

Apple Barrel

The Journal of the Houston Area Apple Users Group

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October 1999

-42: Learn from the error of my ways

By George Sroka

Editor, Apple Barrel

Error -42: Too many files open.

I can't tell you how many times that error message popped up on my Mac. I *can* tell you how close I came (very) to ramming my fist through my monitor every time my computer would lock up or I couldn't save a document because "too many files open." I began to think of -42 as my own personal curse — a computer version of the Satanic "666" mentioned in the Bible.

Mac error codes are notoriously unhelpful in that they don't really *tell* you anything. Even utilities that list error code explanations offer very little in addition to the error code number. In my case, looking up -42 revealed the following: Too many files open. Oh, *really?*

Like me, you'd probably assume that closing a few files would eliminate the problem, right?. Nope, the error occurred when I had no applications or files open on my computer at all. Nada. Zip. *Nothing*. When I started to open my first file, the error popped up. Apparently one file was too many.

Next, I went to the Apple website in search of their explanation of -42. After several searches using different criteria, Apple's website offered the following helpful information: Too many files open. That was it.

The solution to "Error -42: Too many files open" depends on how you define "files."

The error disappeared if I "shift-started" my computer to turn off all extensions and control panels. But then, *most* software problems disappear if you turn off virtually everything except the System and Finder. However, it did confirm it was a software problem, not a hardware

problem. Sometimes a loose or damaged cable—internally or externally—wreaks havoc on a Mac in unexpected ways. Not this time, though.

With software the culprit, I ran my trusty copy of Conflict Catcher to track down the potential problem in the hodgepodge of system extensions and control panels that are a part of any Mac. Despite several hours of tedious comparisons of various startup

sets, the error persisted.

I created a minimal startup set using only those items I needed to complete my project. In other words, I turned off everything that was either fun or superfluous, stripping my Mac down to a very basic configuration.

The problem persisted.

I ran Apple's Disk Utility, Norton Utilities, Norton Anti-Virus, TechTool Pro and DiskWarrior. All these "we can fix anything" utilities analyzed and fixed minor errors and directory glitches.

The problem persisted.

Then I tried what I usually try once I calm down and the steam stops shooting out of my ears like a Warner Brothers cartoon character. I tried to retrace my steps, computer-wise, to track down when the problem started.

Continued on page 4

JavaScript SIG starts in October

The October HAAUG meeting will see the start of new JavaScript SIG conducted by Jonathan Magnus at 12:30 p.m. in the Atlantic Room. Come to the organizational meeting and help set the tone and direction.

JavaScript (formerly LiveScript) is a simple, cross-platform, worldwide web scripting language that enables many of the functions and "special effects" used on the web.

JavaScript originated from Netscape, and for a time only Netscape products supported it. Microsoft now supports it, but inconsistencies between the Netscape and Microsoft "flavors" of JavaScript sometimes cause problems.

Nonetheless, JavaScript is responsible for some of the coolest looking stuff on the web. Check out this new SIG to see what we mean.

Board Minutes 9/27/99

These are excerpts and unapproved.

In attendance were Jeff Davis, David Jaschke, David Scheuer, Joe Fournet, Elizabeth English, Lyda McGhee, Howard Fitter, Amy Denton, Mike Epstein, Patty Winkler, Rex Covington, Mike Lawshae, George Sroka, Bob Lacey, and Randy Herzstein.

Secretary Lyda McGhee's minutes were approved as written.

Programs Vice President: well, we don't have one, so Jeff Davis reported that MetaCreations did a great job in September; October will be Corel; Nov - PalmPilot stuff with a FileMaker Sync demo; Dec - Bob LeVitus.

Facilities Vice President Rex Covington reported that we had some minor problems that were taken care of at the meeting, for the most part. Everybody seemed to like the rented LCD thing for the Main Presentation.

Treasurer Elizabeth English reported net income of \$3,996.01 as of 9/24/99. We're still working on getting HAL-PC paid. The bill for the BBS lines is paid. Now we just have to figure the costs for the ISP users.

Membership Chairman David Jaschke reported on membership statistics. We have 15 ISP members now. Nobody has dropped and the service is growing, slowly but surely.

Apple Barrel Editor George Sroka reported that we got a bunch of submissions for the October issue. Some people are having problems printing the PDF version. He'll send a screen optimized PDF to the e-mail recipients of the Barrel, and also post a print-optimized version on HAAUG Heaven.

Apple Barrel Ad Manager Peter Gingiss was absent and no report was given.

SIG Coordinator David Scheuer reported that he has been unable to get in touch with Larry Mcloughlin and isn't sure about the

Internet SIG. Jonathan Magnus will be starting up a JavaScript SIG. Filemaker Pro SIG will check out the brand-new version 5.

Volunteer Manager Peter Gingiss was absent and no report was given.

Apple/Mac Librarian Mike Brouillette was absent and no report was given. There was some discussion and an approved motion for Mike to pick up a monitor, but after further discussion Jeff said he had a bunch of monitors that Mike could dissect to make a functional one.

Publicity Chairman Kimberly Reeves was absent and no report was given.

Boutique Chairman Amy Denton reported about \$147 earned in September and August. She did buy a new cart and will try to get to meetings earlier.

OLD BUSINESS

HAAUG Heaven: Randy Herzstein reported that while he was out of town, the system hung once and Jeff went over and fixed it. He's working on getting it back up to where it was before the trouble started. It's getting backed up.

The Audit Committee: We elected Randall Phillips as chairman for the 1998 audit. He accepted. The 1996 Audit Committee Report was never given and they still have the books.

ISP Committee Status Report: Chairman Stephen Cravey was absent and no report was given. Jeff has talked with Stephen and Jonathan Magnus. Jonathan is interested in helping, but needs the procedure to change passwords and to know when renewals are due. Jeff also reported that system access speed is faster now.

The promotional postcard should get printed real soon for initial distribution at CompUSA and a future mailing.

HAAUG Hotline is functional again, thanks to Jeff, Rex, and Mark Jacob.

New machine purchases for SIGs are still in the works. Jeff says we should be patient because Apple is in the process of closing the quarter and real soon now we'll be able to make a deal with them of some sort, maybe.

The purchase of the new tape drive was delayed because, for another \$700 or so, Jeff thinks we could get a new G3 or G4 with an extra drive to use as a mirror backup. He and Randy are going to work up a cost analysis with an estimate of what we could get for some of the old equipment to defray costs.

NEW BUSINESS

Funds for the April 2000 meeting site were approved.

We had an offer from Lou Ann Coy at HAL-PC to do the paperwork to get us tax exempt status for \$1,000. Betty gets to figure out if it's worth it.

We need to update HAAUG's web page. A committee was formed to get it moving. Bob Lacey will head it. Rex, Jeff, and Patty have agreed to work on it. Jeff is going to e-mail other members who have expressed an interest in working on it and get them to join. His idea is to have one person in charge of the various sections, SIGs, Main Presentation, etc.

Jeff contacted a bunch of people about creating a new member CD to replace the old floppies. Jeff, Rex, and David Scheuer have volunteered to "burn" some. I expect they could use some help. Jeff will create it, pass it out and we should have them for the October meeting.

Library suggestion - put a phone line in there for one-on-one tutorials. Rex will investigate the cost. This would get more use out of the room and be in addition to the Library.

Apple Barrel is a monthly publication of the Houston Area Apple Users' Group, P.O. Box 570957, Houston, Texas, 77257-0957.

Apple Barrel's editors have a policy to protect the creative rights of authors. The Editors acknowledge that authors' works are copyrighted and intend to honor those copyrights by: 1) this statement of policy, 2) providing, when considered significant, copies of edited text to the author for review prior to publication, 3) seeking permission to reprint previously published pieces from the author whenever possible, and 4) printing acknowledgment of reprints used at all times.

If you are interested in joining HAAUG, please call the HAAUG Hotline at (713) 522-2179, or sign up via HAAUG Heaven, HAAUG's BBS, at (713) 993-3312, or at

our website, www.haaug.org. Annual membership is \$45 for new members, \$40 for students, \$40 for renewing members, and \$60 in US funds for foreign membership. The Hotline is also the Mentor line if you need help.

Guests are welcome to attend one or two meetings to get acquainted with HAAUG, but participation in certain presentations and activities may be limited.

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HAAUG wishes to thank HAL-PC for providing HAAUG with Internet service.

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Apple Barrel Publishing

The Apple Barrel was produced by a committee including Elizabeth English, Jerry Jones, Manley Mandel and Bob McGuinness, led by George Sroka on various Macs running PageMaker, among other things. April Enos designed the logo in the masthead.

Mac and Apple SIGs Wanted

Volunteers who have ideas for SIGs to run, please contact David Scheuer at (713) 464-1228 or send e-mail to david_scheuer@haaug.org.

Articles Needed - All Flavors

Send any articles to Apple Barrel Drop or to apple_barrel_drop@haaug.org.

USB storage options starting to hit the market

CD RW and Travan backup drives offer ease of use and low prices with only a few snags

By Philip Booth

USB mass storage and backup solutions are beginning to hit the market. Imation and Iomega brought out USB products just after the introduction of the iMac and Blue-and-White G3. Now there are external hard drives, CD RW drives, and a Travan tape drive, which was introduced in August.

When backing up my B/W G3 to Zip disks became tedious and time-consuming, my first thought was to buy the QPS Que! CD RW drive and backup to CDRs. However, after purchasing the unit I found that Retrospect would not recognize the drive. Rumor has it that Dantz may release a Retrospect driver for the drive; it supports a similar unit from Sony.

The QPS Que! Drive writes data at 4x to CDR disks and 2x to CDRW disks. It will also write audio tracks at 2x. The unit will read data at 8x. The 4x will only work if the unit is connected directly to either the iMac or B/W G3; 2x is as fast as it will write when connected through a USB hub.

The drive is color coordinated with the original iMac or a B/W G3, and comes packed in a very nice carrying case with "line lump" style power supply and a USB cable. It is also bundled with Adaptec's Toast (Ver. 3.8) software for burning CDs.

As with all USB peripherals, installation is easy—plug in the power supply and USB cables and load the drivers. I can't say I was successful right out of the box, but the problem was operator failure and not the drive. After reading the drive manual and the Adaptec manual I was successful after making only two CD "coasters."

After reading the drives manual, I found the part about the speed limita-

tion when going through a USB hub. The manual also states that the driver will not play music CDs, even though it has a mini headphone jack on the front and RCA phono jacks on the rear that would feed a stereo. A new driver is still not available.

Likes: Design: It coordinates with my computer, and the carrying case is very nice.

USB, while not as fast as SCSI, is what I have without buying a PCI SCSI card.

Power supply: This is a "line lump" and not a "wall wart," so it will not cover power jacks on your plug bar. The case has pockets to keep the cords under control when traveling.

Below \$300.00. Enough said!

Dislikes: Will not play music CDs. I hope the driver will come soon.

Will not write at 4x if connected through a USB Hub. This can cause a real problem if you have other USB equipment and a USB keyboard, which must be connected directly to the computer if you want to use the keyboard power on button.

Adaptec Toast locks up the computer when there is an error.

I think the likes and the dislikes balance out. The one major feature is the price. Other USB CDRW units cost more than \$300.

The original reason for my purchase of the QPS Que! Drive was a bust, but Aiwa recently released a Travan backup tape drive (TD-U8000 that uses the TR 4 cartridges (4-Gigabyte) for backing up. The unit comes with Retrospect 4.1 with a USB driver for the unit. It does one thing, backing up data, and it does it very well. The Aiwa drive theoretically can write eight Gigabytes of data to a TR 4 cartridge depending on a software

data compression ratio of 2:1.

The version of Retrospect supplied was customized to take advantage of the TD-U8000. But other than driving the tape drive, it is the latest version of the popular backup utility. The installation CD is bootable and has Apple Disk First Aid, and HD Setup and an unpacked version of Retrospect. This will allow you to recover from a major hard disk failure.

If you've used Retrospect, you know that making backups is an easy process. The program is fully scriptable, so you could make backups automatically.

My first full backup took about an hour and a half. The drive wrote data at about 20 Megabytes per minute. The time also included the verification step.

I can compare this unit to an AST unit that I have at my office. The Aiwa unit is noisier because it has a cooling fan, which the AST unit did not. The AST unit is a SCSI device, so the writing speed was in the 45-50 Megabytes per minute. The Aiwa unit costs approximately \$250, and the AST drive was over \$500.

Likes: About \$35 per cartridge for four Gigabytes. I doubt that I will need many cartridges.

The unit has an attached 110-power cord, no line lumps/wall warts. Worked first time out of the box.

Dislikes: The unit is noisy, I doubt that you could sleep while it was running if it was in your bedroom.

No driver available to allow the drive to mount on the desktop to be used as a normal storage volume.

If you want to add specialty storage to your USB-equipped computer, these two products should be given some consideration. Both worked well.

Keep bringing those flea market items to meetings



GOODIES HAAUG members check out the selection of flea market software and hardware during the September meeting.

HAAUG members can donate—and buy—used software and hardware by bringing it to the monthly meetings. Here's how it works:

Incoming donations

- Items are non-deductible donations to the club and all proceeds go to the general treasury.
- Make them very inexpensive or they won't sell. Old floppies and obsolete software don't seem to sell at all.
- If it's sizeable or valuable, the best route is usually the silent auction.

Items for sale

- Silent auction items: the winner is the high bid at 12:30 PM when the 12:30 PM SIGs start. The item should be picked up then or as soon as practical after 12:30.
- Priced items unsold are up for grabs at 12:30. If you see something you can use and it's not worth the price marked, take it and donate whatever you feel appropriate to the club, even if it's a quarter.
- Stuff still undisposed of at the close of the 1:45 PM SIGs is usually trashed. No one wants to carry it home again and back next time.

Error -42

Continued from page 1

If I don't have a computer problem one day and I do the next, something is different. And it's usually something I've done to the computer, like install new software.

So I started to think (about time, I'd say). My project involved graphics files from dozens of different sources, all of which came with associated fonts. I'd activated the fonts using Suitcase, a handy font handling utility finally available in a System 8x-compatible version. I didn't see how fonts could be the source of the error, though, because I keep a lean set of permanent fonts and I hadn't activated that many fonts in addition to my standard set.

Then I had the "aha."

When I installed Suitcase 8 a few weeks prior to the big project, I ran a utility now included with it called "Font Agent." This utility is supposed to solve all font woes, resolve font ID conflicts, reorganize your font suitcases, polish your silverware, etc. So I ran it and let it do its "thing" using the default settings and never giving much thought to what it actually did.

Apparently, one of the ways Font Agent solves font problems is by breaking down all font families into their smallest component parts. Whereas before I had one font suitcase containing all the various Helveticas, now I had several containing the different flavors of Helvetica (narrow, condensed, compressed, Helvetica Neu). Multiply that by a few font families. Instead of a few font suitcases, I now had *dozens and dozens of small font suitcases*, all active at the same time.

I hadn't just added a few font cases to the few I thought I had open. I'd added a few to the more than 100 font cases Font Agent automatically created for me *to solve my font problems*. (Obviously, I would not recommend using the default settings in Font Agent.)

Time for "aha" number two.

The Mac sees everything that opens upon startup, including extensions, control panels *and fonts*, as files, and there is a limit: 346. That number comes from information provided by "Black & Bleu," a software package that analyzes Macintosh error codes. You can download it from

<http://www.bleurose.com/>. Black & Bleu confirmed what I had started to suspect. Fonts were at the heart of a problem I thought I had solved ages ago by collecting my standard fonts into a few suitcases. Font Agent undid my handiwork. Adding fonts for the big project pushed me over the open file limit into Error -42 hell.

The solution: turning off every single font I didn't absolutely need and combining the rest into a few font suitcases. The trick is that you can have many fonts in a suitcase, but the Mac sees the case as a *single file*. If you don't have a font handling utility like Suitcase or MasterJuggler, you can easily create empty font suitcases with "Fast Case," shareware available at <http://www.macdownload.com>.

So if the dreaded "-42: too many files open" message pops up on your computer, remember: the Mac sees everything that opens on startup as a file, but it sees a font suitcase with many fonts inside it as a single file. Combine your fonts into fewer suitcases to avoid "font bloat" and -42. Learn from my pain. I've suffered enough for both of us.



MAC FUNDAMENTALS *HAAUG* members learn more about the Macintosh during Mac Fundamentals, a one-hour special interest group meeting held each month at 10:00 a.m. in the Atlantic Room. *HAAUG* member Jonathan Magnus is the shown at the chalkboard. A complete list of SIGs is featured on page 7, including a new one on JavaScript starting at the October meeting.



TUTORIALS *HAAUG* member Mike Epstein (above) helps a new member during a one-on-one iMac tutorial in the Mac Library. At left, John Ladle of MetaCreations describes his product's features during a well-received Main Presentation at the September meeting.

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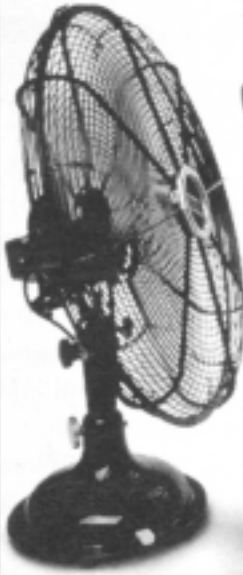
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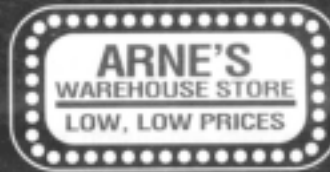
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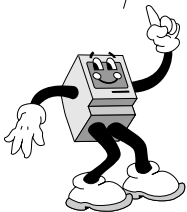
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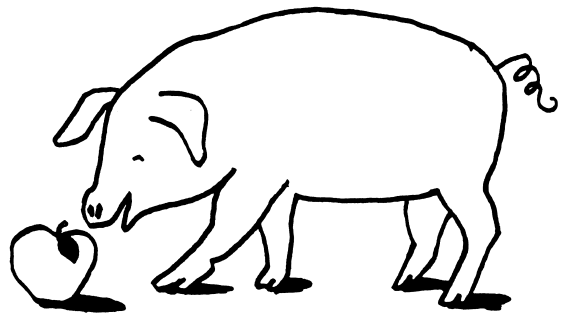
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SIGs...

Special Interest Groups

Schedule for Saturday, October 16, 1999 • University of Houston Underground
as of 9/26/99 • Check the Schedules at the meeting for latest updates

HAAUG Special Interest Groups are a great way to get the most from your computer and your membership. SIG meetings last about an hour. Plan to attend this month. Check at the entrance for the room assignments and updates of your selections.

Libraries 10 AM - 2 PM

CARIBBEAN ROOM

HAAUG's Public Domain Libraries offer a wealth of software resources. Mac/Apple II librarian is Mike Broulliette. Zip disk collections, \$15 each including the cartridge. Prepaid orders are taken for delivery at the next meeting. Blank 100 Meg Zip cartridges will be available at the HAAUG library for the bargain price of \$13.50, tax included. One pack of 5 new Mac formatted blank 120 Meg Imation Superdisk cartridges will be available at the HAAUG library for the bargain price of \$40, tax included.

9:00 AM

MAC 101

KEN MARTINEZ – ATLANTIC ROOM

Prerequisite, owning a Mac or Mac clone: This one-hour SIG is for beginners or those with basic Macintosh questions. Join us with your questions and/or conversation. This SIG is general although hardware oriented, Mac Fundamentals leans more toward system software.

SPREADSHEETS

JOE MUSCARA – PACIFIC ROOM

A discussion group in which participants are invited to bring in problem spreadsheets—or upload them to Joe on HAAUG Heaven in advance so he can review the problem. Also, along with the problems, participants hopefully will bring solutions to problems that they have solved.

10:00 AM

APPLE II Q&A & SUPPORT

With the Apple II library

APPLEWORKS/CLARISWORKS

JOHN REEVES – PACIFIC ROOM

For beginning and intermediate users. This is a 5 part SIG which demonstrates the use of the word, spreadsheet, and database modules of CW, and secondarily, draw and paint. Startup, use for

correspondence, adding tables and spreadsheets, printing, mailing, are main topics. We demonstrate the integration of the Mac OS 8.51 with CW and resources for getting the most from CW and your Mac. Related internet, troubleshooting and utilities for ease of use are covered as time allows. Please check out the CW/MS Office Folder for templates. In October, we will look at the changes from the AppleWorks v. 5.03 updater which allows internet features to work, and include some tips to speed up the browser (Netscape 4.x) and some useful sites. (We know this is a stretch for CW, but we need some new material ;-)

MAC FUNDAMENTALS

JONATHAN MAGNUS – ATLANTIC ROOM

A beginner's SIG that will answer beginner's questions. This month we'll discuss backing up your hard disk or just your key data. Also, we'll cover the ubiquitous UPS - the Un-interruptible Power Supply.

10:20 AM

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

JEFF DAVIS (CLUB PRESIDENT) – CASPIAN ROOM
Getting the most from your membership. How HAAUG works to serve you. Meet the Mentors.

11:15 AM

MAIN PRESENTATION

– MEDITERRANEAN ROOM

Corel Graphics Account Manager Wesley Pack will demonstrate CorelDraw and Corel Photo-Paint. Tickets for drawings for giveaways, if any, will be given out at the beginning of the main presentation, one to a membership. The actual drawings will be held during the business meeting. You must be present to win.

12:15 PM

BUSINESS MEETING

JEFF DAVIS (CLUB PRESIDENT)

– MEDITERRANEAN ROOM

The business meeting will be conducted on time even if it means interrupting an unfinished main presentation in order to let SIG leaders and other attendees make it to 12:30 SIGs on time. If the main presentation has more to offer it will resume after the business meeting. Drawings if any will be held at the end of the business meeting.

12:30 PM

FILEMAKER PRO

REX COVINGTON – MEDITERRANEAN ROOM

Demo of FileMaker Pro 5 and designing fields in FileMaker (which depends on how long the demo of version 5 takes)

GAMES

ROBERT LEWIS – CASPIAN ROOM

Always something new and interesting. October we'll feature Sci-Fi Pinball and Vengeance.

JAVASCRIPT

JONATHAN MAGNUS – ATLANTIC ROOM

Formation meeting, come and help set the pace.

QUICKEN

CLAIR JASCHKE – PACIFIC ROOM

Come see why this easy-to-use program is the most popular home and small business accounting system going. Exploring Quicken, always something new to learn.

1:45 PM

INTERNET

LARRY McLOUGHLIN – PACIFIC ROOM

The happening spot. Get started on the Internet.

MOBILE COMPUTING

JOE KUDRNA – ATLANTIC ROOM

Powerbooks, notebooks, iBooks, Palm Pilots, and more. All here! Bring your laptop, or Palm Pilot, we'll have a few extra connection cables on hand.

SIG NEWTON – VENDING MACHINE ROOM

Responsive to all levels. Come and join us at our round table with coffee.

USELESS BUT NEAT

ANDREW McCLURE – CASPIAN ROOM.

Fun stuff for the Mac. This month we'll do more on customizing the interface, the advantages and disadvantages of Kaleidoscope and Mac's built-in appearance manager themes. After that we'll boot into Linux and see how they handle it there.

Meeting Dates

1999 HAAUG Meeting Dates

General Meetings Board Meetings

Oct. 16

Oct. 25

More 1999 Dates

Nov 20

Nov 29

Dec 11 (2nd Sat)

Dec 27

All dates are subject to change due to late conflicts. Please make it a habit to call the HAAUG Hotline at (713) 522-2179, or log onto HAAUG Heaven for late-breaking announcements.

All meetings are scheduled to be held at the University of Houston, until further notice.

The next meeting of the HAAUG Board of Directors will be Monday, Oct. 25 at 6:30 PM in the offices of Fiserv, Inc., 5718 Westheimer, Suite 200. The Board generally meets on the last Monday of each month, holiday conflicts excepted.

M A I N P R E S E N T A T I O N

SATURDAY, OCT. 16, 1999

CorelDraw and Corel Photo-Paint

Wesley Pack, Corel Graphics Account Manager for this region, will demonstrate CorelDraw 8 and Corel Photo-Paint 8. Come see this now completely Mac-friendly graphics suite in action.

UPCOMING

**Nov. PalmPilot w/
FileMaker Sync demo**
Dec. Bob LeVitus (tentative)

Apple Barrel Deadlines

The Editorial Staff of the Apple Barrel thanks you for your support!

Post your articles (SimpleText format preferred) to the Apple Barrel Drop folder on HAAUG Heaven or to gsroka@aol.com on the Net. The dates by which we need copy are indicated below. We'll update them as needed. Deadlines around the holidays could change.

(Editor's note: We prefer SimpleText or RTF (Rich Text Format), but will take just about anything.)

Copy Needed by For Issue Dated

Oct 24th

November 1999

Nov 28th

December 1999

Dec 26th

January 2000

Share your tips and tricks with fellow Mac users by writing an article. Review your favorite piece of software or game. Let the rest of us know what you think.

CorelDraw and Corel Photo-Paint

NEXT MEETING: OCT. 16 • MAIN PRESENTATION:

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