

C.C.O.G.

COLOR COMPUTER OWNERS GROUP

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 1991

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PRESIDENTS COMMENTS:

The "Second Annual Atlanta COCOFEST" has come and gone. I am very disappointed that the masses in the COCO community did not join us. Attendance was very light in my opinion. The vendors that were there were very enthusiastic before the start of the FEST. I hope they still feel that way now. I hope that even with less people there, that sales for them was good enough for them to consider participating in future FESTs. I also hope that the poor attendance does not reflect a major loss of people in the COCO community.

The next time that someone asks "Is the COCO dead?". We have to answer with the question "What have you done lately to keep it alive?" No matter who you are, no matter where you are, it is up to each and every one of us to support our local user group if we have one. We must support our nearest COCO BBS. And above all we must support the vendors by buying their products. If we do that then the COCO is NOT dead. If we don't do all three of these things then the COCO

will die a slow death. I have been with the COCO since very nearly the beginning. I have been a subscriber to the RAINBOW since early on. I have bought hardware and software from a variety of vendors. As long as my COCO still does the things for me that I want it to do, and that it is best suited for, I plan on remaining a hard nosed, hard headed (empty headed?) COCO supporter.

While at the FEST I was able to talk a couple of vendors into donating software to our club for "Door Prizes". I promised them that we would demonstrate the programs at the club meetings before awarding them to people. So, I guess we will have at least one thing to demo at meetings for a few months. I plan on working with the program at least enough to learn the basics before demonstrating it. One a month is about all I can handle.

Have you given much thought to the upcoming election for 1992 officers? Or the December meeting?

Bernie

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C.C.O.G. Minutes from September 25, 1991
Submitted by Marcine Glowicki

The meeting was called to order at 7:20 pm. There were 18 people in attendance. The minutes from August were accepted and passed. An update on vendors was given and there have been no more advertisers submitting ads, however one has renewed their advertising. Elections are just down the road, two meetings from now! Bernie stated last year that he would run for president one more year and this was the one more year. So....think about it. He will stay on as newsletter editor since he has the facilities to carry on with the task.

Old Business--

By the next meeting we need to decide what will be done for the December meeting since the date is Dec. 24. Most will not want to attend a meeting on that date.

New Business--

The hard drive on Jim's BBS just stopped working and a motion was made for those who use the BBS to donate something to him to help offset the cost to repair or replace it. The motion passed. So as individuals we are encouraged to give some monetary amount to Jim.

The Atlanta CoCoFest is coming up. Three hands went up in response to the question, who is going? Bernie will be taking his video camera and he will take what he can. No guarantees.

We had a new face in the crowd. Her name was Rebecca. She acquired her computer from a friend and was interested in any tape programs the members had to share.

The rest of the evening was spent with a demonstration of a ink jet printer and another presentation by Robert Gault.

See you at the next meeting.

BEGINNER'S CORNER by Robert Gault

There were many new commands and functions added to our Coco vocabulary when the Coco3 arrived on the scene. I would be willing to bet that one of the least used commands is HSTAT. You say you not only don't use it, you never heard of it. My my, you really should study your manual!!

HSTAT, to quote the manual, "returns information regarding the high-resolution text screen" (under the cursor) on character code, attribute, and x/y coordinates. The call is somewhat tricky to use with regard to attribute because all four attributes are packed into one byte.

```
bits 0-2 background color; AND 7 to extract info
bits 3-5 foreground color; AND 56 "
bit 6 underline ; AND 64 "
bit 7 blink ; AND 128 "
```

Attributes are on if a bit is set and off if the bit is 0.

So what does it all mean? Suppose, for example, you have written a program which either uses flashing, underlining, or coloring in messages. You will have no idea what the screen color preferences of a user might be or even your own future choices. ATTR, however, requires you to select back and foreground colors even when you don't intend to change them.

There seems there is no way that you can easily preserve the user's color preferences; or is there?

HSTAT solves this problem. Before making any ATTR calls, use HSTAT to get the original screen condition and save the information. Then it is very simple to reset the correct ATTR values at the end of your routine.

Let's try a very simple example. Set your screen to some color using either the CLS or ATTR commands. Pick any color you want changing the palettes if necessary. Now, without using HSTAT, try to get a message to blink without changing the screen colors. Now try the same thing with the line below:

```
10 HSTAT CH,CA,CX,CY:ATTR 56 AND CA,7 AND CA,B:PRINT"THIS IS A
TEST";
ATTR 56 AND CA,7 AND CA
```

Now try changing the screen colors and run the line again. Still works, doesn't it?! That's what programming is all about.

"Viewpoints" by Gus Korte"

It will be interesting to hear at our next CCOG club meeting about the Atlanta COCOFest which was attended by several of our CCOG club members on Oct. 5-6, 1991. Club member Karl Sefcik attended and told me that there was a decrease in the number of vendors there compared to when he attended the same event last year. Perhaps Karl will be able to give us more details on the BBS for this newsletter. No doubt the new COCO4 models were displayed and we'll be hearing more about them.

Concerning new items in the computer world, did you notice the front page Detroit News item on Oct. 8, 1991, that regional Bell telephone companies were given permission by a federal appeals court to enter the electronic information services market? So now DELPHI, Comuserve, Prodigy, and others will have lots of competition with their telecommunications businesses.

Another interesting article about computers was in the Detroit News on Sept. 23, 1991, page 1E, about a fascinating new phase in computer graphics and computer:human interaction called "virtual reality". That's a new word for your computer vocabulary. Using special goggles, a three-dimensional computer-created space is simulated that lets the user "enter" and interact with it. Sensors on the goggles monitor head and body movements using a computer which accomplishes the interaction. Possibly in the future you'll be able to rent such a device to enter a phantasy world of recreation. If you're interested in the details refer to the previously mentioned newspaper article in your local public library.

Recently I noticed a number of small microcomputers displayed at the local Radio Shack. You can enter names, phone numbers, reminders on a calendar, etc. into these computers. Such a device can be folded up to fit easily into your coat pocket. However if the batteries go bad and you don't change them in time all of your entered data is lost. This is no problem if you use the Radio Shack model PC6 since data can be entered into it's memory (expandable to 16K) using a tape recorder. Therefore you can write short useful programs for your use on your COCO and transfer them to the PC6 via your tape recorder. Reentry of any lost data etc. is easy since you have the original information on your tape cassette. The PC6 also uses RSDOS so this can all be done which would not be possible if it was an IBM type of microcomputer that uses it's own type of DOS. I know of no other small pocket computer that interfaces with the COCO this way.

According to an article in the Detroit Free Press on Oct. 5, 1991, page 11A, Dataquest International, which tracks computer sales trends, hand-helds are the fastest-growing segment of the worldwide portable computer business. Does that mean that the palmtop will surpass the laptop type of small computers? That depends on how many want to carry a pocket computer for instant use most anywhere. The problem is the keyboard is too small. Tandy's

alternative is a tablet that responds to the touch of a copper-tipped stylus. Infogrip Inc., Baton Rouge, LA, in it's new \$600 palmtop computer, uses just five keys in a variety of combinations. This "chording" technique takes less than an hour to learn and allows a typing speed up to 25 words per minute -- one handed. It seems to me that a keyboard that "folds" within the palmtop could be used to solve this problem. When ready for use, it could be "unfolded" for use with the palmtop. If there's enough of a market for a low-cost pocket computer as there has been for the pocket calculator, someone will no doubt solve the palmtop keyboard problem. For the COCO user, the Tandy PC6 (previously mentioned) seems to be the closest interface we have for our use as a palmtop computer especially since it uses Radio Shack DOS.

Karl Sefcik's message is repeated here for those of you who wish to subscribe to the Rainbow magazine. You can use a free telephone number to order by credit card. It is 1-800-847-0309. Since some of you do not use the BBS yet, this information is included here once again for your use.

A reminder especially for new members of the CCOG, the VFW uses your money donations from our club in it's many charitable activities especially concerning unfortunate hospitalized veterans. It's all going for a good cause. The Livonia VFW also collects used books and magazines to give hospitalized veterans. So if any of you want to contribute such, which you would otherwise discard, give them to the VFW bartender to make some unfortunate veterans happy. Remember the bartender is on the first floor and serves both the bingo players there and the CCOG in the Foxhole Lounge. The VFW wants us to supervise ourselves and to leave the room clean when we depart which is certainly a reasonable request.

EDITORS NOTE:

I have not seen the PC6 that Gus refers to above, but, let's remember the definition of DOS (Disk Operating System). The little machine may have a tape file format compatible with the COCO. It would have to have a BASIC ROM that is able to read a "TOKENIZED" COLOR BASIC program in order to transfer programs from the COCO to it. Or maybe you would have to save the BASIC program to tape in ASCII with the COCO. Sounds like a nice idea. But at this point I have serious doubts that TANDY would make anything NEW that is compatible with the COCO!!!

FEST REPORT by Karl Sefcik

The Atlanta CocomFest 2 went well, as far as the technology and the advancement of our hobby, but attendance and exhibitors were both less and fewer this year.

The show opened up on Saturday morning at 10:00 with time to roam the exhibitors. Microcom Software, T&D Software were 2 exhibitors that weren't there this year. Adventure Survivors, the Atlanta Computer Society, the Glenside Coco Club, Burke & Burke and Cocopro were there. Also, Delmar/Peripheral Technology, Eversoft Games, Frank Hogg Laboratory, Hawksoft, N*Johnson Software, Kalasoft, Sub-Etha, Software, and Interactive Media Systems were there.

The first seminar was at 11:00 was with Cray Augsburg talking about OS-9 for the absolute beginner. He said OS-9 is powerful but confusing, OS-9's (real) main advantage is that it allows multi-tasking. Again, a very helpful seminar for those of us that are frustrated by OS-9, and haven't gotten very far. There was an interesting cross section of people there, from those who haven't bought OS-9 yet to those who were well on their way. One thing I did not know (I'm one of the those who haven't gotten very far), is that OS-9 looks at double sided drives as one drive. Also, questions about the Rainbow also came up, and Cray gave straight-forward answers to content, size, life-expectancy, etc. Rainbow may get thinner. but he said they will be around as long as there is a color computer, and users who support it's advertisers. He also said that the Tomcat and the MM1 will be reviewed by the end of the year. The Delmar machine was reviewed in the September issue.

Ed Gresick talked about the PT69K-4 at 11:00, but I had missed that because I was talking to a user from South Carolina who couldn't find a database program with a large enough spreadsheet, to keep the records she had to keep. She keeps records for a National Guard post, and because she hadn't found an adequate database program, she was keeping records on graph paper. Cray was there, & had a few programs to suggest. Cocopro was the booth she had to see, so she made plans to stop by there. Hopefully, Bernie or Jim (our club's other representatives), and can tell us something about it. At their booth, there was a demo of G-Windows, I'm assuming that one of the things Ed talked about, also MIDI, and some graphics pictures displayed on a S-VGA monitor.

Paul Ward was hosting the 2:00 seminar, and he started out by saying that we've all got to bring the community back together again. He demonstrated a few programs on the MM1, but there were a lot of questions and answers. Paul was saying that past production was slowed by bad parts, and supplier delays, but he was optimistic about the future having better figures. Again, OS-9 stole the stage for a bit, Ultimuse for the MM1 is coming, Paul was not an expert at using the demo program, but Mike Knudson stopped by, and showed a few tricks with a keyboard he had brought. Compact Disc

Interactive (CDI) is scheduled to be out by the time you'll be reading this, and the MM1 will have an option for a CDI interface, and even a board to play MIDI compositions through an MM1. He also mentioned that K-Windows may be available soon. Their booth had a display of some real-time video, captured in the computer's memory, (it was cycling back and forth). It was from a cartoon, a mouse sees something, and his eyes grow to 3 times their normal size, and fear engulfs the whole face of the mouse, then the program starts over. The mouse, the eyes, the expression on it's face, etc.

Frank Hogg had the 3:00 seminar, his views are that the Coco market has the greatest potential. (From the last Fest in Chicago, he said that FHL would be building a couple computers for Kuwait). That never happened, (I asked later on), and he said that it never materialized, so I can see why he would target the Coco Community. He wants to take the established base of 100,000 OS-9 users and expand on that. OS-9 is the operating system of CDI, and according to him, all it would take is an interface card, and a computer with 600 Mb. of memory would be formed. He also said there is a review of CDI in a recent edition of STEREO REVIEW. Also, in response to IMS's K-Windows, Frank was thinking about offering either K-Windows or G-Windows.

Kevin Darling had the 5:00 seminar, the last for the day, things were closing down on the exhibitors floor, and Kevin just had an informal Q&A session in the conference room. He polled the audience, (his first question), he wanted to know how many people had a hard disk on their system. More than half the people in the room raised their hands, (not me, but his talk in April at the Chicago Fest was, how many had 512 K). His open forum on OS-9 quickly became an open forum on OS-9 for hard disks, and that was going on for a couple of hours.

I left about 6:00, and gave a quick demo of Max-10 and my printer to my new friend from South Carolina. Also Ultimaterm, because she has a son who wants to get into modems, and I was trying real hard to get her to give up the idea of using the DC Modem pak that she had secretly bought for her son. I ended the day playing with the printer and Max-10 while I listened to the Braves game which was blacked out. I tried double spaced draft mode, and I was surprised how it can look like it was done on a typewriter, not a computer, or at least my typing!

Sunday the exhibition floor opened at 10:00, the first seminar was at 11:00, but I was off buying a monitor for one of our club members, just down the hall at the ACS flea market, but I did get to the seminar about 11:15. It was a good 'nuts and bolts' discussion on MIDI and Ultimuse, lots of questions and answers. I forgot to notice whether he was using a Coco 3 or an MM1 for his demonstration (I think it was the latter). One of his suggestions for those of us who are into MIDI on the Coco, try an instrument in the wrong range. He gave some examples of low pitched instruments making perfect strings if used in the ranges of the strings, there were a lot more, but I couldn't write that fast.