



TACOMA SSERS USERS GROUP NEWSLETTER

Volume 4

DECEMBER 1987

No. 12



From the President . . .

Now that you have all that turkey stuffed (eaten), hope you are getting ready for Christmas. To remind every one, we are having a club Christmas party on the 17th of December at the regular meeting place. It is for all members and family. Bring something to snack on (pot luck!). Hope you all have a good time. May Santa be especially good to you all this year.

As announced at our last meeting, at our officers and board meeting, a slate of candidates for officers for the upcoming year was selected to be voted on at a general membership meeting in January. Nominations for officers from the floor will also be accepted. The following were nominated at the officer/board meeting:

- President - Frank Ashburn
- Vice Pres. - Walt Todd
- Secretary - Larry Hawk
- Treasurer - Ron Prewitt
- Librarian - Bob Haun

Art Daniels has agreed to remain as newsletter editor, but he will need some help in the future. He cannot devote as much time to this project as he has been. He also has a fulltime job and a fulltime family. The family thing may be questionable if he doesn't get some help. Seems like I heard something like that at my house one time. Also we are going to set up a group or committee to take some of the work off Bob Haun so he can do some of his own things on the computer.

While on the subject of help, let us try to come up with some articles (original or copied) for the newsletter. If we don't get newsletter items in to Art, the newsletter will probably have to be a bit smaller (less newsy). Also on the same note, would you please go thru your library catalog and come up with some ideas for Disk of Month and also for demos at meeting. Jot it on a note paper and hand it in to one of the officers.

I saw a small article in one of our exchange newsletters which is entitled WORTH REPEATING and I believe it is. "I don't know if I am a stuffy old so and so or if I have a warped sense of courtesy, but it seems to me that when there is a meeting going on and several people

Tacoma 99ers HONOR ROLL

For the period ending Nov. 25th

The following members have contributed time and effort in support of User Group sponsored activities. This is to express appreciation for their contribution.

Board of Directors Meeting

VERN SCHROTENBOER WALLY DUBBERLY
WALT TODD ART DANIELS
RON PREWITT JOE NOLLAN
LARRY HAWK FRANK ASHBURN

WHERE WERE YOU?

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

GWAC MEET IN OCT.

Computer Room for NOV.

WALT HAMILTON - 7th
JEAN PAUL ANSTEY - 7th

ALF MILLER
VERN SCHROTENBOER
RON PREWITT
FRANK ASHBURN

ALF MILLER - 14th
JEAN PAUL ANSTEY - 14th

Newsletter Articles

BOB MILLER - 21st
J. E. SMITH - 21st

VERN SCHROTENBOER
BOB HAUN
JOE NOLLAN
ART DANIELS
WALT TODD

TOM KING - 28th
JOE NOLLAN - 28th

From the Library Desk . .

We've added several new programs to our library. You might want to check out BARGRAPHER, ENVELOPE DESIGN or HOME ACCOUNTING SYSTEM. There's a new DISK LABEL program and the most complete listing of original TI software, PHX LISTING. You will be getting several new pages for your catalog at the first meeting in December.

I've put together all the Christmas programs I could find and fit on a SSSD disk for the Disk of the Month. I've added an auto-loader with a built-in screen dump. It came out pretty good. We'll see how you feel about it. This is the last news from the library before Christmas so I'll wish everyone A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

SUPPORT THE CLUB AND THE LIBRARY THIS YEAR. . . .

Bob Haun, 584-3938

Game Review!

By WALT TODD

Alpiner - Be a mountain climber challenging the 6 toughest peaks in the world. Hood, Matterhorn, Kenya, McKinley, Garmo and Everest. Face rockfalls, forest fires, avalanches and -ugh!-the Abominable Snowman. 1 or 2 players. (Speech Synthesizer and Joy Sticks recommended.) This is an enjoyable game for kids of all ages.

Jumpy - This is one of my favorite games. An arcade quality game that gets the jump on QBert, Jumpy's purple and black monsters join forces in a relentless race to catch you. Your task is to navigate each maze which you encounter while collecting all the toll dots. Double jumps and strategy are the addicting elements of this ingenious and highly challenging game. (Joystick). An interesting game that offers a large variety of screens.

Junkman Jr. - This game is relatively new on the market (1987) and offers many enjoyable hours of entertainment. The year....2487 A.D. The place...Aging planet Earth in the dying city of Burrwin, Illinois. You are collection pollution for transport to an outer space junkyard in an attempt to save Earth from extinction. But you must listen for tiny barks...your only warning that mean and vicious micro-dogs give before they attack. Only your agility will save you. Entertains with lively music, spritely action, imaginative graphics and sound. (Joysticks recommended).

These games are still available for purchase through the various mail order and retail businesses that deal in products for the TI 994/A. (Tritron and Tenex for mail order and for retail try Queen Anne Computer in Seattle and Bits Chips in Edmonds).

Alpha Lock Curse Is Finally Lifted

This information comes from an article in the CPUG Newsletter of June 1987, a reprint from K&3 TI Newsletter. Those who attended the November 19th meeting saw first hand the results of this modification. For those who were not in attendance the modification allows full Joystick operation regardless of the position of the ALPHA LOCK key. The only part needed is a 1N914 (or similar) signal diode and the tools needed are a philips screwdriver and soldering implements. There was one rare case in which a 1N34A diode (lower forward voltage drop) was needed to compensate for a marginal I/O chip on the motherboard. First remove the back cover from the console and locate the ALPHA LOCK key in the lower right corner of the keyboard. I will write a word picture of how to do the modification and will keep it brief. There are a number of keyboard styles requiring some detective work on your part. If there are two terminals near the key, follow the trace that leads to the connector and terminates at the sixth terminal from the right. Cut this trace and solder the diode across the break with the cathode (banded) end towards the connector. On one board there is a jumper wire in the path which can be replaced with the diode and no trace cutting is needed. If there are three terminals cut the

trace between two closest ones and install the diode with the cathode towards the connector. After installation test the operation of the ALPHA LOCK key and the joystick then reassemble the console.

Here's the good news. At the January 7th meeting I will do the modification for anyone who brings a keyboard or console. I will also provide a diode to anyone desiring the thrill of doing it themselves.

Another modification that I made was change a resistor value in the VDP area. A switch was used to change values allowing before/after comparisons. The consensus of opinion was that there was not much difference on a color TV. Some color combinations did show a little improvement. I noticed no change on my B/W TV. My opinion is that the improvement may be worth the cost of a resistor but is not great enough to warrant the extra effort (getting access to the board) to install it. For those wishing to try, the modification entails replacing the resistor which connects pin 36 of the 9918 VDP processor to ground. The existing 560 ohm resistor which is located between two transistors and a capacitor, should be replaced with a 330 ohm one, or alternatively an 820 ohm resistor can be bridged across the existing one. If it works for you let us know.

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Permanent Color Changes

While looking over some of the newsletters from other clubs, I came across this short machine language routine that changes the character set colors. Credit for this routine goes to Harry Wilhelm and the TWIN TIERS USER GROUP. Some of you are already ahead of me and thinking that it can be done with a CALL COLOR statement, and you are right, however by using this routine the changes are permanent! This means even after the program stops running. Key in this two line program—100 CALL INIT :: CALL LOAD (16168, 2, 224, 38, 0, 2, 0, 8, 17, 2, 1, 63, 36, 2, 2, 0, 3, 4, 32, 32, 38, 2, 224, 131, 192, 3, 128) 110 CALL LOAD(16164,240,240,240):: CALL LOAD(-31804,63)

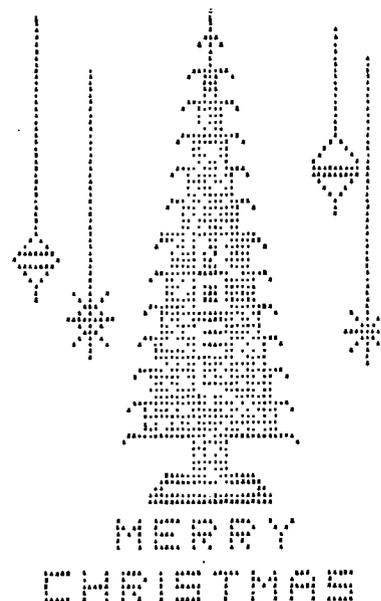
LIST the program and then RUN it. You will now see that the numbers and arithmetic operators are white. As Harry pointed out this makes it easy to distinguish between a zero and the letter "0" and also between a one and the letter "1". You can turn it off by typing CALL LOAD(-31804,0) and turn it on by typing CALL LOAD(-31804,63). As a program debugging tool, I think it's great. You can now load and list your program to check for errors. Be sure to turn the routine off before running your program because it won't allow any other color changes. As the program is written it affects character sets 2, 3, and 4 but with some changes it can change any set to any color. Let's make some changes by editing the first CALL LOAD statement. The eighth number after the address (16128) identifies the number of the first set to be changed and has a 15 offset which means subtract 15 from that number to find the first set. In this case the 17 represents set 2 ($17-15=2$). If the 17 is changed to 15 the program will change sets 0, 1, and 2. The eighth number after the set identifier is the number of sets to change and in this case is a 3. Change this 3 to a 15 and all the character sets (0 thru 14) will be changed. The second CALL LOAD statement represents the list of colors. In the original program this list contained 3 values (one for each set) and each was a 240. We now want to change 15 sets so we need to add 12 additional 240s for a total of 15. The values in the list (240 in the example) represent the foreground and background colors and can be determined by this color formula: $((F-1))+(B-1)$. In the example the foreground is white (16) and the

background is transparent (1) yielding $((16-1))+(1-1)$ or 15 equalling 240. To change a set to dark green (13) on magenta (14) the equation would be $((13-1))+(14-1)$ or $(12)+13$ equalling 205. While the routine is running a single CALL LOAD can change a character set. In our routine the list of 15 numbers is loaded beginning at 16164 such that 16164 has the value for set 0 and 16165 has the value for set 1 etc. To determine the load address for a single value add the set number to 16164. For example to change the color of set 8 to dark red (7) on gray (15) use the statement CALL LOAD(16172,110) where 16172 equals 16164 plus the set number and 110 equals the result from the color formula above.

To sum things up, the routine can be keyed in with or without line numbers. When it is running it has total control of the colors. It can be turned on and off, and when it is off the CALL COLOR statements will affect the character colors normally. A single character set can be changed, or any combination of sets can be changed at once. Hint: Remember the turn off statement, (CALL LOAD(-31804,0)) because it is possible to make all the characters invisible (transparent)!

Now comes your time to experiment and feel free to contact me.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT (Continued from Page 1)

are trying to hear a speaker or listen to the details of a demonstration, the rest of the people should be quiet and let everyone hear. If you must carry on a separate conversation, go to another location like the nearest bar or someone's home and then you don't have to worry about "trying to keep your voices down". Of course, if the conversation is that interesting, maybe you should get up front and let all of us in on it.

From TICO TOPICS, Oxnard, Ca.

This article is also worth remembering so please show your speakers the courtesy of not trying to outdo them.

Also from the same newsletter -ROM NEWSLETTER NOV87- is this little routine called ASCII_SCREEN_DUMP by N. Armstrong.

If you need to get information from the screen to hard copy, use the following:

```
OPEN #1:"PIO",OUTPUT
FOR I=1 TO 24
FOR J=1 TO 32
CALL GCHAR(I,J,N)
P$=P$&CHR$(N)
NEXT J
PRINT #1:P$
P$=""
NEXT I
CLOSE #1
```

The routine is not fast, but it works. It can be inserted in the main flow of the program or called as a subroutine. Just make sure that the variables don't conflict with variables already in use.

On the subject of exchange newsletters, there are some very interesting and informative articles in them but they don't all find their way into our newsletter, so check the book library and check them out.

Thanks to all that helped out at our meetings with demos and etc.

If you indicated you wanted a TI TECHNICAL Manual that we are ordering from the Bunyard Group, but have not yet paid for it, please get your money in to me ASAP. Most of the people that ordered are waiting and we cannot send in the order until the money is in.

Hope this finds your stocking full on Christmas morn.

Till next time? Vern Schrotenboer



DISKS FOR SALE ~ See Ron Prewitt



50 cents each or 25 for Ten Dollars

BITS and PIECES

VCR Guide (Walt Todd)

I record movies and various TV shows for viewing at a more convenient times and maintain a VCR tape library of about twenty five tapes. To keep track of which movie or show is on which tape, I maintain a catalog of them using the Multiplan electronic spreadsheet. This method of cataloging is relatively simple to use and offers several options not available on some of the VCR catalog programs written in basic or extended basic. For example, I recently reviewed one of these programs and found it to be easy to use, it had good prompts and is easy to update. The printed catalog is alphabetized by movie title, lists the rating, time/length of the movie in minutes, tape number and the location (number) of the movie on the tape. It was a well written program and produced an excellent catalog. However, my tape library has two sections, one for general movies/shows and one for children movies/shows. The general use section contains tapes 1 through 15 and the kids section contains tapes A through I. The VCR program would not let me enter the kids tapes by LETTER as it is programmed for NUMBERS only. This is not a big problem but did require me to re-number the kids section. Below are examples of both categories:

VCR MOVIE GUIDE

| MOVIE TITLE | /RATED/ | MINUTES/ | TAPE#/ | COUNT# |
|------------------|---------|----------|--------|---------|
| A VIEW TO KILL | /PG-13/ | 147 | / 5 | /0000 / |
| ALIENS | / NR | / 137 | / 3 | /0000 / |
| AURORA ENCOUNTER | / PG | / 90 | / 14 | /1077 / |
| LAST UNICORN | / G | / 85 | / 18 | /0000 / |
| STAR WARS | / GP | / 120 | / 18 | /1680 / |

SPREADSHEET MOVIE GUIDE

| NUMBER | NAME | TIME | START | END |
|--------|----------------------|------|-------|------|
| 1-1 | CHECK IN THE MAIL | 1-30 | 200 | |
| 1-2 | | | | |
| 1-3 | | | | |
| 2-1 | | | | |
| 2-2 | JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS | 2HRS | 1091 | 1885 |
| 2-3 | RUNNING SCARED | 2HRS | 1885 | 2631 |
| 3-1 | ALIENS | 2-15 | 0 | 1408 |
| 3-2 | | | | |
| 3-3 | KRATE KID 2 | 1-54 | 2294 | 2912 |

Since I do a lot of recording and do not save movies after viewing, I like the spreadsheet catalog because it allows me see tell at a glance which tapes have space available for new recording and exactly where the space is on the tape.

Equipment Sale! (by Walt Todd)

Your users group has purchased and resold twenty used TI 99/4A computers, two 32K ISC memory expansion side port units, two speech synthesizers, power transformers, modulators, a terminal emulator 2 cartridge and 12 game cartridges. The net income after expenses will be over \$100. The only equipment not yet sold are the two speech synthesizers and the terminal emulator cartridge and one 32k ISC memory expansion side port unit. They are still available at the prices listed below:

Speech Synthesizer \$10.00 each

ISC 32K memory(stand-alone) \$30.00

Terminal Emulator 2 \$10.00

These items will be available at the next Users Group meeting.

Fontwriter II vs TPA

During the summer I posted a message about how pleased I was with TPA (The Printer's Apprentice) and how fast it worked from a ramdisk. At that time I was also waiting for FontWriter II, here after called FWII, to make a comparison of the two pieces of software. In the previous message I said that a page (8 1/2 x 11) could be printed from the Foundation ramdisk in 6 min 30 sec and from the Horizon in 5 min 50 sec. FWII formatter will not work with either ramdisk using the .IP command to print pictures so I had to make my comparison using floppy drives. The ability of a formatter to fetch files from a ramdisk is essential to a desktop publishing program to eliminate disk drive wear which could be substantial because of the long printing times from floppy drive. FWII would only print 1/2 of the page vertically so I had to make two passes to print the same page as TPA did in one pass. Total printing time from DSK1 not counting the time to roll back the page was 23 min with FWII. Using the same printing procedure took 17 min 10 sec with TPA. The FWII formatter is also very limited compared to TPA.

FWII disk dump is something TPA does not have and this feature alone may be worth the cost of the software. This feature comes in very handy when converting Art-fonts to CSGD fonts to be used with the BANNER program because the percentage of fonts that convert correctly was very small in my experience. The disk dump will allow one to see which conversions will work OK with the BANNER program. The ability of BANNER to print 9 different sizes only holds true if the font being used is very small. Most ART-fonts or CSGD fonts only allow 2 or 3 sizes. FWII disk dump DOES WORK from ramdisk and generates a batchfile which will print fonts and instances using the formatter from ramdisk. TPA does not have a BANNER program either so TPA and FWII compliment each other. Another feature of TPA that is outstanding is the C-pixel option. This is not easy to explain but I will try. As we know a computer or printer picture is made up of dots. Imagine each dot being expanded by multiplying it in size. TPA can expand a single dot to any proportion in a 8 x 8 pixel block. In this way the fonts or graphics can be made any size or proportion one wishes within this 8 x 8 block. A square or rectangular block is the logical choice, but any shape is possible.

Another excellent feature of TPA is the ability to define up to 77 boxes (print areas). FWII only allows 8 and these must have a frame around them. Have you ever seen a magazine or newsletter with frames around every item? TPA and FWII have many more features, but the ones described interested me the most at this time. With exception of BANNER and DISK DUMP TPA is superior in speed and versatility in my estimation.

Notice that Micropendiums review on FWII does not mention some of the things I commented on. TPA is excellent trouble free software but requires some time to learn like TI-Writer or Multiplan. Seems like with FWII you are always running problems that can't be solved.

TACOMA USERS USERS GROUP

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Merry Christmas



Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas

CHRISTMAS PARTY

FOR ALL MEMBERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES

Dec. 17, 1987

SOUTH END POOL BUILDING

OUR REGULAR MEETING PLACE

BRING YOUR FAVORITE PARTY SNACK
in ENOUGH Quantity to
to SHARE with EVERYONE

POP and COFFEE will be
Furnished by the Club.



Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas

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MERRY



CHRISTMAS



MEETINGS - 1st and 3rd THURS. - 8 p. m.

South End Pool Building - 482 E. 56th Street - Tacoma, WA

For More Information Call 474-7310