North Texas PC News

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More Giveaways at Third Saturday Business Meeting – February 2009

As promised in our February newsletter, we gave out some high-end software at the Noon Business Meeting in February. The winners that month are:

- Glynn Brooks - Microsoft Office Pro 2007
- Pete Guild - Microsoft Vista Ultimate
- Martin Barnett - Microsoft Lifecam VX7000
- Bill Drissel - Visual Web Developer 2005 (book)
- Jerry Jackson - T-shirt (Microsoft)

Do you like FREE hardware and software? In addition to the give-aways that our SIG Leaders always seem to have for their attendees, the User Group generally has some additional items for the monthly Business Meeting, which occurs at Noon at each Third Saturday meeting. As usual, you must be an NTPCUG member, and you must be present to win.

We wouldn't be surprised if we have a few more goodies to give out by the March meeting date as well. Could you be the next lucky winner?

In This Issue ...

Prez Sez

by Chuck Fiedler

It certainly appears that the North Texas PC Users Group is on the right track. Thanks to the efforts of many volunteers, our membership is slowly growing, our monthly attendance at the third Saturday meetings is growing and our number of SIGs is growing. I don't have data on how the second Saturday SIGs are doing but it appears they also are doing well.

At our February third Saturday meeting, we had 89 members and 11 visitors for a recent-year high of 100 in attendance. Upon seeing this fact from the Checkin report, I asked Charles Rem for some perspective on the data and he replied with the following:

[For the three months beginning in June 2008] "…there was an average of 70 members attending. For the past three months the number is in the 90s. For the [2008] period, the average number of visitors was four. Now the average visitor count is around twice as many. We now have about 229 members with 90 [attendees] (39.3% member participation). In prior studies there were 215 members with 70 participating (32.6% member participation)… We have more recorded visitors since the beginning of the Linux SIGs. Linux continues to be a big draw. Some people come because of Linux but sign up because of PC. I think it is a good relationship.

"Here is a story of a new member, Lynn Tims, who signed up [at the February 21st meeting]. He is a co-worker at Verizon. He has heard about NTPCUG from me and two other co-workers who joined. This weekend he rearranged his weekend to attend a meeting. He came as a visitor filling out the form. Lynn attended a few presentations. I saw him in the MS presentation. Later he came upstairs and signed up as a member. Monday I asked Lynn how he liked the presentation and why he joined. Lynn stated that the presentations were 'great'. He got a copy of MS Windows 7. He said 'That alone justified the cost of joining for several years.'"

This last paragraph highlights several things to me: 1) Telling your friends and co-workers about our group can do much to help us grow; 2) Your printing and posting the monthly flyer at your workplace or other gathering spot can also help; 3) The efforts of our SIG leaders to put together meaningful and interesting SIG meetings and their efforts to obtain door prizes can also help; and, finally, 4) Our relationship with the Linux group appears to be benefitting both groups.

I suspect you may have some ideas on other actions we can take to increase membership and meeting attendance. Please share those ideas with any Board member or, by email at bod@ntpcug.org.

2nd Saturday

Alphabetically

Design Patterns – 10:00 am

Tuc Goodwin
tgoodwin@ntpcug.org

The Design Patterns SIG started in March of 2008. This is a series sig, that is to say it will run as a set series of presentations and then it will end. It is the follow up to the Object Oriented Analysis and Design SIG that finished in February of 2008.

They are using the Head First Design Patterns book (ISBN: 0596007124) which can be obtained from Nerdbooks from this url.

For more information about the purpose and use of design patterns, Wikipedia has a short description.

The Microsoft Architecture site is here and a starting point for their use with Microsoft Technologies is here.

Date	Chapter	Topic
March 14, 2009	Chapter 12 – Patterns of Patterns	Compound Patterns
April 11, 2009	Chapter13 – Patterns in the Real World	Better Living with Patterns
May 9, 2009	Chapter 14 – Appendix	Leftover Patterns

The site for the Design Patterns Study Group is:
http://www.dotnetarchitecture.net/default.aspx

The main SharePoint site for the Design Patterns SIG is:
http://sptest.ntpcug.org/2ndSat/ DesignPattern/default.aspx

Microsoft Certification SIG — 2:00 pm Saturday at Nerdbooks

Tom Perkins
tomperki@gmail.com

ASP.NET Fundamentals Workshop Continues

•   Bring your laptop loaded with VS2008/2005 or Visual Web Developer, SQL Express
•   Continuing with Login, Logout Pages, Basic Authorization principles

Questions or comments?

Contact Tom Perkins (tomperki@gmail.com) or Chris Morgan (chris.morgan@ntpcug.org)

SharePoint – 11:30 am

Ram Yadav
ram_yadav@hotmail.com

At most Sharepoint meetings, we discuss the features and current implementation of NTPCUG's Sharepoint site at http://sp.ntpcug.org, and we work to make improvements to this site during the meeting. Come join us as we undertake this continuing task.

.NET Developers – 9:00 am

Tuc Goodwin
tgoodwin@ntpcug.org

We will continue our learning in building our ASP.NET 2.0 knowledge as well as enhancing our experiences with the .NET 3.0/3.5 Framework enhancements. I expect this to be an exciting series of topic. Of course if you want to show off your stuff, please let me know and I'll get you on the schedule.

Building upon the Beginning Visual Basic and Advanced Visual Basic SIG, this SIG now concentrates on any (and all) .NET topics. In the past we have had presentations on ADO.NET, using Code Snippets within the Visual Studio IDE, calling Web Services and introductions to ASP.NET.

Also we will be trying something radically different. The opportunity for our members to give quick 15 minute presentations called "Lessons Learned". This is a chance for everyone to sign up and share their experiences with the audience about a technique or a

tool that has helped them solve a particular problem or issue. We want to make this a regular type of presentation so we've schedule the first three.

The main SharePoint site for the .NET Developer's SIG is: http://sp.ntpcug.org/VBNETSIG/default.aspx

Date	Topic	Speaker
March 14, 2009	Beginning ASP.NET – Part 4	Tuc Goodwin
April 11, 2009	LINQ	Tuc Goodwin
May 9, 2009	Lessons Learned	TBD
June 13, 2009	Building the Web Layer using ASP.NET AJAX	Tuc Goodwin
July 11, 2009	Building the Data and Business Layers using .NET 3.5 (Part 1)	Tuc Goodwin
August 8, 2009	Building the Data and Business Layers using .NET 3.5 (Part 2)	Tuc Goodwin
September 12, 2009	ASP.NET Deployment	TBD
October 10, 2009	Lessons Learned	TBD
November 14, 2009	Windows Workflow Revisited	TBD
December 12, 2009	Our Favorite .NET Tools	Tuc Goodwin

3rd Saturday

All meetings at King of Glory Lutheran Church, 6411 LBJ Fwy in Dallas (between Preston & Hillcrest, north side of LBJ).

Alphabetically

Adobe Photoshop — 12:30 pm

presented by Hillary Morgan Ferrer

Chris Morgan, SIG Leader
chris.morgan@ntpcug.org

No more meetings for now.

Building Web Sites — 8:00 am

presented by Alan Lummus

Bill Parker, SIG Leader
bill.parker@ntpcug.org

Alan Lummus and Chris Morgan are doing a shared presentation at the Building Websites SIG. We will be demonstrating and comparing Expression Web and Adobe Dreamweaver.

Digital Photography — 10:00 am

Spike Smith, NCE
harold.smith@ntpcug.org

We have discussed the many features that photographers and engineers have developed to make cameras more useful and some features contrived by marketing to outsell their competitors. We may find ourselves in a position where we try to separate the wheat from the chaff and that it is easy to become inundated.

To help us understand what is available, desirable, and beneficial for us – it would be of interest for our members to provide our SIG with the new features and shortcuts their new cameras have that have benefited them. An example of the results and a demonstration would be nice.

Digital Photo Editing Software — 11:00 am

Spike Smith, NCE
harold.smith@ntpcug.org

One category I have avoided for years is a discussion of acquiring photos and cataloging them within out permanent files. My reason for letting out a loud bark, placing my tail between my legs, and running full speed to the nearest exit is the attacks we get from all photo software makers. They seem to insist upon taking over and doing their thing while failing to ask if this meets our needs. Seemingly all of their software packages have one primary goal and that is to make sure no other similar program can get into the system.

For those of you who have asked which program I prefer and you notice me turning a purple hue is because I have been saturated. Now, I will ask you:

- Which are your preferred products?
- What are your desired features?
- Does your product have displeasures?

I know there are many features available for capturing images and some of these allow you to be selective with how the software fills the coffers located on your hard drive. Of course, there are even those that offer their unlimited backup space (free – for now), just for you.

Let's hear from our SIG and other members, too.

What are greatest ways for managing your photos?

Please send or bring your examples for our upcoming meetings.

Excel— 8:00 am

Frank Tubbs
ftubbs@sbcglobal.net

Due to Frank's unexpected absence last month we will repeat the February plans.

Excel will continue looking at the shortcut keys. I intend to show why a user might want to learn them. I will show Excel 2007 and the new Office Ribbon it uses. It is considered user friendly because it is supposed to be more context sensitive. The problem is that it is so different, long-time Excel users are lost. So let's see the difference and why prior knowledge of the shortcuts can save your day.

Family History — 12:30 pm

Jim Wehe
jimwehe@gmail.com

Land Records, Maps, and Surveying

Land records are important to farmers, ranchers, homesteaders, persons awarded land for military service, and their descendants.

The United States has two land surveying systems. Metes and bounds as used in the colonies and 7 other states. Metes refers to distance and directional measurements. Bounds refers to property edges determined by rivers, lakes, or other physical obstructions. States that use this system are called state land states.

The second system (created by Congress in 1785) is used by federal land states for land the United States acquired by purchase or treaty. This system is used in 30 states. In this system one or rarely two N-S meridians are established and an E-W base line. The state is then divided into 6 mile sided townships numbered N or S of the base line and E or W of the meridian. Each township is then divided into 36 one mile numbered sections which may be further divided into halves or quarters.

As surveying methods changed from optical levels and compasses to measure direction and chains to measure distance to today's satellite and GPS systems, much more accurate surveys are possible.

Maps for the state can clearly identify range number, township number, section number and partial sections subdivision.

County and state land maps identify ownership of parcels of land of 40 acres or more.

Over the years, relatives often moved nearby and neighbors intermarried and these events often make it possible to locate some family members and then proceed to county court birth, marriage, and death records, and wills.

Internet — 10:00 am

Glynn Brooks
glynn.brooks@ntpcug.org

In March we will look at the new features of Internet Explorer 8. We'll look at what you can see and how it has changed internally.

IT Professional — 9:00 am

Larry Copeland
larry.copeland@ntpcug.org

Doug Gorrie
doug.gorrie@ntpcug.org

The IT PRO sig will have Anuj Bhatia, a local webMethods architect and president of the South Central webMethods user group, who will present on integration architecture. He will touch upon different ways integration can occur but mainly focus on EDI and XML integration with external Trading Partners a.k.a B2B.

Making Money on the Internet — 9:00 am

presented by Alan Lummus
Bill Parker, SIG Leader
bill.parker@ntpcug.org

Bill Parker

Since Alan was out sick in February, in March we'll be examining PayPal checkout and payment options in more detail, actually installing some checkout features to a small commercial website we'll have constructed using Dreamweaver in the 8 am Building Websites SIG.

Microsoft Access SIG — 11:00 am

Larry Linson
larry.linson2@ntpcug.org

Jim Wehe
jimwehe@gmail.com

On March 21, 2009, Access SIG Co-Leader Larry Linson will present an overview of some features and functions of Access 2007. There is much new, a new user interface (the Office 2007 Ribbon, common in appearance in major Office applications), a new Integrated Development Environment (IDE), a new database engine (ACE) and new database format (ACCDB). Gone from ACE and ACCDB format are replication and Access' security. But, if you want those, you can continue using the familiar Jet database engine, as that is an option, too.

Note: If circumstances make it unfeasible for Larry

to present the overview of Access 2007, we will continue last month's topic by looking at an article by Canadian Access MVP Doug Steele and some demonstrations of Internet and Access that Doug did for the article. Doug is a good friend and Access MVP colleague of Larry. The article, and others, can be found and downloaded from Doug's website http://www.accessmvp.com/DJSteele/SmartAccess.html.

Last Month

In February 2009, Access SIG Co-Leader Larry Linson presented "Going to the Internet from Access" illustrated by an application that you can use to store some of your favorite website names, URLs, userids, and passwords. There's other password manager software available, but we are going to look at how it works behind the scenes in Access. It uses just one table, but also a few forms – Jim's minimalist approach to useful applications must be contagious.

Remember, the Access database used in the February demo, in "unsplit" form with both user interface and data together, is in the Shared Documents folder on our SharePoint site, http://sp.ntpcug.org/access-sig/default.aspx. You do not have to be a member of NTPCUG, nor do you have to be logged in, if you are a member, to download this file! You will need software to unZIP the file… a freely downloadable open source package, 7ZIP, available at http://www.sourceforge.net, was used to ZIP it and can be used also to unZIP it.

And earlier…

We would still like to hear from you, too: a demonstration of an Access database you created and use, a tutorial on an Access-related topic, other Access-related material, or contact a friend of yours who'd be a good guest speaker. If you need help with organizing a presentation or with using PowerPoint to create the graphics, see Jim or Larry.

Topic Suggestions: We strive to be a user-driven SIG when it comes to subjects to cover. We solicit your suggestions at each meeting, because we do not want to "shortchange" this vital item.

Please continue to think ahead, and be ready to express your preferences, about other topics that will be of interest and useful. A year ago, we identified an interest in some topics. We have presented on some, and circumstances have forced us to eliminate a few topics for which we could not timely find appropriate speakers. Caveat: not necessarily listed in the order they will be presented, nor in order of importance, nor necessarily is presentation guaranteed – for some, we have to obtain guest speakers.

• Review and make available the Address Book and Information Keeper database
• Templates, in general
• Queries for end-users and developers
• Using other Microsoft Office software from Access via COM automation

Coming Next Month

Next month's topic is still to be determined. Larry will have been to, and returned from the 2009 Global MVP Summit at Microsoft in Seattle and expects to be energized and enthusiastic. He hopes there will be topics that aren't under Non-Disclosure Agreement that he can relate to you.

Valuable Prizes

Microsoft, creators and vendors of our favorite database and office software, through their sponsorship of the *CodeZone* organization to support user groups, has enabled us to resume monthly giveaways. **Larry** extends his thanks for the software and other gifts to *Microsoft*, and especially to **Chris Koenig**, *South Central District Developer Evangelist*, and sponsor of the *South Central Developer Guidance Council*, of which **Larry** is privileged to be a member.

The most recent shipment arrived in December, so we are supplied with valuable prizes for our drawings for some more months. Regular attendee **Jerry Jackson** won the January door-prize drawing -- a camera for attaching to his computer. We'll be looking for the video of his "happy dance" when it's installed and working!

DOWNLOADS and Other New Stuff:

Thanks to our friend, **Teresa Hennig**, President of the *Seattle Access Group* and the *Pacific Northwest Access Developers Group* for the following information. She expends significant time and effort each month to collect and assemble these useful notes for her user groups, and she graciously shares them with us!

For past postings and links, please check the NTPCUG Access SIG SharePoint Site at http://sp.ntpcug.org/accesssig/default.aspx or download previous copies of the *North Texas PC News* from the main http://www.ntpcug.org website to find additional information about events, resources and opportunities.

FREE ... Website for your small business... and there more ... (January 2009)

Office Live offers lots of free services and benefits for small businesses, for example, free website, free online folders, free phone support and too much to list here. So, free up some of your time and space

by using Office Live. Visit www.officelive.com/free-website

Virtualization and Hyper-V --- a "green" light for saving time, SPACE, money and other resources (January 2009)

Ever which you could replicate a desktop or other platform to test before deploying at a client's? That's just one of the scenarios that can be quickly and easily solved using Hyper-V. Once you've tried it, you may become a bigger Hyper-V advocate than IT!

You can download the server for free, read the white papers, take some tutorials, and put it to work.

Training and exams on virtualization, even free e-learning options www.microsoft.com/learning/virtualization/default.mspx

Learn about saving energy and resources with the Hyper-V "Green" Toolbox http://www.hyper-green.com/

FREE Microsoft Hyper-V Server 2008 http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=6067CB24-06CC-483A-AF92-B919F699C3A0&displaylang=en

The best of the best --- Microsoft Office Online 2008 Top Hits List (January 2009)

Convenient links to 2008's most popular training, templates, tips, clip art and more --- as rated by the users!

http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/help/HA103338601033.aspx?ION_CL=1068

VISTA SP2 Beta (January 2009)

If you're enjoying the features in Vista, you may want to participate in the Vista SP2 Beta. In addition to benefiting from the fixes and enhancements, you will be helping to ensure that the final release will be even better. Read more and download from:

www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=361D0CA3-4B2C-4F1C-8B3E-DE376FDB1DE8&displaylang=en

Blue skies and wispy clouds ... or Azure Services and cloud computing. (December 2008)

Learn what's available and what's coming for internet-scale services, from operating systems to developer services.

See some of the solutions currently leveraging this technology and register to try the preview at http://www.microsoft.com/azure/default.mspx

Windows 7 – Previews and Reviews (December 2008)

Intuitive, responsive and now offering touch-screen technology! Read the reviews and learn about the most talked about features.

Read ComputerWorld's rating of Windows 7 http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9119378&source=landingpage

CIO lists the five most talked about features for Windows 7

http://www.cio.com/article/463713/Windows_The_Five_Most_Talked_About_Features

Internet Explorer 8, Beta 2 (November 2008)

Slice n dice to order, discrete and private service. New features in IE 8 allow you to select the exact slice of a web site that you want to monitor – of course, they have to offer web slices, but that's readily apparent by the new little green icon that will be rampantly spreading though sites. And then there are the times when you'd prefer NOT to leave a trail – such as when you're using an Internet café or a colleague's computer. IE8 also have features that enable private browsing without leaving a history. There are several other security and performance enhancements. For more info and a free download visit: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/beta/features/web-slices.aspx?tabid=1&catid=1

Download Internet Explorer 8 Beta for better protection, to connect to more services, and to have more options and control. See how IE 8 can improve your experience www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/beta/

Run IT on a Virtual Hard Disk (September 2008)

Using the power of virtualization, you can now quickly evaluate Microsoft and partner solutions through a series of pre-configured Virtual Hard Disks (VHDs). The Microsoft Virtual Software experience gives you full access to a number of server products on a pre-configured virtual machine. You can download the VHDs and evaluate them for free in your own environment without the need for dedicated servers or complex installations. Download the application of your choice and start evaluating the software for your environment immediately, for free. www.microsoft.com/servers/virtualharddrives.mspx

Access 2003 Solution Center --- (August 2008)

This is a great starting point to find solutions, downloads, current topics and links to the latest updates. http://support.microsoft.com/?scid=ph;en-us;2509

MSDN – Virtual Labs to Test-drive Code samples (August 2008)

How many times have you seen a code sample but didn't try it out because you didn't have the software

configuration or you didn't want to risk unexpected impact to your system? Now there's a simple and convenient solution. MSDN provides virtual labs so that you can try out many of the code samples. Better yet, there's a split window so that people can read the MSDN article in one pane and use a second pane to contain the test environment! http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/magazine/cc511327.aspx?pr=flas

RESOURCE Tips:

A couple of good sites to search for information and programming assistance are www.mvps.org and Office Developer Center on MSDN. And, we've been mentioning the newsgroups. You can search and drill through thousands of threads. Check out http://www.microsoft.com/office/community/en-us/FlyoutOverview.mspx for a comprehensive display of topics. You may also find what you are looking for by using http://groups.google.com or try www.google.com/microsoft.html for Microsoft related pages or by setting multiple search criteria at www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en.

Access Blog – by the Access Team

Stay tuned to the community … The team shares insights into their schedule, their favorite features, new features and how to use them. This is also an ideal avenue for the team to talk about issues that are of interest to the Access community. You'll learn about the people and some of the factors that are helping to shape the future of Access. Whether you're a seasoned developer or just learning about Access, you'll find invaluable information and techniques. From creating a database template to getting help when you need it, The Access Blog covers the gamut. http://blogs.msdn.com/access/default.aspx

Get Help When You Need It – Office Online

Available 24/7 on the Web! The Office Online Web site offers dynamically updated Help and online training as well as downloads, templates, and clip art-for new and previous versions of Office. Check this out at: http://office.microsoft.com/

Database Issue Checker

Access MVP, Allen Browne offer tips and utilities for casual users through expert developers. The Issue Checker can be used during development or to trouble shoot legacy files. Allen's site provides a host of other tips and resources, including a compilation of reserved words. http://allenbrowne.com/AppIssueChecker.html

MSDN magazine is available online …

An excellent, searchable resource. You can check out back issues, download articles and source code. Check it out at http://msdn.microsoft.com/msdnmag

A compilation of links to Access Resources

This site provides an impressive array of links to a variety of resources for Access developers and users. www.cbel.com/ms_access/

Conrad Systems Development--- CSD Tools Version 2.0

Jeff Conrad, former Access MVP, and one of the newest members of the Access Test Team, offers an Access Add-In for documenting your database objects. http://www.accessmvp.com/JConrad/accessjunkie.html

The Seattle Access site. You will also want to check the Links and Downloads pages at www.SeattleAccess.org

Thanks again, Teresa, for the extremely useful links and tips!

And, don't forget the links to sites that are very useful Access resources, on the home page of our Access SharePoint site, http://sp.ntpcug.org/accesssig/default.aspx. Look for more Access information, tips, hints, examples, etc. in the not-too-distant future.

Microsoft Certification SIG - 2:00 pm

At this third Saturday meeting at KOG, we will have hands-on exercises using the Membership Provider feature; more on incorporating a SQL Express database into a web site.

ASP.NET Fundamentals Workshop Continues

•   Advanced Authorization Techniques

•   Creating a database for the Membership Provider

•   Using the aspnet_regsql.exe tool

•   Database schema for user and role information

CertSIG Notes for January meeting:

Members present: Kathy Brown, Chris Morgan, Raj Mandeva, Amin (Raj's guest), Bob Webber, Jeff Frauenheim, Gil Brand, Jesse Hastcoat, Tom Perkins, Bill Drissel

Members work individually or in groups on a common web site application. We built a basic ASP.NET web site, added a master page, created a login page with fundamental authorization features, and learned how to login and authorize a user. Some of the things we'll work on next time include displaying an indicator that a user is logged in, using a template for different displays on a page for logged in and not logged in users, creating a logout page, and using

default content for master pages.

In a survey taken after the first workshop session, members indicated that they would like to continue in-class, hands-on work on the sample web site, rather than work on the problem individually as homework. This provides a good learning vehicle for getting down to the nuts and bolts of a web site. We'll try to find some way to make the classroom time productive and not confusing for new persons coming into the group.

If you or some of your colleagues would like to learn how to construct ASP.NET web sites, feel free to drop in and see what is involved. If you don't have a laptop, come on anyway -- last month we had several groups sharing the development experience on a single computer. For the most part, only one person was typing at a time, however.

We believe that the best learning process is when you're faced with a problem and apply what you know or can find out to do it yourself. This workshop is an experiment in experiential learning -- although we have some clearly set objectives, the class only moves to the next objective when everyone has completed the current objective. The workshop is not a matter of "Gee-whiz! Look what I know!", but rather a matter of "How can we learn this topic together?"

Word tutorial, CSS style sheet, and a C# solution for Workshop I can be found at http://sp.ntpcug.org/STUDYGROUPSIG/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fSTUDYGROUPSIG%2fShared%20Documents%2fCertSIG%20Workshops%2fWorkshop%5f01&FolderCTID=&View=%7bE4BA98DF%2d2705%2d491C%2d8933%2d0586FEDF95B1%7d

Hope to see you at the 2nd Saturday meeting at NerdBooks or the 3rd Saturday meeting at the KOG NTPCUG meeting, 2pm both days.

Questions or comments?

Contact Tom Perkins (tomperki@gmail.com) or Chris Morgan (chris.morgan@ntpcug.org)

Microsoft Expression Web — 10:00 am

Chris Morgan
chris.morgan@ntpcug.org

This month we will finish off the series on Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) with a look at a web page menu system entirely written in CSS. It is a drop-down menu with multiple levels of submenus. If we have time, we will review what has been covered so far on the topic of CSS and why it is such an important topic for anyone building web pages. To see a sample of this menu,

visit the NTPCUG SharePoint site (sp.ntpcug.org), go to the Microsoft Expression Web SIG page, then look in the "Shared Documents" for the folder "Feb and March Meetings – Sample Documents". Click on "suckerfish" to see the menu. February's completed site is "threecolumn4" and the example page for the March "Building a Web Site" SIG comparison with Dreamweaver is "threecolumn5". Alan Lummus will be presenting on Adobe Dreamweaver and Chris Morgan will demo Expression Web.

Mobile Computing — 10:00 am

Larry Copeland
larry.copeland@ntpcug.org

The MOBILE sig will review new software announcements from Microsoft (Windows Mobile 6.5) and Research in Motion (Blackberry Enterprise Server 5.0).

Windows Inside Out — 12:30 pm

Glynn Brooks
lynn.brooks@ntpcug.org

A review of Windows 7 Beta. Is Windows 7 something you should be planning for or avoiding? Come see what all the fuss is about! I'll give you my take and demonstrate the parts I think are most interesting.

Windows Tips & Tricks — 8:00 - 9:00 am

Gil Brand
gb1@ntpcug.org

Chuck Stark
chuck.stark@ntpcug.org

This month we will have an open Q&A session.

Wireless Communications — 11:00 am

Birl Smith
birl.smith@ntpcug.org
birlhtml@swbell.net

Word — 9:00 - 11:00 am

Diane Bentley
diane.bentley@ntpcug.org

"Word 2007 - Where is ANYTHING?"

Word Options includes those options previously found at Tools | Options, plus a few other. They hid my favorite feature AutoCorrect, in there. If there is time, we'll look at other features.

WordPerfect — 11:00am - 12:00 pm

Diane Bentley
diane.bentley@ntpcug.org

Gridlines, Guidelines and Other Lines

Gridlines affect tables. Guidelines affect margins, columns, headers and footer, as well as table. And then, there are horizontal, vertical and custom lines. After this, you should be able to keep all these lines 'straight.'

Powershell – 10:00 am

Gil Brand, SIG leader
gbrand@ntpcug.org

Join us this month for the "Top 10 Things You Need To Know About Powershell". Larry Weiss and I have been compiling this list for a few weeks and are ready to present OUR version. But..., we also want to hear YOUR thoughts.

Start drafting your list today! Email it to me if you like and we can compare notes.

Little Things Mean a Lot

By Chuck Fiedler

"Little Things Mean a Lot" was a popular song in 1953. The best known recording of the song, by Kitty Kallen, reached #1 on the Billboard chart in 1954. Another version of the song was done by country singer Margo Smith in 1978. The song peaked at #3 on the U.S. country chart that year.

I only recently thought of this oldie as I considered what has happened in the last year.

Through a relationship in another organization I met a fairly high level Knight of Columbus and told him that I was involved with TCPI, the computer refurbishment project many of our members participate in.

He passed this information on to others in his group and things just blossomed from there. One person put this information in their church bulletin.

Today, I receive several calls each week from people who have read the bulletin that week, offering to deliver or asking me to pick up computer equipment. Sometimes this equipment is beyond the needs of TCPI and we arrange for this material to be sent to one of two licensed environmental recyclers.

This all leads me to wonder what would happen if each of our User Group members were to promote this project in their worship bulletin, or church or other community group newsletter.

As our TCPI ramrod, Gil Brand says, "Reuse, don't recycle." But for those items TCPI can't use, I say, "Recycle, don't trash."

For your awareness, TCPI can use computers, monitors, keyboards, mice and speakers. Printers, scanners and other peripherals end up being recycled.

One of the recyclers accepts microwaves, toaster ovens, cordless phone systems, etc. Unfortunately, they are forced to charge by the pound for televisions. For these, Goodwill, the Salvation Army and many other organizations accept televisions without charge.

Give thought to how you can help TCPI and help to preserve the environment at the same time.

An interview with a Linux user

by Your Intrepid Reporter

Disclaimer: Most, but not all, new PCs come with Windows® pre-installed. Until recently this was XP, today it is Vista and before long it will be Windows 7. I am a Windows user and do not care to get into the bowels of my operating system. I use my computers for a variety of home functions and these work perfectly well without my having to adjust anything. There are Windows users who are far more technically proficient than I and they may even develop new applications for the Windows environment. While Windows has its shortcomings, notably licensing restrictions and cost, it doesn't require the average user to be concerned with the operating system.

The members of the North Texas Linux Users Group (ntlug.org) voted last year to become members of the North Texas PC Users Group. They meet as part of our group at King of Glory Lutheran Church on the third Saturday of each month.

This interview is intended to familiarize our non-Linux members with the features of this open source operating system as an alternative to Windows® products. PC News asked Linux users why Windows® users should consider an alternative operating system. Portions of these answers were flagrantly purloined from the NTLUG website (ntlug.org).

PC News: What is Linux?

A: Linux (commonly pronounced linəks in English; is a generic term referring to Unix-like computer operating systems based on the Linux kernel.

Linux serves as the foundation of a computer's operating environment. Linux differs from other systems in that it is an advanced multi-purpose, customizable, fast and stable environment. Often, the term Linux is used to describe a set of applications and utilities in addition to Linux which effectively creates the largest and most advanced operating system in the world today!

PC News: Why the name "Linux"? Where did that come from?

A: From the combination of Unix and the name of the first developer, Linus Torvalds.

PC News: What are the benefits of Linux?

A: There are basically five benefits of Linux over the various flavors of Windows.

- Internet Ready
- Scalable Design
- Free Software
- Ultra Reliable
- LOW Cost

PC News: For the business enterprise, what does this mean?

A: With Linux, you can develop and deploy on the same platform. No longer will you have to use a non-Enterprise "personal computer" operating system for development and then spend countless resources deploying on an expensive Unix or OS390 host. Linux provides a REAL 32/64-bit multi-tasking, multi-processing platform which supports 2, 4, 8, 16, processors with clusters of over 1024 nodes in size!

Another viewpoint on this topic holds that non-technical business enterprises should look at actual costs, including the costs of getting non-turnkey systems integrated into the business. Most such businesses probably shouldn't know anything about operating systems. They should buy a business application suite and whatever OS and platform the applications run on.

PC News: For the advanced home user, what does this mean?

A: In many respects, Linux is the ideal environment for such a person. The software and development suites are panoramic and free. Most of the difficulties an advanced user will encounter will be learning experiences.

PC News: For the non-expert home user, what does this mean?

A: If all the user wants is email and web browsing, the Linux distributions called "live CDs" combined with web email like gmail can provide an easy, secure way. No worries about viruses or stealing data. Most of these can operate without ever writing to the hard disk. For the person who wants the above plus word processing and spreadsheet, Linux provides products similar to MS Word and MS Excel. They may be slower and more clumsy but they are FREE.

PC News: I have heard that it is more difficult to set up Linux rather than the operating system that comes with modern computers. Is this true?

A: Imagine a desktop without restrictions. No more expensive client license keys! No more expensive compilers! No more fumbling over a plethora of incompatible security updates! No more worries over e-mail viruses! No more unexplainable systems lock ups!

No more binary-only, no source code, software!

PC News: Well, those sound admirable but my machine came with Windows and I didn't need to do anything except register the software. Is life so simple with Linux?

A: Linux distributions have recently made enormous strides in ease of installation. Perhaps the complaints you heard are ancient history.

PC News: My computer isn't exactly the most modern and is slow compared to newer machines I see in the stores. Even though prices for new computers are falling, they are still beyond my budget. Can Linux help me get better response times from this older equipment?

A: Linux can frequently be installed on slower machines with less memory and smaller hard drives and still provide adequate performance for undemanding applications. This is especially true for the home user who is willing to trade some performance for budgetary advantages.

PC News: I use my computer for email, document processing, check book balancing and web surfing. Is there an advantage to Linux over my current operating system?

A: Linux can do all of these well even on older computers

PC News: I understand that there are differing versions of Linux. Could you elaborate on that?

A: There are different distributions. They differ in minor features. There is a lot more heat than light in the discussion of these preferences. Some, however, are markedly easier for beginners to install than others.

PC News: I see that Linux is "open source". What does this mean?

A: Again there are many heated discussions on this topic. The contrast between open systems and proprietary software is, for most users, that open systems are free and proprietary systems cost money. All software comes to the user with some sort of license. Details of these licenses differ in details that make ordinary people want to stick needles in their eyes.

PC News: So just how does this free system business model work? Who develops these programs without funding?

A: Given the basic fact that open source software can be given away free, a number of alternative models for funding its development have emerged. Independent developers or companies may benefit from consultant fees or charging for services related to the end use of the software, such as training. Several free open source packages may have 'professional' versions which have enhanced capabilities and are sold commercially. Several governments and public authorities have chosen to fund open source development companies for their software needs, rather than pay for commercial licenses. Many commercial open source applications are developed and distributed by companies as a combination of both open and closed source components. In this case, the company benefits from the availability of OSS, and thus, in turn, may end up funding open source maintenance and upgrades when it benefits their application as a whole.

PC News: I understand that my Microsoft® products like Word, Excel and PowerPoint will not work with Linux. Is this true? Are there alternatives to accomplish the same objectives?

A: MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint require MS Windows. They don't work under Linux. There are alternatives. One trio is provided by Open Office.org. There are more. The feature sets of these alternatives are, shall we say, heavily influenced by the MS Office products.

PC News: I read that Apple is gaining market share over PCs. Is the Linux system available for the Mac?

A: Reports are that the current Mac operating system retains the Mac graphic user interface riding on a version of Linux.

Computer Speech Recognition

by Chuck Fiedler

When I was a kid I used to love science fiction movies and programs. In those the central character, usually the commander of the spaceship used the computer by simply talking to it – no keyboarding and no mousing. The mouse and the Graphical User Interface are major advances we've seen since the advent of the PC.

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to experiment with Dragon Naturally Speaking as a way of inputting data to a computer. While the results weren't perfect, they were quite impressive, to me at least. But they weren't the same as Dave talking to HAL. I don't remember whether Captain Kirk of Star Trek spoke to the computer or not but I seem to think so.

Several of our Users Group members have experimented with speech recognition under Vista with mixed results.

I recently came across a review of the use of speech recognition under Windows 7. The writer says that things are not much better under Windows 7 than under Vista, even with a fairly high quality microphone. Furthermore, the dialog with the computer is not exactly normal speech.

Dave spoke to HAL just as we each speak to each other. Under Windows speech recognition, that ain't quite so. One is confined to saying such things as "close___ close that___ OK___ address bar___ open address bar___ location___ ok___ OK____ number", hardly what I would call normal speech. My recall of the features used in the Dragon demo is that the dialog went much more like a normal conversation although the pauses between words and phrases was more prolonged. This may have as much to do with the power of the laptop processor as with any limitations of the software.

In the review I read of speech recognition under Windows 7, the writer said:

"Is it a good useful program? Yes, I'm sure it's been a life saver for anyone unable to use the keyboard and/or mouse for information input. The problem for me is that there is a big difference between being able to open a couple of documents or programs and actually getting large amounts of work done. Using the program and becoming accustomed to its quirks would require a lot of time, certainly more than a few days. It's a program that I would use and be glad to have if it was my only option, but it's not a program to use in order to save time creating a word document or because it's so easy to navigate using voice commands.

"Maybe in a couple of years, if Dragon Naturally Speaking keeps the pressure on Microsoft, that situation will change."

So, I guess it will be awhile before Windows lets us talk to our computers and ditch the keyboard and mouse.

Can you spare an hour a month for NTPCUG?

One of the behind-the-scenes activities that makes our Group run smoothly is the set-up and take-down of equipment before and after the third Saturday meetings. To date, this has been done on a catch-as-catch-can basis by those who happen to be at King of Glory (KOG) at the appropriate times.

The Board of Directors has recently identified the need for two new sets of volunteers, consisting of approximately three persons each. The first group would set up the wireless and audio visual equipment prior to the meeting of the 8:00 AM Special Interest Groups (SIGs). This requires showing up at KOG by 7:30 on each third Saturday. With enough persons willing to help, we should be able to distribute the work in a manner that does not significantly inconvenience our members.

The second group would retrieve and store this same equipment after the Investor SIG, about 1:30 PM. Again, with enough members agreeing to help, there should be minimal impact on members.

That's all there is to it. Why not let our President-Elect, Bill Drissel (bill@drissel.us) know that you can spare this small amount of time to help.

PC Bit-z & Byte-z

By Elva Roy

Third in a series

Five years from now, most of us will likely not own a PC…at least not the same kind of PC that we own today. What?! I can hear you now. "I LOVE my PC. It's my companion, my entertainment… my encyclopedia. It holds all of my important "stuff." It's… my life." (Sad, ain't it.)

But instead of owning a PC ten years from now, it's more likely that you will own some type of a "thin device"… perhaps just a screen (similar to the iMac® screen… all in one…) except that there won't be much of a brain inside your new screen because you won't need a fast processor to do much "computation" or a big hard drive… most of your data will be stored somewhere else other than on your own "device."

Already today you can do almost anything you need to do on a computer with just a simple connection to the Internet. You don't need to buy any application software licenses (such as Microsoft Word®) to load onto your PC. Instead, you can simply connect to a site over the Internet, write your document, or process your data, upload your photos, edit your videos, calculate your spreadsheet, and save all of it to a hard drive somewhere "out there in the cloud." ("Cloud" has become a generic term meaning "out there" across the internet somewhere… no matter which path it travels as long as it is accessible to those who need it.)

You really don't need to know where your information is stored, as long as you can find it when you want it. Yes, there are some security worries when your information is stored "out there" but everything in life is a trade off, isn't it? Convenient and cheap might be an appropriate trade off for a little bit less security. Security is always improving with stronger encryption and better intrusion detection tools and you know that everything in life is a trade off anyway. Will your data ever be 100% secure? No, and it isn't today in your bedroom, either.

Right now, most people (gamers, excluded) could operate just fine with a cheap-o laptop and an Internet connection. You only need browser software al a Microsoft Internet Explorer, or Apple's Safari, or Mozilla or Opera (both open source freebies). Then search the internet for "Software As A Service" or else just use Google's free application software known as Google Docs (including word processing, spreadsheet, presentation software and more) which will enable you to do most of your computer work without buying a license to any application software at all.

The implications go way beyond the simple concept in the preceding paragraph. I recently bought the book The Big Switch by Nicolas Carr which really got me thinking about all this. I came to get a glimpse of how the world is going to be radically changed by this new type of computing which is called by names such as "cloud computing" "utility computing" "grid computing" and others (not 100% synonymous, but related terms) which basically mean that huge data centers "out there" will provide our computing power and storage for a cheaper price than today and therefore be available to anyone who wants to connect. This will transform our world in ways we haven't even imagined. Just as the invention of electricity brought forth radical changes in the way people lived (water wheels with their generators went away forever… power was cheaper and available from a central generating station even if the business wasn't located near the water wheel. Therefore, businesses could operate closer to where their customers were with all of the concomitant cost savings.

PCs as we know them today will also go away just as water wheels disappeared when water wheels were no longer necessary because the same thing is happening to computing. In a few years, there will only be humongous data centers (Googleplex-like) around the globe connecting all computer users and you won't know and you won't care where the computer is located which is searching, finding, processing, and saving your computer data files, just like you don't know today which power plant is providing your electricity, and you really don't care.

Computing will become less expensive, more available, faster and richer. And that's a good thing.

Digital Photography — Tips and Tricks

Spike Smith
harold.smith@ntpcug.org

Are you in a hurry? Are you looking to cut corners? Can you get away with it? Certainly!

Our most popular uses for digital cameras and photo editing today have easy ways to get by whenever there is less demand for the highest level of quality and perfection.

For many years, we have taken on a complex endeavor such as photography, taken simple tools (camera), and then used extensive techniques to provide resulting, lasting images.

Recently, our cameras have undergone extensive revisions, as shown by some manufacturers' addition of nomenclature such as an "i" for intelligent and an "s" for smart, and other gimmicky names. These are just to remind us that many of the features that usually required extensive thought are now built into the camera's logic. Computers have been added to even further enhance their ability to process many tasks for you that were previously your sole responsibility, and which usually require external software applications.

The following are built-in techniques used by several digital camera manufacturers to market their products for less demanding images, such as those used on the Internet, instant photos, email, and cataloging for quick sales. Most of these features will give good images most of the time. They are really simple, and when you learn what the camera is attempting to perform, then the more you understand what is going on, the easier it will be to correct any pre-set mistakes or just use other more reliable methodology. Learn the features, select what you like, and ignore the rest. (Personally, I'd like fewer selections such as uncluttered camera controls and menus.)

Night Portrait Mode

Using different shutter speeds, this feature tries for a blur-free shot of the foreground using a quick shot of flash. The background is then exposed by using a slow shutter speed.

See, isn't that what you have done all along with your manual controls?

Landscape Mode

This mode uses several of the many auto-focus points to attempt to get as much of the scene in focus and exposed as close as practical. Yep! The trick is to use a small aperture. Isn't that what you would do if you were setting up manually?

Close-up Mode

What this does is to open the lens wide so that those cute flower petals are in focus and those further away are slightly blurred, thus making an interesting shot.

No! I don't do it in this way manually as those doggone petals are so delicate that the teeniest wind makes them flutter in and out of focus and blur. Maybe I'd sneak in an off-camera flash to stop the movement, but there would still be a focus problem. If I'd really wanted those outdoor growing flower petals, I may just build a temporary fence around the plant to block the wind.

Flash Off Mode

On some new-fangled cameras, the "flash-off" control is not as good as an on/off switch. This mode may tell the camera to look for a slower shutter, then a higher ISO. Gosh, the camera may have already given you a shutter speed that makes a hand-held shot marginal. If you have a tripod, you can avoid using too high of an ISO which may add artifacts.

Sports Mode

This macro usually just sets the shutter to a high shutter speed. Shucks, I'd just have done that with a TV (faster shutter time) mode and gone for it.

OK. That was easy. Now let's advance to more complicated maneuvers.

Bracketing

Set digicam to AEB. If your scene has some areas or objects too bright and others too dark, you take three exposures in rapid succession giving practically the same view in each. Now go to Paint Shop Pro Photo and place each image in a separate layer. Work on your top layer and use Eraser Tool to remove bad pixels while showing properly detailed pixels on a lower layer. See! It's time-consuming work, but can be done. (Photo Shop and other fine editors will work, too.)

Following are some standard techniques for you to perform and not necessarily built-in camera macros.

Pose Him a bit...

Tell your subject to quit staring at your lens. Have him look over to left or right and have his face follow that look. "And quit looking like you're posing," you demand. "Then we will enjoy you looking at

the scenery."

Pose Her a bit...

Now, just visualize what you had him do. You just had him pose a little while twisting right or left. He and the scenery did well. But it's different when shooting the ladies, and as my fashion photographer mentor insisted, the prime approach (what one must do when photographing a woman) is get that camera down low, then lower it some more. You can even lay it on the ground (but don't dig a hole for it though).

The "fashion pro" wouldn't be interested in the scenery for this shot as was recommended for the male above. He would be shooting a woman, with the intent of making her legs appear longer, so you got to get lower. As a result, you don't get the scenery - you get the female.

Well, I don't always take his advice, as with shooting Aunt Agnes, I blend her in with her favorite scenery. But with Aunt Agnes' daughter, I follow the fashion pros' impeccable advice to a 'T'.

Long Lens

That there fashion pro that kept making me wear out my sleeves at the elbows while getting those legs to look longer had other techniques for ladies. He had a knack for using a super long lens with a big aperture, like maybe f/2 or f/2.8. This nearly always gives you that candid, non-posed look since you are nowhere near them-there subjects.

Also, you obtain a shallow depth of field with that long-fast lens. While using this approach, you soon realize that you now have several pounds of glass and high magnification. So, sure, you absolutely must have a rigid tripod in use.

This approach works when you want to pull your kinfolk out of the marching band. It's your problem though to have everything set up and ready when the shot comes in range. This is a paparazzi tool which sometimes pays well around superstar's swimming parties, although my mentor never mentioned this vocation.

Polarizing Filter

I mentioned these last year, with their ability to mitigate reflection off near-flat surfaces and for modifying light in a different way. While clearing out a number of storage boxes of older parts, I ran across a few old polarizer filters that didn't fit my newer lenses.

So, it's adapter time. The fewer small (cheap) parts I buy, the more money I'll have for a new big (expensive) part. Those old Cokin filters are good enough for me and they do adapt well. With these, you can make your greens greener, blues bluer, skies more noticeable, and just a lot of cute color modifications. Cokin has done well with new easy adapters for small digital cameras – just be cautious, as gadgets like these set in front of your camera can often hide "sensing" signals built on the camera body. Oh yes, polarizing modifies your infrared sensors and pre-flash, and sometimes auto focus controls. Be alert to any errors that may occur and if so, go back to manual controls for these applications.

Rest Your Camera

One of my mentors told me about finding versatile and secure tripod replacements. He had several inventions he had made and proudly displayed. Of course, I had my own inventions too, such as my steel tent stakes welded on threaded camera mounts.

This wasn't the successful photographer who admired only the feminine form; this mentor liked horns, like "antlers", as cover shots for national outdoors magazines. He set up his system showing how his open-window camera mount worked on his car, just as we approached a herd of wildebeest. As we parted and he shot away with his camera, I later realized I should have been there as these images were captured, instead of driving off in my van.

After all the thought he had given to his sturdily mounted gadgetry, he failed to realize that his camera had become tightly integrated with his entire sports wagon. Whoops! After capturing all of these long shots, he realized he had just plumb forgot to shut off the "vibration generator" - his automobile motor (blur maker).

I began thinking about those multi-purpose gadgets I'd used in Europe on long boring trips. I had a big fluffy pillow I'd set on window sills, boulders and whatever. When it wasn't in use with my camera, it sure felt great as a head rest.

Sunrise/Sunset

Regarding this successful outdoors animal shooting specialist, he did take numerous magnificent shots in the early morning and late evening when the colors were simply awesome. Using the early and late lighting added pleasant hues to those furry ones. Then, when the light intensity was most colorful, he'd use the sunrise and sunset as background.

Don't go out with this fellow unless you pack a full day's lunch, as not only is it a long time between dawn and dusk, but he continuously checks sunlit patterns throughout the day on various scenery. However, all of his searching, observing, learned habits as well, it all paid off with his salable prints.

Action Photography

Let's add some more comments concerning the Sports Mode discussed above. Each camera has proprietary means for coupling different macros together to make it easier for a beginner to get off and

running. We will continue from here forward with basic techniques which may or may not be included in your camera. High-end cameras will have a manual setting which allows near foolproof settings of your choice to supplement or replace those numerous pre-sets.

Whether you are a sports enthusiast or not, you will find many occasions where there is moving action, and some of it takes more thought if you are to properly capture your image.

Your macros for "moving" and "sports" settings will do what they can to freeze the action, maintain focus, and maintain proper exposure. To accomplish this, the following settings are considered:

1. Faster shutter speed to reduce delay
2. Wider lens opening to allow faster shutter
3. Higher ISO to allow faster shutter speed
4. Autofocus may be set to follow a panning action or freeze focus after depressing start

Item (1) above strives for the absolute highest speed consistent with proper exposure.

Item (2) is usually wide open. Consideration should be given to whether depth of field (in-focus) is adequate.

Item (3) looks like a cure-all, but you may find that too high an ISO allows artifacts which appear as distortions similar to film graininess, and therefore should be considered.

Item (4) is something that you will learn to select after practice.

All items wherein your camera has to make a measurement and then a decision will affect your image capture ability. Even though items (1) thru (4) do what they are supposed to do, there will be a shutter lag for the time needed to: check exposure, check focus, make decision about parameters for optimum results. The higher end cameras may react faster than low-cost cameras, but you still will consider this shutter lag.

If your activity will allow all action to take place in a defined area, you can pre-focus to this point and turn off autofocus.

If the light source is constant at the subject area, preset your exposure to the highest shutter speed consistent with other requirements (ISO, lens aperture) and turn off auto exposure.

These steps will greatly reduce your shutter lag, allowing you to follow the action and make your desired capture.

It will always be your responsibility to learn the features of your camera so that you can adapt to its manual settings. If your digicam does not have a manual setting, then there may be T or Shutter Priority wherein you can preset your shot to eliminate time lag due to this setting. Check and see if autofocus can be bypassed. Remember though, on small digicams, they just inherently have longer shutter lag.

More about these action shots

Your digicams have computers. They use memory. You likely reuse your file memory. So – buy the fastest speed memory you can afford and that will further reduce shutter lag.

Volunteering

Every board member, officer, chairman, and SIG leader is a volunteer. No one in this organization receives any payment for their work. Without our volunteers, NTPCUG would not exist.

Thanks to **Spike Smith** for volunteering to serve as Secretary at the Board Meetings.

Please consider volunteering for one of these important jobs:

Program Director
Identify and arrange program topics for our vendor presentations.

Volunteer Coordinator
Coordinate permanent and temporary volunteer participation.

Discount Coordinator
Communicate with vendors offering discounts on our products.

Mentoring — Tom Sweet
tom.sweet@ntpcug.org

Communicate with new members to ensure they are aware of the benefits, SIG opportunities and help them in numerous ways to feel welcome and to know that we care about them.

Newsletter — Doug Gorrie, Chuck Fiedler, David Franke
doug.gorrie@ntpcug.org
chuck.fiedler@ntpcug.org
dave f81@gmail.com

Prepare, contribute to and distribute the monthly newsletter.

Information Desk — Charles Rem
crem@ntpcug.org

Assist with check-in process at 3rd Saturday. One or more hours will make a difference.

This Month in Our History

by Chuck Fiedler

Hey kids, we're back at Uncle Chuck's time machine! This month we'll go back to March 1984 and stop to review the issues of PC News, we'll come back through 1989 and stop there also. So hop on and we'll get going.

In March of '84, the Group met at Jesuit College Prep School on Inwood near Forest in North Dallas. Again, the PC News was published in 8½ x 11" paper, printed on both sides -- thanks to the professional printer who did the printing and stapling, and thanks to John Pribyl who was the publisher.

The March meeting had two vendor presentations. VisiCorp made a presentation on VisiOn, VisiOn Calc, VisiOn Graph and VisiOn Word. Later, MicroPro gave a presentation on Wordstar and other MicroPro products.

Member **Fred Williams** had an interesting article headed PCjr Found to be Mentally Deficient in which he noted historic problems at IBM which would never let a product be released which competed with an existing IBM product line. Fred said:

"I say this because I have evaluated IBM's previous products developed in attempts to enter [the PC] market segment, ala the 5110 and its later repackagings. They were typical IBM, user unfriendly, high price/low performance, software poor, market restricted products. The first IBM PC was too radical a departure from IBM's product lines, produced by a wild and woolly division known internally as the 'PAC MAN Division'.

"I believe traditional IBM thought is beginning to gain control of the 'PAC MAN' Division. 'PAC MAN' will never again produce an innovative and dangerous product. PCjr is the messenger bearing this sad news…"

In December, I noted the history on the PCjr and its election to the PC Hall of Shame. No wonder IBM lost their stranglehold on the PC market.

The Disk of the Month (DOM) Squad had 14 featured game disks at a mere $5 per for a SSDD 5¼" disk.

I was astonished at one of the Swap Shop ads which read:

"FOR SALE: Great Lakes/Pegasus hard disk drives for the IBM PC and compatibles. 10 MB Internal Drive $1200, External 10 MB Drive $1400. Complete with cable and controller card… This is the best bargain on the market in a hard disk drive…"

The March '89 issue had the then-traditional grey cover and nothing but the header logo, volume and issue and date on the cover. Such was the wish of publisher John Pribyl.

In 1989, the Group met at the Infomart. Perhaps you remember meeting there with those fabulous sales in the great room off the lobby. Unfortunately, most if not all of those vendors have taken up other endeavors today.

In Prez Sez, president, **Jim Hoisington**, noted that the Board had elected **Stuart Yarus** as the first Emeritus member. (Today we have 18 surviving Emeritus members. These are folks who have done things on behalf of the Group to warrant recognition by the Board for their outstanding efforts.)

Jim went on to report that there had been problems with the machine on which the Group's BBS ran. The BBS committee, which had been promised a much-delayed machine from AST went ahead and purchased a new 386, 20 MHz machine with a whole Meg of memory and a 105 MB hard drive resulting in a reported significant improvement in BBS response time.

Under the heading, TURBOTAX Prepares Your 1040 by Bruce Shubert, CPA, he commented on the exceptional performance of the Turbotax product and the industry-leading ability of the Chipsoft company to keep up with what were not-unprecedented late year changes in the tax laws. More importantly, this product was priced "well under the $100 list." Locally, the price was often discounted to under $50. It ran on an IBM or compatible machine with 256K of memory and floppy drives or a hard disk.

Reagan Andrews' recurrent column The Variety Store discussed two new laptop technologies unveiled at COMDEX/Fall 88. The first was a 3½" hard drive using a reinforced glass substrate developed by Areal Technologies of San Jose, CA. Areal claimed their drives had an average power consumption of one watt with the drive running at full speed, roughly 5 – 10% of typical power consumption of competing drives. Such specifications made Areal drives ideal for laptop applications. Areal was acquired by Tomen Electronics in 1993 and still makes 2½" drives using the glass technology.

Intel reported that they had developed a new math coprocessor for 286-based laptops that drew only one-third the power of previous coprocessors whose

use in laptops was prohibited by the deleterious effect on battery life. Intel suggested a retail price of $510 **for the coprocessor chip**!

A thoroughly tongue-in-cheek article titled Glossary Of Computing Terms by **Thomas J. Cook** had a number of definitions I found of interest:

Big Blue: The mood one gets when the company president defines "computer" to be "IBM" as in "Buy some IBMs".

Bulletin Board: Mechanism to allow the socially autistic to masquerade as real people and communicate with one another by posting cleaver near-random commentary on a remote computer.

Clone: An acronym standing for "Copied Low-cost Optimal Non-IBM Equipment". Often used as a cure for the dreaded Big Blue. Texas, land of independent self-styled individualists, is currently "Siliclone Valley" where imagination is limited only by IBM.

Consultant: Unemployed computer expert.

IBM: Standards proposing organization. IBM develops hardware architectures, and builds slow underpowered prototypes for other companies to improve upon. See Clone.

Microsoft: Contract programming house for IBM, and primary sustainer of the clone market. IBM pays MS to write fancy software, then MS tweaks it a little, slaps the MS logo on it, and sells it to all the clone folks so they can keep competing with IBM…

User Group: A collection of long-time bulletin board users who couldn't stand not knowing what each other looked like. To cure this curiosity, they periodically get together…

Windows: Rampant computing socialism under the guise of "ease of use". Microsoft's product picks up on Macintosh's cue using the siren call of splashy device-independent screen effects to quietly enforce a uniform user interface…

I hope you have found this information of interest. If you have reflections to offer, contact chuck.fiedler@ntpcug.org and we will consider them for future issues.

Monthly NTPCUG Meeting Flyer – Can You Help Distribute?

Each month we send members a flyer listing the upcoming second and third Saturday SIG meeting information. We work to fit it all on one page so it can be easily printed and posted in offices and public areas. It can also be sent by email to family members, friends, colleagues, etc.

With your help we hope to generate increased interest in User Group activities, thereby helping us grow. We rely on members, SIG leaders, Board members and volunteers to share this information with others. We also need you to consider new options beyond the obvious – bulletin boards, etc.

We ask you, our members, to think of places where you can post the monthly flyer and to e-mail it to anyone you know who may be interested.

We try mightily to get this out before the weekend preceding the second Saturday of each month so you have time to "do your thing".

With your help we can grow our Group and reach others who can "Share what you know, learn what you don't."

> ***Where have you sent the March flyer?***

GEEK NIGHTMARE #31:
A DESERT ISLAND, YOU,
AND 100 OF YOUR FAVOURITE BOOKS

Calendar

March	April	May
14 9:00 am—Noon **2nd Saturday** at Microsoft 2:15 pm *Certification SIG* at Nerdbooks	**11** 9:00 am—Noon **2nd Saturday** at Microsoft 2:15 pm *Certification SIG* at Nerdbooks	**9** 9:00 am—Noon **2nd Saturday** at Microsoft 2:15 pm *Certification SIG* at Nerdbooks
21 8:00 am—2:00 pm **3rd Saturday** at King of Glory 2:00 pm *Certification SIG* at King of Glory	**18** 8:00 am—2:00 pm **3rd Saturday** at King of Glory 2:00 pm *Certification SIG* at King of Glory	**16** 8:00 am—2:00 pm **3rd Saturday** at King of Glory 2:00 pm *Certification SIG* at King of Glory

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