Bits of Blue

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

Meeting

Ubuntu Linux

**by
Merle Nicholson**

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

6:30 PM

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: This month's meeting topic is Ubuntu Linux presented by TPCUG secretary Merle Nicholson. Bob LaFave will conduct the usual Windows SIG for the first 30 minutes of the meeting.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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This month Merle Nicholson covers working with Windows 8.1 and modifying it to suit his needs, even though he is to give a presentation on Ubuntu Linux at our next meeting. Ron Weinberg tells us why he no longer feels the need for a desktop computer and has purchased a Windows 8.1 touch-screen laptop as his main computer. And Doug Mullis has provided us with the 2013 financial report. In the remaining space allotted to me, I will write about various problems I have encountered.

In January, I wrote about a problem with my new Microsoft Surface Pro 2 computer that was caused by an update in mid-December. The problem was a UEFI boot screen loop when you pressed the power button to boot the device. UEFI stands for Unified Extensible Firmware Interface, which is meant to replace the BIOS. It has been around for some time, but the Surface Pro 2 is the first computer I have had that uses it. If you would like to learn about UEFI, simply do a search. Personally, I have suffered enough with it where, when booting my Surface,

March Meeting: To be announced

Bits of Blue is published by the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., a State of Florida registered non-profit corporation, to provide educational information about personal computer systems to its members. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 3492, Tampa, FL 33601-3492.

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

Technical information found in this publication is not necessarily compatible with your hardware and software, plus other errors or misprints could occur from time to time. Therefore, the use of programs, commands, functions or anything of a technical nature appearing in this publication will be at your own risk.

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

WE CERTAINLY HOPE YOU WILL

MAIL YOUR CHECK AND ANY
ADDRESS OR NAME CHANGES TO:

TAMPA PC USERS GROUP
PO BOX 3492
TAMPA, FL 33601-3492

$25 Individual $35 Family
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Minutes of the January Meeting

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) opens our monthly meeting. 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 covered a variety of PC subjects: Service Pack 8.1; his personal computer software PaperPort and Power2Go; how Mozilla Backup for Firefox and Thunderbird recovered both his Windows 8 desktop and notebook; and a comparison of Windows 7 Virtual Machine running XP on VirtualPC vs Virtualbox. Our thanks to Bob for a well-prepared and interesting discussion.

Our presenter this month was our own long-time vice-president, Kevan Sheridan, who demonstrated Google Chromebook and the features available from Google. He started out with the communications features: Google Voice, Hangouts, Snapchat and Pinterest. He then showed us calls using Voice from/to three cellphones and two PCs using Windows 7 and his Chromebook. Mary Sheridan participated from home, Bob LaFave, Brian Lance and myself participated using a combination of cell phones and PCs with cameras. It was an interesting and informative session.

John Witmer, our president, then reviewed the O'Reilly book offers and how to download e-versions in mobi, PDF and other formats and encouraged the membership to participate. John concluded with describing the next FACUG Technology Conference. ◆

Windows 8.1 Adventures

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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Mail: I just want a mail client in Windows 8.1. I don't want yet another online account, and Microsoft is making this hard for me. I don't want yet another email account, thank you. If I type in "MAIL" in the Search box, I'm led through a path that leads to Outlook.com, which insists that I establish an account at Microsoft. (Here's where I disclose that I already have one, many years old that I do use often, but not for mail, not for cloud, just some professional software accounts.) And I do not want to tie my PC activity to an online account … anyone's. Apparently Outlook.com will handle ("Import") POP accounts, but not until I enter my Microsoft account.

Ok, here's where my guys would say "Thunderbird, Duh!", and I'll go there but first I'll search for my old Windows 7 solution and see if it works. http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-live/download-windows-essentials is where I can get Windows Essentials 2012. It's SO 2012! It first installed a .NET 3.5 package before downloading this installer:
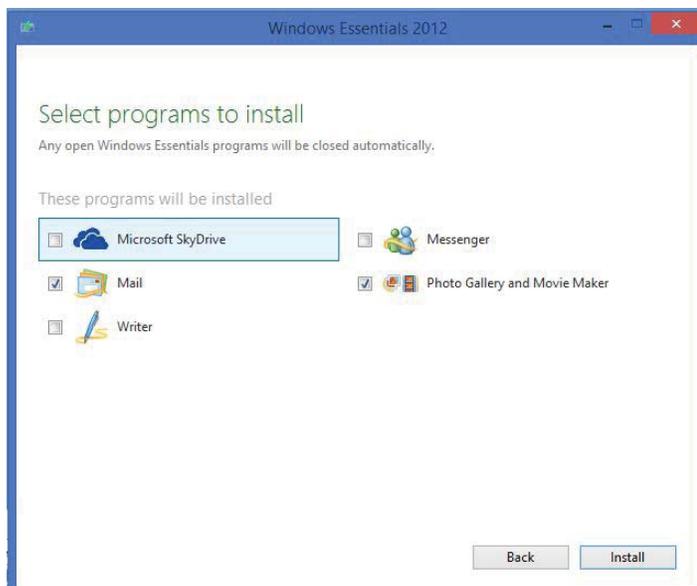
While I'm at it, I'll get Photo Gallery and Movie Maker.
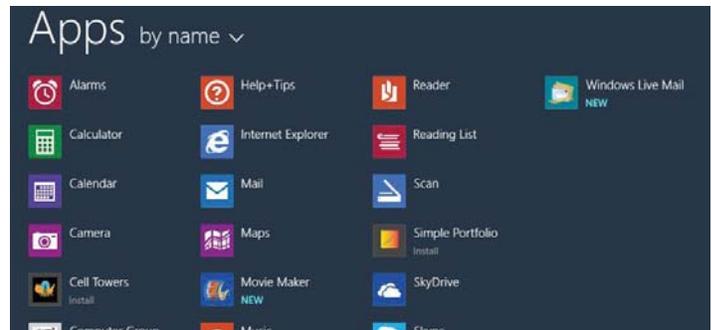
We're off and running. Wasn't hard was it?
While Windows Live mail is running and waiting for
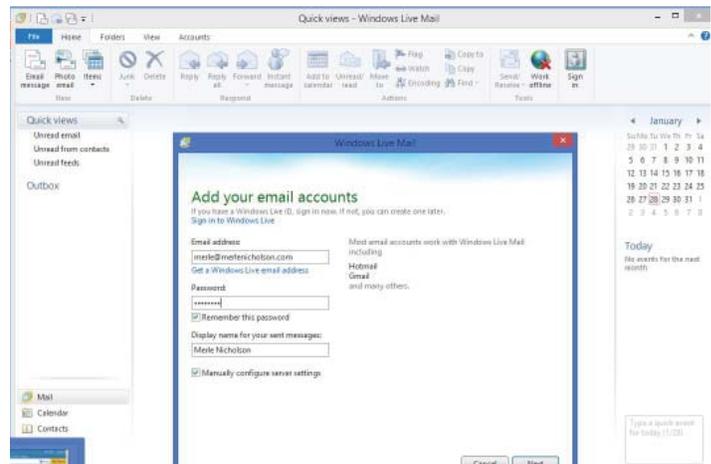
your POP account settings, just go to the item on the taskbar, right-click and select "Pin to Taskbar". While we're at it let's turn the Reading Pane off. Under the tab "View", select the drop-down little arrow next to "Reading Pane", and select "Off". You should NEVER have a reading pane on. That's because you can't delete a harmful email without opening it. If the reading pane is on, it will open when you click on that email to delete it. That's what you don't want.

I realize this email client runs from the 8.1 desktop and not from Tile World, but you can have email without a Microsoft account if that's what you desire. I've never been a big fan of Windows Live Mail because they "flattened" out the appearance – eliminating color – and for me making it hard to read from.

A good alternative is Mozilla Thunderbird at http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/thunderbird. After installing, it will make an offer to you for a new email service. Click on the "Skip this and use my existing email".

Adventures........Continued from page 3

When you put your email address in, it does a credible job of finding the account settings. It found all mine, and I didn't have to change anything except "Leave messages on Server". F8 will turn the reading pane on/off. I like a couple of features in Thunderbird. One is that it makes use of tabs to read messages. Even in Windows 8.1, it doesn't have the flat, hard-to-read appearance you find in Windows Live mail. As I did with Live Mail, while it was open I pinned it to the taskbar. When you right-click on the taskbar, there are two tasks: "Write New Message" and "Open Address Book". Live Mail has four similar tasks.

Mozilla Thunderbird
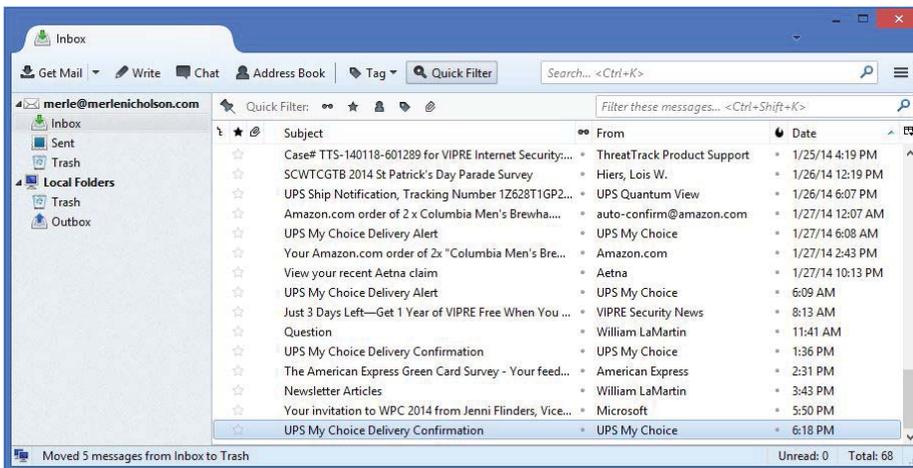
Having both email clients on the PC is interesting. Both want to be the default, so I guess I'll let them fight it out.

ISO FILES: I recently built a new Windows 8.1 computer for my younger son. He bought some new parts; case, motherboard and CPU, and I pulled other parts out of bins in my closet, built it and shipped it to him. It was my second 8.1 computer built recently, so I was able to configure the software pretty quickly. I had to resist the temptation to "customize" it the way I would do one of my own. This case is but 4-1/8 inches tall, the size of a stereo receiver. It has no optical drive, which posed some interesting installation problems. One was creating a Windows 8.1 installation onto a bootable USB drive, and the other was providing him with two other DVDs needed when he had no drive. He isn't remotely challenged by this but I thought I

would resolve it before it got to him. The answer really lies in .iso files.

.iso files are simply images of optical disks. You can increasingly buy downloadable software in this form. If you start with the physical CD/DVD/BD media, making an .iso file is easy with little utility programs like ImgBurn (at http://www.imgburn.com). And with ImgBurn you can recreate the physical media from the .iso file.
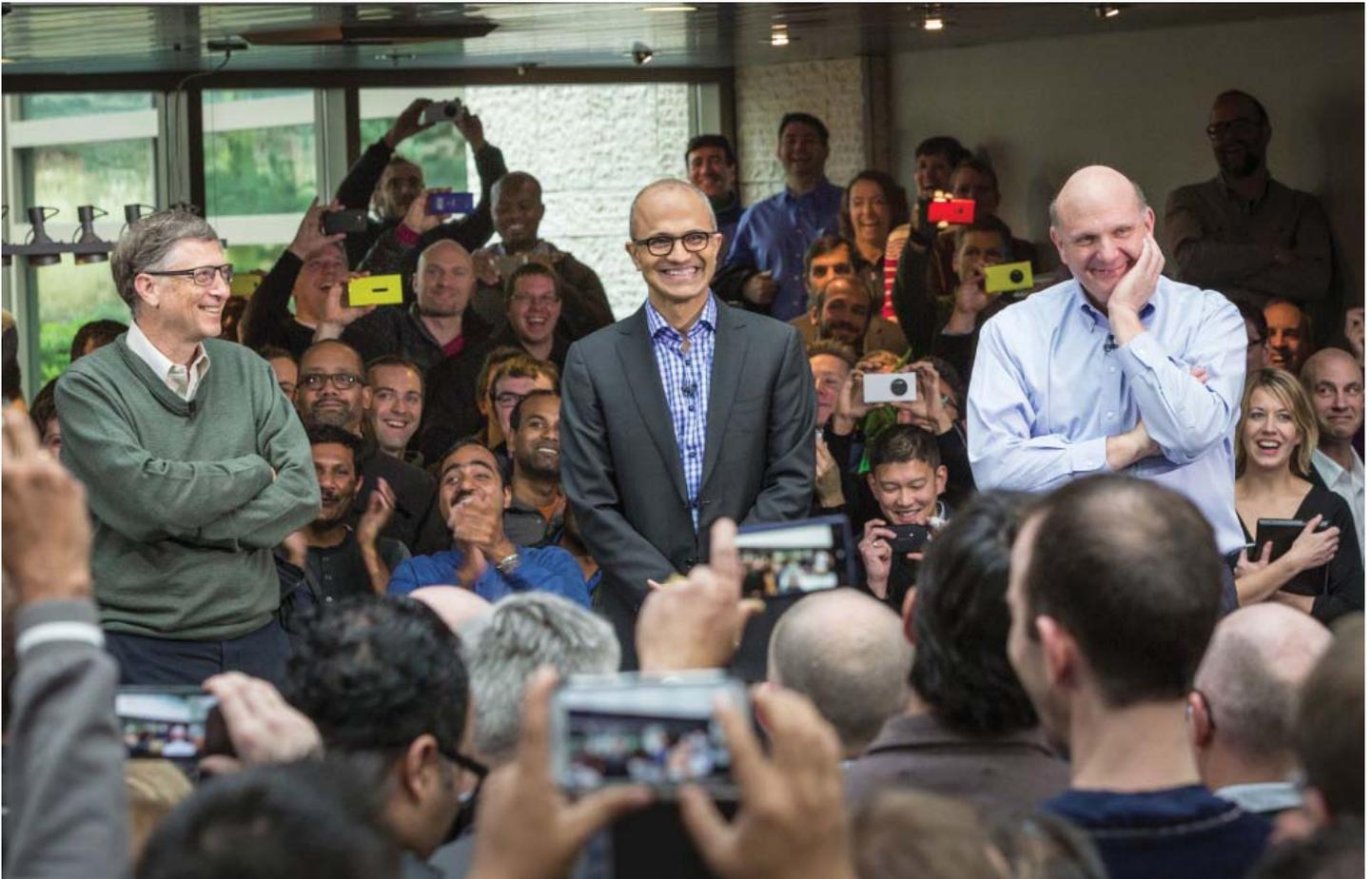
If you have the .iso it makes sense that you could skip the physical media entirely and "mount" the .iso file directly into a "virtual" drive (a software simulation of a physical drive), and indeed you can.

As it turns out, Windows 8.1 will mount .iso files automatically without any software. From what I read, it will not do audio or video format files; I have not tested that. If you want to mount video or audio disks, see the following paragraph for the Windows 7 solution. In any case the 8.1 problem is solved with no effort on my part other than some research time. I included the .iso images of the two DVD's on the flash drive.

For Windows 7, I have been using a nice little product called "Daemon Tools Lite" for many years – a nice, free program from http://www.daemon-tools.cc/products/dtLite (see screen capture on page 6). It acts like a CD/DVD/BD player. The file extension .iso (and optionally many other types) is associated to the player, so a double-click on the .iso file auto loads it into the drive. You can configure the drive to auto-load on Windows startup. You can configure it to auto-load the same .iso file on startup. A word of caution; there are imbedded links to game sites in this app. I was first aware of it when my antivirus blocked the installer as an advertising application. Looking at it, I think it's benign; at least my Vipre antivirus doesn't protest when I went to one of the links. You can collapse the pane where the game site links are shown. The paid versions of this app are too steep in my opinion. I'll

Internet Picture of the Month

Microsoft has a new CEO

From the New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/05/technology/microsoft-names-engineering-executive-as-new-chief.html?hp. From left, Bill Gates, the first CEO, Satya Nadella, the new CEO and Steven A. Ballmer, the previous CEO, shown at a Microsoft event Feb 4. Funny thing, no one is using an iPhone to take a photo.

February's Links

Tampa PC Users Group	http://www.tpcug.org
TPCUG Newsletter Win 8 app	http://apps.microsoft.com/windows/en-us/app/computer-group-newsletters/64b111b8-0c55-4f76-8728-709dbf32dc2b
Antoine's Restaurant, New Orleans	http://www.antoines.com/
Vox Media	http://www.voxmedia.com/
Frequency Allocations	http://www.ntia.doc.gov/files/ntia/publications/spectrum_wall_chart_aug2011.pdf

stick with the ad-supported free version. ◆
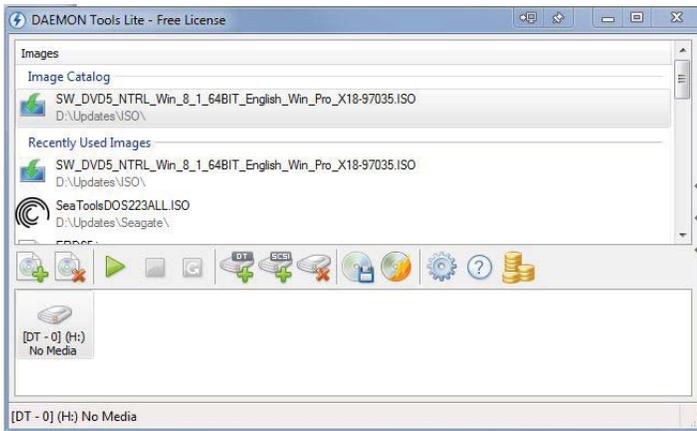
it would produce the UEFI screen (which looks like an old DOS screen and is not supposed to appear), I would have the option to save any of the two possible changes having to do with Secure Boot and then continue. No matter what I did, the computer would most often come back to the same screen. If I did that enough, five or six times, then possibly I would see Windows 8. Or if I pressed the power button until the computer shut down and then restarted, I may be lucky and have Windows 8 appear--or I may not.

I tried all solutions suggested on the Internet (I was not the only person experiencing the problem), but none fixed anything. I contacted Microsoft technical support, and in a week's time they did not produce a solution. There were several other problems caused by the update that I had been able to fix, but this one seemed intractable. So my solution was to phone Microsoft customer service and request a return. The lady who answered cheerfully said she would put that through and I would receive a return label within 48 to 72 hours via email. When the label did not arrive, I phoned again and spoke with someone who sounded like the same cheerful lady; she made the same promise – with the same result: no label in 72 hours. A third try produced the same result. Enough. I contacted someone I knew at the local Microsoft office, and he said he would escalate my request. Within two

Goodbye Desktop Towers

By Ron Weinberg, Member-At-Large
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The April 8, 2014 support deadline for XP fast approaching and my old reliable and powerful custom Dell desktop's hard drive showing signs of wear, time to consider a replacement. Holiday season specials were overflowing.

Dell no longer seems to offer the wide customization options with which they formerly excelled. HP still offers some, and there is a vast array of ready built systems from Lenovo, ASUS, and Acer, etc. Of course, complete custom built or build your own are still available.

Times have changed. The explosion of tablets with thousands of apps has made the PC less important for many. But those of us who are a little bit more involved in computing still need the PC over a tablet.

The days of the big box tower with large power supplies, extra card slots and massive memory are past – such items no longer needed except by a few gamers, professionals, and serious enthusiasts. I have no need for heavy-duty graphic cards for heavy gaming, art or photo/movie editing.

Today's mid- and high-range laptops easily outperform our best older desktops. Their graphics are more than adequate for most tasks.

After due consideration, I decided I could best be served by a Windows 8 Touch Laptop that offers portability and compactness, rather than a big screen All-In-One desk model.

Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop Elements and Premier Elements are the only programs I must purchase. The latter two will satisfy most of my editing needs. Mine are old (Office 2003, Photoshop Elements 5.0, Premier Elements 3.0) and needed to be upgraded in any case.

TPCUG FINANCIAL REPORT
FOR 2013
Submitted by Doug Mullis, Treasurer

TPCUG STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES AND BANK BALANCE

2013 INCOME

Membership Dues (24 Single + 5 Family)	$	775.00
Door Prize/Auction Receipts		43.00
Amazon Link Commissions		688.48
TOTAL INCOME	$	1,506.48

2013 EXPENSES

Newsletter Postage	$	184.00
Newsletter Printing (9 Mos in 2013)		323.45
FACUG Dues		25.00
APCUG Dues		0.00
Florida Annual Corporate Fee		61.25
Web Site Hosting Fee (12 Months)		181.08
P O Box Rental (fee increase)		76.00
December Holiday Party Costs		276.13
Refreshments (Cookies)		5.48
PayPal Usage Fee (5 Payments @ $0.85 ea)		4.25
TOTAL EXPENSES	$	1,186.64

NET INCOME FOR 2013 $ 319.84

CASH BALANCE PER BOOKS – START OF 2013 $ 7,241.02
CASH BALANCE PER BOOKS – END OF 2013 $ 7,560.86

(No Bank Account Reconciling Items for Beginning or End of Year)

My reliable B&W LaserJet 2100 Printer is compatible and already networked. My old Color DeskJet 895CXi will work via USB.

There is no Windows 7 or 8 driver for my old Canon LiDE 50 Desktop Scanner. Like other devices no longer supported after XP, they have mostly been replaced by newer models and, although they still perform, must be sacrificed to so called progress (i.e. planned obsolescence).

While I have already purchased a new laptop, it has not been my intention to extol the virtues of one or another, but rather to comment on desktops' demise as they slowly fade away. ◆

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☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

hours I had been emailed a label. Was it his request or just a coincidence or both? Anyway, I had the label, and the next day the defective Surface was on the way back to Microsoft. About a week later, I had a credit for that Surface Pro 2 in my credit card account, which was nice since, when the first lady said I would be receiving a return label, I immediately purchased a replacement at the online Microsoft Store because I knew the devices were in short supply. In fact, the one I wanted, the 512 GB version, was the only one not out of stock, and as I write this the 128 GB version is the only one in stock. So for a little over two weeks I had two Surface Pro 2 512 GB devices on my credit card.

Now all is well, the new device is fine (please, no bad updates) and is a pleasure to use. It is a real computer with a detachable keyboard in the footprint of a tablet. It has great battery life, seven or eight hours in use, and runs all my Windows desktop programs in addi-tion to the Win 8 apps. One of those apps is Computer Group Newsletters, the updated version of which allows you to view all our newsletters from 1984 to 2014. And there is no room to relate other problems.
◆

to I-275

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