



# Digital Photography



DACS shutterbug  
Richard Ten Dyke  
shows you  
how to  
create,  
select,  
scan, edit,  
format, store,  
and print your  
personal photo  
collection.

# President's File



## PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS ISSUE 0.10

I hope you're all enjoying this ski season. The cold can be a bummer, but the snow has been awesome.

### Red Hat 8 experiences

Last month I promised more on my experiences with Linux. I have Red Hat 8 installed on my old laptop, along with the OpenOffice suite of programs. I rate the combination of the Linux desktop using the KDE interface together with the Open Office productivity suite as "eminently useable with reservations." The word processor and spreadsheet, cleverly called "Writer" and "Calc" respectively, are easy to use and work well for their intended purposes. The problems come when you want to exchange files created in these programs with people on Windows using Microsoft Office. So has open source software arrived for the masses? Read on.

The OpenOffice suite includes several other programs beyond Writer and Calc. There is one for presentations (Impress), Math and Diagram programs, a project management program (it manages resources and does Gantt charts, and probably more), and a program called Draw—you can guess what that does. This is a very complete replacement for Microsoft Office. Red Hat 8 includes an email program from Ximian called Evolution. This extremely good email client even works with Microsoft Exchange Server and completes the needs of the typical office knowledge worker.

Now, the bad news is that each of the OpenOffice programs has its own

"native" file formats that are different from the equivalent Microsoft Office products. This means that you must make a conscious decision to convert or save a document in the equivalent Microsoft Office format. In actual use, this is really only a minor annoyance. The good news is that Writer and Calc can use Word and Excel files transparently. Once you set up the file association, you can double click a Word file in the Konqueror file manager and Writer opens up to display the document.

The only big problem I encountered comes when you try to edit a Word document in Writer and then go back to Word. This would be a common scenario when two people collaborate on a document. In my somewhat limited testing, everything went well as the document, created in Word, was opened and edited in Writer (this is on the Linux machine). The relatively simple Word formatting transferred to Writer just fine and I was able to edit and continue the document using Writer. Then I transferred the document back to Windows and opened it in Word. At first, everything seemed fine. The formatting is all still intact; however, Word could no longer spellcheck the document. Now, for me this is a BIG PROBLEM! Word doesn't even put the squiggly red lines under the misspellings! And F7 does not yield anything either. Disaster!

So far, the only way I have been able to regain spell check is to copy all the text into a text editor like Notepad, close Word, reopen Word with a new empty document (and a clean template) and paste in the text from Notepad. Obviously, this removes all formatting, which is probably a big clue to the source of the problem.

I also tried to open some more complex Office documents in OpenOffice. A Word document with several pictures and text boxes was pretty much a disaster when opened in Writer. The text boxes seemed to move to new random locations. An Excel workbook (multiple spreadsheets in a single file) with a chart in one of the sheets moved to Calc with only one big glitch. The chart shows three years of data as three lines on a 12-month chart. Calc reformatted the chart to a single line on a 36-month chart. Even worse, moving the file back to Excel did not put the chart back to its original format.

I sure hope the OpenOffice folks can fix these problems. OpenOffice could be the key to successfully using Linux as a desktop operating system. Linux still has a long way to go in ease of use, but recent progress has been dramatic!

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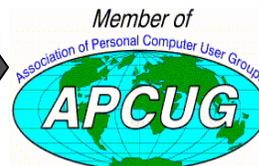
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## IN THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS	2
HELP LINE	3
NEW MEMBERS	4
REVIEW: TOYS FOR TECHIES	4
REVIEW: PICTURE PERFECT	5
HTML BASICS	5
SIG NEWS & NOTES	6
CALENDAR	7
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY - 5	8
GEEK TOYS	9
RANDOM ACCESS	10
CLASSIFIED	11



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**d** = day    **e** = evening

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## There's still hope for Congress

Remember the "Total Information Awareness" project? This part of the Homeland Security Act planned a data mining project to be run by the Pentagon that would sift thru the life histories of everyone (yes, even you) using everything from bank, credit card and library records, to travel reservations, medical files and academic records, combined with your neighbor's gossip, in search of possible terrorists. Well, a funny thing happened on the way thru the Senate. When given the chance, our normally spineless Senators voted 100 to zero to place limits on this system that would treat virtually every American as a suspect. Can you believe it? I refer you to William Safire's column on the February 13, 2003, op-ed page of the New York Times. This is required reading, even if Mr. Safire does take half the column to blow his own horn. Then call Messer's Dodd and Lieberman and tell them they "did good", that you like your civil liberties and want to keep them.

## Goals for the club

When I took this job last year, I did so because I thought I had something to contribute. My main objective has been and remains to bring back the fun we used to have using our computers. Mike Kaltschnee and Ed Hicks are definitely on the right track with the geek toys (see the general meeting review). Ed gave me lots of ideas about how to map the mountain bike trails at Huntington State Park.

Another goal has been to ensure the club runs in a business-like manner. The bylaws change is an example where we needed to bring things into agreement with current practice. Many of our current practices began when the club had far fewer members, and there were seldom enough hands to do the work. Now we have become a "typical club" where a small percentage of the membership does most of the work. This is really another good news/bad news situation. The good news is that all of the people heavily involved with the club do it because they enjoy it. The bad news is that we have missed many opportunities to get more members involved.

A good way to learn more about the inner workings of DACS is to come to the "Pig SIG" following the general meeting. After packing up all the equipment and thanking the speaker, we head over to Chili's Bar and Grill on Newtown Rd. near Exit 8. Most of us have not had dinner, so we eat and talk about computers. In short, we geek out! Join us—

JIM SCHEEF

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# Meeting Review

## Toys for Techies

By Marlène Gaberel

The DACS February meeting was enjoyed by all present, with Mike Kaltschnee as the speaker. Looking a bit tired, but enthusiastic nevertheless, Mike introduced members to the definition of a “geek” using a kindergartner metaphor. “You know your kindergartner is a geek when...” as Mike gave us ten definitions of the ultimate kid. Scary, when your under five year old starts doing your taxes. Mike continued by describing places—mostly online stores—that sell those must-have geek toys. Mike said that the advantage in being a geek is that you know of stuff that will be common in five years. I guess that being online fifteen years ago qualifies me as a geek. Mike continued by mentioning wireless, which is now very inexpensive, to connect computers in your home – no more annoying cables snaking around walls; what beats being able to use your lap top computer in bed? Geeks need scanners too, as per Mike. Lego makes some neat electric components to add on to the building blocks, another topic that Mike described. Of course, geeks have their own clothing, with all the pertinent sayings in front and back. He went on to talk about entertainment. He recently wrote about Netflix in dacs.doc and he finds that it is a very convenient way to watch movies his family really wants to see. Then he continued on news for geeks, such as Google News and Wired News—practical information for time-starved geeks. Mike concluded his short presentation—to let Ed Hicks talk about his hobby—with caffeinated products: such as soap with much more caffeine than your regular cup of java, to use in the morning for those who just do not have the time to drink that essential wake me up. What happened to the time when we had time to savor a cup of coffee in a favorite coffee shop?

I attended the meeting with my 13-year-old son who reviewed this segment of the evening by saying: “Mike is cool!”

Ed Hicks then continued where Mike left off, demonstrating the equipment he uses for orienteering. Until Ed’s presentation, I never realized that orienteering was a sport practiced in the U.S.A. Back when I was in school in Switzerland, orienteering

was part of physical education. It was fun to spend an afternoon with a team, sprinting through the woods, looking for that next post where we would find out our next clue. I was not born with a compass in my head, nor was my team; therefore, more often than not, we ended up not finding the stations in sequence and arrived at the end of our afternoon with half the clues. But it was better than being inside. I know of some kids that grew up becoming so proficient at the sport that they went on tours in Nordic countries and in New Zealand.

So it was with great interest that I listened to Ed, who, by the way, must have spoken for my purpose, in centimeters, kilometers and kilos. Ed described how to get maps for orienteering, how to create and manipulate symbols used in the sport. Ed also showed us a wearable computer with every thing—or just about—that is found on a typical desktop and that can be worn as a belt around the waist. The elements, as per Ed, consist of two tablet-like computers, a battery, USB ports, serial ports, pc cards, a pen to transfer information between the wearable and the office computer, plus the necessary GPS—I just wish I had such a piece of equipment when doing orienteering. Ed mentioned that wearable computers, while convenient for sport, also have

many other applications, such as at a point of sale, when airport staff check your ticket, doing data research in the field, in surveying and such similar professions. He surprised all of us when he said that his wearable computer did not cost much more than \$600.00, all add-ons inclusive. Ed gave the audience two web sites to learn more about wearable computers and orienteering: [www.via-pc.com](http://www.via-pc.com) and [www.orienteeingunlimited.com](http://www.orienteeingunlimited.com)

While being entertained, I learned quite a lot in the amount of time allocated to the presentation by Mike and Ed. That sums up DACS meetings: fun, while keeping up-to-date on computer technology.

**MARLÈNE GABEREL** is a DACS board member and VP for Public Relations. You can e-mail her at: [marlene\\_gaberel@yahoo.com](mailto:marlene_gaberel@yahoo.com).

## New Members

1/19/03 thru 2/18/03

- 1) Francis Gurowskiowski
- 2) Erik Scofield
- 4) Kip Jones

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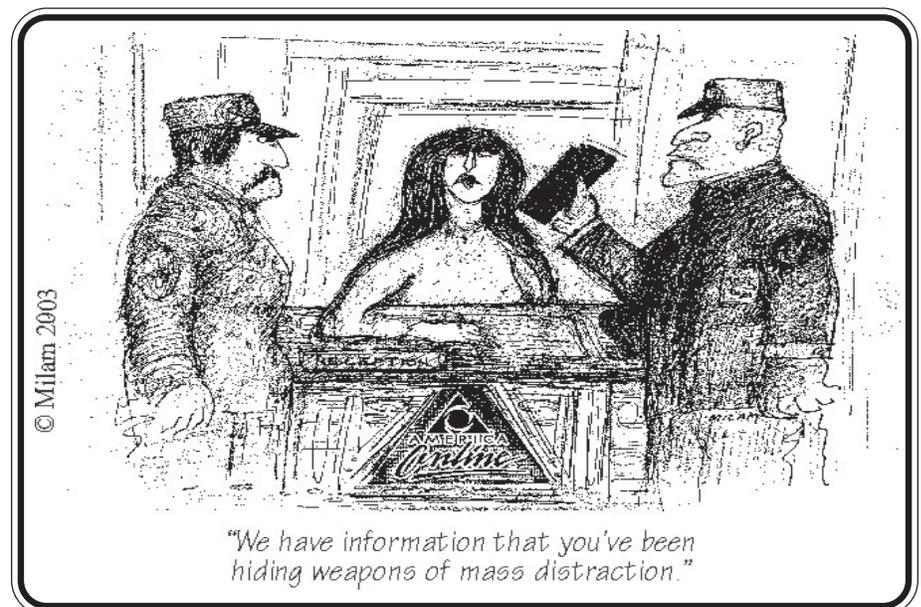
If the membership date on your mailing label reads

**EXP12002**

**or earlier**

You need to renew your DACS membership

**NOW**



## Preview

# Digital Photography

## Picture perfect is not just a snap

By M. Gaberel

Have you been doing your reading of *dacs.doc* lately? If so, you probably have spotted the recent informative series on photography by Richard P. Ten Dyke. The articles went into much detail, enabling readers to become (almost) professional photographers and producers of pictures. Your curiosity may have been piqued by some topics that you would like to explore in a little more depth.

We will have that opportunity at the DACS General Meeting, when Mr. Ten Dyke will demonstrate the basics of digital photography, and explain what's new and why we should be interested. He intends to elaborate on the following:

### Scanning a photo

- Using a flatbed scanner

- Using a film scanner

### Selecting and using a digital camera

- Loading the image into the computer
- Choosing megapixels for intended use
- CCD vs. CMOS
- Selecting aperture and shutter speed
- Depth of field differences
- Using flash
- Using Zoom and Macro lenses
- About batteries

### Choosing and using file formats

- jpeg, gif, sting, raw, psd, tiff, bmp

### Editing (with Photoshop Elements)

- Resizing an image

- Brightness and contrast
- Masking
- Using Layers

### Printing an image

- Choosing Paper and Ink
- Choosing proper resolution
- Color management"

The March meeting is another DACS home-grown presentation. Richard P. Ten Dyke is a DACS member with interest in photography that dates from 1952. DACS members will be fortunate to take advantage of fifty years of photography experience. Richard says that he will make necessary demonstrations when appropriate and that members of the audience will be invited to ask questions between major topics.

The meeting will be held March 4th at 7pm at Danbury Hospital Auditorium. The public is invited; bring a friend.

*MARLENE GABEREL is a DACS board member and VP of Public Relations. She can be reached at: marlene\_gaberel@yahoo.com.*

## Internet Tools

### HTML Part I: The Basics

By Scott Preston

Many people I know have asked about HTML and what it is used for. HTML is HyperText Markup Language. Last year, I started to "hang around" the Ask a Tech Question Message Board on Nick.com and I noticed a lot of posts had been made with lots of decorations such as different colors or fonts and font sizes. I thought it would be a good idea if people were able to learn about HTML.

HTML is great for making webpages. I started when I was 9 using Adobe Pagemill, and now currently use Microsoft FrontPage XP. If you want others to be able to see your web pages, you must have an account on a web server. Often your ISP will provide space for your web pages (usually called 'personal home page'). The other thing you must remember is that all images (pictures, drawings, etc.) must also be on the web server, and references in your web page to those images must point to the image on the web server.

OK, now I would like to share some HTML basics.

With very few exceptions, HTML consists of pairs of tags – a "start" tag that

tells the browser to start some display option, and a matching "stop" tag that tells the browser to stop that action.

For example, to get bold-faced type, you put a <B> before the text you want to be bold, and </B> when you want the bold to stop.

```
<B>bold text goes here</B>
<I>italic text goes here</I>
<U>underlined text goes here</U>
```

Tags may be combined...

```
<I>this will be italic text<B> and this
will be bold italic text</B> and this will
be regular italic text again.</I>
```

An 'anchor' tag is used to create a link to another page. It has two parts:

```
<A reference_to_something_else>
clickable text</A>
```

The most common use of an anchor tag is to put in a hyperlink which will cause the viewer's browser to link to another page. The page may be a different page at your site, or it may be a page at a completely different site.

```
<a href=page2.html>Click to go to
Page 2</A>
```

For example, here is a link to the Google search engine.

```
<a href=http://www.google.com>
Click here to go to Google</A>
```

If you want to include an image (a picture) you may do it with the IMG (for IMaGe) tag.

```
<img src=http://pics.ebay.com/aw/
pics/navbar/ebay_logo_home.gif>
```

An image may be used within an anchor link—so that clicking on the image will take you to another page:

```
<A href=http://www.google.com>
<img src=http://www.google.com/
images/res0.gif>
</A>
```

In the above example, the image provided by Google would be clickable and have a blue border around it, indicating that it is a link. If you don't want the blue border, then you may specify that there is to be no border via an additional "attribute."

```
<A href=http://www.google.com>
<img src=http://www.google.com/
images/res0.gif border="0">
</A>
```

*SCOTT PRESTON is the son of Random Access Moderator and Access SIG leader Bruce Preston. Scott is 12 years old and hangs out at spreston@mags.net.*

## Special Interest Groups

### SIG NOTES: March 2003

**ACCESS.** Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.

**Contact:** Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (*bpreston@mags.net*). Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next meeting:** Mar. 11

**ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS.** Explores and develops OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For meeting notes and notices, follow link to Don's site on *dacs.org*.

**Contact:** Don Pearson, 914 669-9622 (*pearson@attglobal.net*). Meets on Wednesday of the week following the General Meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY.  
**Next meeting:** Mar. 12

**dot.Net.** Programs for Web site/server.

**Contact:** Chuck Fizer (*cfizer@snet.net*). Meets on 2nd Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center. Members' suggestions are welcome.  
**Next Meeting:** Apr. 2

**GRAPHICS.** Create/print high-quality graphics and images.

**Contact:** Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 (*graffic@ntplx.net*). Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo Imaging, Brookfield.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar.26

**INVESTMENT STRATEGIES.** Discusses various investment strategies to maximize profits and limit risk.

**Contact:** Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436, (*pgehr4402@aol.com*). Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar. 20

**LINUX.** Helps in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Nov also be of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

**Contact:** Bill Keane (*bkeane.nai@rcn.com*) 203-438-8032 Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar. 19

**MICROCONTROLLER.** Investigates microcontroller applications from theory to hands-on implementation and member projects.

**Contact:** John Gallichotte, 203 426-0394, (*tlclotus@ieee.org*). Meets on 4th Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar. 25

**SERVER.** Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook.

**Contact:** Jim Scheef (*jscheef@telemarksys.com*) Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next meeting:** Mar. 13

**VISUAL BASIC.** Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

**Contact:** Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (*cfizer@snet.net*) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (*JScheef@Telemarksys.com*). Meets on 2nd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** Apr. 2

**VOICE FOR JOANIE.** Provides and supports people with Lou Gehrig's disease with special PC computer equipment.

**Contact:** Shirley Fredlund, 203 770-6203 (*voiceforjoanie@juno.com*).  
**Next Meeting:** Look for announcements.

**WALL STREET.** Examines Windows stock market software.

**Contact:** Phil Dilloway, 203 367-1202 (*dilloway@ntplx.net*). Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar. 24

## SIG News & Other Events

**dotNet.** The dotNet-SIG formally the IP-SIG attendance was up again this month. The random access session explored web connectivity issues including ISPs, IP addressing and port addressing. Jim Scheef provided the ScheefFamily.com site as an example of applying imaginative use of technology to present his web site without increased expense.

After random access, Greg Austin demonstrated DreamWeaver MX from Macromedia. This new version of DreamWeaver includes tools for .Net website development. We were able to see the code behind in addition to page development as Greg proceeded to create a runnable web page in a "few easy clicks". DreamWeaver is marketed as a website RAD tool that can help get a site up and playable in a short period of time.

Following Greg's demonstration and discussion, Chuck Fizer demonstrated new code for the Role Frameworks product. Claude Prevots captured the essence of this part of the session in the fluent text following: "Our application development has leaped forward at the command of an agile wit in C#."

In our database "UserRoles" in SQL 2000 Server we now have tables such as "ActiveSessions", "AssignedUserRoles", "Organization", and "OrgRoles" that await binding to an infrastructure that links them to a Web page in the making with XML and C# code.

The UserRoles Web page in design mode contains a banner, a control button and the rudiments of a menu which is for the moment horizontal at the upper right side, but will ultimately be vertical on the left side of the finished page that opens the application session. For this application engineering effort we have a menu-driven capability that will generate Web pages by rendering them to a browser with a pageload function that is part of an infrastructure that serves as an event handler to achieve features binding to a database in our SQL 2000 Server. It is important to notice that this infrastructure must be somewhat generic to allow user groups in diverse organizations to adapt the application to those particular uses in given organizations.

The details of this enabling technology must be seen in the program code itself, but some highlights can be noticed for method overloading and generic parameters to allow the flexibility needed for different user groups. The coding strategy is to use stored procedures in the SQL database that activate a menu item by binding stored procedures with generic parameters that allow specification of essential characteristics, namely, 'name', 'type', 'size', and 'value'. A connection string is defined to achieve a link to this database as a datasource and needed tables can be built for the menu item on the Web page. Within the linking infrastructure was see method overloading that allows different actions to flow from one named method. Again, a student can appreciate these details of the enabling technology only with a careful examination of the C# code itself.

We anticipate further effort in the daunting task of assigning permissions to roles for the several types of actors expected in a human organization.

Moments later we noticed that time had expired and it was time to order the pizza before the start of the VB-SIG.

The March meeting of the dotNET SIG is canceled. The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 2nd at 4pm in the DACS Resource Center. Watch the dotNET\_DACS Yahoo email list for details.

**Micronroller.** During our first meeting two development systems were demonstrated. Software was installed on the host PC, programs were downloaded to the micronroller and executed. The ordering of parts to assemble a development sys-

SIG Notes Continued on page 9

# March 2003

## Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
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# Pastimes

## A Brief Introduction to Digital Photography Part 5: Depth of Field

© 2003 By Richard P. Ten Dyke

This is the fifth of the four-part series on digital photography. You might call it an encore, except for a lack of applause, so instead we'll just admit that we left an important item out of the first four parts, and now we return to remedy the situation. The subject is depth of field, sometimes called depth of focus. It should be discussed because it is different for digital cameras.

First of all, what is depth of field? When you take a picture and after focusing carefully on a subject, you notice that objects which are closer to the camera, and objects that are more distant than the subject are "out of focus." However, there is a range of distance, in front of and behind the subject where objects will appear to be "in focus." The range of distance in front of and behind the subject that appears to be in focus is called the depth of field.

Some years ago, I was studying portrait photography, and I ruined several rolls of film by focusing incorrectly. I had pictures where the tip of the nose was in focus, and the eyes were out of focus. The pictures, although fine in all other respects, were horrible. I learned from that experience to focus on the eyes. Recently, Richard Avedon exhibited many of his portraits at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. In some of his portraits, I noticed that where the head is turned slightly, one eye is in focus and the other is slightly out of focus. I estimated that he was working with a depth of field of about a half-inch.

In direct contrast to this, I recently took a picture with my digital camera and noticed that the depth of field was much greater than I would have expected. Objects close to the camera were almost in focus, even though I was focusing on a more distant subject. To check this I ran some experiments, comparing a digital camera to a high quality 35mm film camera, and confirmed my suspicions. Digital cameras do, indeed, yield greater depth of field when compared to film cameras under the same picture-taking conditions; that is, with the same subject and f-stop. I asked myself why.

The depth of field that you will achieve with a photograph depends on several things, in particular, the f-stop, the

focal length of the lens and how close you are to the subject.

The f-stop, or f-number, is defined as the focal length of the lens, divided by the lens diameter, or aperture. You can have any f-number you want, but cameras are usually designed to offer "stops," a defined selection, such as f-2.0, f-2.8, f-4.0, f-5.6. The f-stop is important because it determines how much light is going to fall on the film or light sensitive element. The smaller the f-stop number, the larger the aperture and more light falls on the film. Because the f-number is based on the ratio of focal length to aperture, the amount of light falling on the film is dependent only on the f-stop, so f-5.6 for a 50mm lens gives you the same exposure as you would have with f-5.6 and a 300mm lens. We set the f-stop based on light conditions, film speed, and time of exposure.

To answer my questions, I reviewed the equation governing depth of field. I found that depth of field is proportional to the ratio of f-stop to focal length. Remember that f-stop is the ratio of focal length to aperture, so the ratio of f-stop to focal length is the reciprocal of the aperture, that is,  $1/\text{aperture}$ . The equation is telling us is that depth of field is inversely related to aperture. This makes sense, because the old pin-hole cameras we made as kids had, theoretically, infinite depth of field. But we don't know the aperture when we take a picture, since the camera is not set up that way. We only know the f-stop and the focal length. For our purposes it is the ratio of f-stop to focal length that governs depth of field. If you take a picture at f-5.6 with a 50mm lens on a 35mm film camera, then the depth of field is about 12 inches. By the same measure, if you are using an 8x10 view camera with a 400mm lens at f 5.6, your depth of field is about 1.5 inches.

How does this affect digital photography? The CCD light-sensing element in a digital camera is much smaller than in a film camera. The 35mm film frame is 24x36mm. The size of the CCD in my 4-megapixel Olympus E-10 or the 5-megapixel Nikon 5700 is about 6x9mm. Because the film frame is smaller, the equivalent focal length for the digital camera is one fourth of that for the same pic-

ture taken with a 35mm camera. Therefore, the aperture for the same f-stop is one-fourth that for the 35mm camera. Another way to put it is that I can use f-2 on the digital camera and achieve almost the same depth of field that I would normally get at f-8 on a 35mm film camera. Caution: these numbers I am quoting are approximate, because there are second-order elements in the equations. However, they accurately represent the direction and magnitude of the relationships.

So depth of field is, in fact, determined by the kind of camera that you are using. Today's digital cameras, with their small CCD chips, give greater depth of field for the same f-stop than a standard 35mm camera. Similarly, a 120 film size camera, such as a Hasselblad or an 8x10 inch view camera, provide a much shallower depth field. Some future, high resolution digital cameras may have light sensing elements (CMOS chips) that are the same size as 35mm film, so their depth of field will be the same as for film cameras.

Our objective in this article is not to go into detail about depth of field in general, but only to explore differences that exist between digital and film photography. That being said, there is another important factor to note and remember. Depth of field depends also on the ratio of the subject size to the film size. This ratio is determined by the size of your film or light-sensing element, the focal length of your lens, and the distance between camera and subject. Using a diagonal measure, a portrait has a size of about 36 inches. For a flower, the subject size might have a diagonal of five inches, and for a group photo, perhaps 10 feet. So, using the same equipment, the depth of field for the flower photo is much less than that of the portrait, and for the group photo, much greater. This is why depth of field is important in macro and portrait photography, and less important in group photos. Interestingly, depth of field also becomes important in scenic photography, because a good scenic usually has some object in the foreground which should be in focus in order to emphasize depth to the image.

In those situations where depth of field is important, today's digital cameras provide greater flexibility and ease of use.

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RICHARD TEN DYKE is a member of Danbury Area Computer Society who has had a long interest in both photography and computers. He started his photography career with a Leica IIIC in 1952, and his computer career working with an ERA 1103 in 1956. He currently is retired from IBM and resides in Bedford, New York. You can reach him at [tendyke@bedfordny.com](mailto:tendyke@bedfordny.com).

# Geek Toys

By Michael Kaltschne

In early February I had the pleasure of addressing DACS. Seems that, somehow, somebody (who shall remain unnamed) thought it would be a good idea for me to speak to the group. Forget that I had my second child less than a month before the presentation, was still commuting more than 3 hours per day to New York City for work, or that I wasn't sleeping much (2 young kids).

The problem I really had was the topic, "Geek Toys." If you look the word "geek" up in the dictionary, it basically means someone that bites the head off of chickens in a carnival. Hmms.

I actually enjoyed giving the presentation, as I was able to share some of my favorite geek toys and places I like to shop for them. Here are some of the companies and products I spoke about:

Modifying your computer has become a similar pastime to hotrodding your car, and there are many places you can go to get accessories. The PC we showed was purchased at the local computer show ([www.CoganFairs.com](http://www.CoganFairs.com)) and has neon lights, clear side panels, fan lights, and an aluminum case. The owner of the computer, Jon, is just getting started on this fun and visually interesting project.

You can also buy parts to enhance your computer at

[www.TigerDirect.com](http://www.TigerDirect.com),

[www.CyberGuys.com](http://www.CyberGuys.com),

[www.ThinkGeek.com](http://www.ThinkGeek.com),

and [www.ComputerGeeks.com](http://www.ComputerGeeks.com).

Old standbys include:

[www.CompUSA.com](http://www.CompUSA.com),

[www.RadioShack.com](http://www.RadioShack.com),

(hey -- they still sell diodes!),

and even the:

[www.Apple.com](http://www.Apple.com) store

(how many places sell Unix-based computers?)

It's not that exciting to watch, and takes time to get started, but I had a working fuel cell from [www.FuelCellStore.com](http://www.FuelCellStore.com). This is the future of transportation, and you can play with them now. It won't power your house or car, but it's definitely a geek thing to do.

I demonstrated an interesting speaker, called a SoundBug, that attaches to glass or a similar hard structure. It turns the surface into a speaker, and while I think it's

not something that will turn your MP3 player into a boombox, it's definitely an interesting geek toy.

I like my caffeine, and you can get a wide variety of caffeinated product at [www.ThinkGeek.com](http://www.ThinkGeek.com). They include my favorite, 200mg per shower soap! They have a good assortment of beverages, mints (fresh breath and caffeine!), and a lot of Geek toys.

Since I haven't won the lottery, I have a bunch of geek toys I'd love to have but haven't been able to afford them yet (diapers are my priority right now). They include an electroluminescent keyboard, 18" LCD display (Sony or NEC), a Compaq iPaq, SiPix 2 digital camera, Cappucino PC and about 10,000 other toys. Yes, I'm a geek.

*SIG Notes, Continued from page 6*

tem was discussed. A group purchase of components is scheduled.

**Server.** We had another great time at the February meeting of the Server SIG. Discussion covered two main topics—problems using SCSI tape on a laptop, and beginning a review of Windows Server 2003.

My research over the last month had not made any further progress on using a SCSI tape drive—or any SCSI device—on a laptop. I believe the problem stems from the facts that SCSI support is limited in the kernel installed on my laptop, and that the PCMCIA subsystem cannot activate the SCSI card prior to booting the operating system, as is the case with a regular SCSI adapter plugged into the system bus of a desktop or server PC. If you have experience compiling the Linux kernel, and can come to a Server SIG meeting, please let me know.

We then turned our attention to Windows Server 2003, the new version of Microsoft's server operating system due out later this year. Microsoft had kindly provided us with brand new CDs with the Release Candidate 2 version to try. This is a 120-day evaluation (trial) copy of the last pre-release version. Microsoft made news a couple weeks back by quietly changing the name of this product from Windows .NET Server 2003—dropping the NET part. The news media jumped on this as an abandonment of the .NET concept by Microsoft. This is certainly not

I would like to thank Ed Hicks from Orienteering Unlimited ([www.orienteeeringunlimited.com](http://www.orienteeeringunlimited.com)) who not only brought some really cool toys, but also wound up speaking for about a half hour on wearable computers, GPS, and GeoCaching. Rather than do a disservice to Ed, I'm going to try to talk him into writing about these and other topics. Ed's part of the presentation was awesome.

I would also like to thank Jon Gatrell from Old Gate Consulting ([www.oldgate.net](http://www.oldgate.net)) who brought in some of the toys I demonstrated, including his brand-new "hot-rod" computer, a working fuel cell, and several other toys we didn't have time to show.

A final thanks to [www.ThinkGeek.com](http://www.ThinkGeek.com) for donating the cool Universal Remote Control Watch that a lucky DACS member won.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to share some of my toys with you.

*Mike is a DACS member who likes to play with toys of all kinds. You can contact Mike online: [mikek@demorgan.com](mailto:mikek@demorgan.com).*

the case, as the .NET Framework ships with the new OS. Microsoft claims the new server product to be more secure. Time will tell, but the major change I have seen so far is that fewer services are installed by default, and when a service, such as the Internet Information Server (IIS) web server is installed, it is installed with everything set as securely as possible. Microsoft's philosophy in the past has been to make things as easy to get working as possible. As more networks are connected to the Internet, and the world has become more a more hostile place, ease of use and security are opposite ends of the spectrum. The new installation procedures may help make it easier to setup and deploy a server that is as secure as is practical.

The next Server SIG meeting will be Thursday March 13th, at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. We'll complete the installation of Windows Server 2003 and set up IIS to display a simple web site. Who knows, we might even find a solution to the SCSI problem. See you there!

**Visual Basic.** VB-SIG had a very aromatic start, onions, cheese and pepperoni. Following pizza, this meeting like the dotNet-SIG started with a large attendee population. The random access session centered on the concepts of objects evolving into just a general discussion. As often the case, the explanation is best understood with the use of an example. Here we pro-

*SIG Notes, Continued on page 11*

# Random Access

Feb. 2003

Bruce Preston, Moderator

**M**EMBERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE GENERAL MEETING may submit questions to “askdacs@dacs.org” by the day prior to the meeting. We will attempt to get an answer for you. Please provide enough detail, as we will not be able to ask for additional information.

**Q. I have a Palm Pilot PDA and was told that it would be easy to move data between my Palm and Microsoft Outlook—but I can't seem to find a way to do it. What's the secret?**

A. When you install the Palm Pilot software from the CD that came with it, you have to tell it that you want to synchronize with MS Outlook, rather than the default Palm Desktop.

**Q. I have a handful of SDRAM boards that are marked 4Mx64—how much memory is that? There are no other markings that I can recognize as to possible memory indications.**

A. For your 4Mx64, since you need 8 bits for a data byte, you have to double the 4 to get 8, so you have to take half of the 64 to offset that. That means that you have 32MB on each of those SDRAM cards. Since you don't have to put in pairs of SDRAM boards, the other way to tell, if you don't mind opening up a machine, is to record the before-and-after memory with the boards installed in a machine.

**Q. I have tried to copy files from a “D:” partition on one XP machine to another XP machine, across the network. I get an error message: “Can not copy DOS files.” and a reference to CONFIGNT. What is happening? The source machine at one time was running Windows 98SE and has been upgraded to XP.**

A. Dragging data should not matter at all. It sounds like you have grabbed a Windows XP system file that you shouldn't copy or move, such as the contents of Documents and Settings—which are tightly bound to the hardware configuration. We suggest that you get the exact text of the message and do a search on Google to see if you can find an explanation. Another suggestion is to rename the CONFIGNT files on each machine and then try doing the copy.

**Q. I recently heard that there is something going on with the current release of Turbo Tax. What is happening?**

A. Intuit added an activation/copy-protection scheme to Turbo Tax, that a lot of people are complaining about. It makes use of Macrovision's SafeCast/C-Dilla which installs a hidden application to your machine, which encrypts your activation code and stores it, in fragments, in several places on your machine. Some people have reported problems with getting the activation key over the internet if they have dial-up networking; on Windows XP they get an API error—a crash during the install. Once Turbo Tax is installed, you only get one key when you 'activate;' after that, Turbo Tax will only run in a crippled mode (e.g. no printing, and perhaps some other disabled functions) if you try to install on another machine. If you uninstall Turbo Tax, C-Dilla is not removed. After many complaints that C-Dilla broke other applications and CD burning software, Intuit posted a removal tool that will remove C-Dilla—but it also completely disables Turbo Tax. If you replace your hard disk, you lose Turbo Tax capabilities, and they will not re-issue a key. This could be a serious problem, if for some reason you need to review your taxes at a later date. The internet boards are loaded with complaints about what Intuit has done -- do a Google search on “turbo tax 2002 macrovision c-dilla” to see what people are saying and writing. Most postings have a comment such as this: “After X years of using Turbo Tax, I have converted to Kiplinger's Tax Cut and it works just fine.”

**Q. I have an Epson 1520 printer and am having printing problems. I've replaced the cartridges but it still doesn't print correctly. What could be the problem?**

A. If the printer hasn't been used for some time, you might have to run several head cleaning cycles to burn dried ink out of the printhead. This is found in the printer's property pages on the Utility page—try running several

cleaning cycles. Another common problem for some printer cartridges is that ink can get on the printed-circuit cards' connectors and cause a problem—clean with a cotton swab moistened with rubbing alcohol.

**Q. I am now getting lots of pop-up windows, where I never saw them before. How do I get rid of them?**

A. Some sites send more than others—for example, personal web pages hosted on Yahoo! generate lots of pop-ups. There are pop-up killer add-on applications that can help. Disabling Java will do it also, but then you are likely to lose functionality on some web sites. For example, one of my clients found that he couldn't book flights on Travelocity until he disabled the pop-up blocker.

**Q. I use Charter Communications, Periodically, I get a message out of the blue come up on my screen. This even happens when the machine is idle—I'm not surfing the internet. How do they do that, and how do I stop it?**

A. First, go to [www.microsoft.com/security](http://www.microsoft.com/security) and obtain and run the “Baseline Security Analyzer.” It will see what openings you have on your machine. You may also want to get into your Control Panel/Services and disable MSMSGMGR (or similar) which is a component of Microsoft Instant Messenger - if you aren't using IM, you don't want this running. A firewall will also restrict who/what can reach into your machine -- software firewalls are adequate, but a hardware firewall such as found in a CableModem/DSL router/firewall will do much better. Check to see that it has SPI (Stateful Packet Inspection)—see this page: [http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/S/stateful\\_inspection.html](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/S/stateful_inspection.html) for a description. Essentially, it keeps track of whether the connection was initiated by you from inside the firewall, or the attempt was made from outside the firewall and thus blocked. Note that firewalls can also watch for connection requests being made from your end—and will alert you to any applications that try to establish a link. You then decide whether to permit or decline. For example, it will trigger when your anti-virus software tries to go out and gather updates. In this case, you would want to approve the application as being 'friendly' or 'trusted' so that it can do the

connection. On the other hand, you may want to manually control or outright block a request being made surreptitiously, after installing some product or an application you downloaded.

**Q. Is McAfee Spam Killer any good?**

A. The jury is still out on spam killers in general -- some of them generate many false positives. Unfortunately, if a false-positive blocks an important message, you are stuck. Some ISP's use an 'industrial grade' spam detection/blocker system that makes use of servers such as the "Black Hole database"—to match emails against known spammers or spam-friendly ISPs. For example, Mags.Net reports that about 45% of the attempted deliveries into its POP3 mail server are bounced as spam—yet I have never gotten calls from clients or friends saying that their mail got bounced. When in doubt, they pre-pend "[Possible Spam]" to the message subject and let it through.

*Bruce Preston is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT. A DACS director, he also leads the Access SIG. You can reach him at [askdacs@dacs.org](mailto:askdacs@dacs.org).*

*SIG Notes, Continued from page 9*

ceeded to move to the Recipes VB6 program. By way of information, the Recipes example is a application program in development by Tish Barrow. She is developing the application as a project for a study class in which she is currently enrolled. We took the program and proceeded to dissect its various components and objects and evaluate their functionality. Our initial charge was to change the Form Hide/Show code to use Modal forms. This was readily apparent when we discovered that we couldn't end the application properly because Forms open albeit hidden. Windows doesn't want to end a program that has open objects. Next we tackled the .MDB database used to store the Recipes. Several lists are implemented, a category and a recipe list. By design, recipes are entered into a category. A category can have multiple recipes. For example

the category Lunch could have recipes for sandwiches, soups, etc. The list were populated by running through a list from the database, selecting recipes into categories. We modified this method to utilize a query on the database so that the returned data was specific to the list requirements. Of course, all along the way, various attendees had insightful suggestions that virtually involved everyone in the programming process. This must have been an informative session as everyone except jim remained to the very end eventhough we do go into overtime.

Next month's dotNet- SIG and VB-SIG meetings are cancelled. Chuck Fizer has a conflict with a community service project and Jim Scheef will be away on holiday. The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 2nd at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. Watch the VB\_DACS Yahoo email list for details.

**FREE CLASSIFIEDS**

DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in *dacs.doc* at no charge. Ads may be placed electronically by fax or by e-mail or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting. e-mail your ads to Charlie Bovaird at [cbovaird@dacs.org](mailto:cbovaird@dacs.org)

Leave hard-copy classifieds with Charlie, Marc, or whoever is tending the members' table at the meeting.

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## Future Events

March 4 • Richard TenDyke - Introduction to Digital Photography  
April 1 • TBA

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