Name that PC

Fed up with being called "A. User"? Been working for "My Company" too long? You need REGEDIT. Tim Nott shows you how to change the user name and company on your computer.
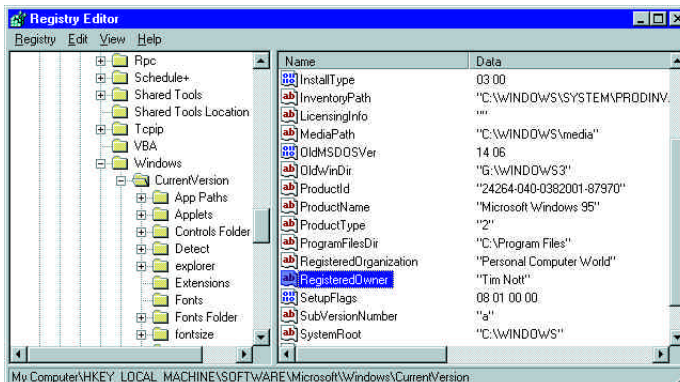
This month, a friend asked me how she could change her name. Not the one her parents had given her, but the one her computer dealer had branded, seemingly permanently, into her new PC. It's what you see in the "Help/About…" boxes, and forms the basis for all sorts of things such as installing new software or creating templates, so it's a comfort to get it the way you want it. By a happy coincidence, in an attempt at self-improvement, I'd been reading the column of the illustrious sci-fi author and PC guru, Jerry Pournelle, who had been tackling this very thing. You may think *I'm* mad, but this guy is barking. He has a fine, robust style: phrases such as "…the new Orchid Fahrenheit Video 3D board. That sucker screams" are bounced around the column. He also doesn't shirk danger or excitement. "Cyrus, still running, fell about three feet to the floor. The bezels popped off the front, and the CPU-Cool chip fan I'd attached to the Barracuda hard drive hung out the front looking for all the world like an eyeball popped out of its socket." (Cyrus is a computer, I think.) What really amazed me was his scornful attitude to some of our best-loved Windows utilities. Okay, I admit to defaming the Great British Car Industry by comparing one of its most successful products with Poledit, but you should hear what Mr P says about Poledit's dear brother, Reg.

So, he wanted to change the user name and company on his PC, as the person who configured his new hard disk had

What's in a name: the problem…

…and how to fix it

misspelled both. "The books say that a program called REGEDIT.EXE comes with Win 95… all the books warn you to be extremely careful. I tried it a couple of times, but I wasn't sure what I was doing so I never saved any changes I made. However, it became clear that what I wanted was in a hexadecimal file called SYSTEM.DAT." Uh-oh, Jerry. You don't save changes: they change dynamically. It gets better. Having made two backups of SYSTEM.DAT, he "attacked that file with the Norton Disk Editor. It turned out to be easy enough to find the hexadecimal equivalent of the word

'Mazgne'. A bit of study showed how the user and company names are stored, including what is used to terminate the string: it's an 01 followed by blanks. I looked up the hexadecimal equivalents of the English letters I wanted, used Disk Editor to fix my name and spell Magazine properly, terminated the strings with 01, and all's well." I won't bore you with the rest, but if you want chapter and verse, then I suggest you point your webby thing at byte.com/art/9701/sec14/art1.htm.

Anyway, I'm inspired by this no-nonsense macho stance and in future I'm going to write this column using EDLIN. For all those of you who've bought machines from box-shifters and are forever known as "A. User" of "My Company" but are too wimpish to deploy a disk sector editor, fire up that Regedit sucker and mosey on down to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\ Microsoft\ Windows\ CurrentVersion. Look for the two keys Registered Owner and Registered Organization: double-click on each to change.

Waltzing ma tilde

Every file on your disk has two names. One is the name that you see in folders, and the other is the one you'll see in DOS or File Manager. If you want to see both at once, open a DOS box and type "DIR /P" (the /P switch stops the listing scrolling off the screen). You'll see the Windows 95 long file name on the right and the DOS-compatible one on the left. If the Windows 95 extension is more than three letters — e.g. .HTML, the

Breaking the sound barrier

DOS extension — it will be truncated to three, .HTM. If the name itself is more than eight letters, it will be truncated to six, followed by a tilde (~) and a number: the number increments for each file with the same six first letters.

You can change this behaviour so that the full eight first letters are shown, so Tyrannosaurus.txt appears as Tyrannos.txt, not Tyrann~1.txt. Start Regedit and go to

`HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ System\ CurrentControlSet\ control \ FileSystem`

You should see an entry entitled "Win31FileSystem" in the right-hand pane. If you don't, search the Registry for that text. Right-click anywhere in the right pane, and select "New/Binary value". Type NameNumericTail over the "New Value #1" default and hit enter. Double-click on the new value and type 00 in the box. Close Regedit and reboot.

Note that this only applies to new files: it won't update existing ones as their short names are already created. Also, if you create more than one file with the same first eight letters, subsequent ones will revert to the six + tilde + number format.

Sound advice

When God didn't make little green applets, he didn't make them much greener than the Sound Recorder. Its most annoying feature is that you can only record very short clips: depending on the quality (which you can select from File/Properties) this varies between six and 60 seconds on my machine. Although you may well have better recording software bundled with the sound card, there is a way around this limitation. Hit the record button and wait until it reaches the end. Don't bother actually recording anything at this stage, this is just preparation. Hit the record button again: it will have a little shuffle around, then record another slice. Repeat until the number of seconds shown in the "Length" panel is enough for your needs. Then rewind to the

beginning and do the real recording. Warning: you can produce some very big files this way, and they might break up on playback if you don't make as much memory free as possible. The Media Player seems to cope better with playback than the Sound Recorder. Thank you, Peter Darton, for that tip.
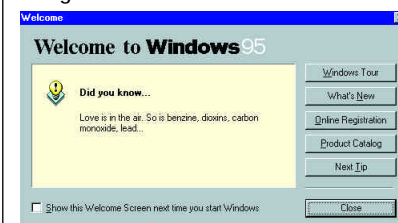
Recent files and recalcitrant colours

Two queries this month on the "Documents Menu". Dave Smith was having problems getting the Windows 3.1 versions of Lotus 1-2-3 (.wk4) and WordPro (.lwp) files to appear on this, the list of the last fifteen files worked on. The problem is that 16-bit programs can't add their files to the MRU (most recently used) list. This, at least, is the word according to Microsoft. But Dave goes on to say that this does work with old Ami Pro (.sam) files, and also with any 1-2-3 files that are opened from a shortcut on the desktop. I can't reproduce this strange situation, so I throw it open to the floor.

Tim Parkinson has the opposite problem: "How can I exclude filetypes from the Documents Menu? I don't really want

Tip of the day

Welcome back to the section where we endeavour to improve upon the wit and wisdom of the Windows "Tip of the Day". Remember, you can view these at any time by running Welcome.exe, and you can edit the existing tips by diving into the Registry at HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\ Microsoft\ Windows\ CurrentVersion\ explorer\ Tips – BUTR first. A couple of good one liners from Andrew Stratford. "I refuse to have a battle of wits with an unarmed person" and "I never make predictions — and I never will". Mike Kirk achieves screenshot stardom (below), but the Mrs Smegma prize for utter weirdness goes to Dave Ives of Hebden Bridge. "Mary had a little cow
It could not walk properly
Bovine spongiform
Encephalopathy"

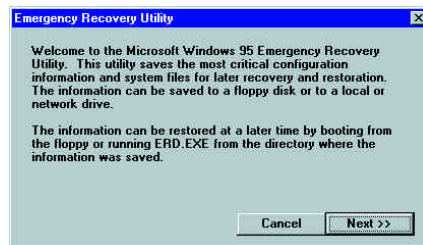**Thank you, Mike Kirk, for this inspirational thought…**

gifs and jpegs excluding the latest Word documents or text files I've opened." Sorry, Tim, and others who have mentioned this, you can't. Not unless you use a 16-bit program for editing bitmaps, anyway.

Noel Gallagher (no, not that one) had a little problem with his desktop settings. No matter what he changed the fonts and colours to, in Control Panel Display, every time he started, they reverted to Windows Standard. Noel did once have multiple users enabled, but not any more. This sounds very much as if someone has been playing with the System Policy Editor, and the cure is to load the latter again (Poledit), go to :File/Open Registry… double-click on the Local User Icon, and expand the branch named "Desktop". Clear any check marks by "Wallpaper" or "Colour scheme", and close the property sheet. Unlike Regedit, Poledit doesn't save changes automatically, so "File/Save" before you close Poledit.

David Nichol wanted to know how to convert a fax to a normal bitmap format. Faxes are stored in one big mailbox file, and although you can export them as individual .AWD files, I don't know of any software (apart from the Exchange Fax Viewer) that will read this. The trick is, while viewing the fax, to click on the "Select" button, drag out the area of the fax you want, then "Edit/Copy" or just "Edit/Copy Page". You can then paste this into any bitmap editor, though Windows Paint tends to choke on hi-res full pages.
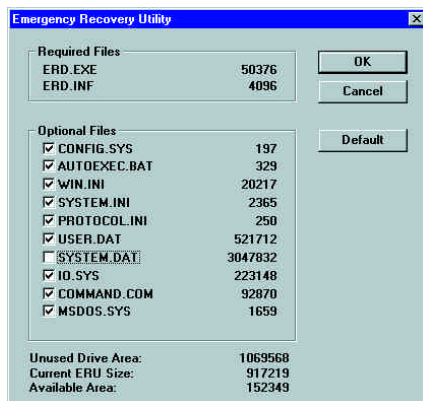

Quick Explorer tips

1. If you want to select nearly all the files in a folder, highlight the ones you don't want, and Edit/Invert selection.
2. If you hold down the Shift key when double-clicking a folder in folder view, that folder will open in Explorer (i.e. two-paned) view.
3. Often, you want to make a safe copy of a file in the same folder, prior to messing around with the original. In Windows 3.1 File Manager this was simple — and still is if you run Winfile.exe in Windows 95. You highlight the file, hit F8, and then type in the new name. There's no direct equivalent in Windows 95, but if you right drag and drop a file in the same folder, then choose "Copy here", you'll get a copy of the file, named, appropriately enough, "Copy of xxx".
4. To open Explorer with all drives showing but not expanded, create a shortcut with the command line Explorer.exe /e, /select, C:\.
5. Clicking on a heading in "Details" view orders the files by that category. Clicking again reverses the order.

The ultimate Windows 95 survival disk?

Not quite. There isn't room…

PaintShop power users only

Here's a clever tip for PaintShop Pro 4 users, sent in by Tim Bailey. It let users browse pictures by right-clicking on a folder.
1. In Regedit, go to

```
HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\ Directory\
Shell
```

2. Right-click on this and add a new key, called "Browse Pictures".
3. Right-click on this new key and add another new key called "Command".
4. In the right pane, double-click the "Default" entry and edit it to read

```
drive: \path\psp.exe /BROWSE %1
```

replacing "drive" and "path" to suit. (PaintShop 3 users should use drive:\path\pspbrowse.exe %1.)

Safe keeping

I've lost count of the times I've written "but first, back up the Registry". What's worse is that I've just noticed that this month's column has already offered three Registry tweaks and none of them contained the magic words. So, before you try them, BUTR. But how? The simple way is to make copies of SYSTEM.DAT and USER.DAT, which live in your Windows folder, to a safe place — for argument's sake, C:\Safe. Note that these files have the System, Read-only and Hidden attributes set, so to restore them you'll need to boot to DOS (press F8 at boot and choose Safe Mode Command Prompt) and do the following.

```
CD C:\Windows
attrib -h -r -s system.dat
attrib -h -r -s user.dat
copy c:\safe\system.dat
c:\windows\system.dat
copy c:\safe\user.dat
 c:\windows\user.dat
attrib +h +r +s system.dat
attrib +h +r +s user.dat
```

There's also the Configuration Backup utility. It's located on the CD-ROM at Other\Misc\Cfgback, and lets you keep up to nine Registry backups in compressed form. However, you have to be running Windows to restore the Registry from these, which is a bit of a challenge if it won't load due to a corrupt Registry.

Digging further into the Windows CD-ROM (Other\Misc\Eru) reveals the rather more useful Emergency Recovery Utility. If you copy this folder to your hard disk and run ERU.EXE, you get the chance to back up not just the Registry files themselves (SYSTEM and USER.DAT) but various other essentials, such as CONFIG.SYS, AUTOEXEC.BAT and various .INI files — you can choose which. By default, these get backed up to a bootable floppy disk — i.e. one that has had the system files copied on to it. In the event of catastrophe, restarting the PC with the disk in the drive will magically restore everything. There's a snag to this, however. After creating a boot disk, there is only about 1Mb left on a standard floppy. So when I tried this, it couldn't copy my SYSTEM.DAT file which somehow, behind my back, had grown to over three megabytes.

Fortunately, you can save the back-ups to a folder anywhere on your hard disk: ERU will copy the files, plus the program that restores them, ERD.EXE, to this folder. Let's say you choose C:\ERD as the folder. Restoring is then a little more complicated than from floppy. First, *don't* try to restore from within Windows. Either boot from a start-up floppy, or hit F8 during normal boot and choose "Safe Mode Command Prompt Only". Then change to the directory (CD C:\ERD) where you saved the files, and run ERD.EXE. Once the restoration is finished, you'll see a triumphant message. Reboot in the normal way; if you just booted from a floppy, make sure you remove it first.