



February in Tampa

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

Vol. 21 No. 2 February 2008

Meeting

TurboTax

By
John Witmer

Wednesday, February 13, 2007
6:30 PM
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: John Witmer will demonstrate tax preparation software. Bob LaFave will conduct the Windows SIG at the beginning of the meeting as usual.

Editor's Comments

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

As you can see from my article on page 4, I am back into Linux again. Using Fedora on an actual computer is certainly more interesting and rewarding than my earlier installation of Ubuntu on a Virtual PC.

Of course, I spend most of my computer time working on my Windows desktop computer. But this recent installation has convinced me that for people with a very limited amount to spend and needing only to browse the web and send and receive email, along with doing an occasional word processing document, spreadsheet, presentation or even editing images, a fairly robust version of Linux like Fedora is a wonderful, free solution. All they need is an older, used PC and the technical expertise to install Fedora. Most of the things that gave me some trouble, like integrating the Linux computer into a LAN or configuring MySQL, would not be of interest to them. So go for it! It's free. ♦

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March Meeting: Blain Barton from Microsoft

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

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Minutes of the January Meeting

By Jim Purcell, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
Edward_J_P@MSN.com

The meeting started at approximately 6:40.p.m with the opening of the Windows SIG portion of our meeting led by Bob LaFave. Eric Goldstein asked Bob to explain the safety concerns of wireless connection to the Internet. Both Bob and Merle Nicholson emphasized that it is very difficult to hack into your router and therefore unlikely that anyone would even try. Merle suggested that if you have concerns for some reason, you can turn off file and peripheral sharing on your computer and this would prevent anyone from looking at your files even if they are successful in hacking into your system.

Another member asked Bob to explain the meaning of "ActiveX". Bob said that it is a program running on your computer that is activated on your browser. He stated that "Windows Update" is an example of an Active X program. He advised that you should set your preferences to require that you be asked before starting an ActiveX program. There was a follow-up question concerning how sites initiating ActiveX programs know which browser to use when more than one browser is in use. Merle suggested that the solution to having three browsers is to delete two of them. Bob cited some features on Firefox that he preferred, particularly the ability to download anything on the screen without purchasing additional programs. William LaMartin said that Windows Media Encoder, a free download from Microsoft, would also allow you to capture anything on the screen.

A member asked the meaning of the message on your computer stating that you do not have sufficient memory and that Windows is getting more memory. Bob stated that the notice is referring to "Virtual Memory" and that Windows automatically designates a certain amount of your RAM as virtual memory. Depending on what you are running, this may be too little or too much. He showed how to adjust the total. William suggested that he shuts down his computer each evening in order to release memory that had been set aside for reasons that were no longer

(Minutes.....Continued on page 3)



An Infection Repair Case

By Ron Weinberg, Member at Large,
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A friend complained his system was very slow. This is an XP Home PC rarely used that, upon investigation, had somehow become severely infected, possibly with an infection that reinstalls itself if not completely cleaned.

McAfee Internet Security Center and Ad Aware, which were already installed had cleaned multiple items but kept missing something. The addition of Webroot Spy Sweeper cleaned more, but still failed to complete the job. Windows Defender was also added.

Just a few of the bad items encountered were:

- Adware SearchSquire
- Adware Ad Destroyer
- Adware eBay Moe Money Maker
- Roings Search Browser Modifier
- Spyware Shop At Home
- Adware Memory Watch
- Adware AZE Search
- Adware180 Search Assistant
- Adware Easy Search Bar
- Many more were buried deep and remained hidden.

But the most noticeable problem was the redirection of any Google search to a legitimate looking page of links, each of which really took you to an undesirable (porn) site, always at 85.255.120.26/feed/search.

A search for this problem revealed that this was a hijack from a server in the Ukraine, and help was available from the Tech Support Forum ([http://www/techsupportforum.com](http://www.techsupportforum.com)).

My request for assistance was responded to by "Pancake," a Security Team Analyst in Australia, who guided me step by step through the issue. Various tools were required to find the malware, Trojans and any Root Kit infections. The steps were:

- Downloaded Fixwareout. It failed.
- Next, SDFIX to remove Trojan Services and repair Registry
- Next, ComboFix, which aborted because it found the system did not have a Recovery Console. It was nec-

essary to download an installation package from Microsoft, which ComboFix used to install the Recovery Console.

- Next, ComboFix ran successfully.

With each of the above repair programs, a log was produced which, together with a new HijackThis log each time, was forwarded to the Security Team Analyst.

Finally, the system was clean, and I removed the repair programs and logs. But in the process I had discovered that the System Restore function was inoperative, and it was necessary to reinstall System Restore.

This whole process was laborious and time-consuming. It took several days because it was necessary to wait for the analyst's response to each log.

For those of you unfamiliar with HijackThis, it is the premier tool used to document system problems of this type. It creates logs of everything related on your system and is available free from Trend Micro. I urge you to download a copy and have it on hand should it ever be needed.

The logs can be analyzed by Trend Micro or any of several free volunteer forums.

It is amazing that this level of expert free help is available from such highly competent volunteers.

Finally, I installed free Spyware Blaster and ThreatFire as further prevention measures. ♦

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valid. Bob explained how to use the task manager to determine which programs are running and what resources they are using. He warned to not to modify the registry unless you are sure of what you are doing.

A member stated that the computer manufacturer had set up half of his drive to be a backup drive; he wanted to know how to have the space available for regular storage. Bob and Merle explained that it was unlikely that it was consuming a significant amount of his storage. There was confusion as to whether the partition was for recovery or for backup. If it is for backup, it was suggested that there is probably a program like "Ghost" installed on his computer to perform this function. Bob explained the procedure for making the conversion in either case but cau-

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Linux One More Time

By William LaMartin, Editor,
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In the April 2007 newsletter (http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2007/april2007/comments.htm), I wrote about installing Linux on a Virtual PC -- specifically the Ubuntu flavor of Linux. At the May 2007 general meeting, I did a presentation on that. And then I forgot about Linux. I had seen what it was like to install, update, configure and use it. Of course, this was in a virtual setting with its attendant shortcomings, such as not being able to see the Linux computer from the Windows computers on the network, not being able to print or have sound, and being limited to an 800 x 600 pixel display. There were probably more things missing, but that is what I recall at this time.

Recently, though, someone told me they needed to install Linux somewhere so as to be able to use a program written for Linux. Of course, I sent them my notes on installing Ubuntu on the Microsoft Virtual PC, along with the PowerPoint presentation I had used in my presentation to the group. They said that was helpful, but they had to install Fedora instead of Ubuntu since that was the version of Linux the program in question ran under. Using some of the workarounds for installing Fedora on a VPC that I had to use to install Ubuntu, they were able to get Fedora 8 successfully installed on a VPC. Additionally, the program in question ran in that environment.

That prompted me to download the Fedora 8 iso file and get it running on a Microsoft Virtual PC. But there were a number of problems, such as the display size being too small and its not always booting on the first try. Problems enough for me to eye that unused Gateway 450X laptop that had been my daughter's first computer in college. It got replaced after a couple years of use because of, based on what could best be diagnosed over the phone, a failing hard drive. Additionally, the lid had a crack on the back caused by the binding of the left hinge. Could I bring this machine back to life? It hadn't been booted in a year. I decided to give it a try with the thought of installing Linux on it. It would be nice to give Linux a try on a real computer (with a sticking hinge and a suspect hard drive) instead of in a virtual setting.

I connected it to its AC adapter, let the battery charge for a little, then pressed the power button, and it came to life with Windows XP. I then cleaned up the files on the hard drive a bit and copied any documents and pictures on it to

a folder on one of my USB external hard drives. Then I went a step further and installed Acronis True Image on it and did a complete backup of the entire C drive, again to one of my USB external hard drives. That was just in case I wanted to restore Windows XP with Microsoft Office, etc. to the computer at some future date.

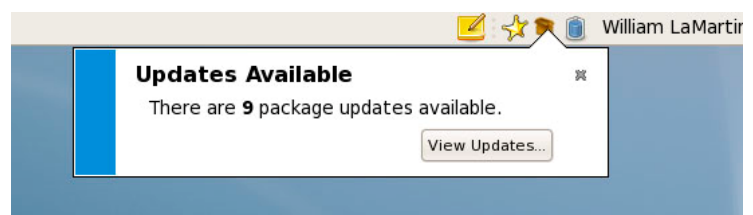
Now I was ready to give Fedora a try on the laptop. First, on my desktop computer, I took the 3.18 GB Fedora 8 i386 iso file I had downloaded from one of the Linux mirror sites and made a DVD from it. By the way, I used a mirror site (the one at Georgia Tech) instead of the Fedora site, <http://fedoraproject.org/>, to get the iso file since the Georgia Tech site was feeding the file to me about 10 times faster than was the Fedora site -- 380 KB/sec vs. 38 KB/sec, as I recall. The URL for the Georgia Tech download is <http://www.gtlib.gatech.edu/pub/fedora.redhat/linux/releases/8/Fedora/i386/iso/>.

Once I had the Fedora DVD made, I checked in the laptop's BIOS to confirm that it would boot from a disc in the CD/DVD drive, put the DVD in the drive and then rebooted the laptop. The Fedora installation took over from there. It was all very familiar since this was the same sequence of steps I had already been through in installing Fedora on the Virtual PC. I chose to install everything available -- Office, software development (whatever that might be) and web server (Apache). That entailed the installation of 1106 packages.

Unfortunately, I did not take detailed notes, so I cannot tell you how long it all took. I do know that it was less than one hour. And I cannot be sure that upon installation I had immediate Internet connectivity through my LAN, but I think I did.

During the installation, you have to pick a root password, which is required for system modifications, and then a username and password for you as an individual user.

Once Fedora is installed and you have Internet connectivity, a check of available updates will produce quite a large number -- again I didn't take notes. In fact, almost every time you boot Fedora it will check and tell you that there are updates available. Here is a crop of what such a



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(Fedora.....Continued from page 4)
screen looks like.

You can view the updates and then tell Fedora to download and install them. It is just like in Windows -- except a lot more frequent.

With the Firefox browser working, the next thing to do is to set up some email accounts in the Evolution email program. This process is similar to what you would do in Outlook or Outlook Express in Windows, and I had no trouble setting up my Road Runner and Netcom email accounts.

The next thing on my schedule was to check out the Open Office word processor, spreadsheet and presentation programs. I was familiar from these from my work in Ubuntu. They function much as their counterparts -- Word, Excel and PowerPoint -- do in Windows.

To test for the Open Office programs ability to also open these Microsoft-created documents, I needed to get a Word document, an Excel sheet and a PowerPoint presentation on the Fedora computer. Well, it was connected to the network through my router since it was accessing the Internet. But I, as yet, had not been able to see the Windows network from the Linux computer or see the Linux computer from the Windows computers. That was a problem to be tackled later. For the moment, to get some Windows files to work with, I simply emailed them to myself from my Windows computer, shut down the email program on the Windows machine so as not to inadvertently receive them there, and went to the Linux computer and did a send and receive with its email program.

Open Office opened all three documents fine. The only problem I saw was that, in some of the slides in the presentation program, the text was a little large and overwrote some images. I think this may have been caused by the

(Fedora.....Continued on page 6)

Internet Picture of the Month

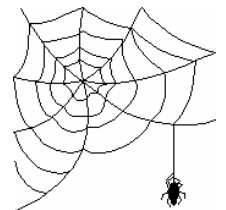


Rex, Mardi Gras 2008 New Orleans

February 5 was Mardi Gras this year in New Orleans. And since I am a former resident of that old city and attended many parades and always tried to get to the French Quarter on the big day, I like to check on the Internet to view some photos of the various parades and costumed people. One of the first places to check is the site of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. This photo of Rex, King of Carnival, came from that site's photo pages. The link to the site is <http://www.nola.com/>.

February's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Big Think - We Are What You Think	http://www.bigthink.com/
Bloomberg Radio	http://www.bloomberg.com/radio/
Mayflower History	http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/
Techcrunch - review of Internet stuff	http://www.techcrunch.com/



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.

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required font not being on the Linux computer. And that gives me something else to look into -- importing fonts from the Windows computer into the Linux computer, since I recall reading somewhere that Linux could use True Type fonts.

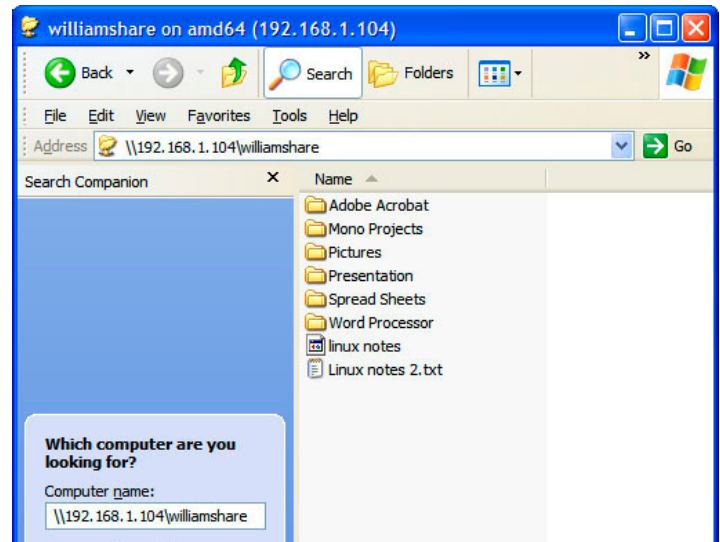
Now to the networking problem. To be able to see my main desktop computer, named AMD64, from the Linux computer, I had to manually set up a host setting in the Linux Networking dialog for AMD64, with the IP address of AMD64. That Fedora provided a Windows style dialog from which to do this, and I did not have to drop to a command prompt, which shows how far some versions (Fedora here) of Linux have come.

I also finally got the Windows computer to see the Linux computer by setting up a share on the Fedora computer in Samba (Unix networking protocol), with System | Administration | Samba named williamshare for the folder I wanted to share. Then I could see it in Windows when I searched for the share with \\192.168.1.104\williamshare. Next, my problem was to get a password and username to work since it asks for them. To do this, I needed to add my Windows username and password to those accepted by Samba, using the Samba server configuration and the samba user configuration, as explained in the Help at System | Administration | Samba. I had a little trouble with the user name when logging on from the Windows computer. I had set up a Samba user with Unix user name william, Windows user name William LaMartin and the Windows password. It turned out that I needed to log on from the Windows machine using the Unix user name of william and the Windows password for William LaMartin -- a bit confusing. Additionally, Samba needed to be enabled in the Firewall settings of Fedora.

The screen capture above is of my shared folder on the Fedora computer as seen from my Windows computer. I have only gone into the details of setting all this up since, if you should decide to install Fedora on a computer where there is a LAN, seeing and being seen by the Windows computers on the network will probably be one of your major problems.

I think most Windows users who install Linux on a computer really do not go much past simply browsing the Internet and using the Open Office programs. My goal is to see how much I can actually do with this Fedora setup. So what more have I done so far?

Since the Fedora setup allows you to include the Apache web server in its installation, I did that, and to get it to work was as simple as starting the httpd service in System |



Administration | Services. I could then place the files for web sites I had already created in the appropriate folder on the Fedora computer and view them with a browser from anywhere on my network -- or, if I had configured my router to allow such, from anywhere on the Internet.

I next downloaded the free MySQL database and installed it and started the MySQL service. After a bit of configuration of the database from the command prompt, I then put the same web pages I had created for the Ubuntu VPC setup on the Fedora computer so that a user from a web browser could view and insert new data into the database. Just the sort of things I do in the Windows server and web programming environment.

To enable the Firefox browser to be able to render some of the "fancy" pages on the web, I downloaded and installed the Adobe Flash and Acrobat plug-ins. I also downloaded Real Player, since obviously Windows Media Player is not available. What I couldn't find is something to Play Quick-Time movies.

Now, I do a lot of work with photos, and Linux has a pretty good image editor named GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program). While not as powerful as Photoshop, it will probably do more than most users need. I haven't done much with it but hope to investigate it more in the future. What really surprised me, though, was that you can open and edit Photoshop files with it. In the screen capture below, you have the GIMP toolbox on the left, a Photoshop file (.PSD) open in the middle and a GIMP Layers Dialog open on the right that displays the different layers in the image. I was quite impressed with GIMP's ability to do that.

The two printers shared from my main Windows computer,

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Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

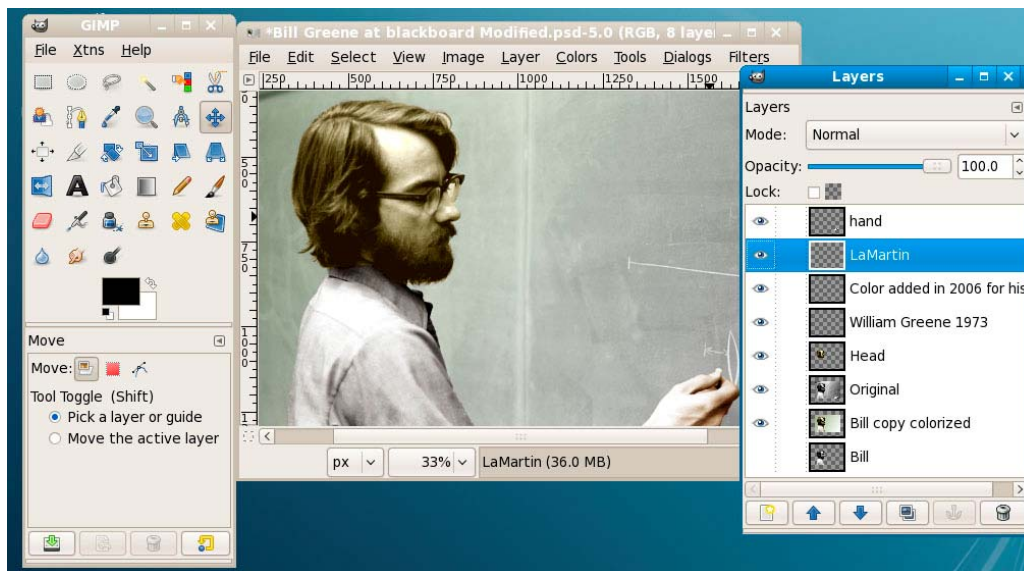
This SIG meets the **first Tuesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information, contact William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com, or Merle Nicholson at merle@merlenicholson.com.

Digital Imaging SIG—Cancelled until further notice

(Fedora.....Continued from page 6)

an Epson 2200 and an HP 4 Plus, were also easy to set up in Fedora using installed drivers for the Unix printing system copyrighted by Apple. The only thing that I have tried but failed at is getting the laptop's wireless card working with Fedora.

So, if you have an unused computer, give Fedora a try. It is free; all it will cost is your time. ◆



(Minutes.....Continued from page 3)

tioned that the member be sure of what he was doing before taking any action.

A member asked about a backup program. Bob recommended Acronis and cited Newegg as an economical source. He said that there are a variety of programs that will fit various needs. He also mentioned several programs that allow you to easily clone a computer drive. He identified Sync Toy as a free program from Microsoft. It is an easy to use, customizable application that helps you copy, move, rename, and delete files between

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.

folders and computers. Bob recommended using external hard drives for backup of files (as opposed to your entire hard drive); they are inexpensive and small so can easily be moved to external locations for storage. William suggested that storage on any media should not be left dormant, especially CD's and DVD's. Jim Purcell reminded members to consider CD's and DVD's from MAM-A Inc. as discussed in the July 2007 TPCUG Newsletter (http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2007/July2007/cd-dvd.htm).

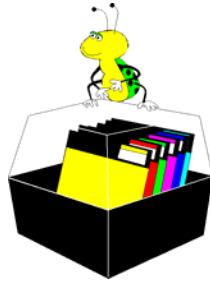
President John Witmer opened the business portion of our meeting at 7:40 pm with a discussion of the upcoming FACUG meeting. The meeting will be held in Zephyrhills on March 7th, 8th and 9th at the Zephyrhills High School. The early registration deadline is February 9th. All of the pertinent information can be found at <http://www.facug.org>.

John mentioned that next month's program would be a demonstration of TurboTax. He advised that the demonstration was not intended to provide tax advice but to show how the software can be used to prepare a return and find answers to your tax questions.

John introduced the speakers for the evening: Dave Aponte, Assistant Manager, and Ryan Pulliam, Tech Specialist, from the Brandon Office Depot store at 10057 E. Adamo Drive. Dave started with a summary of their services. He explained their ink refill program, which they began in 2007. They can only refill cartridges that have the print head attached to the cartridge, which excludes, among others, Epson and Brother. The pricing recently changed to

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First Class Mail

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

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\$10 per cartridge. The machine that they use requires 15 to 20 minutes to fill one cartridge. They usually have about 90 cartridges in their processing queue. William asked about their policy to carry or not to carry a printer cartridge. The only thing that they could identify was whether the store carried the printer.

Office Depot recently entered the HDTV market. They explained the requirements to get an HDTV configured and operating. On February 17, 2009, all analog TV broadcasts will cease. There was also a discussion of their rewards program and their product protection plans.

Bryan mentioned the trend in small laptops. He described the features of the new 8-inch laptop, which weighs about 2 lbs. and uses flash memory with no hard drive. The models have from 2 to 8 gigabytes of flash memory. Doug Mullis asked if there was anything new in wireless routers. Ryan said that the wireless N system is faster and more expensive but there is no advantage unless you convert your whole system. The question and answer session ended at approximately 8:30pm.

John thanked Dave and Ryan and asked the members to confirm that the TurboTax demo is something in which they are interested. The answer was yes. The meeting closed at approximately 8:45pm. ♦

