

MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

October 2000 Newsletter

MEETING NOTICE

by: *Steve Turner*

When: Tuesday, October 10th at 7:30 PM

Where: Old Bedford School (1800 block of Bedford Road) Second Floor.

Program: Groceryworks

This presentation is for the person who does the shopping in the family. Groceryworks will take your order at their web site and deliver your order to your door. They are a Dallas based company and deliver to most of the DFW area.

The program will be presented by **George Ludlow** of Groceryworks.

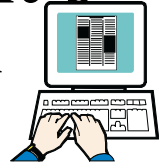
We will also have election of new officers at this meeting.



Halloween

From the President's Cluttered Desk

by *Rick Howell*



This will be the last time I write this column as my term of office is drawing to a close. I do intend to keep up with my Quips N Tips column as it seems to add a little weight to the newsletter. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those people who have served in various capacities on our Board of Directors this past year. Thanks to **Steve Turner** for finding all the programs for the general membership meetings, and for volunteering to run for the office of President to get me off the hook. Steve has also been instrumental in running the Hardware SIG and answering countless questions from people who really needed help with their systems. Steve was there in 1986 when I originally founded this group, and like the Rock of Gibraltar, he has been there ever since. It is nice to have people you can count on. Thanks Steve.

Thanks also to **Rusty Murrell**. Rusty served as our VP-Publicity for most of this term, until he got sidetracked by a Java and C++ class which demanded too much of his time. Rusty realized he couldn't devote the time required to fulfill his duties as VP, so he respectfully resigned from his office. Don Helyer stepped in and has done a great job filling in the void on the Board. Thanks for caring, Don.

In the office of Secretary, **George Ruede** was a little anxious at first about assuming the duties, and expressed concerns about being able to handle the job. I told George I

thought he would be able to handle the job with no problem, and by George, he proved me right. George has done an excellent job as our Secretary this year and has always shown up for our Board meetings in excellent spirits and always willing to help out. I will miss seeing his smiling face at the Board meetings, and will miss the great stories George had about his working days as a civil engineer. Thanks for the memories, George.

Tom Waak (pronounced wok, right, Tom?) Has served as our treasurer for the past year and has always been another Rock of Gibraltar for the group. Tom always shows up for the meetings, and always seems to have an excellent grasp on every situation. He usually has a good suggestion for any problem the Board encounters. It is great to have a guy like Tom on the Board as he helps to keep my sanity on an even keel. Thanks for all your effort Tom. It has been a pleasure working with you.

Anne Johnson has served as our membership chairperson this year, and has had to get real familiar with Microsoft Access because we are always making new demands on her and her talent. Printing out labels for the newsletter or membership lists for the Board, we could always turn to Anne, and she always came through. Anne has also volunteered to head our Web Page SIG, which will demand even more of her time. Thanks for caring. Thanks for a job well done, Anne.

Continued on page 2

Quips N Tips

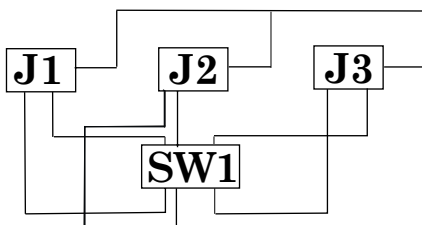
By Rick Howell

(Note: this column was written for last month's newsletter, but due to miscommunication, didn't get published.)

Last month, I promised you guys an explanation of a project I recently completed in my "spare" time. You will recall the topic of last month's meeting was Microsoft Netmeeting, a program which allows you to do videoconferencing over the internet. If you weren't there, you missed seeing my son's friendly face on the giant screen. Anyway, one of the problems I noticed with his system was the fact that if we wanted to plug in the headphones we had to go around to the back of the machine and unplug the speakers from the sound card and plug in the headphones. Now, this is not too hard for some people with fully accessible machines, but for those who are cramped for space and have their computer stashed under a desk or up on a shelf, sometimes it is hard to get to the back of the machine to start monkeying around with phono jacks. And, being the ingenuitive individual that I am, I wondered, "Why not have an A/B switch for the sound system too? Well, if you go to CompUSA or Best Buy, they will tell you they don't have such a critter. So, I says to meself, "Self, you can build one of these". And, I was right. Here's how you do it:

Step 1 PLANNING

Now, being a designer of high-tech aeroplanes and such, I believe that problems should be worked out on paper first, and projects should be thoroughly planned. So, as with any project involving work, I wanted to see just what I needed before I started, and, as I have access to some expensive CAD systems, I thought, "why not draw a schematic of the circuitry required for the project?" This is the schematic (See Fig. 1)



J1, J2, and J3 are standard stereo audio phone jacks, and Sw1 is a DPDT mini toggle switch. For the technically challenged, DPDT means double-pole double-throw, which means the switch actually switches two separate circuits simultaneously.

Step 2 PROCUREMENT

Now I'm a fan of Radio Shack. Here lately, though, they have been going through management changes and have tried to make all their stores alike. Unfortunately, every Radio Shack in the Mid-Cities area was out of catalogs when I was trying to plan this project. Luckily, Radio Shack has a really super website at www.RadioShack.com. Unfortunately, you can't order a catalog from the web site either. I got a little perturbed about this and e-mailed the webmaster. Two days later, I got two Radio Shack catalogs in my mailbox, sent by priority mail. Now, that's service. So I found the items I needed in the catalog. They are:

SW1 DPDT Mini Toggle Switch
Cat. No 275-663 List Price - \$3.59

J1, J2, J3 1/8" Phone Jacks (2 in pkg)
Cat. Number 274-249
List Price - \$1.99

Enclosure 2-13/16x3-13/16x1 Black
Number RSU11521267
List Price - \$4.59

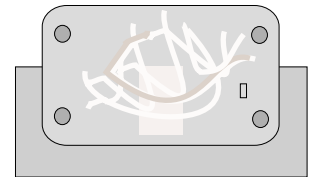
Hookup Wire 22gauge stranded
Cat. Number 278-1218
List Price \$3.99

Now, I had the wire laying around the house. I just included it here for anyone who is thinking about doing this project. The catalog number for the wire is for 90 feet of wire. For this project, you won't need more than about 30 inches of wire. If you don't already have a soldering iron and solder, you will need these tools as well. Radio Shack sells a beginning

soldering kit for \$7.99 (Cat. Number 64-2802). This even includes the solder. My total cost for this project was \$12.16 plus tax. (You have to buy two packages of phone jacks.)

Step 3 ASSEMBLY

Assembly is pretty easy if you have basic soldering skills. Cut eight pieces of wire in lengths of about three inches. Strip about a half inch of insulation off each end of each wire, and solder them to the jacks and switch in the arrangement shown in the schematic. Using a 1/4" drill bit, drill a hole in all four sides of the enclosure, and locate the hardware in the enclosure as shown in figure 2 below.



Step 4 INSTALLATION

You will need to purchase a jumper cable to connect the audio out jack on your sound card to the J2 jack on the back of the switch box. This is another item which you can purchase at Radio Shack. A six foot shielded audio cable (Cat. Number 42-2387) lists for \$3.99. Plug your headphones into J1 on the left, and your speakers onto J3 on the right. That's all there is to it.

I hope you will find this useful. You can vary this design by adding a 2nd circuit and switch for microphones, if you are using the integrated headphone/microphone units which are becoming popular, and you also have a desk microphone or monitor mounted microphone with it's own input cable. If you do decide to add the second circuit, you will probably need a larger enclosure, as the small one I used for this project was pretty crowded with speaker circuits. Projects like this are a lot of fun, especially when they work the first time you plug everything in.

See y'all at the meeting.

Hot Web Sites

By Rick Howell

Last month, we requested that y'all send in URLs that you find interesting or informative. One of our members, **Sheryllyn Roberts** sent these along. Hope you like them. I did.

a business information hot sheet
<http://www.allbusiness.com>

a "best of the web" reference librarian hot sheet
<http://www.digitallibrarian.com/>

better homes and garden home improvement encyclopedia: "Welcome to the web's richest source of home repair and improvement advice."
<http://www.bhglive.com/homeimp/docs/index.htm>

find an article online
<http://www.findarticles.com/>

airline phone numbers
<http://www.travelfinder.com/airlines.htm>

dictionary of difficult words
<http://www.lineone.net/dictionaryof/difficultwords/>

Drill-down of the day: the vehicle repair tool that repair shops and insurance adjusters use
<http://www.alldata.com/>

do-it-yourself alldata
http://www.alldata.com/vehicle_owner/

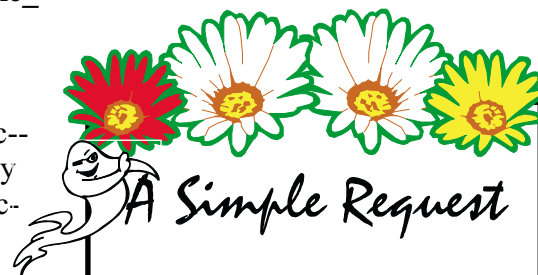
vehicle repair specs for your vehicle; better than chiltons, etc-- lists exploded parts view step by step and troubleshooting instructions for the entire vehicle (\$20.00)
<http://www.alldatadiy.com/>

tips for better milage
[Http://www.alldata.com/vehicle_owner/articles/better_mileage.html](http://www.alldata.com/vehicle_owner/articles/better_mileage.html)

recall section

<http://www.alldata.com/recalls/>

Thanks to Sheryllyn for sharing this valuable information with us. If you have an interesting web site, forward the URL to me at **rhowell@ticnet.com** and I'll see that it gets into the next newsletter.



The Board of Directors has passed a new rule whereby we are requesting that all cell phones and pagers be silenced during our meetings. If you receive a call, we request that you leave the meeting so as not to cause a disturbance for others who are trying to enjoy the program. We hope this will not inconvenience anyone greatly, but we feel it is a common courtesy to all. Thanks for your help and understanding.

President's Desk continued from page 1

Nancy Hester has been responsible for getting out the newsletter this past year, and has been doing a great job. She stepped in and reformatted our newsletter and took it all in stride with no complaints and put out an excellent newsletter. I know I caused her all kinds of problems with late articles and formatting problems and such, but through it all, she has put up with all my lame excuses and got the job done. Thanks Nancy. You are a great asset to the group.

Anthony Nagy has served this year in charge of our Steering Committee. These guys have some interesting ideas for the future of our group, and I really hope they can get these ideas implemented once I get the

heck outta their way. I hope we can turn 'em loose and let them turn the Metroplex upside down. I'm gonna stand back and see what happens. Anthony is truly concerned about the future of our group and I have been glad to have him around. Anthony brings a sense of urgency to our Board meetings and it will be needed if we are to continue as a group. Thanks for giving a damn, Anthony.

I am going to miss the Board meetings, and will miss leading our group. It has been a fun year, and I hope we can continue to meet at the Old Bedford School. This will only happen if we can continue to grow. Growth of the club has to be the number one priority of the upcoming

Board of Directors and should be the number one priority for all members of the group. If you want this group to continue to be here, and I think you all do, we have to continue to have funding for our great meeting place and for all the benefits we want to be able to provide. Growth is imperative!

My entire article has been in praise of my Board of Directors this past year, but I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have been coming to our meetings on a regular basis, and even those who have been unable to attend but still maintain their memberships. You are a great bunch of people and it has been a wonderful year for me. Thanks for letting me be your President.

THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

The Mid-Cities PC Users' Group is a not for-profit organization whose objectives are:

- * to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience,
- * education in the form of seminars and programs, and
- * community as pertains to the computer industry.

Annual membership is \$24.00 per family with one vote per membership. Members are encouraged to notify the Membership Chairperson of any change of address as soon as possible to continue receiving their monthly newsletter. Please address any notifications to: Mid-Cities PC Users' Group: Attn. Membership Chair, P.O. Box 54141, Hurst, TX 76054

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Payment: required with 1st ad copy.

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THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP NEWSLETTER

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CONTRIBUTING ARTICLES

Article Style: Type all copy flush left without justification; use word wrap feature for your paragraphs. This includes headings, by-lines, and the first line of each paragraph. Place a credit by-line (author's name) between the title and first paragraph. Leave no blank lines between paragraphs. Use only one space between sentences.

File Formats: Word Perfect 5.0 is preferred. If formatting is crucial and you do not have access to Word Perfect 5.0 or Microsoft Word, send a hard copy to show the layout.

Submitting Articles: You may use one of two methods. Uploading the article to Nancy Hester at nancyhesterusa@netscape.net or you can hand them to her on diskette (3.5" preferred) during the general membership meetings.



Thanks a lot!

Deadline: The last Friday of the month prior to intended publication.

Advertising Rates:

7½ in. x 9 in.	Full Page	\$40.00
7½ in. x 4 in.	Half Page	\$20.00
3¾ in. x 4¼ in.	Quarter Page	\$12.50
3½ in. x 2 in. Business Card		\$5.50

Discounts: 3 months = 5%; 6 months = 10%. 1st month full price, discount applies to months thereafter.

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