# DAL-ACE

DALLAS ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 5 MAY 1985

## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

At the last meeting, there seemed to be a small controversy over the bulletin board. Many feel that I don't like the board and would like to see it shutdown. Only half of this is true.

It is true that I don't like the BBS, but only because in the past the BBS was costing the group hundreds of dollars a month. At one time the cost of operation was over $400 for one month.

It is true that the blame can rest on the BBS operator and executive board, of which I was a member.

Many people in the club know nothing of these high expenses, and felt that the board should remain. I do also. Yes, you heard right. But, the BBS cannot again deplete the resources of the club as it did in earlier years.

Over the last year Lance has run the board at his own expense and I want to thank him for it. Now Lance wants to let someone else run the BBS and I have a gut feeling of high costs. I hope not because if the trend starts over, I will vote to shut down the board.

Again, I'm all for the BBS, but let's not let it be the drain on the treasury as it once was.

## DAL-ACE NEWS

On the 26th of April, the Dallas Computer Council held its second meeting. This is a council of the leaders of all the user groups in the Dallas area. The goal of this group is to trade information on each others' group and work toward a common goal to help out the groups.

At the meeting, we heard from a member of the IBM group who had contacted the InfoMart about letting us use it for meetings. The news is YES!!! They, the InfoMart, said that they would love to have all the user groups meet there. The best news is the price: $0.00. No that's not a misprint. The InfoMart will let us use the building from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon. Also, they will open up the cafeteria for our use. More good news. Dealers are welcome to set up in a special area.

By the time you read this, Tom Burke and I will have visited the InfoMart and see if we can truly use the location for our meeting. More news to come.

## NEWS FROM ATARI

The 65XE and 130ST are dead; long live the 800XL. Yes, Atari has announced that the 65XE, and the 130ST have been dropped from the new lineup of computers. My feelings are: good news. The 65XE was nothing more than an 800XL with a different cover, and the 130ST was the new 520ST with less memory. With the price of 256K memory dropping, why have a 128K computer. Atari did say that the 800XL would continue to be the low end computer.

130XEs are out. As I write, the 130XE is available for sale. I know because I'm using one to write this. The computer is a dream to use. With 128K of memory it is the most computer for your bucks on the market today.

Other good news. DOS 2.5 is out. You will find it in the club library this month. It is just like DOS 2.0S but will allow you to use the 64K memory as a RAM disk. When it boots up you have about 500 free sectors to use.

Happy Atari Computing,
Gary

## EDITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Dave Gillen said to me at this month's production meeting, "Wait 'till you've been editor for a while. THEN you'll have some perspective."
I look forward to being the editor of issues of this journal for months to come with optimism. I am optimistic that the newsletter staff will receive many, many contributions from our club members. Face it, all of what this newsletter is comes from the members. Not just the usual group of crazies whose names are constantly appearing here, but EVERYBODY. Any one of you may satisfy your journalistic urges while doing a good deed for your fellow members, as well as making your editor's life easier. Tell us how we can actually get some use out of a 1030. Reveal the inner secrets of the lastest program from whoever--is it junk, or should we all rush out and buy it? Tell the club through the most widely-read medium avaiable: the newsletter.
Am I sounding like a used car dealer? C'est la vie.

Mark

## Coming Attractions

By Dave Gillen

Hello there. Welcome to the meeting! This is the column you should check first to see what we are planning for demonstrations, speakers, clinics, and other broohaha.

We need your help for many of these things. In the **Next Month** and **Future Topics** categories, I need volunteers to demonstrate software and hardware for the themes listed. Please help me! Ever used some package that you thought was the greatest thing since sliced bread? Well, demo it!

If you feel a bit uncomfortable about talking before a group of folks, don't worry! I don't like to do it either and that hasn't stopped me yet! I'll help you out if you help me out. You really do **know** more than you think!

On with the show.

### This Month (11May85)

The theme for this month is "Database Managers"!

Noon, A **NEW PEOPLE** Clinic. If you're new to DAL-ACE or to computers in general, check this clinic out. We hope to answer some of your deepest questions and clear up some of your darkest fears about that expensive plastic box that you bought. This clinic will be held in the small room.

12:30pm, The business meeting. This will be held in the large room.

1:00pm, An introduction to Special Interest Groups (SIGs). This will be an informal get-together to launch new SIGs for the coming year. If you want to learn about SIGs or form one, be at this meeting. It will be held in the small room.

1:30pm, A demonstration of one of the new Atari XE series computers. This will be held in the small room.

2:00pm, Our theme demonstrations. This month the theme is database managers. Find out what they are and see these samples in use:

Data Perfect
Filemanager+

These demonstrations will be held in the small room.

Be sure to ask lots of questions at the demonstrations. After all, this is your club! Finally, a big **THANK YOU** to everyone that gave some time for the activities.

### Next Month (1Jun85)

This will be a Saturday meeting. The theme will be telecommunications. At press time the exact schedule wasn't finished but I can give you these tidbits:

1. We will show you how to use the club's bulletin board.
2. There will be a brief discussion about the hardware and software you need to talk to other computers.
3. There may be a demonstration showing how to "talk" to an information utility (ie. a big computer with lots of information).

Stay tuned to your June newsletter for the details.

### Future Topics

These themes are in the works for future meetings:
July, Hardware (purchase, disk cleanup, new products)
August, Graphics

Again, if you have something that you want to see or want to show, please give me a call or collar me at the meeting.

### Caveat

All of the above is subject to change at the last minute without notice (yeah, I know but I had to say it). Always check this column for updates. There may also be a board at the meeting with the "Topics of the Day".

Thanks and Enjoy.

## Meeting Schedule

Mark on your calendars these dates for future DAL-ACE meetings:

Saturday, 1 June 1985, noon
Saturday, 13 July 1985, noon
Saturday, 3 August 1985, noon

These dates were the best we could get for the Richardson Civic Center. We would love to have all our meetings fall on the first Saturday of each month. Unfortunately, we're not that lucky.

If you are dissatisfied with these dates AND you can find a better facility, please contact one of the officers.

## BOARD ACTIONS

Meeting Date: May 19, 1985
A quorum of board members were present.

Below is a brief summary of actions taken. For more information, see Tom Burke, DAL-ACE Secretary or any officer.

* The board voted to sign a new six month contract with the Civic Center. This will allow us to improve our choice of dates and assure a meeting place up through February, 1986.

* The board approved expending $120 for another large room (2 small with moveable divider) for the June meeting ONLY. The board intends to place all vendor tables in this area and allow vendor sales to be uninterrupted through the business meeting and demonstrations. Vendor and member feedback is STRONGLY solicited.

* The board is concerned about DAL-ACE liability and ability to provide proper care for unescorted minors at the meeting. Feedback from the membership on our legal status is requested.

* The board voted unanimously to express its concern about unruly behavior by unescorted minors displayed at recent meetings. DAL-ACE is NOT a baby-sitter. All members' enjoyment of the meeting is reduced by children not controlled by their parents. PLEASE, if your child attends the meeting without you, request that he behave with decorum and observe requests by officers.

* DAL-ACE will formally request membership in the Worldwide Users Network, sponsored by ANTIC magazine (and Atari?). This should improve the club's information sources at no cost to the club. Interested members should contact J. Pellet.

* The secretary will prepare a list of area vendors carrying Atari hardware and software with the intent of soliciting new members and advertisers.

* The board took the following actions relating to the BBS: 1) Confirmed Howard Chang as the new SYSOP (with assistance from Lance), 2) cancelled last month's approval for BASICXL/FOREM XL, 3) approved the expenditure of up to $125 to effect this transfer of responsibility, 4) approved the expenditure of up to $50 per month to cover phone and miscellaneous costs associated with the BBS, and 5) change the BBS format to a MESSAGE BOARD ONLY (This was necessary due to limits of the current club hardware.).

* All members please note that the board meetings are open to all members who are interested. We would request that members observe only unless specifically recognized. If a member has a concern or presentation he or she would like to make to the board this can be scheduled with one of the officers listed on the back page.

## *** COMMUNICATIONS COLUMN ***

by John Pellet

FLASH: NEW BBS #: (817) 540-3270 METRO

If you have questions or comments about anything relating to this column, or DALACE in general, give me a call - my phone number is metro so I hope it's a local call for most of you. Communication is a two way street - one communicator is like one hand clapping.

The BBS should be up again by now. Lance has done a great job but finally got tired of the time demands of the BBS. Thanks Lance! I, at least, think you've got us spoiled. Howard Chang is our new SYSOP and I'm sure great things are in store. The board will have a metro number again, so the cost to the club will be at least $30 per month. Also, since the club 8" drive is fried beyond hope, we only have one drive. Therefore, for the present, the BBS will come up as a message board only. There are many different BBS's in the area that support file transfer so I don't think we'll miss it much and it should make access easier. Let me hear from you. Call me or leave a message on the board if you've got an opinion.

The newsletter has a new editor, effective with the May issue. Mark Maxham will be assuming this much-needed responsibility. We would like to get a co-editor that could provide some help and step in if Mark decides to move to Atlanta. If you're interested LET ME KNOW!

The library has several new disks coming in the near future. Look for a television test signal generator, possibly a couple of public domain DOS's, a freeware word processor, a home finance database, and more. The new public domain C made it in last month - it looks like a cleaned up Deep Blue C. If you have not bought a library disk in a while I suggest you look at the treasurer's report on income sources in the March issue. If you have a neat program, see the contribution guide in the March newsletter.

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU - GOOD OR BAD.

# ATARI UPGRADES FROM NEWELL INDUSTRIES

**FASTCHIP - ATARI 400/800** was $41.95 **Now Only $19.95**

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**RAMROD - ATARI 800** was $189.95 **Now Only $119.95**

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| | |
|---|---|
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| OMNIMON piggyback board with OMNIMON | $69.95 |
| 4K RAM (2716 compatible for use in the RAMROD) | $15.95 |
| 4K OMNIVIEW ENHANCEMENT (80 COLUMNS) | $29.95 |
| 8K OMNIVIEW ENHANCEMENT (OMNIMON & OMNIVIEW) | $44.95 |
| 8K OMNIMON ENHANCEMENT | $44.95 |
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**MYDOS 3.X DISK OPERATING SYSTEM** $29.95

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Accounts- All, outstanding, selected

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Allows the use of three different operating systems. Comes with OSNXL operating system (solves most incompatability problems), FASTCHIP floating point routines, and OMNIMON XL in ROM.

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## HAND'S ON WITH ANTIC'S DEVELOPMENT 520ST

by JACK POWELL ANTIC TECHNICAL EDITOR

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Our Atari 520ST just arrived in the Antic offices. This is the $5,500 development package, and it includes the computer, two 3 1/2" disk drives, one medium- resolution (640 X 200) RGB analog monitor, and one mouse.

The software in the package is the "C" compiler, machine language assembler and debugger by Digital Research, the Mince screen editor by Mark of the Unicorn, Kermit - a modem protocol program for file transfer, CP/M-68, and, of course, GEM - which is in ROM in the machine.

On back order - but expected soon - is a high-resolution (640 X 400) monochrome monitor and a ten-megabyte hard disk.

Along with all this came 1000 pages of documentation and since it will take some time to digest all of this, we thought you might like a first impression of this new, high-level Atari computer.

The development 520ST is a preliminary model and there will be some changes between now and the time you see it in the stores, but all parts of this machine were factory made in the same manufacturing plants as the final product will be.

The only real difference - besides the price - is that these machines were hand assembled.

The first thing you notice when taking the ST out of its box, is that it's very light. Although somewhat larger in size than the 800XL, it feels lighter. This may be because the shielding has not yet been added.

It looks exactly like the ST on our May cover, but there are some details you can't see from the photograph. On the right edge of the machine, to the rear, are two joystick ports identical in appearance to current Atari joystick ports, except they are also used for the mouse.

On the left edge, rear - opposite the joystick ports, is the cartridge slot. This will accept a 40-pin board - 20 upper and 20 lower.

In back of the computer are various switches and ports, each labelled beneath and with an indicating icon etched in the plastic above. From left to right they are:

* Reset - a small, square button.
* Power - identical to previous Atari power switches.
* Power In - 7-pin, male DIN.
* MIDI Out - 5-pin, female DIN.
* MIDI In - same as above.
* Television - RCA, female.
* Channel - mini-switch, labelled "L" "H".
* Monitor - 13-pin, female DIN.
* Printer - female D-25, IBM-PC/Centronics compatible.
* Modem - male D-25, IBM compatible.
* Floppy Disk - 14-pin, female DIN.
* Hard Disk - female D-19.

Besides the standard keyboard and ten-key pad, are ten function keys, labelled F1 to F10. The isolated cursor section is particularly well designed with the lower three keys representing Left, Down and Right, and the Up arrow centered above them. On either side of the Up key are Insert and Clr/Home. The top two keys in the cluster - which are enlarged - are Help and Undo. The Undo key may become particularly useful.

The drives accept Sony 3 1/2" disks. To boot the machine, first turn on the drives and insert both disks before turning on the computer. A disk must be in a drive for the computer to later access that drive.

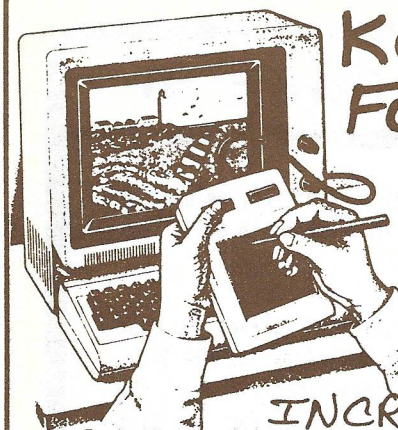
When booted, the GEM desktop appears as a light green background with pale blue border and black-outlined icons. In the upper right corner of the screen are two disk icons, one over the other, that look like file cabinet drawers. In the lower right corner of the screen is a trash can.

In the border area, above the upper left section of the green background, are the words, "DESK FILE VIEW OPTIONS." In the middle of the screen is a thin, black arrow-cursor which is moved by the mouse.

We'll save details on GEM for later articles. Suffice it to say, it is fast! It can redraw an entire screen of icons in the blink of an eye. (EDITORS NOTE: A couple of quick examples of fast: cold boot w/ memory test in 11 seconds and load a 67K file in 3 seconds.)

This is just a surface description of an exciting new machine. Antic wants to get the information out to you as soon as possible and we plan to share our ST experiences as they happen. Stay tuned for further details.

(EDITORS NOTE: This article should be of special interest to those unfortunates who were unable to get



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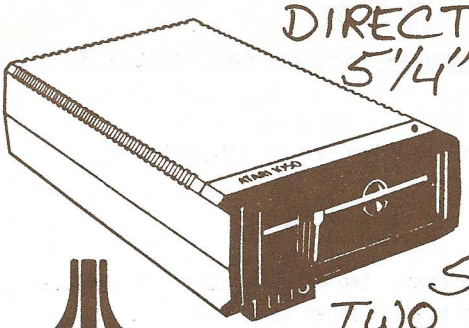

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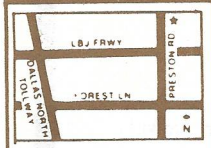
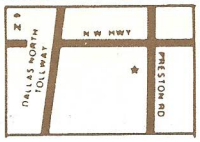
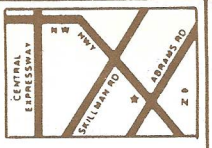


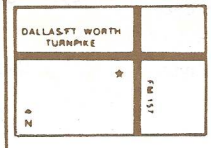

**NORTH DALLAS**
**661-8974**
3340 PRESTON RD
(NORTH OF LBJ)
ACROSS FROM SEARS AUTO



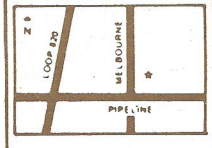

**PRESTON CENTER**
**750-7619**
8301 PRESTON RD
(1 BLOCK SOUTH OF NORTHWEST HWY)



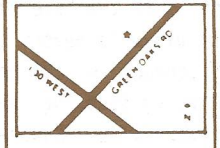

**MEDALLION CENTER**
**368-2836**
309 MEDALLION CENTER
NORTHWEST HWY AT ABRAMS



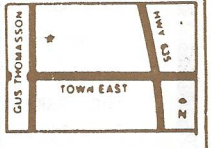

**ARLINGTON, TX.**
**460-8846**
550 LINCOLN SQUARE
(I 30 & HWY 157 ACROSS
FROM BLACK EYED PEA)




**HURST, TX.**
**595-1003**
904 MELBOURNE
(ACROSS THE STREET FROM
NORTHEAST MALL)




**FORT WORTH, TX.**
**731-9181**
6821 GREEN OAKS RD
ACROSS THE STREET FROM
RIDGMAR MALL




**MESQUITE, TX**
**686-6997**
2131 N TOWN E BLVD
AT GUS THOMASSON

## ELEMENTARY P/M GRAPHICS

by Jeff Golden

This is installment two of Elementary P/M Graphics. Installment one was published last month, and you may want to go back and reread that article.

Last month, we presented a "bare-bones" program that placed a player on the screen, and then moved it horizontally across the playfield. We then explained how to reserve some memory for your player/missiles, how to tell the ANTIC and GTIA chips about your player, how to draw the player into memory, and then how to position the player on the screen.

Now, that you know all about the above, we can forge ahead, (otherwise, go back and read that first article).

In any computer learning situation, it is most important to sit down and actually perform the task you are studying. Hopefully, as you read this, you are sitting in front of your computer, and have typed in the bare-bones program.

Today, I want to add some changes to that basic program, and gradually work our way into the numerous options that are available. Having a running example in front of you, is worth, in this case, about 1,000,000 words, and will make things easier for both of us.

Remember my theme song... P/M Graphics is easy.

The bare-bones listing uses a "one-line-resolution" player, and as you can see, it is pretty skinny from top to bottom. We can double the height of the player by using "two-line-resolution". Try changing the following lines in your program:

```
160 POKE 559,46
240 PLAYER0=PMBASE*256+512
320 Y0=60:PLAYER=PLAYER0+Y0
```

Poking a 46 into location 559, (in place of the former 62), switches us to two-line mode. Antic will now use each of our player's memory bytes to create two scan lines on the screen. Of course, we could have done the same thing by doubling the number of POKEs in our Draw-Player subroutine. However, using the two-line mode has some advantages.

By using one byte to do the work of two, we can cut the memory requirements for P/M Graphics in half, from 2K to 1K.

For this reason, we had to adjust the offset to the first player's memory location, (from 1024 to 512). We also had to adjust the vertical position of the player by changing the Y0 value to 60. Each two-line player only has 128 bytes of memory space, versus the 256 bytes that the one-line player had.

A disadvantage of two-line resolution is that, we lose some of the fine detail, that we can get with one-line resolution.

Next lesson. Change or add the following lines:

```
140 GRAPHICS 0
150 LIST 0,1200
```

Then run the program.

How about that! P/M Graphics also works in text mode as well as graphics mode, and in color too. This is significant for game designers, who may have to cram a game into a 16K computer. They usually use a redefined character set to draw in the background.

Character set graphics takes up very little memory space, so they can build large scrolling landscapes. The players are used for fast action-type figures, and for adding more than four colors to the picture.

You can even make a neat cursor with this thing.

Let's try another change:

```
140 GRAPHICS 2+16:POSITION 4,4
150 PRINT #6;"P/M GRAPHICS"
```

Note that changing the text mode to a larger letter size had no effect on the size of the player. The players are truly independent of the graphics mode, with one exception. Some of the newer GTIA graphics modes use the player color registers to achieve their 16 levels of color.

Next lesson:

```
200 POKE 704,24
```

Our original pink color changes to gold. The formula for determining the color value to poke into 704 is this: Color-number, times 16, plus luminance. You

can get the value for color-number from the BASIC book. To get gold, we used color number 1, light orange, and added a luminance of 8. (1*16+8=24). The pink color was developed by using color number 5, purple, plus luminance 8. (5*16+8=88).

Next, try this:

```
230 POKE 53256,1
```

And then this:

```
230 POKE 53256,3
```

Monsters anybody? Try adjusting YO so that the player overlaps the letters. There are two things to note.

First the letters show through the hole in the center of the player. The same thing happens when multiple players are aligned. You can create a multi-colored player by overlaying two or more players and letting the colors show through the holes.

The second thing to note, is that the player is passing in front of the background. There are ways of making a player pass behind an object, but I think that we have had enough for today.

I would like to leave you with a project to do on your own. Get out your graph paper, and see if you can change the player image into that of a Happy Face. Last month's article explained how to do this, and included a short program for converting bits to decimal values.

More about player priorities and other good stuff next month. I hope that you have had fun playing with your amazing ATARI machine. Remember, you did it all with a few easy POKEs, and that's something that anyone can handle.

The Bare-Bones Listing:

```
100 PMBASE=PEEK(106)-16
120 POKE 106,PMBASE
140 GRAPHICS 8+16
160 POKE 559,62
180 POKE 54279,PMBASE
200 POKE 704,88
220 POKE 53277,3
240 PLAYER0=PMBASE*256+1024
320 YO=120:PLAYER=PLAYER0+YO
340 GOSUB 1000
360 FOR X=35 TO 210
380 POKE 53248,X:NEXT X
400 GOTO 360

1000 REM  DRAW PLAYER SUBRTN **
1020 POKE PLAYER,0
1040 POKE PLAYER+1,102
1060 POKE PLAYER+2,255
1080 POKE PLAYER+3,231
1100 POKE PLAYER+4,231
1120 POKE PLAYER+5,255
1140 POKE PLAYER+6,102
1160 POKE PLAYER+7,0
1180 RETURN

2000 REM BINARY TO DECIMAL ***
2020 REM KEY IN ZEROS AND ONES
2040 DIM A$(31)
2060 B=0:INPUT A$
2080 FOR X=1 TO LEN(A$)
2100 B=B*2+(VAL(A$(X,X)))
2120 NEXT X:
2140 ? B
2160 GOTO 2060
```

## Printer Buffer from Digital Devices

Reviewed by John Pellet

I have been looking for an inexpensive printer buffer for my Atari for some time, without success. I wanted a buffer capable of being expanded to 64K, at least, with a total cost under $100. At the April meeting I thought my search was over. The Printer Buffer from Digital Devices (renamed maufacturer of the original Ape-Face) was a Centronics parallel buffer/interface with 16K installed and user-expandable to 64K. And the price was right. When I got it home I ran some simple BASIC programs that showed a 64K (with my RAM chips) and it worked beautifully. BUT the next day, I tried Letter Perfect and HOMEPAK and got characters dropped everywhere but on the paper. I called Digital Device's toll-free number and found out the BAD news - this thing DOES NOT WORK WITH THE 850! This fact was NOT mentioned anywhere on the package or in the documentation. And this from a manufacturer whose history and current product line is strongly oriented around the Atari. Oh well. Digital did supply a toll- free number and my dealer has agreed to exchange or refund this device but I really do not understand the packaging/documentation gap. My search for a lotta buffer for a little green will continue.

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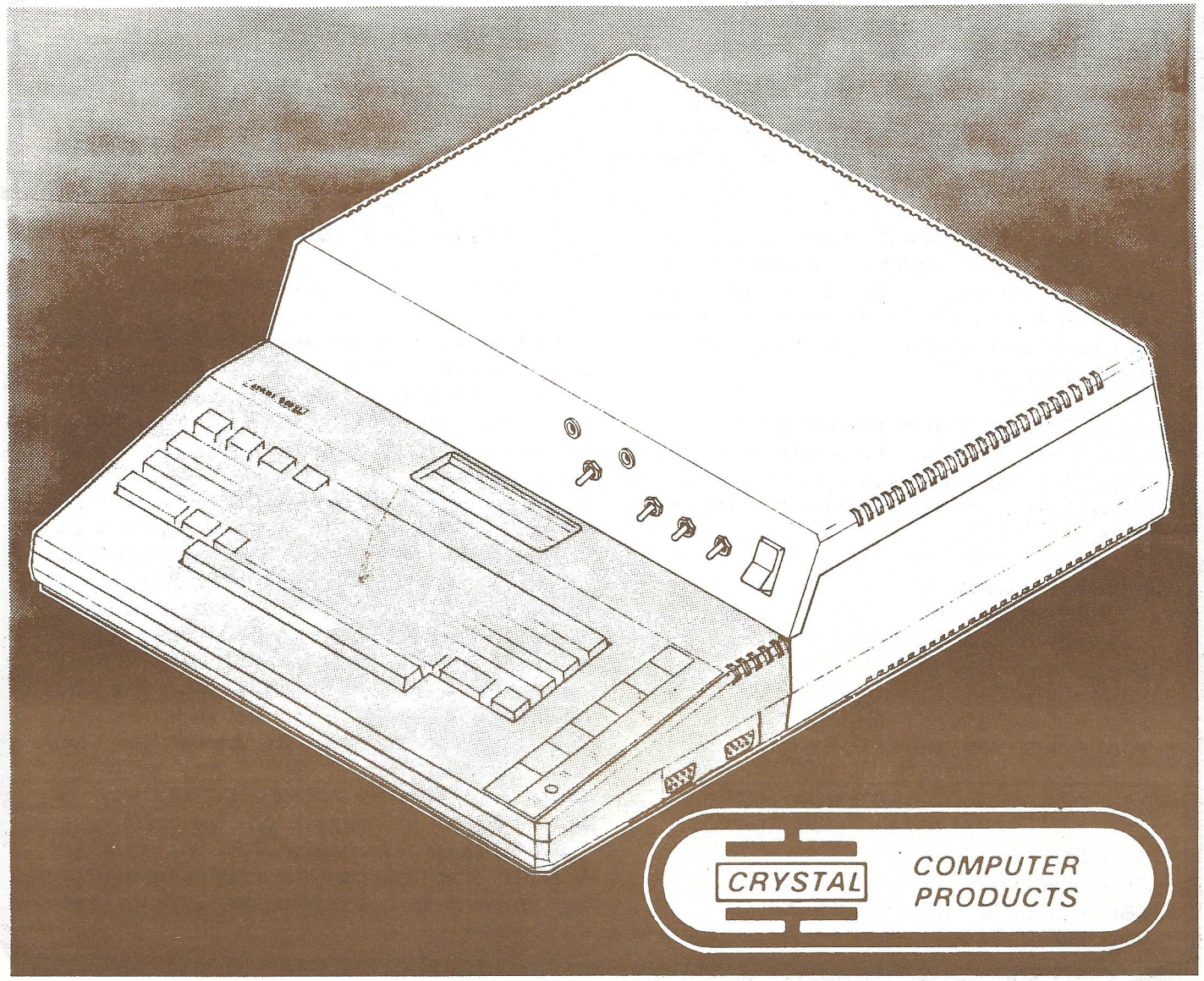

## BUFFER TEST PROGRAM

by John Pellet

This is a simple program to fill up a printer buffer. It lets you verify 2 necessary performance goals: buffer capacity in bytes and lack of I/O errors. It is slower than it has to be but I don't see any particular need for speed in this application. It is self-explanatory when you read the remarks. ENJOY!

NOTE: The close bracket in line 22 is "ESC CTRL Clear". This was written in BASIC XL so BASIC users must make the apprpriate syntax changes.

```
 10 Rem BUFFER TEST PROGRAM
 12 Rem BY J PELLET PUBLIC DOMAIN
 16 Rem NOTE THAT UPDATING THE SCREEN
 17 Rem EVERY CHAR. SLOWS THINGS DOWN
 18 Rem BY A FACTOR OF 10 BUT WHAT'S
 19 Rem THE HURRY?  JUST READ A BOOK
 20 Rem SINCE YOU ONLY RUN IT ONCE.
 22 ? "}PRINT BUFFER TEST PROGRAM":? "
  by J. Pellet":Close #3:Open #3,0,8,"
P:"
 23 ? :? :? "   When count stops w/ pr
inter":? "   deselected, buffer is fu
ll.":? "   Buffer size = count.  Sele
ct"
 24 ? "   printer and let buffer print
":? "   then check char. for errors."
 25 Position 4,12
 26 ? "BUFFER SIZE TO TEST IN K ";:Inp
ut Size
 27 Size=Size*1024:Rem CALCULATE TOTAL
  # CHARACTERS
 28 Iter=Int(Size/10+0.5):Rem CALCULAT
E # OF 10 CHAR. ITERATIONS REQ'D
 29 Position 4,14
 30 ? "TESTING ";Size/1024;"K BUFFER "
:Position 4,15:? " IN ";Iter;" ITERAT
IONS OF MAIN LOOP"
 31    For I=1 To Iter
 32    Position 4,17:? "ITERATION #";I
 33       For J=0 To 9
 34       ? #3;J;
 35       Position 4,18:? "# CHAR. SENT
= ";I*10+J
 36       Next J
 37    Next I
 38 Close #3
 39 Position 4,19:? "TOTAL CHARACTERS
SENT = ";I*10+J
```

## EDITORIAL STAFF

The current newsletter staff is listed below. We need your help. The same half-dozen people can't do the whole job every time. If you won't help in some fashion you can expect this newsletter to go downhill FAST. We need articles, programs, and production workers. Call any of the people listed below, PLEASE! Note that several names have been dropped from this issue - if we're not getting anything from you, you're not listed.

-JLP

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Call John Pellet at 792-3175 to volunteer for one of the vacant positions. The pay isn't great, but there are a lot of intangible rewards that come from making contributions to the club.

## NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Submissions will be accepted in any form. However, it is extremely helpful if your submission(s) can conform to the following format:

Condensed print.
Column width: 56 characters per column (3 7/16 inches).
Column length: 9 inches (either 6 or 7 lines per inch).
Right margin justification used with text.
Submitted to newsletter both printed out and on disk.

### NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

JUNE Newsletter: Copy should be turned in to one of the editors above by May 12th. FINAL deadline and production meeting will be May 12th at 2:00PM at Jim Chaney's house, 916 E. Berkeley in Richardson.

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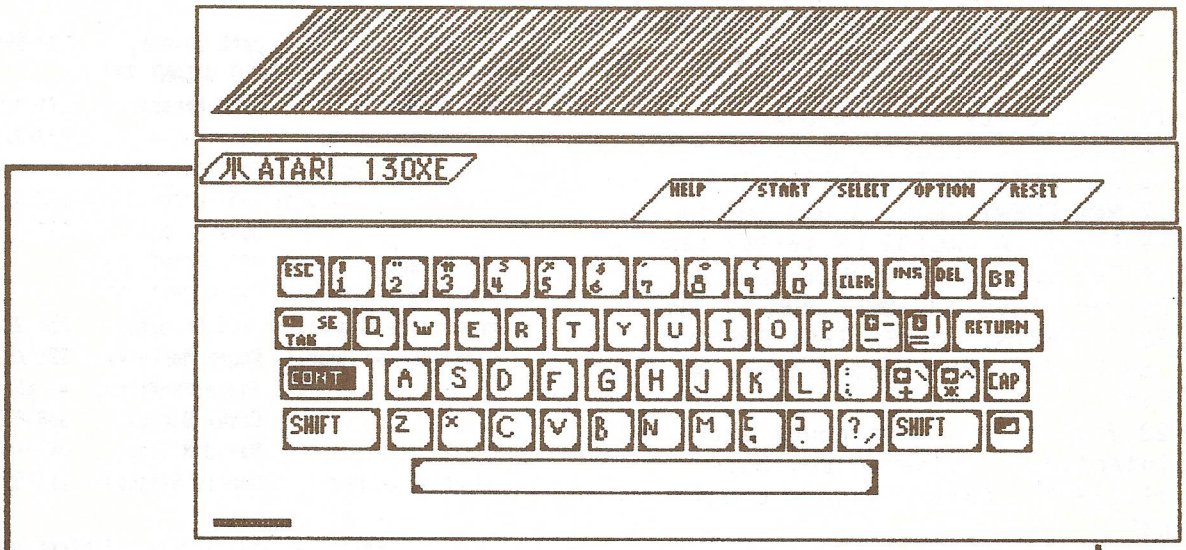


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## ATARI 130XE AND DOS 2.5

Submitted by Morris Stephens

Having had the XE for only a few days and DOS 2.5 for only 2 nights, I cannot really do justice to reviewing them; so let's just call this a preview, or just random observations. But even so, perhaps I can provide some information which might be of use to those of you who are interested in the XE but haven't had a chance for a hands-on demonstration.

The 130XEs are now available and they are, believe me, more than just another XL with extra memory from which to bank-select. It does have 4 banks of 16K memory, BUT they can be accessed from BASIC.... even by amateurs like me. The new XEs have a much-improved keyboard; a new video chip which produces a much clearer, sharper picture; and, of course, the capability of setting up a 65K "RAM Disk". I like the size and styling of the XE (but could live without the "pseudo-doors" on the top.) My only two complaints are the location and shape of the console keys, and the location of the cartridge slot. I prefer the less stylized square console keys located more handily on the right- hand side of the keyboard, and my computer desk is too cluttered and shallow to allow for a cartridge to protrude out the back. Finally, though, Atari has decided to print the graphics characters on the frontside of the keys, saving a lot of time looking them up in the manual.

Many changes were made to the inside of the computer, too. I'm told by Wes Newell that all the little goodies like Omniview, Omnimon, Ramrod, etc. fit comfortably and work very well.

Without a doubt, the most important new feature of the XE is the RAM Disk capability. I've not used a RAM Disk before (never could afford it), so I'm just like a kid in a candy store.... and what a bargain: a computer AND a RAM Disk for less than the cost of the RAM Disk currently on the market. Of course, you need the new DOS 2.5 to be able to set up the RAM Disk, but miracle of miracles, Atari has made that available FREE OF CHARGE. Let me repeat that ... ATARI, yes ATARI made it available free of charge. It is on CompuServe and is now also available from the DAL-ACE Club library. The version available in the library is included on a demo disk especially composed to show off the XE RAM Disk. The demo is a bootload disk using BASIC programs. To create your own DOS 2.5, merely "break" the program and call up DOS; or boot the disk without BASIC. Then select "H" in the DOS menu to create DOS.SYS and DUP.SYS on a blank, formatted disk, then copy the "RAMDISK.COM" file to the new disk. That's all there is to it. One caution: if you do not have a drive with "dual" (enhanced) format capability, do not use "I" from the DOS menu to format disks. Use "P. Format Single". "I" is for formatting in dual-density only.

To alleviate the fears any of you might have about the compatibility of the XE and/or DOS 2.5 with drives other than the Atari 1050, I do not believe there will be any problem. The XE and DOS 2.5 have both been used with the Indus disk drive and with the Atari 810 without any problems whatever. So I do not foresee any major problems with any of the other popular drives. If anyone does have trouble, please let the rest of us know.

Getting back to the RAM Disk..... As DOS 2.5 is booted in, a message "Setting up ATARI 130XE Ram Disk" will appear on the screen. Then the DOS 2.5 menu will appear, or if BASIC is in place, the "READY" prompt will appear.

The RAM Disk can be accessed just like any other drive. It is designated as Drive 8 (D8). You can save to it, copy to it, load from it, etc., just like any other drive, ... EXCEPT EVERYTHING HAPPENS INSTANTLY!!! (Forget hard disk drives and laser drives. I want a 5 megabyte RAM Disk, but with permanent storage ability, of course.)

There are 499 sectors available in RAM Disk. That is approximately two-thirds the capacity of a normal single-density disk. When it is booted in, DOS 2.5 saves DUP.SYS and MEM.SAV into RAM Disk. MEM.SAV, of course, can be deleted. If DUP.SYS is deleted you cannot return to DOS from BASIC. A quick way to clear out the files stored in RAM Disk to make room for more files is simply to format Drive 8. It's usually a good idea to write DOS.SYS and DUP.SYS back to D8 afterwards.

The RAM Disk directory can be read, again just like any other disk drive, using DOS or any standard utility program which performs that function; even from BASIC. All the usual files can be stored in it: data files, PIC files, fonts, etc.

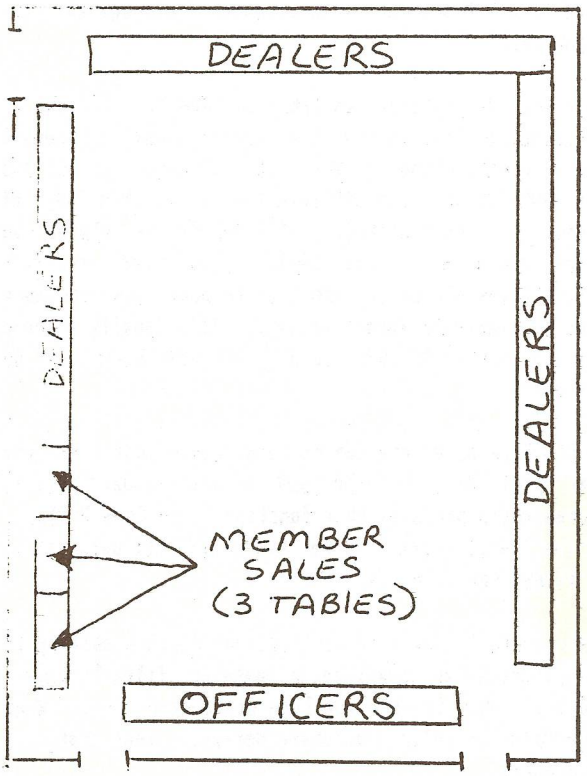
A particularly useful application of this ability is for uploading and downloading data or files by modem, especially when it involves long distance calls or when using BBSs or online database services that charge by the minute.

There are numerous other applications for RAM Disk but I shall leave that for your own ingenuity or for you to find out from those more experienced that have owned and used RAM Disk before the XE was available.

Additional information and comments may also be found in this month's issue of the Atari "Explorer".

As more and more enthusiasts buy, use, play with, and dissect the XE's we will all learn more about it. I already know enough to be convinced that at last Atari has produced a computer worthy of replacing my old reliable 800 (but my 800 is family, so I am still not about to put it out to pasture).

In short, I highly recommend the XE. The RAM Disk capability alone is worth the relatively small price. Combined with the much-improved keyboard, the sharp video, the styling, and the other improvements, it is a BEST-BUY.




DEALER/MEMBER TABLES

Every so often it is necessary to explain some of the procedures the club has on the operation during the meeting. In the past, members were allowed to sell at the officer's table, and many times it got so crowded that is was hard to answer questions and enrole new members.

When I became president again, one of the first things I did was to move the member sales to the front of the dealers tables to allow more room for the officers, and to allow us to service our members better.

At the same time, dealers were starting to rent more tables to sell their goods. By placing the members at these tables, it removed some of the space use by dealers

This week, after a scalding letter from one of our members who had set up at one of the "dealer" tables and who was asked to move, I have decided to clarify the rules for table assignment at the meeting.( see room layout map)

1. No one ( dealer or member ) is guaranteed a table. The tables are on a first-come, first-serve basis.

2. If there is not enough room at one table, no one will have to move to make room. The dealer or member will have to use non-adjacent tables. Members or dealers already set up may move at their option.

3. Table cost is still the same.

4. If you arrive late and all tables are gone, you will have to wait until next month and take your chances.

5. Two or more dealers shairing a table will be charged the full amount each.

6. Because of the limited number of member tables (3), no one can hog a table.

Remember, the dealers help us pay for the rooms we use through table fees. Help us make it work. If you don't get a table, put an ad in the newsletter or try next month.

Gary Sewell
president

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Also, whenever you do business with advertisers, please mention that you heard about them through the DAL-ACE NEWSLETTER so that they will know their advertising dollars are well spent and that we are supporting them.

Thank you.

Morris Stephens

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MEETING AGENDA

| | |
|---|---|
| 12:00 TO 12:30 | SALES (VENDORS & CLUB) |
| | DEMONSTRATIONS |
| | NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION |
| | NEW MEMBER REGISTRATION |
| | SOCIALIZING |
| | NEW MEMBER CLINIC |
| 12:30 TO 1:00 | BUSINESS MEETING |
| 1:00 TO 1:30 | DEMONSTRATION OF CLUB DISK |
| 1:30 TO 3:00 | OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS |
| 3:00 TO 4:00 | BOARD MEETING |

JULY MEETING: SATURDAY, July 13, 1985 at 12:00 noon

## *** PERSONAL ADS ***

Personal Ads are printed free of charge for any paid up member of DAL-ACE. If you have something to sell (COMPUTER ORIENTED PRODUCT) or need something for your system, send your "copy" to the newsletter address by the 15th of the month for publication.

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Vendors may reserve table space prior to the meeting by calling Gary Sewell (214-727-6567). Fee collections and table assignments will begin at 11:45, after which the vendors may begin to set up their areas. Those tables which have been reserved but not yet claimed by 12:30 may be purchased by other vendors at that time. Prepaid reservations will not be released. Space assignments will be on a "first come, first served" basis, unless prepaid. The current meeting facility allows for approximately 30 vendor tables.

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Personal FOR SALE or WANT ads are free to current members.

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Commercial ads must be camera ready. Ad deadline is the 15th of the month. Mail or deliver copy to DAL-ACE Newsletter, P. O. Box 851872, Richardson, TX, 75085-1872 or call Mr. Morris Stephens at 214-525-6483.

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Other ATARI user groups may obtain copies of this newsletter on an exchange basis.

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