



Midland  
Computer  
Club

# BITS AND BYTES

February 2011

Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

## GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

4th Wednesday of the month at the  
Midland Community Center  
2001 George St., Midland, MI

**This month's date:**  
February 23, 2011

**This month's topic:**  
System Utilities—investigate and  
troubleshoot your computer for free -  
Howard Lewis

**What you missed!**  
January meeting:  
Protecting yourself on-line and off (Part 1):  
Basic Overview of Scams and Social Engineering  
and  
Keeping your Computer Software Updated:  
Why and how to update some common software  
programs.

**Upcoming Activities:**  
March meeting: Representative from Grace A Dow  
Memorial Library will discuss eBooks, Audio Books  
and the future of print.

**Program Coordinators**  
Howard Lewis                    lewis3ha@chartermi.net  
Bill Tower                        stressed@tir.com

Please let Howard or Bill know of topics you would  
like covered at future meetings.

## President Piper's Ponderings

"May you live in exciting  
times". Call it a proverb or a curse  
depending upon your viewpoint. With  
our 24/7 access to information, news  
and chatter, one might conclude that  
every day is an exciting time.



But I submit we have just experienced an exciting time in  
our mutual interest of what we call 'computer  
technology'. I offer as evidence three recent items:  
1-Mark Zuckerberg is named Time's Man of the Year,  
2-Zuckerberg's innovation, Facebook, is changing the  
way we interact on a social, political and international  
basis, and 3-IBM's Watson defeats the human race in a  
trivia contest on *Jeopardy*.

Now I am a collector of trivial dates, so Watson's  
conquest on 16-Feb-2011, goes down in my book along  
with 11-May-1996, when Deep Blue defeated Gary  
Kasparov in chess, 26-Dec-1982 when the PC was named  
'Man' of the year, along with the first sale of the Apple II  
on 10-June-1977 and the iPod on 23-Oct-2001.

I was fascinated by the movies which melded the human-  
computer interface: 1968-2001 A Space Odyssey,  
1977-Demon Seed, 1979-Star Trek The Motion Picture  
(staring Vger) and 1996-Star Trek: First Contact (staring  
the Borg).

Now along comes Time magazine this week with a cover  
article that proclaims 2045 as the year computers surpass  
the human race. The piece is a rehash of futurists  
predictions, most notably Ray Kurzweil. The article is  
about artificial intelligence and how its growth is related  
to the exponential growth rate of computational power,  
and when that power will exceed the capacity of not only  
a single human being, but the entire human race. Of  
course making projections—like when Social Security

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**(President Piper’s Ponderings—con’t)**

runs out of money or when the earth runs out of natural resources—can be twisted by one’s initial assumptions, which makes for a good argument.

Already Watson is being put forth as a medical diagnostician, with its ability to take in random facts about a patient and access the latest technology. The human-computer interaction topic makes for good reading, offers some deep philosophical consequences and at the very least will provide some excuse on why you find it hard to keep up with the fast pace of modern technology.

*(The above comments are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Computer Club.)*

**Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites:**

<http://tinyurl.com/25585vn>

By the end of 2011, the world’s population is expected to reach seven billion. This National Geographic video puts that number in perspective.

<http://tinyurl.com/2edbf6g>

If you know someone who texts and drives, you might want to MAKE them watch this video from AT&T on texting and driving.

[www.digitaltips.org/green](http://www.digitaltips.org/green)

If you have some electronic gadgets you would like to get rid of, go to this website and find a local recycling location.

**Board Meeting**

Next board meeting will be  
 7 p.m., March 8, 2011, at  
 Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church,  
 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland MI

**Membership Enrollment Form**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues FAMILY (\$20) STUDENT (\$15) New Member \_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_

*Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :*

**MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB**  
 P.O. Box 132  
 Midland, MI 48640-0132

**Attn: Membership Chairman**

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

## Tips, Tricks & Techniques:

### Moving the My Documents Folder In Windows 7

On a Windows computer, each user has a folder called **My Documents**. With a standard Windows installation, this folder is stored at `c:\User\<username>`. However, in Windows 7 it is easy to move your **My Documents** folder to another location (a different partition or drive) if desired.

To move the **My Documents** folder in Windows 7:

Open *Windows Explorer*.

*Right-click My Documents* and select *Properties*.

In the **My Documents Properties** dialog box, click the *Location* tab.

Click the *Move* button and browse to the location where you want to store **My Documents** and click *OK* twice.

When the **Move Documents** dialog box appears, click *Yes*.

This will move your documents from your standard **My Documents** location to a location that may be more suitable for your situation.

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## **Installing Windows 7 on an XP computer (if I can do it, you can do it!)**

***Nancy Wallace – Sarasota PC Users Group***

I have a 2006 Dell laptop (32-bit) with an 80 GB hard drive and 1 GB of RAM. I have just successfully installed Windows 7 on this computer with a few glitches which I managed to resolve.

Following Microsoft's advice, I downloaded and installed the free "Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor Setup". The Advisor "... scans your PC for potential issues with your hardware, devices, and installed programs, and recommends what to do before you upgrade". I attached all my peripherals and ran the Advisor. To my surprise, it told me to proceed – no immediate impediments in sight (I had expected to find that I didn't have enough space and RAM).

Next I backed up all my data files and programs using Microsoft's "Windows Easy Transfer for transferring from Windows XP (32 bit) to Windows 7"; I stored this backup file on an external drive.

Then I began the Windows 7 Install – no problems. I downloaded the latest AVG virus protection program and began to install Microsoft Office Professional 2007. Half way through the installation it stopped and told me I had run out of space. When the Windows 7 installation begins it stores all of your data files and programs in a Windows.old file on the hard drive. Since I didn't plan to try to recover my old XP environment, I was able to delete that file and gained about 13 GB in the process. Then I was able to restart the Office installation. No problems.

I soon discovered that my Dell Printer (924, all-in-one) needed a new driver for Windows 7 and there is none available. However, I found that I could download a Vista driver for this printer, run it in compatibility mode, and it worked just fine (\_g11AWeb32924EN.exe – I found this info in a Dell Forum).

I continued to re-install all my other programs - Quicken, WinZip, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Reader, Skype and Quilt Pro.

My Quilt Pro is a 1995 version and its Help file is written in HLP format. Microsoft no longer supports this format but provides a free HLP compatibility module which I downloaded without any trouble (WinHlp32.exe). As I continue to use this program, I am encountering more and more "compatibility" issues – always related to storing and updating files. So I've decided it's time to upgrade to a Windows 7 compatible version.

Whenever I open Adobe Photoshop Elements 4, I get the message: "This program has known compatibility issues". When I "check for solutions online", it doesn't find any. However, it seems to work OK – so far, so good.

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*(Installing Windows 7 on an XP Computer - continued from page 4)*

With Quicken I found I had to re-register my Bank and Credit Card company info before I could begin the Online Transfer functions – no problems there.

End result, my computer capacity is 70 GB – I now have 40 GB used and 30GB free. So, it looks like I don't need to buy a larger computer after all – yippee!

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## **Movie Making - at home for fun (not really for profit)**

*by Phil Sorrentino – Sarasota PC Users Group ([www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org))*

Movie making has become possible for anyone who has a digital camera, a reasonably capable computer, and lots and lots of time, with an emphasis on the time. I'm not talking about full feature length movies that could be shown in your local movie theater, but rather movies that document an occasion or activity, using pictures, videos and music. Just look at Youtube to see how many movies (videos) are available for all sorts of reasons like entertainment, education, and "how to (accomplish something)". Youtube makes finding and watching movies possible. Movie Maker and your digital camera make creating movies possible. I am using Movie Maker as an example because everyone who has the Windows Operating System, from XP on to Windows 7, has a version available to them, at no extra cost. Many other applications can accomplish the same task. Some have many more features and some are more sophisticated, but usually at a price, starting around \$60. Among these applications are Corel Video Studio Pro, Adobe Presentation Elements, Photodex Proshow Gold, Pinnacle Studio, Sony Vegas Movie Studio, and CyberLink Power Director. There are even some free applications available for download, like Video Spin, Avid FreeDV, and Wax, none of which I have tried.

Movie Maker and most of the other applications mentioned above provide all the basic tools for assembling and organizing your pictures, videos and music into a movie. The movie can be composed of pictures only, videos only, pictures and videos, or more typically pictures, videos and music together. The formats of the pictures, videos and music must be those that Movie Maker accepts. (There are some small differences between versions for XP, Vista, and Windows 7.) Pictures must be .jpg, .bmp, or gif. Videos must be .avi or .wmv (Windows 7 will also accept .mov). Music must be .mp3, .wav, or .wma. The pictures and videos are usually put into a time sequence, or timeline, and then the music is added as one or multiple audio tracks. (Movie Maker supports only one audio track, which can be used for music or voice-over. You may be able to play some tricks to implement two tracks, but if you need more than one audio track you would be better off using one of the other applications that easily support multiple audio tracks.) The audio track can then be added to the picture and video timeline. Music or voice-over can be intermixed as components of the total audio track. Integrating voice-overs and music, while timing the voice-over with the picture sequence can sometimes become a real challenge, but it is usually worth the effort.

Here are some basic steps for producing a movie with Movie Maker. Gather all the pictures and videos you need for the movie. Bring along more than you think you might need because it is very easy to eliminate pictures and videos if you have too many for your desired audience.

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*(Movie Making at Home - continued from page 5)*

Actually, it is good to have the desired audience and a target time in mind before you start to create the movie. Not everyone might want to see 65 minutes of your California Vacation, though some close friends might make an effort to stay awake. Brevity is sometimes the best policy, but that is up to you, the director. So, for some movies you might target only 10 or 15 minutes, while some others maybe 30 or 40 minutes, where you know your audience wants to savor every last detail. Given that you have a target time in mind and you have more than enough pictures and videos to fill that time, (and probably a little more), and some music identified to go along with the pictures, fire up Movie Maker. Different versions of Music Maker will look different because of the Operating System that it is built for, but all will provide the basic movie making functionality. All Movie Maker home screens will provide a set of tools or tasks, a collection area where you can add pictures, videos, and music, a preview area, and a timeline.

There are many ways you can approach the general task of making a movie. You, as director, can certainly approach this in any way that makes the most sense to you. After creating a few movies, I have settled on the following sequence of events.

The first activity to accomplish is to add all your pictures to the collection area. It is probably best if you have copied all the pictures, videos, and music into one folder for use with Movie Maker, making things easy to find.

Next is to move the pictures on to the timeline. If your pictures are in the proper sequence for your movie, you are done with the pictures, but that is not typically the case, so drag-and-drop the pictures around the timeline so that the sequence tells the story that you want told.

Once the pictures are in the proper sequence, go back to your source folder and get the videos. Place the videos in the sequence of pictures so that they support the story being told by the picture sequence. I have found that short videos, maybe around 15 seconds have a good impact, but sometimes a very long video is necessary.

Once the videos have been sprinkled around the movie, it is time to see if you are approaching your target time. I know this is a hard thing to do, but if you are above your time by a lot (maybe 10% or more), it is time to pare back some of the pictures or videos, (or change your target time).

Once you have the sequence of pictures and videos that tell the story, it is time to add effects and transitions. Effects are animations that can be added to pictures (and videos, although sometimes effects on top of videos are distracting, but that is a judgment call, to be made by you, the director). Effects basically add motion to still pictures, almost like turning a picture into a short video. These effects are sometimes called "Ken Burns Effects", named after the person who made them popular. Transitions are the way one picture morphs into the next, maybe a page turn, or a wipe, or a dissolve. Transitions can be added to both pictures and videos. Use the fancy transitions sparingly; they can be very distracting if over used. Every once in a while, preview the movie or at least sections of it to guarantee that the transitions and effects are adding to the story, rather than adding distractions; again, it's your call.

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*((Movie Making at Home - continued from page 6))*

Now it's time for the music. Add the music to the collection and then add it to the timeline to go along with the sequence of pictures and videos. The music should help tell the story and add to the overall multimedia experience. Try not to use music that distracts from the story being told by the pictures and videos. Music should probably go from beginning to end, so you may need a few music selections, depending on the length of the music selections and the length of the movie. Typically, music selections are about 3 to 4 minutes long, so for a 15 minute movie, you might need from 4 to 6 selections for the complete movie. (Voice-overs can be any length you so desire.)

Now that you see the process and some of the details, if you feel that you don't have enough control over the process or would like some other features, you might make a note to look into one of the more capable movie creating applications when you get a chance.

The last thing in creating the movie is to add a title, although many directors might do this first, and a credits frame at the end. The title introduces the movie, and the credits give credit to whomever you feel should be mentioned or thanked, like the cameramen, participants, and a mention of the music if it is copy-righted music.

The really last thing is to Publish your movie. Publish it to a .wmv file and review it. If it is not just perfect, make the appropriate changes and re-publish it to a .wmv file. Once it is just what you want, and you have Vista or Windows 7, publish it to DVD, which will create a DVD that will play on any living room DVD player. When that is finished, invite the audience, pop the popcorn, distribute the drinks and lean back and enjoy the applause.

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## **Negotiating Slick Deals with Your Cable Company**

*By Gabe Goldberg*

For some people, their cable company is "the company they love to hate". Most folks just accept the cable company for what it is, a semi-regulated utility providing useful or necessary services. And the remainder -- often to the mystification of the first group -- just love their company, even singing its praises when cable service is discussed.

To make sense of this variation, remember that cable service is generally provided by regional monopolies, with territories granted by local governments, so features, customer services, and costs indeed vary widely. And even one company's characteristics can vary with geography, depending on factors such as local management, franchise arrangements and fees, and infrastructure age and quality.

As early as possible in this process, request your free credit reports and ensure that you're shown as being financially responsible, with all account payments up-to-date. Felicia Blow, Cox Cable's Director of Public Affairs, notes that the better a credit history is, "the more flexibility Cox has in avoiding the customer having to pay deposits and the like to get or restore service".

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*(Negotiating Slick Deals with your Cable Company - continued from page 7)*

But separate from everything else is the need to negotiate effectively with the company, whether establishing new service, changing what's provided, or simply haggling for a better deal.

So, prior to any conversation or transaction, do your homework. Understand everything you'll need to consider and perhaps mention: competition to cable services in your area (satellite and over-the-air TV, phone company DSL or FiOS, cell phone service), services offered, service levels (e.g., Internet connection speeds, TV channel bundles), features (telephone caller-id, voicemail, speed dialing, three-way calling, etc.), list prices, bundle discounts, and current or recent promotions offered.

This is complicated enough that you want to get it right, selecting no more or less than what you need and want, while paying the best price possible. So start with a list (or, better, a spreadsheet) showing what to discuss, each item's relative importance to you, the cable company's quoted price, and any available bundles or promotions.

Just as a retired couple likely doesn't need a seven-passenger SUV and a young singleton won't rent a McMansion, don't get carried away by glittering features and services. Cox's Blow suggests remembering your "station in life" before ordering the fastest Internet connection if you'll just send email and do light Web surfing, though if you have far-flung family, a generous phone package might ultimately save money.

Similarly, a killer online gamer might go for blazing DOCSIS 3.0 Internet bandwidth and skip phone service entirely, depending on cell phone connectivity.

Bundles -- combination service packages costing less than the sum of their individual components -- can save or waste money. Think carefully about whether it's worth spending more money to save some, or whether better value comes from mixing-and-matching bits from multiple providers.

Consider freebies offered but remember that they only have value if they're useful. Internet services may include spam filtering, security tools, parental controls, anti-virus, anti-spyware, etc., but compare their quality to other free and fee tools to ensure that you're getting best of breed. If you won't use them, don't let a cable rep seduce you into paying premium prices because they're included.

You'll likely be offered prepaid protection for inside cable facilities. Unless you're aware of problems, it's usually best to decline this -- it's essentially overpriced insurance against rare problems with cable wiring. The company is responsible for connectivity to your dwelling's main termination, and will usually address (Internet, TV, phone) signal quality issues at no cost. But check with neighbors regarding company service and fee policies regarding inside work. Once you're a customer, you're not done chatting with your CableCo. Don't suffer service problems or billing issues silently, or just gripe to friends and neighbors. Cable companies understand they've had public relations problems and work to be better liked. Online services such as real-time customer service chats may resolve problems at 3 am. And some companies have online monitors watching for complaints in forums and on Twitter.

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*((Negotiating Slick Deals with your Cable Company - continued from page 8))*

Even satisfied customers benefit from occasionally evaluating services and adding/deleting features, and calling to request lower prices can cut monthly bills. This can involve citing competitive services – for example, if your neighborhood has just been wired for FiOS with promotional rates offered, you can threaten to terminate service unless the lower price is matched.

Make this more credible by mentioning that you're not tied to CableCo email addresses; note that you use Webmail service accessible through any ISP or that you have your own domain (both of which are good practices to avoid having to change email addresses when moving from one company's territory to another!). If you've suffered problems or outages, suggest that it's only fair for you to be compensated by lower rates.

You may be required to commit to service for some period in order to have fees reduced. One customer reduced his monthly Internet cost \$20, to \$29.99, while getting about 30Mbps download and 3.5Mbps upload speeds -- hardly shabby, and worth agreeing to stick around for a year. If you're content to remain a customer and don't expect to move soon, that's a good bargain. Of course, watch the calendar and haggle again if your rate ever increases. Finally, if you work with a competent and helpful rep -- whether for initial orders, account changes, service or billing issues -- ask for direct contact information, both telephone number and email address.

It's immensely helpful having continuity in dealing with normally faceless businesses, and service providers increasingly recognize how much personal service improves customer satisfaction. Not all companies or reps provide this, but -- as with everything else this article suggests -- it can't hurt to ask.

*Gabe Goldberg has developed, worked with, and written about technology for decades. This article appeared originally on the slickdeals.net Web site, <<http://slickdeals.net/>>. (c) Gabriel Goldberg 2010. Permission is granted for reprinting and distribution by non-profit organizations with text reproduced unchanged and this paragraph included.*

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## **Save Money Grocery Shopping with Online E-Coupons**

*by Ira Wilsker*

### **WEBSITES:**

<http://shortcuts.com>

<http://www.cellfire.com>

<http://www.kroger.com>

[http://www.softcoin.com/Sites/Kroger\\_ECoupons/Page/HomePage/Retailer/Kroger](http://www.softcoin.com/Sites/Kroger_ECoupons/Page/HomePage/Retailer/Kroger)

Just like all other families, my family buys a lot of groceries. Between us humans, the dog, and the cats, we easily spend hundreds of dollars a month on groceries and related household needs. Considering the increase in commodity prices that have been driving up grocery prices, as well as tight budgets influenced by prevailing economic conditions, we seem to use more coupons at the supermarket than in the past. Traditionally, our primary sources of grocery

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*(Save Money on Grocery Shopping with Online Coupons - continued from page 9)*

coupons have been the coupon supplements in the Sunday paper, and the weekly coupons that arrive in the mail almost every Wednesday. While paper coupons are distributed nationally by the billions, we consumers must clip them, sort them, plan to use them prior to their respective expiration dates, and try to remember to bring them to the store in the first place. What I have found especially convenient and useful are some websites that can digitally load coupons to my store shoppers' card, or even my cell phone, for use at the register without the need to cut and carry a bulging envelope of coupons to the store.

Many, but not all, of the major supermarket chains now use some type of digital shoppers' card which the shopper has scanned during the checkout process. Almost all of the stores that do utilize such a card now have a process in place where digital coupons can be added to the card and automatically credited at the checkout without the need to present a paper coupon, the value of the coupon being automatically credited at the register. Locally, the only supermarket offering this service is Kroger, but in this region other stores that utilize these digital "e-coupons" include Randall's, Tom Thumb, Safeway, and a few others. Around the country, some of the other chains that participate in the e-coupon program are Von's, Ralph's, Fred Meyer, Fry's (the supermarket, not the electronics store), and many others.

To have the e-coupons added to the store card is a very easy process to perform online. The first digital coupon service that I used was AOL's ShortCuts.com ([shortcuts.com](http://shortcuts.com)). Registration was free and very easy, and I registered my shopper's card at the website. As I type this, there are about 50 e-coupons listed that I have not previously selected, most of them in the 50 cent to \$1 range, all for name-brand grocery items. To get any or all of those coupons added to a card, all one needs to do is click on the "+ ADD" button adjacent to the item, and the coupon is added to the card; this process being repeated until all desired coupons are added to the card. The expiration date of each e-coupon is clearly displayed, and as a reminder a shopping list containing the coupons can be printed. Upon checkout at the store, when the eligible item is scanned, the coupon value is applied. Depending upon the store, the coupon credits are either listed adjacent to the item when scanned, or displayed on a list at the bottom of the receipt. While these e-coupons are extremely convenient, they are usually only good on a single item (unless a quantity purchase is required for redemption), and they are typically not doubled in those stores that multiply low value coupons. ShortCuts.com also offers a selection of printable coupons that can be redeemed wherever coupons are accepted. The printable coupons can be printed individually or in sheets need to be clipped, just like the newspaper coupons. ShortCuts.com utilizes a Java utility to print the coupons, so Java must be installed and active on the computer in order to print the paper coupons. By choice, I elected to receive a weekly email from ShortCuts.com which displays the week's new coupons, which can be easily added to my card. Expired coupons are transparently deleted from the card, such that only valid and current e-coupons are available.

There is another provider of e-coupons that I use regularly, and that is Cellfire at [www.cellfire.com](http://www.cellfire.com). Registration is very simple, but requires the use of a cell phone number as a user name, and the password is the year of birth. On Cellfire, e-coupons can be selected online

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*(Save Money on Grocery Shopping with Online Coupons - continued from page 10)*

and added to the registered store card, or can be accessed by cell phone, without the need for a computer. Apps are available for iPhones, Blackberry devices, Android phones, and devices using Windows Mobile. According to Cellfire, "Go to [www.cellfire.com](http://www.cellfire.com) from your mobile phone and we'll automatically detect your phone type and provide instructions on how to access our service." With a compatible phone, coupons can be selected and added to the card just as they are from the computer. E-coupons from Cellfire are redeemed exactly the same as e-coupons from other services. What is different about Cellfire is the smart phone apps, as well as the ability to create some merchandise and services digital coupons on almost any cell phone that can receive digital images as text messages. Unlike e-coupons on a grocery shoppers' card, Cellfire can use any of the smart phone apps listed above, or users can access a mobile version of Cellfire from any internet capable cell phone. In addition to the grocery coupons on the shopper's card, Cellfire can display digital coupons on the phone screen for use at retail stores and service businesses. Right now in my neighborhood, the only participating retailer is Sears Photo Studio, where a variety of coupons can be displayed on the cell phone and scanned by the cashier to get the listed discount.

Several of the supermarket chains now offer their own online e-coupons that can be added to the shopper's card. In my neighborhood, Kroger offers this service on its "Plus Card" from the Kroger.com website, linking to a service called "Softcoin". Kroger will allow up to 150 coupons to be active at any time on its Plus Card. To select an e-coupon, the user simply checks the box adjacent to the coupon, and once all desired e-coupons are selected, the user clicks on "Load Coupons to Card". Clicking on the "My Coupons" link will display all of the selected coupons, and this can be used to produce a "printer friendly" shopping list. While these coupons are not multiplied when redeemed, they are extremely convenient to use, as there is no required user intervention other than having the Plus Card scanned at checkout, and the values are automatically credited.

E-coupons in their several varieties are extremely easy to use, and are more efficient for both the shopper and the store, as there are no paper coupons to clip, carry, sort, and count. One of the e-coupon services above shows that I have redeemed over \$70 in its e-coupons in the past year, many of which I may not have used if they were paper coupons. As more and more businesses use some type of shoppers' card, I would expect to see a wider use of e-coupons.

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## **Hewie's Views & Reviews**

*By Hewie Poplock, Central Florida Computer Society*

### **Remove Time Stamps from Photos, Rename & Change File Date**

I am the webmaster for several websites. I have photos submitted to me regularly to be posted. Sometimes the photographer submits the pictures with a date stamp, which is great for identifying your personal photos, but it does not belong on those appearing on the web.

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*(Remove Time Stamps from Photos, Rename & Change File Date—continued from page 11)*

In most cases, it only appears on the photo because the camera owner did not realize that it was set that way, or they did not know how or even that they could turn that "feature" off.

If you don't have the proper date set in the camera, the date stamp will be wrong, as were several that I recently received. They showed a date that was over 3 years prior to the event, so I needed to remove them from the photos. Have you tried this? It is not easy, unless you continue reading.

My first thought is to crop the photos to eliminate the date. Most of the photos would lose some important pieces if I did that. I have several photo editing programs that I could edit the date stamp out. It is very time consuming and while it can be done, it was going to take more time than I wanted to devote to the project.

My next step was to Google the problem. I tried several combinations of terms including time stamp. There were lots of results, but most had little to do with removing the date. Many of them told me how to place it, but not remove it.

The most informational results were from forums where users were asking for the same solution. The most frequent response was "change the setting in the camera." DUH! Of course. What about the pictures that were already taken? I did find some good tutorials using Photoshop and other editing programs. I was still looking for a tool or hint to make it easy. Surely, I wasn't the only one with the problem.

I figured if there were simple steps to get rid of the red eye, certainly there is a way to get rid of a date stamp. In one of the forums, someone suggested Photo Stamp Remover by <http://softorbits.com>. This program appeared to be what I was looking for, and then some. According to their website, "Photo Stamp Remover is a photo correction utility that can remove scratches, dust, stains, wrinkles, tears, date stamps and other unwanted artifacts that appear on photographs. With Photo Stamp Remover, you can restore photos with the minimum of fuss."

I downloaded, installed, and ran the program, using the pictures that I received. In almost every case, the date stamp was removed and did a reasonable to a great job. The trial version does not do batches, but the paid version does and it works well, with 2 settings, quick, or thorough. The latter did a better job.

The program is a bit pricey at \$40, but well worth it. A normal procedure for me is to search for coupons before making a purchase. I did so for this program and found a coupon at <http://www.tjoos.com/> which is a coupon posting site. It was a 20% off code, which saved me \$8.

While removing the date stamp, I also wanted to change the file names and not use the ones that the camera uses. For that I use a tool that I wrote about in a previous column, Lupas Rename <http://rename.lupasfreeware.org/> which is free. It is an old program going back to 2005, but it still installs and works on my Windows 7 computer. You can rename batches, changing, adding to, or

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numbering sequentially. You can change the case of the file filename and extension. I prefer to have my photos all in lower case.

However, Lupas Rename does not change the file date. I had all of these pictures with the wrong date stamp, but also the file date was wrong. While there are ways to change file dates, there must be a tool to do this in a batch. Back to Google. I found Attribute Changer from <http://petges.lu> which is a free tool. It is a power user tool to change file and folder attributes, date, time, NTFS compression, and even changes the Exif information. It runs in the Windows Shell, which allows you to right click in Windows Explorer and choose "Change Attributes." Its dialog box opens and you make your changes.

With these tools, I can make changes to several photos at once. I can change the file names using a title and numbering them sequentially, remove the time stamp, and then change the file date attribute. Now that's what computers were designed to do. Make tasks simpler.