

Nov 1983

99/4A OWNER/USERS GROUP
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DON'T FORGET

Next meeting is November 18 at 7:00 PM. For those of you who came last month and did not know where to go, we are very sorry. We meet at the Woodstock High School. Parking is in the rear of the school. If you look around after you park, you'll find a greenhouse. Near this greenhouse is an entrance, and that's where you enter. Again, we're sorry.

TI QUILTS THE HOME COMPUTER MARKET

Saturday, October 29, 1983; Chicago Tribune, Charles Storch... "FINDING THE home computer market unfriendly, Texas Instruments Inc. said Friday it was withdrawing from that business because of heavy losses.

The cost of withdrawing and low shipments of home computers resulted in a third-quarter pretax charge of about \$330 million and a net loss of \$110.8 million for the Dallas firm. The loss for the nine months ended Sept. 30 was \$222.9 million.

Mark Shepherd Jr., chairman, and J. Fred Bucy, president, said in a statement that the decision to withdraw was "to limit further financial drain" on the company. They said Texas Instruments will remain in the personal computer market of higher-cost machines sold primarily to business customers."

MICROSOFT MULTIPLAN - A SECOND LOOK

In a previous newsletter (Volume 1: Issue 9), we gave a rather stinging review of Microsoft Multiplan for the 4A. No other article ever written brought such an onslaught of comments, from...I agree...to...Drop dead you creep. We even heard from TI with an offer to buy back our copy. With so much comment and feeling about, we thought it best to look again at TI's Microsoft Multiplan.

TI has told us that it was quite a feat to pack such a powerful program like Multiplan into a home computer, and that so far no one else has been able to do the same. A closer look into Multiplan proves they were right. In other articles, we will report our findings as space allows.

SHUGART DISK DRIVES AND THE PES

The most recent disk drives shipped with and for the expansion box are now coming from Shugart. These drives are different from the one's illustrated in the manuals from TI. Here's a Tip for you if your planning on adding additional drives...You do not have to remove the "termination pack resistor" from the first drive to add the second.

MEMORY LIMITATIONS WITHOUT DISK

If you have extended basic and the 32K memory expansion, but do not have a disk drive, remember this...from page 13 of the addendum to extended basic: "However, even with the Memory Expansion unit available, the largest TI Extended Basic program that can be stored on a cassette tape is 12K bytes in size."

TI FORTH - THE PARTING SHOT

When the news broke about TI quitting the home computer market we called TI's user group coordinator, Ed. Wiest, for anything he could tell us. Fact is, there was not much he could say with any degree of assurance. When parts and products are depleted, that's it! Repair service is still available from TI, but that's about all. As a parting gift to all registered user groups, TI is sending out TI-FORTH, a computer language, in their final care package. What follows is an article about FORTH by Dave Hill of the WASHINGTON DC AREA TI HOME COMPUTER USERS GROUP.

For those who are new to computing, "FORTH" is a computer language, not a word I have just misspelled. The main advantage to using FORTH is that it runs much faster than TI-BASIC. However, it is not as fast as ASSEMBLY. Thanks to CompuServe and the efforts of one of its Sysops (System Operators -ED), FORTH is now available for the TI 99/4A and can be obtained either directly from me or through the User Group Library. In order to run FORTH you need the following equipment: disk drive, disk controller, 32K memory expansion and the Editor Assembler Command Module. The language runs through the Debug Program of the Editor Assembler, and in order to run the language you must add a line to the source code of the Debug Program and reassemble Debug. Sound difficult? Instructions about this procedure are in the first file of the three FORTH Source Code Files.

FORTH is not a new language. I am uncertain how long it has been around, but apparently it's been long enough that a special interest group has been formed, appropriately called the FORTH Interest Group ("Fig", for short). If you have ever seen any information about FORTH, you may have noticed the term "Fig-FORTH". Now you know the definition of "Fig". The group is located at P.O. Box 1105, San Carlos, CA 94070, and charges \$15/year to be a member. I have just recently sent away my membership fee, so at this point I can't tell you much about the organization. The initial literature I received offered to sell me everything from a Fig T-shirt to Source Code for 16 different processors, including the 9900 (the TMS9900 CPU in the 4A -ED), for \$15 per listing.

Now that I have told you some good news about FORTH let me give you a little bad news. The present version of FORTH does not support either disk or cassette (at this time we are not sure if the TI-FORTH version will or will not support disk and cassette -ED). This means that any programs you write will be lost when the machine is turned off. Even though this is true, the few hours of

experience I have had using the language tells me that it doesn't really matter because it will be a while before I write any programs that are significant enough to save. The language is fun to learn and believe me there is plenty to learn. If any ASSEMBLY Language gurus out there know how to write a device service routine in ASSEMBLY to enable us poor uneducated ASSEMBLY Language students to save FORTH then you would be doing the world a favor by lending us some of your time and expertise. Think of it as a service to humanity. Unfortunately, I am at the stage with ASSEMBLY Language where I can make a word appear on the screen and that is about it.

**"FOR THOSE WHO KNOW NOTHING ABOUT FORTH IT IS
A LANGUAGE WHOSE LOGIC IS SIMILAR TO TI-LOGO."**

For anyone who wants to learn FORTH, a good tutorial is called "Starting FORTH" by Leo Brodie and published by FORTH, Inc. The book can be obtained locally at B. DALTON. This is my kind of book--easy to understand and has a few cartoons to keep me amused while learning. I have completed the first chapter of instruction and found the short two-or three-line programs there to run without difficulty. For those who know nothing about FORTH, it is like a language whose logic is similar to TI-LOGO. Firstly, one starts by creating a subroutine. This subroutine is given a name; and thereafter, whenever the name is used in a program, that subroutine will be executed. It is similar to building your own dictionary of words. The first chapter of this book starts by placing a star (ASCII 42) on the screen. This routine is given the name STAR. Secondly, a loop is created and 5 stars are placed on the screen. This routine is also given a name. Thirdly, a routine is written to produce the letter "F", using a combination of rows with 1 star and 5 stars, as shown below:

```
*****  
*  
*****  
*  
*
```

This subroutine is defined as "F" in the dictionary; and thereafter, the letter "F" can be placed on the screen by simply typing "F". This explanation of how the language works will, perhaps, whet your appetite to learn more!

-DAVE HILL

SPRITE ONE LINER

Here is a nifty one from Barron Bartlett, reprinted from the HOUSTON USERS GROUP Newsletter.

Want to frustrate and amaze your Atari, Vic-20, Color Computer friends? Just type in the following in command mode with extended basic.

```
CALL CLEAR :: CALL SCREEN(5) :: CALL MAGNIFY(2) :: FOR I=1 TO 28 :: CALL SPRITE(#I,64+I,16,80,80,3*I,8) :: NEXT I :: FOR J=1 TO 5000 :: NEXT J
```

Hit ENTER and watch all 28 sprites do their tricks. If you want to see it again, simply hit FCTN REDD then ENTER again as many times as you want to. You can also INSERT, DELETE, etc. to try different speeds, colors, characters, or even add a line number to make it a one line program.

THE FOUNDATION 128K MEMORY EXPANSION CARD

Reprinted in part from ATLANTA 99/4A COMPUTER USERS GROUP.

Foundation's memory expansion was designed to work just as the TI card. There are some structural differences though. The Foundation card uses fewer chips and is designed for a longer period of reliability. The Foundation card does indeed work like the TI card. It runs assembly language programs and increases available memory. I have used it with assembly language games, programs that are as big as they come for TI and on assembly language utility programs such as the Display Enhancement software that allows your screen to have a forty column display.

There is one program that does not work on the card and that is the new TI Text to Speech program. The Foundation people are also aware of this and their engineers are trying to reconcile the difference. Foundation did not know whether a software or hardware fix would be necessary, but they feel that a hardware fix will probably be the way to go. At any rate they are committed to solving the problem because they intend for their card to be completely compatible to TI's.

There is another difference that is beneficial to the user. The TI memory expansion does not allow you to store strings in extended memory. In other words even with TI's extra memory you can't handle any more files than you could before since those files will not go into the TI card. The Foundation card will handle data strings in its extra memory.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

Got any software or hardware that you would like to sell? Looking to find some software or hardware to buy? Your newsletter is here to help. Just let us know and we will publish your

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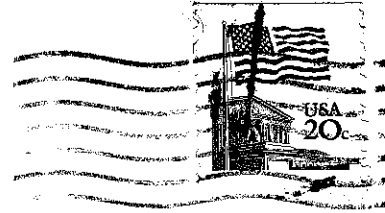


EDITORS COMMENT

In light of TI's announcement to quit the home computer market, I see no reason for anyone to panic and get rid of their TI computer. Many third party outfits offer hardware and software, and more are sure to come. I can truly say that not one of you has fully utilized the capability of the 99/4A computer. Some of you will abandon the 4A for some other brand, and I say for what reason. You'll say, that's easy for you to say, you've got the entire system and then some. And, I'll respond, yes I do, and I use it all to make my living. What then are you to do? COME TO THE MEETINGS AND FIND OUT!!!

-Bob Eckert 815 653-9341

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