DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP NOVEMBER, 1984

Heetings: 7:00pm, 3rd Friday each south At Northlake College, Room 8-206, Irving, Texas

>>> NEII MEETING: Friday, 16 Mayomber, 1984 (((

President: Robert Bayne
Vice-President: Keith Alther (STARTEXT: 49530)
Secretary: Richard Roberts (SOURCE: TI3552; STARTEXT: 7772)
Treesurer: Earl Bullock
Editor: Robert Lee Hoffpauer (SOURCE: TI3700; STARTEXT: 51547)

This newsletter is the official publication of the BMLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP, a non-profit organization serving sember/users of the Texas Instruments 99/4A HOME COMPUTER. For more information you are invited to attend our next senting or send a SASE to: BMLLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP, AMERICAN Inving, Texas 75061.

MEVERER REETING PLANS: Bas John sen

Last month our run of good luck in outting guest speakers came to a screeching halt. Not only did our primary speaker fall by the mayside, but the backup dropped out as well. At first it looked like it would leave Movember in the lurch tou, but this may turn out to be one of our more productive seetings. At least productive in terms of doing the things you all sees to like to do the most.

Neebers present in October heard Glama Aske explain that from now on he would make a copy of the library listing available on disk. He also indicated that the primary method of distributing software would be by copying it at each seeting. Since all of you are going to want a copy of that list, and will probably want to copy some programs as well, we thought we'd try to make that as easy as possible. So, for the November meeting we plan to have 3 systems up and running (the club's, Richard's and mine) all night long. By doing so, we should all be able to update our libraries as needed.

Additionally, Richard Roberts has acquired a copy of Mavarone's new Data Base module. He will have it available for demonstration (and if we all holler enough, he will probably make a little core formal presentation of it). Expect to see and hear about the CorCoop disk controller card also, as well as some more discussion of a club Bullstin Board system (this one may fall into place yet, despite everyone's efforts to ignore it).

With three systems we should be able to copy disks and demonstrate software at the same time, for a change. Bring your disks (better bring your own cassette deck and cable if you want tapes), any seftware you want to show off and come on out for a good time. (th, by the way, electricity may be a small problem. If you have a 'plug strip' and/or short (but heavy duty) extension cord, bring it along too. See you Friday.

MOTICE: A NOMINATING COMMITTE WILL BE APPOINTED AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING TO MAKE MOMINATIONS AT THE DECEMBER MEETING FOR OFFICERS TO BE ELECTED AT THE JANUARY MEETING FOR 1985. If you would be willing to serve either on the consistee or as an officer for the next year, please attend.

STILL LOST & FORM: a TI Business Analyst II calculator — see Robert Hoffpauer at the seeting. SORRY I HISSED THE LAST MEETING!.

LIBRARY PROCEDURES CHANGE: 51 enn Ashe

To those who missed the October seeting, I have found it necessary to make some changes in the operation. First, I have decided to drop the required deposit for checking out material. Second, since I can no longer provide the unlimited free copying of the library catalog, I have decided to limit the catalog hard copies to those members who do not have a disk system. Those who do have a disk system, you may obtain a copy of the catalog from me on disk.

BOOK REVIEW: Ina Member

NIFTY DOGDAD REVIEW: P. R. Olific

Title:

Controlling the World With Your TI 99

Authori

Lex Luther

Publisher: SUPERBOOKS, Inc.

1 Arctic Circle

Price:

Mayupyonder **950,000,00** Name:

Prices

Multicard Nifty Doodad

Manufacturer: Junk For Less, Inc.

1313 Sucker Circle

Postofficebox City

Just 57.95 + sin

How long should the review be? What should you say?

A review should be relatively short — from about one half to a full page should tell the reader enough to get their attention and interest, but need not cover every detail. Three or four paragraphs should usually do it. Begin with a short paragraph to introduce your topic and arouse the reader's interest. Follow with one, two or more paragraphs telling us something about the book-program-peripheral. Finish with a paragraph giving your opinions about the product. If there are negative aspects as well as positive ones, tell us. Tell us if you liked it, and [why!]

Mombers who are worried about spelling, grapper, punctuation, and other pightearss from high school days should rely on their editor to take care of the details - a writer's concern is his (or her) art. Budding Heeingways can contact se at ecetings, on Startext. Or can seed it in the club address on the masthead and on the return address of this newletter.

EDITOR/ASSEMBLER: Robert Lee Hoffpauer

I have now been editing this newsletter for a year, only missing two issues. I hope that you have been pleased with the results. I have tried to put out larger newsletters to show what could be done, and I'm sure there are other ideas I haven't thought of. My only big dissapointment is the general lack of participation from the sembers. Ideally, a club such as ours exists to share information; and a newsletter can be the second best way to do that. I would encourage anyone who has done something with his computer to share the experience. Again, you can just be learning something basic about BASIC, but there are members who may not be as far along as you are — tell us about it!

DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP 1924 Machinery Place Irving, Texas



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brings the overall size of the unit to 10° by 14.5°. When the plastic are is moved to its upper extreme it extends another 8.5° beyond the tablet, and as a result, you need a fairly large area (atleast 12° by 24°) to use it properly.

It was extremely difficult to draw smooth shapes (even when tracing them). This may be a result of the newness and relative stiffness of the device. I think it will be a little easier to use as it gets some wear on it. I found it difficult to move a single pixel (or is that pixle?) at a time. I would move the arm a little and nothing would happen. Howe it a little more and the cursor would jump 3 or 4 positions. I don't know if that is a limitation of the mechanics, or a result of the stiffness. At any rate, an enlarged mode (I think its known as 'FatBits' on the Apple systems, for example) would really be handy for smoothing those shapes out.

The software is menu driven and controlled by three buttons on the tablet. With only a little reference to the instructions, it was extremely easy to use. I never encountered any software failures and it performed exactly as described in the manual. The product is not intimidating to children, and my first-grade daughter (normally not interested in computer stuff) LOVED it.

Unfortunately, the TI bit-map graphics made has some limitations. The most obvious is the fact that in a row of 0 pixels, only two colors can be used. A line drawing with a single color foreground and a single color background can be extremely detailed. But when you begin to fill in colors, the '2 per row' rule takes over. As a result, your final picture may look a lot 'blockier' than you anticipated. This is especially apparent when using the 'textured' colors since they are made up of two colors to start with. It would be nice if you had a light colored grid that could be superimposed on the screen to show where these row boundaries are. Doing so would let you avoid some umpleasant surprises.

The software allows you to swap any two colors, to erase parts of the screen (8 pixels wide again), to fill enclosed areas with a color and, of course, to draw and clear. You say also select the brush stroke to be used or the 'expert' mode. This mode is expert only in the same that it allows you to draw precise straight lines between two points, perfect rectangles and pracise horizontal or vertical lines. Expert mode also allows you to save a drawing to consette, but I was unable to test this feature. The manual indicates it requires about 3 minutes to save a picture to tape.

Now for the good stuff. By kids (and all the neighbor kids) loved it. It is bright and colorful, easy to use and you don't have to blow up any aliens. It seems to be a great way to get children who are not normally interested in computers to sit down and use one. The unit got no rest at all for several days, until my son discovered Planetfall. It went unused for a meak or two and I thought perhaps their interest had waned. But several days ago, they were back at it again, and squabbling over whose turn it was. This seems to be one that will hold their attention for an extended period.

Without several enhancements ('FatBits', save to disk and an overlay grid), I wouldn't use Super Sketch for designing graphics for my own programs. It is, however, a lot of fun in its own right. The kids are beginning to do things eare creative than tracing, and I think it would be well used. I suspect I'm on the way to buying one of my own. Sometimes I wish I'd never mentioned that it was a gift to the club... #(Editor's Note: its pixel — <u>Dictionery of Computing</u>. F. J. Galland. Wiley & Sons, N.Y. 1982)

CHAMEMAKING: Robert Las Hoffnmer

Looping constructs can be some of the most time consuming parts of a program. Here I include a BASIC program (from MICROmmétum) and the same program in FORTH (from yourstrumly) which count the number of ways to make change for a dollar. I suggest you run both, and time them.

```
10 FOR H=0 TO 100 STEP 50
20 FOR 0=0 TO 100 STEP 25
30 FOR D=0 TO 100 STEP 10
40 FOR N=0 TO 100 STEP 5
50 FOR P=0 TO 100 STEP 5
40 IF (P+N+D+Q+H)<>100 THEN 90
70 C=C+1
80 PRINT C:
90 NEXT P
100 NEXT N
110 NEXT D
120 NEXT D
130 NEXT H
140 PRINT "TOTAL: ", C
```

The only requirement to use the disk catalog is that you have TI-MRITEP or EDTOR-ASSEMBLER. This should also make it easier for members to aid in updating the catalog with comments and descriptions of the programs they have checked out. Frankly, there are too many programs for me to review each one.

Also, I have somehow wiped out both library copies of 'Quick-Copy', could someone bring their disk to the meeting so I can replace the library copies?

SECRETARY'S MINUTES: Richard Roberts

Last aonth's seeting of the Dallas TI Home Computer Group was on October 19, 1984. The meeting was called to order by club Secretary Richard Roberts

The minutes from the September meeting were read by Richard Roberts. Glena Amba also gave us a report concerning the club software library. He plans to limit the distribution of hard-copy listings of the library contents, due to the ever increasing size of the catalog, and the cost of copying it for members.

In the future, members who have a disk system will need to give Glenn a blank, initialized disk, and he will return a copy of the library catalog to you. The disk files can then be printed by each member, using TI-MRITER. Members who do not have a disk system, or a printer, can still receive the hard-copy version.

Program director Pan Johnson them gave us the bad news concerning the evening's program. Scheduled was Stave Roubik, from Personal Peripherals Inc., makers of the Super Sketch pad. Only two days prior to the meeting, Mr. Roubik indicated he was still planning to attend the meeting, but on Friday afternoon, Dam received a call from him, indicating that a late night work session had been called. It seems that the company is in a megative cash flow situation, and they were cramming to release new versions of the Super Sketch II for the Apple and IBM computers.

In his absence, he was gracious enough to DOMATE a Super Sketch pad to the club, which Dan picked up and brought to the serting. Also, the long promised disk utilities have not been completed yet, so we will have to remain content with using cassette. Dan indicated that, prior to turning the unit over to Glenn Ashe, he would work with it during the next south, and give a report to the club.

PRODUCT REVIEW: Dan Johnson

Product:

Super Sketch

Hanufacturer: Personal Peripherals, Inc.
Price: reportedly from 645 to 660

rices reportedly from \$45 to \$60

At the last meeting, we had originally scheduled a product desonstration of Super Sketch. Unfortunately, Steve Roubik of Personal Peripherals was forced to cancel his appearance at the last moment. Although he was unable to be present, I was able to meet with him briefly, at which time he gave me one of the Super Sketch devices for the club (another piece of hardware!).

All the way to the smeting that night, I struggled with my conscience. No one in the group know that the device had been donated to the club.... I could simply say it was aine and I brought it along to let others try it out. Alas, it's not my nature (still, its not safe to drop a bag or two of money in front of se!), so I presented it to the club. I did, however, suggest it eight be appropriate for se to 'evaluate' it for the first month, before we made it available for checkout on a regular basis. This column is the result of that evaluation.

Super Sketch is a device designed to allow you to create color graphics on your monitor screen. Different models are offered for a number of computers. Although the various models appear to be physically the same, the capabilities and limitations of each computer scentimes result in surprise, sometimes in disappointment. Hany of the graphic examples in the literature were done on a Commodore C-64, and the 99/4A can't exactly duplicate them. To be fair, 1'm sure that examples done on a 99/4A would probably use some techniques not available on the C-64 as well.

To begin with, the unit is often compared to touch sensitive pads (like Koala, for example). While it does generally the same sort of thing, the mechanism is entirely different. Instead of coving a stylus across a sensitive pad, you move one end of a plastic are across a hard tablet. This sotion is translated into signals to the software and the cursor is made to sove across your monitor screen. The drawing area is approximately 8° by 9° and the control mechanism at the top