

How I became a dial-up BBS SysOp in 2023

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This is how it looked end of the 1980s when people dialed into a BBS using a 300 baud acoustic coupler:



Source: Youtube @quipzz

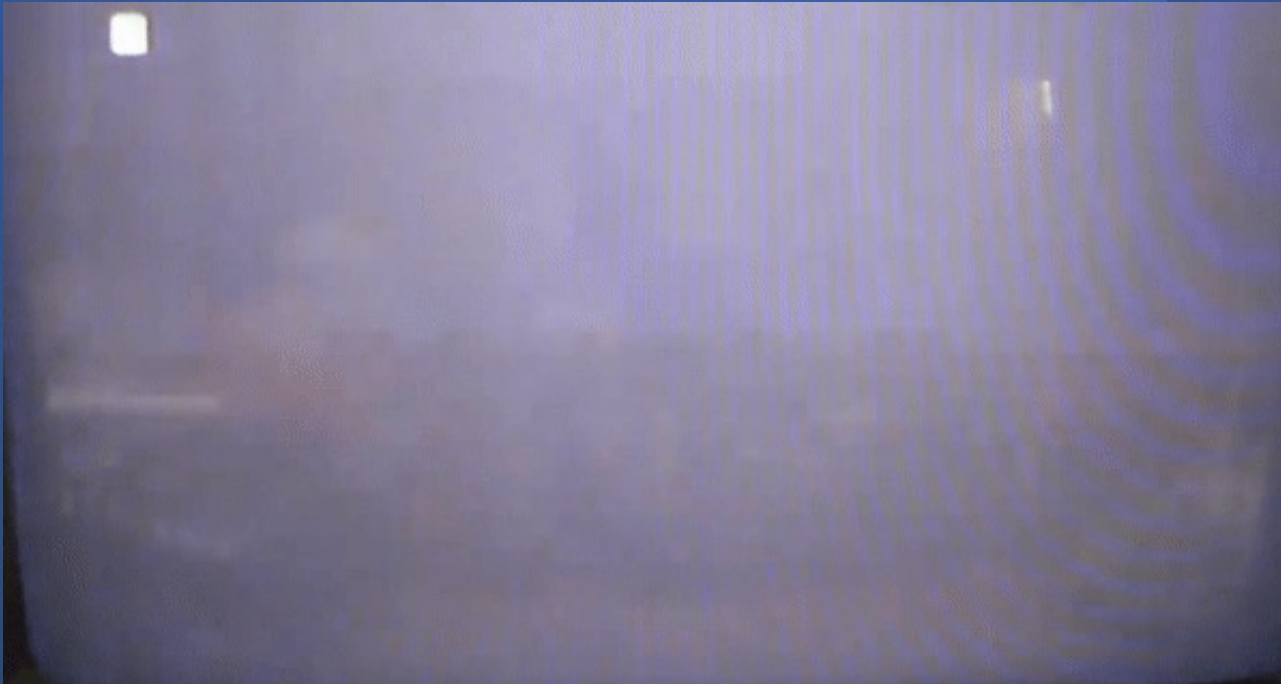
This is how it looked in my case around 1992 using a 2400 baud modem:



Source: My mom

Let's better move on ...

When dialing into a BBS at 300 baud it was all text based and kind of slow:



Source: Youtube @quipzz

BBSes hit their peak around 1996 when the Internet became popular for the masses.

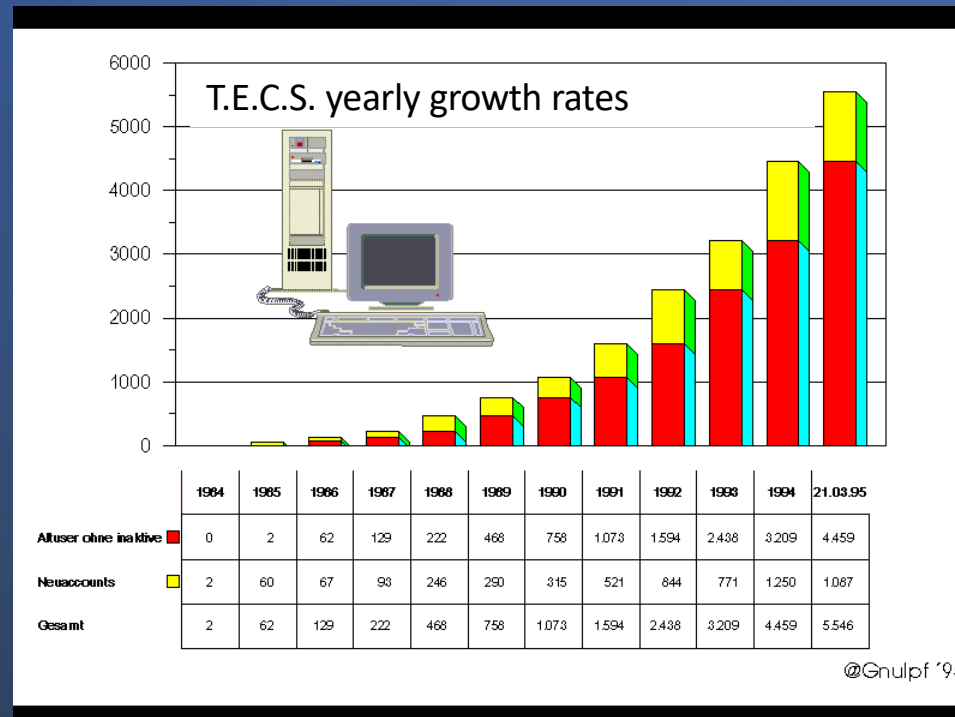
They were a great place to meet, chat and exchange.

File transfers worked using xmodem, ymodem and zmodem using speeds between 300 and 57600 baud (also ISDN at 64kbit).

One of the most popular ones stood in Hamburg, Germany:

T.E.C.S. Tornado Electronic Communications System

- Probably the biggest private BBS in Germany with >50 ports
- Written in MS-Basic/QuickBasic in 1984 by Thomas Schewe
- It quickly became a hot spot for computer enthusiasts:



T.E.C.S. History:

- First ran on a Sirius 1 with two 1.2 MByte disk drives
- Later a 10 MByte HDD was added
- 1987 on a Tandon PCA 70
- Later ran on a Novell Netware server with 486 workstations for every port.
- Each port had an ISDN modem on top of it.
- Telnet support (and later SSH) was added

This is how it looked:



T.E.C.S. around 1990, Source: Thomas Schewe

- I became a user of T.E.C.S. in 1990 with my 300 baud modem
- Met a lot of great people there
- It had a huge influence on my career choices
- By 2010 T.E.C.S. was reduced to two modem ports and SSH access

- Thomas kept the BBS running until his sudden death in Feb 2023
- The BBS was almost 39 years old when he died
- Heard about his passing in June 2023
- The BBS was still running so I had to do something!

- I knew the BBS was running in Thomas' house in Hamburg
- I believed it just remained running unmolested
- Wanted to save it from falling apart or being trashed
- I found his heir (his nephew) after quite some research and emails
- His nephew agreed to meeting me at Thomas' house so I could check his equipment. He is an MD and did not know anything about the BBS.
- It would take a few weeks until he was able to get the keys so I had to keep running whatever I could in the meantime.

- The website www.tecs.de has stopped working at some point
- I knew he had a dedicated server at a German hosting company that was hosting website and e-mails
- I needed to figure out why it became unreachable
- The hoster's support was able to send a recovery letter by postal mail. His nephew grabbed it from the mailbox. Almost too easy!
- I was able to do a root-recovery procedure on that server to be able to log in and add my SSH key.
- Eventually solving the issue (blocked by hoster due to spam) and move the server to my own account.
- The website and e-mails were back online:



[TECS-Mailbox Einwahlnummer 040/644 13 888](tel:04064413888)

[SSH-Zugang: tecs@bbs.tecs.de](mailto:tecs@bbs.tecs.de)

BBS since 1984

**ACHTUNG - TECS ist derzeit per Dialin nicht erreichbar.
SSH, E-Mail und diese Webseite funktionieren aktuell.**

E.C.S. BBS Infos:

- [Sicheres Empfangen und Versenden von TECS-Mails](#)
- [Geschichte des TECS](#)
- [Historische Anleitung für neue User \(1997\)](#)
- [TECS SSH-Zugang](#)
- [TELNET-Zugang entfallen](#)
- [E-Mail online bearbeiten](#)
- [E-Mail SPAM-Filter](#)

Mail: sysop@tecs.de

[Impressum und Anbieterkennzeichnung](#)

A bit of 1990s feeling when opening the T.E.C.S.'s website

- As a pure coincidence all of Thomas' domain names were registered at IPHH (my employer) so with his nephews's permission I was able to move them under my own name. This was an easy step.
- After a few weeks I was able to meet with his nephew at Thomas' house.
- What I found there was incredible evidence of decades of BBS passion:







1 x ISDN TK-Anlage
Anlage mit 1000er
Haupt-Kabel + 1000er
Kabel



Office-Software
Div 5% U...
CPU-Lüfter

PCS.
KGS.
KGS.
QTY: 10
N.W.: 10
G.W.: 10
Hera RHD
12-14 Funktion
120 GB
15.12.2006

Dose ISDN / T&E
Div. Kabel etc. opt. Connect

ISDN
Splitter, NTBA, Telefone, Kabel
(Windows/PC)

SUSE LINUX
NOVELL
MITSUMI
HDD DRIVE

Festplatten adapter
USB / SATA / PATA

www.bauhaus.info
STUDIO

Div. Kabel, Dose
etc.

PCS.
KGS.
KGS.
QTY: 2
N.W.: 9
G.W.: 10
PATCHKABEL

NETGEAR
0800 2511
Zubehör

Serielle
Kabel
- No. 1000er
Kabel
- Drucker
Kabel

Adapter
Serielle
2 x BNC / TP
2 x AG Mikrokanal-Direkt
Kabel, Herk. box etc.
Drucker-Kabel, Lang, ohne Gehäuse

PC-Zubehör
- Kabel
- Drucker
- Festplatten
- Soundblocker

5051
Kabel
Kabel
Kabel
Patchkabel

CCTV
Fank. Video

Motherboard
Motherboard
ASUS
ASUS
ASUS

3 x Soundblocker
Kabel
Olympus
Ladegerät
Schlüsselring "Olympus"

SOUNDWORKS
CREATIVE

Netz-Kabel
Steckdosen klassik
Patchkabel

Powerful AV Sender
Powerful AV Sender

Kabel (Server)

ASUS
ASUS
ASUS

Lautsprecher, schwarz
+ Verstärker

Telekom

Powerful AV Sender

Powerful AV Sender

Powerful AV Sender

ASUS

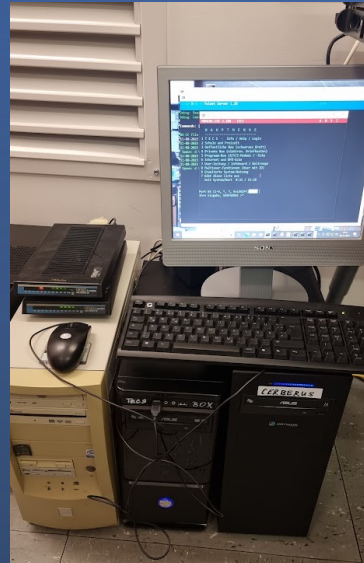




- Identified the most significant servers and grabbed a small NAS
- With the permission of the nephew, I threw everything into my car and drove to our datacenter's lab



T.E.C.S. in my car



T.E.C.S. in the lab



Me and Thomas' nephew Knud

- Broke into the Linux server (acting as a firewall/proxy)
- Assigned new IP addresses and tested it
- T.E.C.S. itself runs in DOS boxes on a Windows 11 machine
- Two modems are attached to the local serial ports
- After the renumbering T.E.C.S. became reachable again over SSH!

Open Topics/Issues:

- Still struggling to understand the whole underlying system
- Reconnecting the modems to T.E.C.S. to make dial-up work again (I am missing an ISDN line for the modems)
- Trying to create a working development environment to edit and compile the code (can someone help with MS-Basic/QuickBasic?)

```
33442 GOSUB 900: IF T<LOGIN THEN T=T+86400!
T=INT(T-LOGIN): T=INT(ZEITGRENZE*60-T): RZEIT=INT(T/60)
IF RZEIT<5 AND RZEIT<>RZEIT.ORG THEN
  IF ANSI.MELDUNG%>4 OR ANSI.MELDUNG%<0 THEN GOSUB ANSI.ONLINE.CLEAR
  RZEIT.ORG=RZEIT: EN%=14: GOSUB 1400: GOSUB 1950
  UE$="" "+LEFT$(ET$,E1%)+UE$(0)+MID$(ET$,E1%+1)+UE$
  IF ANSI.ONLINE% THEN
    UE$=CHR$(27)+"["+MID$(STR$(19+ANSI.MELDUNG%),2)+"";1H"+UE$
    ANSI.MELDUNG%=ANSI.MELDUNG%+1
  END IF
  GOSUB 400
END IF
RETURN _
```

My Goals:

- Get some of the old users back into T.E.C.S.

```
PO -SP- USERNAME----- ORT----- PROGRAMM---- STA
03:TEL ZEUSS                Hamburg      MBMENU.EXE
04:TEL A.C.T                Hamburg      MBMENU.EXE
05:TEL SENFGURKE           Hamburg 54   MBMENU.EXE
```

- Teach younger engineer generations of the old times
- Keep T.E.C.S. running until it turns 42 years old in Dec 2026
- Shutdown T.E.C.S. and find resting place for its hardware and code
- Document Thomas' life achievement properly (Wikipedia article?)

Thank you:

All T.E.C.S. users over all these decades

Especially those few still using it!

Knud Schewe for making this happen



Rest in peace Thomas Schewe

* May 4th 1948

+ Feb 2nd 2023



Thank you!

Any questions?

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