To: FRRS Board of Directors
From: Paul Finnegan, Webmaster
Re: Museum Web Page
Date: July 8, 2020

COVID-19 Update

The website has been kept up to date with all the new museum information regarding the COVID-19 health emergency. The home page, the Latest Museum News column, the calendars, etc. have been updated as I received material.

Enhanced Display Board Reports Tool

I have enhanced the Display Board Reports tool from the Minutes & Reports webpage to add an optional note to the link for the various reports. If you want to see the new feature, go to the May 2020 Reports Page.

Website Routinely Attacked

Like every other public website, wplives.org is attacked almost everyday. Since we have no sensitive information (e.g. credit card numbers or member addresses) on the website, there is little for the attackers to profit by. However, it creates problems for me because if the attacker succeeds in registering for crew or for crew training, then I have to go clean up the signup database.

Our first line of defense has been the use of the reCAPTCHA "I am no a robot" tool. Although this stops many attacks, over time, the robots have gotten smarted and it is not unusual for an attacker to get past it now.

I have been using the "extra time" from the COVID-19 shelter in place order this spring to do a lot of cleanup on the website and have added significantly more logging and tracking capabilities. One that should make my life easier is I have created new code that capture's the user's IP address and then determines the country the IP address is registered in. This has enabled me to restrict appropriate cgi scripts to run only for US based IP addresses, e.g. the crew training signup tool. This seems to be the most attractive tool attacked.

Hostmonster Issue (AGAIN!)

On Thursday June 25th, about 3 p.m. PDT, the Hostmonster account started refusing to allow the upload of the webcam image files. About 9 p.m., I tried to log into our account at Hostmonster and received the same four error messages I got when we had the same problem on May 16th. I immediately opened a ticket with Hostmonster, referencing the ticket number from May. I stressed that in May it took four days to resolve and since it was the same problem AGAIN and they had a ticket to reference, it should not take so long this time. I requested that the new ticket be escalated, since from the previous event, I knew a level-2 sysadmin tech would need to fix it. I was assured it was escalated.

On Friday morning, I contacted Hostmonster to check on the ticket. It had been escalated, but it had not worked on. I opened a second ticket asking a Technical Support Manager to call me, the ticket was opened, but I never received a phone call.

I created a tool on one of my home UNIX systems to check every hour if we could log in to monitor the status of the account.

On Friday afternoon, I contacted Hostmonster again, still no work on the ticket. I was informed the standard response commitment to technical tickets was 24 to 72 hours and I should just wait. I found this unacceptable. Hostmonster no longer has telephone support, it is all done by online chat. I said I needed to talk to someone NOW. The chat support person was able to give me a direct number to US support. So I called it and spent an hour on the phone with William in Arizona. He seemed very supportive and

understanding of my issue. He made an extraordinary effort and told me he had spoken with the Sysadmin Manager and the problem would be addressed within the hour. Since it was nearing end of business hours on a Friday, I had hope we would be up soon.

Nothing happened. Although the website was still up (except the webcam), I could not update it. Since I had no pressing updates (unlike in May when it happened the weekend of the FRRS Board Meeting) I decided to just sit back and watch, collecting data to really unload on Hostmonster the following week.

On Tuesday at 12:25 p.m. PDT, I had reached the end of my rope and was about to call Arizona again. My hourly check tool showed it was still down as of noon. But before I actually made the call, I checked one more time manually. I still could not log in, but the error messages had changed. I waited a few minutes and I could log in. However, a bunch of my tools were not working. I noticed that the time stamp on the ~/.bashrc file was very new. Someone at Hostmonster had edited my ~/.bashrc file (presumably in debugging the problem.) Since someone was working the issue, I decided to just sit quiet and watch.

Over the next 45 minutes things kept changing and then went stable and I could log in with all my normal tools working. I restarted the webcam service and everything seemed to work.

What really peeves me, in addition to taking five days to resolve, I NEVER was told it was fixed. I also NEVER got a phone call from the second ticket.

In the last nine months, we have had four multi-day issues with Hostmonster. I find this unacceptable. I consulted with the Signal Department and Eugene Vicknair and we decided to pursue an alternative solution for website hosting for the FRRS and the WPRM. Working with Kerry Cochran, Kenneth Finnegan and myself, we are establishing a proof-of-concept solution that I will have more to say about in a future report.

Webcam Performance

In last month's report I shared how I had added new logging information to the webcam server. I had intended to share a report this month documenting how often the webcam is out of service. The logs proved very useful in working the Hostmonster issue explained above, but the login issue so contaminated the database, I don't think the information this month is useful. I hope to present an accurate picture of the situation in next month's report.

General Items

6/3/20 – Enhanced display board reports tool.

6/4/20 – Posted June Board Meeting Preliminary Agenda to Minutes & Reports webpage.

6/4/20 – 21:09 PDT – enhanced webcam server program to use new timeout feature to try and kill hung scp jobs that were putting webcams intermittently out of service.

6/6/20 – Posted material for the June Board meeting, preliminary minutes for May and approved minutes for April to Minutes & Reports webpage.

6/6/20 – Posted Election Results to Latest Museum News Column.

6/7/20 – Updated 2020 Election News Item webpage.

6/8/20 – Updated Museum Days and Hours at a Glance webpage

6/16/20 – Added a photo from Greg Elems to the Around the Museum 2020 gallery.

6/17/20 – Fixed PayPal Donation issue on the 2020 Closure Page with new PayPal code from Eugene Vicknair that a user reported yesterday. Also added a note that we would be closed for the rest of the summer.

6/21/20 – Posted 2020 Convention Cancellation notice and updated appropriate pages.

6/22/20 – Posted 2020 Book Fundraiser material.

6/25/20 – Posted three photos from Greg Elems from the Tree Work Project to [Around the Museum 2020](#) gallery.

6/25~30/20 – Worked major issue at Hostmonster that prevented us from updating the website documented above.

7/2/20 – Posted three photos from Greg Elems to the [Around the Museum 2020](#) gallery showing the shop clean up project.

7/2/20 – Posted a photo from Ethan Doty showing backhoe bush removal to the [Around the Museum 2020](#) gallery.

7/4/20 – Updated [*Train Sheet* Master Index](#) and released issue 181 to website. The index now has 6,095 entries.

7/7/20 – To be consistent with current coding best practices, I changed the name of our Bad IP list from black_list_REMOTE_ADDR to deny_list_REMOTE_ADDR