Bits of Blue

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

Meeting

The Future of User Groups

by
Doc Dockerty of the
Tampa Bay Computer Society

Thursday, April 10, 2014

6:30 PM

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: On Thursday, not Wednesday, Doc Dockerty from the user group across the bay will give us his take on the future of user groups. 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
william@lamartin.com

The perennial question: What to write about this month to fill the newsletter with something that might be of interest. Merle Nicholson's and Bob Davis' articles are greatly appreciated. My first thought for the space remaining was to write about the difficulties I had in getting a wireless connection in the hotel in which we were staying while our house was fumigated for drywood termites, along with the attendant problem of sending a mass email merge to 400 residents of my neighborhood concerning some neighborhood matters that it is my responsibility to publicize as the neighborhood webmaster.

To make a long story short, for two days in the hotel I could not connect to their wireless network with my Microsoft Surface Pro 2 running Win 8.1, my HP laptop that has both Win 8 and Win 7, or my Windows Phone (the phone does have a cellular connection and I could use the Internet that way, but I do not have the ability to use the phone as a wireless hot spot). To add insult to injury, my wife could connect fine with her iPad. Now

May Meeting: Blain Barton from Microsoft

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
$60 Corporate = 3 employees + $20 each add'l employee

Go to our web site http://www.tpcug.org and click on the
About Us | Join link to join or renew online

Check the address label for your renewal month

Friend of the User Group

We acknowledge
Pepin Distributing Co.
for their support

Affiliations

Florida Association of User Groups

Association of Personal Computer User Groups

Minutes of the March Meeting

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

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 in answering questions from the members: IP address conflict, USB disconnecting problem, and an Internet camera access.

Bob LaFave also gave the monthly presentation, "A little bit of this and a little bit of that". He showed a new revision of Sysinternals Process Explorer, which many of us are familiar with. They have added a feature that allows an Internet lookup of any process to get a new "virus total". This can be very helpful in chasing down an infected computer.

The next subject was SkyDrive, the MS cloud file storage service, and how to increase available storage space. Bob gave a demo of TrueCrypt, which encrypts files and folders, and 7-zip, a popular zip utility that also has the ability to encrypt and add a password, which is required to open the file. Last was DockLock, another interface to encrypt files. ◆

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

that was bad. A check with the desk informed me that they had many complaints other than mine, but nothing seemed to be getting done, and the poor beleaguered desk person could only pass on the complaints to management. Apparently management did not realize that to many people nowadays a wireless connection is as important as having hot water. I thought about going to a local Panera Bread or some other such location to get a connection but opted instead to go to my own backyard, sit at a lawn table and do my mass mail merge from there using my own wireless Internet connection. The only problem I had was convincing my Surface Pro that it indeed had an Internet

Last Chance For Windows XP

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

April 8, 2014, about the same date you get this newsletter, is the date your computer explodes. No, not really, but, if you're one of the millions of XP users, you can get a step ahead to protect yourself. And I'm here with some suggestions that may keep you out of trouble.

The event really affects three Microsoft products: the OS - **Windows XP, Microsoft Security Essentials and Office 2003**.

Windows XP. As of April 8, there will be no updates issued for the operating system. If you've been watching your updates as they come in, there are always changes to the operating system that are issued for security improvements. That's because the bad guys out there are always finding new ways to exploit your system, and finding and attacking the operating system itself pays off for them. So Microsoft has been keeping up with this and rewriting the code to block attacks. So it's never only been about improving your antivirus software, it's patching the OS as well.

Outside of replacing your OS altogether, which I will address here, there are a few things you can do to keep it safer. **1) Get up to date now, today.** Install all Windows updates. **2) Get the machine running well and virus-free.** You may have to get an expert to do a tune-up. That means removing startup items, uninstalling services you don't need and optimizing the hard drive, replacing the hard drive or installing more memory. Do not buy or use any "tune-up" software. There is no such thing. The solution to a badly running computer is less software, NEVER more software. **3) BUY A QUALITY ANTI-VIRUS**. You can no longer use Microsoft Security Essentials, and I'll go into that later. Buy a well supported, full-featured "Internet" version of a quality product. The "Internet" versions will have a good firewall, and Windows XP's native firewall is primitive, to say the least. Look at antivirus reviews - PC Mag does a good job on reviews. If you

have a weak machine with only 1G memory, you may want to focus on those that have a lightweight footprint. Look at the major brands first. You'll have to spend some money here. 4) BACK UP. Make a good, and I mean good, full image backup of your system. I recommend an Acronis Recovery CD, even an old version. This has both backup and recovery capability. Make the boot CD (or USB flash drive) from the Acronis software. Then use that bootable backup CD (USB) to actually do a new full disk backup to a suitable external storage device. I usually use an internal hard drive and SATA Enclosure Docking Station, because I have them, but any external USB or eSATA hard drive backup will do fine. They have become very inexpensive, and you really don't have an excuse.

Microsoft Security Essentials on Windows XP. On April 8, 2014, you will no longer be getting new virus signatures for this. It will continue to run, but an antivirus that is not being updated regularly is no antivirus at all. Time to step up with the big boys. Spend a little money and get the best because you're out there all by yourself and security patches to the OS have been discontinued.

Just yesterday, I had to do a refurb of a friends laptop with XP. I had just done a thorough tuneup on it last September - six months ago, and I had replaced his hard drive because it was old, with a 60G SSD and had made a full image backup to that old drive that I had removed. He had acquired some ransomware that had hijacked his whole system. His fault - the ransomware mimicked Microsoft Security Essentials saying he had a virus and to install a PC Repair program to fix it. He did that and then it asked for $30 to do the "final" repair. Since he had the backup I made, along with an Acronis boot disk, we were golden.

Then I had to install the 37 MS updates for the last six months. There were two security updates installed that interested me. One is a notification that runs with every startup of the computer that warns of the impending loss of support; the other is a similar warning that Microsoft Security Essentials will no longer be updated. I also installed a trial version of Vipre Internet Security and made him promise to pay for register-

ing it. I selected this one because it does a good job of real-time protection and scanning your Internet pages prior to opening; it has a very lightweight footprint for his 2GB machine and a very aggressive and sometimes annoying firewall. It isn't rated very high for removal of virus that has already infected a machine. Reviews seem to rate antivirus for the capability to detect and remove virus from a test computer, and I'm not too sure that's right. Virus removal software is pretty much free. I'm not sure I value a product that will remove a virus after allowing it to get on the machine to begin with.

Office 2003. Same problem. They have been providing security updates all along and it's ending now. They have replaced this product three times over, in 2007, 2010 and 2013. This is a shame because millions of people consider Office 2003 to be the best and most usable version of all, and the installed user base is enormous, especially in the workplace. Remember that for 2007 they introduced the ribbon interface. That seems to work fine for inexperienced users to find the most commonly used controls, but for an advanced user and for program developers it just gets in the way (perhaps except for Word). They could have retained support for standard menus without its getting in the way for ribbon users. Kind of the way Windows 8.1 does with crippling parts of the desktop. On the Microsoft sites, they state clearly that Office 2003 will not run on Windows 8.1. I have found that to be not true, at least with Access. There certainly is nothing stopping you from installing it fully. There are plenty of excellent alternatives for Office, and I don't intend to worry about loss of support for this.

What are the alternatives? There are Microsoft sites dedicated to helping you upgrade your old computer to Windows 8.1 for $199 retail. ($102.21 at Amazon). They suggest that for the x86 version (32-bit) the minimum memory required is only 1G, and it is 2G for the 64-bit version. You have to find out what the installed memory is, whether the system will support 64 bit, otherwise use 32 bit. There is a compatibility program for XP that is designed to determine what hardware and software will not make the transition. Their website, http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ en-us/xp/end-of-xp-support.aspx, states: "Keep the familiar desktop you love."

Another alternative is to install Ubuntu or one of its many relatives: Mint, Kubuntu, Lubuntu. Chances are very good that your old laptop will be supported very well and will boot up and run faster than it ever did in Windows. I have configured my spouse's computer with Ubuntu very successfully. Everything she needs or could ever want is available, all at no cost. I have configured a spare computer with Kubuntu for my own use. Again, I want for nothing (except live sync with Google Drive, but that's not a deal killer). Both machines work well on my network along with several printers and Windows computers. Ubuntu's desktop is very Apple Mac-like, and Kubuntu (Ubuntu + KDE desktop) is very Windows-like. The Ubuntu interface has become very graphical, and you can probably get everything you want without ever using the command line interface. And it's free, attractive and easy to use and free.

Buy a new computer. Yes, and this should be seriously considered. Interesting thing right now is that Windows 7 computers are plentiful after 18 months of Windows 8.1 on the market. The manufacturers have bitterly complained that the business sales are depressed because businesses will not buy Windows 8.1. So there is a new agreement made. Computers will be available for another month or so with Windows 7 Home and also Windows 7 Pro, after which the Home version will be discontinued. Windows 7 Professional will be available for another year until March or April 2015. Speculation is that this may be extended if the sales are good. You'll see that especially Dell flyers are offering Windows 7 machines for business use. The downside is that these business computers' prices are pretty high.

Most people I've talked to that have transitioned to Windows 8.1 say they have adapted to it pretty well. I think that having a touchscreen is needed for a frustration free experience. The premium you pay for touchscreen on new computers is pretty much gone now.

There is a Windows 8.1 revision 1 coming out soon

Internet Picture of the Month
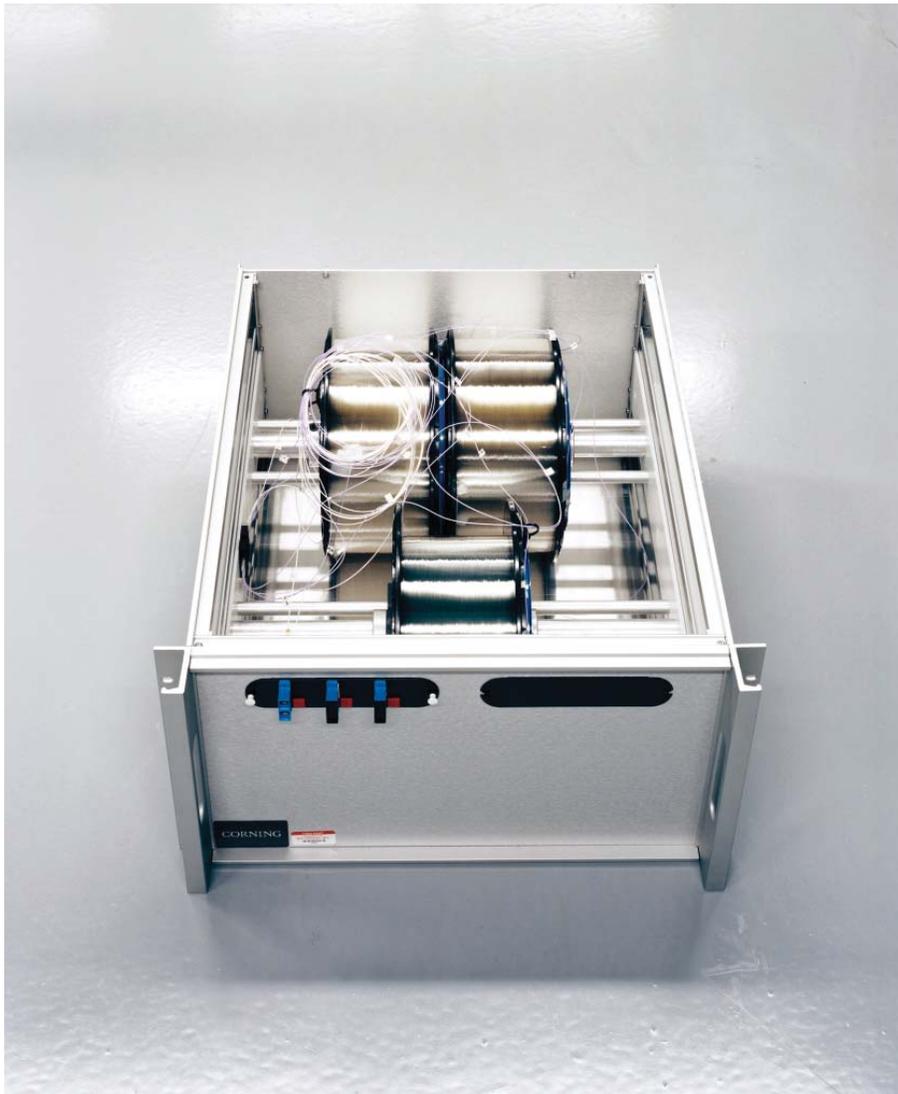
Slowing down high speed traders

From the New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/06/magazine/flash-boys-michael-lewis.html?hp. This box kept at a data center in Secaucus, N.J., contains a 38-mile coil of fiber-optic cable that creates a slight delay in the processing of orders, which levels the playing field among traders.

April's Links

Tampa PC Users Group	http://www.tpcug.org
Tampa Bay Computer Society	http://tampa-bay.net/
brokercheck - FINRA	http://www.finra.org/Investors/ToolsCalculators/BrokerCheck/
Microsoft Security Scanner	http://www.microsoft.com/security/scanner/en-us/default.aspx
VIPRE Rescue	http://www.vipreantivirus.com/live/
Kaspersky Virus Removal Tool	http://www.kaspersky.com/antivirus-removal-tool-register

The PC That Wasn't Broken

By Robert Davis, Tampa PC Users Group
robd234@gmail.com

It was a cold morning in February. I went into my office, turned on the window shaker heater, and hit the power on for my PC. After I hit the power on button, I sipped some coffee and waited, and waited, and waited. My menu program never came on the screen. Nothing came on the screen. I thought about the last time I backed up my data - probably weeks ago. About five minutes later, I hit the reset button hoping maybe there was a glitch in the startup. To my amazement, the screen lit up. The PC booted up but it just did not bring up my main menu as it usually does. After the PC booted up, I tested every program I could think of. Everything worked fine.

My PC has a digital thermometer on the front panel. I noticed it was reading about 76 degrees. I thought maybe now something had to warm up before it would boot up. So I tested my theory. At first, I found if when I powered up the temperature was less than 72 degrees, the PC would not start up. If I let it sit and warm up to 73 degrees or so, it would boot up but still would not come up with my menu program like before. A few days later, I noticed it had to be up to 75 degrees or so to make the reboot work. I was getting desperate.

After doing some listening and watching, I suspected the monitor. The PC always sounded like it was booting up normally. I could hear the hard drive clicking, and I could see the access light flashing for a while and then go quiet - just like a normal boot up. The PC was coming up normal every time. It was the monitor that was failing! I replaced the old 17" LCD monitor with a new 23" LCD Acer monitor. Presto everything is back to normal! Apparently, my old monitor had to warm up to work. That's about an eight on the 0-10 weirdo scale. ◆

connection since I had tried so often in the hotel and received the message of there being no connection. It seems the device has some sort of memory of such things. But I finally got the job done.

What else has been happening? I have essentially brought a long term project to completion. The project was gathering historical information about my Tampa neighborhood. Using Census data, old Tampa City directories, historical maps and photos, as well as old Tampa Tribunes, I have been able to piece together a history of the neighborhood that includes a pretty precise estimate of when each of the 394 houses were built ranging from 1880 up until 2012. We refer to our neighborhood as Hyde Park, which is actually two subdivisions, West Hyde Park (1906) and Morrison Grove (1910), situated in South Tampa and bounded by Swann Avenue on the north, Brevard Avenue on the east, Bayshore Boulevard on the south and Rome Avenue on the west. In addition, Hyde Park is the name of a pre-1900 subdivision immediately south of the University of Tampa, and people for years have referred to the area west of the Hillsborough River, south of Kennedy Boulevard and east of Howard Avenue as Hyde Park. So that name means different things to different people.

Anyway, our neighborhood decided that this year would be a good year to celebrate 100 years of existence, and that prompted me to try to bring my research to a close and post all my findings at our neighborhood website, http://www.oldhydeparkfl.org. The specific page that is the window to this information is http://www.oldhydeparkfl.org/HouseDates.aspx. At this page you will find links to much of the data I have collected. To the casual observer, I suppose the maps will be of most interest and possibly also the old Tampa Tribune articles.

One of the maps is reproduced on page 7. It displays the date ranges for the build dates of all the houses in our neighborhood. To see the different colors, you really need to view this newsletter online, or better yet, view it via the neighborhood website link above. By the way, this is quite a large map, 4464 x 3586 pixels.

West Hyde Park
and
Morrison Grove

Estimated build dates

1880 - 1910
1911 - 1915
1916 - 1939
1940 - 1975
1976 - present

William LaMartin, March 27, 2014

Comments.......Continued from page 6

There is a companion map at the site that instead of a colored circle actually lists the address and build date of each house. How I created these maps is a story in itself. Many years ago, I used a Microsoft mapping program and Visual Studio to do a geocoding of each address to get its exact latitude and longitude. I then stored that in an Access database along with all the historical information I subsequently gathered on each address. The final step was to write another program in Visual Studio to place a color-coded circle on each house in the map indicating in which date range it fell and put all this on a map at a web page. At full resolution, the map covered more than one computer screen, and to capture it I had to do around 10 separate screen captures and then piece them together in Photoshop to produce the map you see. A similar process was used to produce the map that lists each address and its estimated build date.

As to the old Tampa Tribune articles, I made a mockup of 15 pages of an old Tampa Tribune with 17 inch x 22 inch pages in Adobe InDesign using articles I had discovered about our neighborhood – hundreds of them – and then saved it as a PDF file. I first tried putting that at the neighborhood site, but the downloading from there was just too slow. So I moved it, and the link on the house date page at the neighborhood site actually points you to a file at my Microsoft Azure cloud storage account. ◆

Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.
P. O. Box 3492
Tampa, FL 33601-3492

☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

that will appear in the Windows 8.1 update that makes more small changes to the user interface. It's mostly changes to help make mouse users find things easier. I'm sure there will be more changes coming, but slowly.

Endnote: I'm using Google Docs to write this article, and the file is being saved to my Google Drive. To send it out to William LaMartin, our newsletter editor, I download it from Google Drive to the download folder. Google Drive makes the conversion from Google Docs format to Office .docx for William. There are a half dozen different formats, including PDF. ◆

to I-275

Hillsborough Ave

56th Street

TPCUG Meeting Site
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th Street

Harney Road

I-4

Martin Luther King Blvd

50th Street

to Tampa

N

Columbus Ave