

Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for June 17, 2010

Carl Bulger presided.

Four new members:

Sylvia Seeley is considering replacing her 1998 Gateway.

Barbara Elzey

Pat Smith

Carolyn Goddard

Where do you store your laptop or netbook in your car. Bill M. advises you NOT to store it in your car. He told about his neighbor across the street having his laptop stolen from his Ford Explorer.

Ken Godstre, our Treasurer, reported the first expenditure in months: \$23.29 for name tag holders bringing our balance down to \$149.60.

Program:

Dan Lee gave an overview of the laptop market. The brands are Hewlett-Packard (HP), Dell, Lenovo (the Chinese company that bought the license to manufacture what had been the IBM PC and ThinkPad), Panasonic, Toshiba, Sony, and Apple.

There are three main operating systems: Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X.

Screen sizes range from 12 to 19 inches diagonally with most new laptops having the 16:9 format (16 units wide by 9 units high) instead of the old 4:3 format.

Weights range from a little over 1 lb. to about 6lbs. with most in the 4.5 – 6 lbs. range.

Netbooks are smaller, simpler, and cheaper than laptops with no CD/DVD drive, small screen, and small keyboard.

Laptop processor speeds are usually around 2.0 GHz. RAM is about 3-4 GB. Hard drives are usually about 250 – 320 GB.

Many laptops come with Web cams, optical drives (CD/DVD), Wi-Fi capability (802.11 b, g, or n), memory card reader, USB 2.0, eSATA, and Firewire ports, and Bluetooth capability. Batteries are usually 6-cell lithium batteries with the option of a 9-cell lithium battery.

Prices for netbooks are around \$300. For laptops they are \$600 - \$900. Apple laptops begin at \$1000.

Ken Godstre has a two-year old HP Pavilion with 64-bit Vista Home Premium OS. It has a 17" screen, weighs 6.9 lbs and has 4GB RAM, 320 GB hard drive, Web cam, built-in speaker, Wi-Fi b,g, and n with excellent range, bluetooth, 2 USB ports, and is TV compatible. HP service is excellent. It cost \$700 at BJ's Warehouse.

Charlotte Melichar has a Dell Inspiron 1525 with 32-bit Vista with 3 GB of RAM which she bought for about \$800. Dell service was good when she spilled

water on the keyboard. She has been unable to sync the laptop with her Sony PDA.

Bob Blum has a Dell Inspiron 1545 with a 15.6" screen. He bought it at Best Buy for \$550-600. It comes with either the Core i3 or Core i5 processor, has 3 USB ports, a web cam, card reader, no separate number pad, and 802.11g Wi-Fi with his "hand-me-down" router. The touchpad is difficult to use so he uses a wireless mouse. Dell's service is sometimes foreign.

Bill M. recently purchased a Dell Studio 15z-2249CPN Laptop, with a Best Buy "Blue Label" for \$949. Best Buy Online: <http://tinyurl.com/23cl55k>. CNET Review: <http://tinyurl.com/23cl55k>. He wanted a high-end, wide screen laptop that would replace his desktop computer. The features he especially likes are the 15.6" HD (1366 x 768) with LED back light, support for Intel Wireless Display (WiDi) for the TV <http://tinyurl.com/28nmbgz>, and the keyboard with adjustable back light (so he can use it in low light situations, such as when he is displaying something on the TV. Bundled with his laptop was a Netgear PTV1000 Push2TV adapter for Intel Wireless Display (WiDi). This adapter wirelessly streams audio and video to a big screen HDTV at resolutions up to 720p. Blu-Ray and DVD movie playback are not supported due to digital rights management restrictions. He had to negotiate with

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the Best Buy store to get the Netgear adapter at no extra charge as was advertised online.

Other features of Bill M.'s laptop are an i5, 2.27 GHz, 3MB cache processor, 4 MB RAM, 500 GB hard drive, CD/DVD burner, AMD ATI Mobility Radeon HD 4570 Graphics card, 7-in-1 media card reader, WiFi, Bluetooth, Ethernet, 1.3 megapixel webcam, touchpad with zoom-in and zoom-out, 5.67 lbs., two USB ports, one combo USB/eSATA port, HDMI HD video output, and HDMI Express Card 24 mm slot.

Earl Webb bought his laptop so that he could get back together with his wife who was often in the family room watching TV when Earl was using his desktop computer at the other end of their ranch-style home. He likes HP's service which he says is in American English.

Dan Lee has a two laptops, an old ThinkPad T23 which required a PCIMIA plug-in card for WiFi. He bought a 14-in. Lenovo with Windows 7, full size keyboard, webcam, fingerprint reader and facial recognition software, 802.11n WiFi. It lacks an RJ-11 jack for dial-up. He's not sure whether Lenovo service agents will talk to him after his one-year warranty expires. He is told that HP's and Dell's service agents will, at least, talk to you after the warranty period.

Eric Hein noted that an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) is

built-in to laptops and netbooks in the form of the power supply.

Also, he noted that laptops are becoming more upgradeable and expandable.

Surge suppressors are recommended when charging your laptop's battery.

Bill M. listens to ShoutCast.com internet radio featuring thousands of radio stations worldwide.

Like Bob Blum, Bill M. programs his Windows 7 background themes to change frequently and has downloaded 40-50 themes from the Microsoft download site.