friday of the month at 8:00 PM). *No* meetings in July or August. 🖳

37ᵗʰ Anniversary Newsletter CD Now On Sale

Beta .12 Release.

$8.00, including postage.

($7.00 if you pick up a copy at a meeting).

Get yours today!

Back Issues *Still* Needed

Our collection remains incomplete. Below is a list of missing newsletters. Anyone who lends us one of these (or supplies a good clear copy) will receive the next CD as our thanks.

1975: #2 and #3 (dates uncertain).
1976: January.
1984: August.
1985: June, July, August, September. 🖳

Guru Corner

If you need help with any of the technologies listed below, you can call on the person listed. Please be considerate and call before 10 PM.

Software

HTML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
CSS	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
Java	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
C++	Bruce Arnold	908-735-7898
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
ASP	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Perl	John Raff	973-560-9070
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
XML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Home Automation	Frank Warren	908-756-1681

Operating Systems

Windows 3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942

ACGNJ T-Shirts For Sale

(Front)

(Back)

L, XL: $15.00
M: 2 for $15.00
bob.hawes (at) acgnj.org

ACGNJ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Sign up online at *www.acgnj.org/membershipApplication.html* and pay dues with PayPal.

Dues	US/CANADA		STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	$25		$20	$20
2 Years	$40			
3 Years	$55			$45

Mail this application and your check to:

AMATEUR COMPUTER GROUP OF NEW JERSEY, INC., P.O. BOX 135, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076

❏ New Member ❏ Renewal   ❏ Address Change

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ URL _____

What topics would you like to see covered at club meetings? _____

Other Local Computer Groups

Princeton Macintosh User Group: 7:15 pm 2nd Tuesday, Jadwin Hall, A-10, Washington Rd, Princeton, (609) 252-1163, *www.pmug-nj.org*	**Linux Users Group in Princeton**: 7 pm, 2nd Wednesday, Lawrence Branch Mercer Library, Rt#1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrence NJ *http://www.lugip.org*	**New York PC**: 3rd Thurs, 7 pm, PS 41, 116 W 11th St. For info call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC, *http://www.nypc.org*
Computer Education Society of Philadelphia: Meetings & Workshops at Jem Electronics, 6622 Castor Ave, Philadelphia PA. *www.cesop.org/*	**Brookdale Computer Users Group**: 7 pm, 3rd Friday, Brookdale Community College, Bldg MAS Rm 100, Lincroft NJ. (732)-739-9633. *www.bcug.com*	**NJ Macintosh User Group**: 8 pm, 3rd Tuesday, Allwood Branch Library, Lyall Rd, Clifton NJ. (201) 893-5274 *http://www.njmug.org*.
PC User Group of So. Jersey: 2nd Mon., 7 pm, Trinity Presb. Church, 499 Rt 70 E, Cherry Hill, NJ. L. Horn, (856) 983-5360	**Hunterdon Computer Club**: 8:30 am, 3rd Sat, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington NJ. *www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org*, (908) 995-4042.	**NY Amateur Computer Group**: 2nd Thurs, 7 pm, Rm 806 Silver Bldg, NYU, 32 Waverly Pl, NYC. *http://www.nyacc.org*
Morris Micro Computer Club: 7 pm 2nd Thurs., Morris County Library, Hanover Ave, Morristown NJ, (973) 267-0871. *http://www.morrismicro.com*	**Central Jersey Computer Club**: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, College of NJ. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	**NJ PC User Group**: 2nd Thurs, Monroe Rm at Wyckoff Public Library, 7 pm. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432, *www.njpcug.org*
Philadelphia Area Computer Society: 3rd Sat, 12 noon Main Meeting, groups 8 am-3 pm. Upper Moreland Middle School, Hatboro PA. (215) 764-6338. *www.pacsnet.org*	**NJ Computer Club**: 6:15 pm, 2nd Wednesday except Jul & Aug, North Branch Reformed Church, 203 Rt 28, Bridgewater NJ. *http://www.njcc.org*	**Princeton PC Users Group**: 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, *http://www.ppcug-nj.org*

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Member of The Association of Personal Computer User Groups *http://www.apcug.net*
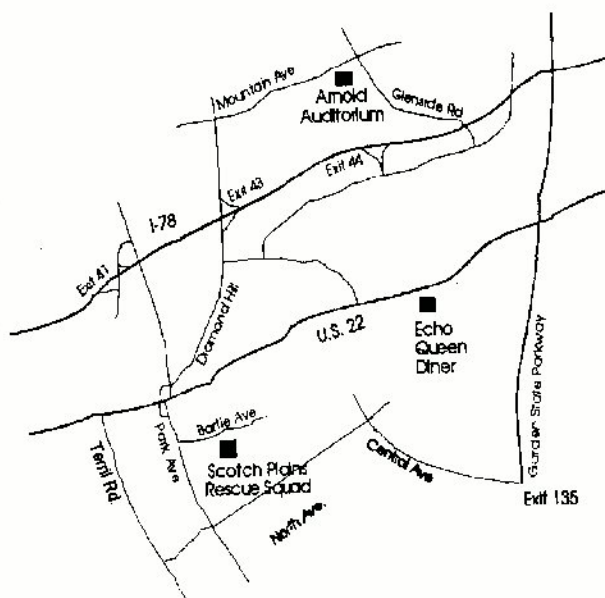
Radio and TV Programs

Computer Radio Show, WBAI 99.5 FM, NY, Wed. 8-9 p.m.

Software Review, The Learning Channel, Saturday 10-10:30 p.m.

On Computers, WCTC 1450 AM, New Brunswick, Sunday 1-4 p.m. To ask questions call (800) 677-0874.

PC Talk, Sunday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., 1210 AM Philadelphia. 1-800-876-WPEN

Directions to Meetings at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains NJ

From New York City or Northern New Jersey

Take Route 1&9 or the Garden State Parkway to US 22 Westbound.

From Southern New Jersey

Take Parkway north to Exit 135 (Clark). Stay on left of ramp, follow circle under Parkway. Bear right to Central Avenue; follow to Westfield and under RR overpass. Left at light to North Avenue; follow to light in Fanwood. Right on Martine (which becomes Park Ave). Right on Bartle Ave in middle of shopping district.Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is located on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed.

From I-78 (either direction)

Take exit 41 (Scotch Plains); follow signs to US 22. Turn right at light at bottom of hill and use overpass to cross Rt. 22. Follow US 22 Westbound directions.

From US 22 Westbound

Exit at Park Avenue, Scotch Plains after McDonalds on the right, diagonally opposite Scotchwood Diner on the left, immediately before the overpass. After exiting, turn left at the light and use overpass to cross US 22. Bear right at bottom of ramp to continue south on Park Avenue. Turn left at the second light (a staggered intersection). Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed. We meet on the second floor, entering by the door at the right front of the building.

From Western New Jersey

Take US 22 Eastbound to the Park Avenue exit. The exit is about a mile past Terrill Road and immediately past the overpass. Exit onto Park Avenue South and follow the directions above to the Rescue Squad building.