

ASK DR. ALBERT

Q.

I have a Series 500 with a printer on the com 1 port (on the cpu). I have been having printing problems, which, by documenting, I have determined to happen every 20 times - at which time we get a "table over run error" from the operating system. Any clues?

Α.

This is a Bug in the OS. If the printer is attached to a port on the 8 port Comm bd., the problem disappears.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This month I have decided to attack "personalized" service. (I do, however, still approve of motherhood and apple pies.) There are some risks in distribution systems that do not follow a well defined pattern, and the risks can be substantial to all parties involved.

One of the nicest fellows I know works for a company that has some problems getting stuff out on a timely basis. When I get sufficiently desperate, I can call him up, and he can solve the problem, but that never makes me happy, and I'll try to define what bothers me about the approach in this column.

In our dealings with our customers, we try to place a lot of emphasis on even handedness. Our pricing is very uniform (no quantity breaks, no "hip pocket deals"), and you can expect the same (or very similar) response from any one of our people. We try very hard to keep our merchandise in stock, and, if there is a shortage, we ship oldest backorders first period. It is a very rigid policy that we have rarely violated.

Every time I encounter the "squeaking wheel" distribution system, I can't help but feel there is a basic unfairness involved. It's kind of like crashing the line at a movie theatre, I just don't do it. If I see a friend behind me in the line, I would let the people behind me go ahead so that I can join my friend farther back. I have never accepted offers to move up in the line, and I resent people who do so.

If you get caught up in this kind of personalized service, you may not be making the right people

Q.

I recently purchased an Altos UPS for my Series 1000. I installed UNIX 5.3d and set aside a 4 meg UPS partition. To test the system, I killed power to the UPS. It shut down properly; but when it rebooted, it did not put my system back to the state it was before it shut down (like my Series 2000 does). What do I need to change?

Α.

Probably nothing. The Series 1000 does not work properly with the Restart partition. It may require a modification to the CPU board to get it to work. Keep posted to Altos Tech notes as to their progress on getting it working.

Q.

I purchased an Altos Mem III memory board with ECC for my Series 2000, a 16 MHZ machine. Now my system is slower than Altos Tech Support. What am I missing?

Α.

There are certain minimum Rev. level boards necessary to use a Mem III board. The most important of which is a 20 MHZ CPU. These are:

20 MHZ CPU bd	Rev C
MDC Controller	Rev L
Serial I/O	Rev U
File Processor	Rev AC

happy. The pushy folks who specialize in trampling on the rights of others are not who I want to please. I appreciate the folks who have a little patience and the confidence that they will be treated fairly when it is their turn; and I try hard to work that way myself. Placing an order should be sufficient, you shouldn't have to follow it up with pleading phone calls.

One of the prime management responsibilities is to insure that a system is in place that provides for uniform treatment of customers. It seems very negligent to allow the decision making of who gets merchandise to be made in the shipping department by an employee who just wants people to quit yelling at him, but that's what it comes down to sometimes.

ALTOGETHER in the future ...

Altogethers to look for in the future: December - Best of Altogether Recap. January - Networking February - SCO March - High Capacity Systems April - Service Business (Tips & Tricks) Others to be named later.

DUKE'S REQUEST

Submit a "theme" article and receive a valuable prize (selected personally by Duke). Please get your submissions in EARLY !!!

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So You Want to Be a Salesman . . .

As we set out to become network experts, I think we need to decide what specific goal we have for the project. For our customers the network isn't the permanent solution, UNIX is. We want to ease the transition and protect their investment in DOS based systems.

Since most of what we are being asked for falls into the clientserver category, we will spend our time on this approach. We have selected a networking approach consisting of a UNIX based server and DOS based clients because of cost efficiency and knowledge transference. The same hardware can be used for either a Novell network or a UNIX-hosted network, and I think the Netware-386 retail price of \$7,995 is a very big obstacle. Using less than a 386 version is too much of the DOS world's problem now, so we wouldn't consider doing so. A UNIX host should have a substantial price advantage, and the added attraction that we know our way around the environment.

The functions that a network normally provides are file server and print server, with some differences in the file server area. Print server is pretty much a "no brainer" for UNIX, partially because DOS print capabilities are so primitive. File serving tends to be pretty straight forward until you want to make a DOS application cooperate with more than one user when it doesn't want to. In most cases my dominant opinion is that multi-user tasks should be run on UNIX and single user work is OK for DOS. Altos has provided MS-NET compatibility for those DOS applications that are designed for sharing.

With the availability of increasing numbers of productivity packages, and the long time advantage that UNIX enjoys in relational database capability, there should be an eventual transition to UNIX based software. UNIX is extremely well suited to accounting so there is little reason to consider a DOS solution there. I can't think of many occasions that an essential package is only available under DOS.

In our sales approach, we try to teach that the network is the interim stop on the way from DOS to UNIX. If they are doing desktop publishing, it may be permanent, but there are few other reasons to maintain DOS systems long term.

Our first experiment this month involved a Series 2000 running DOS Server with PC Connection from Altos. We installed a 32 PC lab with four printers at a small college. In general, Altos deserves an A+ for this networking effort. Other than a small error in the documentation there were no bad spots in the process of putting the network up.

Our competition was an IBM RT/PC running AIX with a token ring network. We had a substantial price advantage because of the per card cost, and IBM still has been unable to provide a fully functional network. The network card cost is double, and there is a substantial software cost. Additional disadvantages include the need to keep the software with a particular workstation (a big problem on floppy based stations) and a network that offered a much slower (almost double) response time. The Altos solution won hands down.

About the only drawback to the Altos solution is the fact that they picked OSI protocols. In a couple of years, it may be a great choice, but right now you may feel a little isolated from existing networks.

We were quite happy with the price performance we were able to produce and the fact that we offered a solution from a single source. Our customers perceive that as an advantage because they have never tried to get assistance from Altos. Oops, I better quit now before sarcasm takes over again. Next month we will look at a similar package based upon SCO UNIX.



TEACH OLD PERFORM NEW TRICKS.

Perf.util "C" routines teach 3.n INFORMIX PERFORM:

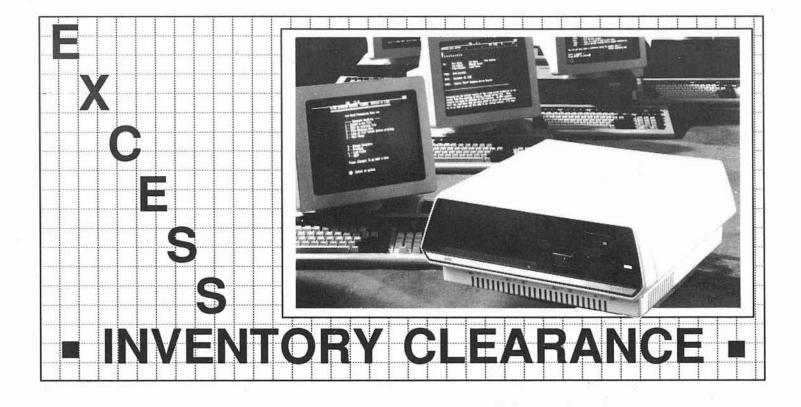
- To change files automatically.
- To force multiple "adds" to any screen.
- To split long screens into 2 or more PERFORM programs.
- To run 2nd or 3rd PERFORM program, passing necessary values via "mail".
- To PERFORM credit card check-digit verification.
- To set screen field to subscript of any field.
- To combine multiple fields into one & force lookup of combined value.
- To browse any database file during add or update of another file.
- To send system mail and/or display system files during add or update.
- To set any field to system time.

Source code and simple documentation:

\$295.00 мс/VI

Call ResponsePak Systems: 1-800-CALL-800 - Ext. 802 (24 hrs.)

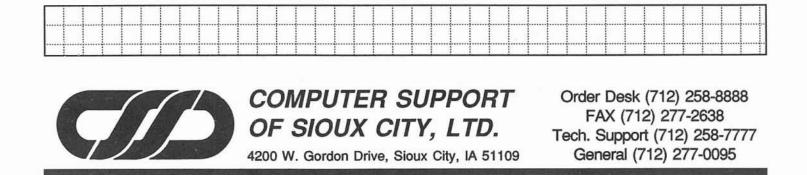
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586T - 40, 80 2500+ 2000	+				
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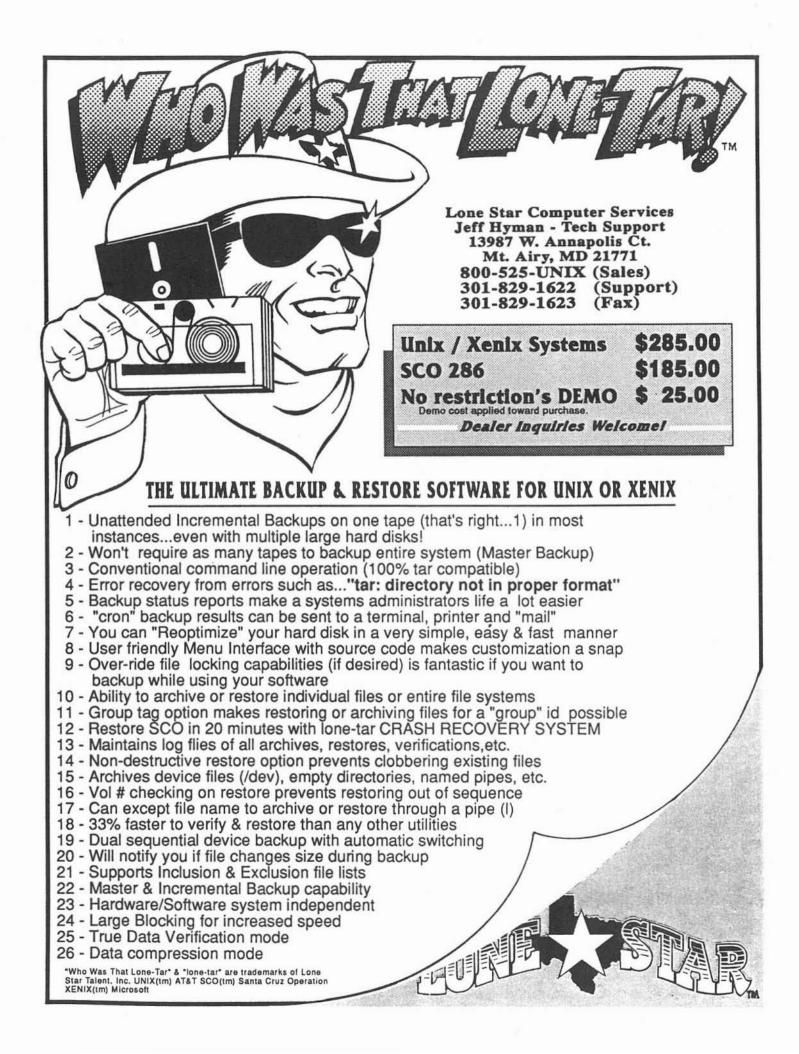


3	each	686T-50	\$1,200º ea.
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First Come - - First Served!





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WANTED: Used Altos equipment or excess inventory. Contact Ed Embree at (312) 860-5807.

BUY AND SELL USED ALTOS EQUIPMENT. Complete systems or parts. Call Peter Marcus, Marcus & Associates, (508) 655-7788.

BUSINESS BASIC Book for Sale. A terrific guide for both novice and experienced Business BASIC programmers. Over 500 pages, this tutorial has three sections: 1) "Plain Vanilla" transportable Business BASIC - how to program; 2)Full listings - heavily commented of actual commercial application software; 3)Reusable coding techniques and program generator building blocks. To order the book, "Business BASIC - What Do You Say After It Says: READY>", send \$65.00 plus \$5 for freight to Business BASIC Services, Department A, 9831 N.E. Skidmore, Maywood Park, OR 97220 or call (503) 254-3349.

PHARMACY SOFTWARE FOR ALTOS AND IBM/AT COMPATIBLES. Proven, sophisticated software for retail, nursing home and outpatient hospital pharmacies. Written for Altos and SCO XENIX and UNIX. Suggested retail \$5000. 50% discount for dealers. Demo Kits, \$100. VIP Computer Systems, (919) 933-9744.

AUTOMATED U.P.S. MANIFEST SOFTWARE: AutoFest is a United Parcel Service approved shipping and manifest system which can automate the weighing, computing charges, labeling (including C.O.D. tags) and printing of the shipping manifest. AutoFest can be tied directly to RealWorld Order Entry software providing a turnkey ordering and shipping system. Used alone it can still eliminate time consuming tasks of preparing U.P.S. shipments and tracking C.O.D. payments. Available for DOS, Novell, UNIX and XENIX. Only \$495. Dealer pricing and Demos available. MBS, Inc., (402) 333-8801.

ALTOS COMPUTERS FOR SALE. (1) Altos 586 -40 Megabyte with 1/2 Meg of Ram, \$1075.00. (1) Altos 586 - 80 Megabyte with 1/2 Meg of Ram, \$1475.00. Both include 90 day warranty. ALSO AVAILABLE - (12) NEW Wyse 50-G terminals in factory sealed cartons, \$349.00 each. (2) NEW Altos TCU-8, \$625.00 each. Penn Computer Services - (215) 592-8888.

ALTOS SALE: Altos 2086T-80, \$3700. Altos 2086T-190, \$4500. Altos 886T-50, \$1900. Altos 886T-80, \$2300. Altos 586T-80, \$1800. Altos 586-40, \$1200. Call South Shore Computers, (617) 749-6880.

FOR SALE: Six New Z22 Zenith Terminals. One is out of the box that was used for testing. All terminals have a keyboard that comes with each one. Terminal and keyboard are \$60 plus UPS charges. Contact: Ray Peters, P.O. Box 489, Citra, FL 32113. Phone: (904) 595-8030. ESPRIT TERMINAL ADAPTER CABLES. It's easy to use the extra serial port for both a second terminal connection and a printer at the same time with this "Y" adapter. Dealer cost just \$30.00. Call Steve at (712) 277-0095.

ALTOS (and related) EQUIPMENT. (2) Altos 8000-14 computer systems. 8" drive, 40 Mb hard disk. Used right up to the day they were replaced by a Novell Network. \$1000. each. (1) Altos MTU-2 tape backup. Used to back up the above computers. Cable was destroyed by workmen when moving the equipment. \$350. (2) Altos 580-20 computer systems. 5.25" drives, one floppy and one hard disk. Worked up to the day they were replaced by an AT multi-user system. Customer says one of these "whines, but works OK". Probably the static dissipater on the hard drive. \$500 each. Numerous televideo terminals 910, 910+, 912, 912C, 920, 920C, 925 and 950's. Each terminal will be tested prior to shipment. 910/910+/912/912C/920/920C all \$125. 925 -\$150. 950 -\$200. (1) QUME QVT 102 terminal. Nice tilt/swivel, separate keyboard, buffered printer port, screen saver. \$150. All equipment as it was shipped from manufacturer. No modifications. Central Computer Company, (317)398-6268.

ALTOS 2086T-80 with 2 Mb RAM, 8 Mhz CPU. Asking \$5,000. Call (201) 238-0881.

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