

How much...

I like to play with computers. Both hardware and software. I like to take them apart and then put them together again. My first computer was one I put together from bits and part. I've added this and that, played with software and hardware. And since I work in the computer field, it is like getting paid to practice my hobby.

Many times I've helped friends with their computers. I've replaced hard drives, installed software, added memory and video cards for friends. There are times when they want to pay me for the things that I do. I feel a bit strange about taking money for helping my friends. I never know how much to ask or accept. After all, I am again getting paid for something I would do for fun.

Funny as in strange, my wife had the same problem. She was very good with everything involved in thread, yarn and material. She enjoyed working and creating with these things. Again she would help out friends when they needed a bit of sewing, knitting or some other needlecraft done. She often wondered about how much to accept or charge when friends wanted to pay her.

I have no such worries when I go to work. I know what I get paid to do my work. Why would I think that something less than my hourly rate is to much too charge for computer work. Someday I may figure it out.

Back in the day...

There was a time, when I was in college that I wanted to be a teacher. Specifically, I wanted to teach High School Math. While in college, I did specialize in computers, I took the exact same classes for a teaching position. For the first 2.5 years of college, I was sure I would either program video games, or teach High School Math. I don't do either of those. I'm not sure why I never tried the video game programming, but I do know why I didn't go into teaching.

It started with an introduction to student teaching. Not the full fledged student teaching, just 1 week in a 9th grade general math course. These were not troubled kids, just your normal everyday kids in small town Ohio. The problem is that they didn't know basic math. Things I remember learning very early in grade school. Other things I learned in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Not any really advanced stuff. Things like $33 + __ = 72$. They were struggling. By the end of the first class, I was frazzled. The second day in I was in charge of a lesson. The teacher prepared it for me, and I just had to study in the previous evening. I stood in front of a class of dazed faces. The day before, I was helping individual students during their study period, today I saw the same faces on every one of the students. They didn't want to be there. They had no interest in math. My lesson went as well as could be expected and the teacher was impressed by the way I handled myself. I was to observe the next two days, and design my own lesson for Friday. We would talk about it after the Thursday class.

The next two days were just really getting to me. I found that my patience grew less as the week went on. Everyday I needed a few hours just to unwind from 1 class period. I wasn't sure what was causing this reaction. In talking with the teacher, he thought I just had nerves from a public speaking encounter. I thought that could have been the problem. My lesson on Friday when Ok, I developed a 'fun' review of the weeks

lessons. The teacher gave me the thumbs up to go ahead, he seemed to think his students would like it. If they did, I couldn't tell. Stuff they were giving earlier in the week was forgotten on Friday. Stuff drilled over and over again the day before was missing from their memory. If it had been a quiz, they would have had some very poor grades. My nerves were worse that Friday afternoon. Yes, maybe it was speaking in front of so many people, I did have that problem with theater just a year earlier.

Then I got a job as a college tutor. Getting other college students ready for tests, quizzes and just helping with their assignments. 1 on 1 stuff, some of these kids were friends of mine. Trying to give them a heads up on some basic math. Same thing with my patience. It was all I could do to not throw the math books at a head or two. Why didn't they know this stuff? It is all so basic. Why didn't they learn this earlier? What happened to math instruction in the High Schools? What happened to basic logic? Hmm. No easy answers. But that was one of my longest semesters at school. I needed the job to help pay for school, but I really hated the job I had. I'd rather wash the uniforms of the various sport teams (did that as a freshman).

To relax I started spending a lot of time in the computer center. Computers didn't argue that they were right. They did exactly what they were instructed to do. The computer never questioned the rules. At the end of that semester, teaching was out and computers were in. I didn't apply for my senior year of student teaching and I knew that I never would.

And what was the straw that broke this camel's back? One of the kids I tutored had a section on some of the basic Algebra rules. The very stuff that makes Algebra work. It was the "Commutative Property of Addition". That old $A + B = B + A$. I tried telling this person that it was a rule. It was one of the things that made Algebra work. I remember explaining that there were just a very few rules that made math work. We spent

a good two hours going over this again and again. At the end of the time, I was asked how I knew all this worked. My reply was simple. It works because it was designed that way. The answer back was, "Oh, Ok". I thought that was the end of it. The next session, the student brought back sheets upon sheets of paper with many, many math equations written on it..

$1 + 2 = 3$, $2 + 1 = 3$, $3 = 3$, $1 + 2 = 2 + 1$... $999,999 + 1 = 1,000,000$.. $1 + 999,999 = 1,000,000$.. $1,000,000 = 1,000,000$.. $1 + 999,999 = 999,999 + 1$... and so on. I don't know how long this was worked on, but was a lot of paper and pencil lead wasted. All to say "I guess it works, I couldn't find anything that didn't. I didn't have the nerve to say, that this could go on to infinity and never give you an incorrect answer unless you added wrong. All I said was, "Yep its a rule, and you can't break it." I just shook my head. I guess I could have had fun and changed a rule or two. Can you say Abstract Algebra or Non-Euclidean Geometry?

working on battery power

I've been having some problem with my laptop's battery. The life I expected just wasn't there. I would like to be able to take my laptop places, sit down for an hour or two, get some work done, or just browse the net. Battery life has been under 1 hour. Sad really. You buy a laptop so you can have freedom to use the computer where and when you want, but you are then limited to finding a electrical outlet to work.

Well, to ease that situation, I was able to get a longer lasting battery (I hope). I've been running on battery power alone for about 20 minutes now. Taking the battery down to 0 will allow my computer to have a better indication of

remaining battery life. Right now it says I have over 2 hours remaining. We will see.

still going...

Update when the battery runs out.

Industrial Technology

IT for short, not to be confused with [information technology](#) which was a possible career track for me once, was where I was Monday and today. This is the class that was once know as shop, as it used to consist solely of things like woods, plastics, and metals. Nowadays those three still exist, but are played down by the age of computers and such lessons as audio engineering, CAD, CAM, robotics, digital music and photography, and more. How does a teacher fit all this in in one quarter (eight weeks)? Well, in the case of one school the students select different “modules” they will work in for ten days apiece. That means if a student abhors woods he doesn’t have to take it. How other schools do it I am not sure. It does seem that at the school I was at today they are always working with wood so it may simply be up to the teacher or district. How do these two districts compare? Read on.

The school I was at Monday actually has an assistant in the room meaning the students do not have to give up their regular work. Ordinarily a sub in IT would mean a video or seatwork as subs are generally not certified on the machinery. Thankfully, as I do not want the responsibility of keeping 20-30 students at a time from getting hurt. It was extremely fortunate that this school had the assistant because apparently the teacher had been out for a week before I came in. If they had to do seatwork all this time they would have

had some serious catching up to do. Plus, with two there [situations like this](#) can't happen...

So Monday my time was spent signing off on modules, passing out module quizzes, getting items students needed, and otherwise helping students. Well, the latter generally consisted of "let me get the TA for you." Okay, I am a computer person but even so I can't know all there is to each of the computer modules. I did help where I could though. All in all this was a fulfilling day and I enjoyed it. I forgot to give back the keys and had to come back, but I enjoyed it.

Then there was today. One teacher, no assistant. I arrived before the teacher left (half day afternoon position) and of course the students were working with wood. Well, now that I think about it I guess some of the class was in the computer room so that would be why there is so much working with wood. Still, even with this in mind this school does a lot more with wood than the other one. Anyway, with no assistant that meant- drum roll please- seatwork. Last time I was there it was a video on drywalling. A time before that the video was tiling. Today, seatwork. And not just any seatwork- they worked on *word searches* of all things. All period. Eight of them. Well, only one or two got through all eight. A few students barely got through one. Which type of student were you in middle school? Anyway, this was not nearly as fulfilling as Monday. I just sat back and handed out new word searches as they finished the old. Thankfully it was only a half day. Two full periods, and a period with only seven ELL students. Difficult students I may add, but I don't want to get into the whole ELL student thing again...

The next two days will be middle school PE again. Same two districts I just compared IT in. Maybe a PE comparison in the future? We'll see.

New Tangents

Well, this is my second post with the new “backend” of the tangents.org website, and I have to say, so far I like it better! It really wasn’t that difficult to get used to the changes, and so far anyway, I’ve found everything I need. If you’ve read my post called, “When Technology Attacks” then you know that I am reluctant to learn new ways of doing things on computers, etc. once I learn the original way to do them. It seems right after I learn something new, it changes, leaving me right where I started – feeling dumb, frustrated, and like I’ve wasted my time. But with the new tangents.org updates, I have to say that I’m pleasantly surprised since I’ve figured out everything I’ve needed to use so far by myself without it even taking any extra time! After that warning from O Mighty Admin, I have to say I was dreading the day when the updates would take effect, but now I see that my concerns were unfounded – for now at least!

Computers, sometimes I just hate them.

Over the weekend I was updating the hardware on one of my computers. While I had the case open, and my hands busily putting in many different parts, my daughter told me that the family computer wasn’t working. Grumble Grumble. I seeing it I thought that the video card was a goner. It looked like the hard drives were still working, the key pad would display

the proper lights when hitting the NumLock and ShiftLock keys. So I took out the card and swapped it with another. Still nothing. I think after 2 1/2 days of tinkering with the stupid machine, I found the problem to be a bad install of DirectX. Grumble, it wasn't the hardware at all.

Why don't I just use linux????

Okay then

You have spoken (or rather, **not** spoken- that is, no comments) and it seems that my links posts are not welcome. Whether it be the links, retrogaming, or whatnot, I guess I need to stick to the teaching posts. Right then.

Today I was a teaching assistant. It's okay- in the district I was in subs get paid the same whether it's teaching or assisting, unlike the other three districts where assistant subs get paid far less. In one district, in fact they get paid half the amount of teacher subs! I was actually supposed to sub in a junior high, but they canceled so I got my choice of this position or a preschool teacher. No choice at all... Of course, when I got there I was in charge of three kindergarteners, so maybe not a win after all. Well, it really wasn't bad at all. The three actually worked very well and I didn't have to intervene a great deal. This was a special education class, so I wouldn't have expected that considering my experience in these rooms in the past. Unlike the regular kindergarten students these three were there the entire day. They were mainstreamed into the same classroom twice in one day which one would think would give them the same instruction twice, but they must have worked out a schedule with the kindergarten teacher because while they were

in there a total of almost three hours between morning and afternoon they did not repeat any instruction.

In the morning following announcements I brought them to the regular class where they worked on an assessment of their number and letter skills as well as their self-image, and then followed with science. I feel I'm missing something, but it is so late I can't think of what. Anyway, they had to color and label the parts of a flower. Oh yes, there was a worksheet that they completed and got checked off for as well. Finally recess, then I brought them back for calendar and computer time where they typed up (with the help of the specialized software) the calendar info and practiced writing their addresses and phone numbers. By coincidence, two of them had the exact same numerical address, though of course the street was different. A teacher was supposed to be there to help, but she had observations to do and they were short a sub, so they pulled her sub somewhere else. Probably because I'm a "certified" sub and could be with them without a regular teacher. Anyway, as a teaching assistant I had to go with them to lunch and help where needed. When they went out for lunch recess I finally got my lunch.

In the afternoon I went to a music class with a second-grade girl for a half-hour, then it was back to the three tykes. In the afternoon K class they did reading and math. Get this- they were given decks of cards and played war! I guess number recognition was the key here, but after a couple games of mostly standard war they added the two numbers together instead, but then still won the cards or not by regular war rules. Back to the self-contained class again, and back to the computers. This time I had to watch them use the computers to make sure they went through the program the way they were supposed to. Finally, the teacher came back, had them pack up, did a couple of dance songs (chicken dance and hokey-pokey) with them, and then finally they were ready to board the buses. Whew. Long day, and long post. It is now

past my bedtime for eight hours of sleep. Goodnight.

Telescope review 2 Meade 70AZ

This was the telescope I just received for my birthday. It is a 70mm refractor with a Altazimuth mount. This telescope came with a planetary imager that I will review at a later date.

The mount with this scope, as with most inexpensive scopes is lacking. It is much too small to support the telescope. It also is a little short to use the telescope standing and looking near zenith.

This mount was also difficult to aim and keep in the same place. It had a lot of wobble and wiggle in both the horizontal and vertical axis. It also was prone to heavy vibration. The small finder scope was almost impossible to use. Most scopes in this class now come with the red dot sights. That would have been much easier to use. Since this scope is geared toward a beginner, I find that these problems are just too extensive for a beginner to get much real use out of the telescope.

Now on to the telescope. The optics really weren't that bad. There was some blue fringing on the moon and bright stars. I haven't looked at any planets yet, so I can't say on that, but I would assume that any of the brighter planets will have the blue fringe. This is what I expected with the scope. What I didn't expect was the amount of reflection in this scope. It was almost as if there was no baffling or the inside of the tube was painted with a gloss paint instead of flat. This was very noticeable when looking at the moon. The detail of the moon after centering it in the eyepiece was good. I'll push the power up the next time I get out.

The two eyepieces were inexpensive models, but the views were again what I expected. I did get some better views when I used my plossels. I haven't fully examined all there is to this scope, and have yet to compare it head to head with other scopes. The diagonal mirror was of similar quality as other parts of the assembly.

All this said, I'm going to play with the mount to see if I can get it to be a little more friendly. I want to see if the scope warrants getting a mount update or just making something up in the workshop. It could be quick grab and go scope when I don't want to lug out the reflector or set up the computerized scope. I will be mounting a small red dot finder to make things easier to find.