

Saskatoon Jan 86



**SASKATOON
TEXAS
INSTRUMENTS
COMPUTER
CLUB**

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NEWSLETTER

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1986



SASKATOON TEXAS INSTRUMENTS COMPUTER CLUB

We discuss and review new products for the TI99/4A while providing technical support for any problems that a member may have. We also support a software library and have regular contacts with other groups in Canada and the United States. Our membership fees are very reasonable: \$10.00/single or \$12.00/family. If you would like to become a member, or require more information, contact any member of the executive or call the STICC BBS.

1986 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

PRESIDENT:	Harry Caruk	384-6321
VICE PRESIDENT:	Ian Hawes	374-0019
SECRETARY:	Randy Mortensen	242-1622
TREASURER:	Ron Schnor	343-1256
LIBRARIAN:	Gordon Millham	374-3387
EDITOR:	John Thomson	244-1394

MAILING ADDRESS

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STICC DISCLAIMER

We are a small, nonprofit club here in Saskatoon. We never have, or ever will, consider our newsletter a professional medium in its field. Therefore, with this consideration, the views presented in the articles, by various authors, may not be the views of the newsletter committee, the STICC executive, or its members. On this basis, this club cannot be held responsible for errors, omissions, views, or copy infringements, as presented in the articles.

STICC BBS

Our BBS is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week (with the exception of daily maintenance), and can be contacted at (306) 384-2844. Ken Read is our systems operator, and barring any problems, can also be reached at 382-2527 (voice). The system operates at seven bits, even parity, and one stop bit.

MEETINGS

General meetings are normally held at 7 PM on the first monday of each month at the Saskatoon Region Community College, 145-1st Avenue North. Any changes in date will be announced in this newsletter. The meeting room number will be posted on a sign at the main entrance. (Usually room 144)

NEXT MEETING: March 03, 1986.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Although our computer club begins its' season in September, as most members know, election of club officers takes place in January. Since the club has a different group of officers we can take this opportunity to assess our accomplishments to this date.

-In our September meeting we learned of a new association called the T.I. Users Association Of Canada. Individual clubs which join are promised ten newsletters per year, including software reviews and contests. S.T.I.C.C has subscribed to this service at a cost of \$ 30.00 per year.

-October provided lively discussions on aquisition and distribution of freeware. Attempts were made, during this month, to survey the Saskatoon market in an effort to obtain possible leads on people wishing to sell their T.I. equipment. It appears most T.I owners are not selling, as the survey didn't turn up any surplus equipment. Present T.I. owners are either satisfied with their equipment, or uneasy about subsequent purchases of computer equipment in the existing market composed largely of vapour-ware. There are many unexplored applications in the 99/4A world as October demos of DM1000, Master Painter, and Bit Draw indicated.

-In November we came to a decision on the freeware concept. The club has voted to accept freeware into the Library. The contributing member will be reimbursed for any aquisition costs for freeware the club has agreed to accept. Members aquiring this freeware will be responsible for reimbursing the author.

-An assembly language class was announced in December by the instructor, R.Mortensen. Classes commence in January.

-Elections were held on the sixth of January. Results are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

continued ...

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued)

On behalf of all members, both present and future, we take this opportunity to thank the past Elected Officers. Their term has resulted in many advances in software, B.B.S, and other areas. We thank you for your unselfish dedication of time and effort. We also thank other members who have contributed so freely of their time, information, and knowledge.

..... HARRY CARUK

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STICC

This computer club had its beginning on October 27, 1982. The club held monthly meetings there-after. The initial membership numbered 12, and had grown to 45 by June, 1983.

The initial meeting assembled at the Cosmos Library. Several names were submitted for a club name and debated. The name chosen was the SASKATOON TEXAS INSTRUMENTS COMPUTER CLUB, or STICC for short. Goals and activities of the club were discussed, defined, and adopted in the form of a plan of organization as set out below.

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION: The purpose of the organization will be to discuss the advantages of the home computer through member organized tutorials, regular meetings, software exchanges, and activities that appeal to members with varying skill levels.

A constitution was drawn up and approved.

CONSTITUTION:

Article 1: This users group shall be known as the Saskatoon Texas Instruments Computer Club.

Article 2: The purposes of this club are to

(a) provide a better understanding of the versatility and usefulness of the TI99/4A home computer.

(b) provide a basis of exchange of members' skills and knowledge.

(c) provide a basis for the exchange of the member's software.

(d) provide a basis for increasing members education with regard to the TI99/4A computer.

(e) provide a vehicle for members to save through club discounts.

Article 3: Membership shall be open to anyone interested in the purposes and objectives of this club.

Article 4: Fees shall be \$5.00 per annum per member.

Article 5: Officers shall be interim and shall be treasurer, secretary, and chairperson.

continued ...

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STICC (continued)

Article 6: Meetings shall be held on the third Wednesday of each month.

Article 7: The Goals and Activities, Plan of Organization, and Constitution shall be re-assessed and be subject to change as decided by the membership.

[Interim President ... Harry Caruk]
Interim Treasurer ... Doug Gibbons
Interim Secretary ... Al Ferguson
Interim Chairperson.. Bill Germain

Subsequent meetings up to and including the June 1983 meeting saw many developments and suggestions, some of which are listed below.

- the publication of a monthly newsletter
- a software library
- organized meetings on a monthly basis
- a Club Logo was chosen from several designs (with a prize of a command module for the winner)
- demonstrations of various games and other software

Due to low attendance at the June 1983 meeting, an election for permanent executive positions was postponed to the autumn. Subsequent meetings in 1983 and early 1984 were held in the J.S.Wood Library. In June 1984, meetings were moved to the Saskatoon Region Community College.

At the April 1984 meeting a number of changes were made. The number of officers was increased to 5, the new position being the Librarian. The number of consecutive terms of office would be two. Voting would be by written ballot. A term would end when new officers were elected, and elections would be held in January of each year. A newsletter committee was established consisting of three members who would elect an editor. Membership fees were increased to \$10.00 per year single, \$12.00 per year family, if collected from September to January inclusive. Partial single and family memberships would be \$5.00 and \$6.00 respectively if collected from February to May inclusive. A full year would be from September to May inclusive, and a partial year would be from February to May inclusive.

In November 1985 it was decided that the position of Editor would be an elected position for 1986.

Elections were held on January 6, 1986. The elected officers are listed on page 2 of this newsletter. I'm sure we will continue to keep the club alive and well throughout the coming year. As Mark Twain would say, the reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated!

Our past president is Francis Gaston, who is now too busy with classes and work to continue on the executive. I'm sure I speak for all of us when we thank him for the significant contribution he has made to the club and wish him success in his studies. Of course, Francis will continue to be an active member of our club!

[contributed by John Thomson, Editor]

DEC WARS was downloaded from the STICC BBS, courtesy Ken Read.

Filename: DECWARSL.DOC

A long time ago... on a node far, far away (from PDPvax)

```

XXXXX  XXXXXX  XXXX
X  X  X  X  X  X
X  X  XXXXX  X
X  X  X  X
X  X  X  X  X
XXXXX  XXXXXX  XXXX

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X  X  XX  XXXXX  XXXX
X  X  X  X  X  X  X
X  X  X  X  X  X  XXXX
X XX X  XXXXXX  XXXXX  X
XX XX X  X  X  X  X  X  X
X  X  X  X  X  X  XXXX

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The Adventures of Luke Vaxhacker

Episode n-1.0

As we enter the scene, an Imperial Multiplexer is trying to kill a consulate ship. Many of their signals have gotten thru, and RS232 decides it's time to fork off a new process before this old ship is destroyed. His companion, 3CPU is following him only because he appears to know where he is going...

"I'm going to regret this!" cried 3CPU, as he followed RS232 into the buffer. RS232 closed the pipes, made the sys call, and their process detached itself from the burning shell of the ship.

The commander of the Imperial Multiplexer was quite pleased with the attack. "Another process just forked, Sir. Instructions?" asked the lieutenant "Hold your fire. That last power failure must have caused a trap thru zero. It's not using any cpu time, so don't waste a signal on it."

"We can't seem to find the data file anywhere, Lord Vadic." "What about that forked process? It could have been holding the channel open, and just pausing. If any links exist, I want them removed or made inaccessible. Ncheck the entire file system 'til it's found, and nice it -20 if you have to."

Meanwhile, in our wandering process... "Are you sure you can ptrace this thing without causing a core dump?" queried 3CPU to RS232. "This thing's been stripped and I'm in no mood to try and debug it." The lone process finished execution, only to find our friends dumped on a lonely file system, with the setuid inode stored safely in RS232. Not knowing what else to do, they wandered around until the Jawas grabbed them.

continued ...

DEC WARS (continued)

Enter our hero, Luke Vaxhacker, who was out to get some replacement parts for his uncle. The Jawas wanted to sell him 3CPU, but 3CPU didn't know how to talk directly to an 11/40 with RSTS, so Luke still needed some sort of interface for 3CPU to connect to. "How about this little RS232 unit?" asked 3CPU. "I've dealt with him many time before, and he does an excellent job at keeping his bits straight." Luke was pressed for time, so he took 3CPU's advice and the three left before they could get swapped out.

However, RS232 was not the type to stay put once you remove the retaining screws. He promptly scurried off into the deserted disk space. "Great!" cried Luke, "Now I've got this little tin box with the only link to that file off floating in the free disk space. Well, 3CPU, we better go find him before he gets allocated by someone else." The two set off, and finally traced RS232 to the home of PDP-1 Kenobe, who was busily trying to run an icheck on the little RS unit. "Is this thing yours? His indirect addresses are all goofed up, and the size is gargantious. Leave things like this on the loose, and you'll wind up with file dumps everywhere. However, I think I've got him fixed up. It seems that he has a link to a data file on the Are-Em Star. This could help the rebel cause." "I don't care about that," said Luke. "I'm just trying to optimize my uncle's scheduler."

Oh, forget about that. Dec Vadic, who is responsible for your father's death, has probably already destroyed his farm in search of this little RS232. It's time for you to leave this place, join the rebel cause, and become a UNIX wizard! I know a guy by the name of Con Solo, who'll fly us to the rebel base at a price..."

Luke had grown up on an out of the way terminal cluster whose natives spoke only BASIC, but even he could recognize an old ASR-33.

"It needs an EIA conversion at least," sniffed 3CPU, who was (as usual) trying to do several things at once. Light flashed in Con Solo's eyes as he whirled to face the parallel processor.

"I've added a few jumpers. The Milliamp Falcon can run current loops around any Imperial TTY fighter. She's fast enough for you."

"Who's your co-pilot?" asked PDP-1 Kenobie.

"Two Bacco, here, my Bookie."

"Odds aren't good," said the brownish lump beside him, and then fell silent, or over. Luke couldn't tell which way was up underneath all those leaves.

continued ...

DEC WARS (continued)

Suddenly, RS232 started spacing wildly. They turned just in time to see a write cycle coming down the UNIBUS toward them. "Imperial Bus Signals!" shouted Con Solo. "Let's boot this popsicle stand! Tooie, set clock fast!"

"Ok, Con," said Luke, "You said this crate was fast enough. Get us out of here!"

"Shut up kid! Two Bacco, prepare to make the jump into system space! I'll try to keep their buffers full."

As the bookie began to compute the vectors into low core, spurious characters appeared around the Milliamp Falcon. "They're firing!" shouted Luke "Can't you do something?"

"Making the jump to system space takes time, kid. One missed cycle and you could come down right in the middle of a pack of stack frames!"

"Three to five we can go now," said the bookie.

Bright chunks of position independent code flashed by the cockpit as the Milliamp Falcon jumped through the kernal page tables. As the crew breathed a sigh of relief, the bookie started paying off bets.

"Not bad, for an accoustically coupled network," REMarked 3CPU. "Though there was a little phase jitter as we changed parity."

* DEC, PDP, and VAX are trademarks of Digital Equipment Corp.

To be continued...

The following is reprinted from the Nov. 1985 newsletter of the Ottawa T.I.99/4 Users' Group.

TI-99/4A National Users Association News

First: We now feel we have a strong enough user-base to carry on with the project...indications are that continued growth is a virtual certainty. Thank you all across Canada for your response to my article last month...we're now going to begin contacting individual and group members to see where you think we should go from here. We want to begin developing a program for the Association (ie: software and hardware development contests....National BBS Sub-system on TIMELINE and whatever other ideas you can come up with).

The TI Faire in Chicago was by all yardsticks a major success, widely attended, interesting and exciting! Estimates peg the attendance at about 2400 very eager beavers! We literally had to plow our way through many of them 1/2 hour before the show was to open just to get in and set up our booth! The sons of guns pulled a real nasty on us poor guys from the hinterland though...they put our booth right next to Craig Miller's..... We were too awe-struck by such a famous name in the TI subculture. We sat and stared open-mouthed wasting precious setup time before the on-slaught.

Big names at the Faire didn't stop with Craig though. The renowned Terry Atkinson (of TI Nova Scotia) stood beside us sharing space at our booth. Terry and I have been exchanging pleasantries for about 2 years now and had to go to Chicago to finally meet face to face. Incidentally, I am not being patronizing when I say 'renowned' in Terry's case; he is a well-known and respected voice in TI circles. John Clulow, Ron Gries and Dave Romer of the New Horizons User Group were there to promote a new piece of hardware for Tiers (multi-purpose memory expansion card for the PEB). Terrie Masters, President of the San Diego 99ers, flanked us on the left. Terrie, and some other high-profile Tiers on the Source, have recently instigated a plan to try to get powerful locally developed software, from the many groups around the world, wider exposure. We're committed to become a part of that plan as its a good one. Another well-known and highly respected TI Figurehead by the name of Barry Traver was there too, I think from Boston. He's just started a fantastic and original project he's billing as "DISK-A-ZINE". Due to space limitations I'm going to have to expand on some of these Group/Individual projects at a later date.

Myarc had a booth; Navarone was there; DataBioTics; Asgard; Inscebot (developers of the fantastic TI-Artist program) was there too. Great Lakes Software was there with lots of powerful disk-based software for all. The only unfortunate aspect of the entire show was that there was far too much for us to see, and man our booth at the same time. Interest and sales of our DM-1000 and 2D-Graphics was at times brisk to say the least, although an argument could be made to the effect a lot of it was spillage from Craig's booth! Just kidding (I think)!

There were 5 seminars in the upstairs mezzanine area during the 7 hours of the show. During the first 1 1/2 hour Craig Miller unveiled his GramCracker. What a show-stopper!!! This little piece of hardware does tricks you wouldn't believe! A part of his demo entailed downloading the PARSEC module; tacking HIS title screen on the front, saving it to disk and rebooting it again...all in about 25 seconds!!! With this magic box and its associated software utilities you can alter ROM, GROM and even whole Operating Systems to suit your own purposes!!! Change text; title screens; default parameter settings in modules...piece of cake!

An outstanding feature of this beast is you can now save modules to cassette so now unexpanded users can build libraries of modules using this medium. You can now expand the TI's main menu to include several of your most used modules, all loadable virtually instantaneously at a keystroke!

All memory in GramCracker is usable program space so that with the addition of the memory expansion chips, which he'll supply for an extra \$20 US you'll have about 100K of program space available to you. It has a Lithium battery built in, which makes it transportable like minimemory.

TI-99/4A National Users Association News (continued)

Not happy with your model console's operating system....download a friends and plug it into yours. It can be done with GramKracker! I don't know if you noticed but I was impressed.... Craig will be selling this little beastie for \$175 US plus shipping and handling, complete with the utility software on disk and full documentation. As mentioned back a bit full expansion(3 memory chips you can plug in yourself will cost \$20 more. I'm sure I can meet or beat his price and I'll soon have one to demo at an upcoming meeting. Craig, as of the Faire date expected to have this little wonder available for around the first of December. Watch for it!

Another of the seminars was given by Lou Phillips of Myarc. He spent about 45 minutes on their 128K card and Extended Basic II module before one impatient, intrepid soul(bless his pea-pickin' heart!) stood up and asked about the new computer. Only after several others joined in and the whole room turned impatient did he send someone out for the 99/128!

We saw it(it LOOKS great); and have pictures to prove it; but we did NOT see it working! They 'forgot' to bring along the disk-based operating system!!! They have great and ambitious plans though barring unforeseen circumstances(what else is new?) they're forecasting a release of the system in the first quarter of 1986. My opinion is it will eventually see the light of day; but I'm not gonna forecast a release date!!! Jane has forecast that she will release an article for this newsletter on the 99/128 so I'll leave it to her. Bye for now

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