DPRG Meeting Gets a Better Time Slot

The Dallas Personal Robotics Group (DPRG) Novemeber meeting was at the Dallas Infomart in room 1060. This was our first meeting at 12:00 instead of 2:00. Many of us believe that this new time will work better for most people and may result in better attendance.

How to Visit

Anyone wishing to attend the DPRG meetings, simply check the schedule at http://www.dprg.org. Normally the meeting is the 2nd saturday of the month, but not allways. A map to the Dallas Infomart can also be seen on this page. Get there a little early and check the overhead projectors which display the times and room numbers of each meeting. You will find many groups listed mainly for computer/software related issues. Make sure to visit the vendor area on the lower level for great deals on hardware, software and accessories, and Christmas presents. There is no charge for these activities and visiting groups is usually free. You can pay dues and become a bona-fid memeber if you want.

Record Attendence

Because Jim sent out email messages, attendence has grown. There were more than 10-15 people, 3 robots, and a huge group of 8-12 year olds including a few parents. This is probably the biggest attendance since the big robot contest back in 93, or was it 92?

New DPRG Web Site

The DPRG now has it's own web site at http://www.dprg.org. Steve Rainwater was kind enough to donate the service to the group. Jim began setting up the pages and it allready looks great. Jim does some awesome backgrounds and animated GIFs. It's been mentioned that the newsletter may just become electronic instead of printed. Also suggested is member pages that describe the member's interest, skills, and projects.

Linux Group

The new Linux group now meets at 2:00 which is just after the DPRG meeting. Many in the group have shown an interest in using Linux for robot control. There has been many postings about the new "embedded Linux" oncomp.realtime and comp.robotics.misc newsgroups.

Tyce Runs the Meeting

Eric, Erick, and Jim were out doing non-robot things during this meeting so Tyce took over. Tyce put together several things for some local school kids that are working on OM (Odyessy of the Mind) which has a contest including building a robot. Tyce made several sheets of drawings describing mechanical movements. He also put together a great little walking frame created with Balsa wood and a toy truck motor/gearbox. All in all, Tyce did a GREAT JOB!

Subjects talked about

We had in-depth discussions on microcontrollers, programming languages, and robot mechanics. We also talked about the new Robot Digest magazine that's comming out soon in place of TRP magazine. Several jokes about Bill Gates were also made.

Chris Donates 2 TI DSP Development Systems

Chris brought 2 TI DSP Development systems which included a small board, software and several manuals. They were quickly snatched up by interested robo-gurus. Those who got them, we expect you to demo your projects! Chris also mentioned that he knew a fellow that may be able to get us a couple of copies of the Kiel 8051 C compiler. This is a top of the line development kit that is outside the price range of most of us. We're looking forward to this for sure. Thanks Chris.

Steve Rainwater Shows his Robot Truck

Steve brought his robot that is built around an RC Truck chassis. He's mounted several Gel-Cel batteries, enclosure, servo controller, and HC11 main controller. Steve plans on dumping the HC11 and moving to an 8051 and doing the high-level programming in C. He had to beef up some of the suspension components and stuff the wheels to handle the load. Steve Rainwater publishes the AI CDROM and the Robot Competetion FAQ that can be found at http://robots.net.

Roger Arrick Takes Pictures and Demos Walker

Roger brought his camera and took pictures of the people and robots. We'll use these to enhance the web site. And possibly build member pages. Roger also brought a prototype of his latest 4 leg walker. Controlled with an 8051 and a handful of servos.

Jim Brown Elected President

This was are month for election and since Jim wasn't there to defend himself, we elected him for the all-important job of 1997 President. From whom much is given, much is expected! Go for it Jim!

Kids show up

At about 2:00 10-20 kids show up to the meeting. They're trying to build a robot for a contest. Tyce quickly transformed into Super-Robo-Teacher. He explained mechanical movements, gears, motors, servos, and demonstrated his frame walker.

Tech-Tools gives DPRG Members a Discount

Tech-Tools is a local company that produces EPROM emulators for microcomputer development. A couple of the employees became interested in the group after talking with Roger Arrick who bought one of their products. They talked their boss into giving members of the group a 10% discount. Tech-Tools will have their web site up soon. Their phone number is 214-272-9392.

Model Rocket Joint Venture?

A discussion was started about making a robot that would fit in the payload compartment of a large model rocket. Several of the members have experience with rockets and one was convinced into talking with the local rocket group and coming up with a joint venture. The robot could exit the compartment upon landing, possibly communicate with the control center, may even have a camera, may try to find home. Connection to the local Ham Radio groups and imaging was also discussed. Possibilities!

DPRG Receives Donations

Jim and Tyce called several companies and got them to donate magazines. The Circuit Cellar robotics issue was one of them.

Thanks to everyone involved for a great meeting. Next time we hope to see Jim and let him know that he's our fearless leader.