

# Something new, something old

Wow, three posts in one day!

I've been working on a very old laptop (Compaq Armada), and installing Ubuntu Linux on it. This little machine has just been collecting dust for the past few months, patiently waiting for me to install a working operating system.

With an old wireless card, I am now able to use this computer to access the internet anywhere in my house.

Why in the world would I want to do that? Well, I'm looking forward to download updates to this machine. Of course, I'm enough of a geeky nerd to like playing with a different OS. And finally, I really like giving this old machine new life for at least a while.

The machine is much too slow for any serious work, but it will give me a chance to work with something different. I may start converting some of my other old boxes to linux of one flavor or another. If I can find good video and picture software, this may replace windows on one of my everyday computers. Still too early to tell on that.

So far so good. I was able to post on my blog, and read email. Maybe with additional memory, this things wouldn't be that slow either.... Nope, the processor is very slow.

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## to DTV or not to DTV

Another political post in two days? Wow! What is up with that? Just this, for at least the few months local television stations have been pushing the switch to DTV in Feb 2009. I

purchased my digital converter before any local stations were using any sort of signal strength on the digital side. On Feb 18 2009, the signals on all the digital channels should have been boosted to a higher level when the old analog signals were shut off. Our congress, in the infinite wisdom (sarcasm!!!), decided it would be a good idea to delay the switch. ARRGH!!!!!! The president will probably sign this bill. ARRRRGH!!!!!!!!!!

So instead of getting better signal strength on the 18th of February, I'll be stuck with what I currently get. I live out in the middle of nowhere (I like that, so I'm not moving) and I can't get cable. I live in the middle of the woods so satellite TV is out, unless I want to cut down some very large and living trees (I don't). So I'm stuck with the signal I can get over the air.

I did my part. I got my new antenna (the old one would have never gotten a good digital signal). I got my converter box. I'm just waiting to get all the local channels. 1 station still hasn't upped their signal to something I can get. 3 others are hit and miss right now. I can only get 1 station most of the time. I was hoping to get all of them in the middle of February. Can I say ARRRGHH!!! again?

I'm really not sure why anyone who watches TV enough to miss it, could miss the fact that digital TV is coming. It has been forced down our throats over and over again, commercial after commercial ( I was hoping they would stop soon). Now those will probably continue until some time in June. All because of a supposed 6.5 million people who aren't ready for the switch. My question is: "Where the heck were they for the past 6 months". Get your government coupon early we were told. Get ready for the switch was said. DTV is coming on Feb 18. Now we will get those same messages for the next 5 months... GRRRR...

The Federal Government forced this switch on us years ago.

Saying we had to keep up with the technology. That started over 10 years ago. I'm sure that the way technology goes, there could be something better for transmission by now if somebody wanted to develop it. 10 years is a long time for tech stuff. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for the digital TV, but this switch really should have been done a long time ago.

I'm just worried that this will go the way of the metric system. We've all seen how far that went. So in 50 years will we still have analog TV and Digital TV side by side? I wouldn't bet against it.

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## **Back in the day...**

There was a time, when I was in college that I wanted to be a teacher. Specifically, I wanted to teach High School Math. While in college, I did specialize in computers, I took the exact same classes for a teaching position. For the first 2.5 years of college, I was sure I would either program video games, or teach High School Math. I don't do either of those. I'm not sure why I never tried the video game programming, but I do know why I didn't go into teaching.

It started with an introduction to student teaching. Not the full fledged student teaching, just 1 week in a 9th grade general math course. These were not troubled kids, just your normal everyday kids in small town Ohio. The problem is that they didn't know basic math. Things I remember learning very early in grade school. Other things I learned in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Not any really advanced stuff. Things like  $33 + \underline{\quad} = 72$ . They were struggling. By the end of the first class, I was frazzled. The second day in I was in charge of a lesson. The teacher prepared it for me, and I just had to study in the previous evening. I stood in front of a class of dazed faces.

The day before, I was helping individual students during their study period, today I saw the same faces on every one of the students. They didn't want to be there. They had no interest in math. My lesson went as well as could be expected and the teacher was impressed by the way I handled myself. I was to observe the next two days, and design my own lesson for Friday. We would talk about it after the Thursday class.

The next two days were just really getting to me. I found that my patience grew less as the week went on. Everyday I needed a few hours just to unwind from 1 class period. I wasn't sure what was causing this reaction. In talking with the teacher, he thought I just had nerves from a public speaking encounter. I thought that could have been the problem. My lesson on Friday when Ok, I developed a 'fun' review of the weeks lessons. The teacher gave me the thumbs up to go ahead, he seemed to think his students would like it. If they did, I couldn't tell. Stuff they were giving earlier in the week was forgotten on Friday. Stuff drilled over and over again the day before was missing from their memory. If it had been a quiz, they would have had some very poor grades. My nerves were worse that Friday afternoon. Yes, maybe it was speaking in front of so many people, I did have that problem with theater just a year earlier.

Then I got a job as a college tutor. Getting other college students ready for tests, quizzes and just helping with their assignments. 1 on 1 stuff, some of these kids were friends of mine. Trying to give them a heads up on some basic math. Same thing with my patience. It was all I could do to not throw the math books at a head or two. Why didn't they know this stuff? It is all so basic. Why didn't they learn this earlier? What happened to math instruction in the High Schools? What happened to basic logic? Hmm. No easy answers. But that was one of my longest semesters at school. I needed the job to help pay for school, but I really hated the job I had. I'd rather wash the uniforms of the various sport teams (did that

as a freshman).

To relax I started spending a lot of time in the computer center. Computers didn't argue that they were right. They did exactly what they were instructed to do. The computer never questioned the rules. At the end of that semester, teaching was out and computers were in. I didn't apply for my senior year of student teaching and I knew that I never would.

And what was the straw that broke this camel's back? One of the kids I tutored had a section on some of the basic Algebra rules. The very stuff that makes Algebra work. It was the "Commutative Property of Addition". That old  $A + B = B + A$ . I tried telling this person that it was a rule. It was one of the things that made Algebra work. I remember explaining that there were just a very few rules that made math work. We spent a good two hours going over this again and again. At the end of the time, I was asked how I knew all this worked. My reply was simple. It works because it was designed that way. The answer back was, "Oh, Ok". I thought that was the end of it. The next session, the student brought back sheets upon sheets of paper with many, many math equations written on it..

$1 + 2 = 3$ ,  $2 + 1 = 3$ ,  $3 = 3$ ,  $1 + 2 = 2 + 1$  ...  $999,999 + 1 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1 + 999,999 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1,000,000 = 1,000,000$  ..  $1 + 999,999 = 999,999 + 1$  ... and so on. I don't know how long this was worked on, but was a lot of paper and pencil lead wasted. All to say "I guess it works, I couldn't find anything that didn't. I didn't have the nerve to say, that this could go on to infinity and never give you an incorrect answer unless you added wrong. All I said was, "Yep its a rule, and you can't break it." I just shook my head. I guess I could have had fun and changed a rule or two. Can you say Abstract Algebra or Non-Euclidean Geometry?

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## Browser wars...

I've always tried out new (free) browsers as they are released since the inception of a browser as a program. I remember the first Mosaic browser. Quite a change from text based newsgroups and bulliten boards. Text and pictures all at once.

Currently I'm using Windows XP and have Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome loaded to run. Most of the time I use Chrome, because it is just a bit faster to load. Firefox follows closely as to what I use most. I have Explorer just in case something doesn't work on the other two browsers.

So of course this lends itself to another poll...

[poll id=4]

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## Not much movie watching today

My weather day turned into a day to install my new router. This now allows all the computers in the house to access the cell modem at the same time. Yes, this does slow down from the direct connect speed just a bit, but if only one person is on, I didn't notice any difference. But I will be able to work, my daughter will be able to do homework, and I'll finally be able to get to the internet from my linux box.

I also found out that I can IM multiple daughters at once. Could be fun if they are ever online at the same time.

Things just moved fast when I was able to get my high speed cell modem. And the speeds are getting faster every day, well almost every day.

Then on to a party with the people I work with. It was a fun time.

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## **A multitude of tests**

Well I spent most of the day at the optometrist today to have a series of tests run. The Dr. found something that concerned him in my last visit, so I had to undergo a testing for glaucoma today. First there were pictures of the retina (those were cool) and then a series of pressure tests every 45 minutes. Numbing drops and the blue light coming toward my eye.... Now my eyes are sore and tired. I'm not sure if that is from all the prodding or effects of the numbing drops. I was told I may have discomfort this evening. Good news is that I don't have to worry about glaucoma yet, but they will keep an eye on it in yearly testing. It's hell getting older.

Now for the fun part.. The blue light coming at my eye caused me to think many a strange thought. After seeing it for the umpteenth time, I was imagining alien examinations, eyes that go "POP!", CSI probing and the like. My multitude of voices were wanting to be heard, but since the Dr. was a bit concerned I felt levity in the situation was a bit out of place.

But now I can let that come out...

Imagine Bullwinkle (wow, Bullwinkle is in the spell check dictionary!!!) sitting in the chair. "Hey Rocky, why all the blue lights?" "I can't feel my eyeballs anymore, Rocky".

“Where’d everybody go? Who turned out the lights?”

Or Stitch? “Blue Punch Buggy!!” “Stitch be good, take blue light away now.”

Or JarJar Binks (Yeah!!, not in spell check)... “Weesa gonna die heere.”

Some unnamed voice... “Go ahead strap me in. Turn on the juice. Say good bye to my Ma and Pa.”

Forget the imagination, why shouldn’t you be able to hear my thoughts...

[some unnamed voice](#)

[jarjar](#)

[stitch](#)

[bullwinkle](#)

[The funny thing is, they are all me.](#)

Strange I thought of a lot more sitting in the chair, but seem to have forgotten most since I’ve been home...

Well, looking at the screen doesn’t seem to be helping much, so that should do it for a bit.

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## **Because my daughters are precious to me**

I went to search for a bunch of sites about the current plight of frogs, after seeing one daughter write about [Frogs.](#)

So here they are for your attention:

[Save The Frogs](#)



[Year of the Frog](#)

[Care to Make a Difference](#)

[Nerdy Science](#)

[NZ Frogs](#)

☐ [Coffee and Frogs](#)

[Amphibian Conservation](#)

[A thousand Friends of Frogs](#)

Just Frog related:

[Wiki Frogs](#)

[Frog Land](#)

[Expolratorium Frogs](#)

[Frog Sounds](#)

Commercial store:

[Frog Store](#)

And a local radio station:

[I Love Froggy 106.7](#)

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## MacGyver . .

Full shows available on the internet. Who would have thought of that. I also have enough speed to watch one as long as I don't make the screen too big or watch anything else.

I really liked that show when it was on. What I thought was great, is that some of the things he did would actually work.

I can't remember how many I tried out. Yes, even as an adult I did try some of the MacGyverisms. My wife thought MacGyver was good looking, so she didn't have a problem watching the show either. She got mad when I sprayed a lightbulb with

water once. Hot lightbulbs explode when they get wet. Who would ever have thought that would work in real life. Glass shards all over the place... I was more careful after that. I waited until the house was empty to try new things.

Well anyway you can watch whole episodes of Macgyver on an IMDb link [here.](#)

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## A post about a big spider

It is a seasonal thing... I was going to post a news article about a big spider in Australia, but after seeing some of the pictures, I decided not to. If you really want to look it up, it was about a spider the size of a person's hand dining on a bird.

What really interests me is that there are so many different arachnids around the world. I always thought of the tarantulas as the big spiders. The tarantulas are not web weavers in general. But here was a rather large spider in Australia that actually spun a web that caught the bird.

Anyway what caught my attention to this story was the bird being the victim here. If I remember the song correctly the bird ate the spider, after it ate the fly...

Now who started going through the rest of the song???

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# Black holes and the end of the world...

Anybody else see a theme forming... And this topics color is black..

Has anyone seen some of the headlines about the new Super Collider? Bunch of doom and gloom coming from somewhere.

Things like "Fear Looms", "Doomsday machine to start", "Collider triggers end-of-world fears", "Black Holes may devour the Earth", "Will Collider destroy the Earth", "Giant wild goat kills thousands".. Ok, I made that last one up. I understand that this is cutting edge science that very few people understand, but does the media have to make the stories so out there. The chance of something like this happening is very small, almost non-existent. The only reason it isn't non-existent is that nobody really "knows" what will happen when they finally get a collision. There are some very good ideas, but nobody "knows" yet. They haven't done the experiment yet.

Tomorrow there is a chance that the collider will create mini-black holes that will swallow the Earth. Tomorrow the Sun could explode and fry the Earth. Tomorrow a big rock could hit the Earth and send us flying out of orbit. Tomorrow a space ship (that's no moon, it's a space station) could blow us to bits. Tomorrow the Sun could rise, and then set and the day will be normal. I have an idea of which of these things will happen, but I don't "KNOW" which one will happen. I'll check tomorrow just to be sure.

May the Force be with you when that space station decides to blow the Earth to bits. We aren't even part of the Imperial Senate....