GUEST EDITORIAL.....ROGER CRAMPTON

It seems that one of the gripes most frequently heard at the bull sessions following our meetings are complaints about how terribly long it takes to receive something that was ordered from a computer mail-order house. For example, I ordered a command module from the TI Program Exchange in Torrance, California, on February 28th. It is now seven weeks later and no word at all, not even a note explaining the delay. Since I sent in a bank money order, the old excuse that it took longer than expected for the check to clear is not valid. If this were an isolated incident, then most of us would not worry about it very much; but nearly everyone in our group has had similar experiences.

For a change, I'd like to relate some tales about prompt, courteous and efficient service from a mail-order vendor. On April 5th, I ordered the Super Cataloger program from J&KH Software in Arlington, Virginia. That's the disk sort and management program that is described in glowing terms in the March 99er Magazine. I was astounded when the program arrived on the 14th of April after just 9 days! It was mailed first class, well-packed and, even more surprising, I had paid with a personal check rather-than my usual practice of buying a money order!! I'm certainly not accustomed to quick service like that, and I recommend J&KH to you enthusiastically. By the way, the program works perfectly, exactly as described in the 99er article. It's well worth $19.95.

Another computer dealer with whom I've had a wholly satisfying relationship is Dave Walley of Sunbelt Computers in Daleville, Alabama. I've purchased a Disk Drive, a disk controller card and an RS232 card from Dave and in each case, the equipment arrived within a week. That's an almost unbelievable record for Texas Instruments peripherals, but somehow Dave comes through. Other local users' group members have ordered printers and materials from Sunbelt and have been just as happy.

Besides Dave's quick and friendly service, he is also very knowledgeable in computer matters and is always happy to discuss and demonstrate his equipment. Dave has an I.B.M. personal computer hooked to a Smith-Corona TP-1 letter-quality printer and he is very likely to proselytize you if you give him the chance, so be careful!

Another significant advantage of doing business with Dave is that intangible but important factor of keeping your money in the local area. Call Dave if you are in the market for any peripherals or materials. He's in the Daleville white pages but by mistake got left out of the yellow pages.

Let us know if you have happy or unhappy experiences purchasing computer programs or equipment and we'll alert our members. We're especially interested in hearing about pleasant transactions and hope that your mailbox is kept full of neat programs and goodies.

You've probably noticed that several manufacturers other than TI are now advertising peripherals for our TI 99/4A computers, often at a substantially lower price than TI. For example, The Foundation, a California firm, is selling a 32K Memory Expansion card for $150, about $80 less than the TI memory card. How well do these "third party" peripherals work? I bought one of the Foundation 32K cards and am delighted with it. The only detectable difference between the more expensive TI card and the Foundation card is that the less expensive card has a green pilot light instead of TI's yellow "on" indicator. Adds a little variety to the mother board. I plugged it in the day it arrived and it's plugging merrily along with no problems. What a relief not to see "memory full" messages flashing on the screen!!

In last month's 99er Magazine, the Foundation company announced a 128K memory expansion card. Ernie Howell immediately called to order one. Unhappily, they told him their ad was premature; the 128K card won't be available to ship until summer. A new RS-232 printer interface was also advertised at about 25% of the cost of the TI interface card and you don't need a peripheral expansion box to use it. From the picture, it appears to plug into the game controller slot →

on the left side of the console. If anyone buys one, please bring it along to a meeting and show us how it works.

Several members have already decided to purchase the Hex-bus adapter and either the wafer-tape drive or the 4-color printer. As far as we know, one of the new items are available for purchase t, at least no one has seen any of them cally. As soon as the new products are on the rket, we'll try them out and let you know what we think of them.

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For those TI hackers with an irrestible urge to learn some of the secrets of the innards of their TI 99/4A, we have acquired a copy of the factory's CONSOLE TECHNICAL DATA. Filled with schematics, charts, diagrams, and mysterious bbreviations, it's a delight to the technically nded, but perhaps too sophisticated for the initiated in electronics. But if you need ome special information (for example, how to onvert your TI computer into a Wok), you're ure to find it in this brief but elegant manual.

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lcome to new member - Tony Lawson. Tony is a ing air traffic controller from Nebraska. He s volunteered to help us publicize our user's oup at Hanchey, Lowe, and Cairns Army Air-elds. Tony is interested in business applica-ions of his TI and has ordered several business rograms that he'll share with out library. He's also interested in SCUBA diving and is a member of the Fort Rucker Diver's Club. Tony is a control tower operator at Hanchey Heliport. We sure need more energetic young people like him.

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If you're like me, your desk has about run out of space to stack up your computer stuff. A printer, its supply of paper, a monitor, and a bunch of miscellaneous junk will quickly consume a table top. One of our members, Ernie Howell, has found the solution to the problem. He has constructed a custom designed desk and equipment rack to store his TI 99 and all the peripherals that go along with it. Earnie said that he is willing to share his plans with anyone interested in building a customized computer work station.

LIBRARY EXPANDED BY 200%.............

At the April meeting of the Wiregrass User's Group, the members ordered more than 100 programs from the Montgomery Users' Group at one dollar each! Some real bargains were made and our exchange library grew rapidly since all of the members agreed to donate their one dollar programs to our exchange library. Active members are already realizing economic benefits from their membership in our local users' group.

The first edition of our catalog of the TI 99/4 computer programs in our group's library was sent to all dues-paid members on April 15th. Thanks to Ed Hayes who put many hours into the production of the catalog. By the way, the catalog was produced on the Texas Instruments word processing module and printed out on a Pro-Writer dot-matrix printer.

There are already 57 programs available to our members and thanks to the generosity of the Montgomery group, we will soon have another 100 various types of programs. It sure didn't take long for our first edition catalog to become obsolete!!

To receive a catalog and become eligible to check out programs, send in your $5.00 dues to the secretary now. Only fully paid-up members may participate in the activities of the organization.

MAIL DUES TO: Dr. Roger Crampton
106 Harwood Place
Enterprise, AL 36330

THANKS ... THANKS ... THANKS

Special thanks to Roger Crampton for this month's newsletter input. As you can see, in addition to being an avid TI 99'er fan, Roger is also a very prolific writer.

Input for our next newsletter should be in by 24 May. We would appreciate any input -- comments, reviews, programs, gripes, praise, cartoons, jokes,....you name it. Chances are, if you find it interesting, someone else will. Just mail to Joyce Rudd, 212 Whispering Pines, or call 347-4987 for pickup. We'll be expecting to hear from some of you soon!!