THE DELAWARE VALLEY USERS GROUP

TI PRO BUYERS OFFERED FREE PRINTER BY TI FOR WRITING TI PRO'S SOFTWARE

In a serially-numbered letter sent to thousands of TI 99/4A owners in mid-December, Texas Instruments offered an opportunity to receive a free TI 855 printer, with purchase of a TI Professional desktop or portable computer. The minimum TI Pro configuration of 256K, costing at least $1862 (of several combinations in the offer), was based on TI 99/4A software writers promising to convert old or write new programs for the TI Pro during 1985.

Distribution could occur by submission for commercial publication or to a "Users Group Exchange Library", left undefined. Upon TI's acceptance, authors must agree not to resell the TI hardware for at least 12 months.

TI's letter to one DVUG member was accompanied by an exclosed letter from Charles LaFara, President of the International UG in Oklahoma. which has a user-written library, and to which the DVUG member belongs. The IUG will offer a disk-based program to transfer files from the 99/4A to the TI Pro.

To gain additional software from TI 99/4A users (and sell TI Pro's), the offer is available until mid-February. Necessary quality of software, or consumer failure to follow up, was not defined in the TI letter, which caught TI Pro retailers by surprise, although the widely acclaimed TI 855 printer has been offered free with TI Pro purchases before now, in holiday specials.

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DVUG BEGINNING THIRD YEAR, AS NUMBERS AND SOFTWARE GROW IN 2D GENERATION

In February, our Delaware Valley Users Group begins its third year meeting as an incorporated body, in our regular location at Christiana Mall. Starting in Summer of 1982 with gatherings of a dozen or so in one family's home, our local TI 99/4A (and then, 99/4) owners grew rapidly with the tremendous price cuts in Fall, 1982. That prompted quick relocation to a DuPont worksite for a few months, then to our current locale.

We now see many old TI purchasers taking their consoles off the shelves and once again finding out about cassette interface cables, then just as rapidly wanting to know how and where to expand to a disk system. The how is easier in some ways, but where

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DVUG BEGINNING THIRD YEAR, WITH MORE BENEFITS (Cont'd. from Page 1)

to obtain the information or material is less visible. In February, we will publish a list of some of these resources, since local retail outlets are less available. While some TI 99/4A owners are moving to more powerful equipment, an earlier generation of TI hardware becomes avail-available again and is in strong demand.

User groups, their telephone bulletin board systems (e.g., our TIBBS), and their newsletters, plus some specialized publications have become the major source of assistance to TI (and other) family computer owners. Our January 24 meeting will decide the Delaware Valley Users Group leadership for 1985. Your attendance to express your preferences, and your $15 membership renewals to support our telephone hotline (328-6162), 24-hr. TIBBS (322-3999), this newsletter, library activities, publicity, and meeting programs are most essential to us.

In December, Bill Acquard provided comments and a demonstration on Super Extended Basic (SXB), a powerful series of advanced program routines in Assembly Language called from XBasic. Jim Joiner described an Epson "FingerPrint" printer attachment allowing convenient shifting between fonts and styles while running a program. Jack Shattuck displayed the Par-Fore XBasic golf game; 9 holes on tape, 18 on disk.

Also, for added convenience of members, Tom August noted a high-speed tape duplicator, which will be available at each meeting. C-30 (minute length) or lesser capacity are recommended; these are usually on sale at meetings. On another part of the user spectrum, DVUG is seeking to have inexpensive (i.e., $70-range) phone modems for sale as well. These bonuses will complement another surprise, the giving away of door prizes which began in December, as well.

Our TIBBS now funs faster and has File Transfer capability, to boot! If we don't have the program you want, call our TIBBS anyway; we have listed over three dozen TIBBS numbers from around the country — many with programs available for the cost of a phone call.

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COMPUTE! magazine has hit a slow point in TI programs, but continues the articles by Regena on program techniques, and an occasional informative Letter to the Editor or advice on the Beginner's Page. However, they continue to publish excellent soft-bound collections of programs and techniques, now numbering six for the TI 99/4A.

COMPUTER SHOPPER's Randy Holcomb, TI Assembly Language and component guru, gave high marks to DVUG member STEVE LAWLESS's "MASSCOPY" program (Version 3.1 was used at the December meeting). Holcomb's article in the February issue also noted that FREEWARE recipients were less than appreciative in tangible expressions of thanks to Steve for the time and effort he's invested in this much-sought item .

FAMILY COMPUTING, published by Scholastic, Inc. (producers of the Scholastic Spelling cartridges), listed the DVUG as one of three TI Users Groups in the country to which they suggested TI users looking for support might turn. Good spadework by some DVUG members.

HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE (HCM) announced its intent to publish 10 issues yearly, not 12 as originally advertised. Its predecessor, 99er Magazine, published 6 issues in Vol.1 (Nov.81 - Oct.82); 13 issues in Vol.2 (Nov. 82 - Nov.83); then began its current Vol.4 ["justified" by printing into a third year in Vol.2] in Feb.84, due to a costly delay during format change.

TECHNICAL BASICS: SAVING MEMORY, "PRK" BASIC, AND OTHER SUCH ITEMS ...

Having your disk drive on will take 534 bytes from your program RAM. Each open file which stays open (and TI Basic presets three files as open) means another 518 bytes lost opportunity for use. While each individually might not seem a lot, as you see, with no intervention on your part, 2K memory might be down the tubes before you start.

If you won't be using Terminal Emulator II as a speech maker, or accessing the RS232 capabilities, allow yourself more workroom by calling up only as many files as needed. In other words, command:

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> CALL FILES(1)   <ENTER>
> NEW             <ENTER>
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Then proceed to bring up or else save your program, having saved immediately 1036 bytes. If, in the middle of running a program, you've unexpectedly hit a ⌧MEMORY FULL⌧ message when you hadn't entered CALL FILES(1) at the start, SAVE the program then go back to run it after closing unneeded files.

Other ways of saving memory by good programming include combining PRINT commands, deleting REM lines, limiting DIMensions (use of Option Base 1 saves 8 bytes each array element), shortening variable names, using GOSUBS and DATA effectively, and carefully planning graphic and logic use.

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There are some features that Basic program writers wished they had available from Extended Basic (XBASIC), for ease and display of programming. Then again, there are some commands that Basic writers have available, but might not know about. Especially for some of our newer users, who are starting to use some of the primary cartridges (or Command Modules, as they used to be called), such as Personal Record Keeping (PRK). There are some features of the older cartridges and other equipment which don't appear in the manuals, but which are nice to know.

One of these is the CALL D command, which can be used when the PRK cartridge is inserted in the console slot (or in Navarone's "Widget" Cartridge Expander). Forget that PRK is there, and select TI Basic from the main screen menu. However, the PRK presence allows the user to display text anywhere on the screen, much like "Display At" in XBASIC, instead of having to witness printed text scroll up with every new line on screen. The line should read: CALL D(R,C,L,S$), with the following values set ahead of time:

R = Which of the 24 rows will hold the message
C = In which column will the printing start
L = What is the length of text (Note: Max. 28 not 32 chars.)
S$= Enclosed in quotes, e.g.,"Hi there!", is the message

If displaying a numerical value N, the command would be: CALL D(R,C,L,N); don't forget the reserved space for the positive or negative sign of N, or the space between words in a character string, when counting the length of the item to be displayed.

TECHNICAL BASICS (Cont'd.): LEGAL BASIC TAIL REMS, PRINTER CAPABILITIES

It's also possible in "PRK Basic" to accept input at specified locations, not merely the bottom of the screen. For character strings, use: CALL A(R,C,L,F,I$). Set L at 28 (maximum) if you leave the response open-ended; the F value is created by the computer from your Input (I$).

If you want to receive numerical input, use the formula: CALL A(R,C,L,F,N,MIN,MAX). You may assign any variable name (A,B,etc.) to the value N instead, for use in other commands. The MINimum and MAXimum value error check functions like "VALIDATE" in XBasic.

CAUTION: If you use these special CALL A routines, DON'T interrupt an input with FCTN <CLEAR>. If you do, the program will prevent you from exiting by a break - you must come to an END or STOP statement, or use FCTN <QUIT> (and, of course, thereby lose your program).

These unusual commands do provide some degree of capabilities of XBasic. Another desired feature is the REM remark (! in XBasic) at the end of a statement, saving the need for another program line for documentation. Leave "PRK Basic" now and return to regular console Basic. It's not completely true that you can't have a REM statement at the end of a Basic line. This is a legitimate statement:

    100 GOSUB 300 REM DRAW LINE

It works only because the line length is less than 28 characters. If you try listing it a few times, however, the peculiarity of Basic REM lines will move the text onto the next line. Better to list the program to the printer if you need that documentation. If you have a printer, you probably have XBasic anyway; just thought I'd mention this anomaly.

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Two printer routines frequently are sought by new users; how to identify individual characters available for use in programs, and how to extend the print line past 80 characters for elite or condensed type. First, to see what characters your printer holds, and their corresponding character numbers, CHR$(N), run this program:

    100 OPEN #1:"PIO"
    110 FOR N=32 TO 255
    120 PRINT #1:N;"=";CHR$(N);
    130 NEXT N

Then, if CHR$(233) is a heart, you can write:
PRINT #1:"I l";CHR$(233);"ve you" for a pretty effect.

To exceed 80 characters per line, simply expand the device access statement, e.g., OPEN #1:"PIO", VARIABLE 96 (for Elite, as opposed to the normal 80 column Pica default value).

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Our DVUG newsletter, The Data Bus, will be undergoing some revisions with a changeover to a new printer and a new Editor, as the latter does some reformatting and gains more familiarity with TI-WRITER commands. We need articles and programs, trying to meet this schedule: copy submitted by 1st week of month, edited in 2nd week, printed and mailed in 3rd week, in time for DVUG meeting on 4th Thursday each month. Contact new Editor JACK SHATTUCK, 2 Colony Boulevard, Apt.101, Wilmington DE 19802-1414, (302) 764-8619.

HOW TO ACQUIRE SOFTWARE FROM THE DVUG LIBRARY:

1. Join the DVUG = $15 annual membership.

2. Come to a meeting. A hard copy (printout) list of programs is available to consult. Items are listed by categories, such as Utilities, Games, Business,etc. Due to growing file size, we are still working on a way to make listings more convenient to all members, both tape and disk users.

3. Payment may be by cash ($1 per program, $5 per full DVUG Software Library disk — SS/SD), or in exchange at a rate of 3 programs to users for each submitted to the Library. Please respect any Software Committe requests regarding compliance with Copyright conventions, such as proof of ownership/subscription for copies of magazine programs.

4. Leave payment, tape or disk, and desired Program Name and Number, with your Name, Address, and Phone number, with a member of the Software Committee at the meeting; Chairman Charles Lightfoot, assisted by Barry Boland, Jack Shattuck, and Paul Wells.

5. If you have a modem and a credit with the Software Committee, after following necessary steps as indicated above, you may leave a message on TIBBS or call Charles Lightfoot, 328-6745, to arrange file transfer by phone before the next meeting. DVUG's TIBBS, 322-3999, will also have some programs available for downloading.

AND A WORD ABOUT OUR OTHER LIBRARY ...

Ed McBride has obtained many excellent paperback references for member reading on topics such as FORTH, LOGO, etc. Other Users Group Newsletters also were included in DVUG selections in the past. Please return these promptly so that others may share.

JAN. 24th PROGRAM TOPIC:

"STANDBY PLEASE, SORTING... "

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T THE DELAWARE VALLEY USERS' GROUP
T P.O.BOX 6240
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T WILMINGTON, DE 19804
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T   FIRST CLASS MAIL
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T   EDMONTON   USER'S GROUP
T   P.O. BOX 11983 EDMONTON
T   ALBERTA   CANADA T5J-3L1
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T NEXT DVUG MTG.: Thurs. Ja. 24th
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