

# TI - D - BITS

PHILADELPHIA AREA USERS GROUP NEWSLETTER  
COVERING THE TI99/4A  
AND MYARC 9640 COMPUTERS

JANUARY 1990



## All Eyes are On The NEW YEAR With A



A new president  
Allan Silverstein  
A New Treasurer  
Don Arcenault



A New Meeting Place  
Orxhel Inst.



New Hardware for 9640  
MEMEM Card - Bud Mills  
New Software for TI



TI-ARTIST PLUS  
Pix Pro  
COLOR CARD and  
COLOR FLYER



THE PHILADELPHIA AREA TI-99/4A USERS' GROUP (JAN '90)

The Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group meets twice a month. On the first Saturday of any given month, we meet at the Bucks County Youth Development Center, (YDC, which is next to Neshaminy Mall), Administration Building, beginning at 10:00 am. On the third Saturday of each month, we meet at LaSalle University, 20th Olney, in room H-329 located in the Science Building. Membership to The Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group is available to all. We invite anyone that is interested in the TI-99/4A to visit us. Stop in and see what is available to you for your TI and how membership can benefit you!

Current executive board consists of:

-----  
PRESIDENT..... Allan Silversteen. 215-947-7353  
VICE PRESIDENT..... Eric Bray..... 215-885-7910  
SECRETARY..... Mark Wannop..... 609-365-1776  
TREASURER..... Don Arsenault..... 215-368-0446

Committees consists of:

-----  
TI-d-BITS .... Ralph Field..... 215-362-2534  
Don Arsenault..... 215-368-0446  
OPEN  
Rice Hall  
LIBRARY ..... Ted Chemey..... 215-752-1458  
Rich Mascara 215-441-4060  
MEMBERSHIP ... OPEN  
ASSISTANT TREASURER. Frank Passini  
EDUCATION .... Barry Traver  
Frank Passini  
Ted Chemey  
Tim Coyne  
Carlo Angelico  
EQUIPMENT .... Rice Hall  
PROGRAM ..... Dr. Eric Bray

REMEMBER to be considerate when calling any of the above people. Limit your calls to the early evening hours. (6pm to 9pm)

The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors are not necessarily those of the Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group or its officers. Nor is the Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group or any of its officers responsible for any damage, inconvenience, or loss which may result as a consequence of the use of any written material herein.

TI-d-Bits is published monthly by the Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group, c/o Don Arsenault, 1290 Buttonwood Dr., Lansdale, PA 19446. All material herein may be reprinted freely by other non-profit User Groups, (unless otherwise stated), as long as proper credit is given to both source and author. Contributions are encouraged, but no payment is made. Editorial, advertising, and classified, copy MUST be in by the LAST day of the previous month. You can either mail your copy to: TI-d-Bits, c/o The Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group, c/o Don Arsenault, 1290 Buttonwood Dr., Lansdale, PA 19446 or send it via modem by contacting Don Arsenault at (215)-368-0446. If your piece contains any diagrams, charts, or code, send a paper copy AT FINAL PUBLICATION SIZE.

Classified ads are printed in blocks. A block consists of 3 lines, 55 characters wide, or any increment of 3 lines. Classified advertising is accepted from members at NO CHARGE for a one block ad, per issue. Additional ads from members may be placed at cost of \$1.00 per block. Non members may place classified ads at a cost of \$2.00 per block. All advertisements MUST be paid for in advance.

Commercial advertising is accepted for publication at the following rates:

Quarter page ..... \$ 5.00  
Half page ..... \$ 8.00  
Full page ..... \$15.00

Commercial advertisements will be placed in the next available issue. All advertisements MUST be paid for in advance.

The editor of TI-d-Bits or the executive board of The Philadelphia area TI-99/4a Users' Group reserve the right to reject any material submitted for publication for any reasons.

The Philadelphia Area TI-99/4A Users' Group's program library is available to all active members at NO CHARGE for copying to your disk. A charge of \$2.00 per disk is made for club supplied disks for members. Non members may obtain copies of the library for a fee of \$5.00 per disk. A catalog of the library's contents is given to all new members upon request and updates will appear in this publication from time to time. To obtain material from the library, contact the librarian for the best procedure to obtain your requests.

THE PHILADELPHIA AREA TI-99/4A USERS' GROUP (JAN '90)

\*\*\*\*\*  
PRESIDENT'S COLUMN  
By Allan Silversteen  
\*\*\*\*\*

President's Sililoquy

My name is Allan Silversteen (Al or Allan will be good enough), and I have been "duly elected" (read railroaded) into the position of president. Its a dirty job so they hired a dirty man to do it. My forte is hardware, heck I don't write so well, let alone spell. I may as well admit that all text I generate will be edited and reviewed by my faithful, loving and letter perfect wife, whom I wish to thank publicly. Thanks, Charlotte, you told me not to volunteer!

I don't use my TI as much as I could or should. The one massive project they (3 systems) did was so successful, we were removed from it because a Wang VS with 130 Megs could not follow up on it. Ask me about reinventing the wheel sometime.

We are the Philadelphia Area Texas Instrument User Group (PATIUG) and, as a user group, we should be driven by the needs and desires of our membership. We all know the "squeaky wheel" principle so I can't do something about it if I don't hear from you. The telephone number 885-7910 has an answering device on it and I try to return all messages, so call me if you have something to say or need help or what-ever.

Gee, I wish I was a professional speech writer! The coming year of my reign of power I hope to accomplish the following:

\* Several Telecommunication courses using Fastern, Masstransfer 80 and Telco. I would like about 90% of our group to have and use their modems and start to talk to other users and user groups.

\* We will re-affiliate our group with PACS as long as they keep their noses and hands out of our business. This means we will make a showing at Drexel University.

\* We will maintain the YDC environment, as long as we can, and continue to support the classes there.

\* I would like to establish an additional BBS at YDC using the group's equipment and YDC's Philadelphia telephone line at night and alternate weekends, except when the group will be using the equipment.

\* I am working with Dr. Eric Bray and indirectly with Lou Phillips of Myarc to utilize the PACS

BBS as an Official Myarc newsletter. This would benefit Myarc by having an electronic Newsletter accessible to PC pursuit. It would gain PACS by pushing its membership to a nationwide area, and finally would give the TI User group more numeric clout, since new members would be counted as members of PATIUG. Let's see if it flies.

\* I took a straw vote as to the desirability of adding a Myarc Hard Floppy Controller Card to our group's system to allow the Geneve to utilize its full power, and allow the group's floppy drives to format to any user level. This suggestion met no resistance, so the next Myarc group purchase will include a HFCC for PATIUG. I have volunteered (I did it again) a Hard drive and power supply to implement same.

\* We will do everything possible to attract the members of the defunct Depford, NJ user group to our fold and try to get some mutual interaction with the Delaware Valley User Group (DVUG)

\* I would like to build a more transportable system for the user group since our equipment is awkward and bulky at present. Any inputs on what should be included and how it should be implemented?

\* Because of the change in PACS aditude we will reconence the 50/50 and the Disk of the Month offers. Remember to bring an initiallize disk with your name and address to every meeting! We will place new public domain software on it and return it to you the following month.

\* I would like to see another YDC type learning center established in city, Germantown, or Roxbrough area for a monthly evening class. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

\* We will continue to support and attend any local TI fests like TICOFF, and Harrisburg, as well as the Trenton State College Fair and any PACS sponsored affairs like the Man and Chips thing. Any offers of assistance would be appreciated.

\* The Swap Shop/Exchange will continue with your support.

\* We will continue to have group purchases when enough interest in a product warrants same, including Myarc products. Why not tell me what is on your wish list?

\* I will try to incorporate some articles that have a more general interest to the TI community than just of meeting proceeding to be included in the PACS Databuss





THE PHILADELPHIA AREA TI-99/4A USERS' GROUP (JAN '90)

**L.L.Conner Enterprise** (Same or next day shipment of hardware or software if in stock; phone answered evenings and Sundays, excellent service)  
1521 Ferry St.  
Lafayette IN 47904  
317-742-8146

**Asgard Software** (Largest software publisher in the TI/Geneve market. also quarterly magazine and several books, extensive free catalog; phone most likely to be answered evenings and weekends)  
P.O.BOX 10306  
Rockville MD 20850  
703-255-3085

**Texaments**  
53 Center St.  
Patchogue NY 11772  
516-475-3480 voice  
516-475-6463 24-hr. BBS

**Competition Computer Products** (good selection of unused TI brand modules and software, also used hardware. They quickly replace anything they sell that turns out to be defective.)  
2629 W. National Ave.  
Milwaukee WI 53204  
800-242-7902 in Wisconsin  
800-662-9253 out of Wisconsin

**Triton** (Nice free catalog)  
P.O.BOX 8123  
San Francisco CA 94178  
800-227-6900

**Texcomp** (Lg. catalog mailed 1st class if you send them \$2.00)  
P.O.BOX 33804  
Granada Hills CA 91344  
818-366-6631

**Bud Mills Services** (Horizon ramdisks, P-grm cards)  
166 Dartmouth Dr.  
Toledo OH 43614  
419-385-5946

**Tigerclub Software** (Extensive, very cheap library of PD software plus original software)  
156 Collingwood Ave.  
Columbus OH 43213  
614-235-3545

**Great Lakes Software**  
804 E. Grand River Ave.  
Howell MI 48843  
517-546-0566

**Hunter Electronics**  
4 N. 370 Pine Grove  
Bensenville IL 60106  
312-766-9503

**Disk Only Software**  
P.O.BOX 244  
Lorton VA 22079  
310-340-7179  
800-736-4951 (credit card orders for Asgard & JP software)

**Not Polyoptics**  
P.O.BOX 4443  
Woodbridge VA 22191  
703-491-5543

**Quality 99 Software**  
1884 Columbia RD #1021  
Washington DC 20009  
202-667-3574

**Myarc Inc** (Geneve computer and hard disk controller card for TI and Geneve and other hardware.)  
P.O.BOX 140  
Basking Ridge NJ 07920-1014  
201-766-1700 and 205-854-5843

**Trio+ Software**  
P.O.BOX 114-A  
Liscomb IA 50148

**The Bunyard Group** (Hardware manual)  
P.O.BOX 62323  
Colorado Springs CO 80962-2323  
719-488-2572

**Midwest Engineering** (Copy of Horizon Ramdisk)  
203 Arcadis Dr.  
Vernon Hills IL 60061  
312-362-9034

**Alboes Computer/Suppliers**  
6298 Hamilton Rd.  
36 Main Street Village  
Columbus GA 31909  
404-327-4900

**LaFlamme Wrigley**  
5480 Canotek Rd. Unit #16  
Gloucester Ontario K1J 9H6  
Canada  
613-745-2225



THE PHILADELPHIA AREA TI-99/4A USERS' GROUP (JAN '90)

TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB

#32

Copyright 1988

TIGERCUB SOFTWARE  
156 Collingwood Ave.  
Columbus, OH 43213

Distributed by Tigercub Software to TI-99/4A Users Groups for promotional purposes and in exchange for their newsletters. May be reprinted by non-profit users groups, with credit to Tigercub Software.

Over 120 original programs in Basic and Extended Basic, available on cassette or disk, NOW REDUCED TO JUST \$1.00 EACH!, plus \$1.50 per order for cassette or disk and P&M. Minimum order of \$10.00. Cassette programs will not be available after my present stock of blanks is exhausted. The Handy Dandy series, and Color Programming Tutor, are no longer available on cassette. Descriptive catalogs, while they last, \$1.00 which is deductible from your first order.

Tigercub Full Disk Collections, reduced to \$5 postpaid. Each of these contains either 5 or 6 of my regular catalog programs, and the remaining disk space has been filled with some of the best public domain programs of the same category. I am NOT selling public domain programs - they are a free bonus!  
TIGERCUB'S BEST, PROGRAMMING TUTOR, PROGRAMMER'S UTILITIES, BRAIN GAMES, BRAIN TEASERS, BRAIN BUSTERS!, MANEUVERING GAMES, ACTION GAMES, REFLEX AND CONCENTRATION, TWO-PLAYER GAMES,

KID GAMES, MORE GAMES, WORD GAMES, ELEMENTARY MATH, MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL MATH, VOCABULARY AND READING, MUSICAL EDUCATION, KALEIDOSCOPES AND DISPLAYS

NUTS & BOLTS DISKS

These are full disks of 100 or more utility subprograms in MERGE format, which you can merge into your own programs and use, almost like having another hundred CALLS available in Extended Basic. Each is accompanied by printed documentation giving an example of the use of each. NUTS & BOLTS (No. 1) has 100 subprograms, a tutorial on using them, and 5 pp. documentation. NUTS & BOLTS No. 2 has 108 subprograms, 10 pp of documentation. NUTS & BOLTS #3 has 140 subprograms and 11 pp. of documentation. NOW JUST \$15 EACH, POSTPAID.

TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB

These are full disks which contain the programs and routines from the Tips from the Tigercub newsletters, in ready-to-run program format, plus text files of tips and instructions.

TIPS (Vol. 1) contains 50 original programs and files from Tips newsletters No. 1 through No. 14. TIPS VOL. 2 contains over 60 programs and files from Nos. 15 thru 24. TIPS VOL. 3 has another 62 from Nos. 25 through 32. TIPS VOL. 4 has 48 more from issues No. 33 through 41. NOW JUST \$10 EACH, POSTPAID.

\*\*\*\*\*  
# NOW READY #  
# TIPS FROM TIGERCUB VOL.5 #  
# Another 49 programs and #  
# files from issues No. 42 #  
# through 50. Also \$10 ppd #  
\*\*\*\*\*

TIGERCUB CARE DISKS #1,#2,#3

and #4. Full disks of text files (printer required). No. 1 contains the Tips news letters #42 thru #45, etc. Nos. 2 and 3 have articles mostly on Extended Basic programming. No. 4 contains Tips newsletters Nos. 46-52. These were prepared for user group newsletter editors but are available to anyone else for \$5 each postpaid.

This one should come in handy for bowling league captains and Little League coaches.

```

100 DIM M(29,29),T$(30)
110 GOTO 130
120 M;Q$;J;I;X;P$;S$;K
130 !@P-
140 DISPLAY AT(3,7)ERASE ALL
:"LEAGUE SCHEDULER":;"by the
Burwells adapt
ed by Tigercub"
150 DISPLAY AT(8,1):" This p
rogram sets up a:"schedule
for up to 30 teams":;"so that
each plays each":;"other onc
e and only once."
160 DISPLAY AT(12,1):" If an
odd number of teams":;"are s
cheduled, each gets one":;"by
e."
170 DISPLAY AT(16,1):"Number
of teams?" : ACCEPT AT(16,
18)VALIDATE(DIGIT):N : IF N
>30 THEN DISPLAY AT(18,1):"L
IMIT OF 30!" : GOTO 170
180 DISPLAY AT(18,1)ERASE AL
L:"Schedule teams by name? Y
" : ACCEPT AT(18,25)SIZE(-1
)VALIDATE("YN"):Q$ : IF Q$=
"N" THEN 200
190 FOR J=I TO N : DISPLAY
AT(20,1):"Team no.":J;"name?
" : ACCEPT AT(22,1):T$(J)::
NEXT J : GOTO 210
200 FOR J=1 TO N : T$(J)="T
eam No. "&STR$(J):: NEXT J
210 IF N/2<>INT(N/2)THEN N=N-
+1 : T$(N)="bye"
220 DISPLAY AT(23,1):"Schedu
le by day, week, month":"or
what?" : ACCEPT AT(24,10):S
$ : FOR J=1 TO N-1 : M(I,J

```

```

J)=J+1
230 NEXT J : FOR J=1 TO N-1
STEP 2 : GOSUB 260
240 NEXT J : FOR J=2 TO N-2
STEP 2 : GOSUB 330
250 NEXT J : GOSUB 350 : S
TOP
260 FOR I=1 TO N-2 : IF M(I
,J)=N THEN 280
270 M(I+1,J)=M(I,J)+1 : GOT
O 290
280 M(I+1,J)=M(I,J):: GOTO 3
00
290 NEXT I
300 X=I+1 : FOR I=X TO N-2
: M(I+1,J)=M(I,J)-1
310 NEXT I
320 RETURN
330 FOR I=1 TO N-2 : IF M(I
,J)=2 THEN 350
340 M(I+1,J)=M(I,J)-1 : GOT
O 360
350 M(I+1,J)=M(I,J):: GOTO 3
70
360 NEXT I
370 X=I+1 : FOR I=X TO N-2
: M(I+1,J)=M(I,J)+1
380 NEXT I : RETURN
390 DISPLAY AT(12,1)ERASE AL
L:"Output to - 2":;" (1) Sc
reen":;" (2) Printer" : ACCE
PT AT(12,13)SIZE(-1)VALIDATE
("12"):K : IF K=1 THEN 440
400 DISPLAY AT(18,1):"Printe
r? P10" : ACCEPT AT(18,10)S
IZE(-18):P$ : OPEN #1:P$ :
PRINT #1:"LEAGUE SCHEDULE":
: : FOR I=1 TO N-1 : PRIN
T #1:S$;" #":I : PRINT #1:T
$(I):" vs ";T$(M(I,1))
410 FOR J=2 TO N-2 STEP 2 :
PRINT #1:T$(M(I,J)):" vs ";
T$(M(I,J+1))
420 NEXT J : PRINT #1:"" :
430 NEXT I : RETURN
440 FOR I=1 TO N-1 : PRINT
TAB(7);"LEAGUE SCHEDULE": :
PRINT "WEEK #":I : : PR
INT T$(1);" vs ";T$(M(1,1)):
FOR J=2 TO N-2 STEP 2 : P
RINT T$(M(I,J)):" vs ";T$(M(
I,J+1))
450 NEXT J : PRINT "" : :
PRINT "PRESS ANY KEY FOR NE
XT WEEK"
460 CALL KEY(0,K,S):: IF S=0
THEN 460

```





```

/1.585,9,N(B)*3.75,30,-4,9):
: GOSUB 290
240 CALL SOUND(T,N(A),5,N(B)
/1.334,9,N(B)*3.75,30,-4,9):
: GOSUB 290
250 CALL SOUND(T,N(A),5,N(B)
/2,9,N(B)*3.75,30,-4,9):: 60
SUB 290 :: RETURN
260 CALL SOUND(T,N(A),5,N(A)
*1.01,5,N(B)/1.585,9):: GOSUB
B 290
270 CALL SOUND(T,N(A),5,N(A)
*1.01,5,N(B)/1.334,9):: GOSUB
B 290
280 CALL SOUND(T,N(A),5,N(A)
*1.01,5,N(B)/2,9)
290 FOR D=1 TO 20 :: NEXT D
:: RETURN
    
```

MEMORY FULL.....

Jim Peterson

PROGRAMS THAT WRITE PROGRAMS  
Part 4 by Jim Peterson

Well, if you have tried your hand at any MERGE format program writing, you have already discovered that it is slow work, and you need to cram more onto a line than will fit. When a little CALL HCHAR(24,12,32,5) tuned into CHR\$(157)&CHR\$(1200)&CHR\$(5)&"HCHAR"&CHR\$(183)&CHR\$(200)&CHR\$(2)&"24"&CHR\$(179)&CHR\$(200)&CHR\$(2)&"12"&CHR\$(179)&CHR\$(200)&CHR\$(2)&"32"&CHR\$(179)&CHR\$(200)&CHR\$(1)&"5"&CHR\$(182) you gave up? There is an easier way! Using DEF can make the job so simple that you might decide to do all your programming in MERGE format - well no, it's not quite that easy. w

The DEF does slow up program execution time considerably, especially when DEFs call each other, but we can tolerate that here.

For instance, that comp-

licated mess of parentheses to squish a line number can be written just once as DEF LINES\$(X)=CHR\$(INT(X/256))CHR\$(X-256\*INT(X-256)) and then, whenever you need a line number, just write line\$(100) or whatever.

The flag token and counting of characters and all for an unquoted string can be DEF' as U\$(X\$)=CHR\$(200)&CHR\$(LEN(X\$))X\$. Then, to write "HELLO" just write U\$("HELLO") and let the computer do the work. For a numeric value in the unquoted string, use UN\$(X)=CHR\$(200)&CHR\$(LEN(STR\$(X)))&STR\$(X), and THEN 999 becomes UN\$(999).

CALL HCHAR can be DEF HCHAR\$=CHR\$(157) for CALL and, since one DEF can call another, U\$("HCHAR") and, since it is always followed by an opening parentheses, CHR\$(183) - but wait, let's define that open parentheses as OP\$=CHR\$(183). Now DEF

Now DEF HCHAR\$=CHR\$(157)&U\$("HCHAR")&OP\$, and you can use HCHAR\$ for CALL HCHAR.

Let's also DEF the comma with DEF C\$=CHR\$(179) and the closing parentheses with DEF CP\$=CHR\$(182). Now that long HCHAR that had you discouraged can be abbreviated to CHAR\$&UN\$(24)&C\$&UN\$(12)&C\$&UN\$(32)&C\$&UN\$(5)&CP\$.

I have written a program of 162 of these DEFs, and another program to print out a handy look-up chart of them. It would take 4 pages to print them, so if you want them just ask me for a copy.

\*\*\*\*\*

## SPRITES, PART 2 ##  
by Jim Peterson

Several sprites can be created by one statement, such as CALL SPRITE(#1,42,16,10,10,#2,65,2,20,20).

The pattern of several sprites can be changed at once by CALL pattern(#1,chr,#2,CHAR) - this is very useful when changing the pattern of a character which has been created from two or more sprites.

Several sprites can be set in motion simultaneously, or have their motion changed simultaneously, by CALL MOTION(#1,RV,CV,#2,RV,CV,#3,RV,CU) etc. This is also very useful when moving a character formed of two or more sprites.

Several sprites can be recolored simultaneously with CALL COLOR(#1,C,#2,C) etc.

Several sprites can be relocated together by CALL LOCATE(#1,DOTROW,DOTCOL,#2,DOTROW,DOTCOL) etc.

The position of more than one sprite can be found at one time by CALL POSITION(#1,DOTROW1,DOTCOL1,#2,DOTROW2,DOTCOL2), etc.

A sprite can have only one color, unlike a screen character which can have a foreground and background color. Any dots which are not "turned on" in the character being used for the sprite will be transparent. However, a sprite with a higher number, using a redefined character with all dots turned on and of a different color, can be

created at the same dotrow and dotcolumn, giving the illusion of a sprite with foreground and background color. Up to 4 sprites can be stacked in this way to create a multicolored sprite effect. If the sprite is stationary, colored graphics behind all 4 sprites can give the illusion of even more colors.

Sprites always appear to be in front of screen graphics, and lower-numbered sprites always appear in front of higher numbered sprites. However, by skillful swapping of sprites, remarkable 3-D effects can be created, seeming to show a sprite passing before and then behind another, or and then behind a graphics object.

Another way to simulate 3D is to place a second higher-numbered sprite behind the first, of the same pattern but of a darker color, and offset by a few dotrows downward and to the side, so that when both are set in motion the one appears to be flying above the surface with the second following as its shadow.

Sprites can also be used to add an apparent third color to screen graphics, which can have only two colors in one character.

It is difficult to create the impression of curved lines with redefined characters because they are composed of dots rather than lines. This becomes even more obvious in sprite magnifications 2 and 4, when each dot is magnified into 4 dots. A circle will appear more round, and of the same

size, if it is composed of 4 redefined characters in magnification 3 than of one character in magnification 2.

Larger figures can be created using several sprites placed next to each other, providing that not more than four are in a row horizontally. These can be of several colors, and can be set in motion simultaneously.

Although it is stated that sprites, once set in motion, will continue to move regardless of what the program is doing, this is not quite true. If the program is doing a lot of calculating, the sprite motion will be jerky and irregular.

By setting a sprite in motion, and using a loop to change it through a series of patterns, remarkable animated graphics can be created, in much the same way that cartoon movies are made.

It is difficult to control motion exactly with CALL MOTION. For more precise control, sprites can be moved from one point to another, dot by dot, by using CALL LOCATE with a loop, such as FOR DC=1 to 100 :: CALL LOCATE(1,50,DC):: NEXT DC. This movement will be very smooth but slow; adding a STEP 2 or STEP 3 will make it faster but less smooth.

If you have Memory Expansion, CALL LOAD(-31806,96) will freeze all sprite motion and CALL LOAD(-31806,0) will release all sprites to their normal

motion. By first freezing the motion and then creating up to 20 sprites with predefined motion, all can be set into motion at once, creating some very remarkable effects.

\*\*\*\*\*

LET'S ROUND UP THE MAVERICKS  
by Jim Peterson

A maverick, for the information of you tenderfeet, is a young Texas critter which has lost its mama. There are over a million of them hiding in the closets of America, and I think it's time for a roundup!

There are perhaps 200, possibly 300, TI user groups in the United States and elsewhere in the world. A few boast of several hundred members, but some have no more than a dozen, and I doubt that the average is more than 50 users actually paying dues and attending meetings. That computes to at most 15,000 members of the "organized" TI world. Of course, there are many others who keep in contact by subscribing to those magazines which support the TI, and still others who are kept up to date on new developments by the catalogs from the big mail order houses. Still, no matter how you compute it, there are certainly well over a million owners of the TI-99/4A who have no way of knowing that our computer is still alive and well.

These people have read that Texas Instruments abandoned the computer. They have seen the supplies

of hardware and software disappear from the big retail stores. Many of them bought their computer during the final suicide sales, therefore never got on the mailing list for the Texas Instrument newsletter.

And yet, relatively few of the TI-99/4A are showing up in the classified ads and in the garage sales. A recent national survey found that the TI-99/4A was owned by more people than any computer except the Commodore.

True, many of these owners are only interested in plugging in a module and playing a game. But some have a deeper interest - and even five percent of a million is an awful lot of people!

When I bought my TI, in March of 1982, I searched in vain through the articles and ads of every magazine on the newsstand, for anything relating to my computer. It almost seemed that there was a conspiracy of silence. I had taught myself to program, and written dozens of programs, before I finally made contact with the TI world. I was once a maverick, and I can sympathize with those who are mavericks now.

Is your user group dwindling away, as some of your members move on to bigger but not necessarily better computers, while others become so polarized in their interests that they have little in common with each other? Are your givers tired of giving to your getters, and your doers tired of being used by your

users? Do you miss the enthusiasm and excitement of your first meetings, when everyone was learning together? Does your group need a transfusion of fresh blood? The donors are out there and waiting, if you can find them!

Do you want to see new hardware, new software, new publications for your computer? The bigger the market, the more that will be produced to be marketed. And the market is there - it just doesn't know that it's there!

The user groups are the only ones who can round up the mavericks. You can do it by publicizing your meetings, by letting the TI owners in your community know what you can do for them. You can get newspaper publicity and television publicity. Some of you are already offering classes in programming or in computer use to the general public, to the schools, to libraries, to senior citizens, to foster children, to the handicapped. These are very fine endeavors in themselves, and they can also bring the publicity which will attract new members. And here and there among those new members will be an ingenious hardware hacker or programming genius who will make our computer better than ever.