



# Nybbles & Bytes



[www.neopc.org](http://www.neopc.org)

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Letter from the Editor -  
David A. Vydra



I would like to extend my wishes of the best for you and yours during this 2008 Holiday Season. May everyone enjoy the spirit and may everyone be safe.

## The Presidents Desk -

Lee Gerber



December is here and winter is upon us. Hopefully you've all got your Christmas shopping done or at least started. If you're in the market for any computer related gear, now is the time for some of the best deals of the year. Don't forget to buy through our Affiliates Page if shopping on line.

Please remember to shop smart and guard against scam artists and identity thieves. Protect your credit cards and receipts and if shopping on line remember to be aware of the lock symbol on web pages and the HTTPS:// of a url address signifying a secure web site.

Keep computer safe this holiday season and all year for that matter. Backup you data, keep your anti-virus up-to-date and working, and protect yourself against spyware and malware. Remember that these three important aspects of computer use are available free and are very easy to use.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

## Webmaster Bulletin -

Dick Rose



## A Holiday Greeting to all

A new page on our Website in the name of "Site Activities" should be visited each time you make your way to our [www.neopc.org](http://www.neopc.org). The intent is to direct you to any new changes or updates that I make to the site. You will note that it is visible from the "HOME" page and available to the public. The hope is that this page and the vast number of pages and topics shown on the "Members Only" page will induce visitors to join our great club. We do cover a great deal. Your guidance by using the "What Do You Think" page, and the entry form included there, will suggest ideas of other topics which will make our site intriguing. Here is an excerpt from the page:

11/15/2008 - Extensive reworking of the website to change the Theme, and to move most of the "Members Only" related pages behind the "Login" portal to accentuate the privileges of membership.

11/16/2008 - Introduced a new group of Lee Gerber's neat Freeware Links - "Tips & Favs"

11/16/2008 - Revised a number of pages: Presentations; Tax Exempt; Web Statistics; Site Activities; Home page now includes a contact feature; introduced Executive Board and Committee pages; removed "Brochure Request" page which was being hacked daily.

11/18/2008 - Added page "Meeting Snaps" which illustrates snapshots taken by our NEOPC Staff Photographer, Bob Minnich, at previous meetings, more to follow.

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11/18/2008 - Added the "Join Us" page with a link to the pdf version of our brochure and application form.

11/21/2008 - Revised and added pages in the "Tips & Favs" area. Provided a database add-in feature for editing along with a "Search" feature on the "Favorites" page.

11/24/2008 - Added a PowerPoint presentation from our 10/8/2008 meeting, "Ebooks and Downloadable Audiobooks" by Matt Weaver to the "Presentations" Page.



## ***Through the Gates:***

### ***Enter to the Trove of Bills Treasures and Travails***

***A monthly column dedicated to revealing some of the unknown or lesser known features or foibles of the Microsoft line of products.***

***By: David A. Vydra***

## ***Windows 7<sup>®</sup>***



“What is wrong with our computers?” Captain Janeway inquired. B-Elana Torres replied that the operating systems were old and outdated. A total retooling and upgrade was necessary. Janeway was quick to make a decision and directed Seven of Nine to begin developing a new system immediately. Thus, the “7” operating system was begotten.

Well, not quite the way it has come about. However, I would sort of like to see a logo for Windows 7<sup>®</sup> look like the one above. And, by now, most of you have heard that Microsoft is developing the latest Windows operating system venture. Some are asking, why not another cool name? Honestly, when Microsoft learns a lesson, it learns it well. Thus, the return to a number based system for a series release. If you recall, the first Windows operating system was Windows 1.0. If you follow the progression, Windows 95 replaced 3.xx and was release number 4. Windows 98 was more like 4.xx. Windows XP was 5 and Vista was 6. The progression has to do with the underlying kernel. When there are major changes to the kernel than the version is a new one. 95 and 98 were based on the same kernel. As was 98SE and the ever popular ME. WindowsXP had a new kernel based on the one developed for Windows Server 2000. Vista had many kernel changes. Windows7 will be entirely revamped. From what I have seen thus far, this will be for the better.

***NOTE:*** Microsoft recently, announced the official retirement of Windows3.xx. Hard to believe isn't it? In truth, Microsoft stopped supporting 3.xx in 2001. What few knew, licensing was ongoing. It was considered embedded and as an embedded system, it was used to power such things as cash tills in large stores and ticketing systems. One of its more glamorous uses as an embedded operating system is to power the in-flight entertainment systems on some Virgin and Qantas long-haul jets. Now, as licensing contracts expire, they will not be renewed. The child that grew Microsoft at its inception in 1990 will now be laid to rest. Soon to be replaced by its great, great grandchild 7.

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Here are some of the comments I have seen from various beta testers: “Installing Windows 7 is quick ... very quick! “Windows 7 installed and was ready to go in under 15 minutes on one system - a time that makes Vista seem like a lumbering dinosaur.” “Beyond the speed boost, the setup process for Windows 7 Build 1601 is pretty much the same as for Vista in that you interact with it at the beginning and the end of the process, but for the most part it gets on with the install by itself.” “Having set aside 45 minutes, it was a surprise to have it complete in 15!” “It was striking how fast Windows 7 is. There’s none of the sluggishness and lag that was experienced with early builds of Vista and XP. Everything is snappy and responsive” ... “Start Menu, Control Panel applets, applications ... everything”. “Side by side, Windows 7 is far snappier and more responsive than Windows Vista”. So, from what I have seen thus far, that alone is promising. Boot up and shut down times have been reported as faster. Basic tests show that boot up is some 10% faster and shut down some 15% faster. Depending on ones current experience this can be an impressive improvement. How this will equate to the final product remains to be seen. Here are some of the more notable differences;

### **The UI**

If there’s one word to describe the Windows 7 UI it’s this - Unfinished! In fact, using Windows 7 puts you in a weird wonderland of Vista mixed in changes for Windows 7. That being said, there’s a lot of new stuff to see - desktop tweaks, taskbar tweaks, Windows Explorer tweaks, Control Panel tweaks. Some long-time Windows applications such as Paint, WordPad and Calculator have received a fresh lick of paint also. The more inclusive use of the Ribbon UI (which debuted in Office 2007) will now be encountered by users who’ve not seen it before. How this will be received, remains to be judged. No doubt there will be some who will be less than thrilled.

### **UAC Tweaks**

It seems that Microsoft has taken on board the constructive criticism it received over User Account Control (UAC) and provided users with setting to make it less annoying. Windows 7 provides four settings, ranging from “Always notify” to “Never notify.” The default setting is “Only notify me when programs try to make changes to my computer,” which seems to offer a happy middle ground.

### **Windows Updates**

Not many changes here yet, but Microsoft has made it easier to see what updates are being offered.

### **Kernel**

The Kernel is the back-bone of the “Windows” operating system. All basic functions depend upon the Kernel. And, have done so since the first instance of windows. Mess it up and you have problems. I am sure that more than one of us has run into the failure of windows to load because of a missing or corrupt kernel. Or, one of the functions attached to the kernel has been displaced in one way or another. At one point, there was one kernel for windows and one kernel for windows server systems. With the introduction of “Windows Server 2000” this was changed. The server kernel was used as the basic kernel for the “Windows Professional 2000” desktop operating system. This same kernel was the basis for “Windows XP” and “Windows Vista”. Essential to this operating system kernel was the added security that was provided. The Windows Server 2000 kernel was pretty much written from scratch and little, if any, of the “Windows NT4” kernel was retained. Incorporating this into the desktop operating system was a rather simple task.

System32? I am fairly certain that most of us have seen this folder in the Windows tree. And, by the way, never, ever mess with this folder! Within System32 lies kernel32. From what I have been able to discern, this is where some of the major changes for “Windows7” have been made. Kernel32 is a dll and is the main cog in the operating system. Heretofore, all of the added functions have been attached to kernel32 and processed in order of importance. This can be a load on the processor and time consuming. At least for those of us who count milliseconds. From what I have been able to discern, in “Windows7” kernel32 will be more like a hierarchy in its topography. The functions or services will no longer be attached and processed as the system is loaded. They will more or less be detached and only processed on an as needed basis. However, don’t quote me on this. After the initial flurry, data flow has slowed considerably and I will investigate further as information is released.

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### **Compatibility and Reliability**

Windows 7 is designed to run on the same hardware as Windows Vista, and to be compatible with applications and device drivers that work with Windows Vista.

Windows 7 is the most reliable version of Windows yet. Designed on an improved technology foundation, Windows 7 allows users to reliably start up, shut down, or hibernate their computers without having to worry about losing valuable work. Furthermore, Windows 7 makes it easier than ever to back up and restore data to network drives or DVDs. Windows 7 also improves upon print reliability and performance.

### **Performance**

Windows 7 maximizes hardware energy efficiency and scalability while maintaining high performance. Energy efficiency is improved through reduced background activity and new support for the trigger starting of system services. Windows 7 also offers improvements in the Windows kernel that enable applications and services to scale efficiently between platforms. (As noted above.)

Performance of many features and APIs is improved in Windows 7 versus Windows Vista. For example, driver performance on servers is optimized by new user-mode and kernel-mode topology APIs. Graphics rendering is considerably smoother and faster. Accessibility performance is also significantly faster than before.

### **Intuitive User Experience**

For the first time, Windows 7 allows the end-users to control their computers by touching the screen. Touch and multi-touch features provide a natural, intuitive way for users to interact with PCs. The top-level UI elements, such as the Start menu and taskbar, have larger targets than previous Windows releases, making them easier to select with a finger instead of a mouse. Visual feedback is provided for tap and double tap. Windows Explorer and Internet Explorer 8 are both touch friendly and easily integrated with Windows 7 applications.

### **The Desktop Experience**

The new Windows 7 desktop brings your applications to life. Applications are now more discoverable, informative, and interactive. Modern and intuitive user interfaces are easier to develop with Windows 7. New desktop and application experiences include the following:

The enhanced taskbar introduces interactive thumbnails, and enables animation and interaction for minimized applications.

The Destinations concept lets users jump with one click to the files, locations, or tasks that they use most often.

Enhancements to the gadgets platform enable applications to install companion gadgets during the setup or first-run experience.

### **Libraries**

Windows 7 introduces the concept of Libraries as destinations where developers and end-users can find and organize their data as collections of items that can span multiple locations on the local computer as well as on remote computers.

The Library APIs provide a straightforward way for developers to create applications that create, interact with, and support Libraries as first-class items within applications. We may see some cool applications for this feature. Libraries can also be selected by using the folder picker dialog box. Applications can enumerate relevant library scopes, or they can use the library directly as a folder.

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## Wrap-up

There is much, much more to be covered. And, so far, the reception and reviews have been positive. However, as the version currently released is geared primarily toward bringing developers on-board, there will most likely be changes between now and the first release candidate Beta. As with any such major change, there will be evolutions which will affect the final product. Yet, at this point, it appears that perhaps this is going to be the best step in the right direction. As a disclaimer, I have to say that my report is based on information garnered from multiple sources. It is as accurate as the data I reviewed. And, of course, is subject to change as developments progress. Stay tuned.

## Members Podium -



Contributed by: David A. Vydra

## **My year long affair with Windows Live OneCare!**

It has been a little longer than a year now. I tried several months of the Beta version before switching to the released subscription product. And, now I have a dilemma! Should I continue and renew my subscription or, revert to the old standbys I used previously? When it comes to performance, Live OneCare has been excellent. At least, as far as I have been able to discern. This is primarily because Live OneCare is, for the most part, unobtrusive. All of the work is done in the background unless there is a new application installation that is attempting to check for upgrades. In this event, there is a pop-up window asking me how I want to proceed. Allow the connection. Disallow for now, but ask again. Disallow altogether. Scans and updates for the malware can be scheduled for a time when system use is at a minimum. Once properly configured, backups are pretty much routine. However, they should also be scheduled for a time when use is not a factor. After the initial backup, which should include the entire hard drive, subsequent operations will only backup changed data.

Performance Plus has also been an unseen asset. The basic engine behind Performance Plus is called "Tune-up". During the tune-up, OneCare checks for updates, defragments your hard disk and cleans out obsolete files to help improve your computer's performance. OneCare tune-up provides virus and spyware scans that check the files on your PC for viruses and checks for files that need backup. The virus and spyware scans as well as the backup file check are redundant. One would normally schedule virus and spyware scans on a daily basis. The backup module will also do this prior to running the backup.

If you have 2 or 3 PC's in your home, one Live OneCare subscription covers them all. If they are networked, either hard wire or wireless, the backup can be configured to include all of the units to backup to a central location. It could be an extra hard drive on one PC, an external hard drive attached to one PC or network attached storage (NAS) device attached to the network. Each PC in the network will have its own backup folder.

Do I recommend Live OneCare? No! But, this is not because it is not an efficient and cost effective product. It is because Microsoft announced last week that it is discontinuing Live OneCare and will no longer sell it at retail after June 30, 2009. Support will continue for any subscriptions until they expire after this date. Sometime in the second half of 2009, Microsoft will instead begin offering a somewhat revamped, streamlined antimalware software that it's calling "Morro" for the moment. The software will provide a "basic level of antimalware protection," including defenses against viruses, worms, Trojan horses, rootkits and spyware. Much of Morro is still up in the air, including its exact release date, how it will be delivered and how it will perform. One of the prime movers for this decision is said to be the proliferation of malware in developing countries where the rates of infection are rising rapidly. Users in developing countries do not always have the financial resources to protect their systems adequately. From Microsoft's perspective, protecting every Windows system is better for them and better for us.



 Coming Events

December 2008

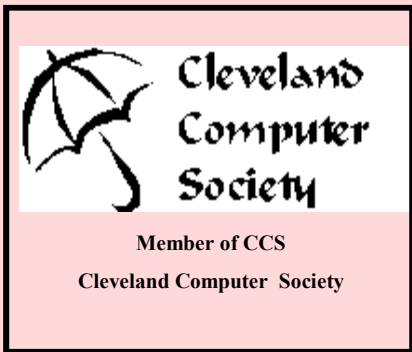
<b>12/09</b>	*** Computer Fundamentals Open Forum *** MORNING session. Northeast Ohio PC Club (NEOPC) - 9:30am Fairview Park Senior Center -Fundamentals of computer use - Any and all topics discussed - Bring a question, bring a topic - Guests always welcome - Always coffee - Free and open to the public. Second Tuesday of the month.
<b>12/10</b>	Northeast Ohio PC Club (NEOPC) - General Meeting - Porter Public Library, 27333 Center Ridge Road, Westlake, OH. 6:30 pm Social (pastries and beverages); 7:00 pm club announcements; 7:15 pm main program for the evening will be "HDTV" by Eric Wennerstorm of Cox Cable. Eric's program will inform the TV viewer of changes that are effective after February 19,2009; 8:30 pm Raffle and Door Prizes.
<b>12/23</b>	NO FUNDAMENTALS MEETING ***MERRY CHRISTMAS***
<b>01/14</b>	Northeast Ohio PC Club (NEOPC) - General Meeting at Porter Public Library, 27333 Center Ridge Road, Westlake OH; 6:30pm Social (pastries and beverages); 7:00pm Club announcements; 7:15pm main program for the evening will be "2008 Income Tax Updates" by Ian Abbott. Ian's talk will help with our income tax preparation; 8:30pm Raffle and Door Prizes
<b>02/11</b>	Northeast Ohio PC Club (NEOPC)-General Meeting-Porter Public Library,27333 Center Ridge Road, Westlake OH; 6:30pm Social (pastries and beverages); 7:00pm Club announcements; 7:15pm main program for the evening "Tips and Techniques for Microsoft Excel" by Bill Jelen. Bill's talk includes the use of the new version, Microsoft Excel 2007; 8:30pm Raffle and Door Prizes.

### Unhappy News:

So far, we have not had any member submit an entry for the "Members Podium" column. Let us begin the new year with a renewed vigor for the NEOPC. Submit entries early and often. Let's be informative and impart our experiences for the benefit of all your fellow members.

**2008-2009 Board of Directors (Elected Officers)**

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