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*North Texas PC Users Group*

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North Texas PC NEWS  
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Deadlines:

All material for publication in North Texas PC NEWS (articles and ads) must be received by the NEWS staff no later than Wednesday before the fourth Friday 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 1050. Member distribution is 863; remaining copies are distributed to PC user groups around the country, and to advertisers, prospective members and others with common interests.



DEADLINE

Copy deadline for October PC NEWS:  
Wednesday, September 24th.

Future Meeting Dates

October Meeting - 2nd Saturday (11th)  
November Meeting - 3rd Saturday (15th)  
December Meeting - 2nd Saturday (13th)

...from the Editor's desk.

Elections will be in January. The following quotes are from the bylaws and are reprinted here for your info:

"The Board of Directors will consist of five (5) members, including the President, President-Elect and three (3) members elected at large by the members."

"The officers of the Users Group will be the President, President-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, and Program Chairman."

"The officers of the Users Group, with the exception of the President and President-Elect, shall be elected annually by the Board of Directors at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors."

Name badges should be picked up at the booth in the INFOMART lobby. Stop and check... yours may have expired.

There are many different details that must be taken care of and coordinated in a group as big as ours. It becomes increasingly difficult to cover them all. We are fortunate to have leaders who take their responsibilities seriously. These leaders are volunteers who work diligently to keep the Group operating in our best interests. However, our leaders want, and need, more input and help from members. To facilitate this, the main meeting has been moved fifteen minutes earlier and now starts at 10:00 o'clock rather than 10:15. The change has been made to allow a period at the end for brief work group meetings. This allows you to join in the area in which you are most interested, and you should join in... that's the way to put your ideas to work. Read the article on page 4 for details.

This issue of North Texas PC NEWS was composed using PS Technical Word Processor by Scroll Systems. Repro was printed on a Toshiba P351 dot matrix printer in Prestige Elite and GTHIC151 typefaces.

September

Charles Kroboth, Program Chairman

9:00 AM, Auditorium

Certified Software, Inc.

**Certified  
Accounting  
System**

Certified Software, Inc. will be presenting the newest versions of their accounting system called Certified Accounting III as well as several of their vertical market packages. These include Property Management System, Membership/Association System, and Wholesale Distributor System.

10:00 AM, Auditorium

Data Access Corp.



Data Access Corporation of Miami, Florida will be represented by their Vice President, Chip Casanave. Chip will be giving us an overview of DataFlex as well as covering the new features in version 2.2A. Windowing techniques to create field context sensitive "pop-up" help screens, allowing for execution of external programs, and increased speed for compiling & indexing are a few of the enhancements. DataFlex is a powerful relational database that offers

speed, flexibility, and ease of use. It is available on over 20 operating systems and the programs you create are transportable to any of those. Another nice feature is DataFlex's experience in a network environment. The software has run on multi-user systems for over 5 years and is used by Novell as their internal database at the Infomart showroom.

**COMING NEXT MONTH**

Oct. 9:00 AM Ansa Software - Paradox

Oct. 10:00 AM Tentatively, Ben Rosen and/or Compaq

Oct. 12:00 AM Lotus Development



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## On Complexity

by Jim Hoisington

About 1950, John Von Neumann presented a series of lectures at the University of Illinois. The lectures have since been published in a book called "The Theory of Self Reproducing Automata." One of his theses was that our computers would become increasingly complex. Eventually, the computers would become so complex that the only way for them to function would be if they could build and repair themselves.

In my work as a consultant, I have been forced to deal more and more with the issue of complexity. This series of columns, will deal with each of the areas that seem to be of concern because of the increasing complexity of our computers.

The topic for this month is the base PC -- the motherboard if you will.

I bought my IBM computer, the first day they were available in Dallas. In those days, the base IBM PC came with one diskette drive and 48k of memory. I had no problem convincing the salesperson that I needed a second diskette drive but it took me a lot of effort to get them to install the memory to bring my total system up to 64k. It seems that the salespeople had been told that 48k was all that most people would ever need.

That seems very amusing today, but consider that I have used that machine at something over 30 hours per week since I bought it and have had only one hardware failure on the base machine. And that failure was in the first month!

Today, the base machine that most people buy is at a minimum, two diskette drives and 256k of memory. In addition, the 4.77mhz of the original PC is surpassed by most of the machines on the market today. Whichever set of numbers you believe, it is obvious that the

base machine sold today is increasingly not made by IBM and runs at a speed faster than 4.77mhz.

The press lumps these machines together under the name 'clones'. Some of these clones are made by well established U.S. companies. These companies have engineers who have designed a machine using good engineering techniques that duplicates the function of the IBM PC hardware but is designed to run at a faster speed. In general, the machines produced by those companies enjoy a good reputation when it comes to reliability.

Other clones are made outside the U.S. Sometimes the engineering consists of using a copier to produce the circuit masks that are used to make the motherboards. A little resolution is lost, just as it is if you get a copy made of your favorite snapshot, but it still isn't too bad. I have walked through some of the electronic marketplaces in Hong Kong and seen clones being assembled under temporary roofs set up in an alley way. These machines also are faster but use the original design. Do these clones work? The answer is yes and no. I have a friend who was going to get into the business of selling clones here in Dallas. He got 1,000 motherboards and spent several days testing them. Not one of them passed the diagnostic tests!

But the problem is that they work for some period of time before they fail. Let's say that the mean time to fail is one hour. (The typical problem is that they loose interrupts and hang the system.) If you buy one of these clones and use it for 15 minutes at a time, three times a week, you probably will think that it is a pretty good machine. Statistically, the chances of the machine failing while you're using it are low.

However, if you use the same machine for a stock portfolio analysis that runs for one hour and 15 minutes and you run that analysis five nights a week, you are in for trouble.

Now consider that the typical PC clone has had the speed of the processor increased from 4.77mhz to 6mhz or 8 mhz. Also consider

many of the clone makers are selling AT clones that are running at 8mhz, 10mhz, and faster but using the original AT design.

At these faster speeds, the engineering of the motherboard becomes more complex. The possibility of a signal traveling on one lead on the circuit board interfering with another signal on an adjacent lead increases as the speed increases. If the board was engineered with a copier circuit mask, the fuzziness introduced by the copier may cause glitches. A friend of mine who buys many PC's for his company, recently bought a large batch of 8mhz PC AT clones from a well known supplier. He found that only 30 percent of them would run for one hour without locking up!

There are already companies who have shipped PC's which use IBM's PC AT architecture but have the INTEL 80386 instead of the INTEL 80286. By the time you read this, at least one of those machines will probably be announced. This machine will probably run at 16mhz. So the level of complexity of the design of the base machine design should be increased again.

Will there be 80386 clones from manufacturers with little or no engineering talent? The answer is yes. Will they run? Of course. Will they be reliable? Well, if you think that they will be, I've got this great beach front property south of Sabine Pass, Texas that I'd like you to consider ...

Jim

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## NTPCUG Volunteers

Support Group  
Organizational Meetings

This month, immediately after the main meeting in the auditorium, most of our officers and the leaders of our numerous administrative and support functions will be holding informal organizational sessions for those of you interested in getting more involved by assisting us in one of the areas listed below. If you would like to play a larger role in helping us build a better users group, this is your big chance!

Some of the groups will be forming standing committees, others will be more loosely

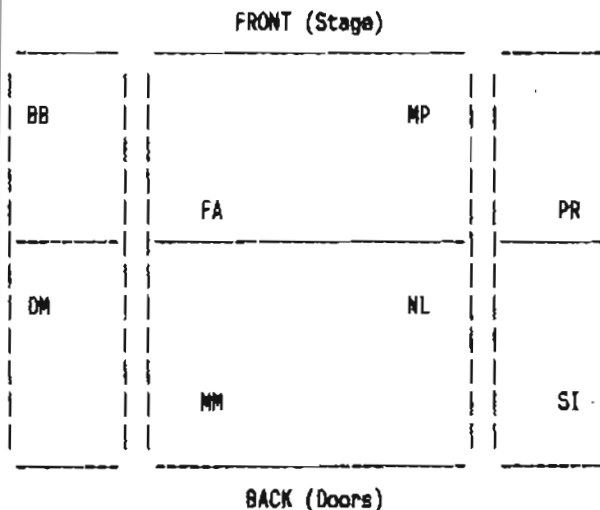
organized. Whatever the case, decide which area would be of most interest to you and get signed-up with the person in charge. The groups and their leaders are as shown below.

Each month this same time slot will be available for these support groups to get together whenever necessary. If you would like to participate in more than one group, pick one to attend this month and just let the other leader know so he or she can get you on his or her list.

Thanks for your efforts and interest. You are the ones that keep us growing - not just in numbers we hope, but in quality, too.

We will try to stagger the meeting areas in the auditorium as shown:

BB - Bulletin Board	Jim Hoisington
DM - Disk of the Month	Tim O'Neil
FA - Financial/ Administrative/Legal	Joe Brophy
MM - Membership (incl. Registration Booths and Volunteer Coordination.)	Bob Russell
MP - Main Meeting Programs (incl. Equip. Setup)	Charles Kroboth
NL - Newsletter	John Pribyl
PR - Publicity (incl. Group Purchases and Startext)	Stuart Yarus
SI - SIG Coordination	Phil Chamberlain



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## Special Interest Program Reports

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### General Special Interest Group (SIG) News

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Because of changes in deadlines for publishing the Newsletter, SIG articles must now be submitted by the 4th WEDNESDAY of each month.

The Disk-of-the-Month Chairman, Tim O'Neil, will be contacting the SIG leaders to help evaluate, catalog, and "cull" the DOM Library -- each SIG concentrating on disks directed at its own area of interest.

Prior to the main meeting each month, SIG leaders should contact the SIG coordinator regarding any announcements they would like to make.

### ADVANCED PROGRAMMERS

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The July meeting began with a book recommendation by Neil, "Advanced MS-DOS" by Ray Duncan from Micro-soft Press. (Supposedly, Neil is mentioned somewhere in the book.) Another book that was recommended was "80386/80286 Assembler Language Programming" from Osborne/McGraw-Hill.

The "theme" of this month's discussion would seem to have been operating systems. We discussed the rumors of IBM's own PC operating system "A-DOS" and the future of the Microsoft Pro-

tected Mode operating systems, MS-DOS 5 and beyond.

One member recounted his experiences with trying to use BASIC's BSAVE and BLOAD commands to save and recall EGA graphics -- he somehow lost the color information. Another user recounted a positive experience in upgrading a PC with an 80286 add-on board.

IBM is said to be losing money in the PC market these days, and this fired discussion of the rumors that IBM is going to get out of the PC business over the next few months/years. Someone suggested that either Compaq or AT&T might take their place and another member replied that AT&T was "taking a bath" in the computer market place -- especially in the PC area.

Mention of AT&T and computers, of course, turned the discussion to the UNIX(tm) operating system. There was a lively discussion of the PRO's and CON's of UNIX. Those who liked UNIX defended it vigorously, but it was obvious that many members remained unconvinced that UNIX had any future on the PC.

Carrington Dixon

### APL LANGUAGE SIG

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APL is the only computer language that was originally

designed as a human-to-human notation!

The "APL philosophy is to free the programmer from computer-imposed restrictions as much as possible and make programming more productive and more fun. For example, variables don't have to be declared -- just assign a value to a name and let APL handle the creation of the variable, the assignment of storage, etc. Because of its power, APL is often mentioned in the discussion of "4th generation languages", and is becoming more and more popular in corporate information centers.

Come to our meeting this month and join the fun.

Jim Fiegenshue

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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The AI SIG is intended for both practicing professionals in Artificial Intelligence and for those who want to learn about AI. AI topics include: expert systems, natural language processing, speech, vision, planning, robotics, knowledge representation, heuristics, the Japanese Fifth Generation Project, MCC, and cognitive models.

AI-related products will be discussed, including both programming languages and expert system building tools.

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## Special Interest Program Reports

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There are now several Prolog and LISP interpreters costing less than \$100, and a public domain LISP and Prolog.

Specific topics for future meetings and projects include: real AI applications; bibliography of books, software, and training courses; Prolog programming; demonstrations of TI PC Scheme and Personal Consultant; and the role of AI in the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Jim Bender

### ASSEMBLER SIG

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Assembler is, in the final analysis, the most fundamental language for computers. Every type of compiler eventually produces machine language code. The Assembler SIG concentrates on the use of Macro Assemblers for the 8086-8088 family of computers. Usually a given group of instructions, with examples of their use, or algorithms that make particular use of them, is covered each month.

John Wolley

### BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

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This SIG has the objective of exploring business uses of the micro-computer, and helping members improve their general knowledge of computing. It does not try to

teach programming or the use of a particular program. Instead it seeks to cover the uses of categories of programs, and other areas (like batch processing) that will help users get more out of their computers. A presentation of some aspect of micro-computing usually precedes the discussion of business application subjects of interest to those attending.

Bruce Schubert

### C Language

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"C" is rapidly becoming the most popular programming language for professional program development. Most of the really good commercially available programs are developed with the C language because it allows the programmer to access most of the features of the machine available to assembly language programmers. The availability of low cost and efficient compilers is making the language even more popular for the novice as well as the expert.

Come to the C language SIG meetings to obtain information on compilers, program editors, debuggers, and features of this popular language.

Sid Nolte

### COMMUNICATIONS

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The Communications SIG group welcomes all who are interested in Personal Computer communications. The SIG meeting is normally made up of a 30 minute formal presentation followed by a free form question and answer session. For those months with no formal presentation scheduled we have a free form meeting mostly related to communications.

So, bring your questions and answers and attend this months meeting.

Fred Williams

### DOS

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Previously known as Beginners, the DOS SIG concentrates on every phase of the DOS command structure. It is open to members of other groups, who may be in the process of changing to MS- or PC-DOS.

John Hall

### GENEALOGY

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Jeannie O'Neill presented the August program on the subject of SOURCES in Genealogy. Without recorded sources of information, the researching genealogist is lost. The TEXT program in Family Roots is good to record sources of informa-



**Special Interest Program Reports**

tion. Footnotes in individual records are another place to record sources.

As the individual accumulates more records, it is necessary to keep track of all records and their sources. Some vital records are birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage certificates, which are available in the city, county or state where the event took place. Record the source for obtaining the certificate, including the volume and page number. DO NOT ask for a certified copy. Instead, ask for a PHOTOCOPY.

There were also a number of good suggestions on how to research cemeteries.

Jeannie compiled and presented a 6-page handout, taken from the Random House Dictionary of the English Language. It discusses footnotes, references from books, periodicals, abbreviations in footnotes, and gave examples.

Minnie Champ

**GRAPHICS**

This SIG is devoted to any and all means of programming and implementing graphic displays and applications on the IBM and compatible PC's. Alan Kaye's talk last month gave us an idea of the tre-

mendous potential in this field.

Mike Durbin

**N-SQUARED ANALYSIS**

The meeting on August 16 was attended by about 16 people. The discussion on technical analysis continued. The next meeting (second Saturday in Sept) will also deal with technical analysis, but with more audience participation. Hopefully we will work with the real time markets, see what current indicators are telling us, and then see how it works out before the next meeting.

Greg Morris

**TURBO PASCAL**

The first part of the August meeting was devoted to a discussion of the Turbo Toolbox -- its usefulness in building and using indexed files, and a few of the problems that may be encountered in its use.

Most of the meeting was a question and answer session with David Intersimoni (sp?) from Borland. He whetted our appetites with some details of the improvements that will be included in Turbo Pascal 4.0, most notably linkable .OBJ files. (Version 4.0 is not due out until early or mid 1987, unfortunately.

Modula-2 is apparently even further off). David also recommended the new version of Turbo Tutor as being greatly improved over the initial version.

There was a considerable amount of discussion on how to keep up with the latest news and developments in Turbo Pascal. While Compu-Serv, TUG-Lines, and Borland's technical service group were mentioned, there was general agreement that Borland should attempt to communicate directly with the various user groups.

One of the members of the group expressed frustration in understanding how the Turbo "Read" statement works. We'll try to cover that in our September meeting.

There is a local FIDO Bulletin Board with a lot of Turbo Pascal programs and routines. The phone number for the board is 520-2826.

Phil Chamberlain

SWAP  SHOP

Will be back...

## Computer Consultants

by John Keohane

Linda Laer and I recently had lunch together at Kuby's Sausage House near SMU. Linda is also a member of the Data Processing Management Association. We had met earlier at DPMA and were at Kuby's to continue our discussion on marketing and data processing. Linda markets off-site data storage. I market my own services as a computer consultant.

"Consultant" is not always a good word. Before I started calling myself a "consultant", I had a sarcastic definition of a "consulting study" as "an objective study with a predetermined conclusion". That was obviously said in jest, since no truly objective study can have its conclusion determined prior to the study being complete.

At the DPMA meeting where we met, Linda had asked if it might be good marketing for Kestrel Data Storage where she works to provide some kind of open-house for consultants. My response was hesitant. There are a whole wide variety of consultants.

"Consultant" can mean a part-time or short-term technician who comes in to do a technically defined job, or it can mean someone who advises, and perhaps implements, managerial decisions for your business. Computer consultants can come in on the strictly technical. One friend of mine is looking for people who know CICS internals to code new releases of his mainframe application software consistent with new releases of CICS.

Other consulting can be primarily managerial, such as doing a management assessment of computer needs. Some consultants can combine both the somewhat technical and the managerial in such areas as training staff on use of spreadsheets or database.

There is a whole range of consultants, from the individual entrepreneur to the large multinational firm such as a Booz Allen or an Arthur Andersen. There is a whole range of expertise

in consultants, both between individuals, and within the same firm. There is also a whole range of problems that consultants are interested in, and are good in dealing with.

During our lunch at Kuby's, Linda asked how people find consultants. Primarily people find consultants through word of mouth from people they have confidence in. That's the same way people find doctors and dentists, lawyers and CPAs and insurance agents.

There is probably a greater variety of computer consultants, than of doctors or lawyers, dentists, insurance agents or CPAs. Besides the greater variety, there is a greater dynamism of change in computers and computer technology, than I think in any other these other fields. That makes it doubly hard for a potential client to pick a computer consultant. Because of the variety of consultants, one must pick the right kind, and because of the dynamism in computers, it is especially hard to define the "right kind".

Linda asked "How do you know that you've found one who really knows what your problems are?" Well, you don't know, and that's not necessarily what consultants are hired for anyway.

Some people are not in the market for consultants. Some feel they already have what expertise they need, or can develop it themselves by talking to salespersons at computer stores, by talking to friends, by going to data processing groups. They may have an full-time employee with the expertise or have the authorization and ability to hire that full-timer. A consultant is like a part-time or temporary employee. In the best cases it is a person or firm which will rent their real expertise to you.

The consultant's hourly rate may be higher than that for a full-time employee, but the annual charge may be much less because one may need a consultant only a few hours per month, or a few months per year, and consultants will have acquired essential training and expertise before you start to pay for their time. Some companies bring in consultants only sporadically, like full-time for a few

months, to handle peak loads, like the CICS conversions. Others bring in consultants a few hours per month, or to do a particular defined job like a computer feasibility study.

Although a hired consultant is usually a part-time or short-term employee, if you were to hire one, you'd best ask some of the same questions you would ask before hiring any employee at all. You would interview a consultant, and learn about credentials and expertise. Before you do that, you would ask yourself some basic questions about what you want the consultant to do. In some instances consultants are brought in as Linda suggested, to determine what your problems are. Other times, the boss or hiring authority determines the problems, and the consultant is brought in simply to code. In other cases the consultant is hired to say what management already "knew". Here there was felt need for an "objective" confirming outside authority to take the heat for such suggestions, and here there might sometimes be "objective" studies with predetermined conclusions.

John Keohane is a computer system implementer, a resident of Richardson, and a University of Chicago MBA. He is vice president of the University of Chicago Club of Dallas. He is active in the Dallas chapter of the Data Processing Management Association and in the North Texas PC Users Group. ▲

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The following is taken from the July 1986 issue of "A BYTE AT A TIME".

## w a t e r

by David Black  
Pioneer Valley PC Users Group

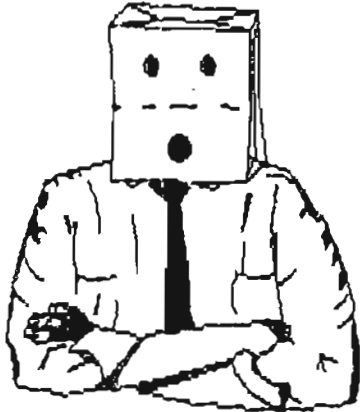
After spending a pleasant, but rainy, evening in Northampton, I returned home, walked into my darkened study, and experienced every PC user's nightmare. My first thought, as I stood in the doorway listening to the papery tapping sound, was that there were mice under my desk. The light revealed something more hor-

rible: my desk was flooded, and the noise was caused by the arrhythmic drip of water from a leaky ceiling. Luckily the computer itself was undamaged, but among the casualties were a number of floppies that had been left exposed. The word processor, MS-DOS, and a number of others were dishrags but, no matter, there were backup versions of all those programs stored safely elsewhere. However, three of the soaked disks were irreplaceable. They contained personal data and represented many hours of labor. How stupid of me not to have backups. I put them aside on some towels, cleaned up the worst of the mess with the help of my wife, and went to bed.

The next morning the soaked floppies were still soaked. I could just barely turn the disk inside their sleeve with my fingers. As I did, I could see that the problem was not that the disks were wet, but that the inner lining of the sleeve was wet. So, although the exposed part of the disk would dry quickly, it was immediately re-moistened by its passage between the wet "blankets" of the sleeve's lining. I had no way of knowing whether the water was simply making my disks unusable.

I figured I had nothing to lose. I took a new dry disk out of the drawer, slid my fingernails underneath the edge where the back and front of the sleeve are joined together, and opened it up. I pulled the good floppy (which, without its protective sleeve, really is floppy) out and threw it away. I took the diskette containing my precious data and opened it up as well, this time cutting away the overhanging flap of the sleeve with a pair of scissors. Using a tissue to avoid touching it, I pulled out the floppy and inserted it into the good sleeve, folded the flap over, stuck it in drive A, and to my delight, successfully made a copy. I repeated this process for all three disks, using the same good sleeve in each case. I was surprised (and delighted) to learn that getting soaked had not ruined my data, just prevented the disk from traveling inside the sleeve.

The lesson is, of course, if it's worth a disk, it's worth two. Back up your data. But if it gets wet, don't despair. Bits won't drown. ▲

**NERD ON THE STREET...**

**IN THE NEWS** - Convergent Technologies recent layoff of 500 employees has been directly related to the decline in orders from AT&T and its Unix PC. In an effort to recoup some of its losses, Convergent has signed a letter of intent to purchase the turnkey systems division (vertical market software) and micro software division (Open Systems) from UCCEL Corp. in Dallas. Tandon Corp. has recently sold its thinline disk-drive division to Shugart Corp. Tandon's micro computer division, which produces the PCX and PCA are using the advanced VLSI chips. These chips reduce the number of logic chips from 65 (as in an IBM PC) to 4. Seagate Technology showed a \$16.4 million profit for its fourth quarter compared to \$712,000 in 1985.

**PAY ME OR TRADE ME** - A recent survey showed that John Woodhull of Logicon, Inc. was the highest paid executive of a computer-related firm in Southern California. \$1,312,636.

**CLONE UPDATE** - A \$9.95 reference book called The IBM XT Clone Buyer's Guide has been published by the IBM XT User Group of San Francisco. Emphasis is on the Far East equipment and includes chapters on assembly, choosing the right parts, and shopping at garage sales. Chapters are reportedly updated by the group members who also run a bulletin board at (415) 552-9070. I haven't seen the book yet but if you want to take a chance, write to Modular Information Systems, 431 Ashbury Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94117.

**MRS. WOZ** - Steve Wozniak (of Apple fame) and his wife Candace recently had their \$750 lawsuit against the City of Los Angeles thrown out of court. It appears that Candy was arrested by the LAPD for trying to distribute a mere 128 tickets for the 1984 Olympic Games to the highest bidder. As the \$11,920 worth of tickets found in her purse were confiscated (and subsequently not sold), the Woz's were a bit peeved. The US District Judge in the case did not agree that their constitutional rights had been violated and that the tickets were needed as evidence. By the way, Candy was never prosecuted because the witness refused to testify against her.

**SHADY ADVERTISING** - Recent ads for Clipper software (a dBASE III enhancement product) from Nantucket Corporation say that package features multi-user capabilities. According to employees they may enhance their product to meet advertising claims in the future. For now unhappy customers will have to purchase another product from another company that makes Clipper networkable.

**79 AND KICKING** - The Navy has just ordered Adm. Grace Hopper to retire after 43 years of service. Her last involuntary retirement was in 1968 (at age 60) but the Navy reinstated her when they ran into computer problems. Hopper is the creator of the COBOL language, coined the phrase "bug" when a moth short circuited her computer, and is even pictured on the 7th floor of Infomart. Her retirement party was held in Boston on the USS Constitution and said "I'm not leaving; they're telling me to go."

**P&L** - IBM Japan posted a 16% increase for the first half of 1986. This was due to increased popularity of the "3090", System 36, and 38. The Nikkei-Sangyo Daily reported that NEC has developed a 6 megabyte 3.5 inch disk drive using a new technology called "Contemporary Control Theory". It will be released next spring and priced low. Tandy's profit picture took a 50% dip for the fourth quarter due to "nonrecurring expenses". If that's the case, look for headlines next year proclaiming their 100% increase over 1986. Eagle Computer has ceased operations and is liquidating. \$4.8 million of the \$7.2 million debt was owed

**NERD ON THE STREET** (continued)

to Bank of America. Although Zenith's computer systems division gained 19% for the second quarter, the company reported a loss of \$9.9 million. Computercraft posted a \$6,900,000 (33%) loss for 1986. Businessland's earnings were \$4.77 million compared to \$239,000 in 1985.

**GOOD NEWS** - While Lotus and Microsoft have lifted copy protection from their products to large volume customers, Ashton-Tate has done them one better by un-protecting their entire line of products to everyone.

**LIABILITY?** - A Florida construction company has filed suit against Lotus Development Corp. because data on their spreadsheet was not totaled properly and cost the company \$250,000 on a bid. The company was using Symphony and claims the miscalculation was the result of a "latent defect" in the package. Get serious! Every software developer and programmer/consultant in the country is going to get their wallet and/or .wks files zapped because this guy doesn't know how to use @SUM. Even if it is a legitimate bug, lets not set a precedent that will bankrupt the entrepreneurial companies out there developing new, exciting and sometimes dangerous software.

**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY** - How many of you knew that our fearless leader, Jim Graham, is really an aspiring artist.

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**PUBLICITY**

Gary Sewell and Stuart Yarus were guests on KRLD's Sunday night computer talk show on 8/17. Host Larry Dominguez was pleased with the audience response.

**Complimentary Memberships**

The club offers complimentary memberships to members who submit original articles for publication in North Texas PC NEWS.

**GROUND RULES**

**Subject matter.** Articles may cover any aspect of the IBM Personal Computer and compatible computers. Main criteria is that they be of interest to members of our group. Some typical subjects include: Hands-on review or personal experience with new software, hardware or techniques... Peripheral interconnection problems and solutions... How-to articles on furniture, diskette storage, Printer paper control... New and unique tree structure for hard disk users... etc., etc.

**Number and Length of Articles.** Four or more articles during one membership year. Each article must be original and a minimum length of 400 words.

**Submission.** Submit general articles to the Editor; software articles to Software Review Editor. Phone numbers are shown on the inside front cover of the newsletter.

**Format.** 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.

**Notify Membership Director.** Before membership expires, eligible members must provide a listing of published articles to the Membership Director for award of the complimentary membership.

▲



## Disk of the Month

by Tim O'Neil

Thanks to all the Disk of the Month Committee. Our disk of the month table ran smooth last month. Thanks to the Board for the new boxes to help store our disk a real improvement over the old boxes.

The committee met last month and some great ideas came out of our meeting.

The table will be open from 9 till 2 on meeting Saturdays.

I appreciate the two people that came to our table and gave us some public domain software last month. This is your library and if you have anything you would like to share please give me a call... phone: 817-267-8981, STAR-TEXT: 6442.

We will start next month to do business by mail... Will tell you more in next month's meeting.

Thanks for a good first month. Tim

DOM for September: PC-TICKLE  
Reviewed by Dwight Neal

PC-Tickle (TM) is the feature of this month's DOM. This is another shareware product of Jim Button, with help in documentation from Barbara Wilson, Bil. Alvernaz and DeeDee Walsh. The registration fee is \$29.95. PC-Tickle is "the program that never forgets," a straight-forward program that can display or print your to-do list of the day.

The to-dos are created using the Buttonware mini-editor (or other word processors that create text files without hidden controls). The list file is scanned by PC-Tickle, looking for any lines that contain dates in a MM/DD/YY format. Any dates matching the current date are displayed. Lines without

dates can be included in the list file to permit headings, profound sayings, etc. In fact, one of the example files with the package includes "... And don't work too late today" as the last entry. Obviously not aimed toward coders. In addition to this simple use of dates, the program can be invoked with any date you wish to review. Also, wild-cards can be set up in the dates in the list file to permit entries to show up for the entire month or year (for example, 08/1\*/86 would show up every day in August beginning with a 1).

The program also permits the definition of tokens that can be used to generate totals at the bottom of the daily list. That is, a calorie counter could be set up that used FOOD as a category of intake and BURN as a category of exercise. At the bottom of the daily list, PC-Tickle adds each category, and produces a grand total of the two. The documentation uses calorie counting, expense reporting and checkbook balancing as three examples of using the counting features. Although there is no way to edit the figures input to know you say what you mean, the check balancing option alone is worth the \$30, if you want a simple way to get it done.

Speaking of documentation, that is the best feature of the package. The concepts are well-presented, the format is easy to follow, and the text is supported by a number of good example list files on the disk.

Also on the DOM is an interesting little BASIC package called "History," produced by a student group called Mypro Inc. As delivered, the package offers history lesson reviews set up as an adventure game. A "time travel" format takes you to a hidden location, and as you answer history questions, you gain gold and move through a simple graphics cave. The questions are about 5 different time periods of American history, and seem to be on a high school level.

Another BASIC program can be used to customize your own lessons. History is not the only subject that could be set up, although that is definitely the bias of the package.

Dwight



## Disk of the Month (continued)

**DISCLAIMER:** The North Texas PC Users Group copies these programs as a service to the club and the members of the club. We try to test all the programs, but we **DO NOT WARRANT THE PROGRAMS IN ANY WAY. YOU MUST DECIDE IF A PROGRAM IS SUITABLE FOR YOUR SYSTEM AND USE.** If you ask, we will tell you what we know about any program, but the final decision to buy and/or use these programs is totally yours. We will gladly and without question exchange an unreadable diskette for one of the same program.

**EXCHANGE:** All members of the club are encouraged to contribute copies of public domain programs to the club library. For each new diskette of software contributed, you may select any diskette in the club library in exchange. The contributions will be reviewed before credit is issued at the next meeting.

**MAIL ORDERS:** Beginning soon. See next month's PC NEWS for details.

**PRICE:** \$2.00 per diskette (if the program is on two diskettes the price is \$4.00)

**CATALOG DISKETTES:** Currently this is a two volume set priced at \$4.00. This has all of the readme files from each diskette in the club library.

**MEDIA:** DSD 5 1/4" Formatted as 9 sector data diskettes. Public domain software only, standard full disclaimers.

**AVAILABILITY:** We will do our best to have all past diskettes at each meeting. DOM sales will begin at the DOM counter around 9:00, and continue until 10 minutes before the main meeting when we will close. We will then reopen after the main meeting and remain open until around 3:00.

**IBM EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER:** The EXCHANGE for the current month will be available at the DOM table AFTER the main meeting at no charge to paid up members of the NTPCUG. ▶

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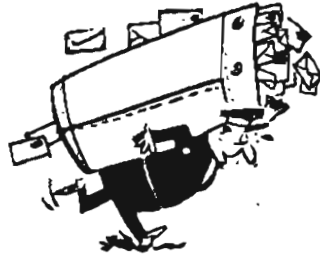
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## Disk of the Month Survey

1. What would you like to see in the Disk of the Month library?

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 -----  
 -----

2. How can we better serve you at the Disk of the Month Table?

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 -----  
 -----

3. What are the Problems you have had in the past?

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 -----  
 -----  
 -----

4. Would you help to review disks? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_.

5. Would you work at Disk of Month Table? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_.

Name: -----

Phone: -----

Address: -----

Please bring this to the booth at the meeting, or send it to:

Tim O'Neil  
 Box 396  
 Bedford, Texas 76021.





## Software Report

### R-BASE SYSTEM V

by Bruce C. Lutz

I recently reviewed a pre-release copy of the improved R-Base (database) program from Microrim which will be available sometime in August. Even though I believe that R-Base is friendly, etc., I have not used it very much because of the lack of certain features, its large physical size and the numerous files required. While the new product is still large physically (it used up approximately four megabytes on my hard disk), R-Base has attacked most of its other problems with vigor.

When the new R-Base is used to BACKUP material, it may be directed to combine all related files into one file which is highly compressed. In one example, source files comprising a total of 22,000 bytes compressed into one file of 6,000 bytes. In a second instance, an application in dBase took almost 60,000 bytes including programming to accomplish certain desirable features. The same material used 133,000 bytes in normal form on the disk for R-Base, but this material was reduced to only 30,000 bytes in compressed form. R-Base has provided a further improvement with operation similar to the BACKUP command in DOS, whereby it can spread a single file over many individual floppy disks.

The new R-Base has the capability of assigning macros to individual keys along with pauses for inserting information. This is an easy process and very well thought out. The ZIP command allows one to leave R-Base and perform some other program outside the R-Base environment. If required to generate memory space for the external operation, the "Zip Roll-out" function returns a majority of the R-Base application program to disk storage and then reloads it so one automatically continues within the R-Base environment after the alternate program finishes.

R-Base has automatic facilities for loading many different types of database protocols in-

cluding dBase III, LOTUS, etc. It took 30 seconds to convert a 500-record dBase III+ file to an R-Base file. The new CROSS-TAB command generates handy summations, counts of occurrences, and will also give minimums, maximums and averages for cross-correlated items.

There are many instances where one wants to enter a short designation to save space. Examples are a part number without a description, or an abbreviation for a house address such as entering "LO" for Lorrie Street in Richardson. It is also nice to be able to have the full description appear on the screen to ensure that the proper item is actually designated by the abbreviation. In the past, this has always taken a considerable amount of programming in any database. With R-Base, and without any programming whatsoever, the program can be commanded to reject abbreviations not defined in the look-up table, or have the meaning of an abbreviation displayed on the screen. This capability impressed me very much.

Another impressive feature is the automatic appearance on the screen of the correct syntax of a command when the syntax is used incorrectly. The HELP command is always available. A great added feature of R-Base over dBase III is that the "memo" field can be used in the SEARCH mode so that records can be retrieved on the basis of any word or words in the memo field. Also, R-Base has reasonable flexibility in printout of the material in the memo field. The width of the output can be set and word-wrap will occur without splitting a word at an undesirable point. Further, the material of any field, including the memo field, can be truncated at any point.

Since this was a pre-release version, I found many mistakes in the documentation and some problems that Microrim appears to be addressing in the final version.

If you already own R-Base 5000, an upgrade is only \$99.00 until the end of the year.

Bruce



**Room Assignments**  
Saturday, 13 September 1986

Check room numbers in lobby at INFOMART

*Special Presentations:*



9:00 - 9:55  
Certified Software, Inc. will  
demo their new accounting system  
called Certified Accounting III.

9:00 - 9:55	Room
Science/Engineering	_____
DOS	_____
Genealogy (w/Apple)	_____
Graphics	_____
BASIC Applications	_____
9:45 - 10:10	
Orientation	_____

**MAIN MEETING: 10:00 - 11:00**

Representatives from Data Access Corp. will  
present DATAFLEX VERSION 2.2A.

12:00 - 12:25	Room	12:30 - 1:55	Room
Orientation	_____	Invest - N-Squared	_____
12:00 - 12:55		1:00 - 1:55	
Assembly Language	_____	Artificial Intelligence	_____
APL	_____	Business Applications	_____
C Language	_____	Communications	_____
Turbo Pascal	_____	Databases	_____
Lotus	_____	2:00 - 2:55	
		Advanced Programmers	_____
		Integrated Software	_____
		Framework	_____

NEW SIG: DATAFLEX \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP  APPLICATION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ NEW \_\_\_\_\_  
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 ADDR. CHANGE \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Metro? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work \_\_\_\_\_ Metro? \_\_\_\_\_

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

North Texas Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.  
P.O. Box 780066, Dallas, TX 75378-0066

Board of Directors

Jim Graham, Chairman      Jim Hoisington  
Dick Barr                      John Pröbyl  
Jim Janeway

The North Texas PC Users Group is a non-profit, independent group, not associated with IBM 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 Chairman	Charles Kroboth	(214)245-4763 w
Treasurer	Joe Brophy	(214)891-8187 w
Secretary	Laura Murphey	(214)742-3233 h
<u>Membership Director</u>	Bob Russell	(214)422-4269 h
<u>Disk of the Month</u>	Tim O'Neil	(817)267-8981 h
<u>Public Relations</u>	Stuart Yarus	(214)867-8012 h

Special Interest Groups:

SIG Coordinator	Phil Chamberlain	(214)243-5034 h
APL	Jim Fiegenshue	(214)539-9281 h
Artificial Intell.	Jim Bender	(214)423-3470 h
Assembler	John Wolley	(214)238-9443 h
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Graphics	Mike Durbin	(214)271-8779 h
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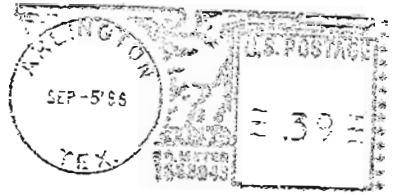
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Check newsletter mailing label for your membership renewal date. No separate renewal notice will be sent.

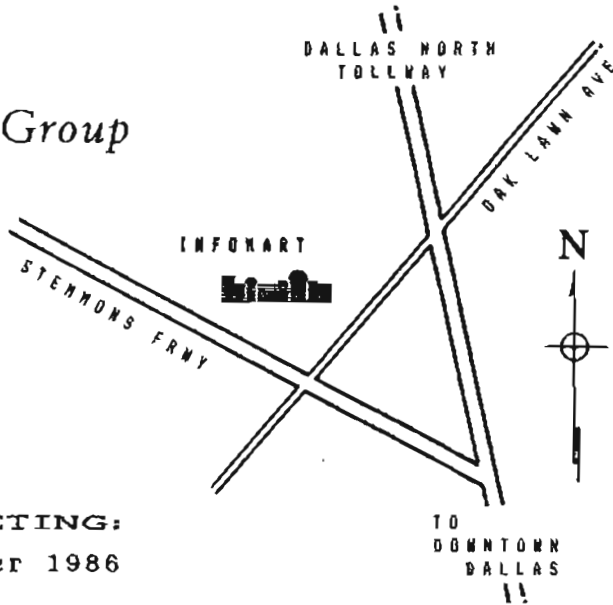


North Texas PC NEWS

2025 Rockcreek Drive, Arlington, Texas 76010



# North Texas PC Users Group



**NEXT MEETING:**  
13 September 1986