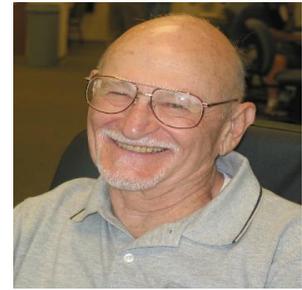


NOBODY ASKED ME BUT.....



One of my dozen (6?) readers responded to my June column in which I recommended the Web site, "Pit Stop" as a great diagnostic tool for checking on the efficiency of your computer. She didn't disagree with its ability to do the job but indicated that the site linked with another Web site that tracked one's cookies, thereby collecting information on your computing habits. I checked on this information and it is accurate. I apologize to those of you who installed Pit Stop and would recommend you uninstall it forthwith. Which opens a whole can of worms (and viruses too).

Magazines, newspapers, radio computer programs, etc. trip over each other to recommend freeware (no cost) and shareware (donation or modest cost) programs to install on your computer that will enhance all kinds of your computer's operating ability; protect your computer from hackers, worms and viruses; provide you with computer games that will give you hours of fun; replace well known, capable but costly imaging software. You get the idea. And there are certainly hundreds if not thousands of these applications available for downloading at the click of your mouse.

Don't get me wrong. Some of them do a great job without stressing your computer at all. But many, many of them can cause headaches from corrupting files, spamming, pop-up assaults, to causing a computer to crash. We assume that when a legitimate source recommends these applications, that they have at least tried them if not vigorously tested them before giving them the thumbs up. WRONG! I'm ashamed to tell you how many times I was led down the garden path to find to my dismay that the free application screwed up my loyal, hard working computer. When at last it crashed and I had to reformat my hard drive, I said, " ENOUGH!!"

My advice? Resist the temptation to install freebees just because they cost you nothing. Ask yourself if you really need /will use the app before you install it. Check with others who are experienced computer users if they have tried the app or who know of others who have. Check with the source of the recommendation to make sure the app has been tested and found trouble free. And then apply Schwartz's first law: TRUST NO ONE!!

Matt

ONE LINERS

Inside every older person is a younger person -- wondering what the hell happened.

Cora Harvey Armstrong

In politics, if you want anything said, ask a man- if you want anything done, ask a woman.

Margaret Thatcher

Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission.

Eleanor Roosevelt