



October in Tampa

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

Vol. 19 No. 10 October 2006

## Meeting

**Excel for Office  
and Home**  
by John Witmer

Wednesday, October 11, 2006  
6:30 PM  
Art Pepin Hospitality Room  
Pepin Distributing Co.  
4121 N 50th St  
Tampa, Florida

**Meeting Preview:** This month John Witmer will demonstrate various uses of Microsoft Excel. We will also have the usual half-hour Windows SIG.



## Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group  
[lamartin@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:lamartin@tampabay.rr.com)

Mouse problems. At least I think that is what I have, as my computer will occasionally freeze when I am using the mouse to resize a window or click on something. Some days it doesn't happen, and other days it will happen several times. When it does, there is only one solution: Press the start button on the computer until the computer turns off; then reboot. It has been with me for over a month. I have thought that I have found the answer only to be proven wrong several times.

I don't even know if it is a hardware problem or a software problem. At times, I was sure it was hardware, then software, then hardware. Usually I solve such problems within a few days, but this one has persisted.

The obvious thing to check was the mouse and its driver. I

*(Comments.....Continued on page 3)*

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**November Meeting:** Steve Singer from RDI with the latest in hardware

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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 September Meeting**

*By Doug Mullis, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group*  
[dmullis@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)

Due to our speaker needing extra time, we skipped the Windows SIG portion of our meeting and launched into the business meeting at 6:40 pm. President John Witmer began by announcing that we need members to step forward and serve in elected and appointed offices of our group for calendar year 2007. Next month we will be seeking nominees for Member at Large, Secretary and Treasurer as the existing officers heed the call to other challenges. Also anyone interested in serving as President or Vice President should let it be known as the incumbents would welcome the direction of newer members. We also need to fill the appointed position of Official Greeter to greet and distribute nametags at our meetings. Bruce Register did a fine job but has moved to Alabama.

John said he is preparing a presentation for our October meeting and asked whether the members prefer Excel or Power Point. Or possibly someone has a topic they would like to present? Hearing no volunteer, John asked for a show of hands between his two topics. The group was divided, showing an interest in both, so John will do a presentation on Excel, and, if time permits, touch lightly on Power Point.

John next announced the upcoming Fall FACUG Conference in Orlando on Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. Registration is \$15 before Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> or \$20 thereafter and includes breakfast and lunch in addition to interesting lectures and door prizes. What a deal! For details go to the FACUG website.

Our Digital Imaging SIG has been on hold for the summer, and the Board believes regular monthly meetings will be hard to support without a new leader, or possibly a new topic. Does anyone have ideas for this group? Special meetings could be called as the situation warrants. Jim Purcell said he had a new program he would like to present and will get with Doug or John when ready.

Programs through the end of the year include John Witmer

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## Best Tech Support Website at Techsupportalert.com

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group  
[merle@merlenicholson.com](mailto:merle@merlenicholson.com)

I wouldn't ordinarily write about a website, but this one grabbed me and has kept me entranced, so I thought others in the club may find it useful. It's a website apparently by one man, Ian "gizmo" Richards, and it's a huge undertaking for one person.

The web page is: Gizmo Richards' Tech support Alert and has headings for "Gizmo's Top Picks of the Best Utilities and Tech Resources", "Gizmo's Top Picks" and "The 46 Best Freeware Utilities".

There was a mention in the St Pete Times about this website that was very flattering so I thought I'd check it out.

Most of the website is directly viewable without subscribing, but there is a monthly newsletter called "Gizmo Richards' Support Alert Newsletter", and the last one posted was 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2006. If you subscribe - free, he sends out an email about mid-month with the latest newsletter. In addition there is a Premium SE (Support Edition) for \$10/year.

The September newsletter is very long, with categories like "Top Tech Sites and Resources", "Top free-ware and shareware utilities", "Security patches, service releases and updates", "Other useful stuff", "Tip of the month" and "Freebie of the month".

I'm in the middle of troubleshooting a software problem of my own where my Webroot SpySweeper scan is crashing my computer (a real BSOD), and so I first delved into this website because he has very extensive testing and comparisons on antivirus and spyware software. His emphasis is on finding freeware and shareware, and he seems to spend the most space on those, but he also includes commercial products. His sections on Internet Security, Virus and Spyware is very extensive and highly educational. Ultimately, I have turned off my daily scheduled scan in SpySweeper and installed ewido, a free spyware program for which he has some recommendations, and I am doing manually-initiated scans with ewido for

now.

I've been through some of his "Best Free Utilities", and I am amazed at how much time this must take one person to maintain! There is plenty of free software that he says he's tested in categories that you've never thought possible. And usually he'll list two or three in that category and give you a summary of the differences. This list is very worthwhile going through.

When you subscribe, your email address is simply registered. There is no password. There is a subscription administration page where you can change your email address and also to un-subscribe and to look at back issues. When you register, you get an email that you must reply to and then wait for a second one saying your email address has been registered.

In addition to his own written material, there is plenty of lists of other websites under the categories of "Best Free Support Sites", "Best Paid Support Sites", "Best Shareware and Freeware Sites", "Best Troubleshooting Sites", "Best Sites for Tips, Tricks and Tweaking" and several others.

Take a few minutes and look at this website; you'll be glad you did. <http://www.techsupportalert.com>. ♦

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*(Comments..... Continued from page 1)*

have reinstalled the Microsoft IntelliPoint driver and tried different mice. I even tried old PS/2 mice and bought a new Logitech mouse and installed it. All was to no avail; the computer would still freeze at times—always when using the mouse. Sometimes it would even reboot itself.

Almost all of the freezes were while resizing a control in Visual Studio 2005, so I even began to suspect that program. However, since I was spending most of my time with Visual Studio, it was reasonable to assume that most of the freezes would occur there.

I also suspected USB as being the problem, and there was good reason for this since the additional card I had in the computer that supplied extra USB sockets, along with Firewire sockets, all of a sudden went bad.

*(Comments.....Continued on page 6)*

## UTStarcom PPC 6700

By William LaMartin, Editor,  
Tampa PC Users Group  
[lamarin@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:lamarin@tampabay.rr.com)

In last month's newsletter, Larry Anders wrote about his new Motorola Q Pocket PC and mobile phone. Well, I can't let Larry get too far ahead of me. I have been following him hardware-wise for many years. He had a scanner before I did back when scanners cost around \$1,000. We both ended up with an HP IICx, I think it was called. Then he had RoadRunner cable for the Internet before I did, and a digital camera before I got mine. Then there was the Pocket PC and now the Pocket PC cell phone with an Internet phone service. And, I imagine, there have been many other computer doodads that he has beat me to the draw on—probably some of which I will never buy.

Larry's article was not really the impetus for me to buy a fancy new phone—although once I decided to get one, it did point me in the direction of a Pocket PC phone. What pushed me toward the phone store was actually a cut thumb. That may sound a bit odd, but there is logic in it—my old phone put a nice deep gash in my right thumb.

Perhaps that last line needs a bit of explaining. I wear my phone in a holder on my belt and not infrequently hit it on things like car doors and door frames in houses. Well, this last item, a door frame in an office I was visiting, apparently lifted the decorative aluminum on my old phone up so that a very sharp triangular point of the metal was pointing at a 90 degree angle from the phone. I noticed it and, not realizing the danger, pushed on it with my thumb, resulting in a surprisingly large amount of blood gushing out, and my thumb is still sore five days later. The piece of aluminum could not be bent into its former position satisfactorily. Thus, a new phone.

Buying this phone was a bit of a stretch. It lists for more than \$600. However, by taking a plan with Alltel for two years, I got it for a net of \$199 after instant and mail-in rebates. I had better remember to do those two mail-in rebates since they total \$150. I am sure Alltel is hoping that I forget; isn't that the purpose of mail-in rebates—hope that the buyer does-



n't follow through. And if you have a phone that can connect to the Internet via a cell tower, you just additionally have to also buy the Internet plan for \$29.95.

That is one thing my previous Pocket PC could not do. It could connect to any available wireless connection, but it had no ability to connect to cell phone networks. Now while we are driving in the car, my wife can order things online instead of being restricted to ordering from the computer at home. At least that is in theory, since she should be able to get some benefit from my fancy new phone.

Of course, you can set up your email accounts on the device so as to send and receive your email. There is one caveat here. Receiving email on your accounts is no problem. However, if you want to be able to send, you most likely will need an email account other than your usual ISP-provided one. For example, RoadRunner will not allow me to send email using that account when I am connected to the Internet via a provider other than RoadRunner. I solve this problem by using an account I set up with my lamar-

(PPC Phone.....Continued on page 7)

*(Minutes.....Continued from page 2)*

presenting Excel in October, Steve Singer on new hardware in November and Smart Computing Magazine in December at our annual Christmas party.

William LaMartin suggested members pay their dues through the link at our web site. This gives us an electronic path for quicker record keeping and eliminates physically going to the bank and P O Box. Kevan has told us this works well for his bike club. You can use your credit card, but go through Pay Pal. You do not have to join Pay Pal to do this. Try it at the site and see how it works. We may even have nametags and names of new members on our roster at the next meeting.

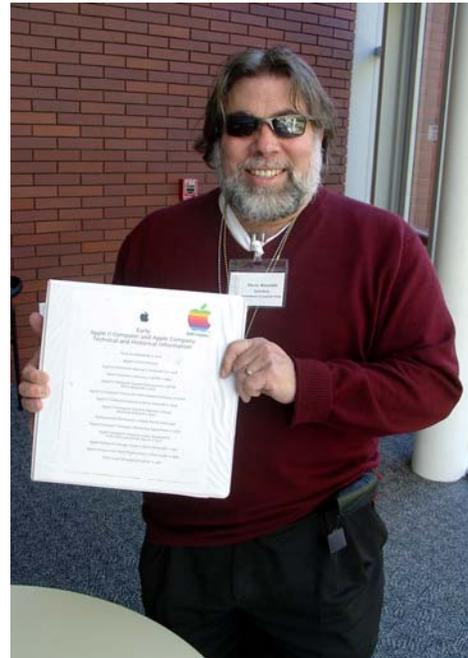
At 6:55 pm, President Witmer concluded business and introduced our speaker for the evening, Blain Barton of Microsoft, to tell us the latest on Windows Vista and Office 2007. Blain thanked us for having him back, introducing himself as the IT-Pro Evangelist representing Microsoft in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. He specializes in client service and is part of a team making presentations across the nation, with sessions planned in the near future for Orlando and Ft Lauderdale.

Blain has been with Microsoft for 13 years and has seen operating systems evolve from Windows 3.0 to Windows XP, with vast improvements overall. Today Microsoft is fine-tuning Windows Vista with a release date before the end of the year. This will be the biggest release in the history of Microsoft! Two hundred and fifty million currently use Windows XP worldwide.

Blain said use the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor to assess your present computer's compatibility with Vista. It not only tells you what upgrades to make, but also which edition best suits your present system. Almost any computer will run Vista; you just won't get all the features or the best performance possible without the recommended upgrades.

*(Minutes.....Continued on page 7)*

## Internet Picture of the Month



**Steve Wozniak in 2005**

The photo of Steve Wozniak, inventor of the Apple, is at the Homebrew Computer Club 30-Year Retrospective in November of 2005.

“Woz” attended many of the meetings of the Homebrew Computer Club, and it was there he met Steve Jobs and together they formed Apple Computer, Inc. in 1976.

Go to <http://www.digibarn.com/history/05-VCF8-HomeBrew30/index.html> for more photos and a history of the Homebrew Computer Club.

## October's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)  
DigiBarn Computer Museum  
Latest Electronic Gadgets  
Steve's DigiCams  
Battery Mart

<http://www.tpcug.org/>  
<http://www.digibarn.com/>  
<http://www.engadget.com/>  
<http://www.steves-digicams.com/>  
<http://www.batterymart.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.

## Suspend your hard drive in rubber bands

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group  
[merle@merlenicholson.com](mailto:merle@merlenicholson.com)

Just this last July, I built a new server for my office. I like a particular black Enlight case that – at least from the factory – will only mount one hard drive, and I needed three. I also want to keep fan noise at a minimum in my office and also cool the hard drives. So I bought a very quiet power supply for the new machine and then developed a variation on something I saw in a magazine where they mounted hard drives using stock heavy rubber bands. I was a little alarmed at the use of gum rubber bands though so I bought ten feet of 1/8" nylon-covered bungee cord from a marine supply store at \$.50/ft.



You lightly burn the nylon cover after cutting, knot it properly and it should outlast the PC for quite a few years. I then mounted a 120mm Silverstone quiet fan using the remainder of my cord, and, along with two 80mm Silverstone quiet fans in the back and the stock cpu fan for the AMD-64 3500+, the PC is virtually silent from two feet away. Note too, I used two long screws in the bottom of each drive to act as stops to keep the drives in place even if you tip the unit violently on its back.

I had to cut a hole in the front for the large fan, and was amazed just how quiet the unit is. Doing some subsequent experimenting, I've discovered that a great deal of fan noise is the air itself whistling through restrictive openings, and just opening up the passages reduces the noise dramatically.



Since that time, I've built two more similar computers using the same method and even cutting two holes in the front for fans on a PC I sent my oldest son. That one moves a very large volume of air over four hard drives, video card and a very hot CPU. In spite of the amount of air flowing through the case, it's virtually silent. ♦



(Comments.....Continued from page 3)

No device plugged into it would work, and it displayed as defective in Device Manager. So I removed it, and things seemed to improve. However, in a couple of days the freezes returned.

I have searched through Google and the Microsoft Knowledgebase, finding no solution. I have unplugged all USB devices while using a PS/2 mouse.

(Comments.....Continued on page 8)

## 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](mailto:lamartin@tampabay.rr.com), or Merle Nicholson at [merle@merlenicholson.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

*(PPC Phone.....Continued from page 4)*

tin.com domain. The hosting company for that domain allows me something like 25 or more email accounts. If you can't do something like that, you will have to use web mail to do any sending from such a device, or, for that matter, to send email anytime you are using a computer not connected to the Internet via your ISP.

This device will do all the things Larry listed in his article. To highlight a few:

- Function as a small computer (Pocket PC) so that you can run programs like Pocket Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Pocket Adobe Acrobat, Pocket Streets and a thousand more written especially for the Pocket PC.
- Is a full-featured cell phone
- Has a 1.3 MP camera with flash
- Built in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth
- Mini SD card slot for extra file storage
- Windows Media Player 10 Mobile to play video and audio files (thus an MP3 player)
- Can be used as a modem for a laptop
- Slide out keyboard (large letters for a PDA)

The only problem I have encountered so far is forgetting to disable the Internet and enable Bluetooth on the phone before starting my car. If these two things are not done, I cannot get the phone and the car to connect via Bluetooth. ♦

*(Minutes.....Continued from page 5)*

Mr. Barton told us there are four editions of Windows Vista: Business, Home Basic, Home Premium and Ultimate. The Ultimate Edition, of course, has the most features, and Blain demonstrated many of its bells and whistles.

Ultimate included Windows Photo Gallery, Windows Aero with Flip 3 D (really neat), Windows Media Center, Windows Tablet and Touch Technology, Windows BitLocker Drive Encryption, Windows Ultimate Extras and Business Networking. Our virtual tour started in the Welcome Center and ended in the Media Center.

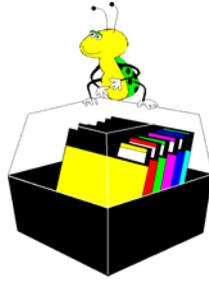
Blain then demonstrated the improved search features of Vista. This really makes finding photos easy if you label them distinctly. He also demonstrated DVD Maker, Gadgets and Microsoft Word.

Windows Vista and Office 12 (aka Office 2007) are planned to be released simultaneously around Thanksgiving and will be on store shelves for Christmas. Why upgrade to Windows Vista you ask? For improved performance, increased reliability and the latest in security.

Blain answered many questions, reflected on where we are headed with PCs and distributed DVDs of Windows Vista Beta 2 for us to preview. He also left a copy of Microsoft OneNote, which we will raffle off at a future meeting.

Thank you for demonstrating Windows Vista, Blain, and for updating us on its release. The meeting adjourned at about 8:40 pm. ♦

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*(Comments.....Continued from page 6)*

I have asked Merle Nicholson. Still no solution.  
Obviously I have checked for viruses and spyware.

Possibly it is some software addition or update. Microsoft, Symantec and SpySweeper are always updating themselves. I have installed a couple of new programs, I think. It is difficult to recall exactly when the problem began and what I might have installed or changed in the days preceding the first occurrence.

There is really nothing in the Event Viewer that I can pinpoint as being the problem. There are always warnings there and an occasional error recorded. But none seem to be a cause of a freeze. In fact, when the computer freezes I don't think it will be writing much to the log.

I think the next step is to totally stop SpySweeper, see if that helps, and if not, additionally stop Norton Antivirus except for email. I'll keep you posted. ◆

