PAGE 4CYANMAGENTAYELLOWBLACK

Computer spring cleaning

computernotes from the road

by WILMA MELOT

It's time for spring cleaning and I've been letting go of lots of old stuff this year.

My old floppy disks from 1988 have finally been relegated to the trash. I had been faithfully hanging on to those old system software disks for too many years. Mac System 6 and 7 and Windows 95 disks were hard to let go of, but I finally faced the fact that if they had been in the trunk of my car for the last five-plus years, which they had, they most likely wouldn't work anyway.

Added to the trash heap was a stack of old, twisted SCSI cables that I replaced with some used USB and ethernet cables.

As I was cleaning, I realized that I hadn't pulled out any of my floppies in the last year at any location. Most of my programs now operate off CDs – and many of you don't even have floppy drives any longer.

Throwing out the old is hard for me to do, but I needed to make room in my trunk for more CDs and newer cables. My heart skipped a beat or two, but I know it was something I had to do.

Maybe my spring cleaning will inspire some of you to sell your old stuff on e-Bay – or to shut your eyes and place it in the dumpster, as I did. It's good to remember that old machines that have sat for years in your back office most likely won't work any more. Hard drives that have sat idle for a year or more generally won't work. Although I don't think those old SEs will ever be a sought-after item, you could ask your local museum.

Spring also heralds Oklahoma thunderstorms. I was reminded of that as I was driving back from Hobart and saw a huge line of thunderstorms covering the sky in front of me.

The anvil-shaped towers with their green light reaching to the ground made me think about my normal spring article: backups. Once again, let me encourage you to backup your hard drives and unplug your computers when storms roll into town.

It's also a good time to remind you to annually change your surge protectors and to check your battery backup units to make sure the batteries are still good.

If you need to buy a new surge protector, take a look at the Belkin SurgeMaster Power Protector ranging from $9.99 to $30. A good surge protector can stop the spikes that halt your hard drive. Don't forget to plug in ethernet hubs to a good surge protector. I've seen several papers lose all the ethernet cards in the building at once when lighting came through an unprotected hub.

Both Belkin and APC make good battery backup/surge protectors units, which is the only way to protect computers from low power dips. Dips slow down your hard drive and cause lots of problems.

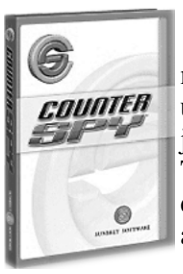
The weather can even damage your files. Many of you have asked why files that worked perfectly fine yesterday suddenly stop working. Files can be damaged when writing to a drive during a brown out. If you're in an older building, you need to watch out for this.

Newer machines, with their fast hard dives and machine speeds, really need the protection of backup/surge protectors, which start at $122.99. It's price we pay for all that speed.

With Oklahoma weather ranging from ice storms to tornados and power blackouts, many of the papers have looked into purchasing small portable generators starting around $500.

If you're considering purchasing a generator, do your homework and make sure it's capable of producing the clean power it takes to run a computer.

Clean up Spyware & Adware



The complaint I hear most often from Windows users is that their computers just became a lot slower. This often means the hard drive needs to be cleaned up and defragmented.

If you've already taken those steps and haven't seen an improvement, check to see if you've had a spyware program downloaded to your computer. According to Microsoft, 67 percent of all Windows machines now have spyware programs.

Spam was the first big Internet annoyance, then viruses began attacking our machines and now it's spyware.

There's big money in spyware, both legitimate and for cyber criminals. The battle for your personal information, surfing and buying habits is waged daily. There are Internet advertisers that want to know where you click, while Internet criminals are trying to steal your identity and credit card info. Your personal computer may have several spyware products on board that it cannot eliminate on its own.

If your machine is doing any of the following, you may have a spyware program on board.

- Unauthorized pop-up advertisements, even when not browsing the Web.
- The browser home page or default search engine change without user consent, and often resists attempts to change it back.
- Unwanted toolbar on the browser, which often resists attempts to remove it.
- A sudden and dramatic slowdown in PC performance.
- Crashing on operating systems, Web browsers and other common applications increases.

The cure for spyware is to buy a program that gets rid of the pesky software. There seems to be no end to the people who say their software will eliminate the problem.

Most of you run antivirus programs, such as Norton or McAfee, but these programs may not protect you from spyware. McAfee's spyware program retails for $40 and is rated much less effective than the Sunbelt program CounterSpy.

Some online comparisons I read say that Sunbelt's CounterSpy is tops right now.

The problem is that as spyware writers update their programs, people trying to get rid of it must also update their anti-spyware programs.

When purchasing a spyware program, make sure to look at release dates and check to see if the company sends updates throughout the year. Sunbelt offers all of this. For more information, go to http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com/CounterSpy.cfm.

Microsoft is planning its own version of anti-spyware, which is now in beta version. Actually, Microsoft bought the software from Giant Software last December and is now working it over. More information about the product is available at http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/strategy.mspx. Reports are that the beta version is very good.

Macintosh computers seem to be unaffected by all the spyware problems at this time.

plugged IN

TopCalculettePro

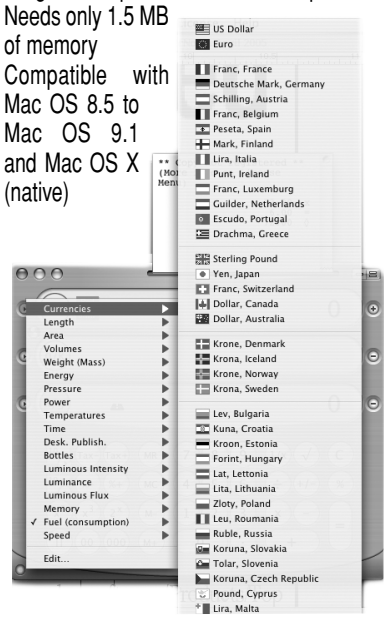
So you bought a new Mac and you're looking for some useful little programs to use with your new operating system. Mollie Nagel's favorite new tool is a program called TopCalculettePro. Mollie is advertising manager at the Hobart Democrat-Chief.

This nifty little calculator utility converts almost anything – dollars to lots of other currency, temperature, volumes and many, many others. Check it out at http://www.rubensoft.com/Products/TopCalculettePro_US.html

As a real desktop calculator, TopCalculette shows the calculations on a virtual paper tape so you can replace that large adding machine on your desk.

By using its 12 useful and customizable keys, as well as it's handy tax and percentage features, your daily calculations are simplified.

- Simulated resizeable paper tape
- Customizable Mac keyboard shortcuts
- Pocket/Accounting Mode
- Memory keys
- 12 keys with user setting function
- 1 to 4 Tax/Percent key pads
- Integrated metric and currency converter with easy selection mode
- Integrated units converter
- Shows the units on the tape and on the display
- Saves display and tapes sums
- Drag and drop of the sum display
- Drag and drop a selection of the tape
- Needs only 1.5 MB of memory
- Compatible with Mac OS 8.5 to Mac OS 9.1 and Mac OS X (native)



This handy shareware utility does everything but wash the dishes. There's a free trial for one month, but the price is only $25.

"Computer Notes" is brought to you by the Oklahoma Advertising Network (OAN).
For more information on the OAN program, contact Oklahoma Press Service at (405) 524-4421.

PAGE 4CYANMAGENTAYELLOWBLACK