HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From The

V A S T

USERS GROUP

NEWSLETTER

CONTENTS

VAST USER GROUP BBS
[602] 437 - 4335

VAST USER GROUP INFORMATION

The VAST USERS' GROUP is a support group for Home Computer users. We primarily support the TI-99 Home computer and compatables, but all computer users are welcome. We will be meeting at the Pyle Adult Recreation Center in Tempe on the 2nd Saturday of this month (January 14). In coming months, the meetings will be scattered between the second and third Saturdays. I have included a 2 month calendar on the Editor's page (page 4) showing the meetings for February and March and will continue to do this in coming months so you have some idea of when the meetings will be. The meetings will start at 10:00 AM and continue until 11:00 AM with socializing starting at 9:00 AM. Please see the address page for additional meeting information. The yearly membership fee is $15.00 and now includes the newsletter mailed to your door!

All meetings are open and anyone may attend. Only dues paying members may vote in elections and obtain programs from the Users' Group library.

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CURRENT OFFICERS
================ ===========

President
  Bob Nixon............897-6204
Vice-President
  Ike Van Kampen.......934-5164
Secretary
  Bill Wedmore.........998-1821
Treasurer
  Earl Bonneau.........269-3802
User Group Librarian
  Earl Bonneau.........269-3802
Newsletter Editor/BBS SysOp
  Jim Ely..............921-3375

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Newsletter O N L Y membership is available for $12.00/year, First Class Mail. The date that appears in the upper right hand corner of your mailing label is your membership expiration date. Address renewals to the return address on page 8.

The Users Group's BBS is in operation 24 hours a day. Contact it at (602) 437-4335. There are 3 message bases, a TI specific download section, and a lot of interesting conversation and information available here so why not give it a try.

Deadline for submission of articles or advertising for the Newsletter is the last Saturday of every month. Articles may be submitted in any form, however, the preferred method is by phone transfer directly to the Editor.

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Advertising rates are as follows:

COMMERCIAL:

Full Page $10.00
Half Page $ 7.00
Quarter Page $4.00

PERSONAL:

Four lines,
30 Characters/line
$1.00
$.20 per line
over four.

All rates are for ONE issue only!

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Programs are available from the USERS' GROUP LIBRARY at the following rates:

SS/SD Disk $2.00
DS/SD Disk $4.00

If copying of documentation is required, it will be at the rate of $.10 per page. If the User Group supplies the disk, please add $1.00 to the above charges. An exchange program for free programs is also in effect. Please contact the librarian for further information. A complete list of what is in the library is available on 2 disks free of charge if you supply the disks or for $1.00 per disk if the User Group supplies the disks.

SECRETARY'S SLATE

VAST User Group
M I N U T E S
for
December 17, 1988

(These minutes are un-official as the group Secretary was not present.)

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by President Bob Nixon. He had the group "shout" "Merry Christmas" as a greeting to one and all to get the meeting underway.

There was a brief discussion about the current meeting room. Some say that it is too far to travel...others that the price is right and the rooms are nice. Gerry Kennedy said he is investigating a room at a church at 2nd Ave. and McDowell that would cost $35 a meeting. Only disadvantage is that we can not have our meetings on a Saturday! Suggestion still under investigation.

Minutes of last month's meeting approved as printed in the December Newsletter.

Jim Ely announced that the December Newsletter was mailed late and that members should be getting them as the meeting was taking place. Since the newsletters were mailed in Tempe, some of the Tempe members did receive them on Friday, Dec. 16th.

NEW BUSINESS...

Mike Marfisi announced that he is going to the TI FEST WEST in San Diego in February. He gave room rates for the Hotel that is going to host the FEST.

OLD BUSINESS...

The discussion continued from the last meeting to get the Board members to meet separately from the regular meetings to discuss upcoming events of the group. (I believe a misunderstanding by Bob Nixon, who was not at the last meeting, ended up with a program committee chairman being assigned, Dan Shell to head committee. This had nothing to do with the original intent of the board members meeting separately.)

Bob Noxon reminded everyone of the upcoming elections in April. He said he does not intend to be re-elected for president for another year.

Mike Marfisi then discussed the two new data bases for the TI: TI BASE and FIRST BASE. FIRST BASE he just got in the mail and had only enough time to look through the docs but from what he saw, it looks mighty impressive. TI BASE he has been trying to use for at least a month without much success because of poor docs supplied with the database program. Mike hopes to have a review of the FIRST BASE program ready for the January Newsletter.

A discussion then ensued on the change of the BBS modem to a 2400 baud unit. This modem seems to have corrected the noisy connection problem that several West side users and some North side users had been experiencing. A motion to purchase the 2400 baud modem for the BBS was made and seconded. A maximum $139 limit was set for the purchase. The motion was approved by the group.

It was suggested that we have another swap meet at our February meeting. This seemed favorable so it will be.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 am. Some Christmas demos were then run by Greg Ely using the TI computer.

Submitted by Jim Ely, Newsletter Editor

From the Editor's Desk

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Hope you all had nice holidays. Let's get right to it.

IN THIS ISSUE...

Page 5 is Computer Tutor again continuing the discussion of String Functions in TI BASIC. And page 7 is Our BBS and You with a discussion of some alternative solutions for sending and receiving programs and data by modem without the use of a terminal emulator program. After doing such long newsletters (10-12 pages) for the past several months, I decided to take a bit of a rest this month by doing a little bit smaller newsletter. That's all I have for you this month.

That brings up a subject on a similar note. I do this newsletter every month for you folks, yet I very rarely hear anything as feedback as to how the newsletter serves your needs. I don't usually mind doing the newsletter but I don't have any idea what YOU really want to know about. Do you want reviews? Key-in programs? Construction projects? Tutorials? WHAT??? I have a phone number that is listed on page 2 of this newsletter and my address, if you are getting this newsletter locally, is the return address on the address page. I'd like a little advice from YOU on the direction this newsletter should go. I would also like to have YOUR articles to publish in this newsletter. Come on! This is for and about YOU!

A SAD NOTE...

I was informed last Saturday by Walt Brown that a long time member had passed away. Marietta Boyle, who has belonged to the group almost from the beginning, passed away Saturday morning, January 7. You may recall that she was hospitalized a few months ago with pnuemonia and at that time cancer was found. She died of that cancer. Marietta had a way of making the meetings she attended pretty interesting with her comments and she was always ready to learn something new about her TI computer. She will be missed by her many friends.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Here is a two month calendar for the next meetings...

FEBRUARY 1989
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	[18]
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

MARCH   1989
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	[18]
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

OUR BBS...

I have changed the security levels a little on the BBS this past month. New persons registering with passwords will now be given a level of 40 instead of 60. A level 40 gives the new user access to the first (main) message base and the "NEW" FOR-SALE conference which has just been set up. New users will only get access for a 15 minute time period and will not have access to any of the files or directories. Upon verification of the users information data, a level of 50 will be assigned which gives 45 minutes time and access to the files and directories. This new system does not affect current users of the board, just NEW users who log on for the first time. If the new user is a member of our group, a level 60 will be assigned after verification. Most users are at a level 60 at the moment. This was done to discourage some new users who have logged on to te system and gone immediately to the files sections and started downloading without a single word to let us know they were even there. If you are new and a member of this user group and plan to start using the BBS, please leave me a [C]omment to let me know so I can up your level.

IN THE NEWS...
(from the Dec., 1988 MICROpendium)

Myarc has released version 1.14 of

THE ELEMENTS OF BASIC
Part 18

(Courtesy Erie 99ers Newsletter)

STRING FUNCTIONS - continued

LEN Function

LEN(X$) is a string function which gives the length of, or number of characters in, the string X$.   LEN is used to do special formatting or to make sure someone entered a string answer rather than a number. Try this:

```
10 A$="THE TI IS A NEAT MACH
INE."
20 PRINT LEN(A$)
30 PRINT LEN("THE TI IS A NE
AT MACHINE")
```

The TI will print 25 for both print statements.   This number includes all spaces and punctuations as well as characters between the quotes. If A$ in the example above is a null string (""), that is, it has no char- acters or spaces between the quotes, then the computer will print 0.   This is especially useful in determing if someone hit the ENTER key without actu- ally entering a string answer.

LEN can be used to assign a value to a variable, like this:

```
10 A = LEN(X$)
20 B = B + LEN(X$)
```

Or, LEN can be used as part of an expression:

```
10 FOR I = 1 TO LEN(X$)
50 IF LEN(X$) = 0 THEN 40
```

This last example (line 50) checks to see if the answer (X$) was a null string (0). If so, then the computer is directed to go back to line 40 and repeat this question.

POS Function

The POS(A$,B$,n) is the posi- tion function.   A$ and B$ are string expressions. The numeric expression n is evaluated and rounded to a whole number, if necessary.   POS finds the first occurance of the second string B$ in the first string A$ start-

ing at the nth character in the first string A$.   If B$ is found in A$, the location of the first character of B$ in A$ is given. If B$ is not found in A$, then the value of zero is given.

```
10 A$ = "ABCDEFGHIJKL"
20 B$ = "HI"
30 P = POS(A$,B$,3)
40 PRINT P
```

In the above example, the computer will begin looking for "HI" after the 3rd character "C" in "ABCDEFGHIJKL." The computer will find the "HI" beginning with the 8th character in "ABCDEFGHIJKL."   Therefore, the position P will equal 8.

Here are more examples:

```
10 A$="BOXES"
20 B$="X"
30 PRINT POS(A$,B$,1)
RUN
3
```

```
10 A$="BOBBY DOLE"
20 B$="B"
30 PRINT POS(A$,B$,5)
RUN
0
```

```
10 A$="BOBBY"
20 B$="BOB"
30 PRINT POS(A$,B$,1)
RUN
1
```

```
10 A$="BOBBY"
20 B$="X"
30 PRINT POS(A$,B$,1)
RUN
0
```

SEG$ Function

The SEG$ function will find a substring (part of a string) that is part of a longer string. For example,

```
10 A$="MISSISSIPI"
20 PRINT SEG$(A$,7,3)
```

The SEG$ function will print "SIP" which begins with the 7th character in MISSISSIPI and is 3 characters in length.   What is actually printed depends on what the 3 characters are beginning with the 7th character in the

CONTINUED ON

COMPUTER TUTOR CONTINUES FROM PAGE 5...

given string. Consider these ex-
amples:

```
10 A$="PENNSYLVANIA"
20 PRINT SEG$(A$,10,5)
RUN
NIA

10 A$="OHIO"
20 PRINT SEG$(A$,6,2)
RUN
```

When a position is selected that
is beyond the end of the string as in
the second example, a null string
will result. That is, nothing will
be printed. The null string is a
character string whose length is
zero. It contains no characters.

If the value for the length
carries the substring beyond the end
of the original string, as in the
first example above, the computer
will print only the characters it
finds up to the end of the string.
The following are more examples of
the SEG$ function.

```
10 A$="HERE IS A MESSAGE"
20 PRINT SEG$(A$,1,4):
30 PRINT SEG$(A$,3,5):
40 PRINT SEG$(A$,12,3):
50 PRINT SEG$(A$,12,12):
60 PRINT SEG$(A$,20,3):
70 PRINT SEG$(A$,LEN(A$)-4,5):
80 PRINT SEG$(A$,-1,0)
RUN
HERERE ISESSESSAGESSAGE
* BAD VALUE IN 80
```

In line 70, the SEG$ function
establishes the starting point of the
substring by figuring the length
(LEN) of A$ and subtracting 4 from
it. Line 80 illustrates that it is
an error to use a negative value for
the length or to use a negative value
or a zero for the starting location.

SEG$ can also be used as part of a
string expression like this:

```
10 S1$="HELLO HI "
20 S2$="THERE I AM"
30 P$="..?!"
40 PRINT SEG$(S1$,7,3)&SEG$(
S2$,1,5)&SEG$(P$,4,1)
```

Try it!

D.H.

EDITOR'S DESK CONTINUES FROM PAGE 4...

MDOS. It was designed to test the
new Myarc Advanced BASIC which is in
the final stages of debugging. The
hardisk version of MDOS should be
released shortly as well.

Technical Application Product
Engineering (T.A.P.E. ltd.) of Ontar-
io, CA is having a "close out" sale
on it stock on hand of most Mecha-
tronic products. This includes the
80-column card, XBII Plus and Mouse
with software and power supply. Con-
tact T.A.P.E ltd. at 714-989-9906.

A printed circuit board to go
inside the TI console and hold 32K
memory, clock, Extended BASIC and
Speech Synthesizer is under develop-
ment by Eric Zeno of Pittsburgh, PA.
Contact Eric at 414 Highland Rd.,
Pittsburg, PA 15235 for more
information. Final cost will
probably be determined by the amount
of interest generated and hopefully
in the range of $5 - $15.

Asgard Software has a new tele-
phone number and address effective
Dec. 30. The new number is (703)
255-3085 and the new address is P.O.
Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20850.
Asgard says that the still long
awaited PRESS word processor for the
TI should begin shipping by Jan. 1.
There is still some final debugging
going on. Orders will be filled as
they were received, with those
placing orders at the Chicago TI
faire being the first to receive
their copies.

Donaldson Software has released
several new cassette based games for
the TI including Swordfish Patrol, a
"sink the Bismarck" type game, Mon-
ster Castle, a graphics adventure
game and Speed Rally, a racing car
game. All games are $8.95. To order
or get a catalogue, which is $1.50,
contact Donaldson Software, 521
Lievre St., Buckingham, Quebec,
Canada J8L 2C2.

AND FINALLY...

...An upcoming TI computer faire
that is close by...TI-FEST WEST '89.
This year it will be held in San
Deigo on Feb. 18-19 at the Clarion
Hotel at Balboa Park. Mike Marfisi
already has his reservations.....

That's it. See you at the meeting on
January 14.

Jim Ely, Editor

OUR BBS AND YOU

GETTING ON LINE: AN INTRODUCTION TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Part Six: Software Packages — How to Transfer Data Without Them — By Fred and Amy Mackey

For the past two months we have been discussing different aspects of various Telecommunication Software available for the TI. This month we will show you how you can transfer data without any special telecommunications software packages at all.

TRANSFERING BASIC AND XBASIC PROGRAMS

Both sender and receiver of the program must be using TI Basic or Xbasic. Sender should load the program into computer memory and at prompt type SAVE RS232, but do not press ENTER. Receiver types OLD RS232, but does not press ENTER. Both parties switch over to modem, sender should then immediately press ENTER, and after about 5 seconds, receiver should also press ENTER. At the top of the screen both parties will see the program block number, which will count down to zero when the transfer is complete. The receiver should then save the program to disk or cassette, since the program transfer was made directly to computer memory, and not to disk.

TRANSFERRING ASSEMBLY PROGRAMS

Both parties of the transfer must be using the Editor/Assembler, option #1 for the Edit section. From there the receiver should choose option #4 for PRINT, and at the "FILENAME?" prompt type in RS232.BA=300.CRLF, but should not hit ENTER. The sender will choose option #1 LOAD, and at the "FILENAME?" prompt ENTER RS232.BA300, but should not hit ENTER. Both parties should then switch to modem, the sender immediately pressing ENTER, and the receiver waiting 5 seconds and then pressing ENTER. When using E/A, there will be no block numbers displayed as in a "Basic/XBasic" transfer. When the transfer is complete, the receiver must save the program to disk using the #3 SAVE option.

TRANSFERING TEXT USING TI-WRITER

Both parties should load the Editor section of T.I. Writer. The receiver prepares to load a file by typing in "LF", and then RS232.LF at the prompt, but should not press ENTER. The sender should load the text file, and then save it back to disk using "PF" instead of "SF", and at the prompt typing in C DSK1.FILENAME and then ENTER. This will eliminate control characters from the file. Sender should then exit Editor, go to Formatter, and load the file. At the "PRINT DEVICE NAME" prompt, enter RS232.LF, and press ENTER for all the other prompts except the last one, which is the "PAUSE AT END OF PAGE?". At this point, both parties should turn there modems on, sender pressing ENTER at the final prompt, and receiver pressing ENTER when hearing the squeal of the modem. When the transfer is complete, the file will appear on the receiver's screen. Receiver should then save the file to disk.

When using these methods of transfer, it may be necessary to enter RS232/1 instead of RS232 depending on your hardware setup. These methods of data transfer do not accomodate the luxury of error checking provided by the X-Modem protocol utilized in various Software Packages. However, the speed of transfer and the ease of use make these methods of transfering data another valuable telecommunications trick to be familiar with.