



PRinT SCreen

*The Newsletter for the Stanford/
Palo Alto PC User's Group*

July 1987

Volume 5, Number 7

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday, July 29
Time: 8:00 p.m.
Place: Polya Hall,
Turing Auditorium (Rm. 111)
Stanford University

A G E N D A

8:00 PM General Club Business
8:30 PM Speaker: Leland Smith
Topic: Composing with your PC
9:00 PM Discussion and Random Access
10:00 PM Conclusion

Even you can become a song writer. Stanford professor Leland Smith will be discussing and demonstrating how he uses computer software to compose and generate musical scores. Leland is also a member of our PC Users Group.

PLANNING MEETING:

All members are welcome to attend the monthly Planning Meeting, where we make decisions on the future of the group (e.g., speakers, topics). Please call Corwin Nichols, 494-8640 or 324-9114, for the location of the next meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, August 12th at 8 p.m. If you can't reach Corwin, call any Club Officer.

CALENDAR

July 28....Group Meeting.....8:00
Aug. 4.....Novice SIG.....7:00
Aug. 12....Planning Meeting.....8:00
Aug. 26....Group Meeting.....8:00

Membership renewals: For the two months preceding the expiration of your membership you will find a renewal envelope enclosed in your newsletter. Use this envelope to promptly send in your \$25 check (\$10 for students) so that you won't miss an issue of the monthly newsletter. A current membership card will then be sent to you in the next PrtSc.

Remember, the "Goodie Coupon" attached to your membership card is presently good for one free disk: the library catalog, Disk of the Month, or a blank disk. Trade in your coupon for a disk at a future meeting.

NEW REDUCED PRICE ON FLOPPIES!!!

Xidex Precision disks are now available for \$6/box (down from \$7). High density floppies are 4 disks for \$5. The catalog and the Disk of the Month will be offered for \$1 a disk. If you wish to purchase disks at the meetings, you will need to present your membership card, so be sure to bring it with you.

**GET PUBLISHED:
WRITE FOR PRT SC**

Please contact Becky Bridges if you are interested in writing for PRInT SScreen. It does not matter what your level of computer experience is; each of you has some information, knowledge or opinion that would be of interest to your fellow members. Review your latest software or hardware purchase. Tell us how you use the PC in your work and play. Help others avoid or solve problems you have encountered.

Please submit the articles:

- o In WordStar, MultiMate, or ASCII.
- o Single-spaced.
- o Double-spaced between paragraphs.
- o Any right margin.
- o By the 15th of the month.

Our mystery speaker for the June meeting was Dave Cortesi, former columnist of Dr. Dobb's Journal. Unfortunately, PrtSc received the information about the speaker AFTER the newsletter had gone to press. Dave gave an interesting and informative presentation on the not-yet-released operating system for IBM's new PS/2 computer. Dave has been fortunate to work with a beta copy of OS/2.

The main features of OS/2 are:

- o it takes advantage of the protect mode of the 286 CPU
- o it can address 16MB of RAM (this is like taking a straight-jacket off the PC)
- o it supports multi-programming.

"It's a technological rush to realize you can have all these balls in the air," says Cortesi. You simply use a hot key to switch between the different programs you are using simultaneously. Dave says OS/2's performance is good, and he feels that the 286 has ample horsepower to support multi-programming.

The bottleneck to multi-programming, is not the processor, but the hard disk. The more the program accesses the hard disk, the more multi-programming is slowed down. If you are using programs that make a lot of disk accesses (e.g., databases, compilers), you will probably want to get more access arms by purchasing several 10MB hard cards.

OS/2 requires a 286 CPU, a 100% IBM AT compatible computer, and a minimum of 2MB RAM. The first 640K of RAM is dedicated to DOS emulation so that you can run existing DOS applications; OS/2 applications are run on top of that. Not all programs will work in emulation mode, however. If the program gets too close to the hardware, it probably won't run under OS/2.

NOVICE SIG

NEXT NOVICE SIG GROUP MEETING - Tuesday 8/4/87, 3785 Farm Hill Blvd. Redwood City. Watch for blue light. Call Don Baird 415 365-6822 for information. Meetings are at 7PM on the 1st Tuesday of the month. People can arrive early & stay until 11PM for extra business, like copying (public domain). Current attendees will be notified in case of late changes.

REPORT for NOVICE SIG meeting held 7/7/87:

Agendas and budgets share a similar property: they are good to have even though they are rarely followed.

We again started with fundamentals, but never got to our main topic: modems (only 1 person present was interested in modems). We began with a discussion on the rudiments of documenting files. We discussed how to create files containing disk directories, which could be edited by a word processor to contain comments on each individual file. You can then use the search power of LIST (or any word processor) to locate files by key name or topic completes the scheme.

We clarified a lot of DOS commands and hopefully inspired people to change CONFIG.SYS or AUTOEXEC.BAT - or to create batch files themselves - or to experiment with the more obscure commands found in the DOS manuals and magazines. It is urged that one find a word processor that allows easy creation and editing of batch files, extraction of text material into files, merging of such files into other files.

Bob Blumenthal has contributed a 300 baud modem to enable someone's initiation into the realm. Available at 415-365-6822.

I use a period followed by a vertical bar instead of REM for comments in a

NOVICE SIG

batch file. (DOS versions beyond 2.1 might require the REM). A query about the bar sparked a discussion on how to access the 255 ASCII characters lurking in our machines. A novice tip thus follows: the vertical bar, for example, is ASCII decimal value 179, and will be shown on the screen if holding the Alt key down while typing 179 on the keypad part of the keyboard. (Do not activate NumLock). Complete listing is in the IBM Technical Reference Manual and in most BASIC & printer manuals. Three digits are required (001 gives the man-in-the-moon on most computers).

OTHER SIGS

DBASE SIG

Those interested in joining a dBASE SIG please contact Gustav Haas at 369-4327.

MS WORD SIG

Jeanie Treichel is interested in forming a Microsoft Word SIG. If you are interested, contact her at 851-0100 (home) or 326-7438 (office). Information regarding the SIG's first meeting will be announced at the main meeting next Wednesday.

HELP WANTED

Please contact Becky Bridges if you would be interested in selling ads for PRINT SCREEN. The job would entail contacting local computer stores, repair shops, etc. to see if they would be interested in advertising on a regular, periodic, or one-time basis. Call Becky at 326-8605 if you are interested.

The club BBS is finally up and running!! The number is 723-7995. In order to log onto the system you must enter your account name and password. Your account name is your name as it appears on your PrtSc mailing label. If you have a space in your last name, use an underline (shifted dash) instead of the space.

Your password is your phone number without area code. Be sure to use a dash (unshifted underline) after the prefix. For example, 321-1234. Your password will be your home phone number if we had one listed for you; otherwise, we used your business number.

You will probably want to change your password once you have successfully logged onto the bulletin board. The main menu has an option for changing your password.

Also, we are looking for a name for our bulletin board. Let us know if you have any brilliant ideas.

C L A S S I F I E D A D S

FOR SALE - \$100 - dBASE II 2.43 for 16 bit users. This is the latest version which I bought from Ashton Tate 2/87, and includes the original master and tutorial disks and manual. Also included: Simpson's "Advanced Techniques in dBASE II," and Byers' "Everyman's Database Primer." Bob Blumenthal (415) 321-0266.

**Envelope Printing:
The Saga Continues**

One of last month's questions addressed a word processor's ability to automatically take the name and address from a letter and instruct the printer to print it on an envelope. We discussed a routine in WordStar, using a macro program or the Shorthand function in Ver. 4.0, that sends the name and address from the letterhead to a separate file and then prints that file.

Elaine Meyer of Palo Alto points out that "Q & A" from Symantec in Cupertino has an envelope printing option built into its print menu. Q & A is actually an English-speaking database with an integrated word processor, meaning that it would be very handy for heavy mail-merge projects. The program sells for under \$300 and anyone interested can call Symantec at (800) 821-8229.

Yet another alternative was suggested by a faithful reader. Instead of building a macro that sends the name and address to a separate file, you can build a macro that creates a second page of the document and merely copies the data to the bottom of the file.

This method works just as well as the original one (maybe better), with one big exception: Now your document is two pages long (one page for the letter, one for the envelope) and if your word processor is set to print continually throughout the document (i.e. no pause for paper change), you won't be able to feed the envelope into your printer after page one is finished. You will have to change your default so that your word processor waits after page one for you to feed the envelope.

Play with both ideas, and chances are you'll develop six more ways to do this and we'll be hearing from you next month.

(continued)

**C'mon Lotus —
Speak English!**

QUESTION: I do a lot of billing using Lotus 1-2-3 and I need to send out professional-looking bills. Unfortunately, 1-2-3's date function can only be formatted to display as 8/1/87 or 1-AUG-87 or some other cryptic format. Whatever happened to August 1, 1987?? How can I make 1-2-3 give me dates in normal English?

ANSWER: While it's true that 1-2-3's simple date formatting doesn't have an option to display dates in verbose English, you can rig it up using a lookup table and a few fancy formulas. I won't get too detailed here, because this is one of those techniques that you can use without necessarily understanding it.

The first step is to build a simple table and give it a range name of MONTHS. The table is two columns across, 12 rows down, and it looks like this:

- 1 January
- 2 February
- 3 March
- 4 April
- 5 May
- 6 June
- 7 July
- 8 August
- 9 September
- 10 October
- 11 November
- 12 December

The day poses no problems because it is simply a number that can be extracted from the @NOW function, and the year can simply be typed in as a constant since it changes so infrequently. But the month is tricky because we're asking Lotus to determine it via formula, and be extracted from the @NOW function, but the

month is tricky because we're asking Lotus to determine it via formula, and yet display it as English. In effect, what we're going to do is instruct 1-2-3 to determine what the month is, and then use the above table to display its findings, instead of using one of its own date formats. In English, what the formula says is: "Hey, Lotus, if we're in the eighth month right now, look in the table to find the label corresponding to the number eight (August)."

Here's the formula:

```
@VLOOKUP(@MONTH(@NOW),MONTHS,1)&
" "&@STRING(@DAY(@NOW),0)&","1987"
```

Briefly, the @MONTH(@NOW) determines the month part of today's date and returns a number from 1 to 12. That number tells 1-2-3 which row in the lookup to find the appropriate month label. Then after the space (" "), the @STRING(@DAY(@NOW),0) converts the day of the month into a usable label. The formula ends by automatically inserting , 1987.

You don't need to understand all of this -- just plug it into your spreadsheet and it will work. Make sure to name your table MONTHS and use this same name in the formula.

QUESTION: My boss claimed that he can learn any word processor and have a letter written and printed in 30 minutes. I said he couldn't and before I knew it, we had a \$50 bet going. Can you suggest a way that I might...you know, tip the scales in my favor?

ANSWER: Call up your bulletin board and download STARTREK.COM. Then rename it to WORDPLUS.COM and tell him that SpaceSoft Corp. just released it. You'll win.

Send your questions (or 50 percent of all bets you win thanks to this column) to: The Answer Man, 25200 Carlos Bee Blvd., No. 428, Hayward, CA 94542.

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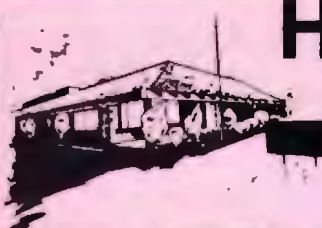
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DISCOVERIES

Making Your Epson Just A Little Bit Smarter

Here's the scenario: You need a quick, rough draft of a text file on your Epson or compatible printer, but you don't want to bother firing up your word processor. You're tempted to just send the file to the printer from DOS with the TYPE command, but you know that when you do that, the printer prints right over the perforations and you're left with a very messy printout. Isn't there some way to teach your Epson when it should end one page and begin another?

The answer is yes. We tend to take our word processors for granted because they do so many things behind the scenes, like margin and spacing control, paragraph formatting and yes, skip-over-perforation. Your word processor sends certain invisible codes to your printer that tell it all about your page layout, including how deep your page is. These are simple ASCII codes and they can be sent to the printer from DOS just as they are sent from your word processor (or from Lotus 1-2-3 or dBASE for that matter).

All we need to do is devise a way to send the right ASCII code to the printer before printing the file. The following batch file, PRNT.BAT, instructs an Epson-compatible printer to skip six lines every 11 inches. (If you have another type of printer, you can create PRNT.BAT, but you will need to consult your manual and substitute the appropriate codes.)

Once created, PRNT.BAT is executed with the command PRNT (filename), with "(filename)" replaced by the name of the

file you want to print, using path names if necessary.

The tricky part to this exercise is the need to embed the "escape character" (ASCII code 27) into a batch file. Most word processors don't allow it (if you touch <Esc> in Microsoft Word, for instance, you activate the main menu). To play it safe, you will create PRNT.BAT using the DOS "COPY CON" file creation technique, where the escape character can easily be placed in a file. Once the file and its escape characters are created, then you can use your faithful word processor or text editor to modify it if you desire.

You need to tell your Epson printer two things: The depth of the page in inches (e.g., 11) and how many lines to skip at the perforation (how about six). For better readability, let's also instruct the printer to print six spaces from the left edge. All of these instructions are found in Line 4 of PRNT.BAT. The ASCII code sequence to set the page length to 11 inches is <ESC>C<128><11>, the sequence for a six-line skip is <ESC>N<6> and a left margin of six is commanded with <ESC>I<6>.

If these codes scare you, that's good -- it means that you're sane. We'll go step-by-step over the entire process. The numbers in angle brackets are the ASCII codes, not the actual numbers, and they are generated by holding down the <Alt> key and typing the corresponding number on the key pad (not the row of numbers on the top).

At a DOS prompt, type COPY CON PRNT.BAT and press <Ret>. Your cursor drops down a line, and it is time for you to type the seven lines that make up PRNT.BAT.

(continued on next page)

DISCOVERIES

(continued)

```
ECHO OFF
CLS
ECHO                Printing %1
ECHO <Alt-155>C<Alt-128><Alt-11><Alt-155>
    N<Alt-134><Alt-155>1<Alt-134> >LPT1
COPY %1 LPT1 >NUL
ECHO <Alt-12> >LPT1
ECHO <Alt-7>
<Ctrl-Z>
```

Lines 1 and 2 are self-explanatory and Line 3 merely confirms on the screen that you are printing the intended file (the "%1" is automatically replaced by the filename that you type when you run PRNT.BAT).

(Note: Line 4 above is wrapped onto two separate lines but should be typed onto a single line in your batch file. When you type Line 4, your screen will return all sorts of graphic squiggles--this is normal.)

Line 4 sends the essential instructions to the printer. <Alt-155>C (read "Escape C") sends a CHANGE PAGE LENGTH command to the printer and <Alt-128> (read "ASCII 128") and <Alt-11> collectively set the value of the page length to 11 inches. Escape-N and <Alt-134> instruct the printer to skip six spaces every 11 inches. Finally, Escape-1 and <Alt-134> set the left margin to 6 (notice ASCII code 134 represents six for both the skip-over value and the left margin value).

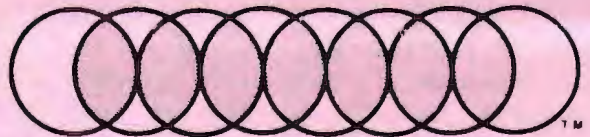
Line 5 sends the file to the printer, line 6 sends a form feed so you end up at the top of the next page, and finally, line 7 beeps to tell you that DOS is ready for your next command (even though your printer may still be printing.)

Two "redirect" commands are used in PRNT.BAT. The ">LPT1" in lines 4 and 6 instruct DOS to send the ECHO statements to the printer instead of to the screen. Line 5 ends with a ">NUL" which merely sends the resultant "1 File(s) copied" to

oblivion (not essential here, but a good technique to know if you want your batch files to run cleanly and with a minimum of backtalk).

For those not familiar, the <Ctrl-Z> represents the "end of file" character that saves the file and returns you to DOS. You will see the "1 File(s) copied" message.

PRNT.BAT assumes that your Epson is connected to the first parallel port, LPT1. If not, change the two occurrences of "LPT1" to "LPT2" or the appropriate output name. PRNT.BAT contains no error checking and is not very forgiving (hey, it's freeware). Next month, however, we'll pick up where we left off and turn this quick and dirty batch file into a bonafide user-friendly piece of software. Then I'll copy-protect it and sell it for \$150...



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**The Stanford/Palo Alto
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