



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



Vol. 29 No. 12

December 2016

December in Tampa

Meeting

Holiday Party

by

All of Us

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

6:30 PM

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

Meeting Preview: Annual Holiday Party.

Merle Nicholson may or may not lead the Windows SIG for the first 30 minutes of the meeting. It will depend on whether there are any questions.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
william@lamartin.com

Thankfully Merle Nicholson and Ron Weinberg have something to contribute this month, for I have very little to write about. I have been keeping busy, just not doing things that would provide much material for a newsletter.

I continue to refine the Android phone app that I am working on for Merle to keep track of his bike riding. However, I can't seem to finish because of all the other projects that pop up--some that have to be taken care of immediately and some that are all of a sudden new and interesting.

One of those that has to be taken care of immediately is handling the data that comes into PayPal from our annual home tour in my neighborhood of Hyde Park. Each year we have a home tour of six or seven houses on one of the streets in the neighbor-

Comments.....Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview	1
Editor's Comments	1
Minutes	2
Have ASpare Smartphone	3
Picture of the Month	5
Back From The Dead	6
Map	8

January Meeting: To be announced

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Vice President : Kevan Sheridan (kevan@tpcug.org)	813-988-6480
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Secretary: Merle Nicholson (merle@merlenicholson.com)	813-879-3602
Member at Large: Ron Weinberg (rswjbr@verizon.net)	813-960-4132
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APPOINTED (Volunteers)

Editor: William LaMartin (william@lamartin.com)	813-251-3817
Programs: Doug Mullis (dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)	813-234-9343

Home Page <http://www.tpcug.org>

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.

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Minutes of the November Meeting

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

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.

For the November meeting, Steven Singer of RDI did his regular hardware presentation after introducing his brother, Scott. Scott brought a very high-end, powerful Windows 10 desktop machine. The computer was specially designed for Scott for editing video – one of Scott's businesses is recording live music bands and putting out a professional product. Scott demonstrated and discussed Adobe Premier for Video rendering, a product that a couple of our members have interest in. Steven went on to discuss some of the computer components he had brought with him: Computer cases, cell phone chargers, mini-ITX motherboards and also some AMD processors, one with a larger but flat fan for low profile cases. All-in-all once again Steven has done an entertaining and informative presentation. We always look forward to his annual visit. Our thanks go to Steven and Scott Singer. ♦

Comments.....Continued from page 1

hood. My job is to take photos of the exteriors of the houses for the brochure and then to return the day of the tour and take interior photos right before the tour begins. You may view a video of this year's houses at my website, <http://www.lamartin.com>, in the Hyde Park menu item. The alternate link usually works better than the first one for most videos.

The most tiresome job is keeping track of all the PayPal payments for the tour when people make online purchases. It is not difficult to view the data. The problem comes when the organizers want a

Comments.....Continued on page 4

Have a Spare Smartphone?

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

I recall TPCUG member Michele Burgess asking if I had ideas for uses for good older smartphones, and somehow the conversation was interrupted and I didn't have a chance to answer. I've been using an old smartphone in my car for much more than a year. It's not on a cellular account; it's an older Moto X2 that's working fine as a GPS device. As it turns out, I own four surplus working smartphones that are not in use. I've checked on their market value which range from zero to \$10. I think it's interesting that it's pretty normal (and strange) to replace a device like this every two or three years in full working condition. I think two are going to be donated to The Spring, and two are re-purposed as GPS readouts.



One device, I'm referring to the phone on the left of the steering wheel above, is an older model that uses a replaceable battery that's especially cheap. I've actually replaced it as my primary phone twice now, the latest is on the right - a Moto X Pure. But it's a good functional smartphone that still has the Verizon SIM installed. As long as the SIM is there it can be used for emergency 911 calls. It's always plugged into a USB charging device, never unplugged. But I do shut off the smartphone itself because I really don't drive the car enough to keep it sleeping and charged.

Its only function is information the app can get from GPS. Primarily speed, and you can observe my speed was zero when the photo was taken, not 0.3, more on that later. I prefer a digital speed indicator, which this current car does not have. I've had a couple of predecessors (2009 and 2012 Civics) that had a digital speed readout and I find it's less distracting than an analog speedometer. In any case this GPS app provides compass direction, a couple of trip odometers and several speed settings you can set to give warning that you're exceeding speeds, and a bunch of other functions. I use the digital speed and trip odometers, and ignore the rest. If you look at available GPS apps for smartphones the only problem is selecting among the hundreds available, including some that are in reverse so that they'll reflect on your windshield as a heads-up-display. I actually have three GPS apps on this phone and have settled on this one for now, but I'm always looking for "the right one".

The phone on the right of the steering wheel is my newest primary smartphone, a large 5.7" Moto X Pure. Normally it's rotated landscape and running Google Navigate (Maps). It's connected via BlueTooth to the car for hands-free telephone and for music to the car speakers. For this photo however, I was testing an app that William LaMartin is developing that I asked for. I want a GPS app that has just the functions I use and no more. Speed and two trip registers for my bicycle. Here's that phone with William's app mounted in my bicycle phone bag.



That bag is good for a billfold, keys and has the win-

Smartphone.....Continued from page 3

dow for a phone. The plastic window does not inhibit touching the screen. It's hard to see in the photo, but it's very readable in direct sunlight because the digits are large and William's app has very little to interact with. If William's app turns out as I expect, I'll use it in the car as well, replacing the current app. Then I'll dedicate one of my surplus phones just for this bicycle bag.



The other uses for surplus working smartphones are car and bicycle GPS, donating to The Spring, and for remote control of household devices. We were using one of these phones to run a Honeywell app that remote controls our air conditioner thermostat. The only thermostat is on the second floor of our townhouse. We try to keep it as warm as we can comfortably most of the time, but several times during the day set it a couple of degrees lower for kitchen activity, vacuuming and cleaning. It has an internet connection for remote control and it works surprisingly well. We have no interest in controlling it when away from the house, but it did allow for us to use a smartphone dedicated to the app – always on – to pick up and make quick adjustments. We have since abandoned that when we set up our Amazon Echo to do the same thing by voice command: “Alexa, set thermostat to 78”.

Other notes:

1. I think a digital speed works best for me because that speed I read goes directly to my brain. An analog speedometer must be interpreted – translated

to digital before it's useful.

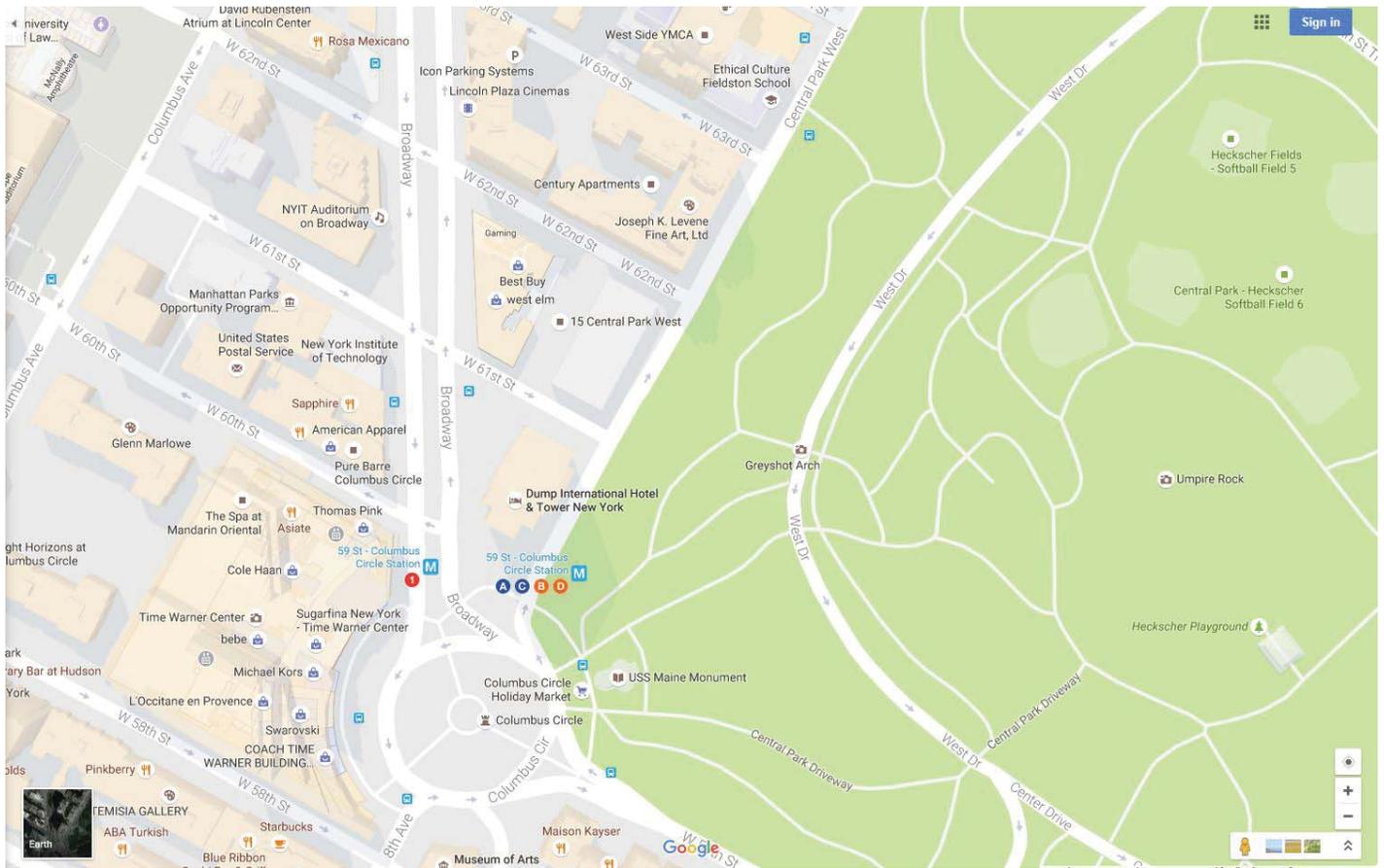
2. You can buy a semi-clear reflective film to adhere to the inside of your windshield so that a phone used as a heads-up-display will be readable in daylight. It's reflective enough to read the phone sitting on the dash. See next note.
3. You have to be careful to make sure your phone does not get fried in sunlight. The interior of your car can easily reach 150 deg f, and the phone will get much hotter than that being directly behind the windshield. I use a white terry facecloth to drape over the phone if it's parked in the sun, and if I think it's especially intense while I'm away from the car, I'll dismount it, wrap it and put it in the glove box. This is a precaution for any similar device left in the car. I let it overheat one time and it shut down, did not power back up until it cooled down. It even notified me why it shut down. It obviously monitors its internal temperature.
4. You also have to be concerned that a phone may be a temptation to steal because it's in plain sight. Not that you lose much, but you'll have car damage to deal with.
5. Smartphone-controllable devices are commonplace now. Especially remote controlled wall outlets and switches and internet-connected light bulbs. ♦

Comments.....Continued from page 2

listing every few days of who has purchased tickets so as to be able to make up a wrist band package for them. They do not want to wait until the last day or two to do this, so it falls to me, the person who set up the Pay Pal account, to supply them frequent updates. No good deed goes unpunished. Next up for the neighborhood is the creation of the directory of residents which I do each year. To do that, I receive the data in an Excel file from the membership person. I then transfer it to Microsoft Access and then use that along with some Visual Basic programming to arrange the data, which I then transfer to Adobe InDesign for the final product. I am trying to shed some of the

Comments.....Continued on page 5

Internet Picture of the Month



Dump International Hotel & Tower

As seen in the screen capture above, on November 26 Trump International Hotel & Tower on Central Park West just north of Columbus Circle in Manhattan was temporarily renamed to Dump International Hotel & Tower New York on Google maps (<https://www.google.com/maps>). Additionally, Trump Tower in Manhattan was renamed Dump Tower (If you don't know the location, it is just to the east of 5th Avenue and in between 56th and 57th streets). It is unclear who was responsible: Google programmers, hackers inside of Google, hackers outside of Google, or the Democrats' favorite suspects: Russian hackers. Anyway, the renaming remained for a number of hours.

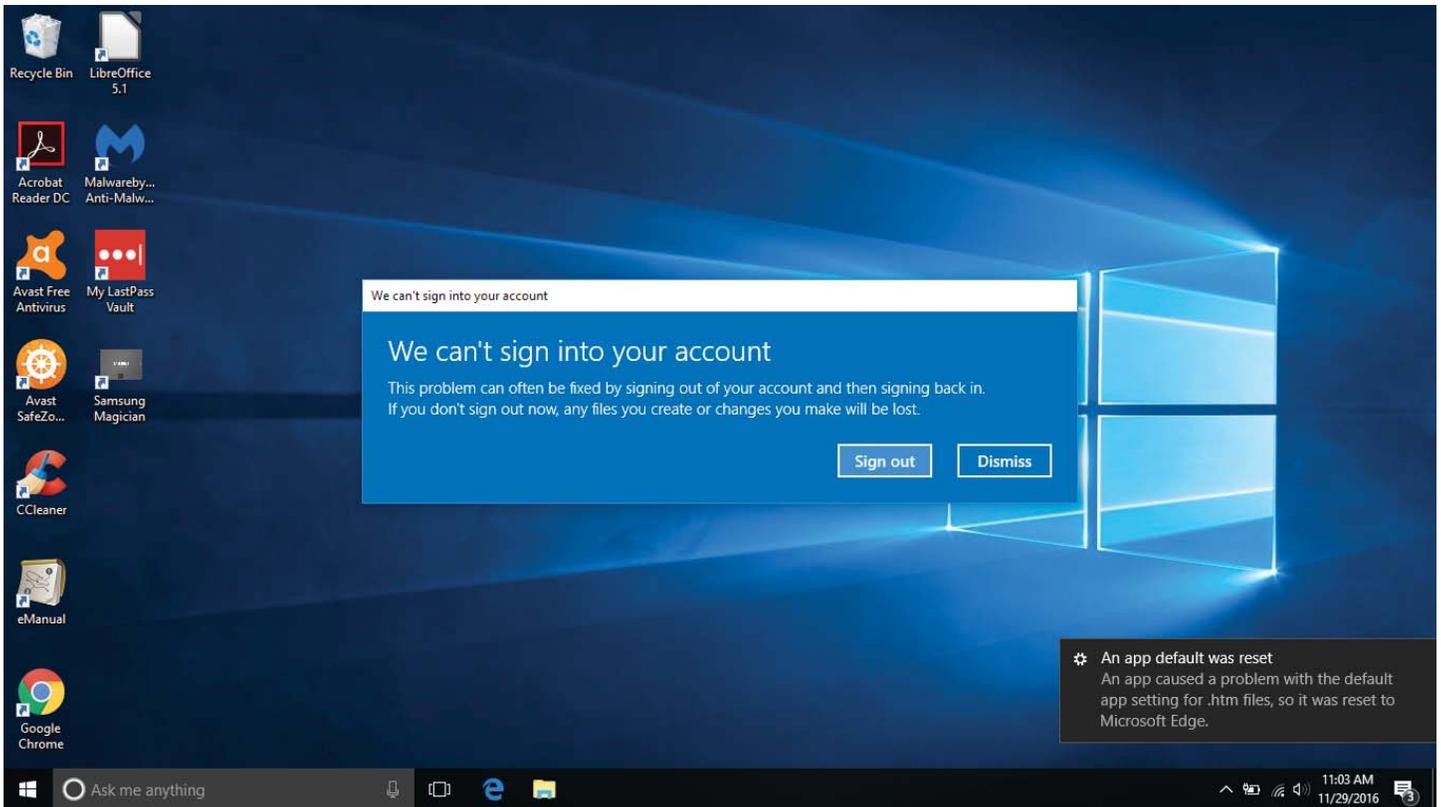
Comments.....Continued from page 4

many "jobs" I have, but the only one I have managed to drop is doing the neighborhood website, as I still have the neighborhood database, emails and directory--not to mention this TPCUG newsletter.

Microsoft has also been causing me problems. A number of years back, when the Windows Phone 7 came out, I began writing phone apps for it. One of them was a database named My Data Tables. The

way it functioned was that you exported xml files from Microsoft Access tables or queries or text files from Microsoft Excel and placed them at your OneDrive account (then called SkyDrive). From the app, you then downloaded these files from your OneDrive (SkyDrive) account. In the app, the data was encrypted and the app password protected. Everything was fine until a month back when Microsoft decided to recertify apps. They noticed that this app did not have an

Comments.....Continued on page 7



Back from the Dead

By Ron Weinberg, Member-At-Large
Tampa PC Users Group
rswjbr@verizon.net

Our six year old i7 Asus laptop, which I had previously written about, describing the difficult upgrade to Windows 10 had, after a few minor tweaks, been working perfectly. It is primarily used by my wife, an experienced touch typist. As such, she prefers to use a heavier external USB keyboard laid on top of the laptop keyboard.

We know food and especially drink should not be placed near a laptop. There was a glass of unsweetened iced tea on a nearby table, a relatively safe place, or so we thought. An accidental bump caused the tea to be thrown onto the laptop.

We immediately shut off via the power button and tried blotting up the tea. The external keyboard did not shield the laptop very well and it was very wet. We grabbed a hair dryer to help.

Later, we found what we should have done: Immediately disconnect the power cord and the battery. Do not use a hair dryer, it forces the liquid further in. Our first step after power off probably should have been to turn the laptop over to let gravity remove the liquid as much as possible.

After allowing everything to dry we tried many times to restart the laptop and all failed. The system was presumed dead. A call to the manufacturer's service department indicated that the system board had probably been ruined and it was not cost effective to replace.

I removed the SSD hard drive and tested it. It, as well as the external keyboard, was not damaged. All the files were easily recoverable. I stored it in a static free bag and stored the laptop in a vertical position like a book intending to scrap and replace it when the forthcoming holiday sale season began.

Fast forward four or more weeks. Black Friday is approaching, the time to buy. I decided to make one more effort, reinstalled the hard drive and switched it on. The screen appeared, wildly flickering, a sign

Back From The Dead.....Continued on page 7

Back From The Dead.....Continued from page 6

of life. I could not sign in as the “s” on the laptop keyboard was inoperative. Adding back the external keyboard I was able to sign in and adjust the display setting to eliminate the flicker. When my wife tried to sign in we got the message “We can’t sign into your account.”

The suggested fixes for this condition are to try to sign in and out multiple times. If that fails you need to edit the registry from the safe mode and change the Ref Count to 0 in the ProfileImagePath and then install any Windows updates. Neither method worked. We could sign into the other user but not the principal user. The main user’s profile was corrupted and had to be replaced.

By activating and using the Administrator account we saw that all the original files were intact. We created a new user, copied the old files into it and renamed the old user. Then we were able to rename the new user to the original name. The sign in problem was corrected. It was necessary to reenter the email program’s settings and everything was back to normal.

Upon further examination it was determined that many of the built in keyboard keys would not work including all of the FN keys. Using the external keyboard was a satisfactory work around. However, the external keyboard lacks a Fn key so all of the functions controlled by key are disabled. ◆

Comments.....Continued from page 5

age rating, which was not in existence at the time it was published. So they re-tested it and discovered that they needed to access the OneDrive test account I had provided and for which there was a provided user name and password. When they tried to access the account, Microsoft now required (but not in the past) that they retrieve a verification code that was being sent to the email associated with the account--which was sent to the owner of the account – me! so there was no way for the tester to actually test the app. I discussed this with Microsoft for over a week and finally gave up on the idea of keeping the app in the store, since they had no solution and simply said that

there was no way for them to certify apps that require access to a OneDrive account. So, since some fights are not worth fighting, I gave up on that.

I am now toying with the idea of redoing the app so as not to need OneDrive and redoing it as a Win 10 Universal app with possible Android and iOS versions. In this version, to get the data on your phone, you will connect it via a USB cable to your computer, copy the xml or txt files desired to a folder on the phone, import them into the app where they will be encrypted, and finally delete them from the folder on the phone. That way you will only have encrypted versions of the data on the phone. Working on that has also taken up some time.



Now there is one final thing that I recall as taking up a bit of my time: Building a robot (pictured above fully assembled). This robot is really meant for children. It includes a small arduino computer on it that can be programmed. One way for children to program it is using the simple SCRATCH language. However, a collection of adults, of which I am a member, is going to attach a Raspberry Pi 3 that is running Windows 10 IOT to the robot, and we are going to write programs to control the device using the C# programming language. The group meets monthly at the local Microsoft office. You may view a video of my robot running around the house on its own at <https://1drv.ms/v/s!AjI1fQgXBbBGlsIbKUbpZnOrPrknuw> (wait for the online version of the newsletter to more easily use the link). ◆

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