



THE BUG REPORT

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*Work is either fun or drudgery.
It depends on your attitude.*

--Colleen C. Barrett,
president emeritus of
Southwest Airlines

October 6th HDTV Transition Almost Here With Walt Ordway

A few years ago, Walt Ordway gave us a presentation on HDTV and a year later gave us a presentation on Digital Cinema. Well, Walt will be coming to our October 6th meeting to give us an update on HDTV. We are getting closer to the magic date of February 17, 2009, which will be the last day of analog television in the USA. So, Walt's current presentation will give us a quick overview of the original FCC announcement about HDTV and that analog TV would end on December 31, 2006. Then he'll tell us what happened and why it got changed to February 17, 2009. He will give us more info about

which of us will be and which of us won't be affected. He will also tell us what we need to do if we fall in the category of "being affected."

Since his presentation will be on October 6, 2008, he will also be able to tell us about an analog to digital TV conversation in a city in North Carolina on September 8, 2008.

As a little side line, Walt will also give us some info about HD radio.

So, if you want to get the latest word on HDTV, make sure you're at the October meeting.



Greater South Bay PC Users Group

*A member of
Association of Personal Computer User Groups*



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Membership is available for twelve months from the date of joining. Membership rates:

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Mail to:

GS-BUG, Inc. — Membership
241 Via Los Miradores
Redondo Beach, CA 90277-6761

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GENERAL MEETING

General meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the first Monday of the month at the Salvation Army Facility, 4223 Emerald Street (at the corner of Emerald and Earl Streets), Torrance.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Garry Sexton 310-373-3989
uags@aol.com

Vice-President Tom Tucknott 310-530-4992
ttucknott@socal.rr.com

Secretary

Treasurer Jim Corones 310-322-1441
jcorones1@juno.com

Librarian

Membership Patrick Garvey 310-378-9767
Membership.GSBUG@gmail.com

Program

Web Master Shelley Miller 310-541-6796
seamil19@verizon.net

Past President Emmett Ingram 310-377-4668

Directors at Large

John Hanson 310-643-9882
ba030@lafn.org

Virginia Pfiffner 310-374-2410
vpfiffne@elcamino.edu

Greg Neumann Gbug_caller@aol.com

Newsletter Staff

Editor Marian Radcliffe 818-249-1629
MarianRad@1stNetUSA.net

Proofreader Virginia Pfiffner

President's Thoughts

By U. A. Garred Sexton

The efforts that some of the people that present to us will go to in order to fulfill the promise to give us a program are impressive.

I was going to be out of town at the time of our September meeting so to be sure everything would work, because this was not our regular meeting night, I contacted the Salvation Army and was assured that the meeting room was available. After I left town, there was a call at home on the answering machine that there was an error, the room was not available.

Tom Tucknott did not get this information so he and our speaker showed up at the Salvation Army to discover there was no place to have the meeting. Robin Ziegler, from Google, was informed that neither the room nor Internet access were available but he said he had a way of getting on line.

To Plan B – it was decided to go to my home where Internet access would be available. So the

operation moved to my house only to discover that no one knew the code to sign on to the WiFi.

At that point Robin Ziegler used his phone card to get on the Internet and proceeded to make an outstanding presentation that was received with rapt attention by the members attending. The amount of effort put forth on his part is an example of the above.

Boy, talk about going above and beyond the call of duty!

October will be a busy month – we will have an election of officers and a special SIG presentation by Harold Pfiffner at Sexton's house. If the SIG runs out of time it will continue on another Thursday night.

Unfortunately, by the time you get this news letter the SIG will have occurred. The reminder about the SIG was to be sent out by Email. If this does not work for you let me know.

Tip

TV Placement In Small Spaces

From *Smart Computing*

Although a small, intimate room probably won't accommodate a 50-inch HDTV, you don't have to give up on your dream of having a wide screen TV in your 12- x 12-foot bedroom or family room.

Consider a flat-panel LCD TV, which you can mount on a wall. Wall mounting saves at least 12 inches of space that you'd usually lose when you

have a bulkier CRT (cathode-ray tube) TV, not to mention the space the TV stand itself usually takes up.

And because you can sit closer to HDTVs than you could to analog sets (the closer you sit to an analog TV, the more horizontal scan lines your eyes detect), you can actually put a good-sized screen in a small space.

Internet Talk

By Frank Chao
Member, GS-BUG

This is the 108th *Internet Talk* article for *The Bug Report*, a publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GSBUG). Liz and I are now active in the Tucson Computer Society. Their Web site is at www.aztcs.org. We will use what we learn from these folks to provide you with future articles in this series.

TUCSON COMPUTER SOCIETY WEB PAGE

The Tucson Computer Society publishes a Meeting Notes page at http://www.aztcs.org/meeting_notes/meeting_notes.shtml

On this page, you will find hyperlinks to Adobe Acrobat PDF documents that contain information from some of their meetings. Some recent subjects include:

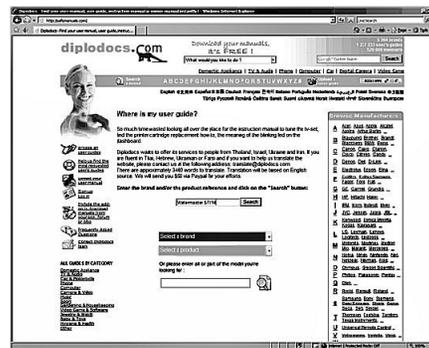
- Identity Theft
- Accessing Libraries Online
- Training for Digital Photography and
- All About Linux

FINDING OWNERS MANUALS

If you are looking for an owner's manual for a car, a home appliance, a camera, a computer, or just about anything, start your search at the manufacturer's website.

Look for a section called "Support" or "Owner's manuals" or "Documentation."

If the manufacturer's website does not have the manual, try "diplodocs.com" at <http://safemanuals.com>.



Finally try searching at Google by putting in the name of the manufacturer followed by the model number or model name.

LABELING COMPUTER CABLES

During the month of August, Liz and I helped several nice folks with their computers and about half of the problems that we resolved were caused by incorrect cable connections.

Here is a typical scenario: your kid dismantles your computer and/or its broadband modem while cleaning. He then puts it back together with one or more cables inserted incorrectly. Now your computer can't reach the Internet and you are now considering phoning the Geek Squad to

visit you for \$169+ for the first hour.

Now, let's back track. Think about how you could prevent this predicament in the first place. You need to label all of the cables that connect your computer to your network equipment.

Being tightwads, Liz and I label all our computer cables with a permanent ink marker and dull, writable Scotch tape. Some of our friends at the Tucson Computer Society use a Brother label maker, which is a bit pricey, but the labels are a lot better looking than ours.

If you use a Dymo label maker, you will have to use super glue to stick the labels on permanently, since the lame adhesive they use eventually dries out and causes their labels to fall off.

Liz and I sometimes use a permanent ink pen to write on the exterior of a cable in order to avoid having to create a label. This works well for grey or white colored cables but is not feasible for black colored cables.

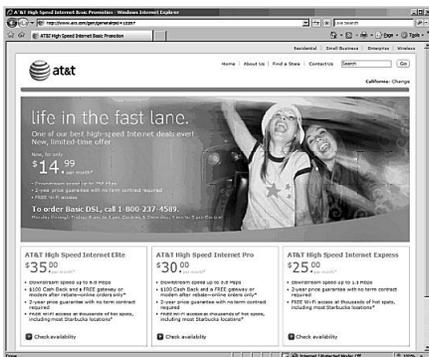
ENTRY-LEVEL BROADBAND

At the entry-level of broadband Internet, "Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line" which is also known as "ADSL" or "DSL" continues to be cheaper than

cable modem or satellite dish Internet. Let me illustrate this with some local examples:

DSL EXAMPLE: AT&T

If you go to <http://www.att.com> and click on "Internet" and put in the North Torrance Zip Code of 90504, and then click on the "Internet & DSL" button, you will be offered "Basic DSL" service for \$14.99. If you click on this offer, you will find that they promise not to raise the price for 2 years:



CABLE INTERNET EXAMPLE: TIME WARNER

If, instead, you go to www.timewarnerla.com/pricingGuides/PDFs08/1050-PL-0208.pdf you will find that the lowest cost option is \$34.95 per month for a resident of the Torrance area.

Note that both choices are exactly the same. At \$35 per month, Time Warner's per-month price for the lowest speed of cable modem Internet in North Torrance has been about the same for about 4 years.

SATELLITE INTERNET OPTION: DISH NETWORK

Now, let's us go to Dish Network's Website at www.dishnetwork.com. Click on 'Shop,' then click on 'Internet.' Finally click on



'Satellite Internet.'

You will discover that the lowest level of satellite Internet service costs \$49.95 per month. **BOTTOM LINE AGAIN: DSL IS THE CHEAPEST**

The above examples illustrate the following rule-of-thumb: At the lowest, entry-level of broadband service: DSL is cheaper than cable modem which is cheaper than satellite.

Some GSBUG members have stated to me that they can justify spending the extra money for a cable modem or a satellite dish connection because they are three or more times faster than entry-level DSL service.

However, if you are new to fast, broadband Internet and all you have ever had is a dial-up mo-

dem connection at 56 kilobits per second, you probably will not appreciate the faster speed of entry-level cable or satellite, and you will probably prefer the lower price of DSL. At least that is what several GS-BUG and several Tucson Computer Society members have told us.

Liz and I generally recommend that new broadband users sign up for entry-level ADSL service instead of the pricier cable modem service. If you win the lottery, you can always upgrade to a pricier, faster service option!

TWO DSL HOOKUPS FOR REDUNDANCY

Two GS-BUG members have also stated that because entry-level ADSL is cheaper, they chose to put two ADSL connections into their homes for redundancy for a lower total price compared to the monthly cost a single cable modem or satellite Internet hookup. Here is how this works:

For each phone line in your home, you order a unique DSL connection for about \$15 per month. Hence, if you have two phone lines at your home, you can order two ADSL connections for a total of \$30 per month. Then you would connect some of the computers in the house to one of the ADSL connections and other computers are then connected to the other ADSL connection. If one Internet connection fails for any reason, then you can re-route all of

its associated computers to the ADSL connection which is still operational. Of course, when the ADSL provider has a total outage in your residential area, then both of your ADSL connections will fail.

DIAL-UP MODEMS FOR A BACKUP

Liz and I continue to recommend that you use a dial-up modem for a backup when your broadband Internet connection fails. We continue to use the free versions of NetZero and Juno and the dial-up version of the Los Angeles Free-Net as a backup connection to the Internet whenever our cable modem connection has an outage.

Since moving to Tucson in March, we have reverted to a dial-up connection four times when our cable modem service had outages. On all four occasions we were pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to attach a USB 56-kilobits per second modem to a computer and run the 'Connect To' wizard to get *Windows* to make a dial-up connection to the Internet.

SOME WEB SITES ARE "PUT-ONS"

When browsing the Internet, please be aware of the fact that some Web sites are satirical and/or humorous and/or malicious "put-ons."

Go to <http://blackpeopleloveus.com>



No where at this web site do they disclose that this entire site is a satirical "put-on." All of the persons in this site are actors. This web site is a creation of Chelsea Peretti, a professional comedian. Her web site is at www.chelseaperetti.com.

When Liz and I first saw the "Black People Love Us" web site, we did not know what to make of it. We then went to Google and we searched on: "Black People Love Us wiki."

On the second page of "hits," we found the following Wikipedia page at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chelsea_Peretti

This Wikipedia page refers to "Black People Love Us" as satire

and credits Peretti with creating it.

At the above-mentioned Wikipedia page, we also found the link to Chelsea Peretti's Web page.

If you have any questions or problems, I can be contacted by the following methods:

1. Send me e-mail at: fchao2@yahoo.com
2. Send "snail" United States Postal Service (USPS) mail to

Frank Chao
405 E. Wetmore Rd.
#117-484
Tucson, AZ 85705-1792

Or sell your computer and take up golf instead!!

Article

E-Mailing Photographs

By Richard Kennon

Amador Computer Users Group, CA

www.acug.netDrtrdguy@volcano.net

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

First, we **must** understand that photograph (image) size in the camera and in the computer is measured in **pixels**. These are the basic dots of color that make the picture. **Do not** pay any attention to anything that says 'inches' or 'pixels per inch.' These terms are meaningless when we are considering a picture either in the camera or in the computer.

They may come into play later if we want to print the photo on paper. But, that is another subject for another time. For now, we think only of pixels.

Most cameras record too many pixels to e-mail. For instance, a 6 megapixel camera will make a picture about 3000 pixels wide by 2000 pixels tall and the file size may be several megabytes. Our screens are usually only about 1000 pixels wide (some are larger and some smaller). So, if we e-mail the native picture, it will be wider than the screen for the recipient **and** the file will be so large, it may take "forever" to download to the recipient's computer. It is possible the service provider will not even accept it.

There are two things we must do to make a photo e-mailable. The first is to **resize** or **resample** the picture. We want to change the picture width from 3000 pixels to 800 pixels, for instance. This process is called resizing or re-sampling. We have to pick the best 800 pixels out of the 3000 to represent our photo. Well, no, that is not exactly correct but it simplifies things to think of it that way. We don't have to worry about it because a lot of very smart programmers have developed ways (algorithms) to help us. Just remember, you want to resize or resample to get the photo down to a size convenient for e-mailing. I usually use 800 pixels or 900 pixels width for pictures I attach to e-mails.

The second thing to do to make a photo e-mailable is to save it in **JPEG format (.jpg)**. That is a format that reduces file size a lot and picture quality a little so the picture can be downloaded more quickly and still be nice to look at. Some software programs give you choices of compression amount with numbers ranging from 1 to 10. One will result in a very small file but the picture quality will not be good at all. A 10 will give the very best quality but with a very large file size. A reasonable compromise is to use

5 or 6. I usually use 6.

How do you do this? First, I will describe how to do it with a free Microsoft program. Then I will try to look at some other programs.

Microsoft Power Toys for XP has a Resize Pictures toy that is slick and easy but feedback says it only works on XP. It can be downloaded at <http://www.microsoft.com/power-toys>. Right click on an image name or thumbnail in Explorer or My Computer and choose **Resize Pictures**. You are limited to four specific sizes but they are good choices. They don't tell us what compression they are using but the results look OK. Unless you tell them under **Advanced** to replace the image in the file, it will make a copy. That's good. They will add the word, "Large", "Medium" or "Small" to the end of the name you have chosen.



If you are happy with this solution, then read no further.

But, if you want to use a picture editing program, maybe this will help.

In *Photoshop Elements 5*, click on **'Image>Resize>Image Size'** and this window will pop up. Note that there is some garbage at the bottom about 'inches' but we will ignore that. First we will click the **'Resample Image'** box. That puts the Pixel Dimensions in play and that is what we want. I selected the 'Width' box and changed the width to 800 pixels. Since the **'Constrain Proportions'** box is selected, that is all I have to do.

Note, down at the bottom, that we have several choices of sampling algorithms. This is frosting on the cake. I read somewhere that I should use **'Bicubic Sharper'** when downsizing so that is what I do. Most programs don't give us all these choices. Then we should click on **'File>Save As'** and give the photo a new name. I often just use the same name and add **'_800px'** so the next time I will know it is ready to e-mail. Here we can choose the JPEG format and the compression amount. *Photoshop Elements 6* is out now and sells for about \$100. If you are able to spend that much and want one of the best editing programs, I highly recommend it.

Let's look at *Picasa2*. It is a free program from Google and looks really good but I do not have much experience with it. By all means, try it first because the price is right! When it comes to e-mailing photographs, it is a little

more automated but not any easier to use than *Elements*. First, click on **'Tools>Options>E-Mail.'** Then select the width you want in pixels. There are six choices. Then click on **'Apply'** and **'OK.'**

The next step is to click on **'File>E-Mail'** and you will get three choices of how you want to e-mail your photos. Fortunately, I use *Outlook Express* so my choice is listed.

When I clicked on *Outlook Express*, an e-mail page popped up with the photo attached. At this point we can write something else on the e-mail and send it. I recommend this so the recipient will know it is really from you and not something sent out by a virus. When I receive e-mails that only say 'Attached,' I delete them without looking at the attachment. This saved me one time when I received a virus from my sister-in-law that she did not know she sent. She spent weeks and dollars getting her computer back up. Oh, I digress. If you want to send more than one picture (and, who doesn't?), you must select the picture and



click on the 'Hold' button near the bottom of the screen. Do this for each photo you want to send and they will all be attached to the e-mail. The program automatically chooses JPEG format and a compression ratio but does not tell you. That is okay as the pictures I tried looked good. *Picasa2* has considerable capability for editing photos in many respects. Try it!

There are many other editing programs that I haven't mentioned and have no experience with. In all cases you want to change the picture's size in pixels by resizing or resampling. Pay no attention to anything that says 'inches' as that will have no meaning for this process. Sometime later we will talk about printing pictures and then we will use inches.

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(From Vista—Part 9, page 9)

some that are free. I've been using the free version of *Zone Alarm* for many years and I'm satisfied with its protection. It also creates a log that I can use to examine attempts to connect to my computer. You can find it on the Internet at www.zonealarm.com.

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Article

Moving on to Vista — Part 9

by Neil Stahfest

Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA

www.tapcug.org

ncstahfest@msn.com

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

As I mentioned last month, *Vista's Service Pack 3* is out. I didn't see any real changes in my computer after I installed it, most of the modifications are supposed to deal with computer security. I have since encountered a problem with my printer.

I don't print too often from my "Vista computer" so the problem wasn't immediately obvious. When I did try to print some documents they "disappeared" without printing. My first thought was that I had changed the firewall on my print server and locked out connections from other computers on my home network (I've done that before). No that wasn't it. After checking and finding that I could transfer files between my computers, I went to the printer section of my control panel. That's where I discovered that *Vista* wanted a new printer driver installed. I don't remember any problems with the printer when I started using this computer. As I recall, *Vista* recognized my printer (a fairly new HP ink jet printer) and it just worked. Anyway, a search of Hewlett Packard's web site didn't reveal a new printer driver. In

fact it told me to use the one built into *Vista*. I turned to the installation CD that came with the printer and reinstalled the printer driver from the CD. It worked and I can print over my home network using a wireless connection again. I have no idea why this happened but at least one other TAPCUG member also discovered a printer driver problem after installing *Vista SPI*.

Speaking of security (see paragraph 1), *Windows Vista*, like *Windows XP*, comes with a firewall program pre-installed. As all you computer gurus know, a computer firewall is a hardware or software tool that examines all Internet traffic letting only "safe" traffic into your computer. The firewall for *Vista* was supposed to scan Internet traffic both entering and leaving your computer. I can hear some of you saying, "If I scan incoming traffic to be safe, why do I care about outbound traffic?" Well, incoming traffic is the bigger threat to you. Using pre-defined rules it determines which programs are allowed to use your network connection or which ports can be used for communications. If some spyware, Trojans or malicious "phone home" software slips past your firewall,

they may allow someone to take remote control of your computer to attack it or other computers through your Internet connection (that's why Microsoft is always sending you those security updates). So a firewall that scans outbound traffic attempts to stop this. To make a longer story short, contrary to plans, the ability to check outbound traffic has not been provided with *Vista's* firewall.

Another shortcoming of *Vista's* firewall is that it does not create a log of all attempts to contact your computer from a local network or the Internet. This kind of record can be useful if you suspect a hacker has been visiting your computer in the middle of the night. Actually, there is a way that you can modify *Vista's* firewall to create a log and examine outbound traffic. The process to set this up is probably more complicated than most of us would like to deal with so I offer a much easier solution. Turn off *Vista's* firewall and install a third party firewall program. Do not try to use two or more firewall programs at the same time. They do not play well together. There are a number of firewall programs that you can purchase as well as

(See *Vista-Part 9*, page 8)

Article

When to Turn Off Personal Computers

U.S. Department of Energy
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

A Consumer's Guide to Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

www.energy.gov/forconsumers.htm

If you're wondering when you should turn off your personal computer for energy savings, here are some general guidelines to help you make that decision.

Though there is a small surge in energy when a computer starts up, this small amount of energy is still less than the energy used when a computer is running for long periods of time. For energy savings and convenience, consider turning off:

- the monitor if you aren't going to use your PC for more than 20 minutes
- both the CPU and monitor if you're not going to use your PC for more than two hours.

Make sure your monitors, printers, and other accessories are on a power strip/surge protector. When this equipment is not in use for extended periods, turn off the switch on the power strip to prevent them from drawing power even when shut off. If you don't use a power strip, unplug extra equipment when it's not in use.

Most PCs reach the end of their "useful" life due to advances in technology long before the effects of being switched on and off multiple times have a

negative impact on their service life. The less time a PC is on, the longer it will "last." PCs also produce heat, so turning them off reduces building cooling loads.

For cost effectiveness, you also need to consider how much your time is worth.

If it takes a long time to shut down the computer and then re-start it later, the value of your time will probably be much greater than the value of the amount of electricity you will save by turning off the computer.

Power-Down or Sleep Mode Features

Many PCs available today come with a power-down or sleep mode feature for the CPU and monitor. ENERGY STAR® computers power down to a sleep mode that consume 15 Watts or less power, which is around 70% less electricity than a computer without power management features.

ENERGY STAR monitors have the capability to power down into two successive "sleep" modes.

In the first, the monitor energy consumption is less than or equal to 15 Watts, and in the second, power consumption reduces to 8

Watts, which is less than 10% of its operating power consumption.

Make sure you have the power-down feature set up on your PC through your operating system software. This has to be done by you, otherwise the PC will not power down. If your PC and monitor do not have power-down features, and even if they do, follow the guidelines below about when to turn the CPU and monitor off.

Note: Screen savers are not energy savers. Using a screen saver may in fact use more energy than not using one and the power-down feature may not work if you have a screen saver activated. In fact, modern LCD color monitors do not need screen savers at all.

Tip

Frozen in Action

If you're photographing sports or other kinetic activities, you can use extremes of shutter speed to accentuate the action. A slow speed (1/15th of a second, for example) will lead to blurring of the figure, emphasizing its sense of motion. With fast shutter speeds, you can stop action, such as capturing a high-jumper hanging weightless while clearing the bar.

From *Smart Computing*

The Bug Report

The Greater South Bay PC Users Group

3623 W. 227th St.

Torrance, CA 90505

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