



Computer Care Chronicles

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Year 13 - Winter 2005

Seasons Greetings from Larry, Faye and Jacob. Can you believe that another year has disappeared already? It seems that only a blink ago we were complaining about the extremely cold January 2004 we had. All those exciting adventures that we had planned are already gone and we're planning new adventures for next year.

This past summer we did lots of camping. It all started with the cub scouts during the first weekend of June. Jacob (age 9) is currently a first year Webelo, and he and I attended Webelo Woods at the Moses Boy Scout camp in Russell. A full weekend of cub scouting stuff like hiking around the trails, learning new things like basic first aid, fire starting, how to use a compass and much more. We'll be attending again in June 2005 as a second year Webelo.

We also went to Howe Caverns, The Baseball Hall of Fame and camping in NY, as well as a fall campout in Gloucester, MA. That weekend we experienced October in Salem, MA, and a haunted walking tour at sunset of Salem. A whale watch (very cool!) and more.

As a family we did our annual trip to Lake George (actually Bolton Landing) in NY. It was during this very relaxing week that we rented a kayak and discovered our love of kayaking. So much so that we now own three recreational kayaks and spent as much time on the water as we could before it got too cold. I can't wait until winter and the spring melt is over to get back in the water.

In fact a small group of us get together to explore local ponds and lakes once a week when we can. So far we've paddled Otis Reservoir in Otis, Congamond Lakes in Southwick, Long Pond in Brimfield, Norwich Lake in Huntington with plans for

more, come spring. If you have a kayak and want to join us, drop me an email and we'll include you in our paddling exploration adventure. If you see a blue minivan with one to three red kayaks on the roof, you can bet it's us heading off to some body of water to have some fun.

If you are interested in learning more, you can start at www.canoekayak.com and www.paddling.net, as well as many other web sites or drop me an email. I'm just a beginner and one of my friends has been at it for about 7 years.

In 2005 we plan on returning to Lake George, or maybe do some camping in Maine and other places. If all goes well, we'll have three kayaks on the roof, a small pop-up trailer behind us and 3 bicycles all attached to the car. If you have any suggestions for vacation or camping, drop an email to computercare@comcast.net.

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One of the items that I have added to the Computer Care web site is a link that allows you a look as to where Computer Care is located at that given time. I won't go into detail here, but click the "Where's Computer Care?" link. This will take you to a page that explains how my gps is tied into my ham radio and reports my location. On that page is a link that shows the last reported location on a zoomable street level map and general topo map. I may be in your neighborhood. Click and see.

Once in a while you may also want to check the web page for newsletters that can help you run your computer more efficiently or help you solve a problem. Of course, you could always call and make an appointment if the notes don't help completely.

Computer Terrorism

At one time, not too long ago, all you needed was a antivirus program to protect your computer. Now you need that and much more. Every computer that uses the internet should have a antivirus program that gets updated daily, an anti spyware program that prevents intrusive spyware from downloading and clogging up your machine, and a firewall. Plus other helpful tools are a popup blocker and a spam filter/blocker.

Some of these programs are available as free downloads and work much better than commercial software and some must be purchased. Everyone's situation is different. If you are still running Windows ME or 98, then all of these programs can not run in memory without causing it's own problems. You have to pick and choose very carefully. But Windows XP will easily run all of them and still be able to run multiple programs without blinking.

The key to watch out for is if your computer has started to run slowly and gets slower each day or week. If suddenly you no longer have access to the internet or email. These two items clue you in to the fact that something that does not belong on your computer and is inhabiting it. Call us if that happens and we'll bring in the tools to remove and prevent future issues from happening.

New Technology & Tools

So much has happened this past year, it's hard to discuss the most exciting and useful items.

Claimed processor (CPU) speeds are now up to 4.0 Ghz. That's 4000 Mhz! Nearly double last year at this time! Whether it be Intel or AMD, it depends upon how you plan to use the computer. Both are excellent choices and you can not go wrong. Both manufacturers have new cpu designs that allow increased speed and performance.

Storage space is no different. There is a new hard drive bus called SATA. That's a Serial ATA interface. It allows for a faster throughput for faster data transfer. It's a little bit more money, but is faster than standard hard drive.

Hard drive size inside a computer is up to 400 gigs. Or an external drive up to one terabyte. That's

1000 gigs or tons of storage space.

Ram (memory) speeds have escalated, too. This helps performance as does the amount of ram in your system. Anyone buying a new system without 512 megs of ram is not doing themselves or their programs any good. The more memory that Windows XP has to work with, the better the computer will perform.

It's hard to believe that I still see new Dell, Gateway and other mass merchant brands selling computers with just 128 or 256 megs of ram. For as little as \$50 more, you can increase ram to 512 megs and your performance will increase substantially.

Portable Storage has become huge this past year. If you have the need to carry a backup device or transport files between two computers then you need a flash drive. A flash drive is the size of your thumb. It stores up to 4 gigabytes on a chip inside the drive. It plugs into a usb port and the computer sees it as another hard drive. It's easy to copy files between the flash drive and your regular hard drive. You can store anything that fits on the drive: data, documents, programs, pictures, etc. Quick and handy.

Also, small (physically) hard drives are now available, too. It's easy to get something that is around 3 inches long, plugs into a usb drive and gives you one or more gigs of portable storage. Or get a larger sized one that sits on your computer desk and back up all your important data to it. These are available up to one terabyte in size. I use a 160 gig external usb drive to back up to. It's quick and easy.

Do you travel? Do you have wireless built into your laptop or as a add-in card? Why not add a \$30 wireless finder to your keychain? It looks like a car remote control. Why open your computer, power it up and go through the process to see if wireless is in your location? With the wifi finder, just press the button on the wireless finder and it will light up if a wireless signal is in your area.

Do you own a MP3 player? An ipod? Want to play your devices music in your car? Just add a wireless FM transmitter. It plugs into your MP3 players headphone jack and transmits a signal to your fm stereo. Just tune in the correct frequency and enjoy your music on any FM radio. The FM transmitters go

for \$30 for an analog model to \$50 for a digital model.

Are ink prices driving you nuts? Maybe it's time to think about buying your ink someplace other than Staples and other places? A friend of mine sells inkjet ink. You can visit her website at www.theinklady.com or call Laura the Ink Lady and ask about ink or toner for your printer. She can be reached at 413-525-6686 or the website for more information.

Speaking of ink. How about printing your own 4x6 photographs? This can be done with or without a computer. Epson recently introduced a incredible new photo printer. It only prints 4x6 or 2 wallet size prints. But the print quality is excellent and inexpensive. The printer prints in 6 color ink and comes with glossy photo paper. The printer is just \$200 and the ink & paper combo pack is just \$29 and prints over 100 pictures. Each print cost you just 29 cents! This is far less than the cost to print the same on HP's photo printers where you can spend over \$50 for paper and ink and have a photo printout of much less quality.

The printer has a multi-function card reader for digital camera memory cards or you can hook it to the usb port on your computer. It's also small enough to take portable with you. And, Epson will refund you for every picture that does not print perfectly!

What about that web site that you've been tinkering with for a while. Can't figure HTML out? Or maybe the site just does not look professional enough? Or maybe you just keep putting it off and there's no site up yet?

My friend, Dick, and his company, ABgraphic.net, can help you design a great looking site or just fix the one you have. ABgraphic.net designed and keeps my www.wemakehousecalls.biz up and running. Do yourself a favor and go to their website and take a look at some of the sites that they have designed. It's great work and can take your web site and your business (or personal site) to the next level. Take a look at the extra page included and contact them. I highly recommend ABgraphic.net. They do awesome work!

New Computers

This past year more and more people and businesses have been ordering new computers from Computer Care. We can custom design a computer for what

you or your business needs, or for what your budget needs. And, should you have any questions, you can call Computer Care, not some impossible to understand person located across the ocean in a foreign country. For example, Dell still advertises that their tech support people are Americans located in this country. When you place an order, the sales people are easy to understand and work with. But, when you have a problem, all that changes. You will be talking to people with a hard-to-understand accent, and so be prepared to spend hours on the phone with them. Is this what you want?

Wouldn't you prefer to make a local call? To speak with someone that understands what you are saying and will speak to you the same way? Or will stop by and fix the problem? If this is you, then you need to call us when you are ready to purchase a new computer (laptop/notebooks too). We don't have the least expensive machines, we leave that to Walmart and Dell. We do have custom-built and reliable computers that will give you years of service. Computers that you can GROW into, not out of after a short amount of time.

All computers that we sell we deliver to your location, set them up, train you on their use, and transfer any data from your old computer to your new computer.

Local Services

Local service is something that many of us specialize in. We all take pride in our work and we work very hard (just ask my wife) to solve or fix your problems. People are always asking me if I know a good someone for this or that, and usually I do.

In the past few years I've joined a small business networking group. There's a group of 20 or so of us that provide local, hands-on, personal service in the area. If you are looking for a photographer, lawyer, realtor, handyman or many other services, point your web browser to www.ebbegroup.com and click on the "Our Members" link. There you will find all the above services and much more. They have all become friends of mine and I know I can reliably refer you to them, knowing you will get excellent service. Feel free to contact me with any questions at any time.

Contact Info

There are a few ways to contact me.

Office: (413) 567-3505

Cell Phone: (413) 348-3289 (*Don't hesitate to call me here during the day*)

Email: computercare@comcast.net or wb1dby@arrl.net (they both go to the same place)

Thank You!

I owe you all a big thank you for making 2004 such a wonderful year! I appreciate your business very much and will continue to earn your business by keeping you happy in 2005 and future years.

Have a Healthy and Happy Holiday Season!

Larry Krainson - Computer Care



Computer Care

Return Service Requested