

August 1998

ADVANTAGE

BUSINESS COMPUTER SYSTEMS

(903) 636-5200 Fax (903) 636-4674

Presenting Pate's Hardware Inc.

Jimmy T. Pate is the founder of Pate's Hardware, Inc. In July of 1988 he bought a small hardware store that was closed and out of business at the time of purchase. Before reopening, he completely remodeled, air conditioned and purchased new gondolas. He also built new lumber bins and storage buildings for the lumber and outside merchandise. The original building was about 4000 sq. ft. Within two years Jimmy had expanded the building. Since then he has expanded three additional times, doubling the main building to 8,000 sq. ft.

In December of 1994, Pate's Hardware, Inc. added a second location in Deleon, TX. This store is 16 miles north of the original store. The Deleon store is also a full service hardware store and lumberyard. In September of 1995, Jimmy opened a stand-alone rental store. Pate's Rental rents large equipment from backhoes, road graders, trenchers, tractors, down to small hand tools, wedding and party equipment. In 1998, which began a busy year for Pate's Hardware, Inc., Jimmy added a general office. The general office is located east of the Rental building and almost a block from the Comanche store. The general office handles all the paper work for all the locations. In April of 1998, Pate's opened a third hardware store in Early, TX, which is 26 miles west of Comanche. The main building is 10,000-sq. ft. and is



surrounded by several lumber sheds and buildings. With the addition of the Early store that gave Pate's four locations.

The main supplier for all these locations is Handy Hardware Wholesale, Inc. The total employment with all locations is 31 employees.

(cont.)

Newsletter

P O Box 421
Big Sandy, Tx 75755-0421

Inside News.....

Security Alert....

*New Look of the
Database....*

*Letter from the
President.....*

*From Sales and
Marketing...*

*Welcome New
Customers....*

Special Offer....

Tru-Serve Customers..

Q and A's...

Dial Direct....

*Avoiding Harddrive
Problems....*

Pate's Hardware, Inc. has been computerized since we opened 10 years ago, but because of the difficulties with our original computer system we switched to **Advantage Computer Business Systems** in September of 1992. **Advantage** was extremely helpful in making the change from one system to another as simple as possible. Since our expansion **Advantage** has continued to offer assistance and new technology allowing our company to operate on state of the art equipment. The greatest benefit of using **Advantage** is the wide range of features that they offer and the technical support to back up these features. Through the use of **Advantage** we are able to place our orders electronically, scan products at point-of-sale, receive our shipments by scanning in merchandise, automatically updating sell prices, and many more features. With the support of **Advantage** and Handy Hardware we will be able to continue to expand and grow with additional locations in the coming years.

From The President's Desk:

The issue of the year 2000 compatibility is one that has been on the minds of everyone that uses and relies on a computer system. The issue is in reality three fold software, operating system, and hardware. The primary issue of software compliance is one that Advantage planned for from the inception of its current "Database" version of the Advantage Software. The "Basic" Version of the Advantage software has been reviewed and tested and is believed to also be 100% compliant with the issue of the year 2000.

The operating system that is used by Advantage Business Computer Systems, Inc. is "SCO UNIX". SCO versions that are 5.0 and above or termed "Openserver" are 2000 compliant and are ready to go. (Versions lower than 5.0 will require that a "patch" from SCO be placed on your machine. A better suggestion, implemented in all upgrade cases, is to upgrade to the newest version of the operating system.) This upgrade can only be installed either on a new hard drive or in a new machine when upgrading.

It is possible for you to determine the current version of your operating by getting to the "#" prompt and typing the command "*(uname -X)*" this will display information for you about your operating system including the version number. The third line of the data display will read "Release = 3.2V4.?" or 3.2V5.?" All users with a "4.?" will require that the patch or upgrade be put in place prior to the year 2000.

The final issue is one of hardware. Computers that are "pre-Pentium" are likely to have an issue with the year 2000; that would be 386 and 486 class machines. The CMOS or firmware that is built into the machine may not be capable of rolling over to the year 2000. We will be conducting some tests on machines that are taken in on trade from upgrades and will be producing the results in following newsletters.

Advantage Software is and has been year 2000 compliant. We will gladly assist you with any additional questions pertaining to the operating system and hardware.

Scott Stanford

*From the Desk of Gregory Cuke
Vice President of Sales and Marketing*

We have recently had another influx of Basic customers converting to the Database, which is always encouraging. The desire to do the conversion seems to come in bursts. I thought that I would take some time this month to explain a little about what happens.

First of all, we like to do about two conversions per week. Sometimes there are several weeks that go by without a conversion and then we get requests from 10 customers all at once. That then puts us in a back logged situation. Obviously, we want to do these when they are most convenient to you. The more notice that we have, the easier it will be to assure your conversion time.

I encourage everyone to take the time to set things up by contacting Dian at ext. 242 to arrange your conversion. Conversions can be arranged either with or without on-site assistance, depending on your exposure to the new software. Spending time testing, configuring and playing on the Database prior to conversion is the key to minimal transition time.

Remember also that there is no charge for the new Advantage software. You may or may not have to upgrade your operating system and hardware. If you do, the changes that you will see as a result of the new software and the newer, faster computer will in many cases be a complete change in life as you know it!

The vast majority of our customers are now on the Database. Having made the transition, they are now enjoying the benefits of the feature-rich package. If you are still not sure, give us a call and let us setup a "play" area for you to start checking it out!

I hope that the spring and summer has been busy for everyone and long may it continue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Gregory Cuke

**NOTICE: ServiStar and
Coast-to-Coast dealers!**

Tru*Serv has purchased ServiStar and Coast-to-Coast. As a result, all users will be converting to a new item number format. We are preparing a conversion application to accommodate this change.

**After coordinating with Tru*Serv,
contact Donna, at ext. 216, to inform
us of your conversion date.**

**WELCOME
NEW CUSTOMERS**

A & A DRYWALL
Dothan, AL

**FRUGE LUMBER
COMPANY INC.**
Eunice, LA

AUSTIN HARDWOODS
San Antonio, TX

**EAST CARROLL
LUMBER COMPANY**
Providence, La

**HAVELOCK BUILDING
SUPPLY**
Havelock, NC

HEDGECOCK LUMBER
Kernersville, NC

**HUGHS LUMBER
COMPANY**
Fairfield, TX

**NANTAHALA LUMBER
COMPANY**
Franklin, NC

**THOMAS WOOD
PRESERVING**
Horn Lake, MS

**VICK LUMBER
COMPANY**
Madisonville, TX

**to our team
of Advantage users!**

Introducing the New Look of the Database Version of the Advantage System!

A Sneak Preview of What Is Coming

As we have been announcing for months, the Advantage System menus have been undergoing a facelift. After five years of development, it was time to re-evaluate the structure of the menus. Due to the depth of features and options offered in the Advantage System, the submenu structure must offer users a means in which to quickly locate and identify those options. Movement between menu options used routinely throughout each day should not be cluttered with options used in original setup or configuration.

The use of hotkeys and alphabetical listings allow users to move through the menus with ease. We know you'll agree that the new look of the Advantage System makes sense.

Alphabetical listings allow quick movement to menu options. Typing the "hotkey" of the first letter(s) of the first word on the menu will move the cursor to that option. Re-titling our menus and submenus has allowed us to more effectively utilize the "hotkey" options. Although arrowing down through the menus gets you there, typing in a letter or two will be less keystrokes. In addition, when you know what you are looking for, knowing that the menus are in alphabetical order will allow you to visually find those option with greater ease. This change will be especially effective on report menus.

Alphabetical Listings

Setting up new users is made more simple since we moved the user identification and passwords, authorizations, and sales rep maintenance screens to a new menu called "User Administration". Located all together, setting up a new user is as simple as 1, 2, 3. No more going from one menu to the next to get a new user setup and ready to go. It can all be done from the "User administration" menu. For the convenience of system administrators who are responsible for setting up new users, it is also found in their newly defined "System administration menu".

User Administration

NEW SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION MENU

The "Configuration and utilities" menu has been renamed to "System Administration" to more appropriately title the types of options to be found in the submenus. All system-wide configuration options will be located on this menu, such as printer configurations, a consolidated menu of maintenance options, release notes, a consolidated menu of the new administrative menus and database management utilities.

System administrators are the only users expected to have access to these menu options. These are not routinely used options for all users. As a convenience to system administrators, we have added access to what are considered normal system administrative types of options. Movement between modules and menus should be greatly minimized with the new System Administration menu.

MAIN MENU

- Accounts Payable**
- Accounts Receivable**
- Customer Support**
- End-of-day**
- End-of-month/year**
- General Ledger**
- Inventory Control**
- Job Costing**
- Other Options**
- Payroll**
- Point-of-Sale/Order Entry**
- Purchasing**
- System Administration**
- Time clock**
- User Administration**
- Quit/exit**

SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION MENU

- Company header configurations**
- Consolidated administrative menus**
- Consolidated maintenance menus**
- Database management utilities**
- History archive menus**
- Operating system utilities**
- Printer configuration menu**
- Select alternate dataset**
- System configuration menu**
- User maintenance menus**
- Release notes**
- Preview all release notes**
- Preview new release notes**
- Quit/exit**

THE NEW LOOK OF SUBMENUS

The submenus have been revised to keep the most routinely used options at the top of each menu. These would typically be the “Posting procedures”, “Maintenance menu” and “Report menu”. This has not changed. However, what has changed is what is on those menus.

ADMINISTRATIVE MENU

A new menu option has been added called “Administrative menu”. This menu contains the “company header configuration” and any other sensitive, non-routine options. *This menu is designed to be used only by system administrators.* Any option found on these menus should only be used under unusual and specific circumstances. These options require advanced knowledge of the system or are used only in the initial setup phase. All of the options that qualify for these menus have been moved from their original locations to these menus.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

An entirely new feature of the next release will be a “Frequently asked questions” database. This database will contain answers to questions that have been routinely addressed with our support staff. Basic questions from “Where is....?”, to questions requiring more in depth answers will be addressed in this database. This exciting new option will be available within each module for ease of access, but will contain questions from all modules. This is the beginning of a state-of-the-art browser, which ultimately will be available for searches similar to an internet browser. Searches will currently be available by module and keywords. These questions may be viewed or printed for your convenience.

“HOW TO” REFERENCE FILES

The “reference files” introduced in last year's release have been relocated to their specific modules. In addition to new and updated documentation, the reference files will address procedures found throughout the Advantage System. Many “How To” instructions requiring lengthy explanation will be found here, as opposed to the FAQ database.

POINT-OF-SALE MENU

Order entry
Posting procedures
Maintenance menu
Report menu

Administrative menu
Custom reports and applications
Delivery vehicle menu
Frequently asked questions
How to reference files
Inventory transfer procedures
Rental menu

Quit/exit

Dept picking ticket configuration
Form and printer configuration
Form and printer mass change
POS Options
Commonly used notes
Fast customer search
Generic margin table
Lump volume discounts
POS mailing list
Special function triggers
3-D dimensional tally

Code Maintenance
Bad check ID codes
Charge codes
Credit card type codes
Paid-out reason codes
Return codes
Shipping location codes
Ship-via codes
Quit/exit

NEW MAINTENANCE SCREEN LAYOUT

To more clearly define the volume of options offered in the Advantage System, the menu options have been grouped. The “Add, change or delete” redundancy has been replaced with the reference of “maintenance”. Again, this has allowed us to offer the “hotkey” alphabetical searches to maximize the usage of this time saving feature. Headings have been added to identify the groupings of options.

Hotkey for Q to Quit/exit

An option to return you to the main menu has also been added to the screens. From any screen, the system will return you to the company list, allowing you a quick exit from any level within the software package.

[F10] Main menu

Now You Know Where You Are!

Main -> Point-of-sale -> Maintenance

Frequently Asked Questions

Q) What are the charges for you to process a vendor download or catalog diskette?

A) The charges are \$150.00 per vendor.

Q) What is included in this charge?

A) Since all vendors do not provide us the same file layout, our programming staff must write a conversion program for the file. Each download or catalog is then tested to verify that the file layout and conversion program are compatible. We then load the data on your machine and run the conversion program on your data. This is typically done in a “play” area so that you may approve it. Once approved, we then call back into your modem to run the conversion in you live area.

Q) What is the difference between a vendor download and a vendor catalog?

A) In both cases, the vendor provides media that contains their inventory items in a flat ASCII file. A vendor download typically contains only the items you have purchased from that vendor. A catalog contains every item that vendor sells. A download is typically added to your current inventory items as a means in which to populate your inventory database. The catalog is left in a directory on the system and can be accessed from the inventory screen to add new items.

Q) How many catalogs can we have?

A) At this time, you will be limited to one catalog. In most cases this catalog will be your primary vendor.

Q) If we receive monies from sources outside of payments against charge accounts, where do we post them into the system?

A) Accounts Receivable > Posting procedures > Enter payments > [F6] Other income
The [F6] option to post other income, allows you to enter the amount received, a reference line and select the G/L numbers in which to create the postings. Income posted in this manner will print an audit trail for your hardcopy.

Q) Where can I see our total sales throughout the day?

A) Point-of-sale > Enter orders, quotes and estimates > [F2] > Sales activity report by workstation
This on screen report will list the total sales by cash or charge and the monies received by workstation. As a quick reference or a means in which to confirm a cash drawers count, this report is a handy tool.

Q) We don't use many of the options available at POS. Is there anyway to remove some of them?

A) Sales personnel > Add, change or delete sales reps > Choose the rep > [F8] Special authorizations
Simply answer [Y]es or [N]o to each option listed. Once completed, press [Insert] to save the changes. Cleaning up those menus can save a great deal of extra keystrokes as well as keeping users out of things they don't need to be playing with.

Q) We have trouble keeping track of who's in and who's out of the office. What is in the system that can help?

A) If you are using the payroll timeclock, the system offers a screen to view the status of each timeclock employee. The screen tells you who's out and who's in. If you are using the time-out codes, you even know where they are. A quick view of the screen can save the time, money and frustration of looking or calling employees who are out. For multi-stores, this savings can be found in dollars not spent calling stores when the person needed is out.

Q) What is the best report for finding who is buying a specific item?

A) The “Customer sales report” is hands down the most powerful sales analysis tool. If you have an item you would like to clear out, consult the Customer Sales report. It can tell you who is buying that product. With any luck they will take you up on an offer to buy it all. But, don't stop there, the Customer Sales report offers hundreds of additional ways in which to analyze your sales trends.

IF YOU'RE HOT....

SO IS YOUR COMPUTER!

With the summer heat upon us all, maintaining a cool environment for your computer is more critical. The “pentium” machines all have a fan that keeps their chip cool, because if the chip gets hot it can burn out, often along with the motherboard. The result is the sudden and unexpected need for a new machine.

Keeping your machine clean and checking the condition of the fans on a regular basis is your best insurance against summer heat. If your computer is in a hot room, then placing an external fan in the room to circulate the air can help to minimize the summer heat.

KEEP IT COOL!

DIAL DIRECT

You can help. Whenever possible, if you are not calling for software or hardware support, please dial your extension direct. Anyone of the following extensions will give you access to someone who can help you in the following departments:

Billing Information- Ext 230, 215
Questions or inquiries regarding your statement or invoices.

Forms Department- Ext 246, 204
Questions or inquiries regarding forms, envelopes, prices, shipping info, etc.

Return Merchandise Authorization-
Ext 218, 208, 243, 288
RMA numbers must be given for any product being returned to us for any reason. Questions or concerns may be addressed by calling these extensions.

Sales Department- Ext 222, 242, 216, 229
Questions or inquiries regarding new equipment, existing equipment, supplies, warranties, and shipping. Inquiries or scheduling of training and service calls are also handled by the sales department.

The telephone system will ring busy or send you back to voice mail if the extension is busy. Once back to the voice mail, you may press another extension number. If you receive a voice mailbox, you may press [9] to go back to the voice mail.

SECURITY ALERT!

UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

We have reason to believe that hackers are accessing our users systems, to promote their own agendas. As always, we are asking all users to secure their machines from outside access. Adding a dialup (modem) password gives you protection from outside hackers. In addition, you know if we are needing access to your system to solve an issue. Do NOT turn your modem on, or give out your passwords to anyone calling themselves an Advantage employee. If in doubt, please call to the Advantage Corporate offices to confirm the employee and the reason.

MODEM (Dialup) PASSWORD

Even more important, adding a modem password will protect you with an additional password required if someone is calling in to your modem. This second password will provide the extra security you need from outside hackers.

TO SETUP:

Version 5.00 or higher

sysut > Modem > Dialup password add/change/delete

Version 4.02 or lower

ut > Modem > Advanced user menu > Change dialup password

Modem passwords should will not be displayed on the screen. To confirm the password, the system will ask you to repeat it. If you do not enter an exact match the system will ask you to re-enter the password. A password can be up to 8 characters (alpha and/or numeric).

To avoid support delays, notify Advantage Software Support of any new passwords, so that their records may be updated. Change your modem password regularly.

AVOIDING HARDDRIVE PROBLEMS...

is in everyone's best interest. Many harddrive problems can be avoided by following a few basic precautions:

1) Know how much space you have on your harddrives before you start any processes that could be writing a significant amount of data to the drives (end-of-day, end-of-month, archiving, G/L batch postings, etc.)

Check space: At the # sign, type in "space".

2) Know how much space is typically used on your machine when this process is run.

Check space prior to the activity. Run the activity and check space again. Keep a log of the space being used for these, so you will know what it takes to run your business.

3) Keep a minimum of one week of backup tapes. A two or three week rotation is even more preferable.

IF YOUR SYSTEM EVER RUNS OUT OF HARDDRIVE SPACE OR CRASHES-

1) **Keep the last end-of-day tape indefinitely.**

2) **Reorganize (DB) or reindex (BV) all data files, as soon as possible.**

Allegrot 2

LABEL PRINTER SPECIFICATIONS

For moderate volume label printing applications demanding versatility, quality and economy, discover the **Allegrot 2** thermal label printer. Based on Datamax's popular **Allegrot** printer, the **Allegrot 2** brings the user added power, features and options:

- A faster maximum print speed of 3 inches (76mm) per second boosts productivity.
- A uni-frame construction provides ultra-precise print registration.
- A larger cabinet accommodates a full-size 8-inch (203mm) outside diameter media supply roll.
- For easy label application, an optional peel-and-present mechanism peels printed labels away from the liner as they are dispensed.
- An optional internal rewind mechanism rewinds up to 4 inches (102mm) of either printed labels or liner in batch mode or liner in peel-and-present mode.
- An optional rugged metal cabinet ensures reliable operation in harsh industrial environments.

Suggested applications include labeling out bound shipments, product labeling, inventory control, and document tracking. The **Allegrot 2** provides current Allegro printer users with plug and play compatibility to ensure continuity within existing applications.

For further information or pricing contact Dian at ext. 242.

Advantage Academy

We have completed another session of Advantage Academy. It was wonderful to see to see old friends and to meet new ones. The classes are very informative, and we hope everyone went home with a greater understanding of the Advantage System Software. Since January over a hundred and seventy three-customers have attended classes. We would encourage you to attend a session if you have not done so already, and we would welcome you back if you wish to increase your knowledge. We also encourage you to bring a data tape so that we can concentrate on your actual data concerns. While we realize that all of you lead busy professional and personal lives, and feel that time away is too costly, past sessions have demonstrated that the experience gained at Advantage Academy will save you time, money, and energy.

At Advantage there is no charge to attend classes, compared to the majority of our competitors who charge \$125.00 a day for training. At one time or another nearly all of our sites have taken "**Advantage**" of this offer; some even participate every time. Training increases your knowledge of the software and ability to access the full potential of your system. Your attendance gives us the opportunity to better address and understand the needs of your business. We all benefit.

You have made a significant investment in you future by choosing Advantage Business Systems, and we would welcome your further commitment by adding you to our list of attendants for the next session of Advantage Academy.

NEXT SESSION OF ADVANTAGE ACADEMY IS SEPTEMBER 21-24.