



Bits of Blue



April in Tampa

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

Vol. 11 No. 4 April 1998

Meeting

**MGI Photo Suite
and
MGI VideoWave
Presentation**
April 8, 1998
6:00 PM
**Museum of Science
and Industry**

Meeting Preview: At the April meeting you will see two products from MGI Software, MGI PhotoSuite and MGI VideoWave, which give you unlimited options when it comes to your photos and videos. MGI PhotoSuite is a complete PC photography solution. It's allows you to edit and organize your photos while giving you creative freedom. And with MGI VideoWave, you can now capture, edit, and produce your own videos on your PC.

Dick Kellerman will be the guest speaker representing MGI Software. He has worked with user groups for over 14 years. Dick is an informative and entertaining presenter. You will come away from this meeting with a much better understanding of photo editing, cataloging & transforming your photos! Dick promised to bring informative handouts for all, door prizes, and a special user group price for those wishing to purchase any MGI products at the meeting.

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President's Message

By Merle Nicholson

This month, I'd like to mention once again the need for all club members to participate in some way. There are opportunities limited only by imagination. Here are some ideas: Serve on the board, write newsletter articles, call vendors for donations, telephone past members and re-invite them to meetings. Hand out our club flyers. Do personal invitations to club meetings. Encourage other members to do the same. I'm sure there's more. The board of directors and the people writing articles are very small groups that especially need new blood. Ask any board member how to get started on the activity that appeals to you most, and if you're not satisfied with the answer, persist.

I have written two beginners' articles, last month and this, and I'd like US to continue to do more. It would be just wonderful to have some beginners' articles written by beginners. If you're concerned that you'll miss on something techni-

(President.....Continued on page 2)

May 13: Waldec-IKON Technology Services will present Microsoft and Internet related products.
June 10: IDT/Centaur will discuss the Winchip Processors for your computer.

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However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 821 S. Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606-2904; 813-251-3817; lamartin@ix.netcom.com.

Technical information found in this publication is not necessarily compatible with your hardware and software; plus other errors or misprints could occur from time to time. Therefore, the use of programs, commands, functions or anything of a technical nature appearing in this publication will be at your own risk.

Contributors are asked to submit articles as an ASCII, Microsoft Write, Microsoft Word, or Word Perfect file to the editor at 821 South Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33606-2904 or to lamartin@ix.netcom.com.

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The use of trademarked and copyrighted names herein is not intended to infringe upon the owner's rights but rather to identify the products for the enlightenment of our users.

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 as an attachment to an email 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.



(President.....Continued from page 1)

cal, someone can edit it or make suggestions for you. Send articles by e-mail to lamartin@ix.netcom.com or call William or myself. All our telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are elsewhere on the page. Thanks, and I'll see you at the meeting on April 8th.

Minutes of the March 11 Meeting

By Merle Nicholson for Secretary, Kevan Sheridan

The meeting started with a demo on the web site, followed by a talk on surge protectors. The Door prize drawing was held following the break.

The meeting was opened by President Merle Nicholson at about 6:30. After announcements and officer introductions, our Newsletter editor William LaMartin gave a live demo of the virtual reality world that is posted on the TPCUG club web site. William created a model of the lobby portion of MOSI as a demo of Corel Web.World, the virtual reality component of Corel WebMaster.

Melanie Arsenault of Kinematics Corporation gave a good overview of what is necessary to protect your home from power surges. They advise the installation of a general household protector at the breaker panel, heavy-duty surge protectors on all electronic appliances, protectors to suppress surges coming in on the telephone lines and even the cable TV.

Two very important points Melanie stressed were that you can't accomplish anything with a \$14 power strip. You have to look at the specifications, and to look at the warranty. If the warranty offers to replace the power strip in case of damage, and not the protected device, you've not accomplished anything.

Kinematics offers a free home survey and estimates. A very complete installation protects everything including pool pumps and garage door operators (an often forgotten item). They're located in Masaryktown. For a free estimate, call 800-393-6966. Thanks to Melanie for an informative talk.

After the break, the door prize drawing was held. Ted Rodenbach won a printer stand, David Clary a printer stand. Frank Reguero won a mouse pad, Merle Nicholson a copy of Helicops, and finally David Clary won a MicroFiche unit that he donated to MOSI. Thanks to Bruce Register for donating the stands and the Fiche unit. ♦

Road Runner Cable Modem - Part 1

by Merle Nicholson, President,
Tampa PC Users Group

I finally got the telephone call I've been waiting months for from Road Runner saying they're ready in my area. They asked if I'd be willing to serve as a beta tester and could they install next Tuesday? You bet they could. That day was just three days ago as I write this. So my experience is limited, and I'll be following up with more next month as I gain experience. But I've learned a lot of details about what it is—and is not—that I'd like to share.

First a little background in case you've not heard about it at all. The Time Warner Cable Company wants to be your Internet service provider, and they want to bring the connection into your house along with the TV signal at an extraordinary speed far exceeding anything a dial-up modem will do. The cost to the customer is just \$40 a month for an existing cable subscriber. The normal installation cost is \$100 a month but just \$50 for members of our club.

The data signal comes in on your TV cable. The catch is that the strength of the signal must meet some standards that are not necessarily required by your TV sets. Mine did not, and when that's the case they beef up what is necessary to bring it to cable modem standards. So they schedule a TV installer at the same time as the cable modem/software installer. If for instance the signal strength at the pole outside is good, and by the time it reaches your TV set it's not good, they'll run a new cable in. Your TV may not care too much, but the modem will. A friend of mine a mile south of me is getting one too, and they ran a new cable in just for the cable modem because the existing interior cable just was too old. In my case, Time-Warner brought in a new cable for me five years ago to service a bedroom and my computer room. So I had a TV and VCR in one room on a good cable. He did replace the splitter and short jumper cables to the outlets to improve that part, and then replaced a cable that ran around the room. He wasn't happy with my 25 feet store-bought variety. He said his was much better quality. All this is included in the cost.

He wasn't at all happy with the signal strength after he was done, but the problem was on their end at the pole, and they scheduled repair people to come out and do that the same day. That was done, and in the process improved the quality of one TV set that was a bit snowy on some channels.

The cable is plugged into a box that looks like a 1985 model 2400-baud modem. It's big, about 7x3x11 inches. It has a power cube about the size of my regular modem. Fortunately the cube uses a power cord, so it doesn't eat up a power strip. He installs a Network Interface Card (NIC) in the computer - a nice little 3-com 10 PCI Ethernet card. There's a short standard network

cable patching between the modem and the PC.

I just found out today from Michael Solomon of TWC that the modem doesn't like being turned off more than two hours, so he asked me to plug it into something always turned on. They're monitoring the data rate and lot of other performance things remotely to make sure my service stays good. They can tell if my modem is misbehaving. It was, so he called me and I reset it for him while he was monitoring.

I already have browser and e-mail software. The only thing to do is install the software support for the NIC, configure that to use TCP/IP and install the Road Runner login software. Then set Internet Explorer and Outlook Express to use the Road Runner proxy servers. All this Ty Abrahams of Groupware International did for me while he was at my house. This part went pretty smoothly considering that I'm running a local-area network in my house and the two NICs—his and mine didn't want to coexist. So I disabled my network and plugged the modem in my own NIC just to make sure everything was working. I've since restored my LAN, and everything is running perfectly.

Fortunately I had already gone to IE4.0, which handles multiple e-mail accounts. So I'm continuing to access my GTE e-mail account through Road Runner. I'll start notifying all my e-mail buds of my new address—merlenic@tampabay.rr.com, for the next month, and I'll be ready to drop the GTE account.

The Road Runner software is just to log onto the system as far as I can tell. It comes on one diskette, and during the installation it connected for the first time and did a very fast download of some software, and Ty very quickly stopped the download as it began downloading Internet Explorer 4.0. All this leaves you with one small login program to run on startup called Login, with a picture of the Warner Brothers' Road Runner on it. When you run the login program, a very simple panel comes up with a place to type the login name and password and press the Login button.

Now the silly stuff. As it logs on, it plays that Road Runner sound thing that cartoon Road Runners make and then runs Internet explorer for you. The sound was funny once or twice, but after that I wanted it to go away. And I just don't want IE to launch. Usually I do e-mail first, but most of the time I just want to connect, and do nothing until I'm ready. Ty said that the login really just wants to run *something* and it doesn't matter what. And it's configurable. The other annoying thing is that it doesn't save the password. It has to be typed in every time. Jeez. I guess in the overall scheme of things, say, compared to weapons inspections in Iraq, it's not important. But Jeez ... guys! Obviously I'm not the only person who thinks this way because there's a freeware program called *QuickRR* that fixes all that. The annoying beep-beep gets replaced by a .wav file that plays ... silence. And the program that gets run does ... nothing. And it remembers my password! And then the login program goes away completely.

(Road Runner.....Continued on page 5)

Software Junkie

By Larry Anders, Librarian,
Tampa PC Users Group

For all of you who do not know me personally, this article this month is my 'coming out-of-the-closet' article. **"I am a software junkie."** There! I've said it. I have been a member of software-aholics anonymous (SAA) for several years, but if anything, I am worse now than ever before. One of the reasons I became the TPCUG Librarian years ago was to help me through the hard times when I just had to have a software program. I figured if I was the person in charge of the library of files, then anytime I needed a fix I could just go to the tray of diskettes and fondle all the software I could get my hands on. But instead of making things better it actually made things worse.

Originally, just having to pay the absurd costs of software off the shelf in that fancy shrink-wrap was deterrent enough, but when you become a junkie you find ways to get your hands on that next fix. I found that one of the easiest ways to get really good commercial software was to start writing software reviews for *Bits of Blue*, our users group newsletter. I'll never forget the rush I got from that first major software package I reviewed, (Lotus for Windows). And the fact that it was free made the high even greater. But there are just so many vendors that are willing to feed my addiction, at least with enough good software so that I wouldn't be looking for more software before the next newsletter was published. After all, I would never consider reviewing someone else's software. I'm not that low!

Then I discovered Shareware. WOW! That's like shopping with a credit card you never have to pay, or at least not as often as with store-bought software. I mean, I could get my fix, decide I didn't like, and not have to pay for it. Although I will admit that quite a few packages have caught my eye and I did the right thing and registered the Shareware. I mean, I'm not a low-life software junkie. Give me some credit! But even the Shareware buzz couldn't always satisfy me. The highest high I can experience is finding good FREEWARE. Think about it! Great software utilities that you can actually use but you don't have to pay for, ever!

Obviously, the hardest thing about Freeware is finding it. Right? Wrong! My friends at *PC World Magazine* have just published their 3rd annual "Best Free Stuff Online" issue for April 1998. The magazine is loaded with great Freeware/Shareware reviews and worldwide web addresses so you can download these treasures immediately. Along with the software they also give you tips for smart downloading and explain exactly how to "try before you buy" Shareware.

There really is good software out there that you don't have to pay an arm and a leg for, written by people, like you and me, who don't have the major dollars to market their products. The Shareware concept exists to help these people inform the world about their software. Support these people every chance you get so that this form of marketing remains a viable resource for them and us. Enough commentary. . . . back to the FREE stuff.



This year PC World Magazine offers:

- Best Free Windows Utilities
- Best Freeware and Shareware Apps
- Best Free Software Sites
- Best Free Browser Plug-ins
- Best Free Web Services
- Best Places to Find Drivers
- Best Graphics and Sound Tools
- Best Free Financial Information
- Best Free Government Sites (Oxymoron?)
- Best Ways to Personalize Your PC
- Best Free Gaming Sites

An example of some of the Free stuff listed is a program called Screen Loupe, which allows you to get a close-up view of any part of your screen you choose. You can also save that portion of the screen you've magnified to the clipboard to print out later, etc. Speaking about clipboard, there is also a program called Yankee Clipper that adds a very useful feature to Windows that should have been included. It saves up to 50 Clipboard text-only images, like boilerplate text that you continually retype, such as your return address, for later retrieval.

One of the most popular e-mail programs is listed, Eudora Light, that has many of the features of the big boys, such as strong message filtering, a find function, and encryption to keep those messages private. If you're into building web sites, it lists a web site called MetaBuilder that has a whole bunch of free tools and utilities that you can use to 'spiff-up' that new web site of yours.

Another interesting site listed is called "Nonags", which lists an impressive library of Shareware and Freeware software

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Now to the last thing. Accounts. They pick one for you. It's made up of your first initial, some of your last name and one number, limited to 8 characters. So mine is ... well you don't need to know, because I'm not using it. You **do** need to log on under that "primary" account to go to the customer Account management on their web site. There you can create four more accounts, login and e-mail. Make up your own. This is good. I did have problems getting into the account management—failed, no access rights, so I sent e-mail, and then called next day. But it took until late that night to resolve it. I sent the help desk e-mail describing the problem again and to my surprise, about 11 PM I got mail back with a setting in my browser to try. It worked. The help desk is open from 8AM to midnight. Very good.

Have I mentioned that it's FAST ?? How about a 1.6MB download in about 8 seconds? It's **F.A.S.T.**

More next month. ◆

Internet picture of the month



MIR live broadcast

This is a screen capture of NASA Astronaut Andy Thomas (on Mir) from a live March 23 Webcast interview with Alan Alda (on Earth).

Please excuse the poor quality of the photo, but for those who have viewed them on a regular modem, this quality of Real Video images is nothing new. This one was a little worse than usual. But it is historic, I think.

April's Interesting World Wide Web Locations



Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.canx.com/tpcug/
HTML Station (HTML programming)	http://www.december.com/html/
Online Book on VRML programming	http://www.wasabisoft.com/Book/menu.htm
Cosmo Software (VRML browser plugin & software)	http://cosmo.sgi.com/
The Ultimate Web Host List!	http://www.webhostlist.com/
Monster Board (Job Search)	http://www.monsterboard.com/mbhome.htm
1-800 Flowers	http://www.1800flowers.com/flowers/welcome.asp
Savings Bond Wizard (calculate returns)	http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov/sav/savwizar.htm
New England Historic Genealogical Society	http://www.nehgs.org/
Find Sites on the Web using their Real Names	http://www.realnames.com/Resolver.asp
Visual Basic Resource Center	http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/rasanen/vbnet/vbnWelcome.htm
Imagine Radio (Internet only radio)	http://www.imagineradio.com/
Melbourne PC User Group, Australia's Largest!	http://www.melbpc.org.au/
Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections	http://www.votehillsborough.org/
Forms and Publications of the IRS	http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/plain/forms_pubs/index.html
USPS ZIP+4 Code Lookup	http://www.usps.gov/ncsc/lookups/lookup_zip+4.html

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.

Mixman Studio

By Brian Lance, Tampa PC Users Group

First of all, I would like to mention that if you are looking for a sequencer or MIDI-compatible program, this is not it. What it does is allow *anyone* to create music using a unique interface to mix supplied tracks (.TRK) live and save a mix (.MIX) to a standard wave file (.WAV).

Minimum requirements listed:

- Windows 95
- Pentium (MMX for optimal performance)
- 16MB RAM
- 5MB HD space (100MB preferred)
- CD-ROM
- 16-bit DirectX-compatible soundcard

I would add that you will need DirectX 5 or later, and MMX is required for pitch-shifting.

On the other hand, the quality of output (.WAV) is not related to the performance of your machine. You always get CD-standard output.

Setup was easy. I took the full install, so the total was 103MB with all mixes and tracks. After perusing the manual, I opened the Demo Mix. My first mix took only 10 minutes, and most of that was messing with settings. I mixed once and then recorded it to a .WAV. A 93 second mix resulted in a 16,170KB file. This is not surprising - CD-quality sound is 16-bit PCM stereo at 44,100Mhz; or 172kb/sec. So you could burn this right onto a CD! You can also import .WAV files or record directly into Mixman Studio. By comparison, my .MIX was 40KB, only having the track, timing and other information. The tracks used were 1.61MB.

I used Windows 95's Sound Recorder (SNDREC32) to convert the resultant .WAV. SNDREC32 will convert to different formats and do simple editing. Try this: right-click on a .WAV, select Properties and go to the Preview tab. This is quicker for previewing a large .WAV, versus actually loading it into SNDREC32.

At 22050Mhz, 8bit PCM stereo, 4043KB, there was no appreciable change in music quality (low-end Labtec speakers). At 8000Mhz, 8bit PCM stereo, 1467KB, the quality suffered: Cymbal crashes weren't crisp, bass was dull, and there were small amounts of noise.

Under ADPCM format, music is uneditable (not Mixman's fault!). Changed to ADPCM 22050, 4bit Stereo, eighth the size (2046KB). With my speakers, this was indistinguishable from the original.

There are also much better sound editors on the market, and



better converters. One I have used is *GoldWave*: <http://www.goldwave.com/>

Items that would be nice to add in a later release are:

- Track names by each mixing 'turntable', over the (very nice) graphics.
- The ability to copy settings to a text file, like track modifications.
- Concatenation of two or more mixes.

One small problem I had with displaying dialogs was easily solved by looking online at their Product Q & A. I believe they are going to put tracks online for downloading, but they are not online yet.

Overall, Mixman Studio has a decent interface, and the help manual has a comprehensive tutorial. On-screen help is a nice touch with overlays.

Like the material mentions, you can mix live, create a tape, a CD, add it to a multimedia presentation, wherever you need music.

Online: <http://www.mixman.com/>

- Technical support through Q&A and Email. Registering gets you a CD of tracks.
- Description: <http://www.mixman.com/studio.html>
- Make sure to stop by the links page!
- Demos of the original Mixman (Win 3.11/95) and reviews.

Available soon: Mixman Soundiscs. Files in various styles: Gospel, Funk (George Clinton), Hip-hop, etc. in .TRK, .WAV and stereo audio files.

Ordering: 1-888-4MIXMAN (1-888-464-9626). ◆

How Many EXE Files Do You Have?

By Tom Cone, Tampa PC Users Group

One thing that's kept me interested in personal computing is the seemingly never-ending potential it offers for doing tedious chores quickly and easily. Basically, I guess I'm pretty lazy. If there's something the PC can do faster and more accurately than I can do by hand, I'll spend some time and effort to "make it happen". I also enjoy the challenge of pushing the technology a bit, using the PC to solve problems on my own. This combination of personal "quirks" has led me to learn a little about programming, and to use that knowledge from time to time to solve an occasional "puzzle". Sometimes the investment in the puzzle's "solution" is greater than the value of the solution. In other cases, like the one I'm going to describe in this article, you can sometimes avoid "reinventing the wheel", by relying on advice from folks who share your interests, and are a step or two ahead of you on the PC "learning curve".

Recently I learned that our editor, William LaMartin, was embarked on a programming project using Visual BASIC. He was building a short program that would scan his entire hard drive and give him a count of the number of "EXE" files installed on the drive. This struck me as a problem ideally suited for a computerized solution. I liked the problem because I could understand it. At least I thought I did. What was needed was a way of opening every folder, scanning and counting any EXE files found therein, then closing the folder, and moving on to the next folder. If you repeated the cycle for every folder, you'd have an accurate tally of all EXE files on the drive.

So, I dropped William an email note and asked if he would mind sending me what he had developed so far. He quickly sent me the source code, and looking it over I began to see how he was approaching the problem. Although I don't know Visual BASIC, it began to look like there were several tricky little "details" that had to be solved in order to come up with a correct solution. First, you needed a reliable way of figuring out where all the folders were located on the hard drive. As you know, folders (directories) can hold folders (subdirectories), which can hold folders (sub-subdirectories) which have folders (sub-sub-subdirectories) inside, also. How can you be sure you've scanned each and every folder on the hard drive? I began to see that this "riddle" could be trickier than I had imagined.

Next, you need a way to scan the file directory within each folder, one entry at a time, and test whether an entry meets the search criteria, or not, e.g. look at the first filename, is it an EXE file? If so, count it, if not, skip it and go to the next one, and so one.

This task seemed to be working well for William, but he told me that he wasn't all that happy with how he had figured out

how to find all the folders on the hard drive. Using specific Visual BASIC commands he built a list of "level one" folders, each of which would then be opened and scanned. He then opened the level one folders and built a list any sub-folders found therein. These became "level two" folders, which were processed similarly, and so on. He counted seven levels "deep" noting that eight levels of sub-folders provided no additional hits.

I began to think of ways to solve the problem using a different programming language, Visual dBASE and quickly ran into the same difficulty as had William. The program must tell the computer which folders to open and scan, but the number and location of folders is unknown to the programmer when the program begins to run. I began to work on a solution which opened the root directory, built a list of all "primary" folders located there, and then processed them in series. As each primary folder is opened and scanned, a new list of sub-folders located within, if any, is built. These would then be processed one at a time, in series. I wanted to process all the folders in a single "root" stemming from the root directory. When a "stem" in the root directory had been carried to its logical extreme, I would eventually open a folder and find zero folders within it. I would know that all folders in that particular branch of the directory "tree" would have been checked, regardless of how many sub-folder levels might exist. If I repeated the process for all "stems" in the root directory, I would have covered, comprehensively, all folders on the hard drive.

Doing this proved very, very difficult. If a folder could only hold one sub-folder the problem would be soluble, at least by me. However, since multiple subdirectories can exist anywhere along the "stem", I began to flounder. My "directory" tree resembled an ancestral family tree so much that I began to wonder if I hadn't stumbled into a "genealogical" quagmire, and almost called Jenny Lind, our Genealogy SIG Leader, to see if she had any suggestions for me!

Instead, I asked myself what William would do? I got on the Internet and asked for help. This was done by posting an email message in a VisualDBASE newsgroup. Within the space of several hours I received a really great suggestion. Why not look "outside the box" and take advantage of services available from the operating system? Huh? Well, it turns out that the lowly DOS "DIR" command, in its Windows 95 incarnation, contains a lot of power that I'd not been using.

We've all gone to the command line, typed "DIR" and pressed the ENTER key to see a list of files in the current directory, right? Some of us know that if you add "/p" after the command, the display will pause instead of scrolling quickly through and off the top of your screen. Remember, also, that you can limit the display to files which match a particular pattern. "DIR *.EXE", for example, will list only files that have the letters "EXE" in their extension.

(Exe.....Continued on page 10)

Florida Association of Computer User Groups Meeting in Orlando

By Don Patzsch, Tampa PC Users Group

At the FACUG meeting in Orlando on March 13, the first vendor was Adobe. They gave each person present a shrink wrapped copy of PageMill version 3.0. The girl who demonstrated PageMill ver 3.0 and PhotoDeluxe really did a beautiful job. She had her talk down perfectly, with no hems or haws and she knew how to use her computer to advantage in showing us these programs. I give her an A+, and the programs are A+ also. Another thing regarding Adobe. They have a Reader on their Internet site which is free. You should look at it. A copy was given to us. (This is not Adobe Acrobat, that's another program.)

Saturday morning JASC software told us about their Paint Shop Pro 5 and other software on their web site. Some of the software is shareware. Paint Shop Pro 5 is their easy-to-use graphics editor. It features complete layer support, picture tube brushes, CMYK separations, and pressure sensitive tablet support. The demo was very good. I ordered a copy for my own personal use. It is about \$50. <http://www.jasc.com>.

Then there were sessions on making money for your group, publicity and public relations, and user group newsletters. Following that, sessions on user group home pages, SIGs, and using volunteers. In each session, you learned from the folks from all the groups. It would be difficult to place all the notes we took in this short review of the meetings.

Saturday noon, Alps Electric presented a talk on their new printer.

Then a session with all the vendors up at the front of the room so we could pester them with silly questions and requests of all kinds. This is where you meet all the vendors and you get to ask them how to get them to come to your meetings and what they want from you.

At 6 P.M., Microsoft representatives gave us a talk on some of their products.

About 9:30 P.M. Micrografx gave us a talk on some of their products. This girl was very good, she kept the demo down to earth. They sell Webtricity, which gives you easy animations and 3D graphics. Great! Also, Windows Draw 6, a general purpose drawing, diagramming, and publishing program. You can output HTML without knowing any code. Micrographx gave us all a CD ROM of Picture Publisher.

Sunday morning, there were group sessions on running a user

group, building membership, and obtaining grants.

We attended Joan Dineen's session on how to obtain grants. She does a great job of telling us how their Women's PC User Group received a grant of \$10,000 cash for them to buy an InFocus Projector for their group. Several members present told how they obtained grants, some for large sums of money. This is always a very interesting session. I recall about three or four years back, Roger Meissner of the Sun City Center group chaired this group session and told us how they received their grant of \$10,000 to buy a projector for their group. They got their money in three batches of \$3,333 each year for three years. Sun City Center has probably been the most active in applications and receipt of grant monies. Since Roger Meissner's session, for the last two or three years or so Joan Dineen has chaired this panel discussion. By the way, the Tampa Bay Computer Society has applied for a grant to give their group a projector also.

Following this session, were others: The Internet as a User Group Facility, New Member Orientation, and Meeting Presentations and Programs.

Cybermedia was to present the talk and demo at Sunday's noon session. The presenter was ill and could not make it, so Gene Barlow talked about PowerQuest's programs, Partition Magic, Drive Copy, and the New Drive Image, version 2.0. Gene has been at most of the sessions since it started in maybe 1989. I don't remember when Gary Schweinshaupt started this gathering of the User Groups, but it was about eight years ago. I have attended all the meetings each year except one in the Space Coast group's area a year or two ago.

Also to share the lunch time, we were given a talk on Real Help, and other programs by Quarterdeck. At the end of his talk, we were each given a copy of RealHelp.

After lunch on Sunday the vendors set up displays of their products and we all walked around to see and talk for an hour or two. Corel gave us a CD ROM of CorelDraw 8. It is good for only 30 days but will give us time to look it over. Lotus gave out a copy of SmartSuite 97 on CD ROM. Then, many prizes were given away by calling our ticket numbers out. Everyone got at least one prize, some were very expensive shrink wrapped software. Then back to the car to drive home. ♦

FACUG

Beginners' Column

By Merle Nicholson, President,
Tampa PC Users Group

Do you know how to "run" a program? Lets say, for instance, you are on the Internet and download a program, maybe the Adobe Acrobat Reader from the link on the club web site. You're asked to "Open" it or "Save this program to disk". If you (rightly) select "Save to disk", it brings up a Directory box, and you press Open. What do you do with it after you have it? If you can't answer that question, read on. We have the right stuff here for you - I hope.

Let's start with a quick tutorial on file names. A good example of a file will be C:\Downloads\ar32e301.exe. The C: part of the name is the *drive letter*, the \Downloads\ part is the *Path*, the *ar32e301* is the name and *.exe* is called the *extension*, or in Windows terminology, the *file type*. The *extension* is what I really need to tell you about. The file type for the extension part ".exe" is *program* or *application*. The terms *program* and *application* are somewhat interchangeable. In a strict sense, a program can be a part of an *application*, because you can apply the term *application* to Microsoft Office, which is a suite of *programs*. But if you use Windows Explorer (you do, don't you?) and show Details (under view, details), look to the right of any file with *.exe* and in the *Type* column, it will say *Application*. While you're in Windows Explorer if you were to double-click (DON'T!) on an application, it will "run" the application. There are several ways to run an application and I'll get to that and what it means, but I'll continue first with Types and how Types relates to the *extension*.

In a broad sense, the file type - the three letters at the end following the dot - determines what the file is used for. We know that if you use Word and save a letter called MyLetter, Word will add the ".doc" extension to the name, and there's a very good reason for this. If you were to double-click on a document file with the name Myletter.doc, what happens? Microsoft Word starts up and loads the file automatically. That's because when you installed Word, the installation program registered the extension .doc in the System Registry as belonging to Word and from that time on, .doc "belongs" to word, just as .wpd belongs to Corel WordPerfect and .txt belongs to Notepad and .bmp belongs to Paint. You can misname a file easily to something that the operating system doesn't have an association for and mess things up. Let's say in Notepad you type some characters and then save-as and type in "Mystuff.bmp" for the name and you **really** enclose the name in quotes. The file gets saved as mystuff.bmp. If you didn't enclose it in quotes, Notepad would have saved it as *mystuff.bmp.txt*! But you did and now we have a file that is most certainly not a graphic file. If you were to double-click on it, Paint will start and then error out and tell you that it can-

not read the file mystuff.bmp. The lesson to be learned here is: **Always make sure that all files are saved with a three letter extension!** It was very common usage back in the DOS days to name a file MYBOSS.MEM (for a memo to my boss) or something like that. In windows you can't do that any longer. Actually you *can* do things like this, but it just complicates your life and doesn't accomplish anything.

What's all this leading to? Well the operating system has reserved many three-letter extensions for specific purposes, and *.exe* is reserved for an *application*. So if you were to double-click on it, or create a shortcut from it and double-click on that (again DON'T), Windows will know what to do with it, just as it does for Word or Paint. And this is a good place to break. We'll continue next month with running files. ♦

(Junkie.....Continued from page 4)

where none of the packages are hindered with reminders to register, disabled features, time bombs that shut down the software after a certain time, or any other tricks that limit the trial software.

I've only touched on a very few of the many, many free things that are referenced in April's issue of PC World. If you don't subscribe, you should. But, have no fear. There is another way to get all this free stuff. Go to <http://www.pcworld.com> and follow the links. But please be for-warned or you'll end up like me, hooked! This is an addictive site with addictive software. The kind people of PC World Online will even assist you in becoming a software junkie like me. If you will go to <http://www.tipworld.com> and fill out the form, they will send you an e-mail everyday with their choice of Shareware files of the day. How can a junkie ever hope to kick the habit when it's crammed down your throat, or rather your modem, for free?!

If I have opened any of your eyes enough to admit that you too may be a software junkie, maybe we could get together and form a SIG for software-aholics and share our sources. Just a thought! ♦

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-

urity. 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.

(Exe.....Continued from page 7)

In the distant past I also remember that many DOS commands permit you to "redirect" output from the display screen to other devices, like the printer, or the hard disk. For instance, the command "DIR > C:\FILELIST.TXT", when executed from the command line, will scan the current directory, and instead of displaying the file list on screen, will "redirect" the file list to a DOS text file called "FILELIST.TXT" which will be written in your root directory on the C: drive. Try it yourself, but be warned, any earlier file by the same name (FILELIST.TXT) will be "overwritten" by the file created in this way by the DIR command.

This much was familiar to me, but its usefulness for the EXE file count problem was not apparent until the additional command line arguments "/S" and "/B" were shown to me.

The Command "DIR /S" will list all files in the current directory, and all files in any subdirectories found within it. If this were executed from the root directory it would display a list of all files on the hard drive, including those in any subdirectories, sub-subdirectories, and so on. The Command "DIR /B" will list data on each file "Briefly", excluding information like date created, date last modified, and so forth. All you get is the filename, including its DOS path.

If you go to the command line in the root directory and type the DOS command DIR C:*.EXE /S/B > C:\EXE.TXT, you create a DOS Text file called "EXE.TXT" in your root directory which contains a list of every single EXE file on your hard drive. Once this file is created, all my program has to do is open the list, count the number of lines, and display the answer

In VisualDBASE I did this by building a program which shuts itself down temporarily, runs the DOS DIR command with the necessary arguments to build a text file containing the EXE filenames, and then opens an array, reads the file list from the disk file one line at a time, each line going into a separate element in the array, and when the end of file is reached, I see how big my array is, and display the result. It would run a bit faster if I didn't build the array, and simply counted lines in the text file,

but I wanted a more general solution which permits me to actually display the filenames on screen from within the program. This solves the problem comprehensively, but makes more experienced programmers shudder. My approach is "quick and dirty", lacking the elegance which solving my "folders within folders" dilemma without using the crutch of a temporary disk file would have meant. But it works, works quickly, and is accurate and thorough.

Naturally, I shared "my" approach with William, managing to create the impression, without actually lying about it, that I simply recalled these arcane command line arguments for the DOS DIR command from memory, instead of having them "fed" to me by more experienced programmers on the Internet!

But you've heard enough from me, he'll finish the story for himself.

William LaMartin's additional comments:

Using Tom's approach, here is what my program reduced to:

```
Private Sub Command1_Click()
Dim MyAppID
```

```
If Dir("C:\TEMP\EXE-2.TXT") <> "" Then Kill
"C:\TEMP\EXE.TXT"
MyAppID = Shell("C:\command.com /C DIR C:\*.EXE /S/B >
C:\TEMP\EXE.TXT", 1) ' Run DOS DIR comand
start = Timer
Do While Timer - start < 40 'give time for the DOS program to
run
Loop
Open "C:\TEMP\EXE-2.TXT" For Input As #1
Do Until EOF(1)
Line Input #1, AS$
List1.AddItem AS$
Loop
Close
```

(Exe.....Continued on page 12)

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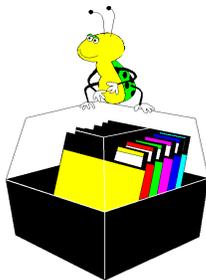
MEMBERS' HELP LINE

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.

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(Exe.....Continued from page 10)

```
Text1.Text = List1.ListCount  
End Sub
```

This is much shorter than my first attempt. There is one fly still left in the ointment, though. Notice the Timer loop that waits 40 seconds. That is to allow time for the DOS program to finish cataloging all the EXE files before the VB program begins to display them. It would be more elegant to have the main program check to see when the DOS program has finished and then to display all the files that had been found. Unfortunately VB does not have the ability to do this. Thus, we need to step out of the box, as Tom calls it, and appeal to the Win 95 operating system with what are known as Win32API calls. This was beyond my current knowledge, but Tom pointed me to a site on the WWW that had such information. Modifying what I found there to fit my situation, I was able to create a program with code about twice as long as the one above which did the job elegantly with no need for the timer.

This is just one more example of how we members can help each other and the usefulness of the WWW. ♦

