

The Authors Corner

by Dutch Rhudy

Welcome to The Authors Corner.

Recovery from last months lightning strike to our outdoor LAN (Local Area Network) cables, set us back several weeks. Purchasing new equipment, without first carefully researching each item, always leads to unexpected problems. Buying under an emergency situation not only cost more, it compounded the problems exponentially.

Our normal computer service center is several miles from my office, so I chose a new-to-the-area and much closer computer service shop. They had in stock the brands of equipment I needed to replace first, before I could discover what other damage we suffered. These lead components being the cable modem, router, LAN switches, and a couple hundred feet of CAT 6 LAN cable.

Lost an hour on the phone with the cable company, getting the modem's MAC address registered and it booted up. Another half-hour to hardwire a laptop to change the router settings and get its security set up. After I resolved a minor issue with the old server computer, it was time to install the new LAN cable.

This is not a task I should have undertaken myself, considering my health, but it needed done. Old Murphy decided to come around and bring a downpour while I worked outdoors between the buildings pulling the cable overhead. I dried off and changed into dry clothes for dinner.

I hoped the damage in my office would not be bad, but it turned out much worse than I thought possible. The only computer still functioning was an ancient artifact, not connected to the LAN, I kept in the corner and used for accounting. Well, it was slightly newer than CGA by a few months, and a 10 Mbps Ethernet card sat above the old 56k dial-up modem.

At least now I knew the new LAN was working with the router. My newest computer would not power up, one of the older computers did, but no sound, monitor, or LAN. I fished around and found an old 10/100 Ethernet card and pulled the graphics card from my newer computer. Although it booted up, once, it soon died. Removal of the cover showed several swollen capacitors, and burnt traces.

The inside of my best computer looked worse than my barbecue grill, but the power supply was working, and case still looked great. Got up early the next morning to take it to the computer guy to rebuild. I should have slept in, he does not open until 10 am. No biggie, I went to have breakfast, figuring I would have to leave my box for him to repair when he opened, and be on my way.

He remembered me from the day before, and my story about the lightning strike, so dropped everything to rebuild my computer while I waited. Mighty nice of him to do so, but it was a nightmare in disguise. Although he used some of the best quality components he had in stock. After I got home, I learned the fancy motherboard he installed was designed and locked for Windows Only.

I lost so much time trying to install my OSs on this machine, he was closed by the time I figured out the problem. I returned my computer to him before lunch the next day. This time I specified exactly what motherboard and CPU I wanted in the machine. He would be glad to swap with me, but it will take up to two weeks for him to get my requested parts.

This is not good, I have a job that requires a computer, and several commitments with deadlines I must meet. He did not have a used computer to sell me, so I made the long drive out to my long time computer guy. He normally had at least ten used computers on his shelves to sell, but every single one was out on loan to a temporary office as they recovered from their building burning down. Old Murphy seemed to be messing with everyone lately.

To make deadline on one article I must submit that day, I borrowed the wife's little netbook. In order to use it, I plugged in a keyboard and mouse, they worked. Unplugged the HDMI cable from her TV and used it as a monitor. The netbook has WiFi but also has an Ethernet port, I chose to use the LAN.

A standard keyboard is double the size of a netbook, and with all the wires connected, it looked like a spider sitting on the low stool between my lap table and the TV. I was able to get my work done and submitted on time. The little netbook performed quite well for being a toy, but I could not work like this much longer.

Late in the afternoon, the next day, after I tore apart my remaining damaged computers to assay the damage, the phone rang. The new computer guy picked up a well cared for used commercial machine from a dentists office, who's new system he installed that morning. If I wanted it, he would have it ready to go in about an hour.

Under the circumstances I figured he would charge me an arm and leg, but no, he charged me only half of what I expected to pay for this brand and model machine. He even loaded an OS on it for me, not my usual, but one I now use quite often.

Having a good working machine, made the two week wait for my new machine to be rebuilt the second time, pass by fast. He then repaired my second newest machine as cheaply as possible. By using parts he gleaned from my barbecued machine, which were not compatible with the new motherboard.

In closing, I have once again been coerced into doing NaNoWriMo. This will put Roaring Falls on the back burner, unless I write an outline for either a prequel or a later book. I have less than two weeks to prepare for whatever I chose to write during NaNo. I have one outline completed for a possible different opening for Roaring Falls, which I set aside after selecting a better lead in to the story. I may take a look at it again and see if it will work.

Before I go, I would like to say thank you for stopping in. I truly appreciate the supportive, wonderful comments, and communication exchanges via your many e-mails. Special thanks to our beta readers for your generous help, corrections, and marvelous suggestions. If the creek don't rise, I'll see you all again next month.

Respectfully submitted
Dutch Rhudy