

Next CTPC Meeting

Tuesday, July 23, 2013 - 6:30 p.m.

### Cybersecurity

Digital security is a major concern for everyone today. Malware, such as viruses, rootkits, or keyloggers, is unremittingly trying to install themselves on our devices, compromise our security and steal our confidential information and money. Corporate and government data breaches are constantly in the news. Even the NSA can't keep their information from being exfiltrated! What can we do to protect ourselves and our businesses?

Richard Frisch will present "Cybersecurity" at the July 23, 2013 CTPC meeting. The talk is intended to

Ira Wilsker

help tighten up one's mental and digital defenses against privacy and digital data loss.

Meetings are held at the Silver Star diner in Norwalk. We invite you to remain after the meeting for some socializing and to have pizza, salad and the beverage of your choice. Cost is shared and is normally less than \$14/person. The Silver Star allows us to use their facility at no charge and we think they deserve some benefit for their generosity. ♠

Aug 27<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.  
CTPC Meeting  
Silver Star Diner, Norwalk, CT

Sept 24<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, 6:30p.m.  
CTPC Meeting  
Silver Star Diner, Norwalk, CT

#### GENERAL MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the 4th (not last) Tuesday of each month except August and December. There is no charge to attend general meetings. See back page for location and directions.

[www.ctpc.org](http://www.ctpc.org)

## Multiple Uses for Your Webcam – Both the Good and the Bad

Virtually all new laptop (notebook) computers, tablets, and smart phones now include some type of webcam (web connected video camera). Some of the newer desktop monitors incorporate an integral webcam, and millions of computer users have an external webcam connected to their computers, typically mounted on the top of the monitor and pointed at the user. For those who may not be familiar with the vernacular, a webcam is a video camera type of device connected to a computer that captures the video (and sometimes the audio or sounds) of whatever is in front of it. External webcams, often only requiring a USB connection, can frequently be purchased for

under \$20 for a very basic model. There are many legitimate uses for webcams, as well as some illicit or criminal uses that webcam owners need to be aware of.

Recently, one of the most popular geeky websites, MakeUseOf (makeuseof.com), published a piece "I Bet You Didn't Know

night, shortly before typing this column, I was talking to my granddaughter over my smart phone when my daughter asked me to turn on the built-in smart phone camera so my granddaughter could video-chat with grandpa. Several of my college faculty are teaching web enhanced or fully online college classes, and regularly use their webcams such that everyone can see everyone else in the discussions, which may improve the level of communications among the group. With a nearly identical setup, organizations and businesses can hold virtual meetings over the internet without incurring any significant travel and meeting expenses.

Now that we are well into the 21st century, webcams are being used for remote job interviews, remote court hearings, reporting on live news features and reports, safe online "match making" (meet a potential date), and other virtual face-to-face meetings. According to MakeUseOf.com in the article above, the capability to view each participant's facial expressions in real-time, "This subtle information adds a lot of depth to conversations."

Your Webcam Could Do This! 5 Tips To Help You Use Its Full Potential". While some of the content in the article is Mac and Apple OS related, the basic premises of the article apply to Windows and Android devices as well.

One of the more traditional and common uses of a webcam is video conferencing. This can be as simple as a video chat using any one of the many instant messaging programs (Yahoo!, Skype, AIM, and others) or the features built into many laptop computers and smart phones. Just to-

#### WEBSITES:

- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/i-bet-you-didnt-know-your-webcam-could-do-this-5-tips-to-help-you-use-its-full-potential>
- <https://www.keylemon.com>
- <https://flutterapp.com>
- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/3-fun-tools-to-get-more-out-of-your-webcam>
- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/webcam-home-surveillance-tools>
- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/build-baby-monitor>
- [http://mika.tanninen.net/Ohjelmat\\_Webcam\\_en.shtml](http://mika.tanninen.net/Ohjelmat_Webcam_en.shtml)
- <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/fun-youll-day-create-animated-gifs-webcam-images-seconds-si/>
- <http://www.zemana.com/LeakTest/webcamlogger-test.aspx>

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## The Tip Corner

### Remove Malware

If you do not do a routine cleaning out of malware from time to time, you can be subject to system crashes, blue screens, computer slowdowns, and even hardware failure. You want to periodically clean out your cookie folder, internet files and scan your computer. Unlike virus checkers, where you only want one program operating on your system, you can have more than one program to check for malware and spyware. There are various strengths and weaknesses with each one. There are several free ones, and there are others included within the security suites like McAfee, Avast and Norton as well as Microsoft Security Essentials. Some stand alone programs are Malwarebytes, AdAware and AVG. I have been using CCleaner for many years which not only checks for malware and Trojans but will also search and clean your registry of orphan shortcuts and other problems. One of the useful items included in CCleaner is the ability to select cookies – such as from your banks or shopping sites – and save them before you do a cookie cleanup, keeping your important ones so you do not have to reenter data on sites you use frequently. Another important feature is making a copy of your registry before making any changes in case something was inadvertently removed. I have trusted CCleaner to do its job with no adverse results. Better yet, it is free. We have discussed this at the Novice SIG but I thought it worthwhile to include it in my tip column.

### Using the Command Prompt to Reveal Hidden Files

Some viruses leave behind nasty side effects, even when your antivirus program has cleaned the actual virus from your computer. If your desktop icons are missing and your C: drive appears blank, don't panic, your files haven't gone permanently AWOL. Common viruses, such as the Windows 7 Recovery virus, will hide your files in an attempt to coerce you into paying for the virus's removal. When you view your desktop or click on your C: drive, it may appear that all of your files have been deleted, but they haven't. If this happens to you here is how to restore them. Click the Start button in the lower left corner of your task bar. Type cmd in the search box at the bottom of the menu and press En-

ter. If you're using Windows XP, click Run and type cmd into the Run box.

Type `attrib -s -h -r c:/*.* /s /d` and press Enter to execute the command.

Allow the command to finish executing (it may take a few minutes). When it's done, close the command prompt window and check your desktop — your files, hidden by the virus, have been restored. You can use the same trick to restore files the virus may have hidden on other drives, including removable storage such as flash drives and external hard drives; just change the drive letter (c:) in the command above to the drive letter of the storage device with the hidden files.

### Do we have to defrag a USB Flash or thumb drive?

The short answer is NO. Since they are solid state without any moving parts there is no reason to do a defrag. Additionally, you could even damage the device if you defragment it too many times. Each memory cell on a flash memory device only has a certain number of times you can read/write to it before it becomes damaged.

But don't panic, it will take quite a while for that to happen. With memory prices still falling, think of multiple backup scenarios to protect your data.

### Re-name multiple files at once

I think I gave this one before, but it is a goodie.

The next time you have a bunch of files, folders, or pictures with names like DSC\_5678 and want to rename them in a more uniform way, do this: Highlight all the files/folder in question, then Right-click, choose Rename and call it something that best describes them. For example: XmasParty2012. Now you have the name you want, and it numbers each picture. Note the file that the cursor is on when rename is selected will be the 1st on the list. So if you want to keep the order put the cursor on the top file.

### Here is a new subject: Android OS

More of us are getting or have smart phones. Here is a tip for the Android Operating System. I do not know if it also applies to the iOS, so check it out. You know that each phone or tablet comes with multiple screens you can swipe to.

After awhile there are icons and widgets spread across the four to five screens we have (Actually, the new Samsung Galaxy S III has seven). Here is a way to make one of those screens your home screen without moving the icons.

First, pinch your screen with two fingers to zoom out. This "zoomed-out" view will show you all of the screens you're able to work with. On my phone I just have to tap the screen I want to be home, With some other phone you will find a little, tiny house icon in the upper right corner of each zoomed out screen. Tap that little house and it will set the specified screen as your new home screen. Going back to your original home screen is easy. Just do it again.

### Tablet Shopping: Accessories Worth Buying

If a tablet is now part of your high tech items, be it the Apple iPad or the Amazon Kindle or anything in between, what accessories are worth buying and which should you avoid?

**Cases:** A case is a good investment. Find a case with a comfortable feel, along with a stand or a holder for other items you already carry. Avoid cases that weigh too much, though, as the combined weight of the tablet and case can get bothersome for your wrist.

**Screen Protector/Cleaning Cloth:** A screen protector film is very popular because they provide a scratch-resistant, plastic-like coating to the screen. I use it on both my phone and tablet. A cleaning cloth or other cleaning device is great to remove fingerprints and smudges on the screen. A good microfiber or pad-based cleaning device works best and will let you wipe the screen clean hundreds of times over.

**Stylus:** A stylus is very useful. You can buy one that will allow you to take handwritten notes or draw on your screen, and another that will allow you to do a one stylus typing. There are a host of note-taking applications available and a lot of coloring/drawing applications. Make sure you purchase a stylus that has a good tip and is designed especially for tablets with capacitive touchscreens, as they require special tips to work with.

**App Store Gift Cards:** There are also App  
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# What Has Your Computer Been Doing? Free Utility Shows All

Many of us have encountered frustrations with our computers. Sometimes it appears that running programs crash or otherwise cease functioning without explanation. On older computers, most notoriously those running Windows XP, a cryptic “Blue Screen of Death” (BSOD) sometimes appears when there is a crash of some type, often displaying nonsensical error codes that require extensive research to decode. Some suspicious computer users believe that others are accessing their computer, running unauthorized software or malware. Other wary users may find it interesting seeing what other people may have done on a particular computer, and what programs they may have run, what documents were viewed, and when (what time) the computer was booted and shut down. If a computer was infected by malware, it may often be of great interest to see what was being run on the computer at the time of infestation, and even identify the malware and its payload. This, and more, can be readily displayed by a tiny, free utility, LastActivityView.

LastActivityView is one of dozens of small free utilities published by a feisty software engineer, Nir Sofer, on his website at [www.nirsoft.net](http://www.nirsoft.net). Nir personally writes all of his own software in his spare time, and makes it available to all for free. Many of his utilities are given the highest ratings by a variety of web services and computer publications; all of his software is free of advertising and other pesky irritants, making it popular among his huge and loyal user base. In his spare time, Nir personally maintains his website and updates his software, as well as creates new utilities. One of his newest titles, LastActivityView has caught the attention of computer technicians, forensic experts, hobbyists, and others who really want to know what has really been running on a computer, and when the computer was accessed.

Windows users may be passively aware that their computers save extensive, but often invisible files, about what they have run; LastActivityView has the capability to read these historical files and display additional information about many of the computer’s activities. On my primary computer, this record starts on the day it was manufactured, and documents everything that I have done since I first pow-

ered it on after removing it from its box. Every piece of software that I ever installed or uninstalled is listed, including

## WEBSITES:

<http://www.nirsoft.net>

[http://www.nirsoft.net/utills/computer\\_activity\\_view.html](http://www.nirsoft.net/utills/computer_activity_view.html)

<https://www.techsupportalert.com/content/nifty-way-find-out-what-your-windows-computer-has-been-doing.htm>

date, time, description, filenames, path on the hard drive, and other information. Every boot, shutdown, crash, and other event was also duly recorded. In addition to simply displaying a huge file with all of my computing activities, LastActivityView also has the power to provide additional information for many of the items listed. LastActivityView also can display detailed information about program interactions, and conflicts that caused software and hardware crashes.

The actual program file itself is tiny, only about 100k in size, and requires no installation. It is totally portable, and can be run from any Windows connected device. The LastActivityView program, an exe file, is one of only three components included in the 64k ZIP (compressed) file downloaded from NirSoft; the other two items in the ZIP file are a small “readme.txt” file with simple instructions and other information, and a standard format Windows Help File (chm format) that can be opened with any version of Windows, and displays detailed help and other information. I downloaded the zip file, and using Windows native utility, “unzipped” or uncompressed it into a new directory that I created for it. Total space required for all three files is a miniscule 130k of drive space. I also copied the files to the USB flash drive that I always have on my car keychain, so I can use it whenever and wherever needed.

According to the included readme.txt file, “LastActivityView is a tool for Windows operating system that collects information from various sources on a running system, and displays a log of actions made by the user and events occurred on this computer. The activity displayed by LastActivityView includes: Running .exe file, Opening open/save dialog-box, Opening file/folder from Explorer or other software, software installation, system shutdown/start, application or system crash, network connection/disconnection and more...” The file created by LastAc-

tivityView can be quickly exported in a variety of formats that can be utilized by a variety of other programs that can read csv, tab-delimited, xml, or html formatted information. A simple copy and paste can also place information in other programs, such as an Excel spreadsheet. For those who may wish to customize the execution of

LastActivityView, several command line options are available, but most users will find that simply running the file without any additional commands will provide comprehensive and useful information.

In addition to the obvious tracking of what was run on a computer, LastActivityView can also provide additional and valuable information. I was able to prove this to myself when I examined some recent logs, looking for software crashes and conflicts. One of several reasons why I do not use Internet Explorer as my primary browser is that for some reason, it sometimes crashes when open. According to the report, my most recent software crash occurred on May 17, at 9:11:07pm when Internet Explorer, version 10.0.9200 crashed. By right-clicking on the line in the log showing the crash, an options menu appeared which displayed what additional information could be shown. I first selected “Properties”, which displayed the Action Time, Description (Software Crash), File Name, Full Path (location on hard drive), and what was most important to me, More Information. Similar information can be displayed as a webpage in HTML by selecting “HTML Report - Selected Item”. The More Information line showed precisely the software conflict that caused the crash; in this particular case, according to the display, there was a memory conflict between IEXPLORE.EXE 10.0.9200.16576 and TmBpIe32.dll, which is a module or component of my TrendMicro security suite. Now that I have recorded this conflict, it would be easy to determine whether this is a one-time anomaly or a continuing problem that requires attention and remediation. Doing a quick online search for TmBpIe32.dll, I found that this file is a Trend Micro Browser Plug-In for Internet Explorer that is designed to protect the browser from exploitation. According to Wikipedia, “A browser exploit is a form of malicious code that takes advantage of a

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## The Mac Corner

Happy New Year! *[Folks get new Apple products all the time, not just at Christmas. CTPC Editor]*

While most of you have had Macs for sometime, others have gotten their first Mac over the Holidays. To those readers I say, welcome aboard. You have picked a good and reliable computer for your work, school, and even play.

This article will be dedicated to those persons who have gotten a new Mac, but are unsure how to get the most out of it.

If you're coming from a Windows computer, there are some things that you should know. For one, there is no Start Button. All of your programs, documents, pictures, music files, etc. are located in a window called The Finder. It will be the place where you'll find yourself using most of the time. The Finder is just like the

Start button but better organized for Mac users to get stuff done quickly.

On each window (upper left corner) are three buttons - red, yellow, and green. The red button is the temporary close option, the yellow is the minimize, and the green is the maximize option. But unlike Windows, the close button does not take the app from memory. In order for a Mac app to close properly, you must use the [Command-Q] combination.

Like Windows, the Mac has a way for the user to jump from one program to another by using the [Control][Tab] key combination.

At the bottom of the screen are icons. This area is called The Dock and is a place where a user can drag and drop application icons and Folders on to the Dock for quicker access.

The Mac also has a way for you to customize it. While Windows has the Control Panel, the Mac has an area called System Preferences. To get there, click on the black Apple icon in the upper-left corner and then select System Preferences. Most of the options are self explanatory. So just go in to each one and see what they do.

Finally, installing programs on the Mac are like Windows. Each program has an installation procedure that the user has to go through. To uninstall a program, just drag it to the trashcan icon in the lower-right of the screen.

I hope I helped you with getting to know your new Mac.

That's it for this month. ♠

Steve Costello, President/Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc., FL, Boca Bits, www.brsc.org, <http://about.me/sefcug>, editor (at) brsc.org

## Interesting Internet Finds

In the course of going through the more than two hundred news feeds in my Google Reader, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during the months of November and December 2012. (Long URLs shortened with the Google URL shortener <http://goo.gl/>)

Shockwave keeps crashing. What can I do to fix it? <http://goo.gl/8ZVzs>

I'm drowning in spam. What can I do? <http://goo.gl/a133b>

How to back up your Samsung Android phone to PC <http://goo.gl/aYaVX>

The Assumptions You Make About Your Slow PC (and Why They're Probably Wrong) <http://goo.gl/Th9aw>

HTG Explains: What's the Difference Between CC and BCC When Sending an Email? <http://goo.gl/2nFTx>

15 WordPress User Errors That Make You Look Silly [Infographic] <http://goo.gl/mFI8i>

3 changes you should make in the Options dialog box of PowerPoint <http://goo.gl/Z5Wb3>

HTG Explains: What You Can (and Can't) Do on the Desktop in Windows RT <http://goo.gl/Dbf3o>

Rid Your PC Of Outdated Bookmarks, Duplicate Files, Broken Shortcuts & Empty Folders [Windows] <http://goo.gl/BNNUG>

How To Connect a USB Keyboard To Your Android Phone <http://goo.gl/ylytS>

OTT Explains - Is It Better to Log Into Websites using Facebook, Google or Twitter Accounts? <http://goo.gl/SfB1T>

How can I read an epub formatted book on a Kindle? <http://goo.gl/uGUef>

eBooks, Remote Control & Other Creative Uses For Dropbox That You Haven't Thought Of <http://goo.gl/BqKq5>

Why can't I send mail from my hotel room? <http://goo.gl/1jLZs>

### From the Feb13 Newsletter

The following are some items I found interesting during the month of Jan 2013.

Why does a scan of a simple text document result in such a large file? <http://goo.gl/TJMg5>

The Differences Between PPTP, L2TP/IPSec, SSTP and OpenVPN Connection <http://goo.gl/Vm7MT>

The Best Choice For Your Mobile Android Office <http://goo.gl/W5tjT>

Listen to radio stations in Google Chrome <http://goo.gl/FQjww>

Download Project Gutenberg ebooks to

your Dropbox <http://goo.gl/eGyLt>

The Best Free Dictionary and Thesaurus Programs and Websites <http://goo.gl/KjhtP>

How to Clean Up the List of Apps that Have Access to Your Accounts <http://goo.gl/8IibW>

7 Windows Frustrations You Can Quickly Fix <http://goo.gl/59mBk>

Hardware Secrets: Uncomplicating the Complicated (Website of the Week) <http://goo.gl/XCvLy>

### From the Oct12 Newsletter

The following are some items I found interesting during the month of Sep 2012.

10 Tips To Help You Email More Efficiently <http://goo.gl/Mwf5L>

Why You Should Start Using a VPN (and How to Choose the Best One for Your Needs) <http://goo.gl/5kFIE>

How Secure Are You Online: The Checklist <http://goo.gl/1Bsto>

How to Open a File with No Extension <http://goo.gl/YAfi0>

Microsoft Copyright Statement - Who Owns Your Screenshots? <http://goo.gl/qpUU2>

How To Build Your Own Smartphone Document Scanner <http://goo.gl/BExDy> ♠

# Review: *The Book of GIMP: A Complete Guide to Nearly Everything*

## Introduction

This hefty volume claims to be your source of information and guidance to nearly everything (GIMP).

And indeed, at first glance at the Contents in Detail, the book does seem to meet the challenge of the sub-title's boast.

## Sections

The Book of GIMP is divided into three sections: Learning GIMP, Reference, and Appendices.

### PART I

I jumped into Part I, Chapter 2, Photograph retouching. The sample image used reminded me of a potentially interesting pic my sister took with her cell phone on a recent visit. I had grabbed a copy of her image with the idea of applying a little straightening and a lot of exposure adjustments.

The tutorial that starts off Chapter 2, Enhancing Badly Taken Photographs, addresses both of these issues and more. Just perfect! The directions are clear, accurate, and broken down into easy to follow steps. There are plenty of accompanying screen shots of dialogs and example images. The tutorial provides basic instructions (more detailed &

In-depth coverage comes in later chapters), for crop-ping, straightening, and restoring perspective. Correcting exposure and color balance comes next. How to remove a distracting object from the image,

add sharpness, and correct for red-eye follows.

The section on the pros and cons of resizing an image or image layer also includes a nice discussion of resolution and printing hard copy. The shear tool is explained. However, the authors do mention that it is 'rarely useful'. All images seem to need a bit of tweaking of the brightness, contrast, and hue and so there is an explanation of how to use the levels, color balance and curves tools. Once again, the step-by-step instructions are easy to understand and follow.

The authors of this book do an admirable job of covering the subjects that you expect to find in books of this flavor. But this book actually does present Everything GIMP. Whether you are interested in that obscure rarely used feature or are looking for the theory behind the process, it is touched upon between these covers.

### PART II

At this point I want to jump ahead to Part II: Reference, and look over the section on filters, Chapter 17. GIMP comes loaded with all kinds of nifty tools to use to transform an image. The authors state that while some of the tools are not strictly filters, they are included in this chapter because they are included under the program's Filter menu.

The breakdown by category also follows the menu listing – blur, enhance, distorts, light and shadow, edge detect, generic, combine, artistic, decor, map and render.

I've often been at a loss when it comes to figuring out how many of the gizmos under the Filters menu work.

Sometimes I just want to know how to use a particular tool, sometimes I need to know why I would want to. Whether you just want to apply corrective measures, or transform an image into an artistic rendition, the tools are part of GIMP and suggested uses are detailed in these pages.

### PART III

For those who would like to ponder 'The Physiology of Vision', optical illusions, the screen to printer process, and color theory, appendix A would be your cup of tea. Appendix B provides 'Tips and Hints' for many of the exercises included at the end of the chapters.

If 630 pages of GIMP aren't enough for you, Appendix C offers additional resources. Appendix D is titled 'Frequently Asked Questions (about GIMP)', and is just that. Appendix E provides installation help for GNU/Linux and UNIX, Windows, and Mac OS X. Appendix F covers batch processing of images.

If you want to learn how to use a robust image editing application and are willing to invest the time, effort, and practice required to do so, this is the book for you. The quality and quantity of the content is outstanding. The Contents in Detail and extensive index make it easy to find help with whatever questions or GIMP challenges that confront you.

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Lynn Page, Editor/Webmaster, Crystal River Users Group, FL, Nov 2012 - Mar 2013 newsletter, www.crug.com, lpage46 (at) tampabay.rr.com

## *Some Web Sites I Have Seen Recommended*

This is a list of sites that I have seen recommended. Some I have visited and the others have been recommended by people I trust.

### Coupons

Coupons.com is the largest of digital coupon provider. Select coupons from categories or browse through them all. Click a coupon to clip it and then when finished click the Print Coupons button.

[www.Coupons.com](http://www.Coupons.com)

### BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program

The wild mustang has been part of the American West since the 1600's when they escaped or were released by Spanish explorers. Currently how to manage their population is a hot topic.

Wild horses and burros are found in 10 western states and It is the BLM's responsibility to preserve and protect healthy herds of wild, free-roaming horses and burros. The Adopt-A-Horse or Burro Program was initiated in 1973 to balance the health of public lands with the health

of the wild horses and burros.

[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)

### Printer Friendly

PrintFriendly helps reduce ink usage when printing web pages. It cleans pages so you don't print ads, navigation and tool bars. Just copy and paste the address of the Web page to print into the print preview bar on the PrintFriendly site. If you print a lot of web pages add a print friendly button to your bookmarks or tool bar, for quick and easy access.

[www.printfriendly.com](http://www.printfriendly.com)

## *Tweaking Windows 8 so it Looks & Acts like Windows 7*

In the February issue of Bytes I wrote, with the help of Linux User Group co-leader Bill Chriss, about how I helped my friend Peggy migrate her stuff from an old Dell PC running Windows Vista to a brand-new HP running Windows 8. Writing about that took a lot of space, so I postponed until this article describing how I used software to tweak the Windows 8 graphic user interface – or, what I like to call, the Great Wall of Tiles – to make it look and act more like Windows 7.

Bill, ever helpful in correcting my mistakes and filling in my gaps in knowledge

### **Computer Doing? –**

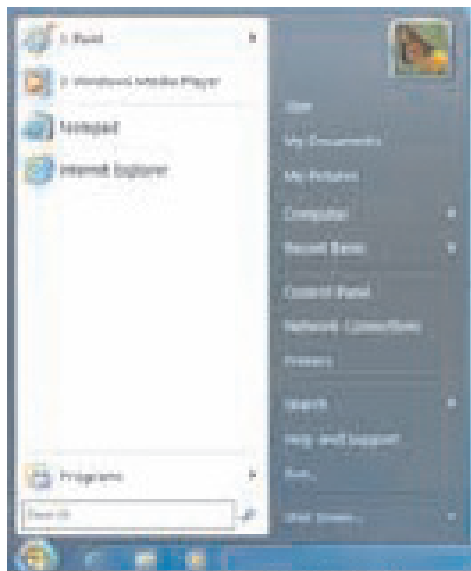
**continued from Page 3**

flaw or vulnerability in an operating system or piece of software with the intent to breach browser security to alter a user's browser settings without their knowledge. Malicious code may exploit ActiveX, HTML, images, Java, JavaScript, and other Web technologies and cause the browser to run arbitrary code." I would not have been able to easily and quickly determine the cause of that particular crash without LastActivityView. This is but one of countless purposes that can be accomplished with LastActivityView.

LastActivityView runs on any version of Windows since Windows 2000, and includes XP, Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8; both 32-bit and 64-bit systems are supported.

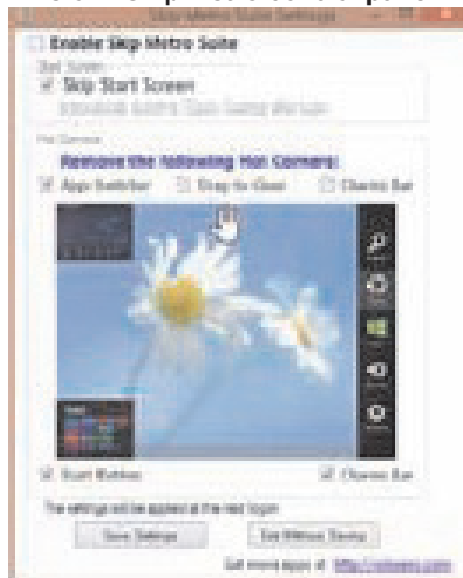
For such a tiny, fast, and free program, LastActivityView is a powerful utility that can provide extensive information on what has been done on a Windows computer. For anyone who would like to see for himself what has been running on his computer; what crashed, what caused the crash; files downloaded, installed, or uninstalled; and a wealth of other information, LastActivityView is a very worthwhile program to add to the user's arsenal of utilities. ♠

*Ira Wilsker hosts "My Computer Show" a call-in tech support show on KLVJ radio, 560AM, from 4-5 p.m. Mondays, Pacific time. The show streams live over the net at KLVJ.com and on the free iHeartRadio app. His call-in number is 800-330-5584.*



**Above: Classic Shell's Start Menu**

**Below: Skip Metro control panel**



about Windows 8, pointed out stuff I didn't know about at the time that a Win8 user can do to see the traditional Windows desktop, including:

- Move the Desktop tile in the Great Wall of Tiles to the top left position. After doing that, pressing the Enter key takes you to the desktop.
- Press the Windows and D keys to apply the keyboard shortcut to open the Desktop.

However, I wanted to find a way for Windows to boot straight into the Desktop and bypass the Wall of Tiles. First, I found the following article from Tech Republic contained the method I was looking for: <http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/window-on-windows/make-windows-8-bootstraight-to-the-desktop/6976>

To summarize it [you can go to the link to read the whole thing], it suggested creating a task in the Windows 8 Task Scheduling Tool to run during login to bring up Windows Explorer, which would make the desktop immediately available. One problem: It would, every time on startup, open a file window showing a library. That's not the desktop.

Then, after more Google searching, I found a freeware application that would work even better: Winaero's Skip Metro, which allows you to skip the Win8 Start Screen as well as the Windows 8 Start Button, Charms Bar and hot corners. However, all we needed was to go directly to the desktop.

Winaero has a ton of other free programs you can check out to tweak the

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### **The Tip Corner – continued from Page 2**

Store Gift Card Applications, and are a great add-on to any tablet. There are a host of retailers who will offer gift cards to the store the tablet works with. For iPads, any iTunes gift card can be used. For Amazon Kindles, any Amazon.com or Kindle Gift Card can be used. For Google Android devices, any Google Play gift card works. During the holidays, some vendors offered discounts on bulk packages of gift cards, and some of them might still be available. Google it.

**Extended Warranty: WATCH OUT!**

This can either be a good deal or a horrible waste of money, so get the specifics on terms, deductible (price you pay to make a claim), replacement rules, and period before agreeing to anything. Make sure you see it in writing, and don't just take the salesman's word for it. There are also third party warranties, such as SquareTrade who offer third-party warranties on most electronics, including tablets, usually at very fair prices. I myself do not go for warranties, since most items come with a one year guarantee. ♠

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## *Multiple Uses for Your Webcam – continued from Page 1*

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It should not be much of a surprise to anyone that online video gaming is enormously popular, with millions of gamers online at any given time deeply engrossed in their games. As technology rapidly advances, much of this change is rapidly incorporated into online games; integrating live webcam images into online games makes such gaming more personal, as the images of the players really are the players, and not some digitally created fictitious avatar.

One very simple but very popular free series of online games that utilizes a webcam is “Webcam Mania GamePack 2” available online at [mika.tanninen.net/Ohjelmat\\_Webcam\\_en.shtml](http://mika.tanninen.net/Ohjelmat_Webcam_en.shtml). Once loaded and connected, this Webcam Mania GamePack 2 looks silly, but is really a lot of fun. The software displays the live image of the player, and the player uses his hands to virtually play any of the several games in the pack. The webcam picks up the movement of the player’s hands and arms, and translates that movement into movement on the screen; there is no physical contact between the player and the computer while the games are being played. While appearing to be simple, many of the games are quite challenging; in one of the games the player has to pop certain colored bubbles with his hands, being careful not to pop the wrong bubbles. In another game, the player has to defend his castle from a stream of virtual snowballs, batting them down before they can impact the castle. Other games in the series has the player balancing a virtual seesaw by sliding rocks along the board, while other rocks are added to the seesaw. Soccer players might like the virtual soccer goalie who has to use his hands to block penalty shots made on the goal. Several other games are included in the game pack, including a few two-player games; in one deceptively simple looking, but frustratingly difficult two-player game is a modern version of the oldest video game “Pong”, but in this version the players use their hands and arms to bounce the virtual ball back and forth.

Another genre’ of webcam software is generically referred to as “Control Software”. Using control software along with a webcam, the user can control several of the popular software programs and utilities with the wave of a hand and other hand gestures, rather than with a keyboard and mouse. One program that I experimented

with was Flutter, available as a free download for both Windows and Mac from [flutterapp.com](http://flutterapp.com). According to the review on [MakeUseOf.com](http://MakeUseOf.com), Flutter, “... presently supports Spotify, iTunes, QuickTime, Windows Media Player, Winamp, VLC, PowerPoint, and Keynote. Additionally, you can control the player functions of YouTube, Pandora, Grooveshark, and Netflix in Chrome.” Basically, Flutter works as a remote control using the webcam as the receiver, and your hand as the remote!

Many computer games, blogs, online forums, chat rooms, and other varieties of online communications use avatars (digital images) which are often caricatures used to identify the user. While some people like the anonymity of a fictional avatar, others find it fun to create their own animated avatars using their own faces, or other digital images. There are several free utilities that can be used to create animated avatars using a webcam; two that were recommended by [MakeUseOf](http://MakeUseOf.com) are PsykoGif ([psykogif.com](http://psykogif.com)) and WebCam Avatar ([toolson.net/WebcamAvatar/Create](http://toolson.net/WebcamAvatar/Create)). Both of these free utilities are web based and work with most browsers, and can take the frames (images) from a webcam to create animated GIF or Flash files. PsykoGif can morph up to six individually selected video frames into an animated GIF, while WebCam Avatar has no practical limit on the number of frames used to create the animated GIF. WebCam Avatar has an edge in that it also supports better editing of the images, including changing the frame timing, image dimensions, special effects, and other editing tools. With both free web based tools, the completed animated GIF image can be downloaded and used as desired.

Some people find the computer logon process irritating when they have to enter a username and password every time that they want to boot the computer. For those who would like to securely automate the logon process without the use of a username and password, but still maintain significant security and control of the logon process, a variety of facial recognition software products that integrate the webcam with an automated process exist. The access security of the computer is maintained by having the face of the user viewed by the webcam, with the facial image digitally matched to a stored image; if the images substantially match, the com-

puter is connected; the manually entered password is still functional if ever needed. This is how facial recognition works. I tried this on my desktop computer using the free version of the KeyLemon facial recognition software with my webcam ([keylemon.com](http://keylemon.com)). One cute feature of KeyLemon, that may annoy the personal vanity of some users, is that the software tracks and records the facial image at logon that tracks and displays the “face evolution” over time. The free version of KeyLemon runs on any version of Windows since Windows XP and includes Windows 8, and includes the facial recognition feature and the facial evolution. The Bronze version (\$20 for a lifetime license) adds user selectable themes to the logon screen as well as a “Permanent Protection

Auto Lock” feature which automatically locks the computer if the authorized user walks away (the facial image is lost), and reconnects when the user returns. The premium “Gold” version (\$40 lifetime) has several enhanced security features, including recording the images of unauthorized users who try to boot the computer, multiple approved images of the authorized user taken under different lighting conditions, and an anti-spoofing feature that can detect the difference between the live user and a photograph of the user held in front of the webcam. The Mac version is not totally free, but available as a trial download, and runs on MacOS X Snow Leopard, Lion, and Mountain Lion.

Some people have found that a webcam can be used for a variety of home security and surveillance functions. Many people use their webcam to maintain a view of their home for home monitoring or security purposes, while many others use the webcam as a “nanny cam” or “baby cam” to monitor the events with baby sitters or the children themselves. A comprehensive explanation of how to setup a webcam as a security or surveillance tool is online at [makeuseof.com/tag/webcam-home-surveillance-tools/](http://makeuseof.com/tag/webcam-home-surveillance-tools/) and includes reviews of several free and commercial (paid) home surveillance software programs. Depending on the software used, streaming live images may be viewed online, or streamed live to a variety of external devices such as tablets and smart phones.

On the down side, there are some risks

*Continued on Page 8*

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## *Tweaking Windows 8* – continued from Page 6

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GUI in various Windows versions.

Next was to bring back the Windows Start Menu. I quickly found ClassicShell, <http://www.classicshell.net/>, referenced and recommended by several on-line articles. It's a free, open-source software that not only restores the Start menu to its accustomed corner, but includes a multitude of other GUI tweaks. It even lets you choose whether you want Windows 8 to look more like Windows 7/Vista, XP or even what they call Classic [Win98?].

Some of the other tweaks it offers include:

- Classic Start Menu, which restores the Start Menu in Windows 8.
- Classic Explorer, which adds or restores features to the Windows window.
- Classic IE9, which restores features from earlier versions of Internet Explorer.

The full list of features is so long, I will just give you the link to see for yourself: <http://www.classicshell.net/features/>

Now Peggy didn't want all these extra features, just her Start Menu back, so that's all I enabled, with the Windows Vista look. But people looking for more options will enjoy picking which improvements they want.

There are plenty of other utilities out

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## **GIMP -**

**continued from Page 5**

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**About:**

**The Book of GIMP: A Complete Guide to Nearly Everything**

**Authors: Olivier Lecarme, Karine Delvare**

**Publisher: No Starch Press**

**<http://nostarch.com/gimp>**

**ISBN-13: 978-1593273835**

**Price: \$49.95/\$26.34 @ Amazon.com**

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there that will tweak Windows 8 to make it look and work more like previous versions: Wikipedia lists 17 different utilities, including Classic Shell, to bring back the Start Menu:

[http://en.wikipeia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Start\\_](http://en.wikipeia.org/wiki/List_of_Start_)

[Menu\\_replacements\\_for\\_Windows\\_8](#)

Based on Peggy's positive feedback, I recommend Classic Shell and Winaero Skip Metro to anyone who wants a familiar version of Windows 8. ♠

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## *Webcam Uses* – continued from Page 7

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of having a webcam connected to a computer or other device; they may possibly be controlled remotely by illicit individuals to snoop on unknowing users. One of the most egregious cases was uncovered in 2010, when the Lower Marion School District in suburban Philadelphia, Pa. was spying on students. In an article on CBS News, "According to Harriton High School student Phil Hayes, officials at the Lower Merion School District used a program called LANRev to manage and track the Macintosh laptops issued to students." It was alleged that the school district illicitly spied on students at home using the laptops checked out from the school.

While this case made the national media, there are also many other cases that did not, and voyeurs are using webcams to spy on unsuspecting individuals. In some cases, this spying has been accomplished by illegitimately installing malware on the target computer, and using this malware to control the webcam, sending the live images to the voyeur. While many of the major security utilities can detect and neutralize this webcam spying, there are still many forms of malware than can penetrate common security software and utilize the webcam to remotely display whatever is in view. One of the security companies, Zemana, offers a free security test that will simulate a webcam hijack, and then disclose to the user if his webcam arrangement is vulnerable to being hijacked. The free simulation is available at [zemana.com/LeakTest/webcamlogger-](http://zemana.com/LeakTest/webcamlogger-)

[test.aspx](#). According to Zemana, "This test program simulates the activities of a webcam logger. If your security software is protecting you proactively, then the simulation should trigger a warning message. No warning means no proactive protection... and probably no protection at all! If the simulation does not trigger a warning, then your current security software does not protect you against webcam loggers."

For those who want total protection from webcam loggers and hijackers, the best choice is to disable the webcam. Most external webcams, typically mounted on the top edge of the monitor, can be effectively stopped by unplugging the connecting USB cable. On a laptop or tablet, some users simply place an obstruction, such as a piece of tape over the tiny lens; be careful not to damage the lens if the tape is removed, and clean the lens to be sure that no "sticky" is left on the lens if the webcam is used at a later date. Several acquaintances use the sticky part of a "Post It Note" to cover the webcam lens on their laptops.

When used properly and safely, webcams can be a lot of fun as well as an effective tool to make virtual meetings a much more personal experience. ♠

*Ira Wilsker hosts "My Computer Show" a call-in tech support show on KLVI radio, 560AM, from 4-5 p.m. Mondays, Pacific time. The show streams live over the net at [KLVI.com](http://KLVI.com) and on the free iHeartRadio app. His call-in number is 800-330-5584.*

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### **MEETING LOCATION**

**Silver Star Diner**

**210 Connecticut Ave. (US-1/ Post Road)**

**From I-95 Stamford:** Take Exit 13 for US-1/Post Road and turn right at US-1 N/ Connecticut Avenue. The diner will be on your left almost at Exit 14.

**From I-95 New Haven:** Take Exit 14 for US-1/Connecticut Ave and turn right at US-1 N/Connecticut Ave. The Diner will be just ahead on your right.

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