Our "ASK RICK" Feature

QUESTIONS FROM OUR READERS
ANSWERED BY RICK SWENTON

[Editor's note: The two letters below from William H. Haesen (WASUSS) were hand-written and VERY hard to decipher. I've retained as much as possible of the original's form, spelling and punctuation.]

Dear Rick,

Over the years I've read several of your interesting articles on ZCPR2 and now the new Z-System. I saw your latest article on Z-System in the SEBHC JOURNAL, Volume [III], number 9, April 1989. I received it as an Introductory Copy, and plan on subscribing if further Z-System information is included in future issues and If I can get a couple of my problems solved that I have with the Z-System that I bought from Peter Shkabara, formerly ANAPRO (no longer in Business).

Peter has told me that the problem I have is probably in the Z-System BDOS. He cannot help me since he does not have any access to the Source Code for that. Joe Wright does. I've presented him also with my problems, send him a disk with my two problems on it, wrote him twice, called him three times long distance and only have after three months his promise, he will look into it. Personally as he told me about 10 days ago on the phone I have a feeling that I'm waiting for some time. That's why I'm writing to you in the hope that you might know or have heard of some one who has had the same problem.

OK, now for the problem. I have an H89A Heath Zenith Computer 2 soft sector drives and one Hard sector. The operating system is ZDOS version 1.2 by Peter Shkabara which includes EmuLate and 2-4 MHz mods 2H 11 etc. All my CP/M programs work fine with this BIOS + BDOS except two (2), namely Power.Com and Write Hand Man. Power.Com PPS is by Pavel Breder, Write Hand Man by Lee Hart. The Power.Com Program will come up and all the Commands not calling for a directory menu work, but those that use the Directory Menu, such as DIR, TyPE, CoPy etc., do not since the numbered menu does not come up properly and consequently one can go no further.

What I cannot understand is. I have a shortened Copy of Power.Com, called CPM Power.Com which is an earlier version of Power.Com and it will work properly, but does not have all the functions that Power.Com has. WH.Man of which I have two, WHMT.Com and WH.com Version 2.11 PPS, when called to come ON, gives this as an answer, "Can not install WHMT on a system that is neither CPM 2.2 nor ZDOS. Call PPS ". Both Power.Com and WHMT.Com run fine under CPM2.204 Heath Zenith and a ZCPR3 version by Richard Allen out of Sextant which I used with the CPM 2.2 version.

I don't have any idea what causes my problems. Someone told me that it has something to do with variables. Makes no sense to me.

I hope I've given you enough information to analyze these problems if not my number is 512-674-8270. If you find time to write me that's fine, you can then possibly give me your number yest in case.

WILLIAM H. HAESSEN

Rick's Answer:

Dear William,

I had to do some research on this one. I am familiar with the POWER.COM Program and I still have copies of version 2.55 and version 3.07.

I remember years ago when I first began using ZCPR2 that the newer version of POWER 3.07 did not work properly and exhibited symptoms similar to those described in your letter. Version 2.55 still worked fine. My feeling then was that ZCPR2 and its powerful utilities were so much better than the features of POWER that I didn't feel compelled to fix the problem. Everything else worked just fine.

Your letter prompted me to re-visit the POWER problem and I was surprised to find that both versions of POWER worked fine under NZ-COM and ZSDOS. I wondered if the problem would show up under ZRDOS, so I loaded the ZRDOS module. I found that POWER, ver 3.07 was acting up with ZRDOS. It wasn't as bad as I'd recollected, but I couldn't get POWER to give a DIR on the default disc, which I knew had files on it!

First, a re-hash of architecture: The standard CP/M system has three parts, CCP=Console Command Processor, BDOS=the Basic Disc Operating System, and BIOS=Basic Input/Output System. The CCP and BDOS were written by Digital Research, and the BIOS was written by Heath.

ZCPR3 (one of several different versions) only replaces the CCP. BDOS replacements can be ZDOS, ZSDOS, ZDOS, or public-domain versions such as P2DOS, NOVADOS, and others.

Peter Shkabara's Z-System consists of ZCPR3 and ZRDOS and is specifically customized for Heath computers. NZ-COM also consists of ZCPR3 and ZRDOS (possibly later versions of both) but is more universal in that it can be installed on nearly all computers running CP/M 2.2. I bought ZSDOS for my own system--ZSDOS is a BDOS replacement. Since I run NZ-COM, ZSDOS replaced ZRDOS as the BDOS module.

So now you can see that there are many variables which may (and can) cause problems to come and go, depending upon which specific operating system modules are in place.
"ASK RICK"

POWER and Write Hand Man are among a special kind of CP/M program called a Resident System Extension (RSX). They load as high as possible in memory and remain resident until commanded to terminate. RSX programs are also special in that part of their loading process involves hot-patching the operating system while it's running. They "intercept" the normal paths of certain functions. For example, they could intercept keyboard characters to examine data flow and test for certain commands that they wish themselves to respond to. During program loading, the hot-patching process assumes some things about the currently running operating system.

I don't mean to imply that I KNOW how POWER and Write Hand Man work, but sometimes programmers take advantage of undocumented or unsupported operating system features, or they make some assumptions about the operating system which may not be true on all systems. Sometimes they even poke into the CCP, BDOS or BIOS modules! This poking is not common practice (thank God) but you can imagine the disaster potential this has. For example the programmer might poke something into the BDOS when actually it has been replaced by ZRDOS! Most times problems happen when the programmer figures out a way to calculate where certain things are in memory, and something about the system is different than what he thought. Then, some things get sent into memory areas where they don't belong!

Not to excusively single out RSX software, but it's possible that BDOS replacementss may also be to blame. There is no guarantee that ZRDOS's author, Dennis Wright--no relation to NZ-COM author Joe Wright--conformed to EVERY design parameter to ensure that ZRDOS was 100% compatible with the original BDOS. In fact, most BDOS replacementss are NOT fully BDOS compatible, since bugs have been fixed in the original BDOS! The fixed BDOS's work as described in the manual, but even BDOS doesn't follow its' own manual. This could be one reason why POWER works under ZRDOS but not under ZRDOS. It could possibly work under the old BDOS but I don't have an easy way of testing that.

Richard Allen's Manual Install ZCPR3 system (REMark, November, 1985) would not have ZRDOS installed. This could be the reason that POWER works for you under that system. It's possible that your POWER problem could be solved by using a BDOS other than ZRDOS. You could buy ZDOS, but I don't think that is worth the bother, especially since it may not fix the Write Hand Man problem. Lee Hart may have some ideas on that one.

So, William, what I'm really trying to say is that I have a general idea about what's happening, and I also have an idea about just how much time and energy can be spent just to get POWER running. Frankly, I don't think it's worth it. You might experiment with different BDOS modules, but under Peter's Z-System, it's not that easy to get the old BDOS back instead of ZRDOS. You might try asking Lee Hart for some insight on the WHM problem.

Sorry, but I don't have a simple answer for your complex problem!

RICK

More from William...

Dear William...

Let me start by giving you a Big Thanks for your quick response to my letters and Problem. Which, by the way, only raises its' ugly head when ZRDOS Replaces the CP/M original BDOS. Power.Com and WHM or WHM.COM work just fine with the Original CP/M BDOS and as I said before with my 2.2.04 CP/M Version and Richard Allen's ZCPR3 ADDED.

Peter Shkabara has told me that the ZCPR3 he used with his Z-System is the same ZCPR3 but written in Z-80 Assembly language instead of 8080. Compiling this with the excellent explanation of possible Culprits, I have to say that my Problem is created by the ZRDOS Version used by Peter Shkabara written by Dennis Wright of Echelon. Peter also told me that Joe Wright has bought Echelon rights for his Alpha Systems Co.

If, as I think, that ZSOOS is a later version of ZRDOS which as you told me will Run Power.Com. Then I don't see too much of a problem for someone, like Joe Wright, who wrote ZDOS as well as part of ZRDOS , to solve my problem with Power.Com. I am still waiting for an answer from Joe Wright after his last, Promise Two weekends ago, to look at my problem on the Disk I have send him with my Z-System Bios and Power.Com CPM Power.com and both versions of WHM.MAN.

Most of what I've said sofar, you all ready know, and is not the Reason I'm writing. I just wanted to let you know, how much I appreciated your quick Response, and it gave me renewed hope that there are still Honest knowledable People around with Highly Ethical Standards and Character.

Bless you Rick Will Call you by Phone some time, hopefully with good news.

WILLIAM H HAENSEN

Rick's Answer this time:

Dear William,

Just to clarify a few things: ZRDOS--as you know--was written by Dennis Wright. Dennis, to my knowledge, was never an employee of Echelon. He merely used Echelon as an agent to market his product. When Echelon closed, they sold the
marketing rights to Joe Wright (no relation to Dennis) and his new company, Alpha Systems Corp. Alpha Systems consists of one full-time person (Joe) and one other person with an unrelated full-time job. Therefore I wouldn't expect you'd get a quick reply from Joe. And I think Joe has many other irons in the fire--most of them bringing bread and butter to his table.

Repeating my earlier comment about POWER: It's possible that the problem is not with ZDOOS but rather that the POWER program may use some undocumented or unsupported BDOS feature which isn't supported by ZDOOS. There are a few things in the BDOS which do not work according to Digital Research's own CP/M manual. It is likely that ZDOOS works according to the manual more so than the BDOS does.

ZDOOS is not an upgrade for ZDOOS. It is a major work unto itself. It was written jointly by three prominent 280 and CP/M experts and combines the very best features from a wide variety of BDOS replacements, including ZDOOS.

ZDOOS supports file time and date stamping and many other features. Being an independent work it can be installed in a variety of system configurations. For example, it can be installed in a plain CP/M system which will still appear to be a plain CP/M system except for the new enhancements. "The Computer Journal" has been running a very comprehensive series on ZDOOS. I'm anticipating more on these topics from other readers. And thanks for the kind words of appreciation!

RICK

[Thanks, Rick, for sending copies of this interesting and informative correspondance to the JOURNAL! We hope that Mr. Haensen's Problem has been or will soon be resolved. And we encourage all JOURNAL readers who have been having problems with ZDOOS, ZCPR(x), or Z-System to write to "Ask Rick", Rick Swenton, 106 Melinda Lane, Bristol, CT 06010-7176, or write to the "ASK RICK" column, c/o SEBHC JOURNAL, 895 Starwick Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105. -- ed]

[Editor's comment: Our faithful main computer Heather (H89A, D-6 Electronics Super89 CPU card installed,) has been running Livingston Logic's BIOS-80 modification without any problems since 1985. The LL package included ZCPR-3 After installing ZCPR-3 we found that it made life a whole lot easier! For example, our SUBMIT file copies several vital software utilities and programs onto the RAM disc. We work from there, rather than the s-l-o-w regular disc drives. RAM disc access is virtually instantaneous so we speeded up program loading, eliminating several seconds-worth of disc accesses. Whenever we want to access any utility not on RAM disc, ZCPR-3's built-in "path" function quickly locates the called file on one of the regular discs and loads it into memory. When you spend at least six hours every day at the keyboard, entering text, having ZCPR-3's many really-neat features working for you means that life is considerably less tedious--and lots more fun!]

Zenith 290-80 computer w/237 external drive cabinet. I'm advised that although obsolete, it has collector's value. Any reasonable offer above $120 is acceptable. Contact: David H. Gill, 164 Forest Ave, Pacific Grove, CA 93950; phone 408-375-3768. Note: Shipping is the buyer's responsibility.

Hard-sector discs, one-only lot of 100 used but still useful. $25.95 buys all, shipping included. No C.O.D.; make cheque payable to L. Geisler, mail it to The SEBHC JOURNAL, 895 Starwick Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

NEWS FLASH: HEATH COMPANY BOUGHT BY GROUPE BULL, LTD!

Special to the SEBHC JOURNAL: Early in October, 1989, Heath Company, Zenith Data Systems, and Veritechology was purchased by a French investment conglomerate for about $600-million! As of this reporting, we understand that the new owners do not intend to change Heath's operation in any way, but will exercise a hands-off attitude for several months until they become thoroughly familiar with the world of Zenith Data Systems and Heath Company. We have no idea as to what shall become of the former HEC stores.

We understand that the parent Zenith Corporation was the target of Brookhurst Partners (a corporate raider formerly headed by Ivan Boesky, the original Mt Nasty of the takeover clan). Brookhurst tried to buy enough Zenith stock to get a controlling interest, but failed. Nevertheless, Brookhurst is Zenith's largest stock holder with a seat on the board of directors. These guys spent hundreds of millions of "green stamps" in their takeover attempt and then found that Zenith was about $500-million in the hole.

We're guessing that Brookhurst's corporate raider-types probably told Zenith that they must unload some operations in order to reduce their debt load. The only profitable (hence saleable) divisions Zenith then had were the three which Groupe Bull bought. Zenith, after selling those has paid off their bills, still has about $100-million left, but most of the remaining divisions are money losers.

Here's something else worth noting: Zenith retains exclusive ownership of the distinctive lightning-bolt trademark. Maybe it's saleable for MEGAbucks to some "offshore" firm! (Remember Motorola's QUASAR tv deal?) Stay tuned...
DEAR SIR:

I'd like to add a few thoughts in light of the demise of BUSS and Sextant. Our newsletter is even more valuable now than it was before. Please keep us readers WELL informed of financial crunches you may experience. I, for one, will be willing to pay more to ensure the JOURNAL's continued presence for a long time. So, if price increases are necessary, so be it. After all, I now have the money I won't [need to] pay for BUSS or Sextant...

DAVID HULTGREN

[Well said, Dave! Thanks for your kind thoughts. Much as we regret seeing BUSS and Sextant "swallow the bitter pill", their loss shall probably be the SEBHC JOURNAL's gain. We've been randomly checking Charlie Flotto's phone--it rings, but there's no answer. We'd like very much to explore the possibility of renting BUSS/SEXTANT's mailing list for a one-shot SEBHC JOURNAL promotional blast directed at Charlie's former subscribers, that is, if the price isn't "outa sight"! -- ed]

Dear Lenny,

I was reading Volume IV #1 today (I arrived back in Hawaii on 16-Oct-89 and found it waiting for me), got to the catalog page and found information on subscription renewal and how to read the [subscription expiration] date. So I turned to the back page and found "[118.19.89]". WOW! I'm due! So here's my cheque for another two year's subscription and a copy of Wordstar Keypatch.

I have some more problems I want to write about, but I'm still working on their solutions...then an article for you.

Aloha...

CORKY KIRK/M60RS, 270 Kapualani Street, Hilo, MI 96720; 808-959-3888

[Hey, Corky! Your disc will obviously arrive long before you see this edition. Please let us know how it works for you as we haven't sold very many copies to date. (Could WordStar be too expensive?!) And we'd like your input on possibly opening a Pacific branch of the Society of Heath Eight Bit Computerists. I'm sure that there are a Whole Bunch of Folks out there in "hula-land" and environs who are not getting the word about how good their H/Z 8-bit machines still are. Get in touch, y'all hear?! -- ed]

Dear Lenny,

I recall reading in the JOURNAL about need for MYCHESS documentation. Here's a spare copy of the instruction manual for the version I have [CP/M MYCHESS, Model SF-9110]. I also sent a copy to Dick Butler.

MARK BUCKINGHAM, 981 Bell Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666

[Right on, Mark! Your "donation" arrived the very day on which we picked up a factory-sealed copy of MYCHESS from an H.E.C. which was dropping their H/Z 8-bit line of software (see the catalogue pages, this issue). Your generosity is typical of all loyal H/Z 8-bit users, and we thank you! Just a thought: your subscription has expired... -- ed]

Dear Lenny,

Just realise it's been over four months since I last wrote you... I guess I must be having fun on the ship! Please note that my Virginia Beach address is still good. My subscription is up this month, but I'll have to send money after the 30th since I'm totally broke....

I've spent a good deal of time going through all JOURNAL back-issues, making up a table of contents for the first three volumes. Your cumulative indexes are great, but I wanted something a little more detailed. The subject matter of most reader's letters are listed--in fact the only ones I left out were those that basically said, "Here's my money for a subscription/ renewal". I'm including a copy of my Table of Contents on this disc in case you want to make it available to other subscribers. [Ya betch! -- ed]

I took my first two volumes down to the local copy shop and had them bound with their respective Tables of Contents--they look good on my handy reference shelf. Unfortunately, while I was doing this project, I found that my Volume III, Issue 2 was missing everything after page 8. Would it be possible for you to send me pages 9 to end? Then I can get my Volume III bound as well. [Done! -- ed]

I recently acquired a Z120 at no cost. [That's cheaper than we paid by $150! -- ed] I use both the 8085 and 8088 sides of it. In fact, I prefer to use the CP/M version of WordStar 4.0 on it. The MSDOS version can't be run without bringing the memory up to 768K and buying WordStar Connection from HUG and a PAL kit as that totals out to about $200, not including the price of WordStar.

Anyway, I've been reading some articles about the H/1200 (non-PC) series. As you may know, the Z120's have a combination 5.25 and 8-inch controller--of course very few people ever got the 8" disks. What's interesting is that there is a 1.2 MB 5.25 inch floppy drive (Mitsubishi HF504, TEAC FD-5S5GFM, Fujitsu M2555K) used on the ATs which simulates a 1.2 MB 8-inch floppy drive. It's successfully been used on 1100s via an adapter cable. I believe the formatted capacity is 1.2 MB under MSDOS and 1 MB under CP/M (same as the 8" DISDD Drive).

So why am I rambling on about the Z1100s? Well, if anyone has an H47 interface card for their H8 or H9 (I do not), this particular drive should look just like a 1.2 MB 8" drive to it. If I could get a hold of an H47 interface card for my H8, I'd be severely tempted to test my theory out. But, alas, I think these interfaces are pretty rare--and I'm not sure that Quikdata even offers it. I don't remember exactly, but I think the Trionyx CB0 controller supports the 8" disk drives. [Quikdata sells the original H8 WHB-37 board which
LETTERS, concluded

has provision for both hard-disc and WH-47 drives. Also, CDR may still have their 8-inch interface available for the HB9s and H/Z90s. -- ed

Something else concerning the 8-bit side of the Z100 is that you don’t have a choice of format density. But, if you have CP/M version 2.20.03 for your HB/H89, format an extended-density disc (382K on a 40-trk soft-sector drive). It will work just perfectly on the Z100. You can also SYSGEN the extended-density disk on the Z100. I took a chance and tried it when I found that 304K simply wasn’t sufficient for Word-Star 4.0 plus the dictionary and spellchecker programs.

Another subject: In Vol III, No. 9, p15, you mentioned you had a schematic diagram for a hard-disc interface. Is this a XEBEC 1410 type interface? If so, is it possible for me to get a copy of it? [Answer 1, Don’t know; answer 2, of course -- ed]

This was going to be a short note, but I just couldn’t help sharing a little knowledge. I hope it will benefit someone.

DSC(SM) GARY S MELANDER, CPO Mess, USS Saipan (LHA-2), FPO New York, NY 09549-1605

[Our thanks to you, Gary, for re-doing our Table of Contents! I had been trying to make time to do it myself, but since I’m doing 99.9% of the JOURNAL single-handed that has yet to happen. (I also once had dreams of a nifty subject-matter cross index to go with the ToC!) I did have to rework your table some to make it fit our two-column page layout, and that job is not yet quite done. Right now, it looks as if we’ll be able to print it in our December, ’89 issue (IV:6), all 5-plus pages of it. Wonder if anyone out there in SEBHC land is willing to volunteer and work up that subject cross index for us?? -- ed]

Dear Lenny,

Enclosed please find information from a Houston, TX company which supports the MPI printer line. I’d mentioned it earlier in a postcard note to you.

I’ve recently contacted this company and found that they have spare parts, ribbons and completely-new MPI printers. They also service them, as well as Televidio equipment. Some parts and ribbons I’d recently ordered for one of my MPI 99G printers came in on Friday--20-Oct. Ribbons are fresh, and cost $15 each in small quantities.

Contact CYBER-FORCE, 3508 East T.C. Jester, Houston, TX 77018; phone 713-682-0668 and ask for Connie.

ALLIE C LINGO, P O Box 118, Dierks, AR 71833-0118

[I’m sure our readers using MPI printers will be delighted to hear of another source of MPI-99G printer ribbons! I called my favorite office-supplies house on the off chance that they could get similar ribbons or “universal” refill packs for MPI and H/Z125 printers. As of the moment they haven’t called me back, so here’s their name, address & phone number for anyone really hurting for replacements: QUILL Corporation, 100 Schelter Road, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-3621; East of Rockies, phone 312-634-4800 (orders) or 312-634-4850, West of Rockies, 714-988-3200 (orders and enquiries). We’ll keep everyone informed.... -- ed]

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KWIP-ETTES... KWIP-ETTES... KWIP-ETTES... KWIP-ETTES...

(Kwip-ettes: New words describing situations, problems, or products in one’s workplace.)

STAPLES: The two tiny holes left in a paper or cheque by a removed staple....

TOTEM POST: Any vertical arrangement of three or more “Post-it” notes....

WORD-ITIS: A disease an individual has, symptoms of which are evidenced by the two-page letters he writes explaining a two-sentence situation....

FAXASTROPHIE: Transmitting one’s grocery list as page three of a contract....

OR SALE... FOR SALE... FOR SALE... FOR SALE... FOR SA

HELP! We’re running out of space! Clean, working green-screen Heathkit H29 Terminal with power cord, operating instructions, service notes. First offer over $75 gets it. We’ll pay shipping. Lenny, The SEBHC JOURNAL, 895 Starwick Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105. Please phone 313-662-0750 between 9am & 6pm weekdays, or 313-769-6052 weekends and make your claim.

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A WORD OF THANKS FROM YOUR EDITOR

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TO PAUL HERMAN, publisher of “Z100 LIFELINE” for inserting a flyer in a recent edition of his newsletter, listing H-SCOOP, The Staunch B/89er, and SEBHC JOURNAL descriptions, addresses and subscription blanks! The JOURNAL picked up several new subscribers due to Paul’s generosity. We assume that our other 8-bit colleagues likewise benefited from Paul’s unsolicited act. It’s very nice to have good friends like Paul Herman, Kirk Thompson, and Henry Fale helping us keep our H/Z 8-bit machines alive and well!

This offer void where prohibited by law or ancient custom.
The JOURNAL’s SOFTWARE CATALOGUE Page

**SJ-14** 173-91-1 MAIL MERGE (w/warranty) 29.95
SJ-15 HDR-837-3 DESPOOLER (w/warranty) 29.95
SJ-16 173-201-1 MICROSTAT (database w/wty) 49.95
SJ-17 HRS 837-1 Peachtree ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE 39.95
SJ-18 HRS-837-5 Peachtree INVENTORY MANAGEMENT 39.95
SJ-19 HRS 817-37-1 Peachtree GENERAL LEDGER 39.95
SJ-20 HRS 837-37-1 Peachtree ACCOUNTS PAYABLE (all above P.T. items w/wty) 39.95
SJ-21 173-197-1 Peachtree INVENTORY MGMNT demo 29.95
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SJ-23 173-62-1 Clark INVENTORY 29.95
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Note: **SJ-15** 173-38-1 SUPER 8-BIT

SEBHC JOURNAL SOFTWARE SALE

We've lucked into over one hundred packages of ORIGINAL H/Z 8-bit software at an incredibly-low price. Most of these items are in their original FACTORY-SEALED wrappings. Which means that their warranties are INTACT and MUST BE HONORED by Zenith Data Systems, the original vendor. Therefore you are avoiding the risk of buying a "pig-in-a-poke", whatever our incredibly-low resale price may be. We also have a quantity of "Demo" software packages which are EXACTLY THE SAME AS THEIR WARRANTIED VERSIONS, except they're without warranties.

**All software runs under H/Z 8-bit CP/M only.**

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Notes

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1 - Prices include shipping inside continental U.S.A. only. (All foreign shipments at applicable UPS rates.)
2 - We WILL NOT accept returns if you break the original disc-package seal ("you break it, you bought it!").
3 - Some items are on Heath-compatible 8-inch discs. If you don't have access to 8-inch drives we'll transfer software to standard 5-1/4-inch discs at no charge at your request noted on your order.
4 - Eight-inch CP/M operating system conversion to 5-1/4" (MAKEBIOS-47 to -17 or -37) on special order only. Call or write for details. Reasonable prices, work guaranteed, and original distribution discs will be sent together with the converted copies.
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