Club Calendar

for

March 08

Mar 08

6...   SLMUG General Meeting 7:30 PM
San Leandro High School
Room 507 (Shop 7 Graphics Lab)
2200 Bancroft Ave.
San Leandro (Info: 510 828-9314)
SLMUG Board Meeting. Normally
held after the general meeting at a
nearby eating establishment.

20...   SLMUG Mac SIG
The Mac SIG meets on the third
Thursday in Room 507, the Shop 7
Graphics Lab. Items for discussion
are brought by you, the attendees.
Discussions are specific to your
problems and requests.
(Info: 510 828-9314)

Apr 2008

1...   SLMUG General Meeting 7:30 PM
San Leandro High School
Room 507 (Shop 7 Graphics Lab)
2200 Bancroft Ave.
San Leandro (Info: 510 828-9314)

Hurrah, we're back on schedule

It has been a rather hectic couple of months but I think we should be back on our normal schedule of meetings. Let's be optimistic.

Macworld has come and gone. Whoopee, lots of people. More crowded and more exhibitors than recent years. A number of new products were on display along with the world's smallest and thinest Mac laptop ever. The production schedule is barely able to keep up with the demand. There are no sales numbers released yet. The stock is down about 70 points and this may be a good buying oportunity.

New laptops are out in force. Three refreshes so far in the laptop line which coincides with the Intel releases. Slight speed bumps but nothing really new. The next refresh is rumored to be in June. We shall see. I must admit, I do like my "six month old" MacBook Pro. It is solid and fast and does what I ask of it.

Leopard is getting more reliable but is still somewhat problematic. Could be operator errors. There are still some outstanding issues that are yet unfulfilled. Rome wasn't built in a day; neither was OS X 10.5. Complain as we may, it is still better than Vista.

The lab is up and running with 10.4.11 on all machines. It is reportedly stable and trouble free.

That's about it for now...

iPhone – How do I love thee?
By Bob Shayler

We have three iPhones in our family, all obtained about three months ago and at the same time from the Apple store in Stoneridge shopping center in Pleasanton. Pamela uses her iPhone mostly for voice calls, Darin for texting, and I for a number of purposes described below.

Our monthly bill for all three phones including unlimited texting for Darin is about $170 per month. This is $38 more than for the Verizon phones we had before, but Verizon did not provide unlimited Internet access. Had I had that feature with Verizon, that bill would have gone up about $50 per phone per month. So, for as similar a feature set as is possible with Verizon, Verizon is more expensive. Some features are just not possible with Verizon such as synching my OS X Address Book, Calendar and bookmarks in Safari (never mind, I couldn't do Internet with Verizon anyway).

Why did we move to the iPhones? Simply put, it was lust: we wanted them. Pamela says she never could figure out how to use the Verizon phone's features but the iPhone was "really easy." Darin wanted one because they are "cool." I wanted one because I wanted to sync my calendars and address book to my phone. As with most Apple products they work as advertised and given that we have an all-Mac household, there was no learning curve at all. The iPhone even got me to start using the Mail program on my Mac at home, as Mail was so easy on the iPhone.

I especially like four of my iPhone's features: Weather, Calendar, Maps and its ability to use a wifi network for Internet access. I always like to check the weather each day to see what is ahead that week. The Weather button does that and only that, no hourly details and for one location only. I have lost my ability to remember appointments so the Calendar keeps me from embarrassment. I use Maps not to find how to get somewhere (my car's GPS is much better for that) but to check the live traffic conditions that the Map displays (my car's GPS does not include those). I have saved myself travel time by avoiding traffic issues. Radio traffic reports are too hit and miss and too infrequent to be of much help when I am already on the road. And when I do use the iPhone for Internet access, it is very helpful to be able to use a local wifi network for speed.

So what do I not like about the iPhone? The touch pad is somewhat unpredictable, sometimes non-responsive to a normal touch and sometimes responding too quickly to a slight brush of a finger. This is especially true of the keypad. I find myself having to re-enter keystrokes far more often than on a regular keyboard. Perhaps related, sometimes when touching a phone number to dial, there is no response. The texting screen is not intuitive for me if I need to use a new number rather than on already in the Address Book. This is the only screen that I have this issue with. The battery life with the wifi turned on is quite short, less than 8 hours for me. And finally, the iPhone interferes with other radio devices nearby, causing a crackling sound in my car's radio and my clock radio at home. I realize this is due to the radio communications between the iPhone and the network, but I had no such experience with the Verizon LG phones. The Map feature has a funky GPS-like feature that is supposed to locate you but it is only to within one mile or so; it basically just shows you the location of the AT&T repeater your phone is using. Stevie should be embarrassed that Apple advertised this as a GPS-like feature; it ain't. Finally, the wifi connection appears to be designed to work with either open password-free networks or those that use the better encryption methods; it does not work with the old flying saucer Airports that have passwords enabled.

Now to the hard part and the reason many people may not want to use an iPhone: the AT&T network. It is noisy (static in the background of most voice calls and a lot of warbling that makes speech unitelligible). AT&T's EDGE network is abysmally slow, often unusable for the Safari browser. I see a lot of "Call failed" notices with both making and answering calls. I hardly ever had those failures with Verizon. So far, I have not had a critical call fail for me though. Ironically, it does work inside the Caldecott Tunnel but not very well in the city of San Leandro (which at last check was above ground).

AT&T advertises they "have more bars in more places" and that is very true compared to Verizon but only because AT&T phones will work in Europe whereas most Verizon phones will not. Also, it doesn't make much difference to me if an AT&T phone has five bars but still fails to connect, as I have seen on my iPhone. Would I buy a iPhone again? Yes, it is too cool. But if it gets opened up to networks other than AT&T, I will go there!

Editor's note: It has been said that the iPhone is great for everything -- except making phone calls!

March 6th meeting features...

Wes is already running Leopard on his G4 tower machine. Not exactly problem free, but he will explain things at the meeting. We'll discuss recent Apple happenings and announcements. As usual Ed will have a new C Dom of the month.

San Leandro Macintosh
        User Group
        P.O. Box 4111
San Leandro CA 94579-0111

Main Meeting - Mar 6th