

# COMPUTER CONNECTION

Monthly Newsletter of the  
Rockland PC Users Group

Volume 19 Number 1  
January 1999

## JANUARY DOUBLE HEADER PANEL OF EXPERTS                      IDEA SESSION

Our first program of 1999 may not be flashy, but it's likely to be worth its weight in gold to many in our group. Some of our most experienced members will discuss major topics about computing and then take questions from the audience.

What decisions are involved when considering upgrading from Windows 3.1 to Windows 95, from '95 to '98 or to Windows NT? Which are the most reliable system-level programs such as uninstallers and partitioners, and what is the value of suites of utilities like the Norton set? Does the home user need antivirus software? Which computer activities put us at risk?

Other possible topics: obtaining technical support—when is it time to give up? What are three important things to do with Windows 9x's Device Manager? When is it time to think about upgrading hardware? Is there a trick to locating specific information on the Internet? And is it possible to avoid receiving unwanted advertising via e-mail (Spam)?

Our experts will try to answer every question. However, if there is a topic you would like covered, your best bet is to send it via e-mail to our program chairman, Stan Smith. (You'll find his address on the bottom of page 3.) Stan will do his best to have your question covered by our panel. ■



Our January meeting will provide an opportunity for all members to participate in what we hope will be a vigorous brainstorming session. Circumstances—the need for a nominating committee to find a new slate of officers for the coming election, our past inability to insure that our group's stewardship is in the hands of dedicated and qualified members—make it essential that we re-examine our priorities and explore our interest in sustaining our PC users group.

How shall we go about encouraging those who might become capable managers but are reticent about coming forward? There are surely some unrecognized among us who have “the calling.” What direction shall our group take? Shall we limit our mission to serving only those new to computing? Are we doing an adequate job of informing and supporting our members?

Our newsletter editor will facilitate the discussion. Past brainstorming sessions have proved stimulating and productive. Your participation and responsiveness at the January session will assure a successful outcome. Members who wish to express themselves concerning the future direction of RPCUG will not want to miss this important meeting. ■

### MEETING SCHEDULE

*Palisades Center Raso Community Room 7:30 P.M.*

**Tuesday, January 12 – Technical Panel**  
**Tuesday, February 9 – To Be Announced**  
**Tuesday, March 9 – To Be Announced**

(All are welcome)

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Sandy Coulter



I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year too! Did you get a computer-related gift? Was it what you anticipated or a disappointment? Your tale of holiday gift fortunes or woes would make good reading. Why not write a short piece for our newsletter?

## Meeting Notes

Our December presentation by International Paper was not only timely, but a smash hit, too! We had a very high attendance and lots of visitors, considering that it was a rainy night and not the usual software vendor presentation. Even though I am "paper savvy" I found it to be very informative. For example, I never could figure out how a 24 lb. paper from one manufacturer could be thicker or heavier than a 60 lb. paper from another company. Thanks to a clear explanation by paper scientist Ben Frank, I now know that there are several different standards of measurement. With no regulation for uniformity, paper companies can use any standard they like, even if it is misleading.

Our January general meeting will be a two-parter. One part will be a Q&A session hosted by a panel of technically proficient members who will provide answers for general computer-related questions. In addition to the Q&A session,

we will invite all members to join our board members for a brainstorming session on the future of the RPCUG. The brainstorming session will be hosted by our newsletter editor, Sy Ribakove, who has done a great job of leading these discussions for the executive board in the past. Members who care about our group and wish to have a voice in the future direction of RPCUG will not want to miss this important meeting.

## New Members

As in November, there were quite a few visitors at the December meeting. I am pleased to welcome seven of them as new members. They are: Suzanne Bernstein of New City, John and Josie Cordero, Stan Mack and Marilyn Silverman of Spring Valley, Brenda Melstein of Tomkins Cove and Deiter Schlesing of Nanuet. A warm and hearty welcome to all of you!

## Volunteers for 1998

I would like to recognize and thank past president Stan Smith for all his work over the last year, much of which was done behind the scenes. In addition to arranging wonderful programs for our general meetings, Stan also leads the ALT OS SIG (a workshop exploration of alternative operating systems) and maintains the membership database which involves a number of sub-tasks. He also proofreads our newsletter, prints the address labels for our newsletters and makes sure postage stamps are available. Those of you who attend meetings know what a fantastic technical expert he is. Without him the functioning of our group would be severely impaired.

Stan is not the only one who is very important to us. Our newsletter editor, Sy Ribakove, has been most helpful to me over the past year in addition to producing one of the best ever user group

newsletters (we have the awards to prove it!) Thus, my heartfelt thanks to Sy for all his help and for making us look so good.

There are a few other members who have a major impact on the smooth operation of our group, and I hope I'll be forgiven if I miss someone. Webmaster Steve Weinberg and secretary Charles Wendler are a couple of real stand-up guys who can always be relied upon to provide help above and beyond their job requirements. I thank them for being there for us whenever possible.

Last but not least is member-at-large Gary FitzGerald who, despite recent physical difficulties, comes to every general and board meeting and has been running our Help Desk so that members can get help from other members for their computer problems. In case anyone is wondering, the function of the member-at-large is to be an advocate for the membership and act as a liaison between the membership and the executive board. So, if you would like to send a message to the board or bring up an issue, Gary is the person to talk to.

## New Users SIG

Remember that the New Users SIG (Special Interest Group) is held on the same evening and location as the general meeting, but earlier and across the hall in the Adler room. The second in a series of seven monthly workshops will take place on January 12 at 6:15 P.M. sharp. The topic will be Essential Computer Hardware (e.g., keyboard, monitor and mouse). Members who missed registration at the last session can still register at the second session. Handout materials from the first session will be available. For further information on the New Users SIG, contact assistant SIG leader Frank Palmeri at 634-2966, e-mail to [palmshet@aol.com](mailto:palmshet@aol.com), or  
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# EDITOR'S DESK

by Sy Ribakove

I've cheered with the appearance of each new release of Micro Logic's **Info Select**, the PIM (Personal Information Manager) I've depended on since DOS days. I don't need an industrial strength PIM like Lotus Organizer because I do not have to maintain volumes of contact information or appointment calendars. But I have always needed to capture fleeting thoughts and sudden light bulb ideas as well as to create daily To Do lists, questions for doctors, and names, addresses and phone numbers I want to remember. For instance, now that I am on the wrong side of seventy, songs from the 1930s and 1940s pop into my mind from time to time. When one of them does, I add it to my **Info Select** song list. **Info Select** provides the means to record such trivia and also lots of other not-so-trivial happenings in my life.

As in past versions, **Info Select 5's** power lies in its speedy search engine. Press F5 (or G, for Get) and a window appears filled with red squares, each representing an item you have previously entered into **Info Select**. Begin typing any word, phrase, name or number that you want to retrieve, and the squares lacking that sequence of numbers or letters turn black, until you are left with only the one

red square, or two or three, that indicate that you have found what you are looking for. If the typed sequence is unique, the material that you are looking for appears instantly on your screen. If there are a few red "hits," just down-arrow to the one you want. It's that simple. Any time you want to write a new note, just press F7 (or N for New) and you are ready to type as much or as little as you wish. No fields, no structure, just type anything you think you might care to remember.

There is another way to enter data into **Info Select**. When it is running, the Transporter, a little lightening icon, appears in the system tray and any selected object in a Windows application—text, a URL, an e-mail message, even a graphic—appears immediately as a new note in **Info Select**. This is a new feature in **Info Select 5**, and very valuable. If the transport is successful, the lightning bolt turns green, if not, it turns red. It is really nice to select something on a Web page by simply pressing and swiping the mouse over it, clicking on the lightning icon and finding the object or objects you wanted to save waiting in **Info Select**.

The **Info Select** interface takes a little getting used to. On the left is the Selector, a kind of outline of every "note" in the



**Info Select** database. Each item in this outline can be dragged and dropped, promoted or demoted at the user's whim. Click on any item and its associated note appears in the window to the right. Mnemonic keystrokes make data entry a snap. For example, Esc-D inserts the date, Esc-T inserts the time.

**Info Select** will dial phone numbers buried within selected blocks of text. It also has lots of Internet and e-mail features. However, to use them, you must get involved with Microsoft's Messaging and have an Inbox icon on your desktop. Not for me. The less I have to be involved with Microsoft applications, the better I like it.

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## OFFICERS

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The Rockland PC Users Group, a tax-exempt educational organization, meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday. Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. The Rockland PC Users Group supports the computing interests of the community as well as the interests of its own members. The latest information about meeting programs and dates is available on the Internet at <http://www.rpcug.org>.

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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# PARTITIONMAGIC 4

by Vincent Cina

I recently upgraded to the latest release of **PartitionMagic**—the most useful system utility I own. I have tried other similar utilities and have found PowerQuest Corporation's **PartitionMagic** to be the easiest and the most reliable to use. Its new release operates flawlessly, surpassing my expectations.

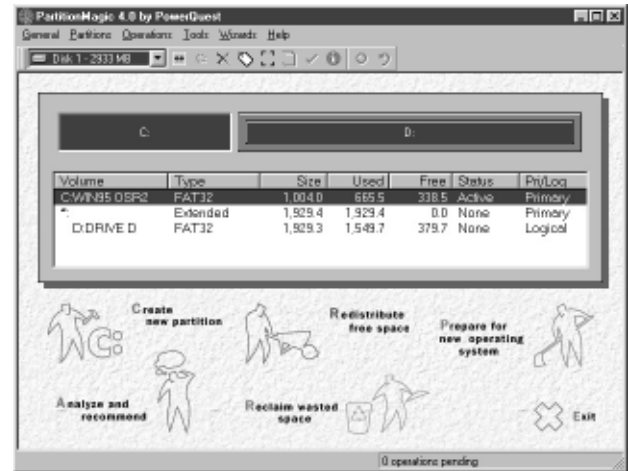
## What does **PartitionMagic** do?

The first release of **PartitionMagic** was a breakthrough product, extending the functionality of the DOS FDISK utility. Amazingly, it was suddenly possible for the user to manipulate primary, extended and logical hard disk partitions *without data loss*. **PartitionMagic** could change the size of a partition or move it. FDISK could not do that then and can't do that now.

I recently used **PartitionMagic** on my new computer to add a new partition to a large disk that had been delivered with a single partition. If I used the FDISK utility I would need to delete the C partition and create two new partitions: C and D. I would then need to format the new partitions. I would also have to restore or reinstall all of my software, including the operating system, applications, data and the personal preferences I had chosen. This would be a time-consuming and error-prone process. Using **PartitionMagic** I simply made the C partition smaller and created a new partition that became the D partition.

Installation of **PartitionMagic** 4.0 was simple and logical. Inserting the CD-ROM brought up selections to *Install PartitionMagic*, *Install BootMagic*, *Create Diskettes*, *View Documentation* and display *Technical Support Information*. *BootMagic* replaces the Boot Manager facility that was included in the previous release of **PartitionMagic**. If you have installed multiple operating systems on your computer, *BootMagic* can display a menu of bootable systems when you power up your computer. *Create Diskettes* creates bootable diskettes so you can run **PartitionMagic** even if you are unable to start Windows. In addition to the **PartitionMagic** and *BootMagic* user guides that come in the box, the online documentation is a good source of information about hard disk partitions. My only complaint is that some of the diagrams in the included online documents are difficult to read.

The **PartitionMagic** installation went quickly. I used Custom Install and the only choice to make was to install **PartitionMagic** for Windows 95/98 or **PartitionMagic** for Windows 3.1/DOS or both. The **PartitionMagic** installation includes other useful utilities; *MagicMover*, *DriveMapper* and *PartitionInfo*. When I added the second partition to my hard drive it became the D partition. The drive letters for my Jaz drive and CD-ROM drive were bumped upward to E and F. I used *DriveMapper* to make the



necessary adjustments. *MagicMover* can move an application from one partition to another.

## What's new in **PartitionMagic** 4.0?

Having been quite satisfied with **PartitionMagic** 3.0, I was pleased with the enhancements in this release. The biggest enhancement is support for very large hard drives. My system came with a 16.8GB hard drive with a single 16.8GB C partition. Previously, **PartitionMagic** could not handle drives greater than 8GB. This was an eagerly anticipated enhancement and it worked like a charm. Another enhancement is the Apply button. Some partitioning operations involve multiple steps. In previous releases each step had to be completed prior to going onto the next step. Now it is possible to plan your partition configuration prior to actually implementing any changes to your drive. You can resize, create, delete, make active, rename, hide, and copy partitions in a graphical interface until the hard drive is configured to meet your needs. To actually implement the changes, you hit the Apply button and the correct sequence of operations is performed. At first I did not think this a useful facility. I was wrong. It is really nice to be able to experiment and visualize the new configuration prior to committing any changes.

In previous releases you had to size and position extended and logical partitions separately. Now, when you manipulate a logical partition, the necessary changes in the extended partition are handled automatically.

This release also includes wizards for creating new partitions, redistributing free space and preparing for a new operating system. There is also a wizard that analyzes your system and makes recommendations for changes. Having worked with

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# SPINRITE 5

by H. Stanley Smith

**SpinRite**, developed and marketed by Gibson Research Corporation, has been one of my favorite disk maintenance and recovery tools since it appeared over ten years ago. As I previously reviewed **SpinRite** 4.01 in March 1998, the reader might want to refer to that earlier review for background information on disk maintenance and how **SpinRite** is frequently able to recover data that seems to be lost to normal operating systems and applications. (Visit the RPCUG Web site—<http://www.rpcug.org/newslett.htm>—to read my March 1998 review.) A brief summary here will aid the reader in understanding why **SpinRite** exists and why I have depended on it for many years.

Hard disk devices sometimes develop defects on their recording surfaces. As they age, they can develop tiny mechanical anomalies. These defects sometimes make it impossible to read the data that has been stored on them. That's when we see the infamous "Data Error Reading Drive C" or "Sector Not Found On Drive C" messages.

As a data recovery tool, **SpinRite** can frequently recover this seemingly lost data. Using its patented disk reading technology, **SpinRite** attempts to reconstruct the damaged data. If it is possible, it moves the recovered data to an undamaged area on the disk and marks the originally stored location as unusable. **SpinRite** can sometimes recover areas of a disk that had previously been marked as unusable, returning them to active use and safe for data storage. (It is important to note, however, that the disk drive needing remedial work must be spinning and recognized by the computer in which it is installed. **SpinRite** is not voodoo; it cannot function on a disk device that the computer doesn't recognize and initialize at boot time.)

As a preventative maintenance tool, **SpinRite** is able to perform complete and total low-level formatting of a hard disk without losing any of the data stored on the disk. This process involves rewriting all of the system areas and user data on the disk, refreshing the data and increasing the strength of the signal that represents the data stored on the disk. These operations effectively rejuvenate an aging hard disk and its components. They may also increase the effective speed of disk drive operations by eliminating the "soft" errors which occur when the operating system needs to initiate error recovery procedures in order to successfully read and write data to a hard disk.

I have regularly used prior versions of **SpinRite** in both its preventative maintenance and data recovery modes and have been able to successfully reconstitute "unrecoverable" data for many clients. (Since I regularly run **SpinRite** on my own disk drives, I have never had to recover "unreadable" data. I guess that speaks well for **SpinRite**'s preventative maintenance capabilities.)

Version 5 includes up-to-ten-times-faster operation and speed improvement; support for Windows 9x 32-bit FAT partitions; a new DOS/Windows hybridization in which program execution may be initiated from within Windows (3.x or 9x) rather than from a boot diskette. There are also new command line options, hardware-level support for all flavors of IDE/EIDE hard disks, support for SCSI hard disks, and support for disk devices that rely upon device drivers. This means that the newly popular Jaz, Zip, and LS-120 disk drives—among others—are now supported.

As with the previous version, the included spiral-bound manual is disappointing. It is simply a reprint of the manual that was prepared for version 3.1 with a sticker indicating Version 5.0 applied to the cover. Its company contact telephone number is doubly incorrect, as both the area code has been changed (from 714 to 949) and the company's telephone number and address has also been changed. A six-page **SpinRite 5.0** Owner's Guide Addendum has been included which provides updated information relevant to the new versions, with separate sections covering the version 4.0 and version 5.0 upgrades. But, even in this addendum, the telephone area code is incorrect. (The included README file does contain a correct telephone number.)

The combination of the professional manual and included insert does provide adequate information for even a casual user to install and utilize the program. More importantly, the fact that this documentation technique is successful with this product indicates that the overall structure and operational aspects of **SpinRite** haven't changed much since the award-winning and patent-winning version 3.1 was released. Versions 4.0 and 5.0 have added incremental improvements, but the global issues of disk drive recovery and maintenance operations and techniques haven't risen through any milestone technology breakthroughs. **SpinRite** remains a solidly written utility.

For detailed information on **SpinRite 5.0**, including lots of technical information on why hard disks fail, how **SpinRite** attempts to recover data no longer accessible on hard disk and diskette drives, and a history of the past versions of **SpinRite**, visit Gibson's Web site at <http://www.grc.com>. You will find a wealth of detailed technical knowhow. One of this unique Web site's capabilities is that after obtaining (by telephone) an authorization code, one may download the entire **SpinRite 5.0** package (a whopping 97K download—yes, that is kilobytes, not megabytes!) and begin to use its magic to attempt to recover some of your lost data.

**SpinRite 5** can be purchased for \$89, and users of versions 3.1 or higher may upgrade for \$39. ■

# PENCIL POWER

by Steve Gibson

Steve Gibson's *SpinRite* is reviewed on page 5. This article was first reprinted with Steve's permission in our February 1995 issue. It remains relevant to this day.

I've been thinking about ease of use, or rather the pervasive non-ease-of-use that plagues our machines today. The irreducible ease-of-use question that still remains unanswered is: How should a computer that is intended for personal use actually operate? This question directly relates to many of the problems we all experience with contemporary software.

Users are still expending far too much time and energy in non-productive "learning time" with new products. As individual applications evolve, growing in sophistication and capability, they become significantly harder to use, let alone master. And when a particular application doesn't do something, or operate in a way that the user needs, we are out of luck.

Yesterday, one of my employees wanted a simple calendar to help schedule and plan a project. She remembered seeing a blank calendar template that had been provided with PageMaker. Despite her familiarity with the Windows environment, being a power user of Excel and Ami, she was unable to figure out how to customize this PageMaker calendar. After she struggled with the experience for about twenty-five minutes, I chanced by. Looking up with frustration written all over her face she repeated that oh-so-familiar refrain that it's wrong to have to read a manual in order to use computer software. She felt that since all she wanted to do was to type into those little empty and beckoning calendar boxes, she should at least be able to do something simple like that, without first reading the whole book.

Walking by her desk later, I noticed that her struggles had ended and that the calendar was nearly complete—having been created entirely with a pencil, a ruler, and paper. She commented that at last she finally had a calendar she could work with, and that there was no doubt in her mind about how to change any of her entries. Her pencil had a big pink eraser.

In my role as "the boss," I found myself thinking about how wrong it was that, dripping with computer technology as my company is, one of my people was planning, organizing, and scheduling a project with a pencil and paper. I thought about how much more the "right" project management software package should be able to offer. So I quickly surveyed the vast collection of project management and project scheduling software that I've received, searching for something that would be both simple to use but useful. After looking through much of what the industry had to offer I had to admit that Susan's pencil-based solution was both elegant, simple, and effective.

Even the very existence of the term "power user" speaks of an industry with troublesome and burdensome solutions. I referred to this employee as being "a power user of Excel and Ami," but I would never think of calling her a power user of a pencil and paper! In this context, the term is laughable since we're all pencil and paper power users. This must arise from the fact that a pencil and paper support neither the depth of expression nor the complexities that harbor within a "powerful" power user package like Excel.

On the other hand, the application domain of a pencil is far broader than a package like Excel. It can produce columns of numbers, draw simple line drawings, complex diagrams, or beautiful art. To once behold a pencil is to understand it, to sense and intuit its use, and to get immediate useful work from it. A simple pencil can do so much. There isn't much to know about using it, so it's not a very deep application tool, but so much varied work can be done with it that its application range is extremely broad.

In a sense the "application profile" of a pencil and paper is broad rather than deep, whereas the application profile presented by most contemporary computer software is extremely deep while at the same time being quite narrow.

So it would seem that the great trick for the future, for opening the powerful benefits of computer technology to a much more mass audience, lies in creating a new generation of software tools that have many of the shallow and broad characteristics of our more venerable and widely applied tools. Ideally we need a computer industry that offers us neither the opportunity to become power users nor pencil pushers. ■

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## Info Select (continued from page 3)

While I am in the griping mode, let me state that I do not approve of **Info Select's** manner of documentation. Several versions ago, a complete manual shipped along with the floppy distribution diskettes. Now you get a folded poster containing only the first five chapters of the twenty-four included in the online documentation. While these five chapters contain sufficient information to get a new user started, they are printed in type too small for my old eyes to read comfortably. This is not news to Micro Logic. The first item on the paper documentation says: "If you require a larger type size please use the online (F1) help." In my opinion, online help is an abomination. It may

*(continued on page 7)*

## PartitionMagic

(continued from page 4)

**PartitionMagic** for years, I have not used the wizards extensively. While the wizards can make tasks easier for the uncertain user, they are not a substitute for understanding the changes you are about to make to your system.

If you are dissatisfied with the way your hard drive is laid out, **PartitionMagic** 4.0 is the tool you need. Its price is \$69.95 list, \$45 at discount. To use it, you will need Windows 3.x, 95, 98, NT or DOS (5.0 or higher), a 486DX, 16MB RAM (more for FAT32 or hard disks larger than 4GB), a CD-ROM drive, a 3.5 inch diskette drive and 12MB free hard drive space (8MB additional for BootMagic).

However, if you are squeamish about getting into the technical details of your computer then **PartitionMagic** may not be for you. To use it effectively you will need to understand primary, extended and logical partitions, how drive letters are assigned and how your system boots. The good news is that the supplied documentation clearly explains all of these concepts. ■

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## Info Select

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serve for occasional reference, but is little help in learning to use a program.

**Info Select** ships with lots of forms for those who like them: letters, fax covers, shipping labels, purchase orders, phone messages, etc. There are also calendars, ticklers and alarms—lots of bells and whistles. For me though, the essential value of **Info Select** is its ability to find whatever I want, in whatever form I may have written or saved it, immediately.

**Info Select** is not available in retail outlets. It must be ordered directly from Micro Logic (201-342-6518) or downloaded from <http://www.miclog.com>. If you purchase the packaged version, you will be surprised to discover that its CD and folded manual don't come in one of today's customary large, mostly empty boxes. They arrive in a cardboard sleeve marked Do Not Bend. I have no problem with this; it's a good idea, saving paper and shelf space. But I'd still like to have that printed users manual.

List price is \$99.95, steep in these days of coupons and rebates, but well worth it if you spend lots of time at your computer and want to be able to create lists, jot down thoughts and ideas, save information you discover on Web pages, and retrieve them painlessly and instantaneously. ■

## President

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leader Bill Hans at 639-1887, e-mail to [Billhans1@aol.com](mailto:Billhans1@aol.com) (note the number 1 in first part of Bill's e-dress).

## Announcement

Ordinarily, this part of my column would contain a computer tip or trick, but I just got some incredible news from one of our members, and with his permission, would like to share it with everyone. Member Mike Diederich from Stony Point wrote:

"At approximately 10:40 Saturday night on December 12, between Exits 13 and 11 on the Palisades Interstate Parkway, while traveling rapidly southward in the direction of Nyack Hospital, came forth the newest Diederich family member. It was, as my wife Brigitte and I can attest, quite an experience. It took approximately fifteen minutes from Brigitte telling me "I think I'm in labor now," to the front-seat arrival. No need for drugs, and not much "coaching" was required. We most definitely woke up the Emergency Room personnel. (It seems this is a rare experience in our small county.) I think that Brigitte's doctor was a little disappointed by having nothing to do but the postscript, so to speak. (No, I didn't give him a bill for my services.)

So we're still deciding on a name for the little blonde-haired, 8 lb., 10 oz. fellow—with suggestions like "PIP" (for the Parkway), Parker (same), Otto (sounds like "auto"), Rush... Perhaps you can think of more. However, we probably will settle on Sean Robert Diederich, so the poor kid will not be forever reminded of his "moving" entry into the world."

By the time you read this newsletter, I am sure that baby Diederich will have a permanent name, but I thought it was fitting to share something so new and wonderful for the New Year, even if not computer-related. Congratulations and best wishes to Mike and Brigitte!

I hope that all of you who care so much about the RPCUG will turn out to contribute your ideas at the January meeting. ■

### AND KEEP IN MIND

#### January

- 12 New Users SIG; 6:15–8:00 P.M.; Palisades Center
- 12 General Meeting; Tech Panel; 7:30 P.M.
- 19 Windows 95/8 SIG; Pearl River Library; 7–9 P.M.
- 28 Executive Board; West Nyack Library; 7:15 P.M.

**WANT TO JOIN THE GROUP? HERE'S HOW!**

Annual membership in the Rockland PC Users Group includes a subscription to ComputerConnection. Bring your completed application and a check payable to RPCUG to a meeting or mail your application and check to RPCUG at 169 South Main Street, Suite 384, New City, NY 10956-3358.

Name ↓ (please print all information)

Address

Day phone:

Evening phone:

Birthdate(s)

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- Corporate sponsorship ..... \$100
- Renewal                      Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

1-99

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

*TZ-Link*, a Rockland County full Internet Service Provider, offers a 10% discount to RPCUG members. There is a two-week trial period during which service can be cancelled without charge. For information and to obtain the discount phone 623-1720.

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