NEXT MEETING

MONDAY,   May 9, 1988 - 6:30 PM

NEVADA POWER BUILDING MEETING ROOM

6226 West Sahara, Las Vegas, Nevada

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Most of my computer time lately has been taken up tinkering with my 384K Horizon Ramdisk and writing/debugging some Assembly programs. As a result, I have managed to neglect my writing, the bulletin board, and Extended Basic programming. Since I am still working on the Assembly stuff, it will be a couple of months before you see anything on it. I do have a review of the 384K Horizon Ramdisk though, and you will find it elsewhere in this issue. I am running late writing this article (so what else is new) so there won't be anything about the BBS in this Snugletter either.

We have some good stuff for this month's meeting. We will be calling Compuserve and Genie. These are the 2 most popular on-line information services. Both of them offer all kinds of information, special interest groups, programs and files to download. We will be exploring the TI FORUM on Compuserve and the TI ROUND TABLE on Genie. If you have never called an on-line information service, or even if you have, you will find this demonstration to be fun and educational.

How many of you have ever heard of a $29.00 printer? There has been one advertised in Computer Shopper for the last 3 or 4 months. After seeing it for so long, I finally decided that I couldn't stand it any more. I ordered one for myself and one for my stepson who has a PC Jr. This printer was originally designed for the PC Jr. so I knew it would work with his computer. The question was, would it work with mine? I figured it should, since it's a serial printer and there are only 3 or 4 wires needed in a serial connection.

It took about 10 days to get the printers. The RS232 connection is completely non-standard (what do you expect from Big ... er, I mean Little Blue). Fortunately, the printer manual is good. All interfacing information is incuded in the manual. After a couple hours of studying and a little trial and error (the nomenclature on the pins was also non-standard), I was able to fabricate a cable for it. Probably the worst thing about the printer is the device name you have to type in to access it: "RS232.BA=1200.DA=8.PA=N". For a $29 printer, it has a surprising number of features. As a matter of fact, if it weren't for it's being a thermal printer, I would have no problem whatsoever reccommending this printer to anyone.

I will have my little printer at the meeting for you to see and will put it through it's paces for you.

WARNING!

If you are planning to buy a Geneve 9640 (reccommended), be sure that the RGB monitor you get for it (also reccommended) is compatible. We have encountered one that won't work. The Amiga 2002 monitor is supposed to be directly compatible with the Amiga 1080 monitor that we have used with several Geneves here in Las Vegas. In fact, the 2002 is the new monitor that Commodore sells for the Amiga. It is NOT the same! There is a problem with the synch signal from the 2002 model. Paul Charleton says that it's probably inverted and that installing a 741s04 hex inverter chip would probably fix it. I haven't tried this because it wasn't my monitor and it would involve either adding parts to the monitor chassis, the geneve card, or building a special circuit into the cable.

Our solution in this case was to take the 2002 monitor back and trade it for a 1080 monitor. The 1080 is a bit more expensive for some reason, but at least we got it to work.

We will once again be having our raffle this month. There are getting to be quite a number of items in the pot these days, but we still like to get new donations whenever we can. At last month's meeting we decided to sell the books that the LA 99ers donated to us. If there are any titles in our book box that you want, see Bob Bieber at the meeting and he will sell them to you. We also still have TIXPO 88 hats left for sale, so if you didn't get one at the show (or have already gotten yours dirty) you can still get one.

At the June SNUG membership meeting, nominations for officers will be called. If you have a raging desire to seek and hold an office in SNUG let the members know at the June meeting. I have cut this article short this month so I can finish my review of the HRD+. Don't forget... May 9th, 6:30 PM, Nevada Power Co. See ya there!

-John-

X—BASIC TRAINING (revisited)!
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

by Dee Wellman

Have you ever gotten tired of looking at the bleak cyan screen with black letters that TI blessed the TI-99/4A owners with? Well, here is a way to change the screen in the immediate mode. To change just the screen color type in: (no line numbers are needed)

CALL SCREEN(6):: ACCEPT AT(1,1):A

(or use the color of your choice)
After typing this in press enter and the screen will turn blue with the cursor at the top left corner, row 1, column 1, of the screen, waiting for you to enter something. Do not press enter or press any key, accept for FCTN 4 (clear), this moves the cursor back down to the bottom left of the screen. And you will be back in the immediate or program entry mode and you can now type in or list your programs against a new background color.

The only problem with this is that if you create an error, execute CALL CLEAR, PRINT or RUN your program the screen will return to the original cyan color.

To change the cursor, text and screen color type in:

FOR X=0 TO 12 :. CALL COLOR(X,16,1):: NEXT X :: CALL SCREEN(5):: ACCEPT AT(1,1):A

Then follow the instructions as set out above.

To change just the cursor color type in:

CALL COLOR(0,7,1):: ACCEPT AT(1,1):A

Then follow the instructions as above. That should give you some sort of a start on giving the computer a little work out and make it a little more fun to read those program listings.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT—MAY 88
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

by R. J. BIEBER

With mother nature letting us know she's in charge this last weekend it's a good time to remind everybody of one of the primary rules of home computing. SAVE! SAVE! SAVE! Don't let a power outage rob you of your efforts.

BULK DISKETTES:

SNUG still has bulk diskettes for sale. The price for a package of 12 diskettes which includes Tyvec sleeves and labels is as follows: SNUG members - $6.00 per package or 2 Packages for $11.50. NON-MEMBERS - $7.00 per package. First come, first served.

NEW PROGRAMS:

Renn Cruap from the SLAVE User's Group in Utah was in town Easter weekend and we got together for some disk swapping. Most of what he gave me was compressed so I didn't have time to decompress, dearchive and review any of the files before April's meeting. Family matters and my brother being in town for the National Association of Broadcasters convention took priority.

As luck will have it the 26 disks he gave me turned into 63 disks of unpacked files and programs. I cannot list all of them here, but, I will have a Master List, Disk Catalog Listing and hopefully a breakdown of individual programs at the May meeting. A quick glance leads me to believe most of the programs will fall into 2 catagories - either Educational or Games.

MAY'S DISK OF THE MONTH !

Because I was absent from April's meeting and the April DOM's were not passed out, I will feature them again in May. One disk will contain Disk Utilities Ver 4.0 by John Birdwell and the other disk will feature TELCO. Both programs were demonstrated by John Martin during March"s meeting.

I have archived and compressed TELCO from 531 sectors down to 264 sectors so it fits onto one SS/SD disk. I've also included Barry Boone's "Archiver Ver 2.4" for those of you who may not have it. You'll need it to decompress and dearchive the TELCO file (Int/Fix 128).

The second disk contains John Birdwell's Disk Utilities Ver 4.0. It only takes up 91 sectors so I'll try to fill up the disk with some other goodies. Documentation is not included with the program. John Birdwell was smart. In order to get the DOCs you must send him the "Fairware fee" of $15.00 and he'll send you the complete documentation.

MAY'S RAFFLE

Evidently, due to a small turnout at April's meeting the raffle was not a roaring success. Hopefully we'll do better this month. Remember, we do have a large selection of items in the raffle pot. Be sure to bring a few extra bucks so you can participate. The raffle tickets currently go for $2.00 each.

SNUG is always looking for new/used items to include in the monthly raffles. Please look through your modules, books and assorted disks to see if you may have some item(s) to donate. Any and all items are welcome and appreciated. Remember, some of our new members are cassette based only and may be able to use those old program books you have lying around.

That's all for this month. --- rjb

SPEEDY CURSOR?
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Downloaded from GENIE and condensed by Dee Wellman.

This fix by Peter Hoddie and uploaded to GENIE by Steve Mehr of the Tri-Valley User Group in So. Calif., shows how to speed up the auto-repeat of the cursor in the Funnel-Writer Word Processor.

First, using a sector editor locate the second sector of Funnel-Writer file "ED". The first line contains the HEX characters "909F 1006 06FF 0003 000A 000A,etc" The first "000A" controls the speed of the cursor while it is in motion. The second "000A" controls the initial delay speed of the start of the cursor's auto-repeat.

Now that you have located these two words change the first "000A" to a "000F" for the faster motion of the cursor. Then change the second "000A" to a lower value such as "0005", this shortens the time delay of the auto-repeat. Try it out! Remember the first "000A" controls the cursor repeating speed, the lower the number the slower the motion of the cursor. The second "000A" controls the time delayed start of the auto-repeat. This "000A" equals approx. 1 second, changing to "0005" makes it about a 1/2 second delay, the lower the number the less delay before auto-repeat starts.

One draw-back to this change:

When entering the ShowDirectory function of Funnel Writer, the flagging of a file to load into F'Writer is changed. As you know, you have the ability to flag from 10 files per page in the ShowDirectory routine. This is also the default (10) or "A" in HEX for the cursor speed. If you don't mind typing in your file names to load into Funnel-Writer, go for it.

Like Steve says in the GENIE file; "Maybe someone can come up with a fix for the SD flag feature to have it get it's value from else where in the file".

Thanks for the idea Peter and Steve!

THE HORIZON RAMDISK PLUS
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
a review from the Geneve point of view...

I bought my first Horizon Ramdisk almost 2 years ago. I have always thought that it was one of the most useful devices in my P-box. The original Horizon Ramdisk was well designed and had an adequate operating system.

Since that time, I have made many changes to both my system and my ramdisk. The ramdisk changes range from doing Ed Hallet's 256K hardware modification to running John Johnson's MENU program. I later added Peter Hoddie's ROM chip to it so that the operating system wouldn't get polluted by my bumbling around with Assembly language. All of these changes proved to be quite rewarding in terms of increased capacity,

speed, ease of use, and overall utility. I had just about the best 99/4A operating system that I could imagine. I have been accused of having such a witches brew of hardware and software (I also ran the Gram Kracker with modified Extended Basic and Editor Assembler in it) that it was a wonder anything ran. But run it did! Almost everything I tried worked very well and it was all available to me in a flash. I couldn't have been much happier with my system.

Then came the Geneve. I went from the most efficient '4A system available to a system that barely worked. I was one of the first people to buy a Geneve and the operating system was not only "not finished yet", it was barely begun. In those early days, the manual was good for a doorstop and not much more. About the only thing that eased the pain was my ramdisk. I could still load my favorite programs from it in a flash (although some of them wouldnt run). As time went on and the MDOS improved, my Geneve began to look a lot like my old TI operating system. The only problem was that with each improvement in DOS, there was a corresponding increase in the amount of ramdisk space taken up by the operating system. It finally got to the point that it took 845 sectors just to get me into Extended Basic. I had 2 choices. I could either put some of the files on floppy disk (yuk) or get more ramdisk.

By this time, Bud Mills had bought out Horizon Computers and was offering a 1 MEG ramdisk!! Wow! That's just what I need! I saved up my pennies and bided my time waiting for the TIXPO, which I knew Bud Mills would attend. During the show, I was tempted by several other entries into the battery-backed ramdisk field. All of them offered some nice features, but I finally decided to stick with the Horizon because I am familiar with it, it is dependable, and I didn't know when I would be able to take delivery on one of the others.

I purchased a 384K version of the HRD+ for my system. I got it in kit form just like I did the original HRD. Assembling the kit was a bit more difficult than the original ramdisk had been, but I got lots of practice by the time I finished helping with 3 others. Of the 4 HRD+ kits I helped with, 3 wound up in essentially the same system as I use, 9640 Geneve and existing 256K HRD. The one that went into a TI system as well as a couple of others that I know of that were assembled by Bud Mills Services are all functioning perfectly with some great new software provided by John Johnson.

The other 3 ramdisks are only partially working. Evidently, the Geneve doesn't access any ramdisk addresses that must be expressed using over 8 bits. That makes the practical limit of memory access 256K.

The HRD+ comes with lots of different software that is supposed to overcome this limitation, but in my opinion it falls dismally short of succeeding.

Evidently, this software was written by someone who only had a HRD+ in his P-box. What they expect you to do is to partition off a small portion of your ramdisk for use as an 8K ramdisk for booting your system (which requires an 8 bit address to be able to boot from ramdisk) and then use the rest as a simulated 16 bit ramdisk. This scheme probably works great for those few who don't already have an 8 bit ramdisk in their P-box, but for the majority of us it is totally unacceptable. I'm not trying to say that the software isn't sophisticated or that it doesn't do what it is supposed to do. As a matter of fact, I am quite impressed by the way it allows multiple ramdisks (even tho on the same card) to use only 1 CRU address.
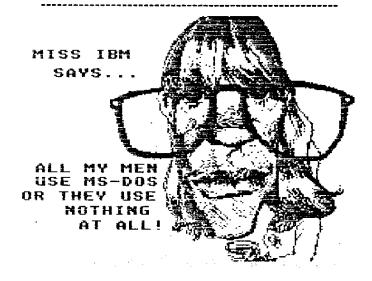
The problem is that you cannot have access to both 8 bit and 16 bit ramdisks at the same time. You must run a program that toggles between them first before they are accessible. This presents 2 problems. First, the program that toggles between ramdisks is only accessible from DOS. Most of the application programs so far are written in TI mode. You must choose 8 or 16 bit before going to TI mode and once there, you can't change back. Second, and probably worse, selecting the 16 bit mode not only causes the 8 bit portion of the HRD+ to become inaccessible, it also causes the original 8 bit ramdisk to become inaccessible. What this does is make 128K of my HRD+ useless to me because even if I formatted ALL of my 384K ramdisk in 16 bit mode, I would still only have 384K accessable to me at best. By using my original 256K ramdisk and 256K of the HRD+ in 8 bit mode, I have a total of 500K of ramdisk available. This is adequate for most purposes, but I still think there should be some way to use the other 128K of the HRD+ without sacrificing the 256K HRD that I've been using for the last 2 years.

This past week, after reading a short note in MicroPendium, we thought that we had found a solution to the problem. By editing sector zero on the ramdisk, one could make it look as if there were as many as 1600 sectors available. 384K would amount to 1536 sectors, so we made changes to sector zero so that it looked like 1536 sectors. We were able to access them and thought everything was fixed, but that didn't last long. It seems that when you try to go beyond sector 1024 (256K), the addressing "rolls over" to zero just like an odometer does in your car after you pass 99999.99 miles. This had the effect of writing new files over old files and marking the disk so it looked like they were out beyond all the old files. It took a while to figure that one out, but at least it gave me a bit of insight to the problems Bud

Mills must have faced when he first tried to get a 1 MEG ramdisk to work on Geneve.

I am confident that either a new version of DOS will allow access to 16 bit addressing or that Bud Mills will finally see what our problem is and get some software out to correct it. Even a way to toggle between 8 bit and 16 bit modes from TI mode would go a long way toward making that ramdisk space available.

I have always made it a point to not write negative reviews of hardware and software. I did not mean for this review to sound negative, because overall I am pleased with the performance of my HRD+. I just think that Bud Mills should have either provided software to handle this situation or else not sell more than 256K with ramdisks for Geneve unless the buyer is aware of the limitations of use beyond 256K.

-John-

MISS IBM
SAYS...

ALL MY MEN
USE MS-DOS
OR THEY USE
NOTHING
AT ALL!

JUST SAY NO!

FIXED ANNUAL EXPENDITURES:

SNUGLETter (Estimated cost per 100)
  Publication Costs ($43/Mo X 12). . . . . $ 516.00
  Postage ($25/Mo X 12). . . . . $ 300.00
P.O. Box Rental Fee ($22 Annually) . . . . . $ 22.00
Bank Account Service Charge ($8.00/Mo X 12) $ 96.00
SNUG B/Board Phone Line ($11/Mo X 12). . . $ 132.00
Long Distance Phone Calls (Estimated). . . $ 44.00
Miscellaneous Expenditures (Estimated) . . $ 90.00

TOTAL ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS (Estimated) - $ 1200.00

Annual Dues Collection: (Avg 30 Mbrs X $18) + $ 540.00

ANNUAL DEFICIT (Estimated)

To be recovered thru Fund Raisers, Disc
Copying Fees, Special Sales, etc.. . . . . . - $ 660.00

~ ~

FUNDS BALANCE (as of 31 March 1988)   + $ 651.26
  (Includes $8.43 Mar 1988 Service Charges)

COLLECTIONS (during April 1988)

Membership Dues (Regular $18 X 1). . . . . $ 18.00
Bulk Diskette Sales ($6/Pkg - $11.50/2 Pkgs) $ .00
Miscellaneous TI Equipment Raffle. . . . . . $ 18.00
Miscellaneous TI Books Sale. . . . . $ 18.00
FunnelWeb Ver 4.0 Donations. . . . . $ .00
J.J. Menu Ver 7.1 Donations. . . . . $ .00
TIxpo88 Hat Sales ($6.00 x 0) . . . . $ .00

                       (Sub-Total) + $ 54.00

EXPENDITURES (during April 1988)

Publication Cost (SNUGLETter)-(R. Johnson)
  Apr 88 . . . . $ 32.44
Postage (SNUGLETter Mailings)-(R. Johnson)
  Apr 88 . . . . $ 30.25

                     (Sub Total) - $ 62.69

$ $

FUNDS AVAILABLE (as of 30 Apr 88)

Checking Account (General operating funds). + $ 542.57
FunnelWeb Donations Trust Fund. . . . . . . + $ 65.00
J.J. Menu Donations Trust Fund. . . . . . . + $ 35.00

            (Bank Balance)>> + $ 642.57

$ $

PROJECTED EXPENDITURES:*

Bank Account Service Charge (Apr Estimate). > $ 8.00

+ +

(takeovers) many dead groups. Some of us are not technically oriented, nor will we ever be. There are a lot of 99ers out there with tape recorders; a lot of 99ers who have never used FORMAT on their TI WRITERS; a lot of 99ers who wouldn't even care to own a GRAM KRACKER (which is great for them as GK isn't made anymore). However, we non-techies can be assets to our groups. We can contribute and have lots to contribute.

What did we do in the old days of before and after the orphaning that was so different?

We went to our user groups as a social occasion, a monthly night out. I think that came first for most people. The 4/A was our commonality. It was social. We talked and shared and learned. We were all, more or less, in the same boat. Those who knew a bit more than we did helped us. We did not feel excluded.

I went to a large TI group last year with the intent of joining. When I got there I felt very uncomfortable. The members did not introduce themselves, nor did they ask me to "come on over" and chat. Nothing. The meeting was disorganized, but when it settled down, nothing happened. There were no workshops, no plans, no anything. Except for five or six men (a couple rather famous in the TI community) who kind of held sway, loudly cracking inside jokes as one or the other of them talked a little bit about what's on their BBS, about Eproms (Damn Eproms, I say!), about how to wire in an XB chip to your console (using all the terms but without a chart or graph). Everyone (except those five or six) was bored to tears. I couldn't understand why anyone even came to the meetings. I didn't join, though I belong to quite a few groups.

When I went back to M.U.N.C.H. I noticed our meetings were getting like that (though not yet as bad).

When meetings started to get down to three and four members present, I knew drastic changes had to take place.

So what did we do to renew membership and keep it active?

First, we started having user workshops. Things we normal types wanted the computer for. Most people want to do something with wordprocessing or graphics. (PRINT SHOP is, after all, the most popular home computer program on the market - for other computers.) Desktop publishing it's being called, and it is just that. We started giving workshops on FUNNELWEB and PLUS! and CFS and TI-ARTIST and FONTWRITER, primarily, because people owned these programs or were seriously considering getting them, and they wanted to know how to use them. They wanted to go slowly and in small groups and ask lots of questions and have things shown a few times. People have a mistrust of manuals, no matter how simple. (The ones that are very simple seem too wordy; the ones that are thin seem to assume too much knowledge on the part of the user.) People like to see things in operation. They

don't care how the TV or the car or the microwave or the washing machine work. They only want to be able to use the things. For most people, this is also true of computers. And for the TI in particular because most purchasers bought it for home and as their first computer experience.

We tried to provide for these 99ers, but we first had to get them back.

We improved the newsletter: increased the number of pages, eliminated the repitious or irrelevant materials, tried to jampack it with goodies from all the exchange newsletters and add graphics and PROGRAMS TO TYPE IN whenever and wherever possible.

Next we mailed them to ALL former members inviting them back to the fold.

We had coffee and goodies available.

We greeted each new or returning visitor at every meeting and pulled them right into the pre-meeting group discussions.

And had signs made up. A batch was given to each member present to put anywhere and everywhere.

We increased our raffles; brought back our text library, our long-forgotten tape library and dubber, our disk library.

At each meeting we begin with a social time (to talk, eat, look at the stuff for sale, for loan, for raffle), pull everyone together for a general filling-in of what the workshops that night will be and a filling-in of what's happening in our computer's world. Lots of jokes and fellowship. Then we have a short, semi-formal meeting (president, treasurer, secretary) and conduct the workshops. Meetings begin officially at 7. Most members arrive by 6:30. We end abruptly at 9.

We gave a list of all members names and addresses and phones to all members.

There is much outside-the-club contact. Many members belong to other clubs, too, so there is a greater sharing. If members show an interest in Eproms, for example, they can bring it up at a meeting and request a workshop for those interested.

The heart and the brain of the user group (for ALL user groups) is the newsletter. Without it, there is no real user group. It is the connector of members. It is the communicator. It is the touchstone and signature of each club around the world. The newsletters are as individual and quirky as the editors whose remarkable dedication continues to turn them out. You can tell from the newsletter if the club is friendly and worth joining.

The main ingredients in successful user groups are the four f's: FUN, FELLOWSHIP, FOOD, AND FRIENDLINESS. When groups get away from these qualities, they're fading into the shadows. However, as M.U.N.C.H. is proof, with a little effort a group can leap back into the light.

[This is the last of a 3-part article on personal experiences in the TI world.]