Next APCjrUG Meeting SEPTEMBER 14 at 7:30 P.M.

A NOVICE NOODLES THE APCjrUG'S POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

A PROPOSAL TO APPLY APCjrUG'S MEMBERSHIP'S SKILLS TO SOLVE PRESSING PROBLEMS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

by J. Wesley Mercer, Sr.
Secretary and PCjrUG Newsletter Editor
Member Atlanta PCUG

Between 1989 and 1992, I had a most wonderful experience centered around three of my grandsons and their schools, one in Dekalb, one in Fulton, and one in Cobb County. It was that wonderful experience that stimulated me to write this article. It was being with my grandsons in their school activities and later working as a volunteer in each of these school systems where I was struck by a revelation! In these schools, I was a "computer whizbang bang", a media worker, and a class room helper. I was a "whizbang bang", worker, or helper, not because I really knew that much about computers, media, or class room activities, but the needs were so great that almost anything that I could do, or was willing to try, regardless of how elementary, there were pressing needs for such help in connection with computers, in the media centers, and in the class rooms.

Don't Forget!

The September, 1992 APCjrUG meeting, as always wil avoid the Labor Day Holiday by meeting on the second Monday - in this case, September 14th.

WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE - What's New?

By David Wilson

The PCjr I use to produce much of my *PEANUT* stuff gave out with a "Zap, crackle, fizz" and no video, no nothing, the other day when I tried to boot it up, and I just haven't had time to open the thing up to see what the problem may be. Without a doubt, I'm procrastinating on this, probably for two reasons: this is a pretty complicated Junior, so it'll take some time to get into it and check it out, and time is something I've been short of lately; and secondly, I'm not at all sure I'll recognize the problem when I see it. Even if I do recognize it, there's a better than average chance that I either won't know what to do about it or I will know what to do and not be able to fix it. What worries me is that I know - I just know! - that I'll try to fix it anyhow (patience was never my long suit in these matters, you know) and I'll wind up with more of a problem than I had to begin with. Then I'll have to send it off for something really expensive, and I'll be mad about *that*, and then... but you get the idea.
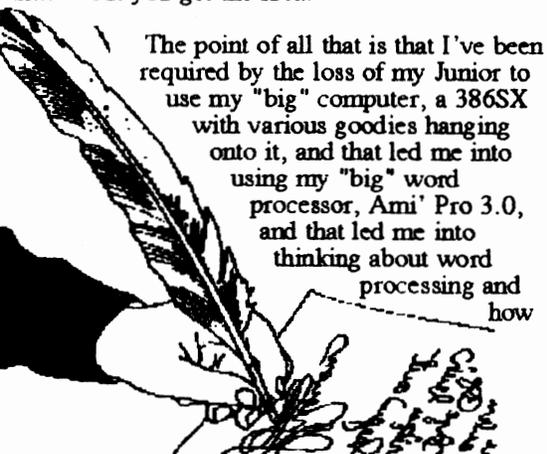
The point of all that is that I've been required by the loss of my Junior to use my "big" computer, a 386SX with various goodies hanging onto it, and that led me into using my "big" word processor, Ami' Pro 3.0, and that led me into thinking about word processing and how

things change. Let me tell you a little about the "high end" word processors like Ami' Pro. If you've got the computing power and the money to pay for them, you can do truly amazing things on these marvels: I could produce a very creditable newsletter without ever leaving the confines of Ami' Pro, complete with my choice of 140 or more fonts in sizes from one-twelfth of an inch up to two inches high (6-144 points), graphics with the text flowing around them, multiple columns, and special effects like shadowing and boxes enclosing text. If I wished, I could generate a research paper with numbered footnotes, an index, a table of contents, title pages and bibliography - all done automatically by this incredible program. I can even use Ami' Pro to write out scientific formulas using the correct symbols such as integral signs and square root symbols. This wonder not only has a major league spelling checker and giant thesaurus, but it also includes a grammar checker to keep your split infinitives from confusing your audience more than the content does; it presents you with a table of statistics including a count of 3-syllable words, average words per sentence and sentences per paragraph, then goes on to "score" your document according to several kinds of criteria (the "fog index" of this document so far is 40.0). I can go on and on, but I think I've illustrated the fact that the immensly powerful and versatile word processing programs like Ami' Pro, Word Perfect, Microsoft Word, and a couple of others are far more than just typewriters with funny keystrokes - they're a whole new world.

"All right," you say (a little peevishly perhaps),

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"in the words of the great American philosopher of the latter 20th century: Big, fat, hairy deal. This thing won't go on my single-floppy, 128K Junior in a million years, will it? So why are you tantalizing me with 'wannahaves' that only make me see the need to dump Junior and get a 386 or better? Try making a little sense, beanhead!" Well, okay, I'll get to the point, but you don't have to be abusive about it. Sheesh!

You're right - there's no way you can run Ami Pro on a PCjr. It takes WINDOWS to do that and starting with the current version (3.1), WINDOWS no longer runs on an 8088/8086 /V20 processor. Used to be you could at least load it, but it would take so long to do anything that very few people ever did more than try it out, but now you can't even do that.. So that eliminates all the WINDOWS-based word processors. Others, such as Word Perfect, Microsoft Word, and Wordstar, have DOS-based versions that will do almost everything the WINDOWS version will - but they are HUGE! Many will not operate on a floppy-drive-only system at all, and those that do will really increase your blood pressure with their incessant demands for you to "insert disk number...". If you have a PCjr with a hard disk, you can run these DOS versions adequately enough to derive most of their benefits, but you pay a terrible price in disk space - anywhere from eight to thirteen megabytes of precious hard drive storage is needed just to install and operate the program, and of course the files you create will demand a portion of the disk as well.

I hear you over there muttering "Get to the point, if you have one, blockhead! I'm aware

that Junior doesn't do some of these things and that's why I'm seriously considering donating it to the Friends of Disabled Adults (FODA - phone 491-9014 for information) and buying a fancy new 386. I'd really like to bring home Word Perfect 5.1 (or whatever) files from the office and polish them up at home, but I just can't do that on Writing Assistant, you know."

Very well, if that's how you want to be about it, here's the point I'm trying to get to despite your constant interruptions: believe it or not, several of the publishers have realized that there are some folks out here who have no need to present footnoted, indexed, Table-of-Contented, documents in multiple columns with charts and graphics wrapped around differential equations. They've created "Lite" versions of their products and many of these are just right for a majority of Junior users. Word Perfect has been offering for some time an inexpensive word processor called Letter Perfect that will read and manipulate WP files without the excessive amount of overhead demanded by the main product. Wordstar, too, has a cut-down version, as does Microsoft, and Software Publishing Corporation produces an excellent product for this market segment. Most of these have "filters" - files that allow them to read and save files in the Word Perfect format as well as their own, because WP is the dominant product in the market. If you have a need for this feature, check the details on the box before you buy it.

My own choice is a word processor called Textra, a mail-order offering from Ann Arbor Software in Michigan that is as fast and as feature-filled as anything on the market other

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(From Page 1)

While in the hospital on and off during late 1989 and 1990 and again in 1992 for a progression of eight surgical procedures, a couple of which tempted the Fates, I have had plenty of time to reflect on my experiences. I concluded that the school needs and the childrens' needs are so pressing that it is imperative that I devote myself not only to continuing this volunteer work during the next school year; but, also, that it was equally imperative to share with others the pressing needs that our school systems have for volunteers to perform a wide range of services at all levels.

Let me share with you a few of my personal experiences in my grandsons' schools. Then I want to suggest how I believe that the Atlanta PC User Group could make a difference in the quality of the educational delivery system in the greater metropolitan Atlanta Area.

I cannot recall a period in my life when I experienced so much concentrated pleasure while working, and I really enjoyed all of my jobs. I first started having lunch three times a week with three of my grandsons at their schools; then, I began working as a volunteer one day each week in my grandsons' schools. Usually, I started out as a helper in the Media Center checking our books and putting up books and audio visual aids used by the teachers. I could see so many needs; for example a bar code system for checking in and out books in all the schools. So much time was devoted to the manual tasks when it could have been better spent with the children. I was surprised at the outmoded equipment in use. One school had old Texas Instruments computers which were set up

with word, shape, color, and simple math exercises which the children could use if all their manual media work otherwise had been accomplished. One of the more advanced schools had two computers with printers and a fair number of computer applications in the Media Center for student use.. Teachers at one of the schools had a computer in most of their classrooms. At one school, teachers were lucky if they had rotational access to a computer shared with one to three other teachers. The computers were largely Apple IIe with 64K and a few with 128K of RAM which were used mostly to reinforce skills using software that had repetitive skills applications. All of the teachers needed data base, spread sheet, word processing, and desk top publishing applications. All the school systems needed at least one computer per room with printers, computer labs, networks, CD-ROMS, Laser disks and equipment, telephone lines and modems.

I found myself being contacted by class room teachers to "fix" their broken computers. I found a variety of matters that I could "fix"; like straightening bent pins; simply plugging in the power supply; acquiring RAM upgrade and net work cards and installing them in classroom computers; and lots of just putting paper in the printers; etc.. I began going to class rooms to demonstrate computer application in support of educational activities. All of this was great fun to me and my grandchildren seemed to approve of my activities. In one of the schools we installed a CD-ROM to a Mac-LC. We got a package deal that included an encyclopedia, world map, and other CD's that had interesting information, games, and/or music. Introducing

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just one CD-ROM encyclopedia set the childrens' interest in research on fire. Use of the encyclopedia increased remarkably. When access to the CD-ROM was limiting, the children showed a greater interest in research in the printed materials, even checking out books to take home for copying or abstracting. I am talking about mostly fourth and fifth graders but this activity involved some children at all levels, K-5. Being DOS oriented, I found myself reading every night in Apple and Mac books to try to stay one half step ahead of the next question.

In two schools, I found that as a grandfather and a male I had a special status with the children. From reading to one of my grandson's kindergarten class and to several others K-2 classes, I experienced a special interaction with the children that seemed to benefit the children almost as much as it gave me pleasure. I may not have been quite as magical with the children as I would like to have believed; but, I do know I gave the teachers a much needed 30 minute break once a week which they badly needed for administrative reports or academic planning.

In one school system at the high school level, I became painfully aware there were about 1200 young people in the 17 through 19 age bracket who had literally fallen through the cracks of that educational system. I later found out that this number of drop outs is typical for most of the large metropolitan counties. These are young people who come from a full range of economic levels and include all ethnic groups. I found myself trying to do something about the problem. Every Tuesday I spent all day identifying these former students and making an effort to contact them and offer myself to be their "seeing eye dog", so to speak, in the world of job seeking and adult education. I defined a research project built around 60 former students and attempted to determine what resources where needed to set up a permanent program to help these young people get jobs which contain growth potential and/or help them get their GED and enroll in a community college. Unlike what our prejudices tell us, not one of these 60 young people were unwilling to talk to me about improving their situation. Not only were they willing to talk to me; but, sadly they telegraphed to me that they desperately needed someone's help and that they could not believe that someone was actually taking up any time with them at all!!!

In early April of 1992, I abruptly left these children in all three school systems. My heart almost put me into permanent retirement! This happened just as I was on a roll working almost full time in three school systems and really enjoying being with my grandsons.

I've only touched on a few of my school experiences and have only hinted at the large number of needs for volunteers in the school systems. Before I proceed further, I first want to make it perfectly clear that just because there are pressing needs in the school systems, this article is not suggesting that the professionals in the school systems are not competent or are not working to solve the problems. What I saw during my time as a volunteer in these school systems, in the main, were groups of dedicated professionals applying themselves against odds to present to all the students the core requirements for students to progress successfully from one class level to the next. In

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every case, these professional efforts were made in spite of the lack of adequate support from most of the student families and the community as a whole; in spite of antiquated technology; in spite of incumbrances by burdensome administrative systems; and in spite of harassment by autocratic and bureaucratic management systems, usually emanating at the county, state and especially at the Federal political levels. These obstacles to teaching trickled down on the professionals and the students in oppressive waves throughout the school year. The professionals and the students could better cope with these realities if the teachers had the technology in the class room with which to more effectively instruct their students and to better manage associated administrative chores. This is where the Atlanta PC User Group could step in and help make a difference in the quality of instruction in the schools in the greater metropolitan Atlanta area.

Here is my suggestion for how the Atlanta PCjr User Group may begin to make a contribution to the quality of education in our communities. Next year on March 15, and 16 Georgia State University will conduct a conference for all Georgia educators entitled "Microcomputers On line with Education '93." I think APCjrUG should form an Educational Support Group and join with the Atlanta PC User Group to get with Georgia State and any other sponsors of that conference and commit to prepare a presentation based upon the concept of three models of high tech class rooms utilizing a full range of computer applications for elementary, middle and high school. Class room teachers need to have available to them the high tech teaching tools utilizing interactive learning techniques. Teachers need to be free to be able to guide their

students to use the full range of multimedia, high technology hardware and software tools to learn interactively. A great deal of work has been done in the computer industry towards this end; but, as far as I can determine, no one has taken all of these efforts and created a class room design which not only integrates the hardware and software into the class rooms for instructional and management purposes; but, includes ergonomics considerations and, as well, a practical management plan for accomplishing the transition from a typical class room to a high tech class room.

Imagine, if you will, a class room built around each student having a fully integrated multimedia work station which could access data and instructional sources via internal school network; could access external data and instructional sources via conventional telecommunications; and could contact world wide sources using wireless transceivers [I am thinking of Ham Radio]. Imagine this system including for each student an assigned laptop with appropriate software on loan from the school on an annual basis to use to access study guides; to access homework assignment sources, including research sources; and access sources for extra curricular activities. All of the students' homework would be uploaded to the school bulletin board; placed in each teachers computer file; and also uploaded to the students work station the next school day, as necessary. Imagine each school having a bulletin board with the years instructional objectives on line together with comprehensive schedules of assignments, events, activities, testing dates, student grades and progress notes and disciplinary records

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privately accessible 24 hours each day to the teachers, students and their parents.
I do not have the skills to fully imagine the truly feasible, practical, and high tech class room for the present and the future. However, I know that the Atlanta PCjr User Group members not only have these skills to develop such a concept in concert with existing school system planning; but, they have the skills to help the school systems put such systems in use in the class rooms earlier than it could happen otherwise.

If any of you work in and around the school systems you know that what I am saying about high tech class rooms is not original with me. All of the school systems have Systems Planners and IS Departments Programmers who are in various stages of developing some form of high tech class room and administration applications. Classroom use of computers has been in some form of development since around 1985 when Apple II's and Pcjr's were introduced into the school systems with great flair. As it develops, the schools that are considered to be on the cutting edge of computer applications in the class room are lucky if they have a computer lab located on site and if they have one computer per class room with one printer for each five class rooms. The teaching professionals have been confronted for a long time with the problem of how to make effective use of one or less computers per class room. Considering that most teachers have twenty to twenty five students each, it is not hard to see that sometimes this limited availability of hardware and software is more of a burden and a hindrance to proper education. All schools from higher economic to low economic student families have one thing in common. They both

need community support to transition education into synchronization with the employment needs of the country and they need it now. In this connection all the schools need high tech skills at the school operating level so that the schools may make best applications of available resources and so that they may better interface with the remote systems planning processes.

Most schools that I have become acquainted with in the last three years are lucky to have enough computers to make up a computer lab of twenty five work stations with computers having 64K of RAM. Even though the hardware and software available at most schools is lacking, there are creative ways for more effectively using these facilities. However, the school professional with twenty to twenty five students is not the person who should be asked to make best use of these lacking facilities. These school professionals are likewise the least likely candidates for planning future high tech classrooms. These professional are appropriately focused on getting the best job done under current limitations which is a full time job. They deserve our help and more importantly our children and our grandchildren deserve our help, now!!

I strongly recommend that The Atlanta PCjr Users Group form a Group devoted to educational support jointly with the Atlanta PC User Group. I think since many of the school systems are committed at the K-5 level to Apple and Mac products we should seriously consider a collaborative effort with The Atlanta MacIntosh User Group, AMUG. In order for this effort to be a fully effective, it would be imperative that we recruit a broad range of class room teachers to participate in any activities which we may jointly consider to be appropriate.

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than the Big Three. It'll do many of the same tricks as the biggies, but just not as fancy. For example, Textra doesn't offer footnotes as an option, but it does offer "endnotes", which allow you to place these comments and references at the end of the document in the proper order. Textra, like all the others, does require expanded memory - a total of 384K is minimum - but you'll have found that you can't do much any more without this improvement anyhow, right? It has a very fast spelling checker, a thesaurus, some font flexibility depending on your your printer, graphics and word-wrapping capabilities, and a host of other features I won't go into at this time. It does not require a hard drive to perform these wonders, either. (I'm not a sales representative for Ann Arbor Software, but if you'd like to know more about this program give me a call at 255-2731.)

Once upon a time, we were thrilled with the ability of our "bundled" copy of Writing Assistant to format and edit our written offerings. Times change, though, and the old capabilit ies aren't as wonderful as they once were. Today's "Lite" word processing programs can offer you the ability to perform text manipulations and produce documents that as recently as five years ago you could only get with a professional setup - and you can do it all on a PCjr!

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For starters, I am willing and anxious to work to form an Educational Support Group. I have made efforts to enlist the interest of the Atlanta PC User Group. I am limited as a computer person for I am truly a Novice; but, I will try not let that be a hindrance to me or anyone else.

The school year is upon us. The time for action is now. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who may agree that the APCjrUG could make a difference in the quality of education in our communities. I particularly would be interested in hearing from members who are professionals in the school systems of our community who would be willing to devote time to defining ways in which the APCUG may work effectively in support of education in our communities. I am sure that the Atlanta PCjr User Group has members who have or are working in the school systems either as professionals or as volunteers. These members would be critical to the success of an Education Support Group such as I am suggesting.

I may be contacted on COM1:Atlanta, the APCUG BBS 404-897-5985; the PCjr BBS 404-418-9363; or at my home as follows:
J. Wesley and Jimmie L. Mercer. Sr.
Crabapple Community
12450 Charlotte Drive
Alpharetta, Georgia 30201-1408
(404)-442-0569
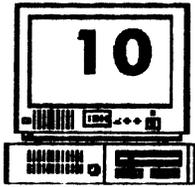
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by David Blagg, President, APCjrUG

There are times when it is appropriate to stop and reflect about things--how they got the way they are today. This is one of those moments.

Several years, when our group was just starting, there was a consensus that a first-rate user group should have a newsletter. We decided that we would have one, too, because we wanted to be a first-rate group of PCjr users. And we did.

Our task was really quite easy because we had an enthusiastic member who had an interest in what has since been called "desktop publishing." David Wilson rose to the occasion with his PCjr, his First Publisher software, and a lot of determi- nation.

About the same time David also sent out a letter (along with founder Hunter Medney and sysop Terry Markert) to the mailing list of potential members, all 13 of them, saying among other things that he had no experience doing a newsletter and was not particularly qualified. If you have a copy of the original, first ever Orphan Peanut, you now know why why that Volume 1, Number 1 issue was dated July, 1900.

In the 48 months since July, 1988 David has consistently pro- duced what has been acknow- ledged as one of the better user group newsletters in the country. He is too modest to tell you that, but I can and I just did. We have watched it improve as he added hardware and gained experience with the software.
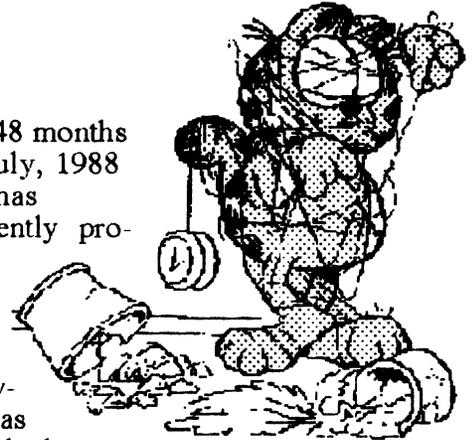
And now he has come to the point when he wants to do other things. This is no surprise for he told us this several months ago. The time is here. This is the last issue he will edit. He will move on to other things among the many activities he enjoys.
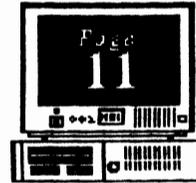
We wish you well, David. And "thanks" for the huge contribution to the success of the Atlanta PCjr Users Group.

Editor's Note - We've been trying to get this into The PEANUT since the July issue, but space has been at a premium. Sorry about that, President Blagg!

APC jr UG

LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE:Disk of the Month

APCᴊʀUG Dɪsᴋ Lɪʙʀᴀʀʏ Oʀᴅᴇʀ Fᴏʀᴍ

| Qᴜᴀɴᴛɪᴛʏ	Disk Name	Price	

~~Beginners Kit @ $10/Members; $15 Nonmembers~~
(Sorry, the Beginners Kit is not presently available)

Please send requests and orders to:
Mr. Leonard D. Brown
Disk Librarian, APC|rUG
537 Lone Oak Drive
Lithonia, GA 30058

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
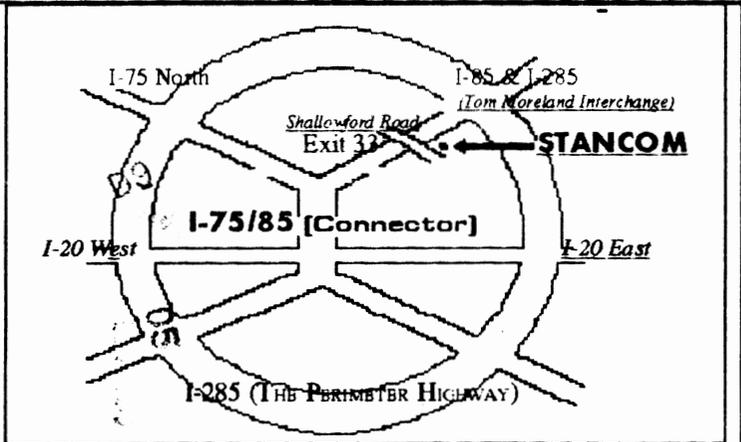
the you will see a buildiing on the left with *STANCOM* in latrge letters on the front of it.

If you're inside the Perimeter (I-285): Get on I-85 heading North from the city. Watch for the *Shallowford Road exit, (Exit 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 lot.

The Orphan Peanut

The Chronicle of the Atlanta PCjr Users Group
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