



THE BUG REPORT

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Remember no one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

–Eleanor Roosevelt,
Former first lady

February Meeting

Monday, February 7th

Please note that there will be a meeting on Monday, February 7th as planned by the new program chairs, Greg Neumann and Lou Little.

Sorry, but no details have been relayed to the editor.

SOUTHWEST COMPUTER CONFERENCE

Do you have the weekend of June 3-4-5 marked on your calendar for the Southwest Computer Conference? Registration is now open and Judy tells me she has more early registrations than ever before.

It will be held at the lovely Town & Country Resort, as before, in the beautiful Hotel Circle, San Diego. It's a terrific location with plenty of room for workshops, meals and other events.

An added attraction this year is a field trip to the new Microsoft Store that is located in the shopping center immediately behind the hotel. This will be Thursday, either afternoon or evening, and will require registration. Since the presentation room has limited seating, early registration for this event is critical. We will be welcomed, given a presentation on the new Microsoft offerings, a tour of the location, and who knows what else.

Once again there will be a digital photo contest, so be thinking about this as you take pictures or look at those already in your file.

Conference registration forms: www.theswconf.org. The site will also give you the hotel registration information. For the Microsoft tour, contact Judy Taylour at judy.taylour@theswcc.org.



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
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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 Zamperini Field, 3301 Airport Drive (intersection of Airport Drive & Zamperini Way), 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	Joyce Oliver	323-778-6256 oliver_joyce@hotmail.com
Treasurer	George Porter	310-373-5416 g19porter@verizon.net
Membership	Joyce Oliver	323-778-6256 oliver_joyce@hotmail.com
Program	Greg Neumann	Gsbug_caller@aol.com
	Lou Little	310-546-1274 loulittle182@yahoo.com
Web Master	Shelley Miller	310-541-6796 seamil19@verizon.net

Directors at Large

Virginia Pfiffner	310-374-2410 vpfiffne@elcamino.edu
Greg Neumann	Gbug_caller@aol.com

Newsletter Staff

Editor	Marian Radcliffe	818-249-1629 Marian2Rad@att.net
Proofreader	Virginia Pfiffner	

President's Thoughts

By U. A. Garred Sexton

During the first week of January, four of our GSBUG club members, including myself, attended the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada. There were about 140,000 attendees. It was cold outside but we had a warm and interesting time seeing all the wonderful new items inside, many of which were prototypes, which we will eventually see on our retailers' shelves.



If the number of examples of 3-D television is any sign of the future, 3-D is a BIG thing on its way. The three methods manufacturers are using to present 3-D television are holographic, Polaroid pictures and "alternate images." I was only able to find one exhibitor who used the holographic

method, and the presentation did not require any glasses. I had to make an effort to see the holographic 3-D image which was simple and slow moving. The other 3-D methods incorporated rapid movement as in "normal movies."

The Polaroid projection method requires lightweight glasses which worked well on top of my regular glasses. The 3-D effect was present regardless of where I was with respect to the projector screen. I had no trouble maintaining the 3-D effect, and I did not see any blur. The "alternate image" method requires special glasses that are heavy and very expensive—about \$150.00 per pair. They require new batteries about every six to eight hours of use, according to Sony. I was uncomfortable wearing the glasses on top of mine, and I was not sure if I could add corrective lenses to the inside of the "alternate image" 3-D glasses.

At this point, my personal choice is Polaroid for viewing 3-D television. My advice to you, if you are considering getting a 3-D television, would be to attend a full-length 3-D movie to be sure you can tolerate hours of having to fuse the two images.

There has been a huge improvement in the "Smart House" using home wiring to connect and control equipment, lights and video. Apparently a standard has been developed that allows equipment of different manufacturers to be used interchangeably.

One manufacturer showed a prototype of a system that he will be offering which will allow control of motors and lights in various combinations using a single remote control that is programmable. The size of the motor or load that can be switched has been increased so the coffeepot can now be

switched as well as the central fan with a single control.

CLICKFREE, an automatic backup system produced in Canada, has increased the size of its backup drive and improved the software. Last year I bought one of their drives to work with.

When I arrived home, I plugged it into my main desktop computer, got up to answer the door and forgot that the *CLICKFREE* was plugged in. When I returned later, it didn't appear that anything had happened.

Since I didn't have time to work with it, I unplugged it planning to return later to work with it. Before I got back my hard drive had died!

Now I had lost all my records. I thought I might recover some of the data but not all. I moved to another computer and plugged the *CLICKFREE* hard drive into it to work with it.

Talk about dumb luck, I discovered a complete backup of my lost data on the *CLICKFREE* hard drive that had been made without my intervention. Needless to say, *CLICKFREE* has my strongest endorsement.

While we were at the *CLICKFREE* exhibit at CES, we discussed with their representative the idea of having them make a presentation to our computer club. Some details have to be worked out with them.

More about CES next month. ♦

Article

Improve Internet Speed by Changing DNS

by Ira Wilsker

Most of us are blissfully ignorant about the inner workings of the Internet. We are quite happy when we turn on our computers and access the Internet to surf the web or read our email. There are several utilities that can optimize the computer's and browser's settings to maximize their performance, and I have discussed these in past columns. What many of us are unaware of is that there is a setting that we can configure that may significantly improve our internet performance, and that is to find the fastest "DNS" freely available to us.

"DNS" is an acronym for "Domain Name Server" (or "Domain Name System"), more commonly referred to by the moniker "nameserver." According to Wikipedia, DNS "... serves as the phone book for the Internet by translating human-friendly computer hostnames into IP addresses. For example, the domain name www.example.com translates to the addresses 192.0.32.10 (IPv4) and 2620:0:2d0:200::10 (IPv6)." Simply, when the user types a web address, or URL" (Uniform Resource Locator) in the address bar of the browser, the browser checks the computer's default DNS, and converts the website address from words to a numeri-

cal address (IP address); thus www.yahoo.com is converted to the Internet Protocol (IP) address of 209.191.122.70, a format that can efficiently be used by the Internet to connect the user to the desired website. The default DNS is typically configured for a specific Internet Service Provider (ISP) when the user first subscribes to that particular ISP. Normally these ISP specific DNS work just fine, but many of them are not the fastest available, and many of the ISP providers' DNS are also vulnerable to hijacking, or misdirecting the innocent user to a rogue website, opening the user to a variety of attacks or identity theft. Some DNS are unfiltered, and let the user connect anywhere they desire, while other DNS offer selective filtering, which can block access to undesired websites, such as pornography and phishing (identity theft). Many adults are perfectly satisfied being able to connect where they want, but families with children and others may want filtered access, and some DNS provide that service.

What is possibly the largest and most widely used alternative DNS is OpenDNS (www.opendns.com). Anyone can configure his computer to use OpenDNS instead of his ISP's default DNS, and may ex-

perience faster and more secure Internet connections. The basic OpenDNS services are free to individuals, and enhanced commercial (pay) services are available to everyone. Thousands of businesses, government agencies, K-12 schools, college and universities, non-profits, and others utilize the commercial OpenDNS services. OpenDNS says that, "OpenDNS is the lead-

(5 computers), and \$5 per user per year for commercial (business) accounts. Special pricing is available for K-12 schools. For those who would like to change their default DNS to OpenDNS, easy to follow instructions are provided by OpenDNS at use.opendns.com or the actual IP address of 208.69.38.205. OpenDNS is compatible with almost every operat-

available to the typical user, and Google is now offering DNS services to anyone who would like to use them with its Google Public DNS service (code.google.com/speed/public-dns). With all of the necessary information online including benefits and setup instructions for almost every operating system (code.google.com/speed/public-dns/docs/using.html), Google Public DNS may be a good choice instead of the default DNS provided by your ISP, and generally offers better security and protection from purloined websites, as well as better speed and general performance than the ISP provided DNS. Google Public DNS offers many of the same benefits of OpenDNS, including the integral enhanced security features. Google Public DNS uses the IP addresses of 8.8.8.8 and 8.8.4.4 which anyone can set as his default and freely use.

***OpenDNS is compatible
with almost every operating system,
and simple directions are provided***

ing provider of free security and infrastructure services that make the Internet safer through integrated Web content filtering, anti-phishing and DNS. OpenDNS services enable consumers and network administrators to secure their networks from online threats, reduce costs and enforce Internet-use policies. OpenDNS is used today by millions of users and organizations around the world." A comparison of the free and commercial OpenDNS services is available at www.opendns.com/start. The basic free service includes selectable web content filtering, phishing (identity theft) protection, defense against botnets, and can correct many "typo" errors which can protect the user from connecting to rogue websites with close web names. The paid service with additional features and protection is very reasonable at about \$10 per year for a family

ing system, and simple directions are provided for Mac OS X, *Windows 7*, *Windows XP*, *Windows Vista*, Generic Routers, Linksys Routers, Netgear Routers, and D-Link Routers. One warning; although OpenDNS is extremely reliable and trouble free, I strongly recommend that users write down their default ISP information, before changing the DNS settings to OpenDNS or any other nameserver. It might also be a good practice to print the OpenDNS instructions just in case the current DNS used by your ISP becomes unavailable, and then you can easily switch to OpenDNS and probably be back online in seconds. Anyone can change his default DNS to OpenDNS by using 208.67.222.222 and 208.67.220.220 as his default DNS.

There are several excellent DNS

There are many other DNS available to users, and Google provides a free open-source utility it calls "Namebench" that can automatically test the available combinations of DNS from the user's computer, and determine which ones provide the best overall performance for the specific user. This free utility is available from Google at code.google.com/p/namebench, and runs on *Windows*, Mac OS X, and UNIX. I downloaded and ran the *Windows* version of Namebench from my *Windows 7-64* computer, and in about five minutes Namebench tested hundreds of

DNS combinations, and found a combination that was 31.8% faster than the DNS provided by my ISP. In my case, OpenDNS-2 (208.67.222.222) provided the fastest service, with Internet America FDDI-2 US (207.158.92.18) recommended by Namebench as my secondary DNS. Each user should run Namebench on his own computer to determine the best combination for his machine, as results will vary from machine to machine.

While all of this DNS business may sound complex, it is really very easy for users to change their DNS settings to a safer, more secure, and faster connection. While OpenDNS and Google Public DNS are both fast, excellent, and reliable, and either may be a good choice for a default DNS over the one provided by the ISP, I would recommend that Google's free Namebench be run to really determine which DNS combination is best for a particular computer. Since ISPs and the other providers of DNS services are subject to the rapid changes extant in the Internet, it would be a good idea to periodically rerun Namebench to verify that the currently selected DNS are still the best combination for your computer. Always remember to write down the current DNS settings before changing them, just in case you might ever want to go back to the original settings, but this is not likely with OpenDNS, Google Public DNS, and the results from Namebench.



Article

What a Nasty Virus Can Do To Your Computer

By Merle Nicholson, TPCUG
merle@merlenicholson.com

I recently was asked to remove a virus from a friend/client's notebook. For all intents and purposes, it rendered the computer completely in-operative. The virus was in a virus category of "Rogue antivirus software". There are many of them out there for the unwary to catch, and this one, called "ThinkPoint," even has the Windows flag on it to further fool you into thinking it is legitimate. The only option you can see is "Safe Startup," and that takes you to a virus scanner and a way to purchase the product. If you close it out, it shows you a blank desktop, no icons, no menus. You can turn the machine off, that's about it. Turn it back on, same situation. I did figure out a way to kill it through the Task Manager's Run command, and then run the desktop. I also found some things written up on the Internet to do something similar, but no help in removing it. I did remove it using some very clever, obscure skills, several virus scanners, then finding and removing twenty or so copies of it. But the computer really didn't work well enough to use. What I found surprised me, and this is what the article is about and what you can do.

Here's a list of what I found. Some things are by deduction and may not be 100% accurate. But I am 100% certain that these problems existed. All of the things fit into a strategy that prevents you from fixing the computer.

1. The worst thing: The computer will not boot into safe mode. It bluescreens every time. I'm speculating that ThinkPoint either corrupted an existing driver or put a new one in that loads and then fails. The way to fix this is to do a system repair or a complete reformat and installation. I did not want to impose that cost on my customer, and she agreed (it's not a primary computer, and it's rather old). So I left it that way.
2. All the system restore points were unusable. Refused to restore to any point.
3. To run most anything, an official-looking popup would ask to confirm the logon user and give a box for an alternative user account that did not work. This is to make sure that everything you try is run under the current user account which has been modified to prevent circumventing the virus. What you want to run is Explorer.exe giving you your desktop, and every effort is

made to prevent you from doing this.

4. Most – perhaps all – items in Control panel will not run. It gave a warning that the administrator account has restricted its use. I did manage to get into the power configuration, but it would not accept any change. The computer would go into sleep mode after about 20 minutes, keeping me from running a full system scan from any anti-virus software unless I sat there and wiggled the mouse occasionally for four hours.

5. The Internet articles say that even if you purchase the software to fix a bogus virus, ThinkPoint stays on the computer. The uninstall just errors out.

6. The Internet articles say that it installs other viruses, and I did find a half dozen other viruses, mostly downloaders.

7. It leaves about 20 copies of itself under various random names, and places items in the registry to run each of them. So removing the active virus is just the beginning. I also found a couple of viruses in the System Restore files.

8. It apparently makes changes to the current user account profile that look like group policy changes, even though this was Windows XP Home, which doesn't have group policy capability.

9. Only after all the bad software

is cleared from the machine can you then get rid of the modified account by creating a new administrative account, copying all of the user files from the old to the new – except for the profile files, then deleting the old account after locating the email files. Isn't this scary? It is to me, and I (95%) fixed this one with a lot of work. The idea of having to fix my own machine after something like this gives me night-mares.

What you can do to prevent this:

A sizable number of virus infections now are rogue anti-virus. There's an understandable reason for this. It creates revenue. Old-fashioned viruses are malicious, but have no revenue-producing strategy. In other words, it's now about money. Most all viruses are sent to you via web pages, and most of those are porn sites, either designed that way or hacked from outside. Porn sites are visited so often, they are a very good candidate for this kind of thing. Also, presumably the porn site owners don't have the skill to remove sophisticated hacks. But most any web site is vulnerable. In any case, you must select something on the site – click on it – to give the browser a chance to violate security rules.

The next common way to get a virus is with down-loads. And that means just about any download or file transfer. So you have to get any and all files from reputable sites like iTunes or Downloads.com, Amazon, etc.,

which have the resources to check their own content. But that leaves any and all file-sharing sites absolutely and definitely off the list. So if you're downloading songs for free, you're in trouble. Any file-sharing site's software must be uninstalled from your computer. And that also goes for any peer-to-peer gaming sites, LimeWire, Kazaa, and any and all IM programs that allow peer-to-peer file exchanges.

And while we're at it remove – uninstall – anything that says "Toolbar." Right now. Want to know why toolbars are free? Because they're a conduit for pushing advertising to you; and they're easily exploited. Besides you don't need them. They want you to believe you do, of course!

But the browser itself and a couple of favorites will do anything a toolbar will do. An alternative is giving up gaming and IM and to start purchasing songs. So if you have kids who will just die without peer-to-peer gaming or IM and stealing songs, the answer is to live with it with some intelligent prevention.

First, if at all possible, put the kids (and maybe grandpa) on a *Windows 7* machine. If you have some internal networking and file sharing, *Windows 7 Pro* is better because it will back up to a network drive. But so will *Acronis Home*, or *2010* or *2011*, running under *Win 7 Home Premium*.

Make sure you have a full system backup, and replace it monthly. Use *Windows 7 Backup* or *Acronis*. Believe me, restoring the entire system hard drive is way, way better than any alternative that I can think of. Look at what I had to do with ThinkPoint. Want to try it?

I guess it's obvious, but a strong anti-virus program running on your machine is essential. BUT – this is important – make sure you look at the scheduling part of it and make sure it will automatically download new definitions and also run a full system scan at a time of day that the machine will most likely be turned on. Same for *Windows Updates*. Make certain that all important updates are installed as soon as they are available.

Password protect your main administrative account (this is the one that comes first with the computer) and bury the password paper in the back yard and leave the location with your attorney. Better yet, *Win 7* allows you to create a flash drive that will unlock the computer. Hide it under some rubber fake dog poop someplace.

THEN:

Create a non-administrative account for yourself – a regular non-privileged account, and a separate one – or one for each kid. A regular account cannot install software. But most importantly, SOFTWARE that is run under this account can't install software. Ah HA!

Then one more step. Set the

screen savers to require a sign-in on wake-up, and ALWAYS log off when you leave the computer. That's especially essential when leaving the administrative account.

Skills:

There are a few things that would be very helpful to learn. The big one is navigating the computer file system using *Windows Explorer*. Find out how your files are organized, and more importantly, how to change what files you can view. That's in *Windows Explorer*, Tools, Folder Options, View tab.

Second Important Skill – learn to use the Add, Remove Programs. That's "Programs and Features" in *Vista* and *Win 7*. When you find an installed program that you are not using (say, anything with the word Apple or toolbar), just uninstall it, see how it goes. ♦

(From *Space*, page 10)

If ClearCloud discovers that it's a bad URL, it sends the IP address back to their webpage and informs you about the malicious site.

<http://clearclouddns.com/Setup/>.



Article

Are We There Yet?

By Elizabeth B. Wright,
Computer Club of
Oklahoma City
wright599new@sbcglobal.net

If you are reading this in the CCOKC *eMonitor*, then you are already someplace.

So the question is, if we start from here, where do we want to go?

Like our children on long car trips, the eternal question is: "When will we get there?" It has taken most of us "older" folks many years to get as far as the Internet.

But now that we are there, we aren't that much different from the children and young adults who have the future ahead of them. Oh yes, they have their mobile devices that let them text, twitter and tune in, but that is mainly because their thumbs still work and ours don't.

As for using computers, unless they find their way into a profession which requires advanced computer skills, they will not really progress much further. And that may be a good thing.

Probably the young people of today will tire of all the chatter and get on with something meaningful, but right behind

them will be new generations demanding similar devices and indulgences.

So what can I offer that will lead you a step further in your computer skills? With all the help to be found online, it is hard to come up with anything profound that will be of use to you. But I must try.

Much to my disappointment, I found this past week that my children are no longer interested in prints of our photographs. They want only digital images. No hard copies to clutter up their space.

I can understand the need to free themselves from the storage necessary for photo albums, etc. But it seems to me that images could be lost more easily by not keeping at least one printed picture of at least some of the more important images. Obviously we now take pictures by the hundreds. Not like the "olden days" when a 12, 24 or 36 exposure roll of film could last a whole vacation. I hope I can convince either my son or my daughter to warehouse the old pictures I have, otherwise their heritage will be "gone with the wind," as they say. I'm busy scanning as many of them as I can find, but sincerely doubt if I will get all of them done.

One tip I can pass on to you is from JP Williams of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. A long time ago he advised us to scan our pictures at the largest

size we think we will ever need, something in the 8 x 10 range. And at 300 dpi at least. No matter what size the original print, let the computer do the math and interpolate (that's a fancy word for "figure it out") how to expand the image if it is smaller than 8 x 10.

For those of you who still have not done much image scanning, it is never too late to learn. Your home scanner, if you have one that is less than five years old, should be adequate for most jobs. You need to learn about dpi and how it correlates to pixels, and also get the idea of resolution. There are professional services which can scan slides at 4000 dpi, but I don't understand how that helps. Computer screens don't utilize that many pixels and very few printers can print anything higher than a resolution of 300 dpi. I assume it is to have as much digital information as possible in the resulting image file.

But it's not mine to wonder why. Just be aware that there are such services if you ever choose to use them, but they don't come cheap.

Then of course you have to transfer those digitized images to some media in addition to the hard drive in your computer. I use CDs, DVDs and USB drives for such storage, often all three for the same set of images. Since no one yet knows how durable these storage devices are, it can't hurt to have more than one kind

of backup system. Unless you make multiple backups and keep them in different locations (home, safety deposit box at the bank, a relative's house, for example), then they are also subject to the same kind of loss as paper images. Fire, flood, theft, etc. I for one do not plan to store any of my images in the "cloud" computer storage offered by so many Internet related entities. Not only do I fear the loss of the Internet in our lifetime, but too much chance, in my opinion, of them being hijacked.

In the past, the professionals and serious amateurs used slide film, but I have many cherished pictures from negatives so small they are almost not there. My favorite picture of the Eiffel Tower was snapped on a rainy day from the window of a moving bus. Not my picture, but one my daughter took on a high school trip to Paris. The camera was one of those strange contraptions from the 1970's when the film industry was trying everything but the kitchen sink to find new ways to take pictures. I think it had a "daisy wheel" type cartridge with the film embedded in tiny holes around the perimeter.

Hopefully I will be able to recapture this image with my scanner, either the print or the negative, and hope it lasts as long as the old pictures I have of my grandparents. And I'm talking from the time of tintypes.

Happy storage days!!

Article

Space, the Final Frontier

By Terry Currier
 WINNERS (WINDOWS users), CA
www.windowsusers.org
editor@windowsusers.org

We've all heard, or said it, - "My hard drive is so big I'll never run out of room."

I had two 250GB drives in my main computer setup as RAID 0. I hated the RAID 0, but it came set up as that. It came with *Windows XP* with the promise of getting a *Vista* upgrade. I received the *Vista*, but never put it on. Eventually I did put *Windows 7* on the computer using PC Mover. But, I was still not satisfied. If you take a lot of video with an HD video camera it can add up to a lot of space used. With our eight-day vacation to Walt Disney World I came back with 24GB of video and pictures. The folder in which I kept all my videos was over 200GB and that did not include many that I put onto an external drive.

I bought a 1.5TB drive at the computer swap meet several months ago and finally got around to installing it. I backed up the complete drive, using *Rebit*, to one drive and made sure I backed up the data twice. First, to one external drive I used the Seagate Manager, to a second I copied the data directly to another external drive. I put *Windows 7 Ultimate* on the new drive, and have been adding programs slowly, making sure I want them rather than just putting every-

thing back on. I even held up on installing my *Adobe Premiere/Photoshop Elements 7* figuring I would purchase version 9 when it went on sale. I bought it at a Black Friday (online) sale and got it two weeks later.

Other software I put back on - *VIPRE antivirus*, *Faststone graphics viewer*, *Total Recorder*, *Snagit*, CyberLink's *Power Director* and my Microsoft *Office 2003*. I also updated my Applian Programs which was well worth it.

As to my scanning old photos for restoring and backup - I just finished the first of eight photo books of which most of them fit onto a CD for backup. I am recording the last five of my VCR tapes and will then edit them for putting onto DVDs. I figure I should be done about 2013.

ClearCloud

From GFI, the company that recently bought Sunbelt (*VIPRE*, *Counterspy*), ClearCloud is a free service that checks every website address your computer tries to access, whether you're browsing the Internet, clicking a link in an email, or a program on your hard drive trying to communicate with servers for information or updates.

ClearCloud prevents you from

being able to access known bad websites, sites that will download malicious files to your computer. Even better, ClearCloud prevents you from being able to access malicious websites that you may not even know your computer is trying to access - and it prevents potentially nasty programs from "phoning home" and secretly communicating between your computer and cybercriminals.

Many programs legitimately phone home to get software updates: Microsoft *Windows* and Adobe *Reader* are two common programs that will check for current updates. ClearCloud knows the websites accessed by over a million safe programs and provides free passage to these sites.

How does ClearCloud know which websites are malicious?

ClearCloud is part of the DNS network, and has access to every URL in the world. When you type the URL in your browser and click 'Go' or 'Enter,' your browser sends the URL to ClearCloud. ClearCloud looks it up in a table, checks it against the list of bad websites, and if it passes, sends back the numeric IP address so your browser knows where to go to get the web page.

All in milliseconds.

(See *Space*, page 8)

The Bug Report

The Greater South Bay PC Users Group

3623 W. 227th St.

Torrance, CA 90505

February 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 SIG Meeting Digital Imaging	2 Groundhog Day	3	4	5
6	7 General Meeting	8 SIG Meetings Digital Imaging Daytime Hardware	9 Board Meeting	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday
13	14 Valentine's Day	15 SIG Meeting Digital Imaging	16	17 SIG Meeting Windows XP / 7	18	19 Newsletter Deadline
20	21 President's Day	22 Washington's Birthday	23	24 SIG Meeting Internet	25	26
27	28					