Bits of Blue

April in Tampa

Meeting

Whittle's Picks

**Wednesday, April 9, 2003
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
6401 N 54th St
Tampa, Florida**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: David B. Whittle, author of *Cyberspace: The Human Dimension* and named by *Working Woman Magazine* as "one of America's most original technological thinkers," will be our presenter.

The topic will be **Whittle's Picks - Quality Software Products Anyone Can Use.** Mr. Whittle will demonstrate or introduce products of general appeal to computer users, including hidden gems from Comdex and from companies with outstanding, innovative technologies, including Intel, 3D Album, Muvee, iSeeMedia, Alpha Software and Creo. There will be a question and answer period, as well as door prizes and special product offers. Non-members of the group are invited to attend and take advantage of this special opportunity. ◆

Editor's Comments

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

This is our first newsletter in many, many years that we are not sending bulk mail. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, bulk mail was no longer saving us money since the required mailing of 200, along with the printing of 200 plus newsletters, was costing more than it would to print

May Meeting Topic: Windows XP

* * OFFICERS * *

President: Kevan Sheridan (president@tpcug.org)   988-6480
Vice President : John Witmer (JWITMER@Pepindist.com)   963-3760
Treasurer: Mike Hodges (mphs@aol.com)   962-2114
Secretary: Peggy Pulliam (pegrance@yahoo.com)   253-0438
Member at Large: Mary Sheridan (mcpease@mindspring.com)   988-6480

APPOINTED (Volunteers)

Editor: William LaMartin (lamartin@tampabay.rr.com)   251-3817
Librarian: Larry Anders (Larry@AndersNet.com)   989-9119
Programs: Bruce Register (bregis@gte.net)   968-8170
Membership: Jenny Leitzke (Leitzke4@hotmail.com)   968-9000

Home Page   http://www.tpcug.org

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

However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 821 S. Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606-2904; 813-251-3817; lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

Technical information found in this publication is not necessarily compatible with your hardware and software; plus other errors or misprints could occur from time to time. Therefore, the use of programs, commands, functions or anything of a technical nature appearing in this publication will be at your own risk.

Contributors are asked to submit articles as an ASCII, Microsoft Write, Microsoft Word, or Word Perfect file to the editor at 821 South Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33606-2904 or to lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

Permission to reproduce portions which are not specifically copyrighted is given to other computer users groups for nonprofit use. Reprints must be unaltered; proper credit given to the author and publication; and a copy of the publication must be sent to the attention of the Bits of Blue Editor at the club address. All other reproduction is prohibited without the specific written permission of the original author.

The use of trademarked and copyrighted names herein is not intended to infringe upon the owner's rights but rather to identify the products for the enlightenment of our users.

Commercial advertisements will be accepted. For rate information please contact the Editor by one of the above listed methods.

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 Peggy Pulliam, Secretary,
Tampa PC Users Group
pegrance@yahoo.com

At the meeting we welcomed several visitors and went straight into a presentation of digital photography.

Digital Photography involves:

1. Taking the picture, so you will want to have a digital camera or pictures you've already taken. You can visit a site at http://www.dpreview.com to see digital camera reviews. In the meantime you can scan pictures into the computer from the supply you have in shoeboxes already.

2. Getting pictures into the computer, straight from a digital camera or disk or storage device. You can visit http://www.luminous-landscape.com for techniques and opinions.

3. Doing something with the pictures. What we saw was about step three--the "digital darkroom" --using Adobe PhotoShop. This was incredible. You can change the background, fix the coloring and the red eye. You can fix them a little or a lot. The features we saw show how to layer the picture so you can change one part of the picture, make it look like the picture was taken in a completely different location by changing the background, or the person can be adjusted to look like they are holding something other than the puppy, for example, by changing just that portion, and you aren't losing the picture you already had! Nor are you adjusting all the layers of the picture, fascinating. Many professional looking possibilities are also available if you were to use Photo-Shop Elements, without the complications and costs of the real professional PhotoShop software.

Our presenter was William LaMartin. He prefers a digital camera that uses the flash card for storage of the pictures and says that Epson makes the best consumer photo printer but developing and printing at the local processors or drug stores is also a way to get some pictures done while you are contemplating what type printer you want to get.

We learned how to take the red eye out and balance the lighting in the picture, better the complexions, even make a person look pounds thinner! He had a butterfly moving around and landing on a flower too. A collection of photos from the back yard was transformed into a panorama of the backyard.

By the end of the evening, William had adjusted a photo of his lovely daughter, transforming her into something else; with purple hair, wider eyes, puffy lips, altered eye color and I'm not sure what all else. I was glad to see that the main picture was still there and the altered one could be saved or not! I vote "Not". There

Need to buy a new PC and do not know what to buy?

By Mike Hodges, Treasurer, Tampa PC Users Group
mphs@aol.com

Do not feel alone. Free enterprise is still very evident in the PC market and one can spend easily between $500 and $6000. So what to do? How can one feel comfortable within this dynamic market environment where technology is moving so rapidly. Very few of us, I believe, fall within any real predefined requirement. So I believe the first rule of the road is not to be in a hurry and at the same time do not dilly dally excessively as the PC technology is rapidly evolving and so is the overall market place. If you are like me, given time, one can do a thorough or close to thorough due diligence and then feel comfortable that you have made the right decision. If your decision is purely based on price you do, however, face a predicament.

I will start with the premise that you still have an operating PC but are becoming disenchanted with what you currently own and are looking to move up-market for any one of a variety of reasons. Since early 1998 I have been churning data on my basic Pentium I, 300 MHz based machine. I am connected by DSL and all is well with fast downloads and good graphics on a sizeable 13" diagonal display. My major concern has been hard drive space and a lack of general inter-connectivity. I recently bought an all-in-one-printer/fax/scanner and again ran into problems. It turned out that my USB port on the basic Pentium Intel-based IBM ThinkPad 600i series laptop PC running Windows 98 standard early edition did not even have the USB port enabled. For me this was the last straw, and my 12-month desire to upgrade was now a firm requirement. I had been forever, it seems, attempting to free up space on the 2 GB hard drive and the overall performance of internet connections were forever throwing up the message "out of disc space, run Cleansweep now!" I had been frequently going to my computer and left clicking on the C drive icon and then selecting Properties to see how little spare hard drive space was available. Sometimes only about 150 KB and sometimes 25 MB of space was inhibiting rapid internet downloads.

So as I do not upgrade but maybe every five years I needed to list my requirements. I am not a gamer and therefore did not need the fastest gun in the West but believed I wanted to be in the high speed range in order to feel respectable. I needed as much hard drive space as affordable. I needed another laptop as I anticipate much business travel in the next few years, as in my past five years. *I wanted good connectivity, I had burnt out many modems in the past at various hotels. I wanted a full Microsoft Office package and I wanted to own my own CD burner and a good DVD reader. I was not as yet too familiar with the latest wireless connectivity rage but wanted to be ready to leap with grace when that segment stabilizes in the next 12 months. Therefore, I wanted a laptop that was at least wireless enabled.* OK, I was now ready to espouse a plan of action.

1 Determine basic and optional requirements
2 Read as many magazine articles as could be found
3 Survey all the advertised specials
4 Get online and search each vendor's latest offerings and prices
5 Get some learned advice from peers
6 Get some hands-on before making a final decision.

Fortunately when you buy infrequently, price for me was not a limiting factor as long as I did not feel pressured or rooked. However, I was not sure that I needed another laptop as the one I had is still quite functional as long as I do not attempt to stash any more software on it or lash it up to any additional external devices. Maybe I could manage with a desktop, save money and have plenty of future expansion capability and use my ThinkPad on the road. So my decision making was temporarily impaired, and I extended my search across both laptops (now called notebooks) and desktops. Finally I decided that I would forever be wishing I carried an elegant notebook with me when on field assignments and that maintaining data across two machines would be somewhat burdensome. So I finally was able to focus on the "notebooks" and not the desktops. So next I sat in the local library and read computer magazines from cover to cover. On the net at CNET, the Dell Inspiron 8250 was the favored PC whereas, in the PC World magazine, the Gateway 600X was the highest rated. I read the April 2003 edition of PC World that sells for $6.99 in the bookstores. However, when you use the library you are required to read the latest editions without removal from the library and as a consequence they do not sit by your recliner for weeks awaiting your attention. On Sunday 23 March, the Sunday papers advertised over 30 separate PC's. I went to Office Depot and obtained their computer sales brochure to round out my survey. Initially I was concerned that Compaq and Gateway may not survive many more years in the marketplace. However, I had read that Dell support was generally not the best.

OK, this saga is now fast coming to a close. I include with this article my survey of 35 machines as advertised on 23 March 2003. A funny thing is that on 30 March I could only find brochures from Best Buy and Circuit City with the Sunday papers, and each of those had far more coverage for TV's and only a few PC's compared to the previous week. In the previous week CompUSA, Staples, Best Buy, Circuit City and others advertised extensively. Beware, as the stores attempt to make up packages that are as different as cheese from each other and therefore direct comparisons are extremely difficult. I surveyed Dell, Gateway, IBM, eMachines, Sony, Toshiba, Compaq and HP brands. Most of the offers require multiple supplier discounts that the buyer has to request in the form of rebates.

I decided I would visit the Gateway store at Columbus and Dale Mabry and the Dell kiosk in Citrus or Westshore Malls. At the Gateway store many notebooks were on display including the 15.7" display 600X model. I then went to the Dell kiosk in Westshore Mall and was informed that the 8500 would not be available for display until mid-April and that the 8200 series was

(New PC………Continued from page 3)

not available either as it had been discontinued in favor of the non-available 8500. Gee, fortunately before my outing to the retail outlets I had set my sights on the Gateway on account of the PC World article. The Gateway sales guy printed me out a quote that again was different from the PC World configuration but was more in line with my detailed requirements as he ascertained them to be. The Gateway store was a happy, comforting experience, and my machine has been ordered and I expect delivery within a week. Gateway promises 13 days, but I expect the machine will be out of Taiwan and on my doorstep by 4 April. I do believe I will be happy, and I know I am relieved the search is ended.

Finally, before committing myself and considerably armed with as many facts as I could collect, I sought out advice from my peer group members. Fortunately, being a member of the TPCUG provided a number of knowledgeable types on which to call. Our esteemed editor being the final point person I called from the Gateway store parking lot and received his green light on my final choice of PC.

The computer's specifications are:

- Gateway 600X with added options
- Processor: 2.2Ghz-M (M means it runs cool)
- Memory: 512MB DDR SDRAM (Single module, readily upgradeable by adding another 512MB)
- Floppy Drive: Modular 3.5" (Many other manufacturers have discarded the floppy drive)
- Hard Drive: 60GB Ultra ATA...add $75.00
- Optical Drive: 24x/10x/24x CDRW and 8x DVD Combo
- Expansion slots: Two type II or one type III PC Card slots
- External Ports: 2 USB, IEEE 1394 (FireWire), SVGA, Parallel, Serial, PS/2
- S/PDIF, NTSC/PAL Video Output
- Operating System: MS Windows XP Professional
- Application Software: MS Office XP Professional...add $220.00
- AntiVirus Utilities: Norton Internet Security with Belkin Surge Kit…add $70.00
- Screen: 15.7" SXGA TFT Active Matrix
- Video: ATI Mobility Radeon 9000w/64MB DDR Video memory
- Extra Mouse: USB Optical Mouse…add $20.00
- Multimedia Package: SoundBlaster Pro Stereo Speakers and Microphone
- Battery: High Capacity Lithium Ion with AC Pack
- Modem: Integrated V.92.56K
- Network Adapter: Integrated Intel PRO 10/100 VE Network Connection
- Internet Service Provider: One year AOL internet access
- Wireless Networking Adaptor: Integrated 802.11b Wireless

FACUG Spring Conference

By Jenny Lind Olin, Tampa PC Users Group
jlolin@tampabay.rr.com

The 2003 Florida Association of Computer User Groups (FACUG) Spring Regional Conference met February 28 - March 2 in the Kissimmee Civic Center, Osceola County, which is near Disney World. I have attended several of these annual meetings and find they are well-planned events. If you make your reservation before the deadline, the event is very financially reasonable. The FACUG Spring Conference is a wonderful time for meeting other computer-oriented people and exchanging ideas. It seems somebody always has a success story to tell, or they are excited about the upcoming program that they are planning.

When I walked in Friday night there was a small buffet of crudités (fresh veggies) and chips with dip, cheese bites, and similar pickings, plus drinks. I was a little "taken back" because I thought the plan had reverted back to the Friday night dinner. In the past there was a very pleasant dinner evening -- good food, a presentation, and at least one really neat "give-away" item. I didn't need to worry. There was, indeed, a very nice dinner and presentation sponsored by Adobe that night.

Times have changed and the freebies are not so forth coming, but the Spring Event is really a bargain if you just consider the food you get. Never mind how hard it will be to work off all those calories. If nothing else, we were very well fed. The large round tables of ten very friendly people gave us an opportunity to exchange ideas and just get to know other groups better. Everybody seemed to be in a good mood, especially at meal times.

The theme this year, which has been a trend for several years, was digital processes. I have to admit it is about time I bought a digital camera and tossed out my Brownie. I could then get started removing red eye (a process that has progressed from A to Z in the past few years), making first time photos look professional by manipulating the background, changing the lighting, and touching up old photos now by copying "patches" and pasting them in flawed areas, and organizing photos in computer albums, to name a few. All are very sophisticated processes using today's new software.

A new vendor this year was Smart Computing Magazine. All received their latest issue and a couple of the door prizes were annual subscriptions, a notebook with a collection of the previous year's issues, and a Smart Computing hardcopy encyclopedia. If you attended the November 2002 general meeting of the TPCUG, then you will recall Kevan Sheridan's presentation on Smart Computing Magazine. We saw an updated version of that presentation. During the demonstration of the Smart Com-

Internet Picture of the Month

puting website, someone suggested they create an Internet Explorer toolbar add-in for directly searching the Smart Computing website and they seemed very receptive to that idea.

At another session, this vendor also conducted a roundtable session on their user group program. Their demonstration program changes often so expect to see another demonstration before long. Smart Computing Magazine has a program that requires the User Group to have a link to their website: http://smartcomputing.com If five members subscribe to one of their magazines, then the user group gets a free subscription.

Microsoft, the time-honored and well-loved vendor, did several presentations during the weekend. They had their problems as their shipment went to another address and never made it to Kissimmee. The Microsoft agent, Alan Chitlik, had recycled his cardboard boxes and had left an old address on one side of the box. Guess which address Federal Express used. In spite of Alan's sharing his thoughts with Federal Express, they were not willing to overnight the package so it was scheduled to arrive at the civic center the Monday morning after the conference. Alan still did an excellent job with his presentations.

One suggestion I would make for other meetings of this type is to coordinate some of the gifts. Microsoft gave us shoe-string type lanyards which held a ballpoint pen. We had a pen in our FACUG bags but I could never find mine. A pen around my neck would have been more convenient. Microsoft doled these out Sunday afternoon, but they would have been better used if they had been in the canvas tote bags we received as we checked in at the registration desk. These bags were sponsored by Borland, Comcast, and Cerious Software. Also, Apple gave us all a large notebook at the very end, and

US Third Infantry at the Euphrates in Iraq

This is one of many photos at the New York Times site http://www.nytimes.com/. The subtitle reads: "The Third Infantry Division took control of a bridge crossing the Euphrates River near Hindiyah, Iraq…"

Photo by John Moore of the Associated Press.

April's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (That's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
College Search - Links to colleges and universities	http://u101.com/
Evergreen Plantation	http://www.evergreenplantation.com/
The Butterfly Site	http://www.thebutterflysite.com/
The Flash Mind Reader (figure it out)	http://mr-31238.mr.valuehost.co.uk/assets/Flash/psychic.swf
NewspaperDirect.com - Newspapers from around the world	http://online.newspaperdirect.com/webdisplay/worldmap.html
Florida Department of Motor Vehicles	http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us/index.html
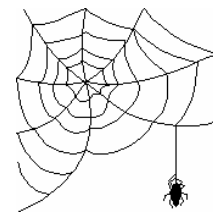
Some of these links will join the many already on the Links page at our web site, where you need only click on the name.
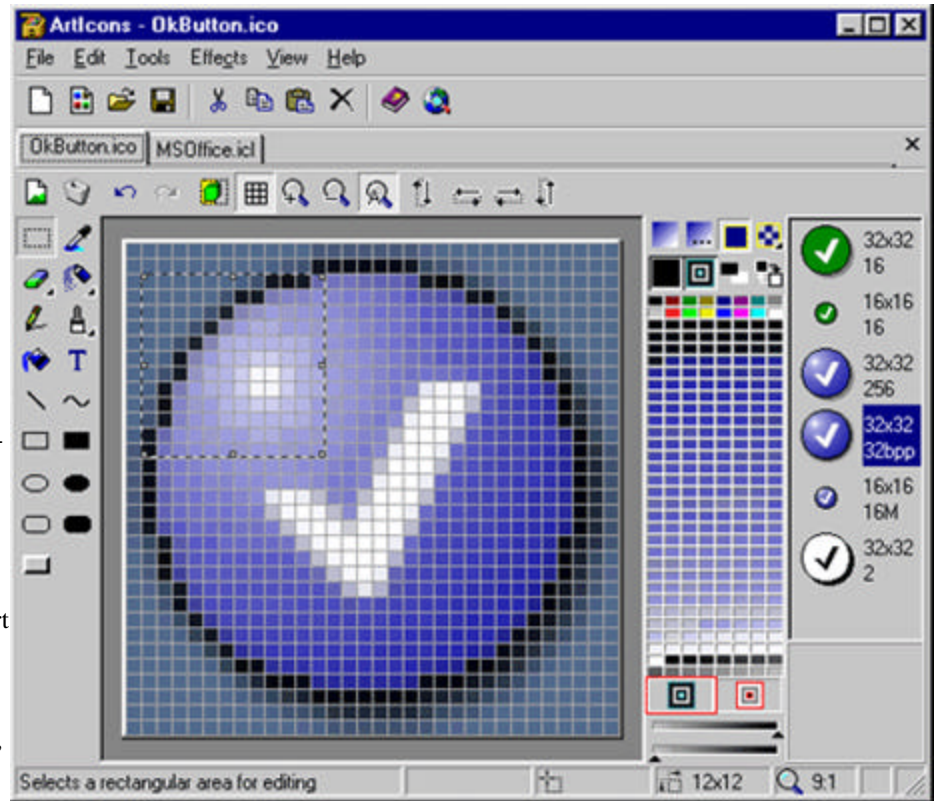
IconUtils

By Bob LaFave, Tampa PC users Group
boblala@ij.net

IconUtils is a software suite that includes the five separate programs that I will describe below. With **IconUtils** you can create your own unique icons and cursors or customize existing icons and cursors. You can also take images and convert them to icons or do the reverse and convert icons to graphics images. This gives you a unique look and feel so you can tailor your desktop icons and display various folders uniquely so that you can distinguish them at a glance. **IconUtils** is priced at $54.95 as a download from Aha-Soft at http://www.iconutils.com.

AhaView is the first program listed in the start menu and would be $19.95 if ordered separately. **AhaView** is a picture viewer and converter that supports all popular graphics formats, including JPEG, GIF, PNG, BMP, ICO, CUR, ANI, WBMP, XPM, XBM, PSD. The viewer has a directory tree that you can scan to a folder that contains supported formats, a thumbnail section that displays all items found, and a small area below the directory that shows a highlighted item in a slightly larger view. You can browse images in thumbnail mode and do various graphics manipulations such as Copy, Rename, Delete, Convert and more. You can then double click any image and go to a full screen view of any picture, and if needed you can browse the other files in the folder as a slide show. I found it easy to use since it is very similar to both ACDSee and IrfanView, which I have used in the past but liked that these five programs in **IconUtils** together take up very little space, 7.70 MB compared to ACDSee taking up 6.71MB and IrfanView 5.39MB. I also believe it displays it's thumbnails faster when large quantities of graphics, icon, or cursor files are viewed.

Any to Icon is the next program and is also listed at $19.95 online as a download. **Any to Icon** is an icon converter that allows you to convert BMP, JPEG, GIF, PNG, WBMP, XPM, XBM, PSD and WMF images to Windows icons. You can convert single graphics or you can batch process all files in a folder and can break down entire icon libraries into individual icons. Icons can be extracted from libraries and some file types such as exe, DLLs, cpl, and more. The program is similar to a wizard in that you progress from selecting the graphics or library and point and click till you create the final desired icons. As you progress you are given the choice to change color resolution and size to create your customized icons.

ArtCursors is the next program in the *start menu folder* and is available as a single download for $29.95. **ArtCursors** is a cur-

sor editor, cursor library manager, and cursor creator. You can find and edit single cursors or you can import, export, manage and create cursor libraries. Libraries are multiple cursors contained in a single file name and allow simple file storage. **ArtCursors** can create and edit static and animated cursors with color depths to up to 32-bit True Color, and you have different paint tools, including gradient fills, to customize to your hearts content. You can also convert graphics images to cursors and import cursors from icon and library files. This program workplace is set as a grid canvas that allows for easy creation or customization of cursors. I was able to create a simple arrow pointer in minutes.

ArtIcons Pro is next and can be purchased separately online as a download for $29.95. **ArtIcons Pro** is an icon editor and icon library manager that does for icons what **ArtCursors** does for cursors. You can find, create and edit icons or import and export icons, both single icons and libraries. As with the cursors, you can also import, export, create and manage icon libraries. The icons that you create or edit can be of variable size and color depths up to 32-bit True Color, and it supports the new icon format in Windows XP. The tools are much the same as in **ArtCursors** with the same toolbars showing each tool name as you hover your mouse over each tool, and you can change effects, such as rotation gradient and fill. You can convert graphics images to icons and import icons from cursor files or from library files. You can scan files and folders for icons and arrange icons into libraries.

(ArtIcons..........Continued from page 6)

Icon to Any is the last included program and is $19.95 if you wish to purchase it separately as a download. This program is pretty much the reverse of **Any to Icon** that is described above. **Icon to Any** starts with Windows icons and cursors and converts them into graphics images, either BMP, JPG, PNG, GIF, ICO, CUR, WBMP, PSD, XPM, XBM and RC formats. It also has a wizard style interface, and it's very simple to process multiple files at once, plus you have control over size and color (again True Color 32-bit) and pick in which format to save it.

The online site had a **FREE** download page with icons, cursors, and graphics to download. There are **Libraries Samples** so that you can figure out what they are. You can also order specialized icons from them of your own design, but I think that with these five programs and a little bit of time most users will be amazed at what you can create on your own. I have no artistic abilities and easily customized and created icons and cursors. Overall, I found each program easy to use, the **HELP** sections explained each process I tried and did so quickly. I had no problems downloading or installing **IconUtils** or figuring how to begin each operation. Each is similar to other programs I have used over the years and most users will be comfortable with these programs. If you like to individualize your computer then this would probably be just the program you would need and would enjoy using. ◆

(FACUG..........Continued from page 5)

it would have been nice to have it at the beginning so we could take notes during the presentations. Maybe it doesn't make as much of an impression to receive it when you register, but the longer we have it in our possession and use the gift, the more time we have to become aware of the vendor. I am certain that Office Depot, another helpful vendor, would be able to give notebooks of maybe a smaller size that could be included in the tote bag.

I was very impressed by the websites roundtable session. During the session the leader was able to bring up several club websites and critique them. He suggested minimizing the graphics so they will load faster. He was not thrilled with animated graphics on the website. He loved having a menu visible on each page so the navigator could move around and especially get back to the beginning. He suggested the counter was not necessary and suggested the webmaster contact the provider to furnish them with the statistics concerning their website. One suggestion I thought of afterwards was suggesting all members use the user group's website as their homepage default.

Ken Bundy of Lake Wales, Ridge Computer Users Group, was the leader of the session on "Running a User Group." He had some very good ideas. One I especially believe is that groups need to train members to perform as officers and ultimately be prepared to be the president. Another was to have the board members listening and reporting on suggestions and comments from the membership. He said his officers all wore golf shirts of the same color at the meetings. Thus all officers are recognizable by any visitor. One club used different colors for the name tags, one color for officers, one color for volunteers, and one color for the regular membership. One club gave their volunteers those neat wallets that you can wear around your neck and use for a name badge. One club gave pins the shape of the state of Florida for a year of volunteering.

The Saturday afternoon vendor panel consisted of the following seven vendors: Peggy Ireland, APCUG; Alan Chitlik, Microsoft Mindshare; Scott Sterns, Microsoft O/S Interaction Team; Kevin Moulder, Office Depot; Peter Bloxam, Comcast, Brian Bess, Comcast; and Ken Torres, Comcast.

I was impressed with the attitude of the Charlotte County Personal Computer Users Group. They had an Expo planned for the following weekend, so they were donating all the gifts they won at the FACUG conference for the benefit of their upcoming event. They needed as many prizes as they could get for door prizes. They have a wonderful community facility to their event - sharing the proceeds with them. They also have the same problems that other clubs have in that not everybody will allow them to hang their posters which they are
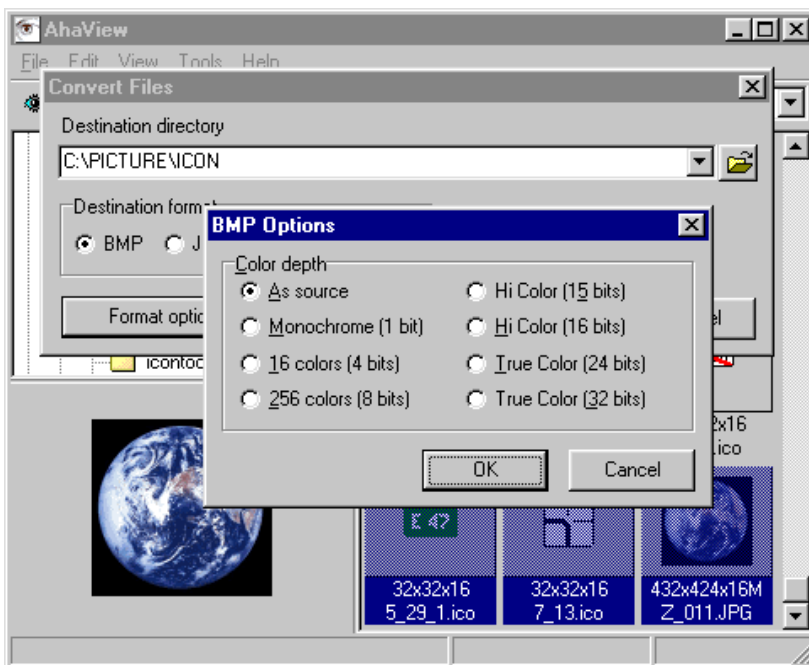
Looking Back to 1993

From the April 1993 *Bits of Blue*

Secretary's Report
MINUTES OF 3/10/93 MEETING
By: Jim Clark

I must say at the outset that our Prez, Harvey Bruneau, is doing a great job. I thought it was another great meeting!!

That the meetings are always enjoyable and productive is in large measure due to the efforts of our Prez. It seems that Harvey always has arranged a super presentation either by a major vendor and/or by one of our own on a new program and/or one of current interest to our group. And he brings many items of interest from the industry to us each month. Behind the scenes, as well, he pushes to make our group ever better. He receives support from a small, but great group of people who serve in some official capacity in our group: Maiylee Bruneau, our editor, who puts together a super newsletter; Tom Cone, our VP, who most know as a pleasant and helpful greeter at our regular meetings, but who also helps in so many behind-the-scene ways; Kevan Sheridan, our SYSOP, which is a time consuming and challenging task, has done a great job maintaining, improving and expanding our BBS; Bill (William) Fuller, our treasurer, who has done a super job taking care of the group's finances and books, and is so helpful in many other ways--Good luck, Bill, you will be missed; Roger Waters, our Member-At-Large, who does what needs to be done; Ed Buzza, Education Director, who helps us all learn more in classes he conducts or arranges, and on a person-to-person basis anytime, anywhere; Larry Anders, our librarian, who not only does a great job of maintaining our software files but also contributes to our group in so many creative and helpful, but, unsung, ways.

It is due to the efforts of these folks that our group continues to produce a useful and enjoyable product, and continues to grow. It takes a lot of time and effort on their part -- and I, for one, REALLY APPRECIATE IT. Don Patzsch, an active member, is currently doing a bang-up job with a comprehensive modem/BBS class that he has been conducting. (I have wanted to take advantage of that class, but other responsibilities have taken priority so far.) Arranging and conducting this class has taken a good bit of Don's time and effort -- the classes don't just happen automatically. A GREAT BIG THANKS to all of you!!

INDUSTRY/CLUB NEWS

In the rather limited time available for general discussion -- the meeting had started a little late and time was needed for the rather large program that was to be reviewed -- a number of items of interest were bought up, including:

- There was a discussion about discounts provided to members by CompUSA. See the President's column for additional information.
- Harvey reported that his organization (a Dun & Bradstreet company that provides human resource and finan-

cial applications to corporate clients) is now using Microsoft's WorkGroup for Windows and it is proving very helpful for them. It is an addition to their network system and is used primarily for internal communications and exchange of data. If you have a multiple-computer office, you may want to investigate the program and what it might do for you.

- There was considerable discussion of Stacker 3.0, started by one who reported a number of difficulties, including compatibility and other computer problems. However, there were no other problems reported from the many other Stacker users among those present. Harvey reported problems with decompressing a drive, a new feature with Stacker 3.0. I run SuperStorPro, which also includes the decompress feature, rather than Stacker. I note in my manuals that the decompression works only with drives compressed by the program, inferring that drives compressed with earlier versions cannot be decompressed with SuperStorPro -- but I haven't tried it. That may be the case with Stacker 3.0 as well. A question was raised about the impact of compression on speed. The answer was that there appeared to be no discernible degradation for normal operations; while decompression does take time, that time is offset by the smaller size of files that have to be read and written. One reported the only noticeable degradation was in the time required to load programs, such as D-Base. There seemed to be consensus among those who spoke that they were reasonably happy with their drive compression program.

PRESENTATION - Impov For Windows

Lotus Corporation was good enough to send to us a knowledgeable representative, John O'Loughlin, to give us a preview of Lotus's new program, Improv For Windows. I must tell you at the outset that I am not an expert on spreadsheets; my experience is limited to use of a 6 x 6 matrix a couple of times.

They term Improv their new "Dynamic Spreadsheet for Windows" with "Functionality Beyond Traditional Spreadsheets." Though John really tried to explain to me what they meant by dynamic, I can't describe to you what they mean by dynamic. My copy of Webster dictionary says dynamic is, "full of force and energy; active; potent." I would have to agree with that definition as a description of Improv. It is a very powerful program that appears to be quite user friendly (that is probably what they mean with "intuitive"). John whipped up new spreadsheets in just a few moments; manipulated with ease the data in just about every way one could imagine, including responses to questions from the floor, "Can you do thus and so?"; and created almost instantaneous charts. Among the many features of the program that give it "Functionality Beyond Traditional Spreadsheets" are:

- Dynamic viewing that lets you rearrange and edit data instantly with drag and drop; hide, show, collapse and expand capability; and switch from flat to 3-D multi-page mode.

- User defined English language formulas which are stored separate from the data and can be applied to many cells at once -- being much like styles in a word processor, it makes for much easier creation and editing. And the formulas are very easy to create -- a few selections using the mouse and,Walla, there it is.
- Multi-dimensional spreadsheet modeling with the capability to analyze up to 12 categories of data, each of which can have up to 63,999 items and allows linking and saving up to 100 worksheets in a single file.
- Innovative user interface with a floating panel that lets you instantly view and set colors, fills, line and text styles; edit and drag & drop any object on screen; right button Quick Menus; smart fill of familiar worksheet categories (years, months, dates, etc.); SmartIcons for common Improv commands; status bar that provides quick access to fonts, formats, styles and other basic attributes.
- Flexible formatting/printing/reporting; includes Adobe Type Manager, with 13 scalable fonts, and uses True-Type fonts as well; print preview to verify page layout and appearance; complete page setup formatting, including headers and footers; portrait, landscape, fit-to-page and scaleable printing options.
- Develop applications with state-of-the-art tools, including L scripting language record and playback scripts which can be edited and attached to icons or presentation objects; Application Programming Interface (API) toolkit; and Lotus Dialog editor to create custom user interfaces to Script programs.
- Supports DDE and OLE client and server for smooth integration with other Windows applications, and it reads/writes WKI, WK3, XLS(4.0) data, formulas, numeric formats and styles.
- Professional creation of graphics quickly and easily, selecting a range of data, pick a graph type from over 20 major chart and graph types, including 3-D bar and pie charts, rotate 3-Ds for the best angle, create and print multi-page presentations, hot link multiple charts and worksheet tables, and annotate presentations with text, images, other drawings and OLE objects.
- It is reported (and appears to be) relatively easy to learn. In addition to context-sensitive menus and Quick Menus, and the simplicity and ease of creating and editing/manipulating spreadsheets, it also has context-sensitive help and an "Exploring Improv" quick-start guide.

Hardware/software requirements for the program are: 386SX/20-class or higher computer (with 33 MHz desired), Windows compatible displays (VGA resolution desired) and printers, 4 MB RAM minimum (with 6 desired), Windows supported mouse, Windows 3.1 or later, and 10 MB of hard disk space.

What does this wonderful package cost? List is $495, but there is a special introductory price of $99 that will be good until

May 31. As a limited special, John is making available to members present at the presentation a copy of Improv for $49 using a limited number of controlled coupons he is providing our Prez (members present had to sign-up for this offer); the coupons will be available at the next meeting.. Those members not present at the meeting should watch the BBS, or check with an officer at the next meeting to ascertain if the $49 offer has been extended to all members desiring a copy.

To Lotus Corp and John O'Loughlin, thanks for a wonderful presentation of a great program, and for your generosity with the programs and the special pricing for Improv. It looks like to us that you have another winner.

AND THE WINNER IS

Thanks to the generosity of Lotus Corporation and Sunrise Computer, along with the 50/50 cash drawing, there were some very nice raffle prizes. Those among us to have the good fortune to win are as follows:

William Coleman	Disk cleaner & Mouse Pad
M.M. Marteny	Lotus Organizer (2)
David Geiger	Lotus Organizer
Ed Buzza	Lotus Organizer
Luis Vergara	Lotus 1-2-3
Kevan Sheridan	Lotus 1-2-3
Kit Kelley	Lotus Freelance Plus
John Waldon	Lotus Ami Pro
Ed Buzza	50/50 ($85)

The meeting adjourned at about 8:40 PM ◆

might be a need for that with some pictures, or maybe a Halloween poster, you never know.

The presenter said that he was not an expert with PhotoShop and had much more to learn--if he only had the time. He has begun a project to scan in all his old photos and get them into some order and a meaningful collection. He's also created some special portfolios of photos from the neighborhood where he lives and the photos of plants and flowers that he has taken.

The other software, Adobe Illustrator, gives you the ability to create designs, your own greeting cards and many other graphic ideas in which you may incorporate your photos.

Lucky winners at this month's meeting took away four great door prizes: A copy of Photo Shop Elements, Photo Gallery clip art, an old laptop computer and a copy of Spell Catcher. ◆

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

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 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. Kevan Sheridan moderates the dis cussion.

Hewlett Packard's Inkjet Cartridge Recycling Program

By Jim Purcell, Tampa PC users Group
Edward_J_P@MSN.com

This program provides customers with an environ-mentally responsible solution for disposal of end-of-life HP inkjet cartridges. The program enables HP to recover recyclable materials and responsibly dispose of non-recyclable residuals.

HP works with some of the most advanced recy-cling resources in the world to recover usable mate-rials from their used inkjet cartridges. The recy-cling process is unique to HP inkjet cartridges and includes steps for grinding, separating and recover-ing plastics, stainless steel, and precious metals such as gold and silver. All HP inkjet cartridges except those from DesignJet 2000CP, 2500CP, 3000CP and 3500CP are included in the program. There is a separate program for LaserJet cartridges.

HP will mail prepaid envelopes to you which will hold up to two cartridges. They also will provide prepaid boxes for mailings of more than thirty car-tridges. To obtain your prepaid envelopes you can visit the HP web site at http://www.hp.com/recycle or call 1-800-340-2445. ◆

Networking…add $75.00
- Warranty: Three year parts and labor, no onsite, three year technical support
- Gateway Music Vault
- Data Migration Kit…add $50.00
- Shipping: $5.00
- Base Price $2177, Configured Price $2758 ◆

and mail via first class postage the newsletter to only our mem-bership and a few friends of the group. If you are satisfied with reading the newsletter online and don't particularly care to read the hard copy of the newsletter and would be just as happy to not receive a mailed version, contact me to have your name removed from the mailing list. That would save the group about $.70. However, the newsletter is a benefit of the group, and everyone is entitled to a mailed, printed version for as long as we print and mail one.

You will note that most of the articles in this newsletter are set at 10 point type, whereas in most recent newsletters most of the articles were in 12 point type. There is a simple reason for that. I got more material than I bargained for when I begged and re-begged for articles this month. On Friday, I had one article; over the weekend I got several more. For that I am very appre-ciative, but can't we all do this just a few days earlier. This last minute editing is running me ragged.

I also want to thank the members who currently help me assem-ble the newsletter. They are Jenny Lind Olin, Wade Herman, Jim Purcell and Lew Kaminga. ◆

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following firms for their support

Gateway 2000
Marshall & Stevens
Pepin Distributing Co.

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

Adobe Systems	Office Depot
Borland	PowerQuest
CompUSA	RDI, Inc.
Corel Systems	Symantec
Intuit	
Microsoft	

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP?
WE CERTAINLY HOPE YOU WILL

MAIL YOUR CHECK AND ANY
ADDRESS OR NAME CHANGES TO:

TAMPA PC USERS GROUP
PO BOX 3492
TAMPA, FL 33601-3492

$25 Individual $35 Family
$60 Corporate = 3 employees + $20 each add'l employee

**Go to our web site http://www.tpcug.org and click on the Join link to fill in an online membership application**

Check the address label for your renewal month

MEMBERS' HELP LINE

Program	Code
Adobe Acrobat	AA
AOL	AOL
Computer general	CG
Delphi	DE
DOS	DOS
Family Tree Maker	FTM
Hardware general	HG
Hardware Modem	HM
Hardware Printer	HP
HTML coding	HTM
Internet general	IG
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS
Microsoft Access	MA
Microsoft Excel	ME
Microsoft FrontPage	FP
Microsoft Office Suite	MOS
Microsoft Publisher	MP
Microsoft Visual Basic	VB
Microsoft Word	MW
Networking	N
PAF	PAF
PaintShop PRO	PSP
Quicken	Q
Windows 3.1	W3
Windows 95/98	W95/98
Windows NT	WNT
WordPerfect	WP

Name	Time	Phone	Codes
Cheryl Alexander	Mon - Fri 10:00am - 9:00pm	914-0008	HTM,PSP,WP
Larry Anders	Mon - Sun 6:00pm - 10:00pm	989-9119	AOL, ME, MW, FP, PSP
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
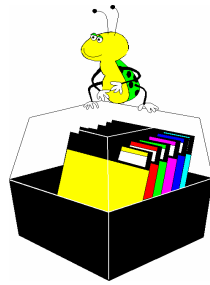
☐ Member: Your membership is up for renewal
☐ Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ___

(FACUG..........Continued from page 7)
using to advertise their Expo.

Times are changing and it is quite evident by the lesser number of vendors available at the conference, the lack of vendors sponsoring the conference events, and the lesser amount of software that was given away. I wonder if the responsibility is ours, the club or the individual, in that we need to encourage more software purchases by our members. Could we accomplish this by providing a means of learning to use new software through general meeting presentations, classes, and SIGs?

I really enjoyed this spring conference and hope to attend more in the future. The registration was close to 200. That tells me there was a real interest across the state in the conference. What little disappointment was expressed came from those old-timers who have been spoiled by the generous software gifts that have now dwindled. Part of the fun was seeing the familiar faces and learning new ones. If you have never attended a FACUG conference, you might want to plan to experience a great weekend next year about the first weekend in March. I will see you there. ◆

The Tampa PC Users Group Meeting is in the Art Pepin Hospitality Room at Pepin Distributing Co
6401 North 54th Street, Tampa, FL 33610