Bits of Blue

**May in Tampa
Gardenias**

Meeting

Windows XP

**Wednesday, May 14, 2003
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
6401 N 54th St
Tampa, Florida**

Meeting Preview: . Merle Nicholson will give a presentation on Windows XP. Preceding that, Kevan Sheridan will conduct the usual half-hour Windows SIG.◆

**Our April presenter Dave Whittle of
whats4me.com**

June Meeting Topic: To be announced -- Check our web site.

apcug Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

Minutes of the April Meeting

By Peggy Pulliam, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
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This month at the Windows Special Interest Group, held just before the special speaker part of the monthly meeting, we discussed the little arrow to the right of the "back" button of Internet Explorer. It shows you where you have been surfing. If you have never clicked on that arrow, try it sometime. Alt F4 closes the current window. That's a good thing to know, too. Other difficulties with Windows were discussed, and the other members present provided lots of solutions.

Each of us at the meeting received a copy of "Computer Link Magazine", a magazine customized for the local Tampa Bay area! See http://www.TampaComputing.com for more information on that.

WINDOWS XP is the PRIZE FOR NEXT MEETING!! All you need (if you win) is 200 MHZ, 64 MB Ram, 16 MB Video Ram. Be sure to come to the meeting May 14th; you can't win if you don't show up, that is for sure.

Our speaker for April, Dave Whittle with *whats4me.com,* introduced us to many interesting types of software and exclusive User Group prices, too. He searches for, finds and presents groups with the coolest and latest software coming out. I'll tell you some of what he showed us, but without the showing part you miss some great ideas of ways to use your computer.

3D Album - by Micro Research Institute. Incredible visual effects for displaying your photos in a slide show. Sort of like walking through the space age or a museum with your pictures in the place of the famous ones.

PhotoVista 2.0 and Photo Vista Virtual Tour - by iSeeMedia. The first creates panoramas from a series of photos, automatically stitching the scene together correctly. He had some wonderful family travel pictures to demonstrate it. The Virtual Tour creates interactive web sites. Dave said some famous websites use that software, like Porsche and Lexus and Tiger Woods. That's worth taking a look at for a little demonstration of the product.

He showed us Alpha 5 Version 5 - by Alpha Software. The newest release of the database product that manages information. Ease of use and learning seems to be the big pull for Alpha 5. It was a smooth demonstration of the program's capabilities. If you weren't there, you can contact them to find out more because it's hard to describe, but clubs and churches and other groups could really use this.

One other piece of software, Six Degrees - by Creo. This software is a desktop application for Microsoft Outlook users. After

HP's Media Center 854n PC & Windows XP Pro Media Center Edition

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

Well, last month I finally retired my 3+ years old Gateway computer that I had been upgrading since it was about 6 months old and decided to look for something new. I had been using Windows XP Pro on both my home and office computers, so I knew I would settle for no less than Microsoft's most stable architecture to date. While shopping around, I happened into CompUSA at the very time they were setting up a new line of PCs by HP. This new PC also had a new superset of XP Pro installed called *Windows XP Media Center Edition (MCE)*, hence the name of my new computer, *HP Media Center 854n PC.*

I had read some pre-introductory promotional info on MCE, but I did not realize it was already out to the public. [I don't usually look at computers when I am shopping because I don't want to see how outdated my current computer already is.] The 854n is actually a 2nd [or maybe 3rd] generation MCE computer by HP that is $300 cheaper than its predecessor, the 873n. I'm not sure what is different between the systems other than some speakers and updated software, but the 854n seemed ready for prime time, and so was I. My last two PCs have had internal TV cards, but they were never fully integrated into the operating system like this setup.

Gateway actually sells a similar model with MCE that comes with a 42" flat-screen monitor that can be set up in the family, or TV room. We already have a large-screen TV in the family room so I settled on a 19" Samsung flat-panel monitor instead, sold separately from the PC itself. But my computer is directly behind the wall my TV sits against so I have plans to go through the wall directly into the TV once I get all of this new stuff figured out. Then I can watch, or listen to whatever is played on my PC on the TV in the family room.

The HP 854n comes with more bells and whistles [and addi-

tional software] than one could imagine not too long ago. It has an Intel Pentium 4, 2.53 GHz processor with front-side bus speed of 533MHz. It also comes with 512MB of DDR SDRAM [expandable to 1GB with one open slot-which I did]; a 120 GB hard drive; a DVD+RW/CD-RW combo drive and a 48x CD-ROM drive [which I immediately replaced with a 52x CDR/RW drive]. The DVD writer is 2x and the combo CDR portion is only 12x, so after being used to writing at 48x I wasn't about to step backwards before I got the new computer home.

The graphics card in my opinion is excellent. It is an NVIDIA GeForce MX440 with 128 MB DDR RAM. I was told the new system came with a 5.1 integrated stereo sound and did not realize until I got it home it was only 2.1 sound. [Like I said, this was a brand new system being set up when I bought it, and I truly believe the salesperson thought it was 5.1] My disappointment didn't last long because my neighbor, who was helping me set up the new computer at home, left for a moment and returned with a 5.1 card that he had purchased in Germany a few months earlier and realized he could not use when he got back to the states. We popped in the card and voila, surround sound. XP recognized it immediately. [Funny thing, though, I learned later, most TV isn't surround sound when it's live anyway, but it is after it is recorded and played back.] I forgot to mention earlier, I had also bought a new Lansing surround sound speaker system, with sub-woofer, one center control speaker and four satellite speakers. So 2.1 sound [typical stereo with sub-woofer] would not have worked with this speaker system.

What makes MCE different is that it comes with a personal video recorder, which is a high-performance hardware encoder compatible with digital cable, satellite TV or just regular old-fashioned antenna TV.

Considering this is called a media center PC, the computer also comes with a host of external media ports including: 5 USB 2.0; 1 serial; 1 parallel; 2 PS/2; 2 IEEE 1394; and a 6-in-1 media card reader that reads all standards of digital media cards used in digital cameras today. [No more having to connect my digital camera via the USB cable.] I just slide my memory card into the appropriate slot, and it becomes another drive letter.

The 854n also comes with all the standards like: fax/modem; network card; mouse, keyboard, etc. But wait. The keyboard is anything but standard. Many of the features of MCE can be accessed directly from the keyboard. Oh yeah, there is also a remote infrared [IR] sensor that comes with the system too, fully integrated directly into MCE. It allows the remote control to communicate with the computer, and also controls your cable or satellite set-top box.

So, now you know about my new computer, what about MCE? This is what Microsoft has to say about it. "Media Center is a single, unified full-screen portal for all of your entertainment, designed for viewing and remote control interaction from a

distance. The easy-to-navigate menu screens feature customizable sound prompts, animated transitions, and backgrounds. Fonts, layouts, and transitions are consistent across all entertainment experiences and with the Windows XP experience."

You cannot buy an upgrade to convert an existing PC to MCE. It only comes pre-installed on MCE-built computers. There is just too much stuff in the operating system and computer that is interdependent on each other for an upgrade to work properly without hours and hours of effort and tweaking. It would not make sense to try and put together a system that would work properly when you can buy a box like I did for $1400.

One of MCE's primary functions is built around the personal video recorder [**PVR**] mentioned earlier. In my case I connected the TV cable to the TV card in the PC, booted the computer and answered some questions about my cable connection and before long it was downloading the TV schedule related directly to my setup and my locale. I must say, the TV listing [**Guide**] on my computer is now much better than what is actually provided by the cable company.

The Guide is an easy-to-navigate grid view of up to 14 days of upcoming programming. The channel lineup can be customized to remove channels that you don't want to view. You can search the Guide for up to 14 days of upcoming programs by title, keyword, or categories such as: Movies, Sports, and Kids and subcategories such as Dramas, Football, and Cartoons. When you find a show that interests you, press the Details (or More Info) button on the remote control to view a description, cast listing, rating, and other program details. The Guide automatically retrieves TV listings from the Internet once or twice each day or you can manually update the Guide at any time.

During the initial setup of your TV connection you can choose to use closed captioning or utilize the secondary audio channel, which may contain a different language or alternate versions of the audio program.

So, you if want to record a specific program or a series of programs and you're not sure when they air, just do a search, make a couple of clicks of the mouse or remote and forget about it. It's really that simple! Oh, and if there is a programming change MCE automatically checks the Guide for the latest programming information, ensuring that your shows are recorded even if the programming schedule changes. So it's actually the program that is the basis for recording, not the time slot. If a recording is set for a previously scheduled time, an alert helps you choose which show to record. You cannot record two programs at once and you cannot watch one program while recording another – yet. But you can watch a previously recorded program while recording another.

Another prominent feature of MCE is the TIVO like ability to stop live TV. Just press Pause on the remote control or the keyboard or mouse. Press Play (or press Pause a second time) to start

watching where you left off. A pause buffer automatically captures the last 30 minutes of live TV, so you can rewind any time you're watching. Transport controls let you navigate live TV: pause, rewind, instant replay (jump back seven seconds), fast forward, skip (29-second advance), frame-by-frame advance, and more. If you're watching a program you decide you want to record, just press the record button and the recording will stop automatically when the program ends. Again, the program and not the time slot controls this action. And yes, there is also a manual record menu that lets you specify a specific date, time, channel and recording time period.

There are parental controls to help block TV programming according to a parent's specific and unique needs. Block all movies, block unrated movies, and/or set the maximum allowed MPAA movie rating (G, PG, PG13, R, NR).

Once your program has been recorded to the hard drive, just choose which recorded program you want to view and there it is, ready and waiting. While watching the recorded program, if you need to pause or stop for any reason, you can set a bookmark at the location where you stop the playback, and when you resume watching, the program automatically cues the playback to that bookmark. MCE helps you manage your recorded TV, letting you keep the recorded show for one week, until manually deleted, until watched once, or until hard drive space is needed to record other shows. You can also choose the level of quality of the recording to control hard drive space. Media Center has four levels of recording quality that you can choose - Fair, Good, Better, and Best. Here is the approximate amount of disk space that each recording level will consume:

Quality	Approximate GB/Hour
Fair	1.0
Good	2.0
Better	2.5
Best	3.0

When the program is recorded it is encoded into a new Microsoft format with an extension of **DVR-MS. DVR-MS is an MPEG2 file wrapped with ASF** [Advanced Systems Format is an extensible file format designed to store synchronized multimedia data.] to allow metadata about the recorded program to be stored. Apparently, in the first release of MCE there was no ability to burn a recorded program to DVD so it could be watched on a stand-alone DVD player connected to your TV, but that was quickly remedied with a patch. Subsequently, the version of MCE that came with my new PC now has the ability to convert the new DVR-MS files to standard-type DVDs with a program called MyDVD, which is included.

There is a lot more to Windows XP Pro Media Center Edition than what I have just covered so far about the PVR. DVD content can be played-back in high-quality full-screen mode for viewing at a distance or in an inset window while navigating

(Media……….Continued from page 4)

Media Center or working in other areas of Windows. Parental Controls can also be used to block DVD content according to a parent's specific and unique needs, like blocking all movies, unrated movies, and/or setting maximum allowed movie rating.

The *My Music* folder makes recording, playing, locating and organizing your music in a visual way easy by making it easy for you to find what you're looking for. *My Pictures* is your digital album for all of your pictures. View and scroll through pictures in the My Pictures folder by using your remote control or your keyboard and mouse. Select a folder of pictures and press Play Slide Show to view pictures as an automated slide show. You can set the slide transition delay time, set the slide show to display your pictures randomly, and play music in the background. And all of this can be controlled by the remote.

I think you get the picture that MCE isn't just a few multimedia applets that have been added to Windows XP. All of this has been carefully thought out, and it is apparent that Microsoft has worked on this for quite a while. There's still a lot more to all of this, like a whole host of included new software that I am not familiar with as of yet. I'll save that for a later article once I've had a chance to learn more about all of its capabilities.

In case you are using MCE and don't know, I have found an excellent newsgroup devoted to MCE at: http://communities.microsoft.com/Newsgroups/default.asp?ICP=windowsxp&sLCID=US&newsgroup=microsoft.public.windows.mediacenter that has a bunch of people ready to lend a hand and answer your questions. Most of the users in this group have already experienced some of the situations you're about to and are very willing to help out. There are also sev-

Internet Picture of the Month

SARS Protection for a Cat

From the *New York Times* online site: "A Taiwanese woman put a mask on her kitten to protect her against SARS. Taiwan's health department has banned all people with SARS from entering or leaving the island."

http://www.nytimes.com/

May's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (That's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
A View on Cities	http://www.aviewoncities.com/index.html
New York City Hotels	http://www.freenewyorkhotelguide.com/
Guide to panoramas and panoramic photography	http://www.panoguide.com/
US Public & Private Colleges & Universities by State	http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/nandigam/region.htm
Plant Facts	http://www.plantfacts.com/
MyFloridaCounty.com - County Websites	http://www.myfloridacounty.com/countyportals/
Photo.Net	http://www.photo.net/
TampaComputing.com - Computer News	http://www.TampaComputing.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.

Game Drive

By Bob LaFave, Tampa PC Users Group
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I have one bad habit left. Yes, I did give up the cigarettes and drinking, and I feel much better now; but I still have ONE. I will buy software that I shouldn't because it "*calls to me as I walk down the aisle*." If I hear what I call *reference or learning type* programs such as an encyclopedia or atlas and (possibly the worst) a *game,* then I just have to answer their plea. Over the years I have answered the call way too many times and created a problem that I have finally found a solution to, "*how to play these programs without having all those damn CD's all over the place and having to put them into the CD-ROM ".*

GameDrive is a Virtual Drive by *FarStone Technology Inc*. that I found at Best Buy while browsing the racks. I went home and after going to their web site and researching at Google for reviews of this and similar programs, I bought it. Two reasons at the web site convinced me to try this program: it would eliminate the need for CD's before playing, and it would be faster when the program was on the hard drive rather than playing on the slower CDROM. You can visit http://www.farstone.com and review the list of advantages there for more *features and benefits*. I purchased the program for $19.95 on my next visit to Best Buy. This program creates images of CD's onto your hard drive and places them into a library to use instead of your finding your CD and inserting it into your CD drive for each program. **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH SPACE FOR YOUR USE BEFORE PURCHASING THIS PROGRAM.**
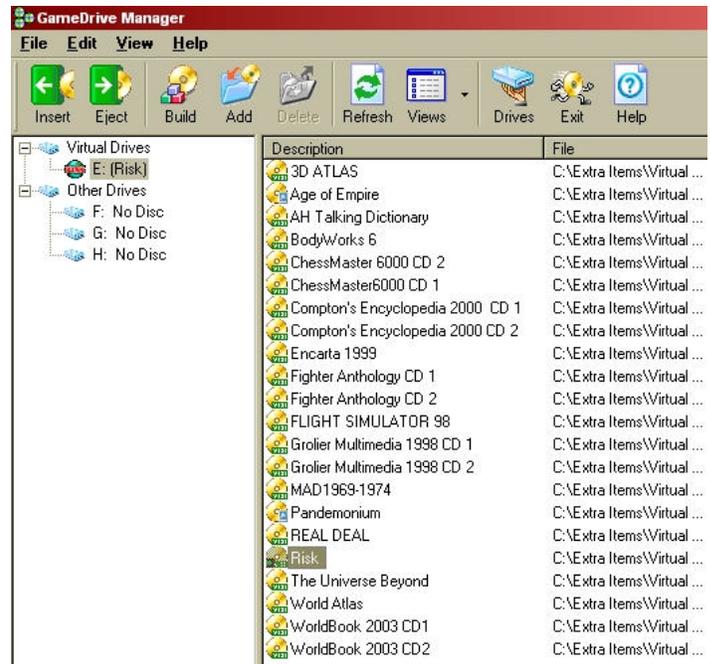
System requirements are Windows 98SE and above, a CD drive to install from, 25MB of hard drive space for the installation files, a Pentium 233mhz and enough RAM (19KB of RAM is used for each virtual drive in use).

GameDrive's installation was typical of other programs today, and all you have to do is follow an *InstallShield Wizard* and agree to the license, enter a serial number and make choices such as what directory to install plus other options. I make sure I read the manuals before I install new programs, and this one went smoothly.

After installation, **GameDrive** can be launched by selecting **Start** on taskbar, then **Programs\GameDrive\GameDrive Manager** and by looking for the *GameDrive* icon that appears in the Windows system tray.

The main *GameDrive Manager* is much like **Windows Explorer** to view and get around. Mine created the **Virtual Drive (E:)** and left my CD drives listed as **Other Devices (F: - H:).** The right panel shows the CD's by name that I had loaded at that time.

The process of entering a CD into your *Library* is to insert a CD into your CD drive and pushing the *BUILD* button; a Wizard will

start that will guide you step by step. First, you select the physical CD drive that contains the CD. Second, **GameDrive** verifies that the selected hard drive has enough space for storage and the folder and VCD file name. Third, you select the CD read method. You can choose **Normal** for most CD's and an **Intelligent Method** for VCD's that do not run as expected and may be protected by having inaccurate volume information to prevent coping. You can also choose **Compression** to save space. There are other steps to build different types of files, such as mixed mode CD's that also contain audio tracks.

Now that you have a CD converted to a VCD file in your library you just select the file with your mouse and then push the **Insert** button and an animation graphic appears and the CD is now in your **Virtual Drive** ready to use. In the picture above, you can see that the **Virtual Drive** contains the **VCD** game **Risk** as CDROM drive E:. The game will now play as if the CD is inserted in a physical CDROM. You can also eject just by going to the **Eject** button.

Now for some other general information that you might be interested in. You can create **Multiple Virtual Drives.** You are limited by the number of letters in the alphabet to 26 total drives. You are then able to load multiple CD's or **VCD'**s that are needed for some games. I have **Baldur's Gate** that contains five CD's to play. After I took the picture showing the *Risk* game, I did build all five CD's into the **Library** and actually load all five. To create a new **Virtual Drive,** you just go to the **Drives** button and add it. You will have to restart your computer any time you add or delete a **Virtual Drive**.

RapidCache is a unique CD caching utility program that uses an incremental caching algorithm found only in **GameDrive** that is included. It can be started from the Program folder on the Start
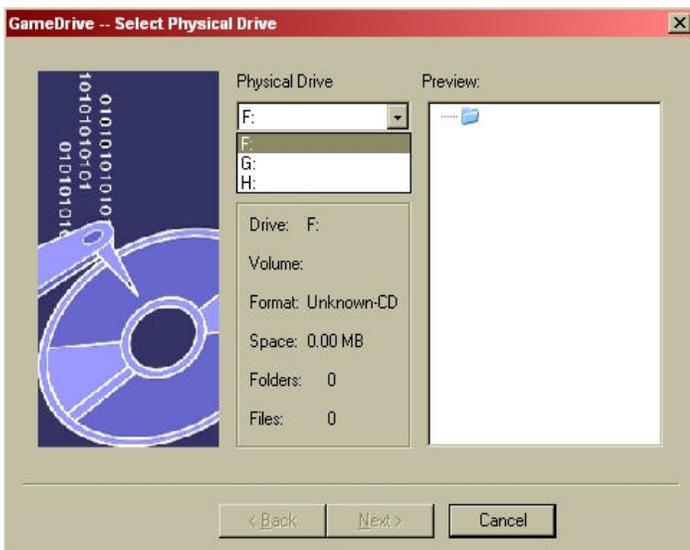
(GameDrive..........Continued from page 6)

Menu or from the File Menu in the program. It allows you to set your **Physical CD Drives** with a larger cache amount than Windows allows, which is 214 kilobytes when set at Quad-Speed or higher. It should increase the performance and the manual says to "experiment" to get maximum performance. You have settings over each *Virtual Drive* and *Physical CD Drive* in your computer. I set mine to "Cache all files" and "Max Caching Mode" with a size of 8192 kb to start and will experiment as they suggest.

This program like many more today includes a *LIVEUpdate* feature that is accessed from the *HELP* Menu. Unlike other program that I have, this *LIVEUpdate* was only usable after I went to the web page and registered and a code was emailed to me. I had to enter the code to use the feature the first time. This was done to inform me that the *LIVEUpdate* feature was by subscription and that it would have to be renewed after a year for a *FEE.* Now, that was not expected, and I will fight that feature next year; I believe they said it was $4.95. I would suggest that you read the web page and also download the online Manual in PDF format before buying. You can also purchase this product online as a download for $19.95 and save on the taxes.

I used the program with Data, Music, and Mixed Mode CD's and was able to use each as I normally would if I inserted a physical CD. Now I just go and insert a *VIRTUAL CD* and have no wear on any of the CD's; now I don't have to burn a copy for my protection against scratches or other misuse. On games that had lag before as the program read from a **Physical CDROM**, I now had none. This is because it does read at a much faster speed from the hard drive. Another feature that I didn't expect and like is that when I *Insert* a *VCD* into the *Virtual Drive,* I could double click the **ICON** of the name in the left panel and the CD would open in much the view you would get by going to **MY Computer** and opening an inserted **Physical CD**. This allows you to view those files if needed or any other operation you could perform with the **Physical CD** ◆

Editor's Comments and Software Review

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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New SIG Meeting Location Starting this month, the Access and Visual Basic SIGs will meet at the Kate Jackson Community Center at 821 S Rome Avenue. That is just south of Old Hyde Park Village. The move was necessitated by Gateway no longer being able to guarantee a room at a fixed time and date in advance. We are appreciative of Gateway providing a room twice a month over the past several years.

Alpha5, 3D-Album and PhotoVista Virtual Tour As did many of you at our last meeting, I found the software presented intriguing.

Although **Alpha5** appears to be a good database program for those not up to beating their heads against the wall to learn how to use Microsoft Access, I had no interest in Alpha 5, since I have indeed beaten my head against the wall more than once in the years that I have been learning Access. Almost anything can be done with Access as regards the presentation and manipulation of data--but you have to have paid your dues in study to know how to do it. Visit our Access SIG if you think you have an interest.

My interest was in the two graphics-oriented programs. **3D-Album** is just a cute and sometimes stunning way to present a collection of images. You can use it to display them on your computer, send an album via email to a friend (this method is less than ideal), create a screen saver or put the album on the web. I have created two different albums on the web of the same 16 photos at my site http://www.lamartin.com. Take the link near the bottom of the page to "Virtual Tours and Other Such Experiments", then select the 3D Displays link.

When you click on a 3D Display for the first time, you will be asked to download a 2 MB plug-in for Internet Explorer (and theoretically for Netscape Navigator if you use that browser--but I haven't checked this out). This is what actually produces the display. The download is a one time thing. It downloads fairly rapidly on a broadband connection but will take some time on a dial-up connection.

This is where I found my first problem with one of the software packages purchased at the meeting. The download produced a warning that the file had an out-of-date certificate of authenticity (it was six months out of date). It took me several emails to convince the software manufacturer, Micro Research Institute, Inc., that there was a problem. Their first approach was to tell me to ignore the message. The second was to tell me to change my browser setting to not warn about such things. I then suggested that it wasn't very professional for a software company

Looking Back to 1993

From the May 1993 *Bits of Blue*

Secretary Report
MINUTES OF 4/14/93 MEETING
By: Jim Clark

The meeting began just a few moments late (at 6:10, to be precise), but it was another good meeting, with quite a nice group in attendance. In addition to a vendor review of an impressive software program, there were some very interesting discussions on items of interest to a great many of us. Once again, our meeting was guided by the astute leadership of our illustrious Prez, Harvey Bruneau.

INDUSTRY/CLUB NEWS

Quite a few items of interest were discussed during the meeting, including:

That Comp USA is unofficially allowing discounts for members of our group on many items purchased at Comp USA was confirmed by our Prez. A discount is not given on all items, especially low cost items (e.g., DOS 6 Upgrade, floppy disks). However, the savings can be rather substantial on other items; one member received a 20% on a $50 hardware item, for example. On more expensive items, members have reported $40 or more savings. To receive the corporate discount, take your purchases to the Corporate Desk and show your User Group membership card.

There was considerable discussion of DOS 6.0, with varying opinions from our membership. Harvey introduced the subject, reporting general satisfaction with all DOS 6.0 features used thus far by him at Dun & Bradstreet, including MemMaker, Anti-Virus, and optional boot. He had not yet used DoubleSpace.

- Most indicated that DOS 6.0 was easy to load, and they had no troubles in doing so. A couple of others reported some problem in loading and setting it up. All felt that documentation left something to be desired, with the manual provided containing little to no technical info.

- Most comments about MemMaker were along the lines that it was not quite as good as the stand-alone memory managers at ferreting out more memory, but that it was a good alternative for those who do not need the last byte of memory and who do not want to pay the price of the stand-alone products. And it certainly simplified the task of making upper memory available and loading TSRs in same.

- The DoubleSpace feature generated the most divergent opinions. Several reported problems, including some boot problems which appeared after installing Double-Space. One with a CD-ROM, loading the driver in upper memory, reported booting problems following installation of DoubleSpace. Some reported the compres-

sion ratio not as good as with Stacker. Others reported it does not allow compressed drives to be decompressed -- as the stand-alone products do.

- Few commented on the Anti Virus, and one reported that the built-in Anti Virus was making his job somewhat easier and that he liked the feature thus far.

- All those who had used the Optional Boot feature seemed to like it quite well. Some of those who had experienced boot problems reported that the AllBoot switch solved their boot problem. The ability to select a clean boot from the hard drive was viewed as a very welcome improvement by all who had experienced booting problems -- negating the need to boot from floppy.

A review of DOS 6.0, and all of its features, sometime in the not-to-distant future would be welcome by all DOS 6.0 users, followed by a seminar to discuss problems experienced and solutions found.

PRESENTATION — SuperBase

Software Publishing Corporation was good enough to send to us a knowledgeable representative, Paul Tondera, Corporate Account Manager, to give us a preview of their program, Super-Base, Version 2.0 — a fully relational database program for Windows. Paul noted that SuperBase is not something new on the market or in Windows, but that it has been around managing data in Windows for over eight years. Hence, it is not something new with a lot of bugs, as is the case with the new programs now on the market; it has evolved as a well-founded, sound and very powerful database program. I am not knowledgeable on databases and have no basis for comparison, but I can say that Super-Base certainly appeared to me to be very powerful, functional and easy to use.

Among the many features Paul reported and/or demonstrated are: A forms-generating capability; a Quick Reporting feature which produces reports in detail; easy setup and modification of all reports and forms; drag and drop editing; provides for query by example; allows up to 999 indexes per file; provides full multi-media support; imports and integrates sound and video files into SuperBase; uses built-in procedural language; provides automatic recording of macros and can use basic macros and those created in "C"; imports from all the major DB programs, as well as AS-CII, and exports in most of the same formats; the forms creator uses predefined fields which simplifies forms creation; includes the capability for merging of mail and label files, and SB allows merging of 2 databases. SuperBase is also network ready.

In some respects, SuperBase 2.0 is the least demanding for hardware capabilities of any of the major DB programs. It will load into and work in a 286 machine, for example. A VGA monitor is required, as is 1 MB of RAM, though 2 MBs of RAM are recommended. And 7 MB of hard disk space is required.

SuperBase 2.0 carries a list price of $795, but has a street price in the range of $500-550. If you already own a previous version of SuperBase, the upgrade price is $149. Those using other DB programs can purchase a SuperBase competitive upgrade for $199.

Many thanks to Software Publishing Corporation and Paul Tondera for an excellent presentation of a great DB program and for your very generous software contributions.

AND THE WINNER IS

Thanks to the generosity of Software Publishing Corporation and Sunrise Computer, along with the 50/50 cash drawing, there were some very nice raffle prizes. In addition, Sunrise Computer donated quite a number of computer items that were distributed to those who could use them, including printer ribbons, covers, and static guards; these items are not reflected here. Those among us to have the good fortune to win are as follows:

Larry Anders	Disk cleaner & Mouse Pad
Herbert Atwood	Mouse Pad
Jim Clark	Mouse Pad
Gene Wade	T Shirt
Bill White	Computer Lock
Parker Monroe	Fanny Pak
Kevan Sheridan	Harvard Graphics for Windows
Luis Vergara	Harvard Graphics 3.0
Tom Cone	SuperBase 2.0
Gene Wade	50/50 ($50)

The meeting adjourned at about 9:00 PM ◆

setting it up, it automatically creates and updates a listing of links to the messages you send and receive. So, months later when you are searching for a certain message with a vital piece of information -- it is very easy to locate even if you aren't a filing genius.

We received a pretty good demonstration of each of these, and we had to opportunity to purchase them for an even further reduced price for being at the meeting. The User Group price is great. You can check it out at http://www.whats4me.com. We had a good time and hope to see you at the next meeting, where someone is going to win a big prize. ◆

to offer downloads with expired certificates unless renewing it was something they couldn't afford. They then completely changed course and said that the problem was their fault and that it would be fixed within the day--and it was. Good for them.

As an aside, I have several ActiveX controls I have created at my site for which you would get the same warning if you tried to download them. Since I am not making any money from the examples at my site, I am not going to pay the $400 per year for a certificate for such things. Of course, everyone trusts that I am who I say I am, so there is really no need for a certificate--is there. In reality, such certificates only guarantee that the software provider is who they say they are. The certificate does not guarantee that the software is virus free or indeed is not a virus itself.

PhotoVista Virtual Tour Maker iSeeMedia has not been as forthcoming in responding to a similar problem I found when I installed their PhotoVista Virtual Tour Maker, which is a very nice program nonetheless. When you start the PhotoVista Virtual Tour Maker software, it wants you to register, but the registration immediately produces an error message when you try to submit the registration. Additionally, when I created a virtual tour to place at my web site that used a Java viewer, the viewer had a yellow button with Zoom written on it. I assume that its purpose is to take you to the software manufacturer's web site. When you click on it, however, you are sent to a web address that no longer exists at MGI--the previous owner of the software, not iSeeMedia--the current owner. In fact, this software still has MGI written all over it. It installs in an MGI folder on your computer, etc. I went to the iSeeMedia web site and downloaded updates for both the Virtual Tour Maker software and the PhotoVista Panorama, which is part of the Virtual Tour Maker package. However, these updates did nothing to remove all the references to MGI.

It appears to me that iSeeMedia has done nothing to the software since taking it over from MGI. There is a forum at the iSeeMedia site to discuss problems with their software. But I see no evidence of anyone from iSeeMedia participating. Furthermore, they have a form you can fill in at the site so as to report a problem, but it has a mandatory field for your registration number. Recall that I couldn't register the product, and there is no registration number on the CD. So that does me no good. There appears to be no way to get email support. Dave Whittle, who presented the software to us, said he would relay my concerns to them, but I have heard nothing from that.

I just checked the iSeeMedia site again. They do have something new there. They say that they have a new plug-in viewer. However, that is not what I want. I do not like forcing people to download large, specialized viewers if I can help it (as you had to do for the 3D-Album) That is why I prefer the Java viewer, but there is no update for that. The Java viewer they

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the first Tuesday of the month at the **Kate Jackson Community Center at 821 S Rome Avenue** in South Tampa 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 **Kate Jackson Community Center at 821 S Rome Avenue** in South Tampa 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.

(Comments..........Continued from page 9)

have is basically two years old., and I am sure that is in the same state that it was when MGI had the software.

All of that said, as indicated above, **I like the product**. You can see the results at my site at the above-mentioned link. I have put three virtual tours there: A tour of two rooms in a house, a tour around a pond, and a tour of Ft. Blount Park in Bartow, Florida. Be sure to read the instructions before starting so that you will know how to move about.

I used PhotoVista to make a stitch of around 18 - 22 photos for each 360 degree panorama. The photos were taken with my Canon G1 digital camera attached to a tripod .The software did a fairly good job with very little manual adjustment necessary. I then imported this panorama into the PhotoVista Virtual Tour Maker and produced the tours you see on the web.

One thing I discovered about outdoor panoramas is that you want to take them on an overcast day. That way you do not have to deal with the sun shining straight into your camera lens at some point. If you are shooting a 360 degree panorama, then at some point you are going to have to face the sun unless the sky is overcast--or it is high noon. Another thing you have to consider for any panorama is movement of objects. Since each photo needs to overlap the previous one by 25 to 30%, you really need everything to remain the same in those two shots. So moving people or cars can be a problem.

I have not tried the third program in the PhotoVista Virtual Tour suite, PhotoVista 3D Objects. To use that you really need a rotating platform on which you place the object to be photo-graphed from all sides. Seems like we used to have such a thing in the kitchen years ago that held spices and rotated. But that is long gone.

To close, let me give you an example of the sort of thing we do in the **VBA SIG**. Visual Basic for Applications lets you auto-mate things in any of the Microsoft Office products. Originally you could only do this in Word, Excel and Access, but Microsoft has now expanded this to include PowerPoint, FrontPage and Publisher. This was done in either Office 2000 or Office 2002.

Most of our examples in the SIG have come from programming in Access, Excel and Word, but here is one that I just came up with for Publisher.

Ever since moving this Publisher newsletter document to the Gateway I bought around 1 1/2 years ago, when I open it I get a warning about it having a font--Copperplate--that isn't on the new computer. I could have loaded the font, but I wanted to find what text used that font. I looked and looked several times but could never produce it. Publisher, unlike Word, does not provide for searches based on formatting like the type of font. So I finally got around to writing some VBA code to accomplish the task. It found the text on page 5 in the Internet Picture of the Month head-ing. Here is the code:

```
Dim x As TextRange
Dim i As Integer, j As Integer, k As Integer
Dim s As String

For k = 1 To Application.ActiveDocument.Pages.Count
    For j = 1 To Application.ActiveDocument.Pages
(k).Shapes.Count
        If Application.ActiveDocument.Pages(k).Shapes
(j).Type = pbTextFrame Then
            For i = 1 To Applica-
tion.ActiveDocument.Pages(k).Shapes
(j).TextFrame.TextRange.Length
                If Application.ActiveDocument.Pages
(k).Shapes(j).TextFrame.TextRange.Characters(i,
1).Font.Name = "Copperplate" Then
                s = s & " " & CStr(k) & " " & Applica-
tion.ActiveDocument.Pages(k).Shapes
(j).TextFrame.TextRange.Characters(i, 1)
                Else
                End If
            Next
        Else
        End If
    Next
Next
MsgBox (s)  ◆
```

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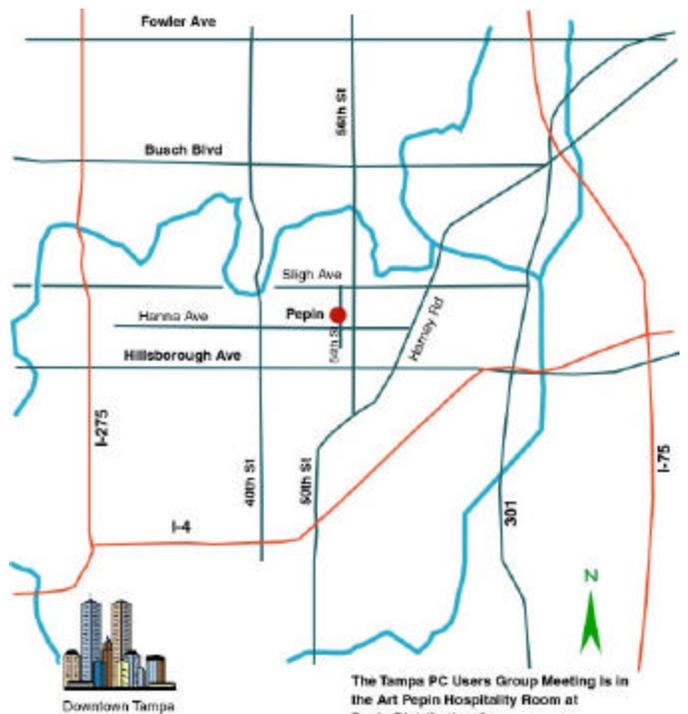☐ Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ___

eral Microsoft MVPs that keep a watch on this site. I've used it a
few times already, and it has been a great source of help. It's not
that MCE is that hard to use or learn, I just typically don't read
the instructions until I have a problem or can't figure something
out on my own, and by using the newsgroup I have been able to
get right to the solution and back to computing.

In conclusion for now, there is a lot of new stuff in this rendition
of Microsoft's latest operating system, and I personally feel
they've done a good job with this release. Just about the time I
get a little bored with computing something comes along to catch
my fancy, and I think this one will keep me fancied [and busy]
for quite a while.

[Note: if you may be interested in one of these systems, you can
find an up-to-date listing of the companies selling Media Center
PCs at: http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/mediacenter/
howtobuy/.

A very good site is http://www.thegreenbutton.com/default.asp

More to follow at a later date… ◆

The Tampa PC Users Group Meeting is in
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