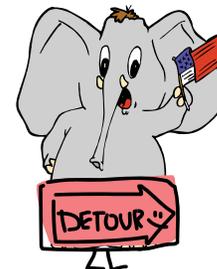




A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.



August in Tampa

Vol. 25 No. 8

August 2012

## Meeting

**Merle Nicholson**  
on  
**Various Topics**

**Wednesday, August 8, 2012**

**6:30 PM**

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

**Meeting Preview:** Merle Nicholson will speak on: Managing passwords using KeePass cross-platform Password Database; inSSIDer wireless network software; Tampa Bay Times eEdition demo; CPU magazine reader. As usual, Bob LaFave will conduct the Windows SIG.

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## Editor's Comments

*By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group*  
[william@lamartin.com](mailto:william@lamartin.com)

**W**ell, no phone or camera article this month. Ron Weinberg tells us how to more easily connect to streaming content (movies) on the web, and Merle Nicholson tells us how to protect our computers from weather hazards. So that leaves me a bit of space to write about some computer odds and ends.

**Apple vs. Samsung** Apple is suing Samsung claiming that Samsung copied the iPhone's look and feel, i.e., the rectangular shape and rounded corners. Also there is something about the Android operating system stealing from Apple's iOS. Apple says that receiving 2.5 billion dollars from Samsung will make them feel better about the alleged theft. Samsung, I think, has a countersuit against Apple. What appalls me about all this is the sort of things that are claimed to be patentable: rectangular shape, rounded corners, certain types of swipes and taps on the phone screen. These companies try to patent variations of

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**September 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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**Affiliations**

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Association of Personal Computer User Groups

**Minutes of the July Meeting**

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

**T**he 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 month Bob touched on a variety of subjects asked by members in attendance: DLL error messages – he demonstrated Autoruns from SysInternals as a good tool to track down errant DLLs. He also discussed a “Take Ownership” menu change program, a quick way to resolve security file ownership problems with files that refuse to be deleted. Further information on this is posted on our TPCUG Forum. See General TPCUG topics for the July 11 entry by Bob LaFave.

Bob LaFave was our presenter for the July meeting, so he continued from where he was. The subjects he presented were Torrent, Portable Apps and ISO files.

**Torrent** – Bob demonstrated uTorrent – a peer-to-peer file sharing application. He showed how to install the free version, peer ratings on movies, and quite a lot of security cautions. Bob spent quite a bit of time showing various locations and what to do and not to do. All very valuable information.

**Portable Apps** – a free application and menu system that is to be installed on a flash drive and transported so that a very large collection of good quality applications are available on any computer from the flash-drive. All of these programs are specifically configured to be run from the portable apps application. This is an excellent way to have familiar software on any computer. Nothing is installed on the host.

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

## Another Way to Connect

By Ron Weinberg, Member at Large,  
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**D**o you want or need an Internet connection at or near your TV? Easy, just run a Cat 5e or Cat 6 cable though your walls, ceiling, etc. for the best hard-wired connection. Too difficult? Buy a pair of powerline adapters and connect through them. Not as efficient or fast as wired, but it works. Don't want to spend the money and already have wireless router and receiving equipment? Just set up your slower wireless connection.

Wait! Now there may be a better alternative for you. Here is my story.

As avid movie fans, we have been streaming movies, primarily from Netflix, using a wireless G connection from our ISP router to and through our Blu-ray Player. The quality of the picture has been excellent, but the initial connection has been slow. From time to time we could not connect and received a "Network Interference" message, which seemed to be coming from the Blu-ray Player or an intermediate Samsung server. To resolve each instance we had to turn the Blu-ray Player off and on, sometimes several times, in order to connect to the Internet and on to Netflix. A Google search showed this was a common problem but a specific remedy was not available.

It occurred to me that perhaps a faster, better connection might correct the problem. Hard-wiring is the preferred method for the best signal. Running a physical Ethernet cable was not practical for this location. Budget would not allow powerline adapters. Next best, I thought, would be to try wireless N, which the player was capable of receiving.

A wireless N router was not readily available at no charge from Verizon, my ISP, but I did have the option of buying my own directly, which could be easily connected to my network.

After a discussion of the problem with a Verizon support specialist, it was decided to send a service techni-

cian to investigate.

When I explained the problem to the technician he immediately came up with a solution and installed a Coaxial Network adapter, which required a splitter, two short coax cables, one Ethernet cable and one power adapter.

The main coax cable carrying the TV signal is connected to the input of the splitter. The splitter outputs from one port to the adapter and another to the Verizon DVR/Set Top Box. The Ethernet cable is connected from the adapter to the Ethernet port in the Blu-ray Player. Powering off the router does not kill the coax signals to the TV, only the Ethernet connectivity.

We reset the Blu-ray Player to use a wired connection and the router automatically assigned it an address and incorporated it into the network.

After testing it, the tech was on his way.

The adapter shows as a MoCA device in the router. Difficult hard-wiring or other adapters were not needed.

MoCA is the home entertainment networking standard, from the Multimedia over Coax Alliance, used for delivery of cable, satellite, and IPTV signals. Main features are: Supports full Ethernet speed, uses existing coax cabling, and coexists with cable TV services.

The new adapter is Verizon Coaxial Network Adapter, Model ECB2200V, manufactured by Actiontec. You can see details on the Actiontec website, <http://www.actiontec.com/>. If your ISP can not provide this or an equal device, Amazon sells them without the Verizon brand for about \$83.

I can now report that connection times are faster and the "Network Interference" error message has not re-occurred. I have all the benefits of a high speed wired connection. ♦

## Hurricane Season – Are You Ready?

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,  
Tampa PC Users Group  
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Ok, as we all know – we’ve at least been reminded – the 2012 hurricane season is upon us. It arrived in late June with a tropical storm that hung around a long time. Some of us in Tampa experienced some real outages that lasted a couple of days. I was fortunate to have just a couple of brief outages over three days; just some blink-outs. Those brief interruptions can cause some real damage if you’re not set up correctly. If you’re interested in preserving your electronic equipment, I have some ideas and some solutions.

First, I’d like to categorize the types of events:

1. Direct Lightning Strike – fudgetaboutit. The outcome is just dumb luck. Obviously it can burn your house down and/or destroy all or anything attached electrically. In Tampa, the TECO Zap Cap program is the best protection. Outside of the equipment, Zap Cap provides you with a policy against damages.
2. Nearby Lightning Strike – this is the temporary full outage you get from a nearby strike. It’s characterized by a single full outage typically lasting for one second.
3. Tree strike – this is when a tree blows into a line. It’s pretty common. It’s characterized by as many as three successive blink-outs. The fourth usually results in a complete outage lasting for a minute to days, depending on the storm and the demand placed on the restoration crews. Most of the time it’s a single blink, but wait a few minutes – it may happen again when the wind gusts again.

It is number three that I want to discuss, because it’s what we need to address using UPS equipment. I call it a tree strike, but it could be other things that blow into the overhead lines. An electric company spends a lot of time and resources on tree trimming. The problem is – deciding how much to trim, because they can’t afford to over-trim. It’s very costly and those

costs are passed on to you because they are operating costs.

When a tree branch is whipped into an overhead line, it causes a short that is detected by equipment back at the substation. That equipment opens the line – drops power within milliseconds – waits for a timed interval and then closes; reenergizing the line. If the branch is still touching the line, it will interrupt again. It has a timer so that it counts the number of closings and after that number, it stays out. It can be reenergized from the control center, but to prevent permanent damage someone must be sent out to investigate. An outage may last an hour to days.

Trees are a difficult subject. After all, trees belong to people who are also customers. There is very little regulation concerning the placement of trees. Trees sprout on their own, right? Little trees grow up to be big trees. Some trees grow fast, some slow. And municipalities are very much interested in preserving trees. It’s very difficult-to-impossible to cut them down, and there are regulations on the percentage of a tree that may be trimmed.

So what can we do to minimize damage to the home? There are two things we must look out for. One is low (or high) voltage, and the other is electrical and thermal shock to equipment that turned off and back on repeatedly. Our best protection is UPS – Uninterruptible Power Supplies. Now, I’m not ignoring “surges” – that rare event that causes a stray high voltage to surge in and destroy equipment. Surge protection is basic – also covered in the Zap Cap program, but it’s an integral part of any UPS. Those surges are a brief high voltage caused by a nearby lightning strike that lasts just milliseconds (that’s event #2).

Let’s check on one thing. Did you know your computer can be set to turn back on when power is restored? Do you want it to be? Well, I guess that would be a NO! I don’t want it turned off and then on .. then off. Right? It must be set so when it goes off, it stays off. If yours does not stay off, you can set that in BIOS. My setting is “Restore on Power Loss” and the choices are “Power Off” and “Power On”. This is important. Set it

*Hurricane.....Continued on page 6*

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## Internet Picture of the Month



**Occupy Lego Land**

From Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nat-nat/7679574938/> by Supernat13 (not a real name).

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

searching on the Internet, clicking on the computer screen and all sorts of obvious ideas (at least to me they are obvious) that really should not be patentable. Since Google makes the Android operating system that the Samsung devices use, I suppose that the lawsuits are also a shot across the bow of Google, which is probably more of a threat to Apple than is Samsung.

**Social Media Stocks** Apparently someone has unfriended the stock of Facebook and Zynga in recent weeks. As I write this, both companies' stock prices have plummeted since their IPOs, with Facebook

down around 45% since its IPO in May and Zynga down a whopping 70% since its IPO last year. Since Zynga's games, like Farmville, run on Facebook, the two companies affect each other. All you Farmville players need to get out there and purchase more virtual tractors and cows to help these two companies. Facebook is now selling at only \$21/share instead of the IPO price of \$38.23.

Time will tell if the current collection of social media stocks, which also includes Groupon, Yelp, Pandora

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

## August's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)  
 Portable Apps  
 Raspberry Pi \$35 computer  
 Raspberry PI FAQ  
 Flickr

<http://www.tpcug.org/>  
<http://portableapps.com/>  
<http://www.alliedelec.com/lp/120626raso/>  
<http://www.raspberrypi.org/faqs>  
<http://www.flickr.com>

*Hurricane.....Continued from page 4*

to “Power Off”.

OK now UPS. It’s a battery backup that keeps power on your equipment so it doesn’t blink out for those one second intervals. It’s to extend the life of your computer or equipment. How long can it power your computer? I don’t know for sure, but I certainly hope they stay powered up long enough for me to shut them down manually or the UPS software to do that for me. That’s the objective; to carry you through those blink-outs. The type of UPS we’re considering is a “standby UPS”. This type of UPS powers your equipment with the line voltage and then switches to battery/inverter power very quickly. They are available in sizes from 200 to 1200VA. I have two 200VA, a 550VA and three 750VA in my house.

A UPS has these components:

- Outlets for equipment to have battery backup; they also have surge protection.
- Outlets that have no backup, but they do have surge protection.
- An inverter to supply 115V AC to supply the outlets that have backup.
- A battery – Sealed Lead Acid type to power the inverter.
- An AVR – Automatic Voltage Regulator. This is optional – more about that later.
- Electronics to control all this stuff, power switch and circuit breaker.

When we buy a UPS, there are just a few things to consider: Capacity, runtime, AVR, battery and price.

**Capacity** This is measured in VA – that’s Volt-Amps. Useful, right? Not Watts like you’d expect. Here’s what I do.

For a full-blown desktop computer with LCD monitor, I use 750VA. A small computer, small processor, one hard drive and an LCD monitor. I use a 550VA, and for the Verizon router, wireless and network switches I use a couple of 220VA. The Verizon FIOS device has its own battery. I have four monitors, so I have just the one primary on the UPS; the others are plugged into the non-battery outlets. I have the DVR, a small media

PC and an LED clock on one 750VA.

All the major UPS manufacturers have calculators to help you with this. In my opinion, they all lean toward selling you more capacity that you may be interested in, but they are very useful. Just Google search “Uninterruptible power supply size”, and you’ll get several sites. Don’t Google “UPS” because .. well, you know.

**Runtime** I’m sized to get about six to ten minutes on computers. That’s enough time to ride out all the blinkouts. If the power goes dead altogether, I have no interest in keeping power on computers. We shut them down properly. All the large capacity UPS have USB cables and software to shut them down gracefully. The small devices like the router will probably run for a couple of days. But – you know why – being in Tampa, I’m not interested as much in runtime as I am interested in having the ability to ride out the blink-outs.

**AVR** I consider AVR where I live pretty essential. It definitely raises the cost and weight of the UPS significantly. The AVR is a heavy transformer that adjusts the output voltage on low and high incoming voltages. It’s available in the larger sizes – 500VA and up. Those UPS that have AVR have it labeled very plainly on the box and in advertising.

**Battery** UPS uses SLA – Sealed Lead Acid batteries. Batteries should be replaced every two years. You can go longer, but you’re at risk, and I would never go more than three years. I have the battery sizes, dimensions and an industry size in a document that I keep up when they are replaced. I also (now) label both the battery and the outside of the UPS with the date of last replacement. You’d think I do a good job on this? Wrong. I just installed four replacements – all have the same size batteries. One I took out had bulges on the sides! And one was dated in 2008 – four years. What prompted me to order those replacement batteries? The hard way of course. When the June storm came in, one UPS battery was so low that it just shut off and didn’t come back on. Not that this was a bad thing; it just wasn’t what I expected.

Battery replacements are easy to get. I order all mine

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*Hurricane.....Continued from page 6*

from an online battery sales company at half the price of retail. Yes, the shipping is a bit high, but all those batteries are an industry standard size. You don't have to buy from the UPS manufacturer unless you really want to spend three times the generic brand price.

**Rules** Never plug a power strip in a UPS unless you absolutely know for sure that the outlet strip has no surge protection built in. No surge-protected power strips. Never plug a laser printer in a UPS. There's no reason to plug any printer in a UPS; use a surge protector instead. It's as important to figure out what you don't need backup for as what you do. Don't plug in any charger, cell phones or wireless telephones. If your house phone has a base station with no battery in it, that would be a good thing for a UPS. If your alarm system uses an Internet connection to call in the alarm, the Internet router is a good one for the UPS.

**Last advice** Don't wait until replacement time to find out what kind of battery your UPS uses. The time to do that is when you buy it. Sure, write down the manufacturer battery replacement number, but pull the battery out and measure the battery and photograph it while you're at it. Generic battery sizes designate dimensions, Voltage, Ampere Hours and terminal size. Save the information and make a Google appointment in two years. My battery guys: <http://www.batterymart.com>. ♦

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

and LinkedIn (the only one doing well) turn out to be like Pets.com of the .com era (do you remember them?) or like Google.

**Searching Flickr** There are many ways to search for photos on the Internet, and there are a fair number of photo sites. One of the oldest and best, but of less interest to the general public now, is Flickr, owned by Yahoo. You can simply go to the Flickr site at <http://www.flickr.com> and search for any photos you would like from among the over five billion they say they have. Or just click on one of the photos you like that they are featuring at the moment. That will lead you

to all the collections of that particular photographer. When I do this, I realize two things: There is a large and diverse world out there, and there are some very good non-professional photographers. In fact, sites like Flickr make things hard for the professionals who used to be able to charge several hundred dollars for a particular photo sold to a magazine. Now the magazines whenever they want a particular type of photo, check the photo sites like Flickr, and, if they find what they want, they offer the amateur a fraction of what they would have had to pay the professional for the photo. And, with these modern high-end digital cameras, the amateurs can produce, when they are lucky, something as good as a professional.

So, why mention Flickr? After all, it is old news. Well, I decided sometime back to write a program that would allow me to more easily search the Flickr database of photos for ones that interest me. Flickr makes this possible by providing an API for doing this. You can find the API at <http://www.flickr.com/services/api/>. To use the API you need to request an API Key from Yahoo, which is easy and, as far as I can tell, automatically granted on request. And, of course, you need to be able to program in some programming language.

Perhaps six months back, I did all of the above and wrote such a program for a Windows desktop computer and for a Windows 7 phone. As of yet, however, I haven't bothered to put the WP7 app at the phone marketplace since I have made so little on the apps I have previously put there. However, with the arrival of Window 8 for tablets and the desktop, I think I might do better on that platform and have been working on modifying the Windows application for Windows 8.

As an example of using the program, you can put in a search term like Manhattan or New Orleans, set the most recent date to consider, such as today, select how many thumbnails to retrieve at a time, say, 25, and press the Search button. You then receive a collection of 25 thumbnails, where clicking on one will display a larger version of the image along with pertinent facts like: Title, Description, Owner, Longitude & Latitude, Posting Date, Camera and Host Computer. You may also download the largest version of the photo permitted. The Picture of the Month was retrieved in this manner. ♦

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

**ISO files** – Bob showed a small, very popular program for creating and burning ISO image files using Img-Burn.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Bob for the excellent presentation.



TPCUG Forum page:

<http://www.linux.tpcug.org/forums/index.php>

