



Tech Enthusiast

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Geek of the Week

Tricks

I enjoy being a geek!

By Laura Bergstrom

Geek



Barb Bowman

"I've been a geek since I was seven years old and my Dad bought me a Scientific Atlanta light-on/light-off binary computer kit," says Barb Bowman, a product development manager for MediaOne Road Runner. Today, Barb wins our blue ribbon at the grownup science fair. For her, exploring technology is still a child's game, so she likes that "Windows 2000 blurs the lines between work and play."

Barb's computer playground in Southern New Hampshire houses a cordless, wireless network o' fun. Before work, the "Geek Goddess" typically reads the news on an IBM ThinkPad 600x at high Internet speeds using a wireless PCMCIA CableFREE NIC wireless card pulling the data from a MediaOne Road Runner cable modem. Thanks to the wireless capabilities of the Windows® 2000 Professional operating system, no cords tether this geek. Free-range Barb moseys room to room, laptop in hand.

"Windows 2000 manages my battery power like never before!" she raves. "While I drink my morning coffee, I usually have Outlook® Express, FrontPage®, and eight other apps open. With Hibernation mode on Windows 2000, I can leave it on all day, come back later, and start exactly where I finished." From the couch, she opens files from an upstairs desktop. Other machines on the network automatically detect her laptop over the wireless LAN.

To what does she owe her cable-defying network prowess? Without a single computer class, Barb has graduated to technology product aficionado. Translation: because they value her input, several high-profile companies kit out Barb with the newest technologies. They figure her feedback is worth its weight in hardware. As an added distinction, years ago Barb was adoringly dubbed the "Msgeeklady" by some early AOL Windows support bulletin board users.

The philosopher waxes geeky

A Renaissance woman, Barb admits, "I've always created my own jobs." She majored in, and then taught, philosophy. The next rung on her eclectic climb to computer geek escapes a tidy job title; in London, Barb decorated two-walled "rooms" that were pictured in wallpaper catalogs and distributed throughout North America. When that fell through, she became a technical writer.

A French DOS shareware programmer needed an English-speaker to write Help files and menus. Barb signed on, but her knack for writing was superseded by that childhood fascination with computer "kits." Instead of picking up a smattering of French via correspondence, she immersed herself in a new language, "geek-ese." Eventually, Barb downloaded a Windows 3.1 Beta application and was "hooked forever."

The geek goddess vision statement

When asked about the future, Barb philosophizes, "I'd like to voice enable my computer so I can yell at it or have it read my mind." She first voice enabled a computer with a Microsoft Soundsystem package eight years ago, and believes that soon, life will be a "2001 Space Odyssey."

"... it will be 'Hal, make my breakfast,' and 'Hal, turn on the videoconference,'" Barb jokes. "Seriously, I'd like to get more involved in voice commands and play with MS Agent applications."

The low down on the setup

Okay fellow geeks, you probably want the skinny on her specs—here's what's under the hood:

- The (brand new at interview time) IBM ThinkPad 600x has a Pentium III 500 MHz processor with 192 MBs of RAM.
- The wireless NIC in Barb's computer is a CableFree wireless PCMCIA from NDC/Sohoware with a Netblaster wireless bridge. For more information, visit the [SOHWARE Web site](#).
- Windows 2000 Professional, of course. ■

Laura Bergstrom is a geek wannabe.

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