Mike's Message

By Mike Ruiz

Whether you're aware or not, our election campaign for a new club officer—the Vice President, is complete. Before I mention who has become our new VP, I would like to take a moment to recognize Lynn Miles, our past VP. Lynn has done a wonderful job and should be commended. I would also like to thank Louie Levy and Phil Janz for their work as the nomination committee team. They produced a wonderful new VP. Our new VP is a member who is not new to some of us. He has held positions in our club in the past. Gordon LeManqauis has held the position of Modem Captain and Commercial Contact. Gordon joins our executive officers as of April first in high regard. At our May 13, 1998 board meeting Gordon had his first official duty. Welcome aboard and congratulations to Gordon.

Yes we did have a Board meeting for the second time this year. May is a little later than usual, but it was a very productive meeting. If you can recall or have the April Newsletter you may remember my note to members about reorgani-zation of meeting schedule and other items that might be reduced in scope. Executive members and others did just that. We produced some great results. We are planning to reduce our scheduled meetings to five and have decided to produce quarterly newsletters. We also have a plan for some one-on-one mentorship, training and workshops. I am very excited about how our club is being re-shaped. Our plan will reduce workloads for some of our more dedicated members and will make scheduling time for all of us less burdening. Stay tuned for more information on this subject. We can informally discuss the board meeting results at our May club meeting and you will all hear our results more formally in the next Newsletter.

Keep in mind that our club is still viable. Each of us should contribute, in some way, as much as possible. You don't have to be a computer genius to contribute. Every member can add something.

See you at the May Spring Cleaning,

Mike

ColorPaint and *Art Studio* Graphic Files

Clyde Dodge

This is in answer to the gentleman who asked the question in last month's newsletter on how to convert the graphic images he had created with *ColorPaint* and *Art Studio*.

There are a number of different formats (maybe 30 or more) for graphic images. There are also programs available for conversion of these images from one format to another IN CERTAIN CASES.
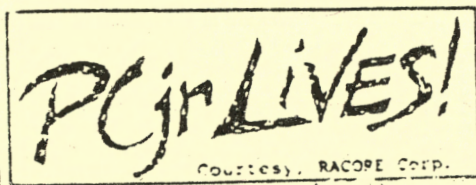
For example, I have a program that will convert GIF to JPG files, and another that does the exact reverse of that, JPG to GIF. However, not all files are compatible with all others.

Thus it pays to know what the files are that were created by the programs used by Spectrum Holobyte's program. Once that is known, we could look around and see what is available to convert those files to something else. It might take a while to discover what that might be as this is a very thin market. If there is no demand for it, there probably won't be a conversion program to be found. On the other hand, the file type may have survived and we might get lucky.

Here is a small listing of some image-type file extensions:

.wpg   WordPerfect or DrawPerfect Graphic
.pic   Graphic Language by Brian Kernighan
.pcx   PC Paintbrush Graphic
.bmp   Bitmap Graphic
.tif   Tagged Image Format
.jpg   Joint Photographic (Experts) Group
.gif   Graphics Interchange Format
Note: These are just a very few of the many formats.

PCjr LiVES!

Courtesy, RACORE Corp.

PCjr c&p format: (cut-and-paste)

We HAVE Keyboards!

A very thoughtful person has donated some keyboards to the club. We have cleaned them and checked them out on the Club's Junior and they all work well.

First, some explanation. These are all the larger keyboards that were not made for use on a PCjr. To use them you must have either a Synectics or RACORE keyboard adapter. So, why do we have them and why should you want one of them?

If you do a lot of "keyboarding" on your Junior you should consider using one of the larger keyboards. This is especially true if you are already using one at work or if you are a skilled typist. We don't mean to imply that Junior's "enhanced" keyboard won't do the job because it will, but doing that job with a larger keyboard that has "real" function keys, a larger "enter" key and a numeric keypad will just make things go much, much faster for you.

We have one NCR keyboard that was made in West Germany. The others are a Leading Edge, two Blazer XT K150L keyboards, three BTC 5060XT keyboards, a Keytronic KB5150, a couple of IBM 5160 keyboards (the ones with "the good feel") and one generic XT/AT switchable keyboard.

All have standard 5-pin DIN connectors so you will have to have either a Synectics or RACORE keyboard adapter in order to plug them into your Junior.

Phil, caretaker of the Club Store, is letting these go for $2 each so now is a good time to get a guaranteed working spare. Just let us know your first and second choices of brands as they are not going to be in the store very long. If you need them mailed, shipping will be at whatever it costs to get it to you.

One note of caution: don't wait until the next meeting to purchase your's as Phil will be out of town and the "store" won't be at the May meeting. You should call or email the club if you want one of these keyboards. 541-343-7592 or pcjrclub@efn.org

PCjr Keyboard Adapters

If you just read the last article where we talked about keyboards, you noticed that we mentioned "keyboard adapters." There are two "keyboard adapters" that we know of that were made to adapt "standard" keyboards so they can be used on Juniors. One replaces the infra-red sensor inside Junior while the other plugs into sockets on the back of Junior. These adapters allow you to use XT or XT/AT compatible keyboards with your PCjr.

One of these adapters was developed by Synectics Software. This adapter also included a built-in keyboard buffer. The buffer held keystrokes and eliminated the annoying beeps you got when trying to type using a standard PCjr keyboard while your disk drive is busy.

Another advantage of the Synectics adapter was that unlike the other PCjr keyboard adapter in this article, it didn't plug into the "K" and "LP" connectors in back of your Junior. Instead, it replaced Junior's infra-red sensor directly and had a "jumper" that you easily attached to your motherboard.

In a Synectics report they stated that many different keyboards had been tested with their internal adapter, and we have tested it also. Most any brand keyboard that will work on XT computers will work with the Synectics adapter. This includes those made for PCs, XTs, and auto-switching XT/AT keyboards.

To install this adapter, you first remove the infra-red sensor inside Junior and replace it with the Synectics adapter. A small flat cable runs from the adapter out the back of Junior. This cable has a standard 5-pin DIN socket on the end for the new keyboard.

Synectics, a company that specialized in the development of hardware enhancements for PCjrs, made sure that the adapter would make PC keyboards conform to PCjr specifications. For example, it doesn't send the "AA" scan code when generated by the keyboard's power-on self test, and it separated multiple scan codes to allow processor bandwidth for non-keyboard activity.

The spec sheet says the Synectics adapter is crystal controlled for precise timing and simulates all timing characteristics of the PC XT interface including the !KBD RESET line. (Your editor will be the first to admit that he doesn't understand anything of what was just said.)

The Synectics keyboard adapters are still available if you search for them. They originally sold for under $50 from Computer Reset, Oowl Software, Paul Rau Consulting, and PC Enterprises.

Synectics began making PCjr products in 1986. They marketed a ROM clock chip and a cartridge which provided automatic time and date functions. They developed the Keylights Cartridge, which has three LEDs indicating the status of your Caps Lock, Scroll Lock, and Num Lock keys. It was Synectics who also was responsible for the Quicksilver Cartridge. They made a chip to make text more readable on the PCjr monitor: the Dualfont and Thinfont chips. The Siamese Slots, which allow two cartridges to be plugged into one PCjr cartridge slot was made by this company.

Our second product review is a keyboard adapter made by RACORE Computer Products. The RACORE keyboard adapter allowed most any full-size keyboard to be used with Junior without disconnecting your original Junior keyboard. You could even use both keyboards at the same time.

The RACORE Keyboard Adapter required no effort on your part as it was "plug and play" as the new terminology says. You just plugged the little pigtail into the keyboard and lightpen sockets on the back of Junior. Next, you inserted the 5-pin Din connector from your larger keyboard into the RACORE adapter. That was it. Also, supplied with the adapter, was an extension cord to plug in the PCjr keyboard.

One problem was noted early on with the RACORE adapter: the plug was made to plug into a Junior that didn't have socket

protectors. As the male plug on this adapter wasn't long enough to fit into the sockets on a Junior with the protectors, the divider between the lighpen and keyboard slots had to be removed so the adapter would be able to plug in all the way.

I don't know what the original cost of the RACORE keyboard adapter was, but I have a receipt from Computer Reset that says I paid $97 for mine with one of the large generic keyboards. I also have a receipt saying I paid $99 plus shipping for a Northgate keyboard that is selling now for $2 in the Club Store!

The newer keyboards that are only AT compatible will not work with any of these keyboard adapters. But, many of the older AT-style keyboards included a switch that allows them to be used with both XTs (Juniors) or AT-type computers.

Some of our membership use the larger keyboards on a daily basis and wouldn't dream of going back to the original PCjr keyboard. When the grandkids come over, they unplug "their" keyboard and let the kids use the old Junior keyboard! After all, the original PCjr keyboard is nearly indestructible!

Questions:

Here are some of the questions that the Wizards received at the April meeting and by e-mail:

"I have a working upgraded PCjr. My daughter tells me that these machines have become a collector's item. Can you advise me on this." Don't I wish! Don't we ALL wish!

"Why will some modems work on my Junior and some will not?"
Due to the PCjr's internal buss circuitry, there are only a couple of internal modems that will physically fit the Junior. As for external modems, there isn't any reason why any of them up to 9600 baud shouldn't work with Junior's serial port. Remember that the internal slot on Junior's motherboard is COM 1 and the serial port on the rear of Junior is COM 2.

Software is another matter. If you are using the IBM 300 baud internal modem, the program *jrTele* works fine. Other programs like *Telix* and *Procomm* will operate 2400 baud and slower modems just fine. Those modems that are faster require some of the newer software. Be sure to read the documentation that comes with both the modem and the software to get your's up and running.

"People doing the programs at Club meetings sometimes say, "Boot Junior with BASIC." I'm not sure just what they are talking about." Generally speaking, we are never very clear on much of anything at these meetings! The person who is making the presentation may feel that everyone is following along, but this isn't always the case, so your question is a very valid one.

As you know, when we put a DOS disk, or a boot disk, into Junior's drive and turn the computer on, Junior starts up, or "boots." Speaking generally again, once Junior finishes booting up, it will leave us with either an A> ("A Prompt"), or it will leave us with the opening screen of whatever program is in the disk drive that we used to boot with.

If there is no disk in the disk drive when Junior is started, Junior will "boot into BASIC" and will leave us with the BASIC menu screen showing on the monitor. But, if we do this, we can't have access to the disk drive.

If the program disk we are using with Junior is written in the BASIC programming language, we first have to get Junior booted using DOS as we need to use the disk drive, and once Junior is booted, the program itself will generally take Junior into cartridge BASIC to run the desired program.

I know that we use a lot of generalities here, but generally speaking, to "boot into BASIC" you would just key in BASIC or BASICA at the DOS A> after having booted, or having started your Junior with an unmodified DOS disk. When you key in either of those words AND there is a BASIC cartridge in one of the cartridge ports on the front of Junior, you will be taken to BASIC's opening screen. You will have "booted into BASIC."

"I purchased some disks from the Club software library and noticed that one of the games already had some "high score" listings. I thought the library sold unused software.

Well, we are amiss on this one. The software in the Club's Library is supposed to be "new." It is all Shareware, but the copy you purchased should not have been one that has been used previously.

Discussion has come up with a possible answer as to how this could have happened and may be a solution to this problem. We have had some of our local members "borrow" disks at the meeting from the Club Store to take home and see if the program was something they would like to buy. As a member-owned club, many of us feel that everything on the Club Store table actually belongs to all of us (and in a sense, it does).

The problem you had possibly was created when the person decided they didn't want what they took and they brought it back. If it is software, and no one is aware it was used, and the person puts it back in the Library software tub, this same disk may be sold as "new" when it isn't. We think this is what happened to the program you purchased. We sent you a copy that had been used by a club member and then returned without our knowledge.

Another similar problem has come up that has been causing Phil other headaches. When Phil does an inventory of the Store after the meetings and things are missing, he feels they were sold to someone and he just forgot to mark it down. He removes it from inventory only to find it showing up in a month or so!

Because of these problems, Phil has asked me to make an announcement in the newsletter that if you want to try something from the store, PLEASE let him know you are taking it so he won't have to tear the store apart looking for those missing items.

Also, NEVER replace software you have used on your computer into the Disk Library tub with the other software. If you bring back software you do not want, DO NOT put it back, but instead, give it to Phil so we can reformat the disk and replace the programs that were on it. We can always be assured that no viruses will ever get in the Club's software library if we take these steps. And, no one will have a "used" disk sent to them by mistake.

The procedure to follow when wanting something from the store or from the Disk Library is to let Phil know. This way, he can mark it down so he will know where the items are that are missing from his inventory. Should someone request the item by mail or e-mail, he can call you to see if you want it or if it is available for sale.

And, we thank the member for letting us know about the "used" software incident. A new program disk has been sent to replace the other copy and we hope all is well with the world!

Cleaning The Junior Keyboard
By John Schwab

1. Disconnect your keyboard from the computer by removing the keyboard cable from the keyboard, or remove the batteries if you are not using a keyboard cable.

2. Place keyboard upside down on a table. You should see 6 Phillips head screws (one is under the barcoded sticker). Carefully remove these with a small screwdriver.

3. Gently pry the two plastic halves of the keyboard apart and. . . *(keep reading on page 6>)*

remove the top half. This is really the under-side of the keyboard. You will see the bottom of the green circuit board. Gently brush off any visible dirt particles with a lint free cloth or a soft brush.

4. Pick up circuit board and remove dust from the other side.

5. Beneath the circuit board you will see a gray rubber sheet, about the same size as the circuit board, and about 1/8th of an inch thick. It appears to have craters about a half-inch wide all over it with little black posts in the crater centers. Remove this rubber piece gently and clean. You will notice on the other side of it as you peel it off that it has what looks like little suction cups (or tiny mounds) that act as springs for the keys below.

6. All you have left now is the inverted top half of the keyboard. You can see the bottom of each key resting in a small crater with the center of the key (looks like a round post) sticking out of the middle. If you lift the key-board off the table, the keys will slide down, but they will not fall out, except maybe the space bar and the enter key. These are easily slid back into place. Use a small brush, or Q-tip to clean the craters the keys rest in, and make sure to remove all dust from around the posts of the keys. This will ensure easy traveling of the keys and help prevent sticking.

Re-assembly:

First, replace the rubber mat on top of the keyboard. The three small holes on the rubber mat should be on top, and fit comfor-tably over the three posts for the screws. Also, the black dots should be face up. Next, replace the circuit board. The chips on the board should be face down and on top. Once again, the three holes on the circuit board should fit over the screw guide posts. Finally, replace the bottom of the keyboard. The part of the key-board that holds the batteries should be on top on the left.

To ensure proper refitting, hinge the top of the bottom piece under the other half of the keyboard and lower the front gently towards you. Hold the bottom shut and replace the bottom center screw. Then, replace the remaining five screws. Tighten equally until snug using care not to over-tighten the screws.

Re-attach the keyboard cable or replace the batteries. This should not take more than a half hour to do, and it will also give you an inside view of how your keyboard works.

Be careful when handling the circuit board as you clean it as it can be damaged by static electricity.

(This article was originally published in the San Francisco PCjr Users Group Newsletter.)

Cleaning That Noisy Disk Drive

If your disk drive is making more and more noise as each day goes by, it's time for you to do something about it. If you get disk read or write errors sometimes, you needed to clean your drive a few days ago! Do it now.

First, if you are using DOS 3.xx you really SHOULD be using STEPRATE.COM (which is on Club Disk JR POWER PACK II) or some program such as HUSH.COM to adjust the rate at which the drive heads seek the proper tracks.

If you are using DOS 2.1 (like we feel you should), and you have noisy drives then it is probably time for cleaning and lubrication.

Cleaning the disk drive isn't the same as cleaning the read/write heads in the drive. If your drive is having trouble reading and writing to the floppy disk, it may be time to clean the heads. Much like your VCR, these heads can gather a coating on them that needs to be cleaned off.

There are commercial head cleaning kits available. You should purchase one of these kits and follow the easy instructions that come
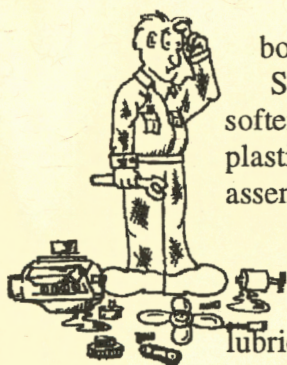
with them. Programs such as CLEAN2 (on Library Disk U-611 JR POWER PACK II) can really help in this cleaning chore by moving the heads back and forth while the cleaning disk spins, making for more thorough cleaning.

Let's get back to cleaning the drive. Never lubricate your disk drive until you first clean it. Remove Junior's top by lifting up on the rear edge. If you have ever watched your disk drive with the lid removed, you will have noticed how the heads move back and forth while the drive spins the disk. Once you locate this head assembly on the drive, turn Junior off and UNPLUG it.

It is recommended that you purchase cotton swabs (much like "Q- Tips") from an electronics store to use for cleaning as it is less likely they will leave lint in your drive. Use denatured alcohol and just barely dampen the swab.

Clean all the dirt and grease from the metal slide rails. These rails are the ones on which the heads assembly rides in and out as it moves from track to track. You can push the heads gently along the rails so you can clean both ends.

Lubrication can be both wonderful and deadly. Some ordinary oils attack, soften and degrade some plastics and as the head assembly is a plastic block riding on the metal rails we need to be careful in our choice of lubricant.

Radio Shack has a small Teflon lubricant that is just right for using on the disk drive rails. This precision oiler tube is part number 64-2301.

Try to apply as little as possible of the lubricant. While one school of thought is that these blocks and rails need lubricant, another school says that all this does is make the dirt and dust stick. So, apply oil very sparingly.

Vacation Time Is Here!

As most everyone knows, the May Newsletter is the last one published before the Club officers and your editor and production staff take off on a much needed vacation. There are NO NEWSLETTERS sent out for the months of June, July or August. We do start all over again in September.

While it has been proven that most folks use their Juniors more in the winter months than in summer, it is the period of summer that most of our members fear. They have the feeling that help is no longer just a phone call away. If their Junior fails them during the summer, what are they going to do with their Junior Club on vacation?

We want everyone to know that all of the support measures of your Computer Club are still here. Just because one or two of the members are not at home, there are many more who are lazily sitting around town just waiting to help.

Check out the Help Phone Numbers on the last page and if you need help, call them. If one isn't home, call the next until you get someone.

The Eugene PCjr Club won't let you or your Junior down. We get a little slow in our answers to both snail-mail and e-mail, but we do get around to answering.

All of us here wish all of you there a fun-filled and safe summer! If you get to Eugene, give us a call. If any of us get to where you live, we're sure going to call you!

See you in September!!

Classified Advertisements

For Sale: 128K PCjr with monitor, keyboard, books, keyboard cord, parallel printer connector and some software. This computer is located in the Eugene/Springfield area. Call Mike at 541.741.3654 with your offer.

Wanted: Good Home for 640K dual drive Junior. We would like for this to go to someone who will use it. Located in the Dallas/Fortworth area. Email wascott@airmail.net

For Sale: Custom crocheted afghans for your friends, relatives or yourself. Baby size afghans are $15, twin is $25, full size is $50 and queen is $100. The baby size is just right to cover up your Junior when it's not in use. E-mail Cindy James at crjames@efn.org or you can call at 541.935.6436

"Whoever said good help is hard to find has never called the Help-Line of their local computer club!"

NEED HELP? Give These Club Members a Call:

BASIC or WordStar:
                         Paul Bonney - 344-1501
PC-FILE III or WordPerfect:
                         Louie Levy - 343-7592
Writing Assistant or Name Pal:
                         Phil Janz - 343-1059
                         Lynn Miles - 484-5063
E-Mail: Lynn Miles - 484-5063
                         Judy Young - 343-0584
                         Rosie Janz - 343-1059
Communications Programs:
                         Mike Ruiz - 687-8361
                 Gordon LeManquais - 746-1594
Hardware Problems:
                         Louie Levy - 343-7592
                         Mike Ruiz - 687-8361
Spreadsheets or WordPerfect:
                         Mike Ruiz - 687-8361
The Disk Library, Parts and Supplies:
The Company Store
                         Phil Janz - 343-1059

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