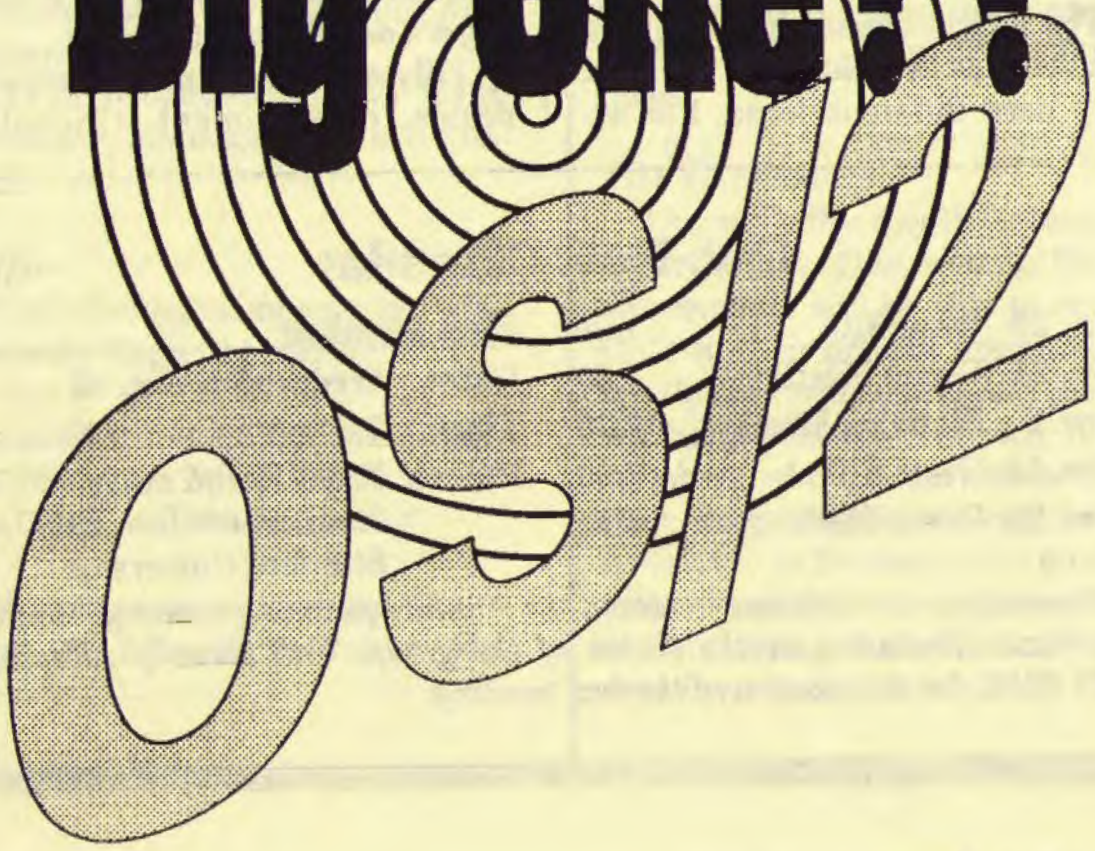
PRinT SCreen

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

October 1989 Volume 7, Number 10

Is This The Big One??



CLUB NEWS

September Meeting

Several representatives from Next Computers showed off their exciting new and powerful computer. You know this computer is different just by looking at it: all the components are jet-black and the computer itself is square-shaped. (No wonder they call it "The Cube.") The system does not come with a floppy disk drive; instead it comes standard with a 256Mb removable read/write optical disk. Overall, this drive is faster than a floppy but slower than a hard disk. You can buy optical disks for $100 retail ($50 for higher education). The benefit to having a removable 256MB disk is that the user can move to another machine with all the files, data, and software that are used on his/her own machine.

The interface resembles a Macintosh, but not wanting any lawsuits, Next uses different icons. For example, instead of throwing away files in a trash can, you drag them into a swirling "black hole." You can move through the directory hierarchy by pointing and clicking at directory names with the mouse.

The electronic mail system really showed off the computer's powerful and unique features. You can send and receive multi-media mail messages, and they can voice and music. For example, if you see a pair of lips in your message (the icon for "Lip Service"), you can click on it and listen to a voice message.

At any point while you are typing or reading text on the screen, you can tap into Webster's Digital Library which comes packaged with the system. Select the word and click on the appropriate icon and you can instantly get a definition of the word.

Fifty-eight programs are currently under development (including

Oct.-Nov. Calendar

Oct. 23	Word SIG	7:30
Oct. 25	Group Meeting	7:30
Nov. 8	Planning Meeting	7:30
Nov. 14	Users SIG	7:30
Nov. 29	Group Meeting	7:30

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, Oct. 25
Time: 7:30 p.m.
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.

programs by Lotus, Informix, Ashton-Tate, Aldus, and Frame)...software will be distributed by taking your optical disk to Businessland and having the software copied to the disk, or more expensive software will be distributed on its own optical disk.

The system is not cheap

Component	Univ.	Commercial
Basic system	$6,500	$10,995
Laser printer	2,000	3,500
330MB hard disk	2,000	4,000

However, it does come bundled with a lot of software: WriteNow, Digital Library (Webster's Dictionary, Thesaurus, Complete Works of William Shakespeare, and the Oxford Quotations), Electronic Mail, Mathematica, Sybase Personal Database application, terminal emulation, another editor, some games, and the Interface Builder (for developing new applications).

For a brochure on the Next Workspace Manager, call 800-848-NEXT.

Raffle

The following members were winners in the September raffle:

Douglas Silker	1-2-3 Quick Reference
Rudy Polacek	Microsoft Word 5.0
Dave Casto	Word Perfect 5.0

The above winners would like to thank the following members who

—see page 10

This Month

Is this the Big One?

No, we're not talking about the Great Quake of '89, but rather the much-discussed, much-maligned and much-praised OS/2. This will be your chance to see for yourself, as IBM shows us what it hopes will be the operating system of the future (aka The Big One).

Those who were in attendance last month will have a terrific opportunity to compare two of the most highly-touted graphical interfaces in modern personal computing.

This month we will also be visited by a group called Technology Concepts, which is making considerable progress in the area of voice-data technology — a big issue for those of us who use telephones, fax machines and modems, often all at the same time!

The Giveaway

Our raffle this month features OS/2, the star of the evening. Not all members will be able to run OS/2 on their present machines, but this is hardly a program that will be obsolete anytime soon. All members who are current with their dues (if you received this newsletter in the mail, your dues are current) and who are present at the meeting at the time of the drawing are eligible to win.

On Being an Electronic Journalist

by Rick Altman

Our softball team finished the year at 2-12 and I have just returned from a post-game celebration that included far more than my share of beers. All I can think of is how much I miss writing sports — the occupation I gave up to be a desktop publishing author and consultant.

Now don't get me wrong — desktop publishing has been very good to me, and I wouldn't trade writing about it for anything less than a World Series or Super Bowl. But I'm not sure why that is.

Sports writing is exciting, dramatic and full of personality. Sports captures the imagination to a degree that desktop publishing couldn't hope to approach. The fact that it has less than an ounce of social relevance is entirely irrelevant, and I mean that sincerely. Few events will ever compare to the thrill of reporting on a baseball fantasy camp, or looking John McEnroe in the eye as he tells me what a rotten tennis reporter I am.

Why have I become a desktop publishing columnist?? I ask myself that question all the time, but until now, have never addressed it publicly. The fact is, there is quite a bit of ugliness in DTP, as businesses try in vain to convert an aging secretary or a naive administrative assistant into a document designer. Right...reminds me of a few hundred rookie pitchers who thought they could throw a fastball by Reggie Jackson.

On the other hand, there is immeasurable joy in the electronic process. We are watching a revolution taking place, the likes of which have never been seen in any ballpark, field or on any court. We are watching one of the largest, most all-encompassing industries, the one we call publishing, change before our very eyes. The beauty of sport is in its timelessness; the beauty of desktop publishing is in its captivating urgency. I doubt very seriously that I could appreciate one without the other, much the way I doubt that I could have written any of this without the incentive of

Few events will ever compare to looking John McEnroe in the eye as he tells me what a rotten tennis reporter I am.

trying to forget a 2-12 softball season in a single evening.

I know that this article will never be published unless it begins to speak tangibly to the issues facing desktop publishers, and so far it hasn't. Or maybe it has. How is it that I am considered a professional publisher and not a professional athlete? I have taken exactly zero classes, have earned zero degrees and have received zero accreditation in the field of electronic publishing, yet I am earning a decent living at it.

Where did my experience come from?? Well, I learned how to concentrate on the golf course, I learned about teamwork on the volleyball court, I learned how to communicate as a tennis coach, and I learned how to deal with adversity on the softball field and I learned how to write as a collegiate sportswriter. These five skills may be the most important ones that I bring to my writing assignments and to my consulting jobs. When I get right down to it, everything I have learned about desktop publishing has come to me through the prism of having been an athlete and a sportswriter.

When I am hired to dole out advice or give a talk on something, all I have to go on are the personal and professional experiences that have, for some reason, become significant and memorable to me.

I'm not exactly sure where I'm headed with this, and I suppose that is the beauty of writing pro bono for a newsletter — I don't have to make this a perfect article with a clear beginning and end. What I do know is how important it is for us to draw on more than just our narrow fields of expertise when it comes to making the kinds of decisions that the computing industry requires.

When we face big decisions, we rely on the personal experiences that have, for some reason, become significant and memorable to us.

Now it's your turn. Seeing how I am unable to end this article gracefully, I would like all of you to do it for me. I would like to hear from those members who have borrowed from other avenues of their lives in order to strengthen their computing careers or experiences.

It was the 11th hole at Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course. I had to shoot right over the water to reach the green, and I was spooked. If the water weren't there, it would be an easy shot, I thought, as I reached for an old ball from my bag. But if it's such an easy shot, why not use a new ball? If it's so easy, why not just pretend the water isn't there? If I remain indifferent to my adversary, maybe it won't bother me. Hmmm, I'll bet that strategy would work with my next book... ¶

Crashes Pick the WORST Times

by Skip Mann,
Palmetto PCUG

Once you get and use a computer system and the data and programs begin to build in both number and size, you begin to realize how much you need the system to continue what you have started. You begin to think in terms of a hard disk crash, floppy disk damage and even, God Forbid, the computer going down. After a lot of use, you begin to believe the old adage that there are only two kinds of computer people—those who have had it happen and those who are going to have it happen.

I can tell you from experience that WHEN it happens, it will be on a Sunday or holiday right in the middle of your most important data and the pucker factor will exceed .8. There is no good time but it always seems to pick the WORST time. So what can you do to prevent this from happening, or at the very least, prolong it or make it easier to accept and fix?

Back Up Everything

The first thing is BACK-UP everything you have. Don't ever use a new program from the original disk. Don't ever have a data disk that has not been duplicated. There is no excuse for NOT backing up your software so don't expect any sympathy when you lose it with no back-up. That means back-up the hard disk as well as the floppy disks you use. Know about the read/write tabs and use them. You go to great expense and trouble to keep termites out of your house because it is a major investment. Your computer system and software are also a large investment so protect it. The first and easiest way is BACK-UP. It is said that repetition is the key to successful teaching. Well I have used the word back-up six times in this paragraph to make the point. **BACK-UP!!**

An Ounce of Prevention...

Another old adage makes a perfect point when it comes to keeping your system running, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." That is what we are going to be cussing and discussing, prevention of the requirement to repair electronic equipment. While we are targeted on computer systems, it also is applicable to other electronic devices like CD players and VCR's.

Save Your Power Supply

There is precious little you can do to prevent the failure of an electronic or mechanical part, but you can help prevent the failure of either through reasonable practices. One of those is the simple act of turning on the equipment. It isn't the initial turning on of the power that creates a problem, but the act of turning the system off and

back on immediately. Each time the power is turned on, there is a surge of power to the power supply and on to the boards. Surge protection exists to soften the block to delicate electronic parts, but, if you turn the system off and then on again before total grounding occurs, you are inviting trouble. A simple rule to follow is IF and WHEN you turn the computer off...**wait at least 15 seconds** before turning it back on. That simple procedure may save you a power supply and some time down on the system.

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness." This is near the top of preventative measures to help keep electronic equipment working. The development of microchips and printed circuit boards have made dirt and dust members of the "dark side." Let's look at some problems and recommendations for prevention of those problems.

Problem: It just doesn't work at all. No lights in the window or lights with no one at home. The keyboard won't key, the disks won't disk and the computer won't compute.

Recommendations: Check ALL connections. Start with the wall plug then graduate to the lines going to the computer and cables in the computer. Often connections will build up a coating which suddenly disables it. Pulling connections off and placing them back on the connectors scrapes the coating off and you are in business again. You can also buy, and use, a contact cleaner which will remove the coating and make for good contact again.

Problem: Physical damage to the computer. Electronic devices and coffee, tea, or milk do not mix well. Soft drinks are even worse and even water can blank the screen.

Recommendations: Don't drink (or eat) anything around the computer. Since I know that very few people are going to follow this recommendation, please be super careful. Not only can you destroy your computer system, but soaking software in anything can destroy data, disks, and tempers.

Problem: Dirt and dust can, and do, create havoc when it reaches a degree where it coats the chips and boards. The dirt and dust provide insulation which makes the chips and boards get hotter and that heat can easily cause permanent damage.

Recommendations: Cover the computer and the keyboard to keep the dust out. It doesn't take a special non-magnetic plastic cover (although these work well), a lint free towel, piece of sheet, anything that will cover and protect the equipment from dust. Then, twice a year you should open the computer and blow the dust out to protect the chips and boards from excessive heat.

Problem: Static electricity can, and will, zap delicate chips resulting in permanent damage. This can come from the machine, external electrical sources including YOU when you handle the internal boards or chips.

Recommendations: The first one is to ground your equipment. If you don't know how to do that properly, ask. It provides a path for all spurious electrical charges to seek

—see next page

Coping with Crashes

from previous page

mother earth. If you do that, you can discharge yourself (from static electricity) by touching the case of the computer before starting to work with it. A static discharge may surprise you, but it deep fat fries a chip.

Problem: Damage from a lightning strike nearby. The energy produced by lightning is horrendous. It permeates the power lines and can produce damage to any electronic equipment.

Recommendations: The best way, and the only sure way, is to UNPLUG your equipment from the power source. That means unplug it from the wall. Also be sure to unplug your modem and the phone line. This will save you from nearby lightning strikes. Of course, if you have a direct hit, don't sweat the computer...save the house.

Problem: SMOKING, anything: cigarettes, pipe, cigars, smoke signals, anything that produces smoke. Not only does smoking coat your lungs with a substance detrimental to your health, it coats everything it touches, and with electronic equipment, it is also detrimental to its health.

Recommendations: Put up "Thank you for not smoking" signs and enforce them. Hard to do, of course it is. I have friends that smoke, and even my wife smokes...but not in the computer room.

Problem: Signs of problems. System doesn't always boot up properly. Works the second or third time you try. Funny new and unusual noises comes from the disk drives. A drive is trying to access drives which do not exist. Hard disks are constantly searching for data and finally give you the "abort" message. Strange messages appear from time to time for what appears to be no reason at all.

Recommendations: The bug in your computer is telling you something. First, be sure your back-ups are complete. Then try to isolate the problem. Usually, since disk drives have movable parts and heads that can get dirty, they are the first to go. Check everything you can in the full knowledge that whatever it is, you have the data backed-up.

As a last resort, clean the heads of your disk drive. You can do this with a special cleaning disk on which you put a cleaning solution. A good solution is plain rubbing alcohol. The problem with this is that the cloth on which you place the solution is abrasive, and cleaning a drive too often will result in sandpapering the head away. That is why I use this as a last resort. Another easier and safer way if you are mechanically inclined and willing to attempt it, is to take the drive apart (in some cases this is not required) and clean the heads with a long Q-tip soaked in alcohol. The residue you remove will look like varnish which has coated the heads from a lot of use. If it works, you have saved at least $80 to $100. Worth it?

Final Note: Whatever you've learned and if you take nothing else away with you from this article, let it be the determination to **backup everything!** ¶

PRTSC POTPOURRI

Get More From Your Hard Disk

by Mike Murdock, Pinellas PCUG

Many users initially formatted their hard drive with DOS 2.xx and are either still using DOS 2.xx or have upgraded to DOS 3.xx. They may not realize, however, that their hard disks may contains as much as 30% wasted space. "Wasted space on my hard disk—never," you may say. Well, the facts of DOS life may surprise you.

In an effort to make PC hard disks as efficient as possible, DOS allocates space in "chunks" called allocation units. These allocation units reserve a block of the disk for your file to expand or contract within. Let me explain: suppose you wanted to store the word "fun" on a disk. You would require three bytes, but DOS figures you may need more room for more words in the future, so it gives you one allocation (or block) of space.

Under DOS 2.xx, the allocation unit was 4K or 8K. That means a three byte file takes 4,000 or 8,000 bytes of hard disk space. OK, I know some of you won't believe me so try this experiment. At the DOS prompt, run CHKDSK.

Note the amount of free space, then type the following:

COPY CON TEST (press Enter)
FUN (press Enter)
(press the F6 key and then press Enter)

Run CHKDSK again and note the difference in free disk space. With the advent of DOS 3.xx, the standard allocation unit was reduced to 2K. However, many users are still strapped to the larger allocation unit because their disks were originally formatted with DOS 2.xx. To take advantage of the 2K allocation unit, you must back up your hard disk, run the DOS 3.xx FDISK utility, reformat your hard disk using the DOS 3.xx FORMAT command and then restore.

Questions & Answers

by Don Simpson, Tucson Computer Society

Q. Sometimes when I issue the command DIR|SORT, two numbers similar to "1435F023" appear as files in the display. Why do I only see them when I ask for a sorted directory, and then only sometimes? What are they?

A. The "|" character is called the DOS pipe. It allows the output of one program to become the input for another and are part of a powerful feature of DOS called "redirection."

The normal output of DIR is the list of files in the current directory. By "piping" the directory through SORT, the directory output is sent to a temporary file. This file is then sent to the sort filter which rearranges it in a second temporary file before display.

As soon as you press Enter after

—see next page

PRTSC Potpourri

from previous page

typing "DIR|SORT" the files are created in the root directory. At this point, they contain no information, so their size is 0. The names are created from the system timer and are random and meaningless. As soon as the output is displayed, the temporary files are automatically deleted from the directory.

Q. Is there a simple way to get a display of the date and time when I boot up my computer? I would like to verify that the clock batteries are ok without having to type "DATE" or "TIME" on the command line.

A. If you include "DATE" and "TIME" in your AUTOEXEC.BAT, the date and time will be displayed, the batch file will stop at each one, and you will be able to change them. If you want completely hands off execution, try the following instructions:

```
echo.|DATE|FIND "Current"
echo.|TIME|FIND "Current"
```

Echo followed by a period executes a carriage return which is piped to the date and time so that you don't have to press Enter. The output is then piped to the Find filter which suppresses the line "Enter new...". (NOTE: echo. may not work with DOS version prior to 3.2.) ¶

Club News

from page 3

were not at the meeting (they would have won if they had been present):

Kathleen Dunlap
Charles Pack
Richard Keller

BBS on Road to Recovery

SPARC, the club's bulletin board, is back on line and accepting calls. The new phone number is **424-0812** and over 30 Megabytes of current user-supported software is available for members. Non-members are invited to browse and contribute to the message base, but they will not have access to the file section.

Any and all questions should be directed to system operator Larry Mehl at 326-6037.

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 be sent to you in the next issue of PRinT SCreen.

Goodie Coupons

The "**Goodie Coupon**" that comes with your membership card is 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. ¶

The SPAUG Resource Center

Club Officers

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

Managers

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

Library

Public Domain Software	Les Weil	321-5541

Software

Accounting-Computer Assoc.	Larry Mehl	326-6037
Framework	Jim Caldwell	692-7181
	Richard Orser	408-425-0474
Lotus 1-2-3	Bruce Codding	367-8642
	Arthur Naman	408-879-9900
Microsoft Word	Jan Altman	408-243-5955
	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
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 PC Users' Group

P.O. Box 3736,
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 P.O. Box 982 Palo Alto, CA 94302