FM: Ted A. Stringfellow
115 Booth Circle
Ocean Springs, MS 39564-8505

TO: Charles W. Good
Box 647
Venedocia, OH 45894

Dear Charles,

I am the only TI user that I know of here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. You can see that I have a bit of difficulty keeping up with the TI world these days. Add to that having less time to play than I used to now that I'm buying a house.

Let me tell you something about myself. I've spent the last 19 years in the military as a technician in telephone switching systems and computer maintenance. I'm currently an instructor in computer maintenance at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi. I've been a TI user since 1982 and I play around with PCs quite a bit also.

From 1985 until 1992 I was stationed at the Pentagon and during part of that time I was the secretary of the Mid Atlantic Ninety NinERS (MANNERS). I also wrote articles for the newsletter during that time period.

On the disks you will find some programs and articles I wrote during that time period. Please feel free to use the articles in the newsletter and add the programs to the group software library. The articles are a bit outdated, but some of them still apply. I kind of miss doing my PROGRAMS ON PAROLE series.

I guess that's about all I have to say. See you next time around. Look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Ted A. Stringfellow   **DONE**

Review of DCOPY
by Ted A. Stringfellow

Wheez! Cough! Hack! Puff! Puff! (head enveloped in a dust cloud) Geez! What dark, dusty cellar of a software library has this program occupied for the last two centuries? DCOPY has gotta be the grandfather of TI archiver programs.

DCOPY was one of the first, if not the first, archiver type programs for the TI-99/4A. I'm not sure who wrote the program. No author's name appears in the program itself, at least not in version 2 (which is the only version I've ever seen). I think I heard Barry Traver say that he wrote this program, but it was at a TI-faire in the Washington, DC area quite a few years ago. The only documentation I've ever seen is a short text file by Howie R., whoever he is.

DCOPY is an E/A program image file (option 5). Its main menu gives you the following options; Save/Restore/Copy. Compared to Barry Boone's ARCHIVER it is quite limited. It does have a couple of interesting, if not unique, features.

The Save option allows you to save multiple files into a single file (just like ARCHIVER). You're prompted for the Save File Name and floppy drive from which to read the files. Unlike Barry Boone's ARCHIVER, this operation saves a disk of files rather than individual files. No compression is performed. On the contrary, the resulting files is a few sector larger than the total number of sectors used by the individual files. I believe this is a result of having the source disk's name and specifications being stored in the new Saved file. I'm not sure what all the disk specs store are, but one of them is the disk size. For example, the Save File size will be larger (and will take longer to create) when created from a double sided double density disk than if created from a single sided single density disk.

WARNING: DCOPY stores files in an Internal Fixed 128 format. This is also the same format that ARCHIVER uses when compressing files. Don't confuse the two. They ARE NOT compatible with each other. I like to use a small "d" as the first character of the file name on a file I've created using DCOPY and the "@" symbol as the first character of an archived file name, but this is a personal preference. Incidentally, DCOPY itself does not allow use of lower case letters. If you want file names in lower case, you'll have to use your disk manager.

Restore simply reverses the Save operation. In addition to the Save File and target drive prompts, you are also asked if you wish to format the floppy disk you're using to restore the files. Restoring a Saved File produces a disk with the same specs as the original floppy used to create it. Any information already on the disk is blanked out much the same as if a sector copy had been performed.

I did some experimenting with the Restore function. I tried different drive specs during formatting just to see the result of the Restore. One thing that was interesting was

that I formatted a floppy as double sided double density 80 track on my 5-1/4" 80 track drive. I restored from a file created from a single sided single density disk and ended up with a single sided single density 40 track disk that I could only read on an 80 track drive. I'd recommend formatting the floppy to the same specs as the original before even using DCOPY.

The Copy function allows formatting also and gives you a choice of sector or bitmap copy. This does an ordinary disk copy, same as a sector or bitmap copy on a disk manager.

DCOPY lacks most of the frills of ARCHIVER. Compression, selective archiving, cataloging, file managing, file reading, or text reading are not among its features.

Matter of fact, I can think of only one feature this program has that ARCHIVER lacks. Remember those programs that you couldn't make a backup copy of because they had that odd sector that disk managers wouldn't recognize. You may be able to make an archive/backup file using this program. No promises, but it may be worth a shot to those with that "only" copy of a favorite program.

I wouldn't mob your software librarian to get your copy of this program. It's a bit outdated and only has one feature going for it, but a few folks might have a use for it. Others may just be curious.

Speaking of curious people, how many remember COMBINE? That may be worth digging back out to play around with also. Have fun and keep on TIing..

DONE

HOW DID I EVER GET BY WITHOUT ...
by Ted A. Stringfellow

"How did I ever get by without this (fill in your favorite piece of hardware or software)?" Sound familiar? I've been using it for years when I added another piece of hardware or software to my ever growing computer system. Most of the time, I'm absolutely serious when I say it.

Before I continue with my raving, I'd like to give credit where credit is due. Ideas, used hardware, or advice have been contributed to my ongoing string of acquisitions by names of the TI world such as Joe Dennis, Bob Fowler, Ed Hall, Bill Cavanaugh, and Jerry Coffey. Without the aid of such people in the constant uphill battle that we call upgrading, many of us would either still be using a 16k TI and cassette or would have moved on to other machines. There have been many others, but these stand out above the rest for the information, experimentation, and general knowledge they have imparted. Besides that, they're all basically nice guys.

Once upon a time, having a home computer was one of the farthest things from my mind. Being a computer technician (mainframe type) I just couldn't understand how programmers, operators, and other technicians could stand to work on/with a computer all day long and then, go home and play with one.

I got my first look at the TI-99/4A while living in England. A co-worker and friend, Joe Dennis, invited my family and myself over to dinner at his house one night. Since it was his recent purchase, of course he had to show off his brand new TI-99/4A. No expansion box, no disk drives, just a bare console with a cassette recorder hooked to a color TV. We played a couple of the game modules and I thought it was pretty nifty, but what made me really decide to buy one (or so I thought at the time) was the wealth of educational modules available for it. Using our son's future education as justification I talked my wife and myself into purchasing one of these cute little machines. Let's face it, I was hooked and wondered how I'd ever gotten by without a computer.

I bought my first TI through a mail order catalog for $145. I purchased the Hangman module at the same time. So between playing hangman and typing in programs from the Beginner's Basic book that came with the computer I was enthused for about one and a half weeks. Then, horror of horrors, I lost power to the console. Oops! That little sealed fuse in the transformer line had taken a disliking to that fluctuating overseas voltage (or the step down transformer). This, coupled with the module slot being offset so I had to insert modules using a ballpeen hammer, seemed to justify returning the computer as defective. Some people would have jumped to the conclusion that they'd all be like that and give up on this brand of computer but not a hooked optimist such as I. I got another one of the same type. Now! The module fits without forcing. Two days later.. Oops! There goes that fuse again. This time I just disconnected the fused extension on the transformer and sent it to TI for replacement. They sent back a molded plug sort of along the same idea as the 3 prong ground adapter except this one had a bulge in one side where the fuse was stored. A week later, there goes the fuse. A hacksaw, a half amp fuse, and some electrical tape took care of the fuse problem this time (and still has to this day). No more blown fuses. How did I ever get by without a computer?

Following acquisitions included a cassette interface cable, a small cassette recorder, and several more modules including, of course, TI Extended Basic. By this time, I had gone through Beginner's Basic twice (just to make sure I didn't miss anything). I even went so far as typing in and saving each and every TI Basic program I found a listing for in a computer magazine. How did I ever get by without Extended Basic and a cassette recorder?

Going the route that most of us went, I eventually got

tired of waiting for a month for a program to load from cassette. By chance this coincided with an advertisement a friend brought to work offering the entire expansion system (Pbox, 32K, disk controller, disk drive) for only $450. We didn't know it at the time but this was the signal of the hammer falling. Yep, TI quit making the 99/4A and its periphereals. Of about eight people in the shop with TIs Joe Dennis was the only one to get the expansion system. The company sold out in no time. One owner was so disgusted he got rid of his TI and moved on to another local computer brand. A couple of others threw the computer back into their closets and forgot about them. The rest of us just continued slugging it out and haunting any advertisements pertaining to computers.

After about nine months of relentless pursuit the search for an expansion system came to an end with the acquisition of a pbox, 32k, disk controller, and single sided full height disk drive. Slow and cumbersome as the belt drive drive and Disk Manager II was, the natural response after using cassette for so long was, of course, "How did I ever get along without a disk drive?" The value of the extra memory was not yet significant.

After this the acquisitions came a little faster. RS232 standalone (couldn't find the card), Editor/Assembler, Gemini 10X printer, numerous software acquisitions, all of which were immediately followed by the famous phrase. Finally, a trip to Japan gave me an opportunity to pick up a couple of half height single sided disk drives at a (at the time) reasonable cost. Installation of these drives produced the classic "How did I ever get by with only one disk drive?"

About three years ago, the purchase of a modem and introduction to BBSing gave me yet another thrill. All these programs that were only a phone call away, the wealth of information about improvements on old equipment, promises of new equipment, being able to communicate with fellow TI users, it was enough to boggle the mind. This also led to personal introductions to such outstanding (frequently in the rain) individuals in my own personal little TI world as Ed Hall, Jerry Coffey, Bob Fowler, and Bill Cavanaugh. You may have mixed feelings about whether this is a plus or minus, but I consider these characters personal friends who have lent helping hands on that constant uphill climb we call "upgrading." How did I ever get by without a modem, Mass Transfer, and the BBBB?

Upgrades to double sided drives and a double density controller, 80 track drives and EPROMs, acquisition of more computers, joining the user group, all have produced the same response. I currently own four drives, have two others on loan to me, two modems, three computers, two disk controllers, two RS232s, a printer, a monitor, boxes and boxes of disks, stacks of manuals, and all kinds of bits and pieces I hardly ever or never use. It's seemingly a never ending process. But how did I ever get by without all this good stuff?

However, my system is quite complete. I have no need to make any more hardware or software purchases. I can direct previously allotted computer funds toward other areas of interest. Well, maybe that new data base program would be nice. Or I could find use for a RAM disk or a 9640 or a hard disk controller. You know, it would be kind of nice to have a 2400 baud modem. How about ..... to be continued...

‡‡DONE‡‡

Review of DSKU
by Ted A. Strangfellow

Disk managers. Sector editors. Printer utilities. File utilities. Aaargh! Where does it all end? Is there one program that can do it all? Is there a single program that forever ends the tedium and drudgery of constantly loading an reloading programs that copy, edit, and print? Look! Out on the bulletin boards! In the MANNERS library! It's a disk manager! It's a file editor! It's all of these and more! It's John Birdwell's

(insert Fanfare here)

DISK UTILITIES

Yes, Disk Utilities (alias DSKU), disguised as a mild mannered disk manager, is really a multi-function super duper utility program. It combines the best features of all the above mentioned programs into one single program.

DSKU is currently at version 4.2, and is usable with all current TI-compatible floppy disk formats. I've used DSKU on my TI-99/4A with the TI disk controller, the Myarc floppy controller (both with and without the 80 track EPROM), the Myarc HFDC, and even the Percom controller. I have no problem using it with any TI-compatible floppy drive or my Horizon ramdisk. Sorry, but it's unusable with hard drives.

DSKU v4.12 has a special edition (4.1a) for use with the Myarc floppy controller. The "a" edition formats disks at 18 sectors per track rather than the Myarc standard of 16 sectors per track. I haven't seen an "a" edition of version 4.2, but it's probably available from John. The "a" edition also allows interlace selection. This edition is not needed with the Myarc floppy controller with 80 track EPROM. Of course, you can still use it if you prefer to control your interlace. I couldn't use the "a" edition with my Myarc HFDC (at least the disk format verification didn't work).

DSKU is almost completely menu driven. I say almost because John Birdwell has done something that more fairware authors should attempt. He distributes a working copy of his program with just enough documentation to make you dangerous. To get full use of the program you need the documentation which John will send you (along with the most current version of the program) as soon as he gets your $15 donation. If you need the "m" version you should specify this when requesting the documentation.

Minimum equipment for DSKU is a TI-99/4A, memory expansion, disk system, and either the Extended Basic, TI-Writer, or Editor/Assembler module. Hmm. I wonder if it can be loaded directly using Mini Memory. Hang on a few minutes .... Nope. I couldn't get that to work. It can probably be done but it would take someone much more familiar with using the Mini Memory than I. DSKU appears to be loadable from any environment capable of loading Editor/Assembler program files.

The file and disk manager functions seem to come from several other disk managers I've used. You an do a complete or selective file backup, rename then copy, copy to another file name, move, protect, delete, and recover files, and view display type files on either the screen or print device. Disks can be copied (sector or bitmap), initialized (with or ithout verification), tested, renamed, or reset (total file deletion without initialization). Pretty good selection and those are the common functions.

One of my favorite file functions is the (C)opy command. I personally like the ability to (C)opy from FILEA to FILEB using a single command. This comes in handy for making a quick backup of your work file on the same disk. All the file copying functions display a "number of files/number of sectors" indication in the top right section of the screen. Provided you know how much free space is on your destination disk, this can provide a big plus in optimizing disk space.
** WARNING to HFDC USERS: I have had a consistent problem with corruption of the file descriptor records for display type files when copying from floppy drive to floppy drive. Interestingly, I have not experienced this corruption when copying from floppy to the Horizon ramdisk. I suppose this can be attributed to the Horizon not being controlled directly by the HFDC. I'd recommend copying these files types with MDM5.

My other favorite file function is the (E)dit file command. This is simply a sector editor that deals only with the sectors used by the selected file. The sector and byte being edited is displayed in both ascii and hex at the bottom of the screen (along with a Start Of File or End Of File indicator, where appropriate). You can edit sectors outside those used by the selected file, but the program will produce a honk to let you know you are proceeding beyond the file's boundaries.

Besides the above mentioned file functions, there are also the File Report, Find String, File Compare, and File Print. File Report lists the number of sectors used, start sector, end sector, protection status, and the comment field of the selected file. Find String allows the user to select a file name, drive, data string (ascii or hex) to search for, and data string to replace it (uses entered data as default). It then searches within the selected file for a match of that string. Note:, This function is case sensitive. File Compare compares two files and prints any non-matching sectors to the output device. File Print prints all sectors of the named file to the output device. I haven't gotten this function to work with my system. I'm not sure if this is another quirk of the HFDC or something I haven't found in my setup sectors. However, all other print functions work perfectly. Another interesting function that abounds throughout the program is that it uses the last disk number and filename as a default so that you don't have to re-enter those values for a Find String or File Report on a file that you just finished editing. This turns out to be a nifty feature for rotten spellers, one of whom called this goody to my attention. I won't mention any names, so I'll just thank the software librarian for pointing it out.

All the disk functions have already been covered, but I'm going to mention a couple of minor points. The verify procedure during a disk format is very slow on the Myarc HFDC. Also, the verification displays are in hex for some functions and in ascii for others. I also have problems cloning my Horizon to floppy if I've initialized the Horizon using DSKU. I encounter an error writing at sector 18 on double density or at sector 9 on single density. I'm not sure if the actual problem is with DSKU, the Horizon, or the HFDC.

A small feature of DSKU I like that seems to be unique to this disk manager is the ability to date your disk. This can be done either during initialization or by using the Rename Disk function. By the way, this dating feature works fine with the Horizon, provided that the Rename Disk function is used.

Another thing that I'll mention about disk initialization as it pertains to OO track drives is that OO track selection is designated by the "Q" density. This is not truly quad density since the number of tracks is doubled from 40 to 80, but the density per sector is still parked the same as a double density drive. The term, "density," as I understand it pertains to the packing of the data on the track. I'm probably being a bit picky on this point since the end result is the same, which is doubling the data storage capacity of the disk.

The next selection from the main menu is the Disk Utilities. Theoretically, this is what we've been discussing so far, right? Not quite. The Directory/Comment function is

a handy utility that I've never seen duplicated in any other utility program. This feature allows you to enter data into a comment field associated with a given file. The comment line (stored in the last 35 bytes of the file descriptor record) can contain any valid ascii character. I've heard some speculation that this conflicts with the location used by the Myarc HFDC for the time/date stamp, but I haven't noticed any time or date info listed in the comment field of a disk that I've created using MDM5. DSKU, coupled with a cataloging program that reads the comment field (such as DISKODEX from Oasis Pensive Abacutors), makes for a well managed library. The Disk Report, Find String, and Compare Disks functions are identical in nature and operation to the equivalent File Utilities except they deal with overall disk access.

Sector Utilities consist of Edit, Print, Copy, Mark, and Free Sector functions. Edit Sector is the same as File Edit except that you can access any sector your little heart desires. This comes in handy if you want to modify the first few sectors so that there are 420010 sectors available, 20 used on the entire disk, and 0 free. Something like that can mess with someone's mind if they are unaware of how sneaky you are. Of course, no one would play such a cruel joke on an unsuspecting victim, would they, Ed? Print Sector and Copy Sector do exactly what the name implies. I've found no practical use for the Mark and Free Sector functions, but they change the status of the selected sector in the bitmap.

There is even a Setup choice from the main menu. This provides for setting the print device, print modes, screen colors, and drive configuration. Changes here are not permanent. Permanent changes are made in the first sector of the DSKU1 file (regular edition) or the first sector of DSKUN2 (m edition). The proper bytes and values are listed and described in the documentation.

Want to know more? Get the program. Play with it. Mess up a few disks. Then, once you're hooked, send in the donation and get the docs. This review is not meant to be a substitute for the documentation. It's my hope that I've given out just enough practical information to spark some interest. If I've gone too far toward complete documentation, my apologies go out to John Birdwell. Other than the few HFDC quirks I've mentioned it's a great program. Hopefully, these bugs will be worked out in a new version that's compatible with the HFDC (hint, hint). Until next issue

DONE

COLLECTING CARTRIDGES -- Part 3
copyright 1995 by William Gaskill
CARTRIDGES and LABELS

So far, I have been able to identify seven different cartridge styles that were used to house programs produced for the TI-99 Home Computer at one time or another, by one company or another. First on the scene of course was the TI GROM ort cartridge that we all conjure up an image of when someone mentions Command Module, Solid State Software or just cartridge software. This first appeared for the TI-99 at the computer's introduction during the 2nd Quarter of 1979. Next (not necessarily in chronological order though) came the Atarisoft cartridges that were in somewhat of a flat Y shape that lacked the lip which the TI GROM Port cartridge used to prevent the module from being pushed into he GROM Port connector too far. Then came the Romox ECPCs (Edge Connector Programmable Cartridges) that were designed with the lip just mentioned, but the cartridge top slanted downward at a severe angle away from the lip, unlike the TI's basically flat with a beveled edge look. The ECPCs were also used by Funware, Futuresoft, the International Users Group (IUG) and to a lesser degree by Navarone as well as by Romox.

Parker Brothers also produced a GROM Port cartridge that is quite difficult to describe as far as shape, but it is recognizably different from all other GROM Port cartridges. Navarone Industries produced a cartridge very similar in shape to the TI GROM port module, but without the beveled edge above the label, and without the rounded corners of the TI cartridges. When not employing the Romox cartridge, which they used only minimally, Funware manufactured their own GROM Port cartridge that was identical to the one made by Texas Instruments, except it did not have the serial/lot number and other information stamped into the bottom of the cartridge.

Sunware/Exceltec produced two different cartridge types. The first, dubbed Model I by the company, was the I/O port cartridge that could be used only in the I/ O Port on the right side of the console because their programming was too large for the 8K limitation the GROM Port was tied to. From memory, only a few titles ever appeared that used these cartridges. Three such "large" programs that come to mind are Arcturus, which was a Zaxxon clone written by Bill Bies of Pittsburg h, PA, that took up a whopping 24K memory and that was only marketed through Unisource Electronics as far as I can tell, Miner 2049er, the game with Bounty Bob as the hero, and Espial, both of which were released by Tigervision of Mundelein, IL. Mike Wright has an Espial cartridge with an interrupt switch built in to reset the computer. I have owned both Arcturus and Miner 2049er in the past, but let both of them slip away and I don't remember much of the detail behind their appearance. The second Sunware/Exceltec cartridge type was dubbed the Model II "Command Port Cartridge", which was designed for 10K ROM or 8K ROM and 2K RAM requirements. The Model I "Peripheral Port Cartridge" was designed for 8K-48K ROM requirements in 8K increments. See Home Computer V4N2 p.22 for an illustration of both models.

As far as I can tell, all TI GROM Port cartridges produced by Texas Instruments between 1979 and about the 2nd

Quarter of 1983 were black with black labeling and orange or yellow type on the labels. Black cartridges may still have been produced or used after the 2nd Quarter 1983, but I've not found one in any of the titles that were verifiably released after June 1983. It also appears that any module produced by TI after the 2nd Quarter of 1983 is missing the spring-loaded edge connection protector that was depressed when the cartridge is plugged into the GROM Port, but that springs out when the cartridge is removed.

Other companies like Scott, Foresman, produced blue, red and white colored cartridges as well as black ones. Although I can't substantiate this assertion, it appears that the introduction of the beige colored TI-99/4A console in June 1983 and the planned release of the beige colored Hex-Bus peripherals, may have brought with them the introduction of the white colored cartridges by TI, with their more colorful labels. It is certainly possible that TI just felt that the lighter colored cartridges looked better with the lighter colored console.

For collecting purposes, it is important to make note of the labeling and cartridge colors that you have, since different combinations exist that make collecting cartridges all the more exciting. For example, Parsec can be found in the riginal black cartridge, with a black label and orange type, a black cartridge ith a mauve colored label and yellow type, and a black cartridge with a red labe l and gold type. I suspect it was also released in a white colored cartridge, just haven't come across one yet.

Cartridges produced by Texas Instruments from 1979 to 1981 or early 1982 all had a TI logo at the left end of the cartridge label, followed by a white vertical bar to the right of it, then the words Command Module at the top, the cartridge title in yellow or orange ink underneath, then a copyright date underneath the artridge title. The product number (PHM ####) always appeared in the lower right corner. This is true only for cartridges produced for distribution in the United States. For identification use in the Cartridge List later in this series, I call these label type A.

If the cartridge was destined for distribution outside the United States it would have Solid State Software - Command Module in white lettering at the top of he black label and it had an additional white vertical bar at the right side of the cartridge label. To the right of the right-side vertical bar the label displayed a country code in large black lettering on a white oval background. For example, GB for Great Britain. Additionally, the label had another number on it that no U.S. distributed cartridges had on the label, and that was a part number.

For example, the CAR WARS game that was sold in Great Britain bore part #1109825-54 underneath the country code. Other country codes were:

D-German (Deutsch),
F-French,
I-Italian,
S-Swedish,
NL-Dutch (Nederland).

Although I have never seen cartridges with country codes on them other than the GB just mentioned, I have seen instruction sheets written for Portuguese, Norwegian, Danish, and Suomeksi (Finnish, I believe) users. I call the labels for cartridges produced for outside the United States distribution label type A1.

The second label scheme I have seen is almost a duplicate of the label type A design just discussed. That means it still has the TI logo, the white vertical bar, the copyright date underneath the cartridge title and the product number at the lower right corner of the label. The difference is these labels were not black, and they sported Solid State Cartridge at the top of the label instead of Comm and Module. I call these label type B.

The last label scheme is the one that appears on virtually any cartridge released in 1983 and 1984. Yes, there were actually cartridges produced and released in early 1984. In this label design the TI logo disappears, the white vertical bar disappears and the banner Texas Instruments Solid State Cartridge first appears at the top of the label. Underneath that banner the cartridge title is displayed, usually in a very large, artistic type font, in yellow or gold ink.

The product number appears in the lower left corner in this series of labels and the copyright date and copyright owner are in the lower right corner. Unlike ny of the other label schemes, this last series also had "some" cartridge labels produced in a metal-flake like color that really jazzed up the label's appearance. I call these label type C.

DONE

nothing quite
by Jack Sughrue

of course
there was nothing like my 4a
not a book
nor film
nor chinese dinner
nothing quite like my 4a
when I first unboxed her
Lobelia
was her name
later
she would be joined by siblings
Ferdinand
Fizzette
Pierre Bovary
Shoogy Junior
& Alfreda Delectorum
later still
there would be five more
all white
but they didn't have the soft spot
that special place
that black & silver
Alfreda
Shoogy
Pierre
Fizzette
Ferdinand
& Lobelia
shared

my own four kids
first
& then my 5th-grade classes
& my 3rd-grade classes
all mastered cartridge
masterpieces
in math & writing & reading &
reading & reading
& mastered adventures
& Munching
& board games
but not bored games

& mastered the master
the Tigercub

now my own kids
& many of those school kids
are all grown up & MAC-ing &
PC-ing all over the world & back

& still today
with Lobelia & her siblings
I watch my new 3rd-graders
meeting Jim Peterson
for the first time
with the same joy & wonder
as their predecessors
while I continue to play
the adult game of
word processing
from chucking my
dinosaur typewriter
over the local cliff
as I climbed onto TI Writer
& oh
that cartridge had no limits
for me
then

then
Tony McGovern
introduced me to the spiders
on his Funnelweb Farm
who caught me in their
intriguing webs
where I've been since
& where I often write about
there really being nothing
quite like my 4a
not jellybeans
nor Mack Trucks
nor balloons
nor even a big box
of Godiva chocolates

Jack, the author of a poetry book, 2 books
on education, a CD-Rom adventure, &
numerous TI articles, teaches 3rd grade.

A newspaper
article about
JACK SUGHRUE.
our member
whose TI poem
is on page 7.

Something old and new

names. The children (who live in Apple Valley) now represent all ages, just as they did in the days of one-room schools. Their parents are farmers, railway agents and dress makers. They all have at least one sibling, Sughrue said, "and some of them lost family members to different diseases of the period. Typhoid was terrible last winter," he explained.

Fritz came up with the idea early

this year, she said, as a way to make the end of the school year — usually dedicated to reviewing old material — a learning experience for the children. It was also an appropriate project for the school.

"Stapleton is the oldest working school in Framingham," she said. "There has been a school on this site since 1857. We wanted to expand the children's concept of what it was like over 100 years ago."

A lot of research went into the project to make sure it accurately reflected the era, the teachers said. Fritz even wears a straw bonnet, she said, to represent that former Framingham industry. And, if children need to use the toilet, they must first pass through a time machine, Sughrue added.

"It's been a real learning experience for us, and exciting for the kids," Sughrue said. "It's like being given a new life. If you had a bad year, you can make it different now."

The unexpected payoff, however, was the change in the students, he said.

"Their behavior is extraordinary. This is usually a time every teacher dreads. And this year they're telling me the kids are more off the wall than ever. I say 'Gee, ours are quiet.' They sit at their tables — the girls are at one and the boys at the other - the way they did in the very sexist days — and do their work. The weird part of it is, I called on one the other day, and he stood up and said 'Yes, sir.'

"I thought 'Wait a minute, I should have done this 10 years ago.'"

He'll be able to make up for the lost time next year, when the duo plans to expand the program.

"It's just working out so much better than we anticipated," Fritz said. "We want to do even more."

Everything old is new again

Stapleton teachers bring lessons of yore

By Rachel Wohanka
NEWS STAFF WRITER

FRAMINGHAM — Most teachers dread few things more than the last two weeks of school when anticipation, apathy and heat combine to create a student body bordering on mutiny.

But, as Miss Prudent Penny House and Mr. Finn McCool, Stapleton School third grade teachers Barbara Fritz and Jack Sughrue are having the time of their lives.

"The other teachers think Barbara and I are a little bit on the loony side, but for us it has probably been the best closing of the school ever," Sughrue said. "We thought it would be fun, but we didn't think it would be this much fun. My wife says 'You're behaving like you're a brand new teacher again.'"

In a way, he is just that.

The pair turned their classrooms into an 1875 "two-room" schoolhouse — complete with bonnets, knickers, lunch pails, slates and century-old games at recess.

"What we have done is kick everything (modern) out of our rooms — or covered it up. All the materials, the books, everything, have to come from

1875 or before," Sughrue said.

Even the entertainment is old-style, Fritz said.

"We've been eating on a separate playground, using baskets or lunch pails to bring the food. Some made some pretty ingenious ones, too. One has a two pound coffee can they spray-painted. The toys and games are only those that would be used at that time," she said.

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Sughrue said he was surprised how the games caught on. "They have wooden hoops they roll, and tug of war and marbles. And I think to myself, 'This is the Nintendo crowd,' " he said with a chuckle.

The students were even assigned new identities — and not just new

Stapleton third-grade teacher Jack Sughrue, dressed as a 19th-century schoolteacher, shows Vanessa Ramos, left, and Vanessa Earle, how to compete in an egg and spoon race yesterday.