

CLASSIC COMPUTERS

COMMODORE

GeoSynch: GEOS-64 V2.0, Evolution On Display

by D. Roderick Eamon

GEOS-64 Version 2.0—exactly what will this number mean to the average geoUser? More than you can guess. This time around, we will look at the most evolutionary progress the geoUniverse has yet experienced.

Although these numbers herald changes (upgrades), we 8-bit Commodorians usually ignore them. Well, we can no longer afford that attitude—especially when buying the basic GEOS starter package.

A quick glance at two other systems, MSDOS and Apple-DOS, will clear up the murky numerology that developers apply to software. Version numbers represent an orderly though not totally simple progression of upgrades. The first numbers (1. - , 2. -) herald major changes in software, while the second numbers (- .01, - .1, etc.) reveal comparably minor (though possibly significant) upgrades.

It can get more complicated: a couple of years ago, I bought a close-out Commodore Manager database program wearing a version "number" of 1.2-B. Whether the "B" stood for British edition or for the company which produced it, I don't know. Fortunately, adding letters to version numbers is rare.

At any rate, it's the first number of

GEOS 2.0 that says it all: This is the first major update of GEOS for the Commodore 64. This upgrade will be at stores and mail-order houses by the time you read this.

What changes hath BerkSoft wrought? What remains the same? Was it worth waiting for? Will our time spent in the geoUniverse become easier, or will 2.0 unnecessarily complicate this intuitive interface?

A caution before we proceed: the GEOS 2.0 reviewed here is a Beta copy (the absolute latest, but still unreleased, System disk). It's possible that one or more of its features may not be present in the final version. Personally, I feel the odds of this happening at this late date are roughly equal to pigs flying. That said, into the fray!

The GEOS 2.0 Package: Changes

Quick history: GEOS 1.0 lacked color in geoPaint. 1.1, and 1.2 contained the Graphic Environment Operating System's Kernal, a very nice geoPaint, a primitive geoWrite, a deskTop and attendant utilities (Calculator, Photo/Text Managers, Alarm Clock, etc.), QuantumLink, and printer/output drivers.

Version 1.3—the last update— included of these, and added Configure to make a RAM Expander available to the GEOS Kernal. BerkSoft's graphics

wizards also saw fit to build in a few useful keyboard shortcuts into the 1.3 deskTop. Meanwhile, the number of I/O drivers multiplied, and a true mouse driver scampered out.

As BSW and third-party developers marketed add-on applications, Commodore's graphical interface matured and grew powerful; yet, geoUsers and Berkeley Softworks weren't totally satisfied. Although far simpler to use than Commodore DOS, users—after exposure to keyboard control of several features—cried out for more. Berkeley listened (Figure 1).

Put down those hard-earned dollars for GEOS 2.0 and you receive major improvements in the Kernal, deskTop, and Configure. Add to these upgrades a complete GeoWrite Workshop 64 package (with geoMerge, geoLaser, a new feature-laden Text Grabber), a powerful new geoPaint 2.0, and geoSpell 1.1 and the package stretches your dollar further than any previous GEOS package.

Let's examine the major changes to uncover where you gain with this upgrade—and where you lose.

Surprised at that last line? Well, first off, you lose time. It takes 42 seconds to load the new Operating System in-

to memory, versus 31 for old 1.3. Processing additional data through memory accounts for the loading extension: the improved 2.0 deskTop grew 11K bytes larger than 1.3; Configure 2.0, at 19K bytes, swells nearly four times its 1.3 counterpart. And with the Pad Color data (more on this later), this adds up to at least 32,000 more bytes to shove through the circuitry.

Also gone is QuantumLink.

Kernal 2.0

With the Kernal, only performance counts; 2.0 performs admirably as always. The only changes I am aware of here are: an improvement in print routines to speed printing (bravo!) and an alteration to make sure it runs properly with both the 2.0 and earlier deskTops.

The deskTop 2.0 Screen

Changes in GEOS 2.0 show when the initial screen, or deskTop, draws onto the monitor. The Command Menu Bar displays two additional items, "Select" and "Page." A permanent clock rests in the upper right corner. The wire wastebasket stands alone—the Printer

continued on page 248

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

TI Forum

by Ron Albright and Jonathan Zittrain

They're At It Again

According to the *Spirit of 99* (official newsletter of the Central Ohio Ninety-Niners Users Group, 181 Henschman Ave., Worthington, OH 43805), the Chicago Users Group will be having their 1988 version of the TI-Faire on November 12. This year will mark the 6th anniversary of this landmark event. The location will be at the Holiday Inn, 3505 Algonquin Rd. in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. This year's happening will be the most full-featured gathering yet. There are activities planned for the kids as well as the spouses. A social mixer is planned the evening before the Convention as well as a post-faire dinner at the Inn. As always, I am confident that the Chicago Faire will be the TI congregation of the year. So plan to attend. You can get additional details from Marcy Brun, Faire Manager, Chicago Users Group, P.O. Box 578341, Chicago, IL 60657; (312) 755-0051.

Batter Up!

Just when you think the supply of new game cartridges for the TI 99/4A has dried up, you get a pleasant surprise. Triton (P.O. Box 8123, San Fran-

cisco, CA 94128; 1-800-227-6900) has produced a new plug-in module called Strike Three! John Phillips, who programmed for Texas Instruments and has produced some of the truly ingenious games available for the 99/4A, has come up with what he says is one of the best of his programs. I have to agree.

This baseball simulation comes as a single, solid-state module. No disk drives, memory expansion, speech synthesizer, or even joysticks are required (or supported). Everything is controlled from the keyboard. You can play against a friend or the computer and playing the computer supports two levels of expertise.

Strike Three! divides the keyboard into the pitching keys (right side) and batting keys (left side). The pitcher decides how fast he wants the pitch thrown (fast or slow; + or -), where he wants to locate the pitch (high, middle, or low; I, J or M), and what breaks he wants (left, none, or right; 8, 9, or 0). Once set, you press "period" to have the pitcher deliver. The batter then decides whether or not he wants to take the pitch (press nothing) or to swing (high, middle, or low; E, D, or X). Statistics decide whether you hit the ball

continued on page 253

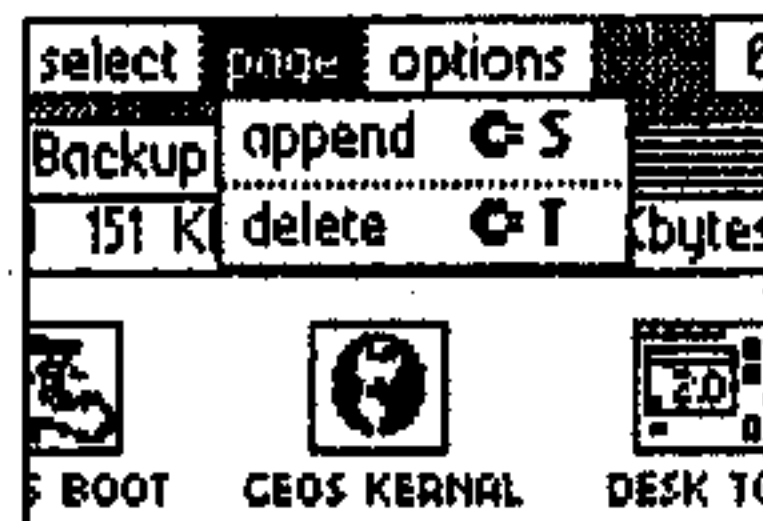
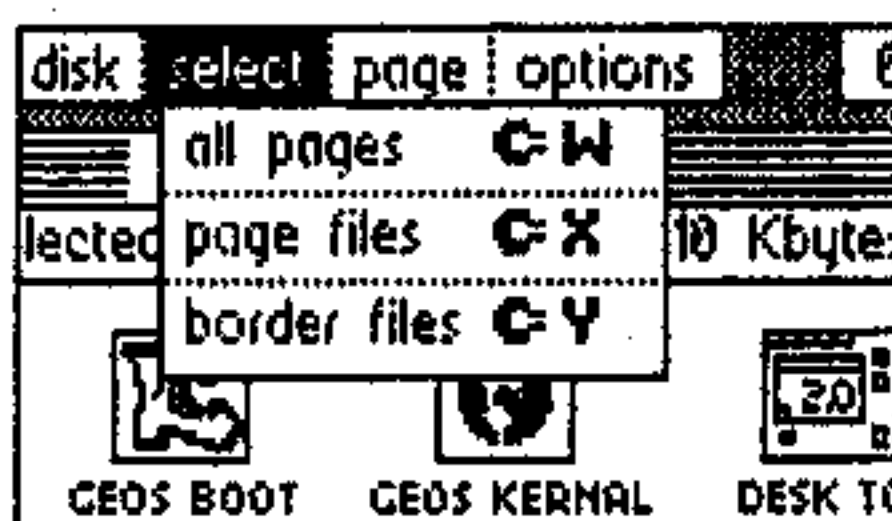
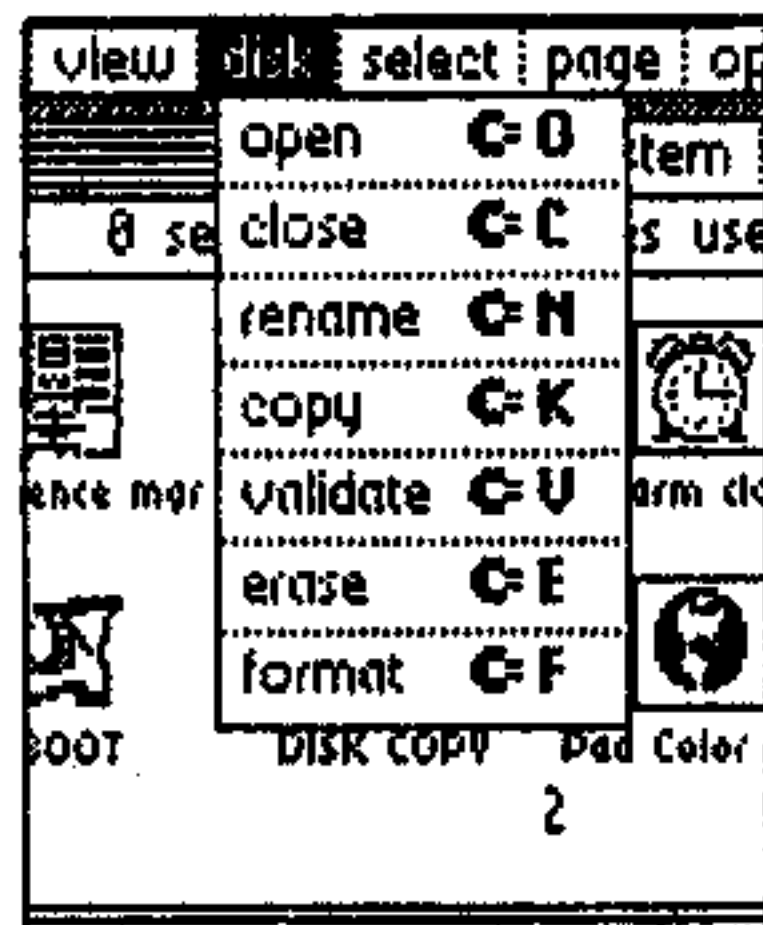
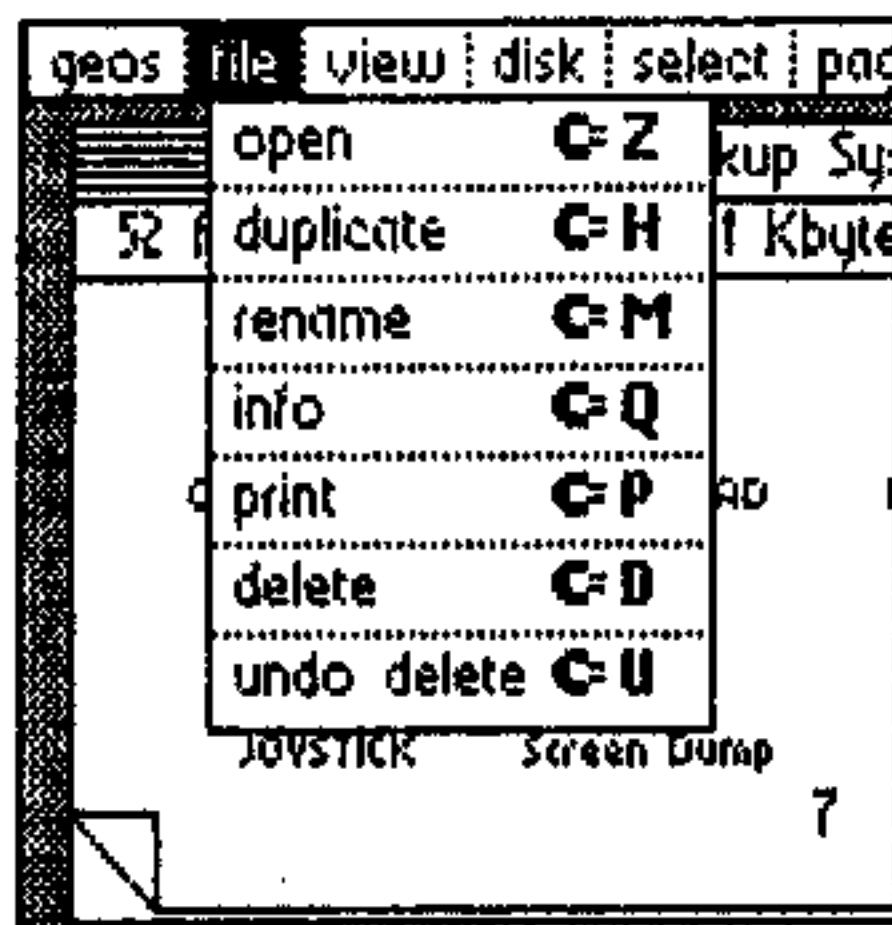


Figure 1—New deskTop 2.0 Command Bar.

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

TI Forum continued from page 241

or not and whether it is called a strike or a ball if you take. If you hit the pitch, there is a crack of the bat and crowd sound effects.

The screen graphics are, in my opinion, not as good as the Baseball game cartridge from Milton-Bradley. But, then, that requires the MBX game system, not a simple console. With the constraints I am sure John had to work with, the screen is excellent. The display is divided into a score area (where scores are displayed for each of nine innings as well as the status of balls, strikes and outs), the view of home plate (where the pitcher and batter are animated), the playing field itself (where runners are shown), and a message area where you are prompted for entering your pitching and batting options. You also see the umpire's calls in this area. When the batter gets a hit, a runner will pop into view at the appropriate base.

Strike Three! is a super game. I guess it was designed with the console-only users (there are still lots of these out there) in mind since it does not take advantage of the auxiliary hardware (speech, joysticks, memory expansion) available for the TI. Nevertheless, it is a nice package. I didn't get a price with the package, but you can call Triton to inquire. I usually give software I receive away in the monthly drawing but, sorry, not this time. My kids would never forgive me.

Did You Hear?

According to CompuServe's *Online Today* electronic magazine, Texas Instruments is producing another computer. This time, not for the home computer market but for preschool children. The miniature computer, called Computer Fun is designed for children under the age of eight. According to James Moran, Computer Fun is the first US computer to be marketed to preschoolers. The retail price will be \$90.00. But, according to Moran, for this price, the machine will provide at least one capability not generally available for more conventional personal computers—a voice recognition system. Before you get too excited, Computer Fun's voice recognition system is limited to two words, yes and no. But it will accept virtually any voice's rendition of the two words. Other features planned include cursor control, a standard keyboard layout, a scrolling display and simple programming capability. The computer will sport a flip-up liquid crystal display. According to TI, the 1600 pixel screen will support animated action. Programming, on a minor scale, is possible, and Computer Fun comes with a number of built-in ROM-based software packages. The programs are based on the usual preschool activities that involve letters and numbers. But, when the child tires of school, the machine can switch to a creative playing sequence to keep children interested. According to Moran, "Computer Fun is one of a series of four new Texas In-

struments products developed for younger children. All of the products are software-based and most can be expanded with the use of optional cartridges." Sounds like interesting stuff for sure. No details were available as to what chip will make up the CPU. I wish Texas Instruments luck.

J & K H Address Correction

Jim Hollender of J & K H Software has moved. J & K H was mentioned in Barry Traver's recent *Extending Extended BASIC*. The new address is 4911 South 31st Street, Arlington, VA 22206-1655. The phone number is still 703/820-4131.

Tracking Down PC Pursuit

In past issues we've talked about Telenet's PC Pursuit service. PC Pursuit is intended for hobbyists to be able to access electronic bulletin boards across the country in major metropolitan areas at a flat rate of \$25/month, using Telenet's network during off-peak hours. PC Pursuit has had its share of problems (including rumors of system "crackers" who had broken into the network), but on the whole has been very valuable to the telecommunications hobbyist—especially in the TI community, where local bulletin boards and user groups take the place of the manufacturer for support of the user. For more information about PC Pursuit, call 1-800-835-3001.

A Letter To Fairware Authors

Fairware (software that may be freely distributed but for which payment is requested to the author if used) has been another valuable force in the TI community. Ruth O'Neill, a TI luminary from Ottawa (and editor of the group's newsletter), has composed an open letter to aspiring fairware authors that we think has some really valuable suggestions. The letter follows.

The following comments are strictly the opinion of the author, and do not represent the position of any group or organization.

Dear Fairware Author:

Fairware (shareware, freeware) is a wonderful thing for the user at large. Being able to try your software out before paying for it is a special privilege for a computer user, and one that I would like to see continued. I realize that this privilege is all too often abused, and that it is quite possible that you will not receive just compensation for your work. I do believe, though, that there are certain things you can do to help us, as users, to understand your position better, and that will increase the likelihood of our paying you for your work. These are the things that I would like to see in fairware programs:

1) Clearly indicate how the program is being distributed. By all means, put a "copyright 1988 your name" in the title screen, but if the program is either public domain or fairware, tell us that, too. Too many programs that authors might like to have distributed freely have been left out of user group libraries

because their status was uncertain. If you want to make your program public domain, and expect no money in return, good for you! That is a generous contribution to our community. On the other hand, if you have chosen to distribute your program as fairware, please make that clear too.

2) Put this information in the program, perhaps in the title screen, where it is easy to find. It isn't necessary to be overly obtrusive, but it should be possible to check the status of your program by running it up and looking in an easily-accessible place. Make sure your address is there, too. This information can be put in the documentation, but unfortunately it is all too easy for the program to become separated from its documentation. Another sad fact is that the documentation is all too often left unread, especially on those programs that are sufficiently well-written that they can be run fairly easily without reading the documentation thoroughly. Our failure to read the documentation is certainly not your responsibility, but you should keep that possibility in mind if you expect us to know that you want us to pay you for your work.

3) Don't give us an easy out. Tell us to pay you if we use the program, not if we like it. It's all too easy to rationalize not paying you if we have to like the program before we pay you. We can use the program every day, and still be slightly unsatisfied if it doesn't perform a certain function precisely the way we would like it to. You still deserve payment in such a case.

4) Suggest an amount to send in. Give us specific guidelines. Put a price on your work. Having to decide how much to send you will probably delay payment, as we use the program longer and longer so we can properly decide on its worth. You don't have to insist on a certain amount, though. You may want to tell us that any amount is welcome, but please give us some guidelines.

5) Don't undervalue your work. We in the TI world are fortunate in the amount of software that is available to us at prices far below those paid by owners of other computers. Most of you will have spent a considerable amount of time and effort writing your programs, and that should be recognized. Don't ask me for less than \$5.00, either. It's hard to picture my 2 or 3 or even 4 dollars making a difference to someone's life, so I suspect that most people won't place sending you a very small amount of money very high on their list of priorities. I know I'd feel much guiltier delaying a payment of \$10.00 than of \$2.00. Besides, if your program is worth paying for, you deserve more than that.


None of these are actual requirements for fairware. They are simply things that make it far more likely that I and, I believe, many other users will pay you for your work.

And now a note to any fairware users reading this:

Make a list of the fairware you use, and check off any that you have sent in your contributions for. For the rest,

continued on page 474

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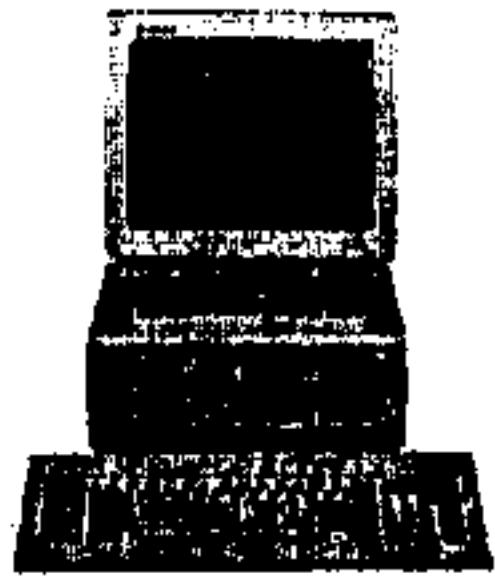
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TI Forum continued from page 253

if you actually use them, whether or not you truly like them, whether or not the author has been especially clear about what should be sent, start sending out cheques!

Ruth O'Neill

c99 v4.0 / Horizon RAMdisk Problem

c99 author Clint Pulley (Source: TI7395; CIS: 73247,3245; GENie: C.Pulley) offers the following bug fix:

Two c99 users have advised me of system lockups occurring on 99/4A systems equipped with the Horizon RAMdisk when loading the c99 v4.0 compiler. As I do not have an HRD it will be necessary to guess at a solution to this problem. The only change which I made to the compiler's start-up code between v2.1 and v4.0 was the issuing of the assembly language equivalent of CALL FILES(3). This was done in an attempt to eliminate a problem with

certain versions of Funn'web which left a file open when running the compiler, resulting in errors with #include.

To bypass the issuing of this call, in the hope that it is responsible for the HRD problems, do:

With a sector editor, locate the first sector of file C99C. At byte offset 7C (hex), 124 (decimal) is this sequence: 0420 2120 0010. Replace the first word in this sequence (0420) with 1002 (hex). The sequence at 7C/124 should now be: 1002 2120 0010.

Any attempt at patching should be done on a copy of the compiler files, not the original.

Winding Down

This month's winner of the giveaway is Duane Wangen of Newtown, North Dakota. Duane picks up TI-BASE, the hot new database software reviewed in the August Forum and a copy of *The Communicating Computer*, Ron's book for the novice, beginner, non-expert, thinking about trying it modem user. ●

Mini Book Reviews continued from page 405

page listing a dozen or so editors and a large number of individual authors. Technically, the Special Edition is a revision of a Lotus text going clear back to 1983, and celebrates a million-copy sales milestone of the original, but with over 400 pages of new material to include PS/2 machines and all the new Lotus companions, it's arguably a new text. A lot of the material is in direct response to user's questions to *Absolute Reference*, the publisher's Lotus newsletter.

The Que cards, on the other hand, are an extended user's guide printed on stiff, 5"x8" cardboard and bound in a ring binder, along with assorted stick-on labels, tabs, a folding cardboard easel, etc. This approach takes some getting used to, but for many users will probably be handier while actually working at the desktop than shuffling through telephone book-sized manuals.

Heard On-Line continued from page 473

to roam the halls at night and read all the material that comes in before you see it. I can thus steal ideas for this column as well as learning very valuable things about Timex Sinclairs and TI/99s. In pursuing this month's timeless prose, I came across a tale of woe about fax modems not working properly. The computing public constantly gets and, unfortunately, has come to expect indecipherable instructions, incomplete solutions, and worst of all, things that just don't work. We even have developers of hardware and software explaining away the problem by saying that things are too complex or expensive to test.

In writing about this problem last year, we quoted a *Wall Street Journal* piece of January 28, 1987 by Bob Davis—"Vernon Kidd, an east Texas bus driver, was making progress against skin cancer last spring when his computerized radiation therapy machine went haywire and killed him. Atomic

Many of the cards have a cross-reference for more detailed coverage in the publisher's other textbooks.

Mastering Lotus HAL

A. Frank Iritz and Maxine Haren Iritz. (1988) Scott, Foresman. ISBN 0-673-38083-1 409 p. \$19.95

As most users are aware by now, HAL (Human Assistance Language) is a companion program for Lotus, a kind of command shell with a limited but very helpful form of AI natural language processing. HAL allows a user to type commands like "Increase Col. c by 50%" or "Extract Unique name with widget quantity > 1000" instead of endless cursor-pushing and cryptic alphanumeric commands. The 21 chapters in this text are divided into four parts, covering Spreadsheet Operations, Graphing, Database Operations, and Macros, respectively, plus a number of helpful appendices. Layout and readability on this text are very good, well above average for business texts. ●

Energy of Canada Ltd., the manufacturer acknowledges that the equipment may have been partly to blame but says that it can't possibly catch every bug." Davis goes on to state "During the past five years, software defects have killed sailors, maimed patients, wounded corporations and threatened to cause the govern-securities market to collapse. Such problems are likely to grow as industry and the military rely more on software to run systems of phenomenal complexity.

It seems to me that the climate has changed since I quoted the Davis column in March 1987. We have fax modems that don't work, programs that ship months late or, in some cases like Modern Jazz, never. Whether or not we need or want Star Wars is not the point; if we do need or want it, we do not want it to have to be built in Korea to work. Instead of pressing the industry to solve Blumenthal's problem, let's press it to make things work the way they're supposed to! Maybe then the columns in this work of literature won't be as funny but we'll all be a helluva lot better off! ●