

# Customizing Model II TRSDOS

Five simple patches can help eliminate some of the unnecessary time-consuming steps of TRSDOS

by Joseph Katz

**W**henever I use TRSDOS 2.0a on my Model II, I feel a little as if I am paying a visit to a doddering old schoolteacher. Since I am a teacher myself I have nothing against the breed, but this particular specimen seems so far over the hill as to be paranoid, slow, and out of touch with the reality that a computer is for doing things.

Take, for example, what happens right after I turn on the computer, insert a TRSDOS disk into drive 0, and close the drive door. There is some thrashing around, then I am told that the computer is initializing and that it has 64 KB of memory. All of this is preliminary to a blinding display of the Tandy/Radio Shack logo, including a warning that I must not cheat by copying or reproducing the software (meaning, of course, TRSDOS itself).

I am not too troubled by the statement that the computer is "initializing"—whatever that means—because TRSDOS takes so long to do it that I take comfort in seeing anything at all to reassure me that something is going on. Nor am I much troubled by the notice that the computer has 64 KB of memory, although I think it is a little silly. After all, I know the darned thing has 64 KB RAM instead of 32 KB because I paid Radio Shack extra money for that memory.

What really bothers me is the logo and the warning. For one thing, they hurt my eyes. For another, they offend my sense of good design. Most of all, I do not like being warned against something I would not dream of doing. Anyway, who would want a copy of TRSDOS 2.0a but another Model II owner? And other Model II owners got TRSDOS the same way I did, as part of the price they paid for the computer. From a purely practical point of view, the logo and warning take time to display—time that I would prefer using to get down to business.

After the logo and warning display,



TRSDOS asks me for the date. I know there are applications for which that information is important, but it has no relevance to most of what I do with my computer. In fact the date is so rarely important to me that I sometimes don't know what it is. But TRSDOS will not let me skip the question. Nothing further will take place until I give it a date, so I usually make up a date and type it in. That accounts for my having many directory entries dated 07/04/1776, one date that comes easily to mind.

Then the darned thing asks me for the time! By this point I usually get the feeling that my computer has an important

appointment to keep, and that one day a message will appear on the screen saying something like "Geel! Is it that late already? Sorry, I have to catch a plane to Fort Worth. Gotta go now." Fortunately, TRSDOS will let me get away with not answering the time question; all I have to do is press the ENTER key.

All of this may seem silly to you, but there are at least two important points here.

The first, of course, is that these preliminaries in TRSDOS eat time. That waste of time may not be too great in an office environment where the computer is turned on at 9:00 am and not turned

1. LOGOKILL. This patch kills the Tandy/Radio Shack logo:  
PATCH SYSRES/SYS A = 24D3 F = 00 C = 3B
2. DATEKILL. This patch kills the date question:  
PATCH SYSRES/SYS A = 2367 F = 73 C = CA
3. TIMEKILL. This patch kills the time question:  
PATCH SYSRES/SYS A = 2390 F = 0A C = 39
4. FORMKILL. This patch kills the questions in the FORMS command:  
PATCH SYSTEM/SYS R = 43 B = 172 F = CD07 C = 1809  
PATCH SYSTEM/SYS R = 43 B = 225 F = CF20FB C = 000000  
PATCH SYSTEM/SYS R = 42 B = 231 F = CD0725 C = C3FB22
5. SPEEDUP. This patch changes the disk drive stepping rate from 20 mS to 12 mS:  
PATCH SYSRES/SYS A = 0CFB F = 1E C = 1D  
PATCH SYSRES/SYS A = 0D12 F = 1E C = 1D

#### Five patches for TRSDOS

off again until 5:00 pm. But it is a great waste of time in my situation where I work at the computer intermittently throughout the day, turning it on and off perhaps eight or nine times each day. Then the TRSDOS preliminaries become a truly annoying barrier.

The second important point is that the preliminaries in TRSDOS 2.0a prevent the creation of a true "turnkey" application—the kind in which one flips on the computer, pops in a disk, and im-

mediately is presented with the program. Just imagine being able to see VisiCalc appear as the first thing you see after a computer boots. If you have had a bright idea that requires spreadsheet manipulation, you could get right to it before your great "what if" fades from your mind. Or imagine Scripsit coming up that way; you could begin processing your mortal words into immortality before they died aborning. Perhaps just as important, imagine being able to start out playing that spanking new game you wrote in Basic without having TRSDOS's nattering spoil your mood.

All that becomes possible with a few patches that I have uncovered. There are five patches in all. The first three—which I have called LOGOKILL, DATEKILL, and TIMEKILL—take care of the problems discussed so far. Apply all three and you can use AUTO, BUILD, and DO, the TRSDOS utility commands, to create turnkey applications. The next two patches—FORMKILL and SPEEDUP—address two other things about TRSDOS 2.0a that bother me.

The philosophy behind TRSDOS 2.0a seems to be rooted in a belief that the kinds of people who buy the Model II start out inept and stay that way. Therefore, the reasoning seems to go, build in error traps that ask the user to verify every command and every interactive stage in every command. Contrast that with the attitude apparent in CP/M, where the presumption is that anyone capable of using a computer ought to take responsibility for knowing the commands. The CP/M operating system therefore is much faster to use than TRSDOS. It also is much more of an adventure because it does almost no checking to see if what you told the computer to do is what you really want done. TRSDOS's way is the better way for many people, but in some cases it leads to absurdity.

The FORMS command is an example. It has default values for printing, and one of them is based on the assumption that you will be printing most things on 11"-by-14" paper. So the default width in FORMS is 132 columns. When you want to print on 8-1/2"-by-11" paper, therefore, you must change that width to a maximum of 80 columns. You do that by issuing the following command: FORMS W-80. That in itself is not a problem. The problem occurs when FORMS then questions whether you want to change other default values also, and engages you in dialogue so cryptic that an occasional user of the command can be trapped in seemingly endless conversation about what should be a simple matter. FORMKILL does not kill the FORMS command; it does kill the questioning so you can make the changes you specify and get back to work.

SPEEDUP does what its name implies. This patch speeds up the stepping time in TRSDOS 2.0a so the disk head can move more quickly from track to track when reading or writing with floppy disks. Obviously, the faster the stepping time the better. SPEEDUP changes the stepping time from 20 mS to 12 mS, which is appreciably faster.

Think of the five patches as giving you information that you may or may not choose to use. And recognize that you must use the information responsibly and only when you know it will help you achieve some worthwhile goal.

LOGOKILL, for example, does prevent the Tandy/Radio Shack copyright notice from being displayed on the screen. It does not, however, remove the copyright notice from TRSDOS. Remember that Radio Shack has the right to charge a fee—and does—if you distribute the operating system with any software you write for it. Do not be deluded into thinking that suppressing the display of the copyright notice frees you of that obligation.

As another example, DATEKILL should not be used on disks containing applications software that depends on dates taken from your response to the date question. If the question is not there to be answered, the applications software will not get the information it needs. So do not use DATEKILL on disks that have software like General Ledger or any other parts of Radio Shack's accounting system. Be careful with Scripsit. It uses your answer to the date question for supplying the creation and revision dates of documents, as well as for allowing you to insert the current date into a letter using the code (D). If any of that is important to you, do not use DATEKILL.

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deciding whether or not to use TIMEKILL. If your application depends on your response to the time question at bootup, do not use TIMEKILL.

As far as FORMKILL is concerned, I have given it a great deal of thought, but have come up with no reason against using it on every disk in which I have to use the FORMS command. The questioning annoys me. You think about it and make your own decision.

SPEEDUP involves an entirely different kind of question: Can your floppy disk drives support the faster stepping time? You will have to experiment to find out. If your Model II has only one disk drive, the answer is "probably." Radio Shack uses a Shugart 801 R drive as drive 0, and can go much faster than the 12 mS produced by SPEEDUP. If your Model II has more than one disk drive, the answer is "maybe yes, maybe no." It depends mostly on the drives in your expansion unit. Mine are Shugart 801 R's that were put together for me by a local OEM (original equipment manufacturer), and they easily support the faster stepping time. When I use Pickles & Trout CP/M instead of TRSDOS, for example, I use a stepping time of 6 mS without any trouble. But when I tried my disks on the Model II at the local Computer Center, I found that the expansion unit there simply cannot read the disks. My suggestion is that you try SPEEDUP on a backup disk that contains nothing irreplaceable. Then try that disk on your system and see what happens. If the system works well at the faster stepping time, SPEEDUP should be useful to you. If not, forget about SPEEDUP.

In fact, that is my suggestion about all five patches: try them first on a backup disk containing nothing irreplaceable, then use them if they do something you need and keep them in reserve otherwise.

Whenever you patch, you must be careful and methodical. First—because the point is important I will say it once again—be sure to apply the patches to a backup disk and never to a disk that has anything irreplaceable on it. Second, never use direct input to do the patching. Use the BUILD command to create one batch file for each patch, then edit the files to make certain that each command line is letter perfect. (If you need to brush up on BUILD, consult pp. 74-76 or pp. 2/13-2/15 of the earlier *TRS-80 Model II Operation Manual*, the "owner's manual.") Third, and only after you are sure that the batch file is right, execute the patch with the DO command.

If you want to kill the logo, for instance, create the batch file by doing BUILD LOGOKILL. Then enter the command line and exit BUILD. You'll

have a file named LOGOKILL in the directory. To edit LOGOKILL simply do BUILD LOGOKILL again, proofread each line against the listing in this article, and re-enter the line if there is anything wrong in it. When it's correct and you are back at TRSDOS READY, just enter DO LOGOKILL. Sit back and wait for TRSDOS to tell you that the patch is complete. (Remember that batch files work on a line-by-line basis so you must

wait for the same number of "patch completes" as there are lines in the batch file.) When you are back at TRSDOS READY again, TRSDOS has been patched. After you have finished making all the patches you intend to make, reboot and enjoy your customized TRSDOS. ☐

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