Bits of
Blue

December in Tampa

Meeting

Christmas Party

December 13, 2000
6:00 PM
Museum of Science
and Industry
4801 E Fowler Ave.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: A Christmas party and election of officers are the only items on the December agenda .

President's Message

By Mary Sheridan, President, Tampa PC Users Group
mcpease@mindspring.com

As another Christmas approaches. I feel privileged to be writing this column. I've so enjoyed being your president. I look forward to a successful 2001. The election will be held at our Christmas Party/December meeting, but since we only have one person running for each office, I'm hoping the voting goes smoother than the national election went. I welcome any suggestions that will make the club better. I also encourage everyone to attend the meeting and let your vote count.

I will be starting classes on November 30th. It's important for the group that things continue to run smoothly. I will be asking for help as my available time reaches the breaking point. Don't hesitate to tell me no if you feel unable to help and please don't commit to anything you're unable to accomplish.

Recently I went to William LaMartin's house to help with the newsletter. Later on his way to the post office, William was involved in a car accident. Luckily he wasn't injured. I was amazed to find out that a couple of hours later he had driven to the post office to mail the newsletters. That's certainly above and beyond, and I want to thank him for his continued excellence and dedication.

We sometimes fail to acknowledge what we appreciate and just assume that others know how we feel. I am so thankful that Merle Nicholson is doing so

January 10: Mary Charboneau of Verizon DSL

Minutes of the November Meeting

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
lamartin@tampabay.rr.com

Our secretary was absent and the member who volunteered to take notes took them, but unfortunately the notes have not made their way to the newsletter, so I will relate what I recall.

As best I can remember, we had our usual Windows SIG for the first 30 minutes of the meeting. We then were presented with the slate of officers to be voted on at the December meeting. An opportunity was given to add names to the slate, but none was added.

Since Gateway backed out of their scheduled presentation earlier in the week, Ford Bond, a local photographer and computer person, agreed to fill in. And fill in he did, giving us a very good presentation on digital photography.

He brought with him two of his cameras, both Nikon digital cameras. One was a high end consumer model (a little over $1,000) and the other was a professional model. If I remember correctly, he described this professional model as being on the low end of such cameras, costing slightly less than $5,000 for the back alone, although it did have the advantage of using all of the regular Nikon SLR lenses.

He provided a run down on the advantages and disadvantages of both cameras—the only disadvantage of the more expensive model being its price. Along with this, we learned a bit about digital photography in general. For example, you can do more with an underexposed photo than with an overexposed one.

To display the quality of results that can be achieved with a professional digital camera, he passed around a number of prints made from his digital images. At this point he described the various printers he used to produce the photos which he had printed himself.

The next topic was a discussion of how he modifies digital photos by opening the digital file in Adobe PhotoShop, where he can "fine tune" the photos.

Finally, he took us to his web site where he has, among other things, examples of his panoramic photography. Actually we only visited a duplicate of his web site that was on his laptop. However, you can visit the real site at http://www.computer-doc.net.

As an amateur photographer, I found the presentation very valuable. ◆

The Canon G-1 Digital Camera

By Wade Herman, Tampa PC Users Group
wherman1@tampabay.rr.com

Ever since I became interested in Adobe PhotoShop, I have had an increasing itch between the eyes for a high quality Digital Still Camera. I have been able to repress that urge because I have a Digital Video Camera that does an excellent job at TV resolution (640/480). Recently a close friend began seriously considering the purchase of a Digital Camera, with the excuse that he had to replace his Nikon film camera lost in a recent move, so he could take pictures of his granddaughter. So in keeping with current mindset that every dumb thing we do is someone else's fault, it is his fault that I purchased this object. My law firm, Dewy Cheatham and Howe, says I should sue.

This is not a camera that should be considered by everyone. If you have been pleased with the results of your Instamatic, read no further. The G-1 is Canon's latest 3.3 Mega Pixel Camera under $1,000, yes a whole $1.00 under.

Now for some of the justifications and excuses for the purchase:

I WANT IT, not withstanding that I know next year an equivalent object will be cheaper and maybe even better. I may have a heart attack and die without one, so what the H---. My friend bought one, keeping up with the Joneses. Look at all the money I will save on film; after all I took two rolls last year. Holiday photo opportunities are coming, so buy now or wait until next year to buy.

Now for some real reasons for a Digital Camera:

I can snap away without consideration of the cost of each picture. The main difference between snap-shooters and professional photographers is the number of pictures they take. It is easier to throw away all the bad ones, as they did not cost anything. With a program such as PhotoShop, I can do everything that formerly required an expensive dark room and all of those costly and smelly chemicals. If I make a mistake it is only my time that is lost. What you can do is limited only by your creative ability. I can save the good ones to CD ROM and preserve them for future generations. I currently have thousands of pictures that have suffered greatly from deterioration with time. No more box upon box of pictures and slides. I can easily share those special moments with family and friends via the Web. With high quality Digital Pictures I can make high quality enlargements of those occasional outstanding shots. This is the main reason for having an expensive SLR instead of an Instamatic.

Now my reasons for purchasing the Canon G-1:

It was the first camera I have seen that meets most of my desires for features. Its 3.3 Mega Pixels produces an image that is photo quality at 8" by 10". It will accept both standard compact Flash Card and the IBM 340 MB postage stamp size hard drive. Each image in highest quality uncompressed is over 2 MB. It has a 3 to 1 zoom ratio, wish it were greater. In addition to the standard Point & Shoot Mode it has all of the creative Modes one could wish for, including Shutter Speed and Aperture Priority, settable exposure compensation, 3 shot programmable bracketing and much more. In spite of the plethora of features it is quite user friendly with a little practice and careful reading of the manual. It has both an optical and LCD View Finder. I especially like the fact that the LCD normally rests screen side against the camera to protect it and folds out and rotates for creative low and high shots. I am getting too old to flop down on the floor to get kids or animals at their eye level. I still gag at most of the baby, look down, shots. The LCD View Finder also rotates 180 degrees and, with the wireless remote control, allows the photographer to compose and take the family photo and be included in it. I was impressed by the almost unanimous rave reviews, and so far the camera lives up to those accolades.

Naturally there are a few things I wish it had:

A larger zoom ratio, with a little more on the wide end would be nice, as would image stabilization. A faster lens for better low light performance without flash. But then would I want to tote around all that extra glass. One of my Nikon Zoom lenses weighs several times the whole G-1 and is several times larger. Zebra Stripe, which puts stripes in the LCD viewfinder areas that are over exposed. This is a cool feature of my Camcorder, as correct exposure using the LCD View Finder is almost impossible. The G-1 however includes programmable exposure compensation for bright or dark backgrounds and a 3 shot bracket mode. Remember the 2 extra shots cost nothing. The battery pack is a proprietary Li-Ion, so if the battery is dead you must wait for it to recharge instead of slipping in some Al-K-Line batteries, to catch the kid's first poop in the potty.

If you are in the market for a camera of this class, the Canon G-1 is a MUST CONSIDER.

I was fortunate to have missed Ford Bond's excellent demonstration of the Nikon professional Digital Camera at the last meeting. As a long time lover of Nikon cameras, I am afraid that the drool on my chin would have been mistaken for senility. ◆

Another Digital Camera: AOL DIGICAM

By Clark Evans, Tampa PC Users Group
CETrain320@aol.com

I have been wondering about digital cameras and how they work, and I have seen them in the price range of $200.00 up to $900.00. But I said to myself, you have two good regular cameras, a Canon EXEE SLR and a new Olympus Accura XB700 ZOOM. So I have been holding off getting a digital camera till the price comes down.

When AOL offered a digital camera for $59.95, I said here is a way to find out what digital cameras are all about without the wife getting mad at me. I ordered it, and it came in five days. I took some pictures around the house and at the ham radio station at the museum. On the front of the camera it says 320 x 240. What does this mean? If you make the pictures bigger than 2 inches by 3 inches, they start getting to look terrible. My son blew up a picture of him to an 8 by 10, and it was really bad looking.

My wife and I had a picture taken at EPCOT by a digital camera. It was a 5 by 8 that came out great. So the AOL DigiCam 320 x 240 is good if you want to send E-mail pictures and print pictures that are only 2 inches by 3 inches. If you want big pictures, you need to get the digital cameras that cost the big money. So you get what you pay for. ◆

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
lamartin@tampabay.rr.com

Recording a RealAudio Stream I was sent a link to a RealAudio file the other day, and after playing it I decided I would like to have a "copy" of it. Well, when you play one of these streaming audio files, there is no copy of it left on your computer as there is for graphic images you view on the Internet. So what to do?

My first attempt was to start up the extend length sound recording I had written in Visual Basic, a download of which is available at http://lamartin.com. This differs from the Windows Sound Recorder in that the Windows Sound Recorder will only record for 60 seconds; my version will record for as long as you want. Unfortunately playing the RealAudio file on the Internet while running the sound recorder produced nothing. Next I tried a program I have called Acid Music from Sonic Music

Foundry which not only allows you to record sound input to wave files, it also allows you to edit the files. Well, it also produced nothing.

Time to get inventive. I next connected the computer sound card's line-out plug to a cable running to the line-in plug of a tape recorder. I then started the tape machine recording and again played the RealAudio file on the internet. That produced a 7.5 minute audio tape that sounded as good as the broadcast.

To get the file back to my computer, I connected the cable from the line-out plug of the tape recorder to the line-in plug of the computer's sound card. Then I ran the Acid Music program and captured the tape output to a wave file on the computer. Since there had been approximately 20 seconds of dead air in the tape where the Internet transmission had to re-buffer (no data was lost, though), I used Acid Music to delete this dead air. The result was a 76 MB wave file that sounded just like the broadcast. Success!

But remembering our most recent meeting's presentation by Bruce Fries on MP3 files and how they were approximately one tenth the size of the equivalent wave file, I went on the Internet and got a freeware program called Simple MP3 from the ZDNet download center. I used it to convert this large wave file to a 2.6 MB MP3 file using a bit sampling rate or 96, which is listed as near CD quality. I then did the conversion again using a sampling rate of 64 (FM radio quality) and found this just as good as the broadcast quality with a file of only 1.7 MB.

The simple MP3 program is really two programs—a MP3 player and an encoder which will make MP3 files out of wave files and vice-versa.

If anyone has a better or alternate way of capturing RealAudio audio broadcasts, I would be interested in hearing about it.

Invalid procedure call or argument is a message you don't want to see--especially if it occurs when you run some code that is the main component in a presentation you are to give in a couple of hours. But that is the way it is with computers.

The day before, I had prepared a presentation for our Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) SIG on my desktop computer. The next day I polished the code a little and then transferred the folder containing all the presentation material to my laptop. It is always a good idea to try such things out on the laptop to see if everything is OK. Well, this time it wasn't, and it was only two hours until meeting time. The VBA code would hang at a certain point and freeze Microsoft Access. Later I modified the code slightly and managed to avoid the freezing and instead got the above error, which was really no better in getting the presentation done. So at the presentation we worked around the problem by talking about it, trying to change the code to correct the problem, and running other code to fill out the meeting. The next day I reinstalled Office 97 on the laptop, and Access ap-
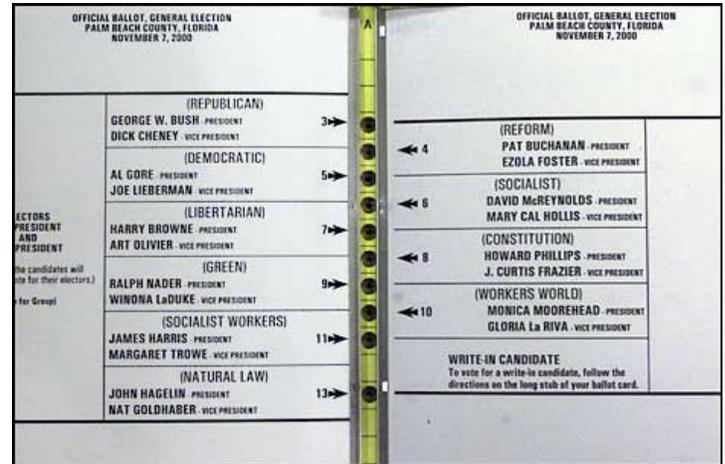
pears to be functioning properly there now. But for how long? How do these applications get corrupted?

VBA SIG What we do in this SIG is study code that allows us to automate processes in any of the Microsoft Office applications. What I wanted to display in the SIG was as follows. At any web site the server software keeps a record of everything that happens and stores it in a log file. There is specialized software that will download and analyze that log file, then present you with tables and graphs to help you see where the visitors to your site come from and what they are interested in--or not interested in. I own one such program called Virtual WebTrends, which cost around $80 as an Internet download. Its big brother WebTrends probably costs at least $400. It serves its purpose with nice tables and pretty graphs, but unfortunately it only displays the top 10 in each category--the top 10 visited pages at the site for instance. But I want to know what is going on with the other pages. So I really need to download the log file and analyze it myself.

The log file for the TPCUG site for September is around 4.5 MB. I have created a database to bring it into as a table containing the requisite fields and also the queries I need for the analysis--how many different user sessions each day, the number of visits to each page for the month, etc. There is only one problem. The log file contains what I would call page header lines all throughout the document. They need to be removed before I can import it into an Access table as a space delimited text file. To remove these unwanted lines throughout the document, I bring the document into Microsoft Word and run some VBA code I wrote that deletes these unwanted lines. I then have a space delimited file that can be imported into the data-

Internet picture of the month

The famous butterfly ballot

This photo of the disputed ballot in Palm Beach County, Florida that started the election controversy to which the lawyers are still adding is from the Washington Post's site http://washingtonpost.com. They have a special election site at http://washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/elections/postelection2000coverage.htm where there is a link to the ballot.

December's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
HealthSquare Women's Health and Prescription Drug	http://www.healthsquare.com/
Tallahassee Then and Now	http://www.nettally.com/draughon/index.html
Common Errors in English	http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/
FrontPage Magazine	http://frontpagemag.com/index.htm
Exodus - Irish emigration	http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/emigration/
Headhunter.net - Job Seeker Homepage	http://www.headhunter.net/
Image Exchange presents World Gallery	http://www.imageexchange.com/
Visual Basic World	http://www.vb-world.net/
123Jump - Stock Market News	http://www.123jump.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.

TPCUG Supports Microsoft Event

By Mike Hodges, Vice President, Tampa PC Users Group
mike.hodges@baesystems.com

On Saturday, November 4th, a live telecast from Microsoft's World Headquarters in Redmond, Washington was simultaneously screened at thirty locations, including the AMC Veterans 24 Movie Complex located on Anderson Road just north of Waters Avenue in the Town and Country area of Tampa. The occasion was the release of Microsoft's latest product, "Money 2001". This product is an updated release of Microsoft's personal finance management program that can help one track spending, make a personal budget, plan investment strategies and generally manage one's finances. Details on this product can be obtained at http://www.microsoft.com/money.

A number of Tampa Bay area PC user groups were invited to support the local screening and to promote their groups at each screening. Three local groups participated: the Clearwater based Tampa Bay PC users group, the Brandon based Greater Tampa PC users group and our own Tampa based TPCUG. The TPCUG was represented by Mary Sheridan and her daughter Michelle, Jenny Lind Olin, Bob LaFave, Bruce Register and myself. The local coordinator for Microsoft, working out of her Orlando office, was Mary Sue Cameron. Some 214 attendees were present to view the local screening. The majority came predominantly from Pinellas, but many had traveled from Manatee, Pasco, Polk and Hernando counties. We hope a number of new members will join our group from Hillsborough and surrounding counties.

Microsoft touted this as a "Microsoft Extreme Event" and had previously staged at least four other product releases in this manner, although never before in Tampa. The Clearwater PC users group had previously supported an event in Clearwater. I inspected the Microsoft web page devoted to the event on Friday November 2nd and saw that New York had over 900 people pre-registered for the New York screening. Most locations had one to five hundred pre-registered attendees. Each attendee received information concerning our group, a T-shirt and a CD providing a sixty day trial of the "Money 2001" program.

What was interesting to me was the technology involved to simultaneously telecast the promotion to 30 sites nationwide. The broadcast commenced locally at 1 PM, or 10 AM on the west coast. Is this the wave of the future? For two whole hours the local captive audience was mesmerized for a single commercial. I for one will want to do this again and I hate to watch regular network TV because of all those annoying commercial breaks, not that the PBS stations are much better with their sponsor promotions between programs. I for one have not jumped on the Time Warner bandwagon to get a cable modem as I find my $77 cable TV bill exorbitant already and

do not wish to pay an extra $39 to receive RoadRunner Service. Yes, I have deluxe service with beautifully clear reception and the multimedia-streaming video-on-demand. At any time I can watch any one of a hundred just released movies, pause the transmission for a meal and resume watching exactly as if I was controlling a VCR. This article will reach our editor by means of my $21.95 AOL service, which it has recently bid to tie up with the Australian news group magnate owner of Time Warner, Rupert Murdoch.

What also struck me was that none of the Microsoft presenters appeared to be over 25. Everything was cool! Is this the wave of the future! The two hour tele-broadcast lost a little in resolution on the really big screen. To me the white noise was a little disconcerting. As my main function was to be the door greeter, I missed the introductions and started in twenty minutes after the start, but caught the full commercial impact of the "Extreme Event." I took a vacant seat on the front row of the upper tier next to the technician who was in control of the projector and the external feed. The theater I estimated could readily seat up to 300 attendees. The first up for me live from Redmond, who also had a local live audience, was an Austrian born Microsoft employee named Claudia Andrea or was it Andrea Claudia. Everything was cool and Andrea had a charming accent and a wonderful command of the English language and could really command her keyboard and mouse drags and clicks beautifully. In short order we witnessed "Encarta", "Encarta.com", a true reference resource, "Mid Town Madness II", a video driving game, and the video golf game, "Links 2001". Andrea then passed over the presentation to Microsoft's MSN Explorer product manager, Mike Nichols, who demonstrated many of the latest Explorer features, such as how to filter out SPAM, obtain free long distance voice phone calls, get MSN news for up to date election coverage and the good life in general.

Next up was Bill Nye who demonstrated Windows ME and how this product allowed one to snap save the entire operating system such that retrieval of a system status to a prior date and time of saving was readily possible. This is something I hope I will not need to do too often, but it is good to know that as a resort to sanity one can always go back in time. Since I had changed screen resolutions and switched between large and small fonts, I would have enjoyed this new operating system's save feature. Next up before the real finale came the Dutch born gamester, that is gamester, not gangster, John Degleman. John gets paid by Microsoft to play games all day and possibly all night! The products introduced included "About Games", "Sidewinder" and the really exciting features available utilizing "Voice Command and Control." With the "Game Voice" product, true gamesmanship can be enhanced by simultaneously chatting to your opponents as one plays over the Internet with a possible 64 simultaneous channels of communication. Finally some precious few remaining min-

FACUG Fall Conference 2000

By Mary Sheridan, President, TPCUG
mcpease@mindspring.com

The fall meeting of the Florida Association of Computer Users was held at the Sunlight Community Church, 477 SW Cashmere Blvd, Port St. Lucie, FL on October 14, 2000. The Tri-County Computer User Group sponsored the meeting. As usual, it was informative, well planned and a great benefit to user group leaders.

Registration and check in for the event began at 8:30 AM. A continental breakfast was available until 10:30. Larry Tyler welcomed us at 9:00 AM, and then everyone went to the round table session of his or her choice.

During the morning sessions, the Board of Directors met and discussed the past and future business of the organization. Lunch was Italian and just wonderful. There was tray after tray of lasagna, ziti, spaghetti and meatballs, plenty of fresh salad and loads of garlic bread. After the meal, I realized how reasonable the conference fee had been.

A short general meeting was held at 1:00 PM. Larry Tyler introduced the Board of Directors: himself as President; Hilda Frederico, vice president; Betty Shearer, Treasurer; Mary Sheridan, Secretary; Web Austin, Newsletter Editor, Murray Tiano, Dave Gerber and Bill McCabe. Bart Koslow has moved to California and will have to be replaced as the ninth board member for the upcoming year. Larry introduced Sharon Rump of the Venice Area UG. Sharon will replace Bart as the Webmaster. Larry also mentioned the importance of keeping all user group data current at the web site.

A Logo Contest will be held, chaired by Murray Tiano. There are hopes that Corel will sponsor the contest. The FACUG will also institute a Community Service Award. Betty Shearer will chair the award committee. The details of both these projects will be available on the web site.

Rose Lynn of the Gold Coast Mac UG announced that the APCUG membership dues were being waived if the user groups joined the APCUG through Rose. For further information you can contact Rose Lynn at roselynn@mac.com.

The Spring Conference 2001 of the FACUG will be held at the Kissimmee Civic Center in Kissimmee Florida. Larry has commitments from eight vendors. A new feature this spring will be Technical Sessions sponsored by Gene Barlow, Microsoft and Adobe. Larry explained that the Spring Conference is a big undertaking. He asked for help so the next conference can be as successful as the last spring conference was. Some of the needs are: panel leaders, round table leaders, and many volunteers. A task list will be posted on the FACUG web site.

The Polk UG in Lakeland will host the Fall Conference 2001. Bob Read, the President of the Polk UG asked the attendance at the current conference. There were 62 attendees representing 18 User Groups.

Larry Tyler introduced Betty Shearer and Tom Chambery as the coordinators of the Fall Conference 2000. Betty then introduces Bob Leonard, CEO of **www.out2.com**, the conference guest speaker. Bob's company is Florida's online Community Newspaper. Bob advises businesses to provide local information as well as advertising. To learn more check out the web site. Bob concluded his talk at 2:05 PM.

The afternoon round tables were followed by a panel discussion in the Sanctuary of the church at 2:50 PM   The panelists were Bob Read, Rose Lynn, Betty Shearer and Larry Tyler. The topic was Community Service and Your Group. Items discussed were What is Community Service, How Can My Group Get Involved and the APCUG Jerry Awards. ◆

(Microsoft……….Continued from page 6)
utes were devoted to "Money 2001" and the improved import and archival features available. For these features and others the Microsoft web site tells all and sells this essential product at http://www.microsoft.com/money. If all this information was not enough for those present, our local Microsoft coordinator then introduced each of the local user group presidents and awarded 14 door prizes, including copies of many Microsoft products and three additional T-shirts. For me this was a most worthwhile products demonstration, and I hope to attend future "Microsoft Extreme Events"….. ◆

(Comments………..Continued from page 5)
base.

I note that it is quite humbling to see after the analysis of the log file that the Editor's Comments are usually quite far down the list of pages ordered by the number of visits.

If you are really interested in Microsoft Office, you should consider learning Visual Basic for Applications. ◆

Run, Run DLL...Run, Run DLL

By Michael Hutchison, Tampa PC Users Group
myankee@ij.net

First, I will try to reconstruct the chronology of my problems with Win 98 SE shutdowns. This has proven to be a fairly persistent malady. I am hopeful that it has finally been corrected; however, there have been at least two such hopes already dashed on the rocks of computing reality.

This all started more or less out of the blue. I can't recall any installations or major crashes prior to the first time that an older machine just froze up after clicking on OK in the shutdown Dialog Box. The box would go away and the computer would thrash a little, all of the icons would leave the desktop and there we would sit just looking at the bare wallpaper. When you did a Ctrl-Alt-Del one culprit appeared in running programs/ files list box: RunDLL32. The only way out of this which I found effective was a touch of the Reset Button on the tower's case. After a reboot and the obligatory Scandisk tour ("because Windows was not properly shut down….."), the machine was typically good to go for 5-6 sessions before this occurred again. Since RunDLL32.exe kept turning up as the file that was not responding, I kept thinking that it was corrupted or had been switched for a newer or older version, etc. After predictable reading and webbing, I invoked the System File Checker. SFC said I had numerous files which had been changed or updated including more than one DLL; none of them were RunDLL32. Other trails of possible solutions which were run across on the Web included:

- disabling the assignment of IRQ/s for USB.
- go to C:\Windows\System\MSCONFIG.exe and select the Advanced button and then disable the quick power down option.
- disable power management .
- right-click on My Computer, open Device Manager, click on the plus sign next to System Devices,double-click PCI Bus, select the IRQ Steering tab and remove the check mark beside "Get IRQ Table from Real Mode PCI BIOS 2.1 Call" Then restart the PC and have your Win 98 installation CD handy.
- in CMOS BIOS enable IRQ for VGA

Well, either I was in compliance with these suggestions or my gut told me that I was heading down a dead end on each of the preceding. Basically, I was still looking at RunDll32 as my prime suspect. So thought I, if the file is corrupted just pull a fresh copy of it off of the Win 98 CD. So I hit the Windows Key, Find, entered the file name and hit Enter. Nada. After some more research, a lucky stumble revealed that the file resides in Cabinet 46. More specifically the path to the file is: Win98_se\Win98\Win98_46. Having ascertained the location of the file, I then tried to extract it per the information in Microsoft Knowledge Base articles and got some sort of error message which eludes my memory at the moment. But I soon found that once you dig down to the file itself in Windows Explorer and select it, you then have in the File menu drop down an option to Extract right there. This being done, the machine was restarted and work proceeded. Before going any further I will list some Microsoft KB article numbers/titles which surfaced during this overall process.To Wit:

- Q129605 How to Extract Original Compressed Windows Files
- Q180465 Error Message: The File was Not Found. Verify…..
- Q231793 Corrupted Setupx.dll After Installing Windows 98 Second Edition
- Q192926 How to Perform Clean Boot Troubleshooting for Win 98
- Q239887 Availability of Windows 98 Second Edition Shutdown Supplement

In truth, Microsoft does put out a lot of information about their product even if much of the info needs the three letter prefix "mis" attached. At this point I thought I had accomplished something and maybe this little fracus was over. This proved to be False Hope #1. After following the pattern that had been established in terms of number of normal work sessions, the machine again froze and named RunDll32 as No-Respondent. I then turned my attention to the last of the Knowledge Base articles listed above. Following the directions, I downloaded and installed the Shutdown Supplement as outlined in Q239887. It prompted me to do a restart so that the changes could take effect. OK, let it rip. The machine froze on the restart. False Hope #2. What followed was a lot of frenetic and extremely feral casting of allegations about the lineage of various industry personalities and a forced landing of the system for additional musing. However, at the next opportunity (translate: at the next juncture where I had time *and* had just done the manual Reset), I downloaded the supplement again, installed it again and was prepared for a prompt to Restart the computer. This was not forthcoming. So I then went in through the Start-Shut Down route and restarted the machine and so far so good. On the second or third shutdown after this last attempted fix I noticed a hesitation but after some more churning, it did go ahead and perform the ShutDown normally.

Bottom Line: What I "learned"was more or less corollary to the circumstances at hand, but if it holds up we'll take it.

Onward through the Fog. ◆

Free for the Holidays

By Larry Anders, Librarian, Tampa PC Users Group
larryanders@msn.com

Well, it's that time of the year again when we've probably spent more than we should (or soon will have) on Christmas gifts, so I thought it was time for one of my "freebie" articles. One of the only computer magazines I still subscribe to is PCMagazine, published by Ziff Davis. It is still dedicated to the PC user and hasn't converted to some type of business magazine that deals primarily with e-commerce. PCMagazine is still about computing and it is published about every two weeks so it's very current with what's going on in the industry.

But, enough about PCMagazine, that's not what this article is about. When I got my most recent issue it reminded me that I hadn't been to http://www.pcmag.com lately, so off I went. I clicked a few links and wound up in the software section and **voil**à**!**, there was this list of a bunch of free downloads… and you know how I like free stuff!
http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/filters/downloads/

A little ways down the page there is a link to *Ten cool -- free! -- tools for your system tray*. Here's what I found:

Tray Command Line - Tray Command Line is a free tool that gives you instant access to a small command-line window, just by clicking on its system tray icon. The utility keeps a history list of past commands, can be loaded automatically each time Windows starts, and can be hidden whenever a command is executed. You can assign program/edit aliases and easily insert file arguments into a command line. With the AutoComplete option turned on, Tray Command Line auto-guesses the commands you try to enter, plus you can specify a hotkey to execute the last program entered in the dialog window. Tray Command Line doesn't quite give you all the freedom of working at an MS-DOS prompt, but its benefits more than make up for its minor shortcomings.

FastOpen - FastOpen is a free, tray-based menu system that's incredibly easy to use and offers a great alternative to the Windows Start Menu. Use it to launch your favorite programs, documents, Web sites, and folders from its left-click menu. Arrange your menu entries in any order you wish and add separators to organize items into logical groups. You can even play a different sound when each item is launched.

Wallpaper Changer - Staring at the same desktop background everyday because it's too much of a bother to change it? Wallpaper Changer will add variety to your screen with virtually no fuss. This versatile tray-based freebie supports . bmp, .gif, and .jpg images from any combination of folders, random wallpaper selection, and automated changing of wall-

paper on every startup, once a day, or at regular intervals -- even as often as once a minute. Have it tile, center, or resize background graphics to full-screen. Plus, you can build, save, and reload multiple sets of wallpaper images. Another nice feature: Wallpaper Changer can give the captions of your desktop icons a transparent background so that more of your wallpaper shows through. The program automatically analyzes wallpaper images and determines the best matching background and the most readable icon caption color.

Free Disk Space - Free Disk Space resides in your system tray and monitors the amount of free disk space on all of your hard drives. Double-click the icon to invoke an attractive dialog that graphically displays total and free space for each drive. You can also set an alarm that provides notification when free space falls below a certain level. Just set the available slider control to determine the alarm level. Other features include configurable display and refresh times, and historical data display. This utility is easy to use and best of all -- it's free!

TclockEx - TClockEx is an excellent utility that hooks into the system tray clock to let you see a lot more than just the current time. You can display the date and/or the time -- with seconds -- in variety of formats and in the order you wish. Customize the colors, font used, tooltip format, mouse actions, and more. Other neat features include memory/CPU usage monitoring, a pop-up calendar, and a copy-to-Clipboard option. Until Microsoft wises up and makes the tray clock in Windows this versatile, we're glad TClockEx is around -- and we're especially thankful that it's freeware.

Exits 95/98 - Exits 95/98 is a free system tray-based utility that gives you several ways to get out of Windows 95 or 98 quickly. Its options are accessed through its icon's right-click menu. You can elect to shut down, reboot, restart, exit to DOS, log off, activate your screen saver, standby, power-off, force exit, eject removable media, use hotkey, use three types of timed exits, and/or exit on single click. The selected method is displayed in the icon's tool tip. Exits 95/98 also supports several command-line switches. It's very small and doesn't require MFC, VB, or any other runtime library -- just the executable and a tiny included .dll file. A Windows NT version is also available here.

Push The Freakin' Button! - Pesky dialog boxes giving you trouble? Check out Push The Freakin' Button (PTFB)! This free tray-based utility waits for specified dialog boxes to pop up, then automatically presses the button you've configured. So when a dialog causes irritation, you simply tell PTFB which button should be pressed, and it will handle the dialog in the future. Although it doesn't work with all dialog box buttons (we had problems with apps written in Visual Basic and Delphi), PTFB should work with most programs programmed

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

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

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.

(Free………..Continued from page 9)

in C++ (such as Windows and its applets) and America Online. It offers a clean, drag-and-drop interface for adding buttons to the "hit-list," with plenty of options provided. Buttons are pushed only once per appearance, so you don't have to worry about a pressing frenzy if the button doesn't dismiss the dialog for some reason. One thing's for sure: PTFB can make life in Windows a lot easier.

Yankee Clipper Plus - Yankee Clipper Plus saves and can even print the past text contents of your Windows Clipboard as you routinely replace it. It stays minimized as an icon in your system tray. A click brings a listing, starting with the most recent clip, of the first line of past Clipboard content. A double click returns any entry to the Clipboard for your repeat use. A second window shows the current contents of the Clipboard and can be scrolled for a complete review. The system can store multiple sets of text collections and retain Clipboard history between sessions. It's a convenient way to retrieve text clips that have been overwritten and can handle text clips too large for even the program to display. Unfortunately, it's not particularly intuitive in use (and the help isn't of much assistance), but it's free and certain to add flexibility to your Clipboard.

WinSpace Light - WinSpace Light lets you create numerous virtual desktops, which give you the effect of having several

monitors working at once. (The program does support multiple "real" monitors under Windows 98, though.) This lets you have more applications open at once, with the windows on each program larger than you'd normally run them. You can easily switch between desktops (or "panes") using the system tray-based window manager. We really liked the Elephant Windows feature, which lets you make individual windows larger than your computer's monitor, which gives you unlimited space to display information in one window. Using the Free-Scroll function, you'll be able to scroll inside of one application just by moving the mouse to the edge of your screen. This Light version of WinSpace is free but has a handful of minor limitations. A Professional version with more features is available from the developer.

Hotkeys (Broeze) - Give your poor mouse a break with Hotkeys. This excellent -- and free -- system tray-based utility is similar to the Microsoft Intellitype software, in that it gives you fast and easy access to a lot of common Windows 95 elements through keyboard shortcuts. Hotkeys does this and a lot more. Use it to define hotkeys to launch applications such as Control Panel applets or frequently used programs; send keystrokes to other applications; exit Windows, log off Windows, or reboot your computer; and quickly access some of Hotkeys' internal functions such as its editor or list. Hotkeys also has multiple hotkey commands (useful for scripting actions) and virtual clipboards that allows you to use a virtually unlimited amount of clipboards. Hotkeys works with nearly every key on your keyboard, including that seldom-used Windows key. Delphi 3.0 source code is included.

Some of these could even make a good gift for your fellow computer user buddy who's not geekish enough to know you downloaded these programs for free. But hey! It's the thought that counts, right? Or, just get these utilities for yourself. You deserve a break for all the shopping you've done for everyone else.

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

Adobe Systems   Microsoft
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MEMBERS' HELP LINE

Program	Code
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AOL	AOL
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Delphi	DE
DOS	DOS
Family Tree Maker	FTM
Hardware general	HG
Hardware Modem	HM
Hardware Printer	HP
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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	960-0208	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 ___

(President……….Continued from page 1)
well and is able to continue to attend our meetings. He's been
such an asset to our group and it's wonderful to know he's well
and healthy again.

I'm leaning towards "mushy" here so I'll end the article. Happy
Holidays to Everyone!! ◆

(Free……….Continued from page 10)
Have a GREAT HOLIDAY and don't forget the reason for the
season! ◆

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