



# NEWSLETTER

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## Donald R. Frey & Company, Inc. Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*By Don Frey*

April 1974 marked the beginning of Donald R Frey & Company. The office opened in a spare bedroom in Don and El's home. The dining room served as the conference area for discussions with vendors and clients.

Few software packages were available at that time. Almost everything had to be written from *scratch*. Computers and operating systems were proprietary. Software would run on only the computer for which it was written. You could not move software for a single vendor's machines from one model to another. Everything was very expensive and time consuming to develop. You could spend eight hours just compiling one program.

The computer *world* was ruled by IBM and the seven dwarfs: Burroughs; CDC (Control Data Corporation); DEC (Digital Equipment Corporation); Honeywell; NCR (National Cash Register); RCA and Sperry-Rand Corporation.

We commenced business writing custom software for Burroughs computers. That was done because of contacts with their marketing organization. The salesperson would find a prospect and would contact us to develop the application software. We also did some work for IBM. However, IBM wanted us to work exclusively for them. We refused to do that because they would have almost total control over us. That wasn't IBM policy, but those were the unofficial rules. We continued to work, largely with Burroughs, for the next few years because they kept us busy and didn't make special demands.

In 1976, Sperry Corporation started a new division and brought out a line of minicomputers, the BC/7. They hired large numbers of sales personnel away from Burroughs and NCR. Many of our Burroughs sales colleagues joined Sperry. In a few months, we

were writing software for the BC/7. One development project was a fund accounting and utility billing system for a small city in Ohio. When the software was installed, other cities visited the site and were impressed. Soon, they began asking us to develop applications for them. Since the software would only run on the BC/7, this gave Sperry an advantage in the market locally.

Shortly, we had a number of municipalities using our software on the Sperry machine. Sperry, at the corporate level, took notice and asked us to market our software on their systems nationally. Over the next two years, we installed systems in over fifteen states. Early on, it became apparent that the software would not work, as designed, in a broader market. We redesigned and rewrote the products in 1979 to be *true* application software packages. The new products were more powerful and offered greater flexibility than our original efforts.

In 1980, Sperry introduced a new computer called a System 80. This machine was not compatible with the BC/7. It would require a rewrite of the software. Because of overall weak BC/7 sales, Sperry decided to de-emphasize the BC/7 and consolidate the sales force into a midrange computer sales group. We were faced with a *crash* rewrite of the software. We no longer had a marketing force to concentrate on selling the BC/7. Things were further complicated by the higher cost of the new system. This caused our market to be redefined. Sales of the new system were mediocre. Consequently, we decided to write the software for a new Burroughs computer that was better suited to our market. The software was developed. However, the new system failed to meet performance expectations. Once more, we were in a bad position because of the problems associated with proprietary systems and software.

In 1982, powerful microcomputers began appearing in the market. They were inexpensive and offered a generic software development environment. We purchased a Radio Shack computer and a generic language compiler. We wanted to see if these systems had promise. It was amazing! We could write software that was far more advanced than that on minicomputers, and in a fraction of the time. Further, the cost of these machines was about one-fourth of a minicomputer. Soon, Radio Shack offered a new generic operating system called XENIX. It was a variant of UNIX. It was powerful, multi-user and portable. We could move our software from machine to machine without rewriting. Radio Shack invited us to join their developer program and began promoting our products nationally.

In 1984, Sperry jumped on the generic bandwagon with UNIX. Immediately, they began promoting our software. However, they wanted us to sell both hardware and software. We declined. We could run on any PC or UNIX system on the market. We did not want to be limited to one hardware manufacturer's fortunes. *We had learned our lesson!*

In the following years, we sold our software on a variety of systems: UNIX, PCs, and LANs. These sales came about from our presence in software locator directories and by referrals. Our customer base expanded to over thirty-five states.

Many clients migrated from their proprietary systems to our new generic environment. However, some hesitated because they feared the new technology. The *proprietary* vendors were also doing their best to instill in customer's minds *fear, uncertainty and doubt* about generic solutions.

In 1995, we developed an Internet Web site. It was an immediate success. People were starting to use the Internet to search for the specialized software we offered. *We found a promising new marketing tool!* In 1996, a new salesman joined the firm to add more to the synergy.

Next, we recognized the demand for graphically based software such as Microsoft's Windows. Windows 95 was released and it appeared to be a great improvement over Windows 3.1. Its methodology was consistent, making it easier to use and it was more stable than its predecessors. The migration was started to GUIs (graphical user interfaces) and updates for the Year 2000. The CUBIC utility billing system was released in 1996. It was our first *True Windows* product. In 1997, the BUCS fund accounting system came out. The CHIPS payroll system followed in 1998, completing the transition to a full graphical environment. The new software runs on any system supporting a Microsoft Windows 95, or later, interface. It runs on PCs and local area networks like Novell, NT and UNIX.

Free migration, including file conversion, is available to all existing customers on support. Today, almost all customers are running on this state-of-the-art software. The few remaining behind are merely awaiting the delivery of new equipment.

Where are we now? We have grown in size and reputation in the last twenty-five years. Frey & Company applications have remained stable in price while growing in functionality by over one-thousand percent!

Today, we occupy a comfortable suite of offices in a modern office complex. We service clients throughout the US and abroad using high-speed support communications and the

Internet. Our application focus, since the late 1970s, has been on fund accounting and utility billing software. This niche market has allowed us to thrive and grow without being dominated by any *megaforce* competition. These are substantial markets; none are dominated by any one firm. Our plans call for continued growth in our specialties, seizing opportunities to expand into other related niches, as opportunities occur.

Our customers are loyal. They have confidence in our ability to harness technology in an orderly and timely fashion. They know we will be there to provide the high quality service and support, as we have done since 1974. ☐

## New BUCS Update Coming



updates for BUCS are underway. The *release* will enter *alpha* testing soon. Our efforts, this year, have been focused on improving performance and adding new ease-of-use controls to the programs. You have to see these major changes to appreciate them. Workflow in BUCS is much smoother and easier. The performance improvements in BUCS will delight you with faster processing speeds, especially on report preparation.

Other improvements slated for the new release include new options for reports and added controls on mission critical processes. For those on the accrual basis, additional posting options will be available. Budget planning has been expanded to allow preparation on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. BUCS can prepare these for you automatically. It can prepare cash flow projections as well. Clients with seasonal variances asked for these capabilities.

A new Accounts Payable-purchasing module will be offered that allows purchase orders to be routed through an approval process. It will provide for a variety of paths to be used. Paths can be set up by fund, departments and/or individuals. BUCS will be released, as customary, by the time of the User's Conference. ☐

## 1999 User Conference Conquering The Millennium!



The 1999 Frey & Company Annual User's Conference will be held August 8-10 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Covington, Kentucky. This facility is located on the Ohio River across from Cincinnati. The

theme this year is *Conquering The Millennium.*

In 1996, Frey & Company introduced a new family of applications designed for Microsoft's Windows 95 and later, graphical interfaces. All would be Year 2,000 compliant. In 1998, this transition was completed. Frey & Company has now embarked on a refinement process to add even more functionality to its products. In the last few years, ACH automatic payments and direct deposits have been incorporated into applications. Scanners, bar coding, automated meter reading and cash drawer enhancements have been incorporated into the CUBIC utility

billing system. The CHIPS payroll has new human resources and ACH processing functions.

Formerly, we relied on annual surveys and periodic input from users to guide improvements. Last year we emphasized a more proactive dialogue in the form of group discussions. Sessions were held on all products to discuss new releases, likes, dislikes and improvements. Reactions were overwhelmingly in-favor of the new conference format. There was more time for demonstrations, questions and general dialogue.

Because of the favorable response to the 1998 conference format, we will continue with that program in 1999. However, this year's agenda will discuss new issues to be confronted in the coming millennium. How will the Internet influence our operations? What new database technologies will be available? Will current meter reading devices be made obsolete by other reading technology? These are just a few of the issues confronting us.

This year's evening event will be dinner at the United States Air Force Museum, Dayton, Ohio. It is the largest military aviation museum in the world. Some 300 aircraft are on display. Our guests will be free to roam these impressive galleries at their leisure. The Air Force Museum Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the Museum, has been a client of Frey & Company since 1993. If you would like a preview of the Museum's collection you can visit the Air Force Museum's Web site at <http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/>

Mark your calendar and make your reservations (August 8 - 10, 1999). This is going to be a Milestone Conference and will fill to capacity quickly. ☐

## New Release of CUBIC *Fast and Full Featured*



CUBIC, Release 8.2 is out and running at blazing speeds. This year we focused on updating the programs with features to improve usability and speed. We introduced features like *Tabs* and *floating windows*, which will make navigating around the system a breeze. We *tuned* the programs to provide superior performance. Below is a partial list of the highlights in the release.

- Added the ability to post accounting entries to BUCS in-summary. This preserves the details in CUBIC, while eliminating *clutter* in the general ledger.
- View Work Orders in Customer File Maintenance. This information is now in an additional convenient place.
- Added meter reading information to the Usage History information. This was a user conference request.
- Allow the user to edit Usage History. The user can now correct misreads in the history file.
- List Unapplied Cash on the Aged Trial Balance report, giving a more lucid picture of the account's status.
- Added the Posting File Purge function to the Billing Update process. This makes this function transparent to users. It

also prevents the buildup of unnecessary historical data, which impairs performance.

- New print spooling routines for faster processing. Preparation times for some reports have been reduced by as much as eighty percent!
- Now, you can specify if Summer Sewer is applicable, by rate. This is useful if you don't extend summer sewer discounts to all customers, such as commercial accounts.
- Updated programs for performance improvements. Wait till you see them run! One *beta* test site thought the programs were not working because they ran so fast!

I would like to thank our *beta* sites for the terrific job they did this year. The changes were extensive and they were very patient as we *tuned* the system *on the fly*. Be sure you load your updates soon. You will be delighted with the new release. ☐



<http://www.drfrey.com>

Our Web site continues to expand and be a major source of information to those who *surf* the Internet. Because of that information, the level of activity continues to intensify. Recently, we added a Utility Billing Checklist to our page. This generic, highly informative document itemizes considerations that should be examined when acquiring utility billing systems.

Our Internet Software Interim Update service has continued to grow. Virtually all-new customers are on the service. Most of our older clients have acquired an Internet service provider to take advantage of this excellent service. If you have not visited our Internet site lately, we encourage you to do so. ☐

## Frey & Company Staff Updates

Brian Hilner has moved to the programming staff. Brian joined Frey & Company in May 1998 as a customer support technician. He will soon complete his degree in Information Systems Technology at Northern Kentucky University.

Brian Scott joined our firm in the fall of 1998 as a customer support technician. If you are wondering about his accent, he originally hails from Northern Wisconsin and Michigan. His academic background is in both accounting and programming. Brian is also a *Packers* fan.

Ed Lovett recently joined the company as Customer Service Coordinator. He comes to us with extensive experience in the finance industry. His responsibilities will involve him with virtually every aspect of customer service, with the exception of technical support. Ed is a graduate of Miami University, Ohio.

Angela Finke has joined us on a part time basis to assist with special projects such as marketing and sales promotions. Angie comes to us after a thirty-five year career with CG&E (Cincinnati Gas & Electric Company). She held a variety of management positions in the Corporation in both staff and line capacities. ☐

# GOVERNMENT ♦ NONPROFIT ♦ UTILITIES

## Fund Accounting, Payroll, Utility Billing

**ESTABLISHED**, in 1974 with installations throughout the US We *understand your business and special needs!*

**EASY TO USE**, Microsoft Windows interface with on-line Help, ODBC and extensive *search* tools. *Programs that make your work easier and more enjoyable!*

**RELIABLE**, withstood the rigors of audits in dozens of states for years, *Problem free accurate programs!*

**ECONOMICAL**, unique pricing model that lets you purchase just what you need. *More value for your money!*

**PORTABLE**, designed for multi-user systems and personal computers. Frey applications run on hundreds of computers and can easily be moved from one to another. *Freedom of choice for you!*

**ADAPTABLE**, programs that can grow with your needs! Our annual updates keep your programs tuned to the latest in technology. *Software that is always state-of-the-art!*

**SUPPORT**, help when you need it! Anywhere! A **Free** 800 number for your convenience. *Support you can swear by, not at!*

**INTEGRATED**, applications that talk to each other. ODBC and Crystal Reports allow you to easily transfer data from Frey packages to spreadsheet, word processor and other application systems. *A team approach to your needs!*

**SPECIAL SERVICES**, custom designed modifications; full range of computer related consulting services. *Professionalism and competence on which you can rely!*

<b>Call Toll Free</b>	<b>1-800-659-3739</b>
<b>Internet</b>	<b><a href="http://www.drfrey.com">http://www.drfrey.com</a></b>
<b>E-mail</b>	<b><a href="mailto:drfrey@drfrey.com">drfrey@drfrey.com</a></b>

## NEWSLETTER

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