

# The SAGATUG

# INTERFACE

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The San Gabriel Valley Technology User's Group. The Club for TRSDOS and MS-DOS

## How Do You Set The Time On Your VCR?

Roy T. Beck

As you know from the numerous jokes on public media, many VCR's and some other devices continuously blink 00:00:00, for the reason that nobody cares to set them, or doesn't know how to set them, or because there was a recent rolling blackout, or possibly for some other reasons.

In the past couple of years, the manufacturers of some VCR's, and TV sets decided to "help" us poor ignorant slobs, and provide an autoclock feature. The autoclock will set the displayed time for you, which in the case of VCR's is supposed to facilitate recording programs for you when you are not around to start the recorder yourself. Since the built in clock displays time to the second, it can be assumed to be correct to the second, right? No, Wrong! Why?

It turns out that the VCR and TV designers scratched their heads a bit in determining where to find a time signal. After the abovementioned cogitation, combined with some input from the accountants, they decided that the appropriate (read most economic) source would be the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). I'm not sure of this statement, but apparently the PBS system has been distributing time signals in the vertical blanking interval for quite some time, and all the VCR designer had to do was to scan for this signal and then set the autoclock to agree. By the way, this practice of inserting time (and other) signals into the vertical blanking interval is known as the "extended data service signal" or XDS.

An Editor named Tekla S. Perry wrote up an article in the IEEE Spectrum magazine in October of 2000, describing the above, and went on to describe his personal experiences with the autoclock feature on his new VCR. Turned out that his VCR was setting its autoclock alright, but was consistently setting it wrong by a fixed number of minutes. Being of an inquiring mind, he began researching the autoclock function to discover the source of its time signals.

His investigation showed the typical autoclock scans through all the TV channels it can receive, beginning with channel 2. It progresses up the channels until it finds one with the time stamp feature in the vertical blanking interval. Whether that signal is right or wrong, it has no way to determine. Also, it doesn't know PBS from shinola. Whatever signal it finds is the one it adopts, despite the owners wishes. This point is important because some FOX affiliates were passing along signals relayed from Los Angeles, and those signals were set to local Los Angeles time, PST or PDT as the case may be. In some locations, the FOX channel was a lower number than the PBS channel for that same area, so the autoclock was using Los Angeles time relayed by FOX network. This set some (but not all autoclocks) to Los Angeles time. If you were in an EST time zone where the FOX channel had a lower number than the PBS channel then you were assumed by the autoclock to be living in Los Angeles, and your autoclock was therefore 3 hours slow.

In San Jose, at the time Mr. Perry wrote the article, the

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### Memory Jogger...

See you at the next SAGATUG meeting this Friday, June 8, 2001 from 7 to 10 p.m at the Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center , 405 S. Santa Anita Ave. (See page four for directions and more upcoming events.)

### Demo By Powerquest Set for July Meeting

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## How To Set Time

autoclocks were consistently 24 minutes fast. Why 24 minutes? The local PBS channel was sending out a signal that was off by 24 minutes.

After Mr. Perry published his story in October 2000, he received a lot of e-mail from IEEE members all across the country, with many strange and wonderful tales to tell. Many of the writers gave up in frustration and simply turned off the autoclock function. This left them subject to time errors due to drift in the clock in the VCR, but by correcting the clocks periodically, the recording of programs was satisfactory. That is until the annual leap forward or back when changing from standard to daylight savings time, or vice versa.

I personally have been bitten by this bug. While traveling out of town, the time changed but my old VCR clock was unaware of daylight time, so my prescheduled recordings were of the wrong program.

In December of 2000, Mr. Perry wrote a follow-up story quoting some of the e-mails. In those stories, many of the writers had approached either or both of the FOX and PBS technical personnel at their local affiliates. A remarkable aspect of this story was that many of the PBS and FOX personnel nominally responsible for the time signals were unaware they were being generated and transmitted! This accounted for the FOX signals being off by 1, 2, or 3 hours due to the use of the LA time signals. Mr. Perry indicated that FOX is now generally aware of the problem, and apparently the time zone problem is a thing of the past.

However, the error of some minutes, fast or slow, continued. These turned out generally to be due to PBS affiliates being unaware of what their equipment was designed to do and what it was actually doing. By the way, apparently some of the cable system operators are also generating and transmitting time signals. Again, they were sometimes ignorant of what their equipment was doing.

Another person described a situation where his clock would mysteriously shift away from correct time for a day or so, then move back to correct time, all with no action on his part. His speculation was that some program material was being taped and then broadcast at some other time, and that the taped material included XDS time signals. If these signals were then broadcast at the time the autoclock was looking for a signal to check itself, some strange results might be anticipated.

A few people had to communicate with the technicians at their local stations and make them aware of the features of their station equipment. Of course, the ongoing problem is that personnel are reassigned at irregu-

lar intervals; and the attention to the XDS time signal may "fall in a crack" and be ignored by a later assignee. Since the system tends to operate without attention, it may fail or produce strange results, unnoticed by the techs until an aware viewer calls in to remind them.

An interesting situation reported by another viewer involved the Disney channel. He was getting erroneous time signals from some source, which he identified as the Disney channel. He then spoke to an engineer at the Disney transmission site. After some investigation, the engineer found the time signal was being generated by some new equipment recently installed to support the V-chip system, which is intended to screen material inappropriate for children. Once the engineer became aware of the situation, he set the clock accurately and the problem went away.

Mr. Perry concluded his December article by noting that we taxpayers are supporting a government time-keeping function at NIST, which used to be called the Bureau of Standards. This agency transmits an accurate signal by radio, which



becomes slightly inaccurate (a few tenths of seconds) due to propagation time from Boulder Colorado

(or Hawaii) to the receiving location. Since this time signal is accurate, paid for, and always on the air, he believes all autoclocks should make use of it, instead of the XDS system with its inherent vagaries. I second his motion!

I have a clock purchased from Fry's, which regularly checks its crystal controlled internal clock against NIST, and resets its time if necessary. It does this once per day, and displays an icon attesting that it did, indeed, check successfully. If it cannot find the NIST signal, the icon is turned off until the next 24-hour check. I use it as the basis for setting my various household clocks and wristwatches. Being battery powered, it is not subject to rolling blackouts, but requires a new battery every year or two.

As a final comment, I believe the NIST time function should be made available on the Internet, and our computers should be designed to detect this signal at specified intervals. This would overcome the problem of drifting computer clocks, which are only as accurate as the crystal-controlled oscillator and the person who originally set the clock. ##

# Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional, a Review

By John Calhoun

The program installed with virtually no problems. I installed it on my computer that already had Win98 installed on it. Windows 2000 gives you the option during installation of upgrading the current Operating System (OS), or installing itself as a dual boot system. What is dual boot system you ask? Dual booting allows you to install two operating systems on the same computer. I chose the dual boot option. Why? Because I had heard that Win 2000 had problems running on, and recognizing, some hardware. It also will *not* run some software, so I didn't want to take any chances on messing up my computer. Plus, I wasn't sure I would like it!

Normally when you install another operating system on the same computer, each OS is hidden from the other, so that they don't conflict with one another. This is critical with Windows. Win 2000 is a little different in this area. After the installation is finished, rebooting the computer brings up an OS menu, that allows you to choose which OS you want to boot to. If you choose Windows98 (or Win95, if that is what you had), everything is just as you would expect: Drive C:\ is your original OS, and all other hard drives follow, just as they were before your Win 2000 installation, with Windows 2000 totally hidden. But if you choose to boot to Win 2000, you will notice something strikingly different: your original OS is visible! The amazing thing is that it is still on HDD C:\. On my machine, I have my hard drive partitioned into four (4) drives: C:\, D:\, E:\, and F:\. I also have a CD-ROM drive (R:\), and a DVD drive (V:\). Windows 2000 created and installed itself into drive I:\, all without any intervention from me, except my input to install as a dual OS. (The CD-ROM was re-configured to drive G:\ and the DVD was now H:\.) Yes, that's right: it installed itself onto the *last* drive on the system, not the first, and left drive C:/, with my original Windows98 visible, and intact (but ignored during Bootup)!

It turned out to be a good choice to install as a dual boot OS. Windows 2000 does not recognize virtually any of my hardware: the CD-RW, the DVD, or the 56k

modem! There is a list of hardware on Microsoft's website that lists the hardware and software that Win 2000 *does* support, but I wanted to try out the OS anyway. Besides, Windows 2000 is advertised as being a lot more stable of an operating system. The problem is, that an operating system is of no use without hardware or software, so now what? Go to the Internet to download the newest Win 2000 drivers? Been there, done that. Updated drivers either were not available, or didn't work. I don't consider it worth the effort and expense to upgrade all my hardware just to make Win 2000 happy. So I'll just wait for the next release of Windows, which will be called Windows XP (XP = Experience). I just hope it doesn't have the same strict requirements! Since I just came back from the MS Extreme Event heralding the release of Windows XP and Office XP, I found out that Win XP is scheduled for release this Fall. For those interested, Office XP is in stores now: I just saw it at Sam's Club Friday.

Windows 2000 takes a lot longer to boot up than did Win98. You *must* login to Win 2000 either as an administrator or a user. If you want to change anything in Win 2000, you can only do it when logged in as an administrator, even if you are the only one using the computer. Microsoft suggests that you login as a user to *use* Win 2000, and as an administrator to *make changes* to Windows 2000. Folder Options and Dialup Networking are now in Control Panel. System Properties, in Control Panel, now has a tab for Hardware. It contains buttons for the Hardware Wizard, and Hardware Profiles. Device Manager is now located under the Hardware tab, and contains buttons for Driver Signing and Device Manager. Driver Signing insures the integrity of all files on the Win 2000 CD with a digital signature from Microsoft, which are automatically verified during Win 2000 Setup. When you install *new* software, you have the option of Ignoring the signature and installing the file regardless; having a Warning message displayed before installing unsigned files; or Blocking unsigned files totally. There is also one more addition to the Control Panel, and that is a folder containing Administrative Tools. The Tool Tip for AT states: "Configures administrative settings for your computer." These tools include

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## Windows 2000 Pro

Component Services; Computer Management; Data Sources (ODBC); EventViewer; Local Security Policy; Performance; Services; and Telnet Server Administration. What each of these tools contain and do is beyond the scope of this review.

The Start Menu now keeps track of what programs you use the most, and leaves the others off. A Tool Tip pops up to tell you this, with instructions on how to see the other menu choices, which involves nothing more than clicking on a down-arrow button at the bottom of the menu. The Start Menu displays this way, regardless of the menu length: even if the entire menu fits on your screen. I think this is a pretty good feature so far, but since I can't do much more than run Windows 2000 itself, that opinion may be a little premature. Just the other day, I set up my laptop to network with my Win98 computer. Since the laptop doesn't have a network card installed internally, I had to use a PCMCIA Fast Ethernet 10/100 card. Win 2000 recognized it fairly easily, after instructing both computers to search the network for each other (less than 5 minutes). That was done without installing any software, or drivers, and no configuration either!

Basically, I like Windows 2000, *so far*. . . I like the

look and feel of it. Transitions between windows are smooth and fluid, not just instantaneous. The startup sound event is different, and the new wallpaper choices are great. You can also choose wallpaper for your folder view in Windows Explorer, as well as a Thumbnail view. As far as the Windows "colors", I really don't like any of them. Just like Win98 and Win95, they are very boring, in my opinion. In both of those Windows versions, the better choices cost more, in the form of a "Plus Pack". I haven't seen or heard of such a package for Win 2000. There's no mention of it on their website either. As far as stability, I can't evaluate that, since as I stated before, there's nothing to do except run Win 2000 itself! I can't install software; I can't log onto the Internet; and I can't watch DVD's! The only software that I have that will run on it is Norton's Utilities 2001 for Win95, 98, 2000, ME, and NT. Norton must have really rushed out the version for Win 2000, since it is very boring to look at compared to previous versions. (Norton's Utilities 2001 on Win95 and 98 looks good though.)

If you are interested in getting Windows 2000, make sure you go to Microsoft's web site to get a list of all the hardware and software it *will* run before you buy it. And, make sure you have all the drivers for your hardware at hand before you install. Otherwise, you will end up with a computer that will do *nothing but* run Windows 2000! ##

# The "SULFNBK" June 1st Virus Hoax

Fred Langa (of the LangaList Newsletter [www.langa.com](http://www.langa.com)) wrote:

I've gotten many notes from readers who forwarded a chain letter to me (usually along with 500 other unlucky recipients) that went something like this:

Do you believe that a friend of mine sent me an alert and the procedure that we have to follow for the possible infection of SULFNBK.EXE .

I had checked, just to make sure. An then... the file was there, hidden even from McAfee and Norton, maybe waiting for something to start to work....

The original recipients of this note checked their systems and were alarmed when they find SULFNBK.EXE there. Well, SULFNBK.EXE file is a normal part of Windows that's used in managing long file names (the file is usually found in your C:\Windows\Command folder). Antivirus routines don't detect the file because it's not a virus. The "virus" warning is a complete hoax.

There is a worm that can arrive as an email attachment named SULFNBK.EXE, but that has nothing to do with the current hoax. All the major AV tools know how to handle that worm; and by now everyone should know that you should never, ever--- EVER--- click on any email attachment, no matter what it's named or whom it's from, without first at least running it through an AV scanner. And in any case, the use of the name SULFNBK.EXE is coincidental. The worm could have been called any Windows file; there's nothing special about SULFNBK.EXE.

What's more, virus chain letters are almost always hoaxes: A good rule of thumb is NEVER to forward any email just because it says "Urgent: Pass this on to everyone!" or comes from a buddy. In fact, anytime you get any email with a "pass this on to everyone!" in it, or a letter that has been forwarded dozens of times, it's almost always (99.99999% of the time) a hoax or scam designed solely to generate a chain letter--- that is, to trick the gullible into perpetrating the hoax.

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## ***SULFNBK Virus Hoax***

Don't be taken in! It only takes \*literally\* a minute to find out about if any email. For example:

--supposed virus alerts (even if the email says they're "confirmed by IBM, Microsoft, AOL and Oracle" or some such),

--pending legislation, including email surcharges and taxes,

--sick/dying/missing children who need email or prayers,

--body part theft rings,

--free vacation giveaways,

--free money or products from Bill Gates (or Disney or AOL or Nokiaor....) to those who forward the most emails,

--foreign government workers who will pay you to let them move large sums of money through your bank account,

--or any of hundreds of similar chain letters.

These are ALL almost always pure, utter hoaxes and scams.

You can make yourself chain-letter-proof by taking literally about a minute to check up on any claims made in chain letters. There are any number of resources you can use, including:

Symantec Anti Virus Research Center at <http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/index.html>

McAfee Associates Virus Hoax List at <http://vil.mcafee.com/hoax.asp>?

Department of Energy Computer Incident Advisory Capability at

<http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/CIACHoaxes.html>

Debunking online and email hoaxes: <http://www.kumite.com/myths/>

The Urban Legends Web Site at <http://www.urbanlegends.com>

Urban Legends Reference Pages at <http://www.snopes.com>

Datafellows Hoax Warnings at <http://www.Europe.Datafellows.com/news/hoax.htm>

ALWAYS take a few seconds to verify the truth of

# Phony Joke Viruses

This is from the LangaList Newsletter: and comes by way of John Calhoun.

Please note: These are ALL JOKES!

## **Just For Grins**

I don't know where this list of "New Viruses" started-- a quick search reveals it appears on about 40 different web sites--- but I hadn't seen it before:

The "I Love You, But I'm Shy" virus never actually invades your computer, but collects data about it worshippingly from afar.

The "Love The One You're With" virus hangs around your computer, but the whole thing is just temporary until it can find the computer that it really wants to invade.

The "Happily Married" virus invades only one computer and stays with it for life.

The "Unhappily Married" virus spends a long time negotiating with a computer, finally invades it, and then strays to other computers from time to time.

The "I Want A Divorce" virus sends repeated, hard-to-read messages that your computer isn't working and takes half of your computer's best data in an ugly network session.

The "Stalker" virus spends unnatural amounts of time monitoring your computer, collecting data your computer has thrown away and tries to record all of its functions. And it writes rude messages to any other computer with which yours connects on any regular basis.

The "Forever Single" virus causes your computer to focus solely on other computers with which it is totally incompatible or prove generally unavailable. ##

## ***SULFNBK Virus Hoax***

any chain email like this, and then tell your friends ONLY

if it proves true. Otherwise, you're not doing your friends any favors, and in fact, you're just helping the hoaxers to waste people's time and bandwidth. Additional resources to strengthen your BS detectors:

How To Evaluate Internet Research Sources at <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>

How To Evaluate Information Sources at <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/~agsmith/evaln/evaln.htm>. ##

**Next SAGATUG Meeting  
Time and Place:**

***7 to 10 p.m., Friday, June 8, 2001***  
**Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center**  
**405 South Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia.**  
**(In the park just south of Huntington Drive)**  
**Meetings are on the second Friday of every month**

**Upcoming Events:**

**TRW Swap Meet**

Last Saturday, monthly, Manhattan Beach

**Pomona Fairplex, June 9 & 10, 2001**

(Sat. & Sun.) Bldg. 4 LA Fair grounds, Gate 14) -  
Admission \$7 plus parking

**Buena Park, July 7 & 8, 2001**

at the Sequoia Conference Center,  
7530 Orangethorpe, (Beach Blvd exit from 91  
Freeway) \$3 admission

**Reseda, June 23 & 24, 2001**

at the Sherman Square Entertainment Center,  
18430 Sherman Way. Admission \$3.

**Glendora Seniors Computer Club**

La Fetra Senior Citizens Center, 333 E. Foothill  
Blvd., Glendora, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

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**Deadline For The Newsletter**

The deadline for the INTERFACE is the last Saturday of the month.

**Republication:**

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