

safe surfing



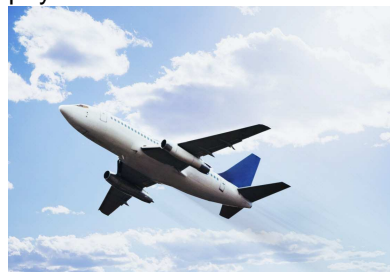
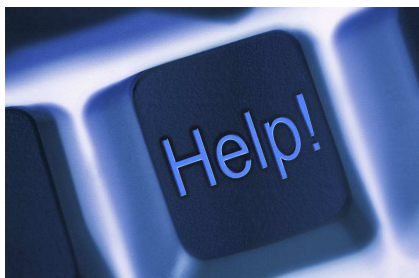
ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

- HANDY HINTS
- BUY AN EXTENDED WARRANTY?
- COUNTERFEIT CONTROL
- WEB SITE FINDS
- I'M JUST SAYIN'

Handy Hints

Reserve Two Airline Seats

I'm not absolutely positive this will work with any airline, let alone Continental, but the hint comes from someone my wife met on a flight recently. It sounds far-fetched and very hard to believe, but it is technically possible. The fellow who sat next to her last week with an empty seat in between them on a full-to-capacity Continental flight said this: he simply selects and pays for his seat online and then backs up to the seat



selection page a second time to change his seat selection. That apparently confuses the system and reserves two seats for him while only charging him for one. Again, as unbelievable

as it sounds, I suspect that it may be true. It's certainly worth a try if you're really serious about having lots of space between you and your seatmates. It may be a little weak in the integrity department for me to suggest this, but I found it fascinating from the standpoint of the apparent bug in Continental's (and maybe other airlines') system.

AVG Upgrade Nag

Have you noticed you're getting frequent pop-ups asking if you'd like to upgrade to AVG's paid version? If so, just "X" out (close the box) and don't worry about it. In about a week the nag will quit automatically. Grisoft just thought the time might be right to advertise their paid version for awhile and the ad campaign should end in a short time (by August 15th). So



do NOT make the mistake of either accepting the upgrade or uninstalling AVG. Just wait out the ad campaign..

Nix on the Zicam!

If you haven't heard, all zinc-containing Zicam products have been recalled. Apparently the zinc impairs sense of smell.



Mosquito Disappearing Act

Here's one I can't believe I never thought of myself: use a vacuum cleaner to get rid of that pesky mosquito that made it inside the house! A little handheld will do nicely. (And cats just LOVE them!)

It's a wrap!

Ever wonder why the Post Office and other shipping services offer free boxes for their customers? Did you think it was just to be nice and helpful? Well in some cases that's possibly true (e.g., USPS flat-rate boxes), but generally it adds weight that may not be necessary. If you wrap your packages instead of box them you save weight. And, for a small business person, especially today, that can be a big deal over time. "But wrapping paper costs money" you say?! Yes, but not as much as you may think. Another hint from my smart and frugal wife: buy the brown gift wrap always available at the



Dollar Tree. It will have cute gold stars or odd-colored polka dots on one side, but inside out it's the perfect plain brown paper wrapping. At a buck for 10 feet by 30 inches, it beats a second box if you have something that's already in its own box and suitable for wrapping.



And while I'm touting the Dollar Tree, a recent article I read warns about being careful buying there. Some things are excellent deals, but some are horrible. Be careful of the packaging.

Some items will be far less expensive (albeit in larger quantity) from places like Walmart, Costco, etc. Other items may not be fresh enough to retain their flavor or may be discontinued items that have been sitting around in a warehouse for a long time. One thing I always used to buy there, batteries, are admittedly inferior either because they're stale or poorly manufactured. And I can get even a better deal by buying a larger quantity from one of those discount or club stores. Again, the Dollar Tree (and the 99 Cent Only Stores) do offer some great values, but you have to be an informed shopper.

Caller ID

Did you know that some telephones have audible caller ID nowadays? Panasonic offers a few models that do that and they are pretty highly rated. It's a great feature. Even better, though, are the televisions you can now get that will identify the caller on the screen. Some TVs have this functionality built in and there are add-on boxes and services that can be purchased for TVs that don't have the capability.

Q-Tip Hiccup Cure

Sometime, not always, this works to stop the hiccups: touch the tip of your uvula. It reportedly interrupts the spasm of your diaphragm that occurs in hiccups.



Toothpaste Repair of Scratched CDs

Use a cotton ball and a small amount of nonabrasive white toothpaste starting at the middle of a scratched CD and move outward. Rinse off with a little water and a clean cotton ball. Works on the sharp edges of shallow scratches, the usual problem, but not on deeper ones.



Toothpaste and Pimples

During my research into the hint above, I accidentally found a whole bunch of folks recommending the use of toothpaste to dry up pimples overnight. But the really useful hint here is "Don't bother." Yes, toothpaste may dry up your zits, but so will any topical anti-acne application, and the latter has medication designed to combat bacteria that causes acne and to limit the potential for skin irritation. Frankly, the best treatment

I've ever found, after a life-long battle with pimples (now, fortunately only occasional, but all the way through my 40s or so I was plagued by them) has been a product called Seban from Cooper Laboratories. This cheap, simple little treatment is predominately alcohol, but it works miraculously (whereas my experiences with raw Isopropyl alcohol did not)! The most distinctive thing I can say about Seban is that, if used early enough, pimples actually reverse course and go away, not just dry up to a removable form. Now that's what I'm talkin' about!



Nope, I have no stock in their company:
www.cooperlabs.com/Seban/

Horny Goat Weed

Now here's an alternative herbal treatment that the purpose of which you might even guess from it's name: it's supposed to be an alternative to Viagra. The longer we men live the more likely we will develop (or at least care about) problems like erectile dysfunction. Me? Nah, not me! Although I have been accused of being a horny goat once or twice, otherwise I'm perfect!. (Good thing my wife doesn't read these newsletters...)

Falling TVs

This may sound crazy, but injuries from falling TVs are reported by the *Center for Injury Research and Policy* to be on the increase among children under ten. Apparently the larger recent (but non-flat panel) TVs are more prone to tipping, especially when kids push or pull them or climb around them. I raise this issue primarily because this very thing happened to one of my young loved ones long ago and she was not climbing, pushing or pulling. She simply opened the wrong drawer of a poorly balanced dresser which was holding a heavy and tip-prone television. Thankfully she wasn't hurt, but it was a scary near-miss. Experts recommend either strapping the TV to a stable stand or mounting it on a wall.



Unfamiliar Cell Phone Calls

Do not return a cell phone call from an unfamiliar number. Scammers are reportedly calling US numbers and hanging up after a couple of rings, expecting you to return the call that could be to a familiar sounding but distant area code like 649



(the Turks and Caicos Islands). The scam results in a call to an adult entertainment chat line, or something similar, and extensive international and chat-line charges.

Buy an Extended Warranty?

The answer is usually no, because you'll probably pay more than the cost of any likely repairs...probably. But here are the statistics, right out of that great magazine, **Consumer Reports**. These repair rates give you the likelihood of the products requiring a repair within three to four years:

Product	Rate of Repair
Laptops	43%
Side by Side Refers w/Icemaker Dispenser	37%
Riding Mowers	32%
Desktop PCs	31%
Lawn Tractors	31%
Self-Propelled Mowers	28%
Top Loading Washing Machines	22%
Gas Ranges	20%
Refers w/Top/Bottom Freezers, Icemakers	20%
Clothes Dryers	15%
Vacuum Cleaners	13%
Digital Camcorders	13%
Digital Cameras	10%
Televisions	6-8%

There are times when an extended warranty is a good idea, but that's mostly limited to when you're buying a returned or used product (e.g. from Stupid Prices or another outlet selling returns and offering warranties) or when there is a special, low-priced promotion for extended warranties.

Credit Card Insurance

Similarly, most experts recommend against those credit card "protection plans" that promise to pay off your credit card debt if you lose your job, become disabled or die. There are too many loopholes and the costs are usually too high. Better alternatives are to build an emergency fund or by extra life insurance (www.novadebt.org).

Counterfeit Control

In my small home hobby/business I have been a victim of counterfeit cashiers checks, personal checks and money orders, but I have not run into counterfeit currency yet. I just bought a little marking pen on Ebay that (supposedly) easily



identifies counterfeit bills. I've used it a few times and it is easy to place the "X" on the proper spot, but, since it hasn't identified any counterfeits yet, I don't have any real proof that it works. It was certainly cheap enough though, so it seems like good insurance to me.

The \$100 bill was once the most commonly counterfeited bill. But I hear \$10, \$20s and \$50s are increasingly common. Is it likely I'll be testing every \$10 and \$20 I get from now on? Probably not. But here, courtesy of **Bottom Line Personal**, are some tips on how to verify that the new bills you get are valid US currency:

Security Threads

Fine vertical threads to the left (on \$20s and \$100s) and to the right (on \$10s and \$50s) of the portrait portraits "USA" and the bills' denomination.

Transparent Portraits

To the right of the main portraits are faint, transparent images of the same portrait.

Torch, Eagle and Star Symbols

To the right of the portrait you will find a small metallic image of the Statue of Liberty torch (\$10s), the eagle (\$20s) or a star (\$50s). The \$100 bill does not have one of these images.

Color Changing

The number at the bottom right changes color from green to black or copper when you tilt the bill.

Web Site Finds

Mosquito Watch

Just visit this site to see if your area is likely to be troubled by those useless insects in the next few days:



www.weather.com/activities/homeandgarden/home/mosquito

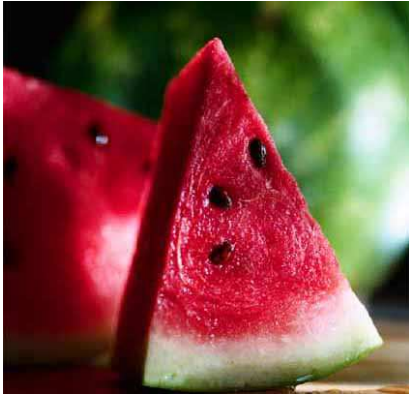
Clunker Cash

The program apparently ran out of money once, but now it looks like the Senate has agreed to rescue the plan by putting \$2 billion more up for a vote. This bailout is supposed to help the car companies, consumers, the environment and the economy simultaneously. Political and philosophical opinions aside, anyone with a qualifying car would be crazy not to take advantage of the deal. Visit www.cars.gov for details.



Sales Tax Free Holiday

Some states are offering to waive the sales tax on some items in anticipation of school starting on a day soon. To find out when and if your state will be doing that, go to www.tacadmin.org/fta/rate/ales_holiday.html



National Watermelon Day
No, REALLY! It was August 3rd and celebrated watermelon's many health benefits: easy hydration, high fiber, and good source for potassium and the antioxidant lycopene. Check out www.watermelon.org.

National Park Admission

On August 15 and 16 many national parks and monuments are offering free admission. Consult www.nps/findapark/feefreeparksbystate.htm.

Doggie Questions

That is, questions YOU have about caring for them of course. Many of these are answered at



DOGS

Don't leave home without them...really, don't.

www.dogchannel.com. For example, a recent article covers a number of things that are tasty but potentially lethal to dogs: grapes, raisins, Xylitol (a sugar substitute in many sugar-free products), macadamia nuts, chocolate, cocoa mulch (mulch from the hulls of cocoa beans) and certain glues (like Elmer's Probond and Gorilla Glue)

Nursing Home Ratings

Here's some help from the government making a very difficult decision. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services rates some 15,800 nursing homes that accept Medicare and Medicaid. Find ratings for quality, the percentage of residents with bed sores after 90 days, the number whose mobility decreased and those who received the recommended care. Consult



www.medicare.gov. Also, the site suggests other alternatives available in the community.

Easy Demo Program

This small, free program is nifty for making tiny video clips of your screen activity that you can then use to



demonstrate some software application or other process for friends and relatives (or clients) who need that little extra help. And you can add audio to enhance the instruction. Yes, it's free AND it saves a personal visit. www.snapfiles.com/get/screen2exe.html

I'm Just Sayin'

Let me know what topics you'd like to hear about please. There's always a lot of material available, but I'd like to make the newsletter useful to you, so I need to hear what you'd like to hear about. For example, Windows 7 is a big deal right now and I could discuss that new operating system soon. The iPhone and similar SmartPhones are also hot topics, as are Blu-Ray players and recorders. Any requests?



Barry Codron, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, lives with his wife and doggie, near his children and grandchildren and their doggies, in the Sacramento area. He enjoys writing and consulting in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments, ideas or corrections at barry.mart@sbcglobal.net.