

PRinT SScreen

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

AUGUST 1990

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 7

GENERAL MEETING OF JULY 25, 1990

GENERAL BUSINESS

Reminders of the "back-of-the-room" items were given. Software, books and hardware may be brought for sale. It's reported that someone recently sold a modem via this method. A "hardboard" bulletin board is available monthly for notices, ads, messages, etc. Also, a floppy disk mail box is available for routing disks or exchanging with others. A Suggestion Box is available, and a box for questions for the Random Access portion of the meeting. The latter is useful for people who prefer to write out a question rather than present it orally.

Tim Short, a Stanford graduate student, agreed to be SPAUG's ASSU Representative. We need more Stanford student members as a requirement for use of our meeting auditorium on campus. If you know of a student PC user, please encourage membership. A \$10 gift membership might even be considered if you're feeling generous or altruistic.

Another new feature was announced, the Member of the Month. Bob Bottini received the first honor for his sysop work on the SPARC Bulletin Board. Lunch "on the club" is his reward.

PLANNING MEETING

Members were encouraged to attend planning meetings. The input by members and their contribution to consensus are what make club planning tick. So come to the planning meeting even if you don't want to run for office or be recruited.

SIG REPORTS

Novice, Word 5, and Word/Windows SIGS met this month. An August 15 date for the first Investment Software SIG meeting was announced.

MAIN PRESENTATION

Three speakers presented the developmental history and technology of color monitors. They were Tom Grau of NEC, Eric Knorr of PC World, and Jim Anderson of Headland Technology. VDU technology from cathode rays and flickering pixels to Super VGAs and multi-sync monitors was covered. VGA is the current standard, allowing 16 colors and 640x480 resolution. Multi-synchronization allows the monitor to adapt to either analog or digital information from whichever type of board is installed. Graphics drivers code in specific instructions between board and application. The Video Seven VGA graphics driver is the only driver currently written into Windows 3.0.

RANDOM ACCESS & DISK OF THE MONTH

No questions. No disk. Don Baird asked for volunteers to prepare a Disk of the Month for upcoming meetings. He said it was a bit time-consuming because one has to check to see that the files are public domain, that they haven't been included on previous Disks of the Month, and that .DOC files are attached. Jan Altman protested that it was easy and fun and not to be discouraged. Take your pick, but do submit a disk!

DRAWING OF THE MONTH

In last month's PRint SCreen, James Strehlow was incorrectly reported as the winner of a copy of the Windows 3.0 program. The winner was actually Ed Doherty. The error, however, turned out to be prophetic. At the July meeting, James Strehlow was randomly selected as the winner of a Video Seven VGA card. He gets another opportunity to thank all those who would have won had they been present: Becky Altman, Mark Graham, Richard Becker, Jon Rich, Martin Packard, Clifford Levin, Bev Altman, and Robert Blumenthal.

UPCOMING AT THE AUGUST MEETING

The topic for the main presentation at the August meeting will be "The Birth of

Planning meeting

Sept 10 (2nd Monday), 7:30pm
1670 Oak Ave, Menlo Park

All members welcome. Help us make decisions. You do not have to be an officer to get your views heard.

Silicon Valley." The Disk of the Month is being prepared by Jim Dinkey. He will present the Program of the Month, and that program and accompanying goodies will be available on the Disk of the Month.

CORRECTION

Don Baird

I had inadvertently advised office aspirants to aim for November elections. Since then, I have found the latest club constitution. Therein, it was found that substantial revisions had taken place since the 1986 version used. The elections had been moved to spring and, for the club's sake, please let's have plenty of candidates.

RANDOM DRAWING PROGRAM VARIATIONS

Don Baird

Variations in the methods used to have drawings at the monthly meetings are welcome. Nancy Helmy has something of her own in process, but is not quite ready. This time we will go back to fundamentals with the out-of-the-hat-trick. (This method fails when more than one prize is involved). Later you will again be exposed to my program having some additional options, of which I have an endless supply. Please note that all random selections so far have been pseudo-random to the limits of the computer art (meaning accuracy far beyond our needs). I wanted everyone to see how the user interface can be an on-going development to find conformance to a range of audience reactions.

Microsoft responded to my request for a description of the algorithmic method used for their RND function, however, they did not want to give us a talk on the subject. Random functions for computers could still

be an informative and interesting subject for one of our quickie presentations.

The suggestion is still open that members bring token items to be selected as prizes preliminary to the drawing for the grand prize. This will preview how the programs perform.

MEMBERS RESPONSE

Members have suggested promoting acquaintanceship among each other. The following moves towards that end. The persons phoned were pseudorandomly selected. Each month, a new group will be similarly selected and queried with the three questions below.

- 1) The most intriguing aspect of personal computing to you?
- 2) Most interesting or useful activities of the club?
- 3) Would like to see what additions or subtractions from club activities?

Matt Lehmann

(Teaching at Littlehouse and currently writing instructions on how to use DOS. Is up to his ears in computers right now. Just got an HP Deskjet printer and can't get the xxxxx thing to work). Thus, for question 1, one of what's intriguing is getting such things to work. For 2, Matt feels that the interchanging of ideas is important. For 3, Matt couldn't say because he hasn't been able to attend due to trouble driving at night. (PLEASE NOTE: Matt suggests that some club attendee living near him might want to help. His address is 675 Sharon Park Drive, Menlo Park 415-854-5430)

Cal Worley

More intrigued with the computers ability to handle data like sorting and graphing

than with word processing. On 2, Cal prefers demonstrations of new developments (software and hardware). For example, the Nov '88 one by Chris Bowman, on laser disk memories and the elaborate file structure organization required for reasonable access times. On 3, nothing specific.

Larry Weinberg

Intrigued with increasing his general knowledge about computers. Particularly, with personal and home use vs business uses. For 2, thinks the demonstrations and the SIGS are best activities. For 3, would not subtract anything and has no complaints. Wants talks, like on the serial and parallel ports, etc. Including, for instance, the pros and cons of the two interfaces. Wants less on cutting-edge applications and more on applications for personal and home use.

DOS TIP

When I first got involved with DOS a few years ago, I sort of went "batch file happy", making dozens of little batch files to switch between different directories and start up programs, and do other similar tasks. I learned after a while that I was eating up lots of disk space because of the way DOS allocates space on the disk. many of the batch files were very similar in form, but different because of the specific job. They looked like this:

```
CD\DIRNAME
PROGRAM (/S) (/S2)
```

Where DIRNAME was a specific directory name, and PROGRAM was a program to be run, with optional switches. One day I saw an example of what DOS calls "replaceable parameters", and realized I could save a whole bunch of disk space by having

one general purpose batch file that would do the work of each of the previous specific files. The general purpose batch file looked like this:

```
CD\%1
%2 %3 %4 %5
```

I named the file GO.BAT. To use it, I would type the following (for example) at the DOS prompt:

```
GO DirectoryName ProgramName <ENTER>
```

Where DirectoryName was the directory name I wanted to GO to, and ProgramName was a specific program in that directory. I could add one or more optional switches to the command line before pressing <ENTER> if they were needed. DOS automatically replaced the %1 with the DirectoryName, and %2 with the ProgramName, etc., then executed the separate commands. This replaced all the other specific batch files and worked great - as long as I wanted to get to a directory right underneath the Root directory. If I wanted to return to the Root directory, all I had to do was type GO <ENTER> and I was immediately returned to the Root.

The reason this file is tied to the Root directory is that the back slash (\) is the DOS shorthand name for the Root, and that became an "absolute" reference to the Root Directory.

I made a second file called G2.BAT, but with a space instead of the back slash on the first line. This then allowed the file to work in "relative" reference to the current directory, whatever it may be, two or three or whatever levels down from the Root.

Reprinted from Sacra Blue, the Newsletter of the Sacramento PC Users Group, April 1989

BATCH TIP

When using batch files one of the annoying problems is trying to get back to the same subdirectory that you started from. Here is a technique that creates a batch file to do just that.

First create a batch file that will return the current directory. Put it in the directory where you store your batch files (usually \BAT)

```
COPY CON CDSPACE.BAT
CD ^Z
```

Remember that you have typed CD then a space then hit <F6> or Ctrl Z.

Now, in the batch file that you wish to run, and then return you to your current directory, insert the following lines before the batch file moves away from the current directory:

```
CD >C:\BAT\CURRENT.TMP
COPY
C:\BAT\CDSPACE.BAT+C:\BAT\CURRENT.TMP
C:\BAT\RETURN.BAT >NUL
```

and then at the end of the batch file add:

```
COMMAND /C RETURN.BAT
```

If you now Typed \BAT\RETURN.BAT it would say CD \<CurrentDirectory>

To make this active over different drives you will need to create a file in the Root directory of each drive called, say, DRIVE.TMP which contains the drive letter of that drive and a carriage return i.e.

```
COPY CON DRIVE.TMP
E:
^Z
```

The first section of the batch file will now read:


```
CD >C:\BAT\CURRENT.TMP
COPY \DRIVE.TMP+C:\BAT\CDSPACE.BAT+
C:\BAT\CURRENT.TMP C:\BAT\RETURN.BAT
```

Add an ECHO OFF and a couple of >NULs and the entire batch file will look like this:

```
@ECHO OFF
CD >C:\BAT\CURRENT.TMP >NUL
COPY \DRIVE.TMP+CDSPACE.BAT+
C:\BAT\CURRENT.TMP C:\BAT\RETURN.BAT
>NUL
Start of your batch file
```

```
End of your batch file
COMMAND /C RETURN.BAT
```

This entire command will be constant for all your batch files so could be placed in a batch file of its own called, say, RETN.BAT and be invoked in subsequent batch files either with the syntax:

```
COMMAND /C RETN.BAT
```

or called directly, using CALL, in DOS 3.3 and above.

A PROFILE OF THE EDITOR

Well I'm a new member of the Group in fact I'm pretty new all round. I only arrived in the Valley from England in the spring and I joined SPAUG in July. I've been to two meetings, Spreadsheet Wars and last month's fascinating Video Tutorial. Now due to some pretty sudden unforeseen circumstances I find myself as Editor of PRinT SCreen. I always knew that events moved fast in the computer world but this makes a 486 look like an Altair.

OK, so down to cases. This issue has been put together in a hurry - basically over the weekend, and other than the standard information on last month's meeting and upcoming events there was really not a lot of time to get much more material together. However, for future issues I would like to think that I can count on help and input from a lot of members.

I'd also welcome advice (don't forget I'm new to the Club - and the country) and, above all, I'd like to know what you would like to see in YOUR newsletter. Do you want reviews (hardware/software/books), a forum for opinions (the start of a monthly dialogue), a beginners section (coping with DOS, the best(?) software, tips on using Batch files to automate tasks, or what?

Naturally I'd welcome any articles from members. Subject matter is up to you, basically whatever you think we'd be interested in concerning aspects of computing - however tenuously connected.

I look forward to seeing you at the August meeting. I'm pretty easy to spot - I'm the one with the funny accent, no tan and a beard, and I answer to the name of

Tomy

THE SPAUG RESOURCE CENTER

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Pascal	John Watson	(415) 325-7632
Smalltalk	John Watson	(415) 325-7632
Quickbasic	Don Baird	(415) 365-6822

HARDWARE

Epson Printers	Jim Caldwell	(415) 365-6822
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CLUB CALENDAR - September 1990

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

September 5 First Wednesday - Novice SIG
7:30 PM Nancy Helmy, (415) 326-1911

September 10 Second Monday - Planning Meeting
7:30 PM Don Baird, (415) 365-6822

September 12 Second Wednesday - Word for Windows SIG
7:30 PM "Migrating to Winword from Word 5"
TechMart, 5201 Great America Parkway
Suite 254, Santa Clara
Jan Altman, (408) 243-5955

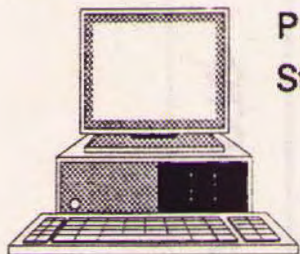
September 18 Third Tuesday - Investment Software SIG
7:30 PM Nancy Helmy, (415) 326-1911

September 24 Fourth Monday - Word 5 SIG
7:30 PM TechMart, 5201 Great America Parkway
Suite 254, Santa Clara
Jan Altman, (408) 243-5955

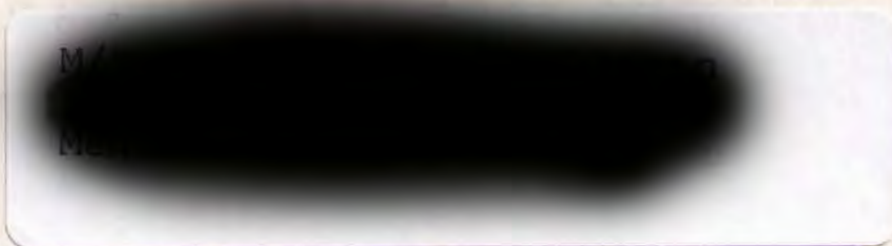
September 27 Last Wednesday - SIDEWALK SALE AND
GENERAL MEETING
6:00 PM Sale Members & Vendors Sale + Food & Beverages
7:30 PM Meeting - "Computer Breeding"

STOP PRESS There is a change of topic for Wednesday's meeting (Aug. 29).
The presentation of PC TOOLS has been postponed to October,
and in its place is "The History of Silicon Valley".

The Stanford/Palo Alto PC Users' Group



P.O. Box 3738,
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Club Information

Meetings

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