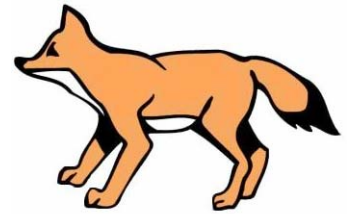


Fox Tales



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Happy New Year!

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

Well another year has arrived! This month's meeting will venture into what may have arrived under your tree this Christmas. We will have a segment, "What I got for Christmas" where members will be asked to review any new and interesting digital/electronic gadgets, software, or other computer related gifts that they had received. We are always looking for personal reviews of these things.

The program for January will be presented by Kris Simon and Jon Jackman: *Exploring the Nintendo Wii*. Kris has had his Wii console for some time and will walk through its use and features. He will bring along some interesting games that will provide insights into what this device can do. We will offer some hands on fun and allow our members to choose to see some samples of various types of games, one being Guitar Hero, among several others. It may be that someone in your family got one of these for Christmas. (I was able to pick one up before the holidays when the new Best Buy recently opened in North Aurora. Pickings were much leaner over the holidays... fewer consoles and hot items (like the "Wii Fit") were hard to find. It will be an eye opener for anyone who has not seen a Wii in action.

I received a call from Bernadette Swiss to thank us for the tribute to Bill Swiss in the December *Fox Tales*. She appreciated the kind words and remarks from some of our members, and commented on the memorial wreath which was displayed in the newsletter. She said that she would share it with the other members of her family. Bernadette told me that Bill had fallen several months ago and broke his neck. As a result, Bill was in a "halo" to immobilize the injury. He had been suffering and the end was a relief of sorts. Bernadette indicated that the published obituary had an error. It indicated that: "Preferred memorials are Masses of the USO." It should have read: "Preferred memorials are Masses or the USO." We will discuss this at our January meeting and will look into any donations be directed to the USO. I see that there is a link on the USO site to donate in memory of someone, so that is what we will do with any donations from our members.

Speaking of phone calls, I have been using Skype to connect to members of an ad hoc panel involved in reviewing a merit system for the new Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (formerly, Illinois Department of Corrections - Juvenile Division). Several of the panel members will be in Mexico on an extended holiday and we will conduct our business using Skype's audio and video features. I also have used Skype to place a long distance phone call to participate in my monthly conference call with my brothers. In the past we have all called a number in Massachusetts (1-781-382-2255), then enter a unique seven digit number followed by a #, and then record the name of the caller. You then go into a room where all of the callers can speak over the phone. As a person calls in, their recorded name announces their arrival, as well as departure when they hang up. You only have to pay the long distance number. In my case, I called in using Skype. However, no one was there. After waiting awhile, I went ahead and called my brothers from numbers that I had previously saved in my contacts list using the "Call...Start Conference Call" link. It was quite strange, since the 3 numbers were dialed simultaneously.

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Be Alert and Vigilant!

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

I had a bad cold after Christmas, but not so bad that I could not check my e-mail. Early on Sunday morning I noticed that I had an e-mail from Capital One indicating that I had successfully changed my user name. ??? Since I did not recall that I had made any changes, or recently logged into my account, I immediately contacted Capital One. We were able to review my transactions online and nothing had been charged to my account. (The e-mail had been sent only an hour or so before I opened the notice.)

With their help, I then went about creating a new user name. Interestingly, when in one of the account creation screens there was an e-mail address already in place, but it was not one that I recall creating, and not the one that I would have used to notify me if I had to receive e-mail from Capital One. It ended in “@ymail.com” which I figured to be related to Yahoo. I sent an informative e-mail to both the Capital One and Yahoo fraud addresses. I requested a follow-up as I suspected that whoever changed my Capital One user name had also created this account to enable switching the direction from Capital One. Scary thought there! I attempted to log into the xxx@ymail.com account, but was unsuccessful. I did have a Yahoo id, but the password would not work and I was unable to get past the security questions. Someone else must have created it and added their own answers.

I went about running Spybot and my AV software to try and be sure that any suspicious “bots” were eliminated. I have since checked my Capital One transactions regularly, and was relieved that there have been no unauthorized transactions. Had there been, Capital One told me that they would work with me to get a replacement card and deal with any unauthorized purchases.

I can only imagine that this event was not an isolated one, and that there is probably someone out there who did not jump all over a similar instance of identity theft as I did. That is how these things work. If there are many attempts to engage such a scheme, there will be someone who did not check their e-mail regularly, or who did not respond as promptly as I did once it was received. I was lucky. No doubt, someone else will not be. It can happen to anyone, so be alert and vigilant! I remember Smokey the Bear, perhaps there should be a Smokey the Cyber Bear: “Remember: only you can prevent identity theft!” There are things like LifeLock and ID Watchdog. I may look into them, but would like any users to share any experiences that they may have had.

I have received Phishing notices before, which looked legitimate (regarding my Ebay and PayPal accounts). It is always best practice to go directly to your account’s website and NOT TO CLICK ON THE EMBEDDED LINK IN THE SUSPECT E-MAIL. I generally forward the suspected e-mail directly to the fraud department (i.e. spoof@paypal.com), which generally replies quickly to advise me that the e-mail was bogus. They generally include a list of tips that one should follow to minimize any risk of being a successful target of a phishing scam. It rests on each one of us to keep a lookout for these dastardly fiends of the ether world.



Happy New Year! (cont'd)

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

I could hear one go into voicemail, and the other was busy, yet a third to Kim was picked up. He told me that two brothers were already in the conference call. I dialed Kim's land line, but he had used his cell phone to call into the conference. It turns out I had used the wrong code and was in an empty room. I redialed and connected using the correct code number. I explained to them that I would be able to call them via Skype and that they would not incur any expenses, unless it involved air time over a cell phone. I could call their Skype name and it would also be free. I explained that we would examine the video conference capabilities and have face to face video phone capabilities. A third brother later connected (the one number that went to voice mail). He explained that he had a very weird voice message, which was basically what I had heard as all three calls were attempting connections. Overall quality was good, although I was dropped once. We will continue to explore Skype would be an inexpensive alternative to calling the 1-781-382-2255 number.

The parts for the First Tee of Aurora project have arrived, but I have yet to schedule a date for us to get together. The time around the holidays are always busy, plus I had been whacked by a bad cold, which then hit my wife. Hopefully details for the project will be finalized at the January meeting. Also, I have been dragging my feet on the 2009 survey, and I will try to get something uploaded soon. Please respond once it is posted.

The mailing of the December newsletter was delayed as there was a scheduling issue with our printer being on vacation. Hopefully this issue will get to you before our January meeting! We also have been a bit late on getting the web site updated. We hope to have a better arrangement during the upcoming year! Sorry about that. We always look for comments from our members that might be published in the Fox Tales. Please send along an article of interest if you feel motivated to do so!

Remember: The 2008 DOQ-4 will be available at the January meeting, so bring along your thumb drive to get the downloads. We will detail the offerings at the meeting.

The weather for my annual snowmobiling excursion is looking good. I discovered a great site that provided a detailed snow cover report. Check it out here: <http://www.nohrsc.noaa.gov/> I am hopeful that we enjoy a safe adventure this year and enjoy some of the best conditions in recent memory. I will have my Wii Kawasaki Snowmobile game at our *Exploring the Nintendo Wii* presentation. Not quite the same thing. They ought to have a trail course option as opposed to a race course set up, but it will be much warmer than the real deal!

See you at the January 17th meeting! Be sure to bring a friend as well as any show and tell items for our "What I Got for Christmas" segment.



Are You All Ready for Digital TV?

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

We have been discussing the upcoming conversion of analog to digital over the air (OTA) TV signal transmission that will occur on February 17, 2009. Norm Hoube provided a link to how to construct an HD antenna using coat hangers. (See this link for the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWQhlmJTMzw> We looked at this video at our November meeting and I gave it a shot. I ended up placing 3 such antennas in an array, but have yet to place it up on my roof. I have a chimney mounted mast in place, but have had to wait to complete the installation since there is ice up there. (I fell off an icy roof once before and will not risk another mishap.) I also picked up a converter box and will try this in conjunction with an analog PCI TV card installed in my older 2.4 GHz machine. My other TVs are hooked up to cable, so I will not need to worry about them. I have a Comcast Digital DVR on the 37" LCD, but if I want to see HD content, I suspect that I will need the Comcast box on the other TVs. (One is hooked up to cable without the Comcast box and the other is connected via an older TIVO box. I will wait and see what goes on after the 17th.)

For Christmas, I gave one of my sons (Dan) a digital converter box and a very basic HD antenna that I picked up as an open item at Best Buy (for \$10!) I imagine that someone returned it since it would not receive broadcasts from Chicago. However, Dan lives in Chicago and can see the John Hancock Building and Sears Tower from the window in his 12th floor apartment, so line of sight to the towers is great! He lives on a modest budget and does not have cable, so this free alternative was a surprise, yet a welcome gift for him. He was excited to see the clear picture from numerous side stations. He mentioned that Channel 11 has three such stations with a different variety of content. It even has an online guide, much like cable. A happy camper indeed!

In my monthly conference calls with my brothers, my Seattle brother (Joel) had explained that he was impressed with the information that was available via the two sites discussed here previously: www.tvfool.com and www.antennaweb.com. He has a new 46" Sony LCD TV and had considered moving to cable, but the clear reception from his rooftop antenna with a motorized rotor is outstanding, and he does not watch too much TV anyway to justify the expense of cable. He lives about 20 miles from the transmission towers and gets a good signal. He had it connected to a converter box, and also the ATSC connection on the back of the TV, and gets good reception from both. He explained that his region is very hilly and that line of sight creates some pockets where reception is challenged. Joel intends to use the built in signal strength meter on the converter to fine tune his antenna reception using the rotor. He lives up on the west side of a hill and has a pretty good sightline to Seattle's transmission towers. He also was pleased with the Blu-Ray DVD player he received. If one has a TV, why not get the best picture you can? It all depends on what you have and where you are. Your options go from there. My other brother (Kim) near Rhinelander uses Direct TV as his remote location is not conducive to receiving any signal. He lives in a forest and would need a very high tower to try to receive an OTA signal. His Internet is via a satellite feed from a second dish on his roof.

I will keep you updated on the progress of my own antenna array. We will keep this as a topic for discussion at our monthly meetings in our "Everything Digital Segment." Please share your experiences with this new era in DTV and we will be interested to see how things develop.



Be Alert and Vigilant! (cont'd)

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

Here is a typical reply from PayPal:

Thanks for taking an active role by reporting suspicious-looking emails. The email you forwarded to us is a phishing email, and our security team is working to disable it.

What is a phishing email?

Phishing emails attempt to steal your identity and will often ask you to reveal your password or other personal or financial information. PayPal will never ask for your password over the phone or in an email and will always address you by your first and last name. Take our Fight Phishing Challenge at <https://www.paypal.com/fightphishing> to learn 5 things you should know about phishing. You'll also see what we're doing to help fight fraud every day.

You've made a difference!

Every email counts. By forwarding a suspicious-looking email to spooof@paypal.com, you've helped keep yourself and others safe from identity theft.

Thanks,

The PayPal Team

Lessons Learned with Bill Powell

FVPCA Membership Coordinator

In today's world we probably all use a USB flash drive (also known as a thumb drive, a jump drive and probably a few other names). These devices are much easier to carry around rather than the old floppies or even a CD (which is read only). They come in a variety of sizes (normally 1MB on up to even 32MB), shapes, and colors. If you watched the sales ads over the holidays you could find a wide variance in prices and quality. You might want to search the web for "Flash Drive Performance Comparison" or some similar words. Cheap isn't always the best (although that is usually my 1st choice – LOL).

Many come with a variety of programs already installed or available at the manufacturers web site. Usually there is an autorun program that launches a menu of the installed programs. You might try going to the manufacturer's web page and see if they have any downloads for their drives or take a look at www.nedwolf.com/freewareportable.htm. These little jewels are not the most stable of memory. The moral is that you should always have a backup of whatever you put on them. I recently learned this first hand... I plugged in my Sandisk flash drive and it told me that the drive was corrupt and needed to be reformatted. oooH Nooo! Fortunately I didn't have anything critical on it... I did a search on the web for "Flash Drive Recovery Procedures" and found several articles that detailed some options for recovering the files or at least saving the flash drive...

What I did... I went to Control Panel / Administrative Tools / Disk Management... Looking at this screen the flash drive showed up as unpartitioned. So, with nothing to lose, I right clicked on the flash drive and choose new partition... Following the directions I found on the web I selected quick format and fat32... Lo and behold it worked and I have my flash drive back....

Lesson learned...

Bill Powell



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There are a growing number of locations that offer free Internet via a wireless Wi-Fi connection! We would like to find a place where we could meet and have Wi-Fi too!

*THE FOX VALLEY
PC ASSOCIATION*

The Fox Valley PC Association is dedicated to the task of providing computer information to our fellow members. We are a non-profit organization. The group has been active since January 1985. The dues are \$30 per year. Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month (except December.)

The meeting place for (January) will be at the Oswego Civic Center, 5 Ashlawn Ave, Montgomery, IL The formal meeting starts at 9:15 A.M. Non-member visitors are always welcome. If you can, please come early & help with set-up. Thanks!

"USERS HELPING USERS"

Membership Renewals

None this month

Thank-You for your continuing support!!
Don't forget to check the mailing label for your dues date!

The "FOX TALES" Newsletter

The "Fox Tales" Newsletter is published monthly by the Fox Valley PC Association, Post Office Box 369, Oswego, IL 60543, a non-profit organization, established to provide information about IBM PCs and IBM Compatible personal computer systems (and almost anything "digital") to our members.

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Kane County Electronic Recycling Dates for 2009 February 13 & 14

Location:

Kane Co. Circuit Clerk Office
540 S. Randall Rd. St.Charles, Il 8:00am-12:00pm

Items Accepted for Recycling:

Personal Computers, Monitors, Printers, Scanners, Modems, Tape, Disk, CD Drives, Cables, Keyboards, Mice, Plotters (*Limit of 25 pieces on Towers/CPU's and Monitors*)

Televisions, Camcorders, Cameras, Stereo Equipment (no speakers), Game Players, Joysticks

Telephones, Cell Phones, Pagers, Answering Machines, Typewriters, Calculators, Adding Machines, Fax Machines, Shredders, Copiers, Postage Meters

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The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:

www.fvpca.org
Courtesy of APCUG



Have a computer hardware problem or a technical question? Head over to our website and click on the red question mark to send your question! We will research it and have an answer at the next meeting or sooner if needed.

January Program:

Exploring the Nintendo Wii

Kristofer Simon

and

Jon Jackman

The Next Meeting Will Be at 9:15 A.M.

January 17, 2009

At the Oswego Civic Center
5 Ashlawn Ave. Montgomery, Illinois