

YESTERDAYS NEWS

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30 Years Ago...

Historical Information taken From Bill Gaskills TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 1987:

Jack Riley joins Myarc as a partner, with the official title of Marketing Manager .

John Birdwell releases Disk Utilities v3.2.1, which includes a version of the program designed especially for use on the Super Cart.

A new prototyping board for the Peripheral Expansion Box is announced by Scott coleman and John Willforth.

SPAD XIII is upgraded to SPAD XIII MK.2 by Not-Polyoptics. In the original February 1987 release you flew the aircraft from the cockpit with views available in every direction. In MK.2 you also are able to view the plane itself as if you were behind it in another airplane with the new "I" command. Other enhancements include the addition of:

- (M) move to a site without having to fly there.
- (P) pan continuously through all views from the cockpit (to scan for enemy aircraft).
- (T) put aircraft into a power dive, or fly-upside-down situation.
- (V) fire your machine guns while in a left bank.

Legends adventure gets a large print manual for persons with poor sight.

Alpha Scientific Box 626 Chesterfield, Missouri 63006 314-878-7117, advertises 3.5 inch Toshiba disk drive Kit for the TI-99/4A in Computer Shopper.

Marty Kröll Jr. releases CATLIB v1.5.3 (CATALOGING LIBRARY) on August 10, 1987.

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A Myarc Geneve 9640 column debuts in MICROpendium.

Jumpboot operating system utility, written by Jerry Coffey, is released by Jeff Guide's Disk Only Software company as the first third-party product for the Myarc Geneve 9640. The program is designed to allow Geneve owners to boot their system from a floppy disk as fast as they could from a hard disk drive.

TPA Toolbox, a utility designed to expand the versatility of The Printer's Apprentice, is released by McCann Software.

Tony Wagner of Minot, North Dakota circulates information on his intention to create a nation-wide hardware projects group in the TI-99 Community.

Home Accounting Control System (HACS) version 2.0 is released.

MEMOcal notes/calendar printing program is released by Unique Software.

Walt Howe, part time Sysop on the TI Special Interest Group of The Source, reports that the TISIG is in 'trouble' because subscriber numbers are so low that it is not paying for itself. Sysop Blaine Crandall asks owners of The Source for a month to survey TI owners for their reactions.

Bruce Forbes founds the Tid Bits bi-monthly magazine for the TI Community. It is made available in both disk and hardcopy versions, \$8 for six disk issues or \$12 for six hardcopy issues.

ARTICLE BY BILL

GASKILL



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COLLECTING CARTRIDGES PART 3



THIRD PARTY PACKAGING:

Third party packaging for cartridges of course existed throughout the life of the TI-99 and after, but I will not cover it in much detail because it was so diverse. It ran the gamut from well constructed, professionally printed, cardboard packaging at the high end of the spectrum, to the plastic ziploc type baggies still used today at the low end of the spectrum.

My vote for the most solid packaging ever used for a TI-99 cartridge goes to Parker Brothers for the two-piece cardboard boxes they used for Frogger, Popeye and Q*Bert. My vote for the most attractive packaging ever used to house a TI-99 cartridge goes to Tigervision for the Miner 2049er box. At varying degrees of appearance and durability are others such as the Navarone cartridge boxes, which were professionally printed boxes in the early days, but which slipped to plain white boxes with no printing on them at all by 1986. Then of course there are the plastic bags used to house Miner 2049er just before Tigervision ended its support of the TI-99, and the DataBiotics and Asgard cartridges still in production today.

For collecting purposes you should also be aware that Atarisoft modules came packaged in two different size boxes. Because I own them, I can verify that programs such as Centipede, Defender, DonKey Kong, Picnic Paranoia, Protector II and Shamus were sold in large 10.25" X 7.5" boxes while other Atarisoft programs like Jungle Hunt and Moon Patrol were sold in 5.25" X 7.5" boxes. It may be that all were sold in the large boxes at one time or another and they also may have all been sold in the smaller packages too. I don't know.

CARTRIDGES and LABELS:

Four different style cartridges were produced for the TI-99 Home Computer at one time time or another, by one company or another. First on the scene was the TI Grom Port cartridge that we all conjure up an image of when someone mentions Command Module, Solid State Software or just cartridge software. This first appeared for the TI-99 at the introduction of the computer itself during the 2nd

Quarter of 1979. Next came the Atarisoft cartridges that were in somewhat of a flat V shape that lacked the lip which the TI Grom Port cartridge used to prevent the module from being pushed into the Grom Port connector too far. Then came the Romox ECPC's (Edge Connector Programmable Cartridges) that were designed with the lip just mentioned, but the cartridge top slanted downward at a severe angle away from the lip. The ECPCs were used by Funware, the International Users Group (IUG) and to a lesser degree by Navarone as well as by Romox. Lastly, there were the I/O port cartridges that were produced by Exceltec/Sunware exclusively as far as I can determine. These were cartridges that could only work in the I/O Port on the right side of the console. Their programming was too large for the 8K limitation the Grom Port cartridge was tied to. From memory, only a couple titles ever appeared that used these cartridges, and my research indicates that all were most likely provided by Exceltec even if the program was produced by another firm. Two that come to mind are Arcturus, which was a Zaxxon clone written by Bill Bies of Pittsburgh, PA, and Miner 2049er, released by Tigervision of Mundelein, IL. Although I have never actually seen a copy of one, Mike Wright's TI-Cyc also lists Sunware's Searchmaster program in the I/O port category.

As far as I can tell, all TI Grom Port cartridges produced by TI between 1979 and about the 2nd Quarter of 1983 were black with black labeling and orange or yellow type on the labels. Black modules may still have been produced after the 2nd Quarter 1983, but I've not found one in any of the titles released afterwards. Other companies like Scott, Foresman produced blue, red and white colored cartridges as well as black ones. Although I can't substantiate the idea, it appears that the introduction of the beige colored 99/4A console in June 1983 and the announced release of the beige colored Hex-Bus peripherals may have brought with them the introduction of the white colored cartridges by TI, with their more colorful labels. The white cartridge casings looked better in the beige colored console I suppose?

For collecting purposes, always examine the labeling and cartridge colors since different combinations exist that make collecting cartridges all the more exciting. For example, Parsec can be found in the original black module, with a black label and orange type, a black module with a mauve label and yellow type, and a black module with a red label and gold type. I don't have one yet, but I suspect it was also released in a white colored cartridge. The point is, I suggest close attention to detail if you really want to have one of each cartridge ever produced.

Finally, you will note that any module produced by TI after the 2nd Quarter of 1983 is missing the spring-loaded edge connection protector that earlier cartridges came with. This at least tells you it was produced in 1983-84.

DOCUMENTATION:

Documentation or instruction manuals for TI cartridges also went through a metamorphosis between 1979 and 1983. Anything produced from 1979 to about the 2nd Quarter of 1982 was released with the more bland covers that TI used when the 99/4 and 4A were first introduced. By the 2nd Quarter of 1982 TI decided to change the cover of the manuals because I assume they lacked eye catching appeal and were losing shelf space to the competition. For collecting purposes this means you will find "new" product that comes with the original black cartridges with black labeling and orange or yellow type on the label in the 1043601-1 cardboard box, but with a new, vividly colored artist-drawn cover on the manual. Inside the manual you find the exact same information as the bland covered documentation, with no credits to the development team for the program, just a changed cover.

Sometime around the 4th Quarter of 1982 the insides of the manuals were changed in order to allow credit to be given to the development team, which consisted of the program designer, the programmer and the people whose voices were used if speech synthesis was part of the cartridge's capability. The practice of giving credit to the development team continued up to the last cartridge TI produced for the TI-99, which officially was Congo Bongo with a 12/05/83 release date.

CG - The other, and maybe the one you worked on, is called "ET at Sea". It is a world geography game. ET has to move around a map of the world visiting cities and getting clues to the location of his space ship.

HM - Now we're getting somewhere -- but that still isn't mine. Mine was called "ET's Adventures on Land" -- which I *never* would have remembered, not in a zillion years, if you hadn't jogged my memory with the At Sea title. If my memory is accurate after all these years, the "At Sea" program was created by a programmer who worked for Looking Glass; his first name was Pete, but I can't remember his last name. (I vaguely remember that it was some kind of long Polish-sounding name.) His wife was also a programmer; she worked for a company in Richardson (a Dallas suburb) that did a couple of TI games, including one called HenHouse or something like that.

CG - I have a video tape of these two modules, and other never released official 99/4A module software that I will be glad to copy and send you.

HM - I would *love* to see that! The memory overload might prove to be fatal, but it would be worth it!

CG - I have heard of "ET and his adventures on land" and always thought it was the frogger type game I described. Nobody that I have ever heard of has seen the "adventures on land" software.

HM - I don't believe I was as far along on it as Pete was on the Sea module when work was discontinued. As I recall, I had programmed in all the little animals and animated them and given them paths to walk on, but the game didn't actually *do* anything when it was abandoned. You could move the animals around, but that was it. My guess is that nobody saved it because it was so incomplete.

Looking Glass Software (the company that had the contract for the ET games) was run by Gary and Mary Schenck (since then, they've been divorced, remarried, and divorced again), with whom I still speak every once in a while; if I remember, I'll ask them if they still have a copy of ET/Land, such as it was. Gary lives in KC (he's an art director for Hallmark), and I'm going to be visiting a client next week who has an office just down the street from his house; I think I'll give him a call.

STOP THE PRESSES!!!!

I was right in the middle of writing this note, thinking about what the chances were that Gary might have any idea where any of my old work might be, when it hit me that I might have some old stuff lying around -- and guess what I found??? I opened up one of my old diskette cases (this is starting to sound like the discovery of King Tut's tomb), and the diskette on top was labelled (in my handwriting) "E/A," which I assume means Editor/Assembler. The only

HANK
AN INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF TI'S ORIGINAL
COMMAND MODULE PROGRAMMERS
MISHKOFF
PART TWO

By Charles Good
Lima Ohio Users Group
November 1995

HM - Here's a long shot for you: When TI pulled the plug on Home Computer division, I was in the middle of writing a program that I believe was planned to be put into a "Command Module." I was writing the program as a subcontractor; the contractor was a company named Looking Glass. The program had to do with the adventures of ET; TI had licensed the character from Spielberg. Looking Glass had contracted to create 2 or 3 ET adventures; I don't remember the name of the one I was working on. I assume that, when the project went under, TI would have had a current copy of the code, and someone could have burned it into some EPROM's (the programs were pretty far along). Have you ever seen or heard of any program that might fit that description?

CG - Which ones? Of those I know about one was just called "ET" and was a frogger like game where ET had to cross the highway, river, etc. to get to his space ship at the top of the screen.

HM - Nope, that one doesn't even sound familiar.

project in which I ever used the Editor Assembler was the ET game, so I figured that I might have hit paydirt -- although I did work on the manual for that product, so the diskette might contain documentation, rather than code...

But here's what the labels on the other disks say:

ET LAND ("GROM?" crossed out) CODE FILES
 ET LAND ROM
 ET LAND ROM2
 ET LAND GROM3
 ET LAND GROM4
 ET LAND GROM5
 ET LAND ("GROM?" crossed out) CODEFILES BACKUP
 ET LAND ROM BACKUP
 ET LAND ROM2 BACKUP
 ET LAND GROM3 BACKUP
 ET LAND GROM4 BACKUP
 ET LAND GROM5 BACKUP

Also, there's a sheet of paper with what looks like some coding equates for animals, homes, and food (12 of each); I'm thinking that maybe you were supposed to get each animal to its home and feed it (?).

Anyway, I'd like to mail this stuff to you, if you're interested and if you think you might be able to make some sense out of it (and if you think there's half a chance that the diskettes are still readable). Would you promise me to let me know what's on it before you make it public and let me "withdraw" some of the stuff if it turns out not to have anything to do with the Home Computer (like if I included a list of my ex-girlfriends and their phone #s...)?

(Charles Good's added note:-- Hank did indeed mail these disks to me, along with the "ET and his Adventures on Land" programming notebook containing original graph paper drawings and notes of all the graphics in the game, as well as extensive dated notes concerning the conception and development of all the Looking Glass Software ET series of command modules. There were three planned modules called Land, Sea, and Air. The notebook contains little information on the Air game beyond its general concept. The Sea game exists in the Lima software library as GROM files that can be run with a gram device, as well as a slightly buggy version that works from extended

basic. None of these three ET games are the same as the frogger type ET command module game, which was not a Looking Glass Software project.

The disks are TI DOS in SSSD format and contain lots of GPL source and object code for the Land game. There are no phone numbers of girl friends. The code is incomplete and the game is not functional. At Hank's request, I copied the disks (some were duplicates) and made a xerox copy of the development notebook, then returned all the originals to him.)

CG - Do I have your permission to give copies of your disks and notebook to others interested in the 99/4A?

HM - Absolutely, although I must tell you that I have no idea whether or not I have any legal right to give you that permission. I suspect that Looking Glass (which doesn't exist any more) or TI may own the rights to the material.

Practically speaking, however, I have a hard time imagining that anyone would care, at this late date, as I can't see that any of that stuff could possibly have even the slightest commercial value.

CG - The Looking Glass notebook you sent me has several pages that are headed "Conceptual development for TI/SDA education modules.." What does "SDA" stand for? I have a never released TI module that says "Music SDA" on its title screen. It is the regular Music Maker module with extra code that allows you to get printouts of assembly source code, GPL source code, and Basic CALL SOUND statements that will produce the music you enter into the module. I have always wondered about the meaning of "SDA" in this module's title screen.

HM - I don't have a clue what SDA means -- although you'd think I'd know, seeing as how it's in my notebook. I've forwarded your question to Paul Urbanus, the creator of Parsec, who's the only one of the TI Home Computer programmers that I keep in touch with; I'll let you know if his memory is any better than mine.

CG - I am today mailing book rate a VHS video tape with 6 hours of viewing. Included are many of the never released modules such as the ET stuff, a bunch of Bill Cosby commercials and pep talks designed for 99/4 and /4A retailers, and the official TI Retail Training video. There is lots of footage of the 99/4 (no A).

HM - That sounds great. I remember seeing Cosby at a CES show in Chicago; TI had rented a ballroom as a hospitality suite, and he was posing for pictures with retailers. There was quite a long line, as I recall, of people waiting to be in some pix with Cos.

CG - I have a Tronics cassette tape set.

HM - Which one? Do you mean audiocassette or program cassette? I was involved in both projects, so you may have some of my work after all.

CG - Both audio and program cassettes. The audio tape has your voice on it! It was apparently made in 1982 and features you introducing yourself by name. The "Sights and Sounds" program tape credits you as one of the authors of this TI BASIC software.

CG - From a newsletter article I wrote a couple of years ago:

"TRONICS was created by Mike Wilcox and Dave Guardanapo to sell 99/4A's using a pyramid system of distributors and subdistributors, similar to the way AMWAY home care products are sold today."

Any comments?

HM - Actually, Tronics was the brainchild of Jody Black, who was a Braniff pilot (a captain, actually) at the time. Pilots make a lot of money (he was pulling in 6 figures at the time, as I recall) and have a lot of free time on their hands (since they work only one out of every three days). Like firemen (who are in a similar situation, but with less money), pilots tend to get into other businesses on the side. And since he traveled so widely (and worked with a lot of other people who travelled a lot, too), Tronics spread quickly all around the country. I knew Dave, and Mike's name sounds familiar, and they may have been successful Tronic distributors (for a while, anyway), but they were *not* involved in its founding.

Tronics always had trouble acquiring enough credit. Thus they had trouble keeping inventory and were very slow in delivering product to their distributors. This trouble delivering goods that had been paid for doomed the project. Eventually Tronics was sold. It went through several sets of owners. The last guys to own the company milked it dry, taking all incoming cash and delivering nothing. I had some involvement in advising a bankruptcy judge on the distribution of the company's remaining assets.

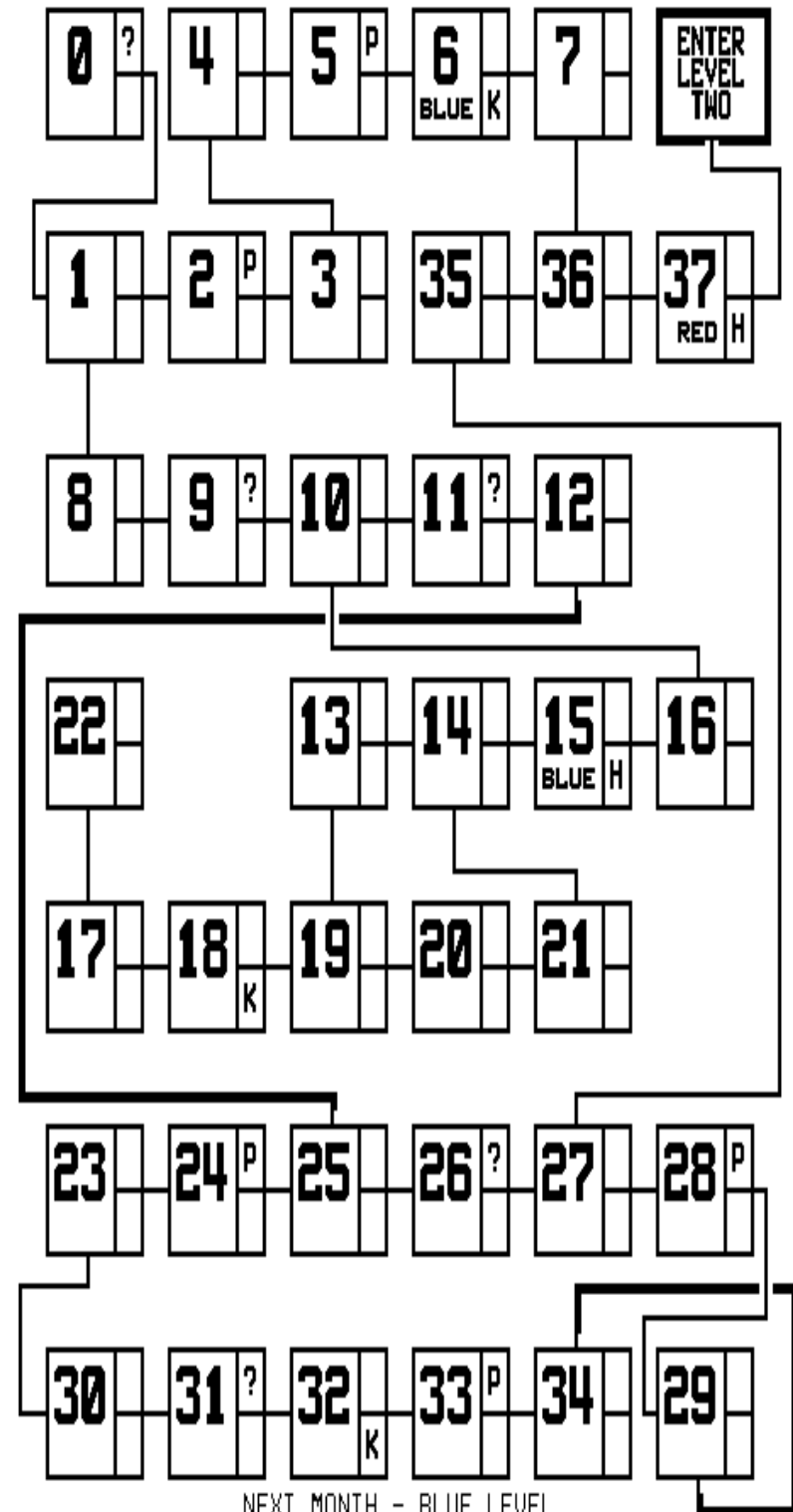
CG - From my newsletter article: "Apparently TI knew about and approved of TRONICS pyramid sales scheme."

HM - They knew about it, but were always a little leery of it. Actually, Tronics was an official TI distributor; they couldn't have done what they did without being able to purchase products at distributor prices. It took Jody a long time to convince TI to let him do what he did; many people were surprised that TI went for it at all. And Tronics was a "multi-level" company, not a pyramid scheme -- the differences are many and can be subtle, the main one being that pyramids are generally illegal.

Hank MishKoff



MAP LEGEND: ?, K=KEY, H=KEYHOLE, P=POTION





Yesterdays News Information



Yesterdays News is a labor of love offered as a source of pleasure & information for users of the TI-99/4A & Myarc 9640 computers.

TI-99/4A HARDWARE

Black & Silver computer
Modified PEB
WHT SCSI card with SCSI2SD
Myarc DS00 FDC
Myarc 512K Memory Card
Horizon 1.5 meg Ramdisk
TI RS232 card
Corcomp Triple Tech Card
1 360K 5.25 floppy drive
1 360K 3.50 floppy drive
1 720K 5.25 floppy drive
1 720K 3.50 floppy drive
80K Gram Kracker
Samsung Syncmaster 710mp

TI-99/4A SOFTWARE

PagePro 99
PagePro Composer
PagePro FX
PagePro Headline Maker
PagePro Gofer
TI Artist Plus
GIFMania

PC HARDWARE

Compaq Armada 7800 Notebook
Compaq Armadastation
Samsung Syncmaster 710mp

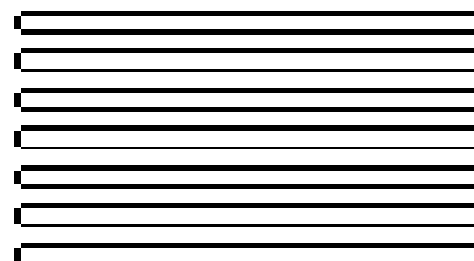
PC SOFTWARE

Dead,Dead,Dead Windows 98se
FileCap
prn2pbns
Infanview
Adobe Distiller
Adobe Acrobat

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TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

TI-99/4A

