

OCTOBER
1993



OSHTI
99/4A
COMPUTER
USERS GROUP



LAST OSHTI
MEETING:



Oct. 11
in
Canada

THANKSGIVING DAY

The Sept. 93 OSHTI meeting was held on the last Tues. of the month. This was a change in weekday which tries to allow as many as possible to attend. Unfortunately, Keith still is tied up teaching night school but can attend afterward.

The setting up of a SIG (special interest group) on programming was brought up by Doug. The consensus indicated a general lack of interest in this area. I read a recent article in the paper indicating that there is lots of work for programmers; however, the programming is sent 'off-shore' to programmers in India and Ireland. That's right India and Ireland. Both of these nations have invested heavily in training for computer programmers. The big and some small companies now have set up companies there. For example, the COREL DRAW people now have an Ireland office. Maybe the idea of early educators regarding teaching programming skills wasn't that far off. If we don't do it, someone will.

Several members indicated that the job scene is still pretty grim. Better luck in the future.

Dick was down from the Kawartha group and brought along some excellent doughnuts. We furnished him with the Funnelweb 5.0 update on DSSD diskettes.

The GEE PROGRAMMING language was demonstrated along with some examples. It is a very friendly programming language with syntax very similar to TI basic but without the use of line numbers. Chaining several procedures together is very simple. The compilation of the programme is extremely fast compared to basic. The advantage offered by GEE is the use of the TI HI RES graphics screen. As I mentioned last month, this is similar to The Missing Link environment but can't make use of some of the TI's abilities. The use of sound and sprites is missing from GEE. However, it offers another interesting programming technique for those who want to learn.

Funnelweb 5.0 (40 column version) was re-released. This version has NO BUG at the QQ (quick quit) command using TI or Corcomp disk controllers. The Show Directory is better;

it shows more files on screen at once. Tom set the 40 column editor up using ALL CHARACTERS mode. This enables you to see all of the IBM graphics after typing <CTRL,>. Printing is WYSIWYG if your printer is in the IBM mode.

Also demonstrated was the printing of page 9 in last month's newsletter. I still am amazed by reverse form feeds. More interesting is the ability to RESET margins so that the printing starts further to the right. A careful study of the file shows how all of this is accomplished. Acknowledgements go out to the South West 99ers of TUSOON for their help in developing this technique.

The dates for the next 3 OSHTI meetings were set for Tuesday nights: Oct. 26, Nov.23 and Dec.14th. The December meeting will be a special one (see article: Christmas Get Together). Anyone who could host the Oct. or Nov. meetings is welcome.

A 50-50 draw was held at the meeting. Although Tom won he let the money ride for another draw which Keith won. Maybe next month will be your turn.

See ya next month. Tom



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BATCH FILES: auto pilot



One of the problems with doing things that are repetitious on the computer is sitting in front of it typing in the same commands and then waiting for them to finish to type in more. One answer to this problem (besides multitasking) is the BATCH concept.

The BATCH concept (not related to a female dog) or rather the BATCH FILE is one which automates the computer. This file sends the right keystrokes at the right time so that you can go away and watch some TV or go to bed. While you are away, the computer is controlled by the BATCH file. If you are familiar with the IBM world, then BATCH files are nothing new. But did you know that the TI can also run BATCH files?

The programme that does this is BATCH IT! (Vsm 2.0 upgrade). The requirements for this to work are the only restrictive part. You MUST have either MINIMEN or a SUPER SPACE card AND the programmes that it works with MUST be E/A 5 type programmes (NO EXTENDED BASIC etc.). The MINIMEN is a cartridge but the SUPER SPACE can be BUILT INTO your CONSOLE or you can have SUPER SPACE in a cartridge form too! If you have a RADE RAN DISK system, like Jim McLaren (Sudbury) and I, then you have a super space built in. At any rate, it would pay to keep an eye open for a MINIMEN on sale. Even if the battery is worn out in a MINIMEN it can be replaced. There are a lot of things that you can do with MINIMEN as I have shown in past editions of this newsletter.

OK, so you have SUPER SPACE or MINIMEN, how do you write a Batch File?

The answer is quite simply to use a word processor and the commands that come with the BATCH IT programme. You see, the BATCH IT programme requires you to write a programme in its own language and then COMPILE it and finally, RUN the compiled programme. So whether you like it or not, it pays to be able to programme!

The programming language is similar to BASIC but it has some peculiarities. If you have written some simple BASIC programmes then BATCH IT programmes will be easy. If you have even written MS DOS Batch Files then it will be similar.

What you must realize is that the Batch programme does something very different from other programmes. The Batch programme can do one or more of the following:

1. Run the computer automatically to do a long series of repetitive tasks.
2. Enable you to interrupt one programme and jump into another one.
3. Set up special keys to do certain tasks; this is

called making MACROS.

4. Find and replace information in a programme.
5. Set up a MENU to run your computer and return to the MENU.

I am sure that there are more, but the above serve to illustrate the power of Batch Files.

OK, back to what I wanted a Batch File to do. When I put the monthly newsletter together, I take all of the articles and put them (called importing) into PAGE PRO to make pages for the newsletter. Actually, it takes 2 PAGE PRO pages to make 1 newsletter page. I use PAGE PRO because it is WYSIWYG and I can see what the product looks like on the screen before it is printed. I can include Graphics and Text easily using PAGE PRO. However, because I NOW USE PAGE PRO COMPOSER, I must change each of these PAGE PRO pages into PICTURES. This 'picture-making process' takes a lot of TIME and a great deal of disk space. It is very repetitious and takes about 12 to 15 minutes a newsletter page. This works out to 1 1/2 to 2 hours of sitting there waiting and entering etc. So my idea was to have a Batch File do all of this for me while I watch some TV (PBS of course...).

To illustrate how to do this I have included a Batch File with explanations. What the programmer MUST DO is TO KNOW EXACTLY what the path for the automation is. This is easy but requires very good attention to detail. Now I will tell you in words what the programme is going to do and then I will break it down into detail and finally show you the programme.

Here is what the programme will do in plain terms in the order it occurs.

- a) LOAD the PAGE PRO programme.
- b) RUN the PAGE PRO programme.
- c) LOAD a PAGE PRO FILE
- d) SAVE the FILE to a disk as a PICTURE

I will illustrate what a person sitting in front of the screen ACTUALLY has to do to accomplish this.

- a) Type in the name of the PAGE PRO file (eg. DSK1.U1) under an E/A 5 environment.
- b) Press <enter>
- c) Press <CTRL F> for the file area.
- d) PRESS <I> to LOAD a file
- e) CLEAR the prompted file name.
- f) TYPE in the name of the file (eg. DSK1.PG1L)
- g) PRESS <CTRL ?> to start the picture saving feature.
- h) TYPE in the name of a picture file (eg. DSK4.PG-1L)
- i) Move the cursor from the top left corner to the 50th line and the 59th column (this is for page 1 only). This requires that the <FCMT E> key be pressed 16 times followed by a <FCMT S> and the <enter> key.

The above procedure is determined by writing down what you have to do in the correct order and the exact count for



WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...



SELLING THE 99/4 AND THE 99/7

Ever hear of the TI-99/7? Probably not. It is discussed in the following article by Bro Uttal, originally published in the June 18 1980 issue of FORTUNE magazine. The article's discussion of TI's marketing strategy for the 99/4 could very well have been written 3 1/2 years later as a discussion of TI's marketing blunders with the 99/4A.

John V. Roach, executive vice president of Radio Shack, the leading producer of personal computers, says he doesn't like to knock the competition. But at a recent brokerage house seminar on electronic technologies, the genial Texan just couldn't restrain himself. Having stepped to the podium, Roach pointed to a demonstration model of Texas Instruments' new home computer, the 99/4. "I'm sure glad somebody brought a TI computer here today," he deadpanned. "It's only the second one I've seen - and the first was when they launched it at the consumer electronics show last June." Roach's wisecrack brought down the house.

The butt of the gibe is TI's first entry into a market that could become the consumer electronics bonanza of the Eighties. Less than five years old, the personal computer business should rack up world wide sales of over \$650 million this year. By 1984 it could top \$3.5 billion, more than the combined value of all the digital watches, stereos, and video recorders sold in the U.S. in 1979. Scores of companies have launched personal computers to stake their claims on this new Golconda.

A BUNGLED OPPORTUNITY:

But the innovative giant of consumer electronics was slow to move, and when it finally did, it chose a wrong-headed marketing strategy and a product that relatively few people seem to want. "Basically, the 99/4 is a dog," says a disgruntled distributor, "and TI has no concept of how to sell it. When I asked a TI exec why anyone should buy it, he couldn't say." The company has dropped about \$20 million trying to crack the market, says a former executive, and it has bungled a major opportunity for growth.

TI refuses to talk about the 99/4, but the problems are obvious. It started shipping last October (of 1979) and by the end of this year had expected to sell at least 50,000, worth roughly \$35 million at wholesale. But Dataquest, a market-research firm, now estimates that TI will ship less than half that number. New England Electronics Co., one of the top ten personal computer distributors in the country, has quit carrying the machine; it is trying to help its dealers by shifting 99/4's from the many stores where they are gathering dust to the few that have found a way to move them.

Although some of TI's troubles can be laid to start up problems, the debacle raises fundamental questions about

the company's strategy. Unlike most of its rivals, TI is concentrating on selling to the ordinary consumer, who would ultimately produce a much bigger market than computer hobbyists, engineers, small businessmen, and professionals. To appeal to Mr. and Mrs. America, the company designed the 99/4 to be the least threatening of computers, with a full color TV screen, programs that simply snap into the keyboard console, and a speech-synthesis chip that enables it to "talk." This friendly machine is supposed to help its owner play games, educate children, and manage household finances.

HOW APPLE GOT BITTEN

Almost everybody else in the industry feels that the consumer market is coming - but will take four or five years to develop. The leading companies - Radio Shack, Apple Computer, and Commodore - have turned instead toward the businessman and professional. "TI is making the same mistake we made three years ago," says Steve Jobs, the 25 year old vice chairman of Apple. "The market now is for machines that can solve serious problems, and to do that, you need a lot more than the 99/4 offers." John Antonchuk, who follows the industry for Creative Strategies International, a market research firm, estimates that the home market is only one-eighth the size of the business professional hobbyist segment - and will grow less than half as fast for the next few years.

TI figured that consumers would be willing to pay a premium for the TI name, but the price of the 99/4 - now \$1400 - seems much too high. Those few competitors who are trying to penetrate the home market have kept prices well below \$1000. Their machines are less versatile than TI's but they feel the consumer simply will not pay for the extra functions TI is offering. Roach of Radio Shack observes, "When the computer does become a mass market appliance item, it is very unlikely that it will sell for more than \$500."

In its single minded quest for the consumer, TI has managed to exclude itself from the business and professional market. It designed the system in a way that makes it difficult for small, independent companies to write programs or make peripheral gear that can be used with the 99/4. These creative suppliers have helped others in the industry grow by providing software and peripheral equipment needed to serve specialized markets such as dentists' offices. Conrad Jutson, who left TI's personal-computer group to help Atari get into both home and professional markets, notes: "What the leading edge consumer needs is a lot of software; without it, the computer is just so much old iron." When Atari introduces its new software this year, he says, most of it will come from third party suppliers.

So, it seems, TI has produced a machine too costly for the mass market and too limited for the sophisticated user. It has ended up, as a distributor says, "offering less product for more money - the opposite of TI's usual strategy." This outcome can be traced to the way the machine was developed. From the start, the product lacked focus. It began as a video game, changed into a primitive home computer, and, after surviving the ministrations of

three successive program managers, emerged as a hybrid.

HEROES CAN BE EXPENSIVE

TI's top managers loved to dabble with the library of programs being developed for the new machine. "Some of them saw in the 99/4 their private electronic fantasies," recalls an engineer who worked on the project. Another veteran links the hazy focus to TI's famed management system, which sets aside special funds for engineers to develop their own ideas. "An engineer comes along with a bright idea," he says, "and before anybody on the operating side knows what's happening, he's been funded, he's off and charging, and he's a hero. It works half the time. But half the time, you end up pouring an awful lot of money down the drain before somebody says, 'Whoa! There's no marketplace.'"

Ironically, TI killed two other computers that bid fair to do better than the 99/4. The first, a "professional" model aimed at scientists and engineers, would have gone head to head with the HP85, one of Hewlett-Packard's hottest new products. But since TI's operating executives are required to meet tight development budgets, the consumer products group bled funds from the professional model to speed up introduction of the 99/4 when it had fallen behind schedule.

The high end of the line was supposed to have been the 99/7. According to managers who worked on that system, its specifications, software, and price - about \$5000 - would have made it a strong contender in the business and professional market. Moore Business Forms Inc., the leader of its industry, apparently agreed: it created a Texas division to sell the 99/7. Distributors of personal computers were so impressed with the 99/7 that some of them took on the 99/4 against their better judgement just to get the more sophisticated machine.

LEFT WITH THE LIMP OF COAL

Internal competition ultimately put the kibosh on the 99/7. TI's digital systems group, which is based in Austin and sells minicomputers to small businesses, argued that it should control development of the 99/7 because the machine was designed for small businesses. Besides, the 99/7 was so powerful and inexpensive that it would have cannibalized the low end of the minicomputer line. The squabble went all the way up to top management, which decided at the last minute to cancel the 99/7 introduction and transfer the project to Austin. There, the "not invented here" syndrome took over. Austin engineers started questioning the new product's technical and economic feasibility, and within six months, most of the project staff had left for other jobs in TI. Looking back on all this, an alumnus concludes, "They threw away the two pieces of gold and kept the lump of coal."

Nobody doubts that someday, in some way, TI will be a major factor in the personal computer market. The questions are when and how. Given the disappointing results to date and the slow evolution of the mass market, TI might well decide to ease off on the business for several years. That would leave competitors laughing and

dealers groaning - but it would give TI time to develop a coherent strategy.

FORTUNE, June 16, 1980, pages 139-140.



Lecso'



Lecso (pronounced 'lech-oh) is a traditional Hungarian dish handed down to me by my Aunt Helen. It can be eaten by itself or used as a sauce for eggs, sausage etc. You can even use it as a soup with dumplings.

- 6-8 large ripe tomatoes
- 2-3 large Green Bell peppers (use less Green pepper as below The mix of colour is nice)
- (1 Red Pepper, 2 yellow Hungarian or Cubana Peppers)
- 2 finely sliced medium onions
- 1 clove of garlic finely diced or pressed
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper (freshly ground)

Peel tomatoes (core first) by placing them in boiling water for 30 seconds and then immersing in cold water. A peeling knife can be used to pull the loosened skin off. Chop them up and set aside in a bowl. Add the spices to the tomatoes and mix in well while you do the onions and peppers.

In a large open sauce pan or Dutch oven, fry up (saute) the onions in 2 tbsp of light oil or margarine. When the onions are transparent add the garlic and stir it in. Julien (slice lengthwise) the peppers and add them to the onions. Saute them until they are softened.

Add the tomatoes to the peppers, cover and simmer for an hour.

Lecso can be served in a small bowl as a thick soup or as a sauce for potatoes or sausage or eggs etc.

The ingredient list was meant to be a guide. Most cooks will taste their food as they cook and season to taste. The sugar takes out the acidity in the tomatoes.

You can freeze the lecso and reheat later.

P.S. My Aunt didn't like to eat lecso because the seeds got under her plate. I guess, you could take the seeds out of the tomatoes to stop this from happening.

Tom

DUMPLINGS:

I got this recipe from the Jeff Smith's Frugal Gourmet show, but it was given to him by a Hungarian viewer. There are many recipes for dumplings, but I like this one the best.

Dumplings can be served with the lecsó above or can be added to Goulas (goulashi). It adds a nice touch to sauce or gravy dishes; everyone I serve it to seems to love them.

Basically, dumplings is a dough which is 'cut' into small pieces and boiled. The boiled pieces are lifted out and served as a side dish or placed in a Goulas.

Make sure that you mix the DRY ingredients separate from the wet ones, then combine them before 'cutting'.

DRY:

2 1/2 cups flour (all purpose)

1/2 tsp baking powder

1/4 tsp salt

MIX WELL

WET:

1 cup of 2% milk

2 eggs

2 tsp of melted lard (or corn oil) MIX WELL

Combine the above in a large bowl.

Mix until you get a sticky dough.

Bring 2 quarts of water and a tsp of salt to a boil in a large pot (as you would for pasta). Have a slotted spoon or strainer ready to remove the cooked dumplings.

Now the next step can be done in a variety of ways.

Cutting the dough to small pieces about the size of your thumb nail. You can do this by literally breaking off the dough with your fingers and putting it into the boiling water.

What I do is to use a 10" pizza rack which has holes the size of your fingers. This fits over most large pots so that it is stationary. I then rub or work the dough over these holes and it falls into the boiling water.

Cook the dumplings for a couple of minutes. They will swell up the longer you cook them. Most books say 5 minutes at the most. Since the dumplings are dropped into the water at different times, I feel that the 'doneness' is a purely visual thing. This will not matter.

Lift the cooked dumplings out of the water with a slotted spoon or strainer and set aside in a dish. You can wash the dumplings with a cup of cold water to remove gluten, but it doesn't really matter.

Dumplings can be done an hour in advance, but the best results always come when they are prepared just before the meal.

If you add them to Goulas, do it at the table and let

people add their own.

That's it.

Enjoy.

P.S. Someone said that they were such experts at eating that they could tell if the dumplings were made by a left or right handed person.

Tom.

HELLO

A big hello to two TI owners whom I talked to in the last month. Ed Campbell from Oshawa was first contacted by Glenn Daniels of the Kawartha club and I was able to send him out the last newsletter. He has a console and cassette system.

When I was at the Pickering Computer Faire, I mentioned to one vendor that I was working on a TI 99/4A, the gentleman beside me then said he also has a TI system (with disk drive). This turned out to be Ken Crook from Keswick on the shores of Lake Simcoe.

A big H E L L O to both of these TI users, we hope that you won't give up on this very enjoyable computer.



CHRISTMAS CHEER

OSHTI MEETING !

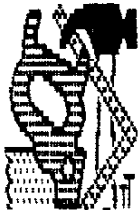
Mark down Tuesday night December 14th in your date book and circle it in RED!

Liz and Ed Conlin would like to invite all OSHTI members and there 'better' (looking) halves to a Christmas OSHTI meeting on Dec. 14th. More details will be available at the Oct. and Nov. Meetings. We hope to make this more of a social event than a regular meeting; I know, our meetings are pretty social now.

By the way, a BETTER map will be available this year. Even I got lost last year.

Thanks to the Ed and Liz for volunteering.





The COMPUTER and WOOD SHOWS..

Guy and I went to a Computer Faire at the Pickering East Convention Centre on Oct.16th. This proved to be uneventful and unproductive. There were few vendors and generally little in the way of hardware. I had planned to buy an inkjet printer but there were none for sale there. Even the weather was cold and rainy.

However, we were saved by the fact that there was a WOOD WORKERS or WOOD show on at the other end of the Mall. Both Guy and I made several small purchases, but the show was well done and very interesting. The wood carving was excellent, especially that nude... a modern Venus de Milo.



CANADIAN GENERAL ELECTION...

October 25th is election time in Canada. This year sees a wider variety of National parties with an even wider diversity of policies. Who Canadians elect will influence the coming years tremendously. It appears at the moment that there will be a change from the ruling Progressive Conservative party (PC's for short, but NOT IBM !!). The right wing conservatives have formed the REFORM Party and the French wing have formed the PARTI QUEBECOIS. This has ensured that the PC's will not get re-elected.

There is also a strong possibility of a MINORITY government. This would be interesting, but it depends on who forms the coalition.

The real task for the next government will be to create jobs and make sure that your benefits (medical, employment, welfare and old age) don't become eroded.

Several parties want to fight the 'deficit' but this will mean fewer jobs, given the approach that has been taken in the past. As one leader pointed out, if the US has had a deficit for so many years and survived, then maybe we can too. I don't believe that any party will soon pay off the deficit, and most people won't feel any difference even if they did. Will they lower income tax the day after the deficit is gone or will they borrow more money on that day. I think it would be the latter. What does matter is the JOB market. Without jobs, of any kind, we will all suffer.

Just remember to get out early and vote often.
(grin <:)



The Case of the Shrinking Files

TIPSY TIP FILES

What's happening to TIPS TXT files? They are getting shorter! I noticed that several TIPS TXT files have become shorter and that the last names in the file are NO LONGER available.

A file that was once 276 sectors in length now is only 37 sectors. Another file that was 340 sectors is now only 254 sectors. I thought that it was a chance occurrence, but now I know that something has been going on.

But wait a minute, a catalog of the disk shows that these sectors ARE NOT FREE SECTORS! They still have been allocated.

When I run TIPS 1.8, these files are indeed short. All of the pictures DO NOT show up. In fact if I have been working with the 15th picture, then I can only access up to that picture the next time.

What I do is to load a certain picture and saving it on DSK1. as a TI-ARTIST INSTANCE using the II command of TIPS. When I do this, there is NO WRITE PROTECT on the diskette and the printer is NOT on. For some reason the files gets an EOF put on at the last access point making the file appear to be shorter. I think that there could be two reasons for this:

1) It may be the fact that the printer is OFF and when I exit from TIPS 1.8 I must press Function 4 after the <E> for END the programme.

OR more likely

2) I use CTRL S to select a NEW file after I save a picture and replace the old disk with a new one. Maybe the FILE from the first SELECTION has NOT BEEN closed properly.

This has become a very serious error since I have had a lot of the files ending in TIT become shortened.

There MAY BE SOME HOPE for salvaging these files.

The fact that SECTOR 0 (the block allocation table) still registers the files as present, is a good indicator that they can be rejoined.

I am trying RECOVER FILE on DSK1 and DM-1000 to see if these will work.

At any rate, I think that the wisest thing to do is to place WRITE PROTECT stickers on the TIPS FILE diskettes. This should solve the problem.

There is NO doubt that something can be done to rejoin these files. I'll let you know next month what happened. It's too late to get the solution into this newsletter, so just BE WARNED!

Tom (Oct.20th.93)

