



December in Tampa

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

Vol. 20 No. 12 December 2007

Meeting

Christmas/Holiday Party

Wednesday, December 12, 2007
6:30 PM
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: The Christmas/Holiday Party and the Election of Officers are the main items of business.



Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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At our last meeting, Steve Singer, president of RDI (<http://morevalu.net/>), as he does once a year, introduced us to many new things in computer hardware of which we were unaware. I hope to do the same for you in this month's newsletter with what I write about my new phone, which is more computer than phone and runs a mobile version of Windows.

It is truly a remarkable package about the size of, and thinner than, a pack of cigarettes. The iPhone cannot even dream of doing what this phone can. And, in addition to all of the built-in functionality that comes with this phone, I can add as much as my abilities at programming allow. It is the HTC PPC 6800, which I review on page 3.

Agreed, for those of you who are not computer programmers, what appeals to me about the phone may not be so compel-

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

| INSIDE THIS ISSUE | |
|--|---|
| Meeting Preview | 1 |
| Editor's Comments | 1 |
| Minutes | 2 |
| HTC Pocket PC 6800 | 3 |
| Links | 5 |
| Programming for Windows Mobile | 6 |
| SIG Report | 7 |
| Map | 8 |

January Meeting: To be announced

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Bits of Blue is published by the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., a State of Florida registered non-profit corporation, to provide educational information about personal computer systems to its members. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 3492, Tampa, FL 33601-3492.

However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 821 S. Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606-2904; 813-251-3817; lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

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Minutes of the November Meeting

By Doug Mullis, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
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Bob LaFave began the Windows SIG portion at 6:30pm by asking for questions or computer problems we may have. A member was having problems with pop up ads. Bob suggested running Ad-Aware, Windows Defender or SpyBot Search & Destroy. Web Root is also good, but will cost you \$40.

Bob went on to say Microsoft now offers online file storage for no charge at a site called Windows Live SkyDrive Beta. It's 1 or 2 GBs of storage available to any computer with Internet access.

Bob suggested we look at Picasa Wed Albums that can be downloaded free from Google to find, view, edit and share digital pictures on our computers. Kodak has a similar web service.

At 7:00pm President John Witmer started the business portion of our meeting by thanking the large number of attendees for coming to hear our featured speaker, Steve Singer of RDI. John also introduced our newest members, Nancy and Bruce Norton.

The first order of business was the announcement that officers for 2008 will be elected at the December meeting so we need members to step forward. John introduced the current officers: Jim Purcell, Member at Large; Doug Mullis, Treasurer and Secretary; Kevan Sheridan, Vice President; and John Witmer, President. William LaMartin is our voluntary Webmaster and Newsletter Editor. Having our officers serving double duty reduces the size of our Board, so John asked that members please let Member at Large, Jim Purcell, know what position they would be willing to serve in so that we may finalize the slate of officers.

(Minutes.....Continued on page 5)



HTC Pocket PC 6800

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Why am I writing about a phone in a computer newsletter? Because it is really more of a computer than it is a phone. A search of the Internet reveals that “HTC is a Taiwanese designer and manufacturer of PDAs and smart phones, particularly Windows Mobile devices. HTC re-brands and sells its devices to other vendors and carriers around the globe, including UT-Starcom.”

Some History My Pocket PC 6700, which I wrote about in the newsletter about one year ago (http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2006/october2006/phone.htm), began to be flaky. You would be, too, if you had been dropped as many times as I had let this phone hit the concrete. Of course, it was really not my fault but the fault of the person who designed its case so that it was removed from my belt by my car’s seat belt almost every time I exited my car. The problem was so bad that I eventually quit using the supplied case and bought a clunky replacement case that would not come off my belt. But this case was bulky, so I settled on just putting the phone in my pant’s pocket with my loose change.

More importantly, though, that phone’s Bluetooth never functioned properly. The way Bluetooth is supposed to work between a phone and a car is that, once the phone and car are “paired” (introduced to each other), the next time you get in the car with the phone, the two connect up again and you can then do all your dialing and talking through the car instead of the phone. However, the 6700 didn’t seem to understand that, and almost every time I returned to the car, the phone and the car had to be reintroduced. I know it was the phone’s fault because my previous phone did not exhibit that problem, nor does the current phone. This had nothing to do with dropping the phone since the Bluetooth never worked properly even before the phone’s first fall.

In addition, though, possibly the outlet plug’s not producing any sound to the plug-in ear pieces could be blamed on all the falls, but, whatever the reason, starting several months back I could no longer listen to my



favorite Internet radio stations, as I used to be able to do on walks.

The final thing that caused me to look for a new phone was the 6700’s habit of locking up while it was running one of the programs I had written for it (recall, it is more of a computer than it is a phone), and, also, the screen sometimes just stayed very dark when I turned the phone on. But when I went looking for a new phone I ran into several problems: Specifically, I was on my 13th month of a 24-month contract, the one-year warranty had expired one month in the past, and I had no insurance on the phone. Thus, according to the Alltel fellow in the store, I was out of luck in that a new replacement phone--the HTC 6800--would cost me around \$600. And this was even though the “advanced” tech fellow that he connected me with to see if he could help with the current problems admitted that they had numerous complaints about the screen going dark and not coming back. My screen wouldn’t even come back with a soft reset and a new battery installed while in the store. Everybody was very nice--but no new phone without \$600. It was enough to make you want to change to another carrier. However, there are only a few carriers that carry the type of Pocket PC phone I wanted. And I was joined to Alltel at the hip, having three phones under contract with them. So time for Plan Two.

Plan Two was my wife’s calling Alltel’s 800 number and speaking with a representative; it turns out they can do things the store can’t. The result was the deletion of the current contract and the start of another two

(HTC 6800.....Continued on page 4)

(HTC 6800.....Continued from page 3)

-year contract on a new HTC 6800 phone with the same \$30/month data service that allows you to connect to the Internet (the real Internet, not some hokey phone Internet). The cost was around \$250, including an instant discount and a \$100 mail-in rebate. I received the phone in two days and activated it with no problems. And, for all car trips, the phone's Bluetooth has connected every time to the car.

Let's talk a bit about this phone's features. Here is the list of things from Alltel's site.

- Windows Mobile 6.0 OS
- Windows Media player
- 2 MP camera with picture and video messaging
- Wi-Fi-capable
- Voice activated dialing
- Infrared (IR) communications
- Bluetooth® wireless technology
- Use your device as a modem for your laptop while traveling
- Expandable memory slot
- Speakerphone
- Mobile Office includes Word, Excel, Power-Point, and Outlook, which includes calendar, notes, tasks and integrated address book

These are basically the same features as my previous phone even though the new phone is slightly smaller and more compact-appearing than the older one. It has a 2 MP camera with auto focus instead of the 1.3 MP camera of the older phone. The expandable memory slot takes a micro SD card instead of a mini SD card. It also has much more storage memory, around 160 MB, than did the 6700, so you may not even need to use an expandable memory card.

The specifications may be found at <http://www.america.htc.com/products/ppc6800/default.html>. They are incorrect in that they list the OS as Windows Mobile 5.0 instead of 6.0.

By the way, the Windows Mobile home page is <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile/default.mspx>. Watch the Flash demo while you are there.

Observations I find this device responds quicker

than the previous one. As mentioned, the Bluetooth works flawlessly with my car. It also connects fine with a Bluetooth GPS unit I have.

Live Search I can run Live Search to return valuable information centered on a city I choose, a position on a map, my GPS position (if connected to the GPS), or someone's address from my contacts. To demonstrate this, I just selected a person I know in New Orleans, and Live Search downloaded a map centered on the address where he lives. This is the sort of map you can click with your cursor and move in any direction you wish. You can also zoom in or out. I can then search for all sorts of things close by--restaurants, nightlife, government, shopping, hotels, etc. I just did a search for Banks and produced quite a list ordered by distance from the map's center. And, since we are in New Orleans, my second search was for restaurants. It will let you choose a category, or you may select All Restaurants. With that, it will return the 25 closest.

Another useful category of information is Gas Prices. Here a search will produce a collection of service stations ordered by the price of regular gasoline, with the date of the price and the distance from you. It turned out that the closest station was next to last--that is, highest--in price. The oldest price I saw was only three days old.

For movies, it presents an alphabetical list of movies. Clicking on a title presents you with a running time, rating, etc.. For a specific movie, you can get detailed information and a list of theaters where it is playing, with start times, the closest theater at the top.

You can also get a traffic map for major cities. Tampa is included, but New Orleans isn't. The availability of all of this information, of course, is predicated on your having a live Internet connection to your device. For that I pay Alltel \$30 per month for their data wireless cell phone service, on top of the monthly charge for regular cell phone service.

Mobile Office, included in Win Mobile 6, is mobile versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook. With these programs, you can open and do basic ed-

(HTC 6800.....Continued on page 8)

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

John next announced that our December meeting will also be our Christmas party and intentionally no speaker is scheduled. The Group treasury will cover the purchase of food and drink this year; however, if there is something you want to bring, you may do so. John also asked that if you have ideas for the catered food, let John hear them.

If you have music CDs or DVD's appropriate for the occasion, bring them. We will give door prizes away at no charge. You don't want to miss this meeting. A show of hands indicated about 30 will attend.

You may have noticed this month our newsletter is in color. William was curious what color would cost, as our usual printer (Pepin) was not available. Kinko's wanted \$800 for 60 copies in color and \$90 in black and white. Having his heart set on color, but without approval or the desire to spend \$800, William ran color using his home printer and three and one-half hours of his time. Cost was about \$40 for ink, wear and tear on his printer and his time. I already mentioned that his duties as Newsletter Editor are voluntary (no compensation). What a deal we get! Enjoy--I doubt it will happen again. Thanks, William.

It now being 7:15pm, John introduced Steve Singer and his wife Pam to tell us what is now available in computer hardware. Steve started by saying computers are continuing to get smaller and smaller. He showed us a fully loaded motherboard that was 10 inches square made by JetWay and selling for \$170. He also told us about Thin Client, a mini computer now used in many offices connected to a server. It

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

Internet Picture of the Month



Bug from Flickr

Leptinotarsa decemlineata
Colorado Potato Beetle

This photo is from <http://www.flickr.com/>, which is a Yahoo company. The link to this beautiful bug is <http://www.flickr.com/photos/endie1/1722932693/in/photostream>. The photo (titled Kartoffelkäfer in German) was taken by someone named EnDie1.

Flickr is a photo uploading site with, I suppose, millions of photos (the site claimed "3,533 photos uploaded in the last minute"). There is everything from rank amateur to very professional. There are beautiful women, flowers, sunsets, cathedrals and anything else that you can focus a camera on. Why a bug instead of one of the beautiful women? Well, beautiful women are a dime a dozen on TV, but when was the last time you saw a beetle there?

December's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us) <http://www.tpcug.org/>
 Central Florida Flowers <http://www.netpamj.com/index4.htm>
 Old New Orleans http://www.thepastwhispers.com/Old_New_Orleans.html
 Adobe Design Video Workshop http://www.adobe.com/designcenter/video_workshop/
 Bloomberg.com - business news <http://www.bloomberg.com/index.html?Intro=intro3>



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.

Programming for a Windows Mobile Device

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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The real reason I wanted the type of phone I described in the previous article was that I want to be able to write programs that will run on its Windows Mobile 6 operating system, as I have done for the Pocket PC 2003 and Windows Mobile 5 devices I have owned.

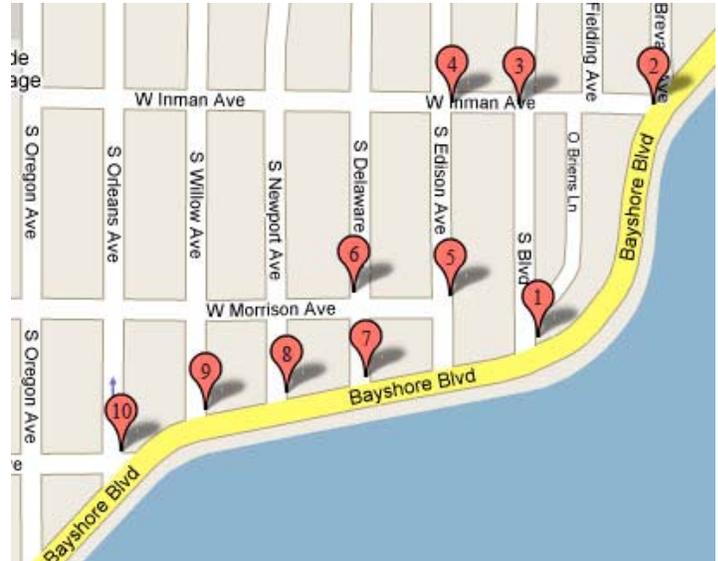
Some programs I have written for these devices are:

- A viewer for photos
- An FTP program
- A database program for compact SQL databases
- A GPS program that will post your positions to a text file or to a database on the Internet

The database program is particularly useful and works as follows. First I run a program I wrote (using VB.Net in Visual Studio) for a Windows desktop computer that will turn any Microsoft Access database into a compact SQL database. These are the types of databases for which Windows Mobile 6 has built-in support. In Windows Mobile 5, you had to install a number of additional files to attain such support. Second, I copy the compact SQL databases to my mobile device, where I can then use the mobile database program (also written using Visual Studio) to open the database on the mobile device.

The mobile database program allows me to carry around in a secure manner data for our computer club, my neighborhood association and much of my personal information. It is secured by the data being encrypted in the compact SQL database and the database itself being password protected.

The image at the top of the next column, is from the web page <http://www.lamartinsoftware.com/GPS/GPSExample.aspx> at one of my web sites, the one used mainly for testing. What we have are 10 markers on a Google map that indicate the points at which I paused on a walk around my neighborhood and took readings from the Bluetooth-connected GPS with my



new Pocket PC phone. What is interesting is how these markers then got on this map on this web page.

Here is what is going on behind the scene that creates this map.

1. First, a program I wrote for the mobile device continuously displays my latitude, longitude and universal time that the device is receiving from the GPS every second.
2. When I click the screen, I am given the opportunity to send this data to a text file on the device--or, more importantly, if I have a connection to the Internet with the cell phone, to send it to a web service (a program I also wrote) running at lamartinsoftware.com, which will, in turn, insert the new position data into a table in a MySQL database at lamartinsoftware.com.
3. When someone asks for their web browser to display the URL, <http://www.lamartinsoftware.com/GPS/GPSExample.aspx>, the hidden VB.Net code for that page (not the source HTML) connects to the MySQL database, downloads the data that I earlier put there and creates the source HTML that puts the Google map on the page with the 10 markers you see and with the text you will see if you click on a marker.

What you see on that page will not change. It always draws on the same data, but I have other pages for my own use that display the last 10 or 20 or whatever number I desire of the most recent positions I have had

(Programming.....Continued on page 7)

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

(Programming.....Continued from page 6)

my device send to the database. I suppose this is the sort of technology that the phone companies provide parents who pay for a service to track the positions of their kids who have GPS-enabled phones. It is also the same technology that allows trucking companies to keep track of their trucks.

With my previous phone, I created a similar application that only logged the positions to a text file and had no Internet connectivity. I used that application to record to a file the locations where I took photos. I wrote about that in the June 2006 newsletter, http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2006/june2006/photography_GPS_programming.htm. I still have that feature in my new application, where the positions are recorded to a file on the device instead of to the Internet.

If anyone has an idea for another program for this phone, let me know. ◆

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

ling. And such a phone is not totally trouble-free. It takes a certain amount of “geekiness” to be able to keep it running smoothly.

I have met quite a few people who had my previous phone, the PPC 6700, who basically never used it for anything other than just a telephone. I suppose they did use the contact manager, the calendar and the camera. So I don't think the phone was really meant for them, since it is not really the best device to have if you only want a phone with a few features and a camera. ◆

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 5)

comes with a keyboard and mouse for about \$350.

AMD and Intel are still the big competitors producing CPUs. Steve leans toward AMD due to lower prices and proven reliability. The latest push in processors is the quad core. AMD is releasing a three core CPU at a lower price, which essentially is a quad that (maybe intentionally) didn't quite make the grade.

Steve said now is the time to upgrade RAM on your existing computer, as prices are at an all time low. Examples: 512 MB DDR2-667 sticks are selling for \$25.00, 1 GB for \$34.50 and 2 GB for \$74.50. SATA 1 & 2 hard drives are now also at very reasonable prices.

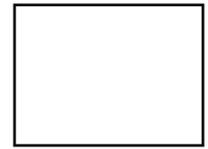
Steve went on to tell us about Photo JoJo, TV Torrents.com, VideoLand.org and MovieSneaks.com, to be checked out as we please. Steve always tells us about many interesting sites.

John Witmer thanked Steve and Pam for the informative evening. Pam periodically makes Steve slow down so that we can comprehend what he's presenting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm. ◆

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First Class Mail

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

(HTC 6800.....Continued from page 4)

iting of the desktop versions of the documents. Although a check showed that the new Word 2007 document format is not supported, there is a free upgrade available that will correct this. Outlook will usually be the most used of these programs, and an improvement over Windows Mobile 5 is the addition of HTML email. Now if you receive an HTML email, you first see the text of the message, and, if you so choose, you may download it again and include all the HTML formatting, including images. There is also a mobile version of Windows Media Player 10 to view videos--including those you may take with the camera since it has that functionality.

About the only problem I have encountered is erratic syncing of the device to my computer, and I have not got the problem entirely solved. The first problem was that apparently the USB cable I was using wasn't reliable, and, when I changed to the new one that came with the phone, things worked better--but not perfectly since sometimes I get the message, "USB device not recognized." Trying several times more usually solves this problem, but obviously something is not right here.

All considered, it is a great phone. ◆

