# Bits of Blue

**March in Tampa Baseball**

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

## Meeting

**Blain Barton**
from
**Microsoft**

**Virtual PC**

**Wednesday, March 14, 2007**
**6:30 PM**
**Art Pepin Hospitality Room**
**Pepin Distributing Co.**
**4121 N 50th St**
**Tampa, Florida**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Meeting Preview:** Blain Barton from Microsoft will be back with us to explain the concept of a virtual PC. In his previous visit, he gave us a preview of Windows Vista.

We will also have the usual half-hour Windows SIG.

### Editor's Comments: Vista and Other Things

*By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group*
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**Vista** is now upon us, and, like all PC users, I need to decide if I am going to upgrade to it and, if so, upgrade how many of my computers. Of the three computers that are used regularly in this house, my main desktop machine is the only one I am considering upgrading. It is the newest of the group at just a little over one year old, having been built for me by Merle Nicholson (see the newsletter article http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2006/january2006/new_computer.htm).

As everyone who is thinking of upgrading should do, I have gone to the Microsoft site several times to get the latest Upgrade Advisor for Vista to run on my main computer to see

**April Meeting: Bob LaFave—Topic to be announced**

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 February Meeting

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

Bob LaFave called the Windows SIG portion of our meeting to order at 6:35 pm. He suggested we check to see that the latest Windows updates had been received, as there were several this month.

Nancy Cottrell asked whether Microsoft Windows Defender or WebRoot Spy Sweeper was better. Windows Defender is free and is included in the new Windows Vista operating system. Spy Sweeper will cost you for the license each year, but they both do the job of protecting your PC from spyware.

Bob then told us some ways to monitor what's going on with our current programs. He also mentioned Windows One Care and some of the things it does. At present there is a $20 discount offered. He also is impressed with the service packages and prices offered by Internet Junction. NewEgg is still one of Bob's favored software and hardware providers. Check out their prices on whatever your computer needs are.

At 7:05 pm, President John Witmer began the business portion of our meeting by welcoming our attendees and guest speaker. We did not have any guests, but we had a fine turnout. With our new members, we are going to have to turn attention to issuing membership cards. Some computer stores like Comp USA give discounts to our members if you go to the commercial sales counter.

The FACUG Spring Conference will be Mar. 2 through Mar. 4 in Kissimmee, Florida. This is always the big meeting of the year, but the $40 discounted registration is now past. Still, you get several meals with a number of workshops offered along with im-

## Buying a Second Digital Camera

*By Jim Purcell, Tampa PC Users Group*
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I recently purchased a second digital camera. Digital cameras have become so versatile that it's pretty hard to justify having two, but there are a couple of things I used to convince myself that it was a good idea. First, when I upgraded from my Canon PowerShot G3 about a year ago I gave the G3 to my grandson and instead of going for a Single Lens Reflex (SLR) Camera I purchased a Canon PowerShot Pro1, a high level point and shoot camera, sometimes referred to as a hybrid. It was less expensive than the SLR's, has Canon's best quality lens and many more features that combined to convince me that it had the capabilities that I needed and would in no way interfere with the full expression of my skills (of course, neither did the G3, but that's another matter). For a lot of reasons, the SLR is the way to go in order to get high quality photos, but SLR's are larger, generally more expensive and there are additional lenses to buy and carry around when you are shooting. So I saved quite a few bucks by not buying a camera system that I didn't need and probably couldn't fully make the most of.

The second reason for getting a second camera was born from my reluctance to take my new camera out in the boat on a fishing trip in the Everglades. There was a fairly safe place in the boat and l had taken other cameras when fishing that area and gotten some excellent pictures. While searching for bait we happened on an island with approximately forty white pelicans just standing on the beach in a semicircle. I missed a picture of one of the most beautiful scenes that I have witnessed. I could have been a contender! I reasoned that if I could find a quality camera small enough to easily fit in a pocket so that I could safely take it places like the Everglades then it was unlikely that I would miss the picture of the century if it popped up in front of me. There would also be many other places where I would take a camera in my pocket that I would not be comfortable taking one strapped around my neck, no matter how safe the conditions.

The first thing I did was to consider how to settle on which of the many small cameras available best fit my needs. I wanted a camera capable of taking a picture that could be printed at least 8x10 or larger in size; I don't print many pictures 8x10 or 11x14, but I often crop my pictures and a severe crop can require a photo with a very high resolution to provide a sharp print. I wanted to be able to take group pictures indoors, outdoors and under limited lighting conditions. There are many small cameras that meet these criteria, so I decided that the best way to narrow the field was to decide what was the largest size I would consider portable enough to comfortably carry it practically anywhere.

I had pretty much decided to stay with Canon unless one of the other camera brands had some overwhelming features. I looked but didn't find any. I have been pleased with the Canons that I have owned, and by staying with Canon I greatly reduce



**A710 Back, In Hand**

the learning curve. I began my search of the 2 smallest versions of Canon—the A series and the SD (Elph) series.

I was quite impressed with the A series. They are easy to hold steady, even with my large arthritic hands. One of the reviewers stated that he was able to easily shoot steady shots with one hand. They are pretty much full-featured cameras with impressive specifications. The A710 IS has 7.1 megapixels of resolution, 6X optical zoom, ISO settings up to 800

**SD800 IS Front In Hand**



**SD800 IS Rear**

and Image Stabilization. The reviews that I read were quite impressive. The camera is small but is a little large for a shirt pocket, and, if it is placed in a suit coat or blazer pocket, it will cause a noticeable bulge that might cause the more suspicious to think you are "packing". I decided that, in spite of how impressed I was with the specifications and quality of the camera, it was not quite small enough. The Elph series are small enough for a pocket or purse, even a shirt pocket (approximately 0.6 inches thinner than the A series). The camera is definitely harder for me to hold steady but is manageable. It takes some discipline to prevent placing a finger over the flash or a sensor. I looked at three of the top Canon Elphs—the Power-Shot SD700 IS, PowerShot SD800 IS and PowerShot SD900. My decision was made easier when I looked

at the features that Canon has included in the SD800 IS to compensate for these problems. I chose the PowerShot SD800 IS based on these features:

- **7.1 Megapixel Resolution:** This provides a level of resolution that I felt would cover my needs with pixels to spare.
- **Wide Angle 3.8x Optical Zoom:** The wide-angle lens (28mm-105mm, equivalent of a 35mm film camera) allows me to get closer to the subject, especially for group photos. This helps compensate for a relatively low-powered flash capability, which is one of the main difficulties with small cameras.
- **Image Stabilizer Technology (IS):** This feature somehow compensates for shake and reduces or eliminates blur when you shoot at slow shutter speeds and at long zoom settings. It's especially important in a small camera, such as the SD800 IS, because it is more difficult to hold steady than most of the larger cameras.
- **High ISO (Equivalent to Film Speed):** The SD800 IS has an ISO rating of up to 1600 and a High ISO Auto setting that also reduces the effects of camera shake and can sharpen subjects in low light situations. As with film, however, the higher the number the grainer the image and, with digital cameras, the more digital "noise". The ability to get acceptable quality at the higher ISO level with the small processors in point and shoot digital cameras is certainly less than with the larger processors found in SLR's.
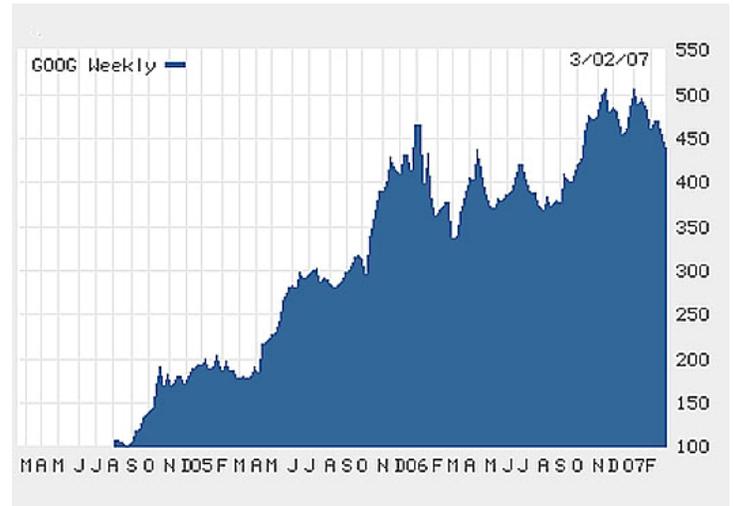


**SD800 IS Front**

*(Camera……….Continued from page 4)*

- **High Resolution 2.5 LCD:** The large high-resolution display makes it much easier to frame your picture and judge the quality that you can expect. It is also large enough to see the effects when you adjust the Exposure Compensation. I think this ability to make plus or minus adjustments to the exposure and see the effects of the adjustment on the LCD screen before you snap the picture is one of the greatest features of digital photography. There is also an optical viewfinder, which is often not included in this size camera. I think that an optical viewfinder is essential for bright sunlight and action photos.

Shopping for a digital camera is not easy unless you know exactly what you want and how you will use the camera. The bright side is that there are several sources of information that will give exhaustive detail on almost any camera on the market. If you haven't visited any of the digital camera review sites, it would be worth your time to look at least two. The first is Steves Digicams http://www.steves-digicams.com/, which has extensive technical and shopping information on practically any camera. It is the source of the SD800 IS front and back photos. The other is linked to the TPCUG site and has even more information and some of the neatest photographic tests that show you how the new features work (or don't work). The Link is "Digital Cameras Digital Photography Review News," http://www.dpreview.com/. That site is the source of the two "In Hand" pictures of the A710 IS and the SD800 IS. I think that when you are trying to select a camera, it is a good idea to look at two or more reviews because sometimes opinions (and tests) do differ.  ◆

## Internet Picture of the Month



**The Rise of Google**

From time-to-time, I like to include a chart of a high-flying computer/Internet stock or, as the case may be, a once high-flying computer/Internet stock.

This month we have Google (symbol goog) for which the chart has been mostly up for the past two-and-a-half years.  The chart above is from the March 5, 2007 online Wall Street Journal at http://online.wsj.com/.  You have to pay to use this site, but a similar chart can also be had for free at Yahoo Finance, http://finance.yahoo.com/.

You might want to compare the chart above to the one of Amazon.com we featured in the newsletter at http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_1999/january1999/picutre_of_the_month.htm in January of 1999.  Remember that once high-flying stock?

What goes up usually comes down.  So is Google the next Amazon.com?  Take a look at another chart we featured http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2001/april2001/picutre_of_the_month.htm.

## March's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)          http://www.tpcug.org/
Microsoft Virtual PC (our speaker)          http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/virtualpc/default.mspx

World's largest how-to video site          http://www.expertvillage.com/
Wiktionary          http://en.wikipedia.org:80/wiki/Wiktionary
Tampa/Hills. Co. Household Chemical Disposal  http://www.epchc.org/household_chem.htm
Fly a helicopter          http://www.hurtwood.demon.co.uk/Fun/copter.swf

**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.**

how well its hardware and software will work with Vista.  The two major problems to upgrading that are still listed by the Upgrade Advisor are the lack of drivers for my Epson Perfection 3200 Photo scanner and my Epson Stylus Photo 2200 printer.  However, I checked the Epson site and discovered that they now have a new driver for my scanner.  Furthermore, an email to them produced a response that a driver for the printer would be available within the month.  So the two Epson problems will soon no longer exist.

As to other hardware, everything is basically OK.  After the installation, I will need to go to the Realtek site and get an updated sound driver.  Also, there are a couple of NVIDIA motherboard drivers that appear to need new versions—but apparently not enough so that the computer will not run after the upgrade.

For software, the few problems indicated were almost always for minor Microsoft products.  And most of them carried the message: "This program might have minor compatibility issues after upgrading to Windows Vista," followed by either a link to click for an update or a message to go to the Microsoft site for more information.  There were two items that needed to be uninstalled before doing the upgrade: Microsoft FrontPage Server Extensions and Microsoft Backup MyPC.  So it is goodbye to the FP Server Extensions.  I can still run FrontPage.  The FP Server Extensions just can no longer be installed to Microsoft IIS running as a web server on the computer.  This is really of no consequence for me, since I have moved away from using FrontPage components that depend on the extensions.  Web hosting companies will still support them for those people who have sites developed with FrontPage that need the extensions.

So it looks like Vista will be happy with all my major programs, but will it really?  Although I use Visual Studio 2005 now, I still have Visual Studio 2003 on my computer for maintenance of web sites and applications created with it and not yet migrated to VS 2005. The Upgrade Adviser did not flag VS 2003 as a problem, but I have read on the web that there is a problem.  Some research is needed here.

**Other things**  Speaking of Visual Studio, here is a list of some of the recent programs I have been working on

that we have looked at or will soon look at in the VB SIG.

- SQL Compact Database. Using it with desktop applications as well as mobile device applications. A program to convert an Access database to a SQL Compact database.
- A program to retrieve time from a time server and set your computer's clock more accurately than does Windows.
- A program to wipe (not just delete) files from your computer.
- A program to reveal an Access database password
- A simple FTP program

The SQL Compact database originally meant for only mobile devices (in fact, it used to be called SQL Mobile) has been adapted now by Microsoft to be used as a small footprint database for desktop applications. That should make it easier to distribute desktop database applications. As for its mobile usage, I wrote a program for the Windows Pocket PC mobile device that allows you to view such a database's various tables.  So, using the other program I wrote to transform an Access database into a SQL Compact one, I can now take important information I have on my main computer in Access and have it on my mobile device in a secure form since the SQL Compact database can be encrypted and password-protected.

At least I hope it is secure, since I am assuming that Microsoft has improved the security in SQL Compact over what it had in Access.  A bit of web searching reveals VB code which is fairly trivial and works to retrieve an Access 97 password.  I have also seen code to do the same for Access 2000 and 2003 databases, but, based on my playing around with trying to crack the password on the 2000 and 2003 databases, I found that code did not work.  I then managed to crack the database code for a database that I created and gave a password to.  I was quite proud of myself until the next day when I created a new database and gave it a password and tried out my program to get the password.  It only produced every other character of the password. Not bad, but no cigar, as they say.  I think this is probably what happened to the people who proudly posted their code.  It was only good for databases created on a certain day.

# **S**pecial **I**nterest **G**roups

**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.

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*(Minutes………..Continued from page 2)*

pressive door prizes. Also, find out what the other groups are doing to draw members and generate interest at their meetings.

Blain Barton with Microsoft will be our speaker next month to tell us about Virtual, so don't miss that meeting. Bob LaFave will entertain us in April.

At 7:15 pm, President Witmer introduced our speaker, Mr. Keith Bunch, owner of North Tampa Photography, Inc. North Tampa Photo has been in business for 36 years. They are at 1020 W Busch Boulevard.

Mr. Bunch told us that digital is taking over from film and that small format film (35mm) cameras are almost a thing of the past. They haven't sold them for two years. In another two years, you may have to mail order film since it is hard for the retailer to make any money on it. To Hell I say!

To add to this, the number of camera manufacturers is declining. Kodak and Sony are the strong runners based on sales, although Kodak doesn't make their own digital cameras for the most part. Minolta has dropped out, and Nikon and Olympus are trying to find their niche in the digital revolution, with Canon a bit better positioned.

Keith said it's his opinion a small-format digital camera of more than 6 mega pixels is more than adequate for the nonprofessional photographer. Secure Digital is the most popular memory card today. The highest ISO is 3200, with 400 being the norm.

He went on to say that DVDs are quickly replacing

CDs for external image storage/transfer due to higher capacity and their ability to store moving images. Kodak is offering a printer that uses $10 black ink cartridges and $20 color cartridges. Also, the new ICS (Image Correction Scanners) do a fantastic job copying images. Canon and Sony are my choices.

Keith concluded by saying he recognized faces of customers in the audience. He took questions and invited anyone to their store on W. Busch Blvd. Feel free to come by and they will address your concerns about photography equipment.
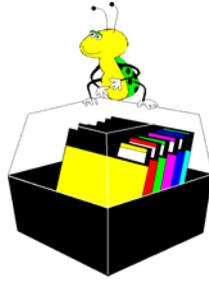
The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm. ◆

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*(Comments……….Continued from page 6)*

But one cannot give up. Especially since I was once turned down for a job at the National Security Agency. And a few more days of work on and off did indeed produce a program that, as far as I and a few testers can tell, reveals an Access 2000 to 2003 database password of up to 14 characters.

I don't plan on making this program available, since it sort of defeats the purpose of such a password. But if you should ever forget your password, ask me, and if I trust you, I will open your database. Additionally, you can pay around $40 on the web to purchase a program that supposedly does the same thing (and if I can figure it out, certainly many other people can too). I assume that in Access 2007 Microsoft will remedy this and my program will not work on 2007 databases.

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

*(Comments..........Continued from page 7)*

The file-wiping program is designed to write random data over a file to obscure what was there before, since a simple delete only marks the file name as deleted in the disk directory.  In fact, the program writes over the file several times because one or two times is not enough to keep really sophisticated snoops from detecting the magnetic residue on the disk. It is not a hard program to write and will save me from having to purchase such.  If I needed a more advanced program to write over the "empty" space once occupied by deleted emails, etc., I will go with a commercial product. Like much of what I write, I mainly wrote the program to see if I could.

I have actually written an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) program twice—once with VS 2003 and again using a different approach with VS 2005. Then, at the request of Merle Nicholson, I expanded it a little and made it more user-friendly, since he wanted a simple FTP program that required no installation (if you already have the .Net framework 2.0 installed) that he could give to his clients instead of more complicated many-featured FTP programs requiring an installation.

That's all for this month. ◆

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