

SLO Bytes Hard Copy

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This rich text format (.rtf) was selected for the newsletter to make it acceptable to most of the email programs used by SLOBYTES members. For text only (.txt) version, see attached file.

SLO Bytes Meeting Review, by Bill Avery

Our March Meeting opened with Ray introducing Mr. William Eyster of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Tri-Counties who thank us for our participation in providing them with the used/empty printer cartridges. He also described how his volunteer organization works in razing much needed funds for the needy in the Tri-Counties.

Following Mr. Ester's presentation, Ray announced the upcoming outside SIG meetings of the HTML and the Linux groups. Alan gave a presentation on another "sysinfo" testing program, like Belarc, which was discussed last month. Aida32 is thought to be better than Belarc, and is available at <http://www.aida32.hu/aida32.php> "AIDA32 is a professional system information, diagnostics and bench marking program running on Win32 platforms. It extracts details of all components of the PC. It can display information on the screen, print it, or save it to file in various formats like HTML, CSV or XML. For corporate users, AIDA32 offers command-line switches, network audit and audit statistics, remote system information and network management."

New versions of AIDA32 are downloaded by over 100000 individual persons each month. For professional purposes, over 5400 registered companies/organizations are using AIDA32 right now, according to their website.

It is an easy install, with only 1.8 MB download, and an excellent informational display interface. I generated a "Quick-Report" in plain text, and two other reports, one HTML, which I emailed to myself as a test, and one "MHTML". These were large files, and I am unsure what the MHTML format is all about. Be careful, because the default email address is their email report address (report@aida32.hu), so I sent a complete MHTML record of my machine to their site in Hungary - OOPS !

"For personal use: AIDA32 is a FREeware application, so it's free to distribute and use for any non-business purposes. " ... "For business, corporate, educational, organizational or government use: AIDA32 must be registered." That registration is also free. It seems like a very handy program to add to your personal or business computer.

Another program for inventory management of hardware assets (auditing program) is: "Hardware Inspector", available at: <http://www.hwinspector.com/download/index.html>
I did not try this one out, as my system is getting full, and I don't want to crash it while writing this article.

For the Main Meeting, I had a recorder which failed to save the details, so I'll be brief, as I am often asked to do. We had an excellent review of the subject: "The History and Current Status of Ziatech / Performance Technologies, in San Luis Obispo."

Our speaker was Jim Medeiros, Vice President and Division Manager of Performance Technologies, Computer Products Division in San Luis Obispo, California. He presented an analysis which is contained in an independent website discussion, so please check: <http://www.vdc-corp.com/embedded/press/02/pr02-35.html> , and see quotes below. The Performance Technologies corporate website is: <http://www.pt.com/> .

Their local facility is located at:

Performance Technologies, Inc.
1050 Southwood Drive
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Tel: (805) 541-0488

This location has been important to me, as it was the home for Vidar, and TRW, before Ziatech moved into that building. I worked for Vidar when I first came to SLO, and that kept me here long enough to struggle through a couple of quarters at Cal Poly. I saw the early Ziatech location on Broad Street, way back in the 80's, and several friends worked with them as they grew into the largest electronics business in town.

More recently, the acquisition of Ziatech by Intel was both hopeful and shocking, as it proved to be short lived. The

website report mentioned (above) notes:

"ZIATECH: BACK FROM THE GRAVE

On September 12, 2002, Performance Technologies, Inc. (NASDAQ:PT) announced that they had acquired the part of Intel Corporation (NASDAQ:INTC) Embedded Intel Architecture Division (EID) that had formerly been known as Ziatech, Inc., for an aggregate cash consideration of US\$ 3.8 million. The transaction is expected to be finalized on or before October 1, 2002. Although the deal appears, at first blush, to be a 'slam dunk' score for Performance Technologies, Venture Development Corporation (VDC) has identified several issues that must be addressed in order for Performance Technologies to realize the combined companies' potential in high performance embedded systems for datacom, telecom and other mission critical embedded applications."

"Performance Technologies, Inc. Founded in 1981, Performance Technologies (PT) is a publicly traded supplier of hardware and software networking and communications products for WAN and LAN environments. VDC projects PT's year 2002 revenues to be approximately US\$ 26 million, down from the US\$ 36.5 million cited in 2001 SEC reports. The company has been profitable every quarter since going public."

"The firm has expended considerable effort in the development of the PTMC (PCI Telecom Mezzanine Card) architecture, embodied in the PICMG 2.15 standard, and of Packet Switching Backplane technology, the first switch fabric backplane interconnect to have significant market impact. The latter is the subject of PICMG standard 2.16. Performance Technologies operates a printed circuit board surface mount technology line, located at its facility in Rochester, NY, where they manufacture board level products."

"Ziatech: The Source for High Performance CompactPCI Ziatech (San Luis Obispo, CA) was founded in 1976 by a gentleman named Bert Forbes. Ziatech operated as a closely held, private company until August of 2000, when it was purchased by Intel Corporation for US\$ 241 million in cash. Although not a wildly profitable concern, Ziatech built an excellent reputation as a supplier of high-end embedded computing products and systems. The company was creative and highly responsive to customer needs. Ziatech also struggled with some persistent challenges, including: high prices and uneven lead times. In addition to being the inventors of CompactPCI, Ziatech had also invented STD-32, a 32-bit extension to the original 8/16-bit STD bus, in 1989. (Just prior to the Intel acquisition, Ziatech had announced that they planned to exit the STD-32 market by year 2006.)"

"The primary source of revenue for Ziatech is CompactPCI single board computers (SBCs). In year 1999, merchant computer boards represented approximately 65% of the firm's total revenues."

In retrospect, " The initial strategy made sense. Telecom and datacom were exploding. CompactPCI was fast becoming the architecture of choice for high availability platforms in next generation networks. Intel needed its silicon to be the heart of those new systems. Ziatech could provide a strong channel-to-market for Intel silicon, and a solid platform on which to build new board-level and integrated systems capabilities at Intel EID." The report noted, "The Ziatech brand was killed, and with it much of the good will and brand loyalty that Ziatech had developed over 20 years. Rather than being perceived as the source of innovation for CompactPCI, the company was seen as a silicon channel for Intel."

We had some examples of their products, which Jim passed around the room. These are very high quality industrial standard computer systems on self-contained cards. Their new developments are based on using networking technologies to interconnect those cards through high speed backplanes, instead of using cables, which can slow systems down. Jim is currently very optimistic about the future of his company, and we appreciated his report to SLO Bytes.

We finished the meeting with a Quick Pick raffle of several donated items by Mr. William Eyster of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Tri-Counties, including a computer phone-microphone system, a keyboard hand rest to relieve typing stress, Christmas Cards (!), CD-Lens Cleaner, a Copy-Clip, compact repair tool kit, a neat canvas tote bag, and a couple of PC games donated to us by the MS Mindshare User Group Team.

President's Message

Sunday, May 4th, happenings:

At 1 PM Alan will be speaking on a variety of current computer topics. Just some of these topics.....

- - A problem which could occur if you updated Windows XP with the Q811493 update and a solution to fix it
- - How Knoppix Linux helped to diagnose a Windows problem

- Dropping prices of USB flash drives, where you can find the lowest prices and possible uses
- Taking a second look at reading newsgroups via a web browser
<http://support.microsoft.com/newsgroups/default.aspx>
- What is a Microsoft MVP?
- First there was serial ATA and now we have Serial Attached SCSI interface
- Questions, problems and comments are always welcomed

At 2:30 PM, our featured speaker will be Michael McKinney, Director of Marketing and Sales for TCSN.net. He will be describing the variety of TCSN Internet-related services, both from quantitative (types and capabilities) and implementation (how they work) points of view.

TCSN.net has been in the computer business for over 11 years and has been providing Internet services for almost 8 years. They are a many-faceted Internet Service Provider offering several primary Internet connectivity options as well as secondary, user-enabling support. Among the Internet options available from TCSN are: dial-up services, several flavors of DSL high speed access, and wireless broadband the latter being a capability of significant interest of late. TCSN offers Spam filtering for user email accounts, web hosting, classroom and on-line computer use training. They provide domain hosting, offer e-commerce-oriented packages supporting client business activities, can provide the robust bandwidth, server resources and infrastructure needed by a hosting provider, and can support the enabling of e-business efforts through website design tailored to meet client needs and specifications. Feature offered to business clients are secure on-line ordering systems and shopping cart systems that track customer purchase histories. TCSN.net offices are at 1306 Pine Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446. They may be reached at 805-227-7000 or toll free at 800-974-DISK (3475) and maintain a web site at <http://www.tcsn.net>.

The featured speaker at the 1 June SLO Bytes meeting will be Ralph Dallons, of Staples, Broad St., SLO. Ralph's presentation will be on PC Monitors.

 Take advantage of the four **learning CDs**: "Learn Windows XP, Excel, Word & Power Point" available for our members to check out (at Marvin's table) and use on their computers. Because of the demand, we have now two sets of the CDs.

 Our winner of the **Microsoft Office XP Professional** drawing was Ralph Jones. Congratulations Ralph!

 At our May meeting we will be selling \$2.00 raffle tickets (\$3.00 for non-members) for **Windows XP Professional**, a \$199.99 value (this is not an upgrade version). This is another product donated to us by the Microsoft "Mindshare User Group Team". Same rules apply as they did in our last drawing. The drawing for this prize will be at the end of our 1 June meeting. You don't have to be present to win, so mail in your check to Marvin (543 Gularte Rd., Arroyo Grande, CA 93420), or buy it at Marvin's table at our May or June meeting.

 If you have any **used ink-jet printer or toner cartridges** bring them to our meeting. We collect them (at Marvin's table) and turn them over to "Make A-Wish Foundation" who generate much needed funds for their organization by refurbishing and selling them.

--Ray Miklas

Treasurer's Report

March 15, 2003 - April 15, 2003

Income	
Membership Dues	\$300.00
Expenses	
Rent	\$75.00
Checking Account Balance	\$2,445.26
Savings Account Balance	\$601.34
Refreshments	\$22.54
Dividends	\$5.76

New Member
 Bill Knerr

Editor's Recommended Reading

This month I'm looking at Alaska club newsletters. The Alaska Computer Society PCUG PC News for March 03 has a column by "Bob Click" of the Greater Orlando (FL?) PCUG called "The Deal Guy". He has a long list of PC deals, one of which tells about "Fixlets". It's short so I'll copy it here.

"Don Singleton, APCUG Vice-president, alerted me to this one. It is called BigFix and is actually a free download. It analyzes your computer to see what fixes it might need, then guides you through them. It also alerts you of updates you need and does that for you. Here is their description:

"The BigFix solution leverages the reach of the Internet and the power of modern computers to create a mass preventive maintenance system that enables mass identification and elimination of computer problems before they cause failures. The BigFix solution can automatically monitor and detect a problem, pro-actively alert users or administrators to the problem before a failure occurs, and fix it on one or more machines at once with the click of a mouse. Because the Big-Fix solution can find and cure thousands, even millions of computers at once, it changes the nature and economics of technical support as well as desktop management. Unlike other available approaches, the BigFix solution simplifies maintenance, reduces support costs, and increases user satisfaction by finding problems before, not after, users experience a failure."

To download this product, go to www.bigfix.com.

For an in depth review of Bigfix see an article by Richard K. DeJongh of the Tulsa Computer Society at: <http://tcs.org/ioport/nov02/bigfix.htm>.

The URLs for the Alaska and Orlando club newsletters are <http://www.acs-pcug.org/newsletters.htm> and <http://www.dealsguy.com/>

The February issue of the Arkansas Oklahoma PCUG newsletter

<http://intrepid.myip.org/aopcug/files/news/feb2003.pdf> has interesting articles on Mozilla vs. Netscape and Software Download Sources <http://download.com.com/2001-20-0.html?legacy=cnet> and <http://tucows.com/>.

Letters to the Editor

You may have noticed that this is my first issue of *HARDCOPY*. If you have any comments, suggestions, wants, don't wants, beefs and/or ????, please e-mail me at junate@charter.net.

Club Information and Meeting Times

SLO Bytes, a PC Users Group dedicated to educate its members in the use of personal computers, digital devices and software, meets on the first Sunday of each month at the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Hall at 520 Dana Street, San Luis Obispo. All meetings are open to the public at no cost. Special interest groups meet from 1 to 2:00 PM and guest speaker presentations begin at 2:30 PM. Contact Guy Kuncir (489-1395, gkuncir@charter.net) or visit www.slobytes.org for additional information about SLO Bytes and the scheduled presentation.

Hard Copy is a monthly publication of SLO Bytes PC Users' Group located in San Luis Obispo, California. Information in this Newsletter is derived from both our own membership and other PC User Group Newsletters. The purpose of this publication is to inform our members of meetings and provide information related to the use of PCs and various Operating Systems.

Membership: Dues are \$25 per year. Full membership entitles you to our monthly newsletter, technical assistance, raffle gift drawing at the end of the meetings, and comradeships.

Article Submission: Deadline for submission of articles is the 15th of each month. Articles should be E-mailed to the editor at junate@charter.net

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Outside SIGs

HTML-Internet SIG normally meets at 6:30 PM on the Monday following our Sunday General Meeting at Ralph Sutter's home in Arroyo Grande. Call Ralph at (805) 489-8678 for directions

Linux SIG normally meets on Thursday at 6:30 PM (following our Sunday's General Meeting) at KCBX.net [a.k.a. SLONET] Training Center, 4100 Vachell Lane, SLO.

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Guy Kuncir (V.P./Programs) gkuncir@charter.net

Marvin Baxendale (Treasurer/Membership/Publishing) marvin@surfari.net

Ralph Sutter (Secretary/Web Master/HTML-Internet SIG) rsutter@pw-x.com

Bill Avery (Contributing Columnist/Win95/98 SIG)

Alan Raul (General SIG/Linux SIG)

Nancy Vrooman (Refreshments)

Peter Stonehewer (Refreshments)

Nate Wallenstein (Editor and contributing columnist)

Ken Stilts (Set-up/Clean-up)

Cliff Buttschardt (Set-up/Clean-up)

John Enos (Set-up/Clean-up)

Bill Palmerston (Set-up/Clean-up)

SLO Bytes Website www.slobytes.org

PDF version of this mailing available at:

<http://www.slobytes.org/news.htm>