

AIRPORT AREA COMPUTER CLUB
POST OFFICE BOX 710
CORAOPOLIS, PENNSYLVANIA 15108

NEXT MEETING: 6:30 PM Sunday, February 7, 1988 at the John Jay building, room 22, at Robert Morris College. Ask guard for directions from entrance road.

February, 1988

Newsletter

Vol. VI No. 2

Airport Area Computer Club
P.O. Box 710
Coraopolis, PA 15108

LAST MONTH: We had a good demo by Bob Dudley of the MyArt program for the GENEVE 9640. This is a graphics program that allows drawings to be created in two different resolution modes. There are some nice features to the program, some that could stand to be revised, and some that I feel are lacking. So far though, it is about the only program available that shows the capabilities of the GENEVE. Bob also showed us some certificates that he had created and informed us that the reason the program did not work in December was that the disk was bad. We also saw the latest version of the FUNLWEB program that allows TI-Writer, Editor/Assembler, or just about any other assembly program to be run from custom menus. The program can be loaded from the XB or E/A module, or by OPTION 5 loaders built into several disk controllers and ramdisks. There were some other demos including one of the K-Mart adventure for the Tunnels of Doom module, courtesy of Wes Louis. Some of our regular attendees couldn't make it to the meeting, we hope to see everyone this month.

THIS MONTH: There will be some software demonstrations as usual at the meeting. We have not seen anything new in the way of hardware since the last meeting. Please note that if you haven't paid your membership dues by the end of the month, this will be your last newsletter. Renewal forms were in last month's newsletter and will be available at the meeting.

PRESIDENTS CORNER: ... Bob Dudley

January was a "TI-less" month for me. As I mentioned at a previous meeting, I publish chess books, and January was very busy on that front. I published two new books and reprinted two previous books that proved to be very good selling titles. That didn't leave a lot of time for computing.

What time there was got tied up in a new direction for me in the publishing area. Micropro updated WordStar 2000 to include many of the features which you expect to find in Desktop Publishing - graphics and text capability on the same page being the major innovation. Since I want to use "word processing" more and "strike on" technology less in the book publishing, I accepted the Micropro update offer. I had traditionally used WordStar Professional, which still used the commands from the days when the program was on CP/M computers. WordStar 2000 is actually a different program, with many new commands. That takes a lot of getting used to. I get a lot of beeps from the computer when I try to use the old commands!

Then, near the end of the month, I acquired new technology to go along with the new software. I bought a Hewlett Packard LaserJet Series II printer. I think the output quality is superior to anything else in its price range. I will be using it to prepare the "masters" from which I print my books. But again, there is the learning curve to face. Right out of the package I got it to print text material with no difficulty whatsoever. I just had to tell my word processing program that I was using a different printer and that was all there was to it. But it will take some practice to use the graphics "grabber" to capture pictures and import them into text.

On top of everything else, January is the start of the Winter semester at Robert Morris. Near the end of the Fall term I

managed to hire three new full time faculty - almost 25% of my Department. That is not usual activity at all, and getting the semester underway was more involved than I hope it will be in the future. So now you have a lot of words to tell you why I haven't gotten much TI computing done this month!

Things were so bad that I am writing this month's column way past any reasonable deadline. I haven't even reassembled the Geneve since last month's demonstration. Nor have I managed to yet produce the Disk of the Month for the meeting - just four days away! There will be a DOM, but it will have to be a surprise this time. I will try to have a listing to distribute at the meeting so that members can determine whether they wish to add this disk to their collection.

Even for those not contemplating acquiring a Geneve, last month's demo seemed to be of interest. MyArt is a reasonably full featured drawing program in its first release. Seeing the screen full of a variety of colors never before available from the TI 99 is pleasing, and the program certainly handles its tasks very rapidly. So, what is in store for us for demonstrations this month? I have a number of public domain programs which can be used to produce pictures on your printer. For most dot-matrix printers the procedure is absolute simplicity. If you have never done a picture from a disk I think you might find this interesting. This type of activity has traditionally intrigued college students turned loose on the college main-frame! I also intend to demo an older game which I suspect many of our members have not seen before. I won't show you how to win - I think the members already know that I don't have great joystick skills. I like to think it is because I don't spend many hours on a particular game - but it may be an inherent fault. I look forward to seeing all of the members turn out. If any of you wish to demo a program, please volunteer. The more we share the better for everyone. Last month we had a most interesting demo of some new Tunnels of Doom programs. The "K-Mart" adventure was something totally different for "Doom" fans. If you have found something new or different please share it with the rest of us.

GENEVE NOTES:

It would appear that Myarc is shipping their long awaited mailing that contains some software updates for the geneve. Included are updated versions of DOS, My Word, Multiplan, the GPL interpreter, and others. Yet to appear are the new BASIC and the PASCAL run time package. For those interested in the Geneve, MICROpendium appears to have expanded its coverage of the computer. The January issue contains a brief tutorial on the use of MDOS, a discussion on using the Horizon Ramdisk with the computer, and some words about upcoming software for it. Anyone wishing to subscribe can contact:

MICROpendium
P. O. Box 1343
Bound Rock, TX 76680

Below is an article that was downloaded from CompuServe. I thought it was interesting to see how the TI is doing in other countries. Some items mentioned will be familiar; some will not.

TI Fair in Bremen, West Germany

[A translation of "Bremen rief zum TI-Treffen", TI-REVUE (HOME COMPUTER AKTIV), Nr. 12/1-Januar, 1988, pp. 34ff. Translated and uploaded with permission of HCA.]

After the successful fair in Cologne in November, 1986, the TI User Group of Bremen undertook the task of organizing this event. And in spite of the gradually decreasing number of TI fans, the Bremen users succeeded in outshining the meeting in Cologne. This should in no way diminish the achievement of the TI-Workshop in the Rhineland of last year, but what was offered TI fans this time in the community center of Obervieland was absolutely top notch.

The first participants, who traveled from Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium, as well as West Germany, arrived late Friday in Bremen.

Punctually at 10:00 on Saturday the official portion of the Second International TI-Fair began. Everything that could quicken the heart of a TI freak was shown. Here was proved once again -- in defiance of all gloomy forecasts -- that the TI 99/4A was far from dead but rather was enjoying the best of health in its rebirth both in software

and hardware. Many things which were inconceivable during the "Texas times" belong today to the standards of this still fascinating system. The possibilities which this computer offers seem inexhaustible in spite of its almost biblical age.

Few people made use of the offer to display the activities of their clubs in a video projection, thus visitors who wanted information had to visit the individual stands, where of course even complex questions could be handled in detail.

The 80-column card which was introduced last year in Cologne is on the way toward shedding its childhood diseases thanks to the help of the TI-Workshop-Rhineland. Also software, for example Multiplan and TI-Mac, a new word processing program, has in the meantime become available for this useful expansion. I was especially impressed with a board separation program, which I never would have thought possible of the TI in this excellent form. But as the campaign slogan of the Rhinelanders states, "Nothing is impossible." Let's hope that the people from Cologne and vicinity continue to be so successful in uncovering the secrets of the TI.

But there are naturally various other clubs which have dedicated themselves to the inner life of this computer. The User Club of Berlin has reworked GROM 0 from the bottom up. In doing so they were able to sensibly shorten some routines, thereby making them faster. They also have extended this GROM from 6K to a total of 8K and have placed a genuine lower case character set, among other things, in the operating system. Also new from Berlin is the Editor/Assembler module Version 4, which like the original is programmed completely in GPL. The accompanying programs must no longer be loaded from DSK1. Loading is now possible from DSK1 to DSK5. This module now sensibly contains a catalog program. Further, the user now has nine new BASIC commands at his disposal. As one can see, even the secret of the TI99 never surrendered by Texas Instruments -- the GPL programming language in the GROM's -- is no longer a hurdle today. An example of this are the GPL reports by Sven Dyroff which have appeared in TI-REVUE for some time.

The Panorama Computer Club of Duisburg brought among other things a model train

setup on which a TI prototype, guided by a TI 99/4A and a home-made interface (a 32-bit input/output card which is also offered separately), seemed to develop its own intelligence. To provide for better understanding, the prototype of this setup demonstrated here functioned with loudly clicking relays. The same thing is also possible with semiconductors, which then will naturally function quietly. One could also see here a battery-backed DSR board which makes possible the construction and testing of user-written Device Service Routines. The Baunatal TI-Club had given some thought to how one can improve cooling under the cartridge port of the TI 99/4A. At this point consoles become noticeably hot after some time. And since the presence of heat has an effect on the life span of the semiconductors, many a TI user can profit from this idea. [No details given. - Tr.]

Another novelty in Bremen was the 512K ramdisk of the TI-Workshop Wiesbaden. Unfortunately, the software for this card for the PEB had not been finished on time, thus the possibilities of this expansion could be only partially demonstrated. But anyone who knows his way around DSR routines knows how much work it involves. Some weeks will pass before the operating system of this card (which can be up to 32K) will be finished. But then this card, which is outfitted with a hardware clock, should offer all possible comfort. It is at present already possible, for example, to define up to 254 device names by which lacking peripheral devices can be simulated (e.g. TP or DSK6).

Likewise from the Rhine-Main area came the members of the System 99 User Group. The TI friends from Frankfurt showed that the TI 99/4A is noticeably faster with a change of the clock speed from 3 Megahertz to approximately 3.5 Megahertz. Some had put their computers into new housings and had provided them with new keyboards so that the good old TI 99/4A was no longer recognisable. But this club also had something to offer on the software side. The flight simulator SPAD/13-Mark2, a graphics program, and a new copy program were shown.

The one who traveled furthest was a member of the TI Club of Vienna. After he had some difficulty getting his setup through customs, he was able to demonstrate some worthy programs for his GRAM-Karte. Unfortunately, the situation is that there

are several different kinds of GRAM expansions which are not compatible with one another. Perhaps the clubs should agree on a single standard so that they can at least exchange software.

We should not fail to mention the other clubs which had traveled from Kiel, Essen, Munich, the Netherlands and Belgium in order to show their new software and hardware items. There were also vendors present. One could view the successor to the TI 99 at one's leisure, the Geneve 9640 by Myarc, introduced for the first time last year in Cologne. The computer consists of a card for the PEB of the TI 99/4A to which an IBM-like PC keyboard is connected. The disk controller and the RS232 card can be used as before; the 32K card is superfluous and must be removed from the box, since the computer itself already has 512K of memory. (Those who already had their 32K expansion in the TI 99 console will then have together with the Extended BASIC cartridge a complete second unit, for even this expanded BASIC is already supplied in the Geneve.) An expansion of this computer up to a total of 2 megabytes is possible. Unfortunately the price of approximately 1200 D-Marks for the basic version is rather high.

Another new item which was shown in Bremen was an "IBM compatible" TI 99/4A. Of course here the limits of the Texan showed up, which functioned practically only as a keyboard for a Turbo-XT. After the start of the program the TI showed only a switched-off screen. The program ran then exclusively on the XT, which also delivered the appropriate picture on its monitor.

Finally, two exotic items from the "TI family" should not go unmentioned. The first was a glass TI, available to be admired at the Bremen User Group table. The entire computer still consisted of the original TI boards, but was housed in a transparent box so that one could admire its inner life in all its beauty. Sven Dyroff from the TI Workshop Wiesbaden had gone one step further. He had disassembled a TI into all its individual parts, had modified them according to his own ideas, and had then rebuilt them on normal strip boards, which he then had screwed onto a wooden board. And although this construction looked more like the waste basket of an electronics workshop than a computer, the miracle occurred and the builder was able to show his TI to the astonished public.

Those who were interested not only in new items but also old accessories for their TI 99/4As were also well provided for. The flea market taking place at the same time offered many a person the opportunity to get long sought accessories for his system at good prices. Here there was virtually everything from modules to complete systems with fully expanded PEB's. Disk drives, from the old SSSD TI drives with 90K to a complete drive system with two DSDD drives with connections as DSK2 and DSK3 were available. Memory expansion with 8 or 16 bit data bus, RS232 cards, disk controllers and other accessories were available in every conceivable configuration. Even defective equipment which might be of interest to hobbyists was available for a good price. So everyone could get his money's worth.

As must be expected at such a meeting, software exchange was the center of interest. The multiplicity of programs for the TI99 is well known. For this reason I will not discuss details. Anyone interested in information about specific programs should get in contact with one of the TI clubs. Since there is a gigantic supply of freeware for the TI 99, almost any problem can be solved. However, on the subject of freeware a serious word must be said. In Bremen one could see that sometimes the passing on of these programs was coupled with the purchase of a diskette at a steep price. Folks didn't get these programs copied onto a disk they had brought; they had to buy a new one. And it clearly contradicts the freeware concept when people try to make a profit in this way on programs which others have written and have placed at the disposal of TI fans for free. This is not to say that one should not sell programs he has written himself, but with freeware which others have thought up, that is out of order. Right? I would be interested in your opinion about this. Contact me through the HCA-Mailbox and write me your opinion. You can reach me in this box under BONGO, you can also write your opinion to board 34.

Now back to the TI Fair. Those participants who went home right after the official end of the event at 6:00 missed something. The high point of the cheerful evening was the cold buffet prepared by the women of the Bremen User Group. There is no purpose in relating anything about this, you simply had to be there. Without hesitation I can add my thanks to those

spoken by representatives of the individual clubs that evening. The Panorama Club of Duisburg, which will hold the fair next year, will have a hard time reaching the level of Bremen's fair, much less surpassing it. Which of course should not hinder the Duisburgers from the attempt.

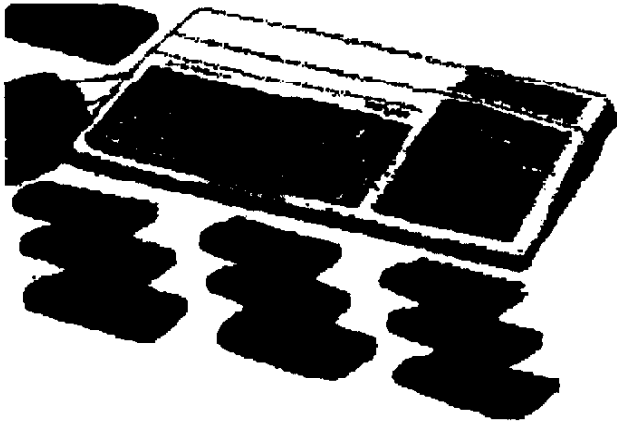
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Translation by Wayne Stith 1/29/88

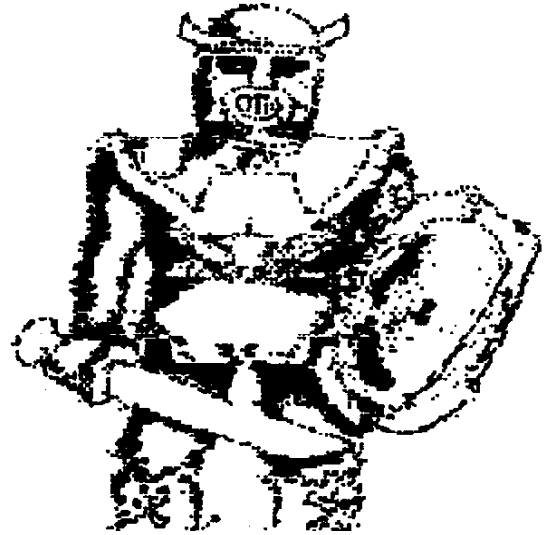
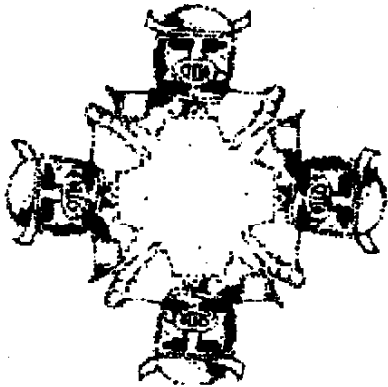
SOFTWARE FIXES AND UPDATES:

Several revisions to some good software have been released in the past month. First of all, for those with *LEGENDS*, a fix to some bugs has been released. Instead of reprinting the fixes here, we will have copies of the instructions at the meeting. In addition, I will attempt to make them available as merge type files on disk to make it easier to patch the program. Next, J. Peter Hoddie released a revised version of Paul Charlton's *FAST-TERM*. Some nice things have been added, mostly cosmetic, but some do greatly improve the operation of the program. The only request if you use this version of the program is that you send Paul the requested amount for his original work. Version 2.4 of Barry Boone's *Archiver II* program was released. This fairware program combines several files into one for archival purposes and can compress the resultant file for more efficient use of disk space. The above programs will also be available at the meeting. Mark Beck has announced a new version of his *CREATIVE FILING SYSTEM*. I have seen an older version of the program and it appears to be a very good database. The new version 7.0 looks to be an improvement on an already great program. This one we do not have. It is available from the author for \$15.00. If you are interested, we will have his address at the meeting. For those interested in taking a look at the older version, bring three disks; we do have that one.

THAT'S ABOUT ALL for this month. Since it appears that there is a full page side left, I will take this opportunity to show off MY new toy. I recently purchased an image scanner for use with my ATARI. With it, I can digitize graphics from a printed page and save them in a format that the Desktop Publisher can use. I will keep things TI related, since this is a TI newsletter. After digitizing, the pictures were edited with a drawing program.



ASGARD SOFTWARE



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