
THE GUILFORD 99'ER NEWSLETTER

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MAY

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OUR NEXT MEETING

DATE: May 7, 1985
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: Glenwood Recreation Center
2010 S. Chapman St.

Glenwood Recreation Center (the address for which is listed above). The meeting room is very spacious, with plenty of seating (up to 68 people) and perfectly suited to our needs. (For details of our agreement with the recreation center see this month's President's Corner).

To reach the recreation center turn onto Chapman St. beside the colesium, follow Chapman St. until you reach the 2000 block and the center is imediately on the right. Please try and attend our next meeting. Support your users' group, its the best thing you've got going for your TI.

JUNE MEETING AGENDA

Did you ever get the urge to relieve your computer frustration by just plain doodling? Do you have an artistic streak in you just waiting to come out on your T.I.? Have you ever wondered what kind of beautiful music you and your T.I. could make together?

Well, come to the June meeting for some fun with your T.I. in the area of sound and picture.

In this meeting we'll explore the capabilities of your computer from a less serious angle. Please bring any such programs that you have, in order to supplement what's in the library for demonstration, and we'll all experiment with what turns up.

Dave Cohen

In case any of you may have not received the word on the new meeting place, as explained in our last newsletter, we now have a permanent meeting place at the

I would again like to appeal to anyone with material for the newsletter to please not feel shy about submitting it. Any and all help will be greatly appreciated, and you may very well be helping a fellow member out. Remember, no matter what your present level of computer proficiency, chances are others can benefit from your input. Also, any comments and/or suggestions about the newsletter content will be appreciated. Let me hear from you!

JSM

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Here it is the beginning of May, and Summer is just around the corner. We have effectively solved our problem about a meeting place. The move to Glenwood Recreation Center is of the permanent variety. By agreeing to let Parks and Recreation co-sponsor our club, we accomplish two very important objectives. First, we have a low-cost (free), permanent place to meet. Second, they will help us with future publicity releases. All they ask in return is to let us include their name in all of the publicity that we release to the general public. It is a deal we couldn't refuse -- particularly in the wake of the "fiasco" at Tax Investment Planners two months ago.

There are reviews of two "disk copying" programs in this month's SOFTWARE SHOPPER column that may be of interest to those of you with disk systems who don't want to go through the agony of using the DISK MANAGER module. They are faster and a whole lot more convenient to use. Incidentally, as one of the recent "convertees" to a disk system, I can tell you that I don't believe that I would ever want to get back to the "stone age" of cassette program storage. For those of you who are still in the market for T.I. products, you might try Steve Sallee and his Discount Computer Sales. He runs the business out of his house in Winston-Salem. The address is 4801 Selwyn Dr. and the phone is 768-3524. It is a good source of some of those "hard to find" T.I. modules, programs, and hardware. Hopefully, we will be able to expand the club-owned T.I.

system that we started with the purchase of the console at the end of last year. We are hoping to add a monitor (or color TV) and maybe a FEB or other stand-alone accessories as the money becomes available. This will mean that our members will not have to bring their own equipment to the meetings. Anyone who knows of T.I. or other compatible equipment at a reasonable price should contact one of the officers. We intend to use the money that we have budgeted for meeting expenditures to make the first purchase and have it ready for this meeting.

Anyone who has a contribution for the Newsletter is urged to contact Joe Martin or send it in to the club P.O. Box. Incidentally, Joe is doing a truly outstanding job with the Newsletter since he took it over completely in early February. George Von Seth advises that there will be no further cassettes for the library. If you would like to have the programs in the library on tape, he will be glad to download them for you if you get in contact with him and make the necessary arrangements. The first cycle of our Beginning Basic classes has just ended. Based on the response that we got for this set of classes we may or may not offer them again in the near future. It seems that there really wasn't enough interest generated to justify offering them again until we get a more positive response. My column is getting out of hand again -- I really didn't mean for it to run on so long. I will say "so long" for this month and keep programin'....

BOB CARMANY

HARDWARE SHOPPER

This month, we are going to look at a neat little item that has been variously called "THE WIDGET" and the "CARTRIDGE EXPANDER". It is produced by NAVARONE INDUSTRIES. The best current price is \$34.95 at TENEX. Now for a description of the item itself. The CARTRIDGE EXPANDER is a "black box" type device that plugs into the cartridge port on the computer. It, in turn has three cartridge ports that allow you to park three cartridges into it and select them with a switch. The major advantage is that it saves wear and tear on your console by avoiding all of the cartridge switching on the computer itself. With Extended Basic, Disk Manager, and your favorite game module in place, you could probably reduce the wear on your console by about 90%. The product has been improved and streamlined since it was introduced and the price has come down considerably since then, also. George Von Seth has one on his system and he gives it high marks in all categories. For those of you who switch cartridges several times during the course of an evening in front of your computer, it might be well worth the investment.

For those of you in search of a modem for your system, the VOLKSMODEM is one of the lowest priced that you will find. The best price that I have seen is the \$59.95 price tag at BEST PRODUCTS here in town. Along with the

modem, you get a "free" subscription to THE SOURCE. If you haven't already bought a modem, this one may be for you!!

Several months ago, we had a column dedicated to joysticks. Several of the club members have purchased the PROSTICK II from Newport Controls. From what we have heard, they are everything that they promised to be -- very responsive and durable. After going through two sets of the T.I.-produced joysticks, it was gratifying to find a joystick that would both perform and stay in one piece. WICO makes several styles of joystick that are also good and durable. If you are having trouble with the T.I. joysticks, it would be well worth the minor added expense to get some from either Newport Controls or WICO. The major mail order companies have them both at reasonable prices. Just make sure that you order the right model number for your computer.

Just one more short note. TENEX has single sided, single density SKC diskettes in 10 packs for \$14.95. That is the best non-sale price that I have seen. SOFTWARE CITY has bulk disks (single sided, single density) for \$12.50 for a 10 pack but they don't come with sleeves or labels. The SKC disks are 100% certified and have a lifetime guarantee. That is not a bad deal at all!! Check with Steve Sallee for disks also!

BOB CARMANY

SOFTWARE SHOPPER

This month we are going to look at two disk copy programs that are available for the T.I. 99/4A. With these two programs, the user can copy entire disks without the use of the DISK MANAGER module and its rather slow BACK UP feature.

The first of these two is a program that was authored by Tarik Isani (an early contributor to 99'ER Magazine). The program is called NIBBLER. It runs from Extended Basic and is an "auto-boot" program. That means that, with the NIBBLER disk in DSK1, the program will automatically LOAD when you select Extended Basic. The program is menu-driven and it doesn't take much instruction to follow the prompts as they appear on the screen. With the proper entry, the program will initialize the copy disk before writing the programs from the master disk to it. The program is very fast, but I have had some problems trying to copy a Forth disk with it. Check at various mail-order suppliers for the best price on this program.

The second program is one called DISK COPY which is authored by Randy Jones and produced by FULLY ASSEMBLED SOFTWARE. It will run from either MINI-MEMORY or EDITOR/ASSEMBLER with option "1" LOAD AND RUN. Simply type in the proper file name after DSK1. This program is also menu-driven and

probably a little more "user friendly" than the previous program. The menu prompts are not as complicated and are easier to follow. It is quite a bit slower than NIBBLER and usually takes several passes to copy the same amount of program or file information. It does copy Forth with no problems at all, though.

These two are just two of the growing number of "disk copy" type programs available on the market. Add to these titles like SUPER COPY, COPY CAT, FAST-COPYER, and QUICK-COPYER II and you will see that there are a number of programs that will do the job. These last four are in the latest TENEX catalogue and range in price from \$17.95 to \$34.95. They will all back-up a disk much faster than using the DISK MANAGER module and will save your console the wear and tear of popping cartridges in and out. If you aren't really interested in speed, though, the DISK MANAGER will copy just about any program that you want backed up.

This month, we have sampled what is on the market to let you back up that one and only copy of your prized program or file. Next month, we will return to a look at what is available in our own library in the form of utility-type programs. Until then, KEEP COMPUTING.

Bob Carmany

The GUILFORD 99'ER USERS' GROUP NEWSLETTER IS FREE TO DUES PAYING MEMBERS OF THE USERS' GROUP (ONE COPY PER FAMILY, PLEASE). DUES ARE \$12.00 PER FAMILY PER YEAR. SEND CHECK TO P.O. BOX 21691, GREENSBORO, N.C. 27420 THE SOFTWARE LIBRARY IS FOR DUES PAYING MEMBERS ONLY.

**RANDOM NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:
BY HERMAN GESCHWIND**

History is not supposed to repeat itself but there must be exceptions to this rule because last week Big Blue left the home computer business in a style all too painfully similar to what TI did to us on that infamous black Friday.

Fact is, the parallels between TI's bungling of the 99/4 effort and what IBM did with the Peanut are so striking that they are worth examining a little closer:

A keyboard that did not find acceptance. TI: The membrane keyboard for the 99/4, IBM the chiclet for the Peanut. Both were designs that should never have hit the marketplace. Both tried to palm something off on John D. Public with a major re-design later on after much unfavorable publicity.

A pricing structure when first announced which was completely unreasonable. It is hard to believe now that the list price for the black and silver 99/4A once was \$1200! IBM was just as greedy with their initial prices for the Peanut and that after the benefit of the TI fiasco! There has been ample experience to prove that a Home Computer system for over \$900 (including storage and monitor) will not sell.

Inadequate memory: The 16K console was not enough for the 99/4A and 128K was not enough memory for the Peanut. In both cases this was corrected at a later date, but why not do it right in the first place.

The belief that advertising hype and hoopla can make up for flawed engineering and pricing concepts. Charlie Chaplin failed for IBM just as badly as Bill

Cosby did for TI. The American purchaser has a healthy sense of value and if value isn't there neither will demand for the product.

Lack of good quality software: TI used patents and copyrights to discourage writers of good quality third-party software. For the Peanut that was a lack of cartridge based software in spite of the potential of two 64K ROM ports.

Too little, too late. TI finally got their act together with the PE Box and a drastically revised pricing structure, not only for the console but also for peripherals. IBM also saw the light, replaced the keyboard, added memory expansion and adjusted pricing where the whole system started making sense. In both cases the market response was enthusiastic and in both cases more units were sold during the last months before the product was yanked off the market than before.

In both cases corporate strategy was more short-term profit maximization rather than taking a longer view and let the revised product strategy take hold.

One lesson hopefully has been learned that in order to succeed in the home computer market several things are essential: The product must be right, the pricing must be right and without software, hardware will not sell. A home computer is no hula-hoop where a big bundle can be made in a hurry. Whoever wants to sell the next home computer must be prepared for the long haul and not judge potential by three month's sales.

The loser in both cases was the American public. If our big corporations with their resources cannot be any smarter, do we really need the Japanese (or Taiwan or Singapore or Korea) to show us how to succeed in home electronics? In the short run Wall Street might like what TI and IBM did but for the country at large

we are all the losers, computer users or not. IBM should be castigated all the harder because they had the benefit of TI making all the mistakes. It seems that some people just never learn!

To our friends who only recently bought their Peanuts we can only say: Take heart. Just as the 99 for us, your Peanut can give you good service and satisfaction for a long time to come, do as we did, close ranks and help each other, your computing hobby will be much the better for it.

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**REVIEW: DIAGNOSTICS:
BY HERMAN GESCHWIND**

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With any computer system there will be times when things just don't go right and the big question in problem shooting will be: Is it hardware or is it a program bug that causes problems.

When I first bought my 99/4A I saw that TI had a diagnostic cartridge listed but it turned out that that one was for the 99/4 hardware and would not work with the 99/4A. As with so many other software items, TI had never bothered with an update for the 99/4A.

This problem finally has been resolved with the help of independent software developers and we now have a choice of not only one but two diagnostic systems.

One is "System Tests" by Know-Ware, Box 53674, Lubbock, TX 79453, (\$17.95). Of the two systems reviewed, this is the more traditional approach with three separate and straightforward test programs.

One program which can be started with Extended Basic will check Console functions such as memory chips, sound and video processors and read only memory (console GROM). What is

intriguing here is that in order to check GROM "signatures" requires access to some rather proprietary information. Could it be that the location of the software author (Lubbock!) is a tip-off? The test is fast and since none of my consoles have RAM or GROM problems, I cannot tell how the exception reporting would have worked. The author claims that in case of failure, the software will identify the chip in question, which should make replacement an easy matter.

The second test program checks the speech synthesizer not only for the proper "signature" of all ROM chips but also for the ability to input external speech data and recognize external speech. Again, the test is fast and I had no opportunity to observe exception handling.

The third test is for memory expansion but this test requires Mini Memory to run. This program has an option for a continuous-run test so that it is possible to test for an intermittent fault with an overnight test.

"Advanced Diagnostics" by Millers Graphics, 1475 W. Cypress Ave., San Dimas, CA 91773, (\$19.50 plus \$1.50 S&H), takes a different approach to diagnostics software. His diskette not only contains routines to test a number of hardware functions, but the user is given the option to create "Command Files" to execute any number of test functions in all possible combinations and with different parameters.

Craig Miller is an authority, if not the authority on 99/4A disk controllers and hardware (he was retained as a consultant by CorComp to assist with the design of the new disk controller card for the PE Box). This background shows in the many disk-related test functions on his diagnostic diskette. The 34 page manual that comes with the diskette also gives the first lucid explanation of how a 99/4A actually records on a diskette. (This information was NEVER released by TI!).

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**PROGRAM REVIEW
BY DAVE COHEN
SUPERMAN**

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This Extended BASIC program is a text adventure for all of you detectives out there. As Superman you have 80 hours to find and destroy 18 criminal types who are bent on destroying Metropolis or you - whichever comes first. You have only a limited supply of energy, though, with which to complete your task.

Directions are voluminous so I suggest that you write the commands down before you begin your search and destroy mission. But even as complete as the directions seem, they are still short on exactly what commands will move Superman around and how the commands actually work. The computer responses however are really funny if nothing else. For instance, when using superbreath the computer made a remark about bad breath. I have not been able to get through this, or any other adventure type game yet, but this shouldn't stop you from trying this game. It's a challenge for you game enthusiasts out there and it is very entertaining. Good luck to any who tries it!

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GAME LEVEL CHANGES

Ever wonder how to advance to a higher level of a game without playing through the beginning levels? There is a trick you can use on game cartridges to by-pass the lower levels at the start! What you do is insert the cartridge and select the game. When the title screen of the game appears hold down the shift key and quickly type B38.

Dave Cohen

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**BOOK REVIEW
BY HERMAN GESHWIND**

**BEGINNER'S BASIC
(AVAILABLE FREE!)**

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Our review this month covers a book that will cost you nothing and one that you do not have to wait for the mailman to deliver it to you from a distant mail order house, fact is you paid for it already and have it already in your possession!

Beginner's BASIC, by Don Inman, Ramon Zamora and Bob Allbreacht, Texas Instruments, Inc., 143 pages.

This book with its distinctive blue-grey-and-white cover was packed with your console and in all the excitement of getting your computer unpacked and hooked-up probably was relegated to some dark corner to languish. If this scenario happens to be true, you are overlooking a real great bargain.

The authors and TI did a real great job in covering the essentials of BASIC in this booklet. I have seen many books on bookstore shelves that purport to be an introduction to BASIC for a price of \$15 or more that do not even come close to presenting the subject matter in such an excellent manner. Even such an old standby as Dwyer&Critchfield looks dated and dry by comparison.

If you are not "in" to BASIC yet, hunt around for your copy, sit down with your console and go through the examples. You'll be surprised how quickly BASIC will make sense to you and your cost is only your time and effort. Truly a bargain if there ever was one.