

February in Tampa
Oranges

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

Vol. 20 No. 2 February 2007

Meeting

Digital Photography

With Keith Bunch

of

North Tampa Photography

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

6:30 PM

Art Pepin Hospitality Room

Pepin Distributing Co.

4121 N 50th St

Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: With so many of our members interested in digital photography, it will be a treat to hear the presentation from Keith Bunch from our premier photo store in Tampa, North Tampa Photography.

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

As is not unusual for me, I did not get to the end of my planned presentation at last month's meeting on building web sites with Microsoft's Expression Web and Visual Studio. The Expression Web part was fairly well covered, but the Visual Studio part wasn't. Partly this was because our Windows discussion went a good bit over time. But such discussions are what the group is all about, so I was reluctant to suggest that we close it down. Anyway, the Visual Studio part you missed would have been more technical and would have given you some insight into what goes on behind the scenes on the server to create more functionality than could be obtained by the standard static web page. Perhaps that can be covered at some future meeting when a presenter is hard to come by. ♦

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview	1
Editor's Comments	1
Minutes	2
Bits of Blue — 10 Years Ago	3
Targeted Advertising	4
Links	5
SIG Report	7
Map	8

* * OFFICERS * *

President: John Witmer (president@tpcug.org)	949-8007
Vice President : Kevan Sheridan (kevan@tpcug.org)	988-6480
Treasurer: Doug Mullis (dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)	234-9343
Secretary: Doug Mullis (dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)	234-9343
Member at Large: Jim Purcell (Edward_J_P@MSN.com)	985-1676

APPOINTED (Volunteers)

Editor: William LaMartin (lamartin@tampabay.rr.com)	251-3817
Librarian: Larry Anders (Larry@AndersNet.com)	989-9119
Programs: Doug Mullis (dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)	234-9343

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

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.

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.

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

WE CERTAINLY HOPE YOU WILL

MAIL YOUR CHECK AND ANY
ADDRESS OR NAME CHANGES TO:

TAMPA PC USERS GROUP
PO BOX 3492
TAMPA, FL 33601-3492

\$25 Individual \$35 Family
\$60 Corporate = 3 employees + \$20 each add'l employee

Go to our web site <http://www.tpcug.org> and click on the
About Us | Join link to join online

Check the address label for your renewal month

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following for their support

Marshall & Stevens
Pepin Distributing Co.

Minutes of the January Meeting

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

President John Witmer called the meeting to order promptly at 6:30 pm and then turned control over to Bob LaFave to conduct the Windows SIG session. Bob showed us the Microsoft SyncToy 1.4 program for copying, moving or renaming files between folders or even computers quickly and easily. This program can be gotten from Microsoft.com's download center free of cost. Bob demonstrated the ease of using this program to make backup files on Flash or other external storage devices.

Nancy Cottrell asked about installing a program for making backups. It was generally thought the feature could be gotten from the Windows installation CD. Discussion followed on backing up your hard drive and the making of music CDs.

Another member was having user sign-on problems. Bob told him about TweakUI, another free, useful program from Microsoft, which gives access to system settings not revealed by Windows XP and allows changes to default settings including automatic logon and privacy settings.

Expanding on a discussion started last meeting, Merle Nicholson gave us a little history on FAT 32 and NTFS file systems and recommended converting to NTFS.

At 7:15 pm, President Witmer ended the very lively SIG session for group business. A record number of guests this evening included Nancy Norton, Brooks Rimes, Roy DeArmond, Eric Goldstein, Emily McGee and Tim Condon. This was Nancy's second visit, and Tim previously was a member. A welcome was extended to all with the hope our guests will join

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



Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

Bits of Blue—10 Years Ago

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

My main impetus for writing this article is that, beginning last month, the newsletter is being printed at Pepin Distributors by John Witmer. Prior to that, since October 1997, Larry Anders of Marshall and Stevens allowed me to use their copy machine to print the newsletter. All we provided was the paper. That is almost 10 years of basically free printing. Thank you, Larry and Marshall and Stevens!!

I think that during that time I used three different copy machines, each one superior to the previous one. In that time, we have gone from printing around 220 copies of a 12-page newsletter of mostly 10-point type to printing 75 copies of an 8-page newsletter of mostly 12-point type.

We did not actually have around 200 members then. It was probably more like 150 members. But to take advantage of the bulk mail rate, we had to mail at least 200 copies. So I would mail around 204 copies each month, with the extras going to vendors and friends of the group. As our membership shrank, I started mailing more than one copy to some of the membership to make the 200 quota. Then one day, I ran a spread sheet analysis that demonstrated that, instead of mailing 200 newsletters by bulk mail, it would be cheaper to mail only to our membership and a few vendors and friends and pay first class postage.

A few years later, due to the difficulty of getting content from our members for the newsletter, we reduced the length from 12 pages to eight. However, the reduction in content was not all that much, since some of what was lost was just boilerplate that appeared unchanged in each newsletter. Still later, most often we printed the newsletter in a 12-point font due to less original content being available from the membership. Occasionally, the membership comes to life and provides enough articles so that I need to reduce the font to 10-point type to make everything fit. However, this month is not turning out to be one of those times. To fill up any remaining space in this newsletter, I would like to look back and see what sort of articles we had

in the newsletter when Larry first started letting us use his office machine.

In that October 1997 newsletter, Larry Anders wrote about his new digital camera, a Sony Digital Mavica, which stored its images on a 1.5 MB floppy disk. Boy, how things have changed - a camera that took a full-sized floppy for storage! Don Patzsch had an article about the DriveCopy program from PowerQuest. Of course, PowerQuest was subsumed by Symantec a few years back.

In the same newsletter, Larry Anders also had an article about a new type of 3.5 floppy drive and disk, called the SuperDisk LS-120, that would hold 120 MB of data. Its price was from \$175 to \$200 and was competition for the Zip drive. Like Larry, I also had two articles. One was on the software called Microsoft Dictation and Voice, which was really a work in progress that could be downloaded from Microsoft and was not really a commercial product. The other review was of a video capture card called Computer-Eyes/RT Video Capture. It was used to capture a single frame and not a continuous video. As an example, I used it not to capture a frame from a TV program but to capture a frame from a video that my daughter took of me with a video camera. You cannot see how young I looked back then, since the online newsletters only go back to January 1998. You will just have to take my word for it that there is a difference between then and now.

As a point of interest, in that October 1997 newsletter it says that the current officers were:

- PRESIDENT.—Connie Kincaid
- VICE PRES.—Mike Hodges
- TREASURER—Wil Goble
- MEMBER AT LARGE — Bruce Register
- SECRETARY.—Merle Nicholson

It also notes that we had a BBS with Mary Sheridan as SYSOP.

In the November 1997 newsletter, Larry Anders had an article about the Power Cat Touchpad, which he had begun using for computer input at the suggestion

Targeted Advertising and Crapware on New Computers

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group
merle@merlenicholson.com

Undesirable software is being installed at the manufacturer on all new computers meant for the consumer market. The results are new computers that, at worst, are running badly right out of the box, and, at minimum, need some expert attention to remove software so that the computer is running optimally.

Taken one at a time, they don't sound too bad. For instance, right now you may really like the Google Toolbar and you'd say that if I bought a computer with it preinstalled, that it'd be easier than installing myself. But here's the catch: Do I need fifteen programs preinstalled on my new computer? How do I know which ones I want to keep and how do I get rid of the ones I don't want? The most dangerous thing is how do I distinguish a really bad program from a program that the computer really needs to run? How do I get rid of a browser add-in when it does not have an uninstall? How do I find out what each one does?

I've looked at a half-dozen brand new computers regarding this problem over just the last year, and I can conclude a couple of things. One, the situation is getting worse, and, two, if you clean up your new computer it will run significantly faster and the power-up time will be reduced an amazing amount.

So why do they do that? I'm talking about Dell, HP and Gateway. I haven't looked closely at other brands, but I don't see any indication that all of them are not doing this to some extent. If there's a brand out there that refuses to load their computers up, they should be advertising: "NO CRAP SOFTWARE".

Back to why they're doing this. It's ... you guessed it ... money. What is Google's interest in this, for instance? Where does Google's income come from? Targeted advertising. The more advertising that gets pushed out to the consumer, the more money they make. So they pay Dell to preinstall it. That isn't saying that Dell thinks the Google Toolbar or Google Desktop is a good or a bad thing. It's saying that with

the extra income from Google, Dell can either sell the computer just a little cheaper or can return more to their stockholders.

Let's explore an analogy. What if you bought a new refrigerator, and when you opened the door each time, a window shade popped down that said: "Wal-Mart Daily Specials on Ladies Undies"? You have to roll the thing up every time you want a jar of mayonnaise. How do you get rid of it? It's tied in such that if you rip it out, it appears that the door seal will be damaged. What do you do? The answer: hire a guy skilled in removing refrigerator advertising shades to come out at \$60/hr to remove it. Here's the catch. They didn't say anything about this advertising gadget in the literature when you ordered your refrigerator, and the one you looked at in the store must have had it removed, and you looked at the warranty fine print and did not see a warning: "*Caution. This computer...oops...refrigerator may or may not have removable or non-removable crapware. We are not responsible for expenses incurred in removing said crapware. Your warranty may be voided if damages are incurred in the removal of such crapware.*"

The same goes for the car dealer's name permanently mounted on the back of your new car. You can bet they don't do that until after the car is sold! Would you buy a new couch if they mounted a "Monaghan's Fine Furniture" plaque on it?

Back to crapware. First, I'll mention one thing. You can find out about all the crapware by Googling the executable name. Someone has written something about it, you can count on that. There are some specific websites that specialize in describing the programs by name, and, for the most part, you can get an assessment of their relative usefulness or dangerousness. But many of these sites are also trying to sell you something, usually a program that will remove the offending program. I've never purchased these because it's just too self-serving. Usually I can glean the manufacturer's name out of this and then go to that site to see what it is. I disabled a service called Bonjour Service from my computer when I investigated enough to find that it had been installed by the "Gizmo Project" software I use. It was written by Apple Computer of all things, and it's a "network

(Crapware.....Continued on page 5)

(Crapware.....Continued from page 4)

helper” that, when removed, has no effect on the use of Gizmo Project. Since then, Gizmo Project has included information about it in their FAQ’s.

I’ll classify some of the crapware programs into a few categories: 1) the “Call Home” programs, 2) the “Internet Access Sales”, 3) the “Toolbar and Desktop programs”, 4) the “Anti-Virus crowd” and 5) the “Really Useless Stuff.”

1) “Call Home”. The first things that come to mind are Adobe Update Manager, Dell Update Manager, and Windows Update Manager. You’ll find the Adobe manager in the Startup manager, MSCONFIG. Do you want Adobe to call home to see if there are any updates ready for Adobe Reader, every time you boot the computer? Has any Adobe Reader update affected your life in any way? How many of these are installed on your computer, and how much time does it add to your boot time? Can you remember to manually look for Windows updates, instead of having Windows do it for you? At least that’s configurable in XP. Incidentally, HP printer software is the worst! I’ve never had any consequences from removing HP software from the Startup in MSCONFIG. The last computer I looked at had four HP items.

2) “Internet Access Sales”. The last Dell Notebook I worked on had an AOL icon in the Start tray, that, when clicked, gave you an opportunity to subscribe to AOL. This means that this program is running on your computer all the time it’s on, for the life of the computer. To its credit, there was an uninstall in Control Panel, Add/Remove programs. But Wait! I

(Crapware.....Continued on page 6)

Internet Picture of the Month



The first hard drive

The photo is from http://www.intelligentmind.co.uk/moc_IBMRAMAC50th.htm. There we learn that (mostly quoting) The introduction of the 350 Disk Storage Unit made it possible for the first time to file, retrieve and manipulate information from database records in “real-time”.

With the cabinet covers on, it measured 5’ 8” tall, 5’ wide and 2’ 5” deep, and weighed in at over a ton. The unit comprised fifty 24” platters, one pair of read/write heads and a pulley system that provided both the vertical and horizontal head movement. Furthermore, the native storage capacity of the disk drive was 5MB.

Jenny Lind Olin alerted me to this monster. The photo she sent is similar to the one at <http://www.elektriq.com/articles/technology-history-a-hard-disk-in-1956> which shows the drive being loaded onto a plane.

February’s Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that’s us)

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

AVG Free anti-virus, anti-spyware

<http://free.grisoft.com/doc/1>

Acronym and abbreviation dictionary

<http://www.acronymfinder.com/>

ShutterFreaks, Promoting Better Photography

<http://www.shutterfreaks.com/>

Data Recovery Free Software

<http://www.ontrack.com/freesoftware/>

Google Docs & Spreadsheets Tour

<http://www.google.com/google-d-s/tour1.html>



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.

(Crapware.....Continued from page 5)

found two more internet services' advertising to remove while I was at it! Give me a break!

3) "Toolbar and Desktop programs." The worst offenders are (currently) Yahoo and Google, which have desktop managers and browser toolbars and IM (Instant Messaging) clients. Again, to their credit, there are uninstall programs. But, in addition, you have to go to your internet browser's Manage Add-Ons to make sure the toolbars are not running, and, if they are running and you have also done all the Add/Remove stuff, that you disable all the add-ons. Remember – the reason they are there is to provide you with some usefulness, but at the cost of targeting advertising directly to you. If you like Google, for instance, put a link on your browser toolbar to www.google.com to click on, and make your default search box in Internet Explorer for Google, all at no cost to you in computer resources.

4) The "Anti-Virus crowd". Every time I look at a new computer there's somebody's three-month trial anti-virus installed. Why do they do that? Well, obviously the anti-virus company is hoping you'll just click on a link and give them your credit card number; you'll get a year's subscription, and then next year they'll charge the same amount for another year and send you an email that they've done that, that hopefully your spam filter doesn't catch first. What's going on here? The software company paid Dell to preinstall it, hoping that you'll not give it too much thought. And they installed the highest bidder's software. It has nothing to do with what's good, what's bad or the best software for the money.

Look, you've bought a new computer. New computers need anti-virus and anti-spyware. You know that. You probably know which ones you like, so consider them a part of the original purchase cost and have them ready when you fire the new computer up for the first time.

5) The "Really Useless Stuff". Let's start with Wild-Tangent Online Game network. It's installed. Do you need it? Do you know what it is? Let's look at QuickTime and RealPlayer. Do you need three media players? Really? You have Windows Media player already, and at least it isn't running until you need it and it goes away when you don't. So you run into a site that has a

warning that to present some little video it needs Apple QuickTime. Do you really need to look at whatever it is enough to install QuickTime and have it running all the time? You can't turn it off! Yes, you can configure it so that it doesn't start at boot. But ... when it is used in any way, it doesn't shut off after you're done. When I discovered that, I sent Steve a personal note about it. That was two years ago, and I'm expecting any time now he'll apologize

Have you realized that your computer is getting slower over time, and you may as well go make a pot of coffee while it boots? Everything you load has a cost in boot time and in processing cpu cycles. So start while the computer is new, buy the anti-virus you need first, clean out the crapware, and then be diligent from then on. You'll be glad you did. ♦

(Bits of Blue..... from page 3)

of his doctor to help alleviate pain from a developing wrist problem. Don Patzsch wrote about the recent FACUG meeting in Sarasota, Merle Nicholson wrote about hardware gifts for Christmas. In the next newsletter, Larry Anders wrote about his new HP DeskJet 1000 printer and his carpal tunnel surgery (of interest to people who type at computer keyboards). Don Patzsch reviewed PowerQuest's Drive Image, and I reviewed the Encyclopedia Britannica '97 CD, where I noted how the once mighty Britannica had gone from being able to charge near \$2,000 for a set of printed encyclopedias to selling the equivalent CD for around \$100. Like many companies, they were too slow in adjusting their business plan to accommodate the computer. Time Warner's RoadRunner was to give the presentation that month.

Starting with 1998, you can view the HTML versions of the newsletter at our web site. In the January issue, Larry had an article about the Grolier Encyclopedia CD. (Boy, did he write a lot of articles back then. That was nice!) I wrote about Street Atlas USA 5 and also Quicken Delux 1998, and Merle Nicholson had a hardware article about a Umax scanner.

(Bits of Blue.....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, 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 2)

our group.

John announced the Spring Conference of the Florida Association of Computer User Groups in Kissimmee, Florida, March 2,3 and 4, 2007. This is always an interesting affair and a chance to see what other groups are doing and what is successful in regard to programs and speakers. Registration is \$40 until Feb 10th, then jumps to \$55, and \$60 at the door. Five meals are included in the registration and the door prizes are worthwhile. Check their website at <http://www.facug.org>

At 7:20 pm, President Witmer introduced our speaker for the evening, William LaMartin, our award winning webmaster and newsletter editor. His topic was How to Create and Manage a Website.

William started by giving us a little history lesson. He said that the Internet was actually started as a military project and that Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web in Switzerland in 1990. TPCUG has had a website since 1996, and you can view it by going to <http://web.archives.org> and then entering tpcug.org and clicking on Take Me Back. Be patient because it takes time to pull up your selections, just as it did back then.

William said the original TPCUG site was created using NotePad. He then moved to FrontPage, and he recently redid the site using Microsoft's Expression Web and Visual Studio. Web pages are much more complicated today.

William then demonstrated the features of the recently updated <http://www.tpcug.org> site, his neighborhood site, <http://www.oldhydeparkfl.org>, and his personal site, <http://www.lamartin.com>. All three of these sites have been updated in the past year to give them a more modern look.

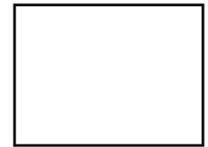
One of the more interesting things was the Useful Things link at lamartin.com, where he had some examples of using Visual Studio programming in creating pages that “do something.” Here is where you will find the Web Psychiatrist and a cost of living calculator.

The main part of the presentation involved using Expression Web to create an example site about New Orleans. Actually, he had already created the site and went through some explanations of how you use master pages or Dynamic Web Templates to give your site a consistent look. Also, there was mention of how to separate content from presentation by the use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), which are nothing but text files that tell a browser how to display web pages. He gave some examples of how by changing one CSS file, he could change the appearance of text on one page or throughout the whole site.

He didn't have time to go more deeply into the Visual Studio material or the database connectivity material.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm. No door prizes were raffled at this meeting due to the late hour. ◆

Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.
P. O. Box 3492
Tampa, FL 33601-3492



First Class Mail

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

(Bits of Blue.....Continued from page 6)

In the minutes that month, it was noted that the new officers were:

- Merle Nicholson, President
- Mike Hodges, Vice President
- Kevan Sheridan, Secretary
- Jenny Lind Olin, Treasurer

In the February 1998 issue, I wrote one of my Comments columns where I basically just go through all of the computer problems I have had during the past month. Some months the list was quite lengthy. Usually, though, I was also able to provide the solutions. I also had a review of FamilyTreeMaker 4.0, Larry Anders provided one of his many Shareware articles, and the Internet Picture of the Month was none other than Monica Lewinsky. Just looking at all the Internet Pictures of the Month over time is interesting to me.

In the March 1998 issue, we noted the closing of our BBS with two articles by Kevan Sheridan, the person who devoted so much time over the years to that endeavor.

So take a tour of the past by looking over all of the old HTML newsletters at our web site. ◆

