

---

# Chicago Times

Newsletter of the Chicago TI-99/4A Users Group

March – April, 2000

Editor: Ernest Pergrem

---



## The Prez Sez...

by Vic Steerup

As I sit here in my home computer room surrounded by a mass of TI equipment and software, much of it no longer available, and little of the rest available new, I can remember back to 1983, when I was a Tronics distributor, selling these hard-to-get beauties. Tronics was a brand-new multi-level marketing corporation, like Avon or Amway. Its purpose was to market, at retail level, Texas Instruments home computer equipment. In return, TI would not sell its equipment for less than it charged Tronics to anyone else. It was wild! People were driving and flying all over the country demonstrating this powerful new machine. No cumbersome, time-consuming disk operating system to load, it started up in one second. Loading and changing programs took only moments, as changing cartridges was a snap. Saving and loading YOUR programs was a little tedious, as cassette tape was the medium. Tronics even had demo tapes available, some of which I will show at future meetings. Future? Of course! We have survived the home computer wars, where Commodore and Atari both stayed in the market place, but have no User Groups.

We have survived Y2K, which was more of a fizzle, or a flop, either due to preparedness, or excessive end of the world media hype. We still have new hardware being made, by state-of-the-art CAD equipment, and

(See **The Prez Sez** on Page 2)

### Inside This Issue

- 2 *Editor's Pen*
- 3 *Meeting Notes – January 15, 2000*
- 3 *Meeting Notes – February 5, 2000*
- 4 *TI Resources On The Net2*
- 5 *PC99 Module Menu, Ver 1.2*



Bruce Harrison accepts the 1999 Peterson Award for TI-99/4A Software from TI-Chips Secretary Glenn Bernasek

## Voting Underway For Peterson Awards

For the past 4 years the TI-Chips Users Group has presented the Jim Peterson Achievement Awards, to members of the TI community. The award, conceived by former TI-Chips member Jim Krych and introduced in 1996 is presented to TI-99/4A and 9640 users and user groups in recognition of their achievements in one of four categories; TI-99/4A Community Service, TI-99/4A Software, TI-99/4A Hardware and Geneve 9640.

Although Jim Peterson, a prolific programmer, was not a member of TI-Chips, his contributions and dedication touched all TI-99/4A users.

Nominations, for the awards are solicited annually from members of the TI community. The actual voting commences in January and ends April 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **TI-99/4A Community Service:**

Charles Good      Scanning of TI documentation.  
Don O'Neil        WHT FTP site.  
Hal Shanafield    Organizing 1999 Chicago Faire.

(See **Peterson Awards** on Page 2)

## The Prez Says

(Continued from Page 1)

new software, that will run TI software by emulating its hardware, on modern computers. So why stick with an obsolete machine? Because it's fun, it's enjoyable, it's a pleasure to use. In spite of the TI's limited memory, or because of it, programs are written with a minimum of waste or fluff. So-called modern computers, with their endlessly expandable memories, storage systems, video and sound devices, are constantly being pushed to run the latest software. In 1983, when you upgraded your TI with 32k of memory expansion and a disk drive, you were set. Any programs larger than 32k were broken into modules that would load each other. This was effort expended by the programmer, NOT the owner. Telecommunications, spreadsheets, databases, word processing were all in days' work for the TI. Games, whether straight fun or educational entertainment was enjoyable. I hope that all of you, and future TI owners, will continue to use, and enjoy, this machine as much as I have in the past 17 years.

Victor J. Steerup  
CHITIPREZ@ATT.NET

## Editor's Pen

First let me start off by apologizing to John Bull. I had intended to do a review of his excellent program Contact Bridge for this first edition and simply ran out of time to do it justice. I promise it will appear in the next issue.

I had plans for this issue to contain two pages more than it does. Not getting to John's program is one reason that it didn't make it. The other was just poor time management. Next issue I start earlier and work smarter.

This issue and the next are being mailed to everyone on our mailing list regardless of their membership status. Upon our return from summer break only users whose dues are current, and exchange groups, will receive a copy. I hope that those who are not currently members will find enough value in the free newsletters to send in your \$21.00 membership fee.

This newsletter is a "work in progress" I had a basic concept of how I wanted to implement it when I started and that continues to every time I look at the partially finished product on the screen. I consider it a "guilt free" newsletter. If you would like to submit an item for inclusion, please feel free to do so, otherwise you won't find me trying to guilt you into submitting an article. Just relax and enjoy it.

## Peterson Awards

(Continued from Page 1)

Harold Mayo Orphanage BBS  
John Koloen & Laura Burns  
Placing MICROpendium into Public Domain.  
Mike Wright Archiving TI documents.  
TI-Chips Organizing & hosting TIMUG'99.  
Tom Wills The List Server.

### TI-99/4A Software:

Bruce Harrison TI-99/4A Midi routines  
John Bull Contract Bridge program.  
Leonard Taffs Specialty/utility programs.

### TI-99/4A Hardware:

Don O'Neil SCSI cards.  
Michael Becker  
Distributing & servicing SNUG cards.

### Myarc, Geneve 9640:

Jim Uzzell ABASIC 4.0  
Tim Tesch Servicing the 9640.

If you wish to vote please select ONE from EACH category. The deadline for voting is midnight (USA Eastern Standard Time), April 30, 2000.

Land mail votes to:

Glenn Bernasek  
Secretary, TI-Chips  
13246 Harper Road  
Strongsville, Ohio 44136-3942  
USA

-or-

E-mail to: GBBasics@aol.com

### Chicago TI-99/4A Users Group Officers

Vic Steerup chitiprez@att.net	President
Hal Shanafield hals@shark.dls.com	Secretary
Irv Levinson	Treasurer
Alfonse Antonowitz	Membership

Bulletin Board System  
1 847 741-6213  
300/2400/9600/14400 - 8N1 - 24 hours/7 days  
Ernest Pergrem, Sysop  
epergrem@core.com

## January Meeting Notes

The first meeting of the year turned out to be a pretty typical user group meeting in that after much planning and preparation, the equipment failed to work. Hal tested the demonstration system both the night before and the morning of the meeting in search of problems. All well and good, until the system was turned on at the meeting. The lights came on, the fan whirled, and we were facing a totally blank screen. After pulling, moving, testing and receiving advice from everyone in the room, including me, it was determined that one of the batteries were dead on the RAM disk and it was locking up the system. Dave Connery furnished us with a battery from a flashlight he had on him to get the card up and running. I was absolutely amazed by the sheer magnitude of items that he and Tony Z have stored in their coat <g>. Once that was resolved the search began for a copy of the ROS (RAM Operating System) to reload the DSR. Several copies were found among the box of disks that Hal had brought to demo but the card was reluctant to accept any of them (by the way what is P-ROS anyway?). Finally after reaching a level of frustration which resulted in the meeting room acquiring a slightly higher temperature, and tossing around war stories of other past failed demos, the group decided to proceed with the planned activities sans the RAM disk. After loading a copy of DSKU from drive 1, a program disk was placed into drive 2. Hmmm. DISK DRIVE ERROR. How about another? Once again DISK DRIVE ERROR. The troubleshooting began and the consensus was that we were facing a bad drive 2.

As the remainder of the group was busy troubleshooting the drive, I was searching the box of disks for something interesting to review. Being a big fan of the Supercart my eyes immediately locked upon the disks labeled SC1, SC2 and SC3. With no Supercart available it was decided that we would make copies of the disk for me to take home to test and possibly upload to the group's BBS. Now it's been a long time since I've done a 720 sector disk copy using DSKU and a single drive (remember number 2 was down), but after 1 disk, 25 minutes and Hal doing 2 disk swaps twice every 12 sectors an executive decision was made for me to take the originals home, copy them on my system, and return them at the next meeting.

Fortunately there was still hope for the meeting to go beyond a lesson in troubleshooting. Bob Pettit had come armed with some programs for us to look at. The first was an assembly language adaptation of the Japanese game "SOKOBAN". The translation of the name means, "warehouse mover" and the object of the

game is to move boxes from the floor of the warehouse to the loading area. A pretty simple concept until you discover that there are multiple restrictions on how you can get the boxes to the pallets. After we finished the first level and our testosterone levels were elevated we felt became so confident in our abilities to beat the game that we immediately proceeded to level 5. Okay, this one turned out to be a bit harder, but once again we proved supreme. Unfortunately, because I had to leave, I don't know if the remaining members challenged themselves beyond that point or not. However, all in all, I think it turned out to be a pretty fair first meeting of the year.

BTW, meeting attendance was the highest that I've seen it since I returned to the group in April. Looks like the TI is alive and well in Chicago.

## February Meeting Notes

There was no doubt that group president, Vic Steerup, had a program planned for the February meeting as he started to unload his car. Everyone who attended the meeting was given an armload of equipment to carry, except Tony Z, who was the designated meeting room guard.

The meeting started with Hal mentioning that he had been unable to read some of the earlier user group library disks and was concerned that perhaps, because of their age, they were starting to deteriorate. Fortunately library disks 1-170 have been archived and copies given to some of the members, so the problem shouldn't result in any lost programs. Hal also brought some disks that he had received from another member and had been unable to read. Concerned that he might be having drive problems he asked Vic to verify the disks. As it turns out the disks had been initialized, but nothing copied to them. As I recently ran into the same problem with a disk I received from another user it makes me wonder (not to deeply) how frequently this happens. As a result of the discussion Vic talked briefly about the differences between the 40 column and 80 column versions of Disk Review. He also mentioned that he had received a copy of "Backside" from the Dutch user group which allows for converting a single sided disk to a double sided disk during the copy process.

In Prez Sez this month Vic talks about his experiences with Tronics, a multi-level marketing company that sold TI hardware and software, offered classes and distributed their own software. He demonstrated a number of the programs, which he sold as part of the company. All of Tronics software was written in TI BASIC and required just a console '

*(See February Meeting Notes on Page 4)*

## February Meeting Notes

(Continued from Page 3)

and a cassette recorder to run. Vic mentioned that, as a result of the equipment requirements, one of the harder items to come find was a cassette cable. The members also had the opportunity to view some of Tronics sales and marketing newsletters as well as price sheets. Apparently the company did quite well until the firesale of 1983. Left without the hardware to sell, Tronics began offering the NEC Freedom Phone and eventually vanished. Tronics was a great piece of TI history that I hadn't previously heard about.

Following the Tronics demo, Bob Pettit and Vic looked at "Peter Pan", one of the programs that Disney had planned to do for the TI. Although never released on cartridge, the game is widely available in disk format for interested users.

The final demonstration, and by far the most ambitious was MIDI Master99 and MIDI Play. Vic hooked his MIDI keyboard to the TI and gave a brief review of both program. The programs, which were written by Mike Maksimik and modified by Bruce Harrison, are available from Richard Bell.

Another great meeting. Can't wait to see what Vic has planned for March.

## TI Resources On The Net

Despite our love/hate relationship with the PC, it may now be one of the best tools that we have for extending the life of our 99/4A. The explosive growth of the Internet has resulted in the access to resources, which were unavailable, or difficult to come by for the average user in the past. Though we have seen a decline of membership in the local TI-99/4A community, through the Internet it is now possible to send and receive responses from members whom we had to previously rely on the post office or for in just minutes.

There is an abundance of information available to the user with a PC. This does not mean that the TI'er with only a 99/4A or Geneve cannot access some of these treasures, it is just becoming more difficult with the declining number of "shell" only accounts.

Each issue I plan on sharing my experiences with some of those resources.

For the TI user looking to the Internet for support I would first recommend starting at Rich Polivka's TI 99/4A Home Computer Page (99er.hispeed.com). Not only does Rich's site contain a wealth of information with links to a number of other high quality sites but

(See **TI Resources** on Page 5)

## Year of the "2000"

### *THE CHICAGO TI USERS GROUP*

Presents the

## 18th Annual Chicago TI International World Faire

Supporting the TI994A and 9640

November 11, 2000 - 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

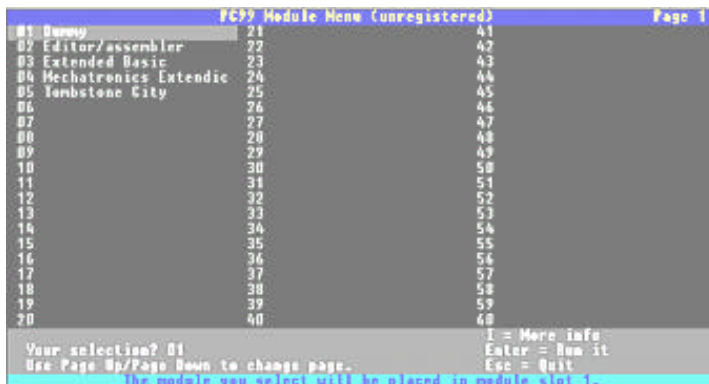
Evanston Public Library  
1703 Orrington at Church  
Evanston, Illinois

**Vendors-Demonstrations-Seminars-User Groups-Door Prize Drawings**

For further information contact: Hal Shanafield (847) 864-8644  
hals@shark.dls.net

# PC99 Module Menu, Ver. 1.2

George Shaw  
10 Alstone Road  
Stockport, Cheshire SK4 5AH  
ENGLAND



Inspired by the substantial number of disks, in PC99 format, that Charles Good had uploaded to WHT's FTP site, I ordered PC99 Lite from CaDD Electronics this past July. Immediately one of the things that I found to be annoying was the need to run a separate configuration program to change modules and disks. Though I learned to deal with it, I was still in hopes for an easier method. A few months ago I saw mention of PC99 Module Menu, a program from George Shaw. The program was designed so the user could select the module to be loaded into PC99's "cartridge slot", using a menu rather than the configuration program.

I downloaded the program from the WHT site and promptly forgot all about it. When I decided to edit the newsletter I knew that I wanted to include software and hardware reviews. One of the first programs that I thought of was this one. I finally installed the program in late January.

Installation is fairly simple, but you must remember to copy the installation file "menuinst.exe" into the PC99 menu and execute it from there, or if extracted to a different directory move the resulting files to the PC99 menu. Other wise when you attempt to run 99menu.bat you will receive "Yikes! Cannot find PC99.MOD!" After unzipping you will end up with 4 new files. You may then delete the installation program if you wish.

Once installed running 99menu.bat starts PC99 Menu. It can be ran either through MS-DOS or within a window, which is my preferred method. Once running it is a simple as selecting the module you would like to load from the list and pressing ENTER. PC99 Menu will modify the PC99 configuration program and start PC99. Since the

menu program reads PC99.MOD all modules that are available for PC99 will be available.

PC99 Menu also permits the user to specify a disk to load into DSK1 with the selected module. This might be handy if you have disk of saved games that you want available whenever you are using the Adventure or Tunnels of Doom module, as an example. Unfortunately this option only applies to DSK1. The user will still have to use CFG.EXE to specify the contents of the remaining drives. This would probably be my one "like to" for the program.

A third option is the ability to specify that you want to use the Myarc RAM card for a specific module. Perhaps because you are using Myarc's Extended BASIC, the additional memory or for some other reason.

The unregistered version has some minor limitations, such as permitting only disks labeled PC99.DSK and MYARC.DSK to be specified. The word "Unregistered" prominently displayed in the menu, etc. None of these affect a user's ability to determine if you program has value to them or not.

Registration is \$8.00 US. I sent mine to George and received an e-mail reply containing the information necessary to change the program to a registered version in less than a week. Not bad response from England, since I've had mail take longer than that to get to parts of Florida.

How useful this program will be once the next version of PC99 is released remains to be seen. Regardless I found the program to be very usable and well worth the investment. If you have PC99 I highly recommend this program. It does nothing that can't already be done using PC99's configuration program, it just does it easier and with less hassle.

## TI Resources

(Continued from Page 4)

also is a jumping in point to the TI-99/4A Web Ring. A web ring allows creators of sites having similar interests to tie them in together so the user can venture from one to another by simply selecting NEXT or PREVIOUS.

My second recommendation is the TI Online Users Group (OLUG) moderated by Tom Willis, of the Southwest 99ers, ([www.egroups.com](http://www.egroups.com)). This is a group of 100+ TI users, with varying levels of experience, who communicate through e-mail. Every 2nd Saturday of the month the group gets together online for an informal chat. Another nice feature is the database where you can list items that you have for sale or are interested in buying. There is no fee, just the willingness to share your real name.

## Application For Membership

Below you will find an application for membership in the Chicago TI-99/4A Users Group. Active membership entitles you to a subscription to the Chicago Times, access to the group's library of programs, attendance and voting rights at regular club meetings and special club activities for one year.

New memberships and renewals are \$21.00 per year. Make check or money order payable to Chicago TI Users Group. Send completed application to:

Chicago TI-99/4A Users Group  
Attn: Membership  
P.O. Box 7009  
Evanston, IL XXXXX-7009

---

Cut On Line

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ -- \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Chicago TI-99/4A Users Group  
PO Box 7009  
Evanston, IL XXXXX-7009

PLACE FIRST  
CLASS STAMP  
HERE

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address  
Street Number and Name  
City, State 98765-4321