



# NIBBLES & BITS

Tuesday, January 14, 6:30 p.m. at Sunny Hills Racquet Club, Fullerton — Bring a friend!

## JANUARY PROGRAM

### Easy-to-use Alpha Five database to be demonstrated



Alpha Five Version 5, the newest release of Alpha Software Inc.'s award winning database product that is truly the ultimate combination of speed, ease of

use and power will be introduced to our group by Doug Chanley, an Alpha Software representative.

Alpha Five is ideal for novice and expert users alike to effectively and efficiently manage data.

Alpha Five Version 5 is the most feature-filled database and application development tool ever released by Alpha Software in its twenty year history. You will be able to track, report and manage any information — be it about people, projects, images, equipment or facilities.

A virtually limitless supply of carefully and logically thought out Genies make Version 5 of Alpha Five extremely easy to use.

Version 5s revolutionary and innovative application scripting capability makes you self-sufficient in terms of being able to build

sophisticated, customized and highly automated applications and solutions for your particular business or organization.

You will find Alpha Five Version 5 is designed to provide you with enormous power and flexibility in manipulating and reporting on data, without requiring that you acquire programming skills.

One of the customers of Version 5 summed it up by stating, "Version 5 is a superb product—you don't have to know how to use it—just let Alpha Five know what you want to accomplish, sit back and relax and watch Alpha Five Version 5 do the rest for you."

• ***"If you're looking for a database that's easier to use than Microsoft Access and yet offers plenty of power, then you would do well to consider the venerable Alpha Five—a simple, powerful, and elegant relational database."* - PC World**

• ***"Alpha Five combines the ease of Approach with the power of FoxPro, while leaving Access in the dust."* - INFOWORLD**



**Five-Star  
Rated**

• ***"With Alpha Five's extensive field rules, strong reporting,***

*Genies (wizards), and more than 35 templates, you can create databases and full applications effortlessly and rapidly"* - PC Magazine

• ***"Alpha Five for Windows is a very easy-to-use, robustly featured and generally excellent DBMS"***

**- Computer Shopper**

• ***"A cure for database fears. Alpha Five is a fully relational database that is easy to use"* - Home Office**

**Computing**

Download the free trial version at: <http://www.alphasoftware.com/promo/trial/default.asp>.

Contact Alpha Software, Inc. at 83 Cambridge Street, Burlington, Massachusetts 01803-4483; 781-229-4500, fax: 781-272-4876. Or visit Alpha Software on the web at <http://www.alphasoftware.com>.

**January 2003**

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**Holiday Edition**

Raffle Winners — Special Insert on Members' Only! web page

**Award Winning  
Newsletter**



# Notepad

by Linda Gonse  
editor@orcopug.org

## Whoa and more woe...

The new year has barely started and I have already spent an entire day and evening getting my computer back up and running due to a program problem.

It all began late last year, though. So, this year should not be saddled with the blame for my bad luck.

Here's what happened. For a couple of years I happily enjoyed the free version of ZoneAlarm. Then, I decided to show my appreciation for a great firewall and to support ZoneLabs in developing future applications. I bought Zone Alarm Pro 2.6. It cost \$39.95 and, at the time, Ad Subtract was thrown in free. Altogether a great bargain.

Soon, I was getting automatic reminders to upgrade to ZoneAlarm Pro 3.1.395. I checked online reviews, but three sites showed 1/3 of the users were negative, so I postponed the upgrade. Along about November though, I decided to upgrade. And, that's when my problems began.

**Uploaded web pages were corrupted when ZoneAlarm was running. The setting that converted incoming email attachments to a .zla extension wouldn't turn off. (Consequently, .zla files couldn't be shared.) It dialed the Internet without my permission. It conflicted with my new HP 1200 Series printer, causing it to hang intermittantly. But, the worst was yet to come.**

I decided to remove ZA. Bad idea. It wouldn't go willingly with Uninstall and I got into a real jam involving the Blue Screen of Death. **Then, ZA cut off my Internet connectivity, due to the uninstall attempt, because its programming indicated a hacker attack. Afterward, web sites and email were unreachable, with one**

**exception.** On dial-up, ZA went to a ZoneLabs web page which gave instructions on what to do to restore regular Internet connectivity.

The uninstall attempt and the recovery process wasted over an hour and took a few years off my life.

**I found ZA's tech support number on its web page and called. But the phone recording directed me to its web page. I went to the web page and emailed tech support. I received an automatic response giving the instructions that I had already found on the web page.**

Evidently, there is no living person in tech support... or, maybe anywhere at the company.

Out of spare time and resigned to my fate, I hunkered down for long-term cohabitation with the unwelcome ZoneAlarm upgrade.

But, this month, in the course of trying to troubleshoot a conflict with my new HP printer, ZA got its feathers ruffled and shut off my Internet connection again! This time ZoneLab's instructions didn't work, and I drove to Orange County for help from Siles Bazerman. Frustrating *hours* later, the computer was Zone Alarm free!

When I got home, I excitedly used my dial-up connection—only to be taken to ZoneAlarm's page! No other Internet address could be accessed! Again.

Over the phone, Siles and I decided that four files left from ZA in C:\Windows\System probably had blocked my connection. They were: *vsdata.dll*, *vsdatant.sys*, *vsmonapi.dll*, and *vspubapi.dll*. I deleted them and was back in business once more!

Now, I am here just to tell you about this Upgrade from Hell. (To be fair, some people including Siles, have had no problems.) But, if you do have trouble—trust me—it will be a doozy and you can kiss off ZA's tech support and try to fight the upgrade to the death, as best you can!

**Better yet, just don't go there!**

## Letters to the editor

### Tech tips on web

I am not sure if you are aware of this site. But it has some good articles in it, you never know when a person needs a little help.

Anyway, I thought it might be interesting to scroll through, so here is the link: <http://www.bootdisk.com/readme.htm#video>

Terry Terrazas  
tryaq@earthlink.net



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## Recommendations for Christmas upgrader

by Siles Bazerman

Talk about serendipity. Just as I was trying to come up with an idea for this month's article I received the following e-mail question.

*Santa was VERY good to me this year. This will allow me to upgrade my current computer which is a 733 MHz PIII.*

*1. I am thinking of doing what I have done in the past i.e. new parts intermingled with old, SCSI hard drive etc.*

*Requirements:*

*1. Don't need the fastest chip available.*

*2. Want 5 expansion slots. (I don't know why but I always seem to be running out of room.)*

*3. USB 2.0*

*4. Don't need to save my old memory.*

*5. Built in NIC would be good.*

*Would like your recommendations.*

*Also I am considering a new antivirus. I have been using Norton System Works Pro 2002 but I removed it because of computer problems and had to remove NAV along with it, no selective uninstall available. In order not to lose protection I am using NAV 2003 trial. To purchase this as a standalone seems high compared to others. I can get a deal on Panda AV, any suggestions here also.*

What follows is based on both my experience and the summation of communications I have received regarding these questions by a number of people I consider hardware gurus. I also would like to recommend the following two sources for more detailed information; [www.tomshardware.com](http://www.tomshardware.com) for reviews and tests of both motherboards and CPUs, and for those that like to play [www.overclockers.com](http://www.overclockers.com), self explanatory.

First, decide on your CPU since there are several form factors now on the market. The form factor must be known before picking a motherboard so that it will fit. Regardless of which you choose, Intel P 4, Celeron P4, or AMD Athalon XP, I would go for the .13 micron technology. These are not only the latest and fastest chips on the market but because of the technology are the coolest running CPUs available. If you overclock, the Celeron is your best bet, and the other sets are dependant on how you feel about Intel. One thing to remember is that the AMD CPUs are numbered as to what AMD feels is the performance compared to a P4. The chip will actually run at a lower speed. Athalon XP chips will run hotter than Intel chips and must, repeat must, have better cooling. Also, whatever you pick, a newer faster CPU will be available as soon as you get home.

Now to pick a motherboard. If you are reusing your case you have to be sure the new board is the same form factor as the old, otherwise get a new case. The socket form will be determined by your CPU. Most new motherboards have built in NICs and five or six PCI slots. They also have an AGP slot or built in video. There are less memory slots available, but that is because memory cards have grown larger over the past several years. I have no experience with Athalon XP

motherboards so would rely on Tom's for reviews and recommendations. For both Intel chips I would, if I could afford it, go for an Intel board. If not, I would pick one with the Intel i485 chipset. My current board has a VIA chipset, and I have had no problems with it, but have heard many reports of problems. If you do get a board with a VIA chipset immediately download the latest 4in1 drivers. Even though your board is new there is no telling when the CD with drivers was produced or how many revisions have been released since then. Also look for a board that will exceed the speed of your CPU in case you want to upgrade later.

I would recommend DDR memory rather than SDRAM because it is faster and also will run at higher front side buss speed. Personally I would go for the fastest (400 to 500) FSB I could get and 2700 DDR.

For memory I would get as much as I think I would need and at least 50% more. As speeds go up, systems are much more sensitive to variations and errors in memory. One hundred twenty-eight megs is the minimum required for Windows XP but 256 meg is the generally recommended amount. On a new system I would look for 512 meg or even 1 g of memory. I also would buy CPU, MB and memory from one source and at one time. That gives the best chance of everything working together. Also, packages may help you save a little money.

I forgot to mention one thing regarding motherboards. Look for MBs that allow built-ins (sound, video and NIC) to be disabled. If not, you will not be able to upgrade or to turn off a malfunctioning item. USB 2 will probably be supported on the latest MB; but if not, an add in card will work. USB 1 devices will work on USB 2 but at the slower speed of USB 1. Drivers will, or should be, supplied with the USB 2 device.

Regarding antivirus programs, I



use Norton Antivirus 2003. I have used Panda, PC-Cillin, AVG and several others. I prefer NAV as I like its e-mail protection, auto-protect feature and regular updates and security alerts. I know others have these also, but this is my choice. I found Panda to be cumbersome to use. I would not recommend McAfee AV as I have heard too many reports of problems with conflicts. I no longer use any other parts of Norton System Works, even though I was a beta tester for several of the included programs. I prefer Iolo System Mechanic for maintenance, and Raxco Perfect Disk for defragging. If you do use System Works do not let anything but NAV run in the background or on boot up. System Doctor is notorious for creating zero bite files when doing software upgrades.

**Siles Bazerman, APCUG Representative. Contact him at [siles.bazerman@gte.net](mailto:siles.bazerman@gte.net); or 714-897-2868 (after 9 a.m.).**

### Members' Web Pages

**Siles Bazerman—Personal Page**

<http://home1.gte.net/reso44a/index.htm>

**Linda Gonse—PC Instruction, Newsletter and Web Page Design**

<http://basicbytes.com>

**Sharon Graham—Family Photos**

<http://home.earthlink.net/~shgraham/>

**David Musser—Consultant**

<http://home.att.net/~musserandcompany>

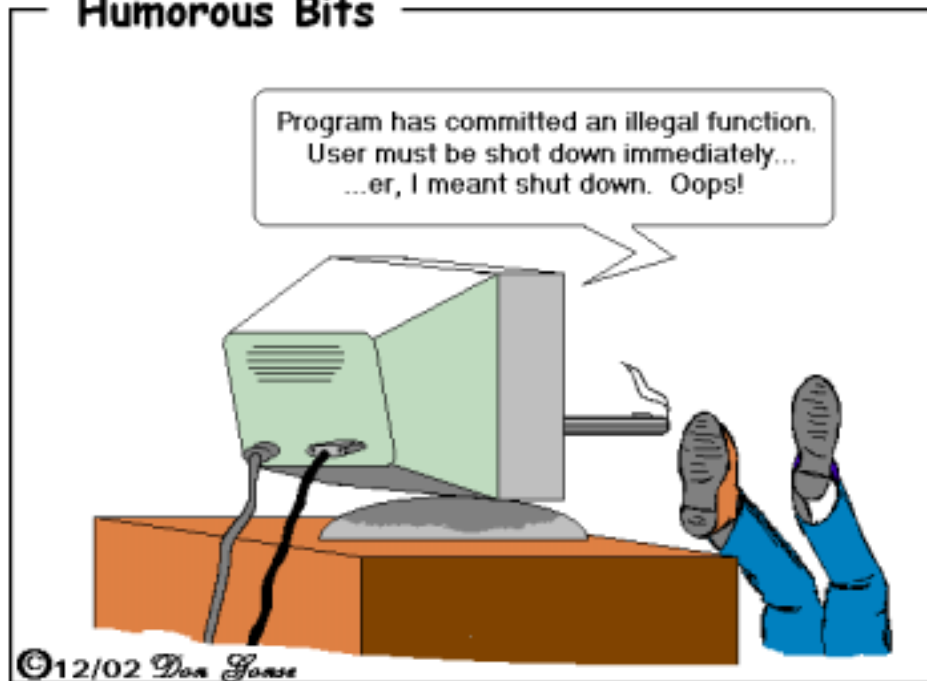
Members, send your URL to [editor@orcopug.org](mailto:editor@orcopug.org)

### Hot hot software!

by Paul Stephen, editor  
Winnipeg PC Users' Group

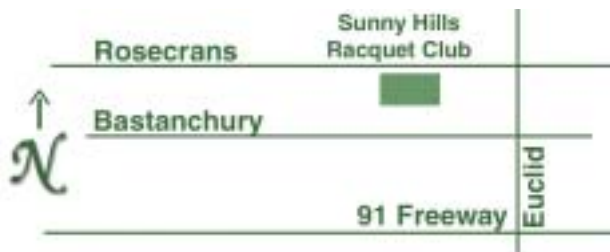
You just **HAVE** to try "File-Ex 3" from Cottonwood Software. It gets rid of those DINKY Windows File Open/Save Dialog boxes. It will even remember File Open/Save directories for each application you use. It will save you a great deal of time!  
<http://www.cottonwoodsw.com>

### Humorous Bits



### Meetings are free, visitors are welcome!

The Orange County IBM PC Users' Group regular meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Sunny Hills Racquet Club, 1900 Camino Loma, Fullerton, (714) 992-1300. For more information, call (714) 990-0580, or go to [www.orcopug.org](http://www.orcopug.org).



**Directions:** From the 91 Freeway, exit at Euclid and go north. Go past Bastanchury and turn west (left) onto Rosecrans. Sunny Hills Racquet Club is located on the south (left) side of the street

### All members are invited to attend the planning meetings!

Planning meetings are held the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Downey Savings & Loan, one block east of Harbor at Bastanchury in Fullerton.

A pdf list of December's raffle prizes and winners and special offer from Jasc Software may be viewed on the Members' Only! web page at [www.orcopug.org](http://www.orcopug.org).