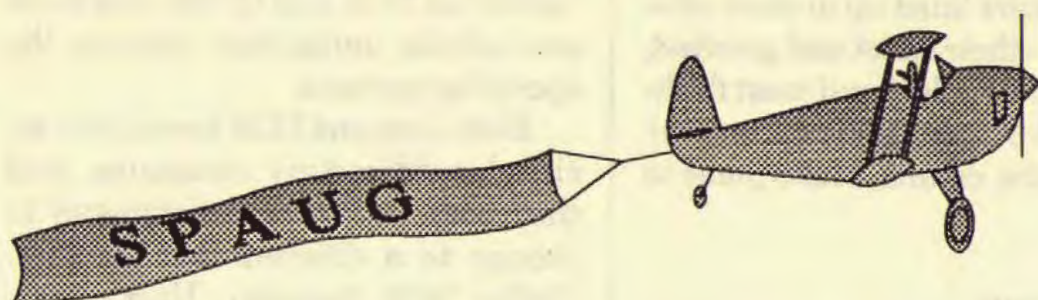


PRinT SCreen

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

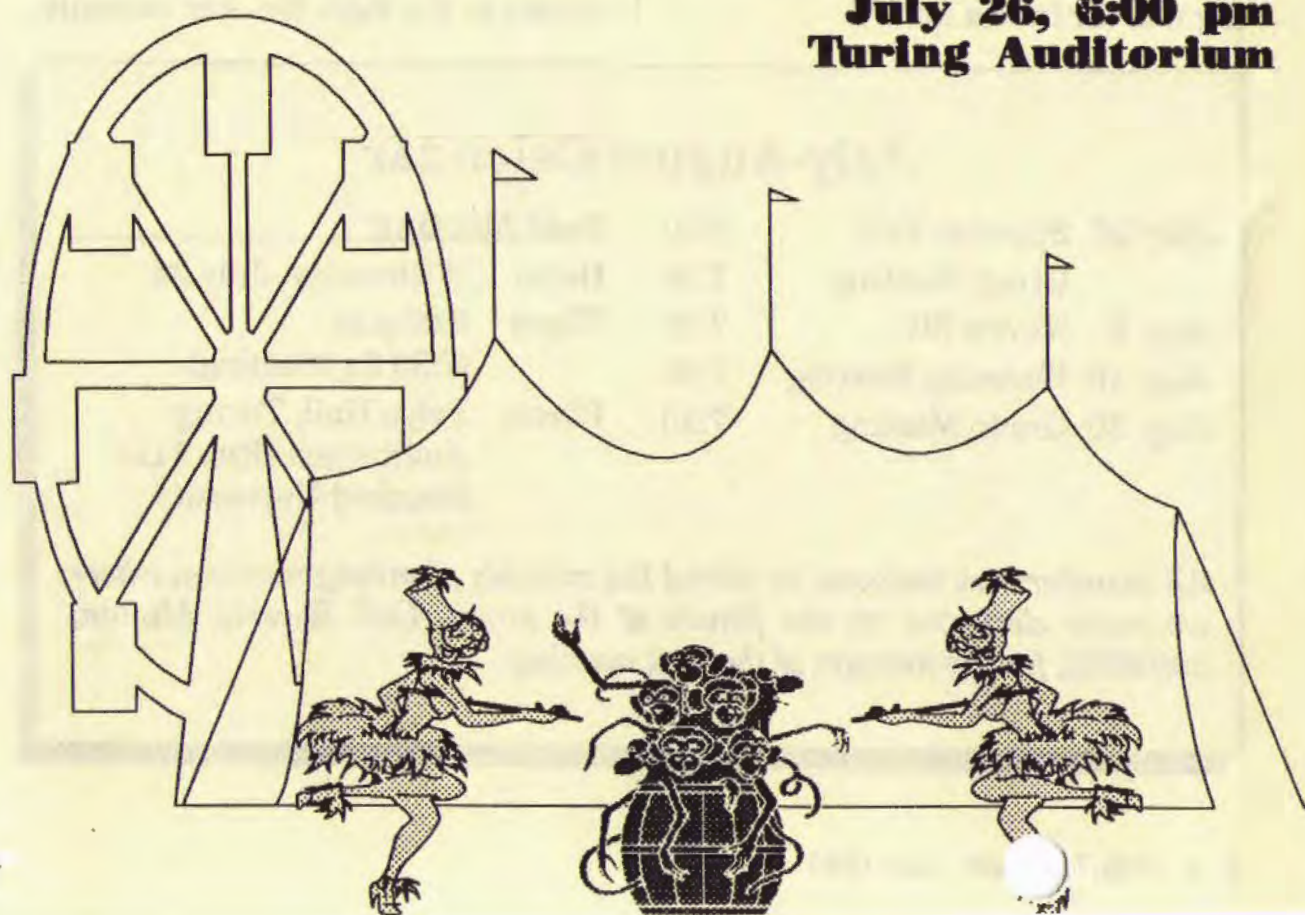
July 1989

Volume 7, Number 7



The Summer Sidewalk Fair

July 26, 6:00 pm
Turing Auditorium



CLUB NEWS

Ladies and Gentlemen, Step Right Up...

The Summer Sidewalk Fair, at 6:00 before the monthly meeting on July 26, promises to be the most fun this club has ever had outdoors. We have several outside vendors and many members lined up to show off—and sell us—their latest and greatest, as well as their oldest and most faithful. See Rick Altman's View From the Top for all the details. Make plans to be there!

June Swoon

I guess it was bound to happen sooner or later. For the first time in the club's seven year history, the main speaker did not show. Everyone was disappointed they didn't get to see a demonstration of Excel, but the meeting was far from a failure.

Jared Nedzel, our Stanford student representative, gave us an informative demonstration of the Unix operating system. Unix is the operating system used by Steve Job's Next computer and the Sun MicroSystem work stations. Unix is actually the "father" of DOS and CP/M, and there are definite similarities between the operating systems.

Both Unix and DOS have a hierarchical subdirectory structure, and they both use the CD command to change to a different subdirectory. Unlike DOS, however, Unix's commands are two characters long and are not mnemonic. For example, Unix's command for *DIR* is *LS* and *TYPE* is *CAT*. If you want to use DOS commands instead of the equivalent Unix commands, you can assign aliases in the login file. For example,

July-August Calendar

July 26	Summer Fair	6:00	Next Meeting
	Group Meeting	7:30	Date: Wednesday, July 26
Aug. 8	Novice SIG	7:30	Time: 6:00 p.m.
Aug. 16	Planning Meeting	7:30	(7:30 for Meeting)
Aug. 30	Group Meeting	7:30	Place: Polya Hall, Turing Auditorium (Rm. 111) Stanford University

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.

the line *alias dir = ls* would let you type *dir* instead of *ls* when you are in Unix.

The main benefit to using Unix is that it is a very powerful multi-tasking and multi-user operating system. It gives you the ability to transfer information between different types of computer systems and different versions of Unix. On the down side, though, Unix is more complicated than DOS and system administration is very difficult. Oh, and the Unix operating system itself consumes at least 70 MB of hard disk storage.

Jan Altman gave a delightful demonstration of the disk of the month: Tasty Bits—the best of PC Magazine's utilities. She started off by showing some of the fun programs on the disk. With these utilities Jan showed us how we could do all kinds of fun things with our screens: she made the screen drip, split and melt. Furthermore, she gave us a copy of User Unfriendly DOS that gives you all kinds of snide remarks when you enter DOS commands.

The Tasty Bits disk also had dozens of useful utilities: a pop up note pad, a screen snapshot program, a program to undelete files, and a command to get a visual tree of your sub-directory structure.

The disk was so popular, we sold all the copies we brought and had to make more after the meeting. If you weren't able to get a copy last month, we will bring more to this month's meeting.

—see next page

This Month

Let's Make Music

This month we will be visited by sound artist Bob Vieira, who will take us on a trip of the state of the art of hardware and software devoted to the music industry. A concert musician, Bob writes the music for Epyx computer games. Much of what he will be showing us will be (gasp!) not PC-based, but we won't tell anyone if you don't.

Program of the Month

Following our music theme this month, we will see a demonstration of Don Baird's THEME3S music cross-indexing database program. Entering partial title information will retrieve any themes related to that title.

Because PC Magazine's "Tasty Bits" were so popular last month, we will be offering this disk again for \$1 each (or use your "goodie coupon").

The Giveaway

This month we will have a variety of software and hardware items that we will be raffling off with our electronic raffling system. You must be present to win the following:

Plus Development's HardCard
ViewLink
Computer games by Epyx

Club News

from previous page

Raffle

We were going to raffle off a copy of Excel at the July meeting, but since the representative from Microsoft was a no-show, we weren't able to. (We're working on getting a copy for a future raffle.) But the raffle must go on! Traveling Software sent us several copies of ViewLink, a program that links all your software programs and data, and so we raffled them off.

The following members won copies of ViewLink:

John Watson

Jim Moore

The above winners would like to thank the following members who were not at the meeting (they would have won had they been present):

David Rahn

Charles Pack

Ronald Seltzer

The WordPerfectionist

WordPerfect Corporation sent us some complimentary copies of the WordPerfect Support Group's monthly newsletter, *The WordPerfectionist*, which will be available at the July group meeting. They are offering our members a discount for a subscription to their newsletter: \$30/year instead of \$36. If you are a WordPerfect groupie interested in subscribing, call (301) 387-4500.

The Club Survey

Many thanks to all those members who sent in the membership surveys we included in the June newsletter. If you haven't returned yours yet, bring it to the July meeting or mail it in soon. (It was self-addressed and stamped, so you have no excuse.) We will be compiling and summarizing the data soon and making it public to the entire group.

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 PRinT SScreen.

Floppy Disks For Sale

Xidex Precision disks are available for \$6/box. High density floppies are \$10/box (10 disks). 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 to all monthly meetings.

Free Ads

Don't forget that as a member you are entitled to free classified ads in PRinT SScreen. If you have old/unused hardware or software, place an ad here. Members have reported good responses to their ads. ¶

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

Who Said Anything About Having Fun?

by Rick Altman,
Club President

With this month's Summer Sidewalk Fair, we attempt to make SPAUG history: we will be hosting an event at which the primary goal is to — dare we say it — *socialize*.

I know, there isn't anything in our constitution about this act of heresy. In fact, wasn't it just last month in this space that I called us all a bunch of nerds?

Indeed, at this first-ever outdoor event, I intend to make good on my campaign promise of more fun. If it rains, I'm resigning.

Beginning at 6:00 pm, out in front of Turing Auditorium, we will have a mini-computer show. We will have a

small cadre of local computer dealers, both showing off and selling their latest gadgetry. There will be several tables of bargain software to be sold and purchased, and more than a few enterprising types passing out a business card or two. Not to lose the spirit of the occasion, I will be unveiling and hopefully selling a training workbook for Ventura Publisher. Also, our two special guests, sound artist Bob Vieira and the all-knowing, all-wise St. Silicon, will be on hand to press the flesh and offer a taste of what has made each of them famous.

So by all means, do bring your checkbook if you are in the market for things electronic. And if you have anything to sell, plug, publicize or market, this is the place to do it.

If you aren't in the market for anything, all the more reason to come. This is our opportunity to actually meet each other — the ultimate Ran-

dom Access. Yes, it is allowed to ask a fellow club member where she went to school, or even under what sign he was born. The speed of one's memory chips can wait an hour or two.

So consider this your personal invitation to step out with your fellow computer hackers. Let's talk baseball over a hot dog, or argue Mac vs. PC over a soda.

Let's have some fun, eh? ¶

At this first-ever outdoor event, I intend to make good on my campaign promise of more fun.

The Future of Computing

by Don Lesser,
Pioneer Valley
PCUG

Nobody ever lost any credibility predicting graphical interfaces, programs with more functionality and the ever-increasing need for more raw computing power. Nevertheless, I've been thinking about these things in relation to the future of MS-DOS.

First of all, the way I see it, DOS is dead. Even if it takes two more years to bring OS/2 applications to the PC, even if the majority of home users never switch, even if OS/2 is slow and bloated — as long as it's got a graphical interface, it means that DOS is doomed. Someday COPY *.* A: will look as archaic as the future in 1930's science-fiction movies. Why? Mostly because of graphical interfaces — with the 640K memory

barrier as the thin edge of the wedge.

I've helped about ten friends buy, set up, and install computers. Each of them was (and still is) reasonably intelligent. But each of them had difficulty visualizing directory tree structures and what it means to "run" a program, let alone understand the difference between VGA graphics and a Hercules card.

I used to think that like driving a standard shift, a new user had to learn about DOS, FORMATTING and COPYING, MD, CD and RD. But after watching my friends struggle, and after getting several midnight and weekend panic calls, I came to the conclusion that there's a reason why automatics outsell standard shifts: they're easier to use.

The people I taught were not fascinated by computers; they simply

wanted to word process, or keep their books, or do mailing lists, or whatever they thought a computer could help them do better. Using a computer should be easy. There's always enough time to teach someone how to keep a hard disk directory once they know enough to clutter it up. Then it can be fun.

What makes graphical interfaces so good? It's easy to understand pointing to something and dragging it to the trash as a way to get rid of a file. It's much easier to click on a file to run it than it is to explain what happens when you CD\WORDPERF then /NC/NK. And once you're in a program, it's easier to point to something than to remember commands.

I've written articles about how much harder a menu system is for advanced users because they have to pick one

menu, then another, instead of simply giving the command. This is true of graphics menus, since it takes longer to draw them. I still believe this, but nearly every menu system I've seen comes with what I call "batch override." With batch override, you simply give the command, if you know it.

Lotus does this by letting you stack commands: if you want to retrieve a file, you type /FR and the name. If you don't remember how, you type /, look at the menu, highlight your choice, etc. Advanced users rip through the menus while beginners go step-by-step. Add context-sensitive help and you've got something that makes the program easier.

I know you've been reading a lot about the old days (not the good old days) when a PC came with two disk drives, a monochrome monitor, 128K, blah blah blah. I came to computers from an arts background (with a minor in science fiction) and I was utterly fascinated by the arcane commands you had to type to get the machines to do anything. But you shouldn't have to be that fascinated to use a computer.

Why? Well, because computers are tools. Sure you don't give a child a power saw, but you can give the kid a hand saw and watch to make sure he or she doesn't lose a finger or cut the arm off of Grandma's sofa.

Apple made some incredible strides with the Mac interface. I think that within two years all software will have that look. First, because it is easy to use. Second, because it's neat. The way menu boxes seem to zoom in and

out of the screen makes you want to add sound effects.

But Apple has made a habit of shortchanging their early buyers (512K of Mac memory used to cost \$700 for the early Mac owners back when 412K of PC memory cost \$64). Also, the Mac is a closed system — it's too hard to add hardware to it and it's too hard to look at the guts of the software to see why Microsoft Word is adding some black holes in your text.

No, despite my admiration for the Mac, I think that the computer for the rest of us is still going to be the PC. Or some more highly evolved member of the species.

IBM is failing miserably at convincing us to give up our choices and buy a system with mediocre performance and a propriety bus. But VGA graphics do look pretty neat.

What I'm looking forward to are fast PCs with an operating system that multi-tasks as fast as DOS runs single programs. They'll have an interface that gives us the ability to pick graphically or type commands. They'll run software that knows about other software and lets us set up all kinds of links between things.

They'll be smarter and more colorful than what we've got now. We'll still be able to get under the hood and poke around. They won't control the temperature in your house and you won't use them to bank or shop or sightsee at home.

And no one will want to listen to a bunch of old-timers talk about "how easy you kids have it now. Why I remember.." ¶

Are Hard Drives Fragile?

Foglight Vol. IV No. 3

Dear Dr. John:

I was in a store recently and overheard a technician telling another customer that no matter what, eventually all hard drives fail. Is this true? I'd hate to think that eventually everything that I saved in my hard drive would be subject to my computer's failing memory. How long does it take for the heads to wear out the disk surfaces? — GG

Dear GG:

Well, I suppose that eventually the bearings that spin the platters might wear out. However, you'd usually hear them getting noisy long before the drive gave you any memory failures. In an actual real-life situation, no; hard drives do not always have to fail. In fact, they will usually become obsolete long before the bearings wear out.

So what about the heads wearing on the disk surfaces? Interesting question. Actually, unlike floppy drives that put the read/write heads in direct contact with the disk surface(s), hard drive heads actually fly over the surface of the platters (hard drive disks). The heads are called Winchester heads and they are designed aerodynamically so they ride

on a cushion of air that's produced by the high speed spin of the platters which is roughly 3,000 RPM - nearly 100 times faster than a record player.

Anyway, since the heads don't touch the platter surfaces, they cause absolutely no wear. But other things can contribute to a hard disks' early demise. First, never move a hard drive while it is powered on. Second, while hard drives filter the air that is pumped through them, filters can become overloaded. If a speck of dust or smoke gets into the drive it can cause some real problems. You see, the heads fly so near to the disk surfaces that the particles that make up smoke would be gargantuan compared to the space between the head and the disks.

Finally, people and the electric company really cause more hard disk problems than any other source. Lost data files are usually the result of the operator error power failure.

So, if you want to extend the life of your hard drives, here are a few rules you can follow:

1. Always leave them in one place while they are running.
2. Don't smoke in the same room with your computer system. Smoke will eventually degrade the performance of most computer components.
3. No matter how careful you are with your drives, power can still cause you problems. So if you want to be real safe, get a battery backup power system (not the same as a surge suppressor). Also be sure to always back up

your data on floppy disks or streaming tape regularly (every day).

With our experience with hard disks in the FOG office, I can vouch for the fact that they do have a finite life span. Most hard disk drives are rated for a MTBF (Mean Time Before Failure) of 20,000 hours. That means that the manufacturer expects the average hard disk to require service (read FAIL) after about 2 years of continuous use.

With hard drives on the FOG BBS systems running continuously, we have to replace them after about 2 years. In actual use, you can expect your own drive to last a little longer mechanically if you turn it off each night. But the transients from turning it off and on may affect the life of the drive, too. In any case always back up your disk. You have been warned.

Programmers' Jokes

by Hy Bender, NY PCUG

Q: How many programmers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. It's a hardware problem.

Q: What's the difference between hardware and software?

A1: Hardware breaks if you play with it long enough; software works if you play with it long enough.

A2: About two hundred dollars.

Q: Why is Halloween the same as Christmas?

A: Because OCT 31 = DEC 25.

(Note: If you don't get this, ask at Random Access.)

File Not Found

*London IBM PCUG,
April 1987*

I lost another file the other day. Well I guess I mean to say I misplaced it. But I know precisely where it was. On my hard disk. Somewhere.

I named it very carefully so I'd remember it. Something like IOSNEI. I thought it had an extension, but I'd forgotten which program I'd created it with, so I wasn't sure what the extension was. It wasn't very big. I thought I put it in a subdirectory. Maybe it WAS a subdirectory.

I looked for it with DIR. I looked for it with DIR/P, DIR/W, DIR/W/P. I SORTed and PIPEd my directories to LPT1. I looked for it with TREE. My tree turned out to be banyan, branches flopping down all over the place. (Why, I wondered, is the tree's root on top?)

I decided to get systematic about it. When I ran Norton, all it said was "Yechh!" I started windowing through my files. TYPEing and DEL'ing like mad. I ran CHKDSK and it found 233 lost clusters and a black hole.

Finally, I felt I had to start afresh. I created four new sub-directories, copied what I knew was good into them, and sent the remainder into a new subdirectory:

```
C:\LOOK\HERE\WHEN\YOU\CANT\
FIND\IT\ANYWHERE\ELSE
```

Even with another "\ " and

—see next page

PRTSC Potpourri

from previous page

eight\character filename, a "." and three character extension, I had two to spare for DOS's limit of 63 characters. No problem. Of course, in my process I accidentally deleted my

Lotus drivers, my Multimate Dictionary and my 1986 income taxes.

In frustration, I shut my machine off and decided to take a walk to clear my head. And it worked. After a few minutes, I remembered where I saved that misplaced file.

On my RAM disk...

The SIGS

Microsoft Word SIG

The Microsoft Word SIG has been temporarily suspended until further notice. If you are interested in being a member of the SIG please call Jan Altman at (408) 243-5955.

Lotus SIG

This new SIG is in the planning stages right now. If you are interested in joining this SIG, please give Jan Altman a call at (408) 243-5955. An announcement with further details will be made at the group meeting this month.

Novice SIG

Last meeting: The last Novice SIG meeting was hosted by Laddie W. Hughes on July 9th. The ten commandments of personal computing as outlined in the Sunday, July 2, 1989 San Jose Mercury News were noted. They were:

1. Thou shalt not use a program thou hast not paid for.
2. Thou shalt not feel guilty about borrowing software to try it.
3. Thou shalt not be stingy or

arrogant with thy advice and assistance.

4. Thou shalt not bear false witness on bulletin boards.

5. Thou shalt not inject viruses into thy neighbor's equipment.

6. Thou shalt not treat women as computer inferiors.

7. Thou shalt support thy favorite bulletin board system.

8. Thou shalt mind thy P's and Q's and TLA's.

9. Thou shalt not snoop in thy neighbor's files.

10. Thou shalt love thy computer as thyself.

Attendees were familiarized with Laddie's IBM PS/50, and several DOS files were explored and reviewed. In addition, Laddie demonstrated her multi-purpose software, First Choice by Software Publishing. Don Baird also served as a reliable resource.

Next meeting: The Novice SIG meets the second Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be held on August 8 at 7:30 pm. Location to be announced.

The SPAUG Resource Center

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President	Rick Altman	962-9270
Vice President	Corwin Nichols	494-8640
Treasurer/ASSU Rep	Jared Nedzel	854-2732

Managers

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Newsletter Editor	Becky Bridges	326-8605
Production Editor	Rick Altman	962-9270

Library

Public Domain Software	Les Weil	321-5541
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	Jim Caldwell	692-7181
	Richard Orser	408-425-0474
Lotus 1-2-3	Bruce Coddling	367-8642
	Arthur Naman	408-879-9900
Microsoft Word	Hunter Jackson	408-446-4097
	Jan Altman	408-243-5955
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
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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