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

March 1990   Volume 8, Number 3

UNCLE SPAUG WANTS YOU

CLUB NEWS

Elections Next Month

In April, the group will once again take to the polls to determine who our fearless leaders will be. See Rick's View From the Top for the President's views on his past term and what his successor can look forward to.

Novice SIG Notes

by Don Baird

Solving the conflicting elements of a Novice SIG (special interest group) is challenging. This piece addresses the cyclic interest in such groups and how to avoid their demise when the interest wanes to the extent that a group might die before interest reinstates. This writer feels it important to have continuous novice SIG activity, because persons entering the computer arena often have no way to efficiently gain conversance. Joining a cosmopolitan computer group can solve part of the problem but it is tantamount to having a kinder- gartner enter the eighth grade, espe- cially if the main group has no novice SIG.

A Novice SIG with more adap- tability may have more chance to sur- vive. One way of doing this could be: To relax rigid novice meeting schedules when attendance is low and unpredictable, and have meetings more random to match the incidental number expressing interest. This re- quires a constant rallying point exist- ing even during a dearth of interest. Times, places, and agenda could be tailored according to the persons in- volved when triggered by enough phone requests to a rally-person.

An on-going roster is key to this operation and serves to connect people with like interests (and problems).

Mar.-Apr. Calendar

Mar. 26	Word SIG	7:30	**Next Meeting**
Mar. 28	Group Meeting	7:30	**Date:** Wednesday, Mar. 28
Apr. 11	Planning Meeting	7:30	**Time:** 7:30 p.m.
Apr. 23	Word SIG	7:30	**Place:** Polya Hall, Turing
Apr. 25	Group Meeting	7:30	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.

Such a roster already exists. It can enable the means of organizing people towards the formulation of impromptu meetings.

To avoid a rally-volunteer from being unduly burdened, a delegating procedure could be thus: When even only one call is received, the rally-person provides the caller with the current roster. The caller can choose who to notify from interest information on the roster, and from guidance from the rally- person. This serves to make the first caller, the titular organizer of a meeting. Further calls received by the rally- person, can be referred to the first caller, who can delegate more calling and other duties necessary to a successful meeting.

Decisions on time, place, and agenda can suit those involved in the process. During a meeting, future times, etc. can be set rigidly or allowed to again be triggered randomly as before. There are innumerable aspects to having broad spectra meetings typical of novice sig meetings. For example, a club membership should have a number of mentor-type persons to chose from who are willing to lead these random novice meetings, if requested. Not all meetings need a guru, but that can be decided by a late consensus, usually because many experienced computer users don't mind coming on short notice.

To get something going, I can volunteer as rally-person to whom calls can be directed. I would then send out a packet of rosters to anyone wishing to formulate an impromptu meeting or series of meetings. This scheme should induce more in-

This Month

OS/2 Redux Redux

This time we promise: IBM will be on hand to show us OS/2. After a series of scheduling hurdles, we will indeed be visited by one of the engineers who has been closely involved with the new operating system since its birth.

Come see what you're already missing.

Program of the Month

This is also a recording...Vice-President Corwin Nichols will take another stab at 4DOS, replacement/enhancement shell for standard DOS.

So you see, you have your choice: you can either buy OS/2 and do away with DOS altogether, or you can check out 4DOS and do away with just a portion of DOS.

Isn't this great—a PC user group that tells you nothing except how to do away with the operating system...

The disk will be available for $1 or you may use your Goodie Coupon.

dividual participation with an acceleration in learning the basics and then moving to advanced subjects. ¶

Uncle SPAUG Wants You!

by Rick Altman,
Club President

Once again, that time approaches for our club: the time to elect new leaders. I always look upon this time with both exhiliration and fear.

On the one hand, I like change, and I think that change for the sake of change is often a good thing. I'm one of those guys who usually likes when the manager of a baseball team gets fired—it often lights a spark under the players. It's an excuse to be optimistic, and any reason to see the cup as half-full is okay in my book.

On the other hand, I know the history of this group, and let's just say that volunteerism is not its strongest suit. We frequently have to pull a few teeth in order to develop a slate of candidates.

I swung back and forth in the last few weeks, and this article will come as a surprise to a few, but I will not be seeking a second term as President. Change is not only good for the club; it's good for me, too, and right now, I need to melt into the background a bit, and turn the reins over to someone else.

Ah, yes—but who? My biggest fear is that I will stand up in front of the membership this month, ask for nominations, and be met with silence. Indeed, what if no one wants to run for President of the group? Does that mean that it dies? Can it run itself? Will the members of the Steering Committee take turns? Will anybody even notice the difference?

These are not rhetorical questions, and they are not meant to be sarcastic. These are the very real questions that

> *My biggest fear is that no one will run for President. What if no one wants to be President of the club? Does that mean that it dies? Can it run itself? Will someone magically emerge?*

we must face, in lieu of nominations made and accepted by worthy candidates.

And what makes a worthy candidate? Being President is a blast—this group has proved over and over again to be one of the most receptive audiences to new ideas. Worthiness is measured by willingness, and a modicum of responsibility. You instantly become more connected in the software industry than 95 percent of all computer users, and free software is usually but a phone call away (yes, you should plan on sharing your discoveries about your new toys with the group, but software manufacturers never ask for their programs back).

What are the myths of the Presidency? The first is that you have to be some computer hot-shot—that's totally false. You only have to know where the hot-shots sit in the auditorium, and usually they sit in the same place each month.

The second is that you have to be a professional speaker or lecturer. The only requirement is that you not pretend to be one, because no one in the group wants the President trying to be someone that he or she isn't. The monthly agenda is very simple, and for the most part, it runs itself. There are always plenty of people willing to demonstrate the programs of the month, and the main speakers come with their own agendas. A quiet and well-organized President could probably preside over the entire evening in 200 words or less.

Now for the requirements. Your monthly obligations will increase by one evening, as the mid-month planning meeting is important for you to attend. It consists of coffee, cookies, and ideas, in an order of your own choosing.

Your most important duty is to line up speakers, and I don't mean

What are the myths of the Presidency? The first is that you have to be some computer hot-shot—that's totally false. You only have to know who the hot shots are and where they sit in the auditorium.

Our Next Presidency

celebrities. Sure, we'd take Bill Gates, but some of our very best meetings have featured anonymous repairmen, undistinguished musicians, struggling entrepreneurs, and other plain folk like you and me. On numerous occasions, the guest speakers *have* been you and me.

Again, the mid-month planning meeting is a great resource for planning guest speakers. In fact, several presidents have delegated the entire job to a vice-president or an ad-hoc committee, and as long as the job gets done, that's perfectly acceptable.

The number one requirement is merely a willingness to become involved, and that brings us full-circle: we just don't have enough involvement from the general membership. I really don't want to lay guilt trips on anyone—this is a club, not your occupation—but as a volunteer organization, there is a minimum amount of volunteerism that is required. We hover perilously at or just below that point. If we are a club of only observers, our days might be numbered.

Being President is fun and easy—so much so that for awhile I believed that I could do it again, even in the face of overwhelming demands on my time and energy. Also, don't discount the inevitable fact that just by running, you will become a hero to us all.

And this call for action extends beyond the Presidency. Becoming more involved in the planning of this group's future is also fun and easy, and you need not hold official office in order to make lasting impressions on our prosperity.

SPAUG is looking for a few good men and women, and I'll bet you could both name one and be one. If you want to save me from standing before you in silence during our upcoming call for nominations, you'll do just that. ¶
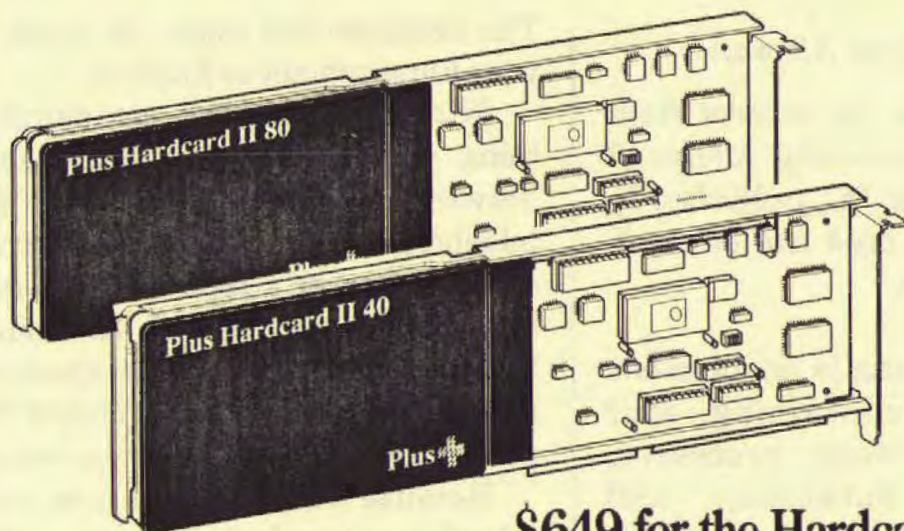
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Is Do-Everything Software For You?

An Overview of Microsoft Works

by Rebecca Bridges Altman

This article is an excerpt from Becky's book, Mastering Microsoft Works for the IBM PC, published by Sybex Books. The book will be available in June, 1990.

Microsoft Works is an all-in-one package containing four distinct *tools*: word processor, spreadsheet, database, and communications. Let's look at each of these tools in more detail.

With the word processor tool you can create and revise letters, memos, and long reports and documents. This tool takes the place of your typewriter.

You will use the spreadsheet tool to do financial planning, analysis, budgets, projections, and forecasts. It takes the place of accounting ledger paper, pencil, calculator, and a big eraser. You can also use the spreadsheet tool to graph your data.

The database tool allows you to keep track of information, such as client records or a mailing list. You can search, sort, and create reports.

The database tool takes the place of your filing cabinet or Rolodex.

With the fourth tool, communications, you can transfer information between two computers over the telephone lines. You can send someone a budget or a report, or you can connect to a service such as Home-Banking. You might say that the communications tool takes the place of the post office and other delivery services.

Because all four tools are contained in one package, you can easily transfer information between different types of files. Here are several examples of how you can transfer information between different types of files in Works:

• You can copy a spreadsheet into a word processing document.

• You can create a graph in the spreadsheet tool of stock prices you received from an on-line stock information service in the communications tool.

• You can print personalized letters in the word processor tool to

everyone who is on your mailing list in the database tool.

Another advantage to an all-in-one package is that you don't have to learn several different programs. If you weren't using Works, you would have to purchase four different programs to get the same power: a word processing program, ·a spreadsheet program, a database program, and a communications program. Because these packages are separate and not related to one another, each program operates differently. But with Works, the menus and commands are consistent from tool to tool.

Mouse vs. Keyboard

Microsoft Works can be used with just your keyboard or with a combination of a mouse and a keyboard. A mouse is a device that has several buttons on top (the mouse's ears, supposedly) and is connected to your computer with a thin cable (the mouse's tail). By moving the mouse on your desktop, you move a pointer on your screen. You use the buttons (primarily the left one) to perform tasks such as selecting text, scrolling the screen, and choosing menu commands.

You don't have to have a mouse to use Works. However, some commands are faster or more convenient with the mouse. If you haven't used a keyboard much or you are competing for World's Worst Typist, you will enjoy using this little critter. But don't over-use the mouse—sometimes it makes more sense to perform a task from the keyboard. After using Microsoft Works for awhile, you will discover which tasks work better with a mouse or with a keyboard.

How to Use the Menus

When you first start the Works program, you see the screen shown in Figure 1. The *menu bar* across the top of the screen displays three main options: File, Options, and Help. The File *pull-down menu* is automatically displayed for you as well. The pull-down menu displays commands on a vertical list.

This screen display is similar to a restaurant menu. The main options on the Works menu (File, Options, Help) correspond to the food categories on a restaurant menu (Appetizers, Salads, Entrees, Desserts). The choices on a pull-down menu (Create New File, Open Existing File, Save, etc.) correspond to the specific dishes (Cherries Jubilee, Baked Alaska, Mud Pie, etc.) listed in a food category.

The Works menu is different than a restaurant menu in that you can't see all dishes at once. On a restaurant menu you usually have a two-page spread where you can see all the appetizers, salads, and entrees. In Works, you can only see one "food category" (pull-down menu) at a time. For example, right now you can only see the "dishes" in the File menu. If you press Right Arrow, you can see the choices in the Options menu. Press Right Arrow again, and you can see what's cooking in the Help menu. Press Right Arrow one more time and you are back to the File menu.

Microsoft Works

Press the Esc (Escape) key now to move out of the File pull-down menu. The menu bar is still visible, but none of the pull-down menus are available right now.

Working with Files And Windows

As shown in Figure 1, the File menu lists all the actions you would want to perform on your files: create, open, save, and close. When you choose the Create a New File option, you are asked to choose the type of file: Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Database, or Communications. Notice that these file types correspond to the four Works tools. You then see a blank screen into which you can create the type of file you specified. You don't name a file until you choose the File Save or File Save As command.

Saving is an extremely important part of using a computer. The letters, reports, graphs, and tables you create in Microsoft Works are in the computer's temporary memory. Until you give your Save command, the file is not permanently recorded on your hard disk or floppy disk. If the power goes off before you save,

you will lose precious work.

Therefore, you will use the Save As command to assign a new name to your file, or the Save command when you have already named a file and want to save it with the same name.

To recall a file you have already saved, you use the Open Existing File command. When you finish working with a file, use the Close command. If you have made any changes since you last saved, Works asks you if you want to save your changes—you needn't worry about accidentally closing a file you haven't saved.

One of the more powerful aspects of Works is that you can have more than one file open at a time. Each file is stored and displayed in its own *window*. A window is simply a bordered container for a file. You don't need to go through any special steps to open multiple files. If you have a file on your screen when you open an existing file or when you create a new file, the first file is placed in a window behind the second one. ¶
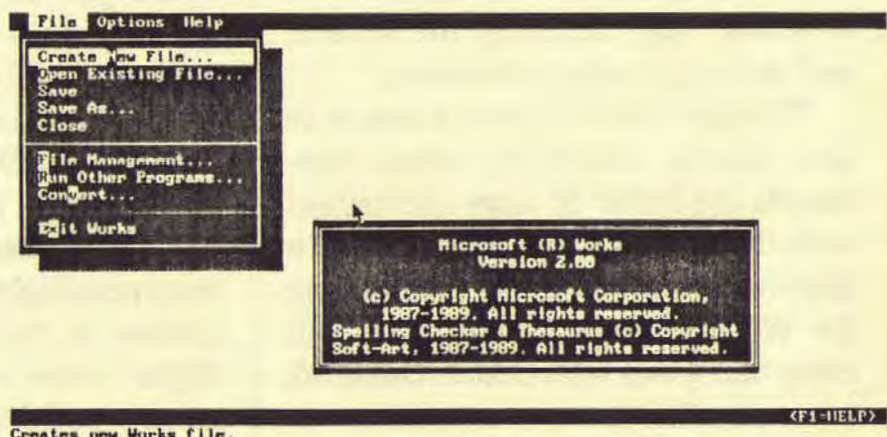

Creates new Works file.

Figure 1

It's That Time Again...

by Wayne Wilson,
Utah PCUG

It was a real non-decision when the upgrade offer for the current version of TurboTax from ChipSoft arrived in the mail. I have used previous releases in preparing my Federal Income Tax Return for the past two years. It is hard for me to imagine plowing through piles of paper and government gobbledygook without TurboTax or a similar package.

TurboTax is basically an income tax preparation aid. It supports over 50 forms, schedules, and worksheets, and provides depreciation and amortization schedules. The package is well-suited to both simple returns and the self-employed taxpayer who has many forms and schedules. Throughout the program, screens function like an overlaid spreadsheet that allows the user to enter information into the appropriate cells.

First time users can use an Auto Interview feature that will determine and report the necessary forms for each individual situation. The process of filing is intuitive and straight forward. The first step is filling out the Personal Information section. This includes demographic information that the program will automatically carry over to all forms and schedules. Previous users can import data from the past year and not have to enter any information that has not changed.

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Potpourri

This form also shows income and tax information from previous years so it is easy to see how the so-called tax reforms continue to cost individuals more and more every year.

Next is a W-4 screen for input of wages and withholding information. Previous users will enjoy finding employer's names and information already in place; only the current numbers need to be entered. At this point individual situations dictate the next action. For a "short form," using standard deductions, the return is ready to print. Others need to supply information to the appropriate forms. One feature that I enjoy is the ability to see the infamous "bottom line" whenever I want to. By invoking the Tax Window a summary showing basic figures, including amount of tax owed, can be viewed at any time. You can see your refund shrink or grow as you enter information.

The final step is printing the return. TurboTax supports many dot matrix and laser printers. It also has a method to edit printer setup codes for customizing to individual printers not specifically supported in a format acceptable to the IRS.

Previous users of TurboTax will be interested in new features and enhancements added this year. The installation program has been greatly improved. Hard disk installation can be done from either disk drive and include a full path statement. It is no longer necessary to delete an options file and rename the hard disk options file as in past years. Also new this year is a pull-down menu system that matches an emerging standard in program operation. The program retains the familiar "/" menu access. This year there is also full mouse support built in. An interesting feature is the function of the right mouse button. Press-

TurboTax supports many dot matrix and laser printers. It also has a method to edit printer setup codes for customizing to individual printers not specifically supported in a format acceptable to the IRS.

ing it will cause the cursor to move continuously in the direction it was last moved until the button is pressed again. This allows for visually reviewing a form at a convenient rate (at least on my 12 Mhz system). Some of you with fast 386's may not find this feature useful.

IBM Laser Announced

Redwood PCUG

As anticipated, IBM announced a laser printer that's aimed at stealing some of Hewlett Packard's thunder. The 4019 Laser Printer is essentially a LaserJet II knockoff that is faster, smaller, and less expensive. Besides H-P II emulation, IBM's product also offers HPGL plotter emulation. The 4019 does accept downloadable H-P fonts, but does not use H-P font cartridges. Instead, it uses credit card-sized font cartridges. At 10-pages per minute, the IBM laser printer is 2 pages per minute faster than the H-P while selling for $100 less. A Post-Script upgrade will be available by mid-1990. Expect H-P to respond with a vengeance.

A Remote Deal

Redwood PCUG

You say you've always wanted to buy "remote computing" but just couldn't justify the expense? Here's your chance: EKD is offering everything you need to get into "remote control" for only $399, retail price. The combination of software and hardware would normally sell for $733. Here's the deal: you get pc-

Anywhere III software, a 2400 baud modem, and a device to turn your computer on from afar, for less than $400! Who knows, discounts may drive the price down to $300.

The software, pcAnywhere, is a package that lets you operate your computer at work, from your home, as if you were sitting in the office at the keyboard. Of course, you'll need a computer with a modem at home, also. This type of software is often used to provide assistance over the phone lines. For instance, you could change a batch file (or demonstrate a procedure) in a remote office, without having to go there or send disks. EKD is the distributor of pcAnywhere. For information, call them at (516) 736-0500.

Listing Today's Files

by Becky Altman

I am one of those rare people who religiously backs up her files every day. I only back up the files that have changed on the current date. Because I got tired of scanning the directory for files with today's date, I created a batch file. This batch file lists only the files with today's date. The batch file, named L.BAT, is listed below:

```
echo off
cls
dir >dir.txt
find "%1" dir.txt
del dir.txt
```

To run this batch file, type L followed by today's date. For example, to list the files modified on March 18, you

would type L 3-18. The format of your date is important; you need to enter the date in the same format as appears in the DOS directory. You do not need a zero before single-digit months, but you do need the zero before single-digit days. For example, to enter March 5, you would type 3-05.

Here is an explanation of how the batch file works. After turning off the screen echo and clearing the screen, this batch file sends a copy of the current directory to a file named DIR.TXT. Then the batch file searches the DIR.TXT file for each occurrence of the date you typed as the variable %1, and displays the line on the screen. After the list of files is dis-

I only back up the files that have changed on the current date. Because I got tired of scanning the directory for files with today's date, I created a batch file that lists only the files with today's date.

played, the batch file deletes DIR.TXT.

Once the list is displayed, I know which files I need to back up. Because DIR.TXT was created on today's date, it also appears on the list; this file should be ignored. I use the following batch file to speed up copying each file:

```
copy %1.* a:
```

I named this batch file C.BAT. When I want to back up a file to drive A, I type C followed by the first name of the file. For example to back up the file named FIG1-1.CAP, all I need to type is C FIG1-1.

```
————————dir.txt
APPB      WPS       4420    3-19-90    10:07a
APPA      WPS      23416    3-19-90    10:00a
APPC      WPS      40542    3-19-90    10:26a
APPD      WPS      25446    3-19-90    10:43a
```

Hayes Gets Reasonable

Redwood PCUG

In an attempt to recapture market share, Hayes Microcomputer Products, Inc., has slashed the prices of its modem line, up to 43%. Hayes has always been perceived as having high quality products, but at a premium price. As more and more users buy modems, that perception has caused Hayes to lose many sales.

Hayes-compatible modems often sell for one-third the price of Hayes products. The new pricing brings Hayes' products more in line with the market place, and means more folks may get "the real thing." ¶

The SPAUG Resource Center

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Vice President	Corwin Nichols	494-8640
Treasurer/ASSU Rep	Jared Nedzel	854-2732

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Financial Manager	Beverly Altman	329-8252
Newsletter Editor	Becky Altman	326-8605
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Software

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Word/Word for Windows	Jan Altman	408-243-5955
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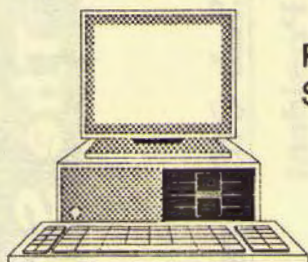
P.O. Box 3738,
Stanford, CA   94309

Club Information

Membership	Louise Greer Bolitho
	322-3850
	$25/year fee (Students $10)
Bulletin Board	424-0812
Newsletter	Becky Altman
	326-8605
	P.O. Box 982
	Palo Alto, CA 94302