Bits of Blue

January in Tampa

Meeting

Bob Lafave
Intel's Build your Own
Computer

Wednesday, January 11, 2005
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: This month Bob LaFave will show us how to build a computer. 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 seems to be hardware month, with Bob Lafave doing a presentation on building a computer and me writing about my new
"Merle built" computer. There is really no need to buy from one of the major computer vendors. Have either Merle, Bob, or one of the local businesses like Steve Singer's put you one together--or do it yourself. You will probably have to buy your own CD/DVD burning software, but that is about the only "free" thing usually provided by major computer assemblers that you will need. The virus scanning software, etc. provided by them is good for only a few months, so you would need to purchase your own copy anyway.

February Meeting: Metro Crime Prevention of Florida

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following for their support

Marshall & Stevens
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Minutes of the December Meeting

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

We did not have our usual SIG portion of our meeting as we were partaking of the Holiday Party Buffet. The spread was fantastic as usual. Thanks to all who brought goodies.

At 6:55 PM, Vice President John Witmer started the business portion of our meeting. After thanking all who brought items for the buffet, John asked Member at Large Mary Sheridan to present the slate of nominees for the coming year's officers. Mary presented:

For President	John Witmer
For Vice President	Kevan Sheridan
For Treasurer	Mike Hodges
For Secretary	Doug Mullis
For Member at Large	Mary Sheridan

The election was held and the above were elected unanimously. Terms of office begin January 1, 2006. To those who agreed to serve as officers, a special thanks.

John expressed appreciation to William LaMartin for continuing in the volunteer position of Newsletter Editor. He then welcomed our guests and acknowledged one new member, Robbie Randall. Robbie is Doug Mullis's son-in-law and has attended a couple of meetings in the past. Unfortunately Robbie's job requires he be in the Atlanta area much of the time. Welcome, Robbie!

William announced that he now owns his first non-Gateway desktop computer in many years. Merle Nicholson set it up for him, and he is initially happy although there was a problem getting some missing

Making My First Music CD

By Ron Weinberg, Tampa PC Users Group
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Although a former computer professional, I had remained a more traditional consumer of music, i.e., purchasing records, tapes, or CD's as technology changed. I don't own an iPod or an MP3 player. My first attempt to download so called "free" music resulted in a virus infection that took hours to eliminate.

Lesson 1, "free" can mean including pop-ups, adware, spyware, and virus infections.

Therefore, it was with great trepidation that I attempted to create a special birthday gift by downloading music. Being a neophyte in this area, I resorted to the old trial and error method.

The Web led me to try Rhapsody, one of several prominent services, as they were offering a free trial with 5 free downloads. This worked pretty well after leaving credit card information as collateral. Rhapsody from Realnetworks.com, owner and supplier of RealPlayer, allows you to legally share or burn CD's of purchased selections. Rhapsody downloads were in the restrictive .rax format but Rhapsody burns CDs in CD Digital Audio (.cda) format. This is the format used in music CDs you buy.

Now that I had the free selections, I removed Rhapsody from my computer. This was a mistake! I could no longer play or burn the titles to a CD, and I lost license rights. Rax format could not even be played by most other players. I had to download and reinstall Rhapsody to regain control.

However, Rhapsody did not have several of the older songs I was seeking. Again, research was my guide, and I tried Wal-Mart's Music Service. There I found the songs, at a cost of 88¢ each, which download in WMA format. You can legally burn them to a CD up to 10 times and are allowed unlimited transfers to a portable device, but have restrictions on sharing or attaching to emails, etc. Note that a WMA file is similar to an MP3 file, but the WMA can be pro-

grammed to limit copying.

There are many music playing and/or recording programs available such as: RealPlayer, Musicmatch Jukebox, Creative Mediasource and Windows Media Player. My default player is the latter, but I needed Rhapsody to burn all my selections, including those from Wal-Mart. None of the others (except RealPlayer) can handle the rax format.

The final result was a homemade CD that actually played perfectly.

A word of WARNING is in order. It has been well publicized that a number of lawsuits have been filed against PC users for illegally sharing or otherwise misusing downloaded music. The law issues are many and complicated. Conflicting claims abound. This is serious business, and readers are cautioned to exercise great care in their use of downloaded music, particularly with regard to sharing music directly or indirectly with others. ◆

parts.

At 7:15 PM our regular meeting began with the introduction of Marcy Gunn and Vince Cogley with *Smart Computing* magazine. Its being winter in Nebraska, Marcy assured us they were pleased to be making the Florida circuit in December for the second year.

Marcy handed out packets containing the January 2006 *Smart Computing* magazine, the October 2005 *Your Guide To The Ultimate Computing Resource*, a mouse pad with calendar year 2006 printed on it and a ball point pen.
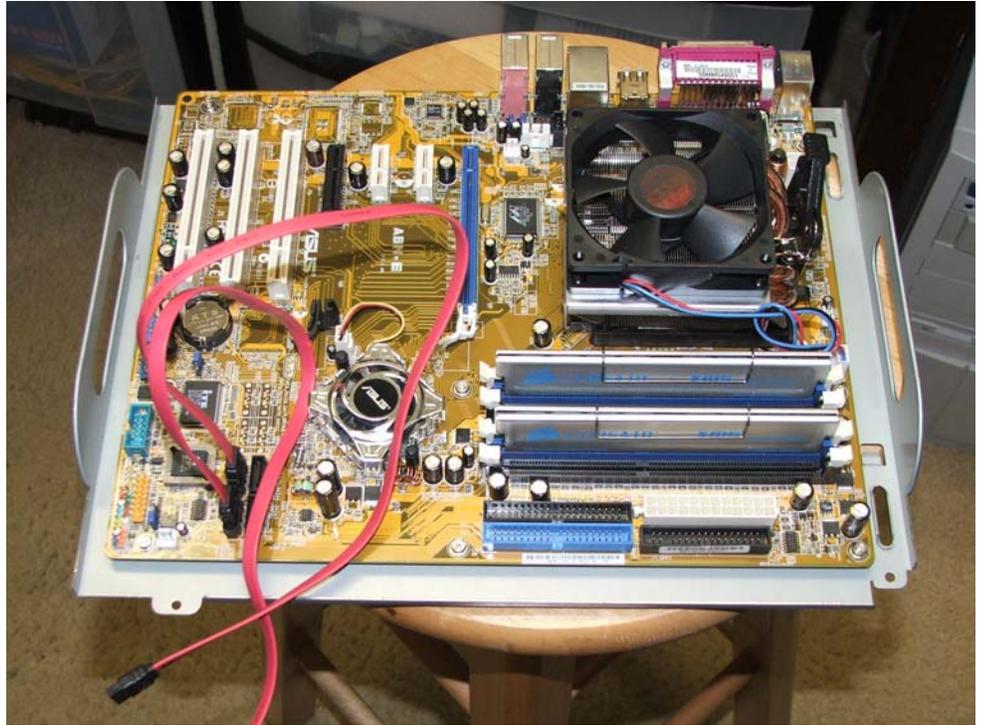
Smart Computing is a monthly publication for computer users of all skill levels. It features easy to follow tutorials, new product evaluations, troubleshooting guides for operating systems and everything in

New Computer

*By William LaMartin, Editor,
Tampa PC users Group*
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There it is at the right, my new computer, minus a case, hard drives, CD/DVD drives, floppy drive, video card and power supply, perched on Merle's work stool. Now, he doesn't assemble computers on a stool; that positioning was just to make taking the photograph easier. So what you are seeing here is really only the motherboard, memory and processor fan.

After 14 years of Gateway desktop computers, I finally made the break to a "home built" one (in Merle's home). And I feel I got a better machine than if I had purchased a Gateway, HP or Dell. As I see it, these companies make computers cheap to sell cheap since that is what most people want. My new computer has a large, roomy case, one where you actually have space to put your hand into and do some work. It has an AMD Athelon 64 Dual Core processor, two GB of Ram, two 250 GB Serial ATA hard drives configured as Raid 0, two CD/DVD burners, a multi function floppy, 20-inch monitor, standard keyboard and wireless mouse. Total cost for the parts was $2,365 (including Windows XP Professional). A breakdown of the pricing is on the following page. Oh, there is a card with extra USB ports and firewire ports.

So, how was all this done? The first step was for Merle to go to http://www.newegg.com and select the components for me to approve. The choice of a case turned out to be the most difficult. I did not want a black case or a poorly-constructed case. I would have preferred a mid tower one but had to settle for the larger tower to get what I wanted. I trusted Merle on the memory, hard drives and power supply. He gave me several choices for the monitor. He did this by setting up a wish list that I could go study at the site. Once we had agreed on what I needed, I

placed the order.

All the packages arrived within a week. Unfortunately, the box containing most of the small items was missing one hard drive and all the memory. That one box was very poorly taped, so I don't know if Newegg didn't put the parts in the box, they fell out or they were stolen during shipment. Now here is the bad part. Newegg has to "investigate" such occurrences, and this takes at least two weeks before they will either ship you replacements or refund your money. So if you want your parts now, you have to reorder (and repay). That is what I did. However, I had to go to another online company, PCMall.com, to get the hard drive, since Newegg was out of them.

Newegg definitely has low prices, and several members of our group recommend them highly and have never had problems, but dealing with them is entirely different from dealing with someone like Amazon.com. Recently I ordered from Amazon the upgrade for Visual Studio, Visual Studio 2005. This is an expensive program with the upgrade costing just under $500. When my copy did not arrive when the tracking said that it should, I went to the UPS site to check, and much to my surprise it said that the package had been delivered earlier at 5:30 PM and that

Internet Picture of the Month

(Computer..........Continued from page 4)

LaMartin had signed for it. Well, my wife and I were both home then, saw no UPS driver and certainly signed nothing.

A call to UPS produced sympathy but the information that I had to contact the shipping party, Amazon.com and have them put in a trace. Well, as you might know, there is no phone number for such at the Amazon site. But I had run into this problem before, and went straight to Google, which produced the secret customer support number. Once connected to

Squirrel Problem

Computer Parts breakdown

S-CASE ISTAR S-10000S RT (Case)	$118.00
CPU AMD 64 |4400+ ATHLON X2 939P (Processor)	$497.00
MOUSE|MICROSOFT M03-00090 Plat (Mouse)	$39.99
ASUS MOBO 939 NF4ULTRA A8N-E (Motherboard)	$109.99
CD MS|WIN XP PRO w/SP2 (Windows XP Pro)	$146.95
KB LOGITECH|ULTRA X KEYBOARD (Keyboard)	$19.99
ADD ON USB/FW (4+2)P PG-COM-303 (USB/Firewire)	$15.99
PSU TT	W0090RU 470W (Power Supply)	$67.99
VGA XFX|GF 6800 256MB PVT42PUDP3 (Video Card)	$209.00
Two HD 250G|MAXTOR 16M SATA 7L250S0 (Hard drives)	$206.00
MNTR SMSNG|20"LCD16msDVI 204T-Black (Monitor)	$549.95
CORSAIR 2X1G Twinx2048-3200c2pt RT (2 GB Memory)	$244.00
Two DVD+/-RW SONY DW-Q30A BK OEM (2 CD/DVD)	$77.98
Subtotal	$2,302.83
Tax	$0.00
Shipping	$62.61
Total	$2,365.44

You might well ask why such a photo for Internet Picture of the Month. Well, I am desperate. Additionally my neighbor at present has a family of squirrels living in his attic, and I have photos of them entering the attic soffit to prove it, but that wouldn't be an Internet picture, would it—unless I put it at my web site. There are all sorts of sites dedicated to removing squirrels from one's house. The one where this photo came from is http://unexco.com/SQ1.html.

January's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
French Wine Guide	http://www.terroir-france.com/
Big Eye in the Sky	http://www.bigeyeinthesky.com/
Speed Trap Exchange	http://www.speedtrap.org/speedtraps/stetlist.asp
IRS Forms	http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/formspubs/lists/0,,id=97817,00.html
Newegg—computer parts, etc.	http://www.newegg.com/
PCMall—computer parts, etc.	http://www.pcmall.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.

Amazon, they immediately offered to ship me via next day air the missing software at no cost. Now I call that service (that we have bought so much through Amazon may have had something to do with it). My Newegg refund was credited to my credit card in about two weeks.

Back to the computer. It took Merle a couple of hours to put it together and check that it didn't explode when booted. Next it was up to me to configure the Raid setup of the drives using a floppy and instructions Merle provided. (If you did not want to do a Raid stripe of the two drives (for faster hard drive access), then this step wouldn't be necessary.) After that I installed the operating system. Following that, again using Merle's instructions, I updated the motherboard chipset driver, sound driver and LAN driver. By the way, Merle normally does all of the above when he builds you a computer, but since he figured that I could manage myself using his instructions, he left that to me and saved himself, perhaps, an hour of work.

Once all that was done, it was time to go to Microsoft and do the Windows updates, of which there were quite a few.

Next came the time-consuming part—installing all my programs. Let's see, there was Microsoft Office 2003 Professional, Microsoft FrontPage 2002, Microsoft Visual Basic 2006, and Microsoft Visual Studio 2003 for the Microsoft ones. Then from Adobe I had PhotoShop CS, Illustrator CS, Acrobat 7.0 Professional and Streamline. For second tier programs, there were Family Tree Maker, WinZip, Stuffit, Nikon View and others.

Now it was time to retrieve all my data from the Gateway. I could have simply copied and pasted folders over the network connection between the two computers, but at Merle's suggestion I decided to use the Microsoft File and Settings Transfer Wizard to accomplish the task, with the additional benefit that most of my program settings for the programs I had just installed would also be transferred. Additionally, all my email folders, address book and Internet favorites would be transferred with no work on my part.

The Wizard is found under System Tools in the Accessories folder of the Start menu. If you have a lot to transfer, it can take several hours to create the package to be transferred (the packaged file was named IMG00001.DAT and was about 2.1 GB in size) and then an equally long time to place everything in the proper place on the new computer. I have lost my notes on all of this, but I think it took a bit more than four hours for each of the two steps.

The one thing I did not include in the transfer was the collection of local copies of websites I maintain, which, I had on the Gateway. For those who know about FrontPage, I chose to use it to "publish" each of those webs separately from the old computer to the new computer over the LAN. As a final note, I should mention that Merle said for some strange reason the Wizard did not automatically include the file type jpg in the collection of file types it would transfer, so I had to add that—don't want to leave all the jpegs behind.

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 *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.

(Minutes..........Continued from page 3)

between, all in plain English. They also keep advertising to less than 20% of the publication.

Marcy used the Table of Contents of the distributed issue as an outline for the presentation. First was "Troubleshooting Your Software," then "Reviews of New Software and Hardware Products", next "Windows Tips and Tricks", then the "Plugged In" section, followed by "Tech Support," with questions and answers, "PC Projects", "Quick Studies" and, finally, "Tidbits".

Next we logged onto the website, http://www.smartcomputing.com so Marcy could demonstrate the ease of use and familiarize us with their homepage. She referred to the second handout, *Your Guide To The Ultimate Computing Resource,* as an outline. Marcy told us of My Personal Library and Browse All Issues & Articles features which allow subscribers to read past and current issues of all four publications they produce online and store articles of interest for quick future reference. The four publications are *PC Today*, *Computer Power User*, *PC Builder* and *Smart Computing*. Subject searches using key words can be done for all publications. There also is tech support available through a question and answer board, or through an 800 number you can call for free assistance in resolving problems.

Heck, for just $17 a year you could subscribe to the website only and access articles from all four publications, printing them, or storing them in your per-

sonal library. At any rate, the magazines, web site and free 800 number should cover any PC problems you encounter and keep you current with what's available in the marketplace.

Thank you, Marcy and Vince, for an excellent presentation. We can get *Smart Computing* for just $29 per year.

Smart Computing provided two door prizes for meeting attendees. The numbers drawn were 792690, held by Ed Snow, who won the *Smart Computing* Reference Set, and 792691, held by Richard Brooks who won a year's subscription to *Smart Computing* magazine.

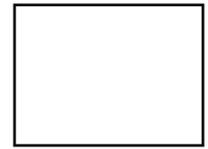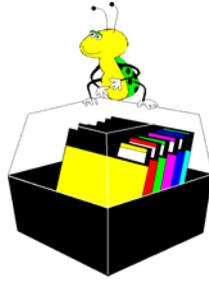The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM. Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year to all! ◆

(Computer..........Continued from page 6)

But one thing remained to be done—and a very important one—install antivirus protection and spyware protection. For me this meant installing a new copy of Norton Antivirus 2006 and of Spy Sweeper. Oh, I almost forgot—my scanner's software and two printers also had to be installed.

It is nice to have a new desktop computer with a monitor larger than I have ever had before. It really

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

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does make working at the computer easier. I have a laptop computer but only use it for travel and presentations. How so many people now use laptops as their main computers is something I cannot understand unless it is just a matter of not paying for two computers. ◆

(Comments……….Continued from page 1)

Make sure that you use virus and adware/spyware scanning software. It is very necessary. I hadn't had the new computer running for more than a week before it was attacked. All I did was go to Google, do a search on a problem my sister was having with a program, then view one of the pages provided by the search. All hell broke loose with windows popping up everywhere, Norton Antivirus popping up messages, etc. To make the story short—three spyware programs had been installed and it took both Norton and Spy Sweeper two runs each to remove them. ◆

to I-275

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Harney Road

I-4

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