

TI-99ers In The '90s

Classic Computer Column
by Barry Traver

Anaheim '91: The Best Fest West?

Thanks to the gracious invitation and kind assistance of some good friends in California, I was able to attend Fest West '91 on February 15-16 at the Ramada Maingate Hotel in Anaheim, California, directly across the street from Disneyland. I didn't go to Disneyland (which was just as well, for it was very busy that Presidents' Day weekend, with reportedly a 120-minute wait for Pirates of the Caribbean!); instead I had a great time meeting old friends (and making new ones) at this great TI event on the West Coast. (By the way, there have been other fine Fest West gatherings in previous years, so I'm not really sure which of them has been "the best," but I couldn't resist the "Best Fest West" rhyme.)

At any rate, the people in Califor-

nia (Bill Harms, Bill Nelson, Ed Butcher, Woodie Wilson, and others) did a great job. Attendance was not as large as at Chicago/Milwaukee (there were perhaps 250 to 300 people at Anaheim), but those present--in addition to "normal TIers"--certainly included a "Who's Who" of the TI world: Bill Chavanne (TI-Tax), Tom Freeman (T & J Software), Bill Gaskill, Peter Hoddie (JP Software), John McDevitt (Rave 99), Steve Mehr and Rodger Merritt (Comprodine), Beery Miller (9640 News), Bud Mills (Bud Mills Services), Mike Sealy (MS Express), Jerry Price (Tex-Comp), Cheryl Whitelaw ("Regena" of MICROpendium), and others.

As at similar major events, there were new releases at the faire. For example, Peter Hoddie of JP Software (1014 Pine Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025; telephone answering machine 415/328-0885) introduced Wayne Stith's Gen-Tri (pronounced not "gen-try," but "gen-tree," ap-

propriate for the aristocratic program that it is). GEN-TRI is a combination terminal emulator, word processor and disk manager for the MYARC 9640 (of "Geneve," which is a TI-99/4A upgrade/compatible).

Earlier JP Software had released Wayne's Triad, a similar three-fold combination for the TI-99/4A, but Gen-Tri (which occupies over 200K of memory) contains much more than Triad. For file transfers, Gen-Tri includes not only the usual XMODEM and ASCII, but also 1K-XMODEM, CISB+ and YMODEM batch. (It does not yet, however, include ZMODEM, although a hook

has been provided in Gen-Tri that will allow the use of external protocols. More about that in a moment.)

"In addition," according to Wayne (in a conference he gave on GENie, where I serve as main SYSOP), "the binary protocols allow the user to include or omit the Charlton header on DIS/FIX 128 files, thus providing a greater degree of compatibility with other computers."

The "TIFILES header problem" can be solved in other ways, of course --e.g., Mike Dodd's PC-Transfer Utilities from JP Software includes a

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CLASSIC WORLD / Your TRS-80 Column

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the TRS-80 community, how about passing it along? Then I'll pass it some more. Write me, please:

Dr. Michael W. Ecker
TRS-80 Columnist,
Computer Monthly
909 Violet Terrace
Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Readers who write implicitly give their permission to have their names and addresses published here, so let me know in advance if you require anonymity. I'll even reply to all your letters personally if you enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Closing Challenge: A Contest

This month I'll dispense with a type-in program and issue a simple programming challenge. Though this is a TRS-80 column, I'll even accept programs for other computers (see my previous list of computers), but if the program is more than five lines, I prefer to receive a disk as well as paper copy, with your name, address and computer brand.

This column was written the day before the new US postage rates went into effect. By the time you read this, you will presumably be acclimated to these changes. Your challenge is to write the shortest program possible that will allow input of the weight of a letter in ounces and correctly output the cost to mail said letter within the US. (It's now 29 cents

for the first ounce or fraction thereof, and 23 cents per additional ounce or fraction.)


Program length will be based on the number of characters in the program. Line numbers don't count, nor spaces between words. The winner will be announced in or by early 1992 and receive a choice of a complimentary trial subscription to Recreational & Educational Computing or Recreational Mathematical Software's TRS-80 blackjack game of Casino 21. Final entry deadline for receipt is September 30, 1991.

All entries become the property of yours truly, the sole judge, and none will be returned. This should be pretty easy, so go to it. And yes, you may enter more than once.

Happy TRS-80 computing! I'll see you next month for another installment of Your TRS-80 Column!

Dr. Michael W. Ecker, holder of a Ph.D. in mathematics, is a Penn State University mathematics professor, as well as a computer writer-reviewer and columnist with 300 publication credits. The author of two books, Mike is also Editor/Publisher of Recreational & Educational Computing (REC).

REC is in its sixth year and is available for \$27 per calendar-year of 8 issues, prepaid. It focuses on "mathemagic" and computer recreations. Readers need not enter the contest to try a trial subscription of three issues for \$10 (see address above), fully creditable toward subscription.



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MICRO EXPRESS

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TIFILES utility, and R. Felton has made available for those with a PC a STRIPPER.EXE file to remove the TIFILES header from a DIS/FIX 128 file--but Gen-Tri solves the problem before it happens.

What many people will appreciate most about Gen-Tri is its script capabilities. Let me let Wayne describe it: "Perhaps the most unique feature is the script routine. You may design a logon script or perhaps a menu of services. You can even download files automatically. It is also possible to invoke a script as a macro. Scripts can be in source or compiled form and may invoke other scripts. The script language is intuitive and easy to use."

If you happen to be familiar with similar features on terminal emulators in the IBM world (e.g., ProComm Plus), you'll be excited to know that these same capabilities are now available for the 9640.

There is one thing presently lacking in GEN-TRI, however, that I would like to see added--particularly since Wayne has provided a place to hook it in--and that is ZMODEM file transfers. One nice thing about ZMODEM (in addition to the fact that it is faster than XMODEM) is that if a file transfer aborts in the middle, you don't have to start over again at the beginning (that can be

tough if you've downloaded 250 sectors of a 300-sector file!), but you can resume right where the interruption occurred. If you think you know someone who can be talked into adding ZMODEM to Gen-Tri (including Wayne?), see if you can talk him into it, because (in my opinion) ZMODEM is a giant step beyond XMODEM.

The TI/MYARC world was saddened by the death of programmer John Birdwell on December 27, 1990 of liver cancer. If you were aware of that fact, you may have wondered about the status of JP Software's plans to release John's Disk One utility (sort of an expanded version of DSKU with additional capabilities, such as being able to handle hard drives). Well, with the rescue of John Birdwell's hard drive, I'm hoping (as is JP Software) that we will see the future release of Disk One as promised. In the meantime, Geneve owners can rejoice that Wayne Stith's Gen-Tri is not "vaporware," but has indeed been released, and is a fine program (and will be even better when we get ZMODEM file transfers for it.)

Time Line 99

Bill Gaskill (2310 Cypress Court, Grand Junction, CO 81506) had something brand new for us at Fest

West in February 1991: Time Line 99, a spiral-bound labor of love "celebrating 10 years of TI-99/4A Computing Excellence." The book is "an historical look at some of the events, people and products that have helped to shape the 99/4A community" and is itself an example of excellence.

The amount of information contained in these pages is amazing. As the table of contents indicates, the book is divided into these sections: The Beginning, The Middle, The End, Fairs and Fests, International 99/4 Users Group, Publications, Books, Software, Personalities, Time Line (a ten-year month-by-month account of significant TI happenings), Trivia, Supporters, and Transitions.

The book is not without a few minor errors or omissions, but they appear to be very few indeed. The biggest omission in my mind is Bill's failing to mention himself in the list of Personalities or Supporters(!). I suppose modesty was the motivation, but no "historical look" is complete without the mention of William Gaskill. For example, I understand that many people can testify that the operations of TI-BASE would have remained an enigma to them if it were not for Bill's helpful TI-BASE tutorials.

At any rate, Time Line 99 contains a large amount of useful and fascinating information. In my opinion, it's one of those "must-have" books for the Tier (like Ron Albright's earlier The Orphan Chronicles). When I talked with Bill at Fest West, it appeared that future availability of Time Line 99 was in question, partially due to cost of production. This is a book that must not be allowed to disappear. If you wouldn't mind paying \$15-\$20 for the book (well worth it in my opinion), why not send a note to Bill telling him so?

Fairware At The Fair

Fest West '91 also saw the publication of THE Altman Fairware List, originally published by Dick Altman, expanded by Steve Mehr, and currently updated and maintained by Ida McCargar of the Southwest Ninety-Niners Users Group (P.O. Box 17831, Tucson, AZ 85730). My hardcopy printout in very small type is about 30 pages long and includes--in addition to the main listing of titles and descriptions--a fairware authors index (including addresses) and a category index.

The list is also available as archived disk files (e.g., with permission of the SW99ers, I uploaded it to the GENie Software Library), and it is well worth obtaining. One nice feature of the list is that "Fairware marked with * is available from the SW99ers for \$2 per disk, including postage," and most of the titles are indeed available from the SW99ers. While at Fest West, I also picked up a

copy of the 10-page February 1991 Southwest Ninety-Niners Disk Library, which itself is very helpful, because for each disk it contains a list of the individual files contained on that disk. (I don't know, however, whether the SW99ers library catalog is available itself on disk rather than just as hardcopy.)

If a program is not available from them, you can try writing to the author directly (don't forget to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope). Be forewarned: since the Altman list is rather comprehensive, some of the people on it no longer have TIs and can't supply programs, while others may have changed their address.

An additional good source of TI-PD software and fairware is Jim Peterson, 156 Collingwood Avenue, Columbus, OH 43213. Jim currently has about 500 disks available at \$1.50 each (including postage if you order a minimum of eight disks). Jim's policy is that "Fairware is offered by author's written permission only."

As I've mentioned before, Jim's disks (mostly full) are arranged by category and usually contain some extras (such as TI BASIC programs being converted so as to run in Extended BASIC). Most disks run out of Extended BASIC and have an auto-loader that shows full program names (not just sometimes puzzling file-names).

Another (but much more expensive) source of fairware and public domain software is Tex-Comp (P.O. Box 33084, Granada Hills, CA 91344). Personally, I think that Tex-Comp's disks are somewhat overpriced (\$4.95 per disk, when I am not accustomed to paying more than \$3.00 or at most \$4.00 a disk even for DS/DD IBM public domain software and fairware!), but they may have titles that you may not be able to find elsewhere. According to their ads, they do include "plastic disk cases ... at no extra cost with orders of four or more disks."

To be fair to Tex-Comp, they do have good prices on some other items (e.g., TI books difficult or impossible to find elsewhere), and they do have a reputation for fairly good service (especially in comparison with some other TI vendors). Opinions about Tex-Comp (and its sometimes controversial owner Jerry Price) seem to be rather varied (and strongly held?) in the TI community (ask your friends for their opinions!), but Tex-Comp is an important TI company of which you should be aware, and Bill Gaskill does give Jerry Price credit for help in locating material for Bill's Time Line 99.

News On Diskazines, 9640 And 4A

There's good news, bad news in the area of diskazines for the TI-

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The Big Apple

Classic Computer Column
by Carol S. Holzberg, PhD

Hypermedia for the Apple II

"Hypermedia" refers to the many new ways in which software developers have integrated traditional media (such as text, graphics, sounds and video) into one interactive computerized presentation. Hypermedia applications provide users with several exploration paths. Individuals can access data in a non-linear sequence, searching for information in the same way as they think--by association or hierarchy.

This month, The Big Apple takes a closer look at hypermedia for the Apple II. This examination is prompted by Apple Computer's release of HyperCard IIGS, a software authoring toolkit that lets users create hypermedia applications, personalized with text, graphics, scanned images and sound. Yet, hypermedia for the Apple II is not new. Since 1985, Techware's Tutor-Tech has enabled teachers to design interactive ProDOS 8 courseware for the 8-bit Apple II, com-



plete with text, clip-art, video, speech and sound.

Tutor-Tech (v2.6)

Tutor-Tech "pages" (the equivalent of HyperCard IIGS "cards") contain "targets" or buttons. These provide

links to related pages or controlled access to peripherals such as videodisc players, video cassette recorders, Echo and Cricket speech synthesizers, and Omega Corporation's cassette tape device called Tutor-Talk. For example, Tutor-Talk lets stack designers record voices and

sounds on tape, then access this audio with simple commands. The tape player will start and stop as instructed. The latest Tutor-Tech version also supports input from Sunburst's Muppet Learning Keys. It is compatible with the Apple II Video Overlay Card so you can display video images on stack text and graphics.

Individuals author Tutor-Tech stacks using selection, text, drawing and target placement tools from the program's toolbox. There are no complex scripts to learn. Only minimal programming commands are required when using multimedia peripheral devices.

The product ships on three 5.25-inch floppies. It includes a Teacher Disk (creates stacks), Student Disk (run-time version for presentation only), plus a Samples Disk with clip-art, stacks and background displays for use in stack design. Additional clip art may be imported from The Print Shop, Newsroom, MousePaint, DazzleDraw, other high resolution or double high-resolution picture files and scanned images.

An optional Grader Disk is available (\$95) for teachers who wish to
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99/4A and MYARC 9640. Good news is that (after another long delay) Vol. 3, No. 2 and Vol. 3, No. 3 of the Genial TRAVELER should be in the hands of all subscribers. (If you're a subscriber to Vol. 3 of GT and for some reason have not received your copy of these issues, write to Barry Traver, editor, Genial TRAVELER, 835 Green Valley Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19128; phone: 215/483-1379). Bad news is that Regena--after completing a volume of six issues--is apparently not planning on continuing her excellent MYARC Advanced BASIC disk/newsletter for the 9640.

Even here there's somewhat good news, however, indicating once again how nice it is for us to have a person like Regena as a part of our TI community (and she still has several TI systems, in spite of her decision not to continue with the publication of the MYARC ABASIC disk/newsletter, so she is indeed still an active Tler!). When I told her that her publication was too good to be allowed to just disappear, she gave permission for Vol. 1 to be distributed as fairware. (Actually, the fairware idea was mine: Cheryl was willing, I think, to just give it away, but I believe that

fair is fair and that she should receive an appropriate financial "thank you" from those who use and enjoy the programs.)

And there is some good news from Beery Miller (P.O. Box 752465, Memphis, TN 38175-2465), publisher of the diskazine 9640NEWS for (you guessed it) the 9640. The good news is that he's planning now on putting out a diskazine for the TI-99/4A as well. It's to be called 4A NEWS (which is logical), and the cost is \$20 for five issues (\$25 foreign). According to Beery, 4A NEWS "will bring NEW information, news, reviews, programs and answers not previously available to the 4A user about hardware and software."

It is expected that a new issue will appear approximately every three months. Judging from the fine job Beery has done with 9640NEWS, I expect that this new venture will also be an excellent product.

Noting Notung's New Software

Although Ray Kazmer did not make it to Fest West, Ken Gilliland was there with some new software offerings, including the long-awaited TI Casino, whose 44-page manual is one of the most interesting I have read in

a while (especially the last six pages, where we get to read about the story behind TI casino, as well as a reprint of a news article Ken entitled "His Part-Time Work Is Full-Time Love," a good description of many TI authors, but an especially good description of Ken).

TI-Casino includes Acey Deucey, Bacarrat, Blackjack, Craps, Draw Poker, Keno, Roulette, a Slot Machine. As Notung Software claims, "Each game is full featured with most of the items you'd expect at a casino, such as insurance in Blackjack and unlimited betting capabilities in Roulette and Craps." (I've never been to a casino, so I'll have to take their word for it.) Here's an interesting feature: "there's no silly Hi-Score chart to show your friends what a gambling pro you are--TI Casino PRINTS you a check for the real hard, cold evidence!" TI Casino requires Extended BASIC and a joystick (the printer is optional), and it sells for only \$15. Important: TI-Casino comes in SSSD and DSSD formats, so be sure to specify which you want when ordering.

Several other new offerings were available: Ray Kazmer's Star Trek: The Next Generation 1991 Calendar

(price \$10; available in three different formats, SSSD, DSSD or DDDD, so again specify which one you want), Fonts and Borders 3 (price \$8; more "cream of the crop" fonts and borders on two SSSD disks), and Certificate 99 Companion Plus (price \$7; includes 30 borders, 60 graphics, 11 fonts, and six new signatures ranging from Mozart to Paul McCartney!). When ordering from Notung Software (7647 McGroarty Street, Tujunga, CA 91042; phone 818/951-2718 6pm-10pm PST), please include 50 cents per item for postage and handling.

Concluding Comments

Other new releases appeared at Fest West '91 (e.g., I came home with MS Software's Adventure Hints Series II and Jim Swedlow's collected TI Bits and XB columns on disk, as well as his Fest West '91 release of Funnelweb Configuration Instructions), but I'll have to postpone those subjects (and others) for a future column, because I'm "out of time and space." Once again we see that the TI-99/4A and MYARC 9640 are alive and well and living not only in Anaheim, but throughout the U.S. So until next Time, keep on compuTIn'!