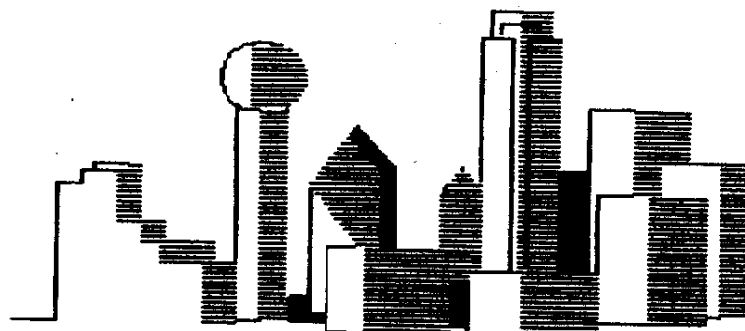




DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP
 PO BOX 29863
 DALLAS, TEXAS 75229



DALLAS 99 INTERFACE

Volume 8, Number 3

September 2, 1988

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
 PO Box 29863
 Dallas, Texas 75229

NEXT MEETING:
 Saturday, September 10, 1988
 The Dallas INFOMART

99er Connection BBS
 24 Hours, 300/1200 Baud
 214-272-2786

----- September Highlights -----

Meeting Day:
 Special SIG: PLATO Couces and Software
 Main Meeting: DESKTOP Publishing
 Special SIG: TI-WRITER Printer Techniques

Minisig, September 18, 1988
 TI-Writer Workshop

Next-Step Workshop,
 September 23, 1988

Inside the DALLAS 99 INTERFACE:
 Coming Events
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 Heard Following the Bus
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 Next-Step Report
 GOSUB 32767
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 CEOTICS
 Membership Services
 Funnyweb Farmz

FIRST CLASS

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 SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

| Event | Date | Time |
|---|----------|----------|
| "Super Saturday" meetings at INFOMART | 09/10/88 | |
| Special SIG: PLATO courses and software, presented by Socratic pedagogue Tom Hall. | 09/10/88 | 09:00 am |
| Main Meeting: DESK TOP PUBLISHING, led by the winner of the DTIHCG "William Randolph Hearst" award, Doug Garretson. | 09/10/88 | 10:00 am |
| Special SIG: TI-WRITER printer techniques and tricks, with Bill "Wanna see my hook?" Pry. | 09/10/88 | 13:00 pm |
| Executive Committee Meeting, at Guion's. | 09/17/88 | |
| DTIHCG Officers | 09/17/88 | 13:00 pm |
| Committee Chairmen | 09/17/88 | 14:30 pm |
| MiniSIG: TI-Writer Workshop, hosted by Angela Parker at St. Mark's School 1201 Alna, Plano, Texas. # + | 09/18/88 | 14:00 pm |
| Newsletter Deadline (for REAL, this time!) | 09/28/88 | 18:00 pm |
| NEXT-STEP Workshop: at Wyatt's Cafeteria, Bellline and Josey, Carrollton, Texas. # | 09/23/88 | 17:15 pm |

| | | |
|---|----------|----------|
| "Super Saturday" meetings at INFOMART | 10/15/88 | |
| Special SIG: Realtime clock options, presented by John Guion. | 10/15/88 | 09:00 am |
| Main Meeting: To be announced. | 10/15/88 | 10:00 am |
| Special SIG: Disk drive diagnostics, by Jon Hodges. | 10/15/88 | 13:00 pm |

 NOTES:

- # = DTIHCG membership required.
 - + = Reservations required.
 - \$ = Attendance Fee.
-

----- NAME OR ADDRESS CHANGE? -----

The mailing label on the back of this page is prepared from the official roster of member of the Dallas TI Home Computer Group. If your name or address is incorrecct, please:

1. Indicate corrections in the space(s) provided below.
2. Remove this ENTIRE page (so that we get a copy of your current mailing label) from this newsletter.
3. Mail it to the group return address shown on the back cover.

Name..... _____

Address... _____

City..... _____ STATE... _____ ZIP... _____

----- UNCLASSIFIED ADS -----

DTIHCG members are invited to submit advertisements to buy or sell their personal computer equipment. Ads must be received by the normal newsletter deadline and will be published at no charge, on a space available basis.

YOUR AD COULD BE HERE!

 Club Officers

| | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|-------|-----------|
| President | Rip Dowling | (METRO) | (817) | 467-0369 |
| Vice-President | Louis Guion | | (214) | 239-6829 |
| Secretary | Robert Jones | | 1-214 | -875-7096 |
| Treasurer | Greg Justice | | (214) | 240-6647 |
| Member at Large | Tom Hall | (METRO) | (817) | 267-5987 |

 Club Chairpersons

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------|-------|-----------|
| Adventure Librarian | Carol Tapia | | (214) | 442-5022 |
| BBS SysOp | Dan Johnsen | | (214) | 494-6770 |
| Cartridge Librarian | Doug Garretson | | (214) | 475-7580 |
| Cassette Librarian | Billy Monroe | | (214) | 285-5397 |
| CCD Representative | Louis Guion | | (214) | 239-6829 |
| CCD Alternate | Lynn Nidiffer | | (214) | 228-4820 |
| Disk-Of-the-Month | Chris Slenker | | (214) | 340-2463 |
| Diskette Sales | Thierry Weber | | (214) | 686-8737 |
| Hardware Custodian | John Creviston | | (214) | 594-0721 |
| Historian | Richard Roberts | | (214) | 579-7822 |
| Material Distribution | David Martin | | 1-214 | -370-3268 |
| Membership Chairman | Mike Chapman | | (214) | 255-5643 |
| Mini-SIG Chairman | Tom Hall | (METRO) | (817) | 267-5987 |
| Newsletter Editor | Dan Johnsen | | (214) | 494-6770 |
| Newsletter Librarian | Mike Stanfill | | (214) | 320-2293 |
| Program Chairman | Jim Stewart | | 1-214 | -902-8686 |
| Recruitment Chairman | Walter Pearson | | (214) | 943-2439 |
| Software Librarian | Charlice Althar | | (214) | 337-4840 |
| Special Projects | Bill Pry | | (214) | 247-8909 |
| Volunteer Chairman | | | | |

These people are the club's officers and chairpersons. They all are invited to, and most attend, the two and a half hour Committee Chairmen's meeting (the officers meet for an hour and a half before that!) on the Saturday one week after the INFOMART meeting. In addition to just belonging, they serve themselves and you by giving freely of their time to make this a better club for us all. Thank them individually if you have the opportunity.



O.K. One more time, just to be sure we have it straight. The club bought out the computer lab at Cisterian so they could purchase other materials. The eight systems remaining after those allocated for club use will be sold to the membership. Each system consists of a TI/99/4A computer with power transformer, a TI color monitor with cables, a peripheral expansion box, a flex-cable interface card, a TI 32K memory expansion card, a TI disk controller card and a single

sided/single density disk drive, everything needed to run a complete disk based system.

These systems will be sold complete for \$250.00 each and are a very good buy. A three month layaway will be available for any member who wishes to use it. If there should be a default on a layaway the money will be refunded and another drawing will be held for that system. Two systems will be sold at each of the next four Super Saturday INFOMART meetings. There will be two drawings from the names of members interested in the systems who are either (1) in attendance or (2) have notified the club secretary, by letter, that they cannot attend but wish to be included in that month's drawing.

A slight advantage in the first and third months will be given to those members who do not have a disk based system in their possession. Their names will be in a special drawing of those names only. The second drawing in those months will be from all the remaining names.

Come to Super Saturday and join the joust for a second system or, especially for your first disk based system.

Next item on the agenda, comes as kind of a shock to my system. It seems like I just jumped into these waters and it's nearly time to come out and get dried off. Yessar, it's time to be thinking about the coming year and who is going to do what, and with which, and to whom.

There are lots of jobs to be done in this organization and lots of different ways to lend your individual support to the group as a whole. A nominating committee is nearly complete and will be announced at INFOMART. If you have any suggestions for the chair officers or if you are interested in any of the offices or chairmanships you can let them know. Don't be afraid to get your feet wet. The water is fine and all the sharks are little ones.

Next month in this column we will copy the past president and give job descriptions for all the offices and chairmanships. In fact if we can find it we might just submit his article. As my writing teacher told me plagerize, plagerize, plagerize.



After a substantial wait, the DataBioTics Grand RAM is FINALLY here! About a year ago, twelve members of our group got together and ordered twelve 512K Grand RAM P-Box cards. Now, a year later, DataBioTics has shipped us a "Grand" total of one 128K Grand RAM. The advertised price for the 512K version had been \$240 plus shipping and was to include the card, a manual, and software (complete with source code). However, memory prices went up and DataBioTics has ceased to advertise the card.

FOLLOWING THE BUS There's a lot more to the story, but I'll leave it by John Guion to someone else to explain it all.

The Grand RAM is a RAM-Disk that can be configured to have anywhere from 64K to 512K. Unlike some other RAM-Disks (Myarc, CorComp, Foundation), the Grand RAM is also battery-backed so information stored on the card is retained after the power to the system is shut off. While there are other RAM-Disks that are battery backed (Horizon, Rave MX101), the Grand RAM also has a few extra features. These include a print spooler, clock, extra expansion ports, a power-up menu, and "hot keys".

The operating system that allows the RAM memory to be used like a disk is stored in RAM on the Grand RAM card. It occupies 12K of memory that cannot be used for the other features on the card. The operating system is loaded by what is called the Configurator program. This program is loaded with the Editor/Assembler or Extended BASIC module. Once the Configurator is loaded, the Grand RAM's operating system can be loaded from disk into the card. All of the other features, such as setting up the print spooler and RAM-Disk, are accomplished with the Configurator. This is similar to using the CONFIG program on the Horizon RAM-Disk, but all functions are accessed from a single screen by pressing one key. The Configurator is also used to save the operating system back to disk once it has been customized by the user.

The most prominent feature, of course, is the RAM-Disk. This allows the user to use RAM memory to emulate a floppy disk drive. This not only offers more storage for your system, but the RAM-Disk operates about ten to twenty times faster than a floppy disk. In the 512K configuration, 500K of memory can be used for RAM-Disk. Since the TI disk system is limited to a maximum of 400K per drive, any memory used for RAM-Disk past 400K must be divided into multiple RAM-Disk drives. I tested the card with 128K of memory and then added another 64K of memory to the card (using my own chips). This allowed me to set up RAM-Disks of 464 and 720 sectors, respectively. If desired, this could be broken into smaller drives or increased with more memory chips. Other than the setup and speed, the RAM-Disk functions just like a floppy disk drive.

Another important feature is the print spooler. Memory on the Grand RAM can be traded between RAM-Disk and print spooler in 2K increments. Thus, some memory can be set aside for the spooler while leaving the rest available for the RAM-Disk. The spooler "intercepts" information that is being sent to the RS232 card and stores it in the Grand RAM's memory. The information is accepted by the Grand RAM at very high speed instead of going to the RS232 card. Use of the computer is returned to the user while the Grand RAM then takes care of sending data to the RS232 card (and printer) at whatever speed it can. This greatly reduces the amount of time spent waiting for the printer to print when other work could be done. The print spooler does essentially the same job as an external print buffer. Unlike a print SEE "BUS", page 05

```

+-----+
+ 1 !*****TINYBURN***** +
+ *****A TINYGRAM***** +
+ ****BY MIKE STANFILL**** +
+ **CALLAS TI USER GROUP** +
+ ***** +
+-----+
+ 2 CALL CLEAR :: CALL COLOR(9 +
+ ,7,7):: CALL VCHAR(1,23,64,1 +
+ 68):: CALL HCHAR(24,1,64,96) +
+ :: RANDOMIZE :: Z=96 +
+-----+
+ 3 FOR T=3 TO 23 STEP 2 :: DI +
+ SPLAY AT(T,2):RPT$("H",12); +
+ :: NEXT T :: FOR T=3 TO 27 +
+-----+
+ 4 J=INT(RND*20)-10 +
+-----+
+ 5 IF T/2<>INT(T/2)THEN CALL +
+ SPRITE(#T,79,5,RND*190+1,T*8 +
+ -7,J,0)ELSE CALL SPRITE(#T,7 +
+ 9,5,T*8-7,RND*190+1,0,J,#1,8 +
+ 8,9,97,121):: H=132 +
+-----+
+ 6 NEXT T :: X=13 :: Y=16 +
+-----+
+ 7 CALL KEY(1,K,S):: J=(K=5)- +
+ (K=0):: L=(K=2)-(K=3):: CALL +
+ GCHAR(X+J,Y+L,C):: IF C=32 +
+ THEN X=X+J :: Y=Y+L :: CALL +
+ LOCATE(#1,X*8-7,Y*8-7) +
+-----+
+ 8 CALL COINC(#1,#X,5,P):: CA +
+ LL COINC(#1,#Y,5,P):: IF C=7 +
+ 2 THEN CALL HCHAR(X+J,Y+L,Z) +
+ :: H=H-1 :: IF H=0 THEN END +
+-----+
+ 9 IF P THEN END ELSE 7 +
+-----+

```

(And here's that joystick code I alluded to earlier.)

```

+-----+
+ 7 CALL JOYST(1,J,L):: L=SGN( +
+ L):: J=SGN(-J):: CALL GCHAR( +
+ X+J,Y+L,C):: IF C=32 THEN X= +
+ X+J :: Y=Y+L :: CALL LOCATE( +
+ #1,X*8-7,Y*8-7) +
+-----+

```

```

1 !****NAME THAT PHCNE****
* No 1's or 0's Please *
* A Tiny Gram *
* by Ed Machonis *
**QB-99'ers Bayside NY**
-----
2 DEF S$=SEG$(G$,1,LEN(G$)-1
):: AS="****###ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPRSTUVWXY" :: FOR C=1 TO 7
3 INPUT "ENTER DIGIT "&STR$(
C)&" OF PHONE # ":D :: E$=E$
&SEG$(A$,D*3+1,3):: NEXT C
4 PRINT "0=SCREEN":1=PRINT
ER:"CHOICE (0/1)",:: INPUT
P :: IF P THEN OPEN #P:"PIO"
5 FOR F=1 TO 3 :: G$=""&SEG$(
E$,F,1):: FOR H=1 TO 3 :: G
$=G$&SEG$(E$,3+H,1):: FOR J=
1 TO 3 :: G$=G$&SEG$(E$,6+J,
1):: FOR K=1 TO 3 :: G$=G$&S
EG$(E$,9+K,1):: FOR L=1 TO 3
6 G$=G$&SEG$(E$,12+L,1):: FO
R M=1 TO 3 :: G$=G$&SEG$(E$,
15+M,1):: FOR N=1 TO 3
7 G$=G$&SEG$(E$,18+N,1):: PR
INT #P:G$:: G$=S$ :: NEXT N
:: G$=S$ :: NEXT M :: G$=S$
:: NEXT L :: G$=S$ :: NEXT
K :: G$=S$ :: NEXT J :: G$=S
$ :: NEXT H :: NEXT F
-----

```

I hope you found this as interesting as I did (but it ain't likely!). And thanks again, ED!

"WEB", continued from page 15
matrix of "H"'s (The houses) and along every street you'll see an "O"
(Das federales) loping merrily along (More on this later) and snack
cab in the middle of the screen, hidden safely in a "safe" house, is
an "X" (You, you nototov nadman you!).

It takes a second or two to get up and RUNNING but you'll know the
game has begun when the 'house' you're in turns red (On fire) at which
time you may use the arrow keys (Or a joystick if you wish to use the
alternative input routine, to be found immediately following the
program listing.) to move your man.

Once you leave the 'safe' house you will not be allowed re-entry into
it or any other house. Your mission is to torch the city and to do so
requires nothing more than moving your man next to a house and
pressing the arrow key (Or joystick.) in the direction of the house,
at which time it will turn red indicating it is on fire (Gets better
all the time doesn't it?). But be alert of the ever-present
authorities because you only get ONE life in this game. That's right!
One Sprite coincidence and "Pfffft!" it's 'Game over!' Gonesville
City, Arizona! The Ultimate Overload! No more! Endola! Finito! Get it?

This game originally had more features than I could work in and I
encourage you to consider modifying it to your taste. Try making the
houses look like houses, the burning houses look like burning houses,
your man look more "manly" and whatever you want to do with the
"strolling do-nuts".

Add a scoring feature. Make some worth more than others (In a "Friday
the 13th mode of thinking a day-care center is obviously worth more
than a hardware store, right?).

Sprites too fast (Or slow?)? Look at line 4 and change the 20 and 10
to numbers where the first is twice that of the second as this assures
that you'll have Sprites moving in both directions. At least most of
the time. It wouldn't hurt to add a bit of code that reads:

```
::IF J=0 THEN 4
```

as this assures that you won't have Sprites sitting rock-still which
will happen in the listed version. Although some would consider this
a blessing, I just ran out of room.

If it turns out you find little joy in the vicarious oxidation of
residences then stick with me and I'll see what I can do for you all
next month (By which time the Wowboys should be eliminated from the
play-offs and all the pressure will be off.). Toodles!

!!! BONUS TINYGRAM !!!

Ed Machonis and I think a lot alike. Ed, if you'll recall, has found
as much fascination with the Tinygram as I have, he and his son being
the originators of the "Tinyheels" program I glorified in my Funnyweb
column a coupla months back. Ed and Mike have written many programs
which I've discovered in several newsletters. I'll be sharing more of
these with you later.

But you'll recall, I wrote a Tinygram a few months ago that would let
you see the ENTIRE range of words or phrases that your phone number
might possibly be (The 99'er number, 272-2786, works out to be "CRAB
RUN", "ARAB RUM", or even "CRAB RUM"!). So, much to my glee and
surprise I find that Ed has written one also!

"BUS", continued from page 04
buffer, however, the print spooler must use the computer to operate
and therefore slows down other operations of the computer.

The Grand RAM also has an optional real-time clock. Like the memory,
the clock is battery-backed and does not need to be reset if the power
is shut off. The clock provides time, date, and day of the week
information. There are two methods for using the clock. First, it
may be accessed through programs (BASIC, assembly, or others) by
opening a file called "TIME". The time and other information may then
be read by the program. This is a very simple operation and is
similar to the methods used by the other clock devices for the
TI-99/4A. Second, the clock may be activated by a series of
keystrokes so that the time is always in the upper right corner of
the screen. Whether in BASIC, TI-Writer, or almost any other program, the
time is available in this manner. The time will be displayed
regardless of whether or not a program is currently running or even if
the screen has been cleared. A different set of keystrokes are used
to turn this feature off.

An optional menu may also be used that will appear whenever the
computer is turned on or reset. Instead of the TI title screen
appearing, the menu (called ROOT) will appear. The ROOT menu offers
several features. The user can use it to catalog a disk, display or
print a file, run either an assembly language or Extended BASIC
program, and create a list of fifteen programs of the user's choice
that may be run with the stroke of a single key. The user programs
can also be assembly or Extended BASIC, however, any Extended BASIC
program run from this menu requires that the Extended BASIC module be
inserted in the computer. No module is required to run the assembly
programs. The ROOT program was written by John Johnson for use with
the Grand RAM and is identical in appearance and operation to both his
MENU and BOOT programs.

The primary operating difference between the Grand RAM and other
RAM-Disk cards is that all functions can be controlled by what are
called "hot keys". The hot keys are a series of keystrokes that are
set up by the user to control certain functions of the Grand RAM.
Functions such as turning the ROOT power-up on or off, turning the
clock on or off, cancelling spooler output, and other features are
handled through the hot keys. When the Configurator program is run,
it will ask the user to press the keys desired to activate a series of
functions. Once the hot keys are set up for one function, the
Configurator proceeds to the next function. When all of the hot keys
have been assigned, all that is required to control these functions is
pressing the key combinations that have been selected. For example, I
set up the keys so that pressing CTRL, FCTN, and T all at the same
time will turn on the clock display. Pressing CTRL, SHIFT, and T will
turn it off. Once they are set up, the hot keys are always active.
This means that any function controlled by the hot keys may be
accessed from either BASIC, the ROOT menu, the TI title screen or from
a running program.

One problem that has always plagued RAM-Disks is that they cannot be
100% compatible with a real floppy disk drive. Early attempts at
RAM-Disk cards were incompatible more often than not. Like the
Horizon RAM-Disk, however, the Grand RAM is just about as compatible
as a RAM-Disk can get. With the exception of programs such as high
speed disk copiers that access disk controller cards directly, the
Grand RAM is compatible with all floppy disk functions. I tested the
Grand RAM with BASIC, Extended BASIC, Editor/Assembler, Funnelweb,
Disk Utils, Fast-Term, Archiver, and other programs with no problems.
SEE "BUS", page 06

"BUS" continued from page 05

In fact, the only difference noticed was the speed increase due to the RAM-Disk. Since the size of the RAM-Disk is variable, it can also be set up to be the same size as a floppy disk, should any program require it. This is also nice in that it allows the RAM-Disk size to match your floppy disk size which makes backing up the RAM-Disk more convenient.

The Grand RAM also has a selectable CRJ base which determines the memory space accessed by the card. This allows it to be added to a system without the problem of interfering with another card in the system. I tested the card with both a Foundation and a Horizon RAM-Disk in the box and all three cards worked together. One notable aspect of the Grand RAM design is that it does not replace the 32K card. Unlike RAM-Disks that do replace the 32K, multiple Grand RAM cards can be used in the same system in addition to other RAM-Disks (as mentioned above). This also allows it to be used with consoles modified to use the 16-bit bus for the 32K memory.

The Grand RAM has several good points. It provides an impressive increase in speed over floppy disks and is comparable to the other available RAM-Disks. The design of the card allows the user to choose a wide variety of memory sizes, so the user does not have to purchase more memory than they want or can use. The card is designed so that the only thing required to increase the memory is plugging in more 32K RAM chips (43256 or 62256 type). No soldering or other alterations are required. The battery-backing is also convenient in that it saves the time required to reload the RAM-Disk if the system has been shut down. The clock is a nice feature that not only allows a constant time display, but also is easy for programmers to access through software. The ROOT menu software is of a proven design and is probably the most useful feature of the RAM-Disk. It allows the user to set up a system with his/her favorite programs so that they are instantly and easily accessible. The spooler not only speeds up printing procedures, but eliminates the need for yet another device connected to the system. Finally, the Configurator software is the first program of its type to allow the novice user an easy and direct way to set up a RAM-Disk.

Unfortunately, the Grand RAM has also has quite a few problems. While I don't know everything about the 99/4A, I do consider myself an experienced user. I have owned RAM-Disks for four years and my family now has seven of them. Understanding the operation of the Grand RAM has been a thoroughly confusing project. The manual was supplied on disk (no printed copy) and is very poorly written. One of the documentation files even required fixing with a sector editor before it would print. Not only are the operating instructions incomplete, the procedures that are described are neither fully explained nor consistent throughout the manual. The Grand RAM was also supposed to be supplied with commented source code for its operating system. This might have shed some light on the problems I encountered, but it was not included as was advertised. The package also was advertised as including 4A Talk and Disk Master. Aside from the fact that I find neither of these programs useful or suitable for the Grand RAM, neither program had any documentation. A very disturbing fact was that the board was shipped with broken solder connections as well as two connections that had NEVER been soldered. These had to be soldered before the card was used. Wires had been added to fix improper board layout and one transistor had been added to the board with only one of its three pins soldered to anything. The physical design of the board also disturbs me in that it uses PAL chips and other components that are not readily available. This, coupled with SEE "BUS", page 07

 THE CUTTING EDGE OF TECHNOLOGY IN COMPUTER SCIENCE



Tandy took the industry by surprise earlier this year when they announced their new ERASEABLE-CD-ROM called 'THOR-CD', which means Tandy High-intensity Optical Recordable Compact Disk. So far they are not saying publicly how they are doing it, but they are licensing other companies to use their technology to produce these new disk devices.

C E O T I C S
by Jim Leshar

Not only can these disks store computer info, but audio and video also. So the disks the music and video industry are using today will be the same ones we will be using in our computer disk drives. Also the player now used for the CD's today will be slightly modified to read the CD-ROMS tomorrow. It is conceivable that our disk drives of the future will also double as our VCR and stereo (but not likely). With 3 different industries using virtually the same device it should bring the cost down much lower than a system born out of brand new technology. The projected price for the drive is \$500, a lot better than the first estimate by a company called Philips, who said \$1000 for the first computer CD drives.



FUNNYWEB FARMZ
by Mike Stanfill

Well, here we are again, smack dab in the middle of what passes for fall, and football, around these here parts. No telling how the Wowboys will be doing by the time this gets printed but it's probably going to be a darn sight better than the "Boys of Summer" (The "We'll Get 'em Next Decade" Rangers.) have done. Even so, I suspect it's another "Year of the 'Buffalo", so why don't we staunch fan-types run off good old Bobs mouth before he runs it off for us! (No real offense intended here, Bob, but keep it up and we'll either hold the bonfire AT your place or IN it!)

I know all of this is music to your ears but what you REALLY want to know is what this months Tinygram is all about. You do, don't you?

Regardless of the repercussions, here it is anyway. A lovely little '88 that's rambunctious, yet pithy, called "Tinyburn" and, no, it has nothing to do with the "greenhouse" (Or even the "Whitehouse".) effect.

In this delightful digital ditty you are an arsonist and you're trying to burn down every house in the city before someone stops you. (Oh, I just KNEW you'd like it!)

After typing-in, SAVEing, and RUNNING the program you'll see an 11X12 SEE "WEB" on page 16

 MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

99er CONNECTION BBS:

Fire up your modem and call 214-272-2786. The group BBS answers both 300 and 1200 baud, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Be sure to let the SysOp know if you are a new DTIHCG member...

STUFF FOR SALE:

Each month a new Disk-Of-the-Month, packed with a little something for everyone is available at group meetings for \$3.00 each. A limited number of "back issues" may be available, be sure to check with the D-O-M chairman.

Blank diskettes are also available for purchase at most group functions. These high quality, generic diskettes may cost a nickel more than the "junk stuff," but they ALMOST NEVER give you any problems; if they do the Diskette Sales Chairman will ABSOLUTELY NEVER give you any problem exchanging one!

Other "minor" hardware (GROM ports, keyboards, power supplies, cables, etc) are also available to members at most meetings. See the "Material Distribution" chairman to get the going rate on the things you need.

As opportunities arise, the group often sponsors "mass purchases" of major items of hardware. Watch this section of the newsletter and stay awake at the meetings to find out what the current "buy" is. asks for your help, give it

HARDWARE LOAN:

A limited number of 99/4A consoles and acoustic modems (you thought they were all gone, didn't you?) are available for loan to members who experience equipment failures. The Hardware Custodian doesn't carry this stuff around with him though, so be sure to give him a call BEFORE the meeting to let him know your needs.

"PEOPLE SERVICES":

The Recruitment Committee is always on the lookout for new and better ways to let potential members know we exist. If you have a suggestion or (better yet) can lend a hand, give the chairman a call.

The Membership Committee handles enrollment of new members and distribution of information to guests and new members alike, as well as providing services to our existing members. If you're new, check with the Membership Chairman if you need a little assistance; if you've been around for a while, give him a hand in welcoming our guests and new members. That's one of the things that got you to sign up, isn't it?

Our Volunteer Coordinator has a multitude of thankless tasks. Each meeting requires organization of who is bringing what, who will help with the set up and tear down, to say nothing of notification to the membership. If the chairman asks for your help, give it cheerfully; better yet, volunteer BEFORE you have to be asked!

"BUS" continued from page 06

the fact that no schematics were provided, makes the user entirely dependent on DataBioTics should any problem with the card arise. The two expansion ports on the top of the card may have a useful purpose, but DataBioTics has made no announcement concerning the release of the proposed devices for these ports. At the moment, they only add to the complexity and cost of the card. Another disturbing design flaw is that the card is too tall to allow the lid to be placed on the P-Box. The metal plate on the lid contacts the card and does not allow the clips to even touch the lid. The battery is also an uncommon device that is very thick and presses tightly against any card that is next to it.

Aside from the potential problems and inconveniences, the operation of the card also has bugs. When setting up the hot keys, the Configurator does not always accept the keys that were pressed, even though the display shows that it has. This is even more annoying since the manual's only mention of entering the hot keys says to follow the prompts in the Configurator, which make little sense. The clock display is a handy feature, but it causes problems when used with programs such as TI-Writer since it overwrites part of the screen. Pressing the keys to turn the clock off will work, but they are sometimes interpreted by the program being used as some other function as well. Having to turn the clock on and off during normal use also detracts from its usefulness as a convenient clock. This biggest bug I found was when the operating system was corrupted (which happened quite often). When a Horizon RAM-Disk has a corrupted operating system, it will usually fail to load the menu and require reloading of the operating system. When the Grand Ram corrupts its operating system, there is no indication until an attempt to write something to the RAM-Disk is made. At that point, it wipes out the contents of the RAM-Disk, losing whatever data may have been on it and locking up the computer.

The only conclusion I can reach is that the Grand RAM, in its current state, is not a good purchase. DataBioTics has a product which not only suffers from delivery problems, but is subject to the current RAM pricing problem. The user is dependent on their product support, with which they have failed even before the card is available. These factors, along with the various software and hardware problems, are not encouraging. Perhaps if the card could have been delivered when advertised or if more work in development had taken place, the Grand RAM could have been an excellent product. With the current situation, however, it seems that the money would be better invested in other products.

 ATTENTION OFFICERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

Please review any mention of your group function, activities or responsibilities in this newsletter. Some of this stuff is getting stale! Please submit rewritten or revised information for use in future newsletter editions. Thanks!

 DTIHCG MEMBER PROFILE: ROSWELL WHITMORE

Roswell (Ross) Whitmore has been an active member of the DTIHCG since January 1967. He has been living in Dallas for the past 40 years, and is originally from Boston, Massachusetts. He makes his home with his wife, Eva Jeanne.

Ross is a retired rubber chemist/consultant, and has been keeping himself busy with his hobbies, the TI-99/4A and photography. Ross uses the two together, one to take color slides of Texas wild flowers and one to catalog and sort the slides (I'll let you figure out which he uses for which).

Ross has had his TI-99/4A since 1987, and he has taught himself how to program in BASIC. He enjoys the DTIHCG because the group is so active. Ross also belongs to the Dallas Camera Club, and has received the APSA and DCCF awards for his photographic achievements.

Ross and Eva Jeanne have put together a side show called "Texas Wild Flowers" that they present to nursing homes, schools, and church clubs. Maybe we could get them to put it on for our group?



Want to learn more about TI-WRITER? In a group setting in which *YOU* have *YOUR* hands on the keyboard, learning more about the commands that make this such a powerful tool? How about learning to set up templates for your frequently-used letters, reports, term papers, book reports, etc.? Are you familiar with PLUS!, which was reviewed in MICROpendium in May? Does the idea of using the Transliterate command send you into a nervous tizzy?

TIWRITER MINISIG

Charlice Althar DTIHCG has the help you need! Our September MiniSig will be a first for our group in several ways. We'll be meeting at St. Mark School's computer lab, so everyone will have a system to work with throughout the session. We'll do our best to cover the things mentioned above, answer your questions, and de-mystify Word Processing. We'll be using FUNNELWEB V4.11, just released August 16! The number of participants will be limited to the number of systems in the lab, so reserve your place by calling Charlice Althar, 337-4840, or sign up at INFOMART. Mark your calendar, Sunday afternoon at 2 PM, September 18, at St. Mark School in Plano.

Each participant will need to bring the following:

1. Extended Basic, Editor/Assembler, or TI-WRITER cartridge.
2. TI-WRITER manual, if you have one. We'll try to have some available for purchase for those who don't have them.
3. TI-WRITER keyboard overlay strip and Quick Reference Card, if you have them.
4. Note-taking materials.
5. Blank disks.
6. Please label your materials so we can return any thing left over after the session!

In addition to all the above, it's gonna be fun! See you all there!



605WB-32767

by Dan Johnsen

THE FRIENDLY PROGRAM. A program that actually works (and works right) gives its author a tremendous sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. At least it does until he gives it to a friend to use...

The programmer understands the operation of his program. He knows if a file name has to include "DSK1."; he knows if an entry has to be in upper case; he knows how large a number can be before the program crashes. The user, however, knows only what he reads in the documentation or sees on the screen. Things that are "intuitively obvious" to the programmer often baffle the most experienced user. He shouldn't have to look at the code (and may not be able to) to successfully use the program.

The (sometime elusive) idea of "user friendliness" STARTS with these two principles:

1. Don't expect the user to understand things he wasn't explicitly told. Make it clear what he is to do.
2. Anticipate errors that the user might make. Don't allow his misunderstanding the program to cause problems for it.

Some folks would list dozens of rules for writing a user friendly program. We may get around to some of them in a future column, but for now keep these two things in mind and exercise a little common sense; it will get you a long way down the road to friendly programming.

Try your hand at writing some friendly BASIC (or extended BASIC) code to solve the following problem. There are an unlimited number of ways to approach such a program, so... The shortest solution will win the "TINYMIND" Award, the fastest will win the "Change for a Dollar" Award and all other successful attempts will receive the "(I did it) My Way" Award. Assume the following:

1. You need the user to enter the length of a fish, in centimeters.
2. The length will be stored in a numeric variable, "FISH."
3. Whole numbers and decimal fractions are OK, scientific notation is not.
4. Prompts, help or error messages from YOU are OK, error messages from either of the BASICs are definitely NOT friendly.
5. You have a clear screen with which to work.
6. The program is fairly small, so you have no serious memory constraint.

A quick-and-dirty program, for your personal use only, might use
 100 INPUT FISH

Such a line of code, however, leaves you open to all sorts of problems when someone else uses the program! You'll need to provide a meaningful prompt of some sort and you may want to use a different technique for accepting the input. Be sure to consider all the different ways the user might make an incorrect entry, including a null entry (pressing ENTER without having entered anything else).

Send your solutions to me via the 99er Connection BBS, the club P.O. box or deliver them in person no later than the October 15, 1988 meeting at INFOMART; we'll take a look at 'em in the November newsletter. Suggestions for future BASIC programming problems are also welcome!

Dallas TI Home Computer Group

Program Schedule - INFOMART

September 10, 1988

09:00 - 09:55 Special Topic SIG:

PLATO courses and software, presented by
Tom Hall.

10:00 - 11:55 Main Meeting

10:00 - 10:30 Business Meeting

10:30 - 11:30 DESK TOP PUBLISHING, led by Doug
Garretson.

11:30 - 11:55 New Member / Guest Orientation Session

12:00 - 12:55 LUNCH BREAK

13:00 - 14:55 Special Topic SIG:

TI-WRITER printer techniques and tricks,
by Bill Pry.

Meeting room numbers can be obtained at our booth, or
check the master list posted on the two overhead projectors,
located just past the Registration booths. Children under
age 16 MUST remain with their parents at all times, in
accordance with INFOMART regulations!

All meetings will begin promptly on the hour, since
other groups may be scheduled to use the room after us.
Please be on time.

WHICH MEETING FOR ME?

The Dallas TI Home Computer Group features a wide variety of meetings,
held throughout each month. One or more of these is bound to be just
the one for which you're looking.

MAIN MEETING AT INFOMART:

This meeting has a little bit of everything. We open with a short
business meeting and announcements, follow with an audience
participation "open forum," present an informative program on
preannounced topics and wrap it up with merchandise sales and new
member/visitor orientation.

SIG MEETINGS AT INFOMART:

Topics of a little narrower range of interest are presented in these
Special Interest Group Meetings. Two such meetings are held each
month, one preceding the main meeting at 9:00 am and the other
following the lunch hour at 1:00 pm. Subjects include application
software, hardware, programming and other fascinating topics.

MINISIG MEETINGS:

For "hands-on" sessions and in depth looks at literally ANY subject,
MiniSIG meetings are held at members homes or businesses throughout
the Dallas area. Generally at least one of these meetings is planned
and scheduled by the group during each month. Additional meetings may
be held at any time by any member with adequate enthusiasm for the
topic; the group stands ready to help you find and contact people with
like interests.

NEXT STEP WORKSHOPS:

Originally a MiniSIG, the NEXT STEP has taken on a life of its own.
This is the informal meeting at which to get your questions answered,
your hardware problems diagnosed (and probably fixed), to get to talk
casually with the "experts" and, often, to eat! Many of the NEXT STEP
meetings are held in cafeteria meeting rooms; bring your appetite and
help us buy enough food to pay for the room.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

Held the Saturday following the INFOMART meetings (generally at the
presidents house), these are the meetings where the real planning and
execution of group business take place. DON'T miss 'em if you are a
group officer or committee chairman; Rip almost always finds a new and
exciting place for us to eat after the meeting...

SOCIAL MEETINGS:

As if we didn't eat enough at the other meetings, several times a year
the group sponsors social meetings combined with DINNER! Each has been
different, each has been GREAT! Watch for announcement of the next
one.

 THE LIBRARY CORNER

SOFTWARE LIBRARY:

A copy of the DTIHCG Software Library catalog may be obtained from the librarian in one of the following formats. Copies are free, but you must provide blank diskettes to replace those you are given:

- 6 SSSD diskettes
- 3 BSSD diskettes
- Printed copy (by prior arrangement, only)

Programs are provided by COMPLETE disk only for a service charge of \$2.00 per disk (you provide the diskette) or \$3.00 per disk (we provide diskette, mailer and postage). Additionally, the group schedules periodic meetings at which you may copy as many disks as you wish for ore, "flat" fee.

As of 6/1/88, there were over 300 diskettes in our library. Members are encouraged to donate copies of public domain or freeware programs at any time; please see the software librarian to do so.

Many programs are also available (or can be made available) on cassette. See the librarian for more information.

CARTRIDGE LIBRARY:

Over 70 DIFFERENT software cartridges are available for a one month checkout from our cartridge librarian! This service is an excellent way to try out some of these titles that are not available in any other format, before you buy a copy of your own. See the cartridge librarian during normal group meetings to get an up-to-the-minute list and check out your personal favorite.

As with the other DTIHCG libraries, members are encouraged to contribute modules that they find are no longer being used. Especially appreciated are those with complete, intact, original documentation.

ADVENTURE LIBRARY:

Like the cartridge library, our Adventure Library works on a one month checkout basis. Original, complete versions of these programs are available for you to try before you purchase your OWN copy. See the Adventure Librarian for a complete list of the games currently available.

A limited number of adventures are also available in cassette form!

NEWSLETTER LIBRARY:

Our newsletter library is unique because Mike Stanfill, our librarian, has taken all the work out of it for you! His compilations of the "Best Of the Newsletters" are broken down by major topics of interest. See Mike to find out what is currently available and check out one of these fine collections on a monthly basis. Tell him you read about it in a newsletter...



NEXTSTEP WORKSHOP
 MINISIG REPORT
 by Tom Hall

There was no August NEXT-STEP and a lot of folks mentioned this fact to me. I hope it means the attendance for the September 23rd NEXT-STEP will be good. So, come early, 5:15pm, and plan on staying late (8:30). We don't lock the door, so if you can't make it right at 5:15 - that's OK.

Remember - NEXT-STEP, Friday, September 23rd, 5:15, WYATTS CAFETERIA at Beltline and Josey. Plan to eat, as that is how we "pay" for the meeting room. Be sure to write DTIHCG on the back of your food ticket, before you pay, in order that we will get proper credit. If we don't meet the minimum, then the Club has to pay the difference.

John Guion maintained his usual superior standards as Sig Leader and LM Kennedy was an outstanding host at the August MINISIG.

Sunday, September 18th, 2:00pm, St. Mark School is the place and time of the September MINISIG. Angela Parker is our hostess.

This MINISIG is going to be a really big snow. The subject is TI-WRITER and the environment is a classroom with a work station for each "student". Charlice Aithar is the Sig Leader and she has some special classroom materials for the "students". BE SURE to sign up for this MINISIG. You may bring your personal copy of TI-WRITER, although this is not necessary.

You get to St. Mark School by going North on Central Express (past LBJ). Exit at Plano Parkway. Go West on Plano Parkway until you get to Alma Drive. Turn North (right) on Alma and go to 1201 Alma Drive. 1201 is the address of St. Mark.

The October MINISIG will be at the same place and feature MULTI-PLAN.

As most of you know, I have been away from Club Activities for the past several weeks. In my absence Jim Stewart has been doing my work. Jim did a good job and I appreciate his efforts.