The Robot Companion
Newsletter of the Dallas Personal Robotics Group

Extracted from the Minutes of the meeting April 18, 1987

We wish to welcome three new members:

Melody Fountain of Datablocks, Inc., Glenwood Ga 30428

Henri Alexandre Le Friant of Alexandre and Companions, Dallas Tx 75222

Brian Vaceluke, Dallas, Tx 75206

The club's bank account is now set up and working.

Among the suggestions to use up our excess money, how about membership cards? What do you think?

We discussed our current mailling list, and the fact that there seems to be a lot of names of people who, for one reason or another, are no longer interested in the club's activities. We decided to set up a visitor's mail list, and send two issues to them. If after that time, if they don't join the club, they will be deleted from the list. You may also note that on the address label, we are including your expiration date, so that you will be aware of when your membership is due for renewal.

We also discussed including a questionaire in a future issue. I am interested in what kinds of questions you would like to see. For example:

1. what level equipment are you using.
2. current interests/projects.
3. long-term goals.
4. short-term goals.
5. What else?

We are going to publish the membership list soon. If, for some reason you do not want your phone number or address included, please let me know as soon as possible.

And for those of you with modems, try calling (214) 739-0645 300/1200/2400 baud, 24 hours, using 8 bits, no parity, 1 stop bit.

During the meeting, Bud described their desktop publishing system. They can scan pictures. We are having a contest for the best layout of a brochure about the club. Rough out your ideas and send them to Bud. All entries in by the 12th of May (or later, I am mailling the newsletter out on the 11th).

We saw the 25 min. video on robots in Japan that was scheduled for the previous month. The capabilities were quite impressive.

A CALL FOR PROGRAMS
by Stan, Club Librarian

It's time to get the much talked-about software library going! The first step is for all the club officers and other old-timers to submit some programs. You know who you are, BUD, WALTER, GREG, ED, and JOE! (Thanks go to Joe, who submitted the first disk to the library!) Over the years, many programs have been developed and demonstrated at club meetings and workshops. These programs would make a good start for the library. Once we get those gathered up, there will be more incentive for others to get involved, too.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The most important thing in submitting programs is the golden rule: submit programs and appropriate documentation in a form that you would be happy to receive from others! Any program is a great program if it can be understood and used by someone; and any program is trash if using and understanding it takes a genius. Hey, I'm not asking for a user's manual, just a nice description of the program's purpose and use, and what kind of special hardware or other considerations are required. Also, if it is a large program, or written in assembler, please provide enough comments so that the recipient can understand how it works.

REMEMBER, one of the primary reasons to have a library is to plant seeds -- let others tailor the programs to their own uses and ideas, and submit another (perhaps better) version of the program.

All submitted programs will be reviewed, and put in the library if the club can be proud to distribute it. If it is lacking in documentation, or doesn't even indicate its purpose, we will have to (tactfully) ask the member to clean it up a bit.

SUBMITTING PROGRAMS

For now all programs should be submitted on MS-DOS/PC-DOS format disks (double-sided/double-density). They should be in the form of an ASCII file, and should either have plenty of comments in the code or have a seperate documentation file. Remember to indicate the robot that the program is for, and any special hardware requirements.

DISTRUBUTION OF PROGRAMS

The programs will be seperated by robot - that is, a seperate disk for each robot type (H-1, H-2000, H-Jr., etc.).

The distribution will be based on a disk-credit basis. In other words, if you give us 1 disk (either blank or with submitted programs), you can receive 1 disk in return. Thus the club will neither accumulate nor lose disks. If you prefer, however, we may decide to offer the disks for a small charge (about $2). This method will also be used when video tapes are distributed. An alternate form of distribution is by hard-copy listings. The club will keep a printed set of each disk, which may be bought for the price of copying. For now, the club will absorb out-going postage costs. This issue is subject to change, however. If you are a local member, please do not ask us to mail a disk to you. Call me some time before a club meeting, and I will bring the disks you need to the meeting.

A FINAL WORD

This library could be one of the club's best features. Our main goal is to make it useful to members, especially the out-of-town members. Many of the programs submitted, especially from out of town, will be demonstrated in club meetings, so let us see your creations! We may even start videotaping the demonstrations for our soon-to-be-started video library. Any suggestions will be welcome. If there are a lot of you out there that would prefer tape distribution, we will give it consideration. Also note that disks may be submitted in CP/M format (5-1/4"), for those of you who have Kaypro, Epson, or Xerox computers (others also accepted -- check with me). This library is for the members, so let us know your needs! Also give us feedback on the programs -- bugs, improvements, praise, etc.! Direct any comments or questions to me. My name is Stan, and my number is (214) 699-1501. I'm not home alot, but please leave a message and I'll get back with you.

Editor's note:
Thank you, Stan! Not to be outdone, We users with Tandy Equipment (Models I, II, III, 4, 12, 16, and 6000) can also receive and distribute these programs. Ed Rivers first 6800 assembler was written on a Model I, and, I can transfer ASCII files between IBM and Tandy equipment.

The only thing scheduled for the next meeting is the official start of the club library. Bring your favorite public-domain program(s) along on a floppy and let's get the ball rolling!