



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



Vol. 22 No. 6

June 2009

June in Tampa

## Meeting

### MandMCards Creating Cards Online to send by mail

by

Marty Burgess

Wednesday June 10, 2009

6:30 PM

Pepin Distributing Co.  
4121 N 50th Street  
Tampa, Florida

**Meeting Preview:** MandMCards, a web-based program where you can choose from over 15,000 cards or designs and create your own Picture Plus cards will be presented by Marty Burgess. Bob LaFave will also conduct the Windows SIG at the beginning of the meeting as usual.

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## Editor's Comments

*By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group  
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The TPCUG has been around about 24 years, having started sometime in 1984. Since I knew that I would be short on material for this month, I checked out the June 1989 newsletter to see what I might reproduce as a bit of history. Unfortunately the minutes for that month were quite short, so I am going to have to write more than I wish. I am appreciative, however, for Merle's and Jim's contributions; otherwise, there would be even more space to be filled. The 20-year-old minutes are on page 7.

Speaking of old newsletters, may I remind you that there are several years of them at the web site in Acrobat format starting in 1988. A little reading of them will show you how far computing has come.

This month I will describe a slide show program and a panorama viewer program that I have written, which I hope you will find interesting. ♦

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**July Meeting: To be announced**

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**Minutes of the May Meeting**

*By Jim Purcell, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group*  
[Edward\\_J\\_P@MSN.com](mailto:Edward_J_P@MSN.com)

The meeting began late, at approximately 7:45 PM, due to a heavy rainstorm. Bob LaFave opened the SIG meeting with a discussion of a member's email problem. This led to other email problems that members were having and how problems are affected by the type of email account that is being used. The Windows SIG ended at approximately 8:00 PM.

Doug Mullis, our treasurer, commented on the importance of paying dues on time. A review at the last board meeting revealed that there are about 15 members whose dues are outstanding. John Witmer, our president, discussed the door prize procedures that the board recommended at the May board meeting. There will be two groups of prizes; one group will consist of the better prizes, from which the grand prize winner can select his prize; the unselected items will be available the following month, along with any new things of value that we receive. The other winners that evening can select from a group of lesser prizes in group two. John will provide the details in the newsletter or in an email, as well as a list of items in each group. John introduced Patrick Courtney of the Greater Tampa Bay PC User Group, Inc., and advised that Patrick had donated the grand prize for the night's raffle, a 1,200,000 clip arts software program.

Patrick began his presentation on Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software at approximately 8:05 PM. He started by defining OCR as the transformation of alphabetic and numerical images into editable text. There are many versions of OCR software available, some of which are free. One version, called Instant OCR, advertises that you can upload an image and they will instantly download an editable text document. He pointed out the numerous challenges to OCR software that are posed by the enormous number of fonts that are available and the minor differences in many of the characters in some of these fonts. The software overcomes some of these difficulties by actually learning from the mistakes that it makes in recognizing these minor differences. He demonstrated the actual use of the software and showed how the features can be used to get the best translation of the images to editable text. Patrick also demonstrated how to transform a JPEG image into a text document.

*Minutes .....Continued on page 8*

## Virus encounter – Sunbelt Software Vipre

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

This month I had an interesting virus experience, fortunately not on any of my own computers. This was an older Dell desktop machine, and the owner had given up trying to cope with it. It had a frequent popup virus alert. The home page on the browser looked to me like it had a highjacker on it. The owner was trying to remove the virus the anti-virus software was reporting, which, as far as I can tell, did not even exist on the computer.

The virus was the anti-virus software! I found several descriptions calling it a “Rogue Security Program.” It was named “Personal Antivirus,” and it would constantly pop up and report a virus. It really looked legitimate – the user interface looked very much like AVG – the colors appeared identical and the icons and text looked very convincing. Looking in the Add/Remove Programs produced nothing. Nosing around in the program just told me two things: One was there wasn’t a way to uninstall it, and, two, it was apparent that it intended to make trouble until the user purchased it. So it was definitely a scam for money.

Given all that, it was easy to track down on the Internet. There was a removal program available that I found mentioned on several forums. I failed to find

the program in the first couple of locations, and, when I finally found it, I had lost my enthusiasm for it. I certainly did not want to infect one of my own with a virus, and the computer I was trying to fix wasn’t in any shape for downloading anything. So I looked at a few other web sites; Symantec had a reference to it as did another site – AVG, I think. The problem was that even though the rogue software was mentioned, nothing there would tell me that their free or trial download antivirus would actually fix the problem. Until I looked at Sunbelt Software’s Vipre antivirus. Sunbelt had all the information I needed to assure me that the trial download would remove it. I downloaded the trial, installed it on the bad machine, got the virus updates and had it cleaned up in a half hour. In addition to removing the “Personal Antivirus,” it also found a couple of trojans and cleaned up the browser hijacker.

I think that someone in that household responded to a fake virus warning, thinking that it was legitimate, and clicked on it. So be warned.

I did learn some things about Sunbelt Software Vipre in the process. Members may recall that, some years ago, a couple of Sunbelt employees gave a very good talk at one of our regular meetings. They’re headquartered in Clearwater. I did buy one of their products not too long ago and since moved on to something else. The Vipre antivirus/antispyware is a fairly new product. Its main claim is its “lightweight” footprint, meaning that it uses a reduced amount of resources, memory and CPU. Their website indicates that it’s small enough to make it a good choice for netbooks.

Netbooks are especially constrained in memory and CPU size, and many have very small storage using even 4G solid-state drives. I just installed Vipre on another client’s older notebook. Even though it has a small Pentium M processor and 512MB memory, the first scan didn’t kill the note-

The screenshot shows the Sunbelt Malware Research Labs website. The header includes the Sunbelt logo and navigation links: Home, Advisories, Malware Research, iScope, Research Toolbox, Media, and About Us. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area is titled "PersonalAntivirus Information and Removal." and includes a copyright notice: "Copyright © 2009 Sunbelt Software. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited." Below this is a table with the following information:

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Threat Name  | PersonalAntivirus  |
| Summary      | PersonalAntivirus is a purported anti-spyware application to scan for and remove spyware from users' computers.  |
| Category     | <a href="#">Rogue Security Program</a>   |
| Level        | High   |
| Advice       | Remove   |
| Description  | PersonalAntivirus may be downloaded and installed through exploits or under dubious circumstances without user consent. PersonalAntivirus hijacks the user's desktop and typically displays exaggerated or false claims of spyware found to frighten the user into paying for the program. |
| Release Date | Mar 19 2009  |
| Last Updated | Apr 30 2009  |
| File Traces  | <a href="#">Show Traces - (Click to Expand)</a>  |

On the left side of the screenshot, there is a "Sunbelt Software" sidebar with a "Sunbelt Blog" section containing links like "My favorite competitor" and "Britain's campaign to generate fals...". Below the blog is a "Current Definitions" section listing software like "VIPRE™ Antivirus + Antispyware 3.1" with their definitions and dates.

## Slide Shows and Panoramas

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group  
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### A Random Slide Show

In the past I have mentioned the Burgert Collection of photographs in the Tampa-Hillsborough County Library. It is quite a collection from the late 1890s into the 1960s. At present there are over 14,000 of them digitized and viewable online. My project over the years has been updating my database of the photo information as they added images. The original reason for this was to be able to do searches for images with my software when all the library offered was a Telnet connection on which to do this. The days of the Telnet connection are long gone, but I have continued to update the database every few years as they added more images.

You can go to <http://www.lamartin.com/burgert/> at my site and do a couple different types of searches of these old Tampa photos. I find these searches more convenient than using the library's online catalog, and apparently others like to use them, too, since I get emails about the page.

I have now added a slide show to the site that picks an image at random from the 14,000 plus images and displays it along with its description. So, if you have nothing better to do, you may sit and view randomly displayed images of Tampa over a 60-plus-years span. I find the older images the most interesting.

The slide show can be accessed from the link above, or you can access it directly at <http://www.lamartin.com/burgert/SlideShow/>.

The show was created using Microsoft Visual studio 2008, along with Microsoft Expression Blend 2, and posted to the web with Microsoft Expression Web 2. The slide show is a Silverlight application, Microsoft's answer to Adobe Flash.

The visual aspects of the page on which the show is displayed are created in Blend. The logic and pro-

gramming are done in Visual Studio. In theory, all the work done in Blend could also be done in Visual Studio. But it is much easier done in Blend.

The data about the photos is stored in an xml database at the site--specifically, the description and notes for each image and, importantly, the URL to the image file on the server at the library. So all these images are being pulled from the library site--not my web site server--just like they would be if you were viewing them at the library site with your browser.

### Panoramas

To display a panorama you need two things. First, you need a photograph that can be viewed as a panorama, and, second, you need a program that will display it for you in a manner that simulates viewing the scene in 360 degrees.

I first made a few panoramas after purchasing a couple of pieces of software from one of our presenters quite a few years back. As I recall, one piece of software was used to create the image that was the result of stitching together the individual images that made up the panorama. The other piece of software was the Java Script viewer to be put on a web page to display the panorama. These first attempts can be viewed at [http://www.lamartin.com/virtual\\_tours/virtual.htm](http://www.lamartin.com/virtual_tours/virtual.htm). The software was PhotoVista Virtual Tour Maker from iSeeMedia and was mentioned in the newsletter in 2003, [http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl\\_2003/May2003/comments.htm](http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2003/May2003/comments.htm). So that was six years ago.

Well, a lot has happened since 2003. I now have Adobe Photoshop CS4, which will make a panorama for you from a collection of images you have taken as you pan the camera; the images should have about a 40% overlap. Of course, it is best to use a tripod-mounted camera.

The panoramas I am interested in at present are the 360-degree ones. They are a bit more difficult than the ones that don't make a full circle in that, after Photoshop or whatever stitching software you use to assemble the panorama is finished, you are left with cropping the image so that one end stops exactly

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where the other end ends.

At the Adobe site, in the comparison of Photoshop CS4 and Photoshop CS4 Extended (I bet you didn't even know there was such a thing as Photoshop extended), the claim is that they both do 360-degree panoramas. But this just isn't the case, as I had pretty much decided for myself and which was confirmed in the Photoshop forum at Adobe.

To make a 360-degree panorama, I take my Nikon 200D digital camera with its 18 mm x 200 mm zoom lens and mount it on a tripod in a vertical position. I make sure the tripod is level with all its fittings tight--except the one that allows the camera to rotate around 360 degrees. Using a cable shutter-release also makes life easier but certainly isn't necessary. It is also helpful when setting up to try to minimize having to shoot directly into the sun during the rotation. I prefer to use a zoom of closer to 50 mm if possible, but often, to get the view I want, I am forced to use something closer to 24 mm or 18 mm. This was certainly true for the backyard panorama and the house construction panorama that I will mention later.

Once set up, all you need to do is take a photo, rotate the camera, take another photo, etc., until you have gone a bit more than a complete revolution, overlapping each successive photo about 40%. I found that this will involve snapping 22 to 28 photos.

The next step is to download the images to your com-

Slide Shows .....Continued on page 6

## Internet Picture of the Month

The screenshot shows the top of the Wall Street Journal website. The main header reads "THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. | QUOTE NOT FOUND". Below this is a navigation bar with links for "U.S. Edition", "Today's Paper", "Video", "Columns", "Blogs", "Topics", "Jobs", "Home", "World", "U.S.", "Business", "Markets", "Tech", and "Personal". A secondary navigation bar includes "Finance", "Deals", "Heard on the Street", "Madoff Fraud Case", and "Market". There are two promotional banners: "The Technical Indicator" and "ETF Trader". Below these is a "COMPANY RESEARCH" section. On the left, there are links for "Screeners", "ETF Screener", "Browse ETFs", "Mutual Fund Screener", and "Mutual Fund Scorecards". On the right, a "QUOTE NOT FOUND" message states: "GM does not match any company symbol. Please try again below. For assistance, contact us." Below this is a "Quotes and Research" section with the text: "Get quotes and detailed information on companies listed on major stock exchanges; fund quotes are updated once a day." At the bottom left of the screenshot, there is a "MARKETS DATA CENTER" section with a "PORTFOLIO" link.

**GM does not match any company symbol**

From the Wall Street Journal's site, <http://www.online.wsj.com>, June 2, 2009. Searching for a quote on GM produced the above screen capture. Once the largest corporation in the world, GM filed bankruptcy papers June 1, 2009 and was then delisted by the New York Stock Exchange and will be removed from the Dow Jones Industrial Average on June 6.

### June's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)           | <a href="http://www.tpcug.org/">http://www.tpcug.org/</a>                   |
| The Story of Stuff                         | <a href="http://storyofstuff.com/">http://storyofstuff.com/</a>             |
| TRUECAR - The Authority on New Car Pricing | <a href="http://truecar.com/release/">http://truecar.com/release/</a>       |
| WolframAlpha - Questions or Calculations   | <a href="http://www81.wolframalpha.com/">http://www81.wolframalpha.com/</a> |
| Bing - Microsoft's revised search          | <a href="http://www.bing.com/">http://www.bing.com/</a>                     |
| Web Design Library - Free tutorials        | <a href="http://www.webdesign.org/">http://www.webdesign.org/</a>           |

*Slide Shows.....Continued from page 5*

puter and setup Photoshop to turn the collection into a panorama. There are several different choices available in Photoshop CS4 for this (with older versions, you have different choices). I got the best results using the cylindrical projection--although the recommended one for 360-degree panoramas is spherical.

Warning--do not try to make a panorama out of 25 full-size images taken with a Nikon D200. These images are about 6 or 7 MB each as jpegs, and you will be at it for a very long time. Besides you don't want to put such a large file on the Internet. I did this once, and the resulting image was several hundred megabytes, I think. What you want to do is to first downsize each of the images to something like 400 x 600. Then, when you have Photoshop "photomerge" the images into a panorama, things will go fairly rapidly.

The top image below is Photoshop's created panorama. Notice the differences between it and the image below that has been taken one step further. The bottom

the way the roads run. But when viewed in the panorama viewer, you will only see a small portion at a time, and the effect will be what is desired.

You can view several panoramas I recently created by the above method at <http://www.lamartin.com/HP-Panoramas>. The bottom image on this page is used in the second panorama. One person has informed me that he had to change his browser security setting before the show could be run.

### The Panorama Viewer

More interesting to me than creating the images for the panorama was creating the viewer. I had thought about such a piece of software over the years, and I just didn't see any easy way to do it--until Silverlight. Making an image scroll across the screen is not the problem. Making it scroll so that it appears to never end is.

The basic idea is to have three copies of the image



image has been cropped so that the curved edges at the top and bottom produced by the merging are removed. Furthermore, it has been cropped so that the end of the right edge is the beginning of the left edge. I realize that may be hard to see since, for the newsletter page, the images need to be quite small considering that this is a panorama.

The image, perhaps, looks a bit strange, especially in

lined up horizontally, with one in the middle and the other two on either side positioned the appropriate distance from the middle and overlapping the middle one a bit but underneath it. You also restrict what the viewer can see to, say, 500 pixels in the center of the viewer screen.

If we start with the middle image moving to the right, at some point the left image will start following it so

## Special Interest Groups

### Visual Basic .Net SIG (and sometimes Access SIG)

This SIG meets the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM. For information, contact William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

## Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Bob LaFave moderates the discussion.

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*Slide Shows.....Continued from page 6*

that there is no break in what is seen. Then when the images have gone what amounts to one full image, everything is reset so that we are really starting over, but, to the person viewing, it appears that we are just continuing to rotate around. Going the opposite way, the right image would start moving at the appropriate time so as to follow the middle one and keep things looking continuous.

The viewer is basically finished. All I need to do now is make it look a little more polished and possibly allow for panning the image up or down, along with a possible zoom.

I think the main problem remaining is figuring out how to take better photos. I still don't know what causes some shows at the link, like the back yard one, to have distorted sections while other shows have no distortion. It is obviously caused by the stitching. But possibly this can be mitigated by changing the focal length at which the photos are taken. The back yard one was the first one I did. Possibly I could retake the images and improve the result.

When I started computer programming many years back, I certainly never dreamed that it would tie in so strongly in later years with my interest in photography.

I wish I had time to research some free software to do this sort of stitching so that I could have included it in this article. But I am lucky to even get the newsletter out (the panoramas were photographed today with the exception of the back yard). I know such software comes with many of the digital cameras. Also, there are possibly free panorama viewers to be had on the web. But, again, time is short; the newsletter should have been printed yesterday. ◆

## 20 Years Ago in Bits of Blue

Minutes from the June 1989 newsletter

### MAY MINUTES

By Russ Merritt

The planned presentation by Steve Speairs was delayed for another session due to lack of the overhead projector. A general discussion about various aspects of computers was led by Harvey Bruno.

The beginning DOS session by Bill Fuller did take place, using an easel and paper pad to describe the events to be expected when copying files. Another beginner's session will be given next month.

Bill Fuller also announced an apparent bug in WordPerfect 5.0. If a space is included in the naming of a file, the document will be saved but cannot be retrieved or renamed using WordPerfect. The solution is to use a file manager program or DOS to rename the file. If DOS is used, the question mark needs to be inserted in place of the space.

EXAMPLE: If the file name is MY FILE.DOC, the DOS rename command will be REN MY?FILE.DOC MY\_FILE.DOC, and now the file can be retrieved in WordPerfect. This was confirmed by your secretary. When I called WordPerfect, they said this was corrected in the version issued as of April 12, 1989.

**Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.**

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**First Class Mail**

*Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

*Virus.....Continued from page 3*

book. There is a setting available to scan slower and take longer. I haven't tried that yet. I am going to be replacing a couple of my antivirus products soon and I intend to go back to Sunbelt.

Here's the final thought: The free 15-day trial version will clean malware from your computer without asking for a dime. That's very generous.

Vipre - \$29.95 <http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com> ◆



*Minutes.....Continued from page 2*

He mentioned that his version of OCR had problems with script fonts because there is no break between the letters. Screen-capture software images can also be used by OCR software to produce a text document. He ended the presentation with a discussion of the many types of OCR software that are available and pointed out that some, especially those with specialized applications, are quite expensive.

The winners in the raffle were: John Waldon, who won the 1,200,000 Clip Art Program; Jim Purcell, Richard Brooks and Dave Gillespie, who all won T Shirts.

The meeting ended at approximately 9:15 PM. ◆

