Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for Mar. 18, 2010

Carl Bulger attended for the first time since his hip replacement, but didn't feel like standing for any length of time, so Dan Lee presided.

Ted Tuck has volunteered to talk about Robotics at our next meeting on April 1st.

Dan Lee said that Tavon Jones, the Apple representative, postponed his presentation because he wants to wait until he has an IPad to demonstrate.

Computer Problems:

Carl Bulger's computer has a serious virus infection. It manifests itself with multiple windows claiming that the computer is infested with twenty or so malware programs. It starts in the Windows kernel: C:\Windows\System32. Smart Computing magazine told him that the virus can disable all of the security programs.

The Geek Squad cleaned his computer yesterday. Among other things they scanned the computer with MalwareByte's Anti-Malware. (When you have a computer problem you suspect is caused by malware, go to http://www.malwarebytes.org/index.php to download the free program.) Afterward, Carl ran a scan with his paid version of AVG Antivirus. It found no malware. So naturally, he thought the Geek Squad had cleaned the computer, and maybe they had, but when Mrs. Bulger went online to Yahoo, the problem returned.

Trend Micro and some of the other anti-malware vendors offer free online scans. Their motivation is to discover new anti-malware quickly so they can develop security measures and to attract new users for their paid products. Trend Micro's website for free prevention, detection, and cleanup tools is:
http://free.antivirus.com/

Microsoft usually sends out an updated version of its Malicious Software Removal Tool on the second Tuesday of each month. If you don't get a copy, you can go to www.microsoft.com/downloads and search for it. It not only detects malware, but it removes it, which some anti-malware programs don't do very well.

In answer to the woman who had a problem with the audio when using Skype for phone calls over the internet, Dan Lee brought in a short explanation of a problem he had and what he did about it.

Presentation:

We had problems with the projector, so Bob Blum had to fall back on his PowerPoint presentation and forget the live demonstration of backing up a computer with Macrium Reflect by imaging the hard drive and then restoring the image to the hard drive.

His presentation is posted near the bottom of our website's Training page: http://BSCClub/home.comcast.net/training.htm .

Bob reminded us that backing up your hard drive frequently is not enough. You also need to create a rescue CD containing an abbreviated operating system. You will use it to restore the image of your operating system and data to the hard disk if it fails or you replace it.

Macrium Reflect offers free downloads of a three different recovery disks. The minimal operating system on two of them are windows-based: PE for Windows 7 computers and Bart PE for Windows XP computers. (PE stands for "Pre-installed Environment".) The third one is Linux. It is usually the fastest and easiest one to use to restore any image. You don't need to know Linux to use it. Linux uses its GRUB (Grand Unified Boot Loader) to restore the image. Make a new rescue disk whenever Macrium Reflect upgrades to another version.

When restoring, Macrium Reflect gives you the choice of restoring the Master Boot Record (MBR) from the image or staying with what you have on the hard disk, if it is not corrupted.

You're not restricted to restoring the full image; you can restore individual files. To do so, use Windows Explorer to browse the image. Copy any file from the image and Paste it back on the hard disk.

You won't be able to restore individual messages in an email application; you'll have to restore

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the entire application. Someone suggested using a webmail application such as Google's Gmail which is stored online and has a very large storage capacity. I use a more archaic webmail application, MSN Explorer, which gives me the option of storing some messages on my computer to cut the time required to download new and previously read messages when starting the email application.

Many backup applications offer you the option of backing up files as they are altered and saved (differential or incremental backups). For this option you'll have to purchase the $40 version of Macrium Reflect or a competitor's backup application. Bob listed six sources of image backup software.

He recommends Macrium Reflect for users who boot two or more operating systems on the same computer even though each partition must be restored separately. To restore all partitions at one time, some have used Acronis True Image or Norton Ghost. Bob, I and others have had problems with Acronis True Image. At the time of his presentation an Acronis rescue disk refused to boot on his laptop and he had not yet gotten a response from their tech support.

The Windows System Imaging application in Windows 7 is difficult to access and slow.

Whichever backup application you choose, use it often so that you won't lose a lot if your system crashes or gets infected by a virus. Try restoring an image to make sure that you know how to do it and your software is configured correctly.

If you backup to a second hard drive, it will be susceptible to viruses and some system failures if it is left connected to the computer all of the time. Backup drives can be disconnected between image backups to reduce the chance of simultaneous loss of primary and backup drives.