

EUGENE

PCjr CLUB

NEWSLETTER

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February 1991

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

MEETING

AGENDA

The February meeting of the Eugene PCjr Club will be held in the Ida Patterson School Library, 16th and Polk, in Eugene on the 14th. Set up and disk sales will begin at 6:30 and the meet-ing will start at 7pm.

OFFICERS

- President Phil Janz
- Vice President Cindy Hoffman
- Treasurer Christine Brown
- Disk Librarian Paul Bonney
- Ass't Disk Librarians Lindsey Hoffman
Cindy Page
Simon Ratti
- Documents Librarian Dick Page
- Modem Captain Louie Levy
- Commercial Contact Mike Luttio
- Social Director Eileen Levy
- Newsletter Editor Louie Levy
- Contributing Editor Dick Page
- Founders and First President Dick Page, Bill Roy
Ginny Dobson

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK
by Phil Janz



The Eugene PCjr Club Board of Directors met on January 31, 1991 focusing on an extensive CLUB By-Laws revision that will be submitted to the membership this Spring. Considerable energy was also devoted to rounding out our remaining Winter/Spring Club meetings and I am happy to report that you can look forward to interesting and meaningful sessions. Also under discussion was how we can raise our Club's profile in the Eugene/Springfield, Salem and Portland areas. . . . There are numerous "jr's" out there that need our support, and we need their numbers!

Our February 14th meeting will again zero in on meaningful software. Louie Levy will demonstrate *BookBase*, the newest addition to our Disk Library. This software is an inventory program that maintains a detailed listing of your home library.

Louie will also provide an overview of *PC-FILE*. This overview may "tickle" several fancies about really seeing the value of learning how to set up a usable data base for keeping things organized at home. Several workshop openings provide an opportunity for additional interested club members to register for this hands-on evening workshop. Our last workshop on *JR POWER PACK II* was "sold out" and instructor Dick Page rose to this difficult teaching challenge and met the many and varied needs of his six struggling students!

Come and join us over a cup of coffee (punch for the kids!), a delightful "munchy" provided by Rosie Janz and a "tasteful" evening program that will stimulate your use of "jr".

Phil

COMMING WORKSHOPS:

The October Club Newsletter provided a complete description of our coming workshops. Please refer to that issue if you are interested in workshop descriptions. The March workshop is a new addition and workshop content will be fully explained by instructor Frank Ratti at our regular Club meeting March 14.

The February Workshop will be *PC-FILE III* and will take place on February 19 at the Levy's, 280 Brae Burn Drive in Eugene at 7pm.

Prodigy

As *Prodigy* is relatively new to the local area, we felt that it would be worthwhile to the membership if we printed this article by Zyg Skrobanski. Zyg is a long-time member of the Atlanta Junior Club and has been using *Prodigy* for sometime with his Junior. Here is his evaluation of the latest version of *Prodigy*.

I love to know that my PCjr can do things that other, more modern, computers can not. One such example is the ability to receive the *Prodigy* Service in full color!

The other machines are able to get the service in color, but only if they are equipped with the more costly graphic adapter cards (such as EGA or VGA). My "other" computer at work is a 286 AT clone with a color monitor, but it cannot receive *Prodigy* in color because it only has a CGA color graphics adapter! I would have to obtain the proper graphics card to get color. The PCjr, on the other hand, has a superior color system compared to the CGA. A scheme similar to the jr's was adopted by Tandy for use with their 1000-series computers.

Prodigy, owned by a partnership of Sears and IBM, is a sort of electronic magazine. What makes it different from services such as CompuServe or other Bulletin Boards is that it is an interactive system. *Prodigy* actually uses the computing power of your computer, rather than treating it as a "dumb" display terminal, which is how the other systems work.

Think of it, my PCjr which I purchased six years ago, not only works with the latest systems, but it can display them better than more modern machines equally equipped!

Unfortunately, *Prodigy* does not officially support the PCjr. This was a real problem when the system first started a couple of years ago. The original software supplied with the start-up kit was not Junior friendly! Always resourceful, PCjr users came up

with a simple patch to convert to Tandy compatible color (which is supported by *Prodigy*).

However, the software still caused Juniors to lock up frequently, and various techniques were adopted to make the system work. These problems and a somewhat lack of features of the service, initially turned many PCjr users away from *Prodigy*.

Recently, *Prodigy* has introduced a new software upgrade (version 3.1), added new features and generally improved service. Although still not officially supporting the PCjr, the new software can easily be made to work well with it!

So, what needs to be done to the PCjr so that it can receive *Prodigy*? First of all, you need to increase the memory of your Junior to 640K or more. The *Prodigy* installation procedure is followed and the two "Personal Disks A and B" are prepared. You should set aside as much memory for the video RAM as possible. Use PCJRMEM.COM or CONFIGJR utilities in the main CONFIG.SYS file in the *Prodigy* "Disk A" to establish the PCjr working parameters at time of "booting."

A typical CONFIG.SYS file will be as follows:

```
DEVICE=CONFIGJR.NRD -j -t3 -v96
BUFFERS=20
FILES=20
```

I use v96 (96k of video memory) though I've read that v32 will also work. The PCJRMEM.COM, if used, will work with the /C mode.

The previous edition of *Prodigy* required the NOBEEP utility to prevent system lock-ups. Apparently, the new version works well without it. However, I have included it in my AUTOEXEC.BAT file. If you are using any other CONFIG utility, remember to include SWAPCOM, or a similar file or method, to avoid the PCjr problems with COM1 and COM2.

If you have made the hardware Tandy modification, you just run the new *Prodigy* software, following the instructions as they are given on the screen, and being careful to choose the Tandy (320 X 200) option during the software installation. That's all there is to it. When you boot up, the color

Please turn page --->

comes on immediately. I'm still very impressed with the *Prodigy* color graphics; it really lets the PCjr show its stuff!

If you do not have the Tandy "mod" then you need to make a patch to the *Prodigy* supplied software. The simplest way to do this is to obtain the required patch from the *PCjr Workshop BBS* by downloading the file PCJRDRVR.ZIP (or ask Dick Page for a copy). After unzipping the file, just follow instructions to change the DRIVER.SCR file in the *Prodigy* "Disk B" with the new DRIVER.SCR supplied by the PCJRDRVR file.

Another way of making the supplied software compatible with the PCjr is to modify the program yourself. This is easily accomplished using the DEBUG program. First, run the *Prodigy* installation program and prepare the two "Disks A and B." The DRIVER.SCR file on "Disk B" will need to be slightly altered at location 1BAE, by changing B8 to 18.

To make the change, copy the DRIVER.SCR file and the DEBUG.COM file to a blank diskette. Type the following (the computer will prompt you), and press the ENTER key at the end of each line:

```
DEBUG DRIVER.SCR
-e 1BAE
XXXX:1BAE B8.18
-w
-q
```

After this has been done, copy the new "debugged" DRIVER.SCR file to the *Prodigy* "Disk B." That's all!

The only problem that I have had with this new *Prodigy* software on my PCjr has been modem related. As the Junior does not have DMA, it can not send instructions to the modem at the same instant it reads the disk drive. This will cause the Junior not to respond to the initial software query to the modem, resulting in an error message and not dial out. *Prodigy* actually interrogates each modem as to model type, and then re-configures the software specifically for that particular modem.

To alleviate the modem problem, the *Prodigy* Service Center provided the remedy. Using a text editor, but NOT EDLIN, add

the following line to the CONFIG.SM file in "Disk B":

```
modem type:1
This line is added directly BEFORE the
line starting with,
modem_str:
```

This will provide a several second delay before the PCjr starts dialing out. The EDLIN program should not be used as a text editor in this case as it is limited to lines having a maximum number of characters of 253. The line starting with *modem_str*: has more characters than 253!

Any problems you may incur with *Prodigy* will probably be related ONLY with the modem or noisy telephone lines and NOT with the PCjr. I run my Junior with an external modem at 2400 baud and only on rare occasions will a problem occur. In event of troubles, *Prodigy* will show an error screen providing an explanation or error code.

After you have *Prodigy* up and running, you may need to center the display on your monitor. This is achieved by pressing the CTRL, ALT and either the left or right arrow keys simultaneously.

The *Prodigy* Handbook will provide further information on the system and how to use AUTOLOGON, etc. All the features of the *Prodigy* Service are available for use by the PCjr. If you have converted the Junior internal modem slot to a second serial RS232 connector, then you will be able to use the mouse feature as well. The PCjr does a really super job of displaying the *Prodigy* color graphics. I particularly enjoy the weather maps!

(Thanks to Zyg Skrobanski and the Atlanta Orphan Peanut.)

Editor's Notes

Since our last issue, it seems that history throughout the world is on the move. Our hopes and concerns are for those in hostile areas of the world and for their families.

Your Board of Directors met on the 31st at the President's home and much was accomplished (once we had eaten birthday

more....-->

cake to celebrate his birthday). Christine reported that the club is still healthy and in the black. Paul is attempting to make the "start-up" procedures for the library disks more user-friendly, and suggested these instructions be made available in a "New User's Packet." Louie reported that negotiations are still underway with another location to Xerox the newsletter more economically in an effort to offset the increased postage rates. Everyone agreed to the placing of an advertisement in the *Oregon Daily Emerald* at the University to let people there know of the club. Next, the Board worked on programs for future meetings and approved funds for door prizes!

The big thing at the Board meeting was the updated By Laws that Phil has been working on for the past month. Everyone is urged to attend the meeting on Thursday as this is when they will be presented. April is the General Meeting and it would be nice to get any changes to the By Laws approved prior to that meeting. A vote will be taken on the recommended changes at the March meeting if all goes well.

Someone asked why are we going to rehash PC-FILE III, version 4 when so many newer versions of this program have been released by ButtonWare. The answer, of course, is that PC-FILE III is still the database of choice by those with only 128K of memory. In fact, it is the one used by nearly everyone in the club! Looks like some Junior owners feel that "if it works, why change it?" And, PC-FILE III really works well for most of the chores Junior owners do, regardless of memory. The February workshop for PC-FILE will target mainly "entry-level" users, but we will also cover special needs of those in attendance.

Louie

Junior and Sound

Most Junior owners subscribe to Crider Associates' *jr Newsletter*. In the November issue, John Wilson had an excellent article entitled "How To Get Super Sound From Your PCjr." As we don't publish a 24-page newsletter, I felt we should at least give you some highlights from John's article.

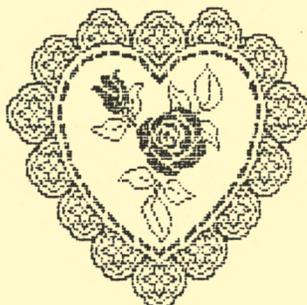
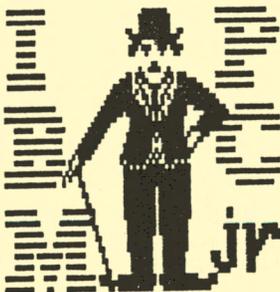
John says that "Your IBM PCjr probably has more power and potential for producing sound than any other stock computer in the PC-compatible world." Big claim, huh? . . . But we know it's true. John says that "Even the latest most powerful Compaq, Extended Industry Standard Architecture, 486 computer doesn't come close to Junior in built-in hardware to produce sound." As Junior owners, we have always known that it was top-of-the-line. That's one reason we are using our soon-to-be seven year old machines.

John's article is the first of a series to be published by the *jr Newsletter* on getting the most out of your Junior's sound capacity, and they will cover the sound generating chip, the TI SN76496, that is on our motherboard. This chip "is able to generate sound of various frequencies, in three different voices and at 15 different volume levels. It is also able to produce hissing noises and periodic noises which can be used as sound effects." As I only use Junior for word processing, I thought all it did was beep at me when I typed while the disk drive light was on!

I suggest anyone interested in getting quality sound read these articles, as John tells us the many different ways of enhancing Junior's sound. We tend to forget the out-of-sight jack on the front of the IBM PCjr Color Display and the audio jack on the back of Junior. Check with the documents librarian, Dick Page, to see this article, or, if you live in the Portland area, call Robert Mueller. Better yet, subscribe to the *jr Newsletter* and get your own copy!

"Your PCjr probably has more power and potential for producing sound than any other stock PC."

John E. Wilson,
in the *jr Newsletter*



COPY COMMAND.COM

C:

A friend at the University purchased a used, two-floppy drive, AT&T 6300 computer and asked if I would help her bootup WordPerfect so she wouldn't have to keep swapping diskettes. I said, "Sure," and formatted a new disk on my Junior using the /s parameter to make it self-booting. Next, I made a config.sys file using her AT&T version of VDISK.COM to make a 128K RAM drive along with the necessary buffers= and files= entries. This made a 128K RAM drive C:. Next, I made an autoexec.bat file so COMMAND.COM would be copied to C: and so that WordPerfect's printer files for her printer would also be copied to C:. Then, the autoexec.bat would boot WordPerfect. The last thing was to copy her WordPerfect files to this new boot disk. It worked like a charm.

The problem came when she asked if this disk would also work on her other computer at home; a PC clone. "Sure it will," I said. So, to show her that the new disk would work on any computer, I went over to the clone we have in the department office that has a 20meg hard drive and a menu system. I put the disk in A: drive and booted. Perfect! After entering the date, we were left with WordPerfect on the screen. (Okey, whose ahead of me?)

The phone call came early the next day from the department secretary; her computer failed to boot. It said "bad or missing command interpreter" in one message and "wrong DOS version" in the next. Yep, when I had booted with the new disk the day before, I had copied my copy of DOS 2.1 COMMAND.COM to drive C:, the hard drive on the department's computer, over-writing the 3.2 COMMAND.COM file that had been there. The RAM created by VDISK.COM on the clone was actually drive D, not C as it already had a hard drive C. Luckily, all we had to do was reboot with the MS DOS disk that came with the clone and copy their original COMMAND.COM on their DOS disk to the hard drive, Drive C: and reboot once more.

Needless to say, this was a very educational experience for me and I learned much. Computing may have it's moments, but I never have these kinds of problems with Junior!

And, yes, it was WordPerfect 4.2. For Junior, 4.2 is great! You can "import" the files into 5.0 or 5.1 at the office, and you can save your files from the office in 4.2 format to use at home on Junior. Just be careful taking your self-booting disks into work with you!

Shareware Views

Have you ever wondered where the software comes from that is in the Club's Disk Library? Or have you ever wondered why it is so economical? Well, the vast majority are programs distributed under the Shareware concept. Awhile back, John Waite, the librarian of the San Francisco PCjr Users Group, reminded us that the authors of these Shareware programs retain full ownership of them, but they allow us to try the software before we purchase it. If, after we try them for awhile, we find the programs useful, John reminded us that we should then register the software and pay the nominal fee requested by their authors.

Much work goes into writing these programs and the authors deserve our support. They also deserve the small compensation they request for their efforts. Registration fees are very small compared to the cost of "commercial" software. Wonder why this is? The method of distribution, i.e. via computer club disk libraries and BBS's, saves a lot of advertising costs and costs of distribution, keeping the overall cost of the software very reasonable. But, the software is NOT FREE!

Distributing software via the Shareware method also benefits nonprofit groups like the Eugene PCjr Club. They provide a source of income that help keep your club healthy and alive. Each time you purchase a disk from the Club Library, our health is maintained. And, each time you register your software, you help insure that there will be newer and better programs for Junior in the future. Be sure and tell them you have a PCjr when you register your software, and also tell them where you obtained your copy.

If you use JRCONFIG, the excellent program by Larry Newcomb, to help solve your booting problems, you should register your copy; it only costs \$10. Neat programs, like Computing Specialties' Amy's

Turn, turn, turn -->

First Primer (\$15), Rad Delaroderie's BookBase (\$10), and HomeCraft's Play 'n' Learn (\$5), are all worth much more than the cost of registration. As an added plus, when you register your copy, most of the authors will send you their latest version of the program.

So, if you are using any Shareware that you haven't yet registered, do it! It's a very cheap investment. And if you have some Shareware that you would like to see in the Club Library, donate a copy to our Librarian, Paul Bonney. We will all appreciate seeing our library grow!

We have a nifty program in the club library called *Picture Label* that adds Print Shop and PrintMaster graphic images to mailing labels (and doesn't require that you own those programs).

It recently has been upgraded by its creator. Version 2.0 is shareware and 2.1 is the fully functional registered copy version (only costs \$10 to register).

While version 1.0 works fine on PCJrs, the upgrade crashes. If we can work around that little defect, we'll put the upgrade in the disk library. Until then, PCjr owners, don't send in for your upgrade.

HEARD ON THE STREET

by Dick Page

D.O.S. 5.0

It looks like a major upgrade in DOS will soon be available from Microsoft Corp. The newest revision will be called *DOS 5.0*. It is claimed that it will have all of the advantages of 4.0, none of its glitches, and will be much less of a memory hog.

[Ed.: With all the hype about speed machines megabytes of memory, it's nice to see the pressures resulting from the proliferation of power-limiting laptops forcing Microsoft to continue to make improvements for the little guys -the ones with 640K or less of memory. Hopefully, when the hype meets the street, Microsoft DOS 5.0 will be able to live up to its claims.]

(taken from info. found in *PC Sources* and other recent magazines)

CGA, EGA, VGA, SuperVGA, & NOW "XGA"

IBM is pushing forward in efforts to establish new standards for high, color resolution with the announcement of the eXtended Graphics Array adapter (XGA).

The original IBM PC display screens show 320 distinct dots (pixels) across the screen and 200 dots vertically. They show up to four colors at a time. This is because they use a Color Graphics Adapter ("CGA"). (The PCjr's is specially made so it is capable of displaying up to 16 colors at a time.)

The next level of improvement in resolution was introduced with the IBM AT. The Enhanced Graphics Adapter ("EGA") has a resolution of up to 640 by 350 pixels and can also display up to 16 colors at a time.

With the PS/2 series IBM introduced Video Graphics Array (VGA). It provides 640-by-480 pixel resolution and up to 64 simultaneous colors.

Various non-IBM schemes, generally referred to as "Super VGA", have since been made that can boost VGA to 800 by 600. A few will go to the new limit of 1024 by 768.

The new XGA will show 256 colors at the 1024 by 768 pixel resolution level and up to 65,536 colors and the normal VGA 640-480 pixel resolution level!

IBM is now distributing new computers that have XGA installed. You may want to buy two or three, if you have a little spare change. The IBM PS/ Models 90 XP 486 and 95 XP 486 are available for \$12,495 to \$17,745. [At those prices, you might feel more content with the image quality your little ol' PCjr puts out! It really isn't all that bad, after all.]

(XGA and PS/2 90-95 info taken from the Jan 91 issue of *PC World* and the Jan 15, 1991 issue of *PC Magazine*.)

PCjr GADGETS GALORE!

The *Metro PCjr Journal* and the *jr Newsletter* both have articles about the latest in PCjr add-ons about to come out from PC Enterprises.

Don't stop, there's more -->

1. **VGA CARD:** Allows PCjr's to use analog VGA monitors to display true high resolution VGA color images (just like Junior's grand children -the IBM PS/2 series computers) and most EGA program images as well.

2. **INTERNAL 2400 BAUD MODEM:** This is to replace the very slow 300 baud PCjr-specific modem. It leaves the external serial port available for other devices (such as a mouse).

3. **MOUSE BUS:** If you have an external modem and want a mouse, PC Enterprises now has a Microsoft bus mouse so you don't need to share the same external serial port.

4. **150 WATT POWER SUPPLY:** For those who have lots of power-thirsty add-ons, this will provide all the power you'll ever need.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

1. 1 MB high speed, self-booting solid state disk drive.

2. PCjr optical scanner.

3. PCjr fax card.

4. "True" 286 or 386 board for PCjr's. (Only if there is enough interest among PCjr owners willing to shell out around \$500.)

GIVING COMPUTERLAND A SECOND TRY?

Many people have voiced dissatisfaction in the past with various aspects of the Eugene branch of Computerland. If you feel you really need their services, you may want to give them a second try (or is it a third or fourth?).

The owner of the Medford store has recently taken over the Eugene store, completely changed staff, and seems to be looking out for the interest of the customer.

Examples of past awards at the Medford store attest to the new owner's commitment to quality products and service:

1985 - (by Computerland) Outstanding New US Store for the year (out of 95 new stores).

1988 - (by Compaq Computer Corp.) Distinguished Dealer Award (putting them in top 20% of their dealers).

1988 - (by Apple Computer, Inc.) Hall of Fame Award (for sales and service).

1989 - (by IBM Corp.) Top 10% of its dealers.

Hopefully, they will try to achieve that at their Eugene store, too. They are saying that customer service and satisfaction is their primary goal. Make them prove it! Hold them to it!

MORE HELP FOR MAIL ORDER PROBLEMS

Several of the computer magazines appear, on occasion, to be going to bat for the little guy when problems arise with orders placed to mail order companies. One of them is *PC World's Consumer Watch Division*, 501 Second Street, #600, San Francisco, CA 94107.

Another source of help may be through the *Direct Marketing Association*. Their address is:

DMA's Mail Order Action Line
6 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017

The DMA will contact the seller and, in cases of flagrant misconduct, will send the case to regulators. DMA's VP for Ethics and Consumer Affairs says that 95% of the cases they help are resolved to the customer's satisfaction.

from PC World, Jan 91

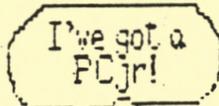
See you next month! Dick

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