

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS
WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET,
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST
SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

- COMPLIMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
- INTERNET FINDS
- TOMORROW'S HOT SITES
- NIFTY NEW PRODUCTS
- THOUGHTS DU JOUR

safe surfing

Complimentary and Alternative Medicine

I'm late with the newsletter this month because of a death in the family. It was a cancer death, and I know many of you have either encountered or are fearing the kind of grief I have been witnessing and experiencing for the past few weeks. There are no words that can console; only time can dampen the deep and horrible pain. I don't want to depress everybody this month, but I do want to share a my personal conviction, even stronger now, for your consideration: If you decide to try non-traditional methods, **PLEASE** make sure they are "complimentary" and that they do not in any way limit your use of conventional and approved treatments!

I realize that there is an active debate on aspects of this topic and that the use of alternative medicines is a very personal decision involving many factors. But it seems to me that there is a basic flaw in the decision to use alternative methods **INSTEAD OF** approved and conventional treatments (i.e., when conventional treatments cannot be provided in combination with another, alternative method). In my mind, such a decision implies a level of paranoia about and distrust of big business (the drug industry in this case) and government (basically the FDA in this case) so deep that it is preferable to risk everything to seek care with only anecdotal evidence of efficacy, if any.



Science is all about the numbers! That is, scientific method demands evidence, and proof comes only from large samples. And the larger and more numerous the samples the better. Small studies and anecdotal evidence are worthless by comparison.

Don't get me wrong, I recognize there are valid issues and other relevant considerations:

- Sure, all effective methods have to start with a single, successful anecdotal case somewhere, sometime that nobody else has found or tested. It just seems very likely to me that any such treatment with serious potential will be taken seriously by scientists and experts within the establishment. So call me naive, but when that rare find occurs, I trust that even big industry, profit-motivated players will want to begin testing the efficacy of those treatments.
- Quality of life issues are tremendously important considerations! It's hard to fault the personal decision to retain a reasonable quality of life instead of what only might provide greater



duration but with almost certainly more pain and aggravation.

- Medical professionals often demand restricting the use of alternative methods for seemingly self-serving reasons. But it seems obvious to me that the use of inadequately tested drugs and methods can interfere with treatments that have some real likelihood of effectiveness. And how can we expect health professionals to determine correct dosages or treatments if we “mix and match” methods?
- Some combinations of treatments (e.g., surgery, radiation and/or chemotherapy) are often insisted upon by some medical professionals to the degree that some treatments may even be “held hostage.” That may seem unconscionable, but there may also be very good and sound rationale for that kind of approach. It’s not unreasonable to insist that your medical professionals work harder to articulate their rationale in an understandable, effective manner during a time of tremendous personal stress that makes communication difficult at best.
- And finally, to quote Kurt Cobain, “Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they’re not after you.” Or more elegantly from Henry Kissinger, “Even a paranoid has some real enemies.” A healthy degree of paranoia, like skepticism, is reasonable and prudent. Your doctor may be the world’s expert on one, two or even several issues, but you may find that one thing he did not know, prompt him to think about something he might not have thought of, or even catch him before he makes a mistake by doing your own homework and engaging him in respectful but penetrating conversation and inquiry. You owe that degree of critical thinking to yourself and your loved ones as much as your doctor owes you the opportunity! My sister calls that being “your own advocate.” That’s close to what I mean, but I’m also suggesting that even we poorly equipped lay people can often enlighten or even help to educate even our most motivated and capable physicians and scientists.

Again, I’m sorry if this tirade seems morbid, preachy or out of place, but my recent experience has made the topic of great personal concern to me. So if talking about it helps even one person reexamine how they care for themselves and their loved ones it will not have been improper.

Speaking of “trustworthy” government agencies, the National Institute of Health sponsors an excellent web site at <http://nccam.nih.gov> that provides tons of information

regarding complimentary and alternative treatments and medicine. I believe the information is provided in a very objective and helpful manner.



Internet Finds

Now back to our regularly scheduled programming.

Financial Fate

Download this free software (until recently \$70) to examine your financial position relative to your goals for



the future. The program tracks data in ten categories with associated subcategories.

WESABE

Another free program, this one web-based, says “Wesabe gives you the tools and the insights to take control of your finances. You can see all your bank and credit card balances in one place and learn ways to get ahead, in a few easy steps.” (Hmmm, I thought that was some sort of Japanese horse radish!)



SMART Hard Drive Monitoring

Check out the free program Active@ Hard Disk Monitor at <http://www.ntfs.com/disk-monitor.htm> and keep an eye on the health of your hard drive. Believe me, a crash can be quite a shock and a real hassle!



PC Remote Control

There are several great programs out there that allow you to operate your home computer from a remote location. Remember Telecommuting? Well this is NetCommunting! One of the most heavily advertised programs is GoToMyPC. But you can get many of the same features free by downloading LogMeIn or TightVNC, both of which allow to to get full access to your home computer, launching and closing programs, reading email, copying and editing files. Go here for your free program:



http://download.cnet.com/LogMeIn-Free/3000-2085_4-10874714.html?tag=mncol

http://download.cnet.com/TightVNC/3000-7240_4-10114315.html?tag=mncol

Get Rid of Trojans

It's increasingly easy to become infected by a Trojan today. Remember, that only occurs when you have clicked on an executable program, often by clicking a link embedded in an email or on a web site like Facebook where some seemingly good deal is being offered ("Do you want to scan your system for viruses?" or "Click here for a free flash upgrade?"). The way to avoid this problem is to make it a rule NEVER to click on a link or offer you are not completely familiar with. The fix when you fail to adhere to that precaution is to download Malwarebytes here and run the excellent free program:

http://download.cnet.com/Malwarebytes-Anti-Malware/3000-8022_4-10804572.html?tag=mncol

Free Online Backup

You will only really get the importance of regular hard drive backups after your hard drive crashes when you haven't done one! But trust me, this is a very important function, especially for critical files and photos you do not have copied anywhere else.



SyncBack Free is one of 2BrightSparks numerous programs and it is one of the most useful programs you can have in your toolkit.

With the free version, you get a fully functional backup program, not one limiting the capacity as with other free programs like **Idrive** and **Mozy** (2GB limitations). The paid version promises faster speed and a few other features probably not important enough to pay for. Get the free version here:

http://download.cnet.com/SynchBack-Freeware/3000-2242_4-10413802.html

SynchBack performs a backup onto a device you choose such as an external hard drive, a USB thumbdrive or another computer. Other programs store your backups on their own servers, not on your hard drive, increasing your security. **Idrive** and **Mozy** do that for free, but with a 2GB limitation.



Adrive, another very good free backup program, stores off-site too but with up to 50GB of files!

Nifty New Products



Verbatim PhotoSave DVD

This new product would make a great gift for your friends who are not particularly tech-savvy but who worry (rightly) about losing the photos on their computer hard drives. These folks know what they should do (back up their critical files regularly) but aren't real comfortable with just how to

do it. The new Verbatim products make the process Rain-man easy. You simply execute a small backup program by SoftR that finds and copies all of the photos on your hard drive. If it takes three DVDs, the package price is under \$10' for five it's under \$15. That's a capacity of from 13.5 to 22.5 GB, plenty for most hard drives. And a version of the product is also available for backing up files other than photos as well.

Pinnacle Video Transfer

This new device from Pinnacle Systems captures video directly from your source (a camcorder or VCR for example) to a USB hard drive or memory stick without the need of a PC. The quality is not the highest you can get, but at \$100, it is not too expensive and it is so easy that there is no excuse for not having those cherished home videos backed up to much more secure and durable media.



Tomorrow's Hot Sites

Wasn't it just yesterday when "Google" was not yet a verb? Evolution in technology happens fast. Even before that, sites like Mapquest, Ebay and PayPal had become important parts of our lives and language. I don't have a crystal ball, but I've written recently about sites like Hulu that promise to become important parts of our internet lives in the near future. Here are a few more that PCWorld thinks will become important by the end of 2009.



TV.COM

Not yet a serious competitor to NBC's Hulu, TV.com was

recently purchased by CBS (as was another favorite site of mine, CNET.com). The site offers a good selection of TV shows and movies, but they don't compare in terms resolution to Hulu. Still, with their rapidly growing following and impressive selection, this is a site to keep an eye (or two) on.

Qik.com

It'd be better if they had come up with a more easily pronounced name, but this site is also likely to succeed. You can stream the video you take on your cell phone to Qik.com, thereby making it accessible to anyone else you invite. The site will also archive your videos and send them to Youtube or your Facebook page if you like.



Loopt.com

I have doubts about this site becoming popular, but I mention it because it seems to suit the kinds of folks that are increasingly attracted to social networks like Facebook and MySpace. Loopt is a mobile app (i.e., an application for your cell telephone) that allows you and your friends to pinpoint your locations on a map that also displays area businesses where you might like to meet. Seems a lot more complex and troublesome than a simple telephone call to set up a meeting, but what do I know? That's kind of what I thought about email too!



Power.com

Personally, I'm not a fan of social networking sites. It seems to me they are fads and that they present little more than "I Love Me" walls simulating your own room during, say, high school or college (or maybe mine right now!). Although I've spent some time with them to see if I could relate to the attraction, and I have to admit they can be rather fun, they can also take up an awful lot of time! Power.com has the mission of aggregating all of your social networks at one location where, after logging in, you can view and communicate on any combination of individual sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and many others). If you use more than one social network, this site could be beneficial to you. But the new craze of the future? I don't know about that!



Google Latitude

Similar to Loopt.com, but for your PC as well as for your phone, when you and your friends opt in to Google Latitude, icons appear for each of you in Google Maps. You can choose to disclose or withhold any element of your location (state, city, street, address). This system seems to me to provide more potential for utility than Loopt:



www.google.com/latitude

Triplt.com

Now here's a useful idea! You simply forward all of your

travel confirmations to this site and it is aggregated into a collection of all your details plus other useful tips and information (weather, restaurants, etc.). You can print out the package and carry it with you on your trip:

<http://www.tripit.com/>

Trackle.com

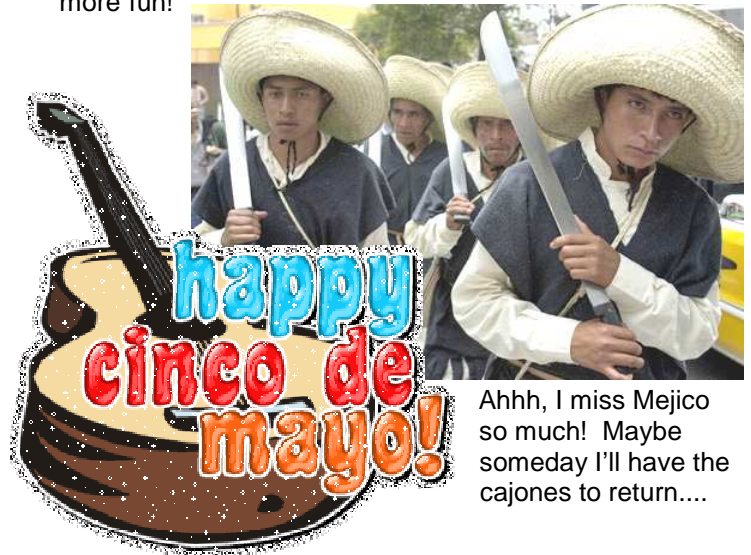
Another site with great potential, this one scouts for new information that you want to be alerted to. Information you can choose to be told about includes Issues such as neighborhood crime, new movies and FDA advisories to name only a few. The only drawback could be the volume of alerts that you might be subjected to. You can choose to go to the site for your alerts or to be emailed daily or instantaneously about them.



Thoughts Du Jour

Once again, I apologize for using this space to prosterlize. I was just "feelin' it" and wanted to share. Hopefully you'll "feel me."

While producing this newsletter every month has proved to be fun, enlightening and rewarding, I think I'm going to dial down the frequency to about bimonthly (as in every other month). That will give me more time to find topics of greater interest. Then I'll see if we can have even more fun!



Ahhh, I miss Mejico so much! Maybe someday I'll have the cajones to return....

Barry Codron, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, lives with his wife and doggie, near his children and grandchildren and their doggies, in the Sacramento area. He enjoys writing and consulting in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments, ideas or corrections at barry.mart@sbcglobal.net.

