## DOS OR BIOS

Q:  I get confused over the distinction between DOS and BIOS versions and would appreciate clarification.

A:  It's all to easy to do especially with the history of how often Apricot have changed these.  "MS-DOS", often abbreviated to "DOS" as it is the most common operating system for 16 bit microcomputers, is the name of Microsoft's disk operating system.  Since first appearing in 1982 MS-DOS has been periodically updated and extended through various versions from DOS 1 to 3.2 on hundreds of different manufacturers' microcomputers - the most famous being its implementation of the IBM range of PC/XT/ATs.  Apricot, who have to purchase MS-DOS from Microsoft to run on their microcomputers, have issued versions of MS-DOS from 2.0 up to 3.1 as shown below.

"BIOS", the abbreviation for basic input output system, is that part of the MS-DOS operating system that an individual manufacturer has to provide to act as the interface between MS-DOS and his hardware.  Apricot never quite got round to issuing a fully working, "finished" BIOS for any of their machines and so although they have issued MS-DOS 2.11 for their PC/Xi's for nearly three years its BIOS has been changed often.  The BIOS issue gets even more complicated with the non PC/Xi Apricots as they contain part of their BIOS in hardware ROM chips and get the rest of the BIOS from the boot disk.

The version of MS-DOS and RAM/ROM BIOS you have are important as they indicate what Apricot Master Disks you have and hence what Apricot utility programs you have, what versions these are and what problems you are likely to have.  We have heard of the following BIOSs (there must be more!):

| DOS: | RAM BIOS: | Date on boot: | Date/version on master disks: |
|---|---|---|---|
| PC/Xi | | | |
| 2.00 | 1.2 | 28 Sep 83 | - |
| | 1.4 | 11 Nov 83 | - |
| | 2.3 | 16 Apr 84 | 18 Apr 84 |
| 2.11 | 2.4 | 11 Jun 84 | 3 Sep 84 |
| | 2.7 (Manager) | 21 Feb 85 | 21 Mar 85 |
| | 2.7 (Activity) | 21 Feb 85 | 10 May 85 |
| | 3.1 | 15 Oct 85 | 16 Oct 85   Stock code ZC AAG4 |
| F1 | | | |
| 2.11 | 1.2 | 28/9/84 | 2 Nov 84 |
| | 1.6 (Activity) | 19/06/85 | -    Stock code ZC APG1 |
| F2 | | | |
| 2.11 | 1.6 (GEM) | 19/06/85 | 28 Aug 85 |
| Portable | | | |
| 2.11 | 1.0 | 24/8/84 | - |
| | 1.3 | 21/11/84 | "In the box" |
| | 1.6 | 19/06/85 | 8 Oct 85 (Dixons) |
| Point 32 | [BIOS versions/dates are as on PC/Xi network boot disks] | | |
| 3.06 | 2.6 | 20 Nov 84 | 13 Dec 85  Vrl.1 |
| 3.1 | 2.7 | 21 Feb 85 | [Jun 85?]  Vrl.2 |
| | 3.1.1 | 23 Oct 85 | 1 Nov 85  Vrl.3 |
| | 3.1.1 | 23 Oct 85 | [Feb 86]  Vrl.3a |
| XEN | | | |
| 3.10 | 1.8 | 15/10/85 | 10/12/85 |
| | 1.8.1 | 10/02/86 | 14 Apr 85 |

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## ALL CHANGE AT APRICOT

Just so that everyone starts off by knowing what has recently happened on the "Apricot" front. On June 25th Apricot announced that there were withdrawing from the mass microcomputer market to concentrate on high performance IBM compatibles, and networking micros. This involved large write-offs and reorganisation and hence a large financial loss for the firm.

The main problems which Apricot seemed to have suffered from are:
a. Apricot Apricots are not compatible with IBM micros hence did not get bought in bulk by the large corporate users;
b. Not being IBM compatible the latest releases of software appeared a lot later than for the IBMs, if ever;
c. Apricot's development resources and their UK market were diluted by too many (incompatible) Apricot models and over frequent changes in hardware and software;
d. The UK market was too small to sustain their independent stance and forays overseas were unsuccessful and expensive;
e. Users, dealers and even the press knew that user support was weak.

Apricot are now concentrating on just three product ranges:
XEN-i    A new Apricot IBM - compatible with the IBM IBM AT micro
XEN      The go-faster Apricot Apricot - compatible with the Apricot PC/Xi
XEN-MF   The Apricot Apricot microcomputer network based around XEN file server(s) which can have any Apricot Apricot or anyone's IBM linked onto it.

What this means for the existing range of Apricot products is as follows:
F1/Fie/Portable        Dropped from the range a long time ago
F2/F10                 Now dropped and remaining stocks being sold off
PC/Xi (Xi-FD & -HD)    Also dropped and remaining stocks have now been exhausted (Apricot priced them very cheaply and sold them just before any even cheaper Amstrad IBM compatible appears)
XEN-FD -CD & -HD       These continue in production at unchanged prices.

Apricot have stated that they will continue to support existing Apricot users for at least five years. This is a very long time in microcomputing and only time will tell how valuable this promise is.

How this may impact you:
a. Your Apricot dealer will probably not be an Apricot dealer for very much longer so your support lines will diminish;
b. As time passes your maintenance contract will get more expensive as Apricot experienced engineers and parts become scarcer;
c. New software is far less likely to appear as the costs of converting software to the Apricot remain constant but the market is reducing;
d. Existing software will probably become a lot cheaper as authors try to capture the marketplace while it still exists.

That said the Apricot Xi-FD and Xi-HD at their final price of around £1000 to £1400 were a short-term bargain if you knew what you wanted to do with them. The go-faster XEN remains a reasonable upgrade if you already have a large application on a PC/Xi that you find runs too slowly for convenience (but beware that the XEN is not 100% PC/Xi compatible). However the UK micro market is about to be upset by very cheap IBM clones from Amstrad and others!

## PORTABLE & PRINTER TROUBLE

Q:  I have two problems with my Portable bought from Dixons in March.
    a.  It refuses to boot up again if turned on within about half an hour of use, reporting error X 08.
    b.  When printing with an Epson LX80 it only prints so far, stops and only resumes if the printer is switched on and off line repeatedly.

A:  We have had various problems with Portables. Our original £2,500 colour Portable (sob, sob, sob) used to start buzzing after 5 minutes on and refused to do anything for a few minutes but then carried on OK. A second Portable (Dixons £499, fewer sobs) had exactly your problem - the only advice we can offer is that if your problem annoys you then return the Portable to Dixons for replacement/repair as it is obviously faulty.

Printer problems are the bane of any micro support person! There could be any number of causes at the micro end (bad - needs Dixons repair), the cable (good - cheap), the printer end (Epsons are usually OK!) On the assumption that your LX80 is parallel the most likely suspect is the printer cable. Is it a "proper" ribbon cable (good) with all 36 pins of the parallel Centronics interface wired straight through, or a lesser cable (bad) with only a dozen or so wires. (Incidentally some printers working with Apricots will leave blank lines between text until you cut the parallel cable on pin 14.) You could also check how you have configured your Apricot boot disk using Activity Utilities System Configurator - we have always said NO to paper out and printer fault.

## CONFUSED OF CANNOCK

Q:  Some problems I have been experiencing on my Fie:
    a.  I have to enter COPY\ source destination /S - it seems wrong;
    b.  The disk icon on my Activity UTILITIES for saving keyboard files is missing even with the write protect removed;
    c.  Activity is of little use to amend data files from my investment program Microvest (Lombardy), only Rename and Copy work; and
    d.  Struggling with my Riteman 2A printer manual I cannot follow the logic of control codes, ASCII and hexadecimal, getting ESCape, and their relationship to BASIC.

A:  Confused of UPG as well !

a.  Your command is indeed wrong (see p10 about COPY /s)
b.  To save a file does not require the disk icon. Simply pick up the current keyboard filename by pressing [RET] over the central named icon and then moving the file shaped cursor to the Keys box on the left hand side which contains the name of any other .KB keyboard file(s). To update the disk's operating system use System Configurator instead.
c.  Activity should be useless for editing data files. It is simply Apricot's rather pathetic alternative to MS-DOS and the pure COMMAND.COM A> prompt. You shouldn't be using either of these to amend an application's data files : use your Microvest program for that.
d.  The representation of a character is a human convenience not of significance to your printer : ie the following are all ways to describe the same byte of data which might be sent to the printer:

^A   as a control character
001  as a decimal (ie base 10) ASCII value
01h  as a hexadecimal (ie base 16) value
SOH  as the mnemonic for this particular control character

Remember that a computer works in bytes of data.  Each byte of data is made up of 8 bits (each ON or OFF) hence there are 256 possible permutations of bit patterns making up the byte.  The 2nd to 27th of these (as it starts at zero, not 1) could be represented in decimal ASCII values as 001 to 026, or in hex as 01h to 1Ah, or as control characters as ^A to ^Z (ie 1st to 26th letters).  Pressing the [CONTROL] key and the appropriate letter should generate the appropriate control character <u>but</u> MS-DOS will filter out some of them (eg ^X cancels the current line, ^C aborts etc).  I suggest you look at the UPGs on BATCH files (and WSTAR) as this covers how to get these characters into a file so that you could then copy to the printer using a COPY filename PRN [RET] command.  (See also p5 below.)

To give an example using BASIC.  Let's say your printer needed the following codes to set line spacing to 8 lines per inch:
    ESCAPE (char 027)  RS (char 030)  the digit 8 (char 056)
in hex these would be: 1Bh 1Eh 38h
in BASIC or GW-BASIC these could be sent to the printer as either:
    LPRINT CHR$(27);CHR$(30);CHR$(56)
or  LPRINT CHR$(27);CHR$(30);"8"

## SUPERWRITER - CONDENSED EPSON PRINTING

Q:  Smaller printing from SuperWriter can be produced on my Epson RX80 by selecting 12 from the appropriate menu - can I get even smaller print ?

A:  You can indeed get SuperWriter to print condensed 17cpi on an Epson. Simply ignore the Control setting menu prompt that you are meant to type in a Pitch between 10 and 15, and boldly enter 17 - it works!

## SUPERCALC - PRINT TO DISK ?

Q:  Page 10 of the SCALC UPG refers to the ability to print to disk to be able to embellish it with boldface, italics, underlining etc.  I am not clear how to do this, and can I use SuperWriter on it ?

A:  Start the /O for output command as you would have done had you been printing to paper, but at the end of the command when asked to press P for printer, enter D for disk instead.  You will then have to provide a filename to save the printing to.  The file will be given the suffix .PRN unless you specify another.  Once the outputting to disk has completed you can quit SuperCalc, get SW running and edit the .PRN file just created, using any features of SW you require (NB the .PRN file defaults as a "System" file).

One slight complication to the above is to remember that the /O Setup options also apply to printing to disk.  Therefore before printing to disk check on the Setup screen that the page length (probably best set at 0 for continuous) and line length (ie Width) are appropriately set.  You can reset these and then back out using [CTRL]Z without starting printing to printer.

## ESC in BATCH files

Q:  Although you mention it in the BATCH UPG I cannot understand how to get an Escape character into my batch files.  I have tried microscreen keypad 2, ^ and [ but to no avail.  I have even tried [CTRL]P uselessly. As to seeing ^[ on the screen - I may be stupid, but never have.

A:  From p7 of our BATCH Guide you should see that the technique described there only applies to composing a batch file using the SuperWriter word-processing program (which you may have received "free").

If you do have SuperWriter then you need to press keypad 2, then ^ (ie hold down [SHIFT] and \) and then the key you want : ie [ESC] not [.  You will then see ^[ on the screen (ie the way the Apricot shows Escape on the screen).  As mentioned in another query above ^[ is just one way of describing the character ESCape, 027 or 1Bh.

Your second attempt using [CTRL]P [ESC] only applies if you are using WordStar, and as warned only works with WS version 3.3 not WS 3.4.

We have actually recently discovered a way to get Escape into a batch file when writing direct from the keyboard using the COPY CON filespec technique. Whenever you want Escape you must simultaneously press ESC and then SHIFT and then R and then release all 3 keys.

## APRI-SOFT EXCHANGE

Various questions were posed in their Jan-Apr 86 newsletters (see p15) to which we can provide some info:

VOLUME LABELS (Mar/Apr 86 p4)
Background:  every disk has space for a "volume label" of up to 11 characters to help in identifying the disk  - as reported by VOL.  Apri-Soft Exchange almost distributed a VLABEL utility to change this !
A:  Some Apricot owners won't need the Ansible copyright VLABEL utility anyway.  Point 32 users have MS-DOS 3.1's LABEL.COM on the server in the DOSUTILS sub-directory typically shared as the Z: drive.  Xen users can run Windows and use the executive's SPECIAL Set Volume Name option to amend volume labels.  (The Norton Utilities includes a VL utility.)

V30 (Feb 86 p11)
Background:  IBM PC users are well advised to consider swapping their 8088 CPU for a V20 chip - should Apricot users trade 8086 for V30 ?
A:  We don't think Apricot users should swap their 8086 for a V30.  We at UPG tried this £20 go-faster CPU in a PC/Xi.  It made an awful buzzing noise when turned on but this ceased once the machine had booted and the PC did seem to work although on the basis that a noisy machine is a very unhappy one we went back to the 8086 without any further testing.

IBM EMULATOR & NORTON UTILITIES (Feb 86 p5)
Background:  Peter Norton (USA) publishes a set of very useful housekeeping and file unerasing utilities for the IBM for around £75 - how about getting these to work on the Apricot under the IBM emulator(s)?

A: We find all the Norton Utilities 3.1 utilities <u>except</u> the main NU one work without any IBM emulator, although FF (filefind) can sometimes add extra keystrokes to the keyboard buffer and TS (text search) can crash a Xen. Under PC/Xi BIOS 2.7 we always use NU /2 with the old PC/Xi IBM.COM IBM.OVL v3.6 emulator - the cursor keys work, only the screen map of disk usage is unreliable. On the Xen the EMIBM.EXE ver 1.5.0 (17.12.85 prelim) runs NU in native mode quite happily and this EMIBM works on the PC/Xi under BIOS 3.1.

## WORDSTAR POT POURRI

Q: I can get a sterling pound sign printed only by using the phantom space (^PF) with WordStar, getting only a hash otherwise. How can I quickly replace the on-screen £ with ^PF throughout a document? In the WSTAR UPG you say it can done but don't say how!

A: We thought the WordStar manual told you, but when we checked we found that p5-12 only hints at how. The moral is to keep the [CTRL] key down for both the ^P and the control character - eg replace £ with ^PF:

    Type ^QA
    Type £ [RET]        (ie the SHIFT 3 or SHIFT 4 key)
    Type ^P ^F [RET]    (see just ^F - ie control F)
    Answer options as appropriate - eg NG [RET]

Q: I want to run WordStar on an Xi with sub-directories but don't understand your points from the Xi and WSTAR UPGs about how WordStar can/can't cope with directories - please say more.

A: WordStar is a pre MS-DOS 2 program and has no understanding whatsoever of DOS' hierarchical directories. Hence on your hard-disk WordStar will only be able to work on files in its own sub-directory.

WordStar is a three part program with a .COM and two .OVL files so trying to use PATH to get WordStar to run from a non-current directory will work OK for the COM file but will fail because the OVL files will not be found. So if you do want to edit files in several directories you can get by with a PATH to the COM, but will need actual copies of the OVL file(s) in each of the relevant sub-directories. You will also need to set the current directory correctly <u>before</u> running WordStar.

One way round this is to set up a RamDisk (see p11) and copy WordStar into this as fully explained in the WSTAR UPG. You will then be able to edit files in any current directory on the A: hard-disk by changing to the appropriate A: sub-directory before running WordStar from the RamDisk.

## SUPERCALC3 - IF ""

Q: On p21 of the SCALC UPG there is an explanation of conditional logic. In IF(C5<0.95*C20,"Low","") what purpose do the final "" serve ?

A: An IF statement has the syntax IF(test,true,false). With SuperCalc2/3 the "" simply give the result "" - ie of no text if the test is false. That no text appears on screen as a blank cell.

## SUPERCALC3 - EPSON FX80 GRAPHS

Q: I cannot persuade my Epson FX80 to produce hard copy of graphics from SuperCalc3 and neither the Epson, SC3 manuals or UPG seem to cover it.

A: An easy one at last ... get SCALC3 running
    Start a global graphics command by typing / G G
    Select the device option by pressing D
    See a list of printers and plotters
    Use [DOWN CURSOR] to highlight Epson FX80 option
    Press [RET] to select FX80
    Press [CTRL]Z to leave the device screen
    Press [CTRL]Z to abandon / G G altogether
    Use /V commands to define and view a graph
    Ensure FX80 is connected and on line
    Press the PLOT microscreen keypad or press [CTRL]Y
    See graph printed OK ?
Assuming success, use a / G G S Y command to update on disk the /GG settings and then play around with the other /GG options.

## CARDBOX-PLUS - ERROR 7

Q: I use Cardbox-Plus to keep a database on a PC duo [ie double-sided] but keep getting Error 7. Even though repairing the database normally works I soon get the error again. Why?

A: This is most likely a problem with BIOS 2.4 (or earlier) and double-sided disks - the BIOS just couldn't cope with them properly. Apricot's Async communications program was another which had problems. Get yourself the latest BIOS 3.1 from your dealer [Apricot stock code ZC AAG4 double-sided & ZC AAG4B single-sided]. See p16 for a further discussion of BIOS.

## 8087 CHIP

Q: Is it worth spending up to £295 for the Intel 8087 maths co-processor chip to speed up my number crunching ?

A: Probably not as although an 8087 can be fitted to an Apricot your software has to be able to recognise the presence of the 8087. If you are using a time consuming program which does lots of multiplication/division and where the authors offer a 8087 compatible version of their program then get them to provide you with statistics on the performance improvement so that you can assess its value to you. Apricot are currently offering 8087s to their dealers for less than £50 so don't expect to pay the old list price!

## XEN GW-BASIC

Q: Just how do I get the graphics commands of XEN GW-BASIC to work ?

A: Do what is <u>not</u> mentioned in the manual and issue a SCREEN 1 command before any graphics commands such as CIRCLE (250,250),50,1. We found this only by trial and error - the SCREEN <u>1</u> might vary depending on your monitor.

## SCREEN COLOURS ON THE F & PORTABLE

Q:  MS-DOS  text on a colour screen is boring old white on black even with a
colour screen.   On the F2 you can edit the operating system  to  amend
this but this is not a standard feature with the F1, or is it?

A:  First  decide which colours you want (we use BLUE on LIGHT GREY) from the
range:  Black-0 Blue-1 Green-2 Cyan-3 Red-4 Magenta-5 Brown-6 LtGrey-7 DkGrey-8
   LtBlue-9 LtGreen-: LtCyan-;  LtRed-<  LtMagenta-—  Yellow-> White-?

Include the following two lines in your AUTOEXEC.BAT (exactly as below):
    PROMPT-$ez$exG$e73$e]0 $e]1
                       ^      ^

        where you substitute the background colour for the first ^ gap
            and substitute the foreground colour for the second ^ gap
    PROMPT-$P$G

eg  For a light grey screen (ie 7) with blue lettering (ie 1):
    PROMPT-$ez$exG$e73$e]07$e]11
    PROMPT-$p$g

## APRICOT ESCAPE CODES IN GW-BASIC

Q:  I use GW-BASIC v2.02 (ACT version 1.00) on a PC with BIOS 2.7 Activity
and  can  not get PRINT CHR$(27) etc to work to generate reverse  video,
underlining etc - ie the escape codes on p21 of the BATCH UPG.

A:  Neither could we when we tested it. The problem will be due to GW-BASIC
using  a  different  screen driver - ie not the standard Apricot one  which
understands  the  Apricot escape codes.   GW-BASIC uses either Digital
Research's GSX GRAPHICS or else Apricot's own BIOS extensions (eg  800400EG).
Neither  of  these support the escape codes hence why it does not  work  as
standard - unless a subscriber out there knows better!

The  problem  did not exist with the good old Microsoft  MS-BASIC  which was
originally provided with Apricots. If you are not using any of the extra (eg
graphics)  features  of GW-BASIC then one way around the  problem  could  be
compile  your code and run it without GRAPHICS/800400EG, but obviously  this
involves you in the expense of a compiler and makes testing more complicated.

## ARCHIVING - THE /O RESTORE OVER-RIDE SWITCH

Q:  I don't understand what the RESTORE /O switch is for or how to use it.

A:   When you archive a hard-disk using BACKUP the details of the
hierarchical directory structure of your hard-disk are also archived.   Hence
when you  come to restore a file/directory/entire disk the file(s)  are  all
restored to the same directory archived from. An example of over-riding this
using  /O - say you had archived a sub-directory called A:\UTILS\DOS and  you
now  wanted  to restore a file from that directory called CHKDSK.EXE  to  the
root directory rather than to the sub-dir it came from:

    RESTORE B: A:\UTILS\DOS\CHKDSK.EXE /O\UTILS\DOS\-\
        source original name       olddir    newdir

## F1 or F2 & GEM ?

Q:  What is  the difference between an F1 and an F2 ?   Can I run Digital
Research's GEM on the F1 ?

A:  As we see it the differences are as follows:

Keyboard:     The F1 has a ghastly tiled keyboard (reminiscent of a Scrabble
              board) whereas  the  F2 has the same layout as  the  F1 (ie
              different to the PC/Xi/XEN) but with actual keys.

Disk Drives:  The  F1 will have only one disk-drive but this may be  single-
              sided  (315Kb) or double-sided (720Kb).   An F2 had definitely
              got two double-sided 720Kb drives.

RAM:          An F1 has perhaps just 256Kb (or even just 128Kb).   An F2 has
              definitely  got  512Kb or more.   Both the F1 and F2 can  be
              expanded up to 768Kb maximum.

ROM/BIOS:     The  F2 has version 3.n ROM chips built into it.   An F1 only
              has these if you had it upgraded (Summer 85+).

Expansion:    All  the F1s we have seen have only one Apricot expansion slot
              whereas the F2s have two expansion slots.

Thus if  you have had your F1 upgraded to 3.n ROMs, got 512Kb of RAM and  a
double-sided disk drive you should be able to run F2 GEM.   Certainly our  F1
seems  to run our F2's master software (although our test was not extensive).
An F1 owner should be able to get the latest F2 master disks (Apricot  stock
code ZC APG6) from an Apricot dealer - they cost him around £25.

## ARCHIVING for HARD-DISK users

Q:  I am hoping  to  use  COPY to copy files of the  current  day's date
automatically  via a batch file to another directory or disk.   I  don't
want  to use the SET environment command.   I do not intend to use  the
BACKUP.EXE utility program because:

    a.   Verify of BACKUP does not work;
    b.   Using  a /M parameter for modified files will not allow two backups
         to be made;
    c.   Using  a  /D parameter requires operator input and may  be  entered
         incorrectly;
    d.   I want the stored files to be immediately accessible without having
         to use RESTORE;
    e.   I cannot get the /O switch to work;
    f.   I want to transfer files to other directories on the same drive and
         BACKUP cannot do this.

A:   Our responses are as follows:

a.   Agreed  even  up  to version 1.4.3 which is  the  latest  version  of
     BACKUP.EXE  which we have seen on the PC/Xi/XEN,  although we have  read
     that 1.5.x is available for the IBM compatible Apricot XEN-i.

b.  /M only works once, agreed (ie a tautologous point)

c.  /D really is the best option, although you are right to be wary of user error.

d.  Agreed that BACKUP'd files have to be RESTORE'd to be usable.  What you may not realise is that they can be restored to a microfloppy - ie there is no requirement to use a hard disk (although obviously a microfloppy cannot hold a file of over 315Kb [single-sided] or 720Kb [double])

e.  The /O switch does work (see p8).

With MS-DOS 3.2 Microsoft have now added XCOPY and REPLACE utilities and updated the ATTRIB utility to help with making discretionary backups of multiple directories but to achieve what you want you could try a combination of MSBASIC or GWBASIC and the BACKUP archiving utility as follows:

i.  Have a MAKEBACK.BAT batch file which contains the instruction to run either:    MSBASIC MAKEBACK.BAS
                 BACK
    or: GRAPHICS            [you may need 800400EG with recent GW-BASICs]
        GWBASIC MAKEBACK.BAS
        BACK

ii  Then create a MAKEBACK.BAS file to contain the following lines:
        10 OPEN "O",1,"BACK.BAT"
        15 D$=MID$(DATE$,4,2)+"-"+LEFT$(DATE$,2)+"-"+RIGHT$(DATE$,4)
        20 PRINT £1,"BACKUP A:\ B: /D:";D$
        30 CLOSE
        40 SYSTEM

iii Ensure your hard-disk has BACKUP available to run.  Then to make a backup of files dated today (having ensured that the Apricot's system clock is correctly set) just run the batch file MAKEBACK.  This will get BASIC running to interrogate the system clock and then create a batch file called BACK.BAT containing the appropriate backup command for today's date, having adjusted the system date from its BASIC USA format of mm/dd/yyyy to one compatible with a UK country-44 style.

Make sure that the version of BACKUP you use is version 1.3 or later as we have no faith whatsoever in earlier versions, and 1.4.n are best.  Run BACK.BAT a second time if you want a second backup dated today.

## FILE COPYING WITH ONE MICROFLOPPY DRIVE

Q:  The copying commands in my manual are wrong.  I can not get /S to work.

A:  It does work with Apricot MS-DOS 2.11 (but not MS-DOS 3+ on the XEN).  To enable the original PC/F1/Portable owners to cope with just one disk-drive Apricot added a new switch to the COPY command :  the /S switch.  This was a command of very limited usefulness and never properly explained :
eg   A>COPY ONE.TXT \ /S [RET]  would copy ONE.TXT (must be less than 64Kb long!) from the current directory of the disk in the A: drive to the root directory of a target disk (obey the screen prompts to swap disks).  Never try to copy more than one file at once, never try to copy to a sub-directory.  As alternatives use the newer Apricot SCOPY utility (still not very good), or use DCOPY or DISKCOPY to copy the entire disk and delete unwanted files.  On a hard-disk machine create and use a TEMP sub-directory to transfer files between two microfloppies.

## RAMDISK

Q:  I cannot get RAMDISK to work.  If I try to install one the display simply shows bad or missing RAMDISK.

A:  Your problem is probably caused by missing out the crucial space in the command line in your CONFIG.SYS file.  To install a RamDisk requires a command with the structure:   DEVICE=RAMDISK.SYS /n
where /n is the number of 64Kb blocks of RAM to allocate to the RamDisk.  You can omit the /n altogether for a 64Kb RamDisk.  Otherwise for a 128Kb RamDisk you would need:   DEVICE=RAMDISK.SYS /2      [note the space before the /2]

The only version of the free Apricot RamDisk we have ever seen is:
    RAMDISK.SYS  1536  5-04-84

We have used this almost daily, since we first found out how to, on all the different Apricot machines and versions of the master software and never had any trouble whatsoever.  The only thing you should beware of is that a small RamDisk is limited as to how many files can be fitted in its root directory:
    64Kb (ie /1)    16 files (ie 15 + the volume label of "RamDisk")
    128Kb (ie /2)   16 files
    192Kb to 320Kb  32 Files
You can of course use sub-directories in RamDisk to get around this limitation.  You can even have more than one RamDisk.  For example to have two RamDisks include two "device=" statements in your CONFIG.SYS.  These will automatically be given the next two drive letter names so if your system has one physical disk drive then they will be the B: and C: drives.  With MS-DOS 2.11 and MS-DOS 3.1 the highest drive letter you can use is the E: drive, although in MS-DOS 3.1 this can be extended to up to 26 drives by including "lastdrive=z" in your CONFIG.SYS file.

## SETTING TIME ON F SERIES

Q:  Your F1-DOS UPG says I should press [SET TIME] and then [TIME/DATE] to update the F1's clock when booting up.  This is not exactly correct.  You need only press [TIME/DATE].

A:  Caught out.  You are absolutely correct.  Indeed not only is just pressing [TIME/DATE] all that is required, but the quicker you press it the sooner the F1/F2/Portable will boot up.  We have of course now corrected the error in the UPG!

## WORDSTAR - TABS & RULER LINES

Q:  Is it possible to alter the default ruler line to get rid of those wasteful TAB settings ?

A:  Not to alter the defaults as far as we know.  You could keep a file on your WordStar disk containing your preferred ruler line - say:
..-----!-------!-------!--------------------------------------------------R
and read this into a document using ^KR, then position the cursor in this line and adopt is as your ruler line using ^OF.  You could actually have all your favourite ruler lines in the one file and delete the unwanted ones.

## WORDSTAR - ENVELOPES

Q: To print an envelope I normally block copy the address from the beginning of the letter to a separate page at the end. I then print out the file using the "Pause at page end" option to insert an envelope. Sometimes I obviously forget or want anyway to print just the envelope. Is there an easier way?

A: Yes. Simply put the envelope in the printer. Block mark the text you want to print and then start a ^KW (ie block write) command. [This won't work if you are in column mode - ie do ^KN to get out of it.] Then instead of entering a filename enter the printer's device name instead - ie type PRN [RET]. WordStar will probably say the file already exists - press Y to overwrite. Hey presto - a printed address. (Obviously it makes sense to practice this tip on a cheap sheet of paper rather than an expensive envelope!)

## "TYPEWRITER" BATCH FILE

Q: In your UPG you state "if you have a daisy wheel printer ...". This seems to imply by omission that your COPY CON PRN ploy cannot work on a dot-matrix printer. Surely it can ?

A: Quite correct - it should work with any printer. The only variability we know about is that some printers will accept [TAB], whereas others will not (eg the Juki 6300 daisy-wheel will not). Why we emphasised the daisy-wheel aspect is that only a daisy-wheel produces output which looks typewritten.

## MORE ARCHIVING PROBLEMS

Q: I have a Plus5 20Mb D: drive and a 10Mb cartridge E: drive. Plus5 provide a utility P5COPY.EXE to copy files around but this overwrites the file date/time which I find useful. I have tried to use BACKUP v1.2 to BACKUP D:\SUCALC E: /F [RET] giving the archive file the name SUCALC without success - it reports Archive File already exists.

A: Don't try using BACKUP v1.2 - we had awful trouble with this. The first BACKUP we had any confidence in was version v1.3, and we currently use BACKUP v1.4.3 and RESTORE v1.4.4 on PC/X1/XEN without any known difficulties

Apart from that you seem to be doing the correct thing although the /F to show file details is not important. What BACKUP does with large target disks such as your E: is backup everything into one file for speed - ie in "packed mode". We would include a /I so that BACKUP creates an index file - an ASCII file than can be TYPEd to the screen to see what files are backup'd into the one .ARC file on the disk. The error "file already exists" is because presumably on an earlier trial of yours the file SUCALC.ARC got created and BACKUP prevents you overwriting this - use DOS' DEL command on it first!

Hence:    BACKUP D:\SUCALC E: /I [RET]
          would backup the D:\SUCALC sub-directory and all its files and sub-directories to the E: drive, also creating an index file on the E: drive.

## SUPERCALC : APRICOT USER(S)

Over the last few months a few questions about SuperCalc have appeared in Apricot User's Clinic pages. The following answers expand on those which were offered in the Clinic pages (not by anyone from UPG!):

CONTROL Z and MS-DOS   (June 86 A.User)

The clinician agrees with the questioner that there are problems with getting CTRL-Z into a SuperCalc execute file, but fails completely to mention that CTRL-C can nearly always be used as an alternative to it. A good tip if ever UPG saw one as the CTRL-C character (ie ASCII 003) can be put into a file by most word-processors - even WordStar - whereas CTRL-Z is a tall order for most WP packages.

KEYBOARD CONFIGURATION FOR SUPERCALC (June 86 A.User)

While admitting that the question was slightly peculiar - how many vertical lines do you know ? - the answer was WRONG. The Apricot implementations of SuperCalc and SuperCalc2 do NOT affect the keyboard in any way and even SuperCalc3 only affects the first three microscreen keypads and, we think, the [HELP] key. UPG knows hundreds of Apricot SuperCalc's used daily with highly configured keyboards created with Apricot's KEYEDIT (or Activity UTILITIES Keyboard Table editor) and KEYS (version 2). What Mr Gawthorpe probably needed was help on just how to impose keyboards either using this KEYS utility or incorporating his special keyboard into his boot disk's operating system using SETUP or Activity UTILITIES System Configurator.

SUPERCALC SOLUTION - HI-80 PLOTTER (July/Aug 86 A.User)

Yet more dis-service by the unsuspecting readership! Apricot's SuperCalc3 version 1.0 does indeed NOT include a driver for the Epson HI-80 plotter so presumably A.User can't dispense "magic". It can however avoid mentioning "the latest versions of SuperCalc3..." as Apricot users have never ever had any choice except version 1.0. It can also avoid telling Apricot SuperCalc3 v1.0 users to use /GKY to save the global graphics settings as this has always been achievable only by /GGSY ie Global Graphics Save Yes. Then it might mention that SuperCalc3 is NOT a spreadsheet with "free of charge" graphics - therefore cap in hand, thank you very much Computer Associates (ex Sorcim) for whatever you get, you do actually genuinely pay for them!

And what about rescuing poor Mr Malhotra from thinking he has wasted his £400 on the HI-80 "as reviewed in Apricot User". It CAN be made to work with SuperCalc3. All you need to buy are two standard Epson HI-80 options:
     a.    HP 7470A emulator ROM    b.    Extra RAM memory required by a.
With these the HI-80 will behave with SuperCalc v1.0 as if it were a HP7470A plotter. This is the first Plotter option in SuperCalc3's /GGD menu. Once this is selected Mr Malhotra will also need to amend the /GGO screen to show that the HI-80 has 4 pens (HP7470A has only 2) and that it is to be driven as a parallel printer (HP7470A is serial) before issuing a /GGSY command. It does work - UPG have printed dozens of graphs using an Apricot with SuperCalc3 and such a HI-80. Of course you could completely upset Mr Malhotra by pointing out that IBM SuperCalc4 supports the standard HI-80 without the £125 (approx) extra bits listed above, but why upset readers - they already know that Apricot users are poor relations of big brother users.

## APRICOT MAGAZINES

Q:   Your adverts mention a review in "Apricot User" magazine.   Where can I get hold of it?

A:  Events have overtaken your question - Apricot User was a monthly freebie from VNU Publications but ceased publication with its July/August 86 issue, following Apricot's withdrawal from the mass micro marketplace.   The only regular publication now left is a newsletter called Apricot File and that has been around for under a year.   It was born out of the ashes of "16 Bit Computing" (previously "Sirius User") although you'll probably only be concerned by that if you lost a prepaid subscription!  Apricot File is a monthly newsletter, with no advertising (although third party fliers have recently started to be included in it), pleasantly printed with various HW/SW/etc reviews, programming features etc etc.  They also do public domain software disks, various "deals for readers", and provide news of the latest goings on/off at Apricot UK.   Although up to 25% of each issue remains fairly constant (subscription info, deals for readers) it is now the only one and therefore necessarily better than nothing:

Subscription has just increased to £50pa in the UK, £65+(?) overseas Airmail. Details from Apricot File, TP Group, PO Box 509, LONDON N1 1YL, 01-833 3501.

## APRICOT BOOKS

Q:   I have several of your UPGs and find them very useful, but are there any books available and what are your thoughts on them ?

A:   We know of the following books with "Apricot" in their title:

PITMAN COMPUTER HANDBOOK - THE APRICOT by Peter Gosling
1984  £3.95  Pitman  ISBN 0-273-02317-9  pp113  7"x4"  Paperback
Save your money - buy another blank disk (or a UPG) instead.

THE APRICOT PERSONAL COMPUTER by M de Pace
1984  £8.95  Collins  ISBN 0-00-383002-0  pp152  9"x6"  Paperback
Far more worthy a book on PC/Xi Manager, but long since out of date.

MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS WITH AN APRICOT by K Lang
1985  £8.95  Holt/Rinehart/Winston  0-03-910662-4  Paperback
Overview of the Apricot PC/Xi and what you might do with it - most suited to a potential purchaser than as an aid for an owner.

THE APRICOT F-SERIES COMPANION  by Malcolm Davison
1985  £8.95  Sigma Press  1-85058-028-6  Paperback
The one and only guide for an F1 and F1e user.   Don't believe them about it covering the F2/F10 but F1 users should get it anyway.

There is one other book, a hardback, Getting to know your Apricot published by Duckworth.   Like the Apricot Personal Computer by de Pace it is another dated piece of work on PC/Xi Manager.

Then three recent paperbacks "produced with the full co-operation of Apricot" - no further comment really necessary.

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INTRODUCING THE APRICOT BUSINESS COMPUTER by Peter Rodwell
1986  £16.50  Wm Heinemann  Paperback
See if your dealer still has any old Apricot advertising leaflets instead.

BUSINESS COMPUTING WITH THE APRICOT by Peter Rodwell
1986  £16.50  Wm Heinemann  Paperback
...and with the IBM PC and most other microcomputers.

ADVANCED USER'S GUIDE TO THE APRICOT by Peter Rodwell
1986  £16.50  Wm Heinemann  Paperback
Some BIOS calls, screen handling and graphics codes but which user cares?

## APRICOT USER-GROUPS

Q:   Are there any user groups specialising in Apricot users ?

A:   We are members of the following two UserGroups which are the only "regular" national usergroups that we know of:

APRI-SOFT EXCHANGE - for ALL Apricot Users

They offer a short and cheaply dot-matrixed newsletter but covering many interesting topics and "cries for help".   They also compile Apricot disks of Public Domain software and negotiate deals for their members with various third party suppliers (such as ourselves).   We have been members since January 86 but the newsletters have been rather sporadic and variable in content and value.   Membership costs just £10 for 1986 (£15 outside the UK) and further details (send an sae) from: Sydney Harrod, Apri-Soft Exchange, 35 Tyler Avenue, Limavady, Co Londonderry, Northern Ireland, BT49 ODT.

GATEWAY USERS GROUP - for F1/F1e & FP/Portable Users

Recently established by a teacher/user it specialises in the entry level "Gateway" models - the people who first had cause to feel shabbily treated by Apricot and dealers.   It is for the "non-technical" and "non-business" home user with a mutual/self-help philosophy, recognising that users who paid under £750 for their machines are not going to buy several £300 software packages to (try to) run on it!  Membership now costs £3.50pa and provides a valuable bi-monthly newsletter packed with info, albeit chaotically unstructured and very cheaply photocopied.   Details from: A J Hill, Gateway Users Group, 85 Edna Road, Raynes Park, LONDON  SW20 8BS (make sure you send him an sae. - he's not at it for the money!).

## PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE

Q:   What is Public Domain ("PD") software and where can I get some?

A:  PD software is software where the author does not claim copyright - hence it is in the public domain.   It is distributed by usergroups (such as those above) free of charge (after allowing for the cost of the disk, duplication time, p&p etc).   Even more sophisticated is "Shareware" where the author asks you to pay (say £25) only if you find the program useful.   A lot of PD software is utilities (bugged ?) or games.   Shareware, more substantial applications programs, is most common in the USA.

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