

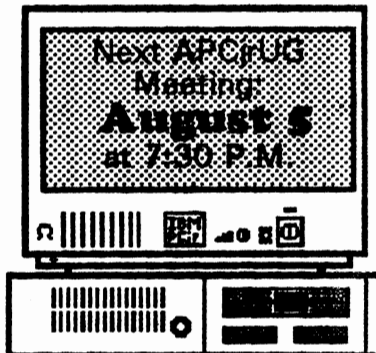
The Orphan Peanut

THE CHRONICLE OF THE ATLANTA PCjr USERS GROUP

Volume 4, Number 2

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August, 1991



SWITCH YOUR A: AND B: DRIVES

By Dick Page, Eugene (OR) PCjr Club

Why change Drive A to Drive B and make Drive B into Drive A? Here are some possibilities.

1. **ROTATING TIRES:** The way I use my Junior, Drive A gets a lot more use than Drive B. Just like you rotate car tires to get even wear out of them, so too, would it be good to alternate drives.
2. **ACCESS:** I find it easier to use my top drive than my bottom one because the large keyboard I have (a Key Tronic KB 5151jr) gets in the way when inserting and removing diskettes.

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3. **COMFORT:** My newer second drive is quieter than my original IBM Qume drive, so switching decreases the sound irritations.

4. **DEPENDABILITY:** By using the disk drive test that is part of COPY IIPC, I found out which drive runs at the best speed with the least erratic behavior. I have made that my primary drive.

Installing the changes:

Switching is no big deal if you have ever taken apart your Junior for cleaning. (If you haven't tried exploring inside, maybe now is the time to both clean it and rotate drives!)

First and foremost, unplug all power cords to the Junior. Make sure you're grounded as well. (You may have a static charge and accidentally touch a chip and zap it.) Don't wear polyester clothing. It's also best if your shoes are rubber-soled.

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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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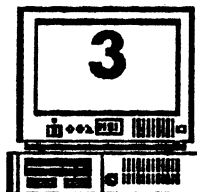
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RODENT LORE

Do You Need A Mouse To Help You Out?

[This is a reprint of an article that originally appeared in jr Newsletter.]

If you find yourself doing a lot with drawing, painting, desktop publishing CAD, or even word processing software, chances are you could benefit from using a mouse. There are several types and many brands of mice available, most of which will work on PCjrs. Since they are becoming more and more popular, we decided to give you a rundown of what mice can do and which mice work well on PCjrs. This was not an easy task since it would be impossible for us to test all types of mice with all software. So, to help in assembling the information for this article we asked several months ago for readers to send us descriptions of their experiences with mice on their PCjrs. We received several letters on the subject (thank you faithful jr supporters!), and we are including excerpts from some of those letters here. But we should caution you that this is still not the last word on using mice with PCjrs. Instead it's a collection of information from various sources (all reliable, of course) which we hope will help you decide whether you want to plug a mouse's tail (cable) into your jr, and if so, which one would best suit your needs. This article should provide a basis for deciding whether or not you want a mouse and help you ask some intelligent questions when you check with mouse suppliers. We suggest you check with at least two before deciding which mouse to buy.

A mouse is a device that allows you to rapidly move the cursor around your screen by simply pushing the mouse around on the surface of your desk (or a special pad). It has from one to three buttons on it for making selections and executing commands. Essentially, it is an alternative to the up, down and sideways arrows on your keyboard. You push the mouse away from you on the desk, and watch the cursor zip up toward the top of your screen. Move the mouse toward you and to the right, and watch the cursor move diagonally down and to the right. If you happened to have started that move at the start of a paragraph while using a word processor, and stopped your diagonal move at the end of the paragraph, you could have "marked" that paragraph for a "cut and paste" operation. It's a lot faster to do something like that with a mouse rather than with the arrow keys.

Types of Mice

There are three types of mice: mechanical, optical and opto-mechanical. Mechanical mice usually have a ball on the bottom, which turns encoders inside as you move it. Optical mice use a special pad with a reflective surface and a grid pattern to "read" the direction of movement. Opto-mechanical mice roll along the surface of your desk just as a mechanical mouse does, but the direction interpretation is done optically inside the mouse with a phototransistor. The first mouse used with PCjrs (in fact, made especially for PCjrs) was the Mouse Systems Mouse. A two button optical mouse, it works well, but



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The Old 'Compatibility' Trick

Tricks To Try When Software Won't Work
From jr Newsletter

Most software that runs on PCs will run on PCjr's, but you may find some software that needs "special handling" before it will operate. Some recent games and other programs, particularly those that make use of graphics, at first may seem to be incompatible with your PCjr, but don't give up without first trying these methods. Many programs that appear to be incompatible, will in fact operate well on your PCjr with this "special handling."

First of all, you need to know what a CONFIG.SYS file is. This is the file that gives your PCjr instructions when first starting up. When you have more than 128K on your PCjr, you must have a CONFIG.SYS file to use that expanded memory. So every memory expansion unit for PCjrs comes with instructions for setting up the right CONFIG.SYS file for your unit. Check those instructions to remind you, if you've forgotten.

To see what your current CONFIG.SYS file says, put your DOS disk in drive A:, and at the A > prompt, type: TYPE CONFIG.SYS. To change your CONFIG.SYS setting with your DOS disk in Drive A > type: COPY CON CONFIG.SYS. Then type in the lines you want to have in your CONFIG.SYS file. At the end, type F6 or Fn6, then press Enter, and you will have a new CONFIG.SYS file. Before you change your CONFIG.SYS file, though, it's best to make a copy of your old one in case you want to go back to it.

Ok, let's get to the steps to follow if your normal methods won't work with new

software.....

IBM Expansion Units -- If you have expanded your PCjr with IBM sidecars, try using a CONFIG.SYS setting of:

```
device = pcjrmmem.com /c
```

This creates a video buffer of 96K and makes all graphics modes operable. Using this setting does, however, mean you will have about 128K less memory to run the software. Some software, especially when paging is involved, will run better with the /c setting.

Other Expansion Units -- For other brands of memory expansion, use the CONFIG.SYS setting that does the same as the IBM description above. (check your manual) Or Use JRCONFIG, which is available from the APCjrUG Disk Library, as a download from The PCjr WORKSHOP, or on jr Newsletter's Jr Power Packs (Disks #52 and #65). This is easy to install and works well with all types of memory expansion units. Installation instructions are on the disks.

With JRCONFIG use -t3 and either -v32 -v64 -v96, depending upon how demanding the software is. You may have to experiment a little.

Also, with large database or integrated software, it sometimes helps to add FILES=20 to your CONFIG.SYS file, no matter what type of memory expansion unit you are using.

NOTE ON DOS: If you are using DOS 2.1, it should be patched to fix a few of its bugs

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Uh, Oh What Does THAT Mean?

What To Do When Your PCjr Breaks Down

Carl Haub,
1st President, Metro PCjrUG

BeepBeep. Ever get that when you boot and nothing else? What do you do? What if you turn on the machine and nothing happens at all? These are problems which may well confront you, particularly if your PCjr is getting on in age. While unsettling at best, many of these problems can be diagnosed or even fixed by you, the user.

This article is written, not by a technician, just a PCjr user who can't tell a resistor from a capacitor, but who has fudged about by trial and error and who also came across an unusually detailed list of IBM "error codes." If I can do it, you can. First, don't be afraid to have a look inside jr, even if you never have before. Lift the top by popping it off with a quarter. What's inside? Working from left to right as you face it from the front, the first circuit board is the power supply. You may have either the older "short" card or the newer "long" one which reaches to the front of the machine. A failure here is often caused only by a blown fuse. Just to the right, in a metal RF shield is the 64K memory board which brought your original line to 128K. The first 64K chips are on the motherboard, the large board which completely covers the bottom of the machine.

To its right are two "slots." The first holds jr's 300 baud internal modem, if you have one. The second will have the disk controller card in it with a flat grey cable running to an angle connector on the disk drive. The cooling fan sits on the back of the disk drive. Both the modem and the disk drive are connected to the power supply card, which is how they get their

power(!). If the fan goes bad, by the way, it can be replaced for \$9.95 from PC Enterprises.

The square silver "box" in the front is the infrared sensor which accepts input from the jr's cordless keyboard. You can remove this by gently pulling upwards if you never use batteries in the keyboard. It saves a little strain on the power supply and keeps the machine a bit cooler.

If you get the "two beeps" when you boot, it indicates some sort of problem. The problem may not be serious. It could indicate that a connector such as the light pen or serial port (which you may not use) has a defect. Bent pins from careless attachment of plugs are a common problem. Or it could be something else.

You can troubleshoot the machine yourself. Try removing one board at a time. Turn off the machine. Work from right to left. Unplug the disk drive from the controller board by removing the flat grey cable. Reboot. No beeps? It's something in the drive circuits. Still two beeps? Remove the controller board. Then try taking out the 64K memory card, then the infrared sensor. If the problem still exists with all of that stuff removed the problem is in the power supply, motherboard, or monitor. Oftentimes simply removing these components (and possibly cleaning the slot contacts with a clean gum eraser) will put your machine right back into operation. Dirty contacts, likely in an older machine, are a common source of failure in electrical components.

The error codes, if any, shown on the monitor

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Uh, Oh...What Does THAT Mean?

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screen provide more clues. During the Power On Self Test (POST), these codes appear on the screen and normal use can often be continued by hitting the enter key if the failed part is not essential. The following details the possible error conditions you may encounter.

1. *Two beeps and a horizontal line across the top of the monitor screen and that's all.* Errors in CPU registers, ROM chips, 64K memory on motherboard and/or 64K memory board, or something called an 8259 Interrupt Error. This usually calls for replacement of the motherboard (a \$75 exchange item from IBM) or the 64K board. "Chip-level" diagnosis can, however, often locate the problem part for replacement at less cost. Few shops, or IBM, are willing to perform that type of detailed repair, but some of our PCjr advertisers will. This could also be a bad power supply, frequently fixed with a 50 cent fuse.

2. *"Error A" shows on the screen.* Memory error on motherboard, 64K card, or memory sidecar. If the latter, this can be caused by dirty pins on the attachment bus for the sidecar. Try removing and blowing any dust away or cleaning the pins. On Tecmar boards, this can be caused by looseness in the plug on the heat sink (the flat plate inside the sidecar).

3. *Two beeps and "Error B" on screen.* Almost always, this is because you touched a key during while booting. This is a no-no; don't know why, but it is. It can also indicate a bad infrared receiver, however. If it happens again when you didn't touch the keyboard, that's it. Replace it from IBM or get a keyboard cord. Error B can also refer to the

monitor, a little known fact. If none of the above seem appropriate, B may be indicating an error in the CRT/CPU page register logic (gate array, 6845, or associated TTL glue). In other words, your monitor is has gone over the hill. DO NOT attempt to repair a monitor yourself unless you know what you're doing. CRT's store large, potentially fatal, voltages. REPEAT, LEAVE THE INSIDE OF THE MONITOR ALONE.

4. *Two beeps and "Error C."* Unlikely since it indicates an error with a cassette tape storage "wrap back." Who uses cassettes?

5. *Two Beeps and "Error D."* Serial port ("S plug") on back of machine failed. Bad news only if you use an external modem or a serial printer (the more usual dot matrix uses the parallel port).

6. *"Error E."* Modem failure. At least it's (probably) not your jr.

7. *"Error F/G."* Error F means an error in ROM on the motherboard (the chip can be replaced). G, more specifically, indicates an error in the ROM cartridge space. The high order byte is shown following the letter.

8. *"Error H."* Disk Drive error. It's the disk drive.

If nothing at all happens when you turn on the machine, it's probably a power transformer (the "black brick"). These are available from IBM and several other vendors such as Computer Reset, Paul Rau Consulting, OOWL Software, and PC Enterprises to name a few.

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THE ATLANTA PCjr USERS GROUP

David Wilson / Membership Committee / (404) 255-2731

July 28, 1991

Mr. James P. Kane
Route 1, Box 125
Drew Road
Holmes, NY 12531

Dear Jim,

Well, it's that time again. Almost a year has passed since we registered you as a member of the ATLANTA PCjr USERS GROUP, and you know what that means - we'd like you to renew your status as a member. We'll send you more in next month's PEANUT, but we wanted to alert you in plenty of time to avoid an interruption.

As I'm sure you are aware, PCjr ownership has its share of snares and pitfalls, and as our Juniors get older and more obsolete those problems seem to be magnified. That's the purpose of the APCjrUG - to try to smooth out as many of the bumps and potholes as we can. We want to make "junioring" as productive and painless as it's possible to do.

New products and enhancements for the PCjr are still being developed and marketed, so the reports of the little darling's death are still exaggerated. We think that they'll continue to be for some time to come, so unless you really need the latest, greatest, and flashiest new goodies, we suggest you stick with a tried and true (if sometimes frustrating) old friend: your PCjr. And in order to gain the maximum from your Junior, why not keep up your membership in the ATLANTA PCjr USERS GROUP? We think you'll be glad you did.

Sincerely,


David Wilson

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David Wilson



Uh, Oh...What Does THAT Mean?

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Our user group, the Metro PCjr Users Group in the Washington Area, we have a "first Saturday" workshop held at the Capital PC User group offices. Area jr owners come by with nonworking machines and the group officers try to help. One owner had a jr which worked fine except that it wouldn't format disks. Inspection showed an LED swinging freely above the disk drive. We pushed it back into the hole in the picking arm on the drive and all was well. Apparently, it senses the indexing hole on the disk to begin the formatting process and won't work when it's out of position. The point here is that none of the assembled group that day knew that problem existed, but it was fixed.

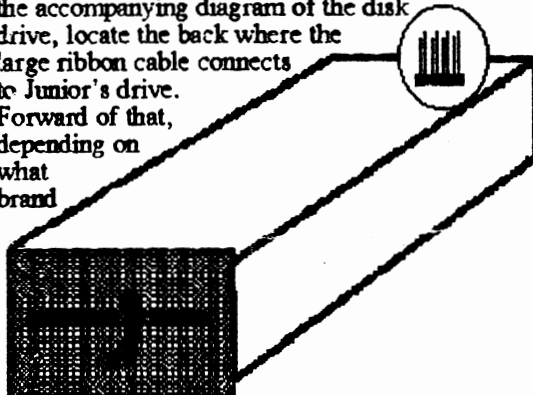
On another day, a woman had a Tecmar Captain memory expansion sidecar that did not seem to work. Turned out that the machine she had bought from a friend had a bent pin on the sidecar bus. That was that. Bent pins, by the way are a very common problem. An Achilles' heel of the jr is the flimsy pin connectors on the back. When plugging things on DON'T reach around the back and just shove it in. Make sure that you have the plug right side up and in the correct port. Use a good light if necessary and don't force a reluctant plug. The pins can sometimes be repaired, but not always; that means a new motherboard.

There, that's it. A brief tour through the problems I hope you don't see. Hardware problems often cause unneeded anxiety. You may not be able to repair the problem, but the chances are quite good that you can at least isolate it and get the offending part fixed.

Switch A: & B: Drives

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Remove the sidecar and the top. Disconnect the cables to the sidecar. Take off the whole snap-in upper section containing the second drive. Using the accompanying diagram of the disk drive, locate the back where the large ribbon cable connects to Junior's drive. Forward of that, depending on what brand

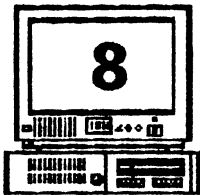


of disk drive you're working with, look for a group of four pairs of metal pins marked S0 through S3. To switch drive designations, move the plastic-covered metal sleeve (called a jumper) from S0 to S and from S1 to S0 -- depending on which set of pins it came with. Reverse the sleeve on the second drive as well. (Otherwise you could end up with two Drive B's.)

Put Junior back together and you are off and running! Just remember that you have a new Drive A. So make sure you start Junior with your DOS disk in that drive.

Good luck and long may your two drives spin!

(The above article was originally published in The Eugene (Oregon) PCjr Club's Newsletter, The Nearly Famous Louie Levy, Editor.)



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The Orphan Peanut

MORE RODENT LORE

(From Page 3)

does not have the ability to adjust resolution (number of dots per inch) that some other mice have. Richard Hermon of North Vancouver, B.C., Canada, wrote to say this about his experience with the Mouse Systems mouse: "I use it for drawing and desktop publishing, with First Publisher, PC Paintbrush, PC Paint Plus and Color Paint. I am completely satisfied with it. It's accurate, controllable and predictable." James Clark of Tucson, AZ, also likes the Mouse Systems mouse. He points out that "it is entirely solid-state, with no moving parts other than the switches on top. The PCjr version of the mouse has two switches, while the "standard" version has three. The outer two switches appear to be the only ones used. I have seen no applications which use the middle switch, but should it be needed with the PCjr version, it can be simulated by pressing both switches simultaneously." Along with his letter, James sent printouts of two nicely detailed color drawings he had made using PC Paint Plus. One warning about PC Paint Plus was sent in by Patrick Delahanty of Elkhart, IN, who was disappointed that it did not support his Star NX10 Printer. So, check to be sure that the software you intend to use with your mouse supports your printer.

PCjr Mice Suppliers

All the vendors of PCjr products offer a Mouse or Mice, and prices vary with the manufacturer and capabilities of the rodent. When you buy a mouse, be sure to ask what type of cable you'll need to hook it up to your PCjr. [PEANUT Editor's Note: DON't get a "Bus" type mouse - these are designed to plug into an expansion card slot of most PC's, but they won't fit a

Junior. The only exceptions are those mice made by PC Enterprises, Microsoft, Mouse Systems, and others which are installed in a sidecar bus and are specifically designed for the PCjr. All but the PCE mouse are no longer in production and are kind of hard to come by.] Most require a serial adapter cable, which costs about \$20.

This brings up another consideration: since the mouse will be plugged into your serial port, you'll have to unhook it when you want to attach something else to that port, such as an external modem. Most people can live with the inconvenience of an occasional plug change, but those who use both mice and modems extensively may want to purchase a switch box (\$25-30) or a second serial port (\$100-\$125). From Compuserve's PCjr Forum, we get this info about the Logitech mouse from Scott Miller, who says, "I highly recommend it." He goes on to point out a quirk that we have heard from other PCjr users. You can't touch the mouse until the mouse driver software has completed its initial loading procedure. If you touch the mouse before it's done, it won't load properly. Other Logitech users have also reported that they have to turn their computers off when switching between software while using the mouse. If you can overlook these slight inconveniences, the Logitech C-7 gets high marks. We also have good reports about the Genius mouse and PC Mouse (the three button Mouse Systems mouse). In fact, we don't know of any mouse that works from a serial port that won't operate on a PCjr as long as you get the PCjr serial adapter cable with it. So, if you want a handy little pet scurrying around on your desktop, pick up the phone and order a mouse!



A:>DIR

by David Blagg, President, APCjrUG

It is hard to get inspired to do much of anything in the middle of the summer. The days are long, often hot, and only sometimes punctuated with a cooling afternoon shower. But there is a thought that will get me stirring. It is the realization that all too soon the summer will come to an end.

And there will be things to do.

And so as I boot the PCjr to get this started, I am very much aware that the time to begin thinking about the fall season is now. But that awareness is something like the alarm that rings too early in the morning: I want it to stop, and I can make it stop, but not for long.

You can help me "hit the snooze button." And here is how. I would like each of our members to think up one suggestion for a topic or other activity at our monthly meeting. I am serious about this request, but your suggestion does not have to be serious. For example, how many of you have a program that "plays tricks" with the computer, or would like to know about such programs? I have one called DRIP.COM that makes the letters on the screen start to fall to the bottom—like a dripping ice cream cone.

Maybe we could devote a meeting to these programs. Or perhaps you have an interest in the range of small utility programs which run on the PCjr. Make that your suggestion or think up a different one. But just one.

While we are thinking about the PCjr and the user group, you might also consider your participation in the group's activities. David Wilson and Terry Markert are always willing to share the tasks required to get out *The Orphan Peanut* news-letter and run the JrWorkshop

BBS. Len Brown can use some help with the disk library, especially now that we are doing short reviews. Shucks, if you want to, you can even write this column. But there is an office that goes with it.

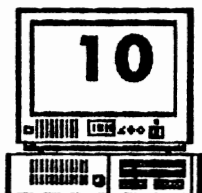
Let us know. Share your thoughts and suggestions with me or one of the other officers. We really want the direction for our efforts as we strive to meet our members' needs.

By the way, snooze button or not, I will be at the August meeting. Karl Hedger from Micro Center will be our guest. Karl has been with us before, and has shared some very interesting knowledge about computers, especially the PCjr. And that's nothing to snooze about. See you on August 5th.

The Old 'Compatibility' Trick *(from Page 4)*

which can cause your computer to lock up. Patches are available on the PCjr WORKSHOP or from the Disk Library. Using DOS 3.21 or higher can solve some problems, but takes more memory.

Try these methods before giving up on software you want to run on your PCjr. You'll be surprised how often a little experimentation will work. Specific notes on which settings work best on specific software are included on the latest version of the PCjr Compatibility Disk, Disk #60 in the jr Newsletter Software Store.



Random Access: RAMblings on a Disorganized Disk

I had a melancholy experience the other day. I flipped the "ON" switch for the hard drives attached to my PCjr, and nothing at all happened. No bells, whistles, sparks, funny odors, accusatory messages onscreen, no nothing! After experimenting for a while, I discovered that the problem probably lies with a defunct power supply card in the Hard Drive itself, so I dutifully called my mentor in these situations, Paul Rau (of Paul Rau Consulting (209) 745-9284). We got the details ironed out, and I expect to have Junior up and running shortly, but that's not what I wanted to write about. I wanted to mention that during the course of the conversation, Paul commented that he is now offering a 20-megabyte Hard Drive system COMPLETE for \$300. Folks, that's comparable to what a HardCard would cost if you had bought that XT Clone you've been seeing advertised. It's housed in a salvaged PCjr chassis, so the not-inconsiderable cost of that isn't a factor. This is a certifiable Good Deal, so check it out - and see below for more good stuff.

A while back, I mentioned that PC Enterprises had some new products for Juniors, but I hadn't seen their catalog and therefore couldn't comment on anything beyond reporting the rumor of what was being offered. I'm delighted to say that that situation has changed for the better - I now have a PCE catalog clutched to my manly chest, and boy, is it exciting! The best news I've seen for those who want to keep their Juniors going but feel that they're being left behind is this: the new VGA upgrade is here, and it's much more than just a kludged pseudo-upgrade like the Racore almost-DMA and the Thin (or Dual) Font chip: this looks like it's the real thing. I'll save the descriptions and rhapsodies

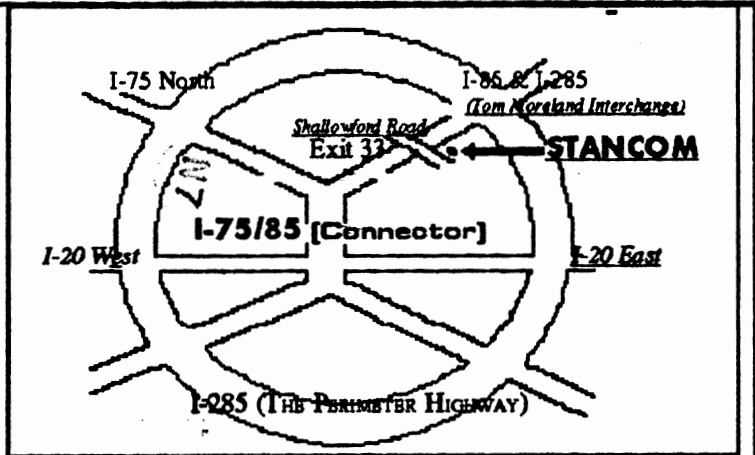
for another time and article, but you can investigate it yourself by calling for your own catalog (See number below); OR you can come to the August meeting of the APCjrUG and get one from me. PCE sent me 15 copies of their publication, and I'll have them available to the first people in line on August 5. Sorry, first come, first served. (if you can't make it, call the aforementioned number and request a catalog - they're actually mailing them these days.

Here's a real *FLASH!* from PCE. I called them yesterday and was informed that they now have an unadvertised special available - they're offering for a limited time an *80-megabyte* hard drive system complete for \$495.00. That's about as good as you could hope for; it's extremely comparable to the price you'd pay for the same setup to add to an AT or 386, and less than IBM wants you to pay for the same addition to a PS/2. A **GOOD DEAL!** Call PCE for details at (800) 922-PCJR.

I'm still waiting for some of my helpers to return their comments on what should be included in the next Beginners Kit (and could someone come up with a better name for it, please?). It now appears that we're going to follow in the footsteps of such giants as Lotus and Word Perfect by creating "vaporware" - software promised but not delivered at the promised time. If you'll bear with us, we'll get the little devil out one of these days. If you have questions or comments on the subject of the BK, please call me or, better yet, leave a message on the PCjr WORKSHOP. I can't accept any advance orders on it because I have a nasty tendency to lose them. It's coming, though, I promise.

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 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

