

99/4 USERS OF AMERICA

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FEBRUARY 1984 NEWSLETTER

CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL: EVERYTHING BUT A COLD BEER AND A HOTDOG!

The Milton Bradley Expander unit for the TI 99/4A did come out in very limited quantities. I purchased mine at retail from K's Merchandise Mart in Quincy Illinois at a cost of \$119.97. This included the expansion unit, headset, and joystick. The special voice modules: Championship Baseball, I'm Hiding, and Terry Turtles Adventures, were \$54.97 apiece. Distribution of these products is strange at best, as the units seem to have surfaced in very small geographic locations.

The three modules I mentioned earlier do work only if you have the MBX Expander, but seven others will work on the TI 99/4A console alone or with the MBX voice recognition unit. The other titles are: Space Bandit, Meteor Belt, Super Fly, Big Foot, Honey Hunt, Soundtrack Trolley, Sewer Mania, and retail for \$29.95.

Now Championship Baseball is some kind of game! It is for two players and offers all of the excitement of the real thing. The team doing the pitching and fielding uses the headset and console and the team doing the hitting and running uses the joystick. A series of pressure sensitive switches on the MBX console allow you to select the pitch: slow-medium-fast, inside-middle-outside, and curve. You can create a series of off speed pitches and a variety of curve balls and sliders by different combinations of functions.

The hitter controls the swing by pressing the fire button, however, he also has full control of the power applied to the bat! A full turn of the knob atop the joystick shaft to the counterclockwise position allows for a bunt and a full turn clockwise is for power hitting. What's more, you can move the joystick to the right or left to power hit to the desired field, such as hitting behind a runner. The batter can also lead his runners off base, slide, and overrun a bag. However, if you slide too soon you don't make it to the bag! A double steal is not possible in this game. The pitcher can throw to any base to keep the runners close, pick off a runner, run them down, or tag them out.

The MBX unit calls out the balls and strikes-the umpire sounds like he came from Brooklyn-, declares when a runner is out, shouts when the ball is foul, etc. The crowd cheers you on too!

The defense is handled by means of voice, but can be done from the MBX keyboard if desired. If you call the wrong player to field a ball, the computer corrects and sends the nearest player to make the play. You can tell who has the ball, as that player changes to black. You must then tell the MBX where to throw the ball to complete the play.

It is a marvelous system and each of the games is sensational. I'm Hiding, for instance, is the first educational program that is truly interactive with the child.

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The MBX speaks to the child and the child responds verbally! It is fascinating to observe a child using such a system. It is most unfortunate that very few of us will have the opportunity to see, and use, such a marvelous hunk of technology. I sincerely hope that some company out there in chip land gets their collective act together and produces a voice recognition package that is both useable by the general public and is still affordable. The market is definately there, we just have to get the manufacturers to produce it.

MI MEETING SCHEDULE CHANGE!

Some of us can read a calendar, and some of us can't. The correct date in March is the twenty-fifth, no meeting in April, and the correct date in May is the twenith. Helps if you use a calendar for the right year!

COMPUTE: AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE

This nice publication carries some very good articles on the TI 99/4A, along with some programs ready for you to key in. One author of note is C. Regina Whitelaw, and this lady does know how to program in basic! Their articles are well done and tend to contain useful information, not fillers as some publications use too much of.

Here is their toll free number: 800-334 0868. The address is: Compute Publications P.O. Box 5406, Greensboro, NC 27403. The editor is Robert Lock, and he does care!

MESMORIZED BY A WORM? WHAT NEXT!

Our thanks to Tom Benedetti for this short routine. His daughter fell in love with it and it kept her quiet for nearly an hour. Might have some merit as a new form of electronic babysitter! It is presented here in X/Basic. Hope that you have some fun with it.

```
100 !THE WORM 130 CALL CLEAR:: CALL CHAR(46,"FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF") 140 FOR X=1 TO 28::  
CALL SPRITE(#X,46,2,100,100)::NEXT X 150 FOR Z=1 TO 10 160 RANDOMIZE 170 X=INT  
(RND*127)-63:: Y=INT(RND*127)-63 180 FOR A=1 TO 28 190 CALL MOTION(#A,Y,X) 200 NEXT  
A 210 NEXT Z 220 GO TO 140
```

TMS 9900 ASSEMBLER: A DISASSEMBLER FOR YOUR BRAIN

Here is a very nice book for those of you who are suffering from headaches gotten as a net result of trying to comprehend assembly language. It is published by the Steve Davis Publishing Co. and retails for \$14.95. It is written by Ralph Molesworth and presented in an understandable format. It isn't a complete course, but it is very helpful in learning what allof that stuff in the Editor/Assembler manual is about. I highly recommend this book!

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Enclosed is my check for \$3.50 in appreciation of the six back issues of you fantastic newsletters. The word fantastic is understated since I've had only the Oregon and Oklahoma glossy prints to rely on for information. It is difficult to accept they do not receive TI support since their information is related to what they feel necessary to promote the product.

And, another complaint. I trust you've also waited a month or two for software that was prepaid with Card or Money Order. I've probably requested fifty mail orders for TI hard and software. Some people in Trenton, the Smart Programming Guide and, you are the only ones able to turnaround a request within a week. Think a rating of houses with unreasonable time delays might be in order.

A request to members for a listing of houses from which they have placed orders, the type of payment, and time delay would be provide good information. A published list of average time delays might start some competition between houses to get their products out faster.

These comments could be consired a bore unless you were aware that I recently received a nice Word Processor from Extended Software and would use most any excuse to learn toprint consoles. After wasting many evenings with the TI Writer with little success, this typewriter is a joy.

Sincerely,
Robert Wolff
323 Hamilton Street
Bound Brook, New Jersey 08805

TIDBITS FOR YOU TO BYTE ON

by, Bud Shapiro

This is a heck of a way to start off the new year. "OOPS!", I goofed. It seems that my glasses, or eyes, or possibly my fingers will need repair. I did not proof read the October 1983 article, and an error slipped in. The corrections are as follows: I used ":@" to indicate the seperation between lines for ease of reading. Thus, some of you may have confused the program written in TI Basic for X/Basic. After line 550 I used the ":@" and failed to indicate the next line number. The line that says: IF LEN(T\$)-V=1 THEN 5080 should have the line number 5060 in front of it! Oh, well...

The following is a simple piece for use in games mostly, or in programs that can use a bit of victory music. Use it as a subroutine or in the main body, which ever works best for your particular needs.

```
10 T=250 20 G=392 30 E=330 40 HE=459 50 HG=784 60 V=6 70 CALL SOUND(T,196,  
V,G,V,HG,V) 80 CALL SOUND(T,262,V,523,V,1047,V) 90 CALL SOUND(T,E,V,HE,V,1319,  
V) 100 CALL SOUND(T,G,V,HG,V,1568,V) 110 CALL SOUND(125,110,30) 120 CALL SOUND  
(125,E,V,HE,V,1319,V) 130 CALL SOUND(500,G,V,HG,V,1568,V) 140 REM return if subroutine!
```

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As long as I am getting my blunders for 1983 off my chest, I might as well tell you about the one in Silent Night! Line 770 should have the following portion deleted: IF KE=49 THEN 32767 It serves no useful purpose.

Next month I may have a super program for cataloging the disk as a load program. It will update itself when a program is added or deleted from the disk. May the great Computer Genious in the sky shine upon you!...Bud

NINE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY

Alright, I confess that I lied! This article has nothing to do with your own neurons, but rather with how to double the memory of your internal or external disk drive. The MPI 52S drive is a double side double density unit with 180K of storage. It will operate just fine with your TI Peripheral cabinet, although the TI Controller Card allows for only single density use!

It will plug right into the Peripheral cabinet as shipped, but for external use you do need the optional power supply and case. MPI is a reliable drive and it is well constructed for many years of faithful use. The MPI 52S drive itself retails for \$340 and your cost is \$225. The external power supply and case retails for \$75 and your cost is \$58.50.

While I am on the subject of double side useage, I should mention that we also handle the Macell double side double density diskettes. They are \$45 for a box of ten. These are high quality diskettes, as your data does deserve the best. A cheap diskette is not a savings when your data goes ZAP!

DON'T REPRESS THE URGE TO SUPRESS A SURGE!

I have heard from many of you who have power problems that are causing you great concern when you are using your computer. Perhaps you could avoid most of these problems by taking a few easy and inexpensive safety precautions. For instance, the December 1983 issue of BYTE magazine features an article dealing with these problems. Read it! This guy was operating his computer during an electrical storm, an absolute no no!

You should be using a line voltage supressor with a maximum voltage tolerance of about 130 volts A.C. Some of thesupressors don't knock the voltage down until it hits 500 volts! Needless to say, when it gets that high there isn't any point in worrying about your equipment!

Try to keep your equipment away from flourescant lights, as they can cause all sorts of quirks in your equipment. Especially a faulty starter in the older models. You can also have difficulties from a power drain or voltage spike. These can be caused by an electrical appliance engaging with a high amperage drain on the same circuit as your computer; such as a dish washer, toaster, iron, or refrigerator. This can cause a momentary change in power and it can affect, and sometimes, damage, your equipment. Avoid static electricity, as it is an instant killer for disks, tapes, and all electronic hardware! Use anti static spray on your carpet if it is a problem. With a little common sense you can avoid the problems, so go visit Radio Shack and spend a few dollars for some peace of mind and computer security!

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PANASONIC IMPACT PRINTER: CHECK IT OUT!

The Panasonic KX-P 1090 serial/parallel impact printer is one of the better buys in the midrange market. It comes as a parallel printer with a baud rate of 9600 and a printing speed of from 80 to 96 character per second, depending on if you are using pica or elite fonts. It offers such styles as: elongated, compressed, subscript, superscript, double width, and so forth. It prints both uni-directionally and bi-directionally and features both tractor and friction feed. You can do bit image printing for graphics also! It is very similiar to the Epson design and will operate with the Data Force Print-A-Bit program.

The paper width is from four to ten inches with a maximum of three sheets at one time. That is, three sheets in depth! The head life is fifty million and the ribbon life is three million. It uses a special cassette design seamless ribbon that is easily replaced. It weighs about 15 pounds and is well constructed for longivity. It measures fifteen wide by eleven deep by four high. The head has nine pins and it is capable of eight differnt languages: U.S.A., United Kingdom, France, W. Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Denmark.

It features an end of paper alarm that squaks when you are down to the last seven lines of a sheet of paper. There is also an audio warning when the print head is stuck or operating improperly. It has a full 96 character ASC ii code and comes with adequate documentation. It operated very well for us and we were pleased by the quietness and the print quality. I don't think that you will regret spending your money on this nifty printer, as it is well worth the price! It has a nice combination of quality blended with affordability. Your cost is \$320 plus shipping. The parallel cable is not included!

EARLY LOGO LEARNING FUN: A PRESCHOOL SPECTACULAR

This unique module is designed for youngsters who can not yet read, although a child who can read can also use it. The manual can be colored by the child and it has a special directions section intended for parents. The child is acquainted with colors, shapes, and motion through a series of graphics and manipulations.

The six activies are: Build, Park, People, Draw, Dallas, and Move and Halt. You can build with colored blocks, move the cars and garages and park them, construct a person from various colored body parts, sketch a desired picture, move trucks and planes at desired speeds and directions, move a desired picture and stop it on command. It offers excellent use of color and animation and is sure to keep a young childs attention for some time. It is quite interactive and very helpful in learning shape associations. It is one of the better programs for the preschool child that is offered by TI. The retail price is \$29.95 and your member cost is \$23.50. I rated it *** Very Good.

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PRESS RELEASES FROM TI: ACTIONS STILL SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!

"Texas Instruments is encouraging third-party manufacturers of software and peripherals to produce products compatible with the 99/4A home computer.:

"Texas Instruments will issue licenses for its auto-incrementing memory feature incorporated in its GROM chip and will sell GROMs to interested third-party software manufacturers through TI's Semiconductor Group. In addition, TI is negotiating with third parties interested in manufacturing 99/4A software originally authored by Texas Instruments. TI plans to continue to produce software until TI piece-part inventories are depleted."

"Texas Instruments today announced a preliminary agreement with March Direct Marketing (MDM), a wholly owned subsidiary of MCCan-Erickson, to provide access to TI's list of 99/4A Home Computer owners to third party interested in marketing to this user base."

"Although the details of this plan have not been completely defined, it is expected that two distinct marketing thrusts will be pursued:

1. A quarterly catalog will be mailed to the user base free of charge. The catalog will include hardware and software from TI (while inventories last), as well as hardware and software from third parties. It will also list opportunities to become members in user's groups and to order relevant home computer magazine subscriptions. The content of the catalog will be controlled by MDM relative to suitability and quality.
2. MDM will identify and contract with the mail list manager whose function will be to make available to a variety of interested parties access to over one million known 99/4A owners."

TI FORTH GOES FORTH!

Some of you will be delighted to know that we will be making copies of TI Forth available to our membership starting in March of 1984. This language requires: at least one disk drive and a controller, memory expansion card, and the editor/assembler module.

If any of you have access to a printer who can reproce the manual cheaply, please let us know! The manual is about two hundred pages-eleven chapters and nine appendixices. A low quantity printing is not cost effective for us, so we are asking for your help. We will make it available for just over our cost of reproduction. If you can help, or are interested in TI Forth, please let us know!

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INVISIBLE CONTROL CODES: WHAT YOU SEE AIN'T WHAT YOU GET!

If you use X/Basic and your control key, you can get some pretty interesting results. Hold down the control key and press the ";" and nothing appears on the screen. Now list the line and you will see that the word "PRINT" has appeared. Every key on the keyboard will operate this way, so don't be afraid to experiment. Here are just a few of the examples using the alphabet letters "A" through "I": A=ELSE B=: C=! D=IF E=GO F=GO TO G=GO SUB H=RETURN i=DEF and so forth.

MICROSURGEON: PLAYING DOCTOR CAN BE FUN!

This is a spectacular education game by Imagic and it is both entertaining and highly informative. You select the difficulty level: student, intern, or surgeon, and select a patient: one to one thousand. Move the robot probe through the body by means of the arteries, veins, and capillaries in search of various conditions and diseases. You medicate the problem and earn research funds for correct medical decisions and cures obtained. The time is limited in conjunction with the level of difficulty and severity of the patients condition. The computer uses speech to assist you, as well as advise you of the position of the robot probe and patients condition.

The program has excellent sound effects, including respiration and heart rate. It is not for a child under twelve, as it is difficult! It is serious education, and not just another fun game. It features excellent graphics and a detailed manual of instructions and suggestions. It requires study and you won't do well at it if you just sit down and try to play. It is a fantastic program and I highly recommend it to any one who is interested in learning about medicine or the human body. Your cost is \$23.50. Rating: Outstanding!

STARTREK: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE FINAL FRONTIER

This is an arcade game by Saga and does offer three dimensional graphics! Try to pilot the Enterprise through space from one sector to another, but beware of the Klingons! You have unlimited phaser power and limited photon torpedoes. You can refuel at a green starbase, go into warp drive, and repair damage. The foes are intelligent and will do most anything to wipe you out. They may surround you and open fire or try to ram your ship.

The upper left screen shows your weapon and energy status, the upper right is a radar view of space, and the balance of the screen is a three dimensional view from the front of the Enterprise. It is colorful, has excellent graphics, plays fast, and is very much a challenge! The farther you go the rougher it gets. It offers speech if a synthesizer is attached. You are in total control of the Enterprise, so wise decisions make all of the difference in how well you do! If you like space games, than this gem is just what you have been looking for. Your cost is \$23.50. Rating: Outstanding

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HOPPER: THIS KANGAROO IS A QUICK STEP ARTIST

This game is a refreshing change, no guns, just three nasty circus trainers who are trying to capture Chadley the kangaroo. Now poor Chadley really doesn't want to be in the circus, so it is up to you to help him escape. Chadley is fast and can kick crates around to defend himself. If a trainer is hit by a crate he vanishes, but if you trap one or more trainers in a crate trap you score bonus points! It may sound simple, but it isn't!

The strategy here is excellent, and you have to lead the trainers into a trap. They are intelligent and are not easily tricked, so leading them on a merry chase is essential. Chadley is fast-and I do mean fast-and can avoid capture by running away. If you kick a crate and miss a trainer, it skids to the edge of the screen and remains there. A crate is only used once, so plan your kicks wisely! It is colorful, extremely fast, and very challenging. Good clean fun for a change with a minimum of violence. Your cost is \$23.50. Rating: Excellent.

SNAKE DANCE: THIS SERPANT HAS GONE PUNK!

Here is a short little graphic routine sent to us by Vaughn Software. It is in X/Basic. Have fun!

```
180 RANDOMIZE:: CALL CLEAR:: CALL SCREEN(2) 190 B=RND*190:: CALL MAGNIFY(1)::  
CALL CHAR(96,"8"):: FOR A=1 TO 28:: CALL SPRITE(#A,96,8,95,10,10,SGN(95-B)*A)::  
NEXT A 200 D=RND*20:: FOR A=1 TO 28:: CALL MOTION(#A,D,A*SGN(10-D)):: NEXT A::  
C=C+1:: IF CLT25 THEN 200 210 FOR A=1 TO 28:: CALL COLOR(#A,RND*14+2):: NEXT A::  
C=0:: CALL MAGNIFY(2) 220 FOR A=1 TO 28:: B=RND*14+2:: CALL PATTERN(#A,96):: CALL POSITION  
(#A,U,V):: CALL MOTION(#A,SGN(96-U)*9,SGN(10-V)*9):: NEXT A 230 FOR A=1 TO 28::  
CALL PATTERN(#A,96):: NEXT A:: CALL DELSPRITE(ALL):: GOTO 190
```

CLOSED CIRCUIT FOR MI MEMBERS!

The February meeting will be held on Sunday February 26, 1984 at 2:30 in room 2007 of the Mott Memorial Bldg. This is in the University of Michigan E. Court St. campus, not down town!

We are requesting that you call us if you plan to attend!!! Please call on Saturday February 18, 1984 and leave your name and the number in your party who plan to attend. The much hated answering service will be waiting for your call. If we do not get a good response, then Duane will stay home and relax. This will be obvious, as a cancellation card will arrive in your mail slot prior to the meeting date.

CORE COMP: LIVING ON A FAULT LINE CAN BE DANGEROUS

This California based company has taken it upon themselves to go into production of hardware cards for the TI 99/4A, as well as talking about a peripheral cabinet and

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new computer. If I sound somewhat skeptical, or sarcastic, pardon me! I am just a bit vaporware shy at this point, especially when it comes to more promises of new and better things to come. I must admit to being a victim to the doubting ear syndrome, caused primarily by listening to the lips in Lubbock for too long!

I have seen, and used, the CC memory card and their rs/232 interface board. They do work, although there may be some problems with them down the road. For instance, some of the older peripheral cabinets do not accept the cards well into the mother board. They are more cheaply constructed-much thinner cases and no ring tabs to remove the card from the board-and lack comprehensive documentation. However, the price is competitive: memory for \$102 and rs/232 for \$80 plus shipping! There is also an impressive warranty that covers a one year time period. Your only cost for a defective product is return postage. Core Comp does reserve the right to either repair or replace any card, but a new one year warranty will be issued in either instance.

How about this new peripheral cabinet? I show delivery scheduled for February 15, 1984 and a retail price from \$250 to \$300-the final price seems to be floating! This package contains: a peripheral cabinet, disk controller, memory expansion, and an rs/232 interface. Why so cheap? Perhaps this package unit is using boards that are built in as opposed to separate plug in cards.

This brings us to the much rumored CC 99/64 Phoenix computer. The details and features on this computer seem to change daily! It is scheduled to be shipped to selected dealers on March 15, 1984 and to the public thirty days later. I do know that it is using a TMS99000 MPU and that it is supposed to be fully compatible with all TI 99/4A software. The present peripheral cabinet may work if you purchase a special mother board card for the CC version peripheral box! The price including the peripheral cabinet is \$600 retail, and that frankly seems terribly cheap to me. If a dealer gets a thirty percent spread from a distributor, this reduces the cost to \$420. If the distributor gets a ten percent discount, the cost drops to \$360. Can Core Comp build and ship all of these items at that price and make a satisfactory profit? I simply have to wonder. It sound too good to be true, and perhaps it is! I, for one, am going to avoid holding my breath and live life on a "wait and see" basis. I wish Core Comp all the success in the cosmos, but wise management is up to them.

WHAT'S NEW FOR YOU!

Here are some new items in stock for you: Parker Bros. Q*Bert \$34.50, Atarisoft: Pac Man, Donkey Kong, Centipede, Dig Dug, Defender, Protector #2, Shamus, Picnic Paranoia the first five are \$23.50 and the last three are \$18.50. Core Comp RAM card \$102, Core Comp RS/232 Interface \$80, Panasonic Printer \$320, MPI Double Side Double Density 52S drive \$225 External Case/Power Supply \$58, Maxell DSDD disks \$45 per box of ten, Pro Stic Controller \$22-with adapter cable, Electrohome Monitor-13 inch RGB with decoder \$250, Logo #2 \$74.

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