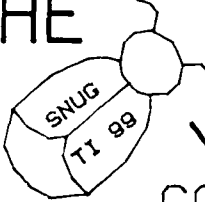


Feb 1986

THE  **SNUGLETTER**
 FROM THE SOUTHERN NEVADA USERS' GROUP

Vol. 4 - No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1986

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1986 - 6:30 PM

CHARLESTON PLAZA LIBRARY MEETING ROOM

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This month I am going to just write a short note about this month's meeting and let my article on the CES take the place of my regular president's message.

Before I get to that, though, I want to publicly thank Craig and Susan Miller, Les Merryman, Terrie Masters, Tom Freeman, Dale Guidrey, and George Steffan for their participation in last month's meeting. Through their generous sharing of time and talent, we were able to have the best meeting ever for SNUG! Thanks also to Gordon Leonard, Joe Leavitt (sr and jr), Dinshaw Billimoria, and all who helped to set up the meeting room. Thank you one and all.

Now, on to new business. This month we will be having a "shoot-out" between the MYARC disk controller card and the CORCOMP Micro Expansion System (which has the Corcomp disk controller in it). If you have been considering expanding your system to include Double Sided Double Density, Single Sided Double Density, or just want to have 4 drives, you will need to have one of these cards to accomplish it.

There are many similarities between the systems, but there are also some differences that you should be aware of. We will be running timed comparisons on such things as disk cloning, single file copy, multiple file copies, disk initialization, disk tests, renaming files, renaming disks, etc. We will also be making comparisons of the various utilities included with both of the cards. If you have been thinking about getting new drives for you system, you won't want to miss this meeting.

We have gotten a deal on some DSDD disks through a company in Southern California. We have ordered 200 disks for the group, and will have them available to our members at the meeting if they (the disks) get here in time. We haven't got the exact price yet due to postage and possible tax

considerations, (not to mention whether we want to make a profit for the club or not), but they should be less than \$7.00 a box in any case. If you are interested, bring some money to the meeting (and a box since they come in plastic bags). Disks will include write protect tabs, labels, and tyvek sleeves.

-John Martin-

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BBS NEWS

As many of you know, the BBS was down for about 4 days last month due to a problem in the RS232 cable. It took 4 days to find the problem because the symptoms were exactly the same as I have had in two other RS232 cards in the past. I was so sure it was in the card that the cable was the last thing I looked at. The only good thing that I can say about the experience is that now we have all the I/O chips socketed in our RS232 card so if we have future problems, it will be much easier to replace them. Thanks to Steve Buchanan, one of our assistant SYSOPs, for his technical assistance and the loan of his equipment and expertise in tracking down the problem. It's good to know that we don't necessarily have to send our equipment back to the manufacturer for minor repairs.

Speaking of assistant SYSOP's, I have recently upgraded Bob Sherburne's access level to Remote Sysop. Bob has recently gotten started using Compuserve and has promised to share information he downloads with us. Welcome aboard Bob!!

BBS use is up this month. So far, since we set up the new program, we have logged about 650 calls. If you don't count the 300 or so from me, that still leaves about 350

from actual users. Much better than we were doing with the old program. I hope this trend continues.

We currently have about 20 files (programs) available for download using TE-II. Most are games, but there are some quite useful utilities as well. I am happy to see that several of our members are uploading as well as downloading programs. That is what keeps the File transfer section interesting.

I have been working on adding XMODEM transfers to the board. If I am able to get it working, we will be able to use this somewhat faster method of file transfer for our program Up/Downloads as well as the TE-II method. This should also make our BBS file transfers more compatible with other types of computers. Keep watching the board for an announcement of this upgrade.

We have also been getting more out of state calls lately (probably due to the meeting last month). For those of you from out of state, we welcome your calls. We give full access to all new callers. The only way I will implement lower access levels is if someone abuses the board. From personal experience, I know how annoying it is to call a board long distance, spend 5 minutes getting logged on and reading the obligatory "new user" Bulletins at the beginning of the program, and then being told that my application would be validated in a few days. I am hoping that my method will work better.

-John Martin-

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THE LAS VEGAS WINTER CES SHOW

For home computer enthusiasts, the Winter Consumer Electronics Show here in Las Vegas has lost most of its glamour. No longer is the East Hall of the Convention Center filled with booths full of new and exciting computer related items. Gone are the days of wandering around in awe at all of the new and marvelous hardware offerings. No more booths with nothing but the latest in video games, word processors, and spread sheets. No more beautiful girls demonstrating some manufacturers latest entry into the home computer field. Instead, we find that the home computer has been shuffled off to one back corner of the giant hall, their previous places of glory taken up by Compact Disk players, BMM Camcorders, and Stereo Television sets.

As a matter of fact, I could only find one major home computer manufacturer present and actively showing its new products. Atari was demonstrating their new 520ST, comparing it to the Commodore Amiga and Apple Macintosh.

There were a sprinkling of independent software and hardware manufacturers demonstrating products for a number of different computers, and of course, TI was there with their calculators and talking toys, but I had the impression that the CES had had its fling with the home computer industry and had all but cast them aside. Very disappointing.

In conjunction with the CES (and taking advantage of the fact that many people like to use the CES as an excuse to see Las Vegas) the Southern Nevada User's Group held a special meeting on Jan. 11th at which we hosted Craig Miller and Tom Freeman from Miller's Graphics, Les Merryman from MYARC, and Terrie Masters and George Steffen from the LA 99ers User Group. Among the guests in attendance were Roy Hunter of Hunter Electronics in Chicago and Cheryl (Regena) Whitelaw from COMPUTE! magazine.

Craig and Tom were introducing a new disk-to-disk disassembler (written by Tom Freeman) called DISKASSEMBLER which will be marketed by Miller's Graphics. This program will disassemble object code from one disk and write the source code back to another disk without having to have the object file loaded into memory. The source code can then be modified as desired and reassembled into runnable code. Unfortunately, I am not an Assembly Language programmer, so I can't elaborate in great detail about this program, but I will be buying one based on the demonstration given by Craig Miller.

Also demonstrated at the meeting was Miller's new GRAM KRACKER module. This is potentially one of the most useful utilities ever made available to the TI user. This module will allow you to actually customize your module based programs. It will be possible to store your own BASIC programs in the GRAM KRACKER and have them come up as an option on the main title screen. Loading the Editor or Assembler from GRAM KRACKER is instantaneous, thus eliminating those annoying delays while waiting for them to load from disk (works for TI-WRITER too!). You could even bypass the console ROM entirely and come up in some other operating environment. Possibilities are so great that there is already a special segment of Compuserve (called KRACKER HACKERS) dedicated to the GRAM KRACKER.

As if that weren't enough, Craig also introduced a new book, written by Ron Albright, a sysop on Compuserve, called THE ORPHAN CHRONICLES. This book is a comprehensive history of the TI99/4A and the people who made it what it is today. It covers the introduction of the 99/4 in 1979, the 99/4A in 1981, the great computer price wars of 1983, the pullout, the great disappearing act by magazines and dealers, the user's groups (real and commercial), telecommunications, FREEMWARE, and insights into many of the people who have become well known to most TI users. At the back of the book is a list of all known user's groups, publications that still cover our "orphan",

a list of distributors and dealers, an annotated bibliography of books relating to the TI 99/4A, lists of software and hardware manufacturers, Fairware authors, and TI produced software (modules, cassettes, and disks). All in all, very much worth the \$9.95 price.

The products from Miller's Graphics are available as follows:

- ORPHAN CHRONICLES.....immediately
- DISKASSEMBLER.....end of Feb.
- GRAM KRACKER.....immediately with preliminary manual. Final manual end of Feb.

Craig also promises to have the GPL ASSEMBLER and DISASSEMBLER for use with the GRAM KRACKER and "A new car for the P-BOX" ready in March. He won't say any more about the card (Just smiles and says we'll like it).

The other major company represented at the meeting was MYARC. They sent their west coast representative, Les Merryman to the meeting. Les gave some impressive demonstrations of the MYARC Personality card (for use with a hard disk system), and their new 512K memory expansion card. He also had and demonstrated the new EXTENDED BASIC II (or IV depending on who you talk to). Unfortunately, Les only got XB2 the night before he came to Las Vegas, so he didn't have time to get real familiar with the software demo that came with it. What we did see looked very interesting, however, with such things as BIT MAP and TEXT modes being directly available from BASIC. This version of EXTENDED BASIC is fully compatible with all XB programs, and runs somewhat faster due to the fact that the program was written in ASSEMBLY language instead of the much slower GPL that TI used for theirs. Les says that the XB2 will only work with the MYARC memory expansion cards. According to sources at MYARC, the XB2 should be shipping in quantity by the time you read this. This is supposed to be the same BASIC that will come in the new computer (still no official name). The new computer was not at the CES, but the word now is that we can expect to see it at the 99'FEST-WEST'86 in L.A. on March 1 and 2.

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FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to pass along some things which I've come across recently. First, is a program that I have used to eliminate one of the gripes that I, as well as others have with the MiniMemory Module. I have a program which was written in Console BASIC utilizing the memory access routines in the MiniMem to download programs stored in the MiniMem's RAM to disk. This allows assembly language routines written with the Line-by-Line assembler to be written to disk files for more convenient loading in the future. Be forewarned though that the program is slow!! Routines in console BASIC are not noted for their speed

and this one is no exception. I believe that this program came to SNUG via a program exchange with one of the San Diego groups. Now, what is needed is a routine written in assembly for object code speed to do the same thing.

Next, is a note that some of the other user groups have been publishing articles and tutorials of numerous types, including ones on TI-Writer, FORTH, Assembly Language and Multiplan. Other groups are starting to publish material on modifying the hardware, e.g., adding a remote keyboard, a connector to move the P-Box connector, among others. These can be found in the recent exchange newsletters. If anyone is interested in these types of articles, let John or me know so that we can target these things for your attention. Call us or talk with us at the next meeting.

R.J. Bieber has provided the following program for those who may have MASTERDISK.

```

20 ! DISK FILENAME="MAIN-UPDTS" - DATED 27 JAN 86 -
  UPDATES by R J Bieber (SNUG) TO CORRECT "MASTERDISK"
  PRINT-OUT TOP ALIGNMENT ERRORS
30 DISPLAY AT(4,1)ERASE ALL:"This program contains a
  few changes to correct printout TOP-OF-FORM Alignment
  errors in the "MAIN" program of the"
40 DISPLAY AT(8,1):" "MASTERDISK" Series.":"
  Copyrighted 1983,":" Extended Software Co.":"
  : "Compare this programs and"
50 DISPLAY AT(13,1):"your program line numbers. If
  they match then DELETE THE 9 programs Lines 20-80 and
  SAVE ONLY Lines 90-1352"
60 DISPLAY AT(17,1):"in a MERGE Format.":"MERGE the
  SAVED FILE with a BACK-UP COPY of your 'MASTERDISK'
  "MAIN" program"
70 DISPLAY AT(22,1):"and run operational checks to
  make sure it's OK before updating your Master
  Copy.":"
80 END
90 ! DISK FILENAME="MAIN" - UPDATES by R J Bieber
  (SNUG)- 27 JAN 86 - TO CORRECT "MASTERDISK"
  PRINT-OUTS TOP-OF-FORM (TOF) ALIGNMENT ERRORS
690 PRINT #I: :TAB(T+(M*QQ-LEN(M*))/2);M#:
  :TAB(T+(M*QQ-LEN(H*(LST+7)))/2);H*(LS T+7): : : IF
  I=1 AND DAT$="" THEN LP=8+(LST=2)ELSE PRINT
  #I:TAB(T+(M*QQ-LEN(DAT $))/2);DAT$ : : LP=10+(LST=2)
760 IF I=1 THEN GOSUB 1350
880 IF I=1 THEN GOSUB 1350
905 IF I=1 AND LP+5>LPP THEN PRINT #I:CHR$(12):
950 IF I=1 AND LP+3>LPP-1 THEN PRINT #I:CHR$(12): : :
955 PRINT #I: :TAB(T+7*#I);DR$(2);"-DISKNAME=
  ";D1$:TAB(T+7*#I);" AVAILABLE=";AV;" USED=";G
960 LP=LP+3 : : IF I=1 THEN GOSUB 1350
965 IF I=1 AND LP+2>LPP-1 THEN PRINT #I:CHR$(12): : :
  LP=2
980 LP=LP+2 : : IF I=1 THEN GOSUB 1350
1020 LP=LP+1 : : IF I=1 THEN GOSUB 1350
1350 IF I=1 AND LP>LPP-3-(2*(LST=2))THEN IF LST=2
  THEN PRINT #I:CHR$(12): : : LP= 2 : : RETURN ELSE PRINT
  #I:L$:CHR$(12):L$: : : LP=2 : : RETURN ELSE RETURN
1352 !

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 * 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 *
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