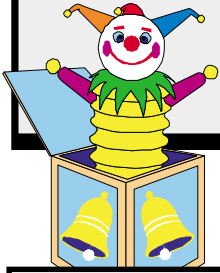


MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

December 2000 Newsletter



MEETING NOTICE

by: George Miner

When: Tuesday, December 12th,
7:15 PM

Where: Old Bedford School (1800
block of Bedford Road)

Program: Our speaker for December will be Mr. Matthew Stevens, representing the DFWPUG (Dallas Fort Worth Palm Users Group). He is also a Hardware Manager for Handango, a local retailer of handheld computing devices. Matthew will bring a variety of hand held devices for display and discuss the pros and cons of each.

We will also discuss plans for a club Christmas party which we will be having on Saturday, December 16th at 7:00 - 9:30 PM. Members and their spouses should plan to attend for an evening of good fun, great food and holiday festivities! Come to the meeting and find out all the details and receive a map to the location.



Quips N Tips

by Rick Howell

In the "should have known" category this month goes CueCat. Do you really expect to get something for free....DUH? Now I discover that every time I use this little critter, a unique serial number is transmitted with the scan, thereby allowing somebody somewhere to keep track of what I request information on and when I do it. Don't get me wrong guys, this type of covert subversive action pisses me off! So, what can I do about it, you say. I like my little kitty and it sure makes information gathering easy. OK you whining cat lovers, there is a way around everything, and sho 'nuff, there's a way to spy this little kitty too.

Go to www.air-soldier.com/~cuecat for step-by-step photos that show how to disable this telltale feature on your kitty. There are also several other web sites which contain information on how to make your CueCat do a lot more than it was originally intended to do. Hey, if you've got it hooked up, you might as well learn to make the most of it. Like everything else on computers these days, hackers have found ways to make the CueCat more than the average mouser. Check out www.flyingbuttmonkeys.com (yep, it's a real web site!) for a graphical interface for Linux which lets you use the CueCat to scan CDs, books, and groceries. The program gathers product information and pictures from various web sites and assigns the data to a personal inventory database. Readerware is a Java-based program which looks up ISBN numbers at various libraries, then downloads the information into a database automatically. Readerware is

available at www.readerware.com. For other CueCat hacks, visit www.666pack.org/cuecat.

This column is starting to look like the favorite web site articles I have been submitting for the past couple of months. From now on, I am not going to be writing that article, hoping that someone will take up the slack for me and continue to publish a listing of favorite web sites. Any volunteers out there?

Some of you may have heard of shopping "bots". Shopping bots are intelligent agents which search thousands of web sites for the best price on a particular item, and can return the results in a matter of seconds. Why make your fingers do the walking when a computer can do it for you? Many of you are familiar with www.mysimon.com which is one of the industry's leading shopping bots. But, there are several others out there which can increase your chances for finding the best deal in cyberspace. Give them a try and let us know your results. They are:

www.bottomdollar.com
www.compareitall.com
www.dealtime.com
www.jango.com
www.nextag.com
www.storerunner.com



Hey, if it's available, use it. The small amount of time involved could result in big savings!

Ok, a couple of months ago, we

Continued on next page

Great Sites for Perusing

By Sherylynn Roberts

Here is a short list of sites for conversation, kids, family surfing, or playing with the computer during the holidays:

<http://www.minerals.net/>

"The Mineral and Gemstone Kingdom: Complete information guide to Rocks, Minerals and Gemstones"

This site has pictures, a glossary, hardness tables, uses, myths, and books on each kind of stone. Who knows what a bookmark for your list to Santa might do?

<http://tapestry.wr.usgs.gov/>

"A Tapestry of Time and Terrain: The union of Two Maps- Geology and Topography"

Short and sweet.

<http://www.fuzzylu.com/docs/home.htm>

"Fuzzylu's Internet Playpen"

a little wordy, but an easy, witty way to help grandma, the neighbor with a new pc, or even yourself learn about the Internet. It has several levels of tutorial.

<http://www.apps.com/>

A different software site-- for those who have mined the usual sites like www.tucows.com and www.download.com

<http://www.editplus.com/>

A good shareware editor recommended as an enhanced "notepad".

<http://www.ghosttowns.com/>

"Ghost Towns and History of the American West"

Do some exploring from the armchair or the driver's seat.

<http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Victorian.html>

"Victorian Web Sites"

a huge collection of sites, scholars, and other info from an English department in Japan.

Check out links at the bottom of the

page such as:

"Mr. Weller's Knowledge of London", and "Japan, my Japan", which are loaded with maps, pictures, culture, and items of interest.

<http://www.centuryinshoes.com/intro.html>

"The Century in Shoes" an interesting collection; the reason for the project:

<http://www.centuryinshoes.com/about/about.html>

<http://www.otn.net/onthenet/travel/convert.htm>

"The Universal Currency Converter™"

How much are those lira, renmimbi, pesetas, and baht you've got stowed in the sock drawer worth now anyway??

<http://www.travlang.com/>

"Travel & Language Supersite"

"Foreign Languages for Travelers | Translating Dictionaries | Currency Exchange Rates | Hotel Database..."

They don't list "texan", so you'll have to be patient with those Christmas relatives from up north...

<http://www.bettycrocker.com/>

recipes, shopping lists and more.

<http://www.recipecenter.com/>

100,000 recipes. Type in an ingredient or a dish to find a selection of recipes.

<http://www.beritsbest.com/>

"Berit's Best Sites for Children"

1000 sites for kids. Surf up some pages for holiday family time or little ones' activities.

<http://www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/home.asp>

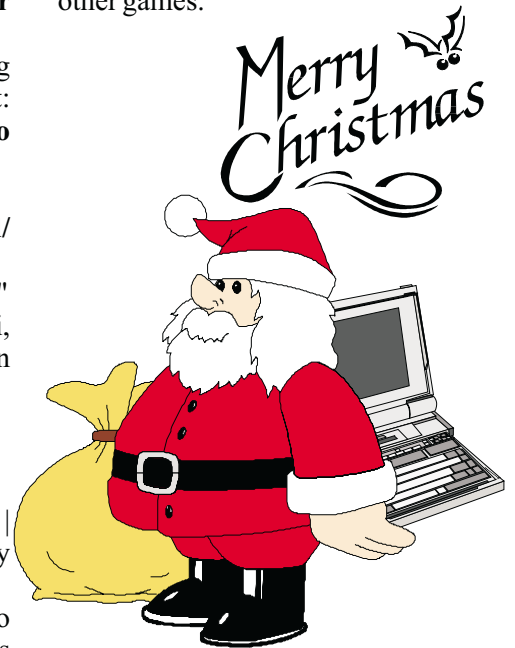
"How many questions can you get right in a row? The game goes until you get a question wrong. After you play, you can challenge a friend to beat your score. your score."

<http://www.research.att.com/~njas/sequences/>

"Sloane's On-Line Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences"

For those who want the deeper topics...

<http://www.3dcrossword.com/> more wordplay, sponsored by popup ads. The "realguide" link also has other games.



Quips *Continued from Page 1*

went through the CueCat craze because it was free (or so we thought). Another so-called "free" device is available to everyone now. How about a free Internet keyboard? At least these guys are up front about how they are offering the keyboard for free. There are 18 dedicated Internet keys labeled with categories such as e-mail, entertainment, shopping, etc. These keys are pre-programmed to take you to one of 17 pre-defined Internet addresses on the web. The keyboard manufacturer takes royalties from the web sites to defray the cost of the keyboard. I like this idea, primarily because they are up front about letting us know how they are able to do the deal. The keyboard comes with an additional user-programmable key that you can use any way you like. For more info, log on to www.rocketboard.com. See y'all at the meeting.

TALK TO THE HAND

By Rick Broida from Yahoo Internet Life

My name is Palm and these are my favorite downloads

Though it's barely four years old, to millions of users the Palm handheld is more than an organizer: It's enlightenment. We've tossed our little black books and notepads. Said sayonara to planners crammed with business cards and Post-it. Our Palm gives us instant access to phone numbers, e-mail, memos, and a calendar. It's the glue that holds our lives together in the digital age.

There's much more to the Palm -- and its cousins, from companies including Handspring and Sony -- than just names and dates. Web sites like *Handango* and *PalmGear H.Q.* are home to thousands of Palm programs -- some practical (exercise planners), some fun (travel guides), and many free (film schedules, for starters). Play the piano? You can turn your Palm into a tuner or metronome. Artistic? Try a download that turns it into a sketch pad. As with so much else in the digital age, suddenly we're confronted with almost too many options. Here are 10 top choices.

News you can use

You can snap a modem onto your Palm and connect straight to the Net, but once you've checked reality, you'll realize that Web pages don't belong on its small screen. Enter *AvantGo*, a free service that delivers Web-based content to your Palm and formats it so that it's quite readable. Each time you sync your Palm to your PC, *AvantGo* downloads your preselected channels -- whether The Wall Street Journal or Fox Sports or the Weather Channel -- using your computer to fetch the data from the Net. Choose your content. But if you're late for the bus, skip syncing -- it can take several minutes to download your morning reading. Size: 307K plus space for content

The Little Picture Show

Get that stack of tattered family

photos out of your wallet and into your Palm. *Album To Go*, a picture viewer that's an offshoot of the photo album service Club Photo, lets you store and view as many snapshots as your Palm has memory for. The resolution is limited, and obviously a color Palm makes for a better electronic album than a monochrome model, but we know you'll look swell in black and white. Size: 52K (45K for color) plus photos

Must. Shop. Now.

Which is more truly impressive: an even-faster computer chip, or the ability to shop from your toilet seat? Enough said. Amazon.com: Anywhere is a download that works with the wireless Palm VII. You can buy books, music, toys, tools -- pretty much anything Amazon sells, except new cars -- from practically wherever you might be sitting. You can also get personal recommendations and monitor online auctions. Size: 13K

No more "shortcuts"

Who likes to ask for directions? Not us. Find the route to your destination and avoid getting lost in the first place with *Quo Vadis*, which provides street-level maps for the United States and its territories. Most of the maps include not only street names but also points of interest such as airports, hospitals, and golf courses. What's more, the software works with GPS receivers -- such as the Rand McNally StreetFinder -- that attach to the Palm, so you can pinpoint your precise location on any given map. Size: 137K plus maps

Meet the Sims

Classic games never die -- they just get smaller. Witness the revival of *SimCity*, reproduced in perfect detail for the Palm. Build a city from the ground up, manage everything from traffic to taxes, and try to keep those pesky little Sim-citizens happy. The game looks and plays exactly like the original, right down to the skyscrapers, power plants, and natural disasters.

Couch Potato Nirvana

You can spend hundreds of dollars on a high-tech universal remote, but *Omni-Remote* is a \$20 download that turns your Palm into the same thing. The software learns commands from your existing infrared remotes; it can then be used to control everything from your TV to your CD player. You can design your own button layouts, create buttons that perform multiple functions (TV off, stereo on, for example), and even set timers to turn things on or off at specific times. One caveat: The Palm's remote control ranges from 2 feet to 25 feet. Size: 47K

Book of Dreams

Problem: Books are heavy. And bulky. Solution: Peanut Reader, a free document viewer that lets you read works sold at **Peanutpress.com**, plus thousands of public-domain files available at sites such as *MemoWare*. The selection of works by prominent authors is limited but growing: Titles include an Elmore Leonard and the latest by Robert Ludlum. Or download a wider range of lit, ranging from Alcott and the Brontës to Mark Twain and Oscar Wilde. Peanut Reader lets you search through text, add annotations, and read hands-free with TelePrompTer-like autoscrolling. Size: 96K

No Massage Parlor Listings?

One of the better-known Palm programs, *Vindigo* provides dining, shopping, and leisure information for five major cities (Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.), with more to come. Size: About 500K

Creative Accounting

You expensed your Palm as a business purchase. Justify the outlay with *LandWare's Pocket Quicken*, which will help you get your finances in order, whether you need to file expenses for work or just want to figure out where your paycheck goes. *Rick Broida is the coauthor of How to Do Everything With Your Palm Handheld.*

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

2000/01 OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

President	Steve Turner (817) 457-7131 Stevent@compuserve.com
VP Programs	George Miner (817) 292-3965 grminer@mindspring.com
VP Publicity	Don Helyer (817) 318-8475 dohelyer@home.com
Secretary	Sheryllynn Roberts (817) 531-7208 sheryln@email.com
Treasurer	Tom Waak (817) 281-8950 tomwaak@zdnetai.com
Newsletter Ed.	Nancy Hester (817) 496-1961 nancyhesterusa@netscape.net
Member Chair	Anne Johnson (817) 268-6411 Annj@ti.com

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 nancyhesterus@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.

Payment: required with 1st ad copy.

Mid-Cities PC Users' Group
PO Box 54141
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