

Jan. 29, 1979

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McLimore

Bob Fabris  
3626 Morrie Drive  
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Dear Bob:

I received the copies of The Arcadian you sent, and I am frankly flabbergasted at what you and the other Arcadians have managed to squeeze out of little ol' Bally BASIC! Some of your discoveries I had stumbled onto myself in my own experimentations. Others--particularly the very useful &(9) function--were delightfully new to me.

How many Arcadians are there across the country? You are bound to have lots more after the Creative Computing mention, plus I intend to recommend the Arcadians Users Group to my friends and customers in this area.

What really gets me is how you gave me more information on the ARCADE and Bally BASIC in one mailing than I have been able to get AS A DEALER from either my local distributor or Bally Mfg. The local distributor has been putting me off each time I asked for a specs sheet on the Add-on module--and here it is in the latest ARCADIAN! In my opinion, lack of communication with owners and dealers is Bally's biggest problem right now. I hope they get it together soon.

The local distributors are having an open house this weekend to introduce the new BALLY equipment. I'll give you all the details then if I find out anything interesting. One new development you may not know about is the release of a new ARCADE model with only 2 hand controls. The new unit will sell for \$299.95, with the original BPA-1100 becoming a "deluxe" model at a price increase. (About \$325, I believe...) Speaking as a dealer, I am unhappy with this, as it will hurt sales. As an owner, I'm just glad I bought mine early!

The sheet you sent on specs for the keyboard says the RAM is expanded to 8K onboard (with room to upgrade to 16K) instead of the 20K RAM originally announced. This is extremely disappointing, especially when matched up with the price increase to \$650. 8K still isn't enough RAM for serious work, in my opinion. 16K is minimum for so many standard programs, that a serious user will be forced to upgrade almost immediately. The improved graphics and multi-program running capability are fine, but without sufficient memory the features can't be used to their full capability. This limited memory downgrades the Bally system from "fantastic deal" to "marginally superior" in comparison to other systems like the Apple and the Sorcerers. (By the way, don't quote me on that, please. My boss might not like it...) I'd like to hear your opinions on the matter. (Maybe I should reserve judgement until I see the thing...)

Enclosed with this letter is a masthead I designed as a suggestion for The Arcadian. I've done quite a bit of professional graphics work, and would be glad to do some department headings, etc. for the newsletter if you are interested. Feel free to use this one, or suggest something else. I'll give it a whirl...

Are you interested in publishing any complete programs that have little or nothing to do with expanding the capabilities of the Bally unit? (Most of my own work has been in games and graphics, as this is where most of my interest lies. I am presently working on several non-computer wargame designs as a free-lancer.) If so, I have several finished, including a game inspired by Star Wars (doesn't everyone?), some graphics demonstrations, and a program designed for use by fantasy role-playing gamers which draws perspective-view and floor-plan dungeon corridors. I would be most interested in corresponding with any Arcadian for purposes of exchanging software on cassette or as a listing. How about listing addresses of

users group members who want to buy, sell, or exchange software for Bally BASIC?

Before I forget, I am also enclosing \$2 for the two publications you mention in the last ARCADIAN--the PA-1 service manual and the Executive Software data. These two works sound like the beginnings of something all ARCADE users definitely need; a comprehensive users manual. The Bally BASIC book is nice for the beginner, but it doesn't scratch the surface of the Bally's capabilities. We need a book to pool all the information we can glean about the unit, the TRASIC, and other functions. I propose the Arcadians make this an ongoing project, and I offer whatever assistance I can be in the endeavor. (Honest--my typing is usually better than this...) This manual would NOT be a programmed learning text like the Bally BASIC manual, but would be more on the order of Radio Shack's Level II Reference Manual. Tom Wood's work with  $\Sigma \%(n)$  seems to imply that he has access to at least a partial memory map of the ARCADE. This is important information that should be included in a manual. Also, how much help could the Arcadians expect from Bally Mfg. in compiling this information? (Radio Shack has been notoriously unhelpful, I am told, in providing data about TRS-80 operations, other than what is in the manuals. Hopefully Bally isn't going to do that.)

I honestly think something like this would be very worthwhile. It might not pay Bally to produce a second manual for the really rabid ARCADE freak, but, if they'd have no objections, it would be a good project for the users group, to be coordinated through the newsletter. I hope this doesn't sound overly pushy coming from a brand-new Arcadian, but I just want you to know I am not one of these types who says "Why don't YOU do this or that?" I'm willing to devote time to a project like this if anyone is interested at all.

(By the way, I hope the manual provided with the new keyboard expander is more comprehensive, or we'll have to go through all this again. Oh, well! Experimentation is half the fun...)

Sorry to have gotten so long-winded with this missive. (Also sorry about the typing. My fingers aren't going where they are pointed, for some reason...) Thanks for the quick response to my ~~last~~ letter. I'm looking forward anxiously to the next issue. In the meantime, I'll send you any info I pick up at the local unveiling.

Sincerely,

*Guy*  
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P.S. In reference to the last page of the latest ARCADIAN:

I find it hard to believe that the elaborate characters at ASCII positions 100-103 are merely space-fillers. (Then again, I can't figure out anything else, either. Maybe I'm overly suspicious...) They do make unusual borders when strung together, however. Also, VIDEOCADE 2004 is \$24.95 locally. My distributor's error, or yours?

*Guy*