

Technology Corner – by George Champine

### **PC disposal revisited**

Last issue we talked about PC disposal. Here is another option. Dell Computer will accept equipment for recycling or disposal for \$15 for up to 50 lbs max. They can arrange for free pickup in most areas. See <http://dell.com/recycling> for details.

### **Digital Photography and Computers**

Digital cameras are rapidly increasing in popularity, and now for the first time are outselling film cameras. I know that I will never buy another film camera. I find that I take more and better pictures with digital. Benefits of digital are: instantly see results, erase bad pictures, mail to others, and easy storage. Many high quality cameras are available from the major manufacturers (Nikon, Minolta, Canon, Kodak, Fuji, Sony, etc) for \$150 to \$300. Some are no bigger than a pack of cards. On a recent one-week vacation, I took 500 pictures, of which I deleted half almost immediately. But the remaining half were much better than I would have taken with film.

I recommend 3X optical zoom (digital zoom is worthless). If you want to make 8X10 inch prints you need three megapixels resolution; for 4X6 pictures two megapixels are enough. The pictures are stored in the camera on a memory chip. There are several sizes and formats for the memory chip. I like to use one that holds 128 megabytes, which is enough for 300 pictures with my three megapixel camera. I recommend getting a camera with a rechargeable battery as digital cameras use a lot of battery power.

On trips I take several memory chips or take a laptop for storage. When the memory chip is full, I transfer the pictures into a computer. In the computer I review them for quality, delete the bad ones, and file the rest. Windows XP has a “film strip” viewing capability (selected in the pull-down menu “Views”) which I find useful for reviewing pictures and deleting the bad ones. Minor defects in the picture can be corrected with an image editing package, such as eliminating red eye, correcting colors or brightness, removing or adding people to the picture, etc. There are several image editing packages available: my favorites are Paintshop Pro or Picture-IT, although the best package is Adobe Photoshop (it is expensive).

I store pictures in directories by date and subject name. Thus, pictures from my recent trip are stored in a directory I named “2004 Florida”. Within that directory I used subdirectories named “Everglades”, “Miami”, “Key West”, etc. XP has a full screen view called “slide show” which I find very useful for enjoying the final pictures or showing them to others.

High quality printers are now available that produce prints of quality equal to photo processing. The best photo quality printers are from Epson using glossy paper, but others are quite good. There is a good print software package in Windows XP when you are in the “My Pictures” directory. If you have an earlier operating system, you probably need

to buy a printing package such as Microsoft Picture-It (my favorite) or Ulead. Another option is to take the memory chip to a local drug store or Wal-Mart who will print them immediately for less than 50 cents per print. Overall, I find that I print relatively few pictures, preferring to enjoy viewing them on the computer.

If you want to enjoy the benefits of digital with a film camera, you can scan prints into the computer with a scanner. Many good quality scanners are available for \$50-\$100. I have scanned my more than 1000 of my important pictures taken before going digital.

Finally, a good way to save, distribute, and/or backup your digital pictures is to burn them onto a CD or DVD. A writeable CD now costs only about 10-20 cents and will hold more than 2000 pictures. I highly recommend this.