## My Turn (*Editor's Notes*)

Introductions are in order: I'm **Henry Winokur** and numero tres (number 3) of the "editorial merry-go-round" that we find ourselves on. I've been a member of PATACS since 2015. You can blame my membership on **Gabe Goldberg**—whom I knew from the **Capital PC User's Group** (CPCUG) headquartered in Rockville—which met at NIH—and whose death knell was sounded by the events of 9/11. Gabe enticed me to become a member. In that time I've been a member of the "peanut gallery"— *when we used to meet in-person*. I hope that we remember what that was like. (I'm hoping that we'll be able to be back together on Roberts Road by the fall. But we ain't there yet, so don't go over to the "club house" expecting to find any club activities. We're still "Zooming"!) I was treasurer for about 2 months, but because I live in Maryland and all the activities of the club take place in Virginia, it quickly became apparent to me that it was not a good match, so much to my chagrin, I did something I hate to do: I resigned. (I took one big thing away from my high school experience: *if you make the commitment, you damn well better be there*.) A few years ago, *President-Extra-ordinaire*, Paul Howard, asked me to became a Director, so I did and am. At the beginning of the corporate year (mid-2020), he kind of nudged me to become part of the editorial triumvirate for this newsletter. In the words of 'Frederick' from Gilbert & Sullivan's **Pirates of Penzance**, "that is how you find me now". I am highly visually oriented (more on that below). I'm very good at remembering faces—but not so good on names. If you, like me, try to attach names to faces, that's me.
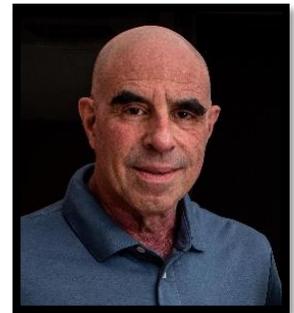

The other thing I've been doing for a while—a long while, as it turns out—is photography. I describe myself as being an "advanced amateur". I'm been taking pics, for, dare I say it? about 55 years. I've been in the digital space since 2005 and I shoot with a full frame Canon DSLR (5D Mark IV), after having shot film with mostly Nikon equipment for first 35 years or so. I have 18,000+ images in my library, and if I see too much white space below, I might put an image or two in as fillers. I'm always happy to talk about photography. A description of my job and my images can be found at www.henrywinokur.com and I can be found on Instagram at henry_s_winokur where I try to post at least 1 image daily.

Paul told me putting the newsletter together would be a 3-hour job. So far, that estimate has proven seriously incorrect ☹. The first time one does anything new, it usually takes way longer than estimated—for me, anyway. I am using **Microsoft365 Word** as my word processor. Our other two editors use other word processors. Fortunately I didn't have to start from scratch, and I ended up modifying one that'll work for me for the time being, until I get through a newer design.

As Warner Wolf used to say, "let's go to the video tape", which in this case isn't tape or video, just old-fashioned—like some of us—paper.

This issue will be known—humorously—as the "**Krout Posts**", due to the fact that our own John Krout, a rather prolific contributor has two articles in this issue. Somehow we managed to overlook his article on Wallops Island since *last* September (2020)!
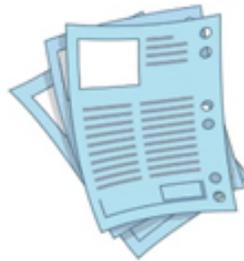
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Editor's Note #1: For reasons unknown to me, people refer to all search engines in general as "Google". "Google" is a specific search engine—one not known for privacy protection. To be sure, there are lots of search engines. I prefer **Duckduckgo**(**.com**) as it protects my privacy. My advice? When you see the term "Google", simply in your head, replace it with the phrase "search engine of my choice".

Editor's Note #2: From this point forward, if I put a note into an article, it will be prefaced by ((**EN**) *and the note will be italicized)* to make the source clear.

Editor's Note #3: I'm a big believer in the use of color, and I will do my utmost to use as much color as possible in the issues I edit. Monochrome, except in certain photographs is just too boring.

Keep Up With Your iPhone / iPad Apps

By Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota Technology Users Group www.thestug.org
director3 (at) thestug.org

Technology "apps" (short for "applications" or "software" ((**EN**) *or "programs"*) are doing so much to help us in many ways. You probably have noticed that your apps need updating and if you do not have "auto-update" turned on in your settings, then you should be updating your apps whenever there is an update available. Updates improve the app, hopefully resolve problems, and add new features, too. You may have noticed that your favorite apps DO change – different colors, menu choices, options, and images. Are you aware of the latest changes to the apps you love and use most?

It's hardly any trouble to update an app but rarely do people take the time to find out what is actually in the update. There could be some hidden treasures there waiting for you! The iPhone, for example, has some big updates (almost annually) which can make the "look and feel" of your iPhone (or iPad) quite a bit different. But many updates to most apps do not make big changes to what you see on your screen, but change some things "behind the curtain".

Are the apps on your iPhone or iPad being updated automatically? To find out, touch "Settings" on your iPhone (the logo looks like a gear wheel), and then scroll down a bit to touch "iTunes and App Store". Here you will see a list of several options – look under "Automatic Downloads" for "App Updates" – the sliding button to the right will be **GREEN** if it is **on** and gray if it is not. I would recommend that you turn this **on**. Note that even if this is turned **on**, the latest updates may not be installed immediately, it may take some days.

Why not make a shortlist of those apps you use most often? On my list, for example, would be my weather (WeatherBug) app, calendar, photos, messages, and Google maps to name a few. To find out the updates that have been "released" or made available for any app – on your device start by touching the "App Store" icon and then, in the search bar, enter the name of your app (such as "WeatherBug"). You will see an oval box that will say "open" or "update" if that app needs updating. Now touch that app and it will open the App Store description about that app. Touch on the text "Version History" to see a list of the latest updates **and** what each update did.

Many updates just fix internal bugs or problems and do not change anything you see on your screen. But is it always wise to take a few minutes and ask Google "What new features are on the 'WeatherBug' app?" ((**EN**): *be sure to specify "in 2021", so you get relevant links*) and you will be given a list of articles that describe the new or latest included features. Scan over this list to see which of these changes affect you and how you use that app. (I am just using "WeatherBug" as an example). One of the things I learned were that I could customize my starting screen that appears when I open this app; I can put what most interests me first on the screen. I also learned how to add and delete any city's weather on my list so I can easily see the weather in other places on earth. Then I noticed many options I had no idea were included in that app! To be honest, most of them did not interest me, but several did. This is true of **any** app. Many of us (myself included) go along and keep using our favorite apps and never become aware of the new options included in recent updates. So why not "take an app a day" and ask Google about it? – You are certain to learn some new things that will make you even better at using and enjoying the apps you love.

QR CODES AND MORE

By John Krout (photo at right), Writer/Presenter,
Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society www.patacs.org

A QR code is a square, 2-dimensional barcode that provides useful info such as a web page address (URL). QR codes can also contain email addresses, contact info, and just about any text. It is not the only square barcode out there. QR codes can be recognized by the square target blocks in the top two and bottom left corners.

Illustration 1 (right) shows a QR code example. This particular QR code provides a web page address for a site where short user-created videos can be downloaded for free. You have probably seen square QR code barcodes many other times in recent years.

My presentations for PATACS frequently include web page addresses. In this pandemic era of virtual meetings, I have

Illustration 1: pexels.com/video

decided to include not only the actual URL but also the QR code containing the URL. Anyone in the audience who wants to copy the URL from the presentation immediately can do so simply by using their smartphone. Chances are that you won't even need to install a barcode reader app on your phone. In recent iPhones and Android 10 phones, the camera app has been augmented to act as a QR code reader.

Illustration 2: Android 10 camera app reading QR code

I tried my Samsung Galaxy S10 camera app. Pointing it at the computer screen where a QR code was visible in one corner of a presentation, the camera app immediately displayed the web page URL contained in the QR code, as you can see in **illustration 2** (right). I did not even have to snap a photo of the QR code. The app gave me the option of tapping the address to open that web page. Opening the web page is ideal for quickly saving the URL for later bookmarking. Many retailers post QR codes enabling you to learn more about products.

MUNZEES is an game based on QR codes printed on small stickers posted outdoors. I have not tried the game, though I know a few of my geocaching friends also play Munzees, and occasionally I see the small Munzees QR code stickers outdoors. Any small QR code in a place where it does not seem to identify any product or other specific object is quite possibly a Munzees QR code.

Illustration 3: Play Munzee URL

The Munzees game has its own website, www.playmunzee.com, and its own free phone app for communicating found-Munzee QR codes to the website. That URL is encoded in **illustration 3**.

CREATING QR CODES

I found that my Galaxy 10 Contacts app will generate a QR code for any record in my contacts list. When I create a contact QR code, it appears on the phone screen. At that point, I can save the QR code as a graphics image file, or attach it to an email or a text message. There is a website, www.qrcode-monkey.com/, which creates QR codes containing the info you provide. It provides some interesting features, such as multi-color QR codes and placement of a recognizable logo in a QR code. You can

download, save, print, and share any QR code you generate on that site. The site provides this service for free. That URL is encoded in **Illustration 4** (below).

OTHER TYPES OF BARCODES

There are several types of barcodes in wide use. The Uniform Product Code (UPC) barcode on products, which enables rapid checkout and helps the retailer manage inventory, encodes information in several parallel vertical bars. That is an example of a 1-dimensional (1D) barcode. There are phone apps designed to scan UPC codes and tell you if the same product can be found for a lower price elsewhere.

Illustration 4: QR code monkey URL

If you have a driver's license, it contains both a 1D barcode and a 2-dimensional (2D) barcode. That 2D barcode is a type called PDF-417, and it includes all the text info on your license as well as some other info identifying your license record in the Virginia computer system (**EN**: *assumes you live in VA*). The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) created a standard for contents of the driver's license 2D barcode and updates the standard every few years. That standard is available online as a PDF document. You can read the field definitions in section D.12.5 of the PDF posted at the following

Illustration 5: AAMVA card standard URL

URL, www.aamva.org/aamva2020dlidcarddesignstandard/which is encoded in **Illustration 5**.

The 2D barcode on the driver's license is now scanned by Safeway at checkout if you buy alcohol (**EN**: *in VA*).

Barcodes also typically show up on shipment box labels.

United Parcel Service (UPS) uses a 1D barcode type for machine-readable package tracking numbers. If you have received UPS parcels in person, you

/Q/R/S/T/U/V/W/X/Y/P

have probably seen the UPS driver use a barcode scanner to scan the tracking number barcode and confirm the date and time of delivery of the parcel.

While the phone camera-apps will read only QR codes, other free apps can be used to read a variety of barcodes. I downloaded one Android app with the rather generic name **Barcode Scanner** to read the Virginia driver's license barcode. The same app reads QR codes, UPC codes, PDF-417 codes, CODE 39 (1D barcode type, which appeared above the address in correspondence I received from my county government), Data Matrix (another square 2D barcode type), and some other types.

WALLOPS ISLAND ROCKET LAUNCHES
Learn about places to view orbital-class rockets heading to space

By John Krout (photo on page 4), Writer/Presenter,
Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society www.patacs.org

INTRODUCTION

The rocket launch facility at Wallops Island on the Eastern Shore has existed for decades. In the 1960s and later decades, the facility launched sub-orbital rockets known as *sounding rockets*, going high enough to provide brief access to space before falling back to earth, like the Mercury flights of NASA astronauts Alan Shepherd and Gus Grissom.

Nowadays, the Wallops Island facility launches more powerful rockets to put satellites into orbit, including resupply missions to the International Space Station. That effort required major upgrades to the launch pads and surrounding infrastructure. The orbital-class rockets launched from Wallops include Antares and Minotaur rockets made by Northrup Grumman, which purchased the Herndon, Virginia rocket company Orbital Sciences, for that purpose. Orbital's HQ building is located on Warp Drive, a wonderful pun of a name for that outfit. Also, as of the summer of 2021, a liquid-fueled rocket called Electron, make by a company named Rocket Lab, will be launched from Wallops Island. That company also launches from its private facility in New Zealand.

WHY GO

Modern rockets provide access to the Final Frontier. Live launches, relatively up close and personal, are dramatic and loud. By definition, live launch audiences are enthusiastic about spaceflight, except for some kids who accompany their enthusiastic parents with obvious reluctance.

I shoot photos of launches, but many visitors simply view the action. If you want a simple way to magnify the sight for yourself, I suggest using binoculars or a camcorder.

WHEN TO GO

I use a free Android app called **Space Launch Now** to obtain launch schedules. The app covers launches all over the world.

WHERE TO GO

Below I will describe the viewing sites with their distance from the pads, starting with the most distant viewing sites. For each of these, I recommend taking along a beach-type folding chair, water and food, because you need to arrive early and will likely be waiting for a while.

There are restaurants on Chincoteague Island, Chincoteague Road, and at the intersection of US 13 and Chincoteague Road. One of the few remaining Stuckey's restaurants in the US can be found on US 13 a few miles south of Chincoteague Road in Mappsville VA.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

It takes a bit less than 4 hours to get there by car from the DC metro region.

From the DC area, take US 50 east, and cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. I use US 50 and MD Route 404. From Route 404 at Bridgeville Delaware, take US 13 south through Delaware and Maryland to the Virginia state line. You can see US 13 and the

region around Wallops Island in the **illustration 1** map. You may know that Chincoteague Island is the home of the famous wild horses in the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on the east coast of the island.

The NASA Visitor Center is marked on the map, and I have marked five other viewing spots on the map. Details are below.

Illustration 1

1. CHINCOTEAGUE ROAD AND SIDE ISLAND

**Advantages**: many hotels on the island, some restaurants on the island and Chincoteague Road

Disadvantages: popular and crowded on launch days, 7 miles away from launch pads, view partly blocked by NASA elevated runway, minimal or no facilities. Local hotels are expensive.

If you are price sensitive for hotel stays, try Comfort Inn or Hampton Inn on US 50 in West Ocean City, about an hour north of Wallops Island.

In November 2019, my son and I went to Chincoteague Island to watch a morning launch of an Antares resupply mission to the International Space Station. The drive from Arlington, VA took us about 4 hours.

Illustration 2

From US 13 in Virginia, turn east (left) on VA Route 175, Chincoteague Road. You can see a map of the road and the side island in **illustration 2**. The road becomes an elevated causeway over the water and swamp in the final couple of miles to the island.

You can see my photo from the side island of the early November 2019 Antares
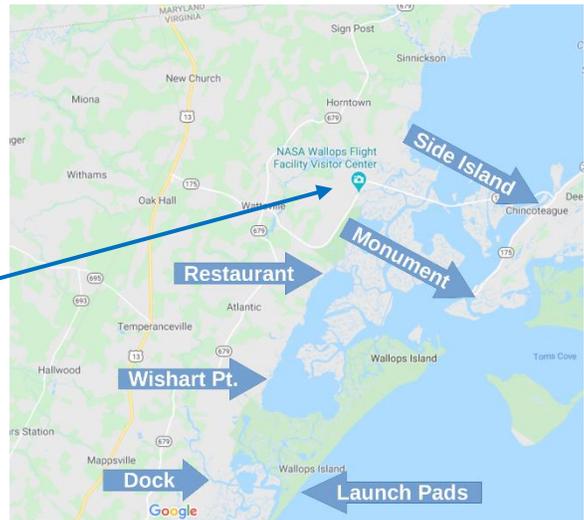
launch in **illustration 3**. I used a 900mm lens ((**EN**) that's a very *long* lens) for this photo. Tourism peaked that day on the island; the southern coast was jam packed, and we ended up on a small side island accessible from the causeway. That too became jam packed, but we got there early enough to snare parking and a fairly decent view of the pad.

Illustration 3

The spot we chose on the side island turned out to be 7 miles away from the pad. On the line of sight between the causeway and the pads, at the north end of the launch complex, there is an elevated runway running roughly east-west on landfill well above average terrain. So the tall water-tower adjacent the pads was visible, but the rocket was not fully visible until it launched.

Any parking spot along the Chincoteague Road causeway has similar issues. There are a few spots, wide shoulders probably intended for fishing. Sometimes the police prevent parking on that part of the Chincoteague Road on launch days.

2. WATERMAN'S MONUMENT ON CHINCOTEAGUE

Advantages: plentiful hotels on the island, some restaurants on the island and Chincoteague Road

Disadvantages: popular and crowded on launch days, 6 miles away from launch pads, unknown facilities

The southwestern coast of Chincoteague Island, around Waterman's Monument, might not be obstructed by the elevated runway. There are several parking lots for tourist fishing and sightseeing charter companies. I was not able to try this spot due to crowds, but it is a popular viewing site. Chincoteague Island traffic in that direction crept along about 2 hours before launch.

You can see a map of that area in **Illustration 4** (page 11). I do not suggest trying to drive to this site unless arriving several hours early, or possibly staying in an island hotel or a West Ocean City hotel the night before. To get there from Rt 175, turn right when you reach the island and follow the signs.

The next two sites are also popular. Because both are further west and on the mainland, possibly both can avoid the issue with the elevated runway. **Alas, both are closed as of the end of 2020**.

NASA VISITOR CENTER

Advantages: seating, facilities, launch control audio on speakers

Disadvantages: 6 miles from launch pad, inevitably crowded, but it's **CLOSED DURING the PANDEMIC.**

Illustration 4

The NASA Visitor Center has bleacher seating outside, and does offer bathrooms, but visitors are not permitted to bring in coolers or cameras on tripods. The distance from the Visitor Center to the pads is roughly 6 miles according to Google Maps, though the Visitors Center claims less. You can see a map of that area in **illustration 5**.

3. **THE WATER'S EDGE RESTAURANT ON THE SHORE: OUT OF BUSINESS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

Advantages: casual dining, seating, facilities, large picture window facing the launch pads

Disadvantages: 6 miles from launch pad, can be crowded indoors and out. You can still watch launches from the shore next to the building.
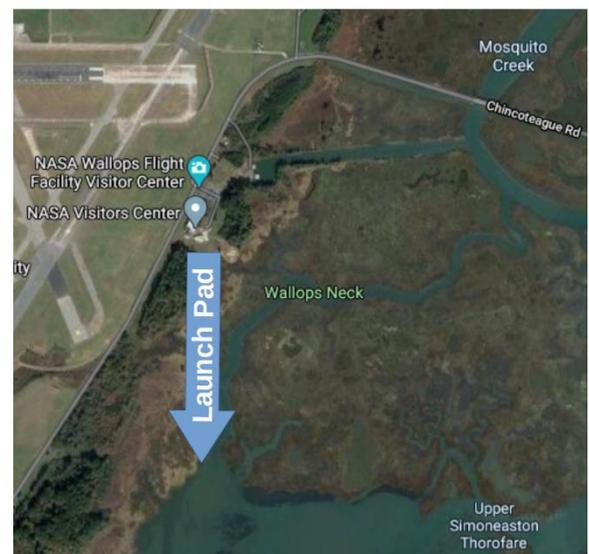
Illustration 5

The **Water's Edge**, at 34267 Wright Road, Wallops Island, VA 23337 was a popular restaurant with a large picture window facing the pads. For wintertime launches, this is the only indoor viewing option and is therefore very popular.

You can see a map of the area in **illustration 6**. The map was captured during the pandemic, so the label Takeout appears on the map.

My son and I drove there after photographing the July 15, 2020 launch of a Minotaur IV rocket. Part of the building extends over the water and sits on pylons, so the name is literal. We also found bad news: the restaurant is **out of business**, perhaps a victim of the pandemic. A sign at the corner of Wright and Atlantic advertised "Seafood Restaurant For Lease". Let's hope someone restores the place to life soon.

The following are public land areas are much closer to the launch pad. Both avoid the issue of the elevated runway.

Illustration 6

4. WISHART POINT

Advantages: 3.2 miles from the launch pad, possibly the least crowded spot during the pandemic.

Disadvantages: no facilities. TV camera trucks use this spot.

After that morning launch in November 2019, my son and I spent an hour or two exploring the local roads. We found a site roughly 3.2 miles from the pad. Locals fishing at that site told us that TV teams use that site to record video of launches. It is at the east end of VA Route 695, Wisharts Point Road, at Wishart Point. There is a small parking lot, and spaces for many more cars along the shoulder of the road. It is a somewhat weedy area; prepare accordingly. You can see a map of that area in **Illustration 7**. At that time, Wishart Point became our primary option for the next launch, in February 2020.

Illustration 7

5. ARBUCKLE CREEK DOCK

Advantages: 2.1 miles to launch pad, picnic pavilion and swing set on site

Disadvantages: crowded, no facilities

I did more map research, and found another site even closer to the pad than Wishart Point. It is the old concrete dock and boat ramp on **Arbuckle Creek** at the northeast end of Pierce Taylor Road, VA Route 730. That spot is 2.1 miles from the pad. We went there for a 6 PM launch in November, but the launch was scrubbed. You can see a map of that area in **illustration 8**.

Illustration 8

That site was packed, possibly 300+ people by the hour scheduled for the launch. Since my son and I are photographers, my advice is to show up hours early and bring a tall tripod. We showed up 3 hours early, and the dock was already crowded. Fortunately, for photographers with tripods, there is higher ground slightly to the west. Later arrivals can stand there and see the launch.

There is also a swing set, a slide, and a small picnic pavilion at that site. You can see one of my launch photos taken at that site in **illustration 9**.

LAST MINUTE INFO

When chasing a launch, which can be delayed or scrubbed for any of numerous reasons, it is useful to know how to learn about delays and scrubs. At the Arbuckle Creek dock site, data service for smart phones is good in the absence of a crowd, and poor on days when 300+ smart phones are awaiting a launch. That may be true at any viewing site in the region on a launch day. In July 2020, with roughly 150 people present at this site, we had good data service. In February, with 300+ people present, it was a different story.

Illustration 9

We did learn from another rocket watcher that Northrup Grumman provides tweets on launch status. The Twitter app may be the best low-bandwidth way to find out launch status.

NASA operates an announcement service on the 760 AM frequency. Bring along an AM radio to hear it. In July 2020, we found that the AM signal was strongest as we drove by the NASA Visitor Center, so we think the transmitter is located there. Our car radio was able to pick up the station at Arbuckle Creek, with some modest static. The Visitor Center was closed due to the pandemic, on July 15, and the station carried only a pre-recorded announcement, repeated over and over, with no updates when a launch was scrubbed. Perhaps when the Visitor Center re-opens, the station will broadcast the Launch Control audio channel.

Since we did have good data service on smart phones at Arbuckle Creek that day, we used the NASA Wallops Island YouTube channel, which ran behind real time by about 1 minute. We knew that and were prepared. A few seconds after Launch Control announced T-1:00 via YouTube, the rocket launched.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **John Krout** is a frequent contributor to PATACS Posts, the newsletter of the **Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society**. He was in second grade when the NASA Mercury flights began. John Glenn lived in Arlington, VA, less than five miles from the author's parents' home, when Glenn became the first US Astronaut to fly to orbit. Krout has photographed rocket launches including Apollo 16 and three Space Shuttle launches at Cape Kennedy. He notes that the modern personal computer industry, including tablets and smartphones, was a direct result of the novel development of microcomputers, meaning an entire CPU was on a single chip, which was first used in the Saturn V rocket for NASA's Apollo program.

An Antares rocket…

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First Class

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The monthly schedule of meetings via Zoom

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

Physical Meetings Canceled
Sessions via Zoom – Meeting Access
Will Be Sent Via Email

PATACS Event Information
Call 703-370-7649 for Meeting Announcements
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