SPAUG *PrintScreen*

Jim Dinkey -
LETTERS FROM THE PREZ

Several times a month I get asked what computer to buy.

This gives me an opportunity to vote my biases about what to do and where to do it.

First, I try to ascertain the desires of the buyer and what they hope to do with the computer and also whether they are limited by budget or not.

I recently had a hands-on tradesman, with no computer background, who was anticipating over $3000 in expenses to replace his older machine that was giving him fits. His anticipation was based on his daughter's perception of what was going to be needed to do word processing – and a 1000 Mhz at today's current prices was a colossal over expenditure. I felt we could do the whole job for half the budgeted price.

So we usually have a little chat and the following conversation usually ensues:

Having established that the usage is usually nothing more than for word processing, the purchasing of a

1000 MHz cpu with its present costs is just ridiculous. Even the lesser minimum computers are blessed with about 800 MHz and the price is about $650 for the entire computer from Micro Center or Datawise (Skawinski). This is quite fast enough and is a

Meeting Agenda.

7:15 "Boot up"

7:30 Announcements.

7:35 Guests introduction.

7:40 Random Access (Crosstalk)

7:50 Break

8:00 SPEAKER

9:15 SIG Reports

9:20 Raffle

9:30 Adjourn

General Meeting @ Elks Lodge - Wed. May 30 @ 7:15 PM
4249 El Camino Real - Palo Alto (directions on page 4)

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lot less than $1500.

I also advise them to not buy the mail order computers because the products by Dell, Compaq, and Gateway cannot be serviced locally and they usually have parts and structures that are meant as lock-ins; often parts configurations designed to force you to do business with them for additions. I remember one IBM machine that had special cables that would not fit onto the hard drive and an adapter was soldered onto the hard drive – purely a lock-in.

Having selected the more reasonably-priced standard model, we then review the peripherals to assure that there are enough slots. Currently there are choices to be made concerning DVD and CD R/W units. The DVDs are cheap and easily touted by the manufacturers, but I have yet to see one where the owner actually used the DVD to show movies on their computer.

The selection of the CD R/W unit is next. If the customer doesn't want such a unit, and does not know what the backup capabilities are, then I drop the subject. If the customer wants a CD R/W unit, then the next decision is whether to go with a slight upgrade to replace a CD R/W from the manufacturer (often a 8x4x32 unit which is quite slow) or a Plextor after-market 12x10x32 from Datawise that costs a few

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★ ★
★ **General Meeting @ Elks Lodge** ★
★ **4249 El Camino Real, Palo Alto** ★
★ **May 30, 7:15 PM** ★
★ ★
★ **Jan Altman, Microsoft Excel and Word** ★
★ **consultant will provide tips for every level of** ★
★ **Excel user, and will cover such topics as: moving** ★
★ **around, editing and formatting, entering** ★
★ **formulas, and error checking.** ★
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bucks more but cuts down significantly on creation time and is also "burn proof". We always check that there is a slot into which to install the drive.

Then there comes the discussion of how the person proposes to back up the computer. Often this is the first time that the buyer has even considered the subject. If the answer is to use floppies, then some kind of unit can be used externally when the need arises after the first crash.

My own philosophy on making full disk tape backups, is to assure that I don't have to spend any time personalizing or reinstalling software that did not come with the original machine and having to recreate the personalizations to boot.

But if a tape drive is in the planning, then a slot is required and the availability of a slot is reviewed as external units cost about 20% more.

So then we go on to the disk. In today's machines, 20 GB is minimal and 30 GB seems to be average. This is so tremendous overkill that anything is acceptable. With the operating system and programs usually not taking up more than 1.5 GB, the balance remaining is more than enough for data. The only time I have seen this observation to fail is on a machine that was designed to be a BACKUP machine to receive the images of 20 other machines, and the 45 GB drive was already 60% utilized and climbing.

Next is the discussion of the monitor (CRT/terminal). Now that the prices of 17" monitors are near where the cost of the 15" used to be, they often opt for the larger 17". And now that the 19" prices are where the 17" used to be, the 19"is often chosen. But

then they are informed of the current flat panel displays – still getting less expensive. Sometimes a flat panel make a lot of sense for small apartments.

Then we turn to printers. Every computer needs a printer. The fundamental choice is between a laser printer and an inkjet printer. Usually the discussion begins with a short discussion of the relative merits and disadvantages of laser vs. inkjet technology vs. color vs. cartridges vs. refillability vs. operating costs vs. separate heads vs. cost of refilling.

The laser gives MUCH faster print and has higher quality and sharpness. The inkjets can print in color, and hype notwithstanding, are slow as snails.

Laser printers are fast. Even the cheaper ones are many times the speed of a color inkjet. Their print is sharper and the cartridges are refillable. They cost more initially, but the cost per sheet is about 10% of inkjets. In the real world, most printing is best accomplished with the laser printers's black on white.

On the other hand, the inkjets can print color – albeit slowly. Internet is a color medium, and sometimes manuals are presented in color, so a color printer makes sense. But a color printer is just plain dumb for many jobs such as printing out e-mail or a non-color manual.

Then there is the selection of type of color printer which means that you have to make the choice between a three-color printer that makes black from all three of the colors creating a grungy brown that masquerades as black, or a four-color printer that carries a true black in addition to the three primary colors. For serious printing, printers with even more colors are employed – which allows photographic-like images – usually digital camera work.

But color printers are terribly expensive to run – especially if one has a color printer that incorporates the print head along with the ink reservoir. Since the heads in a print head outlast the reservoirs by a factor of at least ten, to have to buy new print heads is sheer folly. Therefore, the first recommendation is to buy a printer with replaceable reservoirs. Further, since usually one color is used more heavily than others, replacing the reservoirs by individual colors makes more sense. The solution is individual color reservoirs. And further, if you have individual reservoirs, the refilling of the reservoir at about 20% of the new cost is just that more rewarding.

Rather than get into the position of choosing between them, I utilize a laser printer about 95% of the time and a color printer about 5%. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Getting two solves the missing capabilities of the other.

Now that we have made a pitch for two printers, how does one attach two to a single parallel port. In today's market, one can add another parallel port or merely buy a USB-equipped printer. The USB option won't tie up another IRQ. Another way to obtain the extra printer is to go to Computer Recycling on Saturday morning at 9 a.m. and purchase your second printer for peanuts. The ones with the green dot are checked-out machines.

-O –

GPS TRACKING WHILE DRIVING – a user's report

I'm a map nut. I print out a map of where I'm going in 8.5 x 11 format so I can read the map while driving. Makes finding unfamiliar addresses just that much easier. In addition, rather than spending time looking up the street location in the index of a paper map, I use the computer to find and mark it for me.

Questions and Answers

Name	Area Of Expertise	Phone	Hours	e-mail
Jim Bailey	DOS , Quick Books 6, Quicken 98	650 494 0631	9AM - 9PM	Jimby@pobox.com
Jim Dinkey	Win NT/Win 98	650 493 9307	9AM - 9PM	jimdinkey@jimdinkey.com
Bill Goldmacker	DOS	650 691 0911	6PM - 9PM	gold@svpal.org
Robert Mitchell	ZIP managers, Win 95/98, MS Publisher 2000, ZIP drives	650 941 5792	4:30PM-9PM	Rfmitch702@earthlink.net
John Sleeman	MS Publisher, UNIX, Fortran, Perl	650 326 5603	9AM - 8PM	sleemanj@earthlink.net

Arlan Kertz - "SPAUG 501(c)"

This is to remind you that SPAUG is a non profit organiztion registered with the IRS under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). In this regard, your dues (except for $12 for the newsletter) are deductible. Also, any additional cash and or other non-business assets donated to SPAUG are also deductible.

Elks Lodge, 4249 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, CA 94306-4496

The Elks Lodge is at 4249 El Camino Real on the North side of the street, between Charleston and San Antonio Road, but very close to Charleston. It is next to Ricky's Hyatt House, which is on the corner.

Park your car in the parking lot at the front of the lodge, and proceed to the center door. This is a keycarded door so we will have someone at the door to let you in. Proceed to the Lodge Room straight ahead and to the left.

If you cannot get in the center door because you are late, press the wireless doorbell that will be in place for each SPAUG meeting, and someone will come and let you in.

(Continued from page 3)

There is only one thing wrong with the above procedure – I can't see the street signs at night – so locating can get fantastically frustrating when the car headlights don't reach high enough to illuminate the street signs.

Enter the Global Positioning System (GPS) which permits a home PC to have software on it that senses a receiver plunked onto the dashboard of a car, and plots the present position of the receiver on the surface of the earth superimposed onto a map of the local area.

I had always wanted to try GPS out for myself and when my wife presented me with a receiver and software, I went to it.

Loading the Delorme Street Atlas Road Warrior Edition was, as usual, painless. I've been using the predecessor programs for years.

I made the assumption that the satellite signals would be sufficient to penetrate our roof as there was no metallic material in the roof, and assumption proved to be correct.

I plugged four AAA batteries into the receiver, plugged the receiver into the laptop, set the mess on the floor and waited. The diagnostic that showed the number of

satellites, eventually showed the requisite four satellites with sufficient signal strength to lock in.

At first, our living room was clearly in the backyard of the house across the street. Then, after a number of minutes, it progressed to where one would expect to find it. The slowness is the time of acquisition of about 15 minutes that one has to allow for the initialization of the system.

I tried the system the next morning and nothing was working. I tested the four AAA cells and they were either dead or marginal. This was the big clue that the power drain on the batteries was such that running the receiver from the automobile 12-volt system is imperative.

On a trip down to the SPAUG tour of Level 3, I used the system with the receiver poked up through the moon roof. It locked in OK but when I got up to 50 mph the receiver flapped around causing me to retrieve it.

But on the way back home via Central Expressway, because I had the system working, I was able to observe my progress. At lights the indication was a single green dot, but when moving, a series of arrows showed my progress. Because I had not permitted enough time for normalization, I was driving through the back yard of the houses I was passing. As the trip progressed, I progressed into the house, the front yard, and finally onto Central Expressway where it belonged.

A note of caution. The system MUST be operated by a passenger. I found that my having to operate the computer and to read it was

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Planning Meeting

Planning meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month, usually at Beverly Altman's home at 7:15 pm. All members are welcome, and encouraged, to attend. Please phone Jim Dinkey or Bev Altman to confirm venue.

Next meeting: June 6th, 2001 at 7:15.

(Continued from page 5)

bundles worse than using a cell phone while driving. One needs the passenger to pay attention to the computer. Reading it at night, however, is a snap.

The San Jose Mercury News on Sunday April 30 had a review of three hand-held GPS devices and the results were not good. I'm happy to say that the Delorme product is just fine.

IN DEFENSE OF AMERICA ON LINE
by Bob Mitchell, Past President, SPAUG

In a recent issue of Print Screen a sentiment suggested that it was sad how many relatively knowledgeable members of SPAUG still use America On Line (AOL) as their ISP of choice. This seems to
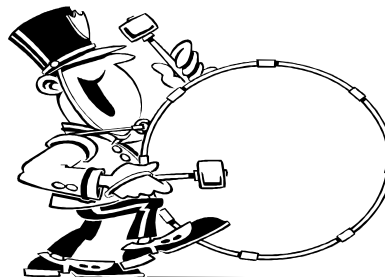
Special Interest Groups

The Club has run a number of SIGs during the past year or so, and they have been well received. There are proposals for more, listed below, and we should like member's input on which are favored. . If you have other suggestions, we should very much like to hear them.

Windows 98/98SE/ME
Internet.
Quicken.
Home Networking

Tech Support.

Don't overlook the list of members (on page 4) who are willing to offer help and advice on their areas of expertise. It's free so there are no guarantees! However, it provides one-on-one help, and more time than the ten minutes of Random Access at the General meetings.

If you have questions on subjects not listed, try calling Jim Dinkey. If he can't help, he may know who can.

Jim also maintains a laboratory in his home which is available to SPAUG members when intractable problems arise. Call (650) 493-9307 to make an appointment, which would normally be on a Saturday morning. This service is also available to non-members, but at the cost of a suitable donation to the Club's coffers. (That alone should be an inducement to join - any appropriate contribution would be more than the annual membership, but less than you would pay a commercial outfit. Tell your friends.)

suggest that these users just don't understand and have yet to see the light. In their naivete they are totally unaware of what is "right" for them. Maybe it's true. Maybe not. This sentiment of course might also have included the vast majority of PC users in this country who also use AOL.

I plead guilty to being one of those unenlightened many who continue to use AOL. Why? Because it offers everything I need in an ISP and provides me with the extra values of a rather complete Internet information system for the low cost of $19.95 (AARP discount). I do maintain a second phone line that is dedicated to a separate fax machine as well as modem in my computer. Have there been problems? Of course, but very few and far between. Am I concerned about a lack of transmission speed? I rarely download attached files choosing to err on the side of caution, therefore the need for transmission speed is negligible. Perhaps because of this I have never encountered a virus in my

system. I am fully aware of the services and pricing structure of other ISPs and the speed of carrier systems such as ISDN, Cable, Satellite and all forms of the DSLs. If the service that AOL provides deteriorates or the rates are no longer competitive, I will consider looking elsewhere. As for others, in their wisdom, they will make similar decisions on what works best for their particular needs.

I will however avoid upgrading to AOL version 6 until all of the negative rumors of problems with this version are either disproved or the problems corrected. This is consistent with previous personal policy on such things as operating systems. There were those pioneers, the "firsts" who tempted fate and elected to be first on the block to install WIN 95, WIN 98, WIN NT and WIN ME. God bless them. They were the ones who went through the horrors of hell encountering all of the bugs and compatibility problems that effected the positive changes in the software. This of course allowed opportunists such as me to benefit from their frustration, by waiting to install (or choose not to install) the operating systems after they were relatively bug free. In a sense this has become a computer world game of the tortoise and the hare. In this case the hare encountered all of the ruts in the road in order that the tortoise could avoid them and still reach the same destination. As Maurice Chevalier might intone, "Thank heaven for little 'firsts', without them what would little CU's (computer users) do"

Field Trips.

The Club has run a number of popular field trips during the past year, and more are in prospect (see below) after the winter hiatus. We should welcome suggestions for other trips; please pass on your idea to the Prez, Jim Dinkey.

Recent & prospective trips:

Hornet Aircraft Carrier – Alameda
Bevatron – UC Berkeley
Intel Museum Chip Manufacture
Ames Museum of Computer History
Palo Alto Power Distribution Center

Stanford/Palo Alto Users Group for PC (SPAUG) annual membership dues are $35, payable to SPAUG, at PO Box 20138, Stanford CA 94309-0138.

Please include your name and address, and optionally an e-mail address and any special interest group (SIG) you want more information about.

Questions? Call Beverly Altman (650) 329-8252 or Jim Dinkey (650) 493-9307.

The SPAUG Web Page

available at

http://www.pa-spaug.org

Hosted by
MNC
Monterey Network Center

General Meeting
Wed. May 30,
7:15PM
at Elks Lodge,
4249 El Camino
Palo Alto

Listserver

spaug-list@cloves.montereynet.net

Any member on the spaug-list can send messages to all other members on the list automatically by sending e-mail to this address. This list is intended for announcements of interest to all SPAUG members. Please avoid excessive or trivial announcements, since some members are paying for connect time. Additions or corrections can be sent to:
info@pa-spaug.org

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PC USER GROUP *Meeting*

| WEDNESDAY | May. 30 | 7:15 PM |

Elks Lodge, 4249 El Camino Real, Palo Alto
Hosted by: SPAUG (Stanford Palo Alto User Group for PC)

Topic: **Tips and Tricks for Microsoft Excel 97**

Speaker: Jan Altman,
Microsoft Excel and Word consultant

Jan's presentation will include tips for every level of Excel user, and will cover such topics as: moving around, editing and formatting, entering formulas, and error checking. While this list represents what Jan *intends* to talk about, it is entirely subject to the whims of the Q&A that will be going on during the session.

Jan first discovered computers in 1975. After a stint at HP where she trained system managers how to use the HP 3000, she branched out on her own. Jan has had her own consulting business for the past twelve years, specializing in Microsoft Excel and Word. Her work has ranged from teaching stand-up training classes, developing customized spreadsheets and documents, programming databases, to publishing a couple of books on Excel. She was the first Microsoft Certified Trainer in Excel in the Bay Area.

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Also, Misha M. McPherson, Channel Account Manager of infoUSA, will give a short talk. infoUSA uses a huge database of contact information in their software programs to help make life a little easier. Their best sellers include the Select Phone and the Powerfinder; Misha will demonstrate one of their newest releases, the Resume Plus.

You are invited to join us for an optional no-host dinner at 5:45 pm, at Su Hong Eatery, W. Meadow and El Camino <u>Way</u>, Palo Alto

We meet on the last Wednesday of most months.
Our remaining meetings for 2001 are: 5/30, 6/27, 7/25, 8/29, 9/26, 10/24, and 11/28

SPAUG — Stanford Palo Alto Users Group for PC
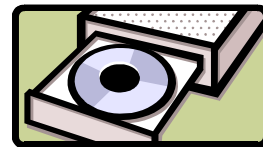**PO Box 20138, STANFORD CA 94309-0138**
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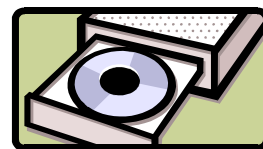**Jim Dinkey, President, 650-493-9307 jimdinkey@jimdinkey.com**
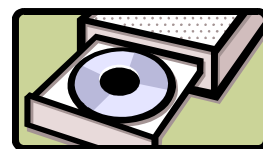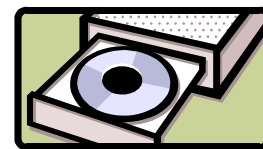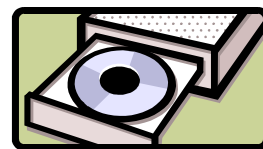
☞ **See other side for a special offer.** ☜

SPAUG Christmas Edition CD (CD2000.12) — Buy one or more, for giving or for yourself

For more information, including how to order, visit SPAUG's website at **WWW.PA-SPAUG.ORG**

AdobeAcrobat	Reader for PDF Files
AdOffNT	Gets rid of ads if you are running NT
AdSubstract	Get rid of banner ads from Web Sites
AmazingBlocks	A Tetris style arcade game
Arachnaphilia40	HTML Editor
AtomicClockSynch	Synchronizes PC Clock with Internet Time Servers
Bounce Spam Mail	Lets you send fake bounce messages to spammers
BusinessCards	Two programs for designing business cards.
CatWalkingAround	Cat walks around your screen doing cat things.
Christmas	Several programs for Christmas
Coco Calculator	Scientific Calculator
Communicator476	Netscape476
Cookie Pal	Block and control cookies
CuteFTP	FTP program
Desk Menu	A simple but flexible desktop launcher
Diskkeeper Lite41	Disk defragger for NT
DropZip50	A drag and drop program for zipping and unzipping files
Eudora Lite50	E-mail program
EZMacros	The ultimate keyboard macro utility
File Splitter	Split large files into smaller files to fit on floppies
FindItEasy	A Java applet to search and retrieve records
MahJongg	Game
MS Media Encoder7	Converts sound files to Media format
MS Media Player7	Media Player
MSN_Explorer55	All-in-0ne Software, browse, e-mail, music, with current ISP
NistTime	Synchronize computer clocks via the Internet
Opera402	Smaller, faster web browser
OptOUT	Internet Spyware Detection and Removal
PaintShopPro7	Easy-to-use photo editing, painting, etc.
PowerToyTutorial	Tutorial for PowerToys
RoboType	Insert blocks of text using a shortcut word
ScreenShotPrograms	Three programs to choose from.
SlidesandSound20	Prepare slide shows with sound from camera or slides
SnagIt32	Screen capture, etc.
WebWasher221	Gets rid of banner adds.
WinZip8	WinZip utility
WS_FTP Lite508	FTP Program

In addition, there are 40 files from the August 23, 2000, *PC Magazine* "Finalists in the Shareware" categories of: (1) Business Applications, (2) Desktop Accessories, (3) E-mail, News Readers & Chat, (4) File Utilities, (6) Graphics & Multimedia, (7) HTML Editors, and (8) Internet Utilities.