

OTTAWA PC NEWS

The Newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG)

Review of June's Meeting

Super Show & Tell—good presentations

by Harald Freise

For the significant number of you that missed the June meeting at Woodroffe High school let me tell you that you missed one heck of a slick presentation. Karl Parks of MidiSoft not only gave one of the best presentations that this club has ever seen in recent times but he

used the product that he was presenting.

SST, or Super Show & Tell is a Windows presentation creation tool. It can combine and coordinate video, animation, sound effects, scrolling text, narration, graphs, and pictures. Imbedded screen buttons can be created to launch or route your viewers through various deci-

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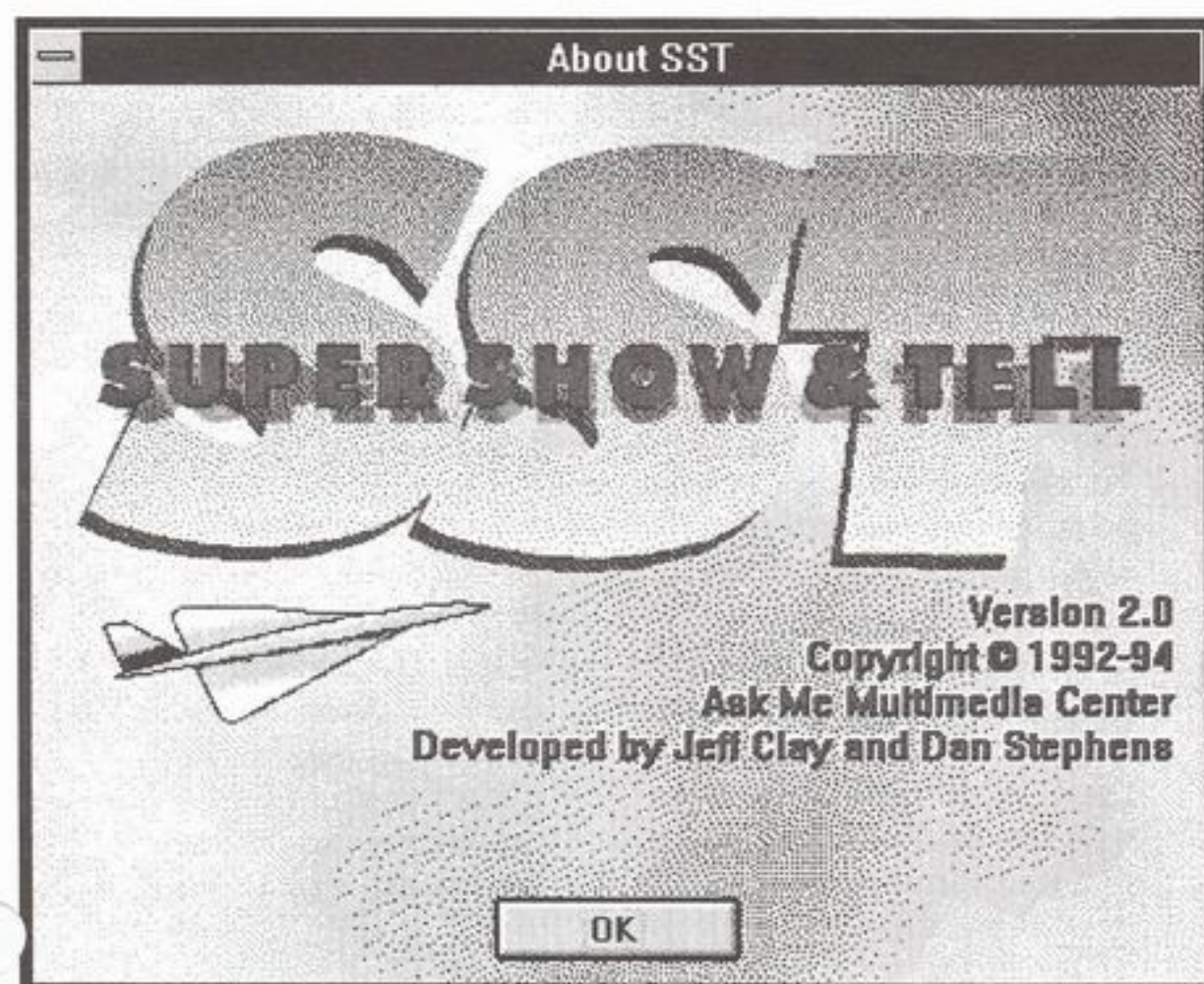
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sion paths in a multimedia presentation.

It looks easy

Mr. Parks made it all look so easy. Using a single screen to create, modify, and view the presentation he guided us in creating a simple presentation. He showed us the six tools that are used to control text, pictures, animation, sound, and video. Using a "play list" he controlled the sequencing and timings within each slide in the slide carousel. You can see the entire show's flow by looking at the thumbnails at the bot-

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tom of the screen while you are creating your presentation.

But is it?

The box says "If you can work a slide carousel and a VCR player" you are supposed to be able to create a presentation. Honestly, I had a problem learning the program. The interface is nice, but like nothing you've ever used before. If you are used to any of the major software titles, things just aren't where you'd expect them to be. Once you get used to it; it still isn't that intuitive with a lot of key/mouse strokes. The tutorial file and manual are light on information but most functions are explained simply.

SST uses the Windows multimedia services and coordinates them to play the various elements as required. Mr. Parks stated that the core program is only about one megabyte in

size. Amazing for what this program can do in a world of bloated software code. One of the largest shortcomings of this program is the long transition times between slides. Some of the animation motion is not all that fluid and jerky. Be forewarned: it is very hardware and processor dependent. If your multimedia presentations run slow now, don't expect SST to improve on that. A cut-down version of a graph creation program called Perspective for windows by 3-D Graphics is also included complete with beg screens asking you to upgrade to the full version.

Anyone can view your presentations

A nice touch is that a freely distributable run time viewer is included. Your audience doesn't need a full install of SST to see the presentation that you cre-

ated. A fair amount of simple clip media, including backgrounds, buttons, and animation is included to get you started. Some of the items are very good and others are simply amateurish bordering on hokey. For example, Dave's .WAV files.

In some ways Super Show & Tell is very professional and in other ways requires maturity. It is an interesting program nonetheless. Stay tuned, perhaps their new home at MidiSoft will bring even greater things to this program.

Note: For those of you who purchased the program at the reduced price at the meeting, there were supposed to be two CD-ROMs included in the package. If you were missing one please contact Harald Freise (828-341) and arrangements will be made to rectify the situation.

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OS/2 SIG

Welcome back

by David Polich

As usual the summer was all too short and now we are about to begin a new season in the OS/2 SIG. Welcome back fellow OPCUG and SIG members. A lot has happened since last June in the IBM and OS/2 world. Most notably, IBM has acquired LOTUS and the latest incarnation of WARP was introduced—WARP CONNECT for all you networking fans.

Just two words

For those of you who are still deciding on whether to get OS/2 Warp, I have just two words—Partition Magic. PowerQuest Corporation has introduced the only utility program that allows you to shrink, expand, move, and convert your hard disk partitions interactively, and immediately see the results! Want to see this for yourself? Just look for the demo on *The PUB* called

PMAGIC.ZIP, which is in the OS/2 SIG area.

Yeah but what else?

What else is available for OS/2? The magazine *OS/2 Professional*, Volume III, Number 5, has a 15-page section showing applications (including Lotus Smartsuite), utilities, books, and accessories.

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Windows '95: the real story

by Julie Dustin

The next OPCUG general meeting will be Tuesday, September 12. Chris Taylor and a representative from Microsoft will be discussing Windows 95. You will be treated to a user's perspective from Chris and a sneak preview of Microsoft Plus from a Microsoft presenter (TBA).

For a relaxing change, one of our members, Chris Taylor will be giving a presentation on Windows 95 (Win95). This demonstration will focus on showing Microsoft's new operating system from a user's perspective. As well as being brave enough to speak to a packed auditorium, Chris is also our dedicated BBS system operator.

Chris says, "I plan to discuss some of the 'gotchas' during the installation as well as the new features. Some things worked well and others didn't. Some features really impressed me. For example, at one point I was experimenting with the colour depth and resolution of my monitor. Unfortunately the memory on my video card was not capable of supporting one particular setup, which I didn't realize at the time. As my PC rebooted, Win95 noted the conflict. It immediately started in safe mode which assumes a default monitor setup. I was then able to change back to an appropriate video setup. This is a great fail-safe aspect for beginners or just for experimenting."

"Overall, I am really impressed with Win 95. I think MAC users will have an easier time converting to Win95. There were far fewer crashes while I was testing the system (on 486-33 PCs with 8 and 16 MB of RAM)."

Win95 handles virtual memory much better than its predecessor. It is modelled on Window NT pa-

rameters. If you set the swap file setting at automatic, it can grow and shrink as needed. Chris notes, "In my testing sessions, I saw the swap file grow from 10 MB up to 48 MB and then shrink back to its original size."

Microsoft Plus Pak

Microsoft will be showing the Plus Pak, a \$59 package of 50 MB of extra things such as different wallpapers and sound events. You can pick overall schemes such as the Sixties which comes with appropriate music files. This software pack includes enhanced versions of Defrag, ScanDisk,

Calendar *(subject to change)*

General Meeting Location: Sir Robert Borden HS
131 Greenbank Road

General Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Date	Topic
Tuesday, 12 September	See this page
Tuesday, 11 October	Date to be confirmed Topic to be announced
Tuesday, 14 November	Date to be confirmed Topic to be announced

and DriveSpace. Also included is the SLIP protocol for accessing the Internet and even a multimedia pinball game!

Come and see what's behind all the hype!

P.S. An extra set of Win95 utilities will be available soon in the Windows section on our BBS. Called POWERTOY.EXE, it contains other programs that the Win95 development team wrote, and it's free!

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Windows '95: a step forward but not a quantum leap

by Julie Dustin

I have always noted that the bigger the hype before an event, the higher the expectation level and yes, the greater the disappointment after the noise and lights have stopped. Seeing Windows 95 (Win95) left me with the same void. My first thought was, what were they making such a big fuss about? My other thought was "Been there, seen it, done it on a Mac." This is not a revolutionary product. It has been improved immensely but the interface borrows heavily from existing products.

I have listed, in no specific order, some of the features which I and some of my colleagues thought were interesting.

Please note: I reviewed a copy of Win95 which was released in June. Some of the things may have changed slightly in the final release:

- When installed, Win95 keeps the old group windows and their contents but it make them into menu and sub-menu items automatically.
- All the screens are designed in the non-eye-straining colour of grey. Gee, colour monitors don't seem quite so important. The scroll box, which formerly took a lot of skill to capture and drag, is much wider (and longer). It is much easier to grab now.
- The pop-up help which works by pressing on the ?

and then pointing on an area of an open dialog box seems cumbersome. It pops up a sentence or paragraph but there are no areas that you can click on to see the complete help file.

- You can click on the desktop and open another application or check a setting on your PC even as a dialog box is open and waiting for a response.
- The word **Exit** got an early retirement package. The words **Done** or **Close**, as menu items or button labels have taken its place.
- You can see a sample of all the available fonts and then print them out by clicking on the print button.
- There is virtually no double-clicking necessary. You move the mouse and the selection bar moves too.
- You can force passwords to be entered before Windows 95 will load. These passwords control access to the PC, improve general security, and allow each user (with their own password) to have their own custom screen settings for the same PC. I feel sorry for technical support people when a user forgets the password.
- Windows 95 has a garbage can to temporarily store deleted files or directories (finally!). Actually, the environmentally correct label is the Recycle bin.

- The previously boring long dash (located in the top left-hand corner of each window to access the control menu) has been replaced by the icon of the program that is running in the window.
- You can select more than one file from any list simply by clicking and dragging around the names. There is no need to use the Control or Shift key along with the mouse to work with more than one file.
- Because Win95 loads automatically when the PC is turned on, a startup menu can be accessed by pressing a function key (F8) during the boot up process. It gives you 8 choices to take as the next step in the boot process, including safe modes and step-by-step confirmation. It is great for troubleshooting.
- Choosing from a menu may take longer because you have to use the mouse. Keyboard alternatives are not obvious and sometimes not even there.

System files

The internal workings of the program can be seen by activating the file called **REGEDIT.EXE**, located in the Windows directory. Warning: This is not an area for the casual user to play in. The **IO.SYS** and **MSDOS.SYS** files (the hidden files which

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Democracy and electronic surveys

by Chris Taylor, Sysop

The recent upgrade to the bulletin board software included a new ability to display the uploader's name automatically for all the files in the download areas. Since I already know who the uploaders are (their names are automatically added as a hidden field in the file description), I thought it best to see if PUB users thought this would be desirable. I set up a survey on The PUB with three multiple choice questions. As of June 8th [this article was submitted in June, but was not included in the June issue of the *Ottawa PC News* due to production problems with Corel Ventura: Ed] 47 people had responded to the survey. Following are the questions and results.

The first question was designed to gauge how many people really thought it would be useful to be able to see who uploaded a file.

Question 1: Should names of uploaders appear in file lists?

Yes = 19

No = 14

Don't care = 14

The second question was designed to gauge how uploads would be affected by this proposed change.

Question 2: Would this affect your uploading?

Yes, I would stop uploading files = 9

No, I would continue to upload files = 32

No effect, since I never upload = 6

The final question was to find out how much work would be required of me if the proposed change was implemented.

Question 3: If the vote favours the inclusion of the name of the uploader in the file description, would you want your name removed from any files you have already uploaded?

Yes = 11

No = 36

Now, one might consider that, ostensibly being a democratic

country, names of uploaders should now be visible. However, things don't always favour the majority. All three questions tend to make me think we would have a significant drop off in the number of uploads to The PUB. I truly believe that the benefits gained from seeing who uploaded file are quite small. When I weigh that against a 22% drop in uploads, I think most members will concur with my decision to leave things as they are—with uploader's names not visible. After all, it is better to have a file and not know who uploaded it to The PUB than to not have the file at all!

The survey will remain in place (see Access Special Services on the Main Menu) for a while so people can get a feel for the electronic survey process if they want to. I expect to use this capability more in the future.

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are the kernel of DOS) get changed and renamed by Win95. The COMMAND.COM has also changed internally but still exists at the root directory. It keeps your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files if they are customized for drivers but will copy them over with .DOS extensions. Win95 may deactivate lines in these files but is courteous enough to put in an audit statement which says "Rem'ed out by Windows 95".

Troubleshooting

You can see devices installed in your PC through the System Properties located in the Device Manager

screen. Here, the I/O and IRQ and other information is listed. You can change settings here but heed the understated warning in the help file. The Help file states that it is best not to change settings manually here because settings are then fixed and the Plug and Play features will not work well in the future.

Worth the name change?

We thought it was interesting that Win95 is labelled as version 4.00.xxx in the About Windows 95 dialog box. I think they should have called it Windows 4.0 from the beginning and saved the marketing frenzy for a future product.

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Ottawa PC News

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members. Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month prior to publication.

Group Meetings

OPCUG normally meets on the last Tuesday in the month, except in July at Sir Robert Borden HS, 131 Greenbank Road, Nepean. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.
Disk-of-the Month: \$25 for either 5.25-in or 3.5-inch diskettes (10 diskettes).

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Up to 14.4 kbps v.32bis 228-0665 (6 lines)

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New kid in town

With apologies to the Eagles, I want to recommend that you review the latest book from New Riders Publishing (NRP) entitled *Inside OS/2 WARP Version 3*, subtitled *Optimize Your System Performance*. The authors claim to be making a genuine effort to present information with comprehensive explanations, practical examples, and minimal hand holding.

I found it to be well laid out and visually appealing. The chapter on troubleshooting is quite comprehensive and topics range from "The Five Steps of Problem Solving" to "Recovery Procedures", "Understanding CHKDSK", "Memory Problems", "Error Message", "Printing Problems", and "Problem Preven-

tion". Still unsure about taking the OS/2 plunge? The first two chapters provide some compelling reasons in favour of WARP without glossing over some of the potential problems you may want to consider. Well worth a look IMHO and from novice to the power user of OS/2, it should prove very helpful.

SIG calendar

This year the executive has moved the OPCUG monthly meeting day to the 2nd Tuesday of each month, so the next OS/2 SIG meeting will be held after the main OPCUG meeting on September 12th.

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