NOTICES
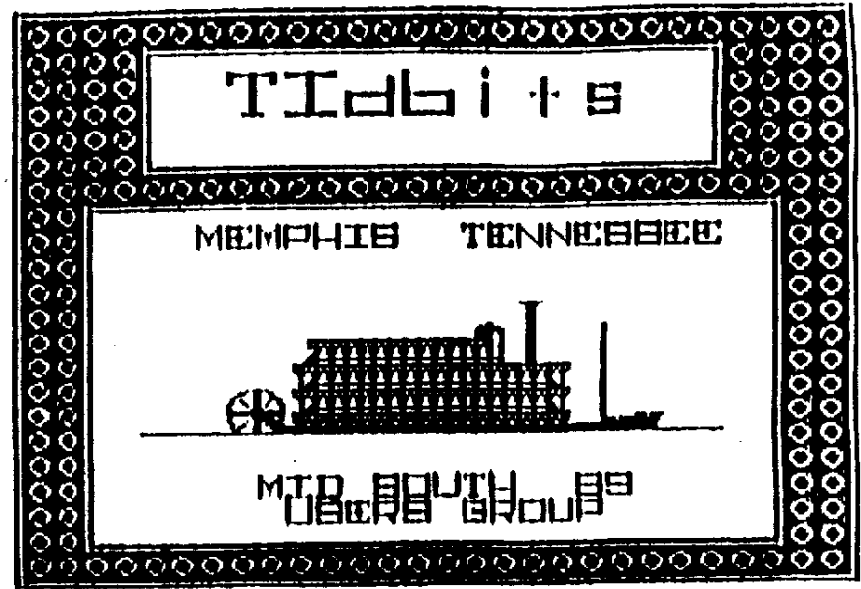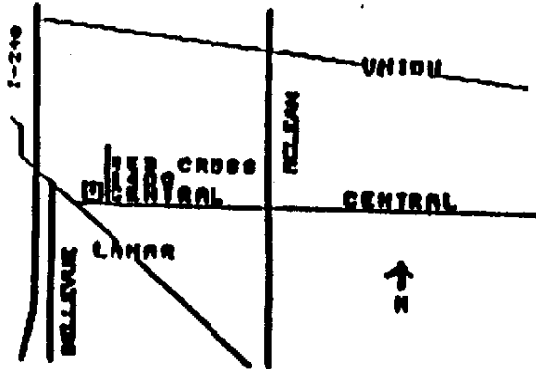
MEETING
7:00 P.M.
Thursday, September 20th
Red Cross Building
1400 Central Ave.

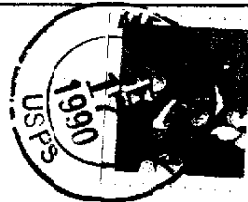**WORKSHOP**
9:00 am - 12 noon
Saturday, September 22nd
To Be Announced

Mid-South 99 Users Group
P. O. Box 38522
Germantown, TN 38183-0522

UG 2/86
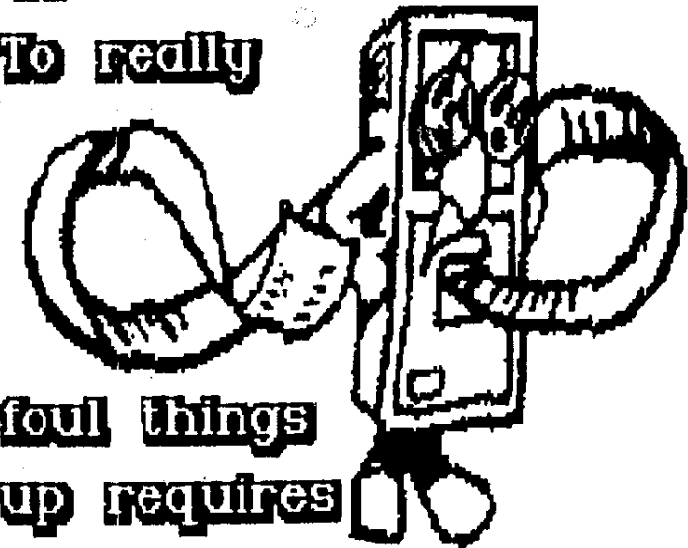DALLAS TI USER GROUP
P.O. BOX 29863
DALLAS, TX 75229

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TIdbits

MEMPHIS TENNESSEE

MID SOUTH 99
USERS GROUP

SEPTEMBER 1990 ISSUE

To err is human.
To really
foul things
up requires
a computer!

TIDBITS

OFFICERS

Gary Cox	PRESIDENT	901-358-0667
Richard Hiller	VICE-PRESIDENT	901-794-9945
Michael Dorman	SECRETARY	501-732-5126
Bob Jones	TREASURER	901-363-9213
Jim Saemanes	Technical Support	901-476-7011
David Ferguson	Disk Librarian	901-795-3287
Pierre Labontagne	CO-Librarian	901-386-1513
Michael Dorman	Editor - Newsletter	501-732-5126
Gary Cox	Program Chairman	901-358-0667
Mac Swope	Chairman - Equipment	901-363-3880
Michael Dorman	Midnight Hour BBS Sysop	501-732-5126

SEPTEMBER 1990 INDEX

PRESIDENT'S BIT

By Gary W. Cox

As you may have read last month, Michael Dorman will be giving up his position as newsletter editor and printer after the December newsletter. During the past few years that Michael has edited and printed the newsletter he has done an excellent job producing some of the largest and most professional newsletters in our 8 year history! Mike has really put in a great deal of work and if anyone deserves a rest he sure does! However, this does pose a problem and hints toward a more serious problem facing our organization. For one thing we will at least need an editor which is responsible for collecting the articles, formatting them together and presenting a photo ready copy for replication. The actual printing I have a line on a way to cover that portion. However, even more serious is that I too am becoming quite burnt out and I am absolutely having to push myself each month to fulfill my duties as President which has included picking up and answering the mail, collecting and writing articles for the newsletter, maintaining the user group database of members, printing the labels and finishing up the newsletters each month by putting on the labels and stamps. Not to mention bringing a complete car load of equipment each month plus providing the food at the meetings when we have food. While I am not complaining I am just stating that I will no longer be doing all of those duties after December either. While I will remain an officer of the group in some capacity I feel it is time for others to fill in in those areas. Being President or Vice-President now for the past 5 years has really worn me out and I would like to sit back for a while and enjoy some of the benefits of the group.

Don't take all this as a sign that the group is dying out as it is not! We have one of the stronger TI groups in the country not to mention of the oldest. We will continue to meet each month as long as I am alive and living here in Memphis but it is up to you the members to fill in the holes which will appear after December.

Remember plans are being made for all those wanting to attend the Chicago TI Faire November 2nd and 3rd...

In closing I need to give a note of thanks to Marshall Ellis who continues to produce the Technical Interface newsletter and assists in keeping up with the groups that we trade newsletters with. Thanks Marshall!

C ya at this months meeting....

IN THE NEWS

By Gary W. Cox

The following is a press release from Genie, an online service accessible by those owning modems.

GEnie SERVICE ANNOUNCES FLAT MONTHLY RATE OF $4.95 INCLUDING UNLIMITED, NON-PRIME TIME ACCESS TO OVER 100 PRODUCTS/SERVICES

ROCKVILLE, MD, Aug. 29, 1990 -- The GEnie(SM) service, one of the leading online information services, has announced the introduction, effective Oct. 1, 1990, of a flat subscription rate of just $4.95 (U.S.) per month including unlimited, non-prime time access to more than 100 products and services.

This new monthly rate will make it possible for GEnie service subscribers -- and members of their families -- to access a wide variety of popular products and services on the GEnie service without the concern of running up costly fees each month as a result of hourly access rates.

In making the announcement, Bill Louden, general manager of the GEnie service, said, "Our market research told us that the number one thing our subscribers wanted in an online information service was a flat monthly rate for accessing a wide variety of products and services.

"As a result, we will be launching, effective Oct. 1, 1990, our GEnie Star*Services with a subscription rate of only $4.95 per month," said Louden. "Our new pricing structure on GEnie is similar to the concept of Cable TV where viewers pay a monthly rate for unlimited access to basic services, and an additional cost for value added services," he explained.

"With this new flat monthly rate for non-prime time access to over 100 of the GEnie service features, the online costs of many GEnie service subscribers could be reduced," added Louden.

NEW NON-PRIME HOURLY RATE

The rate for U.S. access to those GEnie service products/services not covered under the flat monthly rate -- such as all personal computing bulletin boards, all software libraries, financial services, value added services, chat lines and Real Time Conferences, Computer Assisted Learning Center (CALC), and multi-player games -- has been set at just $6 per hour during non-prime time for all three access speeds (300, 1200 and 2400 baud). This is a $4 per hour reduction in the current 2400 baud non-prime time rate. The prime time rate remains at $18 per hour for all three access speeds.

Since more than 60 percent of the 209,000 subscribers on the GEnie service have 2400 baud modems, this lower non-prime time rate of only $6/hour for 2400 baud access also will result in faster, more

cost-effective software downloads on the GEnie service, which has more than 85,000 files available for downloading.

CANADIAN RATES

To access the GEnie Star*Services in Canada, the monthly subscription rate is $5.95 (Canadian), with a non-prime time rate of $8 (Canadian) per hour for all three access speeds. Prime time rate is $25.00 (Canadian) per hour for all three access speeds.

SIGN-UP FEE ELIMINATED

The $29.95 sign-up fee for the GEnie service also has been eliminated for all new subscribers effective immediately. As a result, there is no real cost to subscribe to the GEnie service, except for the first month subscription rate of $4.95 (U.S.).

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

After trying the GEnie Star*Services for the first month, if a subscriber does not like it, he/she can cancel his/her membership and the GEnie service will refund the $4.95 subscription fee to them. (This offer applies only to first time new subscribers to the GEnie service, once per household.)

BENEFITS OF MONTHLY RATE

"We feel this new monthly rate for non-prime access to GEnie will be eagerly accepted by many of our subscribers as they will no longer have to watch the clock when they are using the GEnie Star*Services," said Louden.

"The GEnie service will now provide its U.S. and Canadian subscribers with the most extensive and cost-effective package of online services available today for a flat monthly rate," remarked Louden. "GEnie's original motto of 'Stay Online Longer for Less' is even more appropriate now with the introduction of this flat monthly rate," he remarked.

First operational in 1985, the GEnie service is one of the fastest growing online information services with more than 209,000 individual subscribers. Available throughout the U.S. and Canada, the GEnie service also can be accessed in Japan, West Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

For further information in the U.S. and Canada on the GEnie service, offered by GE Information Services, please call 1-800-638-9636. GE Information Services, a division of General Electric Company, U.S.A, is headquartered in Rockville, Md.

The following edited from the August 1990 Micropendium:

Texaments has released Starfleet Technical Drawings III, the third volume in its Starfleet Technical Drawings Series. Like the previous two volumes, Starfleet Technical Drawings III is a collection of detailed pictures of the various spacecraft that have appeared on the original Star Trek television series, the television series Star Trek: The Next Generation and the five Star

Trek movies. Included in Volume III are drawings of covilian
starships from various members of the Federation (including Earth,
Vulcan, Alpha Centauri and Andorian) plus including adversaries
such as Romulans, Gorn Empire, Orion Pirates and the Tholian
Assembly. Also included is a chart compairing all five USS
Enterprises...

Starfleet Technical Drawings III is a four disk package which is
available for $12.95. Starfleet Technical Drawings I and II are
available for $9.95 each. For a limited time all three volumes
may be purchased together for $27.95. Add a $2.50 shipping charge
for all orders. For more information or to order write Texaments,
53 Center Street, Patchogue, NY 11772. (516) 475-3480 (voice),
(516) 475-6463 (BBS).

The Delphi telecommunications network has changed its rate
structure, and the TI NET special interest group on Delphi is
offering bonus free time for uploads. Delphi's new rate
structure, effect Oct 1, offers two membership options, the 20/20
advantage plan and the basic plan. Within the 20/20 advantage
plan, members receive their first 20 hours of evening access per
month for $10, with additional time available at $1.20 per hour.
According to the company, the 20/20 plan represents a reduction of
close to 80 percent off the previous advantage plan rate. The
basic plan, designed for members who use the service less often,
is $5.95 per month for the first hour and $6 for each additional
hour. Members now receive free access to help files, billing
records and other service related information according to Dan
Bruns, president of General Videotex Corporation which operates
Delphi. TI NET owner Jeff Guide announced that effective
immediately, TI NET will provide all persons successfully
uploading new programs or text files, bonus free time, which is
additional free time equal to the time it took to upload the file.
Other networks only offer uploading time free, he says. A special
$9.95 sign up offer includes one hour off peak connect time. Dial
1-800-365-4636, press Enter twice and at the password type MYTI
and enter.

The Fifth International TI Users Meeting is scheduled for
September 28- 30 at the Bugerhaus, Wiesbaden-Erbenheim, Germany.
The "official part" will be at 10am to 6pm September 29th
according to Gerald D. Turner of TI Workshop Wiesbaden, hosts for
the meeting. He says that a new disk controller will be available
at the fair which will control 4 drives and format to DSDD with
quad forthcoming. A new Gram simulator that fits into a standard
TI cartridge is expected to also be available and will have the
ability to dump and run TI cartridges from disk or cassette
similar to what the Gram Kracker does.

We should have a report from our own Beery Miller of the above
fair as he will be attending the event!

Thats the news for this month...

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MMXB - PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT
NEW MULTIMODE EXTENDED BASIC (MMXB) BY JEAN MARLEAU
Delphi Username: JEAN_MARLEAU

Multi-Mode XB are programs that allow you to use text/multicolor
modes in ext ended basic WITHOUT interfering with the xb
interpreter! This means that it is fully accepted by the xb
interpreter. While in text/multicolor mode, you still can access
drives, control errors, use all extBasic commands, and create
subprgrms. Unlike other similar programs, errors or breakpoints
DON'T lock the computer! MMXB disk contains 54 assembly sub-pgms,
10 XB sub-pgms and a program demo.

The 54 assembly sub-programs include features like: NEW KEY
detection subprogram that detects all 256 characters of the
computer! NEW JOYSTS scans both joysticks/sides of keyboard, and
fire buttons at the same time! One hundred twenty six (126) new
characters in text mode (more than 15 new sets), and the
possibility of two new sets in xb and multicolor modes!

SUPER POWERFUL ACCEPT for Xb/text: Uses all 256 characters (240
displayable in text), 12 fctn keys instead of 8 + gives you THE
ABILITY TO DEFINE UP TO 18 fctn keys of your own in itself!! Can
accept REVERSE-VIDEO in text, access/display all ctrl characters
and has a special feature that helps you build "professionnal"
screen editors very easily! Can also be used as a powerful INKEY
with validation for your selection lists! (13 parameters)

The ability to define the 240 displayable characters of textmode
at the same time! The ability to display a full screen at the
same time or to scroll up and down the screen with top/bottom
lines locked! The ability to create a sound list for loading in
the sound generator. Once this is done, it requires no further
program control!

Check status of special keys of keyboard Super fast LOAD and PEEK
for VDP/CPU! The ability to offset your strings for easy access
of all 256 characters or for coding purposes! The ability to
create all sprites at the same time!! SUPER fast HCOLOR, VCOLOR,
GCOLOR, HCHAR VCHAR, GCHAR for multicolor mode, text, XB modes
(Lot faster than XB HCHAR...)! And more!!

MULTI-MODE XB important features ------------------

Multi-Mode XB is programs that allow you to use text/multicolor
modes in extended basic WITHOUT interfering with the xb
interpreter! This is the most important feature. Plus:

Unlike other similar programs, errors or breakpoints DON'T lock
the computer! You can view/change variables after a breakpoint and
continue. Even if you were in text or multicolor mode prior to
the breakpoint. (However, your xb program must get you back in
the mode you were or it will continue in xb mode.) Unlike other
similar programs, you can use the extended basic subprograms that
you've created even while you're in text or multicolor mode.

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Super fast LOAD and PEEK for VDP/CPU! (You can load up to 2040
bytes in vdp or cpu at the same time! (1sec))

You can create MMXB files to define your character sets (like
CHARA1) or use CHARA2MMXB IN your program for a 1 sec. definition
of all characters, sprites, color sets, and the intro screen!!!

MULTI-MODE XB Super new ACCEPT -------------------

Briefly, this is some of the features of the new ACCEPT:

    - It works in TEXT and Xbasic mode.
    - As it uses the new KEY detection subprogram, it access all
      256 characters of the keyboard.
    - It can offset characters 32 to 127 by 128 bytes, to input
      them as characters 160 to 255. If you define characters
      160 to 255 as reverse video of 32-127, you access these
      reverse video characters directly! And of course, you can
      define different characters for 160-255.
    - It gives you the option to accept at exit time, characters
      128 to 159 as characters 0 to 31. This allows you to see
      (define) the control characters on screen as well as
      accessing them!
    - It CAN USE a MASK for accepting any type of characters FOR
      EACH characters of your accept field (ALPHA only, DIGIT
      only, NUMERIC only, or any characters entered), plus it can
      validate the range of the type entered. Example: NUMERIC by
      only from 1 to 5.
    - It lets you specify whether or not you need to press enter
      at the end of the accept field.
    - It returns the last key pressed before exiting the accept.
    - In addition to the 8 usual function keys, it has 4 new
      ones. Plus, it gives you the ability to define up to 18 of
      your own function keys in itself.
    - Of course, it can beep, erase to end of accept field.
    - It lets you specify where in accept field the start
      position will be. This is a super feature which lets you
      build "professionnal" screen (or windows) editor very
      easily!

MULTI-MODE XB Text mode ---------

In this mode, the screen is divided in 24 rows * 40 columns.
There isn't a sprite in this mode. You can use the assembly
subprograms PRINT, HCHAR, VCHAR, GCHAR, ACCEPT, CLEART, LOADVO,
PEEKVO to display/input from this mode, and COLORT for colors.

In addition to characters 30 to 143, you can define characters 144
to 255 and characters 0 to 13 in this mode, giving you 126 new
characters (more than 15 new sets)!

MULTI-MODE XB Windowing ---------

With Multi-Mode XB, you can easily display windows, PLUS:

    - With the super features of the new accept subprogram, you
      can easily INPUT in windows. In text mode, you can even
      accept in windows in REVERSE VIDEO mode.

MULTI-MODE XB Multicolor mode ----------------

In this mode, the screen is divided in 48 rows * 64 columns of
color boxes. You can change the color of any one of 3072 boxes
with HCOLOR and VCOLOR or read the color of a box with GCOLOR.

You cannot display characters in this mode but you can access them
with sprites. With a magnification-factor of 3, you can see up to
8 characters on the same line.

This is a mode for video games. And there's a lot of them to
invent with this mode for the TI-99/4A...

MULTI-MODE XB Sound lists supports --------------------

Instead of using call sounds, you can build sound lists, load them
in Video Display Processor, and start them playing. Once this is
done, it requires no other program control.

This is an interupt routine, so it will slow done when accessing
VDP. However, for some video games, it's a big "plus" to have a
song playing while waiting for a key, if the program is counting
bonus, or if it's not accessing VDP "all the time".

Creating a sound list (song) can take a while if it's a long song.
In that case, it's a good idea to save the song on disk for
quicker access for future use. You can also save it "behind" an
ext.basic line with Save-Asm-For-Ib, available from PROJEM.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT Multi-Mode XB: With MMXB, you can easely
create or simulate more than 25 of the 31 new calls (statements)
of SEB (ta Triton company) (not the bitmap util.). Plus MMXB
allows text and Multicolor modes.

PURCHASING INFORMATION
for Multimode Extended Basic

MMXB is available for $40.00 U.S. and Canadian, plus $2.50
shipping from Canada. Credit card purchases are $43.00 U.S. and
Canadian, plus $2.50 shipping from Canada. We accept Visa,
MasterCard, and American Express.

Included with MMXB is a Fast Load program, regularly priced at
$14.99, now included with this purchase.

You may order by check or credit card from TI NET Product
Services, P.O. Box 244, Lorton, VA 22079 or call 1-800-376-4951
(U.S. and Canada).

This and other fine TI/9640 products are also available on the TI
NET/Delphi Electronic Shopping Area.

FOR SALE

David Bradley has the following items for sale: TI PEB, disk drive, memory expansion, RS232 plus numerous games and other software. $250 takes everything! Call David at (901) 357-4577.

Robert Raney has the following items for sale: TI99/4a, Speech Synthesizer, joysticks, TE2, Add and Sub, TI invaders, Parsec, Munchman, Carwars, Blasto, Early learning fun, Tombstone city. $75 takes everything. If interested, leave a message on the Midnight Hour BBS at (501) 735-9980.

TRANSITIONS

By Bill Gaskill

The month of August, 1990 has been a difficult one for me, at least from a computing perspective. Two old friends, PERSONAL COMPUTING magazine and PC RESOURCE magazine both produced their last issues this month and have closed their doors forever. Although both were MS-DOS publications, there is a message in their demise for all computer owners to hear. More on the message later. First, a little computer publication history.

PERSONAL COMPUTING was born in January 1976, way back in the dinosaur days before the IBM PC existed. I began subscribing to it in 1984 when I discovered that it actually mentioned the TI-99/4A in some of its articles and software listings. That kind of thing pretty much ended by the start of 1985, but I hung on to my subscription anyway, since I used PC's at work.

In the early '80's I jockied my computer magazine subscriptions among a host of different publications, staying with one for a year, dropping it and moving on to another. There were so many to choose from. Then in 1985 I began to notice that the computer magazine industry seemed to be going through a transition. Some of the stalwarts of the industry, or at least ones that I thought were stalwarts, started faltering, just like the myriad of personal computers that had faltered before them or along with them. It was the plethora of personal computers produced in the '80's that gave life to many of the magazines in the first place, so I guess their demise was sure to spell doom for the publications too.

PC RESOURCE was an upstart publication from the beginning. It targeted MS-DOS users at the novice to intermediate level, something that the folks at COMPUTE! Publications had tried before, when they created COMPUTE's PC and PC Jr. Magazine in March 1984. The PC and PC Jr. effort failed after only a few short months, ending with the October 1984 issue. PC Resource was

born in April 1987, the product of the new PC Clone market that began to appear in 1986. PC Resource was clearly a clone owner's magazine. With the talents of programmers and authors the likes of Dave Rowell, John Wolfskill, Hardin Brothers and a host of other MS-DOS gurus, PC Resource seemed to have carved a niche for itself in the extremely competitive computer publications market. I guess I was wrong though. When I picked up the August 1990 issue and read the editorial that was titled "Time To Close The Doors", I was shocked. I honestly couldn't believe that this "stalwart" publication had gone down the tubes too. Boy was I fooled.

David H. Ahl, arguably one of the most influential pioneers of the PC computer publishing industry, announced the end of his brainchild, CREATIVE COMPUTING, in December 1985. It had been in existence since January of 1975. The failure of Creative Computing seemed to signal the beginning of the end. Many more computer type magazines would be sent to that great printing press in the sky before the decade ended.

Creative Computing can take credit for publishing perhaps one of the most comprehensive articles on the demise of the TI-99/4A ever produced. Written by David Ahl, the article is found on page 30 of the March 1984 issue. In my opinion it far exceeds the completeness and insight found in the Joseph Nocera article of the same topic written for Texas Monthly. Through one reason or another, the Nocera article seems to have gained the status of being "the" resource or authority on the topic though.

In between the demise of Creative Computing and Personal Computing, one can find a graveyard full of both computers and magazines created out of the frenzy of personal computing in the 1980's.

POPULAR COMPUTING, a product of publishing giant McGraw-Hill, began its life in November 1982 and ceased publication with the December 1985 issue. In its hey-day the magazine sported the talents of such current day notables as Michael J. Miller, who now graces the pages of InfoWorld each week.

In March 1984 Popular Computing distinguished itself by being one of the very few non-TI-99 specific magazines to publish a program listing for the 4A. Speedmath, an educational application authored by George Stewart, appeared on page 209. In July of the same year Popular Computing's Associate Editor T.J. Byers wrote an extensive article criticizing Texas Instruments for its decision to use the non-standard TMS9900 chip as the basis for the 4A. The article included an illustration borrowed from a 99er Magazine feature on 3-D Animation with sprites.

Among the best publications that I have ever had the privilege to read was the SIGNAL RESEARCH REPORT, a newsletter like tabloid that was created by former COMPUTE! Magazine editor Robert Lock. It came to life in June 1988 and was among the most valued publications to come across my desk at work. Although it was only about 15 pages per issue, it came out twice a month and contained some of the most concise writing I have ever seen in a commercial publication. Signal Research Report somehow managed to keep me

abreast of what was going on in the hectic MS-DOS world without requiring 200 plus glossy pages to do it. Alas, it only lived about 6 months before succumbing to the pressures of competition. It folded in December 1986. Although the magazine may have been bankrupt in dollars, it certainly didn't seem bankrupt in talent.

COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS was another magazine that disappeared in the latter half of the 1980's. Perhaps it never found a comfortable niche in the computer publications market, but I found TI-99/4A material buried in it that the average reader probably overlooked, or just didn't care about. I don't know when C and E started exactly, 1962 I think, but I'm sure it was a real pioneer in the electronics magazine industry. As computers seemed to take over people's attention in the mid-1970's, I suppose C and E tried to adjust to the market. Somehow it apparently never made it. Computers and Electronics magazine was laid to rest in April or May 1985.

SOFT SECTOR, which was published out of Prospect, Kentucky, was originally a Sanyo 550-555 computer owner's magazine. Like 99ER MAGAZINE when it expanded its market by becoming HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE, Soft Sector tried to survive by jumping onto the PC Clone explosion in 1986. It didn't last such more than a year though, giving up the ghost in November 1987. Unlike other PC Clone magazines, but exactly like MICROpendium, Soft Sector targeted the owner of an out-of-production computer. The big difference is that MICROpendium is still around.

PC CLONES was yet another publication that sprang to life as a result of the PC clone explosion. It was the product of the former TI-99/4A supporters at COMPUTER SHOPPER (Patch Communications) and it lasted from November 1987 until about May 1988 I believe (don't quote me on that one). Although I bought every issue that hit the news stands, I never subscribed to it. The magazine somehow never developed a personality of its own. It was drab and dead just like Computer Shopper. Only Computer Shopper didn't have to have a lively and personable appeal. It was, and I presume still is, THE place to go for the best mail order deal in town.

No doubt there are a host of other computer magazines that have come and gone that I never knew about. I have never been much of an Apple Computer fan so I've not followed its support publication history. I know that there are a couple of Tandy specific magazines out there too. The bottom line seems to be that "it's a jungle out there" in the highly competitive publication industry. For a computer publication to survive today, it must require some kind of tenacity, and a tremendous support/subscriber base.

We know that in our own TI-99/4A and Geneve community we've lost 99er Magazine, Home Computer Magazine, Home Computer Journal, Home Computer Digest, the IUG Newsletter, Enthusiast 99, The Smart Programmer, Super 99 Monthly, the R/D Computing newsletter, The Unofficial 99/4(A)newsletter, the International Home Computer Users newsletter and TIHOME Tidings. We also lost the support of Compute! Magazine, Computer Shopper and Family Computing (now called Home Office Computing), each of which used to publish 99/4A programs, articles and advertisements.

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99er MAGAZINE began in May of 1981 with Volume 1, Number 1, which was a bi-monthly issue (published every other month). In November 1982 publisher Gary Kaplan and company went to monthly issues. This lasted until December 1983 when 99er did a disappearing act that no doubt left subscribers scratching their heads and magazine vendors probably wondering what was going on too.

Then in February 1984 HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE appeared on the news stands and in the homes of former 99er Magazine subscribers. Kaplan and company had pulled a fast one on everybody by expanding the scope of 99er Magazine to include Apple, Commodore and IBM/IBM PC Jr. as well as the 99/4A. The honeymoon lasted until March 1986 when Home Computer Magazine also did a disappearing act. Loyal subscribers got a pitiful looking publication in the mail one day called Home Computer Journal. Included was a notice that said this one HCJ issue was all that current Home Computer Magazine subscribers were going to get in the way of compensation for their remaining subscription dollars. In my case that meant 2 years and 10 months worth of Home Computer Magazine in exchange for 1 issue of Home Computer Journal. What a bargain! I have no idea how long Home Computer Journal lasted, but I can't imagine it was much more than 3 or 4 issues. It was produced by former 99er Magazine and Home Computer Magazine editor David G. Brader, with Gary Kaplan as consultant.

Both the IUG NEWSLETTER and ENTHUSIAST 99 were TI-99 specific publications that were produced by Charles LaFara and the crew at the International Users Group headquarters in Bethany, Oklahoma. The IUG Newsletter was published twice in 1980 (V1/N1 and V1N2), eight times in 1981 (V1/N3-V1/N8), six times in 1982 (V2/N1-V2/N6) and two times in 1983 (V3/N1 and V3/N2). LaFara put it to rest with the decision to produce Enthusiast 99.

In its shorter though perhaps more glamorous life, Enthusiast 99, "The Official Publication of the International Users Group", was able to attract authors the likes of John Phillips, Cheryl REGINA Whitelaw and Bill Gronos (of Hidden Powers of Disk Fixer fame) at one time or another. But the majority of the articles were written by LaFara or members of the IUG "staff". Enthusiast 99 does have the distinction of being the only publication (that I have ever found) to print a photo of the never-released Choplifter game module written for the 99/4A. It's on page 47 of the Sep 1983 issue. Enthusiast 99 issues exist for May 1983 (V1N1), Jul 1983 (V1N2), Sep 1983 (V1N3), Nov 1983 (V1N4), Jan 1984 (V2N1), Mar 1984 (V2N2) and May/Jun 1984 (V2N3).

THE SMART PROGRAMMER was a monthly programmer's newsletter that was produced by Craig Miller of Millers Graphics and later MG notoriety. It was brought to life in February 1984 and lasted until January 1987 under the ownership of Craig Miller and then Richard Mitchell. In June 1986 Miller sold the publication rights to Mitchell, who was already publishing the Super 99 Monthly. Mitchell maintained the high publication standards set by Miller and continued producing The Smart Programmer until January 1987. That was the last issue.

During the Miller ownership era most of the material came from Miller himself, with Los Angeles area 99er Hector Santos helping

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out with the TI-Forth articles. During the Mitchell era of ownership, notable writers such as Barry Traver graced the pages of The Smart Programmer.

SUPER 99 MONTHLY began its life in September 1984, but had pre-release announcements as far back as July 1984. Publisher Richard Mitchell, who now writes information bases for attorneys using IBM and compatible computers, produced a newsletter that was very similar to The Smart Programmer. So much so in fact, that Mitchell combined the two when he purchased TSP in 1986. It was in February 1986 that he announced the merger of the two publications. Thus Super 99 Monthly officially ceased to exist in that month, although the knowledge and expertise of Richard Mitchell and his writers continued on until The Smart Programmer died in 1987.

Unfortunately, I can't tell you much about THE UNOFFICIAL 99/4(A) newsletter except that it existed in 1983, was published by DeBeer Brasses in Clute, Texas, and someone named M.T. Leyton was the editor.

In my wanderings over the last seven years I had only run across mention of it once, and made a mental note to see if I could dig up more information. As luck and old age would have it, I forgot about it (should have written it down, Bill). Jerry Price of TexComp brought The Unofficial 99/4(A) back into the limelight recently when he sent me a copy of the March-April 1983 issue.

Reading inside the taloid I did find out that it apparently started with the November-December 1982 issue and was available for $10 per year, for six issues. Assistance to the novice programmer seemed to be the main emphasis of the newsletter, and it was apparently known well enough to have drawn a full page ad from Elek-Tek, the current day MS-DOS mail order giant, that used be a 99/4A mail order giant.

TIHOME TIdings was first released in February 1981 in England. The first issue of the magazine was sent free to 14 British users by publisher Paul Dicks, apparently in an effort to create a TI Users Group in the United Kingdom.

As far as I can determine, TIHOME TIdings was a monthhy publication, and the policy of giving the magazine away free to British 99ers continued until December 1981. At that point it became available on a subscription or single copy purchase basis.

Despite the contributions of such United Kingdom and European notables as Stephen Shaw, Peter Brooks and Paul Karis supporting it, TIHOME TIdings shut down in May 1983. Karis, you might recall, is credited with discovering the hidden secrets of the PRK module and its CALL A,D,G,H,L,P and S features that were accessible from Console Basic with the Personal Record Keeping module plugged in.

COMPUTE! MAGAZINE began life as a Commodore Pet enthusiast's publication in January 1978. The original magazine was actually a newsletter named The Pet Gazette, and it was founded by a man named Len Lindsay. Lindsay published The Pet Gazette for over a

year as a non-profit making enterprise before turning it over to a Greensboro, N.C. firm named Small System Services. In the Fall of 1979 Small Systems Services brought out Compute Magazine as a quarterly "...Journal of Progressive Computing". It covered mainly Commodore and Atari computers at that point, but did feature articles on how to make hardware mods and such to other computers like the OSI C1P. How many of you remember that computer? I'll bet Norman Spector does.

In October 1982 Compute! (I don't know when they picked up the exclamation point in their name) began advertising for TI-99/4A articles, tutorials and applications. By January 1983 they must have built up a sufficient stock of material, because in that month they began including 99/4A programs and the like in each issue.

The Small System Services company became Compute! Publications in July 1983 and was ultimately swallowed up by giant ABC publications in September of that year. Despite this, Compute! continued to support the TI-99/4A. February of 1986 signaled the beginning of the end of TI support though. From that issue, until the October 1986 issue, Cheryl REGENA Whitelaw's monthly column on TI Basic programming was the only 99/4A material to be found in the entire magazine. The November 1986 issue had nothing on the 99/4A. The only other mention of the TI that I ever found afterwards was in the September 1988 10th Anniversary issue of Compute!, when they alluded to having supported eight different computers in 1983, the 99/4A among them. Despite discontinuing 99/4A support, Compute! Publications ranks among the strongest 99/4A supporters in the computer's history, second only to MICROpendium I believe.

Family Computing was another former 99/4A supporter, but in a very minor way. The few programs that did appear were written in TI Basic (with only one exception that I can think of off the top of my head) and the focus of the programs were absolutely juvenile. By juvenile, I'm talking about programs that made Halloween pumpkins and such on the screen. Not real advanced material. I never really cared for the magazine so I admit to having a void in knowledge of its TI-99/4A support.

So, now that I have covered just about all of the useless trivia rambling around in my head on this topic, what does it all mean? I think that there is a final message that I would like to leave you with that ties it all together. Right now, MICROpendium stands alone as the only commercial publication supporting our computer (Asgard's Reflections notwithstanding). Without it, the TI-99/4A and Geneve community would cease to exist as we know it. If it can happen in the mighty MS-DOS world, it can sure happen one day to us. Wouldn't it be a tragedy to receive a notice in the mail one day that MICROpendium had closed its doors? I think it would. If you are not a MICROpendium subscriber already, then please become one today. If your computer means anything to you, and if you want to continue to see new products developed for it, MICROpendium must survive for developers to have a national audience to market to. Without a medium such as that provided by the folks at MICROpendium, there would be no way for new products to be announced, and hence no new products. Subscription cost is

AIR TAXI by Don Shorock

Reviewed by Jim Peterson

I have always wished that there were more educational programs, above the 2+2=? level, for our computer. And I have always thought that the best educational programs were those that took advantage of computer capabilities to entertain while teaching.

Also, I have always much preferred games that require me to exercise my mind, rather than depending on quick reaction or blind guessing. And, being a programmer, I admire efficient, memory-saving programming.

All that is why I was so very impressed by the new game, Air Taxi, recently released by Don Shorock. It is uniquely educational, very entertaining, and so compactly programmed that the basic version is available on cassette!

The game can be played alone, as it usually will be, or by up to 8 players. Don customizes each game with the default names of whatever number of players you choose and with your home town as the starting point. Each player may select his own handicap level, ranging from A to Z for 6 to 81 cities, and his skill level ranging from 1 to 9 which determines the target size.

A black silhouette map of the entire United States and southern Canada is then displayed; the only features are the Great Lakes, Great Salt Lake, and the coast lines. You are randomly offered a destination to fly to. Since all your friends bum rides from you, and TI users are cheapskates (that is my comment, not Don's!), you are not even paid for your gas for this first trip. It may therefore pay you to refuse any offer to a distant destination - however, each refusal costs you $2.00.

When you accept an offer, you then use the S and D keys to set your initial flight direction, in 45 degree increments (i.e., north, northeast, east, etc.) and press Q. You hear the sound of the motor revving up, and a small cursor dot begins moving from your town in the direction you selected, while your gas gauge shows your fuel being used up. You can use the S and D keys to change direction. If you get close enough (depending on the skill level you selected) before your fuel runs out, the cursor will stop, the motor revs down, and you will be shown the cost of the fuel expended and your remaining bank balance. If your fuel runs

out too soon, you will glide to the nearest airport and you must then set your direction from that point and try to reach your original destination. However, if you were too far from any airport when your gas tank ran dry, you will be returned to your home town and will be assessed repair costs.

Once you have reached your first destination and said goodbye to your freeloading friends, you will then be randomly offered fares, at prices depending on distance, from that point to another city. You have the option to refuse offers, at a cost of $2.00. If you can fly to that point with a minimum of maneuvering, the fare will more than cover the cost of fuel, and you will make money - plus an occasional tip.

There are too many other features to describe here. The program comes with four pages of printed documentation, and the disk version includes three additional files, which can be merged in, to add many more cities or to convert the program for use with a joystick.

At the handicap and skill level K 7 which Don set for me as defaults, I found that I was able to stay ahead of the game by refusing most fares except coastal cities and then cruising along the coast until the airport radar picked me up and brought me in. Trying to find Kansas City or Cheyenne on that black silhouette map would be very difficult without consulting a regular map - and in doing so, you would learn a great deal about the relative location of cities.

This is a commercial program, not fairware, and it is customized for each purchaser. The price is $15 for the disk version, $20 for the cassette version. To get an order form, on which you can specify your own default options, write to Don Shorock, P.O. Box 501, Great Bend KS 67530.

WHY SHOULD YOU LEARN TO PROGRAM?

By Jim Peterson

Why should you learn to program? To make money? No way! If you could write a program to guarantee world peace, eliminate hunger and cure AIDS, you couldn't make money selling it to the TI world!

Why should you learn to program? To contribute something to the TI world? OK, but don't expect any thanks! Contributing a program to the TI public domain is like dropping a pebble into a bottomless dry well - you will never hear a splash, not even a thud.

Why should you learn to program? Because no one has written the program you need? Well, now you have a good reason! Since there is neither money nor recognition in programming, the programmers tend to write what they feel like writing, not what you want them to write.

Why should you learn to program? For one reason, because I know that you would like to make some changes in the programs that you use frequently. I know that, because the only feedback I ever get is from people who wish that I would change this or that! You really wouldn't have to learn very much to change colors, add or silence a beep or a burp, output to disk instead of printer, etc., etc.

Beyond that, unraveling someone else's code can be tricky and frustrating (and I pity anyone who tries to unravel my code!) Often I find it easier to just rewrite the basic idea in my own way.

If you do modify someone's program, please put a note on the title screen, or at least in a REM, that you did so - and unless you are very sure that you have not introduced a bug, don't distribute your version! Programmers do not like to be blamed for other people's mistakes, and the sales of good programs have been ruined by the bad reputation resulting from pirated, modified and bugged copies.

But, the real reason for learning to program - it's fun, it's challenging, it's creative! There is something very satisfying about getting an idea to make the computer do something it has never done (as far as you know!) and then succeeding in making it do what you want. There is a thrill in pushing the limits of that obsolete tiny TI pea brain just a little bit farther.

There are those who prefer to exercise their creativity with the soldering iron, those who can plug in chips and soup up a Model T computer to run like a Ferrari. I regard them with awe and wonderment, and I'm glad they are around. Without them, I wouldn't have my RamDisk, and my equipment wouldn't get repaired.

Personally, I am the ultimate klutz. If I approach my car with a screwdriver, all four tires go flat. My one feeble attempt to repair my P-Box resulted in failure, expense and embarrassment. But, without having more than a faint idea what goes on beneath that keyboard, I have learned to punch the keys (two right fingers and a left thumb) and create hundreds of programs and routines which have given me a great deal of satisfaction.

It's been fun! You should try it sometime.

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GROUP INFO

Visitors and potential members may receive 3 free issues of TidBits while they decide if they wish to join (no obligation). On the top of your label is a code. A Y means you are a member. N means 3 free list, UG means user group and S means a business. Beside the Y is a date, one year from that date your dues are due. A dollar sign ($) on the label will indicate that your dues are due. The library is open only to members. Library list is $1. Mail order disk library access is $2 for the first disk and $1 for each additional disk - max of 5 disks per month. Order by disk number only. At meetings, library access is FREE if you exchange your disk for ours or $1 per disk for our disks. Send all mail order library requests to librarian's address! Send dues and correspondence to group address.

CALENDAR

MEETINGS: September 20, October 18, November 15 (3rd Thursday!)
WORKSHOPS: September 22, October 27 (4th Saturday!)

24HR TI BULLETIN BOARD

The Midnight Hour BBS   300/1200/2400/9600 Hayes 501-735-9980
Dial 735-9980 from Memphis area for toll free call.

GROUP MAILING ADDRESS

Mid-South 99 Users Group
P.O. Box 38522
Germantown, Tn. 38183-0522

LIBRARY ADDRESS

David Ferguson
3377 Creighton Ave.
Memphis, TN 38118

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____ | | $15.00 FAMILY
ADDRESS_____ | | $10.00 JUNIOR (under 15)
CITY_____ ST ZIP____
PHONE(   ) -   :INTERESTS_____

EQUIPMENT,ETC. _____

Detach and mail with check payable to: Mid-South 99 Users Group,
P.O. Box 38522, Germantown, Tn. 38183-0522.

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