



Bits of Blue



A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Vol. 10 No. 11 November 1997

Meeting

MindSpring an Internet Provider

November 12, 1997
6:00 PM
**Museum of Science
and Industry**
4801 E Fowler Ave.

AOL, NetCom, and WebCams

by William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group

AOL and NetCom If American Online sneezes, the world knows about it the next day. Anytime the slightest thing goes wrong with their service, it is front-page news, and the lawyers begin preparing their class action suits. I don't know if anyone will sue because they were not able to traffic in email from AOL for several hours yesterday, but I do know that their two hour total outage and three to four hour email blackout made the news section of *The Tampa Tribune*.

But for those of us using other Internet providers, nobody cares. My provider NetCom (600,000 subscribers vs. AOL's 9,000,000 subscribers) has been giving me and three other NetCom subscribers whom I know here in Tampa pretty uneven service for the past seven to ten days. And I assume everyone else using the service in the area has been having problems. There was one day that connecting in a useful way was impossible. I say "in a useful way" because with persistence you could connect. My computer would tell me I was connected and at what speed. But I couldn't do anything. No WWW, no email, no FTP, and no newsgroups. How do I know I was really connected to the Internet if I couldn't do any of these things? Well, I could do a Ping or a Trace Route. For example, I could do a Trace Route on microsoft.com and would be told the numerical address of the site and shown how many steps and the time it took to reach microsoft.com.

For those who aren't familiar with this, if you are running under Win 95, while connected to the Internet, go to the DOS prompt, type `tracert microsoft.com` and press enter, and you will be presented with such information. To see the

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December 10: Jason Welz of Time Warner will discuss Cable Modems.
The new TPCUG Internet address is <http://www.canx.com/tpcug/> .

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Commercial advertisements will be accepted. For rate information please contact the Editor by one of the above listed methods.

All advertisements must be prepaid by check payable to TPCUG, be in camera ready format (actual size, black ink on white paper), and be submitted on or before the 20th of the month preceding the month of publication. Commercial advertising is usually limited to 25% of the total space of an issue. The Editor reserves the right to hold ads if the total space for ads exceeds this limit or if they are not received on time.

Members may insert non-commercial ads at no charge with the following limitations: no more than 4 ads per member per year; no more than 40 words (240 bytes including spaces); must be camera ready copy or an ASCII file on diskette or uploaded to the BBS as a message to the Editor. Those wishing to place ads are to contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at (813) 251-3817 for space availability and for further information.



SECRETARY'S REPORT & MINUTES OF MEETING October 10, 1997

*Minutes and Comments by Merle Nicholson,
Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group*

Robert Armstrong from BCD Computers gave a very entertaining and informative talk on the direction of personal computers. BCD also donated very generous items for the door prizes.

Starting a little late - we had more time for conversation and networking this meeting - Connie opened the meeting welcoming two visitors. Ed Buzza, a very long term member was attending also. It was very good to see Ed. The SIG announcements were next, with Ford talking about the genealogy SIG and Charles Howe about the Communications SIG.

Bruce Register - member at large - gave a summary of the nominations for office for next year's positions and encouraged all who have the time or inclination to serve to speak out and nominate themselves.

Robert Armstrong from BCD Computers was introduced. He covered a very wide range of topics on personal computers. I will not attempt to cover all, but just a few highlights are: They are offering a 10% discount on purchases for club members. You'll need your membership card. Don't forget. BCD now has a fully stocked download section on the internet, with an extensive drivers section. Also they have an on-line catalog ordering section on the internet. You place the order; it's faxed to a salesman at BCD for later pickup at the store.

He talked about processors next, covering the AMD 5x86-133, and the AMD K6 - "Fastest windows processor today" - Uncle Tom's Hardware Guide. Pentium II, how it's configured and the need for a special box including 32K cache. 168 DIMM 10ns memory, universal serial bus, DVD CDROM, Windows 98 and Intel TX chipsets were all covered - a lot of ground for an hour.

BCD is located across from University Mall; 1911 East Fowler Avenue in Tampa. (813) 631-0100 and in Clearwater 23486 US HWY 19 North. (813) 712-0515. They are also on the Internet at <http://www.bcd.net>. Thanks Robert!

There was a real bounty on door prizes this month including two \$50 gift certificates and much more from BCD. And on top of that, the club took in \$50 in door prize ticket sales! The winners were:

Mary Sheridan \$50 certificate; Roger Waters \$50 certificate;

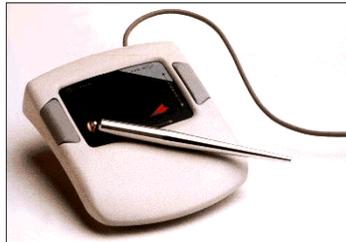
(Minutes.....Continued on page 12)

Hardware Review

POWER CAT Touchpad

by Larry Anders,
Librarian,
Tampa PC Users
Group

CIRQUE[®]



I recently received some bad news from my neurologist. It seems the tingling that started in both my hands several years ago has grown into a classic case of severe "carpal tunnel syndrome." I am writing this now in hopes that some of you may wake up a little sooner than I did if you hear my story. I always thought it was a circulation problem and that it would go away someday. Well, it will, hopefully, after November 14th when I have orthoscopic surgery to open up the tunnels of crushed nerves in my wrists and one of my fingers. And no, it was not diagnosed as repetitive stress syndrome caused by my computer use. The computer use probably aggravates it but it was not the cause. The culprit is more than likely all the football and rough-house sports I played when I was younger. Just think about it; every time you fall on the ground what do you catch yourself with?.... your wrists.

It all started with my hands going to sleep at various times like driving, mowing the yard, eating, writing, etc., etc., etc. Sound familiar? It's amazing how many people I have talked to who have experienced the exact same thing and have done the same thing about it ... Nothing! Well, after a battery of sometimes painful tests at my neurologist's office he sent me to an orthopedic surgeon and according to her, I should have done something about it ... much sooner! Because of my delay they cannot guarantee full recovery. The only reason I finally went to the doctor was because my hands began to hurt instead of just going to sleep. So, what I'm getting at is, if you are experiencing any of these symptoms **GO TO THE DOCTOR, NOW!**

When I visited the surgeon, and she learned of my extreme computer use, she advised me to immediately begin using a *touchpad* because it would reduce the stress on the nerves in my right hand (much more than a mouse does), and the right hand is the worst of the two (and the one being operated on first.) She guaranteed that I would not be able to use the mouse for the first few days after surgery. It may take me a while to get to the doctor but I listen once I get there, espe-

cially if it's going to affect my computer use. So, I made my appointment for surgery, which will be a follow-up story I'm sure, and began my search for the perfect touchpad. I wouldn't go as far as declaring that I have found the perfect touchpad, but I found a good one. And, so as not to waste a good case of carpal tunnel syndrome, here's my review of *Cirque's POWER CAT Touchpad*.

I immediately left the doctor's office and headed for the I-way (Internet) and began my search for a touchpad. Why did I decide on the Power Cat? Simple, the Cirque Power Cat was recently awarded *Windows Sources Magazine's* "Stellar Award" for November 1997, and I am an avid reader of *Windows Sources*.

The Power Cat is Cirque's top-of-the-line touchpad. They also make two other, smaller, less expensive touchpads, *The Easy Cat* and *The Smart Cat*, but neither have all the features that the Power Cat has, which are provided by the Cirque driver included and are:

- **Sign** Signature tool and software accept your signature as a graphic for placement into any compatible application. Just double-tap on an icon on the Windows system tray and your screen will display a window resembling the touchpad surface. Use the special "GlidePen" provided to sign your name in real-time and paste it into the document. (It's not quite as easy as it sounds – it took a little practice to duplicate my signature. But the printed quality of the signature was excellent. You can see it below.)



- **Surf** Internet navigation buttons ("back" and "forward") are operable in Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. Glide your finger along the upper edge of the touchpad to activate page back and forward surf. The surfing area is labeled on the touchpad surface. Each 1/8-inch movement will activate a page change.
- **Scroll** Horizontal and vertical scroll commands are operable in most Microsoft Office 97 applications and many non-97 applications such as Corel WordPerfect Suite 8 and Lotus Word Pro 97. Just glide your finger along the right and bottom edges of the touchpad to activate up/down or sideways scrolling. The Scroll areas are labeled on the touchpad surface.

(Power Cat.....Continued on page 10)

FACUG's Sarasota Meeting

by Don Patzsch, Tampa PC Users Group

On October 13, 1997, my wife and I attended the Florida Association of Computer User Groups (FACUG) meeting in Sarasota.

Not long after registration we broke into groups for discussion. I picked the membership group. Here are some of the things I learned.

The women from the Women's PC Users Group told us they charge \$2 per year for their SIGS. They charge visitors \$1 to come to the regular meetings. For that \$1 the visitor gets a red ticket, a copy of the newsletter and entrance to the meeting. The regular members are given a blue ticket. The tickets are for raffles at the end of the meeting. This group has about 250 members, and about 125 to 200 attend each meeting in Venice, depending on the time of the year.

Sarasota has about 1,060 members, and they sell their membership lists for \$110.00; they sell four or five lists per year. Sarasota has two or three members sitting at tables each meeting, and as each member comes into the meeting he goes to one of these tables and gives his "number" on his bar code to the database entry person. They then draw their prizes at the end of the meeting with a randomly generated number from those numbers, ensuring that they will only call numbers of those who are there at the meeting. Their SIGS are held at a vocational school, and members pay \$7.50 per year for the SIGs. Members donate time to the school.

The Hilton Head UG of S.C. does an interesting thing. They have the members present put their membership cards into a hat for the prize drawing. That is the way they get their cards back, to keep them safe until the next meeting!

Lakeland sets up a table at Computer City to hand out literature about their User Group, and they get many new members that way. They average 60 to 80 per meeting. They also send one of their members to Computer City to buy lots of those items that cost maybe ten or twenty dollars, but they get all their money back by giving them out as prizes (for which people have contributed for tickets) after the meeting!

Jacksonville has about 350 members and 100 to 175 at a meeting. The Pinellas group now has about 1,400 members and about 100 expirations and applications or renewals per month. Manatee County has about 600 members and about 300 at each meeting.

The Women's PCUG had received a \$10,000 grant. Joan Di-
neen, who had applied for the grant happened to be sitting across the table from us at lunch. The grant is for new equip-

ment for the Women's PC Users Group. My guess is that the first item they will buy is a new projector with the Texas Instruments mirror chip. It was two or three years ago that Roger F. Meissner of the Sun City Center group told us how they had applied for and received grants. They have had their \$10,000 projector for years now.

In the afternoon, Rick Rogers of COMCAST demonstrated Cable Modems on the large screen. His talk was very interesting because he could bring up the Internet and show us how fast he could get some screens. Of course it can't bring up a server that is down. Cable Modem connections are available in and near Sarasota and the cost is \$150 to install and \$39.50 per month if you have COMCAST TV cable connections.

After that, we broke into groups, and I attended the Web group. Various people described their experiences making up and maintaining their sites.

Mr VanDerWeele introduced me to Joan Brown, President of the Pinellas Group. I believe he wanted me to repeat the story of Jim Leonard, a retired minister, who started the Pinellas User Group. Jim Leonard belonged to the USF and the Tampa Computer User Groups back around 1982. The Tampa IBM PC User Group met in the downtown Tampa public library when the group started. Jim was standing on the roof of the Library when he told me he was going to start a Computer User Group in Pinellas County where he lived. We were on the roof next to the Planetarium like area, which is where we were meeting at that time. I told Jim I was his FIRST MEMBER. Jim Leonard started the group and I have most of the copies of the newsletters since March, 1984. Apparently Jim wrote the newsletter himself for most of the first issues. The group met at the Fortune Federal Building on East Bay Drive, just a few doors west of U.S. 19, Jim says in the March newsletter.

How did the FACUG get started? It was 1990, and Gary Schweinsaupt of Sarasota wrote to several of us and asked if we would like to go to Sarasota for a day and break into groups so that the Presidents and the Newsletter Editors etc. could talk about their problems. My guess is that the response was so high at that time because people wanted to know how other groups were getting good programs for their meetings. On July 28, 1990, 38 people showed up for the day. The meeting was so successful that further meetings were scheduled regularly. I have attended each meeting since that time. Also, Mike Ungerman of Orlando made a similar meeting each year in Orlando a real interesting affair. Due to Mike Ungerman, the meetings evolved into the FACUG. He did a tremendous amount of work to make the meetings interesting and to provide prizes from various vendors at each meeting. He also found ways to get the vendors to defray some of the costs. Slowly, the various groups around the State volunteered to take the fall meeting, but the spring meeting has been held in

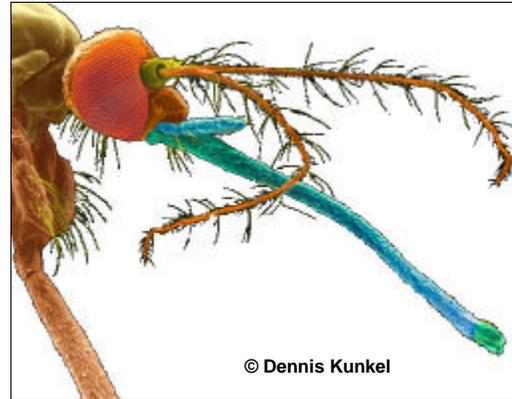
(FACUG.....Continued on page 12)

**SOFTWARE AVAILABLE
FOR REVIEW**

world of flying (8-adult)

(Call 251-3817 for information on review software)

1. **American Greetings CreateaCard Gold** - Micrografx - Create greeting cards, certificates, etc. - Win 3.1/95 CD
2. **G-NOME** - 7th Level - Pilot more than 20 different mechanized vehicles in war action - Win95, Pentium 90, 16 MB RAM & 4X CD required (13+)
3. **HELI COPS** - 7th Level - Helicopter war game simulation - Win95, Pentium 100, 8MB RAM, 4X CD
4. **Magic Cap** - General Magic - Organize all your communications: email, fax, etc. - Windows 95 CD
5. **Work Safe Office for Windows** - Production Technology Engineering & Management Services - Ergonomic risk analysis for computer work stations - Windows 3.1 & 95
6. **On File** for Windows - Arranges your files into fun-to-use "notebooks "
7. **How Would You Survive?** - Grolier - Multimedia Adventure (ages 7-12) - Windows CD
8. **Jump Start Preschool** - Knowledge Adventure - getting a head start on education (ages 2-5) - Windows CD
9. **Space Adventure**- Knowledge Adventure - up to the moment exploration of outer space (8-adult)
10. **Aviation Adventure** - Knowledge Adventure - complete

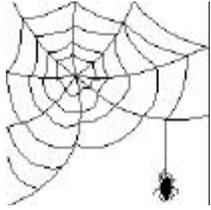


Female Mosquito

Internet picture of the month

This photo is from Dennis Kunkel's Microscopy WWW location. For many more views like this go to his site at <http://www.pbrc.hawaii.edu/~kunkel/> . This copyrighted photo is reproduced with the permission of Dennis Kunkel.

November's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.canx.com/tpcug/	
ABC News	http://www.abcnews.com/	
AMERICA VR (virtual reality)	http://www.americavr.com/	
DigiBooks (electronically published books for sale)	http://www.best.com/~lidial/digibooks/	
InfoClips, Inc. (Video channels)	http://www.infoclips.com/hal.html	
Kitchen Link (What's cooking on the Net)	http://www.kitchenlink.com/	
L.A. LIVE (online music)	http://www.lalive.com/index2.html	
LIVE-ONLINE (online music)	http://www.live-online.com/	
Merriam-Webster Dictionary	http://www.m-w.com/	
Museum of London	http://www.museum-london.org.uk/MOLsite/home.htm	
National Center for Biotechnology Information	http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/	
Switchboard (people & business directory)	http://www.switchboard.com/	
Living the Civil War in Pennsylvania and Virginia	http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow/vshadow.html	
The Wired Eye (WebCams)	http://www.tiac.net/users/wiredeye/wc2.html	
WFLA-TV - Barnett Plaza WebCam	http://www.wfla.com/storm/webcam/barnett.htm	
World Map of Live WWW Cameras	http://dove.mtx.net.au/~punky/World.html	
Worth Online - Financial Intelligence	http://www.worth.com/	

Most of these links will join the many already on the Links page at our Web site, where you need only click on the name.

Software Review

Clip Tracker

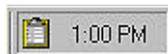
by Larry Anders, Librarian,
Tampa PC Users Group



Anyone that has used Windows for a while, either 3.1 or 95, is familiar with the clipboard utility included. But, you also learned in a hurry that with the clipboard it's *FIFO* "first in – first out." It retains only what you copy until you copy the next clip. Last month Emelie Jurado told us about ClipBook, a utility that Microsoft hid on its Windows95 CD that will save your clippings as you go. But ClipBook is limited to cutting and pasting in an almost ASCII text format. I mean, if you copy text from a formatted document, when it is pasted into a new document all formatting is lost. Granted that's still a lot easier than typing the text all over again. Well, now you can have your cake and eat it, too, and a glass of milk (metamorphically speaking).

Silicon Prairie Software has developed a program, *ClipTrakker*, which, like ClipBook, automatically maintains a history of data that has been placed on your clipboard. But that's just about where it ends. *ClipTrakker* remembers as many items as you specify. Every time data is copied to the clipboard, *ClipTrakker* takes a snapshot of it and creates a thumbnail image, storing it on the 'Clipboard History' page. You do not have to save these snapshots, as they are saved as soon as they are created. With this thumbnail, you can easily find the data you need at a later time. You can create new pages at any time to organize snapshots for long-term safe-keeping and easy access.

The main window of *ClipTrakker* is hidden so as not to obscure your work, but you can unhide the main window by a hotkey combination or by double-clicking on the *ClipTrakker* tray icon next to the clock.



There are also other view and access options left up to the user.

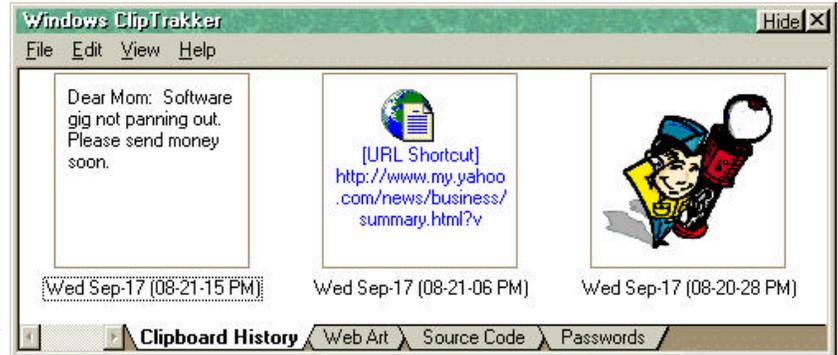
As I mentioned earlier, with *ClipTrakker* installed, all items that you cut or copy are retained and stored as 'Clipboard Snapshots' on the 'Clipboard History' page. To make locating the data you copied yesterday or last week a lot easier, *ClipTrakker* generates a Thumbnail, which is a small bitmap image of what the original data looks like. And one of the neatest and most useful tools is the text editor. When you right-click on a text thumbnail, like the one in the largest graphic reproduced on this page, and choose Edit Text...up pops *ClipTrakker's* text editor for you to add, delete or change the text however you see fit. You can even combine text from differ-

ent snapshots to make one clip to paste into your document. *ClipTrakker* also retains all special formatting such as, font size, color and style, etc.

You can use *ClipTrakker* to exchange data with other *ClipTrakker* users. For example; by copying a graphic file generated in an application on one computer to the clipboard, and sending the snapshot to another computer via e-mail or a company

network, the recipient, who must also use *ClipTrakker*, can paste that graphic file into his document even though he does not have the required application. If the recipient user should install that graphics application at some later date he would then be able to manipulate (edit) the graphic file in its native form, since *ClipTrakker* snapshots preserve the native data structures, even on systems where the application is not available.

As also mentioned earlier, *ClipTrakker* snapshots are orga-



nized into *ClipTrakker* Pages. All original clips are deposited into the "Clipboard History" page. Additional pages can be created and deleted by the user and thumbnails can be dragged and dropped between pages to more easily organize your clips. This is a great way to file and collect art and backgrounds borrowed from the Internet. The files can then be exported to a permanent storage location.

I have been using another shareware program with similar abilities to Microsoft's ClipBook for years but *ClipTrakker* is a keeper. Isn't shareware grand! The cost is \$25, and you can learn more about it at <http://www.ClipTrakker.com/cliptrak.htm> . ♦



Give your PC — and yourself — a Christmas Present

by Merle Nicholson, Treasurer,
Tampa PC Users Group

Here are just a few Christmas ideas and some new things that have caught my own attention recently. Some of these are on my own list to buy.



Sony Mavica digital camera.

See Larry Anders' article about this in the last newsletter. What an outstanding idea: putting the files in JPEG format on floppy drives! Now, a serious photographer wouldn't use this because of

the low resolution (compared to film), but if you're going to present pictures on a PC or even a TV set, 640x480 is just great. Remember, no film development costs, and you can set up electronic slide shows and albums; shoot a lot and discard what you don't need. Combined with a recordable CD unit for long term storage on CD, what more would you want? (<http://www.sel.sony.com/SEL/consumer/mavica/wgreat.html>)



Xerox "Document HomeCentre"

This is a combination color inkjet printer and scanner. Kind of like those "all-in-one" home office units, except without the FAX, and much cheaper. It is a compact 600x600dpi printer with a detachable 24bit color scanner that sits on top. So it's a scanner, printer and copier in one. It includes OCR soft-

ware too. Combined with your own modem and FAX software, you've got a complete FAX also. Office Depot is advertising this at \$399, \$100 off list. (<http://www.xerox.com/products/dhc/index.htm>)



Imation Portable LS120 disk

This is the best competition to the zip drive I've seen. See Larry's other article last month. Office Depot has the parallel interface

unit at \$200 less a \$70 rebate right now, making it slightly less than a Zip drive. Now, while I don't know which way the industry is going, LS120 or Zip drives, it's clear that 3-1/2 floppies are inadequate, and that there's a consumer interest in replacing them, and my own personal observation is that you'll find more internal LS120's than internal Zip drives, largely due to Compaq's offering it standard in some machines and optional in all others. I've seen many other ads for PC's offer-

ing one or the other as optional. I do need a portable drive, and I've been waiting, hoping that an LS120 would become available. Here it is. (<http://www.imation.com/dsp/l120/index.html>)

Other stuff to improve your life at the PC:

New modem Real bargains can be had on 33.6 and 28.8 baud modems because everyone is pushing 56KB right now. Many services do not support 56KB because the standards have not been established. My own service, GTE is one of those. I don't think I will ever have a 56KB modem, because I'm (optimistically) waiting for cable modem from TimeWarner. If you're still plodding along at 14.4, you deserve a break.

Cable modem Blinding internet speed for only \$40 a month! I can't wait. I've talked to one user who lives in Northdale who has this, and there just isn't any downside. Check out www.timewarnercable.com.

More memory Windows 95 needs 16MB to run well, and if you have less than that, there isn't a single upgrade that will do more for you than more memory. Go to 24 or 32MB if you can afford it; you won't be sorry. Prices are back down now to \$60 for 16MB, \$30 for 8MB. Check out the available SIMM slots in your computer before you haul it off to COMP-USA or BCB though.

Disk drives are at the lowest they've ever been, and there's no end in sight. You can get a 3.2Gig drive on sale for less than \$200. If you have a 486, and an I/O card that you can replace, consider replacing it with a newer EIDE card. This will allow you to handle your large drive without a software patch like Disk Manager. Avoid disk managers if you can. Office Depot usually has EIDE cards for the lowest price. And while you're at it check out Wal-Mart for computer parts.

Monitors If you're still using that 14" monitor left over from your old 386, it's time to upgrade to a 15" or 17". You don't have to pay more than \$350 (15") and \$650 (17") for one, because that's the suggested retail for the Sony monitors, and there are plenty of cheaper ones. You can get Sampos for \$249 and \$429 at the low price end. The best way to select one is to first go to www.winmag.com and especially to www.pcmag.com and check out their shopping guides, then go to a store and look at them, compare to other brands and pick one that is best suited to you.

Processor upgrades One of the best-kept secrets in the 486 upgrade world is the AMD 5x86-133 processor. This little gem will make your 486 perform on a par with a Pentium 60. It is very compatible with almost all 486 systems when it is supplied with a voltage adapter. It's commonly sold as a "stack" consisting of a voltage adapter, cpu and cooling fan

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(Christmas.....Continued from page 7)

for around \$120. There are two things that will prevent you from using it; since it's a 3-unit stack it's tall, so if a drive unit or something is above it in the case, it may not be physically possible. And the motherboard must be set at 33mhz. It already is if you now have a 33 or 66 processor, but if you have a 25 or 50, the motherboard must be settable to 33. I've heard that AMD has discontinued the manufacture of this processor, but I know it's still available from existing stock and that the price is steadily rising.

If you have a "generic" standard 486, the prices on upgrades to pentium class just cannot be lower with the competition from AMD and Cyrix. They're both making very fast processors that fit in standard Pentium sockets and use MMX. The AMD K6 processor uses techniques from Pentium Pro processors that make its performance the very fastest available. Right now the K6-200 is very inexpensive, with the K6-233 almost \$200 more due to shortages. Complete rebuild to a K6-200 runs \$400 to \$800 depending on if you need all new memory or hard drive.

And look at UPS!! Wow .. the prices on Uninterruptable Power Supplies are rock bottom! There's no excuse now. For \$120 to \$160 (get a 400 or 450VA if you can, but get a 280VA UPS at the minimum), you get superior surge protection, a \$25,000 policy against damage, and battery backup to boot. The ones I've seen lately have two banks of outlets, one for battery backup and one for just surge protection. You don't need the monitor on battery backup (unless you have the capacity), but you do need surge protection. And don't forget the telephone line! People lose modems all the time from current coming in on the telephone line. One more thing to mention, the inexpensive surge protection strips. They just don't cut it. You'll spend \$50 or more for a decent one.

There are many other things to mention: Color scanners have finally become affordable, Color printers are becoming confusing. (How many models does HP make anyway?). Epson, Cannon and Lexmark are in there trying to beat up HP in the inkjet wars and doing a good job of it. ◆

(Comments.....Continued from page 1)

route taken to our web site, type tracert canx.com. You can also Ping a site to test average response time. To check on Microsoft, at the DOS prompt type ping microsoft.com and press enter. The reason I have you do all of this from a DOS prompt instead of simply typing it in the Start|Run text box that Win 95 provides is that if you do this, you will see the same information, but it will disappear as soon as it is finished

presenting. With the DOS approach the information stays on the screen.

Getting back to NetCom, different days would produce varying problems. Some days I would need to try back several times over a three hour period before I could connect. The time of day didn't seem to make a difference. At other times, I could connect and browse the WWW, but the email server was not available. Some times I could connect, but again no WWW, no email—nothing. However, on hanging up and re-connecting, everything worked fine. You get the idea.

Calls to NetCom's 800 number always produced a busy signal. The other three NetCom subscribers were having similar problems. But no mention in the press. AOL is down for two hours, and that is news, but NetCom on the blink for over a week (at least for four of us in Tampa) and no mention.

While all these problems were occurring, I received a press release from NetCom concerning their merger with ICG Communications. They assured me that I was a valued customer and that I would "continue to receive the same high quality Internet service that we've always provided, with no change in the way you access or use your current service." I do appreciate the service they have provided me for quite a long time at what is probably a money-losing rate for them of \$19.95 each month. But if things don't improve I may be forced to sign on to some other provider and let them lose money on me at \$19.95 a month. If you are a heavy Internet user, \$19.95 does not cover the provider's cost of providing service to you. They hope to make up the loss from those subscribers who use their service very little.

After writing this, I received an answer to one of my email inquires to NetCom. They said that they were aware of a problem with the Tampa POP server and were working on it.

WebCams In last month's newsletter I described how I took an old, unused computer, put a video capture card in it and had some fun bringing TV images and video camcorder images into the computer. And that got me to thinking about these WebCams you see around the Internet.

You know the kind of site I am talking about. The ones offering an image of New York City, Hong Kong, or even Tampa that is updated periodically—as frequently as several times each minute at some sites. And city skylines are not the only subjects that are available. You can also view someone's office, their aquarium, even their refrigerator door (although this site turned out to be a hoax in that it was not really being updated—how would you know, since the door doesn't change). All of this originated with someone's idea several years back to focus a video camera on the coffee pot in some laboratory at Cambridge University in England, to capture the image at

(Comments.....Continued on page 9)

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regular intervals, and to then make it available on the laboratory's computer network. That way the workers could just sit at their desks and easily check to see when a fresh pot had been made. Oh, the ingenuity of man.

I am really a fan of these WebCams and have included a page of them at our web site. There you are presented with 16 thumbnails of current images from around the world: four from Florida, four from the rest of the USA, and eight from the World. They basically follow the path of the sun (for all of us who believe the earth stands still and the sun moves around it). So, if the WebCams are working, when it is daylight at the Tampa camera, it should be dark at the Japanese one. This, as you may have noted, is not always the case. These cameras are apparently a low priority at many of their locations, and if they malfunction, you may see the same image for several days. If you click on one of the thumbnails, say, the Chicago one, you will be taken to an Internet site displaying a larger version of the image, and in this case, several more images from around downtown Chicago.

If you like what you see at our WebCam page, you can then check out the following listings of WebCams around the world (see other listings under the Internet category on the links page at our web site). **Live Cam Worldwide I** <http://www.rt66.com/~ozone/cam.htm>, **Live Cam Worldwide II** <http://www.rt66.com/~ozone/cam2.htm>, and **World Map of live WWW Cameras** <http://dove.mtx.net.au/~punky/World.html>. You will quickly see that there is a correlation between technological development of a country and the density of WebCams. Germany has a lot of them, but I have yet to find one for India. Pakistan has one, but it is unreliable.

Now, back to my old computer, its video capture card and my camcorder. What more do I need to set up my own web camera? I need an Internet site and some software to capture the image on a regular basis and transfer it to my Internet site. Those at last month's regular meeting saw my first, feeble attempt at such a setup.

Since our meeting would occur at night, I had a problem of a subject for the camera. I thought about the pet rabbit in a cage in the back yard. Although he would provide some action, it was too dark for that; the street out front was dark also with little traffic. I needed something that would change, so I gave up on the camera and let the TV provide the video input. The Visual Basic software I wrote captured an image from the TV once a minute and transferred it over a local network to another computer connected to the Internet. On this computer the image was converted from .BMP to .JPG and saved to a file name used by an image on an HTML page. At the meeting, I accessed this page on the Internet and projected it onto the screen. In this manner those at the meeting were able to "watch" the TV at my home. When I left the house, the TV

was tuned to the local PBS station. Apparently that was changed, since what we saw at the meeting, as some of you noted, was not regular PBS fare.

As those in attendance will remember, the quality of the images was quite poor. The main reason for this was my capture of them in 8 bit color. The video projector at the meeting then amplified the problem. Since then I have refined the setup so that the image is now captured in 24 bit color; thus, the image quality is much improved. I also managed to capture it as .JPG, thus, avoiding a conversion so as to be usable on the Internet. (For those of you not familiar with creating WWW pages, you can only use .GIF or .JPG graphic files—no .BMP files allowed.)

So, what keeps me from having my own live WebCam if I have basically solved all the technical problems? It is that pesky Internet connection problem. You see, I don't really have a permanent Internet connection. When I did the demonstration at the meeting I was just using the temporary Internet address my computer has while it is connected to the Internet (it is running Microsoft's Personal Web Server software). As soon as I sign off (or my provider kicks me off) and I sign back on, I will have a different address—and no one would know where to find my WebCam. Additionally, I don't feel right about simply leaving my computer connected to the Internet for hours on end, since I am sure my provider didn't have that in mind when they gave me unlimited access for \$19.95/month. And even if they didn't object—which I am sure they do—the connection would get broken due to technical problems at some point, and, when I reconnected, I would have a different Internet address.

There are two solutions to the above problem. First, I can pay a lot of money and get a permanent Internet connection at my home. If you have looked into this, you know how expensive this can be—hundreds of dollars each month. Second, since my Internet provider provides me with a small home page site that has a permanent address on their server, I could use that as follows: Put the captured image there on a page and write a program to automatically update it at regular intervals by uploading the updated image from my home computer to their server using FTP. In fact, I have done this. Unfortunately there is a problem. The image file is about 60KB; thus, 10 uploads of this file would equal 600KB, and my provider only allows 750KB worth of uploads each month after I get the free site up and running. To update the file only once each hour in a 30 day month would require $60 \text{ KB} \times 24 \times 30 = 43,200\text{KB}$ of transfers. You have to pay a good bit of money to be allowed a transfer rate that would handle that. As they say, "You get what you pay for." So, right now I am not getting much. ◆

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG — **Canceled** (temporarily we hope)

Communications SIG

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month at 6 PM at the Reflectone Building. **Directions: Proceed west on Waters from N. Dale Mabry across the railroad tracks, about 1.5 miles, take second left on Savarese. Proceed on Savarese until you reach the Reflectone building. Use the north**

door. You must sign up to get on the list and to get by security. *Contact Charles Howe: at 968-1207 or HOWE@INTNET.NET*

Genealogy SIG

This SIG meets the second Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Museum of Science and Industry. *Contact Jenny Lind Olin at 960-5723 or Ford Bond at 987-6309.*

(Power Cat.....Continued from page 3)

- **Zoom** Magnification feature is operable in most 97 applications. Glide your finger along the left edge of the touchpad to activate zoom in/out. The Zoom area is not labeled on the touchpad surface; feature requires compatible applications.

To click, all you have to do is lightly and quickly tap the surface of the pad once. To double-click, rapidly tap twice. There is a Right Tap Zone in the upper right corner that takes the place of right-clicking in Windows applications. To drag, draw or highlight, double-tap and hold your finger down on the second tap. If you reach the end of the pad while dragging, just lift and reposition your finger when you reach the textured edge of the pad. Sounds, custom speed, sensitivity, and orientation are just a few of the adjustable settings provided by the Cirque driver.

System Requirements

Power Cat works with any standard mouse driver, but to get the extra features mentioned above, you need to install the Cirque driver. Also, to use the touchpad you will need:

IBM PC-compatible desktop, laptop, notebook or subnotebook computer
Available serial or PS/2 port
One of these operating systems:
DOS 3.3 or above; Windows® 3.1 or above; Windows® 95; Windows NT®
To use the advanced software features such as surfing, signing and scrolling, you will need a Windows 95 operating system.

Physical Specifications

5.5 in. long x 4.4 in. wide x 1 in. deep
6-ft. serial cable (6 in. PS/2 adapter included)
Two mechanical buttons; one virtual button

No contact pressure required; sensitivity adjustable with driver

The Power Cat has a very comfortable feel. The touchpad is mounted on a case that slopes gently onto a foam wrist pad, creating a cushioned frame for your hand to rest on. Because of Cirque's GlidePoint technology, the touchpad senses your finger's movements without pressure or direct contact, allowing the touchpad to respond to your lightest of touches. I had tried other touchpads in the past but none came up to the standards of the Power Cat.

If there is a downside to touch pads in general it's that they require a bit of practice and patience. Once I got past that awkward stage, though, the Power Cat offered enough options and comfort, for me anyway, to put my mouse on the shelf. The computer super-stores list the Power Cat for \$79. ♦

SONY
DIGITAL CAMERA WITH 2.5" LCD DISPLAY
Stores up to 40 standard resolution images on a 3.5" disk (20 images at high resolution). Features 10X zoom and 5 auto exposure settings. User-friendly, on-screen menus help you review and manage images. 640 x 480 pixel image size. (MVC-FD7)

Merle Nicholson discovered this ad. The ad states that you can store up to 40 photos per disk. Merle wonders, "How many more do you think you could store if you inserted the disk correctly?"

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following firms for their support

Museum of Science and Industry
BCD (Brainchild Computer Distributions, Inc.)
Reflectone

And these software and hardware vendors for their demonstrations and review software

Adobe Systems	Microsoft
Broderbund	PowerQuest
Corel Systems	Regnis
Grolier	Seventh Level
Intuit	SoftKey International
Knowledge Adventure	Symantec
Micrografx	

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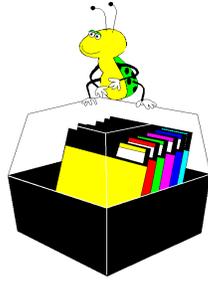
MEMBERS HELP-LINE

The following phone list is provided for our Tampa PC Users Group members in an effort to establish local support for those frustrating times which we have all encountered while using our PC's. Please note that these are members that have volunteered to help you; treat them in a courteous manner. Be sure to ask if it is convenient for them to help you now, or if you should call another time. It would also be helpful to have your documentation and have it handy when you call. (Don't expect help if your software is an illegal copy or you do not have documentation!) TPCUG is not responsible for the information or advice provided by volunteers. Volunteers may or may not be experts in the subject matter. You are on your own with any advice received. Be aware also that some of these volunteers may be consultants in their area of expertise. If you are interested in volunteering to answer members' questions, either leave a message on the BBS or fill in the forms provided for this purpose at the meetings.

Name:	Phone No:	Day:	Time:	For help on:
Ed Buzza	685-5898	Mon-Sun	10am-9pm	WordPerfect 5.1 and 6 for DOS
Jim Clark	986-3888	Mon-Sun	10am-9pm	Express Publisher for Windows, Word for Windows
Charles Howe	968-1207	Mon-Fri	9am-5pm	Modems, BBS & Internet
Tom Cone	949-3716	Mon-Sun	7pm-9pm	Alpha 4 & Compuserve
Larry Anders	989-9119	Mon-Sun	6pm-9pm	Lotus 123 for Windows
Connie Kincaid	661-8185	Eve.+ Weekends	Leave message	MS Professional Office Suite
Merle Nicholson	879-3602	Mon-Fri	6:00pm-10:00pm	Hardware Memory Management, DOS, Windows 3.1 & 95, Visual Basic, Delphi
William LaMartin	251-3817	Mon-Fri	10am-9pm	Win 95, MS Office Suite, Internet

Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

P. O. Box 3492
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- Member: Your membership is up for renewal
- Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ____

(Minutes.....Continued from page 2)

Wil Gobel and Connie Kincaid both won clocks; Bruce Register a thermos jug; and William LaMartin, Merle Nicholson, Wil Gobel, Vince McCoy, Kevan Sheridan, Roger Waters, Gary Ennis, Connie Kincaid, Bruce Register and Ford Bond all won mugs. ♦



(FACUG.....Continued from page 4)

Orlando. I have kept a copy of most of the announcements and many of the other records of these meetings. The proposed by-laws for the FACUG are dated September 21, 1992. The first Board meeting I attended as a member of the Board was held on October 23, 1993. ♦

