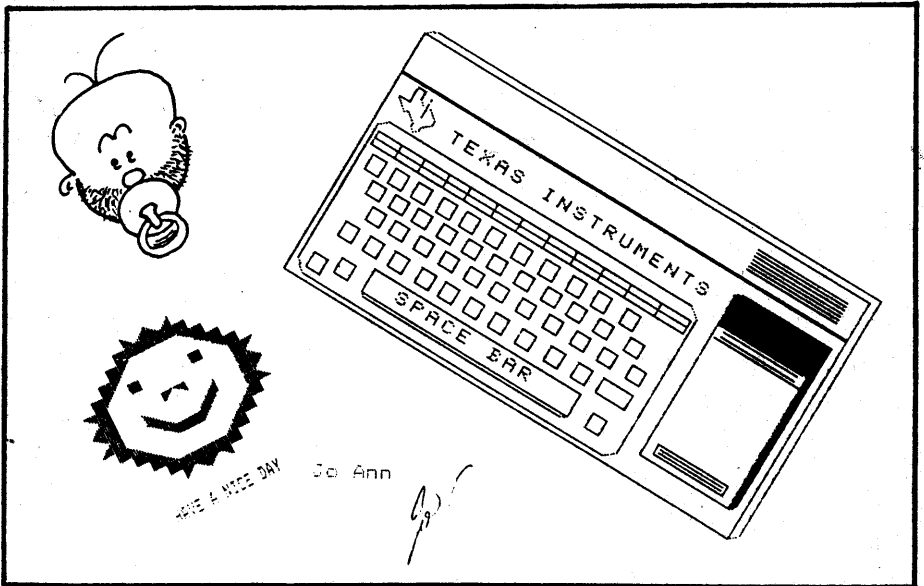


# INTERNATIONAL TI-LINES

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IT SUPPLEMENT NUMBER 1 WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON, SUPPLEMENTS TWO AND THREE ARE BEING PLANNED NOW - DETAILS TO FOLLOW NEXT MONTH      PB

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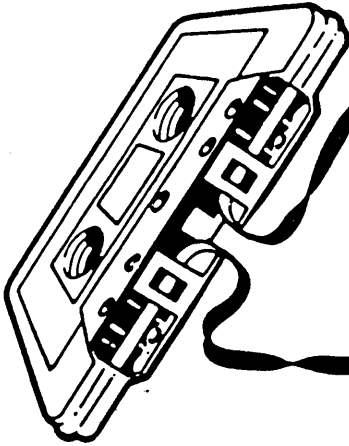












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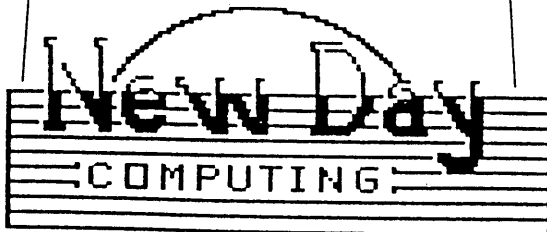
# FRONT

*...very impressive...*

*-S. Shaw*

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# TEXAS SPECIAL!

# JOHN BINGHAM

At periodic intervals, like everytime TI\*MES arrives I have thought that I should write an article, but that is as far as I have previously got. Not that I have any particular gems of wisdom to impart, nor am I a high powered expert programmer, nor an electronics wizard with marvellous hardware mods, but as a regular user of the 99/4A (my wife would use the term "addict", she being resigned to being a computer widow - although she says that at least she knows where I am) I have built up quite a lot of everyday useage experience, which I feel might be of interest to others.

Firstly by way of introduction, I am one of the older generation of members having written my first programs, including a pure machine code utility, some 22 years ago. Being a Chartered Engineer (civil/structural), I have rubbed shoulders with computers for many years, although my direct exposure has been relatively limited for this field.

However I did find that I had an aptitude for using computers, bordering on the addictive (yes, I admit it), and was therefore both thrilled and immediately at home when I was able to obtain my own home computer, the 99/4A, now almost 4 years ago. How different things were then. I chose the 99/4A essentially because of its Texas pedigree, and the expectation that there would be continuity (!!). Looking back, it has certainly performed well, other than the reliability of the cartridge slot, it still looks smart, unlike others I have seen. The continuity has been worrying, but thanks to the very active user groups, and faithful suppliers, this question has been deferred. Indeed the tight closeknit very personal user community is almost a good reason on its own for staying with the 99/4A.

I soon found that deciding which machine was the easy part, finding one was another matter. Advertised everywhere, but "expected in". At last I found one (the only one in stock) and offered with a free Invaders module. The only trouble was that these were out of stock, further supplies unknown, but he had two others - Household Budget Management and Beginning Grammar - not quite the same as an action game. However I took the first and bought the second, the former has never really been used - I soon found that it didn't do what I wanted it to do and I preferred to write my own. The latter was used quite a lot initially by my children, but then they grew out of it. In fact I have had great difficulty getting them to use educational modules (let alone any programming), although they love pure games.

I took it home, and, as the whole family waited expectantly, unpacked and connected it up. Nothing. I tried everything umpteen times without success. Back to the dealer, he was not perturbed - quite usual - replacement would be in next week. At last I got it home, it worked, but what next? I wanted a good game, the dealer had none (after all I had cleaned him out!), searched magazines in vain, writing something myself would (a) be pathetic (b) take a long time. Fortunately the next month C&VG had "Laser", I rushed home crunched it in, you can guess - it didn't work. So I took it apart, worked out some of the logic, failed to comprehend others, even found what as far I could see were some redundant lines. But at last managed to get it to work satisfactorily. The next step was to link up a cassette

recorder, that is another long story, but eventually it worked. How things have changed now I have more material that I know what to do with, in those days I was so desperate I started to translate from other machines.

I soon joined TIHOME, which opened the vista up, and made one feel less isolated. It was through a review in this that I made my first contact with a firm called Arcade Hardware and bought their special joystick. This is still performing well, and I still prefer it to their next one (which the children prefer). Typical of Howard Greenberg, when I ordered my second (because as will follow I had bought a second console and being so satisfied with the first joystick had decided to obtain another ) I had a very anxious note back "why a second?" had something gone wrong with the first? Such concern with the durability of his wares. Needless to say I was pleased to reply that there was nothing amiss, the second order was because of full satisfaction with the first. As I say typical of Howard, I have bought a number of products from him over the years and I have always found him to be helpful, very honest, and reliable. As my wife said after ordering something one Christmas: "you feel he cares".

My first year of ownership was rather frustrating, so much else to do and little time to spare for computing. Invaders and Parsec were obtained amongst others, and gave much satisfaction. During this period I found out the hard way how slow cassette handling of data is - painful. After a year, I was posted to Norway, hence the second console - one in the UK, one in Norway - and found more time for computing. I also crossed my first higher hardware threshold (from the basic of console and cassette recorder) with the purchase from Arcade (of course) of an Alphacom printer. It had been so frustrating not being able to obtain hard copy; but the cost of upgrading to a printer was prohibitive. Consequently the Alphacom opened up new horizons as I churned through thermal paper. It has continued to perform satisfactorily (I hope the devil does not hear and I suffer one failure after another after this article!), I had some connector problems at the start, but after some anxious moments it worked after trying and trying again. I did find that it would not work with a Speech Synthesizer (I didn't try removing the flap as suggested by another member) but this didn't worry me as most of my usage didn't require one.

Another threshold was crossed last year, when I decided to upgrade. I had often dreamed of doing so, but quickly dismissed the idea when I thought of the cost. However a year ago I realised that I had outgrown the basic console and cassette storage, plus my continuance overseas allowed me the means to do something. Expand or change system? Was it wise to sink a lot of capital into a possibly dying breed. After much agonising I decided to upgrade, OK it was going to be expensive but if I changed system (a) I would not get much for my existing equipment (b) I would have to discard all my own written programs and accumulated data (I had laboured to build up quite an extensive data base of Norwegian vocabulary, and the thought of recompiling this was soul destroying). I wonder how many people have calculated the total "as-purchased" cost of their system, I think they would be shattered if they did. The next stage was to decide what upgrade. At this stage I was thinking mainly of disk

drives and 32K, but decided that if one was doing this then it was folly not to also have a printer capability. After more agonising, talking to Howard (honest and helpful), Parco, and useful insider information from Peter Brooks. I decided to go for a Myarc MPES from Arcade, this having as standard 32K, printer and disk drive interfaces. To this Howard added twin DSDD drives. This resulted in a very nice package, yes it seemed a lot of money, but one can easily spend a lot in dribs and drabs. The alternative from Parco would have been a standard TI PEB with a SSSD drive.

With hindsight I feel that I made the best choice at the time, although a possibly better alternative might have been (if it had been available) a TI PEB with one of the new disk controllers and DSDD drives - I cannot add the new generation of cards to my box, and Myarc don't seem to be developing expansion capabilities for their MPES (I gather from the Orphan Chronicles that, as good as it was, the MPES was not a success for Myarc because there was still a good supply of TI PEB's in the States). One point on which I certainly don't have any second thoughts is the decision to opt for twin DSDD drives. Firstly a second drive is not essential, but I cannot imagine getting by without one. The thought of copying disks with only one drive is exhausting. Having two allows one to readily back up as one goes. I have had a rare failure of reading a TI-WRITER file from one disk, switch to and read from the second reinstate on the first, so easy. Again more than SSSD is not essential, but it makes life so much easier. Instead of having of having a program and a data disk, they can be combined into a single composite disk. Generally I tend only to go up to SSSD, because access times come to be rather long on a full DSDD disk, but the capability is exceedingly useful, especially if access time is not too important or where archive back-ups are being made.

Despite what I might have implied earlier, I have been very satisfied with my MPES, it has behaved impeccably, it tucks neatly away and is relatively quiet. Although I have mentioned the new generation of cards, one must also ask "do I need them?". I read the other day an article which said that many who want to trade up/change machine, , don't really know why they need to. One should ask oneself "what will I really gain?", "what will I be able to do that I cannot do now?". I have to admit that my current set-up satisfies all my needs. Even the lamented lack of speed is not really troublesome. With my expanded system, many new horizons have opened up, only a few of which I have so far explored. The immediate gains have been (i) much faster handling of programs and data (ii) word processing capabilities.

In summary, if you don't have a printer, you should endeavour to get one. If you can stretch to expansion, you won't regret it, even if it does mean using up your next few years computing budget all at once.























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 THE TIHOME SOFTWARE COLLECTION  
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Pricing for TSC disks has been reorganised, although the full Collection is still offered at £35 inclusive.

Check the TSC Catalogue (available free to ITUG subscribers on request) to find out what the TSC entries stand for. Make sure that you indicate clearly what your choice is, specifying the name of the disk/s you want.

GAMES:	TSC ENTRIES:	PRICING
TSC_DSK_A	GA0001 - GA0011	The number of programs on a disk can vary between about 7 and 11, dependent upon the sizes of the programs in terms of sectors used.
TSC_DSK_B	GA0012 - GA0022	
TSC_DSK_C	GA0023 - GA0032	
TSC_DSK_D	GA0033 - GA0043	
TSC_DSK_E	GA0044 - GA0055	
TSC_DSK_F	GA0056 - GA0066	
EDUCATIONAL:		The exception is the DEMONSTRATION disk, which alone is offered at £2.95 inclusive of post and packing
TSC_DSK_G	ED0001 - ED0009	The rest are priced as follows:
TSC_DSK_H	ED0010 - ED0017	
DEMONSTRATION:		£ 3.95 for ANY 1 DISK
TSC_DSK_I	DE0001 - DE0006	£ 6.90 for ANY 2 DISKS (SAVE £ 1)
		£ 9.85 for ANY 3 DISKS (SAVE £ 2)
		£12.80 for ANY 4 DISKS (SAVE £ 3)
		£14.75 for ANY 5 DISKS (SAVE £ 5)
		£16.70 for ANY 6 DISKS (SAVE £ 7)
		£18.65 for ANY 7 DISKS (SAVE £ 9)
TSC_DSK_J	MU0001 - MU0009	£20.60 for ANY 8 DISKS (SAVE £11)
TSC_DSK_K	MU0010 - MU0017	£22.55 for ANY 9 DISKS (SAVE £13)
TSC_DSK_L	MU0018 - MU0026	£24.50 for ANY 10 DISKS (SAVE £15)
		£26.45 for ANY 11 DISKS (SAVE £17)
UTILITIES:		£28.40 for ANY 12 DISKS (SAVE £19)
		£30.35 for ANY 13 DISKS (SAVE £21)
TSC_DSK_M	UT0001 - UT0011	£32.30 for ANY 14 DISKS (SAVE £23)
TSC_DSK_N	UT0012 - UT0022	£34.25 for ANY 15 DISKS (SAVE £25)
TSC_DSK_O	UT0023 - UT0033	£35.00 ENTIRE (SAVE £28.20)
TSC_DSK_P	UT0034 - UT0044	

All programs are recorded on Single-sided disks.

You may elect to be supplied with software on Double-sided disks, when you should deduct £1 from the prices shown above.

If you prefer, you may send in your own disks, in which case deduct 50p for each disk from the prices shown above.

For example, 8 disks supplied by you would work out at £20.60 - (8 x 50p = £4) = £16.60 nett.

All the above prices are inclusive of post and packing.

The pricing for programs recorded on cassette remains £1 per program, with an overall charge of 65p for post and packing.

PLEASE MAKE ALL CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "PETER BROOKS"