



Pulse of '62



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Got Computer?! by Joe Durocher

Although the first freely programmable computer is 8 years older than we are, the earliest commercial computer, the transistor, the chip, the “mouse”, the IBM computer, and Windows, all came after us. Actually, it’s probably safe to say that we are among the pioneers of the computer age.

Got computer?! What has been your experience with perhaps the single most paradigm-shifting phenomena of our era? Here’s what 5 of our classmates had to say.

Robert “Bob” Lewis – Retired, Morgan Hill, CA.

Bob is a full-time RV'er (Recreational Vehicle) who has pursued his nomadic lifestyle all the way across the U.S. from California to Maine and Key West, using primarily campsites in the Thousand Trails group, and taking along his bicycle, golf clubs, dog, and divorce papers.

Bob has a laptop computer and he uses WIFI at various campgrounds nationwide. The big thing about Bob is that prior to our Class gathering in Las Vegas last September, he had not even touched a personal computer, although he did have experience with a company computer in the insurance field. “I lived in the time of the Queen (Liliuokalani), and might have been of some service to her in repelling the sailors and marines invading Oahu's shores.” When he found out about our Class "Reconnecting" activities, he bought a computer. He uses it for e-mail and browsing the internet, paying particular attention to our Class Website and other sites which present historical information. In fact, the first e-mail message Bob sent, other than for practice, was to **Dennis Lau**. “I’d like to send one to **pj (Pat) Silva** in the hope that he might mail me a homemade malasada.” His big regret was that he missed the Las Vegas event, since he travels there often.



So behind-the-times that he does not even have a digital camera, Bob still uses his 35mm. Does anyone know where he can procure a supply of film?

“I’m enjoying the newfound freedom and access my computer offers.” While he does have a printer, it is not hooked up yet; space is limited in his travel trailer. An unfortunate casualty of Bob's computer is his golf game. Once an avid golfer, he has only played 2 rounds since he purchased his computer last October. He vows, "I need to get back on the course."

Al Chong - Retired, Soldotna, AK.

Al spent his working years with Hawaiian Electric in Honolulu. During his career, he was exposed to computers as they increasingly saturated the workplace. “I used company computers in the performance of my day-to-day job which included budgeting, documenting, job performance, spread sheets, job estimates, and costing work performed by my Maintenance Division.”



After Al’s retirement, he and his wife, Bunny, relocated to Alaska, to the little town of Soldotna on the Kenai Peninsula, south of Anchorage. “Alaska is truly a frontier state, with an abundance of wildlife, fishing and natural beauty - a state where it is legal to carry a concealed weapon, and it is not unusual to see a moose or a bear on a routine walk out to the mail box.”

On his Dell desk top, Al inputs monthly bank statements, savings, investment info on Quicken, and tracks rental property and expenses in Hawaii. His pictures, letters, and taxes are stored on an older machine.

He and his wife use the computer to acquire material not easily available in Soldotna. “My wife teaches hula and uses the internet to find and purchase hula supplies which are, of course, not available in Alaska.” Bunny also uses the computer in her job with the University of Alaska, Small Business Development Center, to input client info, consultation appointments, workshop attendance, etc.

Mostly an outdoors person, Al enjoys fishing and hunting. “I hunt everything from moose to rabbits with both a re-curve and compound bow.” Al only spends about an hour in the morning on the computer, preferring life outside. He uses e-mail especially to keep in touch with family and friends in Hawaii and around the world, often providing spiritual support to those in need. “I feel very comfortable on the computer, but I don’t want to get too involved or sacrifice things I’d rather do.”

What he likes least about his computer is the continual change and the constant relearning every time there is a new operating system or version of Word and Outlook. Al is most impressed with the speed and the increased sophistication of computers, from “clunky” work computers to highly complex applications such as iPad and iPhone, and the wealth of information at his finger tips.

Rod Imai – Retired, San Jose, CA.

Rod retired after a 40-year association with IBM, re-locating from Honolulu to San Jose, California in 1969. At IBM, he was right in the middle of the “Silicon Valley” explosion, the computer revolution that swept the globe, all the way up through the “Dot Com” boom.

“As a software engineer, I worked primarily with the ‘big iron’ before personal computers were even a glimmer in our dreams.” He played a large role during this time



when big main frames ruled the world. With promotion to software development manager, came the opportunity to develop tools for IBM’s operating systems. During his last twenty-five years, Rod was a software development manager. “I even spent several years coming to Honolulu, recruiting Hawaii’s finest from UH and HPU to work in San Jose.”

After four decades of total immersion in computers, Rod decided to distance himself from them when he retired. “I’d didn’t even want to get a laptop. I was afraid that I would take it with me on trips to Hawaii, and then, become enslaved to it as I had previously been. I guess you might say, I rebelled.” Instead, Rod has a Hewlett Packard desk top computer which he uses for e-mail, personal Word documents, spreadsheets, and access to the internet. The desk top, by its nature, stays at home when he travels. “I use the computer 30 to 60 minutes each day, and no more.” Rod has migrated from a hardcore, big-time “nerd” to a retired technology rebel.

Ed Ferreira - Business Owner, Victorville, CA.

Ed, who works in a family-owned and operated pneumatic tank trucking business headquartered in Victorville, started his current career after a long tenure in the banking industry.

From his earliest days, Ed has always been interested in and attracted to technology. He acquired and mastered



a Texas Instruments programmable calculator which he used extensively to perform his banking job. His first computer was a Xerox with 64 Megs of RAM (Random Access Memory). “At the time, I was impressed with its

‘immense’ storage capacity.”

Ed describes his present computer operation as imperative to his life and business. Really, he owns 5 computers: a desk top and 4 laptops, the latter run by the other members of his family (his wife, Stacey, and his two sons ages 13 and 15). “I strive to maximize every benefit the computer has to offer, including access to almost limitless information on the internet, which would be impossible to reach otherwise.”

While Ed utilizes all the products in Microsoft Office, he specializes in Excel. Here’s an example of Ed’s computer adeptness. When asked how many Excel functions he knew, he responded, “About 50.”, which is indicative

of optimal awareness. “I use the computer 10 to 12 hours each day; I’m completely dependent on it.” And, how does he solves problems? Ed simply states, “I usually just figure them out.”. Ed’s technological sophistication allowed him to set-up a special e-mail account for his junk mail which he uses when an e-mail address is required by a website. In his trucking business, Ed says, “Essentially, I re-engineered the entire enterprise around the use of computers.”. There is no doubt that Ed is an advanced, astute computer user.

John Karasaki – Retired, Kailua, Kona, HI.

Like Al Chong, John began his career with Hawaiian Electric in Honolulu. However, after 19 years, he transferred to its Kailua, Kona subsidiary. “During my time on the Big Island, I was exposed to many different corporate computer systems, ranging from time card processing to maintenance parts inventory ordering.”



“Nowadays, I spend an hour a day on my computer.” John operates an E-Machine; his wife, Dawn, a Dell. John uses his computer mostly for e-mail. However, because he is involved in painting with water colors, and has difficulty obtaining what is needed locally, John also orders his supplies online.

Another thing John enjoys doing on the computer is playing PokerStars.net. “While there is no money involved in the games, the winners of the weekly tournaments become eligible for free trips to Las Vegas.” John’s other pastimes are bowling, taking care of the yard, and tending a plot of land on his walking path.

Although he does not consider himself a “nerd”, John does consider himself knowledgeable. “I like the fact that I can get to the internet and find virtually anything I’m looking for.” What he does not like is that it is too slow. John admits that even though he is only online for an hour a day, he is dependent on it.

John’s son, an engineer at PG&E in Portland, is a heavy computer user. Passing the tradition on to a third generation, John has given his grandson computer games which he happily uses.

One thing is very clear. After conducting these interviews, the Saint Louis Class of 1962 is both diverse and capable; both with computers as well as life in general.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joe Durocher is a retired hospitality industry Information Technology executive. He and wife, Linda comprise the lead couple for the Central California Marriage Encounter chapter.

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