The Ten Commandments of System 7
By Tom Pitts

System 7 is a mixed blessing for many of us. Its features and power are wonderful and it is handier to use for even simple things like file manipulation in the Finder. Books have been written extolling its virtues. Alas, there is a downside. It is slow — much slower than system 6.0.x. (Did you ever wonder why we capitalize the 'S' in 'system' for System 7 but not system 6? Me too.) It requires a lot of memory — a minimum of 4 MB RAM is really necessary if you wish to use an application or two. You can't get much benefit from it on the low end machines such as the Plus and SE. I won't go on — I love it despite its warts. And I've been accumulating a list of ways to improve it and have fun with it, too.

So just what's a body to do?
Okay, you asked so here are ten things you can do for and with System 7.
• 1 — Install System 7 TuneUp v 1.1. This extension, available user groups and electronic information services such as America Online, CompuServe, and GEnie, corrects some problems in the system, updates some printer drivers, and improves memory management. There should be a subtle but real improvement in the speed of Finder activities and better stability of the system.

• 2 — Turn off Virtual Memory. There's no RAM like real RAM. Virtual is slow, much slower than the RAM in your Mac. Unless you are pushing the limit of your internal RAM, don't fool with Virtual.

• 3 — Increase your RAM cache. While you are in the Memory cdev, increase your Ram cache to a minimum of 256K, and to 512K if you have sufficient internal RAM to permit it. There will be a nice increase in the speed of your Mac. You must restart your machine for the new memory settings to take effect.

• 4 — Disable the "calculate folder sizes" option in the Views cdev. It can take forever to navigate through list view windows in the Finder if the Mac has to calculate the sizes of all the folders as you open windows. Hey, who needs that?

•5 — Rebuild your desktop file regularly, even if you don't think you need to. The Finder will boot up faster if the desktop file is not full of old, unnecessary data. Rebuilding it cleans out unneeded information. This holds true for any system, but is especially important for System 7 since it borders on the snail side of the Mac speedometer on its best days. Yes, you will lose the comments in the Get Info boxes, but most folks don't care. (If you need those comments, get one of the shareware programs like CommentKeeper that retain the comments when the desktop file is rebuilt.) To rebuild the desktop file, restart your Mac and depress the Command and Option keys as it boots. When you see the dialog box asking if you really want to rebuild the desktop, click the "OK" button.

• 6 — Discard unneeded system items. Most people do not need many of the things Apple's installer puts into your System Folder. Some, like File Sharing, can slow down the Mac if they are turned on. All require memory. Here are some of the items you might not need depending on your Mac and other hardware: DAL (used for network database transfers), Easy Access, AppleShare, File Sharing Monitor, Sharing Setup, Network extension, Users and Groups cdev, Monitors cdev, Color cdev, Map cdev, several DAs (including Puzzle, Alarm Clock, and KeyCaps), and printer drivers for printers that you do not use. Do a spring cleaning in your

System Folder and its subfolders. Toss out any commercial or public domain/shareware Extensions and cdevs that you do not need. Your Mac will boot up faster and you will free up valuable RAM. Just remember to keep back-ups of the stuff you discard in case you need some of it later.

• 7 — Improve your Finder's memory allocation. Increasing the RAM available to the Finder can speed it up. You used to be able to do this in the Finder's Get Info box under system 6.0.x. If you can still run a Mac under system 6.0.x, put a copy of the Finder on a floppy, access it under the old system and increase its memory allotment to about 350 to 400 K in the Get Info box. Replace your System 7 Finder with the altered Finder and reboot your Mac. That should be all you need, but you might have to increase the allotment even further if there is no improvement. Remember that the Finder will now use more RAM, so don't increase its memory any further than you have to.

If you can't or do not wish to use system 6 to increase the Finder's memory, you'll need ResEdit (current version 2.1). You can get it from user groups and online services. Make a copy of your Finder by dragging it to a work folder and depress the Option key as you release the mouse button. You will work on this copy of the Finder. Boot ResEdit and open the Finder (the copy) from within ResEdit. Double-click on the SIZE resource icon. Then double-click on the resource, ID -1, in the SIZE window. Scroll to the bottom of the window and you will see the Size box. Increase the number in the box to a value as high as 400000 bytes. Close all windows, saving the changes and close ResEdit. Move the unaltered Finder out of the System Folder to a safe place, and put the new Finder in the System Folder. Reboot and you're in business. This is safe and it worked for me.

• 8 — Improve the Finder's window opening time. Windows may take a bit longer to open with System 7 because of the zoom effect the Finder uses. You can eliminate this with ResEdit. Open a copy of the Finder with ResEdit as noted above. Open the CODE resource by double-clicking on its icon. In the "CODEs from Finder" window, locate and double-click on the resource ID 4. Scroll down in the "CODE ID = 4 from Finder" window until you see the line number 000078 on the left. Change "48E7 1F38" to "6000 00E6" in the hex numbers in that line. (Note that those are zeros, not letter 'O's.) Close all windows, saving changes, and exit ResEdit as described above. Move your old Finder out of the System Folder and put the altered Finder in its place. Reboot the Mac. Your Finder now opens the windows more rapidly.

• 9 — Get rid of the Finder's rename delay. When you select a file with the intent of renaming it, there is a brief but annoying delay before the name can be altered. Get the shareware program Rename Delay Editor!, written by Adam Stein. (It is part of the System 7 Pack! current version 2.3, available from user groups and online services.) Just boot Rename Delay Editor and follow the simple instructions to eliminate the rename delay. Look at the other programs is the System 7 Pack! set as well. They're terrific, and let you improve the Finder without ResEdit. Be sure to pay your shareware fee.

• 10 — Have a little fun. There are many hidden secrets in System 7. In the Memory cdev, turn on virtual memory (temporarily) and Option mouse click on the hard disk selection menu. You'll get a list of the programmers names and each has a hierarchical submenu with silly comments. In the Monitors cdev, click on the version number and a silly face and a list of programmers names appears. Press the Option key as you hold down the mouse button and the face sticks its tongue out at you. Click repeatedly on the Option key and the names scramble then mutate to Blue Meanies. Last but not least, hold down the Option key as you select "About this Macintosh…" from the Apple menu. You get the original mountain scene that came with the first Finder. Leave it on the screen a few seconds to see a parade of programmers names.