QB Monitor

QB99er's User Group Newsletter

DECEMBER 1990

The QB99'ers meet on the second Saturday of each month, September through May, at Queensborough Community College, Bayside, Queens, New York. Meetings begin at 2 P.M. Calendar at right shows next meeting date...

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DEAR USER GROUP

THE QB-MONITOR HAS LOST A SUBSIDY IT FORMERLY ENJOYED. OUR SMALL MEMBERSHIP CANNOT SUPPORT OUR CURRENT NEWS-LETTER EXCHANGE. WE HAVE HAD TO DRASTICALLY CURTAIL OUR MAILING LIST AND REGRET THAT THIS IS THE LAST NEWS-LETTER WE CAN SEND YOU. WE ENJOYED THE EXCHANGE AND WHEN FINANCES PERMIT WE SHALL BE PLEASED TO RESUME IT.
  - KEEP THE FAITH - VIVA 4A!

THE QB-99ers

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DEAR SANTA

Anyone in the TIworld owning a disk system longer than a month who has not contacted Jim Peterson at TIGERCUB Software is leading a deprived life.

Jim has the largest collection of stuff at the cheapest prices possible for our amazing 4A. He couples this "best for the least" business with a fantastic knowledge of the machine and a kind, generous spirit. No one knows the BASIC and XB workings of the TI better than Jim. He is an expert in everything!

Mr. TI, as he is known by his thousands of admirers, seems to take to his computer the way Jean Henri Fabre took to ants. He is meticulous and creative and understands the soul of the 4A. I'm still in awe of his skills and dedication and influence.

There is no one in the entire TI World (unless he or she has been hiding under a rock since the 70s and has just been handed a machine) who has not felt the influence of the mild-mannered, modest man.

I've disembled hundreds of programs with his fingerprints on them: programming tools he has given to us. For years Jim provided newsletters with free tutorials called "TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB" which were (and are) so jampacked with wonderful programming goodies that it is hard to imagine what TI life would have been without this marvelous source. In addition, he still sends "CARE" disks to sharing newsletter editors, along with numerous other goodies. He has also written the ultimate tutorial on programming in the form of subprograms that can be easily merged into any XB program (including a subprogram that makes BASIC programs into XB programs). These loaded disks of subprograms (called NUTS & BOLTS) can be purchased from him and readily used with your own or other programs. These Tigercub touches are what I see on almost every good XB program written for the TI in the past half decade."

Jim has also written so many programs for the Public Domain that we just take for granted that these kinds of programs have "always been there." They weren't. Until Jim gave them to us. There isn't a user group library in the world that doesn't have heaps of programs from Mr. TI.

He also wrote numerous "commercial" pieces of software. "Commercial" only in the sense that they were for sale. They were low-priced and high quality in the heydays of the 4A when everything was high-priced and too often of extremely poor quality. Years later, I still use a large number of his programs in school (ANTONYMY, SYNONYMY, MECHANICAL APTITUDE TEST, SCRAMBLE, SQUINCH (a fiendish word game), and many others). I wouldn't like to be without the other utility and game programs that I've enjoyed so much from Tigercub over the years (particularly the unendingly fascinating NUTS & BOLTS disks, which I had the honor of demo-ing (Jim wrote the remarkable demo programs) at a recent computer fair. [I had the greater honor of meeting Jim at a fair in Lima, Ohio.]

The man's remarkable and is universally liked (which is remarkable unto itself).

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[Jim's three NUTS & BOLTS disks/ (with a wonderfully descriptive manual/tutorial) are now only $10 each. His five disks full of "TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB", a newsletter editor's Godsend, are only $5 each. His 120 original programs ~~(a refundable $1 for the catalog)~~ are now ~~just $1 each!~~ *Public Domain!*

Praising Jim's efforts on our behalf is not the purpose of this article. (It's just impossible to write about Tigercub without doing so.) The purpose of this article is to tell you about the latest goodies to come out of Tigercub. Jim, because of his huge number of TI contacts (without a doubt more than anyone else in the world), has been able to put together the largest collection of Public Domain and Fairware programs, files, and templates in existence.

This PD extavaganza can be dipped into by sending a refundable dollar for this catalog. ($2 ~~for both the Tigercub and TI-PD catalogs.~~) Within is an unbelievable world of goodies. A 4A maniac's paradise! At only $1.50 per disk! Not per program. Per FULL disk! And that's postpaid!

These disks do not contain a pile of junk you'll never use, either. They are selected from the thousands Jim has in his library. And they are catalogued and sub-catalogued and regrouped.

An example: Interested in music? Those are the 600 series. What kind of music? Well, remember those great graphic/music combos of Sam Moore? 600 is a disk called "SAM MOORE MUSIC #1" (341 sectors). It has 11 super selections on it. But there is also a "SAM MOORE MUSIC #2" (343) and a 3 (348) and a 4 (337) before #604 moves in "BILL KNECHT HYMNS" (334) and so on.

You get the picture. You get a disk full of the kind of things you want and can use: educational programs, graphics, printer utilities, typing, health, you name it. Games are broken down into so many categories it's amazing. There are three full disks of card games, alone.

All the programs now run in XB and all come with the famous Tigercub Loader, the forerunner of all the good loader programs found elsewhere.

Jim even has games broken down by specific type: "ROAD CROSSING GAMES", KEYBOARD MANEUVERING GAMES", "Q*BERT GAMES", "FORMER COMMERCIAL GAMES", "EASY GAMES FOR KIDS", "KING KONG TYPE GAMES", "TWO-PLAYER JOYSTICK GAMES" (there are loads of one-player), "GERMAN GAMES", and on an on, page after page.

There's even such esoteric stuff as "LIGHT PEN PROGRAMS (including a disk file which teaches you how to make your own light pen).

There are disks of programs about Chemistry; Hi-res Drawing; Physics; Children's Programming with Speech; Sorts, Scrambles & Searches; Auto-loaders; Calculators & Converters; Astronomy, Religious Programs. The list seems endless.

The catalog gives you the full listings of the files on the disk: "FINANCIAL PROGRAMS" (356 sectors) includes the following selections with authors where known: Amortization Schedule (M Holgers); and #2 (J Roche); Compound Interest (C Good); Estate Tax Securities (R Shumaker); Debt Calculator (K Romstedt); Financial Math (C Ehninger); Financial Statemnt Ratio Analysis (C Colton); Investment Analysis (A Robertson) and 15 more.

Just the work and time involved in the collecting , reviewing, selecting, debugging, sorting, creating full disks, cataloguing, printing, and distributing must be incredible. To charge $1.50 a disk is the greatest TI giveaway of all times.

Order the catalogs today; then, after you wipe the drool off the table, order as much as you can to show Mr. TI how much you support his endeavors. TIGERCUB Software, 156 Collingwood Ave., Columbus, OH 43213.

[If you are TIW-A&I/99 please put me on your exchange list.]

TIGERCUB PUBLIC DOMAIN CATALOG

By Ed Machonis

Elsewhere in this newsletter is an excellent description of Jim Peterson's Public Domain Library by Jack Sughrue. Since there was no way that I could improve on this description, there was no point in reinventing the wheel and writing a new one. Read it first and consider it a preface to this article.

The amount of work Jim has put into assembling this library staggers the imagination. I wondered why I nearly wore out a newly re-inked ribbon just printing out the catalog until I realized I had printed out almost 140,000 characters. Just imagine sorting over 4,000 programs onto 400 disks, typing in all the program and author's names into a TI-Writer file, then creating a fast menu loader for each disk. And we think making up a Disk of The Month is a lot of work! When does the man sleep?

Along with some other goodies, Jim recently sent us a catalog of his Public Domain Library archived on disk. Unpacked and printed out with 3 columns per page, the catalog takes up 19 pages. Those of you attending the last meeting received a copy of the catalog. Others can pick it up at future meetings; it is too bulky to mail out. It will also be available in archived form on a library disk.

As noted in Jack Sughrue's article, Jim is making the disks available for a copy fee of $1.50 per disk. Postpaid! Elsewhere in this issue is a reprint of a letter to Jim, from Alexander Hulpke, the author of the TI version of TETRIS. Note his comments granting Jim permission to make his disk available and how another software distributor is selling the Disk for $5 plus $3 shipping which is more than Mr. Hulpke is asking as a Fairware Donation.

As Jim notes in a foreword to his catalog, "I have therefore decided to make the contents of my public domain library available to the TI world, at a copying fee so low that I hope no one will think I am unfairly profiting from the work of others (and I think you will note, in the following listings, that I have probably contributed more to the public domain than anyone else!) but if any author objects to my distributing his work I will certainly stop."

Object? Included in the catalog are my MAC-LABELS disk (#1134) and my TINYGRAMS disk (#1511). Jim says "by permission" but "by request" would be closer to the truth. I couldn't begin to distribute the disks at that price, ($1.50) so I keep sending Jim updates as they come along and leave the distribution to him.

Many user groups charge a copy fee of more than $1.50 per disk to their members, but then Jim has been known to remark that he is a one-man User Group masquerading as a business. (As opposed to businesses that masquerade as User Groups!)

In order to ship the disks postpaid, Jim requires an order of at least 8 disks. Considering that there are over 400 disks available, finding 8 disks you don't have but would like to own, shouldn't present a problem to anyone who can count up to eight.

Why am I bothering to tell you all this? Because the QB-99ers are going to make you an offer you can't refuse. WRONG! You can refuse, no member is under any obligation to purchase anything. But those who do, and donate copies of their purchases to our library, will have half their purchase cost refunded. Software at 75 cents a disk - its Christmas in December again! Not only will you have your own favorite disks, but you will have access to everyone else's favorites through our library.

Let me make one thing perfectly clear, whether you donate disks or not, every member has access to every disk in our library at no charge.

In order to insure that everyone doesn't order the same disks, to obtain the refund you must first clear your purchase with one of our librarians. Just give him the numbers you intend to order and he will tell you if anyone else is ordering that disk. If such be the case, Great!, someone else is purchasing your favorite for you and you get to order another favorite. When calling, it would be a good idea to have a couple of alternate numbers handy, thereby saving a possible call back.

Is there a limit on the number of disks you can order under this offer? I am afraid there is. No member can order more than 400 disks. Don't blame us, blame Mr. TI!

CARFAX ABBEY

FAIRWARE BY DAVID VINCENT
REVIEWED BY ED MACHONIS
QB-99ERS, BAYSIDE, NY

I don't particularly care for Adventure games and I know that Jim Peterson feels just about as I do. So when I saw the adventure game "Carfax Abbey" listed in Jim's Public Domain catalog (#1428) along with a note by Jim, "A great one!", I felt this bore looking into. Somewhere in that pile of disks still awaiting that first look was Carfax Abbey, which an avid adventurer in England sent me almost two years ago. (Shame on me, JoAnn!)

The next day was the monthly meeting of the QB-99ers and the Disk of The Month still had to be made up. Would Carfax Abbey be suitable? One game convinced me it was.

The Docs start out describing Carfax Abbey as a three dimensional maze game. I probably got that far, and no further, some two years ago when I first received the disk. I don't care for maze games, and a three dimensional maze game didn't sound like anything I wanted to play. Was I ever wrong! Carfax Abbey is easily the most enjoyable adventure game I have ever played.

Any adventurer worth his salt knows you have to keep maps, showing every place you have visited, the available exits, and, if known, where those exits lead. But this salt-free adventurer finds drawing maps a big bore. What a pleasure to learn that Carfax Abbey will keep the maps for you and that they can be called up at the touch of a key or two. Not only that, often in your explorations you will find a complete map of the floor you are currently on, showing all rooms and exits. Now that's what I call USER FRIENDLY!

As the Docs state: "The Abbey has 4 floors or levels, each level having 25 rooms in a 5 x 5 room matrix....The object of the game is to locate and destroy Count Dracula. He is somewhere in the Abbey. In order to destroy the vampire, you will need to find the Crucifix and to acquire spells to a minimum value of 200 magic points.... Meeting the Count before you have found the Crucifix will result in the loss of half your energy!" [Heavy stuff this, but the kids love it!] You can lose the game by running out of energy which can be acquired by exploring new rooms.

Carfax Abbey is a Graphic Adventure. You can look at each of the four walls of the room you are in and you will see either a blank wall, windows, doors, stairways or corridors. And a touch of England. a Lift, more commonly known in this country as an elevator, which will transport you from level to level if you can find it. There are secret panels between rooms (and levels) which you can only discover by trying to go through an apparently solid wall.

In the corridors you are apt to meet Ghosts, Goblins, Spiders, Blobs, Bats, and Skeletons. Some are friendly. The unfriendly ones can be handled in an undocumented manner easily discovered by any Grandchild. They are all graphically depicted with textual descriptions of the encounter.

At the top of the screen, a floor plan of each level is displayed with your present location highlighted in color. You have the option of using joystick or keyboard control and can obtain a readout of your current status at the touch of a key. Somewhere in the Abbey you may find a skeleton key for opening the locked doors, or a friendly Goblin may offer it in trade. A very User Friendly game.

The Abbey's 100 rooms, can be laid out in any of 999 different combinations! You select the layout you wish to play by number. Once you have solved one layout, there are still 998 new puzzles awaiting you. A game may be saved at any point and play resumed at a later time. Unfortunately, this 18k game takes over 5 minutes to load and initialize. About half that time is spent laying out the rooms in accordance with the selected layout.

The program is a Fairware offering by David Vincent of Kent, England, but you'll find no strident on-screen demands for renumeration. Instead, you'll find typical English reticence, the author stating at the end of the documentation that "ideas, suggestions, comments, checks, Yankee dollars, moans, groans or magic spells will be gratefully received." A collection of Yankee Dollars will be taken up at our February meeting to let Mr. Vincent know how much we have enjoyed his programming. If you missed the DOM by playing hookey last month, a copy of the program has been placed in the library. Like Jim said, "A Great One!"

TIPS VINDICATED!
AUTHOR DEFENDS PROGRAM
BUGGY 1.7 RUMOR SQUASHED
PROGRAM WORKS FLAWLESSLY

By Ed Machonis

QB-99ers, Bayside, NY

Any or all of the above can serve as the Headline for this article. You may recall that in last months article on TIPS, I mentioned that I had received Version 1.7 of TIPS and that the copy "seems to have a bug when using the Inside of the Card option." I'm glad I qualified my remark with "seems".

Soon after the article went to press, I received another copy of V1.7, courtesy of John Parken of TI Chips, this copy apparently straight from the author. I fired it up eagerly, but alas found the same difficulty; the Message and Image for the Inside of the Card were being printed near the left side of the card instead of the right side.

I returned the disk to John, explaining my problem, requested help and left on an extended Thanksgiving vacation. I returned home 10 days later to a ringing phone. Ron Wolcott was on the wire asking how he could help me! Support? San Francisco should have such support!

Ron asked what printer I had. Epson RX-80. Is CHR$(27);CHR$(68) a valid code for that printer? I had to go to the book on that one. No such code in my book. What do you use for Horizontal Tab setting? CHR$(27);"eO";CHR$(n) and CHR$(9) to activate. Ron was using CHR$(27);CHR$(68);CHR$(40) to set the tab increment to 40 spaces and CHR$(0); CHR$(9) to activate it, all this per the Texas Instruments impact printer manual.

(Epson made the TI printer, which is almost a direct copy of the Epson MX-80, a model or two prior to the RX-80. "Epson Compatible" seems to mean that the name "Epson" is spelled the same way!)

Ron suggested that I try to edit Line 2520 with the Epson codes to TAB 40 spaces and try printing the 3X4 image

inside the card. I did so and got the same results. A little further book searching revealed that the range for the horizontal Tab increment in Pica was 1 to 21 and I was trying to tab 40. Simple, change the increment to 20 and activate the tab twice with two CHR$(9)'s. EUREKA! My greeting card was printing out just fine - as long as I stayed with a 3X4 image. The print codes to tab the regular image were buried in the assembly code which in turn was buried in the XB LOAD program. Not a change to be undertaken lightly! (Did you ever list this 32 sector program and note that only 10 lines of code were listed?) All I knew about assembly language was how to spell it.

Ron promised an early fix in Version 1.8 and noted that more image files were on the way. If the Brooklyn Dodgers had had such support, we'd still have the Brooklyn Dodgers! What a gentleman! What class! What a lucky break for us that he bought a TI!

And so off to bed with visions of sugar plums, arrayed 3X4, dancing in my head. Suddenly wide awake at 4 AM. THAT LOAD PROGRAM MUST TALK TO THE PRINTER IN A LANGUAGE IT CAN UNDERSTAND! HEX! Heck, even I can understand a little Hex. At least enough to convert the code Ron is using and do a string search for it in the LOAD program with a sector editor.

Past experience with these 4 AM insights has proven I can either lie there wide awake thinking about the changes I will make in the morning; or get up, fire up the computer and try out the idea. I'll get the same amount of sleep either way.

Ron's code hexed out to 1B44280009. Disk Utilities found it almost instantly in the 8th sector of the LOAD program. I changed it to the Epson code and wrote the change back to disk. Tried the changed program - no change! Hmmmmmm? Could the code be in more than one place? Back to Disk Utilities. It could and was in the 21st Sector. Trouble! Not enough room to squeeze in the code I was using. Drats! A great idea down the drain for want of an empty byte.

TIPS VINDICATED! Cont............Page 2

Back to the book for a second look. What's this? ESC f0 n will tab n spaces. No need to send a CHR$(9) twice, or even once, to activate it. Translated to Hex it becomes 1B660028. Add a trailing 00 to blank out that trailing 09 in the original. Plug this in to the 8th and 21st sectors of LOAD. VIOLA! The image is Inside the card and I'm besides myself.

Summarizing, do a Hex string search in LOAD for 1B44280009 and replace it with 1B66002800. Write the change back to disk. Repeat the search, make the change and write back to disk again. Change Line 2520 of TIPSX as follows:

```
2520 PRINT #1:CHR$(27);CHR$(
102);CHR$(48);CHR$(40);CHR$(
27);CHR$(76);CHR$(170);CHR$(
1)
```

I have found that the same printer incompatibility exists in Version 1.6. If you are having this type of trouble, make the above changes to the LOAD program. No need to change TIPSX as 1.6 does not support the 3X4 image.

Of course none of the above changes need be made if your printer can print the inside of the card without any problems. The fault, Dear Readers, lies not in the program but in our printers.

Once you start making greeting cards with TIPS V1.7, you'll notice some nice changes. First, and this one is from V1.6, there is automatic spacing. No need to space between Messages and Images or between Front and Inside of the card; it's all done for you automatically. A pleasure to use. It can be turned On or Off with the SPACE option.

There are two new fonts, 5 and 6, this also from V1.6 or 1.5. Font 5 has upper and lower case letters that resemble hand printing. Six also has upper and lower case 3D letters, very nice! Fonts now load a lot quicker than they did in V1.4.

Greeting card images can be label sized images arranged in 4 rows, three

to a row. You can change images (or ribbons, or colors) between rows as a pause option is provided. These can be used Front or Inside, or both.

Early readers may recall I deleted the Calendar option from V1.4. I don't believe I'll be deleting it from 1.7. You can now print a calendar for any month on the verse side of the Inside Card. Very handy for invitations. (Now if we could just save the entire card for repeated printings.) The Calendar will occupy 9 verse lines and can start anywhere between lines 1 and 6. You can mix verse with the calendar, but I suggest that you enter the verse first, leaving calendar lines blank and then select DATE to include the calendar.

Another neat addition, you can print one or more lines of verse in Enlarged type by entering <CONTROL Z> as the first character of the line. Lines are limited to 17 characters when using this feature. Enter 18 or more and you won't get the expansion.

There is also a DARK option which will enable you to use up your old ribbons. You can specify the number of passes the printer will make printing images, etc. The range is 1 to 4. (A word of caution - Don't use those ribbons to the point of exhaustion. A frayed ribbon can snag a printhead pin and there goes your BIG SAVINGS!)

The Central Westchester 99ers, originally listed as a source for TIPS, have disbanded. The TIPS programs and images are listed in Jim Peterson's Public Domain Catalog. The catalog I have lists 10 disks, all double sided and archived. Jim will ship the set for $15 postpaid. I've seen it advertised, not as complete, for $40.

The set may also be obtained from the Nutmeg 99ers, who have some sets left over from their fund raiser sold at the Boston Faire. The price, I believe is $16.50 but I don't know the format or contents. They also have a available a printed catalog of all the images, printed both sides of the page and in a binder for $9.95 plus shipping. Grab it! Their address is: C/O Janet Ryan, 10 Jolly Road, Ellington CT 06029.
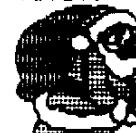
APPRECIATE YOUR PROGRAMMERS!
By Jim Peterson

I quote from a letter recently received from Alexander Hulpke, the German student who wrote the TI-99/4A assembly version of Tetris which most of you have played -

"Many thanks for your letter and the offering to distribute Tetris. I encourage everyone to do so, if they do so at reasonable rates, as you do. It is a bit strange to see TexComp sell disks with my Tetris for $5 plus $3 shipping, which is more than I ask for the program."

"I don't think of the fairware as a way to earn money, the asked donation is merely for postage, sending updated versions, etc. It would be also great, if everyone who uses my programs would write to me, just to see the work is appreciated - but I think I don't have to tell you anything about this."

"Nevertheless, the response for Tetris was quite good, especially when thinking about the problems sending (money) to Europe. Most people sent personal checks (which my bank will charge approximately $2.50 each when cashing several at once) as I found they did not trust the postal service to send cash, which is a bit easier."

Read that again - the part about "it would be great...if everyone...would write". I have had correspondence with many TI programmers. Some of them actually expected to make money by releasing programs as fairware - and they have almost invariably been disappointed. But, most of them want more than anything to know that someone is actually using the program which they worked so many hours to create!

Many of the programs being written nowadays for the TI-99/4A are extremely sophisticated. Those who have the skill and genius to write them could certainly better themselves if they abandoned us to write for computers which are still on the market and have an expanding user base (of users who are more accustomed to paying a decent price for software!).

So, you had better start appreciating what you are getting. If you find a program useful or enjoyable, whether it is fairware or public domain, if it has a programmer's name and address on it, spend five minutes of your time and a 25-cent stamp to tell him so! And if it is fairware, and you can possibly get a few grimy bills unstuck from your fingers, send them along.

If you want to send a donation to any author outside of the country, remember that bank charges, etc. on a check will take most of what you send. The American dollar bill, as worthless as it has become in this country, is still easily spendable or convertible almost anywhere in the world.

Many Newsletter Editors reprinted Ed Machonis' KOOKY FORTUNES. But to Janet Ryan, Editor of the Nutmeg 99ers Newsletter, go the Honors for pulling off the Journalistic Double Play of the year. She coupled KOOKY FORTUNES with a recipe for Chinese Fortune Cookies. When you think about it, aren't recipes a form of program? We are reprinting the recipe for those who may have missed it. Nice going Janet, just what the program needed - A Touch of Nutmeg!

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CHINESE FORTUNE COOKIES
By Janet Ryan
NUTMEG TI-99ers

Thanks to Ed Machonis for his program to print the fortunes. This recipe for baking the cookies was one I had on file. When my daughter was a Brownie scout, her troop made these. It was a simple recipe from a foreign country that they had a lot of pleasure doing together. The fortunes were fun.

Perhaps you and your family will find these fun to do too. Most especially, Ed Machonis. I just wish I had the program back then.

CHINESE FORTUNE COOKIES
    Makes about two dozen
1/3 Cup all purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 T cornstarch
6 T sugar
4 T vegetable oil
1 egg white
5 T water

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1. Sift flour and measure into small bowl. Mix in salt, cornstarch and sugar.
2. Mix oil with egg white and water until blended. Stir into dry ingredients; beat until smooth (about like heavy cream).
3. Heat electric griddle or fry pan to 300 degrees. Brush surface of griddle with oil. Spoon 1 tablespoon of cookie mixture onto heated griddle. Spread with back of spoon to make 3 inch circle. Repeat with remaining mixture.
4. Bake until golden brown - about 5 minutes; Turn over and bake 1 minute longer. Remove cookies from griddle one at a time. While still hot and pliable, place fortune in the center of the cookie. Fold cookie in half; then fold into fortune cookie shape by pulling points together and creasing center. (It helps to fold cookie against edge of a table). Place folded cookies in custard cups or muffin cups to hold shape while they cool.