

## Rich's Ramblings June 2005©2005

I have been messing around with several interesting products that I have either bought or received for review. (In fact, I experiment around with lots of software for my consulting clients) I jumped on the Microsoft bandwagon when they first announced their Anti Spyware Beta version for free. After all when Microsoft gives you something for free, sometimes it is worth what you paid for it. But in this case, the gotcha might be when the Beta1 period runs out in July of 2005. We all might get to feel a warm fuzzy and then they could stick it to us. But you never know, Gates and company might feel sorry for the rest of us and continue the free option. Then again, they might put it in their new release of Longhorn or Windows XP. Anyway, you really should have an anti spyware program of some kind in order to make sure that no program or web site can or has installed spyware on your computer. Remember that there are no guarantees in life or computers.

Quoted from Giant software's web page:

*On December 16, 2004, Microsoft announced its acquisition of GIANT Company Software, Inc., a provider of top-rated anti-spyware and Internet security products. Microsoft will use the acquisition to provide its customers with new tools to help protect them from the threat of spyware and other deceptive software.*

Microsoft gives away a beta1 version of their newly acquired Anti-spyware program to users who are running Windows 2000 professional and above. They named it Microsoft Anti Spyware. It has proven to be a worthy product and hopefully they will continue to provide it free to Windows owners. Microsoft's Anti-Spyware does not support Windows versions below 2000.

The Help screen shows up like this:

Microsoft Anti Spyware Version: 1.0.501

This version expires on: 7/31/2005

As you can tell, it is supposed to expire on July 31<sup>st</sup> this year (2005). Many of the security guru's are recommending that Microsoft continue to provide it free I was running the internal diagnostic's from the help menu in Anti Spyware and the following kinda jumped out at me.

***Session.TimeBombDaysRemaining: 102***

***Session.TimeBombExpirationDate: 7/31/2005***

Not very encouraging. <G>

Sunbelt Software's CounterSpy, is an alternative to Microsoft's Anti-Spyware program.:

I was contacted by Jen Grenz of S&S Public Relations who provide the Public Relations for Sunbelt Software who offered me a review copy of CounterSpy. It is more robust than Microsoft's Anti-Spyware and the price is reasonable (all relative) at \$19.95 and they have multiple copy discounts. I downloaded the latest version, entered the serial number in the box after installing it on a windows XP computer. It looks so much like the MS product aside from the name and logo's, I had to make sure and check which computer I was using. All in all, a good product and the price is cheap, but if Microsoft continues to provide essentially the same product for free, I can't see spending the extra dollars for SunBelt Software's CounterSpy over Microsoft's Anti Spyware.

Unless Microsoft decides to start charging for updates.

Those of you running Windows 98 Second Edition, but not plain Windows 98 can use the SunBelt Software Counterspy. I recommend it for you. [Http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com](http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com) is the web page for CounterSpy. Installation was a snap and it has an update feature that keeps your software up to date automatically.

### **Another Experience...**

I have been having second doubts about Symantec Norton Anti-virus 2005. I have had a couple of cases where it missed a virus as an attachment, Not that I or anyone that I know would ever execute an E-Mail attachment. I found out that NAV2005 missed the virus. Then I decided that the attachment looked suspicious so I copied it to a floppy diskette. I was then able to copy it to a session of Windows 2000 running under Microsoft Virtual PC. I use AVG' anti-virus software in this session. This way the virus, if I had decided to run it would have been restricted to just that session and no major damage would occur.

I am running Grisoft's AVG free anti-virus program in the Windows 2000 session and it detected it immediately. I always check for updates to any of my Anti-Virus products on a daily basis. I run NAV 2005 on my main computers and the free AVG software on the others and when I run different operating systems under Microsoft Virtual PC. (For a pictorial of what it all looked like check with <http://www.schinnell.net/files/badvirus.htm>

where I had recorded my problems.

Another glitch in NAV 2005 is that every now and then it decides that it needs to be re-validated or authenticated with the Symantec servers. This seems to go well but I don't know what is happening.

At this time, I do not intend on recommending Symantec's Norton Anti-Virus 2005.

Check with my CPCUG.ORG web page at <http://www.cpcug.org/user/schinnel/> for the web (Uniform Resource Locator) URL where you can download the free AVG (and other programs that I recommend.) It is quite a bit cheaper than Symantec's Anti-Virus product and seems to behave well with most everything that I run. I have been recommending AVG to many of my small business clients. Grisoft has versions that run under windows 95 up and even a Linux version. They offer a 2 computer version as well as a 5 computer version which are all 2 year licenses.

More Experiences:

I have a laptop and am continually inserting those little USB thumb drives to transfer data to other computers and the cost of the 1 gigabyte models are now down below \$100. I thought that wouldn't it be nice to have a small hard disk say 60 gigabytes or so instead of just 1 gig. I heard about a USB device that allows you to plug in a small 2.5" hard disk (this style of hard disk is normally used in laptops and smaller mini computers). I went searching and found that there is a small USB cable with adapters on the end to fit the 2.5" hard disk, power is supplied from the USB port. It worked great, I can have 60 gigabytes of data in my pocket and Windows 2000 and XP automatically recognize the USB hard disk.

To digress: I upgraded my Toshiba laptop's 60 gigabyte 4200rpm hard disk with a 5400rpm disk which gave me a spare 60 gigabyte hard disk. The neat thing about this USB cable is that it supports standard IDE size drives as they provide a small power supply so that the larger hard disks can be connected via USB cables. USB power drain is important and standard USB does not have the power for the larger IDE drives.

I think that this USB device would be a real boon for pc repair people. I bought mine for \$38 including shipping at <http://www.usbgeek.com/> as a USB 2.0 IDE cable with power supply item number uca000201. They do sell a cheaper version that does not include the power supply for larger 3.5" IDE hard disks.

It even works fine when I plug the USB cable into my Macintosh Mini computer. I can transfer whole document directories over to the Mac effortlessly. It just plain works in whatever machine I plug it into. It is much faster over USB 2.0 but works on USB 1.1.

All in all, well worth the investment.

Rich Schinnell is a real longtime member of CPCUG and has written his Ramblings for over 20 years. He has a Apple Mac-Mini which has been growing on him. He still has his home network of PC's. He has Verizon's Fiber Optic Network internet access installed and seems very pleased at the speed improvement over Comcast Internet Access. Of course he has come a long way since the 300BPS modem days where it took forever to send a file in Ascii. He can be reached at [schinnel@cpcug.org](mailto:schinnel@cpcug.org) and on his home page at [schinnell.org](http://schinnell.org). Last resort via telephone at (301) 949-9292.