

VAST NEWS

for the VAST Computer User Group

Volume 7 Number 6

June 8, 1991

TI World and Local News

(compiled from various sources including
MICROpendium Magazine by Jim Ely)

Planning For Fest West '92 Proceeds

The contract with Days Inn has finally been received and changes made as we had requested. The room rate is \$54 a night, one to 4 people in a room. This is a great rate! We must guarantee 20 rooms on Friday, February 14, 1992 and on Saturday, February 15, 1992. If the rooms are filled, all the convention space we have discussed is FREE for our using. WHAT A DEAL! Packets of information are being prepared for mailing in the very near future, and things are proceeding, hopefully, on schedule. We'll keep you posted.

Monthly Meeting Rooms Secured For Another Year

Our meeting rooms at Pyle Adult Recreation Center have again been finalized for the rest of 1991 and the first half of 1992. Meetings will again be on the second Saturday of every month, but the rooms in which we meet may be different each month. Starting next month, the room in which we will be meeting will also be included with

the calendar that is included on the Editor's page. Signs will also be posted in Pyle on the meeting room door so you shouldn't have much problem finding the meeting.

As a side note, several members of the Group meet for breakfast before the meetings at around 8:00 a.m. at the Lenny's (...I mean Denny's) at the Superstition Freeway and Rural Road in Tempe (not very far from the Pyle Center). All member are welcome. Everyone pays for his own meal.

Harrison Continues NEW Software Support

Harrison Software, which had announced not too long ago it would not produce any new software for the TI, has returned to making new software! The move is due to the fact that Bruce Harrison, company owner, has retired from his federal civil service job and now has the time to devote to programming for

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From the Editor's Desk

**HAPPY GRADUATION!
HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!**

It's that time of year again. Do you think the temperature will get to 122° in June this year like last year? I sure hope not. At this time, we are having quite a mild beginning of summer.

IN THIS ISSUE

Again this month our newsletter is a little skimpy. There isn't a lot of news to report and, as usual, article submissions are non-existent, save two regulars. Mike Marfisi has a review of Asgard Software's *PAGE PRO BANNER MAKER* on page 8. I had the opportunity to see this program in action and it is really a fine program. On page 4 is *NEW-AGE/99* by Jack Sughrue, again this month looking at the fine works of Mickey Schmitt. *4/A FORAY* by Ralph Rees is on page 7, as usual looking at all things relative. That is all there is again this month. Maybe next month <sigh>...

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Below is the calendar for the next 2 months with our meeting dates indicated...

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

A REMINDER...

...School is out for the summer and vacations are coming up. Please be careful when driving. We want to see you all back here when school starts again in the Fall.

See you at the meeting, JUNE 8th.

Jim Ely, Editor

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the TI and PC.

Harrison Software is famous for its superb music programming. It will lead off its re-entry to software programming with a new music disk *II Pastor Flido* (The Faithful Shepherd) which was introduced at the Lima Computer Fair in May. The program is NOT Geneve compatible. It requires 32K, Extended BASIC and a disk system. The program is available for \$6 including shipping from Harrison Software, 5705 40th Place, Hyattsville, MD 20781. Specify DS/SD or SS/SD drive and whether double-sided or floppy.

MIDI Master 99 To Be Marketed By Crystal Software

Mike Maksimik has created Crystal Software Project to market his MIDI Master 99 interface. You may recall last month that a deal with Asgard to market the device fell through due to a disagreement between Maksimik and Asgard. Version 2.2 of the device is currently available for \$45, with version 3 due at any moment. Registered

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SECRETARY'S SLATE

MINUTES

VAST COMPUTER USER GROUP
MAY 11, 1991

The monthly meeting of the VAST COMPUTER USER GROUP was held at the Pyle Adult Recreation Center in Tempe on Saturday, May 11, 1991. It was called to order by President Mike Grogan at 10:02 a.m. All officers, 16 members and 5 guests were present.

Mike Grogan began with some announcements and reminders to the membership. He mentioned that Ralph and Hazel were co-chairpersons of the *FEST WEST* committee and they would be needing all the help they could get. He reminded those that voted in favor of the *FEST* that their vote was a commitment to help.

The minutes of the April meeting were accepted as published in the newsletter. The Treasurers report was accepted as presented.

There were no committee reports other than Jim Ely reminding members to submit material for the newsletter. He also pointed out that a special conference would be set up on the BBS for all *FEST WEST '92* activity. Details will be worked out as to how to give outside callers access to that section.

There was no new business to conduct.

At this point the floor was turned over to Ralph Rees who brought us up to date on *FEST WEST '92*. Several ideas and sugges-

tions were put forth resulting in a fine exchange of ideas. All agreed that this *FEST* thing is getting exciting.

Ralph announced that we had been able to get the hotel to give us a per room rate of \$54 for up to 4 persons per room. We were not sure how many rooms we would have to guarantee. We would have a block of rooms in one area of the hotel. Hazel worked out a floor plan that would net us 36 booths using 6 ft and 8 ft tables.

When the discussion started getting into specifics of pricing for tables and prices for admission, it was suggested that the committee should be empowered to make these decisions and present them to the membership in a report on a monthly basis. The entire club should not be involved in each of these items. That is why we formed a committee. A variety of other ideas were put forth and referred to the committee for further action.

Mike Grogan pointed out that a used computer store in the NW Valley would be holding computer swap meets every other month. He thought it would be a good idea for the group to participate.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully,
Mike Marfisi,
Secretary,
VAST Computer User Group

~~~~~  
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

#12

MICKEY REVISITED

Last time in NEWAGE I spent lots of time talking about Mickey Schmitt's two books (THE ADVENTURE REFERENCE GUIDE, \$9.95 + \$2 S+H, from Asgard, Box 10306, Rockville, MD, 20848, and GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR CASSETTE SYSTEM, \$9.95 + \$2.50 S+H, from the author - Mickey Schmitt, 196 Broadway Avenue, Lower Burrell, PA, 15068). In the interim, I've also written a lengthier article about the new and wonderful ways to use cassettes based upon Mickey's cassette book which appeared in REFLECTIONS. There are a couple of disks available for user groups (or individuals) who have cassettes still active. These two different chock-full disks include all the items referred to by Mickey and many others not yet mentioned by her and can be gotten for a \$3 shipping/handling fee each by asking for "Cassette Master Disk" from M.U.N.C.H., 560 Lincoln Street, P.O. Box 7193, Worcester, MA, 01605-7193; and "TI PD 1205.1 Cassette Utilities" from Tigercub, 156 Collingwood Avenue, Columbus, OH, 43213. Add an extra \$1 to Tigercub's disk request and ask for Jim Peterson's PD Catalog, the largest collection of the best of the least expensive treasures

in the TI World.

If your user group hasn't yet purchased Mickey's cassette book and used it as a fund-raiser, then your group is missing a great opportunity to make some green.

Some other things have happened since I wrote that original article. Mickey has formed a new - NEW! - company of all TI stuff.

Doesn't that have a nice ring to it? A new TI company. The MS stands for the two partners: Mickey Schmitt and Mike Sea. They can be reached at MS EXPRESS SOFTWARE, P.O. Box 498, Richmond, OH 43944. This dynamic duo made their professional debut at the Chicago Fair in November and released a pile of stuff:

ADVENTURE HINTS (Series I) by Lynn Gardner, which is unique in help concepts for adventurers. Each hint loads into the console in the same way the Adventure Module disks load. In addition to loading as standalone help, these hints can also be loaded into the specific programs and called up from a running program! These disks include built-in maps AND hardcopy maps. Nice feature. This first series includes some of the adventures written by Mickey and Lynn: OLIVER'S TWIST, RATTLE-SNAKE BEND, ZOOM FLUME. The same kind of two word (noun/verb) commands are used to ask for help, so there's no need to use all kinds of colored cellophane papers, special invisible ink pens, plastic decoding devices, whatever. Require Adventure Module or interpreter.

See NEW-AGE 12 on page 5

NEW-AGE 12, from page 4

GALACTIC EMPERORS by Eric Kepes, an Extended BASIC, multi-player, strategic simulation program. You and one, two, or three others are each trying to thwart opponents by accessing control to all the planets in the galaxy. Shades of the Darth Vader! There are decisions you and your opponents make beforehand (such as the number of planets) before the computer generates (new each time) the playing grid. Although many random events occur during the game play, the game is a mentally challenging activity that can be saved to continue play at a future date.

(Both of the above are \$9.95 + \$1 S+H and require the standard minimum configuration of one SSSD drive and 32K.)

Finally from MS EXPRESS, there are **SLIDING BLOCK PUZZLES** (Series I) and **SLIDING BLOCK SOLUTIONS** (Series I) each \$7.95 + \$1 S+H and both by Norman Rokke, the same person who brought you the extraordinary Fairware graphic/text program "1000 WORDS," one of the very best of its kind ever.

In this case, Norman has transcended the "normal" sliding block puzzles with which we are so familiar. In the late 1800's Sam Loyd, America's most ingenious puzzle maker at the turn of the century, created the 14-15 sliding block puzzle. There are lots of these out for the TI. The best I've seen is Chris Bobbitt's Public Domain version of many years ago and in all group libraries.

These puzzles, however, are considerably

more challenging than the originals. There are three on this disk and all can be saved in mid-game, so one doesn't have to begin all over again.

The first consists of nine different-colored tiles and supposedly can be solved in 59 moves. Puzzle #2 is made up of 10 blocks and could be completed in 81 moves. The hardest (#3, of course) has 11 tiles to shift and can be solved in 90 moves. A colored monitor or TV to go with your XB, 32K, and minimum disk drive system are required.

You need these puzzles before you get the solutions' disk, which provides the help you need for each puzzle in little pieces so as not to ruin the game for you. Very user-friendly, like all things Norman does. And, of course, ingenuity by him is taken for granted.

Now that we have a new company supporting Tiers, let's hope the TI Community supports the new company. Your support will encourage even more authors to stay with and write for the 99.

~~~~~  
I continue to get letters from cribbage buffs all over the TI World asking about a program I reviewed last year. The program is written by Gene Hitz. He even rewrote it after I gleefully stated how I found a way to cheat on the "Go". He chastised me for cheating our little 99 computer. Now, the computer catches me each time when I try. This program is called "Cutthroat Cribbage" and gives you a muggins if you count incor-

**See NEW-AGE 12 on page 6**

**NEW-AGE 12, from page 5**

rectly. It's fun to play and is fast and friendly. The game can be purchased for \$7 from ARCADE ACTION, Program Innovators, 412 Glenway, Wawatosa, WI 53222. Actually, for \$10 you get a diskful of games, including a nice version of TETRIS and piles of others. If you are a cribbage player, I'd recommend this game highly. If you'd like to learn the game, ask for the longer version (though I think he sends both versions, anyway), because this will give you the option to have the computer count up any combinations to see how things are scored. Then get yourself a HOYLE's from the library and play your TI until you got the game down pat. Excellent midnight companion.

~~~~~  
 Besides TIGERCUB's \$1 catalog of Public Domain disks (truly the BEST BUY in the TI World), everyone should send off for Asgard's newest catalog. Asgard's latest, particularly for Page Pro owners, is a mouth-watering collection of delectable delights. For game players, William Reiss's TOURNAMENT SOLITAIRE (which includes along with KLONDIKE - PYRAMID, GOLF, COMERS, PILE-UP, CANFIELD, and CALCULATION) is terrific. But call or write for the free catalog and notice the high level of your droolability. j.s.



NEWS, from page 2

owners of version 2.2 will receive version 3 at no charge as long as they have sent in their registration cards. For more information contact Michael J. Maksimik, Crystal Software Project, 635 Mackinaw Ave., Calumet City, IL 60409-4014. Checks should be made payable to Michael Maksimik.

New Software From MS Express

Adventure Hints-Series II, Sliding Block Puzzles-Series II and Sliding Block Solutions-Series II have been released by MS Express Software (P.O. Box 498, Richmond, OH 43944).

The Adventure Hints are designed to help solve the Adventure games (Adventure Module, 32K and disk system required) and sells for \$9.95 + \$1 shipping and handling.

The Sliding Block disks contain three puzzles, two of which have 2 different objectives, making five different games (X-BASIC, 32K and disk system required). It sells for \$7.95 + \$1 shipping and handling. The Sliding Block Solutions, obviously, is a help disk for the Sliding Block Puzzles. No price was stated for the Solutions disk.

TM Direct Has New Catalog

TM Direct, formerly Triton Products, has published a new catalog. It had been using Triton's last catalog. Terry Miller, owner, said that 25,000 copies of the new catalog have been mailed. If you don't receive one, you can get one by calling TM Direct at 1-800-336-9966.

4/A Foray

by Ralph Rees

What Do We Have Here? Department

– Have you ever wondered as you sat at your computer desk pounding away at the keys, while looking bleary-eyed at your monitor/tv, what kind of a machine we have here? I can tell you in one easy word... A **SURVIVOR**.

Think about it. It has been almost NINE years since TI decided that they didn't want to compete in the home computer market anymore. Nine Years! And yet the 99 lives on.

Since '83 we now have Hard disk controller cards, 80 column display cards, Gram devices, Ram disks manufactured from many vendors, You name it, we've pretty much got it.

I used to think it was amazing that the TI lasted this long, but not any more. It's not amazing to me because I really LIKE the TI. I have an IBM clone and an Apple IIc that collect dust. To me, they are no fun. With the TI consoles I have, I have no problem lifting the lid on one and trying a new modification. I take software that I have and modify it to MY liking. We can do this with the TI because it's so friendly.

The bottom line to this story is *TI PEOPLE*. The 99 would never have lasted so long if *PEOPLE* didn't love it so. We have 4/A nuts all around the world. Have you ever heard of Commodore or IBM or Apple people as

committed (or ought to be) as we are? I don't think so.

Have you heard of many other computer brands that have Fairs nationwide such as what we TI'ers put on? I haven't.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, as far as a computer to be used for about anything under the sun, for me, "THIS IS THE ONE!"

Help! Department

I received a phone call from one of our new members a few weeks back. He told me of a group of programs he had written that displayed on screen a catalog of his video tape collection. As we talked, I mentioned that he might want to think about using "RUN DSKx.program1, 2, 3, etc" as the last line of code in his programs so one could load the next and so forth. I also mentioned the possibility of "merging" the files into one large program. We talked of a few other programming tricks that I knew of and he was thrilled.

The reason I am discussing this is, It seems we should have a "beginning user" question and answer period during OR after our meetings. Those of us that have used and enjoyed our TIs for years take the little tricks, tips, time savers, etc., for granted and forget to share them with members who haven't had their computers as long.

The bottom line is, a *users group* is for sharing of information and learning, and new users are famished for both (I remember,

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FORAY 4/A, from page 7

Do You?).

Let me close this month by saying thanks to all of who knew about my father's recent operation and expressed get well wishes and prayers. He is not out of the woods yet but recovering from the first operation. (He has badly blocked arteries in his neck.) The left side is done and the right will be done June 11th. I thank you in advance for your continued prayers.

That's all I have this month, See you at the meeting. **FUNCTION =** —Ralph...

Views & Reviews

PAGE PRO BANNER MAKER

Reviewed by Mike Marfisi

This month the spotlight falls once again on *ASGARD*. It seems that I review (or is that pick-on!) more of their products than anyone elses. That is only because Chris Bobbitt and Asgard seem to flood the market with more new stuff than you can shake a stick at. Talk about support! We can all thank Chris for a job well done.

So, that said, let's take a look at one of the newest offerings from Asgard Software... **PAGE PRO BANNER MAKER**. The program is designed to create and produce banners in a quick and efficient manner. There are dozens of programs out there that do just that. The quickness and efficiency of each is a matter of opinion.

The folks at Asgard bill this one as bigger, better and faster than all the others. It can produce banners using many different fonts. There are 7 included with the package and more are available by ordering Page Pro Headline Fonts also from Asgard.

Banner Maker also comes with a small selection of pictures that can be added to your creation. Many more, in fact hundreds more are available. The pictures are in the Page Pro picture graphic format, so this means all Page Pro art plus all TI Artist, Graphx and TIPS art are available after being converted to PP format.

Ok... let's look at the program. It can be used with the 99/4A or Geneve. It needs a disk system, expanded memory and an Epson compatible printer. Fully compatible with a hard drive system, the program also provides 80 column support. Banner Maker is not guaranteed to be compatible with RAM disks.

The program consists of three modules: Configuration, Banner Editor and Banner Printer. All should be self explanatory. After the program loads and the title screen is displayed, you choose which module you wish to use. The first time out you will want to use the Configure module. Here you get to choose goodies like: background and foreground color, 40 or 80 column support, printer device names, default disk paths, etc.

After this is done you are ready to go on to the Banner Editor. Here is where the banner is designed. You can create a new banner or load an existing banner from disk.

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VIEWS & REVIEWS, from page 8

You are asked under what name you would like to store the banner you are about to create. Next you must select a headline font for the text. You are then given a choice of having the font printed "as is" or "enlarged to fit" the entire width of the page. "As Is" means you will get a printout that will take up about 1/4 of the page. When printed, the font will appear along the top of the banner. You are then asked to specify spacing between letters and words.

Across the top of the screen you are presented with a graphic representation of the banner onto which you will type your text. Anytime you wish to have a picture print, simply leave a couple of spaces in the text and hit CONTROL C. A black square appears in the space and you are prompted for the name of the picture to be used. After the picture loads, you will again be given the choice of printing the picture "As Is" or "Enlarged To Fit." Here the size of the "as is" printout will depend on how large a picture is being used. When "enlarged to fit" is selected, the picture will fill the page.

Full text editing is available while creating the banner. Pictures can be placed anywhere on the banner. 280 characters are allowed per banner and up to 32 can be pictures. You can see that there is some great potential here.

After the banner has been created, key FCTN 1 to tell the program you are finished. At this point your creation will be saved and you are ready to move on to the Banner Printer module.

Here you will be asked to load a banner for printing. Enter the file name of the banner or banners you wish to print. Tell it what printer you will use, how dark you want the printout, then stand back and watch it do its thing. While the banner is printing, the screen will show some info such as the starting height of the font used in points, how many times the font is being enlarged, what character is now being printed.

Banner Maker has some special features that make it stand above the others. One such feature is the ability to print several banners at one time. When selecting the banner to print, you may list as many as you wish and the program will "batch" them. This will allow them to all be printed at once. You could create several banners and start the printing process while you go to bed or whatever. You do not have to babysit your printer. Neat. Another nifty feature is the disk catalog. When loading banners, fonts or pictures, if you forget the name of the item you wish to load, no problem. Just leave the prompt line blank and press enter. The program will ask for the name or path of the device you wish to catalog. The program will then catalog the device and present a list of files on the screen. You select what you want by moving a selection bar over your choice and press enter. Simple and effective.

THE GOOD STUFF

The program ALMOST lives up to its claim of being the best darn banner maker for the TI and 9640. It comes with a good supply

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of fonts. You are given a few pictures samples to get you started. Additional fonts and pictures are available. Almost any picture format available can be converted to be used if you have the converter programs which are readily available. For the most part the program is easy to use (note exception below). It is fast. The documentation is really good. Chris has laid out the process perfectly and injected quite a bit of humor along the way. These docs were fun to read.

THE NOT SO GOOD STUFF

The program is delivered on a single disk and includes all 7 fonts plus several pictures. This creates a space problem. To overcome this, Chris has chosen to archive the fonts. He has included the Archiver program so you can de-arc the fonts as you need them. I would suggest that you de-arc all the fonts at once and store them on a font disk. This will save a lot of time later. No big deal here. It is a bit inconvenient but I can see the reason behind it. The only problem I can see is that it introduces the risk of corrupting the files during the de-arcing process, which can make for some interesting results.

As noted earlier, when printing a banner using the "As Is" setting, you get a banner that uses about 1/4 th the width of the page. There is no way, at this time, to print a second, or third line on the banner even though the room exists. That feature would elevate this program to the level of the best darn banner printer, etc.

PAGE PRO BANNER MAKER REPORT CARD

Performance.....	A
Ease of Use.....	A
Documentation.....	A+
Value.....	A
Final Grade.....	A

Page Pro Banner Maker sells for \$12.95 plus shipping. For more information contact Asgard at P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849 or phone (703) 255 3084. m.m.

FOR SALE

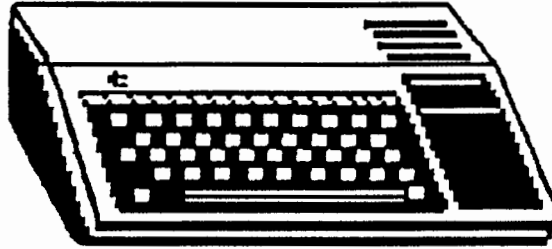
1200 baud Uniqmodem 1200HC Hayes Comptable MODEM with Manual. Asking \$50 OBO. CALL JIM 275-8018 or leave message on VAST BBS in FORSALE Conference.

Just a reminder...

The **VAST BBS** has changed its telephone number. You can now reach it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **(602) 233-0790**. This is a local call for most area residents.



Give it a call for the latest information about the VAST Computer User Group!



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**

481-1552

272-4315



VAST User Group International

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) 233-0790.

CURRENT OFFICERS

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Send any correspondence to the address below.

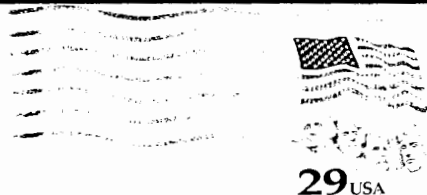
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There is **NO CHARGE** to **MEMBERS** for **PERSONAL** advertising. Non-members will be charged \$1.50 per ad.

Please contact the Secretary/Treasurer for **COMMERCIAL** advertising rates.

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