The Reflection

July 1991 Volume 2 Issue 3

The Chief Sez

So, what's in a "version".

The way we look at it, any minor change that we make to the system that is not absolutely necessary can be done by changing the existing release version and adding a letter to the version number. Thus it was when we released the "CMD Mods" and promoted version 1.2 to 1.2A.

We have now made a couple of other minor changes. We are adding support for the Swiftlink Cartridge. This involves some changes to several of the "ml" files, including the "ml 1.2", "ml.rs232", "++ 0", and so on. These files are going to be added to the release version of 1.2a and will be known as 1.2B. The only reason you would need the 1.2B would be if you had the Swiftlink Cartridge, in which case we will make the files available to you.

That covers the minor changes. Now the major ones. When IMAGE was born from 12.0 the IMAGE 1.0 was a major and total rewrite. When 1.1 was released it had some significant enhancements, 1.2 improved upon those enhancements and added several more. Still, compatibility with Pfiles was maintained from 1.0 to 1.2. We have been working on some more enhancements that would have continued compatibility with existing Pfiles and thus would have been version 1.3. We have changed our plans.

As many of you now know from logging on to the support boards we are working on a TOTAL rewrite of the entire program. The changes are very significant and will become more and more obvious as we proceed. For now the changes from the users point of view do not appear to be that significant, from the SYSOPs side they are MAJOR.

At this time most functions of the board are configurable ON-LINE. As we proceed we will be adding additional features that can be configured online and will be changing many of the existing features to a menu driven environment. People are not restricted and forced to use the cursor menus however, they are optional as well.

We also plan to have a total rewrite on the manual to accompany the new version so many of the

problems due to lack of adequate documentation will be gone.

All in all, we are very excited about the new version and feel that you will be well satisfied with it when we finish.

On another subject, last month we printed a partial list of the registered IMAGE boards. Since that time we have had several people contact us to say that their board was not on the list. We will add them for the next update. What we would like to do is to delete a lot of the boards that are no longer active and we need your help for that. We'd like for someone in each area code to call the boards in their area and let us kow of any that are no longer active.

With your help the registered boards list can be a meaningful list of IMAGE boards.

-*R*-

The South West Regional Report

By: Larry Hedman (X-TEC)
The Southwest Connection

It's been quite awhile since I've written for *The Reflection*. I think my "Easy Sigs" article (Feb 90) was the last time.

One of the reasons I'm writing is because we've relocated (Commodore Image BBS) from Adak Alaska to San Diego California, well Imperial Beach to be more specific.

I didn't get many calls from IMAGE sysops while I was in Alaska but there were a few so I guess this article will be one good way to publish CI's new phone number.

One nice thing about moving to the San Diego area is that there are a LOT of IMAGE boards down here, not to mention a greater number of Commodore callers. I've already met two IMAGE sysops here face-to-face and about fifteen or so others on the BBS circuits. As always the IMAGE sysops here are a friendly bunch and full of questions.

There is no local IMAGE sysop organization here that I know of but with all the interest I think it will be easy to get one started and I'm working on that at this time. Hopefully with enough interest we might be able to get a local group going here like SOSA and AISA did in their areas. My intentions are to be a regular writer for *The Reflection* but no promises. I do work full time as a Master Chief in the Navy which consumes most of my time. But if possible I would be more than happy to write a monthly column.

When I told Fred that I was going to begin writing for *The Reflection* he suggested that I tell a little about the history of my board. OK well here goes.

Commodore Image BBS was born in May 1988 on a tiny island in the Alaskan Aleutian Islands chain called Adak. If you're not from Alaska or if you don't know anything about the US Navy Adak is a strategic military site very near Russia where the Navy has an air station. The entire population of 5000 is made up of military personnel, their families, and persons who

work for the government. Adak has no stores, no trees, cold weather and a LOT of wind! Navy personnel stationed there are considered to be on isolated duty.

Needless to say there were not many outdoor activities so many living on Adak enjoyed the indoor hobby of computing. In the beginning Commodore Image was running C-Net 12.0 on a Commodore 64 and two 1541 disk drives. It was called The Commodore Perspective at that time and was one of only three BBS' on the island. Of the other two boards one was an Apple system and the other a C-128 running an 80-column BBS program which I can't remember the name of. The BBS was a big attraction in Adak and I remember marveling at the large number of Commodore 64 users logging on. Having received over 500 calls in just the first month of operation I decided it was time to upgrade the system a bit so in June I bought my first two 1581 drives.

"Telecommunications is one exciting way to meet lots of people"

Telecommunications is one exciting way of meeting LOTS of new people who enjoy computing. It wasn't long before discussion on the message basses of the three Adak BBS' led to the idea of forming a computer users group. Taking the lead from our users we three sysops began having planning meetings about starting up a group which we did a month later and called it the Adak Computer Users Group. (original, eh?) And of course how can you spread the word about a new users group forming without posting messages on the BBS and circulating a flyer The flyer was a one-page notice called The Adak BBS Network News which announced the first users group meeting and promoted the three BBS'. It eventually emerged into a multi-page laser-printed newsletter exchanged with dozens of other user groups around the world.

Over the next few months CI added more users and more equipment. By October of '88 the C-Net system was running on four 1581 drives and had received 2354 calls. It was in September that I learned about the split between Don Gladden and Perspective Software. Within a month I received mail from both New Image and Perspective announcing their new software packages New Image 1.0 and DS-2 respectively. Both companies made very reasonable offers to registered C-Net owners for the purchase of the new programs; $7.95 comes to mind. With such a deal I ordered both! Needless to say I found the IMAGE package was the better of the two with DS-2 riddled with bugs I couldn't even get my 12.0 system to convert. Converting to IMAGE 1.0 however was a snap! No problems encountered. By October of '88 New Image 1.0 was up and running in full swing.

It was about November of that year that I met Fred. I had logged onto Port Commodore a few times after converting to IMAGE and had

saved up enough money to buy a Lt. Kernal. Not knowing where to order one from I called the voice tech-support line included in my IMAGE documentation to ask the expert. Fred steered me in the right direction and as an aside suggested that I might like to change the name of my board to Commodore Image now that I was running IMAGE software. No sooner said than done! The Lt. Kernal arrived, the changes were made, and lo and behold....Commodore Image! (Thanks for the suggestion Fred)

Between December of '88 and January of '91 Commodore Image went through several upgrades up in good old Adak. From 1.1 to 1.2 to Turbo/Rels every software upgrade and P-file disk enhanced the look of the IMAGE system and drew "ooohs" and "aaahs" from CI's callers. Adding the Xetec multiplexer and a 2nd C-64 seemed the only thing to do since the board was ALWAYS busy and I needed the time to develop programs mods and perform BBS maintenance. Two Supra 2400 modems were also a must since I was spending small fortunes on modem calls off-island.

I wrote a few IMAGE plus files and mods during the time including "Easy Sigs", "Bonus Credits" and "IMAGE Newswriter". I also wrote an extensive database program as an IMAGE plus file to hold information about our User Group members which any member could use to look up phone numbers equipment types mailing addresses etc. by calling the BBS and getting the information. There was even an option for our user group secretary which printed out the mailing labels for our circulars and newsletters over the modem.

Becoming a NISSA member was easy and the association made CI a NISSA SSB. Even though I was located in the frozen North there were still a few IMAGE sysops making the long-distance call for assistance. Through the ever-present echo-delay of the satellite telephone system and via IMAGE conferences on Q-Link I came to know most of the major players in IMAGE and NISSA.

My Navy tour in Adak ended in February '91. New orders sent me to a three-year tour at Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego. I've been living in Imperial Beach since March this year and, after waiting several months for my computers to arrive from Adak, Com

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modore Image is now up and running full swing. Oh yes what would a BBS be without a few upgrades from time to time We are now running Image 1.2A have joined the network as CIB Net-Node 67 and have added a CMD 200 meg hard drive to join the Lt.Kernal 40 megger. And last but not least we've added a co-sysop KINGS KID my Significant Other.

X-TEC
Commodore Image
(619-429-8192)
IMAGE Net Node 67 @ CIB

-R-

Your Turn

By: Karen Leary ENCHANTRESS)

I was impressed by a user who posted that he was, unfortunately, not running IMAGE because he didn't have the money, and it was too hard to pirate. Upon reflection, I realized that IMAGE has done what multimillion dollar companies with elaborate copy protection could not. And the program has parts in basic ALLOWING changes. It is novel and unique. And it's working.

There is a loyalty among IMAGE owners that makes them take pride in their ownership of IMAGE. I am sure if we could bottle that feeling, the United States would be on the right track again.

IMAGE owners not only pay for equipment and software, they operate systems at a total loss, knowing they will never get any compensation. Or do they?

Who can put a price on the feeling one gets as he helps someone solve a problem? Especially when the person helping had that same problem in the past. It is a good feeling to know you are helping someone and that there are no ulterior motives involved in that help. It's unconditional help. People are so willing to give it that the concept has grown to include a network and a support group.

In the network, help can be brought all over the country. Instead of passing help down the line, one person can ask a question, and it can be answered and hundreds of people all over the country can benefit from the answer. Giving knowledge to everyone can only be of benefit in the future. It gives everyone a bigger base of resources to draw from. Just remembering that an answer was in a particular sub allows them to go back to it and get the answer. I think IMAGE has done what most companies pay lip service to. They have given buyers real support for their systems. If you think this is not so super, try calling Commodore or your phone company and compare services.

Another consideration is NISSA. It is an organization devoted to bringing quality programs and good information to every IMAGE owner who needs it. I think people need to feel that they are important and that their questions are valid.

When I started BBSing, the SysOps took pride in belittling the less knowing users. That is the most important reason the Enchanted Forest went up. We had little exposure to C-net, but we knew that we wanted new modemers to get help. The more informed a user is,

the more the user can contribute to your board. Our attraction to IMAGE was mainly because they were trying to further the idea by saying the more informed the BBS owner, the better our company will be.

I am proud to be a part of the IMAGE dream and am privileged to watch it grow. I hope we all can continue to help people and to think about the impact help and information has given us through IMAGE.

-R-

Relative files revisited

A little over a year ago we ran an article on relative files. Since then we've had a lot of questions about them so we thought we'd run it again.

There really should not be the 'air of mystery' surrounding these files, they are not really that complicated. The main difference with relative files is that the data is stored in a specific location and can be read from, or written to, directly. With other data storage methods (program files, sequential files, or user files) the data is simply stored on the disk in the next available slot in sequence and must be retrieved sequentially, just as it was written.

A relative file stores all data in individual "records". Each "record" can contain many different "fields" or bits of separate data that is related to that "record". For the most part it is not terribly important to remember the various terms, suffice it to say that the data is stored in records and that the records can be individually addressed. It is possible, under certain circumstances, to address any individual FIELD within any RECORD in a relative file, but we don't do it in IMAGE. There are some very, very powerful tools available for working with relative files built into IMAGE and those are the ones we will use here.

In most cases it is easiest to demonstrate by example, so we are going to write a short pfile while exploring the relative files. Assume, for the sake of argument, that you wish to restart your BAR STATS. The information for the bar stats is contained in the relative file, "e.stats". To restart your bar stats you could simply scratch the file "e.stats" from your drive, then copy the "e.stats" from your master disk, that would spoil our fun. Instead, we will now write a pfile that will create a NEW "e.stats" file so you don't have to copy the one from the master disk. It would be very simple to just have the pfile zero all the stats, but that, too, would not serve our purpose. We'll just create the new file and write zeros to all 30 records.

To start we would first want to find out if a file existed. This is done with the standard IMAGE file open routine at line 1011 and the error channel is tested. The routine at line 1012 is automatically called every time a file is opened, so we need only check the error condition. We might do some printing to the screen and then have a line 10 that

looks like this:

```
10 a$="e.stats":dr=3:gosub1011:
ife%then:&"No file, create? ":
gosub1902:ifa=.then1812
12 &"Creating..."
```

Now we are ready to create a relative file. But HOW? First it must be determined how many BYTES we want in each record. That would include ALL fields and MUST include a carriage return on EACH field. Just as an example, the "u.config" file contains a record for each USER, and each record contains 24 FIELDS with 254 total bytes allocated. The "e.stats" file contains 30 RECORDS, each record is made up of ONE field and each record is set for 10 BYTES, that is big enough for a 9 digit number plus a carriage return. So, to create our "e.stats" we want it to contain 10 bytes per record.

```
14 a$="e.stats,1,"+chr$(10):
dr=3:gosub1011:ife%then:
&"Error":goto1812
```

If it is created correctly then no error will be generated and we will now fall through to the next line. Now we have our file, we can now READ or WRITE to the file, it is OPEN for either. Since it has no records yet we better not read any, but we CAN write some. We know we will need 30 of them so let's just write a zero to all 30.

```
16 forx=1to30:gosub1001:
print#2,0:next
```

And now we are finished so we can close the file.

```
18 close2:&"[F6][F6]Created":
goto1812
999 rem
```

The added REM statement prevents the file from locking up when run.

Now, that wasn't so hard, was it? But WHAT did we do? To create a relative file it is opened with the ",1," syntax, then the chr$(xx) tells how many BYTES it is to contain. It is important to remember to include all data and carriage returns when figuring the size of your file.

The other very, very important step that we've kind of skated over is positioning to the record you want to read or write. The sheer simplicity of it is rather a work of art by Don and Ray. It is only necessary to set the variable "x" equal to the record number you want to address and use a GOSUB1001 and it is then properly positioned to read or write. You MUST, of course, take care of opening the proper file amd the error channel (channel 15) must be opened to use the routines at 1001 Normally the error channel remains open.

The other important consideration concerns writing the data to the file. In our example there is only one field in each record, so it is very simple. If, however, there were more than one field then each COMPLETE record has to be written at once. A common practice is to concatenate a string to contain all of the information. For example, assuming the information had been read from the "u.config" file into the first 24 elements of the tt$() array, as is done in "+.UD" and "+.VF" among other places, you might find a statement that says:

```
fori=1to24:w$=w$+tt$(i)+r$
:next
```

Which would simply put all

of the information into w$, with each field followed by a carriage return (r$). After that a gosub1001 and a print#2,w$ might be found.

It is not necessary to READ all of the information at once. There are several examples that can be found where only selective fields of "u.config" are read in, such as in the "+.UL" program or in the "+.weed" program. In those cases only that part of the information that needs to be acted upon is read in. If any were to be written out, however, all would have to be read in as it would all have to be re-written. It is possible, under some circumstances (though not in IMAGE) to write out specific FIELDS of data to a relative file.

About the only remaining feature of a relative file that we haven't covered would be creating one where you really did not know, nor care, how big it was going to get. In that case you simply create the relative file and write a record to it. If you have any idea of how many entries may ultimately be made you can write to the last record and it will be the right size. If, however, the size is totally unknown you can just write to what would be a good starting size. With the "u.config" when it is created record number 50 is written to, which creates an initial starting size of 50 records as it is assumed that all boards will have 50 users eventually. When the 50 user mark is reached the file will then expand as more are added. That is another feature of relative files, they expand to meet the need.

Lest anyone get too technical here, the actual "u.config" file contains five or six "zero" records on the end. Any time a new user fills in one of the "zero" accounts a new one is added so the "u.config" is always a bit larger than the actual number of users you have.

If we were just creating our file in the above example and not writing zeros to all records we could insure that it was the right size by using the following steps:

```
14 a$="e.stats,1,"+chr$(10):
dr=3:gosub1011
16 x=30:gosub1001:print#2,0:
close2:goto1812
999 rem
```

Which doesn't write to all the records, just record number 30, which is the last one. It is also fairly common to write one record BEYOND what will be the highest record number when known.

A brief re-cap:

Open or create the file (gosub1011) Note that the ERROR channel (15) is opened at the same time and is used to check for an error condition AND in the next step.

Position the pointer (x=position then gosub1001)

Read or Write to the file (input#2 or print#2)

Close the file (close2)

And remember that if you are writing the file all data must be written at once with one print# statement.

Relative files should go on the "Etcetera disk" (dr=3). Some games do put them on the "User disk" (dr=6) but it isn't recommended. They should NEVER be put on the "System disk" or "Pfile disk".

NISSA News

By: Al DeRosa (BUCKO)

Greetings once again from the land of NISSA.. This month we have some new things to let you folks know about.

We have a new REGIONAL BBS in the South East. The BBS is CODEX the number is 404-473-6173 sysop CREGAN some of you may have seen that handle he is the sysOp who wrote GREED 1.3. Also new to the REGIONAL BBS scene is Alternate Realities (Formerly Chicago) sysOp is MR CTA some of you may have seen that handle CTA has written many utilities and mod packs.. Bruce, Ron, Larry and myself would like to welcome them into the REGIONAL Support scene. The complete list of REGIONAL NISSA boards is:

North East - **Enchanted Forest**
Dr. Bob - 215-825-1136
South East - **CODEX**
Cregan - 404-473-6173
North West - **Alternate Realities**
Mr CTA - 206-848-3209
South West - **Crossroads**
RoadMaster - 714-944-8665

That is the complete list, if you need any of the latest files or some help with anything IMAGE or NISSA related give them a call before you call Fred (Fred can use some time off) and see what they can do to get you straightened out.

Up above I mentioned the name Larry,, Some of you are probably saying "who is the Larry character?" Well he is some "New Blood" in the administration of NISSA, Larry is Larry Hedman (X-Tec from Commodore Image BBS) some of you probably remember him as that crazy guy who calls all the way from Alaska who runs a BBS up there. Well Larry is now in the states and runs his BBS in San Diego and has been doing quite a bit for NISSA lately. He's in the process of starting some very good idea's (more on them in the coming months) and has been an asset to NISSA for quite some time.. Bruce Ron and I would like to welcome him to the full time duties of NISSA Administration.

As of this writing for anyone who is interested in becoming a NISSA member we now have an online application setup on my system (Wrong #][) Larry's system (Commodore Image) and Fred's system (Port Commodore). All applications will be forwarded to me until Bruce (Dr Moffett) gets his system back online. Anyone wishing to join NISSA can log on any one of those systems and hit NAP from the main prompt and answer the questions it asks and the info will be forwarded off to me to add to the NISSA DataBase.

We (The Administration) have been discussing the surveys we have been receiving back, and we are generally pleased as you all have been very honest with us, NISSA has it's bad points and we are trying to correct them, but we also have some very good points and we are going to try to expand on them. In the coming months we hope to institute some of the suggestions we

have received back on the surveys. I would like to thank everyone who replied already, by doing so you are helping to make this group of ours stronger and better then before.

Welp that should wrap this article up, if there is anything you members would like to see or maybe get started with NISSA we can be reached through NetMail at our systems on the IMAGE NetWork Or I can be reached on the NAIS Network at Alternate Realities or The Underworld BBS, Both of those boards numbers can be found in the NISSA Boards List.

By the time you receive this Newsletter it should be around the fourth of July We would like to wish you all a very safe and happy Fourth Of July.

Al DeRosa
EUCKO
-AR-

Some user comments from *The Time Warp*

What do you like about the IMAGE BBS? Dislike?

What do you like about The Time Warp? Dislike?

A. I think that an IMAGE run BBS is very good quality. I like the way the Sub-boards are set up, the U/D set-up is a little different but very good and the Mail system is excellent. I would like to see more on-line games in the PF files such as Guts and maybe a new Trivia section with different catagories each month. I think that overall I would rate this board a 10 due to all of the activity available to its users. That is my present assessment of this IMAGE run board.

A. IMAGE is a wonderful and relatively easy system to get around in. However there are two major downfalls. First the speed. While with the code and speed of the 64 itself it may not be possible to increase it certain things like SB and UD commands could be quicker (and I know the Kernal speeds things as it is!) Secondly while IMAGE has a fast many-option text editor there is one thing missing-visual mode in which cursor keys work! If all commands could be disabled and cursor keys enabled in some way it would be nice. As for this board my only protest is the (once-again) removal of game files. Yes I know the legal implications. However it would be appreciated by myself and (probably) others.

A. I agree with most of the last response. I like this board I always have. The expansion of this board took some getting used to but I think I've got it straight now. Keep up the good work.

A. I agree it's a great board though it seems that things go a little slow for me. What we need is a game like TRADEWARS if it's possible!

A. IMAGE is one of the better, if not the best, BBS program for the 64. If IMAGE would support ANSI or VT-10x terms you could get a visual editor with cursor key movement and such (such as the one in C-Net Amiga and Teleguard).

Ed note: There were more and they are all good comments.

-AR-

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