

99/4 USERS OF AMERICA

5028 MERIT DR.

FLINT, MI 48506

1-313-736 3774

NOVEMBER 1983 NEWSLETTER

TARGET CHRISTMAS: BULLS EYE OR BULL TUCKEY?

The infamous rumor mill is grinding out tall tales faster than cheap nylons develop runs! One day market wizards smile and predict a glorious future for Atari and the same day Atari announces their fifth quarter in a row in the loss column! TI says that they are committed to supporting the 99/4A, but what does that mean? I don't have all of the right answers to solve the present puzzling mess, but I do have a few tidbits of material based on reliable sources.

Atari is losing money fast, and lots of it! Once upon a time they made their profit on the arcade games and machines, about 70% of their gross sales, and lost on the home computer. Today Atari is losing at everything; as games aren't selling and their former computers have all passed away. They are rushing to get the eight arcade modules for TI ready in time for Santa season, I just hope they don't include those marvelous low resolution block graphics! Remember Atari, we use the TMS9910A VDP and have the best resolution going!!! Having put blind folds on their QC people, Atari is also trying to produce their new fleet of home computers in time to load old Santa's sleigh up. If Atari blows it this time, well a few honks on the old bugle and farewell!

How about this new "thing" called Adam by Coleco? How stupid does a company think we human beings can be anyhow. You can't buy a "decent" letter quality printer for \$650, let alone their computer package! They are going to give us a 64K RAM console with a built-in word processing system and a letter quality printer and all for that incredible price. Many large dealers are having second, if not third, thoughts about placing orders for this ghost machine. Coleco has failed several times already to deliver the machines to distributors, but they keep insisting they are ready to go. I heard that they bought twenty thousand cheap printers to sell with their two hundred thousand computers. How can they sell packages that way? It must be a new marketing trick I haven't yet heard of! The reviews have taken a sharp downwards turn on Coleco, so take it for what it is worth. You get what you pay for friends and I hope you bear that in mind before you rush out and buy anything.

Then there is my favorite company from the United Kingdom, Commodore. They are suffering from a plague of bad C-64's, how about an out of box failure rate of over 50%! The company can't build consoles fast enough to replace the bad ones already sold, and this is making dealers very hostile. Here are the dealers with rooms full of defective C-64's and their capital tied into a knot. Litigation is being considered by many dealers to get Commodore to take back the bad units and and either replace the dealers bad stock or refund the dealer's investments. The

C-64 does do a nice job on games, but is a pain in the royal buns to program in their simplistic basic language. This machine has more bugs than a hot night in a Georgia swamp! Someone asked Commodore what they planned to do about their serious ROM problems and they replied that they might fix it some day! So much for British products and humor.

The sleeping giant has finally yawned and new products are hitting the market at a torid pace. New releases include: Moon Mine, Sneggit, Plato, and Logo #2. TI may be the only company in the home market that is going to be ready for December 25th.! They did announce in October that no new computers would be released for the remainder of this year, but that is no surprise. IBM is going to rip the shell off their new Peanut in November, and TI is wise enough to wait and see what is going on. Atari laid a rotten egg with their ET module, and TI smelled the scent of doom and cancelled their version. Perhaps TI is sitting on the 99/8 with chips poised to see what changes will have to be made to make the machine competitive.

I can tell you that the present peripherals-Peripheral Cabinet, Disk Controller Card, Internal Drive, Expansion RAM Card, and RS/232 are going to be buried as of December 31, 1983! The PAP4000 package is a clean way of unloading inventory and giving owners a good buy at the same time. Naturally this means an all new set of peripherals are going to be born for the TI family of computers. This is going to be the Hex-Bus peripherals, although surely TI plans some drives to go with this system! I've heard rumbles of twin 3.5 inch drives and at the worst double side 5.25 drives. Think of it this way; a cassette runs at 1900 baud, the Wafer Tape at 5000 baud, and a disk at 25000+ baud. Who wants a turtle with a limp when you can have a sleek cheetah!

TI has a new marketing genius they hired out of Procter and Gamble, maybe they are going to give away toothpaste next with the console! Only teasing, really. This gentleman is going to reshuffle the deck of marketing cards and make many long overdue changes. Unfortunately there will be some consumer casualties along the way. These are needed changes, but ones that may hurt some of us who already own a full blown system. Bite the bullet along with me troops, and let's take a wait and see philosophy. I just hope that TI realizes that if they continue to feed the mass merchandisers first and their distributors second, that the casualty may well be Texas Instruments!

MOON MINE: TRY TO HIT THE ZYGONAUT SCOUT!

This is the first bi-lingual arcade game that speaks both English and Spanish! It has very colorful bit map graphics and special effects that approach the three D look. You are tunneling into Luna in search of treasures stolen from the Earth by the nasty lunar inhabitants. Ten very rotten creatures attack your ship and your crew: Papillion, Zip Zap Bat, Moon Demon, Skull Man, Moon Ghost, Pegasus, Triped, Two Headed Hydra, Robynth, and the Moon Crab. They are only deadly when they turn black! One touch from them costs you a crew member, and you start with five.

-3-
NOVEMBER 1983 NEWSLETTER

The creatures start out very small and increase in size eight times as they rapidly approach you. You score 100 points for hitting them with your lasers in their smallest form and 30 points at their largest size. You must leave the USS Recovery to gather treasure and while in the tunnel you have a hand laser with only twelve rounds in it! You can't return to the USS Recovery unless you recover the treasure and destroy all monsters in the area! There are three types of treasure: silver, jade, and amethyst. If you do recover the treasure you receive 1000 bonus points.

You have four red cone shaped lasers on the four sides of your lunar craft. The vertical lasers have limited mobility and unlimited range and the horizontal lasers have unlimited mobility and limited range. They are water cooled and the more you use them they hotter they get! Hold the fire button too long and you destroy your ship! This gets more touchy as the difficulty of the game increases. When your water level gets low you may try to send a crew member out into the tunnel to get more water from a pool. The same rules apply here as with treasure, once into the tunnel you must succede or lose the crew member. If you do get the water you receive 2000 bonus points and the game continues. Only three of the creatures will attack when you are in the tunnel trying to recover a treasure or get water: Papillion will go after silver and water, the Zip Zap Bat after Jade, and the Moon Demon after the Amethyst.

The game can be played by one or two players and has sixty screens, or levels. The game gets progressively faster as you play, and at screen twenty-one the creatures require two hits to be destroyed, water becomes more scarce, and the creatures are extremely fast. If you get to screen forty-one it gets even worse! The creatures must be hit three times, water is rare, and the speed is mind blowing. Every level you achieve awards you with 2000 bonus points. You receive an extra crew member at 1000 points and every ten thousand there after.

It plays fast and is exciting. It has excellent speech, very detailed and highly colored animated graphics, and sensational sound effects. It isn't as difficult as Parsec, but it does have variety. For instance, you may play any level desired or start at level one. I rated it **** Excellent. Your price is \$31.95 and we do have them in stock.

PRINT-A-BIT: MAKES YOUR PRINTER AN ARTIST!

This assembler language program is by Data Force and is authored by Dominick Melfi. It works on all Epson and Epson compatible printers with graphics capability. It is interfaced to the Draw-A-Bit program and allows you to print out pictures in hard copy. Several picture print sizes are offered, as well as several dot density options. The screen shows you the picture and the printer copies the screen onto paper. It is fast, efficient, and an absolute must for anyone who is serious about graphics. Incidentally, you don't have to draw pictures with Draw-A-Bit, you could just as well create a ledger sheet or design blue prints for a house. All of it can be printed out with the Print-A-Bit program. I rated it ***** Outstanding. The retail price is \$24.95 and your cost on disk is \$19.95. We have them in stock!

A BENCH MARK TEST: SPEED ISN'T EVERYTHING!

Creative Computing ran a bench mark test in their October issue and it compared the execution speeds and accuracy ratios of many computers. They picked the TI CC-40 for their test unit and it didn't do too well in the rapidity department. I was frankly surprised when it turned in a time of five minutes and forty-nine seconds! We ran the same test in X/Basic on the TI 99/4A and got a time of four minutes and twenty nine seconds. Then we entered the program in console basic and blew all the times away with four minutes and three seconds! Yes friends, console basic is faster when it comes to mathematics than X/Basic or Enhanced Basic.

The best speed we got was still a snails pace when viewed against the faster computers, but wait a minute. How accurate were these speed demons? The TI computers all achieved an identical accuracy percentage of .00000011, and that ran away with the show! The program used generated one thousand random numbers between zero and one and then added them together. The answer would be two thousand. TI carries to ten decimal precision with no rounding off, and that is absolutely critical for all applications of an engineering nature. If we had used some of these faster computers to compute the trajectory to the Moon we would have been lucky to hit the fringes of Pluto!

```
Here is the program, try it for yourself. 10 RANDOMIZE 20 FOR N=1 TO 100
30 A=N 40 FOR I=1 TO 10 50 A=SQR(A) 60 R=INT(RND*1) 70 NEXT I 80 FOR I=1 TO 10
90 A=A^2 100 R=INT(RND*1) 110 NEXT I 120 S=S+A 130 Next N 140 PRINT ABS(1010-S/5);
ABS(1000/R)
```

SNEGGIT: A SNAKE BITE ON THE BUTT IS THE PITS!

Here is another new arcade game from TI and it is great for all ages. One or two can play this game and it has sixty glorious levels to romp through. Try to imagine that you are a chicken who is determined to save eggs from the vicious old snake. Brightly colored eggs are distributed all over the barnyard-careless hens obviously-and you must pick them up one at a time. The point values of the eggs are determined by their color and these values increase with the difficulty level. Here they are: red is 50, 100, 200; blue is 25, 50, 100; green is 15, 30, 60; purple is 10, 20, 40; and white is 5, 10, 20.

The game starts with one chicken and one snake on the novice level, but if you play the most difficult level-expert-you must contend with two snakes! To make life interesting for the chicken, obstacles occur that the snake can slither around but the chicken must avoid. Such things occur more often as the difficulty level moves from novice to advanced to expert. These obstacles include trees, weeds, rabbits, and rocks. The eggs are sometimes hard to see, for you, but the sneaky snake always knows where they are! You have to pick up an egg and carry it to one of three nests and "carefully" drop it in. Hit the fire button too hard and the egg will break! If you guard the egg long enough it will hatch into a chick and run off the screen to safety. A new egg of the same color will replace the one picked up. The snake

-5-
NOVEMBER 1983 NEWSLETTER

will not attack a nest that is being guarded! You receive points for picking up the egg-based on color-, putting the egg safely into the nest, and if the egg hatches into a chick. The snake will only bite the chicken when his, or her, back is turned, told you they were sneaky! The speed of the snake increases as the game screens progress.

The game ends when all of the eggs are either broken or hatched, or when you finally kill the last chicken off. You can get an extra chicken by placing sixteen eggs in a series of nests, as each nest can only hold eight eggs at one time. Put one too many in and it will fall out and shatter! It has sensational bit map graphics, super use of color, and downright realistic sound effects. The snake is so real it makes you quiver! Great fun and a sure challenge to all players of all ages. It has a very busy screen and you won't find yourself yawning between plays! Not and keep the rear of the chicken intact, that is! I rated it **** Excellent. Your price is \$31.50 and we do have them in stock.

PRINT USING: MORE SPACES FOR YOUR PLACES

First and foremost, I would like to credit Rick Rothstien of FFF Software for this clever undocumented tip. You may know that the TI 99/4A carries mathematical answers out to ten decimal places, but there is a way to get up to fourteen! This can be especially useful when it comes to heavy equations that demand such precision. The total places is fourteen, regardless of where you insert the decimal place. Here are a couple of examples of how it works: 10 CALL CLEAR 20 A=2 30 B=3 40 C=(A/B) 50 PRINT USING"#####":C The result should be .6666666667
20 CALL CLEAR 20 A=100000 30 B=11000000 40 C=(A*B) 50 DISPLAY AT(10,2): USING"#####":C The answer should be 10000000000000

Normally such large numbers would be transformed into exponential numbers; like 1.0 or $1E^{13}$. You may use either the PRINT USING or the DISPLAY USING to suit your needs or taste. This procedure will not operate in console basic, as it does not provide for a using clause. Remember, you may position the decimal anywhere you want it, but the maximum total of digits printed still will not exceed fourteen.

MILTON BRADLEY MEX EXPANDER BULLETIN!

Our first shipments of the MEX system are due in early November! Here are the final user member prices for the individual components: MEX Expansion Unit \$101, MEX Joystick \$28.50, and each module is \$49. Only three modules are expected prior to Christmas: Championship Baseball, I'm Hiding, and Terry Turtle's Adventures. We have plenty of each module on order already and are promised that our entire order will be delivered. If you want one of these MEX packages do not hesitate to place an order, as we expect first shipments to be sparse and the demand to be staggering. As usual, our advance pre-paid orders will receive priority! We promise a full review as soon as final tests are completed. It looks great!!!

TIDBITS FOR YOU TO BYTE ON

BUD SHAPIRO

After reading the article by Martin J. Biancalana, in the September issue, about "REAL" sub routines, I go on record that I agree with Martin whole heartedly. So I searched my Red Book and found a sub routine on my merge disk. I keep a file of merge routines on disk so I may use them as needed. I also keep a small note book with all the routines listed by the file name with which they were saved with a short description of their functions. Then when I want a certain routine I look in my handy dandy little Red Book (3 1/2x6) and type merge DSK1.12 and "VIOLA" there is the sub routine ready to go. This is the routine I am including in this article. It allows entries of numbers or any character you specify with out pressing enter and the numbers can be as high as 19. This is primarily used in programs that require entering numbers from 1 to 8 or 1 to 12, etc. or for characters "Y", "N", " " for "MORE Y/N?" or "PRESS BAR TO CONTINUE", etc. HERE IT IS IN X-BASIC:

```
5000 SUB KY(A,A$) :: FL,A=0 :: C=24 :: CH=12 :: CALL SOUND(175,1398,5)
5010 IF FL=1 THEN IF K>48+INT(CH/10) THEN 5070 :: A=K-48 :: FL=2
5020 C=C+1
5030 CALL KEY(0,K,S) :: IF S<>1 THEN 5030 :: A#=CHR$(K)
5040 IF A#="N" OR A#="Y" OR A#=" " THEN 5090
5050 IF K<48 AND K<>13 OR K>57 THEN 5030 :: GOTO 5080
5060 IF FL=2 THEN IF K=13 THEN K=48 ELSE A=A*10
5070 A=A+K-48 :: A=ABS(A) :: GOTO 5090
5080 CALL HCHAR(23,C,K) :: IF FL=2 THEN 5060 :: FL=1 :: GOTO 5010
5090 SUBEND
```

Go to this sub routine with: CALL KY(A,A\$) in main body after PRINT "PRESS BAR"; or PRINT "WHAT #"; or PRINT "MORE Y/N"; or PRINT "INSTRUCTIONS Y/N"; etc. The only time you need to press the ENTER KEY is for the number 1. No need to touch ENTER for any other input. However, you may avoid ENTER entirely, when using numbers, by pressing 01, 02 03 and so on till 10 then it is simply 11, 12, 13, up to 19. I have not had any need in programs to go higher than 19. The CALL HCHAR allows you to set the print where you want it by row # and column # (C). This sub routine must be the last lines in the program since it is a user defined SUB and SUBEND. Have fun, and I do hope you get good use of this routine. Next month we will discuss adding spaces in front of or after numbers to keep them in proper column order, and possibly throw in a couple of other routines as a CHRISTMAS SPECIAL. Till then, have a HAPPY THANKSGIVING..... BUD

THEON RAIDERS: THE DEEP SPACE LOOK AND DEPTH TOO!

This is a brand new release by Jerry 'Spacek' of Intersoft and is written in TMS9900 assembler. Two versions are available: the Mini-Memory version is on cassette and the Editor/Assembler version is on Diskette.

This is the first game I have seen with the true depth that makes the simulated three dimensions come alive! The moving star field is breath taking and gives the illusion of actual motion through space. This game doesn't just offer sensational special effects, but also a very complex game of strategy and hand/eye coordination. The upper left portion of the screen depicts a radar screen with you in the center and the Theon's circled about you. You are white where they are multi-colored. The five enemy blips do not mean just five ships however, there could be several at one physical location! You select a target and use your joystick to move towards the object. You may use the "9" key to speed your craft up or the "0" key to slow it down.

The velocity remains constant unless you alter it. Keep an eye on the display as space zooms by, the raiders come out with guns blazing! You will see a red wave of energy approaching you as you near a battle cruiser, so best hit it with a photon torpedo or move out of its path! The battle cruiser will show you no mercy at all, so either shoot it or be rammed! If you do get rammed the game is over!

The points you score are directly proportional to your velocity, that is, if your velocity is 25 then destroying an enemy energy wave nets you 25 points; where as hitting an enemy battle cruiser is always worth 1000 points. Everything you do requires energy, so you should use it wisely! Additional energy is gained by destroying an enemy energy wave or battle cruiser, as well as by moving to a higher screen play level. The upper right portion of the screen provides you with a constant readout of your velocity, compass position in degrees, energy level, and damage; although the latter is only used on the level three difficulty option. You also are shown the high game score.

You have the option of jumping into hyper-space, but must have a velocity of no less than 100 to do so! If you have not eliminated all of the Theon raiders when you leap it will cost you 1000 energy units. If the screen is cleared you can gain a bonus of 1000 energy units and advance to the next screen by leaping into hyper-space. You can also move so far away from the space station that you are guarding that you vanish from the radar screen! Because space is curved, you will reappear else where on the screen if you remain on the same course, an advantage for more skilled players to exploit. Incidentally, these raiders do not just sit around and hope for you to blunder into them, they are very aggressive and quite lethal!

The Mini-Memory version is joystick only and the Editor/Assembler version works with either joysticks or the console. The graphics are not elaborate, but the sense of depth and feeling of motion is more than enough compensation! The use of color is excellent, the play action is fantastic and fast, and the challenge of this game is unequalled by anything I have seen yet. It is an involved game that is lightning quick on level three and offers a super challenge to arcade lovers. Words do not convey the beauty and execution of this game, it must be played to be appreciated!!! Jerry spent a year working out the special effects, and it shows! I rated it ***** Outstanding. The Mini-Memory version is \$16.50 or 19.95 retail and the Editor/Assembler version is \$19.50 or 24.95 retail. We have both in stock! Our compliments to Jerry and Mary Spacek for this unbelievable game! TI should put this gem in a module!

ATARI MODULES FOR TI: HAS WARNER SLIPPED A DISK?

There is an old saying that "if you can't beat them, join them," and that is what Atari is doing with Texas Instruments. They plan to release five of their more popular arcade games this month for the TI 99/4A home computer. The titles are: Pac Man, Centipede, Dig Dug, Defender, and Donkey Kong. They will retail at \$44.95-I think that is too high personally-and your user cost will be \$33.50.

I am hoping that Atari took the time and effort to utilize the splendid graphic power of the awesome TI 9918A VDP chip. It would be almost criminal to shaft us with those low resolution block graphics and washed out colors the Atari 2600 is renown for. We will let you know how good they are, or are not, in December.

CLOSED CIRCUIT FOR MI MEMBERS!

There will be a change in the place of meeting for our November meeting only, so clean out your ears and pay attention! The meeting will be held on Sunday November 20, 1983 at 2:30 in my residence. PLEASE give us RSVP so that we can plan for adequate seating.

The primary focus of this meeting will be on the long range future of our MI group, regarding the new position of TI. It is your group and up to you to decide just what fate, or future, it is going to have! If you can't attend let us know by mail what your feelings are. If time permits, we will present a short demonstration of the new Logo #2 and Theon Raiders. We hope to see you there!

TI SOFTWARE CLOSEOUT SPECIALS!

The following items will be sold on a "first come-first served" basis, and no refunds or exchanges will be made. If a product should be factory defective, it can be replaced at your nearest TI Exchange Center at no cost. All orders must be cash or check, no credit and no COD orders will be allowed. We ask you to call us by telephone "prior" to sending in an order!!! We will hold your order on your word until the payment arrives.

The following modules are \$10 each, plus \$1.50 for shipping:

A-Maz-Ing, Blasto, Hustle, Tombstone City, Car Wars, Chisholm Trail, Securities Analysis, and Personal Real Estate.

The following modules are \$14.50 each, plus \$1.50 for shipping:

Alligator Mix, Alien Addition, Minus Mission, Dragon Mix, Meteor Multiplication, Demolition Division, Indoor Soccer, BlackJack and Poker, Zero Zap, Othello, Home Financial Decisions, Household Budget, Early Learning Fun, Beginning Grammar, Number Magic, and Video Graphs.

The following modules are \$19.50 each, plus \$1.50 for shipping:

Adventure, Tunnels Of Doom T, TI Invaders, Alpiner, Munch Man, Parsec, Personal Record Keeping, Statistics, Tax Investment Record Keeping, Terminal Emulator #2, Numeration #1, Numeration #2, Math Games #2,

-9-
NOVEMBER 1983 NEWSLETTER

Math Games #6, Milliken-Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division, Integers, Decimals, Fractions, Percent, Equations, and Measurement Formulas

The following modules are \$29.75 each, plus \$1.50 for shipping:
Addition/Subtraction #1, Addition/Subtraction #2, Multiplication #1, Division #1, Typing Tutor, Editor/Assembler, Early Reading, Reading On, Reading Fun, Reading Roundup, Reading Rally, Reading Flight, Scholastic Spelling-all grades, and Video Chess.

The following modules are \$23.50 each, plus \$1.50 shipping:
Moon Mine, Sneggit

The following modules final prices are as shown, plus \$1.50 for shipping:
X/Basic \$72.50, Mini-Memory \$74.50, TI Writer \$74.50, Micro Soft Multi Plan \$74.50

Other Items, plus \$1.50 for shipping:
TI PhoneModem \$74.50, TI Program Recorder \$38, TI Joysticks \$18, Single Cassette Cables \$11, CC-40 Computer \$175, Synthesizers \$74.50, Editor/Assembler Manual \$11, Standard RS/232 cables \$18, , Teach Yourself Basic T \$19, Beginners Basic Tutor T \$19, RS/232 Y Cables \$23

SENSATIONAL SOFTWARE SPECIALS!

Data Force: Draw-A-Bit and Print-A-Bit package \$57.50 (Epson or Epson-like printer required for Print-A-Bit)

Draw-A-Bit: \$42.50 Print-A-Bit \$18.50

Space Station #1, Kippy's Nightmare, Bang Bang Sub package \$60 (\$35 each seperately!)

Space Station #1: \$22.50 Kippy's Nightmare: \$22.50 Bang Bang Sub: \$22.50

All of the above require X/Basic and a disk system with 48K RAM and are in TMS 9900 assembler!

Intersoft: Galactic Gunfight or Meteor Storm or Mission Battlestar-your choice through December \$11 plus \$1 shipping!

Defend The Cities #2: MM version or ED/ASS. \$14 plus \$1 shipping!

Arthropod: \$20 plus \$1 shipping, retail of \$29.95! Assembler X/Basic or ED./ASS. versions!

Maple Leaf Micro Ware: Skydiver or Hang Glider Pilot-\$13.75 each plus \$1 for shipping!

A WORD OF WARNING!

The software listed above at the ridiculous prices is "quality" stuff friends, and it would be to your own personal benefit to purchase it. Why? If we don't support "good" authors, what will we do when they quit writing software? Buy junk and get angry perhaps! Now, more than ever, we had best let quality authors know that we want and need them, or write it ourselves. I urge you to support quality programs, avoid the cheap flashy trash, and keep authors like Larry Sabo, Charles Ehninger, Dominick Melfi, etc. in business.

TI PULLS THE PLUG ON THEIR HOME COMPUTERS!

I was just stuffing in the last tidbit of my supper when the AP news bulletin arrived. It was October 28, 1983 and Texas Instruments had just announced that they were withdrawing from the home computer market and closing down their production. However, TI did plan to continue normal operations of their business computer division and to produce the related software. I had dancing visions of very red \$ signs in my mind and a sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach. A few "choice" individuals were given advance notice before the fatal press release, but I wasn't one of them.

I am told that some of the people at TI learned about the extinction of their jobs while still at work from a radio broadcast! This is going to mean the loss of about four thousand jobs, or at best the relocation of most of those people. The following is a direct quote from the TI third quarter report sent to their stockholders. It is an official release by Mark Shepard and TI President J. Fred Bucy.

"Retail sales of home computers and software for the third quarter were disappointing. Inventories and retail remain high, limiting new orders and resulting in an operating loss for the quarter. With this situation continuing into October it became clear that fourth quarter demand would not be sufficient to prevent large additional losses."

"In order to limit further financial drain on TI, we have made the decision to withdraw from the consumer home computer business. New product development activity has ceased. Production of 99/4A hardware will stop in November, requiring significant personnel reductions in the consumer group. To clear present retail inventories, a price cut to dealers is being made, which will permit much lower prices to the consumer and the termination of the fifty dollar rebate program. TI will continue to provide service and support to the TI 99/4A home computer owners."

The current TI 99/4A carries a one year warranty and that will be honored. The TI Exchange Centers will continue to operate for an indefinite period of time, no less than eighteen months! I am told that this does not affect the TI CC-40 computer, as it is closer to the calculator division than to the home computer branch! I am also advised that the promised peripherals for the CC-40 will be manufactured and made available, and I presume that this means the Hex-Bus peripherals.

I have confirmed that production of hardware by TI has ceased and production of software will stop shortly. TI is going to attempt to fill about 85% of their distributor backorders for both hardware and software, no promises however! Software under licensed contract will be delivered; such as Control Data's Plato series. The definitive word is this; all products announced by TI officially will be marketed to the consumer. Take that for what it may, or may not, be worth!

I learned that delivery of the PAF4000 peripheral package was stalled in October due to a disk drive shortage by the supplier-namely Shugart of California. This caused TI to hold back roughly six thousand PAF4000 packages from the market place. Delivery is promised during both November and December, so a shortage should be prevented in time. I'll wait and see!

The retail price of the TI 99/4A console has been lowered to \$74, although most stores are selling it for \$49.95. Remember, no rebate after October 31st! The free speech synthesizer program is still operating until January 31, 1984 so send your requests in! I understand that TI has nearly one million consoles in their warehouses, so getting an extra one should not be any problem for you. I bought ten for myself, greedy ain't I! Not really, but it is cheap insurance to keep my four fully blown systems operating for a couple more years. I consider that being practical, not greedy.

There was also a reduction of a variety of modular software packages, and the listing is presented earlier in this newsletter. I did not notice any price reductions on the cassette or diskette software, and that struck me as unusual. All of the hardware items remained the same, with the exception of Wired Remote Controllers and the TI Program Recorder. Be careful when you go shopping at some of the large chain discount stores, as we have seen a lot of stock being sold that is at least one year old! TI is cleaning out their existing stock and who knows the true vintage, with my luck I would buy an X/Basic and get version 100!

I had heard through a variety of sources that such a move by TI might be made, but I would never have guessed the timing. Before Christmas? Well, it has done one thing for sure besides make two million+ of us angry. It has dealt a near fatal blow to Atari, Commodore, and Coleco. How? Following on the heels of the TI announcement IBM made official their new PC Jr. computers with retail prices of \$695 and \$1295. Availability is January of 1984. Think about this for a moment. TI destroys the market by dumping a million consoles into it before Christmas and IBM cleans house starting in January! Who can beat that duct? One TI spokesman told me that TI never dreamed that the home market was this deep. He laughed and said that TI could have sold at least 50% more if they had known it. Where have these people been hiding anyhow! I knew this, as did most of you who have been trying to find products to purchase. Availability of hardware has been poor for months and if TI had so much of it they should have shipped it out. You can't sell what you ain't got!

There are three possible ways that TI may now go, and "all" are pure speculation on my part. Please note the word "speculation!" First, they could dig a large hole in Dallas and push the 99/8 and Hex-Bus peripherals into it. This would be a dumb choice, but who can say. Second, they could sell the manufacturing rights to outside companies to produce the 99/4 and 99/8 and the related hardware. They could also release the license on their modular software to outside manufacturers and third party vendors. Naturally, TI could recover a reasonable amount of their research and development monies by doing this, as well as sell components to the new owners! TI always has had the best engineers in the industry, but their marketing style is comparable to the rationality expressed by a dog in heat!

Finally, TI could play a waiting game and watch the competition dry up and go into receivership; ie Atari with over a five hundred million dollar loss so far this year. TI would have a computer base laid down of about three million consoles to work off from next year. They could step back in after IBM is done selling orders for their new PC Jr.-maximum production for IBM is only 800,000 per year. With the other home computers now only a sad memory, TI could waltz back in with a fancy new supped up 99/8 and have a market unto it's corporate self! Just TI and IBM left, how cozy!!!

NOVEMBER 1983 NEWSLETTER

I have been told by one TI person that there are 250,000 sparkling new 99/8 computers already waiting in a warehouse. I wonder just what TI plans to do with them? It seems foolish to dig a pit and push them in, although I am sure some of the TI stockholders are just about that bright! I suppose that I should qualify that remark a little, as it was rather sarcastic. J. Fred Bucy wasn't the man who pulled our plug and left us adrift with no life boat. He moved his own residence to Lubbock for two months in a desperate effort to solve the mess others had created. The heavy handed stock holders, primarily those heavy rollers with lots of shares, forced TI to unload the home computer. Want to wager that TI turns a healthy profit on the home computer in the fourth quarter? Monday October 31, 1983 the stock market reacted to the news that TI had bailed out of the home computer market by rising over twenty-six points! This was the 1:00 EST figure and it continued to rise during the week. So don't send Mr. Bucy too much nasty mail, as I believe that he truly does care about us and did his best for us. It wasn't his final decision, but that of those who control the companies monetary resources.

The 99/4 Users Of America will continue to operate for the present time. It will be necessary to alter our services somewhat, as we can no longer divert money from the sale of hardware and software into the operation. To put it simply, the twenty dollar membership fee will not support us without help from other methods of funding. We would appreciate your thoughts on the subject, so write us or call us with suggestions. We can't depend on TI to help us, so it comes down to the two large groups: Oklahoma and Michigan. If these two groups fail, well... All that will be left is a bad smell in the air for TI home computer owners.

I want to make one final comment on the subject, and this one is definately personal. I was hurt and very offended that nobody at Texas Instruments bothered to contact me prior to the AP press release. It is more a matter of courtesy than anything else. I have devoted four years to the promotion and support of Texas Instruments and I don't think that it would have hurt them to take a moment to do me the courtesy of a few minutes prior notice. Perhaps I am asking too much from a corporation the magnitude of TI. Does TI really care? I think that certain people within the corporate structure do, but the overall picture being displayed to the world is "NO." I know that the move was relatively fast, as no dealers or distrubtors were given the normal advance notification. Such as when TI closed down their watch division a few years ago. It is a fine computer-"CONSUMER REPORT" be darned-and one that deserves a far better fate than it received. A close friend of mine, Carl Casper, once told me. "Duane, you can take a brick and promote it right and people will fight to buy one. On the other hand, you can take the best product in the world and promote it wrong and nobody will come to see it." How right he was! I have said many times, that the only security in life is insecurity, and perhaps I was closer to the heart of the truth than I realized.

A POND FAREWELL TO FRIENDS

I just want to say "THANKS" to all of my many fine friends who worked for TI in various positions and places. In particular Pam, Michael, Larry, Tom, John, Gary, and Fred. I shall miss each one of you, but you won't be forgotten! Words can't express what I feel for each of you, as we have shared joy and sorrow in different ways for many years. Let it suffice to say, that each of you are simple great and May the Good Lord bless and keep each of you always.

LOGO #2: TEACH YOUR TURTLE A TUNE!

It took over one year of impatient waiting, but Logo #2 is finally out and is shipping in small quantities. The instructional manual is well thought out and is primarily aimed at teachers, as opposed to children. The three primary new features are: double the memory, double sized sprites, and music generation capability. The module is enclosed in an attractive software album and includes both a cassette tape and a diskette of demonstration programs. Remember, Logo #2 does require the Memory Expansion Card-32K! A disk system is optional, as is a printer and RS/232 Interface.

The new Logo #2 contains many new and exciting procedures and over thirty-six new program commands! You can now tell your turtle to draw a square without having to input eight commands! Just tell it to: REPEAT 4 (FORWARD 20 RIGHT 90) The square appears almost instantly! I was able to draw many fancy geometric shapes, including a nearly perfect circle. The drawing power is spectacular, but I still ran out of ink memory very quickly. I must question the double memory specification.

Lots of new things are possible with Logo #2; such as the ability to double a sprite from 16 X 16 by inputting "BIG", and the sprite is now 32 X 32! It can be reversed by inputting "small." Perhaps you would like to reverse the order of a word or list. The "REVERSE" command does just this, for instance, "cat" would become "tac." It can also do Pig Latin, for what this is worth!

Here is a very short list of some of the new commands: Length-if input is a word, then output is a number equal to the length of the characters; Contents-outputs a list of all words being used in the current work space; Debug-permits a pause in the program instead of a crash when an error is found; Drum-allows the beat of a drum to be programmed into a program; Member?-takes a word and checks to see if it is a member of a specified list or not; Printout-permits text output of program lines to either a Thermal Printer or an RS/232 device.

The music section does require some degree of skill and much practice, but it is impressive. Musical notes can be from zero upwards and from -1 downwards. Here is an example: MUSIC (0240) (4444) This instructs the program to play four notes-0 is middle C- and each has a duration of a quarter note. Unlike the CALL SOUND command, you do not indicate duration in milliseconds, but in note lengths; such as a half note, quarter note, etc. You may indicate the volume and you may also use three voices at once. Each note is stored in the memory for recall later on by the PLAYMUSIC command. It is also possible to intermix music with text.

You might be interested in knowing why it took so long to hit the market. The original version did not provide for both the Hex-Bus interface and the RS/232 Interface for printer outputs. When it was altered to permit either device to be used, some unsuspected bugs appeared. The program is written in LISP and it is a threaded language. Hence, the error roots run throughout the program and are almost impossible to remove. TI did a total rewrite on Logo #2 in about one year. Compare this to the four years it took to just write Logo #1! I commend TI for not releasing it with bugs, as shifty software we do not need more of!

It is an excellent program and I highly urge you to own a copy, as it isn't just for children! Your user cost is \$80.

TWENTY-ONE NEW MODULE TITLES TO TEMPT YOUR WALLET!

Texas Instruments is presently shipping some of the following new module software titles, and the rest are scheduled to ship prior to Christmas. We have not seen most of these yet, but urge you to grab them while you can! We ordered a limited quantity and when they are gone we will have no more! If you wait for reviews on most of these it will be too late to purchase them!

The titles are as follows: Munchmobile PHM3146, Space Bandit PHM3149, Sewer Mania PHM3150, Big Foot PHM3151, Meteor Belt PHM3152, Super Fly PHM3153, Honey Hunt PHM3156, Soundtrack Trolley PHM3157, Mash PHM3158, Treasure Island PHM3168, Face Maker PHM3177, Story Machine PHM3178, Pirate's Island PHM3189, Jaw Breaker PHM3194, Slymoids PHM3197, Crossfire PHM3208, Demon Attack PHM3209, Microsurgeon PHM3220, Moonsweeper PHM3224, Startrek PHM3225, Hopper PHM3229, and Burger Time PHM3233.

Their suggested retail price is \$29.95 and your user cost is \$23 plus \$1.50 for shipping. These are Third Party licensed software modules and should be of a high quality. We have Mash and Slymoids; in stock now and are waiting for the others to arrive. Bear in mind that quantities are going to be limited, so don't wait too long to order yours!

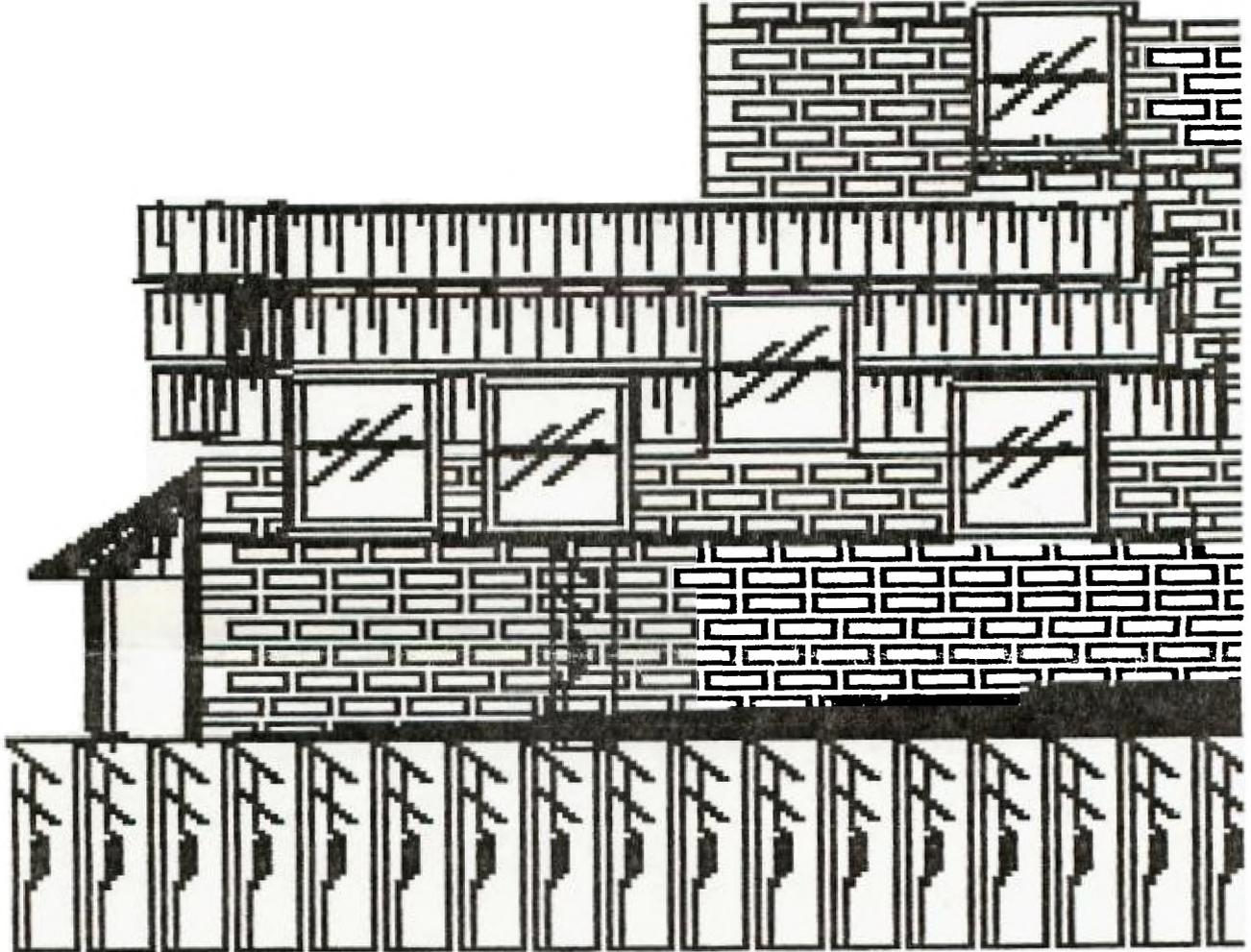
DEMON DRIVER: DON'T BUY IT!

This is a new module release by Funware for the TI 99/4A and it has a serious problem. I have been advised that the thickness of the circuit board is too great to fit properly into the GROM port. It requires excessive pressure to insert the module, and even more to get it out! This forcing of a module can very easily damage your GROM connector, so don't do it!!! We have no idea how many of these faulty modules were built or distributed, so if you have one return it to the manufacturer. Don't force it into your console!!! We will advise you when the problem has been corrected. We are confident that this accident was not planned by Funware, as their products are normally very good.

USED PRODUCTS FOR SALE

- FOR TRADE: Milliken Fractional Numbers and Statistics for one Touch Typing Tutor. Phone 313-756 3395
- FOR SALE: TI Thermal Printer in excellent condition, with 5 rolls of paper. \$150 Contact the Users Group.
- FOR SALE: RS/232 Stand Alone Interface. excellent condition with the manual \$100 Contact the Users Group
- FOR SALE: Disk Controller Stand Alone with manual, excellent condition \$75 Contact the User Group
- FOR SALE: TI CC-40 Compact Computer, three months old in factory condition. Full instructions and three software module packages. Software alone sells for \$180! Total package for \$290. Contact the Users Group.

If you have something that you would like to sell, or trade, drop us a letter and we will be glad to print it for you. Please specify if the interested party should contact you directly or go through us! We accept no responsibility for equipment shown here, as the owner is liable for the condition he, or she, states that it is in.



This is a picture done with the Draw-A-Bit program and printed out via the Print-A-Bit program. It was done on the TI Impact Printer, which is really an Epson MX-80 running eight data bits at 9600 baud.

HAPPY COMPUTING!

DUANE E. FISCHER, PRESIDENT

99/4 USERS OF AMERICA
DUANE B. FISCHER, PRESIDENT
5028 MERIT DR.
FLINT, MI 48506



EDMONTON USERS GROUP
P.O. BOX 11983
EDMONTON,
ALBERTA CANADA T5J 3L1