



July in Tampa

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

Vol. 18 No. 7 July 2005

Meeting

William LaMartin
**VB .Net Programming &
Digital Photography**

Wednesday, July 13, 2005
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
6401 N 54th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: William LaMartin will present examples of Visual Basic .Net Programming and then on a different topic present some aspects of digital photography work. We will also have the usual half-hour Windows SIG.



Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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This month I am the presenter, and I will talk on two topics that consume a good bit of my time--programming in Visual Basic .Net and Digital Photography with Photoshop.

In the VB.Net section, I hope to give examples of how to program for the Web, the Windows desktop and the Pocket PC. VB .Net is a far more powerful programming language than the old Visual Basic, the howls of protest from a segment of VB users notwithstanding.

In the digital photography section I will give examples of photos I have taken with my digital cameras and how you may modify or improve them in Adobe Photoshop. ◆

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August Meeting: Linspire - a Linux based desktop presented by Merle Nicholson

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

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Minutes of the June Meeting

By Doug Mullis, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
dmullis@tampabay.rr.com

Bob LaFave started the SIG portion of our meeting at 6:45 in the absence of Member at Large Mary Sheridan who had injured her foot in a kitchen mishap.

Bob recommended we try the Google Picasa photo-handling program that can be downloaded from the Internet. It is not a full photo editor, but is easy to use, to download and to organize your images.

Bob announced the upcoming AMD Road Show being presented June 14th at the local Hard Rock hotel. This is a free presentation if you can make it starting at 3:00pm.

Our regular meeting commenced at 7:05 pm presided over by our President Kevan Sheridan. Kevan called attention to the fact our treasurer Mike Hodges was at our meeting this evening and that members should see him for nametags, also for dues and membership renewal. Mike said that during the summer he would be able to be at our meetings.

Kevan advised the group that Intel offers a canned program for building your own state-of-the art computer for a price of \$999. They supply the components (less the monitor). Phase I is a seminar done at a regular meeting (tentatively our November meeting) at which the program is presented and final orders placed. Phase II is the assembly workshop scheduled by us (not a regular meeting). To start this process, we need at least one person to place an order and the other members to express a desire to attend the sessions. Ed White said he was interested in the program and would place the initiating order. Members said they would support the program.

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New Keyboards And Notebooks as a Desktop Replacement

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group
merle@merlenicholson.com

This should be a short article on two keyboards I've purchased, both fairly different from the normal, and also some advice on the use of notebooks as a primary PC and the hazards.

Microsoft Keyboard Elite for Bluetooth

This is a fairly new keyboard, and somewhat hard to find in a retail store. It follows the most recent pattern of layout as Microsoft's other "Elite" keyboards. It's wireless and uses Bluetooth for communicating to the PC. It comes with a Bluetooth USB plug-in, which is about 1-1/2 inches in length.



The USB device can plug into the back of your PC and still communicate just fine with the keyboard and mouse in the front. There is a very small instruction sheet that comes with it that works perfectly if you follow it exactly.

The key layout differs quite a lot from normal. For instance the "Home, End, Page Up, Page Down" cluster of keys is entirely different. It has buttons for multimedia devices, sound - mute and volume, buttons to launch My Documents, My Pictures, your Mail Client, the Internet Browser, Calculator, Sleep, My Favorites, and more. The row of keys that is normally F1 - F12 is also a variety of functions within Windows programs, such as Reply, Forward, Send, New, Open and Close. There is an "F Lock" button

to make those keys F1 - F12 when you need that. Notice on the left is a wheel that duplicates the mouse wheel. Both this wheel and the mouse wheel do horizontal scrolling by moving it side-to-side.

All this is surprisingly easy to get used to. I thought that the "home-end, PageUp, PageDown" cluster would throw me for sure, but it really did not. I like this keyboard so much I bought a second one. The large palm rest is a thin rubber. It's comfortable and not removable. I especially like the freedom that wireless gives me, and removing some of the wire clutter from the PC is a bonus, too. It would make a perfect keyboard and mouse for a Notebook Desktop replacement. Never mind that it's larger than a notebook.

Now the downside. First, it's big - really big. It measures 19-3/4 x 10-1/2 x 2-1/2 inches thick. It really needs some desk space. The other disadvantage is that it works in Windows, Period. If you have a more recent motherboard that gives you "Legacy USB Keyboard Support," that's fine, just don't expect this keyboard to work until Windows is active. So it's useless for the F8 menu to get Safe mode, and you have no keyboard to change the BIOS. Just don't throw your old PS/2 keyboard away, because you'll eventually need it.

Microsoft Keyboard Elite for Bluetooth and Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer for Bluetooth. \$150 retail, \$130 mail order

(Try <http://www.NewEgg.com>)

Adesso Wireless SlimTouch Keyboard Wireless WKB-4000

This is another wireless keyboard, and it's tiny. It's just 8 1/2" x 12", and 3/4" thick. It has a touchpad instead of a mouse. My wife uses it for her desk. The desk is in the living room, and she doesn't want a keyboard sitting out, so she puts this in the desk drawer to hide it. We had a nice - but very old - similar infrared keyboard that was going flaky on us, so this was a perfect replacement.

This is a really beautifully made, unusual looking key-

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board.



It is wireless, runs at 2.4GHz and communicates with its own proprietary USB transmitter.

There is a vertical

area on the right side of the touchpad that functions the same as a scroll mouse. It really works great. The layout is about the same as a notebook keyboard. If you need a keypad, and lots of keys, don't look here. It does have Windows keys and a Function key, similar to notebooks.

If you search for Adesso products, you'll find various Adesso computer peripheral devices for sale on the internet (for instance CompUSA and Amazon), but not this keyboard. I ordered it directly from them at <http://www.adesso.com>. And if you're used to the fine Internet shopping, feedback, tracking and emails that, say, Buy.com, Amazon.com and NewEgg.com all give you, you'll be disappointed with Adesso. After I ordered, I wanted the tracking number so we'd be home to receive it, and they wouldn't answer my email. The website has a place for it when you look up your account, but it wasn't there. My wife called them; they didn't have it and said they'd get it and call back. They didn't call back, and it was delivered the next day via FedEx. Actually it was shipped and delivered pretty fast, but you're in the dark all the way.

And then we had trouble with it. It has a sleep mode where it goes to battery savings mode after 10 minutes. And it would rarely wake up. Usually I had to pop a battery out of it to reset it, and it'd be fine until it went into sleep mode again. So I sent an email to Adesso's support the same day we received it, and I sent another two days later; no reply; ever.

I did phone them just before their closing at 5PM

PST, and got through to them fairly quickly. The support person said they have gotten several reports of the problem and if I'd look at their online FAQ, there's a solution. I said I didn't see any, but he explained he had just posted it 45 minutes earlier. OK. What it needs is NiMH batteries – four AAA nickel-metal hydride rechargeable batteries of at least 750MAH capacity. And he said he'd send me some when they get some in, maybe two weeks. Give him my address, because he couldn't look up my account, even though I had the Adesso customer number.

We didn't want to wait two weeks, so we went to Radio Shack, which I knew handled them, and bought four and a charger. Hold onto your hats here - \$20 for four batteries and \$13 for a charger.

But it works just fine. We're absolutely delighted with it, in spite of the problems.

Adesso Wireless SlimTouch Keyboard Wireless WKB-4000

\$129.99 – keyboard

\$12.32 – S&H

\$33 + tax – Batteries and chargers

You add it up, I don't want to.

Notebooks as a desktop replacement

You may be aware that notebook sales in the US have exceeded sales for desktops. Notebooks are increasingly replacing desktop PC's as a person's primary computer. It's partly a result of the changing business climate where people are spending more of their personal time working at home. A notebook makes some sense; it can travel back and forth to work, and it can also float around the house wirelessly connected so you don't have to be isolated from other family members.

But the notebook is not designed to be a desktop replacement. The physical layout is really unsuitable for extended periods of time. Think about it. The keyboard and screen are attached. Something has to give. Either the screen is in a really bad place or the keyboard is or both are, and it's causing repetitive stress injuries to the hands and wrists, and neck, back

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and spinal injuries due to improper posture. It can't be helped; the design is fixed, at least until the system unit can communicate with a detachable screen. That's coming, but that's years away.

There are a couple of ways to improve the situation if you must use a notebook for extended periods. First, get a couple of sets of keyboards and mice for all the locations you may land; home and work. Then get a stand for the notebook that gets the screen higher up so the top of the screen is just below eye level. A very good alternative is to buy LCD monitors, and just pretend it's not a notebook at all. It's an expense, that's for sure, but you really don't want an operation on hands and wrists for carpal tunnel, either!



HP has a couple of interesting solutions, one shown here. It's a stand, and wireless keyboard and mouse. ◆

Internet Picture of the Month



Georgia Historical Society Savannah

This photo is from the site <http://www.pbase.com/savannahga/>, a large collection of photos taken mostly in the historic part of Savannah, GA by Jim Cochran. The direct link to the gallery of photos is <http://www.pbase.com/savannahga/gallery01>.

It is a beautiful of city, and if you can't visit in person, this is a good substitute. However, it does not provide any fresh pralines which a real visit would.

July's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (That's us)
Process Library
Savannah Photos
Ancestral Author
LaMartin.com (Presenter's site)

<http://www.tpcug.org/>
<http://www.processlibrary.com/>
<http://www.pbase.com/savannahga>
<http://www.ancestralauthor.com/>
<http://www.lamartin.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.

Looking Back to 1995

From the July 1995 *Bits of Blue* newsletter

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Harvey Bruneau

June Presentation - I was disappointed when Landmark notified me that they were not going to be able to present at our June meeting. With only a short notice before the meeting, it was not possible to schedule another vendor. Although he never got a chance to do his presentation, I want to thank our own Tom Cone for volunteering to do a presentation. As usual I got carried away with myself and dominated the meeting with my Win95 presentation. I can't stop myself sometimes. I certainly hope that those of you in attendance got as much out of the presentation as I did.

Help Needed - In my column last month I mentioned that we were looking for a replacement newsletter editor. This individual will take over the duties from Marylee for the 1996 year. However, we would like to get someone on-board as soon as possible so that we can begin a smooth transition into the 96 year. To date there has been no response.

We are also looking for early candidates to fulfill officer positions. Look at page 2 for the positions in question. While I am not sure which current officers will volunteer again next year or in what capacity, let's not wait until our elections in December to realize that we have no volunteers to run the business of the Tampa PC Users Group in 96. In next month's newsletter I'll post job titles and descriptions.

If you are interested in helping and are willing to volunteer your time and effort for a good cause then please call me at 985-3338 or 962-2554 ext. 715.

SIGs -I can't express enough thanks to Reflectone and Michael Hodges for providing the facilities and resources to hold two of our SIG meetings. Similarly, I thank Dun & Bradstreet Software and IBM for providing their facilities and resources to the MS Access and OS/2 SIG groups. Without the contributions of these companies there would be no SIGs.

The 1st meeting of the hardware SIG, led by Connie Kincaid, was an enormous success. Connie mentioned that those in attendance were grateful yet thirsty for more at the

end. A reminder: Connie will be presenting her software SIG on July 25th. Both of these SIG meetings will be repeated later this year by Connie. Thanks Connie for a job well done and your unselfish dedication to furthering the education of our fellow PC users.

Items Wanted - A reminder that we are collecting equipment and software for the December bargain table and special community projects yet to be announced. Donations are eligible as a tax donation since we are a designated 501 (c)3 non-profit group. If you have any computer related items to donate Please bring them to any of the following; general meeting, SIG meeting or contact Harvey Bruneau at 962-2554 ext. 715 for pick-up.

A 28.8 modem for the BBS would also be appreciated. Don't forget that we are still taking donations for the BBS.

Win95 - It wasn't that long ago that my belief was WHEN95? However after conversations with many software vendors and using the Beta version, I do believe Microsoft will ship the long awaited Win95 this August.

I am sure many PC users are wondering if Win95 is going to affect them and if they should bother upgrading to it. The answer for both is a resounding YES. Of course there are those who will say NO. Well those are the individuals that still use old 57 Chevys and VWs to get around and THAT'S OK. However, I think most of us would rather have the new models with A/C, stereo, airbags, power steering, and if cruise control and power windows come with it that's even better. Keeping up with PC hardware alone has not been pleasant for most of us. It seems that the state of the art hardware technology we buy gets outdated faster and faster every year. This new release of Windows will not only speed up the outdateding of hardware but will now begin to outdate existing software at a fast pace.

Despite all of the hoopla and hype or how many bugs it has when released, Win95 will be the next major dominating operating system for the masses. No, I don't have stock in Microsoft. My experience and common sense tells me that, for now, Microsoft is the undisputed front runner in the OS and GUI world. In the year 2000 Packard Bell may replace Microsoft, but that's a column for another day.

Some things to consider: Win95 will be preinstalled on most new PCs; at best there will be one last release of MS DOS before Microsoft puts it to rest; software vendors will eventually stop developing 16bit Windows apps and de-

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Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the **first Tuesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information contact William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com, or Merle Nicholson at merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.

Digital Imaging SIG

This new SIG meets the **fourth Monday** of the month at Pepin Distributors at 6:30 PM. For information contact Mary Sheridan at mcpease@mindspring.com.

Visual Basic for Applications SIG

This SIG meets the **third Wednesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information contact 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.

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velop 32bit apps for Win95 and Windows NT, the same will be true for drivers; hardware vendors will develop plug and play products. When will all this happen you might ask? I anticipate that this shift will be completed by the end of 1996. Of course by then we will have updated Win95 twice.

How would I prepare and implement Win95 and its technology if I could? If you are not in a hurry and you don't need the immediate benefits of Win95, wait till the 1st update. It should be out in the Q4 of 95 and include some worthwhile patches to the original release. The minimum computer system should be a 486/66, 16MB RAM, 300MB HD, 14" 28 dot pitch VGA monitor. Of course if you are planning on buying a new system, then go for at least a 90Mhz Pentium with 16MB RAM, 1GB HD, 4X CD ROM and a 17" VGA monitor with 28 dot pitch. Don't skimp on the monitor. Also, take into consideration that a 90 MHz Pentium is already outdated in today's PC world. As far as software applications, I would stick with whatever existing 16bit Windows apps I had for at least a year. There are enough benefits in Win95 alone without the need for new 32bit apps. Secondly, Win95 is a brand new operating system and will surely have some bugs. The same holds true for all the 1st generation versions of Win95 3rd party software that will be released after Win95. Unless you feel lucky or have a dedicated IS staff, then wait for these new products to be tested and proven by others ◆

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At this point Kevan introduced our presenter for the evening, Serre Murphy, president of Net Fulfillment Technologies, Inc. of Melbourne, Fl., which offers a range of services, including web applications, anti-spam services, and consulting. Tonight Serre told us about WebBuild Express, an easy to use and inexpensive web design tool. You may have considered building a website but thought the technology too difficult and the costs too high. No longer! WebBuild Express is a powerful, easy to use program that gives you unlimited freedom to manage web page content and appearance, and you do not need to know how to program or write HTML code.

Why should you create a website? You can use it to share information or promote a product or cause. Costs associated with a website can be kept to a minimum and include: Design - using WebBuild Express, as low as \$22.50; Domain Name - \$10 to \$30 per year; Host (ISP) - average \$150 per year and may be included as part of your provider's basic service; and finally Maintenance - \$30 to \$50 per year.

Serre gave each attendee a CD-ROM containing a 30-day evaluation of WebBuild Express to take home to try. He also provided a complimentary CD of WebBuild Express to the group for our raffle. ◆

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First Class Mail

- Member: Your membership is up for renewal
- Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ____

