YESTERDAY'S NEWS

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30 Years Ago...

Historical Information taken From Bill Gaskills TIMELINE

APRIL 1988:

The Johnson Space Center Users Group reports that as of April 19th, the United 99 Database is up to 5 disKs in size, one of which includes the James Schroeder authored REDISKIT copy program, which must be included because it will copy PR-BASE formatted disKs, which is the application that the United 99 Database exists in. The goal of the project is to help unite all 99/4 User Groups by providing a means of timely access to information of common interest. This will be accomplished via the effort to index the types and sources of information available for exchange between User Groups. User Groups wishing to participate in this project are encouraged to send two disKs with mailer and return postage to JSC PRB Committee c/o John Owen 2321 Coryell League City, TX 77573 (713-554-2844). You will receive a copy of the United 99 Data Base to add information to.

The FORTI MUSIC CARD, designed by Texas Instruments, but never released, then ultimately manufactured by Texas Peripherals and marKeted by the now defunct Unisource Electronics Company, maKes an appearance at the TI Faire in Dallas, Texas. A MICROpendium article claims that it is still offered by Bob Lawson, 1344 Boston Avenue Bayshore New YorK 11706. Although not credited in the article for his contribution, the source of this information is Richard A. Fleetwood of the Forest Lane Users Group in Dallas, TX.

c99 release 2A is announced by Clint Pulley on April 5th.

The 3rd Annual TI Fayuh taKes place on April 9th in Lexington, MA, sponsored by the Boston Computer Society. Ken Hamai of the Brea, CA Users Group shows off a beige TI console at the Fayuh which he calls Geraldine. The console is modified to include every thing in a Peripheral Expansion Box from 32K Ram, to DisK Controller and ports.

StriKe Three! baseball game module by John Phillips debuts.

Artist Borders Volume 1 released by Asgard Software.

Artist Companion disKs numbers 4, 5 and 6 are released by Texaments.

Texaments reaches an agreement with Paul Coleman of Nameloc Software to manufacture and distribute Designer Labels, TI-Artist Graphics Support and CSGD Graphics Support programs.

MICROpendium releases its first index of past issues, a BASIC program by Elton Schooling.

Beyond Video Chess by Harry Wilhelm is released by Asgard Software.

Announcement of impending release of FIRSTBASE appears in MICROpendium. Author Warren Agee and Genial Computerware owner J. Peter Hoddie form Olympys Technologies to produce the program.

Southwest 99ers User Group release new vinyl Keyboard overlays.

Delphi's TINET opens graphics, utilities and telecommunications programming contests in an effort to attract new users.

AVPC 80-column display card by DIJIT Systems of San Diego, California debuts. The new card sports 512 colors in RGB format and contains 192K of VDP Ram.

GEnie, the on-line information service started in 1985, logs its 100,000 subscriber.

The first annual F.L.U.G TI Fair taKes place on April 30th in Richardson, TX.

See "TIMELINE", page 1

INSIDE INFORMATION

ELEMENTS OF BASIC

By Dave Howell

Courtesy of the Erie 99'ers

Part 6

PRINT and REM

One of the most used statements in BASIC is PRINT. Messages may be printed by typing PRINT followed by the message within quotation marks. More than one message may be placed in the same PRINT statement by putting each message in its own set of quotation marks. Print separators - either a colon, a comma or semi-colon - must be placed between each quoted message. TI BASIC interprets the print separators as instructions.

A colon tells the computer to go to the next line; several colons in a row make the computer skip several lines.

Semi-colons tell the computer to join two string messages (within quotes) together with no spaces between them.

Commas tell the computer to start printing messages at the beginning of a field. On the TI, there are two fields of fourteen (14) spaces each.

Enter this program and observe the results:

```
10 PRINT 1,2
20 PRINT 1,2,3,4>
30 PRINT 1;2
40 PRINT 1;2;3;4
50 PRINT "HI","FRIEND"
60 PRINT "HI";"FRIEND"
70 PRINT "HI ";"FRIEND"
80 PRINT "GUM";
90 PRINT "BALL"
```

Notice the spaces between the numbers in the printouts for lines 30 and 40. The TI leaves a space between numeric data for minus signs, if any.

Enter this program and observe the results:

```
10 REM COLONS SKIP LINES
20 PRINT :::"HERE ARE THE CO
LONS"
30 PRINT :"THEY ARE SPACE-HA
PPY"
40 PRINT :"GOOF":"BALL"
```

After RUNning this program, LIST the program.

REM means "remark". Anything that comes after REM is ignored when the program is RUN. REM statements are used to explain various parts of a program to other programmers and are considered good programming manners.

D.H.

YN

TIMELINE continues...

The Erie 99ers April 1988 newsletter runs an editorial complaining that DataBioTics has now taken over two years to deliver promised products, namely the Grand RAM card.

In a support letter to a PR-Base 2.0 user, program author William Warren announces that he has ceased development of the product and is only providing support. He states that source code has been given to Mike Dodd, and that Barry Traver has also expressed interest in the source code.

On April 18th, John Johnson sends the following letter to Myarc Inc.:

"Dear Mr. Phillips. You told us many things about the 9640. Things like included speech, ability to run TI programs from an >A prompt, A COMPLETELY OPEN COMPUTER, a good BASIC etc.

We finally got the machine, and the promises kept coming. We supported you and bought the machine, even though the price climbed from the initial $350 dollars you and we planned on (remember the initial poll you put out on CompuServe back in '85?), to the $550 or so that you now ask for it. We supported you as part of the team, one of the orphans. We didn't buy clones, even though we knew that it would have been the most economical thing to do, and believe it or not, there were a few of us that were willing to take the beating because we wanted to support one of our own.

After all, you knew what it was like, having to struggle through a completely closed system, learning it from scratch, and making the most of it. Well, you gave us real power, brought us out of the orphanage, and we appreciate that.

We're still supporting you. Even though we still haven't seen ADVANCED BASIC, or the finished MDOS, or the PASCAL, we will stick with you, waiting. Waiting while you develop more software for the computer, software that you can sell to us, and probably expect to sell to us before the products are completed.

You talk about a protection card to go into the p-box that will prevent piracy. Why are you wasting time on a piece of hardware that won't contribute to the computer? On the same note, why are you wasting time on software programming at all?

You are taking the same course as TI, aren't you? I hear a lot of rumors about your plans to not give out much technical information on the computer or the operating system. I find it hard to believe that you could be so stupid as to try that on us! Incredibly stupid is what you are if you stab us in the back by trying to keep the machine closed. TIers have learned to program in the last eight years. Why won't you let us and third party software developers handle the software, and you handle the hardware?

I feel I'm a fair programmer on the 4A, but I don't know squat about the 9640, and I really don't have time to learn it. You won't provide information on how to program it, again, because you want to monopolize the software market. If you had half a brain you'd have sent a technical manual full of information to any and all who requested it , at no charge. If you would have, there would be no software shortage for the machine, as there is now. Instead, you chose to limit the number of programmers to damn few, and you've managed to get on their bad side too.

So we have My-Art. So what? With documentation on the computer, by now we could have had 10 different drawing programs. People don't buy an IBM (or clone) because of the software IBM sells.

I really enjoyed my 99/4A, and I do see a huge advantage to having a machine like the Geneve. I probably could never go back to the 4A, but if you decide to continue with the foolish marketing scheme of a closed machine, with you writing software alone, I will not buy any software or hardware from Myarc. I won't sell the machine, or threaten to make you buy it back or any other foolishness, but I will do my best to persuade others not to do business with Myarc.

I will continue to use the 9640 with whatever software comes along in the form of freeware, third party sales etc. I will continue to support my peers (all TIers and 9640 owners) as best I can, but I feel you really screwed us. You gave us a compatible computer to upgrade to, and we supported you with our dollars. We put up with your limp excuses as to why products were constantly late. We put up with your labor disagreements with your programmers, while products bought and paid for were not delivered. Now you are pulling a TI all over again. I have just about had it.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is that I have lots of patience. I can put up with delays, tap dancing etc, but when you start talking about a closed machine that I can't program, that's when I call it quits. I hear that your new managing genius, Riley, is responsible for this type of marketing. Straighten him out, let him know that it won't work with this 9640 owner. I'm also posting this letter on GEnie, and I'll encourage others to write to you. With much bitterness. -- John A. Johnson."

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The Sleeping Giant Stirs

Extended Basic from Texas Instruments

1982 Creative Computing Buyers Guide

by Owen Linderholm

CREATIVE COMPUTING SOFTWARE PROFILE

Name:	Extended Basic
Type:	Language
System:	TI-99/4
Format:	Module
Summary:	Worth every penny
Price:	$99.95
Manufacturer:	TI

Until now the capabilities of the TI-99/4 have been severely limited because the Basic supplied with the machine was not as useful as that supplied with many other machines. Many of its shortcomings still remain, but for certain applications, the TI has become a computer that not only equals but often out does its rivals. The old Basic as extremely slow and did not make good use of many of the features of the computer.

Arrays were limited to three dimensions, multiple statement lines were impossible, graphics handling was possible but difficult, and many commands considered standard on other computers were either absent or available only in a limited form. While some of these problems remain. others have been solved and a few new commands never dreamt of have been added.

The new Basic comes (in its preliminary form) as a black box, about half the size of a disk drive, which plugs into the ROM socket on the front of the computer. It costs approximately $100 and is worth every penny.

Some of the more advanced features include subroutines which operate exactly like Fortran subroutines, graphics which operate independently of program control and a Basic which does most of the things we have come to expect from Microsoft Basic.

The manual that comes with the Basic seems to include everything in the User's Reference Guide, plus descriptions of the new commands. It lists near the beginning all the changes that take place when the new ROM is plugged in. There is a long list of new instructions, functions and commands. Also, at the end are mentioned the disadvantages that accompany the new Basic. These include

See "GIANT", page 3

"GIANT" continues...

a loss of 864 bytes, a loss of 16 user programmable characters and the inability of some TI Basic programs to run in TI Extended Basic. So far I have not been able to find anything else. Graphics buffs who think that the loss of 16 programmable characters is serious are advised to reserve judgment.

Taking some of the less exciting features of the Basic first. I will look at the ACCEPT statement. This is a very advanced form of the INPUT statement and allows you to specify input fields anywhere on the screen, clear the screen before input, beep, put default values in the input field and verify that the data input is of the type required ,all in one statement. The DISPLAY statement has been improved to allow one to do most of these things with output.

Other improvements are: multiple statement lines, with :: as the separator; the inclusion of the command RUN as a program statement; IF-THEN-ELSE constructions improved to Microsoft standard; MAX and MIN functions; a predefined constant pi (guess what?!); improved error handling, including the ability to read protect a Basic program using a Basic command; read protection for disk files; and a few other changes or improvements of somewhat lesser importance.

We now come to the goodies. Leaving the best for last (always a good policy), the next thing to look at is the formation of what TI calls subprograms, subroutines that can be called with a parameter list exactly like Fortran subroutines. Suppose we decide to have a subprogram called TEST which multiplies two numbers together, adds one of the numbers to the result and then prints it. This can be done in ordinary basic by saying:

```
10 DEF FNA(X,Y)=X*Y+X
20 IN PUT A,B
30 Z=FNA(A,B)
40 PRINT Z
```

But this is not a subroutine and it never can be in ordinary Basic, since it will only work on the variables A and B. In TI Extended Basic this can be done with:

```
10 INPUT A,B
20 CALL TEST(A,B)
30 GOTO 10
40 END
50 SUB TEST(X,Y)
60 RINT X*Y+X
70 SUBEND
```

This works, and if you don't understand the usefulness of this facility, just consider the fact that A or B could be replaced by any variable. The same result could be achieved another way.

```
10 INPUT A,B
20 CALL TEST(A,B,C)
30 PRINT C
40 GOTO 10
50 END
60 SUB TEST(X,Y,Z)
70 Z= X*Y+X
80 SUBEND
```

In this version, the variable Z can be used in the main program as well. A subprogram can be as long as you wish consistent with the memory available. As you can see, this is an extremely useful feature of the Basic.

Another of the more interesting features of the machine is its ability to speak using the plug-in Speech Synthesizer peripheral. In the ordinary Basic, speech synthesis requires an extra ROM. With the new Basic the computer can be given a vocabulary of approximately 300 words which allows you to make limited phrases. The manual also mentions creating your own vocabulary but does not tell you how to do this. Nevertheless certain of my colleagues have managed to produce some unusual sentences.

The most interesting feature of the new Basic is the use it makes of the graphic capabilities of the TI-99/4. These are phenomenal, and it is surprising that the machine has not made better use of them up to now.

The single option I found most amazing is that once a graphics character called a "sprite" has been set up, it will continue to move in a specified direction on the screen while the computer does something else like calculating the square roots of the first 100 prime numbers. The "sprite" itself can be made up of either one or four characters which can be defined by you or be part of the standard character set of the computer. For instance:

```
10 CALL CLEAR
20 CALL SPRITE(#1,79,14,1,1,5,5)
30 GOTO 30
```

will clear the screen and set a magenta colored "O" moving diagonally across the screen very slowly. If the program is not interrupted, it will never stop! This may not seem terribly exciting, but consider the fact that the program is doing nothing to the character; it is only executing the loop 30 GOTO 30. Line 10 of this program clears the screen, line 20 sets up the figure as character 79 (an O) with color 14 (magenta), starting point (1,1) (the top left corner of the screen), and velocity (5,5) (5 units in the x-direction and 5 units in the y-direction per unit time). As you can see, all the graphics routines are performed by subprograms built into the machine.

Up to 28 of these "sprites" can be created and used at one time. They can be defined in any shape you wish that can

fit in to an 8 by 8 format. This is done by creating a shape table in a string, which is easily done, and then using the CALL CHAR command to define the shape. I will include an example later. Once the character is defined, it can be used simply as a character or as a "sprite" as you wish.

After a "sprite" is created several things can be done to it. You can enlarge it , change its color, change its position, change its motion, discover if it has run into another "sprite" on the screen, find out where it is, and find its distance from a point on the screen or from another "sprite." These are all done with simple CALLs. Everything is explained fully in the manual and it doesn't take long to create some pretty nifty graphics.

A sample program that draws 16 detailed skulls and crossbones on the screen, each about three centimeters across, and then moves them all about, changing screen color whenever one meets another, is listed below to show how easy it can be. Incidentally, the background to a "sprite" can be made transparent, so when one crosses another you can see it pass over or under the other.

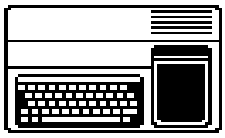
Line 10 clears the screen, then line 20 and line 30 set up the skull and crossbones shape. The next 16 lines set up the actual figures on the screen. Line 195 magnifies the figures so that they take up the space that 16 ordinary characters would. Then the last few lines check for a meeting between the figures and if there is one the screen color is switched to a random color and the sequence is continued until interrupted.

This is only a simple demonstration of the power of the graphics commands. It uses only one shape and ignores many of the built-in functions, but it serves to show what can be done.

With the addition of Extended Basic, the 99/4 still lacks some very useful features, like machine code, which is still practically unavailable, but it seems that TI has finally begun to exploit the potential of its personal computer.

```
10 CALL CLEAR
20 A$="E0E0E02F3F19191F1E0E0
F1A3F27E0C0070707F4FC9898F87
870F058FCE40703"
30 CALL CHAR(96,A$)
40 CALL SPRITE(#1,96,1,1,1,0
,10)
50 CALL SPRITE(#2,96,2,1,1,0
,-20)
60 CALL SPRITE(#3,96,3,1,1,-
10,0)
70 CALL SPRITE(#4,96,4,1,1,2
0,0)
80 CALL SPRITE(#5,96,5,1,1,2
,2)
90 CALL SPRITE(#6,96,6,1,1,2
0,-20)
100 CALL SPRITE(#7,96,7,1,1,
-30,30)
110 CALL SPRITE(#8,96,8,1,1,
-40,-40)
120 CALL SPRITE(#9,96,9,1,1,
5,10)
130 CALL SPRITE(#10,96,10,1,
1,30,15)
140 CALL SPRITE(#11,96,11,1,
1,4,-2)
150 CALL SPRITE(#12,96,12,1,
1,-10,20)
160 CALL SPRITE(#13,96,13,1,
1,-6,3)
170 CALL SPRITE(#14,96,14,1,
1,5,-10)
180 CALL SPRITE(#15,96,15,1,
1,-20,-40)
190 CALL SPRITE(#16,96,16,1,
1,-80,-40)
195 CALL MAGNIFY(4)
200 CALL COINC(ALL,D0)
210 FOR X=1 TO 80 :: NEXT X
220 IF D0=-1 THEN CALL SCREE
N(INT(RND*16+1))
230 GOTO 200
```

YN



Yesterdays News Information

Yesterdays News is a labor of love offered as a source of pleasure & information for users of the TI-99/4A & Myarc 9640 computers.

TI-99/4A HARDWARE

BlacK & Silver computer
Modified PEB
WHT SCSI card with SCSI2SD
Myarc DSQD FDC
Myarc 512K Memory Card
Horizon 1.5 meg RamdisK
TI RS232 card
Corcomp Triple Tech Card
1 360K 5.25 floppy drive
1 360K 3.50 floppy drive
1 720K 5.25 floppy drive
1 720K 3.50 floppy drive
80K Gram KracKer
Samsung Syncmaster 710mp

TI-99/4A SOFTWARE

PagePro 99
PagePro Composer
PagePro FX
PagePro Headline MaKer
PagePro Gofer
TI Artist Plus
GIFMania

PC HARDWARE

Compaq Armada 7800 NotebooK
Compaq Armadastation
Samsung Syncmaster 710mp

PC SOFTWARE

Dead,Dead,Dead Windows 98se
FileCap
prn2pbns
Irfanview
Adobe Distiller
Adobe Acrobat

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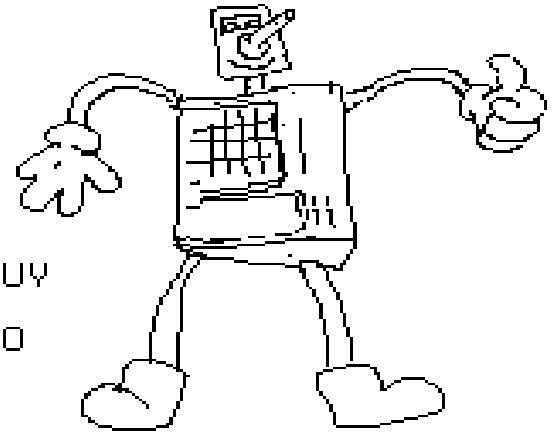

TIGUY
by
CIRO

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