

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

CLASSIC COMPUTERS

TI FORUM

by Barry Traver And Jonathan
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TI Fairs Doing Fairly Well!

One sign of the continuing life of the TI-99/4A can be seen in the numerous and sizable regional gatherings of TI'ers, whether such an event be known as a Faire (perhaps the most popular term), a Fayuh (New England style), a Fest (as in TI Fest-West), or something else (such as the New Jersey TICOFF, an acronym we'll let you ask the New Jersey people about). One interesting fact is that the TI notables often show up at even the smaller fairs (more about that in a moment).

It all started in the San Francisco Civic Center on October 22-24, 1982. This "TI Fest"—which described itself as "a personal computer conference, trade show and seminar"—was sponsored by *99'er Magazine* (later known as *99'er Home Computer* and then *Home Computer* before it discontinued publication). Judging from the seminar speakers (most of whom were TI employees), I suspect that the event was co-sponsored by TI, albeit unofficially. The dozens of seminars presented ran from "How to Start and Run a Users' Group" and "Third-Party Software Development" (still important topics today) to "Interactive Video Course Design" (featuring TI's video controller at the onset of the VCR revolution) and two sessions on "Introduction to TI PILOT" (a p-system based language never officially released by TI, although rumors exist of its being presently in quiet circulation). As far as I know, this San Francisco TI Fest was the only significant TI fair to take place during the entire time that Texas Instruments was supporting the

TI-99/4A.

That quickly changed when TI'ers were on their own. During the past several years, one or the other of the two authors of this column have attended TI fairs in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Ottawa, San Diego, Seattle, and elsewhere. Many of these have become regular annual events. As with the original San Francisco TI Fest, people come because of the special speakers and software/hardware vendors, but the most important reason may be just the opportunity to get together with other TI'ers. The "Fair Phenomenon" (nothing on the same scale that I know of is occurring with other orphaned computers) seems to be showing no signs of slowing down. Although a few fairs have reported slightly decreased attendance this past year, others report the maintaining of earlier levels, and some report actual increases.

If such fairs are not being sponsored by TI or a commercial TI magazine, who is sponsoring them? The answer is that they provide an illustration of what TI user groups can accomplish, even smaller user groups such as the one that organized the excellent TI Fair held in Lima, Ohio on Saturday, May 20, 1989. I had the privilege of staying overnight at the home of Charles Good, one of the active members in that user group. Someone told me that the group had perhaps only twenty-five members, but the Lima fair itself was very professionally done, one of the best I have attended, which demonstrates what other user groups may be able to accomplish with similar commitment by a limited number of dedicated workers.

Although the Lima fair was not as large as Chicago or San Diego or other big-city fairs, it had its share of TI notables (well-known and lesser-known) in attendance, as I have already suggested, including Chris Bobbitt (Asgard Software), Gary Bowser (of TASS fame and co-author of *Diskodex 2001*), Jim Horn (of *Disk Only Software*), Irwin Hott, Harold Hoyt, Steven ("SUPERBASIC") Karasek, Bud Mills (Horizon RAMdisks), Jim Peterson (the old Tigercub himself), Paul Scheidemantle (of P and A Software), Mickey Schmitt (author of *Oliver's Twist*), Mike Wright (TI archivist), and many others (who I hope will forgive me if I didn't include their names in my list).

A number of these people gave seminar presentations, and the talks were videotaped. If you were not able to attend the Lima fest yourself but want to take advantage of that part of the fair, your user group (no individual orders, please!) can order the tapes through Charles Good, Box 647, Venedocia, OH 45864. (I think you can either send a check for \$10.00 or two VHS videocassettes with prepaid mailer, but you should probably check with Charles on the details before sending in your order.)

The vendors I talked with indicated that they were very satisfied with their sales. In short, even though the fair was not as large as some others, no one seemed to have lost any money as a result of being in attendance! I think one of the reasons for Lima's success was that the group went out of its way to make it attractive for vendors to attend (no high-priced tables here!), and I for one hope that the Lima users group will be sponsoring a similar TI

fair in 1990. (If so, I hope to be there!)

It's A Bird, It's A Plane, It's SUPERBASIC!

New at the Lima TI Faire (and demonstrated by the author) was version 2.0 of SUPERBASIC (\$25 plus \$2 shipping/handling if ordered by mail) by Steven Karasek (855 Diversey Drive, St. Louis, MO 63126; phone: 314/961-2052). Actually, SUPERBASIC has been around quietly for a while (reportedly since 1987), but it has received little attention from the TI community until just recently. Because of its growing popularity, it's being released in an updated version, and it's fitting in with the other ten "Extended Extended BASICs" already reviewed in this column, this seems like a good time to give it the attention it merits.

Like DEP, EDP, String Master, STAR, SXB, XDP, and XXB (and unlike the Mechatronic XB II+, Myarc XB II, and Triton SEB), SUPERBASIC resides in low memory space, taking up essentially the entire 8K. Unlike anything else, it uses a "key" as a hardware protection device, a small plug that fits into the joystick port, a very minor inconvenience that protects the author but somewhat limits the user. Like all the rest, SUPERBASIC allows you to add new commands and powers to TI Extended BASIC without losing the benefits of TI XB.

What is SUPERBASIC? It's a unique combination of ingredients, especially of use to XB programmers. Personally, I find it to be at its best in command mode (although many of the same features can be accessed with CALL LINKs while running a program). For example, SUPERBASIC gives you a DOS (Disk Operating System) that

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◆ GEOSYNCH

selects submenu item, and RETURN executes the command.

Hard to remember shortcuts, all geoWrites, 2.0-2.1:

Center text	C=/E
Right justify text	C=/R
Left justify	C=/A
Full justify	C=/J
Double-space line	C=/D
1.5 space line	C=/M
Single-space line	C=/K

And finally, C=/Q exits users from many of the Desk Accessories.

QLink GEOS Data

Peter Hughes, one-half of the set of twins known as the Gurus of Graphics, has been appointed the Arena's official tender of the GEOS

Download Library: an excellent choice. Congratulations, Peter! In the same vein, the online geoReps, now online for over a month, have proved a resounding success! I've used them myself, and received solid information each time.

New and notable GEOS Arena software: Big Clipper (a larger-than-Paint window graphics capture program by Neck Vrtis); geoMonitor (a read-only machine language monitor) and geoDiskEdit—both written by Mike Craig—a 128-only track and sector disk editor with all of the bells and whistles that runs entirely in GEOS 128 in 40 or 80 columns. The latter Application is easier to use than any

other T&S editor in my library, and GeoDiskEdit's point-and-click simplicity and two-key shortcuts makes disk repair and file hacking fun!

A Final Plea

I don't write my own GEOS software because: (1) I haven't enough hours in the day and (2) there are already some fantastic designers at work, both at BSW and in the freelance world. Commodore users are notorious for not supporting shareware authors. If this attitude persists we'll lose these creative people—we've already lost one of last year's GEOS Programming Contest winners and we'll lose more—if you don't act. If you use a shareware product, send a

few dollars to the creator. Support them before they dump their 8-bit machines for Amigas!

We'll that's it for this month. Send questions, comments, and GEOS-related ideas to me, care of *Computer Shopper* or on QLink and Delphi to my username, Geodeamon.

Ordering information and suggested prices of products mentioned: Personal Publisher (C-64 GEOS 1.2, 1.3), \$14.95 (plus \$3.00 shipping/handling), Expert Software, Post Office Box 1911, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156.

GeoCalc 128, \$49.95, Berkeley Softworks, 2150 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.