PRINT SCREEN

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE STANFORD/PALO ALTO PC USERS' GROUP

The purpose of SPAUG is to provide a forum for members to share information and experiences that will help other members obtain maximum benefit and enjoyment from the use of their IBM and IBM-compatible personal computers.

JULY 1990

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JULY-AUGUST CALENDAR
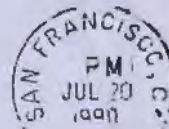
July 25　Group Meeting
7:30 PM
Polya Hall, Turing
Auditorium (Room 111)
Stanford University
August 13　Club Planning Meeting
August 8　Word for Windows/Windows SIG
August 15　Novice SIG
August 27　Microsoft Word 5 SIG
August 29　Group Meeting

THE STANFORD/PALO ALTO PC USERS' GROUP

P. O. BOX 3738

STANFORD, CA　94309

CLUB INFORMATION

MEETING INFORMATION
DON BAIRD　365-6822

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION
BEVERLY ALTMAN　329-8252
$25/YEAR $10/YEAR - STUDENTS

BULLETIN BOARD
424-0812

SPAUG NEWSLETTER
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LAST MONTH (JUNE) MEETING

by Nancy Helmy

General Business: Our general meeting date of the last Wednesday of the month usually conflicts with the meeting of the Silicon Valley PC Users Group (held on the fourth Wed.). A preliminary poll was taken to see if people were available to meet on an evening that doesn't conflict with the Silicon Valley meeting. M,T,W,Th,F of the last week of the month were polled, along with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Wednesdays. The current meeting date on the last Wednesday of the month was the most popular date, with the third Wednesday in second place, followed by other Wednesdays. The poll will serve only as the basis for an inquiry to Stanford to see if the room might be available to us on another monthly date. It was suggested that a mail poll should be made before any decision is undertaken.

Hardware discount prices for SPAUG members is being arranged. The vendor making this ongoing offer will be invited to a general meeting to go over what he has available to members.

Sale Items, Bulletin Board, Floppy Exchange, and Suggestion Box: (All at the back of the auditorium) (1) Members may bring items for sale. Please be sure to retrieve unsold items. (2) Notices may be placed on the bulletin board. (This does not replace SPARC. Members are encouraged to post messages on our BBS.) (3) A "mailbox" is available for exchanging, returning, or gifting floppy disks to other members. (4) A suggestion to have another sidewalk sale will be carried out in September, after summer vacations for members and after classes resume on campus.

Planning Meeting: The June planning meeting was well attended.

SIG Reports: The June SIG meetings were briefly reported. More than a dozen people signed up as interested in attending a proposed Investment Software SIG.

Mail Call: The DOS Doctor, a member of the Miami PC Users Group, wrote to offer and explain the DOS phone inquiry service. Inquiries about DOS can be made 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The lines are manned by off-hours tech support people in the South Florida area. The first minute is free of charge while they determine whether they can help the inquirer. The charge for each additional minute is $2. The number is 1-900-454-9400.

Program of the Month: A utility program to split and recombine files was featured. Concatenation is the combining of files into one file. This program splits that combined file into separate files, sized at the instruction of the user. (The SPAUG Library contains another program named "split," which splits a screen, so this file has been renamed "splitf.exe" to distinguish it as the split-file program.) The .doc file states that the author devised the program originally because he had trouble transferring large files over his phone line and wanted to avoid having to restart a long file after an abort. He sends this utility along with his files to enable the receiver to recombine.

The June Disk of the Month contained the "splitf.exe" and "split.doc" along with other goodies. These programs and documentation files are available for downloading from SPARC (SPAUG BBS) and from the SPAUG Library.

Windows 3.0: A full demonstration of Windows 3.0 was given by Jan Altman, preceded by a Microsoft video indicating the important place Windows holds in the development of software for the DOS environment. A graphical interface, featuring generic or customized icons, allows the user to show and run up to three separate programs or groups of files on the screen at one time. Miniaturized versions (created by 3-D buttons) of small applications can be kept in view at all times at the bottom of the screen (e.g., running clock, solitaire game). Pull-down menus and mouse support are major features in using the program. Plain vanilla word processor, database, and more are included. The macro utility allows the recording of keystrokes to be used within any Windows application.

The beauty of Windows is that the commands are virtually universal for all programs built to run with it. This is the particular advantage over running non-Windows programs, although even non-Windows programs can be invoked through Windows.

A number of "for Windows" programs are on the market. Toolbook (an object-oriented programming application) and AmiPro (full-scale word processor) were mentioned. A SPAUG SIG already exists for Word for Windows. Coffee Break: A new feature, the outdoor 15-minute coffee break, was instituted. Thanks to Don Baird for toting in boxes of coffee paraphernalia to give members a chance to visit and talk.

Random Access: A member indicated that after downloading some files from SPARC he found he didn't know what to do with them. Don Baird responded with an apology because all files uploaded to SPARC ought to have documentation files accompanying them in which the executable files are explained.

Another question about how long floppy disks are viable was answered with erudition by Jim Dinkey. His response is herewith synopsized and deglamorized: floppy disks last about 15 years, maybe less; if you can recover data, you've got it made.

Drawing of the Month: Windows 3.0, donated by Microsoft, was delivered to the winner, James Strehlow. The winner thanks the following people whose names came up before his but who were not present: Ed Doherty, Doug Silker,

Marc Cohen, Al Dien, Alfred Coppel, Glen Roberts, Glen Rupp, Wes Anderson, and Charles Pack.

A new random selection program was tested before the main drawing, designed by Don Baird and based on a Microsoft routine. Don provided three novel trinkets to winners. They were suitably (un?)grateful. The consensus was that the random program needs some more work. Experts please note. (See "Inside the Drawing Program" elsewhere.)

OUR GENERAL MEETING DATE OF THE LAST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH USUALLY CONFLICTS WITH THE MEETING OF THE SILICON VALLEY PC USERS' GROUP (HELD ON THE FOURTH WED.). A PRELIMINARY POLL WAS TAKEN TO SEE IF PEOPLE WERE AVAILABLE TO MEET ON AN EVENING THAT DOESN'T CONFLICT WITH THE SILICON VALLEY MEETING. M,T,W,TH,F OF THE LAST WEEK OF THE MONTH WERE POLLED, ALONG WITH THE 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD WEDNESDAYS. THE CURRENT MEETING DATE ON THE LAST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH WAS THE MOST POPULAR DATE, WITH THE THIRD WEDNESDAY IN SECOND PLACE, FOLLOWED BY OTHER WEDNESDAYS. THE POLL SERVED ONLY AS THE BASIS FOR AN INQUIRY TO STANFORD TO SEE IF THE ROOM MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO US ON ANOTHER MONTHLY DATE.

IF YOU ARE A NEW MEMBER OF SPAUG AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD, PLEASE CONTACT BEVERLY ALTMAN AT THE GROUP MEETING OR BY PHONE AT 329-8252.

If your SIG is doing something interesting, please let us know so we can share it with the rest of the membership. Also, if you have an idea for a new SIG, advertise for members in the Newsletter.

NOVICE SIG MEETING

by Editor

Contact Don Baird at 365-6822 for information regarding the next Novice SIG meeting.

MICROSOFT WORD5 SIG MEETING

by Editor

This SIG normally meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:30 pm. Location of meeting is INFOTEC Training Institute, TECHMART, 5201 Great America Parkway, Suite 254, Santa Clara, at 7:30 pm. For more information, please call Jan Altman 408-243-6955.

WORD FOR WINDOWS/WINDOWS SIG MEETING

by Editor

This SIG normaly meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm to talk about WORD FOR WINDOWS and other general WINDOWS issues at INFOTEC Training Institute, TECHMART, 5201 Great America Parkway, Suite 254, Santa Clara, at 7:30 pm. For more information, please call Jan Altman 408-243-6955.

SYSOP SIG

by Editor

At the June Planning Meeting, the attendees discussed the Club's Bulletin Board, Disk Library, and SYSOP situation. In the September 1989 PRINT SCREEN, an announcement regarding the formation of a BBS SIG was printed. Apparently this Special Interest Group wasn't formed. So, once again, we would like to call for members who might be interested in learning about BBS operation. Corwin Nichols has volunteered to conduct a training session or sessions, as required. Please let Don Baird know, if you would like to learn more about what is required of a SYSOP or how a BBS is maintained.

SUBMISSION OF COPY

The Editor will only include material provided by members in written or machine readable form. Since I do not take notes at the meetings, any information you want to include in a future PRINT SCREEN should be submitted in suitable form.

Existing at present is a policy of minimum editing to contributor copy. This requires that the contributors run their text through a speller and submit it in ASCII (no word publisher attributes) via 360K floppy disk in a mailer to the Editor's address. The floppy should be labelled with the sender's name. In this way the disk can be returned at the General Meeting by means of the newly-established Floppy Exchange Box set up in the rear of the auditorium. Notices must be received no later than the 12th of each month for entry in the following issue of PRINT SCREEN. Ideally, articles should be submitted to the Editor several days before a Planning Meeting in order to permit review at that meeting.

The Publishers of the PRINT SCREEN Newsletter are not responsible for content. Profanity, libel, imprudence, glaring inaccuracies, abounding errors, and items considered not of sufficient applicability or interest will be screened. The contributor will be notified if his/her entry is ruled against and will receive a cursory explanation.

BEHIND THE SCENES

by Don Baird

We should know the people working behind the scenes.

Bob Phillips has been taking care of the mailing of the newsletter. This involves a number of niggling tasks about which Bob has made nary a murmur.

Bob Bottini (a brand new member) has been doing a very difficult job (partly due to the lousy manual) straightening out the bulletin board. He will give us a rundown at the July General Meeting.

Bill Dewing has updated our resource listing which required a lot of phoning.

I will report in future on a task-in-process that Louis Paponis is working on.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

For the two months preceding the expiration of your membership you will find a renewal envelope enclosed in your PRINT SCREEN Newsletter. Use this envelope to promptly send in your $25 ($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 following issue of the Newsletter. NOTE: during the recent turn-over of duties, there has been a problem in the forwarding of renewed membership cards to the members. IF YOU ARE A NEW MEMBER OF SPAUG AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD, PLEASE CONTACT BEVERLY ALTMAN AT THE GROUP MEETING OR BY PHONE AT 329-8252.

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 $5/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 meeting, bring your membership card with you.

MONTHLY PLANNING MEETING

All members are welcome to attend the Monthly Planning Meeting. This is not a formal Board-Type Meeting; but, more of a brain-storming free exchange of ideas. Please plan on attending one of these meetings at least once during the next few months (YOU WILL NOT BE DRAFTED INTO SERVICE). We certainly do welcome your comments as to where you feel we need to make adjustments in order for our Club to serve your needs.

ADVERTISING IN THE PRINT SCREEN

Members are allowed to place an advertisement for personal items in the Newsletter at no cost. There will be a limit to the amount of advertising placed in the Newsletter. All submissions will be received on a first-come, first-served basis.

...BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Matt Mathews, M.A. Reprinted from North Texas PC News, January 1990, Dallas, Texas

What program is lurking on your hard disk that can do about as much damage as a virus? When you first read the title, you may have thought I was going to say that FORMAT.COM is the most dangerous DOS command. As you may well know, FORMAT can cause havoc, especially if you do not have a recent backup. But if you get into a panicky situation, you might assume (erroneously) that RECOVER.COM could help you out. Your DOS manual says that RECOVER.COM is used "to recover files". Do not mistake this to mean that it finds lost files. It does noth·ing of the kind.

RECOVER gets my vote for being the most dangerous DOS command. It can be easy to confuse RECOVER with RESTORE if you are in a hurry or have not read, and understood, your DOS manual in its entirety. The benign RESTORE program puts files back on your hard disk after you have used the BACKUP program to copy them to floppy disks. On the other hand, RECOVER is supposed to be used when your files get scrambled due to hard disk damage. If you use RECOVER inap·propriately, it will turn your hard disk into an anonymous mess. There is for too little warn·ing of this in the DOS documentation. It is extremely easy to wipe out an entire hard disk with RECOVER.COM, and it is very difficult to recover from the effects of this command ·· even if you have Norton's Advanced Utilities or someting similar. You would be better off to run Norton Disk Doctor and Disk Test.

If your hard disk suffers physical damage and a file can only be partially read, the RECOVER command can remove the unreadable part. Maybe you can use the rest of the file. Generally, RECOVER works best on test files; broken program files should be reinstalled after correcting the hard disk problem.

You can enter RECOVER FILENAME.EXT to check a file for readability. But you should never run RECOVER on a file (or disk) unless you know that it contains damaged sectors. If you only enter RECOVER, the DOS assumes that you intend to use the command on your entire hard disk directory (or even worse, if you are at the root directory, it will act upon your whole disk!).

When RECOVER operates on a directory, it:

1) Destroys the entire directory structure.

2) Saves readable data to a file with a nondescriptive name like FILE0001.REC, FILE0002.REC, etc. Your job is to look in each file and figure out if it is useful or not. Good luck.

3) Places RECOVERed files in the root directory. Then you have to copy the usable files from the hard disk to floppy disk and reformat the hard disk. Since the number of files that you can have in the root directory is smaller than the number that you can have on a hard disk that is subdivided by directories, you may have to run RECOVER several times in order to get all the files you are seeking. Of course, you will have to erase the garbage files before you can run RECOVER again.

4) RECOVER writes bad sector (or cluster) information in the File Allocation Table so those areas are not used again.

Several writers recommend erasing RECOVER.COM from your hard disk. (Can't you use some extra space?) If you still decide that you have to use RECOVER.COM, run it from a copy of your DOS diskettes. If you insist on keep·ing it on your hard disk, at least rename the file to distinguish it from the similar·sounding RESTORE.COM. I use the name $RESTORE.COM, but you could just as easi·ly call it SCRAMBLE.COM with an ap·propriate notation in your DOS manual.

In summary, do not use RECOVER. If you must use it, be sure to put a filename after it on the command line. This is still a last resort. By the way, when was the last time you backed up your hard disk?

INSIDE THE DRAWING PROGRAM

by Don Baird

An audience request to negate the "DRAMATIC EFFECT" option while already into a random drawing procedure using the feature allowing only one win per person, was something unforeseen within the four hours spent creating the program. Consequently, un- predictable results occurred. This has now been corrected. Most of the time, as is usual, went towards developing the user inter- face (another topic to address in our future proceedings).

Because assurances that a random drawing be reasonably random (true randomness is not attainable by computers), we have a lovely issue to pursue. The RND function used by Microsoft should be described by them as to what algorithmic method is used. This is no trivial matter, since technologies and businesses depend upon it. A letter was sent to them requesting substantiation accompanied by the sug- gestion that they have their support person/s give us a talk on the subject combined with perspectives on their seeming direction of bring- ing the best of BASIC and C languages together.

BYTE magazine cuts to the core of the ran- dom number generation problem with several ex- cellent articles (lent by Ralph Muraca), one of which even describes early RND functions used in IBM'S BASICA and provided by MicroSoft. Graphs show some repeating of the random number series produced by RND. Whether this has since been diminished would be worth knowing; but, is probably academic, since it seems likely that even the older RND function is many times better than needed for a mere lottery type exercise.

I'm told that several members have offered to create random drawing programs. What fun we should have using the various ones at subsequent meetings. I offer the suggestion that members bring token items to be selected as prizes by such programs as part of a preliminary drawing before drawing for the grand prize. This will give a preview of how the programs perform. I caution that mere demonstration of randomness is insufficient. Good user interface with options that give various ways a drawing can be conducted should be incorporated.

POLICY PIECE

by Don Baird

This is a club in transition. When I first joined in 1983, there seemed to be a cooperative spirit and good balance between technical and applications inter- ests. It may not be possible to regain that situation; but, perhaps we should try. I say perhaps, because the mass exodus of the more technically inclined left the present membership oriented towards large applica- tions software. There are pressures to maintain the status quo. It would be wrong for me to force more balance just because I feel it should be so. On the other hand, if there are enough members wanting more technical involvement, please make it known. If it is determined that the present course is preferred, than I can start the procedure for an or- derly replacement for myself.

If I am to continue, then I cannot live with the fact that there is: no process to groom successors to the various offices (the club was almost scuttled for lack of candidates); no backup or understudy program to insure continuity of club functions in case of illness, pique, or when election time arrives; no backup to the files on the bulletin board; no back- up to the club disk library; no procedure for get- ting new programs (our post office box abounds with them) into the disk library; no set up of accounts (for example, somebody has to pay to get the newslet- ter printed and mailed and then wait for reimburse- ment); no detailed job descriptions (other than the cursory ones in the constitution) which results in each officer choosing to do only that part of the task which suits them leaving the strings for someone else to tie up - me, for instance; no club dossier (each new regime has to re-invent the wheel).

By my tending to these matters, the planning of the Monthly Meeting as well as the writing of ar- ticles for the Newsletters becomes most difficult. Con- centration on such invisibles makes points, but vital matters get short shrift and so does the membership. Be it known that I am a one-term President and that my term ends January 1, 1991, with elections in November. Aspirants should prepare by attending the Monthly Planning Meetings.

THE SPAUG RESOURCE CENTER

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