

VAST NEWS

for the VAST Computer User Group

Volume 8 Number 7

July 11, 1992

Myarc Calls It Quits

TI World and Local News

Compiled by Jim Ely from various sources, mostly MICROpendium Magazine.

Myarc Out Of Business

Myarc, the company which developed the Geneve 9640 and the Myarc Hard and Floppy Disk Controller, is no longer in business, according to officials of the Somerset County, New Jersey, Consumer Affairs Division.

According to Marianne Mattei, director of the division, Lou Phillips of the company has continued repairing products, but is "not really obligated to" do so.



Georgette Rooney, investigator for the division, says she has received 10 customer complaints since an article appeared in the April 1992 MICROpendium dealing with complaints to the office, including one from Australia. She says attempts are being made to resolve the complaints.

She says Myarc's post office box has now been closed. In the April interview, she said the postmaster had told her the box was still open but the mail not being picked up. A call to Myarc's Customer Service Line on June 11, had a tone and a recorded message from the phone company stating that the number is "temporarily disconnected."

There was no further mention of the post office box or of merchandise availability.

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SECRETARY'S SLATE

MINUTES

VAST Computer User Group

June 13, 1992

President Jim Ely called the June 13, 1992 VAST business meeting to order promptly at 10:00 am. The 19 people in attendance included all of the officers and two visitors. The minutes were accepted as published and Jim then asked for the committee reports. The treasury report was given and accepted as read.

PUBLICITY: Chairman Ray Frantz reported that the classified ad ran in the Republic again and that he had one response. The two guests in attendance at the meeting were a direct result of the ad.

LIBRARY: The Knights stated that there were a few new programs added to the library in the last month. A discussion followed as to the need to catalog all of the programs available to club members through the library. It was suggested that a text file should be made available to members listing all of the contents of the club library. Ray volunteered to help Wallace and Hazel accomplish this task.

RAFFLE: Gene Gipson thanked everyone for their prize donations and said that the raffle is alive and doing quite well, thank you.

PROGRAM: The July program is to be on Telco and will be presented by Jim Ely. It was suggested that the business meeting be held at breakfast so that more time could be devoted to the presentation. It was also suggested that the BBS be brought to the meet-

ing so that there would be no problems with the Pyle phone system.

The August program will be presented by Chris Taylor and will be the debut of his new High-Speed Animator program.

Chris also reminds everyone that he will be doing a demo before the meeting at 9:00. Anyone that is interested is encouraged to come in early.

FEST-WEST: Ralph Rees stated that the bank account will be closed, finally. He could not close the account without getting a few more signatures from committee officers.

The topic of the videotape was raised again and it was determined that the best way to get the tape from SW 99'ers was to go to Tucson and pick it up in person. Chris Taylor spoke of an interest in going to a SW 99'er meeting and presenting a demo as well as getting the tape.

BBS: Jim and Jan talked about the upgrading of the BBS. The speed and accuracy of the software were of particular interest. Jim stated that DOS 5.0 corrected the problem with the date and time errors. More use is encouraged.

NEWSLETTER: More articles are needed, as usual. Jim Ely also requested more Bios from members that have not submitted them.

After the committee reports, the topic of *Old Business* was next on the agenda. The subject of the picnic was brought up again. We still do

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— *MINUTES*, from page 2

not have anyone willing to step up and volunteer to ramrod the event. How about it?

The next topic to follow was *New Business*. Tom Pfeffer read a letter that he received from a TI user in Romania. He requests donations of anything to do with the TI and wishes to be listed in our newsletter for that purpose. He was called a "foreign exchange student" and some VAST members stated that they would bring in donations to the next meeting.

Mike Marfisi brought a check that he had received in the mail. It was payment for some of Virginia's artwork. It seems that an ad has been running in MICROpendium and Mike's name is listed in the ad. No one knows the origin of the ad, but the proceeds will be gladly accepted.

This being all of the new business, Jim recessed the meeting at 11:10 am. The meeting was followed by a demo of Disk Utilities presented by Ralph Rees.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Pfeffer,
Secretary/Treasurer

— *NEWS*, from page 1

Lima Conference Tapes Available

Three video tapes covering 17 hours of the May 16 Lima Multi User Group Conference are available to any User Group, dealer or paid member of the Lima Users Group for \$15 or for three blank tapes and \$3.75, according to Charles W. Good of the Group.

You can order by contacting the group c/o



Charles W. Good, Box 647, Venedocia, OH 45894.

On a side note, we STILL have not had any word about the availability of the tapes of FEST WEST '92 from the Southwest 99'ers. Oh well, such is life...

An Authorized Myarc Repair/ Manufacturing Center?

A Wisconsin firm, Cecure Electronics, expects to become an authorized Myarc repair center by the end of June or the first part of July.

Company spokesman Don Walden says he has been unofficially making repairs to Myarc hardware for approximately 2 years. He says he can currently do repairs which do not require the gate array, PAL chips or circuit boards, which are proprietary, but he has been in contact with Lou Phillips of Myarc in order to be able to provide service with the proprietary chips and schematics also.

The company also has manufacturing capabilities and hopes to reach an agreement with Phillips for supplying all Myarc hardware and parts.

— See *NEWS* on page 9

From the Editor's Desk

I hope you all had a nice and safe fourth of July weekend last weekend. It sure is getting hot, though...

IN THIS ISSUE

Well, this is a total second! It is an all member contributed newsletter and only the second time it has happened in the time I have been publishing it. And what's even better is there are several articles already for the August issue!

On page 5 is Ralph Rees' 4/A Foray column discussing several things he has learned about his TI system just recently. Chris Taylor's Chris' Corner is on page 6, this month discussing why he chose the TI. And on page 10 is an article by Tom Pfeffer about some of the things happening to him this far this summer. We have some pretty interesting reading in this issue.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Next month I have a review of some graphics programs by Ray Frantz, who has really gotten into the graphics capabilities of the TI and Chris Taylor continues his column with a discussion of the 9918 video display processor and the TI. PLUS any other column YOU might want to submit. I could sure use some more biographical sketches of our members...

UPCOMING MEETINGS

At the top of the next column is the calendar for August and September with our meeting dates highlighted...

AUGUST 1992							SEPTEMBER 1992						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
2	3	4	5	6	7	1	6	7	1	2	3	4	5
9	10	11	12	13	14	8	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30			
30	31												

The meetings are in the GREEN ROOM at the Pyle Adult Recreation Center.

PICNIC???

Are we going to have some kind of a picnic this summer/fall? It has always been a great time for those attending. All we need is someone to step forward to be the committee chairperson for the event and I'm sure that person would get plenty of help. Please, won't YOU consider doing something for your club?

That's it for this month.
See you at the meeting
July 11. ❖



Just a reminder...

The **VAST BBS** can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **(602) 233-0790**.

This is a local call for most area residents. Give it a call for the latest information about



the VAST Computer User Group! And now it's **FASTER** than ever!

4/A Foray

by Ralph Rees

Well Folks, here we are into July and the heat has finally decided to join us! Where's winter when you need it! I was really hoping that we might have a mild summer but I don't know now. I'm **HOT!!!**

❖ WHOOP-DE-DO FOR MY CRU DEPARTMENT

I decided last meeting to purchase a hard drive controller and thought I'd better check on what CRU addresses my system is currently using. I ran a program written by Jerry Slicer named "DSRSCAN" which shows the CRU address of everything in your system, among other information.

Well, I discovered that I'm running out of CRU addresses!

Here's a rundown on my system:

<u>CRU</u>	<u>DEVICE</u>
1000	Myarc 512 Ramdisk
1100	Corcomp Disk Controller
1300	TI RS232 Card
1500	Gram Karte
1600	90k Horizon Ramdisk
1700	360k Horizon Ramdisk
1900	Myarc 512 Ramdisk
1B00	Axiom PIO Interface
1D00	Corcomp Triple Tech

Note how the Myarc card utilizes 2 CRU addresses. I wonder why? I also wish Myarc would have provided the means to change the CRU address of the card, just in case you

wanted to move its CRU to another spot. Oh well...

The thing that is odd about the Axiom is that it's DSR does not show unless the device you have it connected to is powered up! Pretty weird, huh?

❖ BORED BOARD DEPARTMENT

Where are all the BBS users at? I mean, I know it's summer and everybody is out and about in this sweltering heat but, com'on call the BBS and show some action! We have been lax also on uploading. Let's go people, You know how I like a new file or two to look at OR at least a new message to read! **DO IT TO IT!**

❖ ZONED OUT DEPARTMENT

I guess that's about all this month folks. My small brain must be getting cooked because it's empty right now for any writing ideas. A couple things I just thought of though, Chris Taylor is planning on being at the meetings early (9:00 a.m.) and doing some demos and stuff. I think an early bird visit to Pyle might be interesting. Also, A few of us crazies are stuck in a rut meeting at 8:00 a.m. at Lennys, uh Kennys, No, no, Pennys, Dang it, some restaurant that serves early meal food south of Pyle. Why don't you meet us there and we'll even let you pick up the check.

FCTN +

—Ralph...❖





Chris' Corner

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Why the TI? part one

Almost a decade after Texas Instruments announced plans to cease production of the TI-99/4A™ Home Computer, hereafter referred to as the TI, the computer still enjoys a loyal group of supporters. Why? I am sure there are a variety of reasons. I would like to share with you why I still enjoy working with the computer.

I, like hundreds of thousands of consumers, purchased the TI hoping the features it advertised would enable me to fully utilize the computer. However, after I had spent thousands of dollars, Texas Instruments pulled the plug, and I was left with seemingly useless equipment. I initially bought the computer to help me in my language studies. Texas Instruments' decision to cease production of the computer did not change that plan, it merely delayed it. With perseverance, I decided to pursue my original plan to use the computer in my language studies. I realized that to do so required learning as much as I could about computers in general and the TI in particular. I read everything I could about computers and began to form detailed opinions about what a computer could and could not do for me. Now I was ready.

First, I would like to share some things that many of you may or may not know about the

TI. When the TI was introduced, it was billed as a 16 bit computer with 16K of memory offering high resolution graphics, polyphony sound and high quality speech. With these features it seemed that the TI should have dominated the new home computer market. It did for a while, but it soon became apparent that the features offered were seldom exploited. Therefore, the features were practically useless. Furthermore, to access any of these features required expensive cartridges and/or peripherals and guarded information about the TI which Texas Instruments seemed reluctant to release.

Despite the fact that the TI was the first mass produced true sixteen bit computer on the market, its power was severely restricted. Instead of using a sixteen bit data bus, the computer used only eight bits. The sixteen kilobytes of memory advertised referred to video memory, which is not directly addressable by the central processing unit. The computer only had 256 BYTES! Yes, that's right 256 bytes in which to write programmes. The 16K of memory was used for mass storage and was accessed by Texas Instruments' proprietary Graphics Programming Language (GPL). The computer was designed to use graphics read only memory (GROM) which was another Texas Instruments proprietary design, for programmes. But the grom based programmes were incredibly slow — most were GPL based and used the video memory for data processing. To add insult to injury, peek and poke commands were left out of the BASIC language groms built into the computer. Peek and poke commands would have allowed access to all the machine resources without the need for an additional

— See *CHRIS' CORNER* on page 7

— CHRIS' CORNER, from page 6

grom cartridge or external peripheral.

Allow me to digress for a moment. You know that the TI has BASIC built-in. But did you ever wonder why the sixteen bit TI seemed no match for the 8 bit computers such as the Apple, Commodore VIC 20 or 64, Radio Shack Model One computers, etc. running the simplest of BASIC programmes. Well, BASIC is an interpreted language — i.e. each command is made into a form which the computer can use one command at a time. (Compiled languages like C change an entire series of commands into a form that the computer can use all at once.) Of course, this takes time. When the commands are stored in cpu ram they can be DIRECTLY ADDRESSED, but if they are on a mass storage device-like video ram then each access to that device slows down the process. Remember, the TI only has 256 bytes of cpu ram whereas the VIC 20, for example, came with SIXTEEN times as much ram — 4096 bytes. Also, TI BASIC was in grom not rom and written in GPL. Had the TI been provided a level playing field in the BASIC arena alone, I feel that the competition would have packed its bags and left town. The closest to leveling the playing field was the ability to add 32K of extra cpu ram.

If you are still with me, you see that the real power of the TI was hidden and that purchasing the expensive extra 32K of cpu ram was the only way to unleash the TI. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work that way. Buying the 32K memory offered the potential but the console BASIC provided no way to DIRECTLY address the memory. The only solution once you had bought the memory

was to buy an expensive cartridge in order to use it like TI eXtended BASIC, TI Writer, Microsoft Multiplan, Editor Assembler, etc., all of which I bought as I approached a point of no return. My original reason for investing in the TI was to help me with my language studies. That had yet to be realized. So, as I looked at the piles of manuals before me, I decided that the thinnest of them — the eXtended BASIC manual — seemed to be my best bet to accomplish my goal.

It didn't take long to see that eXtended BASIC would not allow me to fully achieve my goals. There was no direct access to powerful capabilities of the video processor. The video processor was capable of allowing me to have instantaneous access to several foreign language character sets by using a process known as page flipping. So I decided that the only way to use the TI as I needed to was to use assembly language. This language would permit total access to all the resources offered by the TI and do so at ultra fast speed. Naturally, such power comes with a price. Assembly language is a very tedious way to programme a computer — that's why languages like BASIC were invented. Even worse than being tedious, there were no readily available books which would teach me how to programme the TI's unique cpu.

In 1984, still determined to protect my computer investment I bought six TI's at fifty dollars apiece. I figured that if I did succeed in using them like I wanted, I would need some to act as backups in the event that their use became critical to my daily operations. I also, discovered MICROpendium that year. It was in MICROpendium that I saw an ad for

— See CHRIS' CORNER on page 8

— CHRIS' CORNER, from page 7

Wycove forth. The ad offered forty times the speed of BASIC and the same ease of programming. It also, promised access to the hidden abilities of the TI. I guess I didn't know when to stop, because I ordered the programme. That was my single most important purchase for the TI. It delivered all it promised but it was too late. Too late, for what I thought.

By 1985, I had even higher hopes for the TI than ever. When I discover how to use the bit-map mode I realized that I could draw anything on the screen that I wanted. More importantly, I discovered that I could create highly readable text which permitted a sixty-four column display. Further analysis indicated that on a typical page with two one inch borders, I could type a full line of text without the annoying jumps that TI Writer uses to show a full line of text. Before you say that sixty four columns is not enough, think about one of the most talked about computers of 1985—the Apple Macintosh. The Macintosh popularized the Xerox Parc project's development of the mouse and a graphical user interface (GUI). When I studied the Macintosh, I concluded that there was nothing the Macintosh did that I could not do on the TI. Especially, when you consider that the basic premise of a computer display is a symbolic representation of data scaled to the dimensions of the display. Using windows further emphasizes my point. Windows merely shows a small portion of a larger picture. Of course, the TI offered two major advantages over the Macintosh—colour and speech. I am not saying that the TI is better than the Macintosh. The Macintosh is a superior

machine. I, however, am reminded of one of Apple's ads which showed the PC and the Mac and asked: "Which is the more powerful computer?" The obvious inference was that the ease of use on the Mac permitted greater usage. What I am saying is that even in today's crowded field of computers, the TI can hold its own provided there is software that exploits its powerful array of under used features. Such software is possible on the TI.

Next Time — Part Two: 9918A Video Display Processor. ❖



— NEWS, from page 3

Walden is president of the Milwaukee Users Group and the Wisconsin Council of TI User Groups and vice president of the Chicago TI Users Group.

For further information, write Cecure Electronics, 7759 S. Scepter Dr. 7, Franklin, WI 53132-2201 or call (414) 529-2173.

FEST WEST 1993 Set

Fest West "North" '93 is scheduled for February 13th and 14th at the Howard Johnson Hotel, 122 West South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah. The fair's hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

Hosts for the event, held in a different western United States location each year are the Ogden TI Users Group and the TI SLaVes (Salt Lake and Valley Users Group).

Phone numbers for the hotel are (801) 521-8138 or 1-800-366-3684; fax (801) 322-5857. For information contact the Fest West North Committee, 1396 Lincoln, Apt B, Ogden, UT 84404, or call the Salt Flats BBS, which operates 24 hours at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud, at (801) 394-0064. ♦



COMPUTER AND ELECTRONICS SWAP MEET

LOCATION:

**ELECTRONIC MATERIALS AND
COMPUTERS PARKING LOT
3102 W. THOMAS, PHOENIX, AZ
272-3200**

Individuals and Dealers are welcome to come and sell. Booths will be one standard parking space in size and will cost \$10.00. All proceeds will go toward *ADVERTISING*. Booths are limited so reserve early by contacting BILL or BUD at the store. Admission will be FREE for buyers. Sellers are limited to Computer and Electronic items (Bring tables and shade!). As this is a "CO-OP" Swap Meet, sellers will be expected to lend a hand cleaning up afterward, spreading the word, etc...

**SUNDAY
July 19, 1992
8:00 a.m./3:00 p.m.**

BORED!

by Tom Pfeffer

Well gang, things have been pretty exciting for me in the last couple of weeks in the old TI world. I got my Horizon Ramdisk in the mail after a frustrating delay, although it was a necessary delay. It was well worth the wait! What took me so long to buy one!?

For those of you who do not have a ramdisk, you are really missing something. It offers you fast action, and I do mean fast. It also lets you make use of a lot more CALL routines, too. When you turn the power on to your system, a menu screen comes up immediately (if you desire it to). The menu allows you to enter the programs of your choice and you then boot them by pushing a single key! Talk about fast and easy!

I also had a "RAMBO" mod added to my card. I have not had much time to use it, but the speed of the demo is amazing.

And if this wasn't enough, I got a mouse from Bud Mills and yet another from Chris Taylor, too. The Horizon mouse works with TI-Artist, so far, with more programs promised in the future.

The ttc mouse works with a character editor program that Chris wrote. The program is called "t_font32". He has also demoed a program called "t_doodle". Judging by the programming I have seen from ttc, I am sure that there will be many more. Chris also supports a cordless mouse too! Wish that I had one. Maybe one of these days...

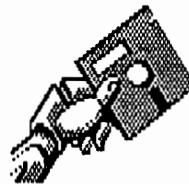
I also got a Wycove Forth language package from Chris, too. I ordered a book that is required reading for Forth programmers and was surprised that the book arrived in only one weeks time. For anyone else interested in Forth, be sure to talk to Chris.

Another useful thing that I bought was a disk box from Bud Barnes. Make sure to talk to Bud about ordering one. They are attractive and very useful. And besides that, it gives Bud something to do. Just kidding Bud.

With all of these things going on now, I am sorry to say that I am back to working over-time at work. I have less time to "play" with my TI. One good thing does come out of all of this work though: it gets me the money to buy all of these fun Things. As time permits, I will try to do a more in-depth review of some of the items that I just mentioned. Other than that, nothing is new around here. Ahhh, the dog days of summer...

Now if I could just get my POP-CART from Gary Bowser at OPA. tp ❖

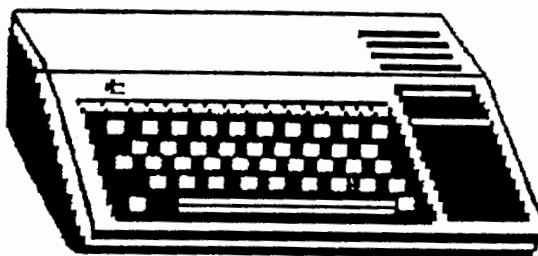
~~~~~



## GAME DISK OF THE MONTH

Who knows what exciting diskette of totally awesome game(s) I might bring this month? I don't, do you? Anyway, I haven't decided what I'm going to put on the GDOM, but it'll be GREAT! Trust me and bring money!...

—Ralph...❖



**REMEMBER THIS?**

**TI-99/4A**

**GET IT OUT OF THE CLOSET! LEARN TO USE IT!  
LEARN TO LOVE IT!**

**LOOK**

**...WORD PROCESSING...SPREAD SHEET MANAGEMENT...GAMES  
...DESKTOP PUBLISHING...DATA BASE MANAGEMENT...MUSIC  
...MUCH...MUCH MORE! WANT MORE INFO?...**

**CONTACT US! WE ARE HERE TO HELP! WE ARE THE...**

**VAST USER GROUP**

**MEETING AT  
THE PYLE RECREATION CENTER  
SOUTHERN & RURAL RD.  
TEMPE, AZ.  
FOR INFO CALL**

**940-0974**

**275-8018**



# VAST User Group Information

The VAST Computer User Group is a support group for the TI-99/4A Home Computer and compatibles.

The VAST Computer User Group operates a BBS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The phone number is (602) 233-0790.

## CURRENT OFFICERS

### **PRESIDENT**

Jim Ely . . . . . 275-8018

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

Ralph Rees . . . . . 869-8145

### **SECRETARY/TREASURER**

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Send any correspondence to the address below.

## ADVERTISING RATES

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

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

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