

# A Block Diagram Compiler

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*A computer program known as BLODI, which accepts for an input a source program written in the BLODI language, is described. The BLODI source language corresponds closely to an engineer's block diagram of a circuit and is easily learned, even by persons not familiar with computing machines. The input code consists essentially of designating the connectivity of a number of boxes drawn from an alphabet of about 30 types. These types include amplifiers, delay lines, counters, etc., which are familiar to designers of electronic circuits. The principles of the compiler are explained and applications are discussed.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes a computer program known as BLODI (BLOCK Diagram compiler). BLODI accepts for an input a source program written in the BLODI language, which corresponds closely to an engineer's block diagram of a circuit, and produces a machine program to simulate the circuit. BLODI has been written for both the IBM 704 and 7090 machines, and has been in use at Bell Telephone Laboratories for several months. Generally speaking, there are two situations in which it can be used profitably. One arises when a person with no knowledge of machine coding wishes to program his own problem. In this case, the BLODI language is much easier to learn than Fortran or SAP. There are, in addition, certain problems involving a rather smooth flow of data which can be most easily coded in BLODI, even by an experienced programmer.

It is rather easy to estimate the efficiency of an object program produced by BLODI. Thus a person with no knowledge of computing machines can often tell if he should code his problem in BLODI or seek the aid of an experienced programmer. This will be discussed in Section V.

BLODI was written to lighten the programming burden in problems concerning the simulation of signal-processing devices. It has the added

advantage of keeping the engineer who invents such a device in close communication with the computing machine by eliminating the middleman (expert programmer).

## II. BLOCK DIAGRAM OF SAMPLED (OR PULSE) SYSTEMS

The circuits\* which we wish to consider here are limited to combinations of devices which accept pulses as inputs and yield pulses as outputs. While the pulses may have arbitrary sizes within certain limits, they must all occur at multiples of a fixed clock time. In general, the output of one of the devices (or boxes) can depend on the present and all past input pulses. A box whose output is independent of the current input pulse or pulses is called a *delaying-type box*. In the current form of the compiler the only delaying-type box is a simple delay line. In addition to these boxes, the circuit may have one or more ultimate outputs and original inputs. A *circuit* then means a number of boxes, ultimate outputs, and original inputs connected in such a way that the output of any box is connected to one or more inputs to boxes and ultimate outputs, and each input to a box is connected to an output from a box or an original input. (We limit ourselves to boxes with a single output.)

A *closed loop* is a path that starts from any point, goes only through connected boxes in the direction of the pulses (i.e., input to output), and returns to its starting point. A circuit which does not contain a closed loop with no delaying-type boxes will be called an *admissible circuit*. The compiler will reject any block diagram which does not describe an admissible circuit. It is easy to see that if the pulse heights were limited to a finite number of values (as they are, of course, in the machine simulation) then an admissible circuit would be a finite-state machine. On the other hand, there is no way to interpret a block diagram corresponding to a nonadmissible circuit. To be sure, one could connect physical boxes in such a manner and something would happen. The analysis, however, would involve the precise transient behavior of the devices within the pulse width — information which is not available to the compiler.

In addition to simulating pulse circuits, the compiler may be used to simulate continuous circuits whose inputs and outputs are bandlimited time functions. One must first design a pulse circuit whose output pulses would correspond to the sample values of the desired output. Extreme

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\* For clarity the machine being simulated will be called the *circuit*. Its description in a certain canonical form will be called the *block diagram*. The word *machine* will always mean the IBM 704 EDPS (or 7090 EDPS).

care must be exercised here; for example, an accumulator (a device whose output is the sum of all previous input pulses) is not equivalent to an integrator. Certain continuous circuits (especially nonlinear ones) are extremely difficult to translate into pulse form. A simple circuit which is difficult to simulate on a machine (with or without the use of this compiler) is the following: Let a bandlimited input signal be connected to a full-wave rectifier, and this to a low-pass filter to return the signal to the original bandwidth.

We will see later that (with a trivial exception) the compiler can be used to simulate any admissible circuit composed of boxes drawn from a fixed list or stockpile. The boxes may have only one output (which may go to several places, however) and at most four inputs. The first constraint is no real restriction, but the second one is.\* We know of no example in signal processing where a general function of more than four variables that cannot be expressed as combinations of functions of four or less variables is needed. In fact, two inputs to each box would probably be adequate but slightly awkward.

### III. THE BLODI LANGUAGE

A BLODI source program is punched on standard SHARE symbolic cards in either the FAP (7090) or SAP (704) format. In general, each card corresponds to one box in the circuit; there is, however, a provision made for continuing a description of a box to the next card. The location field (columns 1 through 6) is either blank or contains the name assigned the box by the programmer. (If a box is to have any inputs, it must have a name.) The operation code field (columns 8 through 10) contains the type of box. Parameters (such as gain of an amplifier) and output connections are separated by commas and listed consecutively starting in column 12 (or column 16 for the 7090 format). The various inputs to the same box are designated by a fraction bar and numeral following the name of the box. Example:

UV AMP 5.28, XY, Z/2

Box UV is an amplifier with a gain of 5.28 which feeds box XY (first input) and the second input of box Z.

A list of all the available box types appears in Table I. Note that INP may be thought of as a box which generates signals spontaneously; actually it obtains its input from a tape designated as a parameter. Simi-

\* Technically speaking, this is not true. A circuit could be designed corresponding to any finite state machine. However, we consider that it is not in the proper spirit to take advantage of the fact that the pulse heights are limited to  $2^{36}$  values.

TABLE I — ALL THE TYPES OF BOXES WHICH ARE RECOGNIZED BY THE COMPILER

Type	Function	Inputs	Parameters
DEL	Delay	Signal	Number of units delay
AMP	Amplifier	Signal	Gain
ADR	Adder	1-4 Signals	None
SUB	Subtractor	+ Input - Input	None
MAX	Maximum circuit	1-4 Signals	None
MIN	Minimum circuit	1-4 Signals	None
CLP	Positive clipper	Signal	Clipping level
CLN	Negative clipper	Signal	Clipping level
SCL	Symmetric clipper	Signal	Clipping level
FWR	Full-wave rectifier	Signal	None
BAT	Battery or bias	(Signal)	Bias
MRP	Multiplier	2 Signals	None
DIV	Divider	Dividend Divisor	None
SQT	Square rooter	Signal	None
ACC	Accumulator	Signal	Gain
FLT	Transversal filter	Signal	Number of taps Delay per tap Gains
SLF	Symmetric filter	Signal	Number of taps Delay per tap Gains
AFL	Antisymmetric filter	Signal	Number of taps Delay per tap Gains
QNT	Quantizer	Signal	Number of levels Levels
LQT	Linear quantizer	Signal	Step size
SMP	Sampler	Signal	Period Quiescent level Initial phase
HLD	Sample and hold	Signal; control	Threshold
CNT	Counter	Signal	Countdown factor Threshold Active level Passive level Initial phase
DTS	Double-throw switch	Control; 2 signals	Threshold
FLF	Flip-flop	Signal	Low threshold High threshold Low state output High state output
PLS	Pulser	Control	Threshold Pulse length Pulse level Quiescent level
COS	Cosine generator	None	Period Phase Amplitude
GEN	Function generator	None	Period Sample values
WNG	Noise generator	None	Standard deviation
PRT	Printer	Control; 3 signals	Threshold Record Limit

TABLE I — (Continued)

Type	Function	Inputs	Parameters
INP	Input	None	Tape number File maximum Samples per record Record maximum Start printing
ØUT	Output	Signal	Stop printing Tape number File maximum Samples per record Record maximum Start printing Stop printing
END	Last card of source program		

larly, OUT causes the signal appearing on its input lead to be written on the designated tape. A circuit may have several inputs and outputs. END is not a box at all but signifies the end of the source program. In addition to the types listed, it is possible for a programmer to create types of his own invention by supplying subroutines written in basic machine language. It is also quite easy to change the basic input-output programs used by BLODI to handle arbitrary tape formats.

#### IV. PRINCIPLE OF OPERATION

An object program produced by the compiler consists of three parts:

- (a) the *prefix*, which sets up the logic for the main loop;
- (b) the *main loop*, which is executed once for each sample processed;
- (c) the *suffix*, which causes the main loop to be repeated the proper number of times, empties output buffers, fills input buffers, etc.

We will concern ourselves here only with the main loop. Except for some strictly local inner loops in certain boxes, this part of the object program is compiled in the same order in which it is to be executed. Simply stated, the procedure is as follows: One storage cell in the object program is assigned for each box. Each time the main loop is entered, these cells will contain values corresponding to the last *outputs* of the respective boxes. It is then the function of the main loop to compute these output values for the next (current) time slot and to fill the cells with these values.

In order to simplify the description of the algorithm used by the compiler we will at first limit ourselves to the case where all delays are unit delays. By "compiling a box" we mean writing the necessary coding to

cause the object program to fill the output cell of the box with the current pulse value. A nondelaying-type box cannot be compiled until all the boxes feeding it have been compiled. The reason is that the output of this type of box is a function of its current inputs, and this part of the object program must not be executed until the cells corresponding to input to this box have been filled with current pulse values. On the other hand, a unit delay must be compiled *before* the box which feeds it. Its output is a function of (equal to, in fact) its *last* or *old* input. At object time this value must be "moved along" before it is overwritten. To reword this second rule, no box which feeds a delay line can be compiled until that delay line has been. This second rule could be dropped if we provided an additional storage cell for each unit delay and had the object program first go through and fill each of these cells with the old input to the corresponding delay line. We will see below, however, that the only price we pay for the more efficient procedure is that the compiler will reject any block diagram containing a closed loop with nothing but delays. Such a diagram would represent an admissible circuit but would be of little value, since we could never get anything but zeros out of this loop at any point. (All delay lines are initialized at zero.)

The above two rules are effected in a fairly simple manner. A binary storage cell is assigned in the *compiler* program for each of the output cells in the *object* program. The two states of each of these cells are called "full" and "empty." Initially all cells which represent inputs to delay lines are marked "full" and all others marked "empty." A box can be compiled whenever its inputs are all marked "full" and its output "empty." When a box is compiled, its output is marked "full" and its inputs "empty." Compilation proceeds until all boxes have been compiled (successful compilation) or until no uncompiled box meets the two requirements. In the latter event the compiler prints the remark CLOSED LOOP WITH NO DELAYS OR ALL DELAYS and halts. To see that one of these conditions must prevail, note that a delay line can *always* be compiled unless it feeds another uncompiled delay line. Therefore, if any of the uncompiled boxes are delay lines there exists a closed loop with all delays. If, on the other hand, all uncompiled boxes are nondelaying, then each must have an empty input which must be the output of an uncompiled nondelaying box. Thus, working backwards, we find a closed loop with no delay.

The order of searching for uncompiled boxes which meet the tests is immaterial from a logical point of view, but this freedom can be used to optimize the use of the accumulator. By first trying to compile a box which is fed by the last compiled box, the compiler is sometimes able to save a "storage" or "fetch" order, or both. Delays are not, of course,

limited to unit delays as in the above discussion. A delay of length  $n$  sets  $n - 1$  storage cells in addition to its normal output cell. For short delays the data are "stepped along" a notch each time the main loop is executed. For longer delays the same effect is produced by address modification.

The above description is merely a sketch of the general procedure used by BLODI. Actually, it has a lot more structure of purely technical character. For example, some boxes are broken down into simpler boxes by the compiler so that parts of the object program concerning a given box may not appear in consecutive locations.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

BLODI has been in use at Bell Telephone Laboratories for about a year, mostly in the Department of Visual and Acoustics Research. It has been used chiefly for signal processing types of problems, and one of the authors has used the compiler to simulate a speech synthesizer of the resonant-vocoder type. It has also been used to study television coding schemes, artificial reverberation in acoustic research, and for part of the coding in a handwriting recognition problem.<sup>1</sup> In appraising its value one must consider two separate questions:

1. What type of problem is easily coded in the BLODI language?
2. What type of problem causes BLODI to write efficient object programs?

The first question will be answered relative to a programmer well versed in basic and Fortran language. Whenever the problem involves a rather smooth flow of data in and out of the machine, with the output being a nearly stationary function of the input, then it can be more easily coded in BLODI than in any other existing language. When, however, the program must process input samples in a complicated order, dependent on previous results, the BLODI language becomes unbearably awkward. (This is precisely the type of circuit which is hard to design with delay lines, switches, etc.)

The second question is easily answered. Any diagram which contains many idle boxes will be inefficient, because the object program goes through the motion of calculating the state of all boxes at each clock time. For example, a program with five memory-free (delay-free) paths, only one of which is connected to the output at any one time, would result in an inefficient object program. For diagrams containing few idle boxes, however, BLODI produces object programs which are usually as efficient as those written by a competent programmer.

The version of BLODI in use at Bell Telephone Laboratories is coupled to the monitor and I-O system, BE SYS 3. Thus an installation not us-

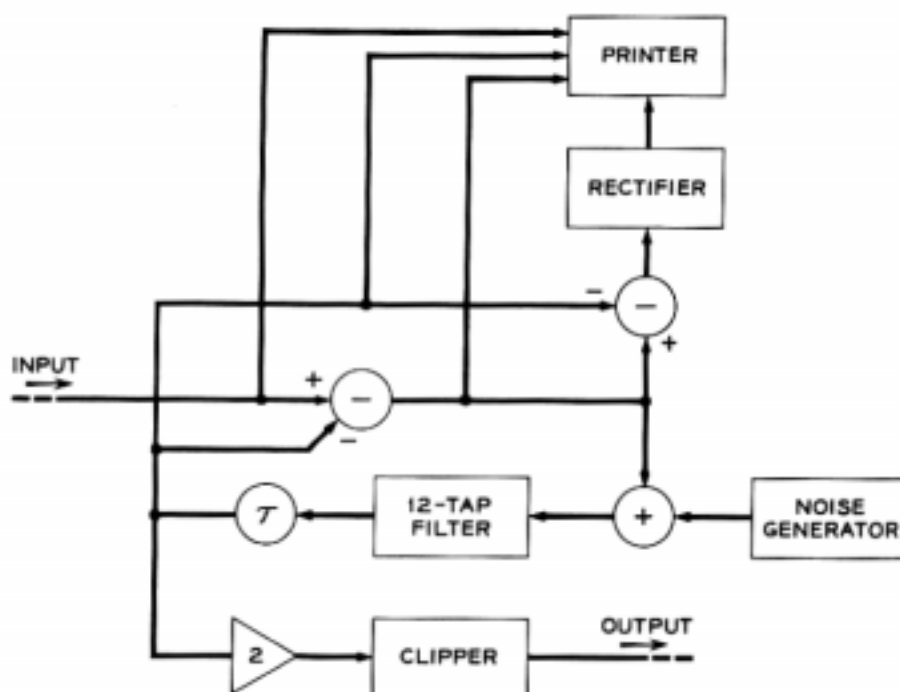


Fig. 1 — Typical BLODI program: block diagram.

SAMPLE BLODI SOURCE PROGRAM			
UNG	SUM	1, 100	
SUM	ADR	BUFF	
BUFF	FLT	12, 1, .001, .002, .004, .008, .016, .032	
		.063, 1/8, .230, 1/4, 1/5, .057, DELAY	
DELAY	DEL	1, SCALE, SUB/2	
		PRINT/3, SUB1/2	XXX
SCALE	AMP	2, CLIP	
CLIP	CLN	T2	
T2	OUT	5	
		,, 1, 1	XXX
SUB	SUB	SUM/2	
		SUB1/1, PRINT/4	XXX
T1	INP	,, 1, SUB/1	
		PRINT/2, 1, 1	XXX
SUB1	SUB	R	THESE CARDS AND THE CARDS MARKED
R	FWR	PRINT/1	XXX WOULD BE OMITTED IF
PRINT	PRT	150	PRINTING WERE NOT DESIRED
END			

Fig. 2 — Typical BLODI program: source program.

ing BE SYS 3 would have to modify the BLODI program. The changes, however, would only involve I-O and interaction with the FAP (or SAP) assembly program.

Figs. 1, 2, and 3 represent a sample BLODI program. Fig. 1 is a block diagram suitable for simulation using BLODI; Fig. 2 is the corresponding source program; and Fig. 3 shows the printed output that results from compiling the source program and running the simulation.

#### REFERENCE

1. Frishkopf, L. S., and Harmon, L. D., Machine Recognition of Cursive Script, Fourth Annual Symposium on Information Theory, 1960.



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02734 0-00000 0-00001 0-1500 0-1500
00101 READ EQU 05
00216 WRITE EQU 14
00401 MNG EQU 257
00427 CRT EQU 279
00515 CAS EQU 333
02734 0-00000 0-00001 0-1500 0-1500
02735 0140 00 0 02736 0 0
02736 0740 00 0 00010 0-00010
02737 0761 00 0 00000 0-00000
02740 3-00000 0-02740 0-02740
02741 0502 00 0 02740 0-02740
02742 0601 00 0 02740 0-02740
02743 0534 00 1 03353 0-03353
02744 0400 00 1 03363 0-03363
02745 2-00001 1 02744 0-02744
02746 0534 00 1 03365 0-03365
02747 0500 00 1 00000 0-00000
02780 0401 00 0 03012 0-03012
02751 0500 00 0 03111 0-03111
02782 0401 00 0 03310 0-03310
02753 0767 00 0 00001 0-00001
02784 0560 00 0 03288 0-03288
02785 0940 00 0 02757 0-02757
02786 0500 00 0 03264 0-03264
02757 0401 00 1 51777 0-51777
02760 0500 00 0 03222 0-03222
02761 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
02762 0200 00 0 03267 0-03267
02763 0763 00 0 00021 0-00021
02764 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
02765 0401 00 0 03224 0-03224
02766 0500 00 0 03225 0-03225
02767 0401 00 0 03223 0-03223
02770 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
02771 0200 00 0 03270 0-03270
02732 0363 00 0 00021 0-00021
02772 0762 00 0 00010 0-00010
02774 0401 00 0 03226 0-03226
02775 0500 00 0 03227 0-03227
02776 0401 00 0 03225 0-03225
02777 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03000 0200 00 0 03271 0-03271
03001 0763 00 0 00021 0-00021
03002 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03003 0401 00 0 03220 0-03220
03004 0500 00 0 03221 0-03221
03005 0401 00 0 03227 0-03227
03006 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03007 0200 00 0 03272 0-03272
03010 0767 00 0 00021 0-00021
03011 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03012 0401 00 0 03222 0-03222
03013 0500 00 0 03223 0-03223
03014 0401 00 0 03221 0-03221
03015 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03016 0200 00 0 03273 0-03273
03017 0763 00 0 00021 0-00021

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03020 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03021 0401 00 0 03224 0-03224
03022 0900 00 0 03225 0-03225
03023 0401 00 0 03223 0-03223
03024 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03025 0200 00 0 03274 0-03274
03026 0763 00 0 00021 0-00021
03027 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03030 0401 00 0 03222 0-03222
03031 0500 00 0 03227 0-03227
03032 0401 00 0 03225 0-03225
03033 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03034 0200 00 0 03275 0-03275
03035 0763 00 0 00021 0-00021
03036 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03037 0401 00 0 03224 0-03224
03040 0500 00 0 03221 0-03221
03041 0401 00 0 03227 0-03227
03042 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03043 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
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03052 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03053 0401 00 0 03224 0-03224
03054 0900 00 0 03225 0-03225
03055 0401 00 0 03227 0-03227
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03057 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03060 0401 00 0 03226 0-03226
03061 0500 00 0 03247 0-03247
03062 0401 00 0 03246 0-03246
03063 0765 00 0 00043 0-00043
03064 0200 00 0 03277 0-03277
03065 0763 00 0 00021 0-00021
03066 0760 00 0 00010 0-00010
03067 0400 00 0 03246 0-03246
03070 0400 00 0 03244 0-03244
03071 0400 00 0 03242 0-03242
03072 0400 00 0 03240 0-03240
03073 0400 00 0 03239 0-03239
03074 0400 00 0 03238 0-03238
03075 0400 00 0 03237 0-03237
03076 0400 00 0 03236 0-03236
03077 0400 00 0 03235 0-03235
03078 0400 00 0 03234 0-03234
03100 0400 00 0 03232 0-03232
03101 0400 00 0 03231 0-03231
03102 0500 00 0 03233 0-03233
03103 0402 00 0 03232 0-03232
03104 0401 00 0 03231 0-03231
03105 0402 00 0 03232 0-03232
03106 0760 00 0 00003 0-00003
03107 0500 00 0 03200 0-03200
03110 0400 00 0 03212 0-03212
03111 0020 00 0 03150 0-03150

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03152 0500 00 0 03201 0-03201
03153 0100 00 0 03152 0-03152
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03155 0601 00 0 03201 0-03201
03156 0764 00 1 00000 0-00000
03157 0771 00 0 00022 0-00022
03160 0402 00 0 03147 0-03147
03121 0602 00 0 03202 0-03202
03120 0500 00 0 03203 0-03203
03122 0400 00 0 02754 0-02754
03124 0601 00 0 03203 0-03203
03125 0074 00 4 77014 0-77014
03126 0-77777 0-03142 0-03142
03127 0500 00 0 03203 0-03203
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03131 0500 00 0 03202 0-03202
03132 1-00000 0-00000 0-00000
03133 0500 00 0 03217 0-03217
03134 1-00000 0-00000 0-00000
03135 0500 00 0 03212 0-03212
03136 1-00000 0-00000 0-00000
03137 0500 00 0 03216 0-03216
03140 0074 00 4 77024 0-77024
03142 0020 00 0 03162 0-03162
03143 740630604751 0-740630604751
03144 31486004800 0-31486004800
03145 05346066060 0-05346066060
03146 1-77777 7-77777 0-77777
03147 0 00000 0 00766 0-00766
03150 0500 00 0 03202 0-03202
03151 0400 00 0 02734 0-02734
03152 0401 00 0 03203 0-03203
03153 0074 00 4 00401 0-00401
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03155 0200 00 0 03270 0-03270
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03172 0074 00 4 77005 0-77005
03173 0 00004 0 03175 0-03175
03174 0020 00 0 03201 0-03201
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03176 31636046825 0-31636046825
03177 514346212425 0-514346212425
03200 24506666000 0-24506666000
03201 0074 00 4 00210 0-00210
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03203 0 00000 0 00005 0-00005

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03204 0534 00 4 03206 0-03206
03205 3-00000 4-03223 0-03223
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03207 0074 00 4 77014 0-77014
03211 0534 00 2 03205 0-03205
03210 0540 00 2 03207 0-03207
03213 1-00000 0 00000 0-00000
03214 0-00000 0-00000 0-00000
03215 0074 00 4 77024 0-77024
03216 0020 00 0 03203 0-03203
03217 741130000000 0-741130000000
03220 040000000000 0-040000000000
03221 011040003400 0-011040003400
03222 3-77777 7-77777 0-77777
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03231 0 00765 0 00000 0-00000
03232 0-00000 0-00000 0-00000
03233 0534 00 4 03206 0-03206
03234 3-00001 4-03223 0-03223
03235 3-00001 4 03252 0-03252
03236 0074 00 4 77014 0-77014
03237 0 77777 0 03240 0-03240
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03241 0500 00 2 00005 0-00005
03242 1-00000 0-00000 0-00000
03243 2-00001 2 03241 0-03241
03244 0074 00 4 77005 0-77005
03245 0020 00 0 03252 0-03252
03246 741130000000 0-741130000000
03247 004000000301 0-004000000301
03250 011040003400 0-011040003400
03251 3-77777 7-77777 0-77777
03252 0500 00 0 00000 0-00000
03253 0100 00 0 02735 0-02735
03254 0600 00 0 00000 0-00000
03255 0700 00 0 02205 0-02205
03256 0500 00 0 03234 0-03234
03257 0534 00 4 03252 0-03252
03260 0401 00 0 03250 0-03250
03261 3-00000 4 03230 0-03230
03262 0020 00 0 00044 0-00044
03263 0770 00 0 02205 0-02205
03264 0020 00 0 73001 0-73001
03265 0 00000 0 00765 0-00765
03266 000000000000 0-000000000000
03267 000000000000 0-000000000000
03270 000000001014 0-000000001014
03271 000000000021 0-000000000021
03272 000000000401 0-000000000401
03273 000000001042 0-000000001042
03274 000000003005 0-000000003005

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