COMMENTS ABOUT *TEX-COMP's* COMMERCIAL SALES
OF FAIRWARE DISKS
An editorial by Charles Good

Several months ago I published an editorial supporting the sales of PUBLIC DOMAIN software by Tex-Comp for $4.95 a disk. I now believe that a distinction should be made between commercial sales of true public domain software and the commercial sale of copyrighted fairware software that is normally freely distributed and copied on a "pay for it if you like it and use it" basis.

The following is quoted from the -READ/ME file of the Sept 12, 1988 release of FUNNELWEB v4.12. Similar statements are found in the docs of all FUNNELWEB releases since at least v4.0. "(FUNNELWEB) is not to be sold or distributed with excessive copy fees, nor made part of ANY (emphasis is that of the FWB authors) commercial sale no matter what weasel-worded disclaimers are made, nor placed on copy-protected disks."

The following is quoted from a letter written by Tony McGovern on Oct 18, 1988 to the Lima User Group. Tony is co-author of FUNNELWEB. The comments refer to the sale by Tex-Comp of "FUNNELWEB FARM UTILITY". Tony writes, "Nothing much I can say about Tex-Comp. They certainly never had the courtesy to ask first, and given their record on DM1000 wouldn't take no for an answer. (They can get away with it legally too on foreign to US material, because the US, like the USSR - great power arrogance both, does not respect other countries' copyright) Heaven knows what version they have. I drafted a letter to Micropendium over it but still haven't sent it off yet. They arn't charging that much that I get all worked up - its just the thievery." EDITORIAL NOTE ON THE ABOVE: The United States Senate in late October 1988 finally ratified the international copyright treaty, so the Australian copyright statement on the FUNNELWEB title screen should NOW be recognized as valid in the United States.

The following is quoted from a Tex-Comp advertisement offering DM1000 v3.5 for sale. The advertisement is on page 19 of the October 88 issue of Micropendium. "It (DM1000) originally started life as a Canadian copy of the Cor-Comp Disk Manager and has been improved by users all around the world. V3.5 is considered the most reliable version to date and we have received permission from Cor-Comp to distribute it as freeware."

The following is quoted from the last page of the DM1000 v3.5 documentation as released by the Ottawa (Canada) Ti-99/4A User's Group. "Disk Manager 1000 was written completely from scratch and does not operate the same as other disk manager programs. Although Disk Manager 1000 may look similar to the CorComp disk manager, it is a completely different program with different features."

EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE ABOVE: Tex-Comp's statement about having permission to distribute DM1000 is meaningless. I too might give Tex-Comp permission to distribute DM1000. However this permission is not mine to give! Neither can CorComp authorize distribution of DM1000, since it isn't CorComp's program. It seem's to me that TexComp is exceeding its moral and perhaps legal authority in selling copyrighted fairware software without permission of the author or copyright holder.

##DONE##

Charles E. Alspaugh 1924-1988

Charlie Alspaugh, 64, a long time member of the Lima User Group died November 8, 1988. His funeral was conducted on Nov. 11 by Minister Michael J. Martinko, also of the Lima UG. (How many other user groups can claim a member/pastor who performs pastoral services for group members?) Charlie attended almost all our meetings, including the Oct. 88 meeting. Two weeks after attending this meeting Charlie decided he washn't feeling well and entered a local hospital for tests. He died as a result of surgical complications. Charlie was responsible for the reorganization of our group's cassette tape library, and he was in charge of local publicity for our recent Multi-User Group conference. As one of the few local members of our group with a double sided disk controller, we could always count on Charlie to transfer double density disks we received into single density format. Charlie really enjoyed playing with new software and always had a gleam in his eye when new goodies were demonstrated at group meetings. In the true sense of a dedicated hobbyist he took home copies of EVERYTHING that was new to the group software library. He was a particular favorite of my 3 year old daughter whenever I would take her to a user group meeting. She frequently mentions Charlie whenever the subject of the user group comes up in home discussion. The Lima User Group extends our sympathy to Charlie's wife and family. We will miss him.

Charles Good

##DONE##

THE 1988 CHICAGO TI FAIRE:
comments and observations
by Charles Good
Lima Ohio User Group

The Chicago User Group had a truely first class faire this year, complete with a pre-faire bash and a post faire catered dinner all in a first class hotel. Everything was well organized and ran smoothly. I attended only the main event, the actual faire on Saturday. Other members of our group attended the Friday night bash where I was told the comments and beer flowed freely until at least 2AM. I overheard two separate individuals state that there were 500-550 paid attendee names entered in the door prize pool. The exhibit room was easily large enough to handle the crowd. I never had to bump elbows or felt pushed around. The conference room often had 100+ attending the major demonstrations. As is usual for the Chicago faire, "everyone" was there from all over the country. I met presidents and newsletter editors of user groups from coast to coast. These are people I otherwise only know from their writings in our exchange newsletters. I also talked with some very well known 99/4A and Geneve software authors. Most of the big name TI personalities were in attendance, but I won't try and list them all for fear of leaving someone out and causing insult.

THE NO SHOWS:
In the now well established tradition of new 99/4A products, the most widely anticipated heavily advertised new product was not quite yet ready for release. I am, of course, talking about Asgard Software's new word processor PRESS. At the Asgard table viewers were shown a nicely styled software/documentation case with nothing much inside. Delivery was promised before the end of the month. Asgard's general manager Chris Bobbitt, PRESS's author Charles Earl and PRESS's documentation writer Ruth O'Neal gave a partial demonstration in the conference room. Considering that the product doesn't yet exist, these people gave a fantastic PRESSentation. Based on what I saw, and based on Asgard's reputation of delivering the goods in a reasonable time, I gave Asgard my $59.95 check for an advance order. I was told that Asgard took in SEVERAL HUNDRED prepaid advance orders for PRESS. Lets hope the goods get delivered as promised. The following bits of information, not covered in the prepublication advertisements for PRESS, were gleaned from the formal PRESSentation in the conference room and from a personal conversation with Charles Earl:

Color highlighting of text portions is available.

The 100000 word spell checker will be on 3 90K disks, and the rest of the software on a fourth 90K disk.

The program includes the best features of WORD STAR and WORD PERFECT plus new stuff, and is designed to be easily learned by those familiar with TI-Writer. Many TIW keystrokes do the same thing in PRESS.

The page number, line number of the page, and column position of the cursor are displayed numerically.

A keyboard buffer (no more missed letters at word wrap) is part of the software.

User defined macros can be created.

Files are NOT saved in DV80 format. However utilities are included for easy conversion of PRESS text files to and from DV80 format. Thus PRESS can use and create TI-Writer files and can use "pure ASCII" files imported from other computer formats.

Graphics created with other software cannot easily be imported into PRESS files. PRESS is not intended as desktop publishing software.

There is provision for a user dictionary.

Files are kept mostly on disk and only portions of files are kept in memory. Thus the size of a document file is limited only by available disk or ramdisk space. Unfortunately, there is as yet no provision to warn you when the media is about to be filled to capacity.

PRESS will work in 80 columns with the Geneve, and should also work 80 columns with no problems with the DIJIT AVPC card using the 99/4A.

Another anticipated software release did not happen. Although the Ottawa user group was present, DM2000 wasn't. It is just not quite ready. I understand that when it is released it will support hard disks.

Also missing from the 1988 faire were any hardware products made by Mechatronics. This is significant, because almost any other hardware product you ever heard of for the 99/4A and Geneve was present and available for purchase. At last year's faire you could purchase a Mechatronics Gramcard, mouse, and 80 column card. In her "TI Comparison Shopper", recently released as part of Genial Traveler vol.2 #2, Shirley Slicer lists these Mechatronics items as no longer available. They were all shown at the 1987 faire by T.A.P.E. LTD of Ontario CA. Maybe this dealer is no longer active. I was not impressed with what I saw of the Mechatronics hardware products at the 1987 faire, and apparently most others weren't either. I have seen no newsletter comment on these products since the 1987 faire.

HARDWARE ON DISPLAY:
Many new and familiar hardware products were available for purchase. The following items particularly attracted my attention.

By far the most important new hardware device shown was the Myarc HARD AND FLOPPY DISK CONTROLLER. The HFDC will probably displace the Horizon Ramdisk as the most important "must have" product for a really useful powerful computer system. For about the same price as a 1 MEG Horizon Ramdisk (available from Bud Mills Services for $650 + $60 if they assemble the kit for you), you could purchase at the faire a HFDC, and a 20 MEG hard disk with power supply. Thats right folks, for the same bucks you can purchase either 1 meg (Horizon) or 20 megs (HFDC) of almost instant access data

storage. Lots of HFDC based systems were up and running at the faire at various vendor and user group tables. Based upon what I have seen at the faire and read in Micropendium and in the newsletters, the MYARC HFDC works very dependably with 99/4A systems. There are few or no bugs if you are using a 99/4A. There are still some problems using the HFDC with the Geneve which presumably will be resolved when the "final" version of MDOS is released.

A good indication of the popularity of the HFDC is the fact that Horizon Ramdisks went unsold. At the 1987 faire, all available Horizons were sold in the early hours of the faire. At the recent May 88 Multi-User Group Conference at Lima OH, many Horizons were sold. However, when the 1988 Chicago faire closed, there were fully built Horizons still unsold at the tables of three separate venders.

In talking with knowledgeable HFDC users, I learned that hard disk access time is about 75% slower than access from a Horizon. If your program takes 1 second to boot from a Horizon, it will take 1.75 seconds from a hard disk. BIG DEAL! I suspect that you will hardly notice the difference. I also learned that the HFDC has an adjustable CRU address. This allows you to use the HFDC along with another disk controller in the same PE box and control up to 8 floppy drives.

Speaking of ramdisks, Midwest Engineering had Horizon Ramdisk clones preassembled for lower prices than those quoted by Bud Mills. Midwest calls their ramdisks the CHICAGO RAMDISK, because Bud Mills has exclusive rights to the Horizon Ramdisk name. Midwest's product appears to be identical to a Horizon. Assembled Chicago ramdisks were priced from $225 for 256K up to $575 for a 1meg ramdisk.

Another useful hardware device for sale was Bud Mills Service's P-Gram PE box card. This is a gram emulator with an optional real time clock that allows you to load one module (and I think only one module at a time) into battery backed memory. Firmware is provided for dumping modules to disk files that can then be loaded into the P-Gram. These files are identical to module files used by the Geneve computer and by the discontinued Gram Kracker. A memory editor identical to that found on the Gram Kracker is provided for customizing module software. With the P-Gram you can NOT modify the console operating system (grom 0) or TI Basic (groms 1 and 2). 56K of memory is available for use as RAM in the module memory space, so the P-Gram can be used as an extra large capacity "Super Cart" module.

To me, the important significance of this card is that it is the only battery backed gram device for the PE box. The Mechatronics Gramcard has no battery backup. With the P-Gram card you run Extended Basic without having to worry about a flaky grom port connection. Other battery backed gram devices, such as the Gram Kracker, plug into the grom port and sometimes crash XB due to a less than perfect from port connection. My experience suggests that the 99/4A's side expansion port is much more reliable than its grom port. I would thus expect XB to run much more reliably out of the PE box than it does from the grom port. Cost of the P-Gram from Horizon Computer is $150 (+$20 for the optional clock) for a kit, or $180 (+$20 for the clock) built tested and guaranteed.

Another battery backed up gram device, the GRAMULATOR, was offered by CaDD ELECTRONICS for $190. This plugs into the grom port and is very similar to the GramKracker in looks and functions. Unlike the GK, the GRAMULATOR will successfully back up MBX cartridges and the battery is very easy to get at. Unlike the P-Gram card, you can use the GRAMULATOR to modify groms 0,1, and 2.

My award for the sleeper hardware (relatively unnoticed, but probably very significant) shown at the faire goes to the DIJIT AVPC card displayed at the L.L. Conner table way back in one corner of the exhibit room. A preliminary version of this card was displayed at the 1987 Chicago Faire, but at that time there was no compatible software available. This card is for use with the 99/4A console and installs in the PE box. You then connect your monitor directly to the card, and with the right software you can get an 80 column text display with the same tremendous spectrum of colors and the same screen resolution as the Geneve. With most 99/4A software you still have to put up with the old 40 column display and 16 colors. The console has to be modified to use the DIJIT card, but no soldering is required, and no extra cables are needed (other than the regular PE box cable) to connect the card to the console. With this card in place, you can display from a 99/4A console in full glorious color any graphic created with the Geneve using MYART. For $220 you get the card, an apparently bug free 80 column version of TI-Writer, some really great MYART picture files, and support software. I was told by PRESS author Charles Earl that PRESS will run in 80 columns with the DIJIT card. If you don't want to buy a Geneve, this looks like the best way to get an 80 column display from a 99/4A compatible system. I bought one!

Under the category of "hardware" I should also mention the generic stuff. Flippy disks were available for $.30 each, and a very sturdy surge protected power center cost $29 from the CHICAGO B 128 USER GROUP. I have seen this same power center several places for $39. I purchased two all wood disk boxes that look like somewhat like roll top desks for $34 each from B&D Computer Supplies. They each hold over 200 disks and look great in my early american living room. I have never seen a similar product for advertised for less than $45.

NEW SOFTWARE
J. Peter Hoddie gave his usual slick demonstration of new Genial compuerware offerings.

For Geneve owners, PICTURE TRANSFER will convert all common picture formats into MYART or GIF format, and can

combine multiple images in the manner of clip art. MYART does not have a clipart function.

TRIAD, by Wayne Stith, is a combination disk manager, terminal emulator, and word processor ALL IN MEMORY AT THE SAME TIME. The word processor resembles the TI-Writer editor and uses the same keypresses to access its various functions. The disk manager closely resembles DM1000.

At the ASGARD table there were lots of recent and new software releases. I purchased QUICK-RUN. This software modifies almost any extended basic program to start instantly, without waiting for prescan or loading of data from disk data files. You can distribute these modified XB programs without paying any royalty.

Another ASGARD offering is EZ-KEYS PLUS, an enhanced version of the original EZ-KEYS. This offers almost unlimited programming possibilities for hot keys in extended basic. As a newsletter editor, I particularly like the ease with which EZ-KEYS PLUS lets you print XB program listings in 28 columns with checksums.

FINAL COMMENTS

Lots and lots of other software and hardware was available. The above specifically described items are those which I found particularly attractive. Items purchased at the faire never required a "handling" fee or postage, and with one exception no sales tax was charged. Thus even if you pay list price (and often you pay much less), you pay less at the faire than through the mail. The Chicago faire is a great place to meet people, get hands on experience with new hard and software, and make discount purchases. It is one of the big events of the year for me. I intend to be back next year.

SOURCES FOR PRODUCTS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE
ASGARD SOFTWARE (PRESS, EZ-KEYS PLUS, QUICK RUN)
Box 10306, Rockville MD 20857
301-559-2429

B&B COMPUTER SUPPLIES (Wood disk boxes)
129 Jefferson St., Montgomery IL 60538
312-897-5777

BUD MILLS SERVICES (Horizon Ramdisks and P-Gram card)
166 Dartmouth Dr., Toledo OH 43614
419-385-5946

CADD ELECTRONICS (Gramulator)
81 Prescott Rd., Raymond NH 03077
603-895-0119

CHICAGO B 128 USER GROUP (cheap disks and power centers)
4102 N. Odell, Norridge IL 60634
312-456-8720

GENIAL COMPUTERWARE (TRIAD, PICTURE TRANSFER)
Box 183, Grafton MA 01519
617-839-4134

L.L. Conner (DIJIT AVPC 80 column card)
1521 Ferry St., LaFayette IN 47904
317-742-8146 or 317-423-4879

MIDWEST ENGINEERING (Chicago Ramdisk)
203 Arcadia Dr., Vernon Hills IL 60061
312-362-9034

MYARC (Hard and floppy disk controller)
2624 Ranier DR. NE, Verminghan AL 35215
205-854-5843
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MULTI-USER GROUP CONFERENCE UPDATE

We expect to have Chris Bobbitt of ASGARD SOFTWARE, Barry Traver of GENIAL COMPUTERWARE, and Jim Horn of the COMPUSERVE TI FORUM as our guests. They will give formal presentations. Remember, this ALL TI Conference is Saturday May 20 at the Lima Ohio campus of Ohio State University. EVERYTHING IS FREE! There is no admission charge, and no charge to user groups or dealers who wish to have tables in the exhibit room. The Lima User Group will make a video tape of all formal presentations and offer free copies of this video to any user group what requests one. It is not too early to start thinking about requesting table space or formal presentation time. For more information, or to schedule exhibit room tables or a formal presentation, call the Lima UG president Dave Szippl evenings at 419-228-7109.
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