

Bits & Bytes

A Newsletter from the Gold Country Computer Learning Center

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Profile.....

Karen Pfanenstiel - The Long Road To Happiness

Karen was raised in San Carlos. "I grew up in a really sheltered environment," she told me. "My parents married late in life and were actually old enough to be my grandparents. My father was an emigrant from Sweden and my mother was born in this country, but grew up speaking German. Neither one had good educational opportunities but they were the best parents anyone could have asked for. They always protected me, they never told me anything but the truth, and they helped me get the education they had not been able to have for themselves.

"I loved school and I loved learning things. I did very well in high school and then I spent two years at UC Santa Barbara." But Karen was not a "beach person" so she transferred to UC Berkeley for her junior year. That's when things started to go wrong.

"I met, dated, and fell in love with a charming man from India. That was in 1966. I ended up running away with him and marrying him before the fall semester started," she said. Karen admits, in retrospect, that she was too innocent really to understand what she was doing—but she did it nevertheless. He turned out to be an abusive husband. "I enjoyed the travel—enjoyed seeing the Punjab province where he came from—and we quickly had three children together, but being married to him became increasingly painful." Periodically, she wanted to leave

the marriage but did not because she feared her sons would be abducted to India and she feared for her own safety.

"In 1981, she finally got the courage to escape. "My mother was still living and I took the kids and went back to my childhood home in San Carlos," she continued. But it wasn't over. There followed an extended period of harassment and intimidation. "I was eventually successful in getting a divorce and I won an extended custody battle for my children. Finally, my husband decided to leave me alone—thankfully. And then I set about getting on with my life.

"Since my husband had not 'permitted' me to work, I had few marketable skills and no work history. But my divorce lawyer told me that his office had an opening for a legal secretary and asked if I would like to apply. I did, and I got the job. With the help of another employee who



mentored me and helped me over the rough spots, I ended up having a very successful career and enjoying the work very much."

By the time Karen got on her feet and thought about getting a place of her own, it was obvious that her mother



was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Karen and her children returned the love and care her mother had shown them in their time of need, and cared for her mother in her own home, until her death in 1986.

Because of this symbiotic relationship, her sons were able to attend excellent schools in San Carlos and they did very well. Eventually, all three graduated from college. They are in their mid-30s now, with professional careers. "I'm proud that they have done so well," Karen said.

"I was a single mom for nine years. Then I met my second husband in San Carlos and we married in 1990. I was still working as a legal secretary then, but in 1996 I had a terrible fall and injured my upper body. The injury prevented me from using my hands for long periods so I had to retire. I heard some place that, if God gave you lemons the best thing you could do is make lemonade, so I tried to make lemonade with this setback and said to my husband, 'Why don't we move to the foothills?' Naturally, I had Grass Valley in mind." And she and her husband did move here in November of 1997. Now, Karen lives among the trees, enjoys gardening, their six rescued cats, and the wildlife that wanders onto her property.

After she arrived here, she started volunteering for Animal Save. In 2001, a friend talked to her about Senior.net. She contacted Mitch Bain and ended up volunteering as a coach. She has been a coach ever since, but in addition she is now the co-chair of the Learning Center's education committee.

"My job for the Learning Center is something I can do from home a little at a time as I am physically able," Karen says. As Co-Chair of the education committee she coordinates the instructors' and coaches' work. Three times a year, as the courses change, she is confronted with the challenge of assigning people to cover instructor and coach positions. She also gets involved in assigning fill-ins when coaches or instructors can't show up for a particular class.

Karen Pfanenstiel is a gem! She is one of the reasons the Learning Center works so well. We are lucky to have her.

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Happy New Year!

Thanks to Jerry Wilson for this article

That is a common greeting for at least the first couple of weeks of each new year. But the day celebrated as New Year's Day in modern America was not always January 1.

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical or agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Babylonian new year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it's safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.



The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

To set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But calendar tampering continued until 46 BC when Julius Caesar established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year, but to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the beginning of the new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as pagan. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations. New Years is still observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision by some denominations.



During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to secular celebration of the new year. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

Other traditions of the season include the making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians.

The Tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886. In that year, members of Pasadena's Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California. Although the Rose Bowl football game was first played as a part of the Tournament of Roses in 1902, it was replaced by Roman chariot races the following year. In 1916, the football game returned as the sports centerpiece of the festival.

The song, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the stroke of midnight on New Years Eve in almost every English-speaking country in the world. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700's, it was first published in 1796 after Burns' death. Early variations of the song were sung prior to 1700 and inspired Burns to produce the modern rendition. An old Scotch tune, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days."

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January Events

January User Group meeting.....

Thursday, January 19 (9:00-11:00)

"You've been blessed with a new camera ... now what do you do with it?"

Presented by Mitch Bain

How does a digital camera differ from a film camera? How do I transfer the pictures to my computer? What software should I use? How do I print the pictures? During the first hour Mitch will answer these questions and take all the other questions time will allow

In the second hour we will have a panel of techies aboard to answer your general computer-related questions and concerns. We welcome your ideas as well.

January Seminar.....

Wednesday, January 25 (1:00-4:00)

"Clean the Junk from your computer - Part 2"

Presented by Roger Thornburn

Garbage, garbage everywhere! If your computer has slowed down to a walk due to an overload of useless downloads and messages, this seminar is a must. Roger will revisit and expand the initial presentation he did several months ago. Many of you have asked for a repeat, so here it is.

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

Tech Tips

Submitted by: Don Tweedie

1. Would you rather use the keyboard to open the Start menu? Press the Windows logo key located on the bottom row of your keyboard. Once it's open, use the arrow keys and then press Enter on the highlighted command. No Windows key? No problem, just press the Ctrl and Esc keys at the same time.
2. Need more real estate on your Internet Explorer screen? Press the F11 key to temporarily shrink the task and tool bars. Press again to bring them back.
3. Having trouble placing the mouse pointer in the little box at the right end of the title bar to maximize/restore down a window? Don't try. Just double click the title bar.

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The following is a good Website for Windows tricks. The links are good too. My thanks to *Dick Thompson* for this lead.

http://www.ehow.com/how_8141_master-timesaving-windows.html

**Have a favorite tip?
Email it to the editor at
publicity1@goldcountrycenter.org**

Be Cautious About Playing Music CDs On Your Computer

In an attempt to stop people from making copies of their music CDs, Sony recently began adding a code to some of their releases to prevent this. The problem is that this code was automatically transferred to the user's hard disk and created a "back door," sometimes referred to as a "Trojan Horse," that would enable outsiders to gain access to everything on that hard disk.

While copy protection is an admirable goal for music producers to strive for, Sony's attempt created a firestorm



of protest. After several lawsuits were filed, Sony backed off, issued recall notices for the affected CDs, and said that they would abandon that method of copyright protection.

Copy protection is an emerging technology. Most music CD producers are concerned about people copying their material and many are trying to add things to their disks to prevent it. To be completely safe in the future, you should avoid playing newly purchased music CDs on your computer. You can also Google “music CD Trojan horse” from time to time and keep up to date on the latest information.

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Photo of the month

Submitted by Bob Reeves

Northern California, as beautiful as it is, gets cold and soggy a few months each year. Renee and I try to spend



some of that time in Florida. Florida, though, is flat and boring. You soon find yourself longing just for a freeway overpass to see off into the distance. Last year to add a little variety we visited Busch Gardens just outside of Tampa. It's a beautiful garden with lush tropical growth, lots of animals, and birds of every variety. Here are a few shots of flamingoes, macaws– the largest member of the parrot family–and peacocks. We hope you enjoy them.

Send your photos (minimum size 600 x 600 pixels) to the editor <publicity1@gcclc.org>, and include a brief explanation of your photo.

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New Hands-On Workshops will be given a trial run.

We want to try a new learning experience that we are calling a hands-on workshop. Sometime in January or February we will take the time normally set aside for a lab and conduct a two-hour seminar. This seminar will be in addition to and will be similar to the monthly seminars we've been presenting, but in the hands-on workshop seminar, those attending will sit at the computers and will actually practice the material being presented by the workshop leader. If this trial workshop is as successful as we think it will be, we'll be presenting many more workshops in the future. Stay tuned for the announcement of date and subject.

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General Information and Contacts

Website – 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
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
You can also register online at our Website.

For volunteer information:

Call Karen at 470-0270 or,
Email 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

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“Bits & Bytes is published on the first of each month by the Gold Country Computer Learning Center, Dick Mooney, Editor. If you have news or an announcement you would like to see included, please send it to the Editor at publicity1@gcclc.org or 478-0156.”

