



U-G-dings



092
\$810

from New-JUG/North

October 1988

Volume 6 Number 10

Officers:

President...Bill Staedeli..384-4660

Treasurer...Frank Filice 384-8797

Veep....Walter Macieski..667-6903

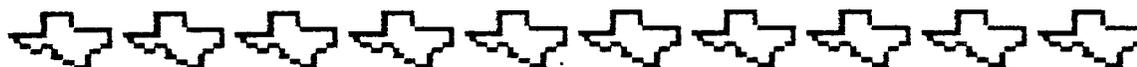
Secretary...Jim Ott..... 790-6052

Editor...Henry Hein...607-988-7789

Librarian.Andy Westner..967-9154

NEXT MEETING: October 18th, Dumont H.S. Faculty Room 7-9+ P.M.

Motto: We are a family enjoying the unspeakable peace and freedom of being orphans. (Paraphrased from George Bernard Shaw)



...October sets the gypsy blood astir!

Let the voter decide the truth!

New Jersey UG/North
P.O. Box 84
Dumont, NJ 07628

User Groups: Please Reciprocate!

Findings
From NEW JUG/North
P.O. Box 84
Dumont, NJ 07628

EDITOR: Henry Hein
RD #1, Box 343 A
Otego, NY 13825
607-988-7789

NEXT MEETING:
OCTOBER 18 at 7:30 PM
in the Faculty Lounge of Dumont H.S.
AGENDA: CLUB'S FUTURE!?

Meeting Notes
None submitted!

RAMBLINGS By Henry

Yep! I did it! It's on its way! I ordered an XT IBM clone! Configured at 640k expandable RAM, 2 drives, a 20Meg hard drive, 3.3 DOS, EGA graphics and monitor, and a digitech mouse. No, I'm not giving up or abandoning this old 99/4a! I love it too much! It's just that I'm expanding MY versatility, and rendering assistance to neighbors who have need of my expertise(?). I'm not giving up the APPLE IIc either! Each computer has its merits and demerits, assets and capabilities, etc. Maybe I'm a foolish hoarder, too.

Actually I had been searching for a portable IBM clone but could not find one that would support EGA graphics or standard drives. Why standard? Well, those 3 1/2" drives will not suit me and my large supply of 5 1/4" disks. Besides, I can easily change over to QUAD density with only a small additional investment. My interest in music computing also deterred me from getting into 286 or 386 (high priced) style processors since any composing will be played back too fast with this high speed chip. In the past two years I've accumulated MANY excellent pubdom and shareware software so far unused, but tested, on neighbors' machines.

I got hooked into it at the ALBANY, NY computer fair held on September 18. Cost: about \$1350. There were three other vendors to compare with with higher prices and unknown brands. I've heard of FOUNTAIN and saw them in action.

Club members can call or write me about details. P.S. I will share my library of pubdom and allowed shareware disks! The same for any I have for APPLE IIc compatibles.

Now that I'm about five months behind in reading our exchange newsletters I just got started to catch up. It IS a lot. Many topics have gone

by the boards in my long lapse but despite interruptions of numerous guests and crises, home improvement projects, etc., I just got started. Some topics, I've discovered, I've touched on.

Disk drive cleaning: Art Byers of Central Westchester UG, a very heavy (not in weight) user suggests, as I do, don't waste your money. Looking at the warrantee on your cleaning kit, should you have one, should tell you why. Both he and I spend hours of writing, saving, recalling, editing, etc., putting a LOT of disk drive time to use have found that it is NOT necessary, nor worth it. Some 'cleaners' actually can disable a read/write head. Excessive use can, too. I've worn out two drives. However, of the latter, I kept one bad one on the shelf for several months and put it back in and it works! It's more of a temperamental thing, I guess. Maybe it's a sickness inherent to tape recording devices. It happened to two of my reel to reel tape recorders, too.

ESSAYETTE

The leaves started turning early in September and are now in full splendor; already falling now in beautiful October. The annual event bodes of the coming *Indian Summer*, cold winds, snows, shorter days of sunshine, and long nights of winter. We are fortunate to live in this climate. It takes out the boredom of life in more calmer climes. It energizes us to seek refuge from extremes of cold and heat, and activates outdoorsmen for a number of sports the climate engenders. This is the time of beautiful October, where changes in nature are most visible. And next month we show our thanks to Divine Providence for our bounty, however meager or plentiful. One thing, for sure, the beauty of October is another of our blessings. For another that I'm grateful for is that I was born in it!

Copy Anybody?

My copy machine died last month after the NL got printed. A technician in Binghamton, NY revived it but said it doesn't have much further to go. If it does, someone in the club would have to do the printing. It's expensive up here in central NY to get the job done, and maybe in the NJ area as well. Is anyone in the club ~~was~~ active in a church group which has access to a machine? Of course pay our way with an additional side donation. It'll still be less expensive and the funds may support the church's charities. Meanwhile, I'm looking for a NEW machine and the feasibility of going into the desktop publishing business. It looks promising here and my investment may not be too great!

Desktop Publishing

You ask yourself what is all this hullabaloo? It has become a rage due to computers of all kinds able to produce graphics enhancing business brochures, trade papers, graphic report generation for board chairmen perusal, and after long periods and downsizing of computers it is now available to the ordinary home user.

This past month my son, at the Univ. of Buffalo, SUNY, suggested that I make up a family newsletter and mail it out to his and our friends, and our relatives. I took him up on it and (though) 'subscriptions' haven't been coming in enough, we got plenty of calls saying "What a wonderful idea!" It was full of fun detailing our escapades of the last month with some double entendres of humor. I'd like to include a copy in the NL but not everyone will get the 'jokes.' I will send one copy for the club's perusal at the next meeting.

No! it wasn't done on the TI, but it could have been with all the wonderful tools it has. I merely did it to familiarize myself to another computer. Indeed, the other computer was slow, too! and the number of steps in composition was just as cumbersome. But, IT WAS FUN! and, best of all- it amused others.

NEWSBYTES
By Henry

Included in this NL is a modest tutorial on Tom Freeman's QUADCOL program. I forgot to mention that there is a flaw in it but just a minor one. When printing out a formatted file it leaves a blank space at the beginning line of the first column. Otherwise, it is as good as gold! It is actually much simpler to use than a similar one I have for IBM text files for my IBM clone!..both shareware programs!

J. Peter Hoddie answers the letter of J. Johnson which scalded MYARC. The latter was published herein several months ago. Gotta give equal 'time' to the pros! He raises some good arguments. I may regret buying the IBM clone yet! Maybe I'll buyte the Geneve yet, too!

Reviews of TI-BASE are trickling in from NLs. Generally favorable! One critic, Beery Miller of MID-SOUTH 99ers, warns "The only word of caution I must mention is that when you display a record, the screen is not formatted. This means that until you write a procedure to locate each field on the

screen at the desired location, the screen will not be pretty." He gives it an "A" rating. Previously I mentioned it supports math functions, Boolean and Arithmetic! Also, according to Miller, "TI-BASE could theoretically handle a file with over 275,000 sectors." (Did he mean entries? ed.) Quad drive anyone? (ed.) No mention yet from any reviewer if files can be accessed or manipulated by TIW's and other programs' DV80 system. I would think THAT is IMPORTANT!

Gleanings from Micropendium
by Frank Filice

Vol.5 No.7 August 1988

- Feedback.....Page 8
 - Don't be too hard on software makers
 - Machine routines obtained in UK
 - Video Chess fix needed by user
 - Thank-you note from Sister Pat Taylor
 - Program problems.
- BASIC.....Page 10
 - Some basics of BASIC
- Dimystifying assembly.....Page 12
 - Accessing peripheral devices
- Trials of a c99 beginner.....Page 19
 - Mathematical function library
- Wipe-Out.....Page 24
 - Quick reactions will keep you in the driver's seat: program listed
- TI Video Chips.....Page 29
 - The 9918A and earlier chips: interesting discussion
- Geneve.....Page 36
 - Myarc's Alabama connection: alternate costumer service sources
- Software sked announced.....Page 38
 - Myarc releases 512K Geneve card
- The Gramulator.....Page 40
 - GRAM Kracker's successor: rave product review
- Barrage.....Page 42
 - Cannons against 'acid rain': rave product review
- Reader to Reader.....Page 42
 - Questions seeking answers.
- Newsbytes.....Page 43
 - Nova Scotia fair set
 - RSTS to distribute Myarc products in UK
 - Asgard releases new products
 - Comic Show Editor won't run on 9640
 - East Texas group to participate in fair
 - 99 BBS adds support for 9640 online
 - Pennsylvania users set exhibition
 - 6th Chicago TI Faire is Noy. 12
- User Notes.....Page 44
 - Editor Aid help XBASIC programmers
 - POKEV and Super Extended BASIC
 - Color selector
 - Slash zero for 80-col. Multiplan
 - Print-Trace outputs to printer

P.3

TIDINGS 10/88

WRITING FOR WORK, SCHOOL, OR PLEASURE
USING TOM FREEMAN'S
QUAD COLUMN
By Henry Hein

It's not often that good commercial printing utilities come by for ANY computer, but when one does you can expect to pay a premium price for it. This program is unique in that it was done by a very good programmer and, though not original in idea, was included as one of several utilities by Tom Freeman and sold to raise money for his UG.

This set of utilities can still be obtained from the Los Angeles 99ers TI UG, P.O. Box 67A79, Los Angeles, CA 90067 for \$8.00. Included is a bound copy manual describing the utilities and their uses. All of the utilities are useful, and one of them, in particular, is written in XB and ASSEMBLY, SIDEWAYS, offer us computer users a wide range of printouts of texts, spreadsheets, and, if necessary, data base files (if filed in D/V 80 formats.)

Tom admits there may be a few quirks in it but I haven't found any. Yep, I had the program sitting on my shelf for more than a year before trying to use it. Now I am using it to print out the *TI-dings* newsletter for New/JUG North EVERY month. As you can see it retains any special character commands I use in my text. This program, historically, is the idea of New/JUG North's Ralph Kopperman who did the NL's throughout 1983/84. His version was published as TWOCOLUMN in our *New/JUG North NL* of Feb. '84.

Somewhere along the line Tom Freeman did some wonderful things to it to enable three and four column printing, and writing as many as 80 readable lines of text on a standard 8 1/2" X 11" page. Ralph's original program allowed for downloading any special characters and Tom did not change that. Why would he? It's an editor's dream! And the improvements, WOW!

My last two tutorials on TIW mentioned that the key to using this program is *divide and conquer*. To understand this one would have to read this very carefully.

A text file generated by TIW with all its formatting and character commands on it MUST be FORMATTED to DISK, not just saved. It MUST be formatted for straight (justified) right margins in either 28, 40, or 57 for

four, three, or two column printouts. The program is intended for COMPRESSED PRINT output but can be altered, since it is written in XB. The alterations must be made in the PRINT# output commands to enable ELITE or PICA (normal) fonts. It works well on STAR and EPSON compatibles, but with the latter the downloading of special characters may have to be modified.

There are differences in some of the upgraded EPSONs and compatibles, requiring some modifications of last month's tutorial's .TL files. For example, to slash zeroes on the STAR older series (GEMINI's, SG-10s, etc.) you needn't make a TL, but just a printout command Control U, Shift R, Function Z, (backslash), Control U, and Enter, saving it in a TL file on ITS OWN line. If you have an FX, LX, or later EPSON or compatible, including the STAR NX-1000 instead of the BACKSLASH key, type in the TILDA (Function W.) Check your printer's manual for its printer code lists to be sure. I do not have access to all these printers. Whatever, you can save this command on a SEPARATE line in your TL file.

CAVEAT! Never buy a printer without a manual! Even a used one!

You can do great things without an STAR or EPSON compatible if you can translate your printer's codes into TL commands. If you have an OKIDATA or other printer you MUST check to see if its EPSON compatible. If not, work on your TLs with its variant codes. The only problem with other printers, but a serious one for some, is not being able to do graphics with most programs made for TI.

Now back to the matter at hand. QUADCOLUMN, as mentioned above, CAN be modified to print out your text in ELITE mode by finding the PRINT# command which tells the printer to print text in COMPRESSED mode. This is represented by CHR\$(15). Substitute this with CHR\$(27);"G";CHR\$(2). RESAVE the program with the name DUALELITE, as I do, for this printout format I used in last month's tutorial and NEWSBYTES and RAMblings columns. If you RUN the program you are limited to only TWO column printing with 40 characters per line unless you have a wide carriage printer using 11X8 1/2 paper sideways. For PICA output all you need do is ERASE the CHR\$(15) command and SAVE the 'new' program as DUAL PICA. This I haven't done myself because the columns would have to be formatted to 37 or 38 columns, max!, and use more paper in

printing out these NLs.

Follow the menu prompts with GREAT care! This is crucial. Here is my explanation:

The program's NORMAL defaults allow for 60 lines/page which allows for 6 lines per inch spacing in whichever type you want it set for, PICA, ELITE, or COMPRESSED.

You MUST EDIT your formatted disk file in CONTROL 0 MODE to do several things. Remove ALL blank lines you don't want, such as the ones separating pages, edit out page breaks, too. Try to realign as much as possible your right margins that are skewed by special character commands using the INSERT or DELETE keys. If you used the EXPANDED print mode command in your text you will have to delete excess blank spaces between words the FORMATTER made to FILL and RIGHT ADJUST. Always leave one space between words however. If you can't, just eliminate the visible special character commands before and after the word and retype the word in caps to satisfy your need for emphasis. By now you can see that I've combined the EXPANDED and ITALIC command several times in last month's NL. This IS possible but a lot of spaces are used on lines when this occurs taken up by control characters and must be compensated for in your printouts by editing out excess or not enough spacing.

Look at the number of lines in your 40 or 57 column texts (the latter for the programs COMPRESSED print limit in two column mode.) If you have 180 lines in 40 column mode you can get 3 columns on one sheet of paper in COMPRESSED. If 240 you can do two pages in ELITE mode, etc. But suppose your text is 150 lines. What then? Here is a set of options Tom's program gives us:

INPUT Characters per line: 40, 57, or whatever

Margins: "n" spaces

Column Separation: "n" spaces

Note: these should be chosen on the basis of your printer's carriage capacity allowing so many characters per line, including spaces.

To change output for each page

Alter lines per column

To change line spacing by $n/72$ "

Lines per page: 66, 70, 80, etc.

If you choose yes on the first prompt you can do a lot of things.

Last month's NL news, meeting notes,

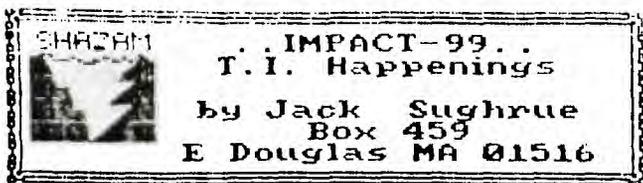
and RAMblings took up 440 lines of text. I squeezed them into three pages of DUALELITE text. For the first prompt in answered Y. For the first page I opted for 75 lines/page and line spacing I chose $9/72$ " line spacing. This automatically set my first page to two 75 line columns side by side with 8 line/spacing, instead of the default 6. When the first page was printing out, about halfway through, the RS 232 card was ready to accept the next page's command and I did the same waiting for the printer to finish (I use single sheets.) After resetting the second sheet in the printer I hit ENTER and another 150 lines of text go to print. After that I had 140 lines of text left to print. The next prompt I changed from 75 to 70, with $10/72$ " spacing so that the page looks better without too much vacant space on the bottom. This gives an almost 7 lines/inch.

Now you have an idea of what is meant by *divide AND conquer*. I sometimes have a little problem but I get to solve it with the DIVIDE and CONQUER method mentioned above and customizing it for DUALELITE column printing. Some rules of thumb in determining multipage printing of 3 column sheets is getting a number of lines divisible by 6. For 2 column=divide by 4 and 4 column=divide by 8. To do this one CAN insert blank lines in the text and, be sure to keep the line feed symbols uniform using Control U Shift J Control U in WORDWRAP MODE, (rectangular cursor!) Leaving line spaces between paragraphs in TIW EDIT mode may be easier since the FORMATTER will automatically put them in and easily removed when you reEDIT the FORMATTED version.

I save this as a modified program on my FUNLWEB disk. I also modified each to reload my FUNLWEB when finished printing so that I can reEDIT the file quickly if it needs it. This can be done by finding the word STOP and replacing it with RUN DSKn.LOAD.

There are lots of tricks out there and Tom's program is really a blessing to NL editors and writers who need condensed copies of texts. I say condensed, not shortened!

I hope I explained the program in an understanding way. I invite any comments, queries, clarifications, etc., for later articles on TIW and related utilities. The TI world is blessed with much talent and is STILL very much alive.



ADVENTURING

Marathons of the Mind

From tiny little word puzzles called *riddles* to elaborate puzzles called *mystery novels* there is really great intellectual growth. This growth is nurtured by fun: the fun of solving puzzles.

In recent years problem-solving puzzles written or developed on massive scales have become the intellectual pastime for a large number of young and old people throughout the world.

On the one hand such brainstorming, role-playing activities as the *Dungeon and Dragon* style puzzle/games have become extremely popular. These situation games require intense researching and reading skills which are only now beginning to astound teachers. How is it possible that a child who can't read *SEE PUFF RUN*, can not only read very technical books on mythology but apply that learning to problem-solving situations?

On the other hand we have - *computers!* - the greatest friend a teacher (particular those of us harried by fragmentation) ever had.

Besides being electronic flashcards and word-processors and educational development tools (i.e., Beginning Grammar, Reading Rally, Dragonix, Logo II, et al), the computer can serve as an excellent reading/writing/problem-solving tool. This tool gets students *involved*. This tool is known, jargon-wise, as interactive fiction. But, to the novice, it is simply identified as text adventures: No graphics except those in the mind.

Most educators who have been using these games in the classrooms with any regularity have agreed that different approaches to the game (henceforth known as the adventure) are varied and effective. Most teachers prefer a group of three to five youngsters on the adventure at one time and that there should be almost no teacher intervention once the programs have been explained and the classroom structure has been established.

A good place to start for most computers would be Scott Adams' *ADVENTURES*. Pirate Adventure (the text version) is probably best to start with. With our 99/4A, of course, we might even start with simpler adventures like *FOUR VEDAS* which aren't available for other computers. Others in that series include *MINER 49er*, *FUNHOUSE*, *HAUNTED HOUSE*, and *STONE AGE*.

Once the game is loaded there is a certain structure usually followed by most adventure programmers: At the from Nutmeg 99ers via LITI

ton of the screen the scene is described in a manner similar to this: *You are in a small dark room. There is a square patch of light in the distance. Shriill, high-pitched noises can be heard above your head.*

Directions: S H U

Then there is a flashing cursor.

The players must decide what to do. They all assume the role of the one character. Everything is perceived from that person's perspective.

Now the character may be directed to go Up or South or West or take an *INVENTORY* or *LIGHT CANDLE* (only if he/she has one and matches to light it with) and *LOOK ROOM*. (Most commands, as you can see, are given in abbreviated form in adventures. This helps the game move faster. Usually commands require only the first or the first three letters: *W* or *INV*. To perform specific actions (or reactions) usually requires a two-word situation: verb/noun. *CLIMB TREE*, *GO HOUSE*, *PICK NOSE*, *TAKE KNIFE*, *EAT SOUP*.

Very high-level games, such as those created by Infocom, allow you to write complex multiple commands in sentence form. Some of their games (the *ZORK* series, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Suspended*) may take adults months. Although they are marvelous they probably would not be suited to classroom use. (Many elementary school children, alone or with their families DO these incredible adventures.)

Meanwhile, back in the classroom, if you have one or two computers going with adventures, you will note an enthusiastic brainstorming at a very profound level. This is an exciting thing to watch. This kind of experience can be easily translated into other kinds of reading, writing, problem-solving, brainstorming experiences.

Depending on the amount of time you allow a group to participate will depend on how many days it takes to complete the adventure. It is an unusually rewarding experience for the youngsters and one which motivates the next group ready to start their adventure (the same or another; it doesn't matter). A beautiful side effect is the sharing that goes on.

There may be individuals who can attempt a solo adventure for some good educational reason, too. The children will volunteer to work on the program during lunch and recess.

Adventuring turns on kids. And it's impossible to keep a turned-on kid from learning. (An excellent classroom environment is provided for computer-use also.)

§§

There are other kinds of adventuring, too. The D&D-style slash & hack appeals to most youngsters. There are two that stand out for the TI: *TUNNELS OF DOOM* and the extraordinary one, *LEGENDS*. *TOD* is superb because you can get *TOD Editor*, which lets you create your own adventures; and *LEGENDS* is great because it is, simply, the best of the S&M adventures around. The graphics are superb, the options are excellent, the potential for growth is built in, and the "real world" geography is unmatched by any other similar game.

TI-dings 10/88 P. 6

Now, for your own adventuring. There are an incredible number of adventures for the TI, depending upon what one considers an adventure.

If it's an all-text thing, then Tunnels of Doom and the great LEGENDS would not be. Thus, some adventures have graphics. But are all-text programs adventures? If so, one would have to include ELIZA (which all but seven people in the world have played) as an adventure. It certainly is an adventure of the mind, though no goals are set and no end results. Maybe psychological wanderings shouldn't be adventures.

Do adventures have to take place in the Middle Ages (or pseudo Middle Ages)? If so, then some of the very best adventures from INFOCOM (Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Suspended, Witness, etc.) wouldn't be. But are. One Tunnels of Doom game takes place in K-Mart.

What then are adventures? Well, I think they must allow the user to make decisions that can change the course of the game. That's 1: player decisions. I think there has to be reactions to those decisions that are logical (even in a nonsensical fantasy a certain kind of logic must exist). I think there has to be a pre-determined (early in the game) mission. A goal. There has to be a set of tasks successfully completed to reach that goal. There has to be punishment of some kind for failure (or failure to take risks). There must be reward for achievement of the goal.

Basically, that's it. But there's still a problem. If you have Art Auction or Car Dealer or Lemonade or Gone Fishing or any number of small programs like these that have you make decisions (usually built upon other decisions), most of the above would apply: text, decision making, reaction to decision, goals (to achieve so much money or fish), punishment (bankruptcy or drowning), reward for successful achievement. Most throw in a thwarting agent, too. (Storm in Gone Fishing, other bidders in Art Auction, rain in Lemonade.

So are these adventures? Certainly more than ELIZA (which I consider a form of adventure), but they are not what many adventure players consider adventures.

There must be more - er - exotic environments: space, jungles, funhouse, battlefields (Watch it! The game Civil War might be considered an adventure.), Wonderland); exotic times (the 30's, prehistoric times, the future); exotic characters (pirates, bugblatter beasts, K-Mart customers); exotic situations (saving the world, getting a cup of tea, understanding a computer poet, finding treasure).

Which brings us to the mazes which are adventures (Zork being the most famous) and mazes (Cat and Mouse) which are not; treasures which are adventure goals (Dungeons) from treasures which are goals but not adventures (Blackbeard's Treasure).

The criteria for "true" adventures, if there is such a thing, is vast and not always something which people agree on.

All this, as you probably figured, is leading up to something.

Mickey Schmitt, the world's leading expert on TI Adventuring, is putting together for publication the ENTIRE adventure world on the TI. Every adventure ever written for the TI - Commercial, Fairware, and Public Domain. This is a vast undertaking.

If any readers have any Fairware or Public Domain adventures, please gather them on a disk or two (preferably with a TI WRITER file to go along with it, giving the title, whether it requires the IB, ADVENTURE MODULE, TUNNELS OF DOOM, E/A, or just plain BASIC), and a short description [in case I have the game under a different title or want to categorize them by theme] and mail them to me. I will see that Mickey gets them. I will also send you back an equivalent number of disks with suitable PD and/or Fairware games for your efforts in this monumental task.

Games released by Scott Adams, Asgard, Infocom, Steve Davis, A.S.D. & E., Donn Branros are all copyrighted materials and may not be copied and sent. They have been purchased for this compilation.

[Jack Sughrue, Box 459, E.Douglas MA 01516]



Random Ramblings

By J. Peter Hoddie

The policy of this newsletter has always been to print the articles provided by the authors without any large scale editing. From time to time this has led to phone calls from rather prominent members of the TI community asking me how I could support certain positions enumerated in the newsletter. Most of you are aware that I have been working closely with MYARC on the development of the 9640 for over 18 months now. All of this said, I feel that it is necessary for me to respond to some of the comments made by John Johnson and published in Mike Wright's column this month. Before getting into the details I would like to state that (1) John's program Remind Me! is released through Genial Computerware, a company in which I hold a one-third interest, (2) I have a tremendous respect for John and his programming abilities, and (3) it is not my intention in the following comments to "slam" any party, John or MYARC.

On MYARC

A major complaint in John's letter, and perhaps what I would consider the most important, is that MYARC is attempting to "close" the machine. I have not seen any solid information to back up this claim. Back in Chicago in November 1985, before I had any direct involvement with MYARC, I listened to Lou Phillips promise a completely open machine. Since then I have heard nothing to directly contradict this. As recently as May of this year I have discussed the writing and/or reviewing of technical programming information with individuals at MYARC. MYARC's commitment to providing full technical information can be seen in the forthcoming manual for the new hard and floppy disk controller (HFDC). This manual describes every available software call for both the hard and floppy disk. This amounts to providing information which TI considered "proprietary" and has yet to release to this day.

Information on each and every available system call from MDOS has been documented by Paul Charlton in a series of files posted on all the major telecommunications networks and available from the BCS software library since last fall. While I will admit that these files are far from being a tutorial of any sort, or even the ultimate reference source, these files do provide all the information necessary to write programs that will run under MDOS. Many computer manufacturers publish huge technical reference manuals for their computers, for the Apple Macintosh and Commodore Amiga, as examples. These manuals for the most part are just long lists of system calls with input and output parameters given, which is exactly what the 9640 documents currently do. These manuals do spend some time describing concepts which are part of the particular methodology involved in writing programs for that computer. The 9640 documents do not do that at this time. However, 95% of the calls available from MDOS should be self explanatory to the 99/4A programmer, certainly the intended audience at this time. It is possible to write a program using these documentation. It may not be easy, but then writing software to run in a new environment is never a trivial task. Several determined individuals have managed to create useful applications under MDOS, including Clint Pulley, Dave Ramses, and Jim Schroeder.

MYARC does not have any full time employee dedicated to writing documentation. Creating good quality documentation is a large job. MYARC is still intent on improving the quality of the available 9640 documentation. However, as John accurately points out, the manufacturer of a computer can never do everything. Apple Computer has some of the best documentation available, yet there are hundreds of books and magazines available on how to program their computers. Some of the most important work done on the 99/4A was done by individual programmers. The information provided by TI, even to their own programmers, never would have allowed for someone to write a program like John's incredible MENU/BOOT system for RAM disks.

The point of this initial discussion, is that I believe sufficient information has been provided for serious work to proceed. This information has been available for many months

from Boston Computer Society

71-dings 10/88 p. 8

now. The documentation can improve, and it probably will. However, those who truly wish to begin work on 9640 specific software should be able to do so. Hopefully they will share what they learn with the rest of us.

John's article implies that MYARC has raised the price of the 9640 in order to make more money. MYARC announced the price of the 9640 at about \$500. Several times Lou Phillips made side comments that no one ever paid list price. When the machine was released it listed for \$500, and many were able to purchase it for about \$400. Since the time when the original costing on the 9640 was done, the prices for certain chips (in particular memory) have increased by over 300%. Since initial release the price has increased to a list of about \$540, and MYARC has provided a substantially improved keyboard as part of this price increase.

The 9640 can still be purchased for under \$500, and considering the capability that the computer provides, this appears to be an exceptional purchase. Consider an IBM style keyboard like the Rave 99 keyboard sells for about \$200, a 512K memory card is another \$200, a 9938 video card roughly another \$200, a GRAM emulator about \$180, and significantly increased speed which really can't be purchased at any price. Total that up and you come out well above \$500 and you still may not have things like a mouse interface, and simultaneous RGB and composite video output. You also end up using several slots in an expansion box. And the 9640 provides MDOS - true command line driven operating system, and the possibility of Advanced BASIC and UCSD Pascal in the near future at no additional charge. MYARC also provides word processing software and an upgrade to the Multiplan package. All this for under \$500 has been considered an exceptional purchase by many.

John makes some brief comments about a protection card for the expansion box. I do not believe in protection schemes. Unfortunately I also understand why they are necessary. MYARC's protection scheme would allow unlimited copies of a piece of software to be made, but they could only be run on only one machine at a time. This will provide no real inconvenience to most 9640 owners. Perhaps in an effort to temper the problem of losing an expansion box slot to a protection card, MYARC has put a connector on the card to allow the use of the speech synthesizer with the 9640. This would also seem to address John's implication that MYARC removed the speech synthesizer from the original 9640 specification. One look at the 9640 card shows that there is no real estate on the 9640 board for the chips required to replace the speech synthesizer. MYARC has what they consider good reason for wanting the protection card. They have figures that they believe show wide spread piracy of the MY-Art program, their first entry into the software business. MYARC invested significant money up front to bring this program to market and did not make back what they expected, in their view, because of piracy. Their hardware protection scheme appears to be a workable solution to this touchy problem.

I'm glad to see that John has not given up all hope in the 9640. I think it is unfortunate that he chose to express himself in such a negative manner in a first public communication with MYARC. Perhaps a more diplomatic first letter would have been more appropriate and less damaging to the TI community as a whole, where fighting has already done too much harm.

More Comments

Moving onto other topics, though still commenting on Mike Wright's article. The Rave memory card is, in my opinion, probably the best memory card option going for the 99/4A owner, and initial tests indicate that it will work with the 9640 as a RAM disk with the next release of MDOS. I am working on a complete review of the Gramulator intended for MICROpendium so I won't get into too many details, but if you are looking for a GRAM emulator such as the GRAM Kracker, the Gramulator is an exceptional product.



JACK SUGHRUE - Box 459
East Douglas MA 01516

If you thought FUNNELPLUS was an excellent word-processing companion with lots of unusual utilities and fun programs thrown in, just wait'll you see v. 1.0 of PLUS!

This brand new environmental enhancement is a remarkable (and remarkably cohesive) NEW collection of all you dreamed of in a word processor and MUCH more. It contains very updated versions of all 21 files originally contained in FUNNELPLUS. (So if you've never owned THAT great disk before, it's here!). However, the larger amount of the 65 files are completely new to TI users.

In addition to the author's codes, templates, graphics, tutorials and programs, other files are included by other authors. Lots of ideas and tips have been garnered from discussions, letters, phone calls, and newsletters. Some PD programs used here have been drastically modified to fit inside this tight environment.

Although all that's needed is one SSSD drive and 32K, enhanced systems will have greater flexibility. Persons with Geneve, 512 card, RAMdisk and/or DSSD or harddisk capabilities will find PLUS! the perfect environmental package for all word-processing and many utility needs.

This new companion contains an excellent tutorial on FUNNELWEB by Charles Good; TIK references for EDITing and FORMATting; tutorials; the most compact reference chart available for instant checking of just about anything on TIM, including the mysterious Transliteration Key (and how to turn it into a macro or graphics maker).

Two of the PD programs let you type in gothic and dump your GRAPHX, TI-ARTIST, and/or RLE pix right into your printer or convert them to D/V 80 files. There are also suggestions for creating your own desktop publishing system.

PLUS! there are the tiny files that FUNNELPLUS was famous for: 2- or 3-sector programs, codes, and templates that let you dump a screen of text, print labels, print out any DV/80 files, design letterheads, and even use the world's tiniest wordprocessor (that'll let you write your novel on adding machine paper!).

Then there are the updates of the taken-for-granted programs that were the mainstay of many of FUNNELPLUS's 9 versions: flexible banner program, personalized desk and yearly calendar programs, on-screen workshop demonstration program (with music and fancy displays), and programs to create box patterns, labels, etc., using printer graphics (Gemini-compatible default) right within your text files.

The docs are a novice's dream. They create a manual and tutorial for even the most nervous computerphobic.

From Nutmeg via Grand Rapids Call
June 1988

Important features of PLUS! are the most often requested files - now a reality: the ability in EDITor LF to set margins to screen size automatically, open your Include Files to resize to 80 or 134 or whatever AUTOMATICALLY in your printout, provide the centering, double-spacing, condensed-typing or ANY OTHER hardcopy combinations you want! THIS IS ALL DONE WITH A SINGLE KEYSTROKE! You want to type a friendly letter, let's say. Press L while in Load File in EDIT mode. BAM! Instant Letter File - all within preTABbed screen dimensions - that includes your own letterhead, date (which will cursor before printout if you wish), name (again cursor), body to type over, properly-spaced closing; the whole shebang. No fuss. No hassle. PLUS! the ability to create letter forms galore.

The one/two-stroke TIM loaders (C, L, G & M files) can suit whatever personal, educational, professional needs you have. They include one done for my kids for their college term papers; one for an educational book I wrote; one for normal text use; one for pack-it-in condensed use. One that lets you type 134 columns by 134 rows: 18,000 characters per page! And others, too. You'll wonder how you could have done without this high-speed convenience before. Because each of these loaders ALSO includes a complete range of anemically-devised transliteration codes. You can use alone or in combinations the following: italics, true underline, doublestrike, super & sub scripts, condensed, enlarged, pica, elite, near-letter quality, and specially-defined (user) keys that give up whole words or sentences or any graphic designs your printer will print out. Each done by a single keystroke. And ALL within your text on the TIM version you are using.

There are lots of other text, graphic, and design programs and files, such as a program that crunches your IB programs for speed and space, a columnizer to allow your text to be printed in columns for newsletters or other uses, and even a program that prints your English into Pig-Latin! PLUS! the versatile mini-manager menu/loader. All this PLUS! more is on ONE FULL (719 sectors) DSSD DISK! (unless SSSD is specified)

PLUS! is - like its popular predecessor - a great Fairware buy: only \$10! (address below)

Any version of TI Writer will work with these 65 files, but the new 1988 FUNNELWEB is unquestionably the best and most convenient. If you are unable to get from your user group a copy of this incredible environment (which includes Disk Manager 1000, Editor/Assembler cartridge, Forth load, disk editor, c99 load, a manual, and lots of other things in addition to the best version of TI Writer around), send me \$3 additionally for the DISTRIBUTION COSTS ONLY for the latest version. (This is NOT paying for FUNNELWEB, as it, too, is Fairware and a fair amount should be sent to the authors! This is just my cost of handling, copying, and mailing their masterpiece.)

* JACK SUGHRUE, Box 459, East Douglas, MA 01516 *

say
Page 10 TI-dings 10/88

PRBASE BUG REPORT by Bill Warren (author of PRBASE).

NOTE: John Parken of Chips received the following from Bill Warren when he sent in his contribution. Some of us may have had these problems and discovered fixes by now, and some of us may not have. Deanna Sheridan, the editor for the Cleveland Area 99ers newsletter (April, 1988), sent a copy to the United Database SIG/Johnson Space Center TI 99/4 UG, 2321 Coryell Street, League City TX 77573. [And the result is that I am retyping it - Jim Susco.]

OUTPUT DEVICE NAME

Many users have experienced a printer error # when attempting to print with PIO or a legal disk file name. Most of the development work for version 2.0 was done with existing databases from version 1.2 in order to ensure upward compatibility. Also, I must have designed 50 different databases to test the code changes, but still failed to catch this bug until after release.

As you may already know, if you have already assigned a default output device name when designing a data screen with CREATE, this output device name will appear as the default whenever you edit or change your data screen. The problem is that on the first design, the old default is displayed as well, even though no former default existed. Hence, when using a freshly, initialized diskette and designing a new database for this disk, when the program asks for "Output Device Name:", it presents you with a field full of [ASCII] character 229s (>E5), which is what the format disk routine leaves all the disk sectors filled with. Since character 229 does not have any character definition in the character pattern table, it shows up looking just like a space character, with nothing visible at all. If you try to output to a common device name like 'PIO', you are actually trying to output to a device name like 'PIOxxxxxxxxxxxx' where the x's are the >E5s.

A lot of folks have mistakenly tried to work around this by using output device names such as 'PIO.CR'. Anytime you place a period in the output device names such as PIO or RS232, the ROM code just scans for the first two characters following the period and then looks for another period (or sometimes an equal sign). Hence, RS232.BA=4800 and RS232.BAUDRATE=4800 and even RS232.BADBOYS=4800 are all equivalent to the system. Anyway, you probably won't have any problem with the >E5s if you are using RS232 as an output device, as most folks have SOME kind of software switches set when using a serial printer (did TI really think folks would normally use 300 bps as the default to drive a printer?)

Anyway, using PIO.CR causes all the >E5s to be ignored, but also sets a software switch, suppressing the carriage return/line-feed pair that is normally sent at the end of each line of text. Not sending the CR-LF pair requires that you space-fill each printer line (send out a full 80 characters on an 80-column printer) to cause the printer to move on the next line. This need for space filling will totally mess up your column alignment. I suspect that a lot of folks who are using this method are just getting along with the P command screen dumps, and aren't taking advantage of PRBASE's tabular report capabilities.

The fix is simple: when you have finished designing or editing data screens, and have advanced to where CREATE asks "output Device Name:", press FCTN-3, ERASE [DEL LINE], and enter your usual device name. Complete the other fields (except the defaults). After entering the last field, the change will be saved, and you shouldn't have any more trouble with the printing error appearing when attempting to print or output to disk file.

DISK FORMAT --- DOUBLE-SIDED

Some folks run into trouble when the disk initialization routines used by CREATE attempt to verify sectors 361-720 on TI controllers. The disk initialization routines in the TI controller apparently vary in some manner that

I was never able to determine. The CorComp selection appears to work fine as either single- or double-sided. The TI selection appears to work without fail on single-sided disks, but fails on some units with the double-sided option.

I don't have a fix for this within PRBASE/CREATE, but you can easily avoid the problem altogether (if you are even having it) by just initializing your data disk prior to it's first use with some other disk manager problem, just like old PRBASE 1.2.

MIS-ALIGNMENT OF COLUMNS IN TAB REPORTS

Some folks have written about problems with the underlining of the column header of the [tabular] reports. The first thing to check is the output device name (see above). If this is all squared away and you are still having problems with your header, try using CREATE to work your way through the design of the problem report until it brings up your old header for changes. Retype the header, taking care to use the space bar to pass through all the white space in the column header. Don't use the right arrow key (FCTN-D)!!!! Using the space bar fills the header field, whereas using the right arrow will sometimes leave nulls (ASCII 0's), which are subsequently ignored by the printer, and as such, foul up your header alignment. Serves me right for clearing the screen with nuls instead of spaces.

FUTURE OF PRBASE

It's not news to many folks, but I am no longer working on any updates to PRBASE. I do still write a lot of letters answering questions on its use, and just servicing the program in general. If a user needs help, I will try to provide it. This still includes having the user send a problem data disk for my examination.

A couple of folks have received the source code from me, and have undertaken some revisions. Mike Dodd of Oliver Springs, TN has gotten as far as to release version 2.1, which I understand will allow you to use standard TI I/O to access the data disk. Mike's address:

Mike Dodd
116 Richards Drive
Oliver Springs, TN 37840

My hat is off to Mike, for working through my source code and sector madness.

Also, Barry Traver expressed some interest in revising the program so that it could run on the MYARC 9640. I understood that he and Peter Hoodie would be doing the work, but haven't heard how they are doing. Barry can be contacted at:

Barry Traver
835 Green Valley Drive
Philadelphia, PA 19128, or:

as a sysop of the TI Forum on Comuserve. His ID is 70436.373.

Thanks to:

Deanna Sheridan, editor
Cleveland Area User Groups
20311 Lake Road
Rocky River, OH 44116

10/88 Tidings - p.12