

VAST NEWS

for the VAST Computer User Group

Volume 6 Number 11

November 10, 1990

HAPPY THANKSGIVING from the VAST Computer User Group



TI World and Local News

(Compiled from various sources
including MICROpendium by
Jim Ely)

Locally... Elections

Enclosed with this newsletter is
your official ballot for the
November Election. The ballot
MUST be received by the
Secretary no later than the start

of the meeting on November
10th. You may mail the ballot
back to be received by Friday,
November 9th, or bring it with
you to the meeting the next day,
which ever you prefer. **JUST
REMEMBER TO VOTE!**

See NEWS on page 2

MEETING
NOVEMBER 10, 1990
Pyle Adult Recreation Center
Tempe, AZ
Information—491-1552

INSIDE INFORMATION

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VAST BBS
24hrs. / day
(602)
433-2767



NEWS, from page 1

RAVE Delays Shipping PE/2

In an apologetic letter to PE/2 customers on September 28th, RAVE announced a delay to the end of October for shipping of its PE/2 Expansion Box. The delay was caused when some metal parts that were plated to prevent rust began rusting! That, coupled with the late delivery of other parts (which were ordered 6 to 8 weeks ago), and design changes in the PC boards for the final versions forced the delay. The rusting parts were returned to the vendor for rework, which took 3 to 4 weeks. Shipping is expected possibly by the time you read this article. We'll keep you posted. Thanks, John McDewitt, for keeping us informed of the progress!

Asgard Updates Spell It!

Version 1.1 of Spell It! is now available from Asgard. MAJOR changes include a 10-15% speed increase, supposed compatibility with the Myarc HFDC (it was supposed to do this with the last version), and more compatible with the Horizon RAM disk, support for alternate CHARA1 files, expanded capacity for unique words (from 1500 to 1900 on a standard -99/4A) and display of total words in a text file as well as unique words. The program also has the capability to look up unknown words in the dictionary. An upgrade from a previous version is obtained by sending your original program disk and \$5 to Asgard. As before, 3 versions are available. The DS/DD version sells for \$19.95, the SS/SD version sells for \$24.95 and the HFDC version sells for \$34.95. Contact Asgard at

P.O. Box 10360, Rockville, MD 20849.

Asgard has also released Screen Preview, a replacement for TI-Writer's Formatter (or compatible). This program enables you to see your formatted document on the screen in "greeked" form before you print it. This way you can check that centering, underlining and text justification are as you expect before you print and if not, can correct directly in your formatted text. Price is \$12.95 + S & H.

DIJIT Drops 80-Column Card

Because of the shrinking size of the TI market, DIJIT Systems is no longer going to produce its 80-column card. This card, which plugged into the PEB, enabled the TI to display 80 columns on screen, twice the normal width of the standard TI screen. An RGB monitor was also required.

Not to worry, though. Several other companies are, or are planning to make 80-column devices including Asgard and Oasis Pensive Abucators (O.P.A.).

Myarc Update

Myarc was expected to release version .98h of MDOS sometime in October. If released, it would be the first update since last Fall. Also, word is not to look for any new major hardware or software. This basically means that the GEME system is dead. Myarc is working to fill backorders on the Geneve 9640 but there is no word on the status of the HDFC. Seems that Lou Phillips, Mr.

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SECRETARY'S SLATE

MINUTES

VAST COMPUTER USER GROUP

OCTOBER 1990

The regular monthly meeting of the VAST COMPUTER USER GROUP was held on Saturday, October 13th at the Pyle Adult Recreation Center in Tempe. The meeting was opened by President Mike Grogan at 10:00 a.m. who took time to thank all those who helped make September's picnic a success.

Mike Marfisi read the Treasurers report which was accepted as presented. Jim Ely pointed out that finances may be very tight for the next year. If we want to maintain the services that are offered by the group, we must realize that the club dues in no way cover these costs. The dues cover the cost of publishing our newsletter but the operation of the BBS is totally dependent on the special donation buckets.

OLD BUSINESS

Bud Barnes brought up the fact that we had chosen winners of the poster contest last month but nothing had been done about distributing them to members for placement in the area. Mike Marfisi will see that we have a supply of posters and small publicity cards at the next meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PROGRAM:

Dan Shell, committee chairman, has no program for this month. He pointed out that he

is running dry when it comes to ideas for programs. We need to come up with some simple demos or programs for the next year. Some suggestions included assigning one member each month to choose a favorite program to demonstrate for a short time.

There were no other committee reports.

NEW BUSINESS

Bud Barnes informed the group that the Tempe Public Library now has a BBS on line where you can access the "card catalog" to get information on available materials.

(*Editor's note:* The telephone number for the Library was not available at the meeting. For those interested, the number is 350-5651. This is a BBS system and you must use a modem and your computer to access this number. After you get a connect, type exactly as shown "hello Tempe,Public.Library" <press ENTER>. (Don't use the quote marks!) The case of the letters is not important, but the space, comma and period locations are. Once you are in, a HELP screen with available commands is available by typing HE at the command prompt. One unfortunate thing for TI users is that the screen is in 80 column format so a lot of what you see on your screen will take up two lines for every one that their system sends. An easy solution is to scroll what you see to your printer and it should be easier to read. If you have any questions, just call Mike Marfisi or Jim Ely. —Ed.)

See SECRETARY'S SLATE on page 4

SECRETARY'S SLATE, from page 3

Bud also informed the group that Ralph Reese has agreed to make some modifications to members consoles including a reset switch, a load interrupt switch and a pause control. The cost of these modifications is \$25 plus parts. The \$25 will be donated to the club treasury. If interested please see Ralph.

Bud, who is just a barrel of information this month, also reminded us that Apache Reclamation has a very large selection of TI joysticks, cassette cables and transformers for sale.

At this point we asked our guests to introduce themselves to the group. We welcomed Mike Scheller and his family and Al Bradbury with his family. Thanks for coming folks.

Under the terms of the constitution and bylaws, an election committee was appointed by Mike Grogan made up of Bud Barnes and Dan Shell. It will be their duty to accept nominations from the members and to certify the eligibility and willingness of the nominees.

A joint nomination was made by Virginia Davis to retain the entire slate of present officers. The motion was seconded and carried by voice vote. Wallace Knight nominated Ed Morse for the office of Vice President. No further nominations were made at this time. A ballot will be mailed to each member to be returned to the secretary by the next meeting for formal counting.

These being no further business, the meeting was closed at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully, Mike Marfisi, Secretary, VAST

From the Editor's Desk

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

IN THIS ISSUE

New-Age/99 is on page 5, this month discussing upgrading or downgrading, as the case may be, to other computers and how the TI stacks up. 4/A Foray is on page 7 with some more interesting news Tidbits about the TI. (Nice going, Ralph! Thanks again.) The TI-Writer help series by Stan Katzman is on page 10 showing how to link together several documents in to one continuous document. Questions and Answers is on page 9 and answers the questions posed by Mike Grogan in last month's issue.

I do have a Member Profile, but no picture, and as the deadline for this issue is so short, we will publish that next month. Speaking of which, when can I expect YOUR profile? It doesn't take much and it will help us all to know you better.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Here is the calendar for the next two months with our meeting dates indicated ...

DECEMBER 1990							JANUARY 1991						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1			1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31		
30	31												

See you at the meeting. Jim Ely, Editor

~~~~~  
 W-AGE/99 \* NEW-AGE/  
 99 \* NEW-AGE/99 \* N  
 EW-AGE/99 \* NEW-AGE  
 /99 \* NEW-AGE/99 \*  
 ~~~~~

by JACK SUGHRUE,
 Box 459, East Douglas, MA 01516

#3

I often chuckle at doomsayers, but sometimes they irk me.

I don't think anyone questions the facts that the APPLE, AMIGA, IBM, and clones all have more commercial software and hardware support than the 4A. Walk into any bookstore and look at the magazines. Go into a department store and look at the racks of software packages. Or into an electronics store and peruse the computers, cards, drives, other hardware and software items. And the Prices.

No question: the stuff's there. And some of us succumb to those temptations. Don't get me wrong. At work and at the homes of friends and relatives I get plenty of opportunities to play and work with these other machines. And enjoy my time on them, for the most part. But, even then and even when I attend the other computer user groups or fairs, I don't have the feeling that I do with similar TI activities.

The emotion - very much in evidence at TI get-togethers - is absent at Apple and IBM gatherings. There are subtle, important other differences, too.

When I look at the new Other software or Other hardware I wonder if most TIers

would pay those humongous prices or whether most TIers would want to trouble to learn these new ways of hi-tech wizardry. For the most part, the TIers don't do that now.

An example: The Apple IIGS is \$1149. (That's without the 5.0 (NOTE THE CONSTANT UPGRADING THAT SEEMS TO BE A COMPLAINT IN SOME CIRCLES!) \$50 Systems disk that's required to operate the machine. Nothing resides in memory.

Let's say you want a word processor for it, as word processing is the most common use of non-business computers. Appleworks (the most popular WP for all Apples) is another \$250. (No percentage point, folks. It's two-hundred-fifty dollars, plus tax!) Will the WORKS give you 40/80 column for those of us (oldtimers?) who LIKE 40 because the letters are large and clean and easy to read? Nope. Try reading 80 on an Apple monitor.

Can you flip around, as you can with the fairware FUNNELWEB, for example, and load up such utilities as DM-1000, Disk Utilities, ARChiver, other languages (Assembly, c, FORTH), other sources (tape, cartridge, etc.)? Nope. There are no tapes and cartridges for those Other machines, anyway, but the WORKS doesn't let you configure any possibilities outside the provided environments. How about modified fonts, underlining, doublestrike? All available with FUNNELWEB, even more so if you use the fairware PLUS! within the FWB environment.

And speed? The IIGS is slow, very slow. But for an additional \$399 you can buy a

See NEW-AGE on page 6

NEW-AGE, from page 5

TRANSWARP GS card that'll speed up WORKS and other GS items to reasonable, runnable speed.

Can you slip into graphics with WORKS? Nope, but FWB's TI text can easily emigrate to PAGEPRO for all kinds of graphic/text manipulations (or PP can stand alone for similar structuring).

You must use PRINT SHOP separately to get some graphics; still, not with the page possibilities. For that you'd need the user UN-friendly NEWSROOM. Add another \$400. Not counting the graphics. The kind that are Public Domain through TIPS for the TI. Say another \$500, easily. How much is that decidedly inferior wordprocessor now? Still under \$3000? That's not bad as prices go in the computer world out there. Check Other computer prices.

Why would we TIers consider THAT an upgrade? We certainly wouldn't pay those prices for software for our superior machine: FWB donation \$20; PLUS! donation \$10; TIPS and 5,000 graphics are FREE; PAGEPRO is under \$25. Grand total for us TIers, maybe 50 bucks at the most.

Most TIers don't have RAM disks or RAVE keyboards or hard drives or the GENEVE upgrade that includes 640k RAM, truly astounding graphic capabilities, a superb keyboard and all other kinds of great stuff, including TI compatibility (as much as most clones have with IBM). And yet EACH of these things are less than a couple pieces of software for Other computers.

Most TIers don't (in all honesty) even pay for the fairware they use, so I can't see them spending \$50 to \$800 per piece of software after spending a couple thousand for another system, no matter how great the software is. Look at the magnificent under \$25 commercial software items for the TI: TI-BASE, PAGEPRO, TI ARTIST PLUS, for examples. Do most TIers who have disk drives own these three items? Not by a long shot!

Have most of the TIers who use Tony McGovern's FUNNELWEB, Barry Boone's ARCHIVER, John Birdwell's DISK UTILITIES, or Canada's DM-1000 sent decent (or any) fairware contributions to the authors? Or contributions for the constant updates? Nope.

Do most TIers subscribe to MICROpendium or ASGARD NEWS, the only two magazines we have devoted entirely to the TI? Nope.

Do most TIers even belong to user groups? Nope. Not even by mail, though that is the best source of disk, tape, and text materials, not to mention the monthly newsletter connection, that money can buy (also under \$25).

Do most TIers take advantage of the massive sources available across their phone through inexpensive modems? Nope.

My feeling is why, if TIers are not even taking advantage of all the things that are available NOW and at a lot smaller cost, would they even want to move (up?) to more expensive machines?

It makes me think about a comment by Keith

See NEW-AGE on page 7

NEW-AGE, from page 6

Jarrett, considered by many music critics to be the greatest pianist of this century. Because he plays jazz and classical and newage and a style of improv that is inimitable, he was asked why he didn't play the electronic keyboard. "I haven't learned everything about the acoustic piano, yet," he said. If he hasn't learned everything about the acoustic piano yet, no one in the world has.

But I feel this way about my TI. When people ask me why I don't move up, I first give them my speech about moving to Apples or clones or whatever is not necessarily UP. Then I think of the real reason: I haven't finished learning everything I want to learn and doing everything I want to do with my 4A yet.

Even if everything relating to TI ceased instantly; nothing more being created; all user groups stopped; the complete TI end — even if... most of us would still be using and learning and enjoying our perfectly wonderful computer for a long time to come.

But such a scenario is not heading our way in the near future. There are too many of us who care and WANT to stay with this gem of a machine.

I think we all have a long way to go yet, and I am enjoying the journey. j.s.



4/A FORAY

by Ralph Rees

Hello again fellow Vastians! Here's hoping you all made it through the last month O.K. and are ready, willing and able to attend the upcoming November meeting. If you don't show you won't be in the KNOW! See Ya' There!!!! -Ralph...

DID YOU KNOW:

- ✓ The TI-99/4 was unveiled in June of 1979 but didn't actually make it to market until early 1980 because of pre-production bugs that couldn't be worked out in time for the Christmas season.
- ✓ The TI-99/4A was unveiled in June of 1981, at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago.
- ✓ It is the "A" in the TMS9918A Video Display Processor chip that gave the 99/4A its name. The 99/4's screen chip is the TMS9918.
- ✓ Plans to introduce the TI-99/2 (a low end, 4.2K ram competitor to the TIMEX-Sinclair computer) were cancelled in May 1983 after prices for the 99/4A fell to a point where they encroached upon the 99/2's target market.
- ✓ The beige colored 99/4A appeared in June 1983. (that was the first one I owned, purchased at K-Mart for \$50.00)
- ✓ Plans to introduce the TI-99/8 (the 64K

See 4/A FORAY on page 8

4/A FORAY, from page 7

upgrade computer for 99/4A owners) were shelved in June 1983 and the introduction was cancelled completely in November 1983 because of the "bailout". (sigh...)

✓ The 99/8 came with Extended BASIC and Pascal in ROM chips inside the console like the /4A has TI BASIC.

✓ TI's planned Hexbus Interface (which was another casualty of the "bailout" decision) supported a Wafertape drive that was faster than a cassette and let you name files just like you do on a diskette. The Hexbus also supported a four-color printer plotter (much like my Panasonic penwriter, I believe) and was to be available with RS-232 and/or parallel ports.

✓ The home computer "shake-out" battle between TI and Commodore began in earnest in August 1982. By July 1983 it was clear that TI had lost the battle. They reported over a \$100 million loss in the second quarter of 1983 alone.

✓ Despite losing so much money on the 99/4A, the entire 99/4A product line accounted for only 5% of TI's sales.

✓ TI officially announced the end of the 99/4A on October 28, 1983. Total production of the computer did not cease until 1984.

✓ Microsoft Corporation wrote TI BASIC for the 99/4 and /4A.

✓ Besides TI, Corcomp and Myarc, other companies such as AJ International, Box Car, Doryt Systems, Intellitec, Mikel Labs, Tachyon Systems and Ultracomp produced

RS232 and 32K ram hardware peripherals specifically for the 99/4A.

QUICK! WHERE'S THE RAID!

It may not have been the first time that a mysterious failure was blamed on a "bug", but Grace Murray Hopper, one of the first computer programmers and a Navy Captain, says she was there when the term was first applied to a computer failure — and she has the bug to prove it. At Harvard one summer night in 1945, Hopper says, she and her associates were working on a "Granddaddy" of today's computers, the Mark II. "Things were going badly — something was wrong in one of the relays of the long, glass-encountered computer," says Hopper. "Finally someone located the trouble spot and, using ordinary tweezers, removed the problem, a moth. From then on when anything went wrong with a computer, we said it had bugs in it." The historic moth remains are taped to a page of Hopper's 1945 logbook, and a photograph of the bug appeared in the July 1981 issue of the "Annals of the History of Computing."

(Source — TIDBITS, Mid-South Users Group, Memphis, Tn., Bill Gaskill) i.r.



2 & A

Questions & Answers

by Mike Grogan

OK.. OK.. I know that this was a short month for the newsletter. But next month I want some of you to answer some of these. Or send me some questions!!

Q Why would I want to change to a double sided disk drive?

A Well like it says, "double." It will add more files on one disk. This will help you with housekeeping—less disks to file away. But, you say, I have a TI-controller. Well if that drive is getting bad, it's not worth fixing and single sided drives are getting harder to find because no one uses them anymore. Yes, a TI card will support double sided. Again "double" the storage. And the cost is very low \$30-\$40.

Q Where can I get a good price on blank disks?

A NO PROBLEM! Just ask Mike Marfisi. The club buys disks for the Disk Of The Month in large quantities and we can pass this savings on to you. Just ask.

Q My P-Box "big foot" locks up my system. Is there anything I can do?

A Some of the magazines that sell TI-stuff have an extension that works really well. It will fit between the keyboard and that "big-foot" and should give you a care free time with your TI —no more lock-ups!

Q Could I make use of more than 1 disk drive?

A You sure can!! It will save loads of time by you not having to swap disks all the

time. But remember ... You will need another power supply for it. Ask around and you can find one in our club members (used) for around \$40.00. And drives sell for around \$40.00 also (used). It's an investment in time.

Well this was put together in a hurry this time. I was waiting for you to answer some of these. But not to fear ... I will try to think of more questions for next time. Wouldn't it be great if I could answer a question that you have been wanting to know about?????

Send questions or answers to me, Mike Grogan, 3040 N. 48th Ave., Phoenix, AZ. 85031, and let's keep this thing going!!



Come Help Us Celebrate The
TI-99/4A's 10th Year
Anniversary

UGOC in association with the
Pomona Valley UG is hosting

FEST WEST 91

THE HAPPIEST FEST ON EARTH

Across the street from Disneyland PLUS many more attractions in the area for the wife/husband and kids to enjoy while you meet internationally renowned TI entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and innovators. Fest tickets are on sale now (\$6.00 for both days). Ticket requests with a post mark before January 1, 1991 are eligible for a drawing for one free night at the RAMADA.

Plan your **THREE DAY** weekend now!
Fest dates are Feb 16 & 17, 1991

The Fest will be held at the Ramada Main Gate,
Anahim 104 Freeway 600-447-4848. Special rate to
fest goes (\$55.00 per night plus taxes)
Only 50 rooms available at this rate and
closing date for this rate is 15 Jan 91

Travel Arrangements may be
made by contacting Ruth Dickey,
Travel Concepts. (714) 778-5459

For future announcements contact the
UGOC BBS at (714) 751-4332 or write to

Fest West 91 Committee
C/O Bill Nelson
11692 Puryear Lane
Garden Grove, CA 92640

FEST WEST 91

T.I. Writer

by Stan Katzman

(From the WEST PENN 99'ers Newsletter)

Part 13

The following is a master file that I used to print out a chemistry laboratory manual that I wrote. Kindly notice that I have all the formatting commands plus all the files in the order that I want them printed out.

```
.AD
.FI
.HE ^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^%
.LM 6
.RM 70
.IN +5
.TL124:27,109,4,134
.TL 123:27,83,49
.TL 125:27,84
.TL 91:27,83,48
.PL 60
.IF DSK2.LABNTBK
.IF DSK2.APP
.IF DSK2.MELTING
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.IF DSK2.DISTIL
.IF DSK2.CRYST
.IF DSK2.INFRED
.IF DSK2.NMR
.IF DSK2.SEPFUN
.IF DSK2.DRYING
.IF DSK2.BUTENE
.IF DSK2.VPC
.IF DSK2.KER
.IF DSK2.NITBENZ
.IF DSK2.BROMBENZ
.IF DSK2.CRAFTS
.IF DSK2.ANILINE
.IF DSK2.NABH
.IF DSK2.ROTATION
.IF DSK2.BUTBROM
.IF DSK2.CYCHEX
.IF DSK2.VALERIC
.IF DSK2.BUTACE
.IF DSK2.BENZOIC
.IF DSK2.METHBENZ
.IF DSK2.MNBENZ
.IF DSK2.MDICHLBENZ
.IF DSK2.DIELS
.IF DSK2.ALDOL
.IF DSK2.MUT
.IF DSK2.SUG
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s.k.

NEWS, from page 2

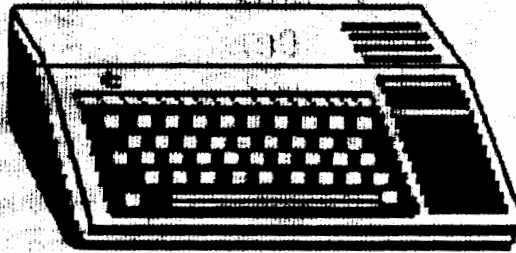
Myarc, has lost interest in further support of the TI. So now it is up to us!

New Catalog From Texaments

The NEW, FREE Fall/Winter catalog is now available from Texaments, 53 Center St., Patchogue, NY 11772. It is included automatically with all orders placed directly with the company. Just write and it's yours or call (516) 475-3480 (voice) or (516) 475-6463 (BBS).



Looks Good, Doesn't It?



REMEMBER THIS?

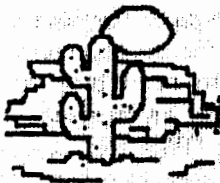
TI-99/4A

**GET IT OUT OF THE CLOSET! LEARN TO USE IT!
LEARN TO LOVE IT!**

LOOK

**...WORD PROCESSING...SPREAD SHEET MANAGEMENT...GAMES
...DESKTOP PUBLISHING...DATA BASE MANAGEMENT...MUSIC
...MUCH...MUCH MORE! WANT MORE INFO?...**

CONTACT US! WE ARE HERE TO HELP! WE ARE THE...



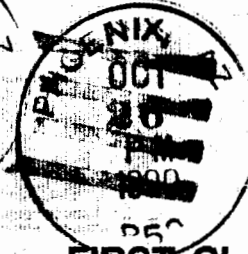
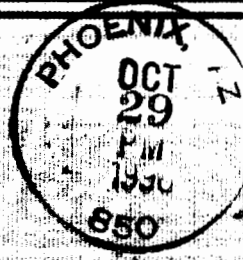
VAST USER GROUP

**MEETING AT
THE PYLE RECREATION CENTER
SOUTHERN & RURAL RD.
TEMPE, AZ.
FOR INFO CALL**

491-1552

272-4315

VAST NEWS
c/o MIKE MARFISI
1425 E. DEL RIO DRIVE
TEMPE, AZ 85282



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FIRST CLASS MAIL

VAST User Group Information

The *VAST Computer User Group* is a support group for the TI-99/4A Home Computer and compatibles.

The VAST Computer User Group operates a BBS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The phone number is (602) 433-2767.

CURRENT OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Mike Grogan 272-4315

VICE PRESIDENT

Jim Ely 275-8018

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Mike Marfisi 491-1552

LIBRARIANS

Hazel & Wallace Knight . . 938-5446

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jim Ely 275-8018

BBS SYSOP

Leo Baker 931-9010

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Please contact the Secretary/Treasurer for COMMERCIAL advertising rates.

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Send any correspondence to the address above.