VOLUME 3 NUMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 1985

Next meeting October 5th
At the Hurst Public Library
9 am till 11 am

The reviews, evaluations and opinions contained in articles in this newsletter are the authors' own and do not reflect the views of the NET 99er HCUG.

Northeast

Tarrant

Home Computer

Users' Group

Devoted to the

TI-99/4A

President's Page

We had been in need of rain at our house for awhile. A big water bill let us know we needed to pray for rain. The night before the last meeting, it came. We got the rain, but lost our electricity for nearly two hours. The night before the meeting is always hectic, but with no electricity meant, also no computer. We used a candle for awhile. This really helped me to appreciate having all of our utilities. Admittedly they could cost less.

A welcome to all of the new members and a thanks to those that renewed. It seemed that we came to the Sept. meeting with a surge of new interest after the slow down of the summer.

Congratulations to Tom Woodard for winning the Multiplan. We also received good support for the Christmas drawing. All members will have a chance to enter the drawing. We will continue to accept donations until the Christmas meeting. You do not have to be present to win. A good many people could make use of a complete system or sell parts of it.

With the help of Ken Dominiec, I have tried to update the non-member list. We send the newsletter to those interested in the Club and those that we exchange newsletters with. Again, the newsletters are a source of information. Especially, those that are consistent in sending their newsletters. I wish someone would offer to do a column for our newsletter about something of interest and where it can be found.

Oct. 5, 1985 at 9:00 AM is our next meeting.

Our program for the Oct. meeting will be presented by Leroy Thompson. A presentation of the new Myarc Disk Controller Card and the 128K Memory Expansion Card.

Please remember the change for our Nov. meeting. It will be Nov. 3, 1985 at 2:30 PM.

See you at the next meeting.

Jo Lambert

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Minutes
Net 99er HCUG Meeting
September 14, 1985

The meeting was called to order by the President, Jo Lambert.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as published in the news- letter. Charles Bathman gave the Treasures report, it was accepted by a majority vote.

A call was made by the President for those who had ordered

GRAPHX to make themselves known.

A letter was read to the group from someone with a system for sale. The group agreed to make donations in the form of five dollars each for a drawing to be held at the December meeting for this system as a door prize. Envelopes were passed out for both the system drawing and for the door prize, a Multiplan that was won by Tom Woodard.

A discussion was begun for the need to change the dates of the next two meetings. October 5, 1985 was selected for the October meeting. The November meeting date had to be changed to a Sunday and Sunday November 3, 1985 at 2:30PM was selected.

Buy and Sell time was next. Leroy Thompson had received a box of books that he donated to the Club. The book was entitled "IDEA BOOK", these were distributed to the members for a donation $1.00.

a short recess was called before our program for the day. Our program was on the use and functions of COMPANION, a word processor program used with our Library. The presentaion was made by Gerry Myers with the help of Gayle Foster and was very informative and usefull. A short demonstration of DM1000 Disk Manager was given by John Lambert with help of Gerry Myers.

James Crosson offered the club some equipement to use as loaners to the membership. Discussion was tabled until the next meeting on the cost of repairs to this equipment

The meeting was adjourned by President Jo Lambert.

Respectfully submitted
John Lambert
Substitute Secretary

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TIMELESS TECHNICAL TIPS
by LeRoy Thompson

We finally get to have a look at a couple of the Myarc peripheral cards. Would you believe that within one week of returning from vacation, I had both new cards? What I am writing about are the 128K card and Disk Controller card. I ordered these about the end of June and received them about the end of August.

First, let's consider the 128K card. If you choose to, you can just plug it in in place of the TI 32K card and forget it. You will never know it is there. It is totally transparent to the user. If you choose to make use of the advanced features, it will be necessary to learn some more. This card has built-in firmware which allows the use of the ramdisk and/or the printer spooler. These are accessed with the command CALL PART(X,Y) with X being the number of K allotted to ramdisk and Y being the number of K allotted to print spooler.

To use the ramdisk there is an additional command CALL EMDK(X)

with X being a drive number from 1 to 5. The ramdisk can also be addressed as RD. The total memory available to the ramdisk and print spooler is 96K. The partition must divide the available memory between the two--zero is acceptable for either. If the 96K is all allotted to ramdisk, you have a simulated disk of 384 sectors. This disk may be addressed as DSKx (x=1,2,3,4,or 5) or RD. I have managed to run the random-file mail list out of ram disk and it is noticeably faster. If you are curious what is in the ramdisk, you need only CALL RDDIR and you will get an instant catalog of the ramdisk. This feature is available from BASIC or Extended BASIC.

To use the printer spooler, you first need to partition the memory so that some significant amount is available to the spooler. Next you must change the way your printer is addressed in your program. SPPIO replaces PIO and SP/2.BA=1200 replaces RS232/2.BA=1200. In the experiment where I tried the mail list, I partitioned the memory to 48K each for ramdisk and spooler. Using a parallel printer, I got use of the computer back when it was printing the "C's" and using the serial printer, I got use of the computer back when the "G's" were being printed. By this I mean that you can do anything else you want to with the computer while the list is finishing printing out. The only exception is using FAST-TERM. When I loaded FAST-TERM, it took over the RS232 card and stopped the printing. When I stopped it, the printer resumed printing everything that had been loaded into the spooler.

One other example: I partitioned the entire 96K to the spooler and proceeded to print a bunch of disk sleeves (SLEEVIT V1.5-Randy Baxter). The computer was returned to me while the first sleeve was printing.

The documentation was adequate, barely. It does not tell you in so many words HOW to get files on the ramdisk. The simple solution is to have the ramdisk emulate some addressable drive and use any disk manager to move the files to the ramdisk. In my example, I emulated DSK3 and made the transfer, then I emulated DSK2 to run the mail list program. Two available features are not even mentioned in the documentation. The card has an external power receptacle at the back which would allow external power to preserve the ramdisk memory while the computer was turned off. When I questioned Lou Phillips about why this feature was not documented, he replied: "We don't support it!" Further conversation disclosed that 9VDC positive tip at >500 ma was required to do the job. This is too much current for a battery and you can't depend on the power company for un-interrupted power. Lou said that 95% of the time you could use it with no trouble, but be cautious.

The other feature which was told to me only by my dealer is that the card is upgradeable to 512 K! This sounds great, however, there are a couple of considerations. First of all, it happens all at once (not in steps). Second, there is no documentation to cover the mod. Third, the required TMS 4464 chips are not available in too many places. I am still investigating this mod and hope to make it in the future.

Overall, the Myarc 128K card works well and it is a real joy to use the advanced features. At approximately $200, it is still a little expensive, but it was worth it to me. I have disproven what I

had heard as a rumor--The Myarc 128K card used as a printer spooler WILL work with both a parallel and a serial printer in conjunction with the CorComp disk control card.

The Myarc DDCC-1 disk controller also worked perfectly the first time I plugged it in. It, too, can be entirely transparent to the user. It can be used just as though it was identical to the TI disk controller card. It will provide many extra features if you choose to use them. The card now comes in a foam-padded box with a disk manager on disk, documentation on the manager, and (hidden underneath everything else) documentation on the disk system. The controller card has a set of dip-switches which allow setting the drive head step time to 20 or 6 ms. When set to 6 ms, my drives seem faster and quieter than when set to 6 ms on my CorComp card. Built into firmware in the controller card is a directory function which can be used while in BASIC or Extended BASIC. By simply typing CALL DIR(X), a catalog of DSKx is printed on the screen without disturbing the program in memory. Very handy.

The rest of the show is in the disk manager. It is different than we have seen before. Whether it is better or worse is up to the individual. Using the Myarc Disk Manager, you can initialize in any of three densities. Standard (9 sectors per track), TIDD (16 sectors per track) and DD (18 sectors per track) densities are available. This was very important to me since I have quite a few disks in 18 sector per track format. The Myarc card will then read and write to these disks in any mixture.

When the program (which is runable from BASIC, XB or EA) comes up, you may select E(dit), S(etup), C(atalog), X(ecute), U(tility) or G(oodby). You first use Setup to configure the manager to your system in a standard manner. Under Setup, you can save the configuration to disk for future use. Next, Catalog is almost required. You catalog by pressing C and the number of the desired drive. At that point, you must press E (edit) to make any changes. Next you are greeted with a large black cursor across the first catalog entry and a new menu. The menu includes C(opy), M(ove), E(xit), D(elete), R(ename), P(rotect), U(nprotect), V(olume), B(ackup) and S(ee). Only the last three differ from conventional managers significantly. Volume allows you to change the diskette name. Backup places "C" by all files so that when executed all files will be copied. See allows you to see displayed on the screen the contents of any DIS 80 file. This is a new and unique feature. When you have made all the choices you desire, you must press E (exit) then X(ecute). The manager seems to have good speed in most cases.

From the main menu you can choose U(tility). This presents a second menu: T(ests), C(lone), F(ormat), L(oad/run), R(amdisk), and E(xit). The tests are very similar to those of the TI disk manager. C(lone) is a sector copy which I have had nothing but bad luck with. It is almost un-documented, but someday I will figure it out. F(ormat) allows the initializing of disks as described before. L(oad/run) allows the loading and running of E/A programs without the E/A cartridge. R(amdisk) allows the setting of ramdisk parameters if the hardware is present.

Additionally, there is built-in firmware which allows the use of CALL ILR, CALL LR, and CALL LLR from BASIC and Extended BASIC. These

calls duplicate the functions of CALL INIT, CALL LOAD, and CALL LINK. This firmware is there for loading and running the disk manager program, but it can also be used to load and run standard assembly language programs. This card gives you a lot of built-in power.

Overall the Myarc disk controller has worked quite well for me. You will have to decide if the REAL costs of owning the card are worth the gained features in your own case. Since I have been evaluating my purchase of the Myarc card, the following have shown up. It will not run the following programs: Companion, Nibbler (in DSDD), Advanced Diagnostics, Explorer and the new Disk Data Base. TurboCopy STILL will not run. However, I think it will only run on a TI disk controller machine. All of the programs which will not run are at least partly assembly language. The two from Millers Graphics you would not expect to run since they manipulate the disk controller in un-fathomable ways. The others are more standard and really should run--BUT they don't. I feel just like a rank beginner--everything I try crashes and I don't know why.

I feel the need to pass along some information that came to me from one of our members. Bill Sullivan recently moved from the Metroplex to Del Ray Beach, FL. He called me the other night and we discussed many subjects. He had just bought the CorComp Triple Tech card for his PEB. His major reason for purchasing it was for the printer spooler feature. It also has a real time clock and a place to plug in the guts from your speech synthesizer. Apparently it worked except..... It wouldn't spool to Bill's serial printer. After several hours of trying and reading, it still wouldn't spool to his serial printer. Bill called CorComp. They said, "Right!" Bill then re-read the advertisement. It said, "The Buffer is virtually compatible with any printer and requires no user modification of software--it installs easily in seconds." CorComp told him that they had told their distributors that it wouldn't work with a serial printer and that the distributors were at fault for not telling the customers. The reader is left to form his own conclusion.

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A REVIEW OF POPEYE
by
Bob Webber

Popeye, the legendary cartoon character, along with his girlfriend Olive Oyle, his nephew Swea' Pea, and his pal Whimpy all come to life in this great game by Parker Brothers. There are, of course, enemies. The Sea Hag is there to throw bottles at Popeye, but of constant worry to him is his arch-enemy, Bluto.

The first screen in this game puts Olive Oyle, apparently a prisoner of Bluto, at the top of the screen. She throws hearts down to Popeye, and if he catches enough of them he will move to the next level. But his task is not an easy one. Bluto is always there, chasing Popeye. Touching his ominous bulk will send you spiraling into the drink. The screen has four "floors", all connected by stairways, plus a fifth where Olive is held prisoner. If two of the hearts thrown by Olive reach the bottom of the screen, Popeye will lose a life. (He starts with three). The Sea Hag occasionally

appears to throw a bottle at Popeye, and Bluto can throw a few of his own if he wants to. Popeye can punch the bottles or simply run up or down the stairs to avoid them. But don't despair! At the top of the screen is a bucket with a punching bag just to the left of it. If Popeye can punch the punching bag while Bluto is standing under the bucket, it will fall on his head, leaving the enemy temporarily helpless. And, if all else fails, Popeye still has his trusty spinach. It is located on the left of the screen, alternately on the second and third floor. When Popeye punches it, all of the hearts freeze in place and Bluto runs in fear. If Popeye can reach him before the spinach wears off he can give him a taste of his own medicine, sending him flying across the screen and down into the water.

There is a shack marked "Popeye" in the top left hand corner of the screen. When Popeye fills all of the 24 spaces in the shack with hearts he moves on to the second screen. Here Olive is still at the top of the screen, but this time she throws musical notes instead of hearts. Whimpy is in the bottom left hand corner of the screen sitting on a teeter-totter. If Popeye jumps on it, he (Popeye) will be bounced to the top of the screen. Swee' Pea sits in the top right hand corner of the screen, but he has no apparent function. Bluto and the Sea Hag are still there, just as mean as ever. There is a window on the right side of the screen where the spinach is kept, and it acts the same as it does in the first screen, making Popeye temporarily all-powerful. When Popeye succeeds in catching 16 musical notes, it's on to the third screen.

This screen is set on a ship, with Olive Oyle still at the top and Bluto and the Sea Hag still trying to foil Popeye in his quest to save his girlfriend. This time the sailor must catch cries for help thrown by Olive. Each time he catches one, another section is added to a ladder starting at the bottom of the screen until it reaches Olive so that Popeye can rescue her. But the Sea Hag's pet vulture is there to try and get Popeye, and Bluto is more aggressive than ever.

The graphics are one of this games best features, although they are not quite on par with that of the arcade version. Popeye and Bluto are both wonderfully animated, with Bluto stopping to look around when he loses track of his prey. The bottles thrown by the Sea Hag tumble through the air, making it look very realistic. When Olive throws a heart, musical note, or a cry for help, it floats to the bottom of the screen, much in the same manner a feather would.

I found this game rather frustrating the first time I played it because when you are standing on a floor below Bluto he will unexpectedly reach down to grab you, or he will jump up if you are above him.

This game runs in Editor/Assembler or it can be purchased in cartridge form.

When you put it all together this is a very good game, fun for both kids and adults. So long and have fun!

THE GREAT NET 99er
HOME COMPUTER USERS' GROUP HOLIDAY SEASON RAFFLE

Once upon a time, there was a good _____ who said,"There are a lot of folks in the NET 99ers who would like to expand their system but really don't have the money to spare. Since I'm changing systems, I think I'll give them a chance at getting my hardly used system." With those words, he shipped his whole system off to Charlie Bathman who had told him, "BOY, HAVE I GOT A DEAL FOR YOU?". Thus began the great RAFFLE.

If you think that you could WASTE $5.00 on something like; a beer, cigarettes, bowling, a movie, a record, gambling, a baby sitter, a book, a drink, your kids, a pizza, Mac Donalds, a magazine, or a Christmas Gift, here's the perfect solution. We have the following TI System that we'll give to the lucky winner:

TI CONSOLE
TI PERIPHERAL EXPANSION BOX with:
- RS232 CARD
- 32K MEMORY EXPANSION CARD
- TI SS/SD DISK DRIVE
- TI DISK CONTROLLER CARD

TI 10" COLOR MONITOR
TRS 80 CASSETTE RECORDER and CABLE
NAVARRONE CARTRIDGE EXPANDER
ONE PAIR OF JOYSTICKS
TI EXTENDED BASIC
TI WRITER
TI/MICROSOFT MULTIPLAN

THE FOLLOWING TI CARTRIDGES:
- PARSEC - MUNCHMAN - TOMBSTONE CITY - TI INVADERS - HOUSEHOLD BUDGET MANAGEMENT - TUNNELS OF DOOM

THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL SOFTWARE
- TI MAILING LIST - NAME-IT - TEACH YOURSELF BASIC

ALL ASSOCIATED MANUALS AND INSTRUCTION BOOKS

Starting with our September meeting, those of you that wish to make a $5.00 donation to the NET 99er H.C.U.G., should do so in a small envelope (we'll supply them at the next four meetings) in which you enclose either a five dollar bill, five one dollar bills, a five dollar check or any form of United States legal currency ammounting to five dollars, print your full name , address and telephone number on the front of the envelope, seal it well and give it to any of the club's officers ON or BEFORE our December meeting. During the December meeting, we will draw ONE NAME. You need NOT be present to win but you must be a current, dues paid member. The lucky winner will get the whole Ball of Wax.

Face it Folks! Where else can you get odds like this. Invest $5.00, with a possible 15,000% rate of return with the odds against you only 200:1.

Like I said,"BOY DO I HAVE A DEAL FOR YOU!".

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Editors' Comment

The latest rumor from MYARC is that Lou Philips has told a New Jersey Users' Group that he may have a new machine for them to demo at their Oct. 22nd meeting. The UG is looking for a larger meeting place than they now have. Lou also told this group that prototypes are now being produced.

Could it be?.....

There is a new sick bay for your ailing micro in the area. It's called MICRO-FIX, and it's located in Arlington at 3535 B W. Pioneer Pkwy. The phone number is (817)860-6281. Metro number is 261-9615.

It's owned and managed by Blair Knappenberger, and he says that he can work on the TI-99/4A.

I have never done this before, but I feel compelled to bring out the 'soap-box' in defense of 'FREEWARE'. I have recently come to think that most of us do not understand the term 'FREEWARE'. It does NOT mean that the software is free. This concept was born because someone felt the need to write a program,possibly for their own use, but did not want to go to the trouble of getting it copyrighted and finding a company to market it for them. So, they decided to market it themselves under the 'freeware' concept. That is, you could copy the program, try it out, and if you found it useful, you could send the author a small donation, usually no more than ten dollars.

Most of the 'freeware' that I have seen and used is excellent, and compares favorably with commercial software costing MANY times more! Yet I have yet to talk to a freeware author who has realized more than a few dollars for his efforts. In fact, most of them go in the hole!

I'm afraid that we are going to lose one of our most valuable resources if we do not realize that the 'freeware' author deserves our monetary support. If you use the product, please send the author a small donation, or one day you may go to the well, and it will be dry!