

This newsletter is the official publication of the SOONER 99ers
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## AUGUST, 1989

Greetings again, my friends! This issue of OUR newsletter hopefully has something for everyone. Enclosed are a few more of Garth's templates: they are a great way to keep information at your fingertips.

For those who are unaware, Dirty Dave Lewis, our esteemed president, has finally received his copy of the software he ordered quite a while ago, but I'll let him tell all in his article.

Our vice-pres/resident assembly language expert Robert Stepp has shown how he has programmed around one of life's minor irritations and tells all in his contribution.

As I read the newsletters from other clubs, I notice many 'serial' articles (not Wheaties nor RS-232, but a continuing article) and thought I'd try my hand at the same. I intend to 'tell all', at the most basic level, though not necessary with the Basic language. After about 30 years in the electronics field (starting before birth) including the last 10+ teaching electronics and programming. I hope to have something for everyone.

I hope to neither bore the 'power user' nor to 'snow' the beginner. I firmly believe that the hope for the future of the TI community rests with the new-comer. Attrition naturally decreases our numbers in two ways:

First of all, none of us are getting any younger. (Well, I age more slowly since I have birthdays only in even-

numbered years) I have noticed with sadness the passing of TIers as noted in newsletters. I don't mean to make light of a sad occasion, but we are also losing valuable expertise amd knowledge.

Secondly, we seem to constantly read of Tiers who 'move up' other systems. I suggest we concentrate our energies on this area. Many people wring their hands and fret about this natural situation, crying that soon there will be no Tiers left. NOT SO I say, every time someone sells his Ti equipment for a down payment on another system, someone else buys a Ti system and the net result is equilibrium. These new owners need a little 'hand-holding' to get them started and that's what I hope to do in these pages.

I do not profess to be a 'guru', nor an expert, nor do I claim to have all the answers. I invite criticism and comments and for that purpose include my address and phone number:

Barry Peterson 10700 Rayberry Drive Oklahoma City, OK 73162 (405) 721-6930

One last piece of news included in these pages: The Source (an early supporter of the TI comunity with Texnet) is no more. Compuserve has bought them out lock, stock, and user list.

Barry Peterson Editor, Sooner 99ers

## PAGE PRO A "QUASI" DESK-TOP PUBLISHER FOR TI

Of all the TI-99 software available, there had yet to be a truly, easy to use Desktop Publishing program. There really still isn't, but Page Pro 99, distributed by Asgard, comes pretty darn close. Within about an hour of booting the program, I had created a functional "page" which included text, an imported picture, enlarged titles in multiple typefonts and outlines going in all four directions. And that's one for us Bozo-level TI-ers!

The program comes with 2 disks: one for the program and one for tutorial, additional pictures fonts. I hasten to add that you can and convert TI-Artist Instances into Page Pro formats as well as TI-Artist fonts. This is desirable as the host font upper and lower cases are really only small and large versions of the same font. (like the first TI-Writer) If the conversion is too cumbersome 'It's not really) Asgard is marketting yolumes of "Pics" and 2 more of typefonts especially for Page Pro at a easonable price.

Among the features I was especially mpressed with included:

- ability to use the line characters 2 types) by toggling the arrow keys Ctrl E, S, X and D) on and off to ove the curser in all 4 directions.

- the what-you-see-is-what-you-get

quality of the screen. It represents one of the 8 printable quadrants. You always have the Column and Line Counts on the bottom of the screen if you get confused.

- the built-in Word-Processor which is both a strength and a weakness.

the ability to easily move from large to small fonts through an easy control key toggling routine.

- the most easily understand docs of one of the most complex TI programs I've seen. As one who swears by such things, It also includes a legible and functional cribsheet you can print from within the tutorial.

There are a few items I would hope for in updated versions:

 improved word-processor functions including smaller characters so that more can fit in a row

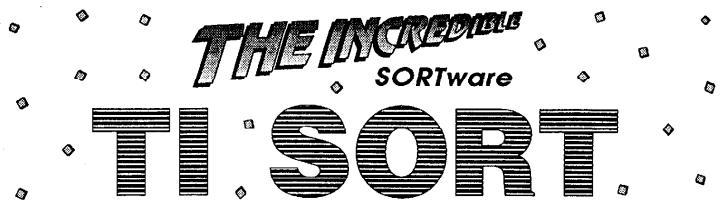
- ability to locate imported text. I may have missed something but I couldn't get any placement of imported D/V 80 text files, rendering that utility virtualy useless. The same goes for the columnizer utility which has a rigid placement default on the page.

Don't think that I'm complaining, however; compared to what has come before, Page Pro 99 is a hands down winner. The cost for the basic package is \$24.95 through Asgard. Thumbs up!!!

Garth Potts

Sooner 99ers

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Imagine the incredible. The ability to sort an unlimited amount of data, stored in virtually any type of file, in record time.

Imagination just became reality, the incredible is TI Sort.

Based on the "Quick Sort" method developed by C.A.R. Hoare, TI Sort is the only universal sorting utility available for the TI-99/4a. Its fast, powerful, and easy-to-use. TI Sort can handle an unlimited amount of data (records), stored in almost any file format. TI Base files, delimited files, fixed length files, and Basic or Extended Basic files -- TI Sort does them all!

## Sample Time Trial

| Program |         | Device  |                  |
|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
|         | Floppy  | RAMdisk | <u>Hard Disk</u> |
| TI Sort | 8:59    | 1:59    | 2:20             |
| TI Base | 3:47:26 | 13:26   | 13:47            |

Sort Type: 2 field nested sort. (TI Sort can sort up to 8 fields) File Type: Standard TI Base file.

File Size: 843 records; 80 characters per record in five fields. Equipment Used: Standard TI-99/4a console attached to a peripheral expansion box containing a Myarc hard/floppy controller, two 6ms DS/DD floppy drives, 20 megabyte hard disk, and a Myarc 512K memory expansion card.

The table speaks for itself -- no hype, no miraculous claims. There is no faster. Period.

## TI Sort - The Incredible SORTware - Only \$14.95

TI Sort requires a disk system, 32K memory expansion, and either an Extended Basic, Editor/Assembler, or Mini Memory cartridge.
TI Sort is fully compatible with all storage devices and the Geneve 9640 (in GPL mode).

AICRO dex

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# TI BASE

With its overwhelming file handling capabilities, extensive command programming tanguage, and unmatched information processing facilities, TI Base is the most advanced and flexible database management system available for the TI-99/4a.

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Ti Base Complete - Only \$24.95

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Order both Volumes I and II for only \$22.951

## **TEXAMENTS**

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Accessing the Myarc Ramdisk by Robert Stepp, Vice President, Sooner 99ers

This article is about use of the Myarc Ramdisk DSR routines with assembly language.

I became interested in this subject when I tired of typing

CALL PART(32,400,80) :: CALL EMDK(3) :: CALL VOL("MYNAME")

in XB every time the electric power went down. I also wanted to be able to do the calls while in the Editor/Assembler environment.

The Myarc ramdisk DSR is distinctly different from the other DSRs because it does bank-switching in memory to accomplish its various tasks. Your workspace must not reside in low(>2000 to >3FFF) or high (>A000 - >FFFF) memory expansion for any of the calls listed above because the computer will lock up with the first bank-switch performed by the DSR. This leaves the PAD (>8300 - >83FF) for selection of workspace area.

A general word of caution is in order. For complete compatibility with E/A and XB save the area of PAD to be used BEFORE using it and restore it BEFORE returning to E/A or XB. Below is a segment that will do this.

SAVPAD LI R4,>8300 LI R5, PADBUF Storage BSS 256 **JMP** SP1 RETPAD LI R4, PADBUF LI R5,>8300 SPI LI R6,128 SP2 VOM \*R4+,\*R5+ DEC R6 JNE SP2 RT

You can adjust the area of PAD saved to the area that you will be using to save storage space if necessary.

For this specific application of DSR routines it will be necessary to use the GPLWS at >83EO - >83FF because that is what the DSR expects. It also expects certain registers to have certain values.

LWPI >83E0
LI R14,>8C00 VDP Write Data (VDPWD)
LI R15,>8C02 VDP Write Address (VDPWA)

The DSR thoroughly expects that it will be operating in the XB or Basic environment when called. So we must act like Basic. This means we will pass a parsed statement to the DSR via VDP memory. Some examples of parsed statements are shown next:

```
For CALL PART(32,400,80):
PARTS BYTE 4
                         Necessary Filler
       TEXT 'PART'
       BYTE >B7.>C8
                         XB Tokens: ( and Number-String
       BYTE 2
                         Text length byte
       TEXT '32'
       BYTE >B3.>C8
                         XB Tokens: , and Number-String
       BYTE 3
TEXT '400'
                         Text length byte
       BYTE >B3,>C8
                         XB Tokens: , and Number-String
       BYTE 2
                         Text lenght byte
       TEXT 1801
       BYTE >B6
                         XB Token: )
  For CALL VOL("MYNAME"):
VOLS
       BYTE 3
                         Necessary Filler
       TEXT 'VOL'
       BYTE >B7,>C7
                         XB Tokens: ( and Alpha-String
       BYTE 6
                         Text length byte
       TEXT 'MYNAME'
       BYTE >B6
                         XB Token: )
  For CALL EMDK(3):
EMDKS BYTE 4
                        Necessary Filler
       TEXT 'EMDK'
       BYTE B7,)C8
                        XB Tokens: ( and Number-String
       BYTE 1
                        Text length byte
       TEXT '3'
       BYTE >B6
                        XB Token : )
  Handle the string as follows:
  1. Copy the string to an unused area of VDP.
  2. Reset VDPWA to point at the first byte of the string.
  3. Store the address at >832C.
  Program Segment Example:
       LI
            R0,>1000
       BL
            2SETVAD
            R1,PARTS
       LI
                        String Label
       LI
            R2,22
                        String Length
LIA
       MOVB *R1+,*R14
                        Remember R14 points to VDPWD
       DEC
            R2
       JNE
            LIA
       BL.
            2SETVAD
                        Reset VDPWA to beginning of string
      MOV
            R0,3>832C
```

The SETVAD routine sets the UDPWA to the address of the first byte of the string in VDP ram:

SETVAD MOV R0.R5 Preserve R0

ORI R5,>4000
SWPB R5
MOVB R5.\*R15 Remember R15 points to VDPWA
SWPB R5
MOVB R5,\*R15
RT

Now all that's left is to call the particular DSR routine needed.

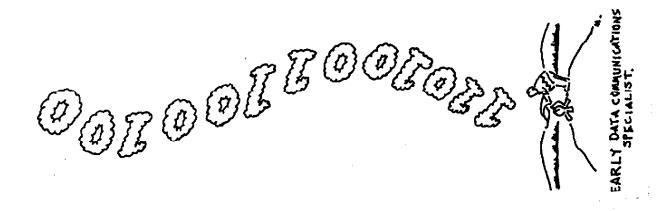
PART EQU >5536 **EMDK** EQU >54F6 VOL EQU >5462 \* RDDIR EQU >4504 **ABSP** EQU **>5C40** \* RDTEST EQU >5398

\* RDDIR and RDTEST will not work correctly in the normal E/A environment because they write to the Screen Image Table with the XB offset()60).

Call the routine as follows:

LI R12,>1000 Myarc CRU Base
SBO 0 Turn on DSR
BL 3PART
NOP This space may contain a B \*R# as an error recovery if desired.
SBZ 0 Turn off DSR

After this call you can resume with your normal programming.



# This article came from the Dallas Morning News

The first weekend of the month is when you have flea markets in Texas. From Canton to Weatherford, vendors offer everything from six-packs of sox to velvet paintings to antiques sitting in the sun in ramshackle booths, trying to make a buck. Most of these affairs are definitely low terh, old manual typewriters and new phones dressed up as old phones are about as high tech as you can find.

The technology world has discovered the joy of junk; on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month, computer junkies from as far away as Oklahoma and Houston travel to Dallas to rummage through odd assortments of floppy disks, disk drives, software packages and other computer apparatus from an assortment of small vendors. At the flea market near Haskell and Central customers start arriving about 5:00 am, and the show folds around noon.

If you want fancy digs, there's a high-class computer flea market one Saturday each month at the Infomart. In its basement, 50 hardware and software vendors or so, ranging from liquidators to retailers, sell all from central processing units to Lotus 1-2-3 at deep discounts.

On that one Saturday each month, the Infomart becomes a mall of personal computer ideas, merchandise and promotion. That's the day computer user group with 4,000 members from across North Texas descend on the Infomart for their monthly meetings, under the auspices of the Computer Council of Dallas.

These groups (with names ranging from Chinese Information Resources Association, the smallest, to the Apple Corps of Dallas, the largest) have remarkable breadth and depth in the range of interests and levels of knowledge they cater to in the world of personal computers.

But the times they are changing for even these users of high-tech tools. While most groups concentrate on different brands of hardware, such as IBM or Tandy or Atari computers, they are hardly hardware clubs any more. Users are not sitting around trying to decide how to make their CPU's talk to their printers or modems anymore. Instead, the clubs have become umbrella organizations for rashers of much smaller clubs that are devoted to subject matter, such as desk-top publishing, or software, such as Lotus 1-2-3.

"The hardware is getting passe. In the beginning, hardware was very important; but now, most part, is focused on software products," said Jim Hoisington, president Of the North Texas PC Users Group, the largest club, with 1,400 members.

Between 100 and 125 members show up each month at the regular one-hour meeting of one its miniclubs, the Special Interest Group devoted to Lotus 1-2-3. That's more members than are enrolled in many other entire clubs.

Such malls of software groups are increasingly becoming an alternative marketing method in the personal computer industry. From the user's standpoint, such groups provide an opportunity for independent, neutral and in-depth resolution of problems in applying computers to the tasks they face.

"We are the place of last resort. If they can't get help at the store, if they can't get through to technical support, they come to us," said Mr. Hoisington.

In turn, the user's intense interest - and demographics - increasingly are leading to intense pressure from software vendors to show off their products. In the past few months, august industry personalities such

as boy billionaire Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft Corp., and the French invader of Silicon Valley, Philippe Kahn, chairman of Borland International, have graced this Saturday enclave with their presence. Even Lotus wants in.

"We have Lotus continually saying, If you fill that auditorium, we'll bring (chairman) Jim Manzi," said Mr. Moisington. Mr. Gates regularly draws more than the auditorium can handle. But would Mr. Manzi? "I don't want people falling acleep" said Mr. Hoisington, nonchalantly, playing from a pretty strong hand.

It's pretty difficult, for these software companies to find places where 500 ardent personal computer users will come together to view a product presentation. Particularly affluent professionals, the average income of Mr. Hoisington's group exceeds \$50,000.

Yet, times are still troubled for even the biggest of these groups. Growth has slowed dramatically for the North Texas PC Users Group. Membership in the Apple Corp is in decline. Many groups are frequently on the verge of disbanding, with organizational issues outweighing the benefits of regular meetings.

That may have something to do with the changing tenor of the times. As personal computer users get more refined, the need to belong to users groups can dissipate. The mall of ideas, merchandise and product displays can become old hat to regular browsers.

Or maybe it simply has something to do with tenaciousness; amid all this change, one small group that is growing is the Texas Instruments 99/4A Home Computer Users Group. This is the ill-fated, overpriced home computer that caused much internal hand wringing at TI as hundreds of millions of dollars poured into a financial black hole.

Texas Instruments has not made this computer for years, but if you want to figure out how to fix a software or hardware problem with your 99/4A, there's only one place to go.

The last resort.



"It says here, While The Panic Button is guaranteed to break you out of any program, you should try to use it only as a last resort."

# STYDKACBWATA<sup>1</sup> by Barry Peterson

Some folks are intimidated by computers, are you one of them? Years ago, when computers were no more than a gleam in some engineer's eyes, some of us learned to fear automation. I remember stories predicting how many jobs would be gone when computers 'took over'. That has not happened yet; there have been more jobs created than eliminated.

There are at least two useful schools of thought about computers in general:

- 1: Computers are 'electronic brains' which are capable of performing complex tasks which humans are unable to accomplish. Such views are popular with sci-fi authors and producers of high-tech movies.
- 2: Computers are 'big dummies' which must be given their instructions in the most minute detail. We often hear the term GIGO which stands for 'yarbage in, garbage out'. Most of the non-programmers among us feel unable to create those directions that computers This frame of must have. mind is perpetuated by the programmers, both amateur and professional, who are proud of what they do.

Computer users also divide in another direction: hardware and software. Generally, hardware is the 'nuts and bolts' of the system and the term might have come from that analogy. Hardware is the part you can see, feel and know you really have. Software, however, is the much

less tangible directions that control what the hardware does. It is hard to determine if a disk, cassette, or module contains software. An empty disk weighs the same and looks the same as one containing many expensive programs.

As is common in most other areas, the truth (in my humble opinion) is somewhere in the middle. None of us should feel terrified in the presence nor should we patronize those who are 'into' computers.

Computers probably will not rule the world, they are merely tools to be used to accomplish our tasks. Although computers must be programmed in exacting minutia, most of us need not concern ourselves with that level of detail. (In fact, a computer itself can be used to reduce the drudgery of producing that effort!)

Computer hardware with power off is useful only as a paper weight or boat anchor. A computer without software is no better off; software, or a program, is the set of commands that cause the hardware to do useful work for us.

On the other hand software is useless by itself. What would happen to a club meeting if everyone brought software and no hardware? Can you hold a module in your hand and play Munchman?

These discussions resemble the 'which comes first, the chicken or the egg?' question. Which is more important? Neither and both! We need to have both in order to survive. And we will survive!

Barry Peterson Editor

<sup>1.</sup> Some Things You Didn't Know About Computers but Were Afraid to Ask

In the December, 1988 issue of the Lima, Ohio 99.4A Users Groups newsletter "Bits, Bytes Pixels", Charles Good reprinted part of the September 1984 and January 1985 issues of Consumer Reports from which I now quote; "This model" (TI-99/4A) "looks like a computer worth consideringuntil you consider it carefully."... "But the low price of the TI 99/4A can be deceiving. A good deal of the software available for the TI requires more than the 16K memory included in basic price. To expand the memory, you must plug in a peripheral expansion box (\$250) and a 32K memory expansion card (\$300)." To TI-Writer, you need the above, "plus a drive (\$400) and a disk controller card (\$250). That brings the price to almost \$1400- before you buy a printer." (Including the TI-99 console at \$99 and TI-Writer at \$100)

I am sure that most of you chuckle to read the above. Consumer Reports is a fine publication, but they forgot to take a few things into account:

1: Those prices were retail, most of

Opinions in this newsletter are those of the editor or authors. Articles, unless otherwise noted, are written by the editor. Advertising us don't want to think about how much we have spent/invested in our systems. Although we might have got a "good deal" at the time, it still was quite a bit of money by today's standards. I bought most of my first system prior to that time and I spent a fraction of what the magazine quoted.

2: Consumer Reports failed to consider the main advantage of the TI-99/4A; its' users and user groups! When I prepared to buy a computer, I asked about users groups. (I bought the TI mainly on the strength of learning about the International Users Group)

Users groups are, and always have been, the heart of any computers' existence. The hardware and software companies have one thing on their minds. As long as there are big bucks to be made, there will be commercial support. (In extracting the money from the user) Users groups will help you get the most value for your money.

Barry Peterson Newsletter Editor

related to the TI-99 or Myarc 9640 will be accepted on a 'space-available' basis from individuals or companies with no payment required.

#### THE UGLY DUCKLING

## GENIAL LIVES !

This month finds me digging the Coleman stove out of the attic and getting ready for a couple of weeks' vacation in the mountains. I wanted to get this to Barry before I left though because today (17 July ) I found a package in my mailbox from Genial Computerware containing my long lost copy of Macflix.

I've been pretty critical of Genial in this column, and I still think that six months almost to the day is just a little long to wait for a program that didn't come from Myarc, but I'll admit that our friends in Massachusetts have finally made good. They even sent me an extra disk of Macflix pictures in the package.

I'd like to share an address with you:

Consumer Council of Worcester County

## COMPUSERVE BUYS THE SOURCE COLUMBUS, OHIO, U.S.A. 1989 JUN 29

The world's largest information service, Compuserve, has purchased rival Source Telecomputing Corporation of McLean, Virginia for an undisclosed fee. The deal calls for some 53,000 Source members to be integrated into the Compuserve system by August 1, and after that time The Source, as it is known, will no longer exist. Maurice Cox, executive vice president of Compuserve's information services division, says Source service will not be interrupted during this period.

A Compuserve ID and password, eligible for a \$20 usage credit, will be mailed to each Source member. Source members can acquire a Compuserve password by calling 800-635-6225 in the U.S. or 614-457-8650.

Compuserve says it has installed additional customer service telephone lines at its corporate headquarters to answer questions from Source members. A customized welcome menu will be

Worcester Community Action Council 340 Main Street Room 555 Worcester MA 01408

These good people seemed to have some influence on Genial, particularly after I sent them a letter asking if the state of Massachusetts allowed businesses to ignore and defraud their customers. Pretty strong stuff, but it did seem to get their attention.

Now that I've caused all sorts of hatred and discontent and spent six months and a not a few dollars getting a product that should have been shipped to me in 30 days or less, I'm amazed at how much easier it would have been for everybody if Genial had just sent me the program in the first or second — or even third — place.

Make trouble. Gripe. Write nasty letters. Get mad as heck and don't take it anymore. People will provide lousy service as long as we let them.

Dave Lewis
Sooner 99ers

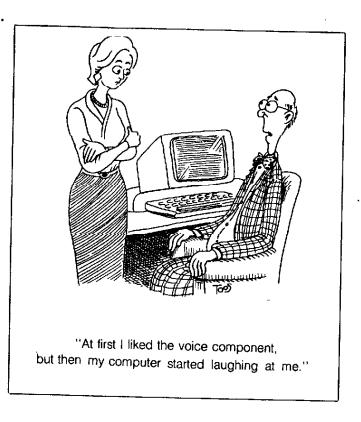
posted on Compuserve to help The Source members become accustomed to Compuserve navigation commands.

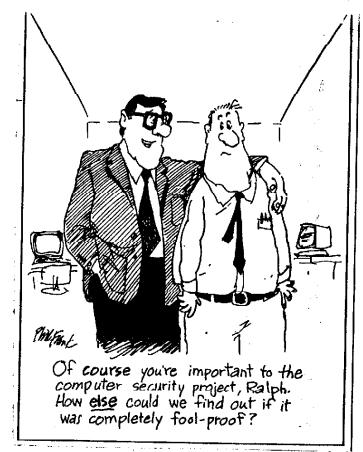
Compuserve has not decided which Source features to port over to Compuserve, nor which private networks to maintain, but that decision will be reached within a few weeks.

The Source employs about 60 people, all of whom are being encouraged to interview for jobs at Compuserve in Columbus, Ohio. However, the McLean, Virginia computer facility will be shut down as a part of the sale.

Both The Source and Compuserve were started in 1979, but Compuserve has grown to be ten times larger in subscriber numbers. Like The Source, Compuserve provides electronic mail and online information, but also provides value-added packet data network services to more than 1,800 major U.S. corporations government agencies.

Compuserve is an H&R Block company, and the terms of this sale will most likely become available at a later date.





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