

NATGUG *NEWS*

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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE

National TRS-80
& Genie Users
Group.

INFORMATION ON THE GROUP

Membership of the Group is by subscription to the Newsletter, which is published monthly. Membership details are obtainable from the Group Secretary. Membership of the Group is open to anyone with an interest in the TRS-80 range of microcomputers, and compatible systems such as the Video Genie.

Details of the Group accounts, and the constitution of the Group, are obtainable from the Secretary.

Members requiring assistance with problems related to the TRS-80/Video Genie may call the Secretary. An attempt will be made to put them in touch with a member who can help with the problem.

Workshops are arranged from time to time in various parts of the country.

Sub-groups exist in many areas. A list is provided in the Newsletter from time to time.

The Group maintains two software libraries (Models I and II) which are free to members. Library lists are obtainable from the Secretary.

For confidentiality reasons, the membership list is not generally available, but members may ask the Secretary for a list of members in their area, and mailshots to all members may be arranged.

Back numbers of the Newsletter are available from the Secretary.

Please send all contributions for the Newsletter to the Editor.

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EDITORIAL

The small size of this issue is due to no-one sending me anything. At the AGM it was decided to keep to a monthly newsletter, even though some of them might be a bit thin. The remedy is in your hands.

A lot of information was missed off the Swindon workshop programme that you received with the last newsletter. The date of the meeting is the 25/26/27 October, and early booking is advisable. Bob Sparling is the organiser, and he can be reached on (0793) 740762. The meeting will also be attended by the Memotech MTX Users' Group, and the sessions on BASIC and machine code will be of interest to members of both groups. I am running the sessions on CP/M assembler and C, and those of you who have CP/M, and wish to get some hands-on experience, should bring your machines, and get copies of the Z80 assembler and Small C compiler from the CP/M Users' Group library. If you don't belong to the CP/M Users Group, membership details are available from Diane Fordred on (0322) 226699.

Bob Sparling tells me that he has received several complaints about NATGUG from members. This was news to Brian and me. The service we provide hasn't changed in any way over the years: you still get a newsletter every month, assistance with problems over the 'phone, and a comprehensive free software library. I don't know of any other group (apart from the QL users' group) that does so much for members. Would any members who are dissatisfied with NATGUG please get in touch with US, and let us know where we are going wrong. We will then try to do something about it.

Tandy gave the PCW show a miss this year. Their profits are still dropping, according to an article I saw recently. They are now selling the Amstrad systems, which won't do much for sales of the Model 4 (the spec. is similar, and the Amstrad is about half the price). Their partner in Computerworld, Apricot (formerly ACT), seems to be having problems - they've written off over £3 million worth of portable computers, and their US operation is still in a mess.

Some time ago I described the sort of machine that I thought Tandy should be making. Unfortunately, my dream machine has been produced by Commodore. For about what I spent on my old Model I a few years ago, you will soon be able to get an Amiga with a 68000 processor, 256K RAM, very high-speed colour graphics, stereo sound synthesis, speech synthesis, multi-tasking operating system and loads of excellent low-cost software.

Leon Heller

PRINTING LABELS

The following C/80 program takes a name and address file and prints the names and addresses in three columns across the width of the paper, which can then be cut up to make the labels. Six lines have been allowed for each name and address. An option to view the output on the display is provided.

```
/*  
** labels  
**  
** C/80 program to print name and address labels from  
** a text file with three labels across the width  
** of the paper
```

```

** Written by Leon Heller
** Version 1.0 - 27/8/85
**
*/

#include <fprintf.h>

#define EOF -1
#define MAXLEN 1000

extern char Cmode;

int  *fchan,          /* file channel */
     *pchan;          /* printer channel */

main(){

    char  fname[12],   /* file name */
          option,      /* user option: P - print V - view */
          line[50],    /* line buffer */
          *lineptr[18], /* pointers to lines */
          *p,          /* buffer pointer */
          *alloc();    /* memory allocation function */

    int   i,           /* loop counter */
          len,         /* line length */
          n;           /* label count */

    n = 0;
    Cmode = 0;         /* char. at a time I/O */
    cls();
    printf("\t\t* * * LABEL PRINTING PROGRAM * * *");
    printf("\n\n\n");
    printf("File name: ");
    gets(fname);
    fchan = fopen(fname, "r");
    if (fchan == 0)
        error("Cannot open file");
    printf("\n<V>view/<P>rint labels: ");
    option = toupper(getchar());
    if (option == 'P') {
        pchan = fopen("lst:", "w");
        if (pchan == 0)
            error("Cannot open printer channel");
    }
    printf("\n\n");
    len = 0;
    while (len >= 0){
        for (i = 0; i < 18; i++){
            len = getline(line, MAXLEN);
            p = alloc(len);
            strcpy(p, line);
            *(lineptr + i) = p;
        }
        do_labels(lineptr, option);
        n++;
        if (n % 8 == 0 && option == 'P')
            putc('\f', pchan);
    }
    fclose(fchan);
    if (option == 'P')
        fclose(pchan);
}

```



```
/*
** getline(s, lim) - get line from file
** modified version of function from K & R
*/

getline(s, lim)
char s[];
int lim; {

    int c,          /* input character */
        i;          /* loop counter */

    i = 0;
    while (--lim > 0 && (c = getc(fchan)) != EOF && c != '\n')
        s[i++] = c;
    if (c == '\n')
        s[i++] = '\0';
    s[i] = '\0';
    if (c == EOF)
        i = -1;
    return(i);
}

/*
** do_labels(lineptr, option) - display labels on screen
** and print them if option 'P' selected
*/

do_labels(lineptr, option)
char option;
char **lineptr; {

    int i, j;

    for (i = 0; i < 6; i++){
        for (j = 0; j <= 12; j += 6){
            printf("%-26s", *(lineptr + i + j));
            if (option == 'P')
                fprintf(pchan, "%-26s", *(lineptr + i + j));
        }
        putchar('\n');
        if (option == 'P')
            putc('\n', pchan);
    }
    putchar('\n');
    if (option == 'P')
        putc('\n', pchan);
}

/*
** error(s) - print error message and abort
*/

error(s)
char *s;{

    puts(s);
    exit();
}
```

Leon Heller

PROBLEM SECTION

I seem to be getting a lot of disk problems lately. A disk written to only a day ago will fail to read giving a "Directory read error". I have the PCCheck utility, but this only indicates a series of unknown errors. PFix parameter F also stops for unknown errors, but S to Skip takes it to the end and the disk then reads OK.

Has anyone found similar problems? I am using LDOS 5.13, a Video Genie I with 48K internal upgrade, and a DP2000 system drive and controller.

I have tape Scripsit now set up for disk by using a move routine. I would like to be able to hold text files on disk. Has anyone got zaps to modify tape to disk?

Allan Fowke,
28 Queensway,
Sawston,
Cambs. CB2 4DJ.
Tel: (0223) 832308

I am trying to convert Scripsit or Newscript to Hebrew. This language is written right to left, so that considerable cursor control mods. are necessary. Can anyone help? I am also seeking a character generator chip for Hebrew. Any suggestions?

Ralph Katzenell,
Mevo Ha'asera 1/12,
French Hill,
Jerusalem,
Israel.

(* The best way to get an alternative character set would be to use the Applegate hi-res mod. This gives a programmable character generator, and might be available second-hand from someone in the group. LFH *)

Has anyone got any of the following for sale:-

Omicron Mapper 1 or 2
Aerocomp/Genie double-density adaptor

R. Bains,
452 Leagrave Road,
Luton,
Beds. LU3 1RH.

MORE DOUBLE, DOUBLE AND NO TROUBLE

I quite agree with Ken Arntsen's remarks in his article in the June issue about the Model 4. I am even still running my 1978 Model I because there is so much useful software for it. Thanks very much, Ken, for your information about transferring software over to 80-track drives. Without it I would still have been struggling.

I was fortunate enough to acquire a couple of new Mitsubishi 80/40-track switchable drives for a very low price (sorry, Os). I had to do some trimming of both the drives as well as my 4P to get them to fit, but with the aid of Ken's instructions TRSDOS transfer was a doddle. Montezuma's CP/M, of course, was simplicity itself. DOSPLUS4 was another thing altogether; partly the same as TRSDOS but part CP/M style. The only way system files can be transferred is with the command SYSGEN which does not perform the same function as in TRSDOS, but is similar to CP/M SYSGEN, then just a straight 'BACKUP' for the rest.

While I was in London for the PCW show I called in on System Science in Smithfield, the firm quoted by Anon. in the same issue. I only wish I could find the money to buy an HSC16 board: it's a very good way to get the best of both worlds. One thing that surprised me was the small size of the board and the large size of the box complete with PSU that could be bought if required. The board is nearly small enough to go inside a 4P.

I spent an interesting day at the PCW show. I met John Harding but missed seeing Leon. Not to worry, I expect he will be at Swindon. The show is getting too big to be able to get round in one day unless one has been in training: I was shattered long before I had seen all I wanted to. Many firms were missing; they will probably be at Compec in October.

E.C Kilpatrick,
3a Gainsborough St.,
Sudbury,
Suffolk CO10 6ET.

FOR SALE AND WANTED

Free to good home: IBM golfball printer, no interface.

Details from Leon Heller on (0908) 613004.

Does anyone have a copy of "Fast BASIC - beyond TRS-80 BASIC" by Gratzner and Gratzner, which is in fair condition, and which they wish to sell?

Les Tebb,
102 Keldregate,
Bradley,
Huddersfield HD2 1TB.

For Sale

Seikosha GP-100A Mark II
Dot matrix printer

Simple, but fast and robust tractor feed printer for A4 paper. Dot addressable graphics. Sold with cable and EG3016 interface, and tape Scripsit. £75.00

Phone Allan Fowke on (0223) 832308.

For Sale

Cassette-based Model III. Offers???

Also speech synthesiser and Vox box for Model I, and Model I monitor.

Ian Farmer 061-736 0863

or ring MOBB (24 hrs) on 061-736 84449 (300/300 or 1200/75, auto-detect)

STOP PRESS

The daily rates were also omitted from the Swindon workshop booking form. They are as follows:-

Including lectures

System room only

Fri. £3.00

£2.00

Sat. £5.00

£2.00

Sun. £4.00

£2.00

Paul Godier

83 Trinity Road

Wimbledon

LONDON SW19 8QZ

Leon Heller



PROSOFT software

The saga of obtaining Prosoft software rumbles on (Ken Arntsen, July). Like previous correspondents I have encountered weird problems ordering Prosoft stuff from the States. Last year I ordered Dotwriter from AMI in Colorado on my credit card, via an ad. in 80 Micro. I waited and waited, and eventually phoned them. They said Prosoft had told them not to sell the program abroad. They muttered something about copyright law in Australia. (All this despite their quoting overseas rates in their ad; and a letter of explanation would have been nice!)

So I phoned Prosoft to place an order by phone. They said the problem was that they could not be sure that their software would work on Tandy machines sold outside the US, but that they would send a copy if I wrote to them exempting them from any liability if the program should fail to operate when I received it. There would be no question of a refund. Much as I would like a copy of Dotwriter, I made an anatomical suggestion about where their program could go.

Just the odd comment or two.

This was going to a very short newsletter when ANON sent in Pages 9 to 16. Thank you very much.

Has anybody got the sort working from the recent 80-MICRO article page 112. 9/85

Laurie Shields rang to say he had Payroll working which incorporated the recent legal requirements. Well done.

Should I help Past members on a business problem when they ring on a SUNDAY afternoon? In view of the complaints said to be floating around I should!

The dropout rate of members renewing is quite worrying and a list will be sent to the following :- Dave Washford, Leo Knaggs, John Kilpatrick and Leighton Davies. The last three were at the first workshop. The list is really to advise the more senior members of our group.

Sorry I have not put anything recently but my planes, family and house seemed to have absorbed ALL the time. Mind you I have been helping a local business person learn how to program the BBC! We have this paying in book program as a result. It is basically MICROSOFT with some BEEB in it.

Brian Pain.

*PS for the record I am going to the local rep on the 25/10/85 - our 10th anniversary

MORE OF HSC16

The board is now truly working though one does discover some quirks. The RAMDISK does not always behave on return from MSDOS. Another quirk is that although re-booting the computer does disable the RAMDISK, it does not clear it's memory. If initialised by a subsequent RAMDISK command all the files, which were present prior to re-booting, still are there. One just has to switch off. Otherwise there are no problems apart from the fact that one cannot run SYSGEN with RAMDISK installed, or that saving CONFIG does display a spurious character - mostly L or T.

I have bought my first bit of software to run under 16bit and this is SuperCalc 2. Similar in many aspects to VisiCalc and very fast though not as powerful as MultiPlan - or at least it does not seem to be as powerful on the first impression. What I do miss is the linked spreadsheets and the ability to move the cursor more than one step at a time. Still this is the trade off. The Tandy MultiPlan is very slow and does not permit sending a string of codes to the printer or, at least the codes which one can send are limited in number from 01H to 31H (which is due to Model 4 keyboard under TRSDOS). SuperCalc 2 permits any string of codes, which is very useful with FX100 printer but beware - the string of codes as entered, does not appear on the screen. So one has to type very carefully.

As I said SuperCalc is very similar in some aspects to VisiCalc. The main similarity is the type of slash commands though not all of them work exactly as in VisiCalc. Furthermore SuperCalc is more 'user friendly' in so far as it lists the strings of options when a command is invoked. Also at any time a command is invoked one can type ? and this brings a Help screen on that command - very much as Multiplan.

I really like the installation module of this bit of software. The number of terminals is limited but there are options to install all sorts of data and the best is that in the Screen Installation option typing 'x' takes one into the dealer's installation module. When I received my copy from the dealer it was installed but there was no reverse video, the cursor was < > and the '>' sat on the last character of the cell thus making it invisible. I got into the dealer's installation program and noticed that the dealer tried to get reverse video using cursor attributes of 0F and 0E. Having played with the installation for a while I decided to change CRT attributes from 0 to 2 and voila. The cursor has been changed from <> to a highlighted block and I also got a highlighted bar on top of the spreadsheet. Should anyone run SuperCalc 2 on Model 4 and have any problems with customising it they can contact me through Brian and I will provide the customisation data.

Another useful thing is the ability to configurate the keyboard under CP/M 2.2 CONFIG program for use with SuperCalc. SuperCalc uses the usual WordStar cursor movements (^s,d,e,x) but

the arrow keys also work apart from the right arrow. This is easily changed with CONFIG by defining it as ^L. I have also defined my F1 as =(goto), F2 as /E(edit cell) and F3 as "(start of any string). These three keys are frequently used.

This CP/M 2.2 ability to define the keyboard is a very useful feature. In the WordStar my arrow keys (unshifted) move the cursor one character or line, shifted word forward, word back, screen forward and screen back. Clear is DEL, shifted deletes word and Contr/Clear deletes the line. F1 moves the cursor to the beginning of the line and F2 to the end of the line. F1 shifted moves to the beginning of the text and F2 shifted to the end of the text. F3 I used as ^V (insert on and off). Very good operating system this Montezuma CP/M 2.2

Having got my 8086 running I really don't know what to do with it. As I already have wordprocessing, accounts and data base on CP/M 2.2 there seems to be very little sense in duplicating this software on MSDOS. I would much rather spend the money on adding another 512K RAM which would give 768K Ramdisk under CP/M 2.2. I have got used to using the Ramdisk provided with 128K Model 4 but 63K is not that much. Now having two of them I experience a real speed up especially with dBASE II and WordStar. With 768K I will be able to load the whole lot into Ramdisk and run everything without changing disks.

I have heard very good reports of TURBO Pascal (the new version 3), and I intend to get the MSDOS copy. My 8bit ProPascal is not upgradeable (and neither are WS, dBASEII or Sage Accounts) and TURBO Pascal is much cheaper. Anyway at present I have a box for the HSC board on order. This has a fan and power supply as I am not happy about the board sitting on a piece of paper. The 8086 gets hot too though this does not affect it's performance even though my board is switched on regardless of what I do.

HSC1686 board comes with MSDOS 2.11 and other software, both CP/M and MSDOS. Software visible to CP/M80 consists of: Install.Com, Ex16.Com, MSDOS.Sys, Ex16.Com, Ramdisk.Com, Rome.Sys, Inst.Dat, Deb86.Com, Fmtms.Com, Crck.Com, ASM86.Com, ASMZ80.Com and two MSDOS.Dsk.

Of these Install.Com, MSDOS.Sys and Ex16.Com are needed as minimum files to install MSDOS. Ramdisk.Com is used in 8bit operation to use the HSC16 RAM as Ramdisk - thus a 128K Model 4 can have two Ramdisks (63K and 250K). Rome.Sys and Inst.Dat are required for IBM PC emulator. Inst.Dat contains tables used by Install.Com on the console type. Debug86.Com is for all those clever types who wish to modify the operating system of C01686. There is quite a bit of gen on that in the manual but I don't understand any of that.

Fmtms.Com formats a disk for use by MSDOS. The following formats are available:

MSDOS logical disk, which is a CP/M formatted disk on which

a CP/M file called MSDOS.DSK is created for use by MSDOS. Disk space is allocated in 64K segments and the program asks how many segments to allocate. There can be only one MSDOS.DSK on a physical disk so any existing MSDOS.DSK is overwritten by this program.

8" in MS/PC DOS format.

8" disk with sector interlace to MSDOS format (whatever the sector interlacing may be!)

Physical MSDOS disk in which case the whole diskette, apart from CP/M reserved tracks is formatted for MSDOS. The whole diskette is divided into 128 byte sectors. This is not a standard format but it permits using any type of disk with MSDOS and, generally, also yields the best performance.

Crck.Com checks the disk received from dealer for data integrity and ASMB6.Com and ASMZ80.Com do things for people who know all about ASM programs - which I don't.

There are two MSDOS.DSK files (on separate diskettes). One is 128K and contains all MSDOS utilities. The other file (64K) contains utilities provided by HSC. These are Import.Com, Export.Com, CPM80.Com, Cdir.Com, Ansi.Sys and Fkey.Com. Import.Com provides the facility to import files from CP/M disk to MSDOS. When buying a program running under MSDOS this is supplied on CP/M 2.2 disk and the Import.Com is used to transfer it to MSDOS.DSK. Export.Com works the other way. CPM80.Com returns from MSDOS to CP/M. Cdir.Com permits reading CP/M directory from MSDOS. Ansi.Sys provides ANSI console output emulation when running in IBM PC mode and Fkey.Com provides a method to test the IBM PC function key emulators.

I went to the Business Computer show at the beginning of June. The show was divided in three sections ie hardware, software and office automation (communications). There was the usual run of IBMs, MACs etc and really nothing very interesting. But I had real fun in the software section. The demonstrator for SAGE-SOFT was showing off their products on IBM PC, colour, pulled down menus and all. There are no longer Sage Accounts, Sage Plus and Sage Executive. Now it is Bookkeeper, Accountant and what have you. But I had a real laugh when the program froze up. The demonstrator was very bitter about it! What I have discovered though is that, providing one has the later version of Sage Account, <Shift@> inserts the date whenever the program calls for it. There was a plethora of Macs but, somehow, I cannot imagine myself wanting to use MAC - the keyboard and VDU are too small. And may I add that I could not find Tandy anywhere?

SERENDIPITY?

The Australian football season over, (at least as far as the pools are concerned) it is time to see how we have performed - the computer, I and dBASEII. Top marks go to the computer, especially the HSCCO 1686 board which permitted speedy entry of data, displays and printing of forecasts. Close to the computer comes dBASEII with easy programming language, nice screen formats and powerful data manipulation. I, on the other hand, came a poor third.

Below for those interested are the statistics collected over 13 matches from 18 May to 10 Aug with my forecasts compared with those of Sunday Express, Sunday Telegraph, Tuesday Telegraph and Tuesday Mirror. Firstly the average of the total results forecast correctly:

1. Sunday Express	46.84%
2. Yours truly	45.57%
3 Tuesday Telegraph	44.06%
4 Sunday Telegraph	40.50%
5 Tuesday Mirror	39.58%

(At the risk of being called a snob I only was buying the Mirror on Tuesday because this gave the Australian league table required to maintain the data base).

Next a bit of statistics on ratio of draws/draws forecast because, for example, if one paper managed to be right in 5 instances out of 25 draws forecast this is nothing as good as 3 correct out of 10 forecast. So (come here - there is more) this is the way the cookie crumbled:

1. Sunday Express	31.07%
2. Yours truly again	25.98%
3. Tuesday Telegraph	20.96%
4. Tuesday Mirror	19.64%
5. Sunday Telegraph	16.99%

And the final bit of statistics, which I intend to disclose is the average of draws forecast correctly - regardless of the total forecast and this goes like that:

1. Sunday Express (boring)	27.22%
2. Tuesday Mirror	20.79%
3. Yours truly	19.44%
4. Sunday Telegraph	17.49%
5. Tuesday Telegraph	15.28%

(The good showing of Mirror in this section is due to the fact that they tend to forecast plenty of draws - but see their record in getting them right (19.64%)).

I have yet more statistics showing detailed analysis of

my Home, Away and Draw forecasts but I do not propose to bore the readers (if any) with that. Yet no statistical exercise can be without a conclusion. And what is the conclusion in this case ? IF YOU WANT TO MAKE MONEY USING A COMPUTER TEACH WORD PROCESSING OR KEEP OTHER PEOPLES' ACCOUNTS (OR WHAT HAVE YOU) BUT DON'T BASE YOUR HOPES ON WINNING THE POOLS. As simple as that but, if one realises that each week there were between ten and seventeen results which nobody got right, what's the price of logic?

There is a puzzler now - what is the future, if any, for Models 4/4P. According to 80Micro Tandy intends to support further these machines, improved version being a possibility, Desk-mate being available 'real soon now' - whilst according to Tandy(UK) the machine is dead. No further computers are being assembled and the stocks of Model 4 will run out in December this year. So it looks like the demise of the most successful 8-bit computer that Tandy has produced. In a way we need not worry as Tandy does seem to support their products for some years after they discontinue the production. Apparently Model 4 was, and is, doing very well in the educational field in USA but it never took off in this country - probably for two reasons. The original price was too high and there was no promotion whatsoever.

Two more things noted recently with HSC1686. Firstly, if you switch the box on - my board has now own box, power supply and fan, whilst the computer is up and running you are likely to damage the disk in drive A:. Secondly, if having booted up, you want to switch on the box (after carefully removing the disks) you find the keyboard locked. I expect that these small things will be coming to light as one uses the box but for all that I think it a worthwhile purchase. No CP/M Users' Group magazine lately, so I have no idea how the other chap is getting on with his board. It would be nice to know though.

The little menace in my office (4P) has been seen to, has had extra 64K memory added and drive 0 replaced and it has been behaving spotlessly since. I use it for my (office) diary, word-processing and MultiPlan and the budgeting. There is plenty of that just now as we are having finance committees' meetings in October and the bids for next year's allocations arrive from all over the country and overseas. I have never in my life been any good at keeping the office diaries but I manage with the computer. Of course when we have the heads' of departments meetings the boss keeps asking 'where is your diary?' and I reply 'Hang on - I'll bring my micro' and that shuts him up.

I have decided to get rid of the ITT 3030 (including 7MB hard disk) and DEC LQP02 printer as we seem to have constant troubles either with booting or the sheetfeeder. The booting troubles are avoidable and really are due to our typist who works surrounded with dust, crumbs, hair pins and never dusts the computer or cleans the drives. Every so often there is a screech 'Mr L computer doesn't work!' and I have to go across with a cleaning diskette, boot the perishing thing till it manages to read Syslib and then in BOS take each drive in turn with VER and a cleaning

diskette for about five minutes and the thing works again. Those Philips drives are very easily affected and they are located very low - at the table level. Actually very nice drives for maintenance. One just takes off the lid (no screws), pulls out the drive and that's it. Never any trouble with the hard disk so far. Anyway I have decided to sell the lot and replace it with Tandy Model 4, dual 720K drive in addition to the internal two Tandy drives and daisy of sorts, CP/M 2.2, WordStar and dBASEII. I don't like DOS and I don't like AutoWriter or AutoIndex. At least I will know what I am up to and, as the drives are higher, maybe we won't be finding hairgrips in them. Another reason for reducing the number of types of computers is that my lady successor - (second successor as I got rid of the first one) will have only PDP11/23 and Tandy Model 4 to learn about. After all her main role will be that of an accountant and managing the computers comes only because I was instrumental in installing them.

By kind invitation from a group member I have been to Northern Ireland and I stayed there - very well looked after - for a week. We had a lovely time computering when I was not being taken round and shown the sights. And we made some discoveries too. Some time ago I stated somewhere that one can get only 31 control characters sent to the printer in Tandy Multiplan. This in fact is quite incorrect. The trouble is that the manuals, both Tandy and CP/M versions, are not very helpful on this subject. We have discovered that ^E will put the Epson printer in an emphasised mode so, no doubt, many other strings can also be sent. We played with Multiplan and dBASEII. My friend has a data base of references to articles in computer magazines (some 740 records). We sat down playing with finding records by keywords and what has started as a bit of fun ended as a very useful program. My biggest regret is that here, where I live, there are no other computer maniacs and I am completely on my own. David, my host, invited a few computer friends for an evening (which lasted till after 1.30 am) and we had a go at Sage Accounts, Multiplan and dBASEII again. On another evening we had a go at communications. I had with me CP/M Users Group magazine which had a listing of an improved version of PIP - or at least a patch to PIP. The improved PIP permits swapping of disks and it remembers the last command (if, for example the last command was A:=B:*.DTA loading another disk in drive A: and pressing 'q' will repeat the function, whilst pressing 'r' does reset all drives to R/W). The only trouble was that the listing was full of errors. Well I am a moron as far as assembler is concerned whilst David knows a bit more about it even though he is no expert. Between us however we managed to find all the errors, compile the patch, patch PIP etc. David has improved this version still further by including clearing of screen and highlights. I wonder whether either of us would be able to achieve all that if working alone. David might have done - I couldn't. So thank you David and Jacqueline once more for the most enjoyable time.

I read somewhere in one of the American magazines about computer conferences - on computering subjects. I wonder why nothing like that has been started in this country yet. Of course

Americans are far before us in most things 'computer' but there is no reason why we could not have telephone workshops. It is a pity that the TRS80 bulletin board is just about non-existent these days. In the days when I had an acoustic coupler I tried once to link with our board but with no success. Now I am thinking of getting a decent modem which can offer a choice of speeds in operation and, of course, good communication. Maybe, when I shall retire next year and have a bit more time, I will start a restricted board for some of the TRS80 users. For the time being the search for a modem is on. Having been once disappointed with an acoustic coupler I am now looking for something which would give all possible speeds up to 1,200, have new BT sockets, auto dial/answer and would perform well. I have read somewhere a warning that good modems are difficult to put the hands on and the ones advertised are no good - which does not help much a fellow who does not know the difference between V21, V23, Bell, half-duplex and full duplex. I had the terms 'synchronous' and 'asynchronous' explained to me whilst I was in NI. Any hints from you communications experts? At one of the computer shows I saw Thorn EMI VX524 modem which seems to be capable of doing everything I want. There are however two questions : can this modem be physically linked to my computer and is the software available for my machine to drive it? Any hints from satisfied modem users would be greatly appreciated!

I have just run my Sage monthly configuration for August (this is when the nominals etc get updated, transaction file is cleared and the file transactions are re-written) and this brought to my mind a question which was asked whilst I was in NI. The storage problem. Well I have provided for 120 nominals, 50 purchase accounts and 10 sale accounts. Minimum configuration which Sage permits is 100 nominals, 10 purchase and 10 sale accounts. Accounts can be re-named at any time so there is no reason why a sale or purchase account once closed cannot be used for another customer. When I was buying Sage the dealer told me that I require larger capacity disks to run the program and, as a result, I have also purchased the dual 80 track, double sided, double density drive. A posteriori I can say that this was quite unnecessary expenditure. Looking at my 40 track disk (which I use as an extra backup) these were the volumes:

ACNTLIST.DTA	4K
BUDGET.DTA	2K
CODELIST.DTA	6K
COMPANY.DTA	4K
POSTINGS.DTA	48K

The postings file remains always at it's last largest size and, in the month when it became 48K, I had 545 transaction in it. Taking the above figures and allowing for more sales accounts one can still squeeze about 1,500 transactions on a 40 track disk. Surely a sufficient number for any small business.

Mind you I do not regret buying the big drive and it became very useful with other applications (especially data bases)

but what did hurt was that when my friend saw it and decided to buy it, his was about £100 less and his is hardware switchable between 40 and 80 tracks. Mine can be defined as 40 tracks under CP/M (double stepping) but it should only be used in this mode for reading but not for writing.

RPIP came very useful today before running the update. One is advised to make at least two backup diskettes before re-configuration (which in my case means three backups - as I have one as current and keep two to the end of the month - one being required to produce the final accounts and the other just in case). It was so easy, having backed up the first disk, to load the others one by one and just press 'q'. RPIP does the reset and remembers the last PIP command - in my case A:=B:*.DTA. For those uninitiated into the mysteries of CP/M piping (copying) is done to destination from source (in the above from drive B: to drive A:). This can be quite confusing sometimes as using almost entirely CP/M I am used to defining the destination drive as first - until I go to MSDOS and then I am back to the TRSDOS/NEWDOS/LDOS/DOSPLUS/ETC way. If, as it said, MSDOS is a quick re-hash of CP/M why does the COPY command work the opposite way to PIP.

July NATGUG arrived today and I have noticed the remark about VC and the memory requirements. In the office I use CP/M version of Multiplan and this gives me only about 13K for the spreadsheet. Not much to play with but adequate when used with Multiplan ability to consolidate the spreadsheets (eXternal command). And on another subject - one can get out from DDT with <CTRL>C without losing any work done on the memory and one can then save the pages required. I enjoy the tutorials on CP/M. As the author is obviously a member of CP/MUG I wonder if he has tried RPIP from Vol 2 No 5 issue? Several typos in that one but once de-bugged it is really good. Sometime ago I was writing myself a little system in dBase II and one of the options was getting out to CP/M SUB file and backing up a data disk. SUB file cannot contain ^C and I could not find a way to re-set the disk from within .\$\$\$ file. In the end I had to settle for DUP, which does not care whether you change the disk or not and so long as on getting out you replace the disk with .\$\$\$ file everything is all right. But DUP formats a disk before copying and this is a bit lengthy process on an 80 track double sided disk. RPIP would have been handy then.

Just got August NATGUG and I am flattered by the invitation (provocation?) to do something about SAGE at the workshop. However, in view of my accent and the fact that my teeth are falling out rapidly (I have now only three molars left and am waiting for next year when I will be able to get 'choppers' for naught), I somehow don't think that the audience would benefit much, if at all, by my presentaion !