

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 236: Linux and Windows: Neither is Perfect!

Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR 715 N. Dries Street Saukville, WI 53080-1664
(262) 268-1949 wb9rqr@att.net

My lovely wife Nancy (KC9FZK) has watched and listened as I installed Linux in a couple of situations where the result was not perfect, and she suggested I write about these to point them out. "Don't claim that Linux is perfect when it is not," she says. So, let us see where Linux has chinks in its armor.

First, Linux is not perfect in a dual-boot scenario. On the other hand, it is probably a very good choice if you want a Windows/non-Windows machine. Let me talk about dual booting for a bit. It is defined as having two operating systems on a single computer, and you choose at boot-up time which of the two you want (you could have even more than two available, but we will not get into that here). Also note that if you want a dual-boot machine, it matters which operating system is in control.

All the experts say that if you wish to have both Windows (XP or above) and Linux on the same hard drive, your best bet is to install Windows first, leaving enough room in an unused partition to later install Linux. Then, after Windows is in place and set up, install Linux, and put it in charge of the dual boot process. This is best is because Microsoft operating systems do not manage dual-boot environments very well (What?? Microsoft does not play well with other operating systems?? For shame!). Linux, on the other hand, will do fine in control of the dual-boot machine.

For example, here is what I see on the screen when booting up my Winlink (Win 10)/Ubuntu Linux) machine:

```
Ubuntu  
Advanced options for Ubuntu  
Memory test (Memtest86+)  
Memory test (Memtest86+, serial console 115200)  
Windows 10 (loader) (on /dev/sda1)
```

Ubuntu (the first line) is highlighted when this screen appears. If I just hit the Enter key, Ubuntu Linux is loaded. Or if I do nothing for 5 seconds, Ubuntu Linux is loaded. Within 5 seconds, if I use the down arrow to highlight the second line, I can select some advanced options for Ubuntu. The third and fourth lines will permit a memory test. The last line will start Windows 10. This line is where I go most often, to start Win10 and Winlink.

Nice, right? Yep, most times it is fine. But, what happens when Windows does an update at 3:00 a.m. and reboots the machine when it is finished? I am not present when this happens, so Ubuntu is automatically selected after 5 seconds. But this is a Winlink machine, supposedly with Winlink running under Windows 10 24/7! So, the next morning, I notice that Ubuntu is on screen, and I must reboot to install Windows/Winlink. Not perfect. Ideally, I should be able to reorder the five choices in the above boot menu and place Windows 10 loader first. But, there are no provisions to do so that I am aware of. One chink in the Linux armor.

Nancy also wanted me to mention that we have six computers in the house, and only one is a dual boot machine. I think she wants to play down Linux. Hers is a straight Win10 machine, which she uses for email, writing and games.

The second chink in Linux' armor is really not a chink. It is just the bald fact that Linux is not Windows. Without taking some special steps, programs written for Windows WILL NOT WORK in a Linux machine. Nor will programs written for Linux work in a Windows machine. It's like trying to give a person who only

speaks English a complicated instruction set in ancient Greek. Or the reverse. It just isn't going to work out properly!

So, what are those special steps I mentioned? Let me just outline three. A program that comes with the installation of several versions of Linux called "Wine" will let you install and run some Windows programs. Not all, but many, including games. You simply run Wine before installing the Windows program and you are home free. It may not work in every case, but it may well work in yours. The only way to tell is to try it.

A second approach is to use a virtual machine. A virtual machine (VM), in this case, is software designed to run Windows programs within a running Linux installation. In other words, you create a Windows environment inside a protected box in your Linux machine and run whatever Windows programs you want in that box. A search for VMware Player should get you started.

Third, if you have more than one computer for your use at home, one being a Linux machine and the other Windows, you can use Teamviewer to run the Windows programs on the Windows machine and see and control the whole thing with the Linux machine. Teamviewer presents the screen of the remote computer just as if you were sitting in front of the remote, and you have full control (mouse, keyboard, etc.). And Teamviewer works perfectly on Linux, as well as on Windows. I do it all the time. Happy Computing!