

This is the first in a series of articles on computing and computers, always from the point of view of use by hams. It is not a "power users" article, but rather will be aimed at practical tips, approaches and news of interest to the amateur community. The old XT with 640k of memory will be the base line - these are beginning to show up as good values at swapfests, and they are plenty powerful for amateur use. So here we go.

First is a news item from the December 1992 issue of NASA TECH BRIEFS. A revolutionary input device has been invented, which may be as important to computing as the invention of the mouse, and which may eventually cost about the same as a mouse.

A fist sized "data egg", invented in 1990 by Gary Friedman of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, fits in the palm of one hand and permits single handed typing while "walking, running, driving, riding a bike, reclining on a sofa or even floating in space". (A use left out of the list in quotes above is holding a microphone in the other hand, or even working a key with the free hand. Just think, we can operate and dupe at the same time!)

The gadget sports seven buttons, worked in various combinations to input all the letters of the alphabet, punctuation marks, and even the control and cursor keys found on a standard computer keyboard. The inventor says that while it is not as fast as typing with two hands, he can now type about 30 words per minute with the device. It takes only about an hour to learn to use it for the first time.

You are undoubtedly picturing this data egg cabled to a computer, and that is definitely one configuration. On the other hand, the working model Friedman is now using has no wires. It has a built-in buffer which stores the data, which is later downloaded to a computer for permanent storage and printing. Tethered or untethered, it works both ways.

The device may also be a boon to handicapped or bedridden individuals, who have difficulty using two hands with a conventional keyboard. There are all sorts of possible uses under a great many circumstances, but the most appealing to us hams is the freeing of one hand to do our communications thing. Watch the news for the Data Egg - it will definitely develop into a hot item.

Tip of the month. Keep two copies of those important files, CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT in your root directory. How? Simply enter these commands from the DOS prompt:

```
COPY CONFIG.SYS CONFIG.SAF
```

```
COPY AUTOEXEC.BAT AUTOEXEC.SAF
```

while in the root directory of your hard drive. You will wind up with second copies of each (CONFIG.SAF and AUTOEXEC.SAF; SAF = SAFety copy). Why? If you are messing around with your computer's configuration and you make changes to the CONFIG.SYS or AUTOEXEC.BAT files, you always have a copy of the way it was before you started "messin round". Also, if you install new software that has the rude habit (many do) of changing these important files without your permission, you can always undo what the installation software did - even if it asked your permission first!

If you find that you want the files restored to their original state, simply reverse the process with the following DOS commands:

```
COPY CONFIG.SAF CONFIG.SYS
```

```
COPY AUTOEXEC.SAF AUTOEXEC.BAT
```

On the other hand, if everything seems to be working fine with the new configuration files after a few days, then make new second copies of these two files.

This is simple, it works, and can save much grief. Do it now.

Got a topic you want addressed in this column? Let me know and I will try to work it in. 73, Stan