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March 1993

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RSUP

- New Version RyBBS
- Spitfire Commands
- Shareware Reviews



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The Major BBS Development Team with about 5% of the code they wrote and tested, line by line. From left to right: Bert Love, Edward Bush, Richard Skurnick, Tim Stryker, Bob Stein, Brian Stephens, Sheri Robert, Les Bird, Chris Robert, Scott Brinker, Chris Kotacka

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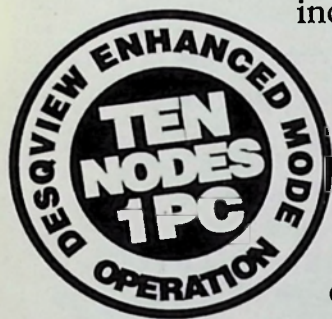
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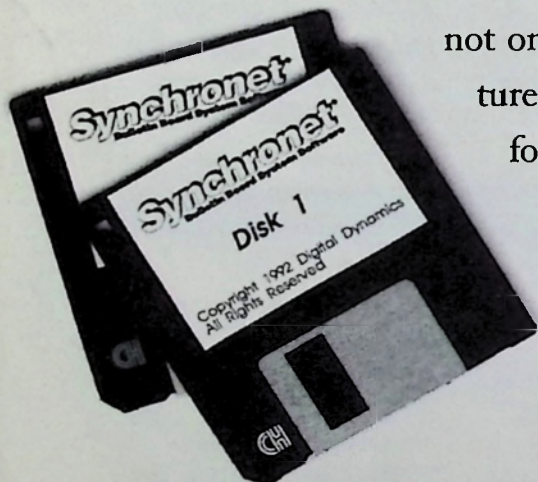
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Paris, IL — Computer Investments merge with Computer Wares, Inc.

A new business merger in Paris! Computer Investments, 807 Marshall St., Paris IL, once owned and operated by James Piper, merged with Computer Wares, Inc., 130 N Main St., Paris IL. This recent merger allows Computer Wares, Inc. to broaden its base of com-

puter sales and service to cover both business and personal needs. James Piper will have position of Vice President/Sales Manager.

Computer Investments was formed in 1990 by James Piper. His primary focus was on personal computer sales. Through the use of innovative marketing techniques he developed this business into a full time operation by the beginning of 1992. His market area includes mail order, area business and personal use.

Computer Wares was formed in 1977 by Jim Lewis. His goal was to provide microcomputer hardware and software to the business community. This venture evolved into primarily a computer hardware service and software development business. Computer Wares Incorporated in 1982 and at this time boasts many specialties including hardware service, software development, local area networks, and microwave data

Continued on page 43



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THE EMERALD PALACE INFORMATION SYSTEM

WHO RUNS IT AND WHAT IS IT?

BBSCD: A brief history of Gregory Shaheen after several conversations.

At the age of 8, Gregory Shaheen's father retired from the Oil and Gas business and moved the family to a ranch located outside a small rural town in the heart of the Texas Hill Country. With nothing around

but acres and acres of streams and mountain land to play on, Gregory's dreams as a boy was to one day move to Alaska and live off of the land.

As time went by and Gregory began to mature, he quickly realized that there was more to life than hunting, fishing and all the things he did during his youth. Of course he is still an avid



Gregory Shaheen at his office.

hunter and fisherman, but has since decided to take life on at full pace.

When Gregory graduated from High School he enrolled at Texas Tech University receiving a scholarship in Applied Music. A Jazz trombonist to this day, he claims that he will one day take the time to record an album just for his mother and father who love to listen to

him play.

After his third year at Tech, Gregory decided it was time to get things going so he left school and ventured out on his own. With the three people in mind that he admired the most being his Grandfather, Father and Cousin, Gregory felt he could do anything he set his mind too.

Gregory became independently involved in the Oil and Gas business and would peddle drilling deals just like his grandfather did. He went out and did what many thought was impossible by negotiating with the Lebanese Government to extend over a million acres of Oil Concessions that his late Grandfather, Father and late Uncle had acquired in the late 1960's but were forced out of the country due to the war.

"When I would sit and talk with my grandfather about the Lebanon deal, his eyes would sparkle as he truly believed Lebanon is sitting on a structure greater than that of Saudi Arabia." I made a vow to him that one day I would get the concessions back in the family name and proceed with his and my late Uncles dreams." Gregory hopes that operations to began fulfilling those dreams will begin in mid summer 1993 when drilling operations are scheduled to begin.

Gregory's interest in computers came into focus in the summer of '91. He went and bought a computer to keep business in order and found that it mostly just sat there. His father one day made the comment "you should be able

to make money with that thing somehow." This is when Gregory got the idea. He had been calling some local bulletin boards and called one of the major online services.

With all this in mind he decided to start his own service. He took a challenge from his father and decided that he was going to succeed with his newest venture. Shopping around for the right software was a major task as knowing almost nothing about computers, he did not know exactly what he needed. He made his decision by choosing the software he felt offered the most and was most user friendly. That is when he picked up the phone and called Galacticomm Inc.

"I remember I spoke With Christopher at Galacticomm and he was very helpful as to pointing out the products I would need to get started."said

Gregory. He relied on a local computer pal Chuck Mace who had previously operated a Major BBS system. Chuck introduced Gregory to the features that MBBS had to offer and would spend countless hours with Gregory teaching him the language of C programming.

Eventually Gregory learned how to compile and link all the programs himself and decided it was time to shoot for the stars. In March of '92 he moved all of his operations to San Antonio and decided that he was going to make this service available to

the national public. After negotiating with a X.25 Network carrier, July saw the national birth of The Emerald Palace. Now his service was available with just a local phone call in over 92% of the population in the country.

Starting and continuing this service is not an easy task. Gregory is a perfectionist and works very hard to make sure everything is done correctly. "I was taught that there are three keys to a successful operation," says Greg.

The first key is that a person must be 100% committed to what they are doing. They must be willing to sacrifice the long hours of hard work and frequent let downs.

The second key is keep overhead to an absolute minimum. "If I can do it myself then I will. He is very fortunate to have his lovely wife Peggy at his side contributing her share

*"I was taught that there
are three keys to a
successful operation,"
says Greg.*



Peggy Shaheen answering customer questions.

Continues...



Rusty Edie

Dual Eliminator

Rusty n Edie's BBS announces the introduction of our their Dual Eliminator. Simply plug your phone line to the Dual Eliminator and then plug the Dual Eliminator into your modem. This device consists of 2 passive electronic filters that handle both high and low frequency noise from the phone line. Both high and low frequency are independently adjustable with knobs that mount on the front of the unit. Surge protection is provided by an electronic varistor.



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Rusty n Edie's BBS
1480 Fredricksburg Drive
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Emerald Palace Setup includes, 486/50,3 CDRoms, 56kbps x.25 Modem, 2 Galactiboxes Housing 32 Internal Modems and a 386/25 Development Machine.

of hard work. Gregory's reason for keeping the cost down are simple. "To pass the savings on to the customer."

The third key is the most important, customer service. You must treat your customers with the respect that you would want yourself. Many are first time bbsers and you want to give them the best first impression of their life. I like to think of the Palace as being a customer oriented system. Whenever major changes are to take place that I know will affect the users, I email them and invite them to an open forum in the teleconference to get their views on the matter. The Palace is like one big fami-

ly and everyone knows that if they have an opinion it will be heard.

Now about The Emerald Palace Information System.

The Emerald Palace has a vast majority of features available. Greg says: "We try not to be really fancy but offer the customer many features for their hard earned dollar. The most popular feature is the interactive chat. This is where any number of users can enter a room and talk live with each other. It is very fascinating mainly because there are people from all over the country in there chatting with each other."

The Playpen

- (A)...Social Room
- (B)...Females Only
- (C)...Males Only
- (D)...Adult Gifs
- (E)...Adult Access Form (A Must!)
- (X)...Exit Menu

Select an option (A,B,C,D,E,X, or ? for help):

A user also has their own private chat channel where they can invite as many other users inside as they want. They can also uninvite a user. Users on the Palace also have the unique feature of going into a one on one chat with another user from anywhere on the system. Users are not limited to chat just in the Teleconference on the Palace.

There are several Chat areas on the Palace. There is even a Wedding Chapel where users can get married online! And Yes they do! At least once a week online romances turn into marriage on the Palace. The following menu on The Emerald Palace shows some of the Chat areas.

Message Base Topics

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (A) ... Windows Applications | (C) ... Jokes & Quips |
| (D) ... Debate on Issues | (F) ... Apple MacIntosh |
| (G) ... Squares (Othello) | (H) ... Hello to All |
| (K) ... Commodore/Amiga | (M) ... IBM Applications |
| (O) ... Science | (P) ... Poetry |
| (Q) ... Ham Radio | (R) ... OS/2 |
| (S) ... Suggestions | (T) ... Star Trek Talks |
| (U) ... Galactic Empire | (V) ... San Antonio Chatter |
| (W) ... Natural Phenomenon | (Y) ... Communications |
| (B) ... Gaming Schedules | (E) ... Games & Shareware |
| (I) ... Sports Club | (J) ... Investments |
| (8) ... BBS 800 List | (X) ... Exit to Previous Menu |

REAL-LIFE GET TOGETHERS

There are different regions set up so you can chat and exchange messages with users from your region of the country. Many users from other regions have actually planned and met in real life for regional Palace get togethers!

There is usually one a month in San Antonio for the locals and others who fly in. We have had them drive in from 300 miles away to fly in from Boston, Atlanta and Wisconsin! A

Continues...

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07 BASIC & QuickBasic	27 Math & Science	47 Music - .WRK Albums
08 Education Programs	28 dBase Files & Utils	48 Music - .CMS Albums
09 Business Applications	29 LAN Files & Utils	49 Music - .STM Albums
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11 Personal System Utils	31 Printer Utils	51 PC Speaker & Sound
12 Windows Applications	32 Screen Utils	52 Misc. Music & Sound
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Caribbean cruise is also in the works for late summer '93 for all Palace members who wish to attend.

GAMES

There are many online games varying from single player to multi-player interactive games. Users can actually play live against each other.

The most popular is Othello, a version of the popular board game. Another popular board game is Scrabble. You have to play this to believe it. There is a full online casino ranging from just about all the card games to roulette. And they are live! You play against other users online.

War of Worlds is a very popular space game where users create their own planet, operate the resources and try to conquer and take over the existing planets in the galaxy. This is another you just have to play it game! Galactic Empire challenges the players to over take the Galaxy and fight off the dreading Cybertrons and other evil forces of the galaxy.

For all the Chess lovers, the Palace offers a full ANSI chess game set

up with all the regulations. It can also be played anywhere online. Get this, there is a full screen ANSI horse track online! Users go to the betting booth, place their bets and sit back and chat with each other. Then the screen clears and the race begins! You actually see the horses trotting across the screen. At the end of the race the computer tallies up your winnings and adds them to your account.

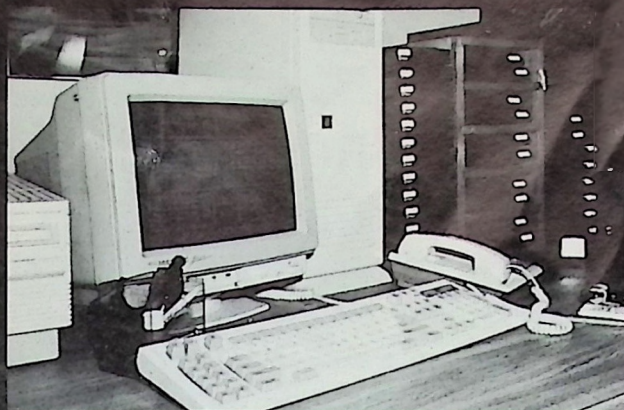
For all the trivia fans there is a online trivia forum that has over 10,000 questions. Also nightly trivia contest are held in the trivia chat channel and users play against each other for points redeemable for free usage on the Palace.

MATCHMAKING

The Palace also offers Matchmaking utilities that lets users match themselves with that perfect mate. Users answer a complete list of questions about themselves and the computer will match their answers with those users of the opposite sex. So far

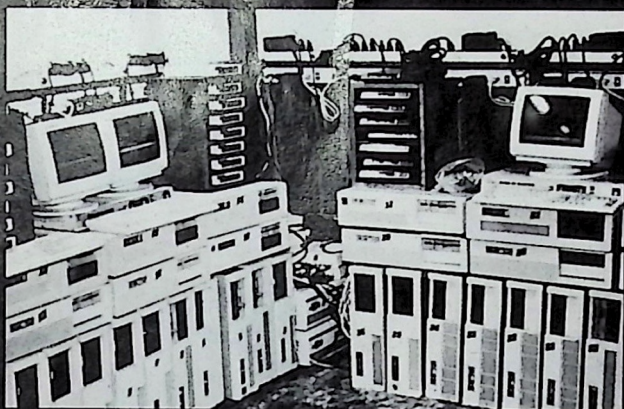
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Transferable N
Membership Days 0 (Not used for network callers)
Security Level 0
Voice Validated N
Alert User Log ON N
Show Information Y
Invisible on System .. N
Adult Access N (Not used)

- 1) Change Alert Status
- 2) Change Show Status
- 3) Change Invisible Status
- 4) Help and Information
- X) Exit to Main Menu

Option:

there have been 4 real life marriages with 2 pending.

Of course the Palace offers all electronic mail features. Users can write,

modify, read, erase and even configure mailing list online. Users may also attach a file to the mail they have written. What a convenience. There is a

QWK Mail utility available so that users can download all their messages into a QWK packet and read and reply offline.

40,000 SHAREWARE FILES

The Palace offers a rather large file library with over 40,000 up to date shareware files. Just about anything you need is located in the file library. Growing everyday, this area will keep you busy for hours on end.

Also available is a dial out utility that lets users online dial up another system. The Palace has several local bbs's set up so that users calling from anywhere in the US can call these systems without incurring any additional charges or long distance charges.

In the Utilities Menu users can look up any user they wish and see when that user was last on. Users can look at the actual BBS statistics and see how many hours of usage was reported for that day to how many messages were written.

The Forums area has roughly 200+ topics all carried over Echo's and

Continues...



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are distributed through out the world. Topics for just about anyone's taste are available. This is a good way to communicate with friends who are in cities that do not have a local access number to connect to the Palace.

TRAVEL SERVICES

An online Travel Center is under development and will offer users discounts on travel packages and airfares. This area is operated by a Travel Agent in Florida who is a member of the Palace. He says he can give a great deal on just about any travel package available.

Of course for Adults only, the Playpen is available 24 hours a day. With private chat areas as well as echoed messages, Adults can get together and converse on a much more laid back and mature level

without being bothered by the oh so ever anxious teenagers. A large collection of Adult Gifts are available also. Access to this area is restricted to adults only. An Adult Access form with proof of age is required before any user is permitted inside.

HOW TO CONNECT

Connecting to the Palace is very simple. Users just dial a local number in their city and they are online. No long distance charges at all. And the cost is the best part of the whole package! Only \$1.50 per hour! Unlike most of the other services, the Palace is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week at this low hourly fee.

Users do not have to wait for the sun to go down to have fun. There are no additional sign

up fees or monthly account fees. Users pay in advance only for the time they use. The advantage of users paying in advance is that they have full control of how much they are able to spend online. Once a user is out of credits, they are dropped back into the demo mode and are given the option to log off or purchase additional time.

900 SERVICE

A unique feature of the Palace is one of the payment methods available to users. Users just pick up the phone and dial a 1-900 number. A voice on the other end gives them an 8 digit code. The user writes it down, calls the Palace back and redeems the code for instant online time. Gregory became involved with 900 service for the Palace back in the spring of 92.

He called a carrier and in turn they connected him with a 900 service bureau in a city 250 miles away. Gregory then called on Yannick Tessier in Mirimar, Florida to do a few programming tricks for him. He asked Yannick if he could write some software that would enable a user to dial the 900

Since the birth of the Palace in late October of 1992, it has grown from a 2 line local system to 128 lines with national access.

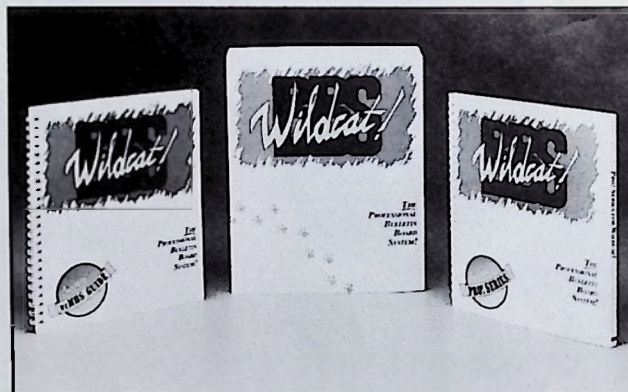
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number, receive a code and call the regular BBS number and redeem the code for online credits. Within days Yannick had uploaded the program to Gregory and after a little work as far as adding features, Gregory had his first 900 number up and running.

The unique thing about it was that when the user actually called the 900 number, they were calling to a city 250 miles north of where the Palace is based. The only other way this could have been done was for Gregory to shell out a few thousand dollars to get a line installed at his location or pay hundreds of dollars every month to have the 900 calls forwarded to his location.

After Yannick saw that his software was a success, he completely rewrote the program to include multiple BBS's thus the birth of Tessier Technologies 900 Payline service. Yannick now has over 70 systems connected through his 900 service and all a user does when calling is enter the System ID on the keypad of the telephone, write down the code and redeem it on the system they chose.

Other options for buying online time on the Palace are sending in a check or money order or using a major credit card. "The 900 payline service by Tessier Technologies enables a first time user to purchase instant online time without the hassles of waiting to get validated."

Since the birth of the Palace in late October of 1992, it has grown from a 2 line local system to 128 lines with National access. Gregory is dedicated to offer an enjoyable atmosphere where users can relax and forget about the worries of every day life. The future of the Palace of course is the future of the users and as long as the users are around, so will the Palace.

To log onto the Palace, just call voice 1-800-521-2733 to get your local access number.

Configure your settings as follows:

Parity: NONE

Data Bits: 8

Stop Bits: 1

Once you get your number dial and connect. Upon connection hit the ENTER key two times.

Autonet will respond with:

Autonet Line nnnnnnnnnn

Command:

Where nnnnnnnnnn is the line number of your connection.

At the Command: type the following;

Command: C PALACE

Then press the RETURN key.

Autonet will respond with the following message:

CALL CONNECTED

You may now proceed with the log on procedures of the Emerald Palace.

If you have difficulty or need assistance please do not hesitate to call customer service at (210) 561-8166.

To connect via the local San Antonio lines, please dial direct to: (210) 561-8150. ■

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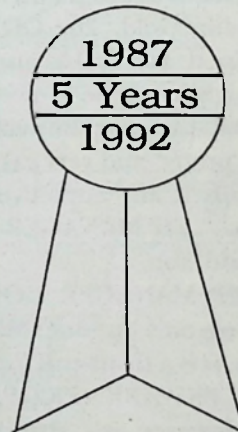
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ZIP MANAGER GOLD

BY "UNCLE" HANK HURTEAU

Take care of all your PKWARE needs with this shareware utility.



ZIP MANAGER GOLD ver 1.0A

by Jack Hildenbrand

There are a few shareware authors that enjoy a reputation of excellence. Seeing their name on a program almost guarantees that the product will be a worthy addition to that particular niche the program is aimed at. Jack Hildenbrand of jwh: SoftWare is one of those names.

You may have seen some of his GOLD series of programs, most notably Fast Menu Gold. The GOLD series is developed for VGA and a mouse (although a mouse is not necessary). Jack's GOLD programs are known for being "pretty" and very easy to use. Ok, Jack calls it an "attractive windowing interface". ZIP MANAGER GOLD is his latest addition.

ZIP MANAGER GOLD is really two programs in one. As the name implies, it is a front-end for the PK utilities by PKWARE (PKZIP, PKUNZIP, etc.). However, it's also an excellent

DOS Shell loaded with features. Let's start with the DOS Shell.

DOS SHELL

After a very short pause reminding you to register the program if you like it, you are presented a small menu. The first tree choices are A-Format, B-Dos DiskCopy, and C-Single Pass DiskCopy. These three options are simply DOS functions, however, they are easier to use than the command line.

Unlike many other DOS Shells, ZIP MANAGER GOLD needs no other external programs.

Choosing Format allows you to do all kinds of formatting without remembering (or looking up) the needed switches. You can format 360k floppies in your 1.2 drive and 720k disks in a 1.44 drive. It also will allow you to format a System disk (bootable).

Choices B & C are for copying disks. Option B is again a simple DOS disk copy. Option C, however, lets you

copy a high density disk in one pass, thus eliminating the need to keep swapping disks. Normally, you'd have to have an additional program if you wanted to do this. DOS would have you swapping SOURCE and TARGET disks several times on a high density disk.

Selecting D from the Main Menu is where the real power of this program comes in. This is where your directory, file, and Zip file maintenance is done. After selecting which drive to work from, you are presented with the directory tree of that drive. From this screen you can rename, create, or delete the highlighted directory (it can not delete a directory if it contains files).

If you wanted a hard copy of your tree, hit "P" to send it to your printer. To work on files, just highlight the directory that contains those files by going up and down the tree with the cursor keys or the mouse and hit RETURN.

Once you've selected the directory to work with, a list of files is displayed. This list can be sorted a number of ways, such as by date, size, or extension in either ascending or descending order. From this screen you can copy, delete, rename, view, or edit the highlighted file. Unlike many other DOS Shells, ZIP MANAGER GOLD needs no other external programs.

The file viewer and editor are built into the program. That doesn't mean

that they are "stripped down" applications. The included editor is as full-featured as any other you've been using. I could do a review on that application by itself. The editor alone may be well worth the modest registration fee.

When copying, you are prompted for the destination path. Choosing Query will let you search for a file (wild cards are accepted). You can even run a program with an .EXE, .COM, or .BAT extension. All of the above options are just little "extras", what we really want this program to do is manage our ZIP files. That's the last item on the files menu.

If you wanted to create a ZIP file, toggle the files you want to include in the archive, and select Zip Up. You will be prompted for a file name and destination path. To work with an existing ZIP file, highlight it and choose ZIP Menu from the file menu. Now a new list of options is displayed.

UnZIP—If you want to unzip the entire file, select Tag All. You will be prompted for the destination path. You can however, be selective and only extract some of the files. This might come in handy if you were tight on disk space and wanted to keep seldom used files compressed. Then you could extract the one you want and use it. It's also nice if all you wanted to do is read or print a programs documentation.

ZIP to .EXE—Have you ever wanted to create a self-dissolving ZIP file? This option allows you to do that quick and easy. Here too, you can direct the output to an alternative path.

View ZIP—This will show you the files contained in a ZIP with all the necessary information. Here, I'd like to be able to read any included text files, but that isn't available (yet?). For now you'll have to unzip the text and read it that way or send it to the printer.

Test ZIP—This option tests for any corrupt files.

Fix ZIP—This option will attempt to fix a corrupted file.

PKLite—PKLite is a program from PKWare that compresses an .EXE file while retaining the ability to be used. Compression can be as much as 50%. This is a handy and effective space saver.

Using this option will convert your program and place it where you specify.

The included editor is as full-featured as any other you've been using. The editor alone may be well worth the modest registration fee.

The original is kept intact. So, if your PKLited file doesn't work, you've lost nothing.

Using the default switches should be just fine for most of us, but if you are familiar with the different ZIP options, these can be edited to your preferences.

Aside from reading text files within a ZIP, the only problem I had was ZIP MANAGER GOLD didn't "see" my network drives. I talked with Jack and he assured me he is working on that and hopes to have that ability in a future release. With all the options available and the ease of use, ZIP MANAGER GOLD is a real bargain at \$25.

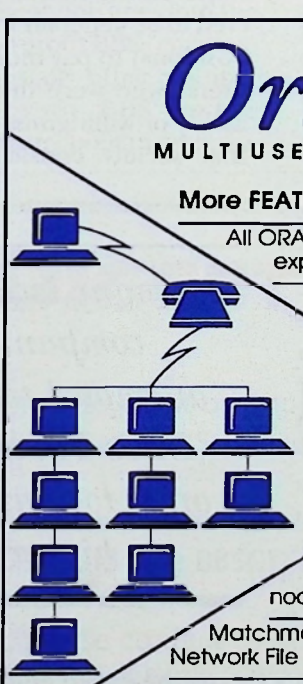
If you've found that other programs of this type were too

confusing and required several pages of documentation to get anything done, try this one. If you're like me and prefer to use the command line with the ZIP utilities, you might just change your mind after trying this excellent program.

Naturally, you'll need the above mentioned utilities from PKWare. These have separate registration policies, so be sure to check on those as well.

NOTE: As of this writing, no new versions of PKZIP have been released. There have been many "bogus" versions floating around but none of these are genuine. Some may even contain a virus or "trojan horse". A new version is promised by early 1993, but for now, the latest can be found as PKZ110.EXE on nearly every BBS. If you do see a new version, BE CERTAIN you have authentic release.

ZIP MANAGER GOLD requires VGA and a mouse is recommended. It has a registration fee of \$25 and can be found with the file name ZIPMANIA.ZIP. ■



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THE DIFFICULTY IN SETTING TELEPHONE LINE TARIFFS FOR BBSs

BY SHARI STEELE

Hobbyist BBSs should not be charged business telephone rates.



As any BBS SysOp can tell you, local telephone companies make some seemingly arbitrary decisions that can have

profound effects on a BBS's ability to stay afloat. One of these seemingly arbitrary decisions concerns the rate hobbyist SysOps are charged for the telephone lines they need to run their boards. BBS SysOps of hobbyist boards must convince their local telephone companies that their boards are more "residential" than "business" in nature in order to receive substantially lower rates. A recent decision by the Oregon Public Utility Commission, while deciding on the lower, residential rates for a BBS SysOp, emphasizes the problems inherent with the current rate classification scheme.

RESIDENTIAL VERSUS BUSINESS RATES

Let's start with a discussion on how telephone line rates are determined. State public utility commissions, or PUCs, are responsible for the regulation of local telephone line access rates. These organizations often base

their rate decisions at least partially on political or social pressures, rather than exclusively on the cost of actually providing service. For example, the rate structure of the former Bell monopoly required businesses (who were considered to be generally in stronger financial positions) to pay more than residential users (who were thought to have less ability or willingness to pay for services that society considered they ought,

... many local telephone companies have attempted to classify all BBSs as businesses in order to charge them the higher rates.

nonetheless, to enjoy). Regulators reasoned that 1) the policy of universal service required that there be affordable rates for residential subscribers; 2) the value of service for business subscribers increased as the number of residential subscribers increased; 3) business sub-

scribers valued telephone service more than residential subscribers; and 4) business subscribers used telephone service more than residential subscribers.

With the divestiture of AT&T, state PUCs have continued this trend, requiring businesses to pay higher rates and enabling residential users to continue to pay lower rates. These cost differences can be substantial. In October of 1990, the national average for flat rate residential telephone service was \$17.78 per month, including taxes and subscriber line charges. The average for single-line business customers during that same period was almost two-and-a-half times larger than the residential rate, or \$41.09.

PUCs execute their regulatory function by requiring local telephone companies to submit tariffs for PUC approval. These tariffs define rates telephone companies will charge for the various services they provide. A telephone company may only charge for service based upon the current tariff it has on file with the state PUC. A telephone company doing business in different states must file separate tariffs with the PUCs in each of those states.

Each telephone company tariff within each state gives its own definitions of residential and business services. In

practice, most of these definitions are amazingly similar. Most definitions of residential service have a requirement that the service be provided primarily for "social" or "domestic" purposes. Unfortunately, the terms "social" and "domestic" are not defined in the tariffs, and there are few published opinions where state PUCs have defined them.

The typical definition of business service incorporates the idea that the service is used substantially for "business," "professional," "trade" or "occupational" purposes. Sometimes the definitions incorporate the idea that if the telephone number is regularly advertised, business rates apply. However, the terms "business," "professional," "trade" and "occupational" are not defined in the typical tariffs, nor is there a definition of what it means to "advertise," so the telephone companies and PUCs define these terms on a case-by-case basis.

Why should any of this matter to BBS users? Because over the past couple of years, many local telephone companies have attempted to classify all BBSs as businesses in order to charge them the higher rates. At the very least, this will result in higher charges for users trying to access their favorite boards. Even more disturbing, many SysOps of

hobbyist boards contend that these higher rates will force them to shut their boards down completely.

HOBBYIST BOARDS DISTINGUISHED

Basically, there are three different types of BBSs: for-profit boards, BBSs run by organizations, and hobbyist bul-

*...the majority of bulletin
boards are run by
computer enthusiasts
in their spare time
as a hobby.*

letin boards. For-profit BBSs, as their name explains, are businesses. They charge fees for their services, and users pay to use the systems. These bulletin boards compete for business and tend to pay for advertising. They also often involve multiple telephone lines into the system. Because for-profit BBSs compete for callers, they usually offer multiple services. A for-profit BBS in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, for

example, offers 12 telephone lines and provides large services for which users pay, such as an online version of USA Today. For-profit BBSs have traditionally been classified as a business use of the telephone lines, and SysOps have been paying business rates for those lines.

A number of organizations also offer BBSs to their members or the general public. For example, many public libraries provide BBSs for users to learn about the library and discuss various books and authors. More and more organizations sponsor BBSs in order to get feedback from their users. Organizational BBSs may or may not be designed to make a profit. Organizational BBSs, including BBSs provided by nonprofit organizations such as schools and hospitals, have traditionally been classified as a business use of the telephone lines, and SysOps have been paying business rates for those lines.

However, the majority of bulletin boards are run by computer enthusiasts in their spare time as a hobby. These hobbyist SysOps provide the computer, software, modem, and telephone line so that users can dial in to their systems and share information. Hobbyist BBSs

Continues...

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are run almost exclusively out of the homes of the SysOps. They often use one telephone line, enabling only one person to access the system at any one time.

Hobbyist bulletin boards are not run to make a profit. While some boards charge minimal fees, these fees are generally used to cover the costs of paying the monthly telephone line charges or purchasing software. Hobbyist bulletin boards also do not advertise. Their numbers are published on local BBS directories so that their systems will receive telephone calls. However, they typically do not pay to have their BBS telephone numbers published in any commercial service, including the "Yellow Pages." Traditionally, hobbyist BBSs have been classified as a residential use of the telephone lines.

Telephone company attempts to change that classification have become more prevalent over the past few years. Some state PUCs, like the one in Texas, have facilitated cooperation among

SysOps and telephone companies as they compromised on a way to keep SysOps paying residential rates for their hobbyist boards. Some state PUCs, like the one in Indiana, have held that charging hobbyist boards business rates

the Public Utility Commission of Oregon, has held that BBS line rates, like all other services, are tariff-dependent.

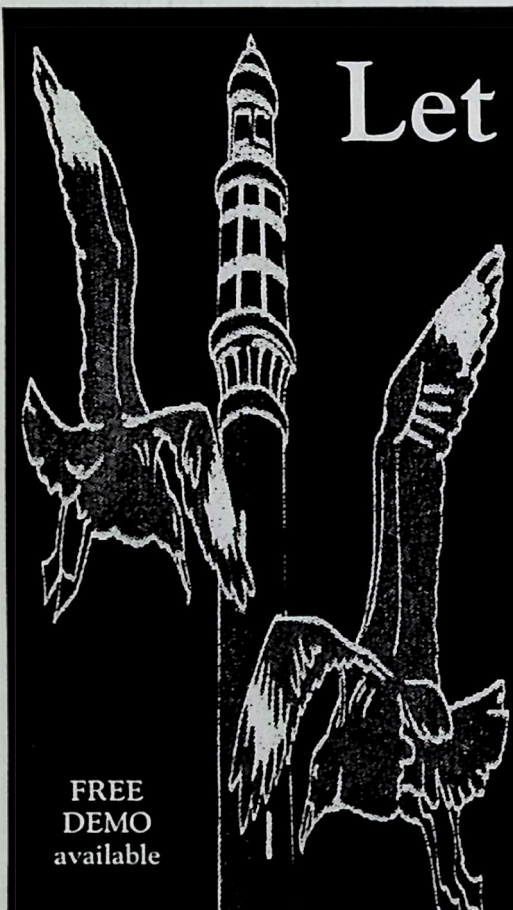
THE WAGNER CASE

On November 23, 1992, the Oregon PUC handed down its decision in Wagner v. U.S. West Communications, Inc. Stuart Antony Wagner was a SysOp for a hobbyist BBS called First Choice Communications in Portland, Oregon. Tony is hearing impaired and cannot use a standard telephone without an amplifier. He found communicating with other computer users by modem very appealing because it avoided the difficulties inherent for him in verbal communications. In fact, many of the users of First Choice BBS were handicapped, although that was not a prerequisite.

First Choice had a general focus. There were no subscription or other fees for users. There was no commercial use of the system. And, while First Choice was listed on the local BBS direc-

All but one of the hobbyist boards in Elkhart, Indiana, either closed down or began charging for access after the PUC released its decision.

is acceptable. This, incidently, had disastrous results for BBS users. All but one of the hobbyist boards in Elkhart, Indiana, either closed down or began charging for access after the PUC released its decision. And now one PUC,



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tory, Tony Wagner did not engage in advertising, promotion or publicity for his BBS. Tony Wagner had three telephone lines running into First Choice.

For several years, Tony was charged residential rates for the telephone lines running into his board. But in October of 1991, US West decided to implement a company policy of charging all BBSs business rates. Tony Wagner filed a formal complaint against US West before the Oregon PUC to protest the rate increase, stating that First Choice was not a business use of the telephone lines, and those lines should not be classified as business lines for rate purposes. Tony argued that his BBS was used primarily for social or domestic purposes.

US West took the position that the First Choice BBS was not a domestic use of the lines, and as such was subject to business rates. US West further argued that the pattern of use of BBSs makes them more like a business than a residential use. In part, US West based its argument on the premise that business rates reflect higher volumes of use and that it would be unfair for Tony to operate a business-type service at the lower residential rate. However, the PUC did not buy that argument, holding that "the tariffs themselves make no reference to volume of use as a basis for determining residential classification." And there was no evidence presented by US West of what the actual volume of use was.

The PUC, in fact, based its decision entirely on its reading of US West's tariff. The PUC held, "The fundamental problem for [US West] in this case is that the tariffs upon which it relies did not foresee this form of residential use. Customers like Mr. Wagner are, in effect, caught in an evolving situation where the tariffs have not kept pace with the technology. Rather than adopting a strained interpretation of its present tariffs, the better approach would be for [US West] to revise its tariffs to specifically deal with bulletin board systems. In the context of a tariff docket, issues relating to the applicable classification, the characteristics of the service, volume of usage, and other matters affecting the public interest could be properly reviewed."

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BBS USERS

The Oregon PUC suggested that the current rate classification of business and residential uses of telephone lines may not work well for BBSs. This makes a lot of sense. Our lifestyles are changing, and so are our uses of the

*Our lifestyles are
changing, and so are
our uses of the
telephone lines.*

telephone lines. The old classifications of business and residential rates were meant to be applied simply. But today's uses of the telephone lines do not fall neatly into that old classification scheme. For example, is a telephone line used during the day by a telecommuter and used at night for speaking with friends properly classified as a business or residential use of the line? Are people who send faxes from their homes properly assessed residential rates? Should modem communications, like BBSs, always be classified as a business use of a telephone line?

The Oregon PUC answered the last question in the Wagner case. The PUC held that "[d]ata transmission, by

itself, is not incompatible with a classification of residential use. . . . A residential customer with a modem and a personal computer may use his residential line or lines to receive and transmit data without paying business rates for the line, unless [telephone company] tariffs require the application of a business rate for other reasons."

So, for the time being, hobbyist BBS SysOps will only have to pay residential rates for running their boards in Oregon. However, the dilemma as to what to charge hobbyist SysOps is indicative of a larger social need — a need for telephone companies and public utility commissions to rethink the ways they classify telephone service. ■

Shari Steele is a Staff Attorney with the Washington office of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing freedom and openness in computer-based communications. Send your legal questions to Ms. Steele at ssteele@eff.org (Internet) or c/o BBS Callers Digest.

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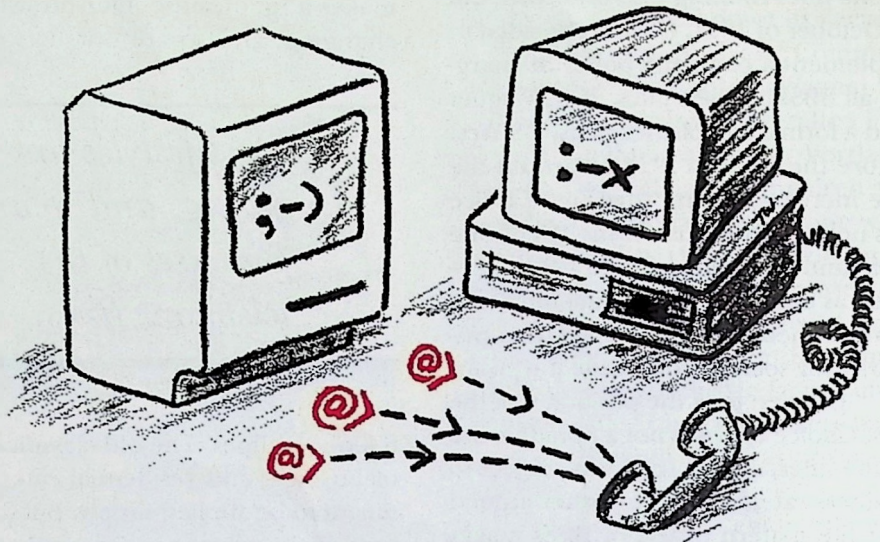
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GET READY FOR MARCH 6

BY CAROL CARMICHAEL
& ED LAZAROWITZ



To the new caller, a SysOp may appear as the Almighty One Incarnate on the Baud Lines, but we have to tell ya, SysOp's are human too and make mistakes... including some very close to home (US!).

A delightful caller to Struppi's BBS was kind enough to send us a donation to the board. Carol was overjoyed by this and left him a nicely worded thank you message which incidentally included the private number to Struppi's BBS. She was somewhat perplexed when we received a message from this caller advising that he had received the thank you message but were we aware that his privileges seemed to have been removed instead of extended?

Carol immediately displayed his caller record to see what could possibly be the matter, scanning it intently but not seeing anything untoward. As the next step in resolving this bizarre problem, she tried logging on as him to experience firsthand the difficulty. Sure enough, no matter which command or feature was tried, Carol received a nasty beep from the system and a message saying she wasn't authorized to do whatever she attempted to do.

Now starting to get just a wee bit frustrated, Carol called his user record up one more time and scanned through

the setup line by line by line. Boy did her face ever get red... when she discovered that while she had correctly increased our caller's security level and added a subscription expiration date, she had forgotten to increase the year!

You guessed it, gang... according to the system, his account was expired!

ALWAYS BE SURE OF WHERE YOU ARE... (REVISITED)

Last month, we told the brief tale of one particular Washington-area SysOpess who seemed to forget to which BBS she had logged on. This month, we'd like to share yet another "Who's on first?" type BBS story...

There's a group of metro Washington SysOps who have formed a loose alliance of sorts and faithfully recommend each other's boards to their callers. In case you can't guess, Struppi's BBS is part of this great group of boards. To help 'spread the word' about these boards, one SysOp in the group designed a logoff screen which displays the name and numbers of all the *other* boards involved.

This SysOp was a little perturbed at Struppi, for she had not changed her logoff screen to match the rest of the groups'. Advised by Struppi that she hadn't received the file from him, this SysOp proceeded to quickly assemble Struppi a new logoff screen she could proudly display.

The joke turned out to be on the fellow SysOp—it seems that in his haste to get the file to Struppi's BBS as quickly as possible, he copied his logoff screen from his BBS.

He did modify the screen so that it correctly displayed the names and numbers of about 10 different BBSes in the Washington area. But where Struppi's BBS name was displayed, he changed it to the name of his board, Capitol Connection. However, he forgot to replace the phone number of Struppi's BBS with the number of his BBS!

So, instead of Struppi's BBS number, the new, official, Struppi logoff screen displayed the names and numbers of the different boards, with the exception of Capitol Connection. Yup, the name of the board was displayed,

but the phone number listed to call was that belonging to Struppi's.

We had much egg on our collective faces, but at least we quickly discovered that at least *our* callers pay some small bit of attention to our logoff screens, as they were the astute ones who pointed out our error to us!

Since it's once again that time of year, we thought we'd share the following tongue-in-cheek treatise on...

MICHELANGELO VIRUS HYSTERIA SYNDROME

Mass hysteria about a virus named "Michelangelo" has been spreading rapidly in DOS-based personal computers users around the world. This scare is "triggered" each year slightly before March 6, Michelangelo's birthday. No one is immune ... people ranging from university students to the staff of *Nightline* have been affected.

According to various psychologists, the Michelangelo Virus hysteria is spread through almost any media channel—written, electronic, mail, oral, computer networks, or on-line services. Once a person is "infected", he will attempt to automatically spread the hysteria to every person he sees.

The hysteria also corrupts base reasoning and logic, so loss of common sense is often a symptom. This is unfortunate, since the hysteria can be eliminated at any time with common sense. This means that once activated, the hysteria cannot be easily removed; the easiest thing to do is to let it dissipate naturally on March 7.

There have been numerous known occurrences of this hysteria at the University of Pittsburgh's campus. This has been caused by saturated distribution of virus protection and detection software, and repeated and redundant E-mail messages. We advise you NOT to attempt to trick people into believing that March 6 has already passed in order to avoid the hysteria. (Even though we tell you about 3 paragraphs later that we tried it anyway.)

The Michelangelo virus hysteria displays pronounced symptoms, which

makes it extremely easy to detect. Some possible symptoms of this virus hysteria include, but are not limited to:

1. Running virus-checking software an average of 6,000 times (per disk).

...the Michelangelo Virus hysteria is spread through almost any media channel—written, electronic, mail, oral, computer networks, or on-line services.

2. Sending repeated and redundant E-mail messages.
3. Photocopying 50,000 flyers and distributing them in every possible location on campus.
4. An irrational fear or paranoia of or destructive behavior towards computers (pushing them off of rooftops, leaving them in front of steam rollers, etc.).
5. Using old, manual typewriters.

In addition, Dr. Ima Quak of the Useless Information Bureau advises that "the hysteria seems to have an almost annual cycle to it. Perhaps this can help us in detecting it." Any person that is not infected and has common sense can also detect the Michelangelo Virus hysteria.

There are many trained psychologists that can detect and/or remove the Michelangelo virus hysteria. However, these steps are usually not necessary. The following techniques have been used to combat the hysteria:

1. Vigorous shaking and/or slapping of the victim.
2. Large quantities of cold water (a fire hose, for example).
3. Avoiding watching *Nightline*.
4. Accurate, brief, and non-redundant

information.

If you believe you might be infected with the Michelangelo virus hysteria, please slap yourself once or twice, ask someone to hose you down with a fire hose, and for G*d's sake, go to bed before 11:30pm! Rest assured that some steps *are* being taken to help prevent this hysteria. In fact, just yesterday Pitt Chancellor J. Dennis O'Connor approved \$82,000 to form a committee to appoint a committee to call a meeting to look into the matter. ■

As mentioned at the start of our column, we have dedicated this space to the lighter side of computing. If you have an experience or thought that you'd like to share with us, please do not hesitate to drop us a line via RIME. Although we prefer to be reached via RIME conference #234 (BBS Callers Digest), Ed and I can both be reached via any RIME conference if your local Board does not carry conference #234. We look forward to hearing from you.

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For more information, please contact the publisher, Richard Paquette, as your earliest convenience. Call 609-953-9110 from 10am to 4pm or write to us at: Callers Digest, PO Box 416, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054 (Attn: Group Sales)

BBS, INCORPORATED

BY CHARLES B. KRAMER, ESQ.

Are you protected from liability related to your BBS?



BBS caller, forum moderator, system operator, the BBS itself, other BBSs in a cooperative network: when something on a

BBS goes wrong, which among these may be responsible? The answer depends not only on what went wrong, but on how the BBS is organized.

Organizations can insulate their members from liability, or spread liability to members who took no part in what went wrong. How this works is a result of both history (a section of a law book on employer liability is still captioned "Master and Servant!"), and contemporary judgments about when we should be liable for our actions and for the actions of others.

BBSs are increasingly part of large and complex organizations. Since the first personal computer-based BBSs went online in the late 1970's and were operated as hobbies, some have grown into profit-making corporations with full-time employees. Many of all sizes have also made alliances and connections with other BBSs, and with the vast interconnected network known as the Internet.

What sorts of organizations are these, and what may be the consequences of their organization?

THERE'S A LABEL FOR YOU SOMEWHERE

Some organizations — and all of those that insulate their members from liability — exist only after their organizational status has been granted by a government authority. The most familiar of these is the "corporation", but

exist without a governmental grant (although, among other things, they may be obligated to register their name and obtain a federal tax identification number). These include partnerships, sole proprietorships, and membership associations among many others, including such exotica as the "Massachusetts Business Trust", whose existence is not limited to Massachusetts.

Many of the organizational types that exist without a governmental grant are created automatically, without any conscious declaration by the people involved. The relationships both within a BBS (among, for instance, the person who manages it, the one that owns its hardware, and the moderators of its public conference areas), and between inter-connecting BBSs are susceptible to legal labels whether the parties are aware of them or not.

So what label should be applied to, say, a group of independent but geographically diverse BBSs that cooperate by daily communications that allow their members to exchange private electronic mail with each other? To get an idea of the range of possibilities and their significance, distinguishing between three sorts of organizations — corporation, partnership, and membership association — will be helpful.

The relationships both within a BBS...and between inter-connecting BBSs are susceptible to legal labels whether the parties are aware of them or not.

there are a variety of other forms, such as foundations, limited partnerships, and professional corporations, each of which has unique characteristics.

Many more organizational types

THREE TYPES

A corporation is a vaudeville ventriloquist's dummy; corporate actions are said to be done by the "corporation", as though it exists apart from the people who speak its words and perform its deeds. When a corporation injures someone, ordinarily the corporation may be sued, not the people who own its stock or manage its business. "Don't talk to *me*", the routine goes. "Talk to the dummy."

Sometimes the corporate vaudeville routine has a surprise ending. While corporate executives are allowed a lot of latitude for mistakes they make as executives, they can be personally liable for mistakes that are illegal, or that directly benefit them. Similarly, a corporate director may also be liable, among other circumstances, when (in the words of one court),

"he has recklessly reposed confidence in an obviously untrustworthy employee, has refused or neglected cavalierly to perform his duty as a director, or has ignored either willfully or through inattention obvious danger signs of employee wrongdoing..."

Even corporate stockholders can be personally liable for their corporation's activities if they dishonor the little formalities (like a separate corporate bank account and management by properly elected officers and directors) that support the illusion that their corporate dummy has its own voice.

A partnership, in comparison, is formed when people organize, and

agree to share profits and management. The agreement doesn't have to be written, so whether a group of people who work together are all "partners", or a

*"Membership associations"
...are a collection of
persons who agree to join
for a social, patriotic,
political, or benevolent
purpose*

mixture of partners and independent contractors, or something else depends on how they share responsibility, authority and profits.

Partnerships involve "unlimited liability" — each partner can bind the partnership, and each can be held liable for all of the partnership's obligations.

"Membership associations" are distinct from partnerships. They are a collection of persons who agree to join

for a social, patriotic, political, or benevolent purpose rather than for a purely commercial one. The agreement that creates a membership association doesn't have to be written either, although it often is, and often provides in great detail for the association's purposes, and for the mechanics of its administration.

Membership associations are mostly collections of individuals who are liable for their own actions, and for those actions of the association that they authorize.

A gray area exists between partnerships and membership associations. Unincorporated organizations (at least, except when they are owned and managed by one person) are generally treated as partnerships when they have a commercial purpose, and as membership associations when they don't. Country clubs may be treated as associations, however, even when they are operated partly for monetary gain.

Continues...

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Where these legal formulae can become real is in your bank account. The organizational forms of corporation, partnership and association can apply both to individual BBSs, and to cooperative networks of them. As a result, when a BBS becomes liable for something, the labels that apply to it and to any network it belongs to can have a lot to do with who has to pay.

BBS, INCORPORATED

The larger and more commercial information services are, not surprisingly, generally incorporated. CompuServe, for instance, is a wholly owned subsidiary of H & R Block, a publicly traded company. Among its many information services are special interest "forums" which allow the same sort of public posting of messages, interactive online conferences, and topical databases that local BBSs provide.

These forums are generally operated by independent parties under a contract that requires them to manage, edit and otherwise control the contents of the Forum in accordance with CompuServe's standards.

Whether by historical accident or design, CompuServe's structure has served it well. In the 1991 *Cubby, Inc. v. CompuServe* case, a court found that CompuServe's liability for defamatory material in a forum was like that of bookstores and libraries, which are only liable for the defamatory statements in their books that they know or have

reason to know about.

This decision has been optimistically been interpreted to mean that all BBSs will benefit from the "bookstore" standard of liability, rather than the less

Many BBS structures can be characterized as somewhere between membership associations and anarchies.

lenient one applied to publishers. A more reasonable interpretation is that the owner of a BBS can organize to legally distance itself from liability for administering the BBS — which should provide little solace to the majority of BBS owners who do their own administering.

But pinning organizational labels on the territory of cyberspace is often not easy. Many BBS structures can be

characterized as somewhere between membership associations and anarchies. The Cleveland "Free-Net", for instance, is said to have CompuServe-like services, such as private mail and public message areas, and 40,000 users. It is free (although money contributions are periodically solicited), allows open access, and is run by community volunteers.

Similarly, even Internet itself, with its vast association of over 300,000 hosts and millions of callers, has been called "the anarchy net" because of the lack of a single organizing point of contact, and the lack of a comprehensive "phonebook" of Internet addresses.

Many "echo networks", in comparison, are often highly organized. Echo networks are cooperative associations of otherwise independent BBSs that systematically and regularly share files and conference messages with each other. Conferences reflect the con-

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tributions of the callers of every BBS in the network that participates, and usually have a moderator who edits the discussion to keep it civil and on-topic.

Echo networks often have a very highly evolved charter, bylaws and hierarchy of officers. These provide, among many other things, detailed rules as to how someone will be admitted to their network, what standards conference moderators should use, as well as the technical side of how echoes should work.

Since echo networks are generally still non-commercial, they are probably membership associations rather than partnerships or something else. But BBSs are increasingly becoming commercial. There's no reason two or more of them may not be characterized as a partnership — and be susceptible to partnership liability as a result — if they share profits, losses or management.

None of this is particularly bad news for BBSs or their callers. While the law provides many rules regarding when BBSs and the rest of us are liable for our actions and for the actions of others, it also provides some of the means for limiting those liabilities. ■

CHARLES B. KRAMER is a member of the New York and Illinois Bars and has lived and practiced law in New York City since 1982. His practice includes corporate, copyright, and trademark law, including for clients in the software development and online information businesses. He can be reached at CompuServe 72600,2026, and at Internet 72600.2026@compuserve.com.

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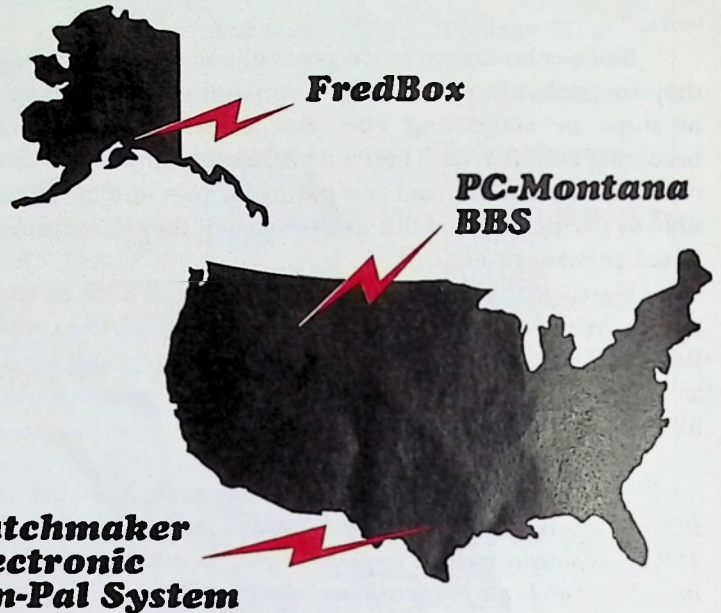
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PC-MONTANA BBS, FREDBOX, MATCHMAKER ELECTRONIC PEN-PAL SYSTEM

BY ALAN R. BECHTOLD



This month I backpacked down the modem trail to big country...hitting three of our largest states,

each with vast rolling wildernesses, each a scenic wonderland in its own rite. Fortunately for us, these colorful tourist vistas are also littered with electronic playlands — better known as BBSes. I visited one in each.

First stop was Montana, a great sprawling state hosting national forests, the majestic Rocky Mountains, and PC-Montana, an impressive online system...

PC-MONTANA BBS

Sysop: Dan Martin

Location: Manhattan, Montana

Phone Number: 406-284-3120

Modem Type: US Robotics 38400 bps

BBS Software: PC Board 14.5a

Motto: "ROMs Are Us"

As soon as I connected to PC-Montana BBS, I was dazzled with nature's splendor. Manhattan, Montana, home of PC-Montana BBS, is nestled right in the Rocky Mountains. Directly between Butte and Bozeman, it's surrounded by national forests and sits just a couple of hours north of the Montana border and the splendor of Yellowstone National Park.

In the midst of all this natural wonder, sysop Dan Martin has created what I affectionately refer to as a Montana miracle in its own rite. His BBS is a rich repository of files, messages and other online treats, a much larger system than you would ever expect to find in one of America's major wilderness regions.

After looking around a while, I'm not at all surprised at the large number of users who regularly access this system, despite Montana's scattered population.

Dan's done a marvelous job of putting together a system that offers vir-

tually everything an onliner could possibly want. There are ten CD-ROMs full of files — everything from games to business applications, programming utilities and anything you could imagine in between, including VGA Spectrum (GIFs, animations and utilities), PC-SIG Vol. 10, MegaROM II, NightOwl 4.1, 5.0, and 6.0, Pixure ROM I and II and GIGA Gold. And Dan's set everything up so the CDs are accessed as if they are regular conferences on the board.

There are also a vast number of other files available on the system, in categories ranging from Humor and Games to Disk Drive Utilities, Printer Utilities, Communications and even Genealogy and Magazine Files.

Available message conferences include the Eclectic Group, Mom's Kitchen (a discussion of computers in everyday life), Bible Study, the Children's Playground (for kids only!), Techno-File, For Sale and For the People (discussions of getting involved, learning about cover-ups and more).

And it's all set up in a series of simple, clean menus, with every step covered by superbly written documentary text files and help screens.

In fact, I found some of the most interesting reading in the system's bulletin files. Bulletin #9 is an extensive list of known and suspected Trojan Horses, Virii and pirated programs that are circulating. Provided by a group calling itself the Hacker Squad, it's a magazine-format text so well-written and informative it should be on every BBS in the country. My hat's off to Dan for providing it.

Dan says he settled down in Manhattan after living and working from Kentucky to California. "First off, I've been hooked on BBSing for a long time," he said. "I was out of a full time job, designing embedded systems software for a test equipment manufacturer, but making enough from software engineering jobs to pay the bills, so I decided to do something I've always wanted to do and set up PC-Montana BBS."

PC-Montana and Dan Martin turned out to be a dynamite combination. "The big plus for me is days are for fishing," Dan said. "And being a BBS sysop is a great night job!"

Dan also makes frequent trips to Yellowstone and shares those trips with modemers who call his board. "I've made a promise to myself that I'm going to hike all the trails in Yellowstone National Park," he said. "This is no small task.

"There are over 1000 miles of trails, but I pack along my Cannon XapShot and have been digitizing images of the park since 1991, with a focus on the Geothermal features. I hope to capture the look and sound of the world's largest geothermal fields left on the planet, and to make them available to my subscribers. This is one of my most important reasons for running PC Montana BBS."

By the time you read this, Dan will also have burned his first CD-ROM of more than 720 TIF images, chronicling his backpack travels so far. It should be a real treat for any CD-ROM owner!

He also uses the system to continue his engineering work. "A group of

local engineers and technical people decided we wanted to work together and interact as a group, while running our own businesses at home," he explained. "The BBS helps us plan product development, explore service opportunities

Dan makes frequent trips to Yellowstone and shares those trips with modemers who call his board. His first CD-ROM of more than 720 TIF images chronicle his backpack travels so far.

and work together as a team on projects. It isn't really important if some of the people on the team are 40 miles away or 4000, as long as the work gets done."

And the group, calling itself the Advanced Technical Alliance, Inc. (ATA), is getting some interesting work done. They've just completed development of a headphone listener with a "True Stereo Imaging" sound, for a company called HeadRoom, Inc.

Despite the fact that all of this goes on pretty much behind-the-scenes, PC-Montana BBS users will benefit, too. "The product will be described and offered online in the 'Local Business' conference, now that the research and development is pretty much done," Dan said. "Callers will be able to find out about it and order it online beginning in January."

1993 looks to be a year of major expansion for the system. Dan said he plans to have at least 18 CD-ROMs online by the end of the year. He's also

joined FidoNet and plans to offer a large number of interesting echo conferences. When I called the system, there was a list of literally hundreds of available conferences and Dan was asking his users to let him know which they would like to see added to the system.

He also plans to add more hard disk space, a HAM radio conference and, possibly, a Packet Radio gateway, in addition to at least seven more local business conferences, 10-100 game doors, an online weather station offering updated ANSI displays — and a lot more phone lines.

I'm predicting Dan will need more lines than he thinks, once folks get a look at the excellent system he's put together. It's a lot for the money — just \$25 per year for full access — and restricted access is always available to all callers free of charge.

PC Montana BBS is, indeed, a world-class system that deserves your attention!

From here we head on up to a land of even more wildernesses wonder, with more mountainous even than Montana and definitely larger...Alaska. This is where we find...

THE FREDBOX

Sysop: Fred Polsky

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

Phone Number: 907-344-8437

Modem Type: WorldBlazer

BBS Software: Waffle 1.65

Motto: "A Data Communications Symposium In Which Communications Hobbyists (otherwise known as geeks)

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Congregate and Send Silly Messages to Each Other, and Read Further Information About It, All of Which is Completely Useless and Irrelevant to the Scheme of Things in General”

Wandering around this system for a while gave me the feeling I was trapped in some alternate universe's answer to NORTHERN EXPOSURE. The FredBox is anything BUT your usual BBS. Sysop Fred Polsky, who never passes up an opportunity to assault his users with his off-the-wall sense of humor, set it up that way on purpose.

In fact, after signing up for access, the following message appears as part of your onscreen greeting: “Feel free to explore, and if you find yourself lost, never fear. The system was written to be intentionally confusing.”

Actually, it's not that confusing at all. That's just Fred's inimitable sense of humor at work. His incarnation of Waffle is quite simple, even plain, offering several lines of one-word commands on the “Main, but still useless, menu.” Typing “HELP” brings up several screens of brief descriptions for all of the available commands “except the undocumented surprise ones.”

It's basically a system offering access to a number of forums and files. Available local discussion areas include “Miscellaneous rants of worthy note,” “Excuse me while I geek out for a sec...” (the technical information forum), “Please, No Volatile Liquids” (a debate forum), and the virtually unexplainable “Psychedelic Man-Eating Rocks From Mars.” You'll just have to read through this last one for yourself.

A number of WWIV Forums are also available on The FredBox, including Heinlein, Shareware, Alaska, Govt (the Role of Government in a [free] Society), Anarchy (more political idealism), Ghod (a religious discussion area) and even Zen, moderated by Timothy Leary himself. If none of these are of interest, there are at least a dozen more from which to choose. And there are also a couple dozen Usenet newsgroups you can access.

The files seem mostly split between MS-DOS programs and an

unusually large collection of text files. The MS-DOS collection is good, offering a nice selection of programs, but the selection of available text files is what makes this BBS most unusual.

The focus here is on issues surrounding freedom of the press and anti-establishment/alternative/activist philosophy. There are files from Computer Underground Digest, Activist Times, Inc., Electronic Frontier Foundation, Factsheet Five and more.

*Wandering around
[FredBox] for a while gave
me the feeling I was
trapped in some alternate
universe's answer to
NORTHERN
EXPOSURE.*

It's an unusual slant, to be sure, but one all too often ignored. I'm surprised there aren't more active “underground press” bulletin boards around. I remember all the great underground newspapers that sprang up during the sixties and bulletin boards seem to be the perfect vehicle for this kind of alternative publishing.

Fred Polsky has obviously seen this potential and is involving his board in a most healthy way.

Files on the board can be transferred to and from your own personal directory. Fred asks that users first upload files to their own private directories, then send him “a bit of feedback explaining what it is and circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each one explaining how it's going to be used against you in court.”

MORE HUMOR.

What led Fred, with five years of modem activity under his belt, to set up

The FredBox? Fred explained, “Sysop Fever (tm) struck me early, while I was staying at a friend's house in the sticks (where I also lived). He had a BBS running on a C-64, limited hours, in an area of MAYBE a dozen modemers. I then moved to The City (in Alaska, there's only one, you see...although residents of Fairbanks may take exception to that statement) and tried a few attempts on my Atari system. Finally I procured a Real Computer (tm) with decent hard drive space and grabbed a copy of Waffle.

I played around with that and saw how delightfully odd it was. Last year about this time I thought I'd just leave it up for a while and see how it went. It hasn't been down since except for the occasional clean-the-dirt-out-of-the-floppy-drives episode and miscellaneous hardware upgrades.”

Growth from that point has been steady. “I started as an island unto myself with a cheap internal 2400 bps modem and have since become a Usenet site and WWIVnet node, and am now running a Telebit Worldblazer.”

An unusual system, naturally, attracts unusual users. Fred describes the users of The FredBox as “Atypical — the user who is tired of your standard WWIV or WildCat! BBS where things tend to look the same from board to board. One of the primary strengths of Waffle is its ease of running in ‘silly mode.’ Even reading the docs can be humorous.”

HE'S RIGHT ABOUT THAT!

So, The FredBox is a different BBS. One catering to users looking for unusual information that is often not found elsewhere. But it's even better than that. It's one that doesn't hesitate to poke fun at itself and take things with a grain of salt. That makes it not only unusual but also unusually fun.

It looks like The FredBox is destined to grow. Fred foresees his board, eventually, adding “some sort of full-Internet Public Access Unix box.” He definitely plans to add more Usenet newsgroups and expand network usage of his system.

"I'd like to see the time when interactive users pick up the art of UUCP and run leaf sites of their own," he said. "It may seem counterproductive to the goals of a normal BBS, but I believe this is the eventual direction of the off-line reader. Eventually, everyone will have their own net site. I believe that networking is the key to spreading and sharing information."

Actually, I think that IS the goal of the normal BBS, and Fred's done an excellent job of creating a center for the dissemination of unusual information and you won't regret taking the time to visit.

Finally, we took our leave of Alaska and head for warmer climes. Our next stop was Texas, another huge state offering perhaps the widest variety of landscapes, from mountains to plains, desert to beachfront, under one state flag. Here we find...

MATCHMAKER ELECTRONIC PEN-PAL SYSTEM

Sysop: Peggy Robb

Location: Austin, Texas

Phone Number: 512-458-1172

Modem Type: Intel 2400 bps

BBS Software: Custom

Motto: "Designed to Introduce People"

Remember computer dating services? In the "old days," folks had to travel to an office, fill out a lengthy form, pay a fee and wait while the service entered their information into its computers and pulled up prospective matches. Matchmaker software allows you to do all of that on a bulletin board — even meet the folks who match your personal information and carry on your own conversations, getting to know them better before you actually meet.

People meeting people. That's what Matchmaker is all about and the Austin Matchmaker does the job well.

Before I could actually log onto the system, I was asked to fill out a detailed online questionnaire about myself. Detailed is an understatement.

I was asked a total of 54 questions,

ranging from the usual age, height, weight and astrological sign stuff all the way to the kind of car I drive, favorite activities, pets, fashions and more. In all fairness, I was warned before starting that the series of questions could take almost an hour to complete so I wasn't

It generated about 200 matches for my profile in a matter of seconds and presented me with a list of matching users I could easily E-mail.

at all put out at going through them.

Besides, all those answers I gave are now stored, along with similar answers from every user on the system, in what is affectionately referred to as the "Date-A-Base." Upon demand, I can run my answers against everyone else's and pull up a list of users who most closely match my own interests and personality.

The software, created by Matchmaker network administrator Jon, is connected to the Internet system and, via that network, to 18 other Matchmaker systems around the country, including Chicago, Phoenix, San Diego, Tampa. Other cities are being added all the time. Any system operator capable of running Unix (and that includes most computers available today) can sign up to become a part of the Matchmaker network, in return for a percentage of fees collected running the system.

The Austin Matchmaker system offers some files, too, including some really funny text files (in the jokes area), recipes, BBS lists and even poems, but the main activity is matchmaking and messages.

The system is simple and straightforward, with easy-to-follow menus. It generated about 200 matches for my

profile in a matter of seconds and presented me with a list of matching users I could easily E-mail.

All this for just \$15 for 20 hours of connect time or \$50 for 110 hours. Far less expensive than the computer dating services of old and a lot more fun. Even better, there are thousands of users on the network so your odds of finding a match — regardless of how odd you might be yourself — are pretty high.

And, of course, you can also send E-mail to literally thousands of other systems through the Interlink connection.

The system will continue to grow. Jon told me he hopes to see the Matchmaker network expanded to 50 systems and 50,000 users, with full-time connectivity between the systems, within the next three years. I tend to think he'll get the job done.

It's a system with one primary purpose and it handles that purpose well. If you're looking for a professionally run BBS where you could meet your perfect match, I suggest you give Matchmaker a call today! ■

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SPITFIRE BBS COMMANDS

PRESENTED BY PHIL BAILEY

What you could do on a BBS run with Spitfire Software!

One of the fastest growing BBS software packages is the SPITFIRE BBS. It is a low cost, fully functioning, shareware BBS package. The Sysop (System Operator), can have the SPITFIRE BBS up and running within thirty minutes. This ease of use combined with CD-ROM support, network capability and too many features to mention make this BBS software a very popular choice among Sysops.

The users of a SPITFIRE board will find the same ease of use as the Sysop. While the command structure is self-explanatory, there is the need to explain some of the less used commands. As an example I am going to use the menu structure from the a BBS in Baltimore, Maryland. The board is up and running twenty four hours a day, seven days a week and has something to offer for everyone. Just take a quick tour through the different areas and you will see how diverse SPITFIRE Boards can be.

What follows are explanations of some of the commands that are basic to a SPITFIRE BBS. Please remember, not all SPITFIRE boards are the same and not all commands are available at all user levels.

Upon connection to this Spitfire BBS you will be asked if you want "ANSI" characters. Respond y for yes if you are using an IBM compatible with color capabilities. Respond N for no if you are using a non-IBM compatible computer such as an Atari, Apple...etc. After the opening screen and news file you will be asked:

User, do you wish to review the message statistics? [Y/n]?

If you answer n for no you will move on. If you answer Y for yes or just hit "enter" (you can always hit enter to execute the command that is capitalized) all the messages in all con-

ferences since your last log-on will be reviewed. You will be notified of your new mail and be given the option of answering your mail.

When you decide move on you will be presented with system statistics, a brief quote from the "Earth Works Group" and a chance to review the bulletins. If the Sysop has changed a bulletin you will be prompted to review it now. This section might look like this:

```
Good afternoon, USER, welcome back.
You are caller number 7,637.
You last called on 11-02-92 at 12:26.
There have been 11 other callers today.
You have called 1 other time today.
You have called 209 times.
You are allowed 40 minutes per day.
You have 40 minutes left today.
You are allowed 40 minutes this call.
492 callers access this BBS.
Your security level is 10.
```

Every year, Americans throw away enough office and writing paper to build a wall 12 feet high, stretching from Los Angeles to New York City! -The Earth Works Group Bulletin <#>, <L>ist Bulletins, < ENTER > to Main Menu?

If you want to move on to the main menu at this time just hit the enter key. You can always read the bulletins from the main menu by executing the command. The main menu will look like figure #1.

Some of the commands are very obvious even to the novice user. Some need further explanation.

Fig.#1

SPITFIRE MAIN MENU

```

<M>.....Message Section
<S>....SPITFIRE Doors Section
<C>.....Comment To Sysop
<L>..... Locate A User
<T>.....This System's Info
<P>..... Page The Sysop
<X>..... Xpert Mode Toggle
<O>....Other Bulletin Boards
<?>..... HELP With Commands

<F>..... Files Section
<B>..... Bulletins
<#>..... List Active Users
<W>..... Who's On/Node Chat
<N>.....SPITFIRE Newsletter
<G>..... Goodbye & Log Off
<Y>..... Your Statistics
<A>..... Add BBS Name & #
    
```

<C>.....Comment To Sysop

This command will leave a non-public (private) message to the Sysop. This is the command to use to ask a question about the system that is not covered by a bulletin. (Please remember to read the bulletins). If you are having a technical problem with something other than the board, try to leave a message in the appropriate message conference. Someone is sure to reply.

<X>.....Xpert Mode Toggle

You will see no menus. After you use this command you will only see a command line. Useful to those familiar with the system. Hit <X> to see the full menu again.

<#>.....List Active Users

This will give you a list of all the active users on the BBS. To be an active user you must sign on once every thirty days or your account will be purged.

<Y>.....Your Statistics

The information that you can change about yourself. At this time if you want to go to the message section then hit the <M> key and you will see the menu in figure #2.

<H>.....Hurry Scan Messages

This command will scan all the messages in the current conference you reside. You will see this format:

```

MESSAGE # MESSAGE SUBJECT DATE TIME
#365..... ..Me.....10-28-92...21:55:52
    
```

<T>.....Text Search

You can search for a specific string of text using this command. You will see the following example:

```

6 key word maximum.
Example: SF;SPITFIRE;v3.2
Enter Key Word(s):
    
```

.....Browse Messages

Will produce this message scan format. Good if looking for a particular message topic. User, these messages in message conference #54 are available to you.

```

Message No. 365 was left on 11-28-92
22:55:42
To..... : Dad Leeword
From..... : My World
Subject... : SF
    
```

Continues...

Fig.#2

SPITFIRE MESSAGE MENU

```

<C>. Change Message Conference
<H>..... Hurry Scan Messages
<N>...Non-stop Message Capture
<Y>..... Your Messages
<T>..... Text Search
<P>..... Page The Sysop
<S>....SPITFIRE Doors Section
<X>.....Xpert Mode Toggle
<?>..... HELP With Commands

<R>..... Read Messages
<B>..... Browse Messages
<E>..... Enter A Message
<A>.... Alter Conference Queue
<F>..... File Section
<Q>..... Quit To MAIN MENU
<G>..... Goodbye & Log Off
<K>.....SFmail Offline Mail
    
```


Fig. #3

```
>>>> MESSAGE QUEUE MENU <<<<
<A>..... Add A Conference      <C>..... Current Queue List
<D>..... Delete A Conference   <I>.... Include All Conferences
<L>..... List Msg Conferences  <R>.... Remove All Conferences
<S>..... Select Conferences    <Q>..... Quit To Message Menu
```

<A>.....Alter Conference Queue

This board carries over eighty message conferences. Use this command to pick the conferences that you wish to monitor. When you first execute the <A> command you will be shown the list of the conferences that are presently in your queue. If you wish to change the list you will then see the menu in figure #3.

<K>.....SFmail Offline Mail

If you carry several conferences in your queue it will save you and the other users time if you use the offline mail system. With this program, written by Bob Zimmerman, you can use SFmail or the popular QWK format. See figure #4 for the SF Mail menu.

Executing the <S> option on any menu will move you to

the SPITFIRE door section. Figure #5 shows the current list of games on the door menu. Most of these games were written by software authors for the SPITFIRE BBS.

A popular area on any BBS is the file area. The file area on this BBS is enormous and up to date. Besides the new offerings, there is a CD-ROM drive packed full with shareware. Take a look at the easy to use file menu in figure #6.

<C>.....Change File Area

Will move you to any local file area. This command will not access the CD-ROM drive.

<N>.....New Files

Will show you all the new files uploaded since the last time that you were online.

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<F>.....Find A File

You may use wildcard characters such as 'PKWWARE.*'. Be patient when using this command because the system will search over the entire drive space.

<K>.....CD-ROM File Areas

Use this command to access the CD-ROM files. When paging through a file directory on the CD-ROM you do not have to remember filenames of the programs that you wish to download. As the files fill the screen you will be prompted for a letter to the corresponding file you wish to download. When you are ready to download there are fourteen transfer protocols from which to choose. Some have "batch download" capabilities. Which means that a user can download more than one file at a time. From this menu you can also elect to automatically log off the system when your file download is complete.

To log off the SPITFIRE BBS you can execute <G> for the goodbye command from any menu. You will be notified by the system of your time spent on the board and the time you have remaining for more calls today.

The registered version of the SPITFIRE BBS package includes a well-written manual. There is limited technical support by the author. ■

Fig.#4

SFMail Version 2.3 from Bob Zimmerman
(221k-bytes free) Registered to
this BBS

----- SFMail Main Menu -----

<1> Download Messages (SFMail Format)
<2> Upload Replies (SFMail or SFP)
<3> Download Messages (ASCII Format)
<4> Download Messages (QWKFormat)
<5> Upload Replies (QWK or SFP)

<C> Configure Caller Options
<P> Preview Mode - Currently set off
<R> Download Reader (SFMail Format)
<H> Help information

<Q>uit
<G>oodbye

Fig.#5

SPITFIRE DOOR MENU

<A>..... Great White Fresh Water Fishing
<E>..... Draw Poker	<F>..... Bowling
<H>..... Scrabble	<I>..... 3 Pair Poker
<J>..... SuperSlots	<K>..... The Pit
<L>..... Sex Quiz	<G>..... Goodbye & Log Off
<?>..... Door Bulletins	<Q>..... Quit

Fig.#6

SPITFIRE FILE MENU

<C>..... Change File Area	<L>.. List Files In This Area
<D>..... Download A File	<U>..... Upload A File
<H>...Help on Upload/Download	<P>..... Page the Sysop
<M>.....Message Section	<Q>..... Quit to Main Menu
<S>..... SPITFIRE Doors	<N>..... New Files
<T>...Text Search Description	<F>..... Find A File
<X>..... Xpert Mode Toggle	<?>..... HELP with Commands
<K>..... CD-Rom File Areas	<R>.....Read A Text File
<V>..... View A File Archive	<G>.....Goodbye & Log Off

BBS CALLERS DIGEST

BBS LIST

To register and receive a copy of CD Sub Program, please fill in this form and mail with a check for \$30 payable to Richard Paquette, Box 416, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054.

Name _____ Home voice phone # _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

BBS name _____

Sysop name _____ BBS access # _____

Check disk type: 360 720 1.2 1.4

Password for access on The Livewire BBS _____

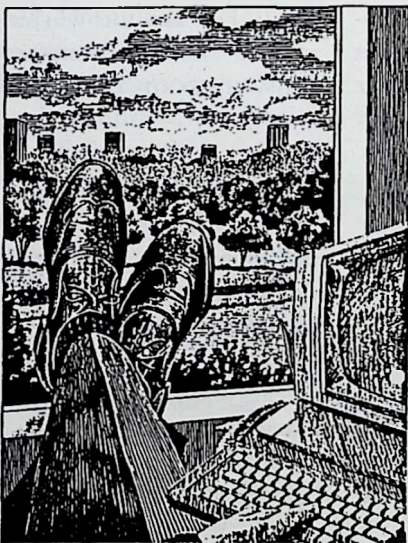
As more BBS's register the CD-SUB program, they will be listed in the next issues. Each registered bbs gets free access to The Livewire BBS 609-235-5297 for newer versions. If you registered and are not listed, please give us a voice call (1-609-953-9110, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., M - F, EST) to make the correction.

The Livewire BBS	Richard Paquette	609-235-5297
The Arlington Software Exchange	Jay Falvey	703-532-7143
BBS Data Systems	Greg Kaiser	708-991-2452
BB's BBS	Bob Browne	609-768-6585
Beckett BBS	Jerry Liddle	609-467-3898
Central Ontario Data Systems	Robin Wells	705-722-0814
Channel 1 BBS	Brian Miller	617-354-8873
Chuck's Attempt BBS	Chuck Ammann	201-729-2602
Chemeketa Online	Bob Hunter	503-393-5580
City Lites	John Lundell	701-772-5399
Collector's Edition	Len Hult	214-351-9859
Computer Confident	Edward Zdrok,	508-528-2295
Dark Side of the Moon	Peter Cacchioli	914-621-2865
Data World BBS	Sean Dudley	615-966-3574
entertain me bbs!!	Shawn Cupec	412-845-1959
Executive Info Network	Andy Keeves	914-667-4567
Griswold's Private Reserve	Jim Kelland	316-788-7520
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The Improv BBS	Joyce Kohl	602-483-0344
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The Lebanon Link	Bruce Richardson	615-399-0707
Megabiter II	George Belcher	314-281-8598
Metroplex BBS	Rick Vanhooser	901-327-1895
MicroNet PCBoard	Ted Freeman	615-626-1620

Mirage Network N.Y.	Brian Buffell	914-426-0729
Modem Zone	Don Cheeks	513-424-7529
The Moonflower BBS	Peter Link	509-891-6148
Mountain Air BBS	Edward Wood	703-427-0226
Music Connection	David Coleman	404-936-0550
Next Generation BBS	John Carcione	609-482-7345
The Night Owl II	Danny Dyess	512-836-4262
PC-Ohio	Norm Henke	216-381-3320
PereLine BBS	Tom Serface	408-364-2789
Platinum Express	Glenn Jarvis	416-770-6917
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Rusty & Edie's BBS.....	Russ Hardenburg	216-726-2620
Salt Air BBS	PCBoard Support	801-261-8976
The Seaside	Les Jones.....	805-964-4766
Southern Online Services	Russell Jackson	501-521-2741
Suburban Software	Chuck Valecek	708-636-6694
Tao BBS	Bob Watson	609-587-2672
Uncle Hank's BBS	Hank Hurteau	413-527-8977
The Vault BBS	Keith Ketcham	614-387-2762
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BOOK RELEASES

TURBO PASCAL 7: The Complete Reference

864 pages
\$29.95

Osborne/McGraw-Hill announced publication of *Turbo Pascal 7: The Complete Reference*, covering every Turbo Pascal 7 command, procedure, and programming technique. This complete and bestselling single resource, also covers Turbo Pascal for Windows 1.5, and Borland Pascal.

Earlier editions of this book have been highly praised for the thousands of lines of source code and complete programs of varying size and complexity. Readers will also find the book's organization makes it easy to locate information, including all the code and syntax in the comprehensive procedure and command reference sections.

Programmers at every skill level will welcome the detailed explanations and practical examples of object-oriented programming techniques.

The authors cover other critical programming topics that include, OOP examples found in graphic programs, sorting and searching routines, and other applications; using Units, and the Turbo Pascal system for modular sub-routines; building applications using the Turbo Vision and Object Window libraries; and much more.

If there is one book Turbo Pascal programmers should keep handy, it's *Turbo Pascal 7: The Complete Reference*.

MICROSOFT ACCESS INSIDE & OUT

by Mary Campbell
707 pages
\$27.95

Osborne/McGraw-Hill announced pub-

lication of *Microsoft Access Inside & Out*, a new book by bestselling author Mary Campbell, who provides readers with an insider's introduction to Microsoft's new feature-packed relational database that industry experts predict will capture the Windows database market.

This new book provides database users with numerous creative, professional, and practical examples to help apply Access features and functions to specific database needs. Readers will discover how to design and customize a database in the easy-to-use Windows environment; how to build on basic techniques to acquire advanced skills in database design and management; how to enjoy a smooth transition to Access from a current database environment including dBASE and other popular programs; how to take advantage of Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) to import charts and illustrations from other programs and create polished, multimedia presentations; how to automate work with macros; how to edit, secure, and back up data in a multi-user networked environment; and more.

Get the fastest start and most complete benefits from Microsoft's hot new relational database program for Windows, with *Microsoft Access Inside & Out*.

EXCEL 4 FOR WINDOWS: The Complete Reference

by Martin Matthews & Stephanie
Seymour
880 pages
\$29.95

Osborne/McGraw-Hill announced publication of *Excel 4 for Windows: The Complete Reference*, an indispensable

resource for anyone working with the latest version of Microsoft's bestselling spreadsheet.

Excel users will discover an ideal reference on Excel for Windows no matter what their skill level. Answers to any Excel question can be found in this well-organized volume that begins with five chapters to get anyone up-to-speed with Excel from building spreadsheets, to creating charts with databases, and working with macros.

The book includes a comprehensive and unique Excel Dictionary offering coverage of every Excel concept, command, feature and function in alphabetized form, so users can quickly pinpoint the information they need. Matthews and Seymour use lots of short business examples so readers can see first hand how to apply the information.

This *Complete Reference* also offers comprehensive cross-referencing directing users to important related information. Readers will also find a special section that charts the Excel version of the Windows Character Set along with a pull out command card, with concise descriptions of many commands.

For anyone working with Excel, this is THE ideal reference to find the answers to any Excel question.

THE SPACE QUEST COMPANION

by Peter Spear & Jeremy Spear
450 pages
\$19.95

Osborne/McGraw-Hill announced publication of *The Space Quest Companion*, a new book in Osborne's Silicon Valley imprint devoted to entertainment software. Osborne's book is the officially endorsed, Sierra On-Line Authorized Edition on Space Quest.

Bestselling co-author Peter Spear, and his son Jeremy Spear provide Space Questers everywhere with the only book they need to games I-IV, along with a special sneak preview of Space Quest V: Roger Wilco in the Next Mutation.

With the *Space Quest Companion*, Questbusters can explore every area of every game and learn how to score the maximum possible points. For anyone baffled by the wild escapades of Roger Wilco, the book provides welcome answers, complete maps for each game, humorous insights into Roger's adventures, screen by screen and step by step walk throughs showing players how to win, and much more.

This must have guide will have players cheering as they triumph over such Space Quest villains as Sludge Vohaul, the Sequel Police, the Sariens, ScumSoft, Astro Chicken, the Monolith Burger Fun Meal and other fun creatures.

With the *Space Quest Companion* in hand, players will have everything they need to cruise through Space Quest's cosmic encounters.

QUICKEN 6 MADE EASY

by David Campbell & Mary Campbell
478 pages
\$19.95

Osborne/McGraw-Hill announced publication of *Quicken 6 Made Easy*, a new book that makes learning the latest version of Quicken fast and easy.

Written by accounting professor and CPA David Campbell, along with bestselling 1-2-3 author, Mary Campbell, this new edition of *Quicken Made Easy* will help Quicken users to breeze through finances, bookkeeping, and taxes. Step-by-step instructions,

examples, exercises, and numerous illustrations help users get results immediately.

Readers will open this book and discover many great ways they can use Quicken including — following the Quick Start section to learn essential features in no time; organizing taxes for faster turn around and refunds; keeping track of credit card purchases; using Quicken's new financial planners to make informed decisions about investments; determining borrowing power with Quicken's loan calculator; taking advantage of powerful new features like financial planners, QuickFill, graphs, check printing and more.

Anyone using Quicken will want this outstanding book to take full advantage of everything the newest version of this popular program has to offer.

PARADOX 4 MADE EASY

by Edward Jones
498 pages
\$19.95

Osborne / McGraw-Hill announced publication of *Paradox 4 Made Easy*, the fastest way to get started with Borland's newest version of their award winning relational database. With Jones' simple, clear instructions, Paradox users will be producing the reports they

need by the end of the first few chapters.

Perfect for beginners, the book provides step by step instructions leading users through the basics of creating a database and manipulating data. After mastering the basics, readers can move on to learning Paradox 4's special features that include — the query-by-example facility, custom forms, macros, VROOMM with Turbo Drive, and automated application builder contained within the program, as well as how to run Paradox under Microsoft Windows.

Paradox users will find just the help they need to learn Paradox's unique Import Feature that brings in existing files from other databases and spreadsheet programs, tips on SQL link words, programming in PAL, and mastering the latest enhancements to Paradox.

Ed Jones, author of numerous bestselling books on Paradox, dBASE and FoxPro, is THE expert any database user can turn to for guaranteed results. ■

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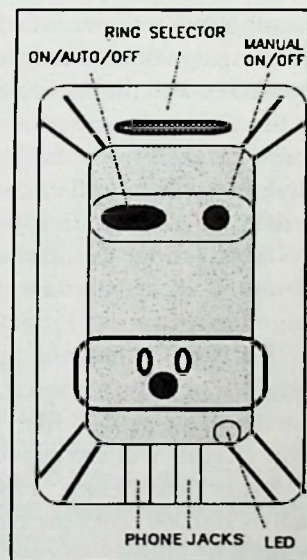
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RANDOM MUSINGS ON THE STATE OF THE FUTURE

BY PETER EDWARD CANN

FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS

In the world of telecommunications, we are presently in the calm before the storm. The first waves are heading in to land even now, and their name is ISDN. ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) refers of the conversion of the public telephone system to digital transmission, particularly in the final connection to the subscriber.

What will this mean for the traditional telephone call? Not necessarily anything. Maybe some fancy multi-button PBX features on your home phone. The major impact will be felt in the area of data communications. Faxes will go through over six times as fast. The cost of exchanging text and numbers will fall dramatically, and the speed will increase over fifty times in many cases. Most large telephone company facilities are already digital, as are most toll channels. Look for data communications and other ISDN applications to snowball as more and more subscribers take the digital plunge.

ISDN will whet our appetite for bandwidth, or information transmission capacity. Soon, optical fiber communication circuits will start showing up at the larger businesses. Fiber has as much as 100,000 times the bandwidth of the present copper circuits. Look for local dial-up videoconferencing at prices close to a present-day phone call. Faxes will be as fast as photocopying, or faster.

Fortunes will be made as entrepreneurs develop computer systems and software to make full use of the communications revolution. Every

home that now has a Nintendo will have a High Definition TeleVision set hooked up to an el-cheapo computer equal to today's best workstation. National television programs with audiences of 1000 or less will come into existence as cheap bandwidth provides a revolutionary degree of choice in entertainment.

Every home that now has a Nintendo will have a High Definition TeleVision set hooked up to an el-cheapo computer equal to today's best workstation.

Expert systems will help average people control this overwhelming flood of information.

What should the alert business person be doing right now? Keeping their eyes open, for starters. You may soon be able to obtain business via data communications — electronic mail, perhaps, like a telex. You may soon want to get a new fax machine, probably designated Group 4, and may find your use of it skyrocketing. You may want to install an automatic system to deliver promotional materials electronically, or possibly even automate major portions of the sales and delivery process; maybe even the whole thing, if your wares can be delivered electronically.

In the products and services market, demand conformance to open standards with staying power, and ability to utilize upscale resources that can be expected to become more common. Look for products that have been thought out from the ground up, and fully utilize the capabilities of current technology. Avoid ten-year-old designs with new fad features awkwardly crammed on.

For a big decision, there's no substitute for independent judgement. Try to learn the basic cold, hard facts of the issue. Consider retaining a consultant, for expert analysis independent of any vendor's financial interest. Always demand facts, specifications, and numbers. Never fall for a sales rep's nebulous hype, and then pay good money for a mediocre product.

COMPENSATION AND COMPETITION A Proposed Revision of US Patent Law

The United States patent laws have served a valuable purpose by allowing those who advance the state of the art to obtain rewards for their efforts. However, I suggest that these laws have a definite need for a particular refinement, to most effectively promote progress.

Patent laws currently grant the developer of an advancement a complete and unrestricted monopoly on the advancement for some period of time. While this rewards the developer, it also

often stifles exploitation of the advancement, by permitting the advancement to be used to sustain an operation that may otherwise be of markedly inferior efficiency. This is due to the granting of an unrestricted monopoly.

A more constructive approach would be to integrate common fair trade standards into patent law. Under this system, the developer would still have complete ownership of the advancement. However, the law would require the financial affairs related to the advancement to be accounted separately from any other interest, and would require the advancement to be made generally available under uniform terms.

For example, if General Widget invents a frammistat, it can use the frammistat in its products, but it must by law pay some fee into the frammistat account, and must allow Amalgamated Gewgaws, its competitor, to use the frammistat for the same fee. Existing anti-dumping regulations would then prevent General Widget from using frammistat revenues to fund dumping of General Widget products in unfair competition with Amalgamated Gewgaws products. Thus, General Widget can charge whatever it wants for the right to use the frammistat, but it cannot use its control of the frammistat to extortionately sustain other operations that are inferior to those of Amalgamated Gewgaws.

To be completely effective, this change would have to include a provision to ensure that only individual developments were patented, rather than several being grouped into a patent. This could be done most elegantly by only allowing a patent to be enforced against infringement when the entire patent, not just some component of it, is infringed. Thus, a developer would have to patent each fundamental development individually to obtain protection.

Such a revision of present patent laws would be extremely beneficial to society. It could also be of great importance to the success of the move towards open standards, as standards require an effort for their development, which should be rewarded, but at the same

time it is profoundly desirable to make standards available to all vendors, and to allow vendors to compete on the basis of overall efficiency.

OPEN STANDARDS

The most powerful and vital technology idea since interchangeable parts is very possibly open standards. What is an open standard? Consider the common household electrical outlet. It supplies a standard kind of electricity through a standard arrangement of contacts and insulators. Any manufacturer is allowed

*...it is profoundly desirable
to make standards
available to all vendors,
and to allow vendors to
compete on the basis of
overall efficiency.*

to make it. This is an open standard.

Imagine, if you can, what it would be like if every local power company supplied a different kind of power, and every outlet manufacturer made a different kind of outlet. Someone who wanted to make blow-dryers, for instance, would have to offer several different kinds of motors and heaters, for the different kinds of power, and each of these variations would have to be offered with several different kinds of plugs. Obviously, the efficiency and convenience implications are horrific.

Open standards are a two-edged sword from a business point of view. Since they increase the customer's ability to be selective, they often

increase competitive pressure on vendors. On the other hand, they increase the efficiency of the entire field so much that many perceptive vendors make a positive effort to establish them.

I see a major open standards battleground in the computing and communications areas. The present micro-computer revolution owes much of its success to the fact that many vendors were able to introduce IBM-compatible equipment and software. This has yielded an explosion of creativity and efficiency, providing vastly greater benefit to society than would have been the case if IBM had been able to keep a lock on the technology. Recognizing the benefit of open standards to a truly capable vendor, several workstation companies are now collaborating on standards for window systems.

In the telephone area, the recent advent of voicemail and automated attendant highlights an obvious need for open standards. At present, unless you get them from the company that made your PBX, they are very poorly integrated. The high-end, multi-button PBX telephone sets themselves are also presently proprietary. If an open standard interface was established, enormous economies could be realised.

To conclude, open standards are obviously a powerful force in the technology products industry, and are clearly of enormous benefit to the customer. While some vendors voluntarily promote open standards, the consumer community would be very well advised to unconditionally demand open standardization of every compatibility-related parameter of every product. ■

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A LOOK INTO THE NEW RYBBS SOFTWARE

BY GREG RYAN

The following information was supplied by the President of RyBBS.

The Ryco Company announces the release of RyBBS v7.6, a time-proven superior Bulletin Board System and Telecommunications Program. Up and running since 1986, Version 7.6 is now "better than ever!". If you need to perform something 'on-line' - you can do it with RyBBS!

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For more information, please contact James Piper at: 217-465-5233 Fax 217-463-1094 or write to: Computer Wares, Inc., PO Box 818, Paris, IL 61944

PCB-UUCP FROM MERLIN SYSTEMS

Ontario, Canada — Merlin Systems started its beta-testing program for its newest software product, PCB-UUCP. Finally, a full featured PCBoard UUCP gateway has been created!

PCB-UUCP will allow PCBoard BBS software to exchange mail with UUCP / RFC822 / RFC1036 based systems. Thus allowing PCBoard users access to mail from InterNet and USENET.

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- BitNet mailing lists – optional hosting of a mailing list – automatic LISTSERV function (for people subscribing to your mailing lists)
- Routing of Mail – route incoming mail to your neighbor UUCP hosts

PCB-UUCP includes install and setup programs that are mouseable and contain online context-sensitive help. They were designed to be 'good-proof'

For more information, please contact: Roy Pereira, Merlin Systems, PO

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Shareware is now shipping an updated version of its TP Utility Library(tm). The new version adds over 30 Public Domain and shareware products to the library, which now holds 598 products, for professional Turbo Pascal programmers.

The products are compressed onto 58 360k or 15 1.44MB diskettes or on CD-ROM. All products in the library are described in an indexed database which accompanies the library.

When a programmer needs to locate a particular type of TP product, they can find it quickly by vendor, name, type, or free text search across descriptions.

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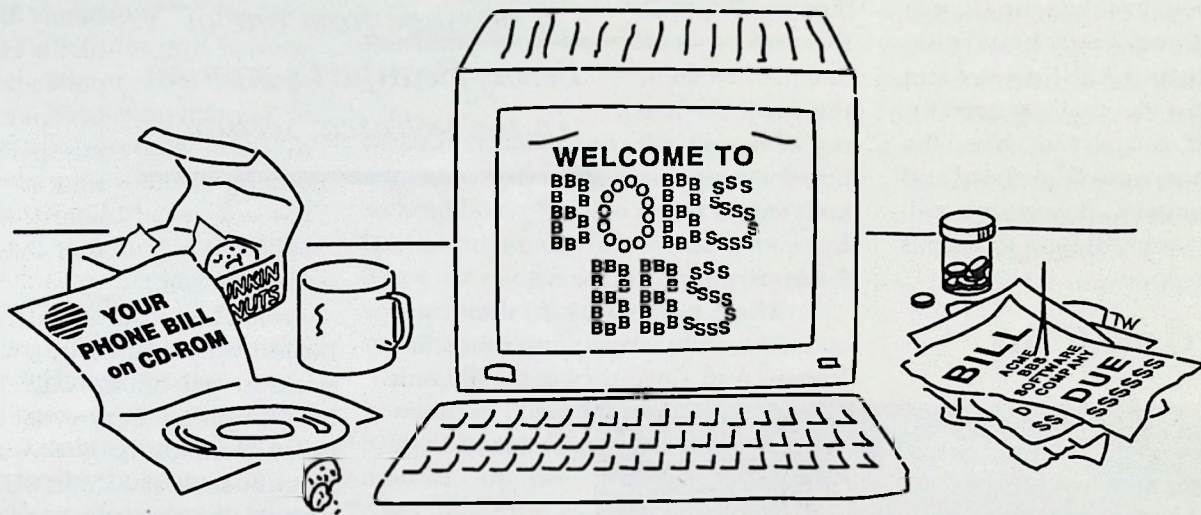
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SO YOU WANT TO BE A SYSOP?

BY WALLY BYCZEK OF WALLYWORLD BBS



SYSOP! (SYStem OPERator)

To start a BBS, you first need a computer. No matter what computer you currently have, it won't be large enough or powerful enough for what you intend to do. And since you can't take the board down (unless you run a kiddy board that bounces up and down or runs only between the time school lets out and Daddy comes home) to do your own work, you will need another computer that you can ill afford. Next you have to find a BBS software package.

This can take months, or you can write your own if you are so inclined. This can take years. Next, unless you are starting a kiddy board, you will need a phone line other than the one that you normally converse on. Depending on the Telco's mood, personnel, and the imminence of a strike, this could be

done in as little as 2 weeks or it may never happen.

Next, if you plan to run doors on your board, you must now spend long distance dollars in scouring other

Whatever modem you currently have will not be supported by the BBS software. This is some sort of unwritten law...

boards for evaluation and acquisition of these games. Naturally, your external file

protocols don't come with your BBS software, so you have to again scour the countryside to find them. Utilities for your BBS are also an after thought and have to be obtained in a similar fashion. All of these external programs have to be registered after a while, since most stop working after a while or have an annoying feature about them until they are registered.

All of the above items take money! and plenty of it!

BUY A MODEM

While we are on the subject of money, you must obtain a modem. Whatever modem you currently have will not be supported by the BBS software. This is some sort of unwritten law pertaining to writing communication

Continues...

software. Be prepared to open your wallet wide. No, your old Hayes 300 won't be good enough. People even hate 1200 baud these days, and the teenagers seem to have USR HST's these days and will complain vociferously if they can't access you at 14.4.

Now you pick a name for your BBS. Whatever you choose will be ridiculed by 20% of those who see it. Another 50% will offer suggestions that are worse than the one you chose. The remaining 30% won't care.

Next comes the wonderful task of installing your board. You have your machine. If you just bought it, that means formatting your hard disk, installing DOS, and ASNI drivers and Lord knows what else that you need for your board. If you already have the machine, you may as well go ahead and reformat it anyway. Something will guarantee that you will have to do this before you are done.

BE SURE TO READ THE MANUAL

The manual for the BBS software was most likely written by the author's 10 year old and was mimeographed. It got wet in the mail and smeared as well, so at least 30% of the manual will be physically useless. The rest is just procedurally useless.

Next comes the fun task of deciding on your board structure. Who can do what and when can they do it. You must design your menus and opening screens. You have to get a pretty good stock of files, because no one will upload to you unless you have something there for them to take first. (not that it matters, I suppose, since even if you DO have files, they won't upload much anyway.)

SECURITY COMES NEXT

Next comes the security aspect. You can leave your board wide open so that users with the name of Benny Beanfart, Dr. Rape, Crack, Hack, File

Attack, DR DEATH, etc can come in and do anything they like. Or, you can lock it up so tight that no one will call. There is no compromise on this.

Next you must build events or prepare to live at your keyboard. A BBS HAS to be backed up. If you can't afford a high density backup medium such as tape or cartridge, you will spend many many hours per week flipping floppies. Events are designed to allow the sysop the luxury of having the board do routine tasks at odd hours by itself—Backups, purges and so on.

These never work as they come and will have to be extensively modified by you. And since they generally only run at 3 AM, you will have to be awake to see just how they die and then try to fix it.

FLIP THE SWITCH

Alright... the big day is here. Your board is ready, your modem is ready, Telco finally hooked you up, and then you start

up. This is

when after 2 days of no one calling,

despite your ad in *Computer Shopper* and

having placed your number on every other BBS in existence, you discover that the init strings for the modem are wrong.

You discover this by calling yourself from a friends' home. This takes calls to the author of the software, the manufacturer of the modem and finally gets resolved by asking another sysop how to do it.

Oh Boy! Now we're in business! During your first caller's visit, someone

will hit a telephone pole and you will lose power. Naturally, since the board is new, you didn't back it up. The power surge when the electricity was restored roached your hard disk. Go back to low level formatting...

DELIGHTFUL CALLERS

Finally, you're up and working. After about a week of gleefully seeing someone call, you will encounter Benny Beanfart or his ilk. He will leave public posts (always in caps and terribly mis-spelled) about what a really lousy board this is and that the sysop is a

three eyed twit.

You automatically kill his account. But do you leave the message for the world to see? hmmm... dilemma number 1. Killing Benny does no good because he will be back with another account such as SYSOP SUX or some such thing. Eventually he will tire of the game and go away, but he has given ideas to of his friends who will also visit you sometime in the next week.

SOME PEOPLE WILL WANT TO HELP!

Then you will be visited by the "smart kid" who can tell you everything that's wrong with your machine, your software, etc. It doesn't matter that he's calling you on a Timex Sinclair. He knows more about your 386 than Intel.

By now, your name has spread around. Probably, if you are in Worcester, the college kids have your name and number. If it is September or January you are in trouble. You will probably be bombarded with file requests for commercial software. Some will assist you by uploading Lotus 123 ver 3 that has the copy-proofing removed. Whoever uploads this to you will then call Lotus Development Corp and tell them that you have a pirated version on

You will find a raunchy joke posted in the Bible topics area, technical questions asked in the political opinion area, and a message from one of Benny Beanfart's cronies in the technical section.



your board (anonymously of course)

If you imposed an upload/download ratio such that users must upload one file to get x numbers of files in return, then you will receive 2K text files from them. They will download 2Mb of Gif files in return.

MESS OF MESSAGES

By now, you are disappointed with your message bases. You perhaps have (if you are fortunate) two or three users who post messages outside of private mail.

These three users are symbionts who, if one of their number does not call for 2 weeks, will not post because they miss their friend. Your message bases will starve. You set up many areas for messages, all carefully listed by topic. No public post will ever go into the area that it should be in. You will find a raunchy joke posted in the Bible topics area, technical questions asked in the political opinion area, and a message from one of Benny Beanfart's cronies in the technical section.

You will next encounter the user who can't do anything right. He will make you feel terribly guilty that you are running this system that seems to rudely exclude him from enjoying it, because he cannot master the concept that M means Message, F means Files, D means download etc. He DOES however know how to leave comments to the sysop.

CHALLENGES CAN BE FUN

At first you will be responsive to all the user complaints and will make a valiant effort to obtain the special game that was requested as a door.

You discover it on a board in the Fiji Islands and the off peak call cost you 32 dollars to download it. You find then that the game was written for a board other than the BBS that you run. You search the countryside for a conversion interface. You find one in Omaha. add another 40 dollars in phone bills from the search. You discover now that the game must be registered with the author. This is another 69 dollars.

You discovered this because after the game was installed, you called from

a friend's house to test it. You find out that while the console looks wonderful

How come there aren't any nice ANSI screens?

How come these crummy ANSI screens slow down the board?

Why can't my C64 see your graphics..

while it is being run, the user sees a screen that informs him that the sysop is a cheap bum who didn't even bother to register this wonderful piece of software. Since the sysop is such a creep, why do you call there? Naturally, you register it so the annoyance screen goes away.

After it has been on the board for 2 months you discover that only 1 person ever used it and he only went in there once, dropped carrier and hung up the board because you later discovered that this "wonderful" piece of software doesn't monitor carrier. Do you now register Watchdog so this won't happen again or do you just scrap the game?

The work load is getting heavy on the board. Wow! It takes at least 2 hours per day to stay up with

things. Answering mail, hunting down Benny Beanfart's latest account, changing screens, moving messages back to the areas that they truly belong in, adding new things, paying Telco, arguing with your spouse etc. You decide to get a co-sysop to help out. He will pay little attention to the needs of the board, but WILL experiment with things like remote drop to DOS. hehehehe! I think this needs little elaboration.

YOU'LL GET FEEDBACK

By now, you are conversant with the many user complaints. WHY aren't you around to answer the sysop page at 2:45 AM? Why does your message editor use A for abort instead of Q for quit? How come there aren't any nice ANSI screens? How come these crummy ANSI screens slow down the board? Why can't I stay online for 3 hours at a time?

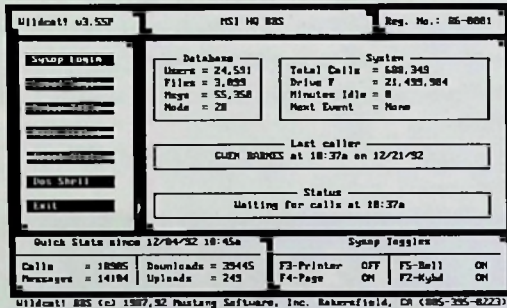
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never post messages because no one else ever does! What do you mean you killed my upload of Dbase IV? I did upload something a year ago.. so how come I can't download more than 100 files now? How come my friend has access

level 50 and I only have level 40? Boy.. do you have a bad attitude! I think the Silicon Sarcophagus is 100 times better than this board! This is a free country.. I can say ANYTHING I want in public messages.

What are you.. Hitler or something? How come nobody ever send me mail? I used a bit editor on Procomm and now it won't work.. tell me how to fix it. That GIF file I downloaded didn't run... this stinks... you really must be a lousy sysop if you don't check to see that it would work for me.

INTERACTIVE CHAT IS FUN!

Then you will discover the wonders of sysop to user interactive chat. You will find this to be a most opportune time to get things done. Since the majority of users who will page you into

chat type at about .000001 baud, you can have a conversation with the user and get things done like mowing the lawn, making a three course meal, and cleaning out the garage before the user has stated his request.

Generally, the chat request was for something such as How do I get out of a file listing or something similar

that is well covered in the user manual that you have both as a file for downloading and as a bulletin for online reading.

Since the majority of users who will page you into chat type at about .000001 baud, you can have a conversation with the user and get things done like mowing the lawn...

Continues...

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Rusty

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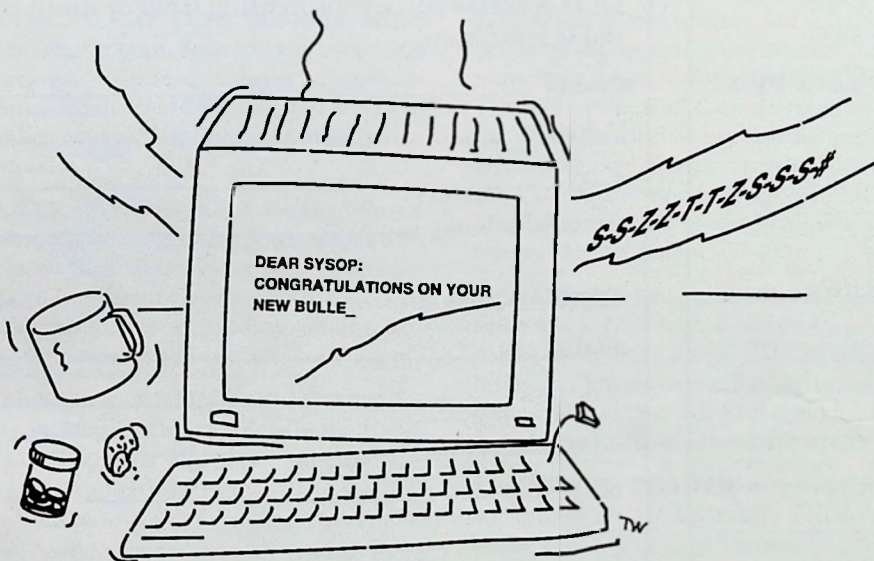
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Compucon 216-726-3620



One admonition is to not get angry about carrier drop by the user. Remember that the user is calling you through the telco. Chances are that no matter how malicious or inept the user may be, the telco probably did it anyway.

TIME TO UPGRADE

Next comes BBS software upgrade time! Such fun! You will find that the author no longer supports your version. You have to upgrade. This means once again opening your wallet. The new version will not have the same reserved file names, nor will the file structures be the same. The author generously supplies you with a conversion program.

This program is designed to assist

you in making all the little changes needed to perform the upgrade. It will automatically convert your file names and structures. There are two type of these programs. One that requires that you have 5Mb more free space than you do, and the other that will abort half way through the conversion because of a bad disk sector read and didn't have a corresponding error trap. Of the

two, the latter is the more catastrophic, because now your data can't be read by either version of the software.

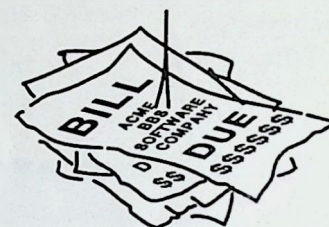
Since you successfully upgraded your software, you now discover what the word Beta Site really means..

Now since you've done so well to this point, it's time for the hardware to

find something to compensate for all this good effort. Generally, the hard drive controller is the most likely device to make this decision to fail. It will not however abruptly die. It will instead, gradually mis-write to disk over a period of several days before deciding not to work at all anymore. This has the advantage that your last backups will be no good at all once you replace the controller and reformat the drive.

HeHeHE Still want to be a sysop? This article available from most local BBS's called BE-SYSOP.ZIP. ■

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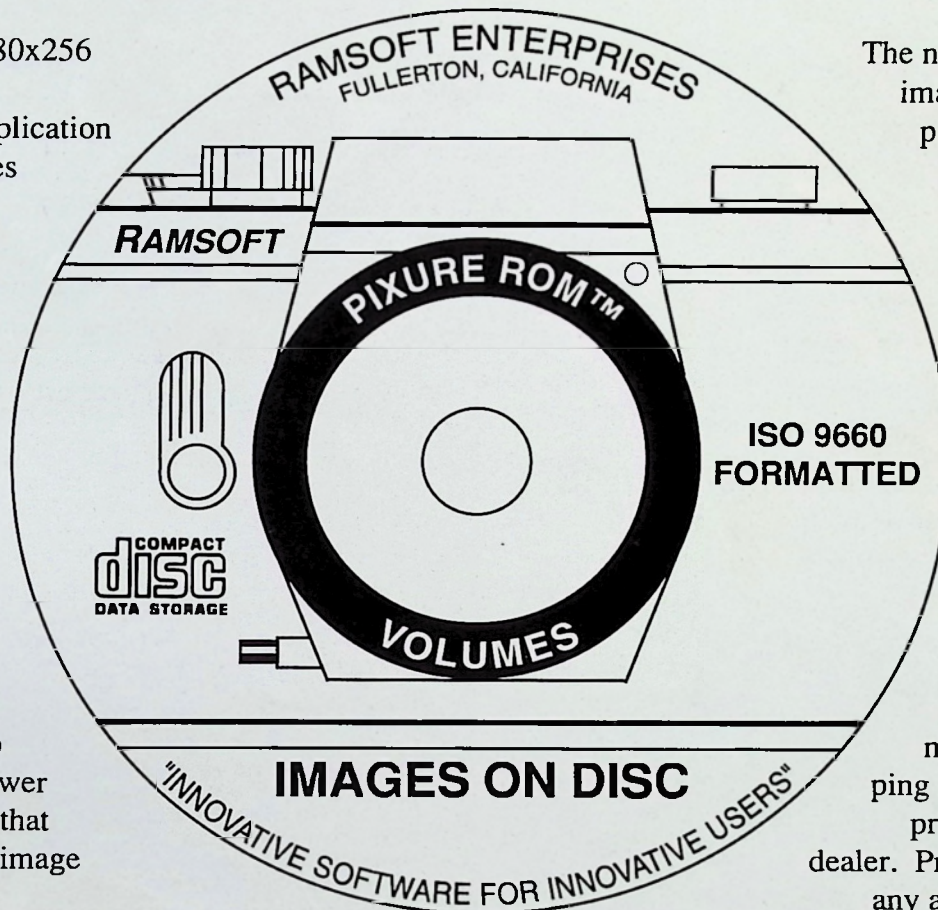
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