

DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP  
MARCH, 1985

Meetings: 7:00pm, 3rd Friday each month  
At Northlake College, Room B-206, Irving, Texas

>>> NEXT MEETING: Friday, 15 March, 1985 <<<

President: Richard Roberts (SOURCE: TI3552; STARTEXT: 8762)

Vice-President: Dan Johnsen

Secretary: Louis Guion (STARTEXT: 77536)

Treasurer: Earl Bullock

Editor: Robert Lee Hoffpauer (STARTEXT: 42437)

This newsletter is the official publication of the DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP, a non-profit organization serving member/users of the Texas Instruments 99/4A HOME COMPUTER. For more information you are invited to attend our next meeting or send a SAGE to: DALLAS TI HOME COMPUTER GROUP, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Irving, Texas 75061.

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PRESIDENT'S SCREENDUMP: Richard Roberts

The sixty-day trial period for the club BBS system is just about up, and I think everyone involved will agree it has proven very beneficial. If nothing else, it does open up a channel of communication that isn't possible otherwise, what with the typical, hectic work-a-day atmosphere that we all live in. And that's just for starters. The ability to tap into the club software library is another major feature.

Despite the fact that a simple vote on the future of the BBS system would no doubt pass, we do have to look at the financial side of it, to ensure that club funds aren't drained just to feed the BBS. The most obvious solution is for some members to support it, and to attract new members through it, which we have already done. If you have any other ideas on how to make it "pay for itself", be prepared to talk about it at the March meeting.

And when you come to the meeting, be prepared to be met at the door. David Martin, who has agreed to handle the responsibility of Hospitality Chairman, and myself will set up a table at the entrance to the auditorium. Members, and guests alike, will sign-in at this point, and be given a name badge. Hopefully, if things go as planned, we can make this a monthly habit. Getting a name badge on everyone is one of my pet projects, and will not only help members, but will allow us to identify, and properly greet all guests.

The first version of the printed membership list was handed out at the February meeting. There are some available, for those that didn't get one at that time. One word of caution--the names and phone numbers on this list are confidential information, and should be treated as such. It is made available to benefit the members only, and should not be allowed to fall into outside hands.

One suggestion--if you know anyone on the member list who has not attended recently, give them a call and invite them to come back again. Let them know that there is still plenty of reason to take stock in the ole machine, and that it's more alive today than it ever has been before. If you didn't believe it yourself, YOU wouldn't be attending either, right? See you there.

SECRETARY'S MINUTES: Louis Guion

February's meeting of the Dallas TI Home Computer Group was held on February 15, 1985. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 P.M. by President Richard Roberts. The minutes from the January meeting were read by Louis Guion and were accepted by voice vote. Two of the four visitors present joined our users group. They are Lee Ogan of Dallas and Keith Williams of Richardson. The other visitors were Billy Williams and Paul Schaub, member Stephen Schaub's father.

**OLD BUSINESS:** The president announced that the promised membership rosters were available for pickup. A generous supply was made available on the front table. An announcement was made concerning the availability of the Foundation 280 card, and literature was again placed in the front of the hall for later collection by interested parties. Several other publications were also made available at this time. Due to the absence (at that time) of the Library Chairman and the Treasurer, no reports were available.

**NEW BUSINESS:** President Roberts proposed that we start using a new name tag scheme. Suggestions were made; no final solution was reached. The president proposed making a cassette or diskette available for new members. Bill Kauth announced that the TIBBS Up/Downloading was now available and explained many facets of the first month's trial run on the bulletin board. The club gave a round of applause to the TIBBS Sysops, Bob Viering and Bill Stutes, as well as to Bill Kauth. A "well done"! Louis Guion passed around a print-out of a "SOURCE" session, pictures of the interior of the TI-99/4A, and samples of very fine emery boards used to clean the GROM port's contacts. He also displayed the TI parts available from Radio Shack. These parts were discussed in a Newsletter article in February.

Matt Pierson, one of our members, presented an introductory level program on FORTH programming. Matt also has headed our group's effort to obtain the prints of the FORTH annual. His efforts finally have paid off! Matt was able to provide the annuals to those who had ordered them after the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 by vote of the members.

#### MARCH PROGRAM PLANS: Dan Johnson

We have been attempting to contact Don Bynum to get him and the fabled 99/8 to the first meeting possible, but we don't know yet when that will be.

Richard has some plans to work on the 'New Member' package during the meeting. I plan a demo/explanation of the dynamic load program 'LOUIE'. In addition, I have some plans to talk enough about assembler to (hopefully) get some sort of group project started. So we should have an interesting meeting, we just don't know what it will be yet...

#### ADVENTURE GAMES BOOK REVIEW: Dan Johnson

Title: Compute!'s Guide to Adventure Games  
Publisher: Compute! publications  
Author: Gary McGath  
Source: The club library  
courtesy of Charlice Althar  
and Bay City Electronics  
Price: \$12.95 for your own copy  
(free if checked out from our library!)

This one is highly recommended. The author is a former co-worker of one of the Zork creators and his love of adventuring is evident throughout the book.

He has covered just about every aspect of Adventure games, short of giving away all the secrets that make them so darned much fun. He includes information on the history of this sort of gaming, how to play them and how to write adventure games of your own. All the major games available for our system (Scott Adams and Infocom) are reviewed and an observant reader can get some useful (although cryptic) hints from his comments. Although McGath (let alone this reviewer!) would never encourage it, persons playing without proper game documentation (now where would they get games like that?) can get a good enough understanding of them to allow much more successful play.

McGath also includes the BASIC source for a simple text adventure that can be played on the 4A. That, along with the explanation of how they work and how to write one of your own, is worth the price alone. He indulges in a bit of adventuring himself in the last chapter, when he attempts to predict the future of Adventure games. That kind of thing is a little tough to do and I'm not sure I agree with him entirely, but it still makes interesting reading.

Check this one out from the library, but if you're like me, there's a good chance you'll want your own copy before long.

### USE DISK MANAGER!: Louis Guion

Do you routinely use a nibble copier to make your backup file copies? This type of copier, represented by Navarone's "Super Duper" and "Quick Copy" from Quality 99 Software, all make copies much faster than the TI Disk Manager module that came with your Peripheral Expansion System. They do this by copying the first 150 sectors, for example, and then directly reading them out to your backup disk. They proceed in this manner, making usually only two or three passes for a 5SSD disk, until they have copied a mirror image of your original disk to your backup disk. They are fast and reliable copiers, but they are NOT the BEST way to make copies should you ever have to recover lost data from your disks.

TI's Disk Operating System (DOS) might be called the housekeeper of the disk. It is what enables you to read and to write to your disk system. For our discussion, it is also what makes sure that you can use all of the space on your disks. One of the ways that this is done is to make use of "fractured" files. The DOS is always keeping track of exactly which sectors are used on each disk. It keeps a map on the disk for its use. Each time you add to or delete from a file on the disk you either use more space or you release some space (sectors) on the disk. The DOS faithfully follows these moves and can use the space you just released for all or PART of a new file. In this manner the system utilizes all of the space on a disk to store valid information.

Now, on a heavily used disk, such as one you use for word processing, you will eventually find that the location of the file's information sectors on the disk, while known to the DOS which can assemble files in perfect order, become jumbled in the order in which the sectors physically appear on the surface of the disk. What does this hurt? Almost nothing. Mainly it slows down the response time in reading information from the disk, but neither you nor I will really not be able to notice that. It really hurts, however, should you damage the directory sector or the bit-map sectors that tell the DOS where the data for each file is stored. It could be a very cold day in Texas before even the most skilled person would be able to find which data went with which file since the data is all jumbled in the fractured files on the disk.

The easiest way to prevent this constant mixing of the data from becoming a problem is to do a backup with TI's Disk Manager Module. Disk Manager arranges your files so that all of them are in logical and physical order on the disk IF YOU INITIALIZE or RE-INITIALIZE the disk on which you will make the backup copy. You must do this initialization so that there is a clean disk on which to write; one without "fractured files" already in place.

Now, this procedure makes the backup copy very orderly, but it does nothing for your operating disk. After you have completed the first backup, RE-INITIALIZE your operating disk and copy the backup disk onto the operating disk with Disk Manager. This second backup (to the operating disk) can be done with a "quick copier" since the result will be a mirror image of the disk which Disk Manager has just restored to order for you. The resulting orderly files will be easier to operate for your DOS and easier to recover should physical damage or error destroy your operating disk.

### ANOTHER ADVENTURE GAMES BOOK REVIEW: Dan Johnson

Title: A Shortcut Through Adventureland, vol II - Infocom  
Publisher: Dataeast  
Authors: Richard Owen Lynn, Paul Ashley and Michael W. Sloan  
Source: Babbages  
Price: \$9.95 suggested retail (but I'm sure I paid a dollar or two less)

When all else fails, this book provides a certain way to complete the Infocom adventures. To my way of thinking, however, its indiscriminate use can spoil <sup>your</sup> your fun as well.

Each chapter of the book deals with a separate adventure (all three of the Zork's, Enchanter, Starcross, Suspended, Planetfall, Deadline, the Witness and Infidel) in the same manner. You will find a good description of the game, some general hints and then, perhaps a lot more than you wanted to know. There is a room by room description of the game, a complete map and step by step instructions on how to 'win' the game. I'm not sure you can really win, once you've read all the secrets...

If you can stand to look for single room descriptions to give yourself a little help, it seems to work real well. But, it's difficult to figure out which room you're interested in without reading all the preceding descriptions. Doing so can be enlightening, but it can also result in a let down when you find out things that you'd hoped to discover on your own. You might do well to give this book to a disinterested party and have them look for the hints you need. Maybe that's really why I gave it to my son for Christmas...

The book is well done and certainly less expensive than the Infocom 'Invisiclude' series (one per game). But don't say I didn't warn you about the possibility of ruining your fun.

ASSEMBLY LANGUAGE BOOK REVIEW: Dan Johnsen

Title: Introduction to Assembly Language for the TI Home Computer  
Publisher: Steve Davis Publishing  
Author: Ralph Molesworth  
Source: Triton and others  
Price: \$16.95

I'm sure there are many good books on assembly language programming for the Home Computer, but I haven't had the opportunity to see the others. From what I hear, there are just as many poorly written books on the subject. The problem seems to be separating the good from the bad before the book store separates you from your cash.

My position may be a little unique, but I believe this book must surely be one of the better ones. I have a fair amount of training in programming, but I have never written assembler programs professionally. I work with IBM assembler on a routine basis, but its always 'their code' and not my own. As a result, I find myself starting at the same place as anyone familiar with BASIC but not assembler.

Apparently that is exactly the audience that Molesworth is attempting to address. He begins at a level that anyone with a few BASIC programs under their belt can understand. Throughout the book he explains the programs in terms of BASIC programming that would be used to accomplish the same thing. Each section has one or more programs that illustrate the concepts he has introduced.

While the book does not cover every possible assembler instruction, it is by no means 'incomplete'. If you work through each chapter, I don't think you'll have much difficulty using the TI manual to pick up those things he does not discuss (sprites and sound, for examples).

I ordered this book from Triton (and paid the full retail), but I believe it is available locally as well. If I can pull together enough interest from the rest of the group, I would like to begin some sort of assembler project (I don't want to say S16, that seems to be the kiss of death around here). This book would certainly seem to be an ideal one with which to begin.

THE EDITOR: Robert Lee Hoffgauer

My thanks to both Louis Guion and Dan Johnsen for their contributions to this issue. (Any other budding authors please take note!) Also, my apologies to Will Pursley -- the equipment for sale advertisement is not included thru my own lack of organization (I lost it.) I tried to contact you by phone, but could not reach you, and I'm late (again) getting this to the printer.

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