North Texas PC NEWS

North Texas PC Users Group

Deadline:
All material for publication in North Texas PC NEWS (articles and ads) must be received by the NEWS staff no later than the 15th of the month.

Articles:
Please do not right-justify, indent or otherwise code the copy. If column alignment is critical, send along a hard copy, or written instructions. Article submission is preferred by modem (817/275-4109 or Startext 51563), or disk in ASCII format, unjustified. If you send a disk, please include a printed copy of the article to assure accuracy. Double spaced, typewritten copy is acceptable but **must be received a week before the deadline.**

Circulation:
North Texas PC NEWS circulation is 1140. Member distribution is 979; remaining copies are distributed to PC user groups around the country, and to advertisers, prospective members and others with common interests.

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D E A D L I N E
Copy deadline for January PC NEWS:
Monday, December 15th.

Future Meeting Dates

January Meeting - 1st Saturday (3rd)
February Meeting - 2nd Saturday (14th)
March Meeting - 3rd Saturday (21st)

The North Texas PC Users Group, Inc., is a non-profit, independent group, not associated with IBM or any other Corporation. Membership is open to owners and others interested in exchanging ideas, information, hardware, predictions, and other items related to IBM Personal and compatible computers. To join the Group, complete the application blank printed elsewhere in this issue, and send it with $24 membership dues to address shown below. A subscription to the newsletter is included with each membership.

The Group meets once each month, usually on the second Saturday. See cover for date, time and place of the next User Group meeting.

Officials:
President - Jim Graham (214)931-8505 h
President-Elect - Jim Hoisington (214)245-0973 h
Program Chair. - Charles Kroboth (214)245-4763 w
Treasurer - Joe Brophy (214)891-8187 w
Secretary - Laura Murphey (214)824-1885 h

Membership Dir. - Bob Russell (214)422-4269 h
Disk of the Month - Tim O'Neil (817)267-8981 h
Public Relations (o p e n)

Special Interest Groups:
SIG Coord. - Phil Chamberlain (214)243-5034 h
APL - Jim Fiegenshue (214)539-9281 h
Artificial Intel. Jim Bender (214)423-3470 h
Astrometry - Arlin Collins (?14)890-6855 w
Assembler - John Cole (   )   -
DOS - John D. Hall (214)495-2375 h
Business Applic. Bruce Schubert (214)539-7330 h
C Language - Dr. Sid Nolte (214)233-6178 h
Communications - Fred Williams (214)492-1315 w
Databases - Chris Morgan (214)245-4763 w
BASIC - Herb Wilson (214)235-3364 w
Framework - Jim Janeway (214)349-0314 h
Genealogy - Minnie Champ (214)341-6507 h
Graphics - Mike Durbin (214)271-8779 h
Invest - N-Squared Greg Morris (214)680-1445 w
LOTUS - Susan Reyes (214)270-3504 h
Programmers - Dr. Neil Bennett (214)422-5673 h
Science/Engr. - Arlin Collins (214)890-6855 w
Turbo Pascal - Phil Chamberlain (214)243-5034 h

User Group Telephone (Answerer) - (214)242-4187
Bulletin Board SYSOP: - o p e n -

Payment of dues, address changes, and inquiries about membership should be directed to:

NTPCUG Membership Director
135 Skyline Drive
Plano, Texas 75074

Check newsletter mailing label for your membership renewal date. No separate renewal notice will be sent.

December ———— Charles Kroboth, Program Chairman ———— —

9:00 AM, Auditorium   * Micro Power & Light *

Mike Durbin, Developer and local representative for Micro Power & Light will be demonstrating the Grand Inquisitor.   This program is a question bank, management, and administrative system.   The Grand Inquisitor helps create programs for testing and can be used by trainers or teachers.   Six different types of questions are available and range from multiple choice to sequencing.

10:00 AM, Auditorium   * Cray Research *

Michael Dungworth, District Manager for Cray Research, will be discussing that company's line of super-computers.   The XMP and the Cray 2 are both multi- processor computers that come with 2 gigabytes of central memory. Also discussed will be software linking Cray's to IBM mainframes and to some typical applications in use.

DOOR PRIZE: 9:00 AM   Grand Inquisitor

Group Purchase

Modems

The TI Professional Users group has arranged with Seabrook Computers for a modem group purchase.

The modem is a Fountain 300/1200 baud external modem.

The modem is 100% Hayes compatible. If you own an IBM PC or compatible you will need both a Serial port and a modem cable. These items are not included with the purchase.

The purchase price is: $129.95 + 6.125% sales tax.

To order a modem bring a check to the December meeting of the user group.   The check should be made out to Seabrook Computers in the amount of $137.91.   The modems will be available for pickup after January 3 at Seabrook Computers. They will not be distributed at the user group meeting. In the event that the modems arrive early and you wish to be notified, please bring a stamped self addressed envelop or postcard with your check.

Seabrook is located just south of LBJ on the west side of Greenville Ave.

Seabrook Computers
12101 Greenville Ave.
Suite 110
Dallas, Texas 75243

ELECTIONS

Elections will be held at the January meeting. The following nominees have agreed to serve:

President-Elect – 1987, President – 1988:

  Reagan Andrews
  Dr. Sid Nolte

Board of Directors – 1987: (Choose three.)

  Francis Bright
  Kathryn Crawford
  Gregory Daley
  Jim Graham
  Charles Kroboth
  David McGehee
  John Pribyl
  Jim Rich
  Bob Russel
  Stuart Yarus

WIN A FREE TRIP
TO THE 1987 FALL COMDEX
IN LAS VEGAS!!

If you write an article that is published in the Newsletter and your article is selected as the best one published during the period of the contest, you will win an expense-paid trip to Comdex.

The Contest Rules are as follows:

1. All dues-paying members are eligible to win.

2. Articles must be submitted between December 1, 1986 and May 1, 1987, and must be published in the Newsletter before the entries are judged.

3. The articles must carry the name of a single individual as author, must be original, and must not have been previously copyrighted.

4. Articles will be approved for publication by the Newsletter editor, with the assistance of the Board of Directors. Their decisions are final. Articles received within the time limits of the rules but not selected for publication within these rules will not be eligible to win.

but may be published in a later issue of the Newsletter.

5. Articles may be on any subject that is of interest to PC users.

6. No minimum size of articles. Lengthy articles (over 5-6 pages) may be "serialized" by the editor, appearing in successive issues of the Newsletter. Each part of a serial article will be considered a separate article in the contest.

7. The editor may judiciously edit articles, and they will be judged as published.

8. A ballot will be published in the Newsletter at the end of the contest, listing all of the entries published. All recipients of the ballot, including other Users Groups, are eligible to vote. The author of the article receiving the most votes will be declared the winner. In case of a tie, the winner will be selected by a drawing to be held at the main meeting. The winner need not be present.

9. The prize will include airplane, taxi, and hotel costs for the COMDEX Meeting. Approximate value $600.

10. If a conflict arises regarding interpretation of contest rules, decision of the Board of Directors will be final.   ▲

USER GROUP SUMMIT MEETING

by Charles Kroboth

One of the bright spots at Comdex in Las Vegas was a User Group Summit Meeting. I was appointed the delegate for the North Texas PC User Group and had a chance to meet users from 30 user groups around the world. These folks represented groups from all over the country, including Canada and Sweden.

The organization of a joint meeting was done by Mike Rohrbach of the IBM group at the Boston Computer Society, Jerry Schneider and Doug Thompson (Editor) from the Capital PC User Group in Washington DC, and Duane Hendricks from Houston Area League of PC Users.

Also present were Gene Barlow, head of the IBM User Group Support Program in Boca Raton and a representative from the Software

Publishers Association (SPA). The SPA is pushing software vendors to consider a license agreement that releases the company from any liability but gives the user a guarantee that the program will work as advertized and that all bugs will be fixed within a reasonable length of time.

HAL (Houston) agreed to set up a bulletin board for editors around the country to upload and download articles. Although a national newsletter was discussed there were no volunteers for editor and it was agreed that it should not be associated with any particular user group.

As it was the first such meeting and only two hours there were no major decisions made other than we agreed the concept was sound and that we should meet again. The next meeting will be in Atlanta at Comdex Spring.

Charles   ▲

On Complexity

No. 4 in a Series

by Jim Hoisington

Has PC-DOS gotten more complex? An article in UNIX REVIEW made the claim that "software gets more complex as it gets older". So, I went into my archives and got out my PC-DOS version 1.0 manual and disk.

The first thing that I noticed was that I had a lot more available memory. I don't have version 3.1, but here are the sizes for the other versions of PC-DOS:

Version	Size
=======	====
1.0	12.1 K
1.1	12.4 K
2.0	24.8 K
2.1	24.8 K
3.0	27.0 K
3.21	54.3 K

(I have PC-DOS 3.21 which is the version that IBM is currently selling. It has fixes for some of the bugs in version 3.20.) Version 1.0 had 16 DOS commands listed in the index, not counting the sub-commands listed under BATCH processing. Version 3.21 has 50 commands.

The 1.0 version's manual fit into the 3 ring binder with lots of room left over. And it contains the DOS technical information which is now in a second manual. The revised pages to bring the DOS 3.20 technical information manual up to revsion level 3.21 are thicker than the entire original version 1.0 manual.

So, I think we can safely say that PC-DOS has gotten more complex. And that's not necessarily bad. There are still a lot of people out there who put their diskette in drive A, power on their machine, and never see the A> prompt. They know nothing of sub-directories, paths or trees.

But I keep hearing from people like this who have just gotten a hard disk or have an
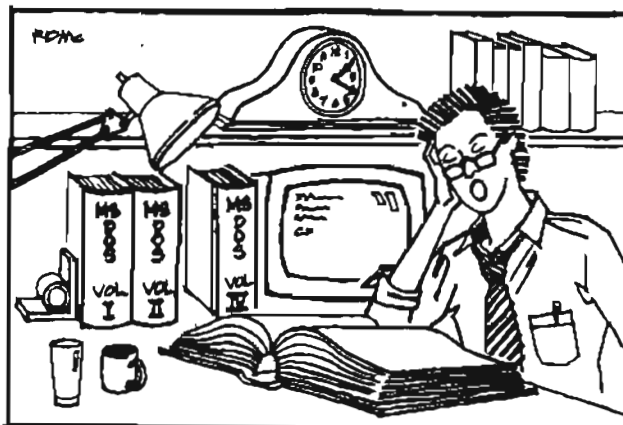
TO INVOKE A SECONDARY COMMAND PROCESSOR, THE FOLLOWING SYNTAXZZZZZZZZZZ......ZZZZZZZZZZ.....

application that requires them to be able to read and understand a directory on a second diskette drive. All of a sudden, their machine has changed its personality and they are faced with this manual containing 50 commands. The "personal" just went out of their "personal computer."

And if that wasn't bad enough, wait until the new protected mode, multitasking PC-DOS comes out. How many additional commands will it introduce? Will it need some sort of artificial intelligence program just to install it on your hard disk? Will it need a Job Control Language? Will we begin to see the emergence of a new occupation -- the PC-DOS systems programmer.

Happy New Year!

Jim

MERRY CHRISTMAS!
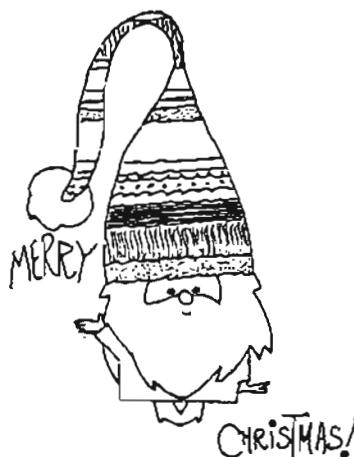
Disk of the Month

By Tim O'Neil

...from the DOM Chairman:

Babe Ruth did it and now Tim O'Neil has done it. I struck out and can only say I am sorry for not having some of the programs at the last meeting. On top of all that the PC-Write 2.7 second disk has bad sectors. I will replace all the 2.7 disk you bought with the new version 2.7.3.

Tim O'Neil

DOM - December 1986

This month we will have:

~AutoMenu (not a Dos shell) 3.01 version. The 4.0 version is on the market but it is not a shareware product. Will write about it later.

-EASY A1 2.0 version, reviewed in November PC News.

-We will also offer several upgrades to existing software.

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Tutor--------PD-79
Oragami-----PD-80
Jr Music-----PD-81
PC-Key Draw-PD-82A
PC-Key Draw-PD-82B Library
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We now accept Master Card and Visa.

If you have anything out on review, please get to us as soon as possible. Anyone wanting to review material please call Kathryn Crawford at 214-690-2963.

Thanks to all our volunteers that work the

Disk of the Month Table. We can not thank you enough.

Automenu---Magee Enterprises---Norcross, Georgia

Automenu is a sophisticated on-line facility that lets you organize and control the use of your computer system by creating menus to access all your frequently used programs. New or inexperienced computer users can easily select the things they want to do without remembering complicated Dos commands or syntax. Power users can customize their Automenu system to provide fast access to applications and perform complicated batch-file procedures.

Tim

NERD ON THE STREET

PIRATES: The Software Publishers Association (SPA) is offering a $100 reward for information on bulletin boards that allow downloading pirated software. Ken Wasch, Executive Director of SPA, moved the deadline for evidence from November 1 to December 31. Based in Washington DC, the SPA has shut down eight boards by turning over evidence to Federal and local officials.

Police in Baltimore County, CA. have seized two systems used by phone pirates to locate long distance telephone codes. The hackers apparently were using automatic dialers to locate MCI codes and then sold them or used them personally.

JOBS: Steve Jobs, Apple co-founder, was recently heard to say it was easier to make money than to give it away. It's so hard that he hired Mark Vermilion to set up a foundation and give away $100 million. No word yet on what requests Mr. Jobs would entertain. My guess is most will go for education related ideas. If I were head of a major computer science department, a $1 million grant might make me consider buying a computer from his new company, NEXT, Inc.

YOUR BASIC SIMULATOR: Anyone can make a mistake. In shipping out 750,000 copies of QuickBasic Ver. 2.0, Microsoft Corp. accidentally put Flight Simulator disks in 150 packages instead of the compiler disks. Only about 75 users have notified Microsoft of the error and the rest obviously haven't opened the package yet (or it's on your dealer's shelf). Those that called were shipped the correct disks but no Flight Simulator manual.

AH-SO: According to the Semiconductor Industries Association, the Japanese have already started violating the month-old anti-dumping agreement with the U.S. The sus-pected EPROM maker has not been named publicly. A popular alternative to violation of the anti-dumping agreement is to buy a U.S. company as Fujitsu did when they purchased Fairchild Semiconductor Corp.

A byproduct of ICOT's fifth-generation computer project, PSI, is expected to be upgraded next year. Mitsubishi Electric says PSI II is one-third as large, half the price ($64,516 US), and runs at 20k LIPS or three times the inference speed of the original PSI.

50,000 units of Toshiba's two Laptop PC's have been sold in the US this year. Sales are so far over original projections that they are even considering selling the same models in Japan. That's interesting because IBM PC's and PC Compatibles control only 20% of that market. Toshiba's sales are probably the incentive Compaq needs to release their Laptop.

For great sushi ask for Kazuo Ishii at Ishi-Sushi in Plano.

COMDEX NEWS: While everyone is talking about Comdex '86 being the year of the 386, I didn't see any machines that were projecting shipments before Spring 1987 (other than Compaq of course). It did appear to be the year for CAD/CAM, Desktop Publishing, and Laptop Computers. One very unique desktop entry was from Datavue Technical Systems. The Super Micro/150 does not have a processor, but instead uses f-ram chips to emulate the 8086. End result is a computer that runs IBM PC, 16 bit software 15 times faster than a 286 AT. To put that in perspective, the Compaq 386 runs 16 bit software twice as fast as an AT and 32 bit software 10 times as fast.

During the last two months the FCC has beefed up its rules and enforcement of PC product standards and has also stiffened penalties. They were at Comdex in force slapping fines on clone makers who had not responded to the mid-September notice for recertification.

Another new product was introduced by Santa Clara Systems called the PCTerminal. It's a $699 diskless workstation for use in a network. The project was a joint venture between Santa Clara and Novell and is being built in South Korea by Hyundai Electronics. The system is obviously PC-compatible and includes a built-in Ethernet board.   ➤

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PageMaker, by Aldus, will be available shortly for the IBM. This is the impressive desktop publishing software that has given MacIntosh an edge in that market. I would recommend a 286 PC as it is slow due to operating in the Microsoft Windows environment. A personal favorite was a package by Three D Graphics called Perspective. It takes output (e.g., Lotus) and produces a variety of marvelous 3-D graphs that can be rotated to any of 25 different viewing angles.

CD-ROM: Lotus Development is currently Beta testing a system that offers huge amounts of financial data on compact, read-only laser disks. It will be called Source One and the data will naturally load into Lotus 1-2-3. 20 years of stock prices can be analyzed. Release is expected next year at between $11,000 and $27,000 depending on features. Price includes a weekly update disk.

Datext, Inc. of Youngstown, Ohio has released a database consisting of 13,000 high-tech companies, public and private. Disk includes business description, revenue, employee names, titles and functions. Annual subscription is $7,500.

HARDWARE NEWS: Look for a new 8086 based PC next year from IBM to replace it's current 8088 workhorse. It is said to have a smaller footprint than the current PC and will use proprietary semiconductors & built-in graphics hardware. --- AT&T has handed over production and development of it's PC's to it's Italian partner, Ing. C. Olivetti & Co. S.p.A. Olivetti controls a nice share of the European market and might be able to educate AT&T on how to market business equipment. --- Video-7 is said to be working with TI to produce a 1,024 by 1,024 display board that quadruples EGA resolution. --- Seymore Cray is rumored to be in Dallas talking with TI about developing a production-ready gallium arsenide chip to replace the silicon chip. As General Berringer once said, "Do you want to put our country in hands of a silly cone die ode". --- Of computers sold in August through retail channels Apple represented **28%** and IBM **22%**. In their defense, IBM sells many systems direct and PC compatibles finished at over **35%**.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: There's an estimated $6 BILLION of software (in the market), and that can't be abandoned by anyone, including IBM. - Jeffrey Katz, Intel Corp.

BOARD NEWS: New '386 boards are receiving mixed reactions from consumers primarily because current software does not take advantage of the added power. Maynard Electronics of Casselberry, Fl. has announced a controller board that will double the capacity of many hard disk drives. The board also increases drive performance and has only one problem that I can see. Price is $4,995. NERD Prediction: It will be cheaper next year.

USER GROUP: Our Special Interest Groups are led by a fine group of volunteers. I would like to see more of you let them know how much you appreciate their efforts to make PC Saturday an enjoyable experience. Maybe I'm out of line, but I would love to see SIG's started for users of TI's, Epsons, Tandys, Taiwans, etc. As a user of clones I know there are occasionally special needs to be addressed and this would be an opportune time. Anyone who would like to see a SIG started should contact Phil Chamberlain. His phone number is listed on the first page of this newsletter.

I would also hate to see a month go by without acknowledging the Dallas Computer Council. Did you know that Atari user groups and TI user groups get 4 votes due to each having two different organizations meeting at Infomart. Poor little IBM has only 2 votes. In their defense I am told by DEEPTHRT.TWO that the Council is now considering a rewrite of the bylaws to include a proportional vote for user groups. Here, Here!

CORRECTION: It has been brought to my attention that John Pellett of the Atari group is upset with some of the comments I made last month about the Council. I apologize for the errors, but unfortunately the errors in my statements do not alter the fact that some very short-sighted items were brought up at a council meeting, and almost passed due to smaller groups controlling a majority of the votes.

<div align="right">Nnnnn</div>

screenCODE –
a Screen I/O Editor & Source Code Generator

The commission-WARE<tm> people of Waco, Texas have developed an inexpensive program tool that automates the creation of ASCII I/O screens for use in programs and slideshow-type presentations. The full system includes:

- SCREENSNAP, a memory resident program that captures any ASCII screen with attributes
- SCREENSHOW, a slide projector program for computerized slide shows for sales demonstrations, etc. SHOW is also handy for prototyping & demonstrating programs in the development stage.
- the SCREENCODE editor program, which creates screen from scratch, modifies screens captured with SCREENSNAP, and saves finished work in a variety of useful formats. The editor and SCREENSHOW programs and four example screens are included in the packed distribution program, which can be copied and shared freely.

Special support for extended ASCII characters, colors, and character attributes used in creating graphic effects is a main feature of the editor. Line structures, borders, and windows are especially easy and fast due to the line-type selection feature and ability to control the direction in which the next character will be printed (up, down, right, left). Once a line type is selected (single line, double line, etc.), the 11 most common line characters, including corners and intersections, are conveniently available with the alt-key combination of a keypad defined between the keyboard's upper "1" key and the "C" key. With a little practice, this unique method permits drawing complex figures and forms quickly.

MARK, COPY and MOVE are likewise important editor features that speed screen generation. Any rectangular portion can be designated with MARK and then freely dragged around the screen in either a copy or move mode until it is positioned "just right" for anchoring in a new location. To assist in lining up objects, the edit-screen "space" character can be made visible by setting it to any other character. Even data input fields can be designated by attribute.

SCREENCODE actually writes program code to generate a selected screen in BASICA, DeSmet C, dBASE II/III, and Turbo Pascal. Screens can also be output as ASCII text files, and, of course, saved in SCREENCODE format for further editing and processing and for display by the SCREENSHOW program.

COMMISSIONWARE sells the full SCREENCODE package for $25. A set of 75 sample screen files on diskette is $6 additional when ordered at the same time, shipping & handling is $2, Texans add sales tax. The address is P.O. Box 21776, Waco, TX 76702 phone 817-776-3205. Registered users receive a $10 commission every time someone registers from one of their distribution copies.

Dick

Special Interest Program Reports

General Special Interest Group (SIG) News

A reminder that any SIG news items for this newletter must be received by noon of the 14th of the month — regardless of the date of the next meeting.

ASTROMETRY

Did you ever open an issue of "Sky & Telescope" or "Astronomy" magazine or ne of the many astronomy guides and refer to the dates, times and locations for eclipses, occultations, lunar/venusian phases, orbital positions of planets, comets, moons, or asteroids? Now that you have been using a PC, did you ever look up any of the prediction equations and try your hand at your own ephemeris calculations? Were you successful? -- then come show the rest of us how to do it. Were you unsuccessful? -- then come see if someone can help you.

Astrometry is the branch of Astronomy concerned with the measurement and prediction of the movement and positions of celestial bodies. If you answered YES or NO to any of the above questions, then you may enjoy the "Astrometry SIG". This SIG is open to any level astronomer and any brand of personal computer user. Many excellent magazine articles and books have come onto the market since PC's have come under the amateur astronomer's "dome". The "Astrometry SIG" will have four items on the agenda for each meeting:

A. Presentation of a computer related Astronomy topic Will often be a guest speaker on use of PC's in Astronomy. Perhaps: photographic exposures, scope guidance, or viewing session planning. You can speak on your specialty.

B. Discussion of Astrometry "Calculation of the Month" Discussion of a selected ephemeris calculation from one of the many references, using a Basic program.

C. Resource review A review of an available book, library, atlas, class, magazine, guidebook, commercial software, BBS, etc.

D. Problem discussion — bring your own problem, maybe someone can help.

The November meeting was our first and we discussed a bibliography of books, articles, magazines that could be used in future meetings. The December meeting will include further discussion on individual preferences for the new SIG. Bring your ideas! I will present the algorithm from Jean Meeus: "Astronomical Formulae for Calculators" in chapter 3, "Julian Day and Calendar Date".

Arlin B. Collins

BUYERS-BUILDERS

The second meeting of this group was led my Charles Plu-meau (596-8860). A questionnaire was passed out to an overflow crowd to determine interest and the direction this SIG should take. Charles suggested that future topics be might be: buying or building (assembling) a clone, local vendors, group purchases, etc. Many levels of expertise were represented, and volunteers to contribute to the following committees are needed:

Mother Board, Ram Chips --
    led by Wayne Ferguson
Cases, Power Supplies --
    led by Wayne Washburn
Monitors, Cards --
    led by Charles Plumeau
Hard disks, controllers --
    led by Bill Hines
Buyers Guide --
    led by Mitchell Lear

Charles suggested that the emphasis should be on the AT, since the "XT is dead". This comment sparked a heated discussion.

We plan to have someone from Five Star Electronics in Carrollton speak to this group in December.

If you enjoy a spirited and worthwhile hour, attend this SIG next month.

Don Marquis

C LANGUAGE

The November program included a presentation of the concepts of data abstraction, or data hiding. Sid Nolte led the discussion. ►

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BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

The December meeting will be presented by Kent Cobb, the author of GASP! who will talk on spawning tasks. His emphasis will be on the use of memory which is beyond the range of a small-memory model "C" program. He will discuss memory management for data buffers and for the execution of secondary programs.

All members are welcome to come, regardless of experience level. Come and learn more about this popular programming language.

TURBO PASCAL

In November we distributed and discussed examples of procedures and functions for making use of DOS's "Environment", and of queuing or spooling files to DOS's PRINT program from with a Turbo Pascal program.

Turbo disks that have been submitted to the Disk-of-the-Month library are being reviewed by Warren Ferguson and Andrew Chalk, so that they can be cataloged and ordered intelligently.

A new local bulletin board with Turbo programs and routines was represented at the meeting. It is operated by Sam Cook, and the BB number is 790-8960.

Phil Chamberlain

T'was the night before Christmas,
and all through the house
not a creature was stirring,
not a Microsoft Mouse.

The cables were hung
by the computer with care,
in hope that St. Nicholas
wouldn't trip there.

The children were nestled
all snug in their beds
while TV toy ads
ran through their heads.

With Dad in pink pajamas
and Mom in a mud pack
were both so tired,
we just hit the sack.

When off in the den
there arose such a clatter
I sprang from my waterbed
to see what was the matter

When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
but a room full of software and peripheral gear.
The software made my color screen a jet fighter,
other programs made me laugh and feel lighter.

This program lets me understand my kid.
Maybe it will keep me from flipping my lid.
That one there figures my income tax
even if with tax records, I am lax.

So many programs to run and do
much too many to describe to you.
I thought It must be a dream
nothing is so wonderful as it seems.

Suddenly, I awoke from my sleep
to hear my watches' electronic beep.
"It was only a dream," I said to myself,
"There is no Santa's sleigh or elf."

But wait, there is a meeting in December.
One you'll surely want to remember.
One to make shopping less tougher,
One for the Christmas stocking stuffer.

So come to the Business Application meeting
and make your fantasies seem less fleeting.
Never outgrew toys, it's my confession.
I'll be at the business SIG session.

And I heard him exclaim
ere he drove out of sight,
"Merry Christmas to all users,
and to all a good night."

Bruce Schubert

The Hardware Corner:

Disk Drives and Other Headaches

by Mike Slay
Reprinted from Capital PC Monitor, Aug, 1986

It's the moving parts in your PC that are going to fail. The RAM chips and other non-moving parts may fail, but the moving parts will, in time, all fail. Fortunately, they sometimes take years to die, and they usually are not too expensive to fix. If you know how to take care of your PC, your maintenance costs should be hardly more than the cost of the electricity consumed. However, that does not include printers. They will be covered in a separate article.

The Most Important Part

There is one component in your PC which is capable of causing catastrophic damage. That component is the fan. I have destroyed a computer terminal by running it without a fan, and I would expect a PC to be just as vulnerable. If your fan stops working, save your work and shut the unit off immediately. If your fan is just making a lot of noise, no action is necessary until it dies, which may be a year or more, but the noise may drive you to take action sooner. Needless to say, I don't advise disconnecting the fan for the sake of silence. Some people claim that if you run your PC without the cover, you don't need a fan. Don't you believe them. It is true that the fan has no effect with the cover off, but that just implies that you shouldn't run your PC without the cover. Most of the people who are running without covers have enough ambient air circulation to prevent problems, but not all of them.

If your fan needs repair the only thing you can do is take your PC to someone and pay them to replace your fan. Computer fans are not designed to be lubricated, and, in aggravation by calling around to see who has the fan in stock and how much they want to do the job. It's a simple fan replacement; they should be able to give you an estimate over the phone.

Floppy Disk Drives

The vast majority of all PC problems are with the floppy disk drives, especially if the heads are not cleaned regularly. Fortunately, cleaning disk drives is not as expensive as it used to be. Radio Shack sells a cleaner kit that, in my experience, will do over 100 cleanings for about eight dollars (catalog # 26-408). Unlike some other disk drive cleaners, this one has reusable disk and a bottle of cleaning fluid (as opposed to disposable disks).

I would make one modification to the instructions supplied by Radio Shack with the kit. Squirt some of the cleaning fluid through the oval hole in the cleaner disk that the heads go through (that is, the hole that looks like the oval hole in a regular disk). Then, when you insert the disk into the drive and close the door, the heads will be against and a wet spot on the disk. Now wait about five seconds for the gunk on the heads to soften before spinning the disk. Then spin the disk by trying to read it (I use DIR with three retries.) If you do this about four times a year, you shouldn't have any problems caused by dirty heads.

Besides cleaning the heads, there aren't many things you can do to fix a balky drive except pull it out and send it to a repair shop. If your drive is noisy, even when there is no disk in it, then you may have a cable rubbing against the flywheel. Try taking the lid off your PC (briefly--remember the heat) and looking at the drive to see if you see where the cable rubs. Cables can also get in the way of the servo motor that moves the head back and forth. If this is your problem, then, when you try to format a disk in the drive, everything will go smoothly for a while, but eventually and consistently fail near the end. If you take the lid off your PC and watch the formatting, you will see an arm slowly backing out of the drive in steps. If you see the arm bump into something, and then swing back and forth, seemingly trying to knock the obstruction out of the way, you have found the problem. Just move the cable, or whatever, and your troubles have ended. This problem is common in drive B of Compaq portables that have just been serviced. The cable from the disk drive
►

should bend right next to the connection to drive B, go down a couple of inches behind drive B, and the back up to the connector on the controller card. If the bend is in the wrong place, the cable may get in the way.

If your drive is truly zapped, then you need to get the thing out to a repair shop. They slide out pretty easily. The screws that hold the drives are on the sides, so that if they were longer they would screw right into the edges of the diskettes. Just unplug the two cables (power and data/controller), take out the screws, and slide out the drive.

If you have two floppies, the good one should be used as drive A. If you look carefully at the two drives you will notice a difference

between them. Drive B will have a chip in a socket that is empty on drive A. That is the terminator chip and is installed on the "last" floppy drive. In a one floppy system, drive A is the last floppy and should have a terminator chip. If you are going to live with a one drive system while your other drive is in the shop, make sure you have that terminator chip on the drive you keep. If you wish to swap drives, to experiment, fault isolate, or just boot, don't forget to swap the chip too.

Problems that have been experienced with local repair ships includes taking out the jumper that configures your drive for an IBM-PC, or compatible, and will forget to put it back in unless reminded. The same holds for any terminator chip you might leave in your drive.

SWAP 🖥️PC SHOP

BABS BYTES (excerpt)
by Barbara Lee Chertok
(PC Report, Boston CS via PC POST)

Heartstopping Moments

Have you ever had a data disk that refused to be read? You got the message -- Sector not found -- Abort, Retry, Ignore? and you have neglected to back up that important disk. Well, it's happened to me a couple of times. The first time, I noticed something -- the "defective" disk was loose in its sleeve. So before I struggled to resurrect the directory, I tried jiggling it back on center. And voila! Once again, it was readable. Whew!

It worked once so I tried it again on another disk. And once again, it worked. So before you panic -- check to see if the disk is centered in its sleeve. And then make a backup copy immediately.

11

(From PC POST, The Modesto IBM-PC User Group Newsletter)

This is the extendend character set to use for making boxes or menus.

HOLD   DOWN THE   "ALT" KEY   AND PRESS NUMBERS ON KEYPAD NUMBERS, THEN RELEASE
"ALT" KEY !

```
   ■219■            ■219■              220               ■223■
 ┌─────────┐      │ ■219■ │        │ ■────■ │          │ ■223■ │
221│  ABC  │222   222│  ABC │221   221│  ABC │222       222│ ABC │221
 └─────────┘      │       │        │ ■────■ │          │       │
   ■219■            ■219■            ■223■                 220
                                                        ■────■
```

```
┌───────┬─────┐    ╒═══════╤═════╕    ┌────────┐
│       │     │    │       │     │    │        │
├───────┼─────┤    ╞═══════╪═════╡    └────────┘
│       │     │    │       │     │
├───────┼─────┤    ╞═══════╪═════╡    ┌────────┐
│       │     │    │       │     │    │        │
└───────┴─────┘    ╘═══════╧═════╛    └────────┘
```

```
201══205══203══209══187    218──196──194──210──191    213══205══184
 ║         ║    ║    ║      │        │    │    │        │         │
186       186  179  186    179      179  186  179      │         │
 ║         ║    │    ║                                 212══205══190
204══205══206══216══185    195──196──197──215──180
 ║         │    │    ║                                 214──196──183
199──196══215──179──182    198══205══216══206══181      │         │
 ║         ║    │    ║      │        │    │    │         │         │
200══205══202══207══188    192──196──193──208──217     211──196──189
```

─ ─
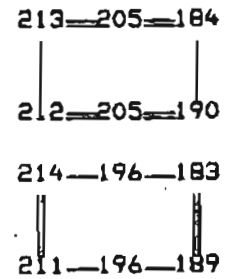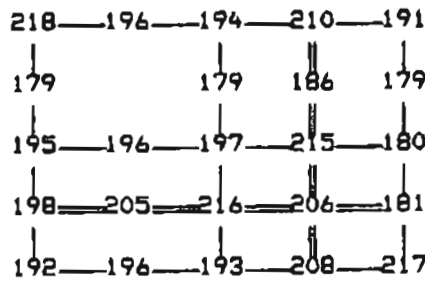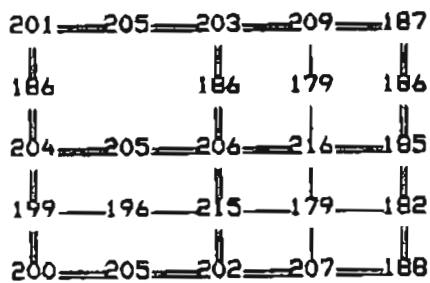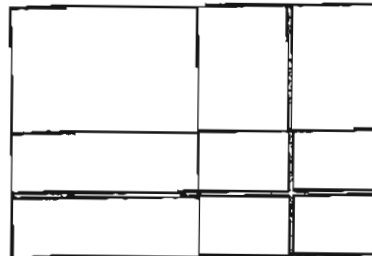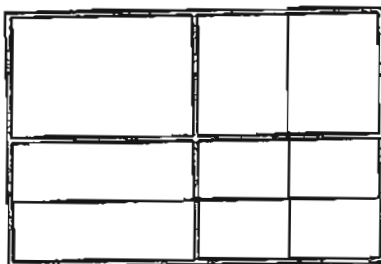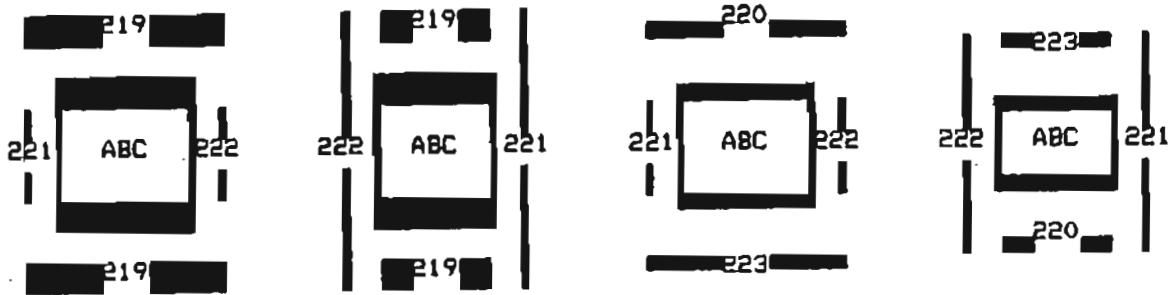
M E M B E R S H I P   🖫   A P P L I C A T I O N

```
                                                        NEW      ____
                                                     RENEWAL     ____
Name _____        ADDR. CHANGE  ____

Address _____

_____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone:  Home _____-_____-_____ Metro? _____

        Work _____-_____-_____ Metro? _____
```

Send completed application with your $24 check to:
Membership Chairman, 135 Skyline Dr., Plano, TX 75074

Setting A Default Path and Prompt
by Bill Todd

(From HARD COPY, Newsletter of Chicago Computing Society via PC POST, August 1986.)

On my hard disk system I set the DOS search path to C:\;C:\UTILS;C:\DOS in my autoexec.bat file using the DOS PATH command. This works fine while I an working with DOS by causing the root, utilities, and DOS directories to be searched automatilly for program and batch files.

When running certain applications, however, I want a different path. That's easy since I use a batch file based menu system to start all of my application programs. These batch files all have the same basic structure.

ChDir...   Move to appropriate directory.
Path....   Set the desired path.
RunProgram...   Start the program.
Path....   Set the path back to the default.

The Variety Store

CASH REGISTER INVENTORY SYSTEM

The "POINT OF SALE" CASH REGISTER VERSION INVENTORY CONTROL SYSTEM for the IBM-PC-AT compatable computers has just been announced by Freeman Software in Garland, Texas. This is a revision of the INVENTORY SYSTEM which has been on market for the last several years and is reported to handle the checkout clerks with "kid gloves" even if they do not know how to use a computer.

Besides all this the INVENTORY program maintains inventory up to 10,000 stock items, prints inventory reorder and stock listings, purchase orders, merchandise labels, and sales analysis reports. It it priced at $89.50.

The CASH REGISTER program also "pops open" the cash drawer which connects to the RS-232 port. The optional drawer is $390.00. △

Unfortunately, one day I wanted to change the default path. This meant that I not only had to change my autoexec.bat file but also every other batch file that changed the path.

To avoid this problem I now store the default path in the DOS environment and any time I need to return the path to its original value I use this stored value. Here is how my autoexec.bat file looks now.

SET DEFPATH=C:\;C:\UTILS;C:\DOS
PATH %DEFPATH%

The first command stores the path in the DOS environment with the name DEFPATH. You can see all of the strings in the environment by typing the command SET alone.

The second command sets the DOS path to the string stored in the environment. Using environment strings in path files in this way is an undocumented feature of DOS. That means that there is no guarantee that IBM will continue to support it in future releases, however, it has been available since release 2.0.

I have now changed all of my batch files to use this method to return the path to its original set value. Now if I want to change the default path all I have to do is change the SET DEFPATH= command in my autoexec.bat file instead of searching through every batch file on my disk.

This technique can also be used to store the default prompt. Why would you ever want to change the prompt?

Have you ever been in a program like 123 or Symphony, used the exit to DOS feature, and forgotten that you were inside another program? One way to prevent that is to change the DOS prompt each time you start a program that has the ability to temporarily exit to DOS. Using the PROMPT command you can put the program's name or the word "shell" in the prompt so that it will appear anytime you jump out to DOS.

This means that when you leave the program you have to set the prompt back to its original value. If you have stored the default prompt string in the environment you can restore the original prompt as described above. △

Selecting a Programming Language Made Easy

Daniel Salomon & David Rosenblueth

Department of Computer Science
University of Waterloo

With such a large selection of programming languages it can be difficult to choose one for a particular project. Reading the manuals to evaluate the languages is a time consuming process. On the other hand, most people already have a fairly good idea of how various automobiles compare. So in order to assist those trying to choose a language, we have prepared a chart that matches programming languages with comparable automobiles.

Assembler
A Formula I race car. Very fast, but difficult to drive and expensive to maintain.

FORTRAN II
A Model T Ford. Once it was king of the road.

FORTRAN IV
A Model A Ford.

FORTRAN 77
A six-cylinder Ford Fairlane wigh standard transmission and no seat belts.

COBOL
A delivery van. It's bulky and ugly, but it does the work.

BASIC
A second-hand Rambler with a rebuilt engine and patched upholstery. Your dad bought it for you to learn to drive. You'll ditch the car as soon as you can afford a new one.

PL/I
A Cadillac convertible with automatic transmission, a two tone paint job, white-wall tires, chrome exhaust pipes, and fuzzy dice hanging in the windshield.

ALGOL 60
An Austin Mini. Boy, that's a small car!

C
A black Firebird, the all-macho car. Comes with optional seat belts (lint) and optional fuzz buster (escape to assembler).

Pascal
A Volkswagen Beetle. It's small but sturdy. Was once popular with intellectuals.

Modula II
A Volkswagen with a trailer hitch.

ALGOL 68
An Aston Martin. An impressive car, but not just anyone can drive it.

LISP
An electric car. It's simple, but slow. Seat belts are not available.

PROLOG/LUCID
Prototype concept-cars.

Maple/MACSYMA
All-terrain vehicles.

FORTH
A go-cart.

LOGO
A kiddie's replica of a Rolls Royce. Comes with a real engine and a working horn.

APL
A double-decker bus. It takes rows and columns of passengers to the same place all at the same time. But, it drives only in reverse gear, and is instrumented in Greek.

Ada
An army-green Mercedes-Benz staff car. Power steering, power brakes, and automatic transmission are all standard. No other colors or options are available. If it's good enough for the generals, it's good enough for you. Manufacturing delays due to difficulties reading the design specifications are starting to clear up.
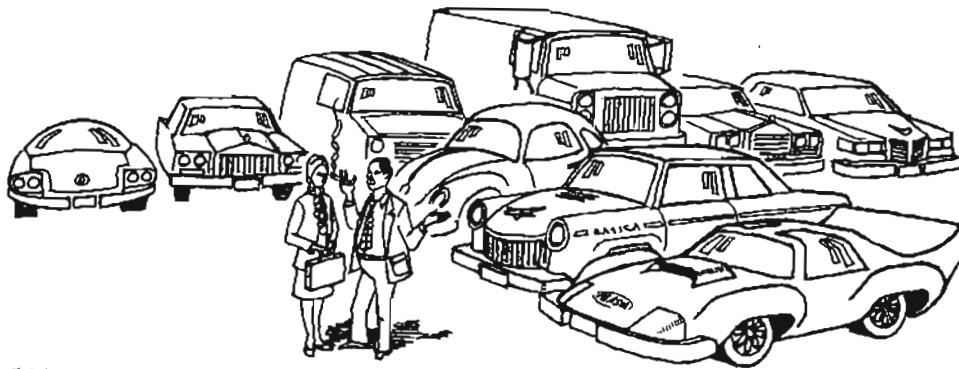
.... PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO SEE A SHARP LITTLE '77 FORTRAN ....

Editor's Notes

January is Election month. Nominees selected by the nominating committee are listed on page 3. Your choice for President-Elect will be on the Board of Directors for the next two years, and will be President during 1988. Other positions to be filled are the three at-large members of the Board of Directors for 1987. Ballots will be included in the January newsletter. Be sure to attend the meeting and vote for the candidate of your choice.

Bring your friends to a meeting and invite them to join the Group. Application blanks are available at our reception desk at Info-mart. There are several orientation sessions during "Meeting Saturday" where visitors can find out what our Group is about, and if they're just starting to learn about personal Computers, the DOS SIG session will help get them started in PC-/MS-DOS.

The newsletter is the largest ongoing expense of the User Group. While the staff and writers are all volunteers, printing and distribution costs must be paid, and these are sizeable. All money received from newsletter advertising goes directly into paying these

bills. We could have a lot more ad revenue each month and tap the Club's Treasury for less, if we had an agressive member to sell more advertising. If you can handle this, and will volunteer, contact one of the Group's officers or the newsletter editor.

The incentive program for early membership renewal is still in force. If you renew your membership more than thirty days prior to the expiration date shown on your newsletter label, you will be credited with a thirteen-month renewal instead of just twelve. Watch the date on your label – renew early!

Enter once! Enter often! I'm talking about the contest for the best newsletter article published between now and May. Where else can you get a chance for a free trip to the **1987 FALL COMDEX in LAS VEGAS?** Check out the contest rules on page 12 and start writing. Deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is December 15th. We have an extremely short turnaround for the January issue because the meeting will be on the first Saturday. So if your article doesn't make that issue, rest assured it will be published as soon as possible thereafter.

Happy Holidays!

John
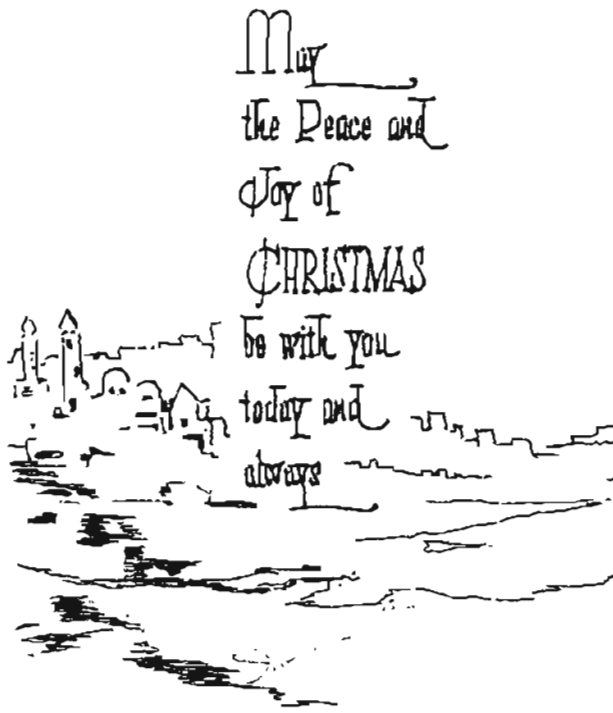
May
the Peace and
Joy of
CHRISTMAS
be with you
today and
always

PC

MEMBERSHIP CARD

This is your membership card in North Texas PC Users Group. You will need it for identification at Disk of the Month sales, group purchases and other activities. This card is valid only for you, the person named on label on reverse side. It is valid through expiration date shown on the label.

When trimmed, the card will fit the holders previously furnished for Infomart cards which are no longer required. Wear your membership card instead. Additional holders will be available at a nominal charge.

Trim card to wallet size.

Room Assignments

Check times & room numbers in lobby at INFOMART

Special Presentations:

9:00 – Auditorium

Mike Durbin of Micro Power & Light will demonstrate the Grand Inquisitor.

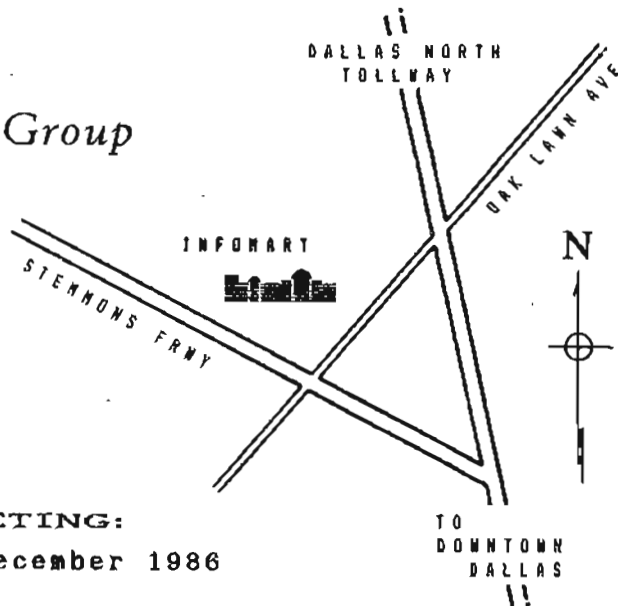| 9:00 – 9:55	Room
Science/Engineering	____
DOS	____
Genealogy (w/Apple)	____
Graphics	____
Buyers Guide	____
Astrometry	____

9:30 – 9:55	
Orientation	____

MAIN MEETING: 10:00 – 11:00

Michael Dungworth of Cray Research, will be discussing that company's line of super-computers.

11:30 – 11:55	Room
Orientation	____
12:00 – 12:55	
Assembly Language	____
APL	____
C Language	____
Turbo Pascal	____
12:30 – 1:55	
Invest – N-Squared	____

1:00 – 1:55	Room
Artificial Intelligence	____
Business Applications	____
Communications	____
Databases	____
Lotus	____
Dataflex	____
2:00 – 2:55	
Advanced Programmers	____
Integrated Software	____
Framework	____
Basic Applications	____

North Texas PC Users Group

DALLAS NORTH
TOLLWAY

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INFOMART

STEMMONS FRWY

N

NEXT MEETING:

13 December 1986

TO
DOWNTOWN
DALLAS