

## CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC COMPUTERS CLASSIC

## COMMODORE

## QLINK

## A Critical Path To The geoUniverse

by D. Roderick Eamon

This month, rather than reviewing a major release, I'd like to tell you a few things about how a modem and a good terminal program greatly enhances your Commodore's productivity while running under the Kernal. Presently, I subscribe to two such services: QuantumLink and DELPHI. Of course there are many other fine online services, and you'll find both GEOS and Commodore support on most of them. For more information on these, check out Michael Bank's "Networking" column elsewhere in *Computer Shopper*.

QLink's GEOS Arena boasts the best coverage of Berkeley Softwork's Operating System. With patience, pluck, and perseverance you'll unearth public domain and shareware applications, utilities, fonts, text and graphics files that make life in the geoUniverse more efficient, fun, and survivable.

I didn't include every GEOS-oriented offering: I don't do the impossible. Consider what you are about to read, a small glimpse into the real potential QLink offers geoUsers.

**QuantumLink:****Ultimate Commodore Support?**

As a Commodore-specific service, QLink is accessible only with the dedicated telecommunications software from QuantumLink. GEOS 1.3 and 1.4 users will find a free copy of this on the back of their main Boot disk. While lacking DELPHI's wider range of features (you can't send or receive Telex or fax messages on QLink, nor use your 2400bps modem at flank speed), QLink offers services targeted directly at Commodore users which makes it stand quite tall indeed. For example:

- Want a "Hot Line" to Commodore? On QLink, you've got it. Questions I posted midweek were

answered in a day or two. If you've ever tried to call Commodore's non-800 number, or sent mail, you know how great this pipeline is.

- Helpers (called QGuides) are always ready to help, and most of the folks you meet in the People Connection know the ins and outs of the system, so don't be afraid to ask if confused.

- An online encyclopedia, American Airlines reservations system, the Mall (an online shopping area), a user group area, and a gaggle of other goodies fill the eight different departments. If you also own a Commodore MSDOS machine or an Amiga, you'll also find software and message boards here.

Some of QLink's services are "free;" actually, part of the \$9.95 a month basic service charge. You'll find the real GEOS action in the Commodore Software Showcase. Here's a quick warning to the budget conscious: "GEOS Arena" is a "Plus" area. When you select it (or any area marked with a "+") from the menu, you'll be charged on a per-minute basis, added on top of the monthly fee. Preplanning is the best way to go here.

**Roadmap To The Arena**

If you've never signed up, contact QLink via the 800-number at the end of this article: they'll instruct you on the basics. Once connected, and select the upper left Box called, "Commodore Software Showcase, and a menu bearing the GEOS Arena will appear. The Arena is divided into a series of menus and sub-menus. Before proceeding, a few special rules apply concerning GEOS programs, text, and graphics.

GEOS uses ASCII, not PetASCII. To transfer GEOS files (in either direction), you must first convert them to/from PetASCII format. The original Convert program on your QLink disk is fine for text and graphic file translating, but

almost useless when attacking application, desktop accessory, and other program conversions.

Convert 3.0, a self-converting GEOS program found in the BSW Applications area, is a must for converting downloaded GEOS files—both program and data types—back into a form you can use. Download this file first and load it as a basic program to dissolve it. Without Convert 3.0, most GEOS file downloads are unreadable in any form. On QuantumLink's Version 3 or 4 disk is an earlier Convert. This will handle text and graphics, but they won't convert many recent uploads, especially the applications.

GEOS-128 users should download 128 Convert 3.0, and use their QLink 128 Convert to change it into GEOS

format. You'll find 128 Convert on QLink V-4.0, on the back of the GEOS 128 Master Boot disk.

**In the Software Library**

The areas of the GEOS Arena which give you the greatest return for your \$.08 per minute investment are the Software Libraries (Figure 1). That said, let's look at how to stretch a few geoDollars into a lot of geoPerformance!

**geoPaint Graphics**

You'll find amazing artwork here, but most of them are large, so download sparingly and start with plenty of file space on your download disks.

**geoWrite Files**

These are worth looking into if a particular title interests you. I normally continued to page 267.

## TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

## TI FORUM

by Barry Traver and Jonathan Zittrain

**Faire News**

One of the significant events on the West Coast will take place this month: TI-Fest West, scheduled this year for February 18th and 19th from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Clarion Hotel at Balboa Park (formerly Lafayette Hotel) in San Diego, California. Unlike previous years, Fest-West '89 is sponsored by the Southern California Computer Group (P.O. Box 21181, El Cajon, CA 92021). (They are, however, working in conjunction with the Los Angeles 99er User Group and are being assisted by the Tucson 99er User Group, so this TI Faire is broadly based.)

This Faire promises to be a major event, with 5200 square feet of exhibit space available and with no charge for booths and tables for commercial exhibitors and user groups (a policy not true of most TI Faires)! My own prediction is that this policy will encourage the presence of lots of vendors and user groups. In addition to the Fest West itself, San Diego has much to offer people of all ages (Sea World, the San Diego Zoo, etc.), so it may be a good opportunity to plan a vacation for the whole family, especially since the Fest happens to fall on a 3-day holiday weekend (so that you will have time on Monday to do some sightseeing).

For more information on Fest West in general, you can write to TI-Fest West, S.C.C.G., at the preceding address, or you can phone their BBS at 619/278-8155. (Exhibit space request forms and hotel reservation forms are also downloadable from this BBS.) If you want information on room rates, you can phone 800/843-9988 (or, in California, 800/423-1935), but you should be sure to mention your plans of attending the TI-Fest. (The hotel, incidentally, is located at 2223 El Cajon Boulevard, San Diego, CA 92104.)

Faires and fests like this demonstrate that the TI-99/4A is alive and well in living in—well, everywhere in the

country. If you can't attend TI-Fest West this month, watch for other similar events that may be scheduled in your vicinity.

**Good News For Hardware Hackers**

Hardware buffs will be glad to hear that the Chicago Area TI-99/4A Users Group (P.O. Box 578341, Chicago, IL 60657) has put together an extensive collection of 77 hardware articles on various topics from TI-99/4A user group newsletters. (Credit is given to authors and user groups where known.) The cost? Only \$6.00 (plus about \$4.00 for postage if you're ordering it by mail, since it takes up quite a bit of paper!).

What's included? Information on cleaning, repairing, modifying, and building. Articles deal with the console, light pens, supercarts and super supercarts, adding 32K (inside speech synthesizer or inside console on 16 bit bus), disk drives, modems, keypads, joysticks and trackballs, home control and burglar alarms, modifying the P.E.B., video improvements, and more. Authors include John Clulow, Ron Gries, Jim McCulloch, Travis Watford, and others. (John Willforth, for example, tells how to install Extended BASIC inside the console, an especially good idea for those who must port their TI from place to place.)

There are even a few articles intended for technoklutzes like me. I especially liked the one by Jim Nollan. For the first time in my life, I began to make sense out of electronics. As Jim explains, "smoke" is what makes integrated circuits and in fact all electrical things work. Remember when smoke escaped from the Lucas voltage regulator on your car? Didn't it stop working? The wires carry smoke from one device to another in all electronic gadgets, and when this harness springs a leak, the smoke comes out and nothing works any more. (I'm no technical genius, but it seems to make a lot of sense to me! <grin>)

More seriously, this

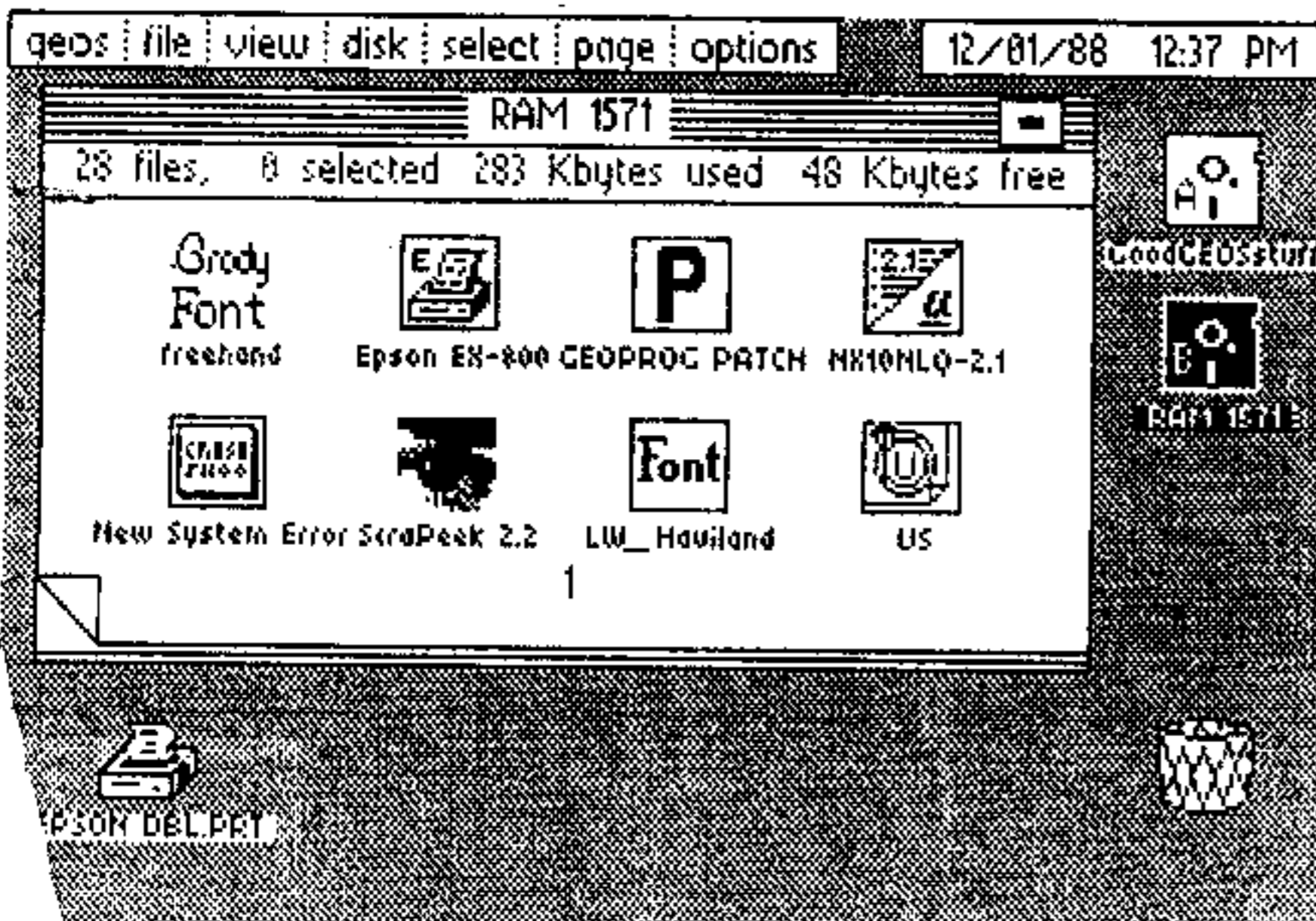


Figure 1—Some GEOS files from QuantumLink.