



Multiple mayhem

Multiple configuration options, low level Windows security, and the search for a cure for the dreaded RDS. All dealt with before Tim Nott posts his Christmas wishes up the chimney.

Martin deLoughery emailed me from Bahrain (he must be a devoted reader because *PCW* costs more than ten quid there) with a warning on multiple configurations, as discussed in my October '96 column.

He writes: *"I stopped using the DOS multiple configuration option thing aeons ago. Why? Well, the prime reason is that once you have set the whole thing up, would you be likely, thereafter, to never add another device to your system or do anything that will not require a change to either CONFIG or AUTOEXEC? I think not, and if you like your memory to be optimised (as I do) you will find that MEMMAKER and your nice new multiple-configuration CONFIG and AUTOEXEC will not be cheery bedfellows. Try running Memmaker with your config and autoexec setup for multiple configuration and see what happens."*

Certainly, he has a point. However, it should be possible to run MEMMAKER on each individual configuration, save the results as CONFIG and AUTOEXEC.001, 002, 003 and so on, and combine the results into a single, multi-choice CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT. That's not to say I'd really like to try it, so point taken.

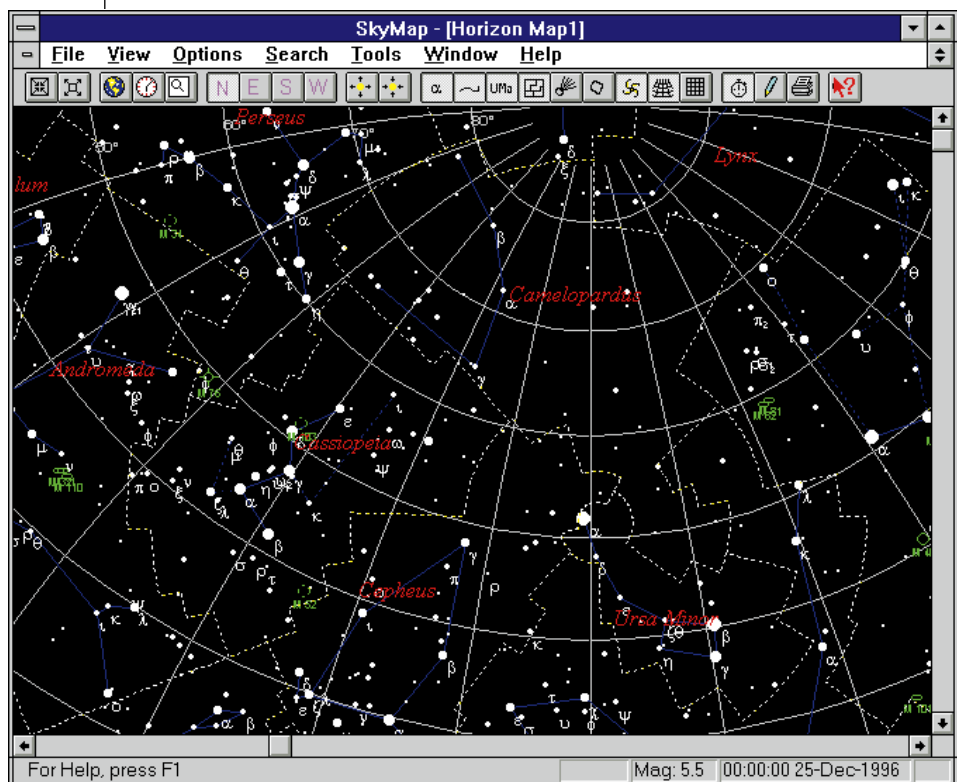
Another observation came from Tim David, who complained that he couldn't get more than nine menu choices, but I think he was just showing off.

Stargazing

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." So wrote Oscar Wilde who, with remarkable prescience, also coined "Either that wallpaper goes or I do" shortly before his last and fatal GPF. But I digress.

As star watching seems appropriately seasonal, check out Chris Marriott's SkyMap on this month's cover-mounted CD. Chris, who comes from Culchett in Cheshire, has created a rather splendid planetarium for Windows. Tap in your latitude and longitude and you'll see not just stars in the east, west, south and north, but planets, asteroids, comets and deep sky objects. It's on the CD-ROM as Skymap.zip, which contains 16-bit and 32-bit versions. It's a 30-day shareware evaluation version. The full program shows over 250,000 objects.

■ Registration costs £29.95 (plus P&P and VAT) from the Thompson Partnership on 01889 564601.



A starry starry night from Chris Marriott's SkyMap, which is available on the PCW CD-ROM this month (Skymap.zip)

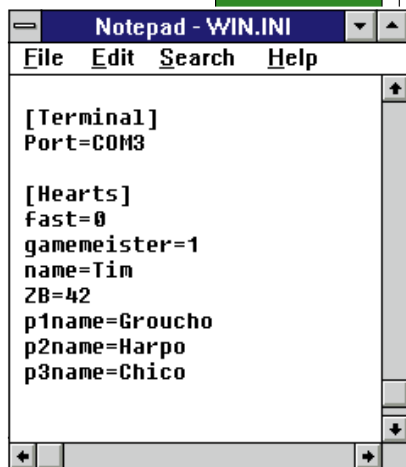
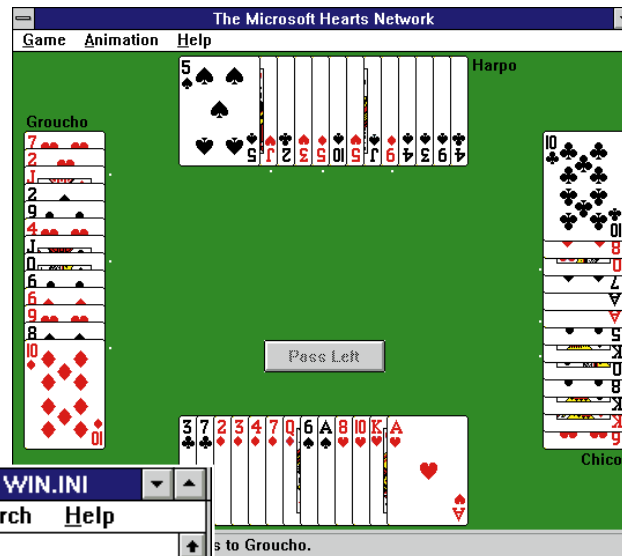
If at first you don't succeed — cheat

If you're an honourable and upright citizen, skip this bit. Not to put too fine a point on it, this is how to cheat at Hearts.

Add ZB=42 to the [hearts] section of WIN.INI. (If you don't have a [hearts] section, create one including the square brackets.) Restart Windows. Play Hearts. Hit Ctrl+Alt+Shift+F12 — borrow some fingers if necessary — and watch as all your opponent's cards become visible.

But even having done that, I still find I lose — I don't really mind, but I do find it rather

humiliating to be consistently trounced by someone called Terri. So if you're in the same boat, cheer yourself up by changing the default opponent names (on a non-networked machine) by adding entries for p1name=, p2name=, p3name= to the section as well.



Jerking around

On a more positive note, our man in Bahrain has a rather novel use for CHOICE.COM (Hands On Windows 3.1, July '96). Being forced to share a PC with somebody he uncharitably (but probably justifiably) refers to as "the jerk", he first created two directories, "Hisstuff" and "Mystuff", and copied his PROGMAN.INI and *.GRP files into "Mystuff". He then created a custom Program Manager for the jerk, giving more limited access before copying this set of PROGMAN.INI and *.GRP to "Hisstuff".

Using CHOICE with the /N and /T switches to suppress the prompt and timeout to a default, AUTOEXEC.BAT would always copy the jerk's Program Manager settings to Windows, unless he pressed a certain key (but unknown to him) during the crucial few second's pause. "It never

mattered" writes Martin, "what he did to his program groups (lest he should have learned how) and never mattered whether 'Save settings on exit' was turned on, the jerk always got the same screen every time he started Windows. Crude, but at that level, effective security."

Roger Pearson had a problem with Program Manager. It could be minimised or maximised but when restored "...it appears as just a short title bar, and I cannot change its size or position from the top left corner of the screen. I have printed out all the obvious files but cannot find any differences between this machine and another."

This sounds very much as if PROGMAN.INI has been nobbled. Open it in Notepad and you should see a section headed [Settings]. In this will be a key named Window= followed by five numbers.

The first two give the position, in pixels, of the top left corner of the window. The next two give the size, again in pixels, and the last should be 1 for restored, 2 for minimised and 3 for maximised. When you restore Program Manager from either minimised or maximised, it will return to the position and size determined by the first four numbers. If these are unfeasible, you can get the problem Roger describes.

The simplest solution is to delete the entire line, or comment it out by putting a semicolon in front. Program Manager will then resort to something restored sensibly in the middle of the screen.

Recursive Syndrome update

A problem that's proving very popular is the mysterious Recursive Directory Syndrome (RDS), as reported in this column in November. This is where Norman Burnell reported that the contents of C:\GAMES was replicated in C:\GAMES\GAMES and so on *ad nauseum*.

A Mr (or Ms) Butterwick reported: "I also had RDS, along with other things such as not reading a file that it had just verified as being saved, files not existing which File Manager or a DIR reading had shown to be in perfect condition, and CHKDSK reporting thousands of lost clusters or cross-linked files. After numerous checks and tests, it finally turned out to be a faulty motherboard — wish I'd thought of that before trashing a perfectly good hard disk."

Colin Mower had a similar problem, although "...it only existed when I tried to open up my CD-ROM drive in File Manager when there was no CD in the drive. I would get thousands of directories reported as existing on an empty drive! This caused no problems in the running of Windows or DOS, until I tried to back up my hard disk. MSBackup would try and read all of these 'ghost' directories, and complain rather bitterly after about the 200th empty one. I tried everything to resolve this problem, but the only way I got out of it was to re-format my hard disk and start from scratch."

Chris Paget came up with a way of reproducing the problem. "All it takes is ten seconds with Diskedit or an equivalent. Having run Diskedit, go to the root directory, pick a sub-directory and change the cluster number to zero. When you quit, that sub-dir will now point back to the root, and voila! a recursive sub-directory, exactly as described." Unfortunately, he doesn't tell us how to reverse the process. Not having

Dear Santa...



And so to my Christmas wish list. Last year, one moan was directed at multimedia applications which insist you change screen resolution before running. So hats off to Talking Books and Broderbund whose children's titles do this automatically, without having to restart Windows, and then neatly change it all back on exit — but only under Windows 95, alas. However, under 3.1 the titles will run without changing resolution. Likewise, in response to another moan, there's a refreshing trend for games and entertainment CD-ROMs to copy nothing but an icon to the hard disk.

Another wish (which made the charts two years running) was that memory prices would drop in accordance with other PC components such as processors and hard drives. I'm delighted (well, not that delighted, as I bought all my current memory before the drop) that this has come true, and after two years of £20-plus, a megabyte of RAM is, at the time of writing, less than £5 although it seems to be creeping up again.

A third wish that came true (or very nearly so) was for a UK version of Encarta. I've had to settle for a "World English" edition but this does a great deal to redress the over-emphasis on US sport, natural history and culture in favour of more important things such as cricket, nightingales and the Archers. And yes, it runs under both 3.1 and 95, but just to show you can't win them all, it installs 4.5-11Mb of files to your hard disk.

Another wish was for a superfast and stable video card. And I think I've found one — a Matrox Millenium that provides 16.7 million colours in up to 1,280 x 1,024 resolution. It seems solid as a rock and, something that's been on my wish list for a long time, lets you change resolution and screen depth without restarting Windows. And that's not just 95 but 3.1, too. And it's fast. In fact, it's too fast, as selecting or dragging text in Word is impossible if the startpoint and endpoint aren't on-screen at the same time: everything scrolls far faster than I can react.

And so to this year's wishes...

1. Can I have an option to slow down scrolling in Word 6 (and 7) please, so I can get my dragging and dropping back under control?
2. Can I ask printer manufacturers to take a rest from developing? I keep reading of colour inkjets that get ever better and ever cheaper. But just when I've set my heart on replacing my six-year-old (but still going strong) Star dot-matrix with the latest technological marvel from Hewlett-Packard (for instance), Epson, Canon or Lexmark — to name but four at random — move the goal posts. And by the time I've found the definitive best buy from that lot, guess what? HP has moved them back again.
3. But if I've really got to force a decision, then can I have an HP 690c, please. And could I possibly have it a bit early so I can produce those amazingly original Christmas cards I've been meaning to do for the past five years?
4. And while we're in an artistic vein I'd like one of those dinky little Artpad graphics tablets with the cordless pen, from Wacom. I had an all-too-brief loan of one and fell deeply in love.
5. Last but not least, a repeat of last year's wish. Keep developing for Windows 3.1!



Tumpty-tumpty-tum...
Microsoft discovers the true meaning of culture

Diskedit or a spare PC to hand, I managed to resist the temptation to try this out. This one, I feel, will run and run, but hopefully we might find a solution.

PCW Contacts

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