STICC

SASKATOON
TEXAS
INSTRUMENTS
COMPUTER
CLUB

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NEWSLETTER

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MARCH   1986

SASKATOON TEXAS INSTRUMENTS COMPUTER CLUB
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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
****
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STICC DISCLAIMER
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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
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Our BBS is normally online 23 hours a day, 7 days a week, from 4AM to 3AM, and can be contacted at (306) 384-2844. Ken Read is the systems operator, and may also be reached at 382-2527 (voice). The system operates at 7 bits, even parity (or 8 bits, no parity), and one stop bit.

MEETINGS
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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: April 07, 1986.

BITS AND BYTES
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WELL, IT'S NICE TO BE ABLE TO SIT BACK AND LET THE OTHERS
HAVE A CHANCE AT RUNNING THE CLUB ONCE AGAIN. I JUST HOPE
MY EFFORTS WERE NOT IN VAIN DURING THE PAST YEAR. WE WERE
ABLE TO REACH OUT AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS IN THE TI WORLD
FROM ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA. NOT ONLY DID OUR UNDERSTANDING
FOR OUR BELOVED TI INCREASE, BUT SO DID OUR LIST OF PROG-
RAMS. I TRULY HOPE THAT THIS WILL CONTINUE.

AS YOU KNOW, I AM NOW A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TI 99/4A
NATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL. THIS IS BEING SPONSORED BY DATA-
BIOTICS OF CALIFORNIA (MORE INFO ATTACHED). IF YOU HAD
MISSED IT AT THE MEETINGS, WE ARE ALLOWED TO PURCHASE ANY
OF THEIR PRODUCTS FOR A LOW, LOW PRICE OF ONLY 20% OF
THEIR RETAIL PRICE. (80% DISCOUNT!!). WE CAN ONLY
PURCHASE A MAXIMUM OF 2 ONLY PER PRODUCT THOUGH. I AM
SERIOUSLY LOOKING INTO OBTAINING A FEW OF THEIR PRODUCTS
AND SO IF YOU ARE ALSO INTERESTED, APPROACH ME AT THE
MEETINGS OR GIVE ME A CALL AT 244-4628. OK?

WHATS NEW?
****

FOR YOU MODEM FANS — WE ARE SAD TO INFORM YOU THAT NCC-3815
   BBS WILL NO LONGER BE IN SERVICE. SO SCRATCH THAT ONE
   OFF YOUR LIST.

FOR THE PROGRAMMER — A BOOK ENTITLED "TI INTERN" IS NOW
   AVAILABLE FROM RYTE DATA FROM ONTARIO. IT IS AN ORIGINAL
   GERMAN MANUSCRIPT DESCRIBING THE INNARDS OF THE TI
   INCLUDING GPL. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS FOR SERIOUS AND
   ADVANCED PROGRAMMERS ONLY.

TI FEST — WILL BE HELD ON APRIL 26 IN OTTAWA AND SPONSORED
   BY THE OTTAWA USERS GROUP. SO IF YOU ARE IN THE AREA,
   DO DROP IN AND SAY "I'M FROM STICC". ALSO NEW BRUNSWICK
   IS ALSO SPONSORING A TI FEST THERE BUT I HAVE NO DATE ON
   THAT ONE YET.

SELLING ITEMS — MARK VENIER IS SELLING HIS SYSTEM; COMPUTER,
   B/W SONY MONITOR, CASSETTE WITH TAPES, MODULES AND DOCS.
   ALL OF THIS FOR $295 OBO....
   DENNIS HANCOCK HAS SOLD THE MAJORITY OF HIS SYSTEM SINCE
   HE HAS PURCHASED A 520ST... HE STILL HAS SOME ITEMS LEFT
   OVER.... INTERESTED? THEN COME TO THE NEXT MEETING OR
   GIVE HIM A CALL....

MEMORY? — A GROUP IN MONTREAL HAS MANAGED TO INCREASE THEIR
   MEMORY TO 512K. WITH A 400K RAM AND TRULY CORCOMP
   COMPATIBLE. THEIR NEXT PROJECT IS TO ADD A 20 MK (THATS
   MEGA) DEVICE. AWESOME YOU SAY???? YA BET!!!!
   I WILL TRY TO GET MORE INFO ON THIS ONE....

WHERE WILL IT END?
MORE NEXT MONTH!!! (I HOPE).

F. X. GASTON

[[[[[[EDITOR´S NOTES]]]]]]

[1] SST Software, Inc., are selling an "Expanded Basic Compiler System", with
optional "High Resolution Graphics Package and Text Mode". They claim that
this is "The most powerful high level language available for the T.I.99/4A".
The compiler translates a Basic or Extended Basic program into TMS9900 machine
language, resulting in a program execution speed of up to 160 times faster.
There are numerous features, such as the ability to add commands using E/A.
     When the 99/4A first came on the market, one of the common criticisms by
"serious" computer users was the nonavailability of a compiler. Now that a
compiler is available at a reasonable price, it would appear to be a
significant milestone in the evolution of the 4A. And yet I have not heard of
anyone using it, nor have I seen any reviews in newsletters. Is anyone out
there using this stuff? Or have I failed to notice? Why haven´t I ordered it
myself?? I think I will. It seems to be a way of obtaining assembly language
speed without the complexity of assembly language programming (at least for
some applications).
     The current price is US$25, or US$35 for the version with the high-res
graphics and 40 column mode. They also offer a "PRE/SST Program" for US$30,
which is a program translator aid that also makes developing new programs
easier. Their address is Box 26, Cedarburg, WI, 53012.
     Actually, I did try to order these items, then found out that they do not
ship C.O.D. to Canada, nor do they take credit cards. They like money orders.
     I have some information on these items if anyone is interested.

[2] Is your cartridge port connector wearing out? I recently ordered several
from TI and have one extra to sell. The price is $10.00 . I gave up on
Geophysical Services in Richmond Hill, Ontario, and got them directly from TI
in Texas. I wonder why it takes so long for "TI/Canada" to get parts?
     If you wish to order from TI in Texas, you can phone (806)741-3064. They
DO take major credit cards. They have a toll free 800 number, but as one might
expect, it is not available from Canada. The mailing address of the TI Repair
Center, Parts Department, is P.O.Box 2500, Lubbock, Texas, 79408. They have
another P.O.Box, #53, for remittances. So if you mail payment with your order,
which box do you use? It probably doesn´t matter. There is a shipping and
handling charge of US$2 on small orders. Each connector costs US$ 5.84 . They
do not have the snap-on lint trap. Perhaps you are supposed to reuse the old
one, or not use one at all?

[3] According to the Victoria B.C. 99´er Group´s August 1985 newsletter, a
Victoria company by the name of Osram Industries is developing a "Super
Widget". It could have connectors for from 6 to 16 cartridges. It would have
line drivers and a buffered selector for each module. Now for the good part.
The cartridge selection would be made from a sequence of menus that appear on
the screen after a power-up or reset. How do you change the operating system
GPL to do this? You don´t. It´s already there! Another undocumented hidden
feature of the 99/4A. Now for the best news. The GPL system is designed so
that with this hardware, the built in software allows one cartridge to access
the devices and calls in another! This allows, for example, console basic to
access all of the modules´ call routines and device names. "MINIMEM1",
"MINIMEM2", "SPEECH", CALL PEEKV, CALL POKEV, CALL LOAD, etc. are all available
from basic. The operating system handles all accesses transparently. Extended
basic could access the speech software in the TEII module, etc, etc.
     I will be watching for further news on this item. Could all of this be
made available at a "reasonably low" price? Or is this already obsolete if one
has a Maximem or GramKracker? I have seen neither of these goodies yet, but I
am certainly interested.

The following is reprinted from the Jan. 1986 newsletter, Ottawa User's Group:

Corcomp has produced and marketed a new firmware product(module) that will allow you to test all aspects of operation within your TI system. Its a diagnostics module who's main advantage over Craig Miller's product is that you don't need a working 32K and Drive to load and run it. It comes complete with a loopback cable and instructions to allow you to test all peripherals without having to hook up anything to your RS-232 for instance. Terry Atkinson of Dartmouth Nova Scotia, has one and will be forwarding a review of the product to us in the very near future.

Dave Romer and pals from the New Horizons UG have gone ahead with the production of their 96K ramdisk project and to-date have sold 35 of pre-fabricated boards. Dave applied to us for permission to install our DM-1000 in their package as its resident disk manager. We agreed and now have a mutual understanding that we will receive $2 US per unit sold from them as a form of royalty. Good stuff!!! Dave recently wrote to say the RamDisk will soon be availible in kit form for about $42 US. That will bring it within reach of my budget and I'm liable to jump on their bandwagon when it happens. Watch here for more info.

Asgard Software has been busy since Chicago and have just recently brought out Graphx Companion II. For those of you that have seen their Companion I disk its time to get really excited....I hear Companion II is even better!!!

The authors of Character Set and Graphics Design and TI-Artist(tm) are corroborating to produce versions of their 2 packages that will be able to use files from both. This is fantastic news for TI artists the whole world over and will soon have Apple "PRINT! ·' owners drooling! Incidently....although very slow Dave Rose's((' Author) BANNER program is very good. All who were at the last meeting can bear witness to that fact thanks to Steve McWatty. TI-Artist Version II will be available soon at an estimated cost of $20 CDN. CSGD is fairware.

The following is reprinted from the Feb. 1986 newsletter, Ottawa User's Group:

CHAIRMAN'S TWO CENTS WORTH

We are now well into the new year and it will soon be spring and the time for our first TI-Faire. Keep the date open and if you have any time to give please phone Jane as this project will require the assistance of as many members as we have. In addition to our Faire in April there will be a TI fair in New Jersey on March 15 at which time Lou Phillips of Myarc has promised to release the new TI compatible computer. We are making arrangements for any of our members who want to attend. There will be more details at the next meeting.

TI-FEST BULLETIN - by Jane Laflamme

Things are running quite smoothly for the TI-FEST to be held here in Ottawa on the 26th of April (Saturday) co-sponsored by NUAC and Ottawa user groups. Plans are finally falling together and letters to invite distributors from across Canada and the U.S. have been mailed; so if your are speaking to one of our sponsors, give us a "plug".

Invitations to individuals and user groups that we have had contact with outside of the Ottawa area will have probably been sent out by the time you are reading this. If you are corresponding with someone in another User Group in Canada, (or the U.S.), be sure to mention that the "FEST" will give them a chance to "strut their stuff", meet other groups and individuals, with the same problems and joys that they have....share knowledge, show us the software/hardware they have developed! Too good to be missed... We will also help find them accommodation if possible. Tell them to check transportation costs; when booked quite ahead of time, they might not be as expensive as they thought!

Any groups or individuals will be quite welcome, so if by chance you do not receive an invitation, please contact us at the address on the Newsletter cover and we will rush one off to you. (We will not be sending out formal invitations to the Ottawa User Group members... to save on postage.)

TI-99/4A National Users Association (NUAC) News   By Bob Boone
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Due to severe time constraints this is going to have to be a short column this month. I do want to stress that things are looking very rosey for us in the new year ahead though.

Phil Thompson of the Kawartha 99ers caled yesterday to announce his group in Peterborough has decided to join NUAC. Phil's group numbers 35 and they meet on the 1st Wednesday each month at 7:30 PM in the Queen Alexander Building on Bernardo St. in Peterborough. He stresses that the welcome mat is out to anyone that can make it out to any of their meetings. He also adds that Bruce Ryan of Ryte Data fame in Haliburton was at their last meeting and demonstrated a couple of new TI products from Germany.

The German Enhanced Ex-basic module was there and a compact stand alone 32K box too. Both products generated considerable excitement with the Peterborough membership at large. Bruce Ryan is negotiating with the German company building these and other products and is trying to get them into the marketplace here in North America. I'll be contacting Bruce in the near future to see if we can arrange a demo here in Ottawa. Watch closely for updates....

Bruce Ryan of Ryte Data got into a spot of trouble a while back with several groups that I've been in contact. Notable among these groups were 9-T-9 in Toronto and TINS in Nova Scotia.... To the best of my knowledge these problems are now in the past and have been laid to rest to everyone's satisfaction. My personal impression Bruce had just gotten himself in too deep and was snowed under by correspondance. I have spoken to him on several occasions and have never found him less than sincere in his efforts toward TIers. He has a definite tendancy, like me, to badly over-extend himself. Hopefully, when the dust does settle he'll still be there supporting us all....or trying to anyway.

I had the opportunity to visit North Bay for 3 days ·ly this week and spent an evening with 3 of their members at N ·· member Pat Graham's home. In anticipation of this chance I hau brought along some of my software library and GramKracker and Maximem. The evening was all too short but exceedingly enjoyable and I'd like to thank Pat and his fellow TIers for their hospitality. Sorry I don't have more time to continue here but the Newsletter deadline is too fast approaching....

Next month I'll have more news for you all on our upcoming TI-Fest and also plan to print screendumps of the Canadian User Group logos that have found their way into my library to date....later....

Craig Miller of Miller Graphics has come through again with, not one but two new offerings for the TI-99/4A!!! GramKracker has come to Canada and was debuted at our January meeting. One feature we did not expound was its ability to save to and retrieve from cassette. This feature, now also available on Maximem, by Guy Gournay in Montreal, will allow unexpanded TIers access to very powerful machine language games and utilities. A disk drive and 32K card was needed to run this type of software....

Craig has also published a new book, written by Ron Albright called The Orphan Chronicles, which in my opinion should be required reading for all dedicated TIers. It's 172 power-packed pages have 10 facinating chapters and 11 appendices that'll keep you enthralled from start to finish. It tells the history of our machine from its inception on the designer's board in Lubbock Texas to that infamous 'Black Friday' in October 1983. In addition to its high interest value it will also be a valuable reference book with User Groups; BBSes; book reviews etc. detailed in its appendices in the back pages of the book.

Craig will sell you these two items directly for $195 US and $10.95 respectively or they may be purchased through me for $260 CDN and $15 (The price quoted for GramKracker includes the 3 optional memory chips)

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

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


X    X    XX    XXXXX    XXXX
X    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    X    X   XXXX
```

The further adventures of Luke Vaxhacker   Episode n+1

The story thus far: Luke, PDP-1, and their 'droids RS232 and 3CPU have made good their escape from the Imperial Bus Signals with the aid of Con Solo and the bookie, Two Bacco. The Milliamp Falcon hurtles onward through system space. Meanwhile, on a distant page in user space...

Princess _LPA0: was ushered into the conference room, followed closely by Dec Vadic. "Governor Tarchive," she spat, "I should have expected to find you holding Vadic's lead. I recognized your unique pattern when I was first brought aboard." She eyed the 0177545 tatooed on his header coldly.

"Charming to the last," Tarchive declared menacingly. "Vadic, have you retrieved any information?"

"Her resistance to the logic probe is considerable," Vadic rasped. "Perhaps we would get faster results if we increased the supply voltage..."

"You've had your chance, Vadic". Now I would like the princess to witness the test that will make this workstation fully operational. Today we enable the -r beam option, and we've chosen the princess' $HOME of /usr/alderaan as the primary target."

"No! You can't! /usr/alderaan is a public account, with no restricted permissions. We have no backup tapes! You can't..."

"Then name the rebel inode!" Tarchive snapped.

A voice announced over a hidden speaker that they had arrived in /usr.

"Then name the rebel inode!" Tarchive snapped.

A voice announced over a hidden speaker that they had arrived in /usr.

"1248," she whispered, "They're on /dev/rm3. Inode 1248." She turned away.

Tarchive sighed with satisfaction. "There, you see Lord Vadic? She can be reasonable. Proceed with the operation."

It took several clock cycles for the words to penetrate. "What!" _LPA0: gasped.

"/dev/rm3 is not a mounted filesystem." Tarchive explained. "We require a more visible subject to demonstrate the power of the RM STAR workstation. We will mount an attack on /mnt/dantooine as soon as possible."

As the princess watched, Tarchive reached over and typed "ls" on a nearby terminal. There was a brief pause, there being only one processor on board, and the viewscreen showed, ".: not found."

The princess suddenly double-spaced and went off-line.

To be continued...

The following is reprinted from the Feb. 1986 newsletter, Ottawa User's Group:

Ryte Data, who have exclusive distribution rights in Canada for the German Extended Basic (adds 40 additional graphic commands to the original TI XB) have indicated to one of our members that there is a strong possiblity that they will attend, I believe. (Perhaps they may also have that 80 col. card that I have heard tell of, developed in Germany!) We also had reason to speak with Lou Phillips a month ago and took the opportunity of inviting him at that time. He didn't say yes, !··· he didn't say NO either! If the computer /128 does "go" at the New Jersey fair, where he is slated to debut the machine, maybe he would like to meet a new market here in Canada. We are definitely keeping our fingers crossed...

Slated for the show: Tutorials, workshops, demonstrations of new and old software and hardware, door prizes, wind-up dinner, and much, much more as it falls into place. The more people attending, the more succesful the endeavour. We have provided the means ···· YOU help us by volunteering to help or, at least, attending your show! Any suggestions or ideas will be gladly accepted...

Jane Laflamme
(613) 837-1719 or 830-5347

            'PRIOR PATTERNS   By Bob Boone

The TI-99/4A world is more alive now than it ever was before...new to us but Old Hat to our European users...The Faires; where, when and sometimes why...Only one Suggestion?!?...Wild rumors...

Chicago, bless their pea-pickin' hearts, showed the world, and the world(at least the TI World)sat up and noticed. There are three major Faires/Fests in the works this spring, including ours; but more on these later...

Craig Miller has annouced plans to publish another Summer Catalog this year with an even bigger and more comprehensive dealer and User Group listing.

Terrie Masters(President of the LA 99ers; Dr. Ron Albright(author of Orphan Chronicles) and a few other nationally known 99ers have announced plans to create a non-profit User Group Network, whose main purpose in life will be to promote good software; whether PD, fairware or commercial. They plan to distribute video and audio tapes of authors demonstrating their software and thereby gain a national audience for programmers that have hitherto had only local recognition. In addition to tapes they'll also publish a bi-monthly newsletter of impartial, fair software reviews. Its definately the sort of thing I think we should get involved in, and as soon as possible.

From Germany...a company by the name of MECHATRONIC has arranged to market some new TI hardware here in our neck of the woods. I think its great news for all concerned. A new version of Extended basic, licenced by TI and enhanced with many additional graphics commands(60 new ones!) has been introduced by this company. Its called Extended Basic II Plus and is available now for $125 CDN. The list of products already developed or under developement by the company reads like a common wish book for our systems...
 internal RAM card!
 stand alone, Ramdisk/Print Spooler with printer port!
A mouse with an Icon driven graphics program! An Eprommer!
128K Gram card for the PEB(like GramKracker)
Extended Basic II Plus!
TI-Intern...a book with ROM, GROM and GPL listings! and an 80 Column card(March 1986)! For more information on these and the many other new products coming on the market, come out to the meetings and all you gotta do then is ask!