



Atlanta  
99/4A  
Computer  
Users  
Group

# CALL NEWSLETTER

VOLUME I

NUMBER 11

November, 1983

Atlanta, Georgia

## PRESIDENTS CORNER

Seems I've been giving this corner a real workout lately. I do hope you find what I have to say is worthwhile, and once again I'd really like to hear from you. Especially now, this club needs everyone's input if we are to continue to be a viable group.

Well Black Friday arrived on October 28, 1983 with the announcement by TEXAS INSTRUMENT'S President J. Fred Bucy that TI was leaving the home computer market. It took me a while to get over that, especially after TI's 'We're in the market to stay' message of just a few months ago. Finally it dawned on me that just before TI's announcement my 99/4A did almost all the things that I had bought it for, and now after the fact, indeed it still does do all those things. TI in the market or TI out of the market, I still had one of the best computers available. I still need to learn how to use it properly, but I still had the best.

TI's announcement came as quite a shock, not only to me but to TI's personnel as well. I called TI that fateful Friday and was told that no one knew anything about the pull out. My wife Elise called the following Monday and learned a few things that we'd like to pass on to you. Remember though, this information like the pull out can be changed at any moment.

First TI plans to stand behind the computer for repairs and maintenance, including maintaining local TI Exchange Centers. Mailing the unit to TI in Texas is, as always, available. The address for the Lubbock Repair Center is:

Texas Instruments Repair Center  
2305 North University  
Lubbock, Tx. 79408

Second TI intends to produce all of the software it promised. A notable exception is the Pike Creek business packages, which TI has sold back to Pike Creek. So much for all the promised software.

As you are probably aware the 99/4A is now selling between \$50.00 and \$60.00, and according to rumors there are approximately 500,000 99/4A's in stock. So the supply should be adequate. However if you were looking for one on Nov 4, in the city of Atlanta there were none; everyone was sold out. Software and firmware was being discounted 50 to 60 percent, and was going like hotcakes;

nothing was being left on the shelves. I spoke to several suppliers and received different stories from them all. One of the brighter stories was from S.A.V.E. seems that they just ordered 1000, 99/4A's and were actively seeking out third party suppliers. They think that the market is still out there and they intend to try and supply whatever they can.

This club is going to stay in there and try to help 99/4A owners. That's what we started out to do, and as long as I can get a dozen people together we'll continue to do just that. The club still has a large public domain library, with over 400 programs in it and more coming everyday. There's a lot that the club can and will do. I don't want this 'toy' to suffer the fate of so many other toys, to wind up at the bottom of the storage closet because the owner doesn't understand its usefulness.

By the time you read this we will have had the reorganization meeting of the Assembly Group, and hopefully the announcement of the first local group which is meeting in the Stone Mountain area. I'd like to get a group started on the south side of town, and another on the west side. I'd like to see the start up of a business group, and how about all of you technical people out there? I've had a dozen calls from members who are taking the TI apart, how about getting together and comparing notes? Now all we need is a few stalwart individuals who would like to help organize and run these groups. Anyone who would like to help get these groups going please let me know and we'll start a new group.

Marshal

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### \*\*\* CLUB OFFICERS \*\*\*

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Marshall Gordon	President
Gary Matthews	Vice-President
Elise Gordon	Secretary/Treasurer
Bill Kleinsorge	Program Chairman
Tom Boisseau	Newsletter Chairman
We need one	Education Chairman
Bob Willis	Library Chairman
We need one	Recruitment Chairman

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November, 1983

P-BOX MEMORY CARD DISK  
[T.I.'S NEW PACKAGE]

(Ed. note: This article was written before T.I.'s recent announcement about quitting the home computer market.)

I was asked to write an article on my recent purchase of TI's new P-package. For starters, if you haven't heard, this package has been reduced from \$1200 to \$400. My biggest problem was in getting hold of it. I waited for 2 weeks, but it was worth the wait.

To try and list the advantages would take forever. One is obvious. If you still have a cassette deck, you probably don't spend as much time as you would like on the 99/4A because of the hassles of loading and storing information. If your deck was like mine, the remote didn't work and trying to process files was a tedious chore. (Ed. note: If you have a remote that doesn't work, information is available from the club on how to correct that.)

Now I find myself thumbing through issues of 99'er Magazine and realize that I can copy them with no problems. Ever try to copy a 500 line program to a cassette deck? All that while worrying about not wiping out the program. After all you can't save every three lines. Without the expansion system, you have only about 12k of usable memory. Now I have plenty with the memory card.

To sum it all up, its like the article in the March newsletter, about the guy and his sophisticated turntable but no records to play. This applies to the 99/4A. You really can't see the machine's capabilities if you don't expand it. I've had the system for only a little while, but I have learned so much in such a short time.

On a closing note, if you are still having problems getting the package, be patient. TI always sold their items separately and it will take a little time for the stores to receive the remaining components to complete the package. Happy trails:

Jorge Benedit

#### TI NEWS

Certainly there are very few if any that have not yet heard that the 99/4A is now an orphan, however everyone is still wondering just how this machine will be cared for.

In a recent conversation with Ed Wiest, Texas Instruments' Users' Group Coordinator, he stated that the exchange centers would remain open to service 4A

owners. We were also informed that all software that had been announced for 1983 will be produced and distributed, and that all current software packages will continue to be produced. TI is even considering the possibility of further supporting the 99/4A by continuing to introduce new software titles.

On the hardware end, Ed stated that TI will continue to produce peripherals only until all present orders and back orders are filled. Therefore if you have been planning any hardware purchases, you had best make them soon.

Regarding the consoles themselves, TI has already discontinued production of them, however considering present warehouse inventory, Ed estimates that they will remain on the market until the second quarter of 1984. At this time the 99/4A can be purchased for about \$50 from most retailers.

Thomas H. Boisseau

The article that follows is by Boyd Cone who runs Information Associates. He will be making a presentation at our Nov. 20th meeting. As a distributor of T.I. equipment, his viewpoint was one I wanted to hear concerning the future of our computer after T.I.'s announcement. Boyd will be demonstrating some software in his presentation and will be available to discuss how he feels the future will develop for the 99/4A.

#### THE SKY IS FALLING!

In an era of high technology you would expect that a phrase like this would be non-existent. I suppose this is why I'm so concerned at the actions being taken since TI's announcement to leave the home computer market.

As most of you probably know, there are MILLIONS of 99/4A computers in the marketplace. On top of that figure, the computer giant has near one million to be shipped in the next two months. These units are scattered throughout the entire face of the earth and the orders keep coming. With this in mind lets stop long enough to evaluate the FACTS. This market is too large, too demanding and certainly has too much potential to die in vain.

We all know that the 99/4A is without a doubt the finest machine for the money in the home computer world. Which brings us to the bottom line. WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Your first emotion should be that of excitement! All of the super programmers in the world will now emerge from the

woodwork to develop and supply the finest software available at any price. Also the research and development of hardware should go full steam ahead. Just look in the magazines at the third party companies supporting our needs.

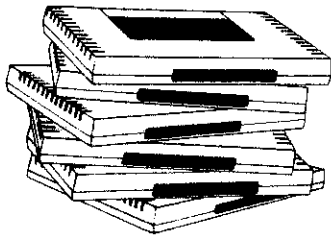
As a merchant I intend to support this market for years to come. As an owner of the 99/4A system, I still wouldn't trade it for five brand X units.

For you skeptical individuals, Texas Instruments is a very large organization. They will be here not in the home computer market as we have come to know, but to support us as they have NASA, the oil field industry, and the business market for many years.

With these thoughts in mind, happy computing for many years to come.

William B. Cone

Manager, Distribution  
Development Information Associates



#### PARALLEL INTERFACE ON THE RS232 CARD

The latest from TI as to how to connect the PIO output to a printer is:

Connect TI pin 1 to CEN connector pin 1, TI pins 2-9 to CEN pins 2-9, TI pin 10 to CEN pin 11, TI pin 11 to CEN pin 29 and TI pin 16 to CEN pin 16. This should work for many printers (including TI and Epson). When outputting to a Smith-Corona TP-1 the signal on pin 1 has to be inverted with the use of an electronic circuit or you may buy a special cable with this inverter built-in. To use with an Okidata printer two lines require the inverted signals - there is also a special cable for this printer. These cables are advertised in THE 99'er [99'er Home Computer Magazine]. -----

If you have had your computer interfaced with these printers or any other printer that require special connections either serial or parallel please send the info [information] to us so that we may pass it along to others.

Reprinted from the "Washington DC Area TI Home Computer Users Group Newsletter", August 1983, vol. 2, issue no. 8.

#### STONE MOUNTAIN SUB CHAPTER BEGINS NOVEMBER 17

Now . . . More Than Ever!

ATLANTA 99 COMPUTER USERS GROUP is pleased to announce the addition of the Stone Mountain Sub-Chapter

Marshall Gordon, President of the A9CUG wishes to reach the hundreds of TI99 users in the areas surrounding Atlanta. In order to achieve this goal, we are pleased to announce the formation of the this sub group (A9CUG-SM).

WHEN: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

WHERE: TUCKER FEDERAL

5660 Memorial Dr.  
Stone Mountain, Ga.  
(Across from K-Mart)

There will be a small charge of \$1 for non-members and 50 cents for members.

For information, call 292-3427 after 5pm. A recorder will take your call and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

We will have demonstrations and discussions about our favorite computer. We will discuss the latest information concerning the options available after the TI99/4A is no longer available.

CLUB NEWSLETTERS - DETAILED PROGRAMS  
CLUB SOFTWARE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Volunteers will be needed to make this a successful endeavor.

Ralph Danson

#### PROGRAMMING TIPS

Most of us who have had their consoles for any length of time can probably recall at least one incident when we had intended to save a program to tape, but accidentally typed in OLD CS1 (instead of SAVE) and then hit enter. Quickly we learned that this was a disastrous mistake to make for the result was the total loss of the program in memory without the saving to tape which we had intended.

It seems that there is now a solution to this problem. When it occurs try this. Simply press shift E and press enter. An I/O error will appear, however the program will remain in memory allowing you to try again to save it on cassette.

Thomas H. Boisseau

## PROGRAMS FROM OTHER GROUPS

From the HUG (Houston) Users Group comes this little gem:

-----  
SPRITE ONE LINER  
-----

Want to frustrate and amaze your Atari, VIC-20, Color Computer friends? Just type in the following in the Command Mode with Extended Basic.

```
CALL CLEAR :: CALL SCREEN(5):: CALL
MAGNIFY(2):: FOR I=1 TO 28 :: CALL
SPRITE(#I,64+I,16,80,80,3*I,8):: NEXT I
:: FOR J=1 TO 5000 :: NEXT J
```

Hit ENTER and watch all 28 sprites do their tricks. If you want to see it again, simply hit function REDO then ENTER again as many times as you wish.

You can also INSERT, DELETE, etc. to try different speeds, colors, characters, or even add a line number to make it a one line program.

Barron Bartlett

-----  
For those of you who have not seen or own a copy of Craig Miller's book *Smart Programming Guide for Sprites*, here are several programs that he gave to the San Gabriel Valley (Ca) Users Group.

Below are programs contributed by Craig that will give you an idea of what the book is like. The first program was designed to illustrate the different magnification configurations that are possible with the CALL MAGNIFY subprogram.

```
10 ! MAGNIFY
A THREE LINE PROGRAM
BY CRAIG MILLER
MILLERS GRAPHICS
```

```
20 CALL CLEAR :: CALL CHARPA
T(49,A$,50,B$,51,C$,52,D$)::
CALL CHAR(96,A$&B$&C$&D$,100,
RPT$("FEFEFEFEFEFE00",4)
)
```

```
30 DISPLAY AT(12,7)BEEP:"CALL
MAGNIFY(1)" :: CALL SPRITE
(#1,96,16,99,1,0,4,#2,100,2,
100,1,0,4):: A=49
```

```
40 CALL KEY(0,K,S):: IF K<49
OR K>52 OR K=A THEN 40 ELSE
CALL MAGNIFY(K-48):: DISPLAY
AT(12,20)BEEP:STR$(K-48)&")"
:: A=K :: GOTO 40
```

The second program was written to illustrate relational and logical expressions without the use of if statements.

```
10 ! REBOUND
A THREE LINE PROGRAM
BY CRAIG MILLER
MILLERS GRAPHICS
```

```
20 CALL CLEAR :: CALL COLOR
(2,5,5):: FOR R=4 TO 23 :: CALL
HCHAR(R,3,40,28):: NEXT R ::
A,R=38 :: B,C=25 :: CALL
SPRITE(#1,35,16,C,C,R,C)
```

```
30 CALL POSITION(#1,Y,X):: R
=R+76*((Y+R>200)-(Y+R<-1))::
C=C+50*((X+C>250)-(X+C<-1))
:: IF A=R AND B=C THEN 30
```

```
40 CALL MOTION(#1,R,C):: CALL
SOUND(-60,-2,9):: A=R :: B=C
:: GOTO 30
```

If you liked these programs, Craig's book is available through Miller's Graphics at 1475 W. Cypress Ave., San Dimas, Ca 91773. Phone: (714) 599-1431.

From Tigercub Software of Columbus Ohio comes the following:

```
110 CALL CLEAR :: FOR K=65 TO
90 :: CALL CHARPAT(K,A$)::
FOR J=15 TO 1 STEP-2 :: CH$
=CH$&SEG$(A$,J,2):: NEXT J ::
CALL CHAR(K,CH$)
```

```
120 CH$=NUL$ :: NEXT K :: DIS
PLAY AT(14,3):"VT EHT DENRUT
OHW! YEH" :: DISPLAY AT(12,
13) : "?NWOD EDISPU"
```

```
130 INPUT Q$ :: GOTO 130
```

Are you tired of the blankety blinking cursor? This won't work in Basic but if you're in XBASIC, try:

```
1 CALL COLOR(0,11,1)
```

We will have a catalog from Tigercub and from Miller's Graphics at the front table, at the next meeting for your review. More programs next issue....

COMPUTER EVOLUTION  
Part II

In the last article we discussed how data processing developed from mechanical devices in the 1800's to the first digital computer in the 1950's. Now we are going to discuss the leap in technology that has occurred in the last 30 years.

The first generation of computers (1951-1958) worked on vacuum tubes. The first commercial machine, UNIVAC was delivered to the Census Bureau on June 14, 1951. UNIVAC was founded by the men who had developed the first digital computer at the University of Pennsylvania. These machines used punched cards for input and output and had a magnetic core for memory.

The coming of the transistor marked the second generation machines. These machines were smaller, cost less to operate, and used other types of input and output. It was during this time (1959-1964) that higher level languages developed (i.e. FORTRAN and BASIC). It was during this time that computers began to be used extensively by business and government agencies.

The third generation (1965-?) was brought about by the introduction of the integrated circuit. A single integrated circuit (or "chip" as they became called) replaced an entire circuit board. Computers became cheaper and less expensive to operate. Since the introduction of the integrated circuit, manufacturers have put more and more circuits on chips. The result is that a computer that occupied a room in the 1950's will fit on a desk top today. The only parts of computers that haven't shrunk dramatically in size are the input and output devices.

Computers are everywhere in today's society. The computers that processed billings for major companies in the 50's had the same processing power and memory as the TI-99/4A has today. Hopefully we can learn to use them as they should be used to make this a better world.

Don Stewart

#### INFORMATION PLEASE

Not Quite Everything You've Always  
Wanted To Know About Cassette Files

Let me first include a short program that will illustrate using cassette files then I will go on to explain some of the basics.

```
100 A$="AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA"
110 OPEN #1:"CS1",OUTPUT,DISPLAY,FIXED
64
120 PRINT #1:A$
130 INPUT "DO IT AGAIN IF X=1 ":X
140 IF X=1 THEN 120
150 CLOSE #1
200 OPEN #2:"CS1",INPUT,DISPLAY,FIXED 64
210 INPUT #2:Q$
220 PRINT Q$
230 INPUT "DO IT AGAIN IF Y=1 ":Y
240 IF Y=1 THEN 210
250 CLOSE #2
```

Before I explain the program let me say why this article is being written. My own understanding of cassette files is half way decent but I claim to be no expert. I had my computer for over a year before cassette files were anything but a mystery to me. Part of the reason was my own fear of not knowing what I was doing. What little I tried didn't work so I gave up quick. The rest of the excuse I'll blame on there not being a decent explanation written down somewhere. The User's Reference Guide (URG) just does not explain cassette files so that I can understand them.

Knowing that some other people were having the same difficulties that I had prompted me to talk about cassette files at our last meeting. Since many of you were not at the meeting (shame on you) I thought I would repeat that information here.

The short program included here will take some data, an A\$ that consists of 64 A's, put it into a file on cassette tape, and then bring it back again just to prove that you can do it. After you understand how it works and feel comfortable with really doing it, it will be easier for you to do something useful with files.

Let's break down the program. OPEN #1: is telling the computer to set aside in its memory what you could call drawer #1. You could have chosen any of 255 drawers but we choose #1 because I'm lazy. While that drawer is open you can put things into it or take things out of it.

We will look at the next two parts together. "CS1",OUTPUT - means that we will take what is in that drawer and dump it to cassette; and it follows that "CS1",INPUT - would then mean we would dump things we got from cassette into that drawer. Notice that you can use 'INPUT' or 'OUTPUT' and nothing else when you are dealing with cassette tape; 'APPEND' and 'UPDATE' are out of reach with cassettes so forget about them.

Next we come to DISPLAY. You could also use INTERNAL instead. They indicate what form the data will be in. The book (URG) says that DISPLAY means the data will be in the form that we are used to seeing it as on the screen and INTERNAL will be closer to a machine language format. What that really means for practical purposes I'll explain after we talk about FIXED.

Notice the last part of line 110 says FIXED. That refers to how long the data in that drawer is allowed to be. It could be written as FIXED 64, FIXED 128, FIXED 196, or just FIXED and it will assume you mean 64. Using cassettes you have to use one of those choices. You cannot leave it out or use anything else.

Line 120 will PRINT to file #1 (to be dumped to cassette) the data in A\$. That data is 64 A's and with our choice for formatting that file, 64 characters is the longest piece of data we can use each time we come to that line to PRINT #1:A\$. It is okay for the data to be less than 64 characters or you could PRINT more than one string to the file (example: PRINT #1:A\$,B\$,C\$) as long as they total 64 characters or less.

Now this is the practical difference between DISPLAY and INTERNAL. If you choose DISPLAY (with our program FIXED 64) you can really let your data (A\$) be 64 characters long, but if you choose INTERNAL your data is reduced by 3 characters so your maximum becomes 61 not 64. The book says that INTERNAL is the preferred choice.

I know that this article can't cover everything because of space limitations in this newsletter (that's also a good excuse because I don't know everything) but it should help you get a handle on working cassette files.

One last note. If your cassette recorder has a remote and a counter that works, so much the better. Even if it doesn't you can get it to work fine if you use a tape from the very rewind beginning. This way you will know at what point you started when outputting files to tape and what point to go back to when inputting them back into the computer from tape.

Gary Matthews

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

Ok, here it comes. You have been asking for this and now I'm gonna give it to you!

Personally, I'm very pleased with the newsletter that is currently being published. It could be more meaningful if more of us would take the time to get involved. But quite frankly, I don't have near the time I thought I would to sit down and use my 4A much less take the time to write. However, the 'President's Corner' message was very nice in the July/August issue. Since I don't have the time to stay on top of what's going on with TI, I appreciate all who contribute to the newsletter and consequently to my overall knowledge.

I've been quite slow about making additional hardware and software purchases for my TI. Two major reasons come to mind: 1) I have a difficult time bringing together the big bucks it takes to invest in some of the hardware that

would really make my 4A perform the way I wish it would. Credit goes too the club for making some items available to us all at good prices...but even the club can make a deal just so good. 2) I seem to have this prideful feeling that unless the software program is really complicated myself. Therein lies the problem.... I'm no programmer. I've been teaching myself BASIC..and I swear I've discovered I'm a very illogical person.

Well, you got me rolling and I really unloaded on you. I'm not going to promise many more of these (aren't you glad) but I will continue to anxiously await each newsletter just as I do my personal copy of 99'er. When I've got more to contribute than just running off at the keyboard...be assured that I'll send it along. I for one thank you and the other officers who have given of their time to help me gain a better understanding of just what this little thing can do.

Sincerely,

R. Gene McCloud

#### LOW FREQUENCY CALL SOUND

At the last meeting I demonstrated a new low frequency call sound. In this article I'd like to demonstrate that format. I'd also like to thank Rob Williams of the CIN-DAY USERS GROUP, who first brought it to our attention, Stephen Shaw of TI-HOME who has been given the credit for discovering this technique, the CENTRAL VALLEY TI USERS GROUP for an explanation of the technique, and Jim Peterson of TIGERCUB SOFTWARE for a method of using it.

Sound with a frequency below 110cps is possible. When a third voice is specified in a CALL SOUND statement the noise generator '-4' (the fourth voice) is given a frequency equal to 1/15 that of the third voice. Since the third voice can have as its frequency 110cps then the -4 noise generator can be as low as 110/15cps or or 7.33334 cps.

Here are some examples;

```
100 FOR I+=1500 TO 110 STEP -20
110 CALL SOUND(500,22000,30,22000,30,
1,30,-4,0)
120 NEXT I
```

Now to make use of this idea. Here's a program to play the lowest chromatic octave of music as given in the "User's Reference Guide". It also plays another chromatic octave below that, previously unknown and unobtainable!

```

110 REM ROB WILLIAMS T.I.U.P.
120 REM PROGRAM TO PLAY LOWEST CHROMATIC
    OCTAVE AND NEW (!!) SUB OCTAVE
130 CALL CLEAR
140 X=110
150 K=2 (1/12)
160 FOR N=12 TO 1 STEP-1
170 Y=X*K N
180 CALL SOUND(500,Y,0)
190 NEXT N
200 CALL SOUND(500,110,0)
210 X=825
220 FOR N=12 TO 1 STEP -1
230 Y=X*K N
240 CALL SOUND(500,22000,30,22000,30,Y,
    30,-4,0)
250 NEXT N
260 CALL SOUND(500,22000,30,22000,30,825
    ,30,-4,0)

```

Here's a short harmonic progression that uses the low notes.

```

110 REM ROB WILLIAMS T.I.U.P.
120 V=8
130 T=600
140 T1=T/4
150 FOR I=1 TO 5
160 CALL SOUND(T,659,V,784,V,981,30,-4,
    0)
170 CALL SOUND(T,440,V,523,V,1310,30,-4,
    0)
180 CALL SOUND(T,494,V,587,V,1470,30,-4,
    0)
190 CALL SOUND(T,523,V,659,V,825,30,-4,
    0)
200 IF I=5 THEN 280
210 FOR J=1 TO 4
220 READ N
230 CALL SOUND(T1,110,30,110,30,N,30,-4,
    0)
240 NEXT J
250 RESTORE
260 NEXT I
270 DATA 1470,1310,1236,1101
280 STOP

```

Finally, this program will play and print the frequency codes for the two "secret" suboctaves of bass notes.

```

110 DEF R(X)=INT(X+.5)
120 F=1652
130 FOR J=1 TO 25
140 READ N#
150 PRINT N#;"=";R(F)
160 CALL SOUND(500,30000,30,30000,30,F,
    30,-4,0)
170 F=F/1.059463094
180 IF J<>12 THEN 200
190 RESTORE
200 NEXT J
210 DATA A,A FLAT,G,F#,F,E,E FLAT,D,C#,
    C,B,B FLAT,A

```

Well so much for low frequency music. If any of you write something with this method I'd like to put a copy in the library. Remember we will trade library programs for it.

Marshall.

## NOVEMBER MEETING

The November meeting of the Atlanta 99/4A Computer Users Group will be held, as usual, at 3:00 pm on Sunday the 20th at the downtown Atlanta Public Library (see back of newsletter for map). Topics for this meeting will include officer elections, a video tape about the club (to be locally aired on TV sometime this month), and a tutorial on TI-WRITER.

With weather getting colder and there being less things available for entertainment, the Users Group's meetings are a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon. You will learn of new products, learn of different programming techniques and of the many mysteries that surround the 99/4A. You will also have a chance to make new friends with people that share your common interests, and to discuss a software or hardware problem with someone who has experienced the same difficulty and who may have found a solution.

Now more than ever with TI dropping the home computer line, you need the Atlanta 99/4A Computer Users Group; and yes, we also need you. So come on out and share with us your computing problems and solutions. It is your involvement that makes the club the valuable resource that it was intended to be.

## SOFTWARE REVIEW

### AMBULANCE

by Funware

Command Module

AMBULANCE is another great Funware game with much action and excellent graphics. This is a command module based game. The object of [the] game is to get the people requiring medical attention to the hospital in time to save their lives. I found the difficulty level to be less than RABBIT TRAIL and thus less frustrating for a young person like myself.

The ambulance must make it through heavy traffic with siren shrilling in a frantic effort to save lives. The game is over when you either lose three of your ambulances due to crashes or 5 patience [patients] die due to slowness. The game requires joysticks and is fun for even young members of the family. It is the best I've seen from Funware; and I highly recommend it.

Amey Szydlowski

Reprinted from the St. Louis 99'ers' newsletter, "The Computer Bridge", October 1983, vol. 2, no. 10.

## EARTHQUAKE! EARTHQUAKE!

TI getting out of the Home Computer business! -- Now that you have all heard that, how do you feel about the situation? It doesn't mean that TI is closing down completely, just that they will no longer make the TI 99/4A home computer. They will still continue making fine calculators, electronic chips and the like (and probably also the larger Professional Computer), as they have been doing in the past. It still doesn't seem clear if they will or will not continue to support the User's Groups. That apparently hinges on the decision yet to be made as to whether or not they will continue to produce software, or leave that entirely to third parties. Perhaps a letter-writing campaign would help them to make the right decision -- how about giving it a try?? That is one thing you can do to help keep things going.

There are a few bits of good news in all this - the price of the 99/4A has now dropped to around \$50.00, which without a doubt makes it the best buy for the money in the computer market now. At that price, it should knock the socks off the long-undisputed king of the low-priced computers, Timex, which has far fewer capabilities. There's no time like the present to get a spare one, if you can find it, as they're going like hotcakes! At around \$50.00, it would certainly be nice to have an extra stashed back on a shelf for that hopefully-distant time in the future when, as everything must eventually do, your present machine gets too tired to work any more and decides to retire without giving you any advance notice. TI has also stated that they will continue the development of all software promised for the immediate future, so there will continue to be some new releases from TI for at least a while. And, they have indicated that they will still continue to provide repair and servicing.

TI's explanation for all this is that they "made some irreversible mistakes early in the game". My own explanation is that they got caught short by the extreme pressure of competition, which has also affected every other computer manufacturer, and had to sell their machines for less than their cost. They are, at least, able to continue in business, something which some other companies have not been able to do. Some of the other companies also feeling the pressure have (or will have) little choice but to knuckle under since they make nothing but computers. To use the same comparison as in my last blurb, it is somewhat like the early auto industry - many companies came and went, and some

great inventions came about, only to be dropped and then re-surface later as a "great new thing". I suspect that may be the case with some of TI's great capabilities. For example, the 99/4A was the first home computer on the market to use 16-bit Bytes. That probably doesn't mean much to most people, but consider this: an 8-bit machine can only use 64k (actually 65,536 Bytes) of memory, including the RAM, ROM and all that other good stuff, while a 16-bit machine can use literally millions of Bytes. If properly exploited. That big little word "if"! It provides an insight into one of TI's mistakes - they chose not to make the full capability of the 16-bit system available to users in the 99/4A. Other, though lesser, mistakes include the odd-ball keyboard design, and the unusual dialect of BASIC. If you've ever tried touch-typing, you'll know what I mean about the keyboard. True, there are many types and versions of keyboards, but TI's is just a little too different. And the particular dialect of BASIC chosen - again, each manufacturer has his own version (sometimes varying between versions of the same machine), and one of the reasons for the choice was to make better use of some of 99/4A's capabilities, but then, most dialects can be fairly readily translated to others, while translating to or from the TI version is somewhat more difficult. One of the good things that TI did do, that most other makers of small machines have yet to try (or can't try, being limited to 8-bit machines) was to build in a number of small programming routines that can be called up from a program without having to use up a great amount of precious memory. What am I talking about, you say? Well, how about the automatic line-numbering routine that you use when typing in a program? Or how about the "Trace" routine for debugging, or "Call Magnify". Or any other of several such time- and Memory-saving tasks that the 99/4A can do with only a few words, that would take from a few to many extra program lines to accomplish in most other machines.

So, the point of all this gab is: Don't give up and quit simply because TI has announced that they are no longer going to make the 99/4A! Write some letters, and let them know that you expect (demand!) that they continue to produce software for a great machine, and that you expect even greater things in the future. Maybe, just maybe, enough letters will convince them that they should try again, and fully exploit the capabilities of the 16-bit system they already have! So long for this month, and DON'T DELAY, WRITE TI TODAY!!

K. BITZER



## A9CUG B.B.S.

The Atlanta 99/4A Computer Users Group BBS should be up and running at or just shortly after the time this newsletter is out. The system's software is by Sam Pincus of Chicago. The system is open for use by all, whether they be owners of a TI or any other machine, and the number to call to access the BBS is 926-0506.

The system will initially be only on a part time trail basis, and will run on Marshall and Elise Gordon's personal TI-99/4A computer and peripherals. If after a month's time response proves favorable, the BBS will be set as a permanent and 24 hour system. In order for this to happen though, a complete TI system will need to be appropriated for such a dedicated use.

We are therefore asking that those who feel they might benefit from such a system, consider making a donation to this cause. Whether the contribution be in the form of cash or hardware, it does not matter; the fact is that a full blown system will be necessary to run a BBS.

We are in need of a 99/4A console, a Memory Expansion stand alone box or card, a Disk Drive Controller stand alone box or card, at least one stand alone or FE Box Disk Drive, an RS232 stand alone box or card, an Extended BASIC command module and a Hays Smartmodem 300.

The Gordons have already contributed a Peripheral Expansion Box, and we hope others who might plan to use this BBS will follow suit. Although we have not yet received status as a non-profit organization, we expect this to be forthcoming, which would mean that any donations you might make would be tax deductible.

## GORILLA

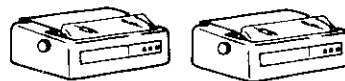
In a city like Atlanta with its surrounding areas, a new computer store pops up fairly often. Some of them survive. This article will not dwell over long on the store but on what I found there.

Computer Headquarters is located at 333 Peters Street and there number is 577-1111. If that address doesn't ring a bell then follow these directions. Drive south on Spring Street. Peters St. will curve off to the right about three blocks past the Omni. Continue on for a few more blocks until you think the area is over-run with pawn shops. Next to one of them is Computer Headquarters.

I am also happy to say that this isn't one of those stores that assume you are out to spend a minimum of five thousand dollars. They are the first place that I have seen the new Gorilla/Banana printer on display. That my friends is the reason for this article.

The Gorilla (which you have probably seen on the inside cover of Compute and other magazines) is a dot matrix impact printer with tractor feed that uses nine and a half inch paper. They had about six in stock and they were on sale for \$199. The printer lists for \$249. (Once their first supply is sold, I'm told that they will then be going for \$225.) It prints a 5 X 7 dot matrix character and although that is not what one would call correspondence quality, it was neat, crisp, and quite readable. The hookup is centronics parallel. Hopefully this is just the start of equipment coming into a price range that more of us can afford.

Gary Matthews

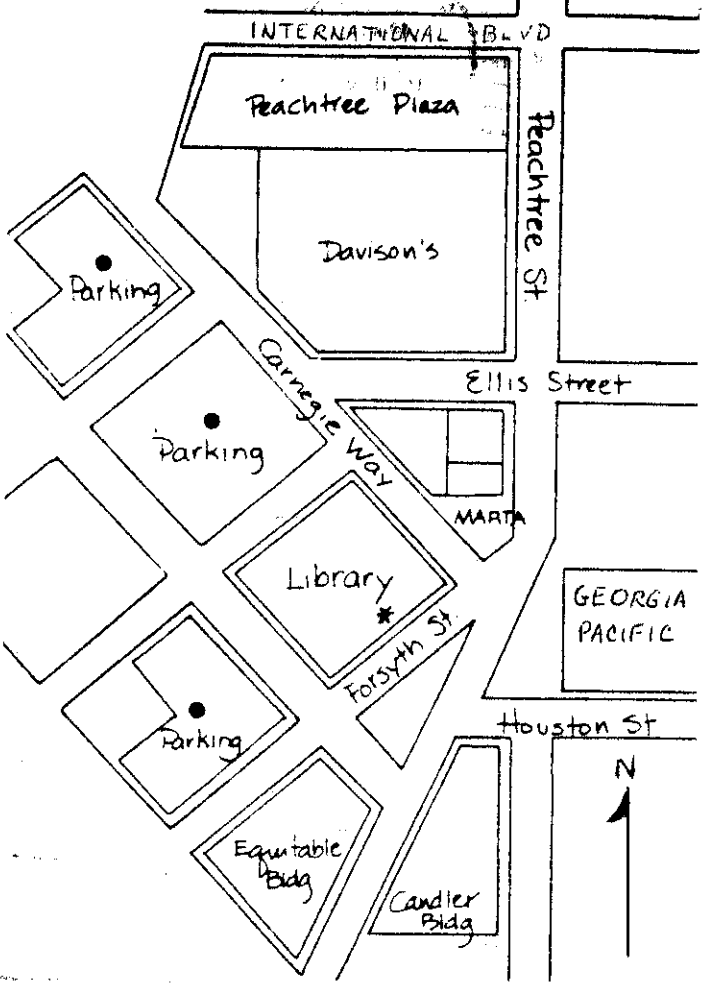


## MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

99 ACCESSORIES,	ATLANTA, GA.	633-4741	GARTEN (FAMILY), ROBERT A.	RIVERDALE, GA.	997-0877
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SKOTT, IVAN N.	DORAVILLE, GA.	396-4733	WILSON, CHARLES W.	STONE MTN., GA.	294-8329
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SPENCER, RONALD L.	DECATUR, GA.	373-7379	WOOD, FITZHUGH L.	MARIETTA, GA.	926-6300
STEELE, MRS. REBEKAH (JAMES L.)	JONESBORO, GA.	477-1839	WOODALL, ELLEN	MO. CITY, TX	713-437-1738
STEINER, JIM	ATLANTA, GA.	351-5122	YANCEY, WINSTON W.	ATLANTA, GA.	876-3225
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			YAU, CHRIS SHIN YUAN	DECATUR, GA.	934-1866

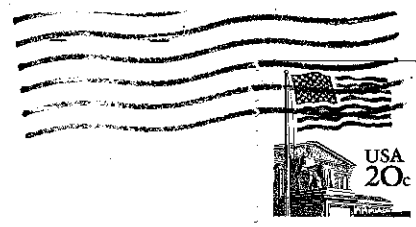


Atlanta  
99/4A  
Computer  
Users  
Group

NEXT MEETING:  
SUNDAY, NOV. 20<sup>TH</sup>  
ATLANTA PUBLIC LIBRARY  
3:00 P.M.

FOR MORE DETAILS, CALL 926-6308  
(A DONATION WILL BE REQUESTED -  
MEMBERS - 50¢, NON-MEMBERS - \$/1.00)

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30325



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