VAST NEWS

for the VAST Computer User Group

Volume 6 Number 10

October 13, 1990

TI World and Local News

(Compiled from various sources including MICROpendium Magazine and Page Pro Times by Jim Ely)

On The Local Scene...



From Our President, Mike Grogan...

I would like to thank all the people that made our PICNIC a success. To say fun was had by all is... well... a great understatement. The food was cooked by Dan and Leslie Shell. This was the best Bar-B-Q I have had all summer. They worked hard to plan it and also, let me say, put up all the door prizes that were given. If you are looking to buy anything for your TI, talk to Dan first. He runs CactusCliff Computer (943-3409) and has sold most everything at one time or another. If he can't get it, he can more than likely tell you where to get the best price and who not to buy from.

Two other people gave their all for the club Pienic – none other than Mike and Cherry Marfisi. They let all of us into their beautiful home, and they let all the kids play in their pool (kids... big and small). Cherry helped everyone feel right at home. She also helped with the food layout.

If there is one person that has made this club keep going, it has to be Mike. He has been Secretary/ Treasurer for some time now and most people in

our group have no idea just how busy this keeps him. He also is a great help to Jim

Ely, our newsletter editor. Just between these two people, we get a very good newsletter every month. I do not enter an article as often as I should and I will try to better myself in this area. But they are the only ones that

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write anything at all. Surely YOU could put an article in sometime. Whether it be about your system or the start of a questions and answers section about your computer or

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NEWS, from page 1

programs. This way everyone has a chance to help each other and answer or ask questions.

Want to expand your system? Where should I buy a program or hardware? How do I get it to do that? See, it's not that hard. You can send these questions to any one of us and we will see that it gets in the newsletter. Even if we can answer it we will put it in the newsletter so everyone can see it. If you do not want to use your name, that's OK too. Just send in the questions or answers. (A sample of what we are looking for is on page 9 of this issue. —Ed.)

Well I can see by the line numbers on the screen that I have gotten off track. Just let me say ...THANKS... to Mike, Cherry, Dan and Leslie.

\$\$\$\$\$ Mike Grogan \$\$\$\$\$

Election Committee

This is the month we pick a nominating committee for the elections to be held in December. It will be the job of this committee to find candidates who are willing to run for the offices of President, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer. Their nominations will be presented at the November meeting and the official ballot will be included with the December Newsletter. Please think about serving on this committee or running for one of the offices!

Asgard Releases POSTER MAKER

Page Pro Poster Maker is a new program by

Ed Johnson, author of Page Pro 99. It enables you to take a full Page Pro page and double it, quadruple it or make it 8 times bigger! It does this by printing a piece of the poster at a time. You then you tape the pieces together to form the poster. You have to have Page Pro 99 to use this program. The price is \$12.95 + S & H. Contact Asgard for more information or to order at P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849 or phone (703) 255-3085. Several other Utilities, Templates, Images and Fonts for Page Pro have also been released including templates by our own Virginia Davis. Again, contact Asgard for a catalog.

Software Sale at QUALITY 99

A buy one, get one free sale is taking place at Quality 99 Software (611 26th St. South, Arlington, VA 22202) until December 31, 1990. Prices are as stated in Quality 99's pink catalog, number 27, and are cash, check or money order ONLY, no credit cards. For more details or their latest free catalog, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the mentioned address.

GOLF SCORE ANALYZER Released

Harrison Software has released an Assembly Language (operating under Extended BASIC) program designed to keep track of golf activity and analyze a golfer's progress. In Arizona, this should prove a very popular program for the TI user/golf addict. Extended BASIC, Editor/Assembler or TI Writer is required as is 32k memory expansion and at least 1 SS/SD disk drive. For more information, write 5705 40th Place, Hyattsville, MD 20781. The price is \$17 including S & H.

From the Editor's Desk

IN THIS ISSUE

SURPRISE! SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

I actually got a couple of files to include in this month's newsletter from people in our group! This month I begin a series compiled by Ralph Rees called 4/A Foray. Most of it will be gleaned from the newsletters we receive from other groups. That is on page 6. NICE GOING, RALPH! Mike Grogan submitted the "Thanks" article on page 1 that expresses the feelings of those who attended the most successful group Picnic we have had to date. He also submitted the Questions and Answers section on page 9. NICE GOING, MIKE! I hope these kinds of writings will continue... We have no meeting minutes because there was no meeting last month! Page 4 is New-Age/99 number 2 by Jack Sughrue discussing a new game from a new company. Part 12 of the TI Writer help series is on page 8, this month discussing the .TL dot command. This series will end with the December issue. The Disk of the Month is described on page 10 and the second place winning poster by Ed Morse is on page 11. I hope Ed doesn't mind that I touched up the poster a little to enhance the "VAST", add the "4" in the TI-99/"4"A and correct the wrong phone number for Mike Marfisi.

UP-COMING MEETINGS

At the top of the next column is the calendar for the next 2 months with our meeting dates indicated...

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FAIRE DATES

On page 7 is an ad for the upcoming TI Fest West '91 to be held Feb. 16 and 17, 199 All the information you need to make resear vations or travel arrangements is there. But, next month is the 8th annual Texas Instru ments 99/4A Home Computer Faire Chicago and the TI Faire in Milwaukee. 7 Chicago Faire is Saturday, Nov. 3rd from a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Rolling Meadows and admission to non-members the Chicago TI Users Group is \$4.00. The Milwaukee Faire is Sunday, Nov. 4th from a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Quality Inn. Advar tickets are \$1.00 and \$2.00 at the door. anyone is interested in going to these Fair and needs more information, contact either Mike Marfisi or Jim Ely for copies of the fliers received from the sponsors.

PAGE PRO TIMES (?)

I got a copy of the latest Page Pro Times use as an information source for this newsleter. This is the first one I have seen sinthe first one several months ago. I was somewhat surprised! The first ones were downing the premire page making program the TI, Page Pro 99. Given the latest issuit seems to look like Page Pro has evolve

See EDITOR'S DESK on page 10

W-AGE/99 * NEW-AGE/ 99 * NEW-AGE/99 * N EW-AGE/99 * NEW-AGE /99 * NEW-AGE/99 *

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by JACK SUGHRUE, Box 459, East Douglas, MA 01516

#2

There's a new (I think) company making software for the TI: Arcade Action, Program Innovators, 4122 Glenway, Wawatosa, WI 53222.

They have a nice version of TETRIS. They also have the usual space shoot 'ems. They have a program called Snowmobile which is yet another version of the Regena-style skiing/river-travel manuevering. And they have a bunch of other stuff, all of which is detailed in their free catalog.

But what they have that is WONDERFUL and a true first for the TI Community is a superb cribbage game!

It's perfect in the sense that it is completely playable. It is reasonably fast. It is intelligent and colorful and extremely well designed and in Extended Basic for people who like to add their own little touches, though you won't need to add little touches to this game at all. The unknown author even offers simple suggestions for reducing 11 of its 60 sectors.

There have never been any good, playable TI cribbage games, but this game, called CUTTHROAT CRIBBAGE, is something else entirely. This game not only lets you play against an intelligent computer but allows some interesting inputs. During the game, for

example, if you wish to question the computer's judgment (or would like to test out some odd card combos) you simply type "C" for Count Check at the end of a hand (instead of the default "P" for continuing Play). You may then set up a hand, including play card. The computer will score it, explaining each detail. For example, you must type each card with the pip value first and the suit (S,H,D,C) second. A Five of Hearts would be 5H; a Queen of Clubs, QC; an Ace of Diamonds, AD. You get the picture. So take a hand like 5H, JD, 5S, 5C, with the play card the 5D. Any cribbage players recognize the Grand Hand when they see it and know it equals 29, the highest score in cribbage. The computer will tell you this when you type in that hand. It will also break down all of the patterns by individual scores (15s, Quadruplets, His Nobs) to show you exactly how the hand is scored. You can create any legitimate hand you'd like for detailed analysis by the computer. This is a superb help feature, particularly for the novice. The pro will have a good time with this game, too.

On-screen graphics arc equal to the best I've seen for ANY card game. The board on the right side runs hand totals to their new mark before filling in the peg area up to that point. There are three rows of 40 instead of the up-down 30/30 of normal cribbage boards; more like the continuous steeplechase boards which are becoming popular.

But what kind of game does it play? It is a very good opponent that knows the rules perfectly. And you better not make an error in

See NEW-AGE on page 5

#### NEW-AGE, from page 4

scoring or it will call "Muggins" on you and take the points; thus, the name "Cutthroat".

The only cheating I was able to do (and get away with) was to call a Go after a 23 when I had a three left in my hand. I got a point for last card at 23. The computer called Go. I returned Go, though I could have played. It played a four; I played my three and got another point I certainly did not deserve. But I assume the author did not anticipate sneaky little buggers like myself trying to sleaze through a game instead of playing properly.

Except for the ability to cheat at the Go and the inability (on the computer's part) to note a Skunk or Lurch, this is a fantastic game in every way. NEW-AGE/99 rates this an A+! It is user-friendly; it is fast (though giving you time to make your crib-throw decisions); it is nice to look at; it is cheap (\$7 gets you this and a couple other programs thrown in; \$10 gets you twice as many games, including AA's TETRIS). The playing field is great. Your six cards are dealt at the bottom of the screen nearest you; the computer's opposite near the top. As you discard by pressing C,D,E,F,G,or H (letters assigned to your cards), the crib will be placed near your cards if you dealt or near the computer's if it dealt. You always know whose crib it is. The play is done card by card in the area between you and your opponent. Just like the real thing. Play scores (15, Run, Go, 31, Pairs, etc.) are all announced and scored during play. In addition to the multi-colored pegging "board" on the right, individual totals are kept in boxes next to each player. There is never a moment of confusion in this game.

At the conclusion of play, the hands and crib are spread out for analysis before scoring. Bear in mind that the computer's scoring is never wrong. All combos are sitting quietly in data statements just waiting for you to score incorrectly. If you do, you get zapped. You can never perform "Muggins" on the machine, but sometimes its play isn't as sharp as your own under some odd play moments. It isn't as wise as some of the best cribbage players I've ever played. (My father, for instance, or my daughter Sue. Or an old Army buddy, Emil, from my days in Germany.) O the whole, though, Cutthroat is a worthy opponent, and, as cribbage cannot be playover the phone or by mail the way chess can, this is the next best thing to a human opponent. In some ways, better. It is 3:30 a.m. right now. I woke and danced The Insomniac's Waltz before settling at my computer. I popped on cribbage. Won two games. Felt good. Decided to write this column, which had been back-burnered for a couple weeks. Who else could I have gotten to play cribbage after 3 a.m.? And accept defeat so graciously?

Hey! Wait a minute! What if you don't play cribbage? Well, for one thing, you must have had a deprived childhood (and continually deprived adulthood) as cribbage is such fun! It's one of the few card games whose origins are known. It was created by the English gambler, soldier, poet (Why so pale and wan fair lover? Prithee, why so pale?) Sir John Suckling (1609-1642). It's come down to us across the centuries virtually unchanged. The English still play the 5-card version, the Americans play the 6 (a variation of this cen-

See NEW-AGE on page 6

#### NEW-AGE, from page 5

tury that caught on permanently in spite of considerable criticism by purists).

Anyway, if you don't play, get someone to teach you or get a Hoyle's and, with Cutthroat in front of you, teach yourself. This game makes it easy, particularly with the option of creating any hands you want to learn to score.

My fifth-grade students play it constantly and are even beginning to beat it almost as often as it beats them. Great learning tool.

Finally, at game's end, there is no gloating. The screen fills with "YOUR VICTORY" or "MY VICTORY" without the obnoxious toots, plunks, and burps that usually accompany such announcements. Very professional.

Now for those times when the urge of the cribbage addict comes upon you and no one is around to play, just pop a Foster's, turn on your friendly TI, and go to it. j.s.



# 4/A Foray

by Ralph Rees

You are now entering the 4/A Foray... Where you will find a wealth of little known facts about the ingenious device you own called the TI-99/4A. Although I don't know as yet were this column may lead, whatever I come up with I hope you will find interesting. Please note, if you have any other interesting TIdbits about our computer please leave me PRIVATE E-mail on our Illustrious Bulletin board [(602) 433-2767]. I request Private mail so only you, myself and our Award winning newsletter editor will know about it until published and mailed. Thanks, — Ralph...

#### DID YOU KNOW?

1983:

- ✓ On April 25, 1983 Texas Instruments began offering a free Peripheral Expansion Box to anyone purchasing any three of the following; an RS232 card, a disk controller card, a disk drive, a 32k memory card, a p-Code card, TI-Writer or Multiplan.
- ✓ Navarone Industries introduced the "Select-a-Cart" module expander, more commonly known as the Widget and finally named the Cartridge Expander.

1984:

✓ Texas Instruments still had 14% of the home computer market, despite the bailout five months previous. Commodore had 37%.

See 4/A Foray on page 7



# Happy Halloween From The UAST Computer User Group

#### 4/A Foray, from page 6

✓ Compute!'s First Book of TI Games made it's debut in Compute! Magazine.

#### 1986:

✓ Unisource Electronics of Lubbock, Texas, a major TI-99/4A retailer and mail order house since March of 1983, goes out of business.

#### 1987:

✓ Monty Schmidt, author of the Techie BBS program, releases Command DOS for the 99/4A.

TrIvia - Texas Style.

Did you know that...

- ✓ Lou Phillips was once a VP at the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York?
- ✓ Moonbeam Software of Northampton, Massachusetts, long-time supporter of the 4/A community with a stable of game programs, used to be named HI-FI Exchange?
- ✓ When Computer Shopper first appeared on the scene you could buy 12 issues for \$10?
- ✓ A Texas distribution outfit named the Tronics Sales Corporation used to sell the

99/4A directly to end-users—door to door like Amway and Mary Kay Cosmetics do?

Whatever happened to...

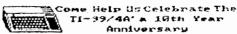
Adam, Lisa, Apple III, Osborne I, Commodore Pet?

Who ever heard of...

Silver Fox, Zorba Portable, Seequaes Corporation's Chameleon, STM Pied Piper, IBM PCjr?

(Sources: TIdbits Newsletter, Mid-South 99 U.G., Germantown, TN.,-Bill Gaskill) r.r.





UGOC in association with the Pomona Valley UG is hosting

#### HEST WEST SI

#### THE HAPPIEST FEST ON EARTH

Across the street from Disneyland PLUS many more attractions in the area for the wife/husband and kids to enjoy while you meet Internationally renowned II entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and innovators. Fast tickets are or sale now (56.88 for both days). Ticket requests with a post mark before January 1, 1991 are eligible for a drawing for one free night at the RAMADA.

Plan your THREE DAY weekend now! Fest dates are Feb 16 & 17, 1991

The Fest will be held at the Ramada Hain Gate, Anahelm Toll Free 1-800-447-4848 Special rate to fest goers (\$55.00 per night plus taxes) Only 50 rooms available at this rate and olosing date for this rate is 15 Jan 91

Travel Ourangements may be made by contacting Ruth Dickey, Travel Concepts. [714] 778-5459

For future announcements contact the UGOC BBS at [714] 751-4332 or write to



FEST WEST SI

#### T.I. WRITER

by Stan Katzman (From the WEST PENN 99'ers Newsletter)

#### Part 12

The last dot command is the transliterate command (.TL \_:\_,\_). With this command you can change any character to another character in the formatter. In order to use this command we must first discuss the ASCII character codes which are listed on page 145 of the T.I. Writer manual, plus you need to know the control codes for your printer. The control codes are given in your printer manual.

The ASCII codes are a set of standard numbers which when sent to the printer causes the printer to print a certain character. For example if your computer sent the printer the code number 65, a capital "A" is printed. Some ASCII codes do not cause the printer to do anything. For example, if the character code 27 is sent (this is called escape), it will be a signal to the printer to do something special.

The transliterate command works in conjuction with the ASCII codes and your printer control codes. Let's give a few examples of them. Let's say we want to make a superscript. The control code for the Epson LX-80 printer to make a superscript is 27,"S0". This is escape, capitol "S" and zero. In BASIC, if we send the printer the following statement, Print #1:CHR\$(27);"S0", it will print all letters or numbers after this code in superscript mode. We must now turn off the superscript mode and this is done with the code 27,"T". So in BASIC we should say Print #1:CHR\$(27);"T" and now everything will be printed normally in a BASIC program.

Well in T.I. Writer we have to tell the program first that we want to change one letter to something else (transliterate). We "tell" the program this by using a character that we will not be using in the rest of the document and then transliterate it. For

example, let us assume that we are not going to use the brackets([]) in our document. The left bracket ([) has the ASCII code of 91. So let us use this as a signal to transliterate it. In order to make superscript we would type at the start of our document .TL 91:27,83,48. What this says is ASCII 91, a left brace ([), to transliterate into the following, 27 code to the printer to do what follows (escape), and now 83 which is a capital letter S and 48 for zero. The next character the printer sees will now be printed in superscript. We now have to turn off superscript and let's use the right brace ( ] ). We would type at the head of the document .TL 93:27,84. This transliterates thusly, ASCII 27 is escape to the printer and 84 is the cap T which tells the printer to turn off superscript (and sub script) modes. Let's see what this would look like:

.TL 93:27,84<enter> (Changes "]" to turn off superscript).

.TL 91:27,83,48<enter> (Changes "[" to transliterate to superscript).

Here is an example of what it looks like when you enter it in your text:

In the making of a cake, heat the oven to 300[0] F...

And here is what it looks like when the formatter prints it:

In the making of a cake, heat the oven to  $300^{0}$  F...

You see the first brace turns the zero to a superscript and the next brace turns off the superscript. That is why we cannot use the braces anywhere else in the document.

Study you printer manual and you can make your printer do everything it is capable of by using the transliterate mode. s.k.

ED NOTE: I would like to thank Stan in print for this series of articles written for the WEST PENN 99'ers. This is not the last in the series! We hope that you are learning.

# 2 & A

### Questions & Answers

Compiled by Mike Grogan

Non-technical questions and answers for everyone.

Last week I found some old cassette tapes I used to use. I put one on my player and could hear that it still had data on it, but I have no label so I don't know the name of that program. How can I find out or should I just erase it?

First, never erase a tape until you find that the data on it is of no use to anyone. You could have a program that someone has been looking for and is not in our library.

Second, put it in your player and listen until you hear the data start. Then back it up a little. Now, how do you load it and in what language? You don't need to know the name of the file on your tape to load it. Start off in TI BASIC and type "OLD CS1". Press <ENTER> and the computer will tell you when to press play so it can read the tape. If this doesn't work try Extended BASIC and try again. Keep trying and don't forget to set the volume up or down (sometimes the computer can't read it if it's to high) If you find a program, find out if it is in our library.

I want to buy a ram disk. Which one is best? What should I look for?

Well, all have good ratings. But some lose all memory when you power down your system. For that reason I would buy one that has power backup — one that will keep what ever has been loaded into its memory when you turn the power off to your system. Next look for one that you can add memory to (you can buy a starter kit of 32k and add more later). For my money, buy a RAVE Memory Card. You have battery backup and you can start small and add up to 512k on your card. By the way, you can have up to 4 of these cards in your system. That can give you 2 Megabytes of

memory. Of course that's a lot of money, and, really, if you want that kind of memory you might be better off getting a hard drive..

How can I call our BBS? I don't have the money to pay for a modem right now and if I don't like to use it, I have paid good money for nothing!

This is an easy question to answer. Our club now has a modem and RS232 that will fit any system. And our library has the latest program that makes it sooo easy.

These items are not for sale, but you can borrow them and anyone in the club can help you set them up and get you on the BBS with your own password. The BBS is a good place to get the latest programs around — next to our library. Just ask or call us at home.

Here are more questions that maybe you can answer in the next newsletter.

- Why would I want to change to a double sided disk drive?
- I'm tired of hooking my TI up to the family TV. What should I look for in a monitor?
- Where can I get a good price on blank diskettes?
- Should I buy a new or a used printer? What kind should I look for?
- How can I get that big foot to my PE-Box out of the way? It always locks up my system and I have to start over.
- Could I make good use of more than 1 disk drive?

Let's see how many answers I can get to these questions in the next newsletter. Send us your questions or answers and let's keep this somewhat non-technical in nature so we can keep new members growing like we did.

Send to: Mike Grogan, 3040 N. 48th Ave., Phoenix AZ 85031 or send it to the newsletter. m.g.

#### EDITOR'S DESK from page 3

in to one really good looking Desk Top Publishing program for the TI. Has it really come this far with a type-set look and all or has Asgard just decided not to use its own program to promote its product. Somewhat misleading, that. I thought the whole idea of Page Pro Times was to let the users see what could really be done with Page Pro. Instead it is just another newsletter, like ours in fact, telling its users all the latest news about a good program and doing it on some other machine. At this point, why not just combine it with Asgard News, which is what it, in reality, really is. I think it should get back to what it was intended for, a showcase for Page Pro 99, and let Asgard News/Reflections on TI take care of the rest.

#### MEMBER PROFILE MISSING

Several people had promised me Member Profiles this month which, at this writing Saturday afternoon, have not been forthcoming. Therefore, we have no Member Profile this month. Oh, well... maybe next month...

I've said enough. I'll see you all at the meeting, Saturday, October 13th. Happy Columbus Day and Halloween!

Jim Ely, Editor



In A Ship Like This?

## Disk of the Month



by Mike Marfisi

A special treat for those of you who like

to play with the TI graphic programs comes to us compliments of Virginia Davis. She has taken the time to scan some great public domain artwork and converted it to TI Artist and Page Pro formats. We have 3 disks full of Page Pro pictures and 6 disks full of TI Artist instances that should be of great interest to any user of these programs.

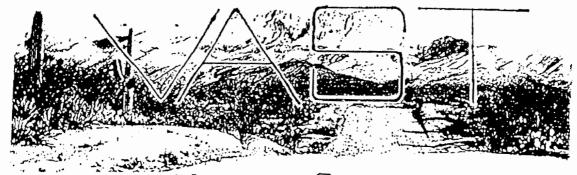
We are planning on offering these as this month's Disks of the Month. Because of the giant task of copying all these disks, we will handle the sale of these a little differently. The masters will be at the meeting. Those wishing to purchase the sets will be provided with blank disks and we will make the copies on the club system after the meeting. Or you may order them for mailing to your home during the next week. Price: \$4.00 for the 3 Page Pro disks and \$5.00 for the 6 TI Artist disks. A real bargain.

Editor's Comment: The Disk of the Month series has not been what I would consider a very popular item. I'm not sure if you are not interested in what is being offered or what. So now I turn to YOU! What would YOU like to see offered as the Disk of the Month? Why are YOU not interested in what has already been offered? Any suggestions? Let's hear from YOU! If we don't hear from YOU watch it VANISH!

# THE

## BIFFERENCE

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VAlley of the  $Sun T_{I-99/4\lambda}$ 

USER GROUP

INVITES YOU

and all Personal Computer owners and users to Join them the 2nd Saturday Morning of each month between 9:00am and 12:00pm (noon) at the PYLE ADULT RECREATION CENTER in Tempe.

#### VAST OFFERS:

- . 24 hour a day 865
  - . Monthly Newsletter
    - . Download from BBS for members
      - . Computer "Hands On" demonstrations
        - , Loan of a MODEM System for members
          - . A library of programs for disc and cassette
            - . A friendly forum for discussion of your PC problems

For more Information on VAST, contact either:

Mike Grogen (Pres)...272-4315 or Mike Marfisi (Sec/Trees)...491-1552

## VAST User Group Information

• VAST Computer User Group is a support sup for the TI-99/4A Home Computer and comables.

#### **CURRENT OFFICERS**

#### PRESIDENT

BBS SYSOP

Leo Baker . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 931-9010

Address renewals, exchange newsletters or other mments or questions to the VAST Computer ser Group, c/o 1425 E. Del Rio Drive, Tempe, Z 85282.

The VAST Computer User Group operates a BBS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The phone number is (602) 433-2767.

#### ADVERTISING RATES

There is *NO CHARGE* to MEMBERS for PERSONAL advertising. Non-members will be charged \$1.50 per ad.

Please contact the Secretary/Treasurer at the address/phone number above for **COMMERCIAL** advertising rates.

#### ALL RATES ARE FOR *ONE* ISSUE ONLY!

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#### VAST NEWS c/o MIKE MARFISI 1425 E. DEL RIO DR.

TEMPE, AZ 85282



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