Bits of Blue

July in Tampa

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

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Meeting

**Personal Digital Assistants
And More**

**July 12, 2000
6:00 PM
Museum of Science
and Industry
4801 E Fowler Ave.**

Meeting Preview: At the July meeting we will have a presentation on those handy little things called Personal Digital Assistants. Mary Sheridan, as usual, will conduct a 30-minute Windows discussion at the beginning of the meeting.

President's Message

By Mary Sheridan, President, Tampa PC Users Group
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I really enjoyed the lively discussions at the last meeting. It sort of reminded me of the old MSDOS/OS2/DRDOS debates. People take their operating systems very seriously. The debate seemed kinder and gentler than in the past though. Maybe we're all getting mellower.

Our projector project is off to an excellent start. I'm so grateful to all who have donated.

As usual, the summer brings with it a shortage of presenters for our meetings. The representatives want to travel to Florida to talk to us in January, but they aren't that keen on being here in July and August. If you know of anyone locally who would like to talk to the group about their products, please let someone on the board know.

Cheryl Alexander has volunteered to handle our need for "Novice Users" information and help. We haven't worked out exactly how it will be implemented, but hopefully we find a way to be a resource for those who are new to the computer environment.

We also are painfully short on software for the door prizes. If you've bought

August 9: To be announced. Check our web site later.

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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@tampabay.rr.com.

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Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

Minutes of the June Meeting

By Mike Hodges substituting for James Weber
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As usual Mary Sheridan opened the meeting with a far ranging discussion of MS Windows topics. Two new members were welcomed along with four visitors.

The opening discussions centered on virus detectors, as this was the burning topic at this juncture in the PC Internet developments. The "I LOVE YOU" virus being prevalent in early June causing many email systems and ISP providers to be totally on their knees. The main virus detector announced was PC-cillin98 as this is free for the download.

It was also stated that Defrag could double as a memory checker. If Defrag runs without aborting then it has most likely determined that the PC memory is sound. It was also announced that PC memory prices have started to rise again. A 64-MB module has risen by $25 in price in recent weeks.

IP routers were stated to provide an excellent firewall for DSL and Road Runner users. IP routers or cable system routers were stated to sell for $200. Contact Steve Singer of RDI for further details at http://morevalu.net/, the RDI web site.

Our featured presenters for this meeting, one of our more interesting, haled from the Suncoast Linux Users Group (SLUG) which boasts 250 members already. Monthly meetings are held at the Brandon Town Center Barnes and Noble bookstore. Our presenters, namely Bill Preece and Norbert, whose last name I have misplaced, host the SLUG meeting on the first Thursday of each month between 8 & 9 PM. The group also holds other monthly meetings in the area. Our presenters were clearly most enthused as to their conviction that Linux was a far superior operating system than MS Windows and believed it would be only a short time until the PC community would use nothing other than Linux operating systems. A number of Linux application programs are currently available and our presenters believed that the whole world would quickly wholeheartedly embrace Linux as the first choice as a total replacement for Windows. Being skeptical of all and any claims, I asked our presenters to state the reasons for their adoration of all things Linux. First, however, comparisons were rendered between the various competing versions of Linux, Turbo Linux, RedHat Linux and Corel Linux. Turbo Linux was stated to be preferable as a workplace system. Staples is apparently offering a 100% rebate on Turbo Linux. It was also stated that Red Hat Linux is the choice for server systems. Corel Linux was a newer version but was very well supported. Our presenters had indulged in Linux only for the last six months but were

The Handspring Visor PDA

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Last month Larry Anders described the HP Jornada 548 Pocket PC—cost $600 (http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/ nl_2000/june2000/pocket_pc.htm). In June, 1998, he also wrote about the Palm III (http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/ june1998/palm_3.html). This month I will describe the HandspringVisor—cost $179 ($249 for the Visor Deluxe).

The Pocket PC and the Visor are obviously different, the first being a miniature PC with a 133 MHz processor, with 32 MB RAM and a color display. The latter is a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) with 2 MB RAM and a gray scale display. However, if you think you might need more RAM to load some heavy-duty software, the Handspring Visor Deluxe comes with 8 MB RAM and a leather case. If you are not going to use it to connect to the Internet, edit Word documents, listen to digital music, or need a color display, then you don't really need the Jornada, and might just as well get either a Palm or the Visor.

This Visor was developed by the original developers of the Palm at 3COM, and it uses the Palm operating system, version 3.1. Furthermore, all of the software add-ons that work with the Palm can be used with the Visor. The most comparable Palm appears to be the Palm IIIxe. To see a side-by-side comparison of this Palm and the Visor Deluxe, go to http://www.handspring.com/products/vcomparison.asp.

Why get a Visor instead of a Palm? At first, price was a good reason, but Palm has now introduced the Palm IIIxe for $249, and it compares very closely to the Visor Deluxe at the same price. The Visor claims to have enhanced versions of the core applications—date book, address book, memo pad, etc.— used by the Palm, so I suppose this is a plus for the Visor, but the main plus, I think, is the Springboard expansion slot on the Visor that accommodates such plug and play peripherals as extra memory modules, modems, and GPS receivers in a more compact way than does the Palm with its peripherals. Additionally, the Visor comes with a USB connector to sync it with the software on your computer. This is an extra with the Palm. A USB connection is a much faster way to synchronize your PDA with your computer than is a serial connection.

I never thought I really needed such a thing as the Visor until one was given to me by my son for Father's Day. Then I found all sorts of uses. The obvious is to import my address book into it from my computer. If you are using Microsoft Outlook, you can import directly. If not, as was the case for me, you first need to export your address data to a comma delimited file and then import that into the Palm Desktop

that you have installed on your computer. Once you have your address in the Address Book in the Palm Desktop, you get them into the Visor by Hot Syncing. To do this you simply connect the Visor's cradle to the USB connection on your computer, put the Visor in the cradle, then press the button on the cradle.

Similarly, you can fill in appointments in the Palm Desktop's date book , then when you sync with the Visor, this information is added to the Visor's date book. If you add an appointment to the Visor's address book, when you sync, that appointment is added to the computer's date book.

One of my uses of the memo pad is to create shopping lists that I used to keep on paper. For example, I have a Home Depot list where I enter items to get the next time I go there. I could do the same for a grocery list, but I have a much better way of doing that. I am sure you have seen me mention my grocery shopping list compiler before at http://www.lamartin. com. To create my shopping list for my neighborhood Publix, I go to the site, select the items I want and have the web site put the list in walking order of that store. I then have my ordered list on the computer's screen. In the past, BV, i.e., before Visor, I would have then printed the list and taken it with me to the store. Now I save one sheet of paper by selecting the list and copying it to the clipboard and then pasting it into a new memo in the Palm Desktop and then Hot Syncing with the Visor. I now have my ordered shopping list in the Visor, which I take to the store.

Once you start using the Visor, or the Palm, you soon want to download those extra programs, some shareware, some commercial. I download a free reader called CSpotRun and then downloaded the novel Jungle by Theodore Dresser and a collocation of poems by Carl Sandburg. Now, when I have to sit in a doctor's office or an airport terminal, I can start CSpotRun, select a document and have it scroll the text as I read.

There are two types of commercial programs, those that are free and those that are not. The free ones are free because they give you some sort of information from which they hope to get some return. This is the case with Vindigo, a program that lists many of the restaurants, shops and entertainment venues in select cities. I chose to download the database for New York City. This package takes up 563 K of memory—a very

large amount compared with other Palm programs. This is why at some point you might want an extra memory module. When you run Vindigo, you first select whether you want to eat, shop or be entertained. Then you select your location as an intersection, e.g., Broadway and 61st St. To find a place to eat breakfast, you would select this category of food, and Vindigo then displays a list of restaurants in order of closeness (or by rating or by cost). For each restaurant listed it displays ratings for food, décor, service and costs. There are also reviews and even a place to enter notes that could be sent to Zagat, the provider of the reviews in the program. What I think is the neatest piece of information provided is the walking directions from your location to the restaurant. Similar free modules exist for other major cities—but not for Tampa.

The second type of commercial program, the one you pay for, is represented by two programs: The Jungle Mapping program and the Tiny Sheet spreadsheet program.

For all major cities, again excluding Tampa, you can get a Jungle Map—for about $10. They have a free demonstration using the southern tip of Manhattan. If you want to go further north than 20th ST, then you will have to pay. The map allows you to zoom in and out, and at the higher levels of magnification you get street names. Additionally you can search for an address and place markers on the map. It is quite a nice little program.

The Tiny Sheet ($20) program allows for basic spread sheet functions, including many of the functions in a usual spread sheet. But the program is limited—after all it is on a PDA—in that you can't do some common things like sort and filter. You can also download an additional free program that runs on your computer and allows you to bring small Excel sheets into the Visor and open them with Tiny Sheet. I now have several spreadsheets useful to me stored on the Visor.

The Jungle demo is good for about 10 days, and the Tiny Sheet demo-using the full features of the program—is good for 30 days.

There are many, many programs you can add. I have only scratched the surface. Of the ones I have viewed, as with anything, some are good and some are so-so. For example, I downloaded a map of the Manhattan subway system that was not particularly easy to read since it apparently originated from a color map, and in gray scale many of the line and stop identifiers were not distinct. By the way, to view the map, I had to find a free viewer and download it. The viewer seemed to work fine on other images.

http://www.handspring.com/ ◆

Napster and Gnutella: Death to the Music Industry

By Tim Condon, Tampa PC Users Group
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How many times have we all heard that some innovation or invention is going to "change everything"? The end of this! The end of that! Everything's going to be different from now on! **Really**!

Yeah, yeah, blah, blah, blah. We TPCUG members have heard it all, and then some.

And just about then something comes along that really **does** "change everything." I'm talking not only about the Napster and Gnutella phenomena, but about the very notion that we are rapidly---and I mean **really fast---**approaching a time when anything which consists of "sensory information" can be virtually limitlessly reproduced and transported, at virtually zero cost. What do I mean by sensory information? You name it: For your eyes, any and all writing including novels, articles, poetry, books of any kind and any type…**and** any type or kind of picture, film, video, artwork, sculpted representation, etc. For your ears, music, music, and music, not to mention audio books, audio novels, audio poetry, audio-anything. For your taste buds, your nose, and your sense of touch (to round out the five overt senses), we're not there yet. But we will be, you can bet on it.

Right now the ability to endlessly copy and trade audio recordings is what is driving the death of the music industry. First, a few words of explanation: Napster is a program that can be downloaded from virtually anywhere on the web. When you install it the program will hook you up with a web server named Napster.com which then enables you to "share" for copying all the music (that you specify) on your computer with whomever and wherever in the rest of the world people may be looking for what you might have.

And then there's the other side: Not only can you share what you have, but everyone else in the world running Napster is similarly sharing all their music files with you. So, you download Napster, crank it up, run a search for whatever you might be interested in, and in a few moments a whole giant list of what you've been looking for pops up on your screen, from Napster users all over the world. From there you just specify which ones you want to download. Then, you've got the music to use and share as you see fit, with the result that you don't have to go out and buy $17.95 CD's anymore (more importantly, our **kids** don't have to spend their money that way…and we all know they're better on computers than we are).

All of which is why the Recording Industry Association of American (RIAA), hard-metal rocker band Metallica, and rapper Dr. DRE are all piling on Napster.com, suing them for zillions of dollars and asking a federal judge to issue an injunction shutting the web site down. Permanently.

Which is where Gnutella comes in. **This** program is what might be called a "next generation Napster." Except it dispenses with the inconvenience of a central server. Everyone in the world running Gnutella can connect and share music files directly, without any central coordinating location. That is, no location that can be legally attacked and shut down. Um.

The more important implication of Napster and Gnutella **type** programs is how they extend the notion of "sharing" property which was previously protected and kept sacrosanct for owners and creators (often not the same people, remember) by federal copyright law. The emerging "ebook" industry is already being held back by worries about how Napster-type sharing can be prevented for **text-based** works of art. I mean, there's music and there are books, right? And books are made out of paper and ink, right? Not for long. Already the Softbook Reader and Rocket Ebook are on the market. And while they're primitive and expensive as first generation "electronic readers," the future is quite clear for those who care to contemplate it: Printed and bound paper-and-ink books will soon shrink drastically as a method of transferring written information and eventually may be totally supplanted by electronic text on small, inexpensive, portable reading appliances.

Now. Let's talk. What about copyright? What about musicians

Internet picture of the month

**Wreck of the Ole '97
Thomas Hart Benton, 1943**

From the Hunter Museum of American Art, http://www.huntermuseum.org/index.html—one of the many wonderful museum sites online.

July's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Bartleby.com Great Books Online	http://www.bartleby.com/
C4 TotalSearch Technology	http://www.c4.com/
Systems Internals (Regmon & Filemon utilities)	http://www.sysinternals.com/
Nag Hammadi Library - Gnostic scriptures	http://home.sol.no/~noetic/nagham/nhl.html
The National Gallery, London	http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/
Hunter Museum of American Art	http://www.huntermuseum.org/
Butler institute of American Art	http://www.butlerart.com/
InSync Online (Palm Operating System)	http://www.insync-palm.com/
King Features Syndicate (Comics)	http://www.kingfeatures.com/
AthletesDirect - Where Athletes and Fans Interact	http://www.athletesdirect.com/
Beliefnet – Spirituality, Religion and Morality	http://www.beliefnet.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.

and authors? What about a concept as simple as the right to "private property," i.e. being able to enjoy the fruits of that which is yours. **Especially** when that property was created by you. That's what the growing legal, media, and ultimately cultural battle is all about. How can artists hope to be compensated, when as soon as their work is released it becomes instantly available to the entire world for **free**? Perhaps more importantly, how can we as a society hope to **encourage** artists and writers and sculptors and playwrights and musicians and poets and other "purveyors of beauty" to work when they may get paid nothing for what they create?

And that's where the struggle now stands. To the leaders of the "music industry," and plenty of musicians, the kids who invented Napster.com are simply encouraging thievery, threatening an entire industry with wholesale theft. Many of the millions of people who are actively using Napster and Gnutella snarl back that the music industry has been ripping off consumers---not to mention the musicians themselves---for far too long with their overpriced CD's and cutthroat contracts.

So where should the rest of us come down? If the copyright law is clear, this is just wholesale copyright violation. But wait! The Napster.com kids and lawyers are arguing in court that, first of all, **they** don't have any responsibility for what other people do with the program (and even have, ahem, a somewhat disingenuous anti-copyright-violation warning on their web site). And secondly, they argue that the copying and sharing of music files among private citizens, where there's no money changing hands, isn't a violation of copyright law anyway! I mean, if you have a record you like, and you copy it and give it to your friend to hear, is that a violation? Or does it come under the copyright exception rubric of "fair use"?

Interestingly enough, the most erudite and thoughtful writings I have seen on the subject have come from two big-time rockers: One from the (in)famous bandleader and widow of grunge rocker Kurt Cobain, **Courtney Love**, and the other from Grateful Dead confidant and songwriter **John Perry Barlow**.

First Courtney Love: In a long and very insightful speech she gave just a few weeks ago as a keynote speaker at the Digital Hollywood Conference in New York City, she argued that the Napster phenomenon is a "radical democratization of music," resulting in betterment to both musicians and fans. Citing dismal figures from the recording industry that make it look little better than chattel slavery of musicians, she proclaimed that in fact artists will also ultimately benefit financially from the Napster wave. Said Love, the "real" music pirates are the record companies and the RIAA, who have recently successfully changed federal copyright law so that musicians and bands are little more than "sharecroppers."

Clearly Courtney Love has not endeared herself to either mu-

sicians on the other side of the barricades, or the RIAA (which may be one reason she's involved in a ferocious legal battle with her former recording label, Geffen Records, which maintains it is owed five more albums by Hole, the rock band that Love fronts). Yet if you read the unedited text of Love's speech, she makes eminent sense. (Which may be why it took me a so long to find an unedited version on the Web: Go now, before it's too late, and download her speech from http://www.undercover.net. au/rncourtney.html. Read what she has to say yourself.)

The other quite thoughtful and important writing I've seen about the Napster phenomenon was written by John Perry Barlow, a former songwriter for The Grateful Dead, co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), which exists to lobby the government in favor of the Internet and cyberspace in general. To give you an idea of where Barlow comes down on the issue, his essay begins like this: "I expect most of you are aware that the Recording Industry Association of America has been fighting a desperate struggle against technologies that would end its century-long enslavement and exploitation of musicians. One of these developments is something called Napster.com…."

Barlow, like Love, is an insightful observer of the modern music industry, having been involved in it himself for decades. "The music industry," he observes, "is generally despised by both music-lovers and musicians, to whom they've been returning about five percent of the retail value of their works." What will happen? "I'm convinced that the traditional music business is finished," Barlow states. "Napster and other environments like it will polish off the likes of BMG and Tower Records within five years. Personally, I can't say I'll miss it. For over a century, it has exploited both musicians and audiences….Whatever models evolve to protect the creation of music, I am not concerned that we will fail to economically support its makers….For some reason, humans absolutely require music, and they were providing for the material needs of musicians for tens of thousands of years before copyright law, just as they will do so for tens of thousands of years after this brief and anomalous period has been forgotten."

You can read Barlow's entire essay by reading or downloading it (for free!) at http://www.technocrat.net/958163435/index_html.

How will it all play out? Can't tell now. My guess is that Barlow is right, and the "music industry" will be destroyed, to be replaced by more direct contact between artists and their fans. Perhaps the most straightforward statement came from a friend of mine who lives and works close to a center of the music industry in southern California. When asked about the apparent copyright violation aspect of Napster, he tried to beg off by saying "My stuff is music that's long out of copyright." But when I pressed him and asked "What about music being downloaded that **is** still covered by copyright?" he paused, then said "Well, I guess they'll just have to kiss my ass."

Chalk up one more supporter of Napster.com. ◆

By Larry Anders, Librarian, Tampa PC Users Group
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I'm running short on time this month, and William, our news-letter editor, has already issued his second notice for articles, so I thought I had better pull one of my reserves out of the closet so I can fulfill my obligation.

As anyone can attest that knows me or has read any of my articles, I like free stuff, especially software. That's one of the reasons I became the librarian of the TPCUG years ago, so that I could be the keeper of all that shareware we made available to our users at the monthly meetings. Well… that was before the Internet became so user friendly and certainly before **The Freesite.com** "*home of the web's best freebies*" (http://www.thefreesite.com/). It would be easy enough for me to say just follow the link above and be done with it, but that wouldn't get this article written, now would it? So…

TheFreeSite.com is separated into many different categories to make it easier to decide which free stuff you want to download to fill up your hard drive. If you're concerned about your privacy on the Internet there is **Anonymous Freebies** (Encryption, E-mail, Web Surfing) at http://www.thefreesite. com/Anonymous_Freebies. If you're in the business world they have **Business Freebies** (Stock Quotes, Management, Jobs) at http://www.thefreesite.com/Business_Freebies. If you're wanting email alternatives there is **Email Freebies** (E-mail Services, Free Newsletters) at http://www.thefreesite. com/Email_Freebies. If you're into family computing then check out **Family Freebies** (Chat Freebies, Children's freebies) at http://www.thefreesite.com/Family_Freebies. If you don't already have a million fonts or you need something to manage the million fonts you already have then see **Free Fonts** (True Type, Logos, Library) at http://www.thefreesite. com/Free_Fonts. Just in case you need a few more games they have **Free Games** (Online Games, Freeware Games) at http:// www.thefreesite.com/Free_Games. For the graphic freaks, **Free Graphics** (Banner Graphics, Free Clipart) at http://www. thefreesite.com/Free_Graphics. If you're paying too much for your Internet service, **Free Internet Access** (DSL, 56K Access) at http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Internet_Access. They have links to **Personal Management** (Online Calendars, Bookmark) at http://www.thefreesite.com/ Personal_Management, **Free Samples** (CD-ROMs, Magazines, Videos) at http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Samples, **Free Software** (Utilities, Graphics, Programming) at http:// www.thefreesite.com/Free_Software, **Free Web Space** (U.S.

services, Non U.S. services) at http://www.thefreesite.com/ Free_Web_Space, and **Free Postcards** (Web Cards, E-cards, Wizards) at http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Postcards.

If you're not sure about all this free stuff then you need to see **Freebies FAQ** (Who, What, Why & Where) at http://www. thefreesite.com/about/faq.html or **Freebie Features** (Question-and-answer interviews) at http://www.thefreesite. com/freebiefeatures.htm.

If after all this you still don't have enough free stuff, then click on **Other Free Stuff Sites at** http://www.thefreesite. com/Other_Freebie_Sites for a full roundup of the Web's other Freebies Sites.

And after all this, if you haven't had your fix of free stuff on the Internet, then you've got it worse than I do and you need to join the F.S.A.A. (<u>F</u>ree <u>S</u>tuff <u>A</u>ddicts <u>A</u>nonymous)!!! Contact me and I'll give you the time and location of our next meeting…for free, of course. Good Luck! ◆

clearly fanatics in their belief of the superiority of Linux as an operating system. Our presenters stated they live, eat and sleep with Linux.

What are these magnificent features that endear Linux so much to our presenters. First Linux can run on a 386 with only 4MB and in general compared to Windows runs faster. Sez who? Linux is very robust with the latest Avalon chip sets due to the extra cache on the chip set that Linux uses to maximum advantage. Linux offers better security and the cost advantage will win over the corporate PC world. Some versions of Linux are as inexpensive as only two dollars a copy. The scalability of installation packages ranges from 720 KB to a system that requires 18 CD's…. Turbo Cluster! The prime advantage is that open source allows everyone free accessibility to every line of code for both operating systems and applications.

Linux was originally developed in the early nineties by the Finn Linus Torvalds as a hobby project and over 10 years has gained approximately 20 million users.

Not all chip sets achieve compatibility and consequently many variants now exist. However the problem is considered not as great as that experienced by MS Window users. Free rapid support is currently available to all users at Linux.COM. Support for PDA devices is also available. There are two major

MP3s, USB CD Writers and Renegade Programs

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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It has been an interesting month of computer problems. Some months are like that. The previous month almost nothing happened of interest. June was a different matter. And much of it can be traced to the MP3 download craze.

MP3, Napster & Gnutella are words we didn't know only a short time back. Now they appear often in the computer news (see Tim Condon's article in this newsletter), the regular news, and in what is not a good omen, the legal news. I don't intend on touching on the legality of sharing recordings in the MP3 format via the Internet by using Napster and Gnutella. I will leave that to the courts to hash out. As for me, I only got involved to figure out what it was all about so as to help someone with their request. You know, "I tried it, but I didn't inhale."

It all started with a request from someone I help to tell them how to turn music in the MP3 format that they had downloaded from the Internet using Napster into music on a CD that they could play in any CD player. It ended with many hours of work getting a CD Writer to write without freezing on their computer and getting Visual Basic and Microsoft Access to again work correctly on my computer. If you don't see the connection, well, that's what the article is about.

HP USB CD Writer First things first. I told them to go buy an internal HP CD Writer, any of several that I had chosen from the HP site on the Internet. And I would come over and install it. Then if the software that came with this new drive wouldn't do what we wanted we would see about getting the appropriate software.

The next day, I went to their house and opened the box of an HP 9300i CD Writer. Having installed similar devices before, I put the software CD in the computer and ran the program to let it tell me which IDE connector was free—and then it hit me. My problem was not in finding which IDE connection to use. My problem was that this $4,000 Dell computer only had two 5.25" drive bays, and both were taken, one with the DVD/CD drive and the other with an HP Colorado tape drive. Another reason to buy a large tower case.

Back to the drawing board and back to Comp USA for the client, a trip which produced an HP 8200e CD Writer which connects via a USB connection. Since there was already a USB printer and a USB device for connecting a digital camera, I also requested a USB hub.

The USB CD writer installed easily, as did the accompanying

software, which included Adaptec's Easy CD Creator 3.5 (they do not give you the most recent version with the drives). Everything seemed to work OK, but we couldn't put any of the MP3 files on the CDs being made because the MP3 files need to be converted to .wav files before Easy CD Creator 3.5 will make an audio CD of them.

When I got home later, I went on the Internet and found several shareware programs that claimed to create audio CDs directly from MP3 files. My client downloaded one of these and tried it. Unfortunately the program would not work. In talking with a friend, he suggested a program called, I think. Ear Jam that he had just found that came highly recommended and which was freeware. He sent all 10 MB of it to me, and I installed it on my computer before he even got it installed on his.

This is where my problems probably started, for as the program installed, I saw a message that said it was installing some sort of data components. I think it possibly said something about DAO. "Uh Oh," I thought. That isn't good. I bet that messes up something. Furthermore, why does a music CD creation program need to use a database. I think the answer to this is that the program also had some sort of marketing angle and would probably keep track of what music you turned into CDs.

Anyway, the program never got past the first track on making a CD on either my computer or my friend's. So I uninstalled it, but made a mental note to watch out for database problems. Next day a bit of research revealed that Adaptec's Easy CD Creator 4.0 (I had 3.5 also) would do exactly what was needed: Go directly from MP3 files to audio tracks on a CD. So the client bought it, installed it, and had problems. It would never get more than two or three tracks written before the program would freeze.

I arrived, checked out the problem and noted that the error message was: "A fatal exception 0E has occurred at 0028: C14F38DD in VXD APIX (01) +……….". A reinstallation of the program didn't help. After running out of ideas, I called Adaptec (this was the big mistake in all of this—not because of anything bad about Adaptec help, but because their program was not the problem). I spent several hours on the phone with a very nice fellow doing all sorts of things: renaming files, deleting files, taking everything out of the startup section of the Windows Configuration except Systray and Explorer, slowing down the Video Card, writing at 2 speed, 1 speed, etc. All to no avail. I went home with the promise from him that he would send me two utilities to check and then update the ASPI layer. I bet you didn't know your computer had one.

Next day they had no record of our long session, and we are assigned another tech. A couple of hours with him, and we mutually agree that Adaptec can't solve the problem with their

Easy CD Creator 4.0 not being able to write to more than a few tracks. But that error message concerning the APIX.VXD certainly pointed to them.

I had also moved the USB connection for the CD Writer to a direct connection to the USB port on the computer instead of the hub, thinking that might help. But it didn't.

My next try was the correct one—many hours too late. I called HP. In describing our travails and attempts at correction I also mentioned that we had a USB printer and a USB hub connected to the computer. I bet it is the printer, the HP tech said. It most probably generates USB traffic at random times and that traffic causes the CD Writer to freeze. I knew better than to try and use any USB device or to plug or unplug any USB device while the CD Writer was creating a CD, but I never dreamed that you couldn't have another USB device plugged in.

However, before we tried his theory, he also wanted to rename and delete a bunch of files to be on the safe side. Apparently there are a lot of files that are installed by other software for devices, scanners, ZIP drives, etc. that also use the Adaptec ASPI layer that aren't removed or updated properly when newer versions are installed.

After about 45 minutes of playing with files, we were ready to make a CD—with all other USB devices unplugged. Ten tracks of ten attempted were successfully written at 4x speed.

So much time wasted in looking for a solution in the wrong place. I then sent an email to the Adaptec technician for whom I had a email address since he had sent me the two files, and a day later he responded that he had used that information to help someone who hadn't been able to use his HP USB CD Writer for 10 days since purchasing it—and who, I might add, had also called Adaptec instead of HP.

By the way, the printer, while connected—even if it were turned off—would cause a freeze in the CD creation process.

Access and VB Several days after installing that freeware CD writing program on my computer, I needed to print out the mailing labels for the June newsletter to be assembled the next morning. I kept getting error messages in Access, but they didn't make much sense. Nothing had changed since last month to speak of, and I couldn't figure it out.

So I finally exported my data and brought it into another machine and used Access there to print the labels. I then noted that I couldn't run certain queries on my regular machine, and would instead get the error message "Function Isn't Available in Expressions in Query Expression" with the problem function described. I did a search of Microsoft and came up with the article http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/

Q194/3/74.ASP. I used their first method mentioned to easily fix the problem. I strongly suggest that those of you who use Access go and read the article. Quite possibly you may need it sometime. I am convinced the problem was caused by installing the program mentioned.

About a week later I opened a VB project that I written months back and not looked at in the past month or so. When I tried to run it I got the message: "Compile error: Error in loading DLL". The program used DAO database components and I immediately suspected that same program. I assumed that some of the DLLs used by my program had been either corrupted or were the wrong version. I spun my wheels a lot as usual looking at the DLLs, checking their versions, etc. And I found one that was highly suspect, since its version description was "MSVCRT40.dll version: 4.20-OS use only. DO NOT DISTRIBUTE." That wasn't good, and I replaced it with the one on my laptop and registered it. Neither that nor a lot of other ideas solved the problem. Of course, I could reinstall VB along with its two service packs, but VB didn't appear to be the problem. Projects that didn't use the Recordset property of the DAO Data control ran fine.

I contacted Microsoft via email and exchanged several messages over the next few days—all to no avail. Then I got the idea of exporting the problem VB project—which I had now refined down to a very simple one with only the Data Control and three lines of code—to my laptop. The project, of course, worked fine there within VB. But now I created an installation package for it and sent this package back to other computer, where I installed it as a stand alone program. Surprise, the packaged program ran fine, whereas it would not run from within the VB environment. I was hoping that this would correct what I still thought was a problem on the main computer with the DLLs the program used. But when I tried again to run the project from within VB I got the same error.

Finally it dawned on me that the problem was not with the DLLs the project used but rather with some DLL that VB needed to implement the Data Control. So VB did need to be installed, something that anyone but myself and the Microsoft tech. would probably have done in the first place.

A reinstallation of VB solved the problem. Well, I was finally made whole after my excursion in to the world of MP3s. ◆

office suites available in Linux: Sun Microsystems' "Star" Office Suite and the Corel WordPerfect Suite. The Star suite is available free at http://www.sun.com/staroffice/. Corel Linux comes complete with its own partitioning system, which installs with only four mouse clicks required. Yes, installation

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

Microsoft Access SIG — For July, moved to July 10

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry (just south of Columbus Drive) at 6:30 PM.

For information contact either William LaMartin at *lamartin@tampabay.rr.com* or Merle Nicholson at *merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.*

Genealogy SIG

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

Visual Basic for Applications SIG —No meeting in July

This SIG meets the third Tuesday of the month, at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry at 6:30 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.

NEW PROJECTOR FUND DRIVE IS AT $740 AND RISING

By Merle Nicholson, Member-At-Large

The TPCUG needs a video projector, desperately and as quickly as possible. Some very loyal club members (and a "friend of TPCUG") have contributed very nicely. RDI@TampaBay – known to us as Steven Singer – has donated $200 to the fund.

I feel very strongly that the future of our club depends on owning our own projector. We must attract good presenters to continue and to attract new members, and some of the very good ones depend on our having the facilities. But it's not just the projector that's critical, it's also the room where we hold the meetings. We hold three meetings a month; the regular meeting and two SIGs. A portable projector gives us far more flexibility to use different rooms and different locations.

The fund was announced at the meeting two months ago, and so far we have $740 in eight donations. I'd like to set a goal of ten donations at $100 each, and the remainder with $25 to $50 amounts. Remember that we're a 501C non-profit corporation. So what you'll get in return is a letter of thanks – in way of a receipt to show the Tax Man, and if you wish, recognition in the newsletter. The recognition is optional, of course.

I'm optimistic that we can do this. Anyone in the group who's participated in the search for a new meeting location will tell you; our options are very, very limited without a projector.

Think of all the time you have invested in the club. Hasn't it paid back to you in value exceeding $100? It certainly has for me. Give it some thought will you? Make a check made out to Tampa PC Users Group right away. You can contact me:
Email: merlenic@tampabay.rr.com
Tel daytimes: (813) 225-5227
Tel evenings & weekends (813) 879-3602
Or contact any officer. ◆

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any programs and never got around to using them, please consider donating them to the group. Someone else may be delighted to get them and your donations are tax deductible. Jenny Olin can give you a receipt for filing your taxes.

The date for the FACUG Fall Conference has been confirmed. It is Saturday, October 14, 2000, and will be held at the Sunlight Community Church, Port St. Lucie, FL. You can get additional information at http://www.facug.org. If you'd like to attend, contact an officer of the TPCUG for details.

I did a phone interview with one of the technical writers for the St. Pete Times last week. Her name was Yilu Zhao, so be watching for the article to appear. The topic was User Groups in general.

I'm sorry my column is so short, but I'm leaving on vacation and haven't prepared anything for the trip.

Thanks to everyone for continuing to support the group.   ◆

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We acknowledge the following firms for their support

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And these software and hardware vendors for their demon-strations and review software and contributions of evalua-tion software to our group

Adobe Systems	Microsoft
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Intuit	Symantec

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HTML coding	HTM
Internet general	IG
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS
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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
Windows 3.1	W3
Windows 95/98	W95/98
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
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
Tampa, FL 33601-3492

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

(Minutes..........Continued from page 9)
problems have been encountered.

It was determined also that our presenters had experienced crashes; however, the system did not normally abort and recovery was easy and did not require a re-boot of the PC. Therefore Linux is more crash proof than MS Windows because it handles itself more gracefully. One of our most conservative members, namely Merle Nicholson, claims that he has no problems with MS Windows, as he is very careful as to what applications he installs on his computer. This only requires patience and understanding and a good knowledge of compatibility. Norbert takes great pride in running a whole host of applications simultaneously under Linux.

Overall this was one of our best presentations of recent years. No doubt we thrive on controversy………….

The following were the door prize winners:
David Rodriquez – MS Developer; Bob LaFave – Second Chance; William Coleman – 3D Universe; Brian Lance – Data Keeper; Mike Hodges – Front Page 45 day Demo; Brian Lance – Smart Suite 97; Bill Coleman – Mouse Pad ◆

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