

BITS, BYTES & PIXELS

LIMA 99/4A USERS GROUP



May 1993

Volume 9, #5

Pro MUG CONFERENCE ISSUE

MULTI USER GROUP CONFERENCE, AN ALL TI/GENEVE EVENT
(information as of April 17)

COST: FREE

LOCATION:

Reed Hall, Ohio State University Lima Campus. Turn North off of state route 309 2.5 miles east of the intersection of 309 and 175. Many motels are at this intersection.

GROUPS AND DEALERS REQUESTING TABLES:

Asgard

Genial Computerware

PC emulator

S&T software

Crystal Software

Cecure Electronics

D. Wright Stuff

L. L. Conner Enterprise

Competition Computer

MUNCH (self help video tape on console maintenance)

Bud Mills Services

Harrison Software (debuting "The Ultimate ACCEPT AT")

Rancharged Computers

Hoosier User Group

Cleveland User Groups

C.O.N.N.I. User Group

CinDay User Group

New Horizon User Group

Los Angeles User Group

Tigercub Software

Lima Ohio User Group

OH MI TI User Group

FRIDAY MAY 4 4PM-8PM:

Set up tables, chairs and video equipment. Free copies can be made of available Lima library disks by a representative of any user group as soon as computer systems are set up. This is an informal time period to meet with each other and help us set up stuff. Meeting rooms will be available if anyone wants to organize discussion sessions.

SATURDAY MAY 5: 7AM. Doors unlocked. More time to set up exhibits. Copies can be made from Lima UG software library.

9AM. Room 150. Seminar by Barry Traver

10AM. Food service opens with coffee and rolls available.

10AM. Room 150. Seminar by Jack Sughrue, "The Teaching TI: Our Computer As An Educational Tool."

11AM. Food service will have custom sandwiches available for lunch.

11AM. Room 150. Seminar by Harry Brashear, "FIRST DRAFT, X83, memory expansion hardware, and other products from ASGARD."

11:30 Room 101. Seminar by Mike Maksimik.
NOON Room 150. Seminar by Bruce Harrison, "The Ultimate ACCEPT AT, and other products from Harrison Software.

12:30 Room 101. THE MULTI USER GROUP CONFERENCE, a meeting of user group officers to discuss common problems and solutions.

1PM. Food service closes.

1PM. Room 150 Seminar by Bud Mills.

1:30 Room 101. Seminar by Tim Bodenmiller, "The Current Status of Game Programming for the TI."

2PM. Seminar by Mike Wright, "The PC99 project, software emulation of a 99/4A on an IBM compatible."

3PM. Room 150 Seminar by Don Walden, "Hardware for the Geneve and 99/4A fr CECURE Electronics."

4PM. Room 150. Seminar by S&I Software, "BBS and Terminal Emulation software the TI."

6PM. Conference closes. Copying from Lima software library ends. Clean up time.

8PM. SPECIAL SUPRISE GIFT FROM THE LIMA USER GROUP TO THE TI COMMUNITY. Details will be available throughout the day. It wouldn't be a suprise if we told you now.

VIDEOTAPES:

All seminars in rooms 150 and 101 will be video taped. A "roving reporter" will cruise the exhibit areas interviewing people and creating a video record of all display and sales tables. Any user group or individual who is a paid member of the Lima User Group can obtain a copy of these videos by leaving TWO video tapes AND \$2.50 for postage, OR by leaving \$10 (which includes the cost of media and postage) clearly labeled with a return address at the Lima table. (If requests for seminars increase it may be necessary to go to three tapes + \$3.75 or \$15.)

****DONE****

MOST COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED OF CHARLES GOOD THESE DAYS:

Q: Have you heard anything recently about the 40 column Funnelweb v5 editor?

A: No.

Q: Will the 40 column Funnelweb v5 editor be available at the MUG Conference?

A: I don't know.

****NOT DONE YET****

LIMA MULTI USER GROUP CONFERENCE

May 14/15 Ohio State University
Lima Campus, Lima Ohio

This all TI event is TOTALLY FREE
No admission charge, no charge
for tables



For Motel information,
or to schedule a free
exhibit room table,
or to schedule a video
taped seminar: phone
Dave Szipp1 513-498-9713
or
Charles Good 419-667-3131

To arrange free airport
pickup and delivery, phone
COLUMBUS OHIO
John Parkins 614-891-4965
DAYTON OHIO
Rick Kellogg 513-773-5941
FORT WAYNE INDIANA
Homer Kipling 219-483-8886
(Please make airport
arrangements with these
individuals as far in
advance as possible)

TI'S "PC INTERFACE": AN EASILY AVAILABLE AND RELIABLE MASS STORAGE ALTERNATIVE FOR CC40 AND TI74 OWNERS

a hands on description by Charles Good
Lima Ohio User Group

The CC40 mass storage problem... Wafertape drives are rare collector's items. The last unsold QUICKDISK drives for TI74s and CC40s were literally thrown in the trash by their manufacturer (Jan 1993 BB&P, p.12). CC40 programs can be stored on 8K constant memory ram cartridges, but these are rather expensive, their batteries are 10 years old, and they can no longer be purchased new directly from TI. Well, it turns out that the TI74 PC-INTERFACE, a \$60 device available since late 1988 directly from TI, can easily be modified for use as a mass storage device for the CC40. (Successful use of the PC-INTERFACE with the CC40 was first reported in the March 1993 issue of BB&P.)

The TI74 is an "almost pocket sized" basic programmable calculator operationally very similar to the CC40. The PC-INTERFACE is designed to allow the TI74 to directly control the printer, floppy drives, and hard drives of an IBM compatible (PC, XI, AI, OUS2.1 or higher) computer. You can also use a TI Professional computer. The actual interface consists of a cable with a 25 pin male connector for connection to the PC's parallel port, and a straight line 10 pin female connector to connect to the IO port of the TI74. Some electronic components are part of this cable. A 5.25 inch disk of software that runs off of the PC is also included with the INTERFACE package. This software is needed to make the INTERFACE work properly.

BB&P articles by Jim McCulloch (March 1991) and Dan Eicher (Feb 1992) suggest how to adapt an 8 pin female hexbus cable (attached to the CC40) to the 10 pin end of the INTERFACE. Resistor leads or similar thin stiff wire are cut and inserted into the appropriate holes of each cable, linking the two cables together. That's all there is to it! Electronically the hexbus and TI74 10 pin cables are identical. You just connect the right wires together. Pin diagrams are in the Eicher article. The task is easier if you have one of the male hexbus-to-female 10 pin commercially made adapters mentioned in the McCulloch article. 99/4A disk files or hard copies of these articles can be obtained from the Lima UG by sending a (disk and) paid return mailer to P.O. Box 647, Venedocia OH 45894.

To activate the interface type PCIF from the DOS prompt. The PCIF program runs and turns the PC into a slave of the CC40 or TI74. The PC is now one of four device numbers and can be accessed from the CC40/TI74 by number, just like any other peripheral.

- 14 Printer connected to a second PC parallel port.
- 45 The PC monitor
- 100 PC floppy or hard drive for program storage
- 101 PC floppy or hard drive for data or program listings.

PC STORAGE OF CC40 OR TI74 BASIC PROGRAMS:

You can RUN, OLD, and SAVE by entering the appropriate commands into the CC40 or TI74. Here are some examples of commands from the CC40 or TI74 that activate the PC. PC file names are limited to 8 characters plus a period and three character file extension. Use of file extensions as part of a PC file name is optional.

SAVE "100.PROGRAM" saves a basic program called PROGRAM (with no file extension) to the same PC drive or hard disk directory as the PCIF program.

SAVE "100.C: CC40 PROGRAM" saves a basic program to hard disk C, sub directory CC40, file name PROGRAM.

ULD "100.C: CC40 PROGRAM" will load the basic program saved in the above statement.

RUN "100.PROGRAM.PGM" will load and run a basic program called PROGRAM (with the optional file extension ".PGM") stored on the same disk and directory as PCIF.

USING THE PC TO CREATE AND/OR EDIT CC40 OR TI74 BASIC PROGRAMS:

LIST "45" lists the CC40 or TI74 program in memory to the PC monitor. Editing this displayed list is apparently not possible, but you can

LIST "101.C: CC40 PROGRAM.B74". This creates on the specified drive and subdirectory an ASCII file of the program listing. Later, when you are using your PC under its own control this file can be loaded into any word processor for editing. You can also create a program from scratch using a PC word processor. Each line of this text must begin with a line number. The edited file can be resaved as an ASCII file. Then you use a PC utility that comes on the INTERFACE disk to convert this ASCII file to a runnable CC40 or TI74 basic program that is saved to a PC disk or hard drive. Next time you hook up your CC40 or TI74 and activate the INTERFACE (by typing PCIF) you can OLD the new program off of the PC drive into the smaller computer.

DATA STORED ON PC DISKS OR DISPLAYED ON SCREEN:

OPEN #1, "101.C CC40 FILENAME" will open a DISPLAY, VARIABLE 80, SEQUENTIAL file named FILENAME in UPDATE mode on hard disk C, sub directory CC40. INTERNAL and RELATIVE files are not supported by the PC INTERFACE. You can PRINT #1, INPUT #1, or LINPUT #1 to and from this file. The EOF function is available.

OPEN #2, "45", VARIABLE 40, OUTPUT will display anything you PRINT #2 on the PC's monitor in 40 columns. OPEN #2, "45", OUTPUT will display data on screen in 80 columns since the default is VARIABLE 80. As mentioned above, you can also LIST "45" a program to the screen.

HOW ABOUT THE PC'S PRINTER? "

Almost all PCs have only one parallel output. You have to disconnect the printer cable from this output in order to attach the PC-INTERFACE, which can be very inconvenient. This means that most of us, myself included, can't use the

Bits, Bytes & Pixels

PC-INTERFACE to allow the CC40/TI74 to control the PC's printer. You are supposed to be able to LIST "14" or OPEN #1,"14",OUTPUT and PRINT #1 to the printer. You can control sending or not sending line feeds and carriage returns at the end of each record.

ADDING ASSEMBLY CALLS TO THE TI74 WITH THE PC-INTERFACE:

CC40 basic has built in subprograms (PEEK, POKE, etc) relating to assembly language which are missing from the TI74. On the PC-INTERFACE disk are a group of assembly subprograms that can be loaded from the PC into the TI74 and then CALLED from a TI74 basic program, just as is done with the CC40. Once loaded, these assembly subprograms for the TI74 remain in memory even if the OFF button is pressed. Memory occupied by these assembly routines is subtracted from memory available to basic. This is reflected in a decrease in available memory that shows when you type FRE(0). Assembly routines are only lost if you enter NEW ALL or if the TI74 is reinitialized (by pressing the reset button or taking too much time changing batteries). The following are available on the PC-INTERFACE disk for loading into the TI74. CC40 owners will be familiar with all of these except IOX.

--CALL CHAR (defines character patterns for ASCII 0 through 6)

--CALL CLEANUP (deletes variable names in memory left over from previous basic programs)

--CALL EXEC (starts assembly routine at specified address)

--CALL GETMEM (reserves memory for assembly program or data)

--CALL INDIC (turns on or off the display indicators at programmer's will)

--CALL IOX (an enhanced version of the TI74's CALL IO that is exactly comparable to the CC40's CALL IO. Although you can't determine this from reading the TI74 and CC40 user guides, the CC40's CALL IO is more powerful than the TI74's CALL IO.)

--CALL PEEK

--CALL POKE

--CALL RELMEM (the reverse of GETMEM, releases memory back to basic)

These subprograms add capabilities to TI74 basic that make it almost as good as CC40 basic, but not quite. CC40 has CALL DEBUG and CALL BEEP for example. One important use of these subprograms is that the TI74 can now use the various DIRECTORY programs that have been written to read directories of Quickdisk drives and Wafertape drives. Loading CALL PEEK, CALL IOX, and CALL GETMEM allows the TI74 to read Quickdisk and Wafertape directories with "DIR" programs designed for use by a CC40.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS:

--You can't SAVE text from MemoProcessor to a PC disk in the normal way because INTERNAL files are not supported. You can, however, SEND DOC, from MemoProcessor to the HexBus

RS232 cabled to a PC, creating an ASCII file on a PC disk.

--The CC40 Editor/Assembler cartridge won't work with the PC INTERFACE. You can save source code, but you can't save the assembled or linked code which is in internal format.

--PASCAL software generated with the CC40 or TI74 PASCAL cartridge can be saved and loaded via the INTERFACE.

--The following CC40 and TI74 cartridges can direct output to printer or PC monitor via the INTERFACE: Pascal, Chemical Engineering, Finance, Mathematics, and Statistics.

--If you own a TI95 keystroke programmable calculator, you can use the INTERFACE to store programs as ASCII listings or as runnable images, images of 8K ram cartridges, images of MEM files, and a listing of register contents. You can also display or print data or program listings.

--The size in bytes of a CC40/TI74 basic program stored on a PC disk (readable by exiting PCIF and then typing DIR on the PC from the DOS prompt) is exactly the size of the program will occupy in the CC40/TI74's memory.

--The BASIC TI74/CC40 word processing program by myself and Palmer Hanson will save nicely formatted text as an ASCII file to the PC via the PC interface. As published in the Sept. 1992 issue of the Lima newsletter, line 4005 of this program is in error. It should read "101.FILENAME.DOC" instead of "100.FILENAME.DOC".

DONE

LETTER TO THE EDITOR ABOUT "THE CYC" AND "PC99" by Mike Wright

Dear Charles,

Thanks for the review of THE CYC (BB&P March 1993).

THE CYC files are in WordPerfect 5.1 format. they can be read by WP 5.0, WP for Windows 5.1, and WP for Windows 5.2. In addition, Microsoft Word can directly import these files and preserve their formatting.

The files are not "designed" to use an HP Laserjet. In fact, they were originally created for output to my Epson LQ510. However, it is a simple matter to change printer drivers in WP, which will then re-format the document to match the printer's capabilities. The files are also designed with WP styles, which allows you to change them to suit your printer.

Although the files are in WP format, WP itself has a feature that permits a file to be saved in ASCII format. You do CTRL/F5, 1 DOS text, 1.save... The only thing lost is non-ASCII characters, for example bullets and em dashes. WordPerfect tends to replace these with a generic box.

PC99 [demonstration scheduled at the May 14/15 Lima MWJ Conference] is close to having a new release. We have the disk i/o serial and parallel ports working, and have tracked down the dreaded Plato bug. We are doing some final cleanup of the code, and adding to the doc before making an official announcement.

DONE

"COLLECTING CARTRIDGES FOR THE TI-99/4A HOME COMPUTER"

a monograph and database by William Gaskill
 review here by Charles Good
 Lima Ohio User Group

Bill Gaskill is one of the best known collectors of TI cartridges. His goal is to collect every module ever produced for the TI-99. Several months ago the Lima group published a newsletter article by Bill entitled "Collecting Cartridges". Recently he sent me an expanded version of this article complete with a VERY detailed data base and a classy looking cover page, a total of over 50 pages printed on a laser printer. To whet your appetite, here are a few quotes from the monograph:

"The last major mistake I made is not buying more modules than I did back in the years 1984-1988, when the selection was at its best, and the prices were generally at their lowest. ...TI Invaders and the like are cheaper now than they have ever been, but I found the others to be quite expensive, if you can find them."

"Although I have never seen cartridges with country codes on them other than the GB (Great Britain) mentioned earlier, I have seen instruction sheets written for Portugese, Norwegian, Danish, and Suomeksi (I don't know what language this is) use."

Here is a sample from Bill's data base. Similar information is listed for all TI cartridges actually sold. Physical descriptions of the actual cartridge, packaging, and documentation are included if Bill actually owns the material. Partial information based on Bill's research is included for cartridge software announced but never actually sold as cartridges.

NAME	NUMBER	MANUFACTURER	RETAIL	RELEA
PRINCESS AND FROG	ROM01025	Romox	\$39.95	4Q/83
Cart: Black Romox slanted top style with multi-colored artist design label. c1982 Romox inc.				
Docs: Paper instructions inside packaging. No programmer credit."				

A lot of research (studying old magazines and catalogs), money (purchasing old cartridges long after they went out of production) and time went into this monograph and data base. This is must reading for anyone interested in the history of our computer. You can have a hard copy by sending \$15 (which includes postage) to William Gaskill at 2310 Cypress Court, Grand Junction CO 81506

BB&P PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

This "May" 1993 issue of BB&P is being mailed in late April in order to inform everybody as quickly as possible about the 1993 MUG conference. The next issue, labeled "June", won't be mailed until mid June.

DONE

HOW TO LOAD ALL CHARS FILES IF YOU CAN'T USING FUNNELWEB V5

a letter to the BB&P editor from Iony Mcbovern

If you are using ALL CHARS mode in Word Processing (as distinct from Program editor) then a tab record will be written to file with Savefile. This tab record uses the basic EuroWriter format and this will LOCK UP any TI Writer version (including earlier Fw). The docs warn against this. V5 is the only one that can handle ALL tab records.

The work-around is to fool TI Writer into thinking it is inserting the file into an existing buffer by LF (enter), 0 DSKX.FILENAME (enter). this bypasses the tab record in the file being loaded. This wouldn't have been necessary if TI had not used an incompatible tab record format in Euro Writer. Until the 40 col v5 is released, 40 col users will need to employ this trick to read A/C or E/W files, just as we always had to do to read E/W files until now.

Larry Tippett's keyboard help screen (illustrated in the March 1993 BB&P) is an excellent complement to the one I did, organized by ASCII value. I have made it one of my four Word Processing mode help screens. No help has yet appeared for the incomplete languages. If there is no interest I may just drop it all to save space.

DONE

LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM JAN ALEXANDERSON:

Comments about the "Funnelweb v5 Editor" article published in the Feb 1993 issue of BITS BYTES & PIXELS:

The statement "if you want the resulting disk file of your document to be readable by someone else on another computer using anything except Funnelweb v5 (such as an earlier version of Funnelweb) then select [one of the 7 bit options]" is still true. ALL CHARS and TI EURO-WRITER will not load into Funnelweb v4.4 editor.

BRITIAN will work with Eurowriter, but USA will not.

Comments about "The P-gram Plus with Clock" article published in the Jan 1992 issue of BITS BYTES & PIXELS:

GRAM PACKER can now be purchased from Bud Mills.

The 4th Review Module Library menu should have included TI BASIC as the first choice. This is the first choice in all Review Module Library menus.

The reference to CALL PGRAM should be CALL PG

Concerning differences between 50Hz european consoles vs 60 Hz North American consoles: I plan to try CALL PEEK(12,A) where A=48 (>30) in a 50Hz console. A=>28 in a 60 Hz console as I understand it. If this is not the case I would be happy if someone could contact me. Ref: SMART PROGRAMMER Aug. 84, p.7; Heiner Martin's TI99/4A INTERN p.9. CALL SOUND takes 20% too long time with 50Hz as does the VIDEO CHESS module timer.

DONE

THE ULTIMATE "ACCEPT AT"
software by Bruce Harrison

(This should be very useful to XB programmers or those who like to modify existing XB programs. Bruce will demonstrate have an "official release" to the public domain of this software at the May 15 Lima MUG conference. At that time user groups can obtain a copy from disk 834A of the Lima software library. The software DOES NOT work properly on a system with an AVPC card. It has not been tested on a Geneve or on a system with a TIM. Below are excerpts from Bruce's ULTIMATE ACCEPT AT documentation.)

"We've all used the Extended Basic ACCEPT AT from time to time in programs, and many have expressed the wish that it could handle strings longer than 28 characters. Some have also wished it could put the prompt on screen for inputs, instead of using a separate DISPLAY AT. Some things we liked about ACCEPT AT were, for example, the ability to specify the length of input to accept, and the ability to use a negative length so that a default "answer" could be placed on the screen before the ACCEPT.

The "ULTIMATE ACCEPT AT" is an attempt to take all the good features in the existing routine, then add features that were perhaps always needed. Making this all work in a fairly short routine (less than 2000 bytes) was helped by being able to use the TI's LINE EDITOR function through 6PLINK. Using that line editor made the routine simpler and easier to create, and left us free to include the "fancy stuff".

THE CALL LINK

This routine is exercised through the XB CALL LINK process, with either six or seven parameters to control its operation. The CALL LINK looks like this:

```
CALL LINK("ULTACC",R,C,CL,"PRMP",CHRS,VAR1,B1)
```

The first two parameters, R and C stand for Row and Column, just as in a normal ACCEPT AT. The third, CL, can have three possible states. Putting 0 in for this parameter will do nothing. Putting 1 in will cause the screen to be cleared before the ACCEPT happens. Putting 2 in there will cause the computer to reset all character sets, color tables, and so on to a state such as having just started Extended Basic.

The parameter "PRMP" is the prompt for the user. This is limited to 28 or fewer characters, and may be either a direct quoted string like "INPUT A NUMBER " or a string variable that contains the desired prompt. It's important to include a space at the end of the prompt, so that the input field will not be jammed up against the prompt.

The fifth parameter, shown here as CHRS, is simply the number of characters to be allowed in the input field. For strings, this number can range from 1 through 255. For

numeric inputs, it will be forced to 32 characters by the routine.

The sixth parameter is the variable into which the input is to be accepted. This may be either a string or a numeric variable. It may also be a specific member of an array variable, such as A\$(I), or N(I).

THE OPTIONS

There are many ways to use this new ACCEPT routine, so let's cover a few variations. If no prompt is desired, for example, a null string (",") can be placed where the prompt would go, and this will cause no prompt to appear. If the allowed length parameter is given as a negative number, then the existing value of this variable will be placed on screen in the input field as a default entry. If the length allowed is a positive number, the input field will be initially blank. A seventh parameter can be added, and this may be anything you like. The simple presence of a seventh parameter of any kind will cause the beep tone to sound. Thus the seventh parameter could be added to the above LINK as (,"BEEP"), and the routine will produce the beep when it's ready for input. Without a seventh parameter, no beep will be heard. These various options may be exercised in any combination you like.

OPERATION

Except for the screen clearing, the routine will start doing things at the location given by the Row and Column parameters. If a prompt has been included, that prompt will appear starting at R,C on the screen. The routine will clear out enough space for the prompt and the designated length for the entry field, then will either place a default there or not, depending whether the length was positive or negative.

The routine protects itself (and you) against the mistake of not having enough room for the designated input length on the screen. Suppose, for example, you started with R=23, C=1, and specified a string input with a length of 70 characters. Obviously that long a string will not fit in just two screen rows, so the routine will move your input field up by enough rows to make room for the desired input length. (As with XB's ACCEPT AT, there are only 28 columns used on each row of the screen.)

The routine also protects against the situation where the existing length of a string is greater than the allowed length given in the LINK. If that's so, the string will be truncated to the length allowed. If you want to be sure of avoiding truncation, the best way to do that is to always specify length at either one more than the expected maximum, or at 255 in all cases. Of course specifying at 255 would limit you in terms of how far down the screen you can do your ACCEPT. Normally a more sensible "safe" entry would be perhaps 81 characters. (None of this applies for numeric entries, where the allowed length is always 32 characters.)

String entries are accepted "as is", with no checking on their content. For numeric entries, there is also no checking performed on the content of the field. If it is non-numeric, it will simply cause a zero (0) value to be placed in the variable, with no error report.

FUNCTION KEY ACTIONS

As in the case of Extended Basic's normal input and Accept At, Function-1 will delete the character at the cursor position. Function-2 will initiate Insert mode at the cursor's position. Function-3 will erase everything currently in the input field. Function-4 through Function-9 will have no effect. Function-S and Function-D will move the cursor left and right, respectively, Function-X or Function-E will have the same effect as ENTER, and Function-= will exit to the TI Title screen.

THE ERROR TRAPS

As with any Harrison product, we have tried to pre-think what kind of errors the programmer might make in trying to use this routine, and have provided on-screen reports in plain English for errors that can be anticipated.

EXTRA FEATURES

For those cases where you're using this routine and want the ability to just re-set Extended Basic to its default colors and character sets, etc., there is a second "entry point" in the ULTACC/O object file. Once the routine is loaded, the re-setting of XB (and screen clearing) can be accomplished by simply:

CALL LINK("ULTCLR")

No parameters are required. There is yet another bonus supplied on this disk, an object file called RSXB/O. This allows access to the same service as ULTCLR, by CALL LINK("RSXB"). This is provided for those situations where you don't need the Ultimate Accept At, but still want the re-setting capability available.

THE DEMOS

This disk includes demos, which have the routines embedded in the XB program with ALSAVE. The main one is called ULTDEND, and it shows off some of the features of the routine. The second is called RSTDEND, and it sets up a screen character font and changed colors, then uses RSXB to clear everything back to the normal XB conditions.

DONE

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REVIEW OF PREDITOR

By: Andy Frueh, Lima OH

TI-Writer was introduced by TI sometime in 1983. At that time, it was the only practical word processor. I must admit, it is one of TI's better programs. Unfortunately, they left the market before they could upgrade it. Funnelweb came along and totally redefined TI-Writer with tons of added features and a new TI "environment". I should also note that TI released a program editor with the Editor/Assembler. It is essentially a stripped down version of TI-Writer.

About the same time as Funnelweb, a commercial company released Companion, which was meant to be a totally new word processor. It does not use D/V 80 files or operate in a way similar to TI-Writer. Harrison software has also released a new word processor.

But what about a utility to make editing PROGRAMS easier? Or source files to be compiled by one of the many language compilers we have (but seldom use)? Most of the time, programmers use the enhanced TI-Writer found in Funnelweb for editing/writing programs. It is handy for Assembly programmers because it has a mode which automatically checks

for correct syntax, symbols, ect. But what about other languages? Besides, TI-Writer can be improved beyond what we have, right?

Enter PrEditor, a totally new (but TI-Writer compatible) editor. It IS a 100% new program and borrows nothing from TI-Writer. Of course whenever you write a program intended to replace an already existing one, two things happen. First, you create many useful features not found in the previous program, and two, you invent all kinds of new annoyances.

Not that PrEditor is in any way a bad program. If you mainly write and edit program files, it is worth your looking into. It does not make a good replacement for a word processor. In my opinion, its hang-ups make word processing too laborous.

As is usual with reviews, I'll start with the strong points. Believe me, there are plenty. First of all, this program is totally configureable. There is hardly one aspect of PrEditor you can't change. By configure, I mean more than colors. You can do that of course, but also change things like the cursor flash/repeat rate (handy for slow/fast typists), the number of characters it will window to the right (pressing FCTN 5 or going off the 40 columns currently on the screen), windowing up and down, and get this, you can even reselect which keys perform which functions. PrEditor uses FCTN/CTRL presses for most of its functions instead of a command line like TI-Writer, so you may wish to set the keys to your choice. Ever thought CTRL I should be INSERT? Now you can do that.

There is one keypress I really like. It will show you how many bytes are left in memory. No more guessing when the buffer is full.

This feature may be handy for those of you who need just a few extra K to write good routines. You may configure PrEditor to use an extra 4-8 K RAM, such as is in the Mini Memory or a SuperCart. As far as I know, there is no support for the Super SuperCart (32K).

Sometimes when you use FCTN/CTRL B to insert lines in TI-Writer, you find the operation is unpredictable. I believe when you move up/down, you cancel the insert line mode. With PrEditor, you toggle between an insert line mode. A status line gives info such as if you are in insert character or line modes, as-is text mode (explained later), as well as which line you are on. It also tells you where your blocks are located (more on that later as well).

What is as-is mode? Because of the large number of functions requiring keypresses, you need to enter a separate mode to enter control codes. It is roughly the equivalent of TI-Writer's Control U mode, and is described about as well in the manual.

Instead of specifying line numbers for move, copy, and delete, you mark a block of text. Some argue that having to set up a block is extra work, but it is handy if you want to copy from the middle of the fourth line to the second word of the seventh line (for example). A big plus, in my opinion.

Another neat-O feature of PrEditor is the fact that it will let you load a second file into memory, provided that there is room. You can swap information freely from both files. Further, if you leave the first file at line 2, column 2, enter the second file and edit it somewhere else, then return to the first file, you will return where you left off when you entered into the second file. In this example, if I stopped editing the second file somewhere in line 142, I do not return to line 142 of the first file, I will return to line 2 column 2. A good idea by programmer Tom Bentley.

How about its weak points? There are a few, and as I said, they don't really hamper the performance of PrEditor, but it would be nice if they got corrected.

One of the biggest "bugs" is that if you have not typed anything to the right of the cursor, you can't use FCTN D (or whatever you set as the right arrow) to move over that direction. You need to press the space bar.

I seem to hate the standard TI character set. There is no neat "CHARA1" type font with PrEditor. If you load it directly from XB or the EA module, you get the resident TI character set, complete with small capitals for lower-case. Yuck.

You can split a line similar to TI-Writer's INSERT when in Word Wrap mode, but there is no "reformat." Your only other insert choice is the insert mode similar to the one in TI-Writer in "fixed" mode. This is when you have to be sure you don't push your line past the 80 column margin, or it gets erased. I suppose it makes sense to not have a reformat key when writing program files. It is a nightmare to see lines and lines of source code reformat into a single giant paragraph. However, it is unbearable to not have reformat if you are attempting word processing. The manual says that PrEditor is well-suited as a word processor.

Another sore point is the lack of "Recover Edit". You can purge, but it only purges the file you are currently on. The second file, if loaded, is safe. It is possible to load two identical files into each of the two buffers, that way if you accidently purge one, the other is still available. However, any changes you made to the purged file will still be lost.

If you can live with its few hang-ups, PrEditor is well worth asking Asgard software about.

DONE