



# Bits of Blue



Spring in Florida

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

Vol. 11 No. 3 March 1998

## Meeting

**Kinematics will do a surge protector presentation**  
**March 11, 1998**  
**6:00 PM**  
**Museum of Science and Industry**  
**4801 E Fowler Ave.**

## President's Message

*By Merle Nicholson, President, Tampa PC Users Group*

I have very important news to convey to all club members. Due to the low traffic on the BBS, the TPCUG BBS has been closed down by decision of the board of directors. The BBS is a very vital part of our history and was a club mainstay for a good many years. I can recall in years past that, even if you didn't know much about the club itself, if you were interested in computers, you knew that the Bits-of-Blue BBS was top-notch. The quality of the BBS was the result of two club members - Kevan and Mary Sheridan.

There isn't any way that we can repay Mary and Kevan for all the literally thousands of hours they've devoted to running the BBS all these years. It's been a selfless dedication to something they fervently believed in. So the Sheridans are due our most heartfelt thanks. They can certainly rest assured that they have made an impact on the quality of the Tampa Bay area. ♦

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
President's Message	1
End of the BBS	1
Minutes of Last Meeting	2
Virtual Reality & Visual Basic	3
History of the BBS	4
World Wide Web Links	5
Windows 9(x)	6
Screen Resolutions	8
Shareware	9
Members Help Line	11
Map	12

## The END of the BBS, an end of an ERA?

*By Kevan Sheridan, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group*

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Quality and Quantity are the things that really change. When I started calling the BBS, I thought it was this huge computer in some big room where the high guru of computers sat in his big chair controlling everything that happened in the world. I know others who have had this same thought. I was literally startled when I saw it for the

*(BBS.....Continued on page 4)*

**April 8: Dick Kellerman will do a presentation of Photo Suite. Visit TPCUG's Virtual Reality World. A link is at the bottom of the page [http://www.canx.com/tpcug/communications\\_sig/communications\\_sig.htm](http://www.canx.com/tpcug/communications_sig/communications_sig.htm)**

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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 February 11, 1998

*Minutes and Comments by Kevan Sheridan,  
Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group*

The pre-meeting Turbo Tax demonstration was canceled. Introductions and announcements began at 6:10 pm. Merle announced the closure of the BBS, and William gave a quick demo of the club web pages. The Corel demonstration began at 6:35 and lasted until 8:00. Following a short break the meeting concluded with the door prize drawing. The amount brought in from ticket sales was \$112.00.

The Tampa PC Users Group BBS opened for business during August of 1986, and there have been quite a few changes since then. One of the biggest changes to bulletin board system usage has been the growth of the Internet, and with this growth a big decline in BBS activity has made it impractical to continue. The local fidonet feed for message echoes will stop on Feb 20. The final day of BBS operation is scheduled to be March 1, 1998.

The Corel demonstration was presented by Sussane Gramann, Product Specialist for Corel Corporation, and John Torres, Corel Corp./Mindshare representative for the Tampa bay area. The first program presented by Sussane was WebMaster Suite, a complete solution for web site creation. The suite contains Web.Designer, Web.SiteManager, Web.Photo Paint, Web.Draw, Web.Move, Web.World, Web.Data, O'Reilly's Website v1.1, Netscape Navigator 3.0, 7500 internet ready clipart images, and free 30-day web site hosting service. Minimum system requirements: PC 486 DX/66 or higher, Windows 95 or Windows NT 3.51 or higher, 2X CD-ROM drive, 16 MB RAM, VGA monitor, mouse or tablet.

Web Designer can handle up to five pages simultaneously and has 222 templates. Web pages can be setup in just minutes. Web site management allows management of local sites, remote sites, and even sub sites. It automatically updates links, detects and reports broken links and orphan files. Photo Paint 7 technology lets you quickly create or edit wonderful images with quite a few fancy options thrown in. With 3D VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language) you can design 3D images and even use animation! Image file formats used include both GIF and J-Peg. If you have stored information to display, tables with up to 100 by 100 elements allow you to publish your database information quickly and easily. Finally, of course, you can use Netscape Navigator to view your pages as they would appear on the web.

Just to show us what could be done with Web.World, Sussane

*(Minutes.....Continued on page 10)*

## Comments: Corel, Virtual Reality, and Visual Basic

By William LaMartin, Editor,  
Tampa PC Users Group

Before anything else, allow me to invite you to check out the new online version of this newsletter (take the fourth link on our home page). In the past, I had been posting an Adobe Acrobat version of each newsletter at our web site. If you downloaded it and viewed it with the Acrobat reader, you were presented with a true, in color, copy of the newsletter with hot links. However, I got the feeling that not many took the time to do this since it involved the download. So, I decided to try to create an online HTML version--I was already reproducing the main articles in HTML format in the "Online Reviews" section. This just added a bit more work, and it turned out to be easier and consumed less hard disk space than I had originally thought.

### Corel's Web.World Virtual Reality Program

As usual, Corel gave us a stellar presentation of outstanding products. They were also generous with the door prizes (see photo at right) and the special user group pricing on their major products. I and each of the individuals on either side of me took advantage of the offer on Corel Draw 8 and the WebMaster Suite. And I noticed many others filling out the order forms that were passed around. In a little over three weeks I had a nice fat box from Corel sitting at my door--much sooner than promised--but too late for a review in the newsletter. However, part of one of the products intrigued me, and I just had to give it a try: Corel Web.World

I first installed Corel Draw 8. That took about 225 MB of that new 5.1 GB second drive I wrote about adding last month. Then WebMaster Suite took around another 100 MB. It's a good thing I got the drive. I remembered enough of an earlier version of Corel Draw to whip out a birthday card for someone in a short time. I haven't used Corel Draw in some time, since I have been using a newer version Micrografx's similar product for the past several years. I plan on using both now so as to compare the two programs.

After installing the WebMaster Suite, I took a quick look at the features of the main program Corel Web.Designer to get the feel of it and then quickly moved on to Corel Web.World, the virtual reality creation program. This program and several of the other lesser programs in the Suite must not be true Windows 95 programs since they don't support long file names. Corel Draw 8 and Web.Designer are Windows 95 programs.

During the Corel presentation, the presenter did not actually build a Virtual Reality (VR) project; she used one that had been created earlier just to show what the results of using the pro-

gram could be. Actually constructing such a VR world would take too much time for a brief presentation.

In using the program, you basically choose a level on which you want to work, say, 0 to 3 units. Here you create your rooms and other rectangular objects--a room is just a rectangular object with the inside cut out. You can then apply color to the walls and "hang" objects on the walls. These objects on the walls can then be given properties such that when a visitor to your virtual world double clicks on the object they may see a text message, hear a MIDI music file being played, be sent to another site on the Internet, or transported to another virtual world you have created.

If I have created a room or collection of rooms on level 0 - 3, then I could change to level 3.5 - 6.5 and create a second floor above the one I just created. I haven't found a good way to move from a first floor to the second floor. Right now one just moves up through the air from the first to the second floors. I suppose you could create two different VR worlds with one the first floor of the building and the second world being the second floor. Then a double click on the stairs, for example, could take you from one floor to the next. I have had only one day to work on the program before writing this article, but to see an example of what can be accomplished, go to the site [http://www.canx.com/tpcug/communications\\_sig/virtual/world3/mosi.htm](http://www.canx.com/tpcug/communications_sig/virtual/world3/mosi.htm). It is hidden away at our web site in the Announcements section under the Communications/Internet SIG. To view the VR world, your browser will have to have VMRL viewing capability installed. Both Netscape and Microsoft Browsers provide add-ons for this. You may not have this feature installed. If your browser has this ability installed, when you go to the above site you will see my version of the MOSI floor plan. See if you can find the man at the computer in the computer lab upstairs. To get upstairs you just sort of walk through the air at present. Later, I will make this more realistic with you going to the stairs then double clicking or something to be transported to the second level.

Just like there is a Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) for writing the code for a web page, there is a Virtual Reality Markup Language (VRML) for creating VR objects. Both produce text files with associated graphic files for whatever pic-

(Comments.....Continued on page 6)



Corel is always very generous with door prizes. Here I am wearing mine.

*(BBS.....Continued from page 1)*

first time. Just a little thing sitting in the corner with nothing more than a monitor, keyboard, and modem connected. The sysop was no longer bigger than life, not much different from anyone else, and was just interested in computers. The BBS was nothing more than a program and a modem. A web page is nothing more than a text file that is sent over communications lines to your browser.

Today web sites just about replace the BBS. A web site can be located on big computers in big rooms with high gurus running them... AND a web site could work on YOUR computer too. With a BBS you could get the latest printer drivers or text formatting program, and the files could have been released just last week (more often it was a few months ago). Today a trip to the web page of the developer can net a driver that was released just 10 minutes ago. Messaging, a big part of a BBS (where valuable information is passed along), is now replaced by Usenet newsgroups. Games, a big portion of BBS doors, can now be found everywhere. Some support hundreds of people playing at once.

All of the functions of a BBS are replaced. Chat, messaging, games, files, bulletins, e-mail, and even individual color preferences are handled on the "net" (or by your browser). "How do I go to the FILES area of your BBS, I use O-A-5 on my favorite BBS?" is a question I was asked once. The answer was "F" on our system but the question highlights something. Today a "link" is a link. You move the mouse and push a button. Just like the BBS 'How do I' question, though, someone probably told you that a colored underline was a link. Today links work the same from site to site.

Quality. A fidonet message area usually contained some off-topic messages such as which side of the bay was better. Today it is just as common to see messages titled 'Windows Lockups' while the contents are about what color a particular beer label had before it changed.

Quantity. With a BBS there was a sense of community, you knew most of the people visiting. Today the Internet covers the world. It seems a little less intimate but you have access to more information than anyone could handle in a lifetime.

End of an ERA? I don't think so....it just looks a little different. ◆



## The History of the Bits of Blue RBBS

*By Kevan Sheridan, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group*

Sometime during August of 1986, Rodney Brewer of Excellence Computers and then president of the Tampa IBM PC Users Group Inc. started a club electronic Bulletin Board System (BBS). Back then bulletin boards, just becoming popular, all had names that tried to give an idea of what the system was about. The IBM PC was quite the computer in those days, and the nickname for IBM was "Big Blue". So, the name of the club newsletter, Bits of Blue, was used for the BBS. The purpose was to give members a place to trade valuable information and prospective members a place to find out more about the group. We will not talk about what some callers thought about a name with 'blue' in it.

This original system had some very fancy items for those days. A messaging area allowed questions, answers, and general comments to be posted or read by any caller. Bulletins allowed the System Operator (Sys-Op) to give callers a standard set of information on request. Items such as how to join the group or what the next meeting would be about were placed in bulletins. A Files area, a standard part of most BBSes, kept the latest version of your favorite shareware game. If your communication program included the X-Modem transfer protocol, downloading files took place at the (amazing for the time) speed of 1200 baud (1200 bps or 120 characters per second). Let's not talk about how long it took to download big files, okay?

Games were big then too, so one was installed on the BBS. Games were so popular people wrote them to be played online, using a function called 'DOORS'. This allowed players to compete for the best scores or just offered something to do for awhile. Another function was called PC-Pursuit, which allowed callers to 'connect' to other systems. Word of mouth and an advertisement on other boards was the way callers found out about any BBS. After a short time Rodney brought his brother Daniel in to help him. Daniel eventually took over all operation of the BBS and worked very hard until mid 1988 when Excellence could no longer support the system.

After two years of operation, volunteers to operate the BBS were called for. Three people, perhaps more, spoke up: Vern Semrad a very capable computer expert, Harvey Bruneau of Dun and Bradstreet, and Kevan Sheridan of Realtron. Kevan, being two months on a new job, offered to keep the BBS at his place of work. His company let the system take up desk space and connected it to a 5kv UPS. The public access of an office must have helped as Kevan was picked to be the next BBS Sys-Op.

*(History.....Continued on page 7)*

### SOFTWARE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

1. **GoldMine 4.0** - GoldMine Software -Number one rated workgroup contact manager - Win95, 16 MB, 486 & CD required.
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. **How Would You Survive?** - Grolier - Multimedia Adventure (ages 7-12) - Windows CD
6. **Aviation Adventure** - Knowledge Adventure - complete world of flying (8-adult)

(Call 251-3817 for information on review software)

### Internet picture of the month



**Bill Gates**

This photo from the London Times is of Bill Gates displaying the results of a cream cake assault in Brussels. The London Times site is at <http://www.the-times.co.uk/>.

A slightly different photo can be seen in the CNN Interactive archives along with a Quick Time movie of the event at <http://cnn.com/TECH/computing/9802/04/belgium.gates.ap/index.html>.

### March's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	<a href="http://www.canx.com/tpcug/">http://www.canx.com/tpcug/</a>
InteliHealth - Johns Hopkins Health Information	<a href="http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH">http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH</a>
Electronic Newsstand (links to online magazines)	<a href="http://www.eneews.com/">http://www.eneews.com/</a>
Fedor's Destination Guides	<a href="http://destinations.previewtravel.com/">http://destinations.previewtravel.com/</a>
BRS Web Radio (gateway to online radio)	<a href="http://www.web-radio.com/">http://www.web-radio.com/</a>
Comcast Online Schoolyard	<a href="http://www.onlineschoolyard.com/default.asp">http://www.onlineschoolyard.com/default.asp</a>
Biltmore Estate	<a href="http://www.biltmore.com/">http://www.biltmore.com/</a>
Real Planet (Real Audio & Real Video Broadcasts)	<a href="http://www.realplanet.com/">http://www.realplanet.com/</a>
HomeWeb - Real Estate Listings	<a href="http://www.homeweb.com/">http://www.homeweb.com/</a>
HOMES.COM - Real Estate Listings	<a href="http://www.homes.com/index.html">http://www.homes.com/index.html</a>
Computer Virus Myths home page	<a href="http://kumite.com/myths/home.htm">http://kumite.com/myths/home.htm</a>
OneLook Dictionaries, The Faster Finder	<a href="http://www.onelook.com/">http://www.onelook.com/</a>
The Elements of Style (English usage text)	<a href="http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk/">http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk/</a>
Windows95 OSR2 FAQ	<a href="http://www.compuclinic.com/osr2faq/">http://www.compuclinic.com/osr2faq/</a>
Titanic (from Encyclopedia Britannica)	<a href="http://titanic.eb.com/">http://titanic.eb.com/</a>



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.

## Windows 9(x)

By Larry Anders, Librarian,  
Tampa PC Users Group

Later this year, as Windows 95 reaches its third birthday, a new release of Windows is to be unveiled. While some are calling it Windows 98, word is that it will be called Windows version 9(something). I have not given this latest version a trial run, even though I have had a couple of offers, because my system is running just fine with 95. But, I have read a lot about it since it has gone into BETA, and as I sit in a hotel room on the other coast of Florida, reading an e-mail from William saying he needs my article for this month's newsletter, I thought I'd pass on some of what I've learned to you.

It apparently will not be as major a design change as from 3.1 to 95, but it's touted to be more than just an upgrade. The bright spot in my mind is that it will actually save disk space. Included in this latest release from Redmond is the new Drive Converter utility that will convert your old Win95's inefficient file allocation table (FAT 16) to the more efficient FAT32 that reclaims wasted disk space. A full installation of Win 9(x) over Win95 takes approximately 70 megabytes but frees up over 150 megabytes after running Drive Converter.. That's quite a diet for your hard drive.

One neat feature is the ability to run two PCI display adapters and two monitors on a single PC. Why would you want to do this? You could run your e-mail program continuously on one monitor and run your desktop normally on another monitor:

Some other new features included are:

- Better plug and play management
- System File Checker and Windows Tune-Up
- Windows Update, a web-based wizard that analyzes your PC and automatically recommends updates to download such as patches and drivers
- Improved disk cache and memory management
- Over 1,200 new drivers including ones for DVD and USB
- Explorer 4, which has already been released, provides a choice for a different desktop view, one based more on the web, called Active Desktop
- Outlook Express, Personal Webserver, Task Scheduler, Net Meeting and a new version of Backup have also been added.

This isn't all of the new features but it's a majority of them. The RAM requirement is between 12 MB to 16 MB. Major performance gains shouldn't be expected but you can expect your system to run better and have better reliability. Although Win95 has been good to me I'm ready for the next step in our evolutionary chain to Windows NT. How about you? ♦

*(Comments.....Continued from page 3)*

tures you want to put on your web page or hang on the walls of your VR world. What follows are the first few lines of the VR file for the MOSI VR project.

```
Separator{
  ShapeHints {shapeType SOLID vertex-
Ordering COUNTERCLOCKWISE}
  SpotLight {on FALSE}
  PerspectiveCamera{
    orientation 0 1 0 0.00170909
    position 5415 3009 11346
    heightAngle 2.42572
  }
  DEF BackgroundColor Info{
    string" 0.517647 0.768627
0.721569"
  }
  Coordinate3{
    point[
      256 0 6144, 256 0 9984, 256 896
9984, 256 896 6144, 7680 0 6144, 7680 896
```

and much, much more. If I knew what all those numbers meant, I probably would know why my colors aren't reproducing properly.

### Visual Basic - ActiveX

I am always on the lookout for interesting things to do with Visual Basic. This last month produced two. Creating an ActiveX component to place on a web page and enumerating all the installed programs on a computer.

In some sense creating an ActiveX component for a web page is similar to creating a VR object to place on a web page. In both cases you use a special program to create the object. For ActiveX, I used Microsoft Visual basic to create a special type Visual Basic program to be uploaded to the web site, which is similar to what I did above with the VR object. Next, just as your browser needed to have the VMRL add-on installed to be able to view the VR world, you will need to download what I would call the Microsoft Visual Basic runtime environment files to your computer to be able to view the ActiveX object on your web page. Once you have these files, you will not have to download them again, but that first time could be time consuming, since the minimal size is around 700 KB. Once you have all the required files, you can do some powerful things with ActiveX. In my simple example, I just had a real time clock running on the page, spaces for the user to fill in information, some of which was numerical, and hen a button to press to do calculations with the numerical information, and spaces to display the various calculations. Then just for a lark, I had the component change colors if you clicked on it.

All this is very cute and indeed useful; however, there is one

*(Comments.....Continued on page 7)*

*(Comments.....Continued from page 6)*

problem other than the need for the one time download of the run time environment files. It is all the warnings you will get along the way from your browser telling you of the potential dangers of renegade ActiveX components from untrustworthy developers. And I am relegated to the untrustworthy category, since I don't have a "certificate" from what, as best I can tell, is the self appointed issuer of such things. To get such a certificate, one needs to have a "substantial presence and evidence of financial responsibility as evidenced by such things as a Dun & Bradstreet rating." So unless there is a way figured out to make people like me "trustworthy", I don't think there will be much reason for me to put any such components out on the web just yet

### **Visual Basic - Counting the installed programs**

How many programs are installed on your computer? I have 701 on my C drive alone. You say, "No one has that many programs installed." Well, it all depends on what you call a program. Using the definition of a program as being a file with the .EXE extension, I have 701 programs on my C drive. And you probably have at least 200.

Why would anyone want to know such a thing, and, then, how can you enumerate the programs? The last part of the question is what someone asked me. The first answer is that Microsoft has some such program for managing the installed programs on all the computers on a network. And, of course, in Windows 95 you have a list of the programs that you can uninstall, but the non-Windows 95 programs will not be there. For these types of programs, I suppose, you could check every .INI file. And then it came to me that all you needed to do was use the find feature in Windows Explorer with the file name set to \*.exe. This would produce a list of executable files. Of course, it is a list with which you can't do much.

My project was to write a Visual Basic project that would also find these files and additionally present you with a list that could be dealt with as any other text file: saved, printed, sorted. With this sort of information, you can compare the state of the installed program base now with the previous month, look for major software titles, and what interests your boss--look for game titles.

To write such a program you need to think of a drive, e.g. C, as a tree trunk with all the folders as branches, the subfolders as branches off the branches, etc., with the programs as the leaves on the branches. You then proceed to search along all the tree's branches. As I said I came up with 701 leaves on my tree. What I am going to do with this information, I don't know. But it was interesting project, and it helps keep my programming skills alive. ◆

*(History.....Continued from page 4)*

Unfortunately, the transfer of operations was not a smooth one. The entire list of items actually transferred amounted to two backup tape cartridges. A company whose name cannot be found, offered to donate equipment for the operation to continue. Kevan's first encounter with building PC's began with a trip through a repair shop: "Here is a computer case and keyboard. And we'll use these memory chips. Let's see. Yes here is a mother board.... Whoops, let's use this one instead. A 20 meg hard drive..." The company really should get credit here for donating this equipment because they did make it possible to continue the BBS. They also loaned the use of a backup tape drive.

It was September 1, 1988. With a pile of components and a modem, Kevan proceeded. He affectionately (well MOST of the time) called this the "Frankenstein System" and once built, the restore from backup could begin. The next lesson was: Backups do not always work. Halfway through the first of two tapes a block was apparently unreadable, thus ending the restore. Some 1500 files were never restored. Fortunately the core files needed to run the BBS were recovered. The next month was spent finding out how to make it run. On October 8, the BBS software, RBBS-PC version 15.1A, was upgraded to RBBS-PC version 17-1A providing lots of new features.

The first official (non sysop) call to the "new" BBS was on October 14, 1988. The sysop spent the next few months learning about modems and how to handle them. Fortunately the BBS software included all the BASIC source code which gave him enough information to allow him to write a new set of modem control programs for his other job (the paying one). This was the first time his BBS experience helped his career. Terms like Baud, BPS, Parity, Stop Bits, and Flow-Control now meant something. Constant system trouble also gave him valuable experience with the operating system and hardware connections. "Wait! You mean the location AND order of the memory chips make a difference???"

In May 1989 Edward Buzza wrote "So,... You've Got A Modem" for new callers to the BBS. Distributed on the BBS and mainly on new group member disks, this manual continues to be the ultimate resource for new BBS users. In April of 1990 a second 20 MB disk drive was added and ZMODEM, YMODEM, and PUMA file transfer protocols were added too. Right after that memory parity errors started to happen causing the system to be taken down for repair. With a new motherboard and completely empty disk drives the next lesson was Low Level Disk Formatting. A program called FDISK now became a friend. Previously learned lessons paid off as the backups worked this time. The support of several group members helped greatly during this low period.

*(History.....Continued on page 9)*

## Screen Resolutions

*By Merle Nicholson, President,  
Tampa PC users Group*

You really don't ever do one thing at a time do you? No, absolutely not, and Windows was designed for doing multiple tasks as well. As Windows was developed over the years, it's gotten better and better at that. My own screen right now has a window on the Internet, sized pretty small in the top left hand corner. It's waiting for someone else to pop up into the TPCUG online Chat window. But I'm really concentrating on what I'm writing right now. I have a clock going at the top of my screen, and I'm kind of tracking the time, hoping to get this article together before bedtime. I have Outlook Express minimized also, because I'm hoping my son will send a note to me by e-mail. I'll hit send/receive a couple of times during the evening, and maybe print out the note for my wife if something interesting comes in. That's it for the moment. Sometimes I have more going on, but this is a night that I have to concentrate on this article.

What the computer is doing (and my brain also) is called "multi-tasking", and for those of us brought up on technologies of the past; Apple and Atari and Commodore and DOS, we're really living luxuriously. So what does this have to do with screen resolution? Screen resolution has to do with how much you can see on the screen at once.

So if your brain is capable of multi-tasking and your computer is also, what about the computer's ability to present that information to you? It's all through the screen (and also sound to a limited degree). So how do you know what you have? Start with the monitor specs. What size is it? Common sizes are 14", 15" and 17". There's a new 19" size becoming popular, and 21" has been around for quite a while if you have lots of money. This is a diagonal measure. My own 17" monitor has an actual diagonal measurement of 15-3/4 inches. Now for the resolution. Right-click on your desktop and select properties, or go to **Start, Settings, Control Panel, Display**. Select the Settings tab, and on that panel, look at "Desktop Area". At the moment, mine is set to 1024 x 768 the "intended" resolution of a 17" monitor. (We'll debate this in a moment). In one sense, "desktop area" is a good description of resolution.

Slide the pointer back and forth, and you'll see - depending on your monitor specs and your computers' video card - just what your system is capable of. The resolutions that you'll see are:

640 x 480 - called VGA  
800 x 600 - called Super VGA, and sometimes SVGA  
1024 x 768 called 1024x768 and sometimes XGA.  
1152 x 864 is rare, but some video cards support this (mine does)  
1280 x 1024

1600 x 1200

The specifications for my monitor says that it's built to a maximum of 1280 x 1024. As a rule, the larger the monitor, the higher the resolution. All monitors that I've heard of will handle from 640x480 up to some maximum, depending on how expensive and how big the monitor is. I have an older 14" monitor in my computer room that handles 1024x768 (and did this terribly, even when it was new). Certainly all newer 14" monitors will do that. 15" monitors will do 1024x768, and sometimes 1280x1024. 17" monitors will all do 1280x1024, and sometimes 1600x1200.

What does this do for us? The higher the resolution, the more "things" we can put on the desktop at once. It's that simple. I very often switch my resolution to 1280x1024, mostly when I'm programming in Visual Basic where I must have six or so windows up at the same time, and still have my e-mail and appointments on-screen and handy. I'll switch it down - usually to 1152x864 when the demands of what I'm doing are lower.

By the way, you'll see both 14" and 15" monitors sell with the same resolution capability, and also many 15 and 17's have the same specifications. What do we gain? Easy - the bigger the screen, the easier it is to see, given the same resolution.

I'm writing this because I've been amazed to see that people do not experiment around with their settings. I've seen dozens of people with expensive 17" monitors with the resolution set at 800x600, a resolution that any 14" monitor will do with ease.

So here's Merle's middle-of-the-road guidelines given, say, mid-life capable eyes and then (young eyes) in Parenthesis  
14" - 640x480 (800x600)  
15" - 800x600 (1024x768)  
17" - 1024x768 or 1152x864 ( 1280x1024)  
19" - 1280x1024 (1600x1200)

You obviously need to modify this depending on the quality of the monitor; the real need you have to juggle many windows on the screen at once; the age of your eyes and also how well your glasses or contacts - if any - are "tuned" to the distance to the screen.

Because of my age, I went to "computer glasses" many years ago that have the upper part prescribed for a distance of 22 inches from the screen. That allows me to use a very high 1280x1024 with very little fatigue.

Sit down at your computer, don't be afraid to change it to see what the effect is, and work with each one for a few days; you may discover something you like. ♦

*(History.....Continued from page 7)*

A new 286 computer was purchased from LORAN Computers in November 1990 (we actually traded our old system in!). Steve Speairs donated two 65 MB RLL hard disk drives, as the previous D: drive (containing only files to download) failed.

By 1992 the BBS had many message areas (or topics) that had a lot of activity. Two doors, Silver Express and TQM, were added to allow callers to download, read, and send mail while offline (not connected to the BBS). To make things better, there was a new "network" called FIDOnet. With a dog as the logo and using a system of computers, a new way to transfer messages between people was developed. Each 'node' on the network wasn't always connected to other nodes. Special programs called "mailers" were written to handle the transfer of messages. A program called D'Bridge (version 1.3) was installed in March 1992. For those interested, our node address was 1:377/32. Fidonet allowed the sysop to ask questions in the DesqView "echo" and get helpful answers from a caller to another BBS located in Australia (in just 3 days!).

The BBS joining Fidonet gave all of its callers access to the world. Additionally fido membership gave the sysop access to other local BBS sysops, a wealth of PC knowledge. This also led to the addition of a US Robotics 16,800 baud modem, a big leap in online speed.

The next very big boost for the BBS came from a donation in Dec 1992: A brand new computer! A 486/33, 200 MD Hard Drive, and 8 MEG RAM. With a better computer a second phone line was added with Desq View running two nodes of the BBS software. This sysop lesson was called file sharing along with a BIG boost in the member support lesson.

Things change, and during 1995 the sysop was no longer able to spend the same amount of time on the BBS. System operation was transferred to Mary Sheridan in September when the system was moved to their home (cutting the monthly phone bill in half).

Things changed even more when the Internet took hold. Overall usage went down over the next year or so, and life with a PC changed as well. The local fidonet feed ended on February 20 1998. Mary took these changes (and more) into consideration when she decided to recommend the TPCUG board stop BBS support in March of 1998. With that, the history is over.

*On a personal note:* When I started, I spent about thirty to forty hours a week on the BBS (down to ten by March 1994). During that time I learned a huge amount about modems, programming, and people. I spent months and even years learning software. I was allowed to install just about any program I wanted to, each one helping in one way or another. I spent countless hours trying to make hardware or software work

properly. And after all of this I believe that I had the better part of the deal! I also believe I couldn't have done it without the unending support of many group members. I would like to personally thank these people for their special support (without which nothing could have happened): Harvey Bruneau, Vern Semrad, Ed Buzzza, Larry Anders, Bill Fuller, and Connie Kincaid. I would also like to thank my wife Mary for helping me change my life from a keyboard to the real world. By the way, I met her on the BBS! ♦

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## SHAREWARE

*By Larry Anders, Librarian,  
Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.*

For this month's newsletter I thought I'd pass along some Shareware files that can be easily downloaded from the Internet. As I have written about in the past, there are plenty of reputable locations where good software is available, and you don't have to worry about downloading some gosh-awful virus along with the software. That's not to say that you shouldn't always be leery of viruses but I've been downloading Shareware for years and I have **NEVER** obtained a virus from a downloaded file. I have also been a registered user of McAfee VirusScan for years and so far it's been well worth the minimal expense.

At this point, before I go any further, I would be remiss not to mention the passing of a very good friend of mine, which was responsible for me joining the Tampa PC Users Group several years ago, our very own *Bits of Blue BBS*. She is gone but not forgotten. Thank you for many, many hours of enjoyment. May it rest in peace! Enough said, now for the good stuff.

Back in the days of Bits of Blue BBS, before the Internet, there was a download protocol called Zmodem that would allow an interrupted download to start back up where it left off without having to start all over again. Now you can expect the same on the Internet with:

**GetRight (32-bit)**, File size: 920 K (Shareware) GetRight gracefully recovers from the many errors that can occur while you're downloading files. No matter how you lose your connection, GetRight can resume downloading a file. It can dial your telephone, download a file, hang up, and even shut down your computer automatically. It can also schedule files for later downloading, support a file mirror list, and switch be-

*(Shareware.....Continued on page 10)*

## Special Interest Groups

### 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 secu-

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

took us through a "walking" tour of a virtual building that had been created by someone at Corel. This building was complete with wall paintings, windows looking out, and it even had a fire "burning" in the fireplace. Oh, and don't forget to include sounds in your pages.

Corel Draw 8 was the next program on the agenda. With over 100 new features in this version of Corel Draw the system requirements may be evident. Minimum requirements: Pentium 90 (133 recommended), Windows 95 or Windows NT 4.0, CD-ROM, 32 MB RAM, 80 MB hard disk space, SVGA, and a mouse or tablet.

This version uses a different user interface. The Property Bar is now context-sensitive, and there are now roll-up dialog boxes, and something called Dockers. It also handles multiple objects better than before using, for example, a 'digger' action to quickly move through multiple images or objects. ALT-SHIFT-PAGEUP and a right mouse will let you copy properties. If you want to duplicate images, try smart duplicate and place copies wherever your mouse goes. Most tools are now interactive to let you see changes as you type them in. Distortion, Zipper, Extrude, Drop Shadow, Envelope, and Smart Duplicate are just some of these. The 3D effects also look quite impressive in both results and speed. Throw in light source control, color gradient control, transparency, and import text tools and you can have sentences wrapping around in spirals.

Sussane Gramann can be reached at (613) 728-0826 Ext. 1637 or E-mail: [sussaneg@corel.ca](mailto:sussaneg@corel.ca)

John Torres can be reached at (813) 620-8094 or E-mail: [torresjd@aol.com](mailto:torresjd@aol.com)

The door prize followed a short break. Ford Bond won a copy of Web Master Suite. William LaMartin won a sweat-shirt. Finally, Connie Kincaid won a copy of Corel Draw 8.

Next Month look for a demonstration of surge protectors. ♦

riety. Contact Charles Howe: at 968-1207 or [HOWE@INTNET.NET](mailto: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.

*(Shareware.....Continued from page 9)*

tween download sites transparently to ensure that you find the best download site. In addition, GetRight supports clipboard monitoring, which can help you start the download process more easily. Other features include username and password storage, integration with Netscape Navigator, download filtration by file type, and a "speed limit" that limits GetRight's share of your modem's resources. Minimum requirements: Windows 95/NT.

Although I have all of the top rated graphic manipulation programs such as PhotoShop, CorelDraw and Micrografx I still use this program more than the rest. Here's their latest effort at making it better with a little extra added:

**Paint Shop Pro (with Animation Shop)**, File size: 7.3 MB (Shareware) Paint Shop Pro 5.0 (currently in beta 2.1) is the latest version of this popular graphics editor, with powerful new features such as complete layer support, Picture Tube brushes, CMYK separations, and pressure-sensitive tablet support. The program also includes enhancements to Paint Shop Pro's flexible painting and retouching brushes, adjustable cropping and selection tools, and images. If you have an existing installation of Paint Shop Pro (registered or shareware) and would like to keep this preexisting installation intact, simply install the Paint Shop Pro 5.0 beta into a different directory. This program will expire on April 6, 1998, but it's worth the look until then. Minimum requirements: Windows 95/NT.

I've been doing my taxes on the PC for years but have never transmitted them electronically because of the charge. It's starting to sound reasonable with this one:

**Federal Tax Wizard** (Nelco, Inc.), File size: 1.9 MB (Free) Now you can file your tax return electronically without using a paid preparer or buying tax preparation software. Download Nelco's free Tax Wizard electronic filing software and get the benefits of electronic filing. For \$4.95 per return, you can transmit up to three returns using this software. This eliminates all of the delays associated with a mailed tax return and a mailed refund. Just enter your completed tax return information into Tax

*(Shareware.....Continued on page 12)*

## 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
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Micrografx	

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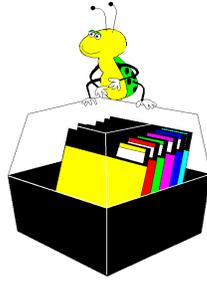
## MEMBERS' HELP LINE

Program	Code	Name	Time	Phone	Codes
Adobe Acrobat	AA	Larry Anders	Mon - Sun 6:00pm - 10:00pm	989-9119	AOL, ME, MW, FP, PSP
Alpha4	A4				
AOL	AOL	Tom Cone	Mon - Sun 7:00pm - 9:00pm	949-3716	A4,VdB
Computer General	CG				
Delphi	DE	Warren Fuss	10am - 9:30pm	949-6844	CG, WNT, N
DOS	DOS				
Family Tree Maker	FTM	Connie Kincaid	evenings & week-ends	661-8185	DOS, MOS,Q
Hardware General	HG				
Hardware Modem	HM	William LaMartin	Mon - Fri 9:00am - 9:00pm	251-3817	AA, FTM, IG, MOS, MP, VB, W95
Hardware Printer	HP				
HTML coding	HTM	Merle Nicholson	Mon - Fri 7:30pm - 9:30pm; weekends	879-3602	CG, DE, DOS, HG, HM, HP, W3, VB
Internet General	IG				
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS	Jenny Lind Olin	Mon - Sun 8:00am - 10:00pm	960-5723	ME, MW, PAF, Q, WP
Microsoft Access	MA				
Microsoft Excel	ME	Don Patzsch	Before 8:00pm	689-8662	CG
Microsoft FrontPage	FP				
Microsoft Office Suite	MOS				
Microsoft Publisher	MP				
Microsoft Visual Basic	VB				
Microsoft Word	MW				
Networking	N				
PAF	PAF				
PaintShop PRO	PSP				
Quicken	Q				
Visual dBase	VdB				
Windows 3.1	W3				
Windows 95	W95				
Windows NT	WNT				
WordPerfect	WP				

We encourage other members to add their names to the list of those willing to assist fellow members with their computer problems. Contact William LaMartin to add your name to the list.

**Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.**

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*(Shareware.....Continued from page 10)*

Wizard. (Note: Tax Wizard is not tax preparation software.) Then enter your credit card information and transmit your tax return. You can have your refund mailed to you or directly deposited into your bank account. Minimum requirements: Windows 3.x.

I'm sure most of you have heard about the dancing baby.

**Boogie Baby Screensaver**, (PJ Software), File size: 1.3 MB (Shareware) This screensaver, features the original dancing baby designed by Kinetix. After already making its way to prime time on the television show Ally McBeal, this little bundle of dance moves can also get down on your PC. Amuse yourself and friends as you watch it boogie to a version of the classic Village People hit "YMCA." Minimum requirements: Windows 95/NT. All of these files can be downloaded from <http://download.com>. Just go to the site, search for the file name and follow the instructions. Enjoy! ♦

