PC Post

The Modesto PC User Group Newsletter

User Helping User

Is someone about to steal everything you are – and have?

Things have changed since Shakespeare's Iago opined: "He that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed."

Nowadays, anyone who steals your good name can make a mint off you.

Just how he or she can do that – and how to stop it before it happens – will be the subject of a multimedia presentation by the Modesto PC User Group's own computer forensics private eye Kirk Stockham when the club meets on Thursday, June 24.

This meeting may be the last to be held in the gymnasium behind St. Paul's Episcopal Church, depending on how successful the group is in scouting out a new meeting place. (A new minister at the church has requisitioned our meeting night.)

Stockham, an expert in identity theft crimes and computer forensics investigations, will examine this fastest growing crime in the nation from the perspectives of both victim and thief.

"During an identity theft crime spree," says Stockham, "the ID thief, when using computer technology, can victimize hundreds of people and steal tens of thousands of dollars in products, services and cash."

He will demonstrate the thief's techniques and how to guard against them.

"Of special interest," he adds, "will be some new information on 'skimming,' a computerized scheme used to steal volumes of credit card information."

The group will convene at 6:30 p.m. for its question-answer forum on individual computer problems. Elections of new officers will be held at 7:30 p.m., followed by Stockham's presentation.

For meeting location see inside back page

Next Meeting Thursday, June 24, Random Access SIG 6:30 p.m. Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Inside this issue

Next board meeting
Come have dinner with the board at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 6, at Ridgeway's Restaurant, Modesto.

Be sure and check our web site at least once a week: www.mpcug.net

Modesto PC User Group Officers

Join The Modesto PC User Group
Web site: www.mpcug.net

To join MPCUG (or just get more information about us go to our Web site and fill out the new member form or mail your check to: MPCUG, P.O. Box 5122, Modesto, CA 95352-5122.Membership is just $24 a year and includes 12 issues of the PC Post along with participation in all meetings and events. You will also receive e-mail advising you of extra events or news.

The PC Post and Editorial Policy

The PC Post is published 12 times per year and is available to all group members as a membership benefit. Annual group membership dues are $24.

For information write:

Modesto PCUG PO Box 5122, Modesto, CA 95352-5122

Opinions expressed in the PC Post do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the members as a group or the Board of Directors.

The PC Post encourages group members to submit articles for publication. We would like to have articles which deal with the writer's experience with computer hardware and software.

An article may deal with any computer-related subject provided it contains no libelous or offensive material. We can't use information copied from other publications without written permission except for quotes.

Articles should be submitted in MS Word text. Do not spend time formatting your article such as indents or centering. Please use only one space between sentences. and do not use bold, italicize or otherwise format the submission as we can't guarantee results in translation to Publisher. Proof read

and run your spelling checker. Watch for special upper and lower case in brand names. Do not tab or indent to layout text.

If you want to include a graphic, please contact the editor for instructions.

We reserve the right to edit articles, for length or to improve readability. Longer articles may be published in several parts. We will not knowingly promote unlicensed businesses.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. All articles and letters to the editor should be submitted to the editor via email as an attached file. Call him at (209) 667-1980 before submission. Please include your name, day and evening phone numbers, and email address for contact.

The MPCUG exchanges some articles with other user groups around the country via the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG). If for any reason you object to having your article distributed to APCUG member organizations for reprinting, please notify the editor at the time you submit the article. Your wish will in no way affect publication of your article in the Post.

Production notes: Prepared using **Microsoft Publisher 2003**, MS Office 2003, Minolta laser color printer and a lot of sweat and tears.

President's Corner

By Sid Losher

The MPCUG year is coming to a close. Had a few challenges but survived them. A change in how we handle the PC Post was the greatest challenge. We had to learn to live within our budget. The board gave the club support needed to meet the club's needs. Two members continued to give their all for the club. Liz Leedom and Bud Bondietti. They furnish the support to have a successful club meeting with programs and Q & A. Nice

changes in the club website have been furnished by Jim Goodman and it looks great. In the background and not seen is Barbara Cameron, club treasurer, who keeps us in the black but more important sees we have refreshments at the meeting. Challenges ahead are to find a meeting place and increase our 25 to 35 attendance. I'm grateful for the support and kindness the club has shown me and know you will do the same for the new president.

Nominating Committee

By Jim Goodman

Nominations will be open from the floor at the June meeting for all positions except treasurer. The vote will take place during the business portion of the June meeting. If you wish to run for one of the offices, please contact Jim Goodman. See inside front page of this PC Post for his contact information.

The slate for the June Election 2004:

President: Mike Kumler
Program VP: Elizabeth Leedom
Secretary: Terry Fix
Director At Large: Hank Mudge

Jim Goodman, chairman, nominating committee
Terry Fix, member
Linda Kerwood, member

Membership Chairman

By Hank Mudge

Members renewing in May - Thank You for your continued support

Roger Bremer   Lester Maxfield
Alfred Kaufman   R. Richard Lutz
Terrance Fix

Members whose dues expire in June

J.J. Schneider   B. Gene Gibson
Stan Loeb   Harold Bates

Frank Lowry   Allan Romander
Gene Richards   Ozier & Wilma Martin
Al Gordils   Klem Nielson
Richard Provost   Dick Krupa

Members whose dues expire in July

Edward C O'Donnell   Elizabeth Sanders
Paul Martelli   Keith Schock
Frances M Marek   Mike Mensinger

That's Not My Job

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

The Moral: No assumption should ever be made that somebody will do it when it's Everybody's opportunity to see that things get done.   **Support your new board of officers.**

E-mail is 32 years old

By Jim Smith, President, Business and Professional Microcomputer Users Group, Inc. (BPMUG), Connecticut

Spring has finally arrived and the winter weather is starting to give way to warm, sunny days. March was the anniversary of Email. Yes, in March of 1972 the very first basic e-mail program was written and the "@" sign was chosen for its "at" meaning. Here it is 32 years later and email is a mainstream means of communication and an normal tool for most businesses and for personal use.

Naturally with this handy mainstream concept comes those wanting to abuse it. I would hope that most of you are aware of some of the tricks and hoaxes that can be offered via email. For the others, I'd like to review some of the more common ones so you won't be tricked.

First, there are the obvious scams trying to get you to buy endless supplies of gimmicks that promise to make many of your body parts larger or somehow enhanced. Less obvious are sites that promise prescription drugs for bargain rates and ones with Hormone Growth solutions, or great mortgages on-line or credit repairs and many others. Much like the snake oil sales team of yesteryear, most of these are scams. The occasional one that is legit should also be considered suspect since anyone desperate enough to jump on the wagon with the snake oil sales team is not likely to be around for long enough to deliver anyway. Businesses that use unsolicited commercial email (spam) to sell their products should be viewed with great caution.

Then there are hoaxes that alert you to something that request that you spread it to everyone in your email address book. Any time you get an email that tells you to spread it around, think about it first! Most likely it is a hoax. The most recent one I've seen is the one that asks everyone to not buy gasoline from the big producers in order to prove a point. Searching on-line will give plenty of reasons why this is a farce but it still doesn't stop people from continuing to send it around. Of course there are plenty of hoaxes around about viruses that will eat your computer unless you send it along to everyone else you know. There are jokes that beg to be sent to everyone and there are emailed chain letters that promise doom and gloom for breaking the cycle. Don't continue to clutter up the email system with these.

Here's something to consider -- if you do what you are told and send these to everyone in your address book, and they turn around and add the addresses from their list, and it goes through that for a while, eventually it will likely land in the hands of someone that will sell all of those email addresses to junk emailers who will delight in sending a huge assortment of get-rich-quick and body enhancing scams to everyone listed. I get enough of those spams without friends adding my email address to those lists.

The other popular email hoax is the endless variation on the Nigerian widow with too much money from her late husband and looking for a trusting American with a bank account ready to enter into a business deal in exchange for a percentage. These scams have been around for longer than email has but, rather than using US Postal Service and phones to deliver the pitch, email is a much cheaper way to fish for unsuspecting victims.

Speaking of fishing, there is another hoax that is know by its variation, "Phishing". Phishing is when someone tries to get you to divulge credit card or passwords by pretending to be legit. If you get an email from PayPal asking you to "Click Here" and confirm your account info or from Citibank asking you to verify your credit card number, or from EBay asking you to type in your password so they can keep your account active, these phishing trips are hoaxes! Do not fall for them no matter how legit they appear to be. If you are not sure of something like that, be suspicious. Assume first that it is a phishing expedition rather than assuming it is legit. With a keen sense of skepticism, many of these hoaxes will become obvious. They prey on our not thinking too much but just doing as we are asked. Most people that fall for them are thoroughly embarrassed after it is over because they realized that if they had stopped to think about it they would have realized the absurdity of it. Don't be hooked in a phishing expedition!

So with 32 years of emailing behind us, there are many wonderful things about email and some things to watch out for. I've given you a few of them... it is up to you to stay alert to many of the other ones that are out there. BPMUG is a great resource for those wanting to find out whether something that sounds too good to be true, is true or not. Don't be taken in. Stop to ponder it first and then verify it. Then if you find an amazing deal to get rich quick that you just know will work... don't share it with me. I probably won't believe it anyway.

Use Run commands for fast access to almost everything

By Linda Gonse, Editor, Orange County PC Users' Group, California

Did you know that the Run command is the Swiss Army knife of Windows' built-in apps? Using it can make your computing time move along more quickly and smoothly.

Available since Windows 3.1, the Run command is often overlooked by users except as an option for installing programs, although techies use it frequently to access various system diagnostics and information.

But, the average computer user should take a closer look at Run for its versatility to start programs and utilities, to open files and folders, to open web sites (when connected to the Internet), and as an alternative to placing shortcuts on the desktop.

To use Run, left click on the Start button. Click on Run. If you hate to take your fingers off the keyboard to access Run, you can avoid using the mouse by pressing the Windows key on your keyboard and the letter "r". Commands are typed into the open box.

For example: In the open Run box, type msconfig to give you quick access to the Startup Configuration tab. Click on the StartUp tab, and check or uncheck boxes of programs you want to run on Startup. (You will be prompted to restart your computer. If you want your custom startup to take effect immediately, click OK.) Msconfig is one of the Run commands you will probably use often.

Following are other Run commands for you to try out. (If you get hooked on Run, you can search Google for "run commands" to find others. There are lots of them! Many will include "switches," familiar to DOS users, that will allow some of the commands to be customized.)

calc (opens calculator utility)
cdplayer (opens cd player)
charmap (opens character map utility)
clipbrd (opens clipboard utility)
command (opens DOS window at command line)
defrag (opens defrag utility)
drvspace (opens drive space utility to compress drives, etc.)
dxdiag (for DirectX, sound, input devices-joysticks, etc. info)
freecell (opens freecell game)
mplayer2 (opens Windows Media Player 6.4)
msconfig (accesses programs that run on startup)

mshearts (opens hearts game)
msinfo32 (accesses system resources info)
notepad (opens program)
regedit (accesses command to edit the registry)
rsrcmtr (loads resource meter utility in system tray)
scandskw (accesses scan disk utility)
scanregw (registry scan)
sndrec32 (opens sound recorder)
sndvol32 (opens sound volume utility)
sol (opens a solitaire game)
sysedit (accesses the System Configuration Utility)
sysmon (opens system monitor utility)
win.ini (accesses file that loads some Windows components)
winipcfg (displays Internet connection/adapter info)
winver (displays the Windows verson installed on the computer)
wmplayer (opens Windows Media Player)
wordpad (opens program)
wupdmgr (connects to Windows update)

Using the Run box can also give you a jump start on addressing your email messages. Go to Run and type in mailto:<desired email address> and press OK. (Example--mailto:editor @orcopug.org.) Your e-mail application will open to display a blank new message that already has the email address you typed in the 'To:' field! You can even check websites by typing in a web address in Run. (Ex-ample-http:// www. orcopug.org.) When connected to the Internet, you will be whisked to wherever you want to go.

Among the switches you can type in the Run box to customize tasks are attrib, move, and xcopy. DOS command and switches, and instructions on how to use them in conjunction with Windows Run, are at http://www.Techiwarehouse.com/DOS/XP_DOS _Tutorial.html, and http://www. computerhope.com/ msdos.htm#02

As you type commands in the Run box, a list of your Most Recently Used (MRU) commands--a history of the commands you've used--accumulate. The growing list can come in handy, because you can just

Claude's Bytes…

By Claude's Delphia, editor emeritus

Email response issues.   Spam or virus, the 40 meg email mystery.

Emailing problems -- Don't you just hate it when you send or receive email, and you feel you have to respond to the response? I've gotten so that I tell my recipients that they need not respond to let me know that they got my email, or that, in fact, I don't care what they decide. That last doesn't sound nice, but in some cases, I'm not going to be affected either way — whether they decide to accept my suggestion, or not. If they do respond, then it could force me to answer them back. I don't want to clutter up my life with that kind of back and forth, especially if it's something that neither one of us has any control over.

There is, of course, the situation where you want to know if the person got the email. There's nothing like no response to something that you felt you clearly worded so as to get a response. Email programs do have a feature that allows the recipient to opt for an auto reply indicating that they got the email. This is great if you need verification that they received the email. It's not great when certain emailers leave this feature on all the time. Its messy always having to decide what to do with the acknowledgement.

Just imagine two emailers who always leave this feature on. The back and forth could be endless and really messy.

One of my problems, if you can call it that, is that I try to be informative in my emails. I usually say more than necessary and sometimes just write things as they come to me -- things that I think the recipient might want to know. In fact my emails are somewhat like the letters sent before the days of easy long distance phone calls. This seems to turn some people off, or at least they don't feel that they need to respond in kind. That is obviously an individual choice and is OK with me. Just because I write because I want to, doesn't mean they have to respond. Some people just aren't into a lot of email chit chat. Some people aren't typists, which limits their abilities to respond. Others aren't writers, and yet others aren't into response no matter what the

medium. So given all these variables, we shouldn't force the response issue. Let the emails die out, so to speak, or at least until the next time.

Crazy spam or virus? -- Sometimes spams and viruses get mixed up. For example, there is every reason to believe that a lot of spams contain viruses. And yet most spams probably don't. In either case, you don't want either one, or in any combination. There is a lot of hacker generated spam that's just designed to clog up the Internet and frustrate people. In some cases its malicious, an attempt to bring down a server or affect someone's business or a government agency.

An interesting situation developed at the beginning of this month. I tried to download my email using Eudora, but it kept bogging down over the first of six emails. It took quite a while to figure out how to get around the obviously bad email. In the meantime, more emails kept coming in, and one thing for sure: it's very frustrating when you know you have email and can't read it. Is it that one email you've been waiting for for years? You know the one I mean, a long lost friend, etc. When this kind of situation develops, you always have to wonder if all the emails will be lost while you try to solve the problem, and then you'll never know whom those other emails were from.

I did make contact with an old school chum last year after over 40 years. It was an email contact; I'd hate to miss something like that.

I had a suspicion that the problem email, the first one in the list, was too large. In order finally to get the emails, I told Eudora not to accept any messages over a certain size. This eliminated the problem email and allowed me to download the remainder. I don't know whether this was a feature of Eudora, but the first message finally came in, but truncated and with a report on the email. The program told me that the original file size was over 40 megs, which would bog down almost any email program. (I also tried Outlook and it choked on this message also.)

When I was finally able to read the first part of the

formerly huge, now truncated, email, I found some interesting things. First of all it appeared to have been sent by MPCUG's treasurer, Barb Cameron. I immediately speculated that she didn't send it. A phone conversation confirmed that she hadn't. There were a couple of other odd things about the email. First, of course, was that it had her email name, which is very specific to her and not generally known. It also appeared to come from an ISP service she's never used. The ISP listed is, however, a legitimate company. The other point is that it appeared at one point to have been addressed to Treasurer@MPCUG.net.

As with so many spams, it also appeared to be a FWD, in this case from Barb. It turned out that the email was purportedly from: Advanced Computer Innovations who offers "Instant Online Conversion Service". This is a real company and offers a good service, so its too bad it was used in this particular spam effort.

In talking with Barb, I learned at least one trick. Like all of us, she gets a lot of spam, some of it on a regular bases. Over a year ago I changed my email address in order to eliminate all the spam I was getting on my computer. Barb has another solution.

Barb has an email provider that offers online email checking. This service is great because it allows you to check your email from anywhere in the world. But it also offers a feature I had not previously appreciated. When you view your email through one of these online services, it doesn't download the email to your computer until you decide to tell it to. All you get is a list of who it's from and the subject line. This allows you to evaluate whether you even want to read the email before it gets on your computer. If there it is an email you don't want, you could delete it there and then. Barb eliminates a lot of spam this way and it never even gets close to getting on her computer because it is never loaded in an email program.

All programs such as Outlook and Eudora download the email to your computer and usually delete it from the ISPs server at the same time. (Deleting is an option from the ISP server is an option that you set.)

If you are regularly plagued with spam emails you might consider this method if it's available from your ISP.

One final thought. It does appear that whoever sent this email, regardless of who they are, has both information about Barb, MPCUG and my current email address. This is not likely to be an accidental combination. This indicates that it is likely that the origin of this email is from someone who is a member, or has something to do with MPCUG. It is also highly likely that that person has a virus that is generating this email. This isn't certain, but in my opinion is likely.

Unfortunately, I can't use Barb's trick to eliminate emails in advance of loading them on my computer. I have my own website -- www.artsandhome.com with its own email address -- so I don't have online email service. The only way I can get access to the email is through a program like Outlook or Eudora. This has rarely been a disadvantage. Not all ISPs offer this email reading service.

Files and size -- A lot of people new to computing have trouble with files, knowing what they are and how to manage them. Simplistically, your computer has to have files to do almost anything. These files, EXE in particular, interact with the computer to produce programs/software that makes your computer do things.

Even a virus is just a file(s) that once put into operation on your computer, does its dirty work.

In the previous subject, the troublesome email involved a file that was over 40 megs in size. In general, files seldom come in this size unless they are programs or software related.

Of the 50,000 plus files I have on my computer, only 7 are over 40 megs in size. With two exceptions, these are graphics, or photo related files. Four of them are Family Tree Maker files, but I suspect each of these files has photos in it. The biggest file is a trial version of graphics software.

So what would be in the 40 meg file that was included in the email? I will probably never know. To give you some perspective on the subject, a 50k plain text file (txt) would contain about 13,500 words. That's about 15 pages of text in a Word

document. So a 40 meg file would have to be around 10 million words in plain text, no formatting, etc. (These figures are just possibilities as the word counts depend on the words used. Longer words would result in a lower count, etc.) For comparison, there are 783,137 words in the King James Version of the Bible.

Protecting your computer -- I know I seem to write about this in each issue, but each month I'm more astonished at who hasn't protected his or her computer. I've already spent time removing the Sasser worm from a friend's computer and have to go there

again because she still doesn't have a virus program installed, although she did buy it.

Then there's a relative who didn't know he didn't have one installed. He thought the firewall was the virus checker. No, it doesn't work that way. Virus checkers work on email. Firewalls protect your computer from direct infection while you are connected to the Internet. These latter infections -- Sasser for example -- use holes in Windows software, which have to be fixed with updates. Please go to the MPCUG website and order the free update disks from Microsoft.

click on any command to activate it without retyping it.

On the other hand, you may not want to wade through a long list, or you may not want others to have access to the visible commands. In these cases, you need to clear the MRU commands. Here are two ways you can do that.

1. Right click the start button and go to properties. Click on the radio button next to Start Menu and

click on the Customize... button. Then, click on the Advanced tab. Locate the Run box and check the box on the left. Then, click on clear history.

2. You can navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\ RunMRU. This is where you will find all the commands in the Run history. Delete the ones you don't want. But, backup the registry first!

APCUG — Association of Personal Computer User Groups

The Club's Meeting Place

Our General Meetings and the Random Access Special Interest Group is held in the gym behind St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1528 Oakdale Road, Modesto (between Briggsmore and Orangeburg, north of Century Center). The church faces Oakdale Road and the gym faces St. Paul's Way.
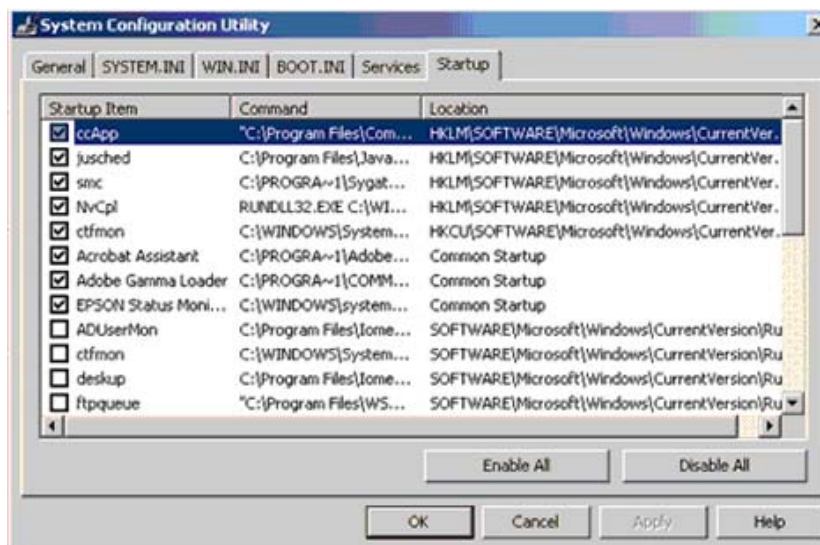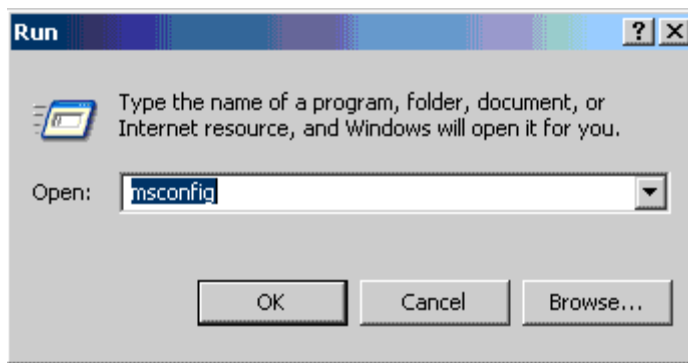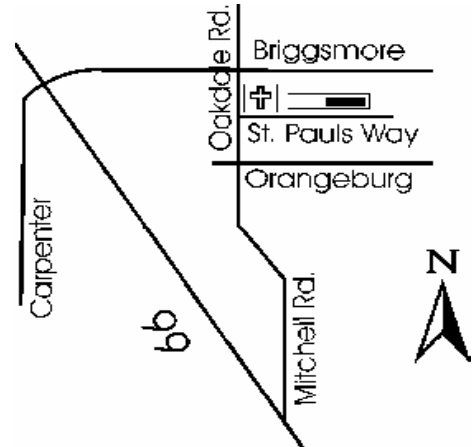
Free classifieds for members. Email the text to the editor at Editor@mpcug.net

Be sure and check our web site at least once a week: www.mpcug.net

Special Interest Groups

SIG meetings are held at the discretion of the leader and participants. Sometimes the date, location and time have to be changed or a meeting cancelled. Give the leader a call before the meeting if it is your first time. Call Bud Bondietti if you know of changes — phone 667-1980 or email sig@mpcug.net.

SIG Name	Leaders	Phone#	Date / Time / Note
Beginners' SIG	Bud Bondietti	667-1980	6:30 p.m., 2nd Monday, Denny's 1525 McHenry Ave.
Random Access Q&A			6:30 p.m. before general meeting
Board Meeting	Sid Losher	545-0853	6:30 p.m., 1st Tues. after gen. mtg. Call for place.
Website SIG	Jim Goodman	579-0122	Looking for a place to meet.
Genealogy SIG	C. Delphia	537-9604	On hiatus
Women's' SIG	Liz Leedom	523-4218	On hiatus

Membership renewal: As with all organizations, MPCUG is run solely by volunteers. That means that when your membership comes due, someone must send you a reminder, sometimes several times. We try to cut back that need by printing your expiration date and a message on your mailing label letting you know your membership status. Please help by renewing your membership in a timely manor. It saves user group money and volunteer time.

PC POST
Modesto PC User Group
P.O. BOX 5122
Modesto, CA 95352-5122
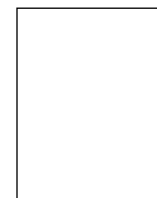
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Time dated material