

THE GRUNT PRESS

(and other wrestling holds)

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Nov. 15 looms ever nearer!

Some people have been a bit sarcastic in this issue. Is anyone under pressure?

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H E L P

For nearly six months now, the GRUNT PRESS has been produced by Ed. Ed now finds time tight and feels he does'nt have the right profile (ie. communication with the right people) to continue with the GP. If anyone out there feels that they might like to take over the GP, give it some new flavour and of course reap the usual perks associated with being the last person to have any control over what gets printed, I would gladly hand over the reigns to them. The job is not a big time killer (it usually takes about a half day every three weeks), but it does require a good knowledge of who is doing what (with whom?). The right candidate will have at least a public school education, a sense of humor and knowledge of WordStar.

Anyone interested in the job (looks great on your C.V.) should see Ed soon.

It's been a slice,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ed".

From the closet of: Chris Wallace

As another issue of Grunt Press is published it marks the change going on all around us. Where were you when the last issue came out and where are you now? Nabu historians will look back on this phase of our development with amazement: and Grunt Press will be the only witness to the truth.

The Information Group has lost John Shortt who was looking after tool development- he is now in charge of Games Implementation...there is a similarity here I refuse to comment on. It behooves me to provide John with games design and a planning schedule to keep his implementation days full. Dale Mackenzie has put the finishing touches on his Astro Lander since the last issue of GP and is now working on our own version of an Air Traffic Control game. It seems there is a definite common theme in his work, oh yeah, and anybody who can successfully land his Astrolander on the first try will win that proverbial \$10.00 roll of quarters. Arthur Ham is working up a version of a 3-D Maze Game that borrows lightly from Tron (uh,hem) and Ken, you-know-him-you-love-him Shimisu will be throwing in the towel (completing that is) on Tennis any minute now .

All the students games, Greg on Pong, Chang on Blackjack, Laura on Runes and Leo on Pac-Roulette, are coming along and optimistically speaking will be finished for Christmas (otherwise Santa will be very mad, and when Santa's mad...).

I am also looking into license deals with Arcade companies and if things work out successfully we may have a few well known games to put up on our system and call our own.

What else? Information. A lot of attention is now being focused on the Information Services that we are to provide on the Home NABU and in the past week and a half a list of services has been agreed upon that will be offered for the launch; Stock Market Summary, Family Fitness and Nutrition (move over Jane Fonda, Fat Broad is on her way) Family Budgeting, Entertainment Guide and Home Car Clinic. Now with the right people and some hard work we will have two (count 'em) programs within each tier for Feb. Any takers?

See you next issue.

From the desk of: Sue Gordon

. . . no time, telephone, no floppies, no machines, telephone, no modem, 3/4 days! No graphics, no animation, rinnggg . . .

But wait, we're meeting deadlines! Due to much hard work, Flashcards (Tootles - 1,2,3's, Tootles - A,B,C's), Restaurant Guide, and Telescope under MCP have been delivered (at least once!) to QA. Stock Market Dailies will follow Friday the 5th.

Artech will be testing the final Personal Profile as soon as possible on the broadcast cycle with an HCC prototype. Work is underway to convert the above services to run on the HCC and (ta-da) Information will have arrived on the NABU Network.

The Metric Converter is experiencing some micro teething problems but we're still pushing for the 15th.

The hot question these days is -- When will November 15th actually occur? or How many November 14's will there be in 1982?

Thanks to the troupe -- Brian & Chuck & Doug & Gord & Heinz & Howie (Mr. Gred) & Jamie & Jane & Judy & Tanya (Ms. Scred) -- from me -- 8 services in 4 months -- well done!

From the desk of: John Shortt

Well, life around here is really picking up. Being put in charge of games development certainly has'nt increased my leisure time but then it's a fun job anyway.

Having been involved with Information Services and now Games, I can't help but be really impressed with the quality of work that is being turned out by the content developers. To us, the significance of November 15 is that it is the date on which our work starts to receive the exposure it deserves and people everywhere get to see what we are capable of.

Some random thoughts . . . it's really impressive to see Coleco-vision's Zaxxon, just imagine what we could do. . . how many people out there have graphics editor packages of some form? Should'nt we once and for all get going on the final solution? . . . What this world needs is a good sound editor, a good high level language (fast execution, compact code, fast compilation) and a good animation package (and a partridge in a pear tree -Ed) . . . has anybody out there looked at bulk ram devices to replace disk drives for compilation, assembly, etc to improve productivity?

From the Virtual Desk of: Dave Allan

The POX on SYSCON!

At this time I would like to include my list of PLMX error messages to enhance the ergonomics of the PLMX compiler (this is above and beyond Warren's suggestions for mods to existing messages).

Error Message:

'Program too complex but it is insufficiently complex to generate a "Program too complex" message.'

Replaces:

Writing garbage all over the disk.

'Compiler confused by "Based <Variable>" declaration ahead of "<Variable>" declaration.

Replaces:

Writing garbage all over the screen.

'Illegal character'

Replaces:

System error at XXXX

I should have listened more carefully to those before me, the thing's a dog. (Some sort of communist plot not unlike Intel's 8048). I suggest to anyone who actually has to use PLMX that you inflate your estimates for coding by 2 to allow for module partitioning, intuitive error correction and spouse beating.

On a more positive note, the 1100/HCC debugger is up with breakpoints, disassembler, single stepping and all that wonderful stuff. Copies are available (with documentation!) at Suite 202, Roosevelt (easy to find, just look for the tacky drapes.)

From the ?????? desk of Arthur Ham:

Not much to report in this issue, Backgammon is finished. Macbeth is playing well, any challenges at level 4 ? Speaking of Macbeth, for the first time I actually beat someone (she can remain nameless) 64 to 0. My next project is a fast action tank game that places the player inside the tank looking out. The main feature will be the smoooth movement of the tank through its world. I will be interested in any techniques for scrolling both virtically and horizontally.

PS. Current high score on Zaxxon 39,600

From the _____ of: K__ S_____u

From the deepest darkest and dankest dungeons in the Kingdom of NABU, or in other words, from the office of Dale and Ken (right next to the nursery and sweat shop).

This short note is for those who are complaining about the lack of patterns in graphics mode I . John Allen has helped me to develop an experimental program that doubles or triples the number of patterns available without having to resort to graphic mode II's bulky colour table. In other words, up to 768 patterns (or more if desired) can be displayed on the screen at one time in graphics mode I. Naturally there are some sacrifices that have to be made in order to do this however in many cases the inconveniences are minimal. For details see myself.

From the desk of: Trevor Pearce

MCP2 lives!! (At least for now). I know it's too good to be true but the sequel to MCP is now available in a library near you. The new version is packed with enhancements to let you do all those things on the 1100 that you could only complain about yesterday. For example, you can now reboot the system with a ^C instead of ESC. WOW! Even better, you can turn off flashing cursors and the real time clock (I know how much this has bothered people in the first version of MCP). The clock attach routines have been reworked to function properly however I'll be suprized if anyone notices any difference. (By far my best advice is DONT use any of the IOS functions! You are far better off to write a simple little routine that does it your own way. By doing this you wont have to read any documentation or bother anyone by asking silly questions. Besides, if you really understand what has to be done, you'll know that its so trivial that anyone can write the same function twice as efficiently as the IOS.)

The biggest enhancement will undoubtably shave hours off the development of all applications. The infinite resources of the 1100's has once again been tapped to emulate the release coded keys. What's a release coded key you ask? GOOD question! Although people never tell me anything (you know how hard it is to get documentation), I think I heard something about it a long time ago. Besides, John Allen wrote the emulator and he might be able to tell you more.

Other notes:

John Harley has created some test software which will be used by the manufacturing people to help get PC's off the line and available for both customers and in house development. The software is very useful for checking out a system to ensure all the hardware is working. Initial reaction from Almonte is that the test works well and will probably be passed along as a field service tool.

John will also be undertaking a study of high level languages for micros. If anyone has any good articles, books or comments on the topic please pass them along to John.

Eric Mesdag is working on CABLESIM. The package is an 1100 tool which will allow segment files created by John Allen's segment handler to be packetized and crunched through a high speed (110 K BAUD) board and into a PC via the NABU Network Interface (NNI - formerly called the HCCA port). CABLESIM coupled with Dave Allan's DEBUG will provide a very realistic and powerful development environment.

(Ed. - These 1100's are truley such flexible and powerful machines that perhaps we should make the emulation of an 1100 on the PC a very high priority project.)

From a desk buried (almost literally) deep in the Dungeon - that's the basement at Roosevelt to those of you who haven't seen it - where is often found the program librarian:

Hi there! There are three things I want to mention in this issue. The first is the fact that the CORVUS is temporarily out-of-order. It died last week and I'm working on getting it fixed but it looks like it may take a little time. Meanwhile, should you need anything from the library I can get it for you off the backups. All is not lost!

Number two: I circulated a memo last week (to be specific, it is dated October 25th) asking for input on the library, its setup and its contents. I recall that it said I would like submissions in the next week or so. Well, so far I have received the grand total of one, from none other than the venerable editor of this esteemed publication. I need everybody's input!!! Or, in other words: c'mon people, I'm doing this for your benefit!!! Even if you think you don't have much to contribute I'm more than happy to answer questions and am receptive to ANY ideas you may have. I hope to hear from ALL of you in the near future. End of lecture!

Number three: I now have the gall to ask you for something else. I am attempting to verify and update everything on my hardware lists. I keep track (or try to) of all the hardware at Roosevelt. Things keep getting moved around, however, so just as a check I'd like you to write down and send me the serial number on each piece of equipment you have or operate. This includes 1100's, CRT's and keyboards (there is a separate serial number on each), televisions and monitors (please include make and model number), printers, Apple's, etc. Also I need the serial number off of the gamesboard in your 1100. This is a three digit number that is found written on one corner of the gamesboard. If any of these items do not have serial numbers please note that down, include the asset number instead and send these along to me. None of this should take very long. Thanx.

A final note: In the last issue of the GP I made reference to a certain games programmer who could not beat me at backgammon. Well, to put the record straight I must now report that since that time he has finally been able to win. I must say, it's nice to have a little competition from time to time!

That's all folks!