

ACPCUG

February 2002

***Taylor Memorial Library
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
February 4, 2002***

Triple Header Program !

Early: Inkjet Refills by David Kluter of Ohio Ink Refills & Paper about Inks, Refilling and Ink Jet Papers. Products available for sale later in meeting.

Main: Advanced Tips & Tricks for Excel by Bill Jelen of MrExcel.com, the world's Most popular website for MS Excel tips and solutions.

Bonus: TurboTax and Other Options by Rick Lubinski and Murray Davis, including online options.

Windows XP: Why You Oughta Upgrade

By Carl Siechert, Co-Author, Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out

At a recent meeting of the Pasadena IBM Users Group, Ed Bott and Carl Siechert, co-authors of Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out, explained why Windows XP is such an important upgrade for most users. Carl did a follow up which included the key parts of the presentation, and graciously allowed the user group community to reprint it in their newsletters.

Why upgrade? At the meeting, several people commented that we didn't show the killer feature or the clear benefits of upgrading, especially from Windows 2000.

That's because, IMO, there isn't a distinct knock-your-socks-off feature/benefit. Instead, there are a number of minor enhancements that, collectively, make Windows XP a compelling upgrade for me. We tried to dash through them but perhaps didn't adequately demonstrate the benefit. Here's a brief summary of my favorites:

- * **Stability.** Windows XP has the ability to run a large number of apps without running out of resources, without crashing. (If you're running Windows 2000, you already have this, so there's no gain.)

- * **Security.** This is a huge topic that I can't adequately cover in a few sentences; suffice to say that security of your data and your privacy in Windows XP is leaps and bounds beyond anything available in Windows 9x. (Again, if you have Windows 2000, you already have most of the security capabilities of Windows XP.)

- * **UI enhancements.** A variety of changes in Start menu, taskbar, Windows Explorer, and Control Panel make everyday tasks such as launching programs, switching between windows, and managing files just a little bit faster, easier, and more convenient. These features can each be customized, so you can use the ones you like and change others back to Windows

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Why You Oughta Upgrade

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9x/2000 style. (Similarly, you can banish the new look of Windows XP while still enjoying its other benefits.)

- * Fast User Switching. Great for shared computers, FUS lets someone else log on without requiring you to first close all your documents and applications.

- * Power management. Standby and hibernation let me save power (on desktop PCs as well as portables) yet still have fast boot time, bringing me right back to where I left off. (That is, all the windows that I left open when the system powers down are already open when I power up.)

- * Digital photo support. I was never a fan of digital photography until I got XP because it was such a hassle before. But the support for cameras and scanners, as well as the features built in to Windows Explorer for viewing, printing, emailing, and manipulating images have actually made it fun and practical to work with photos in new ways.

- * Remote Assistance. The ability to actually see and work with someone else's screen while conversing with them through text, voice, and video chat is a killer feature for anyone who's looked upon as a computer guru and gets calls for support from relatives, friends, and neighbors. (I suspect that includes most PIBMUG members!)

- * Remote Desktop. The ability to connect with my home computer from the office (or vice versa) is awesome. It looks and acts exactly as if I'm at that computer five miles away, and I have access to all its files, printers, and other resources. And like remote assistance, it's acceptably fast if you have broadband Internet access. I also use it to work with other computers on my own LAN; that's sometimes easier than hopping back and forth between two computers.

- * Better help. It's easier to navigate, integrates information from the Microsoft Knowledge Base, and includes links to a number of diagnostic tools. (Of course, it doesn't have all the answers. You still need our book!)

There are dozens of other enhancements--built-in CD burning, built-in ZIP file support, Windows Media Player, Movie Maker, etc. etc.--but those listed above are the ones that I personally find useful.

What's Wrong with XP? Not Much

What's wrong with Windows XP; we promised to talk about "what bites" but some felt we didn't deliver. That's because there really isn't much I don't like; here's my full list:

- * Windows product activation (WPA). I dislike it on principle, but in practice it's not a problem for me or for most users. It's anonymous, and it's a one-time operation that involves clicking Next a few times to get through a wizard--and then you never think about it again. Windows does NOT phone home on its own at any time to confirm your activation status, as has been reported. But as Ed mentioned, it's a classic Microsoft version 1.0 product.

If you want to avoid activation altogether, get XP pre-installed on your next computer from a major OEM vendor like Dell. Those versions of XP do not have product activation, so it'll never kick in when you change a number of components in your system--one of the major flaws in the current implementation. You should be aware, however, that Windows XP versions from major manufacturers are linked to the system BIOS--which means, for example, that you can't take the Windows XP CD that comes with your Dell and install it on a Gateway or a white box system.

- * Price. Now that MS is enforcing the one copy/one machine limitation (it's always been part of the license agreement, but they've never had a way to prevent people from copying to all machines until WPA), I think the price--at least for copies after the first one--should be significantly lower, say \$50-75 for Home, twice that for Pro. OTOH, it is a pretty good value, even at \$100/\$200.

- * Messenger and Passport in your face. I use them constantly, so it doesn't bother me that they always start. But I'd be frustrated if I didn't want to use them and discovered how difficult it is to vanquish them.

- * UI is too chummy in some respects. Wizards have replaced some dialog boxes, advanced options are now further buried, etc. As a power user who knows his way around, these slow me down. Fortunately, there aren't many of these impediments in the areas that I use frequently.

- * Support for "legacy" hardware. Some people mentioned HP products in particular, but there are a number of unsupported products that are not that old. Microsoft has always left device driver development to hardware manufacturers, and it supplies plenty of support to manufacturers. It's clearly in Microsoft's best interest to have all hardware supported.

Manufacturers, however, don't have any incentive (other than the wrath heaped on them by disgruntled customers) to provide drivers for discontinued products; they'd prefer that you buy their latest and greatest. Regardless of whose fault it is, it's a real problem that affects all of us consumers.

- * Networking. It's a little difficult to set up a mixed network--one with Windows XP and Windows 9x workstations. (But it's not impossible, and the steps to successful networking are fully documented in our book!) Win-

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dows XP Home Edition uses only the Simple File Sharing model, which is indeed simple, but also somewhat inflexible. You can set up a folder to be private (so that only your user account can access it, either when logged on locally or over the network) or you can share it with everyone. But you can't, for example, easily set up a shared folder that you and your spouse can access but your kids cannot. (As we mentioned, there is a workaround--detailed in the book--that lets you set up more complex security arrangements using Safe Mode.)

Which Version is Best for You?

Home Edition or Professional? The essential differences are these:

- * You can't use Remote Desktop to connect to a computer running Home Edition. (Btw, the computer you connect from can be running any version of Windows 9x/NT/2000/XP.) You can, however, use Remote Assistance to connect to a Home Edition computer.

- * You can't use Home Edition on a multiprocessor system.

- * With Home Edition, your computer can't join a Windows NT/2000 domain. (You can, however, use all domain resources if you have a domain user account.)

- * With Home Edition, you're essentially stuck with Simple File Sharing. You can share/protect only at the folder level, and you can only make a folder private or share it with everyone. The Windows 2000 security model that's available in Professional offers granular security control that lets you assign specific types of access to specific users for specific files. (Most home user won't need this level of control.)

- * If you install Professional now, you won't be able to upgrade to the Home Edition of the next version of Windows, so you'll pay an extra \$100 now and again the next time you upgrade Windows.

Pro includes everything that's in Home. If you're unsure about which to get (that is, the points above don't seem to apply to you), try Home Edition. Worst case: you later decide to upgrade to Pro. The Home Edition-to-Professional upgrade is \$125, so you're only out an additional \$25 compared to purchasing Pro initially.

You can find Microsoft's advice on this choice at <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/choosing.asp>

What's the Bottom line?

- * If you're buying a new computer, get XP. (Before you do that, however, run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor on your current system. Be sure

that any software or peripherals you plan to use with your new system will work with XP, or can be inexpensively upgraded.) Don't fret too much about the learning curve for a new OS and its new features; nearly everything you know about your current system can be applied to Windows XP, and you can learn about the new features as you need them.

- * If you're using Windows 9x AND if your computer has the horsepower (practical minimum: 300 MHz processor, 128 MB RAM, 1.5 GB free disk space) and is compatible (run the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor), strongly consider upgrading to XP.

- * If you're using Windows 2000 and you're happy with it, hold off on upgrading until you get your next computer. If one of the nifty features like Remote Desktop, Remote Assistance, or digital photo support would make your life easier, pop for XP now.

I've decided that XP Professional is right for my newest systems (the rest run Windows 2000), but I don't mean to suggest that it's right for everyone. Besides, Ed and I have written books about earlier versions of Windows too. We'd be just as happy if you bought one of those books. :-)

Get Some Help

Here are a few URLs that'll help you with the upgrade:

Microsoft Product Lifecycle: This site tells you when support dries up for each version of Windows. <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/lifecycle.asp>

Windows XP Upgrade Advisor: The program available at this site checks your computer for hardware and software that may be incompatible with Windows XP. When available, it includes links to upgrade information for the incompatible components.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/howtobuy/upgrading/advisor.asp>

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The DealsGuy by Bob Click, Greater Orlando

Computer Users Group

Gobe Problems

When I set up the Gobe Suite special last month, readers were supposed to be the only ones to see the \$74.95 price, but problems with their "Web site store" software ended up letting everybody see the price, so they made it available to anybody until they solve the problem. Since then, a hacker has wreaked havoc with their Web site, so things have gone from bad to worse. They wanted you to know the circumstances, so please bear with them if you had trouble ordering.

Still Good

The Gobe special should still be good so go to [<http://www.gobe.com/dealsguy.html>]. The MedioStream DVD software is still good. [<http://www.mediostream.com>] Be sure to enter the discount code "COMDEX1" when you check out. The pcpinpoint troubleshooter deal is still good. [<http://www.pcpinpoint.com>] Use the "DealsGuy" code.

Turn Your Palm Into A Word Processor

Who says your Palm is just an organizer? No more! Blue Nomad is offering WordSmith for your Palm. WordSmith, co-developed by [<http://www.BlueNomad.com>] and Quik Sense Software, LLC [<http://www.quiksense.com>] is the most revolutionary, intuitive and full-featured word processor, doc viewer and enhanced memo pad available for the Palm organizer. Some features are:

- * 3 products in 1! Includes; a full-featured word processor, free electronic book reader and enhanced memo pad!

- * Seamless integration with Microsoft Word (Windows only).

- * Bi-directional conduit for Windows and Mac OS and command-line converters for Windows and Linux/Intel!

- * Excellent keyboard support - supports full speed touch-typing and menu navigation without tapping!

- * Cut, copy, paste, multi-paste, select all, undo, redo, find and more!

- * Bold, underline, italics and color fonts - preserved and functional on your organizer!

- * Beam, delete, duplicate, rename, save, save as, abandon changes and more!

- * Paragraph formatting, such as setting page breaks, indents and line

spacing!

- * Support for bulleted lists.

- * Word count and Font styles, sizes and color - preserved and adjustable on the organizer! Even supports background colors, superscript, subscript and strikethrough.

Blue Nomad is offering DealsGuy readers a great discount via their Web site [<http://www.bluenomad.com>]. Normally \$29.95, you get a \$10 discount by using a coupon for this offer making it just \$19.95. When you order WordSmith (add to cart, checkout) etc., you are required to fill in an order form (name, credit card, etc.), the second item on that form asks for a coupon code. Just enter the coupon code "wxgsclick" there. Enjoy!

Is Your Computer Desk All Cluttered?

Here is the answer to that one. Omega Frame [<http://www.omegaframe.com/>] is one of the ultimate organizers for the unorganized geek's computer desk. I've seen people's computer desk (including mine) literally covered with all kinds of slips of paper with notes scrawled on them, along with tons of other items laying all over. The Omega Frame is designed to fit on most monitors and has all kinds of clips etc., for hanging papers and other stuff. It even includes a mirror to spot the boss watching while you work. There is "sticky note" space, document hangers, business card holders, a calendar and photo clips. Omega Frame attaches to your monitor with Velcro and will clean up your desk a lot. It fits monitors from 15 to 21 inches and is easy to attach or remove from the monitor.

They are offering us a discount during February and March. Instead of the MSRP of \$29.95, my readers get it for just \$19.95 + S&H. To order, e-mail your request to George Johnson [jenco@pacbell.net] and mention the "DealsGuy column" for ordering instructions. This is a bit different, but George prefers to handle these orders personally.

Good God -- Where Do I Carry All This Stuff - - I Know -- The Scott eVest

You heard right. I know people who have more electronic gadgets than you can shake a memory stick at. They have stuff coming out of every pocket and they love to use them and show them off to their friends, who are fascinated. The Scott eVest contains so many "nooks and crannies" that you would be hard pressed to have enough gadgets to fill them all. It's possible to discreetly carry a cell phone, pager, PDA, CD/MP3 player, digital camera, portable keyboard, GPS device, two-way radio, wallet, keys and even bottled water or soda, and more!

The vest has a Personal Area Network (PAN): pat-

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ACPCUG PC Training Courses

Your ACPCUG is working with AMHA (Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority) in sponsoring and providing equipment and professional instruction in the use and application of IBM-compatible computers. These courses are available **FREE** to ACPCUG members on an available-space basis. February classes are filled, but repeats are available at later dates. Evening classes may be available by popular demand later in the Spring of 2002.

Make reservations by phoning 440-248-0021.

This is an excellent reason for friends and associates to become members and get profession introduction to PC's and applications.

Memberships available by contacting ACPCUG Treasurer, Joe Krause at phone 330-454-3613

ACPCUG-AMHA COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan. 10, 17, 24, 31	9:30am – 11:30am Introduction to Computers 12:30pm – 2:30pm Introduction to the Internet
Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28	9:30am – 11:30am Keyboarding and Word Processing Fundamentals 12:30pm – 2:30pm Introduction to the Internet
Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28	9:30am – 11:30am Word Processing I (margins, tabs, columns, mail merge) 12:30pm – 2:30pm Internet II (research, freebies, comparative shopping, online greeting cards)
Apr. 4, 11, 18, 25	9:30am – 11:30am Word Processing II (create greeting cards, flyers, brochures) 12:30pm – 2:30pm Introduction to the Internet
May 2, 9, 16, 23	9:30am – 11:30am Internet II 12:30pm – 2:30pm Introduction to Computers

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ent-pending system of conduits for head-phones/earbud and other connecting wires. That's right, passages built right into the vest for any connecting wires. It's actually an attractive piece of clothing, and its even water-repellent to keep your delicate electronics safe from Mother Nature.

People at Comdex were fascinated with the eVest so find out much more by visiting their Web site at [<http://www.scottevest.com>]. I liked the ongoing description on the home page. I told them about my readers and they

were interested, even though they had never done this before. Here's the deal: The holiday special has been \$99.99 (Regular price \$119.99), but get this --- you folks can get it for only \$89.99 during February (just one vest for that price, and while supplies last). S&H is based on destination and shipping method, ranging from about \$10 to \$15 for ground shipping.

Order on their Web site and enter the special code "DealsGuy" at checkout. My friend Bob Esch, of Dayton Microcomputer Assn., bought one at Comdex and was proudly showing it off. He said he unloaded his entire briefcase into the eVest to free both hands

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while touring Comdex!

*The September issue of the Macon Users Group's newsletter was a veritable treasure trove of good deals so I'll pass one on to you this month.

How About a Free CD Burner And MP3 Ripper!

Here is an alternative to the software you get with any CD-R/RW drive. Not that it is all bad, but there is more than one way to get the job done. Use MusicMatch to rip CD-quality MP3s and convert your records, tapes and CDs into MP3s with an easy one-step recording process. It lets you choose your recording formats with a choice of MP3, Windows Media Audio (WMA) or WAV files.

MusicMatch is available at [<http://www.musicmatch.com>] just for the download time. Of course, if you want a step-up, they have a more deluxe version.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@dealsguy.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

The Department of Homeland PC Security by Patrick J. Suarez, Dayton Microcomputer Assn. Inc.

The Latest Maintenance And Protection Tools Safeguard Your Data

Former Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge now heads a new federal department with the off-kilter title of the Department of Homeland Security, sort of evoking Aaron Copland's music and amber waves of grain. We all know why such a move became necessary.

Just as we now have to keep an eye on things around us in these United States, you must do likewise with your Windows-based PC. Think of computer security as a microcosm of the larger society in which your computer exists, with two fronts of defense against losing your

precious data and your software's carefully cobbled-together configuration, what with patches and upgrades and all.

The first front of defense ironically involves protecting your data from the computer in which it resides. Let's begin with the fearsome registry, that chamber of horrors that holds information about your hardware and software and, if allowed to corrupt with a slowly mounting volume of incorrect or outdated entries, will bring about the demise of your entire system. Finally, someone has invented a program that corrects erroneous entries and removes unneeded data. It does so thoroughly and carefully. It scans every line of the registry and builds a list of wrong entries. It then sweeps this list to find new references in your system for the list's entries. In two mouse clicks, the whole registry is scrubbed clean. This wonder of wonders is Registry Healer 3.0 from www.zoneutils.com. It costs \$19.95, the best double sawbuck you ever spent.

Next, remove fragmentation, the tendency for data to break up into multiple pieces that scatter around your hard drive, with Diskeeper Pro 7.0 from Executive Software (www.diskeeper.com). The program runs \$45 as a download. Diskeeper is the most honest defragger around; sometimes, even multiple passes won't completely defrag a drive. Diskeeper shows you the before and after, and sometimes the after requires another pass or two. And then you might never get to 100% defragmentation. My son's computer has a

60-gigabyte hard drive, and it fragmented so terribly that Norton Utilities couldn't read it. Diskeeper made some progress, but that drive is beyond even Diskeeper's ability to put digital Humpty Dumpty back together again.

Moral of the story: Defrag at least every other day.

And then there are those stray DLL files that hang around long after you have removed an application from your system. DLL files sit in C:\Windows\System and act as code libraries for Windows programs.

Think of them as executive assistants to .EXE files, (e.g., word.exe). Word.exe needs an army of DLL files to help it do things like creating Word's screen images with which you are so familiar. It also needs them to help it perform actions (e.g., saving files, etc.). The popular "disk cleanup" programs you see on store shelves no longer seek and destroy old DLLs. But AnalogX's DLLArchive does. Actually, DLLArchive stores DLLs it removes from C:\Windows\System in another directory. Once you are absolutely certain that the DLLs that DLLArchive has banished are no longer needed, you can empty that

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folder (C:\Windows\DLLArchive). Final note: I do recommend Norton's Clean Sweep. It does safely rid your hard drive of unneeded files that build up during Web browsing. Get Clean Sweep at any store that sells software.

Add a final touch with DiskPie, an application from www.pcmag.com that tells you which programs are hogging your drive.

Voila! You've gained back hard drive room and rid your system of stuff it doesn't need and could get you into trouble. And, I'm going to make a statement that I swear is true: Since I have been using the products described above, I have had no problems, none, with Windows Me. It has been as solid as a rock. No kidding. What better endorsement can I give these programs than that?

Let's move on to the other PC defense front, protecting your data from outside influences. First, stop using Microsoft Outlook. Because there are none so deaf as those who will not hear, I'm going to be pushy and obnoxious in the rest of this paragraph. It's the only way I can get through to those who need to read this. Ready? I know that there are obstinate corporate wanks out there who overglorify this deadly program, and they do so with a certain level of stuffy arrogance. Fine. You people are exactly the problem:

every virus writer in the world writes to Outlook's well-known (and permanent) design flaws. But the Microsoft mindset is a wondrous thing to behold, so you folks will continue to gather and spread viruses at unprecedented rates. Here's a news flash: there are alternate programs out there that work just as well and that do not help the spread of malicious e-mail code. OK, that's off my chest, and it ought to generate a certain level of e-mail traffic to the editor and publisher of this newsletter. At least I hope so.

You need firewall software, a Trojan horse sniffer, and an effective antivirus program. This is such well-trodden territory that I won't reiterate the obvious. I will tell you that my favorite trio of protection in this arena is ZoneAlarm Pro (finally, thank heavens, available on retail software shelves everywhere); Trojan Remover from www.simplysup.com (\$24.95); and Norton Antivirus 2002, newly redesigned with the smartest antivirus engine that automatically grabs updates from its home Web site. I've tried them all and Norton gets my vote. ZoneAlarm Pro, by the way, makes my Windows based computers

totally invisible to everything on the Internet.

Essentially, my PCs can see the world, but the world has no idea that my PCs even exist.

Go one more mile, then, and visit www.scumware.com. Download and run AdAware, Surf + and Gator. These programs remove spyware from your system. Spyware is insidious code planted by advertisers in your registry and Windows folder. This, friends, is going to be a big deal in Congress as users face off against marketing muscle. These guys want to climb into your wallet, psyche and soul, and they'll stop at nothing in terms of Web bugs and bots to get there. Be on your guard. Tell them to take a hike.

I find it sad that we must invest so much time and energy into protecting us from each other. What a glorious tool the computer continues to be. But with good comes evil, and you have to gird your digital loins against the world that exists past your firewall.

I leave you with a few thoughts. First, sometimes these programs can give you wrong information, but it's easy to tell when they do. I tried to install the new Real One, the latest edition of Real Audio, into my Windows Me computer. After installation, Real One would not open. So, I tried to use Add/Delete Programs and the uninstaller failed. I manually extricated the program from my hard drive and registry. When I ran DLL Archive, it found 1,700 DLL files suddenly orphaned. Registry Healer found 1,548 registry errors. Clearly, this was nonsense and you learn what to trust and what not to trust with these programs. The installation and forced removal of Real One tipped my Windows Me over the edge and into the Chasm of Registry Oblivion. I reformatted the drive and installed, gasp!, Windows XP. Since I had not installed a new operating system on that drive in years (Windows 95 became Windows 98 which became Windows Me), it was time to rebuild everything from scratch. Real One was the program that finally did my system in.

Second, all of the programs I described in this article are for protection in the Windows environment. On my Linux computer, I need none of this.

And I rarely have a problem. Now, as they say, "pila in area tua est". [If Caesar were alive today, he'd translate that to "the ball is in your court". Go forth and conquer your system.] pjsuarez@gemair.com

[Patrick J. Suarez, a member of the Dayton Microcomputer Assn. Inc. is a nationally recognized Internet writer, trainer, speaker and consultant. He has

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Akron-Canton PC Users Group
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**Next Meeting - Feb. 4th,
Taylor Memorial Library
Cuyahoga Falls, OH**

First Class Mail

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appeared on numerous radio and TV programs across the United States. He is the Internet speaker at DMA 's semi-annual Computerfest trade show in Dayton, OH each spring & fall. Mr. Suarez published a tutorial software program called "The Beginner's Guide to the Internet" in 1993, and a book by the same title followed in 1995. In addition, Mr. Suarez has been published by Que. Mr. Suarez operates a Web site supporting people who have just learned that they have a tumor. He has just completed a project with Qwest Communications in Dublin, Ohio, as a Senior Technical Communicator.]

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Future Events

Sun., Feb. 17th, 2001
Peter Trapp Computer Show at
Tadmor Temple off I-77 to Arlington Road, Akron, OH (Exit 120)