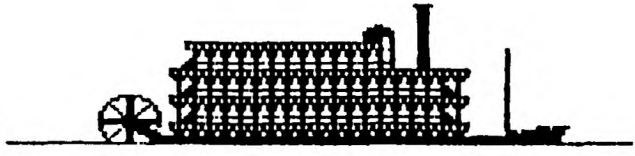
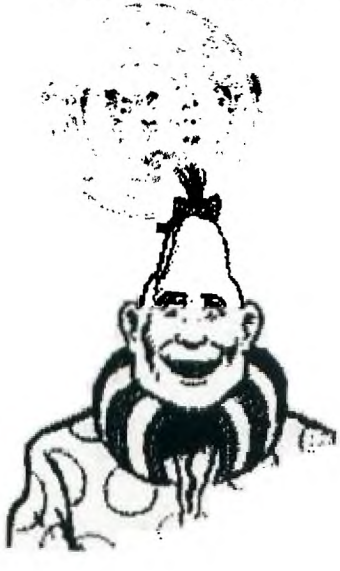
TIdbits

MID SOUTH 99 USERS GROUP



MEMPHIS TENNESSEE

APRIL 1989 ISSUE



MACC COMPUTER FAIR

Newsletter for the MID-SOUTH 99 USERS GROUP Vol 7, #4 APRIL 1989

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PRESIDENTS BIT

By Gary W. Cox

Attendance at the last meeting was quite good with a total of between 25 and 30 people. It was good to see a few extra people turning out.

The Memphis Area Computer Council (MACC) computer fair is almost here! It will be in the Fulton building at State Tech from 10am to 5pm Saturday April 29th. More than 1000 people are expected to attend and we can use every volunteer we can get to help out! Even if you are not able to help out we could use your support by just dropping by. Nearly every major brand computer system is expected to be represented. Don't miss one of Memphis's biggest computer fairs! Also remember May 21st there will be another PC FEST computer show (commercial) at the Memphis Cook Convention Center and since user groups are offered free space we plan on being there as well.

The workshop this month will also be held April 29th at State Tech so if you have something that you would like to see or need help just ask...

I would like to thank Bob Jones for his surprise demonstration of Printers Apprentice at the last meeting as well as the 32K console demo by Jim Saemenes. Since we ran long last month the demonstration of Browse will be this month as well as a continuation of the games demo plus an unannounced demonstration...

Sorry for the missing library last month but we should have it there this month plus have the usual Micropendiums for sale and will as always display all the great newsletters that we receive from other TI user groups from across the world!

I just received a copy of a book that our group ordered called Home Publishing Manual by Harry Brashear of the Western New York 99ers. I must say the book is excellent in describing the different programs that can be used with the TI99/4a for creating banners, pictures, creative text and practically anything to do with Desktop Publishing... The book also comes with a disk containing a TI Artist instance printer, a program to organize your fonts and graphics and a columnizer program. Plus two supplements will be included in the future to those who purchase the book. In all it is 80 pages long and contains all kinds of helpful hints, tricks and example displays using a variety of programs such as TI-Artist, Picasso, Joypaint 99, Graphx, Calendar Maker 99 and many more... The book is great for anyone trying to do any type of publishing on the TI or just for anyone who likes to fool with graphics... The book sells for $15 including shipping. Write to Western New York 99ers, c/o Harry T. Brashear, 2753 Main Street, Newfane, NY 14108. If we have 10 or more people wanting one cost is $12.50 each. Hopefully we will have a complete review of the book soon...

NEW HARDWARE PROJECT

By Richard Hiller

There is a new memory chip just on the market. It is made by a new company by the name of JAPE. This all American company is going to beat the heck out of the Japanese competition. For one thing, their memory chips are made right here and are selling for much less than a comparable chip from abroad. The kicker here is the competition won't be able to out sell these guys. "Why?", you ask. Because it is a new idea as well as a new design in memory chips. In a 28 pin package they have placed 1.5Mbytes of virtual memory. The chip works much like a static ram chip, but its neither static nor dynamic. The chip works in the circuit just like a static ram chip but needs no battery to hold its memory. Instead it has a special capaticance cell built on the chip, which holds a charge almost indefinitely. It can hold a full charge for 3 months and 80% is still there after 16 months. I can't go into any detail about how they are able to get as much as they do on one chip, because they won't release any of that information.

Well on to the project. First I thought of buying the Horizon Ramdisk and supplying the ram chips I had on hand. But when I read of these new chips I had the thought "It wouldn't it be great if these chips could be use instead of just ordinary rams!". That was, I thought, too good to be true; but I was wrong! When I call the Jape Co. they let me talk to one of their engineers and he told me that any place you could use the standard 28 pin memory chips you could substitute their memory chip. The price was as, I stated, comparable; so I bought three of there #4189 chips. Just for the fun of it I place them in sockets and replaced the two static ram chips in the console. Lo and behold they worked. In fact, so well that for all practical purposes I don't even need a PE box. I could load most of what Funnelweb has and even write this article and still have memory left over to load and play two games. And when I turn off the computer the programs are still there. Even when I turn it back on the next day. Except for the times I need to use the modem, printer, or disk (to load or save a program or file) the PE box is off or disconnected. Of course, as with the 32k upgrade of the console you're only using one of the chips. But I can't wait to try 6 of these chips in the Ramdisk I'm going to order. That will give me a ramdisk with over 9Mbytes of memory. Who needs a hard drive now. If you would like to try any of the suggested upgrades and need help please feel free or contact Jape listed in your local dictionary and don't forget the number- 4189.

IN THE NEWS

By Gary W. Cox

The big news of the month is the rumor that Tenex is dropping their TI99/4a line of products. Tenex has been a major supporter of TI99/4a products since 1982 and they carry one of the widest variety of TI99/4a products available from many TI99/4a suppliers. (Tenex also sells products for the Commodore and IBM compatibles.) From a report in Asgard News, Tenex will cease distribution of 99/4a products in 3 to 6 months. After several long distance phone calls I was unable to reach Roger Dooley (President of Tenex) but spoke with several Tenex representatives who said that the rumor wasn't true. However, they did say that they were dropping some of the TI99/4a products that have been discontinued and that they are also dropping products from Asgard Software of which no reason was given. In talking to John Kolen of Micropendium Magazine I was told that they have received word that Tenex has been reviewing their role in the TI99/4a market but haven't received any word as to Tenex dropping out of the TI99/4a market as of yet. However, Tenex's monthly ad did not appear in the March Micropendium... So it appears that Tenex may be scaling down their TI99/4a product line but are continuing to support the TI99/4a? Representatives at Tenex also mentioned that a new TI catalog should be ready in a few weeks... I think it would be worth us showing our support for Tenex supporting the TI99/4a by writing a letter to them at P.O. Box 6578, South Bend, IN 46660.

Remember that the Memphis Area Computer Council COMPUTER FAIR is Saturday April 29th from 10am to 5pm in the fulton building at State Tech located at 5943 Macon Cv Road in Memphis, TN. The fair is FREE and open to the public. All the major brand computer systems will be represented including TI99/4a as our group will be there in full force with an entire room to our self for our display. Don't miss one of Memphis's BIGGEST and BEST computer fairs!

Mechatronics out of Germany is also reportedly dropping their TI99/4a products which includes an 80 column card, EPROM Burner, mouse and other items. Sales of these products in the U.S. have never seemed to go over big since similar products has been available under several other U.S. companies.

Rumor has it that Radio Shack is running out of their supply of TI video modulators that they have been selling for years. I have found that the modulator is the most common piece of equipment to fail on the TI99/4a. Since Radio Shack sells the TI video modulator for $4.95 and TI wants $20 to repair them it would be a good investment to purchase one or two as a backup from Radio Shack.

McCann Software of P.O. Box 34160, Omaha, NE 68134 has released a new software product called The Geometer's Apprentice. Geometer's Apprentice is described is coming in separate versions for the Geneve 9640 and TI99/4a. Each version is described as having unique features but both use the same 3D object structure. 99/4a users can take advantage of the 3D slide creation language to

create motion sequences using the 99/4a bit map mode. For Geneve users, the Geometer's Apprentice will use all available Geneve memory and the Geneve's colors in 512x212 mode to shade each object with a unique user defined platte of color and hatching. Objects may be scaled, translated and rotated in 3space and once created an object may be moved from one drawing to the next. This program also can create files compatible with The Printer's Apprentice. Requires a TI99/4a with 32K, disk drive and XB or E/A. Geneve owners need at least version 1.01 MDOS, v.99 GPL and E/A. An Epson compatible printer is required to print the pictures. The price for Geometer's Apprentice is $39.95.

The following edited from the March 1989 Micropendium Magazine.

Ray Kazmer author of Woodstock and St. Valentines Day Card has moved. His new address is 8614 Foothill Blvd., Apt. 221, Sunland, CA 91040.

Asgard Software of P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20850 has announced several new products, they are listed as follows:

The first is The Adventure Reference Guide by Mickey Schmitt. It is an 108 page book listing nearly 200 adventures for the TI99/4a with ratings, needed equipment and sources. The book sells for $14.95 plus $2 shipping and handling.

Artist Borders III by Paul Schiedemantle is a package of 31 borders described as being in geometric and decorative patterns with sport, space and home themes. It requires a program capable of using TI- Artist fonts and sells for $7.95.

Disk O Pirates by Ken Gilliland is a four disk collection by the author of Disk of Dinosaurs. It is described as including pirate artwork, games, music, utilities, animation pieces and history lessons and biographies. It requires 32K, disk, XB and TI-Artist or some drawing program. The package sells for $14.95.

Calendar Maker Utilities by Chris Bobbitt and Ed Johnson is designed for use with Asgard's Calendar Maker 99 and includes utilities which are said to increase the user's ability to customize calendars. It requires, Calendar Maker 99, XB, 32K and disk system and sells for $12.95.

Quality 99 Software has extended it's Christmas sale until May 20th, according to Larry Huges, president of the company. He says that they are also offering three programs for the price of one (lowest priced program is free). For a free catalog No. 29M, call or write Quality 99 Software at 1884 Columbia Road #1021, Washington, DS 20009, (212) 667-3574.

That's the news for this month...

FOR SALE

2 black and silver TI99/4a keyboards, PEB with RS232, 32K, disk controller, SS/SD drive, 2 standalone SS/SD drives, 2 external 300bd modems, 2 Navarone Widgets, 3 Speech Synthesizers, 4 joysticks, printer cable and the system contains all manuals. The software includes 2 Multiplans, 2 TEII's, Extended BASIC, Touch Typing, Star Trek, Burgertime, Home Financial Decisions, Personal Record Keeping, Parsec, Personal Report Generator, Statistics, Editor/Assembler, Tax Investment and Record Keeping to name a few as well as various other games, utility programs and educational software on cartridge and on disk. In all it is decribed as "a pile of stuff in very good condition" Asking $250 for everything and would be happy to box it all up and ship it. If interested write to David McLendon, 2711 Apline View, Laurel, MT 59044 or call him at (406) 628-8246.

3 consoles, 1 PEB with 32K, disk controller, SS/SD drive, 2 speech synthesizers, TI writer, 2 joysticks, 2 cassette cables, Extended BASIC, plus various software including Apiner, Hopper, Moon Mine, Video Chess, PRK, Microsurgeon, Hustle, Facemaker, Beginning Grammer, Blasto, Market Simulation, Tornado Callenge, Piggily Wiggily, Galaxy and various other pieces of software. Asking for best reasonable offer, contact Richard Hiller at 794-9945.

USER SUPPORTED SOFTWARE

The following is a list of recent User Supported Software products (commonly referred to as Freeware or Shareware). This list edited from the March 1989 Micropendium.

DREADNOUGHT GAME

The Dreadnought Fairware Game requires XB, 32K and a disk drive. It is based on the pencil and paper game of Battleship. It can be played against two players or against the computer. The author asks $4 from those who keep his program. (Data files of the program are temporary so only those who pay the $4 will be able to play it more than once.) For this program send an initilized disk and self addressed stamped return mailer to Dale A. Kloes, R.D. #1, Box 414 Patey Dr., Gibsonia, PA 15044.

THE COMPUTER PHONEBOOK

This program requires XB, 32k and a disk drive (printer optional). This is an address and telephone program that allows users to enter, edit, search and alphabetize addresses and phone numbers. It includes a utility that allows the printing of labels or a listing of names and phone numbers. It can handle up to 150 entries per file with no limit on the number of files that can be created. Documentation is on the disk as a DV/80 file. The author asks $10 and will include a disk, mailer and postage. Order from Brian D. Doornbox, 6562 Kingfisher Lane, Eden Prairie, MN 55344.

PLUS!

This program requires TI-Writer or Funlweb, 32k and a disk drive. It is a word processing companion/utilities disk consisting of 70 files and 719 sectors. It replaces the FUNPLUS program previously released by the author. PLUS! is used for a variety of tasks, ranging from dumping screens to a printer to making banners and calendars to "squashing" XB programs. It includes a number of templates used in issuing printer commands through TI-Writer documents. The author asks $10 for the program and will include the disk, mailer and postage. Unless specified single sided, single density the program will come on a DSDD disk. Write to Jack Sughrue, P.O. Box 459, East Douglas, MA 01516.

TIMPPRINT

This is an upgrade of the MultiPrint Command File used with Microsoft Multiplan. The program allows the insertion of printer commands anywhere on a Multiplan spreadsheet. It supports numerous poplular printers, including Epson, Panasonic, Gemini, Star Micronics, Citizen, Seikosha, Prowriter, Okidata, Smith Corona and others. The author is willing to customize the program to support other printers. Send disk, return mailer and postage to Jack Mathis, 5941 E. 26, Tucson, AZ 85711. A donation of up to $10 is requested from those who use the program.

MODIFICATION FOR SCREEN DUMP

This is a modified version of Danny's Michael's Screen Dump program to work with Prowriter (C.Itoh) and Axiom printers. Screen Dump and these modifications are written in assembluy language and require a memory expansion, disk drive and XB or E/A. The program allows the dumping of screens from some cartridges with a load interrupt switch. Send disk, mailer and return postage or $3 to Jack Mathis, 5941 E. 26, Tucson, AZ 85711.

BOWLING SECRETARY

This program is used to keep track of bowling records, including the calculation of averages and handicaps. It requires XB. To order send disk, mailer and return postage or $3 to Daniel Sellman, P.O. Box 280, New Freedom, PA 17349. A donation of $10 is asked from those who five the program useful.

COMPUTER FAIR

FREE ADMISSION! OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

April 29, 1989 10am. Till 5pm.

State Technical Institute

5983 Macon Road Memphis, Tn

Fulton Building

Continuous Demonstrations
Of Computer Equipment
And
Programming
In All Classrooms
By
Memphis Area
Computer Clubs

* *

FREE DOOR
PRIZES HOURLY
You must be present to win.
Bring your family and friends!
Educational as well as entertaining!
FREE POPCORN AND COKES!
Enjoy the world of COMPUTING!

Fulton Auditorium Demonstrations

12:00 - 12:45
State Tech Presentation

1:00 - 1:45
Computers in Small Business

2:00 - 2:45
Desktop Publishing with the PC

3:00 - 3:45
Newsletter Publishing with the Mac

Resource Center will be open all day!
This Fair is being held in conjunction
with State Technical Institue.

This Computer Fair is directed by *The Memphis Area Computer Council*

Member Clubs Of MACC

Memphis PC Users Group - Memphis Comodore Users Club
Mid-South TI99/4A Users Group - Memphis Osborne Group
Memphis Atari Systems Hobbyists - Apple Core Of Memphis
Memphis Amiga Users Group - Memphis Color Computer Users Group
Participating Opus Sysops Serving the Mid-South

FOUR-A TALK

Random ramblings about things TI.

by Bill Gaskill - April 1989

MYARC'S HARD DISK SYSTEM

Because I am a died-in-the-wool 99/4A loyalist (though my wife has another name for it) I took the plunge in September 1988 and purchased the Myarc Hard and Floppy Disk Controller (HFDC) card. I also purchased a Seagate 125-1 20 megabyte hard drive and power supply from Myarc to go with it. Total price was $735. A lot of bucks for a 99/4A computer peripheral you say? Yes, but read on before you pass judgement.

If you are like me you want your computer to be productive right out of the box. None of this having to be an electronics engineer to assemble it first, for me. I want components that say NO ASSEMBLY REQUIRED. I am simply not a hardware hacker and I am more than willing to pay a few extra dollars for the convenience and time and frustration savings realized in buying "ready-to-run" components.

When I decided to investigate the HFDC I called Myarc at their Georgia office and talked to Jack Riley. I expressed my concerns about "turn-key" componenta to him and was assured that Myarc could provide me with a system that required a minimal amount of assembly. Thus convinced, I placed the order and anxiously awaited its arrival. About three weeks later I called back and inquired about the status of the order. I talked to Jack again and he informed me that I would receive the power supply from Myarc-Georgia and the controller card and hard disk from Myarc-New Jersey within the next 4-5 days. I didn't listen close enough to what he said. If I had, I might have asked how a "turn-key" system could be delivered from two different locations, especially when the power supply would come from one place and the hard disk that goes in the power supply would come from another shipping point.

True to Jack's prediction, the hard disk and controller card arrived four days later, the power supply a day after that. When I opened the box containing the power supply I discovered that it was an off-white, steel cased enclosure measuring about 6 inches wide by 18 inches deep and 4 inches high. A handsome piece of equipment that made a nice looking addition to my workstation. When I looked for the instructions on what to do with it there were none. None meaning NOT ONE! A slight trickling of panic seeped into my thoughts. I then opened the box containing the controller card and found a 3-ring binder with about 80 pages of some of the most confusing documentation I have ever read. But not one word of it told me what to do with the power supply nor how it was to be hooked up to the hard drive. So much for "turn-key" systems.

Well I rolled up my sleeves, dug in, and figured out a couple of

things without too much hassle. First, there are two power connectors inside the power supply box (white plastic connectors on the end of red wires) and you can use either one, since the unit is built to handle two hard drives. Second, the cover plate I got that fills the blank space for the second hard disk I didn't buy, can be installed without a degree in mechanical engineering. The electrical cord for the power supply only plugs in one way so I couldn't very well do too much damage there. On to the hard disk.

The Seagate ST125-1 that I ordered from Myarc was represented as a 28 millisecond access time hard disk in my conversation with Jack Riley. I find that difficult to believe since Computer Shopper ads put the ST125 at 40 milliseconds. The ST125 sells for around $269. A 28 millisecond Seagate goes for just under $500. You can draw your own conclusions. Anyway, the drive is a 3.5 inch masterpiece that bolts easily to the base of the power supply. The back of it has two edge connectors for two ribbon cables that I could not find in any of the boxes that were delivered to my house. So I set the entire unit aside and moved on to the controller card.

In an act totally out of character for me, I read the manual before proceeding with the installation of my HFDC. When I was sure that I got all that my tiny brain could get out of the documentation I called Myarc-Georgia for help. I just couldn't make enough sense out of what was being said to risk damaging my $735 investment. It turned out that the phone call was about the first really correct thing that I had done (Jack Riley to the rescue). I immediately asked about the missing cables and was told to unfold the two panels in the HFDC box that kept the 3-ring binder and card from moving around. Low and behold, two ribbon cables, one 20 pin and one 34 pin. Boy did I feel stupid. From that point on, I decided to invest in the cost of whatever number of telephone calls it took to get Jack to walk me through the set up of the whole system. That was the second correct thing I did.

The installation went fairly smooth once I had a guiding voice on the phone to keep me from making any mistakes. In fact, the entire set up is rather painless once you go through it about two times, which I did. I don't know what went wrong the first time, but things got so scrambled on the hard disk that nothing would work right. Jack Riley offered the opinion that the cause was not turning everything on and off simultaneously with a master switch. I'm not totally convinced of that though since I have been able to turn the hard disk on last and off first and have had no problems. But I suggest that you stay with what the manufacturer tells you to do, so that your warranty isn't jeopardized.

There are some things about the set up, particularly the formatting of the hard disk, that I don't think I could ever have figured out on my own. When the FORMAT command is accessed from the Myarc Disk Manager 5 you must respond to a series of questions like volume name, sectors per track, number of heads, cylinders, write pre-compensation, interlace and the like. It all sounded pretty foreign to me. But with my guide on the other end of the telephone line I tackled the job as any brave soldier would who was facing the enemy's ground troops from behind an M60 tank. No

problem!

In looking back, I again realize the correctness of making the telephone call to Myarc. Because the MDM5 disk manager program has gone through several updates and the documentation has not been brought totally up to date with the program, the manual tells you things that are no longer correct or that are incomplete or are in some way different than what you are staring at on your monitor. Had I not had the benefit of Jack Riley's immediate tutledge over the phone I would probably still be wondering how to get the HFDC and hard drive working. I must fault Myarc for that. There is no excuse for not providing the most correct and up to date information in the manual. The documentation appears to be about two years old as far as I can tell and it gives such erroneous information as "the cables (connecting the hard disk to the HFDC) can only be put on one way. Wrong! The red strip on the edge of both of my cables had to be at the bottom when installed on the HFDC and facing to the right when attached to the power supply. Physically, they can be installed on the edge connectors either way, but only one way is correct. The manual really needs a going over to bring it up to speed with the current requirements of the set up process.

Back to the formatting. John Kolean wrote two nice articles in the September '88 issue of MICROpendium on the HFDC and its use with a hard drive. Some of the information helped me but not enough of it to get the system up and running. Here is what I did with my hard drive formatting. Maybe it will help you.

VOLUME NAME: 1 (The Volume Name is just like the disk name that you give a floppy disk. WDS1. already appears on the screen. You merely type in a name after the WDS1. to name the ROOT directory of the hard drive. If you name it the number 1 (the actual number 1) you will be able to read and write to your hard drive from programs that will not support pathing, which is most of the programs I own. I guess few software authors ever believed that we would ever get out of the DSK arena. Too bad. More on this later.

SECTORS PER TRACK: 32
HEADS: 4
CYLINDERS: 615
RESERVED DIR/FILE SECTORS: 2048
WRITE PRECOMPENSATION: 0 (erase the default then enter zero).
REDUCED WRITE CURRENT: 0 (erase the default and enter zero).
SECTOR VERIFICATION RETRIES: 8
INTERLACE: 2
STEP RATE: 0

These settings may not be valid for your drive if you have a different hard disk or an earlier or later version of MDM5. My copy of MDM5 is V1.25. I noticed that in the MICROpendium articles mentioned above John Kolean has V1.23 and the prompts he lists in the article are different than the ones that appear on my FORMAT screen. Versions 1.26, 1.27 and V1.28 are pretty much the same as 1.25, especially as far as what you are prompted for when formatting the hard drive. When I last talked to Jack Riley (March 13th) V1.29 had just or was about to be released.

When you have completed entering the above values type in the word FORMAT to format the hard disk. While the process of formatting is taking place MDM5 will dislay a bunch of information on the screen to give you something to stare at while it takes the six minutes or so to get the job done. If you begin noticing more than 1 or 2 BAD SECTORS appearing during the format you might have a problem with some kind of electronic garbage hindering the process. This happened to me so I tried reformatting again as John Kolean suggested in his article, but the problem only worsened. The formatting really slowed down and it seemed as if every sixth sector or so showed up as being bad. I KNEW that couldn't be right so I finally powered down the entire system and let it sit for about 10 minutes to clear it of any garbage and to let it cool down. That seemed to work as I was able to reformat the disk successfully on the next attempt, with no bad sectors.

Once the hard disk is formatted you can leave it as it is or you can create subdirectories on it. Either way, the system is usable once the formatting is complete. With my system I chose to build subdirectories to take advantage of the DSK1 emulation available with the hard drive. I also put a copy of MDM5 on my disk for lightening quick access. The configuration listed below has worked flawlessly thus far. If you can't get yours to work feel free to try mine if you like. I give no guarantees though, as I know only enough about this piece of hardware at this point to be truly dangerous.

Subdirectories:

WDS1. (the root directory)

DSK.TIMP. (this is a nested subdirectory of the DSK subdirectory. It contains the files from my Multiplan disk: MPBASE, MPCHAR, MPDATA, MPHLP, MPINTR, OVERLAY).

DSK1. (this subdirectory contains the MDM, MDM5 and MDMXB files from the Myarc Disk Manager).

UTIL. (UTIL has the MDM, MDM-BACKUP, MDM-DELETE, MDM5, MDM6, MDM7, MDM8, MDM9, MDMCBACKUP and MDMXB files in it).

The process of making the subdirectories and copying the files to the various areas is fare for another article, but I will say that using the MDM5 program was and is a most enjoyable experience. It is truly a neat piece of software that is pretty easy to understand as it is. Not much is needed in the way of docs. Wonder who wrote it?

I still have a long way to go before I completely understand the workings and capabilities of my new piece of hardware, but I am absolutely thrilled to have it as an addition to my workstation. I now have what I will boldly claim to be the largest 99/4A data base in existence, 6515 records (2448 sectors) in a single file. I certainly could never have done that on any other storage media available for the TI.

THIS MONTH IN 4A HISTORY:

1983:

-On April 25, 1983 Texas Instruments began offering a free Peripheral Expansion Box to anyone purchasing any three of the following; an RS232 card, a disk controller card, a disk drive, a 32K memory expansion card, a p-Code card, TI-Writer or Multiplan.

-Navarone Industries introduced the "Select-a-Cart" module expander, more commonly known as the Widget and finally named the Cartridge Expander.

-Model Masters of Fullerton, California, now doing business as DataBiotics, introduced JOYPRINT, a low-cost but ill-fated RS232 printer hookup that operated out of the joystick port.

-Tom Wynne, a Seattle area 99er who created the NOLIST utility for XB prgrammers and then gave it away in Barry Traver's Genial Traveler, made it into the 99er Hall of Fame with a score of 1,009,600 points in Tombstone City.

1984:

-Compute!'s First Book of TI Games made it debut in Compute! Magazine.

-Mikel Laboratories released their RS232 standalone unit for the 99/4A and at the same time announced plans to build a peripheral expansion box for our computer.

-Joseph Nocera's now classic "Death of a Computer" article on the demise of the 99/4A appeared in the Texas Monthly magazine.

-Texas Instruments still had 14% of the home computer market, despite the bailout five months earlier. Commodore had 37%.

1985:

-INTELPRO released a French version of their COMPANION word processor.

1986:

Unisource Electronics of Lubbock, Texas, a major TI-99/4A retailer and mail order house since March of 1983, goes out of business.

-PILOT 99 author Thomas Welthofer dies at age 22.

-Amerisoft, a Georgia based supplier of TI products, and a supporter from the early days of the 4A, leaves the TI market.

1987:

-Monty Schmidt, author of the Techie BBS program, releases Command DOS for the 99/4A.

-The Amnion Helpline, run by former International Users Group

librarian Dr. Guy Steffen-Romano, receives an award from the Front Range 99ers of Colorado Springs, Colorado, for continued support of the TI community.

1988:

-Bob Lawson 1344 Boston Ave. Bayshore, New York 11706, announces that the Forti Music Card, formerly offered by the now defunct Unisource Electronics, is still available through him.

TRIVIA:

Did you know that...

-LA99ers User Group member forever George F. Steffen wrote the 99/4A version of Beanstalk Adventure and that he also wrote some of the assembly software for Craig Miller's Gram Kracker conversion utilities?

-Funware, the Richardson, Texas company started by an ex-TI employee that produced Ambulance, Henhouse, Rabbit Trail etcetera, also planned to introduce another cartridge game called Galactic Barrier, but never did?

-Moonbean Software of Northampton, Massachusetts, long-time supporter of the 4A community with a stable of game programs, used to be called HI-FI Exchange?

-TI community personalities Cheryl Whitelaw, Steven Shaw and Tom Wynne all made it into the 99er Hall of Fame with their game scores in Munchman (178,950), Pinball (10,028,010) and Tombstone City (1,009,600) respectively?

-The Turbo Pasc 99 project marketed by L.L. Conner Enterprise, was originally undertaken by Barry Boone under the support of Steve Lamberti of Texaments? Wonder what happened? Texaments even advertised it in MICROpendium a couple years back. Must have taken too long to convert it all over from the German language that it was originally written in.

-Lou Phillips (who?) was once a VP at the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York?

-Windows99 from CSI Design Group in St. Louis, Mo. was written by Ken Dibble (who?)?

Next month; an in-depth look at Barry Traver's Genial Traveler Diskazine and what you are missing if you are not a subscriber, more 4A history and of course... more trivia!

Until then....

COMPUTER VIRUS SCAM

Taken from the March 1989 Moose Lodge Magazine, article written by Lance Grandone.

By now I am sure that most of you have heard, either by television or newspapers, about the computer virus which infected several major systems and computer communications links as a bizarre Halloween trick this fall. Of course, by the time you read this, it may only be a dim memory in the minds of a few knowledgeable computer industry types. However, I somehow doubt this because, folks, there's some money to be made and a few unsuspecting computer users to be fleeced! That's why I titled this article "The Computer Virus Scam."

In the last few weeks, millions of dollars have been made by "panic peddlers" capitalizing on the great computer virus of 1988. Now I'm not tarring every computer consultant and software developer with this brush, but there are a lot of data processing people and management who are blowing this thing way out of proportion in order to satisfy selfish ends.

WHO DID IT?

Let's examine a few points first. One, there is no such thing as a "non-malicious" virus. The program which was perpetrated on an unsuspecting user community was highly disruptive, illegal and required an unbelievable number of man-hours to put things back to the way there were before the virus struck. In my opinion, whether actual data or programs were destroyed is irrelevant. The point is that someone took it upon themselves to play the role of a god, supposedly to teach us a lesson, but overstepped their bounds and nearly caused a catastrophe. This is certainly a misguided way to make a point!

I'm not going to discuss the technical aspects of this virus, or other similar programs variously known as "worms," "cancers," "Trojan horses," etc. They all can cause problems ranging from negligible to catastrophic. The simple fact that there has been a security breach is enough to cause many users and company management to go into a frenzy of preventive measures. In some cases, users overreact and the result is over-control, paranoia, system slowdowns, frayed tempers and delays. There is no doubt that the Halloween virus brought unprecedented international attention to a darker side of data processing which has been with us since the beginning of the information processing industry. I'm also not here to explore the mind set of the computer "hacker" or play psychiatrist. The point is, these people exist and are not going to go away. As long as there are computers and data communications, there will be perverse jokesters, hackers, or just common criminals, disrupting our computer systems. The fact that computers play an increasingly larger part of our daily life makes the potential problem more acute. I'm certainly not against products which make it more difficult for a virus to infect your system, but I do feel that you can avoid giving the opportunists a lot of money when a little common sense can solve most of your problems.

CONTROL

Remember that most of the problems were caused by human failure. The best thing that you can do is control access to your system. Limit access to approved users. Set up passwords and maintain them. Don't permit modem (communications) link-ups with unknown parties. Be very careful about trading copies of programs with your friends. It's usually illegal and it is the primary source for transmitting viruses. The same holds true for "bulletin boards" some of which are notorious virus carriers. If you must copy a program from a "bulletin board," time-sharing service, or a friend, try to first backup your entire system, remove any unnecessary programs and then "quarantine" the new program for a while. See if you encounter any problems with the new program or other programs on your system. If the virus is sophisticated, you many not experience a problem for months. Be careful of bootleg copies of games, these are also notorious carriers of viruses. Try to only use approved software on your system. Safeguard your master disks as if they were gold! You may want to buy a low-cost inoculation or virus detector program. Check your computer store or various industry publications. They cost from $25 to $250 for most versions. But bear in mind, you will probably experience some significant degradation in system performance when you use these.

There are no absolute fail-safe remedy, other than locking your system in a room with no access. Just remember to use some common sense, follow the guidelines above and don't be stampeded by panic peddlers. If you catch a virus, it's not like AIDS. It can be killed and cures are possible, but the cost in time, data and money may be high.

(Gary's NOTE) - A virus on the TI99/4a is not as likely as other systems as due to the TI99/4a system structure the transmission of such a virus is not as easy and the potential for damage is not as extensive. Furthermore, a virus on the TI99/4a would probably be easily detectable but nevertheless, they are possible but I have never run across one yet. In the IBM compatible world I haven't run across a virus (just lucky I guess) either but I do know of a few people who have.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Gary W. Cox

Which disk manager or copier is the best? A lot of disk managers and copier programs exist. Some of the disk managers most people will be familiar with is DM 1000, Disk Manager II cartridge, Disk Master II, Corcomp manager and the Myarc manager to name a few. All of these disk managers will do basically the same thing, copy programs, change file names, format disks, delete files and just whatever there is to do with managing disks... On the other hand the copy programs are made for the purposes of just copying disks

although many of them include features to catalog a disk and provide a few other disk management functions.

As far as which disk manager is the best I think most people will agree DM 1000 is it! It is freeware and does everything that you could ask of a disk manager and is probably the easiest to use. However, it should be noted that on DM 1000 that the only authorized releases of the program are versions 3.5 and lower and in fact 3.5 is what comes with Funnelweb. The unauthorized versions of the program contain potential bugs which can cause problems... As for the Disk Manager II cartridge, I remember when that was the only disk manager available! The Disk Manager II cartridge is slow and not nearly as easy to use as DM 1000 but it does provide one important function that most other disk managers do not provide and that's the disk tests! So for testing out a Ram Disk or a floppy drive the Disk Manager II comprehensive test is great!.

As for disk copiers there is one that stands out from the rest with that being RAPID COPY available from Texaments. I have found that Rapid Copy is by far the fastest copier around for the TI99/4a. While DM 1000 will copy a disk faster than the Disk Manager II cartridge RAPID COPY beats them all and is quick and easy to use.

Where is the ESCAPE key on the TI99/4a? Many BBS's ask that you press the ESCAPE (ESC) for quick logon, this includes our BBS. On the TI99/4a the escape key is CTRL PERIOD (.) .

IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

By Michael Dorman

Well there's one in every crowd! Gary Cox states in his Questions and Answers column that most people would agree that DM 1000 was the best disk manager for the TI. Of course, I would have another candidate for favorite disk manager! I really like Disk Utilities by John Birdwell. Disk Utilities not only incorporates all the features of DM 1000, but also has the best sector editor around. This is one of my most used programs even though I have to use Myarc's MDM5 as well to take advantage of my hard drive. By the way, John is the co-author of Myarc's Hard/Floppy MDM5. The preliminary work was done by Mike Dodd who modified Myarc's original disk manager. (See Bill Gaskill's column in this month's issue.)

For those of you who enjoy Bill Gaskill's trivia each month, check out his Time Line 99 XB program. Time Line 99 is available for downloading from The Midnight Hour BBS.

Finally, this word of advice - Don't be an April Fool!

NOTICE

Information contained in TidBits is accurate and true to the best of our knowledge. Viewpoints and opinions expressed in TidBits are not necessarily that of the Mid-South 99'ers. We welcome any opinions/corrections from our readers. Articles may be reprinted elsewhere as long as credit is given to the author and newsletter.

GROUP INFO

Visitors and potential members may receive 3 free issues of TiDbits while they decide if they wish to join (no obligation). On the top of your label is a code. A Y means you are a member, N means 3 free list, UG means user group and S means a business. Beside the Y is a date, one year from that date your dues are due. A dollar sign ($) on the label will indicate that your dues are due. The library is open only to members. Library list is $1. Mail order disk library access is $2 per disk max of 5 disks per month order by disk number only. At meetings, library access is FREE if you exchange your disk for ours or $1 per disk for our disks. Send all mail order library requests to librarian's address! Send dues and correspondence to group address.

CALENDAR

MEETINGS: April 20, May 18, June 15 (3rd Thursday!)
WORKSHOPS: May 27, June 24 (4th Saturday!)

24HR TI BULLETIN BOARD

The Midnight Hour BBS 300/1200/2400/9600 bps 501-735-9980
Dial 735-9980 from Memphis area for toll free call.

GROUP MAILING ADDRESS

Mid-South 99 Users Group
P.O. Box 38522
Germantown, Tn. 38183-0522

LIBRARY ADDRESS

David Ferguson
3377 Creighton Ave.
Memphis, TN 38118

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____ [ ] $15.00 FAMILY
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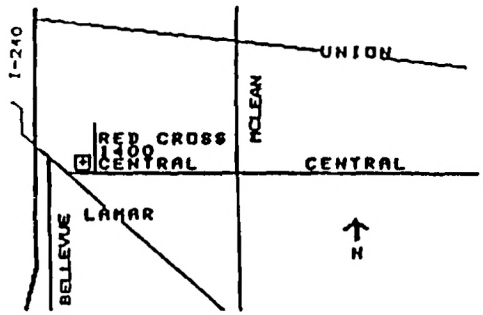
EQUIPMENT, ETC. _____

Detach and mail with check payable to: Mid-South 99 Users Group, P.O. Box 38522, Germantown, Tn, 38183-0522.

NOTICES

MEETING
7:00 P.M.
Thursday, April 20th
Red Cross Building
1400 Central Ave.

MACC FAIR
10am till 5pm
Saturday, April 29th
State Tech
Fulton Building



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