

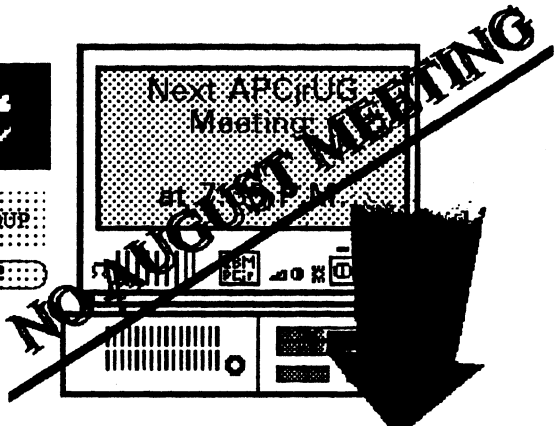
The Orphan Peanut

THE CHRONICLE OF THE ATLANTA PCjr USERS GROUP

Volume 5, Number 2

Price: \$1.50

August, 1982



ROMANCING THE PHONE

ADVENTURES IN **BSSING**

by David Wilson

For several reasons, the APCjrUG members present at the July General meeting unanimously voted to cancel August's meeting. The next APCjrUG meeting will take place on the **SECOND** Monday in September (because of the Labor Day Holiday), so please don't show up on the first Monday. You'll only get yourself some dangerously high blood pressure if you do and you'll still have to come back the next week.



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July's
article
on
Proto-
ools

created such a storm of interest (well, he was a little bit intrigued) that we decided to follow it up with another on the same general theme: Telecommunications, or transferring data between two computers. I'm not going to try to cover the subject in great detail in this article; I'd just like to mention a few subjects, other than Protocols, that are germane to your enjoyment of your PCjr's communications capability.

The first and most valuable of the "peripherals" (devices that work with a computer but are not themselves part of the computer) you'll get for your computer has to be a printer. In the vast majority of cases, the usefulness of your PCjr depends on your being able to print "hard copy" of what you've created with your spreadsheet or word processor - it doesn't do your kid much good to spend several hours writing that perfect paper if he or she has to



take it in for the teacher to read encased in a PCjr, now does it? Anyhow, get a printer first. It's a necessity, not a luxury, and we'll discuss types and levels of printers at another time.

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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.

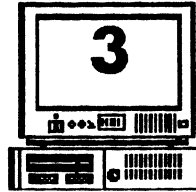
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~ OFFICERS, 1991-1992 ~



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Learn, Then Practice.

by Bob Lay, Quad-Cities Computer Society,
as published in the June 1992 issue of "FOX TALES",
the Newsletter of The Fox Valley (Illinois) PC
Association

We've all heard it. "I'm going to get a computer so I can get organized," or "I'm getting a computer to do my accounting," or "I'm going to get a computer to do whatever-it-is-I-can't-do-now."

Trouble is, this ignores the fact that the computer does nothing to make us what we aren't and everything to make us **more** of what we **are**. The computer is nothing, if not an amplifier.

The implications? If we're disorganized without a computer, we'll be disorganized **with** one, albeit at great speed. As well, if our accounting is nonexistent or a mess now, it'll be the same, but more so, with a computer.

As a magnifying glass makes things appear larger, yet at the same time focuses all incoming light to an infinite point, so works the computer. Given the computer operator's ability to do anything, the computer will multiply that ability in almost algebraic fashion. Likewise, given the **inability** of the operator to do anything, the computer will instantly focus on that lack of ability to an infinite point; which is to say, nothing.

It's here that frustration sets in for all of us. With the speed the computer applies to doing those things which we know how to do, we quickly get to the point of **not** knowing how to do something. All of us. No exceptions! And it's here that we have to realize and to accept the reality that the computer is no different from a

hammer that occasionally hits something not aimed at (i.e., our thumb), or a knife that now and then cuts something not intended (i.e., our finger).

To use our computer for anything specific, we must accept the fact that it won't do anything specific for us unless we know basically how to do that basic something **without** a computer! The world abounds with terrible and ugly attempts to use the computer as a substitute for learning the craft of (desktop) publishing, or writing, or spreadsheet solutions, or genealogy, or what-have-you.

Which isn't to say that learning a discipline can't be done on a computer, or with the help of a computer. Just as the computer can accelerate the work to be done, it can accelerate learning. The difference is subtle but stark. Don't buy a publishing program and expect to learn publishing; learn about desktop publishing, perhaps with the aid of a computer programs that helps teach it, **then** start using a desktop publishing program. Don't buy a word processing program and expect to become a writer; learn something of the writing craft, perhaps with the aid of computer programs that teach it, **then** start using a word processor.

Finally, don't despair. There's one last piece of advice implicit in this: follow the suggestion the New Yorker gave the tourist who asked "how to get to Carnegie Hall?" "Practice, practice, practice," replied the New Yorker.



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DISKCOPY vs. COPY vs. XCOPY

by Craig Landes, Co-Editor, "Fox Tales", the Newsletter of the Fox Valley (Illinois) PC Association, appearing in the July, 1992, issue of Fox Tales

One of the things we learn almost immediately, when confronted by a computer, is that there are some things called "files" and we're supposed to do something about them. If we have no idea at all what they are, the reference manual usually gets us involved right there in the Install section.

Unfortunately, most reference manuals tend to present COPY or DISKCOPY as the way to install program files. There is rarely any explanation of what's happening in the underlying environment.

To understand the idea of copying, we need to know that piece of information (files) reside in two areas of the computer system: on the disk, as a magnetic imprint which keeps the information even when there is no electricity; and in RAM (Random Access Memory), which is a sort of twilight zone of computer technology that *only* works when there is a supply of electricity.

When we start a program, or retrieve a file into a word processor or spreadsheet, most often the computer makes a copy of the information on the disk and puts that copy into RAM. There, we can manipulate and change all sorts of things without any impact on the magnetism still sitting on the disk... until we "save" the file back to the disk.

So at most times there exists a magnetic map of a program, or a letter we wrote, or our current checkbook. Then, if we're using the computer to make changes to the checkbook or letter, there exists a copy of that in RAM. Some

programs write to disk immediately upon our going to the next record (database) or check (accounting). Many programs wait and let us press a "save" key.

As we begin building up more and more files, or install more and more programs, we begin to realize that we need to move things around, or delete the files, or even (oddly enough) back up our data files. Here, once again, we come in contact with the concept of copying files. Drawing on first experience, we might assume that DISKCOPY is the way to go - if that was what our first Reference Manual suggested - or the plain COPY command.

When we use DOS's COPY command, DOS goes to the file we're trying to copy; reads up to 64K of it into RAM; then writes that 64K back to the destination disk. After that the cycle begins again until the original source file is copied to the new destination. If we are copying a large pile of files, DOS still will only read 64K, then write 64K, over and over until the file is completely transferred. *[Ed. Note - On a PCjr, this process is very slow because of the slow clock speed and the fact that two disk drives cannot run at the same time on a Junior because of its lack of Direct Memory Access (DMA)]*. In addition, DOS doesn't care at all if the source file is different but has the same *name* as what you designated as the destination. COPY will overwrite or combine multiple files into a single file and never even blink.

To get around this, if we're copying large numbers of files or a very large single file, we have XCOPY, which came into being at DOS 3.2, and does things differently. XCOPY reads



Romancing the Phone

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The second goody you can get is a modem. It's a gadget that permits your computer to talk to others and to exchange information with them over a telephone line, and it can expand your horizons in a hundred different ways. We've published several articles on exactly what modems are, what they do, and how you can get them to do it, so we won't get into the nuts and bolts of modems, COM ports, serial ports, and the like. If you need a refresher on these subjects, please let me know and we'll see if we can come up with something in future issues of the PEANUT. With this little jewel you can do a number of wondrous things for very little cost definitely unusual in these days of bloated prices for almost everything.

Modems themselves have dropped drastically in price over the last few years. You can now get a adequate external modem that will receive/transmit your files and keyboard strokes at 2400 baud (sorry, we're not discussing what that means this time, but it's what most people still use) for as little as \$39.00 if you watch the ads. Get a "Hayes compatible", not a Hayes modem if price is a consideration, since the difference in price can be considerable. Don't get a fast modem if you plan to use it on your PCjr - I don't think PCjr performance at speeds exceeding 2400 baud is dependable, and in any case, you need a hard drive or a large RAMdisk to make your downloads behave. You can pick up a PCjr External Modem for next to nothing (and in my opinion it's overpriced even then), but that locks you in to a very slow 300 baud which any BBSs won't permit. You're also severely limited as to what software you can use with the IBM Internal Modem. If you just want to get

your feet wet and are not sure that you'll like modeming, you might want to try it with the Infernal Modem, but I really don't even advise that - I think you'll get a more accurate picture of the real thing by borrowing a 1200 or 2400 baud external modem, plugging it into your Serial Port with a Serial Adaptor Cable, and having at it.

Software? You need some that uses the Hayes Command Set (i.e., "Hayes compatible"), but since this is now the de facto standard throughout the industry, you really don't have to worry much about this factor. Most DOS communications software runs perfectly on a Junior, but I recommend that you get the smallest possible program that has the level of bells and whistles you want. You can try many of them out without cost to you, since a number of excellent communications programs are available as shareware - either downloaded by yourself or a friend from a BBS or as a purchase from a Disk Library such as that operated by our own Len Brown. All those offered by the PCjr WORKSHOP or the APCjrUG Disk Library are known to be compatible with the PCjr, by the way, with only a few restrictions or modifications because of your particular Junior's configuration.

Okay, you've got your modem, got your software, got it plugged in and operating, and you've logged onto the PCjr WORKSHOP. Wise move - the WORKSHOP has more to offer the PCjr user than just about any other BBS in the country in the way of PCjr support files. As an APCjrUG member, you're entitled to 60 minutes of online time each day, and unlimited

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downloads as long as you don't exceed your time limit. (This contrasts with most BBSs whose policy is to establish an uploads-to-downloads ratio for users who have not contributed financially to the BBS upkeep fund.)

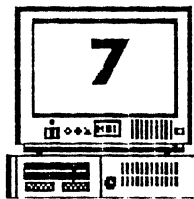
The WORKSHOP uses an off-the-wall type of BBS software called Remote Access rather than one of the Big Three in the Atlanta area: PC Board, RBBS, or WILDCAT!, and each of them has its own peculiarities and idiosyncracies. Mostly, the commands are similar for the more common activities such as Up/Downloading, Message Base, Bulletins and other services, but it's a good idea to select the Novice or Beginner option when the program asks whether you want menus displayed. Usually, there's an online tutorial and/or a downloadable tutorial file for you to print out and peruse at your own speed. Since the online instructions usually take a good hunk of you allowed time, the latter is a better choice except in panic situations.

A few years ago individuals' passwords were being stolen by unscrupulous hackers (almost a redundancy there!). They were used to gain access to BBSs, where the obnoxious thief would proceed to send obscene messages, make outrageous demands, upload nonsensical or booby-trapped files similar to the viruses of today, or try to crash the BBS - and it was all done in the victims' name! The practice has for the most part died out, but one of the 'damage control' procedures that were suggested then is probably still a good idea. It consisted simply of having a different password for each BBS you frequent and changing them regularly every six months or so. A combination of six or eight

random letters such as KB\$CN8JC is preferable to a word with significance to you, but much harder to remember unless you use a script file.

Script files are useful little gadgets that perform tasks for you automatically. They're basically souped-up batch files that you execute from within a program, and their most common use is probably as a logging-on convenience. All of the most popular communications programs have their own script file language - indeed, PROCOMM's and TELIX's documentation for the script language is more voluminous than that of the program itself - and none will work with another's program. Most, also, are far more powerful and feature-filled than the vast majority of us will ever need, but it's something the publishers think they can use as a selling point. At any rate, the better comm programs have a built-in 'learn' routine so that all you have to do to write a script is turn on the 'learn' routine, perform the necessary steps, then turn it off again. The program will normally then ask you if you want to compile the script, if you want to save it, and if you want it installed. 'Yes', 'yes', and 'yep' gets you a working script which you can then add to your dialing directory and set to run the next time you call that number. (TELIx does not have this feature built in, but there's a stand-alone program that you can use available on most BBSs.)

There's some fascinating stuff that is largely left unread on most BBSs. It's contained in the (B)ulletins area, and there's a wealth of topics that are covered - whatever the SysOp thinks would be necessary for you to know or of interest to the typical visitor to that electronic address. You'll find statements of the policies and goals of that particular Board, instructions



Romancing the Phone

on how to use the software, political diatribes, lectures on BBS mores and manners, pleas for help or money or both, charts of BBS usage so that you can plan your calls better, and some just plain ole interesting stuff. Get in and browse around sometime - you may be as fascinated by it as I am.

Doors are mysterious things to most of us, but there is really no need to be intimidated by them. Basically, what they are is a program that actually drops you out of the BBS software and permits you to use another program on the host computer. Thus, on the PCjr WORKSHOP, for example, you can drop out of REMOTE ACCESS and enter a specialized database program called The FerSale Door. Now, you can leave a message advertising something you'd like to sell or read the messages from others who also want to sell, trade or barter. The Door program keeps you online and in the proper directories on the host hard disk, and at the same time prevents vandals from invading the FAT Table or trashing the files areas - a real concern when you allow someone to roam around on your hard disk.

A specialized door that is now a fixture on most BBSs is the Offline Mail Reader. Here's how it works: you log onto the BBS and enter the Offline Mail Door. Here you look over the Conferences available to you, select the ones you'd like to read the messages in, and save your selections so that next time you enter this Door you don't have to configure it all over again. Now you simply tell the host computer that you'd like to download a mail "packet" and wait for a short while as it gathers all the messages that meet the criteria you just established, places them in a specialized

compressed file, and downloads them to you in a block. (The compression method most commonly in use in this area seems to be the QWKmail type, but there are a number of others being utilized.) Now you can read them at your leisure, using an "Offline Mail Reader" such as SLMR (Silly Little Mail Reader, a shareware product still available on most BBSs), OLX ("Offline Express", a commercial version of SLMR). There are a bunch of other readers available for the asking - just make sure that the one you get is capable of reading and writing in the same mail format as the packet you've downloaded, or frustration is bound to set in, big time.

Most of the time when you play an online game of some sort, you're in a door, as you usually are when you fill out one of the questionnaires that some SysOps delight in putting on their systems. These can be anything from collecting statistics on where people stand on the issues of the day to simply gathering demographics so that the SysOp can tailor his/her system to fit the profile of those who use it most. Investigate these questionnaires - you never know what fascinating information may be lurking behind that Door.

And speaking of games, there are a zillion different ones available to those who have the time and don't mind tying up their phone lines. Many BBSs specialize in offering games, and some are as elaborate as you could wish. You can be a pirate or a space trader, or a space trading pirate, or a dwarf on a quest, or a private detective searching for the infamous Carmen San Diego. In many games you



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compete with up to fifty other players, but in others you're on your own - the competition is with the computer at the other end of the line.

I haven't mentioned Message Bases much in this article, and that's intentional. We've hit this subject pretty hard in the past and I don't want to get bogged down at this point, but we'll present a future article on the subject if there's interest enough. I'd like to mention the ECHO NETS, though, in case you aren't aware of the terrific opportunity these give you for broadening your horizons.

There are a number of associations of BBSs around the country which form a cooperative group of systems called a NETWORK. These organizations set up Conferences pertaining to special interest topics such as Genealogy, Biking, Substance Abuse, or just about anything else there is widespread interest in; most successful shareware and many commercial programs have their own Conference in which the author or his/her representative answer questions, defend or explain glitches, take suggestions, and announce changes and upgrades. It's gratifying to have your problem solved by the author of the program personally, and even more so to be told that your suggestion is a good one and will be incorporated into a future release. You can learn some new techniques or capabilities that will be of great help to you, and frequently you don't even have to ask a question - someone else has done it before you. There's a wealth of information and some pretty good discussion in these things.

How do they work? Well, briefly, here's what happens to a typical message. After it is

recorded on the host BBS, it stays there until it is time for the host to pass it on (this may be daily or at some other specified regular interval), then it is gathered up along with all the rest of the new input to that BBS, compressed, and transmitted to another BBS, usually a regional center. Here the packet is added to all the other BBS packets that are members of that cell and passed to another regional cell. At the same time, your BBS will be downloading the master packet containing all the messages from all over the country that have been posted since the last time your BBS checked in, decompressing them, and adding them to its own Message base for you to read on your next visit. There are regional cells all over the country - indeed, all around the world - and you may well see a series of messages on a subject you're following which originate from the four corners of the country and a number of spots in between.

The message packets are passed from cell to cell in a prescribed order, and on a regular basis, so there is normally a regularity to the frequency of each contributing BBS's messages. Since much of this regional packet-passing is carried out over long distance lines, it's usually done with automated software (such as ROBOCOM) between, say, 3:00 AM and 6:00 AM, or whenever the host feels there is likely to be minimum traffic on the BBS. (It doesn't hurt that the call goes out at the time of day with the lowest rates, either.)

The cost of all this long-distance activity as well as the newest and best software and computers, running twenty-four hours a day every day should help explain those constant pleas by SysOps for money. Believe me when I say that

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Romancing the Phone

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no SysOp of my acquaintance has ever done better than break even. Most put in upwards of 20 hours a week on top of their "real" jobs just keeping it up, too, so you have to understand that it's a labor strictly of love. Please keep that in mind when you get angry because they haven't updated the files in a while, or perhaps left you a reply that was a little bruising to your sensitive nature, or maybe didn't upgrade your status quite fast enough. ("I sent you a check day before yesterday! Why am I still not allowed unlimited downloads?" Because every SysOp in the country has gotten checks that bounced higher than Brasstown Bald... and in the meantime the bouncer is merrily downloading everything in sight, secure in the knowledge that it'll be at least two or three weeks before the SysOp knows it, that's why. Give yourself and the SysOp a break: he or she isn't delaying just to spite you - they just don't know you and experience has been a hard teacher. Be patient.)

In this article, we haven't even begun to mention all the enjoyment you can get from your computer, a modem, and a phone line. There are BBSs that specialize in almost every form of human activity, from space travel to SCUBA diving, from ballooning to spelunking, from Science Fiction to Veterinary Medicine... but you get the idea. Here in Atlanta we have close to 200 BBSs online and functioning, so if you've got a hobby or concern, there's almost certainly a BBS that provides a meeting place for you with others of like interest. Yes, that, too. You can discover these spellbinding electronic hangouts by acquiring a copy of the Online Atlanta Society's BBS listing of all known BBSs in the metro area. It's available as a free download from every BBS I know of, or you can get it from most people who modem around. In it, the

OAS lists the SysOp's name, the BBS name, description, equipment, interests, baud rates accepted, and a vast amount of other information; but most importantly, they list the phone number. So what's keeping you? Be an intrepid explorer - romance that phone!

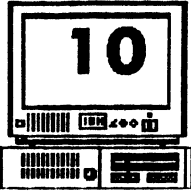
(From Page 4)

COPY, DISKCOPY, and XCOPY

as much information into RAM as there is room, then writes the whole chunk to the destination. If we have five files, each 80K in size, and there is 400K of RAM available, the entire operation is accomplished in one long read, then write. COPY, on the other hand, will require 7 read/write procedures. XCOPY will also ask us if a destination is a File or a Directory (in case we're inadvertently trying to copy 30 files to a non-existent directory).

DISKCOPY is designed to make an *exact* copy of a disk to another disk of exactly the same type (i.e., 360K to 360K; 1.44K to 1.44K, etc.). It will completely overwrite *all* information on the destination disk with *all* the information on the source disk - including bad sectors and other errors.

While DISKCOPY works on a dual-floppy-only system, on any other computer it can't meet the needs of different sizes of media. You can't DISKCOPY a directory to a floppy disk. DISKCOPY is a separate program and needs to be accessible in the path before it will work.



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WE GOOFED!

Last month we published a puzzle for our readers. We carefully created a solution and set it aside in a secure place so that it would be instantly available for this issue of *The PEANUT*. Then a couple of days later we erased it because we weren't paying attention to what we were doing. Before we realized what we had done, we then wrote a file over it, so that all the Unerase programs in the world can't restore it - "It's dead, Jim", as Dr. McCoy would say every episode (or so it seemed) in *Star Trek*.

"No problem," we said. "We'll just crank up the puzzle generating program and

re-create the solution. Wrong! We discovered something we didn't know - that software never does the same puzzle twice - not in our lifetime, anyhow.

What we now have is a solutionless puzzle, or rather, we have a puzzle we can't present the solution to. We assure you that every word and phrase in the word list appears in the puzzle, so we ask that you work it out and send us the correct solution. We'll see if we can manage to publish it before it too disappears. (Remember that the words can go backwards as well as forward.)

ALIEN STAR MAP DISCOVERED!

*(Special from the pages of the
National Intruder)*

The absolutely authentic star map pictured to the right was recovered by the CIA from a UFO which crashed into a densely wooded area of Sierra Leone. Agents were unable to decipher the cryptic message, but it appears to be a summons of some kind.

Atlanta PC jr Users Group

Meets at 7:00 PM, 1st Monday each month
at *StarCom, Inc.* 2615 Shallowford Road

Be There!

The Orphan Peanut



APCjrUG
DISK LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE: Disk of the Month

SILLY LITTLE MAIL READER

APCJRUG Disk Library Order Form

QUANTITY	Disk Name	Price

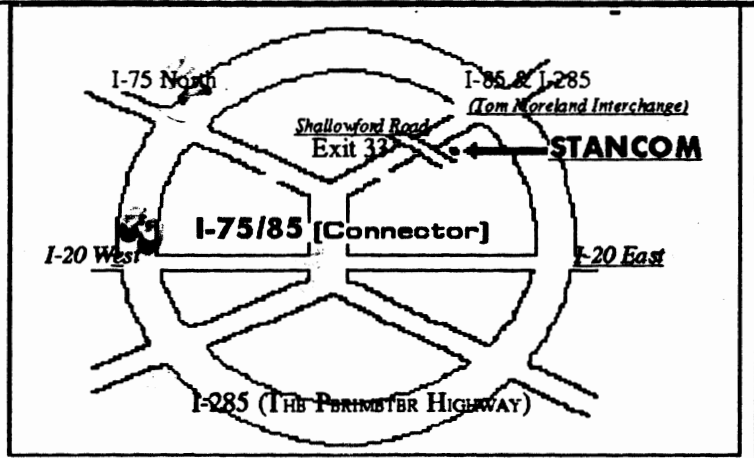
Beginners Kit @ \$10/Members; \$15 Nonmembers
(Sorry, the Beginners Kit is not presently available)

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



GETTING THERE

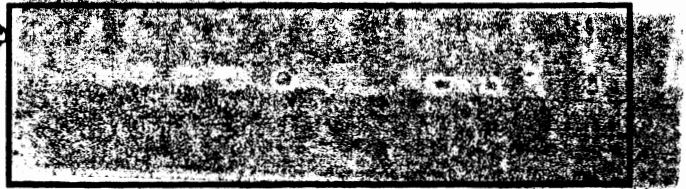
If you're outside the Perimeter (I-285): Just follow I-285 around Atlanta until you reach the *Tom Moreland Interchange (I-285 and I-85 North)*. Go South on I-85 toward Atlanta until you reach *Exit 33, Shallowford Road*. Exit onto Shallowford Road and turn left to cross over I-85. Immediately past the traffic signal on the *East* side of



the 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, (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.

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The Chronicle of the Atlanta PCjr Users Group
12450 Charlotte Drive
Crabapple, GA 30201-1408



No AUGUST MEETING! DON'T COME!