



Bits of Blue



Florida in the
Summer

A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Vol. 9 No. 6 June 1996

Meeting

**June 12, 1996
6:00 PM**

**Hillsborough Community
College, Ybor Campus
Ybor Room**

**Personal Secretary: Voice to Text
Software by Mel Fox
&
Bargain Table**

My Five Year Old Computer

by William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Now that we are about to get a new computer in the house, I think it only fitting that I pay my five year old Gateway 386/33C its due. It has been a superb and hard working machine, as I am sure it will continue to be, since the new computer is meant mainly for my son's C++ programming. Many a time the software package said "Minimum requirement: 486/66, 8 MB RAM,.....etc." But in all except one case that I can remember (and I am not even sure aPentium would have run that ill constructed piece of software well), the Gateway 386 performed quite a respectable job on the software. I get a laugh reading all the computer experts' opinions that to run Win 95 you need a 486 machine with 16 MB RAM, better still a Pentium, since this machine is running '95 very well.

So what is going on here? I think the secret to the machine's success is due to Gateway's using quality components originally and theupgrades I have added. I have always believed that a fast processor with a slow video card or with no cache memory is not much better than a slow processor. And most importantly a lack of memory can cripple the fastest processor. This machine started out with 4 MB RAM and a 120 MB hard drive whose access time I can't remember. The machine now has 13 MB RAM, two very fast hard drives with a total capacity of about 2 GIG, a sound card, 14.4 modem, and a 4X CD drive.

In general things zip along at an acceptable speed. The only programs that I would like more processor speed on are ones involving

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NEWS FLASH: Soon we will have our WWW home page at <http://www.tbos2cla.com>

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SECRETARY'S REPORT & MINUTES OF MEETING May 8, 1996

Minutes and Comments by Bruce Register, Secretary

President Connie Kincaid called the meeting to order. Connie introduced each of the TPCUG Officers and Appointees.

The first 20 minutes of the meeting were dedicated to informal networking, etc. As according to our planned new procedure, William LaMartin held a "close up huddle around hands on" demonstration of and about the Internet during the networking session. He moved the computer up front and used the big screen for demonstrations during the 15 minute break before the drawing for door prizes. Everyone could see it from anywhere in the room. The networking had been planned for people to talk to each other about problems, questions, info, exchange, etc. This planned activity appeared to be well received also. Some people just cannot get to meetings for a formal presentation beginning at 6 PM. These two planned activities served a good purpose while accommodating those late comers who were interested in the planned presentation by Frank Kinsinger of DocuMagix's PaperMaster.

Mike Hodges reminded us to be on a sign-up list or to call him before 4 PM of the SIG day to get our names on the security list which is posted at the entrance for use by security personnel. Call Mike at 887-1675 to get on the list *if you have not already signed up*. Each meeting list does not carry over to the next. So.o.o.o, sign up each time.

Tim Bryce, OS/2 Users Group, visited and pitched the IBM and OS/2 Users Group. He gave us promotional glimpses of IBM's new products.

Visitors were given visitor's tags. Thanks to Larry Anders for making them and having them ready. TPCUG members like to recognize and give special, warm greetings to visitors.

Mike Hodges asked that if anyone wanted to help with SIGs to let him know. If anyone wants a new SIG Group on ANY APPLICATION (that means any software program), let Mike know. Mike accomplishes a great and appreciated effort in providing the high tech meeting place for the SIG groups. No SIG request is too elementary to be considered; Connie's "Hardware Basics" and "Software Basics" were both well attended by novices and veterans alike.

Ford Bond announced a program at MOSI (Museum of Science and Industry on East Fowler) that will assist youth from three years old and older this summer with the 15 computers they have. In the fall, they will have 30 computers and want

(Minutes.....Continued on page 3)

(Minutes.....Continued from page 2)

to assist "youth of all ages" from three to 105 years of age. Some classes are free, some with nominal fees. Ford encourages all to assist in promoting and spreading the word. He also requested that anyone with abilities and interest in volunteer instructing, please contact him. Ford is a "brand new" member of TPCUG. Call Ford at 986-6300 or 986-6309.

Don Patzsch reported on ATT. If you are a user of ATT long distance service, you can get 5 hours free every month on ATT Internet Provider Service. If you use more than 5 hours, you pay an hourly rate but only for the minutes you use. Unlimited access, as with most providers, is \$19.95. Non-ATT users must pay \$24.95.

Mike Hodges asked for a show of hands of those interested in a Laptop presentation. A majority of those present was interested. Connie stated that it is the intent of TPCUG to cycle hardware presentations during the year. A Laptop presentation will satisfy those objectives.

PRESENTATION

Frank Kinsinger gave a presentation on DucoMagix's PaperMaster, a step in the direction of the paper-less office. PaperMaster "brings everything up like you are looking at a filing cabinet and drawers." In fact, you see cabinets and drawers. You go to a cabinet (one among the several that you can create) and open a drawer. You then go to a folder of particular interest, e.g. Real Estate Offered for Sale, and then to a specific file folder on the sale of a particular property, market area, street or submarket. He faxes or scans articles to his computer. He then uses PaperMaster OCR to clean up the document. This program is especially useful for paper pack rats (such as your TPCUG Secretary). One may clip an article of particular interest, scan or fax it to your computer. "Print" it to "PaperMaster." Move it to a cabinet, then to a drawer, then to a general folder and then into a specific folder. It will stay there forever or until you do house cleaning. You may **THEN THROW AWAY THAT CLIPPED ARTICLE**. You get rid of that piece of paper. You still have it filed into a folder in your computer instead of in a physical metal file cabinet or in a stack on your desk or stacked on your floor area.

Frank stressed that scanners are an excellent way to get documents into the system. He uses fax since he does not have a scanner at his home. Quality of document (text or graphics) depends upon the source. Frank showed us documents that he faxed for use in this presentation. He demonstrated the "straighten page" capability of PaperMaster. One probably does not have any other software to straighten a document that came out in a slanted (oblique) manner after having been received through scanning or faxing. PaperMaster straightened the page perfectly. After pressing the "straighten page" icon and performing OCR, one may open the document in Word-

Perfect or other word processor. PaperMaster has built in OCR (Optical Character Recognition) to be used in turning a graphical presentation of the document into a text based version.

Frank had faxed a document with some graphics map on it as well as text. He then brought up the map and added text on top of the map to call attention to certain features on the map or to provide qualifying data sources. Frank uses PaperMaster to store his correspondence regarding prospects or clients in his real estate business with Orange Realty of Tampa. He demonstrated how he stored a letter in WordPerfect into a cabinet, drawer, multiple folder and specific folder. A folder may be a path, directory, file or document.

Frank stated that William LaMartin had uploaded a Demo Version on the BBS. This file allows full use of PaperMaster but limits the volume of bytes and doesn't support scanning. While one may use it to do most everything Frank demonstrated, one will want to purchase the unlimited version after being satisfied that it will do all that is claimed and desired. The test drive Demo Version is free for the downloading.

Everyone praised Frank for a very good presentation. Several people stated that "we would like to see more member presentations by people who use a program. They can tell us what they did and how they did it as well as give their positive and negative comments."

Congratulation to Door Prize winners:

Borland Quattro Pro	Bruce Register
CD Disk-Power Tools	Bambi Stoll
MS BOB	Michael Leiss
Internet and Job Searching	Gary Ennis
CompuServe CD Disk	Larry Anders
SMC Cap	Wil Goble

Congratulations Bambi on winning on the first night as a new member. New members get a ticket on their first night without having to make a donation. Only regular members who make a DONATION to the TPCUG for equipment acquisition and upkeep are eligible for the door prize drawing. ♦

Software Review

Train Your Bird To Talk!

Review by Larry Anders,
Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.



Last year I visited a pet store to purchase my daughter some rabbit food for her award winning flop-eared rabbit. This particular pet store had just put out on display about 50 cockatiels in a rather large aquarium sitting on the floor. I reached my arm into the aquarium to try and pet one of the birds and they all scattered, except this one little pearly pied (gray-yellow) girl who jumped right on my arm and scampered up to my shoulder. My daughter looked at me and said, "we're gonna take this one home, aren't we Dad?" Well, she was right! It's a year and a half later now, the bird is a permanent fixture, and is just as spoiled as the other three women in my household. Oh yea, I named the bird "PC". Wonder where that came from? Actually it stands for '*personal cockatiel*' and she is my personal bird because she will not have much to do with my wife or two daughters. The only trouble I have with "PC" is communicating with her. Come to think of it, I had the same trouble with my other two daughters!

Well, this time I thought I'd do it right, so.....enter the computer. I guess the trouble I had communicating with my other two daughters is the same I have with "PC", ... lack of patience. But we all know the one thing a personal computer can do, and do well, is repetition. If you've ever owned a bird and tried to teach it to talk, the two primary things needed are patience and repetition. Then what better tool than a personal computer for teaching a bird to talk!

I had seen ads for rather expensive machines and other devices in bird magazines that would teach birds to talk, and almost sent for one, until I was wandering around cyberspace one day recently and found a Shareware program that was just what I was looking for....and MUCH cheaper, too....
"TRAIN YOUR BIRD TO TALK!"

The only requirements for this software package are Windows 95, a sound card and speakers and a microphone if you want to use your own voice, although the program comes with eight built-in phrases to get you started. Once the program is loaded, to start playing a particular phrase just click any one of the eight buttons that correspond with the phrase you would like to teach your bird. If you decide to try a different phrase just click on a different phrase button. The speed that the phrase is repeated can be set to repeat from every one to ten seconds. Just click the arrows or the scroll bar itself. And.... there is a *STOP BUTTON* to give you silence, and believe me, sometimes you need that....or your bird will.

When you get tired of the eight built-in phrases, you can record a new phrase over an existing phrase, create a completely new phrase or open a phrase that you may have made in a different program or downloaded from an on-line service or BBS. Of course, all of your phrases can be saved for later use. Any .WAV file will work. Just remember to keep it short. After all, this is to train your bird. You can set up any or all of your available eight phrases for a 24 hour period and create up to 100 cycles.

That's really all there is to it. The program comes with a pretty thorough on-line Help system that covers everything you need to know and how to do it. If you don't own a bird, **GET ONE!** You don't know what you're missing. If you haven't upgraded to Windows 95 yet, **DO IT!** This program should be reason enough since it requires Win 95.

Of course, both of my daughters have a personal computer in each of their rooms and I've been thinking about installing this program on their computers just so I don't have to keep saying "CLEAN YOUR ROOM or MAKE YOUR BED" over and over again!

If you're interested in this program you'd better hurry. The price went up 59% since I registered my copy last month but, oh yea, it was only \$5 originally. **Isn't Shareware GREAT!**

Retail price \$7.95

Mike Holtz, P.O. Box 462516, Escondido, CA 92046-2516
Your choice of registration number delivery. E-mail or U.S. Postal Service

mikeholtz@aol.com

download the file from: <http://members.aol.com/mikeholtz/> ♦



Faithful members Ed Snow and Jenny Lind Olin

SOFTWARE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

1. **First Aid 95 Delux** for Windows 95 & 3.11 - CyberMedia - Windows fixing, crash-proofing- & system restoring survival tool - Windows CD-ROM
2. **Work Safe Office for Windows**- Production Technology Engineering & Management Services - Ergonomic risk analysis for Computer work stations- Windows 3.1 & 95
3. **Outside IN**for Windows - Instant Access to any file-- View, copy print search, launch & manage files.
4. **Harvard ChartXL** for Windows - Compelling charts from critical data. Software Publishing Co.
5. **On File** -for Windows, Arranges your files into fun to-use "notebooks "
6. **Family Fun Pack** for OS/2 Warp CD
7. **How Would You Survive?** - Grolier - Multimedia Adventure (ages 7-12) - Windows CD
8. **Jump Start Preschool**- Knowledge Adventure - getting a head start on education (ages 2-5) Windows CD
9. **Space Adventure**- Knowledge Adventure up to the moment exploration of outer space. (8-adult)
10. **Aviation Adventure** - Knowledge Adventure complete world of Flying (8-adult)
11. **TuneLand** starring Howie Mandel - 7th Level. Interactive Cartoon (ages 3 and up) Windows MPC CD
12. **Crossties** - Organize everything on your PC for instant access - Windows 3.1
13. **ECHO Lake** - Delrina Capture and share family memories - The Multimedia Family Album
14. **Life Form** - fitnessoft - Personal Health Management - Windows.
15. **Terror T.R.A.X** -Grolier - Full -Screen/Full-Motion Interactive Horror Film (ages 13+) - Windows CD
16. **SFPD Homicide: The Body in the Bay**- Grolier - Murder Mystery Game (ages 13+)- Windows CD
17. **Info Accelerator** - Baseline -Manage contacts, phone, to-do's, calendar and mail merge inside Word, WordPerfect & Ami Pro - Win 3.1 or Win 95

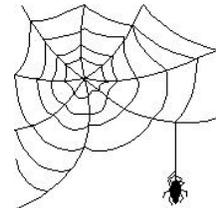
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<http://www.tecc.co.uk/bmj/>
<http://legal.firm.edu/agweb.html>
<http://techweb.cmp.com/techweb/hpc/current/>
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<http://www.chicago.tribune.com/news/current/news.htm>
<http://miso.wva.com/~jeffster/chitown.htm>
<http://www.cyberkids.com/>
<http://www.turbonet.com/games/default.htm>
<http://www.search.com/?msn.srch2>
<http://www.dos.state.fl.us/fpc/>
<http://www.hotbot.com/>
<http://www.cs.uchicago.edu/vt/chicagoloop.html>
<http://www.quotesmith.com/>
<http://www.insure.com/>
<http://www.mapquest.com/>
http://bsd.mojones.com/MOTHER_JONES/
<http://www.kerrymenu.com/>
<http://www.times.st-pete.fl.us/news2/Default.html>
<http://www.usatoday.com/>
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<http://phone.yahoo.com/>
http://s12.bigyellow.com/home_msn.html
<http://www.zdnet.com/yahoocomputing/>

British Medical Journal
 Florida Attorney General
 Home PC Magazine
 Alexander Palace (Russia)
 Chicago Tribune
 Chicago Information
 Cyber Kids Home Page
 Games First (Reviews of Games)
 Search.com (combined search engines)
 Florida State Archives Photo Collection
 Hotbot (New search engine)
 Chicago Virtual Tourist
 Instant Term Life Insurance Quotes
 Insurance News Network
 Map Quest Welcome
 Mother Jones Magazine
 Restaurants
 St. Petersburg Times Online
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 Big Yellow (yellow pages)
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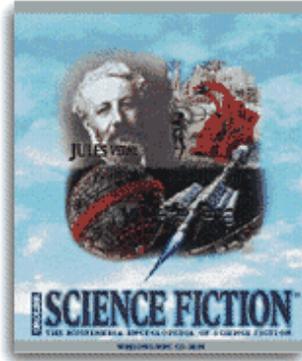


Software Review

Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction by Grolier

Reviewed by James E. Kalshoven
Tampa PC Users Group

As I installed Grolier's Science Fiction: The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (G-SF), I thought of all the great SF I'd read beginning in the 7th grade and continuing until my interest and time decreased in graduate school. But G-SF recaptures those halcyon days in its quality and scope. This is obviously a work of love on the part of the authors, but less obviously a work of love on the



part of the computer programmers. The CD is an expansion and update through 1995 of the book *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Little, Brown, 1993), edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls. The transfer to a hyper linked CD-ROM is outstanding. Like other Grolier products, however, windows do not expand to fill the monitor size. One size fits all, so you get use to the PgUp and PgDn keys. Such things as a small search-result window with no horizontal scroll bar and no keystroke short cut for the copy command are indications of a non-standard Windows interface. One other oddity is the treatment of articles such as 'The' and 'A' as indexable terms in doing a book search. So *A Voyage to Arcturus* is listed under A.

In remembering one of the first SF novels I read, I did a word search of the whole G-SF on Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters*. I was somewhat disappointed that the novel did not merit a brief review on its own but was impressed at all the essays it showed up under. These essays are a trademark of the G-SF. My search turned up essays on topics such as 'Paranoia', 'Parasitism and Symbiosis', 'Invasion', 'Social Darwinism', and so on for a total of twelve. The essays are quite long and detailed with substantial hyper links. But there is no search capability within the essay. Using Heinlein again, I searched for another esoteric work: *Have Space Suit -- Will Travel*. This turned up three essays: One on the author, one on 'Children in SF' and one on 'UFOs'. The book was discussed in the 'Children in SF' in context as one variant on four types which use children. While one might disagree on the selected types, it certainly is thorough and well thought out, stimulating the reader to other works that branch from the one that had been searched.

The essays are grouped under broader themes such as 'About SF', 'Life Forms', 'Science and Technology', and 'Time'. With the hyper links and extensive scholarship, it is an explorers delight. There is extensive reference to television, movies, comic books. Film, video, and audio clips, pictures of SF art and book covers are also fun to look at and listen to and learn from.

The first thing I recommend is for the user to pull down the Help menu and go to 'About This Disc'. This is more than a publisher and version box. It is a narrative discussion on the history and layout of the G-SF, a clear indication of the care put into this extensive content.

This is a delightful and impressive piece of software, a layout with a basically attractive and inviting interface. I recommend this to anyone who enjoys or is even curious about the literature and art of SF.

Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc.

90 Sherman Turnpike

Danbury, CT 06816

203-797-3530

<http://www.grolier.com/interact/index.html> ◆



Librarian Larry Anders checking with Treasurer Wil Goble on the availability of User Group funds for the next all-expenses-paid two week trip of TPCUG officers to London, Paris and Rome.

Software Preview

What does "Merlin" Mean?

IBM reveals plans for next version of OS/2

by Tim Bryce,
Tampa Bay OS/2 Users Group

Contrary to popular belief, "Merlin" (project code name for the next release of OS/2) is not a reference to the magician of King Arthur's court. Rather, it refers to a pigeon hawk, a small falcon, a name that is consistent with IBM's latest product naming convention after birds of prey, e.g., IBM's "Eagle" series of file servers.

As a product, Merlin represents some significant enhancements in the operating system that were revealed only recently at the IBM Technical Interchange in Nashville (April 22-26) and the OS/2 TeleSeminar held April 29th.

Knowing that Merlin was in the works, many existing users weren't sure if there would be significant improvements in the product to justify an upgrade, particularly for OS/2 Warp Connect users. Initial reports on Merlin indicated that it would feature an improved Graphical User Interface (GUI) and connectivity for the Internet. This alone would not warrant an upgrade. Fortunately, IBM added several other enhancements that make this release important and justify an upgrade, most notably speech recognition and universal client support for network operating systems. Although the product is only now entering beta-test, reports indicate Merlin will have the following features:

SPEECH NAVIGATION AND VOICE-TYPE DICTATION

OS/2 will be the first operating system with integrated speech navigation and voice dictation. The decision to include this was made in the eleventh hour by PSP management (IBM's Personal Software Products division). As late as March, IBM officials refused to commit to speech support. However, the decision to adopt speech is a significant move, if for no other reason than to generate media attention.

IBM has been working on speech support for some time now. Their VoiceType Dictation software has been on the market for quite awhile and has begun to snowball in terms of popularity. The decision to embed this technology, therefore, comes as no surprise.

The speech support included in Merlin is touted as easy to learn and use, which is very important. The speech navigation portion of the product allows the user to open and close icons as desired (folders, command files, and executable programs). This will be particularly useful for starting an Internet session (more on this later).

Speech support, however, will come at a price. For starters, it will require at least 16mb of RAM (or preferably higher) and a fast processor, either a Pentium or a 486 at 133mhz. Of course, you will also have to have a decent sound card and microphone (is a video camera far behind?). To many users, Merlin will represent a substantial upgrade in hardware. But if you do not require speech support (and a lot of us will not), you should be fine with your existing OS/2 hardware configuration.

Speech navigation and VoiceType dictation will be more beneficial to end users as opposed to application developers or technicians. Let's not forget physicians and attorneys were the prime markets for VoiceType Dictation prior to Merlin. Not surprising, there will be upgrade fees for special dictionaries for these professions. It will be interesting to see what applications are developed that truly capitalize on speech recognition, particularly games (imagine a game of Doom or Heretic with speech support!)

OS/2

Initially, voice support will be available for the U.S. and U.K. English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. Because of the complexities of the Oriental languages (Japanese, Chinese, Korean) requiring the Double Byte Character Set (DBCS), it may be some time before OS/2 supports these other languages.

UNIVERSAL CLIENT

IBM launched OS/2 Warp Server in February as a universal file server for just about any client: OS/2, Windows (3.x and 95), DOS, and various flavors of UNIX. This was a smart move by IBM because it no longer confined them to a single operating environment (OS/2). Now, with Merlin, IBM is going to do the same thing on the client side by allowing OS/2 to integrate with the popular network operating systems: OS/2 Warp Server, Novelle NetWare, Banyan Vines, and Windows NT.

This aspect to OS/2 is perhaps more significant than speech support even though it won't necessarily generate the same amount of press. Basically, IBM is recognizing that companies do not have one homogeneous computing platform any more and will want to integrate everything. By having universal clients and universal servers, IBM will now be able to penetrate more companies and markets. This approach is in sharp

(Merlin.....Continued on page 8)

(Merlin.....Continued from page 7)

contrast to Microsoft who doesn't seem to grasp heterogeneous computing.

USER INTERFACE

Screen images of the proposed Merlin graphical user interface have been circulating on the Internet for some time now. However, IBM was more definitive when they demonstrated Merlin at the Technical Interchange. A lot of the changes can best be described as cosmetic (e.g., setting notebooks will appear horizontally as opposed to vertically, bubble help, and new system fonts). Perhaps the biggest change will be the new WarpCenter, an icon ribbon that was developed based on a popular technique used by Lotus. WarpCenter will replace the LaunchPad, a favorite of OS/2 users since it was released with Warp. Although the initial reaction to the ribbon has been favorable, the Merlin beta-test should tell us if OS/2 users will really accept it.

INTERNET SUPPORT

IBM has been a big supporter of the Internet ever since they introduced their Internet Access Kit (IAK) with OS/2 Warp in 1994. Their IAK has won industry acclaim for its superior features and ease of use. Now it appears they are going to further simplify it by allowing the user to create icons representing favorite Internet sites and accessing the site by speech navigation. This will be different than the QuickList as provided in the IBM WebExplorer. Instead, users will be able to say something like, "Open Yahoo," whereby the web browser and Internet dialer are initiated taking you to the Yahoo web page (<http://www.yahoo.com/>).

Although the WebExplorer remains the favorite browser among OS/2 users, it is possible that IBM and Netscape are planning to introduce an OS/2 version of the popular Navigator web browser. Although there is no documentation to substantiate this claim, there has been a lot of scuttlebutt on the Internet that such a development is in the works. Further, application forms for independent software vendors to participate in the Merlin beta-test makes mention of a "Netscape Plug In." With the web browser war heating up between Netscape and Microsoft, such a move to OS/2 may very well make sense. What this means to the WebExplorer is anyone's guess. If the OS/2 version of the Navigator comes to fruition, look for IBM to drop the WebExplorer. We'll probably find out with the final release of Merlin.

OTHER ITEMS

There are a host of other enhancements planned:

- Improved installation facilities, including support for plug n' play.

- Developer API extensions to simplify the migration of 32-bit programs to OS/2. It is still uncertain whether Merlin will support Win95 apps. At minimum, the new API set will simplify conversion.
- Support for industry standards such as OpenDoc, OpenGL, and JAVA. IBM scores a coup here by offering the first JAVA enabled operating system. It is rumored that Microsoft will only provide JAVA support for its web browser, not the operating system. In sharp contrast, OS/2 will include run-time code for JAVA applications, a JAVA Developers Kit, and a JAVA enabled web browser.
- Dual SMP (Symmetrical Processing) support - although welcomed, this is a curious feature in that OS/2 Warp Server is still without SMP support (although it is forthcoming shortly) and not many "client" machines come with dual processors.
- A new and improved BonusPak - the first BonusPak basically consisted of IBM Works (word processor, spreadsheet, graphics, and data base suite), the Internet Access Kit, and other communication applications (terminal emulator, fax machine, and CIM for OS/2). It is not clear what the new BonusPak will consist of but look for a few speech enabled apps to be included, such as an Internet telephone.

MARKETING

As always, IBM is gearing up to market Merlin to business (particularly banking, manufacturing, and insurance) and not to the home user. They're primarily targeting professional people who need to be "connected" to their business via computer. More and more, IBM is positioning OS/2 as an "industrial strength" operating system to run a business. From this perspective, the average home user will feel understandably abandoned. This is a shame since OS/2 has a lot to offer the home user in terms of stability and connectivity. IBM still has problems marketing to the general public and feels more confident selling to business instead.

With Merlin, it appears there will no longer be "red box/blue box" versions of the operating system (for customers with DOS and Windows/and for customers without). This will greatly help to eliminate confusion as to which version to purchase.

Pricing will be critical. Currently, the best prices for OS/2 Warp Connect (the immediate predecessor to Merlin) ranges from \$124 (red box) to \$159 (blue box). Although these prices may indicate what a new OS/2 user can expect to pay, existing customers will balk at such a fee to upgrade. An enticing price is necessary to assure users will want to upgrade.

(Merlin.....Continued on page 9)

(Merlin.....Continued from page 8)

The beta version of Merlin will be distributed on or shortly after May 22nd. Independent software vendors and European users are already signing up to receive the release. Beta test periods normally last 90 days, this means we can expect to see the final release of Merlin (or whatever the final product name is) sometime around September.

IBM is much less confrontational to Microsoft in selling OS/2 than it has been over the last few years. They more or less have capitulated to Bill Gate's marketing magic to capture the hearts and minds of the general public. Instead, IBM is content focusing on the corporate world. OS/2 has obviously evolved into a very rich and technically superior operating platform. Microsoft is years away from the type of features that will be taken for granted by the Merlin user (e.g., speech navigation, connectivity, JAVA support). IBM is simply hoping that the corporate user will become so dependent on OS/2 that they will also want to run it on their home computer. Will Merlin be the death of Windows? Hardly. But it will put Microsoft in a very bad light, particularly to corporate users, a market Microsoft is still struggling to penetrate.

So what does Merlin mean?

It has been two years since IBM issued a major release of OS/2; a short time to some, but an eternity by marketing standards. In order to convey its commitment to the product, IBM needed to issue a substantial release that will broaden its market share and enhance its technical credibility. In addition, IBM is beginning to describe future modifications/improvements to OS/2, far beyond Merlin. This type of talk is particularly encouraging to OS/2 users, both current and potential purchasers, who may be afraid of being abandoned by IBM. So, bottom-line, what does Merlin really mean? That IBM is deeply committed to the operating system and has no intention of backing off from it.

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(Computer.....Continued from page 1)

graphics. I certainly would like my *Street Atlas USA* and *Map and Go* maps to print faster—my *HP Laserjet 4 Plus* printer prints fast enough, but the computer takes a long time to compose the map and send it to the printer. And those *Corel Draw* pages take a long time to redraw as they get more and more complicated. Additionally, I think that *WebCompass*, which I reviewed in the May newsletter, would have benefited from a faster computer, but I am not sure, since the Internet itself is so slow. However my other applications—the *Microsoft* ones, *Word*, *Excel*, *Access*, *Publisher*, and *Visual Basic*; and the non-Microsoft applications, *Quicken*, *Family Tree Maker*, *Lotus Organizer*, *WinFax Pro & WinCom Pro*, *PerForm*, *OLX for Windows*, *AskSam*, *TextBridge Pro*, and many, many more—all move along at an acceptable speed. Now, since I don't play games often I can't judge the 386/33's performance there except to note that it did well with *Myst*. I am sure, however, there are multimedia titles out there that would be too much for it.

Perhaps the machine is not as fast as I think it is, and I have just gotten used to it; sort of like an old, comfortable shoe. However it certainly is more than adequate to put out this newsletter using *Microsoft Word* and *Publisher* for text and layout along with *Hewlett Packard* scanning software and *Corel Graphics 3* and *Corel Photo Paint 5* for graphics. But it will be an interesting comparison to make when the new Gateway P5-166 with 32 MB RAM arrives in a couple of days. ◆

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG Meets on the 3rd Thursday of the month (June 20) at 6:00 PM at the Reflectone Building. Directions: Proceed west on Waters from N. Dale Mabry across the railroad tracks (which is about 1 and 1/2 miles), take second left on Savarese (United Technologies bldg. is just beyond it). Proceed on Savarese until you reach the Reflectone bldg. Take the North door. If you need to ask directions, there is a security guard at the location. PLEASE SIGN IN WITH A SIG LEADER For more information call Connie Kincaid - 661-8185 - Leave a Message.

Communications SIG

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month (June 3) at 6 PM at the Reflectone Building. You must sign up to get on list and to get by security. See Microsoft Access SIG for directions to Reflectone. Contact Tom Cone at 949-9698 or Charles Howe: at 968-1207 or HOWE@INTNET.NET

Genealogy SIG

This SIG normally meets the third Wednesday of the month. (June 19) at 7:00 PM at a member's home. Contact SIG Leader Jenny Lind Olin. at 960-5723 for directions and RSVP.

Announcing SoftBrain 95

You've doubled your RAM, you've doubled your speed, you've even doubled your CPU. You're still hungry for more. What to do next?

Double Your Brain!

Since the introduction of the Altair in the mid-1970s, the power of the average personal computer has grown at an exponential rate. Today's notebook computer possesses orders of magnitude more processing power than the Apollo astronauts took with them to the moon. You and I wouldn't think of booting up with less than a PowerPC or Pentium; Neil Armstrong cruised a half-million miles and made One Giant Leap™ with TTL circuitry!

Despite the explosion in processing power and the accompanying plunge in costs for RAM and hard disk storage, many computer users are still disappointed with the performance of their personal computer systems.

"In 1985, when I bought my Mac 512K and an ImageWriter II," says Roy Cardiff, an early Mac adopter, "it took me about a day to write and edit a 10 page memo. Now that I have a Mac 8500 32/1080MB and a color laser printer, it takes me... about a day to type and edit a 10 page memo."

Indeed, our detailed analyses show that over the course of a 24 hour period, 99.94% of all processor cycles are spent waiting for you, the computer user, to do something. In other words, the bottleneck today is not in your computer--it is in your head.

The lesson is plain. If you want to get more out of your computer, you're going to have to improve *your* performance. To

help you along, we've developed **SoftBRAIN 95**.

In our beta testing, we have found that **SoftBRAIN 95** significantly increases the rate at which experienced users are able to get work done with their computers:

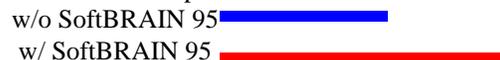
Good ideas per hour:



Bad ideas per hour:



Coherent sentences per hour:



(Your results may vary. We've noticed that people with a general propensity for bad ideas produce a majority of bad ideas with **SoftBRAIN 95**. We're working on a fix. In the meantime, we do not recommend **SoftBRAIN 95** for idiots, MBAs, or government employees.)

Look for **SoftBRAIN 95** at your local retailer/mail order house. Available soon!

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We acknowledge the following firms for their support

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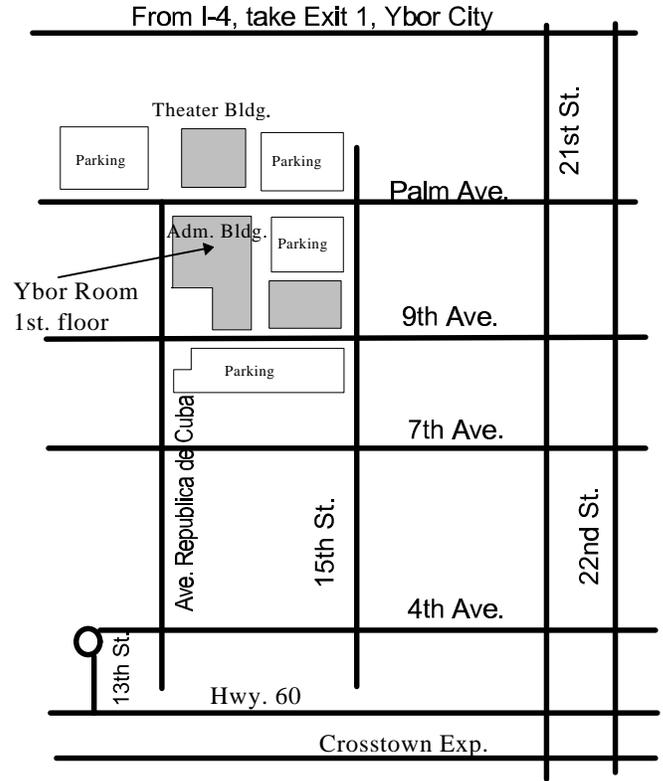
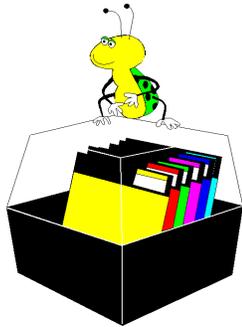
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\$60 Corporate = 3 employees + \$20 each add'l employees

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MEMBERS HELP-LINE

The following phone list is provided for our Tampa PC Users Group members in an effort to establish local support for those frustrating times which we have all encountered while using our PC's. Please note that these are members that have volunteered to help you; treat them in a courteous manner. Be sure to ask if it is convenient for them to help you now, or if you should call another time. It would also be helpful to have your documentation and have it handy when you call. (Don't expect help if your software is an illegal copy or you do not have documentation!) TPCUG is not responsible for the information or advice provided by volunteers. Volunteers may or may not be experts in the subject matter. You are on your own with any advice received. Be aware also that some of these volunteers may be consultants in their area of expertise. If you are interested in volunteering to answer members questions, either leave a message on the BBS or fill in the forms provided for this purpose at the meetings.

Name:	Phone No:	Day:	Time:	For help on:
Ed Buzza	685-5898	Mon-Sun	10am-9pm	WordPerfect 5.1 and 6 for DOS
Jim Clark	986-3888	Mon-Sun	10am-9pm	Express Publisher for Windows, Word for Windows
Charles Howe	968-1207	Mon-Fri.	9am-5pm	Modems, BBS & Internet
Tom Cone	949-3716	Mon-Sun.	7pm-9pm	Alpha 4 & Compuserve
Larry Anders	989-9119	Mon-Sun.	6pm-9pm	Lotus 123 for Windows
Connie Kincaid	661-8185	Eve.+ Weekends	Leave message	MS Professional Office Suite
Merle Nicholson	879-3602	Mon-Fri.	6:00pm-10:00pm	Memory Management, DOS, Windows Norton Desktop Visual Basic 3
John Meroth	831-7878	Mon-Sun	Anytime except 6-8pm	OS/2, Database (general) Clarion, DTP (limited)



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