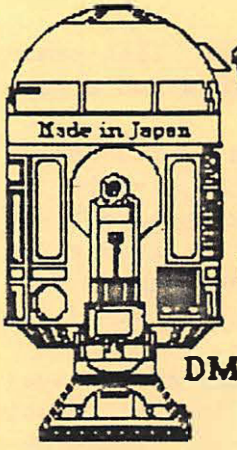

The Computer Rag

newsletter of the
Yokosuka Computer Club

News, Gossip, and Innuendo
from the Western Pacific

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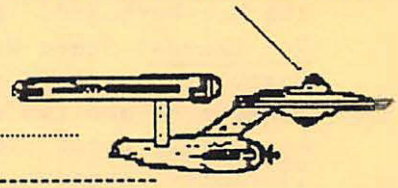

Local Gossip

March Meetings: Will be held on the second Wed., March 13, and the third Tues., March 19, both at 6 p.m. in OEC (top floor of Barracks C). Planned presentations include an awards ceremony to honor those who assisted with the First Annual Yokosuka Computer Faire, and other noteworthy YCC supporters. Two machines will be demonstrated, the Zenith Z-150, and the Radio Shack Model 200 portable computer. If time permits, there will be an open forum discussion of "What I use my computer for."

Last Month: On February 13 Jim Lee continued the series on dBase II, showing how the previously created data base could be modified. This evolved into a discussion of data base packages in general, structured programming, and tips on how to avoid using the right program for the wrong job. There was also a lengthy discussion of what user's groups can do, citing the First Osborne Group and various other Stateside organizations as examples. On February 19 Mark Lucas delved into the mysteries of board games and how they are translated into microcomputer games. A playtester for Avalon Hill and its computer division, Microcomputer Games, Lucas discussed why he played such games, what kind of games are available, and what kinds of strange people write these games. This was a new experience for many of the club members, and generated a long discussion and many questions.

April Preview: Meetings will be on Wed., April 10, and Tues., April 16, both on the third floor of Barracks "C." Highlights will include a review of the Comdex Japan '85 show (see below), plus the semi-annual "What To Buy" presentation. The "What To Buy" presentation will, naturally, be full of bias and slander, so be sure and come to defend your worthless piece of junk and attack everyone else's marvelous machine.

Corton Departs: Corton Computer Systems will leave the New Sanno Hotel at the end of the month, which will all but kill their bulletin board. (Actually, the bulletin board will probably survive, but at the cost of a long distance call to Tokyo instead of a free military-line call.)

Comdex Japan '85: Coming to a very big city near you, Comdex Japan will probably be the largest microcomputer show in Asia this year, so set aside March 26-28 for visiting Tokyo's Harumi Exhibition Center. The entrance fee will be ¥6,000.

Non-Local Gossip

Apple Shuts Down For Week: Apple has asked all its employees at four factories to take their "spring break" early. Officials explain this is not a lay-off or a closure, but a measure undertaken due to the "general softness of the computer industry." Apple's Macintosh plant in Fremont, CA, for example, can make up to 80,000 computers a month, but only 19,000 were sold in January. Apple II plants in Dallas, TX, Cork, Ireland, and Singapore will also "go on vacation."

MacCharlie?: Dayna Communications has announced MacCharlie, a box which allows a

Macintosh to use IBM software. The box includes a coprocessor, 256K memory, a 5.25" disk drive, and a keyboard extension adding function keys and a keypad to the Mac keyboard. Price will be set around $1000.

Woz Leaves: Steve Wozniak, builder of the Apple I and II and co-founder of Apple Computer, has left the firm. Apple insists he is still on the payroll, but do concede he and two other key engineers aren't coming to work anymore. Woz is apparently upset Steve Jobs and other company officials want to ignore the Apple II family, abandoning hobbyists and home users in favor of businesses and corporations. Company officials killed Woz's Apple IIx project, aimed at giving the II family a 32-bit 68010 processor and up to 640K of RAM.

Itty Bitty: IBM is rumored to be buying 1.5 million 2" optical disk drives, each with a 40 megabyte capacity. The drives would be used in a future portable machine, while larger 4.5" optical disks, holding 270 megabytes, would be used for desktop machines. IBM has also cancelled contracts for 5.25" floppy and hard disk drives, but placed several orders for 3.5" drives.

Top View?: IBM's attempt at imitating the Macintosh, TopView, has been released at $149, with an unprecedented money-back guarantee. So far, the response has been -- nil. Of 16 firms testing the software, fifteen never used it after opening the package. One employee at one firm used it -- once. It "has been the least pirated piece of software that we've ever had in house," one source claimed. Another executive at a different firm said: "I'd fire anyone who was stupid enough to think it was any good." PC Week, a major IBM PC magazine, found it very difficult to use, very memory hungry, very disk hungry, and slow. And those were the good points --

Out Of This World: Satellite Business Network (SBN) is selling a kit to allow micros to transmit data at 9600 baud via satellite. For $950, you, too, can talk to the stars.

Chap. 11 Update: A Hong Kong group has taken control of Vector Graphic, the pioneer micro firm which was going out of business. Similarly, Datatronic AB of Sweden has brought Victor Technologies out from Chap. 11 with a large dose of money. On the other hand, Main Street Software is pondering Chap. 11.

Italian-American Invasion: Olivetti, Italy's giant electronic and computer conglomerate, has purchased 49% of Acorn, makers of the BBC micro in England. Olivetti also manufactures the AT&T 6300 micro, and is 25% owned by AT&T.

Software Standard: International Computers Limited (Britain), Nixdorf (Germany), Olivetti (Italy), Siemens (Germany), Bull (France), and Philips (Netherlands) have all signed an agreement making UNIX the all-but-official operating system for European computers. AT&T, developers of UNIX, are said to be pleased.

MicroPro: Has dropped copy protection on WordStar 2000. Unofficial surveys indicate many regular WordStar owners bought it after trying out a pirated copy. With WordStar 2000, so few people were stealing it that this unofficial "trial" technique never had a chance.

Piracy I: American Brands has been named in a piracy lawsuit by MicroPro and ADAPSO, charged with wholesale copying of MicroPro software.

Piracy II: Lotus has refused to sell the Navy and Air Force 7,050 copies of Lotus 1-2-3. Navy and Air Force regulations prohibit the purchase of copy-protected software, so they asked for a special non-copy protected version of 1-2-3. Lotus refused. "We threatened to court-martial anyone who tries to copy the software," stated one Air Force official, but Lotus didn't budge. One New York financial analyst added, "You've got to wonder what that says about [Lotus'] patriotism." (Incidentally, 1-2-3 for the Zenith Z-120 is not copy-protected; only the Zenith Z-150 suffers this blight.)

Piracy III: Lotus has sued Mueller Co., an Illinois valve manufacturer, The Health Group, a Tennessee hospital management company, and Rixon, a subsidiary

of the giant French Schlumberger conglomerate, for copying 1-2-3. Rixon and The Health Group paid unspecified damages and fired all employees involved. Similarly, at least six military personnel have been punished for pirated software uncovered during inspections.

Unclassified Ads

Commodore Users Club of Yokosuka: Meets the first Tuesday of every month at USNH General Practice Clinic at 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Greg Yelland at 0468-75-1325 or leave a message with Mrs. Yelland at 7650/7651.

Interested in teaching an Introductory Computer Class for the Community Center? Call 7261.

Wanted: Information on software capable of running a 15 room inn, scheduling reservations, handling accounts receivable and accounts payable, and allowing electronic bank transactions. Call L.I. Charters at 7255 (w) or 4326 (h).