

Southwest Ninety-Niners Newsletter

**contributed by
- Tom Wills -
compliments of**



**TI99ers
On-Line
User Group**

www.ti99ers.org

SEPTEMBER 1987

P.O. Box 17831 Tucson, AZ 85730

Officers

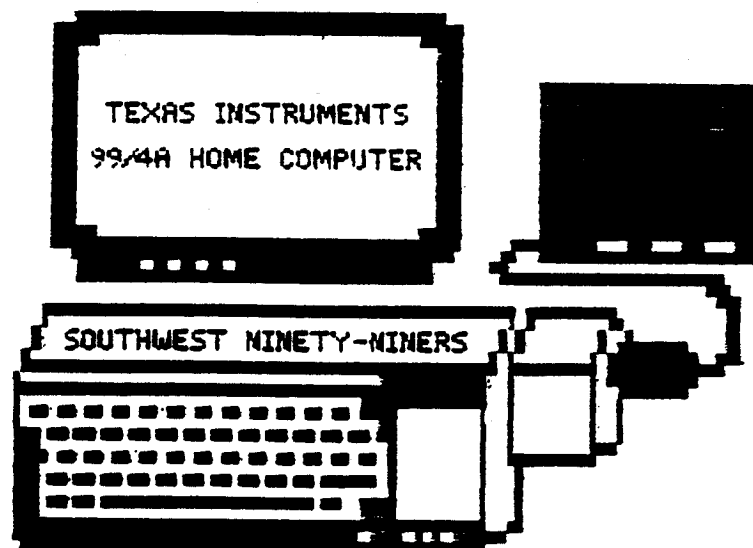
BJ Mathis - President
Ed Hallett - Vice President
Dave Wolfson - Secretary
Al Armstrong - Treasurer

Newsletter

BJ & Jack Mathis - Editors

Library

BJ & Jack Mathis - Co-Chairmen
Joe Lenox - Fairware Librarian
Ida McCargar - Lending Librarian



ATTENTION MEMBERS
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Next Meeting: September 1, 1987 at 7:30pm. Location-Tucson Fire Department Training Center on Ajo Way just west of Park. Joe Lenox will demonstrate the SPAD XIII Flight Simulator.

General Users Workshop: 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30pm (September 10th). Includes: Basic, ExBasic, Hardware/Software Problem-Solving, etc.
Mathis Home - 5941 E 26th - 747-5046

Applications Workshop: 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:30pm (September 17th). Includes: Writer, Multiplan, DataBases, etc. Mathis Home - 5941 E 26th - 747-5046

Advanced Languages Workshop: 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm (September 22nd). Includes: FORTH, A/L, etc. Rod Stallard's Home - 7575 E Logan - 745-6071

SUPER SPECIAL MEETING

October 6th, 1987 - 7:35pm

Les Merryman of L & M Systems, the West Coast distributor for MYARC, will demonstrate all the latest MYARC products including the:

Geneve 9640!!!!!!

Les says the long awaited complete DOS should be finished by then. He will bring several with him available to members of SW99ers at a special discount.

Les hopes to be able to demonstrate a new Dual Disk Controller. It will handle up to 4 floppy drives up to 1.2 meg each (that's DSQD!), 3 hard drives 40 megabytes each, and 1 streamy tape back-up for the hard drives.

We recently received a price list from Les. I can't publish the prices here, but if you are a member of SW99ers, and are thinking about buying any MYARC item check with me before you go elsewhere. Remember MYARC makes RS232s, RAM disks, etc.

BJ - 747-5046

Bytes & Jots

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The results of the TI Owners Survey by Ali Ulgen will be available mid December. About twenty more Users' Groups are reprinting/distributing the survey in July through September. The results will be public domain files in DIS/Var 80 format. If you haven't filled one out please do so, there is still time to get it in to Ali.

Your newsletter needs you! We are always on the look-out for articles from our members, we will help you polish up the article if needed. Articles can be on anything from how to write a simple program, to super technical type, reviews of programs, or TI-related magazines, or even an article on how you use your computer. If you really can't write an article, perhaps you can make yourself available to the newsletter staff as an envelope stuffer, proof reader, or labeler. Let us know if you want to help.

Lowest prices for hardware and software will be available on the AntFarm soon. The AntFarm has had some problems with its modem and is only running at 300 BAUD. It is running twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week at 889-6930.

Interlocking Disk Banks hold ten disks each are available through the SW99ers for \$3 each including shipping. They are available in pearl gray in multiples of five, and in multiples of four one each in red, yellow, blue and green. Please let me know if you want any. You don't have to take the package deal if we can get enough orders.

Nameloc Software has support packages for CSGD and TI-Artist. They sent us information on reduced prices for bulk orders. We'll make a list to sign up, if we get enough interest we can send for the packages at the lower prices.

The newsletters in the group library are continually being indexed as they come in. If you have a particular area or topic you want information on, talk to Ida McCargar or Ed McCullough. If you don't use this service you will miss out on a lot of excellent information.

Due to the size of the Lending Library it will not be available in its entirety at every meeting. Ida will bring part of the library with her and will have a list of the entire contents available to members. If you want a particular item you can call her ahead of time and she will be sure to include it with the things she brings.

If you have items for sale, you can bring them to the meetings. Please be sure to mark them with a price and your name, then add them to the sale table. All TI-related items will be accepted. If you are looking for something in particular to add to your personal library check out the Buyer's Guide at the end of this newsletter or the sale table at the meeting.

A committee has been appointed to look into the feasibility of having a booth for the SW99ers at Fest West '88 on February 27th & 28th in Las Vegas, NV. If you are interested in helping this committee please let me know.

The Bunyard Group has a hardware manual for the TI 99/4A for \$19.95 and will give volume discounts. The manual covers, console design, custom chip operation, TMS 9900 H/W organization, TMS 9900 instruction set, interfacing pitfalls, PEB card description, GROM simulator design and Extended Basic description and schematics. The Bunyard Group, PO Box 53171, Lubbock, TX 79453.

BJ Mathis - 747-5046

Message from the PRESIDENT of Southern Nevada Users' Group

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The plans and arrangements for the TI Fest to be held here in Las Vegas are finally coming together. At the last committee meeting, we agreed to call the show TIxpo88 in addition to TI FEST WEST.

We have signed a contract with the Palace Station Hotel to use approximately 6000 square feet of their meeting space. This will allow us to set up 30-40 booths. The Palace Station has offered us a special room rate of \$42 per night single or double occupancy for our attendees and vendors. This price will include a meal at the Iron Horse Cafe. The hotel has set aside 75 rooms for us. We must have all reservations for these rooms by late January or the unused rooms will revert back to the hotel. After that, they will be available at their regular rates on a space available basis. Anyone wishing to make room reservations for the show may do so by calling the Palace Station directly at 1-800-544-2411 or if you're calling from inside Nevada, it's 1-800-634-3101. Be sure to tell them that you are making reservations for the TIxpo88 / TI Fest West! If you thought it was convenient having the motel just half a block away at the LA show, you'll REALLY like having the hotel in the SAME BUILDING in Las Vegas!

Because we haven't as yet figured out what all our major expenses are going to be, we haven't set any prices for vendor booths or admission tickets. The committee did decide there would not be any "comp" tickets to the show. We have agreed even the TIxpo88 committee members will buy tickets just like everyone else. We know what some of our expenses will be. We have a pretty good idea what some of the others should be. We know there will be some expenses that we haven't thought of as yet. We want to make sure that we cover as much of it as we can with vendor and attendee receipts. As soon as we hammer out the details of setting up the show, security, power, mailings, etc., we will publish our booth and ticket prices.

John Martin - SNUG President

REVIEW of SPAD XIII

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by Bill Zaebst - Cin-Day News - Piqua, OH - Aug '87

SPAD XIII by NOT POLYOPTICS is a World War I flight simulator with 3D graphics, six views in all direction, keys 1-6, as well as an Unobstructed view forward, key U. Although the graphics are rather sparse and updated only about once per second they do give you somewhat of a realistic feel of flying. Your controls are: Throttle, key 7 down, key 8 up and key 9 full throttle. Joystick, up-and-down and Bank left-and-right, and Rudder, left-and-right. The first two controls are keyboard or wired remote controllers and last is keyboard only.

The instruction manual accompanying the program is nicely done; tells something of the history of the plane and has diagrams of maneuvers and fighting tactics. There is a diagram of the Spad XIII instrument panel showing what the gauges on the Forward screen represent. Another page shows the keyboard template in almost full size. A map illustrates the main graphics of the program; home field, enemy field, the trenches between, the river Seine, the Eiffel Tower, and a few assorted graphics representing hills and towns. In flying you will encounter enemy planes, observation balloons, and flak.

I have had no difficulty finding and circling the Eiffel Tower, then finding my way back to the home field and alternately flying over enemy lines, then finding my way back home. What I have had trouble doing is landing successfully; only about half

the time have I survived the experience. If you crash, you immediately see a white screen with the words PRESS ENTER. One might think he had arrived at the Pearly Gates.

Game addicts may find this program too slow after the arcade experience; both in terms of program reaction to keyboard or controller commands and in the fact of the program running in real time. It took me nearly an hour to fly to Paris and back. With the simple line graphics there isn't much to look at but still it wasn't boring to me. I am not a game buff myself and regard SPAD XIII as a simulation rather than a game. So it was a "must have" for me but I would recommend it for anyone.

Program requirements are: Extended Basic cartridge, 32K Memory Expansion, and Disk Drive. It is auto-loading from drive 1 with a simple "SPAD XIII _____ LOADING, Please Wait" message. There are instructions on loading a title screen which is a nice graphic of a SPAD XIII. It seems a bit strange that there is a title screen that isn't normally seen in running the program but I will give it an "ace" rating anyway.

Manufacturer: NOT-POLYOPTICS, PO Box 4443, Woodbridge, VA 22191 (703)491-5543
Cost: \$29.95

Joe Lenox will be demonstrating the SPAD XIII at the September 1st meeting of the SW99ers.

SUPER EXTENDED BASIC

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Review by Gene Bohot - Pomona Valley 99ers - Ontario, CA - Aug '87

At last, a major improvement to the TI-99/4A I can really use. SUPER EXTENDED BASIC is, for me, the best thing since DM1000 and the most used since I learned Fun!Writer. If you have TI Extended Basic, you can send it to Triton for a \$20 coupon when buying Super XB, and if you don't have it yet, don't bother.

I read a review called Super Extended Basic in a MICROpendium of 1985 that was apparently disk-based and needed CALL LOADs to use, but the ad in Triton's Spring catalog said it came in a module and supported up-down arrow in-line editing. Since the price was only \$59.95 I decided to try it out.

WOW! It works just like TI Extended Basic and has been compatible with every program I have in "old xb" and some of the commands have been upgraded so you can specify Line Length with LIST and can RES a segment of a program. You can also move the cursor immediately to the start or end of a line, or up or down a line in a statement, or tab left or right, in a statement, even erase everything up to or after the cursor.

But this is just the icing on the cake! Super Extended Basic also adds 33 new commands. I think the best are:

COPY, MOVE, or DELETE a segment of a program, CALL CATALOG, CALL CLOCK, CALL CHIMES, CALL NEW or BYE, CALL QUITOFF, and CALL RUN(string variable program). It will also return the position of the ALPHA LOCK, CONTROL, FUNCTION, and SHIFT keys. Most of these commands can be accomplished with long programming techniques or assembly language aids, but now they are so much easier. Many times I have spent hours trying to do them in "old xb".

And even this is not all! Super Extended Basic also includes "DRAW 'N PLOT" from

Quality 99 Software BUILT IN as fifteen assembly language subroutines you can use like TI-ARTIST or GRAPHX to draw pictures, then dump them to printer or disk. (You do need memory expansion to use DRAWNPLOT.)

Altogether, I feel this is the best value I have found for the TI-99/4A in a long time. The 24-page manual is laid out like the "old xb" manual and very easy to use. The only fault I have been able to think of with this module, is users with "old xb" cannot run a program written in Super Extended Basic since the new commands are not supported. Can you imagine your "old xb" when it encounters CALL ALL(42) to fill the screen with asterisks? But this is similar to trying to run an XB program in BASIC and not really a fault of Super Extended Basic.

If you write your own programs and have been looking for a way to make life a little easier, I highly recommend SUPER EXTENDED BASIC. Available from TRITON PRODUCTS COMPANY, PO Box 8123, San Francisco, CA 94128, Phone 800/227-6900.

NOTE: Super Extended Basic, in the widget, will not allow you to access modules in other slots.
BJ

SIMPLY PUT....

by Fred and Amy Mackey - Pittsburgh Users Group, Pittsburgh, PA

How A Disk Drive Works

The disk is placed into the drive, the door is closed, and a spindle hub inside the diskette hole spins it around very quickly, at about 300 RPM. A magnetic read/write head moves toward the hub or out to the edge. The combination of spinning and head movements allows data to be placed on any part of the disk. Data is written on or read from the disk as it spins around inside the disk drive. The characters are stored as a series of magnetic pulses treated as zeroes or ones, called bits. Eight bits is a byte, one unit of data.

A double sided disk drive has two of everything and can read and writes to both sides of the disk without flipping the disk over. A double density disk drive can hold twice the usual number of bytes.

The data is read/written on concentric bands called tracks. Both sides of the disk jacket and the disk itself have an index hole. When the three are lined up, a beam of light passes through them and strikes a photo receptor which tells the drive it is the start of the track. Each track on a disk is broken into equal areas called sectors.

Magnetic Media Defects

All computers using external storage systems rely on magnetically created electrical impulses for their memory. Whether using cassette tapes, cartridges, floppy disks, hard disks, or other storage systems, these impulses are what make computers function. The physical devices that accept and hold the magnetic code are called the media. And all media require periodic attention.

If you've ever tried playing a "wrinkled" cassette tape on a cassette recorder, you know there is a problem. Besides producing a skip at the wrinkle, the tape will be weakened in that spot and will eventually break.

The same holds true with magnetic media used for computer storage. Both the media and the programs and data they contain may be damaged or destroyed by such things as heat, static, magnetism, polluted air, chemicals, dirty drive heads, grease or oil from fingertips, excessive humidity, excessive dryness, etc. Even brand new media is not exempt from these problems.

Older media is subject to more problems, such as the base material holding the oxide may turn brittle and become useless with age. The adhesive holding the oxide to the base may deteriorate. Or possibly the software may just wear out with use.

The magnetic media can easily be damaged through abuse or negligence. Therefore, it is important you be as careful as possible in your handling of it. This means running regular maintenance checks to keep your media in shape and doing such things as cleaning the heads of the disk drive and keeping your computer work area as clean as possible. And most important, get in the habit of making back-up disks for all your software.

The following are some rules you should follow to give your disks and cassette tapes the longest life span possible.

1. Always store your media in dustproof, non-metallic containers.
2. Avoid touching the magnetic surfaces of the disks or tapes.
3. When labeling a disk, write on the label before putting it on the disk. If you must write on the label after it is on the disk, use a soft-tipped marker, and make sure the ink is dry before putting it into the drive.
4. Store all media away from sources of heat, as well as from humidity. (This means the basement is not a good home for your computer!)
5. If you just walked across the room dragging your feet on the carpet, first discharge the static electricity by touching a grounded metallic object before you pick up a disk or touch your computer.

THE WORLD OF COMPUTERS

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by Marcia Willieme - KC 99er, Kansas City, MO - August

Everyone knows that software creation is an art, but few people recognize that creating user manuals is also, an art. As with any art form, there are rules and guidelines that should be followed. Here are 10 preliminary suggestions:

1. Use at least 20 technical terms in the first three pages of the manual to discourage users immediately.
2. Make the manual as voluminous as possible - readers may delay using it indefinitely.
3. Assume your readers have already mastered BASIC or COBOL. At the very least, assume they are skilled word processors.
4. Sprinkle the manual liberally with inconsistencies. Was F-4 the clear button on page 4? Call it the escape button on page 6.
5. At least once on every page, tell the reader to consult another page.
6. If you must include explanations of error messages, be sure to not to include them all. This will create a thread of suspense.
7. Two weeks after the publication date send out a packet of "new pages to insert." Mail such packets approximately once a month. By so doing, you ensure that all customers have their own individualized editions.

8. Publish your manual in an inconvenient format, one that will slip off a desk with ease, preferably opening its loose leaf holder and scattering its pages on the floor.
9. Make no distinction between key names and literals in your instructions. Do not include where or when the user should press the space bar. Let him practice guessing.
10. Follow these rules and you too may produce a classic of the genre.

TECH NOTES

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The newsletters are full of many hardware projects and ideas for anyone who is good with a soldering iron, a bit daring, and has the time to try them. As usual these projects are not guaranteed to work and each is TRY AT YOUR OWN RISK! Below is a list of where to find some of the more recent ones in the group newsletter files. Contact Ida McCargar to reserve a newsletter or photocopies of the articles.

ExBasic inside your console - West Penn 99ers, Jeanette, PA - July '87

Buy a PROTO CARD for the PE Box - West Penn 99ers, Jeanette, PA - August '87

RS232 to RS422 converter for networking several computers in the same building - Sun City TI 99/4A Computer Club, El Paso, TX - August '87

Reset switch - insert cartridge but no reset - CinDay, Cincinnati/Dayton, OH July '87
(reprint from West Penn, Jeanette, PA)

Improve older CorComp RS232 - West Penn 99ers, Jeanette, PA - August '87

32K in Speech Synthesizer - Tidewater 99/4A User Group, Newport News, VA - June '87

Build your own 32K card plus 8K module space on card - Tidewater TI 99/4A User Group, Newport News, VA - June '87

Speech Synthesizer in PE Box - Tidewater 99/4A User Group - Newport News, VA - June '87

PE Box Speech Interface - Front Range, Colorado Springs, CO - Aug '87

Power Supply for External Disk Drive - Front Range, Colorado Springs, CO - Aug '87
(reprint from ROM, Orange County, CA - Sept '85)

Single Chip 32K Memory Expansion - Tidings, NewJug North, Dumont, NJ - Aug '87

Send for info on building a new keyboard for your TI-99/4A - Stephen Andrews, 2400 Trout Lake Rd, Northbay Ontario, P1B 7S6, Canada - Sudbury 99ers, Whitefish Ontario, Canada - Sep '87

BUYER'S GUIDE

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The following information is provided as a service to our members. The items listed are for sale by the individuals indicated and are subject to prior sale. The group assumes no responsibility for items listed and makes no claims as to their condition or interface capability with the TI-99/4A computer. Only computer related items will be accepted for publication in this newsletter.

WANTED - Super Sketch - Call Peggy Giddings 795-1915 or 621-7374 (work).

WANTED - Good used system w/single or double disk drive, 32K memory and RS232. Will buy separately. Dick Jones, 6748 E Voltaire Dr, Scottsdale AZ 85254. Phone (602)948-3475.

TI-99/4A Console \$50; TI LOGO \$15; (plus the following cartridges) Car Wars; Tax/Investment Record Keeping; Attack; Number Magic; Tombstone City; and TI Invaders. Documentation and cables included. Call and make an offer John 296-8198.

TI-99/4A Console \$35 o.b.o. Call Ejaz 623-8257.

2-TI-99/4A consoles \$50 ea, *2 CDC Floppy Drives DSDD half height \$110 ea, Multiplan \$30, P-Code Card w/documentation & disks \$90. All items are new/unused. *These items are not negotiable. Call Dick 790-4779.

TI Program Cassette Recorder w/cable \$25. Call Mike 722-8620 evenings and weekends.

Star Micronics Thermal Printer w/4+, 100' rolls of Thermal paper & instruction book. Requires parallel RS232 hook up - \$30 o.b.o. Call John Hale 296-5602 evenings.

TI-99/4A Console \$35. Call John Hedspeth 885-0859 or 745-7253 (work).

TI 32K Memory Card for PE Box \$75, TI Program Recorder \$25. Modules: Extended Basic \$35, Terminal Emulator II \$8, Tax Investment Record Keeping \$4, Household Budget Management \$4, Personal Real Estate \$4, Home Financial Decisions \$3, Personal Report Generator \$8, Personal Record Keeping \$8. Book - Compute!'s Beginner's Guide to Assembly Language \$8. Call Jack or BJ 747-5046.

Sakata SG1000 high resolution green monitor composite video w/video cable \$60. Call George 742-3091.

TI-99/4A Console, TI Joysticks, Thermal printer, Cassette Recorder, 12" TV(BW), all for \$125 o.b.o. Call Paul Garrison 747-3884(Days) or 573-0572(Evenings).

FOR MEMBERS ONLY: These items are for sale by SW 99ers, they are used. Call Jack or BJ 747-5046. P-code Card(no docs or disks) \$50, Personal Report Generator \$8, Personal Record Keeping \$8, Tax Investment Record Keeping \$4, Terminal Emulator II \$8, \$3 Home Financial Decisions \$3, Household Budget Management \$3, The Attack \$3, Munch Man \$3, Jawbreaker II \$4, Tombstone City \$3, Music Maker \$7, Cassette & monitor cables \$3 ea.