West Penn 99'ers

Supporting the TI-99/4A Home Computer

Established 1985

ISSUE #84 **August 1992**

IN THIS ISSUE

West Penn Information 2

Paul's Page 3

History of *Page Pro 99* 4

Asgard Press Release 7

PUG BBS! 8

FOR THE RECORD

By: Frank N. Zic

The July meeting started promptly at 7:00 PM. (It can be done). A nice group was on hand to start the meeting and grew as things went on. Two surprise members were in attendance, first a very warm greeting was given to Judy Muir. We were all happy to see her, knowing that she is still battling with her serious health problems. Next, a pleasant visit from our good friend and editor, Chris Pratt. See you both again on Saturday at Mickey's wedding. Looking forward to the affair. Lest we forget, much happiness together, Mickey and Mike. Well, back to the meeting. See Mickey, with the above announcements, I made it appear that the meeting started at your regular 7:15 time. Norm Rokke first called on Bob Sadusky for a Librarians report. Bob noted that OLGV #9 was available. Ralph Vasco next noted that the newsletters were a little late this month. He brought in a few extra copies. Norm pointed out the highlights of the June MICROpendium, On p21, Myarc out of business, p18 perhaps some very good news to those of us holding malfunctioning Myarc cards. Cecure Electronics, 7759 So. Seepter Dr. 7, Franklin, WI, 53132-2201, phone (414) 529-2173, will be making repairs to Myarc cards. Read the article for more details. On p15 Quick Dump program by Harrison Software.

It was noted that the Computer Monthly magazine no longer carries an article about our TI computer and other classic types. Subscriptions will suffer over this change. Sorry to see this feature being dropped. Paul Brock demoed one of six disks from Cin-Day group that now have their newsletter on disk. The disks are well organized but it remains, how popular will this approach become? It is an endeavor to cut newsletter costs. Give it a look, who knows, this may be the way of our future. Paul also demoed Page Pro Banners. The sample banner he brought was very well done. Next Norm demoed a new set of games for Backsteine. It was faster and more complex than the original but it incorporates an editor for any desired changes. Hum'. looked almost too complex. Next he showed Fonts and Borders, this working in conjunction with TI-Artist. The raffle offered a box of disks, won by Judy, a demoed disk won by Ralph and a second demoed disk won by Ken Farr. Sure seems like it's the same winners all the time. Just kidding (signed envious). We'll all be looking forward to seeing Ken Gilliand at the Wedding & Wedding/Picnic. May the good 4's be with you.

WEST PENN 99'ERS CLUB INFORMATION

NEXT MEETING DATE

AUGUST 18, 1992
7:00 P.M.

MEETING LOCATION

PENNS WOODS
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

JUST OFF ROUTE 30
N. HUNTINGDON, PA

LIST OF WEST PENN OFFICERS FOR 1992

PRESIDENT:	Mickey	412-265-5201
VICE PRESIDENT:	Norm	614-264-6442
TREASURER:	Lynn	412-835-4304
RECORDING SEC:	Frank	412-751-6065
CORRESPONDING SEC:	Paul	412-478-2754
LIBRARIAN:	Bob	412-863-5672
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Chris	703-415-3964

GENERAL ITINERARY OF THE CLUB'S MEETING

6:45 P.M.	DOORS OPEN
7:00 P.M.	GENERAL MEETING
7:45 P.M.	DEMOS AND NEW INFO
9:45 P.M.	ONE ON ONE HELP
9:45 P.M.	SOCIALIZING
11:00 P.M.	DOORS CLOSE

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS FOR THIS MONTH

* LATEST T.I. NEWS AND SOFTWARE DISCOUNTS
* SPECIAL CLUB OFFER - MORE TIPS PICTURES
* "SCREEN DUMP" DEMO BY MICKEY CENDROWSKI
* »"WAR ZONE II" DEMO BY MIKE CENDROWSKI«

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES!

$15.00 PER YEAR FOR INDIVIDUAL / FAMILY
$10.00 PER YEAR FOR ONLY OUR NEWSLETTER

From the Editor...

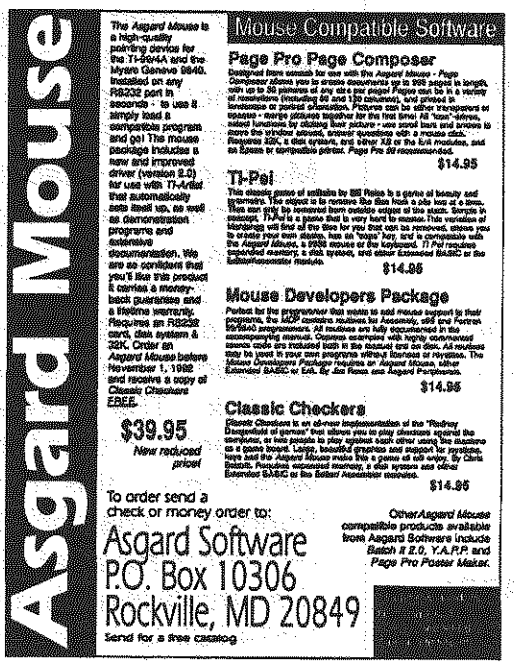
Mickey and Mike Cendrowski asked me to thank all of you for your support on their special day. They appreciate all of the cards and gifts from their wonderful friends.

Fest West "North" '93 will be held February 13th and 14th in Salt Lake City, Utah. The festival site is the Howard Johnson's hotel across the street from historic Temple Square. If you need additional info about Fest West "North" '93, you may write or call, 1396 Lincoln APT B, Ogden, UT 84404. (801) 393-9605 or (801) 394-6815 and BBS: (801) 394-0064.

I enjoyed my visit last month, and hope to be able to attend another meeting soon. I was impressed with the amount of people in attendance considering most of the "regulars" were absent! See you all again soon.

The following advertisement is from Asgard. According to Chris Bobbitt the new Asgard Mouse is less expensive and more reliable! CDP

--WP ♦



PAUL 'S PAGE

WEST PENN 99 ERS

After reciving a few more newsletters I found an artical on how to fix printer head problems and how to do a person to person DOWNLOAD. in the Feb. 1992, issue of the "Newsnet99er". I know nothing of BBS or a TELCO. This is something that I don't have, but may be of interest to a member.

For those of you that have TI-Base or PERSONAL RECORD KEEPING, may want to keep a record of the TI-SUPPLIERS YOU can find this info. in the VAST NEWS May 92 issue page 9. In the TIDIBTS of Feb. 92 on page 17 is the following message.

For those interested in TI-BASE in the April 92 issue of the 9T9 M.A. Smoley is helping out with Tutorials. TI-BASE MACROS .

There is a two page DECIMAL CONVERTER program, BUG NEWS, June 1992, page 6. The program will convert a decimal number to a hexadecimal or a hexadecimal number to a decimal and give you a printout if so desired. The program will do any number up to 32 bytes.

Trun to the Dec. 1991 SNUGLETer to find out the difference between High density and Double density.

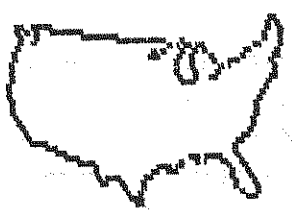
>>>> From Ed McNish <<<< From the Ninity Niners of Vancover Area, July 1990.

! WARNING !

This machine is subject to breakdowns during periods of critical need.

A special circuit in the machine called a "critical detactor" senses the operator's emotional state in terms of how desperate he or she is to the use of the machine, the critical detector" then creates a malfunction proxportional to the desperation of the operator, threatening the machine with violence only aggrevates the situation. Likewise, attempts to use another machine may cause it to also malfunction. They belong to the same union. Keep cool and say nice things to the machine. Nothing else seems to work.

Never let the machine know you are in a hurry.



TI-KEEPS GOING AND GOING

Summer is here and we need "ARTICALS"
Any information give to Mickey, Chris or me.

MADE IN U.S.A.

CONGRATULATIONS

MICKEY & MIKE

The History of Page Pro 99
By Chris Bobbitt

Since its introduction Page Pro 99 has become one of the most popular graphics programs for the TI-99/4A. This is an ironic turn of events considering it became a page layout program almost by accident.

In 1986 there were only two general purpose page-layout programs available for the TI-99/4A - The Printer's Apprentice from McCann Software and Font Writer II from Asgard Software. The best way to describe both of them was "intimidating". When Ed Johnson and I began working on what would later become known as Page Pro 99, we had no intention of competing with either program. the actual genesis of Page Pro was a little program called "FormAtter", or alternately, "Form Maker".

In part based on Font Writer II, the program was modeled on it and the Formatter include with TI Writer. The purpose of it was to allow you to draw forms on the screens. Because it used a special character set it was closer to "What-you-see-is-what-you-get" then anything else available at the time. A user of the program would draw lines and boxes and type text in TI-Writer. The resulting form would then be run through the formatter that was the heart of the program -which would print out the file. It allowed one font size (8 x 16), which resulted in 48 lines of text on a page.

While by today's standards the results were primitive, the suggested possibilities really piqued our imagination. After I showed the program to Ed we came up with a laundry list of things we thought it should do to allow you to create nice forms (remember, the program started out as "Form Maker"). The first thing that had to go was the font format - we needed fonts of 8 x 12 to result in 66 lines on the page. Another thing at the top of the list was to somehow integrate the editor with the formatter, and finally, to explore the possibility of including a picture or two (the idea being that it would be nice to add a logo to a form).

At the same time Ed was experimenting with Form Maker he was deeply involved with bringing together the Desktop Publisher cartridge by Databiotics. The original programmers for the program had quit for unspecified reasons, and Databiotics offered the contract to complete it to us. While the end results were less then desirable, and our experience with dealing with Databiotics on a business basis even less so, the project taught Ed a lot about mixing text and graphics on the same page.

In Desktop Publisher the user would enter text in an Editor, draw a picture in a miniature version of TI-Artist (written by Chris Faherty, and the only really functioning bit of code provided to us by Databiotics), and then place the picture somewhere in the text. When printing out the results the program would print the text in the default font of your printer, and through some dramatic printer gymnastics, would also place the picture in the text. It worked well but the results were pretty primitive (for one thing, the pictures were tiny on the page because the picture size was limited to even less then a full TI screen). The fact that he was able to do even

that was miraculous considering what he started with.

Ed's experience with Desktop Publisher convinced us that the best way to mix text and graphics on a screen is if the printer treated both the same way - as graphics images. It also was living proof (if we had needed any) that the current picture formats for the 99/4A were completely inadequate for desktop publishing - without enlarging a picture it would be too small on the page to be useful. This was a shortcoming that was also shared by The Printer's Apprentice and Font Writer II.

The experience with Desktop Publisher left Ed and I both with a bad taste in our mouth - for both business and technical reasons. He was determined to produce a useful page layout program, from scratch, that didn't have the limitations of the Databiotics product.

Starting over from scratch, and with our multiple experiences fresh in mind, over the next 6 months or so the program quickly evolved. The first problem Ed solved was the user interface - how to represent text and line characters on the screen in a bitmap format in an 8x12 character size commensurate with the dimensions of a page. At that time (and to today) the only programs that could do this were drawing programs - and none of them were capable of representing an entire page at once.

Complicating things, the 99/4A' 5 video processor was designed to address data in 8x8 pixel chunks, and writing everything to the screen in the larger size was a technical challenge. Partly on my insistence (and with no disagreement from Ed), what evolved was a clean interface along the lines of TI-Writer - with a subset of the same keyboard commands and text entry features.

At the core of the user interface, and the first major conceptual leap of Page Pro 99, was the idea of representing the page as a collection of references and not as a bitmap. Instead of keeping the entire page in memory at once, Page Pro instead stores a list of what is at each location on the page (a font character or a piece of a picture).

This way of representing a page grew out of the need to find a way around the memory limitations of the 99/4A - at the printer resolution we chose for Page Pro 99 a page contains over 64K of data. Since the 99/4A can't possibly store so much data in RAM, there was no way for Page Pro to work unless it had some sort of shorthand code it could use to represent the page - sort of "fake" the computer into thinking it had more memory then it did. The resulting code system is the greatest strength, and limitation, of Page Pro. It is this code that made Page Pro 99 the first graphics program for the 99/4A that could represent an entire page in a "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" format.

The next concept explored was how to represent more then one font on the screen. While memory was available to store more then one font representation - recreating the letters of the font involved extending our shorthand coding system to deal with multiple fonts of different sizes, and extending the screen drawing routines to draw characters of several sizes. Saving and loading fonts turned out to be simple using the coding system, but creating fonts in the first place wasn't. The first Page Pro font (and the one originally shipped with Page Pro 99 version 1.0) was simply a stretched version of the default 99/4A text font.

The final major revision of the coding system came was made after exploring the idea of placing a picture on the screen. Based on my observations about pictures and desktop publishing, Ed had a flash of insight that was the second major conceptual leap in Page Pro. Ed devised a file format that would allow pictures of virtually any size, and allow the program to grab just a portion of the picture it needed - the first relatively accessible picture format on the 99/4A. The coding system had 32 slots free for picture codes, so the code was extended to allow up to 32 pictures.

At this point the basic program (minus all of the refinements that appeared in subsequent versions -such as clipping, disk cataloging, etc.) was virtually complete. This is also when Page Pro underwent an identity crisis. What Ed and I created was clearly more then a program for designing forms, but it wasn't a drawing program, and didn't have the font capabilities that we considering necessary for true desktop publishing.

At the same time, it was clear that in order for the program to succeed, it needed the ability to use artwork in what was then THE standard for TI graphics files - TI-Artist. Ed then wrote utilities to do crude conversion of TI-Artist fonts and instances into Page Pro 99 format, and I added a text columnizing routine that exploited Page Pro's ability to import text.

At this point we decided that what we had on our hands was in a new software category as far as the TI-99/4A was concerned - we had created the first page layout program. A friend of Ed's suggested we call it Page Pro 99 - and since no one could think of anything better, that was what we called it. Page Pro 99 version 1.0 was formally released in late June, 1988.

Even though Ed and I were trepiditious about the kind of response it would have, it almost immediately became a success. Despite the fact it was released in the middle of summer (a time that is notoriously bad for releasing new software), it immediately began selling very well. Over the last 4 years it has become, partly by accident and partly because of our efforts to expand the capabilities of the program internally and with additional utilities, the de facto standard for desktop publishing on the 99/4A. Even so long after its release the program continues to sell well, which in itself is a testament to the utility and versatility of the program.

Last year Ed decided that for his career he was going to have to focus more on programming for the PC, so he left the TI community for good. However, Page Pro 99 lives on.

In the last year we have released 3 major new utilities for the program: Gofer, which is a package containing vastly improved versions of all of the utilities included with Page Pro 99, plus a number of other useful little utilities such as a PCX to Page Pro 99 converter; Clipix, which is a utility to allow you to clip any portion of a Page Pro 99 picture of any size; and Page Composer, which allows you to create up to 999-page documents in portrait or landscape, where pages can be any of 3 different printer resolutions, and place up to 30 pictures per page.

Further, a major revision to Page Pro 99 itself is planned, and work continues on other new enhancement programs. From the very start, and for the foreseeable future, Page Pro 99 is a "work in progress".

News Release

Page Pro Page Composer Released

Asgard Software is pleased to announce *Page Pro Page Composer*, a new graphics utility for owners of *Page Pro 99*.

Page Composer is designed to allow you to prepare and print multi-page documents with *Page Pro 99*. With *Page Composer*, for the first time it's easy to generate newsletters and reports. *Page Composer* also allows you to create pages that you can create with no other utility for the TI-99/4A or the Geneve, and does things that no other program can do, including:

- Create documents containing up to 999 pages
- Pages can be oriented either landscape (sideways) or portrait (normal)
- Pages can be a variety of different printer resolutions - the 60 dots/inch mode of *Page Pro 99*, 80 dots/inch and 120 dots/inch - allowing you to create 60, 80 and 120 column pages
- You can place up to 30 pictures of any size on each page, and because of the increased printer resolution, you can use even the largest Macintosh and PC pictures
- Pictures can be "opaque" or "transparent" - you can merge pictures together
- When printing your document, you can print any range of pages and up to 999 copies

Using the powerful features of this program, you can easily create half-page "booklet-style" newsletters on landscape pages - ready to be copied. In fact, you can easily put two full-size *Page Pro 99* pages on a single *Page Composer* page! The possibilities are endless.

Not only is *Page Composer* powerful, it's also easy-to-use. It features a unique "graphical user interface" where you select program functions by selecting a picture that represents the function, move your screen window around a page by selecting arrows and "scroll bars", enter information by selecting "buttons" in pop-up windows, and so on. In fact, the program is designed so that the only time you have to touch the keyboard is when you enter a disk or filename, or a page number!

Page Composer requires a disk system, 32K and at least one DS/SD disk drive. Two disk drives are highly recommend. An Epson or compatible printer is also required. The program is compatible with the HFDC, the Horizon RAM-disks, the Myarc Geneve 9640, and the TIM, Dijit and Mechatronics 80-column cards. It works with a joystick or an *Asgard Mouse*. A *Myarc Mouse* version is available by special order.

Suggested retail price $14.95.

Asgard Mouse Upgraded, Price Reduced

A mouse is perhaps the most important new device you can buy for your TI-99/4A or Myarc Geneve 9640 computer. The *Asgard Mouse* is a high-quality mouse for the 99/4A and Geneve that is compatible with virtually all system configurations. Easy to use, simply plug it into your RS232 and load a compatible program. The recently released version 2.0 of the *Asgard Mouse* is even easier to use with improved software and more reliable hardware. Because of design changes, we have also been able to reduce the price to just **$39.95!**

The *Asgard Mouse* is the most popular mouse for the 99/4A - with more sold and more compatible software titles then any other serial mouse. Asgard Software alone sells 8 programs that work with the mouse, with many more under development. The *Asgard Mouse* includes support for *TI-Artist*, as well as two example programs and a detailed manual.

FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY, ORDER AN *ASGARD MOUSE* AND RECEIVE FREE A COPY OF OUR HIGHLY-RATED MOUSE-COMPATIBLE *CLASSIC CHECKERS* (a $14.95 value) WITH YOUR MOUSE.

You won't be disappointed! The *Asgard Mouse* requires a disk system, 32K and an RS232 card.

Send all orders or inquiries to:

Asgard Software • P.O. Box 10306 • Rockville, MD 20859-0306

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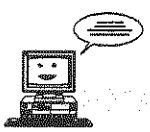

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