FEBRUARY 1989
ROLLING ALONG
JOE NOLLAN

Well, we're into another new year, football is past, and, I would guess that everyone is looking forward to some more new programs for the 'Ol Orphan'. I find that I put mine to good use, even though it is considered 'yesterdays' technology. Of course it was ahead of it's time anyway. I was reading an article in Personal Computing Magazine and found a list of ten articles that you might be reading had the microchip not been invented.

1. The Two-Rolodex Setup
2. Choosing A Type Ball That's Right For You
3. Ledger Widow Complains: "My Man Spends All His Time Cross-Tabulating"
4. Tidiness Tips From The White-Out Users' Group
5. Traveling With Accordion Folders
6. Standards Committee Sets Hole Parameters For Desktop Calendars
7. How To Upgrade Those Narrow Filing Cabinets
8. Slide Rules Aren't Just For Nerds Anymore
9. 10 Ways To Get More From Index Cards
10. Prim Penmanship Gets Your Ideas Recognized

So there you have it. I'm glad none of these will be written, and rather than dwell on what isn't here, I would rather reflect on just what we have for a machine. As I said, I put mine to good use writing articles and programming. I recently got a letter from a fellow in IOWA who found a good use for my MENU-MAKING program. Seems that handicapped persons find it much easier to run their programs from the menu it creates. I consider it a blessing to know someone appreciates my efforts. Anyone who is interested can drop me a line and I'll gladly send them a copy.

I started a series of short lessons at the meetings on programming. I will continue this series as long as there is interest. I try to touch on statements that I've been asked about and will throw in a few odd-balls as I find a place to fit them in. If anyone has a particular programming problem, I would be more than happy to use it as a subject for an evening.

I wish everyone a productive year. Keep those cards and letters coming.

UPCOMING EVENTS

TACOMA 99'ERS USER GROUP
1989

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
5 MEETING	2 MEETING	2 MEETING	6 MEETING -
19 MEETING	16 MEETING Election of Officers Nominations Open	16 MEETING	20 MEETING

MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
4 MEETING	1 MEETING	6 MEETING	3 MEETING
18 MEETING	15 MEETING	20 MEETING	17 MEETING

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
7 MEETING	5 MEETING	2 MEETING	7 MEETING
21 MEETING	19 MEETING	16 MEETING	21 MEETING

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FOUR4-A/TALK
Random ramblings
about things TI.

from
Bill Gaskill

February, 1989

THE AMNION HELPLINE:

   If you have been around the 4A community for any length of time
you have probably also heard of Dr. Guy-Stefen Romano and the Amnion
Helpline. I've known of Amnion since the early days of my computer
ownership in 1983, after Texas Instruments orphaned the 99/4A. Only I
just filed the information away and never took advantage of it. The
other day I was reading through some old National Ninety-Niner
newsletters given to me by Ralph Jones and and I came across a question
and answer column by Dr. Romano that I actually took the time to read.
It turned out to be the single most informative article on CALL FILES
that I have ever seen! Further on in another issue I ran across the
same regular feature with some reader asking Dr. Romano about
simulating the MOD feature from Pascal in TI Basic. I didn't even know
what the MOD feature was until I saw it in the article. After reading
the response from Dr. Romano, I now not only know what it is, I know
how to simulate it in TI Basic. I thought I knew alot about computers
and programming but I can't hold a candle to Dr. Romano. If you need a
question answered, you have just found the resource. If you are looking
for a program for a particular task you have only to call Dr.
Guy-Stefen Romano, the Amnion Helpline, 116 Carl St. San Francisco,
Cal. 94117 415-753-5581 9am-4pm Monday through Saturday. The help will
be free and the programs almost so.

GREAT GROUP NEWSLETTERS:

   One of the really neat things about being a 99er is the contact I
make with other members of the community and staying in touch with what
is going on in the TI world. Belonging to a Users Group is absolutely
the best way that one can accomplish this. I belong to five Users
Groups, none of which are close enough to where I live to allow me to
be a regular attending member. Nonetheless, I find that the newsletters
I receive in the mail from them keeps me in touch and involved. So the
newsletter of a group is pretty important. I can heartily recommend any
or all of the groups listed below, if you are thinking about joining a
Users Group or would like to join more than one.

CHICAGO TIUG   Front Range 99ers
Box 578341   Box 9572
Chicago, Il. 60657   Colorado Springs, Co. 80932

LA 99ers   Mid-South 99ers
Box 67A79   Box 38522
Los Angeles, Ca. 90067   Germantown, Tn. 38183-0522

Tacoma 99ers
Box 42383
Tacoma, Wa. 98442

Do yourself a favor and drop any or all of them a line to find out more information about becoming a member. All of them provide excellent newsletters that promote positiveness and cooperation within the community. I like that and look for it before I will join. I think you will like that kind of outlook too.

WHO CARES?:

Just when you think that the world has forgotten all about the 99/4A along comes a major article about it and other orphaned computers in PC Computing magazine (Dec88, p.222) "Gone But Not Forgotten" by Deborah Asbrand. This is one well researched article. The author includes not only historical information about the 99/4A but also provides facts about the largest Users Groups, the names and addresses of some of the major TI/99/4A product vendors and even talks about Myarc and the Geneve computer. Neat! Pick up a copy if you can. It's valuable if only from an historical perspective. Who cares? We do!

USER NOTES:

If you are a TI-Base owner who has a slew of data on PR Base diskettes you probably would like to know how the files can be transferred. Read on.

-First, the maximum record size that you can transfer is 132 bytes. Anything greater than that will be lost. The reason is because the transfer is done by printing PR Base data to disk via the REPORT feature.

When you want to transfer the data simply design a tabular report in PR BASE that will print all data in one line on a page of paper. Whatever the length of that line is the file format that the disk file will be saved in. For example, if you design a 132 column report the file that is printed to disk will come out as DV/132. This file is readable and convertable by TI-Base V2.0 using the CONVERT feature. The manual for TI-Base will tell you that the record to be read must be in FIXED format. That is not exactly correct. What it means is that the data in each record must be in the same place. Usually, you must have a fixed record format to get this, but printing a data file to disk does this too, so you don't need to worry.

When designing the report print out your screens so that you know later on exactly where each field ends on the printed page. Part of the CONVERT process is to design the record format for the new file. When you do so, remember to build in enough spaces in each field to include both the data for that field and the blank spaces that follow it on the printed report. For example, if the report printed field 1 at column 1 and then continued for 28 characters with a 1 character separater between it and field 2, then make field 1 a total of 29 characters long so that the blank space is attached to the first field. That will allow TI-Base to properly assign characters 30 through the end of field 2 to the proper field in your new data file. All remaining fields are done in just the same way, including the last one.

Bill Gaskill
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Grand Junction, Co. 81502

Until next time...

DESK TOP PUBLISHING
ON YOUR OWN - PART II

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Toledo, WA
98591
(206)
864-2948

As promised, this is part two of a series of articles on DESK TOP PUBLISHING you can do using programs you already own (or should own).

The following programs were used to create the professional looking evaluation form (see sample) I use for my class: TI-ARTIST, Rodger Merritt's PICTURE IT, and TI-WRITER.

After deciding on the general layout, appropriate graphic, and font style(s), I created Instances using the TI-ARTIST ENHANCEMENT Option.

The first Instance file created was (see samples of all actual Instances) "LFTMDTRM_I;" the second was "RTMDTRM_I." Both Instances covered almost 1/2 the monitor screen. They also covered an area of 28 columns in length. This is important to note. If one Instance does not equal the length of the other, they will not align when merged together later using PICTURE IT. If you think you will be doing something similar, let me know and I'll give you instructions on how to create a grid you load first, before creating your Instances. This grid makes your work much easier; Or send a disk and I'll copy the file for you.

As you can see by my samples, 8 Instances were created (a left side and a right side).

Now, why use PICTURE IT? Well, there are two important reasons,

1). it will merge two Instances into one file in TI-WRITER format, and 2). the merged Instances will now print almost the entire width of your paper. Do you know of another program that can do that!?

Don't expect to perfectly output your creation the first time out. The tricky part (at first) is making sure your Instances align. It is very important that when you are saving your Instance that the "rubber band" covers only what you want saved, no extra spaces. Again, here is where the grid comes in handy.

Well, you now have your four newly created (merged Instances) files that are ready for output. Boot TI-WRITER formatter. Load your first file --- in my case it was "MDTRMFRM_W." Don't forget the "W" suffix. For device name, type "PIO.CR" and keep pressing the enter key until your printer starts. When done, repeat the process with the remaining merged files. NOTE: ALTHOUGH MY FILES "CLOSING_I" AND "CLOSNGRT_I" ARE CLOSE TOGETHER ON MY SAMPLE SHEET, IN FACT, THE FORMER FILE HAS SEVERAL BLANK LINES THUS CREATING SPACE BETWEEN "GENERAL ATTITUDE" AND "PARENT'S SIGNATURE" FOR MY COMMENTS.

It just occured to me, you were thinking "How large an Instance can I save for PICTURE IT to convert?" About 3/4 of the screen. Experiment!

That's it for this month. Hope this was benefical to you. Let me hear from you, ok?

Next month, I'll show you how to use JIFFY FLYER, PRINT IT, FONTCONVERT, and GRAPHIC LISTER to make your own custom made full page, with attractive border, flyer and/or bulk mailer.

FILE: LFTMDTRM_I

TOLEDO MIDD

SIXTH GRADE MID-QUAR.

QUARTER_____

STUDENT_____

FILE: RTMDTRM_I

LE SCHOOL

TER EVALUATION

DATE_____

_____

Luque

SAVED
INSTANCES
BEFORE
MERGED
INTO
ONE
FILE
EACH

FILE: DEARPRNT_I

Dear Parent:
Please read and return this form. The
If you have any comments, write them
me a call. THANK

FILE: DRPRNTRT_I

circled grades are only general ratings.
on the reverse side of this form, or give
YOU.

FILE: SUBJECTS_I

READING . . . .
MATH . . . .
SOCIAL STUDIES . . . .
ENGLISH . . . .
SPELLING . . . .
SCIENCE HEALTH . . . .
ART . . . .
QUEST . . . .
EFFORT . . . . **EXCELLENT**

FILE: SUBJCTRT_I

A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
A B C D F missing____ assignments
GOOD NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

FILE: CLOSING_I

GENERAL ATTITUDE:
PARENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

FILE: CLOSINGRT_I

_____DATE_____

THESE INSTANCES WERE PRINTED OUT OF TI-ARTIST USING ALL THE DEFAULT SETTINGS (1 1 8)

DISAPPEARING GAMES

At one time you could get ZORK II from INFOCOM. No more. It is one of the great disappearing games of the TI Era. What will be next? INFIDEL? THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY? WITNESS? ENCHANTER? Or the most peculiar SUSPENDED?

Who knows?

But when these and the following are gone from INFOCOM's stock, there will be no more: DEADLINE, STARCROSS, ZORK I & III, SORCERER, PLANETFALL, and CUTTHROATS. This baker's dozen of games from the most creative adventuring minds in the computer business are all that's left for the 99. And, while the price is still around $45 on the average for the IBM, Apple, and Commodore versions of the same games, TI owners have an opportunity to get them for $14.95 each. (Actually $16.95 each as it costs an additional $2 per game for shipping and handling, as it does for IBM (for a total of $47). Let's say you plan to get 10 of these extraordinary (and very long) games. For the TI — $169.50; for the others — $469.50!

This is one of the best buys in the industry. You could buy the whole dozen for less than half a dozen of the others.

Are they worth $46.95?
They sure do sell at that price.
And if you've ever played one of the games (particularly with friends), you will understand. Some of the games take months. I have not finished the Zork series which I started four years ago.

With Infocom you don't just get the two disk sides, you get a whole environment. In HITCHHIKER, for example, you got a space travel booklet, a DON'T PANIC button, a handbook, a pair of very unusual glasses, a microscopic space fleet, and numerous other essentials.

DEADLINE includes all the clues the detective uncovers in the process of the investigation.
SUSPENDED has — er, a sort of movement thingie like a gameboard sort of and — uh — stuff.

You buy an environment. And you play it a lot, get deeply involved (forgetting the incessant crises of reality), and, when finished (IF finished), put it away for your grandchildren. Each game is worth playing again even after you've achieved victory (or whatever it's called in SUSPENDED) because there is more than one way to skin the Bugbladder Beast of Tral.

If you've never played an adventure game of any kind, I'd suggest you begin with the easiest adventures you can find. They are in many user-group libraries. Many of them are poor, but they give you a good idea of the process of play. Next, move up to American Software's series (Wizard's Dominion, Haunted House, Stone Age, and so on, probably starting with Aqua Base, the easiest). These and the other series can be ordered throught the standard sources: Tenex, Triton, Texcomp.

Once you have worked through these successfully, step up to Scott Adams Adventures. In addition to the old standbys (Pirate Adventure, Voodoo Castle, The Count, Ghost Town, Savage Island I & II, Adventureland, Secret Mission, Strange Odyssey, Mystery Fun House, Pyramid of Doom, The Golden Voyage, and Ghost Town, there are three relatively new releases: Spiderman, The Hulk, and Buckaroo Banzai. (There's also an ADVENTURE EDITOR available to create your own with the Adam's system — and, of course, the

expensive hint books, which can be gotten for each INFOCOM game, also.) You'll need the cartridge (which is very INEXPENSIVE these days) and cassettes or disks with the games. Some of these adventures are not easy. If they were easy they wouldn't be worth playing. But they are all fun. Particularly if you CHANGE your way of thinking. If you problem-solve in fantastic ways you will succeed readily. When something seems impossible, try the impossible.

And be organized. Make maps, take notes. Play the adventure with others.

Then, if you still enjoy this kind of adventuring, go to INFOCOM. There are lots of graphics-type adventures around, too. TUNNELS OF DOOM adventures (also with a new TOD EDITOR to create your own), OLD DARK CAVES, the wonderful LEGENDS, things like that. Excellent!

But INFOCOM's and Scott Adams's are strictly in the theater of the mind. They are totally text adventures.

Nothing equals them.

They are novels in which YOU are the main character. Called "interactive fiction," they are the mind-stretchingest literary computer activities you can engage in.

Even kids like them.

But they have to be bright kids and at least junior high age.

If worse comes to worse and you get deeply stuck inside one of your new INFOCOM worlds, you could always come out and buy an Invisiclue Book from INFOCOM that will let you uncover inch-by-inch the method needed to solve the particular adventure you are working on. They sell a lot of these books, but no one of my adventuring acquaintance has ever owned up to getting one of these clue books. I certainly wouldn't use them. (Heh, heh!)

There are also adventure columns in many newsletters. These give lots of clues or a map or a helpful hint or two. (The best of this type of thing is Australia's HUNTER VALLEY 99ers newsletter.

There are also many adventure books. Some are just books of clues and hints to MANY games (INFOCOM and Adams included). Others go step by step through the creation of your own adventures. These, for the most part are exceptionally good, COMPUTE's being a tie with Tim Hartnell's as the best.

Meanwhile, back at the adventure plant, IFOCOM is up to something.

They have just released their latest catalog. The prices (and the games for TI while they last) are good. However, a few more have disappeared. This may be your last opportunity to own these wonderful "worlds".

To order send a check to INFOCOM, PO Box 478, Cresskill, NJ 07626. Ask to be put on their mailing list to receive their zany newsletters (now being sold as classics in packages for $10). Give the title of the game (see above). Be sure to specify that these are for the TI-99/4A (as they also make some for the TI Professional) and pay $16.95 per game (includes S & H). Or better still to make sure there are still some of what you want available, call your credit card order at 1-800-262-6868.

Then if you make it to reasonable safety [but not necessarily reasonable sanity] aboard the Vogon space ship you have to remember to use your bathrobe to help catch the babel fish for your ear. Otherwise, you and Ford Prefect just might get chucked into the vaccuum of space.

If you follow me.

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%
We here at IMPACT-99 headquarters take no responsibilty for any loss of marbles or looseness of screws connected with the reader's engagement with the INFOCOM loonies.

But we do wish we had a share in the corporation.
%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%

Questions sent in by readers (two: one from Iowa, one from Connecticut):

WHERE CAN ONE GET THE DIRECTIONS FOR WINGWARS?

Answer: I don't know. Does anyone know where to get WINGWARS? I think that's the game that had a dragon flying through gem-filled clouds and into mountain caverns. I saw it years ago. I can't remember where, but I still recall it as having the best graphics ever done for TI. Does anyone out there have WINGWARS or know what the directions are or where it can be purchased?

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY GOOD CRIBBAGE GAMES FOR THE TI?

Answer: Yes and no. There are loads of cribbage games for other computers, but way back in the early days of 99er magazine and even IUG there were a few companies that offered cribbage games for the TI. By the time I started sending for some, the companies had died. There are even some listed in the first TI software books of third parties. I sent there, too, but never got answered. Though there are lots of cribbage buffs out there in TI Land (This is the most-often requested game that no longer exists for TI.), there is presently no cribbage game available anywhere. [Maybe check with Guy Stefan Romano...] If anyone has a cribbage game please let me know where it can be had. However, Corey Cheng (of TI music fame) has written a cribbage game which is superb but incredibly slow. I had a chance to beta-test it a while ago, and it was excellent. He says he's redoing it for greater speed and is working on the directions. Whenever this busy genius (artist, mathematician, violinist, student, computerist) completes the project, I will announce it in this column.

If any reader has a question you think could be answered within this column (or has an answer to questions posed in this column) please write: Jack Sughrue, Box 459, E.Douglas, MA 01516.

Nominations for Officers of

Tacoma 99'ers for 1989

PRESIDENT: FRANK ASHBURN

VICE PRESIDENT: RON PREWITT

SECRETARY: JOE NOLLAN

TREASURER: BEN AMSTREY

TACOMA 99ERS
USERS GROUP
P.O. BOX 42383
Tacoma, WA 98442

MEETINGS ~ 1st and 3rd THURS. ~ 8 p. m.
South End Pool Building - 482 E. 56th Street - Tacoma, WA

For More Information Call 474-7310