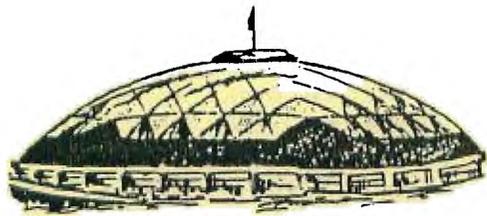


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THE TACOMA INFORMER

Published by The TACOMA 99ers USERS GROUP
P.O. BOX 42383 -- TACOMA, WA 98442

Volume 5

NOVEMBER 1988

No. 10

VP THOUGHTS

I want to flash some rambling thoughts your way. First, the Computer Room is open again. I want to thank the volunteers who have staffed it and hope that with some flyers advertising the re-opening we will get some public attention. I'll say the parking lot renovation is certainly an improvement but we could use a street light at the entrance.

Since my computer sits upstairs in an attic area, this cooler weather is a blessing. So it's great to be back. I want to get some articles going. I noticed that there has been a decrease in new information in the newsletters lately. I haven't decided on my next programming project and will blow the dust off the PROTO board project. I spoke with a fellow at the Faire who had blown the fuse in his PER transformer and may make a DEMO out of repairing it.

I got a thermal printer in a swap at the Faire and will donate it to the Club for a raffle prize. I'll check to make sure how to work the thing first.

I gave a DEMO of how to load and run EA/5 programs from cassette using a 32K built into the console. This will make a neat step up for the cassette users and give them some new programs. If there is enough interest, we'll set up a time to do the console modifications (add 32K).

Along with the great response to the Computer Room sign up, I also got some good DEMO ideas. I'll work these up as soon as I can.

I also took the Club's printer home and played with the switches. I say played because I didn't have any idea which switch did what (no manual) but it does seem to work with the Jiffy Flyer program. There are still a few random glitches to work out.

Last will be the bad news. This concerns the little things. I've noticed that there are quite a number of chairs left set up after the meeting needing to be put away by the few "die hards". I think that if we each took responsibility for our own chair, things would be easier on all of us.

JOE'S EMPIRICAL PROGRAMMING

Part Three

At a recent meeting, someone asked me about 80 column monitors, hoping to end the need to window across the screen when using a text editor. My answer had nothing to do with 80 column monitors but rather presented my own way around the problem. The problem is- How can you display 80 columns of text on a 40 column screen? The solution offered by the EDITOR is to show only 40 columns at one time, and let you window across to see the entire line of text. You start with the first 40 (0-39), then the middle 40 (20-59), and finally the last 40 (40-79). I was always getting lost on the page and would also lose my place when I reformatted, so I've been using this idea.

I now do all my text work in 40 columns. I do this by first setting the TABS at 0 for the LEFT margin and 39 for the RIGHT margin, and while I'm at it I use 5 for the INDENT. The first lines of my document are FORMATTER commands so that the page will be printed properly. These include LM, RM, IN, FI and AD (check the MANUAL) commands. If you are as lazy as I am, then you can pause at this point and save the file with a name like START. The next time that you write something, begin by loading the START file, then continue with your text. I cancel the line numbers on the left side so that I will see all 40 columns and away I go. When the document is printed, the commands at the start will tell the formatter to print the full page width for the hard copy. There is an additional advantage to this 40 column format, and it becomes apparent when viewing the file with a file-reader. The DM 1000 disk manager is one program with a file-reader option. These file-readers will show the 40 column text just as you wrote it.

Looking at 80 column files is difficult because of the line wrapping that occurs.

An 80 column monitor would be a great addition, but in it's absence, this works nice. I might add at this point that I have often seen some users dreaming and searching for something new, and not using the potential of the machine that they have. When I think back to the time when I couldn't even spell formatter, (now I'm using one) I realize that I've come a long way baby!



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JEANS JOTTINGS

I first would like to apologize to our readers for our newsletter being late last month. My hopes are that it won't happen again. Also, in putting it together a 2nd page of Jim Luque's excellent article (the one with all the graphics) was left off. We include it in this month's newsletter. We are learning about composing a newsletter, so write it off as a learning experience and hopefully it won't happen again. Sorry all!

As I mentioned last month, I have been purusing the newsletters and here are a few of the articles which struck my eye.

KC 99er CONNECTION -

/Aug 88

- * 1 - PRE-SCAN IT
(Review by Steven DeGeare)
- * 3 - PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER#2
(Tutorial by Jim Peterson)
[Also in Sept Chicago Times]
- * 4 - TI TRIVIA
(Collected by Bill Gaskill
Reprinted from TidBits NL)
Also in Sept CIN/DAY News
- * 7 - WORDSEARCH/Cartridges
- ANALYSIS OF SORTS
by Jim Peterson
- * 8 - Answer to Wordsearch

BOISE VALLEY 99er COMPUTER CLUB

/Aug 88

- * 5 - TIPS FOR BEGINNERS
by Frank N Zic
on PRBASE
Reprinted from May 88
CIN/DAY NL
- * 6 - PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER#1
- PROGRAMMING MUSIC ON TI
[Also in Sept Chicago Times]
- * 8 - PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER#3
(Tutorials by Jim Peterson)

/Sept 88

- * 3 - TIPS FOR BEGINNERS #14
by Frank N Zic
on Printers Apprentice
Reprinted from West Penn NL
Also in Aug PUG Peripheral
- * 4 - INCOMPLETE AND ABRIDGED
COMPUTER TERM LEXICON
*Interesting Reprint

EAR

/Aug 88

- GROMS

by Colin Hinson
Reprinted from International
TI-LINES

* Interesting article on
what and how GROMS are
handled by 99/4a

- TI TOOLS 2 (Review)

by Neil Wilson

BOSTON COMPUTER SOCIETY /July 88

LIST OF BOOKS FOR TI-99/4A

CIN-DAY NEWS / June 1988

- * 4 - GETTING THE MOST FROM
YOUR CASSETTE SYSTEM #1
by Mickey Schmitt
What to look for in a Player
and how to hook it up.
*Interesting series if you
are Using a Cassette System
- * 5 - TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB #27
by Jim Peterson
-TI WRITER TIP-Outdenting
by Dennis Sherty
Reprinted from HUGgers

PUG PERIPHERAL

/Aug 1988

Super Issue

- * 2 - TI-BASE (Review)
by Gene Kelley
- GETTING THE MOST FROM
YOUR CASSETTE SYSTEM #17
by Mickey Schmitt
Understanding, Creating, and
Using Cassette Files- Part 1
*Interesting series if you
are Using a Cassette System
Part #6 continues in Sept.
- TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB #45
by Jim Peterson

/Sept 1988

- *Page 10- TIPS FOR BEGINNERS #15
by Frank N Zic

SPIRIT OF 99 / Sept 1988

- * 5 - GETTING THE MOST FROM
YOUR CASSETTE SYSTEM #9
by Mickey Schmitt
Understanding Cassette Error
Codes and Messages #1
- * 6 - TI-WRITER PART 10
by Stan Katzman
Dot Commands in Formatter
- TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB #51
by Jim Peterson

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tacoma 99ers User's Group
1988 Activities Calendar

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
7th 8pm Meeting	4th 8pm Meeting-Demonstration of the GENEVE by Barb Weiderhold	3rd 8pm Meeting-BBS demonstration by Cynthia Becker	7th 8pm Meeting
21st 8pm Meeting	18th 8pm Meeting- TI ARTIST Demonstration	17th 8pm Meeting	21st 8pm Meeting 23rd SOFTWARE GIVE-AWAY
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
5th 8pm Meeting	2nd 8pm Meeting 4th 4-H EASTSIDE FAIR	7th 8pm Meeting 9th Movie Saturday	4th 8pm Meeting-SUPERCART DEMO BY Joe Nollan
19th 8pm Meeting 21st MIDWAY SWAP-MEET	16th 8pm Meeting-DEMO ON PC-TRANSFER BY Ron Prewitt	21st 8pm Meeting- MULTIPLAN DEMO BY Cheri Jeffries 23rd STAR-LITE DRIVE-IN SWAP MEET	13th MOVIE SATURDAY 18th 8pm Meeting-BROM PORT CLEANING DEMO BY Joe Nollan
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
1st 8pm Meeting	6th 8pm Meeting	3rd 8pm Meeting	1st 8pm Meeting
15th 8pm Meeting 17th MIDWAY SWAP-MEET 24th SEATTLE TI FAIRE	20th 8pm Meeting	17th 8pm Meeting	15th 8pm Meeting CHRISTMAS PARTY (Bring Snack)

REVISED: 11/01/88

DISCLAIMER

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Myarc HFDC Review By Steve Mickelson

One of the main reasons TI users abandon their 4A for some other brand has been the limited size of space available to store data files. The problem has been addressed through double and quad density floppy controller cards, as well as RAM disks with battery backed memory, up to one full megabyte in size. The price, however (\$590. US for an assembled one meg. Horizon RAMdisk), has made many TIers balk at such prices, and tough it out with a limited system. Enter the Myarc Hard and Floppy Disk Controller, HFDC, Card, and we see a whole new world of data storage.

The Myarc HFDC card, (available for \$325. US, from Disk Only Software, plus shipping), is a multi-function card which will permit either the TI-99/4A or Geneve computers to interface and control up to three hard drives, four floppy drives, and one tape streamer. The streamer can be used to back-up the hard drive(s). Hardware requirement for the HFDC are 99/4A console or Myarc 9640 card, monitor, TI Peripheral Expansion Box, (or equivalent), Myarc or TI 32K expansion memory, (not needed for Geneve), one or more floppy disk drives and cables, and hard disk drive, (including cabinet and power supply). The HFDC can support up to three hard drives, each having a capacity of 134 megabytes. The drive must be ST506/412 compatible. Run Length Limited, (RLL), drives cannot be used with the HFDC

card.

The Floppy controller will support of up to four drives, either 3-1/2" or 5-1/4" single/double sided; single, double or quad density, with 9,16, or 18 sectors per track. The head step can be set to 16, 8 or 2 msec. The memory capacity of each drive can be either 360K or 720K, with 40 or 80 tracks. All settings for each of the four drives can be set by means of DIP switches on the board, thus allowing the mixing of various types of drives in your system. Provision has been made, also for 80-track, 36 sector, 1.44 Meg. capacity drives, (for possible future option for expansion). DIP switches on the HFDC, also allow the user to change the CRU address of the card on the computer's I/O bus. This will permit the card to reside in the expansion system, along side another card sitting at the CRU address 1100, allowing for up to four additional floppy drives, four controlled by the other controller card, and four more by the HFDC. The CRU location can be any of sixteen from CRU of 1000, 1100, 1200, and so on, to 1F00.

The card comes in a standard plastic clamshell, along with a TI- style three-ring binder, containing a well written user's manual. My compliments to Walt Howe, for a job well-done. In addition to the documentation are two cables, one 34-pin edge connector and another 20-pin cable with edge connector on

one end and a slotted pin connector on the other. This will enable the user to connect the HFDC to any standard hard drive, (e.g. Seagate ST-251). The software consists of Myarc Disk Manager V, for use with both the TI and 9640. Included, are upgrades for the Geneve software to permit the 9640 to access and use hard drives. The 9640 software, namely MDOS, V1.06; GPL, V1.01, and MY-Word, V1.20, will enable access to the hard drive(s), but at present, not floppies. This necessitates keeping your old floppy controller card, and setting the CRU address of the HFDC at 1000, at least until an update of the MDOS operating system is complete. This review will be restricted to use of the controller with a 99/4a, as this is the most complete application of the HFDC card.

The manual is well-written, with a very useful trouble-shooting section, (especially useful to this greenhorn to the world of hard drives). It guided me through several problems I had initially, with formatting the hard drive. Formatting the drives, unlike other computer systems, does not have a low and high level of formatting; rather a single format command results in the software and firmware going through a format and verification process, similar to that found with standard 99/4A floppy disk manager software. It appears both low and high level formats are performed at the same

time. However, with a large capacity drive of more than 30 MEG's, be prepared to have a coffee or two while that first initialization takes place. There are sections, in the manual, covering selection of drives, setting of the DIP switches to configure the card, command sets supported by the card and software, connecting the cables. Also, included is an addenda sheet for the manual. For the software writers, a chapter covers Basic and Assembly language support for the card, with full memory map, CRU definition, internal disk data structures, and software interface specs.

One useful feature is DSK1 and DSK emulation, which enables the HFDC to have programs normally restricted to residing on DSK1, (FEL Writer), or a specific DSK, (e.g. DSK.TIMP for multiplan), located on the hard drive with the same name. Thus when the software, as in the case of Multiplan, looks for the disk called "TIMP", it finds it on the hard drive under the root directory TIMP, containing all the pertinent files, which are loaded, as if from a floppy of the same name. For such specific disk directory access, the HFDC looks in the hard drive first to if the specific disk is emulated on the hard drive. If not found, then the HFDC will look through the various floppies for the disk specified by the software.

The card comes with an optional extended warranty, which may be purchased by the user, for up to four years, at about \$25.US per year. This entitles the user to any updates of the software, released during the warranty period. I

would highly recommend this option for a card which is relied upon, so heavily.

The complaints I have with the Myarc HFDC package are, mainly, with the Myarc Disk Manager V software; namely setting the date. On power-up and default interlace settings. When the system is powered-up, in order to properly date-stamp each file the date and time must be keyed-in. If, however, you are using the HFDC with a Geneve, then the HFDC will "read" the Geneve clock. A nice touch, for TI users, with Triple Tech or MBP real-time cards, would be to read the clock on those cards, if they are installed. As far as the interlace is concerned, a novice user is left "in the lurch" as far as to what values to select, when initializing a floppy disk. The Corcomp disk manager has default interlace settings of 7 and 10, respectively, for single-density and double-density drives. What interlace is chosen can have a bearing on whether or not you have read/write errors to the disk that you have formatted. Also, 16-sector tracks, another undocumented option, can result in a disk which cannot be read on the drives of your friends with TI or Corcomp disk controllers. I am sure future updates of MDM V will address these problems. My opinion of the Myarc HFDC rates this unit as the "best buy" for the money, for an upgrade in our TI community. The fact that the controller has been designed for the 99/4A as well as the Geneve, shows that Myarc has not abandoned our community. The fact that the HFDC can support up to 402 megabytes of hard drive memory, indicates not only some

forethought as to the dropping prices/megabyte of hard drives, but gives a clue to exactly which niche in the computer market, Myarc would be aiming at, if it ever marketed the much-rumored stand-alone 9640. Such a rumor may soon become a reality, as the commercial software for the 9640 is released, (namely GEME, MY-Pro Word, and MY-Pro Art). If, like me, you have accumulated hundreds of disks, over the years, and waste time looking through lists and labels, to gather a series of related articles for a newsletter; such waste is virtually eliminated through an orderly set-up of the "directory path" of the hard drive. The speed of access and memory capacity of current drives; user-friendly Myarc Disk Manager V; and competitive price when compared to RAM disks, should put it on the top of the TI user's shopping list. Also, in most cases, the hard drive(s) will be located externally, with respect to the P/Box, it would be nice if the cables provided to connect the HFDC to the drives were a couple of feet longer, to give more flexibility as to the choices of where to locate the hard drives. In the future, I hope to have an article detailing the Myarc 9640 with the HFDC, as well as a review of Myarc Disk Manager V.

Steve Mickelson is President of the Toronto 9T9 Users and Editor of newsletter 9T9, and can be written c/o 9T9 Users Group, 109-2356 Gerrard St. East, Toronto, Ont., M4E-2E2, Canada.

Keyboarded from AUG 1988
PUG PERIPHERAL
T.I.Base (a review by Gene Kelly)

A new way to manage your data.

If you have a rather large amount of data to organize and are tired of trying to force PR-BASE to handle it, have I got a tip for you!!! TI-BASE, marketed by INSCEBOT, may be just the thing. A little (really a lot) threatening at first, TI-BASE may just be the best selling database manager to hit the TI market. Imagine the ability to handle 255 characters in a field, 17 fields in a record with 8192 records in a file, with (best of all) 5--count 'em 5 files at a time! While you in all probability will never use all that power, you can have a lot of fun trying. This program gives the capability to handle data the way the boys with the BIG BLUE toys do with D-BASE II. TI-BASE even offers a command language to semi-automate the process.

TI-BASE loads from Extended Basic, Mini-Memory, or Editor Assembler. Several setup parameters are assumed upon first boot up that are user changeable. The program is not copy protected and the author encourages you to back up the system disks BEFORE YOU START! This cannot be stressed enough. Have at least 3 disks formatted as the system comes with 2 disks. Disk 1 is the program itself (SSSD). Disk 2 contains the Tutor (SSSD). The third disk is needed right off the bat to start creating your data files. The system requires a TI-99/4A, 32K expansion and at least 1 disk drive (SSSD). According to the documentation it has also been tested with the Myarc disk controller and a Myarc ramdisk. It has NOT been tested with a GENEVE or CORCOMP disk controller. Two drives are a definite convenience for an extended processing session. It is written in assembly language except for part of the XB loader and takes a few minutes to load. But, once past

the load procedure, the response of the program is F-A-S-T. Commands are carried out as soon as your finger is off the enter key.

TI-BASE makes you a little apprehensive at first with nothing on the display but a status line and a simple DOT for a prompt. This is your first clue to the power available. BEFORE you input your data, take the time to first lay it out on paper. Define how you want it ordered or you will be creating data file after data file to get it right for your application. There is no separate screen editor as there is in PR-BASE. This is why some preplanning is necessary on your part.

Data in a file may be numeric, character data, or date literals. Mathematical operators include sqr., log., arctangent, boolean, and logical operators. A rather complete array.

Included are several commands in the command language that require the program disk to reside in a drive. Copy file, color changes, and formatting a disk are a few. Some of them most notably Format, cannot have a data base active at the same time or it will wipe it from memory. I don't know about you, but I need a disk most in the middle of a program and can ill afford to lose what I have entered. FORMAT FIRST-CREATE SECOND. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Be prepared to take some time to become accomplished at using TI-BASE and above all, don't give up. Even with its D-BASE like structure, it is not for the casual data user. They will be better off with PR-BASE. Commands are extensive and well organized for use.

My only complaint about Version 1.02 is that the manual is printed in blue ink on gray paper. I know that is nit picking but I just had to find something wrong with it. (Personally, my copy is going to get copied in black and white so I can read it with my bad eyes.)

Great Lakes Computer Group
YOU KNOW YOU'RE GROWING OLD!

The gleam in your eyes is from the sun hitting your glasses.

Your little black book contains only names ending in M.D.

You get winded playing chess.

You sink your teeth into a steak, and they stay there.

Your mind makes commitments your body can't meet.

You walk with your head held high, trying to get used to your bi-focals

Your knees buckle but your belt won't

You sit in a rocking chair and can't get it going.

Your favorite part of the newspaper is '25 years ago today'

Dialing long distance wears you out.

Your back goes out more than you do.

The little gray-haired lady you help across the street is your wife.

BOISE 99'ER COMPUTER CLUB
MURPHEY'S LAWS

A \$300 Picture tube will protect a 10-cent fuse by blowing first.

If it jams, force it. If it breaks it needed replacing anyway.

There's never time to do it right, but there's always time to do it over.

Never play leapfrog with a unicorn.

If everything seems to be going well, you obviously don't know what the hell is going on.

No good deed goes unpunished.

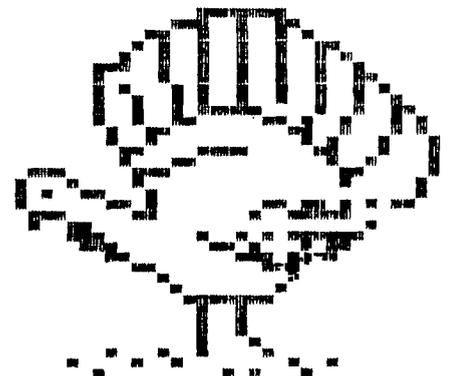
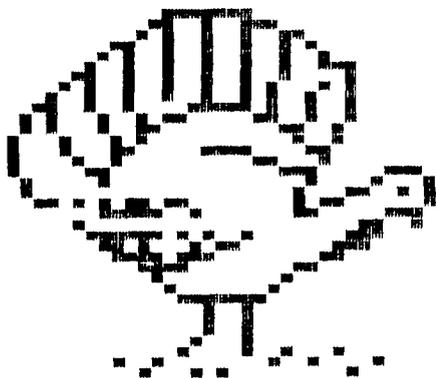
You will always find something in the last place you look for it.

Leakproof seals - will.

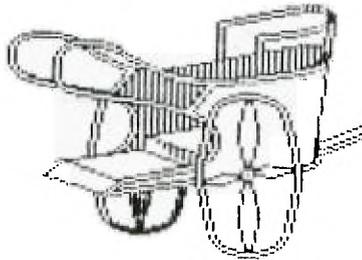
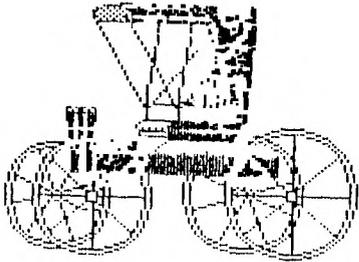
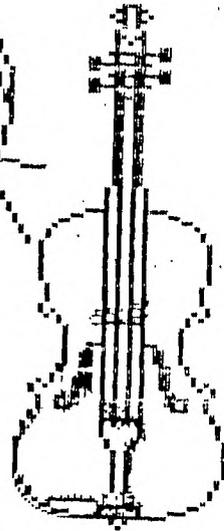
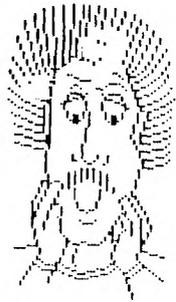
A shortcut is the longest distance between two points.

No matter how long or hard you shop for an item, after youve bought it, it will be on sale somewhere else cheaper.

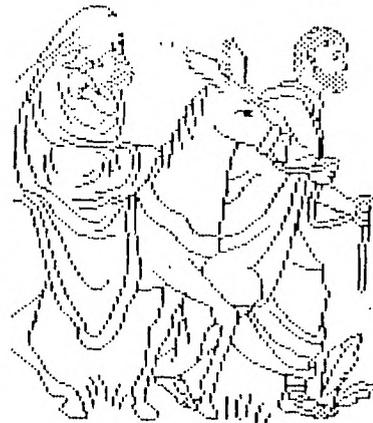
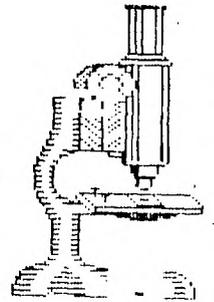
When in doubt, mumble. When in trouble, delegate.



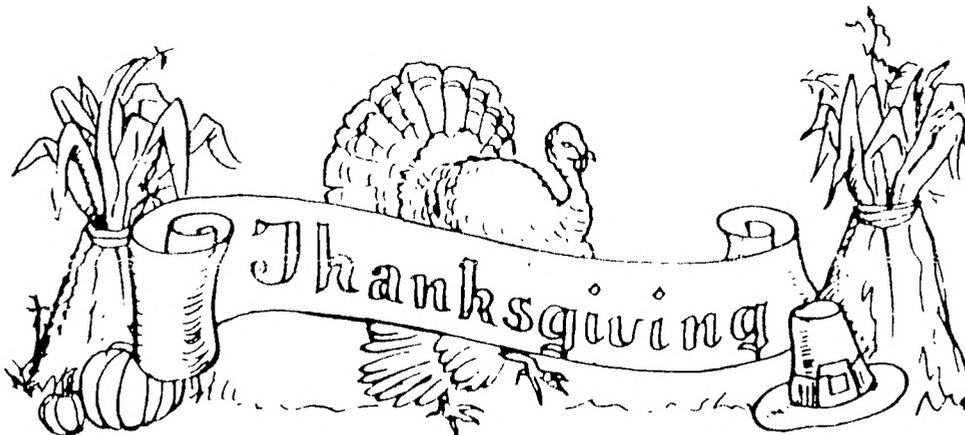
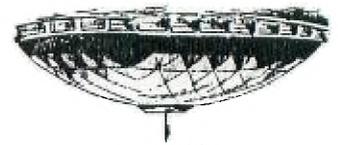
TIGRAPHICS



TIBIBLICAL



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MEETINGS ~ 1st and 3rd THURS. ~ 8 p. m.

South End Pool Building - 402 E. 56th Street - Tacoma, WA

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