



# **PRinT SCreen**

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

June 1988

Volume 6, Number 6

## **THE VIEW FROM THE TOP**

### **Computerology: The New Occult?**

*By Ralph Muraca, Club President*

If numerology is the study of the occult significance of numbers, then computerology must be the study of the occult significance of computers. Since nobody I have talked to has ever heard of the word, it seemed proper that I should give it some thought; after all, I might be the inventor of a new word – or a new fad for computerniks.

Occult is the key word. One of its many definitions is appealing: Beyond human understanding. But another is even more satisfying: Hidden or concealed. And still another suggests predictive character: Used by soothsayers.

All in this club must have dabbled in computerology; which one of us has not sweated and toiled to search for a little understanding of DOS or the newest program? And who hasn't cursed the hidden meanings in DOS?

But, on to the predictive features of computerology. In vain I sought to find some common thread with numerology and even the presidentially sanctioned astrology, but no conjunctions were apparent. So I sat in my favorite chair in deep thought.

Where are we headed? What is the next quantum leap for personal computers? Will computers really help, or will they be a passing fad? Will computers become important tools for teaching our children? Will there be a chicken and a computer in every pot?

One thing seems clear at this time: Our schools have found that computers can't replace the personality of a teacher. Some say we haven't put enough computers in

*see page 6*

# CLUB NEWS

## *Disk of the Month*

The Disk of the Month will be Rick Altman's batch file EXCEPT.BAT, discussed in this month's DISCOVERIES (see page 4). This batch file enables you to copy (or erase, list, etc.) all files except certain ones. Also included on the disk is a copy of the public domain program, HIDE, which is used in the batch file.

Copies will be available for \$1 each or use your "goodie coupon."

## *DOS of the Month*

This month Don Baird will discuss the DOS environment and how to use the PATH command. (This demonstration was canceled from last month's meeting because of lack of time.) He will also show us a few tricks for getting past PATH's limitations.

## *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 numbers will no longer be operative as passwords. If you have not changed your password from your phone number, please call a Sys Op to do so. The System Operators are Ralph Muraca, Turley Angle, Beverly Altman, and Mark Woodward. Their phone numbers are listed on the SPAUG Resource Center list.

## *Membership Renewals*

For the two months preceding the expiration of your membership you will

## June-July Calendar

June 29	Group Meeting	8:00
July 11	Microsoft Word SIG	7:30
July 12	Novice SIG	7:00
July 13	Planning Meeting	8:00
July 27	Group Meeting	8:00

All members are welcome to attend the monthly planning meeting, where we make decisions on the future of the group. Call Beverly Altman, 329-8252, for the location of the next meeting.

## Next Meeting

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

David Needle, managing editor of the popular Computer Currents magazine, will be the speaker at the next meeting. David's list of possible topics is so long that we would have needed a special press run to print it. Don't miss this well-spoken and engaging speaker.

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.

### ***Goodie Coupons***

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.

### ***Floppy Disks for Sale***

Xidex Precision disks are available for \$6/box. 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.

### ***Classified Ads***

Diablo 630 letter quality printer, dual-bin sheet feeders, and sound cover. Best offer. Call Becky Bridges at 326-8605.

### ***Become a Writer***

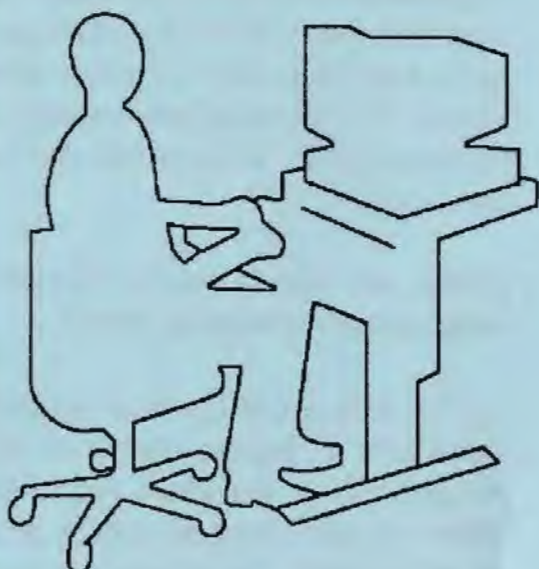
Please contact Becky Bridges (326-8605) if you are interested in writing for PRinT SCreen.

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:

- WordStar or ASCII format.
- Single-spaced.
- Double-spaced between paragraphs.
- Any right margin.
- No centering or tabs.
- By the 15th of the month.



***Action photo of SPAUG member writing article for PRinT SCreen***

### ***Wanted: Ad Salespeople***

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 Bridges at 326-8605 if you are interested. ¶

# DISCOVERIES

## DOS Gets an English Lesson

by Rick Altman

I have long since accepted the fact that I will never be able to speak English to DOS, but I'll tell you what aggravates me even more: Many instructions that I want to give DOS don't exist at all, in English or in any other tongue. For instance, how would you command DOS to carry out this instruction:

**Delete all files in the \CURRENT subdirectory except for FILE1.**

Performing this operation requires some sort of bizarre maneuver like sending FILE1 elsewhere before the delete and then bringing it back after, or worse, going through the directory one by one. How ridiculous!

Once again, the cryptic nature of our operating system has driven me to the batch file forest, this time returning with a batch file called EXCEPT.BAT. This 12-line file allows the user to specify an action, the files to be acted upon and also the files to be EXCLUDED from the action. Best of all, EXCEPT has a syntax that is almost English. The following command requires no explanation:

**EXCEPT file1 ERASE \*.\***

## How EXCEPT Works

Teaming up with a program in our library, EXCEPT.BAT works by hiding the file(s) that you specify to be exceptions before executing the desired command. After the command, EXCEPT unhides them. To the user, it appears that DOS magically skipped over the excluded files, when actually DOS couldn't find them in the first place. EXCEPT is heavy on replaceable parameters, and a working

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*Wouldn't it be nice to  
be able to tell DOS:*

*EXCEPT file1 ERASE \*.\**

?

---

knowledge of how parameters work is helpful, although not necessary.

While EXCEPT is ideal for copy delete operations, it will work with any program that has a command syntax similar to COPY and DEL. You can use paths and wildcards for all filenames, as long as the program that you plan to run accepts them.

The secret ingredient in EXCEPT is the public domain program called

HIDE, which hides and unhides files. HIDE is available in our library and bulletin board (and the next meeting).

### *Listing of EXCEPT.BAT*

```
1  echooff
2  if "%3"==" " goto ERROR
3  hide -h %1 >nul
4  echo Performing %2 on %3
   EXCEPT for %1
5  %2 %3 %4 %5 %6
6  hide -h %1 >nul
7  gotoend
8  :ERROR
9  echo You must list three
   parameters. Try again
10 :END
11 echo ^G
12 echo Done
```

Line 1: The "echo off" makes EXCEPT run quickly and cleanly.

Line 2: Checks to make sure that there are at least three parameters; if not, EXCEPT jumps to Line 8.

Line 3: Hides the file(s) to be excluded.

Line 4: Displays a descriptive message on screen of the operation being performed.

Line 5: Executes the specified command (e.g. DEL \*.bak, COPY \*.\* d:).

Line 6: Unhides the file(s) to be excluded (note the subtle difference from Line 3).

Line 7: Skips over the error message to the end.

Line 8 and 9: Displays the error message if at least three parameters were not entered.

Line 10-12: Beeps and types "Done".

### *Tips...and Traps*

EXCEPT.BAT will prove to be as smart as its user, but perhaps not as forgiving. EXCEPT will stop you if you have not entered at least three parameters, but if you mistype the name of the file to be excluded, EXCEPT will just shrug and go on to the command. If the command is of the delete variety, you may have to make a trip to the undelete well.

EXCEPT will work on DIRs, but you need to fool it. Because of the three parameter rule, you need to add an extra, possibly superfluous, parameter to DIR. For instance, to see your current directory without BAK files, you could type any of the following:

```
EXCEPT *.bak DIR *.*
EXCEPT *.bak DIR /p
EXCEPT *.bak DIR c:
```

but you won't be able to type the plain command of *EXCEPT \*.bak DIR*

### *Your Imagination's the Limit*

This program is simple and flexible enough to assist you in many of your file management tasks. It's also powerful enough to jump through some pretty tall hoops. If ingenious readers share their EXCEPT.BAT discoveries with me, I'll pass them along in future columns and we'll all live happily ever after in shareware heaven. ¶

*Come to this month's meeting for a demonstration of how EXCEPT.BAT can work for you...plus a copy of it for \$1. Such a deal!*

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## Computerology: The New Occult

*from page 1*

schools, and others say it is because teachers are afraid of computers, just like people in the business world try to ignore computers.

At home, the biggest problem is finding things for computers to do that can't be done just as easily by the old methods. If balancing a checkbook is too complex for some people, it means there is a deep-rooted problem, and a computer isn't the answer, for machines are always more formidable than pencil and paper. I've seen people become mired trying to balance checkbooks with a calculator.

But maybe new kinds of personal computers will soon be thrust upon us – computers that listen and talk! Then, it just might be that those who can't use a calculator could talk their way to success. Can't you imagine it? "Withdraw \$44." "Issue a check for \$29 for the electric bill." Etc. etc. And the computer would faithfully report: "Your balance is \$125.33. "You are overdrawn by \$50. Beep, beep!"

Frankly, I'm waiting for voice-operated systems; I can't seem to get data into a computer fast enough with the keyboard. I make so many mistakes that I'm sure I've reentered everything at least three times! If only the computer could understand my voice! But then it might be smart enough to talk back – "You ninny, you already gave me that number!" "Quit lisping!"

I'm told that the present state of the art is such that voice-operated systems

are rather slow, so I might not get to increase my rate of data input. But we might yet see computers that "plug into" human beings, just like some cars have plugs for a computer analysis of malfunctions. Location of the plug might be a problem; I don't want a plug located on my head, and other parts of my body seem too personal to be accessed in public. Nevertheless, it is an attractive concept. Imagine, when plugged in, all you'd have to do is think about the data you want in the computer, and the brain waves will initiate the proper functions. Then the computer would output electrical impulses that simulate brain waves and deliver a response. Now, that's computing!

Of course, why stop at one computer – you could "talk" to a number of them: "Hey, #1, you get the answer to 123456 times 345678; and you, #2, be prepared to divide by 9876.123." Sure beats the multitasking computers talked about these days.

There will always be some wise guys in the world: "Hey, #1, my left toe itches – soothe it." Such computers might be just what is needed to take care of people with dope or drug problems. After all, a plug-in computer, could output the proper brain waves to give an addict a "high" with no expensive drug habit. Even sexual desires might be assuaged.

*See page 10*

# THE ANSWER MAN

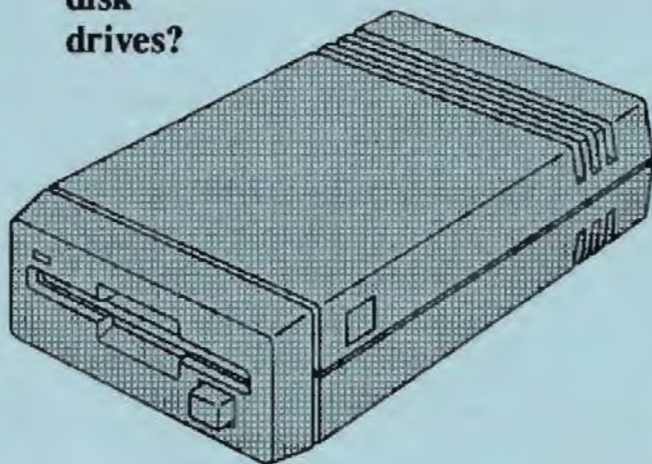
## All About Disk Drives

*(Editor's Note: This month, SPAUG member Richard Anderson plays both parts, giving us a recap of last month's meeting, in question-and-answer format.)*

by Richard Anderson

The guest speakers for the May meeting were Dale Clark and Gary Simbulan from California Disk Drive Repair. These people repair disk drives for a living, and my impression is that they know what they are talking about, without being slick or pretentious. They both worked in the industry before going into business for themselves, so they have seen disk drives from both perspectives. They brought along many different drives for show and tell and answered a lot of the burning questions I know we all have asked ourselves. Rather than a formal presentation, they took questions from the floor. What follows is an edited synopsis of the knowledge they shared:

**Just how rugged are disk drives?**



*Q: Just how rugged are hard disk drives?*

A: Modern drives are designed to withstand very substantial shocks without suffering damage. Currently manufactured drives can be subjected to forces of 20 G's or more. They have had customers drop drives on the ground without losing any data or having any more bad sectors than they already had.

*Q: Should you turn off your computer at night, or leave it running all the time?*

A: They have never seen a drive fail suddenly because of a bad bearing.

Usually when a bearing goes bad you are given ample (noisy) warning, so you have time to rescue your data and get the disk drive repaired or replaced. The most dangerous time for your hard disk is when the head takes off when it starts, or when it lands on the surface of the disk when you

turn the computer off. When the drive is spinning, the head is being forced away from the disk surface by high air

*See next page*

## All About Drives

*from previous page*

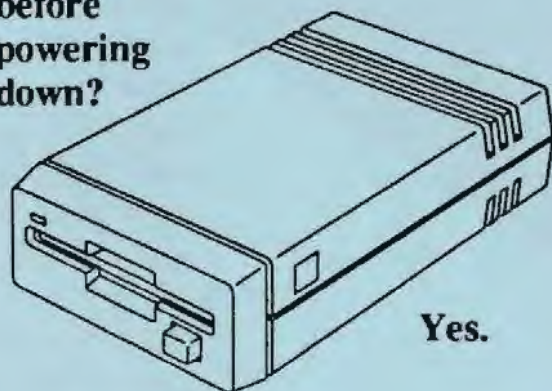
pressure (like a water skier skimming across the surface.)

But do turn your monitor and printer off. The tubes in your monitor will wear out faster if they are left on constantly.

*Q: Should you use a PARK or SHIP-DISK program before powering down?*

A: Yes. The Winchester disk drive family of drives was designed so that the disk head comes to rest against the media when the disk drive stops. Typical specifications state that a drive should be able to survive a large number of start/stop cycles before failure. However, when drives do suffer a disk crash (and all drives will eventually fail), it would be better that the head be over a spot on the disk other than the directory or FAT sectors, which contain critical information. PARK programs move the head to a track

**Should I park  
my heads  
before  
powering  
down?**



toward the center of the disk. The best Park program/hardware combinations, such as those used by Everex, attempt to move the head to a track beyond the

highest numbered track on the system. The drive controller then recognizes this as a park instruction and moves the head to a "landing zone," beyond the innermost track, where no data is stored.

(Note: Some drives, such as the Seagate ST 251 are self-parking. No park program is needed. This particular drive uses stored up electromotive force to park the head when the power goes off.)

*Q: Is it OK to run a disk drive in other than a horizontal orientation?*

A: Most drives are designed to run either horizontally or on either of two sides. Most drives will experience problems, however, if oriented so that the arm holding the drive heads is required to move on a vertical axis, where the effect of gravity alters the tension on finely calibrated springs.

*Q: I once had an intermittent, very high-pitched noise coming from a hard disk. I was told to run the unit upside down for a while, then turn it back over. That cured it. Why?*

A: The noise was caused by a static dissipater spring which is typically mounted around the upper spindle. This component drains off static charge to reduce the number of read errors caused by static build up. With today's error correction mechanisms, static dissipaters are no longer really needed, but are still included in most designs. Some dissipaters wear in such a way that they begin to vibrate at a certain resonance frequency. Turning the drive over caused further, different wear, which changed the

resonant frequency to a point where the vibration no longer occurred.

*Q: What are the symptoms of an impending disk crash?*

A: Early warning signs are DOS error messages. Data read errors or seek errors can mean your drive is going bad. More serious are sector read error messages. Very serious is a general drive error.

*Q: What about occasional flakiness?*

A: Some drives are subject to thermal expansion problems, whereby the relative position of the arm and the tracks of data go out of alignment. Some days the drive will work fine, others it can't find your data. Drives subject to this condition can be fixed with a low level (physical) format. Disk Technician and Spin Right can also fix the problem.

Diagnosis tip for Seagate 225 drives: Do a DIR command from the root directory, then turn off the computer without parking the disk. Then turn computer back on and listen carefully. A healthy disk should step 6 times, then move head to inner and outer tracks as part of startup diagnostics. A drive suffering from thermal expansion problems will make a louder clicking noise at first, because the arm is hitting against a stop.

*Q: If I reformat my hard disk, what interleaf factor should I use?*

A: Most manufacturers specify an interleaf factor that is conservative. For example, the original XT hard disk came with an interleaf factor of 6, whereas you can actually get faster data transfer rates with an interleaf factor of 4. A program called H/Optimum can help you determine the optimum interleaf factor.

*Q: Should I use a floppy disk drive head cleaner kit?*

A: All head cleaner kits are abrasive, some are extremely abrasive. Disk head cleaning kits are not recommended, especially not the dry type. A good quality diskette should provide enough abrasion to keep the head clean. Sometimes, though, there is some build-up of black stuff on the drive head, which can cause scratches

**Should I use a floppy disk cleaner kit?**



**No.**

in the surface of a disk. In these cases, use of a q-tip and lab-grade isopropyl alcohol is recommended. You will probably have to take the drive cover off to get access to the disk heads. Be careful not to bend the arm out of position.

*Q: Should I insert a cardboard card in the diskette drive before moving it?*

A: On early model double sided drives, you needed the cardboard cards (or a floppy disk) to keep the heads from hitting each other. Nowadays drives are designed so the heads are kept apart unless there is a disk in place. Some drives won't let you close the drive door unless there is a disk in place. ¶

*California Disk Drive Repair*  
3350 Scott Blvd, Bldg. 59  
Santa Clara, CA 95054  
(408) 727-2475

# News From the SIGs

## *The Novice SIG*

We still have an immense array of exciting topics to explore, however, DOS fundamentals will always remain central.

**Novice tip:** Lift a corner of your computer off the desk and if the noise drops perceptibly, put squares, cut from foam or live rubber, or from an old rug, under each foot. Do not impede air flow under the computer.

The June meeting was delayed due to a virus (not the computer variety). The "make-up" meeting date depends on a consensus between those who originally intended to come. If decided to be after the general meeting, it can be announced.

**Next Novice Sig Meeting - July 12** (2nd Tuesday of the month). 7 p.m., refreshments, at 3785 Farm Hill Blvd. Redwood City (near Emerald Hill). Watch for blue & red light. (415) 365-6822. Three calls are minimum before July 8, otherwise meeting will be canceled and those calling notified by July 10 (leave phone number). Membership not required.

—Don Baird

## *Microsoft Word SIG*

The Microsoft Word SIG meets the second Monday of every month. The next meeting will be Monday, July 11th at 7:30 p.m. For details on the meetings call Jeanie Treichel at home (851-0100) or work (326-7438).

## Computerology

*from page 6*

We could avoid the unsightly plug if a small radio transmitter and its foot-long antenna could be placed under the skin. It might stick out, but it might be cosmetically attractive. ("She's got the nicest transmitter bump.") Why, computers might even ride herd on our young ones! (It's 9:00, does the computer know where your children are?) There's much to be said for brain-wave communication with computers.

I need computerology for inputs in general, but especially to divine topics that ought to be of interest to our club members. You see, every month we have to find a speaker who can address the group at our monthly meeting. What topic is timely? What new computer item might be of interest? Can we get someone to give a talk on the computer as it might be 10 to 20 years from now? Will there be personal computers, or will we use high speed modems to tap supercomputers?

Is there a computerologist in the house? (I'll settle for the name of a likely speaker!) ¶

# The SPAUG Resource Center

## Club Officers

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

## Managers

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Financial Manager	Beverly Altman	329-8252
Newsletter Editor	Becky Bridges	326-8605
Production Editor	Rick Altman	962-9270

## Library

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

## Software

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Desktop Publishing	Rick Altman	962-9270
Accounting-Computer Assoc.	Larry Mehl	326-6037
Framework	Jim Caldwell	692-7181
Lotus 1-2-3	Bruce Coddling	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

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BASIC	Ralph Muraca	365-1659
C	Corwin Nichols	494-8640
DOS 3.x	Rick Altman	962-9270
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



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

P.O. Box 3738, Stanford, CA 94309

### **Club Information**

**Membership**

Louise Greer Bolitho

322-3850

\$25/year fee (Students \$10)

**Bulletin Board**

723-7995

**Newsletter**

Becky Bridges

326-8605

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