

THIS & THAT

by
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I received a new gadget for Christmas. My oldest son and my daughter went in together and bought me a 512 mega-byte Flash Drive.

No, that does not refer to five hundred and twelve million drive-by obscene gestures. *Flash drive* is the generic name given to a small hand held computer memory device.

You just knew something like this had to be developed. A Flash Drive is exactly like the Flash Memory used in digital cameras these days.

This form of computer memory has no moving parts. It doesn't require a motor and a recording/playback arm to store, change, or remove what's recorded on it. And, like all other permanent storage devices, it doesn't require electricity to remember what's stored on it either.

Computer drives (short for storage drives), since the beginning of the personal computer, have used magnetic recording materials mounted in some fashion to a motor which spins the material like a vinyl record. A second mechanical device holds recording and playback heads (like the vinyl record arm with its needle). All together, these computer storage devices came in several forms; floppy disk, Zip, Jazz, and hard drives.

This magnetic storage concept graduated

into CDs (compact Disk drives) which use laser light rather than magnetism to record and playback computer information. They also use motors and sensing arms to make them work.

Again, Flash drives have no moving parts. They do come in a variety of sizes from 16 mega(million)-bytes to one giga(billion)-byte.

They range in price from under thirty dollars for the 16 meg. size, to as much as three hundred dollars for the one gig. size.

These Flash drive devices plug into a USB port on your computer. Once your operating system recognizes their presence, they look and act like any old disk drive to the computer. If you're not using Windows XP, you will have to install a driver, from then on you can plug the Flash drive in and out like you did the floppy disk before. And too, just like the floppy disk before it, the Flash drive is portable. You can take it to any other computer with a USB port, and use it there.

Anything you could do with a floppy disk, you can do with a Flash drive, only a flash drive can have a much, much larger in capacity. My Flash drive has the capacity of about five hundred floppy disks.

So, when you buy a new computer, and it doesn't come with a 3½ Floppy drive, not to worry. A Flash drive will do the same job, in its place, quite well...even better, if you ask me. Oh, you didn't ask. Oh, well.

