



## THE PREZ SEZ...

2004? What happened to the big concern for starting the new millennium? Ah well, time passes. Much too rapidly. Since beginning a new year is always a good time to evaluate, clean out the old to make room for the new, and make resolutions that can be ignored without too much psychological damage, I will not

break with tradition.

In the evaluation department, we are still in the process of recovering from the loss of computers eight months ago. The insurance company has determined that 50% would be an equitable number to cover our loss. I assume this covers decreased value over time, the professional term being depreciation. The check is in the mail. Bureaucratic wheels grind slowly and to date we are waiting for the money. This

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## SOFTWARE WINNERS BE PREPARED!

If you were the winner of software during our recent visit from Microsoft, bring your certificates with you to our next meeting on January 13th. THE SOFTWARE IS IN!!

You will need to present the certificate to claim your software, so please have it with you. No certificate... no software.



## Lon's Freeware of The Month

by Lon Whistler,  
lwhis@hotmail.com

### Discovering Your Hard Drive

This program was discussed last month by Art True and is a comprehensive study of a computer's hard drive.

I have also brought in a few disks on **teaching Windows XP.**

## It's not the flu... it's a VIRUS!

Virus' are spreading like crazy lately. There always seems to be something or other going around. Here is some helpful information about leftover error messages you may find helpful. J

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## Examining Errors

Usually error messages that appear when Windows boots are easy to fix, but this month a reader presented us with a startup error that was extremely difficult to track down. If you've removed a virus from your computer and continue to see errors when Windows boots, you'll definitely want to read this month's column. We also have tips for deleting stuck files from the Recycle Bin and defragmenting the hard drive.

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### Quick Tip

**Delete for Good:** When you delete a file from your hard drive, it's not really gone. Instead, it hangs out in the Recycle Bin so that you can later retrieve it. However, if you're sure that you want to completely delete a file, select the file and then press SHIFT-DEL. Confirm your action in the message box that displays, and your file will be history.

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*Take a look and take the poll*

*Meeting Time and Place*  
2nd and 4th Tuesday  
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.  
Seventh-day Adventist Church  
29885 Bradley Road  
Sun City, CA

**THE PREZ SEZ...**

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delay has naturally pushed the start of classes down the calendar and with any luck we should be starting in early February. One positive aspect of growing older (the only one I have so far discovered) is patience.

Out with the old to make room for the new. As with changing your smoke alarm batteries when you spring forward or fall back each year (which I know you all do without fail), January is a good time to house clean the old hard drive. Run disk cleanup, do a full scan and defrag. That last one is always fun. You can spend most of a day watching a group of colored squares (Win 98) scurry across your screen like insatiable ermites, rearranging your scattered data into a cohesive arrangement.

Resolutions that can be ignored without mental damage. Cleaning out the My Documents Folder of all those important files you saved for future reference (which you have never looked at again) and saving the five really important ones in appropriate folders should take not more than a week or two. Ditto the My Pictures folder.

One serious issue we face is moving the newsletter to the web site. This takes a good deal of time and work to accomplish. We need people to step forward and become contributors. Product evaluations, interesting web sites, or any tips or tricks you have picked up that help you in your constant struggle with your Personal Confuser. We also plan to monitor access to the newsletter, and if interest is insufficient, it may follow the Dodo bird into extinction.

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to use the Web and he won't bother you for weeks.

**Computer Classes**

Looking to get the most out of your computer? Then CCMV Computer classes are for you. Whether learning for the first time, or brushing up on tips and tricks you may have forgotten, Computer classes are the best way to do it.

Been computing for awhile and want to share what you've learned? Become a trainer or assistant. Contact our Dean, Ed Freeman for more information.  
ebfreeman@aol.com

Classes will start the first week of February and run for 6 weeks.

Monday Feb 2nd begins 2 classes of **XP**,  
Wednesday Feb 4 starts **Basic Word**,  
And Friday the 6th, learn **Win 98**

Sign up at the back table at the next CCMV meeting, at the Kay Cenicerros Community Center front desk or contact the Registrar, Evelyn Rahn, to sign up at: [erahn@inland.net](mailto:erahn@inland.net)

Classes are first come, first served so get your reservation in early!

**Evening Classes By Joannie**

Joannie's new Class schedule is out. The two evening classes run from 5:00 PM-8:30 PM, on Tuesday & Thursday. Find schedule and class outlines at: [www.ByJoannie.com](http://www.ByJoannie.com).

**Basic Word** - Jan. 21 & 22  
(note date change)

**Basic Excel** - Jan. 27 & 29

**Register online at:**  
**[www.ByJoannie.com](http://www.ByJoannie.com) or call (909) 301-6226.**

## Examining Errors

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**The Problem:** After removing a virus from a Windows Me computer, an error message pops up each time the reader boots Windows.

**Error Message:** "Cannot find X.dll or Cannot find X.exe" (X is the name of a DLL [dynamic-link library] or EXE [executable] file.)

We've answered a lot of questions in this column that pertain to error messages that appear during startup, but this is a special circumstance that may help many readers who've successfully removed viruses, Trojans, or other malicious programs from their computers.

Normally, when Windows attempts to load a program as the computer is booting, you can uninstall the program, remove its shortcut from the Startup folder, or use the System Configuration utility to prevent the program from loading automatically. Certain malicious programs, however, place a line that launches the malicious program (or a portion of that program) in the System.ini file.

System.ini is one of many boot files used to store program and other settings, and it's been carried over from the old Windows 3.x days, before the Registry was created to store all of these settings in a single location. Modern OSes (operating systems) such as Windows XP Pro don't even need System.ini or similar files, such as Boot.ini, to load any longer. They still maintain copies

of these files, but only to retain backward compatibility with legacy programs that are incapable of storing settings in the Registry. Because System.ini loads automatically when the computer boots, it's a perfect place for crackers to place lines that launch their malicious programs.

If you see error messages when you boot the computer that claim Windows can't find a certain file, the first step to take is to fire up your antivirus software, make sure it downloads and installs the latest antivirus definition files from the manufacturer, and perform a complete antivirus scan. If the software detects a virus and removes it from the system, reboot the computer and see if the error message still appears when Windows loads. If it does, click Start and Run, type **sysedit** in the Open field, and click OK. A main window appears with several cascading windows inside; you need to find the window that contains System.ini in the title bar (for example, C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM.INI). Click the title bar of that window to bring it to the front of the stack, and to play it safe, you may want to click the square icon with the X in the upper-right corner of all the other cascading windows so that the one containing System.ini is the only one open. Accidentally modifying or deleting anything in the other windows can have serious repercussions, so be extremely careful.

Look in the System.ini window for a [boot] entry (it should be at the top).

Under the [boot] entry, you should find a Shell=Explorer.exe entry that's not in brackets. If you see X.dll or X.exe (whatever program or DLL was listed in your error message) in the Shell=Explorer.exe entry, that's the cause of the problem. Delete the extraneous text, leaving only Shell=Explorer.exe on that line, click File, click Save, close the System Configuration Editor, and then reboot your computer.

**The Problem:** A reader recently deleted a DOS game from her Windows 98 computer, and the deleted files ended up in the Recycle Bin. Now, trying to empty the Recycle Bin manually generates an error message, which suspends the deletion process, leaving many deleted files in her Recycle Bin.

**Error Message:** "Cannot delete "X," cannot find the specified path. Make sure you typed the right path."

In a situation like this, try to drag "X" (the file listed in the error message) out of the Recycle Bin and then try emptying the rest of the contents of the Recycle Bin. You might also try to open the Recycle Bin, manually select all of the files you want to delete, and delete around the problematic file.

If you want to completely solve the problem and rebuild the Recycle Bin, click Start, click Shut Down, select the Restart In MS-DOS Mode radio button, and click OK. At the command prompt, type the following series of commands, pressing ENTER after each line. Remember to use

backslashes (\) instead of slashes (/), minus signs (from the number pad) instead of dashes, and don't forget to put spaces in the appropriate places:

**CD\**

**CD RECYCLED**

**ATTRIB -r -s -h info2.\***

**DEL INFO2**

Reboot your computer, holding down the CTRL key as Win98 boots. When the Startup menu appears, use the arrow keys on your keyboard to highlight Command Prompt Only and press ENTER. When the command prompt appears, type the following series of commands, pressing ENTER after each line:

**attrib -r -s -h c:\recycled**

**deltree c:\recycled**

Reboot the computer normally, without holding down the CTRL key, and when Windows loads, the Recycle Bin should be empty.

**The Problem:** Every time a reader tries to defragment her hard drive an error message appears and the defragmentation process starts over from scratch, repeating this process in a seemingly endless loop.

**Error Message:** "Drive's Contents Have Changed: Restarting . . ."

This is more an informative message than an error message; however, the end result is just as annoying as an actual error because the defragmentation process never finishes.

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# Examining Errors

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**Defragmentation** is a process used to reorganize files on the hard drive so they are stored and accessed more efficiently. All versions of Windows since Windows 95 have a Disk Defragmenter utility accessible by clicking Start, Programs (All Programs in WinXP), Accessories, System Tools, and Disk Defragmenter.

Before Disk Defragmenter can do its work, it must analyze the contents of the hard drive to determine the best way to reorganize the data. If the contents of the hard drive are modified in any way during the defragmentation process, Disk Defragmenter must then reanalyze the hard drive. It's important to shut down all other programs before starting the utility. Antivirus software is notorious for constantly accessing the hard drive, so be sure to disable it before running Disk Defragmenter. Also press CTRL-ALT-DELETE simultaneously to see a list of running tasks that you can manually shut down (choose the Applications tab after pressing CTRL-ALT-DELETE in WinXP/2000 to see this list).

In Windows 95/ 98/98SE/Me the only two tasks required to run Windows are Systray and Explorer, so leave those entries alone. Otherwise, click entries to highlight them and then click End Task to close them. You must then press CTRL-ALT-DELETE to bring the Close Program dialog box back up and repeat the process for all of the other running programs. Some programs are more stubborn than others, and it may take several tries to shut them down. Eventually, you'll be left with only Systray and Explorer on the list, at which point you should be able to run Disk Defragmenter without triggering the constant restarts.


In WinXP/2000 do the same thing in the Applications tab, but here you can shut down everything without crashing the computer. Now click the Processes tab and look for entries that have your login name in the User Name column. You can highlight entries and click End Process to shut them down, but don't close the Explorer.exe or Taskmgr.exe processes. Also leave alone all processes that have

System, Network Service, or Local Service listed in the User Name column. Close Task Manager, run Disk Defragmenter, and if you still see the error message press CTRL-ALT-DELETE to open Task Manager and click the Processes tab again.

Look for entries that have SYSTEM (in all capital letters) in the User Name column that also have lower-case names in the Image Name column, and close them one by one. Don't close any entries that have Image Names spelled in all capital letters and don't close entries that have names in a mix of capital and lower-case letters, such as System or System Idle Process. Disk Defragmenter should run without trouble once the lower-case entries are closed. If the system locks up after you close a process, reboot the computer and don't close that process manually in the future.

by Tracy Baker

Have questions about an error message you've seen? Send us your message (errormessages@smartcomputing.com) and we'll try to decipher it. Tell us what version of Windows you're using, give the full text of the error message, and provide as many details in your explanation as possible. Volume prohibits individual replies.



### QuickTip

**Direct Reflection:**  
 Personalize your PC by changing its background color. To change the background color, right-click any blank area on your Desktop and click Properties. Click the Appearance tab. Make sure Desktop is selected from the Item drop-down menu/palette and click Apply. If you don't like any of the colors available in the Color drop-down menu, click Other to customize your own color. After creating your own color, click Add To Custom Color. Click the color you created under Custom colors,



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*Membership*  
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Dorothy & George Metcalf  
deewoodee@aol.com

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Art True  
arttrue@aol.com

*Cue Card Distribution*  
Art True  
arttrue@aol.com  
&  
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safohio@msn.com

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joannie@RainbowFlair.com

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ebfreeman@aol.com

*Registrar*  
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