Bits of Blue

December in Tampa

Meeting

**Christmas Party
& Election of Officers**

**December 8, 1999
6:00 PM
Museum of Science
and Industry
4801 E Fowler Ave.**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: At the December meeting we look forward to a Christmas party and election of officers. Mary Sheridan, as usual, will conduct a 30-minute Windows discussion at the beginning of the meeting.

President's Message

By Merle Nicholson, President, Tampa PC Users Group

For our December meeting, we'll serve Food!

At our December 8th meeting, the program will be an open discussion, sort of an extension of the Windows SIG, and also have some time for some personal networking. We have the annual elections to conduct and Pizza, drinks and some dessert will be served. So don't forget and eat before you come to the meeting—we'll have plenty.

As you know, this is my last month as president of TPCUG. It's been two years of some fun and some struggling, and I'm ready to pass the position to the next person. The elections are to be held at my last meeting as President, on December 8th.

I have just a few comments to pass on that hopefully will be of some benefit. First, I'd like to say the club exists because a very few members are willing to dedicate their time to make it so. Secondly it exists also because a core group of dedicated members come to the meetings month after month. It's really remarkable that a fairly high percentage of our membership comes to the meetings. I'd like to think that the reason is that the meeting topics and selection of speakers is the draw, because so much effort goes into that very thing. The attendance for the speaker from

January 12: Meeting topic is yet to be announced — Check our web site

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Minutes of the November Meeting

By James Weber, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group

Mary Sheridan started our Windows SIG at 6:00 PM. The main topic of the SIG was the growth of CD recorders in home PCs. There are a growing number of members who have purchased CD recorders in the last few months, and using a CD for a backup media as a replacement for tape or (Heaven Help You) floppy disk has caught our attention. If anyone has a suggestion for a backup utility that can recognize a CD recorder, come to our web site. Your opinions would be appreciated in our discussion group.

The arrival of the "Bubble Boy" virus was brought up. If you were unaware of its presence, don't be alarmed. No one had yet reported an actual infection. If you are concerned about any e-mail related virii check out http://www.ZDNet.com for virus warning updates.

Merle started the general meeting at 6:30 PM. Current nominations were announced at this time and the floor was opened for any additional nominations. A motion was placed before the group to accept the nominations. It was seconded and passed unanimously. The nominations for this year's Board of Directors will be:

President, Mary Sheridan.
Vice-President, Mike Hodges.
Treasurer, Jenny Lind Olin.
Secretary, James Weber.
Member At Large, Merle Nicholson.

A vote for board members will be taken at the December 8th meeting. We will be having a pizza party after the conclusion of business.

Mr. Matt McCann presented Quicken 2000 to our group. Users of the latest version will recognize the layout and will find transition to this version easy. Mr. McCann highlighted several features designed to enhance use. Quicken 2000 also comes linked to its own web site, http://www.Quicken.com. This site tailors itself to each user based on your preferences. It creates a cookie that tracks your preferences as to which features to load when you access the web site. You can have stock quotes from your investment portfolio display automatically so you don't have to go fishing for them.

Quicken also provides a way to estimate the value of your car or home. It uses Edmonds.com as a reference point. You can enter year, make, model and mileage and get an estimate. For

PartitionMagic Version 5

By Don Patzsch, Tampa PC Users Group

You've just bought a new computer with a 12 gigabyte hard drive.

Some people say that it works fine with only one partition. But let's take another look. The other day I thought I was on the A: drive, and I typed "del *.*". After I hit enter I realized that I had a problem. I had to format the C: drive and put back all the programs I had just lost. (When you are in DOS the deleted programs do not go to the recycle bin.)

Previous to this time, I had copied the files from C:\ to a new partition D:\. I copy over the files every few days. So when I put the operating system and all the programs back, I only needed to transfer all the files I wanted to keep from drive D:\. There are many reasons that some day you will also lose your drive C: drive, and you will find it convenient to just copy over your files from a 2 gigabyte partition that I think you should make on that new drive.

After the first of the year, we expect that new computers will not come with a CD that contains the operating system and all the programs. So it may be worth considering a method of backing up the software on a new computer with a second hard drive of smaller size. Other reasons to partition your new drive are, for example, you may want to have more than one operating system, or you may want to store all your data in one place on a separate drive to make it easy to copy to a backup system.

I used version one of Partition Magic, and I have used each new version; we are now on version 5. The first thing you need to do with any program is to read the manual. I read mine three times before I run the program. Do you understand the BIOS 1024 cylinder limit? Or the 2GB boot code boundary? It helps after you become familiar with Partition Magic to read about these things so that you know where they came from. Don't be afraid of these terms. They are described very simply and you can, if you want to, become very understanding of the various limitations of operating systems and bios configurations. The description of what a hard drive is all about is worth the cost of Partition Magic Version 5. The copy disk program is also very valuable. You may "diskcopy" a partition from one place to another or to another drive. (Neat for new computers, or when you are going to take out the old hard drive and put in a larger one; you copy the old one onto the new one and proceed from there.)

Now let's look at the process of partitioning a hard drive.

The first thing you are told to do in the manual is get out of any programs that are running. Disable your virus program, for example. After you are sure no other programs are running, you can partition your drive easily using the wizards that are provided, or do it manually just because you want to. Creating a new partition may cause your drive letters to change and so you use DriveMapper (included) to rearrange all the programs so that they go to the proper drive and you will find no difference in how your programs work.

Now let's see what is in the new version.

You may merge partitions, change a logical drive to a primary drive, and convert from NTFS file system to FAT32. You may merge FAT and FAT32 partitions.

Reading the manual will show you some of the shortcomings of Windows NT now that larger drives are common. Windows 2000 (Windows NT version 5) will use a non-standard "Dynamic" hard drive, which this Partition Magic v 5 will not work with. You may create 64k FAT clusters to work with Windows NT so it will work with the larger drives.

Partition Magic v 5 supports drives over 20 gigabytes in size. Also it supports FAT16, FAT32, FAT32X, NTFS, HPFS, and Linux ext2 partitions.

You may set up the changes you want to make, add partitions, etc. and then you have a choice of applying the change or changes, or discarding the change. The program switches to DOS to actually make the changes.

I don't want this to become another manual, so I will stop here. Let me say that I do not believe that anyone who owns a computer should be without Partition Magic Version 5. There is a wealth of information in the manual and in the online help so that you can answer almost all of your questions about hard drives simply and on your own. Also, the program works so simply that it is easily used by a beginner. ◆

(Minutes……….Continued from page 2)

your home, Quicken uses www.ConsumerInfo.com. This site allows you to enter your city, street, and square feet. The site will estimate the value based on similar homes sold within a ½ mile area of your home. There were questions as to the accuracy of getting a value this way. But, it was pointed out that banks and other financial institutions use this method of estimation. If you are using a 128 bit encryption capable web browser you can send bank book and expense information to your home computer while out on the road.

Quicken 2000 Deluxe was given out as a door prize. The meeting ended at 8:15. ◆

GoBack from Wildfile

By Mary Sheridan, Program Coordinator, Tampa PC Users Group

I had just attended the fall conference of the Florida Association of Computer Users (FACUG) in Sarasota. I rode back to Tampa all smiles because I had won, in the raffle, Microsoft's Office 2000 Premium Edition. In the mail the next day, I receive promotional material from a company called Wildfile. They send the group a copy of "Go Back" for review. I took this as an omen and decided to install, review and use Go Back before installing Office 2000. Yes, I am a chicken when it comes to installing Microsoft new releases.

Wildfile is a 19 year old Minnesota company that specializes in the development of multimedia systems and other software products. Wildfile says Go Back belongs in a new software category called Time Travel Technology. Released in December 1998, Go Back was designed to fill the gap between the undo button and tape recovery. By continually monitoring changes to your disk, Go Back can return your hard disk to the way it was minutes, hours and even days ago.

Enough of the hype, now on to the program. I was worried up front that it would take too much hard drive space. The only information I could find on the subject was "Go Back stores special information on the existing hard drive that allows it to re-create the past. It is recommended that users reserve 10 percent of hard drive space for GoBack's use. More or less space can be reserved, depending on user needs. However, if less space is reserved, users will have a shorter reach back in time from which to retrieve data." Finding percentages involves the use of division, so I decided to move on and take my chances.

The program allows you to set how much hard drive space to allocate. For my four Gig drive, it recommended 280mb, but I changed it to 150 because my hard drive is getting full. It installed in a few seconds and then needed to restart my computer. After rebooting the program went to all the drive partitions and appeared to scan them. 45 seconds later the computer rebooted again. Looking at "my computer" shows Gb_21d(H:), which I assume is a virtual drive.

According to the "short video" on how to use GoBack, "If you cannot get your computer to run properly, then use GoBack to step back in time. First restart your computer. (Turn

Second Chance from PowerQuest

By James Weber, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group

If you are anything like me you are always trying new things with your computer, this utility, that game, or some new piece of hardware. I have found all too often that things don't always work the way they were intended. A conflict between competing programs, or hardware competing for system resources can cause at least an unstable system, or a complete crash. Power Quest has a program they say can help you recover from these problems with Second Chance.

With Second Chance installed you will be able to reset your system to a time when things were working properly. Once the program is installed it will automatically save an image of your system settings and track files and directories that are deleted or changed. Second Chance works with each fixed drive or partition in your system. It doesn't save removable drives like floppies or zips. Second Chance also ignores some directories such as Temp or Internet cache files. The individual checkpoints are not very large in size. The initial checkpoint I created on my machine was just under 6 megs in size for the 2 gigs of data I have on my machine.

Second Chance calls the saved files a Checkpoint. Checkpoints can be set up to save at a specific time of day from once a day to once a week, or they can be done manually. If you really screwed things up and can't even get into Windows, there is also an option to create a start up disk. This disk opens its own operating system and gives you the ability to recreate your system from a stored checkpoint. The number of checkpoints you can create is controlled by variables you set yourself. The checkpoints can be saved for one day to fourteen days depending on your preferences. The total size of your checkpoints can also be controlled by setting a maximum disk size for the checkpoints, and setting a minimum free space on your disk drive. This allows a great deal of flexibility when adding or uninstalling files. Second Chance deletes the oldest checkpoints first when their time limit expires or when the minimum free space on the target drive is reached. Second chance will even ignore the maximum disk size as long as the minimum free space is available on your drive. This allows you to add or delete even the largest programs and not have to worry about losing your checkpoints.

When launching Second Chance, an Explorer type window pops up with three different view panels. A large vertical

(GoBack………..Continued from page 4)

the power off and then on, or press the reset button.) Now get ready to press the space bar. Early in the start up process you will see the GoBack Boot Screen. Press the space bar when prompted. You will have about five seconds to press the space bar. If you miss it, simply restart your computer and try again. Next, you will be given the option of returning your computer to exactly the way it was at an earlier time."   Lost files are re-covered by double clicking on the icon and using GoBack to recover the file. You can make a back up after you need it, by reverting the computer to "the way it was" and then backing it up.

If you have created a document that you don't want to come back and haunt you (e.g., a love letter), you should clear the GoBack history. Click on the Options button in the main Go-Back Menu to bring you to this option.

I permanently deleted many files and they were all brought back seamlessly. I hope I don't need to use this program be-cause of a major problem and I hope it works if I ever need to. I plan to install the Office 2000 programs with the hope that all goes well. If it doesn't, I'll be writing follow up articles.

http://www.goback.com/ ◆

Internet picture of the month

Dining Room from the Ethan Allen Online Catalog

The online catalog and site for the furniture dealer Ethan Al-len is at http://www.ethanallen.com/. It is only for browsing now. To make a purchase you must go to one of their stores.

Like a lot of other retailers, they are trying to figure out how to get into e-commerce without alienating their existing stores.

December's Interesting World Wide Web Locations - links are hot

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
WinDrivers.com (printer drivers, CD-ROM drivers, etc.)	http://www.windrivers.com/
National Atlas of the United States of America	http://www.nationalatlas.gov/
Net Library	http://www.netlibrary.com/
J C Penney	http://www.jcpenney.com/
Crate and Barrel (kitchen, storage, etc.)	http://www.crateandbarrel.com/
Ethan Allen (furniture)	http://www.ethanallen.com/
Byte Online (computer magazine – reborn)	http://www.byte.com/
Fourmilab – interesting scientific site	http://www.fourmilab.to/
Your Sky (virtual telescope)	http://www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky/
Jewish World Review	http://www.jewishworldreview.com/
eHobbies	http://www.ehobbies.com/

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.

Internet Security

By Merle Nicholson, President,
Tampa PC Users Group

I've learned a couple of things about security recently that I'd like to share. This should be of particular interest to xDSL and cable modem subscribers. I know a good number of TPCUG members have Roadrunner.

Now, I don't claim to know a lot on the subject, but I have some help in the form of a web site called http://www.grc.com. Basically what I've been doing is following the advice given on that website. GRC has a web program called ShieldsUp! that looks at your site and gives you back all the information it can find about your computer and gives advice on what to do about it.

I've known that cable modem subscribers have particular problems in keeping their systems safe. That's because the Roadrunner system is actually a network of computers that you're attached to as long as your computer is on. Also, cable modems have one thing in common with xDSL subscribers, a semi-permanent IP address. You may be logged into the network for weeks at a time, and you keep the same address until you log off and on again, lengthening the time that a hacker will have to work on breaking into your computer.

My first awareness of the problem was when a friend of mine called me one evening and said that my computer was wide open and that if he wanted to, he could send a file right to my hard drive! Now, this is an unusual circumstance having to do with the fact that I am also running a local network in my house. My immediate solution was to simply put a good "full" password on my hard drives.

Later, I got email from the Roadrunner help desk warning about running Wingate Internet sharing software in the default configuration, and what to set to prevent intrusion. Also, they advise turning off – uninstalling - "File and printer sharing for Microsoft Networks".

So let's talk about File and printer sharing first. Now this applies to everyone. If you have one computer … you don't need it. So check to see if you have it installed. You may be surprised. Go to Control Panel, Networks and look at the main window where it lists the network components; adapters, protocols and clients. See if "File and printer sharing for Microsoft Networks" is there and remove it after locating your Windows CD; it'll ask for it.

So what if you have a network? I do need File sharing. If I didn't, I wouldn't have a network, would I? Here's what I learned from ShieldsUp!. If you have TCP/IP networking pro-

tocol "bound" to File and printer sharing, you're exposing everything you share to the whole network! (As I was, but with a password.) Now it's simple to fix. In Networking, select the protocol TCP/IP, Properties, and the Bindings tab. UN-check File and Printer Sharing. You don't need it, because if you go to NetBEUI properties, and select Bindings, you'll see that you have a perfectly good protocol for file sharing.

So back to ShieldsUp!. I was exposing much less, but the site could still read my Computer name, my Workgroup name, and Computer Description. So I'm still not completely happy. Coincidently, I got some email from SyberGen, the maker of my Internet Sharing, notifying me a new version was available free to current license holders. So I upgraded, and also found they have a new firewall product called SyShield. Installing the SyShield demo software completely protected my computer, but it was too troublesome. From time to time I'd lose my connection altogether. So I removed it. And in reading the very good documentation on the SyberGen site it suggested enabling the firewall option on SyGate, the sharing software. Well,... I had missed this option altogether, and it fixed everything. Now ShieldsUp! says my computer is "unusually secure" for a Windows 98 machine.

So this is simply building up to a very hearty recommendation for SyGate Internet Sharing software. It's extremely easy to set up. It'll work with xDSL, dial up modems and cable modems. For cable modems (and I presume xDSL) you must have two Ethernet cards: one for the modem and one for your network. With Wingate, you could use but one Ethernet cable to a hub, but both Wingate and Roadrunner recommend that you do not do that, because of a serious security hole to the Internet.

Sygate is at www.SyberGen.com. There's a 30 day trial download of the software. You can subsequently buy a license key for $50. It's a relatively small download and has been perfectly reliable. They notify you when a new version is available (I'm on my third) free. It uses no interrupts and is virtually unnoticeable running on a lightweight computer like the 166 I have it on. But you do have to have two Ethernet cards. On some systems it will share an single interrupt for both cards, but don't count on it. ◆

panel on the left of the screen lists the folders for the current checkpoint you're viewing. A second panel on the top right shows a list of the recoverable files in the selected directories. The bottom right window shows which files are new or changed. The file and directory entries are color coded so you can easily see which ones were added, deleted, or somehow modified. To go back to a previous system setting, you high-

Power BASIC DLL Compiler for Windows

By Tom Cone, Tampa PC Users Group

A number of years ago I wrote several articles presenting a series of programming "puzzles" for members of the users' group. My original solutions were written in various DOS languages including dBaseIII+ and PowerBASIC. Recently the publishers of PowerBASIC have added extensions to their windows BASIC compiler that caught my eye. I decided to take the plunge and try to write a true 32-bit native code solution to one of my early puzzles.

The compiler I am using is called Power BASIC DLL Compiler for Windows, PB/DLL vers. 6.0. This version includes new features collectively called Dynamic Dialog Tools. These permit you to build and manipulate the Windows graphic user interface using command line statements with varying argument lists. You can create different types of dialog forms (checkboxes, listboxes, text boxes, message boxes, combo boxes, and so), adding controls to them for interaction with the user.

Using this compiler you can build DLL's for use with Visual BASIC (in fact that's how the publisher positioned the product initially, and it's still apparently a major portion of their market). But you can also build stand alone EXE files which don't require any runtime support.

The source code below is what I developed. You programmer types may be surprised at how easy it is to read, and how little work was required to create and manipulate the interface.

When this code is compiled it creates a single stand alone EXE file which is 12 kb in size. That's right! 12 kilobytes.

Here's the source (comment lines are preceded by an apostrophe):

```
'-----------------------------------------------------------
'DOORS.BAS for PB/DLL 6.0
'500 room hotel puzzle
'By Tom Cone - 11/25/99

'Assume hotel with 500 rooms.  Each room has one door.
'       AT outset ALL are closed.
'Assume 500 guests arrive, one at a time.
'Guest 1 visits each room, and opens each door.
'Guest 2 visits every other room and closes each door.
'Guest 3 visits every third room.  If door is closed, he opens it.  If it
'        is opened, he closes it.
'Guest 4 visits every fourth room.  If door is closed, she opens it.
'        if it's open, she closes it.
'And so on.

'After 500th guest visits the 500th room, how many doors are open
'       in the hotel?
'-----------------------------------------------------------

#COMPILE EXE   'directs compiler to make EXE file

FUNCTION WINMAIN (BYVAL CurInst AS LONG, _
                  BYVAL PrvInst AS LONG, _
                  CmdLine AS ASCIIZ PTR, _
                  BYVAL CmdShow AS LONG) EXPORT AS LONG

%textcontrol = 100  'program uses a single control.  Each must be
                    '    separately numbered.
LOCAL hDlg AS LONG  'this variable will hold handle of the dialog

' ** Create a new dialog template, the arguments specify size & location
  DIALOG NEW 0, "Progress Report", ,, 260, 50, 0, 0 TO hDlg

' ** Add controls to it; arguments set size & location
  CONTROL ADD TEXTBOX, hDlg, %textcontrol, "", 14,  12, 200, 12, 0

'now declare variables needed for calculations
DIM i AS LONG                'counter
DIM totaldoorsopen AS LONG   'running count of doors opened
DIM totaldoorsclosed AS LONG 'running count of doors closed
DIM patron AS LONG           'current patron
DIM door(1:500) AS LONG      'array of doors
                               '-1 = open
                               ' 0 = closed
DIM currentdoornumber AS LONG
DIM doorstoskip AS LONG       'number of doors to be skipped as a patron
                              'moves thru hotel
totaldoorsopen = 0          'setup start condition
totaldoorsclosed = 500      'setup start condition
FOR i = 1 TO 500
   door(i) = 0               'close all doors
NEXT

' ** show the dialog
   DIALOG SHOW MODELESS hDlg 'this displays the dialog box w/blank text

FOR patron = 1 TO 500 'queue up the patrons to begin their walk
   doorstoskip = patron 'set to match this patron
   currentdoornumber = patron  'begin with this patron's first door
     WHILE currentdoornumber <= 500    'loop through all doors

         IF door(currentdoornumber) = 0 THEN    'if first door for this
patron is closed
             door(currentdoornumber) = -1       'open it
             totaldoorsopen = totaldoorsopen + 1
             totaldoorsclosed = totaldoorsclosed - 1
         ELSE                                    'door was open
             door(currentdoornumber) = 0        'so close it
```

```
            totaldoorsopen = totaldoorsopen - 1
        totaldoorsclosed = totaldoorsclosed + 1
      END IF
      currentdoornumber = currentdoornumber + doorstoskip   'skip to next
door
    WEND    'go check next door
            'loop ends when currendoornumber > 500

' ** update value of textcontrol and refresh the dialog
  CONTROL SET TEXT hDlg, %textcontrol, "Current patron: "+STR$(patron)+_
          "  Current total doors opened: "+STR$(totaldoorsopen)
  DIALOG DOEVENTS
  SLEEP 10       'needed to slow down the display so you can watch it change
NEXT patron

' ** close the dialog box
  DIALOG END hDlg

' ** display msgbox with final counts
  MSGBOX "Final count of open doors:      "+_
  STR$(totaldoorsopen)+CHR$(13)+CHR$(10)+"Final count of closed doors: "+_
  STR$(totaldoorsclosed),,"All Guests Finished"
END FUNCTION     'WinMain ends here.  Program terminates when user presses OK.
' end of source
```
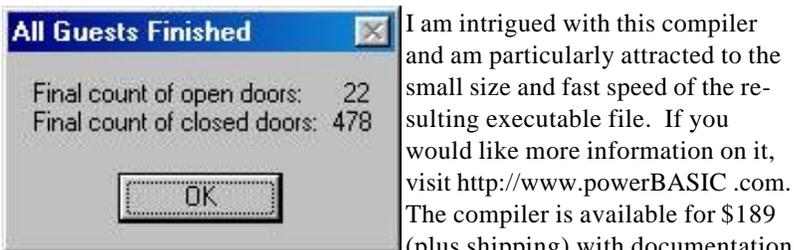
As the program runs, the text box appears on screen with spinning numeric counters. Here's a snapshot:

Progress Report

Current patron: 132 Current total doors opened: 258

When the calculations are ended, this text box is closed, and a final message box is presented. It looks like this:

All Guests Finished

Final count of open doors: 22
Final count of closed doors: 478

OK

I am intrigued with this compiler and am particularly attracted to the small size and fast speed of the resulting executable file. If you would like more information on it, visit http://www.powerBASIC .com. The compiler is available for $189 (plus shipping) with documentation on disk. A softcover book is available at extra charge.

If you are working with a different language (like Visual BASIC, for example), I challenge you to try your hand at converting my code so that it will work for you. Maybe one of you would be willing to write it up for publication next month for comparison purposes. How about it? Any takers out there? ◆

light the checkpoint and click the restore button, just that simple. The system will reboot and a prompt will ask if you want to reinstall any file that is after your previous checkpoint. This works well if you have done several things since you started experiencing problems and didn't want to undo all of them.

When I first received Second Chance for this review I figured on trying it out by adding and removing a few programs, maybe a few JPGs, or text files too. Then I would see how well it recognized my system changes. But I had the unfortunate opportunity to try Second Chance out on a real world system failure. As I said before, I like to play around inside my machine. This means I'm more prone to major crashes than most people. I try to back up my system files on a regular basis for the inevitable system crash, and I was doing just that last month when my power supply died right in the middle of my backup. Not only did I lose my backup, but the system files that were being read were toasted, too. I could no longer get Windows to even attempt to boot into safe mode. Armed with my Second Chance boot disk I was able to restore my system files from a checkpoint I had created when I first installed Second Chance. Now I could get back into Windows. From there I rebuilt the corrupted or missing VXD files that Windows insisted were no longer present. By opening the Second Chance window and viewing the different checkpoints, I was able to locate various missing system files that didn't load the first time. I was able to get my system up and running, including all the add on programs I use, in less time then it normally takes to just reinstall Windows.

As far as most utility programs are concerned, we see a lot of things on the market that try to be all things to all people. Most of the times they do one or two things well but fall short with the rest of their included tools. Power Quest does a remarkable job of producing powerful tools that function just the way you would need them to. Second Chance worked just as the manual said it would, and I could not be happier with the way things worked out for me. If you would like a quick easy way to protect your computer from corruption but don't do regular backups, I would whole-heartedly recommend picking up a copy of Second Chance. ◆

It's time to browse the virtual aisles

By Larry Anders, Librarian,
Tampa PC Users Group

The Thursday after Thanksgiving officially opened the last holiday shopping season of this millennium. Some people live for that face-to-face interaction we call shopping. Since the dawn of time that is all we've ever had, besides mail-order catalogs. Although the shopping phenomenon we call *malls* is new to the last half of this century there is now a new kid on the block and it is a *virtual super-mall* filled with *virtual values*.

No longer do just the people that live in the northeastern portion of the United States get to be the only ones that are able to shop at places like Macy's or Bloomingdale's department stores. Typically you can just type the name of the store into your browser and the usual http:// and dot com (.com) before and after the name and like magic you're transported there. No crowded stores, no long lines.

Last year was officially the first major cybercommerce shopping season but in one short year E-commerce has really come on-line (excuse the pun). And although there has been extraordinary growth in on-line shopping this past year it is still only a scratch on the surface of total retail sales… but it is growing, exponentially.

One of the reasons, I believe, that on-line shopping hasn't come of age is the fear by most people of giving their credit card information over the Internet. Yet, these same people will hand that same credit card to some person in a restaurant or retail store whom they have never met before and think nothing of it. Now does that make sense? Secure shopping on-line is a breeze if you know what to look for and you use common sense.

- Look for and read the website's privacy statement. Make sure you are aware of how your information will be used.
- Look for what the Internet calls *Trustmarks*, or indications that the site is being monitored by an outside agency such as the Better Business Bureau.
- Always use a credit card and place your orders through secure servers. Most sites alert you when you are about to enter a secure server but to be sure the web address usually changes to *https* rather than just *http* once you have entered the secure side. In most cases there is also a lock or key visible in the status bar at the bottom of the browser. Remember, if you use a credit card and there is a problem you will be able to contest the charges and under federal law you are only ever liable for $50 if your credit card information is misused. (This is always the part that gets to the people who are skeptical about purchasing over the Internet. But if you think about it, and have done the above, you should feel more secure than physically giving the credit card to someone you've never met before.)
- And, as I mentioned before, use common sense. Don't give out any information you wouldn't disclose over the phone or in person. You have the ability to feel as secure as you want by reading and understanding the web site's privacy and security practices before you make your purchases.

One last thing to think about when shopping on-line during this holiday season is to make sure you check out the deadline for ordering to guarantee a delivery in time. Although the purchasing is done electronically they still haven't found a way to *beam* the gift…… yet….. but….maybe by the end of the next millennium.

Happy Secure Shopping and Happy Holidays ! (Remember the reason for the season.) ◆

Intuit last month was outstanding.

The club itself has a couple of very good things going for it that hopefully will sustain it for the future. Two I've mentioned: a dedicated board and fairly consistent attendance. Three other things: An excellent newsletter, an outstanding web site and consistently good programs. One thing we did this year was find a willing person to chair a membership position. It was slow in getting on track, but we can see the results I think because the membership drop/add rate has gone positive, and that's very good news. For one thing we are doing some advertising and also we're phoning people who did not renew membership, with some very positive results.

Two areas where we seem to come up short on: We're not growing and the SIG attendance is variable. We're still struggling with these two areas, and frankly we need your suggestions. It seems that all the discussion on the topics we need help on is confined to the board. **We need to know what you need**, not just suggestions that may help. We're small enough to be flexible to tailor the SIGs to meet the needs directly. For instance – would anyone be interested in doing some Access study at the VB SIG? Give us a call – in this case, William LaMartin or myself.

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.

Genealogy SIG

To be included on the TPCUG genealogy mailing list, contact Jenny Lind Olin at 960-5723 or jloin@aol.com

Visual Basic SIG

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.*

Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting at MOSI and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Mary Sheridan moderates the discussion.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor,
Tampa PC Users Group

It seems as if the months are getting closer and closer together. No sooner do we get last month's newsletter in the mail than it is time for the next. And many times, it is one week before the newsletter needs to be printed so as to get it to you on time, and I have only an article or two. In fact, there have been times when there was no article one week before printing time. But with a bit of prodding , the articles flow in. I certainly appreciate the help of all those who contribute much time and creative energy to writing articles for the newsletter. Likewise for those who very faithfully help me assemble it.

As is the case each month, it is up to me to fill whatever left over space there is. This month there is blessedly little to fill.

The past several months I have been pretty deep into Visual Basic, using it to manipulate the information in databases for the most part. It might surprise you, but one of the prime uses of VB is in dealing with databases. I use it to work with an Access database, but I rarely actually use Microsoft Access other than to build the database in the beginning.

Visual Basic 6.0 introduced a new database tool, the Data Report, similar to the Microsoft Access report. On the surface it seems to lack a lot of the power of an Access report, but that is on the surface. I have found that by properly constructing an SQL (Structured Query Language) query on which to base

the VB data report, I can display just about anything I want. It is not as easy as using the Access report, but once done, being an integral part of the VB program, it allows me to do things in VB that were not previously possible.

Another topic of interest this past month was the creation of what is called an ActiveX Document EXE for placement on a web page. This is basically a program that downloads to your computer then runs inside your browser. It provides for much more power than does the use of Active Server Pages (ASP) in conjunction with Visual Basic Script. Recall the ASP web pages I mentioned in the past like the Grocery List Compiler, Mortgage Loan Calculator and others at my web site http://www.lamartin.com.

As usual, though, to get this power we must give up something. To be able to run ActiveX Document EXE's in your browser, you need to be using a fairly new version of Internet Explorer with its security settings on low. Netscape declines to support the technology.

I had visited this technology some time back, but couldn't get it to work. Microsoft's information on the topic is not very clear. Also, when you run the program for the first time, the VB runtime files will be downloaded from the Microsoft site to your computer along with whatever extra files the program may need. This can take some time if you have a slow Internet connection, and I wondered if anyone would really be interested enough to wait for the download.

Well, I gave it another try, and the result is at http://www.lamartin.com/vb/activex_test/index.htm. It is a program that I

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We acknowledge the following firms for their support

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Gateway 2000   Marshall & Stevens
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And these software and hardware vendors for their demonstrations and review software and contributions of evaluation software to our group

Adobe Systems	Micrografx
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MEMBERS' HELP LINE

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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
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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
Cheryl Alexander	10:00am - 9:00pm M - F	914-0008	HTM,PSP,WP
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	8:00pm-10:00pm	248-3379	W95/W98, MOS
William LaMartin	Mon - Fri 9:00am - 9:00pm	251-3817	AA, FTM, IG, MOS, MP, VB, W95
Merle Nicholson	Mon - Fri 7:30pm - 9:30pm; weekends	879-3602	CG, DE, DOS, HG, HM, HP, VB
Jenny Lind Olin	Mon - Sun 8:00am - 10:00pm	960-5723	ME, MW, PAF, Q, WP
Don Patzsch		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
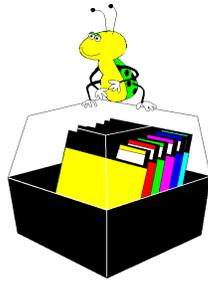
☐ Member: Your membership is up for renewal
☐ Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ___

(President…….…Continued from page 9)

To close, I'd like to thank all those who have supported the club the last couple (and more) years to make my tenure a very positive and rewarding experience. Thank you … and I'll see you at the next meeting. I'll be there and I hope you will be too.
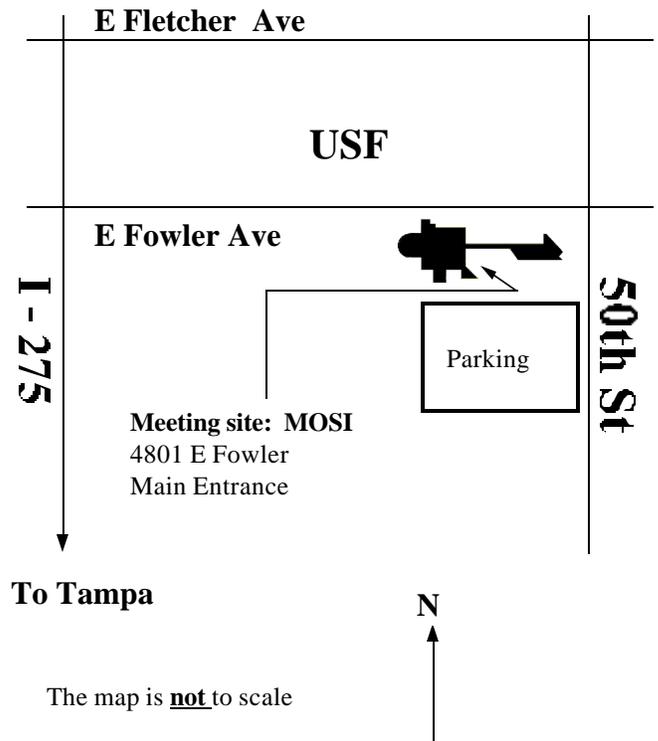
Merle ◆

(Comments…….…Continued from page 10)

wrote for my daughter many years ago to teach her to tell time with an analog clock. I have now turned it into an ActiveX Document EXE. If you have a fast connection, the download should only take a few seconds; if not, it could take several minutes.

Since Microsoft Internet Explorer and a low security setting are required, it is apparent why this technology is at present better suited for Intranets than the Internet, but I am intrigued by it and will try other examples as time permits.◆

E Fletcher Ave

USF

E Fowler Ave

I - 275

50th St

Parking

Meeting site: MOSI
4801 E Fowler
Main Entrance

To Tampa

N

The map is **not** to scale