

# Bits & Bytes

A Newsletter from the Gold Country Computer Learning Center

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## Profile.....

### *Sammie Grib – The Keeper of the Names*

Sammie Grib is a behind-the-scenes Learning Center power. As a member of the Council's Administration Committee and as database manager, she is responsible for maintaining a daily up-to-date listing of students, teachers, coaches, Council members, other volunteers, and those who have attended seminars and user group meetings—virtually everyone who is, or has been, involved in our program—together with all relevant contact information. Without this important database, it would not be possible for us to keep track of and communicate with all the people who are important to the Learning Center. This is vital information and Sammie takes her responsibility very seriously.

“The list is coded so I can produce any kind of report that's needed,” she said in answer to my question. “I use Microsoft Works and there are about 1550 names right now. I update the list almost every day as I get information from Carol Kuhwarth on students, Karen Pfanenstiel on volunteers, Joan Gootherts on seminar and user group attendance, and anyone else who has relevant data that needs to be recorded. I record new data as well as updated information, of course.” The only person who can change this database is Sammie and the file it is always carefully protected against hard disk failure.

Changing focus, I asked Sammie to tell me about her personal life. “Well,” she responded, “I was born and raised in Denver, was there through high school, and then went to the University of Colorado in Boulder. I didn't graduate but instead moved back to Denver and I decorated windows for Denver Dry Goods. That was when a girl friend and I decided to save our money and move to San Francisco.”

And that's just what they did. They were both 20. They got jobs and stayed there for three years. “I moved back to Denver because my mother became ill. This was 1964. In San Francisco, I had worked for Wells Fargo, so I got another banking job when I returned to Denver.”

1966 brought a seminal change to Sammie's life. “I was introduced to Bob,” she said simply. “My one and only,” she added proudly.



At that time, Sammie was still in Denver and Bob lived in California. “It was a blind date,” she told me, “but it worked. We got married in Denver in 1967 and then we moved to Fresno where Bob finished school at what was then known as Fresno State.” Bob became a CPA and a year later the happy couple moved to Salinas.



In Salinas, Sammie resumed her banking work but soon decided to return to school and become a nurse. She graduated from Hartnell College as an R.N. "It was a lot of work....one of the most difficult things I'd ever done," she said. Sammie worked in Salinas hospitals until 1977, "and then we adopted our first child, Frank." Now 28 years old, Frank lives in Flagstaff.

"When Frank was five months old, we moved to Ukiah. Bob got a job with a lumber company but it didn't work out, so we lived there less than a year. Then Bob was offered a partnership in a CPA firm in San Anselmo and that brought us to Marin County. We lived in Novato and Bob worked in San Anselmo." Sammie worked as a nurse for a number of years and also helped Bob in his practice.

Six years after Sammie and Bob adopted Frank, they adopted a girl, Allison. They stayed in Marin County over 20 years, and like so many others, they decided they wanted to retire in the Grass Valley/Nevada City area. "One visit and we just thought it was so beautiful," Sammie said enthusiastically.

In September of 2000, they bought a ranch in the Alta Sierra area. "It took one day," she said with a chuckle. "Horses, a teenager, and various cats and dogs," she added.

"We lived there for three years, but when Allison left home, we sold the ranch and bought a house in the same area."

"Alison is now 23 and has given us a grandson, who is a year old now. We're active in The Unitarian Universalist Community," Sammie added. Bob still has a tax practice and Sammie still helps with that.

I asked how Sammie got hooked up with the Learning Center. "I've always been fascinated with computers," she answered, "so when I got here I signed up with RSVP. They referred me to the library that has a program to help teach people about the Internet. Guess who I met at the library? Mitch!" And, as they say, the rest is history.

Sammie is also a coach. "I enjoy working with the students and I like watching them learn. It's great to see when the light bulb finally goes on. And it's also amazing to see seniors making contact with their grandchildren through computers." Sammie has a particular interest in coaching text processing and graphics classes.

While it's true that Sammie has a public persona as a coach, her hidden--less public persona as database manager--is no less important to the mission of the Learning Center. Kudos to Sammie for being a good

citizen and a valuable member of the Learning Center team!

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## Microsoft's New Windows Version

....Should you buy a new computer now, or wait.

By Dick Mooney

Microsoft is coming out with a new version of Windows. It's called "Vista" but it won't be available until around January 2007. For those presently considering purchasing a new PC, this raises interesting questions. Should I go ahead and buy and convert from Windows XP to Windows Vista later, or should I wait for the release of Windows Vista and then buy a new machine?

For the record, Microsoft promises all kinds of new goodies for Vista. Rather than try to list them here, I'll refer you to:

<http://www.microsoft.com/Windowsvista/>

Microsoft says that, if you want to replace your PC now, there's no reason to wait. Indeed, if you buy a new PC now it should come with a sticker that says that the machine is "Windows Vista Capable," which means that you can upgrade from XP to Vista after it's released.

This seems to make the decision simple. But as Gilbert and Sullivan observed, "Things are seldom what they seem," and that might prove to be true in this case. For example, there will be several versions of Vista from "Home Basic" to "Ultimate." To take full advantage of the best Vista goodies you will need a high-end PC. All this is explained by Wall Street Journal's Walt Mossberg here:

<http://ptech.wsj.com/archive/ptech-20060413.html>

There are several alternatives to consider; 1) buy now and upgrade after Vista is released, 2) buy now and stick with the XP version, or 3) buy after January with Vista installed. This is a strategic decision that is not quite a slam-dunk.

1. The "buy now and upgrade" school of thought says that you will enjoy the present XP version until Vista is available and that the upgrade will be relatively inexpensive to buy and easy to install. (Make sure the new machine you buy has the sticker mentioned earlier)
2. The "buy now and stick with Windows XP" school of thought says that Vista will not have the "killer features" that will compel users to dump their tried and true XP OS. Better to stick with what you know works, they say. After all, Microsoft stuck with Win



98 for eight years. Conventional wisdom is that they will stick with XP for a long time also.

3. The “wait until Vista is released and buy then” school of thought says that the introduction of any new software comes with glitches and with incompatibilities with currently installed applications. These are eventually fixed, true enough, but the process can be lengthy and painful.

The purpose of this article is not to advocate any particular strategy but to suggest a framework for making a strategic decision. The framework I suggest rests on two factors: 1) the urgency to replace your machine and 2) your assessment of risk involved in the three alternatives mentioned earlier.

The urgency to replace your machine – This isn’t very complicated. The highest level of urgency is if your machine has died and you simply have to replace it now. The lowest level of urgency is that you’d just like to have a more current machine. You can figure it out. It isn’t rocket science.

The assessment of risk model – This is more complicated. Unless you just have to replace your PC now, you might want to select what you see as the lowest risk option of the three.

- Buy now and upgrade later – If you buy a “Vista qualified” PC, wait until Vista is released and then upgrade, this may be a relatively low risk option. If you wait to upgrade until Vista has been used for a time to be adequately “debugged”, the risk may be still lower.
- Buy now and stick with XP – This appears to be a low risk option. Some experts say that there is nothing to fear with XP at all. It has always worked well and is far more stable than Windows 98. It will be in the mainstream, especially in business, for several years to come. Of course, eventually, applications developers may stop supporting XP but the pundits say that will be far down the pike.
- Wait until Vista is proven and buy then – This may be the lowest risk option of all if there is no pressing need to buy a new PC soon.

I want to emphasize that this article is not intended to provide advice about what you should do if you are considering replacing your machine, only to provide some background and suggest ways to make your decision. The best thing is to talk to a lot of people who have a proven track record in this arena and make up your own mind. Good luck

## Tech Tips

*Submitted by:* Doug Worthy

### Caring For Your CD Recorder

At some point in time you may be tempted to buy a CD disc cleaner usually sold in computer or discount stores...but, be warned that this is not a good idea!

#### Here’s why:

In the first place there is a self cleaning function in your CD-ROM already. The cleaning discs sold in stores typically use a tiny brush on the underside of the disc, which is supposed to “sweep” dust and dirt from your CD-ROM lens. They can damage your recorder’s read/write lens system. The tiny bristles can be pulled loose and stick to your drive, or the brush can scratch the surface of the laser lens.

I’m not sure why those cleaning discs are even sold, but at least you know what damage could result from their use.

The best way to keep your recorder clean is to keep the tray closed, which most people do anyway. Remember that the printed side is always up when placing a CD in this tray. Be sure it’s seated properly before closing the tray.

If you have a problem where the CD will not eject, you can usually solve this problem by re-booting your computer. If all else fails, there’s often a very small hole on the face of the drive where you can shove a pin to eject it. You could also use one end of a paper clip...unbent of course.

If you happen to have an external recorder, wipe it clean from time to time with a dry, static-free cloth to remove surface dust.

**Have a favorite tip?  
Email it to the editor at  
[publicity1@gcclc.org](mailto:publicity1@gcclc.org)**

## Humor.....

**Customer:** I'm trying to connect to the Internet with your CD, but it just doesn't work. What am I doing wrong?

**Tech support:** OK, you've got the CD in the CD drive, right?

**Customer:** Yeah....

**Tech support:** And what sort of computer are you using?

**Customer:** Computer? Oh no, I haven't got a computer. It's in the CD player and all I get is weird noises. Listen.....

**Tech support:** Aaaarrrrggggghhhh!!!



**Customer:** Hi, this is Celine. I can't get my diskette out.

**Tech support:** Have you tried pushing the button?

**Customer:** Yes, sure, it's really stuck

**Tech support:** That doesn't sound good; I'll make a note.

**Customer:** No .. wait a minute... I hadn't inserted it yet... it's still on my desk... sorry....

**Tech support:** Click on the 'my computer' icon on the left of the screen.

**Customer:** Your left or my left?

**Tech support:** Good day. How may I help you?

**Customer:** Hello... I can't print.

**Tech support:** Would you click on "Start" for me and...

**Customer:** Listen pal; don't start getting technical on me! I'm not Bill Gates . . .

**Customer:** Hi, good afternoon, this is Martha, I can't print. Every time I try, it says 'Can't find printer'. I've even lifted the printer and placed it in front of the monitor, but the computer still says he can't find it...

**Customer:** Yes, there's another one here. Ah...that one does work!

**Tech support:** Your password is the small letter a, as in apple, a capital letter V as in Victor, the number 7.

**Customer:** Is that 7 in capital letters?

**Tech support:** What antivirus program do you use?

**Customer:** Netscape.

**Tech support:** That's not an antivirus program.

**Customer:** Oh, sorry...Internet Explorer.

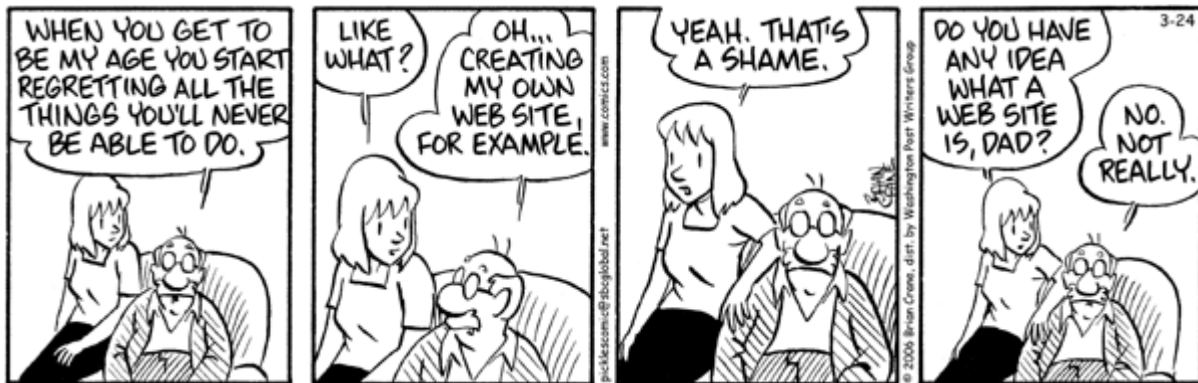
**Customer:** I have a huge problem. A friend has placed a screensaver on my computer, but every time I move the mouse, it disappears.

**Tech support:** How may I help you?

**Customer:** I'm writing my first e-mail.

**Tech support:** OK, and what seems to be the problem?

**Customer:** Well, I have the letter 'a' in the address, but how do I get the circle around it?



**Customer:** My keyboard is not working anymore.

**Tech support:** Are you sure it's plugged into the computer?

**Customer:** No. I can't get behind the computer.

**Tech support:** Pick up your keyboard and walk ten paces back.

**Customer:** OK

**Tech support:** Did the keyboard come with you?

**Customer:** Yes

**Tech support:** That means the keyboard is not plugged in. Is there another keyboard?

## Avoid Home Business Scams

By Scott Oliver

Many websites claim to offer home business opportunities. Some people do make money at home through online jobs, but many of these so-called opportunities are scams. How do you know the difference? Here are some tips for avoiding home business scams.

First, use some common sense. If you are looking because you're short on funds, it can be easy to talk yourself into believing the promises you will read online. Try to look at the offers objectively. Many scams try to convince you that you will become wealthy with little effort, and you might even see on the website that this is



some "secret" for making money that is just now being revealed. Much later they reveal the cost for learning the secret. Before buying this kind of information, take a moment to wonder why it's being sold. If it's really that effective, the person selling it should be wealthy and not need to sell anything.

Second, don't get involved in a pyramid scheme. These are programs that pay you to recruit but don't really have a product to sell. You make money by getting other people to join the system. This only works for those who start the pyramid scheme, and is illegal in several states. Note

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## Photo of the Month



This is a wonderful photo from Bob Reeves. He said, "In March, Renee and I decided to take a few days off from our winter vacation in Florida and visit the Keys. The Florida Keys are an archipelago--a string of about 1700 islands. One of our many stops was the Bahia Honda Key. That means Deep Bay in Spanish. The Key is uninhabited, taken up entirely by the 500 acre park called Bahia Honda. The park has many campsites and is loaded with uncrowded beaches. You can swim in the Gulf in the morning and in the Atlantic Ocean in the afternoon. Just watch out for the coral- it'll cut your feet to ribbons!"

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## Notes from the Web Wizard

By Roger Thornburn

You may not have noticed, but I've recently made a number of useful (I hope) improvements to our website. Most of them have made the website faster to access and easier to read using a fixed width page.

I've also had some people tell me they had difficulty printing this newsletter (directly from their email program) as well as pages from our web site. So I've made this email Newsletter, and all pages on the website automatically "Printer Friendly". What does this mean? If you want to print our Newsletter, the Calendar of Classes, or the Class Schedule, etc. just use the print

command on your browser or email program, and only the text in the main body of the web page will be printed in black on a white background.

### How to Print from your Browser

*Set Margins:* For most browsers, on the Menu Bar click File, then click Page Set Up. Then, for Microsoft Internet Explorer - there is a section labeled Margins, and for Firefox and Netscape browsers, click the Margins & Header/Footer tab. For all browsers, type ".75" for the top and bottom margins and ".5" for the left and right margins.

*Print Preview:* On the Menu Bar, click File, then click Print Preview. You will see the web page as it will be



printed. Notice that the logo and all navigation is removed and all the text is now black on a plain, non-colored background.

*Print:* On the Menu Bar, click File, then click Print.

Finally, for those of you who wanted to, but were unable to attend a User Group or Seminar, you can now download the handouts from our website. Go to the Seminar Page and you will find a link to download either the presentation or handout used.

## May Events

### May User Group meeting.....

**Thursday, May 18 (9:00 – 11:00)**  
**"Blogging"**

#### Presented by Russ Steele

A blog is a contraction of Web log. Russ will explain blogs and will describe the various kinds of blogs that exist. He will explain in detail how you can be a blogger—how to publish your own blog.

User Group meetings are open to everyone. There is no fee, but there is a suggested donation of \$1.

### May Seminar.....

**Wednesday, May 24 (1:00 - 4:00)**  
**" Buying and Selling on E-bay "**

#### Presented by Mitch Bain

Mitch will cover how to research a product, how to determine the best price, how to find a reputable vendor (an authorized distributor versus a low-ball grey market seller), what about extra charges (shipping and tax), what about security when divulging your credit card number, warranty, return policy, tips on how to successfully market your sale items by uploading an attractive info page with photos of sale items, and how to understand the cost of transactions, packaging for shipment, and monetary exchange using Pay Pal.

Seminar fees are \$10, single and \$15, double. (\$5 for GCCLC volunteers.)

### May Workshop.....

**Wednesday, May 31 (2:00-4:00)**  
**"Burning CD's in Windows XP"**

#### Presenter to be named

A hands-on single two-hour class, this student workshop is offered to help clarify the burning procedure. Burning CD's is easy when you have a grasp of the technique and know how to use the right tools. Photographs, music, documents--you name it. Learning Center volunteers may take this class if there is space after student registration. We can accommodate a few laptops that meet the basic requirements. (Laptops must have Windows XP and should have a CD burner. If you don't have a CD burner for your laptop, you can observe and take notes.)

**\$10. fee. Advance registration required. For information and registration call Joan @ 273-6955**

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## General Information and Contacts

Website – [www.gcclc.org](http://www.gcclc.org)

Phone number for general information - 273-0497

For seminar and user group information and sign-up:

Call Joan at 273-6955 or,  
Email [seminar1@gcclc.org](mailto:seminar1@gcclc.org)  
The Community Center at 273-4961 can also sign-up you up for seminars.

For course registration:

Call Carol at 273-3029 or,  
Email [admin1@gcclc.org](mailto:admin1@gcclc.org)  
You can also register online at our Website.

For volunteer information:

Call Karen at 470-0270 or,  
Email [ed2@gcclc.org](mailto:ed2@gcclc.org)  
You can also volunteer online at our Website.

For free computer labs, sign up online at  
[www.gcclc.org/cgi-bin/labcal.pl](http://www.gcclc.org/cgi-bin/labcal.pl)

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