

*Economy - Class
News Letter*

**HUG NEWS
SEPT/OCT 90**

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Houston, TX 77064

*NOT THE ADDRESS
FOR EXCHANGE
NEWS LETTERS, Please.*

**MEETING SCHEDULE
SUNDAY OCT 14 1:00**

AGENDA: USING OUR PRINTERS
>> New Place and Time: NPOA Clubhouse
Claridge Drive (see map) Key 530Z
-- 2nd Sunday each month (we hope!)
SEP. 09, 90 // OCT. 14, 90
NOV. 11, 90 // DEC. 09, 90
HUG TIBBS - 24-hour BBS - OPEN AGAIN
CALL 300/1200----- 713-495-7368

The Houston Users Group is organized to promote the use of the TI-99/4A Home Computer and the Myarc Geneve (TM). We invite persons of similar interest to meet with us. HUG is a non-profit group and is not affiliated with TEXAS INSTRUMENTS, INC.

IN THIS ISSUE HUG CURRENTS BITS AND BYTES MBX INFO

1990 HUG OFFICERS

President --- BOB MCCARTHY ...955-7939 BBS SysOp --- GLENN COX ...495-8931 Membership/VP HENRY KNECHT ...473-8870
Soft Libr --- LARRY PIPKIN ...568-1898 Program/VP -- RON TONE ...999-3686 Nwsltr Libr - BILL MAUTNER ...463-9557
SIG/VP ----- open ...----- Secretary --- LYNNE NEVILL ...771-9357 Cartr. Libr.- BILL MAUTNER ...463 9557
Treasurer --- WAYNE JOBE ...894-6628 N/L Editor RICHARD LUMPKIN.469-3089

NEWSLETTER INFO !:

WELL, hello there! Long time since we met, huh? Actually, for some of you it ISN'T so long, since I only got around to mailing out some of the EXCHANGE newsletters from the "great combined summer April-July plus August" edition at the end of September. For the second time. Mailing that is. I actually mailed the exchange-groups copies of this 6-sheet condensed version in early September, with one stamp per tri-folded-and-stapled N/L, as I have many times before. SURPRISE! says the Postal Service, and sends ME a letter with a LARGE envelope containing 51 of the newsletters back, requesting \$0.20 more postage each. Well, darn it, I have mailed hundreds of six-sheets without this problem, so I proceed to WEIGH them. And SOME weigh LESS than a full ounce on the balance beam scales, and some weigh slightly more than exactly an ounce, but on the ELECTRONIC SCALES at the counter, they ALL weigh "1.1" ounce. Obviously the post office has lighter "ounces" than the real world, since 16 together weighed in at slightly LESS than a pound on one scale, slightly more than a pound on another. So \$10.20 worth of stamps fixed all this, a week or so later. I can only assume that my local copy shop ran some "heavy" paper on my copies and tipped off the P.S. scales.

And what happened to the other 52 of the 103 mailed together?? THOSE probably went to NEBACONNECTA land, along with the lost E-MAIL messages.

SO IF YOU ARE A N/L EXCHANGER WITH H.U.G., AND DID NOT GET A "SUMMER MONTHS" N/L FROM HUG, LET ME KNOW AND I WILL SEND IT. And just in case you think the extra weight was because of the double return-address label-- I did not place the second label over the first until AFTER that group of 51 was returned and I realized I had used MY address instead of Bill Mautner's. AND.... yes, there IS a duplicate

page there, of the PRINTERS APPRENTICE info, out of order, etc. Well, darnit, if I was perfect would I work for FREE ! ? ?

What you DID get was an excellent article written by Phil Van Nordstrand especially for the HUG NEWS and the Johnson Space Center JUS N/L. And it is genuinely "original material", something which is hard for me to GET anymore. What I DON'T send on exchange N/L's any more is library update pages, and widely-distributed info which I am reprinting. The group just can't afford extra sheets of copy any more, since copy costs are up from 4c to 6c and rising rapidly, and the postage situation is a problem also. It cost the group right at \$425.00 for this last exchange mailing anyway, but I am still trying to get out the NEWS every couple of months. \$\$\$ Thanks for your support, patience, and exchange newsletters. \$\$\$
-----end N/L info box, Sept/Oct 90.

Cont. From p-3, MBX INFO

And for those of you who know me well enough to suspect I might do such a thing, I DID NOT tear into the MBX box to see what is on the circuit board...(yet!). I suspect that there is such a thing as a DSR routine to access the MBX through the joystick port, and that this is within each of the MBX modules. I also suspect that many of the Speech Synth. chip group would be present in the MBX, and the data is driven to the MBX through CRU control of the joystick port lines. And I would expect to find a 9901 in the MBX also, TI being as habit-bound as it was. If any of you TI Hardware Guru's would care to elaborate on the MBX internal ops, I would appreciate it.

----- r. Lumpkin, Houston TX October 1990 ///

HUB CURRENTS

AUGUST MEETING came off pretty well, with probably one of the best series of "demos" that we have had in some time, by Wayne Jobe, Michael Lumpkin, and Bill Mautner. We were able to see, in action, how the Super Sketch pad works, and compare the old "T I Artist" with the new "T I Artist Plus" package, which, with its better control and enhanced features, is definitely worth the price. The handling of slides and instances, and the scaling features make this an excellent graphics production package.

We also got to see the demo program of J.P. Graphics by J.P. Morin, which was written in FORTH and is super fast at calculating and placing screen info. I have seen faster "screen draw" demos on IBM 286 and 386 machines, with higher resolution, obviously, but I haven't seen any other "home" computer even come close to what the 4A does here in FORTH.

I also have down in my scribbled notes a reference to BITMAP and GRAPHX with Bill Mautner's name, and a reference to "JOYPAINT-Michigan". Wish I could tell you what all that meant. I know we ran or tried to run a couple of these. It's pretty hard to watch a good demo and take notes at the same time! (That excuse never impressed the instructors in school, either!)

Other news at the meeting was that Wayne Jobe was LEAVING TOWN after a transfer to New Mexico, and is there now, as of September. It was requested that someone else take the post of Treasurer of the Group for the rest of this year, or at least until Ruth Hermann gets back, since she probably will be willing to re-assume that post. Only one person volunteered, and his offer was accepted, so Ray Blackstone will take the job of acting treasurer. (The checkbook and other papers were brought to my house by Wayne Jobe and I finally got them to Ray's house later in September.

Disk of the Month for August was TEXPAINT. There were 12 members attending the August meeting, but we only got \$6.00 in the "dollar box", which is for the \$20.00 per month that we pay for the meeting place. We either have to do better on this or count on taking it out of the regular treasury!!!

One renewal during August... Raymond Sarabia decided to stay with us, probably just so he can retaliate for the verbal abuse he has received on the BBS. Just kidding. We are always glad when members-users of the 4A enjoy our company enough to join or remain members, especially when you recognize that these members are also using other computers at work and at home. It means we still have and enjoy working with a viable and growing machine, and that we are providing, as a Group, what these users need and want. Obviously, newer machine designs are faster, "bigger", and in a lot of uses, "better", but the 4A still obviously meets our needs at home and provides a lot of entertainment (and just about all the frustration that I can stand). And I still haven't heard an IBM "sing", even off-key, so THERE!

September's meeting was on the ninth, with a dozen or so members attending. Free programs at Sept. were won by Ralph Landrum-5, R. Lumpkin-10, Ray Beck-5. Ray Beck was so pleased he decided to renew. Two renewals--Roy Jones (Jr.) and Ray Beck--thanks. Roy Jones is another with several computers at home...several TI's, several Commodores, several Ataris, several Radio Shacks I think... Don't know how you guys keep them all straight!!

Meeting was on Speech, and provided demos of, among other things, the "Singing Computer"--pretty much on key, too. Also had a demo of the Asgard program called "ANIMATOR", a program to help programmers set up graphics and action screens.

Much of program was by Ron Towe with the 4A trying to answer questions which he had not yet asked, but we got the idea, and now know how to get some non-relevant answers to the spouse, whenever we can't talk for ourselves. Seriously, the computer activity which has always most confused, confounded, and impressed non-users of computers over the years has been when the machine appeared to "think" and would answer or respond to them on a one-to-one basis. Even though most of us recognize that the computer has only a very limited range of responses and never really "learns" anything new, it is still entertaining to see if we can "teach" it to do something, or respond in a different way. That is what "Programming" really is--teaching the computer how to do something, if only temporarily (until the first error message and lock-up!)

Also noted at the meeting was that so far we have collected \$46.00 to date for the second disk drive replacement for the BBS, and I believe this \$46.00 was contained within the \$486.+- balance in the treasury at that time. We still need \$24.00 or so more to cover that unit's costs, since it is in service already. Also, we had (I think) \$8.00 from sale of programs and about \$12.00 from the dollar box--- whatever it was I wrote it on top of the box. Please see my notes on exchange newsletter costs for the summer months letters, next page...)

-----end currents, SE/DC 90 ///

BITS AND BYTES OF NEWS

Bob McCarthy also had at the meeting two names of people trying to sell their systems (non-members), and Les Muorer has his for sale (ex-member) at 492-2359. One of the systems Bob referred to is not in town yet, but the people would like to sell the complete system, and said when they get moved (from Oklahoma) they will give us a list of the equipment they have. Bob mentioned \$100. on that system, I THINK.

The other partial system was owned by an ex-II employee here in town, who now works for COMPAG. I got the number from Bob a week later and called him and went ahead and bought the P-Box and other stuff he had, mainly because he had a complete MBX system (only three modules, tho), and some technical data. He wanted to keep his console and speech synthesizer and games modules and the monitor anyway.

Turns out his system was typical of an expanded system of about 1983 or 84...One TI SS disk drive, all TI cards, 50 or so disks with mostly X-Basic programs. Also TI-Writer with the original disk files, ditto Multiplan (In other words, non-updated), and since he had had employee access beyond the actual market releases, he had TI-FORTH, the disks and the documents, printed by TI instead of run off of disks, which program he thought was still "secret" or unreleased.

What he did not have and had no idea of the existence of was all the good stuff we have acquired since 1985... FUNNELWEB, TI/BASE, DM-1000, TI-ARTIST and all the other great Machine/Language programs that have been created by our talented programmers for the 4A. This is typical of the users who are not in the groups and have not kept up with the mainstream of the TI world... they simply STOPPED at the point where all the good stuff really started, and that is why so many system users never pursued the 4A any further. They had (have) no idea where the computer actually has arrived in its development. He says there are other TI owners at COMPAQ who may be interested in selling their systems... I asked him to have them get in touch with us. Maybe some will be interested in KEEPING and USING their systems also!

He also had some of the technical data which has also since been released by TI and is in wide circulation, and a P-Code card and disks/docs. I will sell the P-Code card and items for \$35.00 if someone wants it, since I already have one (and don't use that one anyway!).

SPEAKING of SELLING AND BUYING stuff... Ron Towe would like to get hold of a book for the Speech Editor module, and a PLATO INTERPRETER CARTRIDGE. You should be aware that TRITON is now closing out of a lot of items, and the PLATO programs (called "modules" but these are NOT the cartridge) for \$2.95 each, but not much selection left. The last catalog they issued (and probably the last ever) was the FALL 1989, and if you are interested in ANYTHING in that catalog, you need to call them at 1-800-227-6900 and check the item 4-letter code for availability and price. Best to make a list of the codes you are interested in and then call since a lot of stuff is gone...

They still have lots of cartridge and cassette programs, but very little hardware (stand-alones they still have!) and the current commercial programs are non-available or back-order items (TI-Base, etc). The MBX cartridges are being closed out for from \$.75 to \$2.95-- a far cry from the days when TI and Milton Bradley wanted \$75.00 for them. Of course, the same thing applies to TI-Writer, Ed.Assblr, Multiplan, each \$4.95 plus \$3.00 shipping now I think. If you order something from TRITON (\$25.00 minimum) be sure and get the RS232/1/2 Y-cable splitter (\$XIAD, \$3.95).

-----end BITS, Oct 90 rtl ///

*HUG NEWS
SE/OCT 90 P-3*

MBX SYSTEM INFO:

I ordered three of each of the MBX cartridges that they still have at TRITON (6 types) and now will have all except the SEWERNANIA. Still in stock: SPACE BANDITS vr; SUPERFLY vr; HONEY HUNT vr; I'M HIDING vr; TERRY TURTLE ADVENTURE vr; SOUNTRACK TROLLEY. (One set of the six is for Ron Towe, other two for me). The ones not at TRITON now are: CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL vr; SEWERNANIA vr; BIGFOOT; AND METEOR BELT. The "vr" I added to indicate the ones with "VOICE RECOGNITION, and this constitutes the complete list of all ten MBX carts which were ever produced.

Now let me say that BIGFOOT is a combination of ALPINE and Donkey Kong, nothing special there; and METEOR BELT is a typical "space-shoot" game, and not real great either, so not all MBX programs were particularly superior to regular cartridge software!

The rest of the MBX System consists of the MBX Console, with an 8x8 matrix keypad which allows game options and moves through game-specific overlays of function locations, and the MBX-specific Joysticks (two plug ports provided) and a Voice Recognition Headset (looks like it should have functional earphones, but it DOESN'T--only the microphone part works!).

The console is transformer operated (9volt d.c., center pos.) and the MBX console plugs into the JOYSTICK port on the 4A console, with a Ground connection to the cassette port. The MBX modules plug into the regular location on the 4A console. MOST can also use E-S-D-X keys on the 4A for arrow movements, and "Q" for the Fire Button function.

It should also be noted that: ANY OF THE MBX CARTRIDGES WHICH DO NOT USE VOICE RECOGNITION CAN BE USED IN THE CONSOLE WITH A SPEECH SYNTHESIZER AND A TI JOYSTICK. You get the same voice sounds through the monitor from the speech synthesizer as if you have the MBX attached, at which time the sound comes through the MBX unit speaker.

On the other hand, IF YOU TRY A MBX CARTRIDGE WITH ~~VOICE RECOGNITION~~ WITHOUT THE MBX UNIT ATTACHED AND TURNED ON, IT WILL NOT WORK. How the heck it knows thru the joystick port, I do not know!!! Also, the MBX joystick is DIFFERENT ENTIRELY in its makeup and hookup from the TI joysticks, and only works with the MBX system.

Since on two player mode in the non-voice-recognition games two joysticks are often needed, as with the console games, try playing with the Speech Synth. and regular TI joysticks if you do not have two MBX joysticks. Why are two Joysticks not necessary with with the VR games?? Well, because one player can use the voice microphone for his moves!!! So the system is not quite as locked-in as it would seem at first.

LUCKILY for me, one of the three MBX carts the ex-TI guy had was CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL, which is a voice recognition package and is very "playable"-- it is a better game than the kids Nintendo Baseball (RBI) !!!! Not bad for a program with copywrite 1982 at that!! Oh, well, what could

have been....

**** ANNOUNCING NEW AND EXCITING WORLDS OF GRAPHICS FOR YOUR TI-99/4A!!!! ****

Now available for IMMEDIATE release is the new GIF Picture Loader software by Barry Boone. This powerful software will allow you to tap into the tens of thousands of GIF pictures available from sources EVERYWHERE and convert them into the convenient TI Artist format for viewing and manipulation. The two pictures enclosed in this archive are just examples of some of the great artwork that is just waiting to be tapped into by the TI community.

WHAT IS GIF?

GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) is a format for storing picture files that was developed by CompuServe so that various machines could exchange graphics. Up until now, the only TI-ish machine that could deal with the GIF format was the Myarc Geneve. Now, any TI user who has one disk drive and memory expansion can take advantage of these pictures.

256 x 192 screen size to 640 x 400 to 1024 x 768, or even larger... if you desire, this powerful software will automatically reduce even the largest GIF picture to fit on a 256 x 192 screen... OR you may wish to simply window around the larger picture, looking at only one part of it at a time. GIF pictures may also contain up to 256 colors out of a possible 16 MILLION colors! Since the TI may display only 16 colors, the software has more than one method of deciding WHICH TI colors to use where... this allows you to find the color selection method that brings out the best details of your picture.

WHERE DO YOU FIND GIF PICTURES?

If you have a modem, it is as simple as calling a local BBS or a commercial system such as GENie, CompuServe, or Delphi. GIF pictures are very popular among users of other computers, so BBS's that cater to other machines, or Geneve users, is the best place to find them. As TI users discover the GIF format, I expect the TI-oriented systems to begin filling with them rapidly. If you do not have a modem, your user group is a good place to find them, or your friendly local Geneve user, or a friend with a modem... even a friend with another machine, such as an Amiga, or IBM PC...

The GIF Picture Loader software is available for \$15 plus \$2 S/H from: Barry Boone
P.O. Box 1233
Sand Springs, OK 74063

Future updates will be available for the cost of materials, shipping, etc. (Around \$4 or \$5) and will be enable you to CREATE GIF pictures, load and create Myart files, as well as other formats (like RLE)

ED. note: The picture on right was taken from a beautiful full screen, full color GIF to ARTIST picture sent along. J.F.W.



Reprinted in HUG NEWS SE/06 90 -P4

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