

ARCADIANS #4 Sept 1, 1978

I recently placed an ad in Kilobaud, and this is the first letter to those responding to that ad. We have a loosely-knit group of 35 or so (as of now) starting from an ad in ON_LINE just after the San Jose Computer Faire. We consist of owners-in-fact, owners-on-order, and possible owners-to-be. Personally, I received my unit from JS&A on Feb 28.

As it stands, the Bally "Arcade" or "Home Library Computer" is a powerful TV game with 4 hand controllers to operate the various game players and moves. Buried inside is a Z80 chip, that, along with other components, allows the future expansion of capabilities. There are two connectors inside, hidden behind punch-out panels. A 3-pin connector is a power output, while the 50-pin connector gives access to the Z80 chip (plus 10 more pins). A combination of connectors is needed to operate the various add-ons, as the cassette interface, needed to run a recorder for the storage and retrieval of data with the Tiny BASIC cartridge, needs the power connector plus one of the hand controller connectors for its use. The light pen is similarly attached. The Add-On keyboard will plug into the 50pin connector and have its own cassette interface.

Our main problem is in not having hardware. There was a problem with the first units because of overheating (after anywhere from 15 min to 3 hrs operation) and the resultant rebuilding has delayed everything else. I suppose they considered a second source. Currently the most optimistic schedule for the TBASIC is September, while JS&A is saying October (maybe hedging). The general Bally scheme is to build up a big inventory and ship to everyone at once.

As a group we won't be able to interact on a meaningful level until the TBASIC becomes generally available, when I expect the correspondence and discussion to increase. I will probably go to some kind of subscription system when the load gets too big. Meanwhile, thanks for the support.

In case you hadn't noticed, the TBASIC Manual is available from NCE, Box 8610, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, free. They sent me a few & I can supply also. (This is an authorized copy.) They will carry the full line.

The latest Wards catalog lists the Bally and the same cartridges as reported before. The unit's price went up to 269. with 2 controllers.

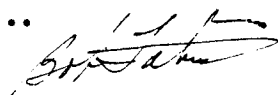
I just purchased the #2002 Sea Wolf/Bombardier from Schwenk Enterprises, 6988 Lincoln Creek Circle, Carmichael, CA 95608, with instant delivery.

On a more positive note, local Arcadians and I took part in a market research project in late August, sponsored by Bally. We, and others (owners & non-owners) met at 7 pm and sat around a table, a dozen or so including the Bally rep, and discussed what we wanted to do with such a machine, its desirable features and accessories, etc., all on a personal basis. Of course we had ample chance to complain about the service (to no immediate good, but who knows after the tapes get back to Chicago). At the end of an hour and a half, we were treated to a review of an operating Add-On module. In prototype form, they haven't decided everything to go into it yet, or the final packaging. They stick to the February delivery date for this. The programmer of the Tiny BASIC, Jay Fenton, was there and demonstrated some of the capabilities of the Module. Page two has some words on the things we saw and heard. Pre-kilobaud-ad-Arcadians who live near large cities may be contacted by a local market research firm to join one of these discussion groups, as they have your addresses from me. Please attend if you can, you will enjoy it, learn from it, perhaps influence the final product(s), and even profit from it as there is a 25. stipend plus mileage for the attendees.

I now have the code describing the identity of each pin in the 50-pin connector and the associated data regarding routines available and the 5x7 character format. Access to the z-80 can now be made.

Here's looking to some really positive news next time...

408-742-6048 days
408-272-2364 home


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Report on the Market Research Experience...Dick Strauss

The initial discussions were generally centered around non-product directed questions aimed at assessing the level of understanding (of personal computers) by the attendees. The group was fortunate in that the cross-section represented individuals that knew nothing about computers, to those who had experience on others systems, or had even built a system from scratch.

The big moment of the evening was the unveiling of the prototype expanded Bally system. The unit was a rack mounted approach with the keyboard on an extended shelf, the TV above, and a disc unit below. The attendees were also asked to evaluate alternatives to the basic Bally Arcade that fits on the unit and approached in appearance an integrated 'desk top' system. Some comment was made about swapping the guts from the Arcade into a new package. All participants stressed the location of the keyboard and the type of keyboard used. It looks like they are headed towards the standard keyboard, a la IBM type. Our group favored a professional black/grey unit with 'no frills' like phony walnut grain/gold trim, etc.

Back to the prototype, which Jay did work. The unit had a video operation monitor mounted above the 15" Sony color set. Some discussion was held about the availability of the instruction monitor and TV outputs - tends to indicate that the monitor might not be an option. Jay demonstrated that the instruction could also be displayed on the TV (as would be expected) at the same time as the operating display. The floppy disc system was not operating - something happened on the trip out.

When asked about memory, I recall something in the area of 44K in the expansion module, which indicated some memory mapping on top of that already in the Arcade. Bally has not ruled out the capability for additional memory via subsequent add-on.

When asked about the music, Jay demonstrated three voices (not the 6 in the JS&A ad).

When asked about time base(s) - they were still working on their scheme.

When asked about the light pen - the interface could be available thru the RS 232 interface. This is the same interface the IBM typewriter and other peripherals use.

A few final words about the program language planned for the expansion unit. Jay calls it ZGRAS. It looked to be as simple as BASIC only more powerful. It seems to include instructions to the user on how the computer 'likes' to see statements - a great help to the novice programmer.

rs

A note on the last, Jay showed (on the screen) the menu of commands. If you wanted to dig deeper into a command, you punch in "HELP GOTO", and the machine goes into a tutorial as to how to use GOTO with an example, if necessary.

Thinking as I transcribe Dick's note...maybe I'll keep the TBASIC and tape drive interface after the Add-On comes out, to use all the goodie programs I'll invent or get from the magazines in the meantime. Depends on how easy it will be to transcribe.

rf

IT'S HERE !

Sorry for the unseemly enthusiasm, but the Tiny BASIC cartridge is finally appearing in the stores, at the \$50 price tag. It consists of the cartridge and the manual, with a fancy book-type box. Inside the front cover of the manual is the overlay for the keypad. Also included is an errata sheet. Plug in the cartridge, push RESET and the screen goes "BALLY BASIC" with musical notes, and you are ready to go. Our local store (ERA-1) ran out of a dozen in just two days.

You should receive a copy of the Bally "PA-1 SERVICE MANUAL" sometime this month. This is being sent to all ARCADIANS without charge as a courtesy from Bally.

Because of the expected upswing of correspondence and inputs for this paper resulting from the release of the Tiny BASIC, I plan on going to a more regular production. This will therefore be the last issue of a 'free' paper, and the next will be on a subscription basis, \$5 the year. A sheet is enclosed, to be used as a subscription order-and it will also be used to answer the inquiries. If there is any correction necessary to the address label used on this issue, please send the label back with the corrections marked.

A report from Bally indicates that they have increased the supply of the three custom chips (address system, I/O, and data) by adding a third vendor from whom to purchase chips.

The Add-On unit is to be demonstrated at the January electronics show at Las Vegas, and production to start after the show.

The Sept/Oct issue of Creative Computing has a very interesting article on the base unit and the Tiny BASIC cartridge. It also includes a few choice words about availability of the product.

Bally is producing three models of the base unit, the only visible difference being the label on the clear plastic cover. These models are:

EA-1000-2	Montgomery Ward	} "ARCADE"™
PBA-1100	available at retail outlets	
PBA-1200	JS&A unit	"HOME LIBRARY COMPUTER"™

Over 10,000 of the -1100 have been manufactured.

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Included below is the erratta sheet that came with the TB manual. I don't understand the reference for pages 107-110, as mine worked ok. There are more commands in the TBASIC than the manual tells you about. For example, the period . is equivalent to REMark; that is, the entry will list, but will not affect the running of a program. There is also supposed to be an /ABS/ command, to give you the absolute value of a number... Anything discovered by subscribers is solicited.

The symbol GO+10 on p. 122 is not too clear. In writing a program with line numbers 10 digits apart (10,20,30,etc.), enter a line by using WORDS GO and the machine will automatically give you the next line number, saving you the step of entering it.

Use subroutines and GOTO to save memory space

The length of a string is apparently dependent upon program size.

It appears that changing instructions after loading a string will destroy all or parts of the string.

NT (note time) can be used to control the speed of the computer at any time - not just for music. Setting NT = 0 will speed up the operation the most, and will shut off the tones. A negative NT will slow the whole operation drastically, and give you really sustained notes, in seconds of time.

The cassette interface may be somewhat touchy. By the way, with a few connector changes you can use a reel mechanism just as well. None of the instructions tell you that it is the recorder's volume control that must be adjusted to get the signals back and forth. There is an LED in the interface, and the control should just make the LED light uniformly, just above its blinking state. If you have material on tape and want to get it into the computer, give it the loading command and adjust the recorder's volume control until the data showing up on the screen is legible (all the WHAT? BALLY BASIC terms are gone), then rewind the tape at start again,"for real". You may have a problem where someone else has recorded the tape, on another machine. Tape head azimuth must be matched. I would recommend sending a listing along with a tape when we get to swapping programs that way, so the recipient can enter by hand any commands that get garbled.

BALLY BASIC PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION COURSE ADDENDUM

Please make these changes and additions to your Bally BASIC programmed instruction course.

PAGE NO.	
11	Do not spell out computer words (B-O-X or S-T-E-P). Use the WORDS shift key.
46	Change this line 143 NT=3
52	Change these lines 20FOR A=1 TO N 60FOR B=1 TO@(A) 70PRINT #1, "\$";
60	Change this line 60IF K=31 A=A-1; GOTO 100
63	Key 31 is the erase key (paragraph 5)
99	Add this line 190 GOTO 10
102	Add these lines 280 H=H+1 290 GOTO 30 301 PRINT "ROCK"; RETURN 302 PRINT "SHEARS"; RETURN 303 PRINT "PAPER"; RETURN
106	Use program on page 60
107-110	Do not use music

Another outlet for the base unit and probably the TBASIC is J.TAYLOR, 611 North 2 St. CABOT, AR 72023, who mails items postpaid. Contact him for prices and details.

The latest Newman Computer Exchange (NCE) catalog, received 10/10 has an extremely interesting description and explanation on the TBASIC. A copy is included herein, through the courtesy of Johnny Johnson of NCE. Their address is Box 8610, Ann Arbor, MI 48107. This is the type of material I want to include in this newsletter for use by our subscribers.

*Any interest in a local meeting?
What are bad evenings?*

ARCADIANS

A USER GROUP FOR OWNERS OF THE BALLY HOME COMPUTER

The potential for Bally's computer system seems large, and a user group was started in early 1978. As it turned out, we were somewhat premature because the deliveries of the Bally base unit were minimal to non-existent during most of the year. The Tiny BASIC portion did not start to appear until October.

The organization of the group was informal as there was little point in formality when there was very little to talk about. However, now with the Tiny BASIC in distribution, people will be experimenting and learning new things, things not covered by the Bally documentation, and it seems apropos to have some sort of newsletter or journal to identify and disseminate the information that is developed by owners.

I am therefore soliciting subscriptions to the ARCADIANS on a yearly basis, November to October, at a \$5. rate. Payment at any time will result in receipt of all issues for the full year, as hopefully the material included will have continuing worth.

At first, issues will be produced on an "as-needed" basis with a bi-monthly minimum, expanding to monthly as required, possibly at the same time the keyboard option becomes available. A large majority of the material will be subscriber-developed, I'm not a computer expert and am learning as much or more than you are. The first issue will start up with a number of subscriber questions that have been received the last year. If there are any that you have, please send them along and they will eventually be answered. Inputs of all kinds are requested. We need programs, methods of interfacing to other gear, methods of getting around the limitations of the Tiny BASIC language, all the kinds of things that Shack and PET user groups and commercial outfits are developing. If you have a program to share, please send a copy-able version so we can just duplicate it.

NAME _____ TEL (optional) _____

ADDRESS _____

ZIP _____

CURRENT BASE UNIT PURCHASED FROM _____

SERIAL NUMBER _____ MODEL NUMBER _____

408 - 742-6048 days
408 - 272-2364 after 6

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ARCADIANS

The undersigned is publishing a newsletter devoted to the dissemination of items of interest to owners of Bally Computer System products.

The Tiny BASIC cartridge currently available contains a large number of features that are not defined, discussed, or even mentioned in the Bally-supplied manual. Subscribers are in the process of investigating these features, and through this journal identify and share the information with others. In this way, subscribers are able to develop programs with special enhancements, eventually approaching the quality of factory products. We are, for example, able to call up various sound effects, or produce more colors on the screen than the manual discusses.

For those more technically oriented, we have located the PEEK, POKE, and CALL commands to allow more direct access to the internals.

Others of our subscribers are working on the interface requirements to allow the use of peripherals with the Bally. We are using the cassette interface to trade programs and are considering a sale arrangement for unique and exceptionally interesting programs.

We enjoy a positive relationship with the manufacturer, and have frequent contact. Because of this relationship, our readers are aware of new/proposed/available options, etc., far in advance of the public.

Issues are produced on an as-required basis with a bi-monthly minimum, expanding to monthly as the volume of inputs indicates. The majority of material is subscriber-developed. The Staff is not a computer expert and is learning as much or more than the subscribers. Material needed includes programs, ideas, narratives of how any function works, applications, methods of getting around the limitations of Tiny BASIC, all the kinds of things that RShack and PET user groups and commercial outfits are developing.

If you have material or a program to share, the Typist would appreciate a copy-able version so that the Publisher can just duplicate it.

Because material in the journal is of long-term value, a subscription is for a full year only, November to October, and payment at any time during the year results in receipt of all issues for that year, via First Class.

Rate is ~~\$5~~^{\$10.00} the year, to : Robert Fabris
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ARCADIANS