

Has My Computer Taken over or Am I Still in Charge?

TERRY HOFFER

Computers are among the great mysteries of modern life. Sure I remember learning about binary math in elementary school, and I realize that the heart and soul of my computer is no more than a series of tiny switches, which open and close very very quickly. They could care less about abstractions and moral dilemmas. Those switches simply compute additions and subtractions with blazing speed in a manner that must be quite simple on some level, but pile up enough of those switches and calculations and they start producing colors, sounds, moving pictures, medical evaluations, interpretations of the unknown and goodness gracious who knows what will be next?

Is it any wonder then that from time to time we are completely buffaloed by our limited knowledge of the systems they describe with casual elegance as software and hardware? Who among us has not been stumped by it all at least once? It might have been using email, word processing or some other esoteric computer application that no one seems to know about or it might have been using computer controls on just about anything.

A recent arrival to Barnet offers an interesting combination of training and experience, and he offers to untangle nearly any web of computer frustration. Bob Roos semi-retired to a Barnet hillside overlooking the valley of Joe's Brook. His career spanned nearly 40-years with hands on experience with computers



Photo By: North Star Monthly

Bob Roos describes himself as a personal technology consultant. With a career as a systems engineer for IBM, which morphed into a second career in the fast food business, he describes himself as a "customer service junkie." He offers computer support to individuals and small businesses, and he offers to untangle almost any web of computer frustration.

including 24-years with IBM as the dawn broke over the age of the personal computer.

Roos was a systems engineer involved in technical marketing when computers were the size of a small house. His assignments with IBM led to St. Louis, San Diego, Germany, San Jose and finally Rochester, MN where his experience with large systems proved especially valuable in the development and testing of smaller computers including the venerable PC.

Roos says, "I had the skills they needed at the right time. I enjoyed the people, and I loved the work." But it proved to be a tough time for IBM as sales of its small computers ate into the sales of its larger systems and the competition surged forward with PC-clones. Roos' career was

built around providing customer service, he says, with that very service driven by the customer. All of a sudden the "bean counters" and other business managers saw customer service as a profit center and one to be driven by sales and costs.

"I was always a customer service junkie," Roos says, "and I was convinced they were measuring the wrong stuff, but I couldn't convince them otherwise." Departmental- and company-wide consolidation led to offers for early retirement, and in 1992 Roos walked out the door.

"I took the lump sum," he says, "and I bought a fast food franchise in a Rochester mall." The franchise was one of some 30 chain restaurants known as 1 Potato 2.

1 Potato 2 was geared to the trend to healthier eating and

offered baked potatoes with a huge variety of toppings from the formidable Bacon Double Cheeseburger and the Chicken Stir Fry to the Veggie and Herb Cheese model - all served on potatoes. "There were 60 stores in the mall, and for eight and a half years I was one of them. I always had fun with customers, and I think we offered fantastic service." The chain was bought out, and the franchises were facing all kinds of changes, and in 2000 Roos closed the store. "It was a sad time," he admits.

Since then Roos and his wife provided foster care for Minnesota's Social and Rehabilitative Services while he continued moonlighting as a technical support person for individuals and small businesses with troublesome computers.

(Concluded on Next Page)

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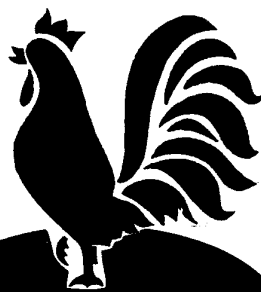
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Good Living Senior Center Trip to Saint-Gaudens Site

On Thursday, September 6, a motor coach from the Good Living Senior Center in St. Johnsbury will transport its passengers to Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, NH. History buffs, art enthusiasts, gardeners, coin collectors and any senior wishing to get out of town on a late summer day will relish this trip.

There will be a stop for lunch at Lui Lui Italian Restaurant in West Lebanon, and then we'll

continue to the beautiful national park that conserves the home, studios and gardens of the great American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907).

Saint-Gaudens is famous for public monuments, which combine realism with powerful grace. One of his greatest achievements is the Shaw Memorial on Boston Common, commemorating the Civil War colonel and his regiment of African-American soldiers. He is

also renowned for creating masterpieces in miniature, particularly cameos, inaugural medals and coins for the U.S. Mint. This year marks the 100th anniversary of his 1907 twenty-dollar "double eagle" gold coin, which collectors consider the most beautiful of all American coins.

A guided tour of the grounds includes the family home, gardens, studios and bookstore. There will also be an opportunity to visit with a sculptor-in-residence at his studio. Interpretive information in Braille, closed-captioned video, audiotape and interactive computer formats are available at the visitor center.

Most areas of the park are wheelchair accessible.

The motor coach will leave St. Johnsbury from the Price Chopper parking lot at 10:30 a.m. and from the St. Johnsbury House at 10:35 a.m. The return will be at around 5:30 p.m. The cost of the trip is \$40, which includes coach fare, lunch, park fees and tips. Any interested senior can call the Good Living Senior Center at (802) 748-8470 to receive more information and make a reservation. ★

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The Ten Commandments of Keeping a Personal Computer in Line

(Continued from Page 10)

Now in Barnet, after following two of three children to New England, Roos is offering his wealth of experience and the easy attitude that comes with a genuine appreciation for customers and satisfying their needs. He describes himself as a "personal technology consultant."

His career spanned nearly 40-years with hands on experience with computers including 24-years with IBM as the dawn broke over the age of the personal computer.

He says, "I speak Geek, and I speak English, and I see myself as the interpreter between technology and useful work. I try to

help people understand their computers as opposed to memorizing a sequence of steps to make them do things."

Roos offers a list of ten, perhaps the ten commandments of keeping a personal computer in line. This might be a list to keep on the bulletin board beside your own computer and one to review when things just aren't going smoothly.

1. Use good anti-virus and anti-spyware to prevent unwanted intrusions from the Internet to your computer.

2. Use the operating system's utility to defragment the enormous quantities of information that accumulate. Otherwise, like having a book with pages scattered all over the house, the computer will waste time tracking down the disjointed fragments of files.

3. Backup your crucial files. It's not if, but it's when will your system leave you stranded without access to its stored information.

4. Practice and be curious. Become familiar with your system beyond the most basic use of

the programs. The more you explore the more confident you will become with its features and responses.

5. Talk to people who use the same applications. A casual comment or a tiny crumb of information might open wonderful new doors. If you can't find someone else, Roos could be that person. He charges \$40 per hour with a one hour minimum, and that could be a bargain. (Check with him first as some of his work has a fixed charge, which could be more or less than the hourly rate.)

6. RTFM - Read the fine manuals. Your computer and your software came with directions and user manuals. Enough said.

7. Dust and dirt are demons. A can of pressurized air and having the computer case somewhere other than on the dusty floor can do wonders.

8. Check your memory. Computers are often sold with minimal memory, which is sufficient to make the system work, but it may be working much

harder than necessary. Simply starting and stopping programs is memory intensive, and additional memory is not very expensive and a big bang for the buck.

9. Update your operating system, something you can do online usually at no cost.

10. Try to avoid the temptation to get a system that is way more than what you need. Roos says, "I'm a believer in KISS, Keeping it simple, Sweetie." Computers get more complicated and bloated all the time, and the part of your system you actually use may be nearly overwhelmed by all the extra

stuff that churns away on-call because someone thought it made sense at the time the computer was assembled.

There you go, the ten commandments. If you are still puzzled and need a friendly voice, an expert with experience in computer development and fast food potatoes call Bob Roos. He likes to call his business wyBatap, a name his daughter offered as an acronym for "when you believe all things are possible." You'll find Roos at wyBatap.com or by phone at (802) 633-4395. And don't forget to ask about the potatoes. ★

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