



Bits of Blue

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



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November in Tampa

Meeting

What's New in Hardware

by

Steven Singer

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

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Meeting Preview: Steven Singer with the latest in computer hardware.

Merle Nicholson will lead the 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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In this newsletter, Merle Nicholson tells us about new phone trends. And then he stops way too soon. Doesn't he realize we have a newsletter to fill, and no one has sent me anything, and that I really have nothing to contribute since I put all that in last month's newsletter. But necessity is the mother of insertion, as they say. And, thus, I have pieced together a few things that I observed or did this month that are computer related.

First I tell you about the amazing new computer that Microsoft will bring forth in the first part of 2017. It is named the Surface Studio, and it is a beauty with a beauty of a price. It is aimed at the creative crowd according to the video I watched. So it is obviously not meant for me

Comments.....Continued on page 2

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December Meeting: Holiday Party

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Minutes of the October Meeting

*By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) opens our monthly meeting. Merle Nicholson, the SIG moderator, 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.

In October, Merle did the presentation as well as the SIG, and since they were the same subject, Windows 10 Tips, the SIG simply continued. Of the attendees, only two people did not have or use Windows 10. Merle demonstrated how to tell the update level of your Windows 10 OS, and explained the history of the two: 1511 and 1607. Next were complete instructions on the System restore points, how to check if Microsoft update had turned it off and how to reinitialize System Restore. Then new changes to how system updates are handled. The next subject was drivers, their importance and how to manage drivers; more specifically how to turn driver updates off without affecting security updates. Finally with William LaMartin's help a demonstration of Windows 10 Quick Access, yet another remote control, windows third remote control program. William controlled Merle's computer after receiving an invitation. Lastly, Merle shared some pictures and narrative about Cape Canaveral in the early 60s. ♦

Comments.....Continued from page 1

Another new item is the quite remarkable Windows phone from HP named the Elite X3. At least that is the opinion of the writer who reviewed it for PC World. I provide a link to the review, which will be more easily followed in the online version of the newsletter.

With all these new devices from Microsoft and such things as the HP phone, it would appear that things are looking in the Microsoft World. I certainly hope so since I am a stock holder in the company. ♦

New Phone Trends – what you may not know

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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It's common to buy your smartphone from your carrier, and while in the past, some carriers discounted the price, they are now charging full retail; having “unbundled” the phone payment from the monthly service. Some may give other incentives if you ask. There are advantages to buying from sources other than the carrier, not the least of which is a much lower price.

I had decided to replace my (only) three year old Android phone and then I monitored prices for several months until I found what I wanted at a good price. I pretty much met my goals with last year's Moto X Pure. It's a 2015 model by Motorola (now owned by Lenovo) and was highly praised as a “flagship” smartphone when it came out. FedEx delivered it Oct 3; the tracking info originating in Wuhan, China. I paid \$289 + tax, shipping included. This is for a phone that cost \$600 last year.

Lenovo has replaced this model Moto X Pure with the 2016 Moto Z, a modular smartphone that comes in several varieties, including the Droid Z phones that are sold by Verizon. But they're still selling the X Pure and others (Moto G and Play) from the Motorola website.

I moved my VZ (Verizon) SIM card from the old phone to the new, waited for Google to transfer data and install apps, then waited for an OS upgrade to 6.0, installed the 64G micro SDXC card (\$20 at amazon), then formatted it as internal storage, and I was in business with a new 80G top-of-the-line (in 2015) smartphone. Motorola will upgrade it to the very latest OS (7.0 or 7.1) in December, but 6.0 is excellent. The VZ cloud restore from backup failed as expected, but all I lost was some old text messages that I was saving. No big loss, and Google had saved the rest. Motorola has a data transfer app, and even has a transfer program using NFC radio holding the two phones back-to-back if you want to wait 6 hours to do it.

Most of my search was based on a goal to release myself of Verizon's unhealthy need to control what devices are available to their customers. Specifically, they demand that they determine the apps that are installed (we call it bloatware), and their insistence that they control updates to the OS – late or not at all. The other goals I have is to never go on contract and to never pay full retail price, all of which means that although I love being on their network, I will never again be buying a phone from Verizon. There are excellent alternatives – more on that later.

The only manufacturer that is refusing to supply Verizon branded phones is Apple. If you will recall, Apple phones were not available from Verizon for perhaps a year later than AT&T because of Apple's refusal to allow Verizon to control updates. Obviously Verizon relented.

What makes it possible to buy a phone that works on Verizon but not supplied by them is a class of phone called “unlocked” and in addition one that is built to work on any carrier called “Universally Compatible”. I mean any carrier; Verizon, T-mo, Sprint, AT&T and European carriers as well. That means that the phone must have two kinds of cellular receiver/transmitters - GSM and CDMA, so that the carrier's SIM card determines the type of radio that is in use. The Google flagship phones - Nexus 5X and 6P, new Pixel and Pixel XL, The Moto G, the Moto X Pure, and a new one from LG the V20, all are “unlocked”, and multi-carrier and also international. Amazon calls these phones “Universally Compatible”. See Amazon <https://www.amazon.com/unlocked-cell-phones/b?ie=UTF8&node=2407749011> for lots of good information.

These phone's updates are controlled by the manufacturer the same way Apple has all along. You can count on the Nexus/Pixel getting the first releases when Google makes a major change to the OS. The advantage is that Verizon does elect to freeze your phone's OS at an older level. It's understandable because it's a lot of work. But it's unnecessary in the first place if they would leave their bloatware off. Really, who would pay a monthly subscription price for Verizon Navigator and be unremovable from the phone? John

Trends.....Continued from page 3

Madden NFL .. Really?

Since I started this article, VZ has started selling the Pixel and Pixel XL, “exclusively” from Verizon. But don’t be fooled by that; Google also sells the same model that is unlocked and “universally compatible” and works on VZ. No one has figured out the “exclusive” tag Verizon uses.

You do have to be careful when selecting an unlocked phone. There are models that are not universally compatible, almost always GSM-only (not Verizon) and there are “International, no warranty” versions made for Europe. You want to look for “US Warranty” and check out the published carrier compatibility. You can get one of these phones for as little as \$150*, and it will work on any US carrier. You can travel to Europe and pick up a prepaid SIM at the destination airport and use it during your European trip. Watch for models that are compatible with VZ except that it may not work on 4G. Not a deal-breaker for me.

* This \$150 phone is an excellent Moto G. It has ads on the lockscreen. The no-ads version is \$200. It may not handle VZ 4G. 4G US coverage isn’t 100% anyway and I don’t stream movie content.

If you travel to Europe and back, you may want to look for a phone that has two SIM slots, US and Europe. They’re available. ◆



Two Miscellaneous Items

*By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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On the left is a phone photo that was taken at a meeting at the Iron Yard in St. Petersburg last week showing me trying out a Microsoft HoloLens. I was able to view a shark, a hamster, a ballerina and an object that I can’t recall that floated in space and which with finger movements I was able to move to different places in the room. Quite interesting. At present the devices are \$3,000 and still under development. The hope is to be able to sell them at under \$1,000 and possibly as low as \$700.

The fellow doing the demonstration was working on an app for the device. This is one thing I have no interest in working with at the present, the steep price being one of the determining factors.

Miscellaneous.....Continued on page 5

Internet Picture of the Month



Halloween

It is Halloween around the world. This photo is from the photos section of the Wall Street Journal, <http://wsj.com>. The caption reads: “Dublin hosts the Bram Stoker Festival on Halloween. Mr. Stoker was an Irish author who wrote the novel ‘Dracula’ in 1897. Niall Carson/Zuma Press”

Miscellaneous.....Continued from page 4

The image at the top of page four is a screen capture from an Android phone of an app that Merle Nicholson requested I develop for him. He wanted a bicycle riding app that would display the instantaneous speed in big digits at the top and then two separate leg displays below that which would keep track of elapsed time, distance and average speed over the leg. The two leg displays needed to be able to be reset, fro-

zen (not paused but just have the display frozen) and paused. You also would be able to unfreeze and un-pause.

In the image, the data is from a short test walk I did where both leg displays are showing the same information. When finished, the leg displays would normally be used to display data from different legs. The app could also record walk data. ◆



Microsoft's New Hardware

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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On October 26, Microsoft did a presentation in New York City showcasing their new hardware products. That's correct; hardware products and not software. That would be the Surface Pro 4, the new version of the Surface Book, and a new and exciting item: The Surface Studio. Warning: You are not going to like the price, but you would love to have one. At least, I would love to have one. But, beside the high price, I am not sure where I would place it. I am already overloaded with two desktop Win 10 machines, a monitor for working both with my Win 10 phone using Continuum and with the Raspberry PI 2 (I think there is a 3 out now) and an iMac. All of which take up desk space around the house. However, the main thing that stops me from ordering one is the price, which starts at \$2,999. However, by the time I configured it as I would like, it would balloon to \$4,199.

To learn about the Surface Studio and the other items, you can view the presentation at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/octoberevent/microsoft-live-event>. This is a two-hour presentation. The Surface Book and Surface Studio starts at time point 1:11.

You may view the Surface Studio at the Microsoft site at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/surface/devices/surface-studio/overview>. And you may even preorder it for early 2017 delivery

It comes with either an i5 or an i7 processor with up to 32 GB Ram. It has a stunning 28-inch, 192 PPI, 4,500 x 3,000 pixel multi-touch display. The hard drive can go up to two terabytes. How they get all of that into what you see in the photo above is a mystery to me.

The presentation indicated it was aimed at the creative class, so I suppose that leaves me out. ♦



HP Elite X3 Windows Phone

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Just when you thought Windows Phone was dead, HP has revived it with the new HP Elite X3, a smartphone aimed not at the consumer but at the business world. You will not find it at the Verizon store since it is a GSM phone and not a CDMA one as Verizon would require. But that is not the only reason. The real reason is that it is not at present sold in any of the telecom phone stores. You may at present only purchase it from HP, starting at \$799 (and possibly ending at \$799) which, I will bet, is more than you want to pay for a phone.

To read about this phone at HP, go to <http://www8.hp.com/us/en/products/tablets/product-detail.html?oid>

=12740553#!tab=features.

To read about it at the more informative PC World site, go to <http://www.pcworld.com/article/3129416/phones/hp-elite-x3-review-this-could-be-the-last-great-windows-phone.html>.

This phone seems like a slight notch up from my Microsoft 750 XL Windows 10 Phone, both of which allow you to use it as a PC running Windows Universal apps by way of Microsoft Continuum as demonstrated in the photo above. And, this is the big one: If you are willing to pay more to use the HP Workspace in a virtualized cloud environment, the HP phone will even run Win32 apps – for \$579/year or \$939/year. Obviously this phone is meant for business, not the rest of us. But it points the way to what will be common in the future. ♦

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