XIO3

GCACE

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

MARCH/APRIL 1998

March 26th Meeting! Swap and Shop

The March meeting will be our annual Swap and Shop. Bring your wallets and extra hardware and software, and with luck you'll end up with new stuff at no cost! Or would you believe with more junk and a flat wallet?

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ATARI®
NEWS AND RUMOURS

by Rowland Grant

Atari has been sold. On February 23rd, JTS Corporation sold the assets of it's Atari division. Atari was sold to HIACXI Corp., a subsidiary of toymaker Hasbro Interactive Inc. The preamble to the SEC report says that the Atari assets are primarily games, intellectual property rights and license agreements associated with the games. This includes the Atari name and the fuji logo. The detailed agreement lists Atari hardware platforms too. These include Atari 2600, 5200, 7800, Lynx, Jaguar, Atari 800, ST and Falcon 030 family hardware, TOS operating system and the Portfolio palmtop. They bought all the plans, designs, software code, brochures, everything but John Skrutch and his office furniture. Even the Internet domain name was specified. Hasbro has all this for $5 million. Sic transit gloria mundi.

Well, JTS is still hanging on. JTS managed to get a $10 million line of credit from NationsBanc Commercial Corporation. But JTS had to pledge its accounts receivables, inventory and other company assets to get the credit. JTS share prices dropped below 20 cents and then rebounded a dime or two. There has been no profit from hard drives. JTS is still losing money on every drive made. Even Seagate, the industry leader, is posting big losses. And yet JTS claims that "this financing will allow us to expand first quarter production to meet forecasted demand ...", really! The only profitable part of JTS was its Atari division, and that's sold. Goodbye JTS, hello Hasbro.

Things are quiet on the Jaguar scene. Battlesphere was rumoured to be finished. However, the 4play team made it clear that debugging is still underway and music installation is yet to come. If they take much longer, many Jaguar users will have lost

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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 over 2 gigabytes of ST public domain software and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (250) 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

John Towler now has a PowerMac, and when his TT is sold (ad on page 7), won't have an Atari ST. He assures me he is getting an ST emulator for the Mac, however. Ted Skrecky wasn't smart enough to get a PowerMac, he now uses an IBM clone. Ted is still using his Mega2 ST. I, too, displayed a lack of intelligence and ended up with an IBM, but my main computer is still the TT. Rowland Grant now uses an IBM laptop but still has many Atari computers, the main one being his Mega4 STE. John Picken has a clone alongside his 8-bits. Why is everybody getting new computers? The reasons are varied. John Towler always was interested in Macs. He was a member of the Mac user group while he only had an ST, but equipped with a Mac emulator. He decided that the time (and price) was right to get a Mac. Ted Skrecky discovered that the best games weren't coming on game machines anymore, but on CDROMs written for IBM computers. The CyberGamePlayer decided he needed one. Rowland got the laptop from his brother in Vancouver, and decided it was handy for word processing. He is shortly to buy a Zip drive for it, and then we will probably have our ST library on a Zip disk, meaning he will have less equipment to take to general meetings. John Picken has the clone set up as a slave to his 8-bit so he can make use of the hard drive. The point is, we all still have and use our STs. The new computers have uses, but I for one prefer the Atari.

Gord

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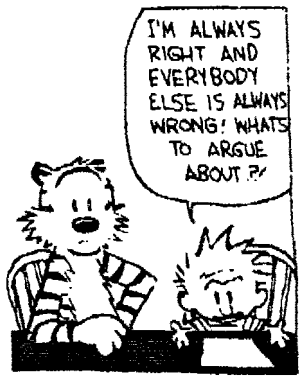
Apple Macintosh	John Towler	382-5083
Commodore Amiga	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
IBM's and clones	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Bob Nex	642-6358

PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper



...STEVE LEMMEN rejoined our happy throng. My apologies to those of you, if any, I missed mentioning here as new members or renewals. I'm an idiot... The CyberScrounger (TED SKRECKY) has ordered the new Suzy B's CDROM. When this is added to our current ST Library, along with the CDROM's Ted bought before, we have over two gigabytes of ST public domain software. A gigabyte, like a nanosecond, is a number that is meaningless except when discussing computers. One gigabyte is one billion bytes. And a byte is 8 bits. If I started counting out loud now, I would be dead before I reached the number two billion. And probably relieved I could finally stop counting. Thanks for adding to our library Ted... I emailed DOUG SKRECKY, our intrepid writer from Vancouver, to get an article for this month's XIO3 from him. This was his reply:

From: Doug Skrecky <oberon@vcn.bc.ca>
To: ud264@victoria.tc.ca

Cc: ua558@victoria.tc.ca

Subject: Shortest Article Ever Written on Atari - for X103

Shortest Article Ever Written on Atari
By Doug Skrecky

R.I.P.

Like Rodney Dangerfield, I get no respect and because of his smart*** reply, Doug don't get no article... I appeal to all my faithful readers to dig up all the dirt you can on Doug. I realize I'm asking you to get down on your bellies and slither like a snake, but if I can do it, so can all GCACE members. I'm counting on you for this! Send to GORD at 475-0857 and maybe I'll get some respect from Doug next issue...

8-BIT AFFAIRS

CDROM for 8-Bit Update

by Rowland Grant

A few years ago Ernest Schreurs and some friends in Holland prepared a CD-ROM disk called the POOL DISK. This CD contains Atari 8-bit shareware and public domain software. The software was stored in the form of PC files called ATR files. Each file is an image of an Atari 8-bit disk. This disk image can be reconstituted on a 5.25 floppy and run on an Atari 8-bit setup. The disk images are prepared and handled using a system called SIO2PC, which was developed and distributed by Nick Kennedy. Now Ernest Schreurs is preparing a second CD of Atari 8-bit material, POOL DISK II. He has been looking for Atari groups that might be able to contribute new software, and he finally came across us. Gordon Hooper informed Ernest that we would be happy to cooperate. Also Gordon mentioned that we have the back-up set of the Bellcom Library. In reply, Ernest sent a list of Bellcom disks that he did have and asked if we could complete his collection. We couldn't fill in all the gaps, but we managed to send off more than 500 disk images in ATR format. To save postage they were transferred to one zip disk using Gordon's PC.

Normally, John Picken would have done the ATR file preparations. However, equipment failures prevented him from making much headway. As time was running out, I agreed to try to make the disk images using my 8-bit and PC equipment. John supplied the Bellcom backup set, a SIO2PC cable and the necessary software. While I had seen SIO2PC in operation before, I had not actually run a setup myself. I used a 256K Atari 800XL, a 1050 disk drive and a monochrome monitor. The spare SIO port on the 1050 disk drive was attached to the RS232 port of my Toshiba notebook computer using the special cable. While the RS232 and the SIO are serial ports, they differ considerably in electrical characteristics and must be buffered. In the case of John's cable, this is accomplished with one chip. John published the connections to this chip in Jan/Feb 1998 XIO3.

SIO2PC is a PC program which will run on my Toshiba notebook using MS-DOS. It comes up as a menu of various options. I won't go into a detailed description of the software. I found it very easy to use. SIO2PC creates a set of four RAM disks in the PC. To an attached Atari computer, these RAM disks appear to be Atari disk drives, each containing a disk. The disk could be of any size, in single or double density. I sector copied disks back and forth between the 800XL system and the Toshiba. I practised making disk images. I was careful to give the image file names the .ATR extension. I found that I could boot the 800XL from a RAM disk (designated D1) in the Toshiba. I quickly gained confidence in the system, and began the task at hand.

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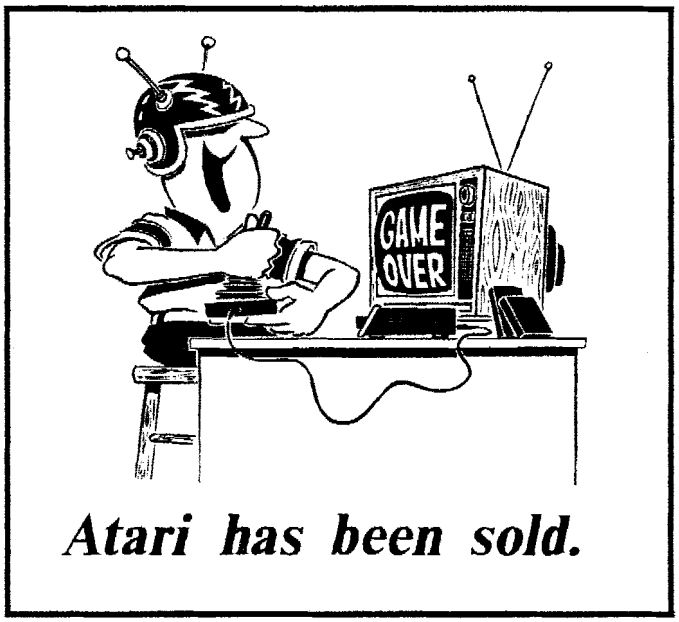
interest. And interest is declining. Telegames mentioned that it has made no profit from its Iron Soldier II cartridges. Pre-orders were so few, that it wasn't worth setting up a production run for them alone. But Telegames produced some anyway, speculating that the cartridges could be sold eventually.

A few years ago a small company called H2O in Calgary created an interesting Jaguar game called Sphear. When H2O showed this game at the Atari section of a video game exposition, Nintendo lured the company away. It took some time to redo Sphear for the Nintendo 64 game machine. However, it finally came out under the name Tetrisphere. By year's end, Nintendo sold 335,000 units of Tetrisphere in North America alone. No comment!

Kevin Manne and his friends are attempting to put together the second annual "JagFest". It is tentatively scheduled for a Saturday in July or August. This year it will be held in Corfu Fire Hall, Corfu, New York. Last year's Jagfest was a success, perhaps they can do it again.

For a number of years, Bill Rehbock worked for Atari, and then went to work for Sony (USA). Bill was the head of game research and development for Sony's Playstation. Now Bill has moved to VM Labs where he is involved with the new Project X game machine. What a new game system needs is games. Bill Rhebock's job is to find developers that will produce the games. This is a job he did for Atari and Sony. His work is helped by the fact that the special hardware needed to produce games is PC oriented and relatively inexpensive. Project X has the same design team as the Jaguar and the unreleased Jaguar II. In a sense Project X is the successor to the Jaguar, and as such is of interest to the Atari community.

Computer Direct in Edmonton may be in financial trouble. A few months back, some popular products such as HD Driver were withdrawn from Computer Direct. The producers of the products in question claimed that they had not received payment as agreed. Computer Direct was also a major distributor of *Atari Computing* magazine. However, so far it has not sent out issue 7, even though issue 8 of *Atari Computing* is now available. Chris Krowchuck says that he has not received issue 7 from *Atari Computing*, so he can't send it out. The people at *Atari Computing* say that issue 7 hasn't been sent because they haven't received payment for it. *Atari Computing* is now willing to deal directly with Canadian subscribers. Perhaps Chris Krowchuck of Computer Direct can recover the situation, but it is beginning to look bad. The website compdirect.com seems to be down for reconstruction. There is a grandiose message "The Direct Group of Companies has outgrown their current Internet Service provider and are in the process of moving files to their new Website Hosting Service where we will have the tools and resources for better core services." Hum! The only advertising recently has been about DA's Layout software for the Macintosh. Computer Direct will take telephone orders but there seems to be little Atari stock on hand. Customers are losing confidence. If Computer Direct does not honour its subscription commitments, is it safe to order anything from them?



If Computer Direct founders, Systems For Tomorrow may be the remaining major source of ST software in North America. Now that Oregon Research has been liquidated, Systems For Tomorrow has taken on the agency for HiSoft products such as Pa pyrus 5.15. They also have HD Driver, CAB 2.5 and other re cent software from Germany. Systems for Tomorrow is now a distributor of *Atari Com puting* magazine. A three is sue subscription is $30 (US). This is for both magazine and disk delivered to the U.S. and Canada. I notice that *Atari Computing* is now being pub lished by Renegade Publish ing. No it hasn't been sold. The private society that publishes *Atari Computing* had to incorporate itself as a publisher for legal reasons.

For several years Al Horton ran Computer Dungeon from his home. He dealt mainly in used Atari software, mostly games. For personal reasons Al had to close Computer Dungeon, but now it is back. Computer Dungeon is advertising to buy Atari software items and small accessories such as Link II's, external drives etc. Also requested are Atari Jaguar, Lynx and earlier Atari video game systems. Computer Dungeon has added a list of fully registered shareware games for the ST and Falcon. A catalogue of Computer Dungeon's current stock has been prepared and is being mailed to prior customers. Computer Dungeon also stocks Atari Computing magazine, and distributes the ST+ Fanzine.

ST+ used to be a monthly disk

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magazine. Now it will be distributed in print. The *ST+ Fanzine* is sent as a software master to various agents around the world. The agents print and distribute the magazine. Computer Dungeon charges $3.00 per issue of *ST+ Fanzine*, but includes copies free with any purchase. Ken Macdonald is the Canadian source, and he charges $3.00 (CDN) per issue. The *ST+ Fanzine* is the work of some Atari ST supporters in Britain. Dave Hollis is the editor. STOS programmer Tony Greenwood is also involved. The idea is that each *ST+* distributor will make copies of the magazine on demand. No money passes between *ST+* and other distributers. They all work on a non-profit basis. *ST+* is entirely a voluntary effort, and it's survival is independent of numbers of sales. Articles and advertisements are being solicited. The first issue of *ST+ Fanzine* on paper became available in North America in February. I suspect that *ST+* will depend on the Internet for subscription orders.

MGI Software has finally announced the release of Calamus SL 98. The complete package costs $199, the upgrade from an earlier SL version is $99, and the upgrade from Calamus 1.09 is $149. All prices are in US funds. From the promotional material, it would seem that Calamus SL 98 is a major development. The essential functions of this desk top publisher has not been changed significantly. However there are numerous improvements to make this software much easier to use. New features include such things as flying dialogues, detachable and resizable toolbars. There is improved vector handling, colour separation controls and printer handling. Bugs in the old versions have been fixed. There is better compatibility with Falcon computers and those using Geneva multitasking. A new Guideline module and New FrankLIN Lite module have been included. Calamus SL 98 will be distributed on high density disks. I suspect a TT, Falcon or better will be required to get Calamus SL 98 to perform at a reasonable speed.

FloppyShop in Aberdeen Scotland is another durable source of Atari software. It has recently added Electronic Cow music software to its list of products. They are: MIDI Arpeggiator, Sound Chip Synth, Snippit Synth. FloppyShop is also relaunching Easy text Pro and Easy text Pro Vector desktop publishing packages. FloppyShop is the UK distributor of Suzy B public domain collections. These are CD ROM's filled with PD and shareware programs. The new editions are in zip compressed format. Volume 1 is a compressed version of the previous two-CD set from Suzy B. Volume 2 is a new compilation. Suzy B CD's are renowned for their excellent documentation. In North America, users can obtain the new Suzy B disks directly from Michael Burkley, for $30 (US) per CD. However, Suzy B CD's are also available from other outlets such as Computer Dungeon and Systems for Tomorrow.

In France, the PARX company ceased operating on the 15th of December 1997. PARX was agent or source of many interesting ST/Falcon oriented products. Fortunately, OXO Systems, is still in business. They have an English language update of Wen.Suite version 2.40b. There are reports that this version of the Web software package actually works, although not with the MagiC operating system. Also a new release of Studio Son is being published by Centek in France. Studio Son is a set of valuable MIDI tools for the Falcon, and is available in French and English editions.

There are rumours that Oregon research did find a buyer for the Diamond Edge and Diamond Back software copyrights. Perhaps this useful software will be available again soon. Another rumour is that sales of Geneva and Neodesk are very slow, and Dan Wilga is not working to upgrade either product any further. On the other hand COMPO Software USA has announced that SpeedoGDOS version 5.7a is now available. This is the version of GDOS that can use vector fonts. SpeedoGDOS is most useful with Atari Works and the Papyrus document processor (still available from Systems for Tomorrow). Earlier versions of the popular Universal Item Selector will not run on Falcon computers. In fact UIS ver 2 will not run on my Mega STe. However, the latest version 3.32 should run on all TOS computers. Rod MacDonald, the publisher of UIS will upgrade earlier versions for a $10 fee and the original disk.

For years Alex Yu operated ATY Computers in Oakland California. ATY was a strong supporter of Atari computers. Alex carried out many skilful repairs and upgrades for TOS computer users in the Bay area. The store was in a rough neighbourhood, so Alex couldn't get insurance on his stock. His luck ran out. He was robbed at gunpoint. He lost nearly everything in his shop, including parts and diagnostic tools. Thanks to the financial and material support from the Atari community Alex has been able to reopen his shop at a new, and perhaps safer location.

Another Web browser for TOS computers has appeared. This is the Draconis Web browser and interface. It features a TCP/IP stack and a PPP protocol driver, modem configuration and dial-in scripts. It should run on any TOS computer with at least 1 MB of RAM. This is software in development. Some ST users reported difficulties with it. However it runs well on the Falcon. Peter Rottengatter took all reports seriously and issued an upgrade of his excellent STing web interface software. He has fixed some bugs and has replaced some slow C code with something more efficient using assembly language.

The Milan computer is in production. The first units should be available in March, although the Milan will not ship in numbers until the end of April. The Milan is expected to be introduced at the Frankfurt music fair. The base computer comes with 8MB of

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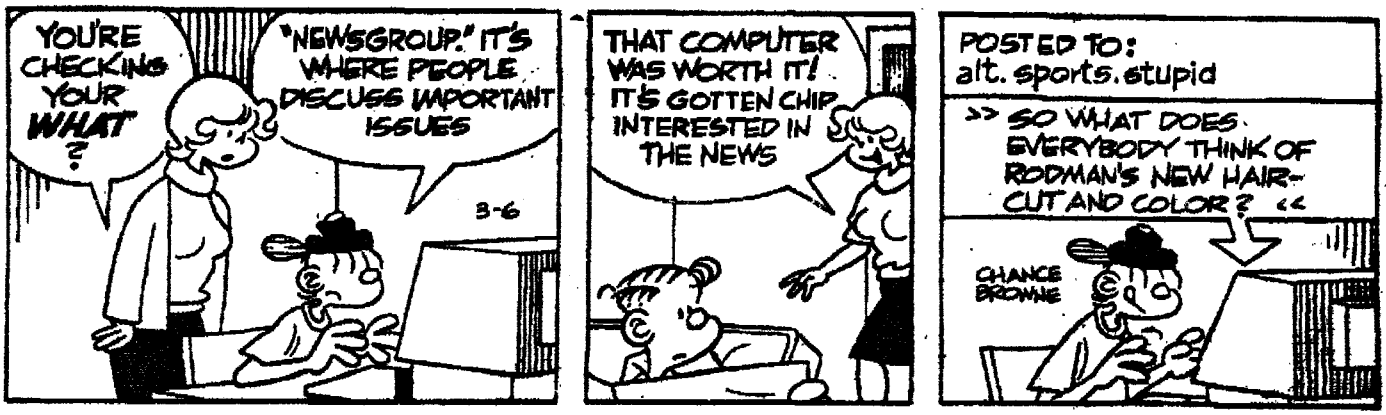
RAM, disk drive, hard drive, keyboard, mouse, 2MB video card, a completely revised TOS 4.X and the Milan multi OS. The price of this package is 1499 DM (about $1200 CDN). Some software is also included. There will be a Spring Atari Fair at Neuss, Germany on April 4 and 5. The well known ray tracing software Neon Grafix is now available from Falcon Verlag in TT and Falcon editions. It will be sold at the Neuss Atari Fair at a considerably reduced price. A new Falcon game (name unknown) will also be on display at this fair. The Milan computer will be there too.

In the March Issue of "PC Computing", page 87, is an article entitled "Guilty" by Paul Somerson. Here are some quotes. "OK, I admit it. I was wrong. I've been a Microsoft defender for a decade and a half ... but today I just switched sides. And it's Windows that put me over the edge." Paul details his efforts to reinstall Windows 95, then goes on to say. "Windows is an utter piece of junk. It is a big joke, except that the laugh's on us. It is an absurdly overcomplicated usability nightmare." After that was published, Paul Somerson received Email explaining that Windows' early competitor, GEM, is still around (as MagiC etc.). That it has been in continuous use, and under development to the present day. The email went on to propose GEM as a worthwhile alternative to Windows for basic business applications (specifically mentioning the Papyrus word processor and the Texel spreadsheet). Paul replied that he was unaware of this, and that GEM might receive coverage in a future article on alternate operating systems.

As a comparison, Dave Gostl reports on problems with MagiC, and says "I copied both disks to my hard drive and reinstalled MagiC from there. It reinstalled in a matter of seconds." We know that GEM is an elegant operating system with considerable potential for further development. Let's hope that the rest of the world gets to know this too.



GCACE MEETINGS

New Executive. Not!

by Rowland Grant

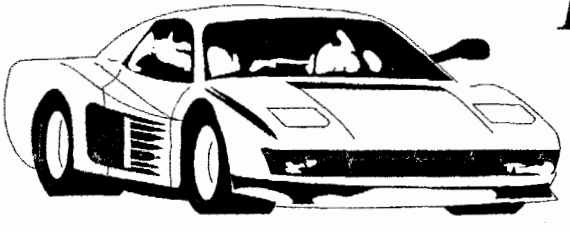
The general meeting in January is our Annual General Meeting. It is required by the legislation under which our society is registered. We went through the formalities seriously, at least for a few minutes. The Financial Report for 1997 was duly accepted by those present. Thanks to Disk of the Month and coffee sales, we end the year with a small surplus. Elections were held for officers and directors. The following members will constitute the Club executive during 1998. President and Editor is Gordon Hooper, Vice President is John Picken, Secretary is Rowland Grant, Treasurer is John Towler, Librarians are Cliff Bouvette (8-bit) and Ted Skrecky (ST). Directors at large are Noel Black, Craig Carmichael, Bruce Funk and George Rose.

The February general meeting featured a demonstration of SIO2PC by myself. This was followed by some neat demos run on an Atari 130XE system. These demos were on disks sent to us by the Atari Bit Byter User Club (ABBUC) in Germany. They must be the most active Atari 8-bit club in the world. The first demo was Drunken Chessboard, a very entertaining projection of patterns and shapes. Then we saw Jiri Bernasek's Christmas greetings. These make use of display list interrupts to get more than one graphics mode on the screen. One demo had top and bottom scrolling banners with a text readout in the centre. The text was in Czech and English. The character set was attractive and the vertical scrolling of the text was very smooth. The other demo also involved a split screen. An amusing wizard gestured and walked back and forth on the bottom part of the screen, while fireworks displays showed up on the upper part. The lower screen animation seemed to use a coloured character mode. The animations probably involved the successive printing of different images to the screen. The fireworks seemed to be done in graphics 8 with colour artifacting. All the demos were accompanied by entertaining music (which also requires the use of interrupts). It was all very impressive for a computer system developed twenty years ago. An Atari 8-bit evening would not be complete without games. I tried the game "Rescue on Fractalus" but I'm a bit out of practice. Ted Skrecky showed that he hasn't lost the knack as he survived several levels of "Boulder Dash" before his character was squashed.

Ready for Life in the Fast Lane?

For Sale: TT030

FERRARI TESTEROSSA



Prefer to sell as a lot. Asking $700.

Call John Towler at:

382-5083

Testerossa not included.

- TT030 with 4 megs ST RAM and 16 megs TT RAM (Requires a VGA or SVGA Monitor) or...
- TTM195 19" monochrome monitor. Great for DTP! Displays 2 pages side by side. Only runs on a TT.
- Toshiba 3301 single speed CDROM drive with some CD's.
- Spectre GCR with System 6.05, Mac utilities
- 50 meg hard drive.
- ICD Link SCSI host adaptor.
- Various Atari software on hard drive.

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My routine was to use SIO2PC to create a RAM disk in the Toshiba's memory, format it, and sector copy a Bellcom disk from the 1050 drive to the RAM disk. Then save the RAM disk contents to a disk image file on a high density (HD) disk. Fifteen single density disk images or 10 enhanced density images will fit on one HD (1.44 Meg) disk. The Atari 1050 drives are rather slow. At peak efficiency I could create a disk image in about four minutes. I wasn't always operating at peak efficiency. After a few hours of continuous use the 1050 drive tended to get hot and errors appeared. So I kept a couple of spare drives ready. Creating all the disk images took about forty hours. This is certainly the way to archive 8-bit libraries. Although I recommend a more leisurely pace. I expect that we could get most of our 8-bit library, in disk image form, on one 100 MB zip disk.

Nick Kennedy created the SIO2PC system so that his Atari 8-bit computers could have the benefit of the HD disks, hard drives, CD-ROMs and other peripherals that usually come with a PC. Even a printer attached to the PC can be used by the Atari 8-bit. When all one's software is backed up on HD disks or a hard drive, the old Atari 5.25 floppy drive would be seldom used. I copied some of my boot-disk software over to disk images on a HD disk. Under SIO2PC all the software loaded and ran perfectly. I even tried QS Forth, which uses the disk drive intensively, with no problems. However, with word processors and Forth, one does have to remember to update the disk image in storage before switching the PC off. A notebook computer is particularly handy when using SIO2PC, as it takes up no more space than any other Atari peripheral. There is other software that makes an 8-bit peripheral out of a PC. But SIO2PC is simple to use, it places few demands on the PC system, and it has set the standard.

I hear that there is no lack of material for the new POOL DISK II. Some of it may be text files, including the indispensable book 'Mapping the Atari'. Ernest Schreurs received lots of files in Diskcomm (DCM) format. This is a regular 8-bit disk that has been compressed into a file. There are utilities that convert DCM files to ATR format, but they are not reliable. So Ernest studied the Diskcomm format structure. He then constructed his own conversion utility, called DCM2ATR (what else?). The reverse conversion is possible too. Anyway, POOLDISK II will be sold for $15.00 (US), a very attractive price. It should be available by April if not sooner.

Unable to meet rent increases, B&C ComputerVisions closed its store and moved to El Dorado, California. It will serve Atari users as a mail order outlet. The new warehouse is ready, the shelves are being restocked, and the backlog of orders is being filled. The address is B&C ComputerVisions, Stope Way, El Dorado, Ca. 95623-4716. Call at (503) 295-9271, Fax 295-9271. Another supplier is K-Products, P.O. Box 22122 A.M.F. Salt Lake City, Utah 84122. K-products has the right to produce and distribute the US Doubler chip for Atari 1050 disk drives. This chip speeds up the drive operation and allows double density. Bob Klass says that he can sell the US Doubler chips and installation manual for $29.00 (US), shipping included. Bob Puff (Computer Software Services) used to sell circuit boards that enabled his Black Box interface to handle a 3.5 inch floppy drive. The supply of these floppy boards is exhausted. However I understand that Bob Puff will make another batch of boards if he has 50 orders.

Atari Classics Magazine is still being published, but there is no definite time table for it. The next issue is due about now. Also New Atari User is back in print after a gap of almost six months. Les Ellingham has gone into other work that takes up almost all of his time. However he wants to continue New Atari User, even if the returns scarcely cover expenses. Issue 82 is quite interesting, worth waiting for anyway. Dean Garraghty ceased producing the Futura disks last year. However he has not given up on Atari computers. I notice that he is proposing to make a 'History of Atari 8-bit Computers' on video tape. It will take some time to collect enough suitable material. Dean has appealed to Atari 8-bit users for photos or video of Atari shows, Atari promotions, press releases announcing Atari products, any rare or unreleased announcements and other inside information.

Larry Serflaten (ChildsPlay Software) is advertising for Atari 8-bit game programmers. He says that he knows of a distributor who is interested in making cartridge games for the 8-bit. The code must be 16K or less. Larry's role is to supply the games in a format for the E-prom burner, and make up the game instructions. The market is rather small. Only about six cartridges will be made at a time. I would guess that financial rewards for programmers will be negligible.

Some time ago, Charles Marslette put his MyDOS version 3.X onto a ROM chip in a cartridge and called it RDOS. Now A&B ComputerVisions is advertising version 4.X of MyDOS in a cartridge. This is a new version which supports a RAM disk as large as one megabyte. The cartridge is the plain brown Atari type. It does not have the top socket that allows a second cartridge to be added. The price is $19.95 (US). Charles Marslette is quite an experienced programmer. I understand that he was involved in the early reverse engineering of the BIOS ROM chips on the IBM PC. The reverse engineered BIOS chips made MS-DOS computers IBM compatible, and provided a common standard. As a result, the PC clone is today's major computer platform (but not the best).

Sparta DOS 3.3c is available in a 16K cartridge from Video 61. The specifications of this cartridge were not given. My Sparta DOS X cartridge contains 64K of program code, bank switched to take only 8K of address space. Sparta DOS 3.3c may have a different arrangement.

Mark Schmelzenb used to use the Envision integrated character editor for creating images for game programs. Unable to find his copy, he decided to create his own Envision utility. Since Envision would work much better using a mouse. He is using an 8-bit emulator that can't use a mouse. So he decided to write his version to run on a PC. So we have an Atari 8-bit utility that must run on a PC using Dos, Windows or Linux. A typical cross-platform tool. Mark calls his program EnvisionPC, and has posted it at UMich.

Greg Menke describes an apparatus that is intended to detect low frequency radio waves emitted during an earth quake (in California). The apparatus consists of an Atari 800 hooked up to a seismograph and a low frequency radio receiver through the joy stick ports. This sends data to a 810 disk drive. A second Atari 800 is attached to the same drive. It reads the data and does computations such as fourier transforms. The two computers are synchronized such that they don't simultaneously access the drive. Interesting.