Editorial

User groups are widely acknowledged as the rock on which the TI community is built. They are responsible for bringing users together to share ideas, complaints, and focusing on activities that benefit all users. Where would the TI world be without the work of the Ottawa User Group and its DM1000? The Hunter Valley User Group and its Funnelweb environment? Every day you and I use programs that were either developed or tested by user groups.

However, the user groups are dying.

It isn't simply a matter of losing members any more (though even the large Chicago TI User Group is losing members now), groups are actually disappearing, in startling numbers. The Minneapolis/St. Paul User Group packed it bags six months ago, and smaller groups throughout the country are dying like wheat in drought-parched Kansas.

Long villified as havens for pirates, some software vendors will welcome their demise. However, those that give any thought to the matter will realize that ultimately user groups are very much the key to the survival of the TI community, and those hardware and software vendors that support it. They provide the essential local link, or interface, between vendors and users all over the country. They serve to disseminate information (through meetings, workshops and newsletters) about the vast wealth of TI hardware, software and textware available, as well as provide crucial feedback about new products.

The funny thing about all this is that user groups are needed now more then ever. Retail outlets carrying TI products have disappeared. As machines regularly change hands, there are more and more beginners desperate for information about new software and hardware, as well as about how to use the stuff they have. You'd think user groups would be booming - what with a potential total worldwide membership of 3 Million+.

User groups have been dying because more and more they've turned to examining their collective naval. I often hear from users that don't belong to user groups simply because they aren't interested in helping new and beginning users. Not just the cassette users but also new disk system owners. Its kind of an institutional death-wish. More advanced users move on to new, more powerful machines but no new members join because user groups don't care, or cater to them. User groups get smaller and smaller and more new owners put their machines in closets because they can't get information about how to use what they have. It is a continuing spiral straight to oblivion.

In future issues I'd like to examine this problem, and tell you about user groups that have actually been growing, and how they do it - including one group that is larger now then it ever was when TI supported the 4A. I'd like to hear comments from our readers about this.

Moving on...

I'd like to introduce a new column by Harry Brashear (a prolific writer of reviews in MICROpendium). Harry is the past President of the Western NY Users Group, as well as the former editor of its newsletter. As you'll soon see he's quite opinionated - and even though he doesn't speak for the management, I believe any opinion is better then none at all. He also invites anyone to write and scream at him.

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Publication Information

Asgard News invites readers to write and comment on anything published. Letters received will be published "as is" if they meet Asgard Publishing's standards for good taste and relevance. No editing will be done to the content of letters, and letters that are too lengthy will not be published unless the author gives us written permission to edit to fit the available space.

Features

TI Strikes Back!
Or why Horizons cost more then they used to

In case you haven't been reading the papers recently, the big news in the computer industry is the high price of RAM-chips. Computerworld reports that "street" prices have more then tripled since the beginning of the year.

What is causing this massive inflation? Economists point to the Trade Agreement signed last year between the U.S. and Japan which set artificial limits on the number of chips that the Japanese could export to the United States. Since the Japanese control over 80% of the market in RAM-chips, this has been disastrous for any American manufacturer that uses RAM-chips in any quantity (from auto to computer to defense industry manufacturers). It's easy to add up the losers in this - anyone buying a computer, a RAM-card, or a new car, the U.S. gov't (which purchases large quantities of RAM-chip dependent devices such as F-16 fighter jets), and most manufacturers of anything more sophisticated than a screw-driver. By extension, the American people are the big losers - higher prices mean fewer sales, which means fewer jobs, and a loss in productivity and income.

By definition, where there are losers there must be winners. A big winner is TI, which is one of only 2 domestic RAM-chip manufacturers left (the others output is negligible). TI is reportedly building another plant to handle the increased demand. The Japanese are another big winner, for although they have lost volume, they have definitely made it up with 300% price increases. The largest winner is undoubtably IBM - IBM manufactures virtually all the chips it uses (RAM-chips included), and none of its competitors (particularly clone makers) does. This has given IBM a tremendous advantage over competing (and more dynamic) companies like Compaq, HP, Apple, and the thousands of makers of IBM compatibles. IBM is assured of adequate supplies at below-market prices - no one else is.

The net effect of this agreement, which was hailed as a saving grace for the U.S. semiconductor industry, is the destruction of dozens of small companies making clones, the delay of productivity-raising computers by American industry, the delay in development and manufacturing of any device that depends on RAM-chips (including markets where the U.S. dominates, such as aircraft, computer milling machinery, etc.), incredibly large profits for IBM and TI, and the concentration of power in the hands of the few. If the trade agreement was designed to weaken U.S. industry and fatally damage U.S. dominance in dozens of computer niche markets, then it has performed admirably.

Picasso
The complete story

A controversy has been raging throughout user groups over the status of the Picasso drawing program, by Arto Heino. I hope this article clears up some of it.

Picasso 1.0 appeared on the scene almost a year ago. It immediately became a very popular item on the telecommunications networks, where it was first distributed. User groups such as the L.A. 99ers began distributing it immediately. Against this backdrop of the immediate success of a truly remarkable program, Chris Bobbitt of Asgard Software contacted the author in November to discuss the possibility of him developing other products for the TI-99/4A. The author described to Chris a new version (2.0), which was a vast improvement over the previous versions, and offered Asgard rights to manufacture the program in North America.

In February, after contracts had been signed and promises exchanged, Asgard belatedly learned that significant portions of Picasso were taken from a program called "Paint 'n Print" by Navarone. The author then refused to answer letters. Asgard was in a quandary - it had paid a considerable advance to Arto Heino and had spent money on preparing the program for release, but seemingly the program not only couldn't be sold, but violated copyright laws, and the author has disappeared!

To make a long story short, Asgard contacted the current owners of the rights to "Paint n' Print" and worked out an agreement with them - Asgard manufactures the item and Tenex has the exclusive rights to sell it. Previous versions of Picasso may be distributed under the freeware method - however, they are inferior to the commercially available version. Everyone benefits from this arrangement - the author gets a royalty from sales of his work, Tenex capitalizes on its rights to the original, user groups can still distribute version 1.1 as a trialware program, TI-99/4A users can purchase a supported version of this very capable and useful program, and Asgard recoups its initial investment.

Personal Viewpoint:
A modest proposal by Jim Horn, TI Forum, Compuserve

As we near a decade of using the TI-99/4A, it is time for the press to discover the "recycled computer." This story has been going on for years right under our noses. It is the perfect opportunity for the United States and Canada, and ultimately your local user group, and you, to benefit from the tremendous untapped resource known as "the computer in the closet".

While this is an exciting story, well worth reporting, something is needed to capture the attention of the media. You do not attract attention with bits and bytes or upgrades to 32K. If we want people to hear what we have to say we must use techniques employed for decades by groups like the Lions Clubs, Rotary, and others. Get your message across via public service. The public benefits, and at the same time recognizes that you exist. However, before this can be done volunteer organizations like users groups have to be prepared to commit time and energy to making the benefits of millions of closeted computers more reality then illusion.

My idea is that we could utilize both this large untapped resource, and simultaneously breath new life into our community, as well as help our nation by finding a use for the millions of TI's sitting next to luggage and winter clothes in closets around the world. Every community, from the local chess club to nations need an overall goal to motivate. In the 40's we stopped Hitler, in the 50's we built prosperity, in the 60's we went to the Moon, and in the 80's we re-built prosperity again. Our community needs something like that if we want to last. Our survival is at stake.

What better goal to establish for our community than working to have "closet TI-99/4As" donated to help educate our children? Article after article unfavorably compares our educational system to the Japanese. We are told that their young people work harder then ours, are on the average more intelligent, and give Japan an insurmountable industrial and technological advantage over other countries - even the United States. We are told that we are in the midst of an "education crisis". The Vice-President is telling America that he wants to be known as the "Education President". On that note, I have taken the liberty of calling the Vice-President's election headquarters and have telephonicly briefed their research department on the the Eunice Spooner story in Maine, as told by Dr. Ron Albright in the August Computer Shopper and in Micropendium. As luck would have it, I drew a staffer from Maine who was very interested in collecting information for an upcoming visit by Bush to Maine. Hopefully, this will eventually result in words of encouragement from the mouth of Vice-President Bush. We also need comments from Dr. (of Education) Bill Cosby who once promoted the 4A in television ads, and is now perhaps one of the richest and most well-known television celebrities, H. Ross Perot, the well-known billionaire, the Secretary of Education, and national association heads. Write them. Their addresses are in your library. The Denver School system is already looking for a club to sponsor a program for them.

The Mid Atlantic 99ers of Washington D.C. have started on my idea, and have chosen to call their program "Free Computers For Teachers". It has only a few simple steps: Locate closet computers and ask people to donate them to a designated teacher. Overcome the inevitable objections about "IBM compatibility", something that even IBM is not anymore. Then the easy part: stand ready to do what we do

best, which is to be available at meetings to help a hoard of new teacher members, intent on keeping their new free computers supplied with new things and fixed. It is certain that some of teachers will expand their systems or enrich our community just as teacher Jack Sughrue of MUNCH (a New England user group) has done while building one of the largest user groups in the U.S.

Then we will call in the reporters, hopefully with the help of a journalism teacher. This is easier than you think. "free" is a powerful word. The 99/4A is designed to be easy to use, one a teacher can use as a bona fide teaching tool. A spelling drill in the classroom corner is better than a closet computer. Remind people over and over that "computers do not teach, teachers do." We hope to choose some teachers who are afraid of computers.

We should hammer away at the thought that it is a national disgrace for millions of 99/4A computers to be in closets while we face an education crisis. If something like this might fit as a part of your own goals please trade promotional ideas and materials with the Mid Atlantic 99ers in Washington D.C. on "Free Computers For Teachers." Write me care of Asgard News or contact either Jerry Coffey or Jim Horn (76703,603) at TIFORUM on CompuServe.

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║  Asgard News would like to see YOUR   ║
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║  like to be your soapbox.  No submission║
║  will be refused because of subject or║
║  point of view - only if the content  ║
║  isn't "G-rated".  Of course all      ║
║  submissions must be relevant to the  ║
║  99/4A community.  Submissions will   ║
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║          P.O. Box 10697               ║
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Departments

Face to Face

[Ed. Note: This is a new column where we pair off opposing commentaries. Please note that the opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those held by the editors of Asgard News]

"Hostility to the Geneve and its owners is wrong"

Ruth O'Neill, Editor, Ottawa 99'ers UG newsletter

During a Compuserve conference in April, the subject of hostility towards Geneves and their owners came up. It seems that in many users' groups (including Ottawa's) there are some people who feel very strongly that Geneves should be banned from the club, or at the very least should not be welcomed. While this sentiment is not held by the majority (in Ottawa, we amended our constitution to include Geneves), the fact that it exists at all puzzles me. What has created this? Why is it continuing? Is it spreading? I certainly hope not.

During the conference, I drew an analogy that seemed to be very well received. Most of the members in the Ottawa TI99/4A Users' Group now have at least one disk drive, but a few years ago, this was not the case. At that time, an expansion system with only 1 disk drive was very expensive, so many people were content (or at least had to be content) with cassette-based systems. Those who were fortunate enough to be able to upgrade to a diskette-based system were able to run programs that the cassette users could not, while still being able to run everything they could before. Did the cassette users express hostility towards the disk users over this? I don't imagine so, but I have no first-hand knowledge, since I am a relative newcomer to this group. Isn't the situation with Geneves very similar, though? A Geneve owner can run some new programs that someone with a 99/4A cannot, but is still very interested in /4A software and hardware. I think the most reasonable way to view the Geneve is as an upgrade to

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the /4A – in fact, it is not even as expensive an upgrade as expanding to a disk-based system was a few years ago. We would like to bring more cassette users into our users' groups to swell our ranks. How can we expect them to feel welcome and supported when they can do less than we can, if we are unwilling to share with those who can do as much or more?

Even if we don't care to think of the Geneve as an upgrade, why should we feel so antagonistic towards it? Are TIers jealous? It's a human emotion, but it would be a shame to allow it to undermine the unique sense of community that has developed in the TI world. Does the Geneve threaten the /4A? I don't think so. I believe that it has provided programmers with something new and exciting to work with, so they'll stay in the community longer than they might have otherwise. The trend right now is not towards programming for the Geneve exclusively (after all, the greater market is still the /4A), but towards new programs that will work on both machines, but take advantage of the extra features of the Geneve.

Even the programmers who have been devoting their time almost exclusively to writing for Myarc have not been lost to us nearly as much as they would have if they had gone to another family of computers. They have been given an opportunity to remain in the community while developing their skills professionally. I'm quite sure that this will show in programs they write for the /4A in the future – and judging from comments I have seen from some of the top programmers in message bases and during conferences, they intend to develop many new products for the /4A. In any case, how can we feel threatened, knowing that over 7,000 /4A's were sold in the Ottawa area alone? Although I have no figures from Myarc, I don't believe the total number of Geneves matches this.

As well as being something new to program for, the Geneve has the potential to be an excellent programming environment for /4A programs. While not all the necessary programming tools are available yet, they are starting to appear, and offer our programmers something to look forward to. That's something we all need very much -- something to look forward to. With all the new programs coming out these days, it is clear that we haven't yet explored the full poten-

tial of the TI99/4A. The very fact of the Geneve's existence is, I believe, challenging TI programmers to reach for new heights of excellence in their work. All of this should be making any waverers think twice before leaving the community for another computer. It *might* even coax a few new members into the fold!

I'm not advocating buying a Geneve, by the way. That's certainly something to be determined by one's own needs and taste, and I don't have any plans to get one myself just now. I am advocating a greater degree of tolerance towards Geneves and their owners – of welcome, in fact. After all, we all came from the same "family".

"The Geneve is a bad purchase"

Doug Redmond - Past President, TI Users Group of Will County

[Ed Note: This Editorial takes the form of a response to a letter in MICROpendium. The author experienced some difficulty in having this letter published in that publication. We are, however, reprinting it.]

In response to Paul Flesners comments in May 1988 Feedback, I would like to make some comments myself. I too read the results of the survey performed by Ali Ulgen. I though was not as surprised at the results of those wanting, or rather, not wanting to purchase a Myarc 9640.

While Flesner may think that 'it is the best $480' he has spent, he fails to also consider the additional cost of the monitor to operate the 9640 in 80 column mode, adding $250 or more to the final price.

While the 9640 has some interesting features, the TI user would have to be foolish to shell out $750-800 for an upgrade to the 9640 when for that same price a inexpensive IBM clone may be purchased. The 99/4A is slower, and I'm limited to 40 columns, but I've yet to see any new software that is 9640 specific which I have a desire to run.

If I was to spend $750 to upgrade, surely I would look at an MS-DOS system. There are those who claim that software for the 'clones' is so much more

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expensive than what can be had for the 4A, but a large network of quality inexpensive MS-DOS software exists via freeware, also known as shareware much like we have found for our own TI's.

Maybe my viewpoint is soured by experiences with Myarc that are closer to home. The fact that I and two other members in my user group spent good money to 'upgrade' to Myarc disk controllers only for each of us to encounter a problem where the disk controller would destroy our system disks without notice by 'blowing away' sectors at a time.

As I was a SysOp of a very active BBS, my experience was disastrous with the controller ruining the disks with my BBS program and data files. Only with the experienced help of my friend was he able to laboriously able to rebuild the lost files. Calls to Myarc netted zero response; placing blame on my equipment even after mentioning the fact that two other members with different systems had contacted Myarc also with the same problem.

I managed to confront Mr. Phillips directly at the TI-Faire held here in Chicago and he arrogantly ignored my questioning. I even tried to talk with him at the Consumer Electronics Show held in Chicago, but again he shunned me. I then managed to talk with Jack Riley and Paul Charlton who could offer no advice. I was told that this was the first time they had ever heard of that type of problem which at the time I took at face value. Later in talking with other Myarc Controller owners, I found several others who had similar problems.

Luckily I was able to dump the controller and move 'up' to a Corcomp controller that has not once failed me.

Or maybe the bad experiences of another member in my group who purchased a new Myarc RS232 card has left a bad impression. Upon trying to use it he had problems. After turning to the assistance of a more knowledgeable member in the users group, it was decided that the RS232 card was defective. Calls to Myarc confirmed they knew about the problem and the card should be returned to Myarc for a FREE repair.

The card was shipped to Myarc for repair and after weeks of waiting he finally received his card, but with a bill for $50, over half of what he paid for the card. Sure, he could have refused to pay and make a complaint, but as Myarc returned the card COD, he had to pay or get the card sent back. He paid hoping to resolve the matter later, but to no avail. You would think before ANY company would make a repair for $50, they would want some form of confirmation BEFORE doing the work. What choice did he really have??

There are MANY other instances I could recite including the many conflicting press releases from month to month in Micropendium regarding both hardware and software for the 9640, but I have tried to keep from being overly verbose with my comments, though in looking at the above I guess I wasn't as successful with that as I intended.

I think that the 4A user has become desperate in looking for companies to give them future support and are willing to continually take abuse just to keep that 'secure' feeling from a supporting company.

If the new 9640 was 'reasonably' priced, I may be interested in purchasing it even with bad previous experiences. But at $500 and the fact that a common RGB monitor can not be used, I think that I will stick with the system that has passed the test of time, my trusty TI 99/4A, until which time there is a need for me to upgrade, and at this moment it WON'T be a Myarc 9640.

Reader Survey
Subject: User Group Survival

This is a survey of all readers that are user group officers. If send in your answers the following questions, you'll receive a 10% discount coupon from Asgard Software for your next purchase:

(1) Has your user group lost members, gained members, or stayed the same size during the last year?

(2) Do you have programs or interest groups oriented

towards beginning and/or console users?

(3) Do you maintain a cassette library?

(4) What were the main programs for the last 3 meetings?

(5) Do you have regularly scheduled and located meetings?

(6) How long have you been an officer of your user group?

(7) What is the name of your group? How many members does it currently have?

Please send your answers by mail to:

Asgard Publishing
P.O. Box 10697
Rockville, MD 20850

New Products

It looks like this column, despite what we said in the previous issue, will become a fixture for at least the next few issues. Asgard Software has been maintaining a heavy development schedule all summer, and plans dozens of new releases this Fall and Winter. Send to **Asgard Software, P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20850,** for more information about these items and others offered.

RAM*BOOT

RAM*Boot is a disk manager and setup program for the Myarc 128K and 512K cards. This remarkable program will allow you to automate the setup process of your RAM-disk, as well as manage a running RAM-disk.

You can place a copy of RAM*Boot on any work disk you have and customize it so that it will automatically partition the memory, copy multiple disks to it, and run a program from it - with a single key-press. Once your RAM-disk is initialized, RAM*Boot becomes a RAM-disk manager that will back-up the RAM-disk to floppy, run any program, copy disks,

or re-initialize the RAM-disk on command. Requires Extended BASIC, a disk system, and a Myarc 128K or 512K card. By Travis Watford. Suggested retail $9.95.

DISK OF DINOSAURS

[Ed. see the ad for this elsewhere for more details]

Disk of Dinosaurs is an excellent collection of dinosaur art, background scenes, and cartoons for dinosaur enthusiasts of all ages. This two-disk package consists of cartoon and realistic dinosaur pictures stored as TI-Artist instances, a complete dinosaur font, a dinosaur hunting license, background scenes for creating dinosaur compositions, and four amusing dinosaur cartoons. (TI or Corcomp disk controller required for the latter) This package can be used to create dinosaur stickers, pictures, calendars, reports, or just plain fun.

Requires 32K memory and a disk system, as well as a program capable of using TI-Artist artwork (Font Writer II, Calendar Maker 99, TI-Artist, etc.). By Ken Gilliland. Suggested retail $12.95.

QUICK-RUN

Quick-Run is an Extended BASIC utility which makes other Extended BASIC programs run instantly. The program works by taking a "snap-shot" of a running program and saving it to disk. The "snap-shot" version can then be run at some future point, and the program will begin exactly where it left off. Quick-Run can eliminate time consuming program initialization - never wait for screens to be set up or variables to be calculated again. By Travis Watford. Requires Extended BASIC, 32K, and a disk system. Suggested retail $9.95.

COLUMN ATTACK!

Column Attack! is a fast action arcade game for the TI-99/4A written in Fortran 99. In this game, you must defend Earth against rampaging alien spaceships. Lots of graphics, color, and sound - this game can provide hours of mindless fun for children of

all ages. Loads like an Extended BASIC program. Requires 32K, disk and Extended BASIC or Editor/Assembler. By Chris Bobbitt. Suggested retail $9.95.

PrEDITOR

PrEditor is a complete replacement for the Editor/Assembler or TI-Writer editor. *[Ed. see ad this issue]* This comprehensive editor is very fast, has many features not found in TI-Writer (80-columns on the Geneve and on TI 80-column cards; block functions, etc.) as well as the ability to edit two files simultaneously. Ideal for writing programs in c99, Fortran 99, Assembly, and Extended BASIC, or for just writing a letter. This editor was written from scratch entirely in assembly to get the most speed and features possible. By Tom Bentley. Requires 32K, a disk system and either Extended BASIC, TI-Writer, Editor/Assembler or Mini-Memory. Can use a Supercart. Suggested retail $19.95

Harry's Corner

First of all, I want to point out to everyone that this column does not necessarily reflect the views of Asgard Software or it's owner Chris Bobbitt. They are all mine! I will be writing here to get your adrenalin pumping, your brains working, and hopefully solicit some letters of retaliation and/or approval. I have every intention of stirring up some stink and, on the opposite side of the coin, give some approval to those that really deserve it.

There is a need in the overall TI community to say some things from time to time that go against the grain of a few people. The trend has been to walk softly and speak softer still, for various reasons. Among these are, "that company advertised with us, so we don't want to make him mad" or "he's a mediocre programmer, so we don't want him to sell his TI." I am not going to support these theories here because I'm not going out for advertising, and I believe that criticism begets better hardware and software. You can expect honest reviews, constructive criticism, and an occasional blast when somebody

really ties me off. Without further ado, let's have at it.

Recently, the final analysis of what was to be a very comprehensive TI user survey was reprinted in MicroPendium. It was also uploaded to the various networks in order to get as complete coverage as possible. This survey was the valiant effort of one Ali Ulgen, and he did a heck of job but, to my way of thinking, told only part of the story.

In the first place, it was a GROUP survey, (they are the only TIers with addresses), consisting of 753 individual returns. While that may be considered a good sampling of the community by some, it is by no means the community at large. (Ali will be the first to agree with that.) Let me give you an example: In my group (Western New York 99ers) there are thirty-two Horizon ram disks, one Geneve, one Gram Kracker, and one or two Myarc cards. Fifty miles east of here, in Rochester, they have tons of Gram Krackers, one Horizon, all Myarc cards, and at least eight or ten Geneves. We are day, they are night. Neither of our groups were involved in the survey, but had our combined one hundred plus membership been included, we would have had a very pronounced effect on this survey.

The fact is that if we are to accept a figure of 250,000 P-boxes in circulation, the survey has looked at less than one half of a percent of the TI system users. That figure doesn't cover the CorComp system users, the few remaining Percom users, or any of the other daisy-chained systems that are hanging around. Hence, I think that it really looked at less than one tenth of a percent of the entire community.

I have no intention of going over this survey point by point, but let's take a look at what I have interpreted as the average user.

1. We are men over 45 years old.
2. We are highly educated.
3. We have a P-box with a TI disk controller, two drives (DSSD), and a spare console under the bed.
4. We have a 1200 baud modem.
5. We have an Epson compatible printer.

6. We use our computer for serious work and we have at least a nominal idea of how to program it.

That's how I perceive the average owner based on the survey, but I'm not using math, only common sense.

Some parts that made me nervous were the ones that said, "we don't intend to buy any more cards and don't subscribe to TI related publications much." Neither of these statements can be true.

We ARE buying cards, lots of them. The old TI stuff is dying and repair costs are sometimes 40% of a brand new card. There is no reason NOT to buy a new one. If you think we aren't buying upgrade cards, ask Horizon. They have sold to date approx. 2000 HRD's of various memory sizes, from 90K to a full Meg. The present distributer, Bud Mills Services, plans on selling five thousand of them. In the meantime, CorComp and Myarc will outsell the Horizon five to one, because most people don't want to build electronic devices. Cards ARE selling!

As far as publications are concerned, I was once told that MICROpendium has a circulation of approx. 6000 copies per month. A lot of people consider this magazine too low on the learning scale though, so they go to the Ryte-Data publication *[Ed. Note: this publication has apparently gone under]* , or perhaps The Smart Programmer. These upper level magazines (loosely termed) must do ok, otherwise they couldn't exist, particularly with the schedules they keep.

Ok, what's the bottom line? Simply this; The survey was intended to give the hardware and software people some idea of where they were heading. It doesn't do that... and it's nobody's fault. At least 50% of the groups never answered the survey. I would estimate that 25 to 30 percent of the paid-up membership of those groups didn't fill out the questionnaire. To top it all off, probably 80 percent of the community at large doesn't even belong to a group. Alas, we have proven nothing.

So where ARE we going from here? I am by far one of the most wide-eyed radicals in the TI community. I am the bane of existence to people that sit and contemplate the "clone". What's more, I

don't like Geneves... no, take that back, I don't like Myarc. I am convinced that we have not yet begun to see the end of the TI potential. Just about the time things slow down, along comes a program like EZ-Keys, Telco, or the Birdwell Disk Utilities, and we're off and running again. The same thing happens with the hardware. The Horizon card, the Rave Keyboard, the prototype cards, all of these sent shockwaves through the community. They stopped possibly hundreds of users from deserting. It never stops. We are the smartest cookies in the entire home computer market, and we're going to stay that way. There will always be room here for new authors and engineers, and they WILL find an open market place, if they are willing to take a little less. Don't con us, we know what's good and what isn't, and most importantly, keep it 100% compatible... call it TI, not Myarc, that's another system.

The big problem lies with communication. How do we find the market and get to it? Hang onto your hat, it's going to get a little wild here.

The first thing we need are state and regional congresses. All the groups in a state getting together with representatives once a year to talk and listen. The state congresses need to produce the newsletters, not the groups. It's just too hard for small groups to do it. Sounds a little like the Boy Scouts, doesn't it? We come very close to what I am looking forward to with our TI fares. Now, a few groups are getting together to perform the task of setting these things up, but the scope of cooperation should be broader yet.

The second thing is to register the owners and keep it going. When a system is passed on through private sale, it should work like your automobile registration. A piece of the registration is mailed to central, who in turn sends a welcome package to the new owner, along with a fresh registration. To me, the idea seems very simple. Of course, we would have to hit every method of communications to even begin to get everyone involved. We can establish a standard registration form and send it out to the user groups. They, in turn, would distribute it to their membership for completion. The group will then collect the information and pass them on to a central or state congress. The state level will tabulate their owners

and then pass all of that on to a NATIONAL leadership. It could work if we can get the cooperation. What do you think?

One final note before I go back to sleep. There are hundreds of software companies out there, large and small, beating their brains out to satisfy the Atari and Commodore users. If some of these companies wanted to make a few bucks the easy way, all they would have to do is license over some of their old stuff to the TI community. We could definitely use some new games, adventures, and the like. Take Infocom for instance, they refuse to make any more games for us even though most of us now have double-sided drives. They say we are too small, or our memory's too limited. What's the matter with these guys, don't they want to make any money? They won't even have to work hard for it! Just call up Hoddie or Dodd and say, "would you like to translate Hard Hat Mac?" NO problem!

Next issue I will submit the confessions and philosophy of a TI pirate.

L8r... HTB

Beginners Corner
Topic: Why Telecommunicate?

Welcome to the first column of what is going to become a regular feature of Asgard News - the Beginner's Corner. This column isn't "yet another BASIC programming column", instead it will be oriented towards providing hard information for beginning users of the TI-99/4A - the why's and how's of doing things. If you have a specific question you'd like discussed in this column, please send a postcard to:

Beginner's Column
c/o Asgard Publishing
P.O. Box 10697
Rockville, MD 20850

In this first column, we would like to discuss telecommunications - what is it, how to do it, and what's in

it for you. We chose this topic deliberately because MICROpendium magazine plans to have a big issue on Telecommunication services in the near future. If the subject is completely over your head, we hope the following discussion will get you up to speed enough to appreciate that issue.

First, What is telecommunications? Simply put, the term is a two dollar word that describes the act of connecting your computer to another by a device called a "modem". There are several things you need before you can do this. First, you need an RS232 for your computer. Next, you'll need a modem and a modem cable. Then, you'll need a phone line (or a phone-jack for your home-line somewhere near the computer). And finally, you'll need a program called a "terminal emulator" - which allows your computer to talk to the computers you call with your computer.

Of course, we still haven't answered the question, What's in it for you? The answer to this is complex but, basically, it can be boiled down to three things: lots of cheap software, lots of friends, and lots of information about your computer. There are hundreds of "bulletin boards" (computers you can call free) around the country where you can get copies of programs ("download" them), write messages to other people (send "electronic mail"), and get information about solving problems, new software, and new hardware. Additionally, there are TI-99/4A clubs on all the popular pay Telecommunication Networks (big computer systems with access numbers all over the world) with even more programs to "download" and people to send "electronic mail" to.

Calling either a Network or a BBS is as simple as dialing the phone number of the system through your terminal emulator program, typing a few commands, and then answering questions that appear on the screen. The difference is that when you are using your modem to talk to another computer, you not only have and can do the things your personal computer can do, you also have and can do things that the one you are talking to has and is capable of. Telephone companies advertise that they can "put the world at your fingertips" - telecommunications beats that hands down by allowing you to pass undreamed of quantities of information through just a normal telephone and your computer.

If you are sold on the idea, and have the means to set aside anywhere from a few dollars to a few hundred to get the necessary equipment, the question naturally comes up - How? Well, as I mentioned above you'll need a few basic components, but surprisingly, you do not need disk drives (unless you'd like to "download" programs). At a bare minimum, you'll need a TI-99/4A console, a plug in RS232 box, a 300-baud modem (the speed of modems is measured in "baud" - or bits of data transferable per second), a modem cable, and a Terminal Emulator II module. You can get all these items for about $200 from Triton. If you already have an RS232, the price plummets to half - if you don't, you can further justify the cost by using the RS232 for a printer.

Of course, most readers of this magazine have a disk system. If you are in this group, you'll need an RS232 card, a modem and cable, and any terminal emulator program - of which there are at least a dozen.

Currently, the most popular such program is called Telco. It is very easy to use for the beginner (it has nice menus and thorough documentation) and is well-supported. Plus, it is freeware, so that you can try a copy and, if you like and use it, THEN send the suggested $20 to the author. (For a copy, send a disk and return postage to Charles Earl, 34 McLeod Str., Ottawa, Ontario Canada K2P 0Z5.) Other popular and commonly used freeware terminal emulators include Fast-Term and Mass-Transfer. Commercial programs include 4A/Talk (though it is primitive compared to Telco). You can also use Terminal Emulator II with a disk system (though it is a waste of time). Freeware terminal emulators can also be found in user group libraries.

Once you've gathered the hardware and the software you'll need and have it all working, you'll undoubtably need a number to call. Most local user groups have TI bulletin boards available to members and, sometimes, non-members. If you don't have a local group, there is a magazine called Computer Shopper that lists hundreds of numbers of BBSs around the country - some of which have TI interest sections. If you are interested in the paid networks, (which are usually much larger and can be reached virtually anywhere in the country), you may want

to read the forthcoming issue of MICROpendium on Telecommunications Services. If you don't have access to one of these sources, drop a postcard to this column with your address, and we'll try to send you a list of local BBSs you can call.

In conclusion, telecommunications is a gateway to many wonderful new things for your computer. It is a way you can get more software then you need at low cost, meet lots of people with similar interests (heck, Walt Howe, a popular writer for MICROpendium, met his soon-to-be wife with his modem), and get help with your problems. It is also a way to directly meet some of the most well-known people in the TI world, as well as most 99/4A programmers. It will help you enjoy your computer more, and is one of the principal reasons the TI community has survived.

Geneve Corner

Welcome to our first installment of what promises to be a regular column of Asgard News devoted to Geneve owners. In this first issue, we'd like to answer the burning question "What software is available for the Geneve?" The following list is a pretty complete compilation of fairware and public domain programs for the 9640. Of course, we'd like to hear about anything we've missed.

```
GPL Interpreter - V1.01 - Aug 1, 1988
   (Supports RAM-disks between TI and
   MDOS modes and hard drives. Myarc)

Myarc DM - V1.21 - Aug 1, 1988
   (Supports hard disk drive. Myarc)

My-Word - V1.20 - Aug 1, 1988
   (Hard-disk drive support. Myarc)

MDOS - V1.06 - Aug 1, 1988
   (Hard-disk support, some bugs,
    reduced RAM-disk size. Myarc)

John Johnson Menu - July 26, 1988
   (replacement for TI BASIC GPL, GPP
```

and GPQ files - makes TI mode
easier to use.)

eXtended DIRectory - July 26, 1988
(John Johnson's replacement for
the M-DOS DIR command. Supports
date/time stamps.)

SDIRM - July 23, 1988
(Directory program with source
code for MDOS by Clint Pulley.)

XPREP3 - July 19, 1988
(c99 utility that converts DF128
files to DV80 files and vice versa.
By Clint Pulley)

Multiplan template - July 15, 1988
(A Home Budget Management template by
Eric Bray for use with 9640
Multiplan only.)

VDP Utilities - July 15, 1988
(Source and object code of 99/4A VDP
utilities for use in MDOS
programming. By John Hayes)

MDOS c99 - June 26, 1988
(c99 for M-DOS by Clint Pulley)

Developers Kit - May 21, 1988
(Complete Quick n' Dirty developers
kit by Clint Pulley. Includes Editor,
Assembler and Linker v2.0. Includes
source code. Fairware)

Circle Demo - May 14, 1988
(An M-DOS circle drawing demo.)

CLK - V2.0 - April 27,1988
(A clock setting program that runs
out of both M-DOS and the TI mode.)

Pallete Master - April 15, 1988
(Allows you to edit internal pallet
of 9640 through TI mode Extended
BASIC. Allows saving and loading of
pallets. By Jeff Kittka)

Fractals - April 13, 1988
(Assembly language fractal graphics
program for TI mode by Luigi Grilli.
512x424 graphics display)

Not-My-Term - V1.7 - April 2, 1988
(Terminal emulator for M-DOS mode of
9640 by Jim Schroeder. ASCII, Xmodem
file transfers. Fairware)

Phoenix Config - V1.2 - Mar 9, 1988
(Config program for Horizon RAM-disk
owners with Phoenix ROM by Ron
Walters.)

Date forward - Mar 8, 1988
(M-DOS program which shifts the day of
the week one day forward to fix MDOS
date calculation bug.)

Horizon ROS - Feb 7, 1988
(Horizon RAM-disk OS for booting
M-DOS)

LOGO FIX - Feb 5, 1988
(Paul Charlton patch that allows using
Logo II on Geneve.)

HRD Tests - Feb 4, 1988
(Series of non-destructive tests for
Horizons with Phoenix eprom.)

XB 9640 Video Utils - Jan 28, 1988
(Assembly utilities for TI XB in TI
mode of 9640. Provides access to
256x192x16 bitmap graphics.)

Time Marks - Jan 15, 1988
(Provide time stamping in programs
from c99. Includes demo)

More - V1.1 - Jan 3, 1988
(A Unix-like MORE command for M-DOS
mode. Used for a "paged" directory.
By Dave Ramsey)

Multiplan - V2.3 patch - Dec 27,. 1987
(Patch for TI mode Multiplan for 80-
columns, etc.)

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PRSET - Dec 27, 1987
  (M-DOS printer setting program by
  Clint Pulley. Epson or compatibles)

MOUSE routines - Dec 27, 1987
  (Mouse access assembly routines for
  Extended BASIC and TI mode. By J.
  Hoddie)

DCLP - Dec 26, 1987
  (Disk cataloger and label printing
  program for 99/4A and Geneve.
  Fairware)

My-Load - Dec 26, 1987
  (Two My-Word loaders for TI mode of
  9640 by J. Peter Hoddie)

Color - Dec 23, 1987
  (2 M-DOS commands by Clint Pulley
  - COLOR and MONO for setting
  display modes.)

9640 Debugger - V1.2 - Dec 23, 1987
  (M-DOS mode Debugger)

Equate files - Dec 23, 1987
  (A set of Equate files for M-DOS
  programmers by Paul Charlton.)

GIF2 - V2.0 - Dec 3, 1987
  (GIF decoder program for M-DOS mode
  of 9640 by Paul Charlton. Fairware)

Linker - Nov 20, 1987
  (Paul Charlton's M-DOS mode linker.)

Command Strings - Nov 17, 1987
  (Source code for passing command line
  arguments to M-DOS procedures by
  Paul Charlton.)

Utilities - Nov 14, 1987
  (Art Green's public domain utilities
  for the Geneve. Includes menu/loader
  for loading utilities.)

PR-Base Utils - V2.2 - Nov 7, 1987

(V2.2 of PR-Base utilities for TI
  Mode execution of PR-Base. Can only
  be used with disks/records created
  for PR-Base V2.1.)

Mass Transfer - V3.9 - Oct 28, 1987
  (Geneve version of Mass Transfer. 80-
  column support.)

80 Column functions - Sep 19, 1987
  (80-column functions for c99 running
  through TI mode. By Clint Pulley)

PR-Base - V2.1 0- Aug 23, 1987
  (Version 2.1 of PR-Base modified by
  Mike Dodd to run on Geneve.)

CSAVE - Aug 15, 1987
  (Cartridge saver for TI mode.)

FTG - Aug 2, 1987
  (Fast-Term Geneve by Paul Charlton.
  Runs from M-DOS. Fairware)

The following software is commercially available for
the Geneve:

My-Art - Myarc
  (Drawing program for M-DOS mode.
  Features some drawing modes. Includes
  mouse)

Jump-Boot - Disk Only Software
  (Fast boot program for M-DOS. Boots
  operating system faster then a hard-
  disk from normal floppy)

In the next issue of Asgard News we'd like to give a
detailed step-by-step procedure on loading and using
popular 9640 software. Send comments about this
column to: Geneve Corner, c/o Asgard Publishing,
P.O. Box 10697, Rockville, MD 20850.

FYI

This is the first installment in a regular column devoted to sources of information. In this issue, we'd like to present a relatively recent compilation of dealers of TI-99/4A and Geneve products. This list isn't exhaustive, and we would like to apologize in advance for any omissions. If you know of a dealer not covered in this list, we'd appreciate a postcard with their name and address.

Bits & Chips
23637 Hwy 99
Edmonds, WA 98133
(206)775-7390

Bob Boone
25 Ottawa Str.
Arnprior, Ontario
Canada K7S 1W7
(moving soon)

Computer Bug
5075 Clairton Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15236
(412)882-3374

Comprodine
1949 Evergreen Ave.
Fullerton, CA 92635

Disk Only Software
P.O. Box 244
Lorton, VA 22079
(301)340-7179 (voice)
1-800-456-9272 (recording)

Dhein's True Value
7 West Airline Hwy.
Waterloo, IA 50703

Edu-Comp
6516 O'Henry Cir.
N. Ridgeville, OH 44039
(216)327-6579

HAC Labs Ltd.
Helene M. Labonville
121 Camelot Dr. RFD 5

Bedford, NH 03102
(603)472-3369

Hunter Electronics
603 S. Fairview Ave.
Elmhurst, IL 60126
(312)832-6558

LaFlamme & Wrigley Assoc.
5480 Caontek Rd. Unit 18
Gloucester, Ontario
Canada K1B 9H6
(613)745-2225

Lake Computer Depot
2139 Lave Ave.
Whiting, IN 46394
(219)659-5628

Mike Lapusan
3429 Pestalozzi
St. Louis, MO 63118
(314)772-2470

L.L. Conner Enterprises
1521 Ferry Str.
Lafayette, IN 47904
(317)742-8146

Steven Mehr
633 Hollyburne Ln.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Moran Computer
4417 19th Ave. SW
Naples, FL 33999

New 99er Users Co-op
216-10th Ave.
New Westminster, B.C.
Canada V3L 2B2
(604)522-2598

Queen Anne Computer Shoppe
6102 Roosevelt Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115
(206)522-6558

Seeber Computers
10668 Kaufman Rd. NE
Silverton, OR 97381

Tenex Computer Express
P.O. Box 6578
South Bend, IN 46660
(219)259-7051 - Information
(219)259-7053 - Order status
1-800-348-2778 - Order line

Tex-Comp
P.O. Box33084
Granada Hills, CA 91344
(818)366-6631 (recording)

Triton Products Inc.
P.O. Box 8123
San Francisco, CA 94128
1-800-227-6900

Future lists may include 4A oriented BBSs, software companies, and hardware companies. If you'd like a list of a specific category, please write to: FYI, c/o Asgard Publishing, P.O. Box 10697, Rockville, MD 20850

Ask Asgard

Q: "I'm interested in learning in PLAIN LANGUAGE what is meant by formatting, what happens when you initialize a disk, what does OPTION 1 mean, and what does CALL KEY(0,K,S) mean?"
- C.J. LaPointe, Pensacola, FL

A: It IS pretty tough on someone new to all this nowdays - few user groups would give you the time of day. To answer your questions as concisely as possible. (1) When you just purchase a disk, it is pretty disorganized - just a platter of plastic with a metal coating. When you "format" or "initialize" the disk (they are synonymous), you are preparing a disk to be used by the TI-99/4A. This process organizes the disk in a way so that the disk drive knows where to look for data and where to put it. (2) Option 1 or 0 refers to the first element in an array. An array is a group of variables with a common name that are differentiated by the number in parenthesis after the name. An array is declared in BASIC with the DIM command (as in DIM A$(5)). With this statement, you are saying "make a variable called A$ which has 5 elements and can store text in each one". The OPTION BASE statement simply allows you to tell the computer where to start counting in array declarations. If you specify "1", it will start counting at element 1 when you DIMension a variable, otherwise it will start with element 0 (IE DIM A$(5) would consist of six character variables $A\$(0)$, $A\$(1)$, $A\$(2)$, $A\$(3)$, $A\$(4)$, $A\$(5)$). You use elements in an array by using the variable name and putting a number or number variable in the parenthesis after the name. For instance, to put text in element 3 you would say:

$$100 \ A\$(3)=\text{"Test text"}$$
or
$$110 \ N=3 \ :: \ A\$(N)=\text{"Test text"}$$

Both are legal. Finally, (3) The CALL KEY command allows you to check the keyboard to see if a key is being pressed - as simple as that. The "0" in the statement lets you tell the computer how to look at the keyboard - there are several different ways and they are mentioned in the back of the Reference Manual that comes with the computer. The "K" is simply a number variable that will hold a number representing the key pressed, if one has been pressed. The number returned by a CALL KEY(0,K,S) would be the ASCII value of the key pressed (see a table in a reference manual - a capital "A" would be 65, for instance). Finally, "S" is a number variable that lets you check and see if a key has been pressed - it will equal zero if a key hasn't been pressed and -1 if it has been. Hence, the following example:

```
100 CALL KEY(0,K,S)
110 IF S=0 THEN 100
120 IF K<>13 THEN 100
```

When run, this little program will first check the keyboard and put the results in variables K and S. It then checks to see if a key has been pressed - if not, it checks the keyboard again. Finally, it checks to see if key number 13 has been pressed (the ENTER key). If not, it will check the keyboard again. (the "<>" means "does not equal"). Hope this helps.

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New Versions

This is a column listing new versions of Asgard Software products. Send all update requests, and make checks payable, to:

Asgard Software
P.O. Box 10306
Rockville, MD 20850

CALENDAR MAKER 99, V1.05 - Asgard Software has been shipping this version for over two months now (you can tell if you have it or not by looking at the number in the upper right side of the main menu screen). This version contains several bug fixes, and a number of new features - (1) the ability to overlay a picture and text in the same date, (2) options for Continuous form or Single Sheet paper in the Print Year Calendar option, and (3) a much more detailed addendum sheet with some instructions on using Picasso to generate a picture for Calendar Maker 99.

The new version can be obtained by returning the original Program disk and $3.00 to cover return postage and costs. The Calendar Maker Utilities package is a bit behind schedule, but should be available before the end of Fall.

ARTIST INSTANCES #1 - One of the pictures (COW_3) is defective. This disk will be replaced free of charge if you return the original disk.

Bug Reports

Only one new bug has cropped up in the last few months, summer is always the slow time of year.

LEGENDS 1.1 - The bad news is there is a bug, and it is a pretty serious one that can prevent you from finishing the game. The good news is, it is the only bug we've found in this version after 3 months of extensive testing.

The error is in line 1200 of the program file LGDN/MON. The line reads:

```
1200 OK=K :: DISPLAY AT(22,1
):USING 9:"WESTERN PORTAL" :
: CALL W...
```

The bug is the first part of the line, OK=K. There is no variable K. Change it to read:

```
1200 OK=F :: DISPLAY AT(22,1
):USING 9:"WESTERN PORTAL" :
: CALL W...
```

This should fix the problem completely, and allow the game to be solved.

Miscellaneous

Telco Tip

If you have problems in logging to your printer from Telco 2.1, the problem is probably in your setting for the XMIT ON/OFF option of communications specifications menu (obtained by pressing FCTN-B from the Terminal mode).

The program defaults to a setting called "logic". However, that is for a system that Charles Earl uses in Canada. The more common setting is "Single" - which means it will recognize a CTRL-S and CTRL-Q. What this means in English is that you won't get messy print-outs with portions of your text missing any more if you change it. Telco is the most incredible terminal emulator ever, but it really pushes everyone's knowledge of a pretty hazy subject.

To check it, get in the Terminal mode. Press FCTN-B, find the option labeled "XMIT ON/OFF" near the bottom, and see if it is "single" or "logic". Change to "single" if you are having difficulties.

Merging TI-Writer Files

This one is straight out of the TI-Writer manual, but it can use repeating. If you are ever working with TI-Writer and you want to merge two files, there is a simple way to do it. Select LoadFile (by typing LF at the command line), and type:

    E DSK1.filename

This will load the file named "filename" at the end of the one you are currently working on. You can put any number in place of "E" to merge in the file wherever you need it. You can also selectively merge in parts of files:

    E 100 200 DSK1.filename

This would load lines 100 to 200 of the file "filename" at the end of the file you are currently working on.

CIS Tip

If you are a Compuserve user, you might find this one useful. If you are downloading files and want to change the transfer protocol (say XMODEM to CIS B format), one way you can do it is to leave the Data Library you are in and return. An easier way is to use the SET PROTOCOL command from the Data Library prompt. Just type SET PROTOCOL and press ENTER, and a list will appear of the supported transfer protocols. Select the item from the list you want and turn it "ON" or "OFF". Make sure you turn the old one you were using "OFF" first. You can combine answers, too. To turn XMODEM off, for instance, you'd type:

SET PROTOCOL XMODEM OFF

Sure beats running up charges getting in and out of Data Libraries.

The News

HDCC Shipping!

Myarc's Hard-Disk Controller Card is finally shipping. We've had a chance to preview it here - it comes with a reasonable manual in a 3-ring binder, a set of cables for attaching one hard-disk drive (which is a real unexpected bonus), a set of disks containing a new version of M-DOS (1.06), the GPL Interpreter (1.01), My-Word (1.20) and the Myarc Disk Manager, a lengthy addendum, and the card itself. The card comes in a case, and on opening, the case seems to be pretty well packed with chips. The card will currently function as a hard or floppy drive controller on a 99/4A, or just a hard-disk controller on the Geneve. Myarc promises to mail a free upgrade for 9640 users "any day now" that will allow using it as a floppy controller. It also seems to work fine, although a detailed evaluation will have to wait for a review. From a brief look at it, the only major drawback is the placement and tightness of the connectors - the little extension board hanging out the back with the connectors is just waiting to snap off. Is it worth $325+? We'll see in the next issue.

Grand-RAM Status

Databiotics is claiming that the Grand-RAM RAM-disk card, that has been the subject of much anguish for all involved, is now shipping. They also claim that letters were sent to pre- purchasers offering them either their money back or credit towards the purchase of the card (the price evidently went up). Do not send your order in just yet - they are working through a stack of back orders and it will be a while before they are prepared to take on new ones.

Rave Memory Card

While we're on the subject of memory cards, users report that the Rave 99 MX01 Memory Enhancement System is shipping (hopefully the card justifies the length of its name). No detailed analysis is available as yet (another review?), but the card "seems to work". If you are in the market now for a RAM-disk, there are now 5 available - the Myarc 512K card, the Corcomp RAM-disk, the Horizon RAM-disk, the Grand-RAM from Databiotics, and the Rave 99 MX01. If you are a serious user of the 4A - you should consider buying one of them.

Dijit Programmers Info

The Dijit 80-column card for the TI-99/4A seems to be more of a reality every day. Less then 100 have been sold, and the installation procedure requires you to open up your console and pry up some chips (which probably means you won't see it in dealer catalogs any time soon), but Dijit Systems has sent out a lengthy programmers's reference manual for it - which is far more then can be said for the Myarc Geneve. If you are considering an alternative to buying a Geneve, you may want to strongly consider this card. It supposedly works with Telco, comes with a very limited version of TI-Writer, and more software for it will undoubtedly be available soon.

Graphics Book

Harry Brashear, author of "The Writers", a small book that compares and documents TI-Writer and its clones, and a columnist both here and for MICROpendium (small world, isn't it?), is now in the process of producing a book describing graphics packages for the TI-99/4A. The finished book will have reviews and comparisons of all the drawing programs for the 4A, as well as samples from all companion programs for those drawing programs. If you are trying to do anything with graphics, this book is recommended. Send to Harry Brashear, 2753 Main St., Newfane, NY 14188 for more information.

Turbo Pasc'99 Shipping

Larry Conner, proprietor of L.L. Conner Enterprises (1521 Ferry St., Lafayette, IN 47904) reports that the TI version of the popular Turbo Pascal is now shipping. This $59.95 package is a complete implementation of the language available for PC clones, and will even allow you to port programs over from the PC. All compilation is done in-memory, so it compiles at tremendous speed. It does not require a P-code card, and produces programs runnable on any 99/4A with its stand-alone module. It was reportedly used to develop TI-Base.

Archiver 3.0 Available

Archiver III has just been released and is now available as fairware from Barry Boone, Box 1233, Sand Springs, OK 74063. Users may request a copy by sending a diskette with return postage and mailer. System requirements are at least 32K memory, disk controller, at least 1 disk drive, and either Extended Basic, Editor/Assembler, TI Writer, or anything else capable of loading Editor Assembler programs.

An archiver is used to take a group of disk files and combine them into one large file, and compress the data to fit in a much smaller area. This means that a user may easily organize his disk library and save disk space by combining and compressing groups of files and keeping them until needed or as backups. Modem users have additional advantage in that

Asgard Software is pleased to introduce:

PrEditor
A Programmer's Editor
By Tom Bentley

PrEditor is the ultimate text editor for the TI-99/4A or Myarc Geneve 9640! Completely written from scratch and extensively tested in a year of development, **PrEditor** is the perfect replacement for the Editor/Assembler or TI-Writer Editor. This incredibly fast program is loaded with features:

- **PrEditor** will allow you to have up to two files in memory at once. You can switch between them at a touch of a key.
- When switching between files the environment in each area is preserved - when you switch back and forth you are returned to exactly the point in either file that you were last at.
- You can cut and paste text between files - take pieces of one file and put it in another.
- You have a full range of text editing functions - insert, delete, and many others.
- **PrEditor** offers many block manipulation functions - move, copy, and delete blocks. Forget working with line numbers - simply mark the start and ending lines of the text you want to work with. All block operations are nearly instantaneous because of **PrEditor**'s unique design
- Includes full multi-directional search and replace commands
- Built-in disk cataloger included
- Has an "as-is" mode that lets you include in your file the exact ASCII character you type, from 1-255.
- You can view a file while editing two others
- Works on the Geneve in 80-columns or with any TI-99/4A 80-column card
- Will take full advantage of Geneve keyboard
- Allows you to use memory available in a Supercart, SuperSpace or Mini-Memory module for an even larger text buffer. 22K Buffer standard.
- **PrEditor** can be completely customized- you can permanently set for any copy the left and right margins, screen colors, the speed of the cursor in various operations, the number of columns it windows over (1-40 at a time) as you type, the tab stops, the video display available (40 or 80 columns), and finally, you can re-assign **ALL** the functions to any keys that you like. If you want to make the "roll-up" command **CTRL E**, you can!
- Finally, You can make as many copies as you like for personal use - and your personal needs. You can make custom copies for as many ways you use a text editor.

PrEditor is not only blazingly fast, it can be completely customized for any application - for writing articles, letters, or programs in c99, Fortran 99, Assembly and Extended BASIC. If you use the Editor/Assembler or TI-Writer editor and you are tired of resetting tabs (or not being able to do at all!), waiting for moves and copies, the screen windowing in big chunks, having to constantly load and save files to edit multiple files, and not being able to customize much of anything, then you *need* **PrEditor**!

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the size of a compressed archive can easily be over 50% smaller (figures between 30-70% are common) and obviously result in a savings in phone charges. The fact that files can be individually extracted from archives makes this system quite flexible, and since it is 100% assembly language, very fast.

Improvements over the previous versions include consolidation of the Utility screen into the main menu, consolidation of the Pack/Compress and Unpack/Decompress functions, the capability to print catalogs of both Archive files and Diskettes to a printer, the ability to view text files, and major improvements to the existing file management utilities. What this means is that you may now Pack and Compress in one step, Unpack and Decompress in one step, even extract individual files from a COMPRESSED archive. Compression has also been optimized to yield a few percent improvement over previous versions in some cases. The menu input system has also been improved with better utilization of defaults, and a REDO option, and an improved text input routine.

Rumors

The following column is dedicated to all those bits of information that haven't graduated to "News" status yet - either the items and issues discussed in this section are unconfirmed or incomplete. Asgard Publishing takes no responsibility for incorrect information - and we will happily publish a correction if necessary.

Genial Mac to 4A program

Genial Computerware (Box 183, Grafton, MA 01519) is reportedly working on a program that allows you to move Macintosh pictures to a TI-99/4A. They placed a sample of the program up on telecommunications networks recently. Whether it requires both computers remains to be seen. Contact the manufacturer for more information..

TI-Base Notes

TI-Base, the new $25.00 relational database from Texaments (53 Center Str., Patchogue, NY 11772), has become a smash hit. The grapevine reports that the manufacturer is selling over 50 copies a day - very large by TI-99/4A standards, and impressive by any. The program was evidently written in Turbo Pasc'99 by Chris (TI-Artist) Faherty's father - who is a professional programmer. Users have reported that the program seems to have a few bugs, and like most PC-like databases, is pretty unfriendly, but it's capabilities are literally unparalled elsewhere in the 4A world. If you are willing to learn its language, you can create databases that would match what you could do with a much more expensive PC clone.

First-Base words

While we are on the topic, the long- awaited First Base by Warren Agee and J. Peter Hoddie (of Genial Computerware) is reportedly entering the beta-testing stage of development. Genial Computerware started taking orders for the program at the last Boston TI Faire in March. At last word the program will retail for $49.95, and will include an impressive manual. Whether it can stand up to TI-Base or not remains to be seen, particularly in light of the price differential.

GIF for the TI-99/4A

Jim Reiss, a programmer for Asgard Software, has just received the Compuserve contract to develop the GIF graphics transfer protocol for the TI-99/4A. GIF, in case you've never heard of it, is a universal file format used to move color pictures between computers - as RLE is used for black and white pictures. Currently, GIF is only available for the Geneve, but Jim will give this capability to 99/4A owners, and likely, owners of the Dijit and Mechatronics 80-column cards. No word yet on availability.

Cheap 2400-baud Modems

The $100 price barrier on 2400 baud modems has been broken! In the current issue of "On-Line Today", the magazine for Compuserve users, a firm is advertising a 2400 baud Hayes compatible modem for $99. It seems like only a few months ago (and it was) that 1200 baud modems first broke the $100 barrier. According to industry insiders the next big step will be 9600 baud modems, however, the big manufacturers are battling over 9600 baud protocols right now, and no end to it is in sight. The best bet for affordable power-telecomputing seems to be 4800 baud modems, which should regularly reach the $200-$300 level before the end of the year. For all of us who watch our pocket-books, sub-$100 2400-baud modems will probably be on everyones shopping list soon. Word is also in that many TI BBSs are switching over to 2400 baud, and Charles Earl's Tex-Link BBS program (an all assembly BBS program reviewed recently in MICROpendium) now has 2400 baud support. With BBSs now turning on hard-drives and offering 40-240 megabytes of downloadable software, we're going to need 2400 baud modems, and SOON. One final note to this, Compuserve seems to have the price advantage over GEnie at 2400 baud - it's rates are the same as the ones for 1200 baud. GEnie users, on the other hand, will get a big shock when they get their first 2400-baud bill. If you are really worried about the bill, though, you should switch to Delphi, which is cheaper at all speeds.

Press Report

Asgard Software reluctantly would like to announce they are developing a new word processing program for the TI-99/4A called Press. No details are available now as to its capabilities, but reportedly it will be released before the end of the year, and will be much more capable then TI-Writer or any other word processor for the 99/4A. It is being written by Charles Earl, of Telco, Tex-Link and DM1000 fame. A detailed description will be in the next issue.

Current Versions

This "column" is designed to keep you up to date on the current versions of any Asgard Software products you own:

Program	Vers.	Last Upd.
Balloon Wars	1.15	1/1/86
Column Attack	1.0	n/a
High Gravity	2.3	5/1/88
Legends	1.1	4/1/88
Missile Wars	1.0	n/a
The Haunted Mine	2.0	n/a
Doom Games I	1.0	n/a
The Volcano Fortress	1.0	n/a
Artist Enlarger	1.01	n/a
Font Writer II	2.0	8/15/87
GRAPHX Slideshow	1.0	n/a
Calendar Maker 99	1.05	6/1/88
Cassette Labeller	1.0	n/a
Recipe Writer 2.0	2.0	5/1/87
Schedule Manager	1.2	4/15/87
Stamp Manager	1.1	5/1/86
Total Filer	1.0	n/a
Beyond Video Chess	1.0	n/a
EZ-Keys Plus	2.0	8/15/88
Music Synthesizer	1.1	11/1/86
Pre-Scan It!	1.1	10/1/86
PrEditor	1.0	n/a
Quick-Run	1.0	n/a
RAM*Boot	1.0	n/a
TOD Editor	3.0	3/1/87

Write to the address below for information about costs and availability of updates:

Asgard Software
P.O. Box 10306
Rockville, MD 20850