TI-99er's In The '90s

Classic Computer Column
by Barry A. Traver

Chicago, Milwaukee...Anaheim?

It was my privilege to attend (and be one of the speakers at) the eighth annual Chicago TI International World Faire, held at the Holiday Inn Rolling Meadows on November 2 and 3, 1990. If you've been wondering how the TI is doing at the present time, you'll be happy to know that there were over 60 TI vendors at the Faire. General attendance, which included people from outside the United States, was actually up from the previous year--estimates varied from 5 percent to 15 percent. For an "orphan computer," the TI isn't doing badly at all!

A schedule conflict regrettably prevented me from also attending the Milwaukee TI Faire on November 4 (Milwaukee is not as large an event as Chicago, but has its own special qualities, and many people like to attend both), so most of this month's column will concentrate on what I saw and learned at the Chicago Faire that may be of interest to you. By the way, if you were unable to make Chicago and/or Milwaukee, there are lots of other TI Faires scheduled. This includes another major event, Fest West 91, on February 16-17, 1991 in Anaheim, California, across the street from Disneyland. For more information, write to Fest West 91

Committee, c/o Bill Nelson, 11692 Puryear Lane, Garden Grove, CA 92640.

Asgard Software/Hardware/ Publishing

As expected, Asgard Software, represented by Chris Bobbitt and various Asgard authors, including David Bishop, Randy Cook, Mike Maksimik and Jim Reiss, had a number of exciting new products to offer, with others shortly to follow--hopefully they will be officially available by the time you read this article.

Actually, about two dozen "new" products are listed in the 1990-91 Asgard Software Catalog! If you'd like a copy (and a copy of the 1991 Asgard Peripherals catalog), write to Asgard, P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20849; phone: 703/255-3085.

If you like games, Asgard has five new ones. Adventure gamers may like to try Randy Cook's Castle Darkholm ($9.95) or Mickey Schmitt's Rattlesnake Bend ($7.95). If you like arcade games, you may want to try David Bishop's Waterworks ($12.95; brand new at Chicago) and Eric Lafortune's Rock Runner ($12.95). And if you like solitaire card games, there's William Reiss' Tournament Solitaire ($14.95), which includes no less than seven popular variations, including Golf, Pyramid, Klondike, Canfield, Calculation, Pile Up and Corners.

As you know, the most popular TI desktop (page) publishing program at the present time for the TI-99/4A seems to be Asgard's Page Pro 99 by Ed Johnson and Chris Bobbitt. Well, Asgard is offering extensive new support to this program, including disks not only by Chris and Ed, but also by Mel Bragg, Shirley Slicer and Paul Scheidemantle. I mean, we're talking about lots of disks here: Page Pro Banner Maker ($12.95), Page Pro Borders #1 & #2 ($7.95/vol.), Page Pro Sideways Picture Printer ($12.95), Page Pro Fonts #1-#3 ($7.95/vol.), Page Pro Headline Maker ($9.95), Page Pro Pics #1-#15 ($6.95/disk), Page Pro Poster Maker ($12.95), Page Pro Templates #1-#12 ($6.95/disk), and Page Pro Utilities ($14.95). That's over three dozen disks!

If you have a TI with a 80-column device (DIJIT, Mechanatronics, etc.) or if you have a Myarc 9640, there is great news for you: Y.A.P.P. by Alexander Hulpke is here! Y.A.P.P., which modestly stands for "Yet Another Paint Program," is not just another paint program. It is a drawing system that takes full advantage of the features offered by the 9938 (or 9958) video chip. Y.A.P.P. ($29.95) comes with an illustrated manual/tutorial as well as "a large collection of original example pictures and fonts." It works best with a mouse (Mechatronic, DIJIT or Asgard), but you can also use a joystick. If you have a TI with enhanced graphics or a Geneve, I believe you'll be interested in this program!

Another new Asgard program at the Chicago Faire was Jim Reiss' Artist Font Maker ($9.95), a utility which allows you to convert a picture into a character of a TI-Artist font. Also, a revised version of Jim's Spell It! ($19.95, $24.95 or $34.95, depending on whether you want DS/DD, SS/SD or HFDC version) is available. Not available at the Chicago Faire, but hopefully available now, is Joe Delekto's Screen Preview ($12.95), a replacement for the TI-Writer formatter that gives you a "screen preview" of what your hardcopy will look like, and Batch It! 2.0 by Charles Earl and Tom Bentley (a rather significant update with new features and a completely rewritten manual).

I mentioned Jim Reiss' Artist Font Maker and Spell It! a moment ago, but the project Jim has been working on that I am really excited about is his Link ($29.95), a terminal emulator on cartridge that "supports full ASCII and XMODEM transfers to disk and cassette." It wasn't finished at the time of the Chicago show, but Chris and Jim assure me that they believe XMODEM transfers to cassette are both possible and realistic.

So--as a TIer and as a SYSOP on the TI RoundTable on GEnie--I have great hopes for this product!

I've left one of the best new products till last--Mike Maksimik's MIDI Master. Yes, Virginia, the TI-99/4A can play MIDI music, because there are those of us who saw (and heard) it happen in Chicago! Asgard is releasing two versions: one for the /4A and one for the 9640 (to take advantage of the Geneve's memory capabilities). Right now you need not only an RS232 card but also a disk system. However, Asgard has announced that it is planning to come out with a "cassette version for 4A users" in the near future. So cassette users, take heart!

Incidentally, one product that I didn't get to see, but which is expected to be released sometime in first quarter 1991, is Asgard's Expanded Graphics Interface (or EGI). The EGI is an easy-to-install "sidecar" that can give the TI-99/4A 80-column (and 256-color) graphics, utilizing the 9938 video chip. If you've been considering upgrading the graphics on your TI, you may want to check it out.

Asgard Authors Form New Companies!

Two new companies at the Chicago show were MS Express (Mickey Schmitt and Mike Sealy) and Notung Software (Ken Gilliland and Ray Kazmer). Apparently inspired by the success of Asgard, Mickey Schmitt (yes, the author of the aforementioned Rattlesnake Bend from Asgard) and Ken Gilliland (the author of Disk of Dinosaurs from Asgard) have begun their own companies! (By the way, as far as far as I can tell, all are still good friends and mutually supportive of one another, as may soon be evident in a moment from the new product offerings involved.)

MS Express (P.O. Box 498, Richmond, OH 43944) has four products to offer: Adventure Hints-Series I ($9.95), Galactic Emperors ($9.95), Sliding Block Puzzles-Series I ($7.95) and Sliding Block Solutions-Series I ($7.95). Add $1/item for shipping and handling when ordering by mail.

Indicative of the "Asgard connection" is Lynn Gardner's Adventure Hints- Series I. This product offers help for three adventure games that are available separately from Asgard Software: Oliver's Twist by Mickey Schmitt and Lynn Gardner ($5.95 from Asgard), Rattlesnake Bend by Mickey Schmitt ($7.95 from Asgard) and Zoom Flume by Lynn Gardner ($7.95 from Asgard). Lynn's hints--

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C LASSIC WORLD / Your TRS-80 Column

➡ FROM PRECEDING PAGE

Davis of Lexington, Ohio, an inmate in a correction center. Mr. Davis graciously included some helpful patches for TRS-80 Model III running under TRSDOS 1.3. I installed many of these on my TRS-80 disks years ago. I'll include a few each issue. Thanks, Jonathan.

To install a patch, simply type the word PATCH followed by the code that follows at the TRSDOS Ready prompt. Remember that you should never-- absolutely never--patch an original DOS disk or any other master disk. Changes should be applied only to backups. This way you are protected from a variety of errors (incor.ect or malicious patches, printing errors, etc.).

I never cared to have to enter the time upon booting my Model III or 4P. To bypass the time request, type: PATCH *0 (ADD = 4EFE, FIND = 215451,CH = C32E4F),

An even bigger gripe I use to have was those useless error messages that weren't messages, but message num-

bers that sent you scurrying to the manual. So, try this for detailed error messages: PATCH *4 (ADD = 4E28, FIND = 20, CH = 18).

In future issues we'll feature more patches. If you have your own tidbits, send them to me. Write to Dr. David Wade, c/o this publication, or to my mail drop at this address:

Recreational Computing
909 Violet Terrace
Clarks Summit, PA 18411.

(Please address mail exactly as shown or it may not get delivered properly.)

Readers who write in for help implicitly give their permission to have their names and addresses published here.

I'll see you next month for another installment of Your TRS-80 Column!

Dr. David Wade, a former academic, is a freelance writer and tennis enthusiast when he's not busy exploring his TRS-80s and other computers. ∎

like the games themselves--make use of the Adventure module (a clever concept developed by Mickey Schmitt). After you load in the hints for a particular game, you use normal two-word (verb/noun) commands (e.g., LIST VERBS or FIND treasure or LEAVE location) to ask for specific help. Printed maps for each adventure are included, as well as the maps built into the programs.

If you've ever played with Sam Loyd's 14-15 puzzle invented in the 1870's, you know how much fun sliding block puzzles can be, but you may not have had opportunity before to explore similar puzzles. Well, Norman Rokke's Sliding Block Puzzles and Sliding Block Solutions (Series I) provide you with three different puzzles of that type. If you desire to do so, you can save a puzzle in mid-game and reload later. Also, you are able to determine how much help you want toward a solution, and whether it is sent to screen or printer.

Then there's Eric W. Kepes' Galactic Emperors, a multi-player game which is sort of like "Monopoly in Outer Space," with the aim of gaining control of all the planets that are in the galaxy. As with Monopoly, the game can be lengthy--each player can have up to 25 outstanding moves, and each move can last from one to about 30 turns!--so options to save or reload the game at any point are included.

Notung Software Software (7647 McGroarty Street, Tujunga, CA 91042) had-- (in addition to fairware programs by Ken Gilliland--five new products to offer at Chicago: Son of Disk of Dinosaurs ($12.00), Filmlib ($7.00), Ring Companion ($8.00), and Fonts and Borders I and II ($7.00 each). When ordering by mail, include $1.00 for shipping and handling--that's per order, not per item!

Ken Gilliland is the author of Disk of Dinosaurs ($9.95 from Asgard) and Disk of Pyrates ($9.95 from Asgard). If you've seen either of those, then you have an idea of how much fun Son of Disk of Dinosaurs is! The "Son" is a 2-disk package and includes lots of dinosaur stuff: TI-Artist instances, text files, a game, an animated cartoon, and more. In short, it's a lot of fun!

Ken describes himself as a "movie-aholic," and the product Filmlib displays his interest in that area. If you have a substantial collection of films on videotape, you'll be glad to hear about Filmlib, which is "a complete videolog for TI-BASE." TI-BASE is an Inscebot database program by Dennis and Chris Faherty, available from Texaments (53 Center Street, Patchogue, NY 11772; phone: 516/475-6463). Notung's Filmlib, as the manual describes it, is "a complete video librarian that not only tells you...the tape and counter number of the movie you want, but also up to three [movie] stars, the

producer, the director, and...who wrote the music score. Also included are...the year [it] was made, how long it was, a 1 to 4 star rating, what category, a synopsis, and more!" You can print your movie list, or search out actors, directors or even movies from a particular year.

If you like Wagner's music and are familiar with Ken's two fairware programs, Richie Wagner's Greatest Hits and Der Ring des Nibelungen (available for $5.00 each from Ken, if you send a self-addressed stamped mailer), you'll be excited about The Ring Companion (text files, a Wagner portrait, a giant Ring picture, other artwork, and a section that lets you examine over 30 leitmotifs or short musical phrases used in Wagner's Ring and explains their meaning!). Also available from Notung Software are Fonts and Borders I and Fonts and Borders II (graphics support in TI-Artist format).

I'm personally encouraged by the new offerings from Asgard Software, MS Express and Notung, and I wish all three companies the best of success!

COMPRODINE: Productive Products

Another company at Chicago was COMPRODINE (COMputer PROgrammers' DIsktribution NEtwork), headed by Rodger Merritt, 1949 Evergreen Ave., Fullerton, CA 92635; phone: 714/990-4577 12-9 PM PT. Distributed at the Chicago Faire, COMPRODINE's Fall 1990 catalog includes 30 software products, all of which are apparently original with COMPRODINE, except for a few titles from Great Lakes Software.

For games, they have Backsteine ($10), Living Tomb ($15) and Warzone ($10) by 15-year-old assembly whiz Quinton Tormanen, and Bingo ($5) by Rodger Merritt. For business programs, COMPRODINE has Formshop ($15) by Rodger Merritt, Steve Mehr and Gene Bohot; Reminders ($10) by William Gaskill; Class ($10) by William Harms; and Extended Business Graphs ($10) by Great Lakes. If ordering by mail, add $1 for each item for S & H, with $3 maximum U.S.

COMPRODINE seems to be especially strong in graphics. Their offerings include Artist Catalog ($10) and Artist Printshop ($25) by Paul Coleman; Color Card ($25), Color Flyer ($20), Picture It ($10) and Print It + ($10?) by Rodger Merritt and Adrian Robinson; Giant Art Posters ($15) by Paul Coleman; Jiffy Card ($15) and Jiffy Flyer ($10) by Rodger Merritt; and Joypaint 99 ($10), Certificate 99 ($10) and Banners 99 ($10) by Great Lakes. Ten more graphics products are available, including the 30-disk Pixease ($60 including binder) which includes 2000 high resolution pictures (from Ron

Wolcott's TIPS) that are ready to be printed out using the TI-Writer editor.

Volleyball, Anyone?

If you like volleyball, you should enjoy USVBA Power Volleyball ($10) from Arcade Action Software, 4122 N. Glenway, Wauwatosa, WI 53222. I brought this one home from Chicago for my son John Calvin, and we're both quite impressed with the program.

The program is written in machine language. The sports action is one-on-one (rather than team-vs-team), but that has enabled (as claimed) some "fantastic graphics and realistic true to life action." You can serve, run, bump, set, spike and block. The manual also mentions something called back bump, but I don't know enough about volleyball to quite know what that means.

The game is played with joysticks, there are four different speed levels, and you can compete against another player or against the computer. This game is one of the best sports simulations that I have seen on the TI. Author Gene Hitz, in my opinion, has done a great job.

Hard Drive News

Chris Pratt's Hard and Floppy Drive Controller (HFDC) didn't make it to the Chicago Faire, but MYARC may be feeling the competition. Soon after the Chicago Faire, MYARC (50 Darren Woods Drive, Martinsville, NJ 08836) announced that it was lowering the retail price of its own HFDC to $200! (When ESD does release its HFDC by Chris, I'll try to report on it here--if I can borrow a copy to test out.)

Incidentally, Tom Freeman of T & J Software (515 Alma Real Drive, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272) was at the Chicago Faire, with a new product intended for hard drive users: Hardback ($15). Here's the description: "Backs up one hard drive to another, preserving tree structure. Eliminates disk formatting and swapping. Will back up all or modified/new files. Can also selectively back up any subdirectory tree. Copy drive ready to use as a new drive, as files are not compressed." Sounds useful to me.

Closing Thoughts

There are yet more significant things that took place at Chicago and are happening now in the TI world, but I'm--to borrow a phrase--"out of space and time." So I'll tell you more in next month's column. Again, I can't promise to answer all letters, but if you'd like to write, my address is 835 Green Valley Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19128. (Or you can phone 215/483-1379, as long as you don't phone collect! In the meanTIme, keep on compuTIn!

D OS WORLD

PC-Based Parametric Modeling

Workbench2 is a software package for mechanical design that combines extensive drawing and "what-if" analysis capabilities with a fast, easy-to-use 3-D solid modeler. Workbench2 runs on a standard PC AT or 386-class personal computer and sells for $995.

Using Workbench2, engineers can construct "smart" 2-D models that respond instantly to every design alteration. This "what-if" analysis capability helps solve problems involving Linkage Design and Kinematics, Tolerance Analysis, Component Development, etc., during the conceptual or pre-CAD stage of product developemnt. Workbench2 also allows engineers to see their concepts right away by using the design database to build 3-D solid models. The package features predefined geometric solids, B-rep primitives, hidden line removal, and extensive shading and viewing capabilities.

Workbench2's solid modeler includes on-line scientific and mass properties calculators. Optional FEA Mesh and Cad conversion features allow users to export designs and data to other programs.

Workbend2 has four integrated mechanisms: Geometry, Equations, Worksheets, and Reports. The package supports more than 50 of these mechanisms in any combination in one analysis, and all four mechanisms are available through individual windows on the screen. Engineers can analyze stresses, forces, accelerations, and velocities. The package handles row and column mathematics, performs up to 25 non-linear simultaneous equations, and features automatic updates and documentation.

ICONNEX offers the 2-D modeling and analysis portion of the Workbench2 package in an unbundled version for $469.00.

For further information on Workbench2 or other ICONNEX Products, call **1-800-ICONNEX** or write to; ICONNEX, 1501 Reedsdale Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15233.