Asgard News

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Editorial

Asgard News in the New Age, and in the old one...

Well, good intentions aside, I managed to be late again. This despite the fact that some of the material for this issue was prepared while working on the last. I guess I've learned more about my own limitations in the interim.

My only problem with the Asgard Software and Asgard News is that I don't have enough time to get everything I'd like to do done. As you may have guessed by now - Asgard Software is quite the "mom and pop" business. Often-times, if I'm sick or otherwise occupied with family or business, things simply don't get done. This includes, or shall I say especially applies to, Asgard News. As well as being the managing editor (meaning I manage to get everything edited), I have to design it, and I even end up writing most of the articles.

With a brisker then expected Holiday demand for our software, you can probably imagine my position. On one hand I have people clamoring to get Christmas gifts for themselves and for others, as well as dealers beating the door down for software. On the other hand, I have an overdue magazine on my hands that only I can put together. Lastly, I have stacks of letters to write, software to get serviced, and so on. On top of this, I have to plan new releases for the Winter and Spring, and prepare new releases. Needless to say, I've been a stranger to my wife and daughter lately.

I'm happy to say this situation is starting to change. The calamitous events at Computer Shopper (if you haven't heard, they dropped their Classic Computers section altogether - which included such discontinued machines as the Adam and the 99/4A, and the not-so-discontinued C64 and Atari 800) have done us a good turn - starting with the next issue Asgard News is picking up Barry Traver as a regular columnist. Barry will have free rein to write pretty much what he wants to (the same sort of liberty I've given Harry Brashear and Jack Sughrue - other regular columnists), whether I agree with it or not.

While Barry and I have publicly disagreed in the past on a number of issues, I respect his writing enough where I believe it certainly deserves to be published. While some of the things he's said certainly haven't been in my best interest (I could say that of my other

Ahead to the 90's!

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columnists too), I think it's in the best interest of the TI community in general that opinion isn't squelched. I don't deny I have vested interests, but part of me likes a good debate - and it's certainly hard to debate with yourself.

The more Barry writes means the less I have to write, and the more time I can spend on other tasks.

More in that direction, I've been doing some soul-searching lately about the direction I want Asgard News to go. I originally started the magazine as a place I could get my two cents worth in about the state of the community, as well as keep customers of my software business informed of new products, updates, new uses, and revisions. In the last 6 issues this idea has evolved quite a bit, in response to events and my interests.

For one thing, sources of information in the TI community have shrunk dramatically - a number of user groups have ceased to publish newsletters altogether. The loss of Computer Shopper's TI Forum is just the latest blow in a year-long decline in independent editorial voices. Perhaps related, but perhaps as much because of the energy I've put into Asgard News, circulation has exploded beyond my wildest dreams. This issue will go to almost 1000 subscribers - much more then I ever anticipated. It's also in the black, which I certainly hoped for when I started it, but didn't quite anticipate. Finally, with every issue I've found more and more topics that are going uncovered - more and more news I'd like to print. You may have noticed, we've started several "regular sections" that haven't been quite regular - simply because we don't have the space and I don't have the time to write them. You may have also noticed the print has become smaller and smaller with each issue.

Now you know why I've been pondering the future so much lately.

All of this deep thought hasn't been for naught - I like to think that this issue of Asgard News marks the end of one era and the beginning of another, physically as well as metaphorically.

To start, I'd like to introduce to you the new Managing Editor of Asgard News, Robin Cochran. A relatively recent graduate of Guilford College of North Carolina, Robin holds a degree in English, and is a certified translator of American Sign Language (ASLAN). Right now she is learning the basics of how Asgard News is produced, and I expect she will be taking over editing and design with the next issue. While she has little experience with the 99/4A in particular, she is quite knowledgeable in the arts of putting together a newsletter - which is what Asgard News needs to survive and grow - and has basic knowledge about computers in general.

The next change is sort of a change of focus. I've been talking about it for some time but I think I can go official on it - the next issue will be the first bimonthly issue. It is hard for a news magazine to be timely when it only comes out every three months. Hopefully, this will cure that problem. Asgard News will come to focus more on general information of interest to all users and less on Asgard related information - though there will always be some of that. We are going to drag Asgard News, kicking and screaming if necessary, into the mainstream of 99/4A news coverage.

As for your subscriptions, please note that you will get the number of issues that you paid for.

Lastly, I was never happy with the name Asgard News - it was chosen simply because I lacked a better name and not because it was what I wanted in a name. As the focus of Asgard

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News is becoming more general and less Asgard Software specific, the name of this magazine is becoming less descriptive of the it's contents.

Therefore, I'd like to announce a contest. We'll give a prize of $100.00 in cash and software (your choice) to the best name submitted. To enter the contest, send a postcard or letter with the name to **Asgard News**, *Name Contest*, P.O. Box 10697, Rockville, MD 20849.

What is my goal for Asgard News? To turn it into a general interest news magazine for owners of the TI-99/4A and the Myarc Geneve 9640. I couldn't do this by myself, but with the aid of Barry, Harry, Jack and Robin, as well as articles from other authors, I think we can. Now, more then ever before, the TI community needs more voices - I want to do my part in giving that to it.

Enough of the present and now onto the future - the general focus of this issue is exploring the 99/4A in the 90's. It's hard to believe that a decade has come to the end, but by the time you read this it should be the start of a new year. In this issue we'll tell you what we think you can expect.

The 99/4A in the 90's

Where we've been and where we are going...
By Chris Bobbitt

If I wrote this article 5 years ago most people would have laughed at me. The idea, in 1985, that the 99/4A would still be more then a museum piece by 1990 would have struck many as ludicrous. Now here we are, on the cusp of the new year, and a new decade, and I still hear from people all the time who tell me they just dug the thing out of the closet and really enjoy playing with it, or they can't believe their luck in finding something this neat at a flea market.

Over the last few years we've seen many big names in TI software leave the market with the idea that our community was doomed to an imminent demise - Craig Miller of MG, Jim Hollander of J&KH Software, and countless users, software companies, hardware companies and programmers. However, if the 99/4A could talk, it might paraphrase Samuel Clements oft-quoted retort - "the reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated".

The way I look at it, the 4A community has survived so long that I don't have any doubts that people will be using it, writing software for it, and building hardware to enhance it years from now, perhaps beyond the year 2000. By then it will indeed be an antique, but it will still enjoy a place in our consciences that earlier generations reserved for the Model A and Juke boxes. It will be something fondly remembered and reminisced over - memories of wondered excitement and great friends.

The future of the 99/4A community is just that - the people in the future that will use it. The past history of our community was greatly shaped by the actions of a few individuals and firms - our future will be shaped not by big companies, and probably not even small firms like Asgard and MICROpendium, but instead by all the people who belong to it.

In the beginning TI created and nurtured our community. Many of the user groups around today (and many that have already given up the ghost) were started and supported, unofficially in some cases, by TI or TI employees. TI's presence in our community was overwhelming - most of the best software, almost all of the hardware, and all the major educational work associated with the machine (ie, the educating of users and the recruitment of new owners) was a function of Texas Instruments. In this period, which lasted from 1980 to around the end of 1984, our little machine was the "Corporate 4A" - much of the support and energy directed at our machine was the work of large corporations.

The beginning of 1985 saw the growth of a new range of mid-sized companies and the birth of many small firms dedicated to supporting our community. Without the aid of TI, many small user groups went belly up immediately as the first exodus of users occurred. In the mid to late 80's a core of dedi-

cated users, many of them owners since the salad days of the 4A, but increasingly those who picked up the machine immediately after it was discontinued emerged to lead our community. In the space of 1985 we saw the coming of age of Corcomp, Myarc, Tenex, Triton, TexComp, Databiotics, Quality 99 and Miller's Graphics - among several others who would claim the corporate mantel. The same time period saw an explosion in second-tier, smaller companies - MICROpendium, Asgard, Rave 99, Dijit, Bud Mills/Horizon, Texaments/Inscebot, Great Lakes Software, and many others.

The TI-99/4A in the period from 1985 to 1988 will probably be remembered as the "Entrepreneurial 4A". Since 1988, the character of our community has changed. At this point all those that would claim to dominate our community have since scaled down one by one. First Miller's Graphics and Corcomp, and more recently, Quality 99, then Tenex and now Myarc have discontinued operations or curtailed new developments. In the near future we may see the end of any support from a few of those named above, as well as the gradual demise of Databiotics, Triton and others.

This period has also seen the "burnout of the user groups". Many people who ran the user groups from the early 80's to around 1988 finally got tired or bored or both. As the officers interest waned so did group services and user recruitment. Groups began to dwindle away due to natural attrition and the lack of any effort to find new users and to cater to beginning users. Some groups even became actively hostile to cassette users - but most of them simply became apathetic to their needs, and those of any new users. The garage-sale and closet-computer people that resurrected their machines during this period, and found these groups often-times simply quit after a meeting or two in disgust or boredom.

A side effect of this deterioration was the temporary growth of "multi-computer groups" - typically the highest officers of the group would buy a PC/Mac/Amiga/Atari and then try to convert the TI group they ran into a "TI and [fill in the blank]" group. For the most part, these experiments (which began around 1988 and have more or less ended now) have been akin to mixing fire with water, and most of these living oxymorons have fallen apart. In many cases the group officers quit in disgust when the members rebelled, or drifted away when no PC/Mac/Amiga/Atari users opted to join the new multi-group.

However, officer burnout continues to take it's toll in the user group community as user groups in large number have ceased publishing newsletters, have phased out libraries, and have in some cases completely dissolved.

Now that we are at the present, let's peer a little into the future.

As the "Entrepreneurial 4A" period has waned, we are seeing the birth and maturity of the "Mom and Pop 4A". Many of the second-tier companies mentioned above have become elevated to a position of prominence in the community, and we have also seen the birth of many new small companies - JP Software, McCann Software, OPA, Comprodine, Harrison Software and others. This new second-tier of firms have become a well-spring of new ideas, and have kept the now leading firms on their toes. As the strength in numbers of the community diminishes (every year a certain number of machines are destroyed, fail and are shelved permanently - and no new ones are of course being made), the number of firms that support the 4A on a full-time basis has declined accordingly. Soon perhaps only MICROpendium and Asgard will be left in this category.

However, at the same time the quality of the software being produced has risen dramatically, while prices have leveled off. Arguably, if the software that exists for the machine now had been available in 1983, Texas Instruments may have opted not to discontinue the machine. While game software hasn't advanced very much (except perhaps adventures), utilities, graphics and productivity software has generally kept up with the mainstream computer world.

In the near future we should see the maturity of the new second-tier of firms, and perhaps the birth of new small ones, but the conditions that led to the rise of small to medium sized corporations like Myarc and Triton, as well as full-time and successful small business like Asgard, Bud Mills and MICROpendium, are for the most part gone for good. At some point in the future, perhaps in 1-2 years, all firms supporting the 99/4A will probably be part-time ventures. However, unless user interest drops off dramatically for some reason, there should be small firms creating new software and hardware for 99/4A users throughout the 1990s.

If the name of the game in 3rd-party support is "downsizing", the slogan for 99/4A user groups is becoming "specialization".

Already we are seeing a mild re-birth of groups as a new generation of user group officers emerges. The new user groups often have the same name as the old ones, but the cast of characters is usually entirely different. The most successful user groups now tend to be more clubby - more interested in everyone getting together and having a good time with their machine and in talking with each other, then in pursuing such things as newsletters and libraries. In other words, many of the popular groups have become social clubs that focus on the 99/4A.

This isn't necessarily bad at all, and is certainly a lot more fun then listening to someone drone out the minutes of the last meeting and the treasury report.

Successful user groups have become specialized over the years, and the tend should intensify in the future. Some have specialized in hardware or software design, like the Pittsburgh User Group and the Ottawa TI User Group respectively. Others have concentrated on communications - like the Chicago Group with its annual convention, its newsletter, and its article collections. Still others have emphasized their libraries, like the BCS TI SIG. In the future further specialization will occur, and users will have more and more incentive to join several groups and not just the one closest to them.

As long as user groups still have meetings, this is a wonderful development for the community - user groups are rapidly becoming more interesting for the officers, more fun for the regulars, and more valuable to outside users as the bureaucrats have left and the pressure to be a "real group", with all the commitments necessary to organize all the service a real group is supposed to offer, subsides. It is likely that such groups will become more insular - with little effort spent in finding new members, but perhaps some groups may be interested in specializing in new members, or cassette users, and offer commensurate services and information. All in all, this is a positive development that should carry the 4A community well into the mid-to-late 90's.

Who will 99/4A owners be in the future? The same type of people who own the machine right now.

● Small schools, students and teachers - Some of the best education software for any computer is still found on the 99/4A, and certainly the best introductory manuals and instructional manuals ever written for any computer are those for the TI-99/4A. There are already a few user groups specializing in the 4A in education, and expect to see more as more budget-pressed schools look for computing options less expensive then $1000 Apple, Tandy and IBM machines.

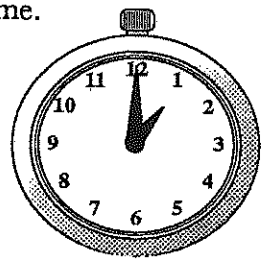
● Lawyers, doctors, businessmen and other professionals - The 99/4A is still a useful tool for the small office. While the business software available for it is quite weak compared to that for other computers - most people who use those machines only use 1/100th of the power of the programs they own anyway. TI-99/4A productivity software is time tested and very solid - important for a business. The 4A has other advantages over other computers used in small-business past and present (like the C64, Radio Shack, CP/M and Apple II computers) - it is very sturdy and well-built, the equipment can be serviced easily by a major corporation (TI), and the software for it is dirt cheap or free (TI-Writer, TI-Base and Multiplan to name 3 such items), and pretty good. It doesn't matter if a 4A program can do only 25% of what a PC version is capable of if it is the 25% that you want to do.

● Closet Computerists and Garage-sale purchasers - Every year, a certain percentage of 99/4As that were bought years ago are re-sold to new owners or dusted off by old owners that never got off the ground. In fact, some 99/4As have probably been bought and sold 3-4 times by now. These users usually get pretty well hooked on a few games or modules such as Personal Record Keeping, and before long are canvassing user groups looking for new software to fill a growing insatiable appetite. Often these people will use the computer to keep holiday greeting card lists, draw pictures, play a few games (cheaper then Nintendo, and some of the old games as much fun), or even sometimes manage a small business.

● Retirees - While sometimes defer to younger users in user groups, more and more users are retired people who just like to play with the computer. While their interests are often similar to those in the above category, retirees have different needs. The computer can fill a lot of otherwise idle hours, and some find computer user groups a great reason to get out and have a good time talking to interesting people they might not otherwise have met. Because they sometimes have more time then younger users in user groups, they often represent the greatest underutilized resource a 4A computer group has. However, because wisdom accompanies age, they are often much harder to trick into doing something for the group.

● Hobbyists - A large group of 4A owners, the hobbyists constitute one of the eternal wellsprings of the 99/4A community and are eventually what all dedicated users from any of the above categories become. The hobbyists are where almost all the new software and hardware companies come from, as well as most of the user group officers. The only requirement to becoming a 4A hobbyist is probably seeing yourself play with the computer in your sleep - when that happens you know you're hooked.

Yes, the 99/4A community has been around for a long time. And yes, the 99/4A can almost seem primitive compared to some of the most recently released computers (usually the ones that cost $5000 and more), but I expect people will be using the machine for years to come.



Preview of the 90's

The shape of things to come...
by Harry Brashear

I was asked the question; "From an old TIer's point of view, what is the future of the 99/4A". I'm not a fortune teller, but I think I can safely say that as long as a keyboard exists, we can be assured of SOME kind of future.

The following quote is one point of view. It comes from an editorial in C.U.S.S Words, the newsletter of the Computer Users Support Society of Lockport NY, and was written by a new TI'er.

"I just wanted to let you people know that the 'old' is sometimes the 'new'. In my case, everything old is new. A lot of old programs that are out there, buried in some archive, are truly fantastic. They should be reviewed and brought to the attention of the new kids on the block, like myself."

" Granted, some of the new, more sophisticated equipment is a lot more attractive, probably does a lot more, a lot faster than the TI, but to me, the TI works just fine. At this stage of the game, I don't need speed, I just need a computer that works, and programs to make it do it's magic."

"...I hear people making fun of the TI, and some of the comments are quite amusing, but I can't help but feel as though I am a member of the TI 'family'. That's exactly what it is... a family!"

"...As for the rest of you with the more modern systems, I envy what you have, and the knowledge you have about them. Some day I might expand my interests with a different system... ...but for now I have my hands full learning all I can about the TI. I know I have a long way to go and I will probably never see the end. Every day I run across something new, or learn a new trick in programming. It's going to be a long trip, but the journey is all the fun."

- Larry Tippett, Model City, NY

What you have here is a fledgling, just like I was seven or eight years ago. I guess I'm learning what old age is all about, because seven or eight years is an OLD TIer. The problem is that a lot of us, (not I) are burning out. That is sad indeed, but no reason to assume the machine that we love is dead. There are new TI babies being born every day that will pick up from where we leave off. People like John Johnson, Jim Reiss, Ed Johnson, Gary Bowser, etc., were never heard of only a couple of years ago. These guys are only now beginning to stretch their limits of TI knowledge, maturing if you will. They know the machine inside and out and if they say there is no limit, then by heaven, there isn't.

Every time these people look at a program on another computer, they don't wish they had the machine, they go home and make the software to run on the TI. That's the attitude that does, and will, keep the TI going for years to come.

All of that aside, I think the TI has, at least, another five to seven years in her, and this is what I see coming:

1> An ability to dump games from other "game specific" hardware into the TI.
2> CP/M-80 compatibility.
3> A better sound chip, disabling the old one, then giving us new and better music based on Peek's and Load's.
4> Myarc will drop out and their equipment will be picked up by trusted, quality conscious people.
5> We will find a better shell for the console including a brand new keyboard concept.
6> A simpler solution to the 80 column 9938 chip.
7> Many old unreleased programs will be picked up and given a face lift for the "new" TIer's. Call it "salvage softwaring".
8> With the new open market concept in Europe, we may get many software and hardware items that have been available there, but unseen by the American TIer.
9> The TI community will get organized at last. More people than I will finally see this necessity and will start doing something about it.

And for the real imaginative among you...
10> A Japanese company will recognize the value of our machine and purchase the rights for it from Texas Instruments. They will mass produce it at a price of $199.00, to include the following: 640K of ram, two quad density 3 1/2 inch drives, the 9958 VDP, all I/O ports, and the SID sound chip. This will all be mounted in a single case similar to the Tandy EX. The package will also include a "looks like, feels like" version of Desk Mate, produced by a disgruntled Tandy mail room worker. There will also be an undocumented slot in the side of the console intended for "future use".
Many of the items I have listed above are already, AT LEAST, rumor-ware, the last one is wishful thinking, but if that DOES happen to occur, remember, you heard it here first.

The TI is like any other prod-

uct, support will come and support will go. It will take a bit of genius to pick up some of the pieces when it goes, but I can almost promise that someone WILL be there to do so.

Take a look at our own case in point. (Asgard) No one has gotten into cartridge manufacture for years, yet, heeeerrreeees Asgard, jumping all over it. Anyone for a new 300/1200/2400 baud CARTRIDGE terminal program? (Oops, sorry Chris... guess that was a secret. Chris? Chris, you don't want to do THAT to me... just for a little slip of the tongue...!!!)

The future of the TI user groups is what I worry about though. So many of us "old timers" are being forced out of the groups because we are tired. We're not leaving the community but we just can't handle all the responsibility anymore. The problem is, that without our expertise, the groups are in jeopardy of falling apart. We aren't leaving the right people to pick up the slack, and it's our fault.

If the groups fold, the "new" TIer could be a thing of the past, simply because he has no place to go. Yes, a link has been formed via the big networks, MICROpendium, Triton, fairs, etc. But those are OUR links, what will the new guys and gals do when they have no place to go and they don't know about those things?

We HAVE to establish a central committee NOW if we expect to maintain the status of the community at large. Also, the group leaders have to be grooming people to take their place. It's just "good business" to do so, and it's a mistake that I have made, so I speak with experience, and great embarrassment.

The bottom line is that our TI future looks very good, for the moment. We STILL get new members in this community every day, and a lot of them are practicing up to be the assembly programmers of tomorrow.

The programs are still coming, and they are getting better. We are keeping up with the rest of the computer world. (If not keeping up, staying in position.)

The hardware is still coming, better, faster, and extending our capabilities far beyond the basic system of yesterday. The Horizon/RAMBO combination and the Rave memory card even gives us the ability to use giant programs far beyond 32K.

Yes, we're doing fine, thank you, but we could be doing better. I think we WILL do better in the ninetys, with a little more help from the "old timers". Maybe, if we get real lucky, TI may quit fighting it and join us.

Current Versions

For better or worse, this list of current versions has been getting too long as of late. So, starting with this issue, we are listing only the products that have been updated sometime in the past. Any items not listed here should be assumed to be still in version 1.0 - and have not been updated since their release. Send to Asgard Software for information about obtaining updated software.

Program	Vers.	Last Upd.
Balloon Wars	1.15	1/1/86
High Gravity	2.3	5/1/88
Legends	1.1	4/1/88
Legends II	1.0	7/1/89*
Font Writer II	2.0	8/15/87
Picasso 2.0	2.0	11/1/89
Calendar Maker	1.05	6/1/88
Music Pro	1.2	11/1/89
Page Pro 99	1.5	12/7/89
Recipe Writer	2.0	5/1/87
Schedule Mngr	1.3	7/1/89
Stamp Manager	1.1	5/1/86
Typewriter	1.2	11/1/89
EZ-Keys Plus	2.0	8/15/88
Music. Synth.	1.1	11/1/86
Pre-Scan It!	1.1	10/1/86
PrEditor	1.2	12/1/88
TOD Editor	3.0	3/1/87

The Chip of the 90's?

Perhaps it is a measure of our times that while the 9938 video chip, the successor to the 9918A found in the TI-99/4A, is only starting to become accepted in our community it's maker, Yamaha, has already released an update to it called the 9958.

The 9938 processor, which is 100% compatible with the 9918A found in the 4A, is widely admired by Geneve users and those 99/4A owners with 80-column cards for it's stunning graphics capabilities. Not only can it display 80-columns of text, it can also handle full bitmap graphics that rival a Commodore Amiga, display multi-color sprites, is extremely fast, and even has built-in commands that make programming graphics much simpler. It's capabilities are only starting to be explored by 9640 and 4A programmers.

The 9958 processor, it's sequel, is more evolutionary than revolutionary. While it has virtually all of the features found in the 9938 (and is still 100% compatible with the 9918A), it *is* different.

Perhaps its most outstanding new feature is the addition of a new graphics mode that permits up to 19,128 colors on the screen at once. This is over 4 times the number that can be displayed by the Amiga, and easily more colors than the human eye can even perceive!

Furthermore, it can display pictures up to 512x212 with this number of colors. While considerably more memory intensive than graphics modes with less colors, the new mode has certain advantages - almost television quality pictures being the major one. Furthermore, while the manual is none too clear on this point, it is possible that images could be digitized directly in this mode.

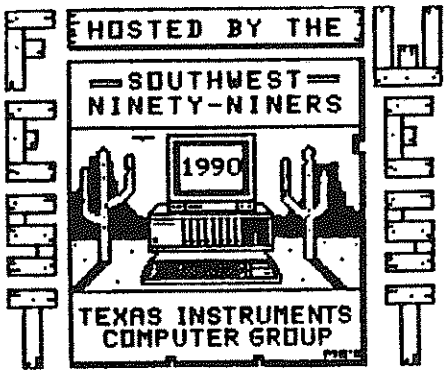
Compared to this new function, the other additions seem relatively minor. The 9958 features a new command for scrolling the screen horizontally one pixel at a time (a vertical scroll function is found in the 9938). This function would seemingly be useful in the first computer expected to utilize the 9958 - the next Nintendo game system. Nintendo computers have used a 9938 derivative for years, and it is assumed that the 9958 was developed to suit Nintendo's needs in their next model. This is wonderful news for the 99/4A community as it means the 4A will benefit (assuredly accidently), from the continued popularity of this game machine.

The last new command isn't as flashy as the other two, but could potentially be very useful. The 9958 has a function called the "Wait function" which, ironically, reduces the amount of time the computer needs to write data to the 9958's RAM (its VDP RAM) from the CPU's RAM. This might not seem terribly important on the surface, but could speed up tremendously such things as animation packages, games, drawing programs, desktop publishing packages, and others that use VDP RAM extensively.

Of course the 9958 isn't quite a free lunch. In addition to not being pin compatible with the 9938 (you can't just pull out a 9938 and plug in a 9958), it also doesn't have the built-in support for a mouse and the composite video output featured on the 9938. The latter isn't too much of a problem because supposedly any hardware designer can get around that limitation, but the former could inconvenience a lot of programmers (and perhaps ultimately users). Considering that the 9958 was most likely developed for use in Nintendo machines, the lack of mouse support was probably considered a way to save space on the chip by its designers (the mouse is a terrible device for playing most games).

There is some possibility that the 9958 will be adapted to the Geneve and various 80-column cards in the future, but from an impromptu survey of various hardware designers, it may be quite a while down the road. The 9938 processor is still being explored, and so the prospect of a still newer video processor to master must seem overwhelming. Don't look for 9958 boards from a dealer near you for at least another year. However, it may well turn out to be the video processor of choice in the 1990s.

TI Fest West '90



HOSTED BY: SouthWest Ninety-Niners - PO Box 17831
Tucson, AZ 85730 - (602)747-5046

DATE/TIME: Sat Feb 17, 1990 - 9am to 5pm
Sun Feb 18, 1990 - 9am to 3pm

LOCATION: Day's Inn - 88 E Broadway
Tucson, AZ 85701 - (602)622-4000
Ask Olivia for Fest West hotel rates

AIR TRAVEL: Bon Voyage/Ask Mr Foster Travel
1-800-327-7215 - Weekdays 8:30am to 5pm(MST)
Ask for Fest West '90 rates

Raffle - Tickets $1
Grand Prize
MYARC HFDC Controller
Other Prizes to be announced

Vendors
Software - Hardware
Accessories
Plus - Users Groups

Admission $4
(Free with ADVANCE purchase of 10 Raffle Tickets)
under 15 free when accompanied by adult

Faces of the 90's

Some of the faces you might see in the TI community in the 1990's.

If the 9900 microprocessor is the brain of the TI-99/4A, then certainly software is the lifeblood of the machine. Consequently, in order for the computer to survive into the 90's, there must be a steady supply of new programs and applications. Fortunately, it seems as the community has shrunk the number of sophisticated programmers for the computer has only increased. Where there were once dozens of assembly programs now there must be hundreds.

This article, the first in what undoubtably will become a continuing series, is intended to formally introduce you to the many new faces programming the 99/4A, as well as list some of the most well-known authors, and of course their work. If you aren't listed in this issue, please don't take offense - because of the number we can only cover so many people in each issue. Also, please excuse the brevity of each biography - with so many people only so much can be mentioned about each person. Finally, any errors in attribution or facts are unintentional and will be corrected as other materials are provided.

Warren Agee: Author of *Recipe Writer*, *Total Filer* and co-author of *First Base*, Warren (known to friends as WA), is a well-known SYSOP of Compuserve's TI Forum, as well as a known writer of databases. Over the years he's written programs in Forth and c99, and is considered one of the best c99 programmers. He is currently working on the next version of *First Base*, his mammoth database published by JP Software.

Paolo Bagnaresi: Another "old timer" in the TI community, Paolo was one of the first to break TI-Writer out of the TI-Writer module with his *BA-Writer*. Later somewhat eclipsed by Funnelweb, *BA-Writer* is still widely used by those preferring a fast editor over a complete writing environment. His most recent work is the *Bagnaresi Assembler*, which is a substantial re-write of the Editor/Assembler module with many enhancements.

Al Beard: A marvel of patience, Al worked for almost 3 years, unknown to the rest of the community, before he released his *Fortran 99* compiler - an extensive compiler that has become a quiet success for the 99/4A, and later in it's 9640 incarnation. All of Al's work before this release and since it has been devoted to creating and extending what is now one of the most professional development environments available for the 4A and the Geneve.

Tom Bentley: Originally became known for his work with c99, Tom has been doing all of his work in assembly in the last year or two. His commercial credits include the programmer's editor *PrEditor*, and *Batch-It*, a batch processing language. Since the birth of his first child he's had less time for programming, but he has been working on revising PrEditor and on other unspecified projects.

John Birdwell: Author of one of the least-appreciated disk management packages for the 99/4A, his *Disk Utilities* (or *DISKU*) is nevertheless one of the most capable programs of its type. Over the years John has worked on various projects for Myarc (*MDM5*, etc), and honed his assembly programming skills. More recently he started working on a Geneve version of DISKU.

David Bishop: An emerging programming talent, Dave is an accomplished assembly programmer and an adventure gaming enthusiast. His work with the *Adventure Editor* has pushed the limits of the *Adventure* module - his *Wizard's End* is the first multiplayer adventure game for that device, and *Witch's Brew* is an ingenious game for beginner's with extensive context-sensitive help (it gives help depending on what you are doing, and to the depth desired). His stand-alone works include a fascinating game called *Waterworks* (with digitized sounds yet), and a collection of educational programs to be published soon in module form by Asgard Software. He has been actively working on a complete re-write of the *Adventure Editor* for quite a while now.

Chris Bobbitt: A co-author of *Calendar Maker 99* and *Page Pro 99*, as well as the author of such programs as *Schedule Manager*, *Balloon Wars*, *Stamp Manager* and others, Chris is a programmer turned businessman as the owner of Asgard Software. In the last few years his other duties have prevented him from doing much programming, but he still actively plans and tests software projects.

Barry Boone: Barry is a regular fixture in the TI community. A third year Engineering student, Barry is the author of the extremely popular *Archiver* utility as well as useful 9640 utilities like *EXEC*. The "original

hacker", Barry has re-written interpreters for the Infocom games so that they run in 80-columns and corrected deficiencies, provided fixes for the Mechatronics 80-column card, the Myarc HFDC, and has often not only found bugs in other peoples programs, but provided corrections for them. A SYSOP of GEnie's TI Roundtable, Barry is involved in several projects at the moment.

Gary Bowser: Self-taught programmer's aren't too scarce in the TI world, but Gary is a self-taught programmer as well as a self-taught hardware designer - quite a rarity. His first widely available program, *T.A.S.S.*, is an extensive slideshow program for *TI-Artist*, *GRAPHX* and RLE pictures. Since the release of that item several years ago, he has turned his talents towards producing other programs (including his disk cataloger *Diskodex*), as well as a variety of hardware/software projects including a Z80 interpreter, the *RAMBO* package for Horizon RAM-disk users, and various others.

Harry Brashear: Harry is much better known for his writing and kibitzing then his programming, but over the years has produced many such useful gems as *Picasso Utilities* and a variety of programs included with his very successful book - *Home Publishing on the TI-99/4A*. An active booster of the 99/4A, Harry is both controversial and colorful, but never boring. He recently gave up his role as newsletter editor for the Western NY 99ers in order to pursue his columns in MICROpendium and Asgard News, as various books.

Paul Charlton: An "old-timer" to 99/4A programming, Paul first distinguished himself in the TI world with Fast Term - the first terminal emulator for the 4A that featured XMODEM transfers. In fact, Paul practically set the standard for XMODEM transfers for the 4A with that program, and its use by TI BBS users. Paul later did work for Myarc and was crucial to the development of the Geneve and it's M-DOS operating system. More recently Paul has been working on documenting M-DOS, and has developed tools such as *Picture Transfer.*

Colin Christensen: An assembly programmer from Australia, Colin has worked on a variety of projects (including *TapeMaster*) over the years and especially since his retirement. His most recent projects include *HardMaster*, an extensive disk sector editor for hard and floppy disks, and *ALFE* - an assembly programmers tool that makes debugging assembly source code simpler. Like many programmers, he tends to write tools for himself, but they are certainly interesting and useful ones.

Garry Christensen: As you may have guessed, Colin's son, Garry is also an assembly programmer who has turned his talents towards the Geneve. His recent projects include an interesting hard-disk backup utility that uses half of the hard-drive as a backup for the files on the other half, and a menuing system that permits the use of floppy drives with the HFDC on the Geneve.

Randy Cook: A budding Adventure module programmer, Randy recently finished a two-part adventure called *Castle Darkholm* that almost rivals Infocom adventures in the wealth of detail offered.

Mike Dodd: Mike began writing serious programs for the TI-99/4A that were as good as those by people 10-20 years his senior in high school - and now that he has started college his programming talents certainly shouldn't suffer. Over the years he's written *M-DISK* and *PC Transfer* , and he had a hand in Myarc's *MDM5* (the much loved/hated disk manager for the HFDC) and numerous other projects. His most recent work is *Identifile* - an interesting disk cataloging program that figures out what type of file each file on a disk is for you, and how to load it.

Charles Earl: Like a lot of TI-99/4A programmers, Charles Earl "came out of nowhere". However, none did so as spectacularly as Charles did. His *Telco* terminal emulator was literally the first program he wrote (well, since he re-wrote in about 3 times before releasing it, maybe his third), and in short order became simultaneously the standard to which all such other programs are compared, a stunning fairware success, and the most popular terminal emulator for the 4A and the 9640. Since Telco, Charles has co-written *Batch-It!* (a batch programming language), the *Hot Bug* debugger, and has for the last two years been working on *Press* - a program that promises to revolutionize word processing on the 99/4A.

Chris Faherty: Chris began programming in assembly on the TI-99/4A back in 1984 with the commercial release of his *Floppy Copy* - at the time one of the most sophisticated copying programs available for the 99/4A. Later, he developed his extremely successful *TI-Artist* - now the standard in TI graphics software - that propelled distributor Texaments into the big leagues. Since 1985 Chris' work has been slow in coming but always profound - his *Display Master* and his recent *TI-Artist Plus* have been very popular releases that have extended the capabilities of the machine.

Dennis Faherty: The father of Chris Faherty, Dennis Faherty is a professional programmer who gain instant success in the TI world with his*TI Base* - the first truly relational database for the 99/4A and the only database programming language. This remarkable program - which did for databases what *Telco* did for terminal emulators - has been repeatedly extended and improved over the last year.

Tom Freeman: Another "old timer" in the TI world - Tom began writing programs for the 99/4A before many 4A and 9640 programmers bought the machine. His works, originally published by MG include the popular *Diskassembler*. Most recently he has published his work through his own firm T&J Software.

Lynn Gardner: A long-time adventure gamer, Lynn is the co-author of *Oliver's Twist* as well as the author of *Zoom Flume*. An accomplished APL programmer, she has also worked at debugging and testing adventures from several other authors.

Bill Gaskill: Noted writer and programmer, Bill Gaskill is known more for his excellent user group column then his programming efforts. Those efforts are, however, quite real - he has been programming for databases and more recently for TI-Base for quite some time.

Ken Gilliland: A true artist who has chosen the 99/4A as a creative medium, Ken is noted for the huge number of works he has produced over the years - in music, graphics and games. He has implemented volumes of Wagner music, tunes from musicals, singing works, his infamous *Girlie Calendars*, and much more for fairware. He has also commercially published *Disk of Dinosaurs*, and *Disk of Pyrates*, and has contributed work to the popular *Doom Games I* and *Doom Games III*.

Donn Granros: Also an artist by original trade, Donn's interest has been towards adventure games since the very beginning. An entirely self-taught programmer completely without a math background, Donn has become the most well-known designer of adventure games for the 99/4A with his *Old Dark Caves* series, *Legends* and *Legends II:The Sequel*. At first an Extended BASIC programmer, Donn has become more proficient in assembly over the years.

Art Green: A programmer's programmer, Art is an "old timer" that was writing programs before many of the people listed here were born, or while then were in diapers. Art is unusual in that he develops software for the 4A on an IBM mainframe and ports it across to the 4A. His work is extensive, but until recently not widely known of. This includes his remarkable *RAG MacroAssembler* (the only macroassembler for the 99/4A), and his more recent *RAG-Writer* - a derivative of TI-Writer with many enhancements, improvements and corrections.

Bruce Harrison: Bruce was introduced to the TI world with a negative review of his version of Wheel of Fortune in MICROpendium. However, that unfortunate start didn't deter him. Since then he has become one of the most well-known publishers of music software for the TI - the extensive collection of music offered by his Harrison Software dwarf the efforts of most other TI music programmers in both range, length and quality. All of his most recent work is in assembly, and definitely uses it to best advantage.

J. Peter Hoddie: Author of such works as *Font Writer II* , *My-Word* and *Pre-Scan It!*, Peter began his own software company, Genial Computerware, in partnership with Barry Traver, and later reformed it again with Paul Charlton as JP Software. A recent graduate of Boston University, he recently relocated to the west coast where he took a position in Apple. His most recent work is *MacFlix Professional*, an improved version of his *MacFlix* MacPaint to TI-Artist converter.

Alexander Hulpke: A math and physics student from Germany, Alexander Hulpke first "broke into" the TI software recently with the release of his *XHi Graphics package*, which brings extended graphics support to TI Extended BASIC for 80-column card and Geneve users, and his assembly version of *Tetris* , both of which are available fairware. No word on future plans - but great things are expected from one with such first releases.

Ed Johnson: Another self-taught programmer, Ed is a manager of a pizza restaurant in his other life, as well as a devoted father of two. He began writing software for the 99/4A by helping to write *Legends* with Donn Granros, and later *Calendar Maker 99* and *Calendar Maker Utilities* with Chris Bobbitt. His most recent project was the phenomenally successful *Page Pro 99* and its associated utilities. An assembly programmer, Ed has always been interested in graphics and graphics software.

John Johnson: John Johnson is primarily known in the TI world for his *MENU* and *BOOT* programs for Horizon RAMdisks, as well as being the SYSOP of GEnie's TI Roundtable. However, over the years he has also authored many others programs marketed commercially and fairware. He has done quite a bit quietly over the years, and is expected to contribute new things for years to come.

Ray Kazmer: Ray is noted in the TI community for the "fun" software he writes. Over the years he's produced the *Woodstock Christmas Card* , *The Maze of Grog*, a *Valentine's Day card*, and other such works that have delighted hundreds if not thousands of users. He is also the author of such works as *ARTCON+* and other more serious endeavors.

Eric LaFortune: A new programmer from Belgium, Eric is a rising star in the TI community. His first commercial release, *Boulder Dash*, is a remarkable program that is not only an incredible game with extensive graphics and use of sound, but is also distinguished in that it uses a heretofore undiscovered graphics mode on the 99/4A. Eric

wrote this game originally on a cassette based system with the Mini-Memory - proving even new things are possible on the most basic system.

Micheal Maksimik: Another new face in the TI world, Mike is off to a fast start with three new projects of his - an MS-DOS like disk manager for the TI called *F-DOS*, an inexpensive mouse interface and an inexpensive MIDI interface for the 4A (see this issue for details). An accomplished assembly programmer currently attending IIT, Michael is working on a variety of things for future commercial release.

Mike McCann: The owner and chief programmer of McCann Software, Mike McCann is one of the most well-known Forth programmers for the 4A and Geneve, as well as the only major publisher of TI software to use it extensively. His work in the past includes *Business Graphs 99*, *The Printer's Apprentice* desktop publishing system, and the *TPA Toolbox* for the 99/4A. His most recent work is a greatly enhanced version of TPA for the Geneve. He has also worked on 99/4A hardware - at one time he offered a Forth co-processor card known as the Avanti 99.

Roger Merritt: Another programmer turned entrepreneur, Roger Merritt began writing TI software packages quite a while ago, and has more recently devoted his efforts to his software company while programming on the side. His work includes *Form Shop*, *Jiffy Card*, *Jiffy Flyer*, various color versions of the previous two, *G.A.P.*, and *Picture It* - all graphics oriented software available from his firm Comprodine.

Beery Miller: One of the original software supporters of the Myarc Geneve, Beery has published a wide variety of interesting utilities and applications for the 9640, mostly through his publication *9640 News*.

Jim Peterson: The owner of Tigercub Software. Jim is to software as Isaac Asimov is to writing - incredibly prolific. While other programmers have maybe a dozen titles to their credit, Jim has written literally hundreds of programs in a wide variety of subjects, and continues to produce new ones for cassette and disk systems. More recently he has organized his extensive public domain software collection, which he has made available at a very reasonable cost.

Clint Pulley: Like Al Beard, Clint is primarily known for one program. Also like Al, it is a biggie - the c99 compiler for the 99/4A and the Geneve. The first and only C compiler for both machines, c99 is the language of choice of several programmers listed here, as well as hundreds of others around the world. Over the years since it was released, Clint has steadily enhanced and improved the compiler. No word on future plans for it.

Jim Reiss: A recent graduate in computer science from Cornell College, Jim is arguably the only full-time paid programmer for the TI-99/4A. Since he began working for Asgard Software in the summer of 1988, Jim has written *Typewriter 99*, *Tris*, *Pix Pro* , and numerous small utilities. Almost a specialist in producing cartridges (with 3 under his belt), Jim's most recent project is a new cartridge based terminal emulator called *Link* that permits XMODEM downloading/uploading to and from cassette among other things. Jim is a SYSOP on CIS' TI Forum.

Paul Scheidemantle: Both a graphics and chess enthusiast, Paul is quite well known in the 99/4A community for his work with Picasso, TI-Artist and Page Pro 99. His graphics packages for each (*Picasso Enlarger*, *Picasso Borders*, *Sports Pics*, various *TI-Artist* font packages, *Page Pro Fonts #1&2*, etc.) are enjoyed by thousands of people. More recently he has been doing more programming work, as reflected in such projects as *Page Pro Utilities*. A writer as well, Paul writes frequently for user group newsletters, and has written extensively for Harry Brashear's *Home Publishing on the TI-99/4A* supplemental series.

Mickey Schmitt: Mickey is an adventure buff who until recently had only a cassette system. However, even with just cassettes she managed to play, and later write adventure games. After getting a disk system together, she began writing adventure games for the Adventure module by herself and in partnership with Lynn Gardner - including *Oliver's Twist* and *Rattlesnake Bend*. A writer as well, Mickey is the author of a popular series of articles on using cassettes, as well as of the *Adventure Reference Guide*.

Wayne Stith: A soon-to-be new father (if the blessed event hasn't already happened by the time you read this), Wayne is a fascinating person intrigued with the capabilities of the 99/4A and the Geneve. His work includes the well-received assembly version of *Chainlink* (a popular Solitaire derivative), and the *Triad* terminal emulator that provides a subset of *Telco's* features in one entirely memory-resident package. His most recent project is a version of *Triad* for the Geneve that promises substantial enhancements, including a script language.

Barry Traver: An Extended BASIC programmer as well as an accomplished writer and columnist from nearly "the beginning", Barry has had his works published the original 99'er Magazine, as well as later in his own Genial TRAVelER. Barry wrote the standard for the original Archiver program, has written numerous Extended BASIC utilities over the years, and more recently has been involved with Genial TRAVelER. Barry is a sysop on GEnie's TI Roundtable and

Compuserve's TI Forum, and is a well-known writer and speaker who attends shows and has spoken on numerous topics related to the 99/4A.

Travis Watford: Over the years Travis has distinguished himself with many excellent fairware and commercial offerings, including his BBS software (*PBBS*), the *MAX-RLE* picture converter which opened up RLE graphics to 4A users, and later such programs as *RAM*Boot* and *Quick Run*, which are useful to Myarc RAM-disk owners and Extended BASIC programmers respectively. Travis is also the author of *Omega*, a terminal emulator.

Don & Aaron West: Another father-son programmer team, Donn and Aaron West broke into the 99/4A programmer world with their *AV-Index* program - an audio and video cassette labeling program with database capabilities. They are currently working on other unspecified projects.

Lutz Winkler: A regular columnist in MICROpendium, Mr. Winkler is well known for his work in extending TI Forth. In recent issues of that magazine he has provided in-depth support for 80-columns to Forth first in text mode and later for graphics. ⇩

TI Watch

News and observations about a certain company..

The TI-99/4A and Myarc Geneve 9640 communities have a natural interest in the comings and goings of TI. In this issue we'd like to share with you some of the latest

TI Gets Patent

The old image of Japanese companies "borrowing" technology from U.S. companies, and then proceeding to use it to drive U.S. firms out of business, is in for an update. In a move that is liable to change the computer industry (as well as increase the cost of most Japanese devices), Texas Instruments was recently granted a patent to the integrated circuit in Japan - only 30 some years after it was invented. This entitles TI to collect a small royalty on each chip made by Japanese firms that utilize the technology - in other words every RAM chip, every microprocessor and any other type of chip you can think of.

This patent, which is on technology basic to the computer industry, should earn TI hundreds of millions of dollars in royalties alone each year for the next 11 years (the life of a patent of this nature). To put this in perspective - TI will make money on every one of the RAM chips that Japanese firms make next year, and Japan controls 70% of the World market for RAM chips. This should go a long way toward eliminating the competitive advantage Japanese electronics firms have (or shall we say "had") over U.S. electronics firms - now Japanese firms have to pay royalties for technology that U.S. firms have had to pay for years. Since Japanese workers now make almost as much as U.S. workers, U.S. firms have a golden opportunity to catch up on a lot of markets Japanese firms have come to dominate in recent years - since the costs for American firms are approximately those of Japanese firms now. If U.S. companies can't close the gap now, the blame will now have to be laid on poor management and not an uneven playing field.

Compaq Chooses TI for Chips

Compaq, a firm originally started by former TI employees in 1982 and now larger then TI itself, has found working with TI a lot easier then with other chip manufacturers. Therefore, it surprised few last year when Compaq standardized on the TI 34010 video processor (a chip that controls the display, like the 9918A in the TI-99/4A) last year, and more recently, when Compaq chose TI as the the manufacturer of a custom EISA chip set. EISA (Extended Industry Standard Architecture) is the rest of the IBM PC compatible computer industry's response to IBM's PS/2 architecture.

Two years ago, IBM introduced it's PS/2 computers that utilized a then proprietary architecture that was still software compatible with it's earlier computers. The rest of the PC compatible computer industry's response was to ignore the PS/2, and IBM's offerings weren't sufficiently capable or priced low enough to interest the vast majority of PC computer owners, and thus make the rest of that industry adopt it. Realizing that the architecture used by PC and AT com-

patibles was rapidly aging, Compaq, Hewlett-Packard and other leaders in PC clones began work on EISA as a more compatible alternative to the PS/2 architecture. After much development the first EISA computers are now being released, and an avalanche of them is expected soon.

Intel was, to this point, the only firm manufacturing EISA support chips (which it must have been doing grudgingly since Intel is partially owned by IBM). Compaq, by choosing TI as an exclusive alternative source of these chips, has already started the battle to dominate this burgeoning market. The TI chips do not have the hardware problems that the Intel chips have, and hence Compaq EISA computers should be faster then EISA computers produced by other manufacturers.

In related news, TI recently signed a five-year pact with Compaq related to sharing technology and manufacturing. TI has in the past signed similar agreements with Apple. Maybe the IBM PCjr killed the TI-99/8 in 1983, but it seems TI is now getting revenge by backing two companies that are doing a good job at knocking IBM out of the microcomputer market altogether.

TI Releases "Cheap" Laser Printers

Texas Instruments recently released a new printer known as the *microLaser* that is considerably more affordable then its previous laser printer offerings. The new *microLaser* carries a suggested retail price of $2999 - making it one of the least expensive Postscript laser printers available. While Postscript printers are very rare in the TI and 9640 communities, we've had one attached to our Geneve in our office for almost a year now and found it very useful.

In the future, as Postscript printers become less expensive, TI-99/4A software will certainly begin supporting it. These type of printers, used primarily now with Apple Macintosh computers and high-end PC compatibles, can create near typeset quality pages, and mix graphics and text on a page with ease (as witness this magazine - produced entirely on a Postscript laser printer). TI's new *microLaser* is reasonably fast (6 pages/minute), easily upgradeable to up to 4Mb of RAM, and will even accept external font modules. ⇩

Hijacking of HardMaster

Asgard Software received a nasty shock a couple of months ago. Right before we released our new disk sector editor for the Myarc HFDC, a program purporting to be the "Myarc HFDC Sector Editor" (HFDCSE) appeared on GEnie and on several bulletin boards, along with extensive documentation. This program is, in fact, a program known as *HardMaster* , it's by Colin Christensen of Australia, and it is published by Asgard.

Someone obtained a copy of this program by unknown means, as well as the documentation we prepared from information provided by the author, and removed all references in both to the author, Asgard Software, and the real name of the program. The culprit substituted in Myarc's name for that of the distributor and the author and the name of the program.

The perpetrator then placed the program on bulletin board services, and eventually it was placed (either unintentionally or otherwise) on GEnie where it received national distribution.

Several HFDC users unwittingly downloaded this "gift from Myarc", and spread it to other bulletin boards. No doubt now the program is also available in some user group libraries. This is, of course, illegal (though innocently done). All honest users, user groups and BBS owners are required by law to immediately remove this program from their collections and eliminate all copies of it. If you like the program, and would like a legitimate copy that is much improved over the one "hijacked", you can send a check for $14.95 to Asgard Software (P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849) and we'll be happy to send you a legitimate copy of the program with a nicely printed, more extensive manual.

I believe that most users condemn piracy. I also know that some condemn it but wink at it when it benefits them. This particularly insidious form of piracy benefits NO ONE. This type of action strikes at the very core of the right to ownership - the right to be acknowledged as the author of a program. If authors cannot be assured that the programs they write will contain notice of their authorship, regardless of how the program is distributed, THEY WILL NOT WRITE THEM. Period. No author likes to see his/her program pirated, but if it has to happen they at least like people to know they wrote it. This doesn't even give the author that much.

This form of software piracy does not benefit the honest user or even the sometimes pirate - it only benefits those that wish to bury the TI com-

Continued on next page...

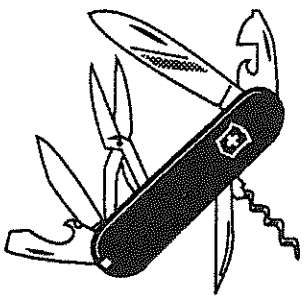
Hijacking, continued from previous page...

munity once and for all. Therefore this action, and all actions like it, should be CONDEMNED BY ALL SOFTWARE USERS AND MANUFACTURERS.

We'd like to thank the SYSOPs of the three major networks, Barry Boone of GEnie's TI Roundtable, Jeff Guide of Delphi's TI Information Network and Jim Horn of Compuserve's TI Forum, as well as the several BBS owners we've contacted, for their prompt action in helping to stem the distribution of the pirated version. We'd particularly like to thank Barry Boone for pointing it out to us in the first place.

Finally, I'd like to note that we have retained a lawyer for this matter, and criminal as well as civil legal action will be taken against the individual or individuals responsible for this act (or their legal guardians). We also expect that all users who unknowingly helped transmit this program will provide us with information about where they obtained it. We will of course not prosecute any user who provides information of this type. Again, the fault for this incident lies with the person or persons who stole and modified the program and documentation in the first place, and not those individuals who took the accreditation of the program to Myarc at face value. Thank you.

Chris Bobbitt, Asgard Software



User group observations and more...

There are a few things in the community that have been bugging me lately, and since I have free rein on this column, I thought I would whine and complain a bit this month.

First of all, I attended two TI faires this year in as many months, Washington DC and Carlisle Pa. Both of them were great, but neither one was as good as it could have been. The Washington show was the "new boy on the block" and was done in a very professional manner, in a hotel, with lots of important people, and a banquet afterwards, etc. The Carlisle show on the other hand is down and dirty but, held with a hamfest so there is lots more to see, do, and spend money on. It was cheap to attend, easy to get to, and is more group-table orientated. Washington is quite the opposite on those counts, but when all is said and done, with the pros and cons of both, they probably come up even at the bottom line.

What I believe is that both got a lot less in paid attendance than they could have, simply because they both existed. This is something that I have been complaining about for a long time... there are too many fairs, too close together, in too short of time. Both of these probably could have increased paid attendance by fifty percent if one of them had paid attention to one of the aforementioned problems.

Please don't get me wrong, I loved them both, but I had expected much better attendance at Carlisle, and I think Washington stole their thunder. I remember that as the Washington group acquired the big kahoonas, (actually paying the way for a couple) I would announce with great excitement to my wife that _____ would be there TOO. Finally, one day, she looked at me and said, "with all of these demigods coming, I sure hope there are going to be some people to pay homage to them". I think that says it all.

A little more cooperation between the groups, would produce bigger shows, in the proper place, at the proper time. The end result would bring more money to the venders and groups that planed it. It's the venders and group tables that make the show and drag in the people. As it stands, there are too many reasons for procrastination. Wouldn't people from PA have attended Washington if their own were not just around the corner? Likewise, wouldn't Virginia people have gone to Carlisle if they hadn't already seen it all in Washington? Wouldn't the venders such as Harrison Software, Tony Lewis etc., who were absent from Carlisle, have gone there if it was the only one in three months?

Do as you will fellas, but I think you're cutting your own throats. A convention in western Maryland, or just above

Baltimore, jointly given by the many groups in the area, (including Jersey) in late October, would make more sense to me. Chicago doesn't enter into it because they are in another section of the country all together. Just a thought.

Now this brings up another point, cooperation. This is a difficult situation at best, mainly because we are thinly spread out all over the world. THE TI COMMUNITY NEEDS A CENTRAL COMMITTEE OR GOVERNING BODY! Not one that is in it for the money, but one that looks at everything going on, makes suggestions, dispenses information, and helps to keep us organized. Let me give you an example.

I would like to see a John Guion Award given for the best hardware project of the year, but who is to present it? How are they to know what projects are finished and ready to be produced for the community, and who is to decide which one is best? A central committee could handle all of this and more. They would make themselves available to the networks, with a once a month powwow for the community at large. It would also be up to them to maintain a viable list of TI groups, and assist in setting up groups where there are none. This committee should also be responsible for printing up a newsletter that would go out to all of the groups so that information is current and not duplicated.

I know that such an organization would be difficult to set up, but we NEED it. We are disorganized at best, and will die if we don't get that way pretty fast, at worst.

Then there is this $#@!&#@ console that we are dealing with. I wish to heaven that SOMEONE would create a new shell to hold all of these great hardware mods that people keep coming up with. If you stuff a Zino board into it, that's great, and a heck of an upgrade. But what about the keyboard? There has to be an answer for that, and I truly think that a brand new shell is the answer. Something that cartridges plug DOWN into, and will hold a small footprint PC keyboard. Everybody keeps talking about a new computer... I don't think this is the answer. We have everything we need, rams, 80 column cards, fantastic programs to work with, why not something to put it all in? The Geneve isn't the answer to everybody's problem, and neither is the Rave keyboard, that only adds to the desk mess. I would pay $150-$200 for such a thing, or more, if it included other upgrades. I DON'T WANT A NEW COMPUTER, particularly if the operating system smells like a PC.

The last item is not so much a gripe as it is a suggestion. I want to personally congratulate the Front Range 99'ers in Colorado Springs for their firm stand on the future of their group. In spite of outlandish pressure to convert over to a multi-computer user group, the TI'ers hung in there, stood up and were counted. When the smoke cleared, only the TIers were left. Good show guys and gals!!!

Now, the Front Rangers have a problem, in that, they have a lot of money in their treasury and not a whole lot to do with it. This "problem" is one that is shared by many groups in large cities. While they operate on a non-profit bases, they have managed to get a couple of grand in the bank for a rainy day... it rarely rains.

My suggestion is this; Look around for a viable hardware project that's in the R & D stage and dump some of that money into it, for a cut of the action, of course. The idea is, that the money goes to work for the community at large, and trickles back in at a slow enough rate to keep you solvent. Also, in the loooong run, you make some nice interest.

Now, you do have to be careful. Make sure that you talk the project over with people like Bud Mills or Barry Boone or somebody like that. Even Asgard is interested in some of these things. But these are people that you, and all the rest of the community know, and, can trust. There are a number of things going on right now and individuals can rarely afford to put out all the money it takes to get a board to market. Give it some thought, it can't hurt, and it could help a lot.

-htb

Asgard Bookshelf

This is a service area for Asgard News subscribers without access to user group libraries, telecommunications services or other magazines. The following freeware items and publications are available:

Item	Disks	Description
Picasso 1.4	1	An excellent drawing program
Artist Printers	1	Excellent file printers for Artist pics
RAG Writer	1	Enhanced TI-Writer
Telco	2	Excellent Terminal Emulator
MDOS Development Kit	2	Kit for MDOS programmers
Hot Bug	2	Debugger for 99/4A and 9640

Item	Cost	Description
The Adventure Guide	$14.95	Lists 200 adventures for the 99/4A.
The Orphan Survival Handbook	$14.95	A tremendous resource
Home Publishing on the TI-99/4A	$15.00	How to use the 4A to publish
Interface Standard & Design Guide	$19.95	For programmers & hardware hackers

Please send an initialized disk and $1.00 for each disk requested (2 disks and 2 dollars for 2-disk packages). The books are available at the price listed, plus $2.50 a book shipping and handling expenses. Please note that several of the software items are freeware - the author asks (and we strongly urge) that you send the requested fee if you use the program. The $1.00 charge is merely a copying and postage fee. It should not be construed as a fairware contribution.

Send all orders to: **Asgard Bookshelf**, P.O. Box 10697, Rockville, MD 20850. Please allow 4-8 weeks for delivery. This offer is limited.

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 20849

Picasso 2.0

While other drawing programs have more features then this program, *Picasso 2.0* has a capability still not found in any other 99/4A drawing program - the ability to draw up to half a page at once. *TI-Artist* and *GRAPHX* screens, by contrast, are only 1/3rd the size. While by itself this will only interest the artist who wants larger pictures, this capability is potentially of tremendous use in desktop publishing. With the new generation of TI-99/4A page-making software, the average *TI-Artist* or *GRAPHX* picture simply disappears on the page because it is comparatively so small. Desktop publishing on the 99/4A cries out for large, detailed pictures - which drawing programs limited to the size of the screen cannot deliver. *Picasso*, on the other hand, doesn't have this limitation. You can potentially use *Picasso* to create large custom pictures, titling or borders for use in *Page Pro 99* and other desktop publishing programs. The only problem with this is that Picasso doesn't save its pictures in a format that *Page Pro 99* uses, and all the other desktop publishing programs for the 99/4A and the Geneve aren't set up to handle large pictures like the ones Page Pro can accept.

While you can convert *Picasso* pictures into *Page Pro 99* format with *Pix Pro*, if this is only conversion you need to do using *Pix Pro* would be equivalent to shooting birds with a howitzer. So, in order to enhance *Picasso*'s value as a desktop publishing tool Asgard Software is now packaging a direct *Picasso* to *Page Pro 99* converter with *Picasso 2.0*, written by Paul Scheidemantle.

To obtain a copy of Picasso 2.0 with this utility, return your original Picasso 2.0 program disk plus $2.50 to the address above.

Page Pro 99, Version 1.5

We debated calling this version 2.0, considering the tremendous value of the new features added to this popular program.

Version 1.5 of *Page Pro 99* is now available and is shipping. This new update features the following new features/additions:

- A built-in disk cataloger at every load filename prompt. Simply enter the device to catalog and press the command key any time you are asked to enter in a filename for a font or page file, and *Page Pro 99* version 1.5 will catalog the disk, and list all the files one after the other. When the one you want to load comes up, all you have to do is select it and *Page Pro 99* will load it for you - you don't even have to type in the filename. This feature is obviously useful to anyone who wants to load a file and doesn't remember the filename.

- Version 1.5 features the addition of a "clipping" function. You can now, using the cursor keys, clip any portion of your *Page Pro* page and save it as a picture. This function has numerous uses: for one thing you can create graphic elements like titles, letterheads or such and save them as a picture so they can be easily used on another page. Another use for this function is to effectively remove the limit on fonts or pictures on a page. For instance, you can place 28 pictures on a page, and then save the whole page as one picture. You could then reset the program, load in the big picture and place 27 more on top of it. You can do this ad infinitum. The same thing could be done with fonts. You can type some text with one font, save that text as a picture, load in another font and type in it, and then load in the text you clipped as a picture. This function will allow you to create incredibly detailed and complex pages.

- The new version gives you much more control over loading in a TI-Writer text file. Version 1.5 will allow you to start loading in the text at the cursor's location. It will not erase anything else on the page except any text that was previously located where you placed the text. Now, for instance, you could type up a small block of text in TI-Writer, and then load it into *Page Pro* in the center of the page, and nothing above, below, to the left or to the right of the text will be disturbed.

- Finally, the author endeavored to make the program even more user friendly then it was before. For instance, now whenever you change the typing direction the program beeps. This makes it harder to accidently type in the wrong direction. Additionally, all filename loading prompts are now more descriptive about the type of filename they want you to enter. Several more little touches like this were added.

All in all, version 1.5 represents both an evolutionary, and especially in the case of the clipping function, revolutionary advance over the previous version. The new version gives the experienced *Page Pro* user several powerful new tools for creating pages - as a result making a newsletter with v1.5 is much easier then with the previous version, among other things. While most of these features were added at the request of users, the clipping function is an entirely original addition by Ed Johnson.

To obtain the update, which includes a manual addendum, return your program disk and $4.00 to the address above. The new version of *Page Pro 99* retails for the same price as the previous one - $24.95.

Typewriter 99, Ver. 1.2

While this program hasn't made a big splash since it was released, it has very quietly become one of the most popular items Asgard Software sells. While originally released as a tool to do small jobs on your computer more easily then with a word processor, it turns out that it meets the entire word processing needs of hundreds of users who found word processors too alien and complex, and has been of great use to hundreds more.

The new version of *Typewriter 99* may be of interest to quite a few people then. Version 1.2 has the following changes:

- Setting up your printer has been greatly simplified. Instead of specifying the type of printer interface you use, you simply have to select either RS232/1 or RS232/2, PIO, or SIO. If you select either of the first two you are asked to enter in the baud rate.
- Support for the RS232 interface has been greatly enhanced - RS232/2 support is now included, and both interfaces function a lot better then before.
- *Typewriter 99* now supports the Multicom and Paraprint stand-alone interfaces - in all versions.
- Characters now auto-repeat when the key is depressed - to cursor over to the right hand side of the page, for instance, you simply have to press and hold down FCTN-D instead of pressing it repeatedly.
- An M-DOS version of *Typewriter 99* is now available. This version, called MTYPE, loads and runs directly through M-DOS. This version is distributed on the same disk as the TI-99/4A version.

To obtain a disk update, return your disk and $4.00. For a module update, return the original module and $7.00.

New Products

For more information or to order any of the following new items, send to:

Asgard Software
P.O. Box 10306
Rockville, MD 20849
(703)255-3085

U.S. residents, please add $0.75/item shipping and handling. Canadians, add $1.25/item and Airmail please add $5.00/order.

Pix Pro

This is a useful utility that allows you to take pictures stored in any of 8 popular picture formats and save them in any of 6. This effectively allows you to do 48 or so different conversions - many of which weren't possible before or were only possible with the aid of 2 or more programs.

Pix Pro supports as input formats TI-Artist Instance, TI-Artist Picture, GRAPHX, RLE, Picasso, Page Pro, Pix and MacPaint. Pix Pro will take any of the pictures stored in those formats, and allow you to save them as TI-Artist Instances, TI-Artist Pictures, GRAPHX, Picasso or Page Pro 99 pictures, or in the Pix format. With the exception of RLE and MacPaint, all of these formats are popular 99/4A native formats. In other words, now you can use most any 99/4A program to draw a picture and then use any other to add to it or print it. MacPaint and RLE are included because they are very popular formats for other computers - there are literally thousands of pictures available in MacPaint and RLE formats that, with the aid of *Pix Pro*, can be converted into any of the popular 99/4A picture formats. For non-artists, this means a very large supply of ready-made art that you can get for next to nothing from user groups libraries and elsewhere, and then use in such programs as *Page Pro 99*, *TI-Artist*, and the others listed.

In addition to straight conversions, *Pix Pro* has a number of other useful features that making it startlingly valuable to anyone who uses graphics. The program includes a built-in clipping function that allows you to take any portion of a picture, up to the size of the screen, and "clip" it from the picture. The clipped section can then be saved in any of the save formats. This means you can save exactly the portion of

Continued on next page...

a picture that you want, without using a drawing program to erase anything else. Additionally, *Pix Pro* has an excellent MacPaint picture printer built in - MacPaint pictures are often full-page and generally can't be viewed or used in their entirety except with *Page Pro 99*. The MacPaint picture printer will allow you to print out these pictures, and then use traditional cut and paste methods to use them in your works. If you have *Page Pro 99* you can save MacPaint pictures in the Page Pro format and use them in that program.

Pix Pro not only allows you to handle MacPaint pictures, it doesn't have the trouble converting and printing particularly large ones that the other MacPaint program has. The other MacPaint program will only allow you to convert small chunks of MacPaint pictures to TI-Artist picture format or print them out, and has difficulty with large MacPaint pictures. *Pix Pro* does everything the other program does, does it right, and does a lot more besides, and costs the same amount. There is really no comparison.

Finally, *Pix Pro* has other little touches - there is a disk cataloging function available at any filename prompt that lets you catalog any disk (even a hard disk or a RAM-disk), the program is entirely menu-driven, it comes with an extensive, easy-to follow manual, and more. If you are serious about graphics, you shouldn't be without this program. *Pix Pro* requires 32K and a disk system, or a Myarc Geneve 9640. It carries a suggested retail price of $14.95.

Page Pro Utilities

By Paul Scheidemantle, and written in conjunction with Ed Johnson (the author of *Page Pro 99*), the *Page Pro Utilities* package features *Page Pro Enlarger, Page Pro Stripper, Page Pro Flipper* and the *Page Pro Line Font Editor.*

Page Pro Enlarger, the first utility included and the most comprehensive, allows you to do things you never imagined possible with your library of Page Pro pictures. This fast program gives you the ability to freely enlarge, reduce, stretch, squeeze or "ghost" your pictures. Ghosting is a process by which a picture is made to look "ghostly", or semi-visible - excellent for backdrops and such. Experienced Page Pro users understand that sometimes you need a picture to fit a specific space - *Page Pro Enlarger* allows you to make the picture you want to use fit the space you need to fill.

The next utility, *Page Pro Stripper*, is worth its weight in disk space - disk space saved that is. This utility allows you to remove excess space often found around Page Pro pictures (particularly converted ones). This potentially can result in saving 10, 20 or even 30 or more sectors which once contained nothing but "white space". You only have to use it once - the savings lasts forever.

Page Pro Flipper is ideal for anyone who wants to make greeting cards or signs with Page Pro. This easy-to-use utility lets you literally flip your Page Pro pictures (and anything in them) in 90 degree increments. You can rotate a picture left or right, or even flip it completely upside down. Fast and friendly to use, *Page Pro Flipper* lets you flip your pictures to your hearts content.

Finally, the *Page Pro Line Font Editor* is a small utility designed to allow you to create line fonts for Page Pro. While a more comprehensive utility (with the ability to create and edit small and large fonts as well), is planned for the near future, this little program allows you to quickly and easily create border patterns, special symbol sets, or anything else and save them as Page Pro line fonts.

Page Pro Utilities has a suggested retail price of only $14.95.

Sports Pics

Sports Pics is a remarkable collection of pictures designed for use with TI-Artist or Page Pro 99 (or programs compatible with either). These pictures can be used to accent your own works, or as a basis for new works. If you have an interest in sports, you will enjoy these excellent, all-original drawings from Paul Scheidemantle, one of the premier TI-99/4A artists.

Distributed on disk with a manual and reference sheet, this package carries a suggested retail of $9.95. Please specify either the Page Pro or TI-Artist version when ordering.

Picasso Enlarger

Picasso Enlarger, by Paul Scheidemantle, is an easy to use utility designed to compliment the Picasso graphics program. It will allow you to enlarge, reduce, ghost (lighten) a picture, merge TI-Artist instances into your Picasso pictures, and convert 1 high (8 pixel high and wide) fonts to and from the Picasso and TI-Artist formats. This useful utility provides you a whole range of tools to let you get more out of this useful drawing package.

Suggested retail $14.95. Distributed on disk.

Using Picasso

The book you'll wish you had had a long time ago! *Using Picasso* is a 40 page "manual" for this valuable drawing program that gives you a complete overview of the program, as well as tells you how to best utilize its features. It also includes information about using Picasso with other drawing programs, and how to use it by itself to create flyers, letterheads, labels and even whole page ads and newsletters. By well known author Harry Brashear. Suggested retail $5.95.

The News

News about manufacturers, discoveries, exhibitions and more...

Asgard Gains Module Making Facility

Asgard Software recently announced that they've become the first new original-equipment manufacturer of cartridges for the TI-99/4A in almost 4 years. These facilities were constructed, reportedly, to demonstrate their commitment to the 99/4A, as well as bring a host of new software to users of basic and lightly expanded console systems. Currently, Asgard Software offers two modules - *Typewriter* (a program that turns your computer into a sophisticated electronic typewriter), and *Tris* (an excellent version of the popular game from Russia), both by Jim Reiss. By the time this magazine hits the streets, they intend to have ready for release *Edu-Pack*, a collection of three educational games by David Bishop, and *Link*, a sophisticated cartridge based terminal emulator with XMODEM and ASCII downloading to cassette, by Jim Reiss. Additionally, Asgard has two other new cartridge programs in various stages of development. Assembly programmers who are interested in adapting existing programs for module, or who are interested in writing new module software are encouraged to contact Asgard Software at P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849.

Comprodine releases new products

At the Chicago TI Faire Comprodine recently released several new packages for the 99/4A. Among the releases were *War Zone* and *Living Tomb*, two new assembly language games, *Color Card*, a color version of their *Jiffy Card* greeting card-making program, *Cards 4All Occasions* and *Card/Flyer Graphics* (companions to *Color Card*), *Color Flyer* which is a color version of *Jiffy Flyer*, and *Artist Print Shop*, which is a program that allows you to type on a page with two TI-Artist fonts and place up to five TI-Artist pictures on it. For more information, contact Comprodine at 1949 Evergreen Ave., Fullerton, CA 92635, 714-990-4577 (12-9PM).

Dijit releases EPROM for 80-column card

Dijit recently introduced a new EPROM for their popular 80-column card which for the most part solves incompatibility problems with Asgard's popular *Page Pro 99*, and the industry-standard *Telco* terminal emulator. The Dijit card has been a popular option among 99/4A owners for adding 80-column capability to their machines, and allows you to use such programs as *TI-Writer*, *FunnelWeb*, the *PrEditor* text editor, *Multiplan* and others in 80-columns. For more information about the EPROM or the card, contact Dijit at 4345 Hortensia Str., San Diego, CA 92103.

Asgard Address changes

Time to get out your rolodex. Through the greater wisdom of the US Postal Service, without whom our lives would be so different (undoubtably for the worse), our zip code of 5 years has been changed. The Zip code on our address is now 20849 instead of 20850, evidently by Postal Service diktat and without consulting merchants and individuals effected. So, now when you write to Asgard Software address your letters P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849, and to Asgard News/Publishing write to P.O. Box 10697, Rockville, MD 20849. Thank you, and send any complaints regarding the inconvenience to USPS, Postmaster, Rockville, MD 20850.

Texaments sells Barry Boone products

Texaments, distributors of the popular TI-Artist and TI-Base programs, have added another feather to their cap with the Geneve Productivity Pack. This collection of useful utilities by Barry Boone includes *Archiver* (a program for combining and compressing files into one big file, and the reverse), and *EXEC* (a utility which allows you to run 99/4A assembly programs directly from M-DOS without using the GPL Interpreter on the Geneve 9640), as well as a few others. These programs are still available fairware, but can be purchased as a set if sources of fairware are unavailable to you. The suggested retail price is $19.95, and orders should be sent to Texaments, 244 Mill Rd., Yaphank, NY 11980.

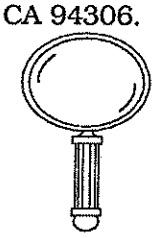
Programming/Hardware Manual released for 4A

Well-known 99/4A "hacker" Tony Lewis recently completed and released, at the TI International Expo in Washington DC, an excellent manual indispensable to both 99/4A programmers and hardware designers alike. The Interface Standard and Design Guide for TI-99/4A Peripherals is 100 page tome that covers topics ranging from the design and interfacing of TI-99/4A

peripherals to the construction of software to interface them. Programmers will appreciate the highly detailed descriptions (with flowcharts) of how DRSs really work, as well as the collection of utility programs included with the book on disk (including the Hot Bug debugger, 9900 and GPL disassemblers, etc.). This manual was reviewed and contributed to by some of the best known names in the 99/4A community. The complete book and disk package can be obtained from Asgard Software (P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849) for only $19.95 with a DS/SD diskette, or $20.95 for a book with two SS/SD disks. Please add $2.00 for shipping and handling. Technical inquiries should be directed to Tony Lewis at 409 Drolmond, Raleigh, NC 27615.

JP Software Releases Indentifile

JP Software previewed at the Washington DC TI International Expo, and released at the Chicago TI Faire the very interesting *Identifile* program by Mike Dodd. This unique cataloging program differs from other such programs in that it figures out automatically the software needed to load the programs stored on a disk, as well as which programs created which data files. While currently it only identifies some of the more popular file formats (file types not recognized by the program are indicated as "Unknown"), the author intends to update it as new ones become available. The program also supports 80-columns on the Geneve (and presumably 80-column equipped 99/4As). Contact JP Software for more information at 2390 El Camino Real #107, Palo Alto, CA 94306.



New Graphics mode for 99/4A Discovered

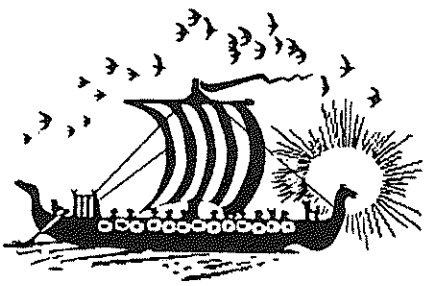
We recently had the pleasure of viewing a heretofore undiscovered and unused graphics mode on the 99/4A which permits spectacular color graphics and sprites, as personified in the new game *Boulder Dash*, by Eric LaFortune. This new graphics mode permits bitmap-mode like colors with pattern-mode like control of sprites and character definitions, which allows you to create graphics with almost unprecedented speed and color (hence it's name "half-bitmap"). The game *Boulder Dash*, hopefully only the first game to utilize it, feature incredible graphics, excellent sound effects and theme music, and quick, exciting action (kind of like the Atari game Dig-Dug). Currently, the program requires the Mini-Memory module and an expanded system, but will be adapted for other modules soon. To order this game send $12.95 plus $0.75 S&H to Asgard Software, P.O. box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849. It is amazing that after so many years new things are still being discovered about our machine. It is things like this that keep programmers still interested in the 4A.

Fall TI Shows "faire" well

Sorry - couldn't resist the pun. The regular crop of TI-only conventions this Fall was a mixed bag, but reports are generally heartening. Even 6 years after the 99/4A was discontinued, and 10 years after the 99/4 was first released, TI shows still draw strong attendance. The first show of the season, the TI International Expo '89 in Washington DC was very successful, according to organizers. Drawing about 300 attendees, this show was well organized (thanks to the efforts of Disk Only Software owner Jeff Guide and user group President Dr. Jerry Coffey), and users were enthusiastic. The next show on the docket, the All-European TI Show was a tremendous success, with almost 500 attendees from across Europe. After the success of these nascent conventions, the four-year old Seattle TI Faire managed to draw almost 200 users (down some from last year, but perhaps attributable to the perpetual rain that plagued the show), while the Harrisburg TI Show drew a similar number - down quite a bit from last year but most likely due to the fact the Washington DC show drew some of its thunder. The Grand Finale, if you will, the 6 year old Chicago TI Faire was well attended as usual, with vendors and attendees alike happy with the results. Best of all, the banquet afterwards didn't have chicken (for a change). As usual, the Chicago show featured new releases from many vendors, many reported elsewhere in this magazine.

Asgard section opened on GEnie

In partnership with GEnie's TI Roundtable, Asgard Software recently opened a special file download section just for Page Pro 99 users. This section contains artwork, special utilities, tutorials and sample pages for use with Page Pro, all of which can be downloaded and used free of charge (except for connect time) by registered users of this remarkable program. To gain access to this section, either send a GEnie mail message (from page 200) to C.BOBBITT, leave a message on section 7 of the Roundtable message section, or drop a note to Asgard Software, P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849.



Rumors

What's up with Myarc, M-DOS, MIDI and more...

The following column is devoted to all those bits of information that haven't quite graduated to "News" status yet, yet are interesting nonetheless. The items reported below are either incomplete or unconfirmed, hence Asgard Publishing will gladly publish a retraction or correction if necessary. We accept no liability for incorrect information.

99/4A MIDI, Mouse Demonstrated at Chicago

Michael "The Frogman" Maksimik, author of the F-DOS disk managing system for the 99/4A, demonstrated two unique new items at the Chicago TI Faire - an inexpensive mouse and a MIDI interface for the 99/4A. The mouse, which is a standard PC mouse without modification, attaches to the serial port, and through software Mike wrote can be used in TI-Artist or by Extended BASIC and Assembly programs. The MIDI interface is a device that allows you to attach intelligent music keyboards (such as the models produced by Casio), to the 99/4A. With the proper software, as yet undeveloped, you can play on the keyboard and the notes are sent to the 99/4A, where they can be modified ("patched" in the jargon of the technology), played on the 99/4A's own sound chip, or sent back to the keyboard or other MIDI compatible devices (including drum machines,etc.). While all of the software to do this isn't complete as yet, software has been written that allows other software to talk to the MIDI interface and by extension to MIDI devices. While neither the mouse nor the MIDI interface is completely unique (a crude MIDI interface was sold years back by Home Computer Magazine, and Mechatronics marketed a 99/4A mouse at one time), both are unusual in that they are relatively inexpensive to produce, and are comparable to what is available on other machines at a similar price. While Mr. Maksimik has not revealed marketing plans at this time, he is in negotiations with software companies.

Whither Myarc?

Rumor has it that a whole batch of Myarc Hard & Floppy Disk Controller Cards has turned out to be defective - prompting headaches for many distributors and would-be customers. Apparently, goes the story, the firm that Myarc contracts to produce the device has had a history of poor quality control work, and since the principal of Myarc, Lou Phillips, recently took another job, he hasn't had the time to devote to checking on his suppliers. While no word is available on how recent events will affect future planned Myarc hardware and software development, it is expected that projects such as ABASIC and M-DOS will be completed shortly by authors that contracted with Myarc for the purpose. It is ironic that these difficulties have begun to plague Myarc at this time, the HFDC has become an overnight sensation and reportedly the Myarc Geneve has started selling briskly again with the price reductions and exposure in the Triton catalog.

M-DOS Development Package Partly Here

Last issue in this column we created quite a ruckus when we announced that Genial Computerware's (now known as JP Software) M-DOS Development package (now called GenPROG) was delayed. After furious communications on the subject on several telecommunications services, the "squeaky wheel" evidently got the grease when Mr. Hoddie presented my a copy at the Washington D.C. TI International Expo in September. I'm happy to report that the software seems to be complete, however the documentation is lacking some critical areas - particularly discussions on reading the keyboard, using M-DOS video and math commands, and on multi-tasking. No word has been given when those things will be provided, but apparently they hinge on the completion of those parts of M-DOS.

Correction

Evidently we were incorrect when we announced in the previous issue of Asgard News that J. Peter Hoddie was a recent graduate of Boston College - it is actually Boston University that he recently attended. We apologize for the error, but at least we knew it was *some* school in Boston.

Great Lakes Software?

Great Lakes Software, along with their popular programs JoyPaint, Business Graphics 99, and Certificate Maker have seemingly disappeared from the radar screen. A recent letter to them from Asgard Software in regards to obtaining the file format JoyPaint pictures use has so far gone unanswered after two months

(Asgard wanted to support that format along with the rest in the recently released Pix Pro package - see this issue for details). Reportedly, an exchange program for JoyPaint clipart and pictures has also been discontinued. However, a dealer in California still is selling the products. We'd appreciate anyone knowing the status of that firm writing in and giving us the scoop.

European pirate destroys American software sales overseas

A large dealer of TI peripherals and software in northern Europe reportedly has been purchasing single copies of TI-99/4A and Myarc Geneve 9640 products from U.S. and Canadian firms, and then manufacturing and selling them to users all over Europe without their makers permission. While small-scale piracy is common for all computer communities (individuals making copies for friends), piracy on this scale has been known to destroy entire industries, and only benefits the pirate in the long run. Rumors of a class-action suit being filed by several U.S. software companies are floating around. In the meantime, be very careful that the software you purchase (particularly overseas) is actually produced by the company who wrote it and not the dealer selling it.

Next Issue...

Due to a large amount of news and our special features, many of our regular columns didn't make this issue - the next issue of Asgard News will contain our usual selection of tutorials, tips, and other useful bits of information. Our apologies for any inconvenience.

From the Mail Box

If you have a comment or question, please feel free to write to: The Editor, Asgard News, P.O. Box 10697, Rockville, MD 20850.

Cassette Software Wanted

I have the TI-99/4A. I am really interested in the games *Legends, Legends II, Mission Destruct*, and any others that are like *Legends*. But, I have a problem. I do not have the money for a disk and 32K system. I was wondering if you could put the games that I am interested in on cassette,
RICHARD MARCHETTI JR.
DERBY, CT

I certainly wish we could oblige you Richard, but a cassette system has certain limitations related to cassettes and not due to the computer. Legends is only possible on a 99/4A because of disk drives. That program, like many newer programs, is larger then even an expanded memory 99/4A can hold. The program is set up so that it looks to disk for certain things. It is a bit difficult to explain, but you can't read stuff off of a cassette the same way you can from a disk. I guess a good analogy would be the difference between a cassette tape and a record - in order to get to the third song on a cassette tape you may have to rewind or fast forward the tape. To get to the third song on a record, all you have to do is put the needle at the start of the third song. - you can read a cassette only from start to finish, while you can jump around at random on a record if you like. The only thing I can suggest is that if you want to play more sophisticated games like Legends, that you somehow save your pennies for a disk system.

Suggestions & Comments

I often wonder about the testing of programs. I think this frequently falls to more accomplished TI'ers and does not address the problems of an important segment of the market, novice and intermediate users. This is of particularly important to those of us who do not have a local users group. It simply is not practical for me to drive 200 miles to consult with my sophisticated friends. Our local college courses only speak IBM. They think TI is some sort of foreign country. With user groups gradually losing members, I think that the time has come for the ideas of E.M. Smith of the K-Town 99'ers. He has definite suggestions on the use of videos to demonstrate and tutor. Authors, software distributors or user groups could sell or rent them perhaps with a refundable deposit.
DON SCHWAB
HAYESVILLE, NC

We can't help but sympathize with the plight of users that don't have local user groups. For better or worse, there isn't too much that regional groups can do to help - much of the value of a user group comes from attending meetings and talking to other users about problems. As for the testing of software, I certainly can't speak for other software firms, but we do use a variety of beta testers. While some of our packages are only tested by experienced users, the software we produce intended for a wider audience usually is tested by more average users. For instance, the author of Page Pro 99, *Ed Johnson, had his two young children test it - hence we can honestly say it is so easy even a child can use it! As for the production of video tape tutorials and demos, honestly, few 99/4A software firms have the resources to not only produce the program but also a video tape on it. The simple fact of the matter is that most 99/4A programs don't have a market large enough to support this kind of effort. However, if there is a group or individual out there with the wherewithal to produce such an item, we would gladly provide our support in facilitating and distributing video demos/tutorials of our products. Anyone interested should contact Asgard Software (P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849).*

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