Bits of Blue

July in Tampa

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

Meeting

**Home
Computer Networking**

**July 14, 1999
6:00 PM
Museum of Science
and Industry
4801 E Fowler Ave.**

Meeting Preview: At the July meeting, Mark Komula from Network Technologies speaks on home networking. Mary Sheridan, as usual, will conduct a 30 minute Windows discussion at the beginning of the meeting.

President's Message

I'd like to thank a few people who are doing such a great job for us on the Board of Directors. Jenny Lind Olin, Mary Sheridan and William LaMartin. Now everyone on the BOD deserve a round of thanks, but these three are doing more than their share. Jenny is so diligently watching our club treasury that we all can sleep knowing the money is all accounted for. Mary, as programs chairperson, does such an outstanding job of getting guest speakers month after month. The quality of the programs has never been better. And all you have to do is look at our web site to see what a job William LaMartin is doing. The web site is always developing; slowly because a lot of thought must be given before making changes, and the quality of that thought is very evident. And of course our newsletter has been consistently outstanding since he took it over. In addition to building the newsletter, William also has to badger writers every month for material, make up the newsletter, print it (with one volunteer) and then fold and mail it (with a small but loyal group of helpers), also maintain the mailing list, and finally run to the post office to mail it! Did I mention that he also writes a usually large article himself?

Which leads me into one (non) favorite subject: soliciting articles for the newsletter. Now hear me out. If you'll notice there are three or four people who are there month after month. There are three or four that can be counted on to contribute every few months or a couple of times a year. That's basically it. Everyone, and that means **everyone**, is capable of writing an article for the newslet-

August 11: **The meeting topic is yet to be announced — Check the web site later.**

Bits of Blue is published by the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., a State of Florida registered non-profit corporation, to provide educational information about personal computer systems to its members. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 3492, Tampa, FL 33601-3492.

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.

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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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Minutes of the June Meeting

By Jim Weber, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group

Our meeting began as usual with a Windows SIG, which Merle Nicholson started and Mary Sheridan picked up upon her arrival. We discussed one member's problem with a modem not connecting properly. After a brief debate the group decided it was time for our friend to upgrade to a version of Windows a little newer than 3.1.

Disposal of computer parts came up again. As you all know, monitors cannot be thrown out with your regular trash, but were you aware that those old motherboards couldn't go out on a regular pickup either? They contain elements such as lead that qualify as toxic or hazardous material. If you have any of these items you can still take them to the dump yourself. Homeowners will need to bring a copy of your tax receipt for proof of residence, and apartment dwellers can use a phone or electric bill.

Power saver problems were brought up, with several members claiming similar stories. It seems that when the system goes into power saver mode it will occasionally crash instead of warming up. This appears to be common to Win95 and Win98 users. It was suggested that, if you suffer from this problem, you should disable power saver functions in Windows. If the problem continues, then try disabling the BIOS settings.

For those of you who want a web browser with 128 bit encryption, but couldn't find it in Internet Explorer 5.0, Microsoft has the plug-in available on their site.

Merle started our general meeting at 6:45 PM. He reminded the members present of our membership drive, so please try to enlist the aid of your friends into our little family. An announcement was made that if any of you have a personal web site, we would like to link it from our User's Group web site. If you are interested contact our editor, William LaMartin.

Chuck McPhearson of Laser Perfect was our first presenter. His company started in 1988 recycling toner cartridges for copiers. They now remanufacture laser and ink jet cartridges as well. There is less than a 2% failure rate on their product, and if it does fail, Laser Perfect will replace it postage paid both ways. The cost of a remanufactured cartridge can save you up to 50% off retail cost if you send them your old cartridge, but if you don't have the empty available yet you can still purchase a backup at less than the cost of a new one. To order call their number, 1-800-989-2666, and they will send

Building "Cemeteries of Florida":
http://users.quadra.net/cemetery/

By Cheryl Alexander, Membership Coordinator, Tampa PC Users Group

"I'd like to do something for the Web." Oh, what a can of worms that can be! "Something for the Web" can range from a freebie-walk-you-through-the-template personal page to a huge web site with hundreds (or thousands) of pages. There are many decisions to be made before code is even written:

- What will it be about? - How will you edit it?
- What is your naming convention?
- What do you want it to look like?
- What does it look like on someone else's computer or browser?
- How will I keep up with it all? - How will anyone find it?

I don't have all the answers but maybe I can share my process.

The hardest part of building a web site for me was selecting the subject. That sounds easy until one actually tries to make a decision. For some, it's easy; they pick out their dominant interest. I went through my interests and tried to pick just one. That proved to be too difficult. Meanwhile, I kept poking around the web, looking for what interested me, how they did it, what I liked and what I didn't like on all kinds of web pages and sites. I finally decided that no matter what the subject was, I wanted to add new information to the web, not just another list of links. I had a tentative design that was just horrible. I dumped it and started over. (It was good for practicing how to write code and helped with finding the editing program. So, it wasn't wasted time.)

I decided on "Cemeteries of Florida" by a very strange process. I discovered "Graveyards of Chicago" and many other cemetery photo sites. I looked for similar sites on Florida and found that there was none. My subject is narrow enough to give me a focus but broad enough to give me material for a huge site!

Before I had narrowed my subject, I was already trying to find a program to write this site with. I tried HTML Assistant Pro '97. I can't remember why I didn't like it because it's been so long since I attempted to use it. I tried Corel WEB. SiteBuilder. It tries to do too much for the user without giving any leeway to do anything else. William LaMartin had demonstrated FrontPage Express which is included with Microsoft Internet Explorer. I like that it is WYSIWYG and that I can edit the HTML code easily. I don't use the tool buttons very much because I don't like giving up that much control to the program.

I was ahead of the game on developing a naming convention. Organizing large numbers of documents with graphics was part of my job for a long time. It was very natural to revive the concepts. I knew that I had to number for growth. I could have used what is called the friendly naming system where actual names are used instead of what amounts to a personal code. But there are too many duplications of names of people and cemeteries, so I went with a code: aa000b00.ccc:

1. aa = two letter code that tells me what level I'm dealing with, main page (cf), cemetery (cm) or photo (cp)
2. 000 = a numeric designator, not necessarily in order of use, gives me up to 999 before I have look for two more letters
3. b = usually an f for figure, could have been p for plate, anything that links with the page of the same number
4. 00 = in conjunction with the figure, tells me how many I have, example: f1, f2, f10, f11 etc., gives me up to 99
5. ccc = simply is the extension, jpg, gif, htm

It sounds complicated and not friendly but in the long run makes a lot of sense. My way is good for me but may not be good for someone with a much smaller site. This method is very flexible and allows for expansion.

I looked at a lot of cemetery photo sites before I decided on the layout of my site. I have used "Graveyards of Chicago" as a pattern because it followed the hierarchical set up that I was used to, didn't rely on thumbnails, gave space to add informational text and created a respectful, instead of spooky, atmosphere. Happily, he didn't mind that I copied some of his code, especially since I had asked permission first.

I got some of my page sets from Website-Designs. There are a huge number of sites on the web that will give you all the graphics that you need (background, buttons, bars, animated gifs, icons) to build a site in exchange for a link to their page. I've used Paint Shop Pro 5.01 to modify existing graphics and create my own page sets. One portion of the process is that you have to tinker with the graphics and colors of text, active/visited/link text. Also, I had to take into consideration how a photo would look against its background. I needed something that was neutral but not stark, which would contrast but not conflict with colors in the photo. I make notes of what I name my creations, sizes of buttons, font name and size for title graphics and buttons and color codes.

Testing is dreary, boring and absolutely necessary. Yep, I had experience in this aspect also! I tested all links repeatedly on my machine before I put it on my hosting server. At that point, I drafted about five or six friends to look at my site with their computers and browsers. I asked them to tell me about their computer type, modem speed, monitor resolution, their opinions of the look, the navigation buttons that I had

(Cemeteries.........Continued from page 3)

provided. Try not to take all their advice to heart. If you have thought carefully about your layout from the beginning and have done the best that you know how, it will probably be okay. (For example, one person suggested that I use frames for navigation. I don't know how to use that yet, but maybe in the future, I'll do just that.) However, testing can tell you that some things just will not work and must be re-designed or scrapped.

Maintaining a site starts at the beginning. I have kept a list of all the counties, cemeteries, and photos from the very start. Some of my lists have gotten so large that I have had to split them up! My goal is to include photos from one cemetery per county. At this point I have six counties, 29 cemeteries, and about 750 photos. I use a notebook to keep notes about the elements that I use for each page or set of pages just in case the unspeakable crash happens and I have to reconstruct the whole mess. I may eventually use a maintenance program but, for now, I make upload lists and make notes of changes that I make.

I've just started the process of getting listed with search engines and using meta tags such as "description" and "keywords." So far, I am listed only on Yahoo!. I have joined five web rings that deal with my subject. I distribute business cards with my site information on it to those who are interested. I exchange links with other sites who have the same subject that I would like to be associated with. I also make notes of link exchange requests and search engine listings. It takes time, but I hope that my site will be noticed and maybe even win awards!

Two books that I have used extensively in this process are:

- *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web* by Louis Rosenfeld & Peter Morville, published by O'Reilly & Associated, Inc.
- *SAMS Teach Yourself Paint Shop Pro 5 in 24 Hours* by T. Michael Clark, published by Sams Publishing.

Any web site worth its HTML code is never really finished. But it will reach a stage where it will become presentable. Improvements and additions can continue as long as there are material and time to work on them. ◆

Recognizing Text and Speech

By William LaMartin, Editor,
Tampa PC Users Group

Several months back CompUSA ran a special on a bundle of two software items--TextBridge Pro 98 and ViaVoice Office 98. It was $49 after the in-store $50 rebate. But at $100 it would have still been a bargain based on recent prices of both programs. The implied goal here was to set the computer user up so that he would have little typing to do in the future. He could either scan in old paper documents and then have Text-Bridge Pro turn them into textual documents, all the while preserving the layout and graphics. Or he could simply sit in his chair with his hands folded and dictate into the supplied headset microphone and have ViaVoice turn his speech into a textual document in the computer.

One of these scenarios worked superbly and one didn't. Can you guess which one fell short.? It was the voice recognition. Up front I must admit that the computer I tried ViaVoice on, a Pentium 166 with 96 MB of memory fell one notch short of the required configuration--it needed to additionally be MMX. But I think the problem was more than that. The first time I tried out the program, letting it train itself while reading a short Mark Twain story, things seemed to go OK. During the setup for training, I got where I could speak the continuous speech required in a manner that produced few retires to get the training phrases understood. And after the training was over, the program recognized my speech in a so-so manner. The main problem was that the recognition was quite slow. But I will attribute that to my slow processor.

So I closed out the program and set it aside for a couple of weeks with the thought that when I next tried the program it would undoubtedly do better, since it would have learned my speech patterns better. That was not the case. On the second try, using the same profile I had created before, it recognized almost nothing of what I said. So I decided to train it again. This time I read a passage from *Treasure Island*. And after training, things were better--but not anywhere nearly as good as my first try with the program. In frustration I decided to

(Recognition..........Continued from page 4)

shelve the program until I had a faster desktop computer. I suppose I could try it on my faster laptop, but I think I will wait until I have one of those 400 Mhz or 500 Mhz machines. That way I will be sure it is the program and not the computer which has shortcomings.

In general, I think the voice recognition programs have a long way to go. I previously tried some Microsoft developmental software for discrete speech recognition and wrote about it in the October 1997 newsletter (see http://www.tpcug.org/reviews/microsoft_dictation.html). I got it to work a bit better than I did IBM's Via Voice. I know others who have tried other programs with poor results. In fact, one of our members has a speech recognition program right now from another of the big name producers of such programs for which he is supposed to write a review. Unfortunately he can not get it to work satisfactorily and has yet not produced a review. So, if there are any members out there who have had success with a speech recognition program, let us hear about it.

Text recognition, on the other hand, has come of age. I am simply amazed at how well TextBridge does on converting the printed page to a computer document. For years I have been using an earlier version of TextBridge Pro and was happy with the results. TextBridge Pro 98, however, leaves

Internet picture of the month

ARGEMONE MEXICANA
Yellow Prickly-Poppy

For some beautiful photographs of wildflowers from Florida and around the country, go to the site http://www.wfnirvana.com/ .

July's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Cemeteries of Florida (A member's site)	http://users.quadra.net/cemetery/
Wildflower Nirvana	http://www.wfnirvana.com/
Pineapple Press (Books with a Florida connection)	http://www.pineapplepress.com/
Google search (A different search engine)	http://www.google.com/
BookSpot - Book reviews, book stores, reading lists...	http://www.bookspot.com/
Canalweb.net (French TV online)	http://www.canalweb.net/
Philosophy in Cyberspace	http://www-personal.monash.edu.au/~dey/phil/
Inconstant Moon multimedia tours of the lunar surface	http://www.inconstantmoon.com/
WAMU 88.5 FM – Public Radio - Washington, DC	http://www.wamu.org/
USGS Mapping Information	http://www-nmd.usgs.gov/www/gnis/gnisform.html

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

Software Summary of Windows 98 SE (Second Edition)

By Larry Anders, Librarian,
Tampa PC Users Group

There's a little known and little heralded release of Windows 98 out now called **Second Edition** (**W98SE**). In my situation it came out at just the right time. I recently had my first involvement with networking several computers together when we relocated our offices to a new facility. Prior to this we had not been networked, but now we are. And it wasn't very hard to set up our new peer-to-peer network, which I handled myself. After finding out that it wasn't that tough, my *home* network is next on my agenda.

Then along comes **W98SE,** which is an update to Windows 98 (W98) that enhances W98 with the latest Internet, **home-networking** and hardware technologies. And notice I said *home-networking*. And that's just a few of the things included in this upgrade. Here's a full list of the enhanced capabilities related to the Internet and hardware compatibility:

- **Internet Explorer 5**, Microsoft's popular browser software, provides breakthroughs in Web performance, usability and flexibility, including the new Outlook Express 5 integrated email software. There's also a great new feature called Radio Tool Bar that lets you listen to live radio while browsing.
- **Windows NetMeeting® 3**, the latest version of Microsoft's award-winning Windows-based conferencing software, brings Internet conferencing capability to consumers by offering an easier user interface, data conferencing security, enhanced standards support and more.
- **Internet Connection Sharing**, a set of advanced home networking technologies, enables multiple users to share a single connection to the Internet for simultaneous Internet access. (This is the one I'm interested in most!)
- **Windows Media™ Player 6.1**, the latest version of Windows Media Player, enables playback of popular multimedia formats, including streaming media such as Windows Media, MP3 and more.
- **Enhanced IEEE 1394 support** gives support for more devices, such as digital camcorders.
- **Advanced Configuration and Power Interface (ACPI) advancements** deliver hardware optimizations and more granular control over settings on a device-class basis.
- **USB improvements** include the capability to work with devices on a per-device basis rather than a per-port basis.
- **WDM modem support** supports USB modems and enables hardware vendors to write a single WDM modem driver for Windows 98 and Windows 2000 Professional.
- **WebTV® for Windows updates** provides support for a broader array of analog television tuner cards and Advanced Television Enhancement Forum (AVTEF) standards for HTML-based enhanced programming.
- **DirectX® API 6.1** delivers a variety of improvements to Windows multimedia technologies, including better audio and video synchronization.
- **Processor and motherboard optimizations** for the latest hardware technologies, including Intel Pentium III, are featured.
- **Device Bay support** enables a system to ship with Device Bay hardware.
- **Windows 98 Service Pack 1** addresses top issues in existing Windows 98 features, such as Windows 98 Year 2000 updates
- **Multiple monitor support** can be extremely beneficial to users in many areas, including desktop publishing, web site development, video editing and gaming.
- **Intel MMX technology** support provides faster audio and video functionality.

Key performance and reliability features include the following:

- **Setup enhancements** reduce the number of setup steps, allowing for a faster and simplified setup.
- **Applications load faster** by identifying the most frequently used applications and placing the files associated with their startup together on the user's hard drive so they load quickly.
- **Faster shutdown** dramatically reduces the time needed to shut down the computer.
- **More disk space** is available as a result of the ability to store information more efficiently with a new feature called FAT32.
- **Windows Maintenance Wizard** automatically schedules and executes "tune-up" activities to keep users' PCs running in top form.

For new users to Windows 98, Windows 98 Second Edition will replace W98 in retail stores, new machines, etc. Existing W98 users can update their system to the Second Edition technologies via a CD that can be ordered directly from the Microsoft Web site for $19.95 (plus S&H). Also included is a book detailing features and benefits of Internet Connection Sharing.
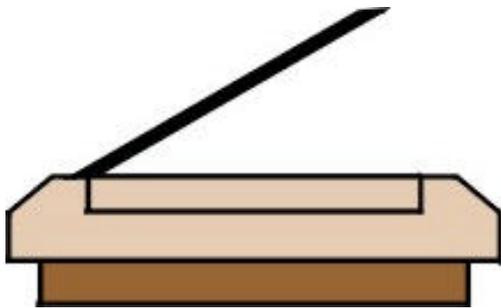
To me it's a cheap price to upgrade an otherwise pretty stable operating system. And for you people still on Windows 3.1 or 95, who have been waiting for Microsoft to get the bugs out of Windows 98 (…and God only know why!)…, **now is the time for all good computer users to come to the aid of their computers.**

(Note: I know that "bashing Bill Gates" almost seems like the stylish thing to do these days but you won't hear it out of my mouth, or my keyboard. I'm thankful Gates and Microsoft have accomplished what they have because they sure have made computing a lot more enjoyable than it was in the early days (early 80's) of personal computing. Thanks Bill!) ◆

(Recognition...........Continued from page 5)

that program in the dust as to speed and accuracy of the process. As one of my first projects with the new program I converted to a computer document a small book a friend of mine had written 22 years ago and which was now out of print. The average time it took to scan a page (you need a scanner before you can use such a program), perform optical character recognition (OCR) on it, and then present any questionable words to you was less than one minute. Additionally there were usually no more than a couple of questionable words on a page. In fact, the program had usually guessed correctly and I only had to click OK. Then on to the next page.

I used the feature that allows you to open TextBridge directly from Microsoft Word (a similar feature is available for Word-Perfect and Microsoft Excel). After I had done about a dozen pages I would then close and it would convert those 12 pages to a Word document. Then I would open TextBridge again in Word and do another dozen pages. I was afraid of doing too much at one time and possibly losing it due to some computer glitch. If you choose not to work with Word, you can save your scanned text as an RTF file. I do miss one feature of the old TextBridge that allowed you to also save your work to the clipboard (in RTF format I assume).

Once I had the entire book in my computer as a Word document, I could of course print it out as a normal printed document. But this is the age of the Internet, so I saved it in HTML format, brought it into Microsoft FrontPage, scanned in separately (this has nothing to do with TextBridge) most of the photos used in the book and sent to me by the author, brought them into FrontPage, inserted them in the web document, and published everything to my web site, http://www.lamartin.com. To view the results, go there and click on the link *History of Okeechobee County Florida.* By the way, preparing the photos for the web took a lot more time than scanning the text.

Optical Character Recognition, in my opinion, is one of the great success stories of computing. Voice recognition—in time—probably will be a success too.◆

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

you a price list with a prepaid return box. Fill out the order form, put your empty in the box and the new cartridge will be back to you within seven working days. If you have a larger item they will send you a postage paid label.

Laser Perfect also assists charitable organizations by purchasing old, empty cartridges at $1.50 each. These organizations in turn get larger sponsors to save empty ink cartridges instead of throwing them away, helping the environment along the way.

Next, Jim Weber gave a brief discussion on MP3 music with a demonstration of Music Match Jukebox. MP3 is a compression scheme that allows a 10:1 compression ratio over standard .WAV and CD music files. This means a minute of CD quality audio now only takes up 1 Meg of disk space. Songs can be transmitted over the Internet without tying up a phone line for hours, and music can be stored and played directly from a hard drive. That means you can now store the long version of "In A Godda Davida" without buying a new hard drive. MP3 works with a combination of removing sounds the human ear can't pick out anyway and mathematical compression algorithms. Since MP3 is a compression scheme, processor power comes into play for decoding during playback. A Pentium 75 is the minimum recommended speed with 16 Meg of memory. In reality a P166 is the least you will want to use on a Windows system if you plan on doing anything else while MP3s are playing. Music Match Jukebox is the first, and therefore favorite, MP3 recorder and decoder I use. It allows a user to create MP3 files from Compact Disks or wave files and convert MP3 files to a wave file. It functions like a Jukebox, which means I can set up a play list of up to 99 songs depending on the type of music I'm in the mood for, and it will proceed to play through my selections. A full description and a demo version is available from http://www.musicmatch.com. It costs $29.95 and comes with a FREE lifetime upgrade. I've upgraded mine twice without any trouble.

In the door prize drawings, Mary Sheridan won a free year of ink cartridge refills, Clark Evans won Nuts & Bolts 98, Roger Waters won ProComm Plus, and Brian Lance won McAfee's Virus Scan. The meeting ended at 8:30 PM. ◆

UPS Surges of the Mind

By Merle Nicholson, President,
Tampa PC Users Group

You realize, don't you, that we live in the area (Tampa) with the highest concentration of lightning in the United States? You do have the best protection available don't you? I try to. I have all three of my computers on UPS's and I also have a whole-house surge protector on my outside wall under the meter. Besides buying (I thought) good quality UPSs that also have good surge protection specifications, I have insurance! To me that's the best lightning protection of all; the $25K or so that you get when you buy an APC or Tripplite UPS. I have a positive conviction that if lightning wants to zap your beloved 'puter, it will, period. So I have my machines well backed up to a removable hard drive, and I have insurance. The UPS, as far as I'm concerned, lets my machines survive the one-second blink-outs that frequently happen at my house. And for double insurance, I turn my computers off and unplug the modems.

One thing I hadn't been able to figure out until now is how to disconnect my Roadrunner modem. Actually I can, I just don't want to on the theory that if I mess with that cable too much I'll cause more problems. The cable modem is powered by my UPS and must stay on, 24 hours a day. RR doesn't want you to turn it off. What I want to do is disconnect the modem output to my PC while I'm away. The cable is a standard short network CAT 5 cable with RJ45 connectors on them. They look just like a telephone jack only bigger; they have eight conductors in the cable. I can buy a pin-to-pin adapter that is used to join two network cables and get another short cable so that the adapter is out in plain sight where I can disconnect it easily. I may do that.

I have the same kind of adapters for my telephone lines; they're glued to the underneath side of my computer table at the outer edge, so I can easily tell they're unplugged as I look in the door from 10 feet away.

So back to UPS's. I bought one of those large surge strip/UPS combinations for my wife's PC. This one was made by Tripp. The prices are seriously coming down, and I picked this one up for $75 at CompUSA. It's rated at 280VA. This one was perfect because I could fasten it to the back of her desk which is located next to the living room. We worked hard to hide the wires to her PC to keep it from looking too junky. I even fastened some very small speakers to the back of the desk under the lip of the top so they can't be seen. Hers was the last of the computers to get a UPS, mostly because I started feeling guilty for being so conscientious about my own and neglecting hers. This was after she asked what kind of surge protection was on hers. She assumed I did that when I built the computer for her.

Anyway, after only three months of loyal service, her UPS sacrificed its life, maybe, .. or maybe just committed suicide, I'm not sure. A real outage of six or eight minutes occurred one morning two weeks ago, and she was witness to it, but I had failed to instruct her on how to plug the monitor into the UPS just long enough to shut down Windows. The time on the little batteries was too much, so it died.

Now this really isn't bad on the surface. My own experience is that the worst you can do to an electrical device is to blip it off and back on; characteristic of our one second power blips. So it had been doing a good job up until now. Not having the monitor on the backup is normal; it just shortens the time that the CPU is backed up because of the additional load. Under these circumstances the best thing to do if you're sitting there and it looks like the power will not be coming on soon is to just power the system down after waiting for the hard drive activity to settle out. What you don't want to happen is for the power to blip out while the hard drive is writing to the disk, and that's what the UPS is good for, even a little one.

So she powered everything down and went on to work. I was first to the PC that evening, and saw that there were several lights blinking on the UPS, so I switched it off and back on, and now not only were all the lights blinking, but also it was making a low, short, regular alarm sound. So I disconnected everything from it, unplugged it from the wall, and it was still blinking and beeping. I set it down on the formica counter and then noticed it was warm, and, as the evening went on even warmer, so I had to take it outside so in case it burst into flames it wouldn't burn the house down!

It was dead in the morning, so later I dug the receipt out and called them long distance (no 1-800 number) for an RMA number. The guy was OK with me I guess, after I assured him that the only thing that was plugged into it was the CPU and the answer machine power cube. I gained some respect from him there I think, so he gave me the address to ship it and to put a note "possible internal short" (Hah! <u>Definite</u> Internal Short in my opinion!) on it. I pleaded a bit that I needed him to ship me the replacement **now** because I'm in the lightning capital of the US at the beginning of lightning season and I can't survive two or three weeks without a UPS! No, my guess is that the call center he is in is somewhere in the desert maybe and he's never seen a lightning storm. So it has to go by "trackable" carrier, which for those who know where I live is about a 45 minute trek through town to the guys in the brown trucks.

By the way, why doesn't the postal service know where my stuff is? Now I'm talking like Andy Rooney.

FAT 32 and SexHeaven.com

By William LaMartin, Tampa PC Users Group

Here are a few loose items from my month of computing in June. There were far fewer problems this month than last.

FAT 32
First off, in the last newsletter I noted that I had installed Win 98 on my main desktop after having some problems that necessitated the reinstallation of the operating system. That gave me an excuse to move up to 98 on that machine. This month, since I was running a bit low on space on my C drive, having to religiously delete unneeded files in order to maintain 200 – 300 MB of free space, I decided it was time to convert that drive from FAT 16 to FAT 32, moving from 32 KB clusters (the smallest allowable block of data) to 4 KB clusters. The idea is to recover a lot of wasted space. And it worked. Under FAT 16, I had 232 MB of free space; after the conversion I had 888 MB—quite an improvement.

But the conversion was not without problems. Windows 98 has a FAT 32 conversion program in its System Tools that does the job. As usual with such things you are supposed to stop all running programs before starting. I forgot about the virus scanner, and a few minutes into the process I received the message "There is not enough memory to convert the drive. Edit your ConfigSys and your Autoexec.bat file……". I was being asked to remove any programs that were started in these two files. McAfee virus scan was the only one, and I put a REM in front of the pertinent line to stop it from loading.

Starting the conversion process again, I got the same message. Of course, there was nothing now in those two files to start, but just in case the process got into the Windows' part of the boot, I removed everything that was in the Windows' startup folder and everything set to run in, I think, the Win.ini file. That should have taken care of everything. But it didn't.

The same message appeared, but this time I had paid attention to what was scrolling on the DOS screen as the computer booted. And I saw two file names go by. One was C:\Tools_95 \guest.exe and the other was C:\logitech\mouse\mouse.exe, the first dealing with my Zip drive and the second dealing with my Logitech marble. I could find nowhere that they were loading from, but I knew how to stop them from loading—I simply renamed both of them temporarily. After that the FAT 32 conversion was happy and did its thing, taking about an hour to convert a 2.1 GB C drive. When finished, I changed the two file names back to the correct ones.

SexHeaven.Com
The second thing of note last month was a Visa charge of $59.95 to DMR* info@4hlp.com that I didn't recognize. There

was also an 800 telephone number after the name so I called it and was informed of the company name, which I can't remember. I do recall that they said that they were a clearing house for Internet charges made to various online companies. I said I believed they had a charge for me that I hadn't made. No problem, they said, just give us your account number and we will see to whom the charge was made. I did and was informed that on a certain date I had made a charge of $59.95 to SexHeaven. Com. Not I, I said. Oh, she said, it looks here as if the company has already issued a credit (probably exactly when she got my phone call), but you should contact your Visa company just to make sure. I, of course, contacted Visa, and they eventually sent me a print out showing that DMR* info@4hlp.com had issued a credit.

The question is, how did I get charged in the first place. Worst case scenario—my card number, etc. had been stolen from an Internet transaction. That didn't seem likely, since just one incorrect charge had been made. On the other hand, the speed of their "credit issued" announcement implies these "errors" are frequent. Nonetheless, my guess is that a transaction for someone else was simply keyed in wrong and their credit card information was just a digit or two different from mine. So check out those credit card bills. If you enter everything in Quicken or Microsoft Money, you will know what is yours and what isn't.

Computer prices
My most recent purchase brought home how much we in the computer world have benefited from falling prices—should I say plummeting prices. My laptop came with 32 MB of RAM, and I thought that should be enough, but during the previous Internet SIG I had a half dozen applications running— FrontPage, Corel Draw, PhotoPaint, Family TreeMaker, Microsoft Word, and Internet Explorer and then started a conversion of a Word document that was close to .5 MB to an HTML document. Something went wrong and the computer hung. I don't know if memory was the culprit, but a couple of days later I purchased an additional 32 MB. The price was $99. Less than two years ago, the 32 MB I purchased for my previous IBM ThinkPad cost around $350.

Memory, hard drives, monitors; the prices of everything in computing (except Internet stocks) is dropping like a rock. A year or so back, entire systems that would do what most users needed dropped below $1,000, then to $600 more recently— and now to nothing. That's correct—nothing. Well, almost nothing; you have to purchase three years of Internet service for $20 per month. This final offer reminds me of the old Polaroid camera pricing. They sold you the camera very cheaply, then you had to buy the special film at their usual high price. Except, here I am not sure what the equivalent of the film is. Is it the Internet service? Today $20 per month is sort of the going rate for the usual ISP. But what about two years down the

Special **I**nterest **G**roups

Internet SIG

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month at 6 PM at the Reflectone Building, off West Waters Ave. You must sign up to get on the list and to get by security. Contact Mike Hodges at hodges@reflectone.com. For directions, see the map at our web site or contact Mike Hodges**.**

We consider all topics concerned with creating web sites. We study sites of interest from the web and those created by members of the SIG. And, in general, we consider anything of interest concerning the Internet. There will be no meeting in July, since it would have been right after July the Fourth.

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.*

Visual Basic SIG

The VB SIG will not meet in July.

This SIG meets the third Tuesday of the month, at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry (just south of Columbus Drive) at 6 PM. For information, contact Merle Nicholson at merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.

Last month, we reviewed the surveying program mentioned last month and then took a quick look at a VB program that queries a web site for information.

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road?   If the rate drops to $10 or nothing (if you are willing to look at an ad on each page), then signing up for three years to get that computer may not seem like such a good deal. Especially if you could then get twice the computer for $200.

Why can't auto parts follow the same price decline curve as computer parts? Every time I spend a small fortune on the simplest auto repair, I think of all the nice computer doodads that I could get for the price of the repair parts. Sometimes it would be an entire system. Perhaps the government should investigate auto parts pricing instead of Microsoft.

Office 2000
Office 2000 is out, but I am not jumping at it. The problem is that I use every one of the programs in the most costly version, Office 2000 Premium: Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Publisher and FrontPage. All are working fine now, so I will wait and collect opinions and comments from the Usenet newsgroups concerning the various components before jumping on the 2000 bandwagon. I am particularly interested in the changes to Access and FrontPage.◆

So I'm waiting. I mailed it 10 days ago and I expect it will be another ten days, and in the meantime Valerie has to go back to unplugging her PC – the best surge protection of all, as we well know. ◆

Getting your Freenet email — from anywhere

By Don Patzsch, Tampa PC Users Group

Perhaps you will be in another city some day and want to read your Suncoast Freenet email. If you do not have a computer with you, you may go to the library and read your email there for free. We have done this in Phoenix, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, etc. Most large cities have many computers on the Internet now, and they allow public use, even for nonresidents.

How do you go about it? Ask the librarian if they permit you to read your email on their computers. They may put you at a desk and give you a temporary name and password. You may then bring up Netscape and type in telnet://scfn.thpl.lib.fl.us in the "location" line. This will take you to the Suncoast Freenet. I get half of my email there.

If you want to try this out now, get on the Internet and if you have a copy of telnet either on your machine (Windows 95/98 have it) or the server you work through, just type the above, or whatever URL you want to go to, on the "location" line in Netscape. I do not use Internet Explorer so I can't tell you how that would work, but it would probably be the same.

When I am on my ISP here in Tampa, I bring up Netscape and type in that FREENET URL above and use the telnet program. I can use the email service on the ISP's location also; I just tried that here at home once more to be sure you can do it if the circumstances allow. ◆

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following firms for their support

Museum of Science and Industry
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And these software and hardware vendors for their demonstrations and review software and contributions of evaluation software to our group

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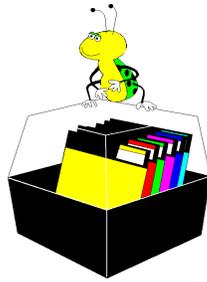
Program	Code
Adobe Acrobat	AA
Alpha4	A4
AOL	AOL
Computer General	CG
Delphi	DE
DOS	DOS
Family Tree Maker	FTM
Hardware General	HG
Hardware Modem	HM
Hardware Printer	HP
HTML coding	HTM
Internet General	IG
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS
Microsoft Access	MA
Microsoft Excel	ME
Microsoft FrontPage	FP
Microsoft 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 95/98	W95/W98
Windows NT	WNT
WordPerfect	WP

Name	Time	Phone	Codes
Larry Anders	Mon - Sun 6:00pm - 10:00pm	989-9119	AOL, ME, MW, FP, PSP
Tom Cone	Mon - Sun 7:00pm - 9:00pm	949-3716	A4,VdB
Warren Fuss	10am - 9:30pm	949-6844	CG, WNT, N
Bob LaFave	5:00pm – 8:00pm	960-0208	W95/W98, MOS
William LaMartin	Mon - Fri 9:00am - 9:00pm	251-3817	AA, FTM, HTM, IG, MOS, MP, VB, W95, MGS
Merle Nicholson	Mon - Fri 7:30pm - 9:30pm; weekends	879-3602	CG, DE, DOS, HG, HM, HP, W3, VB
Jenny Lind Olin	Mon - Sun 8:00am - 10:00pm	960-5723	ME, MW, PAF, Q, WP
Don Patzsch	Before 8:00pm	689-8662	CG
Mary Sheridan	9:30am - 9:00pm	988-6480	AOL, CG, DOS, HG, IG, MW, Q, W95, W98

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.

P. O. Box 3492

☐ Member: Your membership is up for renewal
☐ Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ___

(President..........Continued from page 1)
ter! It doesn't have to be top quality. It can be on an everyday subject, something that you do or have experienced during your time on computers. We need much, much more material. If twenty five of our most loyal members would write one article a year, we could lighten the burden for a few dedicated members and increase the diversity of subjects.

I'd like to thank our member and secretary Jim Weber for an outstanding talk on MPEG-3 last month. It was just outstanding. I enjoy home-grown presentations as much as the outside speakers.

I need to remind you again as always … we need to bring in new members. Remember there's a prize for bringing in the most members. So harass your friends and neighbors, make a nuisance of yourselves and drag some new faces in.

See you at the next meeting.   Merle Nicholson ◆

E Fletcher Ave

USF

E Fowler Ave

I - 275

50th St

Parking

Meeting site: MOSI
4801 E Fowler
Main Entrance

To Tampa

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The map is **not** to scale