XIO3

GCACE

Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts
1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2

JULY/AUGUST 1997

Inside

ATARI®
NEWS AND RUMOURS

by Rowland Grant

The stock price of JTS dropped to 37 cents before rebounding a bit. Last year, when JTS was struggling, the stock went up above $5. The price slowly declined to around $1.50 which it held for some months. Then it suddenly dropped again. This left observers scratching their heads. While JTS is still not turning a profit, many of the earlier troubles have been overcome. JTS has released two new lines of hard drives. There are reports that purchasers are now pleased with the reliability and price of its products. JTS drives are widely available, even here in Victoria. The first quarter revenue for fiscal 1998 (yes they are eleven months ahead) was $73.4 million. This is more than four times the revenue for the same period last year. They also sold the drives for more than they cost for the first time. Of course other overhead expenses ate that profit and a net loss of $11.8 million was reported (down from $25.8 million loss last year). JTS says that it would have made more money if it had been able to get the new product lines out sooner. But more computer manufacturers are using JTS drives. Also JTS is working on integrating magneto-resistive head technology into its products. This will double the capacity of the drives. These are all signs of progress in a difficult market.

So why have JTS shares become penny stocks? My suggestion is that expectations of good profits in the near future have been reduced suddenly. When Atari took over and became JTS it passed on cash, debts and tax credits. The 260 million in tax credit, accumulated from Atari's past losses, could be applied to future profits of JTS. Depending on the tax rate that could be as much as $80 million in tax savings (extra profits). However the IRS (US federal tax department)

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CREDITS

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 1000 8-bit public domain disks and 190 ST disks and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (604) 642-6795.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

As noted in PEEKing Around, the club is mired in the summer doldrums. Two of our members, however, are keeping busy. Bob and Jacquie Nex have been adding to the population again. On July 4th, which patriotic Jacquie admits was not the politically correct day, she gave birth to their second child, James. She notes there is disagreement on the middle name, but at least it gives them something to argue about. Jacquie is thankful the birth was quick and relatively easy. Both mother and child are doing well.

Both mother and father are also busy in other areas. Bob is vice-president of the almagamated Sooke soccer clubs and Jacquie is active in Girl Guides. She will take her 7 months of maternity leave and hopes to find part time work in Sooke after that.

Congratulations to Bob and Jacquie, and we hope the whole family can make it to a meeting soon!

Gord

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Repairs, Sales, Upgrades	Steve Lemmen	595-7811
Modem & printer setup	John Picken	598-2386
Other Computers:		
Apple Macintosh	John Towler	382-5083
Commodore Amiga	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
MS-DOS Computers	Rowland Grant	598-3661
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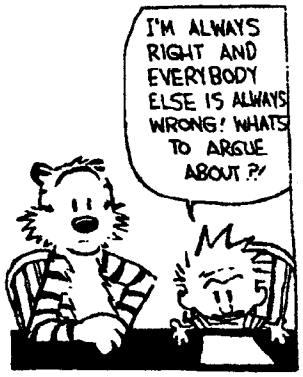
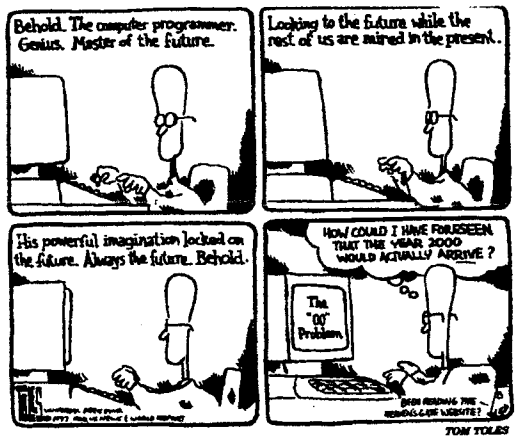
PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper



... Welcome back to renewing member GERRY BLACK ... The usual summer doldrums have hit the club, and I have little news about club members passed on by my faithful spies. Nothing much has changed, however. JOHN PICKEN is still ensconced in his computer garret along with a majority of the month of Junes' output from the Molson Brewing Company ... TED SKRECKY still has a joystick embedded in his hand and is gleefully blowing away cyberstudents in the game Schoolhouse Slaughter ... I too am still playing with my computer and performing semi-official quality testing on the product of various brands of vodka distillers ... Call GORD at 475-0857 when the summer heat (?) has dissipated and GCACE members once again engage in their naughty deeds ... In view of the limited news and the necessity of vodka testing, I will turn over the rest of the column to humour ... The following bit of wisdom is from the *Times Colonist* of July 13th, 1997. "An observation from Larry Johnson, wire editor for the *Everett Herald* in Washington State. The marketing people at Microsoft and their ad agency have really done it this time. The choral background music for the recent Internet Explorer TV ads is the *Confutatis Maledictis* from Mozart's *Requiem* (Mass for the dead). The words of the final blast of music that accompanies the words "Where do you want to go today?" on screen are "*confutatis maledictis, flammis acribus addictis...*" which means "the damned and accused are convicted to flames of hell." Presumably this answers that question once and for all." ...



Eulogy For Atari

by Doug Skrecky

Every year Electronic Gaming Monthly magasine comes out with a Video Game Buyers Guide. This rates various video game machines, as well as their software. In comparing the 1996 issue with the 1997 one, an interesting correlation is visible in the following table. Can you spot it?

RATINGS

HOME UNITS	*1996*	*1997*	*CPU SPEED*
Nintendo 64	-	9.0	93.75
Sony Playstation	9.3	8.4	33
Super NES	7.5	8.1	3.58
Sega Saturn	7.3	7.0	28
NEO GEO	6.7	4.7	14
3DO	6.3	3.4	12.5
Sega Genesis	5.3	4.2	7.6
Sega 32X	2.7	RIP	23
Sega CD	2.5	RIP	12.7
Atari Jaguar	2.5	RIP	8
PORTABLE UNITS			
Nintendo Pocket Game Boy	-	6.6	-
Sega Nomad	-	6.6	-
Sega Game Gear	7.3	5.7	3.6
Virtual Boy	5.3	2.4	10
Ninendo Game Boy	4.7	RIP	2.14

The ratings are from 1 (bad) to 10 (excellent). All the machines which garnered a rating of less than 5 in 1996 are now extinct, while all those with ratings of over 5 are still in existance in 1997. A low rating is apparently a kiss of death and with a lowly rating of 2.5 for the Jaguar, EGM placed coins over the eyes of Atari in 1996.

Using a rating of 5 as a breakpoint in 1997 it looks like thefollowing will be toast in 1998: NEO GEO (4.7), Sega Genesis (4.2), 3DO (3.4) and Virtual Boy (2.4). It seems old hardware is a depreciating asset, since with one exception all 1997 ratings are lower than their 1996 counterparts. Super NES is the lone exception here. I attribute this to the "Bill Gates" effect. When you are big enough, with massive enough software support you can succeed even if your product is technically second rate. Comparing Windows 3.1 with TerraDesk running on an Atari Mega ST comes to mind. TerraDesk blows Windows out of the water based on technical merit, but was annihilated in the market place by the massive support for Windows. Atari

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disallowed these deductions. Apparently the Atari/JTS merger agreement was the problem. Recently the chief financial officer of JTS left the company. She had been given much of the credit for the merger agreement. JTS is selling off its Atari assets. There is very little of it left. I suspect that the IRS is ruling that most of the tax credits could only go against profits in the Atari division (about one million this last year), otherwise the merger would look like a kind of sale of tax credits to JTS. If Atari had bought JTS for cash and stock and then continued on to make JTS disk drives only, the tax credits might have been useable. But the deal was more complicated than that, and apparently the IRS didn't like it. It may be that JTS could use the credits if it runs an active Atari division. This might account for the rumour that JTS is considering the purchase of graphics processor chips from Lockheed Martin to be used in products selling under the Atari label.

Finally, now that JTS is properly underway, it might be open to a takeover by a larger manufacturer such as Seagate or Western Digital. The very low stock prices make it vulnerable. It is rumoured that someone recently purchased a ten percent position in JTS. A takeover rumour should drive the stock up. But it's still below a dollar. Of course maybe a controlling interest is not available. It might be that 50 percent of the stock is held by the Tramiels, Jugi Tandon and a few others, and most of these shares cannot be sold on the open market. Maybe the Tramiels are still trapped. JTS must succeed or their original Atari holdings will turn to dust.

The group now known as Telegames started as a contract development company for Atari 2600 games. They continued supporting the various Atari game consoles. Telegames began publishing its own products in 1986. They sold by direct mail retailing. They continued the contract work as well. More recently Telegames bought up the rights to most of the unissued Atari Jaguar games. They released the Jaguar games Breakout 2000 and Towers II, earlier this year. There are rumours that Telegames had only 500 cartridges of each game made. Even so, Terry Grantham, the CEO of Telegames, says that they have not recovered their investment on these games so far. However, what they have done is rekindled interest in the Jaguar, which should increase sales in the future.

Some major game stores have taken a renewed interest in the Jaguar, particularly as the console and the CD peripheral are now so cheap. One of these, Electronic Boutique, has placed orders with Telegames for all of its releases. Electronic Boutique has 500 outlets. Even a few new game issues sold in each store should make Jaguar game production profitable. If this happens, Telegames will be encouraged to issue more game titles. Telegames has also released two CD-ROM games. Iron Soldier II is perhaps one of the best Jaguar releases yet. World Tour Racing has had mixed reviews. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that it is the best car racing game for the Jaguar. Unfortunately that's not saying much. Telegames is using the Jaguar market to experiment with games for other systems. Towers II is being prepared for the PC game market, and Iron Soldier may come out soon on the Sony Playstation.

ICD is another company that has a long history in the Atari market. ICD is preparing a limited release of the game AirCars. The game was developed by the MidNite Entertainment Group in 1995. It can handle up to eight players simultaneously. AirCars does not have particularly good graphics, but the game seems to be very playable, and has excellent sound. The price is $59.95 (US). While this is a reasonable price for a new game, old Jaguar games are now being remaindered at $9. Each Jaguar in the multiplayer network needs ICD's Catbox accessory. This would explain why ICD is distributing it. There is another accessory, called Jaglinks, that can handle two players. This limited release of 100 cartridges uses more expensive parts than production Jaguar cartridges, so price reductions are unlikely. Apparently ICD received more than 100 preorders for AirCars. So ICD is getting more cartridge supplies to meet the demand. There seem to be enough Atari Jaguar enthusiasts to keep the system alive (barely).

BattleSphere, the other game sponsored by ICD, is mostly finished, and bug hunting in the code is underway. And as one of the 4Play developers says: "... it's been a great three years, the game's almost done, and like it or not, it's coming out." Tom Harker of ICD went to the Electronic Entertainment Expo where he distributed the BattleSphere E3 Promotional Video. A demo version of Battlesphere will be running in a multiplayer network at two Atari fairs this summer. One at the Mist Atari show in Indianapolis and another at the Jagfest in Rosemont Illinois. Apparently 4Play have approached other game publishers. They like the game, and they like 4Play. But these publishers have no idea how to market a PC version of BattleSphere in a market dominated by Doom clones and other graphics-obsessed games. So we may be nearing the end of the BattleSphere story.

Clay Halliwell, a noted Atari 8-bit enthusiast, is also editing an online magazine called Jaguar Explorer Online. This is similar in format to the old Atari Explorer Online. Even the old tagline has been retained: "this issue is printed on recycled photons". Clay has put out two issues and more will be forthcoming.

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Howard Warshaw used to program for Atari. He did various game titles such as Yars Revenge, Raiders of the Lost Ark and Saboteur. Howard says that he was "... sick of hearing empty truthless watered down reports of what Atari was like. Atari was an amazing place to be, and no one has ever told the story." So he is producing the story, a four part series on video. It covers Atari from the beginning to about 1983. It seems to focus on video games for the arcades and for the 2600 game console. One part has been completed. This part deals with the technical details and difficulties of programming the 2600. The video features interviews and demonstrations of games. The video series will document the first rise and fall of Atari. Howard Warshaw didn't mention Atari computers.

Unfortunately, Atari magazines in English are dwindling. *Current Notes* was transferred to a small group of Atari enthusiasts in Toronto. They were animated by Howard Carson. They continued the magazine for a number of issues, but nothing has come out since January of this year. *Current Notes* is published as a spare time hobby project. Howard Carson has become deeply involved in selling Calamus for Windows computers. He is very energetic but has little spare time. It would seem that publication has been suspended for the time being. This is dangerous, as contributors, advertisers and subscribers will lose interest in supporting *Current Notes* if it is not revived soon. *Atari Computing*, the remaining magazine is still going strong. They report that subscriptions are three times the number expected. Five men do all the work of publishing and distributing *Atari Computing*. They do it in their spare time. There is no paid staff. It is impossible to carry on an Atari publication as a business. Rod McDonald says that he went $42,000 in debt trying to keep *ST Informer* going. When Toad Computers stopped advertising, Rod accepted no more subscriptions. A group in Kansas City expressed an interest in buying *ST Informer*, but that came to nothing. Rod has no cash to refund outstanding subscriptions, so he is offering software as compensation. Ros also owns A&D software, publisher of UIS, UI Network and other titles. Rod is trying to set up a Web site where he will publish a successor to *ST Informer*.

The Swedish Atari Club has again sponsored the Nordic Atari Show in Gothenburg. It was held on the weekend beginning June 13th. The show featured exhibitions of wares by dealers and distributors and a swap meet. There was a "hacker hall" where software hacks were demonstrated and contests held. As usual in Sweden, no meeting would be complete without seminars. There was computer entertainment including networked games and goofy contests (hard disk throwing). There were the usual refreshments and Swedish pizzas (?).

In order to access a Web server, one uses software called a TCP/IP stack. To communicate, the stack must be able to use the various protocols PPP/SLIP/CSLIP (and other names drawn from a bowl of alphabet soup). There is a new TCP/IP stack for Atari ST/TT/Falcon computers. This is STinG, or ST Internet Next Generation, by Peter Rottengatter. It is meant to be a successor to the popular STiK, the ST Internet Kit. Unlike STiK, STinG can handle all the protocols. STinG is still in development as freeware. Some users have reported all sorts of difficulties, others have no trouble and are pleased with STinG. Of course the stack software must work with other programs that send, receive and process various forms of information, programs such as Crystal Atari Browser, Newsie and others. So it is not surprising that reviews are mixed.

The STiK software works very well for most users, but it does not handle PPP protocols. However, I understand that a PPP version is being tested. CAB works very well with STiK. Version 2.0 of CAB has been released in demo and commercial versions. There have been some complaints about the demo version. I have not seen any reviews of the commercial version. It would be useful to have a complete Web software package for Atari computers. One effort is WenSuite from OXO in France. According to users comments, the latest version doesn't work very well. Termite is commercial TTCP stack software for Amiga computers. Oregon Research is working on a port of Termite for Atari ST computers. However they have run into troubles with it, and are now wondering if there is enough "market interest" to justify continuing work on Termite.

Now that Toad Computers seems to be pretty well out of the Atari mail order market, the demand is being carried by Computer Direct in Edmonton and Systems for Tomorrow in Independence MO. The offerings of these two dealers overlap only slightly. So it is worth while making contact with both. Systems for Tomorrow carries CAB ver 2. They claim that CAB reads HTML documents on Internet, and it will read HTML based CD ROMs as well. Systems for Tomorrow handles the few games recently released for the ST, but it has a large collection of older games. Some recent releases are Tetris II Strikes Back for $12.99 and Power Up for $19.99. These games are reminiscent of popular 8-bit games of the past. Systems for Tomorrow sells Geneva and Neodesk. I notice that Gribniff is still supporting these products. A patch converting Geveva 5 to 6 has been released. Systems for Tomorrow also has a stock of NEC CDR25 single spin CD-ROM drives for $39.99. They have other hardware goodies. They publish a small catalogue.

And speaking of hardware, Compu-

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itself once had this sort of massive support for its 2600 game machine, which for a long time was probably the poorest videogame machine in existance. However it was also the cheapest and enjoyed unparalleled software support. It is hard to believe now that Atari once owned this (now) multi billion dollar per year market.

What went wrong for Atari? How did 2600 success turn into Jaguar failure? How did Atari snatch defeat from the jaws of victory? I think it was because Atari failed to capitalize on its strength. There was such a long dry spell between the demise of the 2600 and the entrance of the Jaguar that defeat was inevitable. By failing to come up with a timely successor to the 2600, Atari's fate was sealed. An analogy with Microsoft would have Gates coasting on DOS to the year 2001 and then trying for a come back in the 21'st century with Windows brought out too late. Time waits for no man.

EGM had a eulogy for Atari: "Who hadn't felt a pang when Atari finally called it quits with the Jaguar? After all, Atari was the video game mother who nutured the industry. The Jaguar was simply a mediocre attempt at bringing back some of the old glory for Atari. It never took off for a couple of reasons. One, the lack of third-party support created a void in the Jaguar's game library. Two, the graphical prowess of this supposed wonder machine was greatly exaggerated. Since no one could see the 64-bits of power, why buy one?"

EGM implies that Atari had two winning strategies for re-entering the video game market. One would have been to come out with a truely powerful machine, which was dramatically superior to the competitor's machines. Another would have been to encourage third party support. I suspect that neither option would have been enough to keep Atari going for long.

A powerful machine with true 64-bits of power would have cost a lot of money to build and would have been very expensive to sell for such a small company. Such a high end machine would have cost at least as much as a PC. While it would have been superior as a games machine, I suspect that Atari did not at this late date have enough money to bring it to market profitably. Costs can be kept down only with large product runs, which Atari could not afford.

The only cost effective way for a small company like Atari to encourage software support would be to make it very easy to write software for their machine in the first place. This would require a high degree of compatibility with its defunct ST line of computers. While the Jaguar likely would have done rather better than it did if it had maintained a degree of ST compatibility I doubt that this would have delayed Atari's exit from this market by more than a year. Atari is simply too small to compete in a market that is dominated by well capitalized corporate titans such as Nintendo, Sega and Sony.

I have always felt that Atari's best and brightest hope after being forced out of the PC market by Gates' Microsoft juggernaut, was to concentrate on becoming a software company since there do exist a number of profitable smaller software companies. However after reading Roland Grant's articles on Atari in X103 over the years I never got the impression that Atari had ever seriously considered this option. Atari seemed to be hell bent on remaining a hardware company till it's last breath. Could Atari still have succeeded in spite of this tunnel vision?

I think a case could be made that Atari could have succeeded in the video game market, though with portables, rather than home machines. The portable video game machine market is much smaller than the home market so the advantage of large product runs the big companies have is much smaller. Atari did have a minor hit with its Lynx portable, to which it had devoted only a small percentage of its resources to. If Atari had gone all out,

and made the Jaguar a portable machine I think it is not impossible that they would have succeeded. Nintendo shrunk it's Game Boy machine, relaunched it as the Pocket Game Boy and is enjoying good sales.

Atari could have done the same for its Lynx. The portable game machine market held a lot of potential for Atari. The Tramiels all but ignored it and the result is history.

News and Rumours

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ter Direct is now offering its DirecT 40 and 60 computers in kit form. Motherboards with the CPU and cabling cost $1799 CDN for the 68040 and $2499 for the 68060 option. The purchaser must supply the case, power supply, keyboard, SIMMs, hard drive, floppy drive, PCI bus graphics cards and so on. Also needed is the specific software to drive the graphics card. Three graphics card types are supported at present. These computers are very fast TT clones. Now a DSP and Sound card will be available soon that gives the DirecT or Hades computers the capabilities of the Falcon and then some. There is an Audio Mastering software package available for this DSP board. Also Soundpool's products are being tested and made compatible with the DirecT/Hades design.

8-Bit Runs Notice Boards

by Rowland Grant

John Harris has been active in the Atari 8-bit community lately. John is one of the early programmers of Atari computer games. He worked for Sierra On-line and his exploits were written up in the book "Hackers". Among his games were Jawbreaker, Frogger and Hackers (naturally). Back in 1981 John used MAE (Macro Assembler Editor) software. This was published by Eastern House, the makers of the Monkey Wrench cartridge for the Atari 800. MAE was expensive and not all that good. So of course a hacker like John Harris began to make improvements for himself. He began rewriting bits of code until eventually he replaced all the original code with his own. The new MAE version 1.1 is now available from John Harris as freeware. He has been attempting to upload MAE to various Atari bases. It should be readily available soon.

In the new MAE, the editor, assembler and debugger units are highly integrated. The editor will go directly to lines that have assembly errors. The debugger can reference the labels in the code. The full screen editor features key macros, block moves and copies, multiple undo, automatic data labels, automatic 'JSR' and 'RTS'. The editor is compatible with XEP80 and other 80 column devices. High speed software drivers for 64 and 80 columns are also supplied. The assembler macros involve full text substitution. There is conditional assembly, local labels and more. Also the assembler will handle 65816 opcodes and 24 bit addressing. All these features take up memory. MAE will run in 64K but it leaves a small 13.75K source buffer. However with a 130XE or better, MAE uses only 1.25K of main system memory, the remainder of the code is bank selected. There is a configuration utility to help adapt MAE to a particular 8-bit system. With all these features, the new version of MAE is probably the best 6502 assembler available.

John Harris has another version of MAE, compiled for 65816 computers, that runs much faster. I suspect that he uses it professionally. John Harris has a business that manufactures and markets character generator systems. These run video display notice boards in airports, hotels, cable TV etc. Originally these systems incorporated modified Atari 8-bit computers. Now he is making an Atari 8-bit compatible computer based on the 65816 microprocessor. The new machines were developed by another company for an undisclosed dedicated application. They needed a supply of Atari 8-bit chips (Antic, Pokey etc.), But apparently they could not reach an agreement with Atari to supply the parts, so the project was dropped. At that time, Atari had stopped supporting its 8-bit computers, and had heaps of spare chips on hand. Eventually Atari was forced to sell its stock of 8-bit chips to anyone interested, so John probably has a good supply.

The new 8/16 bit computer (now called D816) has a 65816 processor running at 5.37MHz. However for the first 64K of memory the processor runs at 1.79MHz to be compatible with the Atari custom chips. The D816 is in a case with enough room for a 3.5 in high density disk drive, a hard drive, parallel and serial ports, expansion slots, two joy stick ports, and a SIO port. The memory is 128K of static RAM. This means that the code in memory will survive a power down. There is mouse support and a separate IBM-type keyboard. However this computer does not have a cartridge port. The expansion slots will take IBM 16 bit ISA card experimental boards so a cartridge port could be constructed. The computer has its own Sparta-like DOS optimized for use with the 65816 processor. Indeed Black Box and Sparta software were licensed for this project. In the D816 computer, the Atari 8-bit video circuitry has been completely re-engineered. More memory could be added using expansion cards. John Harris adds a special card for character generation that has an additional 32K of RAM. The whole system, with all options and character generating software, retails at $1800. After all, this is a small production item. However John says that he could sell the D816 as a general computer without the special character generating features and software for somewhat less.

I have heard nothing more of Curt Vendel's project to create a new Atari 8-bit computer. It too would have slots for expansion cards. Recently, Curt did comment on the Diamond GOS operating system. He did the icons for it. Alan Reeve developed Diamond GOS, a graphic operating system software for the Atari 8-bit. The final version was quite fast and included some application software. At that time, Commodore put its 64 computer in a new attractive case and called it the Commodore 64c. It came bundled with a mouse and graphic interface software. So Alan approached Atari with the idea of including Diamond GOS with XE computers to compete with Commodore. Atari wouldn't go for it. They decided to compete using lower prices instead. That was the end of Diamond GOS, although Alan continued to sell it for awhile.

Steven Tucker's Atari Peripheral Emulator has been upgraded again. A registered and a trial shareware version of APE 1.15 is now available. This is software for a PC that enables an Atari 8-bit computer to use the PC as a peripheral device. The new version adds some efficiencies and conveniences. A number of bugs are fixed. (Murphy's Law: there is always one more bug). There are a number of new printer options including print to file. New software called Apeloader has been added.

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ST LIBRARY

Pillaging #1 Priority!

by Ted Skrecky

It has been 8 months since the last time I did an update of the ST Software Catalogue. I have just completed Version 4.1 which adds three new disks. Most of this new software is from various Internet FTP sites. One place I like to visit is FTP.IBP.FR, Directory: pub/atari. This French site was previously known at CNAM. Unlike UMICH, new ST software is being uploaded to IBP. I also like visiting a place in Finland called FTP.FUNET.FI, Directory: pub/atari. Besides having a good catalogue listing with English descriptions, new software is also still being uploaded to this place. For those who are interested, the catalogues for both IBP and FUNET can be downloaded from the Atari ST Text & Doc file SIG on our club BBS, The Pothole (642-6795).

At club meetings, the software in the GCACE ST library and also on the two Crawly Crypt CDs are available to club members. If you don't yet have a copy of the catalogue files for the Crawly Crypt CDs, just bring a blank disk to the meeting and I will make a copy. There is a significant amount of STuff on these two CDs which are not in our own club library. Some of the programs on these CDs will eventually appear on GCACE ST disks but it will probably be quite sometime before I get around to doing this as there is still lots of new ST software appearing on the Internet. Pillaging files from the Internet is currently my #1 priority.

According to a recent catalogue I received from Systems For Tomorrow, Crawly Crypt CD #3 is still supposed to be produced. When it finally becomes available, I will purchase one. Another 600 megs of ST material should help keep all of us ST users happily entertained for sometime to come.

One thing I would like to mention is that I did install Windows 95 on my Cyrix 120mhz machine. After having wasted a huge amount of my spare time studying WIN95, I can confidently state that an ST using TeraDesk, Universal Item Selector III, Silkmouse and a screen accelerator such as Quick ST II, can run circles around WIN95 when it comes to ease-of-use. Bill Gates should issue a press release admitting what we all know to be true..... the Atari ST is still the #1 most desirable computing platform on Planet Earth. The only reason I can think of why there isn't an Atari ST computer system in everybody's home is because the Tramiels always had this minor problem with not really knowing what the term "marketing" actually meant. If I could travel back in time to 1985 and give Jack Tramiel a dictionary, things would be quite different now in the year 1997.

There has been a couple of problems with respect to the disk drives

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has been added.

Thomas Havemeister reports that when he lived under the old DDR (East Germany), Atari 8-bit computers were available, but nobody could afford disk drives. Some clever hackers managed to get Atari's slow cassette system to run 15 to 20 times faster. They used a special interface, and created a cassette operating system to go with it. Thus it was possible to fill a tape with files and quickly access any one of them. This not easy to do otherwise. Back in 1983 many Atari users in Canada couldn't afford a disk drive either. One of my first assembly language projects was to create a tape operating system. I called it TOS. Tapes were unreliable, and one of the features of my "TOS" was to playback a newly made file to determine if it had actually been copied to the tape properly. When Atari disk drive prices dropped in late 1984, I bought one. This opened a new world of software, and I gladly put my tape drive away. If you think that Atari disk drives are slow or unreliable, use an Atari tape system for awhile.

While using my modified Atari 800XL, the screen went blank. I changed the power supply and the screen came back. I thought I had solved the problem, but next day the screen went again and didn't return. I turned to my 130XE backup, but I missed the 256K of RAM on the 800XL. For years the computer had been sitting in a room that varied considerably in temperature and humidity. I opened up the 800XL. Most of the chips were socketed, so I pried them loose and reseated them. The 800XL began working again, the computer had suffered some pin corrosion.

Another hazard for old systems is disks loosing their magnetism. Most of my disks are more than a decade old, and a number have gone bad. The bad disks can be reformatted and recycled, but not always. I took a new 8-bit demo disk over to Ted Skrecky, as he is interested in such things. Ted copied the disk but found that his copy wouldn't work. Also his disk drive began reporting errors with other disks. Opening his drive he found the R/W head covered with magnetic material. He cleaned the drive and it worked again. Inspecting the disks, Ted found one that looked like it was covered with an uneven layer of loose rust. The magnetic material rubbed off at the slightest touch. Ted calls it "disk rot". Beware!

Eclectic Meetings

by Rowland Grant

The May and June general meetings didn't have any featured topic. However Craig Carmichael saved the day. In May, Craig demonstrated a two-player maze shootem-up game from Germany. Um.. can't remember the name of it. I do remember that I had to do library duty while librarian Ted Skrecky took part in the cooperative on-screen mayhem. The graphics and sound were great but the game play reminded me of the 8-bit games of the past. In June I had intended to do part one of a series reviewing the word processing options available to ST users. I was going to start with Word Perfect, but I got sidetracked with printer problems and didn't have my demo ready (still don't). But Craig did a demonstration of his interactive textbook software. This is a great program which blends text, image, animation and sound, It runs under OASES. As an example he did "A Guide to the Master Universe", an outline of material from the *Urantia* book. The 'Guide' was mostly astronomical illustrations, with animation, which supported the contentions of the *Urantia* book. The meetings are getting more eclectic all the time.

John Towler continues to find interesting software for our disk of the month offerings. Even when he has to be absent due to work, the disks make his presence felt. We have received very little in the way of newsletter exchange and correspondence recently. We renewed our subscription to *Current Notes* in February and haven't heard from them since. The Executive Committee decided to renew our subscription to *Atari Computing*. We sent a money order for the subscription to Computer Direct at the end of June. All the back issues of

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Library

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that have been used to copy club disks at meetings. One type of drive that has been used is an old 720K mechanism which previously was used in a PC machine. This drive reads disks at the same speed as a regular ST drive but when it comes to writing, it seems to be going at half-speed. It gets the job done but the lack of speed means that not many disks can be copied in a 2 hour period. At the last meeting an external 720K SF314 drive was used. Even though I had write-verify on, the drive still wrote data to disks much faster than the PC drive could. However, after checking a bunch of the copied disks, I found I could not get a disk directory listing on any of them. A couple of days after the meeting, Rowland took the drive apart and found that the read/write head wasn't moving so it was always writing to the same track and the mechanism always verified the data as being correct! For the next club meeting, I will bring along my 1040STf which has 2 1/2 megs of RAM and also has an internal disk drive which hasn't yet caused me to pull all the hair out of my head.

I don't have much else to say so I will end this ST Library Report by listing the contents of the latest 3 disks which are as follows:

BOOTTECH.LZH 9K #197-Bootsector Technician Version 1.0. Read & modify the boot sector of a disk in DRIVE A:
CDLISTN2.LZH 12K #197-Play audio CDs on your CD-ROM drive.
CDPLAYER.LZH 25K #197-Allows you to play audio tracks on your CD-ROM drive.
CEEJAY.LZH 15K #197-May 12th, 1997 listing of Atari ST new & used software available from CeeJay Software. Lots of good deals!
DESKMORF.LZH 18K #197-Deskmorf Version 1.0. Gives icons & dialog box buttons a "3-D" look.
DOSTESTR.LZH 15K #197-Disk Operational Speed Tester Version 1.02. Blank disk required.
ELFBACK.LZH 34K #197-Hard Disk backup program. TT & ST versions included.
FT226E.LZH 205K #197-Family Tree Version 2.26.
HARD.LZH 11K #197-Atari Hardware Description Version 1.2.
KILLDRV.LZH 3K #197-Allows you to disable and then later enable DRIVE B:,C:,D:,etc MGIF_
V5.LZH 278K #197-MGIF Version 5.0. Absolutely fantastic GIF & JPEG viewer. Looks best in Mono. For best results, select "Flicker" mode on the MGIF Initialization screen and then select "Option" and then "Display". Click on "flicker" and "scrollable" view. Next, load a pic!
SCAN.LZH 15K #197-Hand Scanner software. Handles 300 & 400 dpi. Follows the XBRA standard.
SHDWTERM.LZH 131K #197-ShadowTerm II by Michel Forget. Looks like a very good comms program. IMPORTANT: Place files in the main directory of DRIVE A:. Also, you should read the text file called READ_ME.NOW.
TOGGLEB.LZH 1K #197-Disables/Enables DRIVE B:. Note: The power must have been "on" for DRIVE B: when you originally booted your computer.

DIAMOND ICE 1DSK #198-Diamond Ice. An excellent platform game by STOSSER SOFTWARE.

DESTRUCT 1DSK #199-Demo of Destruction Imminent. This is a Wolf 3D dungeon-type game. Works on all STs with 1 meg.

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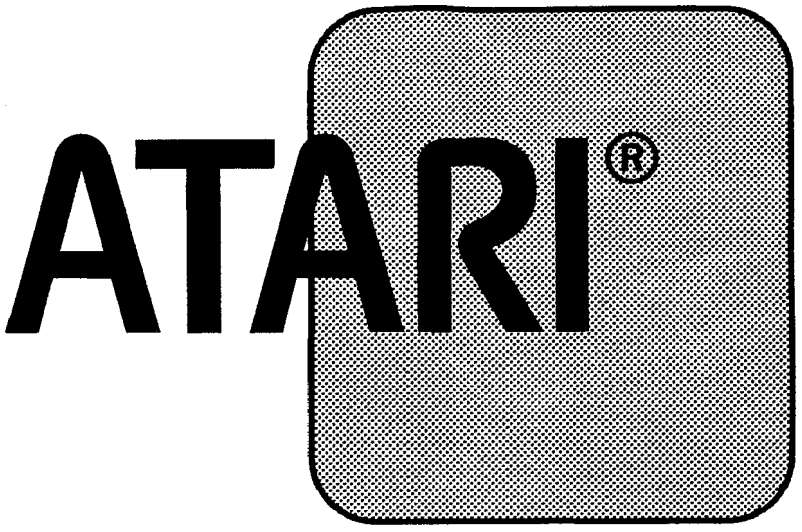
Atari Computing were brought to the June meeting so that members could borrow them. We have had continuing trouble copying disks at meetings. The replacement drive on my Mega is reliable but very slow. We added an external drive to speed up copying. But something went wrong with the stepper motor, and it copied everything into the first track over and over. These older Atari drives with the large tongue are not the best. I have two computers and one external drive with those mechanisms. They have proven to be unreliable in sector-copying disks.



July Financial Statement

Date: Jul 10, 1997

EXPENSE SUMMARY - 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	YR-TO-DT
Printing	26.34	-	30.50	-	-	17.68	$74.52
News. post	28.56	-	30.12	-	-	-	$58.68
Postage	-	-	-	-	9.52	-	$9.52
Room rent	21.40	21.40	21.40	21.40	21.40	21.40	$128.40
Office sup	-	-	1.69	-	7.33	-	$9.02
Disks	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
Telephone	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
Advertise	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
Mag. subsc	35.00	-	-	-	-	-	$35.00
Coffee sup	3.02	-	3.68	7.57	-	9.39	$23.66
Bank chg.	1.20	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	$4.20
Currency	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
Society Ac	-	15.00	-	-	-	-	$15.00
Expen Misc	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
Cash.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
Cash (Net)	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
TOTAL	115.52	37.00	87.99	29.57	38.85	49.07	$358.00

INCOME SUMMARY - 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	YR-TO-DT
Dues	175.00	50.00	80.00	25.00	25.00	85.00	$440.00
PD disks	11.00	-	10.00	10.00	-	20.00	$51.00
Donations	10.00	-	10.00	-	-	-	$20.00
Coffee	5.00	-	12.25	6.00	-	7.90	$31.15
Bank intst	-	-	-	0.64	-	-	$0.64
Incom Misc	-	-	-	-	-	-	$0.00
TOTAL	201.00	50.00	112.25	41.64	25.00	112.90	$542.79
CASH FLOW	85.48	13.00	24.26	12.07	-13.85	63.83	$184.79