# Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for May 21, 2009

Carl Bulger presided.

Vic Kiviat, Chairman of the Website Committee, said that the old website at www.bowieseniors.org was removed by the Internet Services Provider (ISP), Gates.com, as soon as they were notified that we wouldn't be renewing for another year. Vic says that the new website's address is case sensitive: http://home.comcast.net//~BSCClub/index.htm . The new website address has been posted at Smart Computing.

Someone went to the store in Laurel that refills ink cartridges. He found that they don't refill Dell cartridges.

We had a visitor, a guest of Bob Davis: Jerry Cooperman, who also lives at Riderwood. He said that he is a member of the Capital PC User's Group and volunteers to rebuild old computers.

PROGRAM:

Dan Lee, Bob Blum, and Bob Rapczynski brought in computers to demonstrate how to upgrade memory, optical drives, hard drives, and other hardware.

Members circulated freely between the three computers observing, asking questions, and, in some cases, trying. For example, replacing a memory stick can require a little force with your fingertips to get it to snap into place.

Carl Bulger suggested that we find the documentation that came with our computers and read it before ordering parts. If the specifications for the Random Access Memory (RAM) can't be found, you may be able to look it up on one of the RAM manufacturer's websites. Crucial.com provides this service. Just enter the make and model number of your computer.

Newer computers tend to have Serial ATA (SATA) hard drives rather than the older ATA or IDE drives. The cabling for SATA drives is just four wires. The older IDE drives require flat cables with up to forty parallel conductors embedded in them and multipin connectors at each end and in the middle. Depending on which IDE connector your hard drive is connected to, you must select one of three options on the back of your hard drive by putting a jumper between the proper pins as designated in a diagram above the pins. The three options are Master, Slave, and Cable Select. The Master position is for the primary hard drive and the slave position is for a secondary hard drive or for an optical drive. Use Cable Select if you want the process to be automatic.

Dan Lee warned everyone to make sure that any replacement optical or hard drive will fit your cables and be compatible with your motherboard. His friend had to pay a restocking fee because he ordered the wrong configuration and had to return the drive to have it replaced with one compatible with his computer. He also mentioned that whether you buy the part locally or order it online, it is likely to come without some of the required screws, bolts, cables, etc. Bob Rapczynski suggested that you call him to see if he has what you need. He has cannibalized many computers and has a large stockpile of miscellaneous hardware, connectors, and screws.

Every computer case seems to open differently. Before you open yours for the first time, consult the instruction book so you won't damage anything.

The first thing you may notice after you open the case is how much dust and lint has accumulated inside. Computer technicians are leery of static electricity which can instantly destroy an expensive Central Processing Unit (CPU), memory stick, or any of many other electronic devices in your computer. Most use a can of compressed gas to blow out the dust and lint. Bob Rapcynski uses a vacuum cleaner. Computer technicians usually shy away from vacuum cleaners because they believe that they might induce static electricity. Bob tries to minimize static electricity by grounding the chassis. He does this by cutting the two main conductors in an old three-wire power cable leaving just the green ground wire. He then plugs one end into the power plug of the computer and the other end into the wall. If the wall plug is correctly wired, the chassis is then grounded to the house wiring ground. Another way to ground

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the chassis is to connect a wire between a metal part of the case and any good ground conductor. Some technicians go the extra mile and connect a wire between a clip on the chassis and a conducting strap around their wrist. This may be more necessary in the middle of winter when the interior air is very dry.  Newer, more expensive solid state devices are more likely to be damaged by static electricity because manufacturers are crowding transistors and conductors closer and closer  to provide better performance in smaller packages. Static electricity can jump the smaller gaps much easier.

A tool that is handy when working inside a computer is a headlamp.  Lightweight LED headlamps are sold at hardware stores.

Bob Rapczynski demonstrated his installation of Ubuntu 9.0.4 Linux on his computer.  It can be downloaded free of charge and runs a graphical user interface very similar to Windows.  You can also run an actual Windows operating system in a Virtual window if you choose.  Bob has two hard drives in his computer, one with Linux and the other with Windows.  As the computer boots up, he can choose which operating system he wants to use.

Ubuntu comes with the FireFox browser and Open Office (both free).  Open Office has a word processor that gives you the option of PDF output.  It also has a spreadsheet and a presentation module.  These three are similar to and compatible with Microsoft's Word, Excel, and Power-Point.

Thanks to Dan Lee, Bob Blum, and Bob Rapczynski.  It was a good and fun learning experience.