



December in Tampa

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

Vol. 19 No. 12 December 2006

Meeting

Smart Computing

Wednesday, December 13, 2006
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: Jen Clausen will speak about Sandhills Publishing's magazines and the Smart Computing User Group program. Jen will step us through an issue of Smart Computing, convey the value of SmartComputing.com through a live demonstration and introduce attendees to Smart Computing's sister publications - PC Today, Computer Power User, and the Reference Series.

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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Scanner solution Recently I wrote about not being able to purchase a replacement negative holder for my Epson scanner. Well, I have found a solution. It's an 8"x 10" piece of clear glass. I simply put the negatives on the scanner bed aligned parallel to the side of the scanner and then place the piece of glass over them to hold them in position. It works for all negative sizes. The only difficulty is getting the negative aligned properly.

IE 7 I have installed IE 7 on my laptop and my desktop with

(Comments.....Continued on page 7)

January Meeting: Blain Barton from Microsoft

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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.

Technical information found in this publication is not necessarily compatible with your hardware and software; plus other errors or misprints could occur from time to time. Therefore, the use of programs, commands, functions or anything of a technical nature appearing in this publication will be at your own risk.

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\$25 Individual	\$35 Family
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Check the address label for your renewal month

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Minutes of the November Meeting

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

Bob LaFave started the Windows SIG portion of our meeting at 6:35 pm. A member stated he had bought a music CD in Europe and could not get it to play. Steve Singer (our speaker for the evening) said that foreign CDs and DVDs are encrypted to play only in the zone intended. There are programs for decrypting CDs and DVDs so this is what will be necessary.

Bob showed us a device that accepts standard Stereo cable inputs and sends the signal to your PC through a USB connection. This allows you to store music on your hard drive or make CDs. There also is a turntable available with a USB connection.

At 6:50 pm, Bob turned the meeting over to Member at Large Mary Sheridan to conduct the business of presenting names of nominees for next year's group officers. John Witmer has agreed to continue as President. Jim Purcell has agreed to be nominated for Member at Large. We need members to step forward to serve as Vice President, Secretary and/or Treasurer. Doug Mullis is willing to be nominated for Treasurer if someone else will be Secretary. Eddie Rodriguez has agreed to be our new "Greeter" at our meetings. Way to go, Eddie and Jim! Elections will be conducted at our December meeting.

Mary asked if we want to party at our December meeting. Smart Computing Magazine will make their annual presentation after our election of officers. If you want to party, please bring finger food or holiday desserts to share at our December 12th meeting. We will set up a table as was done in the past.

At 7:05 pm, Mary introduced our speakers, Steve and Pam Singer with RDI-Tampa. Steve is our local dis-

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Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

Photoshop Elements 5 — New Features

By Jim Purcell, Tampa PC Users Group
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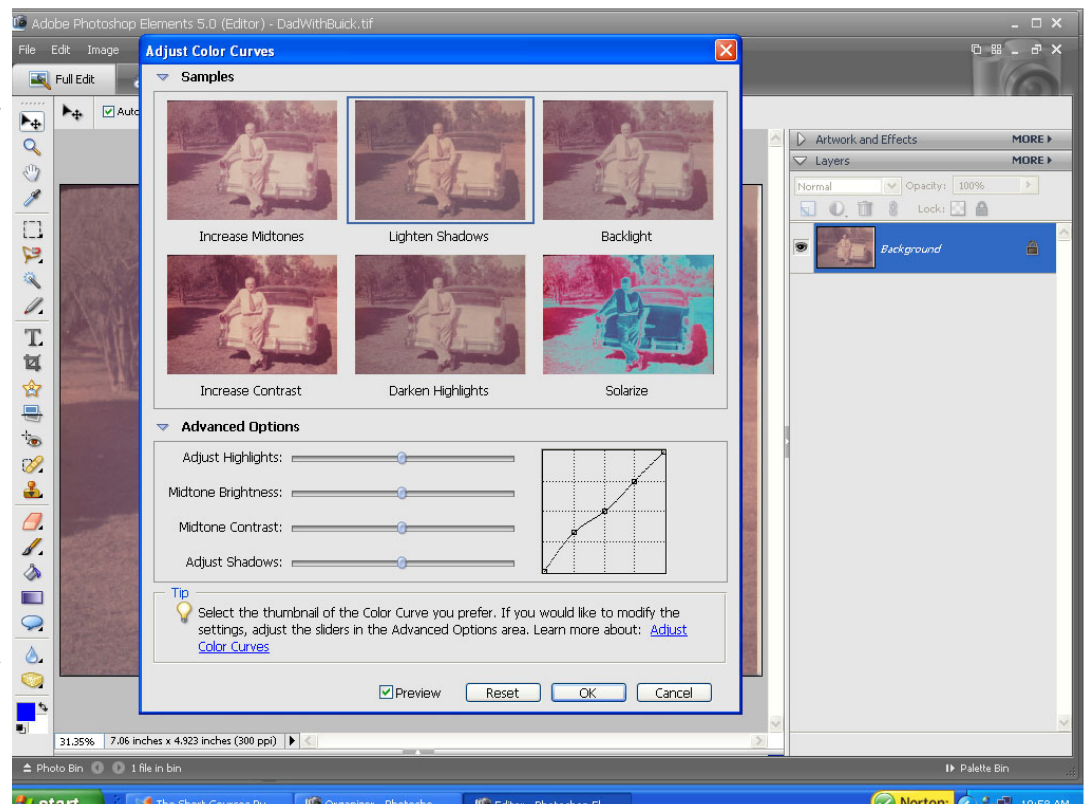
Overview There are many online references in this article, so you might want to download the HTML version of this article from the TPCUG web site, <http://www.tpcug.org>, so that you can merely click on the URL. The basic structure and functions of Photoshop Elements were broadly covered in the article on Photoshop Elements 3.0 published in the August 2005 Bits of Blue, which can be viewed and downloaded at the TPCUG web site. Photoshop Elements is made up of three parts. The first is the Organizer that is used to gather the photos and provide a sophisticated system for organizing them with a user-designed tag system, by time or by the Windows folders to which you have assigned them. The Organizer also provides a system of backup and archiving your photographs. The second is the Editor, which is divided into two parts, the Quick Fix Edit and the Full Edit. The Quick Fix is largely a set of one-button fixes to the most common problems with photographs. The Full Edit is a set of commands using sophisticated commands, filters and layering to correct or improve almost any problem you might encounter in improving the quality of your photographs. The Editor also provides a large number of tools to create special effects. The third is the Creator, made up of Photo Creations and Digital Creations. Photo Creations are print-oriented projects. The Digital Creations are primarily computer or web-oriented. As you can imagine, there is also crossover between these two categorizations. The commentaries I have read indicate that Photoshop Elements has practically everything that is included in Photoshop that the average amateur photographer requires and that many of the Photoshop features

been included in Photoshop Elements have been powerful features that have been modified to make them easier to use. To get a thorough look at the entire program, you can download a full-featured copy of the latest version (5.0) for a free thirty-day trial at <http://www.adobe.com>. The new features in Version 4.0 were reviewed in the December 2005 Bits of Blue newsletter, which is also available for view and download at the TPCUG website.

Some of the more significant new features appearing in Version 5.0 of Photoshop Elements are:

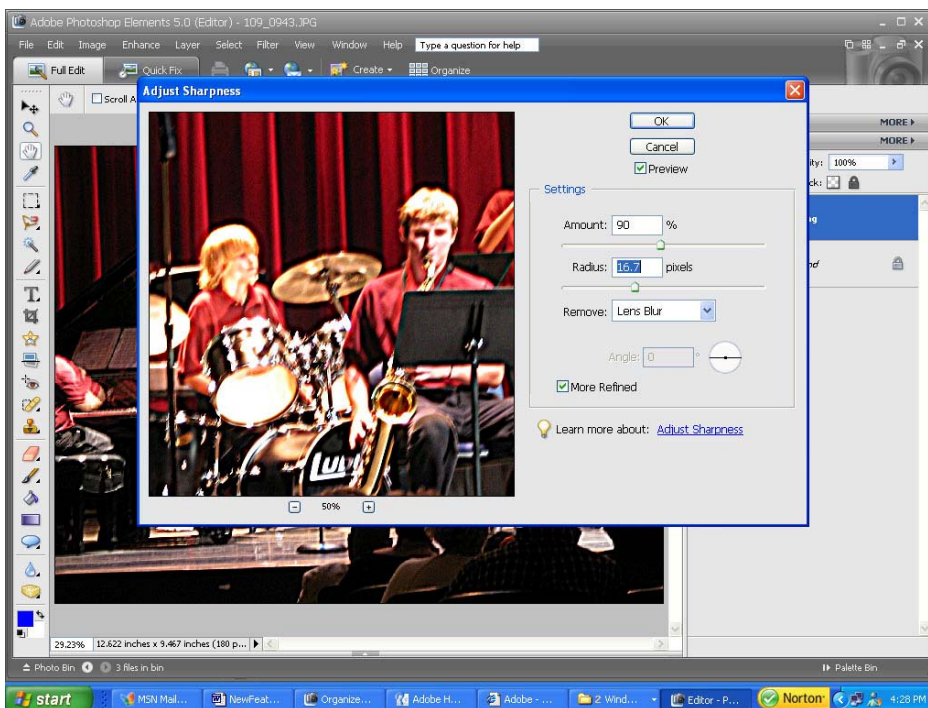
Correct Camera Distortion: The “Correct Camera Distortion Filter” is a popular Photoshop filter that has been transferred to Photoshop Elements minus some of the advanced options. Adobe has made this tool very easy to use in Photoshop Elements. This one filter allows correction of distortions caused by being too close to your subject, by having been forced to take the picture at an odd angle, or by shadows caused by the lens hood. These photos are most often of buildings which are obviously out of perspective, or of faces that look like balloons. The filter can also be used creatively to purposely create some of these distortions.

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(Elements.....Continued from page 3)

Sharpen Blurred Edges: The new “Adjust Sharpness Tool” goes beyond the Unsharp Mask that has been probably the most used method of sharpening photos. The Unsharp Mask tool reduces Gaussian blurring, which often is not the cause of the blurring. This new tool, which is quite easy to use, is capable of reducing Gaussian Blur, Lens Blur and Motion Blur. You are given a dialog box (*See Below*) that contains the image you are sharpening so that you can see the results of your changes in real time.



Fine Tune Exposure: The “Color Curves Tool” is introduced in Version 5.0. It is the feature that evidently was the one most requested by Elements users. It is similar to “Levels” but gives many more points of correction. It is not quite as powerful as the Curves Tool in Photoshop, from which it was adapted, but is much easier to use. A short video tutorial that explains the details of its use can be seen at: http://www.adobe.com/special/photoshopel/pse5_help_cc_26.html.

Enhanced Support For Raw Files: Raw files can be likened to a digital “negative,” in that they contain the raw data of your picture before your camera

makes the changes needed to produce a JPEG, TIFF, or other file format. The Raw format is most used by advanced photographers and sparingly if at all by the amateurs. No matter which you are, it is nice to have this capability if you have a very special subject that you want captured in all of its detail. You can process and edit the raw files of most cameras within Elements 5.0. This is apparently a great time saver. The Adobe Camera Raw Converter allows you to make sophisticated corrections to your photos even before you open them, and you can further edit the file once it is opened.

Create Dramatic Black and White Photos:

Previous versions allowed you to remove the color from a photograph. The process is described by Adobe as follows: “The Remove Color command converts the colors in the image to gray values by removing all the saturation from the image. It assigns equal red, green, and blue values to each pixel in an RGB image, so the image is still in RGB mode. The lightness value of each pixel does not change”. The “Convert to Black and White” command gives you the ability to make the conversion decisions that are decided for you by the software in the Remove Color Command. This may not seem like much to those of you who lost interest in black and

white when color photography became available, but to someone like my daughter it is a terrific feature. She seems to have inherited all of the creative genes that both my mother and her mother possessed. She has done some neat things with black and white photography. I know that she and those of you who are convinced that the birth of color photography spoiled your chances to become the next Ansel Adams will enjoy this new command. Click on the URL below to view a short video tutorial that does a good job in explaining just how simply this command works. http://www.adobe.com/special/photoshopel/pse5_help_cc_27.html

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Internet Picture of the Month

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Creations, New Ways to Show Your Photos: Photo Creations includes such things as photo layouts, album pages, DVD or CD labels and greeting cards. They can be single pages or, thanks to a new feature in Elements 5.0, up to thirty pages in one file. The new photo layout feature provides many formats but allows all to be customized. Another new feature allows you to size and resize the photos and artwork that you bring into the layout with no loss of quality, and you can still edit the photos after they are brought into the layout. You can print or email these projects or burn them to a CD or DVD. If you are interested in scrapbooking, the tools and artwork provided within this program will boggle your mind (Check the commercial website at <http://www.scrappersguide.com>). Digital Creations enables you to make flipbooks and three types of photo galleries that are web-oriented and animated. These can be burned to a CD or uploaded to your website or to a free service provided by Adobe. The wizard does all things necessary to allow you to send the folder, which it creates, containing your project via FTP to your web server. To get an idea of the magnitude of this section of Photoshop Elements 5.0, you can click on the URL below, which will bring up the "Idea Gallery" from Adobe. There are six colored boxes at the bottom of the page. The first contains the two tutorials referenced above. The last five contain examples of what you can do and a section in each that tells you how to do it. There is also a fifteen-minute overview of Photoshop Elements 5 and a shorter one on using the program in conjunction with Premier Elements 3.0. <http://www.adobe.com/digitalimag/ideagallery/> ◆



Three test mice

This was in most news outlets on the web in early November. The description below is from the Wall Street Journal (<http://online.wsj.com>). The exact link is <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116239800769710272.html?mod=mostpop>. However, you will need a subscription to view it.

In a Harvard Medical School and the National Institute on Aging study, "three 15-month-old mice from the study were fed, from left to right, a standard diet, a high-calorie diet and a high-calorie diet plus resveratrol. Although it still got fat, the mouse on the right had a 31% lower chance of dying as it aged than the control mouse next to it."

Before you run out and buy some red wine (which contains resveratrol), note that the article also said: "A person would need to drink more than 300 glasses of wine a day to get the amount of resveratrol the mice got."

December's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)
Smart Computing (our presenter)
Digital Fish Library
Hillsborough County Clerk of the Court
The "new" CNBC.com
Windows Vista Home

<http://www.tpcug.org/>
<http://www.smartcomputing.com/>
<http://www.digitalfishlibrary.org/>
<http://www.hillsclerk.com/>
<http://www.cnbc.com/>
<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/default.aspx>



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.

Replacing that old cassette

By Ron Weinberg, Tampa PC Users Group
rswjbr@verizon.net

Music CDs have virtually replaced cassette tapes. Many new cars have no cassette slots. CDs are relatively inexpensive and of higher audio quality than most tapes. Converting from tape to CD is probably not worthwhile in most cases. But then again, there are old favorites that may be hard to find in CD format.

Since I had a good sound card (Sound Blaster Audio 2 ZS) with a line-in jack, accompanying software, a CD Burner, and RCA Audio Cables left over from some old equipment, I decided to try. There may be more sophisticated and fully-automated programs, but I decided to work with what I had available.

None of my in-home cassette players or radios however, had proper output ports. Earphone ports were not recommended. This was corrected by borrowing an old Technics cassette tape deck.

To connect the deck to the jack with the cable, I needed to purchase an inexpensive Y-adaptor at Radio Shack that accepts two RCA phono plugs and fits a 1/8" stereo phone jack.

The Sound Blaster Card came with a complement of 13 programs from Creative, which allow great flexibility in creating and editing audio. Not being a music guru, I selected the basic Creative Media Source Player, which has a record feature. It creates MP3 files. It was necessary to select the input or Recording Source as Line/CD/AUX/TAD/PC.

Examining the various options of the Creative Media Source Player software, I found an EAX advanced HD Console that has an option to automatically remove unwanted noises in audio, such as hisses, clicks and pops from external sources. I set this option ON using its default settings.

I started the tape deck playing, clicked on Record in the software panel, and the work was in progress. At the end of the first side, I stopped recording and saved

the file so as not to have blank space while the tape was reversing or switching to side 2. I manually reversed the tape and repeated the process for side 2. When complete, I saved the second file.

My CD-DVD writer came with Sonic's *Record Now Plus*, which has an option to create an Audio CD for Car or Home Player. Using that, I burned both files onto the CD and tested it in a boom box. The result was a CD with two audio tracks, fair sound, and poor volume.

Unsatisfied, I rechecked the recording software and found a Surround Mixer Panel that had a Master Control, which allowed me to increase the volume setting. Note that the volume dial on the tape deck had no effect on the resulting volume.

After setting the Master Volume to high, I repeated the copy and burn processes, and the result was a success. ◆

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

tributor of computer related devices and tells us the latest and what is coming. Pam keeps Steve on course and brings him back to earth when his enthusiasm gets him talking too fast.

Steve first reflected on statements made during the Windows SIG meeting relative to encrypted foreign media devices. There are several programs available for decrypting material from other countries. Some may already be on your computer. Find someone who knows how to use them.

Next, Steve told us about the BitTorrent's web site for downloading audio, video, images, ebooks, games and software for FREE. You do have to become a member by paying either a flat or annual fee. According to Steve, you can earn credits by sharing materials you download with other members. Try <http://www.BitTorrents.com> for particulars.

Steve says there are wireless video extenders, which

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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 merle@merlenicholson.com.

Digital Imaging SIG—Cancelled until further notice

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. Bob LaFave moderates the discussion.

(Minutes.....Continued from page 6)

will connect your TVs or music system to your PC using Windows Media Center or D Links software. Antenna extenders can be attached to your wireless router and network cards to improve signal strength. New routers now come with multiple antennas for greater performance. Signal strength is increased by up to three times. The new 802.11n (NIMO) wireless performance standard will be out next year. Speeds and distance will increase substantially. This standard will apply to multiple antennae devices.

Wireless USB is coming, similar to Bluetooth but probably faster. Voice-over IP is an inexpensive way to talk by telephone over the Internet. Voice-over IP can save you lots of money in long distance charges. For \$35 a year, you can get a local phone number for receiving incoming calls over the Internet. Or you can have Sip Phone (Gizmo Project) installed, which will give you multiple phone lines using the Internet. Steve can set you up if you are interested.

We now have a choice of Verizon FiOS or Bright House (Time Warner). FiOS is all digital and cheaper for the time being, but negotiate the best deal you can, as Verizon will deal to get your business. Make sure you don't get short-changed on the number of TV channels you desire. FiOS does require a battery backup that you will be required to maintain.

Finally, Steve told us of motherboards he has to offer and distributed price sheets that not all got to see. Also Steve has rebuilt some past generation computers starting around \$50. They may be as slow as

133 KHz, but they're great for your Mom to surf the Internet.

Steve answered members' questions and gave information on how to get free passes to new release movies and how to get cheap popcorn to boot.

No door prizes were raffled at this meeting because of the time. The meeting ended informally at about 8:40 pm. ♦

(Comments.....continued from page 1)

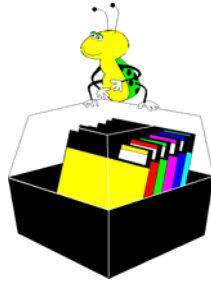
no real problems other than getting used to the new interface. I did notice an increase in security settings when I open web sites on my computer for editing with FrontPage and other programs. But others I know have not been so lucky.

One person noticed that immediately after the installation, if she left her computer unused for any length of time, when she returned to try to open a web page or send an email, nothing would happen—neither IE nor Outlook Express would respond. The solution to this problem was to change the power settings for her computer from an energy-saving mode to one that only shut off the monitor after a certain length of time. The energy-saving mode was putting the computer in standby, which had caused no problem previously.

Another person could not open any message in Outlook Express after installing IE7. If she clicked on a mes-

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

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Tampa, FL 33601-3492



First Class Mail

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

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sage, she would get an error message to the effect that there was something wrong with the address book and it could not be loaded. If you looked up the exact wording of the error message, there was a solution at Microsoft.com that supposedly provided a solution. It basically involved finding your address book, copying it to the desktop, then deleting all address books under your profile (which had somehow become corrupted). That should allow you to then open Outlook Express and to import the information in the old address book, and everything should be OK.

However, that did not work. As soon as she would touch the address book in OE, the same error message appeared. After some thought, I think I know the problem. What she thought was her profile was probably not her profile. So, since she is the only user of her computer, she should delete all the address books (.wab files) on her computer except the one she put on the desktop. Then OE would create a new blank one into which she could import the data from the one on the desktop. But she has not tried this yet. ♦

