



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

February 2010

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

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Help your newsletter

You are invited to share favorite websites, reviews of software or just general computer experiences. Send your article or notes to editor@rvpcc.org.

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Next Meeting
Saturday, February 13, 2010
9:15 a.m.

Topics:
Changes in Taxes for 2010
By
Sandy Johnson, AARP Tax Instructor

Weather Alert: See Page 6

“God Mode” in Windows 7

Bill Scott has a great tip for anyone running Windows 7: the God mode. A lot of the links are things can be found in various places, but it is handy to have all of them in one place.

Create a folder anywhere and paste the line below as the folder name.
GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}

When you open the folder you'll find links inside to a whole slew of Windows 7 settings -- all in one place. Handy.

Your editor tried this and found 276 links in 47 categories. Googling “God Mode” came up with some more tidbits, which your editor did not try:

► The trick is also said to work in the 32-bit versions of Windows Vista. However, it is known to crash 64-bit versions of Vista, requiring you to boot in the safe mode or go to the command line to delete the folder.

► You can change the “GodMode” text, but the following period and code number are essential.

Secretary's Report

January 9, 2010

The president, Earl Abbott, called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. He then turned the gavel over to the incoming president, John Leary.

Door prizes were won by Andy McLaughlin, Bill Farmer, Stan Rogowski, Bob Johnson, and our visitor, Frank Drobot.

Officer reports: Vice President Bill Scott 'has the vice under control.'

Secretary: Kay Viskup is expected back for the February meeting.

Treasurer: Helen Trenor reported that the club is solvent.

Roanoke County Schools: Homer Duff delivered our check to the school and said they were very appreciative of it during this time of very tight money.

Program: Andy McLaughlin gave several suggestions for future meetings. Changes in the tax laws will be the topic for February's meeting.

Everyone introduced himself to our visitor.

Program: What did you get for Christmas?

Andy also presented a short program covering up-dated versions of 13 free software programs.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandy Johnson, Acting Secretary

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PREZ' NOTES

Members, and prospective members



F E B 2 0 1 0

Roanoke Valley PC Club meetings seem to me to be more about learning what's new in personal computing, than building or experimenting with PC projects. We've had some really interesting presentations from members. These days, there are a number of free, entertaining and educational courses on PC technology that are available on the web. Its often best to view these presentations in a group. Conversation and comments from other folks help to make clear what the presenter aims to say, With thanks to Hewlett Packard, I am including a list of free courses on PC topics. Perhaps one day we can "reprise" one of these presentations in a PC Club meeting, with discussion to benefit all interested members.

Network attached storage

[http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/38089?](http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/38089?JUMPID=EM_TAW_US_JAN10_ACROSS-BG_696238_HPGL_US_910406_1&DIMID=1004673992&DICID=null&M RM=1-4BVUP)

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Website Design

[http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/23629?](http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/23629?JUMPID=EM_TAW_US_JAN10_ACROSS-BG_696238_HPGL_US_910406_1&DIMID=1004673992&DICID=null&M RM=1-4BVUP)

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Linux 101: a beginner's guide

[http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/5548?](http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/5548?JUMPID=EM_TAW_US_JAN10_ACROSS-BG_696238_HPGL_US_910406_1&DIMID=1004673992&DICID=null&M RM=1-4BVUP)

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Adobe Photoshop CS4: intermediate

[http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/35889?](http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/35889?JUMPID=EM_TAW_US_JAN10_ACROSS-BG_696238_HPGL_US_910406_1&DIMID=1004673992&DICID=null&M RM=1-4BVUP)

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Protect your PC from spam, spyware and viruses

[http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/35835?](http://h30187.www3.hp.com/courses/overview/p/courseId/35835?JUMPID=EM_TAW_US_JAN10_ACROSS-BG_696238_HPGL_US_910406_1&DIMID=1004673992&DICID=null&M RM=1-4BVUP)

[JUMPID=EM_TAW_US_JAN10_ACROSS-](#)

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Let me close my notes for February with a question: "Why bother looking for "Ohio Distinctive Solutions"?"

Answer to follow next month.

John Leary

Is Internet Explorer Unsafe?

Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) has been in the news lately, but it hasn't been good news. A severe security flaw allowed recent cyber attacks on Google and other technology companies in China. The code for this attack has been leaked and other hackers have begun to take advantage of it. This has caused governmental agencies in Australia, France, and Germany to recommend that users switch from IE to an alternative browser.

The news releases are somewhat conflicting. Some releases said IE6 was bad but IE8 was OK, while others said that all versions of IE running on XP and later were vulnerable.

To plug the flaw, Microsoft released a critical "emergency security update" on January 21, about 3 weeks ahead of its normal monthly update-release schedule. The update is available by manual or automatic updates. It applies to all versions of IE. Users are urged to download it as soon as possible.

As users, we hope that the update will work and IE will be secure. However, one day after the patch was released, a US security firm claimed to have found another set of vulnerabilities in IE.

What can we users do other than hope? We could switch to another browser as many are recommending. Mozilla's Firefox (www.mozilla.com/firefox) is a good candidate. Its

market share is greater than IE's in some parts of the world. Firefox is free, easy to install, and can live peacefully side-by-side with IE on your desktop. You can use Firefox at any time, or you can set it to be your default browser. But don't remove IE from your computer; it is still needed to download Microsoft's Windows and Office updates.

If you would like a brief guide on installing Firefox, read Kim Komando's 1/23/2010 tip "Dump Internet Explorer For Firefox" at <http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=8058>. Or, go to www.komando.com and search for "dump" without the quotes. The "Dump" article, #8058, will be in the results list – it was the first entry in the list at this writing.

In addition to Firefox, there are many other browsers. One list on the 'Net showed 28 different browsers available. However, unless you like to experiment, it would probably be best to stick with one of the widely used popular alternatives like Firefox, Chrome (www.google.com/chrome), or Opera (www.opera.com).

RVPCC Meetings

When: 2nd Saturday of every month

Where: Arnold R. Burton
Tech Center
Room 105
1760 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153

What time: 9:15 am until noon



Travel Checklists

By Bob Johnson

A travel checklist is available at www.DontForgetYourToothBrush.com (This site wins the Unusual-Site-name-of-the-Month award). Enter your trip date, select the type of trip, and DFYT will email reminders to you about what to do and pack at appropriate times before the trip.

DFYT's reminders are useful, but I disagree with some of their times. I want to check my passport's expiration dates and visa requirements 6 months in advance, not just a few weeks. And one week before leaving is a bit late to start looking for new clothes.

As one who has forgotten to pack everything from tent poles to passport, I now rely on a pre-trip checklist. Over the years, I have refined my list by adding things or tasks that I forgot or almost forgot. I also have several versions set up for different types of trips, like flying, driving, or camping. Let your computer help you travel.

My checklist is on a word processor, but could easily be set up on a spreadsheet. Here are the headers I use, with a few examples for each header:

- Six months before leaving – passports, visas.
- Four weeks before leaving -- medical, medications, shots
- Two weeks before leaving -- lawn service, car preventive maintenance.
- Few days before leaving -- stop mail and papers, notify credit card companies.
- Day before – cut grass, water houseplants, prepare snacks.
- Night before – set up lights and timers, unplug electronics.
- Day of leaving – set the house heat/cool, shut off water, lock up.
- Often-forgottens – items that are easily forgotten

such as battery chargers, spare glasses, sunscreen, umbrella, swimsuit, tent-poles, passport, etc.
On return – reset heat/cool, restart mail and papers.

If you want to set up your own travel checklist, there are many sources of ready-made lists in addition to DGYT. Just google “travel checklists.” I'd be happy to share my own checklist with other club members. Or, just dive in and write your own. Include everything you can think of, and then add to the list as you use it.

Getting ready to leave is a busy, exciting time, and it is easy to forget something. A checklist isn't foolproof, but can certainly help. You may avoid that sinking feeling when you reach for your passport at the airport and suddenly realize it is still back home on your dresser!

Do You Lock your Luggage?

Here is a video that shows you how quick and easy it is to open a zipped and locked suitcase, and how it can be re-zipped so you can't tell your suitcase has been opened. This video shows how a criminal can open your suitcase to steal items or to insert contraband.

This video is scary, but a traveler needs to be aware of the dangers. Watch the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSdTQYuhYII>. Or, google “opening locked luggage” (without the quotes) and click on the article “How to open a locked zippered luggage bag.”

The googled results list will show many articles and videos on opening locks and suitcases. These may be of interest. If you look at a few of them, you will begin to believe that locks keep out only the honest folks!

There is a “Tell-Tag” that will let you know if your zippers have been moved. However, they are from Australia and a 5-pack costs close to US\$20 with international shipping. This gets expensive fast since you have to use a new Tell-Tag each time you lock your suitcase.

Meeting space provided by
Roanoke County Schools

Two New Websites

The Roanoke Times newspaper recently described two websites that should be of interest to RVPCC members. Both sites are candidates for our Favorites lists.

Outdoor recreation: www.RoanokeOutside.com was launched January 14, 2010, to publicize our region's outdoor recreational opportunities. The coverage area stretches from Douthat to Smith Mountain Lake between the James and the New rivers.

The site provides about 125 links to information about activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, boating, camping, gear shops, kids' activities, accommodations, attractions, and trip ideas. A calendar of events is included, as well as a section on late-breaking news.

The Roanoke Regional Partnership, an economic development organization, maintains the site. Development was assisted by a grant from the Virginia Tourism Corp.

This site makes you realize what a great area we live in.

Education: www.AcademicEarth.org offers free video courses from leading universities and professors. No cost, no homework, no 8:00 labs. Just log on, watch, and learn. Academic Earth says that it is "an organization founded with the goal of giving everyone on earth access to a world-class education."

The lectures offered on the site are in Science and Engineering, Social Sciences, and Humanities.

The Computer Science lectures might be of interest to RVPCC members. There are 14 lectures, beginning with "Understanding Computers and the Internet" by Harvard's David J. Malan (this lecture is sub-titled "Computers for dummies"). There is a 4-lecture series on beginning computer science, plus other lectures on more advanced computer topics.

Be sure to browse the long list of offerings – you'll be inspired to learn.

An E-mail Problem Solved...

Did you ever send an e-mail too soon? Before you had finished writing it, proof-reading, or spell-checking? Here's a trick to solve that problem:

Enter the recipient's address last. Enter the address only when the message is completely finished and checked. The message can't be sent without an address.

If you are replying to an e-mail, you can delete the sender's address while you compose the answer, then re-enter the address when the answer is ready to send.

And, be sure to select the correct address. It is easy to select the wrong name from your address book. For example, if you want to send a message to Sam Jones and type "Sam J," Sam James will appear first. Double-check that name before accepting it.

Be friendly. Read out loud the e-mail you are about to send. If it sounds harsh to you, it will sound harsh to the recipient. Use a salutation. And don't use all-caps since that is like shouting.

These tips are from Barbara Pachter, who specializes in business etiquette. She offers a blog on the subject. Visit her blog at <http://www.pachter.com>.

You can read Pachter's full article on E-mail etiquette by googling "7 Ways to Avoid Saying or Doing the Wrong Thing with your Email" with or without the quotes.



In Excel: Clear values but keep formulas

You have just finished your big 2009 income tax Excel spreadsheet, and you need to start a new spreadsheet for 2010. Now you have a choice: either reenter all the text, formatting, and formulas into a new sheet, or go through a copy of the old sheet deleting each individual value. (In Excel-speak, a number that you enter into a cell is a "value.")

Either approach is painful. Wouldn't it be easier to delete only the values, leaving the structure, formulas, and details of the spreadsheet intact? Here is a method for doing just that.

First, open your old spreadsheet that you want to reuse. Use Save-As to save it with a different name for the new spreadsheet.

In the new spreadsheet, go to (click on) cell A-1 in the upper left-hand corner. This is so that future operations will refer to the entire spreadsheet. Then open the "Go-To" dialog box by pressing Function Key 5 or Control + G.

In the Go-To box, click on "Special." In the new box, click "Constant" to check it. Next make sure "Numbers" is checked, and uncheck (click on) the others (Text, Logicals, and Errors). Finally, click "OK."

This will highlight every cell in your spreadsheet that contains a value, leaving unhighlighted everything else. Press the Delete Key to delete all the highlighted cells.

Then click anywhere in the spreadsheet to close the operation. Save your spreadsheet. You are now ready to enter values into the newly cleaned spreadsheet.

Clearing the entries is also possible in the OpenOffice spreadsheet, Calc. The procedure is clearly explained under "delete" in Help. It is even quicker and easier than in Excel.

Best Software of 2009

Computer Power User Magazine ("CPU") has published their list of the best software applications of 2009. They chose 3 applications in each of four categories: Utilities, Security, Media, and Miscellaneous.

Read the list and the reviews at: <http://www.computerpoweruser.com/editorial/article.asp?article=articles%2farchive%2fc1001%2f33c01%2f33c01.asp&did=5069&aid=60797>

Or, google "programmed to perfection" (with the quotes). The first response should be the one you want, "Computer Power User Article – Programmed To Perfection."

WEATHER ALERT!

When it looks like this outside:



Be sure to check your email and/or the club website, RVPCC.org, to see if the meeting has been postponed or canceled.



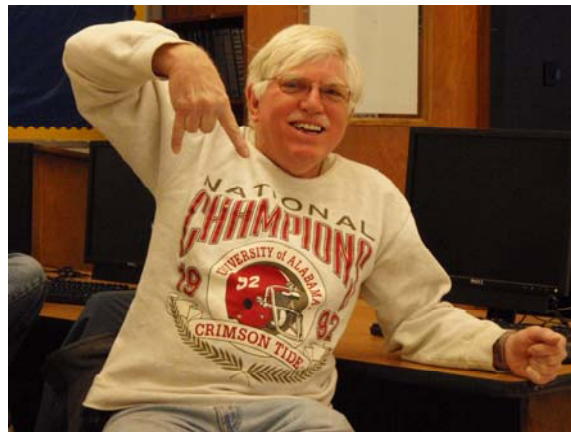
PICTURES FROM JANUARY MEETING



Earl Abbott greeting our new president, John Leary



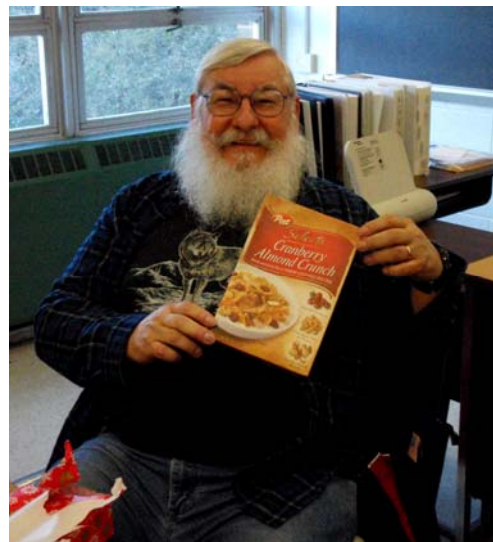
Passing the gavel



Bill Scott showing his Crimson Tide colors!



Homer Duff greeting our guest, Frank Drobot



Stan Rogowski showing his door prize—is it really a box of cereal?