The Bug Report

A Publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group

October, 2004

Calendar

November:
 Printing and Paper

December:
 Christmas Party

February:
 Wireless home (Intel program in box Sexton) how to make your home wireless

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Annual Holiday Party

Announcement
by Virginia Pfiffner

Although it's just the first of October, while I was out shopping two weeks ago, I noticed Christmas decorations and supplies are already in some of the stores. I was reminded that I had better get an article to Sharon Grant regarding the festivities that we are planning for our December meeting.

We will have the GS-BUG Annual Holiday Party and Silent Auction of computer hardware and software donations from our members. It will be held on Monday, December 6, 2004, at 6:00 p.m. at the Salvation Army on the corner of Earl and Emerald in Torrance.

It is a fun and active meeting—a chance to socialize with members and to bid on inexpensive pieces of software or hardware that suit your fancy. There will be door prizes as well as a raffle.

We plan to have a potluck affair, which was so successful last year, with food, soft drinks, coffee, tea, cocoa and sweets. Signup sheets for food that you would like to contribute will be passed around at our General Meeting on November 1, 2004.

Pamela Harrison, Emmett Ingram, Joyce Oliver, Virginia Pfiffner and Dixie Rasmussen are spearheading the activity. Come help make this meeting a festive occasion.

The following are some activities in which we'd like you to participate. Make your choice(s):

1. Bring your computer hardware and software white elephants to the December meeting. Check out your closets, garage and the attic for things that are cluttering up your life.
2. Sign up on the circulating sheets at the November 1st meeting to bring your special dish, potato salad, green salad, baked beans, cookies, candy, brownies, soft drinks.
3. Help to:
        Set up tables for displaying donated software and hardware
                Decorate
                Set out food and drinks
                Cleanup
    4. Have fun!

Any ideas that you may have to help out with the party will be welcome. You may call Virginia at (310) 374-2410.

Bob Hudak
Software Library News
RSH532@aol.com

Attention!

For every person you encourage to join the GSBUG, you will receive four months of free membership!

New Members

Please notify Herman Krouse at: herm@socal.rr.com of your email address to enable you to receive timely notices regarding special meetings, classes or cancellations. Remember, we are a computer club and we do much of our correspondence by email.

Library News

Last month I told you I was not going to be looking for new shareware programs to bring you at the general meetings because there is little to no interest in them. Most members have Internet connections and find their own programs.

Of course I am still checking out programs of interest to me and will tell you about them. If you are interested in any program in the library and want a copy, contact me and I will put it on a disk or CD for you.

Mozilla's Firefox

Kim Komando has been telling us about Mozilla's Firefox browser as a replacement for Internet Explorer. I was using IE 4 because it is so old that no one was writing programs that could be used to do harm. It got to the point that a lot of sites on the net were causing my computer to lock up when trying to download items. I needed to upgrade. I gave Firefox a try and so far it is working good. Stops spam and is easy to use. It moved over all my favorites so I was ready to go. The program is 5 megs so if you would like a copy I will put it on a CD for you.

Hardware For Sale

I have a number of hardware items for sale that can be checked out by calling me at 323-0579. A 200 MHZ Pentium loaded with CD Rom drive, a CD burner, Floppy drives, sound card, modem and USB connection. Clean Win98se, CD burner program and Office software. This is a clean, fast machine that can handle most of your computer needs. Have a nice scanner. A Microtek X6 SCSI scanner with software and cable plus owner manual. Also available are small hard drives and CD ROM drives. Printer. Snappy video capture module with software. One of a kind, so call if interested.

Tip Of The Month

This is a Windows XP tip. I am way behind most of you in using Windows XP so this might be old stuff. I tried it out and it works good. The tip is to add a shortcut icon to shut down the computer with a click. Here is the drill. Right click the desktop in a clear spot. Choose NEW-SHORTCUT. Type the following in the box that comes up. SHUTDOWN -S -T 00. Click next and give it a name. It comes with a name but you can change it anytime. Click FINISH. That's it. Try it and see if you like it.

Hardware SIG News

There is something interesting going on every Tue at the Hardware Sig at the Scout Center. Hours of operation are changing from 1:00 to 4:00 PM to 12:00 to 3:00 PM. So come a bit earlier. It is hard to separate hardware and software. One does not work without the other. This is where we run into the most problems when new items are added to the computers. We have been working with DVD burner drives and the software that makes things work. Harry Goldstein, our expert, has been sharing his knowledge. Worked for weeks with George Rodriguez to get him up to speed. George is so happy now. Harold Caccamise bought a DVD burner and we are trying to make it work in his older machine. Always something new to learn. How would like to have a 17" LCD Computer Monitor for $5.00? You are hearing this here first. At our Christmas party we will raffle a LCD Monitor. You will not need to be there to win BUT you will need to buy a chance. More details next month but put buying some chances in your budget right now.

Internet Talk

Frank Chao
Internet Talk

Ways to Contact Me:

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

1. Send me e-mail at:

fchao@pacbell.net

2. Leave me a voice message at (310)768-3896.

3. Send "snail" U.S. Postal Service mail to:

Frank Chao
4001 Inglewood Ave., Ste. 101
PMB 305
Redondo Beach, CA 90278

Or sell your computer and take up sewing instead !!

You are reading the 74th "Internet Talk" article for "The Bug Report", a publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GSBUG). The month of September has been hotter than usual. Hopefully, you were able to find a cool spot for yourself and your computer.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR GSBUG

Joyce Oliver reports that as of September 12th, our membership count is 153, which is 1 less than last month. If your membership has or is about to expire, please renew it to help GSBUG's finances. In the long run, you will be helping yourself.

SOCAL FREE NET

As promised, I tested my new Internet dialup account at SoCal during the month of September. They provided me with totally-free Internet access at an average of 41.2 kilobits per second. Their modem connections were as reliable as Netzero and Juno. Unlike free Internet dialup from Netzero and Juno, "SoCal.." does not have an advertising bar. Nor do they have any time limits of any kind, as compared to the 10-hour per month limits imposed by Netzero and Juno. Obtaining an account with "SoCal.." was easy and it took me less than two minutes at their Website. Unlike Netzero and Juno, "SoCal.." does not provide you with any software for setting up a "dial up networking" connection in a Windows computer. Instead, you must use the "Network Setup Wizard" in Windows XP, the "Add Network Place" icon in Windows 2000, or the "Make New Connection" icon inside "Dial-Up Networking" in Windows 95 or 98.

Unfortunately, this free Internet Service Provider (ISP), does not have any dialup phone numbers that are local calls for most GSBUG members. Their list of phone lines is located at:

http://www.socalfree.net/service.htm
As of September 13th, their list of phone numbers is as follows:

All the numbers for our free service end in FREE (3733):
213-227-FREE -- Los Angeles (DA01), CA
310-949-FREE -- Avalon, CA
323-390-FREE -- Los Angeles (DA11), CA
323-623-FREE -- Los Angeles (DA14), CA
323-624-FREE -- Montebello, CA
323-625-FREE -- Los Angeles (DA06), CA
562-369-FREE -- Long Beach, CA
619-364-FREE -- San Diego, CA
619-747-FREE -- Jacumba, CA
619-774-FREE -- Dulzura, CA
619-868-FREE -- Campo, CA
626-368-FREE -- San Gabriel Canyon (Azusa area)
626-370-FREE -- Pasadena, CA
661-620-FREE -- Canyon Country, CA
714-629-FREE -- Santa Ana, CA
760-551-FREE -- Ramona, CA
760-661-FREE -- San Marcos, CA
760-785-FREE -- Brawley, CA
805-274-FREE -- Ventura, CA
805-851-FREE -- Fillmore, CA
818-685-FREE -- Van Nuys, CA
858-233-FREE -- La Jolla, CA
858-234-FREE -- San Diego (Rancho Bernardo), CA
858-236-FREE -- Poway, CA
858-237-FREE -- San Diego (Mira Mesa), CA
858-297-FREE -- Del Mar, CA
858-364-FREE -- San Diego (Rancho Peñasquitos), CA

909-661-FREE -- Ontario, CA
949-963-FREE -- Saddleback Valley, CA

If one of these phone numbers is the local calling area, you can now use "SoCal Free.net" to make a free, unlimited, dial-up connection to the Internet. Congratulations !

213-227-3733 is located in downtown Los Angeles.
323-390-3733 is located in Koreatown a.k.a. "Los Angeles 11" telephone central office.
323-623-3733 is located in Hollywood a.k.a. "Los Angeles 14" telephone central office.
562-623-3733 is located in Long Beach, California.

For most GSBUG members, who live in the South Bay area of Los Angeles, the Long Beach phone line will be the closest one to their homes. This phone line will be a local call for some Carson, Lomita, Torrance, Redondo Beach, San Pedro and Palos Verdes residents. To find out if this 562-623-3733 Long Beach line is a local call for your residence, phone your local telephone company's customer service center.

Most of you know that using a non-local phone line for a dial-up modem can make your local phone company wealthier at your expense. For most residential telephones, your local calling area consists of all telephones that are connected to all local central offices that are less than 12 miles from the local central office that your telephone line is connected to. However, some of the competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) offer extended local calling areas. If a specific phone number of SoCal's is not in your phone's local calling area, you might consider signing up with a CLEC that puts that specific phone number into your local calling area.

The main URL for SoCal Free Net is
http://www.socalfree.net

Click on the "Support" button for step-by-step instructions for making a dial-up connection to your specific version of Windows.

Finally, please do not confuse "Socalfree.net" with the "Los Angeles Free-Net". They are not the same. There is no relationship between these two Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

WeatherBug

Weatherbug provides software than can turn your computer into an up-to-the-minute warning device for alerting of weather events such as tornados, hurricanes, and lightning storms.

You can download their free software at
http://www.weatherbug.com

INTERNET TIME SYNCH FOR XP

If you are running Windows XP, it has the ability to synch the clock in your computer with Internet time servers:

Step 1:
Double-click on the clock inside the system tray on the right or bottom of the gray Windows task bar.

Step 2:
Make sure that the date is correct. (If it is not, the time synch process will fail.)

Step 3:
Click on the "Internet Time" tab.

Step 4:
If there is no checkmark in the box next to "Automatically synchronize with Internet time server, click on box to put a check-mark inside of it.

Step 5:
Click on the "Update Now" button.
If the time synch fails, use the pull down list-arrow to change to the other default time server and repeat Step 5.

Recommendation of the Month

Cyber Security

by Sharon Grant

Each week we hear of different computer viruses that are sneaking about. Do you have concern about just how secure your computer is? If so, at this link:
http://lists.gpick.com/pages/Security_Testing.htm

You will find security testing programs that will be right for your computer. Let your computer get a nice workout and give it a try. Following is some examples of what they have on the site:

License Free!
Promoting Security Awareness
"Your free online security audit, firewall test and research center. Your security test and port scan starts here. Audit your firewall with a free online Firewall Test, Port Scan and Privacy Test that provides immediate results designed to promote security awareness and help secure your firewall. Port Scan all 65,535 tcp ports or choose your port scan range!"

License Free!
Browser Security Test
"Scanit's Browser Security Test automatically checks your browser for various security problems. When the test is finished you get a complete report explaining the discovered vulnerabilities, their impact and how to eliminate them. Important Note: If you use software that blocks pop-up ads, please disable it for the time of the test. The test needs to open multiple windows in order to work." [It appears that this service is for testing Internet Explorer only; Ed.]

License Free!
DSLreports Port Scan
"This is a basic TCP/UDP port scan. The TCP (full connect) scan starts first, and results are shown as ports are found. The UDP scan goes next and must complete, before any results are shown. The maximum test duration is 60 seconds for the TCP scan and 60 seconds for the UDP scan. Firewall software or hardware may cause the scans to exceed the time limit and be terminated."

License Free!
Email Virus Protection Test
"This web site allows you to send a harmless test virus to any email address. If your mail server or email hosting provider is running anti-virus software, these emails should get blocked. "This site is for test purposes only. The owners of this site do not claim that your mail server will be able to catch all viruses even if it catches all of the test emails below. However, if it does not catch some of the test emails below, your mail server is not as secure as it could be. The options below provide several different ways to send the test virus through email. Your anti-virus software should catch them all."

Hot Links—Editor's Choice

1. Http://www.dmarie/timecap/ - When were you born? You can look up how much a loaf of bread, eggs cost; the latest headline news; the top songs; who was famous who also was born on that date etc.
2. Www.livinginternet.com— It is an internet description of the internet. Tells you about the history, design, basic use, advance use, key features, security, help and more info. It is really quite fascinating!
3. www.tocmp.com— The Old Car Manual Project is a library: a central place where anyone can come to get the information they need. How this happens is by volunteers scanning their hard-to-find documents into a digital format, so that everyone can have access to the information.

Epson Stylus C84

by Nathan Chandler

With all the hoopla about digital cameras and home photo printing, it's easy to think that most inkjet manufacturers have completely forgotten about mundane tasks such as text and plain-paper photo printing. Epson hasn't. Its Stylus C84 is an inkjet refined to produce its best output on regular copier paper.

To accomplish this feat, Epson equipped the C84 with a brand-new printhead that sprays the company's DuraBrite ink, which comes in nice individual cartridges. DuraBrite inks are pigment-based and supposedly produce plain-paper images that resist blurring and fading when exposed to water and light. The printhead itself has a laughable resolution of 5,760 x 1,440, and Epson says the C84 will print at 22ppm (black) and 12ppm (color).

Testing revealed much slower printing speeds. This printer whisked out text at a rate of 10ppm, which is a respectable speed for a product that costs less than $100. It also completed a three-page PowerPoint file in less than two minutes and needed less than four minutes to finish a six-page Word file that mixed text and clip-art graphics.

The low-resolution text wasn't worthy of a business report, but standard text was much blacker and had only a few fuzzy characters. Clip art was clear and colorful. Banding was a bit of a problem but won't alarm many users.

Glossy photo printing was consistently inconsistent. Banding marred the leading edge of many of my prints, and a reddish tinge was apparent on some darker colors. It's no stretch to say that this printer makes better images if you stick with plain paper, which is much cheaper than Epson's DuraBrite media, anyway.

If you're a plain-paper aficionado, this is the budget-priced printer for you. But if you need good glossy photos, stick with a Stylus Photo or a low-priced unit from Canon or Hewlett-Packard.

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Kodak EasyShare CX6330 Zoom Digital

by Nathan Chandler

Dumbing down complicated cameras, such as the CX6330, is no easy task. Kodak does it better than anyone else, but not without some forehead-slapping missteps.

The CX6330 comes complete with a 3.1-megapixel CCD and 3X optical zoom capability. In lieu of a low-capacity flash card, Kodak includes 16MB of internal memory, which you can complement with an SD/MMC card of your choice. Though there's no on-camera speaker, there's a microphone to help you add sound to your videos.

In a remarkable twist, Kodak removed preset white-balance modes on this model, leaving users to rely on a single automatic mode. I was impressed with this feature's capabilities. Outdoors, indoors, and under many different light sources colors were almost always accurate and, in many cases, better than other cameras that offer scads of modes that never seem to do the job.

However, I called into question some of Kodak's other design concepts. The four-way controller works fine, but it's mounted on the left side of the camera where it's a bit harder for right-handed users to control. The door for

"Kodak" continued from D1

the flash card compartment is one of the worst I've encountered, with its flimsy plastic hinge that won't stand up to any abuse. The most ridiculous feature, however, is one that Kodak completely omitted: There's no button to toggle the LCD monitor. To turn the screen on and off I had to work my way through a menu tree.

For a camera of this price, however, performance was excellent. Start-up times were a tad slow at four seconds, but shot-to-shot delays were miniscule even when I used the flash. Paired with the CX6330's superior image quality, this is a solid camera, and one that I highly recommend for novices who want guaranteed high-quality pictures.

Web Tips

Enhance Your Time Online

■ Secure Your Computer's Border

Problem: I'm an always-on broadband user, and I have some security concerns. Is it safe to continuously be connected to the Internet? Can other people connect to my computer even though I have a firewall?

Solution: There are a lot of malicious programs that exploit open connections to your computer. Although firewall software (including applications that come with many routers) is definitely a step we recommend, here's a site that offers a great free security check: Sygate Online Services (http://scan.sygate.com). Sygate provides free port scanning, which means that it will try to connect to your computer in a number of ways, such as through the port used for file and print sharing. It will then report whether your ports are open, closed, or blocked. It can be an eye-opening look at your system's security. Also, check out the site's FAQ (frequently asked questions) section for more information about the different types of tests Sygate offers.

■ Stay Informed About New Releases

Problem: I've been eagerly awaiting an update to my favorite computer program. Is there anything I can do to help endure the wait?

Solution: Whether you're actively seeking the next feature set for your must-have program or just want to keep an eye on the technology horizon, visit BetaNews (http://www.betanews.com) to find out what's new. Here you'll find news about prerelease software, the same beta software that advanced users and/or risk takers install and test for free. By its very nature, beta software is buggy, so we don't recommend that you replace your software with its upcoming beta counterpart. But if you just can't wait to see what's coming out next, BetaNews is certainly the place to take a look.

■ Soccer Programming Search Engine
Problem: I'm a big soccer fan. Is there an easier way to find soccer-

related TV programs instead of having to surf through hundreds of channels?

Solution: Soccer.com (http://www.soccer.com) is, as you might imagine, a portal for all things soccer. It also includes a nice feature (somewhat hidden in the lower-left area of the home page) that helps fans search for soccer programming. Type your ZIP code in the field, click Get Listings, and find the soccer-related TV programs airing in your area.

■ Is There A Doctor In The House?

Problem: I'm not feeling well, but I don't think that my condition is bad enough to go to the doctor. Can I look up common symptoms somewhere to figure out how to treat myself?

Solution: First, we must say that reading about symptoms and diseases on a Web site is never a substitute for proper medical care. But if you're simply looking for some general information, MedicineNet (http://www.medicinenet.com) is a great place to start your online research. The site features numerous articles written by doctors that focus on symptoms for all sorts of problems, from a rash to allergies to that annoying ringing in your ears.

■ Thanksgiving Is Just One Big Party

Problem: I usually have Thanksgiving dinner at my parents' house, but this year it's my turn to host the feast. Finding recipes is easy, but how do I deal with everything else?

Solution: Planning a dinner party is often much more difficult than actually cooking the food. Get the Thanksgiving 411 at Party411.com (http://www.party411.com/thanksgiving.html). This site provides decoration suggestions, ideas for party activities, and guides to such things as "Keep The Kids Busy" and "Top Ten Ways To Get Your Guests To Leave" (just in case). And yes, this site even lists some recipes. It's enough to be thankful for.

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SIGs:

Event	Location	SIG Leader
Board Meeting 1st Wednesday	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	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

Microsoft Picture It! Photo Premium 9

Photo Premium 9

by Gregory Anderson

Professional image editing has long been the domain of high-end workstation hardware and expensive software. The industry's gold standard professional application costs $650. So what can you expect for less than $50? Quite a lot, as it turns out.

Getting started with Picture It! Photo Premium is easy; the users manual is well-organized, moving from the very basics to intermediate tasks in a short time.

The program's features are more robust than we expected. Picture It! Photo Premium opens most major image formats, including PSD, EPS (Encapsulated Post-Script), GIF (Graphics Interchange Format), JPEG (Joint Picture Experts Group), TIFF (Tagged Image File Format), and BMP (bit map) files. It offers the main image-editing tools most users need: cropping, resizing, selection, and layering (called Objects). Microsoft also threw in a variety of adjustments (levels, contrast, tint),

filters (sharpen, blur, and artistic redrawings), and effects (scratch and red-eye removal, for example). The Mini Lab feature handles images in batches for renaming, resizing, cropping, copying, and changing formats en masse.

We found the interface helpful without being overwhelming. The left side contains a list of common actions and tools that display their options when selected. The right side lays out the current image's objects and a palette of all currently open images. The result is an intuitive screen that highlights the most common functions while making more advanced options readily available.

You have to get pretty far into photo editing before running up against Picture It! Photo Premium's limits. For anyone with basic to moderate image-editing needs, Picture It! Photo Premium is a great value. ■

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Minutes of September 2004

The president and secretary being present, a general meeting of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GS-BUG) was held on Monday, September 6, 2004 at the Salvation Army Facility, 4223 Emerald Street, Torrance, CA. In attendance were approximately 34 members and guests. President U. A. Garred (Garry) Sexton called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

President Garry asked for a raise of hands from those who now have HiSpeed Internet. The response has increased since last year. President Garry also apologized for the club's newsletter not being available at this meeting but they would be mailed out as soon as possible.

Fred Vogel announced the Digital Imaging SIG would resume on Tuesday, Sept. 7. 9am to noon and would be starting with a new instruction book Adobe Photoshop CS one-on-one.

President Garry asked the group if anyone would volunteer to continue the Internet SIG as Herman Krouse is no longer able to host this SIG. There being no response the Internet SIG is now cancelled.

WINDOWS 95/98 plus . . . Virginia Pfiffner invites all members who have questions for these programs to come to this SIG held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at Levy School, Room 7. (Note: For all SIGS currently in progress please review the newsletter or our website.)

Nominating chairman George Austin reminded members that an election for the 2005 board of directors will take place at the October general meeting. He thanked the current board members for their dedication and asked if any members would volunteer tonight for any position on the board. No response was forthcoming. George then announced the nomination of officers at this time is President Garry Sexton, Vice President Tom Tucknott, Treasurer Jim Corones, Secretary Art Harris, Members-At-Large Virginia Pfiffner, John Hanson and Jack Noble. George mentioned that nominations will remain open until just before voting at the October meeting.

Programs: "Why CMYK Inks and not RGB?" George Austin gave a presentation on colors and their values.

Alan Haskell shared his hobby of model building which contain microprocessors and he demonstrated with two tanks, a submarine, oil tanker and a robot.

Dick Basnek demonstrated Photoshop's features for photographs with blemishes and retouching imperfections.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

— by Pamela Harrison, Secretary

General Meeting Notice

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

Address:
4223 Emerald Street
Torrance, CA

Time:
7:30 P.M.

GS-BUG INC.
P.O. Box 6950
Torrance, CA 90504-6950
Phone: (310) 373-3989

GS-BUG On The Net
Web: http://gsbug.apcup.org

The Bug Report

The Greater South Bay PC Users Group
P.O. Box 6950
Torrance, CA 90504-6950