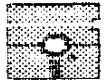




NEWS

NET99ER



TI HOME COMPUTER NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1988

Next meeting MAR. 5TH At the North Richland Hills Community Center at 9:30 AM

President: Bill Duncan
V. President: Doc Graves

Treasurer: Lee Deforest
Secretary: David Shivers

Editor
Tom Collins

Newsletter Staff
Doc Graves

COMING SOON TI NET BBS

581 1421

WATCH FOR IT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

----- FROM THE PRESIDENT -----

Hi fellow NET99ERS! I'm trying to get a handle on things but am going mighty slow. We are now in the process of getting our BBS going with the phone line installed and all equipment up and checked out. The number is 581 1421 and should be ready for business Saturday February the 20th. See you at the next meeting!

Bill Duncan

----- V. P. CORNER -----

Due to the ignorance of the VP this will be short and sweet. I should have some SUPERCARTS SINGLE AND DOUBLE-SIDED ready by meeting time. We are trying to set up a work shop for everybody to use and a place to hold sig meets. Anybody with anything that you know enough about to show at the meeting, please let us know because there is always someone who would appreciate all the help we can get.

Doc Graves

----- FROM THE EDITOR -----

Well, here we are again, time for a newsletter. The only interesting thing I have to report is about an expanded console that I have been tinkering with. It consists of a new keyboard that extends from the far left side of the console to the far right. The power supply board will be replaced with a separate external power supply. I got the parts from the Radio Shack Parts Warehouse on Northside Drive. The keyboard was originally for a TRS 80 Model 4. It is the same type of key setup as the Stackpole or HYTEK keyboards. I got the schematics from a MICROPENDIUM from 1986. It was written by Tony Johnson in the May issue. It describes a circuit that will allow the TI to have full cursor keys, F1 through F10 keys, plus +, -, oops, tab erase, and home cursor - all at the single stroke of a key. It is all done with hardware, so there is no software to load up each time you want these key functions. I have my keyboard set up with two vertical rows of function keys on the left side, a control key and function key next to them, then the standard TI style keyboard, and on the right side of the keyboard I have the cursor control keys, + and -, and numeric key pad 1 thru 0, ., and enter. The parts needed are readily available at Radio Shack and local electronics supply outlets. I have the main 5 chip array finished but am having a little trouble locating the relays. I need some DPST mini relays that have 200 ohm resistance coils if any knows where I can get them please let me know. The console will also have a two port cartridge slot styled after the Navarone Widgeit, with select and reset built into it. Now all I need is to have James Crosson put in the 32k 16bit conversion kit. When I get it done I will bring it to a sig meeting and will surely set it up at the Computer and Camera show this year. (I hope we set up this year! That is where I joined the group.) By the way for those of you who have the sylar type of keyboards - try putting an in914 diode in the function jumper on the back of the circuit board (cut the jumper and solder the diode to where the jumper was with the black band towards the closest edge of the board) and you won't have to be sure that the Alpha lock is pressed when using your joysticks. Fast, simple and neat! Until next month.....

Tom Collins

----- THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 6, 1988 -----

by Dave Shivers

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 AM. Bill Duncan introduced Chester Johnson, a new member. The 1988 officers were introduced, these included the following:

President Bill Duncan VPresident Doc Graves Treasurer Lee Deforest Secretary Dave Shivers Member at Large Phillip Chappell Newsletter Editor Tom Collins Membership Chairman John Lambert Chief Librarian Ron Miller Librarian Ken Dominiec Newsletter Librarian Roy Willis Equipment Chairman James Crosson Cassette Librarian James Crosson

The financial report was given by Lee Deforest with a total of \$555.66. This was accepted and the minutes of the last meeting was given. This was also accepted without correction.

James Crosson announced the Disk of the Month and a special disk to raise funds for the TI Fair in April. Bill Duncan announced that we will get the newsletter out earlier each month and that all officers will write articles for the newsletter.

Gary Higgs announced that the BBS will cost \$65 to \$70 for phone line installation and \$12 to \$15 for a monthly rate. A collection was taken from all members who wanted on the BBS. Enough money was collected to have the phone line installed. This will be installed by the end of next week if possible.

The buy sell and swap was held and followed by the break.

After a short break Gary Higgs gave a demonstration of our new BBS program.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.

----- TREASURERS REPORT -----

This month we had \$180.00 deposit and we paid \$15.00 rent for the meeting room, and with the \$60.00 collected from the members who wanted to help get the BBS online that leaves us with a balance of \$655.66 in the treasury.

Lee Deforest

----- MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT -----

February 6, 1988

I would like to welcome new member:

William T Hardie M2/88
2031 Park Place Blvd
Bedford Tx 76021
283-2002

Unfortunately we had some members who did not renew their membership:

Richard Beckman
David Blocker
Charles Clines
Jerry Colburn
Curtis Fredeck
Charlie Howard
Peter Rokkas
John Wadle
Jim Yingst

The following members will be dropped if dues are not paid at the next meeting:

Roger Hurlbut
Bernadine Jones
Shawn Moore
George Shupee'

SSMUG-TIUG

A NOTE TO ALL MEMBERS. Look on your mailing label on your newsletter for the date that your membership is renewable, such as M1/86 is January 1986. M5/86 is May 1986, etc.. The club does not send out reminders on dues because the postage is prohibitive. If you know any of the members who did not renew, please give them a call and see if you can learn the reason. Let your officers know so they can look into the reasons. Your help on this will be greatly appreciated.

John Lambert

Membership Chairman

----- TINET BBS NEWS -----

In this section I would like to submit to the Officers an additon to the newsletter. It would contain articles of interest to the BBS users in our group. It may even contain the rules for use of the BBS as well as a current list of available downloads for validated users. It could have articles of interest may also be included by the SYSDPS or by the users. I feel this would be a useful addition to the newsletter.

Tom Collins

----- FROM TI CHAT -----

In the November issue, MICROpendium published a program, Intruder, which some people have reported having problems loading the screens. Trying to load the Dining Room screen seems to crash the program with a "FILE ERROR IN 2780." This error message can result from an improperly converted file as well as an inputting error. The former can be solved by making sure that the screen data file (FROGDATA) is properly converted into an I/V80 format. Make sure that line 130 of the conversion program uses LINPUT, and not INPUT. The file characteristics will be I/V80 regardless of whether LINPUT or INPUT is used, but the data won't be readable to the main program unless LINPUT is used. The latter problem is likely to result because the instructions may not have been explicit. When entering the file using TI-Writer as recommended, we noted that the Alpha Lock key should be depressed. Well, that's not enough. When entering the number 2 as required, the shift key should also be depressed because, as we all know, the uppercase characters on the top row of keys is not controlled by the Alpha Lock key. This will produce a proper control character. If it produces a lowercase r, you didn't hold down the shift key.

Regarding the 4A-9640-PC combination, Miller Communications of Seattle has developed an IBM-AT- style case that will hold the 9640 card plus others. The case has a 220W power supply, disk controller slot and seven other slots. It will hold 3 floppy drives and 2 hard drives. The case has been developed for Queen Anne Computer Shoppe. In the seven cards you can have two RS232 cards and Miller Communications videoflex and Frame Grabber card that were mentioned in previous updates. The case is equipped with Key lock and LED status lights. The box, configured for TI users wherein the cards are mounted vertical. A disk controller card for an IBM clone is available with a switch so the user can go between the IBM or the 9640 or 4A. The IBM type card will also fit in the PEB, but you would need a new keyboard with the TI, with the same drives. The 256K RAM IBM type card has a floppy disk controller on board, and the user can add "layers" to make an extensive IBM system, if desired. The box was developed because of the need for a heavy power supply for the 9640 and his fear of packing the TI PE box for fear of overheating. The basic box retails for \$329.95. The 256K IBM type card is \$399.00. Additional information is available from Queen Anne Computer Shoppe, 6102 Roosevelt Way, N.E., Seattle WA 98114 or (206) 522-6558 or (206) 622-9400, (Answering Service) M-F 8:30am-5:00pm.

In the month of December, a committee to establish Archiving Standards for the TI was established at a conference on Dec. 17 on Delphi's TI NET. Though the committee will have no "official" status, it will consists of 3 persons in the forefront of "developing archiving programs." The committee will be Al Beard, Barry Boone, and Barry Tarver. These three ask Jerry Coffey, conference chairman to join the committee. The article is quite interesting and I recommend that you secure a copy of the issue and read it.

Interested in a 2400 Baud Modem? Online Store, Ventura, CA 93003, (805) 650-0188, is advertising US Robotics 2400 Baud for \$149.00. Does not say whether internal or external. Will accept Visa, M/C or Amex.

Downloaded from Startext with the permission of Roy Willis

- ITEMS FOR SALE -

COMPLETE TI 99/4A SYSTEM

TWO consoles

PE Box w/TI disk controller, TI 32K card, TI RS232 card, TI disk drive (spare), BUME 142 Dual Disk Drives, JC Penney remote control cassette player TI Joysticks, all cables, power supplies and manuals.

Software

Microsoft Multiplan, TI Writer, TI Extended Basic, Adventure, Pirate Adventure(cassette), Personal Report Generator, Market Simulation(cassette), Disk Manager II, Personal Record Keeping, Personal Financial Aids (cassette), Teach Yourself Basic (Pts. 1 2, cassettes), Teach Yourself Extended Basic (cassette), Beginners Basic Tutor (cassette), Micro Pal - The Genealogy Workshop, Basic Tricks for TI 99/4a, Graphics and Sound.
All books and manuals for the hardware and software listed above plus-

TI 99/4a Users Guide Macmillan COMPUTES Guide to Extended Basic Flynn
COMPUTES Programmers Reference Guide Regina
The Last Word on the TI 99/4a Schreiber How to use the TI 99/4a Computer Brewer and Lewis
Using and Programming the TI 99/4a Holtz
Basic Tips -- Anlist
I Speak Basic to my TI 99/4a Jones

I would like to sell as a complete system.
The price for the complete system is.....\$400.00

William C. Boyce
2503 Summit Drive
Irving, Texas 75062
214-255-8284

TI Consoles, 2 each in working order \$ 35.00 ea; TI Consoles 2 each not in working order (started to upgrade to turbo console) good for parts \$ 20.00 each.
TI MONITOR 13 inch screen color \$125.00; 1 Stand alone RS232 (does not have a PID port, 2 serial ports) \$ 50.00
OLIVETTI DAISY WHEEL TYPEWRITER, typewriter with interface cable to be used with buffer (listed seperatly), extra daisy wheel,extra ribbons. \$250.00; BUFFER,1 QUADRAM BUFFER with serial in, parallel out,and built in 32k memory (can be expanded), \$ 75.00; TI 32K EXPANSION 1 Expansion memory \$ 50.00; TI FLEX CABLE 1 cable \$ 50.00; MODULES: 1 PLATO mod, \$25.00, \$15.00 each, 1 TI EXTENTED BASIC (no book), 1 E/A (no book), 1 MINI MEMORY, 1 MULTIPLAN (no book), \$15.00 each, DISK MANAGER II, 1 TI-WRITER (no book), 1 TERMINAL EMULATOR II, 1 HOME FINANCIAL DECISIONS, 1 PERSONAL REPORT GENERATOR, 1 PERSONAL REAL ESTATE, 1 PERSONAL RECORD KEEPING, 1 SECURITIES ANALYSIS (no book), 1 HOUSEHOLD BUDGET MANAGEMENT, 1 TAX/INVESTMENT RECORD KEEPING, 1 PHYSICAL FITNESS, \$5.00 each, 1 TERMINAL EMULATOR I, 1 WEIGHT CONTROL AND NUTRITION, 1 PARSEC, \$3.00 each, 1 FOOTBALL, 1 VIDEO GAMES; CABINET, 1 Holds eight modules \$ 3.50; CABINET 1 Holds approx. 24 modules \$8.00; CARTRIDGE EXPANDER Holds up to three modules at one time \$ 20.00

LEE DeForest 237-9746

3 TI CONSOLES (NEW) still in factory boxes \$75.00ea.
1 TI PEB with: TI 32K card; TI controller card; TI RS-232 card; 2 HH Shugart SA-455 DS DD drives \$450.00
1 TI PEB with: TI 32K card; TI controller card; TI RS-232 card; 1 FH SSSD drive \$325.00
Contact: John Lambert MC 95829 (817) 232-8306

The deadline for contributions for the Mar. newsletter is Sat. Mar. 12th

more practical level, this means that the cursor moves flawlessly, almost instantaneously, and with none of the "jumpiness" found in other mouse systems. This is a testament to the 9938 and the Myarc Disk-Operating-System (MDOOS), and not to My-Art.

Since the graphics chip handles 2 of the three buttons on the mouse (why Myarc decided on a 3 button mouse is beyond me - the Apple Macs do very well with only 1 button), and the 9995 processor built into the 9640 is VERY fast, this means the response to a click is almost instantaneous. The secret to the speed of My-Art is the 9995 chip - which makes anything 3-5 times faster than it would run on a 99/4A. A programmer could even write very poor 99/4A assembly code and it would be blindingly fast on a Geneve - even in the slowed down 99/4A mode. My-Art supports a pretty standard set of features found in drawing programs today. The selection is, however, by no means "rich". A lot of the fancier features that found their way into GRAPHX, TI-Artist, JoyPaint and the myriad other drawing programs for the 4A 2 years ago when most of those programs were written, are lacking in My-Art. I'm not even going to compare them to the features in graphics programs found on the Amiga or the Atari ST - computers with similar, if inferior, graphics hardware to the Geneve.

Within My-Art the user can select colors, draw with a pencil, clear the screen, fill a shape, draw lines, circles, boxes and rectangles, and control the speed of the mouse. The user can also use more "advanced" features such as moving or copying parts of the screen, printing the picture, typing text in various sizes (unfortunately only in one typeface), saving and loading pictures to disk, and doing a disk directory or formatting a new disk. All in all, this list could almost be used as a list of the basic features that should be found in any drawing program. The three more advanced features that distinguish My-Art from the standard "bare-bones" drawing program is that it sports a help screen (which is pretty essential unless you prefer thumbing through the manual every few seconds the first times you use the program), a very well done "zoom" mode that is truly impressive, and an "oops" key. The "zoom" mode allows you to examine a picture in truly microscopic portions (the cursor icon changing into a microscope at that level is a cute touch) - with a grand total of 12 pixels on the screen at once. While the necessity of zooming that close may be argued (particularly within a program that has excellent cursor control - thanks mostly to the hardware), it is very dramatic and makes for a neat demonstration.

The "oops", or "undo" function is something that should be standard on all drawing programs, but usually isn't. It allows you to erase the last thing you did - whether it was drawing a line free-hand in the pencil mode or filling an area. In using a mouse-based drawing program, this is almost a necessity. While computer users have been going ga-ga over rodents for a few years now, graphics professionals for the most part detest them - they tend to prefer drawing tablets and trackballs as they are considerably more precise for experienced users (even if they aren't as cute). My-Art, for the most part, performs almost all of it's functions flawlessly. I emphasize "almost". The move/copy function is perhaps the most frustrating part of the program. Despite a pretty good description in the manual, I've found it virtually impossible to use. If it's any consolation - the same function in the beta version of My-Art was even worse. However, it remains that the Move/Copy function is particularly ill-conceived and confusing (even to someone, like myself, that has used dozens of drawing programs). In fact, if Myarc changed just one thing I'd ask them to re-do those functions to the way they are in TI-Artist.

How does it stack up to other drawing programs? Well, for the most part My-Art is a pretty basic (I would almost say "primitive") drawing program. It lacks most of the features that you take for granted even in 99/4A drawing programs - a clipboard, rays, fill patterns, various brush widths, an eraser of sorts (currently you have to redraw over what you want to erase pixel-by-pixel in the background color for that area, or by "boxing" it over), the ability to make ovals, a spray-can function, and maybe bit-mapped font capability. Perhaps, if the designers are ambitious, they could add some of the popular features of drawing programs from other machines: color cycling (see an Amiga demo if you want an explanation), object-oriented drawing (where you manipulate object instead of pixels), picture merging, and the ability to print to color printers and plotters.

My-Art, in fact, doesn't even begin to demonstrate any of the capabilities of the machine it runs on beyond raw speed, and a few of the basic things found in the 9938 chip such as the resolution, colors and mouse control.

DOCUMENTATION:

The documentation that accompanies My-Art is servicable. It does an excellent job of concisely describing the features of the program. However, it is more distinguished by what it doesn't have than what it does. For instance, it doesn't have an index (I pray for them, but most program manuals don't have them), it doesn't have a tutorial, it doesn't have any reference at all for programmers that want to use My-Art pictures in programs, and finally, it has no illustrations (which would definitely help some users). Like the program itself, it is the acceptable minimum and little else. It DOES at least have a Table of Contents, which is more than a lot of programs have.

It would have been nice that for \$125 Myarc would have thrown in a keychart, or perhaps a keyboard overlay listing the commands. Putting all this in a help-screen only partially mitigates the absence of either. It also would have been nice if the manual was a bit longer, and perhaps a little chattier and less terse. You often learn as much in asides found in manuals then you do in the listing of functions and their explanations. If Myarc had been truly generous, they could have even thrown in a small section on mouse drawing techniques for that large majority of 99/4A users that have never used a mouse (or have only used it with TI-Artist). It is safe to say that the manual does the job, and no more (or less).

EASE OF USE:

This is my biggest bone of contention with My-Art. While it has the minimum features that a serious computer artist could use to produce spectacular art - they are arranged in a such a way that it is a wonder that anything can be made with the program. First of all, the 9640 keyboard has all those wonderful function keys. So what does My-Art use for all it's major functions? Everything BUT the function keys! Some attempt was made to attach the keys anematically to their function (L for lines, etc..), however even the sparse number of features found in My-Art would soon exhaust this scheme. Witness the K key used to format a disk. Even more senselessly, many important features are found on control keys, which require pressing 2 keys at once to activate. If Myarc had bothered to attach all the features found on control keys to one of the 10 function keys, as well as those commands that didn't fit the anemonic key assignment scheme, they still would have had a function key left over! There is no sin in key-driven graphics programs - but there is in doing it haphazardly. Not everyone has the time to program text or icon menus such as those found in GRAPHX or TI-Artist.

My second major gripe with My-Art is even more fundamental. The color list is apparantly arranged at random. While this is no problem in medium resolution with only 16 colors on the screen at once, in high-resolution with 256 colors available it's the pits! I've literally spent an hour trying to find the closest shade to another I had been drawing in. Apparantly, the author(s) of My-Art just put the color choices on the screen as they are stored in the 9938. Ideally, they should have arranged them like the color spectrum anyone who has taken a chemistry class is familiar with. Then, if you are drawing in red, and want to simulate a shadow with a darker red, it is no problem. The way it is now it is truly a test of will-power to do any kind of shade-drawing work in My-Art. Since the ostensible reason for having 256 colors in the first place is to produce more natural drawings, this defeats the whole purpose of the program! Sloppy programming can make even the best program worthless. To it's credit My-Art does have one feature I found very nice. Normally, the way the colors are arranged, if you draw in one color for a while, and switch to another, finding the first again would be close to impossible. My-Art gets around this by letting you drag the color-selection cursor over the screen on to any color in your picture. Hence, getting your original color is simple - even fun (as you drag the cursor over the screen all the other screen colors it passes over are flashed on the border of the picture). To me, though, this looks like a "fix" for an abominally planned color palette.

VALUE:

This is the perhaps the most subjective area of ANY review. In fact, it is so subjective I'm not even going to rate My-Art in this area. If you can live with My-Art's shortcomings, then it will have infinite value since it is the only game in town. If it lacks too much for you to use it seriously, then the thing is worthless. Judge for yourself by what I've said above.

CONCLUSION:

As John Koloen put it in his review, the "Myarc Mouse appears to be well-built and will probably last a long time under normal use". I felt this pretty much summed up what I felt about the program.

The price of \$100-125 for My-Art is about what you'd expect to pay for a PC mouse of perhaps the same quality. After looking over the program, I feel I bought My-Art primarily for the mouse. Hence, I don't feel I was "taken". I'm also confident that Myarc will release future updates of the drawing program - it's in their best interest to have a nice drawing program in order to sell more 9640's, which I assume is their main business. How they will get them to the users I don't know since they didn't bother to enclose warranty cards with the package - at least mine.

Myarc is just getting used to being a software company. In fact, their first "official" commercial release has convinced me that Myarc should have sold the SOURCE CODE for My-Art to 3rd-party developers, just when it was released. Heck, the 9640 has the advantage of 1000s of 99/4A software programs the ST didn't have.

It seems to me it is in Myarc's self-interest to have as many programs available for the Geneve as possible. Enough philosophizing, now to the report card:

REPORT CARD

Performance..... B-
Documentation..... B+
Ease of Use..... C-
Value..... (your guess)
My final grade..... B-

If you are interested, I'd like to hear how YOU rate My-Art. I'd also like to hear anyone's thoughts on the future of the Geneve.

***EDITOR'S NOTE:

The deadline for contributions for the February newsletter is Saturday February 13th

Comments or questions about anything? Contact your officers:

PRESIDENT---: Bill Duncan
V.PRESIDENT-: Doc Graves
SECRETARY---: David Shivers
TREASURER---: Lee DeForest

Got some interesting info to share? Articles, letters, paragraphs, or words of wisdom are yours to contribute. Contact Tom Collins, Editor. 817-738-2428. Startext MC232653

THE END

WANTED! INTERESTING GRAPHICS FOR THE NEWSLETTER
CONTACT THE EDITOR - TOM COLLINS 738-2428



PLUTO SAYS SUBMIT YOUR GRAPHICS NOW!