



August 2, 2001 Meeting Announcement *Directors' Favorites*

The August 2nd DVPC meeting is going to be Directors' Favorites. This is when our Board of Directors members roll up their sleeves, put on their dancing shoes, pull out their computing ephemera, and give demonstrations of their technical legerdemain. We usually don't know in advance everything that we're going to see, but you can be sure it's going to be especially interesting.

Perhaps the highlight of the evening will be Nick Chase. Nick will bring his computer music hardware and software and give us a demonstration of the latest equipment and techniques that are making the use of computer such an important element in today's music world.

Our other Board members will discuss and/or demonstrate their own favorite software, hardware, and computing toys. And you know that old saying about our Board members: "The difference between Board members and boys is the price and quantity of their toys!" – and we're sure to see an interesting collection of those Board members' toys.

DVPC meetings are held in the lobby conference room in Building B at the Bank of America Technology Center office complex in Concord, located near the northeast corner of Clayton Road at Galindo (see the Map to Monthly Meetings on page 15). Please use the main entrance of the building, which is in the center of the front of the building that faces Clayton road. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting starts at 7:00 p.m.

The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at Bank of America building B. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to each DVPC monthly meeting.

We'll also have the Networking Table from 6:30 to 7:00; if you have something to sell or trade, need technical help, or just want to exchange views, visit the Networking Table. We will have one of our pre-meeting games, with a great prize for the winner! Also, as usual, we'll have library disks and those great DVPC mugs (version 2) for sale, SIG news, and some of our usual great door prizes.

See you at the August meeting!

What's Inside

Let's chat Internet Phone	Page 2
Fun and Games (not!) Ron Ogg	Page 3
SIG News Nick Chase	Page 4
Switch to the <i>Diablo Blue</i> Web Edition	Page 6
California Copy Source Ad	Page 6
Email Meeting Notification	Page 7
Value Net Ad	Page 8
Here Today, Gone... Steve Bass	Page 9
Special Raffle Promotion	Page 9
Pre-Meeting Game News Craig Peterson	Page 10
DVPC Board Meeting Minutes Tom Krauss	Page 11
Up-Up-&-Away George Griffin	Page 12
Computer Crossword Craig Peterson	Page 13
Information About DVPC	Page 14
Membership Application	Page 15
Directions and Map to DVPC Meetings	Page 15
DVPC Calendar	Page 16

President's Corner

by [Alan Mildwurm](#)

I am writing this almost as the last fireworks go up in smoke. In fact I used my EYEMODULE to make a few 5 second movies of the display. Every year the City of San Ramon puts on a stupendous fireworks display and this year was no exception. I would love to know how they do the happy faces in fireworks. Very cool indeed. I'll upload the fireworks to the website in the next day or so. The movies aren't bad considering they were taken with a Handspring Visor at night – but watching fireworks on TV or even a computer monitor somehow misses the mark.

Speaking of TV, I have become hooked on a program on the TECH CHANNEL (one of the Digital Cable offerings – channel 294 in the Tri-Valley) called The Screen Savers with Leo Laporte, Patrick Norton and Rick Sargent. Very entertaining. My only criticism is I wish they would go into a little more depth in their segments. The one and one half hour show airs daily and is repeated a few times throughout the day. What this fast paced show lacks in depth is made up by their web site www.techtv.com/screensavers, which is truly excellent and contains all the depth and detail you want – together with links and downloads!. It will whet your appetite for more!

(Continued on page 2)

let's chat Internet Phone from [Bestn Goods](#)

let's chat Internet Phone

The **let's chat IPT2.1** is the second generation of Internet phone handsets for computers. Specifically designed for Home or SOHO users of Internet Phone.

FEATURE RICH – AND AFFORDABLE

It connects to the PC's sound card and allows the external PC Speakers to be re-connected. This avoids the necessity of having to disconnect your speakers to use Internet Phone. **PROBLEM SOLVED!** This is the "Cure-All" ... with lots of benefits!

Advantages

It's primary advantage is the automatic muting of the PC speakers when it is lifted from it's holder or the desk. There is no need to lower the volume or disconnect the PC speakers during it's use. When you've finished with your phone call, simply return the handset to it's holder or set it on the desk, your speakers are automatically turned back on! Simple, and convenient.

The **let's chat IPT2.1** permits users to receive "phone to PC" calls while online, or to make "PC to Phone" call whenever you wish. It works with most internet phone services. We currently use Net2Phone.

Application examples and areas of use

- PC-to-PC phone and phone to PC Internet telephony
- click-to-call services
- universal computer microphone
- works great with Yahoo Messenger and MSN Instant Messenger
- works great with [Cisco IP and Cisco softphone](#)

Features and Benefits

- **NEW** - Now comes with a full 2 year manufacturers Warranty!
- PC speakers can be connected to the auxiliary female stereo plug
- PC speakers are muted when the handset is lifted from it's holder or from the desk
- Shielded, extra-long, partially coiled cord with a self-adhesive fixing clip
- the cord is sufficiently long to reach under-the-table PC's
- convenient earpiece volume control
- self adhesive handset holder for mounting on the PC monitor; frees table space
- Mylar speaker (does not influence color on your monitor)
- high quality, noise canceling microphone – ideal for voice and speech applications
- easy to install and operate; only one connection cable; works with any IP telephony, voice or sound application.

*You can visit the **let's chat** web site at www.bestngoods.com and learn more about and/or purchase a unit, or come to the August DVPC meeting where we will have one in our raffle!*

President's Corner...

(Continued from page 1)

This show is just fun. You can tell the hosts are having a blast as they skip from segment to segment in rapid fire action – viewers can interact by web cam, email, faxes – you name it. Following Screensavers is Silicon Spin hosted by John Dvorak – always timely and interesting. The only downside is that from 10 p.m. to midnight you get glued to your TV!

In August – come watch the Board entertain you! See you then, Alan.

Fun and Games (not!) with Microsoft Publisher by [Ron Ogg](#), DVPC

Well, I guess it's just fate. If you read the "July, 2001 Announcement" story on the first page of last month's issue of *Diablo Blue*, you read the following glowing comment I made about Office XP... or, more exactly, about Microsoft Publisher 2002 which is part of Office XP Professional:

'Publisher (which I use for this newsletter) saves files that are about 60% smaller than Publisher 2000. If you've been sitting on the fence about upgrading, take another look at Office XP.'

It's amazing how things can come back to bite you in the posterior. If you've been wondering why the Web edition of the July *Diablo Blue* was so late, it's because of a wee change Microsoft made to Publisher 2002. One small step forward for Microsoft, one **GIGANTIC** step backward for some Publisher users, including yours truly!

Here's the short form of how the monthly edition of *Diablo Blue* has been generated in printed and Web versions, using Microsoft Publisher 2000:

1. The publication from the prior month is copied to the current month's folder and the file is renamed to the current month and year.
2. The old articles are deleted, the page headings are changed to the current month and year, and the calendar is deleted.
3. The new articles are copied to the now mostly empty publication, the calendar is updated, and the document is saved.
4. The master for California Copy Source (our printer) is printed.
5. The file is saved as a Web site using the *Create Web Site from Current Publication* menu item.

Step 5 generates about 11 or 12 GIF or JPG graphics files (from the images that are part of every issue) the largest of which is 79 KB for the Value Net ad, and all of the rest much smaller, and 16 HTML files (one for each page of the publication). At the top of each page there are links to the first, prior, and next pages of the publication to make navigation easier. All of these files (not including the Adobe Acrobat pdf file for the month's issue) total about 302 KB. Not bad at all!

So I rushed home from the Office XP event at the Metreon, gleefully installed Publisher 2002 that came as part of the copy of Office XP that I had purchased. Creating the July newsletter was a snap, and (as I reported above) the publication's file size was a amazingly smaller than with Publisher 2000. I generated the July issue of *Diablo Blue* using Publisher 2002, printed the master pages, and took it to California Copy Source so it would be ready for Peggy Johnson to pick up, stamp, and mail to all of the eager DVPC members who get the printed edition. That takes care of steps 1 through 4 outlined above. And the file size was less than 40% of the size of the prior month's issue. Good Publisher! Very, very good Publisher!!

Next, I went to step 5. The steps to save the July publication as a Web page looked more-or-less the same as Publisher 2000. So far, so good.

No, so far so horribly bad! Bad Publisher! Bad, bad Publisher!!

Instead of 11 or 12 graphics files, there were over 100. And some were **huge** (like one at 360 KB).

There were 16 page files. That's OK, one per page of the publication. But there were a bunch of other files, some with a .XML extension, and some with strange file extensions.

And here's the real kick to the posterior: these files totaled **over 1.8 MB** in size. That's versus **only 302 KB** when the same thing was done using Publisher 2000. That's **6 times larger, folks!**

(Continued on page 6)

Moving? Changing Your E-mail Address?
Tell us so you will continue receiving Diablo Blue!
E-mail your name and new information to changes@dvpc.org

SIG NEWS Compiled by [Nick Chase](#), SIG Coordinator, DVPC, 680-4211

Be sure to see the DVPC Calendar on [page 16](#) for the date and time of each SIG meeting, and any changes in meeting location or schedule.

Access/Visual Basic SIG [Ted Armstrong](#), SIG Leader – 939-4096

The Access/Visual Basic SIG meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. We are meeting at the San Francisco State University Extension at 1990 N. California Blvd., Suite 20, in Walnut Creek across the street from the Walnut Creek BART station and upstairs from the Federal Express office. Everyone who is interested in Access, Visual Basic, and VBA is encouraged to attend the SIG meetings. For more information go to the Access/Visual Basic web pages on the DVPC web site at www.dvpc.org/sig_vbaccess/.

Advanced Developers SIG [Ron Ogg](#), SIG Leader – 415-281-0431

The Advanced Developers SIG is a learning co-op. Every month we choose a topic and let people know where they can learn about it. We then get together and go over the information on a computer with a projector. We hope that if everyone learns a little on their own, and when we get together everyone can learn a lot. If you are an advanced developer you are invited to join the ADSIG. Beginners will want to get some serious development experience before joining the SIG.

We meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month, at 2000 Crow Canyon Place, Suite 185, in San Ramon. Take the Crow Canyon exit off of 680 and go east to the first signal. Turn left and go to the third driveway on your left; there is a large sign at the driveway entrance that says "2000". Turn in and enter into the building at your left.

Advanced Users SIG [Jeff and Sharon Noyer](#), SIG Co-Leaders – 778-4348

The Advanced Users SIG meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at 4208 Amargosa Drive in Antioch. Directions: Go east on Highway 4 through Antioch to the Hillcrest Avenue exit. At the light at the end of the exit ramp, go right onto Hillcrest Avenue, and then stay towards your left. At the 3rd light, Hillcrest Avenue turns to the left. Go left and stay on Hillcrest. (Landmark: "The Crossings" Shopping Center is at intersection). At the 4th light, go left onto Wildhorse Drive. (Landmark: 7-Eleven on corner at intersection). At the 2nd left turn, go left onto Meadow Lake Drive. At the 4th right turn, go right onto Amargosa Drive. 4208 Amargosa Drive is the 3rd house on your right, blue and white one-story. The Advanced Users SIG is for anyone interested in discussing advanced topics such as hardware and software issues, cutting-edge technologies, networking, Windows NT Server and Workstation, troubleshooting, etc. Please join us to participate in this very informative and educational forum. We hope to see you at the meeting!

Genealogy eSIG [Peggy Johnson](#), SIG Leader – 676-7522

The DVPC Genealogy SIG is a group of computer genealogists who share helpful websites, databases and source information found on the internet. It's an opportunity for members seeking help to put forth a question or problem to the SIG and receive suggestions and advice. When you locate a useful website, database or visit a research facility, please email the group of the details so we also can take advantage of this information. If you wish to be included in this Genealogy SIG, please email Peggy Johnson, pegszone@aol.com.

Education and Entertainment SIG [Alan Mildwurm](#), SIG Leader – 510-770-5770

The Education & Entertainment SIG usually meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Montevideo School in San Ramon at 7:30 p.m. Check the DVPC web site (www.dvpc.org) for information about each month's meeting. The E&E SIG is oriented to exploring the best in education and entertainment software for the PC. Come back in the fall when everyone is invited to attend our meetings, and bring your kids along - they'll have a great time, too! Directions for our next meetings: Take 680 to Bollinger Canyon Road, go west to San Ramon Valley Blvd., go south to Montevideo Rd. and turn left. Proceed east on Montevideo about 3 blocks to Broadmoor and turn left. The school is 1 block on the right. We meet in Room 22.

Internet SIG [Craig Peterson](#), SIG Leader – 671-7025

The Internet SIG meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at Computer [\(Continued on page 5\)](#)

SIG NEWS...

(Continued from page 4)

Renaissance, 959 Contra Costa Blvd. in Pleasant Hill. We cover everything about the Internet, from browsing and email to creating your own web site and the tools for doing so. For more information, contact Craig Peterson by email at compmail@pacbell.net or phone at 671-7025.

For August, we recommend the following sites: (8/1) Francis Scott Key's Birthday www.theshop.net/slworley/fckey.html; (8/9) Betty Boop's Birthday www.geocities.com/Hollywood/6773/; (8/23) First Photograph of Earth From the Moon www.nasa.gov/. If you like these sites and/or can suggest better ones, then join us as we explore the "wild, wild web".

Microsoft Project SIG [Elias Asmar](#), SIG Leader – 299-8500

The Microsoft Project SIG meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month at InterPro ADF's office at 3569 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 210 in Lafayette. Park in the lot behind Radio Shack. The entrance to suite 210 is at the back of the building. Enter through the door marked "210" at the parking lot end of the walkway from the street and take the stairs to the second floor. Everyone who is interested in Microsoft Project and project management is invited to attend. If you plan on attending, please call Elias Asmar at 925-299-8500, Fax 925-299-8511, or send an email message to him at: elie.asmar@iadf.com.

New Users SIG [Bill Earl](#), SIG Leader – 939-5874

The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at Bank of America building B. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to each DVPC monthly meeting.

PC 101 SIG [Craig Peterson](#), SIG Leader – 671-7025

Remember, PC 101 (a class on how to use the computer) will be holding its first class at the new time and place this month. We will be meeting the Saturday following the general meeting in the community room of the Concord Police station, 1350 Galindo Street. The classes will start at 1:00 pm and end at 3:00. Join us for some hands on, one on one, help at the nuts and bolts of using computers.

Photo SIG [Chuck Graham](#), SIG Leader – 680-1333

The Photo SIG usually meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at Graham Family Photo, 5100-35 Clayton Road, Concord. Vineyard Center at Ayers Road next to KMart. Call for directions at 925 680-1333 or check out our map at www.grahamphoto.com. Please bring anyone that is interested the Photo SIG. Please continue to let me know what your interest are. Also be sure to see our page on the DVPC web site at www.dvpc.org/photo.html.

Real Estate SIG [Bill Thompson](#), SIG Leader – 693-0174

The Real Estate SIG meeting location is still being researched, so meetings are postponed until a new location can be finalized. The relocation is required because the Insurance Commissioner's office is prosecuting 5 other title companies for current RESPA violations. My boss and I are trying to figure out how to side step the commissioners office and make our efforts legal. If you have any ideas they would be appreciated. Contact SIG Leader Bill Thompson at 925-998-8530 or email at thompson@dlsnetwork.com for additional information.

Windows SIG [Ron Ogg](#) (415-281-0431) and [Walt Parsons](#) (934-0775), SIG Co-Leaders

The Windows SIG usually meets at the Community Room at the Concord Police Department Building on the first Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. We discuss the latest version of Windows, demonstrate interesting shareware and freeware, and have random access sessions where we all try to answer SIG members' questions. Everyone who uses, is interested in, or is curious about Windows on their PC is invited to attend.

Directions: The Concord Police Department is at 1350 Galindo Street in Concord. From the 242 Freeway take Clayton Road east to Galindo and turn right; the Police Department building is 3 blocks south on your left. From Highway 24 take Monument Blvd. east and continue on Monument Blvd. to where it changes to Galindo; the Police Department building will be on

Fun and Games (not!) with Microsoft Publisher...

(Continued from page 3)

I looked at the content of each of the page files. They were filled with XML constructs, Cascading Style Sheets, and other marvelous bleeding-edge state-of-the-art features. None of which are needed for the Web version of *Diablo Blue*. And which would make it unreadable by anyone who uses an old browser. The graphics files were a real puzzle. Many were present in two versions (GIF and either PNG or JPG), and many were graphic versions of the HTML page files and graphic versions of individual articles – where were these supposed to be used?

I opened the first page in my browser, and discovered that the pages weren't even rendered correctly! The masthead included extraneous graphic elements. Alan's *President's Corner* article had text overlaying other text, making parts of it unreadable. Some articles had the last sentence (or two or three) cut off. Some articles were placed as graphic images instead of text, increasing the size of the page by tens of thousands of bytes, and any links in articles placed as graphics were displayed without the link – which would be expected since they were not being placed as text. The links to the first, prior, and next pages were all missing, complicating navigation.

(Continued on page 7)

Switch to the Diablo Blue Web Edition

*"I am a real computer person and as such recognize the ultimate reality of the **'Paperless Society'**. In keeping with this spirit and in an effort to help DVPC reduce overhead costs, I say "Nay" to a written newsletter. Give it to me electronically, I want to get my copy of DVPC's *Diablo Blue* off the Web. (I can always print it out on blue paper and don't even have to admit that I did!)"* Turn in this form at the monthly meeting – or email to:

nopaper@dvpc.org

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email address for meeting notification: _____

Also notify me about these SIGs:

CALIFORNIA COPY SOURCE

State-of-the-Art Electronic Printing
DESKTOP PUBLISHING - COPYING . PRINTING

1676 No. California Blvd., Plaza #119
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

(925) 256-6898

10% Discount for DVPC Members with this Ad!

Formerly Krishna Copy Center

Fun and Games (not!) with Microsoft Publisher...

(Continued from page 6)

In other words, even though the file size of the publication was considerably smaller by using Publisher 2002, the Web pages generated were huge and basically unviewable.

I have three desktop computers and a server at home on my network. One old desktop computer is used primarily for data storage. And that computer still has Office 2000 installed. Including (thank goodness!) Publisher 2000. So I was able to save the publication in Publisher 2000 format, regenerate the Web page using Publisher 2000, and was finally ready to upload it to our Web site.

Of course, as we all know, Murphy was an optimist. The fact that I had so much trouble generating the July *Diablo Blue* for our Web site wasn't the end of this little tale.

Last month, after uploading the June issue to the Web site, I received a notice from GlobalScape about a new version of CuteFTP: CuteFTP Pro. Since I have found a number of glitches when using CuteFTP I decided to upgrade to this new Pro version. When I tried to use it to upload the July issue to the Web site it hung and wouldn't upload any files. I called GlobalScape tech support, and of course no one was available to talk to me, and no one called me back (does this sound like one of Walt Parsons' *Curmudgeon* articles, or what?). I then downloaded three different freeware FTP programs, and none of them would work, either. Finally, I decided the best thing to do would be to uninstall CuteFTP Pro and reinstall CuteFTP. While CuteFTP is acting even more strangely than it did before (for example, I often have to connect to our Web site several times before the folders and files on the site are accessible, and opening some empty folders causes CuteFTP to hang), I was finally able to get everything uploaded on July 4.

A Patch, a Patch, My Kingdom for a Patch...

This isn't the end of the story. On July 6 I received my first copy of the Office XP email newsletter from Microsoft. It included an interesting announcement: there was a downloadable patch for Publisher 2002 at <http://office.microsoft.com/ProductUpdates/default.aspx>. The patch is described as follows:

(Continued on page 9)

Email Meeting Notification Available by Ron Ogg, DVPC

We're providing an Email Notification service for the DVPC monthly meeting, and for SIGs as well, for all current, paid-up members. If you're interested in receiving an email message announcing each monthly meeting, and for the SIGs you attend, fill out this form and mail to the address on page 16 of this copy of *Diablo Blue*. Note that there's no separate notification for the New Users' SIG since it's held on the same night as the monthly meeting.

Send me Email notification of each monthly DVPC meeting:

Name _____

Email Address _____

Also send me Email notification of each of the SIG meetings I've checked below:

Access/VB SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Microsoft Project SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced Developers SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	PC 101 SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Entertainment SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photo SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Genealogy eSIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Real Estate SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windows SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attn: DVPC Members!
Value Net is your best value for
ADSL (for home or office)!

Value Net
doesn't charge
extra for ADSL!

Value Net

ADSL is a remarkable new technology that allows fulltime high speed connection to the Internet, and Value Net isn't even charging you for it! For home (single station) ADSL, you only pay our regular low monthly rate (see below), and Pacbell charges only \$39/month for the DSL line. For this low flat rate, you are always on, at speeds that put dial-up to shame!

Special plan for DVPC members:
PPP Dial-up \$15/mo (when paid quarterly)
with ADSL, only \$54/month total!

Value Net Internetwork Services

2855 Mitchell Dr., Ste 105
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Phone: (925) 943-5769

On the Web: www.value.net

E-Mail: info@value.net

Available Services include:

- ADSL
- Frame Relay
- ISDN Lan-to-Internet
- Web Hosting
- Centrex ISDN
- Custom Business Solutions

Get a Friend to Join DVPC!

Fun and Games (not!) with Microsoft Publisher...

(Continued from page 7)

The Microsoft Publisher 2002 Update: June 21, 2001 provides the highest levels of security and stability available for your version of Publisher 2002. When creating and posting a Web page using Publisher 2002, the size of the Web page is larger than a similar Web page created using an earlier version of Publisher. This increase in size can cause slower uploading and downloading of the page. This download increases the performance of Publisher 2002 under these circumstances. This update is part of Microsoft's continued effort to provide the latest product updates to customers.

I immediately downloaded and installed the patch, and it did make a big difference. The overall size of the generated files is only around 800 KB (vs 1.8 MB, but still much larger than the 302 KB that Publisher 2000 generated). And there are still three times as many image files generated, and all of the rendering problems that were created by the unpatched version are still present in the web pages generated by the patched version.

My Conclusion...

I **still** recommend Office XP. And Publisher 2002, unless you're going to use it to generate Web sites from publications. If that's a major use you have for Microsoft Publisher, stick with Publisher 2000. What I'm doing is using Publisher 2002 to create a publication, saving it in Publisher 2000 format, then opening it using Publisher 2000 on my other PC and using it to generate the web pages.

And besides all of that, the dog ate my homework, too!

Here Today, Gone in a Month or Two by [Steve Bass](#), Pasadena IBM Users Group

Think it's bad now? Wait a year and more dot.coms will be dot.gones

Get out your hankies, folks, I've got a sob story for you. This is an actual e-mail I received recently. I changed the name so I wouldn't get sued and [*annotated the e-mail within the brackets with what the company was really thinking*].

"It is with deep regret [*but not lots of remorse*] that we inform you that we will be discontinuing our very-cool.com service effective March 28th, 2001 [*Don't worry. You'll see us again. We're starting something just as dumb next month*].

Due to current market conditions [*actually we overspent like crazy*], we have found it impossible to continue to offer this service [*'cause our venture capitalists finally got wise*].

While we will endeavor to keep the service operational [*actually, one server, the slow one, and the only one even the creditors didn't want*] and fully functional until late March [*at least the front page of the Web site, just enough to fool the creditors*], we can make no guarantees of up-time or performance [*but guaranteed it's not going to be great*].

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you retrieve any data that you desire [*along with a zillion other people, slowing the site to a crawl*] and transition to an alternative provider at the earliest possible date [*like today, okay? 'Cause we're not sure if our ISP will give us access to the servers much longer*]."

(Continued on page 10)

Special Raffle Promotion

Bring a guest to a *DVPC* meeting, you get 10 Raffle tickets!

If your guest joins at the meeting, you get 10 Raffle tickets –
and your new member guest *also* gets 10 Raffle tickets!!

Pre-Meeting Game News by [Craig Peterson, DVPC](#)

Well, we have all had a month to rest up and get ready for this month's game.

See Peggy, Stan (or whoever is at the table when you enter) and get your puzzle.

Be sure you turn it in before the first speaker (yes, those who come early get more time to work on it) and one member will get a prize. Good luck!

Here Today, Gone in a Month or Two...

(Continued from page 9)

Circling the Drain

In the last few months, sites that I actually used—and some I was about to try--have landed belly up.

- Freeworks.com, a truly wonderful site--and one I wrote about in a nationwide magazine—ran out of money in February, '01.
- PlanetRx.com, one of about five drug and prescription sites, closed their doors in March. They're urging me to move to drugstore.com, who will likely shift the business to WebRX in a few months.
- AcmePet? Petopia.com? Slammed their doggie doors and were scarfed up by PetSmart and PetCo.
- eStamps, one of the great innovators of online postage took a licking, canceling their service, and encouraging customers to get in line and switch to Neopost Online's Simply Postage. (No thanks.)
- Dow Jones closes Work.com, laying off over 100 staffers.
- Paypal, a terrific service that's doing well merged with X.com, the online bank. Within three months, X.com disappeared, with not a mention on Paypal's site.
- Driveway.com, Netdrive.com, and Docspace.com, all online storage sites, and all history.

So Who You Gonna Trust?

So obviously, if you're thinking of depending on a new web site for anything important, you're going to have to make some informed choices. If you get a look at the company's Form 1040.com (see page 3) you'll have a big edge.

One industry insider said to me, "don't use the online storage sites for permanent storage. Considering how many online storage sites are around, it's no wonder they've lasted this long. My bet is that iDrive will be one of the few to survive."

PC World's curmudgeon, Steve Manes advised that, "Free services may be particularly flaky, and doubtless more will fail." (see www.pcworld.com/features/article/0,aid,41086,00.asp).

Protecting Yourself

I have a few recommendations; things you can do to defend yourself against losing data, money, or credit card numbers you have online.

- **Diversify.com:** Whatever you do, don't depend on any single free file storage service. Take the extra time to store your files in at least two places. Even if the online site is rock solid financially, they may become temporarily unavailable. Better, increase the odds that your precious data is safely stored online — and easily retrievable--by choosing a service that's fee-based.
- **Withdraw.com:** Never leave more money on an online service than you can afford to lose. For instance, I leave \$5 in my Paypal account, transferring funds to my real-world bank whenever the amount reaches \$25. Ditto for the many of you selling used books on Amazon.com and Half.com.
- **Minimum.com:** eStamps let users get a full refund but hassled them, asking for the return of the electronic vault, a small electronic gadget. Alternately, they gave users up to two months to use up their postage, fine if you send out lots of mail. My advice? If you try an electronic postage gizmo, buy just enough postage that you'll use in a month, and no more than you're willing to lose.
- **Disposable.com:** One fear many of us have is an online store passes away and passes along your credit card number. The solution? Disposable credit cards. Many companies, such as American Express and MBNA, provide single-use credit cards. The randomly generated credit-card number is used for that one transaction and won't be used again. The purchase is billed to the shopper's account, but the account's actual credit-card number is kept off the Web. So the online merchant doesn't know your real credit card number and the account number never goes out over the Internet.
- **DigDeep.com:** If you've invested lots of time and money in, say, an online e-commerce site, or a stock

(Continued on page 11)

Here Today, Gone in a Month or Two...

(Continued from page 10)

market service, keep your ear to the ground. Actually this is good advice no matter what type of financial stew you have cooking online. My advice is to use the Internet to get a belly sense of how the company is doing and where they're going.

One thing to watch for are rumors that a company may be gobbled up by a bigger firm. While that may be okay, a lot depends on who's buying. For instance, Intel's famous for their purchase and desert strategy. They bought a terrific online and callback tech service, promoted it like all get out, and then abandoned it in less than a year. That was undoubtedly painful for the investors. Worse, though, are the poor schnooks trying to sell products on the Internet.

ICat was an Intel fiasco. ICat was a successful company providing the front- and back-ends for many e-com merchants. I wrote about them in PC World in 1999, and they were doing a terrific job. ICat was doing so well, Intel bought them, also giving them a virtual kiss of death. They were gone in less than a year. The lesson? If you were paying attention, you would have learned about the Intel buyout and started moving to another e-com site.

So checking a few web-savvy sites often will give you a little bit of an edge. The two sites I visit regularly provide a different perspective on the online business.

- **www.thestandard.com** A site with enough between-the-lines reading to make it worth a weekly visit. For instance, thinking of investing in an online magazine? Not a great idea. It's becoming clear that Salon's (www.salon.com) not doing so well. They're shifting to the model only the Wall Street Journal has found successful—subscription based access.
- **www.ecompany.com** Lots of stuff here but focus on Amy Kover's STREET LIFE column.
- **www.****edCompany.com** This famous site is based on the classic parlor game of deadpool--picking celebrity deaths with points earned based on odds, usually the age of the celebrity. (I can't repeat the actual name of the site. But I will say they buck the trend, and in order to fill in the first four asterisks, tuck your hands in your pocket, think for a minute, and maybe you'll have some luck. And *be careful*: Once you figure out the word, type in the URL exactly or you'll end up at some porn site. The site's variation on the deadpool game is that they bet on companies instead of people. "The lines are a little blurred," they say, "when dealing with companies because there is rarely a clean-cut death." ****edCompany is an essential tool when protecting yourself against the demise of dot.coms.
- **www.business2.com** Short, tightly written pieces with plenty of details. Writers to follow include Jenny Oh, Jim Welte, and Kevin McLaughlin. (Stick their names in the search field.)
- **www.fundalarm.com** While not a site to protect you against failing dot.coms, fundalarm is so valuable, I included it here. Their tagline is "know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and know when to run." Sure it sounds like poker but they're talking about mutual funds, and the guy gives away free, meaningful, and irreverent advice.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World Magazine, frequently writes for Forbes ASAP, Working Woman, and Family Circle, and is the president of the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He can be reached at stevebass@earthlink.net. Sign up for Bass's online newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes

by [Tom Krauss](#), DVPC Secretary

Meeting Date: 7/5/01 **Time:** 7:00 pm **Location:** Alan Mildwurm's house

As announced earlier, since the regular July meeting night fell on the day after the 4th of July, the regular meeting was cancelled. And since the odds of a quorum of the Board showing up for the July Board meeting were slim without a general meeting to remind them, the Board meeting for July was cancelled, too.

This worked out well in one respect. Due to travel schedules our beloved Diablo Blue Editor Ron Ogg called for all articles to be submitted by July 8. This was three days before the scheduled July Board meeting would have occurred on Wednesday the 11th. How could I have written the minutes three days before the meeting?

Of course, who would have noticed? Certainly not the Board. By the time we get home the after a meeting we have forgotten everything we said and did anyway. For that matter, I have never let a little thing like missing a meeting prevent me from writing the minutes in the past, so I guess it would have worked out. In fact, it did work out, because here are the minutes!

New Business:

Raffle prizes: Alan gave a sneak preview of some of the items to be offered as raffle prizes in the coming months. You traditionalists will certainly want to be there when we offer up DOS 5.0 in the original shrink wrap! For the more daring, cutting edge experimenters there are two copies of Windows 3.1, also in the

(Continued on page 12)

DVPC Board Meeting Minutes...

(Continued from page 11)

shrink wrap. This release, when supplemented with a 23 MB download from the Microsoft website (set your browser to www.microsoft.com/oldstuff/finallyworks/almost) will work on most 486 machines. Of course, none of these come with anything remotely resembling useful documentation.

Also in the coming months look for the latest software from MGI. Normally sold in stores for \$29.95 (with a \$50 rebate coupon), it can be yours for only a \$1 raffle ticket.

And the latest upgrade from Word Perfect will be raffled off. With a retail price of \$399, this release will actually let you open, edit and save documents created in earlier releases! Still leading the pack, this software comes with over fifteen fonts! As always with Word Perfect, you can actually view the codes that control the format of your document, changing them manually over and over again until you have completely lost control.

Last, but not least, Symantec weighs in with ten (10) copies of Norton Antivirus. This latest version offers a 100% guarantee that if used according to their directions you will never again suffer from a virus attack. Once you start Norton Antivirus running on your machine it immediately disables all external connections, whether modem, DSL, cable, satellite, whatever, and then locks your CD and disk devices. It then removes from all your hard drives any files that are named in the format *.*. One word of caution: updates are available only in punched card or paper tape format.

Random Conversation: As usual, conversation drifted a bit. Charlie paid us a visit, but had to leave as soon as the pizza and dessert were gone. During his time with us he managed to use the phrase "bandwidth" thirteen times, and "video projector" seven. Nick of course favored us with samplings from the digital sound lexicon. Craig wasn't there so we were able to swap post office jokes freely, always a good time for all.

Alan showed us his latest gadget: Contest Buster. You know how frustrating it is when you want to enter a contest but the rules require a postcard? Well, for only \$279 from sting.com, Contest Buster prints and franks postcards! Just enter the pertinent information (names, addresses, key answers and phrases) and the number of postcards you want to print into your Palm or other handheld device. Then either use the included cable to connect your device to Contest Buster, or use the infrared facility to transmit the data into Contest Buster. Load the card stock into the feeder slot, press the "I Win!" button, and stand back as Contest Buster prints the requested number of postcards, with the postage franked on them! The only downside I could see is that you have to take it to the post office regularly to pay the metered postage and have it reset, but hey! Maybe you'll see Craig and have time to chat while the line slowly moves forward.

Ron announced that he had been wrong all along. It was indeed his fault that Unix/Linux users could not view our website pages well. He has remedied that problem and is anxious for feedback from any Unix/Linux users still out there. And by the way, he hopes to have completed the necessary changes by September so that Windows NT users can again view the website. Sorry for the inconvenience...

I, of course, said as little as possible, spending my time taking cryptic notes so that I could truthfully and accurately relate the shortcomings of my fellow Board members to you in this newsletter, as I have done.

Up-Up-&-Away by [George Griffin](#), DVPC

Yes! Time marches on, but electronic happenings at times goes at a quick gallop.

One of the newest electronic goodies to emerge in the user world is USB 2. The adapter board is now on sale by people like Adaptec [the well-known manufacturer of SCSI controllers, etc.], but soon there will be the whole mob such as Belkin, Orange Micro, etc.

The applications to be used on USB 2 are not yet evident in the retail market, though. This new system, so what, and why, is all the noise about USB 2. Well it's the speed it has been dramatically increased from 12 Mbit/sec to 480 Mbs. That's a 40 times increase, and the one big advantage you will still be able to use your present USB 1.1, because it is backward compatible. That means that your present equipment has not quite suffered the fate of the Dinosaurs.

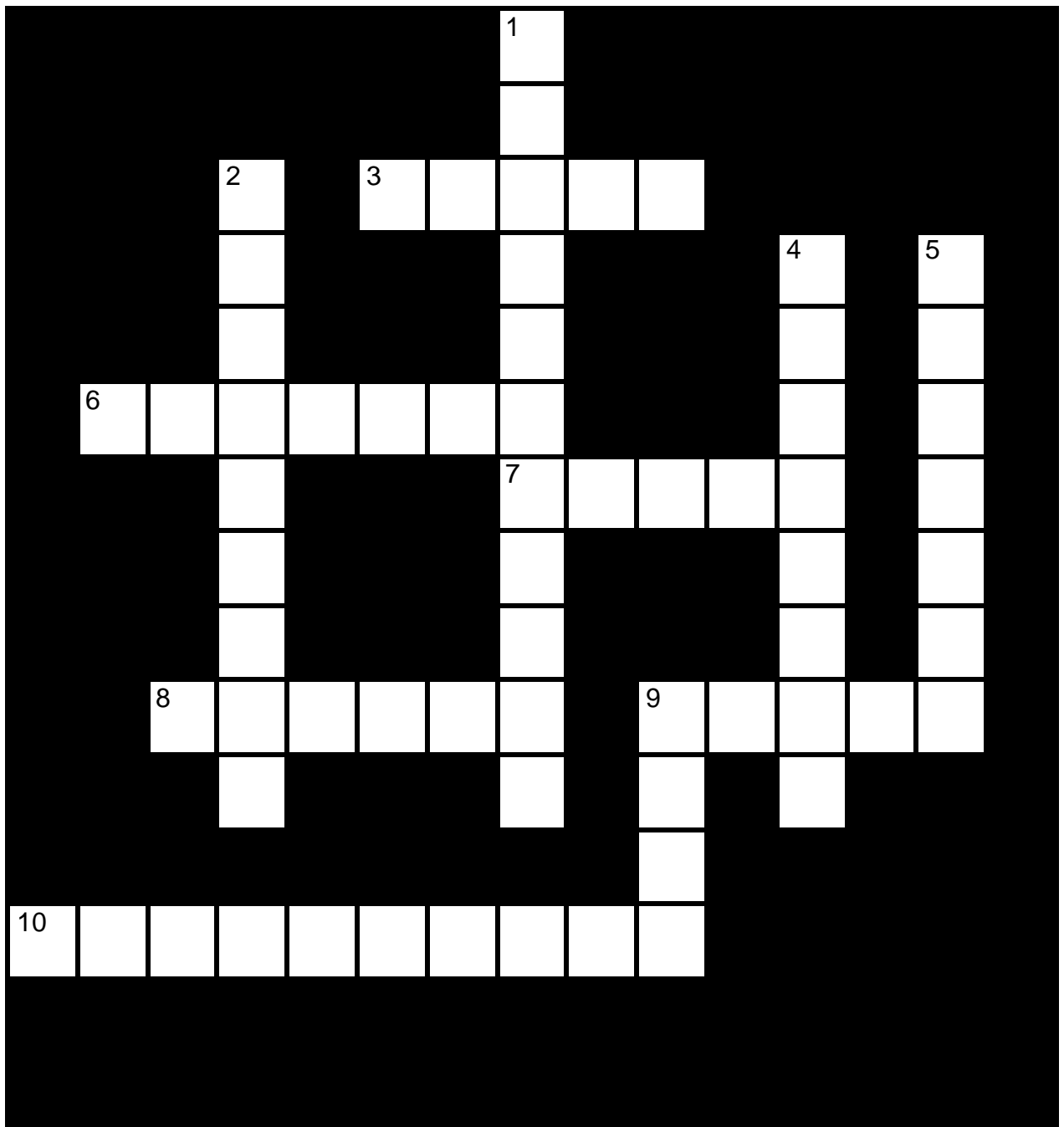
USB 2 has similarities to FireWire/1394, but USB 2 will be a little faster, 480 Mbs vs 400 Mbs, but the boys in the backroom say that FireWire/1394 is technically superior to USB. The fact that its speed at present is only 400mbs is a "so what" because there is the potential for it to reach the stratosphere.

In the past Microsoft has been waffling about including support for USB 2 in its upcoming Windows XP operating system, but in the 10th USB Developers Conference in Beverly Hills, they seem to be planning support for USB 2.

So this all leads to the Electronic Axiom: "One's Pocketbook, patience, and learning curve, etc., never reach, nor be great enough."

Links: www.usb.org, www.adaptec.com

**Computer Crossword
"Home Office"**



Across

- 3. Software language first used in 1960
- 6. Software language first used in 1957
- 7. In 1946 John Mauchly and J. Presper Eckert completed building this machine
- 8. The first of these computers were delivered to the U.S. Census Bureau in 1951 by the Remington Rand Corporation.
- 9. IBM user group that met for the first time in 1955.
- 10. He began working on Plankalkul (Plan Calculus) in 1945 (2 words)

Down

- 1. Term coined in 1948 by Norbert Wiener (from a Greek word for steersman)
- 2. Computer that debuted on Edward R. Murrow's "See It Now" television series in 1951.
- 4. In 1962 MIT students Slug Russell, Shag Graetz, and Alan Kotok wrote this first interactive computer game
- 5. In 1961 this first industrial robot, began work at General Motors.
- 9. The first large-scale computer communications network linked hundreds of radar stations in the United States and Canada in 1958.

About the August Crossword Puzzle by [Craig Peterson](#), DVPC Librarian

It used to be that a home office was where you could find a calculator (if the kids didn't need it for school), a phone and a typewriter. In the last few years, however, many of us have upgraded to the point where the home office has equipment as powerful as many large corporate offices. Check out the items that many of us have in this month's puzzle.

Diablo Blue Article and Ad Information

Diablo Blue needs articles from the members of DVPC. See your name in print! Achieve fame and fortune! (Well, maybe just some limited fame in Contra Costa County...) We are particularly interested in product and book reviews and articles about your PC experiences.

Commercial advertising is available in Diablo Blue. Prices are \$75 for a full page, \$40 for a half page, and \$25 for a quarter page for one insertion — or get three consecutive insertions for the price of two. For more information, call editor Ronald Ogg, at 283-7900, Ext. 201 (days). Members of DVPC can submit personal classified ads that will be printed in Diablo Blue for three insertions at no charge. The rules are simple: up to 9 lines (as we typeset it), material must be suitable for publication (the editor is the sole judge of suitability), the member must be in good standing (current dues paid), and ad space is available on a first-come first-served space available basis only. If you want fewer than three insertions note that on your ad copy. If members want their business card reproduced, the rate is \$10 for one insertion, or \$25 for three insertions. The card must be horizontal and must be scannable.

Send your articles or member ad copy as email attachments to the [Newsletter Editor](#). See the deadline information in the Calendar on page 15 of each issue of Diablo Blue.

DVPC on the Internet

DVPC has a web site on the Internet - thanks to our Web Team: Ron Ogg and Stan Umlauf. You can surf your way to our own domain and home page by starting your favorite Web browser and typing the following URL; be sure to save it in your browser's hotlist so you don't have to type it each time: <http://www.dvpc.org>

DVPC Officers and Directors

Alan Mildwurm, President/Programs 510-770-5770 (work)
Ted Armstrong, Publicity 939-4096 (home)
Nicholas Chase, SIG Coordinator 680-4211 (home)
Charlie Crothers, At Large 829-2237 (home)
Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary 676-7522 (home)
Tom Krauss, Secretary 689-9960 (home)
Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer 829-5858 (home)
Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor 415-281-0431 (work)
Craig Peterson, Librarian 671-7025 (home)
Stan Umlauf, Web Site 458-5560 (home)

The Board of Directors usually meets on the Wednesday evening following the general meeting each month. Check the DVPC Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*, or the DVPC home page on the Internet (www.dvpc.org) for the meeting date, time, and location. You can reach any of the officers and directors by talking to them at the DVPC monthly meeting, or leaving a message on the DVPC voicemail System.

DVPC Voice Mail System

DVPC has a computer-based voice mail system. The phone number for the DVPC VMS is 925-556-1449. This communication vehicle provides members with up-to-date information about monthly and SIG meetings, potential new members with information about DVPC, and a message center for Board of Directors members and SIG Leaders.

Diablo Blue is the monthly newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users' Group.

Editor: Ronald Ogg, Mailing: Peggy Johnson

Please submit articles and columns to the Newsletter editor by email at rogg@value.net

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The Diablo Valley PC Users' Group is a non profit corporation
DVPC is a member of [APCUG](#), the Association of PC Users Groups

DVPC is a certified member of [UGN](#), the User Group Network



Support **DVPC** — Get a friend to join!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Enclose a check for \$30.00 for one year's dues with printed edition of *Diablo Blue*, or \$25.00 for one year's dues with access to the Internet edition of *Diablo Blue* (\$20.00 for students who must enclose a copy of current Student ID), made payable to **DVPC** and mail to:
DVPC User's Group, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583

Renewal _____ New Member _____ Referred by current member? Name _____

Name: _____

Company/School: _____ Email address: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

On occasion DVPC publishes a list of members **for distribution to DVPC members only**. Please check how you would like to be listed: **No listing** _____ **List Name and Home** _____ **Work** _____ **phone number(s)** _____

I'm also interested in these SIGs: _____

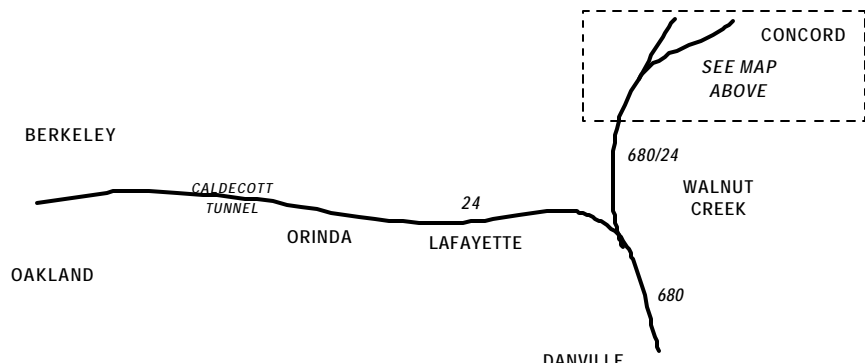
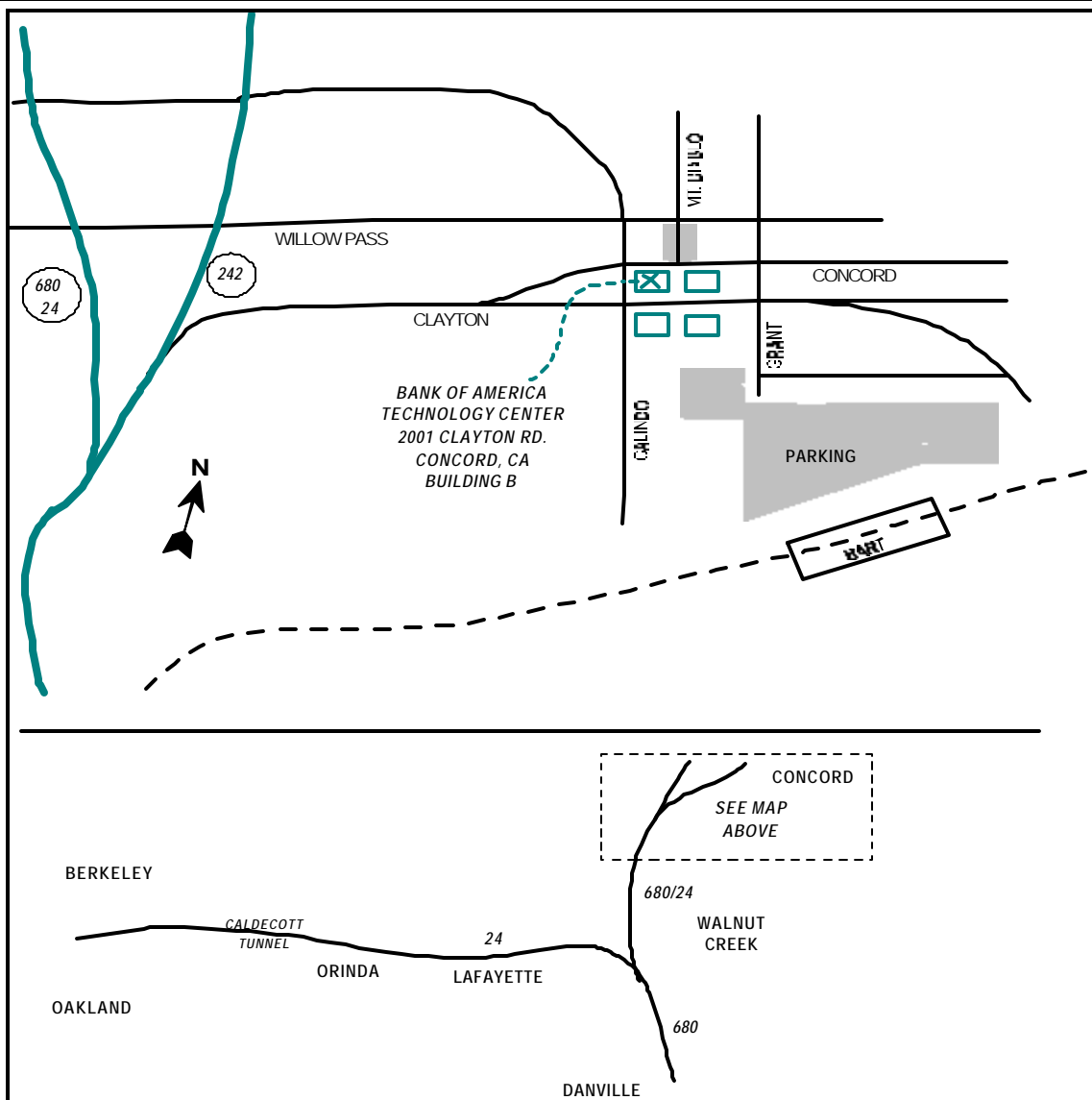
Directions to Bank of America Building B in Concord

Take the Clayton Road exit off of the 242 Freeway, and go east on Clayton Road. After about 1½ miles you'll come to Galindo, and you'll see the Bank of America complex of four high-rise office buildings.

Building B is the first building on your left, at the northeast corner of Clayton and Galindo.

Parking: Turn right on Grant Street (the first block past Galindo), then right into the BART parking lot at the back of the BofA complex. Or turn left on Galindo then right onto Concord Avenue to find street parking.

Be sure to observe parking regulations! Concord parking officers are very efficient!



DVPC August 2001 Calendar

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT				
		1	DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 p.m. New User's SIG 6:30 p.m.	2	3	4	Real Estate SIG <i>No meeting this month – see the DVPC web site</i>	PC 101 SIG 1:00 p.m. <i>New Meeting Day and Time</i>	
6	7	8	9	10	11	<i>Windows SIG</i> <i>No meeting this month</i>	DVPC Board Meeting Alan Mildwum's house 7:00 p.m.		
13	14	15	16	17	18		Internet SIG 7:00 p.m.	Advanced Users SIG 7:30 p.m.	Diablo Blue deadline: Email articles and ads to the Newsletter Editor: rogg@value.net
20	21	22	23	24	25	Microsoft Project SIG 7:30 p.m. Genealogy eSIG See SIG News on page 4	Photo SIG 7:00 p.m.	Education & Entertainment SIG 7:30 p.m. Advanced Developers SIG 7:00 p.m. New night!	
27	28	29	30	31			Access/Visual Basic SIG 7:30 p.m.		See SIG News starting on page 4 for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TO:

Diablo Valley PC User's Group
PO Box 3244
San Ramon, CA 94583