



**April in Tampa
Tax Time**

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

Vol. 20 No. 4 April 2007

Meeting

Bob LaFave

Meeting Preview: Bob LaFave will expand the usual Windows SIG to cover most of the meeting. If we run out of questions and problems, he will show us how to record and edit TV programs on our computers.

All Things Windows and How to Record & Edit TV Programs

Wednesday, April 11, 2007
6:30 PM

Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Editor's Comments: Linux on a Virtual PC

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

Immediately upon arriving home after watching Blain Barton demonstrate Virtual PC 2007 from Microsoft at our March meeting, I went to Microsoft (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/virtualpc/default.msp>) and did the free 30 MB download and installed it. I had already thought about what operating system I wanted to install as my first VPC. I really didn't care to revisit DOS, Win 3.1, or Win95. What I thought would be interesting was to see if I could load some version of Linux. I suspected that this was not exactly what Microsoft had in mind, and, after struggling with various versions of Linux (Debian, SUSE, and Ubuntu) and the need to occasionally drop to a command prompt to issue commands to make things work properly, I thought perhaps that was part of their plan—To whit: Let people see that installing Linux and using it with various programs is no cakewalk. And, indeed, it is not. But I persevered, and I now have the Ubuntu 6.10 flavor of Linux running as a Virtual PC (VPC). Additionally, I in-

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May Meeting: Drew Smith, president of the Florida Genealogy Society

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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.

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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Minutes of the March Meeting

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

The Windows SIG portion of the meeting commenced at 6:35 pm. Bob LaFave turned the meeting over to Kevan Sheridan to present the concept of portable applications. Kevan said a portable application is a computer program that you can carry with you on a portable memory device such as a 2 Gig flash drive, which he then demonstrated. When plugged into any Windows computer, you can access your software and personal data just as you would on your own PC. You can load your passwords, antivirus program, utilities, or the whole Open Office suite with documents and prepared presentations and use them on the host computer. Each of the applications you load on the flash drive has either been modified to run from the flash drive or run in an environment controlled by the flash software that allows it to run from the USB device. And to add to this wonder, when you unplug your flash drive, portable hard drive, or iPod/MP3 player, none of your personal data is left behind.

You can download or purchase flash drives with portable applications programs from a number of sources. Kevan mentioned U3.com and PortableApps.com as two he was familiar with. Then just add your programs and data. Really interesting stuff, Kevan. Thanks!

At 7:05 pm, President John Witmer took control for the business segment of our meeting. John asked that we indicate our presence and verify the information on the sign-in sheets so that our records are accurate. Two or three of our members went to the spring FACUG conference in Kissimmee, and John asked for a report at our next meeting as to what went on at the conference that would be of interest to the Group.

Next month, Bob LaFave will be our presenter, so he asked what topics the Group wants covered. In May we will have Drew Smith, president of the Florida Genealogy Society as our speaker. Some of you missed our genealogy program two years ago, so plan to make this one and see what the local society has to offer.

(Minutes.....Continued on page 6)



Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

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

stalled the Apache web server and the MySQL database. Along the way, I removed the version of Open Office that comes with Ubuntu and installed the latest version from Sun along with the latest Java runtime environment.

From my Linux VPC, I can use the Open Office word processor, spreadsheet, database, and presentation programs to do things similar to what I would do with Microsoft Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint. I can send and receive email using the Evolution email program and browse the WWW with the Firefox browser. I can see and access the shared files on any of my Windows Network computers. However, the reverse is not true. My Linux VPC has an IP address on my LAN (I think you need to be using a router for this) just like my Windows PCs, e.g., 192.168.0.15. If I put web pages into the www folder of my Linux VPC that was created by the installation of Apache, with the Apache web server running I can view them from any of my Windows computers on the LAN by an address like <http://192.168.0.15>. Furthermore, if I edit the configuration file for my router to point port 80 (used for HTTP) to the IP address above, then anyone in the world can access those web pages on my Linux VPC by going to the IP address of my router (which, of course, I would have to tell them).

The final thing I did was to learn enough php coding to use the php language (server-side HTML embedded scripting language) to be able to insert data from an input form on a web page (at my virtual Apache site) into a database table on the virtual MySQL database server and to be able to also retrieve such data on another web page on my virtual site using php code.

In the space remaining is a very abbreviated sequence of things I did and some problems I encountered. Please excuse the gory details. I have included them as a guide to anyone wanting to do the same thing,

First, I should say, I chose the Ubuntu flavor of Linux since member Tom Cone said that he had installed it on an old PC he had but had done nothing with it yet (a very common Linux situation I have noticed). To get it you can go to <http://www.ubuntu.com> and click on the download button. Choose the United States as your location, then choose Columbia University as the mirror site. Or just go to <http://mirror.cc.columbia.edu/pub/linux/ubuntu/releases/edgy/ubuntu-6.10-desktop-i386.iso>. This will get you the iso CD file to use in Virtual PC.

Once you have the approximately 700 MB file, you will need to start Microsoft Virtual PC 2007 that you have pre-

viously downloaded and create a new virtual PC. Give it a name and set the operating system to other; next, adjust the RAM to 512 MB, and tell it to use a new virtual hard disk. Finally, look at its settings and set the Undo Disks to Enabled.

Now you have a new empty Linux VPC. Select it and click the start button in the VPC Console.

Note that in all of this you can recapture the mouse cursor from the VPC by pressing the right alt key. Once the process starts and you get a "DOS styled" window, choose "capture iso image" from the CD menu item. Then click on the action menu item and select ctrl-alt-delete. This reboots the VPC, and the Ubuntu installation will appear. Press F6, then use the backspace key to delete everything from the end of the line through the word splash and press enter. The install will start and the output will be very limited, so be patient.

You will eventually see a screen that has gotten wide and begins to fill with colored squiggly lines. Let this continue for a minute or so until things settle down. Then press ctrl-alt-F1, followed by enter. If you are lucky, another DOS type window will occur with a prompt. If so, type or paste in the following text and press enter: `sudo sed -e 's/DefaultDepth.*24/DefaultDepth 16/g' -i /etc/X11/xorg.conf` (you are changing Ubuntu's color depth setting from 24 bit color to 16—with which Virtual PC will be happy). Note this problem would not occur on a non-virtual installation. Now enter ctrl-alt-F7 and press enter. This should give a slightly fuzzy screen. Then press ctrl-Alt-backspace and press enter. In a moment things should clear up. Once you are able to see the Ubuntu screen, just let the Ubuntu user log in itself. Once you see the desktop, double click on the Install icon to start the actual installation to the virtual hard drive. Answer questions about language, location, time, keyboard, etc. Once the install starts, accept the defaults for hard drive and partitioning. (I found the workaround at <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/HowToConfigureUbuntuForMicrosoftVirtualPC2004>.)

The installation of the operating system took a little less than 20 minutes on my computer. You are asked to reboot the virtual computer. The reboot from the installation may hang. Use the right alt key to get your mouse back and then, in the VPC window, click on Action menu item and choose close. When finished, all of this will close, and you will be left with the Virtual PC Console. You are now ready to use your newly-created virtual Ubuntu PC.

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

First-Time Vista

Windows Vista Business Upgrade

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group

merle@merlenicholson.com

On previous OS upgrades you could provide proof of a previous OS by inserting a CD. With Vista, this is no longer true. I installed Vista on an older machine with very limited Vista graphics capability.

I'd just acquired a used AMD XP processor, and, with an older motherboard and various parts lying around, I set up a "test bench" computer to run Windows XP for a software job for a client. The client needs networking software I was reluctant to risk on my main computer. So it was taking up space on my bench, and I realized that with another old hard drive from a junk drawer, I could try out my new Vista with no risk.



I do have to say that I have no intention to upgrade my current primary machine to Vista – or any of the computers in my household. Instead, when I do migrate to Vista, it will be using a new computer I've set up from scratch, and on which, over perhaps a couple of weeks, installed all the software I need.

So I have this Windows XP computer sitting there running a legally-activated XP Professional OS. I disconnected the hard drive, connected a new junk hard drive – it probably has remnants of an XP OS from my spouse's computer when I replaced it a month ago. I booted from the Vista DVD and went through some of the process – entered the CD key, only to be told that I must run the DVD from a

system that is being replaced and please exit. I can upgrade only from a working system.

Ok, I guess I knew that. Remember on previous OS upgrades, you booted from the CD and eventually you would be asked to insert the media from the previous system you were replacing.

With Vista, this has changed. You must run the DVD from a working system. If you have a broken computer with no CD to repair the OS and decide that, as long as you're at it, you just migrate to Vista, chances are you're out of luck. You may have to buy the full version. Many millions of computers have no operating system CD. Some computers had the only backup of the OS on a partition on the hard drive. That's a disaster waiting to happen. Bad hard drive = no operating system. Others have "restore" CD's. So if you have one of these, that's good. If it works.

Ultimately, I reformatted the drive and then backed up my good working XP system to it using my trusty old Powerquest Drive Image Disk-to-Disk copy, then booted to the hard drive. I inserted the Vista DVD and proceeded with the install.

At the onset, you're provided with two choices: One is to replace the XP system leaving the documents and programs intact, and Two is to put a scratch-new OS on the drive after moving all files to a "Windows.old" folder.

Notice there was no option to reformat or partition the drive. This is an upgrade, and I guess if it has to behave as an upgrade, it offered only those two choices. I don't know what choices you'd have if your drive was formatted FAT32. If you have an XP system with a FAT32 drive, it would take some cautious investigation and some reliable backing up.

In my own case, the system I am replacing had no applications worth preserving. It is a very clean basic XP system, so I picked the second option and put a scratch-new OS on the drive after moving all files to a "Windows.old" folder.

The install options were setting time zone and language options and the option to validate the OS on the Internet. There was one thing to pick to allow it to get its own OS updates from the Internet, which I did allow.

After the setup and learning how to set the screen back-

(Vista.....Continued on page 5)

(Vista.....Continued from page 4)

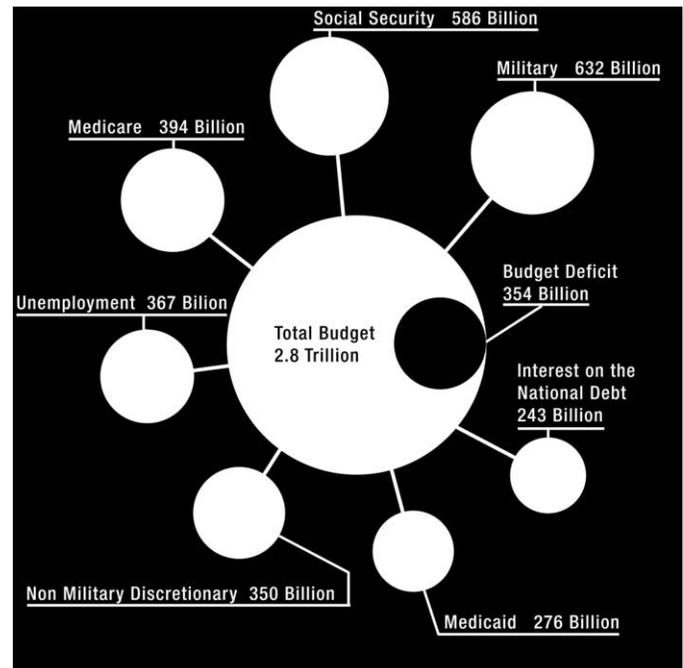
ground to get rid of all the pretty things, I went to the hardware manager and found no issues. It had picked generic video and monitor drivers. After poking around, I found the “Windows Experience Index” with a rating of 1.0 out of 5. It picked the lowest number of all the categories – two were “graphics” and “gaming graphics,” both with 1.0. This reflects the age of the system and the fact that it has on-the-motherboard video. Now, this is an AMD XP 2200+, and although it isn’t in production, it still – in my opinion – makes a more than adequate computer, and the experience index of 3.1 for processing power bears this out. The Graphics Index of 1.0 is defined as suitability to run “Aero” – the Vista transparent overlapping Windows. I could not find the Windows Aero interface in the list of desktop interfaces, so I assume that I am blocked from using it because of the low rating.

Even with generic video and monitor drivers, I was able to set the screen to the maximum of 1280x1024, 32-bit color depth. I’m not 100% happy with the response of Windows when opening and moving. Perhaps some fine tuning would produce better results, like not showing a window’s contents while moving. I have looked for a Vista-capable video card online to help improve the response and can find some in the \$68-\$75 range.

I did find that the install did some unexpected things, like retaining the data folders in the root of the drive. I’d expected everything to be in the Windows.old directory. There are but three folders in Windows.old: Program Files, Windows and Documents and Settings.

The Control Panel is very much larger, with more of all the various settings concentrated here, which is a very good thing in my opinion. Aside from that – and the time I’ve spent figuring out where everything is – it’s been a positive experience. I’ll keep it and use it to test software developed on my primary XP machine and perhaps start installing software to see what works and what doesn’t. ♦

Internet Picture of the Month



The 2007 Federal Budget

Since April is tax month and I need an Internet picture of the month, here is graphical representation of where those taxes go. As you can see, you are not paying enough since there is a projected \$354 billion budget deficit.

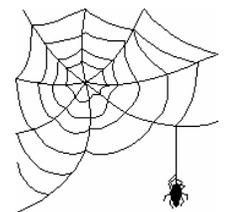
The URL of the image is <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/2006/09/the-awesome-power-of-visualization-2-death-and-taxes-2007.htmlprint/>, which I really think they could have made shorter.

On that page there is a link to the “Death and Taxes” home page, which you may also find instructive. The link is <http://thebudgetgraph.com/index.html>.

Happy Tax Month.

April’s Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that’s us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Microsoft Virtual PC (repeat)	http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/virtualpc/default.mspx
Ubuntu Linux	http://www.ubuntu.com/
The Art of Bonsai Project	http://www.artofbonsai.org/
Canon Camera Virtual Lens Plant	http://www.canon.com/camera-museum/tech/l_plant/index2.html
Ethanol from Corn: Unsustainable?	http://pangea.stanford.edu/ESYS/Energy%20seminars/patzek_ethanol.pdf



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.

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

Jim Purcell asked for a show of hands of those interested in attending monthly meetings of the Digital Imaging SIG. Seven or eight expressed an interest so Jim will try to arrange a meeting place and meeting schedule.

At 7:10 pm, John introduced our speaker of the evening, Blain Barton with Microsoft. The Group expressed their appreciation to Blain for the great pizza. Blain said that it was his pleasure and tonight he was going to tell us about Microsoft Virtual PC 2007.

Blain said that Microsoft has recently released Virtual PC 2007 and that free downloads are available. The host PC can be any x86-based or x64-based computer running at 400 MHz or faster, although a 1 GHz processor with L2 cache is recommended. Virtual PC supports the use of AMD, Athlon/Duron, Intel Celeron, Pentium II, III and 4, Core Duo and Core2 Duo processors. You must have a CD ROM or DVD drive, a super VGA (800x600) or higher resolution monitor, keyboard and Microsoft mouse or compatible pointing device.

The host operating system can be Windows Vista Business, Enterprise or Ultimate, Windows XP Professional or XP Tablet PC Edition. Host memory and disk space needed range between 64 MB and 500 MB to 512 MB and 15 GB respectively, depending on the guest operating system selected.

Blain then demonstrated setting up several virtual machines that ran concurrently on the same physical computer. This is particularly useful for running test applications under differing operating systems. Available RAM is the limiting factor for the number of virtual machines you can run simultaneously.

During the demonstration a number of interesting questions were answered. As you might expect, Blain kept us entertained until 9:00 pm. No one dozed off even with tummies full of pizza. Several nice door prizes supplied by Microsoft were then raffled off. The prizes and lucky winners were:

Windows Vista Ultimate	Ron Weinberger
Microsoft Light Pen	Roy DeArmond
X-Box Headset	Jim Purcell
X-Box Headset	John Witmer

Seventy-four dollars were collected in raffle ticket sales. Thank you, Blain and Microsoft!

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm. ◆

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

After all that, I was up and running Linux as a VPC. I could browse the WWW and see my Windows Network computers. What I couldn't do was add any new applications. A search of Google for the error message told me to get a command prompt (using the Terminal program) and execute the command "sudo dpkg --configure -a". This apparently reset something, and I was able to use the Synaptic Package Manager, the advanced form of Add/Remove. I then was advised that five packages were corrupted. So I downloaded and installed new versions of them. Then I tried a test of adding some little educational piece of software, and that worked.

Now that I had the Add/Remove working, when I closed down the session (saving the changes) and started up again, I received a notice of all the many updates available--253 MB worth. So I let Ubuntu update itself.

I played with Open Office for a bit and found one problem in that I couldn't create a form using the wizard in its database program (I find the database program to be the least fleshed out when compared to Microsoft Office's programs). So I used the Synaptic Package Manager to remove the main packages of Open Office and then went to the Sun Microsystems site and downloaded the latest version of Open Office and installed it, which was an adventure in itself since the packages were meant for the RedHat flavor of Linux. That meant I had to use the Synaptic Package Manager to download a program called Alien that would convert these packages into the Debian flavor of Linux packages (which Ubuntu belongs to) so as to be able to install them. Alien runs from the command prompt, so you see this is a bit more complicated than installing things in Windows.

To test everything, I exported some name and email data from Access as a DBF file (I could not import the Access file directly into Open Office), imported the DBF file into the Open Office database, then did an email merge from the Open Office word processor to send emails to the people in the file—and it worked. I also imported Microsoft Office Word documents, Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations into the corresponding Open Office programs.

My next step was to install the Apache web server software into my Ubuntu Linux setup. I then copied a folder from my main Windows computer containing a small web site and put it in the appropriate place in my Linux VPC for Apache and, voila, I had a website up and running that could be seen by anyone to whom I gave the IP address of my router once I allowed port 80 to map to the Linux VPC.

There was only one thing left that I wished to immediately

(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, 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.

TPCUG STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES AND BANK BALANCE

2006 INCOME

MEMBERSHIPS	\$	870.00
DOOR PRIZES	\$	161.00
AMAZON & MISC	\$	104.93
TOTAL INCOME:		\$ 1,135.93

2006 EXPENSES

NEWSLETTER POSTAGE	\$	156.00
NEWSLETTER PAPER	\$	31.65
FACUG CONF REGISTRATIONS	\$	200.00
FACUG DUES	\$	25.00
APCUG DUES	\$	50.00
FLORIDA INCORPORATION FEE	\$	61.25
WEB SITE HOSTING FEE	\$	99.50
PO BOX RENTAL	\$	50.00
WEBSITE DOMAIN REG-3 YRS	\$	74.97
MISCELLANEOUS	\$	27.42
TOTAL EXPENSES:		\$ 775.79

NET INCOME FOR 2006	\$	360.14
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BALANCE IN BANK - BEGINNING OF 2006	\$	4,796.23
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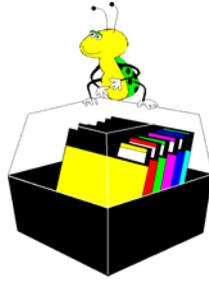
BALANCE IN BANK - END OF 2006	\$	5,156.37
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RECONCILIATION OF BANK STATEMENT TO BOOK BALANCE:

Balance per BANK at 12-31-06	\$	5,217.67
Deduct outstanding checks written as of 12/31/06		
CK #780 APCUG	\$	50.00
CK #781 MIKE HODGES POSTAGE	\$	11.30

Balance per BOOKS at 12-31-06 is this amount:	\$	5,156.37
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Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.
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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 ____*

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

try—install the MySQL database server on my Linux VPC. Again, I used the Synaptic Package Manager in Ubuntu to do this. I also installed a visual interface for managing MySQL: MySQL Administrator. I could find no way to create a database using this interface, so after consulting Google, I used the proper command at the command line prompt to create a database. I also created a user who could access the database. Once created, I could then use the nice graphical interface to create tables for this database and add columns to the tables.

Having a MySQL database meant that I could, by using the php programming language, communicate with it from web pages. To test this, I created an input form on a web page where one enters their first name, last name and email address. I gave Merle Nicholson the URL to this page, and he went and tested it for me. It worked, and now the main table of the membership database in MySQL has an entry for a David Slartybartfase, apparently one of Merle's aliases.

This has all been very interesting—and it costs nothing in dollars, only in time. But for me and my house, Windows is still the operating system of choice. ◆

