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PENN-OHIO USERS GROUP
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NEXT MEETING

MAY 14, 1990
7:30 P.M.

AMERICAN RED CROSS
5TH AND WOOD STREETS
YOUNGSTOWN, OH O

PRESIDENTS' CORNER

I would like to start this by ex-
tending our deepest regrets to John
Turner for the loss of his son. I
know that all of our member were
sadden to hear of his death.

Well T-ball season is upon us so
i'll be a little late for this meet-
ing but I will be there. We have a
few demo planned for the evening.
One will be Brown Bagger's Mind-
reader, not the world of the un-
known, but for those of us that have
problems spelling. It will display
the word as you spell the word. If
this has you all confused then be at
the meeting and you will understand
all. I guess I don't need to tell
all that we have planned because you
are planning to be there so you will
see it all then.

CREDITS

Editor; Ed Luptak
Asst. Editor; Dave Tranovich

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INVITATION

Please take this opportunity to
challenge yoursel'. Write an arti-
cle for the newsletter. Send your
copy to Ed Luptak, 71 Elm Street,
Struthers, Ohio 44471 or, if you
wish to send it via modem, call Ed
at 755-7691 to make arrangements.
You may write or type but the easi-
est to handle is an ASCII file made
with your favorite word processing
program.

DUES

Dues for the Penr-Ohio Users Group
are $15.00 per calendar year for an
individual membership, $20.00 per
calendar year for a family member
ship and $10 per year for an associ-
ate membership. Cues go to the cost
of newsletter publicatior and li-
brary expenses.

TI FEAST EAST (Wash. DC)

Race North race South catch another
show. That was the order of busi-
ness this past weekend. So where do
begin? Let's start at the begin-
ng. The TI Computer Show in DC can
only be classified as a success.
Let's see, who was there better
still who wasn't there? Not many I
can assure you. It seems that any-
one who is still active was in at-
tendance. Bud Mills, Peter Hoddie,

Barry Boone, Barry Trave·, Charles Earl..... and the list goes on and on.
The DC users group did a super job putting the whole show together. The demos were a little late but that's to be expected when we all get together like that with a lot to say. A big round of thanks go out to these folks.

Tidewater was well represented with Ken Leibrand, Ken Woodcock, and Mike Couture making up the Norfolk side. Hampton was also in attendance with Barry Ensley, Rodney Llewellyn and Howard Ingram rounding it all out.

A BIG special THANKS goes out to Joe Towell for holding down the fort at the Virginia Beach computer show on Saturday for us while we indulged at the DC show.

Our trip to DC was rather uneventful travel wise but the trip home Xxas a story all it's own. First the rain put us in a holding pattern on I-95 for about a half hour then the delightful high speed tunnel capped it all with the inch worm crawl through. All in all though we made out pretty well. Maybe Allen and Ken they picked up some neat door prizes. Allen won a bare board from Bud Mills worth about $50 and Ken won a program from Peter Hoddie. The driver (you guessed it ME) won the pleasure of their company. Not bad for a days work.

If you've never been to a TI computer show you don't know what you are missing. The people are very friendly and if you have any of those special questions that only the programer would krow then that's the place to be. They take all the time you need to understand what it is you want answered. Believe me they really do.

Even an old hand like me can learn something (ha ha). If you think that this little computer is on it's

last legs well all I can say is you are wrong. We have only begun to scratch the surface. Nuff said. Til next time NUMBERS CRUNCHIN.......
MIKE

Modyfing SUPER X BASIC
by Ken Woodcock

This is for all you GENEVE'rs as well as you TI'ers with GRAM KRACKERs or other Gram cevices:

SUPER EXTENDED BASIC has some real neat features. Once you've tried it you'll never go back to plain vanilla XB! To me, the enhanced editing functions are the most useful. Being able go to the end or beginning of the line, move down or up a screen line and erase everything from the cursor to the end (or start) of the line with one stroke was teriffic! (well actually the 'one stroke" is a two or three keypress combination) I got hooked on SEB on my T system before becoming a GENEVE owner but was pleased to find that SEB works fine on the GENEVE. ... oopps!! Maybe I spoke a little too soon!! Although most all SEB features do work fine, my cherished enhanced editing functions don't!! What to do?? Never fret!! A l is well in the end.

STEP #1 - buy the SUPER EXTENDED BASIC module. The latest catalog from Triton Products lists it at $49.95 (a pitance) Call them at 1-800-227-6900 and order it. Even if you don't have a GENEVE or a gram device you'll still love SEB!

From here on it is only applicable to GENEVE and GRAM owners. 1st thing you'll want to do is dump it to disk. Very easy to do with a GRAM KRACKER (fortunately I never had to use Myarc's cartridge saver program). Now let's get to the real reason for this article - how to get the enhanced editing functions to work on the GENEVE (and TI with RAVE keyboard). I take no credit for this accomplishment. A well know TI per-

sonality, DR. Tom Freeman, developed the modification and published it in the LA 99ers newsletter (issue unknown). I am re-publishing it here because it is necessary to have made this modification before you can get into the customizing I will present later. If you have disposed of your Gram Kracker, ya better start looking for a friend who has one because while modifying the module space memory in a GENEVE is relatively simple, there is presently no way to save the modified module to disk (hint .... hint .... any programmer types interested??) Once these modifications have been made the SUPER enhanced editing functions are once again usable, and easier than before. THANK YOU TOM (I would like to think that all us TIers are on a first name basis). I went along for several months with this configuration, until receiving the September MICROpendium. In the "User Notes" an article by James Aaron caught my eye; entitled EXPANSION KEYBOARDS, GRAM KRACKER & SEB in wh ch he listed the GRAM addressess that hold the ASCII value of several of the enhanced editing keypresses. This got me to thinking; why not customize SEB to my keyboard?? Why should I use <CNTL> Q to go to the beginning of the line when my keyboard has a key labeled HOME just beging to be used, and wouldn't it be more logical to use the key labeled END to go to the end of the line (instead of <CNTL> A ?? (remember that I am using a GENEVE -enhanced- keyboard) So, armed with the information from Tom Freeman and James Aaron, I set about to customize my SEB editing keypresses. << about 1 month later >> The first step is to determine which keys you want to activate the editing functions. I decided to change only 3: <HOME> to go to the beginning of the line, <END> to go to the end of the line ard <TAB> for word tab. I had wanted to use the <PAGE UP> and <PAGE DN> keys to move up and down screen lines within the program line but found that my keyboard duplicates the <PAGE DN> and

<F4> key codes so I would lose the ability to abort the editing which <F4> usually provides. Step 2 is to determine the ASCII codes that are generated by the keys you want to use. This is easily done with a BASIC program like the one James Aaron listed in his MICROpendium note. My keyboard returned the folowing codes: <HOME> 140 >8C <END> 138 >8A <TAB> 137 >89 Now to make the changes. This involves editing the Grom and must be done cifferently depending on whether you have a GENEVE or a TI with Gram Kracker. On the GENEVE you can use the new CALL POKEG() command of SEB itself to poke the data into the "grom". This method can't be used with the Gram Kracker because to modify memory within the GK, the write-protect switch must be off, and if SEB is used with that switch off it will lock-up. So with the GK you would use the built in memory editor to make the changes. I am not familiar with the other gram emulator devices but there should be a way to edit their memory. All that remains is to identify the gram addresses to modify. James Aaron identified the word tab address as gCBF7 so a CALL POKEG(-9225,137) and that one is done. The other two addresses can be determined from Tom Freeman's article. They are: g7798 (30818 decimal) for start of line and g77A2 (30826 decimal) for the end of line key. A CALL POKEG(30818,140) and CALL POKEG(30826,138) completes my modification. It can now be tested and if not to your liking just poke in a different key value. If you have a TI with gram simulator you save the modified module to disk and relax. If you are a GENEVEer, the mods will be gone next time you turn off the power but you have 3 (or more?) options. 1. Get a friend with a GK to make a disk copy for you. 2. Use a disk sector editor to modify the SEB files. 3. Run this XB program each time you start your system (with any necessary adjustments for your keyboard):

100 CALL INIT :: CALL POKEG(

-9225,137) :: CALL POKEG(30
618,140) :: CALL POKEG(3062
6,138)

Maxamize Flexibility
by Ken Woodcock

OK, Ladies and gentlemen. We are well past the era where a single disk drive system was king. Today many TI (and GENEVE) users have 2 to 4 floppy disk drives, RAM disks ard hard dists. It is time to keep this in mind when writing programs; whether public domain, freeware or commercial. It is most annoying to run a program only to find that it accesses one or more data files which have been "hard coded" into the program as DSK1.cxx or that there are several program segments which are run by RUN "DSK1.xxx". This was fine "way back when ...." but is a royal pain in the behind for many users today, especially hard disk users since the hard disk directory named WDS1.DSK1. is searched first when such an access is encountered. The solution is relatively easy for the programmer to build-in. It is usually quite a bit more difficult for the end-user to add to the program. In this article we will consider the 1st situation. Hopefully this will encourage programmers to include this versitility, and may be of some use to you in getting that program to work with your "CUSTOM SYSTEM".

First let's consider YOU, THE PROGRAMMER. First and foremost, use a diskname for your program. Instead of having a RUN "DSK1.PAFT2", make it RUN "DSK.YYY.PART2" where YYY is the diskrame. This makes it easy to install your program on a hard disk where the subdirectories under WDS1 .DSK. can be as many as 114, and also is easy on the Horizon ramdisk user who can partition his device into several logical drives which will respond by diskname. This is a good practice to follow regardless of what language your program is written n (XB to A/L). If you do

this, please follow up by making it clear (either in the docs or in the program itself) that the program is looking for a specific diskname.

For datafiles, a little more caution is required to insure compatability with the Nyarc HFDCC. This is because the HFDCC will not create a NEW datafile on sub-directory WDS1.-DSK.XXX. using a statement such as: OPEN #1:"DSK.XXX.DATAFILE" If a file named DATAFILE already exists, then it will either be added to or overwritten (cepending on the access mode). The only way to create a new file is to use the entire pathname: WDS1.DSK.XXX.DATAFILE . The key is to use a variable for the disk identification, such as @$="DSK3.". Then access the datafile by
    OPEN #1:@$;"DATA1"
instead of
    OPEN #1:"DSK3. DATA1".
Put the assignment
    (@$="DSK3.")
in one of the early lines of the program and then to make it realy elagant, include an option to change the device later on. ie.
    DISPLAY AT(4,1):"DEVICE NAME
    ->";@$::ACCEPT AT(4,14)SIZE(
    -14):@$.
This doesn't take much effort and makes things much easier for many users.

The above holds true, of course, only for Extended Basic programs. For A/L, C-99, Fortran and other compiled language programs, a different approach must be taken. This can be accomplished in one of two ways. One way would be to have within the program itself a way to customize it to the user's system. The other way would be to have an external install program which the user would run first. Once it was run, the devices and pathnames would be wr tten to his working copy and it would not need to be run again except to change some parameter. (of course these methods can also be used for XB programs).

This is fine for all the great programs that are yet to be written; but what about all these neat programs that you already have? The ones that won't run on your custom system? Well, there is no cure-all, but there are some things you can try and most programs can be converted to work from the device that you choose.

TRIVIAL PURSUIT: COMPUTER STYLE
By Dan Gutman

Question: What was the bestselling board game of the 1980s?

Answer: Trivial Pursuit, of course.

And now trivia fans can continue their quest for worthless information with "Trivial Pursuit: The Computer Game" (Parker Brothers, for IBM, $40)

The computer version is a fairly faithful recreation of the board game. The rules are virtually identical; the questions come from editions of the original Trivial Pursuit.

There have been some additions to the game that take advantage of the computer's capabilities. You can play by yourself, for instance. The game disk includes six characters who serve as your opponents if your flesh and blood friends are busy.

These characters, with cutesy names like Holly Wood, Deke Athlon and Professor Prune, have various levels of expertise. Holly Wood, as you might expect, knows just about everything about movies. The characters are "animated," but only to the extent that they smile when you get the answer right and frown when you get it wrong.

The computer rewards your correct answers with a message like, "Fantastic! What knowledge!" or "Good job old bean!" When you miss, you see, "Who knew that one? Not me."

Unlike the board game, you can customize the computer version by selecting your categories of questions. There are 30 all together, with the emphasis on sports, music and pop culture. The game truly lives up to its name when you can select as your area of expertise 'Pre-Elvis."

Computers are known for their ability to automate human tasks. In "Trivial Pursuit," the computer rolls the dice for you and moves your piece around the board. There is even a screen of statistics, so players can see how many questions they've gotten right and wrong in each category.

All this aside, the important question is whether or not putting the game on computer makes it any more fun. In my opinion, it doesn't. In an effort to "add value" to the board game, they have actually taken AWAY from the experience of playing Trivial Pursuit.

Half the fun of any board game is tossing the dice, moving your little "man" around the board--things that are peripheral to the actual gameplay. Playing the old Trivial Pursuit, I saw marriages teeter on the brink because somebody got one those ittle pie wedges stuck in the plastic wheel.

With the computer, all you can do is stare at the screen. By having the computer take over the mundane tasks of gameplay, the players have been taken OUT of the game. You're less involved. You don't care as much. It's simply not as much fun as the old Trivial Pursuit.

One easy improvement would be to let the human players freeze the game at any point while the computer--generated players take their turns. Trivial Pursuit games often degenerate into interesting discussions (or arguments) about the answers. In this computer version, your simulat-

ed opponents mechanically give their answers a few seconds after the question appears.

My neighbor Nick, who played the same against me, suggested it could have been improved with three--dimensional graphics of the dice rolling and views of the game board from different angles. I'm not sure. I question whether ANYTHING they could have done would be more fun than the old cardboard game on a coffee table.

The real questions are: Must everything in the real world be simulated on computer? And does something necessarily become BETTER because it appears on a screen?

Is computer baseball better than the feel of the ball smacking into your glove? Is computer poker better than holding the paper cards in your hand? No matter how closely they can simulate life on a computer screen, it usually doesn't match the sounds, smell, and feel of the real thing.

EARTH DAY IN SILICON VALLEY
By Dan Gutman

Can computers help us save the planet?

Just in time for Earth Day, two of Silicon Valley's most acclaimed software authors have created "environmentally conscious" simulation programs. For a change, instead of saving the planet from aliens, trolls and monsters, we can attempt to save it from OURSELVES.

"The Balance of the Planet" ($50) is just out from Chris Crawford, creator of the critically-acclaimed "Balance Of Power."

"BOP" was a geopolitical simulation in which the computer user attempted to prevent a nuclear confrontation between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. Now that The Cold War is over, Crawford

sees other--just as deadly--threats to civilization. Pollution. The depletion of the ozone layer. The Greenhouse Effect. Mountains of garbage.

In "Balance of the Planet" (Chris Crawford Games, for Mac, IBM, 408-9-46-4626), you're responsible for the planet's health. As United Nations High Commissioner of the Environment, you have the power to levy taxes on any of a dozen different industrial activities.

You also have the power to determine where those tax dollars go. The money can be allocated to grant subsidies to 20 different environmental activities. "You distribute the resources in a way to make the world a better place," says Crawford.

Points are awarded for success, and taken away for failure. At the end of the simulation the computer tells you which things you managed well and which you did poorly.

Crawford calls "Balance of the Planet an "environmental policy" game. It's available for IBM and Macintosh.

The other new environmental simulation is "SimEarth: The Planet Simulator" (Maxis, 415-376-6434). It was designed by Will Wright, who gave us last year's Entertainment Program of the Year, "SimCity."

"SimEarth" is based on Cambridge professor James Lovelock's GAIA hypothesis: The earth is a living life form. Humans are just organisms that stabilize it.

The program starts ten billion years after The Big Bang, as the Earth's crust is cooling. You witness the creation of the atmosphere, the oceans, and continental drift. Temperature, CO2 emissions, the content of chemicals in the atmosphere and dozens of other factors

can be manipulated as the planet evolves.

"You can go through a billion years in about fifteen minutes," says Wright.

The goal, naturally, is to preserve the planet. If you run the Earth poorly, all life dies off.

The program offers several different scenarios. In one, you start in 1990 and see if you can make it through the next 25 years. In another, you travel into the future, when we can go to other planets and colonize them. In this case, Earth must be maintained as a place to visit on vacations. The Earth as a national park, you might say.

In still other scenarios, meteors can wipe out civilizations that don't take care of their planet, and dinosaurs can achieve intelligence before mammals do.

"SimEarth" will be out soon for the Macintosh and later for IBM computers.

"In five billion years, the sun is going to incinerate the solar system. So it's really a matter of how long we can postpone it," says Will Wright. "I never realized until I started doing the research on this program what a predicament we're in."

POWER TO THE PEOPLE
By Dan Gutman

Computers, copiers and fax machines have made it possible for millions of Americans to work out of their homes. But there's one thing a home office needs more than anything else--electricity.

An electrician came to our house today to upgrade the service from 100 to 200 amps, mostly because my wife and I have filled the place with so many electronic gadgets that

---

we were on the verge of overloading the circuits.

Naturally, he had to cut off all power coming into the house. We'd be without juice for most of the day. It will be fun, I figured, like going back in time. No big deal. We can handle it.

Well, yes and no.

My computer, of course, was out of commission. I was prepared for that. I have a laptop computer that runs off rechargable batteries. My plan was to use it during the time the electrician was over, so I could work like any other day of the week.

Scrap that idea. The batteries were dead. My recharger, which is always plugged into the wall, frequently malfunctions, and luck would have it fail me this time. There would be no laptopping today.

Fine, I said to myself, bitterly. I can deal with the situation. My old electric typewriter was useless, of course, but I DO have an ancient manual typewriter stashed in the basement. My wife thought I was crazy when I picked it up at a yard sale a few years ago.

"Just wait," I told her at the time. "Someday the electricity will go out and this will come in handy."

Have you tried typing on a manual typewriter in the last ten years? After getting used to a personal computer, hitting keys on a manual is like slamming a sledgehammer in one of those carnival games where you try to make the bell ring. Did people actually use these things to write with in the olden days?

After typing a paragraph or so, I was gasping for breath and felt like my shoulder was dislocated.

I decided to forget about writing altogether and make some business

calls instead. The telephone worked fine, but the answering machine runs off electricity, so that was dead for the day.

I always took the answering machine for granted, but when you work at home, it really changes your life. When it's on, I come and go as I please. When it's not working, I'm paralyzed at my desk.

I was afraid to go downstairs to get a bite to eat, because somebody might call and hang up before I could make the mad dash up two flights of steps to pick up the phone.

And I couldn't eat anyway, because if I opened the refrigerator door, the little cold air that was left inside would escape and all the food would spoil. The stove didn't work either--it's got one of those electric ignition systems instead of a pilot light.

I was even afraid to go to the bathroom for fear of missing a crucial call. How did people work at home before there were telephone answering machines?

So I couldn't write and my phone calling was limited because I had to sit at my desk and wait for the people I called to get back to me. (You can never reach anybody with just one phone call these days.)

The fax machine ("the office tool of the Nineties") didn't work. The copy machine was useless for the day too.

The doorbell didn't work, so I didn't know when the Federal Express man came with a package. The lights in the house were out.

After a few hours, I got hungry. My bladder became full. I didn't even know what time it was, because all the digital clocks were dead.

At that point, I decided that I'd

had it. I took the rest of the day off.

I'll come back tomorrow, when the current is flowing again. All these home office gizmos are powerful, but useless without power.

SPRING CLEANING? DON'T FORGET THE COMPUTER
By Dan Gutman

In more civilized times spring cleaning meant taking up the heavy rugs and cleaning out the closets. These days, it means dusting off the VCR and getting the car washed--IF we have the time.

But there's one thing you should give a thorough cleaning once a year--your computer system. All sorts of problems occur when dirt and dust get into delicate electronic parts.

A few suggestions on cleaning computer components...

--Monitors: Spray Windex or Glass Plus on a lint-free cloth and wipe the screen well. Computer stores also sell anti-static screen cleaners. You might want to run around the house and clean your TV screens at the same time as you clean the computer screen.

--Keyboards: Computerists are constantly told not to eat anywhere near the computer. Hardly anybody ever follows that advice. Consequently, most of us have keyboards filled with Chips Ahoy crumbs, pretzels, and last year's salami sandwich.

Common sense should tell you not to pour Fantastic--or any other fluid---on your keyboard. And don't try to pry off the key caps to clean the innards. You're just opening a can of worms.

The only way to clean a keyboard safely is with a r. Use a powerful

vacuum with an attachment that can fit into small places, or better yet, blow the dirt out by spraying compressed air. These cans are sold in camera stores--photographers use them to blow dust out of their equipment.

--Printers: This is where the dirt is the worst, because you have all that ink flying around. Clean the printhead carefully with a damp rag or Q-tip soaked in alcohol. For letter-quality printers, run an old toothbrush or rubber eraser over the keys.

--The computer itself. If you know how to open up your computer and aren't afraid to poke around inside, there's nothing wrong with carefully cleaning it with a damp Q-tip.

If the thought of opening up your computer makes you break out in hives, don't do it. You may do more harm than good.

If you've got a service contract, bring your computer in once a year even if nothing's wrong with it, so a professional can fully clean and check it out. A good time to do this is when you go away on vacation or business, when you won't be needing the computer for a few days.

If you smoke or have a cat that prowls around the computer, it's all the more important to clean it occasionally. You don't have to buy an expensive cleaning kit. Usually a plain old rag with alcohol or cleaning solution works just as well.

Before you clean ANYTHING, look at the instruction booklet that came with the component to see if any special procedures are indicated. And make sure everything is turned off before you clean.

A few other tips for regular computer maintenance...

--Keep computer equipment away from

radiators, direct sunlight and other sources of heat. Make sure to leave a few inches of breathing room around all your components so air can circulate.

--Computers don't like static electricity. Get an anti-static mat for your desk and the floor below the computer. Get in the habit of touching your lamp or other piece of metal before you touch the computer, especially in the winter or if the room is carpeted.

--Stash the cords and cables out of the way so children and pets don't trip over them.

--Fumes from nail polish remover, ammonia, glue and other liquid chemicals can react with magnetic surfaces. Keep them away from your floppy disks.

--Get a dust cover, not just for the computer but also for your printer, copy machine, and other electronic equipment.

--Tape a cardboard flap in front of your disk drive opening and leave it there all the time. Less dust will get sucked into your computer, so there will be less to clean next year.

ARE NEWSPAPERS DEAD?
By Dan Gutman

Wouldn't it be nice if every article in the newspaper was about something you were interested in? Wouldn't it be a big time saver if all the boring stuff was edited out before the paper was printed?

Last week Dow Jones & Co. announced "DowVision," just such a "customized newspaper" that can be accessed by anybody with a personal computer modem and phone line.

The online information networks also offer personal news clipping services, and some experts believe they