

MSP 99

USER
GROUP

THE MSP 99 NEWSLETTER

JAMES DEW AND THE 99'ER CONNECTION

by Jon Todd

Remember "Up Scope," "N-Vaders," and "Termite"? If you read 99'er Magazine, you've probably seen these programs. The man who wrote them is a member of our users group. His name is James Dew.

Jim has submitted other programs to the 99'er, some of which will be published in future issues. And Jim has only been programming on the home computer for about 18 months.

Jim's prolific programming had its roots in frustration. He works at Sperry Corporation where he wrote Operating Systems programs using assembly language. But a promotion meant he could no longer write programs at work. His solution was to buy a TI-99/4A.

He soon found uses for his computer around the house. Besides home bookkeeping and word processing, the computer helps Jim's family do their grocery shopping more efficiently. On shopping days Jim or his wife Della type the grocery list and the name of the store they will be visiting into the computer -- the computer reprints the list in supermarket aisle order.

Most of Jim's submissions to 99'er have been games, tested by his daughter Andrea. Future issues of 99'er will contain at least two new games from Jim. One, called "Space Smog," is written in Basic and features a multi-colored smog descending from space (or was that California?). The player has a cannon that can be moved to the left or right to cause the smog to retreat. Another game program we'll soon be

typing is "Slider," a single-player game similar to shuffleboard, written in Extended Basic.

For those of us who would like to see our names in print, Jim has some suggestions. First, of course, the program must be bug-free, written with the familiar "box" heading found in all 99'er listings. The program should be resequenced so that the first line number is 100 and line numbers are incremented by 10. If the program is on cassette, be sure to record the program twice, once at the beginning of each side.

The article accompanying the program should be double spaced and typed. A line explanation of the program and a list of variables are also requested.

The folks at 99'er Magazine pay for these programs if they are used, but the amount would have to be called "modest" at best. Jim said that typically when a program is to be published, a retaining fee of \$50 is paid to the author, followed by a \$100 payment at the time of publication. Further royalties are possible from sales of the "99'er Magazine on Tape" cassettes.

Although all five of Jim's published programs are written in Basic, he prefers using assembly language with the Mini-Memory module. He has submitted several assembly language programs to the 99'er, including one for word processing, but so far none have been accepted. Perhaps when a greater number of 99'er subscribers have acquired Mini-Memory, we'll have a chance to enjoy some of Jim's assembly handiwork, just as we've enjoyed his Basic programs.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HOME COMPUTERS...

The MSP 99 USERS GROUP meets once a month for a general program. You'll hear discussions and presentations that will enable you to be better informed; whether you own a home computer or are planning to buy one. Users groups are groups of people who share and exchange information for the good of all. You'll find our members are helpful and congenial. Some of our members have a broad range of computer expertise and experience which they are willing to share with others; others are just beginning. We are not affiliated with or sponsored by any other group or company. We are owners of the Texas Instruments TI-99/4 and TI-99/4A home computers, and we share an enthusiasm for these fine machines. Membership dues are \$12 a year for a family and \$10 a year for an individual. You are welcome to visit a meeting before you join. For more information, call or write us.

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The MSP 99 Newsletter is published by the MSP 99 USERS GROUP to serve the needs of TI-99/4 and TI-99/4A home computer users in the Minneapolis and St. Paul area. This publication is one of the regular benefits of an MSP 99 USERS GROUP membership. Members are encouraged to contribute articles for publication. Opinions expressed are those of the writer and are not necessarily those of the MSP 99 Users Group, its officers, editor, or members.

Newsletter Editor--Marilyn McPartlin 636-5663
Newsletter Committee Members: Bonnie Burton, Wayne Page, Jon Todd.

MSP 99 Newsletter articles may be reproduced if appropriate credit is given to the author (if one is listed) and to the Minneapolis-St. Paul TI-99 Users Group.

The MSP 99 USERS GROUP MEETINGS are held at the Brown Institute, Computer Building, 27th Avenue and East Lake Street, Minneapolis, on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m.

Members who have a special interest or idea for future programs should submit their ideas to the Program Committee. Mail ideas to the Users Group address given above (mark ATTN: Program Committee) or talk to Mike Larson at a meeting.

Members are needed to help on our committees. They include: Education, Equipment, Program, Recruitment, Software, and Newsletter. To volunteer or assist, contact one of the officers.

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Business firms that desire to communicate with our members may do so by placing an ad in a forthcoming issue of this newsletter. Rates are: Full Page (7-1/2 X 10-1/2) \$30; Half Page (3-1/2 X 10-1/2) \$20; Quarter Page (3-1/2 X 5) \$12. Each ad must be camera-ready in sizes indicated and paid in advance. Contact the newsletter editor for more information.

PERF SKIP: PRINTING A LIST PROGRAM
by Dick Irwin, Treasurer

Have you purchased the TI-WRITER and found that the printer will not skip over the perforation when you print a program listing (due to switch changes)? Here are some ideas for use with the Epson printer. Don't use line numbers with these commands and they will remain until the computer is turned off or until you enter a new command. (I'll assume your printer is set for six lines per inch.)

OPEN #1:"RS232.BA=9600.EC"
then:

FOR 11-INCH PAPER
PRINT #1:CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(67)&CHR\$(66);CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(70)&CHR\$(6)
FOR 8 1/2-INCH PAPER
PRINT #1:CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(67)&CHR\$(51);CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(78)&CHR\$(6)
FOR 9 1/2-INCH PAPER
PRINT #1:CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(67)&CHR\$(57);CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(78)&CHR\$(6)
FOR 9-INCH PAPER
PRINT #1:CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(67)&CHR\$(54);CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(78)&CHR\$(6)
FOR 12-INCH PAPER
PRINT #1:CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(67)&CHR\$(72);CHR\$(27)&CHR\$(78)&CHR\$(6)

For example, with the 12-inch paper, the CHR\$(72) indicates the length of the paper (6 lines per inch times 12 = 72); the CHR\$(6) indicates a six-line jump at perforation. The skip will take place after 66 lines have been printed (72 minus 6 = 66).

When you have your program on the screen, type the open command and press enter; then type the print command and enter; then type:

LIST "RS232.BA=9600.EC"
DA=7 can be used in place of EC if you like. Press enter and the printer will start listing the program.

PRICE REDUCTION

TI is expected to reduce the price of its 99/4A home computer to \$100 per unit by June 1983. (Makes you wish you weren't the first on your block to purchase one of these fine machines, doesn't it?!)

MSP 99 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TUES., MAY 17

SUN., JUNE 26

Paul Mork of the Command Small Computer Learning Center will be joining us for the May meeting to be held on the 17th. Paul is the co-host of KSTP-AM's Computer Talk, which may be heard at 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

He will present a program on the past, present, and future of computers. Paul will also discuss uses for the home computer, and he will answer questions you may have.

SOFTWARE CONTEST WINNERS will be announced at the May meeting. There were too many entries for the Software Committee to make its decisions in time for the newsletter deadline.

MSP 99 Users Group

COMPUTER FAIR

12-5 p.m., Brown Institute

(See article below for details.)

MSP 99 COMPUTER FAIR

Mark your calendars for Sunday, June 26! The MSP 99 Users Group Computer Fair will be held on this date from 12 to 5 p.m. at Brown Institute, 2716 E. Lake Street, Minneapolis. Edward Wiest, the Users Group Coordinator for Texas Instruments, will be coming from Lubbock, Texas, to present some of the new TI hardware and software. Demonstrations will be given at 1:00 and 3:30 and will last 45 minutes to an hour. Presentations will include an opening with quadrasonic music (generated by the 99/4A and a special quad sound card) and a slide show. The "Forth" language will be demonstrated and the 99/2 will be compared with the 99/4A. There will be a CC40 displayed and questions answered about it. The remainder of the presentation will be open for questions and answers. Another TI expert from the Lubbock plant will

accompany Mr. Wiest to help answer the many questions that our members always seem to have.

To add to the fun, five software packages will be given away as door prizes and pop and popcorn will be available. Proceeds from the sale of refreshments will be donated to the Brown Institute Emergency Student Loan Fund, in appreciation for the generous use of their facilities for all of our meetings.

Space will be available for retailers to display and sell goods and services related to the 99/4A. A sponsor membership is required for any vendor wishing to have exhibitor space. Those interested in exhibiting goods and services should call Jim Kavanaugh at 644-5940 for information about reserving a space.

**TI-99/4A
HOME COMPUTER COURSES**

Taught by Jim Kavanaugh

THE BASIC PROGRAMMING COURSE FOR THE TI-99/4A \$75

Six 3-hour sessions learning the features of the TI-99/4A, the BASIC Language, and programming techniques. Participants will learn how to organize, design, and write programs in TI-BASIC. The course will make the participants comfortable with and knowledgeable about programming in BASIC on the TI-99/4A. REGISTER NOW for the Monday night series starting May 9 and meeting once a week for six weeks, except Memorial Day.

OR

REGISTER for the Wednesday night series starting May 25 and meeting for six consecutive weeks.

THE COMPUTER COMFORT COURSE \$10

One 2-hour session discussing what to do with the TI-99/4A, demonstrating the equipment, explaining what it does and why it is useful. A broad spectrum of software is also demonstrated. The participant will become better acquainted with equipment and software and be able to make better decisions about purchases. REGISTER NOW for the session on May 10.

WORD PROCESSING WITH TI-WRITER \$15

One 3-hour session demonstrating the use of TI-WRITER. The participant will learn how to use TI-WRITER effectively. REGISTER NOW for the session on May 19.

PROGRAMMING LAB \$5/SESSION

A 3-hour open forum to assist participants organize, design, code, and debug their programs. This is your opportunity to work on the details of your own programming project so bring your programs and programming ideas.

REGISTER NOW for the Labs on May 12 and/or May 26.

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME: _____

MAIL TO:

ADDRESS: _____

Jim Kavanaugh
P.O. Box 13012
St Paul, Mn 55113

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

OR

COURSE: _____

CALL

Inquire about private courses for your group. **644-5940**
Take a 10% discount on payments made a week in advance.

SOFTWARE SEARCH by Bonnie Burton

After scouring the town for the last command module you needed to make the April 15th speech synthesizer deadline, would you agree TI should wake up software-wise??

Actually, Texas Instruments, Inc. has announced that a comprehensive list of software for the 99/4A is scheduled to be available in May. The TI-99/4A SOFTWARE DIRECTORY (PHA 2619) will contain 1200 software packages from both TI and third-party authors in a well indexed fashion that includes abstracts of all listed software. We'll soon know WHAT'S available, but WHERE to buy it is another matter!

A telephone call to TI produced a list of dealers that was incomplete and inaccurate for my purposes. For example, the list included wholesale and manufacturing dealers and frankly, I could care less that Midwest Plastics packages the software for Target Stores. While J.C. Penney-Southdale and Children's Palace are personal favorites, investigation shows more and more local retailers are carrying TI software. Some stores have a better selection than others: inventories fluctuate and it's a guess as to what will be available. The stores listed below each have several locations and I assume you will locate those most convenient to you.

MPLS/ST. PAUL RETAILERS

B. Dalton-Southdale	K-Mart Stores
Children's Palace	LaBelle's
Dayton's Stores	Schaak Electronics
Digital Den	Sears
J.C. Penney, Inc.	Target Stores

USERS GROUPS

MSP 99 USERS GROUP	INT'L 99/4 USERS
Attention: Software	GROUP
5916 France Ave. S.	P.O. Box 67
Edina, MN 55410	Bethany, OK 73008

For those seeking third-party software, there are a few local dealers available via mail order. In addition, User's Groups should not be overlooked as a potential source of programs that, if not deluxe, are at least usable. Generally, a telephone call or a note will produce information.

Software is also available through multi-level marketing plans. A common approach of these plans is to offer a catalog and the rights to sell software for a \$20 fee. In exchange, you are told you can purchase your own software at 'wholesale prices' and many people buy in on this promise alone. A quick survey of these prices shows they are comparable to Labelle's. While some third-party software may be offered that is not available through other sources, the selection is rarely worth the investment. So unless you're a fan of the multi-level marketing approach and all it entails, these plans are not the most cost efficient means for the average consumer to obtain software. The bottom line is that you pay \$20 to get a catalog.

If all else fails and you just can't find the software you want, remember you can order it through the TI Consumer Software Line: 1-800-858-4075, M-F, business hours. Happy hunting!

LOCAL 3RD PARTY AND MAIL ORDER OUTLETS

AMERICAN SOFTWARE DESIGN, P.O. Box 46,
Cottage Grove, MN 55016

CALCULATORS, INC., 7409 Fremont Ave. S.,
Minneapolis, MN 55423, 612-866-8908

DEMARS, 612-544-6219

MICRO-ED, INC., P.O. Box 24156, Minneapolis,
MN 55424, 612-926-2292

SOFTIES, 7300 Gallagher Dr., Suite 229,
Edina, MN 55435, 612-831-4872

TI-WRITER: PRODUCT REVIEW

by Jim Kavanaugh

TI-WRITER is an excellent word processing package. It is fast, flexible, easy to use, and all around the best package out of Texas Instruments to-date, in my opinion. The International 99/4 Users Group had an article reviewing TI-WRITER in its February Newsletter. In that article, "TI WRITER - Untied" (sic), statements are made about needing to write programs to create a mailing list file, bad documentation for DEFINE PROMPT, how screen overlapping works, the use of the TL instruction to the Formatter, restriction to an 80 character line, and more. THESE STATEMENTS ARE NOT TRUE!!! I do not understand the motivation of the author, A. Poubelle, in submitting the article for publication. Perhaps it was a valid review of an early prototype.

Word processing is a complex function and it takes both time and patience to use it well. The rewards are enhanced abilities in organization and written communication. I have used TI-WRITER to create and maintain priority lists, correspond with friends, document project specifications, write memos to business associates, write articles, prepare fliers describing course offerings, and many other things.

EQUIPMENT: The equipment requirements are:
TI-99/4A console and monitor (or TV).
TI Peripheral Expansion System with:
Memory expansion card.
Disk controller card.
RS232 interface card.
Disk drive.
Printer, RS232 compatible.

THE TI-WRITER PACKAGE: TI-WRITER comes in a 3-ring binder containing:
FCTN and CTRL key strip.
Quick Reference Card.
User's Guide and Reference Guide.
TI-WRITER Cartridge.
TI-WRITER Program Diskette.

MECHANICS: The TI-WRITER manual is divided into two major sections. The User's Guide is devoted to getting a new user familiar with TI-WRITER; the Reference Guide provides detailed explanations of each function and feature. The User's Guide recommends copying the Program Diskette and using the copy for program selection. The original diskette is set aside for making more copies, when needed. This is a good recommendation and should be followed.

Using TI-WRITER is very easy. Turn on the equipment, install the cartridge and Program Diskette, and select the English language version from the master selection list. (Evidently, TI-WRITER will be implemented in a number of languages.) Once TI-WRITER is selected it displays its main menu of three programs: 1 for Text Editor, 2 for Text Formatter, and 3 for Utility.

The Text Editor program is used for entering and storing documents, the Text Formatter prints stored documents according to format specifications, and the Utility program provides the interface to "utility packages" that will be sold separately. There are no clues to the possible functions of the utility packages.

GETTING STARTED: The User's Guide recommends going through its hands-on tutorials about using the Text Editor and Text Formatter. I did it. It took me about 8 hours, and I think it was worth every minute. The tutorials are well presented and organized and thoroughly cover the functions of the Editor and Formatter. In addition, there are exercises in Appendix 2 that give good tips about letter writing, and introduce variables, Mailing List files, and use of the Mail Merge Option. These are worth going through in detail.

Half way through the tutorial on the Text Formatter I abandoned the recommended procedure for single disk drive systems. The User's Guide recommends using the Program Diskette only to load the TI-WRITER programs. "User diskettes" store user created documents. The problem with this is the Program Diskette and the user diskette need to be swapped in and out of the disk drive depending on whether a document needs to be stored, edited, or printed; this is tedious and inefficient. I found I could use the Program Diskette for document storage, too. There is adequate space: 231 of the 358 sectors are available, more if the practice files are deleted. So I eliminated the swapping by using the Program Diskette for program and document storage. And it has worked well so far.

OPERATION: A typical session begins by selecting the Text Editor from the main menu. Then text is entered into the Editor's buffer by either creating it at the keyboard or loading it from a file on diskette. The text, which includes both the document text and the instructions to the

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SIGNALMAN MARK III MODEM

by Mike Larson

Just about the time I was seriously considering purchasing a modem, there appeared an ad in the 99'er Magazine for a Signalman Mark III from TEX-COMP at a price of only \$94.95. I ordered the modem and TE-II, which was also offered at a special price.

Although I have never used a modem before, I had no trouble following the instructions supplied with the unit. All that is required to connect this modem is a phone which has a modular cord between the handset and the desk set (phones with the dial in the handset will not work with this modem). A short cable (supplied) is connected from the Signalman to the phone, after which the handset is connected to it. The installation is completed by inserting a 9-volt battery and connecting the attached cable to the RS232. (An optional AC adaptor is also available.)

TI-WRITER

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Text Formatter about how to print the document, may be corrected, rearranged, appended, or shortened. The final operations are storing the text in a file on diskette and returning to the main menu.

To print a document the Text Formatter is selected from the menu. The Formatter requires the name of the document file on diskette to print, the file name of the printer, whether or not the mail list option is used, which pages of the document are to be printed, the number of copies to print, and whether or not to pause at the end of each page (for single sheet feeding of the printer). The Formatter prints the document exactly as specified by the instructions embedded in the text.

I found the Editor and Formatter to have all the functions and features necessary for word processing, plus a few. Like the ability to change the screen color to suit individual needs, and a built-in mail list feature. When multiple copies are to be printed, the Formatter decrements the count as each copy is printed.

TI-WRITER IMPROVEMENTS: Although I found the TI-WRITER package to be more than satisfactory in most respects, there are a few items that, I think, would improve it:

After reading my TE-II manual I was then ready to test my modem by dialing up one of the local bulletin boards. I began by selecting default values for the terminal emulator. Upon receiving the board's carrier signal, I moved the modem's only switch to the data position. Next an audible tone was heard, which ceased after the Signalman detected the incoming carrier. I followed the instructions being sent to me by the bulletin board's computer and began to browse through its data base. Later another club member and I exchanged some programs via the modem and encountered no problems.

A complementary subscription to The Source comes with the Signalman Mark III, including one free hour of use, making it one of the best values I've purchased for my home computer system. I found the Signalman to be very easy to use, very compact, and well suited for my purposes.

1. TI-WRITER should keep track of the name of my printer so that I would not have to enter it each time I select the Formatter program from the main menu.
2. TI-WRITER should keep track of the last file stored while using the Editor, so it could be presented as the default document file name when the Formatter or Editor program is selected.
3. The Formatter should ask its full set of questions only when requested.
4. There is no line length maximum in the "word wrap/fill in" mode, but an uncomfortably restrictive 80-character limit in "fixed/no fill" mode. Because many printers allow compressed type at 17 characters per inch and there is a 13.2 inch standard print width, a 240-character limit would allow space for special printer control characters and a full print line in compressed type.

CONCLUSION: TI-WRITER is an excellent word processing package that is well documented, easy to use, fast and powerful. If you have the required equipment, it's a must! If you don't have the equipment, TI-WRITER is the type of package you've been waiting for to make the investment worthwhile. On a scale of 1 to 10, TI-WRITER is a solid 9.5. I have never given a 10!

FREE PROGRAMS FOR KIDS

by Dick Irwin

The Software Committee will give any children 12 or under three programs of their choice if a parent, guardian, or teacher signs the order form saying the child has been "good" during the month. This is available only to family memberships and each family may receive only 3 programs per month regardless of the number of children in the family. The parent will have to pay \$1.75 for the cassette tape and postage.

Since the "age" had to be selected arbitrarily, the person making the decision as to the "good" factor is also free to arbitrarily decide if the age was intended to mean physical age or otherwise. It is not the intent of the Software Committee to place undue hardship on the child.

The Software Committee does not have time to look up the birthdate of family members, so we've decreed that all family members have at least one child 12 and under. The formula used to determine this will not be revealed since it is highly technical and requires a full-blown system as well as 10 modules, 2 printers, and 3 subscriptions to the Source.

MSP 99 USERS GROUP
P.O. BOX 12351
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55112

Address Correction Requested

KIDS KORNER

by Amy DeMars

We've decided to start a special group just for kids. This group is for kids of all ages who are interested in the TI-99/4 and 4A.

The intended purpose of this group is to share ideas and learn from each other. To be successful, we need as many kids as possible.

We'll be getting some hardware and software exclusively for our club.

Hope to see you and your ideas at the next meeting. Bye till next month.

WANT ADS

Members may place want ads, at no charge, by calling Bonnie Burton at 431-8084 or by turning in written copy of the ad at any MSP 99 meeting.

DISKS FOR SALE -- Top quality blank disks for data or program storage at users group rates on special purchase by group. Ten in plastic storage box, \$26; regular box of 10, \$24; single disks, \$3. Call Dick Irwin, 926-9401, for info.

TAPES FOR SALE -- Ampex 10-min. cassette tapes now available through Users Group. Cost is 75¢ each or 10 for \$5 (\$1 mailing charge or pick up at meeting). Call Dick Irwin at 926-9401.

FOR SALE -- Stand-alone RS232, \$100; 32K memory expansion unit, \$140. Call Dick Irwin, 926-9401.

Bulk Rate U.S. Postage PAID Permit #1285 Minneapolis, MN
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CENTRAL ALABAMA 99/4 USERS' GROUP

551 LARKWOOD DRIVE
MONTGOMERY, AL 36109

A HOME COMPUTER INTEREST GROUP