

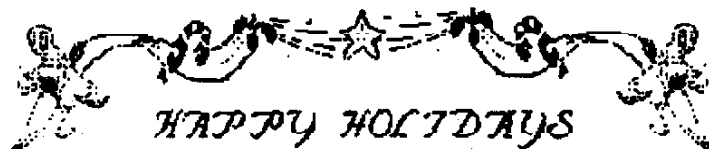


THE *SNUGLET*ter

FROM THE SOUTHERN NEVADA USERS' GROUP

Volume 10 No. 12

December, 1991



Next Meeting

Monday, December 9, 1991

Nevada Power Meeting Room

6226 West Sahara, Las Vegas, Nevada

Southern Nevada Users' Group

P.O.Box 26301

Las Vegas NV 89126-0301

TO



From The President

Season's Greetings to all of you! As I type this Thanksgiving is over and Christmas is nearing. And speaking of Christmas it is time for SNUG's annual Christmas meeting/party. So far we have beverages, a cake, nuts, some cookies and brownies, and styrofoam cups, napkins and a table cloth arranged. I believe some other individuals had other goodies to bring. If you haven't already arranged some snack-type item to bring it is time to put on your thinking cap to come up with some item to bring to the December meeting. In accordance with past Christmas meetings we also welcome families of our members at this year's meeting. So, come one and all with your item to share and pass along the joy of the season. Just so there is no confusion the meeting is being held on the regularly scheduled second Monday of the month - in this case the 9th of December. There was some question of changing the date, but it turned out that a change would have caused more trouble than it was worth.

George just dropped off a bunch of the latest newsletters on Friday (today is Monday), and I have yet to scan them for new information. I've had relatives visiting for the Thanksgiving holidays, so I haven't had much time to spend on the serious aspects of computing on the TI. However, I have spent a bunch of time on a new 386 PC that I finally decided to break down and buy. There were a growing number of complaints about things (mostly programs) that other members of my family couldn't do on the TI based systems. So, to alleviate the pressure I finally spent some time looking and getting the most reasonable system that I could find locally. So far the family is happy with the machine so I won't have to put up with further complaints. At least I spent less on the PC and the DOS than I have invested over the years in TI equipment and software. One aspect of having the PC is that I will be able to run the C compiler on the PC which generates code for the Geneve. Now all I have to do

is learn C. Wish me luck. Anyway, I can be called or questioned at the meeting as to the specifics of the 386 which I purchased. I'm also interested in shareware for the PC, so you PC owners may get requests from me for information.

One project which I have finally completed is the addition of a third switch to the cheap two button Logitech mouse that I picked up several years ago for my Geneve. The circuit board had all the circuitry for a third switch except for the switch. I finally located a micro switch and figured out how to install it. The hardest part was figuring out how to activate the switch with a button. I have a very temporary-looking contraption to do that, but it works. Now I need to rewire the switch connections so that they correspond to their positions on the mouse as the computer reads them. I didn't originally know how they were supposed to be wired, so I guessed at their functions but guessed wrong. In some respects I like my configuration and I may not change it. I will also experiment with a serial mouse that I will have for the PC when I get a chance to make a converter plug as there has been some information published on Delphi about using such an animal. I'll let you know about the results when I construct that device.

Enough of this rambling even though it is some of the fun stuff that I do. If I don't see you at the December meeting, may you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

- Rudy

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Librarian's Report

by George Campbell

COLD WEATHER HERE AGAIN AND THAT MEANS MORE TIME ON THE COMPUTER AND LESS TIME SPENT ON UNNECESSARY THINGS.

TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR SYSTEM REQUIRES UPGRADING BOTH THE HARDWARE, AND SOFTWARE WITH WHAT IS AVAILABLE TODAY. HARDWARE INCLUDES A PAIR OF HALF HEIGHT DISK DRIVES (AROUND \$50 TO \$100), A RAMDISK CARD (\$100-\$500), AND EITHER A MYARC FLOPPY (\$165), OR MYARC HARD/FLOPPY DISK CONTROLLER (\$240). THE HARD/FLOPPY CONTROLLER ALSO REQUIRES A HARD DRIVE (\$150-\$500). THERE IS MORE HARDWARE AVAILABLE OF COURSE, LIKE A GOOD PRINTER, BUT ANY OF THE ABOVE IS WORTH THE PRICE IN BETTER OPERATION.

SOFTWARE IS WHERE OUR LIBRARY COMES IN, AND THAT IS WHERE THE T.I. SHINES. BY COMPARISON WITH ANY OTHER BRAND, T.I. (AND GENEVE) SOFTWARE IS FREE TO DIRT CHEAP, AND HAS OVER TEN YEARS OF PRODUCTION. THAT MORE THAN MAKES UP FOR THE COST OF HARDWARE UPGRADING. FROM WHAT I HAVE SEEN OF PC, MAC, APPLE, ETC, THEY SHOW LITTLE TO GIVE ME CAUSE TO SWITCH. GETTING THE MOST FROM THE AVAILABLE SOFTWARE MEANS HAVING YOUR OWN LIBRARY, AND HAVING IT IN ORDER SO YOU CAN LAY YOUR HANDS ON IT WHEN YOU WANT IT. A 20 MB HARD DRIVE (WITH ADEQUATE BACKUP) IS BY FAR THE BEST SOLUTION FOR THAT CHORE. THAT MEANS YOU ARE WITHIN 10-15 SECONDS OF NEARLY EVERYTHING EVER WRITTEN FOR THE T.I. BUT EVEN WITHOUT A HARD DRIVE, A PAIR OF HALF HEIGHT DISK DRIVES CAN HANDLE ANY T.I. OR

GENEVE PROGRAM. THAT DOES REQUIRE A GOOD SYSTEM OF DISK STORAGE, RETRIEVAL, AND & MAINTENANCE THOUGH. IF YOU SPEND MORE THAN A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR COMPUTER TIME HUNTING FOR A FILE, OR PROGRAM, ITS TIME TO OVERHAUL YOUR DISK FILING SYSTEM. THE S.N.U.G. LIBRARY HAS SEVERAL DISK CATALOGING PROGRAMS THAT WILL HELP WITH THAT CHORE. SOME INCLUDE PRINTER UTILITIES TO GIVE PRINTOUT OF YOUR LIBRARY. WHATEVER YOU WANT TO DO WITH YOUR T.I., THE CHANCES ARE, THAT SOMEONE HAS ALREADY WRITTEN A PROGRAM, AND IT IS IN THE LIBRARY. CHECK FIRST. WE HAVE PROGRAMS TO IDENTIFY FULL MOON DATES, DRAW GRAPHICS, PLAY MUSIC, PRINT CALENDARS. TALK. TEACH A HUNDRED DIFFERENT SUBJECTS, FIGURE INCOME TAX, WRITE A LETTER, - WELL THE LIST IS ALMOST ENDLESS.

IF YOU AREN'T GETTING THE FULL USE FROM YOUR COMPUTER, THIS IS THE SEASON TO UPGRADE BOTH HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE. BEST OF ALL, WE HAVE A NUMBER OF SEASONED VETERANS-IN SNUG THAT CAN HELP YOU WITH WHATEVER.

TO GET THE MOST FROM THAT LAST ITEM, ATTEND THE REGULAR MEETING AT THE NEVADA POWER BUILDING ON THE SECOND MONDAY OF EACH MONTH. I UNDERSTAND THE DECEMBER MEETING WILL INCLUDE SOME MUNCHIES, SOFT DRINKS, ETC. I'LL BE THERE WITH THE LIBRARY.

GEO. CAMPBELL
LIBRARIAN

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I'm sorry to report that the SNUG BBS is once again experiencing hard drive problems. The main drive is acting up. I think the problem is heat related since it will work if I leave it turned off for a while. This problem has been creeping up on us now for a couple of months. At first, I could just turn off the drives for half an hour and everything would be all right again for a week or so. Then, the time started getting shorter and shorter until it would only work for a couple of hours before crashing. I put a temporary fan in the box to cool off the drives. This seemed to work for a while, but eventually the problem came back. I tried to make a backup of the main drive, but ran into some undefined disk errors that caused the backup to be corrupted. Finally, it got to where I couldn't even access the drive at all, whether or not it was hot.

At this point, I put the backup drive into service. Everything seemed ok for a while, but then I noticed that things seemed to be missing from the board. I guess that the bad backup left holes in some of the important files. Anyway, while trying to fix that problem, I discovered another one! The backup drive has an intermittent problem that causes the motor to stop running periodically. I think it is a crack in the printed circuit board since I can cause the motor to stop and start by simply flexing the board a little or pressing lightly in a couple of places. This type of problem can be very frustrating to find and fix. It was also causing problems with the BBS since it could (and did) shut down at any time without warning.

Time for a session with the sector editor. I checked out the main drive with a sector editor and found out that several sectors in the bit map area were corrupted. Since both the sectors before and after the affected area indicated that their entire range of

sectors were used, I copied one of them to each of the bad sectors. After leaving the sector editor, I found that I now had full access to the drive again.

I re-installed the drive in the BBS, placed the cooling fan directly on top of the drive for maximum cooling, and re-booted the board. That was about 24 hours ago. So far, everything is still working as far as I know. I don't know how much longer the board will run in this condition. I think it is time to think about getting another hard drive to replace one or the other (or both) of our existing drives. Unfortunately, running a BBS is very hard on equipment. I will bring this topic up at our December meeting.

Well, enough of this doom and gloom. Let's move on to some brighter stuff.

NEW in the TI section this month:

AMORTIZSC1 Size: 32 sectors Upload date: 11/20/91

A LOAN AMORTIZATION PROGRAM - LIST 12 MONTH GROUPS TO SCREEN AND/OR SEND TO PRINTER OR DISK. PRINTS 12 YEARS PER PAGE.

TOUCH-TYPE Size: 149 sectors Upload date: 11/11/91
REGINA'S-MODIFIED TO EX.B. WITHOUT A CALL FILES.
LOADER ADDED. IF ANY BUGS TELL ME. GEO. CAMPBELL
LIBRARIAN

SMASH Size: 23 sectors Upload date: 11/09/91
SMASH IS A PROGRAM TO PRINT 136 CHARS PER LINE
AND 126 LINES PER PAGE FROM ANY DV80 FILE.

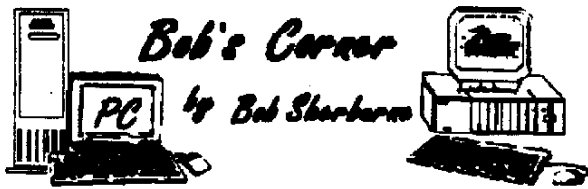
New in the Geneve section this month:

MDM5-1/4 Size: 120 sectors Upload date: 11/19/91
MYARC MDM5 1.4, THE LAST VERSION WORKED ON BY
JOHN BIRDWELL. BUG FIXES, SAID TO BE "BUG FREE".

MT-UPDATE Size: 75 sectors Upload date: 11/10/91
UPDATES TO MASS80-HD WITH IMPROVEMENTS SUCH AS
LOADING A PHONE FILE FROM A DIRECTORY, LOADING A
CHARA1 FILE, ETC.

NEW in the Graphics section this month:

ITPASTUFF Size: 179 sectors Upload date: 11/16/91
A COLLECTION OF FONTS FOR TPA BY CLINT PULLEY. 21
continued on page 6



We do Windows!

I'm sure my article last month convinced ALL of you to run right out and plop down a thousand dollars or so for a new PC compatible computer, so I'll move right into software. Nearly every PC vendor includes two major pieces of software with their machines when you buy them; MS-DOS and Microsoft Windows.

PC's need to have an "operating system" load into memory when the machine is switched on, and MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System) is the predominant operating platform at this time. IBM's OS/2 version 2.0 is nearing completion but as of this writing is not a viable platform. Since there are several versions of MS-DOS, be sure to let your PC dealer know you want the latest version, DOS 5.0. 5.0 has several advantages over the previous versions; superior memory handling capabilities, a nice text editor for changing CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files, a much better command line interface, a better BASIC, and DOS SHELL to name a few.

DOS SHELL insulates the user from the dos command prompt by using a graphical interface which displays directories and filenames in a window. To run a program from the shell just point your mouse cursor at the filename and click. When people speak of shells, or "shelling out", they are referring to the practice of running one program from within another. There are dozens of programs of this type, including menu programs, but the most famous is Microsoft Windows.

TI users who have seen Beery Miller's "9640 Windows" demonstrated, have some idea of what multi-tasking is, but unless you have actually seen Microsoft Windows 3.0 in action, "you ain't seen nothin yet". Windows is installed by following straight-forward screen prompts which ask you about

your system configuration, and the applications you would like to have installed immediately. Once finished, type WIN at the dos prompt to run Windows. Windows will automatically decide which mode to run in by the configuration of your system. If your system has less than one megabyte of memory the program will only run in REAL mode, run only older applications, and in this case I recommend you don't even bother. STANDARD mode is the "normal" mode of operation for Windows. It allows access to extended memory, lets you switch among non-Windows applications, multi-tasks Windows programs and runs faster as you add memory. This brings us to 386 ENHANCED mode which only works if your computer uses a 80386 CPU. In this mode, Windows uses the "virtual" memory capabilities of the CPU to let Windows applications use more memory than is physically available by writing temporary files to your hard disk or ramdisk. 386 ENHANCED also allows you to run most non-Windows applications in a window. Windows allows you to decorate your screen with infinite variety and save the changes you have made so that the next time you start Windows, the screen appears just as you left it during your last session. You can open all your group windows, arrange them by stretching or shrinking, and color them to taste, or open some or none at all. If you have no windows groups open at start up, simply double click with the mouse on the group(s) you wish to open. Once a group window is opened program icons appear. Double click the icon corresponding with the program you want to run to start it. Icons can be "dragged" between groups by placing the cursor over the icon and holding down the left mouse button, then moving the icon to a different group window or icon. If you aren't pleased with the rather bland looking icons supplied by Microsoft, there are hundreds of icons on bbs's for you to download. The icons can then be changed by clicking once on the icon you wish to change, then click on Program Manager's FILES menu. Now click on PROPERTIES, then CHANGE ICON. Now type in the path and filename of the icon you wish to use and it will appear in place of the Microsoft icon. There are also dozens of fantastic Shareware and Freeware programs available, some of which allow

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We Do Windows continued from page 5

you to design and save your own icons. Others can load pictures in several formats and let you "capture" areas of the picture. Once captured, these clips can be saved to the clipboard, a temporary storage area, and pasted into other programs which let you touch up the image and save it as an icon! The nice thing about this procedure is that all four of the programs can run simultaneously in four separate windows on your screen, and the entire process takes but a few seconds! More on this next month.

Bye for now --

Bob

BBS Report continued from page 4

FONTS & 2 GRAPHIC SETS USED BY REDEFINING THE ALPHABET. INCLUDES A NEW EPSON PRINTER DRIVER FOR 72 COLS. DOWNLOADED FROM DELPHI. THESE INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR TPA INVESTMENT!

That's all the new stuff for this month except for a picture that Bob Sherburne uploaded when I had the backup drive connected to the system. I will try to salvage it and get it up here for ya if it's still on there.

Merry Christmas and I'll see ya at the party...er...meeting.

-John-

Our quote of the day...

Good clothes open all doors. -Thomas Fuller

Some Notes On Viruses ...by George Tilley

New viruses are increasing at an exponential rate. Hundreds of separate viruses have been identified and new ones are being introduced at an estimated six per day. Any one of them can corrupt files, ruin software or erase data on your computer. Of little concern in the TI world, are viruses a real threat for those of us crossing over to PCs?

That depends --- The main source of viruses is bootleg software and users exchanging disks. LANs (and BBSs) are particularly vulnerable. That means we are all vulnerable to varying degrees.

Here are *six of the most common viruses* and their effects:

CASCADE: There are nine known variants that all make text fall into a pile at the bottom of your video display.

PAKISTANI BRAIN: makes floppy disks spin wildly out of control. One of the most clever programs ever.

JERUSALEM: a terrorist weapon designed to ruin files in the Middle East is now worldwide. Spreads to any executable file

DARK AVENGER: randomly overwrites a disk sector destroying any program or data.

WHALE: causes your video display to flicker, frequent hang ups as your system gets slower and slower.

TYPO BOOT: causes misspelling in documents when they are printed.

I had a long conversation with Bob Sherburne about the virus problem. There is a lot more to it than I've touched on. Maybe Bob will do an article, but for now here are a couple of highlights.

If you suspect a virus: Boot from a floppy you know is clean. Run a scan and removal program such as NORTON ANTI VIRUS or CENTRAL POINT ANTI VIRUS. Make sure you run from clean, write protected floppy backups of original programs. **As a precaution :** Write protect all .exe and .com files using the read only (+r) attribute. Keep complete, clean, scanned copies of your hard drive(s).

SNUG TREASURER'S REPORT - 30 NOV 1991

(in lieu of 30 NOV 1991 bank statement)

Ralph F. Guise - Treasurer

FIXED ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

(see Nov 90 Newsletter for last revision)

BANK STATEMENT BALANCE (as of 31 OCT 1991)

(includes 7.72 service charge) + 300.96

FUNDS STATUS - 30 NOV 1991**COLLECTIONS**

Membership - Regular, renewal + 36.00

EXPENDITURES

Postage - NOV 91 - 22.00

Copying - NOV 91 est. - 13.85

(sub-total) est. + .15

ADJUSTED BALANCE ... est. + 301.11

PETTY-CASH (undeposited funds).. 0.00

TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE est. + 301.11

— The following is reprinted from the SPIRIT OF 99 for October, 1991 —

RANDOM ACCESS TO MY MEMORY BANKS

by Jim Peterson

The 9910S Accelerator, to be priced at \$250, will speed up the TI by a factor of 3; in combination with the PEB RAM interface card, to be priced at \$90, the increase will be 10-fold. These are remarkable devices, and I am sure the hardware hackers will love them - but do the computer USERS really need them?

Personally, every program I'm apt to use is on my Randisk, for almost instant access. Prescanning has eliminated those initialization delays. The programs generally run as fast as I want them to.

I know that Stephen Shaw over in England is writing graphics plotting routines that take hours and hours to run, but that is the kind of thing you boot up and start just before you go to bed; nothing is going to speed it up so much that you would want to sit and wait on it.

Yes, sorting routines are a bit slow, even in assembly, but the TI just doesn't have the memory to sort any sizeable amount of data anyway. TI-SORT gets around that limitation, to some extent, by writing and reading a scratch file on disk - but disk access is necessarily slow. Other chores you might like to speed up, such as archiving, are slow because of disk access. I know, I know - the hard drive overcomes that limitation. Sorry, my time is valuable but not THAT valuable!

And maybe you would like to speed up Multiplan, or TI-Base. Here again, the TI is handicapped by lack of memory. It was designed as a HOME computer, not a business computer. I have only two projects I would like to put in a database, and both are too large to be practical on a TI. If I ever get around to working on them, I'll put my money into a second-hand PC (pardon the word) rather than add more hardware to my little home computer.

But if you absolutely have to speed things up, maybe there are cheaper ways. For years, there have been references to changing a crystal, costing about \$4.50, in the console. Finally, in the Hoosier newsletter of August 1991 I ran across an article downloaded from DELPHI, in which Jesse Slicer explains exactly how to do it. He says you will gain an increase of 19.3% in microprocessor speed, but you will experience problems with terminal programs and graphics-intensive programs. So, he tells how to install the new crystal in addition to the old one, with a switch to alternate between them.

In the same newsletter are two other DELPHI downloads. One is a step-by-step description of Mike Ballman's method of adding 32k of RAM memory on the 16 bit bus, for a speed increase of about 50%. It requires two chips costing about \$13 and a couple of other doohinkies, price not mentioned.

The other file describes a modification to this method, by the late John Guion. Now, all of this is complete Greek to a technoklut: like me, but if some hardware hacker was to start buying up \$25 consoles, making those modifications and reselling them at a reasonable price, I might be interested.

Perhaps a better way to speed things up is through the software rather than the hardware. A few years ago, RYTE Data was marketing a so-called Basic compiler. It wasn't really that, but it did speed up XBasic programs quite drastically. Unfortunately it had so many limitations and created so many bugs that it was worthless. Last year, someone on the East Coast announced that they were writing a true Basic compiler, but I have heard no more about it. I believe that J. Peter Hoddie and Paul Charlton examined that idea previously, and decided that it was impossible within the memory limitations of the TI.

Ideally, programs should be written in assembly for maximum speed and efficiency - as Mike Ballman would be quick to point out. Trouble is, there are very few programmers with his skill, and very few programs being written in assembly.

But actually, XBasic is a perfectly satisfactory programming language, easy to write and easy to modify, and can be fast enough for any purpose if it is supplemented by CALL LINKs to assembly to do whatever XBasic can't do fast enough or can't do at all. Some of the best programmers have gone that route, but most of us don't know how to write those assembly routines to link to - we need someone to do it for us. Some extremely useful routines have been written for us by such skilled programmers as Karl Roastedt, Barry Traver, Bruce Harrison, Bud Wright, Ross Mudie and others. We need more of them.

Just think. If, back in 1984 when I put out my first 100 Nuts Bolts XBasic subprograms, some assembly genius had started putting out disks full of assembly subprograms. What a powerful programming language we would have by now, and what wonderful programs might have been written!