The South Bay Mug

MACINTOSH

Snafu: .Mac to MobileMe

If you read the Macintosh web sites and publications, you know that iPhone 3, the shift from .Mac to MobileMe, and security issues have been dominating the news. You can read about the security issues on page 3. On our web site you will find a button on the left for Favorite Links which includes many of the news sources used by members and researched for this newsletter.

On August 11, James R. Stoup writes about the MobileMe snafu at AppleMatters (http://www.applematters.com/article/mobileme-pushes-back-everything/ where he weighs in with his commentary on why the launch went poorly and what we can expect in the future. This article is used with permission of Stoup and Apple Matters.

MobileMe Pushes Back Everything

I haven't written anything about the ongoing MobileMe mess because when it started I just assumed that Apple would have everything fixed long before it became a huge, festering, embarrassing problem. Well, it has officially become a huge, festering, embarrassing problem. And the longer it continues, the bigger the problem gets.

This latest news of the reorg over at Apple can be looked at in one of two ways. The optimist in me sees this as a genuine attempt on Apple's part to remove incompetent management and replace it with a proven leader. Things will now improve and soon MobileMe will be back on track for an error-free relaunch.

The cynic in me sees things a little differently though. It is his opinion that this is a gesture made entirely for publicity reasons. Apple looked at the situation and realized that something had to be done to make it look like they were trying to fix the problem. Since you can be certain no one is ever going to come out and give the technical reason why they're having problems, the obvious solution is to blame management. "See, it isn't that we underestimated the amount of infrastructure we needed, it's because a manager didn't do his job very well."

This second approach carries with it the implicit notion that this is a problem that can be fixed by putting the "right" person in charge. Thus, this is only a temporary setback, a slight miscalculation that soon will be put to rights. And

maybe that is how this will all play out. I wouldn't bet on it, but you might be willing to believe it.

And now we come to the realization that it's August and this problem still hasn't been resolved. The holiday shopping season is just around the corner and there are rumors of new hardware coming. It could be very bad for Apple if this situation isn't fixed by then.

The first problem it raises is one of resources. The more time, money, and manpower that Apple devotes to fixing MobileMe, the less they will have for the rest of their products. Their second big problem is one of presentation. If Apple announces new products before MobileMe is fixed, then it doesn't look like a smooth sales pitch but rather comes across as a desperate attempt to draw focus away from their other problems. And that is hardly the kind of atmosphere you want if you are Steve Jobs walking up on stage to deliver something new and cool.

This all brings me back to my main point. The longer MobileMe is broken, the more everything gets pushed back. New hardware, new services, new anything. Nothing else can move forward until this problem is fixed. And it doesn't look like it is going to get fixed anytime soon.

Search for New Meeting Room Continues

In last month's newsletter on page 1, you read that we are searching for a new meeting room and the reasons why. Several members are researching possible locations and you can check the Wiki for discussion.

In the meantime, to determine your preferences for a meeting place, Jayne Palmer and Bob Goodman have developed a survey that will be distributed at the August meeting. The survey will also be available electronically at the web site.

Welcome to
South Bay Apple Mac User Group (SBAMUG)

You, your friends and colleagues, are invited to attend our next meeting. Our membership dues are only $35 per year, entitling you to this newsletter each month, plus many more benefits.
If you would like to become a member or get more information on SBAMUG, feel free to check out our web site at:
http://www.sbamug.com.

P. O. Box 432
Redondo Beach, CA
90277-0432

310-644-3315
Email: info@sbamug.com

Meetings are held at the
Redondo Beach Community Center
320 Knob Hill, Redondo Beach
(see map & directions on page 11)

Officers & Volunteers:

President:...............LJ Palmer
Vice President:..........Jim Pernal
Secretary:...............Wayne Inman
Treasurer:...............CW Mitchell
Directors at Large:......Dave Nathanson, George Kiefer, Dorothy Weeks, Louise Polsky, Chuck Mulvey, Jayne Palmer
Membership Director:......CW Mitchell
WebMaster & User Group Ambassador:
........................Bob Brooks
Server Director:.........Dave Nathanson
USPS Liaison:............Don Myers
PD Disk Editor:..........Jim Pernal
Program Director:........George Kiefer
Newsletter Editor:.......Fran Pullara
Raffle Chairman:.........George Griffiths
Raffle Director:.........Chuck Mulvey
RefreshmentCoordinator:..Louise Polsky, Taffy Rath

Membership Report:
(You may notice your name is in larger letters on your card. That is so it can be used as a name tag at the meetings. Your membership cards are in the mail!)

Current Membership - 155

Welcome New Members - Ed Ginins

Thank You Member Renewals - Rose Marie Tashima, Samuel Peters, Wayne Inman, Michael Maiuri, Barbra Hunter-Duffy, Karen Hopkins, Hank Folson, James Pousson, Dorothy Weeks

Remember, if your name is mispelled or your expiration date is wrong, contact cwmitchell@sbamug.com for correction.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

1st Sat. - **SBAMUG Core Group Meeting @ announced locations, 10 a.m. - noon**
1st Thur. - LB Mug @ Emerson School, Palo Verde & Willow, Long Beach, 7 p.m.
1st Sat. - Orange Apple UG, Orange Coast College, Chem Bldg, Costa Mesa, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
3rd Sat. - Adobe Tech Exchange Toyota Bldg. on Gramercy near 190th, 9 a.m. - $10
Last Wed. - **SBAMUG Monthly Meeting**
Last Tues. - WOCMUG @ Emerson School, Palo Verde & Willow, Long Beach, 7 p.m.
Last Sat. - TRW / Northrop Ham Radio & Computer Swap Meet, 7 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Members are invited and encouraged to submit articles and original artwork for publication. Newsletter deadline is the last Wednesday of the month. Articles may be edited to fit in available space. Please send to: redondowriter@sbamug.com

Heads Up on Security Update and the DNS Poison Cache Problem

If you read the Macintosh-related online web pages or publications regularly, there has been a major concern about security in Apple's Security Update 2008-05 pertaining to Tiger and Leopard. SBAMUG President LJ Palmer writes about the problem on the Wiki and describes how you can test to see if you are being affected. Excerpts from this posting are printed here, but you can read the full article and links at: http://wiki.sbamug.com/corewiki/index.php?title=Security_Issues.

In a nutshell, it appears that Apple's last security release is incomplete. They have fixed the BIND code (binding definition documents) that is used by few people not running servers, but the DNS resolver code used by everyone has not been fixed. Admittedly, the part they fixed three weeks late is the part that has attacks already in the wild. Initially the bad guys are after the ISP's (Internet Service Providers) and big DNS providers. (Note: The attack on individual machines have not been found in the wild, probably because the bad guys get better results, more computers, attacking ISP's. Furthermore, here's good news. The NAT (Network Address Translation) built in to a router will protect your machine from attack. Bad news: Routers themselves are probably open to attack until their firmware is upgraded.)

The only attack in the wild is the one against ISP's and DNS providers. This is the one you should be concerned about right now. If your ISP has not fixed the problem I would consider using OpenDNS (http://www.opendns.com/) or some other DNS provider that has already fixed the problem. This is the most serious security issue in recent memory. It has not all been fixed or solved. I would only worry about the part you can do something about. The next step will be to keep an eye for firmware updates for your router.

Recently, a significant threat to DNS, the system that translates names you can remember (such as www.sbamug.com) to numbers the Internet can route (66.240.226.139) was discovered. That would allow malicious people to impersonate almost any website on the Internet. Software companies across the industry have quietly collaborated to simultaneously release fixes for all affected name servers. Many ISP's have not as yet fixed this hole. The primary way most people will see this problem is because their ISP/DNS Server provider has the problem.

Although it can affect your computer if is it is not behind a firewall or a NAT, a patch has been released for Windows but there is no word yet on whether the Mac has the problem or not. It probably does due to the fact the flaw seems to be in all OS's except OpenBSD (a Unix-like computer operating system descended from Berkeley Software Distribution (BSD), a Unix derivative developed at the University of California, Berkeley).

Recommended Easy Fix

Proceed to http://OpenDNS.com and install/use their Free DNS server. Instructions are available at the site. You do not have to use your ISP's DNS. Furthermore, this free service has a number of great services that you might like.

One Way to Test for the Problem

Go to this link: DNS Test (http://e6a74f050ccaded7999428d0.et.dns-oarc.net/.) It will automatically test your system.

For additional methods to test for the problem, click at the Wiki address at the beginning of this article.

Again, there's not much we can do right now except wait.

PUBLIC DOMAIN CD (PD CD)
by Jim Pernal, PD Editor

For many years I have researched and written the monthly PD CD column in the newsletter. I also make the physical CD that you can purchase at the back table at our monthly meetings. The CD's cost $5 each (except the archive CD that costs $20).

Published every other month, these discs contain the shareware, freeware, and public domain (PD) programs reviewed monthly in the club's newsletter. If you are new to these terms, **Shareware** is defined as programs you can try out, and if you like them, pay the developer the shareware fee. Often features may be limited until you pay the fee and get the registration code. **Freeware** is defined as free programs, but retain copyright control by the developer. **Public domain** is defined as free programs that don't have copyright control.

My columns are also on the club's new Wiki. Go to the main page and click on PD CD. You can read the articles in the notebooks to determine the system requirements for each program. Generally OS X is required for the past several years.

I have seven programs this month with several updates of earlier versions.

boxikon-osx.dmg This is a shape fitting puzzle game, one I play regularly. It is perhaps a bit like Tetris, but there are more tricks to increasing your score. Latest version has bug fixes. OSX 10.3 -10.5 PPC/Intel.

Consultant.app.zip Freeware application for employee and client billing. Enter the bill/pay rate and the number of hours, and you can get a professional looking statement (bill). OSX 10.5

Date Difference.dmg Utility program to calculate the difference between two dates. You can choose days/hours/minutes/seconds as the default resolution. US date formats only OSX 10.4 -10.5

debtinator.dmg.zip A program to manage debt, enter income and expenses. It can calculate how much you can use towards savings. OSX 10.4 to 10.5

TeraFractal2.3.zip Create fractal images. You can control some of the parameters. Three examples files are supplied. OSX 10.4 to 10.5

tuxpaint-0.9.20-macosx.dmg A simple drawing program aimed at young children. Freeware. OSX 10.4-10.5

vlc-0.8.6i.dmg Versatile media player. Handles DivX, DVD, VCD, MPEG, AVI, FLV WAV, WMV, OGG and other formats. It will often work when Quicktime will not. OSX 10.3.9-10.5. PPC and Intel

The PD CD for this month will be available at the August 2008 meeting as the July-August 2008 CD.
Catch you at the August meeting.

Have You Backed Up Your Files Today?

by Fran Pullara, Newsletter Editor, with a **LOT** of help from the Wiki.

It is often said that teachers teach and writer's write about what they most need to know and that was certainly the case for me recently. Beginning July 21, SBAMUG's e-group got a taste of what can happen when you don't. Former newsletter editor Dorothy Week's MacBook wouldn't start. In an e-mail message to the group she said, "Usually life goes along smoothly with Macs. But then something like this happens, accentuated by poor management by the owner, me! " Who among us hasn't been there?

Her MacBook (Universal) 80G, 2GB of RAM, running OS X 4.11, got the dreaded question mark when she tried to start up. She uses SuperDuper! (http://www.shirt-pocket.com/Superduper!) to back up her desktop but she had been busy and hadn't gotten around to backing up the MacBook. She turned to the e-group for suggestions and several posts on the thread gave us all a lot of information about things for her to try and for us to know if this ever happens to us. Dorothy reported back to the e-group as she tried each fix. The e-group is invaluable when you are trouble shooting a problem—and so is Apple Care. The bottom line is that Apple Care replaced Dorothy's hard drive and the rest of us learned a lot from her plight.

At the Apple Support link, there is detailed information about options for backing up OS X files. We all know we should keep backup copies of our important and irreplaceable files but it's good to be reminded of options. Apple (of course) suggests MobileMe (but many people don't buy that service), using third party backup applications, or by manually backing up.

Regardless of which method(s) you choose, you should store at least one copy of your backup outside the computer to guard against common risks such as theft or power issues, including lightning. You may also wish to store a copy of important data at a second site to guard against property destruction, such as fire and natural disasters. (Were you on your computer during the recent earthquake? I was, although the power held.) Check Apple's Support link for detailed information.

On the MUG's Wiki, there is also a lot of information about back-up with step-by-step instructions. Check Back Up Strategies: http://wiki.sbamug.com/corewiki/index.php?title=Time_Machine#Backup_Strategies. Superduper! and Apple's 10.5 Time Machine are options.

If your hard drive dies, just reboot off the clone and keep going. No need to rebuild a drive with restoration software. No need to replace the failed drive to continue. Just switch drives and you have everything from the last backup. There are also links to other back-up options at the Wiki.

I'm one of the guilty ones who keeps postponing back-up options. Dorothy's experience was a good lesson for me. I do use MobileMe, but I need to set aside a half hour and check all the links above. At a recent SBAMUG meeting, a member mentioned Western Digital's 500 GB "My Book" was featured at Costco. I bought one. And don't forget, MUG members, are eligible for discounts at many local computer stores. There are links on the website and the Wiki.
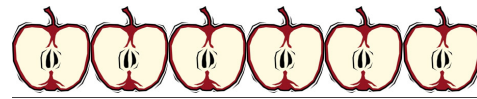
Apple Groaner of the Month

Why didn't the two worms go into Noah's ark in an apple?

Because everyone had to go in pairs !

Late Night Thoughts on Keeping Personal and Themed Blogs

by Fran Pullara, Newsletter Editor

Cartoon courtesy of Blog Gags

Are you puzzled about why blogging has become one of the most effective tools for communication in the world? Are you a blog follower or a blog author? Do you shrug blogs off as being too time consuming and self-serving? I'll admit that I am an addict.

Blogs, short for web logs, are a way of life now, like it or not. Not only do individuals host blogs about their passions and interests, but we have immediate access to news with diverse points of view. For example, this year's presidential campaigns feature blogs as do all major newspapers and magazines, electronic media, corporations and non-profits. Some of our SBAMUG members keep personal and themed blogs, including me, and I'll list the few I am aware of later. You can also find links to members blogs and websites on the front page of the club web site.

This is Wikipedia's definition of blogging: A blog is a website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. E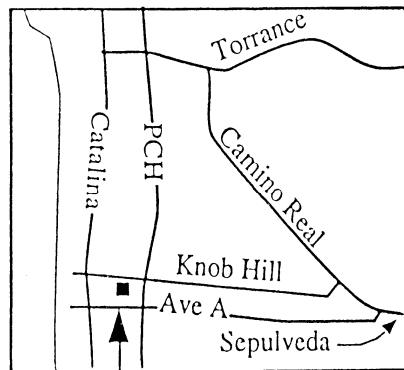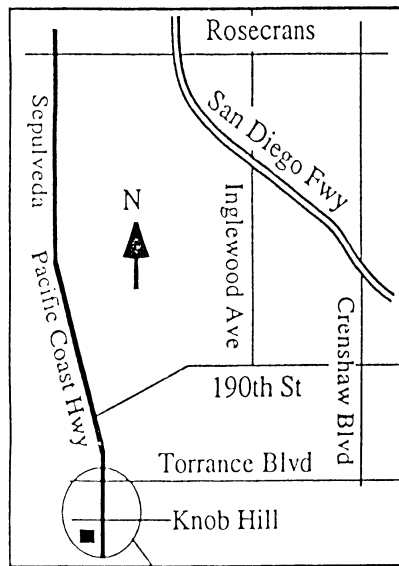ntries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Blogging is one of my passions and I also like to view my "blogroll" when I have a spare hour. If you don't know the term, "blogroll" means a list of links to other blogs or websites that the author of the blog regularly likes to read. The blogroll of each author generally resides in one of the side columns. If you want to learn more about blogging terminology, try Blogossary (http://www.blogossary.com/).

There are communities of bloggers with special interests and I've made many new like-minded friends because of blogging. I have met many of them in the U.S. when I travel or when they come into L.A. Many blogs I read are international. I have kept diaries and journals since I learned to write, have written on-line with other writers for more than 11 years, made my living by writing, and evolved my writing passion and practice into keeping a daily blog nearly five years ago. Mine is in the style of an on-line diary with photos and graphics. Blogging is one of my personal psycho-spiritual tools to keep track of my life. I write the blog for me, although I always welcome comments, which I do monitor. There are a lot of whackos out there in the blogosphere.

A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketchblog, videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting) are part of a wider network of social media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging which consists of blogs with very short posts.

AUGUST 2008 MEETING

Wednesday, August 27, 7:30 p.m.
320 Knob Hill, Redondo Beach
(see map at left for directions)

Attention Beginners
At 6:30 p.m., prior to the main meeting, SBAMUG always offers two beginners Q & A sessions. One is hosted by Bob Brooks and Jim Pernal in the main hall. The second group meets in the kitchen, hosted by LJ Palmer.

August 27
Tentatively scheduled as iMovie HD or iMovie '08
Discussion is still underway on this presentation. IMovie HD is part of iLife '06. Now discontinued software, it is the only choice for users of G3, G4 and single processor G5's. (Also available with iLife '08) Check the Wiki for confirmation of this presentation.

September 24
Bento, Apples' new consumer database program
Anton Anderson, of Productivity Consulting, will help us get started with this new tool from FileMaker in the iWork tradition.

Thanks, Refreshment Committee, for all your hard work every month. All goodie donations are deeply appreciated.

We're at 320 Knob Hill at PCH • Free Parking

(Blogging article from page 6 continued)

As of December 2007, blog search engine Technorati was tracking more than 112 million blogs. With the advent of video blogging, the word blog has taken on an even looser meaning of any bit of media wherein the subject expresses his opinion or simply talks about something.

Some people write their own code, or use authoring applications like Dreamweaver or Freeway. Most people I follow use template-driven apps for a monthly fee or free sites like Blogger (http://www.blogger.com). I personally use a company called Typepad (http://www.typepad.com) which is inexpensive, easy and intuitive. Many of my friends use Wordpress (http://www.wordpress.com) and as an SBAMUG member, you have the capability of storing your own blog on our server using WordPress as part of your member privileges. I'm happy to pass on my tips and tutorials on blogging and would love to receive yours. When time permits, I will also add them to the Wiki.

These are the SBAMUG member blogs I am aware of. Most are linked on our Members page of the website. If I have missed you, or you would like to add your blog to the newsletter next month, e-mail me at redondowriter@sbamug.com. The club's webmaster will add them into our website. You may not agree with what blog writers write, but viva America!

LJ Palmer's World (http://blog.ljsworld.com/)
Fran Pullara's Redondowriter's Sacred Ordinary (http://redondowriter.typepad.com)
Russell Neglia's Veritas Vincit (http://veritasvincit.blogtownhall.com/)
Russell Neglia's Prolife Prologic (http://prolifeprologic.blogtownhall.com/)

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SBAMUG Membership Application

South Bay Apple Macintosh User Group provides Mac owners and users with a local source
of shared knowledge and experience through monthly meetings, training seminars
and our monthly newsletter.
Individual and family membership is $35 per year payable to SBAMUG.

☐   New Member   ☐   Member Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____   State: _____   Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____   Email Address: _____

Special Computer Interest: _____

Model of Macintosh You Use Most: _____

How did you hear about SBAMUG?: _____

Comments: _____

_____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Bring Application & Fees to Meetings or Mail to:
SBAMUG
P.O. Box 432
Redondo Beach, CA 90277