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VOLUME 3 NUMBER 8

AUGUST 1985

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Next meeting September 14th  
At the Hurst Public Library  
9 am till 11 am

The reviews, evaluations and opinions contained in  
articles in this newsletter are the authors' own  
and do not reflect the views of the NET 99er HCUG.

**Northeast  
Tarrant  
Home Computer  
Users' Group**

Devoted to the

**TI-99/4A**

President's Page

For those that were kind enough to compliment me for the August meeting and program, I thank you very much. With the capable assistance of Jim Yinst and John Creviston Jr. and Leroy Thompson backing us up, I felt good about the meeting. A good subject, The Library, with a lot to be learned by all of us.

A second order has been placed for GRAPHX. All of those that signed the list but, have not paid, we will send another order if we reach a goal of five.

Gerry Myers allowed us to use his kitchen table as a place to learn about sorting for bulk mail. Charles Bathman led several of us through the steps. Gary Fuquay, Sam Weller, John Lambert and I each did something. Charles will be helping us, also, for the next newsletter. An offer from Ruth Neidholt to help with the mailing chore will complete the picture. Gerry Myers served a glass of wine and some cheese and crackers to top the evening off. A group for the club to be proud of!

A call from Roy Willis Sunday evening sent me scurrying to VIDEO CONCEPTS at Irving Mall to get the last two Multiplans they had on hand. These will be used in our monthly drawings. A thanks to Jim Yinst and John Creviston for spending Sunday afternoon at our home in an effort to explain the workings of the Library.

Our program for September will be a look at COMPANION on another level and a look at DISK MANAGER 1000. BRING A DISK to get a copy of Disk Manager and if you can make use of this software, please send five dollars to:

BRUCE CARON  
C/O THE OTTAWA TI-994/USERS' GROUP  
P.O. Box 2144  
Station "D" Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5W3

The next meeting will be September 14th.  
Till next time,  
Jo

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NORTHEAST TARRANT  
HOME COMPUTER USERS GROUP  
Minutes, Aug. 10, 1985

President Jo Lambert called the meeting to order. Treasurer Charlie Bathman reported that the club had \$654.70 in its account.

The GraphX program came in for members who had ordered it, and further orders were being handled by Jim Stewart. The excellent graphics program sells for \$30.

Gayle Foster, a teacher in the Grapevine school district and who held six Basic classes for our members, reported that new

requirements for students in 7th and 8th grades will include one semester of computer literacy.

She said much of the same information that will be included in these courses can be found in the book "I Speak Basic to my 99/4A" that club members can buy for \$8.

Cal Cather won a drawing for TI-Writer.

It was announced that the Assembly Language Special Interest Group (SIG) will hold its meetings the Tuesday after the regular users group meeting at the First Baptist Church on 820 and Haltom Road.

A buy-sell-swap session was then held.

Jim Stewart wanted to know if anyone was interested in starting an Extended Basic SIG.

Jim Yingst will no longer be the chief librarian, but still will be a lending library. The chief librarian will now be John Lambert.

After a break, President Jo Lambert opened discussion on the use of the libraries, and Jim Yingst gave hints on how to copy programs out of the library.

Leroy Thompson demonstrated a mail list, TC-Mail, that was written in Forth, and then President Lambert adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charles Clines, Secretary

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TIMELESS TECHNICAL TIPS  
by LeRoy Thompson

This month's column is being written a little bit early because of an impending vacation. Also, my wife says that I definitely can not take a computer on vacation even if Robert Wessler told me how.

First a glance at software: I developed the relative-file mail list program which the NET 99ers use to keep the membership on. I continually seek to improve its performance and capabilities. The sort is one area that I wish to improve. The July MICROpendium gave me hope. I am not smart enough to write the desired sort subroutine in assembly language, but there on page 43 was a neat little package written by David Romer and John Clulow. I labored several nights to enter the object code which was printed in compressed letters and then I labored another night or two to debug it. The major problem that I had was one too many spaces on a line (my fault brought on by the tight spacing). I used the neat example program in XB and it seemed to work quite well. But, sorting 10 names is no way to test a sort.

I tried a revision to the mail list program. For a benchmark, I ran the existing sort. It ran in 115 seconds with no interchanges. In order to use the AL routine, I needed a pre-sort and a post-sort

coder/decoder so that the name and the pointer number would be carried together. The actual numbers went something like this: pre-sort; 30 seconds sort; 90 seconds and post-sort; 60 seconds. The total time was close to 3 minutes--significantly more than the pure XB sort. It was an interesting exercise. The net accomplishment was nothing, but I did learn that there is a lot more to learn.

I sent for and received EXPLORER from Millers Graphics. Someday (5 years from now) when we all are smart enough to understand it, maybe I will be smart enough to write a review of it. I bought it not knowing what I would use it for. I just felt that if I didn't buy it, I would be sorry.

All kidding aside, EXPLORER is the grandest and most glorious de-bugger ever written. In the hands of a competent AL programmer, it would undoubtedly be of extreme use. I have heard comments from around the country that EXPLORER is allowing people to learn more than ever about the 4A. The program is a machine-language interpreter. What that means is that this program allows you and your keyboard to stand in between another program (of any type) and the 9900 processor. YOU control when the next event happens and even WHAT happens next. The 106-page manual has copious amounts of handbook material that should last me for a long time.

Craig is cautious to mention that with EXPLORER running, any time-dependent operation (like disk access) will not work properly. I feel sure that this is a restriction imposed by hardware and the general program philosophy. It does, however, seem convenient for him that we cannot observe how he manipulates the disk controller to enable it to read in the illegal track numbers and sector sizes found on EXPLORER and Advanced Diagnostics.

The foregoing paragraphs about EXPLORER are not to be construed as a review. I am not smart enough to review it and write an intelligent review. Let us all hope that some one within our accessible world of publications can do it.

The hardware reviews promised last month must be delayed at least another month. When this is written, I haven't received any hardware. I have yet to receive either my Myarc double density disk controller or my Myarc 128K card. I am still eagerly looking forward to having both of them. I still promise to review them for us as soon as I can get them. It seems that all Myarc hardware is slow to arrive. This is being proven both locally and in Philadelphia.

How many of you realize that this very NEWS NET 99er is also available on-line on STARTEXT. I think that we all enjoy reading the NN99er each month, but those of us that are STARTEXT subscribers have several other advantages. This newsletter is on line, and also, II, II2, IICHAT, and IITIPS are available to a STARTEXT subscriber. I will briefly describe them below:

II - written by Richard Roberts who is Dallas UG President. Richard writes about new programs, new procedures and rumors, etc.

II2 - written by Robert Wessler (our member) and Randall Ainsworth (via Source). Robert reprints (with permission) Randy's Rag from the Source monthly and adds his witty tidbits in between.

TICHA1 - written by Gary Higgs (our member). Gary tries to present a public-domain program for downloading every week or two. Gary also shares all available rumors with us.

TITIPS - written by Randy Baxter and Joe Gillo (both our members). Randy is in the process of writing a tutorial on Assembly Language. Joe is writing us a tutorial on PASCAL. They alternate on a 2-week update.

As you can see this is quite a lot of written (or electronic) information which you are missing if you are not a STARTEXT subscriber. The cost is reasonable (\$10/month) and STARTEXT has not stopped improving since I first subscribed in early 1983. All it takes is a modem and an RS232 interface plus a terminal program. There are some excellent Freeware terminal programs available. As of September 1, STARTEXT will offer Grolier's Academic American Encyclopedia on line. This will be priced extra (by use time) and it is well worth the cost--especially when compared to purchasing a set of encyclopedias. I just don't want you to pass up one of the best bargains around simply because you don't know about it.

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GOOD NEWS

By Gary Fuquay  
Chuck Mansfield contributing

The best news this month is, the well seems never to go dry!! Wish I could say the same for the Euleess water supply!

On the 22nd of August, Chuck had a telephone conversation with Lou Phillips, and was reassured that the announcement of the new machine would be made very soon. In fact, by the time you read this article, the decision will have already been made by MYARC's financial backers. MYARC has already finalized their production plans. All that is needed for an announcement is the confirmation of funds. There are two things that investors look for, future growth and profitability. MYARC's projection is selling mainly to the installed base of II users' and they should do very well in that market. This will eliminate spending a large amount of revenue on marketing and advertising.

The machine will come with 256K of memory standard, and will be compatible with everything that fits in the PEB, including the WDS100. It will "probably" support 3 1/2 in. disks. When IBM announces the PCII next year the 3 1/2 in. will be the standard, and the 5 1/4 in. will wave "bye-bye". The standard machine will not be IBM compatible, but will have that option. A board will be available as an add-on and will fit inside the unit. It will not be an "ugly appendage sticking out". The price has been established, but could not be revealed until the announcement is made.

MYARC will start shipping EXTENDED BASIC II the last week of August, and it will give a sample of the new machine, as it makes the 4/A operate at the same speed as the IBM PC. It does require the 128K card, and comes structured with a cartridge and a disk. It uses 32K and allows the user to use the remaining 96K for programming, constants, etc. It is all assembly language instead of the GPL that

TI used, so it operates much, much faster than TI Extended BASIC.

Let us hope that next month we'll be hearing about the REAL THING!

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### FastTerm

A Review by Chuck Mansfield

I have reviewed this program extensively and I find it to be one of the most comprehensive terminal emulator-communications programs on the market for home computers. I have worked with many terminal programs as well as emulators and terminal emulators and I am very impressed by the theory and features of FAST TERM. The program contains more options than is found on many home or commercial packages. Also, it combines the features of TE2, P-TERM, TE1200 and AMA LINK to name just a few.

You can create a separate parameter file for virtually any host computer or bulletin board which you use. The parameter file also contains options for text color, screen color, screen width, whether the print spooler is to be on when the program is loaded as well as the normal communications options. However, FAST-TERM does not force you to use a parameter file. Almost all of the set up options can be changed through the keyboard. You can specify a baud rate of up to 19,200. here is a print spooler which will support several interfaces (TI, AXIOM, CORCOMP) and can be toggled on and off. If you have an interface which FAST-TERM does support, you may log to disk and then edit the data using the E/A editor or TI-WRITER. A screen dump is available without losing any incoming characters. Not only can you send and receive ASCII files, but FAST-TERM also supports TE2 and XMODEM file transfer protocol. FAST-TERM will transmit or receive ANY size file. THE FILE SIZE IS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE BUFFER SIZE.

If you select the 80 character screen size, you may toggle your screen size with almost any size window you desire. Another handy feature is the WINDOW BACK which allows you to view the data which has scrolled off of the screen. An item not usually found on communications programs is a digital clock [elapsed time] which can be toggled on and off.

There is a total of 35 control keys which is not surprising given the large number of options. However, don't let this throw you. You will probably use only three or four control keys in your normal operation. One of the communications packages which I use at the office has 45+ control keys.

My only negative comment concerns the placement of the most commonly used control keys. For instance, the transmit and receive control keys are FUNCTION B and FUNCTION N. I would like to see these options initiated through the keys at the top of the keyboard, however, I have already adapted to the location imposed by FAST-TERM.

FAST-TERM will be supported indefinitely. In fact, enhancements are in the development stage.

The documentation is excellent! I can honestly say that it is as good as the documentation which is included with the commercial communications packages I use at the office.

FAST-TERM is fast becoming THE communications program for the 4A. It seems to be the current rage in many user groups around the country. I like the program so well that I will use it exclusively for all communications purposes.

About the author...

Paul Charlton is an 18 year old sophomore electrical engineering student at the prestigious Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. He is currently employed by the University of Virginia in the Department Of Physiology at the medical school. He is designing and building hardware and writing software for this hardware which will be used in medical labs for research and patient problem analysis. I have talked with Paul several times and find him to be congenial, helpful, shy, very intelligent and worthy of our support.

FAST-TERM is FREeware and is available with source code for the unheard of price of \$10 + \$3.50 to cover the cost of the disk and mailer from:

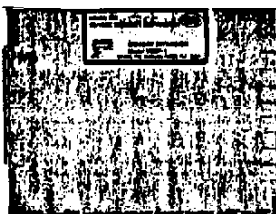
PAUL CHARLTON  
1110 PINEHURST CT.  
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22901  
804-296-6421

If you obtain FAST-TERM from a source other than Paul, please send \$10 or more to him to reward him for this excellent effort.

(Contributors - Gary Fuquay LeRoy Thompson)

# MYARC™

32/128K Memory expansion and real RAM disk.



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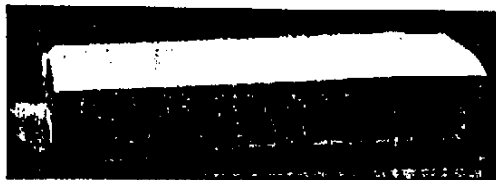
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