WHAT'S NEW

—By Bob Ward, Secretary

This has been an interesting month for me and SLO Bytes. We cut it about as close as possible in teleporting a speaker into our last meeting. Hartley Macklin from Delrina flew in from Canada the day of the meeting; arrival time to SLO airport 1:30pm.... NOT!!! I think SLO just wants to emulate O'Hare, or so the passengers thought as they continued to circle the airport. The pilot finally saw me on the ground frantically looking at my watch while wearing a permanent path in the concrete. That was enough for them. The plane landed, Hartley was promptly pushed into my car and we arrived at the door to Fisher 286 at 2:46 pm. It took me the rest of the meeting for my vital signs to stabilize.

Then we had to get him back to the airport by 5:00pm for his flight out to Salt Lake City, Utah... or so we thought. The outgoing flight was delayed for an hour which trashed his connection at San Francisco. So he was re-routed through LA to Utah. It took longer to get his tickets changed than it probably took to get to LA. By this time, the officers "Pig SIG" was well into the 4th course at the Sizzler, so I said; "forget it, Hartley's buying me dinner at the Spirit." (actually he offered). Since my school keys were also at the Sizzler I had to go back and get them after dinner, then back to school to get my umbrella. This is after Kathy had words with me for not letting them know I was staying at the airport rather then showing up late to

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

—By Dick Brandlon, SLO Bytes PCUG

I'll never forget freshman history. Each day, Dr. White, a seriously intelligent person with a voice like a magpie, would swoop in on her broom and subject us to one incredibly boring lecture after another. Finally, when slumber permitted us to get some relief from the unending drone, she would bang a large volume of Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire on the metal surface of the lab table and send us all into shock and/or cardiac arrest.

Learning history no longer has to be like this, thank heavens, and the latest proof of the pudding is "Colonization" from the imaginative mind of Sid Meier and Microprose, who gave us "Civilization" and "Railroad Tycoon", both of which were as

CLUB CALENDAR

MARCH 5
Hartly Macklin from Delrina will demonstrate their latest software WinFax Pro

APRIL 2
Visual Reality will demonstrate their 3-D presentation software

MAY 7
Call America, a local Internet Provider, will be demonstrating the Information Super Hwy.

IN THIS ISSUE . . . ◆ ◆ ◆

APRIL WINDOWS SIG
—By Bob Hunt, SLO Bytes PCUG

The Program Manager, the first window presented upon starting Windows, is a window containing other windows or "groups" which contain all the icons or "buttons" we use to start our applications. It serves mainly as a fancy menu for running your programs. It "remembers" for you the commands, switches, and parameters necessary to execute your applications, and you can "teach" it how, where, when, and what to run.

The instrument to manage your data storage system (hard disk) is the Windows File Manager. The sets of machine language instructions which run our computers are presented to us as "names" using the DOS eight-dot-three format, that we call "files".
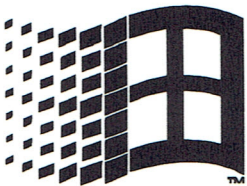
The average PC running Windows will customarily contain hundreds, or even thousands of files. How in the world can the user keep track of all this stuff? And should he or she even have to? The fact is, most of us PC users must also be our own systems manager. This can also be true, even in offices or businesses that don't have a professional network administrator or MIS department. If we don't at least attempt some organization of all these files, we will surely pay the price eventually, if not in outright disaster, then in irritation and frustration when things go wrong unexpectedly and inexplicably.

Every installation routine for Windows applications that I've ever seen, offers you a choice of drive and directory to which the installation program will place the application's sets of files. You are usually presented with a dialog entry field suggesting a drive and directory, such as: "C:\PRGMNAME\". Pressing Enter or clicking OK will accept the suggested drive and directory, and the program files will begin to be installed there.

ALERT! Before you press that Enter or click OK, this may be the only interactive point during the installation! This is the point at which you have some control of where on your hard drive the program's files will be installed. Should you mindlessly accept the suggested drive and directory? If nothing else, our computers are the ideal information filing system. Filing cabinets can be instantly created, duplicated, expanded, divided, sub-divided, drawers and folders can be added, and folders within folders, ad infinitum. And all of these elements can be named, numbered, renamed, copied, moved, or deleted with just a few keystrokes and perhaps a bit of planning. Use the Windows File Manager to find the best place to install new programs, to see how much space you have, to set up and track your file organization, and to perform regular housekeeping maintenance.

Here are a few of my suggestions for organizing a hard drive. I divide large drives into two or three logical partitions. This keeps cluster size small and helps to simplify backups. Normally you won't have the opportunity to do this unless you are installing a new drive or are inclined to completely re-install the existing one. That is an option worth considering if you have a disordered system and have the time and desire.

I create several short-named directories in the root of each partition which will hold sub-directories for similar types of applications. Such as BUS for business programs, DOS for system files and utility programs, ART or DRW for graphics and drawing applications, COM for communications, DAT for database management, WRD or PUB for publishing and word processing, FUN for games, etc.. The main directories receive only other sub-directories for similar programs, such as: C:\DRW\WINDRAW, C:\DRW\COREL, C:\DRW\MORPH, C:\DRW\HIJAK, C:\DRW\DCAD. These are "sister" directories under the "Mother" directory C:\DRW, each accept the files of separate applications (in this case graphics programs), which in turn may use one to several "daughter" directories for their ancillary files. This

LIBRARY NEWS
—By Bob Ward, Secretary

There are times I wish every would-be shareware programmer would take the same month off on vacation. I've got so much shareware I have difficulty getting it loaded on to disks for the meetings.

Here's several more for your collection:

#632
ICONMOL4 - starts programs & moves icons on desktop in Windows.
WIT - Windows in Time: Historical timeline.
WITBT1 - Windows in Time: Biblical timeline.
FYLBX6 - add-in file manager for Word for Windows 6.0.
CLOCK242 - Time Capture: Electric employee time clock.
FTPSRV10 - Serv-U V1.0 FTP server for Winsock.
TWSK20B - Trumpet/Winsock 2.0b Internet Communications program.

#633
ACT-21 Archive comparison table.
AUNX12 - Audio Nexus 1.2, music library records.
EI30 - Easy Install 3.0 - Installation disk maker.
FLASH_30 - make flash cards in Windows for Study.
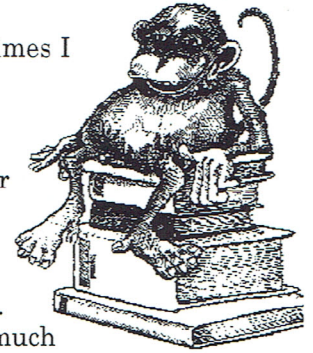**HTMLCO16.ZIP** - Convert HTML files (Internet) to ASCII with formatting.
INET1 - Internet Magazine Issue #1.
SEED10 - garden seed database, journal/planting schedule.
TSHW12 - Tardeshow 1.2, PCX sequencer for demos. VFD_16D - FLC/FLI/AVI <—> BMP, TGA, GIF cross compiler.

#634
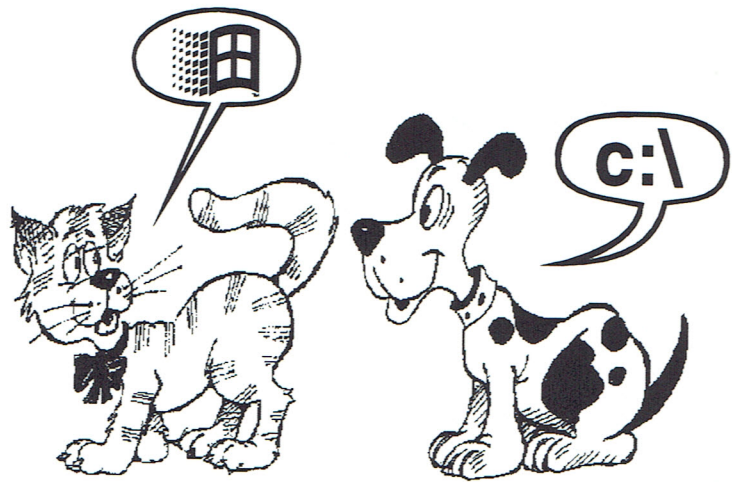**PSP30** - PaintShop Pro for windows V3.0.

THE BIG PICTURE

—By Gus Thomasson, SLO Bytes PCUG

As I look out over the oblivion of empty chairs of my own deserted beginner's DOS forum out through the door to the glorious Window's forum filled to capacity with enthralled Windows users, I am compelled to come to the defense of ancient and venerable old DOS.

First, I too use Windows. Graphical User Interfaces (GUI). They are at present the **CAT'S MEOW.** I have been using them in one form or another since the most excellent GEM operating systems emerged at about the same time as the MAC interface. GEM, written by the now defunct Digital Research Corporation, has always seemed to be a more intuitive graphic interface than the complex Windows shell. GeoWorks is another (GUI) which failed in the market place, and yet somehow offered the user a better organized system. These GUI's failed because of the cumbersome 640K barrier which made it so difficult to do any real work once you had all the elements of the GUI loaded in RAM. There was just no room left to run advanced applications with all the elements and over-

head of the GUI. Microsoft developed a way around this 640K barrier, a way to address all the system memory and thus became the dominant force in the GUI world. Of course, the fact that Microsoft wrote the operating system under which the thing operated had nothing to do with it. Suuurrrrrrrrrrrre!

Aside from the obvious advantage of the graphic user interface (GUI), the most valuable aspect of Windows is the little appreciated or understood fact that the program runs in a strange and mysterious mode of operation called the *protected mode*. In this mode the operating system allows for the creation of multiple DOS machines, actually 8087's with in RAM. The more RAM, the more virtual machines can be simultaneously created. All of this is wonderful of course if you can keep track of things. Protected mode operations have been around since the advent of the 8086 but were not used due to memory and interface problems. Deskview has a DOS based package that ran in the protected mode way back in the 80's.

All of these systems use DOS. They are all a part of the BIG picture of computer usage, but only a part. The truth is, many computer operations are not possible within the protected mode of operation. Installations, booting, disk reads and writes, copying and formatting are all *real mode* operations which explain why these operations are so slow and inefficient under Windows. Windows actually calls the real mode to accomplish many operations and then switches back into the protected mode. The thing that killed the 80286

chip was not the fact that is could not run in the protected mode, indeed it could, but once in the mode it could not get back without a cold boot.

I see Windows as just window dressing for DOS. In reality, Windows is a fancy menu system that can perform many tasks simultaneously. For real understanding and broad based knowledge, a well rounded computer scientist or computer user should see the big picture or at least be exposed to it. For that, one needs to understand DOS, file structure, and batch files. After all, Windows uses all of these structures as do main frames, Macintoshes and all other computer systems. Someone once said, "a computer is a wonderful servant but a terrible master." Therefore, to have your system serve, you must understand DOS, realize where Windows is placing your files and data, and be able to manipulate this knowledge into a structure which makes YOU the master of your computer, not its servant. (Macintosh users take note!)

Why do I teach the beginners class on computer theory, DOS and batch files? Because it is the basis from which you can totally understand your system. Today Windows is hot, tomorrow Chicago, the day after something else but the theory under which these platforms operate and are developed will remain the same; a basis on which to build a solid foundation for growth and understanding. These things we all find useful, even seasoned old advanced users.

Geo W Thomasson

WHAT'S NEW
Continued from page 1

the Sizzler. Gee, when I called the Sizzler to tell them one of the Pigs was late for the SIGS, he wrote me off as an obscene phone call. Actually, I really knew what was in the back of her mind... "what am I going to write about, HE's not here." Look at the newsletter and you'll see her column is very short this month. So it was an interesting SLO Bytes meeting, especially for me.

What do they call those people that keep doing themselves in, masochists? I always thought that meant to chew your food well. Anyway, my next project for SLO Bytes was upgrading the BBS software to Wildcat 4.01. Hey that wasn't too bad, although the SYSOP menu you don't see was DIFFERENT than with the old version. Not only was it different, but half the commands didn't work! Seems the old version was too easy to set up so they decided to change the way I could delete messages that had been "killed" by the receiver on the BBS. Drop to DOS? I wanted to change that command to DROP DEAD! Another "change for the better" only if you had a PHD in Wildcat software menus.

For those of you who use an "offline" reader to log-on and off quickly from the BBS... well, that didn't work either. Now, instead of TOMCat, its called WC-Mail. Well with perseverance, fortitude, and a lot of luck, I did get all those commands to work for me. (categorically, I think?) So I thought I'd rechew my food some more (masochist) and try setting up DOORS on the BBS. You say, "what are doors?" Well, they're 3 parts headache, 2 parts indigestion, and 1 part logic. Actually they are used so a BBS user can play games, etc. while the BBS remains in the background. Once you're done playing, Wildcat comes back on-line and you continue with the BBS. I've come to the conclusion that the real game playing starts when the SYSOP tries setting them up. I've just about got that mastered and now we need to find something neat to do with them. (My wife's answer to that is, don't use

them! One should always follow a wife's suggestion, but who said life was easy) I've been exploring a couple trivia door games. Hopefully this will all come to pass by the next meeting and the BBS will be running exactly the way I want.

Other things to look for... remember we save our newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format. Acrobat Reader 2.0 for Windows is now in the library, an upgrade from 1.0. The DOS version remains at Ver 1.0. They may be purchased from Bill at the library ($2 for the DOS and Windows version) or you can copy the two disks during the meeting. They are also on the BBS in the "newsletter" file section. This section can be seen only by club members. Feel free to download any past newsletters and the readers for both DOS and Windows. Personally I'd use the Windows version so you can take advantage of all the cut and paste capabilities.

We are always looking for more members to review software for the newsletter. If you have a little writing talent and organizational ability then we have some work for you. Rewards are your name in print and you get to keep the software. We give you about 3 to 4 weeks to run the software, write about it and submit the article to me. We are looking for honest, straight forward reviews and reviewers. Now wait a second, I can just hear it; "so ya think I'm not honest... blam, crash, bang, ouch!

Have you modem users been taking advantage of the San Luis Obispo County Library on-line system? Call 781-1261 and follow the prompts. (9600 baud) Look for books, see which library has them, place them on reserve, see what you have checked out, etc. Our family uses it all the time. We can do it all over the phone except for paying the late charges for overdue books. I'll see if Dave McCaleb will add it to Coast-Net for those outside the 781 SLO calling area.

This coming month we'll see some exciting multimedia software from Visual Reality. From the name of the company you can guess it's a little different than the multimedia we've seen before. This stuff is 3-D, or so

I'm guessing. Yes they will be here from Southern California. Hopefully they are driving. I need a break from the SLO airport.

See ya at the meeting... enjoy the rain. —Bob

WINDOWS SIG
Continued from page 2

method keeps the number of directories in the root to a minimum. Remember the root has a limit of 512 files and directories including hidden system files, while sub-directories have no such limit. With hierarchical branches collapsed the file list on the left side of drive window will be shorter.

TIP OF THE MONTH
Check "Indicate Expandable Branches" in the Tree menu of the File Manager. This puts plus (+) marks in the little file icons on the tree view (on the left side) when lower branches are present but the view is collapsed. Double-click the little plus marks to expand the view, and double-click the little minus (-) marks to collapse the branches below.

Go to Options, Font in the File Manager menu bar to increase the readability of File Manager drive windows. Pick a typeface you like and a larger size, and I recommend you check the Lowercase box for legibility and display space preservation. Uncheck Save Settings on Exit under the Options menu then hold Ctrl-Shift while you click File, Exit to save your setup. I'll present more File Manager tips and features in future articles. Spend some time learning your way around the Windows File Manager, you'll soon gain a much better knowledge of your computer. The more familiar you are with the File Manager, the more you'll appreciate it's replacement, the Explorer when it finally arrives with Windows 95 later this year.

See you next month.

Robert C Hunt

STEP RIGHT UP FOLKS, IT'S FREE!

—By Bob Hunt, SLO Bytes PCUG

If you are presently using any version of MS-DOS prior to 6.22, I strongly urge you to upgrade right away. Your operating system is arguably the most important program you own, without it, nothing else at all will run. It is important to me to be as current as possible with software so basic to my system, and to upgrade is cheap and may even be free!

At the DOS prompt, type "ver" and press "Enter" to find the version you are now running. If it is 6.0 or above the Microsoft has a free upgrade for you which they call "Step-Up". You can download it from the Microsoft BBS (206-637-9009) or Compuserve. You can also buy it from most computer or software dealers for about $9.95. The following text is from the file "NEW4_622.TXT" which I downloaded recently from the Microsoft BBS: Why Step Up to MS-DOS 6.22?

STEP UP

The MS-DOS 6.22 Step-Up improves on the safety and ease-of-use provided by MS-DOS 6.x, and is designed for users of Microsoft MS-DOS 6.0, 6.2 or 6.21 only.

This file explains what functional changes your system undergoes when you use the MS-DOS 6.22 Step-Up; these changes depend on your current version of MS-DOS. This file also describes features in MS-DOS 6.22 that are new since MS-DOS 6.0.

If you currently have:
MS-DOS 5.0 or before

If you have MS-DOS 5.0 or earlier, you cannot use the Step-Up to install MS-DOS 6.22. To upgrade your version of MS-DOS, obtain the full MS-DOS 6.22 Upgrade instead.

MS-DOS 6.0

You'll gain all of the MS-DOS 6.22 features and functionality, including Data Protection Technology. You can either keep DoubleSpace compression or replace it with DriveSpace compression.

MS-DOS 6.2

You will not gain any incremental functionality other than the opportunity to convert your DoubleSpace drives to DriveSpace.

MS-DOS 6.21

You'll gain the DriveSpace compression technology and all of the other features listed in the following section.

SAFETY FEATURES & ENHANCEMENTS

— MS-DOS 6.22 includes ScanDisk, a utility that detects, diagnoses, and repairs disk errors on uncompressed drives as well as both DriveSpace and DoubleSpace compressed drives. ScanDisk can repair file system errors (such as crosslinks and lost clusters) and physical disk errors. ScanDisk keeps a log of its repairs and enables you to undo any of the changes it made. DriveSpace runs ScanDisk to check the reliability of your disk before it begins compression. You can also run ScanDisk yourself by typing SCANDISK at the command prompt.

— DriveSpace includes DoubleGuard safety checking, which protects your data by verifying data integrity before writing to the disk. If DoubleGuard detects that the memory DriveSpace is using has been written to by another program, it notifies you and recommends you shut down your computer immediately to minimize damage to your data.

— The MS-DOS extended-memory manager, HIMEM, automatically tests your system's memory when you start your computer. This test can identify memory chips that are no longer reliable. (To turn off the memory test, add the /TESTMEM:OFF switch to the command that starts HIMEM.)
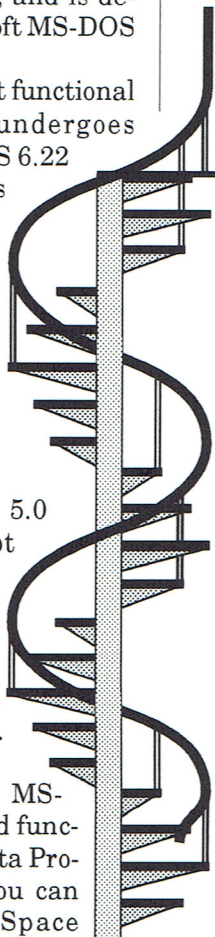
— Setup now configures SMARTDrive as a read-only cache by default. Even if write-caching is enabled, MS-DOS does not display the command prompt until SMARTDrive has written its cache to your disk.

— The MOVE, COPY, and XCOPY commands now ask you for confirmation before copying a file over another file that has the same name. (However, to maintain compatibility with existing MS-DOS batch files, these commands do not prompt for confirmation before overwriting a file when issued from a batch file.)

EASE-OF-USE FEATURES & OTHER ENHANCEMENTS

— SMARTDrive now caches CD-ROM drives.

— DriveSpace automatically mounts compressed floppy disks and other compressed removable media — even when Windows is running. * You can easily uncompress a DriveSpace drive or even completely uninstall DriveSpace from memory.

— You can easily convert a DoubleSpace drive to DriveSpace format. * Interactive Start (the F8 key) has been enhanced so that you can now bypass or carry out individual commands in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file and other batch programs. (In MS-DOS 6, this capability was limited to your CONFIG.SYS file.) This feature makes it easier to troubleshoot your system configuration.

— The DISKCOPY command now uses your hard disk as an interim storage area, which makes copying from one floppy disk to another faster and easier.

— Microsoft Defragmenter makes better use of your computer's extended memory, so it can now defragment much larger disks and disks containing many more files and directories.

— The output of the DIR, MEM, CHKDSK, and FORMAT commands is much easier to read, since it now includes thousands separators when displaying numbers greater than 999. For example, "1000000 bytes free" now reads "1,000,000 bytes free."
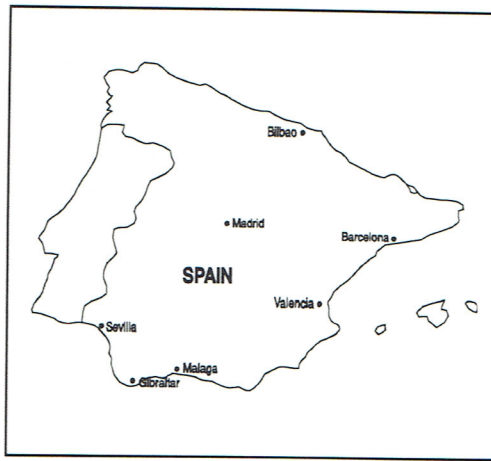
HISTORY
Continued from page 1

instructive as they were entertaining. In his latest game, however, Meier takes himself a bit more seriously, departing from such puzzlers as having covered wagons crossing the plains in ancient Egypt and teepees showing the size of villages in Babylonia. "Colonization" is the most authentic game I have ever seen, from the graphics to the music to the challenges faced by the players.

You begin as the emissary of a king (you may pick one from England, France, Spain or Holland) and your assignment, if you choose to accept it, is to increase his prestige and pick up a bundle for yourself by establishing colonies in the New World. Each country, true to history, has one feature the others lack, from sheer numbers (England) to an ability to make friends with the natives (France). Your ship leaves home port and, as it nears the New World, you take command. Note: The first interesting choice you'll make is whether you want an actual model of the east coast of America or whether you prefer a genuine "New World" where nothing about it is known - as was true in the fifteenth century.

One thing you'll find out quickly: easy this game is not. As would be expected in something as complex as "Colonization", there is a vast amount for you to think about as you play. Such things, for example, as how to deal with the natives, who are in an excellent position to either make your life more pleasant or wipe you out completely, and how to carve out your place in the face of intense competition from the other European powers, who are, on the whole, as greedy as you are.

There is also the continuing problem of how to best use the labor and materials at your disposal, whether it be from indentured servants, "converted" natives , convicts, or skilled artisans from the Old World who wish to establish themselves in the New.

The colonists are as varied as you want them to be. You may populate churches with ministers, schools and colleges with teachers and dis-

tilleries with rum makers. An interesting option is the increasing level of complexity available to you in each facility you create. Thus, a blacksmith's house can be enlarged to a shop and then to an ironworks. The more materials and labor you have, the more products you can produce. Keeping on good terms with the natives becomes more and more of a juggling act as you expand your territory at the expense of theirs.

The good part of all this is that the manual - all 132 pages of it - is well written and easy to follow and keeps you from making too many fatal errors, like getting cocky about how strong you are. For those who are in the habit of just diving in to a game, a word of caution is in order: There is simply too much in "Colonization" for the average player to grasp by trial and error. I advise reading the manual.

So here is a game that treats you as a thinking adult, not a semi-literate moron who has been suckered into parting with $59.95 or so for another piece of software. (I saw it at Costco for about $48) If there is a political slant to the game, it leans toward preservation of the environment and respect for the indigenous population. In other words, freedom and dignity can be more important that sheer cash accumulation. There isn't a lot of "white hat, black hat" kind of thinking in this game, and that's a plus as far as I'm concerned.
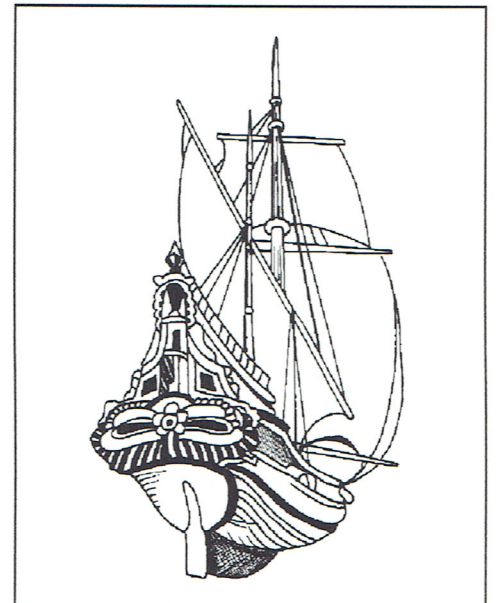
Your ships keep shuttling from the New World to the Old, to trade, to pick up new colonists and supplies, which always seem to be running low. Your king, being a practi-

cal man, is always looking for ways to get more money out of the colonies, usually by higher taxes. This can bring about, well, what it actually brought about - revolution. However, you'd better be pretty certain you have the men and materials to fight it to a successful conclusion.

The game ends in 1800, or when you have successfully established an independent colony in the New World. Your score is recorded and, in most instances, you get to have something named after you - like a flower, a building or, in my case, a semi-poisonous insect. You can naturally save the game at any point, or simply quit and go back to DOS.

"Colonization" is pretty big - about four and a half meg - but it's certainly worth the space on your disk. The music is especially noteworthy, as I mentioned before. There are hornpipes, early English classical music, jigs, Indian music and more. You are also given the ability to pick out any selection to hear at any time. Graphics are clean and maps easy to read. After a while, when you get to the point where you can "win" the game as French, Spanish, Dutch or English colonists, you can give the manual away, but I wouldn't be hasty. The number of possible variations is mind-boggling.

Verdict: A big hooray for Microprose's Sid Meier. If you're interested in a stimulating way to relive colonial history, has he got a present for you!

QUICKEN DELUXE REALLY IS!

—By Bob Illman, SLO Bytes PCUG

I admit it. I like Quicken stuff a lot. I have used it since 1989, and it remains the industry standard for Home Financial Management. (Quickbooks, a companion product, is great for small businesses. I reviewed an early DOS version of Quickbooks a couple of years ago.) What I really like about the Quicken family of products is that it would seem that Intuit, the parent company, actually takes user comments into account each time that there is a new version released.

While I was interested in breaking the shrink-wrap on Quicken Deluxe, I was at the same time plagued by two nagging thoughts. First, how do you review a product that is designed to be as simple or complex as you, the user want it to be? Quicken, after all, starts out looking like a simple check register, and grows from there. Earlier releases, such as Quicken 3.0 for Windows, which I was using when I opened Quicken

Deluxe, had evolved into financial management systems which would graph, analyze, and project your financial picture. One could keep track of loan balances, have hidden savings accounts, create budget spread sheets, and so on. So what do I tell people?

Second, Quicken seemed to me to be all that it could be. How could Intuit add anything else to Quicken 3.0 for Windows? Do you see my concerns in writing this?Now, a month later, I still have the first concern, but I can at least tell you what is different about Quicken Deluxe. Actually it is a new release of Quicken for windows, Quicken 4.0 for Windows, with additional modules or "Add Ons", as they are called, to do other nifty things besides track what money you have. One, for example, is called Quicken Home Inventory. As an add on, it really has nothing to do with your finances, but it does give you a VEERRY comprehensive series of

screens so that you can use your computer to keep track of what you own. That way, when you have a fire or flood, and your stuff burns, including your computer, you can point to the smoking hunk of plastic which once functioned as your CPU, and say, "Yep, I stored it all in there." My thought on Quicken Home Inventory is that someone who would use it probably already has created a data base just like this on his or her own. Most people would rather turn on the Video Cam and just take a picture of all the junk they have. (People who are embarrassed about how bad they keep house probably don't know what all they own, and wouldn't fill out a Home Inventory, let alone take a picture of it.) So, I see a limited usefulness for this "Deluxe" addition.

Also included are additional "Add Ons", including an on-line Stock Quote service, which not only costs money for the 900 Number, but seems to duplicate what most people already have through the on-line service of their choice. (You can get your quotes

SMALL BUSINESS ACCOUNTING 101

—By Gary Peterson, SLO Bytes PCUG

We have recently had demonstrated for us at club meetings two state-of-the-art business accounting systems, Peachtree Accounting ver3 and Intuit's Quickbooks ver3. Both are Windows programs. There was more interest in these programs than I had anticipated. This led me to the conclusion that SLO-Bytes has it's share of small business owners.

A little history......As a recent graduate of the"Scolari's School of Bookkeeping" (you put all of your receipts in a Scolari's grocery bag, and sort them out and post them at the end of the year!), I first got my computer in 1993 and tried three different accounting programs, Peachtree ver1-win, Quicken ver3-win and Quickbooks ver1 available only in Dos. I quickly (pun intended) concluded that Quicken lacked the invoicing and accounts receivable capabilities necessary for a small business. Despite having an accounting background, I could not even get started in Peachtree. This was due, I am sure, to my inexperience with computers. It's interface and procedure was just not intuitive (second pun intended). I settled on Quickbooks, despite it's inherently clunky Dos interface. As soon as the Windows version of Quickbooks came out, I upgraded to it as well as the subsequent versions. I now use Quickbooks ver3-win. I was very excited at the January SLO-Bytes meeting to see the latest version of Peachtree was nothing like the first version that I had
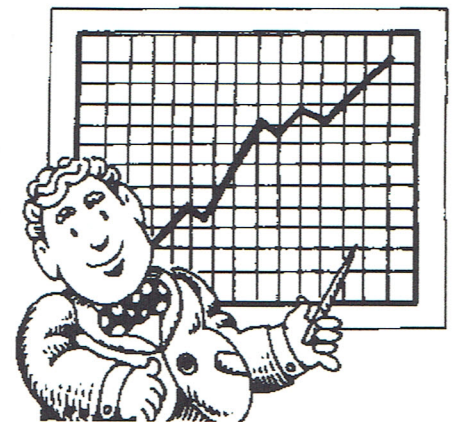
tried 1½ years prior. It has grown into a very easy-to-use, yet, powerful Windows program.

SETUP

Setting up an accounting program is widely recognized as being the most difficult task. Peachtree has taken a lesson from Quickbooks and has made setup a painless and easy task. There is a goofy little accountant icon that pops up to offer useful advice to help you make setup choices. There are also several (over 50) pre-defined accounts of various types of businesses that you can copy all or some of to get going more quickly. The chart of accounts is the backbone of any bookkeeping system and provides the means to separate and track your income and expenses. Thought and care should be used when building this foundation to your financial books. Both Quickbooks and Peachtree now have this quick setup feature and offer plenty of advice on and samples of accounting structures.

ACCOUNTING 101
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REPORTS

Regardless of how well your financial information is sorted, it is useless unless you can see it in an organized and descriptive form. Examples of simple and common reports are: Balance Sheets, Profit and Loss Statements, Checkbook Registers and Budget Reports. Some of the more sophisticated reports are: Inventory Reports, Sales Reports, Delinquent Accounts Aging, Payroll Reports, Cash Flow Predictions and Customer Histories. Both programs do this equally well and offer numerous pre-defined reports, most of which are standardized within the accounting industry. However, there is a major difference in how these two programs allow you to "customize" reports, invoices, and other forms. Quickbooks' idea of letting you customize a form or report is giving you the option of inserting/deleting some of the columns of information in their 100% pre-defined forms. Peachtree not only allows you to put in any informational field that you see fit, but you can put it anywhere you want on the page. In fact, you can place any graphic, drawing symbols, or data field anywhere on the page with any font size or feature. 100% design flexibility! This allows you to design a custom invoice, for example, without using pre-printed forms. Or you can design a "Sales Report" that visually corresponds to the written form that the sales people fill out. With Peachtree, you can have a form that contains the exact same data as another but is completely different looking. You can spot a Quickbooks user a mile away with it's pre-defined forms. This is a major shortcoming of Quickbooks that if not remedied, will probably cause me to switch to Peachtree.

ADVANTAGES

For a small businessman, the real advantages of using an accounting system is the time savings in doing repetitive tasks. For example, writing that mortgage check every month is only two mouse clicks to print the check and post the portions of the total to various expense accounts. Both programs offer abilities to retain memorized reports and transactions to bring forward next month for use. In addition, they can do automated tasks such as recording automated bank transactions. And of course, at any given time, you have accurate up-to-date financial information about your business. Both programs offer various graph reports that can graphically describe data. Peachtree has a small advantage in some of the PIM features that it offers. You can set up calendar based account based reminders. For example, if your supply of widgets drop below a pre-defined quantity, you will be notified to order more. Or more importantly, if the amount of money in your "Computer Equipment" account falls below, say, $2000, you can get a reminder to transfer funds from "Food and Family Allowance" to bolster the ailing "Computer Equipment" account. Handy, eh?

THE BOTTOM LINE

So what are the big differences between these two programs? Quickbooks is still the easiest to use, has the friendliest, intuitive interface, and requires the least amount of traditional accounting background. While both are based on the traditional "double-entry" accounting principle, Peachtree still uses more of the historic terms and forms. Quickbooks uses more "plain English" to accomplish tasks. The screens for data entry look like the form that prints. For example, when you write a check on screen, it looks exactly like the check that prints, when you fill out the invoice on screen, it looks like the invoice that goes to your customer. Peachtree is the more powerful and comprehensive of the two. It has more flexible and stronger features that are appropriate for businesses such as a Hardware store or a Real Estate or Legal office with multiple partners and employees. If you have a sole proprietorship business with few employees or small, simple inventory, Quickbooks is easier to learn and use. It is ideally suited for the small self-employed Contractor, Architect, Computer Consultant and other service oriented business.

ONE LAST OBSERVATION

Despite their individual strong points, these two programs are moving closer to each other in feel and features. They seem to be "borrowing" from each other strong points.

QUICKEN
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through CompuServe and feed them right into Quicken via this Add On and avoid the 900 Number.) Tax Link Assistant allows you to assign Quicken transactions with category designations to specific IRS categories on the 1040 form. Most people won't use this feature, though it is slick. Finally, the Deluxe means that you get a booklet of tips to help you work smarter. Most of us who have used Quicken products would benefit from reading this. We could find out what all those manuals that we never read were suggesting that we do to work faster in Quicken. By the way, the manuals with this release are the typically superb publications typical of earlier Quicken releases. They really are worth reading.

Although the Add Ons don't exactly peak my interest, the Quicken Update continues the tradition of giving us bells and whistles. The desktop is a little more user friendly than earlier releases. You can click on a button and go to any of your various accounts within the group or "datafile" as quicken calls it. Quicken 4.0 for Windows does "snapshots" of your finances, which means that you get a whole screen full of pie charts, graphs, and other pictorial aids good for impressing your mother-in-law. Really! The colors and charts look so impressive! You could owe everyone, but "Snapshots" makes it look so good!

Quicken Deluxe sells on the street for about $59.00. Without the "Add Ons", Quicken 4.0 for Windows is $10 to $15 less. Buy 4.0, save the difference and take your mother-in-law to dinner. Then, don't forget to record the expense!

CLUB INFORMATION

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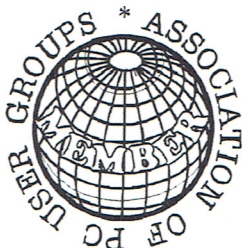**Los Osos, CA. 93402**
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MEETING TIMES

General meetings are held the 1st Sunday of every month, unless noted otherwise in the newsletter calendar, at 2:45 pm in the Cal Poly University Biology Department, Fisher Hall 286.

Special Interest Groups (SIGS) meet at 1:00 to 2:30 pm.

General Information SIG:
Fisher Hall 286

New computer user SIG:
Fisher Hall 289

Windows SIG:
Fisher Hall 287

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CLUB TREASURER'S REPORT

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March, 1995

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