Volume 105, Number 10   **http://www.mvpcug.com**   October 2005

Al Fasoldt, the Technofile Guy

As an editor and columnist at The Post-Standard newspaper in Syracuse, Al has written about computers and consumer technology since 1983. Gene Wolf and he hosted the popular call-in show, Random Access, on Syracuse radio stations for nearly 10 years.

Al was a war correspondent and bureau chief for "Stars and Stripes" in Vietnam in 1966 and 1967.

He is the author of "Technofile" (consumer technology), "The Road Less Traveled" (Mac OS X), and also wrote the internationally recognized advice column, "Dr. Gizmo."

Visit Al's website at: http://twcny.rr.com/technofile/index.cfm for his "Articles, reviews, essays and advice on computers, software and consumer technology".

There is never any charge for a non-member!

On our website

— ***Links of Interest*** —

Go to:

mvpcug.com/index1.htm

* Tech Target

* Learning Guide

Click on the links to find out more about these subjects.

How Internet Predators Can Harm Your Computer

By Gene Barlow, User Group Relations
Copyrighted August 2005

View this informative article at the end of our online newsletter. Find it after page 8.

Meeting Agenda

5:30 . . . . Meet and Greet
6:00 . . . . . . Business Meeting
6:30 . . . . Program, Part 1
7:00 . . . . Break
7:15 . . . . Program, Part 2
8:15 . . . . . . Drawing for Prizes
8:30 . . . . Adjournment

October 4, 2005 - 6PM - Whitesboro High School

Mohawk Valley Personal Computer User Group, Inc.
PO Box 586 • Marcy NY 13403-0586

explorer

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The Mohawk Valley PC User Group, Inc. (MVPCUG) was founded in 1981 by individuals interested in IBM compatible computers. This non-profit organization consists of volunteers whose expertise range from novice to professional.

Regular meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 6pm, usually at the Whitesboro High School, Route 291, Marcy NY. A typical agenda consists of discussion of business affairs and a demonstration of computer related products. Meetings are open to the public.

Initial membership fee for an individual is $25. Annual renewal dues are $20.

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Minutes of September 6, 2004
— Donna Gorrell, Secretary

*The MVPCUG general meeting was held at the Maennerchor in Marcy. President **Jerry Finkelstein** called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. There were 30 persons in attendance.*

BUSINESS MEETING

Treasurer **Bill Gorrell** reported that income was $320.35, expenses were $673.44, and there is a balance of $3,948.21 as of August 31, 2005.

Jerry announced that our meetings should be resuming at the Whitesboro High School cafeteria next month, pending approval from the school. Notice will be given if there is any change.

The Q&A SIG will resume meeting in October. **Bill Gorrell** will assume leadership if **Tim Clinehens** does not return. The meetings will be held at St. John's Church, 35 Main St, Whitesboro at 6:30 PM on the first Thursday of each month.

Bill announced that he has CDs with Service Pack 2 for Windows XP if anyone has not already gotten one. In order to determine what version of XP you are using go to Start | Settings | Control Panel, then double click System in the General tab. This will give you the information as to what version is installed. It is strongly advised that SP2 be installed for security reasons.

Bob Schaffer announced the program for October will be Al Fasoldt. He is unsure of future programs at this time. He also spoke about doing a Microsoft "Presentation in a Box".

PROGRAM

At 6:15 PM, **Bill Gorrell** and **Lisa Britt** began the "Ask the Guru" session. There were many questions and Lisa and Bill answered most of them with ease. Members of the club also provided additional information. Several answers were demonstrated on the club computer showing us how to change default settings; how to switch from one dialup service to another; and how to remove programs that run when the computer is booted. The program concluded at 8:10 PM

DOOR PRIZES

[furnished with club funds]

CD RWs	**Loretta Sliwinski**
CDR labeling	**Stuart Schwartz**
Book-Advanced PHP program	**Lisa Britt**
Book-Scanning for SOHO	**Jim Schmandt**
Optical mouse	**Helen Russell**
Smart Computing subscription	**Bo Wozniak**, Joe Penabad

[donated by Jerry Finkelstein]

Encarta	**Fred Cole**
Post It notes	**Loralee Whitlock, Bob Schaffer**
Paper	**Don Jennings**
Notebook	**Bob Angelhow**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.
Donna Gorrell, secretary ❖

Welcome New Member
Jo Antonik

FOOD / TOY DRIVE

Dave Askew has once again volunteered to coordinate the annual **Food and Toy drive**. During the meetings in the months of **November** and **December** he will accept donations of non-perishable food and new toys to be given to the needy of the area.

When you bring in any amount of food you will be given a door prize ticket; any amount of toys will give you a second ticket. You could hold three tickets for door prizes and it's possible that all three numbers could be winners. Non-members will be allowed to participate in the drawings if they donate food/toys, but they will not receive the normal free ticket given to all members.

Please open your hearts and pocketbooks one more time. You may have contributed to help the victims of Katrina, but we have folks in our own area in need of your kindness. ❖

Word Processing Tips
— by Bob Schaffer

WORD —Apply line spacing from the Formatting toolbar (97/2000/2001/2002)

Word 2002 offers a new and improved Line Spacing button on the Formatting toolbar, making it easy to adjust line spacing on the fly.

Place the insertion point in the paragraph you want to affect, or select the paragraphs you want to affect. Next, click the dropdown arrow next to the Line Spacing button on the Formatting toolbar. (The Line Spacing button's design contains four horizontal lines, with two up and down pointing arrows.) Select the line spacing setting you want to apply from the resulting menu, or click More to access the line spacing options in the Paragraphs dialog box. If you aren't using Word 2002 (and even if you are), you can use the keyboard to quickly apply line spacing instead.

* Press [Ctrl]1 to apply single-line spacing, [Ctrl]2 to apply double-line spacing, or [Ctrl]5 to apply 1.5-line spacing.
* In Word 2000/2001, you can also use the three individual line spacing buttons found on the Formatting toolbar.

— Setting up a template

If you have some standard correspondence you can set up Word so the boilerplate is always there. You need a Word template. To make a template:
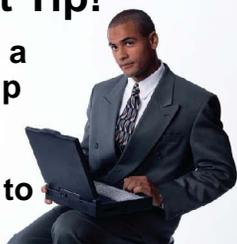
* Open Word and enter your boilerplate. You can add headings, footers and anything else you use regularly.
* Then, click File | Save As.
* In Save As Type, click Document Template.
* In Save In, select a folder you can find easily.

When you need to use the template, double-click it.

WORDPERFECT —Publishing WordPerfect documents to PDF

(Note: This tip will work in WP11, but you'll have to check to see if it applies exactly to earlier versions.)

If you need to share your WordPerfect documents with people who don't have WordPerfect, you have the option of publishing documents to Portable Document Format (PDF). PDF format is useful when you want to distribute documents that are meant only for viewing and printing.

When publishing to PDF, you can choose one of three preset styles. The style settings are designed to optimize the PDF document for a specific method of distribution. The style you choose should correspond with how you plan to distribute the file.

For example, for most documents, you can choose the document distribution style because the settings are suitable for the average document. You can specify the Web style if you plan to post the file on a Web page; this optimizes the PDF file for viewing on the Web and it also reduces the file size.

The editing style publishes the PDF file with all fonts and images at full resolution; this can be useful if you plan to edit the file using Adobe® Acrobat®.

The person receiving the PDF file can view or print it if they have Adobe® Reader® installed on their computer. If you want to view the PDF files you create before sending them to others, you also need to have Adobe Reader installed on your computer. To publish the active document to PDF:

1. Click File, Publish to PDF.
2. Click the General tab.
3. In the Export range area, enable one of the following options:
   Full document — publishes the entire file
   Current page — publishes the active page only
   Pages — publishes a portion of the file
   Selection — publishes selected text
4. From the PDF style list box, choose one of the following options:
   PDF for document distribution
   PDF for the Web
   PDF for editing
5. In the Filename list box, click Browse.
6. Choose the drive and folder where you want to save the file.
7. Type the filename in the Filename box.
8. Click Save.   ❖

Did You Know . . .
— Donna Gorrell

. . . that the Active Keys feature that was common in Windows is turned off in XP? This feature allowed you to press ALT and the underscored letter in many menus as a shortcut, or keyboard instead of mouse action. To return that function in XP, right-click the Desktop, select Properties | Appearance tab | Effects button, then remove the check mark from Hide Underlined Letters For Keyboard Navigation Until I Press The Alt Key.

. . . that you can control the size of images that you insert into a Word document? You could grab the size handles and move them in or out depending on what you want the size to be, but this can be tricky in Word. You can control the size of any image by first making a text box to the desired size. Click Insert, then Text Box, then copy and paste your picture into it. The image automatically resizes to fit the confines of the box.

. . . that you can alter the font size of web sites within your browser? In Internet Explorer, click Tools | Internet Options | General tab | Accessibility, check the Ignore Font Sizes Specified On Web Pages option. Then go to the General tab and click the Fonts button to make your choice of a new font and size. If you use Mozilla Firefox you can choose the font and colors that are used on web sites. Go to Tools | Options, on the left side, choose General, then Fonts and Colors. Make your choices as to fonts and sizes you desire, along with any changes you would like to make in colors. Place a check mark in the box Always Use My: Font and/or Color. Click OK.

. . . that you can easily increase the size of fonts on a web site by clicking View | Text Size or View | Text Zoom, depending on what browser you use. This is a temporary alteration. To make permanent changes you must follow the steps for whatever browser you use listed in the previous tip.

. . . that you could make the Taskbar disappear? Right-click the Taskbar and choose Properties. In Windows 98 you can choose: Always On Top, Auto Hide, Show Small Icons, and Show Clock. In XP: Keep The Taskbar On Top Of Other Windows, Auto Hide The Taskbar along with other options.

. . . that you could move the Taskbar? To move the taskbar, simply place your mouse on an empty space in the Taskbar and drag it to the top or either side of your desktop. When you have it in the position you desire, release the mouse button. You can make the Taskbar larger by placing the cursor at an edge and waiting until a two headed arrow appears, then drag it larger. In XP you can lock the Taskbar in place by right-clicking the Taskbar and choosing Lock The Taskbar. In order to move it or resize it you must first unlock it.

. . . that you could move a folder into the Quick Launch area of the Taskbar? For easy access to any folder on your computer you can drag and drop the folder into the Quick Launch toolbar. The Quick Launch toolbar is located at the right of the Start button on the Taskbar. You must first select Quick Launch from the toolbar menu. Right-click the Taskbar then choose Quick Launch from the menu. You may also add a new Toolbar or choose one of the other selections.

. . . that WindowsXP has a Notification Area on the Taskbar? This is on the extreme right side and by default XP hides the icons that are not used frequently. The programs are still running even though the icons do not show. By right-clicking the Taskbar you can bring up a menu to choose to deselect Hide Inactive Icons or you can click the Customize button and select which icons you want hidden and those you want visible at all times. Remember, these icons represent programs which are running in the background and you may not want them running all the time. You must disable them by going to Start | Run, then typing *msconfig*. In the resulting dialog box, select the Startup tab. Uncheck those programs you do not want to run all the time.

. . . that you could get to your desktop by pressing the Windows key+D? On keyboards with the flying Windows logo keys, holding this key while pressing D minimizes all open windows and brings you to the desktop. If you want to hide your Taskbar this is an easy solution instead of using the desktop icon in the Quick Launch area.   ❖

Sites to Visit on the 'Net
— by John Hunter

October brings clear days and cool nights. For those who are not impressed with October weather, a visit to spaceweather.com may be more to your liking. The homepage provides weather data for the Sun - Earth Environment such as: space wind speed - 662 km/s; x-ray solar flare activity; an aurora watch; and pictures of the Perseid Meteor shower for 2005. Site visitors are invited to submit photos of astronomical occurrences for the edification and interest of site members. One of the featured photos the day I visited was a picture of a Perseid fireball taken by a Portuguese photographer. Another picture highlighted a Martian streamer of clouds or dust coming from the South Polar Ice Cap captured by an amateur astronomer in Atlanta Georgia.

Earth weather aficionados will really appreciate this site. The site also encourages members to compare astronomical statistics and will notify you before aurora activity (northern lights) begins. You can even subscribe to spaceweatherphone.com, at $6.95 a month, for an automated telephone call alerting you before the space shuttle flies over your house. If the shuttle ever flies again, that is.

Those of you planning vacation travel this month will probably be very aware of the price of gasoline. At this writing in mid-August, gas prices are over $2.50 per gallon for regular gasoline. Who knows what the price will be when you read this?

AAA provides a web site that allows you to estimate fuel costs for a trip. Visit tinyurl.com/brhf4 and the calculator homepage asks you to provide the starting point of your trip, the destination, the vehicle manufacturer, model and year and then calculates the cost of gasoline to get you there. Unfortunately, the site provides limited cities in each state from which to choose, so the actual fuel costs may be higher or lower than the computed cost. I chose Albany, NY to start my trip and Portland, ME as the destination. According to the AAA calculator, the cost to drive my 2004 Honda CRV 259 miles from Albany to Portland is $26.52; $53.04 round-trip. Ouch!

A number of web sites provide information for motorists interested in saving money by purchasing the cheapest gas available. Gasbuddy.com allows you to keep track of gas prices in North America. The homepage provides interactive maps of all 50 states and the Canadian provinces as well. Clicking on New York State brings up links for AlbanyGasPrices.com, BuffaloGasPrices.com, NewYorkGasPrices.com, RochesterGasPrices.com and SyracuseGasPrices.com. I clicked on Syracuse and found a list of gas stations and the posted prices for regular gas in the greater Syracuse area. No luck for the Utica area unless some of you wish to volunteer to provide the site with gas price data for Utica and its environs.

Gaspricewatch.com provides similar information and does include gas prices in our area. I chose Rome and found a listing for every station in the city although not every station had prices listed. This site too needs volunteers to provide info. The price for regular at the Dominick Street Xtra Mart was $2.63 per gallon. Double Ouch!

The federal government provides several web sites that deal with fuel economy and fuel prices. Sites provided by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Federal Trade Commission offer suggestions for highway driving, auto maintenance, and tips for improving gas mileage. The URLs for these sites are tinyurl.com/bozlw; and tinyurl.com/bs7xs respectively.

The Alliance to Save Energy ase.org/content/news/ and bankrate.com/brm/news/ provide gas-saving tips, proper maintenance techniques, smart driving techniques and a listing of fuel-efficient cars. If you can't lower your gas consumption with this help, oil up the your old Schwinn Cruiser and start pedaling.

If the price of gas puts a dent in your vacation plans, how about a bus trip? I found a good one recently that not only will show you the sights on the 4 1/2 hour trip, but also give you lunch as well. Asliceofbrooklyn.com offers a foodie trek through Brooklyn's best pizza restaurants. The guided bus trip features pizza, soft drinks and an audio-visual historical tour of Brooklyn's famous movie locations, landmarks and points of interest. In addition to pizza restaurants, you will visit the Brooklyn Bridge, Coney Island, learn about George Washington's Battle of Brooklyn in 1776, and visit movie locations for "Saturday Night Fever," "The French Connection," "Annie Hall," and "Scent of a Woman".

Tours leave weekdays at 11:00 AM from Union Square (4th Ave between 13th and 14th Sts). The cost is $45 for adults and $35 for children. Not bad for four hours of info punctuated by slices of pizza and soft drinks. Enjoy. Until next time . . .   ❖

Bob Schaffer Reviews

Easy Microsoft Money 2004
by Gina Carrillo. Indianapolis: Que Publishing

Que's full color "easy" series provides a quick and practical introduction to popular software. In recent years Microsoft's *Money* has been giving Intuit's *Quicken* a run for its money. Some recent reviews have give the former the edge in terms of the way it handles investments.

While Que's *Money 2004* is being reviewed here, Microsoft recently released *Money 2006*. Basic elements in *Money* haven't changed so this handy guidebook to the software remains valuable for many users. There are 219 colorful pages, each featuring highly readable pictures of monitor screens with minimal text. Most pages have no more than three or four sentences explaining the steps in accomplishing a particular task. This provides a very quick insight into what you do if you want to:

* Enter account information or start a new account
* Record account transactions
* Create a budget to guide and control spending
* Create a very helpful debt reduction plan
* Record investment transactions
* Enter and track income tax information
* Plan for and manager major purchases (house, car)
* Plan for the future, which includes retirement

Recently I was talking with a young contractor who had developed a successful business. (I'd be lost without him.) He watched me make some entries into *Money* and have the computer spew out a check for him. He was very impressed, for his "bookkeeping" was all over the place on hunks of paper that weren't easily controlled. He'll talk to his wife about *Money.*

Money is not only ideal for a family, but extremely useful—and not complicated—for a small business. It's computer efficiencies include such timesavers as:

* Remembering previous entries, so you don't have to repeat typing things you've entered previously. Example: You want to enter Faxton-St. Luke's Medical Center. You type "Fax" and *Money* enters the complete name.
* Enter 9 20 and *Money* types 9/20/05. In fact, if you just type the number 20, that will work too.
* Having trouble remembering whether or not you paid a bill? Go to your list of payees and you'll instantly see every bill you've paid to any payee. ❖

This book will be offered as a door prize at an upcoming meeting.

Blogs, websites, e-mail have come to the aid of citizens seeking Katrina news. The hurricane left official news media – press, radio, TV – out of commission, they were literally under water. But thanks to the Internet, "most media outlets have continued to operate on the Web," National Public Radio reports.

Indeed, www.NPR.org offers a plethora of blogs and sites relating to Katrina, the hurricane itself and its aftermath. And it is all updated daily. Included in these sites are community news reports not covered in your usual press, interviews, commentaries, audio and video segments, and detailed references to people looking for people missing, lost, separated, caught in this terrible deluge.

Among the blogs and sites that evacuees and citizens in general have turned to are Craiglist, WWLTV News, The Times-Picayune. The Katrina Web log (a link from the npr.org site) was another of the very informative, always current sites. More mainstream but still vital CNN.com gives us up to the minute information, photo essays, reporters reporting from ground zero. And it's interactive, as is most of the blogs and sites covering Katrina.

Dvorak, in a recent article in *PC Magazine,* quotes a study that maintains that people who spend a lot of time on the Internet, reading stuff from sites and blogs, get dopier with time. IQ points drop. He's been "fascinated" by how many people believe the bogus information coming over the Internet. He reports that "people believe what they read on the Internet more easily than what they see in print." After all, the Internet is infamous for its hoaxes.

Still, websites and personal blogs are often useful and mightily informative. Take the sites offered above. Many people are counting on them for the first hand information and the first class commentaries that help us make some sort of sense of the Katrina catastrophe.

Still, let's not leave our brains at the door when we enter the world of the blog. Hot off the Net is the idea that the Republican party is making efforts to grab Bill Clinton for its presidential candidate. I said it's got to be a joke. My friend said, it can't be, he read it on the Internet.

What's that about IQs dropping?   ❖

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what's.com/ing					October 2005	
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Happy Halloween !						1
2	3	4 Monthly General Meeting 6:00 PM Whitesboro HS	5	6 Q & A SIG 6:30 PM St. John's	7	8
9	10	11 Board of Director's Mtg 6:30 PM	12	13 Yom Kippur	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 30	24 BOO ! 31	25	26	27	28	29

HOW INTERNET PREDATORS CAN HARM YOUR COMPUTER

By Gene Barlow, User Group Relations
Copyrighted August 2005

This is the first of a two part article on Internet Security. This article will focus on the harm that predators can do to your computer while you are attached to the Internet. The second article addresses what you can do to protect your computer from these predators. You need to read both articles to get the whole story.

Introduction

The Internet was originally designed as a communication tool between users of a few mainframe computers located inside some Universities and Government offices. To access this early Internet, you had to use a terminal that was inside these secure locations and attached by cable to one of the mainframe computers involved. The outside world could not get access to this early Internet system. Because the original Internet was limited to a very secure environment, no security measures were designed into the Internet. Later, as the scope of the Internet was broaden and became available to almost anyone around the world, additional security features were not added to the Internet. The Internet was initially designed without security and security was never added to the Internet as it grew.

The Internet has become one of the most useful features of our computers. Almost all computers can be connected to the Internet through phone lines, wireless, or via many types of broadband connections. Today, we keep in touch with our families and friends via Internet email, chats, and Internet phones. We find enormous amounts of information on almost any topic by researching the Internet. We locate hard to find items on the Internet and can order them and have them delivered to our door. We access our bank and investments using the Internet to handle our financial affairs. The Internet has brought us tremendous benefits in the past few years.

That is the bright side of the Internet. Unfortunately, there is also a dark side to the Internet that many of us are not fully aware of. The simple fact is that while you are connected to the Internet and can access thousands of locations, thousands of predators on the Internet can access your computer at the same time. As our connection time to the Internet increases, the risk of having harm done to our computers is skyrocketing. Broadband Internet connections greatly speed up our use of the Internet, but these are always connected and so our computer is always available to these predators. The purpose of this article is to identify who these predators are and how they use your computer for their own needs. The following article will show you what you can do to protect your computer from these predators.

Internet Predators

Who are the Internet predators that cause harm to your computer? They are called Hackers and they come in a variety of types. Taking a cliché from the old western movies, these hackers are often distinguished by the deeds they do. If you remember the old western movies, the cowboys that wore white hats were usually the good guys. The bad cowboys normally wore black hats. Likewise, you have the White Hat Hackers and the Black Hat Hackers. They both break into your computer, but the White Hat Hackers do no harm and only do it for the challenge. The Black Hat Hackers are not as kind and will do all sorts of damage to your computer once they break into it. Finally, you have the Script Kiddies who are young kids learning to become hackers.

Where do these hackers hang out? There are hundreds of hacker web sites around the world and the hackers use these sites to exchange ideas and things they have learned about hacking into certain computers. They also brag about their hacking accomplishments once they have broken into a special computer. This brings them the admiration of their fellow hackers. Young kids from 10-14 years old learn to become the future hackers of the world on these web sites. So these web sites are the training ground

for new hackers to learn and develop.

Taking Over Your Computer

What do these Internet Predators do to your computer? The Black Hat Hackers go through a number of steps to break into and harm your computer. The first step is to scan for a target. They want to find a computer that has fast internet access, has enough empty space on their hard drive for storage of their hacker tools, and is a fast computer. While this is the ideal target, they will take a less valuable target if they can access it easily. They have special computer programs that scan and test computers connected to the Internet. Did you know that your computer is tested on average of 17 times each day by hackers looking for a target? When will they stop at your computer and decide to use it for their purposes? One in four computers will be hacked this year, so your turn is not far off.

 Once the hackers find a target, their next task is to break and enter into that computer. Unfortunately, this task is very easy to do, since most computers have no security protection at all to keep the hackers out. Some users will have a firewall set up to prevent hackers from entering their computers. These firewalls have doors in them called ports. A firewall may have 256,000 doors or ports in them with some of these doors wide open. When a hacker finds a firewall, all he needs to do is to scan these ports until he finds one that is open and available for him to enter into your computer. Finally, hackers know of weaknesses in your operating system and Internet browser. He can take advantage of these weaknesses in the software and break through any security you think you have in place. It may take him a bit of time, but eventually, a hacker will find a way to break into your computer without you even knowing that he is doing this.

Once inside your computer, the hacker goes about setting up shop in your system. He may first look around for anything of value that he can steal from you. It may be as dangerous as your social security number, credit card numbers, or other financial information that he can use in the theft of your identity. Identity Theft is the number one consumer problem today and the number of thefts is growing each year. If your identity is taken and used, it will cost over $10,000 in goods and services to resolve the problems from this crime. The hacker may find your personal digital photos saved on your computer and share them with others on the Internet. Finally, the hacker may help himself to copies of any software he finds on your computer.

Next the hacker will make changes to your computer to fit his needs. He will store his hacker tools on your hard drive so that it is available for him to use in a moments notice. These tools may include viruses and worms to send out from your computer, key loggers to watch the keys you press as you enter your password to get into your online banking, email monitors to read your email messages, and other devious tools he has available to use from your computer. Once he gets all of his tools loaded on your computer, he will make your computer secure from other hackers. He will close up all of the open ports and operating system weaknesses in your computer so that other hackers will not be able to break into it. He wants your computer for his own use and not to share it with other hackers. He will leave one very well hidden back door open so that he can get back in to your computer at any time he wants to. The hacker now has your computer all ready for his future use.

Using Your Computer

Having set up your computer for his needs, what things will a hacker do with your computer? First, he may set up your computer to send out viruses to other computers. He will start with your email address book and send out these viruses to all of your friends and family members. After all, he does not want to have his computer identified as the source of the virus. Junk mail is also sent out mostly from hacked computers. My computer was hacked a couple of years ago and thousands of SPAM messages were sent out late one night using my computer. The next morning my inbox was filled with bounced messages from email addresses that were no longer valid. Just emptying these bounced messages from my

inbox took hours to accomplish. Working with my ISP, we found the faulty code that let my system be hacked and fixed it. I quickly learned that these hackers are serious. Another favorite hacker use of your computer is to send out porn pictures. It would really embarrass me to learn that my computer had been used to distribute porn to others. I may even be held legally liable for permitting this porn to be distributed from my computer.

Some hackers pride themselves in bringing down main computers, like eBay, Yahoo, or AOL. Other hackers go after mainframe computers at banks, stock markets, and government offices. To do this, they need to use more than one computer. Hackers will break into and set up hundreds of computers which are called Zombie systems. The hacker can activate these Zombies to do what it wants in a few seconds. Your computer may be sitting as a Zombie computer waiting to be activated to attack some large government defense computer. When it is activated with hundreds of other Zombie computers, they all send messages at the same time to the large computer under attack. When the mainframe computer is hit at the same time by hundreds or thousands of Zombies, it can't handle the load and will shut down to protect itself. Just what the hacker wanted. The shutdown of a major computer may take hours to bring back up and can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost businesses to these companies. This is serious hacking and your computer might be involved without your knowing it.

Check Out Your Computer

So, how do you know if your system has been affected by a hacker? Hackers pride themselves in doing their mischief without anyone knowing that they have been hacked. So, finding out that you have been hacked is not easy to do. There are a few excellent software tools that have been designed to find and remove hacking tools from computer systems. The second article of this series will identify all of the things you need to do to protect your computer from hackers and to remove their mischief if you have already been hacked. Watch for this article to be sent to you in a few days or you can find it on my web site (www.usergroupstore.com) in the Newsletters section after September 1, 2005. In the meantime, you can check to see if your computer has hacker tools on it by accessing my Invisus web site at www.myinvisusdirect.com/usergroupstore. Look for and click on the small red button that is titled, "Test Your PC Now". This will take you to a page where you can download a trial of the hacker tool removal program and see what hacker tools are located on your computer. You will probably be surprised at what you find.

I hope you have learned more about the harm that can happen to your computer on the Internet. If you have questions about this article or Invisus tools, please email them to gene@ugr.com and I will try to answer them for you. Watch for my following article on protecting your computer from Internet predators.

Gene Barlow is the president of User Group Relations, a consulting firm specializing in promoting computer products to the user group community. He has over 40 years of experience with computer systems. He worked for IBM for 34 years and managed IBM's user group support organization for 14 years. He helped hundreds of user groups get started and is sometimes called the Father of User Groups for his involvement. When he left IBM, he set up his own consulting firm and has represented many software vendors to the user group community the past 9 years. He is an outstanding speaker, writer, and helper of end users and loves working with user groups. You may contact him atgene@ugr.com.