



EUGENE NEWSLETTER

PCjr CLUB

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1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220, Eugene, OR 97401

FEBRUARY 1988 PCjr MEETING AGENDA

A> February 11 General Meeting will be held at the Ida Patterson School Library, 16th and Polk, Eugene. Set up and disk sales will start at 6:30pm, the meeting will begin at 7:00pm. Louie Levy and Paul Matchulat will be giving a demonstration of programs from the Disk Library, Funnels and Buckets and Amy's First Primer.



COMPUTER CHANGES

by Club President - Mike Luttio

We had a most interesting and informative meeting last month. I wish to thank Richard Syfert from Pactel for bringing some newer computers to show the club. Rich brought along a black and white IBM model 25 and an Amdeck model. It appears that there are many changes still going on with the new computer scene. Rich explained the differences in the internal workings of the machines currently available and how these effect the ability to work with the new machine languages and software coming in the near future. It seems that the IBM models 25 and 30 will not be able to run the new OS/2 software. IBM will also drop the model 25 from its inventory (another orphan!). So, if you want to get into OS/2, you will have to start with a model 50 (very expensive) IBM or look for a compatible with

room for expansion. Rich's suggestion of the Amdeck would run about \$2,000+ with monitor, single disk drive, and hard disk. My suggestion would be to wait out the introduction of the new operating system and see what happens as the new software is introduced. By that time the compatibles will have some decent models out for comparison.

After the demonstration, the club members present discussed some topics of importance. I brought up the need for a new newsletter editor. With no volunteers forthcoming, Louie Levy and I said we would make sure a newsletter came out this month. After further thought by Louie, he has suggested giving up the disk librarian position to become the newsletter editor. So, we now need someone to help with keeping the disk library current and to keep on the look out for interesting programs we can add to the inventory.

Dick Page suggested that the club spend some of the money in the treasury to buy some items of interest for use by the club members. Suggested items were books written about or concerning Junior, an MS-DOS tutorial program, the service manual for the Junior, and a disk drive analyzer program. Any other suggestions that might be of interest should be brought up at club meetings and the executive board will take action on possible procurement.

I am still looking for volunteers to demonstrate software at club meetings. This month's meeting will have a couple of club disks and a diskette magazine demonstrated. Any other topics of interest will be appreciated. Come and join us at this month's meeting.



WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!
 - OKjr Users Group, Oklahoma City,
 Oklahoma, June/July 1987 -

Anybody with a Racore/Quadram second-drive unit should read the following: it may steer you away from a lot of grief.

Sometimes being extra-thorough in tracking down a computer hardware problem will get you into more trouble than if you'd just thrown the whole thing into a box and taken it down to the shop. The moral of this story is that they don't call computers "systems" for nothing. All the parts are hooked together, and when one part goes bad, it may cause another part to go bad, too.

Take, for example, the time I blew out three Junior power transformers in one day. This happened one day in March when my Junior went up to only 4K in its POST memory check and then crashed. On rebooting, the POST didn't start, and neither did the computer. You would think something like this would be caused by a problem in the main unit, but it never hurts to double-check. So I removed the second drive, and the Junior booted up fine. Good. Now we've got the problem narrowed down to the second drive unit. Checking for obvious things on the Drive Two unit turned up nothing -- all the connections were tight, no scorch marks, etc. Not much more for an amateur to do except call Racore for some help or a Return Authorization number so the unit can be sent in for repairs.

Then I remembered having read somewhere that the power transformers are the most frequently replaced piece of equipment on the Junior. Since the Racore's Drive Two transformers are the same thing, made by the same company (Ault) and having the same voltage and amperage ratings, maybe the problem lay there, and it would be possible to plug in my spare transformer and avoid shuffling floppies for two or three weeks while the Drive Two unit was in for repairs.

So, I hooked the Drive Two transformer into the Junior's power socket and tried to boot up. Yayy!! It didn't work! Back went the Junior transformer into the Junior. Bootup just fine. Now we know what's wrong. Bad transformer. But that wasn't all I learned. To be double-sure about this, the next thing to do would be to plug a good transformer into the Drive Two unit. So, Drive Two is reattached; to it is hooked the original Junior transformer and to the Junior CPU is hooked the spare transformer.

But this time nothing happens. This is where I should have stopped. I hadn't isolated the problem to the Racore transformer, and something was evidently wrong in the Drive Two unit. But I destroy my last remaining transformer by being triple-sure: I remove that Drive Two and reboot successfully, then hook up Drive Two again and swap the transformer's hookup points, the spare transformer now in the second drive and the original transformer back in the Junior. Still nothing. Time to call



Racore. Their Technical Support man says the problem is not with the transformers but with a bad component on the power-supply circuit board. If this part goes bad and the power is turned on, it will eat up, roast, fry the transformer.

This may seem a bit hard to take at first: how could such a sturdy-looking, heavy thing as the Junior power transformer be zapped like this? But I was ready to believe it. I'd just had one go out and lost another two trying to figure out what was happening.

Racore's price for this fix is pretty reasonable -- a minimum of \$50 labor, plus parts (\$80 elsewhere). The price on the invoice for the replaced part was \$2, and it was identified only as CR3. If you look closely at the power supply circuit board, you can see CR3. Replacement transformers from Racore cost \$18 each, but I gave them instructions not to include any with the repairs since I'd been seeing ads in COMPUTER SHOPPER for surplus transformers at \$9.95 each (stock #WTN-4860). They've been sold for several months by an outfit in Texas called Lolir Electronics. They list several addresses in their ad, but the one I called, and got good results from, was: Lolir Main, 13922 North Central #212, Dallas, TX or call 214-234-8056.

AND SPEAKING OF RACORE... MORE REFLECTIONS

- Louie Levy, Eugene PCjr Club -

A question from a woman in Wyoming to the Junior Report last July about her problems with her RACORE expansion package has prompted me to write this short note. It seems that many people who have purchased this fine product from RACORE have either been very happy with it or very unhappy.

Most of the problems that folks have had with their memory and drive packages from RACORE have been caused by misunderstandings and not by actual deficiencies in the product. Once the new owner has worked out the idiosyncrasies of the installation of their new drive and memory, they have been very pleased with the RACORE product they purchased.

The major problem I have found with RACORE is not their product, but is that the instructions and documentation they supply with their products is very limited and poorly written and is therefore often misunderstood. In one case of which I am aware, it was left out completely. In another, a 128/384 board was shipped without any additional chips on it to a customer who had purchased their second drive with 384K additional memory. They had paid to have their Junior enhanced to 512K, but unknowingly had only received a board which had brought them to 256.

Many Junior owners never remove the top of their computers, so it isn't reasonable for a manufacturer to assume that a consumer can look at a board and tell what it is and where it should go, let alone how much memory it is capable of supplying. If the chips aren't there, much frustration will be generated following instructions trying to address the missing memory.

There are very many happy RACORE owners; I am very pleased with the operation of all their products. Still, I understand the pains that many have had getting their units to work correctly. The best advice I can have if you are one of the unhappy ones, is to contact someone who has the RACORE product you are using and

Keep going - more on next page →

tell them your problems. This person has gone through the aches and pains of trying to follow the documentation and has overcome them. They can help you install your unit, tell you what memory configuration you received as opposed to what you ordered, and they can help you configure your Junior to address all of its available memory. Call them; all Junior users like to help others!



QUICKSOFT AND THE U.S. NAVY

Did you know that the U.S. Naval Academy issues PC-WRITE to all of its incoming freshmen? This is a fine way for you to get your copy free. Or you can purchase it from the club library for 3.00. Either way, PC-WRITE should be in your software collection.



Q. I just erased a vital file by mistake! Can I get it back?

A. This is a two-pointer! First, you have just learned the value of backing up your work. Second, as long as you have not overwritten the files, they can be recovered. DOS does not actually erase the file, it just alters the filename. Programs like PC-TOOL by CENTRAL POINT SOFTWARE and the NORTON UTILITIES have utility programs to recover erased files. (FOX VALLEY PCjr ASSOC., Plainfield, IL, 9/87)

HEARD (HERD?) ON THE STREET by Dick Page

PC-CALC BECOMES PC-CALC+

There aren't too many new software releases right now because most everyone tried to get commercial programs out before the Christmas buying season. However, in the shareware field ButtonWare has announced a major upgrade of the old workhorse spreadsheet program, PC-Calc from Version 3.0 to PC-Calc Plus.

Their flier indicates that they have over 70 new features to make the program more powerful and much faster (2 to 5 times faster - if you believe their literature). It requires at least 280K of available memory (which probably means it will run on a PCjr with 384 or more K).

It sells for \$69.95 plus \$5.00 shipping/handling and can be ordered by calling 1-800-JBUTTON. (Ask if you can get \$10.00 off because you are ordering before March 1st.)

COMPUTE! CLEARANCE SALE

COMPUTE! Publications is trying to unload a lot of its old books. Four PCjr-related books are on the list:

1.) "Home Applications in BASIC for the IBM PC and PCjr." Item # 2386604

2.) "COMPUTE!'s IBM PC and PCjr Games for Kids." Item # 2386493.

3.) "Putting Junior to Work: A Guide to the IBM PCjr." Item # 2386906.

4.) "COMPUTE!'s Kids and the IBM PC and PCjr." Item #2386930.

One or two books sell for \$4.00 each, \$9.95 for three books or \$11.95 for four. Add \$2.00

Don't stop - more on next page

for shipping and handling. Send payment or VISA/M.C. numbers to: COMPUTE! Books, Customer Service, P.O. Box 5038, F.D.R. Station, New York, NY 10150. (Books only available "while they last".)

PRINT SHOP HELPS

Another book has been published which can help PRINT SHOP users, called "The Official Print Shop Handbook". (Last year "The Creative PrintMaster" was shown at a meeting. It was written for PrintMaster but had ideas useful for Print Shop owners, too.) PrintMaster users will also find this book of value.

The book is 192 pages long and is well laid out. It includes lots of ideas, guides, suggestions, and hints. It provides easy ways of determining how many letters of a particular type style will fit, how to keep lettering off the graphics, how to combine signs and letterheads for a more detailed sign, etc.

If there is enough interest I will share some of the book's info at an upcoming meeting.

SHARING PRINT SHOP IMAGES

Speaking of Print Shop images - I would like to know if others are making their own graphic designs using Print Shop or PrintMaster's Graphic Editor. I would be glad to share the images I have created with other club members and would enjoy having images others have created.

Therefore, I would like to gather those images onto disks (one for Print Shop and one for PrintMaster) for use in the club disk library. [I have Springboard's GRAPHICS EXPANDER program which can convert images to either PrintMaster or Print Shop formats.] Either talk to me at

the next club meeting or send me your images via the club address. I will send your disk back with other images after they have been gathered together.

ERRORS IN TYPING B.A.S.I.C. PROGRAMS

It is easy to make a mistake when typing in B.A.S.I.C. programs. There are several common errors which can be made.

Be watchful for letters that look similar, for example, the number 1 and the lowercase letter l, number 8 and the capital B, the number 0 and the capital letter O.

It is also easy to type the wrong line numbers. [One way to avoid this is by using the AUTO Command found on page 4-29 of the PCjr BASIC manual. This command causes a new line number to be generated each time you press <ENTER> at the end of each line.]

DATA statement entries can be a monotonous pain to do if there are a lot of them to type. Be careful. Every comma and number must be exactly right. Some DATA statements have two commas together with no number in between. This is intentional. The two commas indicate a null string.

Make sure that <ENTER> is pressed at the end of each numbered BASIC line. This is easy to forget if the line you are typing fits the exact width of your screen. The cursor will "wrap" to the next line and look "normal". However, you will have added the second line to the end of the first line if you did not remember to press the <ENTER> key.





HELP!!!

TO CLEAN OR NOT TO CLEAN THOSE DISK DRIVE HEADS??

- JrNEWSLETTER, September 1986 -

There seems to be considerable confusion over whether or not you are doing your disk drive heads a favor by cleaning them regularly. The confusion resides, not with the experts, but with the general public. Probably because we are all used to meticulously cleaning the heads on our tape decks, we assume the same treatment is good for our disk drive. But not so!

There are many disk head cleaners on the market and it might not be a bad idea to purchase one, but there is agreement among those who know that too much head cleaning can damage your disk drive heads. So, how much is too much cleaning?

Even if you are using your computer a few hours every day, you probably shouldn't clean the heads more often than every two years. Some people we know have gone many more than that with no problems. If, however, you start getting a lot of "read errors," you could try cleaning the head to remedy the problem. But go carefully. Try 10 to 15 seconds at first. If the read errors stop, don't clean any more. To perform your once every two years cleaning, you can run the cleaner for more like 30 seconds. But you shouldn't have to do it more than that; unless, of course, you habitually spill your Dr. Pepper on your disks. Then, no matter how much you clean, your heads will not be too clean.



(OLD) NEWS FROM THE DISK LIBRARY

Disk sales seem to have picked up somewhat after we lowered the price of our software down to three dollars. I'm not sure if it was due to the price or because many people felt that software made good stocking stuffers. Whatever the cause, the club's treasury sure needed the boost.

There have been some changes in the listing of the library that was printed in December's newsletter. Beginning at the top, PC-Dial is no longer being sold by the club. It has been replaced with what many believe to be a much more versatile program called Telix. Telix is one of the best telecommunications packages available. It is great for all levels of users, even down to your editor (our son and his wife gave us a modem for Christmas)!

PC-CALC was listed as version 2, but we also have version 3 for those with additional K. Disk 16, Freewill, has been replaced with Menu Master. Most of the members felt that the California Will format of Freewill may be a problem "later on" so we replaced this program. Menu Master was reviewed in the October 1987 issue of the PCjr Newsletter. Disk 26, Checkbook Manager, has been dropped. If you purchased your copy from us, return it for credit. When we ran this program it worked well, but only if you begin with a zero balance in your checking account. Actually, this may be close to the actual balance of most of us as we start this new year!

Colorpaint has been replaced. Disk 31 is Name Pal and if you haven't seen it yet, it will be reviewed soon both in the newsletter and at the monthly club

Keep going - more on next page

meeting; watch for it. This was a gift to the club from Richard and Monique Byron of Computer Reset. Both demo disks, 33 and 34, have been replaced. 33 is now The Baker's Dozen, 13 pretty good utilities from Buttonware. Disk 34 is Present, the Shareware version of IBM's Storyboard. Disk 47, PC-Deskmate was updated with PC-Deskteam back in May. Check the May issue of the newsletter for a review of PC-Deskteam.

If you are having trouble keeping track of these changes to the library, send a SASE and we will mail you a complete listing of what is available from your library. Better yet, come to the monthly meeting, purchase a new program, and you will have a complete up-to-date listing as of the date of your purchase; JRCLUB.DOC is on all of our software (when there is enough room), so all you have to do is copy it to your printer.

"TIME OUT" WHEN PRINTING LONG FILES

If you use a slow letter quality printer, you may encounter mysterious problems when printing long files. The printer may suddenly go off line, skip text, or begin to print "garbage." Or you may get an error message like "Printer or device not ready" or "Error in file PRN."

The following DOS command usually cures the trouble:

MODE LPT1:,,P

Type this command at the DOS prompt, or put it in your AUTO-EXEC.BAT file. Remember that MODE.COM must be present in your default drive.

The MODE command changes the way your computer communicates with your printer. The "P" turns on "infinite retry," which prevents a slow printer from over-

flowing its buffer or "timing out" your computer.

This fix will work with parallel printers only. Do not use it with a serial printer.

(From Quicksoft's Quick Notes)



Q. Is there a problem with the PCjr color display that causes intermittent dimness?

A. When the Junior goes into BASIC, either directly or via a program, the screen intensity drops about 50%. This is true for either cartridge or cassette BASIC. (FOX VALLEY PCjr ASSOC., Plainfield, Illinois)

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

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The EUGENE PCjr NEWSLETTER accepts advertising at the following rates:

1 Page - \$18.00

1/2 Page - \$ 9.00

1/4 Page - \$ 5.00

Classified "For Sale" ads in this section of the Newsletter are \$2 for 25 words or less to non-members and free to members on a one-time basis.

Ads should be placed at least two weeks before the next club meeting, and all payments should accompany the ad request.



ARTICLES NEEDED!

The idea behind the EUGENE PCjr CLUB is "users helping other users." Please share some of your experiences and expertise with others by writing an article for our award-winning Newsletter. Just send them to us in any format and you may see your name in print!



KNOW A PEANUT PERSON?
TELL THEM ABOUT US!



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