

Bits & Bytes

A Publication of the Kern PC Users Group

Ron Wilczynski from the Sacramento office of the FBI will be here to talk about computer forensics, the FBI, and one of his recent overseas trips in which he used his computer forensics skills. Because he does not know what type of operating system he will have to work on he is fairly well versed in Windows, Unix/Linux, and Mac. I think this should be a very interesting meeting. I spoke with him today and confirmed that he would be here unless there is a National emergency.



Meeting time is 7:00 pm on May 8



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The following rates are for one insertion in the **KIPUG** newsletter. All copy must be received camera-ready, no later than the 15th day of any given month for publication in the following month's newsletter.

Camera-ready copy should be submitted to Bits & Bytes, c/o Dave Chalmers, P.O. Box 2780, Bakersfield, CA 93303

KIPUG members who have computer related items for sale or trade or who have information they would like to share with other members may do so **FREE** of charge as space permits. Ads larger than business card size are subject to 50% of normal advertising fees. Non-members are subject to the normal advertising fees.

Business Card \$ 5.00
Quarter Page \$ 15.00
Third Page \$ 20.00
Half Page \$ 30.00
Full Page \$ 60.00

ADVERTISERS

KIPUG will mail your direct computer user targeted mail advertisement (fully prepared for mailing, including postage) to our entire membership at a reasonable fee. For more information, please contact Rhonda Pierce, President, at pierce27@earthlink.net.

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I hope everyone had a wonderful Easter! Unfortunately at our April Meeting, our speaker from New Horizon didn't show up, but one of our very own members came through in a pinch and bailed us out. Elton Kelly, Webmaster by trade for various websites, the main one being ANETEK. Elton spoke on websites, a very good and interesting topic and well done to be on the fly at the last minute. A BIG THANK YOU to Elton, what a wonderful job you did for us. Maybe we can have you back to speak again, so you can have a chance to prepare for it this time.

This month for May, we have an FBI Agent speaking on criminal investigation aspects. I should be a very interesting topic also. Hope to see you there.
Rhonda [:-)

HOW CAN KIPUG MEET THE NEEDS OF ITS MEMBERS?

Many members missed out on a fine presentation at KERO TV. To have only 20 attend the presentation must be rather disappointing to the program committee. No wonder we can get very few high power presenters to come to make presentations in Bakersfield.

The needs of members of KIPUG seem to be unknown. Attendance has rapidly decreased. Perhaps membership is down but the members at large have no figures to verify this. It would be nice to get reports in the monthly bulletin showing total number of paid up members and an accounting of the use of our dues. We need to improve the communication with all members. Some on the board say that members do not want monthly meeting time used for such matters. Then the monthly bulletin would be a way of communicating without taking up meeting time.

Would it be worthwhile to have a well formed survey prepared for members of KIPUG and would the members assume the responsibility of responding to the survey as to their desires and needs? Are there any community needs that KIPUG could assume - such as holding adult or sen-

ior citizen introductory computer classes one or two evening per month? Participation in other community gatherings or events might make our existence known to others. I am sure many ideas are possible if collectively the members will work at it. But we need all to participate!

I attended the March board meeting and was urged to write a letter to members for publication in the bulletin to see if other members had concerns that should be aired as well as those I have mentioned. This is your chance to speak up. I hope you will contact board members as well as contact me (871-2683) if you want to see KIPUG make some changes to enlarge our membership and serve the community.

At the March board meeting I reminded the board that we used to have monthly door prizes for drawing from membership badges at end of session. True, many of these prizes were donations by vendors making presentations. But we are devoting a large sum of our money to door prizes for the 2 social pot luck dinners.. One board member said the potluck door prizes were main drawing card for the potlucks. If our priority is attendance at monthly meetings, then the same idea should be transferred to the

monthly program. After all, these meeting door prizes are listed in the bulletin as a fringe benefit for members.

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Thanks for listening.

Bob Campbell

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50 Greatest Computer Mistakes A Review by Dave Chalmers

Kim Komando has her own national radio talk show. She recently released a book on a CD-Rom format about common computer problems and mistakes. The book retails for \$19.95 and is available on her web site at

www.komando.com.

I received the software in a retail folder containing the CD-Rom and a picture of the author. The installation went smoothly and put very few files on my computer. The program is primarily based on the CD. Also included on the CD are a series of pictures of the author and a series of humorous sound files that could be used for various windows feature sounds. The program has a simple to use interface that allows you to access the lecture sound files and also a written file of the lecture in a PDF format. There are lots of Internet links to various sections of the author's net site. The audience for her subject matter are primarily computer beginners and families with young children. The explanations are clear and to the point. They run up to about three minutes. I would recommend this book for the above audience. This could make a good gift for folks that are just getting a computer.

As a note to Bob Campbell's letter, our elections are coming up. Maybe some new blood would be helpful. We have had the same group for a long time. I know none of these folks would be hurt if new people are elected

Computing Can Be Fun

Sam Thompson

I can't figure out why KIPUG doesn't have at least 500 members who attend regularly. There ought to be loads of people who enjoy computing as much as I do.

Sure, there are mundane ways to use a computer at work, but even then, the increases in productivity can make it enjoyable to have a computer to use. Text manipulation can be lots more interesting than just typing text. Desktop publishing can free a person's creative impulses. The computer also makes other communications mechanisms such as email, instant messaging and web pages possible. Of course, the standard business memo is a staple of computer users, but these other tools are much more interesting.

If you're interested in keeping track of your finances, a financial program or spreadsheet can make even the smallest income and expense worksheet fun to manipulate. I keep a three-year budget, merely for the sake of making paying bills interesting. Also, it helps to see that there can be a light at the end of the tunnel, even if the tunnel

gets somewhat dark at times.

But all of this stuff is just BORING to most people.

A computer can be a tool to make a person's interests and hobbies much more interesting and enjoyable, too. Genealogy projects of all kinds are possible, and I really enjoy collecting old family photos, scanning them, and storing them so that they can be easily accessed. It's easy to share photos with other family members, even if they're far away by posting pictures on a web page, attaching photos to an email, or sending a CDROM via snail mail.

If you're a collector, it's natural to want to track your collections with databases. Whether your collection is movies or music or whatever, a computer database is just one more way to enjoy your collection. Those old shoe boxes of photos can actually be available to show the family in some semblance of order. A computer can be quite a boon to a "scrapbooker", too.

There are so many fun things to do with computers that there just never seems to be enough time to do them.

Lately, I've been working with video. Now there's a time sink for you, even with a fast, new computer. I have a digital video camera which makes transferring video to the computer a snap, and a DVD burner just completes the picture. When my new grandson was born, I had video on DVD out to family members within the week; most people have DVD players hooked to their TVs now, so it's a natural medium to exploit. Recently, I've been going back to old family movies also. We had my grandfathers 8 mm movies converted to VHS tape long ago, and now it's simple to convert those analog tapes to digital and then copy them to DVD. You can skip the boring stuff and go directly to your area of interest. Also since I'm a gadget freak, I had a video camera by the time my son Rex was 4 months old, and he's now almost 25, so I have lots of tapes from Christmases and birthdays to distill onto DVD. Ah, so little time...

I have been the unofficial videographer of my extended family, too. When my step-sister was married about 25 years ago, I pulled the reception guests over to the side for introductions on video. Now that both of her grandmothers have passed away,

it's very nice to have this special video to share with her kids. Recently I was able to get a five-generation video with my grandmother, mother, son and grandson. That one video can make all the work of editing and re-editing worth it.

I guess my point is just this: no matter what your interest, a computer can make it more fun and more interesting. I have made some wonderful, long-term friendships in KIPUG because of our shared interest in computing. It's been exciting to see how I can apply what others are doing with computers to enhance their hobbies (as well as vocations) to my own interests. We may not share political views, vocations, or interests in the same hobbies, but the technology ties us together nevertheless.

Choosing a Digital Still Camera By Ira Wilsker APCUG

Digital cameras have become one of the most popular new consumer items. As is common for many high technology items, the price of digital cameras has fallen, as the technology improves. The dramatic increase in sales of digital cameras is mostly due to their "instant gratification" by eliminating the cost and inconvenience of film and processing. Another advantage is the ease of editing digital photos. The increase in sales of digital cameras has often more than offset the decline in sales of film cameras and accessories. Also, digital photography has in some cases, replaced film photography in many professional applications. According to Olympus, one of the leading digital camera manufacturers, the high-end digital cameras are now used by many professional photographers for weddings and other events. Many newspapers and magazines are now employing digital photography, which bypasses the darkroom, and allows the input of images directly to editors. For home users, digital cameras range from very inexpensive (under \$30, often before rebates) point and shoot models to sophisticated models that rival 35mm

SLR cameras, including accessory lenses and peripherals.

The potential resolution of digital cameras is measured in "pixels", a condensed term for "picture elements". Pixels are basically the little colored dots that compose an image. More pixels in an image mean that a larger size picture can be printed or viewed, but increases the amount of storage or memory necessary to hold the image. Contrary to popular belief, more pixels are not necessarily better. Consider that a typical 14" monitor has a resolution of 640x480 pixels, which is about 300,000 pixels. The unedited image from a digital camera with a 300,000-pixel resolution will fill the screen of that 14" monitor. My 17" monitor is currently set at a 1024x768 resolution; a digital photograph of about 740,000 pixels would fill that screen. Many digital photographers take their photos at the highest resolution, which is often unnecessary, and a waste of memory and time. If the image is to be emailed, or posted to the web, the image will likely have to be substantially reduced in size to be practical. Using good quality photo paper and a photo-grade color printer, an 11x14 inch image will require about 4 million pixels (4 megapixels) to approximate the qual-

ity of a 35mm print. An 8x10 inch print will require about 2 megapixels. An inexpensive 1-megapixel camera is quite capable of producing satisfactory 5x7 inch photos. The least expensive digital cameras on the market, sometimes under \$20 (I recently paid \$19 for one), can easily produce a printed picture in the common 35mm print size of 3.5x5 or 4x6 inch sizes. Some digital cameras, such as one of the Olympus CamMedia series, can print directly from the camera, using Polaroid film, or conventionally export images to a computer.

Digital cameras need something to hold the images until they are downloaded to a computer, or printed directly. Various types of non-volatile memory cards, typically compact flash, smart media, or memory stick formats, are used to store images. Currently, these cards are available in capacities up to 1 gigabyte (about 1 billion bytes), with 16meg (16 million bytes) to 128meg being both common and relatively inexpensive. The cards are reusable as images are erased from the cards. The contents of the cards can typically be transferred by the camera to a PC or Mac via a USB connection, or read directly by a card reader. Other popular cameras, such as some of the Sony Mavica series,

use common 3.5" floppy disks. These floppies, each holding about 1.4 megabytes, can be read directly by a computer, as the images are written directly to the floppy. Some more advanced (and expensive) digital cameras can write to mini-CD discs, which can hold well over 100 megabytes, and can be read on any CD drive. Generally, the more storage of any type available in a camera, the better.

Many digital cameras also have the ability to record short movies, sometimes with sound. The length of the movie is only limited by the memory or storage available in the camera. For most common movie capable digital cameras, the length is typically measured in seconds, or a few minutes.

Zoom is another feature often available. With the traditional film cameras, optical zoom is used. The zoom on digital cameras can be optical, digital, or a combination of both. In terms of image quality, optical zoom is superior to a digital zoom, with the same magnification. One digital camera I tried is advertised as having a 20x zoom; 4x optical, and 5x digital. At 20x (combining the digital and optical zoom), the images were quite grainy, but at 4x (optical) they

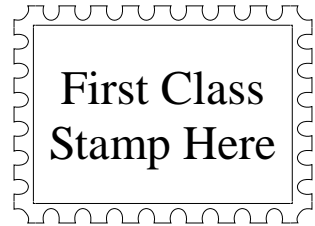
were very sharp. The same image at 4x digital zoom was visibly grainy, especially when enlarged. If a choice is available, optical zoom is superior to digital zoom.

Convenience factors, such as size, weight, flash, and battery capacity are often a matter of personal choice. Many digital cameras utilize the common AA size battery for convenience. Disposable alkaline batteries become expensive, if many pictures are taken, as they have a relatively short useful life. Rechargeable Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH) batteries are much more expensive to purchase, but the better ones have a capacity of two to four times the photos as alkaline batteries, and can be recharged around 1000 times. In the long run, NiMH batteries are far less expensive to use than alkaline. Select the NiMH batteries by comparing their capacity, typically 1200 to 1800 mAh (milliamp hours), the more the better. Another factor to consider is the viewfinder. Many digital cameras have a conventional lens type viewfinder, while others have a small LCD screen that is a "what you see is what you get" view. Some cameras have both. Many users have found that it is harder to aim a digital camera using an LCD screen than a viewfinder, but others prefer to

see the exact picture on the LCD an instant before the image is captured. Almost all digital cameras come with either an integral flash, or some sort of "hot shoe" or plug for an external flash. Some digital cameras combine their still function with a live video function, as they can also serve as webcams, sending live video over the net.

Digital photography can be both money and a time saver for many users, and should be strongly considered for that next camera purchase.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which this user group belongs.



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We are on the web at
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Your Address Here

Sarah Perelli-Minetti Webmaster

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month
at the Kern Superintendent of Schools Building.
17th and L streets Downtown
Meeting Time is 7 pm