

HUG

NOVEMBER

1987

HOUSTON USERS' GROUP
[FOR THE TI-994A & COMPATIBLES]

MEETING SCHEDULE

FIRST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

(2nd Sunday if 1st Sunday

is on a holiday weekend)

HUG TIBBS - (713) 475-8909
24-hour BULLETIN BOARD

AT THE NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1987 - 2 P.M.

St. John's School - 2401 Claremont

There's a SWAP MEET planned for the November meeting folks! So put on your grubbies, pack up all of that software n' equipment you have that hasn't seen the light of day since, er, you can't remember when and haul it on down for sellin'-n-tradin'. Be sure not to miss it 'cause they'll be lot's to see.

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HUG Classifieds Meeting & Member Info
Editors SoaPEBox Vendors Holiday Sales

1987 HUG OFFICERS

President --- LARRY PIPKIN .. 499-9991	Exec. Asst. - TOM JAY 850-0222
Membership/VP BOB McCARTHY .. 955-7939	Soft. Libr. - LARRY PIPKIN .. 499-9991
Program/VP -- BOB FLOYD 455-1467	Nwsltr. Libr. KIM PETERSON .. 498-3047
S.I.G./VP --- EWELL BRIGHAM . 422-8616	Cart. Libr. - TO BE POSTED .. 555-1234
Secretary --- TERRY LeFEVRE . 660-8776	Treasurer --- RUTH HERMAN ... 271-4171
BBS/SysOp --- BILL KNECHT ... 473-5713	Editor ----- KIM PETERSON .. 498-3047

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EQUIPMENT LIST UPDATE

The question and answer sessions, held at the monthly meetings, have provided an excellent arena for the exchange of valuable software and hardware information on our 99/4A's. However, most problems don't usually crop up the day "before" the monthly meeting, (more likely the day "after", as past experience has shown). In the past, it has always been very helpful to know which fellow member has equipment similar to our own, that might be able to provide help in time of need. Fortunately this has worked out very well as we've got quite a few knowledgeable folks who are always glad to help out a fellow member. It has been some time since we had a updated member equipment list, so I've compiled a new questionnaire from those I've seen used in other groups throughout the country.

PLEASE take a brief moment of what I know is your valuable time to detach the questionnaire from the newsletter, fill it out and place it in the mail. A second option is to bring it to the next meeting and give it to an Officer, (however, that doesn't mean to give it to Bill Rister - grin). A final list will be published shortly after the holiday season.

TAKE NOTE: Results of the questionnaire will be provided freely ONLY to those who have submitted a questionnaire of their own! So, if you think you'd be interested in having a resource list like this one be SURE to fill one out. With the advent of the Myarc 9640 (Geneve) and the increasing availability of used equipment a list of this type should be of great value.

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Houston Users Group
c/o Kim Peterson
13107 Bafing
Houston, Texas 77099

HOUSTON USERS GROUP - QUESTIONNAIRE

Member's Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____
Work Phone: (____) _____
Best time to call: _____

Date: _____

Where did you hear about our user group? [] Friend [] Newspaper [] Bulletin Board
[] Dealer [] Other: _____

Do you use your TI-99/4A: [] Daily? [] Weekly? - Average time per session: _____

Please check the particular areas of interest below that you would be interested in either seeing at the meetings and/or pursuing with the help of the club:

HARDWARE

SOFTWARE

- [] Modifying your Existing Hardware -
[] 32k in console, [] Speech in console -
[] Demo's of new hardware: _____
[] Demo's of Original hardware _____
[] How to repair your system components -

- [] Demo's of new programs: _____
[] Demo's of older programs: _____
[] How to use TI-Writer/Multiplan -
[] How to modify existing software -
[] Learning new programming languages _____

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

MEETINGS

- [] How to access "HUG-TIBBS" BBS - (BBS: Bulletin Board System)
[] How to set up your own system for BBS access -
[] Would you like to see demo's of Database services?
[] yes [] no
[] Do you belong to any other Time Sharing System?
[] GENie? [] CompuServe? [] The Source
[] Delphi? [] Other: _____

- [] What would you like to see MOST at the monthly meetings? Please be specific: _____
[] Would you offer to help at meetings with a topic you know well? If yes, list topics: _____

Please indicate which of the following hardware/software that you have:

- [] 99/4a console [] Peripheral Expansion Box [] Extended Basic [] Wordprocessor
[] Joysticks [] Speech Synthesizer [] TI [] TI-Writer
[] B/W monitor [] Disk Controller Card? [] Other: _____ [] Funnel-Writer
[] Color monitor [] TI [] CorComp [] Myarc [] Mini-Memory [] Other: _____
[] Cassette [] Disk Drives: [] Editor Assembler [] Spreadsheet
[] GRAM Kraker Quantity: _____ [] Term. Emulator II [] Multiplan
[] P-Code Card Type: (ie SS/SD) _____ [] Logo I or II [] Other: _____
[] Printer: [] Hard Disk: Size: ___ MB [] Plato [] Data Base Mgmt
[] TI [] Epson [] 32k Memory Card [] Pascal [] Type _____
[] Gemini [] Star [] 128k " " [] UCSD [] Business Soft.
[] Axiom [] Oki [] 256k " " [] Other: _____ [] TI-Count
[] Other: _____ [] 512k " " [] TI-Pilot [] Futura
[] MBX Expansion System [] Horizon RAMdisk [] Forth [] Other: _____
[] 9900 Expansion " [] 80 Column Card [] c-99 [] Graphics
[] Modem: [] Acoustic [] Smart Modem [] Adventure Games [] GRAPHX
[] 300 baud [] Direct Connect [] Homemade [] Educational Soft. [] TI-Artist
[] Hexbus Adaptor [] "Side port" equipment [] Utility Software [] Printers Apprentice
[] Myarc Geneve [] Triton Turbo PC [] Other Category: _____

- [] Other TI Equipment Owned: _____
[] Future TI Items you plan to purchase: _____
[] Other Computers Owned: _____

Please indicate a committee you would be willing to assist:

- [] Program Committee [] Special Interest Groups [] Software Library [] HUG Newsletter
[] Newsletter Library [] Membership Committee [] Cartridge Library [] Equipment Committee
[] Publicity Committee [] Other (That we haven't thought of) _____

Additional comments or suggestions: _____

Please return this form to an Officer at the NEXT HUG meeting; or mail to:

Houston Users Group, c/o Kim Peterson, 13107 Bafing, Houston, Texas 77099-2244

ANNOUNCEMENT - The November meeting will be held on the **SECOND** Sunday, the 8th of November. The facilities at St. John will not be available for our regularly scheduled time. However, be sure to attend as we will have our big annual "Swap Meet" and just in time for Christmas too. Gather up all the loose hardware you have laying around gathering dust, those cartridges and accessories that were so valuable way back when, but now seem out of place. Bring 'em on down and make a REAL deal. Remember, this ain't the early 80's, so make the items priced to SELL. After all, you don't wanna hafta haul 'em back home and put 'em back in the closet do you?

MONTHLY MEETINGS - The last couple of meetings, primarily Question & Answer (Q&A) jam sessions, have turned out remarkably well. A whole bunch of software and hardware questions were brought up with an equal number of answers, (helpful suggestions for those questions of the "twilight zone" variety). They were very productive sessions indeed. HUG-TIBBS, the groups BBS, received many positive comments on the Q&A format along with requests for additional time at future meetings. Hereafter, we'll try to run a tighter agenda to allow more time for Q&A's, something along these lines:

Time (PM)	Length (min.)	Agenda (* variable length)
----	-----	-----
2:00	15	HUG Business, Old & New
2:15	*45	Formal Programme
3:00	*60	Question & Answer Session
4:00	-	"Vamonos a Casa!" (ie. git'on home)

(In case you're wondering why I used the word "programme", some of the groups Single-Sided/Quad Density members think of "programming" when discussing the Formal Programme. While sometimes that may be the case, when the subject IS programing of one kind or other, it is not always necessarily so. Therefore I resort to the import, (one can hardly get away from them now-a-days!). If anyone has any comments or suggestions on the subject, I'd be glad to hear them - which brings up another matter....

MEMBER INPUT - For those of you with comments and suggestions, and those of you who don't, I would like to encourage you to fill out the attached questionnaire. In addition to enabling the compilation of a member software/hardware resource list, it will aid the HUG officers in their plans for future meetings. **THEY CAN'T GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT IF YOU DON'T TELL THEM.** It will also indicate which individuals would be willing to assist in the running of the group and those of particular expertise. Remember, this is YOUR user group - you're only going to get out what YOU are willing to put in. As they say, "speak up, or forever hold your peace"....

NOVEL IDEA - Here's a something that's making the rounds of the other users groups - Cartridge Software libraries. Individuals that have either grown tired of their software in cartridge (ie, "TI type Module") or own multiple units of the same, have been donating them to their users groups. The groups have been setting up libraries, such as the public domain software or newsletter libraries, and allow members to checked out a cartridge for month. It sounds like a good way to check out whether that game you-just-can't-live-without is REALLY what you wanted or not. This would especpecially benefit our newer members whom haven't quite built up to the level as most of us. They would have a chance to try a program out before they fork out their cash. (By the way, do you remember what you paid for your FIRST cartridge? - YIKES! - Yeah, me too.) Another good benefit, is that it would give the Program V.P. something to build a programme around for those lean months when nary a topic abounds. I've got a spare Pac-Man along with an extra TI-Writer that I wouldn't mind donating to HUG if we can get someone (do I hear any takers) to keep it all organized and come to the meetings each month. Check out those dusty file cabinets of yours and see what you may have. Maybe some of the folks at the Swap meet will donate some carts they are unable to unload. It's a great idea and has a LOT of merit. Ponder on it a while.....

BACK TO THE FUTURE - Over the span of the past year, the newsletter has inadvertantly gotten away from the original format that has made it of value to ALL members. HUG has a tad over 100 members (104 at last count), however slightly under half that number of heads are seen at the monthly meetings. It seems like a large percentage of the membership is not readily benefitting from the monthly meetings, but OUGHT to. (We have quite a few out of town members that rarely have the chance to come to our meetings.) Therefore, I'm going to try to "plug up that hole", so to speak. I'm going to lean on some of our officers, a bit, to help provide some of Past, Present and Future info each month so that everyone will benefit from the newsletter. I'm shootin' for an interesting recap of the monthly meetings for those absent, a head count and ovation for new and renewing members, a short blurb from accounting letting us know the condition of the ship, some ideas from on where we ought to be heading and some scheduling of upcoming HUG events in the near and distant future. I think this sort of info would be of interest to all.

FINAL NOTE - Don't forget to bring your graphic/text advertiser to the November meeting for the final awarding of "BEST HUG ADVERTISEMENT". You ..DID.. design one didn't you? I mean somebodys gonna walk away with close to a HALF MILE of computer paper and it might as well be YOU, right? (For those of you who have been out in the rain and have no-earthly-idea of what I'm talking about, check last months newsletter. Yeah, its the one labled October 1987!) To the rest of you GOOD LUCK!

CHRISTMAS SONGS

Fairware Music Programs by Bill Knecht
Review by Kim Peterson - Houston Users Group - November 1987

O! Bill Knecht has gone and done it again folks! Yep, he's laid his magic touch on a new disk chock full of Christmas holiday music with graphics that he's renown for. Bill's Christmas compendium was released mid September at the Seattle TI-fest and went over real well with the nor'westers. This disk joins a whole slew of musical renditions previously released by Bill such as: 1) Best Songs I, 2) Best Hyans, and 3) Best Songs II. Bill has a unique gift, of not only being able to program music for our 99/4As in multiple harmonies but also an artistic talent with graphics. Combine the two and you've really got something, as many throughout the 99/4a world know.

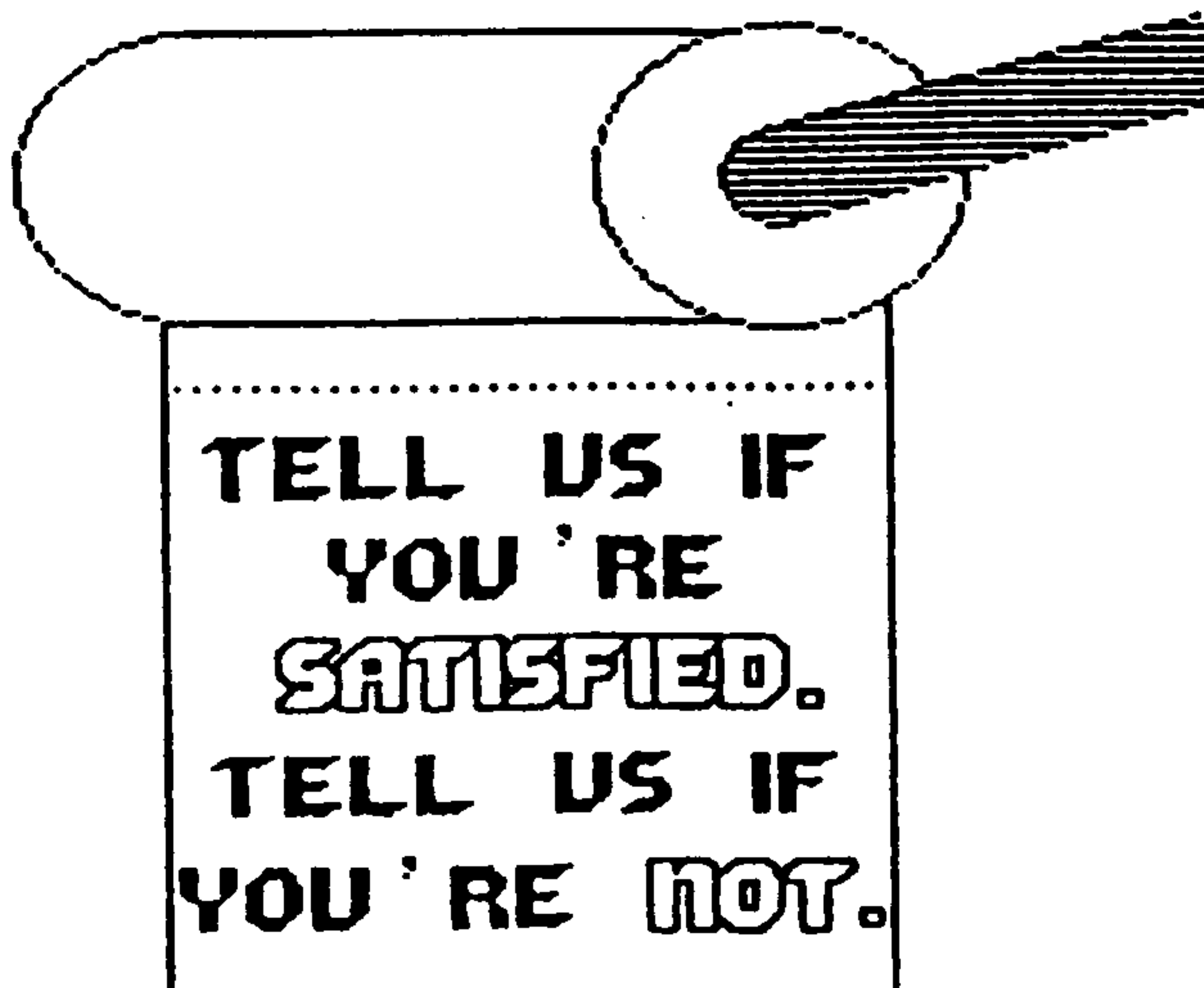
While I try not to push the holiday spirit at our house too soon, I couldn't help but to try out the songs when I got the disk. Quite a few of the songs have lyrics so I joined in with the melodies, (like one does when one thinks one's alone - and YES, I do sing in the shower!). My 5-year old indian brave came in, while I was giving my concert, and his eyes began to sparkled with excitement. Although he couldn't read the the words, he remembered some of the lyrics he learned in years past, and joined in on some of the choruses. One particular "vocal" one was the chorus of "We Wish You A Merry Christmas". In the "Drummer Boy" song he even brought out his toy drum and drummed to both the music and the graphics on the screen. These were choice moments indeed! I hoping to have many more of these before the years out. Well, enough flowers already, onto Christmas Songs.

Christmas Songs runs in Extended Basic and contains an auto-loader which brings one right up to the main title screen. The title screen plays a short rendition of the "Caroling, Caroling" chorus, while colorful bells ring back and forth along the top and bottom of the screen. Shortly thereafter, one is led into a menu selection screen which lists 14 music titles from which to select, using alpha keys "A" through "N". The available selections on this disk are as follows:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Angels We Have Heard ... | 6. Santa Claus Is Comin' | 11. O' Holy Night |
| 2. Let It Snow | 7. Good King Wenceslaus | 12. Little Drummer Boy |
| 3. Caroling, Caroling | 8. Hark The Herald Angels ... | 13. O' Christmas Tree |
| 4. Deck The Halls | 9. We Wish You A Merry Christmas | 14. Sleigh Ride |
| 5. O' Come All Ye Faithful | 10. Jingle Bell Rock | |

After selecting the melody of ones choice, the program loads the selection and runs it. At the end of the melody, the title screen returns, followed the menu selection screen. A nice redo option was included in the program. If one desires to hear the melody again, just press the space bar at the end of the song. Returning to the title screen following each melody, prior to the selection menu, is a nice touch. The short little jingle is catchy and lingers long after the medley is over.

Now obviously I'm a tad partial to Bill's programming efforts. You would be too, if you knew him and his talented work. Notwithstanding this bit of favoritism, Christmas Songs REALLY is a some nice programming that you most certainly will enjoy - especially the kids. Being a fairware product, Christmas Songs, may be obtained by sending \$5 (a real bargain if I may say so) to: Bill Knecht, 815 Yorkshire, Pasadena, Texas, 77503.



MSAVE EVERYTHING IN SIGHT!
(With the MECHATRONIC XBII+)

Henri J. Schlereth - Houston User Group - November 1987

I like EXTENDED BASIC, it is a very powerful BASIC, written by MICROSOFT to TEXAS INSTRUMENTS specifications. But, powerful doesn't always mean fast and since our BASIC is double-interpreted it also is one of the slowest BASICS around, however we now have an extension to this language in the form of the MECHATRONIC XBII+ that provides a way to speed things up.

I use assembly language sub-routines written by others and myself to push and prod more use out of XBASIC. However, the assembly language LOADER for XBASIC is also very slow and quit limited.

The XBII+ with its MSAVE/MLOAD commands will allow you to save the LOW-MEMORY portion of your 32K EXPANSON MEMORY, the same segment that holds all ASM-subroutines that help XBASIC along. MSAVE creates 34 sector Mirror Image files of the lower 8K that can be reloaded in 5 seconds flat. This includes almost anything that you could think of to store in 8K blocks.

(My second article will deal with use MSAVE/MLOAD and the MOVE command to do away with 99% of imbedded DISPLAY AT commands and the resulting program space savings.)

MLOAD can reload these programs in 5 seconds from a running XBII+ program as your program needs them without doing one CALL INIT. Simply because the CALL INIT is saved along with the assembly programs. I frequently stuff the 8K segment with as many routines as will fit, MSAVE them and use them in packets.

The MLOAD feature also allows you to run E/A 5 PROGRAMS as if using the E/A- CARTRIDGE or UTIL1 files from TI-WRITER.

NAME	AUTHOR(S)	NORMAL LOADING TIME
XMDBBS	(PAUL CHARLTON)	.25
DUMPIX	(DANNY MICHAEL)	1.35
NEATLIST	(DANNY MICHAEL)	.19
TEXT-TO-SPEECH (TI)		1.37
TTS WITH DATABASE (TI)		1.51
SBUG V1	(TI/NAVARONE)	1.45
TKMF400	(TOM KNIGHT)	1.00
SIIPCLKSUP	(MONTY SCHMIDT)	.30
CATALOG	(TOD KAPLAN)	.39
SWAP	(H.J.SCHLERETH)	.08

These times were arrived at using a stopwatch and are not 100% accurate. However, the MLOAD speed of 5 seconds per 8K segment is 100%! These are just a few of the long loaders that I had available for testing, I am sure there are more.

E/A 5 PROGRAMS MLOADED	AUTHOR
TI TRACK COPIER	(MICHAEL A. BALLMAN)
SBUG II V2.0	(E.L.DOHMANN/EMELL BRIGHAM)
DISK MASTER	(TOD KAPLAN)
DM1000 (M6R1)	(BRUCE CARON)
C99C/D/E	(CLINT PULLEY)
RAGASH/N	(R.A.GREEN)
PRBASE	(WILLIAM M. WARREN)

NOTE: THAT SINCE THESE FILES WERE NOT DESIGNED FOR AN EXTENDED BASIC ENVIRONMENT AND UNLESS YOU WISH TO DESIGN PATCHES TO CORRECT THIS DEFICIENCY THE COMPUTER WILL LOCK UP ON EXIT OR RESET TO THE TITLE SCREEN. THAT IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T USE RE-ENTRANT CODE.

There were a few draw backs to owning one of these modules but nothing that wasn't overcome, and not one that seriously hindered me in deciding to get one.

1. IT GETS VERY HOT. I USE A WIDGET AND IT STILL GETS HOT. BUT MY OLD XB MODULE GOT LESS HOT AND LOCKED UP ON ME. XBII+ HAS BUT NOT AS OFTEN.

2. YOU CANT SELECT ANOTHER MODULE FROM THE WIDGET AS YOU NORMALLY CAN. WITH PROGRAMS LIKE FUNNEL WRITE THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM ANYMORE. SO ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, I AM ALL FOR THE MECHATRONIC XBII+, EVEN THOUGH I CANT FIND VERY MANY USES FOR THE GREAT GRAPHICS COMMANDS. MAYBE ONE DAY I WILL LEARN.

BEST OF THE BOARDS

Those of you who don't access the two GREAT 99/4A boards we have here in Houston, HUG-TIBBS (713-537-0741) and The Phoenix (713-475-8909) on a regular basis are REALLY missing out. There's a veritable TON of valuable information that passes through these boards regularly. Take advantage of both SysOps hospitality, BUT remember it's always better to give than to receive.

HUG-TIBBS - TE-II Download Files

LOAD/MT - MASS TRANSFER Ver 4.2
 MASS - *****
 MAST - includes X-Modem feature,
 PHONEMAKE - auto-dialer, and more!
 MASSDOCS1 -
 MASSDOCS2 - (Fairware)
 MT/42/DOC - \$10.00 to Stu Olson

LOAD - FAST-TERM V1.16
 FAST-LOAD - *****
 CHARA1 - Great!
 DEFAULT - Terminal Emulator for
 UTIL1 - X-Modem and TE2 up/downloads
 UTIL2 -
 FT116DOC - (Fairware)
 KEYS/DOC - \$15.00 to Paul Charlton.

HUG-TIBBS - X-Modem Download Files

CATLIB/1 - Cataloging Library program
 CATLIB/2 - V 1.5.0 (Fairware)
 CLK/ARC - 12/24 hour clock.
 CRIBBAGE - Cribbage card game
 DISASMB - Disassembler program
 EFONT - Enhanced text display prog.
 EFONTDOC - " " " docs.
 ELE/BANK - Electronics Data Bank.
 QUEST2 - New game by the Kirase bros.
 SMALLCALC - Calculator program.
 STEP-BUG - A/L debugger program.
 STEPDOC - " " docs.
 XBTOOLS - XB Programming Utilities.
 TOOLS*DOC (Fairware - Jim Swedlow)
 JULIAN/DT - Julian date program.
 PRINTER4 - Printer set-up - Gemini 10x.
 ANIMATOR1 - Animated graphics utility
 ANIMATOR2 - (Fairware - Mike McCann).
 SPRITEB1 - Sprite builder program
 SPRITEB2 - (One of the best).
 XBMENU64 - Catalog and loader.
 SHOOSH - Shooshboomers ski game.
 WHEEL2 - "Wheel of Fortune"
 PUZZLES - type game by the
 PUZZLES2 - Kirase brothers
 OIL - Oil finding game.
 ARCLOAD - Archiver prog Ver. 2.2
 ARCII - (Fairware - Barry Boone's)
 ARCHIVER - Archiver Ver 2.11 - Traver
 UNPACKER - SSSD Version of Archiver.
 XLATE - converts DV/80 files to prog

HUG-TIBBS Text Files

Books about the TI-99/4A
 Commands for OMEGA - C.Becker
 Extended tokens list
 Freeware list 1 - 67 programs
 " " 2 - 54 "
 History of HUG-TIBBS
 Info on Pgrm & Memory Oper.
 Kim's Korner - good stories
 Letters to the FCC
 Myarc 9640 Geneve Report
 Other TI BBS List
 Program Listing - Why Me
 Reviews - Hardware/Software
 SysOp's Report on Illness
 TI-Writer Help
 Want Ads - User/commercial
 Bargain of the Month - humor
 HUG Membership Application

THE PHOENIX - Text Files

Area Radio - Houston area stations
 Bits 'N Bytes - Videotex ruling
 Cooler Boxes - Cool off your PEB
 Foster's Column - Ride the Tex-Mex RR
 Barb On CIS - Latest TI Ramblings
 Health & Nutritn - Good Country Cookin'
 Info on system - The Phoenix BBS
 Top Ten Tunes - Best selling Rock
 Top Ten Videos - Top video rentals
 X-Modem Tutorial - Good mini tutorial
 User Friendly - Myarc 9640 Tips
 Very Interestin - Police Computer Sting
 For Your Info - "The Money Pit"
 Xlate Program - Translate DV80 files
 Your User Groups - Info on various U.G.
 Kwiklist - Program listings
 Geneve News / I Joke Section
 Local BBS's / Other TI BBS's
 USA User Groups / Foreign User Grps
 Phoenix Viewpoint / Birthflowers
 Some Texian Lore / Tongue Twisters
 GENie(tm) Info / PC-Pursuit #'s
 TIBBS SysOp Tip / Trivia Mania
 Coming TI Fair / Want Ads

The Phoenix - X-Modem Download Files

CANTINA - great musical interpretation
 CANTINA1 - of Star Wars "cantina" music

RLE FILES:

RLEA - Pirate
 RLEB - Ronnie
 RLEC - Dragon
 RLED - Sailboats
 RLEE - Computer
 RLEF - Mouseland
 RLEG - Donald Duck
 RLEH - Foxy Lady
 RLEI - Tammy Faye Bakker
 RLEI - Pluto
 RLE2 - Christa McAuliffe
 RLE3 - Mickey Mouse
 RLE4 - Corvette
 RLE5 - Walt Disney
 RLE6 - Unicorn2 poster
 RLE7 - Large tiger head
 RLE8 - Garfield drawing
 RLE9 - Opus2 drawing

PR1/ARC - PRBASE by Mike Dodd, runs
 PR2/ARC - on both 99/4a & Geneve
 BOGART - Drawing by Cynthia Becker!
 OMEGA/ARC - New terminal emulator can
 display RLE files online!
 MAX-RLEXB - View RLE files in XBasic
 MAXDOC - Docs for MAX-RLE
 BRUCELEE - Drawn by Cynthia Becker.
 ARCII-V22 - Latest Vers of Archiver II.
 FONTASTIC - Redesign the CHAR1 file!
 EARTH - Suspended earth.
 TE2/12 - Operate TE-II @ 1200 baud.
 TE2/12DOC - Docs. for above prog.
 UPUV3/ARC - Universal Printer Utility
 FIGHTER - Fighter plane game
 TRUCK - A truck bldg word game.
 AMERICA - Name all 50 states
 CIVIL/WAR - GOOD text/graphics game

For the Geneve 9640 ONLY

FTH - FAST TERM
 FT6 - *****
 FT9640DOC - Terminal Emulator Program
 96DEM/ARC - Docs & demo programs

The following article was taken from the Colorado Front Ranger. If you are interested in Data Base Software, then this article is a MUST to read.

Data Base Managers For the TI-99/4A By Bill Goskill

Some owners/authors of the applications I have covered in this article will no doubt be angered by the apparent brutality of it. I choose to view it as honesty rather than brutality. Too many reviewers white-wash the weakness of TI software they critically review. I will not. I think sometimes that we are afraid that the software market will dry up and blow away unless we give favorable reports on the software products that do appear for our computer. I prefer to think of it in another way: if we promote junk software in a favorable light those that do publish product reviews will lose credibility, and those that buy software based upon those reviews will simply be that much more reluctant to get burned a second time.

In the process of searching for the perfect data base manager I have purchased several programs and spent over \$300. All of the programs that I own have positive points and all have negative points. What I have discovered to date is that the "perfect" data base manager does not exist, yet [not even in the business world]. What I am going to share with you are my impressions of the programs I own, and in doing so, will perhaps save you a little time and money if you too are looking for that "perfect" application.

The programs I own are:

ACORN 99 from Oak Tree Systems
DBMS from Navarone Industries
DATA BASE I from SPC Software
DATA BASE 99 from Quality 99 Software
DATA BASE 300 from the Int'l Users Group
DATA BASE X from Western Ware
PRBASE V1.2 and V2.0 From William Warren
TURBO DATAMAN from Easy Ware

I have used these programs enough to feel comfortable with each and could probably write several pages about each

one. Unfortunately, publication space is limited and such a voluminous article would never see print because of it.

Thus I have tried to be brief, but to the point, in my comments on each program. Also, please keep in mind that my comments are subjective, based upon how each product meets MY needs and expectations. Yours may be different.

For ease of reference I have included some of the information in a comparison table that allow analysis at a glance. In the paragraphs that follow I will try to provide a little detail to each issue and cover special features, lack of what I view as standard features and product performance of each program. I apologize in advance for the cryptic style you will read, however, I needed to be brief. The DATABASE 300 program will not be looked at since it is not available.

ACORN 99:

Among the top three DBM's available to the TI community. The only relational data base available. Also, the only one with a programming language interface for custom applications. EXTREMELY powerful and well designed. Can support three active files at one time, allows existing data file formats to be edited, copied to another file, resequenced and can reformat a file structure into another file format. Does not have the ability to show number of records in a file. Can hold more than 1500 records per file on a SS/SD disk [depending on file size]. Sorts alpha characters and strings better than numbers. Indexes record location for subfile creation and main file is then concatenated to create the subfile as another database. Possesses ability to search, using "equal to, unequal, greater than, less than, ignore" logical operators. Supports relational

operators in search routines through the use of a true/false convention that allows selection of records where all parameters are met, or any parameters are met. CAN print a single record from a display screen. EXTREMELY slow in operation. Uses 40 column text mode. Allows duplicate key field data entries. Allows printer control codes to be encrypted in set up file. Provides input checking for "numeric, integer, money, string, flag and date" entries. Overall, a fabulous program, with almost limitless potential. The best documentation of the group, giving many examples along with explanations. SUPERB application.

DBMS [Navarone]

Allows 32,000 records per file, but only 350 per SS/SD diskette. Limits you to half that amount if you wish to sort the file since it creates a second sorted file that demands equal space on your data disk. Most interesting report generator I have ever seen, a cut and paste type affair that is really neat, but poorly documented. Excellent custom screen design module which includes help screens that you design. FAST, FAST, FAST. Requires unique key field entries only, which I find inconvenient. Documentation is better than originally written, but still confusing at times, and incomplete. Dotes on mundane things and skips over, or entirely omits, important things. Does totaling in reports., but no other computational work. Does not support single record printing, but can use the report module to scroll data on screen, write it to disk or send it to your printer. Can append new data fields to the end of an existing record, but cannot reformat the record in any other way. Can create subfiles, but you have to figure out how to do it for yourself because the documentation does not tell you how. It doesn't even mention subfiles. Allows printer control codes to be encrypted in

Report Generator file. Does not perform input checking of any type. All data is considered to be a string entry. Best suited for a hard disk environment. Not difficult to use once you have "played" with it, but can be intimidating at first.

DATA BASE 1:

Best suited for mailing lists or other LIST type data files. Cumbersome design setup requiring records to be accessed by their relative position in the file (record number). You must first list the records by a specified field if you don't know the record number. Time consuming. Provides three pre-set mailing label report formats and one custom format for your own design. Will NOT do reports that have heading information. Includes several nice utilities, such as a form letter generator, disk file data base which creates a DB1 data base file out of the information on your library of disks. Does not provide for input checking, nor length of field entries. Only looks at the length of overall record. Does searches by "equal to" operator only, only one data field at a time. Requires that you first create an index file and then search. To search by another field you must create another index file. Searches by a maximum of 5 characters in any field. Sorts are limited to 1000 records, no matter how many exist in the file, but both alpha and numeric sorts are offered. Subfiles can be created to a printer in the main program or to disk by using the Utilities options. Selection is by "equal to" or "between two values", which can be either alpha or numeric type.

DATA BASE 99:

More emphasis put on copu protection than on program performance. Allows custom screen design and claims 28 fields of up to 28 characters each. Would be a neat trick to do since four of the 245 rows on screen are used by program prompts. (ast assembly language interface for report generation. Can not generate reports with headings and does not permit pronter control codes to be inserted in report data. Does not save a format after design, so you will

have to re-create it each time you want a report. Data is printer in continuous format without regard to page breads or anything else. Design of layout is cumbersome, requiring you to conceptualize how many colons and/or semi-colons ae needed to push the data across the page. Number of colons/semi-colons is limited to 127 characters allowed in a LINPUT command. A terrible system. Disk catalog accessed from main menu will crash program if you enter an alpha character instead of a number when it prompts for the disk drive number to be cataloged. Color is lost after a crash since it was CALLED from the LOAD program. Does not permit single record screen print (unless you buy the DB 99 utilities), must use EDIT option to search for a record or search sequentially. Can not go directly to a record by its relative position in the file. Will create subfiles to disk, allowing the search by "less than, equat to or greater than" operators. Search is limited to one field for all practical purposes. Sorts can be performed in ascending order, by any one field. Sort is an actual re-write of the file. All data is considered strung information. No number crunching (agani, unless you buy the DB 99 Utilities), no input checking. Documentation consists of two 8 1/2 X 11" sheets of paper printed on both sides. Program is slow, inflexible, inconvenient in many ways and cumbersome to use. It might have been an advanced application two years ago. Today it is a dinosaur, even with the DB 99 Utilities. MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE.

DATA BASE X:

Very modular, meaning that each function (adding, editing, printing, deleting etc.) is a separate program that must be loaded each time you want to use that function. Does statistical analysis of data. Record counter is inaccurate, code of program is jumbled and entirely unstructured. Does not sort data, even though documentation uses the term "sort". What it means is "select". When DATA BASE X "sorts" by a particular parameter it is really selecting records for dumping to a printer that mee that parameter. Does allow selection between ranges. Can not

create subfiles, does not index existing records. Access of a record is done sequentially, unless you know the record number. No way to tel the record number, you must guess. Supports 1 or 2 disk drives. Excruciatingly slow. Requires that you name the data disk DBXDATA, for no good reason that I can see, otherwise program errors out. Does not same report definition, but does allow it to be printed in normal or compressed mode. Definition process is fairly simple, but time consuming. Documentation is the "shabbiest" I have ever seen. It is photocopied and put into booklet form with the pages not even cut straight, so that some information is missing off of some pages. Overall, this program is JUNK! As with the IUG's DATA BASE 300/500, it never really belonged on the market in the stat that it is in. Unfortunately, I didn't know that and paid out over \$30 to find out.

PRBASE:

Totally assembly language coded. THE BEST all-round appolication in my opinion. FAST, flexible, does virtually anything a user would want in the way of data handling, except number crunching. It will not do anything in that area. Treats all data sas part of a big sring just as DBMS and DATA BASE 99 do. As long as you own the PRB Utilities written by John Johnson You can create subfiles, otherwise you can't. Has on-line help for commands, creates an index by any input field you choose and then accesses any record in about 1 second. Also has a FIND feature to liik at data sequentially in any single field and a GLOBAL option toat searches for a single data entry anywhere in the record. Saves up to five report formats, V2.0 allows you to format data disk. Custom screen layout with terrific graphics options for borders/windows etc. is available. A TREMENDOUS PROGRAM, well thought out, well designed, artistically executed. FAIRWARE!!!! PRB Utilities are free for the asking as long as you provide the disk and sailer. Report design is cumbersome and confusing. Prints single record from screen display in either 40 or 80 column mode. Program is very sensitiver about I/O device names. My

copies (V1.2 and V2.0) both require PIO. to work rather than just PIO or PIO/1, etc. With number crunching abilities this program would be a perfect "flat-file data manager" for most TI users. As it is, the value and performance for a FAIRWARE application, or a commercial application too for that matter, is unsurpassed. If you don't have PR BASE then you are missing out on one of the premier productivity tools available to the TI Community.

TURBO DATAMAN:

This is the second most powerful and useful data manager, taking a backseat only to PR BASE. It runs slightly ahead of ACORN because it performs number crunching and is faster in operation. Like ACORN, TURBO DATAMAN allows you to create a dictionary of data items (fields) and then lets you choose from that library of fields to put a record together. Up to 30 fields are allowed per record. Twenty pre-defined records (file formats) can exist on one disk. Allows custom screen layout design, complete with graphics for

vorders/windows etc. Does input checking, allows secondary screen access, like ACORN's Detail Records. Allows formulas to be created and saved that perform the four basic math functions. Report definitions can be saved. Allows wildcard type operators in searches, will print single record from screen display. Provides "less than, greater than, equal to, not equal to, greater than or equal to, less than or equal to" operators in screen display and report generation modules. Permits sub-totals in reports that can be formatted like TI Extended BASIC does with IMAGE statement. Subfiles can be created through the report generator by sending the output selected to a disk file rather than a printer. The results must be converted back to INTERNAL, FIXED from DISPLAY FIXED before you can use it in the program however. TURBO DATAMAN does not provide you with that utility. The documentation instructs you to "write a program" to do it. Names used for different modules in the program are confusing. Ex: ETCH, SKETCH, SKETCHR, FETCH. Should change

names to more accurately reflect function of module. Documentation acceptable, but lacks adequate coverage in some areas. Utilities are provided to perform some mundane operations, such as counting the amount of records in a database. Reformatting or restructuring of an existing file is not permitted, unless the input field is appended to the end of a record format. This program needs some "fine tuning" in some areas, but is still an exciting productivity tool with immense possibilities. Its speed of operation is not fast, but acceptable. It is faster than ACORN. One can set up the SKETCH program to auto-load if desired, but the whole application should be centered around a menu in my opinion. As it is now, you must RUN each module from the READY> prompt when you need to use it, because every module exists with an END statement. If you don't own this program, you should. Whenever you want to manage a mailing list or do accounting, TURBO DATAMAN is for you.

Feature table:

	DATA BASE NAME						
FEATURE	ACORN99	DBMS	DB1	DB99	DBX	PRBASE	TURBO DM
RECORDS/FILE	LIMITED BY DISK	32,000	LIMITED BY DISK	350-1400	LIMITED BY DISK	350/710	LIMITED BY DISK
FIELDS/REC.	54	25	10	28	10	32	30
MAX. RECORD LENGTH	255	255	245	246	246	246	255
MAX. FIELD LENGTH	40	40	28	28	28	246	28
MEMORY REQ'D	32K	32K	32K	32K	16K	32K	32K
LANGUAGE	XB/ASSM	ASSM	XB/ASSM	XB/ASSM	XB/ASSM	ASSM	XB/ASSM
CUSTOM DESIGN							
SCREEN LAYOUT	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES
SCRN GRPHCS CAPABILITY	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
ALTERED CHAR SET USED	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
CUSTOM REPORT DEFINITION	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
SAVES REPORT DEFINITION	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES

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VERBATIM HEAD CLEANING KIT	5.95	BOOK BY DATAMOST(\$14.95 VALUE)	

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