THE SNUGLETTER

FROM THE SOUTHERN NEVADA USERS' GROUP

Vol. 4 — No. 1 JANUARY, 1986

SPECIAL NEXT MEETING

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1986 — 1:00 PM

SUNRISE ACRES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I look back on 1985, I can't help but wonder what they mean when they say the 99/4A is an "orphan" computer. There has been a tremendous amount of quality new hardware and software released in the last year. Hardware developers like Myarc and CorComp have let us expand our systems with new disk controllers, expanded memory, real time clocks, printer buffers etc., while software developers like Miller's Graphics, Navarone Industries, DataBioTics, Mechatronic, and a host of others have provided us with software of a quality that had been heretofore unavailable. Offerings such as Miller's "ADVANCED DIAGNOSTICS" and "EXPLORER", Navarone's "PAINT-N-PRINT", Databiotics "4A-TALK", or Apesoft/ Mechatronic's "EXTENDED BASIC II Plus" have given new life to this once "dead" computer!

And then there are the "FREEWARE" authors. People such as Paul Charlton ("FAST-TERM"), Mark Hoogendoorn ("99-BBS"), Steve Lawless (Masscopy), and Danny Michael ("NEATLIST" "SCREENDUMP") have provided us with commercial quality software for practically nothing (usualy a $10.00 or less donation).

"You make the past sound good.", you may say, "but what about the future?". Well, all I can say is that if the announcements for the first part of this year are any indication of what 1986 will be like, the future looks bright, indeed! We have already heard from Craig Miller about a new disk to disk dissassembler he will introduce right here in Las Vegas at our next meeting (Jan 11). Craig has also recently started shipping his Gram Kracker module, and will be selling a new book written by Ron Albright called "The Orphan Chronicles". He has announced that soon he will be releasing a GPL Assembler, GPL Disassembler, and a GPL Programmer's Guide to be used with the GRAM KRACKER. These utilities will allow you to write your own GPL programs (easier than ASSEMBLY, but you still have access to the entire computer and its peripherals!). GPL is the proprietary Graphics Programming Language built in to your console that was never documented by TI.

We also hear from Myarc, Inc. that their new TI compatible computer will be released sometime in the "first quarter" of 1986. We understand that Myarc is also working on an "IBM card" to give their machine compatibility with "Big Blue". It's possible that we here in Las Vegas will get the first actual demonstration of the capabilities of this new computer! Lou Phillips, Myarc's president, says that if they have anything to show, they will be here in Las Vegas for the Winter Consumer Electronics Show and will attend our special meeting.

There are many more people and companies worthy of note, but space will not permit. Suffice it to say, if ever we truly were "orphans", we have long since been "adopted" by a very friendly family!

--John Martin--

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THIS MONTH'S SNUG MEETING WILL NOT BE HELD AT THE REGULAR TIME OR PLACE!!!!

SNUG TO HOST MILLER'S GRAPHICS IN JANUARY!

On Saturday, January 11, 1986, SNUG will be hosting Craig and Susan Miller at a special meeting to show off several new products from Miller's Graphics, including a clinic on using their new "GRAM KRACKER" module.

Also expected at the meeting will be Tom Freeman, the author of a new disk to disk disassembler program which is to be distributed by Miller's Graphics, and Terrie Masters, President of the LA 99ers. Ron Albright, a Sysop on the TI section of CompuServe, was also invited to appear and autograph his new book, "The Orphan Chronicles", but will be unable to attend due to previous committments. His book will be distributed through Miller's Graphics and will be available at our meeting.

We have also invited Lou Phillips, President of MYARC, to attend. He says that he will be here at the Consumer Electronics Show and will attend our meeting if he has anything to show. They are currently assembling a number of the new computers and hope to have them ready to show at the CES. Mr Phillips has said that the decision to attend the CES would be a last minute thing.

Myarc also has some other new products for the 99/4A including 128K 512K memory expansion cards and a new Extended Basic that will take advantage of these expansion cards and allow access to text mode (40 columns), and bit map mode (hi-res graphics) directly from BASIC. Les Merryman, a Myarc distributor from Southern California will be at our meeting to demonstrate these new products even if Lou Phillips is unable to attend with the new computer.

The meeting will be held at the Sunrise Acres Elementary School multipurpose room. The address is 2501 Sunrise Ave. Located at Sunrise and Eastern.

For further information, contact John Martin (702)647-1062 or Gordon Leonard (702)384-2302.

--JOHN MARTIN--

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FROM THE EDITOR

First, I must extend my apologies to Don Mitchell for my error in reporting that another member had provided the flyer about our group. (Have you placed yours up in a conspicuous place?) It turns out that Don was the member who provided it and deserves all the kudos!

I just received my December issue of MICROpendium. (By the way - if you want a source of info for the TI 99, this is IT! I have picked up most of the back issues that others didn't have and have found them to be extremely informative.) They are picking up a lot of advertising along with having some very good articles and tutorials. This issue has an article on Freeware (I like to call it Shareware) with some views of some of the authors of some of the offerings to this market. (Have you sent your payment for the programs you have or use?) There is an article on assembly language for the TI by Mack McCormick who is their regular columnist in that area. There are reviews of Oak Tree Systems "Display Enhancement Package", a 40 column display program, and CorComp's Triple Tech card. Their NEWSBYTES section has its usual announcements of hardware, software, new users' groups (Yes there are still ones forming!), and programs and tips on programming. All in all, a good publication for those information starved TI owners.

Our special January SNUG meeting should prove to be one of the most interesting we have had. You will find a map elsewhere in this issue showing the location of the meeting. I hope that all of you are planning on attending to get some of the best type of information available, i.e., from the mouth of those who are the doers in the TI market. SEE YOU AT THE MEETING!

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GRAM KRACKER--a quick review

Hopefully, you all had a Merry Christmas; and, if you are like me, you're glad it's over. Now you can settle down and relax in your favorite easy chair, watch football, and gain a few pounds from the Christmas dinner leftovers. OR, if you're like me, you can turn your brains to mush at your 99/4a console.

True to his word, Craig Miller came through with the Gram Kracker just before Christmas. Mine was delivered the day before by United Parcel special delivery, with the 80K GRAM expansion installed, and a packing slip stating that each component, system, and memory was prechecked before shipping. Also enclosed was a letter of apology stating that the utility disk and owner's manual which came with the Gram Kracker were temporary, and that the final versions of both would be delivered in about 2 (two) weeks. It also stated that if I had any questions about the Gram Kracker's functions, to call the phone number listed in the letter. I was so happy to get it on time that I didn't (and don't) care at all that the documentation was a bit sketchy. I have made a few calls to Craig, and not only were my questions answered, but other information and tips were freely given to me.

Now a few words about the Gram Kracker itself. It is definitely a QUALITY product! It has a heavy sturdy feel to it that only our P-boxes come close to. It was designed to fit S.N.U.G.gly into the console to avoid problems with bumps and bangs. It does! If you don't use crowbars on your console, you won't bother the Gram Kracker. It has a black, textured, epoxy-finish with white lettering on the front control panel, and it sits on 2 fat rubber supports to keep it in a level position above the console itself. I assume that this was done to avoid the build up of heat that our cartridges are susceptible to.

After reading through the manual which came with it, I proceeded to save my first module (Extended Basic). The Gram Kracker displays directions on the screen which make

saving and loading a snap to do. To my amazement, it worked the first time! With my confidence building, I pulled out my Extended Basic module and loaded the new disk version. It worked! They all worked!! It still works!!! To date, I have placed over 40 (forty) modules on disk and reloaded them without one single problem. Even the Atari cartridges (they do not have a reset line) work perfectly after being loaded from disk. And, whichever cartridge is loaded into the Gram Kracker STAYS in its memory when the computer is turned off. After I receive the new utility disk, I will be able to save up to 3 (three) cartridges in the Gram Kracker's memory and leave one in the cartridge slot to use with the flick of a switch! Also on the utility disk are some new "CALLS" for Extended Basic.

Now for the best part! The Gram Kracker makes it possible to edit the memory of a cartridge. You can personalize your error messages in Extended BASIC for instance, or have a title screen with your name on it. You can also change default printer specifications to fit your printer. After these changes have been made, you can store the modified cartridge the same way that you stored the original. I could go on and on, but I'm sure you can see that I am very happy with my Gram Kracker. It's like having a new computer! My thanks to the Millers, and Happy Holidays to all. BYE

--Bob Sherburne--

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BBS NEWS

The SNUG BBS now has 1200 BAUD capability! We filally got the new modem we ordered from DAK. The modem is an ADC model MD 1202. It supports 300 or 1200 BAUD communication. The selection of baud rate is automatic and tone controlled. This means that the BBS will know whether you are calling at 300 or 1200 BAUD and will automatically adjust itself. The modem has a built-in clock/calendar that can be accessed by the BBS. It is fully Hayes compatible with several nice features not found on Hayes modems. All in all, I think we got a good bargain for $169.00.

Word must be starting to spread about our BBS because we have started getting calls from out of state recently. We are also getting more calls from our members than we used to with the old BBS.

We currently have around 20 programs and files available for download in our file transfer section, and I am working on some documentation files for the Info/News section. I will also soon be adding some tutorials and informational files to the INfo/News section.

Probably the least used section on our board is the Message base itself. There is room for about 200 messages on it at any time, but so far we only have about 20 or so messages and I left most of those. Don't be afraid to leave a message or ask a question. That is what a BBS is for!

Steve Buchanan has volunteered his services as an assistant SYSOP. I have set him up with a remote SYSOP access level so that he can help out with some of the routine maintenance and updates. Welcome aboard, Steve!

--John Martin--

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FROM THE LAWS OF COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

01 THE PROGRAMMER'S NEMISIS
  03 EXPERTS THEORIZE THAT, THROUGH EVOLUTION AND INBREEDING, PROGRAMMERS MAY BECOME A DISTINCT SUBSPECIES OF THE HUMAN RACE.
01 A LAW FOR THE FUTURE
  03 IF IT'S NOT IN A COMPUTER, IT DOESN'T EXIST.
01 HORGAN'S HOMILY
  03 WE WON'T HAVE PERSONAL COMPUTING UNTIL WE CAN GET THEM LITTLE AND TALKING.
01 WAIN'S CONCLUSION
  03 THE ONLY PEOPLE MAKING MONEY THESE DAYS ARE THE ONES WHO SELL COMPUTER PAPER.
01 FIRST COMPUTER AXIOM
  03 WHEN PUTTING IT INTO MEMORY, REMEMBER WHERE YOU PUT IT.
01 LAW OF CYBERNETIC ENTOMOLOGY
  03 THERE'S ALWAYS ONE MORE BUG.
01 LANDAU'S PROGAMMING PARADOX
  03 THE BEST PROGRAMMER HAS TO BE SOMEONE
  03 THE MORE HUMANLIKE A COMPUTER BECOMES THE LESS TIME IT SPENDS COMPUTING AND THE MORE TIME IT SPENDS DOING MORE HUMANLIKE WORK
  03 A SOFTWARE COMMITTEE OF ONE IS LIMITED BY ITS OWN HORIZON AND WILL ONLY SPECIFY THAT FAR.

NOTE !!

NO Monday night meeting in January

The following TI-WRITER help chart has been published in several newsltters.

A HANDY DANDY TI-WRITER USERS REFERENCE GUIDE

SUBMITTED BY BOB STEPHENS

The following handy TI-WRITER commands are reprinted for the June issue of the 99'er News published by the TI Users Group of Will County, Romeoville, Il. This puts the most used commands on one page for handy access at your computer.

EDITOR COMMAND	FCTN	CTRL	EDITOR COMMAND	FCTN	CRTL	EDITOR COMMAND	FCTN	CTRL
Back tab		T	Ins. Blank line	8	O	Quit	=	
Beginning/line		V	Insert character	2	G	Reformat		2orR
Command/escape	9	C	Last paragrapph		6orH	Right arrow	D	D
Delete character	1	F	Left arrow	S	S	Roll down	4	A
Del. end of line		K	Left margin rel.		Y	Roll up	6	B
Delete line	3	N	New page		9orP	Screen color		3
Line #'s(on/off)	0		New paragraph		8orM	Tab	7	I
Down arrow	X	A	Next paragraph		4OrJ	Up arrow	E	E
Duplicate line		S	Next window	S		Word tab		7orW
Home cursor		L	Oops!		1orZ	Word wrap/fixed		O

Load files: LF (enter) DSK1.FILENAME (load entire file)
LF (enter) 3 DSK1.FILENAME (merges filename with data in memory after line 3)
LF (enter) 3 1 10 DSK1.FILENAME (lines 1 thru 10 of filename are merged after line 3 in memory)
LF (enter) 1 10 DSK1.FILENAME (loads lines 1 thru 10 of filename)

Save files: SF (enter) DSK1.FILENAME (save entire file)
SF (enter) 1 10 DSK1.FILENAME (save lines 1 thru 10)

Print Files: PF (enter) PIO (prints control characters and line numbers)
PF (enter) C PIO (prints with no control characters)
PF (enter) L PIO (prints 74 characters with line numbers)
PF (enter) F PIO (prints fixed 80 format)
PF (enter) 1 10 PIO (prints lines 1 thru 10)
NOTE: The above assumes PIO. DSK1.FILENAME, and RS232 are also valid!
To cancel the print command press FCTN 4.

Delete file: DF (enter) DSK1.FILENAME

Setting Margins and Tabs: (16 tabs maximum)
L - Left margin R - Right margin I - Indent T - Tab
Use ENTER to execute or COMMAND/ESCAPE to terminate command.

Recover Edit: RE (enter) Y or N

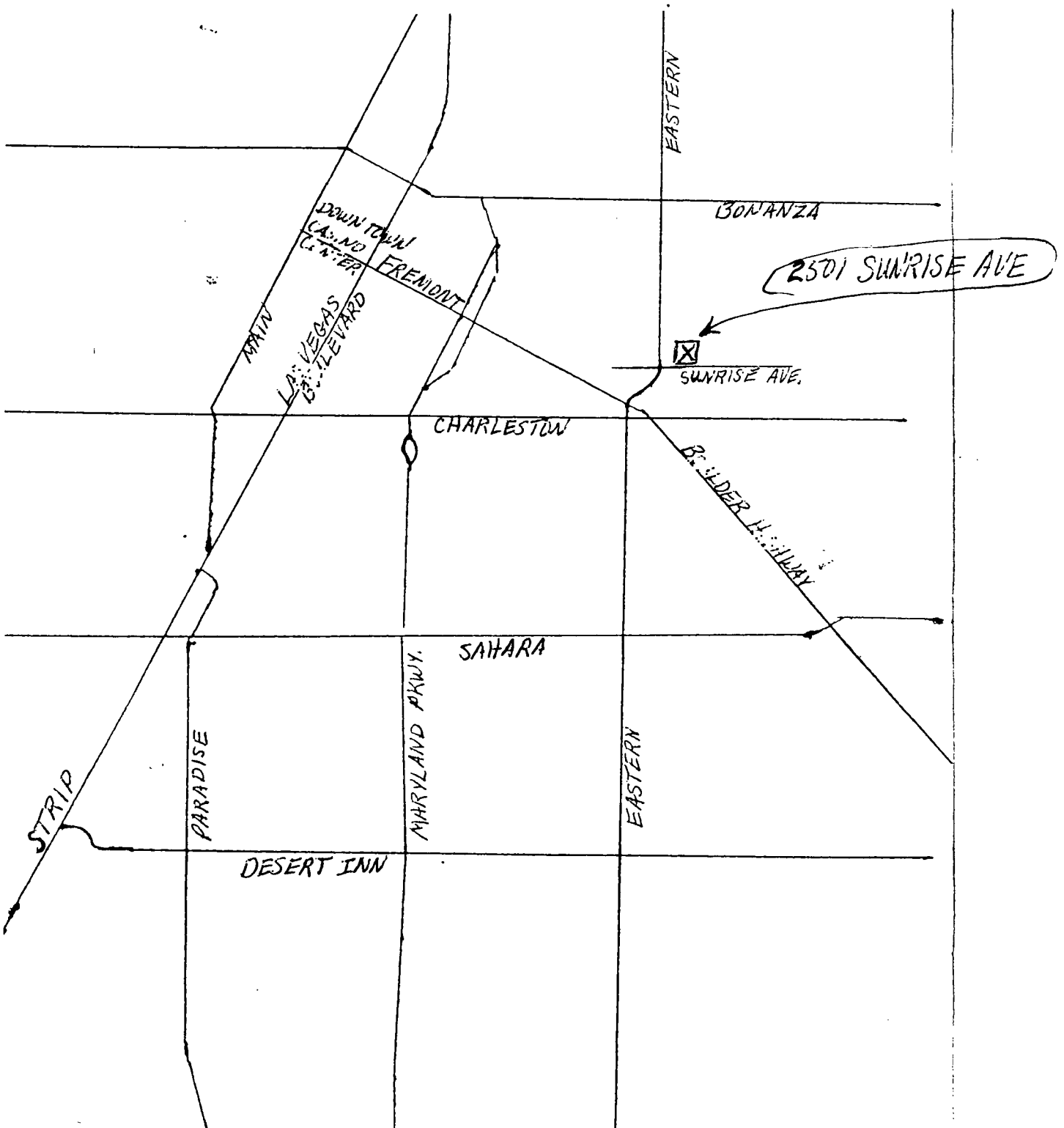
Line move: M (enter) 2 6 10 (moves lines 2 thru 6 after line 10)
M (enter) 2 2 10 (moves line 2 after line 10)

Copy: same as move except use C instead of M.

Find String: FS (enter) /string/ (will look for string in entire file)
FS (enter) 1 15 /string/ (will look for string in lines 2 thru 15)

Delete: D (enter) 10 15 (deletes lines 10 thru 15 in memory)

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF SNUG'S SPECIAL JANUARY 11, 1986,
MEETING BEING HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE
WINTER CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW



* The SNUGLETter is published monthly by the Southern Nevada Users' Group [SNUG]. SNUG is a non-profit organization of individuals with an interest in all aspects of Texas Instruments' 99/4 & 4A computer, including all related hardware and software by third party vendors. The GROUP meets 6:30 PM on the second Monday of the month - currently in the Clark County Library meeting room, 1726 E. Charleston Blvd. [Charleston Plaza Mall]. Visitors and guests are welcome to attend the meetings. Information on membership is available at the meeting.
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Newsletter submissions can be sent to P.O. Box 26301, Las Vegas, Nevada 89126. Articles using TI-Writer on disk are ideal. You may also phone articles with a modem also a preferred method.