

# The Newsbyte

THE TRI-COUNTY COMPUTER CLUB

December 1999

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Happy  
Holidays!

Happy  
New Year!

## NEXT MEETING

December 14, 1999 – 7:30pm  
OSU-ATI Skou Hall Room 101  
1328 Dover Rd., Wooster OH

### Program

*Is Your Computer Ready for  
Y2K?: A Guide for Preparing  
Home Computers*  
by Microsoft Corporation

Discussion of Disbanding Club

Member Raffle: \$25

Election of Officers



## Treasurer's Report

Balance as of 10/12/99 —	\$464.67
Income —	\$0.00
Expenditures —	\$20.98
<b>Balance as of 12/14/99 —</b>	<b>\$443.69</b>

## Club Membership Report

Current Membership → **23**

Members Joining/Renewing

None

All new 1999 memberships expire on December 31, 1999. Visit TCC Online at <http://www.tricountycc.org/joinus/> for more info.

## Review Products

If you are interested in acquiring software for low or no cost, write a review for the Newsbyte! (Based on a discussion with Willis Troyer, it is expected that members will be able to keep software they review for free.) Please note that these are very generous offers compared to what most other user groups provide.

Since there are delays in requesting software and when it arrives, please place your requests early! If you are interested in writing a review of software, contact Brian Powell via e-mail at [reviews@tricountycc.org](mailto:reviews@tricountycc.org) or via the telephone at (330) 828-8365.

## T-Shirt Ordering

We have received a quote for our TCC t-shirts. They will be ash (light) gray t-shirts with a small version of Mr. Disk and the club name on your upper left chest. The back will feature a blowup of Mr. Disk, the club name and web site address.

The shirts will cost about \$13 each for adult sizes small through extra-large. The price may be lower depending on number of requests. Contact Brian Powell at [members@tricountycc.org](mailto:members@tricountycc.org) to order.

## Proposal to Disband Tri-County Computer Club

Due to low attendance, there is currently a proposal to complete operations of the Tri-County Computer Club and disband. (If it is voted that the club is to be disbanded, the club probably would operate through the end of Spring 2000.)

Please express any comments on this issue to the officers and attend the December meeting. If the members present at the meeting vote for disbanding the club, officers will begin to execute plans to ending club operations.

## 1999 Club Officers

### PRESIDENT

Willis Troyer (330) 669-3925  
[troyerpw@juno.com](mailto:troyerpw@juno.com)

### VICE-PRESIDENT

Brian Powell (330) 828-8365  
[brianmp@neobright.net](mailto:brianmp@neobright.net)

### PROGRAM CHAIRPERSON

Tom Zimmerman (330) 264-5521  
[zimmerman.4@osu.edu](mailto:zimmerman.4@osu.edu)

### SECRETARY

Amy Besancon (330) 202-5287  
[sunflower@valkyrie.net](mailto:sunflower@valkyrie.net)

### TREASURER

Pat Johnston (330) 264-8726  
[dolphinpj@aol.com](mailto:dolphinpj@aol.com)

## November Newsbyte

Due to time constraints, there was not a November 1999 edition of the *Newsbyte*. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

# The First Personal Computer

by Werner Buchholz, Mid-Hudson Computer User Group

The first issue of this microCHIP newsletter appeared in 1977, and its name referred to the microprocessors used in the then novel desktop machines which had attracted the attention of hobbyists and other early users. But were they the first personal computers? Many people think so, and if you consult, for example, Van Nostrand's "Encyclopedia of Computer Science," its article on Personal Computing begins with "The personal computer has been in existence only since 1974..." and points to the MITS Altair.

The answer really depends on how you define a personal computer. If you insist on a machine small enough to fit on a desk, the Altair may well have been the first, even though it had hardly enough capabilities to do much useful work. Better examples might be Radio Shack's TRS-80 or the Apple II, both of which appeared a few years later. If, on the other hand, you define a personal computer as a computer that is specifically designed to be used by a single person, you may have to go back about another 20 years to an IBM product that barely saw the light of day.

My nominee for the first personal computer is what was formally called the IBM 610 Auto-Point Computer, which was announced in 1957. It was the brainchild of John J. Lentz, a member of the Watson Laboratory - not the big IBM research lab. in Yorktown but an earlier one near Columbia University in New York City.

According to the book "IBM's Early Computers" by Bashe, et al, Lentz started experimenting in 1948 with circuits for use in a "personal computer" (p. 530). Later the project became known as the "Personal Automatic Calculator (PAC)." Lentz had an engineering model completed in 1954, but the machine remained in limbo until 1957, when its production was turned over to, of all things, IBM's division responsible for making

time clocks and scales. With the long delay and with salesmen who knew nothing about computing, this was a sure death sentence for the machine.

As you can see from a photo on p. 506 in the Bashe book, the 610 was far from a small machine and, with a purchase price of \$55,000, it was well out of range of amateur users. (I had a chance to play with it once in the Poughkeepsie lab.) The machine could be run like a desk calculator from a keyboard. For repeated calculations one could have the machine record the keystrokes on punched paper tape during a session with sample data and then play back the program for each run with stops for manually entering new data. Alternatively, one could punch both the program and data for different runs on paper tape and have the whole executed automatically.

A feature of the 610, and the reason for the name "auto-point," was that it could do arithmetic on 31-digit decimal numbers with the decimal point moving back and forth depending on the number of digits required to the left and right of the point in the result. This mode, which is intermediate between fixed-point and floating-point arithmetic, appeared again later in handheld electronic calculators.

Some might object to calling the 610 a computer because it could not store the program on its magnetic-drum memory and thus was not a stored-program machine.

If that is part of your definition, you would have to look for another candidate, perhaps in the 1960s, for a first. I prefer to put the emphasis on "personal" and "automatic," for which the 610 qualified at least up to a point (no pun intended). The credit for a first certainly belongs to a machine that existed well before the 1970s.

**Article courtesy of author and "microCHIP" newsletter of Mid-Hudson Computer User Group, Poughkeepsie NY.**

# Finding and Fixing Y2K Problems

## Part Three: Operating Systems and Y2K

by Ray Isenson, Central Coast Computer Club, Santa Maria CA

### PC OPERATING SYSTEMS

This is Part III of a multipart article on preparing one's personal computer for a smooth transition into the year 2000 (Y2K). The preceding part addressed that which is generally described as the hardware aspect, the BIOS chip and the "real time clock" This, the third part considers the software aspects of the problem .

*Disclaimer: For the protection of the Tri-County Computer Club and the Central Coast Computer Club and their respective members, the following disclaimer is established: Testing and upgrading your PC to achieve Y2K compliance will require running some programs and adding software patches and making other changes to your system. Within the several sections of this document various programs are identified as being designed to correct the deficiencies that you may find to exist in your machine. The software and patches come from generally reliable vendors. They have been tried in machines belonging to members of the Central Coast Computer Club without creating any observable, unfavorable consequence. Introducing the programs into your machine shouldn't cause any problems, if properly done. However, neither the Central Coast Computer Club nor the Tri-County Computer Club can accept any responsibility for losses to your PC, hardware, data files or software, resulting from such introduction.*

The Operating System (O/S) is the software that couples the computer's hardware to the application program; the word processor, the spreadsheet, the data base or a shoot'em up game. They include familiar names like MS/DOS or Windows, 3.1, 95, 98 or NT. In common, they share the requirement that they must be Y2K compliant or the computer on which they function will not be. In discussing patches or upgrades, the convention established in the preceding section will apply. The bracketed number following a patch or upgrade identification refers to a source listing in the appendix.

**MS-DOS 6.22:** This, the last of Microsoft's stand- alone DOS systems is, with one major exception, relatively free of Y2K problems. The exception is the built-in MSBACKUP. MSBACKUP creates a catalogue using a YMMDD format. It does not recognize dates greater than 1999. MS/ DOS , itself, recognizes dates to CY2035. It does not display the full year in a file listing but it will sort files correctly. If a 2-digit date is entered the O/S assumes that the date entered is in the 20th century. The MS/ DOS DATE is the only O/S command that accepts dates. It does not correctly handle 2-digit dates from 00-79. This command returns the error message, "Invalid Date," Dates entered using a 4-digit year are handled correctly (e.g., 01-01-2000). There are no patches to enable a 2-digit entry as it isn't considered to be a significant problem.

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## Fixing Y2K Problems Continued from Page 4

**Windows 3.1, 3.11, Windows for Work Groups 3.1 and 3.11:** These O/Ss are functionally dependent upon MS/DOS 6.22 so the above comments and limitations apply. Additionally, however, there are minor quirks in the file manager that are easily corrected with an updated version of WINFILE.EXE. Windows 3.x, if not corrected, will report out the date 01/01/2000 as 01/01/;000. A similar discrepancy results from using a noncompliant version of WINFILE.EXE with WorkGroups.

The patches, available at no cost from Microsoft, are contained in W31FILUP[10] and WFWFILUP[11], respectively. These self-extracting executables contain the proper version of WINFILE.EXE and a short text file describing the installation. The versions are not interchangeable.

To verify the need for and effect update for Windows 3.x, check the date for the file, WINFILE.EXE in the Windows directory. If it predates October '97 rename it "WINFILE.OLD," expand W31FILUP.EXE to extract the 10/14/97 version of WINFILE.EXE and copy it to the Windows directory. Similarly for the Windows for Work Groups 3.x, find the old version, rename it to WINFILE.OLD and copy in the 12/02/97 version from WFWFILUP.EXE.

After making those changes, select the "Main Program Group" and "International."

In the box showing date format, click on change, if necessary, and modify the date format to show the year as 4-digits.

**Windows 95:** As of this writing, three updates and a change in the specified date

format are known to be required to bring Windows 95 into compliance. The three updates are: WIN95Y2K.EXE[12], W95FILUP.EXE[13] and 401COMUPD.EXE[14]. 401COMUPD, when installed, updates the existing COMCTL32.DLL and addresses known Year 2000 issues on the Windows 95, Windows 98 and Windows NT 4 platforms. The other two updates are unique to Windows 95. W95FILUP is an improved version of File Manager. In its absence the file manager displays an incorrect date. WIN95Y2K corrects problems in COMMAND.COM involving DIR and DATE. It is installed by copying the file to the Windows folder and finding it in Microsoft Explorer and double clicking on it. W95FILUP is treated just the same. It, too, is self-installing. Copy 401COMUPD.EXE to the Windows folder and do a START/RUN. In the open box enter "401COMUPD /r:n /q:a" without the quotes.

To adjust the date format, go to Control Panel, click on the Regional Settings Icon and reset the "Short-Date Format from mm-dd-yy to mm-dd-yyyy. It is a way of telling your applications programs to run in a four-digit calendar year mode.

**Windows 98:** As previously noted, this O/S also requires 401COMUPD[14]. It installs just as for Windows 95. And, as in 95, the short-date format must be reset. (See above paragraph for instructions.) A CD-ROM containing other patches [15] has been and will be mailed to registered users. They may also be downloaded from Microsoft's Web pages.

## APPLICATIONS

In addition to the real time clock (RTC \BIOS ROM combination and the operating system (DOS or WINDOWS) being Y2K compliant, each application program must

## **Finding and Fixing Y2K Problems**

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be able to handle the millennium transition. With, undoubtedly, some few exceptions, CY1999 versions of application programs; spreadsheets, data bases, word processors, will be Y2K compliant. However, many of us have old favorites with which we are familiar and whose continued use we prefer. Additionally, many of us may be confronted by extensive files prepared with these older programs; files so voluminous that conversion to a new program might not be economically feasible.

Fortunately, some of the programmers of these older applications did envision the possibility that someone might be using their "brain child" past the millennium. Prior to discarding your older data base or spreadsheet you are well advised to first investigate whether that program is Y2K compliant or whether and how to modify it to achieve compliance.

Where the program came from a major publisher such as Microsoft, Lotus (IBM), Symantec or Intuit, for examples, look to their Internet Web pages for information detailing Y2K compliance or the availability of patches to make them so.

Lotus's 123 Spreadsheets and Borland's DB3+ Relational Data Base are examples of applications that have been very popular for 10 years or more. Both will be useful without major change until the year 2099; probably far enough into the future for most of us.

Lotus 123, whether the DOS or Windows version was designed for a life span of 199 years. If you are using the "@NOW" function, your spreadsheet on the first of January, 2000 will report "1-Jan-2000" or in

one of the other possible formats selected by you. For the "@DATE(yy,mm,dd)" function you'll need to input the year as 100 plus the last two digits of the year. Thus, March 3, 2013, would be input as "@DATE(113,03,03)." The computer will output that command as: 3-Mar-2013. Sorts on dates or comparisons will work satisfactorily.

Users of Borland's DB3+ will have a little work to accomplish to get that program into Y2K compliance. In the directory (or folder) containing the DB3.exe file there's a small file, "CONFIG.DB." Bring this file up in a text editor such as Edit or Notepad It probably has three or four line; e.g.,

```
"STATUS=ON"  
"COMMAND=CLEAR"  
"COMMAND=SET DEFAULT TO A."
```

To bring DB3+ into compliance with Y2K needs, one only has to add the line "CENTURY=ON" to the existing list. Having done that, the program will modify the date field's size to encompass a 4 digit year and will change all existing dates to a dd/mm/yyyy format. It will, the first time data are displayed, show all dates as being in the 20th century; i.e., 19xx. The user will have to go through the data base, record by record, changing the year field to 20xx where appropriate. This need be done just once. And the data base is compliant and accurate. DB3+ will recognize the four digit year for display and calculations.

Because of the broad use of Microsoft Works ver 4.0, its compliance with Y2K requirements was examined. Although the spreadsheet is partially compliant, having a useful life until the year 2079, it has other deficiencies. To bring the Works 4.0 or 4.5 into compliance Microsoft offers a free update, WORKSY2K.EXE[16]. Installing the update will bring either to a ver. 4.51

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status.

Among other major software producers most have been trying to protect their customers against problems emanating from the century roll over. In addition to Microsoft and Oracle, for example, most big names are to be commended.

Intuit Corporation has made an obvious and concerted effort to insure Y2K compliance for their many products. Not only are the 1999 versions of Quicken, QuickBooks, QuickPay and Quicken Financial Planner compliant but attention has been paid to prior versions. Quicken for DOS, versions 5 through 8 and Quicken for Windows, versions 1-5 allow for dates from 1901-2027; although for dates beyond 2000 the year entry must be four-digit; i.e., dd/mm/yyyy. More recent versions of Quicken for Windows allow the user to enter the date with two digits for post 2000 years but require a four-digit year entry for years 1900 - 1927. Lotus, too, has demonstrated a deep concern for the Y2K compliance of its products. By and large all recent versions of Lotus Notes and the Lotus Suite are compliant. For information regarding a specific, older product see the Lotus web site. The greater problem arises when the software comes from now defunct or custom software houses.

Where the computer is the mainstay of a business accounting system and the origins of some of the software is questionable, there are aids to help one ascertain compliance of the entire system. A freeware program, "Y2KAudit"[17], downloadable from the Internet, claims to be able to check up to 1000 files on a hard drive to test for likely Y2K problems and prepare a report. The program was not

extensively tested for this report.

A commercially available program, McAfee 2000 Tool Box, was referenced above. It, too, claims to compare the software it finds on your hard drive to a built-in list of known programs with the Y2K compliance of each and prepare a report as to which on your drive need attention.

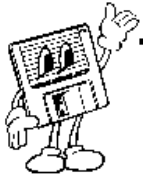
Another, very well received, software auditing program, Norton 2000 is reviewed below. All things considered, if your livelihood depends significantly on your computer it may be the best way to go. One way or another, the application programs on your computer should be evaluated and updated or replaced as necessary to insure Y2K compliance.

### *Editor's Note:*

*A review of Norton 2000, which is referenced in the above article and included as part of this article's distribution was to have appeared in the December edition of the Newsbyte, which was merged with the November edition to create the version you are reading. Therefore, the Norton 2000 review will not appear in the Newsbyte as it will be too late to be use to members. The Tri-County Computer Club apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused.*

**Y2K Countdown:**

**Less Than One  
Month until 2000!**



# The Newsbyte

THE TRI-COUNTY COMPUTER CLUB

## Finding and Fixing Y2K Problems: Part Three

### The First PC

## Next Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 14  
at 7:30pm

OSU-ATI Skou Hall  
Room 101

Preparing Computer  
for Year 2000

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