SOUTHWEST NINETY NINERS USER GROUP, TUCSON, AZ

SW99UG NEWS

FINAL ISSUE

February, 2000

IT'S ALL OVER AS SW99UG DISBANDS

BY TOM WILLS

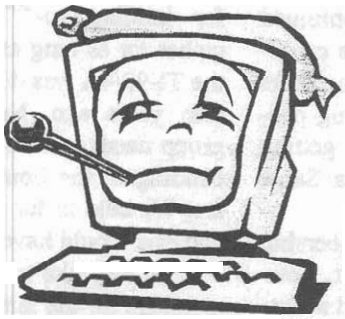
What a way to close out my observations column. But I have no choice here.

The end of the SouthWest Ninety Niners is at hand. The SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group, founded in April of 1983, has officially decided it is time to close down the user group.

While this decision saddens us all, it was not unexpected. Nor should it have been unexpected.

For a user group to continue in operation and be as active as this user group has been is a great tribute to all members who stayed with the user group until the end.

It was in October of 1983 that Texas Instruments announced that it was ceasing production of the TI-99/4A Home Computer. Many "jumped ship" at that time. However, diehards such as members of the SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group stiffened their collective backbones and stayed the course. This was a decision that we all were glad we made.



As the SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group disbands, many are saddened by the decision

Even after more fourteen years had passed since the TI-99/4A was taken out of production, this fine user group was able to put together a Fest West that almost everyone, except for SW99UG members, thought was totally impossible. That Fest West was the now famous Fest West '98 – Lubbock.

Even Texas Instruments was surprised that there were as many of us left as there were. Fest West '98 earned the SouthWest Ninety Niners the Jim Peterson Award for Community Service for 1998. This was the second Jim Peterson Award won by the SouthWest User Group. The first was for Hardware for the production and marketing of the Super Advanced Memory System expansion card.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

I HATE MICROSOFT

by David Ormand

I hate Microsoft. This is probably not surprising to you readers, since you already know I'm a die-hard TIer, and it is a common pattern for users of non-Wintel machines to hate Microsoft. However, as the picture begins to emerge from the courts, where the software mastodon has been unable to shake its opponents as well as Bill Clinton was able to shake his, better reasons to hate Microsoft rise to the surface than just the fact that they buried my favorite platform.

There hasn't been much said in this TI newsletter about the matter, but I've been keeping up with the Atari newsletters and the Linux web links about the story of MS vs. DOJ, where the key issue was whether embedding Internet Explorer into Windows was an attempt to cut Netscape out of the picture. The judge was so disgusted by Microsoft's obvious guilt and their attempts to cover it up with conflicting

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The SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group has had a very proud history. Probably one of the most active TI-99/4A user groups in the world, this user group has been the host of four very successful Fest Wests. The first was in 1990. Who can ever forget that one? But it was fun and we all we happy after it was the success that it was.

Then there were the Fest Wests of 1994, 1996, and 1998. Of course, we shouldn't forget the Fest West held by the VAST User Group in Phoenix. We were involved, to a much lesser degree, in helping the Phoenix group put on another very successful Fest West.

However, as the years went on, the membership of the SW99UG continued to decline to the point where we couldn't even field a good show of members at a membership meeting. Getting people to run for any office was getting worse than pulling teeth from a Sabre Tooth Tiger.

At the January. 2000 membership meeting, we had a good turnout, however, we still weren't able to field a slate of candidates to keep the user group a viable organization.

Rod Stallard would continue on as Treasurer if we could get a slate of other officers. To his credit, Leonard did volunteer to run for Vice President. However, no one wanted to be President or Secretary.

With this we knew it was all over. The members voted to allow the officers from 1999 to continue in office for as long as it takes to shut down the user group in an orderly manner.

To finally shut down operations as a formal user group will take several months. During this time we will be closing out the Post Office Box (That address will be good through March). Then there will be the issue of closing out the user group's bank accounts.

Active members will be getting notice of where the remaining funds are going and how they will be disbursed.

Tom Wills, SW99UG President, 1997 - 2000.

I want to thank the membership of the SouthWest Ninety Niners for holding together for as long as they did. After all, the TI-99/4A was discontinued over sixteen years ago. No one in this user group needs to feel ashamed at the disbanding of the SouthWest Ninety Niners. We held in for far longer than anyone ever would have expected.

I'd also like to personally thank all members for the faith they put in me for electing me Vice President and President for all the years you did. Plus the backing of the Cactus patch BBS, and the total commitment you made to helping me get Fest West off the ground and into a reality. Without the backing of the members of this fabulous user group, none of that would have been possible.

Now I am hoping that we can continue in some fashion as some sort of social group. It would be great to have picnics and Christmas parties over the upcoming years. After all, we forged some very strong friendships over the years. I do not want to see those friendships come to an end just because the user group is disbanding.

I think it would be a great idea for us to have a picnic in the spring and fall plus an annual Christmas party. I hope everyone agrees with this proposal. All members are invited to present their ideas for ways to maintain our friendships. And please do so! I'll be looking for any ideas anyone has to offer.

There will still be a number of ways we can keep in touch with each other. The telephone will always be available as a means of communication. Then there is E-Mail. The Addresses of current members are included in the box included with this article. Let's make every effort to keep in touch with each other. Let's not let all these years of being friends go by the wayside. If you have an E-Mail address, and are not included in the list, send an E-Mail to those listed so that we all have it.

Those who have E-Mail can always join in on the conversations taking place at the On-Line TI-99/4A User Group at eGroups.com. As of this writing, there are at least 107 members of the On-Line User Group (OLUG). For those who just have the TI-99/4A or Geneve 9640 computer, they can also join. However, I believe they will only be able to take advantage of the E-Mail portion of the OLUG. Those with full fledged internet browsers will be able to get involved in all aspects of the OLUG. More on this elsewhere in the newsletter.

The TI-99/4A and Geneve 9640 have served me well over the years. It is a sad day to see this User group disband. However, it was inevitable.

In closing, the Vulcan phrase we've heard Mr. Spock say so often seems proper: ***"Live along and Prosper."***

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testimonies and doctored videotapes that he found them liable to anti-trust prosecution. As of yet, he has yet to determine whether MS is guilty of breaking anti-trust laws, but all the same, he has set up an arbitration between MS and the government. The judge's "finding of fact" paper goes on and on with the sordid story of MS twisting arms and playing dirty to hurt Netscape, Apple, IBM, AOL, and a host of other companies, and the talk on the Web has changed from "will MS be found guilty?" to "will MS settle or be dismantled?"

Then, in looking around for Linux systems, I came across Caldera Systems, which markets an excellent, professionally prepared distribution. Turns out Caldera had acquired Digital Research at some point in the past, and with it, DR's lawsuit against MS over DR-DOS. When MS finally released Windows 95, it did so with the claim that it was a totally new operating system that replaced DOS. If you remember Windows 3.1, or other versions prior to 95, you started a peecee with DOS and then ran Windows. Well, it turns out Windows 95 is exactly the same thing, MS' declarations notwithstanding, and the whole deception is a stage late in the battle of Microsoft to exclude the superior Digital Research DOS from the market, a battle MS won with more dirty tricks that are outlined in the case DR, and now Caldera, are pressing in Utah.

For details, look up www.naag.org/ms-findings.html and www.drdos.com.

At work, we had previously used the Borland C compiler, which was faster, more friendly, more configurable, and produced tighter, faster programs than the Microsoft compiler. I already knew that MS had put "things" in later versions of Windows, "things" only MS would know about, that prevented Borland from working at all; now, Borland only exists as part of another company, and its C compiler is really a "front end" for Microsoft software libraries. This made me mad, really sparked my hatred of MS, but what really gelled into my current position was to learn the details of the DOJ and Caldera cases. I was going to put W98 on a junk peecee in my "lab", but now I think I'll stick with Linux. Using MS products has, in my mind, become similar to buying things built with slave labor in China. Or burning whale oil. Or other situations with ethical significance.

In all this furor over MS and more justice being done than I was accustomed to, there are a few good things to already come out of it. No longer subject to the "price break on Windows if you don't install any other OS" license requirement, more peecee builders are offering machines with Linux and even BeOS pre-installed. This is a Good Thing, even if you are a Windows user. Furthermore, there are more application programs coming out of the Linux and Be camps. Star Office for Linux, while it gets mixed reviews, is a FREE complete office productivity suite that happens to be mostly compatible with MS data formats - that is, it can read MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel files (to an extent), and even generate them. In my explorations of cryptographical issues, I have discovered an alternative to PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) which runs under Windows; GPG or GnuPG for Linux. And many, many more. I don't think it's an accident that the business, personal, and development interest in Linux really took off at the same time it became obvious that MS was going to "get it" in court.

However, I still have to use Windows NT at work. We have been fighting for weeks to get a particular application to keep up with a device that issues messages to what amounts as the serial port at 4,000,000 baud and 225 messages/sec. No matter whether we used a "normal" peecee or a "hot" 500MHz one, didn't work very well. Seems that Windows is based on a 10 millisecond "timeslice", which limits the amount of work you can do regardless of the computer it's running on. Not a big deal for games or internet or word processing or human-interface stuff, but a very big deal for time-critical stuff. Windows is NOT a Real Time Operating System. But we HAVE to use it anyways.

Now after fussing (or rather, "ranting") about MS, I have to make a disclaimer. I don't want to be "happy" that MS is in trouble; I don't want to be viewed as taking pleasure from an enemy's discomfort. Rather, I am glad to see people (especially judges) being concerned with justice and seeing what MS has done as WRONG, and not just blowing it off because MS is so huge, or because "everyone uses it". Furthermore, if you happen to use MS because you HAVE to (for some application, or for job reasons, like me), or even if you LIKE it... well, this is MY opinion column, you are as welcome to your opinion as I am to mine!

Now, if you use MS stuff because you THINK you have to, because you think there isn't an alternative, I would be happy to prove you wrong. Especially after I get my copy of Caldera OpenLinux, which reportedly has a very user-friendly installation (and oh by the way cooperates very nicely with Windows).

TI stuff

You thought the TI-99/4A's days were over? Well the days of the TI-9900 mainframe computer should have been over a long time back, but it just keeps plodding along. Someone recently on the comp.sys.ti newsgroup has posted that they "rescued" a 990/10a from a firm in Iowa, that they had it in their garage (the joke was, as a heater!), and that it appeared to boot, but they couldn't tell for sure, or what to do with it now. I was pleasantly surprised that there were ALL KINDS of people to come out of the woodwork to provide trivia, advice, and kind words to this person and everyone else reading the newsgroup. The TI-99/4A world may be dwindling away, and the TI-990 mainframe computer world may be even further along that path, but both still have their adherents, and both worlds are still filled with friendly, helpful people. I'm glad that some of those are Southwest 99ers!

On-Line TI-99/4A User Group

By Tom Wills

Even though the SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group is disbanding, there are still options available for members of this group. One of them is to join the On-Line TI-99/4A User Group.

To join, there are several ways to do it. One is to go to the SouthWest Ninety Niners web page at http://www.theriver.com/Public/sw99ug and go to the "Join" link on that web page.

Another method is to go directly to http://www.egroups.com/group/ti99-4a/info.html and join from there.

A third method is to send an e-mail to ti99-4a-subscribe@eGroups.com. Leave the message blank except for the to and from addresses. You will get a return message from eGroups.com asking for confirmation of your wanting to join.

If there are any questions, or problems, contact me at Tom@Wills.net.

As of January 27th, there are 107 members of this On-Line User Group, or as I refer to it, OLUG. I have conducted a couple of polls just to see where people are coming from. First of all, I asked who was using what kind of computer to access the OLUG. As expected, most were using a PC compatible computer. However, I was surprised to see how many were using the TI-99/4A, TI-99/4, and Geneve 9649 computers. More than half are still using them.

What really surprised me were how few were using Atari, Apple/Macintosh, and "other" computers. And only three of us were listed under the "Wish my TI was still working". Yes, I was one of those three responses.

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RSA Encryption

by David Ormand

Computerized encryption techniques provide a great advantage over the manual ciphers used in the past, because the computer has the speed and memory to apply cipher algorithms of far greater complexity and depth than any human candeal with. In fact, as last month's article was intended to show, a computer can so encrypt a message that not even another computer can "crack" it in a reasonable amount of time. However, there is still a problem: a symmetrical cipher like the ones we have looked at so far need the same key to encrypt and to decrypt a message. The recipient of a message must have been given the key somehow, and of course, they can't be transmitted electronically, or they could be intercepted by the same parties who would be wanting to read the message when it, too, was transmitted. This necessity of physically distributing keys ruins the advantage of impervious computer ciphers.

In his book "The Code Book", Simon Singh describes how Whitfield Diffie, Martin Hellman, and Ralph Merkle came up with the concept of "one way mathematical functions" in the early '70s at Stanford University. The idea is a mathematical operation that transforms one number into another number but which cannot be reversed. The "modulo" is one such function. Modulo is essentially the remainder from a division operation. Thus, 18 (mod 16) is 2, and, given 2, one cannot tell what the original number was. It might be 18, or 34, or 50, or any number which (mod 16) converts to 2. Later on, the team of Ronald Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Leonard Adleman at MIT built upon Diffie, Hellman, and Merkle's ideas to produce a practical implementation, called (after the developers) RSA.

The system involves unique mathematical properties of prime numbers, involution (raising a number to a power; e.g., 5 ^ 7 is 5*5*5*5*5*5*5) and the modulo function. The numbers are very large (hundreds of bits) in order to frustrate anyone trying to break a code by brute force. The core of the idea here is, the sender can pick a number (two numbers, actually) and generate another number with this "one-way function". The second number can be made publicly available for others to encrypt messages which can only be decrypted with the first number. The first number is, therefore, the PUBLIC key, and the first is the PRIVATE key.

This non-symmetrical cipher gets around the key distribution problem. Now the public key can be transmitted electronically, even made available for everyone via a network server. Sensitive information such as credit card data can then be encrypted using this key, and nobody else but the intended recipient, who has the private key, can decrypt it. In RSA, the private key is a pair of very large prime numbers, and the public key is the product. The public keys used tend to be larger than 10 ^ 308. It would take a hundred million fast computers more than a thousand years to find the two prime numbers that compose this public key.

The C-language code provided below demonstrates the use of the RSA algorithm. The main function allows you to choose three prime numbers, two of which, p and q, are the private key. The other, e, is part of the public key; Singh says this could be fixed for all implementations of RSA, or included as part of the public key along with the product of p and q, but he doesn't say what is actually done. Anyways, you can then enter a line of text to be encrypted. Each character in the message is subjected to the one-way function of M ^ e (mod N), where M is the message

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Right now I am polling members to find out what kind of operating system they are using to access the OLUG. Not surprisingly, most (as of this point in time) are using Windows 9x based operating systems.

Also available on the OLUG are several databases. One is for members to place "Wanted" ads, another is for "For Sale" ads, another is a "Phonebook" of members, and so forth. This section will change as time goes on and more uses are thought of for miscellaneous databases.

The Vault has several folders in which to store information. There is the Member Pictures folder, the Hardware Pictures folder, the Software/Screen Dumps folder, and the Links folder. Plus there a several non folder items, such are the On-Line User Group Policies (yes, there are policies to be abided by in this user group), the ballot list of the 1999 Jim Peterson Award Nominees, and several other items.

Any member of the OLUG can post to these sections. Just like any member can set up a polling item to query members about just about anything.

The Links folder mentioned above, is collection of links to various TI-99/4A related web pages and member's home pages. Anyone can add a link to their home page or TI-99/4A related web page.

What this OLUG offers is a way for members to do their "own thing." They don't have to ask my permission as the moderator/ manager to post items. And as long as they aren't blatantly offensive, I won't interfere.

On January 22nd, a group of us got together to have a "conversation" in the Chat Room. This was very enjoyable. There was a fair amount of trivia exchanged during this session.

As of this writing, the OLUG is

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On-Line User Group Help

How to set an alias for your registered email address:

Creating an alias will allow you to post to your groups from an email address that is not currently registered or subscribed. Your alias email addresses will not be visible to Managers, Moderators, nor other group members. You can add up to 10 email aliases for each registered email address.

For example, name@domain.com is a registered user and subscribed to several groups. To send mail from another email address (myname@myhome.com) that is not registered or subscribed, you can make myname@myhome.com an email alias of name@domain.com to post to your groups

After logging in at www.egroups.com

1.Go to the "My Space" page
2.Click on the "User Info" tab
3.Click on the "Add alias" link
4.Enter the email address you wish to be an alias
5.Click on "Apply" and confirm the alias was added

*To easily remove an alias, click on the "Remove" link next to the email address you want to remove.

ID visibility:

You can control the visibility of your user profile by following these instructions:

1.Click on "my Space"
2.Click on the "User info" tab
3.Click on the "Edit" link next to "Default Settings"
4.Select the visibility level you want at the profile drop-down box
5.Click on "Apply" when you're done

eGroups.com respects your privacy. (See our Privacy policy)

Here is an explanation of your choices:

Fully Visible: if you choose to have your profile fully disclosed, all your "personal info" will be visible to other members, including remarks you have made about yourself.

Partially Visible: This setting will only reveal your name, photo (if you have one), company, home page web address, and remarks you made about yourself.

Not Visible: This setting will cause all personal info about you to be unavailable to all members, including the group manager.

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byte, e is this mysterious number, and N is the public key, p * q. In real use of RSA, M is the entire message treated as one big number, just like p, q, and maybe e are very large numbers. The TI can do this, but only by using multiple precision arithmetic, which is beyond the scope of this article. So we are just doing it on individual characters, which limits your choice of p and q: Their product must be larger than 128 (so all ASCII characters can be encrypted) but less than 256 (so the encrypted letter will fit in a byte). The encrypted message may then be decrypted by using the reverse function of C ^ d (mod N), where d is the decryption key, determined such that d * e (mod (p-1) * (q-1)) is 1. In the "rsa_decrypt" function, I determine d by brute force - I just keep trying all numbers (up to a limit I hope works; namely, N) until the above equation is satisfied. There are more elegant ways to do this, but this works for the little numbers involved.

Another thing you might notice is that this program uses the a sc2bin" and "bin2asc" functions from last month. Because the output of RSA (and any computerized encryption algorithm) are numbers, they have to be converted to readable bytes to print to the screen or paste into e-mail messages. Therefore these two functions are needed here. However, the functions themselves aren't here! This is because I turned these two related and useful functions into a C library. By cutting them out of the program from last month and putting the line **entry bin2asc, asc2bin;** at the top, I can compile and assemble this into its own file, **DSK1.BIN2ASC**.

By putting **extern bin2asc(), asc2bin();** at the top of any program I want to use these functions in, I never have to recompile those functions again. So now, this program is compiled and assembled, and using E/A option 3, DSK1.CSUP, DSK1.STRING, DSK1.PRINTF, DSK1.SCANF, and DSK1.BIN2ASC are loaded, and then the object file for this program. The program executes from symbol START.

```
#include "DSK1.STDIO_H"
#include "DSK1.STRING_H"

extern printf(), scanf();
extern bin2asc(), asc2bin();
entry rsa_encrypt, rsa_decrypt;

main()
{ int p, q, e, n, len, done;
  char c, plain[80], cypher[80];

  printf("RSA Encryption\n\n");

  done = 0;
  while(!done)
  { printf("1 Create a public/private key set\n");
    printf("2 Encrypt a message\n");
    printf("3 Decrypt the message\n");
    printf("Q Quit\n");

    switch(getchar())
    { case 'q' :
      case 'Q' :
        done = 1; break;

      case '1' :
        printf("\n\nEnter three numbers < 256:\n");
        printf(" #1 (p): "); scanf("%d", &p);
        printf(" #1 (q): "); scanf("%d", &q);
        printf(" #1 (e): "); scanf("%d", &e);
        printf("public key: N = %d, e = %d\n\n", n = p * q, e);
        break;

      case '2' :
        printf("\n\nEnter a mesage line:\n");
        gets(plain);
        len = strlen(plain);
        rsa_encrypt(n, e, plain, cypher);
        bin2asc(cypher, plain, len);
        printf("\nEncrypted message:\n%s\n\n", plain);
        break;

      case '3' :
        asc2bin(plain, cypher);
        rsa_decrypt(p, q, e, cypher, plain);
        printf("\n\nMessage is:\n%s\n\n", plain);

      default :
        printf("\ninvalid, try again\n");
    }
  }
}

/* RSA Encryption
   cypher byte = (plain byte) ^ e (mod N) */
rsa_encrypt(n, e, in, out)
int n, e;
char *in, *out;
{ int i, j;

  /* encrypt letters until terminating null is reached */
  while(*in)
  { for(i = 0, j = 1; i < e; i++)
    { j = j * (*in);
      if(j > n) j = j % n;
    }
    *out = j;
    in++;
    out++;
  }
  *out = '\0';
}
```

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```
/* RSA Decryption, reverses above process
    plain byte = (cypher byte) ^ d (mod N)
     where d is the decryption key, such that
     e * d = 1 (mod (p-1)*(q-1))  */
rsa_decrypt(p, q, e, in, out)
int p, q, e;
char *in, *out;
{  int d, n;

  /* Find decryption key */
  n = (p-1) * (q-1);
  for(d = 1; d < n; d++)
    if((d * e) % n == 1)  break;

  n = p*q;
  rsa_encrypt(n, d, in, out);
}
```

One more thing: As I mentioned, RSA treats the entire message as M, and subjects it to the algorithm ONCE, rather than for each byte as I have done. This is terrifically computation-intensive, and has limited RSA to large, mainframe-class computers. In 1991, Phil Zimmermann had produced Pretty Good Privacy, a program that a desktop machine could efficiently run. His idea was to use a symmetric computer cipher like DES to encrypt a message, and then use RSA to encrypt the key. Because the key is much smaller than the full message, the burden of using RSA is greatly reduced, the public/private key advantage is realized, and a virtually uncrackable computer cipher is available to everyone. Of course, when Zimmermann made PGP available to everyone on the Internet, he got into a LOT of trouble with NSA and the FBI for exporting "weapons technology" (which includes cryptography tools), and additionally RSA Data Security, Inc. for patent infringement! In time, the federal government dropped the case, because (a) Zimmermann had not actually exported PGP; he just made it publicly available on the Internet server, and (b) since everyone had it, and the Europeans were making revised versions that were not subject to United States security restrictions, there was really nothing to prosecute him for! He also settled with RSA by getting a license.

Where are we now? The TI is up to the job of computerized encryption. At this point, all we need is multi-precision math (for which I have written a C99/Assembly library) and details of how PGP works. A more promising possibility (for me, at least) is the appearance of GnuPG, a PGP "lookalike" for Unix and Linux. Gnu products include the source code under the "Gnu Public License" where anybody can get, examine, and even modify the original source code of a program. So it is possible that someday the TI can swap encrypted messages with other computer users! We will just see if we get there!

David's Rant

by David Ormand

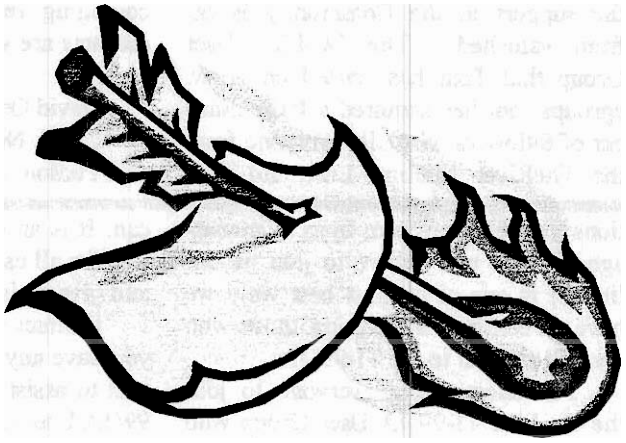
Here we are at the end of the first month of 2000 A.D., a time of beginnings, endings, and continuations.

Beginnings

Namely of the new millenium! Oh, yes, spare me the technically correct explanations of why the millenium doesn't actually start until next year. In practical and aesthetic terms, the rolling of the date to two trailing zeroes marks the beginning of a new era, as far as most people (excluding the pedants who keep writing "letters to the editor") and certainly computers are concerned. So I nod my head to these explanations, agree that, yes, technically, next year is the start of the third millenium since Christ, but keep right on being amazed that I am priviledged to be here in the year 2000!

Hmm... no flying cars or colonies on the moon... Looks like the Sci Fi guys were off a bit.

But then, so were the guys claiming that Y2K would be the meltdown of Western Civilization. I was advising the SW99ers that they ought to stock up a few weeks of food and water, just in case distribution was affected, keep some extra cash on hand, and get hold of important papers like bank and insurance statements. And so I did, and we are already consuming our stock of canned vegetables and Ramen, and some time in the next few months I will start watering the oleanders with the water from the recyclable juice bottles. Not out anything. In fact, since we were concerned about SW Gas response to Y2K, we justified buying a propane grill! So here's one boy who is NOT sorry about some mild Y2K precautions!



As far as computers go, on the night of December 31st, my Linux box was running until "date" showed that the new millenium was here. In fact, the Linux box just runs all the time; I don't bother shutting it down, or even logging off, it just runs and runs. I've heard you can't do that with Windows. And the Atari was playing a game from the GEM-Window Game Competition that the MagiC enthusiasts had conducted in December. And most fun of all, the TI was running the following TI-BASIC program:

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(Rant – Continued from page 7)

```
100 I=1
110 PRINT I:"TMS9900 IN 2000AD
AND BEYOND!":
120 I=I+1
130 GOTO 110
```

Yes, I know it's silly; just my little way of celebrating the 20-year-old orphan making it into the future!

Endings

I guess this is IT for the Southwest 99ers. In a way, I'm sad, because the TI community looses another organization that has contributed so much over the years. All those Fest Wests, the AMS card, a long-lived Bulletin Board Service tradition with Ant Farm and Cactus Patch, several programs from members, not to mention assistance to members and other TIers with advice, the lending library, and the shareware library and Altman list. I have really enjoyed the association of SW99ers over the years, especially people like BJ and Jack, and Al Armstrong and Dick Paschall, and Ida McCargar and Ed Hallett. All of you, really, for doing demos and putting up with mine, and trooping along with the SW99ers General Meeting, whether it was in the Fire Department Training Facility out on Ajo, or the little room at Devon Gables, or finally at the VFW Post. It has been ten years of pure delight, and I'm sorry it's over.

At the same time, I'm not THAT sad. I feel that the SW99ers has really been out of the TI business for the last few years. At last count, only a handful of Tucson members still use their TIs and Geneves. The Lending and Shareware Libraries have not even been missed. The demo of TI programs at the Meeting has received polite attention but no real interest. So except for the appearance of loss to the TI world, I'm not sure there's a REAL loss.

I also don't think that the controversy of last year would have made any difference if it had turned out the other way. If you will remember, I was a vocal advocate of the SW99ers remaining a TI User Group, rather than accommodating PEECEE users. I don't know how much the vote was affected by my agitation (there wasn't much pro-peecee opinion, as I recall), but I think subsequent trends confirmed my thesis: Opening the SW99ers to peecees would not guarantee our survival; we would have to work to attract peecee people, and if we couldn't promote the TI, it wouldn't be likely we could promote the peecee.

At best, we would cease to be a TI User Group, and be transformed into a peecee User Group. In fact, the ideas being discussed about transforming the core of the membership into an investment club affirms my position. So I'm sad to see the SW99ers folding, but it really was an irreversible process.

Continuations

But my interest in the TI-99/4A will survive the demise of the Southwest 99ers TI Home Computer Users Group. Even as I type this article in on TI-Writer, I can assure myself that I will keep using this fun little machine even if all the support in the TI community has vanished. I may have an Atari or a Linux box, or maybe a PowerPC Open Platform running both Linux and a multitasking Atari Operating System (yes, I'm watching the development!), but the TI will always be here until it breaks down and I can't fix or replace it! And the support in the Community is far from vanished. The On-Line User Group that Tom has started on www.egroups.com has acquired a large number of followers, virtually everyone from the TheRiver Mailing List, and then some. There are more contributions to the TI-based FTP sites on Don O'Neil's server and the others than ever before. There are still some vendors left, and some new Tiers appearing from time to time on comp.sys.ti who need help and support. So I will stay in there as long as anybody.

Plus, that handful of Tucson-based TIers? We need to stay in touch, guys. I have your numbers from the last survey we ran a few years back. I keep thinking of a low-maintenance TI survivor's network via phone and mail, kind of the same thing my two Atari friends are considering with me. Orphans are fun, and we need to stick together.

Finally, even though SW99ers may disappear, the Southern California group is still there. The Milwaukee group is still there. The Chicago and a few Ohio based User Groups are still alive and publishing newsletters. I fully intend to join them, even if I can't attend meetings. I can support them with my dues, by submitting newsletter articles, by providing Disk of the Month files upon occasion. I would encourage anyone who is (or used to be) a SW99er TI user to contact me if you want details on any of these User Groups.

And with all that said, I will sign off for the last time in the Southwest 99ers Newsletter! It's been fun!

PS: If anyone is interested in the continuation of the Crypto article series, which I hope finalizes in a TI program compatible with PGP or GnuPG, contact me. Source for the programs in Newsletter articles are available for a buck, and the final program, if it ever appears, will be Freeware. I know, I keep encouraging readers to contact me, but contacts are very, very rare. But just in case,

David Ormand
212 S. Nema Pl.
Tucson, AZ 85711

(OLUG – Continued from page 5)

one of the largest groups in our section of eGroups.com. We are 12th out of 40 groups. And we are growing, so I expect to see us slowly move up.

In this final issue of the SW99UG News, I am including several help sections from eGroups.com so as to encourage TI99ers everywhere to join us online. It is one of the last best ways we have to continue supporting those who are still faithful to the TI-99/4A.

I'm encouraging everyone to join the On-Line TI-99/4A User Group who can. It is an easy way, and a very good way for all us to stay in touch and to get and give assistance to others.

Contact me at Tom@Wills.net if you have any questions. I'll do my level best to assist you with the On-Line TI-99/4A User Group.

Following are the latest set of Policies for the On-Line TI-99/4A User Group. As you can see, they are fairly lenient. They are an attempt to make the OLUG a fun place to visit. I am placing them in this Final Issue of the SW99UG News so everyone can get an idea of what the OLUG expects for its members.

Tom Wills
OLUG Moderator/Manager

TI-99/4A ON-LINE USER GROUP POLICIES

– Last Updated: January 21, 2000 –

All members/Subscribers of the TI-99/4A On-Line User Group are expected to adhere to the following policies. If there are any questions, contact the Manager/Moderator of this user group, Tom Wills at Tom@Wills.net.

Members who do not follow the polices and guidelines listed below, after being given a chance to comply, will be removed from this User Group.

- All Members are expected to use their real names. The definition of a real name is both First AND Last name. Nicknames, such as Joe in place of Joseph, will be considered a Real First Name. No handles, business names, or other such misrepresentations of the Member's real name will be tolerated. The Member in violation will be given one week in which to come into compliance. If still in violation after one week, the Member will be removed from the User Group roster. While the use of real names if required, no member will be required to publish their user profile or to add their name to the UG Phonebook. These two lists are strictly voluntary.
- No foul language will ever be tolerated. This is to be a friendly place to be. Repeated offenses of this policy will result in removal from the User Group Roster.
- Flaming of a member of this User Group will not be tolerated.
- Spamming of this User Group will not be tolerated.

JIM PETERSON AWARDS BALLOT

The following have been nominated for Jim Peterson Achievement Awards in their respective categories. (Vote for only ONE from EACH category.). The voting deadline is April 30, 2000.

TI-99/4A Community Service:

Charles Good	Scanning of TI documentation.
Don O'Neil	FTP site.
Hal Shanafield	Organizing the 1999 Chicago Faire.
Harold Mayo	Orphanage BBS
John Koloen and Laura Burns	Placing MICROpendium into Public Domain.
Mike Wright	Archiving TI documents.
TI-Chips	Organizing and hosting TIMUG'99.
Tom Wills	The List Server.

TI-99/4A Software:

Bruce Harrison	His Midi routines for the TI-99/4A.
John Bull	Contract Bridge program.
Leonard Taffs	Many published specialty/utility programs.

TI-99/4A Hardware:

Don O'Neil	SCSI cards.
Michael Becker	Distributing and servicing SNUG cards.

Mvarc, Geneve 9640:

Jim Uzzell	ABASIC 4.0
Tim Tesch	Servicing the 9640.

Land mail votes to:
Glenn Bernasek
Secretary, TI-Chips
13246 Harper Road
Strongsville, Ohio 44136-3942
USA
Or E-mail to:
GBBasics@aol.com

SouthWest 99er User Group Officers
Tom Wills, President – Tom@Wills.net
BJ Mathis, Vice President – bjmathis@flash.net
David Ormand, Secretary- diormand@aztec.asu.edu
Rod Stallard, Treasurer – rcstallard@theriver.com

SOUTHWEST NINETY-NINERS
99
TI USER GROUP TUCSON AZ

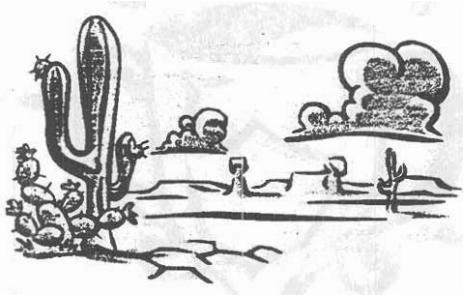
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Membership Meeting	**NONE**
Executive Board Meeting	**AS NEEDED**
Newsletter Deadline (to Tom Wills)	**NONE**

Visit the SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group's Web Page at
Http://www.theriver.com/Public/sw99ug

USER GROUP DISBANDS!
SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE ONE.

SouthWest Ninety Niners User Group
P.O. Box 17831
Tucson, AZ 85731-7831



FINAL ISSUE