

PC Post



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25 years of User helping User

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Our Next Meeting

Can you do without I.E. 7?

Bud Bondiotti, past president, intrepid and ubiquitous presenter, will try to answer that question when he offers an overview of the most recent Explorer browser at the March 22 membership meeting.

A recent CNet poll found 9 out of 10 rating the newest browser “spectacular,” while at the other end of the scale, 3 out of 10 – that’s close to one-third – found it “not worth the download.” The problem, of course, as always, is – the requirements of the computing world being what they are – can you avoid downloading it?

One of the problems is that upgrading requires that you have Windows XP with SP2 already installed. If you meet this requirement, CNet provides a free download. And then, how do you handle those crazy tabs? Bondiotti promises an answer to that one.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. with the Random Access Special Interest Group, where members can get their most pressing computer questions answered. After refreshments at 7:30 p.m., Bondiotti will offer his program.

The meeting, as usual, will take place at Destiny Christian Center on Carver Road just south of Roseburg Avenue. Members and friends should park on the south side of the building.

Important Meeting Dates

General Meeting — Mar. 22nd— Destiny Christian Center
Photo SIG Meeting — Apr. 3rd — Denny’s Restaurant
Board Meeting — Apr. 4th — Ridgway’s Restaurant
Beginner’s SIG Meeting — Apr. 9th — Denny’s Restaurant

For directions to the meeting location, see page 11.



President's Report Mike Kumler

Unfortunately, Mike was unavailable to provide his article this month. Look for him next month.

Membership Report Hank Mudge

Members renewing - Thank you for your support:

Riva Lee 10/07	Hank Mudge 2/08	Thomas O'Brien 1/07	Leonard Olives 10/07
Dick Philpot 2/08	Donald Risen 2/08	Don Vera 1/08	

Members dues expired since January 1st:

Mike Mensinger	Bill & Virginia Nylander
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Members dues expired since February 1st:

Orval Brewer	Joe Sousa	Lynn French	Thomas O'Brien
Jeff & Michelle Barnes			

Members dues expired since March 1st:

George Ditman	Jerry Jackman
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Members dues expiring in March:

Ed Sill	Mike Kumler	Skip Pringle
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Members dues expiring in Apr:

David Futrell	Tony Parisi	Frank Waldorf	Bettie Nickerson
John (Jack) Selover	Phillip Anselmo	Donald Branson	

Treasurer's Report Barb Cameron

<u>Income</u>		<u>Modesto PC User Group</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Membership	\$ 168.00	Financial Statement		Jan. Refreshments	\$ 15.00
Interest on Savings	\$ 0.00	January 2007		APCUG Dues	\$ 50.00
Donations	\$ 0.00			Membership Refund	\$ 24.00
Total Income	\$ 168.00			Total Expenses	\$ 89.00

Current Assets	
Checking - US Bank, Modesto	\$ 1,635.04
Savings, US Bank, Modesto	\$ 332.38
	\$ 1,967.42
Total Club Assets	\$ 1,967.42

Claude's Bytes

By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, Modesto PC User Group

Ordering or building a new computer? — What with having to consider newer and better computers, mainly due to Vista, some of us have had to face new computer purchase issues that we haven't faced in quite a while.

In 2005, with Jim Goodman's help, I built a new computer. I did so because I wanted to reuse a lot of existing equipment, and I wanted it built my way. I felt at the time, and I believe it was so, that it was going to be more affordable in my particular set of circumstances.

Recently, I had to spec and decide on a new computer purchase for an organization. I asked a local dealer to custom build one, but they never got back to me, claiming that they couldn't do it for a low enough price. I suspect that they knew they couldn't get the parts cheap enough.

My first effort to spec the computer was to go online and go through Dell's computer customization procedure. I came up with a price that was workable for the organization's budget. I was almost ready to place the order, when Jim Goodman noted that I could order a similar computer through HP for less money.

So I went to HP's Website and went through their computer customization process. Frankly it was easier and more flexible than Dell's, which was somewhat of a surprise. I was prepared for HP to be behind the curve. Instead they were ahead.

The next surprise was that HP's price, after rebate, was some \$500 less for the same powered computer. The HP actually had more features. One of those was a memory slot panel on the front of the computer for different sized memory cards. Dell didn't even offer that. The Dell computer, as far as I could tell, didn't offer speakers either although I could be wrong on that. I certainly don't remember being offered any speaker choices. HP offered several different levels of speaker quality.

This may be a small issue, but the Dell computer case was way too flashy for me. I like a plain, somewhat squarish case. Dell's looked like it might take off if it had a propeller. There is no need for a rakish style in the average business type computer. Those kinds of cases always end up looking dated in just a few years. Give me a good old 25-year-old IBM-PC style any day as I will chuck it under my desk where the sun doesn't even shine. I can feel around for the on switch and find the CD drive button.

But back to the money. Once I found out how much lower the HP was going to be, I then started moving up the processor speed and features. For the extra money, I was able to move up two whole notches to the second highest computer speed. Since the organization involved will be using this computer for the next five years, it was important to spend the extra money now and buy the fastest computer we could afford. It would cost you more in the long run to spend less now, although many of us don't have this flexibility.

While some may want to wait for the bugs to be worked out of Vista, those of us who have high speed Internet access needed not to worry about Vista fixes. They will be automatic if we set it up that way, and we should. We need to remember that fixes are continuous. Even now, XP is still being tweaked. A bigger issue is whether the changes between Vista and XP will be disconcerting to you. If you are using a lower operating system such as Windows 98, then the switch to Vista is going to be a whole new experience no matter when you get it.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 5

A Software Review by Nancy Dennis, Membership Chair, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

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Adobe Photoshop Elements 5 is a photo editing and organizing program that also includes easy to use features to backup your photos, and really fun creative ways to show off your photos to family and friends.

Adobe Photoshop is the top of the line photo program for the professionals and costs hundreds of dollars. Elements (under \$100) has many of the same features as the professional version with a lot of fun and easy features added in, making it the software choice for the non-professional user like you and me.

The software installs the Adobe Photo Downloader in your system tray and is ready instantly whenever you plug in your camera or memory card. Your photos are downloaded into the Organizer where you have easy access to them for viewing, tagging, creating collections, printing, emailing, creating all the fun projects, or switching to the Edit mode for a Quick Fix or Full Edit. Your photos are identified by Elements in Catalogs. You can have multiple catalogs for different users of your computer in the family, or say for photos that you may use for work which you want to keep separate from home photos. You can even use the Organizer to select photos to order prints online or size and send through your email client. Your photos are managed by date with a timeline across the top of the screen that is very easy to navigate when you are looking for a photo at a specific time on the calendar. The Tags and Collections feature takes a few extra minutes when you first download the photos, but sure makes it easier to select certain photos when you are ready to create a project. Tags can be given for photos of specific family, friends or places and events. Collections work in a similar fashion but could include several different people, say in a vacation.

Since software packages come with little or no manuals, I find that one of my first places to explore is the Help feature. The Adobe Help Center, which is on the Help menu, includes a very extensive index of help on the program as well as hyperlinks to video tutorials on the Adobe web site. The Help Center includes a very good Search tool with easy navigation and even a Bookmark feature where you can bookmark a topic that you may want to return to again quickly. I was also offered free online tutorials from Adobe after I registered the software. Be sure to take advantage of this offer. There are eleven video tutorials that give a very good overview of everything from getting your photos into Elements to creating fun creative projects. Another quick way to get to help on any of the tools on the screen is to hover your mouse over the tool and a link appears that takes you directly to the Help Center on that tool. You will find that you don't miss the manual with this complete Adobe Help Center.

When the Elements program starts there is a Welcome Screen where you can choose to open the Organizer, Quickly Fix Photos, Edit and Enhance Photos, or Make Photo Creations. Once you decide which mode you want to begin with you can set the Welcome Screen to always open in that mode or stay with the Welcome Screen. Since you need to open a photo in order to edit it or select several photos for projects it made sense to me to always open in the Organizer mode.

With a right click of a photo in the Organizer you can select the Go to Quick Fix feature as a truly "quick fix". With this feature you are able to fix the most common problems with your photos without having to know any of the more advanced features. Now mind you the advanced features are in Elements, but you may find that you seldom need to go into that mode to get the results that you want. With Quick Fix mode you have auto buttons for lighting, color, sharpen and red eye. Then if the auto button doesn't quite get the photo like you want there are fine tuning levers to adjust to finish the job. If you just can't get the look you want you can click the Full Edit tab from this window and go into the more fully featured mode of Elements to complete the task.

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Some of the new features for editing in Elements include correct lens distortion, sharpen blurred edges, fine-tuning with curves, creating dramatic black and whites and support for raw files. One of my very favorite features of Elements in the Full Edit mode is the Artwork and Effects Palette. From this palette you can pick from dozens of backgrounds, frames, graphics and shapes. Then select a style for that object from a dozen more selections and just drag and drop onto your photo. This palette includes different themes for effects, filters for effects and text styles, all applied with a double click. There is even a Favorites area where you can drag an effect that you especially liked and want to get back to quickly. A couple other favorites of mine in the Full Edit mode are the Adjust Color for Skin Tone and the Spot Healing Brush. If you have a photo where the skin color just doesn't look right you can use the Adjust Color for Skin Tone feature to quickly change the skin tone by using the eyedropper over the skin. If you want the result a little more tan or blush there are easy adjustments in that same dialog box. The Spot Healing Brush works wonders for those marks and blemishes just by clicking over the area. There is also a new feature called Magic Extractor that provides an easy wizard to extract an object (or person) from your photo. Again there are fine tuning options in this wizard if the extraction is not quite what you want. I found that this features works very well. The red eye fix in Elements 5 is by far the best red eye fix that I have used in a photo editing program. There is even an option to have red eye corrected as your photos are being downloaded from the card reader.

Elements 5 has added a Back-Up and Restore feature that allows you to back up your photo catalogs to a server online (you have to sign up for this service). The online back up service through Adobe Photoshop Services gives you a 30 day free trial. There is also a Back-Up feature that will do Full and Incremental back ups of your catalogs to a CD or DVD, another drive, or another folder on the hard drive. This feature is Wizard driven and makes this very important task quick and easy, without leaving the Elements software. This feature is right there on the tool bar along with all the other online services.

Once you have your photos downloaded, edited and backed up it is time for the really fun part of Elements 5 – creating projects like photo book pages, photo layouts, album pages, greeting cards, CD and DVD jackets and labels, slide shows, VCD's with menus, photo galleries and flipbooks for the web, photo calendars, and PhotoStamps. Most of the print projects can be printed on your own printer or ordered through an online service that can be set up with a wizard right in Elements. I didn't register for the online service but was very tempted by some of the neat projects that can be created and then sent off for printing and delivery. For instance the photo calendar can be created with 12 of your photos and then step through the wizard to choose the cover, page layout, and title, etc. Then through the wizard the calendars will be printed, bound and mailed – what a great idea for Christmas gifts!

I decided to create a slide show with photos taken at Disney World. After selecting the photos from the Organizer and then selecting Slideshow from the Create menu the wizard started with slide show preferences and then the main Slideshow Editor opens with very full featured options that are available in most of the stand alone slide show programs. This feature is like a program within a program – I am really impressed with the scope of the Slideshow Editor. There are transition options, panning and zooming, audio and narration, and adding blank sides and graphics and text.



Once you have the show the way you like it the Output feature opens another wizard for options to save the show as a file, burn to disc, e-mail the show or send to a TV. The wizard works great burning to a Video CD format. (The only option that I would like to see added would be to burn to DVD.) If you have several slide shows that you would like to burn to one CD you can select

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the Create a VCD with menu and the wizard will allow you to add multiple slideshows and then create a menu before burning.

The next project I tried was to create a Photo Gallery. With the same Disney photos selected the Photo Gallery opens a wizard with three types of galleries; Web Galleries, Animated or Interactive. With Web Galleries chosen the wizard asks for arrangement of the photos on the page and a style with both options showing thumbnails of how your choice will look. Next the wizard opens a dialog window with more options to customize, such as Gallery Title and Slideshow duration and effects. You then can select where to Share the gallery; either choose Do Not Share (which saves to your hard drive), Photoshop Showcase (more about this later), My FTP Site, or CD. I also tried the Animated and Interactive galleries with the same photos. The wizard makes creating these very complex shows a breeze. If you don't know how to publish to your web space a dialog box offers simple steps to help with that task, or you can register and sign on to the [free](#) Adobe Photoshop Elements Showcase feature. This is an online community for users of Elements to upload and share their photos and galleries.

Each project that you create and save is added to the Organizer at the top. If you want to edit a project you just double-click the project file and the wizard that was used to create it opens. All of the print projects like the Photo Book Pages, Photo Layouts and Album Pages, are saved (with multiple pages when applicable) with a .pse extension. The print projects are wizard driven and offer step by step selections for size, layout, theme and then additional options depending on the project chosen. I decided to make a print project of a CD cover and label for the Disney slide show that I created earlier. The wizard walked me through the entire process opening Elements in the Full Edit mode with my selected photo and all the layers in the layer palette created – it truly seemed like magic. Since you are left in this mode you can then adjust or fine tune the project before saving and printing it.

One feature that I was not able to try but may be of interest to some reading this review is the ability to download and upload photos from a mobile phone.

I highly recommend Adobe Photoshop Elements 5. There is an upgrade rebate in the box of \$20, so if you are using an older version you can take advantage of that. The price today at Amazon.com is \$69.99 with free shipping and your \$20 rebate makes the total price \$49.99. There are other special offers at local stores and online. Visit Adobe's web page www.adobe.com for system requirements.

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The Changing World

**A Review of Vista by David Steward, APCUG Advisor, Region 8 and Program Chair,
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The title of this article explains a lot. With the release of Microsoft's newest iteration of Operating Systems, Vista, we are going to be making a lot of changes in how we perform day-to-day tasks on our computers. For once, I think they actually got it right. With a more intuitive interface, a lot less cluttered desktop, easier networking and a much more robust security system, Vista will indeed go a long way in making the lives of us who spend a great deal of time staring at a computer screen easier and more exciting.

Getting Started

The first thing that you will notice when opening the box is that Vista is shipped on a DVD instead of a CD, as all of the previous operating systems from Microsoft have been. There are a couple of reasons for this. The first is that Vista is

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packed with much more content than has been available in the past. Things like Windows Defender, Sidebar, Snipit (a screen capture utility and more), built-in Fax and Scan, and Windows Live Meeting all of which are designed to make life easier.

The second is that regardless of which version (see below) you purchase, all of the versions are included on the DVD. The version that loads depends on the installation key that you receive with the purchase. What does this mean to us, as consumers? It means that you can upgrade the OS version any time you want, and the media is already on the disc. All you need to do is the purchase the upgraded “key” and the system will do the rest.

As mentioned above, Vista is being offered in many different versions. Each version is, of course, designed around a specific type of user. At the time of this article’s writing, the following versions are being offered:

Vista Home Basic – Basic package. Contains all the usual things that you would expect to be included in an operating system plus many new enhancements.

Vista Home Premium – Adds support for the Media Center PC, the Tablet PC, automated backups, Windows Aero and Glass, built in DVD authoring, and much more.

Vista Business – Version scaled for business use

Vista Ultimate – The whole enchilada. Contains everything including support for multiple processors.

For a detailed description of each version, and to help decide which is right for you, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/editions/default.mspx>.

On a little side note here, I want to caution the readers to not think only in today’s terms when deciding which version of Vista to choose. With the advent of the multiple core processors and initiatives to put more processors on the motherboard, each with multiple cores, you might want to consider the Ultimate edition, as it directly supports multiple processors, up to 128 gigs of memory (on 64 bit machines) and makes use of the higher buss speeds associated with multiple cores. Plus, as you will see later, it grows with your system.

Entertainment

As I said previously, Vista is designed to make your life easier. Plus, a lot of the OS has been wound around the entertainment capabilities of today’s PC. With built in DVD, CD and TV (with tuner card installed) support, any PC can be turned into the main entertainment center of your house.

Most of us have grown up using a PC for normal things like word processing, spreadsheets, digital photography, listening to music, email, and surfing the web. Basically, everything that we can do while sitting about 2 feet from the computer screen. Well, a new “buzz” word in the industry is the “10 foot” experience. It encompasses things that we can do away from the computer. This includes experiences like storing all of your DVD’s and videos on your computer’s hard disk, and viewing them from anywhere in your house. Being able to show slideshows of your photos on your TV in the den, listening to your music files in the bedroom including changing the playlists a you desire. Vista makes this possible. And, Vista’s Media Center capabilities will couple with your Xbox360 and use it as a media extender.

If you want to see if your computer is Vista capable, visit the “Vista Upgrade Advisor” at <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/upgradeadvisor/default.mspx>. The Upgrade Advisor will perform a very thorough search of your system’s hardware and installed software and let you know what needs to be changed before upgrading to Vista.

The Meat

Let’s get to the actual operation of the software. Before I installed Vista, I ran the included Upgrade Advisor, which informed me that I needed to remove the “Nero Burning Rom” software before I could install Vista. In addition, it cautioned me that although Vista would run on my system, I would not achieve the full performance of the graphics engine due to the installed drivers for my video card. Specifically, I would not be able to run the Aero or Glass enhancements. At the time, I did not consider that a good enough reason to rush out and purchase a new high end graphics card, so I went ahead and installed Vista, after removing Nero. I chose to upgrade my existing system, as I have a ton of programs installed, and did not want to have to re-install all of them. So, after entering a few basic pieces of information, including

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the “key”, Vista took off and performed all of the upgrade functions without any further input from me. This is good as it took almost 2 hours to completely install and upgrade the system. At one point, I thought that it was stuck and that I would have to start over, but it wasn't. It just took that long to load the features and enhancements, and upgrade the existing programs.

This might be a good time to point out that I am performing this review on a 2 year old Sony Vaio Media Center PC, which has a Pentium 4 running at 3.4 Ghz, 1 GB of RAM, a 320 GB drive, and a 64 MB on board graphics card. I have partitioned the drive into 2 partitions, a 80 GB program partition, and a 240 GB data partition.

Finally, the upgrade finished and the system rebooted into Vista. The first thing that you see is a screen titled the “Welcome Center”. From this screen, you setup all of the basic things like security, users and internet settings. This is all accomplished by wizards that lead you through the process step-by-step. You can also view some very informative videos that introduce you to the features of Vista. It also gives you the opportunity to register and go online with Windows Live, a place where you can setup your own personalized start page with Live Mail access, news, weather, RSS feeds, etc....however you want it to look.

After you finish setting up all the necessary features, it is time to explore and have fun. I am not going to write about every feature and function, as I would have to write an entire book to cover it all, but I am going to highlight a couple of things that I think will be of interest to us all.

First, Vista has a ton of informational type of screens that tell you a lot about your particular system and hardware. One of these is called “Performance and Information Tools” which is accessible from the “System and Maintenance” button on the Control Panel. This is where you can find out what your system experience rating is. This will let you know how Vista will perform under different conditions, and whether or not you can take advantage of some of the enhancements like Aero or Glass on your desktop. My particular system rating was 2.8. The reason for the mediocre rating was because of the graphics chip that was on the motherboard. Everything else had a rating of 4.2 or above. I really wanted to use the Aero on my desktop, so I rummaged around in my computer room, and found an nVidia 6600 graphics card. After installing it, I re-ran the performance rating test, and my system rating increased to 4.1, which allowed all of the included enhancements. It was well worth the time.

Another feature that is accessible from the Control Panel is the “Problem Reports and Solutions”. This area keep track of every time a program stops running for any reason, or has a problem installing, and logs it into a database. From time to time, you should check this area and see if a fix for a particular problem has been released. Vista will automatically download the fix, apply it, and test it on your system. Why is this important? It means that you do not have to wait for a service pack to repair individual problems.

There are many more features on the Control Panel that you will want to explore and play with, including the ability to change the partitioning of your drive, schedule tasks and view event logs. Believe me, Vista is an information geeks dream.

Another new addition is Windows Mail, which replaces Outlook Express. I used to prefer Outlook Express over Outlook because of it's ease of operation and Windows Mail has not changed my mind. Windows Mail operationally looks like Outlook Express with one major enhancement. It has an automatic spam and phishing filter integrated in the program, and it works. It is so nice to look at my messages and not have to wade through 200+ messages wanting to sell me stock or change my anatomy.

Getting back to the desktop, one of the features that I really wanted to see was the new Aero feature. Aero is the high performance desktop experience that has been introduced in Vista. Basically, it allows a much more robust and dynamic view of the desktop and the components running on it. For example the Glass feature turns the individual windows translucent so you can see what is going on in windows under it. The Flip 3D function allows you to quickly “flip” through all of the open windows until you find the one that you want. In addition, when a window is minimized, you can hover your mouse over the button on the taskbar, and see exactly what that window looks like. Plus, Aero gives everything a much smoother appearance making it easier on the eyes. It is hard to describe Aero in words, but trust me, you will like it.

Another new feature is Gadgets. Simply put, they are little gadgets or programs that you can place on your desktop to

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help you. Things like a clock, news feeds, stock tickers, RSS feeds, or even games. Now, this is what Active Desktop really means. <G> You can adjust the transparency of each of them so that they do not distract from the workspace.

Ultimate Extras

For those of you that take the plunge and opt for the full blown Ultimate version, there is a bonus. Microsoft has announced the Vista Ultimate Extras program. This entails new additions to the Ultimate package that will be added as time goes on. Things like new gaming experiences with Windows Hold'em Poker, added security with the bit-locker encryption system, and my favorite, Dreamscape, which turns your desktop background into a true "active" desktop by allowing motion video to be run on the desktop. It is truly an unbelievable sight. And, more will be added in the future, allowing your system to grow as time goes on.

For the gamers reading this, Vista is going to change the way that you play games on the PC. Microsoft has included DirectX 10 with the shipping versions of Vista. DirectX 10 is a much more robust API that allows a more realistic appearance in games. In addition, you can use your Xbox360 controller on your PC now, and it will take advantage of all of the controller features like vibrate and positive feedback.

Having said all of this, I do want to note that I did have some problems while running Vista. I have had a couple of programs that flat refuse to run in Vista, specifically shareware video editing and video conversion programs. I am presently working with the support engineers to rectify this. I also found that although Microsoft says that Vista will run well with 1 GB of memory, and it does, Vista really wants as much memory as it can get. I noted a significant improvement when I install another gig of memory. Same thing is true about the graphics adapter in the system. I recommend at least a 128 MB card, and preferably a 256 MB card if you want to run Aero and Dreamscape. This will ensure that there is no noticeable loss of system performance.

I know that this is supposed to be a review of Vista, and it has ended up sounding like an advertising blurb about the product, but I am very excited about the new Operating System. I truly believe that Microsoft has finally listened to the user community, and has made a concentrated effort to include the enhancements that we have been waiting for. I am actually enjoying sitting in front of the screen again.

Next time I will review Vista on a laptop, and I promise that it will be shorter <G> Until then, ya'll have fun.

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New Security Products Shown at APCUG Annual Conference

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas; Radio and TV Show Host; [Iwilsker\(at\)apcug.net](mailto:Iwilsker(at)apcug.net)

WEBSITES: <http://www.apcug.net>
 <http://www.grisoft.com>

<http://www.pandasoftware.com>
<http://www.trendmicro.com>

I recently had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting and convention of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) in Las Vegas. Even though I have attended APCUG annual events since 1991, it always amazes me how quickly technology changes, and how those changes are rapidly introduced to us consumers. Every year participants are astounded by what we see, but every year has also demonstrated technologies dwarfing those shown the previous year. The APCUG events were all on topics related to personal computers, including security, applications, operating systems, hardware, CPU, and other technological services and components. Three of the presenters were companies

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in the computer security software sector.

Grisoft (www.grisoft.com) is a computer security software publisher headquartered in the Czech Republic, and best known in the U.S. for its very popular free version of AVG antivirus software. I was very surprised to learn that the more sophisticated and comprehensive commercial versions of AVG are among the most widely used computer security utilities in Europe. AVG has a professional staff of engineers in Europe, but also has sales, and more importantly technical support services, located in the U.S. I have to admit that until I saw the AVG-Grisoft presentation, I was unaware of the degree of sophistication and quality features built in and backing up the AVG products. My opinion of AVG was positively changed, as I had always thought of it as an excellent free antivirus product; now I know it as a technological leader providing enhanced features and functionality in its products. While I will still recommend the free version of AVG antivirus software to those who may not be able to afford commercial software, I would also hope that those who use AVG free version and are satisfied with it would eventually upgrade to the more comprehensive and feature rich commercial products. AVG offers a comprehensive selection of security software ranging from antivirus software to complete security suites. AVG has been certified as among the most effective antivirus products by several independent testing and rating services.

Panda Software (www.pandasoftware.com) is a publisher of computer security software headquartered in Spain, but with a strong American presence. I first became acquainted with Panda several years ago when I purchased a copy of Panda Antivirus at one of the big-box office supply stores. I had read some amazing reviews of it in a computer magazine, so I decided to try it on my Windows 98 computer to replace an expired competing big-named American product. My "98" computer continued to have Panda protect it for the remainder of its lifetime, and Panda never failed me. At APCUG Panda amazed me with its degree of technical sophistication in dealing with the changing threats facing the computing public. According to Panda, over 90,000 new malware threats appeared in 2006, with some individual months in 2006 having as many new threats as in all of 2005. Panda explained how the threat scenario for computer users changed from the old-fashioned viruses intended to damage computer files with random acts of vandalism, to the new threats that are almost all commercially driven. Panda Software offers technology security solutions ranging from its free online "Active Scan", to free-standing antivirus software, to comprehensive security suites complete with antivirus, firewall, anti-spyware, anti-spam, wi-fi protection, and other protective features. Panda has its own proprietary "TruPrevent Technologies" which is designed to protect computers from attack by new and unknown viruses even before the virus signatures can be updated. Most Panda Software packages can be installed on multiple computers under a single license, and should be considered as a very strong and capable competitor to other better known security products on the market.

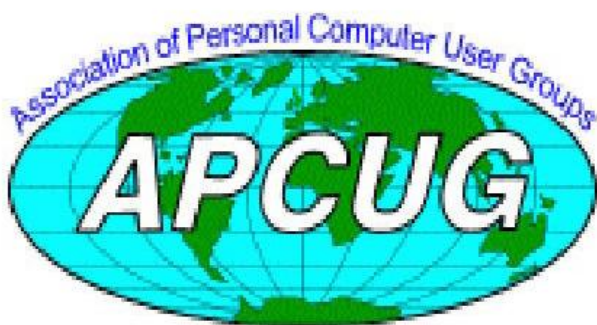
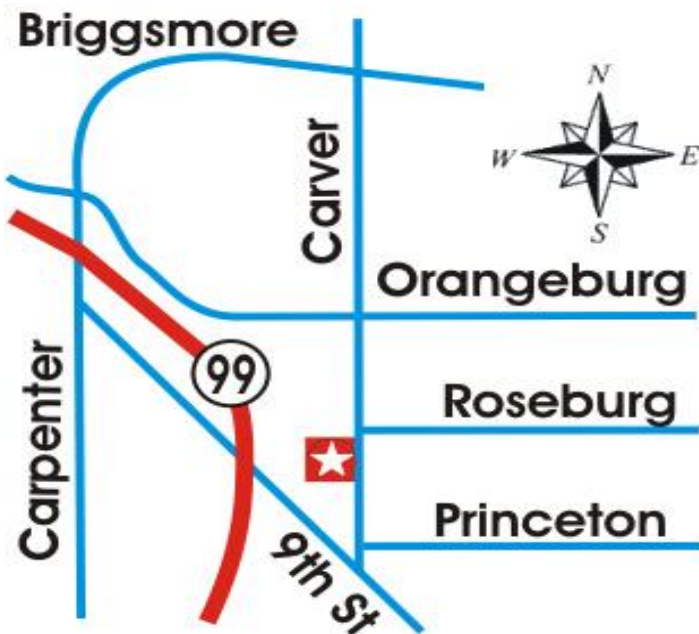
Trend Micro (www.trendmicro.com) explained the degree and types of security threats facing computer users. Identity theft of various types was discussed as well as the means to detect, protect, and neutralize a wide variety of other computer threats. Threats can come via email, malicious code on websites, from file sharing services, and countless other places. In order to deal with and protect from a wide variety of threats, Trend Micro demonstrated its flagship product Trend Micro Internet Security 2007 with its integral TrendSecure online services. Previously known under the moniker PC-Cillin, Trend Micro Internet Security 2007 provides protection from viruses, spyware, spam, phishing, and other forms of attack. Features also include a "fraud defense" to explicitly help protect credit card and other sensitive personal information from being compromised while online. The 2007 version includes a single license that can be installed on three computers which make it both a qualitative and economical good choice when compared to the other name brand security software titles widely available at retail.

I am a firm believer in good competition and the free enterprise system. As was clearly demonstrated at APCUG and CES, competition drives innovation which in turn provides valuable and tangible benefits to the consumer. We all need antivirus and other flavors of security software on our computers and any of the feisty competitors above can provide a quality product and service at very competitive prices. If more computer users could have seen what those of us at the APCUG event saw, the security "biggies" would have a lot to fear, because these aggressive "little guys" are providing excellence by innovation and superior service and support at a fair price. Those big guys on the block should be looking over their shoulders, as these little guys are growing stronger by capitalizing on the weaknesses of their larger competitors. Security software should not just be purchased based on the familiarity of the name or brand, but on the quality of the services and support offered. Any of the three products mentioned above would be a good choice for virtually all PC users.

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