



Bits of Blue



Taxes

April in Tampa

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

Vol. 15 No. 4 April 2002

Meeting

Alpha Five

Wednesday, April 10, 2002
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
6401 N 54th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: Tom Cone will demonstrate how to use the Alpha Five database program. In his words: "I use it because many powerful features have been put in easy reach for the non-programmer, while the underlying scripting language is powerful enough to permit custom applications to be rapidly developed for others. This combination means that the package is immediately useful to end-users and developers alike."

President's Message

By Kevan Sheridan, President, Tampa PC Users Group
president@tpcug.org

Well, it's that time of year again. The time we begin to prepare for Tampa Bay's #1 Technology Event. We will have tickets available at this month's meeting. If you register for this event online (highly suggested well before the event) please use the Registration Code of TX1769. This is really a great event to attend and it's just as great to work in our booth. The show runs from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM at the Tampa Convention Center and if enough people volunteer to help out we could each work two hours in the booth. There is not much to it, all we want to do is get our name out there and have people join our group. Please send e-mail to president@tpcug.org if you are interested. Perhaps you could also help us distribute tickets? All there is to it is to explain the use of the registration code printed on the back of the ticket.

On a lighter note, let's talk briefly about some fun learning software. The programs I am talking about are Solitaire, FreeCell and Hearts. Yes, if you are a beginner and have a newer version of Windows, you already have these valuable card games on your computer. IF you haven't already, find them under GAMES or ACCESSORIES | GAMES. What do

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May 8: To be announced. Check our web site

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All advertisements must be prepaid by check payable to TPCUG, be in camera ready format (actual size, black ink on white paper), and be submitted on or before the 20th of the month preceding the month of publication. Commercial advertising is usually limited to 25% of the total space of an issue. The Editor reserves the right to hold ads if the total space for ads exceeds this limit or if they are not received on time.

Members may insert non-commercial ads at no charge with the following limitations: no more than 4 ads per member per year; no more than 40 words (240 bytes including spaces); must be camera ready copy or an ASCII file on diskette or as an attachment to an email message to the Editor. Those wishing to place ads are to contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at (813) 251-3817 for space availability and for further information.



Minutes of the March Meeting

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Mary Sheridan fielded computer questions and answers for the first 30 minutes of the meeting. Bob LaFave also answered several questions by demonstrating how to solve the problems on his computer connected to the projector.



Paul Willies

The main presentation was given by Paul Willies of Long Bay Communications, <http://www.longbaycommunications.com/>.

Paul's business is designing, building and maintaining web sites. But that is not exactly what he spoke about. Rather he described a new product he and a programmer have been developing that allows far-flung organizations with numerous member groups to maintain their membership records, their meeting schedules, etc. on the web where they can be immediately accessed, modified and updated.

This is done in a secure environment, so that payment of dues or membership information is safe. Every action requires a certain level of access. Any member of a local group would have access to update their personal information, but only designated local officers would be allowed to change other information concerning the local group. Information of a national (or international) scope could only be changed by individuals with the appropriate higher level of access.

Paul said that the project was done totally outside of the Microsoft software orbit. The site is hosted on servers running either Linux or Unix software, the web programming language is PHP, and the database that is behind everything is MYSQL.

Additionally, he showed how, by using templates, each local organization could bring their current membership database into the new setup as a onetime uploading of their data.

It was an interesting presentation, demonstrating that there are very practical uses of the web. I believe this product is aimed primarily at the nonprofit sector of organizations. ♦

Homework and Computer Frustrations

By Merrill Friend, Tampa PC Users Group
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Usually I look very carefully into purchases I make, but I really blew it this time. I wanted a laptop computer. I needed the portability, and this was the answer. I selected a Compaq Presario with XP Home Edition installed. I really didn't give it much thought. After all it is Microsoft software, and if it has a Microsoft word processor and spreadsheet it can't be too different from what I am already using on my desktop computer, can it? It has seemed to me that every time Microsoft has come out with a new product it has been an advancement over its previous product, so why should this one be any different? And surely it is going to be compatible with all earlier Microsoft products, isn't it? Of course it is, I reasoned illogically!!!

So I get my dandy little laptop home and turn it on. A "Welcome" screen appeared telling me the need for registration of the hardware and software and suggesting that I handle the registration right now through the internet. I really didn't care to register just then and was disappointed to find that the computer and software manufacturer had conspired to push me along in this direction. It was rather like having a high pressure salesman sitting at your elbow. Heck, I had just turned the darned thing on and wasn't ready to do start registering anything just yet. But the welcoming screen just wouldn't turn me loose.

Compaq and/or Microsoft's motivations were clear, however, since under the guise of welcoming me as a client they were steering me toward registering through the FREE AOL program which came with my computer. All I really wanted to do right then was explore my new computer and the XP software but I couldn't get rid of this pushy "Welcoming" gibberish. Since I already had an internet provider, I opted to skip the installation of AOL's service as well as the immediate registration of my computer and the XP software since those tasks required an internet setup which I hadn't handled yet.

The next question the charming "Welcome" screen asked me was what I wanted to name my computer, which impressed me as an awfully ridiculous thing to do. Why in heaven's name would I want to name my computer? I certainly didn't want to name it after the kid who programmed this pesky "Welcoming" screen. Had I done that it wouldn't have been a very flattering name. I thought once about naming it "Bill Gate's Alter Ego," but

thought better of it. I didn't want to see that in front of me on a regular basis. Perhaps the naming had something to do with the possibility of my using my computer as a part of a local area network, but no reason, not even that one, was given for naming the computer.

"I don't want to adopt you," I finally said out loud to the computer, "I just want this crazy screen to go away so I can get on with using this machine." I then realized that naming the computer was "optional" so I skipped that step. I have always been rather slow at reading all the directions and somehow in my haste to get on with it I missed that little word "optional". The software then permitted me to gradually work through all the mandatory "welcomes" and I finally got to the desktop. I am thankful that the kid at Microsoft who did the programming of this "welcoming" sequence didn't also program in a temper tantrum to yell and scream at me when I opted to skip those steps the kid and his bosses all obviously felt were so important. At this point, however, I wouldn't have been surprised at anything.

My Internet provider is AT & T. Apparently Microsoft doesn't like them. Of course they don't own them either. The desktop of Microsoft XP contained icons for contacting CompuServe, AOL, and MSN but no Icon to use to set up my account with AT&T. Fortunately, years ago on a much older computer I printed out my passwords and usernames for that account. I also was able to copy the settings I was using on another computer to the appropriate places on the laptop and this made the job manageable. I had stubbornly decided that I was not going to be intimidated by my computer manufacturer or the software provider as to whom I was to use as my internet provider. No matter how much personal effort it took I intended to continue with my personal choice of internet provider. After all I paid for this machine; it now belongs to me and I'll use it as I wish, thank you.

Then I went into the Microsoft Works software that came with the computer and pulled up the spreadsheet product. I had some Excel files on my other machine. "Works" was able to read one of them but couldn't understand two formulas in the other spreadsheet. By redoing these formulas I could get "Works" to accept the second Excel spreadsheet. I then began actually comparing the two spreadsheets and found that the "Works" spreadsheet has far fewer features than does Microsoft Excel.

Had I done my homework I would have already known this, but such is life. One needs only to turn on two computers and bring up Excel on one and "Works" Spreadsheet

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Express Thumbnail Creator

By Larry Anders, Librarian,
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First, let me begin by apologizing to ExpressSoft (and William LaMartin – our newsletter editor) for taking five months to get around to reviewing this software. Believe me, it's no reflection on the software, just my busy schedule.

Now... on with the review. Just a few days after I read about the latest version of Express Thumbnail Creator (ETC) in one of my computer magazines, William posted the software for review and I was excited to give it a test drive. After reading the article I was definitely interested. I, like many other people these days, have my own website, which has turned out to be a collection of photographs to share with my family and friends.

When I first started posting the pictures to my website, I would painstakingly take the time to code the pages to show the photos somewhat how I wanted them to appear. I could never seem to get it just right nor the same every time. As time passed, different programs were developed to assist in preparing image collections to be published to the web. I tried a bunch, but none were as simple and fast as ETC.

Without reading a thing, I installed ETC, started the program, chose to **Create a new project** and clicked Next. I then clicked the "+" to add images to the collection. (If you're not sure what the images are, there is a preview window when you click on the file to remind you.) I then chose the folder I wanted to save the project to (better to create a new one for each project) and then selected the default settings for the next 8 clicks. Then I chose to **Generate all** (as in thumbnails, images and the web pages), and my first collection was ready to be published to the web. Really! Less than five minutes and it was done, and I was hooked! And, I got this program for free because I agreed to review it. What a deal! (I'm throwing this comment in because good software is available for our members to review most all of the time.)

Once I finished my first project, I was ready to go back and see what I could customize so my web postings wouldn't all look the same. (Back to the 8 clicks I breezed through.)

1. <Select a **Style** for your gallery> There are six styles to choose from for a background-primarily color schemes.

2. <Modify the look of your **Thumbnails**> Choose the size of thumbnail, crop the image, add a colored border, rename the image file, add a drop shadow and image quality settings.
3. <Full-size **Images**> Resize the original image that will be displayed when the thumbnail is clicked, add a colored border, convert filenames to lower case, auto rename and image quality settings.
4. <**Index Tables**> Customize table size (rows & columns), layout (cell padding & cell spacing), add borders and include a background of your choice.
5. <**Index Pages**> Title your primary page for the gallery, choose the location and graphic for your navigation bar on each index page, and select a background graphic and color.
6. <**Image Pages**> Customize your links, filenames, navigation bars, background pictures and color on each full-size image page.
7. <**Titles**> Customize titles of index and image pages
8. <**Generate**> Generate all the pages automatically and then preview them.
9. <**Upload**> Sometime in the near future ExpressSoft plans to add an upload feature – but it's not ready for primetime as of this writing. I use FrontPage and had no problem publishing
10. <**Finish**> Save the project and you're done, honest! That's all there is to it.

There are other tweaks I did not mention, but those were the primary adjustments that can be made. This software is excellent (and easy) for creating photo galleries, and not only for publishing to the web. You can easily copy these files to a CDR/RW and share your gallery with your friends and family. Just plop in the newly created CD and type the name of the main page and it's as if you were viewing the gallery on the Internet. The software sells for \$39.95 and you can order it online at <http://www.express-soft.com>. You should add this package to your software collection.◆

 **Express Thumbnail Creator**

(Frustrations.....Continued from page 3)

on the other and go across the column heading selections at the top of each spreadsheet to see much of what has been left out of “Works.” And for those reasons “Works” is compatible with Excel only on the simpler more basic spreadsheets.

One deficiency in the “Works” spreadsheet which was real important to me was the inability of the “Works” spreadsheet program to protect that part of the spreadsheet where permanent formulas exist, thus preventing their inadvertent change or removal. This is a feature of Excel but is not supported on the “Works” spreadsheet. The only way to protect a file under “Works” is to make that entire worksheet “read-only.” Not a practical idea unless you only want to read the worksheet and not ever work with it.

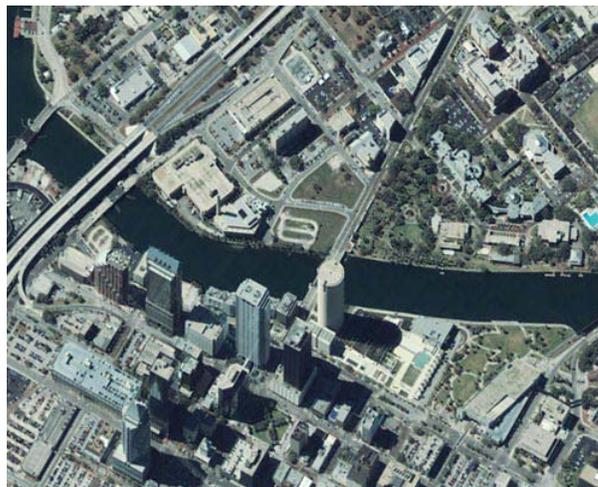
When I was growing up and someone said this or that product had “the works,” it meant it really had everything. I have learned that it doesn’t mean that as far as Microsoft “Works” is concerned because that program obviously has less than other Microsoft programs I am familiar with. Thus, its name seems somewhat of a misnomer.

But you probably already knew that anyway, didn’t you? You certainly did if, unlike me, you had done your homework. To those of you who haven’t done your homework, read on.

After I saw what had been done to the spreadsheet pro-

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Internet Picture of the Month



Downtown Tampa

from

<http://www.digitalglobe.com/>

This is a crop of a much larger photo of downtown Tampa at the DigitalGlobe site, a relative new high resolution satellite image site. Here is how they describe the photo:

“This natural color pan-sharpened image was created by using QuickBird 2.44-meter multispectral image data (red, green, and blue bands) to colorize the QuickBird panchromatic image data. This image chip shows an overview of downtown Tampa, Florida.”

April's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)
 My Tool Store — over 30,000 tools
 The Village Voice
 PROVANTAGE.COM - Hardware & Software
 AGRICOLA - National Agricultural Library
 Net Stumbler Dot Com - wireless Internet access points
 The Museum of Hoaxes
 Pakistan News Service
 Life Magazine Covers and more

<http://www.tpcug.org/>
<http://www.mytoolstore.com/>
<http://www.villagevoice.com/>
<http://www.provantage.com/>
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/ag98/>
<http://www.netstumbler.com/>
<http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/>
<http://paknews.com/>
<http://www.life.com/Life/>



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.

Handspring Prism

By Mary Sheridan, Vice President,
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This is my second article in the "Handheld" series. Instead of starting a "Palm" SIG, a series of articles will be written about the handheld devices. I encourage input as to what things you would like to see more information about. Either the Palm Platform or Windows CE, it does not matter. I will be happy to research the issue and write an article about it.



I got the Prism while I was in Las Vegas attending the Fall APCUG conference. I bought it at the Handspring booth at Comdex. There were two primary reasons I chose this unit over the others; 1. The screen is wonderfully easy to see and read and 2. The price was in my range (because of a APCUG coupon I paid \$249.00). I began shopping for a new Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) last summer. I had been using a Palm III for a little over a year. The address book had helped me out a couple of times, but that was all I used it for. Once I was able to see the newer units with much easier to read screens, I realized there had been a problem using my unit because it was hard to see. Even with the backlight on, it was still difficult to make out the characters. I had initially planned on trying to get a 'deal' on the newest Palm unit, but once I compared the various units, I walked away with the Handspring.

There were better units and I was really tempted to buy the HP Jornada. BUT, the cheapest price I could find on the Jornada was \$599.00. I just could not justify this much money, not knowing for sure if I would really use it more often than I had my Palm III.

The units are less than \$450.00 today, but still a lot of

money IMHO.

Anyway, back to the Handspring Prism. There are over fifty modules available for the Prism. These modules are digital cameras, mobile phones, wireless internet devices, MP3 player...the list goes on. The modules are plug-and-play. Just plug them in and they work, no drivers to install or wires to plug in. The modules are very easy to change. They are small and very portable. The Prism comes with the usual software that comes on a Palm Pilot; Addresses, Date Book Plus, Calculators, etc. Because the Prism uses the Palm Operating System, the unit is fully compatible with any other Palm device. I can transfer data to and from my computer by placing the unit in its cradle (easily connected to the computer by USB connection) and pushing a button. It's even easier to transfer data to another Palm based unit by simply 'beaming' the data via infrared port. The unit comes with software that is compatible with either a PC or a Macintosh.



HP Jornada

Many of the previous features are standard in other handhelds, but since I own the Handspring Prism, it's easier for me to start with this unit and then compare the other units to this one. I use my Prism every single day. I have it with me all the time and I find new uses for it at least once a week.

I'm investigating a pedometer unit that clips onto your waistband like other pedometers do. The module has some interesting software that does some extensive 'fitness' calculations. It sells for \$39.00 and unless I am able to talk myself out of buying it, I will write an article in the future about the unit.

Please send any suggestions for the handheld column to mcpease@mindspring.com.



Firehand Software

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

Firehand Technologies makes two basic products to assist you in organizing, editing, and displaying your graphics and multimedia files. The company only markets its products on the web at <http://www.firehand.com/products/>. The first thing I appreciate about their products is that you can download a fully functional trial copy. I especially appreciate this feature because over the past year I have purchased two pieces of name brand software that were so buggy on my machine that I have had to remove them. Another program did not meet my requirements. Leaving me stuck with over a hundred fifty dollars in useless software. For me, try before you buy is hard to beat.

The first product "Firehand Ember" is a graphic file viewer and editor. The edit function is quite limited and does not include any Red Eye Removal function, which is most needed for anyone who takes digital flash photographs. The program's main claim to fame for me is that it is a comparatively small, rapidly loading program that produces excellent quality displays of almost all file formats. What I like most is that you can set it to automatically adjust the image size to fit on your screen. Quite often I receive pictures taken in a resolution that exceeds the resolution of my screen, and, thus, to see the entire image without scrolling you must resize the image in a program such as PhotoShop, which is very time consuming. With this program the resolution of the file is not changed but it will automatically fit your screen. Try it, I think you will like it.

The other program is "Firehand Lightning." It allows you to create versatile slide show presentations of collections of photographs. This program creates a single highly compressed file containing all of the images with the viewer as an integral component. Thus, the file can be viewed on most any PC without the need for any other program on the receiving computer. You can send the file over the net or burn a CD ROM. In addition, you can embed printed or audio annotation. With this function you can record the voice of your little darling and have it automatically play when the picture appears or you can add background music. Pretty cool. The program allows you to select from a variety of transitions between images, such as dissolves and wipes. My only complaint here is that the transition apparently must remain the same for all images in the presentation and the time on screen cannot be adjusted for individual images. There is much more, so

if this sounds interesting go to their site and peruse the features, or better yet download the trial and get some hands on experience for free.

Do it before the meeting, as when I purchased the program I asked if they would be willing to donate a program as a Door Prize for our group and they kindly agreed. If the opportunity arises, please express your appreciation to them.



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(Frustrations.....Continued from page 5)

gram, I pulled up the "Works" word processing program. Again, I was disappointed and again the same computer by computer comparison was easily be made of each of these two products.

So what was my solution? Phone an expert and get another viewpoint, as I should have done in the first place. So I phoned our own William LaMartin, who suggested that I should be able to successfully install my Microsoft Office 97 software on this new laptop which uses XP Home Edition. I tried that, and it worked fine giving me access to the programs I wanted.

I had been led to believe by a computer salesman when I bought my new laptop that Microsoft Works would be fully compatible with Excel and Word. Had I been told the truth, I would have wanted my laptop outfitted with the latest editions of these programs. When I found that what I was told wasn't true, continuing with the old tried and true software was the easy answer for me. And if I buy any more computers, I now know one store to leave off my shopping list.

Next, I looked for a list of printers and was initially unable to find such a list. I went online to Hewlett Packard, who made my 820Cse printer, to get a driver for XP, only to remember that HP had obsoleted this printer a couple of years ago and no longer provides support for it.

As an aside I should tell you I bought this printer in 1996 and at one time thought it would have to be replaced because, when it printed, the ink streaked over the paper and certain lines did not print. I contacted HP then and learned that it was obsolete so they couldn't help me.

But HP has a users discussion board where I went with my problem. Some other HP user had had the same difficulty I was having and told me that there is a "tub" under-

(Frustrations.....Continued on page 9)

Looking Back to 1992

From the April 1992 Bits of Blue
PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Ok let's all get strapped in. The roller coaster is a fixing to start. Just as I was preparing for the OS/2 vs. Windows 3.1 battle someone pulled the rug out from under me. First, I am told, and later read, that the parent company I work for, Dun & Bradstreet, is considering buying Lotus Corporation. Ok, that's pretty major stuff by itself, but it didn't stop there. Next, I read where Novell is looking to merge or buy Software Publishing Corporation (SPC), the makers of Harvard Graphics. Now, fact or fiction, I am still trying to figure out both of these deals. Finally, the knockout punch, Microsoft buying Fox Software for 175 million. This deal seems to be fact and will probably be a done deal within the next couple of months. If you are an XBASE user, the last deal will be very important to you. Microsoft, after many years of trying to create their own database product, has opted to buy a very good and established product. My understanding is that Microsoft will not stop working on their own product, yet Microsoft is now aiming squarely at Borland International's dBase. FoxPro by itself is a very good and extremely fast database language. If Microsoft does the right things to FoxPro to evolve it into the Windows environment it will be a powerhouse. The race to the Windows database arena and market share between Borland and Microsoft should benefit all XBASE users. These two giants will not be the first to market a Windows database product. Companies like Software Publishing Corporation (Superbase 4), Computer Associates (dBFast) to mention a few, are already there. It will take a couple of new releases to see if Microsoft can convert FoxPro from a prince to a king, or court jester. Borland has a fight on its hands, first to regain the trust of previous dBase users which still have a bad taste from the original release of dBase IV, and now the entry of Microsoft into the jousting contest.

On April 6th Mr. Bill (Gates) will once again do his magic. He will introduce the long awaited release of Windows 3.1 at Comdex Windows World. His presentation will be shown via satellite around the country. If all goes well I will see it at the Hyatt in Tampa. Anyway if you have Windows already, start saving that upgrade money (around \$49.00). This product will be shown by Microsoft at our June meeting.

OS/2 2.0 has been released to BIG corporate land via BBS and other electronic means. To date I have only heard from beta sites. The product has not been seen on any shelves. I read that IBM is thinking about \$49.00 for the product. At this time I am not sure if that is for an upgrade or anyone

who has DOS or what. If you plan on getting and installing the full works of OS/2 2.0 make sure you've got 30Mb of disk available, at least a 386 20 MHz with 4Mb of RAM as a minimum.

If you have been waiting for a notebook with great color, I saw one. CompUSA recently had an open house for corporate types to meet vendors and kick the tires of their products. Vendors included Symantec (the Norton people), Dell Computer, NEC, WordPerfect and others. NEC had on display their new NEC Ultralite SIJ2SC. It's one of the few color notebooks which uses an active matrix thin film transistor display. That's a mouthful. Basically it means that each screen pixel is controlled by its own transistor. This produces a sharper focus and brighter colors than passive matrix screens. The list price of the notebook is under \$6,000. If you are interested in buying one good luck. CompUSA does not have any in stock.

Sometime back I shared my opinion about the use of 14" monitors with Window word-processing software. I stated that the text was too small to read. Well I have an update on this continuing saga. I recently upgraded my discontinued 14" NEC 3D monitor to a 15" NEC 4FG monitor. At first I was very pleased. This monitor has a new color system which you can set, reduced ELF, VLF and magnetic field (Marylee says all that stuff is good for me). However, NEC decided to discontinue applying the anti-glare coating found on its previous monitors. To date this has produced the 1st computer related problem to my body since starting in this field in 1974. I now have a good case of eye strain which I attribute to the complete reflection of myself (scary) and everything behind me outside the building. I talked to the NEC rep at CompUSA about the problem and asked why they had decided to remove the anti-glare coating. In a nutshell he stated that the market had asked for that feature or lack thereof and that my problem may be an individual one (ouch). While talking to him I noticed that the 4FG monitor he was demoing had a NEC anti-glare screen attached. Of course it's no longer called that; it's now called a NEC MultiSync monitor lens and retails for \$79-\$199 depending on which of their monitors you have. As I stood there still smarting from the NEC rep's comment that it may be an individual problem, two individuals came up pointing to the NEC 4FG monitor. A young man in his twenties and an older man in his late forties. The young man said "See, that's what I need to prevent my eye-strain." Well, I can tell you my poor eyes lit up when I heard that. I talked to them and explained that I now suffered from the same problem and that I felt that NEC was nickel and diming us by making us buy their product

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(1992.....Continued from page 8)

(monitor lens) to prevent this. I confronted the NEC rep who overheard this conversation “Must be another case of an individual problem!” I said. “NOT!” I have ordered the NEC monitor lens to see if the eyestrain goes away or if I should bring back the 14” NEC 3D. Presently, I am highly disappointed with the new NEC monitors. Of course this is my story and 1st hand opinion. I couldn’t help notice that other opinions are different: PC Magazine (January 14th issue) selected the NEC F series as one of the Best of 1991 products, PC WORLD (December 1991 issue) rated the 4FG as a BEST BUY for a Windows monitor, PC/Computing (December 1991 issue) selected the NEC 5FG as one of their 1991 MVP, and, lastly, in the April 14th issue of PC Magazine, John C. Dvorak makes the comment about the NEC 4FG that “I can’t recommend this monitor enough” in his Inside Track column. Maybe its just me and one other end-user but this has the smell of the initial dBase IV 1.0 recommendations and great initial reviews by the press several years back. I wonder where the human factor of an end user comes to play in all these press opinions.

Look for the continuing monitor saga in the future.

Harvey Bruneau ♦

(Frustrations.....Continued from page 7)

neath the place where the printer ink jet cartridges reside when the computer is not actually printing. While sitting there excess ink from the print cartridge drips into this tub. Over the years the tub gets full. He suggested I clean out that “tub” of excess gooey ink residue that had accumulated over the years and my printer would work fine again.

He was correct, and I suspect that has possibly kept my printer going much longer than some others of this model. Whenever the ink jet cartridges moved over that full “tub” some gooey ink residue would rub off on the bottom of the cartridge and ruin the print. Just cleaning out the vat or “tub” with a wooden Popsicle stick cured that problem. I was warned not to touch anything else and not to use any cleaning fluids or lint bearing cloth.

But, back to the XP printer driver problem. I actually have two printers, the HP mentioned above and an ancient wide carriage workhorse Okidata dot matrix, over ten years old which my wife uses for excel spreadsheets.

Okidata’s web site said that XP contained a generic printer driver, called the 193 Plus-IBM Okidata. I connected the printer to the laptop. Then I went to the Control Panel and asked to install it. It asked for disks, which I didn’t have, so I skipped that process and installed the generic driver. I then printed out some e-mail I had on my machine and thought I was home free.

But then I pulled up my “Works” word processor and brought up a 65 page document that had looked fine hours earlier only to see that it had now become a lot of unreadable gibberish. That’s when I realized that “Works” uses true type fonts and the old Okidata does not. Apparently Outlook Express doesn’t use true type fonts either because my e-mail had printed out fine on the Okidata. Concerned about getting the “Works” word processor working correctly I removed the Okidata printer from my machine and my “Works” word processor again displayed a clearly readable copy of my previous work.

I had never encountered such a situation previously when I was not actually attempting to print something and could not read the document because of the printer selection. Of course, at that time the Okidata was the only printer driver active on my laptop, and perhaps that was the key cause of the problem.

Next I decided to try the same process with my obsolete HP printer no longer supported by HP. I connected the printer and laptop, turned the printer on and then turned the laptop on and, once powered up, got a message on the desktop that my laptop had detected new hardware. The old Okidata did not have plug and play features but the HP and the Laptop did, and the XP Home Edition recognized it. The installation wizard came up and I opted to install the printer. When I was asked for a disk, I selected automatic installation since HP had not provided XP support. I was given two generic XP printer choices. I picked what appeared to be the right one for my printer. Then a test page was printed, and I was in business.

Did it include all the features that this printer was capable of? No, it did not, but enough features were there so that I could print letters on legal size and regular paper. I cannot print in “book” style on both sides of the same sheet of paper, which I will miss, but at least I have a printer and don’t yet have to go out and buy another one. If I need book printing, I can still do that on my desktop, where I still have the fully supported HP drivers on Windows Me.

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Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the first Tuesday of the month at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry (just south of Columbus Drive) at 6:30 PM. For information contact 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@tampabay.rr.com.

Visual Basic for Applications 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 6:30 PM. For information, contact Merle Nicholson at merlenic@tampabay.rr.com, or William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com

Windows SIG

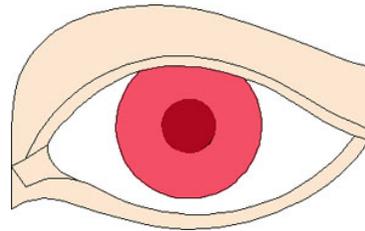
This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Mary Sheridan moderates the discussion.

Red-Eye: Its causes and how to deal with it

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

I think we are all familiar with that picture that is lovely except for the horrible red spot in the center of the subject's eyes, Red-Eye. The first thing to note is that it only occurs in flash pictures and the darker the room the more pronounced the effect. Fortunately, digital photo editing programs can greatly reduce the problem, but it is still best to eliminate the problem at the source when possible.

The effect is caused by the light from the flash reflecting off of the rear of the eye, the retina, which contains translucent blood carrying capillaries. Thus, the reflected light is red. The reflected light is passed back out of the eye and imaged by the camera. In dark surroundings, the iris of the eye, like that of the camera, opens to pass more light, thus the more pronounced the effect. Professional photographers deal with the problem by offsetting the flash source 6-10 inches from the plane of the camera lens. In this case, the reflected red light is offset so it does not pass through the camera lens. The amateur photographer does not want to carry around such a bulky contraption, so another solution has been developed. Unfortunately, it does not



work very effectively. In this case just before taking the picture the camera sends out one or more preflashes in hopes of making the eye's iris small enough

that little light is passed back to the camera even though the flash and lens are very nearly on the same axis. Unfortunately, the preflashes are seldom strong enough or long enough to cause the iris to constrict before the main flash and may cause the person to blink at the wrong time. This feature often does considerably reduce battery life but little else.

What can the photographer do? Only use the flash when there is no other way to sufficiently light the subject. Turn on additional lights and open drapes. Remove lamp shades from lamps out of view of the camera. If you must use the flash, place a bright light source in the direction the subject will be looking, thus constricting the subject's iris. Have the subject look at an object off camera.

If all of this fails to give acceptable results, then obtain a retouching program that has a good Red-Eye Retouching feature. ◆

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MEMBERS' HELP LINE

Program	Code	Name	Time	Phone	Codes
Adobe Acrobat	AA	Cheryl Alexander	Mon - Fri 10:00am - 9:00pm	914-0008	HTM,PSP,WP
AOL	AOL	Larry Anders	Mon - Sun 6:00pm - 10:00pm	989-9119	AOL, ME, MW, FP, PSP
Computer general	CG	Bob LaFave	8:00pm-10:00pm	960-0208	W95/W98, MOS
Delphi	DE	William LaMartin	Mon - Fri 9:00am - 9:00pm	251-3817	AA, FTM, IG, MOS, MP, VB, W95
DOS	DOS	Merle Nicholson	Mon - Fri 7:30pm - 9:30pm; weekends	879-3602	CG, DE, DOS, HG, HM, HP, VB
Family Tree Maker	FTM	Jenny Lind Olin	Mon - Sun 8:00am - 10:00pm	960-5723	ME, MW, PAF, Q, WP
Hardware general	HG	Don Patzsch		689-8662	CG
Hardware Modem	HM	Mary Sheridan	9:30am - 9:00pm	988-6480	AOL, CG, DOS, HG,IG, MW, Q, W95, W98
Hardware Printer	HP				
HTML coding	HTM				
Internet general	IG				
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS				
Microsoft Access	MA				
Microsoft Excel	ME				
Microsoft FrontPage	FP				
Microsoft Office Suite	MOS				
Microsoft Publisher	MP				
Microsoft Visual Basic	VB				
Microsoft Word	MW				
Networking	N				
PAF	PAF				
PaintShop PRO	PSP				
Quicken	Q				
Windows 3.1	W3				
Windows 95/98	W95/98				
Windows NT	WNT				
WordPerfect	WP				

We encourage other members to add their names to the list of those willing to assist fellow members with their computer problems. Contact William LaMartin to add your name to the list.

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I am a bit disappointed at HP for dropping support of my printer. When I called them on the phone they admitted they have other printers that are older than mine which still receive HP support, so age alone was not the criteria for dropping support on this model. XP Home Edition does seem to provide generic support for a wide range of printers from the ancient Okidata to the much more recent HP. (Hey, did I just pay Microsoft a compliment? Darned if I didn't, and my machine didn't lock up when I did it, either.)

Should my next printer be an HP? I really don't know. But I will consider other models as well when that time comes, and I'll try to do my homework this time, not only on printers but also on software and computers as well. It might surprise you to learn this, but I never did like homework. ♦



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

they teach? Mouse skills! Yes, they help you practice Clicking, Double-Clicking and Drag-and-Drop. So the next time your boss walks in just tell them you are working on your mouse skills.

I welcome your comments and suggestions. Please send them to president@tpcug.org. ♦

