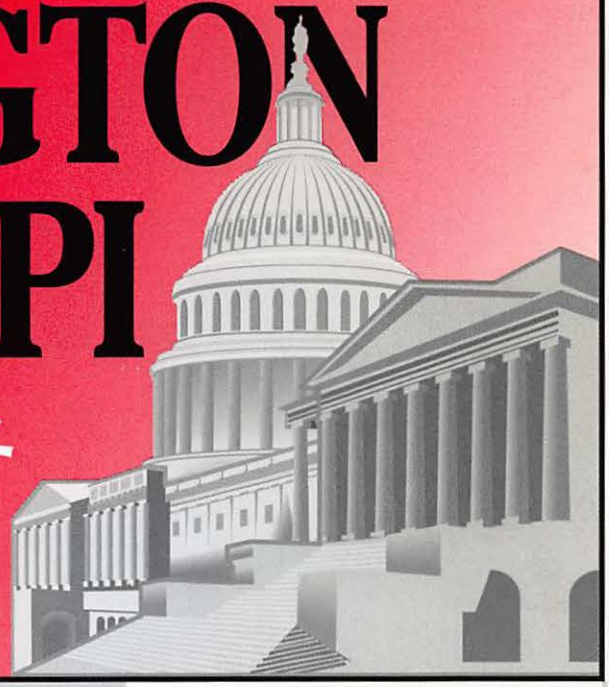
November/December 2005 $2.95

WASHINGTON APPLE PI



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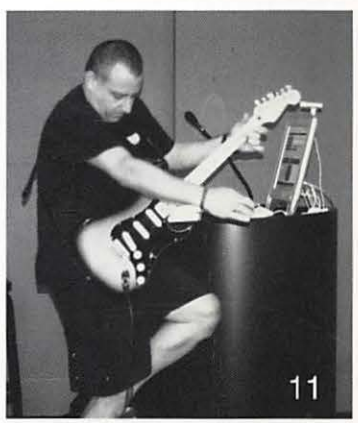

Washington Apple Pi
General Meeting
November 19, 2005
9 am to noon
"iLife for Holiday Sharing"
at
Microsoft Innovation and Technology Center
12012 Sunset Hills Rd
Reston, VA 20190

Join us as we explore ways to use Apple's iLife software suite to creatively prepare family cards, newsletters, and Web sites for the holidays.

Note the New location. For further details, in-cludingmaps and driving directions, check the Pi Web site at
http://www.wap.org/events/nov2005

Washington Apple Pi

Holiday Brunch and Gift Exchange

Saturday, December 3
from 9 am to noon at the
Old Country Buffet
in Fair City Mall, 9650 Main St
Fairfax, VA

The gift exchange will be a "round-robin" affair. While the meeting is free and open to the public, each participant must pay for their own meal.

Further details can be found at the Pi Web site under
http://www.wap.org/events/dec2005/

Where the heck is the Pi

HOTLINE Listing?

The Hotline listing, with the names and phone numbers of members who can provide help on a variety of computer issues, can be found on the TCS,

http://tcs.wap.org/

If you are having problems with your Pi account name or password, visit:

http://tcs.wap.org/password

for assistance.

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Editorial Staff

Managing Editor
John Barnes; john.barnes@wap.org
Macintosh/Reviews Editor
Lawrence Charters; macedi-tor@wap.org
Photo Editor
Richard Sanderson; richard@sandersoncomputer.com

President's Corner

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The Future of the Pi

This essay is adapted from a posting of mine on the Pi electronic message forums. You can access the original thread at <http://tcs.wap.org/topic=b?=hero&top=1187>.

The member who started the thread was concerned about the "hand-wringing" character of discussions over the contractions that the Pi has been undergoing. The Pi has been reinventing itself, sometimes painfully, ever since Beth Medlin and Lorin Evans stepped aside at the beginning of 2002. I think that most members of the BoD will agree with me when I say that the Pi as it now stands has what it needs to continue into the foreseeable future. Our ship of state may have to make further course alterations, but the shoals are charted. It is partly a matter of how the winds of membership blow. These are, after all, what fills our sails.

I think that all of you, as Pi members, need to look objectively at what you are getting for your Pi membership dollar. While the Board of Directors has had to take serious measures to minimize superfluous expenditures, we are still providing the core services that our members have signed up for. There is no reason based on money that would keep us from doing this for the foreseeable future.

We Need People

The Pi's real problem with regard to viability is not dollars, but people. Our members are simply not sharing enough of themselves. The core group of volunteers who handle mundane tasks like keeping the books and processing memberships are approaching burnout. That core group of volunteers also forms the nucleus of whatever else happens: General meeting attendees, picnics, Journal articles, teaching, and governance. We need a few new people to take up these tasks.

Examples of areas that need participation by many more members are the *Journal* and the tutorials program. The *Journal* needs more contributors sharing their Apple experiences. Articles about experiences with hardware, software, Apple happenings, and Pi events would be enjoyed by everyone. This is an activity that even Pi members in remote parts of North America or the world can participate in.

There are some aspects of the Pi that need to be reinvented. The tutorial program is a case in point. With so many other sources providing the knowledge people need we have to examine our hands-on teaching to see what is relevant and what we can expect to provide. New instructors are a key aspect of this reinvention and we welcome anyone who is willing to put together and present a coherent instructional offering.

Many of our ablest stalwarts have taken a break from running the Pi and moved on to other personal, business, and family concerns. These are largely the result of changes in their personal situations.

They have only been partly replaced by new volunteers. There are currently two vacancies in the Board of Directors' Class of 2008. Any interested Pi member is welcome to step forward to fill one of those seats. Come next March we asking for 5 or more new volunteers to stand for election to the Class of 2009. These are great opportunities to express themselves for those who want to make something of the Pi.

I'm afraid that a great many Pi members do not appreciate just what it takes to provide the infrastructure that everyone takes for granted. Much of this work has to be done by teams working together in real places and real time.

External Changes

Some people, notably Adam Engst, attribute changes in the Apple marketplace to "appliancification," a change in the character of the company's products. I think this is largely irrelevant to user groups. I think that the increasing difficulties of user groups are attributable to a decline in volunteerism throughout our wider society. This seems to be manifested in clubs of all kinds. The willingness of Americans to form associations in pursuit of their objectives that so amazed Alexis de Tocqueville when he visited our nation dur-

ing its early years has long been on the wane in many corners of our society.

The appliancification theme has other ramifications, which I plan to discuss in a future issue of the *Journal*. I think that the need for people to better understand the complexities of their computing appliances and to take responsibility for them provides user groups with genuine opportunities for enriching the experiences of their members.

In closing, I would like to say that the leaders of the Pi are not engaged in "hand wringing." We are actively engaged in preserving the Club and helping it to move into the future. I hope that enough other members will see fit to avail themselves of the existing opportunities to make the Club more vibrant and more capable of coping with our mission of "Users Helping Users to Help Themselves."

Thank You

How to Thank the Leaders of Your Computer User Group

by Phil Shapiro

If you have found benefit in belonging to a computer user group, there aremany ways of thanking the leaders of the group. Sure, you can always walk up to them after a meeting and shake their hand. But there are more meaningful things you can do, too.

You can thank them by moving the club forward in countless small ways. You can drop off membership flyers at the local computer stores and public libraries. You can offer a smile and encouraging word to people who show up to meetings.

You can answer questions on the club's email list. You can ask questions on the club's email list. (Questions are as valuable as answers.) You can exhibit patience with computer beginners -- answering their questions in ways that benefit them the most.

You can offer some computer item you're no longer using to another member of the club. (If you're giving away commercial software, make sure you delete the copy on your own computer.)

You can also spread the word about the club around town. Be careful not to oversell, though. When I explain about the benefits of the local user group, I spell out honestly what the club can offer and can't offer. You would be doing no-one any favors if you raise false expectations in the minds of prospective club members.

You can write an article for the club's newsletter. Articles can be on almost any topic you think would bring value to club members. You don't need to be a computer expert to write an excellent article. Computer beginners have lots of important and interesting things to say. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."

You can talk to your local public librarians about the benefits you've encountered in your user group. Librarians are the intellectual hub of any community. You want them to be able to pass on information to anyone who inquires about computer user groups. You might even give them a video showing one of your user group meetings in action -- so they can better visualize and describe the meetings to other community members.

And now here's some unexpected ways you can thank the leaders of the club. You can show up to the club meeting with an unexpected door prize. Perhaps buy a pair of new computer speakers. Some headphones. A computer microphone. (Note Macs use different microphones than Windows computers. Mac users usually use a USB microphone.)

Stop by a bookstore and buy a copy of a new how-to computer book. Or purchase a modest Amazon.com gift certificate as a door prize.

Offer to be a "club driver" - - so if someone calls the club and says there is a sick child or adult who could use a computer at home, you'll be there to deliver that donated computer on behalf of the club. Bring homemade cookies to club meetings (being careful not to leave crumbs for the next people using that meeting space.)

Offer to be a "computer mover," so that if someone in the club isn't able to move their com-

puter from one room of their house to another, you'll be there to help them do that. Or be the modem rescue person, so if someone's modem got zapped by lighting, you be there the next day and connect a replacement modem for them. If they ask you why you did that, tell them that you value them being connected.

You can start a scholarship program for 5 families/year in your community. Interested families could apply to the club to get a donated computer and 1/2 off the annual dues of the club. (For the first year.) By doing so you're building a ramp to club membership, you're helping the community and you're creating new ways for club members to engage in outreach and publicity.

Get creative in how you thank the leaders of your computer club. Behind the scene many hours of work go into making computer clubs work. Club leaders are not paid a dime. They do it because they get a thrill from seeing people help each other, from people increasing in their learning and computer confidence.

Surprise them in the ways you say thanks. You may even want to say: "I'm ready to work. I'd like to offer my time to help."

A grateful handshake is a good starting point. A grateful action is an appropriate follow-up. Actions speak louder than words. Collective action is what user groups are all about.

Find a need. And then fill it.

The author has benefitted from the generosity of people in computer user groups for the past 20 years. He is reachable at http://www.digitaldivide.net/profile/pshapiro and pshapiro@his.com

This article was inspired by the actions of the Macintosh Business Users Society of Greater Philadelphia in starting an award program for students at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia -- where this user group meets. Somebody in that club is thinking outside of the box in excellent ways.

A Visit from Comcast

© 2005 Lawrence I. Charters

This may seem like a polemic against Comcast, but it is really a tale of computer security, mixed in with issues of customer service, competency and courtesy.

Comcast, the world's largest provider of cable television and broadband Internet service, started out as a local cable TV company in Tupelo, Mississippi back in 1963. Over the years it has absorbed, merged with, combined, subsumed and taken over a vast number of cable television providers, cable television networks, and telephone service providers. In 2002, it merged with AT&T Broadband, striking off a huge chunk of the former Ma Bell and becoming the new Ma Bell of the cable world. It reigns supreme.

Sometimes. Ma Bell was noted for professionally trained, well-groomed technicians, first-rate technology (my grandmother used the same Western Electric phone for more than 60 years), and rock-solid, reliable service. There were concerns about its virtual monopoly status, and if you did have a problem with billing or anything else, Ma Bell's aloof bureaucracy could quickly kindle the flames of rage. Comcast seems to have inherited none of this legacy except the aloof bureaucracy.

I've had problems with Comcast service on many occasions. When they came to install the cable, the "crew" consisted of one guy with a trowel; he "buried" the coaxial cable about an inch under the surface. It was severed and abraded any number of times by animals, lawn mowers, and erosion, requiring subsequent "crews" with their own trowels to come out, restring cable, and "bury" it under an inch of soil, over and over again.

In September 2005, troubles started anew. While cable television seemed to work just fine, broadband Internet service fell off in both speed and reliability. Hours would go by with no service at all, and when service was restored, it was very slow: 50,000 bytes per second, about a tenth of the promised 600,000 bytes (six mega-

bits) speed. I made numerous calls to Comcast customer service which were dismissed with misdirection ("There may be an outage in your area," "The weather may be causing problems" [in this, the driest summer in area history?]) or misinformation ("We don't support Macs," "We don't support Mac OS X 10.4," "It must be a configuration problem on your end") or outright bad advice ("We don't work with firewalls. You need to get rid of that").

Finally, one call was answered by a representative who quickly got to the point: "Your cable modem has reset itself 28 times today. Did you do this?" When I said no, he said it was likely the cable modem was dying, and scheduled an appointment. All I had to do was take off an entire day of work and a technician would fix the problem.

The technician eventually arrived on the appointed day wearing torn blue jeans, a dirty shirt, and without evidence of recent bathing, shaving, or combing. After asking if I was "the Charters guy," he then made a point of saying he "hated Internet calls. They're always %$@*!" So much for a professional appearance and decorum.

Over the next few minutes he proceeded to confess that he knew "nothing about *&@#$ing Macs," he repeated his hatred for "#$%@&ing computers" in general, and he told me several times that his "&#$@*ing radio [cell phone walkie talkie] wasn't working. He used a diagnostic device to determine that the cable was, indeed, working, and disappeared back to his truck to pick up another "$@#&ing cable modem." If you subtracted the obscenities, his working vocabulary seemed to be limited to maybe 100 words.

He returned, removed the old cable modem, and attached a new one that was about half the size of the old. Things started to go downhill when he asked the seemingly innocent question, "What is your #*@$%ing password?"

The Comcast technician had unplugged the Ethernet cable connecting my Mac to the firewall and plugged it directly into the cable modem. The cable modem, a Motorola SURFboard, is designed to then connect to a (Comcast? Motorola?) Web site via a proxy server, where the technician can then type in configuration information. But because his "#$@%&ing radio" wasn't working, the technician didn't know what to type, couldn't contact anybody to ask, and instead he'd downloaded a file, and was attempting to install something on my Mac.

My patience with his language was at an end, so I bluntly told the technician to clean it up. Then I looked at what he was trying to install, and shuddered. The file was a binhexed Stuffit archive containing something called the "ComcastInstaller." Using Mac OS X's Get Info command, I opened up the installer, and discovered it contained an outdated collection of obsolete software.

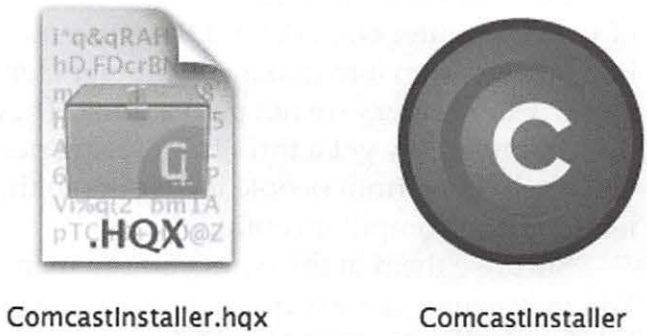

Figure 1 - The ComcastInstaller had a nice, bright, if somewhat boring icon. But inside, it contained nothing I wanted or needed.

How out of date? The downloaded file was compressed with Stuffit, an obsolete archiving protocol. Mac OS X 10.4 doesn't even include a utility to open the archive. If you did have a way of opening it, none of the included software even works with Mac OS X. All the applications were from Microsoft, and dated back to the previous century; the browser, for example, was Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0, released for Mac OS 8.1 and 9 in March, 2000.

I refused to let the technician install anything, and told him he shouldn't need to install any software just to get the cable modem working. He disappeared out to his truck for 45 minutes, and during his absence I called Comcast's technical support line and, with their aid, configured the cable modem and successfully con-

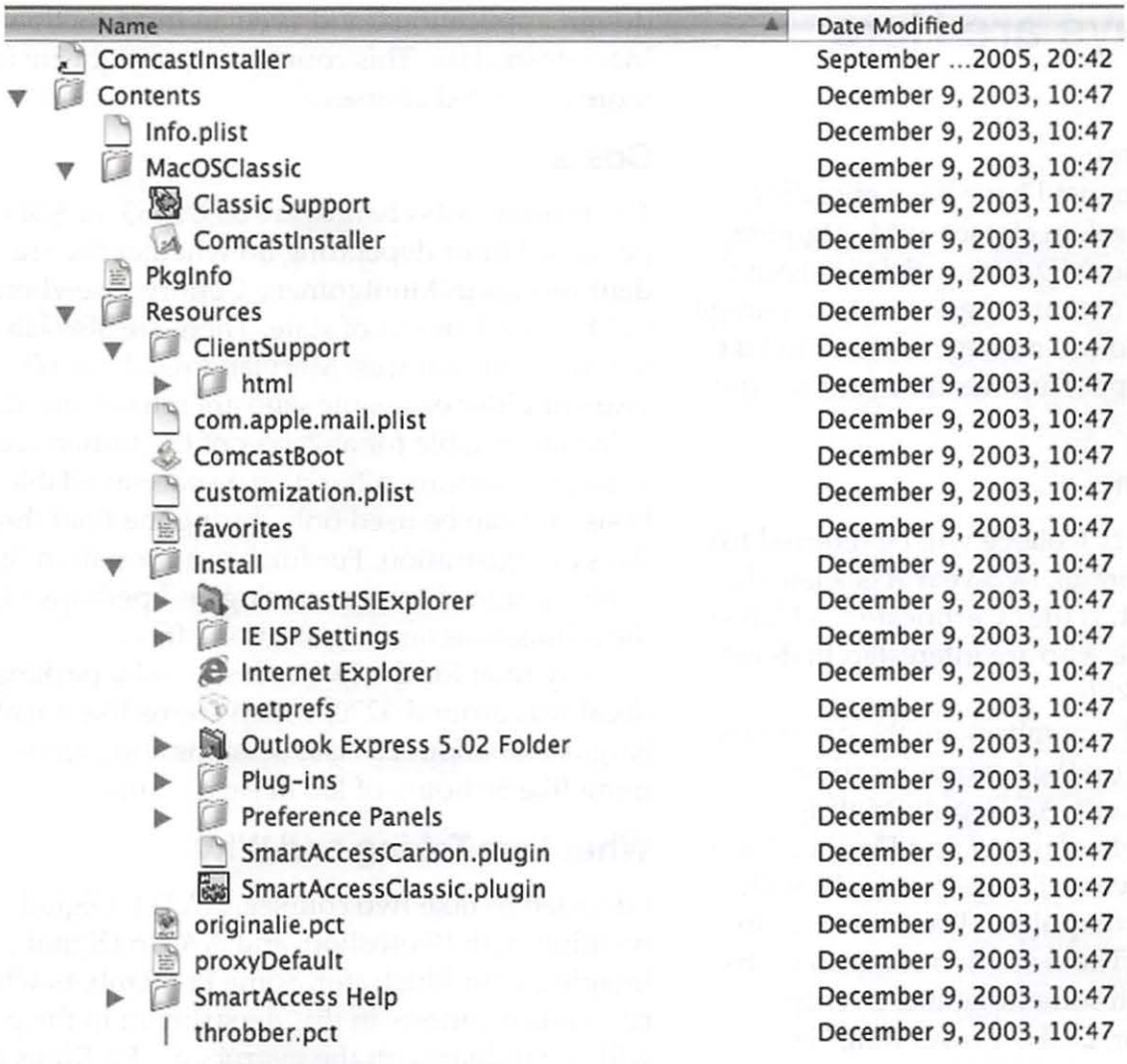

Figure 2 - By Option-clicking or right-clicking on the ComcastInstaller, I could select Show Package Contents, and see inside the installer. And all I saw was a desert: an expanse of obsolete software and scripts that, if run, would have greatly confused my poor, innocent Macintosh.

nected to the Internet.

What are the lessons to be learned from this encounter?

- Don't assume a technician knows more about your computer than you do.
- Do insist that they be respectful, courteous, and civil.
- Don't let a technician install *anything* to connect you to the Internet. Every Mac ships with a full suite of Internet applications, and the Software Update pane in System Preferences will keep you machine far more current than anything your ISP has to offer.

In this particular incident, the problems were with Comcast. But they are not unique to Comcast. Gone are the days when technology-obsessed geeks staffed Internet Service Providers; today's visiting technician may not even like computers. Most of them do troubleshooting through a script; venture off the page, and they are lost. Few understand the differences between Macs, Windows and Linux; some think they use interchangeable software. Most of them see essential safety features, such as firewalls, as obstacles. They've heard they are important, but don't understand how they work, and "know" that things are easier without them.

What should you do? You should learn, at a minimum, enough about your computer system, and how it connects to your ISP, to be able to troubleshoot problems. You should know enough to have confidence in challenging visiting technicians to explain themselves. You should know enough to refuse, outright, any attempt to install software on your computer, to refuse to provide them passwords to your system, and to refuse to try and reconfigure your software. If your connection to the Internet *was* working but isn't now, changing your software, or allowing someone else to change it, is usually the worst possible idea.

You don't need to be a computer maven to be a good consumer.

College Days are Here Again

©2005 *John D. Barnes*

Since the end of August I have been spending four mornings a week in classes at Montgomery College in Rockville, MD. This article is about the rewarding aspects of that experience. I encourage all Pi members who can manage to do so to take advantage of the opportunities that your tax dollars are providing.

The Curriculum

MC (as Montgomery College will be referred to) has, as its stock in trade, two-year Associate degrees. Another path is the "Certificate," which is intended for people who are interested in developing workforce skills.

Of interest to Pi members are the programs in Advertising Art (in the Communication Arts Technologies, or CAT Dept.), Printing Technology, and School of Art and Design. These three programs have well- equipped labs with lots of Macintosh computers. The courses I am taking are in CAT. There are two computer labs, each equipped with something like twenty-four dual-processor, 2 GHz Power Mac G5s. Other Pi members are taking classes in Printing Technology, and yet others have taken classes at the School of Art and Design, which is on a separate campus in Silver Spring.

The MC course offerings are too numerous to list here; the offerings for January 2006 should be available in print and on the MC website in late November. A course in iLife is scheduled for the Spring 2006 semester. This offering was cancelled for the Fall 2005 semester because only 2 people pre-registered for it. If Pi members want to see this course come to fruition in the spring we will have to have commitments from enough members so that we can make proper arrangements with the CAT department to avoid cancellation. I am told that Harry St. Ours is scheduled to be the instructor.

For more complete descriptions of the offerings one should check the Courses/Offering item on the MC home page. There are numerous offerings in Photoshop, Illustrator, various web design applications, and even an Introduction to Macintosh class. This course is a prerequisite for more advanced courses.

Costs

The tuition costs charges are $89, $183, or $245 per credit hour depending on whether the student resides in Montgomery County, elsewhere in Maryland, or out of state. There are also lab fees for some courses. Maryland residents 60 years or older or people who are retired and disabled are eligible for a waiver of the tuition fees. These waivers are offered on a space-available basis and can be used only during the final three days of registration. For further information one really should check the catalog and perhaps visit the admissions and registration office.

My total for the two courses and a parking decal was around $270, which seems like a real bargain for about 28 class sessions and something like 50 hours of lab in each course.

What I am Taking and Why

I decided to take two courses, AA214, Digital Imaging with Photoshop, and AA216 Digital Imaging with Illustrator. Some Pi members who have taken courses in this department in the past will be familiar with the instructors: Ed Riggs for AA214 and Patricia Johannsen for AA216. Each course has a lab associated with it. The first hour of a given day's session is taken up with lecture and the second 1 1/2 hrs is lab time, so that a given day at college takes up 2 1/2 hours in the classroom plus travel time and the search for a parking space.

Why did I decide to take these classes? Illustrator and Photoshop are two tools I would like to know more about. They may help me spruce up some of the graphic design around the Pi and I might be able to do a better job of helping members use these tools. The schedule for the AA courses seemed a little more to my liking than the ones for the PR department. The latter department does not offer Illustrator, which may have swayed my thinking.

In any case, the courses I am taking are meant to prepare people to go out into the world of graphic design and to perhaps earn a living at

it. Many of my classmates are very talented as artists and the displays of artwork done by students are very impressive indeed. Anyone can visit the display in the basement of the technical Center building on the Rockville campus of MC.

Perhaps, as a person who failed water coloring in kindergarten (this was before the days of finger painting in day care), I should have taken a closer look at the course description for AA214. "How to Fix a Bad Photograph" is only a small part of this course. Creating art through the use of layers, effects, and filters goes far beyond that. It has been a real challenge for me because I have little concept of painterly practices in doing art. My eye for highlight and shadow also needs developing. I have, however, learned a great deal that I just might be able to apply in the future.

There has been some work on building up composite images and restoring badly damaged photographs and Ed Riggs has taught me to sharpen my eyes when judging the quality of a Photoshop project.

The Instructors

The Illustrator instructor, Patricia Johannsen, has taken a very systematic approach to introducing tools from the application and developing students' skills in using them. I have acquired a great many insights into how one builds up objects and gives them a three- dimensional appearance. This activity has a few features in common with technical illustration and my years in the physics lab had made me somewhat comfortable with that. Ms. Johannsen has given me a keen respect for the pen tool, the indirect selection tool, and working with paths.

In both courses, practice breeds understanding. I would never have acquired a real understanding of the tools without the guidance of teachers like these.

I have learned from Pi members who are taking the PR231 course that their homework burden is somewhat less than mine, but still demanding. Several of our members who took Photoshop at Art and Design last year also enjoyed that experience. MC certainly offers a variety of courses that use their Mac labs. Unfortunately it sometimes seems to me that the students do not appreciate their unique opportunity.

I may have bitten off more than I could chew with these two courses, especially given my responsibilities with the Pi and other things. All-nighters to finish up assignments ought to a thing of the past for someone my age. Ellen keeps complaining that it is bad for my health and that it deprives her of sleep. Next semester I am going to do a single course, perhaps InDesign. I think this will be a new offering, as the CAT department has focused on QuarkXPress in the past.

Recommendations

Whether one takes courses like these for career-related training or for personal enrichment, they provide an outstanding and economically priced alternative for people who are willing to invest some time and energy in the learning process. Self-directed education through books and videos is one thing; classroom experience with other students, good equipment and competent instructors is another.

The MC campus in Rockville is an incredibly diverse place. I see people of many ages and many ethnic backgrounds. The students in my classes seem to be focused on their learning.

I have no doubt that similar opportunities exist in community colleges throughout the nation, although the dominance of Macintosh computers on the MC Rockville Campus may be quite unusual. Ed Riggs, the CAT department head, is a confirmed Macophile and the Printing Technology department may be similarly staffed. Unfortunately, UDC seems to be the only other place in the immediate area that offers an emphasis on printing technology and I have no idea whether they use Macs in their labs.

I encourage Mac enthusiasts to seek out courses at their local community colleges. Under the best of conditions there is simply no way that a Macintosh Users Group could ever devise an educational program with the scope and resources that the colleges offer. There is also no way that we could match their low cost. Even at full tuition for an out-of-state resident the cost comes out to something like $20 per hour of instruction.

Scenes from the Renovation Project

During the month of September the Pi managed to downsize its space requirements. This aves us nearly 40 percent on our rent.

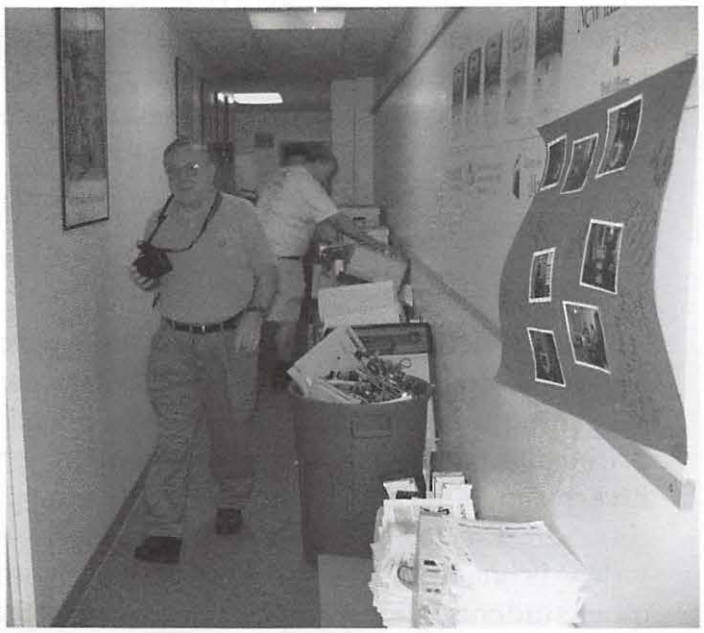

Figure 1 - While TCS Crew was busy pulling hundreds of feet of strange wiring through the office, wondering where it went, work crews were busy gathering together "stuff" for removal from the office. Richard Sanderson (with his ubiquitous Nikon D-100 camera) and John Barnes (in the background) were part of this massive exercise. In just a couple weeks, several hundred cubic feet of material was removed from the Pi Clubhouse.

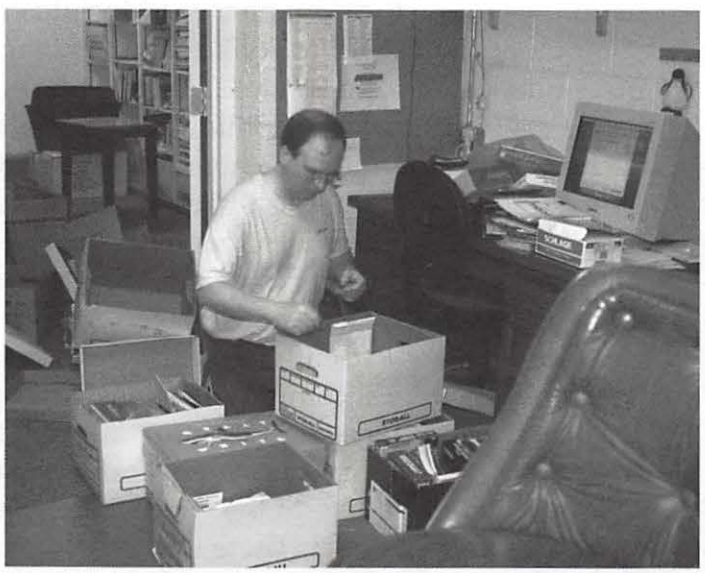

Figure 2 - Software Triage - Jerry Eisner helps to sort out the sheep from the goats as the Pi disposes of tons of old software and documentation.

Figure 3 - The reclamation project's "wareshouse" part-way through the project.

Figure 4 - The Wareshouse in its "broom clean" condition, ready for the Pi's landlord to renovate it into new space for his needs.

Figure 5 - The Tutorial computers awaiting deployment in their new space.

General Meeting Report - September

by WAPi VP Membership - Bob Jarecke

Dr. Mac LIVE!

September's general meeting was held on the 24th of the month at the Northern Virginia Community College in Annandale. The forum was filled with a crowd that was noticeably larger than normal and an unofficial head count put

Figure 1 - A nearly full house listens attentively to Bob "Dr. Mac" Levitus

the total around one hundred members – a good turnout! Our guest of honor was Bob LeVitus, better known in the Macintosh community as "Dr. Mac." When I arrived he was already engaged in the Q & A session and I thought, this promises to be a dynamic learning event. My supposition was on the mark.

Introduction

Pat Fauquet started our meeting with a comment about this month's Apple Pi Fillings CD. The disk was chock full of software goodies and the price is still ten dollars, which helps to defray the cost of the meeting space. She also asked for a show of hands from all those who had received an email during the week promoting this month's meeting: Those who did not get the email notice can opt in on the TCS to receive electronic mailings by going to the following url: *http://tcs.wap.org/prefs?tab=email* . At the sign-in page for the TCS enter your user name and password. You will be then be taken directly to the preference page where you can select to opt in for email notification.

Next, Pat provided some introductory remarks about Dr. Mac: He is a prolific writer of Mac books with nearly fifty books to his credit. He is a widely traveled and popular speaker on all things Macintosh. Pat attends all of his presentations at Macworld and she also confided that she is now one of Bob's employees with his Dr. Mac Direct troubleshooting and online help enterprise.

And the Star of Our Show... Dr. Mac!

Figure 2 - The guest of honor in full demonstration mode.

Our speaker started off with a brief survey of the audience on their types of computers and the kind of Internet access used. Then he set the hook by asking how many of the audience back up their data religiously and how many do not. He predicted that everyone in the later group would at some point lose their data, pointing out that hard drives are mechanical devices that can and will fail; it is only a matter of time. And the recovery of the information off of the failed drive is extremely expensive or even worse, impossible to accomplish. He recommended several back up options, pointing out that Apple has just updated their *Backup* program and it looks very promising. It is available to any .Mac subscriber and it is

free.

Dr. Mac next talked about the impending switch by Apple to Intel chips. He thought the move would be good for Mac users, because the current G5 chips are limited and with Intel chips we will get faster Mac desktop and, more importantly, portables. Apple will be able to deal in volume with Intel and the costs of new Macs should go higher. As for using our current PowerPC (PPC) based software, there will be emulation technology called *Rosetta* which will allow our older PPC versions of software to run on Intel based Macs. What will be lost is Classic. If you are still using an Operating System prior to OS X, he suggested get a new Mac now so you will still have this capability well into the future. Finally, he predicted that the Mac's transition to Intel chips will be easy and we will have cheaper, better and faster computers in the end. The next iteration of OS X will be 10.5 and it will be tied to the move to Intel Macs. Its feline moniker will be "Leopard"!

The subject now switched to OS X 10.4 Tiger. Bob presented statistics that showed the latest update 10.4 .2 to be good and stable, and it is now reasonably safe to upgrade for an older version of OS X, if you haven't already done so. He said the Archive Install option is the preferred method and you will have the fewest problems using it. One big inconvenience – Adobe applications will have to be reloaded but that is a small price to pay. His main point, when a new version of OS X is introduced, study up on how the upgrade is doing by reading various Mac magazines or web articles. Wait for the dust to settle and then follow the sage advice that is being offered.

Software Goodies on Your Mac

At this point, Dr. Mac launched GarageBand to demonstrate how to make music on the Mac – his forte. While having problems getting the application to load, he mentioned he would be available right after the meeting at the Tyson's Apple Store to do a full hour GarageBand demonstration. The application continued to act up, so he move on and played several short clips of his musical compositions. They were impressive, and afterward he restated how easy it is to make a song plus it is a lot of fun.

Other software titles he showed us were Spell Catcher, MacReporter, Spotlight, LaunchBar and Dashboard. Spell Catcher ($39.00) is a neat application that did an excellent job of correcting his spelling errors. It also did a superb job of interjecting common phrases Bob uses in his writing, and it will work within any application where you can type text. Someone asked if it would work in Unix applications, so Bob launched Terminal and yes, it did. MacReporter ($12.00) is a convenient shareware application that saves you from using a web browser to read your news. It uses plug-ins for each news website and does this in an easy to use application window. Spotlight is imbedded in OS X Tiger and it uses words or phrases to search your entire hard drive. He demonstrated it by entering in the phrase "Dr. Mac" and within about ten seconds it had found over 1,500 items and it was still counting when he stopped the search. Impressive! The cool thing is Spotlight looks inside document files, not just titles of files and names of folders. However, using Spotlight to find and launch applications is not convenient because doing such a deep search takes too long. And so, Bob likes to use LaunchBar ($19.95). This handy program is fast and smart. The search is initiated with a simple two-keystroke move, and then as you begin typing the application name, it immediately starts the search. In some cases, the program you are looking for will be found before you have typed the third letter. It is able to do this because it remembers what you have asked for before and it brings those choices to the top of the list if it is a match. Dashboard is an OS X program that provides a myriad of widgets on a separate desktop overlay. And there are widgets for everything – from the weather to the traffic to the news to your flight reservations; they cover a wide gamut of information. A dictionary widget will help your spelling; an eBay widget will help your auction buying; a Joke of the Day widget will make you smile. Hit the F12 key and prepare to be amazed. Widgets do it all!

It was during the Dashboard demo that Bob was handicapped because many widgets re-

quire an Internet connection. Someone from the audience asked why isn't there a way to connect to the Internet using a cell phone. Dr. Mac said there is a way to do this but costs are prohibitive. Another member, David Wilson, quickly spoke up and said that he had a service for unlimited cell phone access for $19.99 a month and to prove that he was presently online and willing to share his connection. Bob quickly connected to David's network and we now had "live" widgets – way cool!

Commercial Announcements and Q & A

Next, Bob put in a couple of plugs for Geek Cruises, his columns and Dr. Mac Direct. Geek Cruises are ocean cruises a la Mac. During the days at sea, there is a host of Mac related workshops and presentations available. Yes, there is an additional charge but according to Bob, who has been on several cruises, no one has been disappointed. Bob mentioned he writes an article each week for Mac Observer and the Houston Chronicle. Bob's online computer business, Dr. Mac Direct, does technical support training and trouble shooting via remote control software over the Internet.

The questions were many and varied as could be expected when you had someone of Bob's experience and caliber on stage. However, in the interest of keeping this article short, only one of the more interesting issues will be reported. An audience member brought up the fact that IPv6 Internet protocol will become mandatory sometime in the future. This "next generation" protocol will not only allow for more much needed IP addresses but it will also enhance Internet operability. It also permits real time tracking of all Internet IP addresses, to whit Bob commented, "It sounds like 1984 to me." The point the member had was that Microsoft was now writing IPv6 into their Windows software, and if Apple didn't do the same, the Mac community would be left out to dry. This sounded ominous until Dr. Mac pointed out that it is already in your Mac OS X operating system. On the projection screen, he navigated to System Preferences/Network/TCP/IP tab and sure enough, right there at the bottom of the pane, you have the option of using IPv6. It looks like Windows is still playing catch up.

Prizes Galore

With Dr. Mac all questioned out, we went right into the raffle with seven of Bob's books as the prizes. He offered to autograph them for the winner but jokingly cautioned they were be worthless. As *Raffler* dutifully picked the winning numbers, each of the following Pi members claimed their winnings: Zack Dougherty, Greg Mason, Dick Sanderson (he always wins something), Gabriel Roth, Ted Maeder, Bill Jones and Jim Hartneady. Door prize winners were Bill Bailey, Henry Rose, Gabriel Roth (again), Don Fortnum, Attila Horvath and Tom Carlson. Everyone was thanked for coming and making this meeting a success. With just an hour or so until Bob was to present at the Tyson's Apple Store, little time remained for chatting with our guest, but when I departed there were plenty of folks gathered around Dr. Mac as he continued passing along more valuable Mac information. Thanks, Bob.

Figure 3 - Bob autographing one of the books he donated as raffle prizes.

GARAGE BAND 101

by Gene Haddon

What a treat to hear Bob LeVitus actually do it. Yes folks, he created, in less than one hour, a complete Garage Band song. He convinced us in the audience that all we need is two parts

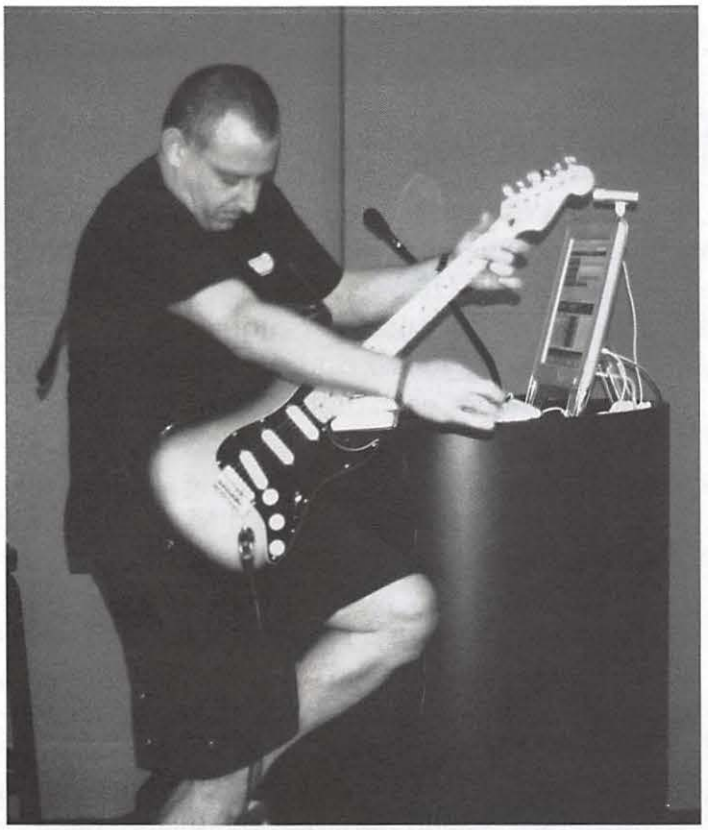

Figure 1 - Dr. Mac cranking on his guitar to show how to produce a song in under an hour.

enthusiasm and one part know how. First he laid down the drum track. Then the strings. Then the piano. He made them all match up and adjusted the loud and soft. The man plays the guitar (sort of) and he sings (he knows the words). He did those things with the mike and it all went down in new tracks. Then he saved it and played it back. It was wonderful - just like your favorite rock and roll song. Just like Ricky What's-his-name. all time favorite with your kids. He says that he can't sing (he does know all of the words!) and he says that he can't read music, but he wrote a whole song in less than one hour.

All that we need is the Bob LeVitus book, Garage Band for Dummies, a whole lot of enthusiasm, a keyboard for ninety-nine dollars, a mike and one hour. I wish that I had taken notes so that I could give you more details. Those of us that went to The Apple Store after the last General Meeting and got to hear this fabulous presentation were all set to go out and become instant jazz or rock and roll musicians. If you already have iLife, Garage Band is in there waiting to get out and be heard. Good luck.

And thanks Bob!

Figure 2 - Mecca at the mall - inside the Apple Store at Tyson's Corner Center.

Figure 3 - Craig Contardi, Ron Fauquet, Nancy Little and Gene Haddon waiting for the show to start.

Figure 4 - Adieu,Kind Friends, Adieu. Pat Fauquet and Gene Haddon give an exhausted Bob Levitius a sendoff on his way home to Austin.

General Meeting Report - August

by WAPi VP Membership - Bob Jarecke

Photography Done Right!

This month's general meeting was held on August 27th at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (BCC-SC) and it was SRO (Standing Room Only)! To be honest, the facility is much smaller than the NOVA forum area we have commonly used over the years, so the respectable crowd of over 55 members filled most every chair available. The main speaker, Martin Schulman, proved to be very knowledgeable and educational. I think most everyone came away from the meeting having learned something they could put to immediate use when taking their next digital (or film) photographs.

The meeting's formal theme was Getting into Digital Photography and Mr. Schulman, as the manager of a Ritz Camera store, proved to be the right man for the job. He told us that he has been in the photography business since 1983 and a professional photographer since 1990. With his strong background, his presentation with recommendations and advice was highly credible. Also Martin was entertaining and enthusiastic about the subject and this resulted in another Pi general meeting that hit the mark!

Preliminaries

Before the main presentation, John Barnes, the Pi President, hosted the Q&A portion of the meeting. Lawrence Charters was present and again added enlightening comments regarding questions posed. John pointed out several vintage books available on a table at the back of the room that were free for the taking. These Mac-related books were received from various publishers for review and with the reviews complete, they were now available to anyone who had an interest in the subject matter - another benefit of membership in the Pi. By the end of the program, all the books had found new homes.

Introducing Martin Schulman...

After a brief recap of his career exploits, Martin gave us a short historical perspective of digital photography. Since 1995, he explained, things have come around and the field of digital photography has really expanded. He asked for a show of hands of who had a digital camera and a sea of hands was raised. He jokingly said, "What am I doing here?", to which, someone stated he was here to help us learn how to use our them better. He said he could do that and we were off to the races.

Martin explained there are basically three types of cameras. On the low end of the scale are the "point and shoot" models that are easy to use and generally have a 3X zoom lens. They are not highly adjustable, but rather possess preset scene settings that should be matched to the photo situation at hand. These cameras generally take very good pictures. At the upper end of choice for a camera is the 35 MM SLR (Single Lens Reflex) style camera. This camera is the virtual equivalent of the film version SLR except the image is captured on an electronic chip (CCD - charged coupled device) that is measured in megapixels. The higher the megapixel number the better image quality. The third camera type is a hybrid between the previously mentioned types and it is referred to as an electronic viewfinder camera. It has automated features like the point and shoot camera but with more shooting options and more megapixels. The picture quality of this camera compares to that of the SLR digital camera. Also this type of camera allows you to shoot various types of electronic image files, a very useful feature.

He began with imaging. The first thing affecting the quality of images is the number of pixels in the camera, and you will get superb quality out of a camera with 5-8 megapixels. The next item to consider is the lens. There are various lens manufacturers who produce some excellent lenses for digital cameras. The better the lens the more you will pay for it but you will get a better photo as a result.

Finer Details of Taki ng Good Photos

During Martin's presentation, questions arose and in answering them, he was able to explain some additional aspects of taking photos.

Stabilization, that is keeping the camera steady during the photo taking sequence, is vital to good pictures. He recommended using a camera with built in image stabilization; when using a zoom lens greater than 3X, image stabilization is a must. Another option is to use a tripod or mono pod. The longer the zoom or exposure the harder it is to keep the subject of the photo steady. An external stabilizing support is essential to taking good photos of subjects at long range.

Martin then switched gears and talked to us about image quality and he stressed the most important aspect of any photograph is white balance. Different types of lighting produce different wave lengths of light, and while our eyes understand this our cameras do not. It is therefore essential when you have artificial or diffused lighting to use the white balance presets in your camera versus the auto white balance setting. He next covered the three basic types of files that cameras will produce. Most everyone is familiar with the most common one - the JPG file. The next files was a TIFF or targeted information file. These are very similar to a JPG file with the difference being they haven't been compressed. The last file type is a called a RAW file and it is just that, a file of unprocessed data.

The audience was now comfortable with Martin and his topic and the questions began to flow. He was asked about taking photos in black and white; the manipulating of photos and the effects on the associated file when recompressed; Unsharp Masking (a filtering option in PhotoShop); and red eye reduction. Regarding red eye, Martin explained why it happens, how it occurs and what professional photographers do to avoid it - which is to move the flash out of the direct line of sight of the camera. For example, when using a point and shoot camera with it's flash built into the camera body, there is no way to avoid red eye. After the picture is downloaded, the unwanted side effect can be eliminated by replacing the deep red color with a shade of dark gray or black. Most photo manipulation software, such as Photoshop and iPhoto, do a very good job of covering over the red eye effect.

Going Digital with Old Photos

Next, Martin was asked about getting images into a digital format. He explained the principle method is to scan the images. Old photographs, slides or negatives can all be turned into an electronic format, and then they can be printed or manipulated on your computer. As a basic rule, the higher the resolution of the scan, the better the image quality if you elect to enlarge it.

As for printing your digital images, Martin told us about the three main types of printers. The first is the die sublimation printer: it uses heat to print the image onto the matrix paper. These prints are quite durable, lasting up to ten years before fading. The next printer type is an ink or bubble jet printers: these use pigmented or non-pigmented dyes. One thing to keep in mind is non-pigmented dyes are not as long lasting and your photos will fade sooner. Another printer, which may not see as much use in the home, is the color laser printer. It uses color toner that tends to breakdown in heat above 90° F. Another general comment from Martin was the more inks used by the printer, the more jets will be used and thereby the better the color.

In parting Martin passed on a final piece of sage advice regarding the safekeeping of your digital images. He stressed to never selectively delete images from your camera; that will leave your camera's memory card fragmented and subject to corruption. In lieu of doing this, he emphasized to download on your computer, back up the images to a CD immediately and when this is complete, delete the images from your camera's memory. With that final comment, we graciously thanked Martin for talking with us and he received a robust round of applause.

Pi Club Notes

Before we transitioned into the prize give away portion of the meeting, John Barnes talked about an impending downsizing and reconfiguring of the Pi office space. The deadline for removing the equipment from the reclamation storage room and moving the tutorial room contents is October 1st. A call for volunteer help would soon be going out. Another consideration

is the work and functions being conducted at the clubhouse, and this move is an opportunity to perhaps rethink our business model to operate more efficiently and effectively. We are in search of new general meeting locations as we are giving up our meeting place at Northern Virginia Community College in Annandale due to its high cost. A request was made that any member who would like to check out potential meeting locations in VA, MD and DC, please, feel free to do so and get back with the Board of Directors with their findings.

We concluded with our raffle and door prize drawings. The first lucky winner was none other than myself. I quickly grabbed the copy of PhotoShop Elements 3, a worthy prize. Other raffle winners' names, other than Don Fortnam, were not recorded, and I offer my apologies for messing up this detail of the meeting. Needless to say, each prize winner went home rewarded in substance as well as being enriched with a better working knowledge on using digital media on their Macs. Then again, so did everyone else. Ah ha, another successful general meeting of the Pi.

Figure 1 - Nancy Little in her "keeper of the gate" role. Nancy deserves a big round of applause for the way she makes sure that the members get their "goodies" at General Meeting time.

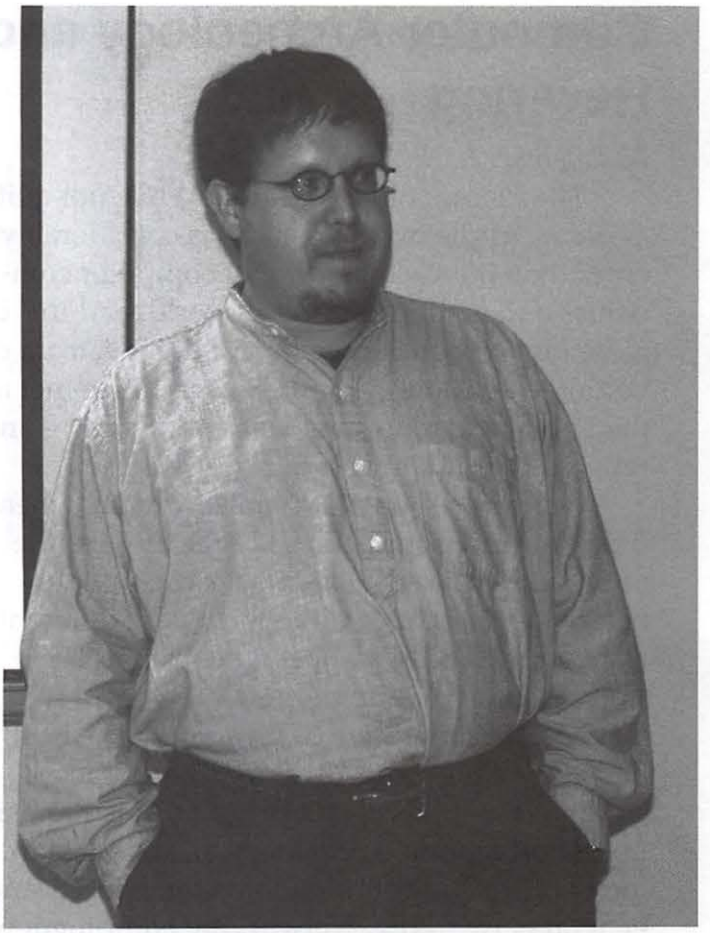

Figure 2 - Martin Schulman, manager of the Woodmont and ElmSt. Ritz Camera outlet discoursing on digital photography from a consumer perspective.

Figure 1 - Pi president John Barnes discusses recent developments in the reinvention of the Pi, includinbg the downsizing of the clubhouse space and the search for new meting venues.

Computer Archeology and Rewiring

By Lawrence I. Charters

The Pi is an old institution. While not quite as old as Apple or Microsoft, it is considerably older than the vast majority of computer companies and institutions in the world, and this became obvious on September 17, 2005. A team of volunteers from the Pi's TCS Committee met at the Pi office to redo some network wiring – and ran, full tilt, into history.

None of us could remember exactly when the Pi moved from Bethesda to Rockville (the misty tendrils of time are unclear, especially before lunch) but it was a world very different from today. The Pi's bulletin board, the TCS, was based on dial-up modems and entirely text based using terminal programs. The host machines were Apple IIGS machines, each equipped with LocalTalk cards and the requisit LocalTalk cabling. LocalTalk was also used in the Pi office and tutorial rooms for printers and general networking. Networking equipment was scarce, and the layout of the Pi office space was daunting.

Memories started flooding in as soon as some ceiling tiles were moved. Above the ceiling was a tangle of wiring: old telephone lines, old LocalTalk cables, and masses of cable that might be Ethernet or might not. After a few half-hearted attempts to sort it out, the work crew adjourned to a Chinese restaurant for regrouping and refueling.

The original plan was to move some wiring around to accommodate reconfiguration of the Pi office space. The Pi's landlord wanted to take back two rooms leased to the Pi, and we were to have them vacated by October 1. Accordingly, the TCS Crew had the very simple idea that the wiring would be pulled from these rooms and redistributed elsewhere. Meanwhile, other work crews were emptying the tutorial rooms of centuries (so it seemed) of accumulated computer paraphernalia, and the stacks of equipment blocked access to the walls from where wiring needed to be removed as well as walls where it needed to be installed. This we knew in advance.

But we'd forgotten about history. Over the years, more and more wiring was added, and nothing was removed. The TCS had long ago retired all the Apple II machines; all telecommunications services are now provided over the Internet from Macintosh computers. Yet the old LocalTalk cables were still in the ceiling, along with PBX telephone cable, POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) cable, and great masses of what might be Category 3, 4 and 5 Ethernet cable. There was also cabling from an old close circuit TV system used by a prior tenant, old thermostat and alarm and intercom cables, and some stuff that we simply couldn't identify. Some of the cabling was labeled. Some of the labels made sense.

History played a role in the quantity of Ethernet cabling. When Ethernet networking was added in the 1990s, Ethernet hubs were the rage. With a hub, you had to run a full cable from every machine back to the hub so, if you had two dozen machines scattered around the office, you had to have two dozen cables pulled through the ceilings. We never did have two dozen machines connected at once, but we thought we might, so Ethernet cables gradually accumulated over time, hidden in the ceiling. In today's world, where Ethernet switches are the rule, good design suggests you run a single cable to a given point, install a switch, and then attach machines to the switch. You can easily daisy-chain switches, which greatly cuts down on the amount of cabling required. But in the 1990s, Ethernet switches were prohibitively expensive, and daisy-chaining hubs is disastrous.

To cut down on the amount of rewiring, it was suggested that we leave just a couple cables running to the main meeting room and up to the front of the office, and install switches to then distribute network connectivity. We debated this for a while, and finally rejected it: we didn't have that many working switches. This sad fact meant that everything had to be done twice: cables had to be pulled from the rooms that were being returned to the landlord, then pulled, again, into the rooms were connectivity was needed.

Pulling cable without disrupting wiring that we wanted to keep, without electrocuting

anyone, and without triggering fire equipment, is a delicate task. Fortunately, the drop ceiling tiles made access to the cables fairly easy. Unfortunately, a couple brick and cement firewalls made getting from the front to the back of the office difficult. Fiberglass insulation also made life unpleasant. At one point, in order to push cable from one cramped area and into another, the Crew reenacted a Nordic myth, preparing a wooden spear for our figurative Odin who then cast it above the ceiling tiles to its destination. Many were the praises for this epic cast, and for the wonders of duct tape.

The effort was suspended late in the day, with all the cable pulled and tested. The Crew wanted to install cable junction boxes in the walls of the front office and main meeting room, but we couldn't actually reach the walls because of piles of "stuff" being moved. On October 15, 2005, the Crew returned, had pizza instead of Chinese, discussed several administrative items, and installed the junction boxes. The Age of LocalTalk finally passed away, given over completely to the Age of Ethernet and Airport.

Figure 1 - We knew there was an Airport base station somewhere in the ceiling; the Tuesday Night Clinic uses it all the time, so it had to be somewhere. But finding it proved to be something of a challenge; about twenty square feet of ceiling tile was moved before it was discovered, perched on a board.

Photos on this page by Lawrence I. Charters.

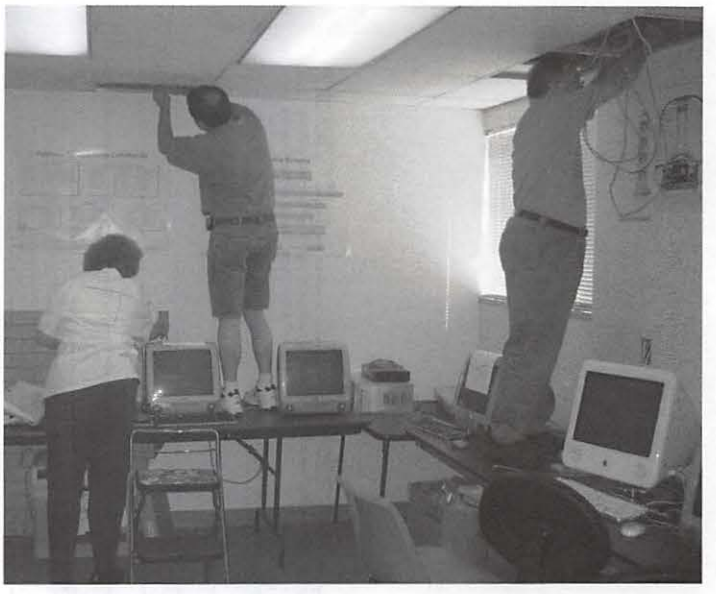

Figure 2 - From left to right, Kathleen Charters, Paul Schlosser and Richard Sanderson work on pulling cable from one of the tutorial rooms. These rooms were returned to the building landlord. Richard Sanderson was supposed to be working on other things, but got distracted.

Figure 3 - The TCS Room looked like the set of some horror film, with tentacles of strange creatures erupting from the ceiling. Believe it or not, the Crew knows were (most of) these cables go, and what they are used for.

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Tuesday Night Clinic – Jim Ritz — jim.ritz@wap.org
Calendar Editor – David Harris — david.harris@wap.org

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Contacting Washington Apple Pi

Contact: Washington Apple Pi, Ltd., 12022 Parklawn Drive, Rockville, MD 20852. Business Office: (301) 984-0300 [Answering machine]
Web address: www.wap.org
e-mail address: office@wap.org

Office hours: You should not expect to find anyone at the office except as otherwise noted. Please check the listings for "Volunteer Days" at calendar.wap.org. These sessions are scheduled for several times per month to make best use of limited numbers of volunteer ofice workers.

Clinic Night - Tues. 7-9 pm

Please leave messages on the answering machine at 301-984-0300. This is an automated system that allows our volunteers to quickly respond to your needs without having to actually sit in the office.

We will try to to put an appropriate message on the answering machine if we have to cancel an activity.

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Tutorials

Dreamweaver - 2 session series

Instructor: Sheri German
Schedule - by Arrangement between Instructor and Students
Cost - $50 per session for Pi members, $100 for others.
Prerequisite: Intermediate Macintosh skills.
Enrollment - Send e-mail to *sheri.german@verizon.net*

Session 1 - Long considered the industry standard for visual web page editors, Dreamweaver is a deep, feature-packed program. This class will introduce students to the interface, teach them to define and organize a site, and guide them through the creation of a table-based layout that uses Cascading Style Sheets for all design and presentational elements.

Session 2- This second level course will take students deeper into the productivity features of Dreamweaver, such as templates, libraries, behaviors, assets, snippets, and extensions. We will continue work on our CSS table-based layouts and turn them into templates that will form the basis of a complete site.

Mac OS X Driving School

Prerequities: Pi membership, demonstrable intermediate to advanced Mac OS X skills.
Cost: To be Determined.
Schedule: To be arranged with students
Instructors: John Barnes, Bob Jarecke, Nancy Little

This is an experimental course intended to help people who are intermediate to proficient in the Mac skills gain full mastery over the Mac OS X user interface and applications that run under it.

Learn how to stay on the track and avoid crashing and burning as you speed through cyberspace. The course seeks to provide users with tools that they can use to expand their knowledge rather than recipes for repetitive tasks.

Most users need to improve their visual awareness and awaken their curiosity if they are to feel comfortable in the driver's seat. Good reflexes are also a must.

This course seeks to foster self-reliance through fundamental understanding of the file system, customization of the GUI, use of help resources, backup techniques, structured approaches to troubleshooting, and more.

Preregistration

If you are interested send an e-mail to our new tutorials coordinator at *tutorials.wap.org* to be placed on the contact list. We will then try to work out a schedule that suits both the students and the instructor.

Special Interest Groups

Be sure to check the WAP calendar at calendar.wap.org for meeting locations, times, and dates.

AOL - John Barnes (301) 652-0667 JDBarnes@aol.com

Apple IIGS - Lorin Evans lorin.evans@wap.org

Graphic Arts - www.wap.org/gasig

iLife - Hal Cauthen (703) 323-8934 chrgrhorse@aol.com

Mac Programmers - Aaron Burghart

Power Users - www.wap.org/power

Retired Persons - www.wap.org/retired

Apple /// - David Ottalini (301) 681-6136, dave.ottalini@wap.org

SIGs Needing Fresh Spark Plugs

AOL, Educators, Excel, Genealogy, QuickTime, Music, Retired Persons, Teen

If you have a special interest that would seem to warrant formation of a new SIG please send E-mail to *president@wap.org*.

WASHINGTON APPLE PI

A Macintosh Users Group
Serving DC, MD, VA

WAPi Office
12022 Parklawn Drive
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 984-0300 www.wap.org

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WAPi has Special Interest Groups (SIGs), please check if you'd like to join, know more about or start a new one:

❑ *iLife (iTunes, iMovie, iDVD, iPhoto and GarageBand)*
❑ *Programming*
❑ *Retired*
❑ *Teen*
❑ *Graphic Arts*
❑ *Your Choice*
❑ _____

The Pi needs my help, I volunteer to:

❑ *Help at Monthly Meetings*
❑ *Work in the office or on the Journal*
❑ *Help Organize our Open House activity*
❑ *Teach (some paid positions)*
❑ *Telephone Committee*
❑ *Hand out Brochures*

Thank you, we will call you.

FEES

Basic Membership and/or Renewal – includes 6 issues of The Journal, one email account and access to the TCS*. New members receive a one time kit which includes the latest Journal and CD, a member # and user ID for email and TCS* access. *(Please note if you live outside the US, contact us for postage charge to your location at office@wap.org)*

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Services

- Mac Hardware, software, networks & training. Apple factory trained & A+ Certified. Marchetti Associates LLC. 301-404-2210 or *phil@marchettiassociates.com.*

- Macintosh House Calls - Upgrades, Repairs, Tutoring. Contact John Barnes at 301-652-0667 or *jdbscience@mac.com*. Discount for Pi members.

-Law Offices of Richard S. Sternberg http://www.MetroWashingtonLaw.com/ (202) 530-0100

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