

Our annual “Ask the Guru” night

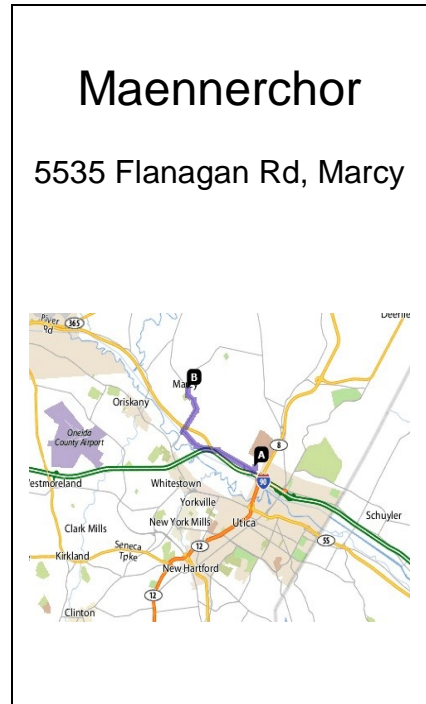
This meeting will be held at the Maennerchor on Flanagan Rd in Marcy.

Once again it's time to ask your questions and pick the brains of our gurus. Bring all your questions—whether they are about hardware or software—for we have the experts ready to handle just about anything. Heading the guru list will be Lisa Britt and Bill Gorrell. And maybe you'll help answer someone else's question. Remember—we're members helping members!

We'll have paper and pencil for you to jot down your questions if you've got a detailed issue you might want to write it out in advance of the meeting.



It's the beginning of a new year of club meetings. It's a great time to bring a friend to the meeting. Many people are helped to solve computer problems when they attend this kind of an open question and answer program. Please come and bring a friend!



Tuesday, Sept 4, 2007- 6PM at the Maennerchor, Marcy



explorer

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The MVPCUG was founded in 1981 by individuals interested in IBM compatible computers. This non-profit organization consists of volunteers whose expertise range from novice to professional.

Regular meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 6pm, usually at the Whitesboro High School, Route 291, Marcy NY. A typical agenda consists of discussion of business affairs and a demonstration of computer related products. Meetings are open to the public.

Initial membership fee for an individual is \$25. Annual renewal dues are \$20.

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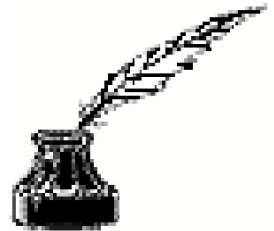
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Meeting Agenda	
5:30.	Meet and Greet
6:00.	Business Meeting
6:30.	Program, Part 1
7:10.	Break
7:20.	Program, Part 2
8:00.	Drawing for Prizes
8:15.	Adjournment

Editorial notes . . .



Summer will be on the wane when you read this, but today it is warm and the air conditioner is running full tilt. We're having an addition put on the house and life is anything but calm and peaceful. We are moving 35 years of accumulation from one place to another as work goes on around us.

In the midst of all this disruption, I elected to buy a new computer. I am now the owner of an HP laptop running WindowsXP. It was quite a challenge to find a computer that didn't have Vista, but they are out there. I also upgraded to WordPerfect X3. So far, I am not impressed with either one.

Having the laptop has been wonderful during all this work as I can just pick up and move to a different location. I even have Bluetooth wireless so it has been easy to work without having to worry about losing an Internet connection.

My files transferred easily thanks to the local network we have. However, some files are not quite the way they should be. Fonts that I had with WordPerfect 11 are not in version 13 and new ones have been added.

[continued on page 3]

Stay connected . . . to the MVPCUG
Mohawk Valley PC User Group, Inc.
\$25 for initial sign-up - \$20 for renewal

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Please mail this application with a check payable to MVPCUG to
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Minutes of June 5, 2007

— John Hunter, Secretary

The MVPCUG general meeting was held at the Whitesboro HS cafeteria. President Jerry Finkelstein called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. There were 49 persons in attendance.

BUSINESS MEETING

President Jerry Finkelstein welcomed members and visitors. Jerry then called on Treasurer Bill Gorrell to present the treasurer’s report. Bill reported that for the month ending on May 31, 2007 he received \$139.17 in income from donations, dues and interest earned. Expenses for the same period totaled \$127.33. This resulted in a net income for the month of \$11.84. Account balances for May totaled \$3746.87 and include funds held in the checking account, money market account and the GPO credit union account.

In response to a question, Bill indicated that the money market account earns 3%. Bill also reported that there will be no Q & A SIG in June.

On another topic, Jerry indicated that club PR seems to be improving. He is getting calls about upcoming meetings.

John Hunter mentioned that the club received an email from author Scott Rekdal regarding the book review of his book which appeared in a recent newsletter. Rekdal thanked us for the review.

Jerry reported that Mid-York Library System is offering to hold workshops at the Mid-York building beginning in the fall.

Jerry continued with the report that September’s meeting, “Ask the Gurus”, will be held at the Utica Maennerchor.

Questions from the audience focused on Vista Software and digital photos. An additional question regarded whether Vista software was backward compatible with older versions of MS software.

PROGRAM

At 6:30 p.m. Jerry introduced speaker Linda Oltz who talked about using Excel data tables with Word documents. The program paused for a 10 minute break at 7:20 p.m. After reconvening, Linda covered the use of Excel mail merge. At the conclusion of her presentation, Linda took questions from the audience.

Linda also covered the use of spreadsheets for family budgets. Questions ended at 8:25 p.m. when the drawing for door prizes began.

DOOR PRIZES

[furnished with club funds]

- 15 CD-R..... Fred Cole
- 4 X 6 Photo Paper..... Bo Wozniak
- Norton Antivirus..... Jerry Finkelstein
- Serif 5 CD set..... Patricia Bruno

[donated by Microsoft MindShare]

- T Shirt..... Gary Virkler

[donated by Rod St. Clair]

- 4 message pads..... Fred Schmandt

[donated by Jerry Finkelstein]

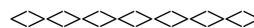
- Ream of paper/12 file folders..... Helen Russell

[donated by Peach Pit Press]

- Moving to Microsoft Vista..... Jim Schmandt

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM.

John Hunter, secretary



Editorial Notes [cont. from page 2]

This newsletter is the first to be produced using the new software so there may be discrepancies. Hopefully, things will be ironed out as I get used to working in this new environment—both in my house and on my computer.

One of the things I am having trouble getting used to is the distortion of the wide screen. I have a 17" screen but all the newer screens, regardless of size, will be wide screen. I scanned a few photos and compared the original to what was on my screen. Not good. You may not notice the difference unless you are working with photos of people. I haven’t printed out any of these yet so I’m hoping it is only a screen problem.

The scanner is the same one I’ve had for years. But that also has developed some peculiarities under XP. I used to set the output for color at 300 dpi. Now the scanner takes over and will change the output to what it thinks is best. A document will be scanned as black and white [this is *not* the same as greyscale] and some photos also have been treated this way. This is unsatisfactory. I am used to doing things my way, not Microsoft’s way.

Playing Solitaire is somewhat challenging as it is more spread out than I’m used to on my old CRT.

On the plus side, XP offers a game that I’ve become addicted to – Spider. It’s a version of Solitaire and offers a diversion from the usual. There is an extension you can add to Firefox that will give you Spider and other versions of Solitaire. Go to: <http://tinyurl.com/yr5dxm> and type *Cards* in the search box. You might also look around for any other add-ons that interest you. I added a weather forecast to my Firefox menu bar. With Firefox, you can “have it your way”.



Windows Tips

— from WindowsSecrets by Scott Dunn

Scott Dunn writes in his Windows Secrets column that there are many freeware and shareware programs that will emulate some of the features of Vista Business, Enterprise, and Ultimate that are not included in Vista Home Basic, Home Premium, or Windows XP. These include Vista's "shadow copy" feature, image-based backups, and faxing. Here are some ways to add those features to your own Windows system.

* **Shadow copy.** Vista's Shadow Copy applet is a file versioning tool that automatically makes backups of older and newer versions of your files while you work. For a freeware equivalent, try FileHamster [mogware.com/FileHamster/], which monitors files and folders you designate, automatically makes backups, and lets you annotate them.

Data Deposit Box [datadepositbox.com/], is an Internet service that backs up your data online for \$2 per gigabyte per month.

* **Image-based backup.** Neither XP nor Vista Home Premium have Ultimate's tools for making a complete backup image of a disk drive or partition. Fortunately, a number of low-cost tools do just that. Symantec Norton Save & Restore 2.0 [tinyurl.com/3xhwm2] is now Vista compatible and handles both drive imaging and file backup. Acronis True Image 10 Home [acronis.com/homecomputing/products/trueimage/], also supports Vista. Both products are \$50, but at the User Group Store [ugr.com/TrueImage.html], you can get the Acronis product discounted to \$33 [on CD] or \$29 [download]. DriveImage XML [runtime.org/dixml.htm] rates a score of 4.5 out of 5.0 from SnapFiles [snapfiles.com/freeware/], an independent download site. This product does not yet support Vista.

* **Faxing.** Users of most versions of Windows have long taken faxing capabilities for granted, but this feature was omitted from Vista Home Premium.

Snappy Fax 2000 [snappyfax.com/] is a \$30 shareware tool for sending and receiving faxes. The product includes OCR and other features. A previous release, earned a perfect 5 rating from SnapFiles. Version 4 supports Vista. A 30-day trial version is

available. If you're using XP or older version of Windows, a cheaper alternative is the \$20 shareware product MightyFax [rkssoftware.com/]. [Rated "Excellent" by SnapFiles].

* **Whole drive encryption.** Vista Ultimate comes with BitLocker Drive Encryption to protect your data if your computer is hacked or stolen. At \$99 for a perpetual license, PGP Desktop Home [pgp.com/products/desktop_home/index.html] is less expensive than buying Ultimate. For a free product that's comparable to PGP's, check out TrueCrypt [truecrypt.org/]. This encryption software garnered the highest rating from SnapFiles.

* **Virtual computing.** Vista Enterprise and Ultimate include Virtual PC, which lets you run multiple PC-based operating systems within Windows. This can give you backward compatibility with older software, a second environment in which to surf the Web more safely, and more. XP users can download this feature for free directly from Microsoft. Users of other Vista editions other than Enterprise and Ultimate may want to try out the free VMware Player [vmware.com/products/player/].

Vista Ultimate and Home Premium have some features that aren't found in other Windows versions.

* **Multimedia features.** If your computer has a TV tuner card, you can record programs to your hard disc using SageTV Media Center. Download a 15-day trial version from at: [sagetv.com/sagetv.html]. Vista Home Premium also offers Movie Maker and DVD Maker utilities for video editing and production. For \$100, Adobe Premiere Elements does the same job. Aimed at inexperienced users, Elements helps you capture, edit, and output digital video on DVDs, the Internet, and elsewhere.

* **Parental controls.** Vista Home Premium and Ultimate come with built-in tools for controlling what Web sites your children can visit, what applications they can launch, and when they can use the computer. Microsoft's tools also provides monitoring, so you can get an activity report showing what your child has been doing with the computer. Fortunately, you don't have to have Home Premium or Ultimate to get these

[continued on page 7]

Photography—Flash attachments/Fireworks — by Kim Komando

Q. I purchased a digital SLR a few months ago. I'm new to digital photography and photography in general. But I'm learning pretty fast. It is obvious that my built-in flash is not strong enough. I'm going to buy a new flash, but I'm not sure what I need. Can you help?

A. The features that are important will depend on how you intend to use the flash. Will you use it outside, or are you setting up an indoor studio? Or do you plan to use it for macro photography?

If you're interested in macro photography, look for a ring flash. This attaches to the end of the camera's lens. It illuminates close-up objects. You won't need to worry about shadows from the lens.

Otherwise, you'll probably want a flash that mounts on the camera's hot shoe. This is the most common type of flash for amateur photographers. The hot shoe is at the top of the camera, behind the pop-up flash. The hot shoe has a cover that slides off.

Since you're new to photography, you may not want to invest much. But keep in mind that more advanced equipment will give you more room to grow. It will save you money in the long run.

Also, flash photography is particularly difficult. There is a lot to learn before you'll take good pictures with a flash. Advanced features in a flash make things easier. You can use automatic modes to take better pictures.

I said that flash photography isn't easy. Calculating the distance from the subject to the flash and adjusting the aperture accordingly is difficult. If you calculate incorrectly, your subject will be washed out. Or, it could be overly dark. You want your photo to have details in both the highlights and the darkest areas.

Fortunately, you'll find plenty of TTL flash systems. TTL means through-the-lens. The light from the flash bounces off the subject and is sent back to the camera. It enters the lens and hits the sensor. Another sensor judges when the exposure is correct and turns off the flash. Wow!

TTL flash systems take some of the burden off of you. They've been around for about 20 years. Innovations over the years have improved them.

The systems improve light metering, even when working with filters. Some of these flashes can be used to control remote flash units wirelessly. For this, you need a flash with a built-in commander unit. Keep in mind that some cameras have built-in commanders. Or, you can buy commander units without flash to attach to the camera.

These systems allow you to set up compatible flash units around your studio. Obviously, this can create complex lighting situations.

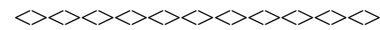
If you're interested in studio photography, this is a must-have option. I would buy a flash that allows for this type of expansion.

Other things to consider are the flash's tilt and swivel. These allow you use bounce flash, which is softer than full-on flash. And look for a short recycle time. The recycle time is the time it takes for the flash to recharge between shots.

You should also consider the guide number. This dictates how far away the subject can be before the flash loses effectiveness. The guide number is expressed in feet and meters. It is usually measured at 100 ISO.

Before you buy a flash, check to see what focal lengths will work with it. Flashes won't cover the entire frame if the lens is too short. Also look for zoom. Some flashes sense the focal length of the lens and adjust accordingly.

You'll find third-party flashes that work with your camera. But, you're probably best sticking with ones made by your camera manufacturer. That way, you'll be sure you'll get all the features promised by both the flash and the camera.



Q. I recently made the switch from film to digital photography. With July 4th coming up, I wondered if I could shoot fireworks with my digital camera.

A. Most digital cameras are slower than their film brethren, making fireworks more of a challenge. But it can be done.

That is, it can be done if your camera permits manual settings. If it is an inexpensive point and shoot model with auto focus only, you may not be able to capture the fireworks.

So here are some things that have worked for me:

- Use a tripod. Fireworks require a long exposure. If you're holding the camera, you'll shake it, guaranteed.
- Use a cable release or remote triggering device. You don't want to touch the camera. That's another way to cause shake. Most cameras don't come with a cable release or remote. Check with the manufacturer, or stop by a camera store.
- Turn your mode dial to landscape. That will take care of your focusing issues. Your manual should have instructions for this.
- Take pictures on the highest quality setting. Reduced quality settings will cause some digital information to be lost. Your manual should explain that.

I found a wonderful site from the New York Institute of Photography, written by Jim Barthman. It also includes links to other fireworks photography sites.

<http://www.nyip.com/tips/current/digfirewks.php> ❖

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www.komando.com

Sites to Visit on the 'Net

— by John Hunter

Dude, Are You Buying a Dell?

A former Dell Computer Sales Manager recently published a blog listing bargain-hunting tips for purchasing Dell computers. To access this consumer-friendly blog, click on

www.consumerist.com/consumer/insiders/22-confessions-of-a-former-dell-sales-manager.

Some of the tips are intuitive such as: small business is better than the home office. Reason - sales promotions are sometimes better and the consumer is more likely to qualify for domestic tech support than home machines which usually get non-native English speakers for tech support.

Another tip says that for low-end desktops, skip the extended warranty. It is usually better to replace the machine since no low end components are worth the warranty price.

Useful Dell info. Promotions run from Thursday at 1 a.m. to Wednesday at midnight. Promotion styles - typically the first week will feature cash off; the next week will be percentage off. If you miss the cash off, check the "As Advertised"-Newspaper. Cash off helps for low end purchases; percentage off helps high end purchases. Check the blog for more useful tips.

Some Blogs Just Have More Fun

Some say that parody is the sincerest form of flattery. If you subscribe to this, check out www.trailerspy.com. Click on the link that takes you to The Top 15 Movie TrailerRemixes of All-Time and view movie trailers that answer questions as:

- What if *Dumb and Dumber* was a horror film?
- What if *Jaws* was a love story (between Roy Scheider and the shark)?
- What if *Glengarry Glen Ross* was really about Tourette's Syndrome?
- What if *Top Gun* was really about a gay-love affair?
- What if *The Shining* was a lighthearted drama?

Each clip lasts about 2 hilarious minutes. Enjoy.

Is It A Bird, Is It A Plane . . .?

If you spot a UFO, what do you do? Do you tell a friend? Do you check into a psychiatric hospital? Or do you deny the sighting and say nothing? For those not satisfied with the above responses, visit www.mufon.com. This site, Mutual UFO Network, claims to study UFOs for the benefit of humanity and will take you seriously. You will find tips on what to

do about your spotting experience; you will learn how to report a UFO; and you will be comforted to learn that Dan Ackroyd supports Mufon. This group also sponsored a symposium August 10 - 12 in Denver Colorado. You can also download a UFO report form, 13 pages long in pdf format. OooohKaaay.

Pet Food Information

Recently the FDA alerted consumers to the fact that some pet foods imported from China contained toxic materials that caused death in some animals. If your pet food appeared on the FDA list of possible contaminated foods, you can find more specific information at

www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/petfood.html. For pet owners who decide to make their own pet food, animal nutritionists note that cat and dog food diets call for high amounts of calcium and fat and specific vitamins. To check if your homemade pet chow is healthy, visit www.balanceit.com for help and recipes.

Weird Facts

Did you know that 98% of atoms in your body are replaced every year? Did you know that couples who marry in January, February or March tend to have the highest divorce rates? For those of you who enjoy arcane information, visit www.weirdfacts.com. You can even find geography specific weird facts listed by state such as: In Idaho, riding a merry-go-round on Sundays is against the law. And in North Dakota, it is illegal to lie down and fall asleep with your shoes on.

Free Stuff

One of my friends says, "If it's free, I want it." For him and for you, a mother load of free stuff can be had at www.absurdlycool.com. According to the site, free products from all over the world can be had by simply providing your email address.

The site lists free items by date. On my visit, free samples of John Friedas Frizz Ease and Dove proage deodorant or shampoo were available. The day before listed Shania Starlight (a perfume product) and a printable free one-day pass to Sam's Club were offered.

You can even get free toy samples from K'Nex building blocks from Lego if you provide your email address. This offer is good while supplies last. You will also qualify for \$60 worth of coupons for Six Flags theme parks. Interested? Just don't blame me if your inbox begins to grow exponentially as soon as you provide your email.

Until next time . . .



Did You Know . . . — Donna Gorrell

. . . that if you purchase software using a credit card you'd better read EULAs [End User License Agreements] carefully when you install programs such as McAfee? Buried within the wordy agreement is the following: "If you have agreed to permit McAfee to automatically renew your subscription to the Software by charging a valid credit card number which you have provided to McAfee, your subscription will be automatically renewed thirty (30) days prior to the expiration of the term and each anniversary thereafter for a fee no greater than McAfee's then-current price, excluding promotional and discount pricing."

McAfee is not the only software maker using this marketing tactic to ensure renewal. Both Symantec and ZoneAlarm have similar policies. Opting out can be a nightmare.

This policy is not limited to software—or purchases by credit card. I subscribed to a magazine by sending a personal check. A few months into the subscription I began receiving notices to renew. Then the notices became more and more unpleasant and threatening. There was always a bill and a return envelope [without postage]. Since I had decided not to renew I saw no need to spend the money for postage telling the company that I didn't want their product. This went on for months until one letter became alarming—it threatened to turn my name over to a collection agency and demanded I send the proper amount immediately. I decided to write to the company telling them that if I received one more threatening letter I would take it to my attorney. Did I waste the postage money? Nope, I went to the web site and sent an email. Haven't heard a word from them since. In case you wonder what magazine would stoop to these tactics—it had nothing to do with computing, but dealt with good housekeeping.

Moral of the story: when using a credit card be extra cautious and read everything carefully. As I stated, using a check does not remove the obligation for automatic renewal. Read the fine print for any contract and then decide if you can opt-out or not.

Opting-in would be my preference and if enough of us object, maybe we can influence the offending companies to stop this obnoxious practice. Complain, loudly and often. ❖

Windows Secrets [cont. from page 4]

features on your computer. Advanced Parental Control [advancedparentalcontrol.com/] provides the same tools and earned 5 out of 5 stars and cows, respectively, from CNET and Tucows. Another favorite, rated highly by PC Pro reviewers is CyberPatrol [cyberpatrol.com/]. Both products cost \$40, but have trial versions that you can install and use for free. If even \$40 is too much money, consider your options if you have an Internet security suite.

ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite [zonealarm.com/store/content/catalog/products/] and Norton Internet Security 2007 have some parental filtering features built in. (Note: The Norton product may require a free parental-control add-on pack).

If you want a free product, your best bet may be the older version 3.06 of iProtectYou [snapfiles.com/get/iprotectyou.html]. This program was rated 4 out of 5 stars from SnapFiles. It lets you restrict Web sites, chat sessions, e-mails, and instant messaging as well as scheduling when children can use the Internet.

* XP owners who want more of the slick Aero appearance — and other desktop features that are part of every Vista version — free and cheap substitutes abound. For example: You can give XP a more modern look and feel by using "skinning" programs, such as StyleXP [tgtsoft.com/prod_sxp.php] from TGTSOFT or Stardock's WindowBlinds [stardock.com/products/windowblinds/] (\$20 each).

* You can add transparency to Windows elements with these free products: Transbar [home.no/aksoftware/], PowerMenu [abstractpath.com/powermenu/], and TransApps [vasileios.gr/freesoft/transp_apps.htm].

* To get Vista's "thumbnail preview" of a window when you hold your mouse pointer over a Taskbar button, check out the freeware product Visual Task Tips [visualltasktips.com/].

* Last, but not least, for something approaching the Vista Sidebar in functionality, try Desktop Sidebar [desktopsidebar.com/download.html] or Yahoo's desktop widgets [widgets.yahoo.com/]. ❖

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“Ask the Guru” night

Tuesday * Sept 4, 2007 * 6:00 PM * Maennerchor, Flanagan Rd, Marcy



what's.com/ing				September 2007		
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Francis Scott Key wrote the “Star Spangled Banner” on September 14, 1814						1
2	3 Labor Day	4 Monthly General Meeting 6:00 PM Whitesboro HS	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Board of Directors Meeting 6:30 PM	12	13  השופר	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22  Yom Kippur
23 Autumn	24 30	25	26	27	28	29