Southwest Ninety-Niners Newsletter

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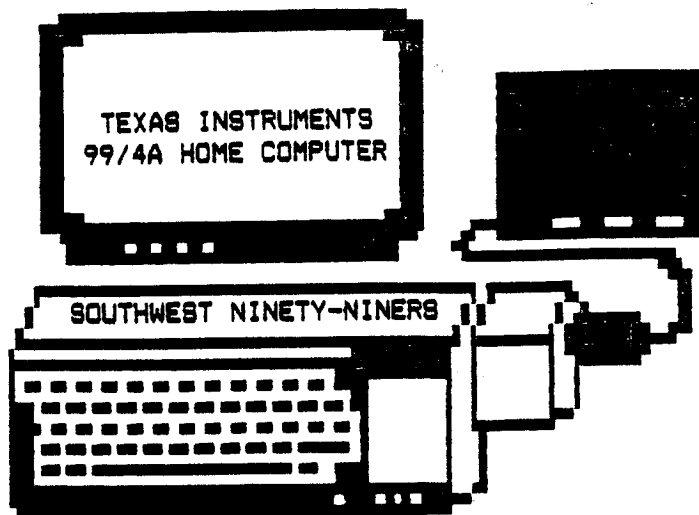
www.ti99ers.org

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P.O. Box 17831 Tucson, AZ 85730

Officers
John McCleary - President
Ed Hallett - Vice President
Wesley Eng - Secretary
BJ Mathis - Treasurer

Newsletter
John McCleary - Editor
BJ Mathis - Assoc. Editor

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS 99/4A HOME COMPUTER

SOUTHWEST NINETY-NINERS

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ATTENTION MEMBERS
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NEXT MEETING: April 1, 1986 at 7:30pm. Location-Tucson Fire Department Training Center on Ajo Way just west of Park. Ed Hallett will demonstrate GramCracker.

WORKSHOPS: Basic & Ex-Basic - 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 pm. (April 10th). Mathis Home - 5941 E. 26th - 747-5046
Other Basis & Ex-Basic Workshops scheduled by individuals within the group according to their proximity to each other in distance and knowledge.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS: Writer & Multiplan - 3rd Thursday of each month at 7 pm. (April 17th). Mathis Home - 5941 E. 26th - 747-5046
Assembly Language & FORTH - 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm. (Apr 22nd).
Joe Lenox Home - 8252 E. Zemsky - 722-2464

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER
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As you'll notice we have established Special Interest Groups and they are off and running. The first meetings of each of the groups was held in March. Those who were at the February and March club meetings were in on the ground floor of these groups but the rest of you can join in now or at any time in the future. The three areas were selected based on the interest expressed by you and your fellow members. So give yourself one additional night each month to learn more about one of your areas of interest in the TI and join a SIG. All you need to do is call me (John) or BJ to be added to the list and you'll get a call before each meeting as a reminder.

Fourteen people were at the first Basic & Ex-Basic meeting, seven showed for the Writer/Multiplan conclave, and nine met for Assembly Language & Forth. That's a terrific turnout! BJ offers more in *Bytes & Jots* on the Basic meeting. If you're interested in Forth be aware that group has decided to tackle Assembly first. Good luck!

Don't miss the report on the Los Angeles computer Fair and note the availability of items for sale by the club in New Acquisition. Also, remember to use the Buyers Guide to find the items your looking for when expanding your system.
John McCleary
296-8198

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AUCTION REPORT
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After expanding the club's computer system we held a closed bid auction for the items
not needed by the group. Many of the modules and much of the hardware has been sold
to the high bidders but there are a few items which remain. We are offering to our
members the chance to buy any of these items at less than the current lowest price on
the market. If you are interested please contact BJ Mathis. The remaining ones are
listed below. The lowest pices on many of the items has gone up therefore the
minimum bid (50% of new the price) is higher on some items this month. We will not
have a grace period for accepting bids simply choose your item and pay for it.   Of
course, all items listed are subject to prior sale. Again, I have included the
current lowest price each rounded to the nearest dollar (shipping is not included in
the price.) to give you an idea what they are worth new.

MODULES

$5   1ea. Munchman $5   2ea. Home Financial Decisions
$10 1ea. Terminal Emulator II $19 1ea. Personal Record Keeping
$5   2ea. Household Budget Mgmt. $5   1ea. Personal Real Estate
$35 1ea. TI-Writer $20 1ea. Editor Assembler

HARDWARE

$75   2ea. TI-99/4A Consoles
$80   1ea. Signalman Mark III Modem
$337 1ea. TEC Pro-Writer Printer (price listed is original purchase price)
                                         *BJ Mathis * 747-5046*

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Bytes & Jots
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I am very happy to say that the new Workshops and Special Interest Groups are being
met with a lot of enthusiasm. The first meeting of Basic and Extended Basic Workshop
was held 13 March at our home. There were fourteen people in attendance. We broke
up into several small groups, opened up the Basic book that came with our computer.
That may sound very elementary to many but there are many of us who never have
understood what that book was trying to tell us. By working in groups there was
usually someone in each group who could explain some or all of the terminology and
what was supposed to happen and why. In spliting up into groups there was usually
someone who could act as the teacher and others found that they actually knew more
than they thought they did. I think a majority of the people who have been trying to
figure this stuff out for a while are soon going to have the confidence to move on to
Extended, Assembly Language, and/or FORTH. This Workshop is for everyone not
everyone in the Workshop wants to be a programmer, many just want to understand what
the program is doing so that they can change parts they don't like.

Most of the people at the Workshop wanted to learn more and faster than meeting once
a month would allow. Several smaller workshops were set up throughout the month. If
you are interested in getting more help with Basic and Extended but you can't come on
the second Thursday of each month, please contact John or BJ. We'll try to set you
up with some help. Some of the "teachers" have even expressed interest in giving
tutoring sessions in the "student's" home.
                                         *BJ * 747-5046*

When Jack and I decided to go to the '99 FEST-WEST '86, we were apprehensive that we
would find out that we knew so little about our computer that we would be put to
shame. However our enthusiasm about our computer and our Users' Group made us decide
to go anyway.

The week before we left Wesley brought over BA-Writer FREEWARE that he had gotten
from Italy . It had been given high marks in a review in the March MICROpendium. We
soon found it was an improvement over TI-Writer. Little did we know that it would be
so important on our trip to LA.

We arrived on Friday evening checked into our hotel and went to dinner. We knew
there was supposed to be a hospitality room somewhere but didn't know where.   As we
finished our meal a large group of people came in and took over the back room. We
guessed they were "the computer people". We were right and found we were soon
talking to people from all over the U.S. about the TI, each others systems, and
Users' Groups. The first night we met many of the names we've all come to recognize
in the TI community: Terrie Masters, the President of the LA Users' Group; Les
Merryman, the MYARC distributor for the west coast; William Warren, the author of
PRBASE; and the presidents of Cin-Day Users Group and of Northern Nevada Users Group.
We saw Craig Miller from a distance! Craig is probably the STAR of the TI community
and even seeing him from a distance reminded me of groupies in the music business.
After dinner we went with William Warren for a demonstration of his latest, and as
yet incomplete, version of PRBASE. Every disadvantage listed in this newsletter last
month was eliminated. We paid him on the spot for our copy and for the our User
Group's copy.   Bill is completely unpretentious and any user of the TI could easily
talk with him for hours. The subject of BA-writer came up and we were soon
explaining all it's features. Sadly we admitted that we hadn't brought it with us,
as we figured if our Group had it we were probably one of the last to get it.   We
promised to send it to him and several others there as soon as we got home.

After a good night's sleep and breakfast with members of our group and Al Armstrong's
brother, we walked about 3/4 of a block to the Shrine Exhibition Hall.   The main
floor was filled with all the other computers and their peripherals, but the mezanine
was all TI. There were around twenty booths and many items available for the TI that
Jack and I had never seen before. Many of hese companies are very young and have
very young owners. We were delighted with the show of items available.

We talked to Craig Miller. He is bright, innovative and seems inherrently honest.
Craig seems to sense the technical knowledge of those he is talking with and adjusts
to their level. When we asked him what his new product for the TI was his eyes began
to twinkle, he looked like he could hardly stand to keep it a secret, but he said we
would have to wait for his presentation later in the morning.

Jack and I moved on to the Super 99 Monthly booth. As we were standing there Jack
poked at me. "Isn't that him?", he said as he nodded toward a man signing his name
to an application. Sure enough I saw the name of Paolo Bagnaresi, the author of
BA-Writer being written.   We quickly introduced ourselves and found that he was
indeed THE Paolo Bagnaresi. The next booth was the FREEWARE booth. We told William
Warren and several others that Paolo was there and pointed him out. Paolo soon
became known on sight and Jack and I became known as the ones who "know all about
BA-Writer".   We demonstrated it at many of the booths and made arrangements for many
to get their copy. Paolo was soon flooded with people asking for his FREEWARE and
paying him for it.   Luckily he had many copies of it with him. Thanks to our
secretary, Wesley, Jack and I had firsthand knowledge of something that opened a lot

of doors for us and hopefully opened a lot of doors to Paolo because we recognized him.

As promised Craig Miller announced his new idea in hardware for the TI-99/4A later that morning. He has designed a board to go into the Peripheral Expansion Box that allows you to hook up any IBM keyboard. There will be two phases to the introduction of this innovative idea. The first will allow you to hook up and use the IBM keyboard, the computer will not be aware that you are not using the TI board. In the second phase chips will be added that will allow you to have programmable keys with a buffer and a battery back-up. The battery back-up will allow your programmable keyboard to keep its programs even when the power is turned off. This eliminates reloading the program for the keys each time you turn on your system. Craig stated that the prototype was not as yet completed, but he hopes to have the first phase for sale in 10 to 12 weeks. Craig has so far managed to keep his promises although he is often overwhelmed by the response and therefore has trouble filling all the orders as fast as the individuals would like.

Lou Phillips of MYARC introduced a new program from MYARC, called The Program Manager. He also talked at length about the "new" computer. He said he expected to have a working model at the TI show in New Jersey the 15th of March. I personally think that Lou needs to find himself a better salesman. He definitely does not impress me.

Saturday night most of the restuarant was filled with TI-99/4A enthusiasts. Conversation was animated and ranged from usage of our computers to how our Users' Group was organized. Many people were impressed by the size of our membership (70) and by the number that attend our meetings (30-35 average). We were surprised to find that our group was larger than many others in areas where there is a larger population.

The first presentation on Sunday was by the editor of Super 99 Monthly, Richard Mitchell. He discussed his projects with MULTIplan. He is a very interesting person to listen to once he gets over his nervousness. Richard explained that he is working with SYLK files and trying to learn more about how to transfer information in and out of the MULTIplan environment.

Craig presented the DISkASSEMBLER by Tom Freeman. Jack and I know very little about Assembly language, but Craig explained most of the features well enough that we were able to follow some of it. We understoood enough to know that the DISkASSEMBLER is definitely a wonderful new tool for the TI.

Craig stated that the last issue of the Smart Programmer is expected to be out soon then he and those working with him will publish their articles through Super 99 Monthly.

Craig then introduced Kent Thompson who helped write the documentation for the DISkASSEMBLER. Kent went on to describe a package he is selling, Real Estate and Tax Planning. Jack and I were so impressed that we decided we wanted the package, as soon as Kent was done we went over to his booth and bought a copy. Kent said that updates will be sent out each year if we send him the diskette with the program on it.

Throughout the weekend we saw Terrie Masters many times. She helped out in many booths to allow the vendors a chance to get out and see what the competition was doing. Terrie worked harder than anyone. Whether or not you went to the '99 Fest West '86, if you appreciate new hardware and software becoming available for your TI you owe Terrie Masters and the workers from the LA Area Groups a *"Thank You"*. If people like her did not put out the effort to put together a weekend like this the TI

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community would be the loser.

One of the things we hoped to accomplish when we decide to attend was to get our group better known to the TI community. Another was to meet people with our kind of enthusiasm for this computer. Lastly we wanted to find out about new things for the TI. Whether we were successful in our first objective remains to be seen. Our success in the latter two was complete. I hope we can pass on our enthusiasm to the Southwest Ninety-Niners and other groups who read this newsletter.

BJ * 747-5046


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A Book Review
by John McCleary

Time passes and things are brought into better focus. That's the goal of a new book on the TI Computer, The Orphan Chronicles. Written by Ronald G. Albright, Jr., MD it looks at the TI-99/4A as no one has done so far. Bringing together facts and remembrances of how Texas Instruments got into the Home Computer marketplace and why they bailed-out. He also deals with Users Groups ("Commercial" and "Real"), publications, support, and much more. The book concludes with a chapter entitled "Survival Manual" which applies more to people who may find themselves orphaned in the future than to 99/4A owners. There are extensive appendices at the end of the work which should be of interest to many.

If you're interested in the story of the 99-4A this could be a nice addition to your library. However, be forewarned that it isn't easy reading. Albright's writing style is a bit labored for my tastes and he does seem to repeat himself at times, usually when you'd like things to move along a bit faster. The writing he's done appears to have been for the scientific community not public consumption, you know - stilted. More importantly the print is difficult to read. Published by Millers Graphics the typeface chosen doesn't work for me but it may not bother you.

Personally I'd buy The Orphan Chronicles just to be able to look back on how this machine, which has changed so many lives, came into being and went out of production. You may order your copy from:

Millers Graphics
1475 W. Cypress Ave.
San Dimas, CA 91773

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TI WRITER TIPS
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EDITING OPERATIONS
by John McCleary

Are you a hunt and peck typist or do your fingers fly over the computer keyboard.
Well if you are a fairly good typist you ought to pay attention to the TEXT EDITOR -
EDITING OPERATIONS as found in the manual and on the Quick Reference Card. Using the
Control Key and one other a touch typist can literally fly through editing
operations.

There are fully two pages of operations listed on the quick reference guide. Knowing
these functions is the key to fast and easy word processing. Take the time to study
and learn each of them. The payoff will be faster word processing and fewer errors
in your final text.

One caution, if you do type fast watch out for skipped letters at the beginning of
lines when using word wrap. It won't happen every time but frequently enough to
catch you if you aren't looking for it.


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BUYERS GUIDE
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The following information is provided as a service to our members. The items
listed are for sale by the individuals indicated and are subject to prior sale. The
group assumes no responsibility for items listed and makes no claims as to their
condition or interface capability with the TI-994A computer. Only computer related
items will be accepted for publication in this newsletter.

TI Disk Controller, Internal Disk Drive & External Disk Drive w/own power supply,
Disk Manager II with documentation. All for $200 Call John Karsh 883-1613

Hunt the Wumpus command module $3. TI Program Cassette Recorder w/cable $25. Call
Mike 722-8620 evenings and weekends.

Volksmodem 300 Baud with 9 volt power supply $50, Flip 'N' File 50 with lock $15.
Parallel RS232 printer cable $15. Call George 742-3091.