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OCTOBER 1983 NEWSLETTER

SANTA CLAUS LINKED TO SOFTWARE PRICE SLASHING!

One of our informed unofficial sources tells us that Santa Claus sent TI a mailgram. We called the North Pole hotline and spoke with Comet, a spokesdeer for Mr. Claus, and were advised that Santa was contemplating unloading his TI 99/4A in favor of the Comodore-64. It seems that the bearded wonder could not afford software for his TI and still be able to make the payments on his new sleigh. The spokesdeer would not reveal the context of the mailgram, but hinted that Santa had threatened the "powers that be" at Texas Instruments with an Atari 400 in each of their children's stockings this Christmas! Somebody heard the distant bells at TI and on September 9, 1983 a price reduction on solid state modules was announced.

The reduction averages out to 31% against the retail price. This should put Texas Instruments in a better software position in the computer market place. Please see the enclosed sheet for a complete listing of all price reductions! Here are a few samples: Tax Investment Record Keeping $39.95 against the previous $69.95, Early Reading is $39.95 against the previous $54.95, Alpiner was $39.95 and is now $24.95, and Household Budget is $24.95 instead of the former $39.95. I am encouraged by these price cuts and feel that TI is moving in the right direction finally. Some times it takes a giant a while to get up and moving, but when they do take a step it can be a great stride forward!

LIST SPEECH WITH X/BASIC?

It is possible with Text To Speech on diskette to do everything that can be done with the version housed in the Terminal Emulator #2. The method is different, but the results are nearly identical. I have written routines that permit a full listing of a program in X/Basic with speech, routines to read variable names aloud, and an error reader that is fast and efficient. I have built all of these routines into a menu driven program on the TTS diskette for quick loading.

We have sent Texas Instruments a copy of the work already and we plan to make copies of the diskette available starting on October 1, 1983 for $22.75 each. Please note that there is "NO CHARGE' for the X/Basic speech routines!

I have spoken with several sofware developers and they have agreed to adapt some of their X/Bassic software to TTS. Here is the hardware configuration that you must have to use TTS: Expansion Cabinet, Disk Controller Card, Disk Memory Drive, Expansion RAM-32K, X/Basic module, and the TTS diskette. Naturally, the Speech Synthesizer is required.

A COMPUTER PARABLE

The mistakes a man can make in a lift time can be done by a computer in a micro-second!

THE TALKING LETTER WRITER: OUR CONTEST WINNER

This program is authored by Robert Tinney of Kalamazoo, MI and is written in TI console Basic. It requires the Speech Synthesizer, TE#2 module, RS/232 Interface, and suitable line printer. The documentation is in written form and also on cassette tape. Mr. Tinney talks you through the operations of the program one step at a time. The cassette tape includes two dumps of the main program, a data file of instructions that can be loaded and printed out, and full verbal operating instructions. It will be available starting on October 1, 1983 for a cost of $35 per copy.

This unique program allows any user-sighted or not-to create, edit, review, and print out a two page document. Some of the many features include: the ability to read any line aloud, a full review mode that reads the entire body of the text aloud, edit mode with talking curser that moves right and left, a memory indicator that speaks the percentage of available memory, a position feature that speaks the present line, page, and column location of the curser, paragraph indention, double space feature, full spelling of any line to locate punctuation marks, margin warning bells, and a tone prompt at character 63 of the 70 character line to warn you of the nearness of the lines end. A complete listing of all defined function key operations is included in the documentation.

The program operates very well, does what it is supposed to do, and makes letter writing fun. The speed is some what slowed down by the use of TI Basic, but that is unavoidable. I feel the slight loss of speed is a small price to pay when one considers the usefullness and practicality of this program. My personal compliments to Robert Tinney for his most original and well written program. I would encourage Bob to wirte some additional programs of an equal value and quality. Bob will receive the Peripheral Expansion Cabinet, Disk Controller Card, and Internal Disk Memory Drive.

I should mention here and now that I do not make the final decisions alone. Four individuals use, evaluate, and rate eash program entry. No favoritism was shown because this particular program was useable by blind individuals, it was quite simply the best overall entry! We received many very fine entries and the final choices were not easy to make. My personal thanks to "all" who participated and my congratulations to the three winners.

TI 99/8: A CHRISTMAS STOCKING STUFFER?

The rumors are flying hot and heavy about this forth coming new home computer! Our most recent information says, that it is a full blown 128K RAM computer with the chips built in for Extended Basic and the Editor/Assembler. The existing hardware and software are reported to be useable on the machine, at least they were on the prototype units. We are looking for an official TI announcement on the computer in early October and release prior to Christmas of 1983. The retail price is speculative, so we will leave it alone. This unit should offer TI addicts a good small business computer at a low cost. Incidentally, TI plans to run a profit for the year of no less than 120 million, so things don't appear as bleak as they did a few months ago! TI has "many" surprises in store, so be patient and watch for the good news!!!

BEGINNERS BASIC TUTOR: GO FOR IT!

If you want to learn TI Basic, then here is a cassette package that you ought to own. It requires the 99/4 or 99/4A console, a video display, and a cassette recorder. It contains eight very helpful and highly instructional lessons, including a seperate second lesson the 99/4A keyboard. This program teaches you a concept or application and then tests you with a series of multiple choice questions.

You may not go any farther in your studies until you do get the question correct. It is clearly presented, easy to follow, and very simple to comprehend! The examples are presented in a practical way and some study of the screen makes their purpose quite clear. It covers everything contained in the Beginners Basic manual, plus more. I highly urge you to obtain a copy of this program! It retails for $29.95 on cassette and your cost is $22.75. I rated it **** Excellent

DRAW POKER: SATURDAY NIGHT MAY NEVER BE THE SAME!

This is a one player game that is done in X/Basic. You and the computer sit down at a smokey table and each start with five thousand dollars. Naturally the computer keeps track of your anty, bets, raises, and calls! It deals all five of your cards face up at the top of the screen and all five of its cards face down near the middle. The graphics are excellent!!! Now the game gets serious and the men get seperated from the wimps.

I was dealt a pair of kings and three unrelated pieces of junk. I opened for $10 and the computer raised me $30! I called and he drew four cards. I had to ask myself why he raised when the best he could possibly have was an ace! I took three cards and caught a pair of sixes to go along with my kings. Two pair, not bad when nothing is wild. Every time I bet the computer raised me! Finally I called him and he showed his lowly pair of fours. No, he wasn't stupid, as he plays a random pattern on you. Simply put, the lousy computer tries to bluff you out! If you do not call him, you do not see what he is holding either.

I did win $1400 after playing an hour or so, and got smart and got my kids out of the street. He plays a good game and the bluff factor makes life difficult for the best poker player. The odds are higher in this variation because each hand is from a full deck of cards. If you like to play poker, well then this game is just what the gambler's union ordered! It retails for $9.95 on cassette and your cost is $8.50. I rated it *** Very Good.

DON'T FORGET THE MEETING!

The September meeting will be held on Sunday September 25, 1983 at 2:30 in the Mott Memorial Bldg. on the campus of the Flint University of MI. We will be using room 2007. Featured will be demonstrations of Draw A Bit and the Print A Bit programs, the CC-40 computer with software packages, and several assembly language arcade games. Hope to see you there! RSVP PLEASE!

ELECTRONIC CARD FILE: THROW THOSE PENCIL STUBS AWAY!

Our second place winner goes to Martin Biancalana, enjoy your Pascal System guy! This program is an electronic version of a 3 X 5 card file and is coded in X/Basic. The system configuration is as follows: Peripheral Expansion Cabint, Disk Controller Card, Disk Memory Drive, Expansion RAM-32K, RS/232 Interface Card, and suitable line printer.

The program allows you to store and recall up to one hundred names per diskette. It is user friendly too, as this author used English language commands instead of bone breaking combinations of function and control keys! If you want to add an entry to your file, just type the word "create". You can also update the cards by an append feature, delete names no longer needed, sort by name, city, state, zip code, etc., look up a card by the use of either the first or last name, and print both reports and envelopes. The envelopes may be small or large and you print the return address automatically with the primary address being sorted out.

It is a very efficient way to store data on a personal mailing list, club memberships, personal or business financial expense records, Christmas card file, etc. It is easy to use, has a clean attractive screen, and works very reliably. I rated it **** Excellent! Incidentally, it also has three message lines for personal comments or notations! It will be available starting on October 1, 1983 on diskette for $35.

AMAZEMENT PACKS: IT ISN'T JAPANESE, BUT IT SURE GETS THE MILEAGE!

Our third place winner goes to Bud Shapiro for his two sensational package entries. Your check is in the mail Bud. The packages each contain four programs and all are of exceptional quality. We can't print adequate descriptions of all eight here, but we will give you a quick overview.
Amazement #1: Education
> Alpha-Writer: this is a mini text editor that allows you to create and store documents. It offers a full edit capability and many of the features of larger programs. It is in X/Basic and disk based.
> Flash Word: you select verbal responses or location with a joystick. The time ranges from 10 to 500 milliseconds for viewing. You enter ten words, numbers, or letters and challenge your opponent to identify them. Excellent for children. It is in X/Basic.
> Alphabet Stew: two to ten players take turns trying to unscramble the mystery words. The score is based on elapsed time and fewest guesses. You may input the words to suit yourself. It is in Basic.
> Mystery Word Game: players take turns trying to spell the word that is spoken by the computer. You create your own custom word list! You may alter the spelling to have the word spoken correctly without actually changing the proper spelling of the word. Great for children with a learning problem or just for practice. It is in Basic and needs the Synthesizer, TE#2, and disk system.

Amazement #2: Entertainment

Checkers: you match your skill against the computer in this ancient and very popular game. He flips a coin to see which of you goes first! Some nice graphics and good computer logic. A challenge for the checker players among you. It is in X/Basic.

Igo: this game is similiar to Othello and involves occupation of the majority of sixty-four squares. Moves can be any direction and the secret is to control the corners! You test your cleverness against the computer, and he does play a good game! Nice graphics! This game is in Basic.

Simon Outdone: try to match the color in the screen center with the border colors. Be careful though, as sometimes you must reverse your left and right responses and other times make no response at all! It gets faster as the game progresses. It is wild fun and guaranteed to frustrate you! it is in X/Basic.

Alien Adventure: an adventure game for the space loving youngsters among you. Try to collect as many alien artifiacts as you can and get back to the Earth alive. If you touch the invisible force field you are very dead and the game terminates. A challenge! It is in X/Basic.

These two excellent software packages will be available starting on October 1, 1983 at a cost per package of $25. One sensational buy!!! The same programs will also be available on an individual basis at a cost of $10 each on tape or diskette. Our compliments to Bud for his super effort!

ATARI MODULES FOR THE 99/4A? Some PEOPLE HAVE NO SHAME!

Atari plans to release eight command modules for the TI 99/4A computer later this Fall. Naturally, we expect them to be on the market in time for Christmas presents. Some of them include some very popular arcade games: Centipede, Pac Man, Defender, Slime, etc. They will retail for $44.95 each, although we anticipate lower prices from some sources. I like the attitude of Atari, if you can't beat them, then join in the fun! Just think, now we will be able to compare Munch Man and Pac Man in one evening and never leave home!

SOFTWARE INVASION?

Many popular companies have now climbed onto the TI tortise and are developing a variety of software packages. For instance, Imagic plans to offer their excellent program Microsurgeon in modular form for $39.95 and hints of more coming. Then there is the highly resepcted company Bhroderbund with their pinball spectacular Davis's Midnight Madness. This one will be on diskette.

It is an encouragement to see large and volumous companies getting turned on to Texas Instruments. The reason Apple sells so many of their antiquated computers is due to their awesome amounts of available software. Quite honestly friends, the TI home computer at under one hundred smackers is not only the best buy, but also the most powerful computer for under a thousand dollars!

TIDBITS FOR YOU TO BYTE ON

BUD SHAPIRO

Here I am again to throw some more tidbits your way. I am sure that
many of you have wondered what happens to the zeros that you enter
after the decimal point, such as $13.00 or 24.50 etc. This mysterious
disappearance was a puzzle to me a few years ago. It was like watch-
ing a magician make things disappear and reappear with one difference,
the zeros never reappeared. Many have shared, or share today, the
dismay I had with those "WHERE DID THEY GO GEORGE, WHERE DID THEY GO?"
crazy zeros. I was about to call it quits when the video displayed
$124 instead of $124.00. Well I didn't give up, I spoke to my son-
in-law and found that T.I. was not alone in this strange phenomenon.
The internal language of the computer is not designed to carry zeros
in a numeric variable after a decimal since it has floating point
language built in. Same as a calculator with a floating point.
So I said to myself, "Self, if a magician can make objects reappear
you can make the zeros reappear!". Well I did it with a simple basic
routine which I now use as a sub routine in programs that require the
zeros be put back for video display or hard copy. The following is
the routine in BASIC to be used as a sub routine over and over again.

```
5000 T$=STR$(T)::5010 FOR Y=1 TO LEN(T$)::5020 IF SEG$(T$,Y,1)="."
THEN 5060::5030 NEXT Y::5040 T$=T$&".00"::5050 GOTO 5110::
IF LEN(T$)-Y=1 THEN 5080::5070 GOTO 5090::5080 T$=T$&"0"::
5090 IF LEN(T$)-Y=2 THEN 5110::5100 PRINT : "AMOUNT LESS THAN .00"::
5110 RETURN ....By George the zeros are back!
```

I use T as a variable to remind me it is temporary. I don't have the
computer's memory. Above all, T must be assigned the value of the
variable you are using before sending it sub.(e.g.) T=X or T=VAL(X$)::
GOSUB 5000. When it returns print the variable T$ and the zeros are
there. Using this sub routine in programs or FOR/NEXT LOOPS makes it
easy to add, subtract, or whatever, and then have a total figure with
zeros after the decimal. (e.g.) TOT=0::FOR Y=1 TO X::AMT=VAL(COST$)::
TOT=TOT+AMT::NEXT Y::T=TOT::GOSUB 5000::PRINT T$ ...If using character
strings to carry the number when using a file system for bookkeeping,
budgets, costs, etc.then the following: TOT=0::GRTOT=0::FOR Y=1 TO X::
AMT=VAL(COST$)::TOT=TOT+AMT::GRTOT=GRTOT+TOT::T=TOT::GOSUB 5000::
PRINT :T$::NEXT Y::T=GRTOT::GOSUB 5000::PRINT :"TOTAL $";T$ ....
Remember, T$ is changed everytime you gosub, so use it to print
immediately or at the end of any math or accumulating routine with
PRINT T$ or PRINT "TOTAL IS $";T$...Another reward of using string
character T$ is that we eliminate the leading and trailing spaces that
numeric variables use when printed. I use string characters to carry
the numbers in files because it uses less memory. This will be
discussed in some future article. Anyway, back to the subject at
hand, you can now be the great magician and make the zeros reappear.

ED WIEST: A BULLWARK IN OUR TIME OF NEED?

        Following is an exerpt from the most recent TI CARE package I received. It
is written by Ed Wiest the Users Group Coordinator and appears exactly as originally
written.
        "Many questions have been raised concerning the international users groups.
Currently, there are 5 international groups, and unlike local users groups, the
international groups do not conduct monthly meetings. In fact, in most cases, the
international groups are profit organizations and may also be TI dealers or distributors."
        "We list the international groups in the users group list so that members
of the local groups can become members of these organizations if they wish. The
international groups usually have large software libraries from which to choose.
They also publish monthly newsletters or magazines, and, in some cases, sell
hardware. It is important to remember that when you deal with an international
group, you are dealing with a business, not a local computer club."
        I got the impression that international groups were some sort of diseased
things that ought to be sterilized and avoided. Perhaps the author has forgotten,
if he ever was aware, that it was the international groups who stanchly supported
the TI 99/4 when the press was trying to bury it alive! Maybe Ed Wiest overlooks
the fact that international groups provided software when Texas Instruments was
getting slam dunked for not having enough for their home computer. Either someone
has a short memory span, or TI is trying to feed us to the wolves!
        Texas Instruments has benefited, and profited, greatly from the international
groups. For instance, the LIST"SPEECH" command and application software for the
handicapped. We as individual users also benefit when the corporation profits, so
it behoves each of us to promote our own investment. The international groups
held TI up by the shoulder when it faltered with the X/Basic crisis of 1901 and
shouted loudly when Commodore printed misleading and false advertisement comparrisons.
Frankly, if it wasn't for the international groups I personally doubt that TI
would be in the home computer business today. Maybe Edward Wiest should thank
us for his present job!
        It is true that at least two of the larger groups do sell hardware and software,
and for a profit too. What does Mr. Wiest think that a user group survives on
anyhow? We can't exist on promised charity, public assistance, or simple devotion;
as those telephone bills alone are outrageous. Consider that we talk to people
each day from all over the United States and Canada, and that gets expensive. Many
of those troubled souls first called TI Consumer Relations and were given our name
as a possible source of help. If we were "profit" orientated we sure would not
sell the products at 25% below suggested retail, pay the UPS charges ourselves, and
give away information packages for free! I doubt that Ed Wiest would do his job
without pay, so why should we?
        Maybe he doesn't recall the critical product shortages that owners experienced,
but that is why we handle the products today. We can afford to tell the truth, and
some dealers just want to make a sale regrdless of the consumers true needs. I
wish that Mr. Wiest would read our newsletter, then he would know that we do hold
monthly meetings and always have. Perhaps a retraction is in store from TI, as
this verbal garbage from Ed Wiest is detrimental to the thousands of users who do
not yet know of the international groups benefits. You are safe, as you do know!

POSVALSEGSTR: A NEW COMMAND?

Actually, I was deceptive in the title and misled you, but I admit that I planned it that way! What we really have here are four very useful statements: position-POS, value-value, segment string-SEG$, and string dollar-STR$. I will discuss each of them briefly and give you an example in program form.

The POS statement is used to find a given character in a character string. This could be most helpful in a word processing program for character location for replacing a word or line of text. The desired character is assigned a numeric value. . X=POS("TEXAS","A",1) We have instructed the computer to search the word "TEXAS" for the first occurance of the letter "A". Thus, the value of X will be 4, as "A" is the fourth letter in "TEXAS". If we had a word with two identical letters in it, we can find either the first occurance-as shown above-or the second occurance. X=POS("INSTRUMENTS","S",4) Now the computer reads the word "INSTRUMENTS" and finds that the second occurance of "S" is equal to 11. Thus, X here is also 11.

The VAL statement is used to convert a string variable to a numeric variable. This statement does the opposite of the STR$ statement! Let us suppose that A$="12.5" How do we convert that to a numeric variable? X=VAL(A$) Now X will be equal to 12.5!

I didn't present them in this order, but here comes the STR$. Don't you just love my transitions? Let us suppose that we now want to convert our A$ from the previous example back into a numeric variable. Opps! Got myself confused! Make that, convert our numeric variable back into a string variable! That's better Duane. Anyhow, let us set Y equal to 22. Here is how we sneak it into a string. B$=STR$(Y) Now B$ will equal 22. Wasn't that slick!

Now we get to the good old SEG$. What it really is is a specified portion of a given string. Compare it to the numbers one through ten and suppose that you just want the numbers five through eight. The digits one through ten are are "whole" string and the digits five through eight would be our segment of a string. Ready? Here we go...Y$=SEG$("123456789",1,4) We have instructed the computer to start with the fist character of the string-which is the number 1-and use only the first four characters it encounters. Hence, the value of Y$ would be 1234. Let us use some words now. Y$=SEG$("MY NAME IS",1,7) Y$ will be equal to the words "MY NAME". The "IS" will be ignored, as we told the computer to only consider the first seven letters of the string! This application is especially useful in finding a word, or phrase, in a given string of text. For instance, you could use the SEG$ statement to locate words to be replaced in a text editing program.

I hope that this quick pass over these four statements gives you some insight into their practacality. I would urge you to experiment with them in order to better learn, and understand, their proper uses. Remember, the first number is the starting spot in the string and the second number represents the number of characters to be counted. Have fun!

Maybe I should put all of these odd notes of mine into a binder and sell the collection of assorted jargon as a programming guide! Take two Bufferin and go to bed Duane, its late! Not a bad idea though....

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PRICE LIST UP DATE

Home Financial Decisions $20 Household Budget $20 Personal Record Keeping $31.50
Personal Report Generator $20 Statistics $20 Personal Real Estate $31.50 Tax
Investment Record Keeping $31.50 The Attack $20 Car Wars $20 Tombstone City $20
TI Invaders $20 Munch Man $20 Alpiner $20 Tunnels Of Doom $31.50 Football $20
Indoor Soccer $20 Physical Fitness $20 Video Chess $31.50 Scholastic Spelling
#3 through #6 $31.50 Early Learning Fun $20 Beginning Grammer $20 Early Reading
$31.50 Reading On $31.50 Reading Fun $31.50 Reading Roundup $31.50 Reading Rally
$31.50 Reading Flight $31.50 Alligator Mix $20 Dragon Mix $20 Alien Addition $20
Minus Mission $20 Demolition Division $20 Meteor Multiplication $20 Editor/
Assembler $31.50 Video Games #1 $20 Mind Challengers $20 Speech Editor $31.50
Weight Control and Nutrition $31.50

AN OPPS! FROM BUD

There is a correction for last months article on the RIGHT string, and here
it is. RIGHT$(C$(X),LEN(C$(X)),1) Sorry that I did not proof read it too well.
At least you now know that I am human...

SPACE STATION #1: LET'S WASTE THOSE DUMB HUMANS!

Now here is a "fast" action game for space freaks who love to blast away!
It is your duty to defend the space station from an awesome alien attack. It is
a potent barrage of missiles, drones, and a big bad mother ship. The more you
drain the alien's energy banks the less accurate their shots are, but they can
take a lot of damage. You can withstand only five hits, so it doesn't pay to
make mistakes!
It is in TMS9900 assembler and runs in X/Basic. It does permit you to move
and shoot at the same time, and I like that feature! The rate of attack speeds
up each time the alien energy level is drained by ten thousand points, and it does
get very fast and very furious! Just to make things exciting the alien missiles
are sometimes invisible!
The graphics are bit map and quite good, the color is sensational, and the
play action is unsurpassed. There is plenty to keep your mind and eyes occupied!
Although this isn't a new release from Data Force, it is one that Dominick Melfi
can be proud of. If you want action, then this gem is for you! I rated it ****
Excellent. Your price is $22.50 on diskette.

HAPPY COMPUTING!

DUANE B. FISCHER, PRESIDENT

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