

# GBBS Pro News

Vol. 1

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April 1987

## 'Pro' has new support Pro News: GBBS information source

By STEPHANIE A. MCGRATH

"Support" and "GBBS 'Pro' " have been a bit of a contradiction in terms in the past.

Sysops have made up for the lack of support by creating their own network through GBBS boards across the country, but there's still something lacking.

More than 600 people have registered copies of GBBS 'Pro' for the amusement and education of their users.

Of those registered owners, only a few hundred call the official support boards -- L&L, (303) 420-3568, and Apple Pack, (703) 370-4223.

Thank goodness! It's tough enough autodialing through all those who already call those boards to offer advice, criticism and modifications.

But who knows what we've been missing? Maybe one of the mystery sysops has the answers to the ACOS problems we can't solve.

I'm guessing the missing owners are people who think they have nothing to offer the rest of us. The purpose of this newsletter is to reach them and convince them that they have much to offer.

Here are some of the features it will include:

- **GBBS Pro News:** in this issue, it's an explanation of how v1.3 is different from v1.2, so you can make a decision on whether it's worth your money;

- **Lance Taylor-Warren:** a column by the owner of the GBBS 'Pro' copyright;

- **Guest Columnist:** written by a Pro News subscriber about anything connected with GBBS 'Pro';

- **Sysop of the month:** a feature about a GBBS sysop who runs an interesting system or writes good mods;

- **Summaries** of GBBS 'Pro' sysop messages from L&L and Apple Pack. Other BBSes will be included as space permits.

I will add features, such as a machine language-level column, as they are needed. Suggestions for these features are welcome.

I've been sysop of Chameleon, (713) 586-0914, a greatly modified GBBS 'Pro' system, since September 1986 and used BBSes for many years before that.

I received a bachelor's degree in journalism from Southern Methodist University in 1982, and I've been a reporter at the Houston Chronicle since then.

This issue is a test. If you like it and you want more, send \$12 for a year's subscription of monthly issues. (Praise is optional.) I don't plan to become a millionaire out of this, but I'd rather not become a pauper, either.

More than anything, I'm doing this for fun. When it's not fun anymore, I'll refund your prorated subscription.

But don't expect it anytime soon; the fun has just begun.

## L&L finally releases v1.3

The long wait is over; more than 100 'Pro' sysops are in the process of upgrading their bulletin board systems with GBBS 'Pro' v1.3.

Unfortunately, the usual first-release bugs infested the initial copies of v1.3. But for all the trouble of reconfiguring it, the software adds some much-needed code and some lovely new 'toys' for sysops and users.

Lance Taylor-Warren, whose L&L Productions now owns the GBBS 'Pro' copyright, mailed the first copies of the new program and manual on March 21 after more than a month of delays.

The new version has many purely cosmetic changes, and it fixes several

v1.2 bugs that most 'Pro' owners had already repaired, but Lance thinks the new manual, alone, is worth the upgrade price of \$10.

The new manual includes mostly the same information as the old manual, but the command list is alphabetical.

The upgrade fee is also a "down-payment" on the estimated \$60 Pro/Link upgrade, which is what Taylor-Warren plans to call the much-rumoured-about GBBS 'Pro' v2.0.

Taylor-Warren stresses that no one should feel pressured to upgrade if they're happy with the version they're

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**Next month:** How 'bout those v1.3 bugs? I'll try to get Lance pinned down on a list. Plus: preview of V1.2 plans.

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## Sysop of the month:

# Reluctant sysop reigns over 'Forest

In late 1984, Steve Schneider wasn't interested in running his own bulletin board system.

"Originally, it was my son's idea," Schneider recalled. "I fought tooth and nail not to put one up, as it cut into my BBS calling time."

Before long, Scott Schneider, now 15, lost interest in his RainForest BBS. But his dad, now 43, was hooked on sysopery.

"I strove for the most technically proficient system to offer users all of the options they would ever want or need," he said. "It's supposed to be a quiet place to visit and relax."

RainForest is open to the public, but he mails a newsletter and opens his download sections for those who spend \$10 for an annual membership (which can be waived in subsequent years for those who contribute to the board in other ways).

His 250 users are the usual mix of ages and interests, and his 24 sub-boards include something for everyone. He has boards for gaming, jokes and wine tasting, among others.

When it went on-line for the first time, RainForest was running a pirated version of GBBS II. When 'Pro' was released, Schneider bought it even though he didn't plan to replace his highly modified GBBS II.

"Compared to GBBS II, nothing at the time was as sophisticated or as easily modifiable," he said. " 'Pro' was chosen for what it promised to improve on GBBS II and because I really felt I owed it to Greg (Schaefer, author of the GBBS series) to pay for a program to make up for using his earlier work without paying for it."

Schneider is still running v1.0, hoping to see v1.3 soon so he can use some of the mods that haven't worked with the old version.

His longstanding interest in GBBS support died for about a year after he uploaded several mods and some information to the old Eamon BBS support board and received nothing in return. But now he's back in the support network, calling four GBBS boards -- L&L, Chameleon, Night Shift, and Durham After Dark - at



Steve & Scott Schneider

### **Vital Statistics:**

Name: Steve Schneider  
Age: 43  
Real job: Xerox technician  
BBS name: RainForest BBS  
Phone: (305) 434-4927  
PC Pursuit-able? No  
Baud rate: 300/1200/2400  
Hours: 24 hours, 365 days  
On-line since: 12/17/84  
Audience: general public  
# of users: 250; 50 paid  
GBBS 'Pro' Version: v1.0  
Storage: 10 megs  
Up/downloads? Yes  
Role-playing games? Yes  
Other games? Yes  
Sub-boards? 24  
GBBS sysop board? No

least weekly.

In addition, he calls about 10 boards in his Southern Florida area.

He said he spends about an hour-and-a-half every day calling boards, two hours a week doing system maintenance, and 40 hours a week working on mods, "if you count all the paper scratching as well as typing and refining."

"Gee, you'd think with all that

time, I'd do a better job!"

In "real life," Schneider is a senior Xerox technician, and he works on text files and calls BBSes from a Xerox 6065.

His wife of 18 years, Jean, "wouldn't touch a computer for love nor money," and complains that she's a computer widow.

"She's right; I don't spend enough time with her," he admitted. "But I don't fool around, and I'm always home. You have to take the good with the bad."

Part of the "good," at least for his users, is Schneider's philosophy of running a BBS. He doesn't believe for a moment that his users will appreciate all the work he has put into the modifications on the system; he makes mods for himself.

"With the exception of one mod (searching back for previous messages with same title) which a few users 'busted my chops' about for months until I finally put it in, all the modifications on the system have been to please me, more or less," he wrote in a "Reflections" column which he posts semi-irregularly on his BBS.

"Ain't no fun running a 'stock' program. There's a lack of personality to the BBS. So by all means write and install the mods that please you or your users, whether anyone ever uses the darned thing or not.

"Anything you do (be it good or bad) will add to the individuality of your BBS and (don't hold your breath, mind you) SOMEDAY a user might even leave you Feedback (or a public message) THANKING you for a particular modification."

Of course, Schneider is still waiting for National Take-A-Sysop-to-Lunch Day....

To be considered for this column, send the information about your BBS in the format of the box above, to Chameleon Publishing, via U.S. Mail.

# Disks!

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100 percent certified,  
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\$39/100 or \$185/500

## Avatex modems

1200 baud \$105  
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## Hard Drives

Sider, 10 meg: \$559  
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## GBBS 'Pro'

Character fight segment  
\$29.95  
(Call for details)

## Arbuckle Computer

### Supply

3613 Arbuckle Dr.  
Plano, TX 75075  
- (214) 867-8724

# Highlights:

## L&L: (303) 420-3568

L&L has been a busy place since it became the flagship support board for GBBS 'Pro'. The last few months have been busy for sysop Lance Taylor-Warren, as he has been trying to get GBBS 'Pro' v1.3 ready for public release.

**Modems:** Most of these problems have been taken care of through new cables or new configurations. But... for anyone tearing out their hair over an Applecat, Dave Pfister (#27) says GBBS won't run it at 16-bit mode because the Cat takes everything too literally, and in 16-bit mode it dials too fast, sends too short a carrier, etc.

Problems with the U.S. Robotics Courier 2400, 2400e and 9600 appear to be cabling problems. Lance says the GBBS driver will run at 9600, but he has had some trouble designing a cable for the 2400e, since U.S. Robotics hasn't sent him the information he needs.

Several sysops have also been asking whether anyone has found the proper cable or configuration to use the Avatex 1200 with anything but the generic modem driver. Can anybody help?

**BBS List:** Jono Smith (#31) has volunteered for the herculean task of compiling and recording the official GBBS 'Pro' BBS list. If you send your BBS name, phone number and baud rate (and hours of operation if not 24 hours) with your subscription, I'll pass them

along to Jono.

**File Transfers:** Clark Johnson (#120) wonders about the possibility of including Binary II and CRC Xmodem formats in the up/download capabilities of GBBS 'Pro.' Has anyone else tried fixing the x.up and/or x.dn to work with these or other formats?

Lance has already said he plans to include Ymodem transfers in some future version of GBBS 'Pro,' and Mike Golaszewski has released his new EXfer v4.0, which includes Ymodem as well as the old Exfer features. (Ymodem is a file transfer system that sends 1280 bytes per block instead of the usual 128 bytes. For those using Telenet's PC Pursuit system, the difference in transfer speed will be considerable.)

One of the few term programs that support Ymodem on the Apple is ProTERM, written by Greg Schaefer. (Why does THAT name sound familiar?) It's available through Checkmate Technology, Inc.

**Mods:** Where to start? How about Mike Golaszewski's (#235) ACOS Parker, to "park" the heads on a Sider hard drive while the board is waiting for a call?

Or how about a mod from James Mardis (#239) that allows a sysop to restore a partially destroyed mail file so users don't miss all the mail in the meantime? (By the way, fixing the v1.2 mail bug is as easy as creating a fake "bulletin board message file," then renaming it "mail." No kidding.)

The ACOS.time segment on L&L has been rewritten many times since the early versions that only worked on certain systems. This most recent version should work on all systems with a simple "use" statement.

**Working Mods:** Keith Christian (#73) is trying to write one that will allow on-line viewing of any file's hex data as ascii data. His primary interest is to add the file type and 'creator' to his Macintosh library. He says Macbinary-format uploads contain this information in the first 128 bytes. Anyone have anything like this?

Several people are working on games for GBBS. I hope some of them are going to be public domain. (hint, hint.)

Variable hints from Mike

## EXFER v4.0

### FEATURING YMODEM

Introducing EXfer v4.0, the FIRST GBBS transfer program to use YMODEM!

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Golaszewski: Once you declare a variable, it is in memory for good, and eventually, if you're using several segments, that space will fill up and cause errors. Every time there is a new LINK, ACOS performs a FREE to consolidate garbage, but sometimes that's not enough.

There are a few ways to avoid filling up variable space. 1) Use scratch variables such as x,y,z and their string equivalents over and over to perform temporary functions. 2) Use byte(x) to store temporary values of up to 255, because you can erase them without erasing all the variables.

If you STILL have a variable problem in your home-grown segments, learn how to use STORE, CLEAR, and RECALL, as shown in Golaszewski's Exfer program.

Related question: Keith Christian wonders if there's a way to find out where ACOS stores all the variables in memory, so he can grab a list of them?

**Questions from the floor:** Michael Brady (#178) is seeking a binary file that he can "use" to send commands to his modem. His modem has an "off-hook" command, and he wants to use it when he logs on locally.

Steve Freitas (#108) wonders if anyone has tried a multi-port system using AppleTalk, a system that allows you to share peripherals between computers. Has anyone out there gone multi-port without a Corvus?

Several sysops have complained about the length of time it takes to backup their systems. Does anyone have any helpful hints on how to make the job easier -- aside from buying a tape backup system?

Also, Lance used a question from one curious sysop to reiterate: "There are no backdoors in GBBS Pro. I should know...I am the owner of the source code."

### **Apple Pack: (703) 370-4223**

Sysop Ron Gabbert has had some hardware problems, but the board helped support GBBS through it all. Tony Coluca (#89) uploaded his greeting card segment for our amusement, and Larry Johnson (#299) left us two packed up diskfulls of random mods in the GBBS sysop file

transfer area.

Several sysops complained that when they changed clocks to avoid typing in the clock driver fix they lost their seconds. I agree! How about some seconds for generic clocks, somebody?

### **P+: (214) 424-2001**

Notice the new phone number. Sysop Jan Porter bought a new house in Plano. Meanwhile, his system had serious hard-drive problems, so he had to kill back the entire message base.

The big news is: P+ has released its new adventure game, The Land of SPUR! As always, the beta-testers have been having a field day. The new game is \$49.95. See the P+ ad on page 2 for more details.

Jan and Darryl are still working on the "official" fixes to keep their casino and other games running with the new GBBS version, but they should have some official statement soon.

Among the discussions here is one that was also around on other boards: ProDOS 8, v1.3. The bug everyone is complaining about, is a track 0 bug, and Steve Freitas (#335) says he sent a patch to Apple Pack's file transfer section.

Bruce Kahn (#214) announced that after 3 months of work and sorting, he has compiled a "quasi-comprehensive list of collected mods from all over." He hopes to make the list available to all, so we can see what we've missed.

### **Caddyshack: (201) 920-2353**

Sysop Rich Lowenburg has been suffering through the same bugs that plagued me for a long time. Does this look familiar to you?

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@  
@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

I think that's what happens when the gosub stack is demolished, because since I went through all my segments and cleaned out some "push"es, and added some "pop"s, I haven't seen it.

The biggest news announced on Caddyshack is that First Word Software is using the board as a beta site for its new Gridlock Management System and File Management System. More on these as they are tested, but

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# First Word

Get the most powerful GBBS Pro(tm) custom modules available; at a price you'll like, with the support you deserve:

## Match!

- **For Friends, Lovers.**
- **Questionnaire:** Permanent user stats file; 25 built-in questions; prompted, auto-created custom questionnaire.
- **Secondary Handles.**
- **True cross-referencing:** Search 3 interests fields, self-description field, questionnaire percentage, sex, age, or any combination.
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- **Full System Menu.**

## That's Not All

Preview Elite!, GMS II multi-porting and Extended Command System on Europa (713) 526-0714, 300/1200 bps.

Match! is only \$29.95; The Mall is only \$24.95. Send check or money order to:

**First Word**  
4110 Roseland Ave.  
Houston, Texas 77006  
COD: Phone (713) 526-9711.

# V1.3 has a new manual

Continued from page 1

using now.

"V1.3 is not a 'hafta' upgrade," he said. "The primary reason for 1.3 is to offer what I feel is a better product."

One of the major changes is the message header format. The new format adds a line for the user to whom a message is addressed. This line necessitates the use of a msg.convert segment to convert v1.2 messages to the v1.3 format.

In addition, the v1.3 userfile holds 128 bytes of data about a user, compared to v1.2's 64 bytes. The new information includes 15 byte(x) slots and 16 nibble(x) slots, of which eight of each are reserved for user expansion.

The other new bytes and nibbles expand information already stored in v1.2 userfiles. For example, under v1.2, a user's total calls were stored in byte(0) with a max of 255; in v1.3, that information is split between byte(1) and nibble(1). To keep from having to start the userfile from scratch, there is also a user.convert segment.

Unfortunately, the first-released msg.convert and user.convert were bug-ridden. Exterminated versions are now available on L&L's support BBS for registered v1.3 owners. We didn't have time to get a bug list in this edition.

V1.3, in upgrade form, comes without a file transfer segment. Taylor-Warren figured that most existing owners already use something other than the original file transfer section. Owners who purchase v1.3 new will receive a copy of Mike Golaszewski's Exfer program.

The new version's other enhancements include:

## LOGON.SEG

- A new way of taking new user information so users don't forget the questions before they can reply.

## MAIN.SEG

- Golaszewski's "on-the-fly" menus.

## MSG.SEG

- Anonymous and/or un-profanity-filtered posting.
- Keith Christian's Xmodem uploading and downloading of messages.

## SYSTEM.SEG

- Christian's on-line data2 editor. Allows changes to bulletin boards without going through config.system.

## X.UP, X.DN, X.DOS

- Rewritten by Scott Galbrath. (The rumours of Ymodem availability in v1.3 are false.)

## CLOCK DRIVERS

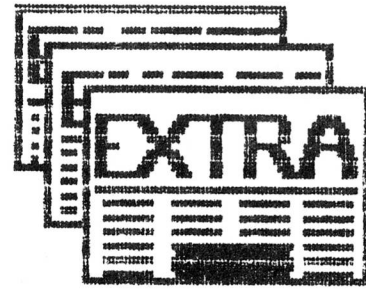
- Fix of the 1987 date problem in all clock types.
- D. Ellingson's driver for the SMT No-Slot Clock.

## Highlights:

Continued from page 5

maybe Gridlock Management is a way to use Appletalk to multi-port? Author Rick Crossley (#506) has been testing these systems on Europa, (713) 526-0714, with some success.

Crossley offers the following hints on randomization: 1) Always ask for a RND\$ after asking for a RANDOM, because the former re-seeds the generator. 2) Always use as much "room" as possible. Ex- ample, I want to simulate a 1d6: y\$=rnd\$:y=random(59)+1:y=y/10. This is MUCH more random than y=random(5)+1.



## THIS SPACE FOR RENT!

There was supposed to have been an advertisement here, but I didn't get the ad copy in time for the printing deadline. I thought it was more important to get this newsletter in the mail than to wait for an ad!

Do YOU have something that other GBBS sysops might want to buy? Want to show financial support for this newsletter above and beyond your subscription?

Ad rates are available on request.



Lance Taylor-Warren

## The official line on tech support

Earlier this year, a GBBS 'Pro' sysop from Connecticut called me to complain that GBBS wouldn't work on his brand new platinum Apple IIc. So I went to a friendly computer store, where I borrowed a platinum IIc and tinkered for four hours, only to find that GBBS won't work on the thing.

I'm still working on that problem: The configure program freezes up at the introductory screen. And while this is the kind of technical support question I hate to hear, it's also the kind of question I hope to answer.

Contrast that unfortunate would-be sysop with the guy who is running a perfectly good BBS. This guy "only" needs a three-hour explanation of how the "msg" files work, so he can write a "k-kool" mod.

I enjoy talking to everyone, but I can't help write your modifications, nor will I help fix errors in other people's mods. Those kinds of questions are the reason we have GBBS support boards. There are many sysops who are more than happy to help, if you ask. You may find that someone has already written or fixed the mod that's been driving you crazy for a week.

Keep in mind that technical support is a gift. That is not to say that I have any intention of discontinuing it; when I bought the rights to GBBS 'Pro', I also bought the responsibilities of technical support to owners. (For those who are not 'up' on GBBS gossip, I own the copyright to GBBS 'Pro.' Greg Schaefer, its author, and Micro Data Products are no longer affiliated with GBBS.)

I think v1.3 is an example of my commitment to technical support. Among the changes that YOU requested are rewritten X.UP, X.DN and X.DOS files and a driver for the SMT No-Slot Clock. I am also working with U.S. Robotics to configure cables for the 2400e and the new 9600 HST. These are the kinds of technical support I am happy to provide.

If you are having trouble with the software and can't correct them yourself, call the Technical Support voice line, 303-420-3156, Monday through Friday from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. Mountain time.

On another subject, several people have asked me about my feelings about pirated GBBS systems. Frankly,

Paul A. McGrath

## Cry of a sysop's neglected spouse

When I last went shopping for a wife, I was looking for a companion who combined beauty, intelligence, wit -- and, I hoped, a dash of bawdiness.

My wishes were granted on the first three, but Lady Fate played a cruel joke on the latter. Instead of bawdiness, I got baud-iness.

Yes, I was looking for a modern woman; instead I found a woman who writes mods. Instead of a woman with a competitive drive, I got one with a hard drive.

Being a man of the 20th Century, I was fully prepared to share my wife's time with her job, children and dogs -- understandable encumbrances all. But, pray tell, how can you compete with a computer? Make that TWO computers.

I come home from the office after a hard day of defending democracy from communists and Republicans, and as I limp through the door, does my wife greet me to offer solace or a how-do-you-do? No, she's busy tap-tapping on the IIe in which breathes Chameleon BBS or rewriting GBBS 'Pro' mods on the IIc.

When my chosen one arises from her slumber in the morning, is it my wondrous countenance that she wishes to behold as her initiation to the morning? No, she would rather peer into the phosphorescent visage of an Apple monitor.

And where is my beloved spouse when my football or basketball champions achieve athletic glory or folly? Is she there by my side to share my triumph or tragedy? No, she is too entranced with updating her user list.

Here could be a typical conversation at the McGrath household on a given day:

Me: "Steph, dear, the paper is submitting my work to the Pulitzer committee. And our next-door neighbor was murdered last night. Also, the mortgage company is foreclosing on the house."

She: "That's nice, dear. Now come see this great new mod. . ."

I ask you, how much can a civilized man take? I have already conceded that I will seldom, if ever, receive the home-cooked meals or sparkling housekeeping that made ancient woman what she was in her day. These are things that I can live without.

See Lance, page 8

See Computer, page 8

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# Lance explains his policy on technical support

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they tick me off, so please let me know about them. I am talking to a lawyer to get something done about it. Therefore, if you bought GBBS but have not sent in a registration card, or if you bought GBBS before last November and never received a postcard announcing the new L&L support board, please send me your GBBS serial number, address, voice phone and BBS phone.

I am sure this newsletter will be successful, and I thank Stephanie for taking a load off my back, allowing me to pursue other areas. We are considering major changes in future versions of GBBS and would like to get everyone's opinions about the product. Drop us a line at L&L Productions, P.O. Box 5354, Arvada, CO 80005; 303-420-3568 (L&L BBS); or CompuServe number 76440,114.

Til Next time. . . may your BBS be busy and free of Leeches!

*Lance Taylor-Warren is president of L&L Productions, which owns the copyright for the GBBS 'Pro' bulletin board system.*

# Computer widower's lament goes public

Continued from page 7

But being replaced by a computer in my wife's affections would be a step too far. The day I catch her smooching the monitor is the day I walk out. I wonder if it's legal to serve divorce papers in Feedback?

Don't let me leave you with the impression that being married to a computer fanatic is devoid of positive aspects. My wife has gone to great lengths to include me in her addiction. She programmed an auto-logon for me and even let me play Spy Hunter. Once.

But despite her foibles with bits and bytes, my wife is still numero uno with me. And I don't mind letting the microchips fall where they may, because I have the feeling that I still rank first in her heart of hearts. Love conquers all, as they say.

Unless the board crashes. . .

•••••

*Paul McGrath has been a newspaper journalist for 10 years and is now working for the Houston Chronicle. He is the (sometime-) husband of Chameleon sysop Stephanie McGrath.*

Guest columnists may write up to 4K about any GBBS 'Pro'-related topic. Intelligent discussion of the product's faults (as well as praise for its strengths) is encouraged. Send columns in e-mail to L&L user #5 or by U.S. Mail to Chameleon Publishing, P.O. Box 671521, Houston, TX 77267-1521.

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