The Ottawa TI-99/4A
User's Group

NEWSLETTER

Volume 13, Number 9 ...November 1994
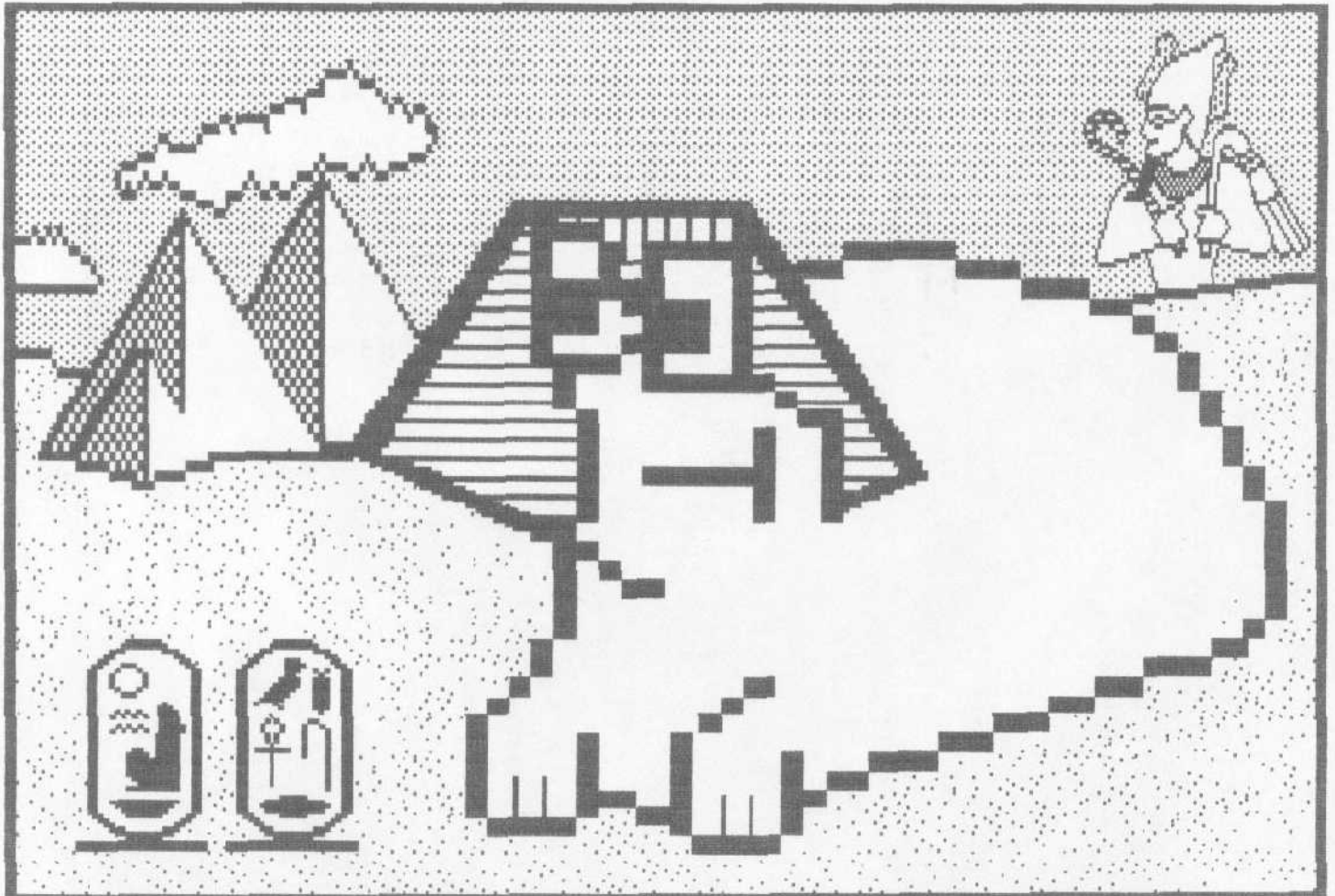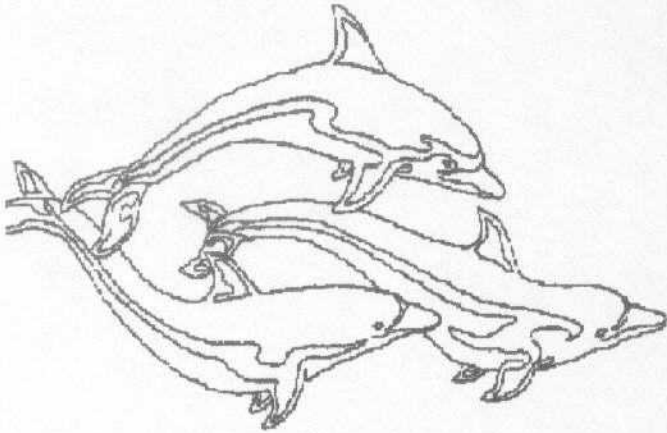
COMING EVENTS

November meeting: 1 Nov 94
December meeting: 6 Dec 94

Meetings take place at Lucie Dorais' apartment, at 7:30pm. Everyone is welcome for a friendly, informal meeting to discuss the TI. Please call in advance, Lucie's number is on the list on the last page.

Any and all articles are welcome and solicited for publication in this newsletter. Submit your articles to Lucie Dorais c/o editor, or directly to me by internet email at mbrent@proton.com
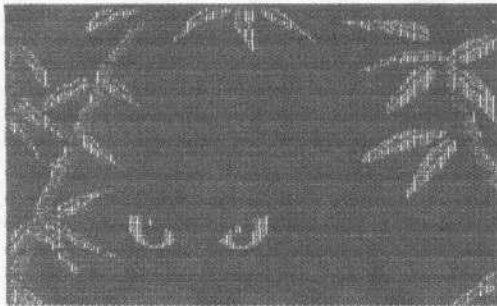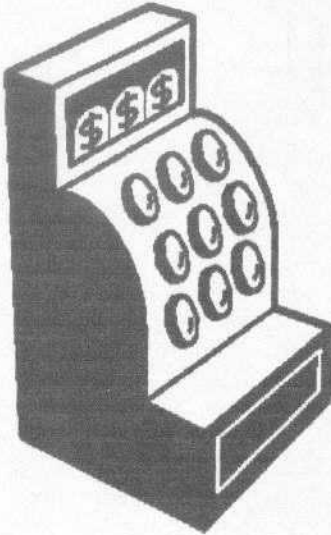
DISCLAIMER

The OTIUG is a non-profit organization based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, providing support to users of Texas Instruments and compatible home computers. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the OTIUG itself.

THE PRESIDENT'S TWO CENTS WORTH
by Lucie Dorais

So, how do you like the new look of the Newsletter? Much nicer I think, more picture, and for the first time in many years there were long articles I had never read before, nice change!

Wonderful work Mike, and this month should be better, as you know your software better.

There are more changes this month: for the first time, there is no FAST EXTENDED BASIC column, as I have found nothing to say. Instead, there is a new column, TEN YEARS AGO...

Nothing exciting has happened on the TI front, so no TI News either this month, but there is a brand new list of Suppliers for the TI and the Geneve, lovingly put together by Gary Cox.

Oh yes, last meeting was the "election"; only two persons showed up, Jeffrey Brown and Philip Harris, and they both unanimously confirmed me in the President chair.

Words From the Editor
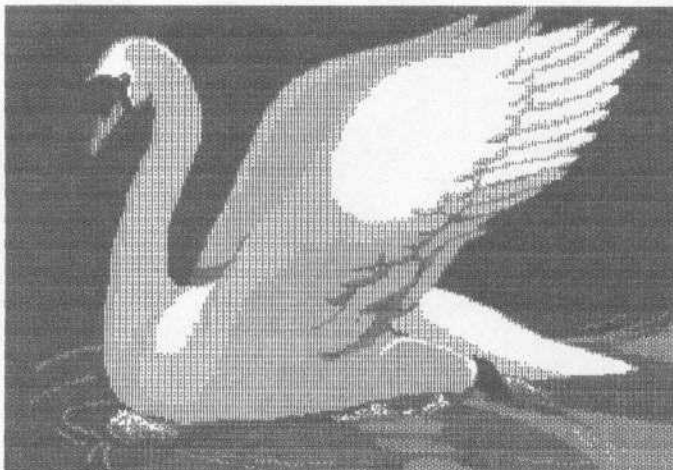
Well, here we are with my second issue, and it's a little late making it out this month. Hopefully nobody will notice, and I can blame the post office. (smile)

All in all, it was a little easier to put it together this time, except for Jeff's article, which barely squeezed in under the wire. For once, I *almost* did NOT get the last word. Naturally, I shall be prodding Jeff a tad earlier next month.

Lucie also asked me to remove the membership renewal form for the user group, so I guess it's true that the OTIUG is on it's last legs. But, let's not dwell on that, we've several months left to cover yet!

This month seems to be a month for reminiscence, so thought I'd add my own fond memories of the TI. That's elsewhere.

What I really want to comment on here is how distasteful I found certain comments in a certain public forum this month. A TI programmer was putting down another programmer's software against his own, in a public place. This is bad enough as it is, but when combined with the fact that this programmer has never SEEN the other software, and that his own software runs only on the Geneve, and NOT the 4A, then it becomes outright repulsive. Sure, he was only hinting at it, but that does not make it any better.

Some of you have no idea what I'm talking about, while others of you know all too well, and if the person in question is reading, he's probably decided that I'm a real jerk for pointing this out.

But let's face it, people. The TI world is NOT the place for competitive business. The users out there need support, not competition. They need quality software, and not cash grabs from people who's best marketing strategy is to put down a freeware offering because people are showing interest in it against his commercial product for another machine.

I'm deliberately being nebulous here, because, although I'm the editor, and this is my place to voice my opinions, it's not necessarily my place to go and single out a person for something I feel is wrong.

And it's not the point.

What I'm calling for here is a little cooperation. At this stage of the game, supporting the TI should be something you do because you want to, not something you do to make money from. We need quality software. We don't need one programmer trying to shove another programmer out of the market. There is more than enough openings in the TI software world to allow all the programmers to develop to their hearts' content. A little variety and choices certainly never hurt any market, either.
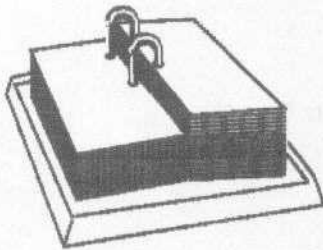
Naturally, hard drive crashes are a nasty thing, causing me further delays on an already late project. My apologies. Once again, I've been shown that backups would have been a dandy thing to have around.

TEN YEARS AGO...
by Lucie Dorais

Ten years... this is how long I have been a member of the Ottawa UG... I still remember clearly... At that time, I had had my TI for about one year and a half, cassette only system, but with a printer: a Brother miniature electronic typewriter/printer/modem; my RS232 interface was in a CorComp box, because when the PEBs came out on sale after the 1983 Black Friday I had no money... I was aware of the UG (hard to miss, ads in every computer store!), but was afraid that I would find myself the only woman in a group of male techies... so I kept to myself, learnt to program in Extended Basic, and bought about every good book I could find on the TI.

One day I bought a book about "Sound and Graphics"; this being lunch time, I sat at a cafeteria table and started to read while eating, couldn't wait! After five minutes, a man with long hair and a bushy beard, but in a proper suit (with a very colourful tie), sat besides me. For one hour and a half, he talked... and talked... about the TI, but mostly about the Users Group. No, they were not all techies; and no, they were not all men; and yes, there was a meeting that same night, and he would take me there, where I wanted or not!

At seven sharp, Berry Minuk was at my door and away we went to Merivale High School... Nice meeting, lots of people, I even got a date that night (and a lasting friendship), so being a woman among so many men had its advantages! And if it was true I was one of the few "cassette" people, they just had this great "one time only User Group Special" from Corcomp to upgrade at reduced price, so I signed up for a drive controller and Memory expansion (it took almost a year to reach my door, but that is another story).

My newsletter collection therefore starts with October 1984; the UG was already two

years old. The big thing in that issue was the new BBS, written (in XB) and SysOped by Bruce Caron (Peter Arpin, our current SysOp, stepped in about two years later). The phone number was... 738-0617; sounds familiar? At the end of the newsletter, there is a list of all the BBSs in Ottawa... 21 names... all gone today except ours...

The elections had just been held (in October of course), all members now gone... Bill Sponchia was Chairman, Berry was Vice, John Altorio (who left us to head the Mac UG) was Treasurer, Jane Laflamme was Secretary (of course, a woman...); the Past Chairman was Danny Lyonnais, who was one of the founders.

There had been a programming contest (no results given yet), Berry Minuk wrote about the new "in" language, FORTH, CorComp already had financial problems, the Constitution was strictly adhered to, with changes submitted to members in the Newsletter; there were enough people then not only to fill all the executive jobs, but also to form committees...

Art Green was already an Assembly genius, writing about TI's memory and explaining sprites. Bob Boone wrote about the four TI UGs in the Ottawa region and how it was time to bring them together... some did, some did not: the Carleton Group always kept its own identity, and has now evolved as a PC group for old TIers who also enjoy beer... a very select group indeed!

This being November already, here is a summary of the November issue: there would be FOUR major demos at the next meeting, plus a demo of "selected library programs", all done by one person, Bob Picard. The membership dues had just gone up to $20 for 1985... There was a strong reminder about "not talking to friends during the formal part of the meeting or during demos"... Another memory mapping article by Art Green, a good introduction to Murphy's Law #516 by Bruce Caron; that Law is still true:

"The chance of anyone or anything destroying
information stored on a diskette is directly
proportional to the value, quantity and usefulness
of said information."
[I would have done well to remember that a month ago... :) - Ed]

And Bruce, who wrote because he "wanted his name in print", follows it with a thorough description of diskette formats. Bob Boone mentions his many contacts, including with Australia (TI-Shug of Sidney, which still produces the best TI newsletter in the world!). The cover had just be redesigned, and it looked very much like what we still have, but there was no picture in the frame; instead, there was a very detailed TofC. There was

paid publicity: Commoner's bookstore on Rideau (long gone...) and the Software Depot, in Lambeth and London. Last but not least, on the last page, a shortie entitled "ATTENTION LADIES!", written by Jane Laflamme and asking for input.

This column could go for another ten years... More next month!

THE DAY THE TI CAME - M. Brent

I remember what I was doing when my dad brought the TI home. I was doing dishes. I was.. oh.. 12 or so, and it was 1984. I knew my parents were assembling something... but I had no idea what it might be.

I was especially surprised to see a computer. My dad didn't like computers or video games, or so he made it known, so a computer was the absolute LAST thing I expected to see in the apartment. But there it was... shiny and new, fresh from the box, with the nice matching Texas Instruments Program Recorder beside it.

With a mighty >WHONK<, and then a familiar friendly BEEP, the machine came to life for the first time. The colourful title page held everyone's attention for a few minutes, until the inviting "READY - PRESS ANY KEY TO BEGIN" message was finally heeded.

We had a couple of books, I still remember which ones. We had "Kids and the TI-99/4A", "Games for the TI-99/4A", and Creative Computing's "More BASIC Games". My brother and I were told we should work through the first book there, and learn the machine.
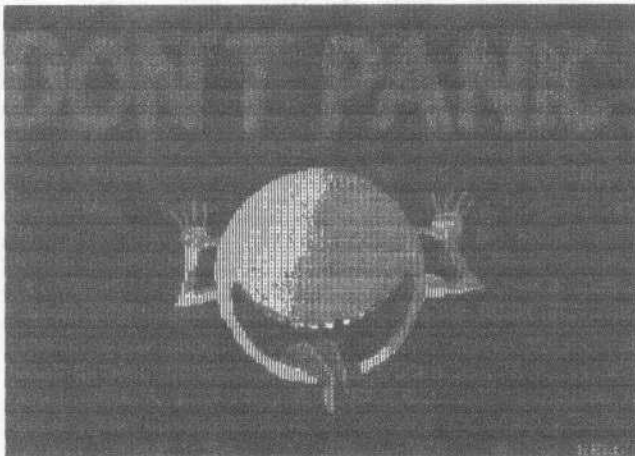
The whole family started to learn the machine, but I think I was the only one who became truly addicted to it. After typing in and running 'Alligator Alley', and then modifying the messages to ones more satisfying to my young mind ("Oh no! You got eaten! Now the poor alligator has indigestion!"), I saw the gaming potential of writing my own software.

I think what really brought my Dad down was that TI pulled the plug on the machine just weeks after he bought it, and watching the price plummet discouraged him.

We never got any expansion for the machine, for many years I plugged away with just the keyboard and cassette drive. The machine became indubitably mine (except occasionally when I was in trouble, and verbally reminded who owned the machine). Then, finally, for one Christmas I got the PEB and floppy drive. By this time, I was 16, and I had my vehicle, and a part-time job. So, once I'd finished copying all my software to disk from cassette, I decided I needed the memory expansion module. After that, I got a speech synthesizer from a local second-hand store. Naturally, it didn't do anything, so I saved up for Extended BASIC.

I didn't work with XB long before I realized that I needed much more... I needed assembly. My next purchase, the Mini Memory and Computes! "Beginning Assembly Language on the TI-99/4A". I found that book an invaluable reference to assembly language in general, and it led me to other Compute! books for other machines. None seemed as well written, though.

From there, the price of TI components was beginning to go down, and my income was going up, so I spent more and more on the machine. The Editor/Assembler, more floppy drives, a RAMdisk, software on disk and in module format.

Many times, I was forced to explain to people why I was using something as ancient and out-of-date as the TI. My reply was "It suits my needs, and I like using it." They'd often reply with "But isn't it a crappy machine?"

Once I'd explained that it was a 16-bit machine, 16 colours onscreen with 256x192 resolution, 4 channel sound with 4 bit resolution (one voice dedicated to noise generation), and 32 sprites onscreen, people were usually impressed. Especially for a machine born in 1981. The only limitation, I'd usually add with a sigh, is the small memory space.

What I spent on my TI was easily in the thousands (and I know some of you put out that much for your INITIAL purchase!), but I never regretted any of it. I finally sold my TI systems for $50 last year, two PEBs, a turbo console, a normal console, two memory expansions, two RS232, 3 floppy drives, boxes of books..etc. But I know it went to someone who would use it.

I went to the Amiga. I'd spent several years looking at the market, trying to find a machine with a niche I could enjoy. The Amiga owners seem to share the same love for their machine as the TI owners, so I felt comfortable going that route. (I didn't expect Commodore to go under as a direct result of it, though!)

The draw to the TI never left. I now have three TI consoles again. I have the emulator

for the IBM (no IBM), and I'm writing an emulator on my Amiga. There was something about the TI, I don't know what, that just made it so attractive to me I can't let go completely. And I don't think I ever will.

Jeff's World - by Jeffrey Brown

Hi TIers... I've had a quite rotten past couple days here... including corruption of Ramdisks, loos of time restoring data, corruption again.. an imploded turbo switch, a blown TMS9918A video chip and the drawer I sit my TI on collapsed... one blown 8kx8 RAM chip in one RAMdisk.. so that one's out of commission till I get out to buy another one. <sigh>

I guess the only memorable thing over the past few days is that I got XB to print out text files with TI Artist Plus fonts, which is neat... it was also going to be the topic for this newsletter article, but the article got wiped with my RAMdisk, luckily I had a backup of the program.

I suppose I'll give you at least a description of the program... It loads a font file into low memory, and then lets you load and print out text files with it.. it's terribly slow though and that's precisely why I had chosen it for this article... to prove the merits of Assembly programming.

The assembly version is nearly complete... it's the first time I ever have to open two files simultaneously and send IO error messages back to XB. Most file access I've done has been to dump out ROMs into program files or a message pad's data... which was a lot of fun... still a few things to finish up on that before I can distribute it.

Well I guess I've given you an idea of the content of next month's newsletter.. a tutorial on converting XB to assembly... I've found, by readig my past articles, that I'm not a good teacher... let's hope I improve enough for this to be easy to follow!!!

Well, see ya!... I've got to get back to fixing my Turbo console (with the imploded switch) and rebooting my work RAMdisk (which had corroded battery terminals... there-

fore no power, therefore, no data! <argh!>)

SUPPLIERS OF TI99/4A PRODUCTS
Listing compiled by Gary W. Cox
September 1994

NOTE: Thanks to Beery Miller, who uploaded this file for me on GEnie so you could have it as soon as possible (Lucie).

The following is a listing of vendors of various TI99/4a products, this is by no means a complete listing but it is as complete as I can determine... I would like to thank Tim Tesch for all of the information that he provided for this list!

If you have any additions or corrections you can contact me at the following EMAIL addresses: Genie - GCOX1, Compuserve - 72060,1277, Internet - cox@mbcf.stjude.org or VIA the TI-ECHO or write to me at Mid-South TI99/4a User Group, P.O. Box 38522, Germantown, TN 38183-0522

9640 News, c/o Beery Miller, P.O. Box 752465, Memphis, TN 38175-2465, (901) 368-1169, BBS (901) 368-0112

Arcade Action Software, Gene Hitz, 4122 N. Glenway, Wauwatosa, WI 53222

Asgard Software, c/o Harry Brashear, 2753 Main St., Newfane, NY 14108, (716) 778-9104 (not sure as to status of this company)

Bill Gaskill, 2310 Cypress Court, Grand Junction, CO. 81506

Braatza Computer Services, 719 E Byrd St., Appleton, WI 54911, (414) 731-3478.

Bud Mills Services, 166 Dartmouth Dr., Toledo OH 43614, (419) 385-5946, BBS: (419) 385-7484

CaDD Electronics, Mark Van Coppenolle, 81 Prescott Road, Raymond, NH 03077, (603) 895-0119

Cecure Electronics Inc. c/o Don Walden, P.O. Box 222, Muskego, WI 53150, 1-800-959-9640, (414) 679-4343, BBS: (414) 422-9669 (Texas Instruments Authorized Repair Center, also carries a variety of products!) Also carries products from Mike Maksimik, Tim Tesch and Jim Schroeder...

Competition Computer Products, 2219 S. Muskego Ave., Milwaukee, WIS. 53215, (414) 672-1600 or 1-800-471-1600 (variety of hardware and software)

Comprodine Software, 1949 Evergreen Ave., Fullerton, CA 92635 (714), 990-4577 (variety of software)

Dee Turner, 641 S. Laughlin Lane, Merced, CA 95340, (209) 722-7352 (home) or (209) 722-2053 (work) (distributor of The Printers Apprentice by McCann Software)

D. Wright Stuff, 2201 185 North Past Road, Indianapolis, IN 46219, (317) 895-1765

DDI Software, Jim Uzzell, 518 D. Truman Annex, Key West, FL 33040-7560

D&L Software, 89 Little Neck Avenue, Swansea, MA 02777

Genial Computerware, 835 Green Valley Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19128, (215) 483-1379.

Harrison Software, 5705 40th Place, Hyattsville, MD 20781-1727, (301) 277-3467.

Jim Lesher, 722 Huntley, Dallas TX 75214, (214) 821-9274

Joy Electronics, P.O. Box 542526, Dallas, TX 75354-2526, (214) 243-5371 or (800) 442-3892 (Texas only) or (800) 527-7438 (outside Texas)

KBCC, 653 Fair Ave. NW, New Philadelphia, OH 44663

L.L. Conner Enterprise, 1521 Ferry St., Lafayette, IN 47901 (317)

742- 8146 (a variety of hardware and software)

LGMA Products, Al Beard, 5618 AppleButter Hill Road, Coopersburg,
PA 18036

McCann Software, 4411 North 93rd St., Omaha, NE 68134 (not sure
as to the status of this company)

Micropendium, P.O. Box 1343, Round Rock, TX 78680, (512) 255-1512
(The monthly magazine devoted to TI99/4a and Geneve owners!)

Notung Software, 7647 McGroarty St. Tujunga, CA 91042, (818)
951-2718 (now carrying MS software)

OPA, 432 Jarvis St. Ste. 502, Toronto Ontario, M4Y 2H3 Canada,
(416) 960-0925

Rag Software, 1032 Chantenay Drive, Gloucester Ont K1C 2K9
Canada.

Ramcharged Computers, 6467 E. Vancy Dr. Brook Park, OH,
1-800-669-1214 or (216) 243-1244

RBD Enterprises, C/O Ricky Bottoms, 643 Fair Ave., Shelbyville,
IN 46176 1-800-464-8851

S&T Software - Tim Tesch, 3804 North 75th St. Milwaukee WI 53216
- BBS: (414) 464-1978, 9600 v.32/v.42 bis on the TI. Original
software, specifically BBS and terminal emulator related
software.

Sam Carey, 5820 SE Westfork St., Portland, OR 97206-0742 (503)
771- 4431 (Constitution Reader and other programs)

T&J Software, 515 Alma Real Drive, Pacific Palisades CA 90272

Texcomp, P.O. Box 33804, Granada Hills, CA 91344, (818) 366-6631

Texaments, 701 South Wicklow, Suite #506, Stillwater, OK 74074,
(405) 372-0819

TM Direct Product Marketing, 1650 Broadway, Redwood City, CA 94063, 1- 800-336-9966

Western Horizon Technologies, C/O Don O'Neil, 10225 Jean Ellen Dr, Gilroy, CA 95020, (408) 934-0352.

99 Computer Repair, c/o David Lynch, 2101 W. Cresent Ave., Unit A, Anaheim, CA 92801; (714) 539-4834 (repair of Corcomp products)