

THE ROBOT COMPANION

the newsletter of the
Dallas Personal Robotics Group

January, 1988

***** NOTICE *****

Notice to members: Renewal time is coming up for many of us. The mailing label on your newsletter now contains the expiration date of your membership. If you do not renew your membership within 1 month of this date, your name will be removed from the mailing list. For example, if the date on the label is JAN88, then THIS will be your last newsletter unless you renew by JAN 31, 1988.

DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES

The December meeting had a fairly small turnout, due to the holidays. However, all of the club officers were there, so we started discussing the elections to be held at the January meeting. Specifically, we need a new president, since the bylaws state that Walter Bryant, having been president twice in a row, cannot be president again. The general concensus was that none of the old officers really wanted to be president, so we need some new blood in office! If you would like to 'take charge' for a year, show yourself! There really isn't much that the president has to do, so don't be afraid to try it once!

The planned demo for the IBM PC group was moved to February, since there was not enough time to prepare for their January meeting. Preparations will be made at the Jan. user's lab, which will be held at Walter/Bev Bryant's house on January 24th, 2:00 PM. Also, Bev Bryant will give a demonstration of her HERO-to-HERO communication program. Be there!

Possible ways of spurring participation in the newsletter were discussed, including gifts/prizes for contributors and special interest groups (SIGs), etc. One idea proposed was to have a leader for each of 3 SIG groups (HERO 1, HERO 200, and Homebrew) which would be responsible for 1 article per month; either written by himself or from one of the SIG members.

The Heath store gave the group a Movit "toy", which at the time was not working. Ed Rivers has reported that he has it working now, but needs more information about how to program it. This Movit has a processor on board, and can be programmed to move, turn, blink lights, beep, and process input from each of its 2 feelers. He has offered to let someone else borrow it for a month to figure out all of its functions.

Correction: Last month I mentioned that back issues were \$3.00 'per set' -- the actual price is \$3.00 for both pre-1987 AND 1987 sets, which are now combined into one set. Add \$2.00 postage if ordered by mail.

JANUARY MEETING AGENDA

The January meeting will be held on Jan. 16, 3:33 PM, at the Heath/Zenith store, 12022-C Garland Rd, Dallas. The scheduled activities include:

PRIZES! Anyone who has a HERO 1 will want to enter a drawing for one of two EPROMs donated by Walter Glod (see article below, "CONTACT"). These EPROMs contain many common words and phrases for the HERO 1, and some common subroutines.

ELECTIONS! New officers will be elected in January, so please try to attend.

DUES! Many of you need to renew in January, so bring your \$10 (cash or check) to the meeting to save postage and don't miss a newsletter.

MOVIT! Ed Rivers will demo the Movit that was given to the club (see Dec. minutes).

DEMO! We will discuss the demo planned for the IBM PC group. Please bring your ideas.

INFOMART! Ed Rivers has submitted our application to the Computer Council of Dallas at their last meeting. We should be a member of the CCD as soon as the Apple Corps group turns in their letter of recommendation. We can, however, go ahead and have our meetings there. At this meeting, we will vote on moving our meeting place to Infomart starting February. If this happens, we will probably have the user's labs at the Heathkit store, instead of individual's homes. This would make the labs much simpler to arrange and attend, as well.

CONTACT

Last month, I sent a letter to Walter Glod (HERO Resource Exchange) requesting an information exchange between our groups. I have received a very positive response! Apparently his newsletter is also lacking in participation, and he is very open and eager to work with us. Along with his letter, he sent:

2 of his WORDS EPROMS for the HERO 1 (to be given away at the JAN. meeting).

2 program tapes for the HERO 1 (see "...Library" below).

Copies of their newsletter back issues.

An article for our newsletter, "HERO feeds the dog" (presented below).

He says that a he will be sending a video of various experiments for the HERO 2000, including ARMSCAN, a method fo using the 2000's arm and a photocell to convert pictures into character graphics (like on T-shirts). He has also done object recognition using the same technique.

Apparently, he has a HERO 2000 fitted with a disk drive, with HERO MS-DOS. Has anyone else been able to get the disk drive yet?

Has anyone heard anything about the Robots and Beyond Exhibit at the Science museum? He mentioned it in his letter, but did not mention a date. His group (HRE) is/will be having a HERO 2000 demonstration there, and asked us to make sure the robots are still functioning (and reprimand the curator if not). He also offered to be a speaker at one of our meetings if he is in town.

You can see his letter, newsletter backissues, and the descriptions of the programs and WORDS EPROMS at the meeting. Thanks for the terrific input, Walter!

Since the article that Walter sent me involves some construction (although not on the robot itself), I'll let it fill this column. That lets me off the hook for another month...

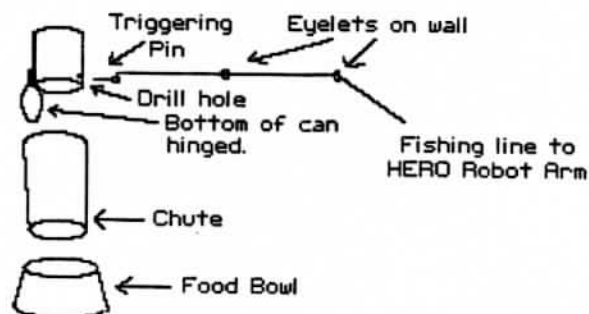
HERO ROBOT FEEDS THE DOG

BY WALTER GLOD
 10802 Condrey Ridge Court
 Richmond, Virginia 23236

I am always trying to find ways to make HERO do useful things around the house, and even more important, have the robot perform a task that I am not present to do myself. The following article addresses such a task.

When spending an overnight trip away from home, we needed care for our dog. I solved the problem of providing water for her by installing a auto-watering "licker" valve on the faucet. The method of providing her with food was a bit more difficult since I knew that if I left a large bowl of food out, she would devour it shortly after we left. Next came the idea of having the HERO robot feed her. It is obvious how difficult it would be to safeguard the robot from getting damaged leaving it in the area of our German Shepherd with a bowl of food in it's gripper. The problem was solved by having the robot in a safe area and used for control purposes. After all,...In industrial applications a robot doesn't have to perform all of the tasks. Often support devices are implemented with the robot, to carry out a function. A hopper configuration was used with a nylon fishing line to control the trap.

Use a can opener to remove the bottom off an empty one pound can of coffee. Save the removed piece. Secure this disk of tin back on the can with a hinge. Drill a hole in the can opposite the hinge just below the lip. Opposite the hinge, just below the lip of the can, drill a hole about the size of a nail. In this hole you will place a triggering pin (such as a nail or heavy wire bent into an eyelet). Mount this can high on a wall out of the reach of the dog or animal. Underneath the can make a long chute aiming to the dish on the floor (I used large PVC pipe). Attach to the pin a long piece of fishing line and guide this along the wall with eyelets to a room or closet that HERO is housed in. Attach this end of the fishing line to HERO's arm in the upright position. Fill the can with food, cap it with the original plastic lid on top, and program the robot to pull the cord at a predetermined time. You can even have him say "Chow time!". A second can can also be used with a control line to the robot's head to trigger on a head rotation. Remember to provide plenty of water for the animal during your absence.



FROM THE LIBRARY

by Stan Spielbusch, Librarian

Walter Glod, president of the HERO Resource Exchange, sent 2 cassette tapes with programs for the HERO 1. I need someone to transfer these programs to MS-DOS diskettes for our library. Programs include navigation, demonstrations, and voice recognition. Thanks, Walter!

Also, I would like to get the WORDS EPROM code downloaded to disk.

If you have a program to submit, put it on an MS-DOS format disk (double sided, standard format) and bring it to the meeting or send to:

Stan Spielbusch
2404 Via Barcelona
Carrollton, TX 75006

***** Please ***** include a description of the program, either as comments in the program or as a separate .DOC file. I don't have the time to study each program to figure out what it does!

When you submit a disk, you receive credit for 1 disk in return. Let us know which one(s) you want, or if you just want your original disk back.

We currently have 2 disks in the library -- a combination HERO-1 and HERO-2000 disk (all programs in BASIC, text format), and a HERO-1 Assembler disk (see October '87 issue for details).

If you want a copy of a disk, the best way is to bring a blank, formatted PC-DOS/MS-DOS disk to the meeting and either trade with me there or copy a disk yourself using one of the Heathkit computers. If you forget to bring a disk, we will have to collect \$2.00 per disk. Hard-copy listings of the programs will soon be available. Mail-order -- \$3.00 per disk -- no need to include a disk with order. Send orders to me (address above).

IN SEARCH OF

Ed Rivers (and the group in general) needs documentation for the Movit mentioned above. Even the address of the company that makes (made?) Movits would be helpful.

The group needs "a few good men" (or women) for officers and SIG leaders.