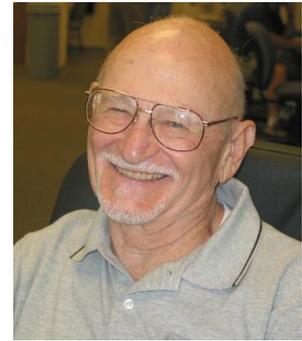


NOBODY ASKED ME BUT.....



..... I find comparisons between owning a car and owning a computer make them similar in many respects. I've owned automobiles for about 50 years now. In that time it never occurred to me to open a single commercial repair manual for any of the vehicles I've driven for lo! these many years. I've been content to have the car serviced by "experts" when the need arose (and paid for the privilege - sometimes dearly!). But a limited pocket book, positive consumerism and just plain curiosity convinced me that I needed to know SOME basics that would protect my cars from unnecessary expenditures, inconveniences and perhaps an unscrupulous mechanic or two.

So over the years I familiarized myself with the basics of necessary protective maintenance that would accomplish these goals; simple stuff like regular oil changes, rotation of tires, correct tire pressures, changing the air cleaner and keeping to the owner's manual recommended schedule of tune-ups, diagnostic procedures, etc. None of these require any mechanical skill or automotive technical knowledge on my part and my vehicles have performed reliably and safely for the many years I have driven each one.

What has this lengthy preamble have to do with computers and computing? As I said at the beginning, there are obvious similarities between maintaining a car and a computer. Like most of you, I'm no technical or mechanical expert regarding computers. I leave that to the Norm Salzbergs, Julius Zuckermans and Pepe Motolas of our club. But I do want to protect my computer and its attached machines from breakdown, virus invasions, lousy performance and frustrating error messages. Owners' manuals are either nonexistent or undecipherable. What's a clutz to do? I think I've found a reliable, creditable and (hallelujah!!) easily understandable solution. After years of surfing the internet seeking basic information equal to the automobile owner's handbook I've settled upon a Web site that does just what I want. And it's FREE!! (Unless you would like to show your appreciation for the tremendous amount of work it took the guy to build this site.)

Point your browser to <http://www.pcpitstop.com>. It is an invaluable asset to any computer owner. For openers it will put your computer through 13 diagnostic tests with the click of your mouse, the results of which you will easily understand, while you sit there and watch your screen. You will then get loads of step by step advice on how to get the most and best from your computer without going into the registry (an area restricted only to those who are experienced and knowledgeable), changing files, etc. The rest of the Web site is dedicated to giving you a better understanding of your computer and what it needs to give you years of trouble free performance without your being intimidated by the usual esoteric magazine articles and Web sites that turn us off by the third paragraph.

Only one word of advice from this "clutz": like your car or any other mechanical device, you'll get the best out of your computer if you follow a regular schedule of diagnosis and maintenance. It is too late to berate yourself AFTER the computer has crashed because you meant to but didn't.

Matt

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