Hard Drive Cipher

Getting a new computer but don't know what to do with the old one that has all your personal data? Consider Cipher

In Windows XP Professional or 2000 there is a handy tool to wipe out deleted information. The tiny tool is called Cipher. (If you have neither of the above, a sledge hammer works quite well to make a hard drive unreadable.)

Cipher is really an encryption tool. But one option allows us to use it to overwrite deleted files. Cipher does a lot of manipulation. So, make backups of your important files and folders.

1. Click Start>>All Programs>>Accessories>>Command Prompt.
2. Type "cipher /w:" (without the quotes) at the prompt. Then add the path name of the particular folder you wish to encrypt. The path should be in this format: C:\folder name\folder name\folder name
 Example: The path of the My Documents folder would be
 cipher /w:C:\Documents and Settings\owner\My Documents

3. OR To secure your whole hard drive, type "cipher /w:C:\" (without the quotes).

 Cipher will take anywhere between one hour and a few hours. Your deleted files will be unreadable to thieves. And it's not much harder than shredding information on paper.

The command prompt gets confused by names that contain spaces. If any of the folder names contains a space, put the path in quotes:
"C:\folder name\folder name\folder name"

NOTE:Some families set up separate profiles for each family member. You can just replace "owner" with your profile name.

Revised 5/30/2009 JMM