

## PENN-OHIO USERS GROUP

calculate pi to the tenth place, but the cost of a can of beans overwhelmed it.

Today, people complain that personal computers aren't user-friendly, but the slide rule was a nightmare. The thing just didn't make sense.

But what really killed the slide rule--perhaps even more than the calculator--was its nerdiness.

You never saw pictures of hot cars or sexy babes on slide rules. It was never, "Oh, dig this cool new slide rule," but always, "Quick, let's cross the street--here comes that goofy Poindexter with his new slide rule."

The slide rule was associated with engineers, chem lab, Coke bottle eyeglasses and plastic pen holders. Some poor misguided unfortunates even hung them from their belts, like scabbards. You knew what THESE guys were doing on prom night.

With all these built-in problems, was it any surprise that the first pocket calculators were welcomed like the Allies storming the beach at Normandy?

So let us not mourn the passing of the slide rule, but be thankful it's gone, properly buried, and sliding off into history.

**Penn-Ohio Users Group**  
71 Elm Street  
Struthers, OH 44471

## THE FLOPPY COPY

The Newsletter of the Penn-Ohio Users Group  
Dedicated to the TI and IBM user

Pres: Ed Luptak 755-7691 VP: Dave Tranovich 533-3593  
Sect: Frank DePinto 743-0421 Treas: Herb Sooss 743-1301

Volume 7 APRIL 1990 Number 4

NEXT MEETING: APRIL 9, 1990  
7:00 pm  
AMERICAN RED CROSS BUILDING  
Fifth and Wood Streets

membership and \$10 per year for an associate membership. Dues go to the cost of newsletter publication and library expenses.

### VP'S CORNER

By Dave Tranovich

As most of you know, Ed recently had some health troubles. That is why I am putting together this newsletter. I really would have liked to get something a little more seaty together but due to the time involved and the fact that my house is torn up with a remodeling project (my wife is unhappy with that), I just did not have the time to put into it. I appologize that this newsletter does not meet our normal standards. Things should be more on track next month.

### MINUTES & COMMENTS

by Frank DePinto

Its that time again, but I promise that this will be a short report. Now that the weather is getting better, I'm spending my excess time outdoors trying to clean-up and get the camper ready for another season. Anyway, the meeting was called to order by President Ed about 7:15. We met downstairs at the Red Cross because the upstairs was being carpeted. This was one of our larger gatherings as there were ten members and two guests. We're always happy to have guests

### CREDITS

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### INVITATION

Please take this opportunity to challenge yourself. Write an article for the newsletter. Send your copy to Ed Luptak, 71 Elm Street, Struthers, Ohio 44471 or, if you wish to send it via modem, call Ed at 755-7691 to make arrangements. You may write or type but the easiest to handle is an ASCII file made with your favorite word processing program.

### DUES

Dues for the Penn-Ohio Users Group are \$15.00 per calender year for an individual membership, \$20.00 per calender year for a family

## BENN-ONIO USERS GROUP

as they hopefully become new members.

Ed discussed the Hamfest at Talmadge and then talked about the Computer Fair of America at the Quaker Mall in Akron. Unfortunately, by the time you read about these hamfests and fairs, they are already over, but, that's one of the advantages of attending the meetings. You can learn about these activities before they occur.

Frank Krautter explained that he had sent several back issues of our newsletters to the newly formed TI Users Group in Oakland, Maine. They quickly sent a "Thank You" note. Thanks to Frank for helping to promote the TI.

Our treasurer, Herb Soss reported a balance of \$290.85 at this time. Not much, but it should be enough to complete this year for the club.

Frank K. made a motion to have the club contribute \$20.00 each to Ed & Ron Baker for their trouble and time involved in downloading programs to the POUG IBM Library. Dave T. seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed. As soon as that motion was passed, Don Carpenter motioned that we raise the donation to \$25.00. Since a membership to the BBS systems was approximately \$50.00, this would cover about half. The motion was seconded by Frank K. and voted on. It passed also. This is money well spent; Ed & Ron have done a tremendous job getting programs for the library and keeping track of them. The money only covers about one-third of the money that has been spent and that doesn't include labor. It's a good thing that Ron &

Ed work because they love the club. THANKS RON & ED!

Don Carpenter reported on a computer display that was recently held at the Eastwood Mall.

Finally, Ron B. & Ed demonstrated WSSINDEX, the data base that is used for the POUG Library. It is a fantastic program and it seems to be easy to work with. If I get time, I would like to use it to catalog my disks. If I can use it, I'm sure that anyone can.

Well, I promised to keep this one short. That's it for now. I'll see you at the next meeting on April 5th at the Red Cross Building in Youngstown at 7:00 PM. Try to bring a guest.

### A SURVIVOR OF THE COMPUTER WARE

By Don Gutman

Whatever happened to the computer companies that started out on top of the world, then crashed and burned in The Computer Slump of the mid-Eighties?

One of them--Franklin Computer--is on top of the world again, and they got there by breaking all the rules in the computer business.

Franklin was founded in 1981, when most of us hadn't bought our first PC yet. The company hit it big immediately with their Franklin Ace, a computer that could run Apple II software but was less expensive than Apple's machines. Franklin took in \$28 million that first year, and \$71 million the next.

APRIL, 1988

company reached sales of \$67 million in 1989.

I visited Franklin's plant in Mt. Holly, New Jersey recently and asked Mort David about his idea of computers that perform a single task, as opposed to conventional computers that perform many tasks.

"There's no question that there is a huge segment of the American public who like totally dedicated products," David says. "They have simplicity of use that you can never achieve once you introduce multiple functionality."

"We sell knowledge," claims David, "and we're trying to make it as palatable and user-friendly as possible."

These machines are no dummies. I typed the letters 'K-A-W-P-H-Y' into Franklin's "Translation Master" (a Spanish/English translating dictionary). The computer instantly recognized the word as "coffee." That's pretty amazing, considering that none of the letters match.

More handheld computers are in the works from Franklin: "The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia," "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary," a series of bilingual dictionaries and a Russian/English dictionary. Last week, the company changed its name from "Franklin Computing" to "Franklin Electronic Publishing."

The possibilities for electronic reference computers are unlimited. Books like "Bartlett's Quotations," "The World Almanac," "The Yellow Pages" and "The Baseball Encyclopedia" would make useful

Apple began to see all those millions of dollars being diverted to Franklin, and sued for copyright infringement in 1983. The courts ruled in Apple's favor, and Franklin was ordered to pay \$2.5 million in damages. The company was on the verge of going under.

In May of 1984, Franklin brought in Mort David, a well-known "turnaround specialist," to save the company. David had previously rescued Dynamics Corporation and The Mura Corporation from bankruptcy.

David had an unusual plan for Franklin--stop making traditional computers that run hundreds of software programs. Instead, make stand-alone, handheld computing devices that would be "dedicated" to one task.

At the end of 1985, a pocket-size spelling corrector called "The Franklin Spelling Ace" was introduced. It was an enormous success, selling more than two million units.

Franklin knew a good thing when it had one, and went on to create 19 other handheld computers for word junkies--dictionaries, thesauruses, phonetic spelling correctors and word game machines.

The company's most recent success has been "Language Master 4000," a dictionary/thesaurus that speaks--in a very human-sounding voice. The most unusual product in the Franklin line is "The Electronic Holy Bible"--the entire Good Book stored in a computer the size of a cigarette pack.

With products like these, the

computing devices for many people.

Other companies have jumped into the field of dedicated handheld computers. Microlytics of Pittsford, New York even has a competing Bible. But Franklin has a big head start.

Now that Franklin has successfully turned itself around, a turnaround specialist such as Mort David might be looking for his next company to rescue. "No, I'm committed to Franklin," he says. "It's too exciting and has too much potential. I'm going to make Franklin my career."

AS THE DISK TURNS:

PART I

By Dan Gutman

My wife just became obsolete.

No, I'm not going on a ski trip with Marla Maples or anything. Like many people, my wife's career is suddenly being threatened by computers.

Nina is an illustrator. Over the past six years, she's built up a good reputation drawing charts, graphs, and maps for magazines such as Psychology Today, Discover, Scholastic, and many others.

Last week, two of her clients informed Nina that unless she started doing her work on computer, they wouldn't hire her anymore. Just like the horse and buggy manufacturers at the beginning of the century, my wife's skills have become unnecessary due to the march of technology.

Deep down inside, I have to

admit I'm secretly pleased. Ever since we met, I've been telling her that she should learn to draw on computer before the inevitable day when it would put her out of work. "Besides," I keep telling her, "you'll be able to do your work faster and easier on computer than with pen and ink."

She always resisted these overtures. She dislikes computers, and is afraid of them. She's also afraid that drawing on a computer screen will take away the pleasure she gets from drawing with ink on paper.

I must admit I had a little "I told you so" feeling when she got the news. But my gloating came to a halt quickly when I found out how much this new computer system was going to set us back.

All the technical illustrators use Macintoshes, she was told by her art directors. Specifically, she'll need a Macintosh IIcx with five megabytes of RAM and an 80 megabyte hard disk drive. All this sounded very amusing to Nina, by the way, who wouldn't know a megabyte from a megavitamin.

She'll also need a color monitor, and the monitor has to be big--two full pages, so she could draw a magazine layout and see the entire drawing on the screen at once.

She'll need a scanner, so she can take existing artwork from books, magazines, and her own files to manipulate and turn into new creations. (Before computers, illustrators used tracing paper.)

She'll also need a laser

printer. The quality of the dot matrix printing I use in my work is nowhere near what she needs for finished art, especially for precise line drawings.

Armed with this information, I went to my local computer store to see what a system like this would cost. (Readers may think that hot shot computer writers get all this stuff for free. Guess again.)

I had already resigned myself to the fact that the \$10,000 we had hoped to put away for our son's college education might very well have to go into Nina's computer instead.

I was a bit off. Here's my price quote they gave me...

Apple Macintosh IIcx: \$3,999,  
Radius two page color display:  
\$3,499, Radius color video board:  
\$2,995, Apple scanner: \$1,499,  
Apple Laserwriter II: \$1699,  
Laserwriter controller: \$1891,  
Keyboard: \$109, Cables: \$155,  
Preparing the system: \$49.95

Grand total with sales tax:  
\$16,982.15.

After the salesman helped me to my feet, I was able to reflect more philosophically on this purchase. My first full time job paid me \$12,000 a year. Our car cost us \$11,000. Now we have to pay 16 Gs for a COMPUTER?!

And that doesn't include software, a service contract, or training, which my computerphobic wife will certainly need to learn how to use the thing. Suddenly that old obsolete pen and ink on paper didn't seem so bad after all.

Thoughts raced through my head. Maybe Nina could switch careers--become a tractor trailer driver or something. Maybe my son wouldn't want to go to college. Maybe instead of getting the computer, we should get a divorce. It would be a lot cheaper, for me at least.

When I came back to reality, I sat down and tried to think of a way we could pull this thing off without sending us to the poorhouse. I'll tell you about that in Part II of "As The Disk Turns..."

HACKERS IN THE BLOTT?

By Dan Gutman

What does The Computer Age have in store for major league baseball? You need only to look back to see what effect the Telegraph Age, Radio Age, and Television Age had on The National Pastime.

Back in the Telegraph Age, the turn-of-the-century Philadelphia Athletics had a clever idea. They rigged up a wire that stretched underground from their centerfield clubhouse to the third base coaching box.

Utility catcher Morgan Murphy would sit in the clubhouse with binoculars, stealing the catcher's signs. He would relay them--in Morse code--to the third base coach, who would receive the signal through a steel plate in the ground. Then he'd let the batter know what the next pitch would be.

The plan worked like a charm until

## PENN-OHIO USERS GROUP

an opposing third base coach--Tommy Corcoran of Cincinnati--got his spikes caught in the wire. Corcoran yanked the wire up and followed it across the field until the umpires discovered Murphy at the other end.

Yer outta the game!

In the Radio Age, those clumsy wires became unnecessary. The Chicago White Sox, it has been said, installed a transmitter in pitcher Early Wynn's cap. Manager Al Lopez would call for the pitches he wanted by sending silent signals to Wynn this way.

And after Bobby Thompson hit his "shot heard round the world" to win the pennant for the Giants in 1951, rumors spread that a buzzer system had tipped off Thompson to the pitch.

When the TV age arrived, it opened up a whole new arena of sign stealing. While managing the Texas Rangers, Billy Martin supposedly installed a closed circuit camera in the Arlington Stadium outfield.

Coach Jim Fregosi would watch the game in Martin's office. When he figured out the opposing catcher's signs, he would send them to Martin through a walkie-talkie. Martin would then let his hitters know what pitches were coming.

Most managers have TV sets in their offices these days, so when they get thrown out of the game they can keep an eye on things and send directions to the dugout.

The grand and glorious tradition of cheating in baseball has closely followed the technology over the

last hundred years, so it stands to reason that the computer will eventually be used by some clever schemer to get an edge for his team.

Today, many managers use computers. The Philadelphia Phillies hired a computer science major from the University of Delaware to do nothing but compile statistical analyses of the players on the team. We can only guess what electronic skullduggery is going on as baseball embraces the Computer Age.

I can imagine double agents copying disks and whisking them to opponents' computers. The owners will recruit teenage hackers to break into phone lines while opposing managers are uploading crucial data. Laptop-to-ing coaches will sit in the stands stealing signs and send them to the dugout by wireless modem.

Of course, stealing signs is not a hard science. Even if you have the other team's signals cold, there's no guarantee a hitter will know what pitch is coming.

1948, Chuck Dressen stole a catcher's sign and told Ducky Medwick to expect a curve on the next pitch. Medwick leaned in and an inside fastball fractured his skull, ending his career.

### DEATH OF THE SLIDE RULE

By Dan Gutman

Recently, Dietzgen Corp. of Des Plaines, Illinois, did an inventory of its warehouse and stumbled across a treasure to rival the unearthing of King Tut's tomb--box

upon box filled with...slide rules. 50,000 of them.

Dietzgen, which is 104-years-old and used to be one of the biggest manufacturers of slide rules in the world, now gives the stash away for free to collectors and the curious.

"We've got 4,000 left," says director of marketing Michael Peterson. "After they're gone, that's it."

The slide rule, washed away by The Computer Age, is breathing its last gasp. Like the dinosaurs who once ruled the earth, the mighty slide rule disappeared and was replaced by more adaptable creatures.

For those born too late, the slide rule was an ingenious device that primitive pre-Disco man used for higher math functions while waiting for the microchip to be perfected.

Invented in 1632 by an English clergyman named William Dughired, your classic "slip-stick" consisted of three parallel rulers and a movable transparent plate. The middle stick slid between the other two, sort of like a trombone.

In simplest terms, the slide rule reduced multiplication and division to addition and subtraction. By adding or taking away distances on logarithmic scales, it could calculate squares, square roots, powers, cubes, cosines and other trigonometric functions that baffled all but the brightest engineering students.

Gas lamps and penny candy are quaint reminders of simpler times. I'd like to rhapsodize about the

slide rule's passing in the same way, but if the truth be known, the slide rule was a bad idea from the get-go.

It did not just because of obsolescence, but also because of bad press, marketing and perhaps more than anything else, its inherent nerdiness.

First of all, any third grader could perform math tasks on paper that were beyond the reach of the most expensive slide rule. I mean, you couldn't do simple addition and subtraction on the blasted things!

Square roots and cubes are fine, but before investing the hours, days, or months necessary to use a slide rule, one couldn't help but ponder how often in life it's necessary to know the square root of ANYTHING.

Furthermore, instead of giving an exact answer, slide rules depended on human judgement to estimate a number between two lines. If you asked a class of students to multiply 196 by 345 with their slide rules, no two people got the same answer, and nobody EVER got the exact answer.

Slide rules simply were not accurate, which is kind of odd for a mathematical instrument.

The slide rule didn't even have decimal points--you had to insert them in the answers yourself! 2.35? 235? 23.5? One answer is as good as another to a slide rule.

They were useless for everyday tasks. You never saw anybody walking down the aisle of a grocery store with a slide rule. It could

APRIL, 1970