

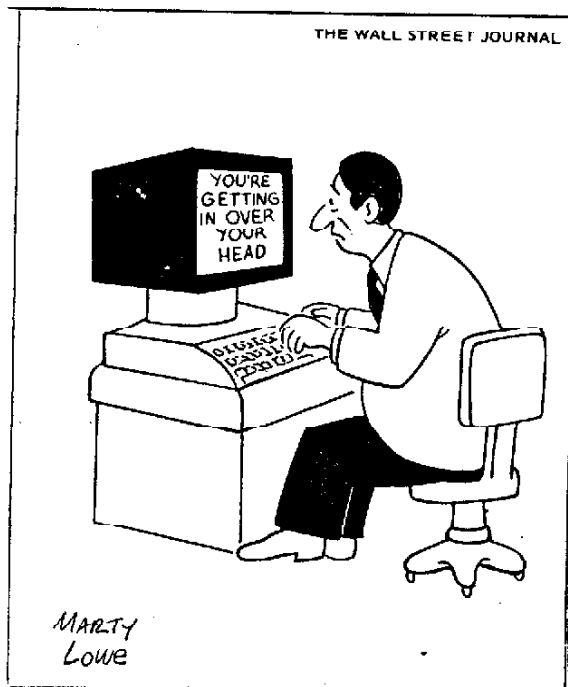
WIREGRASS 99/4 USERS — GROUP

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 4

Enterprise, Alabama

August 1983



????????????? Look Familiar ??????????????
?
? If so, maybe you could benefit from the ?
? loads of information and timely tips ?
? inside this month's newsletter!! ?
? If you don't find something of interest ?
? to you, let us know your interests or ?
? problem areas and we will try to ?
? address them in future issues of this ?
? newsletter. ?
?
? You can reach me at 347-4987, or ?
? Roger Crampton at 347-1619, or ?
? Bubba DeJarnette at 347-1708 ?
?
? Give us a call, we're looking forward ?
? to hearing from you. ?
?
? Joyce Rudd ?
? Editor ?
?
??

POTPOURRI

by: Roger Crampton

SURVEY OF OUR MEMBERSHIP - An informal and not very scientific survey of the 31 members present at our July meeting revealed some interesting facts about our membership's interests.

- #1. Most of our members are operating from cassette rather than diskette.
- #2. About one-quarter of the members present had the extended-basic module.
- #3. Nearly one-half have the Speech Synthesizer.
- #4. Only one member has a modem.
- #5. Most of our members are planning to upgrade to a faster and less aggravating storage system, either wafer-tape or disk drive.

Further information about the interests of our members can be seen from the fact that of the 36 programs ordered by members at the meeting, more than half were educational programs. Looks like our membership is very child-oriented, since most of the programs ordered are at the elementary school age level. The same thing happened a couple of months ago when we ordered 114 programs from another users group.

While this is not a random sample and not a very elegant survey, I think that it tells us a little about the direction our users group should take.

HARDWARE

by: Roger Crampton

Those of you who have been waiting for the price of disk drives and other peripherals to come down have cause to rejoice. Your patience has been rewarded! It's finally happened-- The total cost of adding a disk drive has been reduced by about half. PERCOM Data Corporation has developed a disk drive that requires neither the Peripheral Expansion Box nor the Disk Controller Card. You simply plug their disk drive into the side of the console and you're in business. Here is a comparison of the Percom Disk Drive and the TI drive (based on suggested list price, which we all know are often discounted):

T.I. Peripheral Expansion Box	\$249.95	Percom TX-99	\$449.00
T.I. Disk Controller Card	\$249.95		
T.I. Disk Drive	\$399.95		
TOTALS		\$899.95	\$449.00

For additional information call 1-800-527-1222

If you'd like to hook up a printer or modem, don't despair, you can still escape the peripheral box by purchasing a "stand-alone" RS232 interface. Several are on the market now and advertised in the last couple of issues of 99er magazine. AJ International advertises their RS232 for \$169.50 (compared to \$174.95 for the TI RS232 interface plus \$249.95 for the peripheral expansion box). For more information write to 4023 Sommers Avenue, Drexel Hill, PA 19026. Phone number is (215) 623-8083.

An even less expensive interface comes from Doryt Systems (14 Glen Street, Glen Cove, NY 11542, Phone 516-676-7950). This one is a parallel-only interface so it probably won't work with a modem. But if you want to connect a printer at the minimum cost, this might be just what you need at \$105.00.

Speaking of printers, how about a printer for \$189.00? The Star Micronics 80-column thermal printer is advertised at that price in the July issue of 99er Magazine. Of course, you'll have to buy a cable at \$24.95, and remember that all thermal printers must use special heat-sensitive paper. This special comes from TENEX, Box 6578, South Bend, IN 46660. Call (219) 277-7726.

Still haven't seen any of the new HexBus peripherals, but they are all pictured in full color in the latest Sears Catalog. I'm still lusting after a 4-color printer/plotter and feel sure that I'll buy one very soon. The pictures in the Fall Sears Wish Book show the TI 99/4A in its new light grey color, and the peripherals have apparently been changed also.

LIBRARY

by: Roger Crampton

Texas Instruments has sent us a complimentary copy of their Sourcebook of Programs for the TI 99/4. It's a great big book with literally thousands of programs listed. The book is now in our library and is available to our members.

We've also purchased Holtz's book on programming the TI 99/4. There are several programs in the book that need to be keyed in. Here is your chance to get some programs to swap with our program exchange.

The Pittsburg Users Group has done some "horse-trading" with us and as a result, we have 22 new programs in our library. Some of them are terrific. For example, ASPIC is a new language (Amatour's Special Purpose Instruction Code) that is specifically designed for elementary age school children. It loads from either tape or diskette, runs in regular basic, requires no peripherals, and helps young children learn both logic and computer literacy. Try it, but be sure to have the instructions which appeared in the November 1982 99er Magazine.

CODE OF LIFE is a super program that teaches genetics and the structure of DNA. It lets you move four chemicals around to construct a chain of DNA, then tells you what hair and eye color, freckles, etc., will result. Just follow the instructions. Kind of advanced for children, but usable for bright high school level kids.

For all of our Hydrologists, we have a new program called OVERFLOW. It solves water runoff problems. For example, if you are landscaping a golf course, you can input rainfall rate, duration, type sod, and terrain slope, and the program will compute the amount of runoff and display a hydrograph. Again, you'll want to have the instructions (in Volume I, #5 of 99er Magazine), and if you are loading from disk, you'll need to use the "CALL FILES" routine mentioned earlier in this Newsletter. The program runs only in Basic and therefore cannot use the 32K memory expansion.

For a little fun, watch 12 (count'em, 12) pink panthers do their kaleidoscopic thing as Inspecteur Clousseau of the Surete' sings the theme song from "The Pink Panther" -- real nice. Runs only in regular Basic.

For our more adventurous members, try AIR COMBAT -- Take off from the heaving deck of an aircraft carrier (hear the hiss of the catapult launch), climb through a cloud layer, and enter the combat patrol area. Since your airspeed is 2300 mph, you would outrun your bullets, so you fire a laser to shoot down the enemy. But be careful, at your speed it's hard to tell friend from foe. Our guys are up there too and get angry if you shoot them down by mistake.

Many of our members are low-level aviators (Whomp, Whomp, Whomp) and might be more interested in HELICOPTER RESCUE, which will run in either Basic or Extended Basic. Needs joysticks. You're a Dustoff Pilot and must take off from the roof of a hospital, fly to a nearby building, and rescue a damsel in distress (I guess she's a damsel, it's kinda hard to tell.). Lots of fun, even has chopper's sound.

MORE PROGRAMS ORDERED

At our last meeting, six members ordered programs at \$2.00 each. Soon we'll have another 36 programs in our library. This is another example of how our Users Group helps us---when we pool our resources, we can really make some bargains. There will be other chances to purchase programs at low cost. Don't miss a meeting, you may miss your opportunity to get in on one of these special deals.

SOFTWARE

by: Roger Crampton

Here are several tips to make your programs easier to write. Perhaps you are familiar with most of them, but an occasional review is sometimes helpful. Also many of our new members ask these questions at our meetings.

1. Use the NUM and RES functions of your computer liberally. They help to uncomplicate things considerably.
2. Don't use consecutive numbers for program statements. Increment by at least ten, then you can go back and insert lines "between the lines."
3. Be generous with REM statements. They really help in de-bugging programs. If your program gets too long, you can always go back and remove all REMs.
4. Never GOTO a REM statement, in case you later have to go back and take out the REM to shorten your program.
5. Write your programs in modules (not Command Modules!). Get one part working before you start on the next part. Dress it up later with SOUND, graphics, and COLOR.
6. Don't get too far ahead of yourself! Debug as you go along. Make each part work before you proceed to the next program segment.
7. Make liberal use of GOSUBS. Mark them with REMs. Subroutines save memory space.
8. SAVE your program on tape or disk as you go along. That way if you have a power failure, you won't lose too much.
9. Always SAVE just before you RUN. Then if your program "locks up" while RUNNING, you'll have a backup that you can LIST from.
10. If you try to list and you get a bunch of "hash" that resembles Egyptian Hieroglyphics, it means that the program that you're trying to LIST is an extended basic program and you are in regular Basic.

More TIPS in the next newsletter. Hope you found something useful.

CALL FILES ROUTINE

Some of the programs in our program exchange are quite lengthy. NAME THAT BONE, OVERFLOW, and GOLDRUSH are three exceptionally long programs, and members have been having difficulty LOADING them. In fact, some will fill up the 16K memory and refuse to LOAD or RUN without this little trick.

To free up some extra memory to enable you to LOAD these long programs in regular basic (or extended-basic without the 32K expansion), you can try the CALL FILES routine. But you have to do it exactly in the following order.

1. Type in NEW. Your screen should clear and say "ready" or "TI Basic Ready."
2. Type in CALL FILES(1). Don't use a statement number.
3. Now type in NEW again. The screen will clear again.
4. Next use OLD command to load the program.

Good Luck! It usually works.