



OTTAWA

# PC NEWS

Volume 27, Number 8

October 2010

## ARTICLE

### Shadowy Images – A Cautionary Tale of Disk Backup

by Alan German

Some time ago, I updated Windows Vista, the AVG virus scanner, and the Zone Alarm firewall, all at the same time, after which Vista would consistently hang just after it booted. No mouse cursor, no keyboard entry, just a pretty display screen that was frozen in time. No problem I thought, I will just restore my backup disk image from the previous week when Vista was functioning normally.

Now, since Vista effectively wouldn't boot, it wasn't going to be possible to use the version of Acronis True Image Home 2010 (TI2010) that was installed on the Windows' disk partition. But TI2010 let's you make a bootable CD for just such an occurrence.

So, I dug out my rescue CD, re-booted the machine, and TI2010 loaded under its Linux-based operating system in rescue mode. I plugged in the external USB hard drive containing all of my disk images, and started the process to restore the most recent full hard disk image. I browsed to the appropriate directory, selected the desired image, and TI2010 indicated that it had found Volume 9, the ninth and last file in the chain of associated backup files. So far so good. However, when I now hit the proceed button, a warning box indicated that I should "Specify location of volume 8". This was an unusual request from the software. And, pressing the

browse button this time, failed to show the external USB drive, so that I was unable to specify the location of Volume 8. TI2010 evidently didn't know where it was, and I could no longer tell it where to look. Oops!

*The moral of this story – test your backup system – before you actually need it!*

Almost time to contact Tech Support, but first a few additional trials. The first response from Acronis was almost certain to be that I should download and install the latest version of True Image and/or that my disk image was corrupt. Consequently, I repeated the restore process with the rescue disk software currently posted on the company's web site. Same failure. Next, I copied the nine disk image files from the external USB drive onto the data partition of my hard disk (Drive D:) and successfully used the original rescue disk to restore this image to the computer's main hard disk (Drive C:). Clearly, the chain of backup images on the USB drive was not corrupt, and the issue was definitely the rescue disk not accessing the files on this disk correctly, while it would do so if they were located on a conventional hard drive.

True to form, the reply from Acronis indicated that I should - download the latest version of the software, re-install the program, and the drivers, try the restore again - or create a rescue disk, and use this to restore the image. And, there was the other possibility - the chain of backup images is corrupt - validate the disk image and run *chkdsk*.

Note that most of this advice studiously ignored the fact that, since Vista was hanging, I couldn't run the Windows' version of TI2010. However, to be fair to Tech Support, the list of options did include one item that would have worked around my problem by using a rescue disk - "Change the backup location (for example save your backup to the internal HDD instead external.)" But, none of the advice fixed the actual problem with the rescue disk software, and would not have helped had I experienced a complete hard drive failure and been trying to reload my customized system onto a new hard drive.

*(Continued on page 4)*

#### Inside this issue:

Calendar / Coming Up / Raffle	2
Article: Shadowy Images	1, 4
Review: Basic File Renaming	3
OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 18	5
Contact Information	6

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

# October Raffle

**C**ourtesy of the Microsoft MVP program, we have a copy of **Windows 7 Ultimate** for the October raffle. This is the full version (not the "upgrade only" version) that can be installed on any PC. Valued at \$350.

If you have not yet moved to Windows 7, this is your chance to start using what is widely perceived to be Microsoft's best ever operating system.

Tickets are, as always, a good deal at \$1 for one, a great deal at \$2 for three or the unbelievable bargain of \$5 for ten!

## September Prize Winners

**Gerald Larocque** was the big winner at our Sept. 8th meeting taking home the raffle prize (a copy of Corel Wordperfect Standard X4) as well as one of the three Linux books on offer as a door prize. The other book winners were **John Middleton** and **Allen McNamara**.

Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to our friends for the prize donations.



## Coming Up...

October 13, 2010

Speaker: Brian Glaser of Orleans Computers

Topic: TBA

## 2010 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, October 13 <sup>th</sup>	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the <b>Canada Museum of Science and Technology</b> , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. <a href="http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/english/index.cfm">http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/english/index.cfm</a>
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, October 13 <sup>th</sup>	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux / Open Source SIG	Wednesday, October 13 <sup>th</sup>	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, October 13 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd.

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

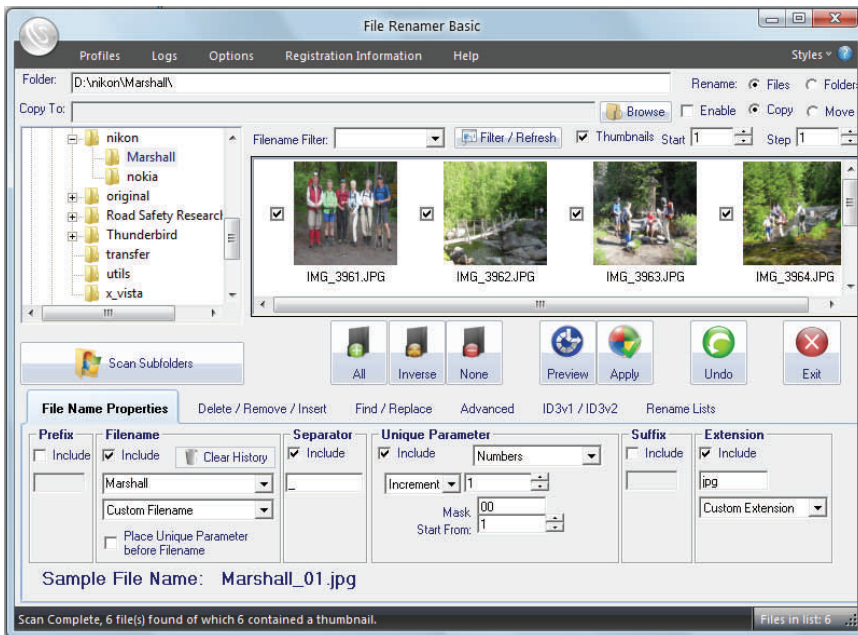
# PRODUCT REVIEW

## Basic File Renaming *by Alan German*

**A**re you looking for a simple way to rename batches of digital image files? If so, you may wish to try File Renamer Basic from Sherrod Computers. This program is freeware and is the little brother of regular and deluxe versions of the package that are available for purchase.

While the basic program handles straightforward renaming of one or more files in a given folder, the regular version of the software adds features like drag-and-drop, while the deluxe version provides even more functionality, such as an undo for file renames.

For most users, File Renamer Basic is likely to provide all the necessary features that such a package might offer. In fact, the renaming capabilities of this version are very powerful, yet extremely simple to use.



The basic renaming operation takes place in a graphical environment, with a file browser allowing the selection of a folder with files to be renamed. By default, the file details are listed as text, but a checkbox allows thumbnails of digital image files to be displayed in the main window.

A series of tabs in the lower portion of the window provides tools to edit the existing file names in a variety of ways. In the example shown, custom filenames and extensions have been assigned to a series of digital photographs, together with an underscore character as a separator, and a sequential numbering scheme. In this way, each file in the selected group is renamed so that, for example, IMG\_3961.JPG is renamed as Marshall\_01.jpg, IMG\_3962.JPG as Marshall\_02.jpg, etc.

Other renaming methods include deleting a specific number of characters at any location in the file name and/or inserting a new character string; or using a search-and-replace technique across the file name and/or extension.

The program is configurable through an options screen, and includes a clearly-written help system.

So, if you need to rename a group of files, File Renamer Basic will probably provide the tools you need to do the job.

### Bottom Line

File Renamer Basic (Freeware)  
 Sherrod Computers  
[http://www.sherrodcomputers.com/products\\_filerenamer.cfm](http://www.sherrodcomputers.com/products_filerenamer.cfm)

Shadowy Images... (Cont'd from p. 1)

*“I have a clear understanding of the issue you are experiencing.”*

*“Regarding the issue, please let me know when does the windows vista hangs. If it hangs normally also then you may have to repair the windows.”*

**Support Professional,  
Acronis Customer Central**

The next round of technical support provided instructions on how to generate Linux and system reports while using the rescue disk. I created two system reports, one just before, and one just after the failure to locate the disk image files. These reports were used to "escalate this case to the expert team". Now, several weeks had passed since first getting in touch with Acronis's technical support desk so, when I was contacted by a Tier 2 support engineer, it turned out that I wasn't using the current version of the software. Now, where have I heard that before? But, I was provided with a link to a different build of the rescue disk software, that had a "without quiet" option, and instructions on how to run strace (a trace of the system calls made by the program).

But, the new rescue disk also provided new boot-time options. Not only was there an Option 2 for a "without quiet" bootup (to facilitate the strace process), there was also Option 1 for the regular boot procedure. Trying both of these, I found that Option 2 functioned correctly, and allowed the backup disk image to be restored from the external USB drive, while Option 1 did not!

Now, our Tier 2 expert came up trumps. He recognized that there was a timing issue in loading the program and the software's detection process for USB disks. His suggestion was that setting a small delay for the GUI load might resolve the issue, and indicated that he would ask the development team about the possibilities of setting the timeout. This was duly accomplished and I was sent the URL for a custom build of the rescue disk software that did indeed work as advertised. The "USB delay" version of the rescue disk finally resolved my problem!

It isn't clear if this fix will become part of any new software release. I was informed that the problem was related to timing issues with particular hardware (i.e. my external USB drive) and USB port I/O signals (i.e. my computer). For some reason the USB port did not have enough time to provide Linux kernel with information about the attached USB device. Normally, USB ports have sufficient time for this process, and the issue that I identified occurs only in very rare cases. The fix was to increase the loading time for the Acronis True Image binary file, not necessarily a desirable protocol for all users.

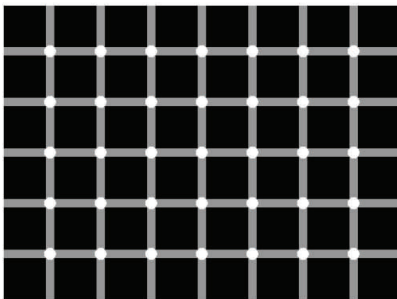
So, if you encounter a problem restoring a critical backup disk image from an external USB drive using TI2010, you might be able to fix it by requesting a USB delay version of the rescue disk. Or, if you have another problem, be prepared to be persistent with your technical support person!

**Bottom Line**

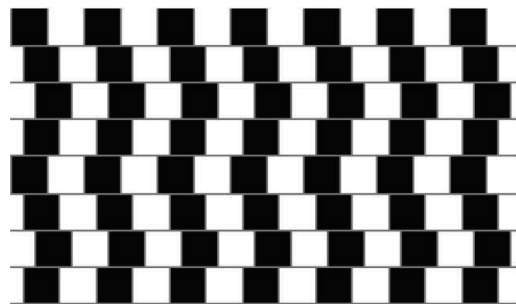
Acronis True Image Home 2010 (US \$29.00)  
(User Group Price at <http://www.ugr.com/TrueImage.html>)  
Acronis: <http://www.acronis.com/>

---

## EYE TRICKERS



Count the black dots! :o)



Are the horizontal lines parallel or do they slope?

# OPCUG Free Software Guide – Part 18 Compiled by Alan German

This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available software is provided for the information of our members who may find one or more of the programs useful. If you try one of the listed items, you are encouraged to share your experience, good or bad, by providing a brief review of the program for a future issue of the newsletter.

## ICU - Icon Configuration Utility

This program will restore the desktop when your carefully positioned icons get inadvertently rearranged. Running the program couldn't be simpler. Press "Save" to store a particular configuration. Press "Restore" to reset the icons to the saved positions in the selected configuration file.

Current Release: Version 2.4

Web Site: <http://www.funk.eu/>



ICU – Icon Configuration Utility

## Sumatra PDF

This utility is an open-source PDF viewer for Windows. It has a minimalistic design, with few features, but it's small and starts up very fast. There is only a single executable (EXE) file so you can run the program from an external USB drive, and it doesn't write to registry.

Current Release: Version 1.1

Web Site: <http://blog.kowalczyk.info/software/sumatrapdf>

## VMware Server

Install VMware Server as an application on top of a host Windows or Linux operating system and you can run multiple virtual machines simultaneously. Each virtual machine is isolated from its host, and from other virtual machines, leaving it unaffected if another virtual machine crashes. Your data does not leak across virtual machines and your applications can only communicate over configured network connections.

Current Release: VMware Server 2

Web Site: <http://www.vmware.com/products/server/>

## PortableApps

Obtain a complete collection of portable applications including a web browser, E-mail client, office suite, calendar/scheduler, instant messaging client, antivirus, audio player, Sudoku game, password manager, PDF reader, mine-sweeper clone, backup utility and integrated menu, all pre-configured to work portably. Just drop it on your portable device and you're ready to go.

Current Release: Version 1.6

Web Site: <http://portableapps.com/>



## Process Monitor

From Winternals' developers, Mark Russinovich and Bryce Cogswell, this advanced monitoring tool for Windows shows real-time file system, registry, process and thread activity. Its uniquely powerful features will make Process Monitor a core utility in your system troubleshooting and malware hunting toolkit.

Current Release: Version 2.91

Web Site: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896645.aspx>

## VCW VicMan's Photo Editor

This award-winning image editor is freely downloadable and comes with a wide range of essential features for both novice users and professional designers. You can refine your digital photos, draw artwork naturally, and effortlessly produce superb graphics for the web.

Current Release: Version 8.1

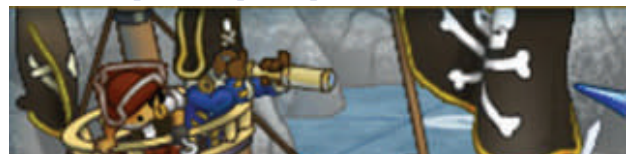
Web Site: <http://www.vicman.net/vcwphoto/>

Previous Review: VCW VicMan's Photo Editor, Jocelyn Doire, <http://www.opcug.ca/public/Reviews/VicManPhoto.htm>

## Puzzle Pirates

In this web-based, open-ended multi-player game, you take on the role of a pirate. You are free to travel from island to island, around the ocean, earning your keep as a sailor and buccaneer. You can use your wealth to buy yourself a ship, fill out your wardrobe, or become a merchant. There is almost no limit to what you can do!

Web Site: <http://www.puzzlepirates.com/>



# OTTAWA PC NEWS

**Ottawa PC News** is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

## Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

**OPCUG Membership Fees:** \$25 per year  
**Mailing Address:** 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6  
**Web address:** <http://opcug.ca>  
**Bulletin board** — The PUB (BBS) <http://opcug.ca/default.htm>

President and System Administrator

**Chris Taylor** [chris.taylor@opcug.ca](mailto:chris.taylor@opcug.ca) 613-727-5453

Meeting Coordinator

**Andrea Wells** [andrea.wells@opcug.ca](mailto:andrea.wells@opcug.ca)

Treasurer

**Alan German** [alan.german@opcug.ca](mailto:alan.german@opcug.ca)

Secretary

**Gail Eagen** [gail.eagen@opcug.ca](mailto:gail.eagen@opcug.ca)

Membership Chairman

**Mark Cayer** [mark.cayer@opcug.ca](mailto:mark.cayer@opcug.ca) 613-823-0354

Newsletter

**Brigitte Lord** [brigitte.lord@opcug.ca](mailto:brigitte.lord@opcug.ca)

(editor/layout)

**(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire** [jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca](mailto:jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca)

(e-mail distribution)

Public Relations

**Morris Turpin** [PR@opcug.ca](mailto:PR@opcug.ca) 613-729-6955

Facilities

**Bob Walker** 613-489-2084

Webmaster

**Brigitte Lord** [opcug-webmaster2@opcug.ca](mailto:opcug-webmaster2@opcug.ca)

Privacy Director

**Wayne Houston** [privacy2@opcug.ca](mailto:privacy2@opcug.ca)

Special Events Coordinator

**Bob Gowan** [bob.gowan@opcug.ca](mailto:bob.gowan@opcug.ca)

Beginners' SIG

**Chris Taylor** [chris.taylor@opcug.ca](mailto:chris.taylor@opcug.ca) 613-727-5453

Linux / Open-Source SIG

**Andrea Wells** [andrea.wells@opcug.ca](mailto:andrea.wells@opcug.ca)

© OPCUG 2010.

Reprint permission is granted\* to non-profit organizations, provided credit is given to the author and *The Ottawa PC News*. OPCUG requests a copy of the newsletter in which reprints appear.

\*Permission is granted only for articles written by OPCUG members, and which are not copyrighted by the author.

# OPCUG



*Users helping users*

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

**B**ring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the General Meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. Please limit magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.

You may TAKE AWAY any items of use to you.

Any items left over at the end of the meeting have to be taken back home by those who brought them in.

