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J A N U A R Y
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January 1988 Vol. 7 No. 01
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NEXT MEETING
DATE : Thursday, February 18, 1988 TIME: 7:00 PM
PLACE: Kirkland Public Library, 406 Kirkland Ave, Kirkland

AGENDA: * New software demonstrations * Lectures/Special Interest
* Continuing GENEVE updates * Question and Answer session

MARCH MEETING
DATE : Thursday, March 24, 1988
TIME : 7:00 PM
PLACE: Kirkland Public Library
406 Kirkland Ave, Kirkland

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THE PRESIDENT SAYS
By Chuck Wynne

A tip of the hat to Rick Lewis and Al Gomen for bringing their computers to the last meeting. We also brought our computer which was a Geneve. As I have three TI computers at home, we could have brought any of them. The TI, the Corcomp, or the Geneve.

Most user groups are slimming down quite a bit. This can cause problems in out case as we definately want to be in communication with all the other groups in the nation. This takes bulk mail to be affordable. And that in turn takes at least 200 mailings. Our endeavour is to remain with at least this many members.

Computer Shopper has an AD in there for the Geneve computer. Myarc has spent the money for this venture. Let's hope it pays off. It is important for the whole TI community. You see, a new computer that supports the old TI software will cause the new products to keep rolling.

From what I understand, the GIF format pictures can be shown on the original TI if you have the 80 column card. Tom Wynne has just transfered some of these from the PC clone to the Geneve, and they work perfect, and look great. GIF (graphics interchangeable format) are for all computers. They are too high res for the regular composite TI.

TI writer never looked better as Funnelweb 4.0. The program from Australia has some of the best enhancements yet. It even beats the Myword processor on the Geneve. You can show directory, then mark it for viewing while working on another, or deleting, or when marked, it will come up with that name when you type LF. On SF, your cursor is on the disk drive number in case you want to save it to a different drive. A control ; will change lower case letters to upper case, and the control . (period) goes the other way. A beep shows end of line like a typewriter.

I'm typing this on the Geneve, but I could use the TI also. When I'm finished, I can go to the TI and look at it. The format of the disk is the same. And with the PC connection module, I can transfer this file over to the PC clone and bring it up on that too. Lots of power there don't you think? You can also take files off of a IBM format and use it in a TI word processor, all from the TI disk drives. So now, all the computers work together. We have transfered basic programming over between the two and ran them, but there is different syntax between computers, and some conversion is essential.

We still need more participation in the club to make it more enjoyable and useful for all members. Please let us know as to what you can do for us, or what we can do for you. But above all, make it both ways.

VideoFlex Expansion Box

The new Videoflex expansion box is now available through Queen Anne Computer Shoppe. The box, produced by Miller Communications of Seattle and designed by Phil Jordan, is a full sized AT box with a 220 Watt power supply. The box has 8 slots for which cards are placed vertically and has LED status lights much like the TI Peripheral Expansion System. The box can hold 2 hard drives, 3 floppies, or 3 3.25" drives. The Videoflex box also has the option of plugging in a stand alone XT Compatible mini card and can hold two disk controller cards, one for the XT and one for the TI/Geneve computers. Call 522-6558 for more details.

Speech Synthesizer holder

Rave99 has produced a new Speech Synthesizer holder which can be used with both the TI99/4A and the Geneve 9640. The card plugs in the Peripheral Expansion Box and the speech synthesizer (without case) plugs into the card. This will remove your speech synthesizer from the side of your computer and reduce the possibility of your computer crashing.

The Third Annual Seattle TI99/4A Convention
By Barbara Wiederhold

The 1988 Seattle Convention will be held this year at the Seattle Center Snoqualmie Room. It will be held on Saturday, September 24. This is our plan: On Friday, September 23, there will be a hospitality room open at the Executive Inn next to the Space Needle. Then from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM will be a discussion session in the Ballroom of the hotel where you can have the opportunity to questions to VENDORS, DEALERS, ETC. Dinner will be served at 8:00 PM with a live band (50's Music) will play until 1:00 AM. This Friday night special will be pre-sold at 18.00 per person and serving 225 maximum. So, if you can join this Friday night happening, don't miss it and save that cost now... bring wife, date, mate, etc... A pretty outstanding setting, meal, dance, conversation. For the price, buy two tickets, bring a friend. Saturday morning the convention set up time is 7 A.M. to 9 A.M. at the Snoqualmie room across the Seattle Center grounds near the Colosium. If you are staying at the Executive Inn, you can call and arrange for a long black limosine to drive you over to the convention site on 1st avenue for no charge. So everyone, take this chance to stay at the hotel friday and or Saturday night. Single rooms 54.00, double rooms 64.00. 2 to a single room or 4 to a double room will have to be reserved. We can put you all together somehow and defray that hotel cost so we can have the Snoqualmie room from 7:00 til Midnight so 9 AM to 1:00 PM we will have seminars. All the distributors, speakers on special topics will spend that time with us until 1:00 PM. We will have lots of time to see the products demonstrated and hear what everyone has to say. Equipment will be covered until 1:00 PM, then the selling will start until 6:00 PM. After cleanup and putting things away, we will stay longer for a chat and get together at the hospitality room on Saturday night. Remember, for those staying at the hotel, that free black limosine will take you into Seattle, leave you where you want to go and pick you up again.

Geneve users use GIF

GIF, which stands for Graphics Interchange Format, is a format used by many computers to display computer pictures much the same way as the RLE pictures. The advantage of GIF is that it can display pictures in much higher resolution and in color. A GIF translator has been created by Paul Charlton for use on the Geneve 9640 computer and can display pictures of upto 512x424 resolution in 16 colors. The GIF translator for the Geneve can also convert a picture to the Myart drawing program so you can change the picture at will. NOTE: The higher resolution pictures with 424 lines will be converted to Myart format with only 212 lines. This will cause the picture to loose detail. GIF is a trademark of Compuserve, Inc. and you can download pictures for use on your computer. The TI99/4A cannot display these pictures because of the need for high resolution and more color. However, the Mechatronic 80 column card, with its use of the 9938 video display processor will be able to display these pictures.

Title: A Report on M-DOS 1.0
By Chris Bobbitt, Asgard Software

Summary: M-DOS 1.0 is obviously not the last version of the operating system we are going to see - however it is reasonably complete. Watch for version 1.1.

Version: This is the 11/30/87 update. It has been modified to reflect new information kindly provided by Paul Charlton, the author of M-DOS.

Version 1.0 of the Myarc Disk Operating System has been released. However, a thorough examination soon proves that this latest version still isn't the one that is documented in the manual accompanying the machine. Many of the differences and some of the shortcomings are significant. This is not to say that the operating system is necessarily deficiant. In many ways, it is superior to anything available for the TI-99/4A in scope and capability.

As is, version 1.0 is a reasonable operating system where productive work CAN be done - at least as productive as anything done on the 99/4A. Once some means is provided for converting assembly files from the TI format to one that can be executed directly from the M-DOS command line, M-DOS will be a complete operating system - with or without any additions.

This is not an apology for Myarc - instead it is encouragement for people to look at things as they are, instead of making sweeping pronouncements. Critics will be quick to jump on Myarc and claim that since the current version is less then the one advertised in the manual, then Myarc is again trying to pull a fast one. However, these critics are ignoring the purpose of an operating system - to provide user access to the resources of the computer, and to provide some means to use applications. In these things, M-DOS is complete. To put it a little clearer - EVEN IF MYARC WERE TO RELEASE NO FUTURE VERSIONS OF M-DOS, WE CURRENTLY HAVE ALL THAT IS NEEDED TO PRODUCTIVELY USE THE MYARC GENEVE COMPUTER. No one need apologize for M-DOS, especially not Myarc and it's authors.

The purpose of this article is to document the differences between M-DOS 1.0 and the version described in the user manual. Additionally, an effort was made to generate a rough index for the operating system manual (a glaring oversight in a otherwise decent manual). This is not

to say this article is complete - I undoubtably overlooked many inconsistancies between M-DOS 1.0 and the manual, and I didn't have the hardware to adaquately test some parts of the operating system (specifically a hard disk drive).

The system I utilized for my tests consists of a Myarc Geneve 9640, a Myarc Floppy Disk Controller, 2 floppy disk drives, a TI RS232 card, an HP Thinkjet printer (Epson-compatible) and an Avatex 1200 baud modem. Additionally, the monitor was a small Zenith monochrome 80 column display.

Now to the tests.

M-DOS 1.0 reportedly functions fine with all disk controllers available for the TI-99/4A. As this was true with the preceeding version, it comes as no great surprise. I found in general that all my devices seemed to function pretty much like they do on the 99/4A (but the keyboard buffer is sometimes obnoxious - I wish there was a way to clear it). All in all, M-DOS works pretty much like that described in the manual. The following is a list of all the commands and notes as to how accurate the manual is for each:

ASSIGN: (pg 76) This command does not work as described in the manual. According to the operating system's author, it assigns "physical devices to logical devices". What this means is that it lets you assign a letter to a device name (like DSK1) so that M-DOS is easier to use (and more like MS-DOS). The ASSIGN command has a number of uses: a primary one is the ability to use the ramdisk in M-DOS. To do this try ASSIGN D=DSK5: (note the colon is essential). You can also use this command to make all queries from one device go to another - for example if you try ASSIGN A=DSK2:, every time you type DIR A: you will get a directory of the disk in drive #2. You can also use this command to assign a letter to a hard-disk subdirectory: for example ASSIGN C=WDS1.SUB1 assigns the subdirectory SUB1 of the first hard disk drive to device C. Hence, if you were to type DIR C:, you should get a list of the files in that subdirectory.

ATTRIB: (pg 46) Before I reported that this doesn't work. After a protest from the author to the contrary, I spent a half-hour testing it again. It didn't seem to work quite right, but I downloaded another copy of M-DOS and the command worked fine. Apparantly I had damaged my copy in some tests.

CHDIR: (pg 53) See the notes below for MKDIR. Was unable to test this.

CHKDSK: (pg 46) Works fine. However, does not report the amount of space used by files on the disk or that used by directories. However, by using wildcards, you can get info about all or some of the files on the disk (for example, CHKDSK * would tell you how much space is used by the files on the disk).

CLS: (pg 32) Works as described.

COPY: (pg 43, pg 69) Works as described but it occasionally startles you the way it works. For instance, if you specify the devices on a single-disk copy (IE COPY A:FILE A:FILE) it pauses for quite some time after prompting you to press any key before it seems to begin the actual copy. The first time this happens you are liable to press a bunch of keys and mess things up. It does this at odd times. The way around this is common sense - if you press a key it is very likely the Geneve caught it. If nothing happens after 30 seconds - press another (but never Y or N).

DATE: (pg 32) Works as described.

DIR: (pg 38) Works as described.

DISKCOMP: (pg 41) Works as described.

DISKCOPY: (pg 41) Works as described (and uses all the empty memory as a buffer so that you can usually copy a SS/SD disk to another with one drive in a single pass!). Occasionally, if you are making copies onto uninitialized disks it will try to copy without formatting the new disk (particularly if it isn't the highest quality disk). As a result, M-DOS reports a whole whole disk full of write errors. The way to stop this if it happens is to press CTRL-ALT-DEL simultaneously and wait a few seconds.

ERASE: (pg 44) Works as described.

FORMAT: (pg 40) Works as described. It would also be nice if you could set the interlace of the disk with this command too.

GRAPHICS: (pg 70) Doesn't even begin to work.

LABEL: (pg 48) Works as described.

MKDIR: (pg 51) It seems to try to do something, but apparantly floppies aren't allowed to have subdirectories (a shame too!) and no one plans on it. I didn't have a hard-drive on hand to test out this command, RMDIR and TREE.

MODE: (pg 65)
SCREEN: The Shift screen option doesn't work. The Test Pattern isn't displayed.

PRINTER: Works as described (don't try to set any other printer length but 80 and 132 though - it won't work).

SERIAL: Works as described.

PATH: (pg 55) Couldn't test without hard-disk drive.

PROMPT: (pg 75) Works as described (and is pretty neat!).

RENAME: (pg 45) Works as described.

RMDIR: (pg 54) Couldn't test it - but when I tried the command it didn't seem to know it because it checked the disk as if I asked it to load and execute a file.

SPEED: (pg 78) Didn't seem to have any effect in TI mode or outside it.

TIME: (pg 32) Works as described.

TREE: (pg 56) Couldn't test without hard-disk drive.

TYPE: (pg 43) Works as described (and is a real time-saver).

VER: (pg 78) Works as described (and is pretty useless considering M-DOS tells you which version it is when it boots).

VOL: (pg 49) Works as described.

The following is a list of batch commands and whether they functioned or not. Batch files are simple to make, and can do quite a few powerful things which make a command line operating system almost livable. There is one bit of wrong information in the section about creating batch files - using My-Word use the ProgramEdit mode (PE from the command line) and print the file to disk when finished (for good measure).

ECHO: (pg 59) Works as described (but a bit confusing).

FOR: (pg 61) Works as described.

GOTO: (pg 60) Works as described.

IF: (pg 60) According to the author it works, but I had trouble with the example in the manual.

PAUSE: (pg 59) Works as described.

REM: (pg 58) Works as described.

The last section deals with configuration files. What the manual doesn't make clear is that a CONFIGSYS file to be properly executed should be named AUTOEXEC and be placed on the disk containing the operating system. When M-DOS boots up, it will automatically be executed. Some of the options also drastically reduce the amount of system memory available (128K for the TIMODE option alone!). Do I see 1Mb updates for the 9640 soon?

BUFFERS: (pg 74) Seems to work.

FILES: (pg 74) Works as described.

LASTDRIVE: (pg 75) Works as described (as I learned to my chagrin when I created an AUTOEXEC file with this value set to 1 and found I couldn't use my second drive until I edited the AUTOEXEC file and rebooted).

RAMDISK: (pg 72) It apparantly doesn't effect the size of the GPL Interpreter's (or TI mode's) RAM disk, but you can create one for use in M-DOS. After setting it up in your AUTOEXEC file, use the ASSIGN command (detailed above) to make it usable.

SPOOL: (pg 73) Works VERY nicely. Unlike what I reported earlier, though, there is a way to kill the spool command in mid-spool. Type DEL (for DELETE) and the logical device name of the printer (PRN), or DEL PRN, to stop it. This doesn't work on any buffer built into your printer of course.

TIMODE: (pg 74) Assigns the memory allright but TI mode will load equally with or without this command.

A number of non-command things described in M-DOS are different. The CTRL PRT SC key (pg 33) works perfectly (and can be a nuisance). The Command Stack (pg 34) is actually there, but it is assigned to different keys. Use the up and down arrow keys to scroll through the commands you previously entered, and when you find one you like press ENTER to execute that command. Redirecting Output (pg 69) works just fine, and so does Copying from a Device to a File or Another Device (pg 68). Finally, the Screen Scroll (pg 35) doesn't work at all.

Additionally, NEVER use a \ in a filename - you can't rename, copy, or do anything to a file from M-DOS with that character in the filename. M-DOS interprets that as a subdirectory marker or somesuch. However, if you do, all isn't lost. If you put quotes around the name of the file you can make copies of the offending file, delete it, or do anything you would do to a normal file. Only the filename should be placed in quotes, not the device name of the drive containing the disk (IE B:"SYSTEM/SYS" and not "B:SYSTEM/SYS" is the correct procedure).

Finally, you can re-boot the Geneve (have it return to the swan) by pressing CTRL-LEFTSHIFT-RIGHTSHIFT. Or you can press CTRL-ALT-DEL to have it return to the M-DOS title screen and execute any AUTOEXEC files that may be on your disk. The current version of M-DOS may be relatively complete and useful, but there are a few things I would like to see (other then the suggestions listed above). It would be nice to be able to return to M-DOS from the TI mode (or GPL program) without re-booting. And I can't wait until some of the Geneve specific software (like My-Word and Paul's Fast-Term) will be available in versions that execute directly from the command line so that I can ignore the TI mode altogether. However, word from the author is that there will be no future versions of Fast Term for the Geneve.

The most common complaint right now among Geneve owners is having to swap disks 3 or 4 times before getting to their application (though people with DS/DD drives don't really have this problem so much). Some programs seem to work better with M-DOS 1.0 then previous versions - Paul's GIF Translator for instance would occasionally do odd things under 0.99B but seems as stable as a rock under 1.0. Ah well, I guess we're starting to get there folks!

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MAY BE REPRODUCED IF UNALTERED

USER MANUALS AS ART
By Marcia Willieme, KC 99er Newsletter

Everyone knows that software creation is an art, but few people recognize that creating user manuals is also an art. As with any art form, there are rules and guidelines that should be followed. Here are 10 preliminary suggestions:

1. Use at least 20 technical terms in the first three pages of the manual to discourage uers immediately.

2. Make the manual as voluminous as possible - readers may delay using it indefinitely.

3. Assume your readers have already mastered BASIC or COBOL. At the very least, assume they are skilled word processors.

4. Sprinkle the manual liberally with inconsistencies. Was F-4 the clear button on page 4? Call it the escape button on page 6.

5. At least once on every page, tell the reader to consult another page.

6. If you must include explanations of error messages, be sure not to include them all. This will create a thread of suspense.

7. Two weeks after the publication date, send out a packet of "new pages to insert." Mail such packets approximately once a month. Be so doing, you ensure that all customers have their own individualized editions.

8. Publish your manual in an inconvenient format, one that will slip off a desk with ease, preferably opening its loose-leaf holder and scattering its pages on the floor.

9. Make no distinction between key names and literals in your instructions. do not include where or when the user should press the space bar. Let him practice guessing.

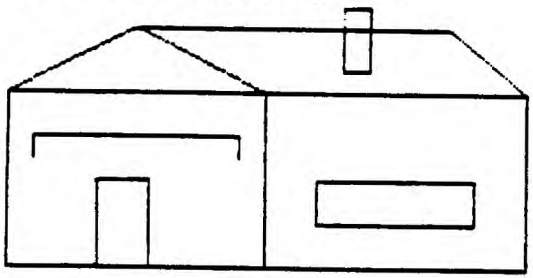
10. Follow these rules and you too may produce a classic of the genre.

C L A S S @ by Bill Harms
Copyright Jan. 1988

Create Letters And Special Shapes for Signs, screens Add a touch of it to your work. A bold new program to make signs, posters, and generate draftings, and otherwise put the Triton SXB Module's drawing commands to work with pixel perfect accuracy!

REQUIRES Triton Super Extended Basic, 32k memory, disk. Compatible printer and Joystick recom'd.

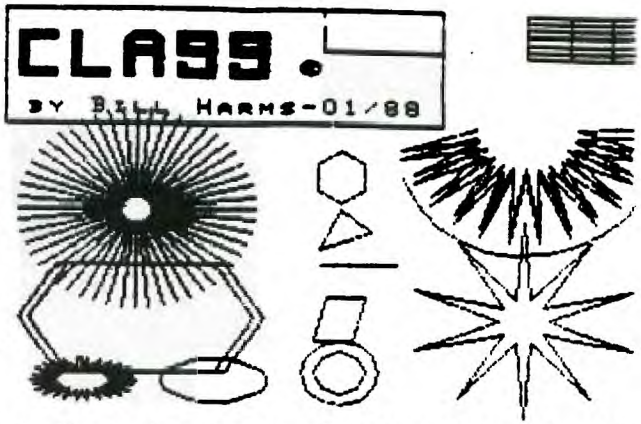
COMPATIBILITIES -- @TI-Artist's _P Picture or Instance files for great effects and via DISPLAY-IT or @ART-CONVERT to put pictures, letters, etc. into text documents using @TI-Writer's Formatter to print, and convert the drawing to be usable directly by TI's Extd Basic via various programs.



CAPABILITIES *Printouts are Super Extended Basic's screen dumps of either 4x2.5" or 7x6" approx.

*Large (and small) Letters A-Z, some punctuation, 0-9, Box, Star can all be done in Block Outline Style. You enter screen placement, height, width and line size. A line size of 0 or 1 gives a "pen line" letter. A bigger size (up to 26) yields the letter in big block outline form that can be Filled in the EDIT mode. Can do a word across or down, and even inc. or dec. height of letters in the word from the 1st to last letter. Also gives you ability to overlap the characters. Can put a normal text font message anywhere on the screen.

*Special and custom shapes can be done. Arc, True-Circle, Oval, Triangle, bentline, Line, Box, Rhombus, Octagon, Hexagon, Stair steps & Grid [with step or cell size you specify], Fan, Star and other Equal sided shapes - of any size, anywhere on screen --- Most shapes can be auto. repeated Across or Down or Diagonally for n times or Fill screen equally, and Overlapped. Most shapes can be squashed or tall and thin. Add a text message in TI's normal font anywhere. Use the SHOW/EDIT option to further customize the drawing.



On the Design Custom Shapes screen you can enter (or load from disk) the values for up to 30 points, which the program will connect, if you wish, save and print the values for future use .

*A "drawings show" or a banner, though only semi-automatic, can be set-up. Picture file names are entered in show order and saved to disk as a file to be used for the show/print. There are many other options possible while doing the show.

Send $10.00 to Bill Harms, 6527 Hayes Court, Chino, CA 91710. Doc's on disk.

Look for release of CLASS-MATE to also use Triton's sxb for class jobs.

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