



August in Tampa

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

Vol. 19 No. 8 August 2006

Meeting

Liz Mueller
From the
Hillsborough Library System

Wednesday, August 9, 2006
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: This month Liz Mueller from the Hillsborough Public Library will tell us about their digital-based reference system. 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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Printing Much of my computer time the past month has been spent printing out large images. In last month's newsletter I mentioned the panoramas that I had been printing. Well, I don't have many panoramas to print, but I have many, many other photos that I would like to view as large prints. By large here, I mean mostly 11" x 17" images. That is a convenient size since the aspect ratio of the images produced by my digital camera is approximately 2 to 3, and this fits nicely with almost no cropping on the 11" x 17" paper. The printer used is an Epson Stylus Photo 2200 (2400 is the latest version).

If the largest images you have printed are 8.5" x 11" ones, then you are in for either a pleasant or an unpleasant surprise with the 11" x 17" ones. It will be a pleasant surprise if your
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September Meeting: Blain Barton from Microsoft returns (subject to be announced)

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

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

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Minutes of the July Meeting

By Doug Mullis, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
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Bob LaFave started the Windows SIG portion of our meeting at about 6:35 pm in the Pepin Training room by telling us that Windows XP has a program for transferring files from your old computer to a new computer. It is the Files & Settings Transfer Wizard. You must have the Windows XP operating system on both computers to use it.

Bob then demonstrated the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor, a service available online to scan your computer and determine what upgrades it needs to be compatible with Windows Vista.

Nancy Cottrell asked about adding USB ports to her computer. Bob suggested she get a four-port powered hub at a computer store. When Nancy said she has been camping on her neighbor's wireless network, she was advised her neighbor, by having an unsecured network, is exposed to hackers. Wireless networks should be secured and only authorized access permitted.

Another member was having trouble with his cable provider's Internet access. Several suggestions were offered, all of which had been tried except "change your provider because they are a bunch of dummies".

At 7:00 pm, Bob turned the meeting over to president John Witmer for the business portion. John thanked Bob for conducting the SIG portion of the meeting and introduced the officers present, stating that our vice president and our member at large are vacationing. Joseph Weaver, Richard Brooks and Dirk Vallo were introduced as guests and welcomed to our group. Two new members were introduced and also welcomed, Sam Christy and Jean Gillespie.

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Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

Sling Media's Slingbox™

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

Last month I alluded to some really neat presents I have been receiving from my techie-geek daughter and son-in-law. Last month I told you about the Roku Soundbridge. This month I want to tell you about how I can now watch the TV in my family room anywhere I have a connection to the Internet; at work, in another state, or even in another country. Well, not actually watch that specific TV, but rather whatever can be viewed on that TV, and not only just viewed but controlled as if I were sitting there in my living room. Sling Media calls it “placeshifting” your TV to your PC, no matter where you are.

The **Slingbox** is a mechanical device that looks like a large silver chocolate bar that connects between the TV and a router, either by cable or wirelessly. The **Slingbox** is compatible with thousands of devices like TiVo, Comcast's and Bright House's DVRs, Dish TV, Direct TV and many, many more. The initial automatic device setup asks you specifics about your equipment so that when you go to control your TV at another location you practically have the same ability as if you were home.

You can receive TV on an unlimited number of PCs without the hassle and cost of adding new hardware (i.e. TV tuner cards) and software drivers to every computer — and with no additional service fees. The only catch here is that only one connection to the **Slingbox** can take place at a time, kind of like AOL.

The setup really is painless — just follow the instructions. They provide a CD with the client software, or you can download the latest version from their website. Once the client software was installed on my notebook I started the program, opened up the remote that looks remarkably like the one I got from Bright House, turned on my TV at home and watched a program that I had recorded earlier, and it really was just that simple. And all the time I was in my hotel room in Houston, Texas.



I travel a lot with my job and this new accessory I have added to my notebook sure makes my travels a little more enjoyable now. As with all good things, there is typically a downside. If there is one with this, it's that you have to have an Internet connection, the faster the better. It has built-in optimization that will automatically adjust to the speed of the connection to give you the best picture. I don't always carry my notebook, but I always have my PocketPC, which will access my TV also. Again, you need an Internet connection with that. This past week I upgraded my cell phone to a new Motorola Q, which runs on a Windows Mobile Smartphone platform, and you guessed it, it accesses my TV, too. But with my Moto-Q, I carry my broadband Internet connection in the phone. So now, anyplace I can make a cell phone call, I can access my TV at home. The picture is obviously smaller, but the new Q has a high-resolution screen and the picture from the TV is remarkably clear.

The Slingbox sells for about \$200, and if you're a TV aficionado like I am, this is the best deal on the planet. Go here to see what you must have, what the minimum requirements are and other facts about the Slingbox: <http://www.slingmedia.com/us/slingbox/>.

Next month, more on my Motorola Q. By then I may have learned all it can do. ♦

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image file has enough information (pixels) to produce the large print. It will be unpleasant if your file does not have the pixels or is of poor quality. All of the files produced by my camera have enough pixels. However, very few—possibly one in 50—are of the quality that I want to print them as 11" x 17" . So far, I have only printed 20.

Just as an 8.5" x 11" is more impressive than a 4" x 6" photo, an 11" x 17" completely outclasses an 8.5" x 11". Some photos that are nice as 8.5" x 11"s are stunning in the larger format. Of course, there is no way of demonstrating that in this article. Perhaps I can bring a portfolio of them to the next meeting.

Of course, there is one drawback to the 11" x 17" s or the even larger 13" x 19"s that I can print—the price of paper and ink. Based on what paper and ink cost me and using Epson's estimate of square inches printed per ink cartridge, I come up with about \$8.00 per 11" x 17" . Of course, that doesn't include the wear and tear on my \$725 printer.

And if the print comes out a little too dark, you have just thrown \$8 in the trash can. So it is important to know how the print will compare to what you see on your monitor. Supposedly you can calibrate your monitor using Adobe Gamma. I have tried it with so-so results. And I am not going to pay \$300 plus to buy a device to do it.

Actually, I get a fairly good match between what I see on the monitor and what I print. I accomplish this by knowing the image will always print a bit darker than the monitor shows it, and I adjust the file's brightness accordingly just to do the print. Additionally, I have downloaded the ICC profiles of the types of paper I use made by Epson and Ilford for my printer. I then set the print driver settings to use the proper profile with no color correction.

For anyone who might actually be doing this, a note of warning: When you do a print with preview on this particular printer using the ICC profiles and no color correction, the print preview will appear very red in tone. Epson says to ignore this and proceed, as the print will be fine. And it will. When I first

started using the printer and profiles and saw the reddish preview, I would cancel and simply print with no profiles and hope for the best. But reading at the Epson site that the print preview did not give an accurate rendition when using the profiles with no color correction gave me courage to proceed with first printing 4" x 6"s and then moving up to the larger formats using the profiles.

From what I have read, getting a reddish tone to prints from inkjet prints is not all that uncommon—and I produced my share when I was trying to learn how to use the different profiles and print driver settings for this printer. But once I learned what the correct combination of settings were, I have been able to produce results superior to just simply using the default settings.

Until we meet again was the subject of an email I just received from friend and club member Wade Herman. Normally that would not be out of the ordinary except that Wade died of a heart attack July 27th in Asheville, NC.

The email was listed as from "Wade" with subject "Until we meet again" and began with the salutation "Dear family and friends." I forwarded the message to club members for whom I have addresses, so I won't repeat the details of the message here other than to say that it touched on the past, the present and the future. At this point I do not know if Wade wrote it earlier and set it aside to be used at the appropriate time, or if some family member or friend penned the message. Of course, if you are of a Spiritualist bent, then there is the possibility that Wade did actually send it himself. Regardless, it was well done and much in line with the way Wade did things.

The computer connection My acquaintance with Wade actually coincides with my involvement with the personal computer, which for me began when our family bought an Apple IIe in 1983 from Florida Computing in downtown Tampa. After having the computer for a few months, I learned from another neighbor that there was the fellow living a couple blocks away who also had an Apple. That was Wade. He actually had a slightly earlier version of

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the Apple—an Apple II. Our main interaction at that time was simply sharing information on the various software programs available for the Apple.

For those who never had one of those early Apples, let me remind you of the specifications of the Apple IIe (I think the Apple II may have been more minimal). The Apple IIe came with 64 KB (that is KB not MB) of RAM with an external floppy drive with a capacity of 135 KB. All programs were run from floppy disks inserted into this drive. I think, the computer and a green screen monitor cost around \$1,650. If you wanted to buy a second disk drive to write out data to, for example, that would cost you another \$350 (I think, as stated, the price of the IIe included a floppy, but it may have been extra). If you wanted an additional color monitor (the Apple produced color), that would be around \$400. An Apple dot matrix printer went for around \$500. Compare those prices in 1983 dollars to what you can get now for just a few hundred dollars.

I stuck with the Apple, writing my little programs for it using the built-in Applesoft programming language, until we purchased our first PC from Gateway in 1991. That was by far much longer than I have ever subsequently gone without purchasing a new computer. Wade moved on to the PC format much sooner. So, after he purchased an IBM compatible, with no computer problems in common we had very little contact until sometime after 1991.

At some point in the mid-1990's we began communicating regularly on computer problems, and that developed to discussions of life, in general: politics,

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Internet Picture of the Month



Ottoman Empire 1481—1683
— A small section —

For the second month in a row, the Internet Picture of the Month selection is a map. This map is from the University of Texas's Historical Map Collection for the Middle East at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_middle_east.html. The different colors indicate when the regions became part of the empire. What is of interest is that on this map there is no Iraq, no Lebanon, no Israel. These countries came into existence after WWI.

August's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)

<http://www.tpcug.org/>

Genealogy Atlas

<http://www.genealogyatlas.com/index.htm>

Apple II History

<http://apple2history.org/>

America's Running Routes

<http://www.usatf.org/routes/>

University of Texas online map collection

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>



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.

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automobiles, the stock market, etc. But no sports. Neither of us cared a whit about that.

The last phone call I received from Wade was about a week before he died. He was in Asheville, where he had a second home. He wanted to relate all his tribulations in finally getting his dial-up Internet connection there to work. In Tampa he had a RoadRunner (Bright House) cable connection for the Internet; they also apparently have a feature where you can connect to the Internet through a dial-up account when you are away from your main cable connection (Tampa in this case). I think you possibly have to pay extra for this and it is really through the AOL dial-up numbers. Whatever the case, Wade had signed up for it and used it on previous trips to Asheville.

This trip he had occasionally been able to share (with permission) a neighbor's unencrypted wireless connection, but that would often drop out after only a very brief time. So he needed to try his dial-up. That is where the fun began. An attempt to connect via his modem to the local phone number produced the common error message that says in effect that your username or password is incorrect. I have seen that many times over the years, and it is usually solved by simply waiting a few minutes and then trying again when everything will be OK, since the problem was really a temporary problem on the ISP's end. No such luck for Wade.

I wish my memory were better on this, but here is the outline of what happened as I can best recall it. In all, Wade spent over five hours that day with various phone-help people scattered all over the world. First he contacted RR help. I don't recall the sequence of events here, but I believe they led him through all sorts of setting checks to see if that could be the problem. When that didn't work, at some point they found out his operating system was XP and asked him if he had SP2 installed. On an affirmative answer to that, he was told that was the problem and he needed to contact Microsoft.

I think this took well over an hour, and he then moved on to Microsoft, where after a long wait on hold, he was informed that there was no way that SP2 would

cause a problem with dial-up networking—which Wade said that he figured was the case all along. But he was just following up all possibilities since he had not been able to get things to work otherwise.

There are many details of all this that I cannot remember, but I know he again contacted RR in North Carolina with the Microsoft answer, and they tried more finagling to no effect.

Before I reveal the solution to the problem, a little history: Wade a couple of years back had RR as his Internet provider in Tampa, as many of us do. He had a username and password for that account. He then changed to Verizon DSL when that became available in the neighborhood and cancelled the RR (now Bright House) account. Then, sometime in the past year, he decided to change back to Bright House because of an attractive package deal for both cable TV and the Internet. When he did this, he created a new username and new password different from what he had before with RR.

Now back to North Carolina. After five hours of frustration, he decided to try the old RR username and password—you guessed it, the dial-up connection in Asheville now worked. Somehow, even though he had cancelled his RR account in Tampa and then created a new RR account, approximately a year later when he went back to RR, the Asheville account was apparently not cancelled or if it was, it was reinstated with the old information.

Of all the problems we discussed in recent years, keeping his two computers on a network was the most persistent. We always got the problem fixed, but sometimes it would take several days before whatever caused the problem was reversed. Some of Wade's other problems were because he always wanted the latest and greatest in video cards and other hardware devices—many of which did not perform as advertised because they were slightly beyond the cutting edge. As for myself, I was happy to wait until others had tried out such stuff and the kinks had been worked out. But waiting was not for Wade when it came to the latest gadgets. And I will miss him. ♦

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—Cancelled until the Fall

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.

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John announced next month's speaker would be Elizabeth Mueller from the Hillsborough Public Library System. Don Patzsch had suggested this presentation as he heard it at the Brandon Group. A member also asked that she tell us about their e-book service.

Jim Purcell reminded us of our arrangement with Amazon.com wherein books and other computer supplies are not only discounted, but also the group gets a percentage of the sale. You have to access Amazon from our home page for us to get the credit. Bob LaFave said that newegg.com is also an online site with good prices.

Doug Mullis recalled that, at last month's meeting, Bob LaFave asked if anyone was interested in a session on backing up their hard drive. It seems before a response was heard another question was presented. Except for Doug, no one spoke up this time either.

Another member asked about replacing her printer with an "all in one" device (printer, scanner and copier) costing around \$100. Merle Nicholson responded that he bought one several months ago and is happy with the performance. Bob made a pitch for the new low-priced laser printers. Although not color, they are fast and you get many, many more copies before having to replace the cartridge.

At 7:15 pm, John introduced our speaker for the evening, one of our own members, Merrill Friend, to show us what he has been doing with Adobe Photoshop Elements 4.0.

Because of his investment in camera and lenses, Merrill uses his Minolta X 700 film camera for taking color slides. He then scans the slides into digital format and is pleased with picture quality.

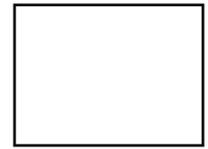
Merrill says it is important to first adjust dimensions of your images, maximizing resolution rather than simply cropping. After that, there are all kinds of things you can do. Editing your images is fun, but time-consuming.

Merrill showed us things he has learned, such as doing panoramic views, adding or removing people or items, enhancing sky color, clouds and lighting. One particularly nice image was a Rocky Point causeway scene where he had created a mosaic on white foam board, leaving a grid between each picture element with the effect that the scene was viewed through a multi paneled window. A panoramic riverside view with majestic oaks was also beautifully backlit and refreshing. You could feel the shaded air cooling with the retreating summer sun.

Merrill did admit to having the expert assistance of Creative Color Inc., located on E. Cypress St., with

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Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.
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First Class Mail

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

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some of his work. They don't come cheaply, however. He showed us price comparisons of photo services for varying sizes and numbers of printed pictures. Shipping usually is additional, so use a local service. To have anything framed, you'd better carry a sack of money, or learn how to do your own.

John thanked Merrill for the interesting presentation. We did not have any door prizes to raffle off this evening; however, attendees were reminded we had chocolate chip and Oreo cookies, Starbucks coffee and bottled water.

The meeting adjourned about 8:20 pm. ◆

