



September 1993

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Number 4

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SYSTEMDISKS

Part II: Start Me Up!
By Josef Wankerl

This installment of the Beginner's Guide To System Disks will discuss how the System Disk starts up and loads everything into place as well as clearing up what most of the files on the disk are used for. Where the first part of this series was basically an overview of the System Disk, this installment is mainly GS/OS information, and not generic System Disk information. While the information presented in this article is not necessary for you to be able to use a System Disk, it is information that will generally be useful to know, even if all you use your computer for is running your word processor or playing games.

Just how the heck does a System Disk start everything? Well I'll tell ya... On the first part of every disk there is something called the boot block. When you turn your computer on, it starts searching all your devices to see if it can read in a boot block. If it can, it will read it in and then turn control over to whatever was read. In nearly every case, the boot block contains a short piece of code which loads in a bootstrap program. In the

case of a IIGS System Disk, this bootstrap program is called ProDOS. It is located in the root (i.e. the "topmost") directory of your System Disk. The ProDOS file does a whole bunch of interesting things such as determining what operating system to load (ProDOS 8 or GS/OS). The boring case is ProDOSJ80; it loads in the file called P8 from the *:System: directory and then executes it. The interesting case is when the ProDOS file decides that GS/OS needs to be loaded. First, a file called Start.GS.OS is loaded and executed. This file contains all the code necessary to load in the rest of GS/OS.

The Start.GS.OS file does an enormous amount of work. It loads in the file GS.OS which contains the Loader and most of GS/OS. It also loads in the ERROR.MSG file. This file contains plain English translations of most GS/OS error codes. Next, all of the File System Translators (FSTs) are loaded, then Device Drivers are either loaded or generated. After that, Initialization (Init) files are executed, then New Desk Accessories (NDAs) and Classic Desk Accessories (CDAs) are loaded. At this point, everything required for GS/OS to operate should be in memory.

Meeting Notice

The next meeting
date is
September 16, 1993

We will see a demo
of
"Casper"

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The regular membership meeting is held on the third Thursday of the month, with a start time of 7:30 p.m.. The meeting is held at:

"the computer store",
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The general public is invited to attend.

Meetings - Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meeting is held before the regular meeting or as otherwise arranged.

Annual Membership Dues

Individual member \$15.00

The WAC BBS is currently provided at no charge, however if you would like to make a donation to keep the BBS running, contact:

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Authors should submit their articles in hard copy, 3 1/2 inch disk or send it via modem to the editor at the above number by the first of the month.

Copy should be submitted in ANY form you wish. I can read any format from any computer types so if you have something that looks good send it in.

The WAC Journal is published monthly.

Contributing writers are needed, especially for the Who's Who column. This is a member written column dealing with what each individual is doing with their computer, what kind of computer and programs you use, and how long you've had your computer. I can accept your article at any time for this column. Call me!

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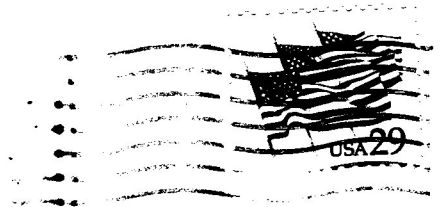
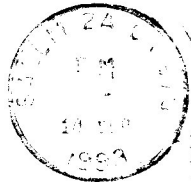
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