

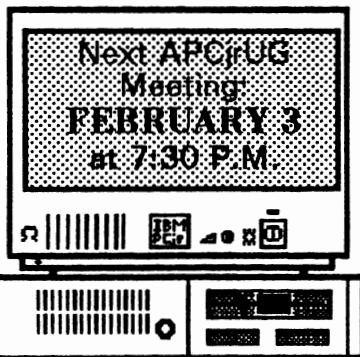
The Orphan Peanut

THE CHRONICLE OF THE ATLANTA PCjr USERS GROUP

Volume 4, Number 8

Price \$1.50

February, 1991



It's Baaaaack...

by David Wilson

Len Brown, the Disk Librarian for the APCjrUG, has just released an all-new catalog of programs available from the Group. This catalog is as comprehensive as any we've ever seen, and because of that we simply don't have the space in The ORPHAN PEANUT to print it here - at least, not this month. We're going to have to make it a separate publication which can be ordered from Len at the address shown on page 11, where we have thoughtfully included an order form which cleverly has your mailing address on its reverse side. (If you don't want to harm the pristine beauty of your PEANUT by cutting

out the form, please don't forget to include a complete name and address with your order.)

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A Group 10

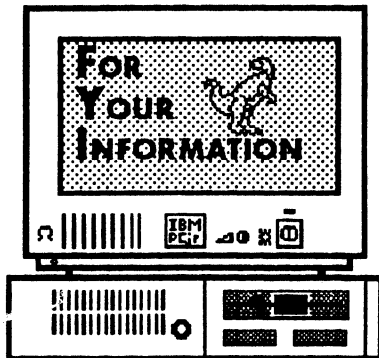


We're sorry, but we'll have to charge you for the catalog: \$1.00 for APCjrUG members, \$2.00 for nonmembers; or, you can download it free from The PCjr WORKSHOP, the last PCjr BBS anywhere. Trust us - it's a bargain at these prices. Len has put in many hours of work on this project, and it shows in the product he's offering. He should be able to fill orders either for disks or catalogs by the middle of February, or you can download the catalog now.

For those who didn't see it or who have forgotten, there's an update of an article we ran last year on Library procedures and charges on Page 4. There may be changes to this as we get into the actual operation, but this is how we understand it to work. There should be a conflict between what you read here and what Len Brown says should be the case, please remember that Len is always correct in these situations

Shareware is an excellent way of seeing what your computer can do without investing a substantial portion of your life savings. Look into this method of improving your program library at what is a very reasonable cost.





The Orphan Peanut

is the official newsletter of the *Atlanta PCjr Users Group*, a distressingly non-profit organization dedicated to the health and well-being of the first Orphan and first "clone" from IBM - the "Peanut". The Group's single purpose is as stated in Article 2 of our Constitution:

"... to provide a forum for members to share information, experiences, and techniques of use that will help other members derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their PCjr."

The ORPHAN PEANUT is designed, laid out, and entirely created on a PCjr with 736 KB of RAM or 8 MHz of clock speed (but not both together), a Microsoft Mouse, a second floppy drive (3.5") from PC Enterprises, and two 20-megabyte hard disks from RIM via Paul Rau Consulting. There's other stuff as well, but we forget.

Software used includes *TEXTRA* word processing (ver. 6.0) and QEdit (2.1) text editor, Power Up! Software's *EXPRESS PUBLISHER* 2.0 desktop publishing, and sundry other programs of varying usefulness.

Permission is hereby granted for the abstraction and republication of any and all original articles in this publication, with the dual provisos that the sense of the article not be changed and that proper credit be given the author and **The ORPHAN PEANUT**.

~ OFFICERS, 1990-1991 ~

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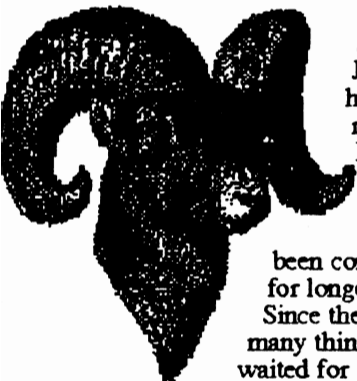
* Designates Membership Committee





Try A RAMdisk

A "Golden Oldie" by David Wilson
First Published in the October, 1989
Issue of *The ORPHAN PEANUT*



When I first started Junioring, I heard frequent references to RAMdisks or "virtual disks" from those who had been computer owners for longer than I had. Since there were so very many things to learn, I waited for some time before I finally got involved with them - and I wished I hadn't waited. A RAMdisk can make life much easier in a number of ways, and they really aren't that difficult to learn how to use.

First, let me explain that a RAMdisk is a "logical" disk, as contrasted to a physical one. It's a section of your computer's Random Access Memory which has been designated by software commands as another disk and is treated as one in most respects by the computer. You can't format a RAMdisk or use CHKDSK on it, and if you turn off the computer without transferring the data from your RAMdisk to a physical storage area, you lose that data forever. On the other hand, these "virtual" disks have nothing to slow them up and can process data as fast as their little electrons can flow, making them the fastest storage, retrieval, and processing medium you can use.

Some ways to use the electronic disks might

be:

(a) As storage for uploads and the target for downloads when you transfer data. The fact that Junior doesn't have to stop every so often and refer back to a physical disk makes it possible to use sophisticated "streaming"-type protocols such as ZModem and Kermit with a PCjr - something you can't ordinarily do.

(b) Placing the files from a database or other program which require frequent sorting or manipulation of data on a RAMdisk will speed up the operation considerably.

(c) In a program that requires two drives to interact, single - floppy systems can often run perfectly using a RAMdisk as the second drive.

Unfortunately, RAMdisks take memory, because they ARE memory. If you have a 128 KB memory, you're not going to get much relief from creating a RAMdisk because you then won't have enough left to run your program. By contrast, if you have 640 KB of memory, you could set up a 300 KB RAMdisk and still have more than 300 KB to let the program do its thing. (DOS will take up some memory as well.)

All RAMdisk programs that I'm familiar with take the next available letter as the drive designator after B:. If you have a single-floppy system and create a RAMdisk, it'll be Drive C:, and if you create another after that, it'll be Drive D:. B: belongs to a second floppy, although there are ways to get around that problem if you have software that'll only address Drive B: and you don't have one of those. My own system, for example, has only one floppy and a Hard Drive, designated A: and C:, respectively, so on a very

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Try A RAMdisk

(From Page 3)

few programs I have to get sneaky with DOS - but that's another topic.

RAMdisks are normally created by placing a DEVICE DRIVER in your CONFIG.SYS file. (You do remember how to do that, right?) This driver will have a syntax allowing you to specify the size disk you wish. The IBM RAMdisk creating routine is named VDISK.SYS (it's included with the supplemental files for DOS 3.2 and later.) The proper method of creating a 250 KB RAMdisk on booting up would be to include this statement in CONFIG.SYS:

```
DEVICE=VDISK.SYS 250
```

and it's done - providing you have 250 KB available and the VDISK.SYS file in your boot directory.

There are a number of Shareware, Public Domain and Commercial RAMdisk programs available. The one I use is a little different from VDISK, as it allows you to change the size of the disk from the Command line without editing CONFIG.SYS and rebooting, a tedious process. It comes in two parts: the device driver, called RAM.SYS; and the part that actually sets the disk size, named SETRAM.EXE. After installing RAM.SYS in the normal way (by inserting the line DEVICE=RAM.SYS in your CONFIG.SYS file), you can create a disk of any size at the DOS prompt by typing

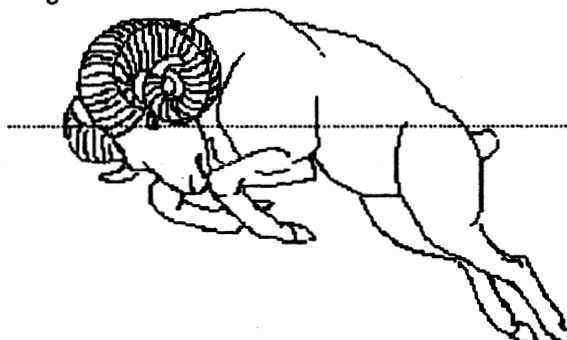
```
SETRAM d mnn
```

where d: is the drive designator for the disk you wish to create and mnn represents the RAMdisk's size in Kilobytes. After you finish using it, you

may remove it by typing:

```
SETRAM d
```

always keeping in mind that you have to save the data to a floppy disk first, because once that RAMdisk is gone, whatever was stored on it is gone as well.



(The RAM.SYS and SETRAM.EXE set of programs are available either as a standalone package or as a part of the JRCONFIG package of memory management utilities. Both can be obtained from either the APCjrUG Disk Library or as a download from The PCjr WORKSHOP.

There are a number of variations on these programs and space limitations prevent us from going more fully into them now. Many are available on a try-before-you-buy shareware basis, and it would behoove you to try them out until you can find one that does what you'd like it to. It's a powerful tool, and one that shouldn't be overlooked by anyone using a computer - especially not a user with limited equipment. Try a RAMdisk...you'll be glad you did.



The Great PCjr Upgrade Caper

Tale of Multiple Frustrations by David Wilson

Back last summer, my son decided he would return to college, so I had the brilliant notion to get him up with a much improved PCjr. I figured I'd add a couple of things to the unused one I had purchased a couple of years ago for my other (and which Dad has never even booted, he fink!), and he would have a good, serviceable computer that would provide him with enough support for at least a couple of years. Little did I know...

The computer I planned to upgrade was an enhanced PCjr with a Quadram expansion unit which gave me 512K of Random Access Memory, two floppy drives, and a Parallel Port for a printer. At about that time, I had seen PC Enterprise's ad for their DisplayMaster VGA enhancement sidecar, so I determined I would order the VGA upgrade for my own Junior at the same time I ordered a 40-megabyte hard drive for my son's machine. The hard drive was a Christmas present (kinda pricey at \$400, but worth it for college, right?) and the VGA upgrade would be my own last upgrade for my dusty Junior. I figured I could save a few bucks by ordering the upgrade kit and getting Tom to carry, one of our members, to do the actual installation for me. So far, so good.

Orders were placed in August and I settled back to wait for delivery. After a few weeks with no deliveries, I made a call to PC Enterprise and asked to some of the nicest people I've ever spoken to at any mail-order establishment. The hard drive was on the way, and the VGA sidecar and upgrade kit were out of stock but on

backorder, and I would get both as soon as they came in. Well, okay. I had been doing a little thinking and had come to the conclusion that, for a number of reasons, I should install the VGA enhancement on Dave's computer as well as my own - sort of an unexpected bonus for good behavior. I figured I could afford to wait to install the hard disk until after the VGA unit arrived so that we could get everything taken care of at once.

Finally, in October, the VGA arrived. I called Tom and one Saturday afternoon - Tech wasn't playing that weekend, so I had the afternoon off - I took Junior and the modification kit over to Norman's Electronics, where Tom works as a technician. We settled down to an hour or so of soldering and chip replacement according to the very clear directions PCE included with the kit. It really didn't take long, since Tom's a professional and the directions were quite clear. He performed all the steps, checked them twice, then put the computer together and turned it on as the last step in the procedure. White screen. Nothing else. He was outraged that he might have missed something in a procedure that straightforward, but we re-performed the entire sequence a second time with extreme caution. Same result. Panic. After the third run-through and about four hours had passed, I took it home. I just couldn't let Tom spend any more time doing what we both agreed was a perfect installation according to the directions.

Around Wednesday, I gave up and called PCE to ask them for suggestions. "Oh", they said, "we were going to call you. It seems that the directions were printed incorrectly, and you



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THE GREAT PCJR UPGRADE CAPER

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replaced the wrong chip. But don't worry, we'll send you a revised set of instructions." And they did, about a week later. I took one look at them, remembered that Tom was out of town and wouldn't be back for some time, and did what I should have done in the first place - I packed up the CPU box with the motherboard only still in it and sent it to PCE in New Jersey to have them install the VGA modification as well as a couple of others. I sat back to wait.

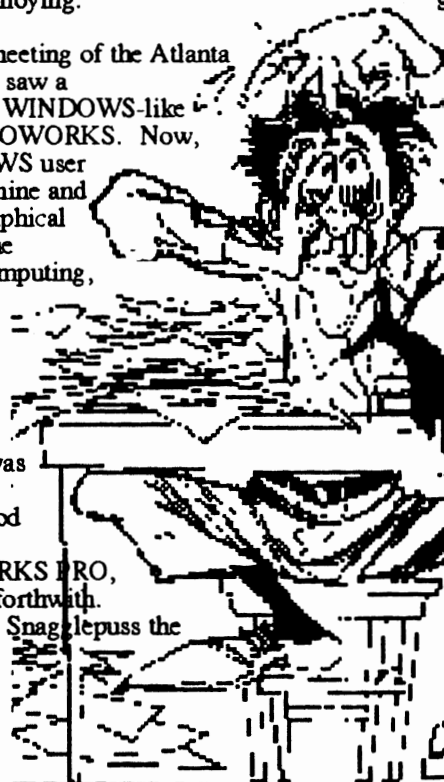
About the middle of November, after I had made a couple of calls to PCE, they called me back. They had attempted to rectify the problem, but there was apparently some other problem with the system board that they had not yet located. I weighed the options and told them to replace the motherboard with a fully reconditioned one (for a few bucks more). Okay, they said, but I would have to wait; guess what was out of stock? Gritting my teeth, I said politely that I would.

Two weeks before Christmas, it arrived. I was tied up in the Christmas rush, but I set it up - Quadram expansion unit top cabinet and sidecar, VGA sidecar (well, EGA, since I don't have a VGA monitor to add to the system), and hard disk top cabinet and sidecar. It made an impressive sight: three "stories" tall and three sidecars wide, but it wasn't EGA I was getting on my monitor; it was a black screen. (The hard disk, by the way, worked and still works perfectly. More about that later.) Back to the telephone. "Funny you should mention that. We've a couple of other people call in with symptoms exactly like those you describe, so here's what you can do. Just pack it up in a good strong box and return your VGA unit to

us, and we'll send you another unit." That went out over three weeks ago, and guess what? So far, no replacement VGA adapter. This is beginning to get annoying.

At the December meeting of the Atlanta PC Users Group, I saw a demonstration of a WINDOWS-like program called GEOWORKS. Now, I'm a big WINDOWS user on my 386SX machine and I think that the Graphical User Interface is the coming thing in computing, so when the demonstrator mentioned that it would run on an 8086/8088 computer with 512K of RAM, I was enthralled. They offered a really good deal on their new package, GEOWORKS PRO, so I sent off for it forthwith. Fifthwith, even, as Snaglepuss the Lion used to say...

After the obligatory one month plus waiting time, GP arrived and I immediately set about installing all thirteen (yes, thirteen 360K, 5-1/4") disks on my son's beautiful, empty hard disk. The install routine got three quarters through the first disk and stopped, telling me that there wasn't enough room on the disk. "The hell there isn't!", I exploded, "There's more than 35 megabytes on that !@#%&*()"





THE GREAT PCJR UPGRADE CAPER

risk, and that's enough for WINDOWS and GEOWORKS PRO both, with a lot left over for application programs!" Well, to make a long story short, it did the same thing at the same place no fewer than ten times with ten different setups before I went berserk and called GEOWORKS Technical Assistance - in California, naturally. I talked to a very nice young man who made several reasonable suggestions, none of which worked, and wound up where I started, which is to say, nowhere.

[NOTE: GEOWORKS PRO will run on a CGA-equipped system ONLY IN MONOCHROME; if you want color, you must have at least an EGA resolution capability.]

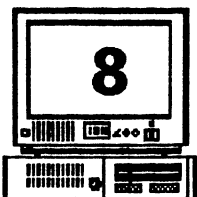
A brainstorm occurred. Maybe the disks were somehow damaged, or the KERNEL.EXE file was corrupted. Hopefully, I ran the installation program on my 386SX, but it worked perfectly and now I'm worse off than I was before. I've had a chance to look over the program at close quarters, and I love it! It really seems to be just the thing for those old computers like PCjr's, Cs, and XT's that can't use WINDOWS or one of the other advanced platforms because they lack a means of increasing RAM to the requisite three or four megabytes. If I could just get it to

load itself onto my hard disk, I'd be in great shape.

The funny part of all this is that I'm not really mad at either PC Enterprises or GEOWORKS. I just want their stuff to work the way I was given to understand that it would. I am getting tired of having to spend my money on long-distance calls, only to be put on Hold for ten minutes or so, but that's an industry-wide practice. Ever notice that you can call them on their nickel to spend some money, but if you need help you're on your own? I'm also somewhat annoyed at the delays in filling an order. I always use Money Orders rather than personal checks, but it doesn't seem that there's any advantage in that. They apparently hold your order for the same number of days before processing it either way, on the principle that waiting is good for the customer or some other obscure notion. At least, I hope that's why ... if that's the best a computer company can do, I'd hate to see what delay a behind-the-times outfit would achieve.

On the positive side, I've talked to some nice people who really seem to want to help, and I really don't want to blame them for my problems. We have a very fast hard disk, with the necessary controller and connections to attach other hard drives, floppies, or even some sophisticated stuff like streaming tape backup devices and CD-ROM. There's no reason at this point to think that the DisplayMaster VGA upgrade won't eventually work just as advertised, and I'm really hopeful that when that happens, GEOWORKS PRO will perform as it should. We'll see.

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THE GREAT PCJR UPGRADE CAPER

(From Page 7)

LESSONS LEARNED

What have I learned? (Other than inhuman patience, that is.)

➤ I now know that it's foolish optimism to expect an order to be filled in less than a month.

➤ I've found that, although it cost just a bit more than the comparable upgrade for my SX, the PCE 40-meg hard drive system is very nice indeed.

➔ I don't like the DiskMaster software that comes with the PCE hard drive package. It creates a "non-DOS" partition that causes problems with some other software, maybe even the GEOWORKS installation program.

➤ I really dislike programs that come with self-installation routines and have absolutely no way to figure out what's going wrong if that routine fails; cryptic error messages are one of the bottom five things in computing. You should have a list of what goes where and what the variables are in case you want to change something or install the software manually.

➤ Everyone who expects to use a PCjr for the next couple of years should strongly consider a DisplayMaster EGA/VGA/SVGA upgrade, remembering that EGA will work on a PCjr Display but VGA and above will not; however, if you buy a monitor for the higher resolutions, it'll also work on another computer when Junior finally comes to

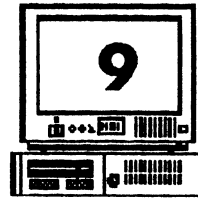
the end of the road.

✓ If I could just get comfortable with long waits on long-distance lines, I'd be happy with the quality of the help I've received so far.

✓ GEOWORKS is in many ways what WINDOWS should be... it's much more coherent and it's easy to learn to use, if somewhat less flexible and powerful than the Microsoft product. It does require a hard disk, and at least EGA graphics capability if you want color, but the big problem at the moment is getting it installed. I'm going to pursue this goal until I become convinced that it can't be done or I manage to do it. Until then, I'm afraid, I don't recommend GEOWORKS for a PCjr, and that's a shame.

(One thing that needs to be considered when getting GEOWORKS is that the Macintosh-like interface requires a mouse. These graphics interfaces really need a rodent to make them work as they should. I mean, you can use a keyboard with GEOWORKS or WINDOWS, but why would you? All you get then is a bunch of pretty pictures and an awkward way of making use of them. If you're a die-hard DOS freak or mouse-hater, or if you really don't think the fad will last, stay away...but don't be surprised when your kids make that li'l rodent sing!)

So here I sit. I've got some nifty stuff for a PCjr, if only it could be made usable. I've seen the DisplayMaster VGA demonstrated at an APCjrUG meeting, and it truly is terrific; now, I've seen GEOWORKS PRO firsthand, and it's also marvelous. If I can get both to function properly on my son's Junior, we'll really have something special - IF!



A > DIR

by David Blagg, President, APCjrUG

As we get firmly into the new year, I believe it is a good time to make everyone aware of recent activities among the officers.

As a rule, we meet briefly at **STANCOM** before each meeting of the user group. Usually we talk about meeting topics--always an item of concern--and then make each other aware of unusual events which might effect the group. Since there are few such events, our meetings are almost always short.

However, at the January meeting we discussed our income and expenses. I would characterize that discussion as a "prudent review" of where our funds come from, and how we dispense them. As you might guess, we were unable to complete our business in the short time before the regular meeting. We adjourned, having set a time to pick up the topic the following Saturday, January 11th. That meeting took place with most of the officers able to attend.

We reviewed the decisions which were made

when our group was first organized a few years ago. At the time we set our dues at twenty dollars so that we could provide both a newsletter and a bulletin board system for the membership. We have had both since July, 1988, and our dues have remained unchanged. By the way, we have very few other expenses, and most of these are covered through the generosity of individuals.

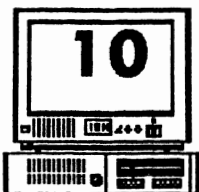
With thanks to Treasurer Dick Anthony, we had financial data available which showed that we are in good shape today. In addition, we have a reserve of funds which is adequate to provide for several months of future expenses for the user group. This is just as it should be. And with the adjustments we made to expenses, we expect to continue our sound state of financial health.

Put simply, the bottom line is that we will continue to have *The Orphan Peanut* and *The PCjr Workshop*. And there will be NO increase in our dues [Editor's Note: Read his lips...]. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss the details.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Last month, I wrote an article concerning an idea which had recently occurred to me: collecting PCjrs whose owners no longer want or need them and passing them on in good working condition to a person whose interest and desire to own a computer was present, but who could not manage to buy one. I'm happy to say the idea was well received at the January meeting and a committee was appointed by President David Blagg to explore the possibilities. The Chairman of the committee is Sam Lanham, and you can reach him at (404) 578-0273 in the early evenings. If you have a Junior you'd hate to see junked outright but which is rarely used, or if you'd like to help with parts or software, call Sam and see what can be worked out. Thanks for caring.

David Wilson, Editor



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**NINE WAYS TO
KILL ANY
ORGANIZATION**

NorthWest Arkansas Microcomputer User Group,

1. *Don't participate beyond paying your dues* (let "them" handle things), then complain that members have no voice in the management of the organization.
2. *Decline all committee appointments and offices* (because you're too busy and your time is too important), then offer vociferous advice on how they should do things.
3. *If appointed to a committee, don't work* (it's a courtesy appointment) and then complain that the organization has stagnated.
4. *If you attend meetings, don't initiate new ideas* ... and then play "devil's advocate" to those ideas submitted by others.
5. *Don't rush to pay your dues* (they're too high anyway), then complain about the lack of quality or sparse number of services offered.
6. *Don't encourage others to become members* (that's selling!), then complain that the membership is not growing.
7. *Don't read the newsletter* or other communications (they're not important), then complain that you're not kept informed.
8. *Don't volunteer your talents* (that's ego fulfillment), then complain that you're never asked, never appreciated, and never recognized as the "expert" you obviously are.
9. *Have faith in no one and nothing*; don't take any chances on untried procedures (after all, you're not a gambler). Let someone else put their reputation on the line and take the risks, then be sure to enjoy the benefits that result from another's leap of faith.

AND IF BY CHANCE the group grows in spite of your contributions, grasp every opportunity to tell the youngsters how tough it was; how hard you worked "in the old days" to bring the group to its present level of success.

**From the March, 1990 issue of
The ORPHAN PEANUT:**

All the selections listed in the catalog are either Public Domain or Shareware offerings. This means that you can in most cases get

quality software for a very small cost, but we urge you to remember that the authors of the Shareware programs have invested a great deal of time and effort into creating a useful product and deserve to be compensated for their efforts. Please register Shareware if you use it. Only in this way can we encourage quality software development at an affordable price. You can determine the disk to which each file belongs by checking the first column of the catalog listing. Disks are currently assigned an identification code consisting of the APCJRUG prefix followed by up to three letters or numbers. These identification codes help the Librarian to sort the groups according to Disk ID as well as by functional groups, and are the best way to locate a particular disk. You should try to use them whenever you order your selections. Most of the files are carried in the .ZIP format to save as much disk space as possible. If you don't have enough memory or space or you just don't want to fool with the unZIPping process, please ask the Librarian to unZIP them for you. Be aware, though, that this will increase your cost by increasing the number of disks you need.

The file sizes shown in the catalog are the .ZIPfile amount, which are typically 50% of the total decompressed file size. In other words, double the number of disks for an expanded file.

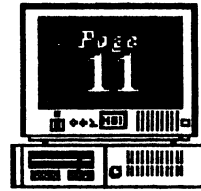
If you have any questions, suggestions, or complaints, please call Len Brown or another officer. The APCjrUG Disk Library is for you, and we want you to be happy with it.



The Orphan Peanut



APC jrUG



DISK LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE: Disk of the Month

Call Len Brown 879-7079

The Atlanta PCjr Users Group

Disk Library Order Form

NAME	DISK NAME	PRICE

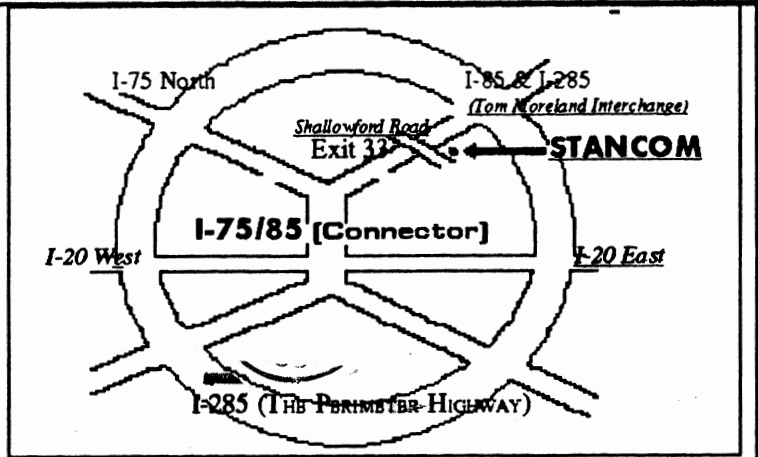
Blank Disks - (5 disks - \$3.00; 10 Disks - \$5.00)

Postage & Handling (\$1.00 per 5 disks ordered)

TOTAL 

GETTING THERE

If you're outside the Perimeter (I-285): Just follow I-285 around Atlanta until you reach the *Tom Moreland Interchange (I-285 and I-85 North)*. Go South on I-85 toward Atlanta until you reach *Exit 33, Shallowford Road*. Exit onto Shallowford Road and turn left to cross over I-85. Immediately past the traffic signal on the East side of



the overpass you will see a building on the left with *STANCOM* in large letters on the front of it.
If you're inside the Perimeter (I-285): Get on I-85 heading North from the city. Watch for the *Shallowford Road exit, Number 2 33*, and leave the Interstate highway there. Turn right on Shallowford Road, get in the left lane and prepare to immediately turn left into the *STANCOM* parking

The Orphan Peanut

