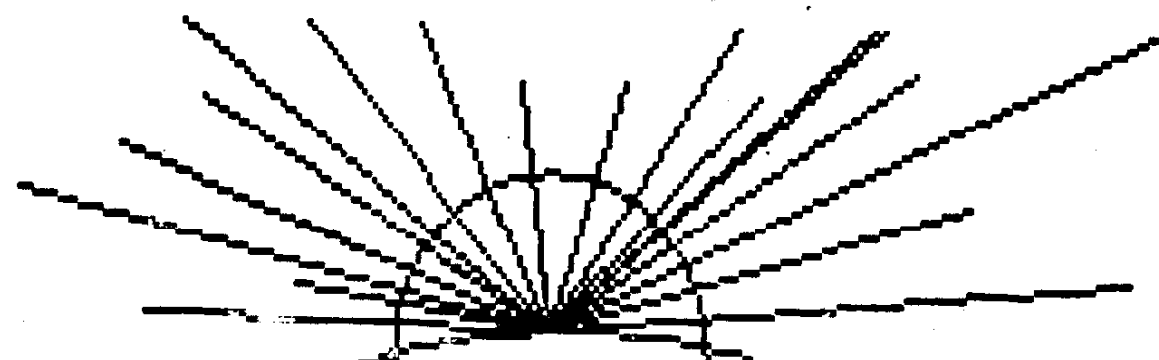


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The NEWJUG NEWS

Helping the USERS of
the TI-99/4A and
Myarc Geneve 9640 into
the dawn of a new decade.

MEETING:

MARCH 7, 1988

NEWJUG NEWS
c/o Bret Musser
60 Broadway Road
Warren, NJ 07060



June 21, 1988
New Hampshire

NEWSLETTER EXCHANGES: PLEASE NOTE
NEW ADDRESS!

DALLAS TI Home Computer Group
PO Box 29863
Dallas TX 75229

Before I introduce this month, I must notify you all of a recent happening: earlier in January, Ed Zelazny, a good member and friend, died from a heart attack. Many of us will miss him.

NEWJUG MEETING SCHEDULE

1988 The main meeting will start at 7:30 in the Iselin Public Library on Green St. in Iselin.

- FEBRUARY 2 Come early to get settled down for the meeting and
- MARCH 1 for an informal discussion period on any topic of
- APRIL 5 your choice.
- MAY 3
- JUNE 7

NEWJUG Club Officers

- President: Herb Oppenheimer...992-9734
- Vice President: Dave Green.....463-9133
- Dan Gazsy.....???-????
- John Molinelli....???-????
- Bret Musser.....647-1437
- Rec.Secretary: Johan Mykvist.....727-6217
- Corr.Secretary: Stan Rosenthal....647-2365
- Treasurers: Mac Rochan.....463-1918
- Software Librarian: Dave Green.....463-9133
- Newsletter Editor: Bret Musser.....647-1437

Please send all mail to:

NEWJUG NEWS		NEWJUG Corresponding Sec.
c/o Bret Musser	or	Stan Rosenthal
60 Broadway Rd.		40 Cottage Place
Warren, NJ 07060		Gilette, NJ 07933

Membership dues: \$15 for individual
\$20 for family membership

Send all dues to: Mac Rochan
6 Sunburst Lane
Piscataway, NJ 08854

If possible, pay your dues at the meeting.

The mentioning of a product in the NEWJUG News does not constitute an endorsement by the NEWJUG News or by NEWJUG itself. Opinions expressed here belong solely to the author of such opinions and do not represent the opinions of NEWJUG or the NEWJUG News. Copies may be made of this newsletter as long as the original author(s) is recognized.

Introduction: This is February.

Well, here we are into a new month. For me, January was one of my most trying months, with Mid-year exams and all. But now it is over, and my life can resume, and so can my excellence in writing this newsletter, which has been lacking the past month, and is lacking also in this issue. There is a reason: I have not used my computer that much. For that matter, I haven't used ANY computer that much. Usually, I log on about 10 hours minimum per week, but this month, I averaged one hour per week!

To be honest, I wrote some of these articles (and this introduction) just two nights before the meeting, and had the newsletter printed the day before the meeting! Why? Well, it is some form of self-torture...but not entirely voluntary. First, I start to write in the morning, then get involved doing something else for someone else, and then the next thing I know, its 10 o'clock p.m.!

Anyways, enough about me, and more about what is going to happen in the coming months. Firstly, mainly, and most importantly (now there's an illegal use of adverbs if I ever saw one) we are going to be preparing for TICOFF. We should really run a demonstration of something that our club has done, and we must distribute ads for the club. I think that when I took over this newsletter, I mentioned that as what we should make our Number One goal, and I'm sure I mentioned it last month.

Speaking of last month, I have some notes about the January newsletter. First, in the Geneve column, the parts relating to someone else's reactions to the Geneve were inappropriately written. I was not writing it for you, but for a few selected people who would probably never read this newsletter. I should have rewritten it once I regained my mind. Second, in the article about our future: all of what I said was logical, but I must emphasize one point--none of that has to come true. We CAN change that grim future I mentioned. (For a touch of reality in this case, change would most likely mean delay.) First, we must get all of the TI's out of the closet and back in operating condition. This also means getting the USER's of those machine back and running again. Second, participation in groups and for the newsletters of the TI world must increase. It has been for our group, and I am very thankful for that, but participation must increase universally. We cannot take and take from a system and not return anything. Look at our world today for proof of that. I just hope that no one drops the TI because of what I said. Thankyou Stan.

Anyways, because I got around to this newsletter pretty late, I decided that it would be pretty impossible for me to write alot for it, so this month is the month for other people's writings. The major contributor this month is the famous Dan Gazsy, our c99 guru. I think that I'll call him "Mr. C" from now on. Next, I got an article off of Compuserve that is a part of a Multiplan tutorial. This month's section just reviews all of the commands and gives a brief beginners introduction. Then, by Mr. Johan Mykvist, we have our club minutes, and (trumpets please) we have a review, written by Bob Wolff, of VCR Guide.

Here we go!

DATA BASE MANAGERS FOR THE TI-99/4A

By Bill Gaskill, reprint from Chicago Times.

Some owners/authors of the applications I have covered in this article will no doubt be angered by the apparent brutality of it. I choose to view it as honesty rather than brutality. Too many reviewers white wash the weaknesses of TI software they critically review. I will not. I think sometimes that we are afraid that the software market will dry up and blow away unless we give favorable reports on the software products that do appear for our computer. I prefer to think of it in another way; if we promote junk software in a favorable light those that do publish product reviews will lose credibility and those that buy software based upon those reviews will simply be that much more reluctant to get burned a second time. In the process of searching for the perfect data base manager I have purchased several programs and spent over \$300. All of the programs that I own have positive points and all have negative points. What I have discovered to date is that the "perfect" data base manager does not exist yet (not even in the business world). What I am going to share with you are my impressions of the programs I own and in doing so will perhaps save you a little time and money if you too are looking for that "perfect" application.

The programs I own are;

ACORN 99 from Oak Tree Systems DBMS from Navarone Industries DATA BASE 1 from SPC Software DATA BASE 99 from Quality 99 Software DATA BASE 300 from the International Users Group DATA BASE X from Western Ware PR BASE v1.2 and V2.0 from William Warren TURBO DATAMAN from Easy Ware

I have used these programs enough to feel comfortable with each and could probably write several pages about each one. Unfortunately, publication space is limited and such a voluminous article would never see print because of it. Thus I have tried to be brief, but to the point in my comments on each program. Also, please keep in mind that my comments are subjective, based upon how each product meets MY needs and expectations. Yours may be different. For ease of reference I have included some of the information in a comparison table that allow analysis at a glance. In the paragraphs that follow I will try to provide a little detail to each issue and cover special features, lack of what I view as standard features and product performance of each program. I apologize in advance for the cryptic style you will read, however I needed to be brief. The DATA BASE 300 program will not be looked at since it is not available.

DATA BASE MANAGERS FOR THE TI-99/4A

ACORN 99:

Among the top three DBM's available to the TI community. The only relational data base available, also the only one with a programming language interface for custom applications. EXTREMELY powerful and well designed. Can support three active files at one time, allows existing data file formats to be edited, copied to another file, resequenced and can reformat a file structure into another file format. Does not have the ability to show number of records in a file. Can hold more than 1500 records per file on a SS/SD disk (depending on file size). Sorts alpha characters and strings better than numbers. Indexes record location for subfile creation and mainfile is then concatenated to create the subfile as another database. Possesses ability to search using: "equal to, unequal, greater than, less than, ignore" logical operators. Supports relational operators in

search routines through the use of a tree/false convention that allows selection of records where all parameters are met or any parameters are met. CAN print a single record from a display screen. EXTREMELY slow in operation. Uses 40 column text mode. Allows duplicate key field data entries. Allows printer control codes to be encrypted in setup file. Provides input checking for "numeric, integer, money, string, flag and date" entries. Overall, a fabulous program, with almost limitless potential. The best documentation of the group, giving many examples along with explanations. SUPERB application.

DBMS (Navarone):

Allows 32,000 records per file but only 350 per SS/SD diskette. Limits you to half that amount if you wish to sort the file since it creates a second sorted file that demands equal space on your data disk. Most interesting report generator I have ever seen, a cut and paste type affair that is really neat but poorly documented. Excellent custom screen design module which includes help screens that you design. FAST,FAST,FAST. Requires unique key field entries only, which I find inconvenient. Documentation is better than originally written but still confusing at times and incomplete. Does on mundane things and skips over or entirely omits important things. Does totaling in reports but no other computational work. Does not support single record printing but can use the report module to scroll data on screen, write it to disk or send it to your printer. Can append new data fields to the end of an existing record but cannot reformat the record in any other way. Can create subfiles but you have to figure out how to do it for yourself because the documentation does not tell you how. It doesn't even mention subfiles. Allows printer control codes to be encrypted in Report Generation file. Does not perform input checking of any type. All data is considered to be a string entry. Best suited for a hard disk environment. Not difficult to use once you have "played" with it, but can be intimidating at first.

DATA BASE 1:

Best suited for mailing lists or other LIST type data files. Cumbersome design setup requiring records to be accessed by their relative position in the file (record number). You must first list the records by a specified field if you don't know the record number. Time consuming. Provides three pre-set mailing label report formats and one custom format for your own design. Will NOT do reports that have heading information. Includes several nice utilities such as a form letter generator, disk file data base which creates a DB1 data base file out of the information on your library of disks. Does not provide for input checking nor length of field entries. Only looks at the length of overall record. Does searches by "equal to" operator only, only on one data field at a time. Requires that you first create an index file and then search. To search by another field you must create another index file. Searches by a maximum of 5 characters in any field. Sorts are limited to 1000 records no matter how many exist in the file, but both alpha and numeric sorts are offered. Subfiles can be created to a printer in the main program or to disk by using the Utilities options. Selection is by "equal to" or "between two values" which can be either alpha or numeric type.

DATA BASE 99:

More emphasis put on copy protection than on program performance. Allows custom screen design and claims 28 fields of up to 28 characters each. Would be a neat trick to do since four of the 24 rows on screen are used by program prompts. Fast assembly language interface for report generation. Cannot generate reports with headings and does not permit printer

control codes to be inserted in report data. Does not save a format after design so you will have to re-create it each time you want a report. Data is printed in continuous format without regard to page breaks or anything else. Design of layout is cumbersome, requiring you to conceptualize how many colons and/or semi-colons are needed to push the data across the page. Number of colons/semi-colons is limited to 127 characters allowed in a LINPUT command. A terrible system. Disk catalog accessed from main menu will crash program if you enter an alpha character instead of a number when it prompts for the disk drive number to be cataloged. Color is lost after a crash since it was CALLED from the LOAD program. Does not permit single record screen print (unless you buy the DB 99 Utilities), must use EDIT option to search for a record or search sequentially. Cannot go directly to a record by its relative position in the file. Will create subfiles to disk allowing the search by "less than, equal to or greater than" operators. Search is limited to one field for all practical purposes. Sorts can be performed in ascending order, by any one field. Sort is an actual re-write of the file. All data is considered string information. No number crunching (again, unless you buy the DB99 Utilities), no input checking. Documentation consists of two 8 1/2" X 11" sheets of paper printed on both sides. Program is slow, inflexible, inconvenient in many ways and cumbersome to use. It might have been an advanced application two years ago. Today it is a dinosaur, even with the DB99 Utilities. Much too expensive.

DATA BASE X:

Very modular, meaning that each function (adding, editing, printing, deleting etc.) is a separate program that must be loaded each time you want to use that function. Does statistical analysis of data. Record counter is inaccurate, code of program is jumbled and entirely unstructured. Does not sort data: even though documentation uses the term "sort". What it means is "select". When DATA BASE X " sorts" by a particular parameter it is really selecting records for dumping to a printer that meet that parameter. Does allow selection between ranges. Cannot create subfiles, does not index existing records. Access of a record is done sequentially unless you know the record number. No way to tell the record number, you must guess. Supports 1 or 2 disk drives. Excruciatingly slow. Requires that you name the data disk DBXDATA for no good reason that I can see, otherwise program errors out. Does not save report definition but does allow it to be printed in normal or compressed mode. Definition process is fairly simple but time consuming. Documentation is the "shabbiest" I have ever seen. It is photocopied and put into booklet form with the pages not even cut straight, so that some information is missing off of some pages. Overall, this program is JUNK! As with the IUG's DATA BASE 300/500, it never really belonged on the market in the state that it is in. Unfortunately I didn't know that and paid out over \$30 to find out.

PR BASE:

Totally assembly language coded. THE BEST all-around application in my opinion. FAST, flexible, does virtually anything a user would want in the way of data handling except number crunching. It will not do anything in that area. Treats all data as part of a big string just as DBMS and DATA BASE 99 do. As long as you own the PRB Utilities written by John Johnson you can create subfiles, other wise you can't. Has on-line help for commands, creates an index by any input field you choose and then accesses any record in about 1 second. Also has a FIND feature to look at data sequentially in any single field and a GLOBAL option that searches for a single data entry anywhere in the record. Saves up to five report

formats, V2.0 allows you to format a data disk. Custom screen layout with terrific graphics options for borders/windows etc. is available. A tremendous program, well thought out, well designed, artistically executed. FAIRWARE!!! PRB Utilities are free for the asking as long as you provide the disk and mailer. Report design routine is cumbersome and confusing. Prints single record from screen display in either 40 or 80 column mode. Program is very sensitive about I/O device names. My copies (V1.2 and V2.0) both require PIO. to work rather than just PIO or PIO/1 etc. With number crunching abilities this program would be a perfect "flat-file data manager" for most TI users. As it is, the value and performance for a FAIRWARE application or a commercial application too for that matter, is unsurpassed. If you don't have PR BASE then you are missing out on one of the premier productivity tools available to the TI Community.

TURBO DATAMAN:

This is the second most powerful and useful data manager, taking a back seat only to PR BASE. It runs slightly ahead of ACORN because it performs number crunching and is faster in operation. Like ACORN, TURBO DATAMAN allows you to create a dictionary of data items (fields) and then lets you choose from that library of fields to put a record together. Up to 30 fields are allowed per record. Twenty pre-defined records (file formats) can exist on one disk. Allows custom screen layout design, complete with graphics for borders/windows etc. Does input checking, allows secondary screen access like ACORN's Detail Records. Allows formulas to be created and saved that perform the four basic math functions. Report definitions can be saved. Allows wildcard type operators in searches, will print single record from screen display. Provides "less than, greater than, equal to, not equal to, greater than or equal to, less than or equal to" operators in screen display and report generation modules. Permits sub-totals in reports that can be formatted like TI Extended Basic does with the IMAGE statement. Subfiles can be created through the report generator by sending the output selected to a disk file rather than a printer. The results must be converted back to INTERNAL, FIXED from DISPLAY FIXED before you can use it in the program however. TURBO DATAMAN does not provide you with that utility. The documentation instructs you to "write a program" to do it. Names used for different modules in the program are confusing. Ex; ETCM,SKETCH, SKETCHP, FETCH. Should change names to more accurately reflect function of module. Documentation acceptable but lacks adequate coverage in some areas. Utilities are provided to perform some mundane operations such as counting the amount of records in a database. Reformatting or restructuring of an existing file is not permitted unless the input field is appended to the end of a record format. This program needs some "fine tuning" in some areas but is still an exciting productivity tool with immense possibilities. Its speed of operation is not fast but acceptable. It is faster than ACORN. One can set up the SKETCH program to auto-load if desired but the whole application should be centered around a menu in my opinion. As it is now, you must RUN each module from the READY> prompt when you need to use it, because every module exits with an END statement. If you don't own this program, you should. Whether you want to manage a mailing list or do accounting, TURBO DATAMAN is for you.

Reprinted from:

CALL SOUNDS, AUGUST 1987
Newsletter of the Central Westchester 99'ers,

(C)

MINUTES

The regular monthly meeting of the New Jersey User's Group (NewJUG) was held at the Iselin Public Library on Tuesday evening, 2 February 1988.

Mr. Michael Tierstein presented a demonstration of the mathematics routines that he has been developing.

The business portion of the meeting was opened by the President, Mr. Herbert Oppenheimer. Mr. Mac Rochon distributed copies of the Treasurer's Report (attached). Disbursements for expenses were made to Mr. Bret Musser for \$12.64 postage for January 1988. Disbursements were also made to Messrs. Bret Musser and Dave Green as itemized in the Treasurer's Report.

Minutes of the previous meeting were distributed to the membership without being read. A current list of members was also distributed.

Mr. Bret Musser informed the membership that the deadline for submissions for the next newsletter will be Monday, 22 February 1988.

A discussion of our participation in TICOFF '88 was held.

A MOTION was made, seconded and CARRIED that the club purchase a working TI99/4A console. Purchase will be made from the lowest bidder to submit his price to the Secretary by 29 February 1988.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:45

Respectfully submitted,

Johan I. Nykvist

Secretary