Bits of Blue

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Meeting

A Little Computing History
by
William LaMartin

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

6:30 PM

Pepin Distributing Co.
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Tampa, Florida

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: William LaMartin will lead a presentation on the past two decades of personal computing as seen through our club's newsletters. As usual, Bob LaFave will conduct the Windows SIG for the first half-hour of the meeting.

Editor's Comments

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

This month I am scheduled to do the presentation, and I thought a retrospective of the past 20 plus years of our user group and the PC industry from the perspective of our collection of newsletters would be of interest. I also hope to include some of our long-time members in the presentation and, if possible, have people who devoted a lot of time to the group but no longer attend meetings attend just this one to help us remember.

Our club was founded in 1984 as the Tampa IBM PC Users Group, which was later changed to the Tampa PC Users Group since there were then a lot more personal computers than just those made by IBM. The first formal newsletter, as best I can tell, was published in January of 1988. The earliest copy we have is from February 1988, where there is a misprint identifying it as Volume II, Issue 2. The volume number was corrected in subsequent months.

I have started going through the old newsletters looking for

July Meeting: Creating a Website for a Wordpress Platform

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WE CERTAINLY HOPE YOU WILL

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Minutes of the May Meeting

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

The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) normally opens our monthly meeting. The meeting began as usual at 6:30 PM. The SIG is devoted to a discussion of all aspects of the Windows operating systems and of computer-related subjects in general. The SIG moderator, Bob LaFave, introduces new or little-known products and technological developments for discussion by the group. He accepts questions and requests for help in solving problems from attendees. Bob discussed several items: MSI i-Speeder, a simple network information tool; IE-9 installation; Microsoft Knowledge Base; and Microsoft Fix-it. He touched briefly on SlimDrivers, a product to scan your PC for missing, broken or out-of-date drivers.

This month's SIG concluded at 7:00 PM. TPCUG President John Witmer mentioned the FACUG Cruise, a reminder of membership dues and upcoming programs and asked for suggestions.

Our speaker this month was long-time member and current TPCUG Vice President, Kevan Sheridan. His topic was "Google Applications." Kevan is an experienced Google Docs and Google Applications user, having implemented "cloud computing" and cloud-shared documentation at his workplace.

Kevan gave a quick demo on many things Google – as much as time would allow. He touched on email, calendars, documents and slideshow presentations. In Calendar, tabs, tasks, sign in and out of accounts. Google Apps for Business ($50/user/year), Google Apps Free and Enterprise Resource Planning. He touched briefly on creating a Google personal website.

Kevan gave a very enthusiastic and dynamic presentation that barely covered the many features of Google Applications. It was interesting and made the audience want more detail. The presentation concluded at 8:40 PM. ◆

ION Audio U Record USB Music Archive System

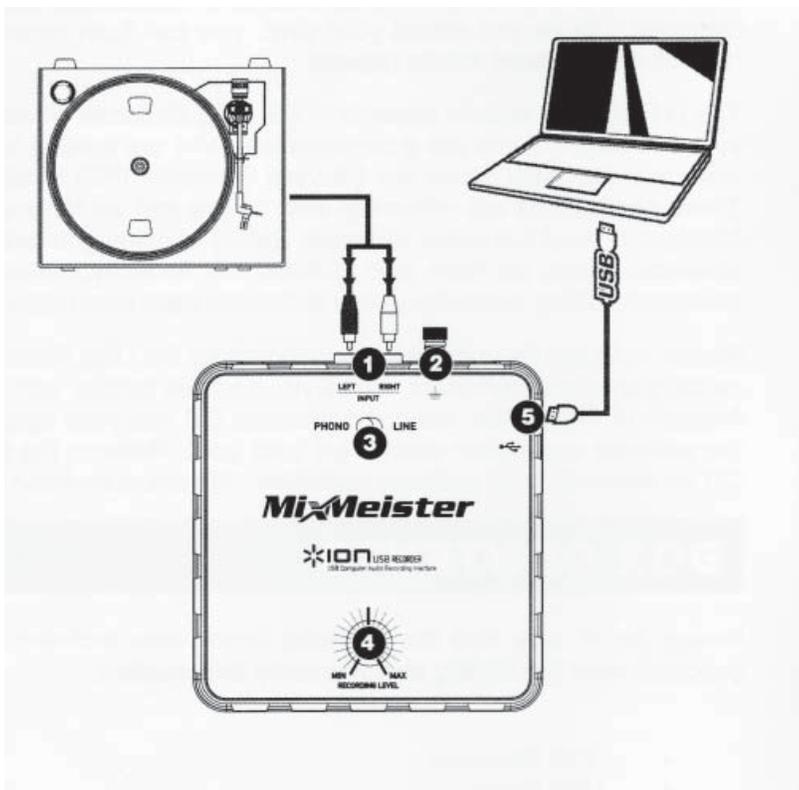*By Jim Purcell, Tampa PC Users Group*
Edward_J_P@MSN.com

I have a large collection of records that dates back to the late 1940s. They consist mostly of "Big Band," Jazz, Country Western and Classical, with a sprinkling of other stuff that was popular from about 1940 forward. I have been thinking for some time about digitizing some of my favorites and some that might make good background music for my slide shows. I have a high quality turntable that is still in good condition, but I had heard several discussions about USB turntables and their ease of use so I took a look on Google. Much to my surprise, the first link at the top of the page was: "Don't Buy A USB Turntable - 8 Reasons against USB at dak.com. Use your PC Soundcard. Your turntable or ours." It opened with a beautiful ad and an audio that came on immediately explaining all of the many features, including the ability to copy from tape recorders and CD players. I was impressed and ready to order since the price ($77) was less than I had expected to pay for just the USB turntable. Thankfully, I realized that I didn't

understand most of the miraculous things that could be accomplished by the Mixer Interface System, so I asked Merle Nicholson to look at it. In summary, he thought that the price was too high and that the system fixed some things that did not need fixing. If you buy their turntable, the price of the package is $237. He forwarded some options that he believed would do the job. I decided to purchase one of his recommendations, the ION Audio U Record USB Music Archive System, that costs just $40 and has the following features: http://www.ionaudio.com/products/details/u-record

● **Phono/line input records from a turntable, tape deck or CD player** As you can see from the illustration on the left, the recorder is simple to hookup and can accommodate practically all turntables, tape decks and CD players. You plug the RCA output plugs into the clearly-marked input RCA plugs on the recorder (1). If your turntable or tape deck has a ground wire, you attach it to the ground connection on the recorder (2). The Phono/Line switch (3) is set, depending on the output signal from your turntable or tape deck. Most old turntables output a weak signal known as a Phono-level, which needs to be amplified in order to be heard. In this case you set the toggle to "Phono." If your device outputs an audible signal, you toggle to "Line." The Recording Level Knob (4) is used to adjust the volume of the recording so that the audio level meters in the recording application screen shown below never hit the red. The "Plug and play USB connection" (5) gives you a quick connection with no drivers required

● **EZ Vinyl Converter software (PC) and EZ Audio Converter software (MAC)** I'll discuss only the PC version, but both versions are on the disc that is included. The software was easily and quickly installed. You are instructed to install "iTunes" before you start recording. The software will not work without iTunes. This worried me at first, but so far it has worked exceptionally well. You can move quickly and conveniently between iTunes and Windows. While installing iTunes, I got a pop-up recommending that I use the 64-bit version, and it furnished me the link, which installed the
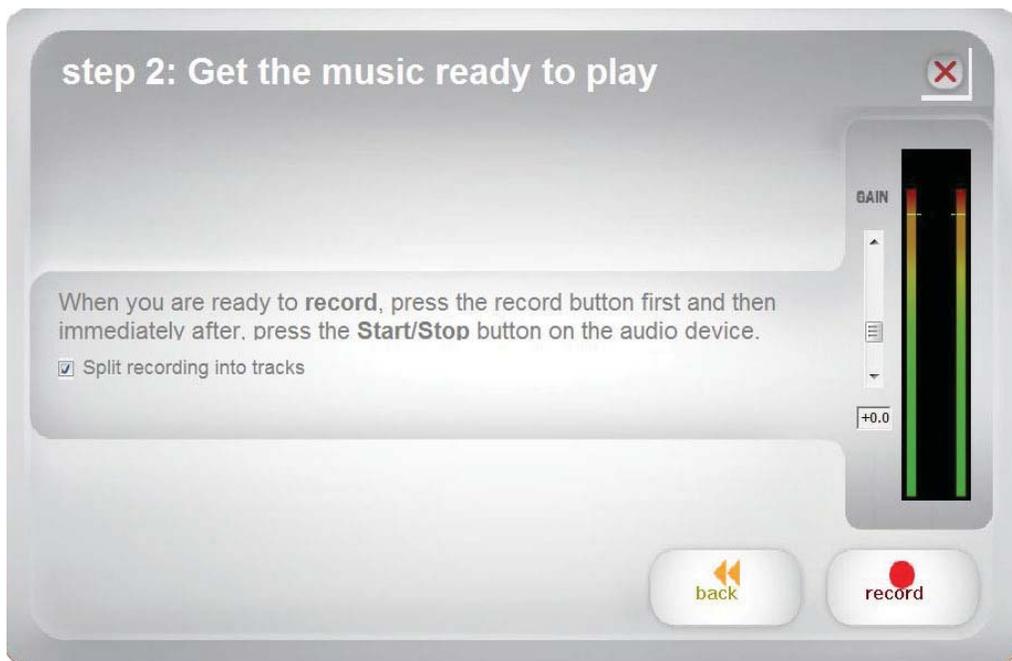
program without a problem. I found that the iTunes software makes it simple to burn music and MP3 CD's.

● **Audacity software records, edits and corrects** I haven't used the Audacity software, a freeware editor that is included on the installation disk. Merle indicated that he has used it for quite awhile, and he recommends it highly. There are many editors that are available, many of which are freeware, if you need more features.

As I mentioned, I've only used the system for a short time, but I have been impressed with the simplicity and convenience of recording from a turntable and a reel-to-reel tape deck. The ability to record from a tape deck has been especially rewarding. My family was stationed in Germany from 1961 – 1965. We had four children, aged from three to eleven, and two sets of grandparents back in Florida. The cost of long-distance calls between Germany and Mulberry was enough to make it impractical to use with any frequency. Both sets of grandparents bought small reel-to-reel tape recorders. The three-inch reels came in a mailing box, so we exchanged them frequently, and I have a pile of these tapes. The first that I recorded was Christmas of 1964 in Wiesbaden, and it came through crystal clear. That alone has been worth the price of the unit.

◆

things of interest for the presentation. For 1988, there are two newsletters; 1989 has eight; and in 1990 there are 10. After that, there is pretty much one for every month with a few missing issues. All the newsletters from 1988 through November of 1995 had to be scanned. Subsequent ones were created as Acrobat documents from the originating programs, either Word, Publisher or InDesign. Obviously the scanned ones had to have OCR preformed on them to make them searchable. This allowed me to create an index in Acrobat that lets one search the entire collection of 262 newsletters for words or phrases.

As examples of using the index for searching, searches for the words below produced the results shown with the year indicating the earliest year of mention. With each search, you also get a list of newsletters containing the searched for word or phrase and the ability to click on the link and go to the location in the newsletter.

Pentium: 80 documents, 203 instances; 1992
OS/2: 111 documents, 679 instances; 1988
Windows: 250 documents, 5801 instances; 1989
Apple: 64 documents, 159 instances: 1989
IBM: 165 documents, 976 instances; 1988
Microsoft: 246 documents, 3148 instances; 1989

The early newsletters came mostly from a collection of Ed Buzza with the help of a collection from Roger Waters. All of these newsletters are at our web site. Additionally I plan to put them on a CD, along with the Acrobat-created index, so that you may search for interesting topics, or just browse them at your leisure. You will be surprised how far we have come since 1988.

In the early newsletters there was a lot of emphasis on the AUTOEXE.BAT file and other

Internet Picture of the Month

High Water

This photo was taken on May 13, 2011, a few days before the Mississippi River crested in New Orleans. It looks as if an average wave would put the river over the top of the levee. You have Jackson Square in the background, with the St. Louis Cathedral behind that. Possibly the river is only three or four feet from over-topping here. However, the high crest predicted did not occur due to the opening of two spillways above New Orleans, which diverted a lot of the flow to the Gulf by various other routes.

This image is from the site http://www.nola.com

June's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

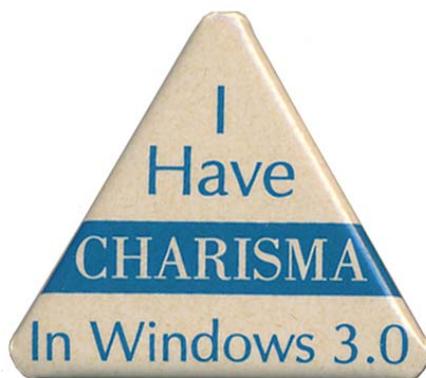|	
Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Microsoft Answers	http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us
Epocrates Online	http://online.epocrates.com/
The Billion Prices Project @ MIT	http://bpp.mit.edu/

things which modern computer users do not even know existed (a good thing, I think). Then there was all that time spent on getting our modems to connect to other computers over the phone lines. We needed a certain connection string to connect to one computer, say, at the library and another to connect to our own BBS. You will see Kevan Sheridan's name all over those early newsletters since he was the club's SYSOP – that is, the person who ran the club's Bulletin Board Service (BBS). Yes, at one time personal computer users did not have the Internet and instead relied on BBSs to communicate with other computer users and to post and receive information on topics of interest.

And do you know how much memory those early PCs had? Or the size of the early hard drives? What about the costs of the first flat-screen 15-inch monitors? The answers are all in those newsletters.

Then there are all the programs we used, first in DOS, then Windows 3.0, 3.1, Millennium, 95, etc. that we no longer use, or which no longer exist. You probably recall names such as WordPerfect and Lotus 1-2-3, but do you also recall vendor or program names such as Procomm Plus, Quarterdeck, Delrina, XTreeProGold, Ashton-Tate, Applause, Borland, Paradox. And the list could go on for quite some length. They are all mentioned in the old newsletters, along with information about how important these programs were and their somewhat expensive prices.

If you go to the display of COMDEX buttons at http://www.lamartin.com/ComdexButtons/index.htm, you will get a flavor of some of the vendors and software that were current then. Then-president Harvey Bruneau would attend COMDEX each year and bring back news, software and these buttons, which I have made into a display using Silverlight. For more, come to the meeting. ◆

My Windows Phone 7

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

I was beginning to feel like a dinosaur carrying around my almost three-year-old Windows Mobile 6.1 phone with everyone else sporting iPhones or the Android equivalent. I was waiting for a Win phone because that is the operating system I can most easily program. I had looked at programming the Android phones, but that was an alien environment. The Windows 7 phone became available at other carriers last Fall but didn't show up at Verizon, my carrier, until the end of May. It is supposedly a $200 phone, discounted by $50. However, on ordering online from the Verizon site, there was an additional $50 off with free overnight shipping. So I ordered before the required 4:30 in the afternoon for delivery the next day and received the phone via FedEx the next day.

Above is a photo I took of the phone showing about a third of the tiles on the main screen. The phone is an HTC Trophy, hence the large htc tile showing the current Tampa temperature. The flower photo on the Pictures tile is one of the photos I took with the phone's camera. I added a tile for each of my three email accounts. Most of the programs, however, are accessed via what appears in the photo to be the small white disk in the upper right. It is actually a white circle with an arrow inside.

Activating the phone was trivial. I dialed the required number and had only to input my Verizon Wireless account password, and I was finished in a couple of

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 Editor William LaMartin at william@lamartin.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. Member Bob LaFave moderates the discussion.

Yahoo! eGroup Reminder

By Kevan Sheridan, Vice President,
Tampa PC Users Group
kevan@tpcug.org

The purpose of the TPCUG Yahoo! eGroup is to inform and promote communication among members of the Tampa PC Users Group. This is a great member benefit and the easiest way to stay in touch with other members during non-meeting days.

Joining the eGroup is simple: Use the e-mail address with which you wish to join the group to send an e-mail to: TPCUG-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Include your full name in the text section of this e-mail. You will receive a verification request that you reply to, then you are up and running.

Note: if you join with a Yahoo! email address, you get full access to the group site at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tpcug.

To post messages to the group, create an e-mail and address it to: tpcug@yahoogroups.com. Your message will be broadcast to everyone in the eGroup. ◆

Phone........Continued from page 6

minutes. The phone was now ready to make calls, surf the web or download Apps to run. What it was not ready to do was email. Setting up my several email accounts was not problem. All that is needed is a user name, password and incoming and outgoing mail server addresses. But after that you would like to have your contacts and possibily your calendar, as you have in Outlook, on your computer. For Windows Mobile,

I simply connected my the phone to my computer and the contacts and calendar were automatically synced. Not anymore.

Now for Win Phone 7 (and the Droid and iPhone) you have to sync with some online account. For my phone, I need to sync with Windows Live, which has both a contacts list and a calendar. But then the problem becomes: How to get my contacts and calendar in Outlook up to Windows Live. To do this, Microsoft has created a program called Outlook Companion. When you download and run it, a menu item appears in Outlook named Outlook Companion, along with an additional contact folder named "contacts in <your Windows Live user name>." You then simply select all the contacts in your regular contacts folder, copy them and then past them into this newly-created contacts folder. Then by some miracle, these contacts will appear at Windows Live and, when your phone syncs with it, the same contacts will arrive in the People Hub of the phone. Your Outlook calendar is imported into the phone is a similar manner.

The only disadvantage of this method is that, if you add a new contact to your regular contact's folder in Outlook, you then have to copy it and paste it into the Win Live one in Outlook so that it will eventually move up to Windows Live and then to your phone. Also, it appears that I now receive two notifications of the same calendar event in Outlook on my computer, since there are now two identical calendars there. Possibly there is a solution for this.

If you think the above is cumbersome and would not buy this phone for that reason, think on. For the situation is the same if you have an iPhone or a Droid.

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For the iPhone, you have to sync through iTunes, and, for the Droid, you have to do something similar using Gmail. The web is full of people having problems doing this. So it is probably equally a pain to do it with any one of these three phones.

I like the phone's interface, with my only complaint being that, on some built-in screens, some of the text is quite small. Right now, both the iPhone and the Droid have a few features that this phone doesn't have. However, a major operating system update will be rolled out in the Fall that should make them more equal. And I particularly like it because I already have installed three of the programs I have written, one of which I am thinking of placing on the Windows Phone Marketplace. Possibly I will even make enough to pay for the phone. ◆

to I-275

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