January Main Meeting

Jeff Dowley Presents

'Harness the full power of your GPS'

by Harry Elder

MHCUG President Jeff Dowley presented our January main meeting. I first heard about GPS Technology 20 years ago watching the late Johnny Carson's 'Tonight Show'. During Johnny's monologue he announced that the Federal Government was coming out with a device that would 'tell you where you are'. 'Imagine that', chuckled Johnny, 'a device that tells where you are'!   The audience predictably laughed. Who could have imagined the far reaching applications that GPS technology would give us?

New technology has always been met with skepticism and ridicule. When the telephone was invented, most people couldn't imagine it ever being widely used.

The low cost of GPSs ($100-200 will buy you a decent model) has made them affordable for most car owners. The major benefits that a GPS gives you, besides the obvious one of navigating you to your destination, is to find the best route in terms of distance, cost, and time. If you have multiple stops, they can plan the most efficient route to take. In short, they can save you time, fuel, and frustration.

GPSs can also give you the actual miles and time that you took, so you can compare it to what it predicted.

Jeff's presentation centered on a mid-range Garmin model 765T.

Jeff Dowley

Jeff first showed us the 'off-road' or 'pedestrian' mode. When you park your car, you remove your GPS and carry it with you.   The GPS will remember its starting (parked) position. It can navigate you on your walk to your destinations as it ordinarily does, with the added features of ignoring one-way street directions, and taking you on known paths or routes where cars aren't allowed. This would be useful in New York City, for example, where a large area around Times Square is now blocked off from traffic. Pedestrian mode will navigate you back to your car. Be careful not to use up your GPS battery power while walking with it.

You can import Google Maps and MapQuest data directly from your PC to your GPS.   Pick an address in Google Maps or MapQuest and connect the GPS via USB cable. Google will look for an attached GPS, and import map data to it.   Select the 'send' option in

Google Maps, it will find your attached GPS, or give you a pull-down list of attached devises to choose from. You can give the default address a generic name, for example, 'train station'. This is a free feature.

Jeff next talked about POIs – Points of Interest.   Most GPSs have pre-defined POIs in them, such as hospitals, police stations, etc. You can add to existing POIs, or make your own. Jeff used Starbucks as an example. Many companies let you download their store locations to your GPS. Obviously, this helps them as much as it helps you.   Other useful POI lists are low bridges (if you have an RV or truck), speed traps, gas stations, motels, etc. In the case of speed traps, or fixed traffic cameras, GPSs can alert you before you get within their range. Useful POI lists are on the Internet. Start with http://www.gpspassion.com/ and http://www.poi-factory.com/. There's also 'POI Loader' – an app that comes from the Garmin website.

Jeff's GPS accepts a flash memory card, so he can choose where his GPS info resides. Flash cards can be purchased preloaded with maps – handy when in foreign countries.

The initial set of maps is free, but you have to get them within the first 60 days of activating the GPS. Many people aren't aware of this, but the Garmin website makes it clear. Additional maps sets are about $60 each. Jeff found a lifetime GPS map subscription – up to four sets of maps per year, for $80 on amazon.

GPS maps aren't always perfect. The Garmin lets you make specific changes and corrections; for example, you can rename a street, or change the direction of a one-way street. Updating the firmware is just as important as updating the maps, and that's free too. New firmware can fix any number of problems, including not finding specific locations. There is a feature similar to Windows update, where the Garmin website will look at a connected Garmin GPS, and show a list of available updates.

You can import new languages, and accents too. For English, there's British, Australian, and American, all in both male and female voices. You can export your addresses from contact files or email accounts, as long as you can export the information in comma-separated-values (CSV) format. Many contact and email programs let you do that. There may be more work involved, such as importing the CSV contact data to a spreadsheet like Excel, and then removing extraneous columns.

You can greatly enhance your GPS with 'waypoints', or navigational references. Websites such as www.gpsvisualizer.com and www.easygps.com have tools and free software to personalize your GPS maps further.

GPSs are really small computers, and as such, they let you do many things normally associated with a traditional PC, such as download and show picture albums, play MP3 audio files and audible books, etc. Jeff's model has a bluetooth phone interface, a currency converter, a language translator, a calculator, and more. He can even change his default boot-up screen if desired.

The Garmin 765T has speed limit data for most road and highways, so it can alert you if you're speeding. It lets you capture screen images, from boot-up to any screen it displays. This is how Jeff was able to get many of his presentation slides.   The audio can be transmitted from the unit to your FM car radio.

If you're approaching an accident site, or a traffic jam caused by construction, Garmin models that end with the letter 'T' have traffic awareness, and can navigate you around traffic jams and delays. Nice.

Jeff covered many more aspects of GPS technology.

If you have a GPS, or are interested in getting one, realize that they are far more than navigation devices. Time spent on learning and using their many functions and features would be well worth the effort.□

Technology Workshop January 7

By Harry Elder

We now start immediately after our Board of Directors meeting.

Dick Kranz has a new MiFi unit. That's Verizon's personal WiFi device. It allows you to route multiple PCs to the Internet, but instead of connecting with cable or DSL, the connection is made through Verizon's cell phone towers. We'll look at this further in upcoming months.

Dick Kranz's neighbor just dropped his cable subscription and installed a satellite dish for television, and AOL 'high speed' dial-up for Internet. The neighbor wanted to know if he was really getting a 'high speed' dial-up. Jeff and I replied that you can't exceed the 56K dial-up limit, actually about 53K when overhead is factored in. The speed improvements are done with compression. Compression is good for plain text files, i.e., Notepad files. Word processor files, e.g. MS Word files, are filled with scripting tags (you normally don't see these). These don't compress as well. Finally, pictures, sound files, etc., are usually already compressed (JPEG, MP3), so you don't get compression there. Our verdict is that Dick's neighbor won't usually get the touted 'up to 5x' speed improvement.

Wayne is looking for a laptop recommendation. He's considering Toshiba, HP and Dell. The club recommends that for general purpose use, he'll be happy with any brand he chooses.

Ron McDermott thanked Jerry Clark for mentioning the Windows 7 Student/Teacher offer. It's over now, but it was a great deal – a Windows 7 Pro upgrade for $29.95. The current retail price is $199.

Lloyd Quick and his son recently installed, or upgraded, to Windows 7 - 64 bit. They were using XP and Vista. Lloyd didn't see any advantage to Windows 7. Lloyd additionally used VMware on his Vista and Windows 7 machines to regain compatibility with devices and programs that played well with XP. VMware went on fine in his Vista machine, but under Windows 7, he needed to install many VMware add-ons and do additional work, especially to connect the Internet.

Lloyd also tried out the latest version of Windows Movie Maker compatible with Windows 7. He said that it's missing many of the movie editing features that were in earlier versions on Movie Maker. He was able, however, to download and install an earlier version of Movie Maker on Windows 7 that had those features.

Lloyd asked how he could see what version of Windows 7 he's running. A fast path to that is **Start > right click 'Computer', > Properties.**

Dick Kranz brought in some information to share with us from a company called Gadget Hotline in the UK. They give telephone help to consumers having problems with new products. In a company survey of 75,000 users, they found that men and women have different approaches to using technology. Men typically consider technology as something to be conquered, while women are more interested in what the technology can do for them. The biggest problem with new technology is getting gadgets to work well with each other. Even though only about 5% of all new technology products have the problems, about 15 to 20% of new technology devices are returned.

Dan Sullivan was interested in a new feature that he had heard about, called 'God' mode. The basic idea is that you get a super folder on your desktop that gives you access to all of Windows 7 or Vista's special features. All of these features can ordinarily be accessed through the control panel but you may have to drill down several layers in each control panel folder to find them all. 'God' mode gives you all controls in one folder. You can find good information from well known trusted websites on 'God' mode. Some users of 64 bit Vista have reported machine crashes using this. It works fine on my 32 bit Vista Ultimate machine.

Rolf Nijhuis wanted to know if he should look for wireless 'N' capability in a new laptop that he's considering buying. Wireless 'N', formally known as 802.11n, is the latest sanctioned wireless protocol. It supersedes 802.11g, it's twice as fast and covers twice the distance over 'G'. The good news is that the wireless 'N', like 'G' before it, is backward compatible. Rolf also wanted some advice on setting up security in a wireless router. Jeff Dowley recommends using WPA2. It's recommended to change your router's password, and the default SSID.

Rolf also wanted to know if Windows 7 uses a different registry structure than Vista or XP, and if so, should he get a new registry cleaner. Jeff replied that Windows 7 does have structural changes in its registry, but does not recommend the use of any registry cleaners.

Bob Gieseler showed us a pen that also doubles as a digital voice recorder. He said that it has eight gigabytes of memory and can record 1.5 hours of voice data. It's thicker than the typical pen, and also functions as a regular pen. Interesting.

Jerry Clark showed us a small versatile camera stand that his wife gave him for Christmas. It's only a foot or so tall, but its most interesting aspect is that the legs are flexible. This allows the camera stand to be wrapped around small poles and other stationary objects. It's also light and very portable.

Gordon Sager told us that the FCC is looking into regulating the Internet. He wanted to know if any of us has read the document on the proposal. No one else in the group has read it, but we're all interested, if not concerned. Gordon says that a close reading of the document, known as 'Net Neutrality', looks risky. Although it's a long document, Gordon urged us to read it.

Finally, we had a discussion on RAID 1, also known as disk-mirroring. You use two identical drives, and the the operating system writes to both simultaneously. In theory, if one drive fails, the second drive still has all the data intact. Dan Sullivan heard that this isn't a good backup strategy; you still need to do regular backups. I checked Wikipedia on this, Dan's right. Wikipedia says '<RAID 1> would not be suitable as a permanent backup solution, as RAID technology by design allows for certain failures to take place'.

Please join us at our next MHCUG Technology Workshop. We meet on the first Thursday of each month in Conference room A23B at Guardian Storage Business Development Center, 3 Neptune Rd. Town of Poughkeepsie. Contact Technology Workshop leader Dick Kranz for additional information. ☐

Upcoming February Main Meeting

Don't miss our '3 in 1' presentation by MHCUG club president Jeff Dowley!

Get those passwords organized

It seems like every favorite website wants us to register in order to use all their features. Best practices says not to re-use passwords, if you lose it, all of your accounts are at risk. So how do you manage so many passwords?   Jeff will show us how to use three different password management tools.

Protect Your Data

Carrying a laptop or other portable PC? The data on your hard drive or memory cards may be far more valuable than the PC itself. If you have business information, financial info, valuable personal files – pictures, documents, music – what's the loss if that were stolen? Your first defense is your backup – away from your PC. You do have a backup – right? Good. Now, keep your files away from prying eyes. Encrypt them. Jeff will show us how to do that with a free, open source encryption tool, and also with encryption built in to premium versions of Windows.

So What's Bluetooth Anyway?

Your dentist can't help you here. Jeff will tell us what Bluetooth is, and how we can use it.   Jeff will show us how to -

Connect your cell phone to your PC

Connect your cell phone to your car phone

Use external Bluetooth devices

Use Bluetooth securely

About the Speaker

  Jeff Dowley has been working with computers and computer
networking full time since 1994. He has held jobs in frontline
support of a 10,000 node campus network, as a quality control
engineer in network software testing, and as a manager in
software quality assurance. Presently he works for himself and

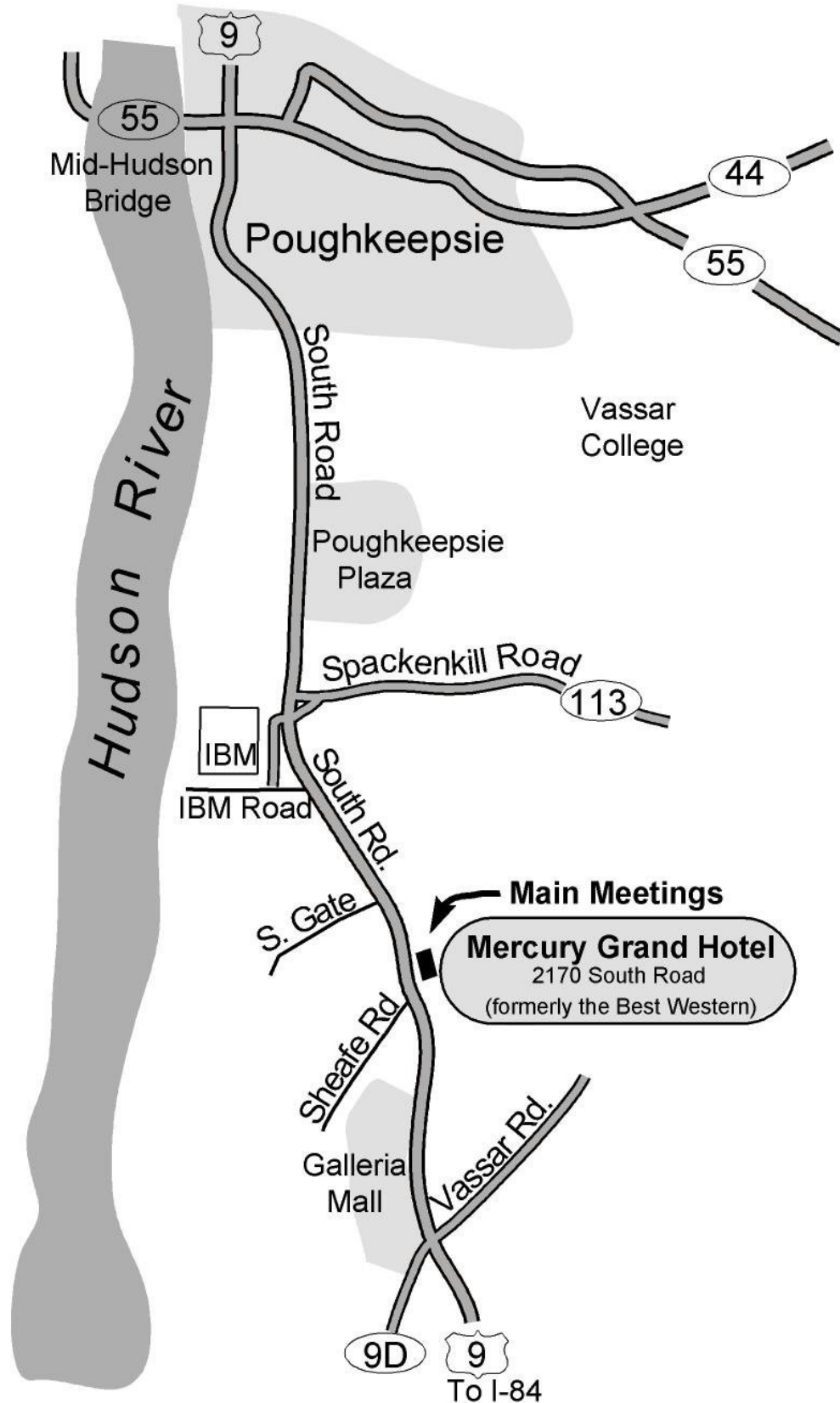MHCUG Club President and Speaker at February's Main Meeting **Jeff Dowley**

has the pleasure of working with clients with needs that range
from the everyday to the quirky puzzles that no one else has
figured out yet. He regularly works with Microsoft products, and
he looks forward to giving presentations to groups in which he
can show what Microsoft has done well. His favorite Microsoft
programs are OneNote and Windows Home Server, with a nod to
Windows 7.

Join us Thursday night, February 11, 7:00 PM, in the Hudson room of the Mercury Grand Hotel, Route 9, Poughkeepsie, NY. See map on next page. Come early (6:30 PM) for a lively question and answer session on all things computing. Bring a friend. All MHCUG meetings are free and open to the Public. □

MHCUG MAIN MEETING LOCATION

Map created with OCAD software. Courtesy of Orienteering Unlimited.
(914) 248-5957   www.orienteeringunlimited.com

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group, Inc.

PO Box 1962

Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-0962

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Vice President -Activities - Dick Kranz

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WebSite: Jerry Clark

Database: Dan Sullivan 229-0241

Publicity: Edward Morzen 849-1231

SIG Chair: Jack Marsella 632-1478

Membership: Open

Monthly Meetings - Scheduled the second Thursday of every month. Check **www.mhcug.org** for possible changes to general and SIG meetings. Local radio stations will be advised if a meeting is cancelled unexpectedly.

microCHIP **staff**

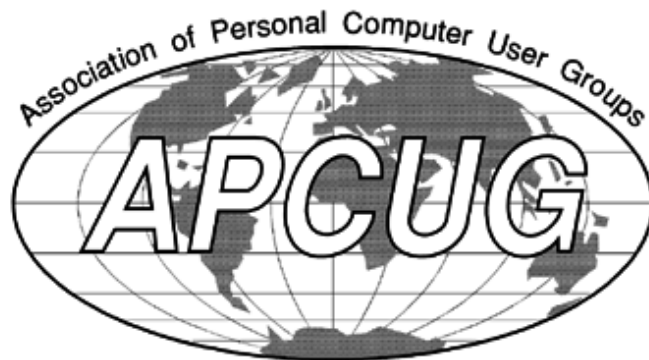Harry Elder, Editor, e-mail: editor (at) mhcug.org

Advertising

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- **All area codes are 845 unless shown otherwise.**

- **Website: www.mhcug.org**

The MHCUG is a non-profit educational organization which promotes activities encouraging the use of computers by its members. The MHCUG encourages professionalism and the development of technical skills. A Member may be anyone with an interest in computers who supports the purpose of the MHCUG. A Student-member must be under 25 years of age and attending an educational institution full-time.

If new applicant or renewal, please check one:

‰ Member: dues: $35 per year

‰ Student: dues: $15 per year

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February MHCUG Meetings

Thursday, February 4, MHCUG Board meeting 5:30 p.m.   Guardian Storage Building

Thursday, February 4, Technology Workshop 7:00 p.m. Guardian Storage

Thursday, February 11 MHCUG General Meeting 6:30 p.m. Hudson Room, Mercury Grand Hotel

Thursday, February 18 , Upgrade and Repair 7:00 p.m.   Guardian Storage Building

Thursday, February 25, Digital Media 7:00 p.m. Guardian Storage Building

All SIG meetings at Guardian Storage are in room A23B □

All submissions for the Microchip must be in the hands of the editors by the Thursday following the General Meeting. Any articles or information received after that date will be held for the following Month's publication. E-mail editor (at) mhcug.org