YESTERDAY'S NEWS

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30 Years Ago...

Historical Information taken from Bill Gaskills TIMELINE

OCTOBER 1988:

Long time LA 99er Users Group member George Steffen dies in New York.

Harry Brashear, outspoken member of the Western New York 99ers User Group, MICROpendium columnist and frequent visitor to the 'Boards' supporting the TI Community, publishes the following in the October 1988 issue of his User Group newsletter the N.Y. 99er Interface:

"THE VIEW FROM THE POINT: For those of you who have heard about my confrontation on GEnie with the "Miller camp", I would like to explain myself, in as few words as possible. I have nothing against Craig Miller, only his ignorance of the people he is dealing with.

I have stated that I only got two things out of him -- the first thing he did, and the last. (Smart Programming Guide for Sprites and Super Extended BASIC). I am not including his XBasic games in this because anybody with a little experience could have done these.

In between the aforementioned products, I also bought his three other major works; DisKAssembler, Explorer and Advanced Diagnostics. These products were never designed with me in mind or ninety percent of the rest of the community, for that matter. Miller threw a fit when sales dropped off and blamed it on the pirates, instead of the fact that the products weren't for the community at large.

I agree that he was trying to make a living, and he deserved whatever he got, but there's an old saying, "If you can't convince them, confuse them.

" I have a vision of the average user buying these products and sitting slack-jawed and entranced while they went through their paces, totally amazed at what he was witnessing. When he was finished, the program went on the shelf and stayed there, because the average user still had no idea of what he was looking at.

Instead of giving us what we needed to work with the TI, he gave us things that only the upper two percent of the community could use.

There are many people today that are as good as Miller ever was and they are making a good buck on us because they gave us things like Graphic Enlarger, Telco, TI-Base, EZ-Keys, PREditor etc. These are products for US, and products I support. I might also point out that they are NOT protected, but they sell well.

So for the last time, I have nothing against Craig Miller and, having talked to him a couple of times many years ago, I would have to say that I thought he was a pretty nice guy, but his attitude toward us and his business sucked! 'Nuff said!".

Dr. Ron Albright, author of The Orphan Chronicles, leaves his post as a writer for Computer Shopper's monthly TI Forum column.

The Central Pennsylvania User Group sponsors a TI Faire that is held in Harrisburg, PA on October 16th.

MICROpendium begins a new monthly column entitled MICROreviews. Author is Harry Brashear of the Western New York 99ers.

The Press word processor is schedule to debut at the Chicago Faire on Nov 12.

Hypercopy by Mike Dodd to debut at Chicago TI-Faire.

FUNNELWEB v4.12 is released in the United States.

TexComp announces that it will begin sale of the Collins Starter Packs for game programmers.

INSIDE INFORMATION

YESTERDAY'S NEWS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY RALPH REES (SPARKDRUMMER). COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, IDEAS, ETC ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

ELEMENTS OF BASIC

By Dave Howell

Courtesy of the Erie 99'ers

Part 12

ON...GOTO

An ON...GOTO statement is a combination of a conditional statement and a branching statement. The following program illustrates one example of the use of the ON...GOTO statement:

```
10 INPUT A
20 ON A GOTO 30,40,50
30 B = B +1
40 C = C +1
50 D = D +1
```

The ON...GOTO statement at line 20 is used to branch to one of the line numbers 30, 40 or 50. The variable A is used to select the line number in 20. If A is equal to 1, the program will branch to the first line number specified - in this case 30 if A is equal to 2, the program goes to 40, etc.

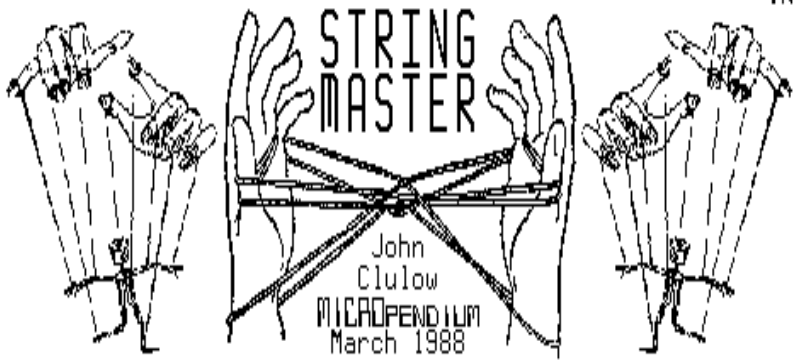
If A is not a whole number, it is rounded off. But A cannot be zero or less. Nor can A be equal to a number greater than the number of line numbers listed in the ON...GOTO statement which is 3 in the above program. If either condition exists, a BAD VALUE error message will occur.

Here is another application of the ON...GOTO statement:

```
10 RANDOMIZE
20 LET N = INT(6 * RND) + 1
30 ON N GOTO 40,50,60,70,80,90
40 PRINT "DICE THROW = 1"
45 GOTO 20
50 PRINT "DICE THROW = 2"
55 GOTO 20
60 PRINT "DICE THROW = 3"
65 GOTO 20
70 PRINT "DICE THROW = 4"
75 GOTO 20
80 PRINT "DICE THROW = 5"
85 GOTO 20
90 PRINT "DICE THROW = 6"
95 GOTO 20
```

Lines 10 and 20 will continuously simulate throwing a die by selecting a random number from 1 to 6. That number is assigned to N. Line 30 determines which line to go to depending on what number N is. If N is 2, the computer will go to line 50. If N is 5, the computer will go to the fifth line, 80.

To stop the above program, the FCTN-4 Keys will have to be depressed. Otherwise, the program will continue to return to line 20 to select another random number.



String Master is a collection of 29 subprograms used to enhance TI Extended BASIC. The software will also work with Triton and GK Extended BASICs, but it will not work with Myarc Extended BASIC. As the name implies, the central focus of the collection is upon manipulation of strings and particularly string arrays; functions such as sorting array elements, searching an array for a specified string, saving and restoring data from screen display windows, trimming unwanted characters and rotation of string array elements.

The routines are written in assembly language, and will normally be loaded into a section of memory unused by Extended BASIC: They can be used without reducing available program or stack memory or otherwise altering the Extended BASIC environment. At the same time, assembly language provides the ultimate in speed.

CALL LINK statements execute the sub- programs. For example, to access the routine called BEEP, the statement CALL LINK("BEEP") is used. When information must be provided for a subprogram to operate, it is supplied in a series of parameters following the routine name. For example. FRAME draws a hollow box around a "window" on the screen. To use FRAME you specify the upper left and lower right corners of the box and the character pattern to be used. To draw a box with row 3, column 2 as the upper left corner and row 10, column 15 as the lower right corner and using an asterisk (ASCII 42) as the border:
CALL LINK ("FRAME",3,2,10,15,42).

The String Master manual is very well written and easy to use. The subprograms, listed in alphabetical order, are each thoroughly described. All descriptions follow the same format. The CALL LINK syntax for a subprogram is followed by a description of each parameter, references to related String Master subprograms, routine usage, application notes, things to be careful of when using the

routine, and one or more examples of use of the subprogram.

Although the manual is very good, I felt that application notes for several of the routines were not explicit enough for me and perhaps for the average user. However, it is also quite possible that this reaction says more about my own deficiencies than those of the String Master manual. So while I feel obliged to describe my impression, remember that you might have an entirely different reaction.

One example would be the subprogram CONCTR that concatenates or adds the elements in one string array onto the right side of the corresponding elements in another string array. While the description of how to use this subprogram is quite clear, I found that the application note, "Useful in database operations", left me wondering what I would ever use something like this for. I am sure there must have been several specific ideas the author had in mind when he wrote the routine, applications which, once explained to me, would appear obvious. But the application note is not of much help. After some thought, it occurred to me that this routine could be of use in building index files for a database, but I have to wonder what else I'm missing.

Another example, APENDA, is probably the most complex subprogram in STRING MASTER. It uses 16 parameters. This routine can be used to copy elements selectively from one string array into another and even back into itself. You can start at any array element in either array: the first element in the "source" array can be copied into the 15th element in the "destination" array, for example. You can specify that only a certain segment of the source array gets copied, and even specify that it is only copied if a specified logical condition is met. In addition, you can use parameters to keep count of the number of elements copied or of the number of elements that meet the logical condition without copying them.

It took me about half an hour to understand how this subprogram works, and then I was left with the question of what kind of applications I might actually use it in. The application notes say it is "Useful for database operations in which a field is derived as a SEGS of a string....to obtain counts of strings matching certain criteria.....and clever manipulations of character patterns." Although I usually think of myself as a rather clever person, APENDA now has me wondering: Maybe they should have called it HUMILITY.

For the majority of subprograms in STRING MASTER, though, no application notes are needed, even for me. For example, there are three different sorting routines. SORTA, SORTAN and SORTD. SORTA and SORTD perform ascending and descending ASCII sorts one one-dimension string arrays. SORTAN is like SORTA except that it puts null string elements (those with nothing in them) last. These routines are designed to handle one-level sorting. However, in many instances you can achieve a multilevel result by constructing array elements from concatenated strings. To build an index file sorted by zipcode and then by last name, for example. you could first put zipcodes in an array. then use CONCTR to add last name to the end of each zipcode. then use FIX-LEN to make all elements the same length. and finally use CONCTR again to add the record number to the very end. When this array is sorted, last names will be sorted within zipcode. and record numbers will be carried along at the end of each element to be used subsequently in relative file access.

Another routine that could be useful in a broad range of applications is SEARCH. With this routine you can search up to a seven-dimension array for the first occurrence of a specified string. SEARCH will find strings that are embedded in array elements. Because the element with which the search begins is specified in the parameter list, you can use SEARCH repeatedly to find multiple occurrences of the string in an array.

The WINDOW subprogram is another general purpose routine. It allows you "instantly" to save the contents of a specified screen window in an array or to display a window previously saved. Together with the FRAME routine mentioned earlier, WINDOW can be used to advantage in most Extended BASIC programs. As in the FRAME example, the parameters include the row and column for the upper right and lower left corners of the window, a "W" or "R" for Write or Read, and the name of the string array to be used.

SELECT is a unique subprogram that allows you to review the contents of an array by stepping through the elements using either the up and down arrow keys or a joystick. One of the parameters in the SELECT statement is the beginning screen row for display or the array elements, If you keep an arrow key depressed, the stepping process auto-repeats, picking up speed the longer the arrow key is held down. When the ENTER key or a joystick fire button is pressed, the subprogram returns to Extended BASIC with the number of the array element selected.

In addition to these kinds of routines, STRING MASTER has several subprograms that are useful for more advanced application. SMPEEK and SMPOKE. for instance, allow you to read bytes from CPU memory and store them in a string array. The number of bytes you can read on a given access is limited only by the amount of string space available. The analogous SVPEEK and SVPOKE are used with VDP RAM.

After you have read data using SMPEEK or SVPEEK, you can then do conversions among number bases. The subprograms BINHEX, HEXBIN and HEXDEC make such conversions very easy, and convert all elements of an array with a single CALL LINK.

Other STRING MASTER subprograms not mentioned above include: CIRCUL circulates elements in an array; CONCTL like CONCTR, only concatenates on the left side of array elements; EOANN finds the last array element that is not empty; MAXLEN and MINLEN return the longest or shortest string in an array; RE-PLAC used to search an array replacing every occurrence of a string with another string; and one of my personal favorites, HONK created especially for Canadian users, perhaps.

In summary, Extended BASIC programmers who are working with applications that use string arrays will find that String Master lives up to its name.

Programmer:
Ian J. Howle
Reviewer:
Charles Good

IAN'S GAMES

ATTACK OF THE CREEPERS

In his letter to me Ian writes: "I have just finished writing this game program in TMS9900 assembly language. It has taken a little over a year to develop. I would like to put this in the public domain so that everybody can enjoy it....Could you put this in your library and distribute it to anyone who is interested."

This is a make your man climb ladders from the bottom up through several screens to the top of the maze game. The game comes as EA5 files with an optional Extended BASIC loader. I don't usually get excited about arcade games with fast action but little strategy. I must admit, however, that this game has held my attention for several days now. This is mainly due to the very complicated joystick action required to finish the game. The scenario is this: The creepers have attacked your mineral mine and completely surpassed your defenses. You have to escape from the bottom of the mine to the surface where a spaceship awaits. Along the way you have to make sure that you don't come in contact with creepers (they look like spiders) as they move through the mine and that you don't fall off one of the many narrow ledges in the mine.

You need a really good responsive joystick to succeed in this game. The official TI wired remote controllers really aren't good enough. I have had best luck with a Prostick. This game has the most complicated sequence of joystick movements I have ever encountered in a TI game. Of course if you move the stick up/down your man moves up/down the ladders and if you move the stick left/right your man walks along the ledges in those directions, and if you press the fire button he shoots his gun in the direction he faces. But there are more possible types of man moves, most of which require a particular sequence of stick and fire-button actions. Your man can be made to move left/right at double speed to run away from a creeper and then turn around and fire. He can slide under obstacles and come to a rapid stop. He can also jump left or right either short distances or long distances. Jumps are used to get up and down from one ledge to another in the mine.

Part of the fun is figuring out the complete repertoire of movements your man can make and the exact sequence of joystick movements need for each type of movement. Without giving away any significant secrets I can tell you that two of these man movements require a specific sequence of three joystick actions. First you do this with the joystick, then do that with the joystick, then do the third thing with the joystick at which point your man will make his move. If you mess up on any one of the three joystick actions either the wrong thing happens or nothing happens.

Once you have figured out how to get your man to do this and that it is still a challenge to predetermine which action to take in a given situation. There are two levels of difficulty, and the easier of the two usually gives you plenty of time to think about what to do next. Should you jump short or long to get across a gap to the next ledge? Should you go down in order to later go up? A fair amount of strategy is required. The harder level of difficulty gives you less time to think because you have many more creepers to contend with. I haven't managed to get very far under these harder conditions. Nevertheless, I find this a highly entertaining arcade game.

AND THEN.....
Ian Howle, author of "Attack of the Creepers" which I reviewed a few months ago, sent me a disk labeled "Ian's Games". In his cover letter he encourages me to distribute his assembly language games as widely as possible. They are public domain, he says, and based on computer games originally written in the late 70s. Ian's Games are in assembly language. I have seen similar not as good TI extended basic versions of these games in the defunct International User Group software library. Each of Ian's games reviewed here comes with on line instructions and an attractive title screen.

TIC TAC TOE

You get your choice of easy or hard levels and either one player against the computer or two players. I like this game because I never lose, even at the hard level. Tic Tac Toe is a game that can't be lost if you know the system, as I do. Even at the hard level, if the computer lets me start which it does half the time, I can often win. Otherwise I get a tie game. You use a joystick to place your X or O on the board and press the fire button when the X or O is positioned with the way you want. The screen display of the # pattern is quite artistic. The pattern is three dimensional. You appear to be placing your X or O into three dimensional boxes. This is the kind of visually attractive short game I really enjoy.

When I get tired of doing other things I just boot up Ian's Tic Tac Toe and play a couple of quick games with the computer.

SEAWOLF

You are a submarine shooting straight up through the water at surface ships. These ships pass by on the surface from left to right or right to left at varying speeds, sometimes very fast. You have to sink a certain number of ships before time runs out. At successive levels you have to sink more ships in the same amount of time. There are rapidly moving fish and slowly moving mines in the water that can get in the way of your torpedos and prevent them from reaching the surface. It is very annoying to have a fish zoom by and detonate a torpedo that you fired in an otherwise perfect setup. This game is hard! I rarely get beyond the first level. The fastest moving ships are almost impossible to sink.

SPACE ZAP DELUXE

Your star base stays in the center of the screen and the invading hords approach the star base one at a time from any of 8 directions. You rotate your base's cannon in the appropriate direction with the joystick and shoot with the fire button to destroy the enemy coming from that particular direction. If the enemy gets too close to your base you are dead and the game starts over. The time interval between attacks gradually decreases. It takes a very good joystick to work this game. Locking on to the proper diagonal is particularly difficult for most joysticks.

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NEWSBYTES

HOME COMPUTER COMPENDIUM
February 1984 Vol 1, No 1

MB DROPS EXPANDER

After more than a year of development and after finally releasing its long-awaited voice expander system for the T199/4A computer, Milton Bradley is leaving the home computer market. It is one of the first non-computer companies to suffer heavily from the turmoil in today's home computer market. Prior to TI's announcement that it would cease the production of home computers, Atari told Milton Bradley that it would not honor its contract to utilize a similar voice recognition system with its home computers. The company then had its hopes pinned solely on TI. When TI dropped the ball, Milton Bradley was left standing out in the cold with a $100+ system that would allow users to play high-priced game software, not all of which used the voice recognition capabilities of the MB expander. The voice expander finally reached the market in November but was withdrawn almost immediately. The company cited the lack of software support as the reason for recalling the expander.

Actually, it may not have been a very good idea in the first place, according to some analysts. Game cartridges for the system were priced as high as $50. One cartridge, a simulation of baseball, was very similar to Intellivision's baseball cartridge. The basic difference was in the voice-recognition capabilities of the expander. However, there is some question as to whether consumers would agree to pay $100 or more for the expander hardware plus $50 for a game cartridge that could be purchased for half the price on other systems, sans the voice recognition capabilities. Voice recognition at this point remains more of a novelty than a useful feature in home computers. So what happened to the several thousand MBX systems that were produced? According to a TI spokesman, the units were gobbled up by TI and Milton Bradley employees.

INFOCOM DROPS OUT

Infocom, the maker of such games as ZORK I, II and III and Deadline, has reportedly changed its plans to translate its games for the 99/4A. This appears to have been a last minute decision since the company had already begun publishing ads in major computer magazines that indicated game versions for the T199/4A were available. The lack of an adequate distribution system was cited as the key reason for the change of plans.

"BEIGE" PROBLEM

A number of recent purchasers of the beige T199/4A consoles have reported problems getting non-TI cartridges to work. Last summer TI threatened third party software developers that it would modify the GROM (cartridge) port in new consoles in such a way that the console would be able to read non-TI cartridges. Although HCC has not been able to confirm this problem, we've been told it is limited to consoles that display a 1983 copyright on the title screen. HCC has not seen such a screen, either. Most, if not all consoles, display a title screen with a 1981 copyright.

MAILING LIST OFFER

TI will reportedly provide vendors of software and hardware with its lists of TI home computer owners. With some one million owners, estimates range up to two million, vendors may be able to launch huge direct-mail campaigns, though the costs may prove to be prohibitive to all but the very well-heeled.

Editors Note: I remember my Users Group (VAST) had one of these lists from TI. It was a ponderous thing. At every meeting for quite a while I would ask members to take just one sheet of this print out and try to contact buyers and tell them about our club. My success in this was minimal to non existent, as per usual, it was left for somebody else to do it.

TI-99/4A

Yesterday's News Information

Yesterday's News is a labor of love offered as a source of pleasure & information for users of the TI-99/4A and Myarc 9640 computers.

TI-99/4A HARDWARE

TI99/4A COMPUTER
MODIFIED PEB
WHT SCSI AND SCSI2SD
MYARC DSQD FDC
MYARC 512K MEMORY
HORIZON 1.5 MEG HRD
TI RS232
CORCOMP TRIPLE TECH
1 360K 5.25 DRIVE
1 360K 3.50 DRIVE
1 720K 5.25 DRIVE
1 720K 3.50 DRIVE

TI-99/4A SOFTWARE

PAGEPRO 99
PAGEPRO COMPOSER
PAGEPRO FX
PAGEPRO HEADLINER
PAGEPRO GOFER
PAGEPRO FLIPPER
PAGEPRO ROTATION
PIXPRO
PICASSO PUBLISHER
BIG TYPE
TI ARTIST PLUS
GIF MANIA

PC HARDWARE

COMPAQ ARMADA 7800
COMPAQ ARMADASTATION
SAMSUNG SYNCMASTER

PC SOFTWARE

DEAD WINDOWS 98SE
FILECAP
PRN2PBNS
IRFANVIEW
ADOBE DISTILLER
ADOBE ACROBAT

Yesterday's News is composed entirely using a TI-99/4A computer system. It consists of 11 PagePro pages which are "printed" via RS232 to PC to be published as a PDF file.