



August in Tampa

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

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Meeting

Digital Photography Combined with Programming

by William LaMartin

Wednesday, August 13, 2008
6:30 PM
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: William LaMartin will give a presentation tying together his interest in photography, mapping and computer programming. 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

Most of you probably have a digital camera, and a few have moved up to the SLR-type digital. I am also sure almost everyone has boxes of photos and the attendant negatives you have taken over your lifetime. What to do with these new digital photos and the old film ones?

In my presentation at this month's meeting, I am going to try to answer that question and along the way introduce you to a couple of new programs that are currently free from Microsoft. Of course, any discussion of digital photography has to also include Adobe's Photoshop. Then there are the programs from Microsoft that I have used for years that are not free. I have enough material on this to do several presentation, and the job for me is going to be winnowing it down to the allotted time and presenting it in a nontechnical way.

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**** OFFICERS ****

President: John Witmer (president@tpcug.org)	949-8007
Vice President : Kevan Sheridan (kevan@tpcug.org)	988-6480
Treasurer: Doug Mullis (dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)	234-9343
Secretary: Jim Purcell (Edward_J_P@MSN.com)	985-1676
Member at Large: Ron Weinberg (rswjbr@verizon.net)	960-4132

APPOINTED (Volunteers)

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

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

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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 July Meeting

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

Bob LaFave opened the meeting by starting the Windows SIG at 6:35 pm.

A member had a problem with his wireless connection. Bob went through all of the things that might possibly be causing his problem.

Another member had lost use of Office 2007. After a discussion of the conditions that she has encountered, Bob determined that the program had not been installed after she purchased the program and received the key to convert the trial version that came on her computer. He also mentioned that she might use the Microsoft Complete Uninstall routine if the normal installation procedure does not work after a normal uninstall. He recommends a complete uninstall of the trial version if you buy a new package that may or may not be the same version as the trial version.

Bob mentioned that the "Lost.FM" site was a good source to find music and artists. It has an easy to use and versatile search program that allows you to quickly find practically any artist or song. Bob also recommended "Total Recorder", a program that he has used for several years, that allows you to record practically anything that is playing on your computer.

There was an extended discussion about the provision of free antivirus programs by Verizon and Roadrunner compared to the antivirus programs available commercially from a variety of vendors.

John Witmer, our president, opened the business portion of the program at 7:20 pm. He mentioned that

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Vista – It’s Growing on Me

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

OK, I’m beginning to like this Vista thing. For the record, I have Vista 64 Business installed, tuned for performance. That turns off most of the gee-whiz graphics, including Aero, the taskbar thumbnails and the gadgets/widgets.

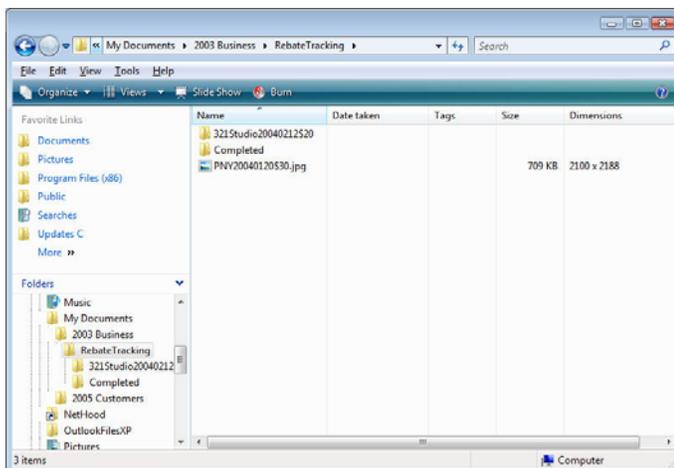
Last month I declared that I disliked the Start menu and Windows Explorer. I haven’t changed my mind about the Start Menu, but I have mitigated it some.

Windows Explorer

I have, however, changed my mind about Windows Explorer. I now think it’s an improvement over the traditional old tree structure that goes back to Windows 95 and Norton Commander for Windows 3.1.

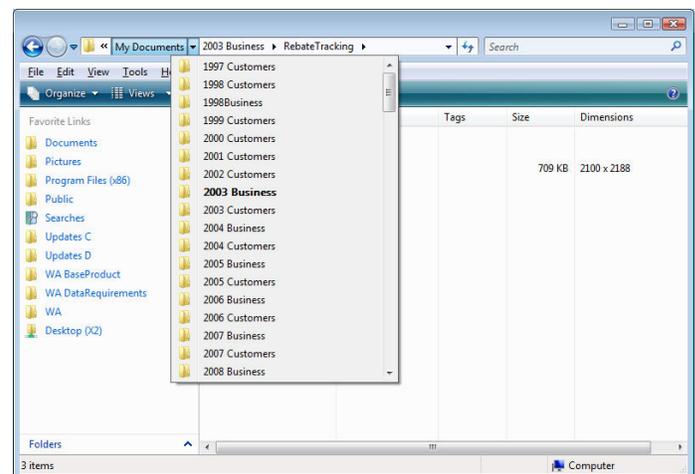
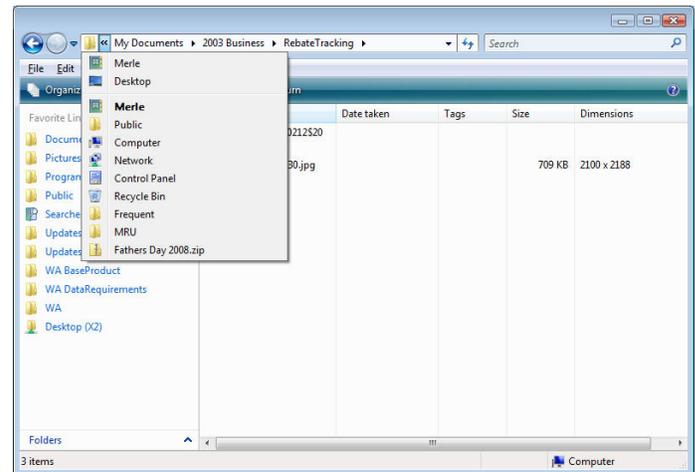
I may keep the Free Commander file manager (<http://www.FreeCommander.com> and no relation to the old Norton Commander), but I find I’m using it less as I gain experience with Vista’s Windows Explorer.

With Vista’s Windows Explorer, I was trying to make it fit into my old XP paradigm instead of looking at it as a new approach, starting with the Navigation Pane on the left, having two sections, “Favorite Links” and “Folders”.



Where I made my mistake: I was depending on

navigating the Folders and hating it – for good reason. So I’ve stopped using that and closed it so I have more room for Favorite Links, and I’m using the drop-down folder listings in the Address Bar to move around instead.



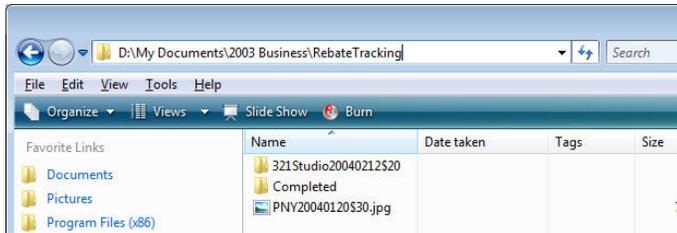
You can see the result above. I’ve added useful Favorite Links that satisfy my needs about half the time, and I then navigate using the drop-down folder lists from there. Unfortunately, you cannot eliminate the Folders section altogether, but at least you can shove it to the bottom.

For the times I need to copy and paste a path, I just click in the Address Bar and it automatically turns into something you can cut and paste. See below. Also, the in-context menu that you get when you right-click a file changes by holding down Shift. It adds a few items. One is “Copy As Path.” Right-click on a file holding shift down, select “Copy As

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Path,” and the entire pathname is sent to the clipboard.



The right-click+Shift also adds “Pin to Start Menu” and “Add to Quick Launch”. You get different in-context menus, depending on the file type. For picture files, “Rotate Clockwise” and “Rotate Counterclockwise” and “Set as Background” are on the menu.

There’s a Search Bar at the top right that filters, showing only the file names that fit the search. It looks inside all files for the text, the filename, tags and file properties. The search is limited to the current folder and all its subfolders. You can search only the filenames by typing “Name:” as a prefix as in Name:flower. There are a great many advanced queries available, such as date range or size range (size:>=50 <= 70). There’s too much to cover on this subject, but the built-in help is extensive and well-written. Once you’re used to it, it works very well, and is exceptionally fast.

There are a couple of other features, like the File Viewer, which I find pretty useless, since, as far as I can tell, it works only with Text files. Office files launch the full Office application anyway, as well as Adobe Reader for PDFs and Windows Photo Gallery for pictures.

In Detail view, there are other ways to organize the files in addition to sorting by columns. You can Sort By, Group By and Stack By. If you Stack by Modified Date, you get all the files stacked in time categories like “Today,” “Earlier This Week,” “Last Week,” “Earlier This Month,” “Earlier This Year” and “A Long Time Ago.” Each stack contains the files fitting that stack criteria.

Start Menu

We’ll cover this next month.

Other Subjects

Vista Screen fonts: Screen fonts are handled differently in Vista, apparently. They are crisper and easier to read than XP. ClearType is a part of the installed features. It was an add-in in XP. But even considering ClearType, Vista fonts are even better. It’s an unexpected bonus.

Networking and accessing network files

This is a subject for another article, but I’ve found attaching to shared folders on my network from Vista is very much quicker and more responsive to navigating. It’s pretty easy. And I have not found locating Vista shared folders from XP machines any different. If anything it’s faster. There were a lot of complaints prior to Service Pack 1. I experienced some frustrations myself. It seems to have gone away.

Windows Live One-Care

I have this on three machines, one XP, one Vista and my Vista 64. It’s antivirus, anti-spyware, an improved firewall, automatic backup, scheduled tune-up and phishing filter. It’s a bargain at \$50 for three machines, in my opinion. I started the subscription eleven months ago, and I’ll renew.

It’s the most unobtrusive of any antivirus software I’ve seen. If it wasn’t for my noisy hard drives I wouldn’t know it’s scanning. It detects that you have your machine in use and will slow down to make sure it doesn’t interfere. There’s a single interface program to pop up from the taskbar, and everything is located there in a well-organized manner. It will pop up and tell you when something isn’t done on time. Otherwise it leaves you alone.

More next month. ◆

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

Kevin Sheridan, our vice president, would give a presentation on the Trend Micro Internet Security programs shortly. John also reminded the members of the importance of going through our web site for all of their Amazon.com purchases. The purchase is handled the same for your purposes as it would be if you went directly to Amazon.com. The price is the same and you take full advantage of any special prices or discounts that Amazon is offering, and your user group receives a percentage of the sale price.

Kevin opened his presentation by explaining the role of firewalls and of antivirus programs. He discussed the differences among malware (malicious software), viruses and spyware. The stated purpose of his talk was to make sure that everybody has something on their machine to provide protection.

Trend Micro's web site has information on each type of coverage that they provide. The three programs that Kevin discussed are: Trend Micro Antivirus Plus 2008, Trend Micro Internet Security Suite 2008 and Trend Micro Internet Security Pro 2008. Kevin covered the features and pricing of each of these products. He demonstrated and gave numerous examples of how the features of each worked. He concentrated on the details and features of the Trend Micro Internet Security Suite 2008. He ended his presentation with a discussion of the added security provided by "OpenDNS", which will stop your computer from going to unidentified sites. Members were also advised that when they use unsecured or public wireless "hotspots" that they should turn off file- and printer-sharing options on their laptop.

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Internet Picture of the Month



Rat Trick

After photographing a squirrel and then a rat trying to steal the seed from my bird's cage while it was outside, I went looking for such photos on the Internet. This one is from kintired's photostream at <http://www.flickr.com>. The link to kintired's photostream is <http://www.flickr.com/photos/8879785@N07/>. Incidentally, there were 4,185 uploads to Flickr during the minute before I went there.

August's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)

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

Cuil –A new search engine

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

Replacements, Ltd.

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

GigaPan—view and share panoramas

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

Bankrate.com—Bank ratings

<http://www.bankrate.com/brm/safesound/select.asp?insttype=0>

NOLA Radio

http://www.nola.com/new_nolaradio/index.ssf?content.ssf/2008/07/satchmofest.xml



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.

Vista Experiences – Summary

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

If you'll remember from last month, I purchased an inexpensive middle-of-the-road notebook with Vista Home Premium and increased the memory to 2.5GB. Then, after trying out Vista 32 Business (while also using XP) on my main fast desktop computer, I finally settled on a Vista 64 SP1 Business version.

On both Vista systems, I tuned the system for performance, disabling all of the new graphics capabilities.

I haven't experienced any of the "bad stuff" that the press is writing about. The system I built for myself had no real driver issues. In fact, except for the not-surprising non-support of my old scanner and having to visit Canon for a printer driver for a 2003 inkjet, Vista 64 SP1 supplied all of the drivers needed off the installation DVD, including ones for a USB headset, a drive controller card, a Bluetooth Dongle and my old PDA.

On the purchased notebook, since it was delivered with Vista installed, it had no problems for me to inherit. I did remove quite a lot of HP CrapWare, almost none of which was actively bad, just slowing the computer down. It did have WildTangent, which, depending on your point of view, is malware in the wrong hands.

I found Vista networking very easy. I can share folders to other Vista and non-Vista computers and vice-versa. It works as well or better than XP. It's certainly more responsive.

Setup for Mail and Internet is routine; no real difference from XP. All my data is on a separate hard drive, so I didn't have to move much from my XP drive to Vista 64.

I've had no "Blue Screen" events or any unexplained program failures. The system is very "tunable", allowing me to turn off a lot of annoying (to me) graphics. But I was able to leave a few features that I enjoy, like ClearType, "smooth edges of screen fonts" and "use

visual styles."

Aside from my personal dislike of Start Menu and Windows Explorer, I can find nothing much to fault. I do find file copying from one location to another using Windows Explorer disappointingly slow, but that's not a real impact on me. The automatic backups I do to a networked PC are very fast, as is Acronis 11.0.

You'll need to upgrade to Acronis 11 for Vista support. A very surprising amount of 32-bit software all runs transparently. I did obtain a couple of replacement programs for Vista 64, but all were free anyway. So far, except for the Acronis 11 upgrade, I've not spent any money for software.

One peculiar thing is that Vista 64 has two IE 7 browsers, one is 32 bit and the other 64. Of course, no ActiveX or any other browser add-in will work on the 64-bit version, even Adobe Reader. I haven't yet found out how I get to one or the other.

I find the system very fast, fairly quick to load (58 sec after POST) and to shut down (28 sec). Applications like MS Office, IE 7, FTP, Acronis and Delorme Street Atlas all load pretty much instantly, somewhat faster than XP. I attribute this to a large amount of installed memory and Vista SuperFetch. I haven't timed the notebook, but I do know it's acceptable. Naturally, I set my expectations low when it comes to an inexpensive notebook.

I do have a wish list for Vista, but it's not large. I would like to see file copying improved. I would like some alternative desktop themes. Mainly I'd like to get rid of the black Start Bar, and I'd prefer the cascading Start menu of XP. The "classic" desktop theme should not be Windows 3.1. The Vista file Dialog box has some interesting features, and there's more there than meets the eye, but I think it operates on a pretty superficial level, aimed at novices. I'd pay money – today – for an improved desktop theme that does not call for replacing a DLL with one from XP.



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.

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

The programs that I will feature are

- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Illustrator (only a brief mention)\
- Microsoft Pro Photo Tools (free)
- Microsoft Deep Zoom Composer (free)
- Microsoft Visual Studio 2008
- Microsoft Access

Somewhat of a strange collection, you might think. What do Microsoft Access and Microsoft Visual Studio have to do with photography? The Access answer is easy: I created an Access database to record the file name, date, location, etc. of each of the images I have scanned in from either a negative or slide. I am probably halfway through scanning in all my negatives and slides. I have scanned almost all of the oldest ones (that is important since they are losing quality). That amounts to 8,585 scans; however, of that total, I have only catalogued 5,137 in Access.

Then there are all the digital photos: 3,890 taken with my first digital, the Canon G1; 6,482 taken with my Nikon D100 digital SLR; and 2,315 taken with my newer Nikon, the D200 digital SLR. With the digital files, I can use either Photoshop or Microsoft Pro Photo Tools to add a description and location to the EXIF information in the header of the file. And I have been doing this for my more recent photos. With Pro Photo Tools, if you can find the location on a Virtual Earth map, then you can include the latitude and longitude of the location in the image file simply by clicking on the map at the location.

But what to do with this information in the header of

the image file? There are programs that let you view it, Photoshop being one, but how can you make use of it? That is where the programming comes in. I have written various VB.Net programs to extract this EXIF data from the image files so as to retrieve the title and description (which I put there, usually with Photoshop), the date (which the camera put there) and the latitude and longitude (which I put there using Pro Photo Tools). I can then either add this information to my Access database of photographs or I can use it to create pushpins on a Virtual Earth map, where for each pin there is an associated photo.

I have touched on these ideas before in the newsletter. In the presentation, I am going to go a step further and show you (leaving out some detail) how this is done. You will be able to do the geo-tagging of your photos, that is adding latitude and longitude with the free Pro Photo Tools using no skill other than being able to find on a map where you took a photo. You can also use this program to add a title, description and much more. So, unless you use some renegade program (one that destroys the EXIF header info) to edit the image files in the future, all that information will stay with the file indefinitely.

In closing, I believe some thought should be given to how you preserve your images. In theory, digital files should last forever. However, that does not take into consideration failing hard drives, lightning strikes, gamma rays and people who don't care.

You can protect your files against failing hard drives by saving copies of the image files to more than one hard drive. You can protect against lightening by making sure the other hard drive is an external one and

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



First Class Mail

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

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The raffle conducted at the end of the meeting earned \$24 for the group. Jenny Lind Olin and Jeanne Gillespie each won software, and Merle Nicholson and Ed Cohen each won a T-Shirt.

The meeting ended at approximately 8:35 pm. ◆



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

that it is kept totally unplugged from anything when not in use. Of course, you can also save copies to CDs and DVDs. As to the gamma rays, I don't know about that, but we are bombarded with them all the time and we are still alive.

The people who don't care are a harder problem. It is quite possible that when you pass from this earth, your descendants will simply throw everything, including your 10,000 digital photos, in the trash. However, based on my experience with my father-in-law's photos, including those from his father, it is more likely that someone will keep, treasure and make use of at least part of your collection. ◆

