










Vol. 3 No. 3 Mar. 1986
DMS Box 187
FPO Seattle, WA
98762

 **The Computer Rag** 
newsletter of the
YOKOSUKA COMPUTER CLUB

**News, Gossip &
Innuendo from the
Western Pacific**

   **Local Gossip**    

March Meetings: thanks to a fluke in the calendar, will be held on the same dates as the Feb. meetings, Wed. the 12th and Tues. the 18th, both at 6 p.m. in the General Practice Clinic conference room at the hospital. At either or both meetings there should be discussions on the ~~new~~ **COMDEX** Japan '86 show, as well as a report on the new Macintosh Plus and Mac 800K disk drives.

February Meetings: our Commodore 64 demonstration at the Wed. meeting was cancelled because the demonstrator had the duty. [Shouldn't let those demonstrators run loose, anyway . . .] This didn't slow things down much, as there were extended discussions on how to get printers to work with AppleWorks (conclusion: if you have a Japanese printer, take it to a shrine and have it blessed), which expanded memory card should you buy for your Apple II (conclusion: wait and see what Apple does first), where can you get repair work done on machines (no good conclusions), and should we do any more workshops (conclusion: yes, but no definite ideas on when). Robin Hermann was drafted into the post of Vice President.

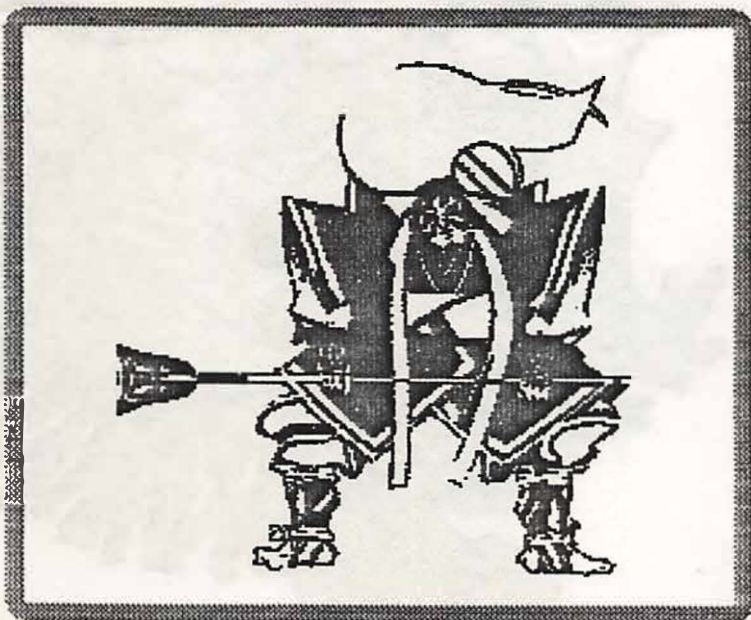
At the Tuesday meeting Dennis Vickland and

Greg Yelland demonstrated the Commodore 128. Everyone agreed the keyboard was far improved over the Commodore 64 (or most other machines, for that matter), and, except for the size, there isn't much cause for complaint with the new disk drive. Dennis did mention there were problems hooking the 128 up to the RGB jack on a Sony Profeel, but Commodore's new RGB monitor is so well designed most people would prefer to buy it rather than use a combination TV-monitor.

While there are already some software packages written specifically for the C-128, the machine fully supports C-64 software, so there is no shortage of programs even though it has been on the market less than nine months. If this wasn't enough, the new disk drive can read, under CP/M, Osborne, Kaypro, Epson QX-10, and a few other disk drive formats. This is a mixed blessing, though, since reading the disk doesn't guarantee the programs will display properly on the C-128 screen. Among other things, the C-128 uses CP/M+ (CP/M 3.0), so many CP/M 2.2 utilities won't work properly, and the C-128 terminal characteristics do not seem to correspond to either the Kaypro or Osborne standards. If you have some public domain CP/M programs (not in Apple format), there are several C-128 owners that would like to talk to you . . .

Also at the meeting was Sherrie Au, regional manager for the M.J. Daniel Co. M.J. Daniel is Apple's representative to the Navy (and Army and Air Force) exchange system, and they also handle such essentials as software (for non-Apple machines, too), diskettes, paper, printers, etc. Au answered some questions about how M.J. Daniel does business, and also asked: 1) is there anyone who would like to work part-time as a vendor rep. for M.J. Daniel at A-33? and 2) is there anyone who could perform basic repair and diagnostic work for Apple machines? If you are interested, or know of someone interested, call Lawrence at 234-4326 or write to the address on the masthead.

Disturbing rumor: IBM apparently was willing to donate up to 10 IBM PC XT machines to DODDS schools on base -- without charge -- but was



turned down because the schools had "standardized" on the Atari 800. As the 800 isn't even made anymore, this makes precious little sense. Would someone be willing to ask embarrassing questions about this? The editor's 7 month old daughter isn't in the DODDS system, and if this is true she may never be --

February's Mac Pack meeting in Tokyo featured a demo of the Macintosh Plus. As expected, the Mac Plus has a new 128K ROM, 1 Mbyte of RAM, 800K double-sided 3.5" internal disk drive, new keyboard with built-in numeric keypad and cursor keys, and a new SCSI ("scuzzy") interface for connecting hard disks and other exotic gadgets. An Apple-brand 800K external drive was also demonstrated.

On the down side, the 800K Mac drive will not work on the regular Mac (no one seems to know why). The new, larger keyboard is the same height as the old keyboard (a fraction too high for some tastes), and the right shift key shrank (though the enter key grew substantially). While it might be better than an IBM PC keyboard, a bit more improvement wouldn't have hurt.

More troubling are the new serial modem and printer ports. In order to make more room for the new high-speed SCSI port [see last month's issue], the serial ports were moved and changed from a 9-pin D-shell connector to a small 8-pin DIN-style connector. One German owner at the meeting objected, pointing out DIN is a German standard, and a true DIN connector is much larger. An informal consensus agreed to call the new connectors either "ersatz DIN" (little German joke, there) or "DIN DIN."

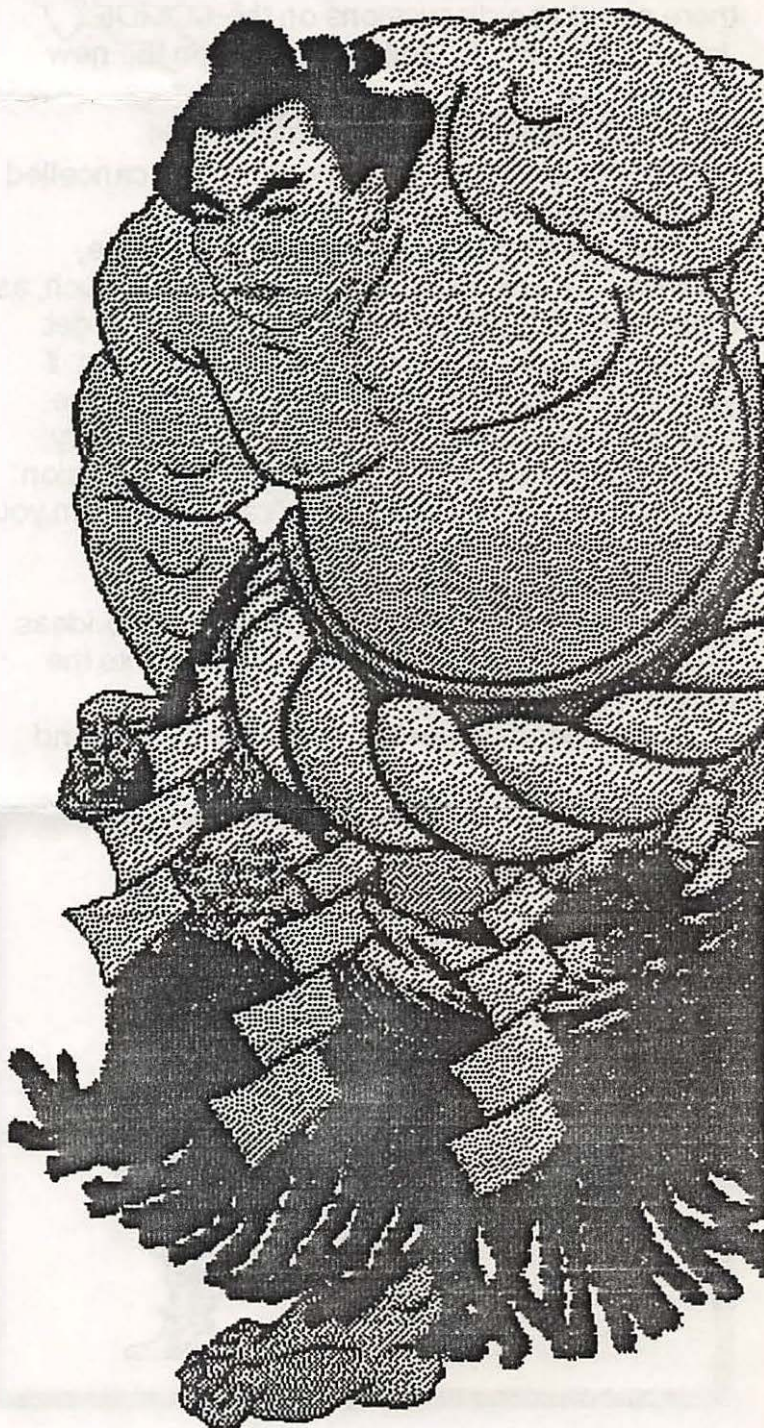
In addition to requiring the purchase of new cables, the new connectors lack the electrical power feed present on one pin of the old connector, requiring manufacturers of peripherals (such as the Thunderscan digitizer) to add power supplies to their products.

Also unexpected were some major software compatibility problems. Virtually all present Macintosh languages will not run on a Mac Plus, nor will Switcher, Copy II Mac, and many other old reliables. New versions of all packages are expected "real soon now."

Memory chips on the Mac Plus are socketed, so if and when 1 megabit RAM chips become available the machine can be easily boosted to 4 Mbytes of RAM. Actually, 1 megabit

chips are already available in Akihabara, but the Mac needs 32 of them, and at ¥28,000 apiece not too many people can afford them.

This bit of high-technology isn't too badly priced: the Macintosh Plus is \$2599 [¥648,000 at Apple World Tokyo], and list price on the regular 512K Mac has dropped to \$1999. Owners of regular Macs can get the new ROM and disk drive, together, for \$299 [¥60,000], the new keyboard for \$129 [¥31,500], and the 1 Mbyte logic board and



back panel (with SCSI interface) for \$599 [¥100,000] (512K Macs) or \$799 (128K Macs). Apple World Tokyo will do both the ROM/drive and logic board upgrades at the same time for ¥150,000.

Apple has also announced the LaserWriter Plus, which is essentially the same machine with a 1 Mbyte ROM, 1.5 Mbytes of RAM, and seven new fonts, for a total of eleven. Cost is a petty-cash \$6800.

A-33 will probably not be carrying the Mac Plus, but they may offer the MacPlus upgrade packages.

Non-Local Gossip

Paladin Software, which merged with VisiCorp last year, has filed for Chap. 11. Currently, another company is in the process of buying Paladin, but you probably don't care anymore, do you? For all you VisiCalc owners out there -- now you know how the Banana 6000 Jr. feels.

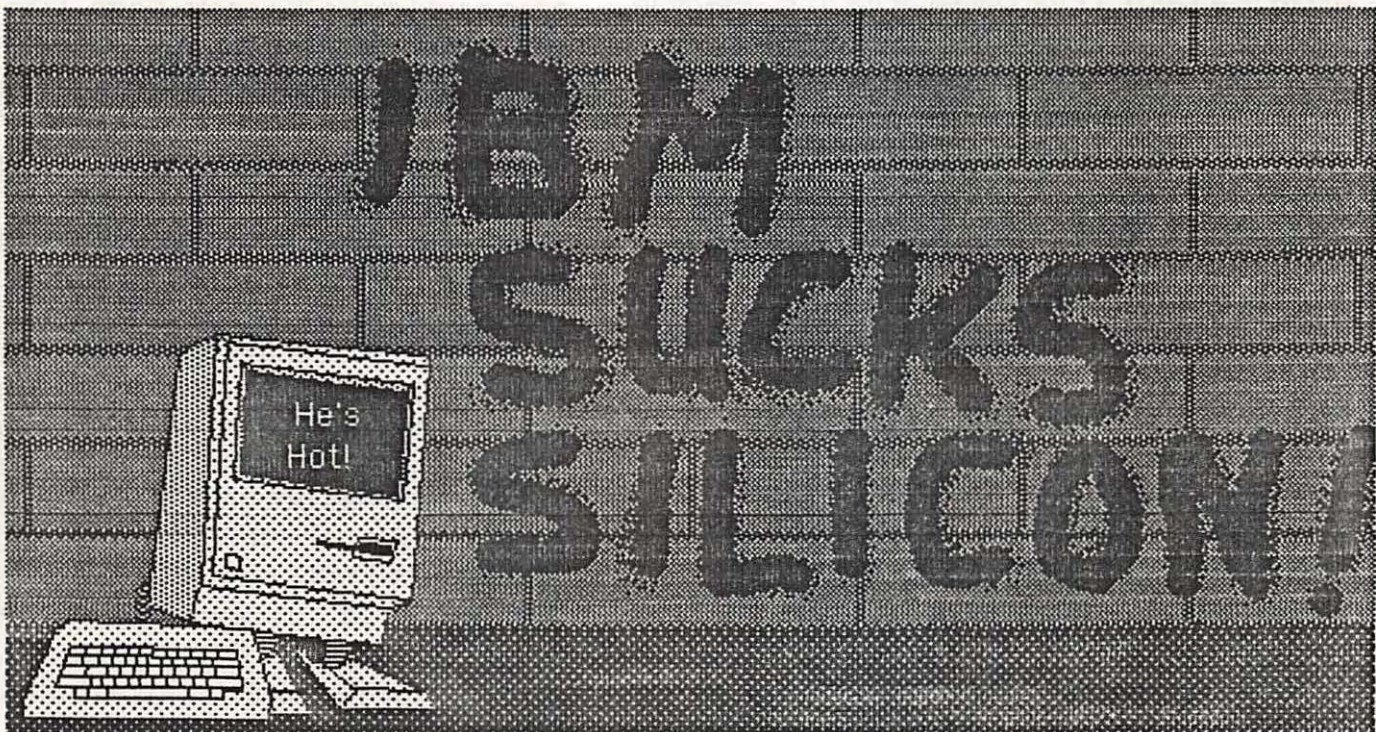
Speaking of the Banana 6000 Jr., Berke Breathed was injured in a hang-gliding accident in New Mexico, and won't be doing much cartooning soon. Rumor has it his Macintosh, back in Iowa (in legendary Bloom County), got lonesome, so through the good offices of cartoon fans in New Mexico he is now sending computer messages home with a borrowed Mac.

Worth every penny: recent studies have shown federal agencies are ignoring public domain

software, even though it often is better than commercial products, or is completely unavailable in commercial versions. Hoping to overcome this, the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board has been set up to distribute public domain software to federal agencies. Called Uncle Sam's Board, the computer bulletin board specializes in IBM PC-compatible software, and can download PC-Talk, PC-Write, Data Base of Steel, Mintel, Kermit, Gmodem, Graph'em, Ivy League Project Manager, FreeCalc, Archive, Deskmate, Data Acct, Newkey, and Automenu. They will even send federal agencies a copy of the bulletin board software if they send two blank, IBM PC-compatible diskettes to: Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Box 50268, Honolulu, HI 96850. You can also call the board on commercial lines at 808-546-3719, 24 hours a day.

IBM has released the IBM RT PC, which uses an IBM-designed 32-bit RISC (reduced instruction set) central processing chip. Aimed at scientific and technical users, the price ranges from \$11,700 to \$19,510. It comes with 1 Mbyte of RAM expandable to 3 Mbytes, and a 40 Mbyte hard disk. An IBM-designed memory management chip allows up to a trillion bytes of virtual memory, just the thing for budget justifications. It runs under a

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multi-tasking version of UNIX, and has six IBM PC AT compatible slots, and can run PC-DOS programs if you first buy both a \$995 board and a \$550 coprocessor program. The first person who brings a RT PC to a club meeting will receive a free membership (they'll be broke, anyway) and our heartfelt sympathy.

Atari will start selling the 520ST through mass-market channels in March, and bring out the new 1040ST for computer specialty stores. (Yes, for only the third time in his life, your editor was wrong; he was certain Atari would bring out the 1040ST on April 15.) As expected, the move has infuriated computer stores, nearly all of which are threatening to either drop Atari entirely or cancel plans to carry the brand.

AT&T, on the other hand, is apparently working on purchasing specially modified 520ST machines for use as UNIX terminals.

Central Point Software, those wonderful people who brought you Copy II Plus, Copy II PC, and Copy II Mac, now have the ultimate in Apple backup systems: the Laser 128. This machine runs virtually anything and everything an Apple IIc or IIe runs, comes with a built-in disk drive, 128K RAM, 32K ROM, double hi-res capability, 10 function keys, numeric keypad, two RS-232C ports, 1 Centronics parallel port, mouse/joystick port, and one expansion slot. If you buy it now, at the low, low, low price of \$395, Central Point will throw in a Copy II Plus package for free. Apple is thinking about taking Central Point to court, claiming the Laser 128 violates Apple II patents, but Central Point seems to feel otherwise.

Tandy is offering a trade-in program for schools. Trade in an Apple II or TRS-80, and get \$200 off the price of a Tandy 1000. A Commodore 64, Atari, Texas Instruments or IBM PCjr will earn a \$100 discount. As the school price for the Tandy 1000, an IBM PC compatible, is \$800, this really is a good deal.

New software: Borland Intl. has released a Turbo Modula-2 compiler for CP/M (Apple II version available), with an MSDOS version scheduled for "sometime." Borland also has released a Turbo Pascal for the Macintosh.

Assimilation is now selling a Turbo Trackball for the Apple IIe, which works just like the Turbo Trackball for the Mac. They will also soon be selling Excaliber for the Mac, a \$600 2 Mbyte

random access memory drive.

While Apple and Tandy had record profits for the last part of 1985, Commodore and Kaypro had record losses, and IBM and Compaq recorded only "modest" gains. Considering the number of bankrupt and unprofitable computer companies, what we need is an ad agency with a new approach for orphaned users: "You've been through so much -- why not suffer a bit more?"

Atari sold lots of computers, but is privately held and does not release profit figures. Even if they did, they have a long way to go to recover from past debts. [When Warner first took over Atari, Atari made more money than the entire movie industry -- combined. When Warner gave Atari to Jack Trammie, Atari was losing more money than the entire movie industry -- combined.]

Steve Wozniak, Apple I and II designer and Apple Computer Co. founder, purchased roughly \$5 million in Apple stock in November and December. He is rumored to be working on the Apple IIx (a "monster II") as well as a "laptop II" (presumably an inexpensive, portable Apple II).

PC Week, which covers the IBM PC world and nothing else, surveyed over 500 large "corporate users" and found 80% of all distribution companies claimed they had no "unused" IBM PC's, while only 47% of medical and educational sites could make the same claim. [The editor would like to editorialize on what this means, but his medically-oriented spouse has threatened his life.]

One influential consulting agency, trying to determine the resale value of various microcomputers, ran into an unexpected problem: in Tokyo, used NEC, Tandy and IBM computers were selling for slightly over half the original list price, Apple II machines for slightly under half, and all other brands sold for far less than their original prices. The problem: they were unable to find a single used Macintosh for sale. Apparently, nobody who has bought a Macintosh wants to get rid of it. Notebook computers (such as the Tandy 100 and 200) were also scarce.

For the curious: this newsletter was prepared on a 512K Macintosh with ReadySetGo 2.0. Including graphics, the newsletter occupies one 63,975 byte file.