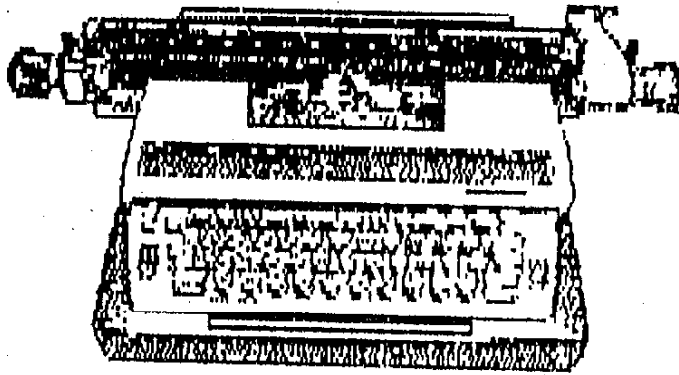


KAWARTHA KRONICLE

The monthly Newsletter of
The KAWARTHA 99'ers

P.O. Box 373
Peterborough, Ontario
Canada K9J 6Z3

Vol. 7 No. 5



NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to Gary Storey. Gary saw the ad about the club in the Peterborough Examiner. He came to our September meeting. I hope that Gary joins our group and enjoys the comradeship of the other members as much as I have over the years.

I guess that we are first and foremost a social group. What binds us together is the common interest in the orphan. Our group is not huge, but the numbers have remained stable. This is an interesting phenomenon when, all around us, other computer groups are dying.

People like Gary is what our group is all about. On the 14th of October, we're going to set up our display again at Lansdowne Place. I look forward to meeting with and talking to some interesting people. Who knows...we may even get some new members.

We have been fortunate to get this facility FOR FREE!!! (Believe me, on our meager budget, we couldn't afford it otherwise!) It is a lot of work setting up and manning the demonstration all day, but with lots of club members pitching in, it isn't an onerous task for any one person.

AND...it's nice meeting those nice people.

The bad news is that summer is over, the hours of daylight are decreasing, there is a nip in the air at night and the newspapers are already running the ads for Christmas shopping. The good news is that we are already gearing up for another fascinating COMPUTING season. (I'm probably the exception...I took my computer up north with me this past summer. I even did some work on it.)

We have some interesting COMPRODINE software to play around with this season. Phil Townsend demoed the PAGE PRO 99 at the last meeting. Phenomenal!!

A hearty THANKS is due to the Peterborough Police Dept. for the use of the our meeting room. It is centrally located. There is lots of parking nearby. And we haven't had any equipment stolen. Seriously, thanks, folks, our group appreciates your community spirit.

John Beal
Editor

KAWARTHA 99ers USER GROUP

FOR USERS OF THE TEXAS INSTRUMENT 99/4A HOME COMPUTER
P.O. BOX 373
PETERBOROUGH, ONT.
CANADA
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GROUP MARKETING	PHIL TOWNSEND	705 745 3757

Meetings are held on the SECOND Wednesday of each month (Sept. to June) at the PETERBOROUGH POLICE DEPT. meeting room, located at the intersection of Water St. & McDonnell St. Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.

Membership fees are collected on an annual basis of \$18.00 per annum (individual) or a portion thereof at the rate of \$1.50 per month for the balance of the year. Family memberships are available for \$24.00 per annum or pro-rated at a rate of \$2.00 per month for the balance of the year. The group's annual meeting is held on the second Wednesday in March at which time elections for the group's executive is held. Memberships can only be held in an adult's name.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily of the KAWARTHA 99ers USER GROUP.

Advertisements and contributing articles for this newsletter may be given to the newsletter editor or mailed to the group's P.O. box.

The KAWARTHA 99ers would like to thank those groups who exchange information and newsletters regarding the TEXAS INSTRUMENT HOME COMPUTER with us. We endeavour to recognize and credit original authors and sources of articles of information which we reprint or make available to our membership.

The KAWARTHA 99ers USER GROUP is a non-profit group who welcomes any individuals who have an interest in the TEXAS INSTRUMENT HOME COMPUTER.

"CONSOLE-ING THE ORPHAN"

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO PRINTERS

by Phil Townsend

During the past few weeks a number of friends and acquaintances have asked about what type or brand of printer to buy. This really is a loaded question. Since I am not being paid by Epson, Roland, Star Micronics or any of the other manufacturers I try not to endorse any one specific brand. That keeps me out of trouble with the many salespeople that I know around town! The major brand-name printer manufacturers all create fine products, it really boils down to price, features, warranty and service.

First, some background to the type of printers currently available;

The most common and suitable type of printer being sought for home use or small businesses is a "dot-matrix". These printers use a group of fine wires which strike a ribbon putting the ink onto the paper. The most common configuration of wires or pins is in the form of a 9 by 9 matrix. Newer technology now offers a 24 pin matrix, this however is very costly at the moment but does give much finer detail in the print-outs. Dot-matrix printers are very versatile, they are capable of printing text (words) and graphics (pictures).

Other types of printers are either specialized in their use or too costly for the average home computer user. I will only briefly mention them so you have an idea of what is available.

The "thermal" printer is older technology, it needs special (read expensive) heat sensitive paper which comes usually in narrow rolls. The printout was (note past tense) not of the quality that is generally available today on a dot-matrix machine. I would advise first time purchasers to avoid purchasing this type of printer even though of its low up-front cost. The ongoing cost of the paper and the limitations of this technology don't make for a good buy.

An "inkjet" printer fires measured amounts of coloured ink from reservoirs onto the paper. This technology is capable of producing extremely fine graphics and text (in colour) and the good news is that the prices have been coming down quite rapidly over the past few years. The bad news is that the prices were astronomical to begin with! This type of printer is quiet compared to impact printers (dot-matrix & daisy wheel). Maintenance has been difficult in the past due to clogged ink lines etc. If you have lots of cash and need great colour in your print-outs this may be the choice for you.

Probably, the most expensive type of printer today is the "laser" printer. The easiest way to explain this type of printer is to imagine a photocopy machine hooked up to a computer. That's the kind of quality to expect in your printouts. Both text and graphics can be printed. Some models can print in colour but now you are really talking big bucks! Laser printers are generally quite fast, they print out ten pages per minute on average. Again this type of printer is quiet and gives the very best quality and is often used in small printing companies to create camera ready proofs to print from. These machines begin at the \$1500.00 Cdn mark. You will need a special interface (computer hook-up) to run this type of printer.

Another type of printer found in many businesses is the "daisywheel" printer. These machines have a replaceable metal wheel which has the characters to be typed stamped onto it. Wheels with different styles of fonts (type) can be exchanged as needed. This type of printer can only print text but will print with the same quality as a professional typewriter. A daisywheel is usually quite fast but is generally noisy. The price of these units is higher than that of dot-matrix printers.

The final type of computerized printing instrument available at present is called a "plotter". This machine has a series of coloured pens which a mechanical arm can choose from. The arm then draws the object that the operator has programmed or drawn on a computer. These machines are fast but much more expensive than regular printers. You would only require one of these if you are doing CAD (Computer Aided Design) work for a living. The programs which drive plotters require mountains of memory as do the files which store the instructions for the drawing itself.

MAKING THEM WORK

There are several ways that printers can be hooked up (interfaced) to a computer.

A "serial" hook-up allows one piece (bit) of information (data) at a time to go from the computer to the printer. Usually this type of hook-up is an extra cost item when you buy the printer. It comes in the form of a circuit board which fits inside the printer. The computer end of the hook-up requires a serial port (plug) which is usually found on an RS232 printer card or stand alone interface. Serial printers can be located a much greater distance away from the computer than their parallel counterparts. In order to get text to print, the command which has to be typed into the computer is something like this - RS232.BA=4800.DA=0.LF. When you wish to print a graphic image then the LF should be replaced with a CR.

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"CONSOLE-ING THE ORPHAN"

- Beginner's Guide... cont'd.

The other type of interface (most common) is the "parallel" connection. This type of interface is capable of receiving 8 bits of data at a time from the computer. The parallel interface usually comes as a standard feature on the majority of printers suitable for the home computer. This type of interface requires using either a parallel output on the RS232 printer card or a parallel stand alone interface such as the "Axiom" brand "Parallex Connector" which can run a printer from the console without the need of the P.E. box or extra memory.

Parallel printers are usually much faster than serial printers. In order to get text to print, the command which has to be typed into the computer is PIO or PIO.LF. When you want a graphics print-out then change the LF to a CR. The wiring for the cables which attach the printer to the computer's printer card (circuit board) is very often different from one computer to another. That is a subject for a whole different article or series of articles by itself.

Printer manuals are usually about as easy to read as the writings found on the DEAD SEA SCROLLS and are drier than the Sahara Desert. If you know of a knowledgeable person in the area of printer use and who lives close by, forget your pride and holler for help. That is a far faster method to get your printer up and running.

Many programs are preset for certain types of printers, if your printout appears as the Martian version of Betty Crocker's recipes then you may have to change the program. Likewise, if the printer and or computer lock up and will not respond the program may be at fault.

Some printers are just not compatible with our "Orphan", if this is the case avoid ulcers and nervous breakdowns by selling the printer, if you own it or not buying it in the first place.

FEATURES TO BE AWARE OF

In order to determine which printer will be a wise purchase think about what your needs now and in the future might be.

Font styles: Many printers now give you a vast assortment of sizes and styles of typeset (fonts) activated by a button on the printer. Most often the software can control these fonts as well. The condensed font and Near Letter Quality (NLQ) are probably the most useful. The NLQ feature allows your text to appear as though it had been typed on a typewriter. Other font sizes are a bonus but not a necessity.

Speed: This is measured in Characters Per Second (CPS). The faster the better, 160-180 CPS are common for dot-matrix printers. Remember, the faster the printer the quicker you get the computer back to work on.

Buffer size: The computer is inaccessible while getting a printout unless you have a gadget called a "buffer" which can be in the printer, in the computer or a stand alone memory which vacuums up the printer data from the computer and then takes over control of the printer. It sends the data as the printer needs it thus freeing up the computer for you to get on with other things. This is an extra cost item, the cost dependent upon the size of the memory in the buffer. I strongly recommend this peripheral (extra) device for anyone who uses the printer a great deal.

Paper feed: The two main types of paper used to print on are single sheet paper or perforated tractor fed paper. Your printer should be capable of feeding both. A cut sheet feeder is an expensive add on which can automatically feed single sheets of paper from a built in hopper. Good for business use but not necessary for home use.

Paper park: This feature allows you to switch from tractor fed paper to friction fed paper and back again without removing the paper manually from the printer. This can be a real asset if you use different types of paper often.

Form length: If you use your printer for business purposes this might be quite useful. It allows you at the touch of a switch to have the printer feed to the top of the next form when you are using a non standard size sheet. Standard size paper being 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper.

Wide carriage: Instead of the standard 9 inch carriage these printers have a 15 inch carriage. These printers are useful when large amounts of data have to be printed in a horizontal line. Usually for business reports.

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- Beginner's Guide... cont'd

Graphics mode: Most printers can print either "Epson" format or "IBM" format when it comes to graphics. Many models can print both. Having "Epson" compatibility is of primary importance for TI'ers as most of the graphics software is written to these industry standards. Your printer will slow down in graphics mode, this is normal. Remember, daisywheel printers are incapable of printing graphics.

Push tractors/ Pull technology: In order not to waste a full sheet of paper each time you begin a new printout you will need "push" tractors. The paper hits the tractors first and is then pushed past the platen (black paper roller) and up to the print head, where the actual printing takes place. The "Pull" technology allows paper to be automatically set to the top of the form or reversed out of the printer at the touch of a button.

FINALLY!

Warranty: There are vast differences in length and coverage of warranty. Many companies now give a full 2 year parts and service coverage. Very often an extended warranty is available at the time of purchase for a reasonable fee. There are many moving parts in a printer, you should keep that in mind.

Service: Check to see the location of the closest factory trained service centre. If your printer has problems you don't want to incur extra shipping costs to get repairs done. Be sure to use an authorized dealer for service otherwise your warranty will be voided. See if the company supports a toll free line in case you need help or technical advise.

Price: The majority of dealers have enough cushion built into the sticker price that they can give a bit on the price. If their profit margin is small they might be willing to throw in a printer stand or the printer cable (it is normally sold separately). If there is more than one of you buying the same model at the same price this can also be a bargaining chip. Never pay the asking price without attempting to improve the deal somehow!

Choice: Some of the many brands and models which I know of as being compatible with the TI are;

- Roland DG / Panasonic (these are the same printers with different names)

- Epson (this is the industry standard that printers are compared to)

- Star Micronics (NL, NP & NX series, the NX series must have the "old style" chip to be fully compatible)

- Gemini (X series)

I'm sure that I have probably left out many other pertinent points, that may just be an article for another issue.

Phil

DEMONSTRATION DAY

LANSDOWNE PLACE

SAT., OCT. 14/89
8:30 - 3:30

The line-up so far for the demonstration is:

MORNING - 8:30 to 11:30

Ken
Phil
Karen

AFTERNOON - 11:30 to 3:30

John B.
Gary
Glen

Then we need some equipment:

Printer & colour monitor - Phil

Axiom interface - Jack

Expanded system - Club

Expanded system, printer - Ken & Dianne

Console - Karen

Console, monitor & cassette - John B.

Colour monitor - Glen

Software - modules, tapes, disks - Library

Newsletters -

"LIBRARY CORNER"

FROM THE LIBRARY

by Dianne and Ken Post

ITEMS FOR SALE:

NOTE: all items are subject to prior sale. The Kawartha 99'ers are not responsible for the condition of items listed for sale nor for any terms or conditions of sale imposed by a vendor.

Used Smith Corona "Fasttext 80" dot matrix printer. 2 years old. Manual & cables to P.E. Box included. Contact Bob Tisdale at 742-8589 for further details and price. Willing to negotiate price.

Several consoles for sale. Call Glen Daniels at 742-9869.

John Morton has the following items for sale...

- Modules: (\$5.00)
-Pac Man -Parsec
-TI Invaders -Alpiner
-Protector 2 -Munchman
-Super Demon -Attack
-Beginning Grammar

- (\$10.00)
-T.E.II -D.M. 2

- Cassette cables (\$6.00)
Cassette recorder (Sony) made for computer use (\$35.00)
TI RS232 stand-alone (\$50)
TI 32K stand-alone (\$50)
Speech synthesizer (\$12.00)
Console power supply (\$6.00)
Parallel printer cable (\$15)
Book of games (\$2.00)
Call John at 745-9363.

ITEMS WANTED

Cassette recorder suitable for use with the TI system (a machine with the remote control jack is preferable) ...Call Ann Ouellette at 705-939-6343

Division module & a printer buffer ... Call Glen Daniels at 742 9869

Welcome back to another season of computer TI'ing.

Dianne and I hope you had a good summer of practising with your TI computer!

Dianne and I have been with the club for over one year now. We enjoy the night out because the kids don't beat us at any games, at least for one night. We accepted the role of librarian over 3 months ago and enjoy the position and the benefits, e.g., WE get to try the programs out.

Back in 1983, when we bought the computer, we were able to get all kinds of programs or information we needed. Now you have to go to the States to get the programs, unless you belong to a club.

We have all kinds of newsletters from all over the world. So why not take a few home for the month and type in a program or two! There are over 40 basic and XBasic tapes along with over 40 modules. (NOTE: We are still looking for an XBasic module. One has turned up, but there is still one missing. Please have a look around. Thanks. Ed.) For some reason or other, the library doesn't seem to be used that much. A little input as to what you want or need would be appreciated.

There is a module in the library that I'm using now. It's called Console Writer. This program works like the FunnelWeb editor except that it only requires a console and a cassette recorder. You can print using an Axiom parallel interface and a printer. No expansion box is necessary. So if you wish to write a school report, you can use this module.

That's all for this month.

USING YOUR CONSOLE AS A
CALCULATOR

by Charles Good
Lima Users' Group

This idea comes under the "why on earth didn't I think of this before???" category. Have you ever wanted an easy way to use the 99/4A as a calculator? Perhaps you can't remember where you put your pocket calculator, but you always know where the good old TI is located.

The best way to use the console as a calculator is from command mode! Type PRINT followed by a string of calculations and then press ENTER.

That's all there is to it! This method allows very rapid data entry and rapid calculation of complex problems. You might use this method to balance your cheque book by entering a series of numbers such as:

```
PRINT 1254-56.25-452-6.95-77.89-  
36-45.80+45+ 6.23-99.99
```

530.44

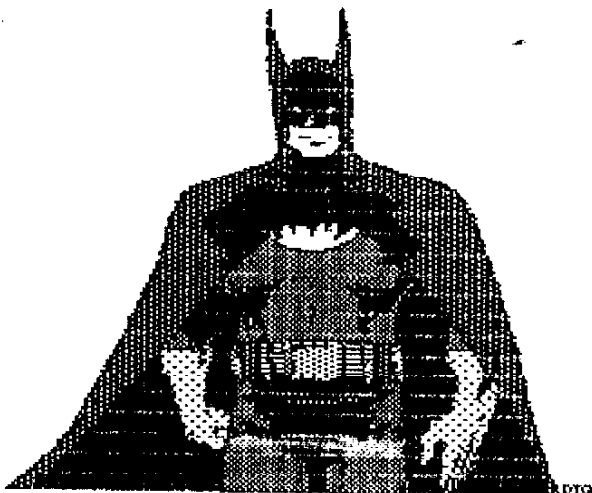
You can also do complex calculations such as:

```
PRINT (56*9)/(2.5*6.52)+96-  
(8/.2+65)
```

-30.797546

Try it! All you need is a console. Just turn it on and enter either BASIC. No module or program loading is required.

DONE



V/P NOTES BY GLEN DANIELS

Well it must be time to get back to the old TI again as we had our first frost this morning up in our neck of the woods.

I took some of the newsletters that we receive in the mail, home to read over the summer. There sure is a wealth of information in them on nearly everything related to the TI99/4A. I don't know how Phil finds time to read them all when he picks them up at the post office. He must be a lot faster reader than I am! (I only read the articles that I understand, so that cuts down the amount to read a whole lot!) More members should take a few home each month because that is where a lot of your dues money goes.

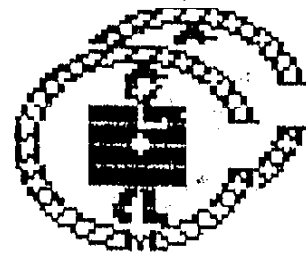
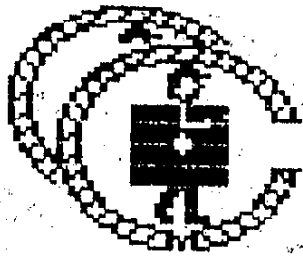
Before the next meeting I hope to have the library completely cataloged again with the new disks added to it, we have over 225 disks in the library now! They are available for you to copy at any of the meetings, so bring some disks with you and make use of this library.

Don't forget to keep Oct. 14th open. It will be a great help if you can give us a couple hours of your time at Lansdowne Place to let people know how active we still are, here in Peterborough. In previous years we have gained a number of new members this way and we hope to do the same this time. Join us on the 14th and help us keep the group going strong.

Sorry I missed the last meeting, but it is a long drive back from "Newly Land". That is one beautiful island and well worth the long ferry ride to get there.

I have just received "Page Pro 99" from Asgard Software. Terrific software and terrific service to boot. From the little bit that I have looked at, I believe it should be great to make flyers and newsletters with, more about this in the future when I figure out exactly how to make it work!

I would also like to mention and welcome the guests which we have had and are about to have at our meetings. Gary Storey and Frank Mayes both heard about us from the "Upcoming Events" section of the "Examiner". Gary has a TI and has been looking for a user group to help him along. Frank is a "clone" user, and is interested in learning more about our machine and our group. The friendliness and helpfulness of our members are bound to impress these prospective members. Welcome to both of you.



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