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PATACS Posts

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Newsletter of the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society

October 2025, Volume 7

My turn……

It seems like more than a month of Sundays have gone by since the last newsletter. I don't know what I've been doing since…oh wait a minute, yes I do!!!

I've been replacing computers because of the expiration of support for Windows 10. I've replaced my wife's machine which hadn't been done since 2009(!), my brother's machine (2015?), my machine which is quite literally dying, and 4 clients, with at least 3 or 4 more in the pipe.

Did you know that when you purchase a Windows machine it comes configured in what is known as *administrator's mode*? The reason for that is to allow the owner/user to install stuff. But it's just not a good idea to run in ***Admin mode*** day-to-day. Why? Because in ***Admin mode***, Windows has been granted all kinds of permissions to do things…like install software. If you had taken the time to install a *standard user* account, and you operated in that account, as I train my clients and family to do, then if you get a drive-by download, Windows must ask permission to install it. When Windows asks for the admin's password, you get a moment to think whether this was something you requested. If not, you realize you didn't ask for whatever is asking and you (just) say "no". Whatever it was won't be installed. If you were in Admin mode, Windows wouldn't ask, it would say to itself "I'm in Admin mode, so it's OK to install" and voilà, you've got malware on your machine!

While I haven't traveled in the last couple of months, I have been able to photograph the women's soccer team of my high school alma mater, Sandy Spring Friends School. I started doing it last year on the invitation of the coach, when I met him in a committee meeting we attended together. As you might imagine it's a lot of shooting in a short amount of time. Since I was learning how to use my then-new camera body, I was trying a lot of different methods. The camera is very smart. It knows different subject matter and three different sports: soccer, volleyball, and basketball. How that benefits me, I'm not sure, because I have nothing to compare it to, but I suspect that part of it is that the camera's focusing system is actually *looking* for the ball! In an eighty-minute game I have taken as many as eleven *hundred* (!) images. The problem with that number, of course, is that I must edit them. My first step in that process is to delete images that are so bad they shouldn't, ahem, see the light of day. I have learned some tricks in that department as well, which can speed up the process. I also edit in batches, knowing that I don't want to edit hundreds (!) at a time.

I hope you were able to attend the party at the September meeting, catered by Leti Labell. She did her usual wonderful job and the food was excellent. And yes, I did get some photos. They're located somewhere in this issue!

Lastly, I have come to the decision that after four and a half years as editor of POSTS it's time to stop. I will, however, continue through the end of the year and the last issue of this calendar year. Having said that, PATACS is **now looking for a newsletter editor**. If you're interested, please get in touch with President-for-Life (😊) Paul Howard at president@patacs.org. I will do my best to help whoever takes the mantel of editor get across the hump of getting started. It's been my great pleasure working for you, but all good things do end and it really is time for new blood.

Next printed issue: December 2025

Thank this issue's proofreaders: Jonathan Bernstein, Barry DeMaio, Nick Wenri

New Smart TV – New OS

By Phil Sorrentino, APCUG Rep and Author, The Computer Club
https://www.scccomputerclub.org philsorr@yahoo.com

Yes, as most of us know, OS stands for operating system. But how is that related to a TV? Well, an operating system and internet capability make the TV *smart*. Without an operating system controlling the TV (and internet) functions, you would have a low-IQ television, probably only capable of providing television from the air or cable TV channels offered by a cable TV provider like Spectrum or Frontier.

I recently bought a new smart TV to replace my low IQ TV in the kitchen. The old TV was working fine, but I wanted a bigger screen in that room. I "Cut the Cord" six years ago, so I have an antenna in the attic and distribute the antenna signal to four TVs in four different rooms, one of which is the kitchen. I have a Wi-Fi network of computers in the house, and I use the kitchen screen to show videos and movies (usually during lunch) from a networked computer at the other end of the house. I also have a DVD player set up in that location so I can show movies there if I have the movie on a physical disc. (The local library has an enormous selection of DVDs and Blu-ray discs (BD).) The old TV had multiple HDMI inputs, so each video source (computer and BD player) had its own input, and the third input was used for a streaming device. I've used an Amazon Fire Stick and a Google Chromecast and gotten equally good results; I'm sure a Roku device would also provide similar results. So, the new TV had to

provide the capability of a streaming device and have at least two HDMI ports. Other requirements get lost in a lot of technical talk describing the quality of the delivered sound and picture (possibly a topic for a future article). One other requirement I did have though it was not a deal breaker, was to be able to cast to the TV so I could show movies that I have on my phone, on the big screen.

With these requirements and the screen size, which was finally decided with great deliberation, I was ready to look at specific TVs. The distance the screen would be from the observer's eyeballs was used to determine the TV screen size, which came in between 50 and 55 inches. I opted for the 50-inch size. In retrospect, 55 would have been a bit better. I've always felt that you can't have a screen too big, but that's another story. So, with these requirements, I began looking at 50-inch smart TVs. There are a lot of smart TVs available, and I was amazed at how reasonable the prices were. There are well-known major manufacturers like Sony, LG, and Samsung, as well as lesser-known manufacturers like Hisense, TCL, and Vizio. And even if you select a manufacturer, there are price levels for what seems to be the same basic TV, but the devil is always in the details. If you can't get into the details, you'll have to pick a price range and go with that. I found using AI sites like Copilot and Gemini, and reviews helpful in determining the relative quality of different manufacturers and even other models within a specific manufacturer. After all the comparing and deciding, I bought a 50-inch Vizio. I have had Vizio TVs and felt okay about the purchase.

A new TV is always a happy event, only eclipsed by a new computer or smartphone. After unboxing the TV, which is no easy task when the screen is above 40 or so inches, the first thing to do is ensure you have the users manual. (If you have been in my classes, you would have remembered that.) With these large screens, it's best to have another person to help with the job, even though they are not heavy, they are cumbersome, and you certainly don't want to drop it while setting it up. Once the TV power and inputs are set up, it's time to turn it on and enjoy some entertainment.

When you turn the new TV on, you will have to go through a process, almost like setting up a new computer or smartphone. Why? Because the operating system needs to be set up so it can do its job. Because this is a smart TV, it needs to be internet-enabled and set up on your network, either by Ethernet or Wi-Fi. (Almost all installations will use Wi-Fi, so the network name and password must be available.) At this point, you start to experience the operating system, the user interface part of the OS. Like Windows, macOS, Android, or iOS, a user interface enables you to interact with the device. Many of us are familiar with computer and smartphone user interfaces because we have used them for many years. Still, TV operating systems are relatively new: they have only appeared with the advent of streaming. Roku's streaming device, the earliest device, was introduced in 2008, Google's Chromecast was introduced in 2013, and the Fire Stick was introduced in 2014. Each streaming device has an operating system, and these operating systems have found their way into smart TVs. There are a few more operating systems, so a complete list is: "Roku TV OS", "Fire TV OS", "Android TV", "WebOS", "Tizen", and "SmartCast". Every available smart TV uses one of these

operating systems. Multiple manufacturers use some of these OSs, and I've even seen some manufacturers use two different OSs in different models! So you will have to familiarize yourself with the user interface of your particular OS to accomplish the tasks needed to enjoy your new TV. These OSs accomplish the same thing: they allow you to bring together your disparate entertainment sources, such as over-the-air TV, cable channels, and streaming services. All the OSs are similar, but different. In other words, the goals of the OSs are identical, but the implementations are slightly different.

By the way, during my research on TVs, I discovered that the Android TV OS and the SmartCast OS support casting. (You may be unable to help your neighbor easily if they have a TV with a different OS because the operations are not similar enough.) Getting familiar with your OS is like how you get to Carnegie Hall… practice, practice, practice. But take heart, you have the user's manual to help you along the way. And maybe you are lucky enough to know a teenager with a similar TV who can assist you. If all that OS talk doesn't sound so good then stick with your older TV. If you're willing to jump in, good luck with your new smart TV.

###

Glympse – Here's my current location

By Phil Sorrentino, APCUG Rep and Author, The Computer Club
https://www.scccomputerclub.org, philsorr@yahoo.com

I know most people recoil when they think that someone else knows where they are located, but this is an opportunity to make your location available to someone else, and for you to benefit from it. So, what is Glympse? The dictionary defines the normal spelling of glimpse as "a momentary or partial view". Glympse, with a "y", is an app for Android and iPhones that lets you temporarily share your location with others, in real-time, easily and safely.

Glympse Icon

Glympse uses GPS capability on your smartphone to let you share your location on a web-based map for a predetermined period of time with anyone you choose. So a glimpse of Glympse provides a person, of your choosing, with your real-time location for a limited amount of time of your choosing. Your location remains private because you control who you share your location with and for how long. This temporary location sharing is easily and quickly set up, and you can share your location with anyone you choose via email or text.

Glympse does not require a sign-up, and the recipient of your location does not require a special app. When you share your location, the recipient sees a map of your location and an indication of your movement speed. After the time you have set up, the location sharing automatically stops, and your location is no longer available to anyone. When using the app, sharing your location with someone is called "sending a Glympse." The "Glympse" goes out via a text message or an email, only to the person you have selected. When the recipient of the Glympse clicks on the Glympse link, they will view your location on a map in real-time, using any web-enabled device such as a computer,

tablet, or smartphone, as long as you have allowed your location to be shared with them.

So, that's what the Glympse app does, but why would you want to use it? Generally, you might want your friends, family, or colleagues to know where you are so they can estimate whether or not your combined plans are on track. For example, if you are trying to meet up with a group at a restaurant at dinner time, Glympse answers the question "Where are you?" and offers insight into how long it might take to get to your destination. Some uses might be: to let your spouse know when you will be home for dinner, to let your client know when you will be at the business meeting, for businesses making home deliveries so that customers know exactly when you will arrive, on a marathon run to let your family know you are safe. There are probably many others.

I have found Glympse helpful in a few instances. The first time I used it was when I was going to visit my brother in Orlando for a holiday celebration. I thought of Glympse because of the unpredictable nature of I-4. The trip should take just under 3 hours, so before I left, I sent a Glympse so he could see my location for 4 hours. This way, he could see if my car had left my driveway and how fast it was going. He would know I hadn't left if it was going zero mph. As he checked on my location later on, he would see my location, and hopefully that I was going along at around 70 mph. If he ever checked my location and found that I was on I-4 and my movement was 2 or 3 mph, he would know that I-4 was having some problem, and not to expect an on-time arrival (have to lower the heat on the turkey). Eventually, he would see that we were moving again and that from my speed, he could estimate my arrival time (turning up the heat on the turkey). That is, as long as there are no other hitches with I-4. I've done this many times, and it always seems to calm everyone involved in getting together for a celebration, even considering the vagaries of I-4.

Another way I have used Glympse is in coordinating a meeting with a friend in a city halfway between my home and my friend's home. So, this is a little more complicated and requires more coordination. My friend and I chose a time and a place for the meeting. Let's say I am leaving from Sun City Center, FL, and he is leaving from Atlanta, Georgia, to meet in Tallahassee, FL, just about halfway between us. We are trying to meet at about 6 pm at a particular hotel. We think the trip might take about 6 hours, so before we leave, we send a Glympse to the other one via email and set it for 8 hours. Now, each of us has a good idea of where the other is, and with the speed indicated, we have an idea of the road conditions. Now we can use the Glympse of the other to estimate an ETA, and with any luck, we can adjust our trip if road conditions require. It works out pretty well, but for safety's sake, both cars need another person to keep an eye on the smartphone screen, so the driver is not distracted by the events on the screen.

So, you can see that another person's knowledge of your location can be quite helpful in certain situations. This is just another use for your smartphone that you probably never even thought about when you bought it.

###

Additional Info on Scams Directed at Seniors

By Joel Ewing, President, Bella Vista Computer Club
president@bvcomputerclub.org

There are many websites with information about the scams and frauds which abound today, but since many of our members are seniors, I was particularly interested in scams directed at the elderly. I found a link to the web pages of the US Senate Special Committee on Aging https://www.aging.senate.gov/scam-resources, which contains information on **Resources > Fraud and Scams Resources**.

On that web page you will find some detailed video accounts of actual cases in which artificial intelligence (AI) has been used by scammers, with accounts told by those who were targets of the scam and from others involved. There are general guidelines on what kind of scams to watch for. Some of the video accounts reveal what red flags were potential indicators of a scam.

Areas in which AI is being used to make scams more believable include phishing attacks (imitating genuine communications), family-emergency scams (using AI voice cloning and deepfake videos to impersonate a family member in distress), and romance scams (using AI to operate fake profiles on dating and social media platforms). Scammers may commonly communicate via emails, phone, or text messages, and social media.

Some generic tips to protect yourself include:

- Do not share sensitive information via phone, email, text, or social media.
- Do not transfer or send money to unknown locations.
- Consider designating a "safe word" for your family that is only shared with family members and close contacts.
- Do not provide any personal or sensitive information to an online chatbot.
- Report potential scams to the authorities and the companies involved.

There are a number of red flags that are common indicators of a potential scam:

- Threats of arrest or legal action against you or a loved one unless you agree to pay money immediately
- Claims to represent a government agency or a business, when the email addresses and supplied internet links do not go to the official domain name or website associated with that organization; or if the business or agency contacts you on a social media platform rather than personal email. On contacts by phone, caller ID can be forged, but many spammers don't even bother to forge a caller ID that maps to the claimed agency or use a reasonable area code (I have received calls claiming to be from an agency in Washington DC where the caller ID area code indicated it was on the West coast).
- A request for personal information or payment coming in an unsolicited email, text, or phone call
- Pressure to take immediate action
- Asking for payment by difficult-to-recover methods: gift cards, prepaid debt cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency, or cash

- Offers to move your money to a "protected" account
- A demand for secrecy
- The communication contains incorrect punctuation, spelling, or unusual wording that suggests the writer is unfamiliar with common English usage.

One of the things I noticed in some of the fake "family emergency" scam examples on the above website is that the scam may begin by using common generic relational names like "mom", "grandson", or "granddad" and doesn't volunteer the actual name of either the person they are trying to contact or the person they are trying to impersonate. It's almost as if they are unsure of their skill and are waiting for you to identify by name a family member you think might be calling, so they know if their impersonation is plausible.

If your family members refer to each other by less common names, that alone may be enough to reveal a family-emergency scam. Sometime within the last year I received a phone call that started out with "Grandpa, this is your grandson". I have multiple grandsons, none of them address me as "grandpa", none of them have ever had occasion to phone me on that particular phone number, and if they did, they wouldn't say they were my grandson because they know I have multiple grandsons. It was pretty obvious the call was not legit, so I asked "Which grandson is this?", and they hung up.

I would suggest watching some of the videos on the www.aging.senate.gov website to get a better understanding of how the scammers can appeal to your emotions and pressure you to act quickly, rather than taking the time to think before acting. If you slow down and take time to think, you are more likely to recognize all the inconsistencies in their fabricated story line.

###

Applications, Programs, and Software You Should Never, Ever, Install

By: David Kretchmar, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
https://www.scscc.club dkretch@gmail.com

A program, an application, and software are the same thing: a set of instructions telling the computer how to perform in response to different inputs from the user, to provide something that the user wants to experience. The term **application** (or "app") has more recently gained a connotation of being a program developed for smartphones, but that is not always how they are used.

Many questionable programs are offered that promise some benefit, to tempt the user into downloading and installing them. Often the cost of these programs in device performance, security compromises, and money far outweigh any benefit.

You can get 10 or more contradicting opinions on this topic from 5 different computer geeks, and my ideas are no less unassailable. I know I will be stepping on a lot of toes, but if some users can be persuaded to reconsider some program choices, this article will be worthwhile.

America On Line – AOL

Their core technology is about as clunky and outdated as any you are likely to find. There are performance issues, security issues, mail issues, and customer service issues. AOL would not mind keeping you in its own little world, so much so that it has never learned to play very well with some other parts of the internet. AOL's ancient technology is very susceptible to hacking, putting your entire device at risk. Users report issues with email delivery and spam and fraud filtering on AOL more often than compared to other providers. There are just much better options for anything AOL gives you. One exception: if you are accessing the internet through a dial-up modem, you are probably OK sticking with AOL. (Editor's note: AOL terminated its dial-up services on September 30th, 2025.)

Many AOL users, including myself, have had horrendous customer service issues. At one time it was impossible to cancel an AOL account. I had to cancel a credit card and deal with calls from a debt collection agency when I ended my relationship with AOL over 20 years ago.

Anything from Norton

You should never install Norton antivirus (NAV) on your device. It takes up excessive system resources and even when it is current, it is weaker than most other antiviruses. I have seen NAV slow down a system so much it was unusable. NAV provides poorer protection than Microsoft's built-in and free anti-virus and firewall software, Windows Security, and the first thing NAV does is turn off Windows Security. If it were not for kickbacks from Norton to retail computer assemblers and vendors, even these companies wouldn't use it.

If you feel the need for extra protection, Malwarebytes and McAfee seem to work well with Windows Security. Malwarebytes is expensive and overkill for most individuals, and McAfee is not very robust software, probably adding nothing to Windows Security.

A problem with Norton and McAfee is that they are frequently used in online scams, which probably have nothing to do with them. If someone has used one of these, they are more likely to respond to a bogus email or text stating an account has just been charged $400 for renewal. This is true even if the "use" was simply uninstalling bloatware from a new system.

LifeLock is Norton's identity theft protection product. LifeLock has been controversial over many years, facing allegations of deceptive advertising and data breaches. Disturbingly, the data breaches have come from within the company as well as from outside sources.

In 2010, the FTC fined LifeLock $12 million for making deceptive claims about its identity theft protection services. The FTC also alleged that LifeLock claimed to protect consumers' sensitive data with the same security as financial institutions when this was untrue. The FTC further alleged that LifeLock falsely claimed to protect consumers' identity around the clock. In December 2022, LifeLock disclosed that its servers were attacked, compromising thousands of user accounts.

LifeLock, and other identity-theft protection companies don't do anything to protect your identity that you could not do just as well or better on your own.

If you are really concerned about identity theft, then freeze your accounts at the three major credit reporting agencies. I have done this for years, and when I bought a car a couple of years ago, I just unfroze my account for 24 hours at the agency used by the dealer.

The federal government now allows you to "lock" your own Social Security Number. This will hopefully not allow any new accounts to be established by anyone using your SSN. Go to https://www.e-verify.gov/employees/employee-self-services/mye-verify/self-lock. This helps prevent anyone else from using your SSN for E-Verify. If an employer, financial institution, or any other entity enters your locked SSN in E-Verify to confirm authorization, it will return an E-Verify Tentative "Nonconfirmation" (mismatch). Like credit reporting account freezes, the owner can lift the "self lock" when necessary.

A Virtual Private Network (VPN)

A VPN allows you to "tunnel" through a sever in another city or country to hide your location. VPNs also claim to protect your data by encrypting it on both ends.

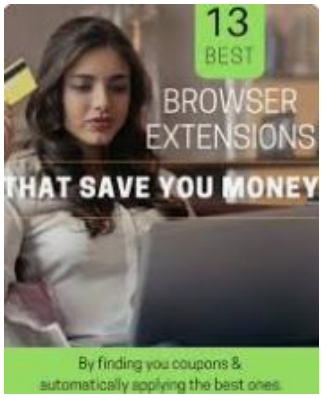
I have used a VPN in the past to watch a baseball game that was blacked out because I was too close to California or Arizona markets. Sadly, the broadcast was difficult to watch, being slowed down by virtue of routing through a remote server plus the encryption overhead.

Internet service providers (ISPs) such as Cox and CenturyLink have learned about VPNs and will often throttle or simply block an identified VPN connection. Use of VPNs sucks up a lot more ISP system resources than would otherwise be necessary.

VPNs have recently been identified as being more vulnerable to hackers, because of the additional access points their protocol requires.

Any browser shopping extension

Users are often offered free browser extensions, which promise to save money by searching out better deals on items purchased on the internet. Some offer a cash-back feature. Sounds like a great deal, yes? The answer is a loud NO!



Browser extensions are bits of software that are added into browsers, such as Edge and Google. Browser extensions are an extremely critical and vulnerable part of the browser and bad extensions can hijack a browser and/or make it do weird things.

Also concerning, these extensions are operating around an extremely sensitive area of the internet, where the buyer initiates payments. There is a lot of critical data: names and addresses, credit card information, and even banking data exposed in this area; why create another possible exposure?

I tested a shopping extension a couple of years ago and could not wait to uninstall it. When I shopped and found an item I liked, the extension invariably advised me I could buy that same item for less. Unfortunately, the alternative purchase was always for a used or refurbished item. I know I can always buy a refurbished item for less than new, so these pop-ups were annoying and less than worthless.

A performance booster or driver updater

Sorry, there is no such thing as a USB stick or program you can just put into your device to make it run like a new machine, or any better at all. Often these programs will slow your system by running in the background, hogging resources, doing nothing worthwhile.

At one time, when devices used much slower mechanical hard drive storage, a major cause of a slow system was fragmented files and useless registry errors. With much faster systems today, with much better seek times, fragmented files and unnecessary registry entries are no longer bottlenecks for your system.

Driver updaters are a total waste of system resources and money. I regularly research technology questions on the internet and inevitably find suggested fixes that do not work. Then a software fix, often involving registry cleaning or driver updates is offered for sale. These are worthless, since Microsoft does the work of keeping its drivers up to date.

An alternative to buying a performance booster is to just keep your system as clean as possible. Uninstall any programs you no longer use with a free program such as Revo Uninstaller (https://www.revouninstaller.com/). Revo does a good job of cleaning registry entries of little pieces of programs that might be floating around your system.

Some programs you probably **will want to install**

There are plenty of useful programs you will want to download and install on your device. The first third-party (non-Microsoft) applications many users install are browsers such as Google's Chrome or Apple's Safari, which manage over 85 percent of searches in the U.S. Some users prefer Firefox or DuckDuckGo, feeling they afford better privacy protection.

You are also probably going to need "productivity software" such as Microsoft Office or OpenOffice, and software (AKA drivers) that carries communications between your device and your printer.

Be careful out there. Always carefully note the source of any software offered on the internet. For instance, make sure you are downloading software for your HP printer from HP.com, or you are likely to be extremely disappointed.

###

Luncheon Photos

September 20th, 2025
by Henry S. Winokur, photos@henrywinokur.com

President Paul Howard is on the right in the back wearing a white cap. Director Geof Goodrum is on the left in the tan shirt around LOTS of good food!

Another view of the "eats" table. Director Geof Goodrum, in a tan shirt (on the right) and presenter John Krout to Geof's left.

Then there was the dee-licious cake that Leti provided!

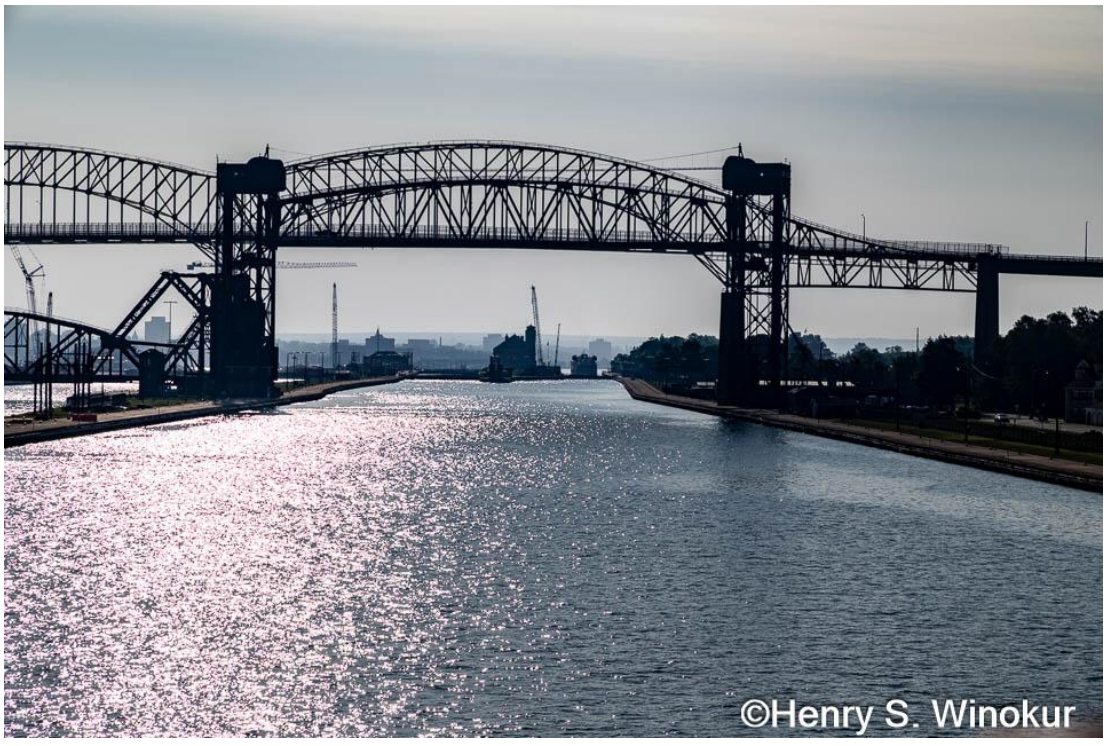
Presenter John Krout getting ready for his presentation after lunch!

###

And now some white space filler, a few photos from my (and my wife's) cruise on the Great Lakes this past summer on the Viking Line.

Entering the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, MI.

Camera: Canon R5M2.
Lens: Canon RF24-105 /4 L IS USM
Exposure: 1/1000th s, f/9, ISO 100, 105mm



(Above) A monochrome rendition of piles of Taconite waiting to go into the blast furnaces of the Algoma Steel Plant on the St. Mary's River in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada
Camera: Canon R5M2; Lens: Canon RF24-105 /4 L IS USM; Exposure: 1/500th s, f/8, ISO 125, 35mm

And last, an ore truck, carrying ore to the blast furnace.

Camera: Canon R5M2; Lens: Canon RF24-105 /4 L IS USM; Exposure: 1/500th s, f/8, ISO 320, 81mm

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Join the discussion at PATACS Groups.IO. First, register: https://groups.io/register, so you can change your subscriptions. It's free. Then go to https://groups.io/g/patacs to sign up. EZ PZ.

Colophon: This issue of *PATACS Posts* was prepared with Microsoft Word 365 (www.microsoft.com). The typeface is mostly Century size 12 through 16. Public domain clip art is from openclipart.org. Artwork from other sources is attributed.

E-mail article submissions and reprint requests to editor@patacs.org.

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Website: https://www.patacs.org

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First Class

AFFIX
FIRST
CLASS
POSTAGE

TEMP-RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Meeting schedule (Zoom=Online Only, Hybrid=Online/In-person)

1st Wednesday	7:00 – 9 PM	Arlington General Meeting	Hybrid
3rd Monday	7:00 – 9 PM	Board of Directors Meeting	Zoom
3rd Saturday	12:45 – 3:30 PM	Fairfax General Meeting	Hybrid
4th Wednesday	7:00 – 9 PM	Technology & PC Help Desk (in Arlington)	Hybrid

Arlington Mtg: 5711 S. 4th St., Arl. VA **Fairfax Mtg: 4210 Roberts Rd., Fairfax, VA**

Meetings are Hybrid or Zoom (as above)
Fairfax Health/Safety: https://www.patacs.org/fairfaxattreqmts.html
Online Meeting Access Will Be Sent Via Email

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