Next APCjrUG
Meeting
JANUARY 6
at 7:30 P.M

A > DIR_

by David Blagg,
President, APCjrUG

"Thank you" is in order for those of you who took the time to consider the options available to the APCjrUG, as requested in the last ORPHAN PEANUT We received 27 postcards by the deadline, a rather impressive response.
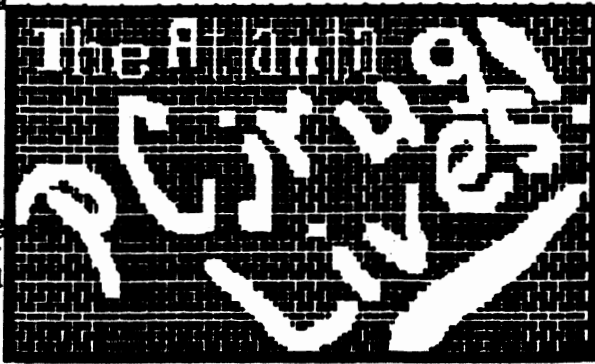
Here is the outcome of the survey. Thirteen respondents said "let's stay pretty much the same." Thirteen more said "let's become more closely affiliated with the APCUG." One returned a card with an "abstain" sentiment. There was one other who relayed a response via telephone (for the SIG), but the card was not received. No one opted for dissolution. A summary interpretation of these results is that we simply do not have a swing toward consensus, one way or the other.

The officers met in a called meeting on December 14th. After much discussion of the alternatives -- including merger with some other user group (if one could be found)--we decided to carry on as an active independent user group for at least the next three months. We will review the situation after the March meeting and make the next decision. By the way, yet another "thank you" is in order to express gratitude to our officers for their time and effort on this particular issue.

What will become of our group? The answer is inside each of you and will be revealed in your collective actions. I have recently looked through back issues of the *JrNewsletter*. A few years ago there was an appreciable number of PCjr user groups scattered about the country.

Two years ago there was a notice about the demise of the Jr Users of Monterey (Calif) Peninsula (JUMP) with the observation that there was lack of participation, although there were many inactive members. Just two months later there was another notice about a new PCjr user group in south Florida.

Interest and participation at any one time and place seems to be the key to a viable user group. As has been said before, "PCjr Lives!" To that I say, "How well do you want your PCjr to live?"

posed Graffiti for building Interest/Participation

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.

AN OPPORTUNITY

by David Wilson

I got a phone call a couple of days ago from a guy asking if I knew of anyone who wanted to buy a "like new" PCjr. The caller went on to say that he really wanted to sell his Junior because the money would come in handy, but that if he didn't sell it by the first of the year, he was going to try to find some way to offer it as a donation to a worthy cause. He wondered if I knew any individual or organization which could use a plain vanilla 128K PCjr - preferably one which he could claim as a charitable donation for tax purposes. I made a couple of suggestions and then, after he hung up, I got to pondering the question: where do all these old, nonworking, superseded PCjrs go? Their owners don't want to throw their Junior out and they can't seem to sell it, but they don't know of any other alternative.

Well, a number of them are used as "boat anchors" or "doorstops"; they are stuck on a shelf or in the attic or in another room and are never used. Many are sold or given to beginners in computing who eventually either come to us or replace their Junior with a faster, more souped-up model without realizing its potential use. And many Juniors just die. They quit working and no one can be found who can or will repair them. There are a lot of unused (or underused) PCjrs out there, and they just kind of drift into the sunset because someone doesn't know what to do with them. It seems a pity, doesn't it?

That's the core of my latest idea. I'd like to explore the possibility of the APCjrUG acting as a kind of broker between people who have a need and people who have a surplus they're willing to donate. It seemed to me that, as an example, the Scottish Rite and Eggleston hospitals could identify kids who have an interest in computers but not the means to pursue it and who would welcome the chance to own even a slow, obsolete, slightly flaky machine. I mentioned my brainstorm to David Blagg, and he felt that there were possibilities here, suggesting that the infra-red keyboard might make Junior ideal for bedridden patients, children and adult, in the Shepherd Spinal Clinic - the patient could operate it from his or her bed, even if the computer is across the room; that brought on the thought that the PCjr was built with the idea that it could be used with a TV set, so placement that far away would be fairly simple for a person with reasonably good vision. Then my wife tossed out the notion that a computer would be wonderful for a severely hearing-impaired child at the Atlanta Speech School. Then... but you get the idea.

The possibilities for helping others and at the same time prolonging the useful "life" of an old friend are numerous. We could take in broken or non-functioning machines, swap some parts, and provide someone with a working computer where there was once only a couple of piles of junk. There must be a zillion PCjr Internal Modems out there that aren't even being used as paperweights - plug one of them into a 128K machine and include a disk with JRTELE software and voila'! you have an opportunity for someone to reach out and meet some people they wouldn't ordinarily be able to. And how about those obnoxious thermal printers? They're no good for you and me, but how about for a beginner? They'll use fax paper, which is readi-

Some DOS Tips

The following article has appeared in The ORPHAN PEANUT before, but the subject is one that can be said to be "ever popular". We hope it provides a little help to our new users and a reminder to many of our veterans - Editor

Printing Directories

The simplest way to make a copy of the directory on a disk is to type at the A > prompt: DIR > PRN (ENTER) This will give you a copy of the current directory without displaying it on your screen. If you want to see the directory as it is being copied, first press the Fn and the E (echo) keys on your PCjr keyboard and then type at the A > prompt: DIR (ENTER)

Some Facts About DISKCOPY

The DOS command DISKCOPY is one way to copy the information from one diskette to another, but keep these points in mind: It makes a "carbon copy" of the diskette you are copying from. This means if you use a single sided diskette as your source, your copy will be formatted as a single sided disk, too. (So you won't be able to add files to it once the single side is full.) Also, unlike the COPY *.* command, if there are any bad sectors on your target diskette, DISKCOPY will still try to write to them and will give you a copy that may be imperfect. The preferred way to copy diskettes is to FORMAT first and then use the COPY *.* command. It's slower, but your copy will be more reliable.

When DISKCOPYing Keep RAM Free

The time it takes to copy diskettes, when using the DISKCOPY command will be reduced if you keep your RAM memory free. When you are DISKCOPYing, DOS transfers data from your source diskette into memory before dumping it to your target diskette. So if your memory is occupied there will be less space for the transfer, and the copying process will require more steps.

Watch Out for File Fragmentation

The organization of files on a diskette that has been used for a long time with many deletions and additions can become very inefficient. This is caused by the storage of more recent files in the spaces left by previously deleted files. One file may be stored in several places on the diskette, requiring DOS to skip around in order to find the information. The diskette will still function, but DOS will take longer to handle its files. This can slow you down, particularly with wordprocessing or spreadsheet files. One way to reorganize these files is to format a new diskette and then use the COPY *.* command to copy the old diskette's files to a new diskette. The files will be copied continuously, making the job of handling them easier and faster.

How to Label Your Diskettes

If you want to put a label on your diskette (not the kind you stick on the outside, but one appearing above the directory), use the FORMAT B:/V command. This will enable you to write an eight character label or volume number which will appear every time the DIR command is given.

5

"Quick & Dirty" Drive Maintenance

We frequently get calls from panic-stricken junior users who have just gotten one of those cryptic messages DOS loves to throw at you now and then such as "Bad disk in drive" or "Disk Drive Failure" accompanied by the ever-popular (A)bort, (R)etry, (I)gnore?" options. Frequently, this aberation is accompanied by a horrible grinding not unlike a berserk coffee grinder. Sometimes, it's true, you've just been present at the death of a floppy drive, but often it's simply a little dirt or dust in the wrong place.

One thing you can do that may help the situation is to purchase and use a commercial cleaning disk that you slip into you slot of the offending drive ang run for several seconds. There are a number of them available at any computer store, and I don't really know if one brand is superior to another; just be sure that you get the "wet" type rather than the "dry" - they're much less wearing on your read/write head. Don't overuse them either, as they do cause a small amount of tear to the head each time they're used. You can also get some denatured alcohol and a high-quality (to reduce the stray fiber) cotton swab and gently clean off the head manually. CAUTION: be very careful when you lift the head - if you throw it out of its precision alignment, you'll need either a new drive or a professional realignment.

Another helpful piece of owner maintenance is described in the following article, written several years ago by a member of the now-defunct San Francisco PCjr Users Group. We've printed it before, but we're going to ignore our normal no-repeat policy and offer it again because of its value to our users. Just follow the directions and you won't go wrong. -Editor

A LUBE JOB FOR YOUR Jr

by Herb Gellis

Scranch! Scranch! Grrdlrrdlrrdlrrdl! Scranch! Scranch! go your Jr's diskette drive(s). Annoying and not too healthy for the drive either. Is there anything you can do? You betcha... a simple lube job and now Jr sounds more like vuub-vuub vuub-vuub. Even the ten thumbs non-mechanical I can do it (and so can you for $1.49 and a few minutes time).

There seems to have been a rash of computer club articles regarding PCjr maintenance this past year. If you break out in a rash every time your A: drive turns on, this article is for you!

To remove the PCjr's lid, all you need is a flat-headed screwdriver, which you insert under the rear end of the lid in the three notched places provided for this purpose, and gently pry upwards. The lid will then easily slide out back and upwards. And by the way, you should do this with the power off!

Looking at the disk drive mechanism, you will note that there are two metal rails (as indicated by the arrows in the picture) along which the plastic head carriage moves. If you gently move this carriage back and forth along the rails you will see where you need to lubricate the rails (two places on the left side and one place on the right side).

The question is, what do you use to lubricate those rails? And well you asked that question because not all lubricants are good for the job,
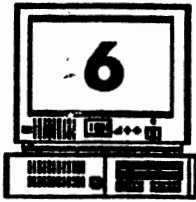
Lube Job for Junior

(From Page 5)

as some are not compatible with the plastic, and will corrode the mechanism.

The best method suggested in these articles (which I have used to great satisfaction myself on drive A:, and my Quadram second drive) is to use a Teflon based oil, which is supposed to last almost forever, and resist dust buildup. Specifically, I used the recommended Radio Shack "Archer Precision Oiler", costing a whole $1.49, and which comes in a really easy to apply container. It looks like a see-through ball-point pen, with a capped needle- nose end. Another article recommended TRIFLOW, which is also Teflon based with similar properties, and is available from hardware stores in general.

The particular advantage of the Radio Shack oiler, is that you don't need a special lint-less cotton swab to apply the oil. (Such cotton swabs are typically available with audio head cleaning kits, for example.) All you do with the Radio Shack oiler is remove the cap on the needle-nose, and carefully position it over the places on the rails where the carriage rides over it, and place one or two drops of oil there.

Go easy on the oil, and don't drip any anywhere else! Move the carriage back and forth several times (gently!) to help distribute the oil. When you're done with the lube job, slide the Jr's lid back on, snap it down, and power up. And listen to Jr purrrrrrrr........

Format Disks Faster
by Ray Stroud

Probably the dullest task associated with computing is formatting. Of course there are some programs, such as FASTFORMAT designed to ease this task. And there are others.

One of the "others" is a short, neat program that appeared in the StarDotStar column of PC WORLD in the October issue. The program continually runs A and B drives. When it finishes formatting in one drive, the computer BEEPS, which is to let you know to change disks. I like this program(s) because it permits me to do some other tasks while the computer is formatting, then the beep lets me know when to change disks.

Here is how to do it. Make a file called FORM.BAT which is an endless loop.

```
FORMAT B: %1 %2 < CR_Y_CR ^G
FORMAT A: %1 %2 < CR_Y_CR ^G GOTO top
```

The variables %1 and %2 are for using parameters such as /S and /4. The author suggests that you not use /V since this program will not handle it. The redirection symbol gets a carriage return, a "yes" and a carriage return from the file. These are keystrokes you would normally have to make, using the DOS format. The "^" symbol is not the character above the number 6. This represents Ctl G which is the bell or beeper. Hold down the Ctl key and depress G.

You will need a file called CR_Y_CR. To make this file, use the command COPY CON CR_Y_CR <ENTER>, then type CR,Y,CR, hit Fn-6, then <ENTER> and get out of the file. NOTICE!! The CR in this file is the actual

Some DOS Tips

The Powerful FORMAT Command

The DOS FORMAT command is used to initialize a diskette to accept DOS information and files. It can be issued as a command on its own, or automatically invoked when using the DISKCOPY command. When used on its own, it will tell you if there are defective tracks on a target diskette. This does not mean the diskette is unusable, just that those tracks should be avoided (which the COPY *.* command will do, but DISKCOPY will not). If you add /S after the drive specification, you will have a copy of the operating system on the target diskette, making it bootable. The addition of /1 will format only the first side of the target diskette. Adding /V enables you to write a volume label, to appear above the directory.

Using Wildcards to Find Files

DOS allows the use of two wildcard symbols, the * and the ? These symbols can be useful in many ways, but the one we'll discuss here is using wildcards with the DIR command to find files quickly and easily. Each of the symbols means something different. The * will match any number of characters, while the ? will match just one character. Here are some examples: If you type DIR *.DOC, you will get a listing of all the files in your directory with the file extension .DOC. To get even more specific, if you type DIR A*.DOC, you will see all files whose names begin with A and whose extensions are .DOC. Since the ? represents a single character, if you type DIR FILE.DO?, you will get a listing of all the files named FILE with extensions that have DO as the first two letters. If you keep these wildcards in mind, you can not only speed up your searches for files, but you

can create file names and extensions that will help you organize and find them later.

When DOS Growls, Don't Panic

DOS has a lot of error messages, such as "Disk Boot Failure," "File Not Found," "Bad Command or Filename," and other depressing statements. But 90 per cent of the time, the problem indicated by the error message is minor. For example, unless you're perfect (in which case, please let us know, we'll do an article on you in our next issue), you may have simply made a typing error. Your PCjr is VERY particular about which keys you press when communicating with it. Or, some slight misalignment, dust particle, flea or gnome may have caused the problem and then disappeared. In which case simply trying again will do the trick.

Format Disks Faster

CARRIAGE RETURN key, NOT a printed CR. The CARRIAGE RETURN is in a response to the normal DOS FORMAT message, "Insert diskette in drive A: and strike any key when ready." The Y is another response to the prompt, "Format another?" This is one of those simple, creative programs that some bright people have written to problems that plague all of us. Thanks to the author.

(The above article was originally published in the OKC Jr Orphans Chronicle, now defunct.)

Psssst! Wanna Download Something?

How Downloading Works

One of the joys of home computing (or office computing for that matter) is communicating through your telephone using a modem. When you first make contact with a distant Bulletin Board System (BBS), it's like entering an exotic land. And it's often a land full of goodies you can scoop up before leaving.

Each BBS has its own protocols for viewing files, leaving messages, etc. Usually the directions are right there on your screen telling you how to do these things. As far as downloading files (the goodies) is concerned, though, you usually have a choice -- and sometimes the choices are confusing if you are unfamiliar with how downloading works.

Basically, there are two kinds of downloads -- ASCII and Binary.

ASCII files usually contain text and can be downloaded by a direct ASCII capture, sometimes called a buffer dump. Your telecommunications software will have a downloading command that will most likely bring up a window showing your choices. ASCII, XMODEM, YMODEM and KERMIT are some of the most common. Since we don't intend to get very technical in this article, let's just make the basic distinction between these protocols.

The ASCII protocol is a direct dumping of information from one computer to another (yours). Your diskette will receive whatever information comes through the telephone lines to your modem and it probably will include some errors due to noise or static on the lines. When

you've finished receiving you can read the file with your word processor, or by using the DOS TYPE command.

The other category of downloading protocols is called binary file transfer. All the other choices offered by your telecommunications software will fall in this category. Binary transfers check the incoming information for errors before allowing it to be recorded on your diskette. Essentially, the BBS's computer sends a block of data to your computer. Then the two computers compare the data. If the data in the block doesn't compare exactly, the block will be sent again.

Binary downloads are necessary for all downloads of software. It is also advisable for long text files, otherwise you can get large blocks of gibberish.

As far as we know, none of the binary methods is clearly better than another. We use Procomm with the XMODEM protocol almost all the time and have experienced no problems.

Editor's Note - Since this article was written, several shareware Communications programs have become available that work beautifully on the PCjr, depending on the amount of RAM you have available. If you have 384K or more, we suggest that you try TELIX or BOYAN as well as PROCOMM 2.4.2. If you have the PCjr internal modem and/or less than 384K of RAM, go with JRTELE. All are available on the PCjr WORKSHOP or from other members of APCjrUG.

We'll have a more complete discussion of transfer protocols such as X-, Y-, and Zmodem in a future issue.

If You REALLY Want To Know What's Wrong With Your jr...

Author Unknown, (But It wasn't your Editor)

Our PCjrs have a very nice, very colorful self test procedure than can be started by pressing and holding Ctrl and Alt, then pressing Ins. Very colorful and interesting, perhaps the first time you try it -- but not truly informative.

The test menu screens that come up during the test give you a chance to test just about everything -- disk drive, monitor, light pen, joystick, sound, keyboard, modem and printer. And it is useful to some extent. It can help you figure out where your problem is. But that's about all.

As your PCjr Guide to Operations will tell you, if your jr fails any one of the tests, "Have your IBM PCjr serviced."

That's not a lot of help, but it's about all the bad news most people need to have. Because even if the self test gave you more technical information, you probably wouldn't know what to do with it.

For the Technician

However, if you are inclined to be good about technical matters, you might want to consider purchasing the Hardware Maintenance and Service Manual. It comes with four service plugs that go in the joystick ports, the serial port and the parallel port.

These plugs add a new dimension to the diagnostic tests. When the plugs are in and the test is run, you will not only get an indication of where the problem is located, but you will see on your monitor a four digit figure that corresponds to a list in the manual.

When you look up the code, the manual provides a detailed description of what is wrong and how to go about fixing it. Sometimes the problem will be something that any reasonably ambitious do-it-yourselfer can handle. Other times you will have to cart your jr to the service center. But at least you will be able to tell the technician what is wrong and you will know if a technician tries to expand the repair bill beyond the real problem.

The Hardware Maintenance and Service Manual is no longer available from IBM dealers, but you may be able to get it from PCjr mail-order vendors. Probably your best bet is to watch the ads on BBSes, in newspapers, and in jrNewsletter. If you're technically inclined, it can be an investment that will provide a very nice rate of return.
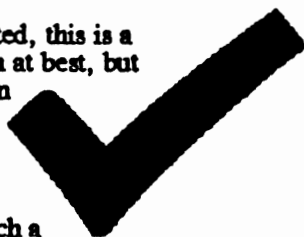
An Opportunity

(From Page 3)

ly available. Granted, this is a rudimentary system at best, but isn't that better than none at all for someone without the opportunity for more? A lot of us started with just such a system and it wasn't all that bad.

Want another idea that occured as I was typing the last paragraph? How about someone screening the educational and game software we have available as shareware and providing that along with a "compatibility list" of commercial programs that work on a PCjr? Isn't a lot of this just what a User Group is supposed to do anyhow?

What we need, though, is someone - or a group of someones - who can take this idea, expand on it, and make it into something that works. Perhaps the Shriners or United Way could assist in identifying recipients and distributing the computers. I can't take on this responsibility in addition to my other duties and interests, nor can we ask any of our present Officers to do so. How about it? Can you? Call me at 255-2731 or leave me a message on the PCjr WORKSHOP if you'd like to explore the possibilities. There's a chance here to do some good, and it needn't cost you anything but some time.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The APCjrUG's Officers met on Saturday, December 14, to analyze the results of the survey taken in the December issue of *The ORPHAN PEANUT* and to try to determine the direction of the Group's future.

Basically, the choices offered in the survey were three: (1) Remain as we have been - an independent User Group affiliated with, but not an integral part of, the Atlanta PC Users Group; (2) Become a Special Interest Group (SIG) of the APCUG; and (3) Dissolve the APCjrUG entirely. Comments and suggestions were invited, but the responses were divided into those three categories.

The voting was done via a pre-addressed, pre-stamped postcard requiring only three actions by the members, and just slightly over half of them were returned (A poor perfor--mance; in your editor's opinion, considering the subject and the ease of responding.) There was no clear-cut majority opinion; the voting ended in a dead heat between those who wanted to continue as we have been and those who wanted to become a full-fledged SIG.

What's the meaning of all this? Beats me. This result was not what I expected. None of the Officers present at the meeting wanted to close down the Group entirely, but we all recognized that the problems haven't gone away in spite of the wishing and hoping. We still need what we did a month, six months, or two years ago - participation by our members. I really hate to keep harping on this, folks, but of our current membership, only two or three have stepped forward to accept increased responsibilities; conversely, almost all of the long-time Junior users have stepped several levels ahead and will be available for less and less in the future. None of us wants to see our Group expire, but it will if you don't act soon.

Increasing Disk Buffers Often Speeds Up Software

From JrNewsletter

If you have more than 256K on your PCjr you may want to experiment with an increased number of disk buffers to gain speed for certain software.

What are disk buffers? You may not be aware of it, but every time you boot up, DOS reserves a certain portion of RAM for disk buffers. Usually about 528 bytes, a disk buffer is a part of your computer's memory where DOS can temporarily store information that it is asked to read or write to disk. It generally does this when the information it is asked to read or write is not the same size as a disk sector. When the buffer gets full, DOS will write the information on disk.

The upshot of this is that if you are using software that reads and writes to disk very often, you will be able to operate that software faster if you tell DOS to reserve more than the usual two disk buffers. Generally, database and spreadsheet software benefit from a higher number of buffers. But it depends upon how the software is written. So the best thing to do is experiment with the software you use most often.
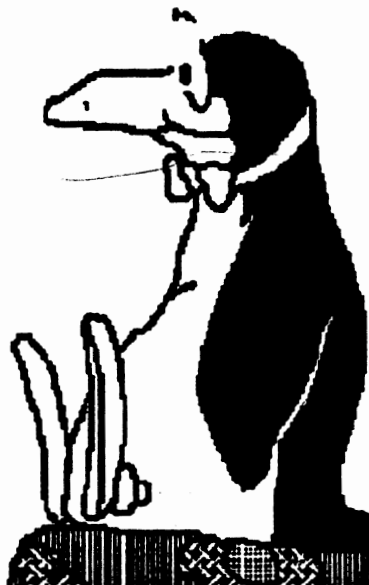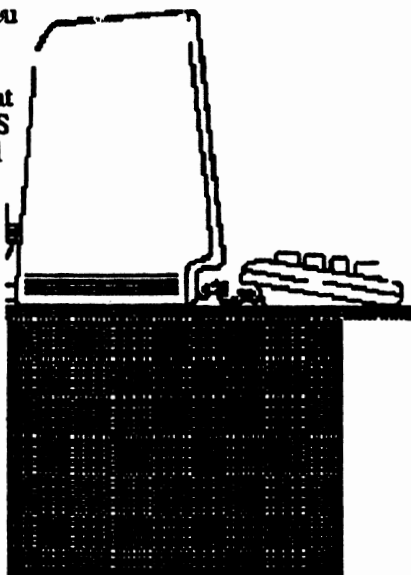
The way to set the number of disk buffers available for DOS is to put the line

BUFFERS=nn

in your config.sys file. (nn stands for whatever number you select.) Although theoretically the greater number of buffers the better, when using DOS 2.1, you will find that the optimum number

is usually somewhere between 10 and 20. DOS 2.1 tends to become bogged down with more than 20 buffers. DOS 3.0 and higher, on the other hand, can handle up to 50 or 60 buffers without getting bogged down.

For those of you who are not familiar with modifying your config.sys file, you can do it with any word processor. Just add the line BUFFERS=10 (or whatever number you want to try.) Or you can write a config.sys file from scratch, either with a word processor, or by typing at the DOS prompt: COPY CON CONFIG.SYS. Then type the lines you want. When you are done, press F6 or Control C, then Enter. If you use the copy con method, you will be starting from scratch, which means before doing this you should have a record of what your existing config.sys file says. You should preserve the other parts of it while adding the buffers line (as a separate line.)

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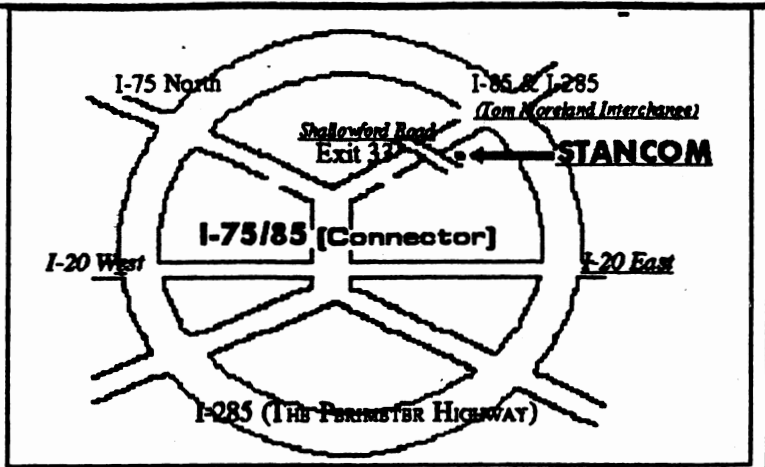
the overpass you will see a buildiing on the left with *STANCOM* in latrge letters on the front of it. If you're inside the Perimeter (I-285): Get on I-85 heading North from the city. Watch for the *Shallowford Road exit, Number 33,* and leave the Interstate highway there. Turn right on Shallowford Road,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

Map: I-75 North · I-85 & I-285 *(Tom Moreland Interchange)* · *Shallowford Road* Exit 33 · STANCOM · I-20 West · I-75/85 [Connector] · I-20 East · I-285 (The Perimeter Highway)

The Orphan Peanut

The Chronicle Of The Atlanta PCjr Users Group
6575 Amberglades Lane
Atlanta, GA 30328

NORTH-METRO-IMPC 31DEC91 17:39

**HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR...
BUT DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE**