

## Rich's Ramblings for April 2005

No, I have not gone over to the dark side so don't worry about me forgetting about my Microsoft Windows computers..

(Also, this is not an April fools article like his April 1990 article, still available in my archives on <http://www.schinnell.org> )

But, as last month I talked about buying one of the new little Mac-Mini's. I have since upgraded it with a wireless card and 1 gigabyte of memory. So, as one who has been messing around with Virtual PC (under windows) and running other operating systems, I went out and bought Microsoft's Virtual PC for the MAC. It installed on my Mini-Mac pretty much as they say it should. As with all my software, I checked the manufacturers web site and upgraded the VPC-MAC to the latest version (from 7.0 to 7.01) and proceeded to install Windows XP Home edition. (You of course must have a legitimate copy of any software that you install under the Virtual PC.) On the Mac, my Windows XP works just about as easy as it does on my Toshiba Laptop. I installed the free version of AVG anti-virus and Golden Bow's VOPT disk optimizer, (links to both sites on my web page on CPCUG.ORG.)

I haven't yet tried to install Ubuntu Linux on the Mac but that's for another issue of my Ramblings. All in all, I still am amazed at how easy the Mac desktop to use after running Windows XP for a couple of years. The Mac people who I talked to at two local Macintosh retail stores (MBS and AbsoluteMaC) were very helpful and readily agreed to answer all of my dumb questions. The Mac keyboard is quite a bit different from the PC standard keyboard and requires a bit of retraining for this old DOS person. <G> One thing I forgot to remind you is that Backup is very important, whatever operating system you use. Also, Remember to check with the vendor of your software/hardware for upgrades. Many times a problem crops up whenever windows update changes something and then your other software or hardware does not work correctly. Almost all software has under the Help button, an option that is listed as "check for upgrades". Do it.. That could save you some time in figuring out what has gone wrong.. :) (BACKUP)

### Another New Subject:

FIOS (Fiber Optic System) is now available in my neighborhood (Aspen Hill MD) and after watching Verizon install the fiber optic lines all over my street and elsewhere in Montgomery county. I finally found out that Verizon was offering High Speed Internet access via their FIOS system. You can check it out to see if your eligible for installation at [verizon.net/fios](http://verizon.net/fios) I called on a Wednesday and they came the following Tuesday with two technicians who spent over 4 hours installing a box on the outside of my house. They switched over the phone lines to my house so they now come out of the fios unit which consists of a Optical Network Terminal (ONT), power supply and battery back-up system. There has to be a power outlet jack near the inside of your house where the phone lines enter. The battery backup and

power supply is mounted inside and requires an AC electrical outlet plug. Peeking into the unit, I noticed a cable TV type of jack marked Video, just watch them start offering TV services real soon now.

I have had Comcast Cable internet access for about 3-4 years which has been working fine. As many of you who know me, I like to be on the bleeding edge of new technology.

On to the install for FIOS, After the install and according to the installation instructions, Verizon FIOS techs were planning to install their software on my computer. I talked them into getting me registered on the system without installing the MSN software. Many of you might like it but I prefer my old familiar stuff. They agreed that many people do not like all the extra stuff that many ISP's require or request that you install. They had an alternative method and using my old dependable Linksys router, I was able to register on the verizon.net and get a userid and password. All is now well in Rich's computer...

One nice thing about Verizon is that they are getting smarter. Now they include a router which "kinda" protects people from probes on the internet. Everyone should have at least a router which interfaces between your cable modem or DSL line and your computer(s). Most routers perform what they call IP (Internet Protocol) translation. What that means is that it automatically converts your ISP's (Internet Service Provider) IP number to an internal network number which is non-internet routable. The routers DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) option gives each PC when you connect to the Router, a number which is referred to as a "dotted Quad" Normally this is in the range of 192.168.xxx.xxx and 192.168.xxx.xxx. This number range for "dotted Quad" can not be used on the world internet, none of the existing Internet systems pay any attention to this range of numbers (There are few other ranges of numbers that are also not internet routable). In other words they are prohibited from being routed to anyone. Period. So what the router does is takes the requests from your local computers IP address browser and mail programs, then it passes this to the internet via the IP that your ISP assigns you when you connect to their system. Whew, a bit complicated but the bottom line is that when the wierdo's who inhabit the internet start scanning IP address's for computers that are vulnerable to being infected, they can't get thru the routers IP translation to your PC.

I decided to try a couple of speed tests to determine the difference between Comcast and FIOS on download speeds. After downloading the same 522Megabyte file via both Comcast and FIOS, the results were 630KB per sec with FIOS and 264KB per second with Comcast. I had opted for the 5K download and 2K upload with FIOS, so I figure that FIOS is over twice as fast as Comcast. The cost for the 5/2K FIOS service is \$34.95 for me as I have other Verizon services. Without these, it would have cost \$39.95 per month, No installations charges are supposed to show up on my bill and I can upgrade to the 15/5K service for another \$10 per month which I might choose after a couple of months.

PC-Pitstop ( <http://www.pcpitstop.com> ) which is a Internet test site affiliated with PC-world magazine, the FIOS gave me 5040 download and Comcast a 1976 reading.

So, I guess it is good-bye Comcast before my next billing cycle.

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