



BYTE-LINE



June 1993

Note from the president....

**** THIS MONTH ****

This month's meeting will be on June 17, 1993, at First Congregational Church. *Please use the south door, go down the stairs and turn to the right (2nd grade class room).*

This month's meeting will be a busy meeting, with election of officers, finishing planning for the Computerama, and Aubrey Johnson with demo of Sound Blaster card. The Sound Blaster card is an add on to IBM clone systems, that lets the computer to make more and better noises. Some of the programs that comes with sound blaster are the talking parrot, voice editor, organ, and much more. So be there.

**** LAST MONTH ****

Last month's meeting was planning for the computerama. There seem to be a misunderstanding of the show, so Charles Stringer volunteered to chair a committee on the show. I know he has worked hard to get the show on the road to success. He and his committee will enlighten us on the status.

**** NEXT MONTH ****

Next month is open for a program. Please let the officers know what program you would like to see.

See you at the meeting, George

Decatur 99er User Group

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm on June 20, 1993

Old Business: No old business.

New Business: WSOY and W103 are the new sponsors for the computer fest to be held at the Civic Center. Copies of the consignment agreement were passed around..

Those Present were:

George Kornfeld

Jerry Brunson

King Forkner

Harry Young

Scottie Williford

Carol McGonigle

Charles Stringer

Derald Henderson

Aubrey Johnson

Won the 50/50 drawing was won by Charles Stringer.

Election of officers is this month please come vote. Nominations were opened and closed. King made a motion to put the slate of officers to be elected to be the same as last years with nominations from the floor..

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm

Respectfully submitted

Carol McGonigle

NEWS OF THE TI LIBRARY

Once again the LIMA Users Group was host to its TI FAIR on the 15th of May. It was good to continue the tradition and to see again the friends of the last several years. There was a harvest of software to be had for the copying. Unfortunately the press of people to use the facility prevented getting more than a small sampling of what's available. Some of the gleanings will be the subject of future columns.

Like the pink bunny, FUNNELWEB keeps going and going. The latest release is a completely new re-write of the 40-column Editor (v. 5.0) to be used with the other files released about 2 years ago as v.4.40. The release date is May 5, just barely time for disks to arrive from Australia and be duplicated for distribution on the 15th.

Let Tony McGovern tell you:

"The latest development in the Funnelweb system for the TI-99/4a computer is an extensive rewrite of the system editor. For better or for worse it remains as compatible with the original TI-Writer and E/A editors as can be managed, but now incorporates multilingual features previously available only in an incompatible form in the European version of TI-Writer."

The new editor will be especially useful to persons who are fluent in one of the European languages, for there has been a great effort to supply it with character sets for Britain, France, Germany, and Sweden, as well as the default set used in both Australia and the USA. The non-English versions also have native language command files. (Character and command files for Dutch and Italian are incomplete. Spanish may be included later.)

Having said this, my comments will be confined to the Aus-USA version of the Text Editor. A few days use of a program as ambitious as this leave me still in doubt about some features. I hope that none of my comments is incorrect or unfair.

What I see impresses me very much. It's GOOD as it stands, but will be BETTER, I think. This is the FUNNELWEB Editor we've needed ever since version 4.12, which has remained my own choice. The next release of this editor will be able to access and print the high half of the IBM character set (ASCII 128 and above) where the special characters and graphics elements are assigned. (I can hardly wait.)

As to the new features, there's some good news and some bad news. On the whole the good news far outweighs the bad. Let's start with my favorites:

It is now possible to scroll through the text while in Command mode. Why would you want to do that? Perhaps because you need a line number operand for a Copy, Move or Delete operation. But better yet, you can scroll to the desired line, press Ctrl-M and--presto! --the line number appears on the command

line. You don't need to memorize or write down the line numbers any more. Use it to select all the operands; it works.

It's also possible to 'mark' a line that you want to return to later. To do it from Edit mode, press Fctn-; then do whatever editing you need to do, whenever you need to do it. To get back to the 'marked' line (there's really no mark visible on the screen), just press Fctn= . You're immediately taken there.

Marking can also be done in Command mode--just enter 'MK'; a message asks that you enter the line number to be 'marked'. When you return to Edit mode, press Fctn= to go to the marked line as often as you need to. The latest 'mark' overrides a previous one, whether entered in Edit or Command mode. To put a little more frosting on this cake, use Fctn= to go to a marked line. When you've done, Ctrl-O will take you back to your point of departure. NEAT!

Another feature new to FUNNELWEB, but long a part of RAGWRITER, is the ability to move from command mode to edit mode by entering a line number and pressing 'enter'. It's possible to leave a blank command line with 'enter' alone; it puts the cursor on the top line of the current screen. 'S(how)' still works, but you won't need it, even for the last line (i.e., S and E). Just enter a big number to go to the last line.

Other improvements deserve mention:

Loading of a text file seems to be a bit faster, and a line counter gives you something to watch while you wait.

Gone are the wearisome minutes (well, many seconds) while a long 'Delete' is accomplished. Now it's ZIP!

Ctrl-Z takes you to the right end of the line; this otherwise requires several presses of Ctrl-T.

The FS/RS commands have been improved. Any non-numeric character can be used as a string delimiter, so you can search for the elusive '/' if you wish. You can define a character as a 'wild card' in the string. Best of all the commands recognize the last occurrence of the searched string by making a 'beep' and putting the cursor on the command line, out of harm's way. No more extraneous N's and Y's! Use Ctrl-O to go back to the starting point if you want to make another search/replace.

There are several new features of the Print File command; I've not tried them:

--Print selectively by specifying the beginning and ending lines. Insert them before the print device name; for example

154 156 PIO
prints the 3-line paragraph just above this one.

--Preconfigure printer control codes (P) and after-print reset codes (Q); to use them enter the letters P and/or Q before the print-device name.

The codes must be those accessed by Ctrl-U and stored in the configuration file.

--Print to disk in DF/80, MS-DOS or in UNIX formats. DV/80 files can be opened in Append mode, so that long files may be created and edited.

As for the Down Side of the new editor, my comments fall in three categories: Things I Could Live Without, Serious Flaws and Personal Gripes. Let's look at the gripes first:

There's only one. Changes have been made in the functions assigned to some of the Ctrl-letter codes. Those of us who have used mostly the "control key/alphabetic key" commands will find some old friends doing different things than they used to do. Two examples: Ctrl-N used to remove a line; now it inserts a blank line. Ctrl-B formerly moved to the previous screen; now it functions like 'Insert' (in Wordwrap mode) and like nothing I've seen before in Fixed mode. These things are at best disconcerting.

If it seems unfair to dwell on annoyances, I take refuge in Tony McGovern's statement: "For better or worse it remains as compatible with the original TI-Writer and E/A Editors as can be managed..." As a non-programmer I'm not in a position to deny the truth of his statement; but I have to express doubt.

Changes in key assignments look to me to be arbitrary and unnecessary. There are 9 Fctn-letter key combinations which aren't used at all and one, Fctn-V, which duplicates the spacebar! Surely these 10 could have been used for the new and undoubtedly useful features which have been added. Whimsical changes are unfair to both the user and the author. The user must unlearn what are likely to be reflexive habits, and the author needlessly cripples his offspring's acceptance.

Having said that, let's go on to the Things I Could Live Without:

--A new feature called 'Freeze Screen' (Ctrl-F) draws a line across the screen in place of the line just below the cursor. Then it's possible to edit above the line while keeping the old text in view. This may have its uses, after one becomes familiar with it. Unfortunately the new user may lose several lines of text before he remembers that the text below the line is a phantom, still in view even if it's been edited out of existence. I think I'll stick with the familiar way of editing, where what you see is what you get.

--Another new feature mentioned above is 'Split Line' (Ctrl-B). In Wordwrap mode it's exactly like 'Insert' (Fctn-2 or Ctrl-G both apparently still in good health). In Fixed mode Ctrl-B divides the line in exactly the same way, while 'Insert' of course allows you to push in letters at the cursor. The explanation in the documents suggests that 'Split Line' is used to insert material into a line without having to

retype it. This may be so and useful to those familiar with it, but it appears to me to be a trap for the unwary.

--Another possible trap: 'Reformat' (Ctrl-2 or Ctrl-R) can mix the contents of two adjacent lines when used in Fixed mode.

Now for the Serious Flaws! There are a couple of real flubs in the coding. Let's hope they get fixed.

--The most serious, to my mind, are those which exist in the 'Next Paragraph'/'Last Paragraph' moves (Ctrl-4 and Ctrl-6), intended to move the cursor to the beginning of the 'Next/Last' paragraph. EITHER OF THEM LOCKS UP THE SYSTEM. You can escape only by shutting off power. This won't do.

Those of us who prefer to write on a 40-column screen without 'windowing' (Fctn-5) really need a paragraph-by-paragraph step function for easy re-formatting to 80-columns before printing. This feature hasn't been reliable in my hands since v.4.12, which is the last version that moves the way it's supposed to and doesn't jumble text.

--Ctrl-H and Ctrl-J have now been assigned, respectively, to move the cursor to the beginnings of the first and last screens of the file. These are functions which have been needed, and will be welcomed by all of us. Ctrl-H works as it should. Unfortunately, Ctrl-J misses its target by one line. The last line of the file is omitted from what is supposedly the final screen, so one has to use Ctrl-X or Fctn-X to see it.

--FUNNELWEB has always suffered from the lack of a simple and clean break back to the operating system. It still does.

--There is a flaw in the Line-Numbers toggle (Fctn-0); from time to time it fails to restore line numbers after they have been blanked. The only remedy seems to be to reload the program.

IN SUMMARY: The new FUNNELWEB 40-column editor is a going to be a winner when its bugs are fixed.

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Members who want to give it a try should call me if they want a disk at the meeting of the 17th. The TI contingent will not meet separately this month; we need to spend some time in planning for the SWAP SHOP and Club demonstrations at the COMPUTERAMA of June 26th.

WE NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET!

7 June 1993
EOF File JUNE/14D

CS Stringer

Editor's Note: October of this year will mark the 10th anniversary of TI's big sellout--the time when most of us first looked seriously at computers. We bought our first console and set out to learn to use it. We've come a long way since then! Bill Gaskill wrote a history of Personal Computing in the dark ages before there even was a TI-99 much less the TI-99/4A. We'll carry it in five episodes in honor of the year 1983 and the monumental miscalculations that led up to it. Here's PART 1:

THE BIRTH OF A COMPUTER / Bill Gaskill / October 1992

In April 1984 Texas Monthly magazine published an article written by Joseph Nocera entitled "The Death of a Computer". It was among the most comprehensive accounts ever written on the events leading to the demise of the TI-99/4A computer. Perhaps because of this, the article became so popular that only 2,000 copies of the April 1984 issue of Texas Monthly were available for sale a scant month after it hit the news stands.

Mr. Nocera's work was the driving force behind this article because reading it made me realize that more effort has gone into writing about the demise of the TI-99 than has ever been invested in writing about its birth and life. The reasons for such universally poor coverage of the TI-99 are a matter of debate, but my research leads me to believe that TI's policy of a closed architecture on the TI-99 may have been carried over to one of closed mouths when it came to talking about the machine. No matter what the reasons, it appears that a negative and non complimentary relationship between TI and the media cast a cloud over the 99/4 even before it's release.

Nevertheless, there are some choice tidbits lurking around in the printed media of the late '70's and early '80's which help to piece together the days before, during and after the 99/4's birth. Because I have access to so many back issues of Byte, and because it is the oldest computer magazine still in existence, I chose it as the main source of information for this article. The material chosen from the many issues of Byte that I read through is presented in time line format so one can pick up the chronology of events easier. It is the sequence of events like the RF modulator hassle with the FCC and the production problems with the TMS 9900 chip that to some extent explain why Texas Instruments was so late with its entry into the personal computer market.

Lastly, you will notice that I have thrown in a few items not related to the TI-99. Most are what I consider significant developments in the personal computer industry that I thought would add some flavor to the article and perhaps a little perspective for the reader about the world that the TI-99/4 was born into. For other historians of the TI-99 I've also provided notations as to the source/location of the information used in the time line. Although not presented according to Turabian, I think someone might find the references useful. I hope you enjoy the reading.

** LIFE BEFORE THE TI-99 **

1974: Jonathan Titus creates the Mark 8 microcomputer and advertises it for sale as a kit in Radio Electronics magazine. This becomes the first programmable microcomputer made available to the general public. (YOUR OWN COMPUTER, Waite/Pardee, p.15).

1975: The MITS Altair 8800 microcomputer is introduced and it becomes the first company or corporate venture into microcomputers for sale to the general public. (YOUR OWN COMPUTER, Waite/Pardee, p.17).

1976: Explosive growth hits the industry when companies like Apple, Cromemco, Imsai, Digital and others introduce microcomputers. (YOUR OWN COMPUTER, Waite/Pardee, p.19).

1977: The Radio Shack Division of Tandy Corporation and Commodore Business Machines both join the competition for personal computer dollars with the introduction of the TRS-80 and Pet 2001 respectively. The year 1977 also sees the birth of the computer publications industry when a host of new magazines such as Creative Computing, Kilobaud, Personal Computing, Intelligent Machines Journal (now Infoworld) all appear, trying to break in on some of the profits already being realized by Carl Helmers and Virginia Peschke who had created Byte Magazine back in mid-1975.

Aug 1977: The TRS-80 is released on August 3rd. It comes with 4K Ram and carries a retail price of \$599.95. (Byte, Apr 1978, p.49).

Oct 1977: Commodore enters the market with the Pet 2001. It retails for \$495 with 4K of Ram or \$795 with 8K of Ram. (Byte, Feb 1978, p.190).

ANOTHER 96 CHARACTERS?
Charlotte U., Jim Folz
Delaware Valley UG
Great Lakes 1/93

Many Gemini printer users don't realize that they can access another 96 characters in their printers. The 99/4A uses seven data bits to send characters to be printed. The additional printer characters in the Gemini printer (and some others) become active when the eighth bit is turned on. Gemini engineers have provided an escape sequence that turns the eighth bit ON and OFF.

In the TIM FORMATTER, .TL60;27,62 will make the eighth bit go ON when a < is found in the text. If you also put in a .TL62;27,61 then > will turn the eighth bit OFF. Check your printer manual to make sure your codes are not different.

Many users will find it easier to use the CTRL-U sequence to access these codes, when working from the EDITOR, so as not to have to use the FORMATTER. In that case, the sequence would be: CTRL-U, FCT-R, CTRL-U, > TO TURN IT OFF.

The eighth bit simply adds 128 to the ASCII value of the character you type. Consult your printer manual for the characters you want to print. Subtract 128 and use the ASCII character of the resulting number.

For the complete print-out of the resulting number, enter and RUN the following BASIC program.

```
100 REM PRINTS 128+ 2 COL.
110 OPEN #1:"PIO"
120 PRINT #1:CHR$(15) !COND.
130 FOR X=32 TO 80 !2-COL
140 PRINT #1:" ";X;" ";X+128;"
o;CHR$(X+128);" ";X+48;" ";
a+48+128;" ";CHR*(X+48+128)
150 NEXT X
160 CLOSE #1: :: END
```

Submitted by
King Forkner



George Kornfeld...President
Charles Stringer.....Vice president
Aubrey Johnson.....Vice president
Carol McGonigle.... Secretary

Scottie Williford.....Editor
Charles Stringer.....Librarian(TI)
Ray Fisher.....Librarian(PC)
Harry Young.....Treasure

June 17, 1993 Next meeting

July 15, 1993

August 19, 1993

September 16, 1993

October 21, 1993



First Congregational Church..3465 N. MacArthur Rd..Decatur,IL..7:00pm to ????

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