

# The PULP



 Apple  
User Group  
March 2005



<http://www.huge.org>



Volume 26 Issue 1

## Spring is Here??

### General Meeting Topics:

New Programs to be Reviewed

**Bonus:** Giveaways for attendees

East Hartford Public Library  
Main St. & Central Ave., East Hartford, CT.

General chit-chat                      6PM–7:15PM  
Main Meeting starts at:              7:15PM

### Huge This Month:

- March 15th :** **General Meeting** See above 7:00 P.M.  
**March 20:** Deadline for **ALL** Articles. Please upload articles to [editors@huge.org](mailto:editors@huge.org), or give them to the Pulp Editor **Midnight**  
**April 19:** **Chit Chat SIG Meeting** Starts at 6:00 P.M.  
**April 19:** **General Meeting** Starts at 7:15 P.M.

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## MEETING LOCATIONS

East Hartford Public Library  
Main & Central Avenue  
in the Lion's Community Room  
Downstairs

Wethersfield Public Library  
500 Silas Deane Hwy.,  
Wethersfield, CT

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## From the Editor

by Pat Teevan

Hello. ... and welcome back to the Pulp. George has asked me to fill in as editor for a while, so that Maris can take a much deserved rest. Having been the editor of the Pulp before, I can tell you that it's not an easy job and it can be very time consuming.

So, first and foremost, lets have a big round of applause for Maris Bowers for her many years of service to the club as proofreader and editor,

Thank you, Maris. I'll try to approach the quality that you've brought to the Pulp.

Which brings me to my second point. This month's Pulp may seem a little "rough around the edges" and might also be a little later than you're used to getting it. I apologize for both of those problems.

I don't own a high-level page layout program, so this month's Pulp is being produced using AppleWorks and rendered as PDF using the built-in functions of MacOS X. This meant building a new Pulp template from scratch [notwithstanding that I started it in preparation

for the January meeting] and took a bit longer than I had hoped. I've gotten by the early problems now, so next month's Pulp should be delivered in a more timely fashion.

I'll continue to 'tweak' the design in an attempt to make this look as much like the 'old Pulp' as possible. You may have to put up with me playing with the masthead and the layout of the front page for a little while, until I get something that works for me.

I may eventually try laying the Pulp out in OpenOffice also. I've been experimenting with the beta version on both MacOS and Linux and it's seems quite capable. If I do attempt it, I'll let you know and may even write an article about the experience.

Finally, if anyone is interested in becoming the next editor of the Pulp, please let me know. I'll provide training and assist you in any way that I can to grow you into the position. I will also appreciate any article submissions that you care to send my way—or even suggestions for articles. Maybe we can publish a list of requested articles and see who might feel up to doing the writing.

Well, I think that's enough for this month. Time to finalize the layout and get this issue out the door. Keep in touch and come join us at a meeting soon.

# A Little Computer Quiz

by Stuart Rabinowitz

**Editor's Note:** *Because there were no newsletters in January and February, we're a little behind on Stu's column. We'll be publishing two quizzes each month until we catch up.*

## January Quiz:

*The trivia and minutiae of the computer related world. The answers will appear next month or you can submit an answer sheet at the General Meeting. Good Luck.*

- 1 You may have heard of the site WWW.CRAIGSLIST.ORG which allows free post and read classified ads sorted by city. There are currently 57 around the world. What is Craig's last name?
- 2 The Mac G3 Blue & White was the last model to have the Apple Desktop Bus (ADB) included. What was the first model to have an ADB?
- 3 What was the first product that Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak (cofounders of Apple) made and sold together?
- 4 Who did Apple pay for the right to use the name 'MacIntosh'?
- 5 There is a patent for an Apple tree variety called, "Burchinal Red Delicious". In fact, it is a patented variety. Who (Hint: it is a computer industry related company) holds the patent?
- 6 In the Wintel side of the PC world there is an annoying (that's at least one categorization) software problem called 'spyware'. One of the products used to thwart it is a program called 'Spybot Search & Destroy', who wrote (& supports) it?

# December Answers

In honor of the coming holiday season and all the game systems and programs to be sold.

- 1 One of the very first home video game machines was the Atari 2600. What was the in-house name for it during development?  
A The in-house name for the Atari 2600 was "Stella".
- 2 The 2600 was released in 1977, how many games were available?  
A There were nine games available for the 2600 at launch in 1977.
- 3 What was the so-called 'killer-app' that everyone wanted and therefor bought the 2600?  
A Space Invaders
- 4 How much memory was installed on the 2600?  
A The Atari 2600 only had 128 bytes of RAM.
- 5 What was the original name of the Atari 2600 when it was released?  
A The Atari 2600 was originally known as the Atari VCS (Video Computer System). The name was officially changed after the release of the 5200 system.
- 6 Which game available on the 2600 was the first of the coin-op video games to be licensed for home use?  
A Space Invaders was the first home license of a coin-op video game.



## From the leaders desk

by George

### Happy St. Patty's Day!!

The general meeting for March is posted on the web. There will be door prizes for those in attendance.

The January and February meetings were great. Many thanks to Pete, Ralph, Stu and all the others for the new knowledge that was gained by all.

A comment that I hear and sometimes—it does happen more than it should—is that the talk gets too techie, too advanced. This has happened ever since I was a newbie and attempts to curtail this practice are ongoing. How to handle this matter:

- 1) Try to better plan of what is going to be said. If your presentation is aimed only at the newbie your more advanced people will be bored.
- 2) You could ask the new people or, better yet, look at their expressions,
- 3) Ask if there are any questions as you proceed.

How is HUGE attempting to handle the new person feeling at home and sharing knowledge that can be useful for them? There is a Chit Chat SIG that is 1 hour prior to the General meeting. Very informal talk, great place to ask general questions.

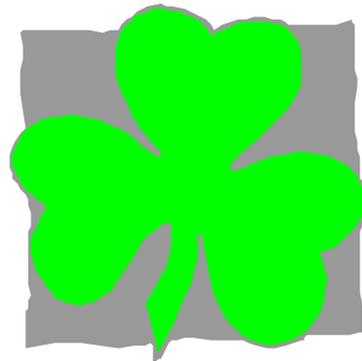
#### **April, May, and June meetings topics:**

We'll be looking at graphics, sound and Apple's Keynote and iWorks products. On the PC side of the house we'll present sound and photo programs.

See you on the 15th—and if you have a topic you want to see and hear about, contact us through [info@huge.org](mailto:info@huge.org)

Bring your laptops to the meeting - surf the net during the meeting on the HUGE WiFi.

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# Firefox: A program popularized by open source programmers

by Linda Gonse, Editor, Nibbles & Bits  
Orange County IBM PC Users' Group  
www.orcopug.org

The latest version of Firefox, an open source program, formerly Mozilla, and before that, Netscape Navigator, was released to popular acclaim near the end of 2004 from [www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com). Many people, tired of security problems and perpetual patching of Internet Explorer, have begun to make the switch to Firefox. I was one of them. It was an easy transition to import my bookmarks, favorites, and other items, and set up housekeeping in it.

But, it was a real surprise to find free “themes,” a change of appearance for Firefox. Feeling the exhilaration of discovery, I downloaded Nautipolis, Red Cats, Gray Modern, and Littlefox, and others; finally settling on Littlefox. Then, I discovered “extensions.” Extensions are little programs, originally called applets, that run from within Firefox. Their specialized capabilities add to the functionality of Firefox and quickly become features you just can't live without. There are about a dozen I use, including: Weatherfox, QuickNote, Titlebar Tweaks, SpoofStick, CopyPlainText, and Tabbrowser Extensions.

One extension that makes my online life simpler is called QuickNote. It allows me to copy and paste from browser pages into a tabbed notepad available right in the browser. It saves me from opening Word or Notepad and working back and forth from one of them to the browser window.

Fascinated with the free extensions, I tracked down QuickNote's creator, Jed Brown, to ask him to tell me how he got started and why he

wrote the program. Also, QuickNote had earned five stars as a popular Firefox item, I wondered if Jed thought it might end up being incorporated into Internet Explorer.

He said, “I became involved with Mozilla back in the 90s. I was a frequent user of what was then the Mosaic browser when the World Wide Web had just begun. Netscape was born from Mosaic and I was instantly a user of Netscape Navigator.



**Firefox**  
the browser, reloaded.

“Once the “browser wars” began, I was a devoted Netscape user who really loathed how Microsoft used their OS dominance to spread use of their browser. Unfortunately, after Netscape released its 4.0 browser, MS was right on their tail and produced an even better and more standards-compliant browser.

“Despite the better browser, I was loyal and stayed on NS as long as I could. Around the time when Netscape 5 was going to be released (1998 I believe), they decided to open-source their browser. That sparked my interest and I got my hands on the code as quickly as I could. Once the open source community realized that the NS code was a huge hack and badly organized, they decided to start from scratch and create what was to be the fastest most compliant browser ever. This was too good to be true.

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### Firefox continued from Page 5...

Unfortunately this was no easy endeavor and would take over three years to get even close to a final product. In the meantime, Internet Explorer was the superior product (over NS 4.x) and was becoming the browser of choice for many -- including myself.

“I wasn't hacking on any of the code, but I did start testing the releases from the first public beta release. Since that day, I used this new engine and code base as much as I could, but always had IE there for sites that did not work in the new, young and untested engine.

Once Mozilla had matured (version 0.8) and became usable on a daily basis, I switched over and said goodbye to IE for good.

“The folks at Netscape had a brilliant idea called XUL that would allow them to write the interface to the browser once, and allow it to run on any platform possible. This meant Mozilla looked the same on Windows, Mac, Linux/ OS 2, etc. This same technology allowed authors like myself to start creating programs that would live on top of the Mozilla platform and extend its functionality (now called “Extensions”).

“As a high school student back then, I started a project called “QuickNote” that would allow easy access to a notepad-like sidebar for easy note taking.

“While my extension was popular and used amongst many Mozilla users, Mozilla was plagued with bad interface design decisions from Netscape and AOL who later bought Netscape, so it really never hit it well with anyone but “geek” users. A few talented programmers at Netscape (Hyatt, Blake, Goodger, etc.) realized this and in their free time started a new project based on Mozilla, but much more simple, that was meant to be only a browser instead of a full suite like Mozilla was. This eventually turned into what Firefox is today.

“Thanks to Firefox (formerly Phoenix and Firebird) much more attention was brought to it and a much larger user base. More interest in Mozilla, XUL, and extension development arose. This has led to over 200 extensions made for Mozilla applications, and has brought together programmers from around the world, like myself, to join in and help make Firefox/Mozilla better.

“For example, QuickNote was a project I was doing by myself in my free time. But now many different users contribute code and translation. A Russian programmer, Nickolay Ponomarev, has joined with me and contributes to QuickNote on a regular basis.

The whole idea of multi-platform and open source software is amazing as it has brought thousands of people together under one cause, despite language and cultural barriers. This in part, is thanks to Mozilla and its example that open source software can be just as good -- and in this case -- better, than proprietary software.”

We asked Jed what he sees for Firefox in the next couple of years?

He said, “I think we will see a continuous trend in the growth of Firefox users. Once Microsoft won the browser wars, it dismantled its IE team, and left users high and dry. Firefox is filling this void, bringing a new and fresh idea to the World Wide Web and making it the place it should have been (virus/popup/spyware free) years ago.

“I also can see more and more companies embracing Firefox in their internal networks and products they offer to their users. Google, Amazon and many others are already starting.”

We also wondered if Mozilla/Firefox will survive and grow through the efforts of the open source community. Or will Microsoft will gobble up talented program writers such as Jed, and IE will remain dominant?

“Mozilla/Firefox will definitely survive, and be

vital for the years to come,” Jed said. “Microsoft is far behind with Longhorn and even when it ships it will take years to get users to migrate over. In the meantime Firefox will continue to see growth in users on multiple platforms, and be extremely important to the survival of Linux as a desktop alternative. Sure MS will copy features and do its best to find exploits in Firefox. No software is perfect, but I believe the very nature of Mozilla and Firefox appeals to users and gives the Web freedom from control from one sole company. As time goes by, I think the average user will begin to understand this and realize the importance of alternative products and that they are superior in many aspects.

“The other huge benefit that Firefox has as a browser and Mozilla, in general, as a platform, is their mutiplatform nature. As a programmer, I can create any application or extension based on Mozilla and easily make it work on every platform that Mozilla/Firefox runs on. This allows users to use any system they like, perhaps Unix/Linux at work, Mac OS on their laptop and Windows XP at home, and yet feel no difference when it comes to surfing the web and using the applications/extensions built on Mozilla. Microsoft has no real answer to this (although .Net tries) and it is a huge selling point to both users and corporations.”

(You can email Jed at [contact\\_me@jedbrown.net](mailto:contact_me@jedbrown.net), and look for programs he has written for Firefox at [Mozilla.com](http://Mozilla.com).)

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

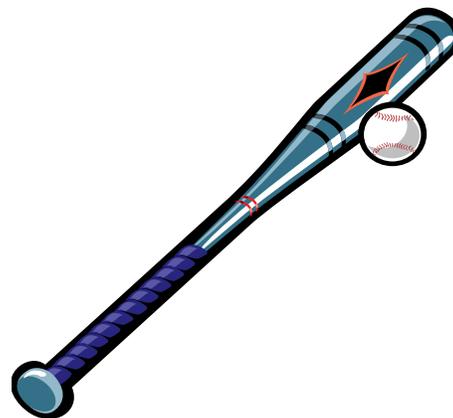
## Another Computer Quiz

by Stuart Rabinowitz

### February Quiz:

*The trivia and minutiae of the computer related world. The answers will appear next month or you can submit an answer sheet at the General Meeting. Good Luck.*

- 1 In 1974 Optical Character Recognition (OCR) was in its infancy, with programs able to recognize only a few specialized fonts. Who developed the first OCR program to recognize any style of print?
- 2 In 1975 the first Charge Coupled Device (CCD) flatbed scanner was developed. Who developed it?
- 3 Also, in 1975 the first text-to-speech program was developed, by whom?
- 4 In January, 1976 Walter Cronkite used a machine to read aloud his signature sign-off "And that's the way it was, January 13, 1976." What machine read the sign-off?
- 5 IBM shipped the first copies of Fortran to customers in 1957. Who was the principal person behind the development of Fortran?
- 6 Who was responsible for the whole input-output system in Fortran?



# IRS and “Free File Alliance” Again Offer FREE Online Tax Preparation and Filing

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

It's that time of year again. Our mailboxes are brimming with W-2's, 1099's, and other ubiquitous indications of our daily financial lives. Preparing our forms 1040, 1040A, and 1040EZ are typically not our favorite annual right of spring. This year, the fine folks at the IRS and their partners, the “Free File Alliance” are again offering their free online federal income tax preparation and electronic filing services. Unlike past years, where only selected groups of people, such as students or military, could utilize the free services, this year there are free services available for almost all federal tax filers.

The main IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) has at the top: “Free File -

Ever missed a good thing and regretted it? Don't miss Free File. Millions of eligible taxpayers can use Free File — a free online service that let's you prepare and file your tax return electronically. It's smart, free and fast. Don't miss it!” According to the IRS, about 6.5 million people took advantage of the opportunity last year.

The process is relatively easy. The first step is to enter the IRS Free File website at “[www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp](http://www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp)” where the various filing services offered by the Alliance can be viewed, and eligibility for each can be determined. Eligibility determination for each service is the second step listed. Some of the 15 resources listed have a maximum “AGI” (adjusted gross income) ceiling. Others will only prepare forms 1040A or 1040EZ online, while some others will prepare taxes for residents of specific states. Other

members of the Alliance will prepare and e-file taxes for free based on age, often under 25 or over 60, while others (such as H&R Block, TaxAct.com, and TurboTax for the Web) have no restrictions on who can use the free services, and are available to all. After the free preparer is selected, the user will be directed to a non-IRS website to complete the online preparation. The taxes are calculated, and proper forms are electronically filed with the IRS using a secured link. An acknowledgement is automatically generated via email notifying the filer that the return has been accepted or rejected.

The IRS notes that several of these companies also offer a fee-based online preparation service, and the only way to be assured to get these services for free is to link to them directly from the IRS Free File website, and not directly to the company websites. It should also be noted that these companies do not generally prepare state income taxes for free, and that there may be a charge for preparing state income taxes, but users referred from the IRS site are under no obligation to incur any tax preparation expenses for the preparation and filing of federal income taxes, provided they were originally eligible for the services.

Electronic filing by these free resources, or other similar commercial resources, has several advantages, according to the IRS. Some of these benefits are that it takes less time to prepare online than on paper, refunds can be processed much faster, returns are more accurate (provided accurate information is entered), and acknowledgement of receipt is generated so you know the return has been filed, and other tangible



Continued on Page 9

and intangible benefits. The IRS also has a statement that the software used by the providers for the free service is “comparable” to the software used by these preparers for their commercial (paid) clients.

The IRS is well aware that not all taxpayers have internet access, so it is arranging for such groups as churches and community associations to provide the internet access so as to promote the widest possible use of the free service. The IRS is also supporting such volunteer groups as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE).

Some individuals will justifiably question their personal privacy when entering this data onto a private company’s website. The IRS has approved the security and privacy policies of the participating companies, and all of the providers must also have a recognized third-party privacy and security certification. Information provided to these companies can only be used for the preparation of income tax forms, and no other purposes not explicitly authorized by the user. The IRS will monitor all of the providers for compliance, and the companies are required to promptly alert the IRS if any privacy or security problems are

encountered. The IRS has set up an email address with the Free File Alliance at [helpdesk@speedymail.com](mailto:helpdesk@speedymail.com), where anyone can get technical assistance about the Free File website, or resolve issues with any of the listed providers. Any user who is not satisfied with the selected free provider is free to try another provider that he may qualify for.

The Free File Alliance is a result of the IRS' Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, which in part has a goal that 80% of all returns are to be filed electronically (e-filed) by 2007, and requires the IRS to make available to taxpayers free online filing options.

Last year (2004) saw 6.5 million e-filed returns, and the IRS hopes to triple the number this year. That still leaves many millions more that will have to e-file in order to reach the 2007 goal. The 15 companies listed that are providing free filing services are a good step on the path of meeting the IRS' goals.

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**Interim Editor** Pat Teevan  
**Distribution** George Carbonell

**Membership:** Anyone may become a member. Dues are \$12 per year and include a one-year subscription to The Pulp as well as access to the HUGE Public Domain disk libraries and BBS. Meeting topics, times and places can be found on page 1 of this issue.

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# March 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15 General Meeting 7:00PM	16	17  St. Patrick's Day	18	19
20 Pulp Articles Due	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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