

DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP  
SEPTEMBER, 1984

Meetings: 7:00pm, 3rd Friday each month  
At Northlake College, Room B-206, Irving, Texas

>>> NEXT MEETING: Friday, 21 September, 1984 <<<

President: Robert Bayne  
Vice-President: Keith Althar (STARTEXT: 49530)  
Secretary: Richard Roberts (SOURCE: T13332; STARTEXT: 7772)  
Treasurer: Earl Bullock  
Editor: Robert Lee Hoffpauer (SOURCE: T13700; STARTEXT: 51547)

This newsletter is the official publication of the DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP, a non-profit organization serving member/users of the Texas Instruments 99/4A HOME COMPUTER. For more information you are invited to attend our next meeting or send a SASE to: DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP, Irving, Texas 75061.

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SEPTEMBER PROGRAM: Don Johnson

Well, we had hoped to offer you folks a demonstration of Super Sketch, a piece of hardware similar to the Koala Pad, but available for the TI 99/4A. The good news is that we still hope to bring this one off. The bad news is that we can't seem to get ahold of the manufacturer. It is known, I'm not sure by whom it is known, but it is known that they exist somewhere in the Metroplex. We'll keep trying.

On the other hand, the news is not all that bad. Richard Roberts and Robert Hoffpauer will give us a double treat. Richard will look at a disk using Disk Fixer and discuss some of the ways you might be able to 'fix' a blown directory. Robert will share his knowledge of the formatting option of TI-Writer. Richard says he can only discuss some of his subject because he has a few matters remaining to figure out. Hey, some information may help us out of a jam some day. Robert, I'm sure, will have something for us that will be useful every day. This may be a more interesting program than the one that didn't materialize. Bring your note-pads and pencils.

SECRETARY'S MINUTES: Richard Roberts

Last month's meeting of the Dallas TI Home Computer Group was on August 17, 1984. The meeting was brought to order by club vice-president, Keith Althar. The minutes from the July meeting were read by club secretary, Richard Roberts.

Keith then presented several proposals for club members to vote on. All proposals passed. The first one was for approval to purchase a standard power strip to use with the club computer during meetings. We have not always been able to rely on finding one available in the auditorium, so it is necessary to bring one of our own. The second proposal was to approve the idea of inviting the monthly speaker to eat pizza with us after the meeting, and to pay for the meal with club money.

Richard Roberts then introduced the speaker, Don Bynus. Most TI owners will recognize that Mr. Bynus was an instrumental figure in the development of the 99/4A computer, and achieved the status of vice-president of the Home Computer division, before bad times set in. He is now, among other things, selling software for the 99/4A under the name of Softail Inc. So far, he is marketing two programs, TE-1200, a terminal emulator program, and Guardian, an assembly language game. He also has another company, Texas Peripherals, to market his line of hardware devices for the 99/4A, namely the FORTI music card. Both TE-1200, and the FORTI music card were demonstrated during the meeting.

I am sure I speak for the whole group when I say that it was a most enjoyable presentation, and it also showed us how gracious a person Mr. Bynus is, as he eagerly answered any question put to him, from the adults as well as the children. Perhaps we can talk him into coming back in a few months.

This is an excellent program. The package comes with two disks and a small, but informative booklet. Included on disk is a 20,000 word dictionary. The user can add his own words in a second dictionary, which makes the dictionary almost unlimited.

The following hardware is needed to operate the program: (1) a TI-99/4A, (2) a PERIPHERAL EXPANSION BOX, (3) a 32K MEMORY EXPANSION, (4) a TI WRITER WORD PROCESSOR or TI EDITOR ASSEMBLER, (5) a 1 or 2 DISK DRIVES.

It has a lot of good functions like being able to change the words in your file without reloading, searching for, and rewriting the word. If you don't know from the word being displayed what you wrote, you can see it in the context in which you used it. You can also delete the word from your file, or leave it as it is. If the word is correct but it is not listed in the dictionary, you can put it in your dictionary and next time it won't kick it out as a misspelled word.

The spelling checker has two drawbacks that I can find. If you use a word in the wrong context -- like 'to,' 'too,' or 'two' -- the computer would not catch it. But then, it's not easy to proofread your work, only to find the misspelled words. Another thing is that it has a function that is misnamed. It is 'NEXT' function. It doesn't go to the next word if that word has not been displayed yet, but is used when you have gone backwards to look at a word that had previously been displayed, and then want to go forward again, until you get back up to the last word displayed by the spelling checker before you went backwards.

I was planning to bring it to the next users group meeting for all to see it and try writing and checking a few letters, but as of this afternoon (8/13/84) I will start nightshift at work and will not be able to make it to the Friday meetings until I am on another schedule. I recommend this program to anyone who uses TI-Writer.

FORTH Language Book Review: Robert Lee Hoffbauer

Title: FORTH Fundamentals  
 Author: C. Kevin McCabe  
 Publisher: Dilithium Press (1983) Beaverton, Oregon  
 Prices: Vol. 1 - \$15.95 (paperback)  
 Vol. 2 - \$12.95 (paperback)

For years now, the only tutorial book available for the FORTH language was Starting FORTH by Leo Brodie, and virtually everywhere one turns there are references to this volume. The TI-FORTH manual even includes a section detailing, on an occurrence by occurrence basis, every difference between the poly-FORTH version used in that book and the TI version of FORTH.

However, in the last two years several new books have been published to introduce the newcomer to FORTH. Among these is FORTH Fundamentals. Available in paperback, in two volumes, I personally feel that Mr. McCabe has rendered us all a valuable service by producing a tutorial that is at once thorough and intelligible while not condescending. Volume One is the tutorial, and can easily stand on its own, without the second volume (a glossary of FORTH words found in the major dialects of FORTH).

Volume One of FORTH Fundamentals is one hundred ninety pages of text, thirty pages of appendices, and an index. The first five of the twelve chapters are an introduction to how the language works without going into the details of how the FORTH language accomplishes what is being illustrated, and includes many short routines that the TI user can key-in with a minimum of conversion (in most cases no conversion at all), while the remaining seven chapters are in depth discussions of the how's, why's, and wherefore's of FORTH. One of the features that I especially appreciated was that whenever a new word is introduced, it is accompanied by a legend indicating which version(s) of FORTH use the word.

The first book I bought on FORTH was Starting FORTH, but I did not find what I was looking for. Each of the major parts of the FORTH system (the text interpreter, the compiler, etc.) were set into little comic strip characters -- an approach that I would not have chosen. FORTH Fundamentals, on the other hand, employs a straight-forward approach, explaining thoroughly with the aid of short routines and diagrams. I believe that I learned more in one night's reading of FORTH Fundamentals than in any other single effort. I most heartily recommend this volume (VOL. 1) to anyone requiring an introductory text. Volume two is not required to make use of volume one since the TI-FORTH manual includes a glossary of the words in TI-FORTH.