

March 4, 1987

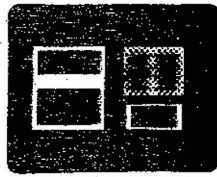
orphanz no4

Greetings to
all We have
lost our old

must use it to buy happiness (or status, if you're in business computing), by all means dump your 2000. Otherwise, stay with us and show fiscal responsibility.

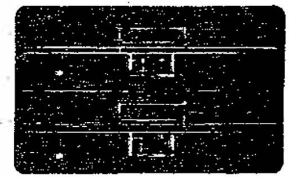
Finally: If you dump your 2000, dump it on us, not on your son as a doorstep — whether you're moving to a new machine, or out of 'puting. With a garage full of 2000s, our most determined survivors will have enough backup machines to survive the day when Tandy stops repairing the 2000.

Tandy 2000 Orphans



387 Main Street
Westport, CT 06880

David R., coordinator



name, Tandy 2000 Software Swappers. The new name, as of January 1, commemorates the final year that Tandy will admit their association with the machine we all love. One member just called Tandy execs and they admitted they are no longer making the 2000, as if we hadn't already figured that out.

We now have no daddy, and since the software companies are not grinding out any more 2000 programs, we have no mommy either. Thus, the name. The change was with the unanimous backing of our president, our data processing specialist, our secretary, our production supervisor, our editor, our legal counsel, and our gal Friday. In other words, I decided.

You gotta have a little sympathy for Tandy: they lost their real sentimental favorite. You can tell they loved the 2000 when you hook up its very own desk-side stand and monomonitor stand, and especially when you check those gorgeous jackets they wrapped 2000 software in. Tandy's only multicolor jackets and a fine job too.

It would be dumb for Tandy to keep on supporting and selling the 2000, because they'd lose money. It's dumb to lose money. But it would also be dumb for us not to take advantage of Tandy's troubles, grabbing a full hardware-software system of top quality for bottom dollar, forsaking all others as the preacher says.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

I'll bet you thought all the software made for the 2000 was on that Tandy list of roughly 180, some sold out and some imaginary. El wrongo, as the Mexicans say. The accompanying (if you are a member) list was compiled by member G.F.S.Orsten of Massachusetts.

At the end he lists 56 manufacturers, omitting Tandy because, perhaps, you already know where to find them. You can buy the whole pile of 339 packages, like Charlie Chaplin in the IBM ad, for \$184.121.

This list, going to every member, is typical of the great things we can do for one another with full member participation. What's your talent?

This list is strictly for serious computing, and thus omits all games and entertainments runnable on the 2000. Some members, however, have children who can be lured into deep understanding of computing by starting them with easy play, followed by gentle teaching. If any of you would like us to publish a list of those child-development materials, send it in. Our children need real earning power when it comes time for them to take care of their aged parents.

And some of us grownups play games.
A big hand for Mr. Orsten, if you please.

the race that spectators win

It seems that every year, we can get a 'puter that's twice as good as the one we could (and did) get last year, its software also twice as good, for the same total price as last year.

But how good is good? I'm so old-fashioned, I'm still perfectly satisfied with an assistant that memorizes the writing I pecked out in six hours, and took another six hours to edit, by saying a mere BEEP-daBEEP-BEEP; BEEP in ten seconds of disk grinding. Silly me. I see nothing worth thousands of dollars in a chance to reduce that brief performance to just one BEEP. Nor do I need more accuracy: my assistant has not made a careless error yet.

If we buy a new machine and software each year for \$2000, to simplify, we pay out twenty thousand in ten years. If, however, we keep the first year's machine going with help from a one-machine national user group, for nine years, and then buy the machine offered in the tenth year, our total cost is four thousand — minus six thousand that the unspent money has earned at 5% interest! We end up paying less than nothing and having a good machine for the whole time.

Therefore, there is only one reason to dump your 2000 and buy frequently: it makes you feel GOOD. If you have the excess money, and

new members

If you feel left out of that greeting, here's one for you: greetings, non-members. If you find yourself getting a free copy of this newsletter you are, we have reason to believe, the owner or at least the user of a Tandy 2000, new king of the trash pile, the finest computer ever dumped by its manufacturer. Welcome to the national user group for your machine. Your application and survey is in the box at the lower right. We send one free copy, but that's all, to any non-member.

To become a member, enclose your \$10 for entry and your first year, by check (pay "Tandy 2000 Orphans") or card number, and your FILLED-OUT survey form, all part of this newsletter, using the postage-paid fold-up mailer. Tape your check (staples choke post office machinery) to the inside of the mailer, back-side showing (because banks hate tape on the bottom half-inch of the front which their machines read). Tape the mailer shut, again no staples.

To me, \$10 seems like two things at once — a lot to send to a perfect stranger (and some say I am not perfect), but very little compared to your already heavy cash investment, which may be enhanced and later given longer life by club membership.

If you don't fill in the survey, I'll toss your check or card number, and you won't be a member! This is a participators' group.

New member returns received by March 31 will bring you a note of confirmation; otherwise the next newsletter (planned for April 15) will be your confirmation of membership.

If new members are mostly in favor, I will reprint the big software list and include it in their first regular newsletter.

DOLLARS FOR YOU — Some of you new members know other 2000 owners, possibly not yet members of the Orphans. If you bring in one of them — someone who has not received one of these newsletter invitations — your membership fee is down to \$5. If you get two, your fee is \$0. If more, I'll mail you \$5 for each new member beyond two.

Two requirements: that this (these) extra member(s) not be on our list of people we've mailed a newsletter to, and not on the membership list (ask them); and that the full membership package for each one must be enclosed in your own membership mailer. That means the completed survey (zeroxed for them), the completed membership form (a zerox again), and the \$10 payment.

Present members: This offer is not for you.

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE
PAID
MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 06880
PERMIT No 179

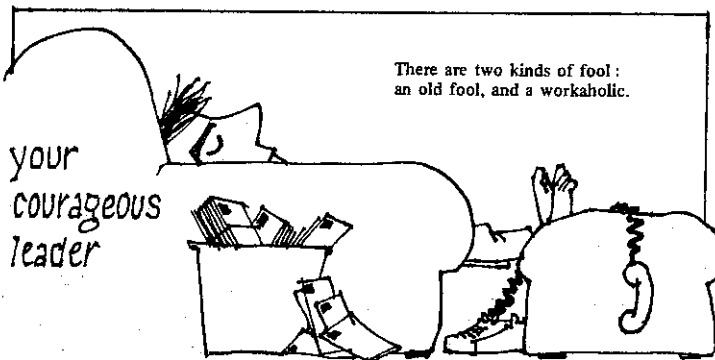
CREATIVE BYTING

A publisher of commercial software has sent me a great guide for the writer of any new program — what makes it likable and powerful. Those of you who will be offering shareware to members through this newsletter should ask me for this 174K disk (40 typed or 80 book pages). Send me a five-dollar check for a disk, a mailer, postage, my time, and all the information copied (with their OK) on my 2000.

Naturally they're asking for clones of major software, on the IBM bios, but their advice is solid for our use, and new to me. The outfit is SourceView Software International, 835 Castro Street, Martinez, CA 94553. Their 800 number is kaput, so they may have gone under, but their interesting disk survives. It's amazing the amount of miscellaneous material a user group headquarters receives.

service with a simile

This club will give you newsletters (almost monthly), and send you names of people to swap software and hardware with. Beyond that, to make a simile, our service will be like Tandy's — meaning lousy. Your phone calls will be refused, your mail unanswered except for one-liners in the newsletter.



The reason: I set my own hours (about 20 a week on the Orphans) and use them wisely (for everybody at once, meaning the newsletter plus reading all your mail to find out what you guys (in general) need). I'll database your requests, but seldom answer them.

Sorry, I'm not on modem, and can't talk on the phone (I have a wife and hope to keep her). What I do for this club, I do for nothing. The dues pay only for club expenses, like postage, printing and phone calls to companies that might make group-purchase deals with us. Eventually, our dues may buy a few ads in national magazines, trying to let every 2000 owner know we're here.

What if we end up not spending all the dues when the club folds up? Then I'll divvy up the kitty (after expenses of the farewell newsletter) among all active members; you could wind up making a profit if you stay on longer than others do.

And if I run out of steam before the club does, here's a question that should make you stop and think: Do you want to run this club? If you're bright, honorable and energetic, and fool enough to work for a lot of other people for nothing, you could be the next el presidente of el club. Check the el presidente box if you think you would be willing when that time comes.

info sharing

All of you have discovered little tricks that make me feel ignorant when you tell me about them. Put them down in writing in the survey space provided! I will publish the best of them, or all of them if most people are too shy to boast.

When I have conquered a software bug, I often feel an awful fool for missing the simple tricks that finally won — but we all are still screwing up the same software traps, so send in your bug-bombs for major programs.

members tell

The manual for Framework requires a whole series of up-levels, down-levels, and views, when you're moving between your written work and the outline you're fleshing out. The book way is the wrong way. You can pop from a view of the full outline, to the middle of text in your deepest sublevel, and back again, simply by hitting Zoom (F9), tool numero uno, the carpenter's hammer.

Also in Framework: Ctrl-Enter saves the entire file you're working on, a lot faster than their standard menu safari.

In every word processor, use COPY instead of MOVE as long as you have any fear of losing the text bag on the bus. Delete the original later. You get the feeling of safety, even if you're already safe.

members ask

How can the system clock be forced to admit it's ten p.m. and get off that 22:00 nonsense? Any diddy program can subtract 12, but how do you sneak a program into CLOCKGET?

Who knows a way to give our clock brains enough to remember the date? Every five-dollar digital watch can do it, but the only known way to smarten up the \$100 clock board is to have the computer humming every midnight; but if you do it with a timer switch, it will crash your unsaved word-processing session at 12:02 a.m.

Tandy is so desperate to sell their overpriced printers that when they buy a software package and tailor it to the 2000, they erase all the drivers for major printers (even though the utility disks are mostly blank). A member tells me this can be corrected by borrowing those vital drivers from IBM-style versions of those programs. Who among you has such versions, and is this escape route feasible for us?

Why does Microsoft Word refuse to work on the green screen after color chips are added to the board? The bug seems to be caused by cutting "link 1" as the installation manual directs. Can we install a back-of-board switch for link 1, or will that fry silicon?

We have all had problems making backup copies. Specifically, which protected software have you unlocked with which lock-picking programs, and what steps (keystrokes, disk moves) worked for you?

borrowing

Software for the 2000 is mighty expensive — about double what the same programs cost on the wide-open IBM-style market. Given the steep monopoly prices Tandy charges, a buyer needs to try a program for days to be sure it is worth the giant price. But the store tryout, if any is available, is a long way from home, in the middle of our busy day, with no deskspace, sales activity all around us, and a hovering salesman who seems more determined to wear us down than to get us interested.

So the wise shopper buys no 2000 software, eventually crippling his work with the 2000 and forcing himself to buy a new machine — quite possibly Tandy since he's already a customer there.

What we have in the Orphans is a nationwide store with no pressure, where we can try out Tandy disks without documentation, and in 15 days we get a good feel of how the program fits us, what it can accomplish for us. Half of us then buy the program (NOT from a store! from a nice, cheap franchise). We buy it because the program is just too weak without the paper, like TV without color.

We easily run five minutes of compdupe on 50-cent disks, but few lenders will go downtown for three hours and buy \$20 worth of zeroes. So we lend disks only, and if the disks sell the program then Tandy gets the sales — although not of new computers as they might prefer. And we get good software, every purchase a wise one.

The Orphans trust you to erase in two weeks, but probably others are less trusting. We expect that one member in a thousand will be a spy, and you will find software spies discussed in this issue.

name your numbers

You may, in the survey, name prices you would pay for tryouts of software, and prices you would charge to lend copies of it on disks. If your price quotes (either as borrower or lender) are reasonable, you will get the name of a member offering to cooperate with you at your price or better (I'll split any difference). Excess lenders (like 20 people lending but only 10 people borrowing a program), bypassed randomly, will not get paired with borrowers. Excess borrowers will be shared equally by right-priced lenders.

All prices asked and offered are databased opposite each other, from high to low, and the closest matches get the pairings. Our record-keeping is negative: as soon as we meet your expressed need with a pairing, I bulk-erase your need from the database. As far as Orphan records go, you never asked about that software. If a pairing doesn't work out, re-list your need by mail to Orphans headquarters.

To help in your buying of software you have borrowed and approved, we will run lists of the best franchise prices available, pushing for price improvements by calling franchises to offer newsletter listing. During Tandy sale months, you can call around our franchise list for even better deals.

You may not list more want-to-try software than you offer (major and minor figured separately) at meetable prices. If you do, the database shortens your list. Them as has (and offers), gets.

Transactions for the same package can occur at different prices. If two Versacad owners offer loans at \$50 and \$100, while two borrowers ask to pay \$100 and \$200, then the two transactions will take place at \$75 and \$150. This discrepancy is for three reasons beyond its workability: first, the wider price splits will be avoided, such as someone willing to lend for \$10 getting \$105 (unfair), while the member offering \$200 only has to pay \$105 (also unfair).

Second, this price stratification pushes similar users together — two twentyish hackers exchanging programs for \$10, two fiftyish businessmen making loans at \$100. Third, if the lowest renter got all the business, this would cease to be a club where everybody participates, and the big-volume copier would find himself a target for spies.

Price your offers on the basis of the loan of all disks of a program, plus the postage and bother of sending them, plus a consideration of the tryout's value to the borrower. If a \$100 program is

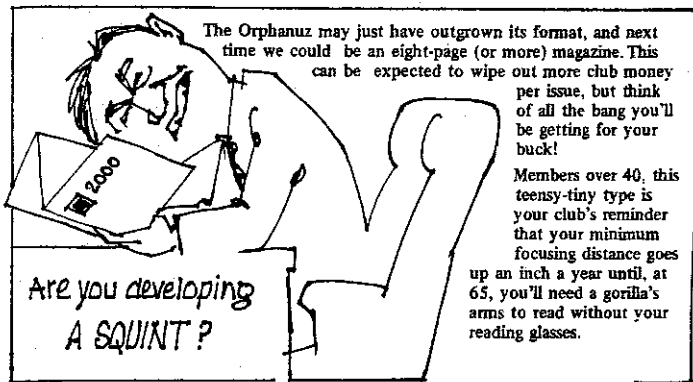
worth \$10 to borrow, a \$3000 program might be worth \$100 for the loan, even with no extra lending costs. It's worth more bucks to help with a bigger decision.

tell them how

You are required to send a booting sheet with every disk — a list of every keystroke, disk move and other step needed to boot the program all the way up through installation and to menus on the screen, including little traps like notch stickers, subdirectories, .bat and .sys file wording, disk volume labels, internal boards, DOS versions, and a dozen other electronic ambushes. Then the borrower can take a test flight and maybe buy the airplane.

Exchanging zeroxed documentation is pretty much a no-no with this club. First, it's hard work. Second, the booting page covers the test flight well enough, and further help on the big guys is in every bookstore. Finally, duping manuals would dump us in spy city. Let's stick to borrowed disks. Afterward, buy the program or forget it.

Borrowers should send advance payment. Call or write each other to make sure you agree, before the renter sends money. Convince me that someone has cheated or spied, and they're out of the club.



Is there a spy among the members whose names I will send to other members? With a big club like ours, probably yes. But he'll only be able to make one or two deals before his cover is blown, and the administrative costs of busting one member for one loan are prohibitive. Software sleuths will chase the big operators, which none of us will be.

If I find a member making more deals than most, or otherwise showing a fishy profile, I will check him and maybe chuck him, whether he's a spy or just greedy. Our database will spit him out and so will I.

Nobody picks on a borrower. He has no agreement with the publisher, the agreement they claim a buyer makes when he unseals the disk, because he didn't buy that disk. He has not violated copyright law, because he didn't publish or sell anything. It's not illegal to use the borrowed disk, even after that frame that says Don't You Dare.

The lender is fairly safe from a spy borrower. Even if he settles out of court, he can only owe the software publisher one package price, for the sale he supposedly prevented (plus any others he foolishly admits). The overworked Feds never prosecute a copyright infringer who pays the copyright owner's loss. If the lending member chooses to resist in court, he's got a fine chance: juries dislike spies, and are unlikely to believe that the spy was a bona fide customer likely to buy the software on his own. When a spy borrows software, the software publisher loses nothing but the money it pays to the spy.

BEEP ALERT

Many members are asking what modem and modem software work perfectly on the 2000. Those of you who are comfortably settled in with a Hayes compatible smart box plus software that chats with all the major services at 1200 baud or more, at below market prices but perfect quality and decent manuals, please add a sheet to your mailer about it. Include best prices, sources (800 numbers if available), and any software tricks or simple hardware fixes you used.

hard help

you be the store

Members buying and selling hardware will be paired in the same way as those lending/borrowing software. But unpaired hardware offers (to buy or sell) will each run in one newsletter issue, a policy that does not apply to commercial software loans. You may not sell a member your hardware unless it is in perfect working order.

You may also offer disks of home-brew software or information. Put your documentation on the disk in a read.me file, and I suggest you will benefit from the software making guide listed above. Send a disk with every such ad, which I will try out and (if I like it) review in the newsletter.

where money talks, and where it sings

Silly me, I thought I was getting a good deal from that pushy salesman at Shack, until he told me I must never buy from the dreadful mail-order places claiming to be Tandy — all cloned parts, expect cheating, and people who buy from them are never allowed to walk into a true Radio Shack again. That got me curious, and I checked an 80-Micro magazine on the store counter. Those magazines are now off the store counters, because Tandy salesmen started noticing their low-price ads. Tandy deeply regrets its long-ago sales of franchises.

Sure enough, the franchise places were deeply underselling my local Shacks. I hooked into them at warp speed. Today I visit Tandy retailers only to touch the hardware, read the software manuals, and tell them how cheap and honest the franchisees are.

The 80 or so Shack franchises give 20% to 30% off Tandy prices, and during Tandy's occasional months of fair market prices ("sales"), the franchisees take about 10% off the sale prices. Ordinarily shipping is free but charge cards add 3%, so it pays to send a check. Each of you has small franchises nearby, listed as Shack under computers in the yellow pages. Send me their addresses (see survey) and phone numbers.

The franchisees are already a good deal, but prices vary a lot. Your newsletter is going to list them all, and run occasional telephone price wars to publish here the best prices on items that many of you want.

Companies other than Tandy put out the best stuff for our 2000s, hardware and software. For a major example, see the box on Mr. Guts. When many members express (by this issue's survey, or mail) an interest in a certain machine or software, Orphan headquarters will contact the manufacturer and negotiate a price to offer in the newsletter. In the case of big items, we will step in as a non-profit "dealer" to get members the raw, raggedy wholesale price.

but --

You know by now that when you buy something that you don't need at half price, you have not gained half the price — you have lost the half that you paid!

MISTER

As long as we're talking hardware, every one of you ought to know about Envision Designs, a company in back-country Washington at 1539 West Pearl St., Pasco, WA 99301, (509)547-1139. The little company (two guys in their houses) has a technician (Don Hammer-void) and a blue-sky designer (Dave Nechodom). As far as the inside of my 2000 goes, designer Nechodom is "Mr. Guts."

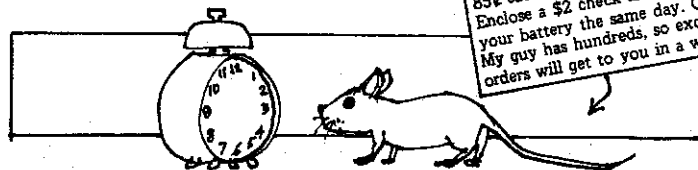
Envision makes much better insides for the 2000 than Tandy. They make a \$1000 motherboard with 896K RAM plus 8087 math, but insist on having your machine for a week to install it. For the middle-price crowd, their \$500 daughterboard adds 640K for a system total of 896K. They accept the Tandy daughterboard (128K, 256K?) later (use Envision's box) for a \$100 refund.

Hard-disk members write me that their 10-meg limit squeezes them. Envision sells a Seagate 225 20-meg disk for \$1110, and TWO internal 20s for \$1610. These include controller plus power supply and are user-installable, unless you do aerobics in orion before opening your 'puter.

If any of you wants a special board, they'll create it for \$2000 or \$3000, even an 80386 motherboard for the 2000! They are dreaming of a 2-meg board for EMS use (to back up the latest CADs or spreadsheets with a "data-only RAM"). Another dream is a package for controlling industrial processes or houses. But they need demand from you guys before the drawing-board and bench work. Let the newsletter know and I'll put them to work for you. 20 orders drops a board to less than \$1000, if you work through me, I'll take no profit, just make the deal. I don't share bucks with Envision, but I admire it — our own little Zuckerworks.

GUTS

FLASH—I just got 25 proper batteries, Toshiba CR2320, for 85¢ each plus \$4.25 shipping. Enclose a \$2 check and I'll mail your battery the same day. OK? My guy has hundreds, so excess orders will get to you in a week.



a timeless problem

If you have the clock&mouse board, and every user who was weary of typing in the boot time has it, your battery is just about worn out. And Tandy has stopped stocking it, possibly as a hint to buy a new system.

Now I hear from one franchise that Tandy promised him a batch of batteries in "mid-March." Marymac, 800-231-3680. Out of all the seven franchises in the March 80-Micro, they are the only ones (Jim and Richard) that knew, in this month's callaround, which end of the 2000 you type on; the others are just storekeepers.

Surely there is a non-Tandy battery of the required size and voltage tolerance around, and if a member knows of it, please tell me for the newsletter. See FLASH above

newsletter continues on back

❁ Daisy Laser Matrix, frump ❁

There are some nicer printers coming out, but not nicer enough. Sorry, but there is still not a good computer printer on the market. Until now, no one has turned out a printer that produces the quality my silly 1970 typewriter (an IBM Composer) does. We all ought to be ashamed of ourselves for using today's best machines.

But when a printer comes out that does the following things, I will notify you:

1. It takes orders from the 2000, and from the major software packages we all have in 2000 versions.

2. It "plots" any drawing from a CAD program in 30 seconds, not the 30 minutes of a real plotter — although on typewriter-size paper.

3. It produces print of coffee-table-book quality, in hundreds of fonts and sizes available on disk for less than \$25 per downloadable typeface. The 300x300 standard is a bit bumpy for coated-paper printing; the key may be in the landscape (sideways) printing that the new Ricoh engine can produce. Run your stuff sideways, join two pages into an 11x17 sheet, photoreduce at the printshop, and you're up to 400-per-inch resolution, 520 on a legal size machine. All this assumes half-inch margins. For magazine or big book pages you'll want two columns, giving you 800x800 resolution, 1040 from legal size. Now that's smooth.

4. It gives you all three kinds of proportional printing: A. Its typefaces have proportional letters — the small m is twice as wide as the small n; the same for w and v — although you can always imitate humble typewriter type for writing your son's teacher or your mother-in-law. B. It gives you variable spacing between words, useful for justifying the right margin. C. It gives you kerning, stretchable spacing between letters (so your line won't look this bad). Good software could also use kerning for good looks — more space is needed between "db" than the pair "do," a problem you might have noticed with proportional letters.

5. It grinds these perfect lines out at 500 characters per second, a pretty page every eight seconds.

Now, a printer like that could spoil a fellow rotten. I'll let you know when it exists, and arrange for us to get it at half price — that'll probably be over \$2000 but under \$3000, if this perfect machine comes out in 1987. I'll resell to you at zero profit.

I've felt out the market, and we can get laser printers utterly wholesale, a lot lower than those prices in 'Puter Shopper, if you let me buy the whole fleet using your prepaid checks. Trust is the only way we can score the bottom price. No manufacturer will sell wholesale to a list of guys I send him. They also grumble about what they think I might charge, but they don't insist on knowing when they smell big volume.

But again, no deals until someone comes out with a good printer.

BEEP ALERT

WordStar 4 is out, stronger than 3.3 and nicer than the unpopular Wordstar 2000 (no relative of our machine).

MicroPro has sent me a review copy, which their development v.p. insists will run on the 2000. It does, but as he admits, its thesaurus does not. The new breed of electronic thesauruses is a whole new age for writing, particularly for those able to resist the big words and find the perfect simple word we overlooked.

They want \$90 for the update from 3, or probably \$500 if you're new, but hold off for now. I've got inquiries in to MicroPro and Microlytics about the writing of a patch (one of you may get a chance). And after it is writ, we'll probably score a wholesale price (with me as "dealer" without profit).

Those of you who want this wholesale price, plus a share of the patch (which I won't buy if it pushes us over retail), write "WS4T" (T=thesaurus) on the survey as a needed-software selection. Members asking later will pay the same cost, with their "share of the patch" going in the club treasury.

Once we get our thesaurus, it will serve all our word processors, via the ASKY translation that all of them provide. You can outline it to rough draft in Framework, thesaurus it in Wordstar, and polish it into print in MS Word. Neat.

soft solutions

no waiting for windowing

For five months, I've been asking six retailers and seven franchises to accept my order for MS Windows. All have refused, saying it's not out yet; or that the catalog is a mistake, it just won't run on the 2000. Calculated confusion by Tandy, I think.

It now appears (wait for confirmation next issue) that plain old IBM-style Windows will run perfectly on the 2000 if you install it with a secret disk from Tandy. #700-2611 "Windows Drivers." Tandy sells the driver for about \$10 (\$7 in franchises), but only if you scream obscenities at the dealer who tells you there's no such animal. Also, if you order Windows from Tandy (\$100, \$77 franchise), they ship you that driver disk free when you specify, WITH DRIVER DISK FOR TANDY 2000.

❁ As Alice used to say in Wonderland, and Dorothy in Oz, "It sure would be helpful to have a user group newsletter to clarify this mess."

Our spies are now penetrating Tandy to find out how many other secret "700" disks there are for running IBM software on the 2000. What have you guys heard?

fancy flag

If you like to see your favorite woman in a puffy bathrobe, read no farther. But if you are discriminating and use monochrome, this is your last day sitting in front of that drab "A>".

Take your DOS working disk, peel off the notch sticker, and make sure it has `ansi.sys` — which is available on the original disk if needed. Then put "device=ansi.sys" on your `config.sys` list, which you can check with "type `config.sys`," alter with "edlin `config.sys`," and create with "copy con `config.sys`."

Then (using the same mix of type, edlin and copy con) put this line in your `autoexec.bat`, with no spaces except the four that I imitate with an underline:

```
prompt $e[1;7m$t$e[0m$H$H$H$H$H$H$e[7m_$N_$E[0m_
```

Reboot to see the new prompt. If it is not two-tone, adjust the screen controls at lower left on your VM-1.

With this pretty time prompt, I am gently reminded that it's getting late.

BEEP ALERT

Missing from the weakened computer market is an up-to-date Whole Earth Software Catalog, due out last summer. I have asked the publisher and am hunting for the author (Stewart Brand). If any of you knows of a book this good, please tell the Orphans about it.

Meanwhile, buy WESC 1.0 (summer 1984) or WESC 2.0 For 1986 (summer 1985), the second mostly a reprint of the first. There are still a few on bookstore shelves, and this is a great book. Given that Tandy stopped supporting the 2000 in 1985, these books are right up-to-date with Tandy's 2000 software.

fancy file show

If you like a fancy prompt, you would like your DOS sessions (everything with an A> or C>) in a screenful of helpful graphics.

I have tried out a few "desks," but only one is helpful with DOS. Deskmate (#5316) is handy as a reminder calendar, address book and note pad, but with several problems: If you're booting it with DOS, the disk is pretty crowded and you may run out of space on a:. And the separate calculator and calendar on my desk are much easier to use for the quick multiplication or the fast phone note.

And you have to quit Deskmate to run any DOS (like a `chkdsk` or `dir`) or any software. Deskmate II claims to solve this, but is it worth the \$200? Sidekick and Popcorn, simpler IBM-style deskmates which a member has ported to the 2000, have the same problem, a barrier of keystrokes and waiting between their notepads and your DOS.

However, I just bought Gem Desktop on sale, and it has become my new DOS booting disk. It will stay on as my lead sled dog until Tandy finally buys MS Windows to make good on its catalog promise. (See above for late news on this.)

Gem relieves me of all that typing to DOS, which I often have to redo because I'm clumsy. And when comparing directories on two disks, copying between them, or erasing files, I was ready to give up my 'putting until Gem came along. Particularly galling was all that hand-scribbling and printing out of directory info to compare to other directories I would put up next.

With Gem you just put the keyboard aside, set the mouse on your rubbery cutting mat (an art store item), and do everything with the mouse. Erasing the wrong file becomes less likely, because everything is visible — all drives; all directories, the mouse agreeably scrolling the directories side-by-side, positioned and sized as you want them, sorted and displayed in many formats, all at a flick of wrist and finger.

When the stock work is over at your idea warehouse, you can call any program, from an itty checkdisk to a heavyweight database, just by poking its file (the `.com` or the `.exe`) with the mouse. If the program lets you give parameters, like which article or which spreadsheet or which disk it will be playing with, then Gem plops a box on the busy screen and waits for anything you want to add — by actually, finally typing something. Then the screen goes black and your day's work rumbles into its title page.

Nothing is perfect, and Gem has an amazing number of ways to crash into paralysis. But unlike other software that crashes, this is a package I use every day, so I can already avoid the traps.

Their manual pretends that nothing can go wrong, so you have to find the bugs yourself and write them down. I lack newsletter space to describe them all. One odd one: Gem insisted that its clock and calculator were missing until I repartitioned my Envision board to give Gem LESS memory to play with!

Like all the manufacturers, they think a manual is OK if it is written by an idiot and laid out for print by a genius, so you'll take an hour to get Gem off its tail and working.

At this rate, I may never be ready to let Windows take over. Dollar for doer, Gem is my best software so far.

our friends

Some of the big software people are reportedly supporting the 2000 on their own in new versions, ignoring the desire of Tandy to bury our machine by offering no new stuff. Among those are, allegedly, Autodesk (Autocad), T&W (Versacad), and Lotus (for both 123 and Symphony). Members who know more, please tell the newsletter. If it won't delay your survey more than a few days, you can pack your information in the survey mailer.