

Faulty Mouse ??

It was mid to late December 2000 when I received a phone call early one morning, it was a gentleman asking if I could repair his personal computer. I said that I could and asked what seems to be the problem? He said that the computer will not come on, I asked the usual questions relating to a possible fault and gave the usual support advice, to which he replied that he was not familiar enough with computing to carry out any telephone diagnostics and suggested that the computer was brought to me to sort out. This I agreed and told him to leave it with my wife, as I had to make some on-site visits that day.

Later that afternoon my mobile telephone rang, it was Barbara, my wife, she sounded a bit frantic, "what's the matter?" I asked, and she replied that the man had brought a computer for repair as arranged but he had said that he'd found what the trouble was, it's the mouse inside, Barbara said "Oh! The mouse is faulty and you've put it inside the computer", he said, "no, there is a live mouse inside". Of course my wife who hates any sort of creepy crawlies panicked and said, "You're not leaving that in my house". "Where can I leave it?" He asked, "in your shed or garage", Barbara said "not my shed but you can leave it in my husband's workshop". She took him to my workshop, he put the computer on the bench and covered the rear open slots with a piece of scrap paper and sticky tape, she said he then left. I told my wife to leave it there until I was able to get back later.

I arrived home late afternoon, listened again to Barbara's version of the earlier events and went into the workshop, there was the computer on the bench as she had said with the paper stuck on the back. A mouse inside, I thought, sounds a bit far fetched so I picked up the computer and gave it a gentle shake hoping to disturb the mouse if there really was one inside, not a sound, so I gave it a more vigorous shake and tapped the case, still no sounds from it. I placed it back on the bench with the rear towards me and peeled off the paper and sticky tape, I bent down and looked inside the open expansion slot and believe it or not I saw the face of a little mouse staring back at me. Oops! I thought, there really is a mouse inside, what now?

I stuck the paper back over the slot and got a large plastic waste bag from in the house. I removed the case screws but did not remove the case until I had placed the computer in the plastic bag; this was to prevent the mouse running around in my workshop. I gingerly removed the case and could not see a mouse, so I banged the computer chassis to try to disturb the mouse, nothing happened. I picked up the computer and looked carefully at the hardware inside and saw the little mouse crouched in the tiniest of places between the power supply box and a bank of cable connectors. I poked the mouse out into the plastic bag and decided that there was just the one mouse and placed the computer on the bench for closer inspection.

On examining the inside of the computer it became obvious that a nest had been made underneath the hard disk drive bay which provided a sort of recess, this was full of chewed up paper etc, there was even a partly eaten strong mint there and no signs of any other mouse. I removed all the rubbish and mint etc but the inside of the computer chassis was fairly dirty due to mouse droppings and other things that mouse leave in the toilet area, most of this was on the main board. I did find that the reason for the computer not functioning was that the data ribbon cables to the hard disk and floppy disk drives had been chewed through preventing the booting up process. By this time it was time to eat, so I went in the house, washed and joined Barbara for our meal.

After the meal, a cup of tea and a short rest, I decided to go back into the workshop to complete some unfinished repairs. I was working away quietly on some equipment and thought that I heard a rustling sound like paper being disturbed, I stopped, listened but heard nothing more. Some 15 minutes later I heard the noise again, this time it continued and I was able to trace it to my waste bin, which was full of paper after running a printer test the day before. I looked in the bin and the paper was moving about at the bottom, I thought I was seeing things; it was another mouse in my waste bin. I think that it had somehow squeezed out of the computer through a loose edge of the paper and sticky tape on the back and gone along the bench, tried to jump down onto the waste bin and fallen inside. It seems there were two mice in the computer trying to make a home and possibly raise a family there until I came along and evicted them.

The computer was thoroughly cleaned of any deposits, the cables replaced and a repair was successfully completed.

I hasten to add that the mice were humanely released back into the wild but well away from our home.