

GBBS Pro News

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Multiporting: your checkbook, please

By Joe Abernathy
Contributing writer

We discussed last month the basics for a two-line system: two computers, two phone lines, a multi-user hard drive, and software modifications to protect against data overwrite.

Before we continue, the cautionary note. The minimum monetary investment for multiporting is several hundred dollars over what you now have invested, plus the monthly cost of two or more telephone lines. To do it in top style, you'll spend even more.

The good part is that you'll enjoy your board more than ever when it's multiline, and you won't have to feel guilty about playing Silent Service all day on the weekends! Even making the changeover itself is a rewarding end.

You're exploring what is basically new territory, so keep your guard up from the start. Do a two-line system in the beginning; later, if you want more, it's only a matter of a few minutes to add another line. Also, purchase reconditioned equipment. All you're going to use it for is running a BBS, and you can pull your No. 1 machine offline whenever you want it for personal use.

If your multiuser hard drive is a Corvus, your second machine can be an Apple II+. If you are using a SCSI drive, it should be an Apple IIe or IIgs. Presumably, but not automatically, a IIe clone would work. Incidentally, both machines must be of the Apple II series. Although a Macintosh will share a network with a II-series machine, both CPUs must be able to run the GBBS Pro program files.

So, to get your equipment together: Two IIe CPUs, one monitor, a multi-user hard drive, two hard drive interface

cards, two phone lines and two modems.

Recommended equipment includes a second monitor and a second printer interface card, along with a printer dual-line switcher. Unless you're running two IIgs systems, you'll want to put clocks in both machines.

Next, set up your machines with correct read access to the hard drive. On a Scuzzy (SCSI) drive, grant full read/write access to both CPUs. With Corvus, create two users with equal read/write access.

To multiport successfully, your drive must be broken down into small file areas. Program files go on a: volume. Text files on b: volume. Etc. That's the way it is with all Pro systems, but lots of folks take the lazy way out and make all their (a: through l:) volumes the same ProDOS volume. That won't work. In fact, you need to use the ACOS (1-99) provisions for your upload/download area: Apple text files on I1:, Apple utilities on I3:, etc., for example.

The reason for all this is that you're only going to let users write to volumes one at a time. If two users are both trying to upload to the same volume, somebody is going to get the short end of the stick.

To actually implement your multiporting, you must protect against one thing: overwrites. The CPUs will share the GBBS Pro files happily, but without overwrite protection, everything that is written to the drive will get trashed: mail, message bases, user list, data files, uploads, even your own all-powerful sysop password (listen to the voice of experience).

Developing an original overwrite protection scheme is

See Multi-port, page 8

Vendors: where to get the hardware you need

The best place to start looking for specific equipment is to ask people who are already multi-porting. The list last month is a good place to start. (Please note, however, that Steve Ragsdale's BBS number was incorrect last month; see the Highlights section for the correct phone number.)

After that, also realize that a great number of GBBS sysops are also hardware and software dealers. Some of them are more obvious than others

in their salesmanship, but all are just about guaranteed to give you a good deal, because otherwise it's easy enough to badmouth them to other sysops.

For example, First Word Software, which has lent more financial support to this newsletter than any other advertiser, sells the GMS overwrite protection scheme and CMS hard drives.

GBBS 'Pro' copyright owner L&L Productions also sells the CMS

drives, as do a number of other sysops.

The best place to look for CPUs is the used equipment market, which usually manages to carry reasonably acceptable-quality equipment at prices that can be hard to beat.

Other than that, mail order is generally going to be cheaper than the local computer store, if you can wait for the mail delay. Otherwise, you MIGHT get better support closer to home. But not necessarily....

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Highlights:

Continued from page 3

wasn't the cause of the crash.

ProChess 1.35: James Stanford (#69) posted both here and L&L about finding this fun program that he had assumed was public domain but now understands is copyrighted to someone named Andy Anderson. Frank McGee (#348) said he thinks it is public domain. Does anyone know this mysterious author???

Mods: Doug Dranzow (#127) wants to know why he's losing the last six characters of his input when he uses the following code:

```
set li$=edit(5)+1100,250
input @2 i$
li$=left$((i$+chr$(32,250)),250)
print li$
```

He also wonders why the following code causes a Type mismatch error:

```
if instr(chr$(x+65),cd$) then....
```

On question number two, the solution is to define (x+65) as a variable first, but WHY?

Now.... for those who are curious and enjoy PEEKing, POKEing and CALLing, here's a couple of interesting calls posted by Jon Davidson (#11):

1) CALL -32346 = CTRL-V (go into and out of sysop mode from remote!)

2) CALL -32358 = chat mode (why would you do this? you cannot exit with another call!

On the subject of calls (and see also the pokes above....) how about somebody write a column or a main story about ML programming in and around GBBS?

Spur: Joe E. Powell (#80) was back to it again, in spite of a hard-drive crash that ate all of his wonderful mods. Eek! But he wrote and Steve Schneider (#97) edited a scatter mod to toss those "base stickers" back into the fray.

Casino: Doug Granzow (#127) has written a mod to DRAW.SEG that tells a player what they have after each hand. His mod is written for Casino v2.0.

Europa: (713) 526-0714

Sysop Paul Hutmacher has his new SCSI drive online, and he hopes to be multiporting soon. Once he is, First Word Softwear hopes to be able to make available a Doubletalk CB simulator for GBBS, too!!

Paul Farber has been doing a lot of work with Match!, and reports that it is now running great guns on his v1.2 system, with the mail problems all ironed out. A September update will incorporate Farber's suggestions and will be available via download; \$5 for mail updates.

Commander in Chief, the new First Word game/simulation is online now with the task of writing its

There are rumours here, also, that the programmers are working on a new editor in the tradition of ECS: ProEdit Plus (yes, yet another product whose name starts with "Pro". Ha!). Features are rumoured to include a complete board appearance editor, user editor and file editor along with a batch of features.

Correspondence:

Many of the Pro News subscribers are in foreign countries and they subscribe specifically because they don't have a chance to log onto the major support boards. A few of them, and a few American sysops who also don't call the support boards, have written letters containing their questions and problems. I'll include their questions and comments in this section.

Dhahran Apple Club: Ken Burnell, vice-chairman of the Dhahran (Saudi Arabia) Apple Club, informs me that it was 15-year-old Jim Anderson of Princeton, N.J., and not Burnell who configured the club's multi-port Corvus Omninet system. Oops. Burnell says Anderson logged more than 200 hours after taking on the club as "an informal summer project."

Burnell also wrote:

"We are running Apple Super Serial cards and borrowed Hayes Smartmodem 1200s. We have tried to replace the Hayes' with compatibles such as the Smart Team, Mitsuba and other supposedly "100 percent compatible Hayes" 300/1200 baud modems, but they all have the same problem - the modems won't hang up when the user does! The users have to send a disconnect signal to kill the connection. GBBS Pro isn't the only software that has given us this problem. Our last BBS software exhibited the same problem. Now, everyone can't afford a pair of real Hayes', so they must be using something else successfully. How do they solve the "hang up" problem?

Burnell says the Club has its SSC switches all ON except bank 2, switch 6, which is OFF. In their Hayes they have all switches except #8 ON.

Burnell is also seeking a second Mountain Clock card, if anyone has one for sale.

Rooftop Hideaway: Steve Ragsdale, sysop of Rooftop Hideaway near Houston, says I goofed on his phone number last issue. His BBS phone number is (713) 452-0346. It is also PC Pursuitable. Please make a note of it.

But the reason I mention Steve here is that he called me with an interesting plea:

It seems he has had both ports (yes, this lucky dog is running multi-port) of his 300/1200/2400 baud (yes, he's also got 2400 on both ports) system running for a while, but

See Highlights, page 8

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Mods!

Trace mod!! by Stephanie A. McGrath
for Chameleon BBS, (713) 875-9868, 300/1200

The purpose of this mod is to allow chaining, or tracing of messages through a particular sub-board. If your BBS is anything like mine, the auto-replies don't necessarily follow in any particular order, and sometimes you want to just read through a whole chain (sometimes called a "thread") before going onto a new subject. This modification does just that. I borrowed some of the code from Steve Schneider's Direct Backscan mod (July Pro News), so if you used his, then some of this code might be redundant.

However, this is written for the v1.3 msg.seg, so v1.2 or earlier might have to watch the variables and the way they are stored at the top of each message.

Also, a warning. This code is LONG. If you haven't split your msg.seg into a msg.seg and a mail.seg, then you should NOT attempt to put this in your msg.seg. You will go over the 20K limit and get lots of errors.

On with the mod. Grab your msg.seg and we're off. Changes in the code are in boldface; existing code is in plain. I've tried to include enough "existing" lines to help you figure out where to put stuff. I've also tried to make sure that these "existing" lines are in the unmodified GBBS v1.3 code; my code is significantly different. Feel free to call me if you can't figure it out.

Documentation - for your users' sake.... - follows.

; Please note that I use flag(28) and flag(29) as markers for
; the tracing. You might have to change that if you're using
; those flags for something else.

cmd2

```
aa=0:ty$="" : tx$="" : xy=0 : flag(28)=0
```

cmd2a

```
if i$="P" then ti$="All users":sb$="" : d=0 : ki=mn :  
kj=0 : goto post
```

post2c

```
if (kl>0) and (kl<=msg(0)) kill #msg(kb):crunch :  
b=b-1 : if aa then aa=aa-1  
if flag(38) print #6,"Date -> "date$\ki,kj : else print  
#6,"Date -> "date$ "time$\ki,kj
```

jmp3

```
if (a>0) and (a<=ab) pop:bb=a : aa=0 : tx$="" : ty$="" :  
flag(28)=0 : goto start
```

qs2

```
if i$="Y" sb$="" : ti$="" : flag(28)=0 : kj=0 : tn=0 : ki=mn :  
print : gosub post
```

qs3

```
bb=bb+1 : aa=0 : tx$="" : ty$="" : flag(28)=0 : if bb>ab goto qs4
```

show

```
if instr(right$("00000"+str$(msg(a)),5),ty$) then return
```

showa

```
d=0 : if a<1 then a=1
```

show1

```
if a<1 then a=1 : print "\"First message.\"\  
rn=0 : ki=0 : xy=0  
input #msg(a),sb$\tn,ti$\d,fr$\w$\rn,kj : ki=msg(a) :  
setint(2)
```

show1a

```
print #x,w$ ;  
if (kj=1) and (not flag(28)) then print "\" **Replies**" : if  
flag(29) then aa=a : flag(28)=1  
print \:copy #6,#x  
x=0 : setint("")  
if (key(2)) and (flag(28)) then y=a : goto bcmd3 : else if  
key(2) return
```

show2

```
if i$="+" return  
if flag(28) print "\"Chaining ON) " : ; else if aa print \  
if aa print "[C] will return you to message #"aa ;  
print "\"< = Trace backward, > = Chain forward" ;  
if aa or flag(28) then print ", C)lear, H)alt chain"  
get i$ : print
```

show2a

```
if (i$="N" or i$=chr$(13)) and (flag(28)) then y=a : goto  
bcmd3  
if i$="H" print "\"Halting chain NOW." : aa=a : goto  
bcmd3b  
if i$="<" then y=a : goto bcmd  
if i$=">" then y=a : aa=a : flag(28)=1 : tx$=sright$(  
"00000"+tr$(msg(a)),5) "+" : goto bcmd3  
if i$="C" print "\"Resetting...." : \: goto bcmd3b  
gosub kill.3 : a=a-1 : if aa then aa=aa-(a<aa) : return
```

show4

```
edit(0) : input #msg(a),a$\b,b$\c,c$\d$\d,e  
x=msg(a) : kill #msg(a) : print  
#msg(a),a$\b,b$\c,c$\d$\d,e
```

show5

```
if left$(i$,1)="Y" goto show6  
input #msg(a),sb$\tn,ti$\d,fr$\w$\rn,kj : edit(0) : copy  
#6,#8  
if not kj then x=msg(a) : kill #msg(a)  
if not kj kj=1 : print #msg(a),sb$\tn,ti$\d,fr$\w$\rn,kj :  
copy #8,#6 : msg(a)=x : x=0 : update  
kj=0 : print \  

```

show5a

```
b=a : gosub post : a=b : goto show2  
if xy=1 then a=aa : aa=0 : return
```

anony

```
input #msg(a),sb$\tn,ti$\d,fr$\w$\rn,kj : setint(2)
```

dn.xmdm

```
input #msg(a),sb$\b,b$\c,c$\w$\rn,kj : setint(2)
```

; now let's start the serious new stuff.

```
bcmd
i$=""
if ((ki=rn) or (rn=0)) and (aa=0) then aa=a
if (ki=rn) or (rn=0) print "\"First link. Chain forward? ";
get i$:print \"if i$<>"Y" goto show2
if i$="Y" then flag(28)=1:tx$=right$("00000"+
str$(msg(a),5)+" ":goto bcmd3
print "\"Searching backward....\""
```

; trace backward

```
bcmd1
y=y-1:if y=0 print "\"Prior message scrolled off, was
killed or was moved.":goto show2
input #msg(y),b,t$,xx:kg=msg(y)
if kg=r goto bcmd2
goto bcmd1
```

; if we're seeking forward, load the current message number
into:
; ty\$ = the messages we've already read
; tx\$ = the messages to which we're seeking replies

```
bcmd2
if not aa then aa=a
f$=right$("00000"+str$(msg(a),5)
if (flag(28)) and (not instr(f$,ty$)) then ty$=ty$+f$+" "
if (flag(28)) and (not instr(f$,tx$)) then tx$=tx$+f$+" "
```

; if those strings near their limit of 255 characters, lop 'em.

```
if len(ty$)>240 then i$=mid$(ty$,7):ty$=i$
if len(tx$)>240 then i$=mid$(tx$,7):tx$=i$
a=y
goto show1
```

; follow the chain forward, seeking replies

```
bcmd3
f$=right$("00000"+str$(msg(a),5)
if not instr(f$,tx$) then tx$=tx$+f$+" "
bcmd3a
y=y+1
if kl>msg(0) then x1=1:else x1=0
if y>msg(0) print "\"End of replies. Add yours? [Y,N,R] ";
xy=0:get i$:print \"
if (y>msg(0)) and (i$<>"Y") then xy=(i$<>"R"):
goto bcmd3b
if y>msg(0) then xy=1:gosub bcmd3b:aa=a+x1:goto show5
input #msg(y),sb$\tn,ti$\d,fr$\w$\xx,kj
y1=1
```

```
bcmd3a1
kg=val(mid$(tx$,y1,5))
if xx=kg goto bcmd2
y1=y1+6:if y1<len(tx$) goto bcmd3a1
goto bcmd3a
```

; if you've reached the end of the chain, clear the trace

; string -- but NOT the "already read" string!! -- and go
; back to where you started.

```
bcmd3b
f$=right$("00000"+str$(msg(a),5)
if aa then a=aa:aa=0
tx$=""
if (flag(28)) and (not instr(f$,ty$)) then ty$=ty$+f$+" "
flag(28)=0
if xy=1 return
goto show1
```

Ok. Now add the following explanations to your "hlp.
msg" file, and alert you users to its existence.

[C] [C]lear allows a user to quit an existing trace or chain
and go directly back to where he/she was when he first
started chaining.

[H] [H]alt stops the chain at the current message, rather
than returning the user to where he/she started the chain.

[N] (Revised) [N] ext or carriage return takes you to the
next message during a sequential scan or to the next link of
the chain during a FORWARD chain -- that is, when the
(Chaining ON) message is at the bottom of a message.

[<] T)race takes you to the message to which the current
message is a reply. Is that about as clear as mud? This
command is best used when you come to a message where
some user says, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" and you want to know
what in the world they're agreeing to do. To continue
further back in the chain, continue to hit "<"; "N"ext will
not work in a backward search.

[<] C)hain forward sets the first link of the reply chain
at the current message. First, it seeks replies to the current
message.

Then if you hit "N", it chains forward seeking replies to
both the first message AND its reply. However, if you hit
>" again, it seeks only replies to the second message, thus
narrowing the search.

At the end of the reply chain, it will tell you, "End of
replies, add yours?" to which you may respond Y)es, you
want to reply to the first message of that chain; N)0, you
don't want to post anything; or R)eread, you want to re-read
the first message of the chain.

One last item: In the code below show1a, there is a
reference to flag(29). On my BBS, a user can set flag(29) if
he/she wants to ALWAYS scan via message threads,
rather than typical GBBS-style. This has mostly been
used by the users who are familiar and comfortable with
TBBS-type systems. So you might want to add an option
where your users can choose auto-chaining.

Modems !!!

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Highlights:

L&L: (303) 420-3568

The Apple Pack:
(703) 370-4223

BIG NEWS!!! Lance has been testing ProLink on one of his message bases. He's been transferring between L&L and Ron Gabbert's Apple Pack for a couple of weeks now, working out a few bugs here and there along the way. You still can't A)uto-reply privately to messages on the "linked" sub-board, but it sure looks swell to call L&L and see messages with "[Source: The Apple Pack]" at the bottom.... VERY nice.

Lance says he plans to add other BBSes as he gets other bugs worked out of the system. I'll let you know how that progresses.

Because this section now includes messages from both L&L and TAP, the numbers in parentheses are user numbers on L&L BBS, unless otherwise noted. Some won't have user numbers, because I don't know the TAP user numbers off the top of my head....

Other networking: Eddie Seaholtz (#66) and Parik Rao (#300) are kind of working together on a networking option. Seaholtz has gotten far enough to be seeking other people to try it out with, he says. He'd like to set up an Apple sub-board, at least, that will transfer messages. He can be reached at his board, Telen-Quest, (417) 882-5108, 3/12/2400.

Mods: Bob Lindabury (#268) has found a problem in the Backup mod that GBBS Pro News ran last month. After running a poke to change his Apple IIgs speed, something overwrote his data file with zeros, then crashed. When logon.seg booted up and saw the zeros, it thought it was time to backup... and promptly overwrote the backup data file with all zeros in it, too. He suggests that you backup to a different drive spec every day: "a1: on Monday, a2: on Tuesday," etc., so you don't end up with trashed backups AND originals.

Speaking of drive specifier, if you have a problem with yours, you might take a look at those trailing slashes. Keith Christian says that in your configured storage, you must start each pathname with a slash, but you shouldn't END with one.

Scott Bloom posted the following list of some of the GBBS runtime control

codes:

CTRL-A (Chat)	\$13cb	5067
CTRL-V (Exec)	\$13c3	5059
CTRL-R (40c top)	\$13cf	5071
CTRL-K (pw show)	\$13d3	5075
CTRL-P (prt screen)	\$13d7	5079
CTRL-O (trace)	\$13db	5083
CTRL-L (logoff)	\$13c7	5063

To use them, poke the low ascii value of the key you want to replace. For example, if you want to change the chat key to CTRL-C (Ascii 3), you POKE 5063,3.

On the subject of CTRL-O, Paul Duckenfield is having some trouble getting the trace mode to work with his Videx card. Others, too, complain about the inability to trace on the II+. Can anybody help?

Richard Scheffrin (#304) says he has a "better" clock file to show time and date in a more human fashion. He has it online at 303-690-0914, The Back Door BBS, 3/12/2400. He also asks the question (as do several of us who have mucked up our clocks in this fashion....): why does mo\$=left\$ (date\$,2) trash date\$? I hope to have a column on that subject next month.

Speaking of time, Steve Schneider (#182) wonders why the idle.time mod trashes his time\$ when he runs SPUR. He says he never had any problem with idle.time until he tried to run it with SPUR.

And if you can stand one last question about time.... I just wonder (out of curiosity) whether anyone has ever come up with a better no-clock timer than the original one? I know there are new clocks configuration files out there, (including one that will notice the IIgs clock!), but has anything ever been done for the (few?) sysops out there who don't have a clock on the system? I didn't know how bad it was until I had to use a clockless IIc for a while when my IIe was in the shop. Yecch!

Bruce Kahn (#13) wonders if there's any way to imbed control characters in a msg or mail file.

And David Bruner (#289) wonders if anyone has yet written a "Softmail" segment. It would allow users to trade software by xmodem in e-mail. Any ideas?

On the subject of mail, Larry Longo says the Fisherman's Wharf (201) 560-8020 and the Graphics Dump (201) 469-0049, are both using the mail

reciept mod, written by Bob Lindabury.

SuperTac: Ryan Malone (TAP #316) says SuperTac v2.2 will have batch ymodem up- and downloading, newscan by dates, pack determination and search by master directory.

Games: Chet Day (#7) uploaded to The Apple Pack, a packed file entitled GO.AFTER.HALO, which is an all-text adventure in the public domain from Shem the Penman Software. He also said to let everyone know that questions and inquiries about Shem the Penman Software should be sent to P.O. Box 9074, Metairie, LA 70005.

Keith Borocz (#196) plans to release a game for GBBS Pro called "Conquest," that he hopes will rival P+'s "Land of SPUR." He was seeking sysops to help beta-test last month, and he was hoping to find a support BBS for his game in the 513 area code by early September. As of Aug. 31, he was about 75 percent completed, and beta-testing was going well.

Steve Goodspeed (#233) is considering a golfing simulator for Pro. He includes the following basic outline: Golf.seg: instructions, member list, weather forecast/greens conditions, lessons, news. Golf.sysop: members, set weather, reset files. He plans to have a golf shop where users can purchase clubs or balls or whatever. He hasn't started the actual code yet, so leave him some ideas or code in e-mail (or send them to me by U.S. Postal mail and I'll see that he hears about 'em!)

Peripherals Plus:

(214) 424-2001

Jan has rewritten EFTS, adding Ymodem downloading, and he hopes to have Ymodem uploading soon. Included in the upgrade are a file count option, "packing notes," enable/disable credit system, and separate public and sysop-only activity logs.

Caution!: In mid- to late August, Jan was beaming with pride about a CACHE program he used to put his BBS in /ram. However, the program late destroyed his hard drive catalog, and he had to completely reformat the drive. He says it would be best to stay away from using that program, until someone can prove to him that it

Multiporting: a good programmer can write the code

Continued from page 1

not beyond the abilities of a good programmer. It WILL take time. Grid Management System, an overwrite protection software product, is the protection scheme developed over several months by the sysops of Europa, when that BBS went multiport. GMS was written in 15 minutes; the months of development were spent working out glitches and in apple-polishing.

To do your own, go through your program code. Any place you see a write or update, let that serve as a warning that an overwrite could occur there.

Once this goal has been accomplished, you can write a simple chat routine by assigning port ID variables and writing a message-passing modult. Or go full guns, for a roundtable chat feature.

There are hundreds of games out for GBBS 'Pro,' and many of them just scream for player-to-player interaction. Nobody said you have to call CompuServe to play interactive games with somebody on the other side of the continent!

The moral is that by going multiport, you are taking a step into the future. Expect some suspense, headaches and problems that demand solving. You'll have fun and become a better programmer. And we hope you'll contribute -- in the public domain -- to the growth of the fastest-growing area of the personal computing era: communications.

••••

Joe Abernathy is a copy editor at the Houston Chronicle and co-owner of First Word software, developer of the GMS II overwrite protection scheme.

Highlights:

Continued from page 7

in the last couple of weeks, he's been having trouble with an echo. That is, if a caller connected at 1200 or 2400 on port 2, it would print "User number (or NEW)" and then at the input prompt, echo "User number (or NEW)" back. So the user had no chance to enter his/her password.

He called me because I've been known to have the same problem. Only I think mine miraculously cured itself without me doing anything other than wiggling a few cables. I'm curious to hear from other sysops who have had this problem and have actually figured out what causes it and how to get rid of it, if it shows up again.

Discordia BBS: Sysop Greg Oberfield says to let everyone know that he is working on a new message segment for GBBS Pro. His segment would look just like the ProLine Conference system, "except with better commands." For more information, call Discordia at (609) 683-8813.

Editor's note:

If you know anyone who has never received Pro News, please pass along my address to them or their address to me. I want to reach all the sysops with this information. The more sysops we have in the "network," the better our systems can be.

Also, anyone whose address is wrong on this mailing, PLEASE let me know. My system crashed in July and I lost my subscriber list, among other things. I think I recovered it all from hardcopy, but I might have missed some address changes. Please let me know.

Advertisers: I plan a full GBBS mailout (about 700 sysops) for the November issue, so prepare an ad seeking those Christmas sales. Ad deadline -- paid, in advance with camera-ready copy -- is Nov. 1.

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