CEDAR VALLEY 99'ER USER GROUP
NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 1990
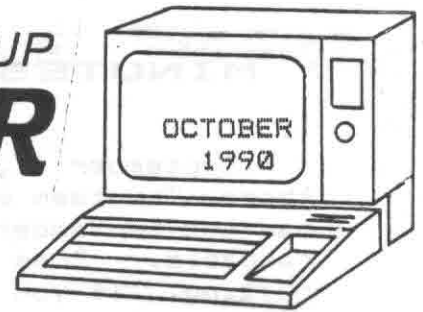
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SPECIAL NOTICE: NEXT MEETING IS ON MONDAY, OCT. 8 DUE TO A SCHEDULE CONFLICT WITH THE MEETING ROOM.

ANOTHER NOTICE: IF YOU RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER IN TIME, REMEMBER THE SPECIAL MEETING AT MARIAN HALL IN DUBUQUE HOSTED BY SISTER PAT TAYLOR, SAT. OCT 6, 9 AM

****NEWSLETTER TOPICS****

1. Future Meeting Dates
2. Next Meeting Notes
3. Minutes from the Sept. mtg.
4. Special Meeting in Dubuque
5. What does John use his TI for?
6. Spad XIII Mark 2 review
7. Library information
8. Reminders/for sale stuff
9. Ham Radio and the TI

****FUTURE MEETING DATES****

Please mark the following dates on your calendar for future meetings:
OCTOBER 8, NOVEMBER 13, DECEMBER 11

***** NEXT MEETING *****

The regular monthly meeting will be MONDAY, OCT. 8, at West Music, Cedar Rapids, with open discussion starting at 6:30 PM.

MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

September 11, 1990 was a good night for a UG meeting. Were you there? Thirteen members and guests were present. Gary announced that Jim had the September NEWSLETTER printed on white paper to see if it was more readable. Does anyone have any comments? None were forthcomming at this meeting. If you have any observations please let any UG officer know.

The minutes of the last meeting were pproved as written in the NEWSLETTER.

BBS REPORT: John repeated his previous report that the DARKSIDE BBS has redone their format. Everyone will have to sign back on and get a new ID and password issued. He also mentioned that the TI section is gone

OLD BUSINESS: 1. The visit with Sr. Pat our friends in Dubuque will be held on October 6, 1990. There was a conflict with our original date. Be there! We expect 4 or 5 from Dubuque, 6 to 8 of us, and all the sisters. 2. Reminder: We are out of disks for sale and will not order any more until there is a need for them. 3. Did you find your assignment in the NEWSLETTER? Check it out. Happy writting folks. 4. For those who would like the schematic for the clock featured in Gary's article one is available. He brought them to the meeting. If you missed out see him. 5. The following report from several people about the HAM FEST. We got lots of looks. We were by the consession stand so everyone came by. They were so pleased tht we showed up that they didn't make us pay even for the electricity. Next year it will be Sunday only. Yours truely had been there only 15 minutes before he won a door prize. See you all next year. 6. John reported that he found several DSDD disks in the library. He needs help to get them SSSD so he can read them. Jerry "volunteered" even though he not attend.

NEW BUSINESS: 1. Dave Arnold sent word that he wants to sell his TI. See this NEWSLETTER if anything is left. 2. John reported the program BANNER by Gene Atkinson is good and easy to use. To prove it he printed "Happy Birthday Gary" and we all sang to him. 3. Several copies of the Chicago TImes Newsletter were available to take home. 4. Jim sent word that he is very busy and would like someone else to do the NEWSLETTER editing. Any takers? 5. Reminder: November is membership renewal month. 6. Andy Viar visited this meeting.

DEMO: Bob was back at the console learning how to use ARCHIVER III BY BARRY BOONE. Thanks Bob for asking.

Submitted by Bill Paeth, Secretary

Our special meeting in Dubuque starts at 9 AM Saturday, Oct. 6. The theme chosen by Sister Pat is family computing. Family oriented programs such as greeting cards, banners, letter writing, and communication skills will be demonstrated. It may be a little early for the peak fall colors, but the drive will be very pleasant, with some early brilliant colors showing. For a change of pace, try returning from Dubuque down the Old River Road, along the Mississippi river. All in all, Saturday promises to be very enjoyable. I have room for some riders if anyone is interested. Contact me as soon as you can, if you receive this newsletter before Saturday. -GARY BISHOP

WHAT DO I USE MY COMPUTER FOR?

Often after watching a demo of a computer program I have heard people say "That is great, but what do you use your computer for?" I have to agree that this is reasonable question considering the money most of us have put into the equipment. Like the engineer I knew who owned an airplane, I don't try to justify the cost. It is my hobby. I like it and I hope to keep it. Beyond that basic truth about most hobbies, I find that I do use my computer for a lot of different things. Let me give you my particular list of uses.

In asending order the uses are....(I am starting with the least first so I can rave on a bit at the end.) I have a Keyboard (musical type) and it has a Midi output so I hope to hook it up to the old TI one of these days. (This is definately at the bottom of my list.) I should mention here that I played at the piano long before I got a computer. I lost the piano when we moved and I always thought that the computer was a substitute for my creative outlet at the piano. But now that I have both I find that the substitute is better (for me) than the original. Next is a planets program that shows their positions in the sky. I use this for that old hobby of mine...astrology. Coming out of the twilight zone we come to graphic things like banners, letter headings etc. My librarian duties for the TI club probably come next. Video Chess and the Spad XIII flight simulator tie for the next slot. As you can see by this article I use the word processor quite a bit. The rest of my family would probably list this number one. The game of Yahtzee ends this paragaph. I consider it a game of both chance and skill. I use it to see how my luck and skill are on a particular day. This version of Yahtzee from our library I consider one of the best basic programs that we have. Even though we can now load it in XB with the special loader, remember that it is a basic program written way back when the club started. At least it preceded me.

We are down to the big three. If you have read my other articles you know I spend quite a bit of time on BBS's. If you are interested in my experiences there I suggest you read some of my articles on them in past newsletters. Writing an adventure game comes out number two. I have been at this since 1985 so I have renamed it "The worlds longest home prodject". Now we come to number one and the reason for the long time span on the adventure game. Learning about computers is the top! They are everywhere. To be honest I like them a lot. But if I didn't I would be foolish to not learn all I can about them considering my line of work. I work with electronics in case you hadn't guessed. So all my other computing activities take a back seat if I see a chance to improve my general computer skills. I have changed writing an adventure game to learning computers while writing an adventure game. Well that is about it except the latest language I have run into at work is Atlas. It is a language the airlines want their test equipment software written in. But not to worry. After TI9900 assembly and Forth and some C language experience it looks strangely familiar.

EOF...J Johnson CR

SPAD XIII MARK 2

I had always had an interest in flying but that interest did not persuade me to invest in flying lessons or consider purchasing a program such as this one until I noticed the series of articles on this program in the Chicago Times. (What else?) Then Tex Comp in a brilliant bit of advertising strategy listed it in Micropendium. (Where else?) So here is the straight scoop on what I got for my $20+.

The first thing I noticed was that for $20 I got a disk version and not the cartridge I had expected. This would have been OK except I have not not found anything that will backup this program. Also it states in the instructions that turning on the disk drive with this disk in it may damage the program. Great! I have a game that has a life expectancy of from one day to 20 years. Well, I haven't destroyed it yet so lets contiue on. The graphics range from a great view of the landing field disappearing out of sight to some pretty sketchy 3D graphics and ground details. I was hoping for some graphics along the lines of Computer Wars. This we do not have here. To be fair about the graphics I should say that there is a lot of scenery to be seen. I would have prefered to have more detail and loading from the disk as needed. My youngest son has a similar game for his computer that has better graphics but that is only a game and not a flight simulator. I tried it and it is no competition for this one. See the end of this article for more on this.

The program has a lot of options that make it worth the money. The ones I like the best are a real 3D view from all sides of the plane. Top and bottom views in addition to an unobstructed front one are also shown. Before I forget you can use either keyboard or joystick inputs. That's a necessity! You can also do things like press "M" and jump 20 miles to where the action is. "I" will get you a removed view showing your plane from above and behind. Finally "P" will give you a panorama of views, switching through them all at a one second rate. The landing simulation is very good but I wonder if it isn't a little too easy compared to reality. Also the instructions are adequate but a bit terse. They do recomend you purchase a flight handbook in one place but later they say to end the game you must taxi on the ground to the hanger. What they don't tell you is that to do that you must use your rudder and not the ailerons as in flight. I only learned that from the articles in the Times. Well, there are enemy planes and balloons and The Red Baron. He is very good.

In conclusion- Yes, you can learn a great deal about flying. No, you won't be able to go out and fly a plane after mastering this program. I did notice on my one and only yearly vacation flight this year that the way the pilot flew the plane and changed engine RPM's made sense to me for the first time in my life. Also my youngest son got off his computer and worked on this program many days after he got a taste of it. In short it is a very good simulator but a not so good game or graphics demo. So if you are looking for the first you will be happy with it but possibly not if you want the second. Buy it.. Fly.. Enjoy!

EOF..J Johnson CR

THE LIBRARY BLURB

Trivia-What was the first computer priced under $10,000 that had LOGO available to it? Take a wild guess and you will probably be right.   Or read the rest of this article.

New programs-We have only a few but I am impressed with the ones I have looked at.

Disk of Summer	425	Funnelweb and some XB subprgms.
Disk of Summer	426	Rest of above. Still available.
Carfax Abbey	427	Graphics adventure game in XB.
Tips Ver 1.6	428	Latest and greatest TIPS. More assembly.
Quick Dirty	429	Make posters in XB by Jim Peterson.
Mona Lisa	430	A printer demo program from Texcomp. XB

I found Carfax Abbey down in a BBS called Cy's Swap Shop in Florida. This adventure game is all graphics with some 3D effects. It consists of 25 rooms and four levels of play. The 3D view of the room is in the center of the screen.   At the top are four displays of the levels and their rooms. The bottom has the instructions. You can run the whole game with joysticks! It has maps you can find etc. Two things I didn't like were a very long loading time and some repetition after about 55 rooms. This is fairware but no price is mentioned. Very smooth.

TIPS now has many assembly subprograms and thus runs much faster. (I hear) Quick and dirty I haven't looked at. Mona Lisa now hangs over my computer area. The thing that interests me about this picture is that it is done with only letters of the alphabet. It does go back over each line twice but I am sure it is all letters. I will bring a copy of it to the meeting.

There is a program I used this month that I would like to bring to your attention. I wanted to make my first banner ever and I didn't want to take any more time than I had to. Fortunately I found disk number 333 by Jene Rasmussen.   The EA version of her program printed my banner in ten minutes the first try.

BBS-The Dark Side has revamped and the TI files are gone! If you want a program this way let me know and I can put it on F mail for you on any BBS that you are registered on.

Trivia answer-The TI of course. Source-April issue of The Chicago Times.
I have joined the Chicago group so we should have many programs available from them soon.

EOF....J Johnson CR

REMINDERS AND FOR SALE STUFF

Just a reminder: Please return the Chicago UG newsletters to the next meeting, if you borrowed some. This will give everybody the opportunity to see them all. The more that come back at each meeting, the faster they can be rotated to all our members. Thanks! -- Gary Bishop

COMMING ATTRACTIONS: Next month is our renewal month, and we have traditionally held a swap meet/barter session/haggle fest. Bring in any unused or unloved hardware/software for redistribution. While you are at it, try to find a new member or someone interested in computers to bring to the meeting.

FOR SALE: Horizon 1 Meg RAMDISK, plugs into P-box, battery backed up. One year old, with latest ROS 8.14 system, manual, schematics. Present new cost: $630, I'm asking $400. Works beautifully, has five 720 sector drives, and one 486 sector, for a total of 4086 sectors. Can be divided into 11 360 sector drives + one short drive, or whatever. If purchased locally, I will assist in showing the new owner the ropes. Can demonstrate. Gary Bishop, 319-377-9574 after 5 PM CST.

I also have a Practical Peripherals 2400 baud IBM internal modem, recently updated at the factory, several years left on the five year warrantee, with manual. Stores in nonvolatile memory 3 most used phone numbers. I will trade it plus $10 for an external modem of similar capabilities, or $70 outright. It works super! I want the external modem so I can use it on both the IBM and TI. Gary Bishop

I have many battery packs for sale. They are Sanyo size AA nicads in a pack of 14, with shrink wrap. 550 mahr rating. One in each pack is weak, because these are pulls from operating equipment. The charger for the equipment these were removed from did not have enough ooomph to bring back the completely discharged cell, so the whole stack was pulled. Great for model cars, walkie talkies, toys, etc. $5 per pack. No guarantee, but if you don't get at least 12 good cells from the pack, I will replace it. Hoss trader Gary Bishop.

How much of this can you stand? I have over 1000 8" soft sectored disks, some still in sealed boxes. Several 8" drives, various brands. Some with chassis and cabinets, internal power supplies, etc. Anybody into CPM or 8" stuff? Make offer. Guess who? See above.

Wanted: Stand alone disk drive/controller of some sort for the old TI. Would consider a bare Percom board or the like. Non working OK, but expect to be bargained down with deep price cuts from wheeler-dealer Bishop.

BIG FOR SALE: Dave Arnold wants to find a new home for his complete system. He indicates he may part out some of it: 2 consoles, P-box with RS232, 32K, TI disk controller and SSSD disk, speech synthesizer, TI printer, E/A, XB, TE II, TI Writer, about 20 cartridges, 8 cassette tapes, electrical hookup with 6 plugs and fuse, joysticks, one dozen disks, 18 programming books, 2 modulators, cassette player. 319-849-2077 Center Point - local call from Cedar Rapids. Dave, if you don't get enough nibbles, bring the lot to the November meeting. Contact Gary Bishop to see the entire detailed list of Dave's equipment.

HAM RADIO AND THE TI

Ham radio uses for the TI computer. The first application I will discuss will probably have the broadest appeal, and require the least amount of hardware and expertise. We have several Morse Code training programs in the library, and I think they may only require an unexpanded console with a cassette recorder. I have recently happened across another unexpected application for such program: my Cub Scout needed to learn a cypher or code of some sort, and Morse code was one example of what was acceptable. My Webelos picked up quite a few letters from the Morse code training program; enough to qualify for that particular achievement. Now, the task was not particularly difficult, because he was not required to be proficient or fast, just to transmit a simple message. A few minutes a night for several nights was all he needed to do it. I haven't been able to sustain his interest in the code, so as to steer him toward a license. But we had some fun together, and shared some time tackling this new type of problem.

I'm sure the practice program would help a Boy Scout prepare for a Radio merit badge, or any other program that requires Morse code.

Of course, the main reason to use a code training program is to learn enough to pass a ham test. The beginning license in ham radio requires a code speed of only 5 words per minute, which is one character every 2 1/2 seconds. Even 5 year olds have mastered it! I don't think the training programs in our library are oriented so a learner could start from scratch and master the code. I do beleive that the TI programs are great for building confidence, and increasing speed. However, I find that to really master the code, a sending technique called the Farnsworth method should be used. This method sends the characters at a relatively fast speed, but provides large pauses between the characters. The result is an average speed that is quite slow. The advantage of the Farnsworth method is that to increase your speed, you do not need to relearn the characters at a higher rate; you already know them at a fast speed. All you need to do is reduce your recognition and reaction time. The programs we have in the library do not directly allow for the Farnsworth method, but could easily be modified to provide it.

I recommend a beginner purchase the code practice tapes that accompany the booklet: Tune in the World with Ham Radio, published by the American Radio Relay League. I have a couple of copies to loan out if someone is interested. These materials can also be purchased locally at Iowa Radio.

The next type of use for the TI in ham radio is for copying and sending Morse code. Bob Wahlstrom purchased a package from a fellow ham in Oklahoma that can send and receive Morse code, with very little hardware, and no need for any expansion system, disk drives, or the like. The device uses a simple circuit connected to the speaker of the radio to drive a relay. The relay contacts are connected to the joystick port on the side of the computer. A program provided then reads the contact closures from the joystick port, and prints the corresonding characters on the screen. I don't have any experience with this particular set up. Perhaps I can prevail upon Bob to write up something about it. If I would have to guess, I'd think the program would use the cassette motor control circuits to control a relay for transmitting. All that is needed is a contact closure to key a transmitter.

I have extensive experience with the Kantronics hardware, and their software called "hamsoft." I published a detailed description of how to reduce interference from the Kantronics, so I hope that article helped others in enjoying ham radio a little more. After quite a bit of operation with the Kantronics hamsoft and terminal unit, I have developed the following wish list of things to improve:

1. Figuring out a way to install it in the P-box, so that things don't have to be plugged and unplugged to operate the interface. This would require a connector on a blank project board, such as the Zeno board. Or, the parts from inside the hamsoft could be removed and transplanted to such a board. I have already made one of these interfaces from scratch, so it would certainly be possible to build in from scratch on a project board.

Installation inside the P-box is fraught with perils. The Zeno board will help in quite a few areas, such as voltage regulators to provide the proper voltages, and data buffers, so the interface won't load down the data bus. The biggest problem I forsee would be tremendous radiated interference from the P-box, getting into the ham receiver. It is quite a challenge to operate a sensitive short wave receiver within 2 feet of the TI computer. Very careful attention must be paid to grounding, shielding, and the like. Optocouplers may be useful here. Optocouplers are devices that can transmit a digital signal, but provide isolation between the input and output. Also, a DSR decode circuit would be required. The representative circuit contained in Tony May's hardware reference manual will do the job nicely.

2. Providing some way to gracefully exit the program, and return from whence it cometh. Once the hamsoft is started through the OPEN statement, the only way to stop it is to turn off the power. Very undignified. There is a main selection menu of about 5 things to do. A little code busting and reverse assembly could find a relatively easy way to get back to basic, or maybe the color bars. It might even be possible to put a Kantronics selection right on the opening TI menu, right after the color bars.

3. Providing a way to use the standard system printer called PIO. The Kantronics provides a printer designation of "PP" to basic when the interface is pugged in. I have already patched the rom to include the name PIO for the printer port inside the interface. I don't think it would be a big deal to reverse assemble the printer call in the rom, and patch it to use a standard PIO port already in the expansion system.

4. Support for a storage device to load the message ports from, other than cassette. Even using just a Minimemory to load and store the message ports would be a big improvement. This patch could be made almost independent of the rest I've listed. A message port is kind of like a macro, or a complete message you want to sent with a single keystroke. Usual candidates for inclusion in a message port are your name, call, location, equipment listing, etc.

5. The hamsoft allows any incomming information to be echoed to the printer. This is OK, but I want to add some way to also store on a disk file or Minimemory.

6. A way to read any existing system clock to update the time. The Kantronics has the time continuously displayed, but it must be set manually every time you fire up the interface. I have a battery operated clock on my system, and it would be very convenient to set the time from the clock. This would work the same way J. Johnson's MENU program reads the clock every time it fires up.

7. Hams like their zeros slashed: Ø. I can accomplish this in basic, before I call hamsoft, by redefining the zero (character #48) with CALL CHAR. I would rather wire this into the hamsoft program.

8. Now for the real pipe dream stuff: 40/80 column support, RS232 linkage and support. Making the hamsoft hardware a dumb DSR location, and transferring the hamsoft out of the prom into a regular disk file. The file could then be provided with either an Extended Basic or Editor Assembler loader. Such a file would then be much easier to modify and support.

HA! There is enough stuff in this list to keep a hardware/software hacker busy for quite a while. In all probability, most of these items will never be accomplished, at least not by me. I have started to look into the code, and have made several crude patches that seem to work. Any help or more ideas?

Gary Bishop NQØV

Open letter to Ernie Pergrem, President of Chicago TI/99 UG: From Gary Bishop, President of Cedar Valley 99 UG: I received your letter of March 10, 1990 concerning exchanging newsletters. I took you up on your offer of obtaining back issues of your club's newletters for the cost of postage. I received the back newsletters, and I was very happy to make them available to our membership. Your letter also stated that you would start to exchange newsletters with other clubs on a regular basis. I indicated we wished to do so when I ordered your back issues. We have been mailing you our newsletters for the last 4 months, and have not received one in return yet. I have sent you 2 postcards in the interim asking you to fix this problem. Would you please look into this and start sending us your newsletters? Thank-you.

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 8

6:30 PM --- WEST MUSIC COMPANY

Cedar Valley 99'er Users Group
377 Cambridge Dr. NE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402

Send To: