THE BUG REPORT

April 2009

INSIDE

*Now Nature hangs her
mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets
o' daisies white
Out o'er the grassy lea.*
                    - Robert Burns

April 6

Backing Up — Did It?

The program for April will involve a demonstration of an actual backup of a hard drive and then learning how to confirm that it really did happen by Greg Neumann.

There will be a general question and answer on anything you want to ask or discuss.

See you at the meeting on Monday, April 6th at 7:30 p.m.

Internet SIG

The Internet SIG is held the fourth Thursday of each month from 7 to 9 PM.

PURPOSE: Fun and Learning.
Our next Internet SIG is Thursday, April 23, 7 to 9 PM.

The time will be spent surfing the net so bring a favorite web site URL to share. The meeting will be held upstairs at Garry's home at 3623 West 227 Street (half block east of Hawthorne Blvd.). At the April meeting we will be answering your questions and expanding our Internet knowledge.

Tom Tucknott, SIG Leader

Greater
South Bay
PC Users Group

A member of
Association of Personal Computer User Groups

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

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All submissions to the GS-BUG Report must be un-formatted on PC disk or e-mail (no hardcopy). Limit formatting to bold or italicizing. We reserve the right to edit as necessary for space consideration. Art work submitted must be in a common graphics format (.jpg, .tif, etc.)

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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

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President's Thoughts

By U. A. Garred Sexton

Unfortunately, we have to say goodbye to Patrick Garvey. He has served our Club well as Membership Chair and with his active participation in the various SIGS. When asked why he was leaving the answer was thought-provoking. He joined the club to find out if GSBUG activities would fulfill his desire to interact with club members and delve into the working of personal computers at a programming level. Because we did not fulfill his desire, he has decided to look elsewhere. Good luck in your search, Patrick, and thanks for all your involvement to help us become a better club.

Many years ago, a book was written by Eric Berne called *The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups.* In it he talked about why people join groups and where the groups get their energy. We join a group for what it will do for us and the area in which the group goals and the personal goals mesh, the organization then develops energy to take external action.

Things have changed significantly in the personal computer field over the years and we need to take a look at what we are doing to keep up with your interests as they change.

What, as a member, do you want from the group GSBUG?

Here's a short survey to check out what you want.

I want fellowship. Y N

I would like presentations on new technology. Y N

I want interactive events. Y N

I would like to:

_____

_____

What other more specific ideas and needs would be satisfying for you?

Email me at uags@aol.com and we will re-evaluate how we can make changes to improve your satisfaction with GSBUG.

 U.A. Garred Sexton

Internet Talk

By Frank Chao
Member, GS-BUG

Welcome to the 114th *Internet Talk* article for *The Bug Report*, a publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GSBUG). Liz and I recommend that you do some Spring cleaning on your computer so we will send you to some Web sites that tell you how step-by-step. Before we get to this digital janitorial guide, we would like to tell you about some cool Web sites that we have been visiting.

HULU WEB SITE

You can watch some television shows and a few movies for free at www.hulu.com.

For example, you can watch 120 full episodes of *Star Trek* at http://www.hulu.com/videos/ search?query=star+trek

Now you know why Liz and I retired from our jobs !

GIGAPAN

Gigapan is a technology for stitching multiple photos into a single, dynamic image that you can pan and zoom. Here are some examples of the end result of the Gigapan system:

A dynamic view of the Los Angeles area, as seen from Rancho Palos Verdes can be found at http://gigapan.org/ viewGigapan.php?id=7355
A dynamic view of Yosemite Valley can be found at http://gigapan.org/ viewGigapan.php?id=5178

Some dynamic views of the

Tucson area of Arizona can be found at http://www.gigapan.org/ searchGigapansList.php? sort=recent&keywords=tucson& window_height=800&window _width=1264

A zoomable view of Hunauma Bay in Hawaii can found at http://gigapan.org/ viewGigapan.php?id=5322

A dynamic photo of President Obama delivering his inaugural speech on January 22 can be found at http://www.gigapan.org/ viewGigapan.php?id=15374

The Gigapan system consists of three parts that are described at http://www.gigapansystems.com.

PART 1:
The "Gigapan Epic" is a fancy automated camera mount that rotates your camera up to 360 degrees and takes multiple photos. It costs about $400.

PART 2:
The Gigapan Stitcher is a free, open-source software application for stitching multiple photos into a single panorama. This software can be used with panoramic photos that are created by rotating a camera on a regular tripod, if you do not own a "Gigapan Epic."
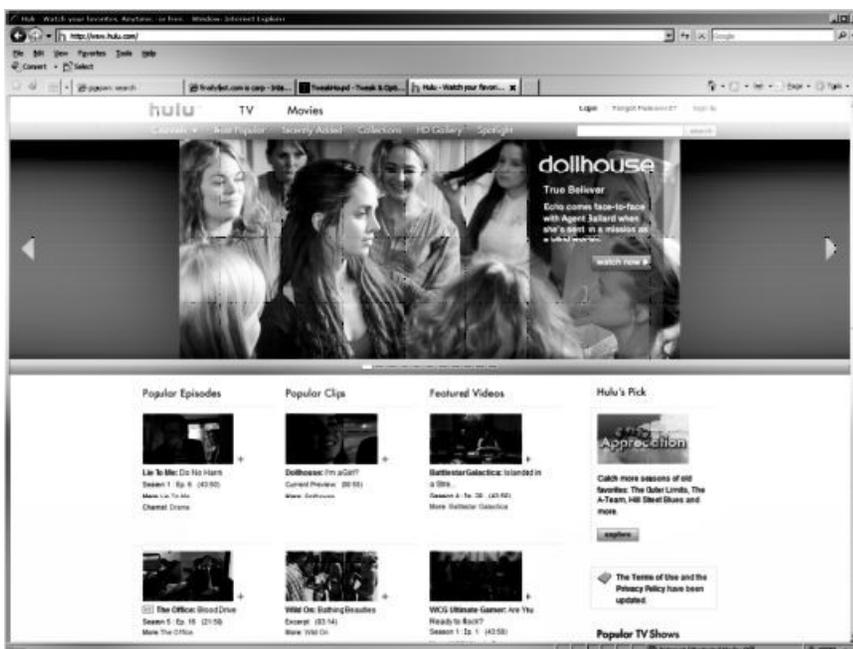
PART 3:
Gigapan.org is a free Web site for viewing and sharing Gigapan photos. You do not need a free account to view the photos. You need a free account if you want to upload photos for others to view.

The three parts of the Gigapan system are inter-related and complementary but they do not depend on each other. Liz and I have only used Part 3 to view the works of others. We continue to use Adobe Photoshop Elements to stitch multiple photos together but we will eventually try out the "Gigapan Stitcher" of Part 2.

CCLEANER

Liz and I almost gave up on finding a registry cleaner that was safe enough to recommend. We have tried a lot of them over the past five years and most failed miserably. After reading very positive comments on

Piriform's *CCleaner* at various Web sites and noticing that they won the "PC Pro" "Software of the Year" award, we decided to try it on a few *Windows XP* and *Windows Vista* computers. We were pleasantly surprised at the results.

When you start *CCleaner*, it looks like this:
If the *Cleaner* 'brush' icon is highlighted, use the 'Analyze' button and then the 'Run Cleaner' button to clean up *Internet Explorer*, *Windows Explorer*, and unneeded *Windows* files

If the 'Registry' icon is highlighted, use the 'Analyze' button and then the 'Run Cleaner' button to clean up the *Windows* registry.

Get yourself a copy of *CCleaner* at http://www.ccleaner.com/ and use it as part of the Spring cleaning process for your computer!
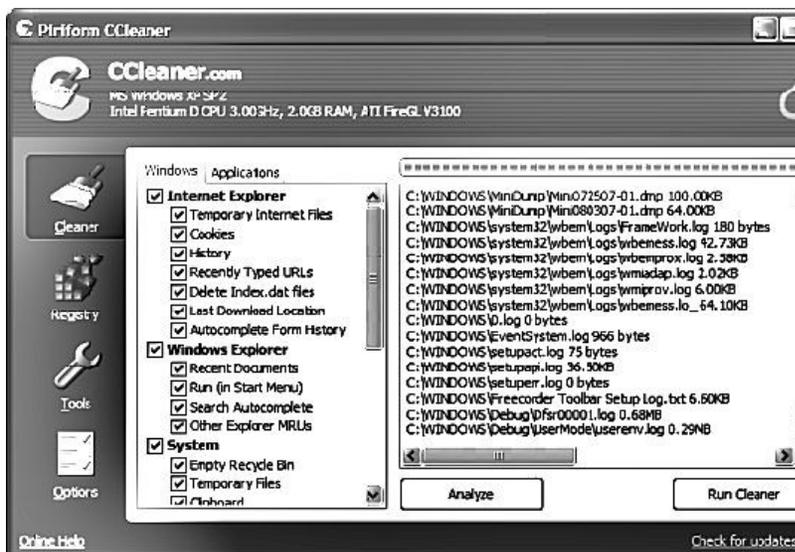
CONTROLLING START-UP APPLICATIONS

In addition to running *CCleaner*, you can get rid of unwanted applications that start up automatically and slow down your computer by following the advice at

http://www.pacs-portal.co.uk:80/startup_index.htm

This Web site was recommended to me by John Mayer of the Los Angeles Free-Net.

OPTIMIZING *WINDOWS XP*

Additional tweaks for optimizing *Windows XP* can be found at a Web site called "The Complete Guide to Optimizing Windows XP" at http://www.connectedinternet.co.uk/2007/02/06/the-complete-guide-to-optimising-windows-xp/1/

A similar, more detailed guide to optimizing *Windows XP* can be found at http://www.tweakhound.com/xp/xptweaks/supertweaks1.htm

OPTIMIZING *WINDOWS VISTA*

Additional tweaks for optimizing *Windows Vista* can be found at a Web site called

"Tweaking Windows Vista" at http://tweakhound.com/vista/tweakguide/index.htm

FREE STORAGE ON THE WEB--PART 4

DROPBOKS

This is the fourth installment in our series of discussions about storing files for free on the Internet. This month, Liz and I obtained a free storage account at *DropBoks* and we loved it. We found it to be easy to use. This *DropBoks* company is a new arrival to the Internet storage service category: they have only been in existence since late in 2006.

Their Web site is located at http://www.dropboks.com. It looks like this:
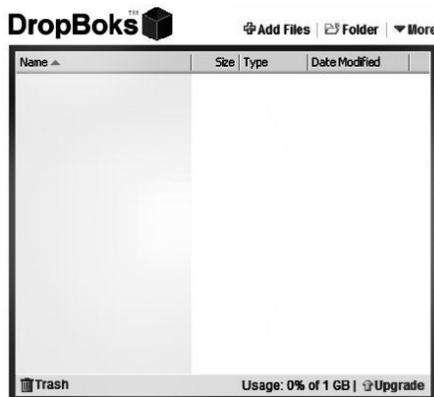
Their Web site is a reflection of their minimalist philosophy: It has no frills and is free of advertising. Click on "Get Started (Free)" to sign up for a free account.

After you sign up for an account, you will get a 'Log In' form whenever you go to http://www.dropboks.com.

If you do not get a 'Log In' form, click on 'More' and then click on 'Log in.'

After you log in, it looks like this:
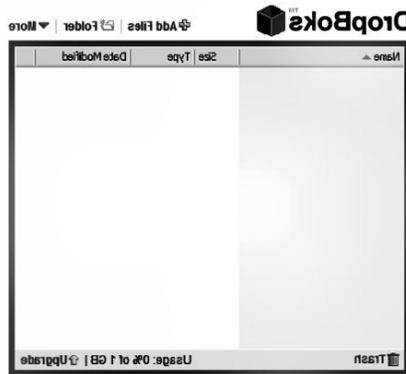
Click on the 'Add Files' hyperlink to upload data files from your computer to your account at *DropBoks*.

Click on the 'Folder' hyperlink to create a folder at your storage space at *Dropboks*.

Then enter a name for your new folder, as requested.

You can drag folders into folders.

You can drag files into folders.

The key features for a free account are:

Total storage space = 1 Gigabyte

Maximum single file size = 50 Megabytes

Maximum monthly bandwidth = not stated on "Skydrive" Web site

The maximum monthly bandwidth is the total amount of data that you (and others that you designate) upload to, and download from, your free account.

DropBoks does not limit the types of files that you can store.

DropBoks does not allow you to shares files with others at the present time. They intend to implement this feature in the future.

The official blog of the DropBoks company is located at http://dropboks.wordpress.com This blog details their efforts to create a low-cost, user friendly storage location in the Internet cloud.
With this continuing series of descriptions of free storage locations, Liz and I continue to show you that you can get a significant amount of storage space in the "Internet cloud" to mitigate the bad effects of local hard drive failure. We hope that you will take advantage of these storage services.

Let me know if there are any online file storage services that you are particularly fond of and we will describe them in future articles in this series.

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 fishing instead!!

Article

Alternative Travel Sites Deals

By Ira Wilsker
Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont TX; Radio & TV show host
Iwilsker@apcug.net

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

We have all seen the TV commercials with the gnome fretting over travel problems, and have seen the black clad inspectors prancing all over a hotel snooping in every nook and cranny. One thing the Internet is not short of is travel web sites that offer airline tickets, hotel rooms, cruises, rental cars, and package deals combining all of the above. Many of the proprietary airline and hotel sites, such as Continental.com and Hilton.com themselves guarantee the lowest rates, but neglect to show what the competition is offering. One advantage to the direct sale proprietary travel sites is that they generally do not add a service fee for online bookings, unlike the fees charged by the independent commercial travel web sites. On the other hand, the commercial travel sites can show the rates and fares from multiple providers, allowing for comparison shopping for both cost and schedule. While there are many well advertised mega-travel sites like Expedia, Hotels.com, Orbitz, and Travelocity, there are also some lesser known web sites that offer a service that some of the mega

sites are lacking.

One such site that I recently learned about from a professional acquaintance is 'Ultimate Fares,' at www.ultimatefares.com. While similar to the mega travel sites in appearance and function it had some different travel results when I compared it to some of the mega and proprietary web sites in a side by side comparison. In one example, I was looking for the lowest possible airfare from Beaumont to Las Vegas on some specific peak travel dates. Travelocity and Expedia displayed a nearly identical selection of flights and airfares, many of which were duplicated on Ultimate Fares. What was unusual on the Ultimate Fares website was the ability of the user to choose from some unusual indirect routings where the user had the choice to choose between a lower fare (not offered on the mega sites) and a longer flight time, including connections. If for the traveler, at his personal choice, it is worth saving in some cases over a hundred dollars in airfare, in exchange for a two or three hour longer total flight time, the user at least has that choice.

One specific example was on the

Beaumont BPT - Las Vegas LAS example on some peak travel days in the Christmas - New Years time period, when the airlines were extremely busy and heavily booked. While the traveler could select a direct Beaumont - Houston IAH - Las Vegas route from one carrier, or a combination of carriers, both by changing planes in Houston, Ultimate Fares had some lower fares listed with some unusual city pair combinations.

When I ran the comparison for this column, Ultimate Fares showed several lower fares than the mega sites, but with the longer flight times by about two hours by going from Houston IAH to the Orange County, California John Wayne airport, another change of airlines, and then a short direct flight back to Las Vegas. If the traveler is on a tight budget, and the difference in cost (savings) is worth more than the hours of additional time each way and inconvenience, then this could be a good alternative. My only concern would be for the timely arrival of the baggage after being on three different airlines! Ultimate Fares will e-mail two confirmations to the traveler, the first the purchase confirmation, and the second will be the airline

confirmation number and itinerary. This second email is the document that will be required to pick up boarding passes at the airport, so be sure to save it and print several copies, and bring the printout with the airline confirmation number to the airport!

Another area of travel deals where Ultimate Fares had rates as good or in some cases even better than the competing mega sites was cruise deals. I randomly selected some dates, and compared the featured cruises on each of the websites, and then found the comparable cruise on the other sites. In many of the cruises compared, Ultimate Fares had lower rates and larger discounts than the mega sites. In one specific example, I selected next September for a date range, and compared Caribbean cruises. Ultimate Fares showed rates for interior, ocean view, balcony, and suite cabins that were very competitive with the mega sites, and in some cases, better deals. According to Ultimate Fares, some of the best deals offered savings off of the published cruise line brochures of "up to" 77%, 75%, and 72%! Remember that on almost all travel sites, taxes and fees will be added to the quoted price, and should be included in any final comparison.

Hotel rooms and airline seats are considered as perishable commodities if not booked, and go unused. Hotels often have some last minute unsold rooms, airlines have unsold seats, and rental car companies have cars left in the lot. Ultimate Fares of-

fers "Last Minute Deals" which offer combinations of flight, hotel, and car deals which can be booked up to 14 days in advance, and offer package discounts of up to 70%. These last minute deals would be ideal for the person or family who has the flexibility of date and location, and will accept a smaller combination of offerings in exchange for deep discounts. The smaller combination of possible offerings is not a sparse offering; as I type this in late December, Ultimate Fares has a lengthy list of last minute deals from Houston, including 230 last minute flight and hotel deals (double occupancy, car optional), 115 flight and car deals, and 47 hotel and car deals, all at package prices of up to 70% off retail rates. Many of us rent cars at our destination when we fly to distant cities. As an example, I compared rental car rates for an upcoming week at DFW airport. Ultimate Fares listed the rates for 10 different car companies, ranging from no-name deep discount companies, to the major national rental car companies. Ultimate Fares quoted rates up to 40% less than the mega travel sites for the same cars on the same dates! Just remember to include taxes and fees, which are quoted by the website prior to actual booking, in any comparison.

Now, I always heard that if a deal is too good to be true, it probably is. Ultimate Fares, while not well known, has privacy certificates from Verisign, and Trust-E, and is a member of the ASTA (American Society of

Travel Agents). I looked up some of the online reviews of Ultimate Fares and they were a mixed bag of positive and negative reviews. One often repeated warning in the online reviews of Ultimate Fares (that also applies to all other travel sites as well) is to be fully cognizant that the original price quoted does not include all taxes and fees; fees and taxes can substantially increase the total cost of the trip!

To be fair, Ultimate Fares, just like almost all other travel web sites, does indeed disclose the taxes, fees and total price prior to the traveler entering any credit card information. I did find when comparing taxes and fees on some sample airfares between Ultimate Fares, the mega sites, and the airline websites directly, that the Ultimate Fares taxes and fees were about $10 to $30 a ticket higher than the airline site which only charges taxes and mandatory fees (but no surcharges), but competitive with the mega sites that have the same taxes and mandatory fees, but also add on some type of surcharge.

Before buying any travel services from anyone online, checkout the reputation of the seller, and use a major credit card that is likely to side with you in the event of a dispute. Be emphatically sure to review the itinerary and any taxes and fees prior to entering credit card information and finalizing the booking process, as many fares and deals are rigid and non-refundable, or have hefty fees to change an itinerary.

Article

How To Send An Email Message To Any Cell Phone

by Ken Peters
Hilton Head Island Computer Club, SC
www.hhicc.org
product.review@hhicc.org

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Impress your kids, grandkids and friends with your ability to text.

Send a text message to their cell phone by email from your computer.

Most cell phones have the ability to send and receive short text messages. This is called short message service (SMS) or text paging. This service can take email messages sent over the Internet and deliver them to a cell phone as a text message.

Each carrier has its own email address extension, i.e., @tmomail.net for T Mobile carrier.

The two things you need to know to send a message are the person's cell phone number and their carrier's email extension. So to send to a T Mobile phone, enter the phone number and add the extension – 8433216549@tmomail.net

The message will look similar to that on the next page. Some of the common cell phone emails are:

Alltel
10-digit phone number@message.alltel.com
Example:
2125551212@message.alltel.com

AT&T (formerly Cingular)
10-digit phone number@txt.att.net
Example:
2125551212@txt.att.net

Boost Mobile
10-digit phone number@myboostmobile.com
Example:
2125551212@myboostmobile.com

Nextel (now part of Sprint Nextel)
10-digit telephone number@messaging.nextel.com
Example:
7035551234@messaging.nextel.com
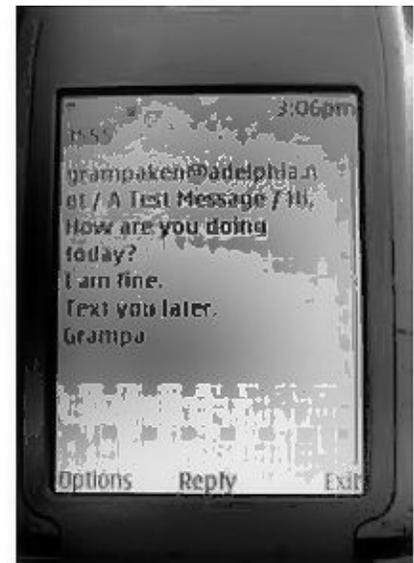
Appears on cell phone

T-Mobile
10-digit phone number@tmomail.net
Example:
4251234567@tmomail.net

Verizon
10-digit phone number@vtext.com
Example:
5552223333@vtext.com

Virgin Mobile
10-digit phone number@vmobl.com
Example:
2622341256r@vmobl.com

Article

Cloud Computing

by Sister Dorothy Robinson
The Olympia Microcomputer User Group, WA
www.olymug.org
Newsletter@olymug.org

USA US Cellular
10 digit phonenum-
ber@email.uscc.net
Example: 2125551212@
email.uscc.net

Sprint PCS (now Sprint Nextel)
10-digit phone num-
ber@messaging.sprintpcs.com
Example:
2125551234@messaging.sprintp
cs.com

If you can't find the email ad-
dress for the carrier, check the
carrier's website (Links above) or
call their customer service.

The one receiving the message
may be charged 10 to 15 cents
per message unless they have a
plan that includes text messag-
ing.

Your kids and grandkids most
probably do have a text plan.
There is a 160 character limit per
message including the email ad-
dress and the subject line. Some
carriers will split the message
into two messages if it is longer.

The person receiving the email
text message can reply to you
from their phone and sometime
later you'll receive their reply in
your email inbox.

If you don't like texting from a
cell phone or hate trying to type a
message with those small phone
keys, give this a try. It's fun.

☞☞☞☞

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quire the permission of the author
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When did you first hear or see
the term "cloud computing"?

I'm usually the last to
know anything, it
seems, so I've only
recently started notic-
ing this term on the
Internet.

I did some research,
and some say it's the
greatest thing since
sliced bread – but
others think it isn't
such a hot idea.

In very simple terms, cloud com-
puting is this: rather than having
programs and files on your com-
puter, you would store files
online and also access applica-
tions (programs) online (think
Google Docs or MS Office Live;
think Flickr or Buzzword).

Your computer really wouldn't
need to have much on it, and
you'd have to have an Internet
connection in order to run appli-
cations or access your files.

Not only individuals, but also
companies would be doing this
(and in fact, are doing it now).

One of the major benefits is that
a company (or an individual, for
that matter) has the use of com-
bined server resources they
might not otherwise be able to
afford 'in house.'

The ever-vigilant Rich-
ard Stallman warns
against the use of cloud
computing: "Somebody
is saying this is inevita-
ble – and whenever you
hear somebody saying
that, it's very likely to
be a set of businesses
campaigning to make it
true.

One reason you should not use
web applications to do your com-
puting is that you lose control,"
he said. "It's just as bad as using
a proprietary program. Do your
own computing on your own
computer with your copy of a
freedom-respecting program. If
you use a proprietary program or
somebody else's web server,
you're defenseless. You're putty
in the hands of whoever devel-
oped that software."

Food for thought.

GS-BUG Membership Application

[   ] New   [   ] Renewal   [   ] Update

I hereby apply for membership in the Greater South Bay PC Users Group. I understand I will be entitled to attend meetings, receive the monthly newsletter and be eligible for special offers that become available from time to time.

_____

Name **(Please Print)**   First   Last

_____

Address

_____

City, State, Zip +4

_____

Phone   E-Mail

Individual $36.00; Student $18.00; Family $48.00; Newsletter Subscription $18.00

Please mail check to: GS-BUG, Inc.—Membership; 241 Via Los Miradores, Redondo Beach, CA 90277-6761

CLASSIFIED ADS
Members may place personal ads of three (3) lines for free. All other business and non-members ads: $2.00 per ad for 3 lines. Ads must be prepaid, camera-ready copy, and received by the 15th of the month preceding publication.

ADVERTISING RATES
GS-BUG accepts commercial advertising from members and outside businesses at the following rates:

    Business Cards (3 1/2" x 2") $15.00
    1/4 Page Ad $25.00
    1/2 Page Ad $35.00
    Full Page Ad 60.00

All prices are for single issue only. All advertisements must be prepaid and received by the 15th of the month preceding publication. All artwork must be camera ready copy.

Checks payable to GS-BUG, Inc.
Mail to:
GS-BUG, Inc.—Advertising
3623 W. 227th St.,
Torrance, CA 90505-2522

LIBRARY
Shareware disks are available at the General Meeting for $3.00 per disk and $5.00 per CD. Charges are to recover duplication and distribution costs.

SIG MEETINGS

Daytime Hardware   Every Tuesday
1—4 p.m.   Torrance Scout Center
Bob Hudak   rsh532@aol.com

Digital Imaging   First Three Tuesdays
9—12 noon   Torrance Scout Center
Greg Neumann   Gbug_caller@aol.com

Beginning _Windows XP_   3rd Thursday
7:00 p.m.   Garry Sexton's
Virginia Pfiffner   310-374-2410
                         vpfiffne@elcamino.edu

Internet   4th Thursday
7:00 p.m.   Garry Sexton's
Tom Tucknott   310-530-4992
                       ttucknott@socal.rr.com

SIG Meeting Addresses

Torrance Scout Center
2375 Plaza Del Amo, Torrance

Garry Sexton's
3623 W. 227th St., Torrance

The Bug Report

The Greater South Bay PC Users Group
3623 W. 227th St.
Torrance, CA 90505

April 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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