



## *December 2015 Newsletter*

*I'm sure that everyone is scrambling to get their Christmas shopping started, make out Christmas cards, find the perfect Christmas tree, and decorate their homes with zillions of lights. For weeks now, we have been bombarded with emails from retailers telling us that their store can give you the best price around for any gift that's on even the toughest of Christmas lists! Isn't it amazing how today we can sit in front of our computer and check out different websites to find those low prices, free shipping deals and then just wait for them to deliver it to our front door? I am a big fan of all of this because I really hate to battle the crowds, and after a while I feel like I'm going around in circles trying to find the perfect gift*

*when I don't know what the perfect gift is! Just ask my husband John...he'll tell you that's exactly how it is! ☺ So what precautions do we need to take at this time of year when all of our personal information is given to these retailers and we have to worry about identity theft?*



*One of my favorite places to shop is Amazon.com and being a prime member it allows me free shipping on most of the items that I want to purchase. Is it safe to store my personal credit card information with a company like this? The answer is simple. **If you have good security on your machine, meaning a good antivirus program and anti-malware program, and an active firewall, you're well on your way to safe shopping.***

*Today Retailers are very aware of the need to protect their customers, so once their website loads you'll see the name of the their store and just before it **http"s**". The **"S"** is the key...it means it's secure.*



*Now I have to thank Bill Tingue for asking me a question last week about “History”. Not American or European, but **Internet Search History**. Whenever you visit a website, most browsers like Firefox will keep record of where you’ve gone and it will be in a list called History. It’s great for going back and finding a site that you visited but can’t quite remember where it was or the exact name. History isn’t always good though. So once again I’m reminding everyone to clear their History in Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari, IE or Edge whenever you’re doing any banking or making any kind of purchase. Why? It leaves a trail for someone to follow and find out where you’ve been banking, shopping, or paying bills. Remember, a number of us like to stay logged in to a website for the simple convenience of not having to type in user names, or to have them remember our passwords because we usually don’t! In the wrong hands old history can become a serious problem.*



*And remember . . . . Reputation add-ons to your browser from sites like Web Of Trust (<https://www.mywot.com>) can help you quickly identify sights that are questionable.*



*Ebates is a great way to make cash back on purchases. It's not a scam...it's real! I've mentioned this before and I can attest to the fact that they do pay you money back on your purchases. Go to [Ebates.com](https://www.ebates.com) and sign up for an account*



*When you're shopping, be aware of the following tech rip-offs!*

- 1. Extended warranties or phone insurance can add hundreds of dollars to your purchase price and are usually bad investments. The basic manufacturer warranty is usually one year, which is the time*

*period in which most repairs are often needed. With an extended warranty the item has already become outdated and is usually not worth repairing. One exception.... Apple care is worth the investment.*

*2. When you go to buy special cables like the HDMI that we use on DVD players, Roku etc., you'll see quite a difference in price range. Some can be listed at a price of \$100 or more. I have purchased these cables online at discount stores for between \$5 and \$10 and found them to be of superior quality. Amazingly enough there isn't any difference between a \$10 dollar cable and the crazy gold plated versions.*

*3. RAM and hard drive upgrades from computer makers at time of purchase always seem to be a good deal. In truth it's less expensive to buy the base model of your computer and perform your own upgrades. As an example; if you purchase a Mac computer from the Apple Store and double the memory of the machine, Apple will tack on an additional hundred dollars to the sale price. Anywhere else you can purchase the same memory for \$60. You can see there's a big markup in price. You say you can't install the memory by*

*yourself? Just go online and look for step-by-step instructions on how to install RAM.*



- 4. If you're worried about the extended warranties on computers here's one last thing to remember. If you purchased your laptop desktop or any electronics with a **credit card**, most credit card companies will offer an extended one-year warranty on your item. I've had several clients who have had major repairs that needed to be done just after that one year warranty expired, and by calling their credit card company they were able to either have the machine repaired or were given back their money on the defective item. If you're not sure what your credit card offers, either call them or go online to their website and check out their policy. Paypal is another company that will refund your money.*



Photography is a big part of my life. I always seem to have a camera with me and even take pictures of my client's pets when I go to their houses to work! 😊 It's a way to capture memories for a lifetime and sometimes just "naming" them loses out on the real meaning of what the photo was about. Now there's a way to embellish on the information that you can save about those special photos. EveryStory is trying to make documenting your experiences much easier by allowing you to record your voice to explain the moment behind each image. It's an easy way to turn your photo albums into an interactive experience with a lot more depth, because your voice is leading the journey. You can assemble your project via an app on your smartphone or use the website to bulk upload pictures from your computer. Once you have the images you want in the album, you use your smartphone's microphone to add your voice annotations. You can even create groups so others can contribute to the album.

<http://everystory.us>



Could this be what we've all been waiting for? I don't know about you, but the spam in my email inbox has increased a lot lately and there's no easy way to get rid of it. I just read about this on Data Doctors last week and I think it's worth trying. "If you live on email, you probably spend a good chunk of time every day getting interrupted by unimportant messages because you're on various mailing lists.

You probably don't even know how you got on half of the lists, but with today's auto-opt in mailings, it's going to keep happening.

If you're drowning in daily junk mail and newsletters, a free service called Unroll.Me is worth checking out. Once it scans your inbox, it'll alphabetically list every subscription it recognizes so you can choose to keep, unsubscribe or add messages to your roll-up.

The Roll Up is a daily digest of all the subscriptions that you do want to see combined in one message, so you don't get them all day long. For important items, you click on Keep in Inbox so that you see them as they're sent.

**Unroll.Me currently works with Gmail, Yahoo! Mail, AOL, iCloud, and Outlook.com accounts.** Learn more about the service and their new iPhone app at

<https://unroll.me> “ You can download the app from the Apple Store \*\*From a Data Doctors Mailing



**Beware of Sneaky Ransomware attacks !** Recently there's been a surge in popularity by hackers to use ransomware to attack Business computers. The reason for targeting businesses is because they lock the machine and then ask for a hefty price for people to get their information back. Bottom line is that they know the businesses will panic and pay the outrageous demand just to keep their files safe. Sadly, many pay the price and never retrieve their information. The way they're doing this is by claiming the attachment is a Resume. Once that attachment is clicked on and opened the ransom attack begins. Just because I'm mentioning businesses here, that doesn't mean that we all aren't at risk. Just recently someone called me saying that they were on the Internet and a startling message popped up on their screen. The message had an audio file attached of a person screaming at them saying that their computer was infected and if they didn't call the

number shown on the screen, their computer would be inoperable. If they call that number you know what's going to happen! **That's when the machine becomes infected** and the headaches really begin. Never let anyone take control of your machine unless you know who they are!



Remember when Mac people we're so confident that there're machines and devices would never see a virus or a piece of malware? Last month it was announced that there was a discovery of a new malware called Xcode ghost. It turns out that this malware has infected at least 39 known iOS apps all of which made it into the Apple Store. A few days later they updated information and said that 3500 apps were infected. I guess it's time to finally except the fact that Mac users not only need an antivirus program but also an anti-malware program. I use Avast antivirus on my iMac and a free version of Malwarebytes for Mac. Just yesterday Avast flagged three viruses that they prevented from attacking my iMac. The people at the Mac store are very faithful to the fact that they believe viruses don't exist in the Mac

world. Times are changing, and preventing an infection on the machine is much easier than removing it. You may have noticed that it's been along time since Apple has run those ads making fun of windows from a security standpoint and that's not a coincidence!



This past month there was an article in the Schenectady Gazette that caught my eye. It said “hate your cable box? In a few weeks Time Warner cable is going to start testing in **New York City** a cable service that doesn't need one (cable box) and it is delivered over customers **home Internet**”. I wish I had a dollar for every time I've had to reset my Modem or Cable box! Yes, I hate my cable box...to be honest I don't know where this is going to go but it's a start in the right direction. If they follow through on this they're going to have to perfect our Internet connection so that it's more reliable. The upside for us is that we wouldn't have to pay an extra \$10 a month to use their equipment. I know we have 3 boxes...that would be \$30 back in my pocket! I already use Netflix

and find that a lot of my programs are available with their service, and I think these big companies are beginning to realize that people are fed up with prices and the fact that they can't pick and choose their own stations to watch. It also stated that Cable customers fell by 7000 in the July- September quarter. It looks like some brave souls have cut their cable!

For those of you who tried to get your bill reduced and couldn't, keep trying. They told me to call back at the holidays when they run their specials, and I will. I'll play their game if I can get my bill down to a price that is reasonable!



Now for a Time Warner tip! We all know that when you lose your Internet connection you can reset your modem/router by unplugging it from the power strip, waiting about a minute and then plugging it back in. What if it doesn't work to restore your Internet? That's when you call Time Warner and ask them to reset it on their end. If it's a continuing problem, return the modem to Time Warner for a new one.



*Gluten free*

There's a new app that might be of interest to those of you who are trying to eat gluten free, avoid dairy or even shellfish. It's called Kitchology and is designed to help families with special dietary needs. You can filter recipes, nutrition and allergy information is integrated right into the recipe, and you can even use the app for shopping lists. It's available for the iPhone and iPad at the Apple Store.



What about Windows 10? I've been asked this so many times, that I figure it's worth answering in this newsletter. If you're happy with Windows 7, stick with it. Your support for this operating system will be available for at least the next 5 years. That's what they're telling us at this point, and they're still selling Windows 7 machines so they should honor it. By that time you'll be thinking of replacing your machine, and guess what! You'll get Windows 10 "free" on the new machine. 😊 It's always a learning curve

to go with a new operating system, so keep that in mind. I know a lot of you are curious about it and the fact that they say it's "free" is alluring. As for me, I'm sticking with Windows 7 for now. I'm comfortable with it and I know that once I switch I'll lose a lot of the software I love to use.

**Want to get rid of the Windows 10 nag screen? Go to this link and download Instructions:**

<http://www.win10wiwi.com/#download>

They will send you an email with a link to download the file and complete instructions on how to use the tool!



***Computer Term of the month: DCIM***

Short for Digital Camera IMages, DCIM is a folder that contains the digital images taken with a digital camera.

If you'd like to see some of my photography, you can follow me on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/shirl.woodworthcrane>

Or check out the Scotia Fire Departments website. I'm the fire photographer and post all the photos I take for them of events and fires. You might even see yourself on there!

<https://www.facebook.com/ScotiaFD/timeline>

*Christmas is a joyous time for all of us, and my faith in what this season is all about is what keeps me going. If it weren't for the grace of God I wouldn't be where I am today or doing what I'm doing. I'm very thankful! John and I both wish all of you the blessings of this holy time. May you and your loved ones know only love, joy, good health and the promise of God's faithfulness in your lives. Merry Christmas & Happy Hanukkah.*

**Warm Regards,**



*Shirl*