THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

By Steve Davis

'Twas the night before
Christmas,
The same **OLD** Routine,
Just waiting for something
To come on the Screen.

My programs were Loaded
From tape with great care,
In the hopes that when **RUN**
There would be no Error.

In a **CALL SOUND** Routine
There arose such a clatter,
I typed in a **BREAK** to see
What was the matter.

I then ran a **LIST**,
I was checking it slow,
Found not a **GOTO**,
But instead a to go.

When what to my wondering
Eyes should appear,
But 8K of Memory,
Give or take a Byte here.

With a brand **NEW** program
That ran oh so quick,
I knew it was written by
Jolly St. Nick.

More rapid than Memory
His Cursors they came;
In a **SOUND** Subroutine,
He **CALL**ed them by name;

"On Floppy, On **FOR NEXT**,
Now Cassette and Printer,
On **RANDOM**, on **COS**ine,
Let's go while it's winter."

To the top of the screen
They Scrolled at his **CALL**,
"Now **DISPLAY**, Now **DISPLAY**,
Now **DISPLAY**, you all!"

He wrote not a word,
But went straight to his
work,
Of **DISPLAY**ing graphics
Without any jerk.

And when I hit **ENTER**,
That dear little man,
Paused and played Trek Wars
As only he can.

Then he **END**ed the program,
Packed up his Print-Out,
And as the screen **CLEAR**ed,
I thought I would shout.

But I heard him **REM**ark
As he flew like a **SPRITE**,
"Merry Christmas to all
And to all a good **BYE**!"

Merry
Christmas
To You
And Yours
From Me
And Mine

International 99/4 Users-Group

THE I.U.G.

BY BILL GASKILL

The International 99/4 Users Group or IUG, was formed, actually incorporated, in September 1980 as the 99/4 Home Computer Users Group. The idea for the IUG was the product of Joe Nichols of Maryland and Charles LaFara of Oklahoma. As most of us know, it was LaFara who actually marketed the IUG and came across as the "president" of the group. Nichols was to be the programmer who would provide the start for the IUG's Software Exchange Library. Nichols died in November 1981 however, and apparently provided less than a dozen programs to the Exchange Library. It's probably coincidence, but the managing editor of Enthusiast 99, the IUG's official publication from May 1983 to May 1984, was a young lady named Dana Nichols, who may have been related. But that is total speculation on my part.

Although the term Users-Group is found in their name, the IUG was not an actual users group under the intended definition. It was more of a commercial venture than it was a non-profit, regular meetings holding, for the benefit of the member, Users Group. Despite that fact, as originally incorporated, the IUG charged no dues. That changed in 1982 however, when basic membership dues were offered at $12 per year, and you had to be a member to purchase Software Exchange programs, even though the programs were supposedly in the public domain.

Commercial or not, during the early years the IUG did serve as an excellent source of products and information for the fledgling 9 /4 community. At the time of the IUG's incorporation, there were less than 2,000 TI-99/4 owners, many no doubt, first time computer users. So help in any form was probably better than none at all. Through the IUG's newsletter, which was published every other month, Charles LaFara delivered fairly timely product news, reviews, an editorial or two and other information that generally proved to be interesting to the 99/4 hobbyist. Each newsletter averaged about 8 pages and now, in looking back, seems to have contained some of the best documentation of our computer's history that there is to be found anywhere.

The IUG's Software Exchange Library, which started out as I mentioned, with less than a dozen programs, ultimately grew to be one of the most extensive in existence at the time, containing some 2000 Basic, Extended Basic and Logo programs. The librarian for the IUG Exchange program was

the late Dr. Guy Steffen-Romano of Amnion Helpline notoriety.

Under the original Software Exchange Program, a two-for-one exchange rate was offered or users could purchase a program for $2.50 each. In February 1981 the exchange rate became four-to-one with program costs remaining at $2.50. In May 1982, when annual membership dues were first levied, the cost per program rose to $3.00 each. Submissions were required to be on cassette or disk, but purchases of programs could be obtained in cassette, disk or hardcopy format.

Beginning on May 1, 1982, membership in the IUG was offered at $12 per year for Regular status or $50 per year for the President's Club status. The $12 fee lasted until August 1983 when it went to $16 per year. Regular membership guaranteed discounted prices on all TI products, the IUG newsletter, catalogs, call-in information and referral services, Software Exchange Library useage and new product bulletins.

President's Club membership gave the user all of the privileges afforded to Regular members, plus it added substantial discounts on 99/4 products. As an example, the Extended Basic module sold for $99.95 at retail dealers back then. Regular IUG members could purchase it for $80.00. President's Club members got it for $71.65 though. LaFara had it figured out that if a member intended to purchase $150 or more in hardware or software products during the year, the President's Club was the way to go.

As membership grew the IUG Newsletter was discontinued in favor of a full fledged magazine titled Enthusiast 99 (despite the fact that Gary Kaplan had been publishing 99er Magazine for some two years already). During its life, the IUG Newsletter was published twice in 1980 (V1/N1 and V1/N2), eight times in 1981 (V1/N3-V1/N8), six times in 1982 (V2/N1-V2/N6) and two times in 1983 (V3/N1 and V3/N2).

In its shorter though perhaps more glamorous life, Enthusiast 99 was able to attract authors the likes of John Phillips, Cheryl REGENA Whitelaw and Bill Gronos (of Hidden Power of Disk Fixer fame) at one time or another. But the majority of the articles were written by LaFara or members of the IUG "staff". Enthusiast 99 does have the distinction of being the only publication (that I have ever found) to print a photo of the never-released Choplifter game module written for the 99/4A. It's on page 47 of the Sep 1983 issue. If you are a trivia buff like me, or a collector, you will want to know that Enthusiast 9 issues exist for May 1983 (V1N1), Jul 1983 (V1N2), Sep 1983 (V1N3), Nov 1983 (V1N4), Jan 1984 (V2N1), Mar 1984 (V2N2) and May/Jun 1984 (V2N3).

The IUG lasted from September 1980 until May 1985 when it

folded under banKruptcy. At the height of its glory, the IUG claimed over 50,000 members around the world, in some 51 countries. According to Ron Albright, writing in "The Orphan Chronicles", the IUG was the victim of a loss of credibility in the TI Community for trying to defend an imaginary copyright over its library of public domain programs. Albright also alludes to the IUG's propensity to promote an image of self-importance and "insider" status with Texas Instruments (that apparently did not exist), which by inference might extend to Charles LaFara too. Perhaps the best evidence of this can be seen in the February 1983 IUG Newsletter, page 5, where the reader is treated to a photo of Charles LaFara lighting Bill Cosby's cigar. The photo has nothing to do with anything in the newsletter, it simply smacks of "power in association" or self-agrandisement, reinforcing Albright's claims.

On the other side of the coin, one can never accuse Charles LaFara of being TI's lacKey. After reading through the entire set of IUG Newsletters and the seven issues of Enthusiast 99, I found him to be quite opinionated about things that TI was doing in the 99/4 and 4A marKetplace. As early as December 1980 LaFara was criticizing TI produced software that performed poorly such as their Mail List Manager. He was also probably the first of many to cry foul when TI forced the absurd "MunchMan Plan" on 99ers (Jan-May 1982), requiring that they purchase any four of the existing TI produced command modules, or any one of the software albums (the Value PacKs) in order to get MunchMan. You couldn't buy it anywhere. If you wanted the new game, you had to play TI's game and go through an intricate proof of purchase routine and then mail off your order to TI. In February 1983 LaFara again blasted TI for the Plato series, screaming that the entire system was sub-standard, overpriced and would probably not be delivered on time anyway. He even went so far as to label TI's dependability on delivering products by the announced deadline a "joKe".

My first and only contact with the IUG occurred in September 1984 when I sent them a checK for $14.95 to purchase a copy of Data Base 300 from their Master 99 Series. To my complete surprise, I actually received it, the last weeK of Febraury, 1985. Not a bad turn around time, huh? Even though Data Base 300 turned out to be a bust, I thought that the Master 99 loader designed by LaFara, with its marquee-liKe moving and flashing graphics was worth the wait.

Whether one has positive, negative or no opinions about the IUG, it certainly carved out a place for itself in TI-99 history. Besides claiming over 50,000 members in its hey-day, the IUG also supposedly employed 24 people at one time and tooK in as much as $2,000 a day in orders. That's not too bad for a cottage industry.
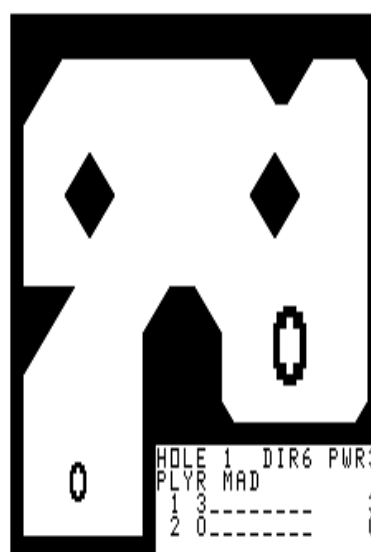
Mini-Golf
by Beejay Funware

HOLE 1   DIR6 PWR3
PLYR MAD
  1 3--------- 3
  2 0--------- 0

	P	F	G	E
Performance				
Engrossment				
Document				

Poor/**F**air/**G**ood/**E**xcellent

Reviewed by Sharyn Lyon

Wouldn't you Know it! All weeK you've been looKing forward to your golf day, and now, it's raining. Darnit! LooKs liKe you'll have to forgo your favorite leisure time activity and clean the garage instead. Well, cheer up - Beejay Funware has come to your rescue with their Mini-Golf game. This simulation of the recreational favorite has many of the elements of outdoor golf plus some extra added attractions to Keep you saying "Fore!" and asKing for more.

As you would expect, the screen display looKs something liKe an outdoor golf course. Each well-trimmed green is complete with sand traps and a cloudless blue sKy . But in outdoor golf the distant cup is marKed by a teensy flag that you may or may not be able to see from your tee-off point. This video version lets you see the entire hole from a bird's-eye view. The cup (into which you must hit the ball) is clearly visible. Your starting place is indicated on the screen by a small round ball to differentiate it from the cup, which is larger.

The graphics are uncluttered, and the colors pleasing to the eye. If they were anymore complicated, the graphics would distract you from your goal: to play the course through and attain the lowest possible score. You may play alone, continually trying to lower your score, or compete against one opponent. We found the 2-player version of the game slow moving. The second player also has a distinct advantage since he can learn from Player 1's miscalculations and successes. In the interest of fair play, therefore, we recommend that when you play several games in succession, you alternate the role of Player 1. But for a fast-moving, practice game, it's fun to play alone and play both roles.

MINIGOLF CONTINUES,

TEEING OFF

Providing 64 random greens, the 18-hole game asks each player to ENTER the direction in which the ball should be hit and the amount of power to put into the swing. You use the number Keys to communicate these shot specifications to the computer. The power of each stroke ranges from 0 (soft) to 9 (hard), and there are 8 directions in which the ball can be hit.

The game simulates some of the pleasures and challenges of outdoor golf. Rather than using a golf cart, you move from green to green by rolling up the old green and scrolling in the new. And as in real golf, you experience the calming effect of watching the ball float in its trajectory. You are not given the par for each hole, but there is a 9-stroke limit which, if reached, will inspire a low-register "Uhoh" from the computer.

PAR FOR THE COURSE

Because the 18-hole course is different for each game, you won't be able to replay your favorite course as you can in outdoor golf. This built-in course variation does, however, Keep you thinking all the time. Golf is a game that requires strategy, as well as a balance of aim and power. Mini-Golf's varied course provides good practice in these essential elements of the game. If you hit the ball in the right direction but with too much or too little force, it will take more "strokes" to reach the cup.

Most of the game is quite realistic, and as you play the course, you can imagine yourself at the Masters Tournament. But your fantasy comes to a halt when you encounter a sand trap. These orange blotches may resemble sand traps, but they actually function more like trees along a fair way. Your ball cannot land in these traps, but it can ricochet off the sides. If you put the sand traps to use in this way (the best technique we found for getting a hole in one, by the way), the game resembles miniature golf or bumper pool more than the big course golf variety.

FORE SCORE

Along with your view of the hole, the screen displays the score in two ways. It shows each player's stroke count per hole and the subtotal as the game progresses. Looking at the screen display, you can easily tell whose turn it is, how each player is doing, and whether each player improves as the game goes on. In the example below it is ML's turn (as indicated by the 0) to try Hole 1. She is ahead now and has decided to hit her ball in direction 4 with a power of 3.

```
HOLE  5     DIR4     PWR 3
PLYR  ML
1 5 7 5 0 _ _ _ _      17 17
2 9 6 3 _ _ _ _ _      18 18
```

The screen can display the number of strokes per individual hole for only nine holes at a time, but your cumulative score remains on the screen and reflects your changing total throughout the 18-hole game.

JOGGING YOUR MIND

Mini-Golf won't give you any physical exercise, but it will give your mind a good workout. It is not an arcade-type game geared for speed and scores in the thousands. It is a game that calls for precision and a geometrical understanding of how to set up a shot. What makes Mini-Golf mentally exciting is that the game doesn't get more sophisticated, you do! It is the same as regular golf in that improving your scored depends on your judgment of distance and stroke force. The game remains a challenge as you strive to improve your handicap.

If you have a great game going and you make a typing mistake, don't lose heart. There is a built-in error-handling safeguard so that a typing mistake won't ruin your game. After typing in the direction of your shot and deciding that the number you typed is wrong, all you need to do is press FCTN 9 before typing the power number. This erases the mistake so you can start over. Once the power number has been typed in, however, the ball automatically begins to move. The game might be improved if you had an opportunity to fix a power mistake as well as a directional one. Perhaps having to press ENTER when you're ready to hit the ball would allow time to use FCTN 9 to fix power errors.

Mini-Golf is a challenge to play, but it is easy to use: You will find all the necessary documentation on the screen. When you have won the round of 18 holes, the computer declares you the winner and prints the number of strokes by which you won. It would have been nice if the sound and graphics capabilities of the TI-99/4A had been utilized more fully with at least a musical fanfare at the end. But even without such elaborate rewards, playing Mini-Golf on a rainy day sure beats the old putt the ball into the glass on the floor routine. In fact, your console-ation course may become one of your favorite places to play! The price of the tape or diskette is certainly small compared to a country club membership fee or the price of paying a caddy. So, let it rain - you've got it made because you can play Mini-Golf on your 99/Fore-A.

HOOKED ON PROGRAMMING? - OR ARE YOU A PROGRAMMING ADDICT?
FROM THE NATIONAL NINETY-NINER VOL 2, NO 4 APRIL 1985
By Don Veith

There are people who love computer programming. Quite a few actually. I am one of them: a programming addict. The number of programming addicts is growing geometrically with the sale of affordable personal computers.

If you are a programming addict, perhaps you have tried to

explain yourself to friends and family and found you could not. Maybe you have wondered if your addiction is healthy. The ideas presented here will try to explain what the programming addiction is, why people succumb to it, and what may be learned from this phenomenon.

The symptoms of a programming addict are listed below.
THE PROGRAMMING ADDICT:
1. Works Late, On Weekends, And At Home.
2. Thinks Programming Is Fun.
3. Cannot Stop Programming.
4. Suffers A Loss Of Time Sense
5. Uses Tell-tale Phrases (and behavior).
6. Possesses A Distorted Sense Of Values.

Programming addicts will work all evening or weekend forsaking other commitments and people, including their own wife and children. It is nothing for one to lose a sense of time and work all night long going to work with a minimum amount of sleep or none at all. Many people find it rather strange that they view their job as fun. Many of them started programming for fun and ended up realizing people would ACTUALLY PAY MONEY to an individual for doing something they enjoy!

Programming addicts cannot stop programming. When elevated to manager positions, the managing task with its paper work and meetings causes great anguish by reducing the programming time available. The never cured addict actually begs his boss not to remove the terminal, which there now is so little time to utilize, from his office. All work and meeting schedules are banished to the Ozone fringe when one of the manager's programmers states the bug in this program cannot be located. It triggers that old nemesis of a heartache called Programmer's addiction. Removing the victim from the pleasurable task at hand, finding a coding error, may cause withdrawl symtoms and will definitely reduce your life expectancy if not accomplished in an organized and careful manner. Have you ever viewed GODZILLA and GHENGIS KHAN At the same moment. My advice is to avoid this type of confrontation. Hidden monsters may arise suddenly in the most timid Programming Addict when a Key train of thought is interrupted. Be assured you WILL BE ADDRESSED in a voice that uses words most people are not aware exist. Additionally, YOU WILL BE REMINDED CONSTANTLY for a very long period of time that your 10 level interruption on his Richter Disturbance Scale, maxed out of course, caused the Addict great delay in the search for that elusive rascal of a program bug. Oh yes, a program bug is invisible, cannot be eliminated with the aid of an exterminator, and causes great anguish until located, removed and summarily executed in a correct manner!!

When the dedicated Programming Addict is on the trail of a program bug, nothing will be allowed to interrupt until it has been located. I MEAN NOTHING!! Many Computer Widows will readily attest to the Quest Fervor which TOTALLY CONSUMES AND CONTROLS her resident Programming Addict. No amount of feminine wile or intrigue can overcome THE SACRED QUEST for that damned program code error. Normal reflexes and awareness of the surrounding habitat and its human accessories go totally unnoticed until the Programming Addict announces with great pomp and ceremony , "THE QUEST HAS ENDED!! I have located the dasterdly devil in my quadrempholenic hystersis zouperdroopper dribblrrrz spritzen haufperpeper's secondary auxiliary standby backup secondhand philiophronicKing memory chip's controller sync bit address's register entry point!!!! "

Now, if you can identify that piece of computer equipment, you are an absolute and totally dedicated Programming Addict. Imagine what we sound like while whipping our high tech slang onto each other as the uninitiated and technically droll people look at us like nuts headed for the processing plant? Who ever inferred Programming addicts fit any normal mold of humanity!

All Kidding aside, programming does provide an outlet for recognition. What can replace the telephone call or personal conversation with someone who has used a program written by you. The comments," I am using the program you created and its great." Just the fact that YOUR PROGRAM is being used is a sufficient reward for most of us. Conversations with appreciative users is icing on the cake to provide incentive for further program development effort.

The sense of conquest from controlling a device and making it do mundane and routine tasks is another ego motivator. A unique pleasure may be derived from reducing a large complex multi-faceted problem to a simple task. It does require a sense of dedication to the task at hand to undertake, yet let alone , complete the reduction of a complex task into a simple procedure. A programmer's job is finished when the last modification or revision of their work is completed. The programmer was successful and can look back to review the list of accomplishments represented by software created. Very few things in life provide this clearly defined sense of accomplishment.

The end result (a program) does not justify a Programming Addict's ignoring their complete surroundings. Remember when you start to hassle your resident computer enthusiast, at least you can always locate him although requests, even pleading pleas for attention or assistance, go completely unheeded. His toy is bringing him home each evening. The communication level , if it existed at all, is at a much lower level than intelligent life had believed was ever possible. Besides, if you cannot get your resident Programming Addict's attention, why not join that nut with their Quest Fervor and find out what is so fascinating about computers. Perhaps a future Forth , Pascal, or Assembly Language Programming Addict is lurking in your own subconcious mind. You will never understand the joys AND frustrations of working with a computer until you personally atempt to use the infernal device. Their role and importance in our world today is increasing.
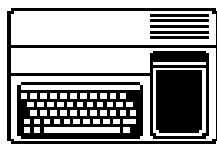
Yesterdays News Information

Yesterdays News is a labor of love offered as a source of pleasure & information for users of the TI-99/4A & Myarc 9640 computers.

TI-99/4A HARDWARE
Black & Silver computer
Modified PEB
WHT SCSI card with SCSI2SD
Myarc DSQD FDC
Myarc 512K Memory Card
Horizon 1.5 meg Ramdisk
TI RS232 card
Corcomp Triple Tech Card
1 360K 5.25 floppy drive
1 360K 3.50 floppy drive
1 720K 5.25 floppy drive
1 720K 3.50 floppy drive
80K Gram Kracker
Samsung Syncmaster 710mp

TI-99/4A SOFTWARE
PagePro 99
PagePro Composer
PagePro FX
PagePro Headline Maker
PagePro Gofer
TI Artist Plus
GIFMania

PC HARDWARE
Compaq Armada 7800 Notebook
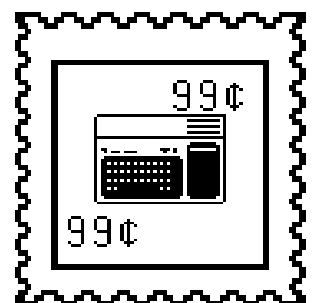Compaq Armadastation
Samsung Syncmaster 710mp

PC SOFTWARE
Dead,Dead,Dead Windows 98se
FileCap
prn2pbns
Irfanview
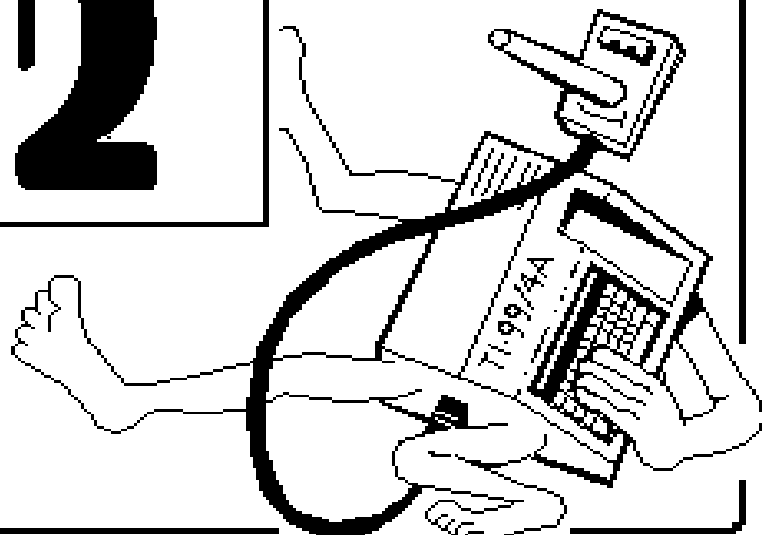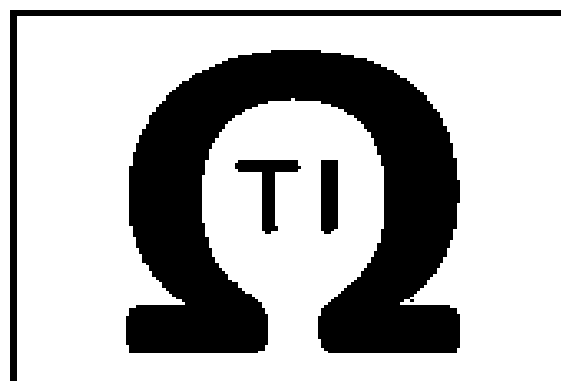Adobe Distiller
Adobe Acrobat

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