Bits of Blue

November in Tampa

Meeting

D. J. Elliot
The Clone Evangelist

Wednesday, November 9, 2005
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: This month D. J. Elliott, the Clone Evangelist, will give us an amusing fractured history of the IBM compatible PC. We will also have the usual half-hour Windows SIG.

What To Do About This Newsletter?

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

This month the newsletter well went dry. Well, almost dry. Doug Mullis sent in his usual minutes, and on a second request for material, Mary Sheridan sent me an article. But that leaves a whole lot of space to fill. And since I long ago instituted a policy of using only material from our group, I have a problem. I could reduce the newsletter to four pages this month, or I could try to fill up about three pages myself. Some months when I have purchased a new computer item or had some interesting computer experiences, I could easily do that. But this month there is no new item, and my computer experiences have been mostly redoing web sites and writing computer code in Visual Basic .Net.

December Meeting: Smart Computing and our annual Christmas Party

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following for their support

Marshall & Stevens
Pepin Distributing Co.

Minutes of the September Meeting

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

Mary Sheridan, member at large, started the SIG portion of our meeting at 6:40 pm. We welcomed Mary back from her vacation to Maine.

As our first item of business, Don Patzsch reported that he was being cut off when doing wireless downloading from the Internet on his new laptop. After several suggestions as to why this may be happening, Don decided he would contact the dealer for a solution.

Mary advised the group that during our Nov. meeting we would submit nominees for next year's officers. So far she has John Witmer accepting the nomination for president, Kevan Sheridan agreeing to accept vice-president, Mike Hodges and Doug Mullis agreeing to continue as treasurer and secretary respectively. Any of these nominees would welcome others volunteering or being nominated, also we need a nominee for member at large. Please express your interest in serving as an officer or submit nominees at the Nov. meeting. Fresh blood is healthy for the organization. Your group needs your service, and those who have served for more than a year need the break.

Mike Hodges, our treasurer, expressed appreciation for the fine job William LaMartin is doing with our newsletter and added that our financial situation is stable for the remainder of the year. Of concern, however, is the fact that we are losing members and therein revenue. Mike made a call for dues payments and suggested we try to attract new members.

Mary reminded the group of the upcoming Fall Conference of the Florida Association of Computer User

Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

FACUG Conference and Other Things

By Mary Sheridan, Member at Large,
Tampa PC users Group
mcpease@mindspring.com

Despite the threat of Wilma heading for the west coast of Florida, the FACUG fall conference was a huge success. We only had half of the people that registered for the conference in attendance. This was not a problem. The conference was well-organized, and the food was very good.

This is the second event that I have attended at the Shrine Temple in Sarasota. It's a very nice place and less than an hour's drive from home.

Because of my required attendance at the board meeting, I was not able to sit in on all of the sessions that were offered. There were round tables on how to get grant money, how to get programs, how to grow membership and many more. I heard many people discussing that eBay has become a "hot" topic for meeting presentations. I'm working on trying to get an eBay pro to give us a presentation at one of our future meetings.

Dave Gerber (past vice-president of the FACUG) has an online web site, http://www.bitsandbytesradio.com. I tuned in on Sunday and it was quite interesting. His guest was the creator of an anti-spam program. He has a variety of guests and takes call-ins. You could even win software. Check it out.

At our November meeting, I will call for nominations from the floor and present the candidates for the December election. I encourage anyone who wants to help make our user group better and more interesting to consider being an officer. The tentative slate is president, John Witmer; vice-president, Kevan Sheridan; secretary, Doug Mullis; treasurer, Mike Hodges; and member at large, Mary Sheridan. If you have a nomination and are unable to attend the meeting, please email me at mcpease@mindspring.com.

The December meeting is Smart Computing and our annual Christmas Party. Everyone who has a special dish that they like either to make or buy, please bring it to the party. The club will provide something from Publix, probably finger sandwiches, and plates, forks and cups. Be creative and prepare to have a great time.

Happy Computing! ◆

Groups on Oct. 22, 2005 in Sarasota. This is a one-day meeting, with continental breakfast and lunch included, for $20. Learning how to maintain an active club and what others are doing will be beneficial to our members.

We are still settling into our new meeting place, and it was decided to delay a tour of the Pepin site until construction is completed toward the end of the year.

At 7:00 pm, Mary started the regular portion of our meeting by introducing Steve Singer of RDI-Tampa. Steve started by telling us some history of his involvement in supplying computer hardware beginning in 1978 when Apple ruled.

Steve displayed three Jetway motherboards and reflected he prefers AMD hardware to Intel. AMD uses two buses to divide the routing of tasks. Their chips utilize a dual core, which take advantage of the motherboard's split bus for greater speed. The dual core CPU requires a 939 Chip socket and RAM must be filled in pairs, but SDRAM PC 100 and 133 can be utilized. Steve pointed out that the emphasis on chip speed has been redirected toward the dual core chips, as faster and faster chips were generating too much heat.

Steve offered an external disk drive case for housing a notebook hard drive for $35. He also demonstrated a portable two channel USB speaker system by Encore Electronics, featuring a 2" subwoofer and two 1" satellite speakers with self contained amplifier, for $29.95.

Steve invited us to visit his website,

(Newsletter………Continued from page 1)

The Newsletter and Me I have been doing the newsletter one month short of 10 years. That makes 119 issues of the newsletter, all, if I am not mistaken, produced on time (arriving in your mail before the monthly meeting). And for every one of those newsletters, there is an Adobe Acrobat version. In December of 1995, I took over the job from someone who was burned out, and I would not be adverse to now yielding the job to someone else. I have been thinking of creating a CD with all the Adobe Acrobat files along with a searchable index. It would be sort of a history of what we were doing in computing for the past 10 years. To fill up all that empty space I mentioned, let's look inside some of those issues.

Ten years of the *Bits of Blue*
In that December 1995 issue, Larry Anders had a review of *Street Atlas USA 3.0* . I assume if they were still numbering the product in that manner we would now be on version 13 since they put out a new version each year. However, I note that the product is now called Street Atlas USA 2006. Also in that issue the president of the group, Harvey Bruneau, described his recent trip to COMDEX in Las Vegas. Changing times killed that event, which used to be enormous. There were also reviews of *Adobe Photoshop 3.0* and *Lotus SmartSuite for OS/2* copied from other user group newsletters. I don't think there are any new OS/2 programs out there at the moment. The newsletter, as it was until recently, was 12 pages, and our meetings were on the Hillsborough Community College campus in Ybor City.

The January 1996 issue had a column from our new president, Connie Kincaid. There were also reviews of *Syncware Fill* by William LaMartin, Seattle Film Works (a business) by Bruce Register, *Zip Explorer* by Larry Anders and *Partition Magic* by Don Patzsch. That was version 1 of Partition Magic. I note that *Zip Explorer* is now on version 7 and *PartitionMagic* is at version 8. Remember, you probably heard about them first via the TPCUG.

In the March 1996 issue, I wrote an article about *Microsoft Publisher for Win 95*, as that version was called. That was the first issue I had used *Publisher* to do the newsletter, the previous three issues having been done in *Microsoft Word*. Let me tell you, I found out quickly that a word processor is not the ideal vehi-

cle in which to create a newsletter. I have been using *Publisher* ever since. My current version is *Publisher 2003*. In that issue, Larry Anders wrote about an early version of *PaintShop Pro*. There was an OS/2 article from outside the group. (At that time, I struggled to secure articles about OS/2 since there was a small but active part of the group using OS/2 as their operating system.)

Do you remember *Microsoft Bob*? If not, you can read about him (it?) in the May 1996 article by Tim Condon. The June 1996 issue had a very long article about *OS/2 Merlin*. In the July 1996 issue, we announced our first web site which was hosted by member John Meroth as a subdirectory of his site. It would be a few more months before we got our own domain name of tpcug.org. Remember the Zip Drive from Iomega? Larry Anders wrote about an early one in the August 1996 issue. Iomega is still making Zip Drives but no longer appears to make the parallel interface ones of that era.

In the September 1996 newsletter, I wrote about PC Hell--a topic I would return to not infrequently over the years. The October 1996 issue inaugurated a short-lived column by Will Goble titled *Ask PC Willy.* And again since OS/2 was of interest, Charles Howe had an article on *OS/2 Warp*.

The November 1996 issue has articles about *Delrina CommSuite 95,* of which *WinFax Pro* was one of the components. Faxing from your computer was a big deal back then. There was mention of Internet Explorer 3.0, and it was noted that Netscape was the runaway preference for most of the Internet world. Mention was also made of a beta version of *Microsoft Net Meeting*.

In December 1996, Larry Anders had a review of *Street Atlas 4.0*. (See they had put out their yearly update from 3.0 to 4.0.) And there was mention of our move in February 1997 to a new location for the general meetings to MOSI, the Museum of Science and Industry.

Those are some highlights of my first year of newsletters. And there are nine more years to go, but I will spare you that for now. If you go to our web site, http://www.tpcug.org, you will find Adobe Acrobat

Good Hard Drives Needed
Bring them to the meeting!

Do you have an unused hard drive lying around?

Merle Nicholson and Bob LaFave will clean it of data for you, test and recertify it and donate it to Metropolitan Ministries. They can use anything 10G or larger. Nothing smaller, please!

They'll also accept systems that can be refurbished with processors 1G and higher, and also CRT monitors in good condition 17" and up. Bring them to the meeting this month or contact Bob LaFave at boblafave@verizon.net or Merle Nicholson at merle@merlenicholson.com.

(Newsletter……….Continued from page 4)

versions of the newsletter for the past 12 months. There are HTML versions of the newsletter going back to 1998, and a list of articles going back to March of 1996. There are opinions, hardware reviews and software reviews. All that should give you an idea of the members' interests over the past years.

Anyone interested in manufacturing those CDs I mentioned? ◆

Internet Picture of the Month

ISS011E14111

**A Soyuz Spacecraft
Approaches the Space Station**

This photo, taken recently, is from the site
http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html.

If you are interested in space photos, this is the place where a selection is made for you from NASA's vast archive.

November's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (That's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
EarthSLOT	http://www.earthslot.org/
Drug Information by RxList	http://www.rxlist.com/
Drugs.Com - Online drug information	http://www.drugs.com/
AltaVista - Babel Fish Translation	http://world.altavista.com/babelfish/tr
AV Science Forum (Audio Visual)	http://www.avsforum.com/
Windows Live Beta	http://www.live.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.

Some Visual Basic .Net Programming

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

I spend a good bit of my time writing programs using Visual Basic .Net. In past years I used Delphi and Visual Basic. The more I use it, the more I appreciate VB .Net.

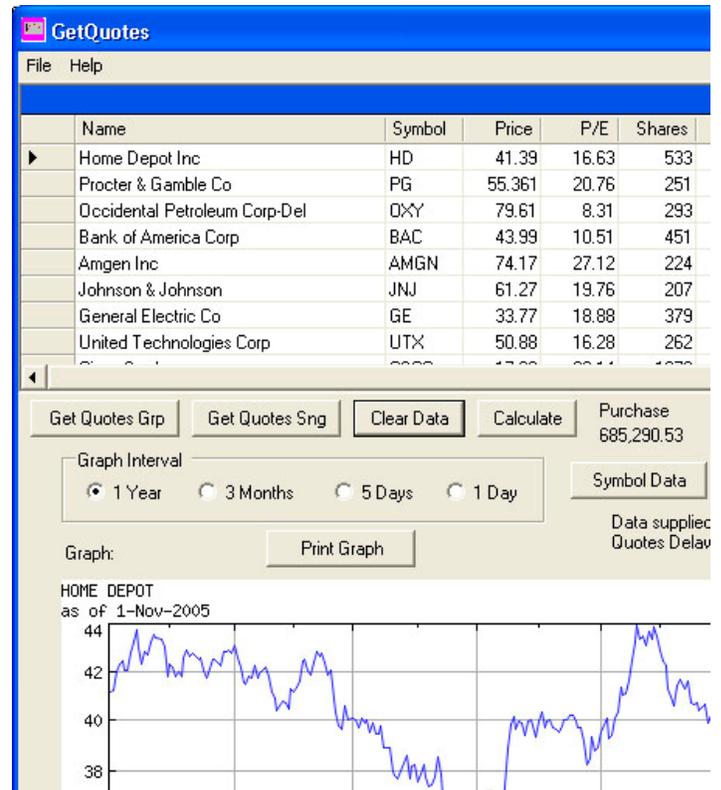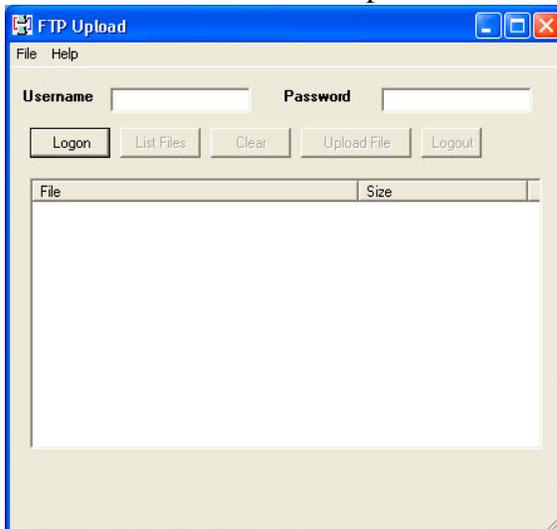In the past month or so, I have written

- A bare-bones FTP program
- A Zip and UnZip file program
- A program to parse data from a Telnet session dump and then display it and post it to an online database
- A stock portfolio that retrieves time-delayed quotes and displays the portfolio's current status with individual stock details and graphs.

I am also in the process of using VB .Net in the redo of a web site using ASP.Net technology.

The FTP program was written to satisfy a request from a friend who wanted a simple way for his clients to send files periodically to his server. The clients needed an "idiot-proof" way of doing the file uploads, and telling them to download a shareware FTP program, install it and figure out how to use it was clearly not "idiot-proof."   Here is the simple interface of the program. All they need do is supply a username and password, then log on. Once logged on, they then click the Upload File button and select the file to be uploaded from the directory tree. The file is then automatically sent via FTP to the server and put in the folder associated with that username.

There is no

installation of the program; you simply place the executable on the desktop of any computer that has the .Net Framework installed (if not installed, the .Net Framework can be downloaded from Microsoft and easily installed).

The picture above is the upper left hand portion of the stock portfolio program, displaying the status of a hypothetical portfolio and the one year graph of a selected stock, in this case Home Depot. The stock data is supplied by a free web service that has a 20-minute delay. The graphs are gotten from the Yahoo financial site.

For any stock you select, you can display both a graph for varying lengths of time and its statistical details. This program also needs no installation.

In general, a program will need no installation program if it does not reference any external dlls. To write the Zip and UnZip program, I had to use the SharpZipLib from http://www.icsharpcode.net. So this program required an installation program. But the installation program was small and no big deal. At present the program will unzip an archive of zipped

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

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 *merle@merlenicholson.com.*

Digital Imaging SIG

This 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.
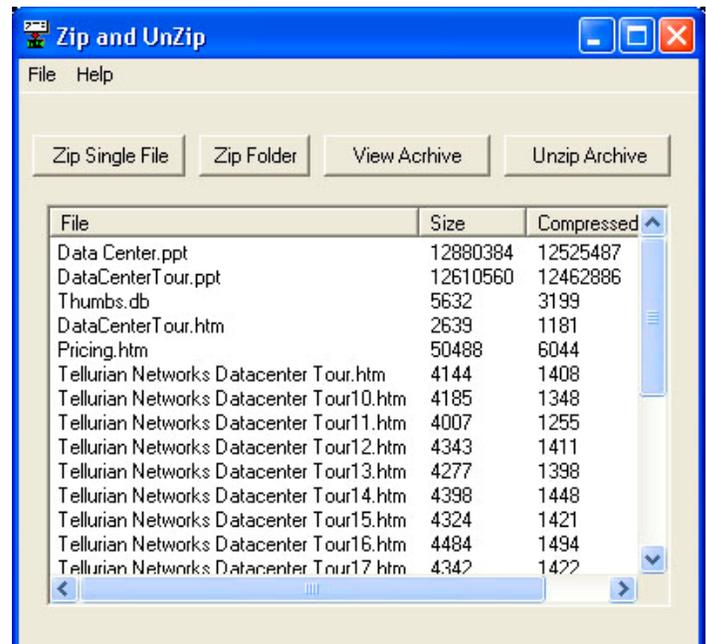

(Programming...........Continued from page 6)

folders within zipped folders to any depth, but will only zip a collection of folders with folders to a depth of 2. I need to come back at some time and write a recursive function to handle that process.

You might rightly ask, why write a program to do something that you can already get done for free. For example, Windows XP will zip and unzip things for you. Well, here is one reason. Say, I wrote a program that as output creates a large file and sends it somewhere using either FTP (as in the earlier example) or HTTP post to put it at a web site. I would like the file to be as small as possible. I could accomplish that by including the zip code within that program so that I zipped the file from within the program before sending it off. The Zip and UnZip interface is at the top of the next column.
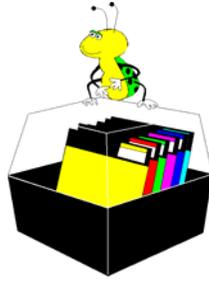
Finally, I'll write briefly about the inventory program. The problem basically was that I needed a way to get data out of a proprietary system that you could only access via a vendor-supplied Windows program which was basically just a wrapper for Telnet. (Remember Telnet, the way you communicated with another computer and viewed the session on a "DOS" screen for which you had to keep pressing Enter to see more data?) About the only thing the program will allow is for you to export the display memory to a text file.

So I wrote a program that opens this text file, parses

out the desired information and displays it in table form. You can then sort based on each column or filter on the values in as many as three columns. You can then save the data as a text file or as an xml file. Finally, the most important thing is that you can press a button and the data will be uploaded to a web service which will then save it to the web site where you want to display the inventory information. The idea is that someone at the business will run this program once a day to update the web site information. And that is the end of my story. ◆

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 ___*

(Minutes……….Continued from page 3)

http://www.morevalu.net or http://www.videoLAN.org, for free software and movies. He advised that we should periodically update the firmware of our CD and DVD burners to stay current with copyright coding.

Wireless router cards can now be obtained for as low as $35. The wired router should be a thing of the past. A couple new wireless standards are coming, n and nimo. Currently there are 811.02 a, b and g.

In conclusion, Steve donated the Encore speaker set as a door prize and invited members to come up and look at the hardware he had on display during the break.

Tickets for the two door prizes were sold during the break. The winners were: Bob LaFave - a copy of Partition Magic and Roger Waters - the Encore speakers.

The meeting adjourned about 9:00 pm. ◆

to I-275

Hillsborough Ave

56th Street

TPCUG Meeting Site
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th Street

Harney Road

I-4

Martin Luther King Blvd

50th Street

N

to Tampa

Columbus Ave