The Bug Report

A Publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group

July 2005

Go To GS-Bug on the Net: http://gsbug.apcug.org

Events

Web Tips

Tune Up Your Old Monitor

Problem: My several-year-old monitor is starting to show its age and isn't as crisp as it used to be. Is there something I can do to tune it up instead of getting a brand-new monitor?

Solution: Long before monitors burn out, their calibration can go way out of whack. Graphic designers and other visual pros often use expensive hardware to color-calibrate their monitors, but we found a no-cost source you can use to make your monitor's display look sharp again. MonitorsDirect Calibrator (http://snipurl.com/fznk) is a free test from this retailer site. MonitorsDirect says this test is "designed to help evaluate monitor quality, diagnose possible problems, and help properly adjust the display image." For you, that means no more guessing with the brightness and contrast controls.

How Fast Are Your Fingers?
Problem: Someone recently asked me how many words per minute I can type. Is there an online test that will rate my speed?

Solution: You should check out the TypingMaster Online Test http://www.typingtest .com. You can vary the length of the test from one minute to three minutes, which gives you much more accurate results than other online tests that only clock one sentence at a time and extrapolate the results up to a minute.

Find Your Golf Handicap
Problem: My New Year's resolution is to get out and play more golf. How can I find out my handicap?

Solution: There are a bunch of free handicap calculators on the Web, but some of them require a registration login and others require the scores of as many as 12 games before their calculators can perform the necessary calculation. Instead, take a look at this small, unattractive but effective Golf Handicap Calculator http://snipurl.com/fznn, which bases its calculation on at least five rounds of golf. Plus, for those just beginning to track their stats, the site provides a link at the top of the page to its Single Round Handicap Calculator. Fore!

Millions Of Pennies
Problem: These days, there's a lot of talk about federal spending that's in the billions of dollars, and a deficit that's in the trillions. How big is that?

Solution: Most of us know that 1 billion is 1,000 million and that 1 trillion is 1,000 billion. Still, these amounts are hard for many of us to visualize, and that's how MegaPenny Project (http://www.kokogiak.com/megapenny) can help. With its illustrated steps, it leads you through an ever-increasing stack of little copper coins. MegaPenny Project also provides interesting statistics on every jump up in size (for example, 1 billion pennies weighs more than 3,000 tons), but the most valuable aspect of this site is how the relative sizes of these piles of pennies put such big numbers into perspective. One page of this site (the one labeled Index, Table And Links) even features a list of measurement names for big numbers—all the way up to novemtrigintillion, which is a numeral 1 followed by 120 zeros. Now that's big.

Bob Hudak
Software Library News
RSH532@aol.com

God Bless America! Happy 4th of July! Party Big time.

A past member of the club is working hard to burn a slide show to a CD of slides that were scanned that will play in a DVD player on his TV. He wants to record a audio comment about each picture. Maybe have background music also. He has tried a number of different programs but is not having any luck making it work. He has a great number of family pictures that he wants to save for future viewing. He is looking for help in finding the right program. If anyone has this worked out please send me, (rsh532@aol.com) the information and I will pass it on.

For Sale!

I have a few club items for sale. If interested, give me a call to work out a pickup time and place.

1. Visioneer One Touch scanner with cable and software $15.00. Not sure if you can get driver for Win XP
2. HP Laserjet 111 printer with new in the box cartridge, owner's manual and cable. $25.00
3. Two HP 660 printers. great text printers. $5.00 each
4. Epson Stylus 880 color printer. $5.00 Note. $5.00 printers are untested but are supposed to be OK.

If you need a computer or some other hardware, let me know and I will work on finding it for you. Storage is a problem so I am unable to except everything that is offered unless I have a member that is looking for that item.

Hardware SIG News

Hardware Sig is still meeting each Tue afternoon at the Torrance Scout Center. Come down and talk about your problems or bring in your computer to have it looked at. Maybe even fixed. Need help installing new hardware. We can help. Remember to do a little house cleaning inside your computer case. I had another member bring in a computer that had half the dust and dirt in Torrance choking the fan and CPU. This really is bad for the life of your computer. Keep it clean.

Members bring in their computer because it is having some software problems which is not related to a hardware problem. We try to come up with a fix. The big problem is that most of the time the member does not have the software for the program. Some think that once they load the program they will never need the software again so they pitch it out or store it in some never to be found again spot. Please help yourself by putting ALL your program disks in a shoe box that is marked as being for that computer. All driver programs, operation manuals, and backups or image files. Then if a problem comes up, and it will, everything you need to recover is in one spot. How great it is. This issue comes up quite often so I wanted to bring it to your attention.

More and more members are buying and using digital cameras. Some are thinking of buying but are unsure of what to buy. If you would like to have a little help in making a selection or using your camera, let me know and if there are a number of people interested, I will put together a group discussion at one of the Tue Hardware Sigs.

Frank Chao
Internet Talk

Welcome to the 83rd "Internet Talk" article for "The Bug Report", a publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GSBUG). Liz and I hope that both you, your computer(s), and your Internet connection are all in robust condition.

Membership Report

Joyce Oliver reports that, as of June 8th, GSBUG has 147 members, which is one more than in May. Thank you, Joyce !

NEW PLACES TO BUY COMPUTERS

For GSBUG members, most of whom live in the South Bay area of Los Angeles county, there are now three great new places to buy computers, accessories, and software:

PC Mall has opened a new brick-and-mortar store on the north side of 190th Street between Van Ness and Crenshaw. This store has the same low prices that you will find at their Web site at http://www.pcmall.com PC Mall has been a reputable online dealer of computers and associated equipment for years. Only their brick-and-mortar store is new.

CompUSA has opened a new store in the Del Amo Mall. It is located about 70 feet east of Lucille's Barbecue or about 150 feet east of Barnes and Noble. If you are doing some shopping at the Del Amo Mall anyway, this store is mighty convenient.
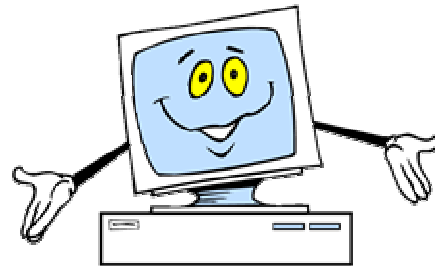
Finally, there is a very small, but competitively-priced, computer section in the new Walmart at 195th and Normandie. When I visited this store on June 16th (which was their second day of operation), I found three laptop computers and three desktop computers in stock. All were being sold at rock-bottom prices.

So, if you need a new computer, you now have more places to shop at.

Preying on Your Very Name

Identity thieves usually steal one or more key pieces of your personal data, such as an identification number or a driver's license. Then they use it to impersonate you and open up credit accounts in your name. At the same time, they divert the ensuing paperwork to their own mail drop. They spend as much as they can as quickly as they can. You will not know what is happening until the collection agencies start calling.

How do these unscrupulous individuals steal such personal information? It is very easy. It often starts with collecting personal data that many people casually give out on credit applications or to telemarketers. Some crooks resort to 'dumpster diving'—digging into your trash cans for bank, mortgage, or credit records. Others intercept financially related mail from mailboxes. 'Shoulder surfers' are thieves who use cameras or binoculars to watch their victims punch in numbers at automated teller machines (ATMs) or public phones. In some countries much personal information is readily available at courts, in public documents, or on the Internet.

Internet Library

Identity Theft— Recommended Sites

If you are the victim of identity theft, go to the free **Identity Theft Assistance Center** at: http://bittyurl.com/Fp

Liz recommends that you go to the Web site of Specialty Hardware Outlet for information on home improvement and repairs. Their URL is: http://bittyurl.com/Fq

Other Web sites with information on home improvement are:

Ace Hardware at: http://bittyurl.com/Fr

Home Depot at: http://bittyurl.com/Fs

True Value Hardware at: http://bittyurl.com/Ft and

Lowe's Home Improvement Center at: http://www.lowes.com

For details on hardware and supplies of all types, go to the Website of McMaster-Carr at: http://www.mcmaster.com

Beware!

PRIVACY AND ON-LINE JOB SITES: Job seekers who post their résumés on-line face considerable threats to their privacy. Résumés may be stored on on-line job sites for years and may even become a source of information for identity theft. Some job sites request personal information from job seekers, such as name, address, age, and work history, and then pass that information on to third-party vendors, such as advertisers. *Awake!*

Netscape 8 Now Available!

Netscape 8 is now available for you to download at: http://bittyurl.com/Fu

Netscape 8 has various enhancements for security, including the ability to warn you if a Website will infect your computer with spyware. Netscape 8's enhanced "tabbed browsing" capability lets you access multiple Web sites efficiently at the same time.

Firefox

The Firefox Web browser is now up to version 1.0.4 and can be downloaded for free at: http://bittyurl.com/Fv

At the present time, it is the safest Web browser for you to use, since very little spyware / adware is able to use it to cause trouble for your computer.

Before installing any new version of Firefox, it is best for you to totally uninstall the old, existing version by using "Add or Remove Programs" from the Control Panel of your computer.

Multiple Web Browsers

When you install more than one Web browser in a computer, just say "no" when any particular Web browser asks you if you would like to make it your default Web browser, if you wish to leave Internet Explorer as your default Web browser.

Remove the check mark from "Always perform this check when starting Netscape", if you want it to stop asking you about whether you want it to be your default Web browser.

If you want a particular Web browser to be your default Web browser, click on "Yes" when it asks you if you want it to be your default Web browser.

For example, if you want Firefox to be your default Web browser: When it asks you if you want it to be your Web browser, click on "Yes" and remove the check mark from "Always perform this check when starting Firefox". Then say "No" when the other Web browsers ask you the same question.

Multimedia Flash Player and KFWB

If you use "Internet Explorer" and the "Macromedia Flash Player" is installed into your computer, the KFWB Web site at: http://www.kfwb.com looks like this:

They have turned to top of their Website into a big ad for "Monster.com" that covers up your title bar and toolbars of your Web browser. Unless you need to look for a job, this is a massive annoyance. Here are your options:

1. If you must use "Internet Explorer", you can click on "Change Toolbar Back" in the upper right hand corner of the "Monster.com" ad bar and the ad bar will disappear. This must be done each time that you access the KFWB Website.

2. Or, if you must use "Internet Explorer", you can uninstall the Macromedia Flash Player using Macromedia's proprietary uninstaller at http://bittyurl.com/Fw You would not expect Macromedia to allow you a straightforward way to uninstall the Flash Player in "Add or Remove Programs", would you?

3. Or, you can use any browser other than "Internet Explorer", such as Netscape, Opera, or Firefox.

How you do with this annoyance is up to you. Let me know about which strategy you select.

Welcome to <u>Mr</u>. <u>Modem</u>'s Desktop, a neighborly nook and chatty cranny of computerdom, where each month I share a few tenderly harvested tips, tricks, gems, and tidbits genetically engineered to supplement your high-cyber lifestyle. These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA and are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any downloadable afflictions.

It boggles the mind to think that July is upon us once again. It seems like it was only a year ago that I made a similar astute observation, but I could be wrong. I'll Google it and get back to you.

Speaking of Google—and they don't call me the Sultan of Segues for nothing—do you know how Google got its name? It was originally Googol, which, as we all know, is a unit of measure represented by a 1 followed by 100 zeros. The new search engine was to be named Googol to project a sense of the vast amount of information that would be accessible by using it. When my good friends, founders Sergey Brinn and Larry Page (or <u>Mr</u>. Brinn and Mr. Page, as I call them), presented their idea to an angel investor, they received a check made out to "Google, Inc." And the rest, as they say, is typo history. For additional company-name etymologies, visit the Wikipedia at http://www.snipurl.com/89y8.

If your Desktop overfloweth, sure you could delete a few icons, but where's the challenge in that? Instead, why not reduce your icon size and increase the IPSI (icons per square inch) ratio? Start by right-clicking any empty area of your Windows Desktop. Click Properties, the Appearance tab (WinXP users click the Advanced button), and then the Item drop-down menu. Select Icon. Enter a lower number in the Size field to shrink the size of your icons, and then click OK. (My doctor tells meI shouldn't be concerned about shrinking icons at my age, but still. . . .) To increase your IPSI ratio, select Icon Spacing Horizontal and Icon Spacing Vertical and enter smaller Size values. Through trial and terror, you can easily increase the amount of space available for cramming icons onto your Desktop.

A few months ago I asked for your comments and opinions about the amount of our personal information that's slowly but surely slithering out onto the Internet. Security concerns were cited as the primary reason why none of you were in favor of personal data, including financial, medical, and driver's license information, being available on the Web. The ACLU is also concerned and created a fascinating demonstration of just how revealing the simple act of phoning in a pizza order *could* be in the years ahead. Have an anchovy-free slice on me while you visit http://www.snipurl.com/bijx.

If you occasionally encounter a Web page that runs off the edge of your screen, try reducing the size of your browser'sdisplay font by clicking View and Text Size or Zoom, depending on your browser. If that doesn't work, you could try increasing your screen's resolution, but all that clickin' and fussin' can be exhausting. Enter, the Size-O-Matic (www.pythoness.com). This free program lets you view Web pages at any screen resolution without having to change any settings on your computer. Its toolbar-like presence displays CSRs (common screen resolutions) ranging from 640 x 480 to 1,600 x 1,200. Drag a resolution to any window to change that window's resolution. It's a revelation in the resolution revolution.

Windows 2000 and WinXP contain a helpful but largely ignored feature called the File Summary that can jog your memory when searching for a file. To deploy this feature, right-click a file, select Properties, and then click the Summary tab. You'll see fields for Title, Subject, Author, Category, Keywords, and Comments. If not, simply click the Simple button located at the bottom of the dialog box and then enter your comments, keywords, notes, memos, and any other information, all of which are searchable by clicking Start and Search.

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Hello Its Me Again

The State Of Biology-Based Security

by Gregory Anderson—Smart Computing

The strongest forms of authentication verify identity by combining three components: something you know, something you possess, and something you are. The first two are easy: Passwords and keys are two classic examples. But something you are is a little more complicated, and that's where biometrics come in. Biometrics enable the third leg of security--proving who you are.

■ Bio What?

Our friend Webster defines biometrics as "the statistical analysis of biological observations and phenomena." In plain English, biometrics is the science of using biological information to confirm or discover identity. Though there are a variety of applications for biometrics, we'll limit our discussion to computer security. Some applications scan biometric information and search a database to find any possible matches (**identification biometrics**). In security apps, however, the question we're asking most often is whether we're sure this person is who he claims to be. In other words, rather than searching vast databases for a match, security applications compare captured data (a **sample**) against a single stored record to verify a match (**verification biometrics**). The verification approach is easier and less resource-intensive and thus more appropriate for PC security applications.

Retinal scanners, such as this model from Iridian technologies, are just one of many biometric methods for verifying identity.

■ Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes

Though biometrics may sound like a unified field, the reality is more complicated. We can capture, measure, and store a wide variety of unique biological indicators. Each requires a different method of presentation, measurement, and authentication. The technology for most methods is still in its infancy, so the field isn't yet as broad as it will be. But there are plenty of options for now.

Fingerprints. You've seen the most common biometric used a hundred times in crime dramas and mystery novels: fingerprints. Fingerprints are completely unique: The statistical probability of two people ever in human history sharing the same fingerprint pattern approaches zero. An electronic fingerprint scanner creates a digital image of your prints and matches the image against a stored record of your unique pattern of whorls and loops. There are actually two methods: optical and capacitance scanning. In optical method, a photo sensor takes a picture of your print and creates a numeric representation of the image for storage. In capacitance scanning, electronic circuits measure the charges created by the contact of your fingerprint ridges with the scanner, creating a pattern of those connections. In both methods, the process captures and creates a profile your unique fingerprint pattern.

Smudging, perspiration, movement, and other factors can affect the sample with both methods, though capacitance scanners are harder to fool. And few systems compare a complete set of fingerprints--they more often measure a handful of notable characteristics (places where ridges split or end) in each profile, called **minutiae**, a method that saves space but decreases reliability. However, a general public acceptance of fingerprinting and the low cost of the hardware required have made fingerprint scanning the clear favorite thus far in PC security apps, especially at the consumer level.

Retinal and iris scanning. The blood vessels in your retinas and the features of your **irises** (the colored ring surrounding the pupil) create patterns similar to fingerprints in their uniqueness and measurability. As with fingerprint scanning, a retinal or iris scanner can capture those patterns and compare them to a stored profile to determine whether the two match. But the technology is less mature, more expensive, bulkier, and more invasive. Many people find the direct light necessary for retinal scanning uncomfortable, and you have to remve glasses and put your face right in the scanner. Iris scanning avoids most of these issues, but is still an immature and expensive technology. High-end security applications have found uses for both, but the technology has yet to make inroads in the consumer market.

Voiceprints. Voice recognition systems work a little differently. Each person's voice has different acoustic (pitch and vibration) and behavioral (speed and enunciation) qualities that, together, create a unique profile of our speech. By recording and storing a digital representation of those speech patterns, a voiceprint biometric system compares a user's speech to a stored profile. Voice recognition works best with a set passphrase or sequence of verbal cues, and background noise or sound distortion can affect the results. You aren't likely to see consumer products using voice recognition for sale just yet, but you may experience them soon in telephone systems used to access financial or personal information.

Facial recognition. You may remember a short-lived controversy about a plan to install facial recognition systems in airports, shopping malls, and even at the Super Bowl. The idea was to have PCs pick known terrorists and criminals out of the crowd and alert security personnel. Despite raising important civil liberties issues, the technology is an example of the potential for **identification** biometrics.

Identification technologies collect biometric data without the knowledge or participation of users, literally picking faces out of a crowd rather than merely verifying identity. Face recognition works by measuring key physical indicators (including the location of and distance between eyes, nose, and mouth) and creating a digital profile of those characteristics. The technology is expensive and requires more resources than other methods, so the consumer applications are limited. But that doesn't mean you won't find the technology at airports or other secure locations, whether you know it or not.

■The Biosphere

With all those ways to identify users, you'd think there would be a wide array of products on the market. We found, however, that the selection is relatively limited in practice. The limitations are partly because biometrics is a relatively immature science (with the attendant high costs and complicated technologies) and partly because people aren't yet comfortable with the idea of so much biological information sitting around on unregulated and less-than-entirely secure machines. In fact, only one method (fingerprinting) has products in regular consumer-level use.

Portable storage. Fingerprint-protected memory sticks are the most portable biometric devices. Kanguru Solutions' newest model, the Kanguru Bio Drive ($84.95 to $199.95 for 256MB to 1GB; www.kanguru.com), is one example. The Bio Drive comes with software for recording profiles for up to five fingers' prints, with an encrypted partition to protect data from unauthorized access. The drive locks when removed from a PC and prompts you to scan your print on the built-in sensor when you plug it in. The small size of the device limits its accuracy, but we rarely had to scan fingers more than twice to make the match. This level of accuracy represents a significant improvement over earlier models from other manufacturers, making fingerprint-protected drives a viable option for users who need to carry sensitive information on portable media. The risks? If the fingerprint hardware suffers damage or malfunctions, you won't be able to get to your data unless you created a Rescue Password (which limits the biometric security's strength).

Keyboards and mice. Rather than limiting security to a single peripheral, keyboards and mice with built-in fingerprint scanning control access to the entire system. And integrating biometric technology with the devices you handle most makes complete sense. Microsoft offers a biometric security set, the Optical Desktop with Fingerprint Reader ($84.95; www.microsoft.com). Install the included DigitalPersona Password Manager software, attach the USB keyboard and wireless mouse receiver, scan to enroll, and set the system to check for prints whenever you log on or try to access protected files. You can also use the software to store passwords for specific Web sites and programs. The idea of easier logons is always appealing, and it's helpful to have another convenient layer of verification.

Standalone authentication systems. If you don't want to replace your keyboard or mouse, or want to protect a portable notebook computer, consider a standalone authentication system. The Fingerprint Reader from Microsoft ($54.95; www.microsoft.com) plugs into any Windows XP PC with a USB port. Install the DigitalPersona software (the same application used with the Optical Desktop), record your fingerprint information, and use the Reader to log into the system or onto specified Web sites. It's a convenient way to log onto your computer and forget about remembering a bunch of passwords, but it doesn't really add extra security: You can always access the computer the old-fashioned way.
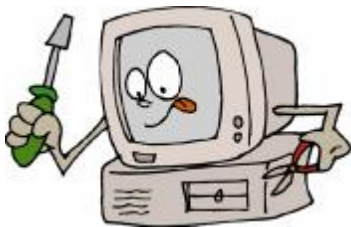
The Bug's SIGs:

Event	Location	SIG Leader
Board Meeting 1st Wednesday after the 1st Monday of the month.	Levy School - 229th Place & Madison, Torrance, Rm 7	Gary Sexton, President UAGS@aol.com
General Meeting 1st Monday	Salvation Army, 4223 Emerald St. Torrance	First Monday of the Month
Daytime Hardware SIG Every Tuesday	Torrance Scout Ctr, 2365 Plaza Del Amo 1pm to 4pm	Bob Hudak - rsh532@aol.com rsh532@aol.com
Windows 98/XP SIG 4th Friday	Levy School - 229th Place & Madison, Torrance, Rm 7 6:30 pm	John Sullivan 549-2063
Windows 95/98/ME 3rd Thursday	Levy School - 229th Place & Madison, Torrance, Rm 7 7:00 pm	Virginia Pfiffner 374-2410 vpfiffne@.elcamino.edu
DIG SIG (Digital Imaging) Every Tuesday	Torrance Scout Ctr, 2365 Plaza Del Amo 9:00 to 12:00 pm	Fred Vogel 375-9336

Notebooks. A handful of notebook manufacturers are starting to build fingerprint security right into their models. The Fujitsu Lifebook P7010 ($1,999; www.fujitsu.com) is one example. In addition to impressive performance specs, widescreen monitor, and a long battery life, the P7010 includes OmniPass software and a built-in fingerprint scanner. OmniPass lets you create profiles for different users and encrypt specific files or directories. A small scanning sensor provides authentication access for any of your fingers, requiring users to verify their identity during login and whenever they attempt to access protected information. We found the sensor reliable, and the software easy to configure. The system is useful for those who need portable secure computing and who need to carry sensitive files and data around but don't want to risk compromising the information if the computer is lost, stolen, or used by others.

The main benefits of biometrics are clear: Completely unique identifiers that are difficult to fake or modify. However, those same characteristics also create biometrics' downside. No biometric method is foolproof--identity can be forged in a variety of ways. But forgery isn't the biggest problem (we have the risks of copied keys and cracked passwords well enough under control). The biggest challenge for biometrics is brittleness: The science doesn't fail well. If you lose a key, you can change a lock. If someone steals your password, you can change it. If someone compromises your fingerprint or voiceprint profile, your profile can never be truly secure again. So biometrics won't entirely displace other security methods, but can be a valuable part of an overall security scheme combining authentication methods. ■

Hot Links—Editor's Choice

1. www.wikipedia.org — The world's largest internet encyclopedia. The catch is that you may edit the material yourself being an expert that you are on various subjects. It is a fascinating site full of facts.
2. http://snipurl.com/fzmr — A collection of energy drink reviews. A place to compare: taste, alcohol hiding ability, cost, pump upedness. So if you like having that "stay awake" caffeine effect, give this informational website a try!
3. http://snipurl.com/cq8l — It is a fun internet site if you like to know your geography. It is called "Place The State" in which you place the U.S. states in their proper place on the virtual map.
4. http://www.disturbingauctions.com/ — Ok Ebayer's here is an interesting site that you will see unusual things up for auction.
5. http://www.movieorigins.com/ — At Movie Origins they research the origins of some of the most popular (and not so popular) Hollywood films. You can browse the True Stories section to find the realities behind movies based on true stories.
6. http://www.roadid.com/ — Each year, over 450,000 of us are taken to hospitals unconscious and without Identification. If you should experience an unexpected injury or sudden illness, when not at home, you want those who come to your aid to have quick easy access to YOUR IDENTITY. Road ID® not only provides safety and peace of mind for you and your loved ones, but Road ID® can prevent serious delays in medical treatment or even save your life.

General Meeting Notice
1st Monday of the Month

Please mark your calendars for the General Meeting is to be held on the 1st Monday of each month at the Salvation Army Facility.

When:	**Time:**	**Address:**	
1st Monday of the Month.	7:30 P.M.	4223 Emerald Street Torrance, CA	GS-BUG INC. P.O. Box 6950 Torrance, CA 90504-6950 Phone: (310) 373-3989

GENERAL MEETING

General meeting are held at 7:30 pm on the first Monday of the month at the Salvation Army Facility at 4223 Emerald St. at the corner of Emerald and Earl Streets in Torrance

MEMBERSHIPS:

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

Individual - $36.00
Student - $18.00
Family - $48.00
Newsletter only - $18.00

Checks should be payable to: GS-Bug, Inc. and mailed to:

GS-BUG, Inc. - Memberships
P.O. Box 6950
Torrance, CA 90504-6950

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

A publication of

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The Greater South Bay PC Users Group

We're on the Web!
Http://gsbug.apcug.org