

# **PRinT SCreen**

The Newsletter for the Stanford/Palo Alto PC Users Group

## OCTOBER 1990

# VOLUME 8, NUMBER 9

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# **CLUB NEWS**

### SEPTEMBER PRESENTATION Infoworld

Rafe Neilman, the reviews editor of InfoWorld, gave an interesting talk on the way that the magazine reviews are conducted. The nice thing about the InfoWorld reviews is that they have the same people reviewing the same categories which leads to consistent opinions. Unfortunately the magazine is only available to those who qualify by buying for major accounts (or for \$120 pa). The good news is that the book "Compilation of InfoWorld Reviews" authored by Rafe is available.

The Sidewalk Sale was an enjoyable success. A nice evening, bargains to be had, and a plethora of door prizes (some 30 or more). Our thanks to Domino Computer, Pacific Computer Supply, Frys, 800 Software, InfoWorld and to everyone who most generously donated gifts. Thanks also to our guest, Rafe Neilman, for handling the draw most professionally, and to Jan Altman for providing the hat.

This incidentally proved the most efficient way, so far, of randomizing the numbers. For the October meeting Nancy Helmy's program will have its debut with Bob Bottini arranging for the prizes.

#### RECRUITING

We need one more Stanford student signature for club re-registration. Call Don Baird (415) 365-6822 if you know a student who might join.

A Stanford faire was held on Oct

23-24. We did our part with a chair and 1/2 table to advertise the club and sign up students. By the look of things at the Faire, to better compete with student activities, we may need to recruit more ladies into the group. To that end, it may be that hay-rides, swim-fests, dances and a SPAUG marathon during the intermission could be appropriate parts of our proceedings. Suggestions anyone?

#### THE OCTOBER MEETING

The coinciding of Halloween with our meeting date, plus a non-definite commitment by the PC TOOLS vendor, has provided an opportunity for something different. So we will have a series of mini-talks. These will be from both members and non-members on computer related topics, lots of interesting stuff here. Following these will be a period for a forum-type discussion on any topics we fancy. Naturally we will kick off with Random Access where you can get help with any of your technical problems.

The Disk-of-the-Month will be presented by Michael Van Waas. Don't forget you can trade in your Goodie Coupon (attached to your membership card) for the D-O-M or simply hand over a dollar bill - now that is value for money.

Talking of disks and value for money reminds me that Xidex Precision DS/ DD disks are available to members at the meeting for \$5 per box.

The October Member-of-the-Month will be announced. See page 4 for an open invitation to a dinner honoring this year's M-O-Ms.



#### MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

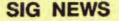
Two months before your membership is due for renewal you will receive a notice to that effect. You can mail in the envelope or you can pay at the General Meeting. A renewal by mail will have the new membership card enclosed in the following month's PRinT SCreen.

#### OFFICIALS

We need indications of intentions to run for office. Therefore, please put a note in the suggestion box stating which office and identify yourself with a nom de plume.

#### THE NOVEMBER SPECIAL

This one is a biggee. Remember Spreadsheet Wars? Well Word Processor Wars promises to top even that. More news in next month's PRinT SCreen.

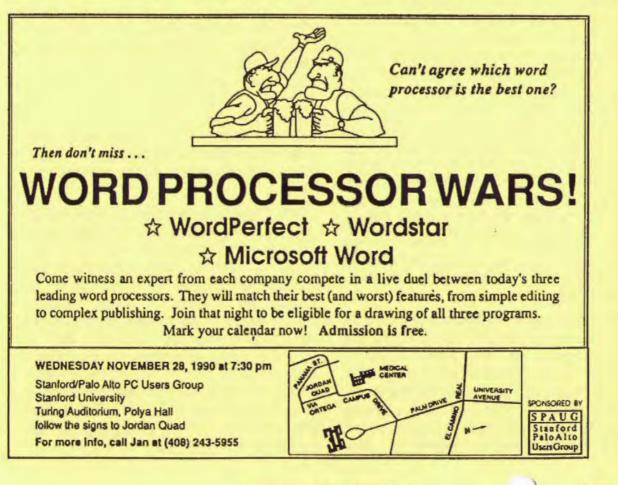


Word for Windows/Windows SIG meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm to talk about Word for Windows and other general Windows issues. On Wednesday, November 14, we will talk about the File Find command.

Microsoft Word 5 SIG meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:30 pm. On Monday, November 26, we will talk about form letters and print merge.

At both of this month's meetings Jan will report on the 2nd Annual Word Conference held in Seattle. Come along and hear what's new and what's due from Microsoft.

Location of all meetings is Infotec Training Institute, Techmart, 5201 Great America Parkway, Suite 254, Santa Clara. For more information, please call Jan Altman, (408) 243-5955.





# MEMBERS OF THE MONTH TO BE HONORED AT NOVEMBER DINNER

#### Nancy Helmy

APPLEWOOD INN will be renamed PCWOOD . . . at least for the evening of November 28 when SPAUG members will gather. Members are invited to come for an informal, no-host dinner before the General Meeting to honor our Members of the Month. Applewood Inn is the place, and 6:00 PM is the time. The Applewood is located on the corner of El Camino and Ravenswood in Menlo Park.

The Member of the Month designation recognizes ongoing service to our group. Current Members of the Month have been waiting patiently while the Steering Comm worked out this plan to honor them. Meanwhile, several suggestions for a way to reward with a special treat were made and discarded. (Cash gifts of ever-increasing amounts seemed quite popular!) Originally, lunch "on the club" was to be the reward. The only problem with that idea was it more or less left the Member of the Month to eat lunch alone! A dinner before the General Meeting will make this a little less lonely and a little more of a social occasion. SPAUG will treat the honorees, and the rest of us will make up an appreciative group of pizza or pasta eaters.

The current list of Members of the Month includes some oldtimers and some newcomers. Each serves SPAUG in a special way.

Bob Bottini, July Member of the Month: Bob innocently jumped in to become the BBS Sysop for SPARC. He was almost wrestled down by the Wildcat system, but is showing his own strength by staying with it, learning, and making progress in turning the bulletin board into a full resource for members. Bob is also taking the initiative to purchase a new answering machine and to set up a new location for SPAUG's telephone line. The phone line enables SPAUG to give out meeting information and respond to general inquiries about the user group. A toast to Bob!

Beverly Altman, August Member of the Month: One can almost always find Bev (often in red) at the General Meeting sitting about midway down on the right side of the auditorium. From this spot, Bev takes in dues and issues membership cards. She distributes newsletters, sells blank disks and Disks of the Month.

Between meetings, Bev serves as Membership and Financial Manager, submitting dues and expense requests to Stanford for deposit or reimbursement. She maintains our roster and keeps addresses current. Beverly usually hosts the Planning Meeting at her home in Menlo Park, graciously providing refreshments for members who come to bring their ideas to the group. These are the mainstays of her ongoing service, yet she willingly accomplishes a number of other tasks on an as-needed basis. Bev's conscientious attitude sets an example for service.

Bob Phillips, September Member of the Month: Bob has faithfully "stuck the stickers on" newsletters for two years and counting. Addressing, stamping and mailing newsletters is the last task in the production of PRinT SCreen. Without his service, all the preproduction work would go to naught. We honor Bob for his willingness to find a job that needs doing and "sticking with it" (as it were). He understands and accepts the need to do one's part and we'd love to see some Bob Phillips clones emerging as the standard for SPAUG.



Month. Know the suspense is unbearable. TBA at the Halloween meeting.

All this to be continued. A quarterly dinner is our aim. Even reluctant members will be honored if they insist on giving service!

Pop-up menus for service can be provided by club officers and all you need to do is point and shoot. See you at Applewood when we rename the joint!

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# MEMBERS RESPONSE

Don Baird

Each month three members are selected at random. The question this month: What system (if any) do you use to manage your files?

William Corcoran: Has 20Mb hard disk with 19.5Mb of software, thus feeling need to upgrade. His math programming, letter writing, etc. are saved on floppies in an old desk having drawers of just the right size for 5 1/4 floppies for which he has made dividers. Has no need for subdirectories on the floppies and generally dedicates each floppy for specific tasks which, in a sense, gives him a lot of root directories. Uses Norton package to help keep things straight on the hard disk.

Weston Anderson: Uses subdirectories on hard disk and labelled floppies in labelled boxes.

Phil Harsh: No home computer, but uses various computers at companies and uses whatever file management system exists there. However, feels that proprietary file management packages for one's own personal computer must have hard time satisfying individual needs. He has about ten floppies, some of which are our disk-of-the-month items.

# **TECHNICAL TOPICS**

#### FLOPPYDRIVES

**Tony Allen** 

There are three main types of drives for desk-top machines.

| <b>Type</b><br>5 1/4" | Capacity   | Tracks | Sectors/Track |
|-----------------------|------------|--------|---------------|
| 5 1/4"                | 360/320K   | 40     | 8 or 9        |
| 51/4*                 | 1.2M       | 40     | 15            |
| 3 1/2"                | 720K/1.44M | 80     | 9 or 18       |

When I started to build a 12MHz 286 from the motherboard up I had to decide which drive combination I needed. My main computer has a 1.2M as A: and 1.44M as B:. The 1.2M will read and write 360K disks O.K. and the 1.44M will do the same on 720K disks (Format B:/n:9/t:80). But there's one problem with this combination. When you format a 360K disk on the 1.2M drive (Format A:/4), frequently it won't be read by a 360K drive. This is because the 1.2M drive has narrower heads to allow it to write 80 tracks on the disk. When you tell it to write 40 tracks it does so alright, but they are 40 narrow tracks. The 360K drive is looking for 40 wide tracks and hence you have problems (see Note on P.10).

So I needed one 360K and either a 1.2 or a 1.44. I settled on a 1.2 as drive A: and a 360K as drive B:. Although I think that 3 ½" disks are the way of the future, most software still comes on 5 ¼" media and, increasingly on HD disks.

Physical installation was easy. I'd bought one of these mini sized cases with bays for three half height 5 ¼" and one 3 ½" drives. They just slide in, and four screws hold them in place. There are only two connections, the power cable and the controller cable, both of which can only be fitted in one way. Drive A: went at the end of the controller cable and Drive B: went in the middle.

In the old days (when all the drives were full height, had black bezels, and were made by Tandon), the way to check which drive



was A: and which was B: was simple; A: had a terminating resistor and B: didn't.

Some drives still have this arrangement but most (like the Teacs that I bought) use jumpers. As long as both drives are configured as drive 2 all will be fine. This means both drives have jumpers across the second set of pins, which will be labeled D1 or D2 (some drives start numbering their pins at D0 some at D1).

Make sure the drive plugged in at the end of the cable - after the twist - is A:(except for Compag who put drive A: in the middle of the cable and drive B: at the end, and put give the cable a double twist). If you do go wrong, worry not, it just means that you won't be able initially to boot from the drive, you won't damage it. It's just a matter of checking the jumper settings and the connections. Obviously it's much easier to do all this work with the drives accessible, and I don't actually put them inside the case until I'm satisfied it all works. On thing I do though is make sure that there is either a disk or a cardboard protection sheet in the drives when moving them about. -2

# VIEWPOINT

#### Don Baird

The software spectacle is a wonder, and not wonderful. Those of us who prefer truly well written packages, must be quite frustrated. This was first brought home after struggling long and hard to create a package that was self-teaching, fast, unambiguous, minimum code, and with clear options to go elsewhere from any point in the program. An acquaintance offered to give it a try-out. Soon I received a call with the question, "where are the boxes?".

Anyone who programs for function and not window-dressing, can sympathize. A good example of window dressing is where a well-known diagnostics program forces one to use cursor arrows to shift to the exit box when wanting to exit. After hitting return, another box lights up again forcing the use of the cursor arrows to choose between yes or no boxes, and again requires hitting the return key to finally get a DOS prompt. Invariably, these type programs often leave you stranded between windows with "no directions home - Dylan". Somehow, the graphics interface programs overemphasize arcade-type displays to having real gutsy usefulness. The suspicion arises that the false fronts serve to hide the lack of real skills on the programming staff.

The good thing about shareware authors is that they typically strive to have a high 'utility to required memory' ratio in their programs. Even having some graphics, PROCOMM still fits this mold. In others, the instructions tend towards the cryptic, perhaps because the skilled author is directing the package towards programmers. An early version of a commercial utility program was inflated to 84 kbytes by graphics, but was tolerable because its usefulness was not too impaired. However, it's now up to ver 6.0, when ver 5.5 still remains uninstalled on this writer's machine because of graphics bloat. The hammer is getting almost as big as the house it's supposed to fix.

Not satisfied with just gobbling up what memory exists, the software marketers have made it necessary for the hardware technologists to produce machines with outsized memory capacities and speed. What's worse, we users have to expensively update the hardware to run the updated software we purchased to remain eligible for future updates.

Many of the name-brand packages seem zealous to lift the burden of using DOS off our shoulders. The INSTALL (or SETUP) utility can be something to dread. It would help if we got a list of all it intends doing to our machine so that we might decide to install in our own way. Naively putting ourselves at its mercy can unleash all kinds of mischief. The CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT can get modified as if



your computer was born to use just one glorious package. Subdirectories get created, and sometimes with sub-subs. Our hidden file sanctuaries are invaded by new secret files. Most capricious is the putting of macro-generating commands in the AU-TOEXEC file.

You may ask, "so what?" - Depending on your walk-in-life computerwise, "so nothing". However, consider that you may need more than one CONFIG.SYS. Yours truly has a different one accompanying each size of ram-drive residing in its own subdirectory. Each CONFIG.SYS would have to be adorned with the same change made by the INSTALL. Now the problem with AUTOEXEC.BAT is that you may not want it to invoke what INSTALL put there each time you boot. Again, having a cluster of new subdirectories may not be bad if you can remember not to delete them during hard-disk housecleaning. Now we get to the real naughty. When files get hid (generally to protect the manufacturer from package proliferation), difficulties arise when reformatting. You might blame everything under the sun and even replace the harddisk without ever knowing that removing the installed hidden files was all that was needed. As to the macros invoked on bootup, we can only guess what confusion ensues when operating outside the package the macros were intended for.

Please note that it takes real programming skill and time to design an install procedure without messing up the fundamental organization of our computers. It's pushing the problem onto the user. We have to find ways of shoving it back. Simply don't buy unless an install list is shown and promises kindness to your existing disk organization. Beware if directed to ensure that your CONFIG.SYS, AUTOEXEC.BAT, and FORMAT.COM files are not read-only before invoking the install procedure.

There are many things in the United States to be thankful for. Being able to criticize what seems deficient is one of them. We forget (and can often not even be aware of) what awesome power the citizenry have by living in a majority-rule country. For that reason, situations less than ideal, are mostly of our own doing (or failure to). Americans are lousy at consumerism. Proof exists as recent as our "conspicuous consumption" era and the great diminution of the Bay area's food cooperatives. Another, is our burning up as fast as we can, an exotic substance responsible for dyes, medicines, esters, lubricants, to mention a very small fraction of the uses oil is put to. How ironic that quantities originally in trillions of barrels, are now measured in decades-beforedepletion.

The "bottom line" however, is something we are good at understanding, and that line could possibly be at where we are happiest. Who can really say whether wastefulness, triviality, and idleness, is not the best way. We can only know our children and grandchildren. Anyone coming after is only a stranger - so do we owe them any of the providence bestowed on those lucky enough to be born before the ruination of land, sky, and oceans? The "why" of these circumstances is controversial. We seem to have lost our ability to think deeply on the subject. Not using a VCR to pan through commercials, causes brain-washing and perhaps even brain-damage.

This writer contends that merely knowing that HUMANISM DETRACTS FROM THE BUSINESS OBJECTIVE, except where it (good will and holding employees) might aid that objective, explains most of the paths businesses take, together with the consequences. Businesses are not intrinsically immoral, unethical, or even evil. We only allow them to behave that way. A computer club is a small collective. Thus, in some ways, it has a piece of being a majority. Let us wisely use that piece to, at least, improve our computing world.

(Other members are requested to submit their viewpoints)



# QUICKBASIC DILEMMA

The answer that was desperately sought from MicroSoft via the dialing scheme, described on the next page, concerned a problem with MicroSoft's QuickBasic. A large program in QB developed over the course of two years required macros for fast data entry. Soon, a faster computer with more memory was acquired to cope with the growing data bank. This situation is mentioned to show how one gets committed through trust that software companies are striving towards industry-wide standards and respecting conventions. Well, it was a shock to find that the acquired computer no longer permitted macro operation within QB programs (version 4.0 or 4.5). Macro programs like NEWKEY (all versions), PROKEY, SMACS, PCTOOLS(desk top macros), AN-SIKEYS, DEFKEY, all refused to work. It became necessary to make a test disk to try at places using a variety of computers. Finally, it evolved that it was either the keyboard or the bios chips because all was well when an un-enhanced keyboard was used. Down-grading from the enhanced keyboard that came with the acquired computer to an un-enhanced might not be as simple as it appears, because a bios chip set might have to be found to match. This latter, it was soon learned, might not be feasible from a practical standpoint, since almost as many different BIOS chips as different board manufacturers could be involved. To get to the happy ending, purchasing an un-enhanced keyboard from Haltek did solve the problem.

I still would like to know MicroSoft's stance in all this. There must be many cases where users want to use macros in QuickBasic programs and are wondering why their updated equipment no longer allows it. For a \$25.00 entrance fee and a trip to San Francisco, attendance at a MicroSoft **OuickBasic Seminar in November likely** would give an answer. On principal, I won't go, nor purchase the current and expensive update of QuickBasic because this isn't the only instance of MicroSoft's disregard for the importance of downward compatibility that I have personally run into.

There are good things to say about QuickBasic. Many years ago, when steeped in Fortran, it was a relief to find a language for the smaller tasks that had a good set of defaults such as the mainframe BASIC had. Fortran (likewise Pascal, and C) requires a lot of preset conditions that can impede creative thought, particularly where such rigid conditions aren't needed. Professors intently pushing structured programming seem to overlook this important fact. MicroSoft's QuickBasic has pushed BASIC further by introducing aids that operate concurrently with the programming process. The instant debugging and syntax checking case in point. Add to that, being able to easily link with many submodules of itself and other languages, makes for powerful packages. Combined with the many string and graphics primitives BASIC has always had, made it my choice for many tasks. Sadly, MicroSoft people have told me that excessive overhaul of the language would be required in order to escape the 64K ceiling for the main module and plan nothing in this direction.



# HINTS & TIPS

#### DIALING TIP

#### Don Baird

It's a delight to find other uses for software used regularly. Several years back, I had let the tax deadline get too close (like the the next day, for instance). Well, as fate would have it, there occurred one more important question to ask the IRS. Of course, trying to get through on the phone at such a late date, seemed like sheer folly. Then it dawned that the PROCOMM dialer might aid in this dilemma. Indeed, by setting up the IRS number in the PROCOMM directory (ignore or ape the protocols), and then using Alt-R (for re-dial mode), the IRS helpperson was reached within an hour.

Some hints to follow are: adjust the re-dial parameters (set-up screen 1: item 10 to at least 30 seconds and item 11 to about 2 seconds) to permit any busy signal to establish itself and get detected by PROCOMM, and for PROCOMM to completely disconnect from a busy signal before trying again; find something to do (like reading a book) near the modern speaker, so that a voice answer can be heard and responded to; respond to a voice answer by picking up a phone connected to the same line the modem is on; all phones connected to the modem line, must be "on hook" until a voice answers.

The method again was just now used desperately trying to reach MicroSoft Technical Support. However, this time re-dialing for about one hour each time during the morning, noon, afternoon, evening, midnight, 3AM, and at 6AM, resulted in nothing but busy signals. To me, it was proof that Microsoft was dispassionately refusing to engage in any support activities via telephone by leaving or simulating their phone as "off hook". The only call that got through was in the beginning, when a taped voice identifying itself as from MicroSoft answered that the MicroSoft number had been changed. I will be curious as to how much that call (to Washington state) will cost me. [2]

#### NEWS

Plus Development of Milpitas [(408) 434-6900] have announced a new generation of their Hardcards. These have more storage capacity and are faster, much faster, than previous versions.

The Hardcard II-XL 50 is a 50Mb drive and the II-XL 105 is a 105Mb drive. Both of them boast access times of around 9ms which ranks them among the fastest drives around. Expect street prices to be in the order of \$400 and \$700.

#### SOFTWARE NOTE

One of the best geneology programs around is PAF (Personal Ancestral File). It is available from the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City and it costs just \$35. For more information call (415) 321-6734.

#### WARNING

If you're using Quarterdeck's QEMM 386 memory manager and have just got version 6.0 of PC TOOLS be aware that there is an incompatibility between QEMM and the disk caching program in PC TOOLS which can cause a crash. Central Point is working on the problem, meanwhile don't use them together.



| THE SPAUG RES                      | OURCE CEN      | ITER           |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| OFFICERS                           |                |                |
| President                          | Don Baird      | (415) 365-6822 |
| Vice President                     | Jan Altman     | (408) 243-5955 |
| ASSU Representative                | Tim Short      | (415) 854-2732 |
| MANAGERS                           |                |                |
| Bulletin Board (SPARC BBS)         | Bob Bottini    | (415) 369-2086 |
| Financial Manager                  | Beverly Altman | (415) 329-8252 |
| Librarian - Public Domain Software | Les Weil       | (415) 321-5541 |
| Newsletter Editor                  | Tony Allen     | (408) 739-2953 |
| SOFTWARE                           |                |                |
| Accounting                         | Larry Mehl     | (415) 329-6037 |
| Foxbase                            | Marie Hooper   | (415) 325-1206 |
| Microsoft Products                 | Jan Altman     | (408) 243-5955 |
| R:Base                             | Larry Mehl     | (415) 326-6037 |
| Lotus 1-2-3                        | Larry Mehl     | (415) 326-6037 |
| Symphony                           | Sally See      | (415) 941-1378 |
| LANGUAGES                          |                |                |
| С                                  | John Watson    | (415) 325-7632 |
| Fortran                            | John Watson    | (415) 325-7632 |
| Pascal                             | John Watson    | (415) 325-7632 |
| Smalltalk                          | John Watson    | (415) 325-7632 |
| QuickBasic                         | Don Baird      | (415) 365-6822 |

#### from page 5

NOTE: There is a program that gets the 1.2M drive to write narrow tracks in pairs so the disk can be read perfectly in a 360K drive. This utility is CPYAT2PC and, as its name implies, it splits up files that fit on AT (1.2M) disks to copy onto PC (360K) disks, and splices them together again when they're on the PC. The copy I have is version 1.1 from 1986 so it's probably been updated by now. Check with Microbridge Computers in San Carlos (415) 593-8777.

### PLANNING MEETING

Nov 12 (2nd Monday), 7:30pm The location 1670 Oak Avenue, Menlo Park Help us to make decisions. All members are welcome, you don't have to be a club officer to get your views heard.



|   | CLUB | CALENDAR | - November | 1990 |
|---|------|----------|------------|------|
| Г |      |          |            |      |

| 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  |     |

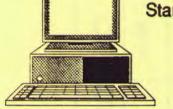
|                        | First Wednesday - Novice SIG<br>"DOS Help & More"<br>255 South Rengstorff, #23, Mountain View<br>Larry Weinberg, (415) 969-2292   |  |  |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| November 12<br>7:30 PM |   |  |  |
|                        | Second Wednesday - Word for Windows/Windows SIG<br>"Word 'File Find' Program"<br>TechMart, 5201 Great America Parkway, Suite 254, Santa Clara<br>Jan Altman, (408) 243-5955 |  |  |
| November 20<br>7:30 PM |   |  |  |
|                        | Fourth Monday - Word 5 SIG<br>"Form Letters/Print Merge".<br>TechMart, 5201 Great America Parkway, Suite 254, Santa Clara<br>Jan Altman, (408) 243-5955                     |  |  |
|                        | Last Wednesday<br>Dinner Honoring Members of the Month<br>Applewood Inn, Menlo Park<br>GENERAL MEETING - "WORD PROCESSING WARS!"<br>Turing Auditorium, Polya Hall           |  |  |
|                        | (NO GENERAL MEETING IN DECEMBER)  |  |  |

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P.O. Box 3738, Stanford, CA 94309



| Club Inform           | nation                    |  |  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Meetings              | Don Baird                 |  |  |
|                       | (415) 365-6822            |  |  |
| Membership            | Beverly Altman            |  |  |
|                       | (415) 329-8252            |  |  |
|                       | \$25/year (Students \$10) |  |  |
| <b>Bulletin Board</b> | (415) 424-0812            |  |  |
| Newsletter            | Tony Allen                |  |  |
|                       | (408) 739 2953            |  |  |