Bits of Blue

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

Meeting

**Creating a Website for a
Wordpress Platform
by
Michelle Burgess**

Wednesday, July 13, 2011

6:30 PM

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: Michelle Burgess will tell us about creating a website for a Wordpress Platform. 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
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Last month's presentation was mine, and I hope the group enjoyed our trip down memory lane where we revisited the group and personal computing's history through our newsletters since 1988.

I was surprised to learn that a few members had been in the group from the very first days of 1984 and 1985. I knew that Kevan Sheridan and Roger Waters had been there from the earliest days, but Ed Cowen and Gary Ennis also volunteered that they were in the group when it met downtown. In general, some members recalled items from the past that others of us had forgotten.

Those newsletters are online at our website as Adobe Acrobat documents. At future meeting, I will also be happy to provide to anyone interested, for the agreed-upon $5 donation to the group, a CD or DVD containing them that additionally has an index that may be searched using the free Adobe Acrobat reader.

August Meeting: To be announced

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However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 813-251-3817, or william@lamartin.com.

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Minutes of the June Meeting

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
Tampa PC Users Group
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The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) 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 talked about Prey software.

Prey is a free, open source laptop-tracking software developed by Fork Ltd, that helps recover computers by tracing their location through the remote retrieval of information. The software is activated from the outside by using a URL as a checking method and phones home by sending a detailed report either to a centralized control panel or directly to the computer owner's mailbox. It's available for Windows, Linux, Mac OS X and Android. http://preyproject.com. This month's SIG concluded at 7:00 PM.

Our speaker this month was long-time member and newsletter editor, William LaMartin. William has spent a huge amount of his own time scanning all the back newsletters he has been able to find and publishing them to PDF files. He has compiled them and produced a CD that is available to anyone for a $5 donation to the group. Each newsletter can be downloaded from the website, but obtaining the CD from him is well worth it to avoid the time of downloading more than 200 files if you're inclined to have all of them. Additionally, the CD is searchable, of course.

William must have read an impressive number of newsletters to prepare for the presentation. He gave a timeline of events of the club and invited members present to recall details, people and locations. Several people were able to contribute memories and facts not otherwise known.

QR Codes

By Ron Weinberg, Member At Large,
Tampa PC Users Group
rswjbr@verizon.net

Recently, I have been noticing small high density code squares appearing in magazine articles and catalogs. I found that they are QR Codes intended to be scanned by smart cell phones which then automatically insert a specific URL in your phone's browser. The related web page gives more detailed information about a particular product or subject.

QR codes (QR meaning Quick Response) were developed and widely adopted in Japan, spread to Europe and are now being found in the US and elsewhere. These two dimensional bar codes have multiple uses, but the most common is to store URLs and addresses.

I have had more than a passing interest in bar codes since my days in the retail industry when I was developing coded labels for small jewelry items. Some time ago, I wrote an article for the newsletter explaining and extolling bar codes for personal and business recordkeeping.

Since I knew little about these squares, I wanted to learn more, see what they were, and what they did.

BUT, I do not have a smart phone, neither iPhone, nor Android, not even a new Windows phone. I thought there must be a way to do this using a computer. The problem was how to get the code into the computer. Conventional bar code scanners are expensive and many cannot read QR code.

Fortunately, a method had already been found, using a web cam. I have an early generation Logitech VCAM-U1. This is a simple low resolution camera, but I thought I might see if it would work.

Many programs were available, but professional programs which had to be purchased seemed in excess of my requirements. Several free programs were found, and, after looking at three, I determined two to test.

1. The first was QRreader from densl.net. This required my computer to have Adobe Air as a prerequisite, which I did have.

2. The second was bcWebCam from QS QualitySoft GmbH in Germany.

Both work in a similar way in that a box appears on your screen into which you move the focused image of the QR code from the web cam, whereupon the program reads the code.

After several attempts to use QRreader trying different code squares, all attempts failed, none were read. Since I had to believe that the program probably did work or would not have been made available, I had to attribute the failure to my poor quality web cam.

bcWebCam worked perfectly every time! It had more features than QRreader. It can also read many additional types of bar codes. Although I mainly used the defaults, I did choose two options: To automatically save to the clipboard, and audible beep for successful scan.

The first screen that appears when you begin the program is an illustrated instruction set showing the few steps required to insert the scan result directly into a target document or browser. Since I chose to save the scan to the clipboard, I did not have to choose a target.

When you press START, a box appears into which you scan. bcWebCam remains in the foreground and the target, if you choose one, shows in the background. The resulting text from the read appears at the top of the box and is automatically inserted in the target wherever you have placed the cursor.

If you press STOP after the successful scan, the first instruction screen returns in German. You can close and restart the program to return to English

There are simple ways that anyone can generate and print their own QR codes but that is beyond the scope of this article.

QR Codes.......Continued from page 3

The example code shown here is actual code, created with "Qurify!" (qurify.com). Newsletter readers with appropriate phones should scan it in. ◆
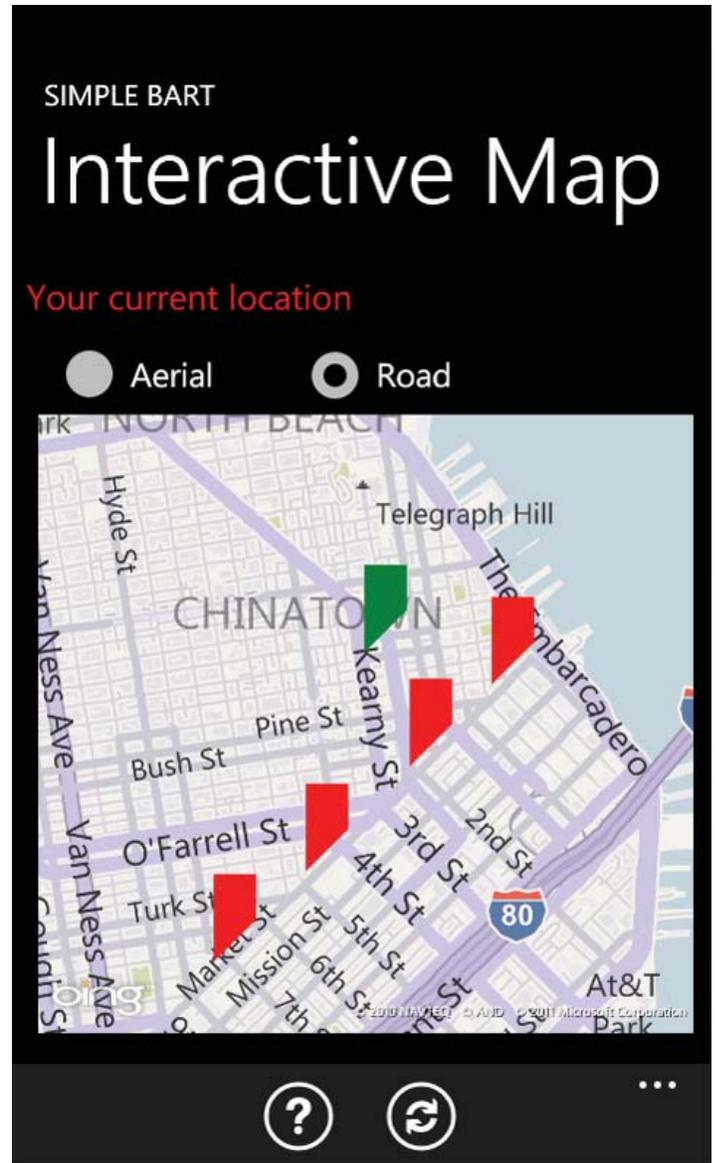

Comments......Continued from page 1

This month, thanks to Ron Weinberg for his article about those new types of barcodes that appear almost to resemble a square containing lines making up a maze. Recently a friend at a car dealership gave me her business card that had one such code on it. One of the free apps I downloaded for my new Windows Phone 7 was supposed to decipher such codes. And it did, with the result being that it displayed her name, title, business address, phone number and email address. My question, then, is why do people write such applications for free. One possibility is that they make money from advertising that they display during the app, or they collect your location information (supposedly with your permission) to send off to a database for payment. Or they could actually just create such an app for practice or because they enjoy programming. I would love to find out how they get from a camera shot of the code to the deciphered content of the code. Perhaps I will look into it in the future.

Practice and love of programming are the reasons for the creation of two free apps that I have published to the Microsoft Windows Phone 7 Marketplace. Microsoft has strict guidelines that must be followed for apps to be placed at the marketplace. And it takes a bit of study to master the process. I write about this in an article in the newsletter beginning in the next column.

Hope to see you at the next meeting. ◆

Programming a Windows Phone 7

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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I received my HTC Trophy Windows Phone 7 (WP7) around the first of June, when it became available at Verizon. Before that, I had already been working on programs for it, termed apps I suppose, using the phone emulator in Visual Studio 2010. The image above is a screen capture of the emulator running my application named Simple BART. What you see is a bing map centered on downtown San Francisco, with the nearby BART subway stations

indicated in red and my (supposed) location in green. I temporarily modified the code to put my location in San Francisco for the sake of getting a realistic image to use at the Microsoft Phone Marketplace. With the correct code, the program would put the green marker at my house in Tampa, thousands of miles from San Francisco.
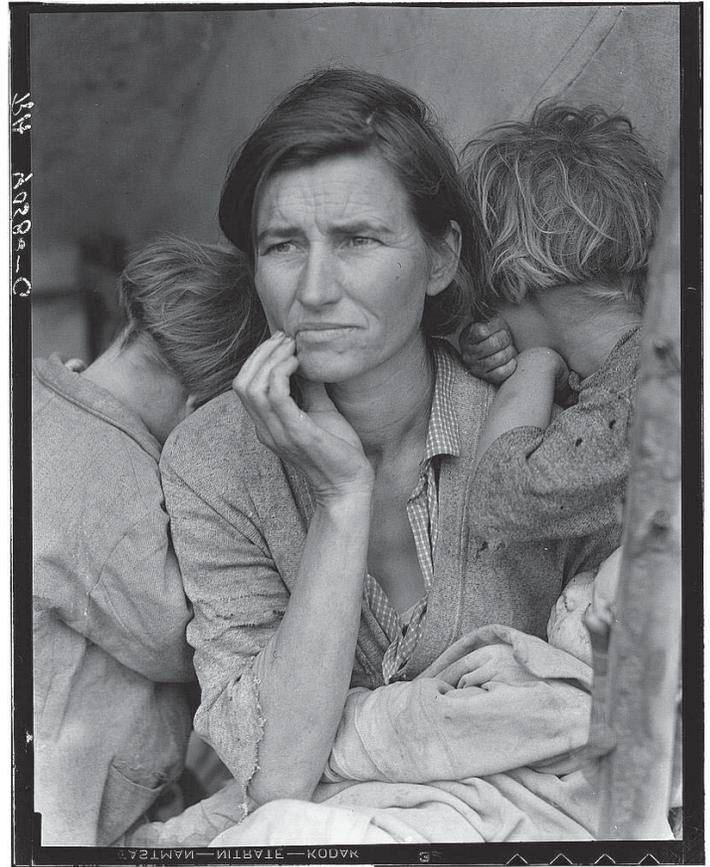
The BART System provides an open live feed of information about the 43 stations in the system: Their arrival times, destinations, direction of travel, track, etc. All the programmer has to do is to sign up with them and figure out the relatively easy SDK for retrieving the information. About the only restrictions I found were the prohibitions against using the BART logo and the official map. So I had to go out and find another map of the stations and the different colored tracks on the Internet. Wikipedia had one, and it was free to use. Isn't the Internet wonderful?!

So how does the app work? When you run it, you are first presented with a page stating that the application uses a data connection to retrieve the BART data and location services for receiving your map position. It is a Microsoft requirement that you notify the user of such things. You can choose to use or not use these features. If you don't use a data connection, the program is of no value since there will be no BART info; if you choose not to use location services, all you lose is your present location marked on the interactive bing map.

When you click the Continue button on the opening page, you are presented with a scrollable list of all 43 stations in the system. A click on any one will then provide you with either a detailed or brief (your

Internet Picture of the Month

**Mother of seven children
Age thirty-two**

This very famous photo taken by Dorothea Lang in 1936 is from the Library of Congress Photo Stream at flickr, http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_ of_congress/, which now contains 13,481 historic photos. If you would like a high quality image, you can follow the "Persistent URL" link on any photo's page to download a better quality image such as the 55 MB 6849x8539 tiff version of the one above.

July's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

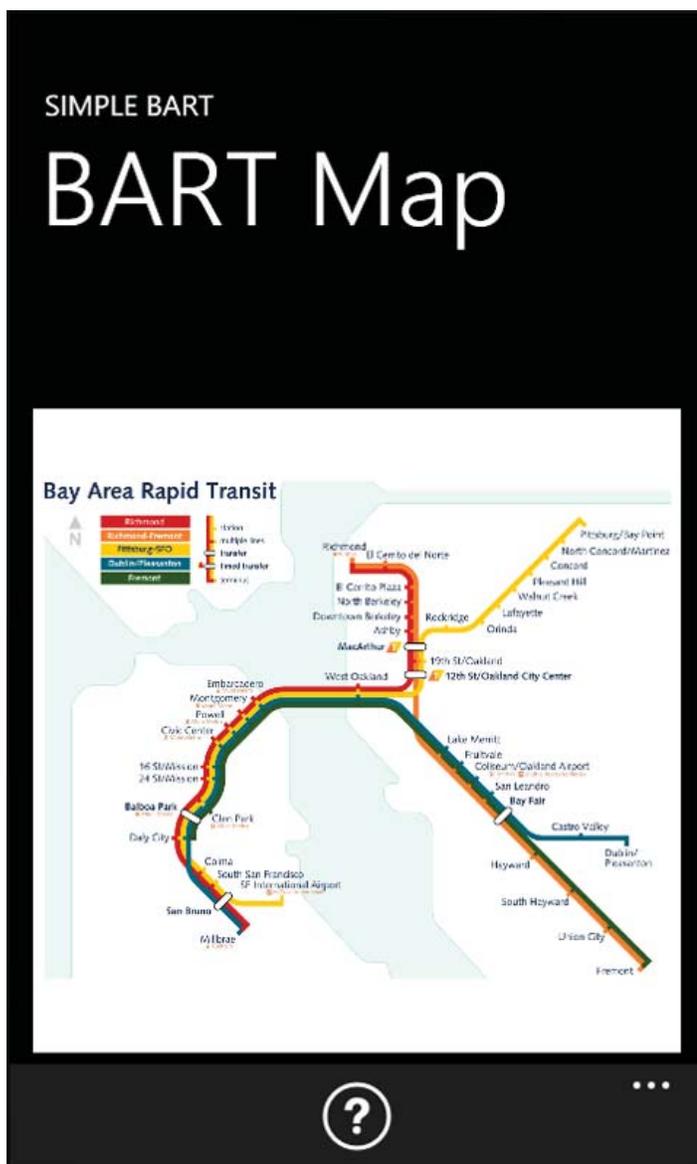|	
Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Retro Junk Hey I remember that	http://www.retrojunk.com/
Cooks.com - Recipe Search and More	http://www.cooks.com/
Mapping the 2010 U.S. Census - NYTimes.com	http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/map
College Navigator	http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

choice) list of incoming trains and details about them and their destinations.

There are probably at least half-a-dozen BART apps at the Marketplace, most free, but a couple for pay. I wrote a preliminary version of mine long before I had an actual phone in hand or had even looked at the Marketplace. It was just something I could program as practice for retrieving data from the Internet, and I could test the program on the emulator until I actually got a phone. There are a number of things, though, that cannot be tested on the emulator. One is changing the size of what you are viewing by using finger gestures. That is something I wanted to do for the system map pictured below. Another is programming and testing that had to wait until I had a physical phone.

For those going to San Francisco who have a WP7, you may download the program from the Marketplace at the link: http://social.zune.net/redirect?type=phoneApp&id=6f2c84ed-7a98-e011-986b-78e7d1fa76f8. Or go to the Marketplace and search for Simple BART.

Around June 20, I was told that if I had two apps registered with the Marketplace by June 30 I would receive a refund on the $99 I paid to register as a WP7 developer. The question then was, could I, in a little more than a week, prepare an app and get it published to the Marketplace. Based on my first submission, at present it takes three to four business days for an app to go through testing at the Marketplace, and then it may well be rejected for not meeting all of Microsoft's guidelines. My BART app was initially rejected because I failed two requirements on my first submission.

I looked over the apps I had already written and saw none that I wanted to submit; some because I thought they would be of no interest and others because I hoped to eventually submit them as paid apps. I decided to write something fairly simple that had been of use to me in the past: Calculating the volume of liquid in a cylindrical tank lying horizontally, based on the depth of the liquid in the tank. If you have ever owned a fuel tank of any kind, then you know the value of such information. To make the app more interesting, I added three more tank configurations as pictured on page 7. Since all these images are in color, you will have a much better experience if you look at them in the newsletter on the website.

A click on a tank type takes to you to another screen where you then enter the appropriate dimensions of the tank along with the depth of the liquid, click on the Calculate button, and a scrollable list of volumes is returned for the various possible depths. You may use either US or metric measurements.

Luckily, this app, Simple Volume, was published to the Marketplace on my first submission. The URL to the free download is http://social.zune.net/redire

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.
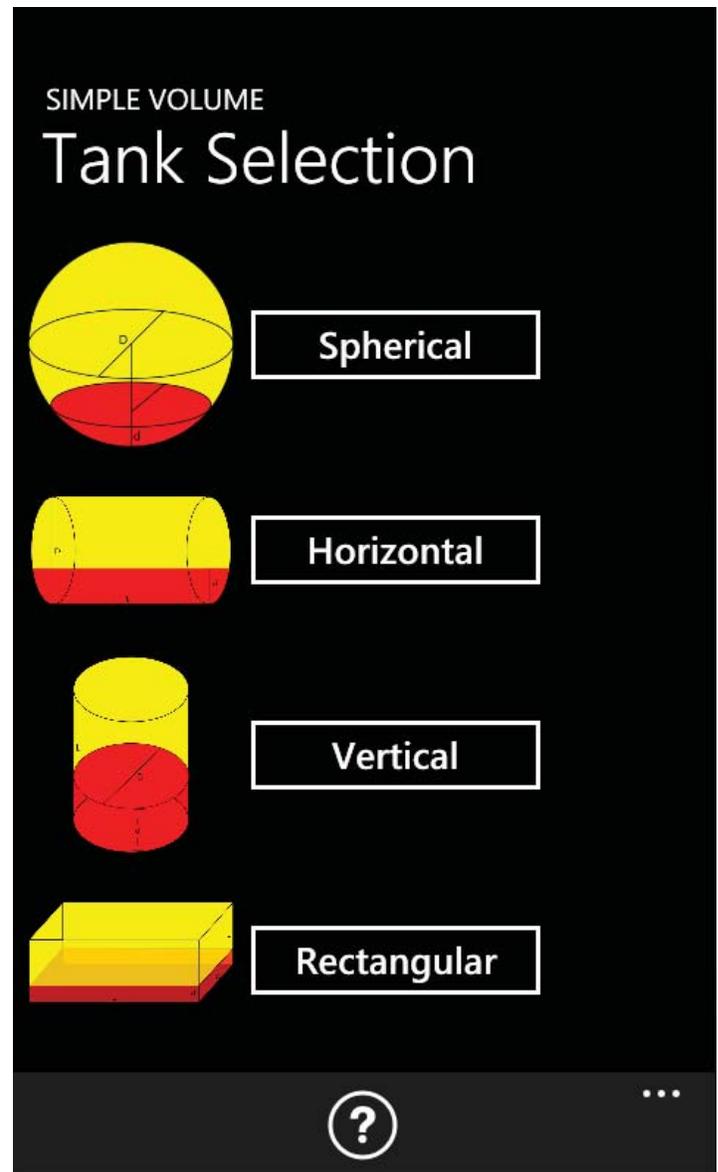

Phone........Continued from page 6

ct?type=phoneApp&id=1a6c32e7-459c-e011-986b-78e7d1fa76f8. Or you may search for Simple Volume at the Marketplace.

Now, with two practice apps under my belt, I am ready to see if I can create a paid one that will get some attention. I have an idea and have it far enough along that I find it useful to have on my phone. In looking at the Marketplace, I see that there are other apps that supposedly do the same sort of thing. But looking at the descriptions and screen shots, I see that they don't really do what mine does. So I think there is an opening for mine. My problem will be in getting people to notice it and then to think it is worth paying $.99 for instead of using one of the free ones that purport to do the same thing but which really are very limited.

It is clear that I will need to offer a free or trial version with somewhat limited functionality to make people want the very expensive $.99 version. However, it is not clear to me if there is much money to be made with these phone apps due to your app getting lost in all the clutter at the Marketplace,

I recall one fellow in an online forum for WP7 app developers who also developed iPhone apps. He said that in the beginning of the iPhone his first paid app garnered thousands of dollars, and he thought he was on the way to something. So he spent more than 500 hours developing a second iPhone app, which he thought much better than the first. But after he put it at the marketplace, almost no one bought it--not even the free trial version--most probably because they didn't notice it among the, at that time, more than 200,000 competing apps (now more than 500,000). I suppose the secret is getting Apple to feature the app for a few

days. But how does one do that?

I have met one fellow who has a golfing app at all three marketplaces: Apple, Android and Windows, and he seems to be making a success of it. However, it is a full time job for him. I don't know if he was doing

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☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

MInutes........Continued from page 2

William showed a brief history of personal computers, Apple II and Mac, Commodore and IBM PC, and recalled the meaning and origin of "PC clone."

William gave a very interesting and dynamic presentation that only partly covered the subjects of the history of the club and the relationship to earlier computing. For complete coverage, we would need several meetings. ◆

Phone........Continued from page 7

any marketing, but I would guess so. Such success stories notwithstanding, my guess is that less than one percent of app developers are actually making any income of consequence from their apps. Of course, that doesn't include programmers who are paid by major corporations such as Bank America to create apps for their businesses. So, go out and create apps because you enjoy it, but don't expect to get rich. ◆

to I-275

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