



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



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October 2011

October in Tampa

## Meeting

### The Latest Hardware

by

Steve Singer

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

6:30 PM

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Tampa, Florida

**Meeting Preview:** Our October presenter is Steve Singer of RDI@TampaBay who will present his annual hardware review. Also, 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](mailto:william@lamartin.com)

**Steve Jobs** We should note Steve Jobs' passing since he was one of those who helped create our personal computer world by teaming with Steve Wozniak to produce the Apple I, the success of which, along with that of the Apple II, motivated IBM to develop the first IBM PC, which, in turn, led to the creation of the Tampa IBM PC Users Group, renamed at a later date the Tampa PC Users Group. So I can blame Steve Jobs for possibly being a partial cause, along with Steve Wozniak and Bill Gates, among others, for my working on this issue of the Tampa PC Users Group newsletter.

**News** I am sure we all have heard that HP may exit the computer hardware market. Apparently selling desktop and laptop computers is a low margin business. HP's new CEO, Meg Whitman, says she will tell us their decision by the end of the year. That is if she is still CEO then, since HP has had three CEOs in what, I think, is less than a year's time. It is amazing how disorganized HP has appeared to be in the past year. I certainly hope

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**November 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](mailto:william@lamartin.com).

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Association of Personal Computer User Groups

**Minutes of the September Meeting**

*By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,  
Tampa PC Users Group  
[merle@merlenicholson.com](mailto:merle@merlenicholson.com)*

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. This session, Bob LaFave could not attend, so Merle Nicholson stood in his place. One subject explored was a question about what computer to get for a person who was not interested in the computer at all and couldn't be bothered. A possible solution was suggested by Kevan Sheridan, who happened to have a Chromebook sitting in front of him in the meeting. (See related article on page 3.)

This month's SIG concluded at 7:00 PM.

Our speaker this month was myself, Merle Nicholson. Merle talked about Windows 7 Backup, why you must do backups, what the consequences of not doing backups are and suggestions on the possible equipment available to do it inexpensively using Windows 7 Backup as software.

The thrust of the presentation was that your computer's storage is based on a hard drive and that hard drives have a lifetime, after which they die and take everything to the grave with them, leaving you with no choice but to replace the hard drive, recover the operating system and lament losing all your email, documents and valuable pictures.

Windows 7 Backup and Restore is a good software solution, because it's there and it's good and reliable, even if it does not have any useful extras that you get with purchased packages such as Acronis.

The session was lively and some good related discussions occurred during the presentation. ◆

## Chrome OS Linux

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,  
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This is about an alternative to a Microsoft Windows computer – Chrome OS. It's for people who want to keep things simple and are willing to do most everything on the web – but, specifically, the Google family of applications. It's similar to a Google Chromebook, but with some additional advantages and disadvantages. And it's kind of free.

By comparison, the Google Chromebook is a Netbook computer with an Atom processor running the Google Chrome operating system. The price at Best Buy today is \$429 wifi, and 3G Cellular for \$499. That's with a 12.1 inch screen, wireless Internet, no DVD, 16 GB solid state hard drive. It's not cheap, but it does have some advantages. It is lightweight at 3.3 lbs., it boots up very rapidly and you're on the Internet in a minute, where you can do email and web, calendar, messaging, Picasa, Google+ and dozens more applications, all web-based and cloud services that Google offers. And other services, too, if you wish.

What you don't have is access to your own computer in the traditional manner of thinking. For instance, you can't worry about computer viruses and antivirus because, so far, there aren't any (maybe). You don't worry about updates to the computer because that's done for you. And you can't manage your own files. That's all a good thing and a bad thing, depending on your point of view.

This operating system is built around a product – Chrome Browser – that you can install on any computer. I have it myself on my personal computer. It's simple and seems to do everything you need in a browser after you get past its very simple user interface. It's fast; I like it.

So the Chromebook is a very attractive idea and probably works very well if you're happy with everything Google – or at least everything web, because there is nothing keeping you from using Hotmail or Verizon

mail or maybe the Windows Live products for that matter. Don't hold me to the Windows Live thing, I'm guessing.

Ok – onward. Did you know you can buy a Dell Mini notebook at Best Buy for \$200? Wifi, 10.1 inch screen, a 160 GB hard drive, 1 GB memory and 3.1 lbs! It has the useless Windows 7 starter OS, so why not put Chrome OS on this? \$230 cheaper than the Chromebook!

And Hey! A Lenovo notebook, 15.6 inch display – a full sized notebook computer with 4 GB of RAM for \$299.99. It's called an ultraportable because it's only 5.2 lbs, and 1.3 inches thick.

Here's what I'm leading up to. The Chrome OS Linux. Now, the Chrome OS is built on a distribution of SUSE (pronounced soo-sa) Linux. SUSE Linux is a German-origin open source Linux project. It has evolved over time, having been acquired by Novell, and then by Attachmate. So SUSE lives on both as a commercial enterprise and as an open source, meaning there are free distributions. Make no mistake, Chrome OS Linux is not a Google product. Instead, it is a free operating system built around the Google Chrome browser. The website to get this operating system starts at <http://getchrome.eu>.

Copying from their website, we have:

Featured software in Chrome OS Linux:

- Linux kernel 2.6.37
- GNOME 2.32 desktop environment
- Experimental GNOME Shell desktop environment
- Google Chrome 15.0.874 web browser New!
- Google Picasa 3.0 photo manager
- LibreOffice 3.3 office suite
- GIMP 2.6 image editor
- Wine 1.3 Windows emulator
- Cheese 2.32 webcam app New!
- Pidgin 2.7 instant messenger
- Dashboard with social toolbar
- Control Center
- revamped new tab page New!

*Chrome.....Continued on page 4*

Chrome.....Continued from page 3

- and much more!

I have downloaded this operating system and installed it on a notebook with the idea in mind of duplicating a Chromebook in functionality as much as possible, and it looks as if I'll succeed in doing that. I have set the Chrome browser to load at Start and to load the getchrome home page. It happens in about 75 seconds from the notebook power on. And to give you an idea, this page is pretty much the beginning. If you have the Chrome browser and a gmail logon, you can go to the chrome web store at: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore> and get a few hundred more apps.

The notebook I installed this on is pretty old as notebooks go – 2005. It's large and heavy but still works well. I pulled the hard drive out and installed an older one that I didn't care about. It's plenty fast enough for this very fast operating system.

I won't go into the technical details of downloading and installing the OS in this article. I will say this: If you're not particularly technical and experienced at

this, you'll need some help. But once I had the CD created it was pretty easy from there. First, I did try an alternate – installed to a 4G flash drive and booted from that, and failed with early lockups. My son in Seattle experienced the same thing. So I created the live CD and went forward. It's made to run “Live CD” - so it will run from the CD without installing to the hard drive, and I did that a couple of times. I don't recommend doing this as long as there is a valuable hard drive installed because, just momentarily, I came within an inch of destroying my Windows installation. That's when I decided to replace the hard drive and go on with a regular installation.

My installation isn't 100% complete. I don't have my Bluetooth mouse or WiFi running yet. When I'm 100% done – that's another article.

My thanks to Kevan Sheridan for the introduction to the Chromebook and the time he took to explain it to me.

Below is the Chrome OS home page. ◆

#### Get Chrome OS



Gmail



Hotmail



Yahoo! Mail



Google Calendar



Google Reader



Google Docs



YouTube



PicasaWeb



Myspace



Last.fm



Pandora



Contacts



Calculator



To-do list



Calendar Panel



Angry Birds



Books



Chess



Google+



Facebook



Twitter



Get more...

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## Internet Picture of the Month



A small plane crashes into a Ferris wheel in Sydney, Australia and dangles there with two people inside the plane and a pair of children on the Ferris wheel trapped there for 90 minutes. From the New York Times at [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/world/asia/small-plane-crashes-into-ride-during-festival-in-australia.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=plane%20%20ferris%20wheel&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/world/asia/small-plane-crashes-into-ride-during-festival-in-australia.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=plane%20%20ferris%20wheel&st=cse)

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*Comments.....Continued from page 1*

they decide to continue producing computers because that gives us one more source when we want to purchase a new one. I think the problem is, once you buy a computer from them, that is all they get until you may want an additional computer. However, if you purchase a printer from them, then it is more toner or ink until the printer is no longer used. The same for all the consulting services they supply.

**IBM** has done quite well since they discontinued selling desktop and laptop computers and sold that business to Lenova. Apparently they are surviving quite well with their mainframe business and computer

services. So well, that I recently read where IBM has now, as Apple did some time back, passed Microsoft in the value of their stock. For tech companies, we have the most valuable is Apple followed by IBM and then Microsoft.

**Kodak** As noted above, being on top does not guarantee that you will stay on top – or even be anywhere near the top. At one time, Kodak dominated photography and was one of the 30 companies in the Dow Jones Industrial Average. Now, they are almost bankrupt, with a stock value of under one dollar per share. You will say, but their mistake was not getting into

*Comments.....Continued on page 7*

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### October's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)  
 Tampania  
 Call2Recycle - Recycling Your Batteries  
 Charles W. Cushman Photograph Collection  
 Animated Knots

<http://www.tpcug.org/>  
<http://tampaniatampa.blogspot.com/>  
<http://www.call2recycle.org/>  
<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/cushman/>  
<http://www.animatedknots.com/>

## Update on FIOS Battery Backup

By John Witmer, President, Tampa PC Users Group  
[jhwitmer@verizon.net](mailto:jhwitmer@verizon.net)

I previously wrote of my experience with my FIOS backup battery causing both an audible alarm and a red-light replace battery warning signal. The events occurred over the Christmas holidays in 2009, and the article appeared in our newsletter in April 2010. I thought I would update you on that situation. The very same battery is still alive and well in my FIOS backup system box, some 21 months later. So much for its needing to be replaced! I will have to admit that I have had several more instances in those 21 months where the audible and red-light alarms occurred in the unit, but by following the instructions I put in that old article, the battery alarms were silenced, and the system continues to function perfectly. I have had that battery for more than four years now and expect it to last another couple more. I base this guesstimate on having to recently replace the backup battery in my home alarm system after getting seven-plus years out of it. Here's hoping anyway that the FIOS battery lasts as anticipated.

One of the surprises that came out of that article was receiving emails from a couple of individuals who had come across the article in our TPCUG newsletter while searching the web for a similar problem they were having. They were appreciative of finding

a solution to their problem without having to replace the battery and were thoughtful enough to let me know it benefited them. I was curious back when the emails were received as to what was out there when doing a Google search for the topic of "FIOS Battery Backup." I came across a Verizon website forum on the subject. The solution that was contained in my article was not mentioned on this Forum, so I decided to add it as a posting under that topic, hoping that not only would many people benefit from it, but also that perhaps a Verizon representative might see it and offer a comment. I posted my comments and a link to the TPCUG newsletter article on the Verizon Forum in early Feb 2011, and within a month or so, there were favorable comments from a couple of other posters. What really surprised me is that they show the number of views the post has had, and, as shown in the screen clip below for this article, it has had 6,315 views so far. I feel somewhat elated that perhaps a great many of those viewers were able to resolve their problem without the expense of a new replacement battery. I even noted that a later poster to this Forum in July 2011 indicated that he received essentially the same information as in my article from a Verizon FIOS representative when he called about his battery problem, so maybe Verizon has seen the article and is now offering it as a possible solution to customers calling in with this type of battery backup problem. For me, this is another example of what a great resource the web is, with people sharing information and solutions to problems. ♦

Re: Battery Backup beeping and in the Red - Verizon | Forums and Blogs - Verizon Community - Internet Explorer, optimized for B

http://forums.verizon.com/t5/My-Verizon-Account-Residential/Battery-Backup-beeping-and-in-the-Red/m-p/231

verizon fios battery beeping

Re: Battery Backup beeping and in the Red - Verizon | ...

Witty-in-Tampa  
Contributor

02-07-2011 12:50 PM

FYI, I have found out that just because your Battery Backup Unit has the "Replace Battery" light on, and you get an audible alarm to draw your attention to this fact, it may not necessarily mean the battery has to be replaced. I have on several occasions had this condition with my FIOS service BBU, and as noted in the article link below, the resolution may be as simple as unplugging the BBU from the electrical outlet, then opening the battery compartment door to allow access to the battery, then unplug your battery terminal from the BBU so that it is not providing backup power. Leave the battery disconnected for approx 5-10 minutes, then reconnect it to the BBU and put it back in the slot in the BBU box, then plug the electrical power back in to charge the system. I have found this will eliminate the red light and audible warning signal, and your battery may continue to function fine for many more months/years. As noted in the article, you can also take the battery to have it tested to determine if it is still good, or needs to be replaced. I suspect there are a lot of good batteries being replaced that don't have to be. See if this situation applies to you!

[http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl\\_2010/april2010/verizon.htm](http://www.tpcug.org/newsletter/nl_2010/april2010/verizon.htm)

Report inappropriate content  
Message 4 of 10 (6,315 Views)

Reply

## 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](mailto: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.

*Comments.....Continued from page 5*

digital photography soon enough. Well, I have news for you. They invented the digital camera in 1975. I am not sure, but that may have even been before Al Gore invented the Internet. Anyway, it is obvious that they did not properly capitalize on their invention. Possibly because it would have cut into the cash cow of film photography where they were dominant. Now with what remains of their business, Kodak is trying to become a printer company, I think.

**WP7 Mango Update** I was one of the lucky ones who got the Windows Phone 7 Mango update pushed to me on the first day it was available. It is being deployed in stages to a percentage of users on different phones from different vendors in different sections of the country, as I understand it. That way they can monitor the process for problems instead of pushing it out to everyone at once.

There are supposedly 500 improvements. I assume most of those will be invisible to the user. The ones I have noticed that are quite nice are

- Holding down the back button displays all the running apps.
- You can now aggregate all your email accounts into one super account for ease of use (the all accounts inbox).
- When you click on the Bing search button and then the eye button, the camera activates, and, if you point it at a barcode, it will provide you information on the product. Similarly it will copy and translate text for you.
- That is all that I have noticed of use to me so far. However, for those who use facebook and twitter there are all sorts of features that will make your life easier. For example, you can put your friends into

different groups and then send messages or tweets to everyone in a particular group.

I am sure there are a lot more, but I haven't really been interested in looking for them. My main interest is writing programs for the phone. On the same day the update was released, the final version of the programming tools for the phone using Visual Studio were released. Before I could install the new tools, though, I needed to download and install Service Pack 1 for Visual Studio 2010. I only mention that because the size of the download amazed me. It was 600 MB plus. I think the Apple IIe that Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs designed for me only had 64 KB of memory plus an additional 64 MB I purchased (that extra 64 was really not easily addressable at the time). We have come a long way memory-wise.

Of course, not much attention was paid to the Mango update for the WP7 by the press since it had been devoting its space for a couple of weeks to hyping the upcoming (and now done) release of a new version of the iPhone. It was the iPhone 4S with the iPhone 5 expected sometime in the Spring of 2012.

**Are you being tracked?** Are you worried about Google, Facebook and other social media following you on the web and storing all sorts of the information about you that you divulge on such sites, which they can then combine with subsequent searching and browsing activity? If so, why don't you use two different browsers. Use one, say Firefox or Chrome, for the social media stuff and use Internet Explorer for your web searches and browsing, or vice-versa. Or make it even more restrictive and use, for example, Chrome for social media, Firefox for web search and IE for general browsing. Then, when you research

*Comments.....Continued on page 8*

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*Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

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water softeners in a web search, you will not be shown water softener ads when you try to read the news on the *New York Times* site. ◆

