Not Ok: A Requiem for GW-BASIC

By Mark Jones Lorenzo

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Is GW-BASIC dead?

Microsoft GW-BASIC greets you with a simple user prompt: Ok. An invitation to a world of possibility, the Ok prompt presents a blank canvas with which to code a masterpiece. But GW-BASIC, released over three decades ago, has sadly fallen into disuse, its decline greatly hastened once graphical user interfaces like Windows began to proliferate, leaving text-based MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System) programs to wither away. And that's just not ok.

In *Not Ok*, Mark Jones Lorenzo argues that GW-BASIC still has much to offer both the budding and experienced programmer. Packed with delicious type-in algorithmic recipes to stew, *Not Ok* is the last in a long line of mashup BASIC cookbooks that once transformed coding into a delectable romantic pursuit. With the recipes will come the inspiration to cook up your own algorithms, in turn sharpening your programming chops while keeping GW-BASIC fresh and alive.

But *Not Ok* is not meant to be an exhaustive tour through GW-BASIC history or commands or statements or functions, nor is it intended as some kind of learn-GW-BASIC-in-ten-easy-steps tutorial, nor is it designed as some sort of teleological work, although it contains bits of all of those things. Instead, this book brushes up against the absolute limits of the GW-BASIC interpreter toolbox, only presenting you with a dose of mathematics when absolutely necessary, whilst shying away from PEEKs, POKEs, and other assembly language-type subroutines. Appropriately, *Not Ok*'s scope is especially vast; the approach is meant to be as accessible as possible while also not sparing many details, serving as both a GW-BASIC appetizer and a main course. And unlike most other computer programming books, in which the keywords or the concepts are the focus, here the programs are the centerpiece from which everything else follows.

Not Ok rekindles an itch, reminding erstwhile BASIC programmers of the supreme satisfaction (coupled with a heavy dose of nostalgia) to be had while coding in GW-BASIC, and maybe, just maybe, can also introduce the programming language, with all of its simple pleasures and lovable foibles, to a younger set.

So don't cue the funeral dirge just yet. With a little luck, and a generous helping of *Not Ok*, perhaps a requiem won't be needed for GW-BASIC after all.

* GW-BASIC is a registered trademark of the Microsoft Corporation, which did not in any way endorse or assist in the production of this product.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Mark Jones Lorenzo is a teacher. He lives in Pennsylvania with his dogs.

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