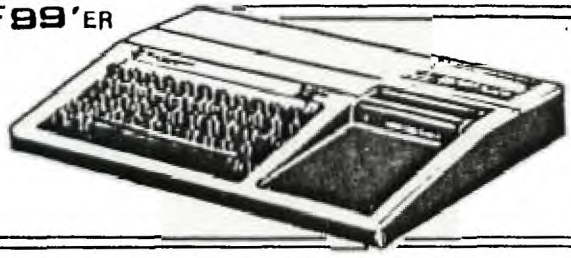
99'ER



FEBRUARY 1985

# NEWS

ENTERPRISE, ALABAMA

EDITOR: BUBBA DE JARNETTE

## MODEM COMMUNICATIONS

Just get a modem? Wondering what to do with it? Here's a couple of telephone numbers that you can try out without going into debt to the telephone company.

347-0080
598-6079

Here's how to get started. First, load your telecommunications software (the TE-II or some other emulator program). Now set the parameters to agree with your brand of modem. Usually 300 baud, 7 data bits, one stop bit, echo off. Then dial the BBS. When you hear the data signal on the phone (a high pitched squeal), turn your modem switch from voice to data. In a couple of seconds you should see the cursor dance to the center of the screen and a welcome message will print out. You should be able to hang up your phone now, depends on your modem model.

The bulletin board will then ask for your name and city and tell you that you are a new user. If you select Command A from the menu, you'll be able to add your name to the authorized users list. It will tell you then to select option X to pick a password and do some preliminary things that you won't have to repeat the next time you call the BBS. At this time you can set your screen width. Using the Pterm 99 software package, I set my screen width to 34 characters and it seems to work very well. But experiment a little and try different setting. You can change anytime you want to.

You'll notice that just about every menu screen that you see will have a (?) symbol to get a help screen. Usually this is a list of commands that you can use, with subcommands also. Until you get used to using the BBS, use the (?) command frequently. It won't take long to become an old hand at bulletin-boarding, but be careful-- it can become addicting, and you'll be tempted to sign onto some out-of-town boards, and GTE will get rich!

**********

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.....
Those who CAN, and those who CAN"T. Those who CAN - DO. Those who CAN'T - CRITICIZE. If you have a BEEF take it up with WENDY'S but if you have constructive Criticizism let me put it in the Newsletter.....

# GI[illegible]G ADVICE TO[illegible] OUR COMP[illegible]TER NAIVE FRIENDS

How often have you been asked by friends to advise them about which micro-computer they should buy? How did you respond? I'll bet you a cup of coffee and a doughnut that you recommended that your friend purchase the same brand of computer that you own.

If you're an IBM fan, then nothing will do except for them to get into the "Big Blue" mainstream. Only Volvo owners are more dedicated to a machine, or compare with IBM freaks in magnitude of nose elevation. The 2.4 million TI-99 owners are also fiercely prejudiced in favor of their 16-bit processor, and delight in discussing the FORTH and Assembly languages capabilities of the machine they bought at Penny's for $79 and then got a hundred dollar rebate from TI.

Advocates of Apples are rabid about the zillions of software packages available for their machine. Like Ford dealers, who fight for the chance to donate cars to the high school driver's ed classes, Apple is anxious to donate Apples to schools so the kids will start out on their machine and grow up to buy many more of them. Commodore claims that its machine can out-perform any other, and will play you a tape of music created on their C-64 if you even mention music synthesis.

The point of all this is that all microcomputer owners are ideologues ( a kinder term for smug and opinionated), and therefore unable to provide unbiased and objective advice to a novice. Asking two owners is even worse than asking one, you'll only receive conflicting information and become more confused. And each will do his or her best to proselytize you, including giving you misinformation and spreading malicious rumors about their friends' machines. ("Have you heard that the VIC-20 leaks radiation and will make you impotent if you hold the keyboard in your lap? Buy a TRS-80 Model III like mine, it's big and bulky and you can't detach the keyboard, therefore you won't put it in your lap and won't get impotent.")

Obviously it is impossible for you to advise anyone without letting your own preferences color your advice. As James Fallows remarked:

> Recommending the "right" computer is a lot like recommending the "right" religion. People tend to like the system they've ended up with. The most important point about computers, more so than about religions, is that the difference between a good one and a bad one is tiny compared with the difference between having one and not (Bear, 1983, p. 57).

If the difference between the popular computers are so tiny, then does it really matter much which computer we recommend (even if it is our own brand)? Probably not, unless you are recommending an Intellivision when what your friend actually needs is a word processor of some magnificent capacity to complete his eight-volume history of the Millard Fillmore years in the White House. In this case, if he's looking for something in the pittance cost bracket, a 64K Atari will perform about the same as a C-64, provided that the appropriate software is available.

So what's the answer when Ol' Billy Bob asks your advice? Perhaps the best thing to do is to let Billy Bob use your computer for an hour

or two, performing the same kinds of tasks that he intends to use his future purchase for. You might then refer him to someone who owns a comparably priced brand for a comparison trial.

But you probably won't. Like antique car buffs (or Volvo owners), you're almost certain to urge him to buy an exact copy of your 67K, 17-bit, ultra-red remote, all-purpose multi-interface, Texari II-d Jr.

## BE YOUR OWN CHIROPRACTER

After a days' work, you spend the evening hunkered over your microcomputer console, trying to get that last bug out of the masterpiece you're writing (or trying to score a million at MunchMan). Bet your neck and back muscles are weary and hurting!

Here's a solution to your problem, free from the people who bring you the red-covered diskettes. Just write to:

Verbatim Company
323 Soquel Way
Sunnyvale, California 94086

and they'll send you a booklet that describes a set of excercises specifically designed to relieve those miserable aches and pains. And you can do them while sitting in your chair blasting those Xaxxon aliens from Arcturus!

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If you don't have the Triton, Inc., catalog of TI-99 products, you can call (1-800) 227-6900 to have one mailed to you. If you're new to the group you may not know that TI contracted with Triton to dispose of the remaining TI stock. And some of their prices are absolutely unbelievable! Would you believe $5.95 for PARSEC and lots of other cartridge based games?

Another company with many TI products is TEXCOMP, P.O. Box 33084, Granada Hills, CA 91344 phone (818) 366-6631. I've purchased things from TEXCOMP in the past and found them to be prompt.

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FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH

## FREE FORTH PROGRAMS

Send an INITIALIZED diskette and a stamped, self-addressed return mailer to John Volk, Rt 1, Box 291, Van Buren, AR 72596, and John will send you free FORTH Programs. Pretty hard to beat that price. Guess John is trying to get more people interested in learning FORTH.

FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH FORTH

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BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT THERE WERE 2.4 MILLION TI-99 MICROCOMPUTERS SOLD BEFORE TI WENT OUT OF BUSINESS. AND THERE STILL SEEM TO BE SOME FOR SALE-- OCCASIONALLY YOU SEE AN AD FOR CONSOLES FOR ABOUT $79.95. THAT'S QUITE A LARGE NUMBER OF COMPUTERS, AND IT IS PROBABLE THAT ABOUT 1000 A DAY ARE BEING RETIRED TO HALL CLOSETS. THAT'S A SHAME, SINCE THE TI-99 IS WITHOUT DOUBT THE MOST VERSATILE OF ALL THE COMPUTERS IN ITS PRICE RANGE.

**********

If you are using a black and white TV for a monitor with your TI-99/4, try adding this line early in your program:

```
CALL SCREEN(15)
```

You'll see a remarkable change in the quality of your picture, with many of the irritating wavy vertical lines now disappeared. Your text especially will be more readable.

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## WARNING!
## ACHTUNG!
## ATTENCIONE!

THE TI-99/4A IS SUBJECT TO BREAKDOWN
DURING PERIODS OF CRITICAL NEED

A special circuit was installed in every TI-99/4 that senses the operator's emotional state in terms of how desperate he or she is to use the machine. This complex electronic circuit is called the Critical Detector. When the Critical Detector senses that the computer's operator is working under an impending deadline that must be met, it creates a malfunction. The seriousness of the malfunction is proportional to the level of desperation of the operator. It usually appears when an important document is being created with a word processor, never during a casual game of MunchMan.

Threatening the TI-99 with violence only aggravates the situation. And attempts to relieve the situation by pounding on the console or P-Box will cause unpredictable perversities to occur at random future times. Replacing disk drives, 32K cards, cables, or other devices will do no good-- they all belong to the same union. The only way out is to keep your cool and say nice things to the machine (and smile a lot-- it seems to like that).

Remember Murphy's Law: <u>Never let anything mechanical know you are in a hurry.</u>

(With thanks to the Suncoast Beeper)

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CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ

HAM Radio Operators Net for TI-99ers

For those interested in amateur radio there is a "net" for TI-99 owners. It is KD8LR (Bob). The net meets each Wednesday night at 2200 hours EST on frequency 3.927. Listen in one night and see if anything interesting is being discussed.

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## BEGINNER'S CORNER

### Disk Tips

If you've only recently switched from tape to a diskette system, you may discover that some of your taped programs won't load into your computer anymore. Every time you try to load a cassette program using CS1 you get an ERROR FOUND IN DATA message.

Here's what's happened. The disk system is using up some of your memory, and long tape programs that loaded without the disk system attached are now too long to load.

Here is a tip that might work to release some memory so you can load your favorite but too long program. First type NEW. Then type in CALL FILES(1), then NEW again. You'll now have about 1.4 K of freed up memory to let you load your cassette program. Then maybe you'll be able to save it to a diskette, do some editing to reduce its size, and get it to run from disk. Won't always work, but give it a try.

### Cassette Tips

When you put several programs on a single tape you have the problem of locating the one you want so you can load it. Here's a method that is absolutely foolproof and also very easy to use without referring to the digital tape counter, or especially if your recorder doesn't have a tape counter.

Just use your voice to announce the name of the program. Before using SAVE CS1 remove the red microphone plug from the tape recorder, and using the usual built-in mike, record whatever voice message you want. Perhaps you'll want to explain some hints in a program to make it easier to use. Then just listen for your voice when you need to reload.

(Wonder why I didn't think of that years ago? Thanks to the Hoosier Users Group for the tip.)

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## A POINT TO PONDER

If you are 21 years old, read at about 250 words per minute (About average reading speed), earn $13,000 a year, and plan to retire at age 65, then by the time you finish reading this paragraph, the federal government will have spent more money than you'll earn at your present salary for the rest of your working life.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

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## BEGINNER'S CORNER

This is a new feature of our newsletter and is designed to answer questions from newer users of the TI-99/4. If you have any questions or topics that you'd like to see covered in this column, please let me know. We'll try to get answers for you or talk about the subject that you're interested in. But we need your suggestions -- Let us know what you are interested in.

We'll try to cover basic subjects in three categories; Cassette procedures, disk-based system problems, and new users of modems. And perhaps later we'll discuss the hooking up of printers to your console, along with some of the options that you have in interfaces. We're also going to try to get some guest writers to author this column, so here's your chance to become famous! It doesn't take long to become an expert at something, so before long, you beginners will be sharing your expertise with the membership. If you buy a new piece of equipment that you'd like to write about, just let us know.

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## CASSETTE RECORDER PROBLEMS

At our Users' Group meetings we still hear from members who aren't able to use their favorite cassette recorder with the TI-99. It seems that the recorder doesn't behave the way the computer's instructions say it should. It doesn't witch itself on and off when commanded to do so by the computer during SAVE and OLD routines.

The problem usually is traced to an incompatable "remote" jack in the recorder. In technical terms, the recorder's motor has reversed polarity from that expected by the TI-99. Since 99% of all cassette recorders have simple D.C. motors, it really doesn't make any difference about the polarity when the recorder is used to record voice or music, and the on-off function will be done manually. The difficulty is very easy to correct, and a two-dollar fix can save you the price of a new recorder.

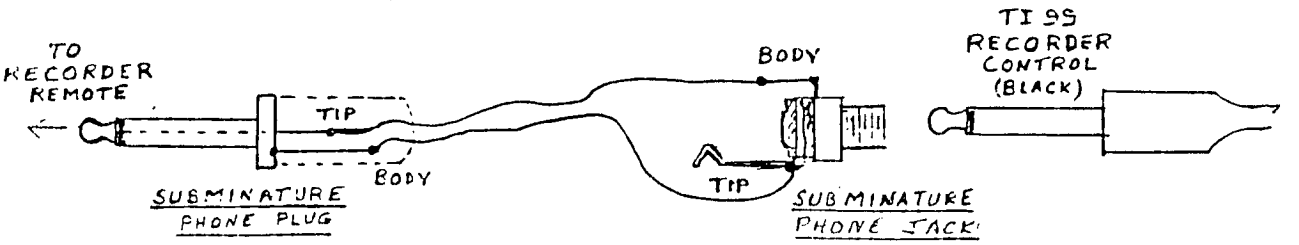
There are three ways to deal with the problem. I'll save the easiest and most practical for last:

1. Pry apart your recorder's case. It is usually just a snap fit, but sometimes you'll find a couple of screws holding it together. Now find the "remote" jack, the one you plug the black wire into. It's always smaller than the other jacks. You'll see two wires connected to it. Unsolder the two wires and then resolder them back but reverse the two leads. This is the cheapest way to solve your incompatability problem, but you have a lot to lose if you mess up. On many recorders, popping the case open isn't too easy, and getting it back together can be pretty tricky. In fact, it's easy to crack the plastic case. But if you've got lots of confidence, this is the neatest fix, and it's permanent (not necessarily an advantage).

2. This one is easier-- simply take your diagonal cutting pliers (dykes) and snip off the plug from the remote cord. Then strip back about a half inch of insulation and solder a new sub-miniature plug (2.5mm) onto the end. Now try it out. You've got a 50-50 chance that it will now work. If it doesn't, no sweat, just reverse the two wires in the plug and now it will miraculously work!

3. Here's the best, safest fix, and it has the advantage of being temporary so that if you get a new recorder you won't have to do anything no matter

what its polarity. Go to your local friendly Radio Shack (don't tell them that you have a TI-99, for some reason they get real hostile). Buy a subminiature phone plug and jack. Using a short piece of twin lead wire (or two short pieces of single wire), solder the plug and jack together using the diagram below.




Now plug the short adapter into your remote jack, and plug the black wire from your recorder into the adapter. You have now reversed the polarity, and your machine will work.

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## DISK TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Have you ever typed in a long program or subroutine and only then discovered that your disk system is not turned on? STOP!!! -- Don't turn on the disk drive system! If you do, you'll lose everything you've typed in, because your console will lock up. As the instruction book says, it's important to turn the power on to your system in the correct order. Any other way will cause you untold misery. Here's the way you MUST do it: First, turn on your peripheral expansion box and any external disk drives. Then turn on your TV or monitor, then your printer and any other peripherals that you've go. connected to your system. Then finally, the computer console itself. Remember, turn the console on last!

Now to return to your unfortunate situation -- you've typed in a long program, your first masterpiece. Then you find that your disk drive is not turned on and you can't save your program to disk. (It usually doesn't happen this way -- Most often you only find out that the disk drive is not ready to go after you've already done something stupid, like reaching out and mashing the on button of your P-Box) Here's how to recover from your trouble.

Since you obviously can't save your program, and since if you turn on the disk system you'll lock up your computer, your only alternative is to save the program on cassette tape, then turn off the computer to break the lockup, turn everything back on, powering it up in the right order. Then you can reload your program from cassette and save it to diskette. It's really not all that much of a tragedy -- just a minor irritation. And you wind up with a dandy tape backup of your masterpiece that you can use while your disk drive is in for repairs.

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## FOR SALE

Anchor Signalman Mark VII Modem, auto-answer, auto-originate, will even auto-dial if you have the right software configuration. Modified to work with the TI-99, it is in operation right now, and works perfectly with many different communications packages. Advertised retail price is $149, first $90 takes it. Call Roger Crampton at 347-1619(h) or 347-2623(w).

Also have a pair of Texas Instruments joysticks, cost $29, will sell for $17. These are indispensible if you are into games, especially games where two persons can play against each other. Call 347-1619 or 347-2623 for more info. I'll throw in a couple of terrific games (on your own disk) at no charge. An adapter is not required for these, they plug directly into the side of your console.

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## WANTED TO PURCHASE

Does anyone have a Peripheral Expansion Box that they would like to sell? Roberta Fleming would like to purchase one. Call her at (205) 347-4850.

## FOR SALE

DON'T FORGET THAT ERNIE HOWELL HAS DSDD DISKETTES FOR SALE FOR $17.00 A BOX OF TEN. I'VE BEEN USING THIS BRAND FOR SOME TIME NOW, AND HAVE NEVER FOUND A BAD SECTOR. AND TO MAKE IT AN EVEN BETTER DEAL, ERNIE DONATES EVERY CENT OVER HIS COST OF BUYING THESE DISKETTES TO THE USERS' GROUP.

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FOR SALE: Editor/Assembler package. Through Mail-order house error and personal impatience, I have two E/A's - Must sell one of them. Requires Disk Drive and 32k memory expansion. Still in un-opened box. You may not need it now, but will be a good investment for down-the-road when you want the full capabilities of your TI-99. You can have it for my cost, $42.95 (this includes the shipping and handling charges). Call Jim Ketcham at 774-9235 (home) or at 255-4448 (work).

FOR SALE: TI Writer, Brand new and unopened: $49.00, Ron 347-1358.

WANTED TO BUY: Touch Typing Tutor, Chip Weakley 347-8519.

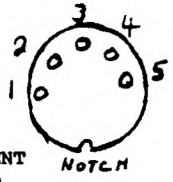
FOR SALE OR BARTER: Feathered Speach Synthesizer - You do not need X-Basic or TE2 module. This is a smart Synthesizer that operates even if electrical current is disrupted. It is also capable of operating without CONSOLE!!! This is the only unit I have seen that speaks all foreign languages. The current resident vocabularily is some version of SWA-HE-LEE. This is the Blue and Gold model with a Value of over $1,000.00 for THIS INCREDIBLE PRICE OF $500.00!! You may also purchase the Wrought Iron Caging for an additional Price of $300.00. Call 347-1708 - Bubba.

# WIRING DIAGRAMS AND PIN POSITIONS

**All plug and port numbers are as if you were looking straight into them.**
**Now you have something to use if a wire breaks or you want a weekend project.**

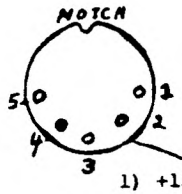
MARSHALL

MODULATOR PLUG



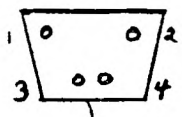

1) RED
2) TRANSPARENT
3) WIRE WRAP
   (not a ground)
4) BLACK (ground)
5) WHITE or YELLOW

VIDEO/SOUND PORT



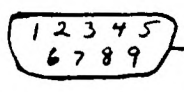

1) +12 volt
2) Video Out
3) Shield
4) Ground
5) Sound Out

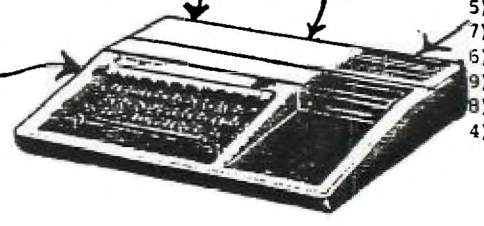
POWER PLUG



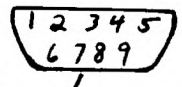

1) NOT USED
2) 8 volt AC
3) 16 volt AC
4) GROUND

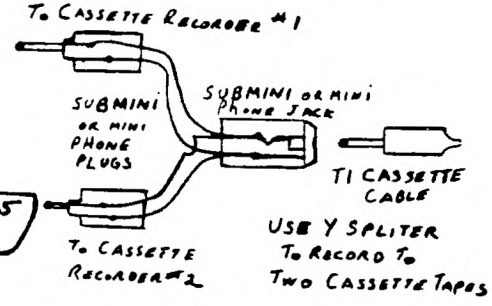
JOYSTICK PORT



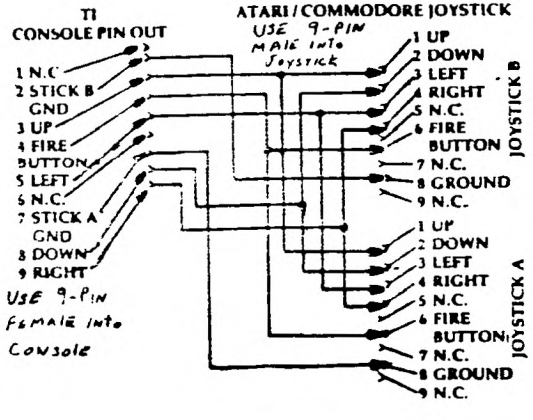
CASSETTE PORT



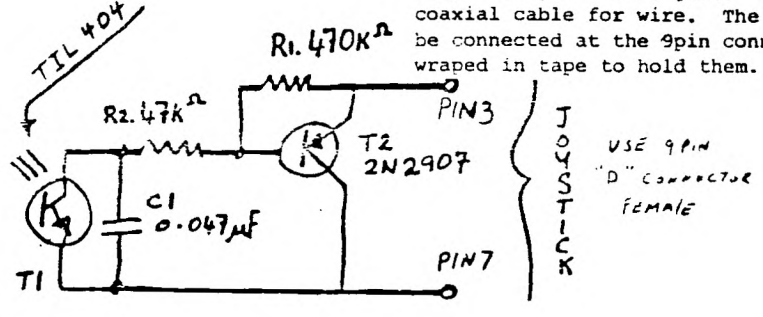

CASSETTE PLUG

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2) Negative Remote CS1 | sleeve | | |
| 1) Positive Remote CS1 | tip | | Small Remote Plug 3/32" Phone Plug 1/8" |
| 3) Negative Mic 1 and 2 | sleeve | CS1 CS2 | |
| 5) Positive Mic 1 and 2 | tip | | |
| 7) Negative Remote CS2 | sleeve | | |
| 6) Positive Remote CS2 | tip | | Small Remote Plug 3/32" Phone Plug 1/8" |
| 9) Negative Speaker CS1 | sleeve | | |
| 8) Positive Speaker CS1 | tip | | |
| 4) NOT USED | | | |




## TI-99/4A LIGHTPEN

The TIL 404 Photo-Transistor is attached to one end of the wire and inserted into a Felt-Tip or Ball Point Pen Case. It should be held in place by Silicone glue. Use RG 174/U coaxial cable for wire. The other parts can be connected at the 9pin connector end and wraped in tape to hold them.



EDMONTON USERS GROUP
PO BOX 11983
EDMONTON ALB T5J-3L1

WIREGRASS 99/4 USERS GROUP
106 HARWOOD PLACE
ENTERPRISE, AL. 36330

WIREGRASS 99/4 USERS - GROUP

X=YZ(sin) X=YZ(sin) X=YZ(sin)

For you technically-minded TI-99 hackers here's a winter project for you. Someone up in Kansas has developed a real-time clock for the TI-99/4A. From what I gather, it fits inside the P-Box and keeps time even with the power off!... It keeps track of the time, day of the week, and the date, and has a battery backup power supply. It comes in kit form, the printed circuit board is furnished and you furnish the discrete components and put it together.

If you want more information call (316) 681-3167, which is a BBS number (data only). If you construct the kit, let us know how it works out, and bring it to the next meeting to show off your handiwork!

```
1 !TEXAS CURSOR from GOTO Newsletter of Columbus, GA
Users Group; unattributed
2 CALL CLEAR :: CALL INIT
3 CALL LOAD(8196,63,248)
4 CALL LOAD(16376,67,85,82,83,79,82,48,8)
5 CALL LOAD(12288,48,48,63,255,254,124,24,12)
6 CALL LOAD(12296,2,0,3,240,2,1,48,0,2,2,0,8,4,32,
32,36,4,91)
7 CALL LINK("CURSOR")
8 INPUT X$ :: GOTO 8
```

**TI-WRITER ENHANCEMENT By Fre Soff**
(Reprinted from the September 1984 [illegible] Newsletter)

When I recieved the enhancements to the TI-WRITER, I was quite pleased with what it provided, with the exception of the Text Formatter that defaults to an RS232 serial output. I, personally, have a parallel printer output so that meant that I had to modify this setting each time I wanted to print out a document. The other day I was browsing through the mail on CompuServe and ran across the solution to this problem. So if you have a parallel printer and want to change your default setting permanently, follow these instructions:

If you are changing the [illegible] as it was received from the Club library then power up your new disk fixer [illegible] and select option 1. Go to section 58 (HEX), the beginning of line 3. Use F.IN 2 to switch to ASCII, and you will see, "PIO.BA=1200.LF". Position the cursor over the "R" at the beginning of the line and type "PIO.LF" then block out the rest of the existing information, through "LF", with spaces. Next, hit FCTN 8 and answer "Y" to the prompt. That's it. Now when you print out a document and come to the printer default all you need to do is hit ENTER and you are off and running.

In case you have transferred [illegible] to your own disk, you can use option 2 of DISK0 to locate the beginning of FINAL, proceed 10 sectors, and you find the printer default information.

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