

# THE BUG REPORT

A Publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group

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## August 3rd *Smart Computing*

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*Success is like reaching an important birthday and finding you're exactly the same.*

– Audrey Hepburn,  
Academy Award-winning actress, humanitarian

This meeting will be an updated review of the popular publication, *Smart Computing*, with references to its three companion magazines.

Even after reading *Smart Computing* for years, there are still things to learn.

- An overview of what is available on line will be presented as well as how to find the topics that interest you.
- In your Online Library you will learn how to save the useful articles you discover in any of the magazines instead of keeping the whole magazine.
- Articles in all the magazines, including *PC Today*, *First Glimpse* and

*Computer Power User*, since their inception dates, are available to you.

- Such topics as the meaning of error messages, how to “do it yourself” and, most importantly, live tech support will be covered.

We will have handouts for you along with some prizes.

We hope to see you at our new meeting location at the Torrance Airport Administration Building at 7:00 p.m. (see details on page 3).

As a reminder, there will be no meeting in September, because of Labor Day. (The speakers for October and November have not given me the titles of their presentations.)



## 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:

Individual	\$36.00
Student	\$18.00
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All submissions to the GS-BUG Report must be unformatted 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 7:00 p.m. on the first Monday of the month at the Torrance Airport Administration Building, 3301 Airport Drive, Torrance, CA; (corner of Zamperini Way and Airport Drive).

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# President's Thoughts

By U. A. Garred Sexton

**Note: We have a new meeting place and time!**

The Salvation Army requested a meeting to review our existing contract. As a result of this review they felt that they needed to increase the rental to \$250.00 per meeting.

We could not tolerate this on the existing membership fee.

I visited the Torrance Airport and checked out the meeting room. The room is large enough to accommodate us and the fee is \$22.46 per meeting. There also is a possibility that Internet access will be available in the future!

Therefore, the next meeting will be at the Torrance Airport, Torrance Airport Administration Building, 3301 Airport Drive, Monday August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m., lasting till 9:00 p.m.

We will need to set the room up (put out the chairs) and clean up the room at the end of the meeting and put the chairs away.

You are looking north from PCH at the bottom of the picture with the Mercedes Benz car dealer on the right.

As you drive up Zamperini Way (across Airport Drive) into the airport you will see the Tower straight ahead.

The parking and the Administration building are on the left in the picture with the blue cone on the Administration building.

When you walk into the lobby turn to the left, which is the Pilot Lounge. The meeting room is to the left after you enter the Pilot Lounge.



# Internet Talk

By Frank Chao  
Member, GS-BUG

Welcome to the 118th *Internet Talk* article for *The Bug Report*, a publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GSBUG). Liz and I hope that you actively participating in the GSBUG group. Please ask any Board member what you can do to help make this great organization even better than it already is.

## Speedup Tweaks for *Windows*

Liz and I hear complaints like, "My old *XP* computer is slow," or, "My new *Vista* computer is slower than my old *XP* computer," all the time. Our instructions on how to resolve these two problems have been relocated to a more permanent location at my personal Comcast Home Pages.

Our instructions for speeding up *Windows XP* are now located at: [http://home.comcast.net/~fchao2/techdata/xp\\_speedup.html](http://home.comcast.net/~fchao2/techdata/xp_speedup.html)

Our instructions for speeding up *Windows Vista* are now located at: [http://home.comcast.net/~fchao2/techdata/vista\\_speedup.html](http://home.comcast.net/~fchao2/techdata/vista_speedup.html)

Our instructions for making *Vista* look like *XP* are now located at: [http://home.comcast.net/~fchao2/techdata/Make\\_Vista\\_Look\\_Like\\_XP.html](http://home.comcast.net/~fchao2/techdata/Make_Vista_Look_Like_XP.html) (underscore between words)

Liz and I revised and improved these three documents with the

help of the computer geniuses at the Tucson Computer Society. We would like our readers at GS-BUG to also provide us with comments and suggestions about how we can further improve these three documents. Please feel free to contact us by one of the means listed at the end of this article.

## Portable Apps--Part 1

We will now start a series of discussions about 'Portable Apps.'

In addition to the above-mentioned tweaks for *Windows XP* and *Vista*, you can make your computer run a lot faster by using 'portable apps.' 'Portable apps' are stand-alone software applications that do not use the *Windows* registry. You can move a 'portable software application' from one computer to another by putting it on a USB flash drive device, a CD-R disk, a DVD-R disk, or an external hard drive. You do not 'install' a 'portable app' into your computer. You just double-click on its executable file(s) and it/they run on whatever *Windows* computer you happen to be using.

To learn more about 'portable applications' go to: <http://onlinecollegedegree.org/2009/03/11/flash-driveedu-100-free-and-useful-portable-apps-for-college-students/>

And

[http://downloadpedia.org/Portable\\_Freeware\\_Software](http://downloadpedia.org/Portable_Freeware_Software)

And

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-portable-programs.htm>

Don't get tricked up by nomenclature:

'Portable apps' are also known as:

'PortApps,' 'portable apps,' 'portable applications,' and 'portable software',

If a software application does not have to be "installed into *Windows*" and/or it does not show up in 'Add or Remove Programs' in *Windows XP* or 'Programs and Features' in *Windows Vista*, then it is a 'portable software application.'

Here are some situations that can occur:

- 1) Sometimes, you cannot tell if a software application is 'portable' until you move it to another computer and try to run it. The Web sites of many 'portable apps' often do not tell you that they are portable.
- 2) Some software applications can be installed either as 'portable apps' or regular *Windows* applications.
- 3) Some software applications have to be initially installed as regular *Windows* applications. Then you have to copy their 'Program Files' folder to a thumb

drive or other hard drive location and this ‘Program Files’ folder is then your ‘portable app.’ Then, you uninstall the software application from ‘Add and Remove Software’ or ‘Programs and Features,’ or by using the ‘Uninstall’ ‘Start Menu’ item that they provide. We will cover examples of these three situations in future “Internet Talk” articles.

## Installing *Openoffice.org Portable*

Let’s start with basics:

[OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org) is the free, open-source alternative to *Microsoft Office* or *Corel Office*.

The *Windows* version of [OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org) is a regular *Windows* application.

Before you can use this suite of applications, you have to ‘install’ it into your *Windows* computer. While you are installing it into your *Windows* computer, it writes various ‘keys’ into the *Windows* registry.

When you run one of the [OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org) applications, it needs to lookup the ‘values’ and/or ‘strings’ that it has written into it’s ‘keys’ in the *Windows* registry. Also, while you are running one of the [OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org) applications, it occasionally changes the ‘values’ and/or ‘strings’ in its ‘keys’ in the *Windows* registry.

Within the [OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org) suite of applications:  
*OpenOffice Writer* is similar to *Microsoft Office Word*. It can

open, modify, and create \*.doc and \*.docx files that are compatible with *Microsoft Office Word*.

*OpenOffice Calc* is similar to *Microsoft Office Excel*. It can open, modify, and create \*.xls and \*.xlsx files that are compatible with *Microsoft Office Excel*.

And

*OpenOffice Impress* is similar to *Microsoft Office PowerPoint*. It can open, modify, and create \*.ppt and \*.pptx files that are compatible with *Microsoft Office PowerPoint*.

The ‘lite,’ skinnied-down version of [OpenOffice.org](http://OpenOffice.org) is called *OpenOfficePortable*.

As a ‘portable app,’ *OpenOfficePortable* can run without being installed into your *Windows* computer.

It’s installation process consists of decompressing various files and folders from the single [OpenOfficePortable-3.1.0-English.paf.exe](http://OpenOfficePortable-3.1.0-English.paf.exe) file that you download from: [http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice_portable)

Liz and I verified that during its installation process, this executable file does not write any keys into the *Windows* registry.

Within the *OpenOfficePortable* suite of applications:

*OpenOfficeWriterPortable* is similar to *Microsoft Office Word*. It can open, modify, and

create \*.doc and \*.docx files that are compatible with *Microsoft Office Word*.

*OpenOfficeCalcPortable* is similar to *Microsoft Office Excel*. It can open, modify, and create \*.xls and \*.xlsx files that are compatible with *Microsoft Office Excel*.

And

*OpenOfficeImpressPortable* is similar to *Microsoft Office PowerPoint*. It can open, modify, and create \*.ppt and \*.pptx files that are compatible with *Microsoft Office PowerPoint*.

Let’s try it out!

Go to [http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice_portable)



Click on the ‘Download’ button.

If the download does not start after 20 seconds, click on ‘mirror’ near the upper right-hand corner. Then click on the option button for ‘Intemap Network Services’ of San Jose, California.

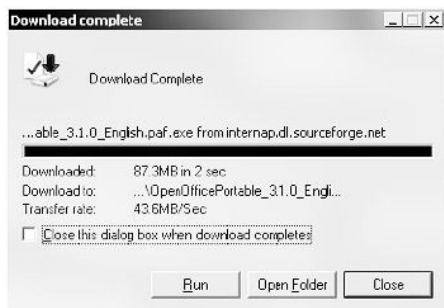
Next click on the ‘Use this mirror’ button.

Click on ‘Save’ and save the [OpenOfficePortable 3.1.0 English.paf.exe](#) file to a drive inside your computer.

Click on the ‘Run’ button.

Next, click on the ‘Run’ button of the ‘Download Complete’ box.

Click on the ‘Next’ button.



Click on the ‘Browse’ button, and select where you want the *OpenOfficePortable* folder to be installed. You can install *OpenOfficePortable* onto a USB flash drive device from the “get go” or you can install it onto any local hard drive and then move it onto a USB flash drive later.

Then, click on the ‘OK’ button.

Click on the ‘Install’ button of the ‘Choose Install Location’ box.

Note that the ‘Completing the OpenOffice.org Portable Setup Wizard’ box states that ‘OpenOffice.org Portable has been installed on your device.’ This is to remind you that the application suite is portable. You

can insert this ‘device’ into any *Windows* computer and run ‘OpenOffice.org Portable.’

Click on the ‘Finish’ button.

Somewhere on your computer, you now have a folder called *OpenOfficePortable*.

Use ‘My Computer,’ *Windows Explorer*, or your file manager of choice to locate and open this folder.

To get your new copy of *OpenOfficePortable* to work right, you need to run any *OpenOfficePortable* application once:

Just double-click on ‘OpenOfficeWriterPortable.exe.’

A ‘Welcome to OpenOffice.org’ box will pop up.

Click on the ‘Next’ button.

Remove the check mark from ‘Transfer personal data’ by clicking on it.

Click on the ‘Next’ button.

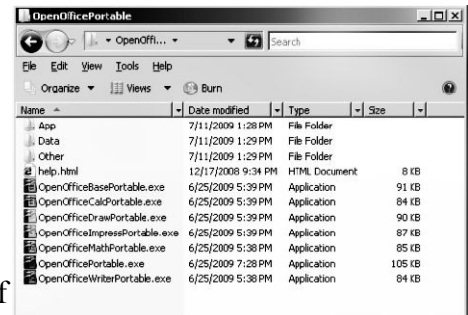
Do not put in your name at this time. Click on the ‘Next’ button.

Click on ‘I do not want to register.’

Click on the ‘Finish’ button.

If you look at your ‘OpenOfficePortable’ folder, it will look like this: Double-click on ‘OpenOfficeWriterPortable.exe’ to start up *OpenOfficeWriter-*

*Portable*. It is similar to *Microsoft Word*.



The *OpenOfficeWriterPortable* will open up and display a blank default document. Whatever you type into your keyboard will show up to the left of the blinking vertical bar cursor that is near the upper left hand corner of the displayed document.

It looks a lot like *Microsoft Office Word 2000* but don't tell Microsoft!

It is just a skinnied-down version of the *Writer* application of the totally-free *OpenOffice.org* software suite.

Close the *OpenOfficeWriterPortable* application by the clicking on the ‘x’ button in the upper right hand corner of its window.

You can now copy or move your *OpenOfficePortable* folder to a USB flash drive device, or a portable USB hard drive, or a portable SATA/eSATA hard drive. Then you can attach this portable storage device to another *Windows* computer and run *OpenOfficePortable* applications such as *Writer*, *Calc*, *Impress*, or *Base* without installing these applications on the other computer.

Note that we did not say that you can copy the *OpenOffice-WriterPortable* folder to a CD or DVD and run these portable apps on another computer from the CD or DVD. Running *OpenOfficePortable* applications from a CD or DVD will involve some additional steps. We will cover how to do this in the next installment in this series.

## Free Storage on the Web-- Part 8

This is the eighth installment in our series of discussions about storing files for free on the Internet.

## Free File Storage at [aarp.org](http://aarp.org)

This month, Liz and I obtained a free storage account at [aarp.org](http://aarp.org).

Their Web site is located at <http://www.aarp.org>

AARP used to stand for American Association of Retired Persons but they quit using their long description in 1999.

You do not have to be an AARP member to use their free online storage services.

They have massive brand identity and goodwill so people who are afraid of using the Internet are often more willing to view and download files that are stored at the AARP website than from other free storage locations on the Internet.

The [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) web site does not offer paid accounts so, unlike most other free storage locations, you will not be nagged to upgrade your account to make them some money!

The key features for a free account at [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) are:

Total storage space for photo files in "My Photos" = 100 Megabytes

Total storage space for video files in "My Videos" = 100 Megabytes

Total storage space for online journals (=text notes) stored at the [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) website = not stated

Maximum single file size = not stated

Maximum monthly bandwidth = not stated. (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.

[aarp.org](http://aarp.org) does limit the type of files that you are allowed to store:

You can only store .jpg (.jpeg) files in 'My Photos.'

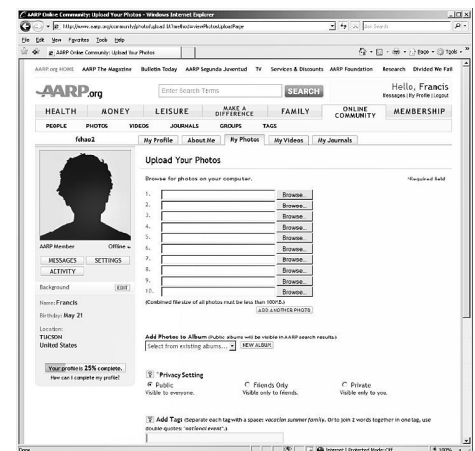
You can store .avi, .mpeg (.mpg), .wmv, .and .flv files in 'My Videos.'

To get yourself a free account, click on the red 'Register' button that is about 1-inch down from the upper right hand corner of the home page.

After you get yourself an account, click on any blue 'Log In' button which will also be near the upper right hand corner of most of the pages at the [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) web site.

Enter your e-mail address and your newly-acquired password. Then click on the blue 'Log In' button.

Click on the 'Online Community' button on the upper grey navigation bar. Then, click on 'Photos' to view and upload your photo files or click on 'Videos' to view or upload your video files. Next, click on the 'Add Photos' to upload your photo files.



For each .jpg or .jpeg photo, you can select whether this specific photo file is to be 'Public,' 'Friends Only' or 'Private.' If it is 'Public,' anyone on the World Wide Web can view it. If it is set to 'Friends Only,' only [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) account holders that you designate can view it. If it is set to 'Private,' then only you can view the photo file, after you log into [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) with your e-mail

address and password.

For an example of a photo that has been set to 'Public' go to: <http://www.aarp.org/community/fchao2/photo/>. The photo that we made 'Public' was taken by Liz at Biosphere 2 in Arizona last month.

Please note that [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) gives each member a mandatory 'public profile' web page. Also note that I have chosen to suppress all personal information from displaying on this page. We will explain how you can do the same for your 'public profile' web page next month.

Let us 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](mailto:fchao2@yahoo.com)
2. Send "snail" United States Postal Service (USPS) mail to Francis Chao  
405 E. Wetmore Rd. #117-484  
Tucson, AZ 85705-1792

Or sell your computer and take up

*A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew.*

– Herb Caen  
Pulitzer Prize-winning  
American columnist

## Article

# VideoLAN VLC Media Player – Free All Format Player

By Ira Wilsker

What started out in 1996 as a student project at France's École Centrale Paris has now turned into an international sensation: a free multi-platform utility that can play almost every known audio and video format. This software, *VideoLAN VLC Media Player*, is quite possibly the most widely downloaded media player in the world with over 260 million copies downloaded, including earlier versions. As I type this, the latest version, only released in the first week of July, has had almost 10 million downloads, and is currently being downloaded at the rate of over 8 copies per second. Over three million copies were downloaded in the first 72 hours of the current release.

What makes *VideoLAN VLC Media Player* so popular is that it is unique because unlike its lesser competitors, it does not require any external "codecs" or media drivers to play the vast number of formats that VLC can process. While all of the previous releases were self-referred to as "beta," or pre-release versions, with a version number less than one (such as 0.8), a full release with a version number 1.0.0 was released on July 7. Based on the success and popularity of the earlier versions, the version 1.0.0 was met with wild

enthusiasm, and was the primary topic in many of the relevant blogs and media reviews. I have been a user of *VideoLAN VLC Media Player* beta for several years, periodically downloading updated versions. When I saw that a real version was available, I jumped on the opportunity to be one of the first few million to experience what a fine utility that this software is. Another reason for its extreme popularity is that builds of this software are available for free download in almost all popular operating systems, including all current versions of *Windows*, *MAC OS X*, *BeOS*, *Syllable*, and 12 of the most widely used versions and flavors of *GNU/Linux*.

The program code is open source, meaning anyone can have it, and is also available for compilation in three versions of *BSD*, *Solaris*, *ONX*, *Gentoo Linux*, and *Crux Linux*. Downloads for all of these operating systems are hyperlinked by operating system at [www.videolan.org/vlc](http://www.videolan.org/vlc). Since each download is large, about 17 megabytes for *Windows*, and over 8 copies are downloaded each second, there are dozens of international servers providing the downloads, with the massive data burden being spread among those servers. The download



page attempts to route the download request to the closest available server. In my case, I downloaded it at home from the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

*VideoLAN VLC Media Player* is likely the most capable and feature rich media player available at any price, dwarfing the capabilities of Microsoft's vaunted *Windows Media Player*, and the dozens of commercial media players available. By my count from the VLC features page at [www.videolan.org/vlc/features.html](http://www.videolan.org/vlc/features.html), VLC can input media from 14 different sources, including online, DVD video, video CD, audio CD, DVB

(Satellite, Digital TV, and Cable TV), MPEG sources, and other forms of media. It can also import audio and video from any capture devices installed on the computer. From these 14 sources, VLC can process data in nearly 20 formats, including MPEG, MP3, MP4, MOV, Realplayer, WAV, Midi, and many others. For those who like digital video, VLC supports 20 international video formats, and can interchangeably play videos in all versions of MPEG, DIVX, H.264, MPEG-4, DigitalVideo, Indeo (all versions), and RealVideo (all versions), as well as some lesser known formats. For those of us who enjoy digital audio, whether music, audio books, or any other audio source, VLC can probably play it, as it supports 29 different audio formats, basically any audio format in significant use any-

where on the globe. I have downloaded some bizarre videos and audio files in obscure formats, and I have yet to find one that VLC can not play. Simply put, this program will play almost any audio and video that can be found on DVDs, CDs, downloaded audio and video, and streaming media.

*VideoLAN VLC Media Player* can run as a free standing audio



and video player, a *Firefox* plug-in (plays directly from the browser), an *Internet Explorer ActiveX* plug-in, or it can also be used as a server to stream in unicast or multicast in IPv4 or IPv6 on a high-bandwidth network. The interface is simple, clean, and intuitive, with a menu for Media, Playback, Audio, Video, Tools, View, and Help. A slider allows the user to go directly to any part of a playing audio or video, and a conventional VCR type set of buttons (icons) allows the user to play, rewind, fast forward, pause, and control the volume. For those who like *Windows Media Player* visualizations, those entertaining (or boring) dynamic figures that prance on the screen to the beat of the music, they will like the visualizations built into VLC, and accessed through the Audio – Visualizations menu. Some-

times it is necessary to convert from one digital format to another, and VLC has some conversion capability, found on the menu under Media – Convert/Save. Under the Video menu, videos can be viewed in their native size or in full screen at the users' choices. Videos can also be made into DirectX wallpaper, where the video plays continuously on the desktop, or digital photo quality snapshots of playing videos can be created

using the Snapshot tool under the Video menu. A variety of novel icons and skins can be downloaded to customize the appearance of the interface.

*VideoLAN VLC Media Player* is the most comprehensive media player I have ever seen or used, and it is a wonder with all of its capabilities. What is even more remarkable is its price, which is totally free. This is one utility that all computer users should have installed, especially considering that it is available for so many operating systems. With *VideoLAN VLC Media Player* you can play any form of audio or video that you are likely to find on any media form, both hardware and software, that you can get on a computer. In summary, *VideoLAN VLC Media Player* is a “must have.”

*Article*

# If Your Computer Gets Wet...What?

Written by Bob Schwartz  
 HAL-PC, Texas  
[www.hal-pc.org](http://www.hal-pc.org)  
[bobx@hal-pc.org](mailto:bobx@hal-pc.org)

What to do if something wet spills on your electronic device or it falls into wet whatever? The following is not guaranteed but represents years of experience.

Quick, unplug it! Unless there is a likely shock hazard. Look up the instructions (best to do this when you buy it). Find out if there is any prohibition against using ALCOHOL. Alcohol can dissolve some materials.

There are generally two items to have handy. One is **distilled** water to first wash off and dilute any spill, especially anything that might be conductive. The second is alcohol, 90+% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. Ethyl alcohol or ethanol – 90% - will work too. Alcohol has an affinity for water. Rinsing the item first with the distilled water and then with alcohol will dilute, pick up water, carry it away, and evaporate quickly. The higher percent alcohol 90% vs 50% have a greater affinity for water.

Time is important. You do not want water to soak into an otherwise insulating medium, especially water that contains something conductive like salt. It will leave a conductive residue that will short out portions of the device. That is why you want to

**rinse first** with distilled water to carry away any conductive residue and then the alcohol to remove the water film. **Most tap water has dissolved minerals** that remain after the water evaporates, hence the distilled water to rinse these away.

After, and I repeat AFTER, the above cleaning, you can use **very modest heat to help dry out** the item. You can use a hair dryer at some distance. Make sure you don't heat the item any hotter than is comfortable to hold. Some plastic materials deform at relatively low temperatures.

Remember the order: (1) rinse with distilled water (2) rinse with alcohol (3) **warm gently** with hair dryer or warming oven.

For items immersed in flood waters, the above approach can be tried but the outlook is not promising. Generally the conductive flood waters have had time to

soak into the various insulating materials and are almost impossible to remove. Still, it may be worth a try, especially if you have the time and possible success is worth the effort. Distilled water and alcohol are not very expensive. Most circuit boards are coated with varnish to resist moisture. In this case, wash repeatedly with distilled water. Use a soft brush to remove any remaining film such as mud. Then, the alcohol followed by the dryer. Using the dryer prematurely can 'set' the offending material to the point that it may be almost unremovable. So save it for the very last step after you are sure things are clean. Your efforts may save part if not all of the equipment.

*Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.*

## RAM Issue

If RAM errors start only after the PC has been running for a few minutes or during heavy workloads, you may have a cooling problem. Check that the PC's fans are all running and that there is decent airflow over the RAM and other devices. Carefully blow out any dust. Also, verify in the BIOS that the RAM is running at its specified voltage, such as 2.2v.

From *Smart Computing*



# The Bug Report

The Greater South Bay PC Users Group

3623 W. 227<sup>th</sup> St.

Torrance, CA 90505

<b>August 2009</b>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 <b>General Meeting</b>	4 <b>SIG Meetings</b> Digital Imaging Daytime Hardware	5 <b>Board Meeting</b>	6	7	8
9	10	11 <b>SIG Meetings</b> Digital Imaging	12	13	14	15 Newsletter Deadline
16	17	18 <b>SIG Meetings</b> Digital Imaging	19	20 <b>SIG Meeting</b> <i>Windows XP</i>	21	22
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