

THE COMPUTER CORNER

FIXDATE – A Free Utility

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Among the “junkier” computers I accumulated this winter were two that I just could not bear to recycle. One was a very fast (100 MHz) 486 (now doing service as my basement open-case test machine) and the other was a Pentium 75 MHz. Both are oldies but goodies, with one serious problem. Each time either one booted up, it they would show the correct time, and they both kept accurate track of the day and month. But the year defaulted to 2094! Of course, this is a Y2K bug in the BIOS chip, easily fixed by purchasing a new chip for each machine and popping them in. But, being a resourceful ham and not wanting to spend the \$40 + for each new chip, I decided to correct the problem with a fix-around. So I wrote a little PASCAL program that fixes the year. Here is what the program does, written in what programmers call “pseudocode” so anyone can understand it.

1. Hey Computer! Get the DOS date from the system clock (day, month, and year).
2. Write to the screen so your human master can see it:
“DOS date = day month year.
3. If the year is not 2000, then:
 - a. Change it to 2000 in the system clock.
 - b. Write to the screen so your human master can see it:
“Year is being set to 2000”.
4. If the year is 2000
 - a. Write to the screen so your human master can see it:
“No adjustment of the year is necessary”.
5. Your human master is done for now – go on doing what you were doing.

I put the little program (FIXDATE.EXE) in the root directory, and added a single word to the end of my AUTOEXEC.BAT file on a separate line: Fixdate

Now, a purist would say “Stan, you dummy, what happens next year when the date changes to 2001”? My simple answer is that I will modify the program on lines 3, 3a, 3b and 4, above to reflect the new year. A once-a-year task, and a good application of the KISS Principle!

Now, if you have the same problem with a computer, all you need do is let me know. I will send you a copy of the little program (4,624 bytes) and the source code (574 bytes), via snailmail on a floppy or right over the Internet if you are connected. The combined 5 kilobytes will download in a snap. If interested, you can view the source code (FIXDATE.PAS) with any text editor - Notepad will work fine. The source code contains the human-readable English commands that I wrote, using conventions of the PASCAL language. They are converted to binary (machine language) by the PASCAL compiler, and put into the EXE file. You can even open the EXE file with your text editor, if you desire, but all you will see are strange symbols with no meaning to any human being. To have any meaning at all, you would have to view this file with a utility that converts the machine language to hexadecimal code, and even then it would not mean much. We humans just don't think like computers (thank goodness). Happy computing!