COMDEX Revisited

Ladies and Gentlemen: Step Right Up...

Atlanta, GA — It was my first visit to the annual spring rite – the gigantic computer convention in Atlanta known as COMDEX. As I got off the plane, ready to join over 100,000 other computer professionals from all over the world, one of my first thoughts was, "Boy, am I importa. After all, COMDEX is serious stuff – this is everybody's coming out party. This is where you go to take the pulse of the entire computer industry. I even brought jackets and ties to wear.

I'll start with the punch line. While several forests were sacrificed to accommodate the deluge of information that was disseminated, another national resource was utilized as well: Barnum & Bailey's circus. No penny arcade could hope to compete with the attention-getting schemes that were in force on the convention floor.

Funny, and here I thought that I flew all the way across the country to learn about hardware and software. Silly me.

My first stop was a font manufacturer's booth. "Hi, have some candy," said the nice-looking lady with an exhibitor's badge, thrusting a Tootsie Roll

by Rick Altman

CLUB NEWS

Elections

As most members know, elections for club officers were held at last month's group meeting. In case you weren't there, and have been on pins and needles awaiting the election outcome, Ralph Muraca is our new president and Richard Orser is his right-hand man as vice-president. Jared Nedzel replaces Mark Woodward as Treasurer/Student Representative.

Disk of the Month

The Disk of the Month will be Baker's Dozen, a collection of utilities from Buttonware. The Baker's Dozen includes a mini-spreadsheet and a calendar, along with utilities to locate a file, find a text string in a file, compare two text files, sort a file, print a file at 90 degrees, capture printer output to disk, take a snapshot of the screen, remove a subdirect(, keyboard information, swap COM1 and COM2, swap LPT1 and LPT2, go to DOS temporarily. Various disk utilities are also included.

Mark Woodward will be demonstrating the program. Copies will be available for $1 each or use your "goodie coupon."

DOS of the Month

A new feature of our monthly group meetings will be "DOS of the Month". Each meeting a member will demonstrate a different DOS command or feature. This month Don Baird will discuss the DOS environment and how to use the PATH command. He will also show us a few tricks for getting past PATH's limitations.

May-June Calendar

May 25	Group Meeting	8:00
June 13	Microsoft Word SIG	7:30
June 14	Novice SIG	7:00
June 15	Planning Meeting	8:00

All members are welcome to attend the monthly planning meeting, where we make decisions on the future of the group. Call Turley Angle, 369-1981, for the location of the next meeting.

Next Meeting

Date:	Wednesday, May 25
Time:	8:00 p.m.
Place:	Polya Hall,
	Turing Aud. (Rm. 111)
	Stanford University

Dale Clark from California Disk Drive Repair in Santa Clara will be discussing hard disk maintenance, problems, and solutions. He will also discuss ways of optimizing disk performance using Mace and Norton Utilities.

April Meeting

A pre-release of the Prodigy interac-
ti   information service was
de. unstrated at last month's meeting.
Prodigy offers an array of features
designed to appeal to all members in a
household: business, sports and enter-
tainment news; on-line shopping; trivia
and quizzes; stock quotes and trading;
travel reservations; consumer reports;
educational content...and much more.
Prodigy was created by Trintex, a
partnership of IBM and Sears.

In the quick tour (or maybe slow
would be a better word) we were given of
PRODIGY, it was obvious that 1200
baud is not adequate. The constant wait-
ing was tedious. The color and graphics
were beautiful but really slowed down the
system to an almost unbearable speed at
1200 baud. 2400 baud is a must. Mem-
bers found it difficult to understand why
Trintex was offering a 1200 baud Hayes
modem with the service.

The company's main source of
revenue is electronic advertising – not
subscriber fees. This was immediately
apparent in our tour of the system. Almost
e   screen had a catchy boxed ad at the
bottom. The advertisements keep sub-
scriber charges to a minimum
($9.95/month).

Those who attended the meeting were
eligible to become founding members.
As a founding member, you get six
months free membership and a special
renewal rate of $49.95 for one year.

Bulletin Board

The club's bulletin board, nicknamed
SPARC, is available 24 hours/day, 7 days
a week. The number is 723-7995. Use the
following communication settings: 300,
1200, or 2400 baud; no parity; 8 bits; and
1 stop bit.

For your own security, phone num-
bers will no longer be operative as
passwords. If you have not changed your
password from your phone number,
please call a SysOp to do so. The System
Operators are Ralph Muraca, Turley
Angle, Beverly Altman, and Mark Wood-
ward. Their phone numbers are listed on
the SPAUG Resource Center list.

Library Additions

by Turley Angle, Librarian

The following programs have been
added to the software library during May,
1988. Copies may be obtained from Les
Weil.

FILENAME	DISK#	DESCRIPTION
DDLABEL	136	Mail list manager
PCTYPE	113C	Buttonware PCTYPE+ Word processor/editor disk No. 1
PCTYPE2	13D	Disk No. 2
PCTYPE3	13E	Disk No. 3
EXT-DOS	13F	Buttonware Extended DOS enhances DOS with more commands
BAKER12	140	Buttonware Bakers Dozen; Misc. utilities for file manipulation
WISDOM1	141	World Wide info. from classical sources disk 1 of 2
WISDOM2	142	Disk No. 2
PMK	143	Professional Master Key Utilities (similar to Norton) ¶

THE ~~ANSWER~~ SALES-MAN

Garage Sale

Question: Where can I go for inexpensive commercial software?
Answer: Right here.

The Answer Man is moving and before he does, he would like to reduce his inventory of software. He is offering for sale a variety of programs at heavy discounts. All of them contain the original diskettes and the original and complete documentation. Some are labeled as "demonstration" or "evaluation" copies, but they are all guaranteed to be the exact same program that you would be buying at the store. Most of them are still sealed in the factory wrappers. Here are brief descriptions and prices:

Program	Comments	List	Your
Webster's On-Line Thesaurus *Simon & Schuster:* *Memory resident* *thesaurus with over* *100,000 synonyms*	Quickly became the king of the on-line thesauri; this is the stand- alone version that is now bundled with most major word processors; works with practically every word processor and any text display.	69.95	20.00
Hotshot *SymSoft: Capture, Modify* *and Print any text or* *graphics screen*	Excellent desktop publishing tool used by virtually all publishing houses who now publish technical documentation with DTP software; CGA, Herc, EGA compatible	199.00	50.00
Pizazz *Application Techniques,* *Inc: Screen capture* *program for text screens*	Like Hotshot except that it is limited to text screens and is especially suited for dot-matrix output; supports all display adapters.	99.95	25.00
LaserMate *MicroLogic Software: For* *HP LaserJets and* *compatibles--Controls all* *printer functions and* *downloads soft fonts from* *within any application*	Memory-resident with its own pop-up menu; great for Lotus 1-2-3 and other programs that require long strings of codes; comes with disk- based tutorial which the company claims is all you need (although it has full manual also)	99.95	25.00
Lightning *Personal Computer* *Support Group: Disk* *Cache program*	Latest release of the original caching program; very reliable, easy-to-use program.	69.95	20.00

Disk Optimizer
SoftLogic Solutions:
Defragments your hard
~ by moving files into
contiguous sectors

The first – and according to PC World, the best – of the defragmentors. Very good documentation/tutorial for those who have never used a defrag program.

79.95   20.00

Software Carousel
SoftLogic Solutions:
Places several programs
in memory at once and
allows you to switch
between them instantly

A quick and dirty multi-tasking program that works; takes advantage of both expanded and extended memory and allows you to open as many windows as you want; very clean interface.

119.95   30.00

Keyworks
Alpha Software: Macro
program

Probably the most powerful macro program on the market, due to the extensive menu-making capability built into the program. Voted Editor's Choice by PC Mag and Pacesetter of the Year by PC World.

145.00   45.00

Disk Watcher
RG Software Systems:
Watches for pending disk
full errors

To quote the product, "The first disaster prevention software that tells you when you're out of space and what to do about it." Comes with other loss-prevention programs; unopened.

79.95   20.00

Gem Desktop Publisher
Digital Research:
Medium-powered desktop
publishing program

While not as glitzy as Pagemaker or Ventura Publisher, this program is cheaper, easier to learn and more efficient for many tasks; supports all display adapters, Postscript or HP printers, accepts text and pictures from all the major packages; requires a mouse; very good entre into desktop publishing; unopened.

295.00   65.00

In-A-Vision
Micrografx: Complex
drawing program for
Microsoft Windows

One step below a CAD program, this graphic program gives you the full array of tools for making precise geometric drawings; main difference between full-fledged CAD is that In-A- Vision cannot rotate a picture on its axis; requires CGA, EGA or Herc; Comes with run-time version of Windows so the product does not require that you already own or know how to operate Windows.

295.00   50.00

Garage Sale

Diagraph/2000
Computer Support Corporation: graphic drawing program for charts and presentations

Very friendly program for presentation graphics--forms, signs, word charts, org. charts; comes bundled with 2,200 high-quality symbols and 13 typefaces, all of which can be moved, sized, stretched, rotated, flipped and copied freely on your page; symbols are all indexed in the documentation and the company is very good with their support; unopened.

250.00   50.00

Designer
Micrografx: Full-featured graphic drawing program

This is the program responsible for closing the gap between the Macintosh and the PC; you can create anything — advertisements, brochures, cartoons, electrical schematics, engineering specifications, architectural, fashion and technical designs, logos, maps, mechanical drawings, you name it; imports text and pictures from all Windows applications; this is the one graphic program that I use everyday; unopened.

695.00   125.00

Relay Silver
VM Personal Computing: PC communications software

Full-featured communications program that handles all telecommunications, not just modem transfers — micro-to-mini, mini-to-mainframe, null modem; unopened.

295.00   65.00

The Complete Hand Scanner
The Complete PC; hand-held 200 dot-per-inch scanner

Nifty tool for anyone who needs to scan images into the computer; looks like a mouse, works great and is fun to use; comes with its own software for capturing and cropping images; big difference between this and the $1,500 scanners is that this one limits the size of your originals to 2" x 10" strips; requires one slot in your computer; unopened.

250.00   125.00

If there are any takers for these absolutely fabulous opportunities, the Answer Man will be happy to field them, however he will be out of town from May 23 through May 30. Before or after that, call him at 581-7563. Happy bargain hunting! ¶

DISKOVERIES

T● Circus of COMDEX

into my jacket pocket. "In return, I'll tell you why our fonts are the best."
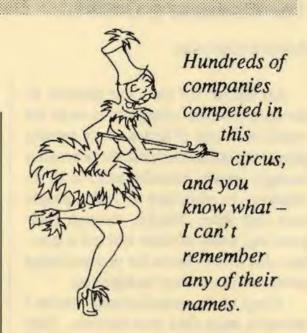
I'm not making this up. This lady felt that free candy was the best way to get people to stop at her booth. The guilt associated with escaping with a 10 cent candy bar was supposed to be too much for me to bear. She had a captive audience of computer junkies, each of whom paid $50 a day to attend, and this lady thought that Tootsie Rolls were necessary?

My next stop was at the booth of a laptop computer manufacturer. I wiggled my way through a small crowd to see what was causing the gathering. Maybe a full-color plasma display? Desqview running 16 programs simultaneously? A built-in laser printer?

How about a man in a tuxedo doing magic tricks – the same man who performed the same tricks at the Seybold show in Santa Clara last summer. There w● about two dozen people watching, bu●.when the young Houdini was through, all but one of them left for another booth. If this company wanted to generate a crowd, the strategy was successful, but if it wanted to generate interest about its product, the gimmick was a flop.

Step right up, ladies and gentlemen – the stories get better.

I saw jugglers using keyboards as their props. I saw men riding unicycles in bikini briefs, wearing Elton John glasses. I saw a Vanna White clone (or should that be a compatible?) running a Wheel of

Hundreds of companies competed in this circus, and you know what – I can't remember any of their names.

Fortune game. I saw Miss Georgia challenging men to a keystroke race.

My editor advised me against using the names of all of the companies that participated in the circus, but you know what – I can't remember their names anyway. I didn't even catch them in the first place. Now if they had shown me a spiffy new high-resolution monitor, or a super-fast microprocessor, I may have actually picked up literature.

I saw Groucho Marx promising to send some lucky person to Paris. I saw women in space suits escorting people into a huge chamber, where they would be teleported across the galaxy and greeted by Leonard Nimoy. I saw a man playing video games on a theatre-sized screen with concert-sized speakers. I saw clowns, I saw mimes, I saw aliens, I saw lizards, I saw walking computers, I saw Max Headroom, I saw more magic acts, I saw more candy.

The Circus of COMDEX

Let me see if I have this straight: In the second-largest computer event in the world, with tens of thousands of patrons paying top dollar to attend, the prevailing strategy among manufacturers is to do whatever is necessary to make people stop and stare. Maybe, through their gawking, a few of them will ask a question that is relevant to the product being promoted in the deep background.

Many of the manufacturers couldn't afford to stage their own circuses. They had to resort to such pathetic maneuvers as displaying products on table-tops and passing out literature. Gad, some of them stooped so low as to have technical people on hand to discuss the product. Can you imagine...

I suppose I'm just as bad as the ringleaders, because I've devoted this entire column to the glitz instead of the substance. And you're just as bad because you're reading it. I guess we all react when someone flashes something spectacular in front of us, and who knows, it's probably healthy for us to have a chance to take our professions a little less seriously. True, I would have been embarrassed for my profession if this were

As a spectacle, COMDEX was great fun, but as an example of the state of the art of the computing industry, it was a failure.

taking place in a public park, but there was nobody there except we inmates.
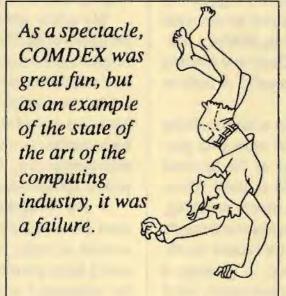
I'm not naive enough to think that these were resources that could have gone into the products instead. In fact, there is an entire industry in place whose objective is to inject razzle-dazzle into shows and exhibitions like COMDEX. I disagree with the wisdom of the entire strategy. As a marketing ploy, the circus approach doesn't work. We're all thrown into a huge cavernous room with bad acoustics and flat lighting and asked to roam around and look at things. The major manufacturers knew how to compete for my attention, but they did not know how to deal with my attention-span. The bigger the splash, the quicker came my saturation point. By the end of each , "WOW" was about the only reaction I was able to muster.

I stopped and gawked at the Houdinis and the Grouchos and the spacewomen, but I don't remember a thing about the companies or the products that were being represented.

As a spectacle, COMDEX was great fun. As a shining example of the state of the art of the computing industry, the show was a failure. ¶

PRINT SCREEN POTPOURRI

High Capacity Floppy Disk Drive Special Offer

Eastman Kodak Co. is making a special offer to user group members on its Verbatim 6.6 MB Subsystem. Kodak recently reduced the price of its high capacity floppy disk drive from $595 to $299. As an added bonus for user group members, Kodak will provide a free two pack of diskettes, a $32 value, with each subsystem purchased through this offer.

The Verbatim 6.6 MB Internal Subsystem consists of a Kodak 6.6 MB disk drive and FDC-1 controller plus the hardware and cables needed to mount the drive inside computers similar to the IBM PC/XT and AT lines.

To order a drive from Kodak or to get more information, call Doug Blackburn, 408-773-3870. To get the free diskettes be sure to ask for the user group special.

Q & A Write

The first 5,000 PFS:Write and Professional Write owners to respond can upgrade to Q&A Write (a PFS clone) for only $29.95. Q & A Write is a stand alone version of the word processor found in Q & A Version 3.0, and was recently named Editor's Choice by PC Magazine (2/29/88) out of a field of 55 word processors. InfoWorld named Q & A Write the No. 1 executive word processor in October, 1987.

Q & A Write includes laser printer and Postscript support, multi- column printing, date and time stamping, and tight integration with Lotus 1-2-3 so Lotus graphs and spreadsheets can be imported into Q&A Write documents. Suggested retail is $199. Symantec Corporation in Cupertino is the publisher of Q&A Write.

The Computer that Craved a Cookie

Even though the computer field is relatively young, it has already developed some interesting myths and legends.

One of the more amusing "tricks" that was supposedly played on one of the large computer companies many years ago was a little surprise someone put into the operating system. (It would be called a "virus" today.)

After the machine had been up and running for about eight months, this secret program woke up and printed, at the operator's console, the message:

"I want a cookie."

The program would then go back to sleep for another four months, and then emit the "I want a cookie" message again.

This continued with the interval between the messages halved each time, until the message was finally being repeated once per second, at which point the program locked everyone else out of the computer and displayed the message:

"I want a cookie now!"

Finally someone had the presence of mind to type in the word "OREO". The program, sated, then went back to sleep for another eight months before beginning the cycle again. ¶

News From the SIGS

The Novice SIG

Report on cancelled meeting of 5/10. Less than four called by the deadline. Thus, those who did call were notified of the cancellation.

Give and take is essential for a group of this type. A session will go on as long as there are at least three, because it hurts to desert those who want to come. A show of hands at the next general meeting may indicate changing meeting time and date. A query to the assemblage as to what topics might be of most interest is intended. – Maybe 7:00 pm is too early for some.

The best meetings have been comprised of both true novices and advanced users. Another monitor and a roving keyboard would aid flow of info. A loan of such has been requested periodically.

NEXT NOVICE SIG MEETING – June 14, 7:00 pm, refreshments, at 3785 Farm Hill Blvd. Redwood City (on south side of street near Emerald Hill). Watch for blue & red light. (415) 365-6822. Three calls are minimum before June 10, otherwise meeting will be cancelled and those calling notified by June 12 (leave phone number).

– Don Baird

Microsoft Word SIG

The Microsoft Word SIG meets the second Monday of every month. The next meeting will be Monday, June 13th at 7:30 p.m. For details on the meetings call Jeanie Treichel at home (851-0100) or work (326-7438). ¶

Club Information

Mailing Address	P.O. Box 3738 Stanford, CA 94305
Membership	Louise Greer Bolitho 322-3850 $25/year fee ($10 for students)
Bulletin Board	723-7995
Newsletter	Becky Bridges 326-8605

The SPAUG Resource Center

Club Officers

President	Ralph Muraca	365-1659
Vice President	Richard Orser	325-8441
Treasurer/ASSU Rep	Jared Nedzel	854-2732

Managers

Financial Manager	Beverly Altman	329-8252
Newsletter Editor	Becky Bridges	326-8605
Production Editor	Rick Altman	581-7563

Library

Public Domain Software	Les Weil	321-5541
Soft Copy	Ralph Muraca	365-1659
	Turley Angle	369-1981

Software

Desktop Publishing	Rick Altman	581-7563
Accounting-Computer Assoc.	Larry Mehl	326-6037
Framework	Jim Caldwell	692-7181
Lotus 1-2-3	Bruce Codding	367-8642
	Arthur Naman	408-879-9900
Microsoft Word	Jeanie Treichel	851-0100
	Hunter Jackson	408-446-4097
Q & A	Elaine Meyer	325-8057
R:BASE	Jack Kahoun	349-4696
	Tony Pabon	408-866-4815
	Larry Mehl	326-6037
Symphony	Sally See	941-1378

Languages/Operating Systems

BASIC	Ralph Muraca	365-1659
C	Corwin Nichols	494-8640
DOS 3.x	Rick Altman	581-7563
Fortran, Pascal	John Watson	325-7632
Hard Disks	Jim Caldwell	692-7181
Toshiba Printers	Paul Berry	494-2043
Epson Printers	Jim Caldwell	692-7181
Panasonic Printers	Van Maulis	966-1306
XT/AT Systems	Van Maulis	966-1306

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PC User's Group

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