FUJI FACTS

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The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus

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The Editor's Column

by: Warren Lieuallen

There are two cardinal sins from which all the others spring: impatience and laziness.
-Franz Kafka

Well, a new year is upon us, and hopefully, we've all resolved to become more active in our Atari users' group! I've reprinted a passage from C.H.A.O.S. that deals with this very subject.

After last month's vacation for our newsletter, I was worried that things wouldn't get started up again. The recently prolific Jeff Moore has come through for us again with another of his software reviews, and I came across several things from other users' groups that I really wanted to pass along to you. Otherwise however, the pickings are pretty slim. I said it before, and I'll say it again: What you see is what I got, as much or as little as there is. Remember, 'tis better to give than to receive!

I'm really looking forward to getting reviews of all the new Atari things that Santa gave you (you were good, weren't you?!). What with the many new hardware expansions, entire new systems (both 8 and 16 bit), and new software manufacturers pledging to support Atari, Fuji Facts should be literally deluged with exciting and up-to-date material (Right? Right!).

I'd also like to repeat my plea for an Assistant Editor (particularly if they live out on the east side of town). While I am very grateful for the three Distribution Volunteers that I now have, I have one more job that I'd like to dump on... er, I mean that I'd like to share (yeah, that's it, SHARE!) with someone. It's not difficult, although it does have to be done every month, according to a deadline. So, if someone would like to become a bit more involved in ACEC, and make a significant (albeit easy) contribution, please let me know.

Several months ago, I mentioned that I'd like to start a Letters to the Editor column. I've got everything I need except one thing: the letters! While I have gotten a number of responses from out-of-state readers that receive Fuji Facts through our Newsletter Exchange Program (and I have reprinted most of these), I have yet to get a single letter with an Ohio postmark on it! I know you can read (I see your lips moving!); surely you can write, too! My articles and editorials have gotten more and more controversial, in the hopes of generating some interesting and insightful response. Go ahead, make my day! (P.S. I've recently gotten several replies on our BBS, so watch for them in a special ACEC Speaks Out Issue next month!)

Enough random rambling for one month....

Warren

Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus

This newsletter is written and published monthly (except December) by the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus (ACEC). ACEC is an independent, non-profit organization interested in exchanging information about any and all Atari Home Computer Systems.

Our main meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 7:15 p.m., at DeSales High School (on Karl Road, just south of Morse Rd.), and are open to the public. Other Special Interest meetings are held as announced at the main meeting.

Dues are $12.00 per year, and entitle members to all club benefits (Newsletter, Disk of the Month, Publications Library, SIG meetings, group discounts at selected area merchants, etc.).

Fuji Facts welcomes contributions of articles, reviews, editorials and any other material relating to the Atari computers, or compatible hardware devices and software packages.

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Guest Editorial

by John Nagy
reprinted from Michigan Atari Magazine, Nov '87

Burn-Out

1. Only people who burn can burn-out. The occasional volunteer (Oh, to be able to keep my hands in my pockets and my words in my mouth!) somehow knows his/her limits and can say NO when it is appropriate. Others are habitual doers that just can't let things slide.

2. Real doers can't just do one thing for a club. The Disk Librarian becomes the Sysop/Disk Librarian, and then the President/Sysop/Disk Librarian. The Treasurer adds the Publications Librarian duties. The editor becomes the Vice President (or vice versa! - Ed.). Fewer and fewer people end up doing more and more.

Condition two has several results:

3. Things get DONE. Prosperity and movement mark the early stages of the consolidation of jobs in the small, active, responsible, enthusiastic group.

4. "Regular" members get used to watching the progress, usually quite pleased at the results. They volunteer less, since after all, the doers know what needs to be done, and are doing great.

5. The doers get used to making decisions for the group. It is only natural that the ones doing the bulk of the work should determine not only how to do it, but what to do next. In fact, the "regulars" will encourage the doers to use their own judgement, and not bother them with trivial votes and the like.

6. More praise and recognition is given to the doers for remarkable accomplishments (this is addicting-Ed.). The doers realize that they individually are making the club a success. At about this point, practices within each division of activity are becoming familiar enough to become ritualistic.

7. What were once exciting challenges become everyday duties for the doers. The thrill may be gone, but it is replaced with pride and confidence.

8. Eventually, the constant run of duties becomes a perceptible drain. Tasks that once kept the doer up all night in a creative frenzy now wait for a night with nothing really good on TV. After all, this is a volunteer job, right? And who really cares anyway?

9. Things slow down for the club. Some things go out late. Some things never happen at all. The doers get mad because nobody seems to want to help. The membership isn't used to having to help. The "regular" membership isn't pleased with being bawled out for being "regular" members.

10. Stirred by the bawlings and seeing an opening, some new people come into the ranks of the doers, eager and inexperienced. The doers have little patience with this, and even less interest in changing anything from the way they have developed so successfully.

11. Resentment becomes the new bylaw of the organizations. Doers think they are being pushed or replaced with incompetent newcomers, or else they think that nobody cares about what they are doing enough to become

involved. The new doers get disillusioned by the resistance from the old doers and either revolt or retreat. The "regulars" begin to drop out, because they see no movement, because they dislike the "elitist" attitude of the officers, or in order to avoid being assailed by the doers. They either form their own new club (which rarely lasts more than a year), or drop out of users' group involvement all together.

Finally,

12a. The original doers resign, disappointed to see that the support "just wasn't there anymore" for what once was, after all, a GREAT club.

and/or

12b. The club folds up.

Now this scenario sounds pretty grim, but it is and has been the fate of a number of our sister clubs, not to mention many other non-computer organizations. It isn't always this way, of course. We have the power to recognize ourselves in one of these stages, and redirect ourselves to a different outcome (what stage do you think ACEC is in? - Ed.).

I think I have spotted a singular common indicator of imminent burn-out: when an officer simultaneously complains about too much to do, but refuses to allow others to help in their own way. That's stage 9, or perhaps even 10, and the end may be near.

Not everything needs to be going smoothly in a club.... Not every project has to be a roaring success.... Not every owner needs to be in the club for the club to be an active, fun and profitable part of every member's life.

None of this should be taken as a discouragement to people who have and will put massive efforts into their clubs. Without them, the really great things that some of our Atari clubs have accomplished would simply never have happened. But beware of courting burn-out. You may burn more than yourself.

(Please remember, this article was NOT written specifically about any particular group, but simply records some of Mr. Nagy's impressions. I was struck by the resemblance of some of his observations, however. I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions, and to determine what (if anything) you think should be done. - Ed.)

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Living With the XEP80

a Subjective Review by Wally Wong, BRACE

Yes, folks, it's finally here, the long awaited 80 column adaptor from Atari, the XEP80. Actually, it's more than an 80-column display module, it's also a parallel printer interface (Due to deadlines, I did not have a chance to investigate the printer aspects of the XEP80 but I will tell what the claims are). There are some delights and some plights you should be aware of as well as a plethora of potential programming hackings that could keep some Atari enthusiasts awake many a night.

The Atari XEP80 Interface Module is an 80-column video display controller and "standard" parallel printer interface for all 8-bit computers with a minimum of 16K RAM. The XEP80 looks just like the Atari SX212 modem, same size, dimension and color - minus the lights on the front panel. The XEP80 comes with just about everything you need; video cable to connect the module to a composite monitor (monochrome recommended), power supply adaptor (Egads! Another one, that makes six!), the module, a 20 page owner's manual, a warranty card (that no one I know sends in), and a 5 1/4" distribution disk, all for $79.99,list.

A nice long cable runs out the rear of the module that connects to your computer via joystick port one or two. Most will probably elect to use port two and keep the other available for a joystick. No problem except one of the demo programs (WINDOW.BAS) will only work if the joystick is in port two and the module plugged into one. The power switch is located in the rear and a tiny diagonal window emits a subtle green light on the front panel when the power is on. The video cable is a simple cable with RCA male jacks on both ends. One end connects to the rear of the module and the other to your composite monitor.

The "standard" parallel printer port is a DB25 parallel female connector found on the STs and IBM-type systems; it is not Centronics, and not a Atari 850 or P:R: Connection connector. This is one of the reasons why I haven't tried the printer aspect of the module; no cable, and not being able to use my 850 parallel cable. The reason for using DB25 connection is for "standardization", which means you can obtain a printer cable from just about any computer store, and not be hand-cuffed to "Atari-Only" vendors who would be the only ones carrying 850/PRC parallel cables (but we will make our purchase at our local Atari vendor, right!!). If you wish to use the parallel printer port solely as a printer port, hold down the shift key while booting the disk and continue to hold until its done loading. This will allow output to the printer although you'll be in 40 columns through the computer video port or RF. Here is what the owner's manual says about selecting the printer port:

"When you start up your system with the XEP80 Module, the module is prepared to direct output to a printer through the parallel port (P1:). Specifying P2: directs output to the ATARI 850 Interface Module; P3: outputs to the 1025 Printer; P4: to the 1020 Color Plotter; P5: to the 1027 Printer; P6: to the 1029 Printer; P7: to the XMM801 Printer; and P8: to the XDM121 Printer."

There is a "PRINTER.BAS" program on the distribution disk. I haven't looked at it, it may have something to do with configuration and the XEP80. The XEP80 also sports an internal 2K

buffer for printing. Nice touch. (Nicer if its easily expandable, but that's too much to ask of Atari.) That's all I can say about the XEP80 as a printer interface.

Turn on the XEP80, monitor, disk drive(s), insert the XEP80 disk (of course you made a copy of the original, right?) and turn on the computer. The XEP80 handler comes as an AUTORUN.SYS file so it will boot up automatically. If your monitor is adjusted to give you a full screen with a normal 40 column screen (like mine), the first thing you will notice is the bottom half of the last three characters of the "READY" prompt of BASIC in the upper left hand corner of the screen. If you type "DOS" to get to the DOS menu (DOS 2.5 comes on the disk), the first line of the heading is tucked somewhere beneath the top of your monitor chassis. The next thing you will notice is the bunch of tiny characters (relative to 40 column characters) on the screen! Folks, you now have an 80 column display. The characters are quite readable on the BMC and Commodore 1702 composite color monitors. The display looks great on a monochrome composite monitor (once I got mine to work properly).

The characters are defined within a 7x10 cell (7 wide x 10 high) compare to 8x8 cell used normally. I think this is the reason for the truncated display at the top of the screen; the characters are taller than normal and pushing the top of the display. Now, this is just a guess, I'm no video display wiz. This can be corrected by adjusting the vertical width. Correcting for 80-columns will create a smaller vertical screen when you return to 40 columns. This is okay if the vertical adjustment is located on the front of the monitor or easily accessible; if not, you'll have to decide if you want to make this adjustment and then find someone qualified to do it.

The XEP80 can actually display up to 256 character columns but only 80 are available at a time (Hmm, doesn't AtariWriter Plus scroll in 256 columns??!!). The demo program "WINDOW.BAS" and a joystick illustrates this aspect nicely. Remember, the module has to be plugged into port one and the joystick in two for the program to work. If you want to disable the XEP80 but want to use the printer port, hold down the shift key when booting the system. This disables the 80-column and enables the normal video output; composite video port or RF. The XEP80 handler disables the ANTIC chip from displaying and display I/O is directed to the XEP80. There is a document file on the distribution disk that explains all this in detail.

The distribution disk comes with DOS 2.5, the XEP80 driver, assorted demo programs written in BASIC, assembly language source code, and a doc file that goes into the hardware and software specifics in detail.

The following are some thrills and chills I've experienced during the course of a week since I bought the XEP80. Remember, these are only preliminary experiences and are not conclusive, especially the items listed in "CHILLS." I qualify that because the XEP80 handler is relocatable and compatibility may just be finding the right spot for the handler.

THRILLS:

1) It is compatible with SpartaDos 3.2. The XEP80 handler (the AUTORUN.SYS file on the distribution disk) must be installed through the STARTUP.BAT. I renamed the AUTORUN.SYS file to

XEP80.COM and when creating the STARTUP.BAT file, the XEP80 file should be the last item in the batch. I have not tried it with the Time/Date Display (TD) line since I rarely use it because of the conflicts with other programs. Note: If you happen to setup your ramdisk (RD.COM) after installing the handler, you'll get garbage on the screen. I found that by turning the XEP80 off and back on, the screen clears and behaves.

2) Atari BASIC - you still have a maximum of three lines per line number but now three lines equals 240 characters instead of 120. I would refrain from extending BASIC lines beyond 120 characters to maintain compatibility between the XEP80 and standard 40 column screen. SETCOLOR and DRAWTO commands cannot be used.

3) MAC/65, yes!

4) The display is good on a color monitor and great on a monochrome. The doc file provides plenty of information to develop some great applications taking advantage of the XEP80. I've been looking at some PD/Shareware text editors written in BASIC that could easily be modified to use the XEP80. Remember to give credit to the author is you plan on using existing programs as a foundation for your programming. I'll leave it to your good programming morals to contact authors before you start hacking someone's program and distributing them.

5) The demo programs on the distribution disk are a great source for programming ideas and tips on how to use the many attributes of the XEP80.

CHILLS:

1) There are no programs available that uses the XEP80 except for the demo programs.

2) AtariWriter 80, if I may call it that, will be a couple of months before it is released. November, maybe?? Contrary to some rumors that the AW80 was cancelled or shelved, the AW80 is being worked on; confirmed with Neil Harris on GEnie.

3) No ACTION! XEP80 does not like the way ACTION! behaves with the screen.

4) No BASIC XE. Same reason as number (3). Probably the same with BASIC XL.

5) I also found that with the system on, it may try to reboot when turning the XEP80 off and on with DOS 2.5, sometimes. Turning the XEP80 off and on like this is probably not good for your system, so make sure you process the SpartaDos batch files correctly to avoid this.

6) Inconvenience between switching plugs connecting the monitor between the video cable coming out of my XE and the XEP80. You can't have both connected at the same. There are two solutions: a) run out and buy a monochrome composite monitor and connect the XEP80 into this monitor and keep the video connected to the color composite monitor (or vice versa if your present monitor is monochrome) or b) build a switch box that will handle all the different connections. Plans for the switch box I built is simple and I'll submit it to PSAN... next month. (*watch for it! - Ed.*)

Neutral Notes:

Be sure you try out the monitor with the XEP80 before you buy. Some monitors have a 40 or 80 column switch either inside or outside. This switch might have to be set to obtain a decent display (as suggested by Darryl, Atari Tech.).

If your monochrome monitor looks fine in 40 columns but you get flashes of indecipherable dots, try adjusting the horizontal hold. Again, this adjustment might be internal so think before you jump.

The XEP80 supports bit mapped graphics, 320x200.

The XEP80 handler replaces the E:, S:, and P: vectors in the Handler Address Table.

Personal Touch: I believe this is the single product that will make or break the "only a game machine" mentality of the eight bit Ataris. If the applications software is done well and released in reasonable time and the advent of the new disk drive and maybe a drop in price, the Atari XE will be the most affordable, versatile and serious computer system on the market. Imagine the day when new computer buyers choose the Atari because it's AFFORDABLE and DOES THE JOB WELL!.... and it has great graphics and games. We know this already, now it's time for the public to find out.

D.O.M. Correction

by: Noni Dupriest

If you don't get ANALOG magazine, you may be wondering what all the dungeon and dragon files are on D.O.M. #60. DRAGON.LST is an enhancement to the DRAGONLORD game. You can get this game by downloading it from A.C.E.C. BBS (471-8559) or by getting a copy of ANALOG, issue #29. However, a short correction is needed on the D.O.M. After loading DRAGONLORD, ENTER the DRAGON.LST file. Then, before you save the new version type:

```
3040 REM
3348 POKE 752,N1:POKE 88,N0:POKE
89,MAP:POSITION N18,N9:?
RM$(RM(ROOM)*N17-N16,RM(ROOM)*
N17)
```

This new version will let you see where the dragon was hiding if you didn't find it before the game ended. It will also save to disk the ten highest scores. You now get points added by visiting as many rooms as you can, and 150 points for completing your exploration. The last enhancement is being able to load different dungeons. There are some included in the D.O.M. You may wish to add your own dungeons by using the DUNEDIT file. This will allow you to choose where the exits will be for the 77 rooms. Type "C" if you make a mistake and "Q" to quit.

Crossword Magic

by: Jeff Moore

For any of you crossword fanatics out there, I have found the ideal program for you. It is Crossword Magic, by L&S Computerware-Mindscape.

It has been around for several years and the designers keep improving it. Originally, it had the construction program on one side and pre-made puzzles on the back. Now it has Atari program on one side and Commodore on the other. Like many other programs, the price has also fallen, from a $50 original price to as cheap as $24.99 now.

You can create a crossword very easily using a menu; Crossword Magic automatically places your words in the puzzle. If you don't like where the word was placed hit Ctrl-R and the word is moved elsewhere, or if your word doesn't fit it is put into storage until it does. Crossword Magic can make a grid from 3x3 to 20x20 (your decision), or can be made automatically adjustable (up to 20x20).

When you are satisfied with the puzzle, you press Esc and use the menu to enter the clues. Make sure you have all the "answers" in the grid you want because after entering clues you can not add more words without erasing your clues! I don't think the clues are limited in size, as I haven't reached one yet. When all the clues are entered the screen will read "puzzle done" and another menu appears. You can save your puzzle, edit, test play, print or mark. With mark, you can mark characters you want printed on the final copy, i.e. first letter, whole word or just symbols in a word that could never be guessed (-,',&)

You can save your creation to disk and can later play on screen or printed out hard copy. The program will add the extender ".INC" if you saved an incomplete puzzle. If you are playing the puzzle and you can't complete it, save it, and you enter your initials. The directory will show the puzzle name then your initials to indicate "play in progress".

To print the puzzle you need a graphics printer. Pick your printer model from the menu list, then indicate exactly what you want printed. You can print the puzzle, clues, list of words, answers, include box numbers, don't fill in blank areas (blackouts) and wait between sections. I don't use the blackouts because it uses up the ink quicker. Mark one word and print the puzzle and list and you have a word fill-in puzzle or print all for a normal crossword.

I think this is a clever and versatile program and would highly recommend it. Use it as a learning tool for the kids or create puzzles for friends. I've even used it to create puzzles for a newsletter at work!

This month's topic (Action!) was postponed, due to lack of sufficient material.

Watch for it soon, however!

GEnie "Rebuttal"

by: Ken White

Dear Warren,

Just finished your comparison of Compuserve vs. GEnie in the November Fuji Facts, and found it quite fair and balanced, especially considering that you're a "new kid" on the GEnie block and it is, indeed, a whole new kettle of worms when lined up against CIS.

But, on to a couple of comments about the article...

I agree, at 300 baud, the menus in GEnie can take a while to "zip" past (using that term loosely) and, as you said, there's no way of cutting the menus out completely (hit a break, see the whole damn thing again...)

On the other hand, with the price of 1200 baud modems dropping as low as they have, I've found, from discussions with other members in our group and in the online community at large, that 300 baud is quickly falling into disfavor. It's real easy to find a 1030, XM301, or MPP1000 modem these days, 'cause everybody's going 1200 baud.

But even disregarding the relatively reasonable price of 1200 baud modems these days, the plain fact is that one is paying $5.00 an hour for GEnie vs. $6.00 an hour for CIS at 300 baud. For a buck an hour saving, I'd be willing to spend a bit more time watching menus roll on by.

The one complaint you made about GEnie that especially struck me, though, was your comments about the organization of the message bases.

I'll cheerfully admit that the commands in the GEnie message base section are a little on the...well...unusual side.... And organizing messages along the lines of "topics" is certainly different from the message base organization on CIS. When I first started using GEnie, I HATED the message base structure. But now....

I just picked up Deskcart last night at our club meeting for my ST. I want to read all the messages that are available about Deskcart, see what John DeMar (the developer) has to say, and what other purchasers have to say.

I get on GEnie. I go to the message base section. I get a list of Catagories. Ah, yes, Hardware. That's what a Deskcart is....

Then I get a list of topics for the Hardware category. There are about 25 of them, but down the list, I see that Deskcart is listed. I hit a break, go back to the menu, type "Rea 6", and away I go....fortunately, I have a big buffer and I can sit back, let it scroll into my buffer, and read it off line (I read fast, but not quite 1200 baud...)

Now, as these messages are scrolling by, I can get the gist of what is being said. If I see a message that really looks interesting, I can pause it and jot down a note to myself, about what I might like to say in response to that message. Or I can set GEnie to pause after each message for me.

I realize, having fought many battles from the 8-bit trenches, that memory is usually limited on 8-bits, and so the buffer space is also limited as well. So putting things on scroll and reading them off line is not always an available option.

Still, I was a GEnie user when I was telecommunicating with my 8-bit, and it can be done with limited difficulty. What difficulty there was is, in my own mind, overshadowed by the very fact that messages are organized by topics.

If I wanted to read messages about Deskcart on CIS, I would have to read ALL of the messages in a particular category (for example, Hardware), and though I would be given the opportunity to reply after each message, I would be seeing an AWFUL lot of messages that had nothing to do with what I wanted to learn.

Of course, I could search messages on a keyword or something like that, but it still wouldn't be as easy and as complete as reading an entire topic devoted to the subject I want to read about.

In addition, with GEnie, I have the option of starting MY OWN TOPIC. Last night, I also purchased a copy of SSI's Computer Ambush for my 8-bit (used - $4.00 - one of your bigger bargains...). I've never played before. So perhaps I would like to "interface" (as they say) with other 8-bit users who are pros at the game.

I go to the 8-bit section on GEnie, go to the Games category, and get a list of topics....hmmmm...no topic for Computer Ambush.

But I can very easily start my own. Not just ask a question in the Game section on CIS, hoping that some Computer Ambush fan happens to scroll on past, see my message, and decide to reply. Instead, I can start a topic specifically about Computer Ambush, and anyone playing the game who gets a topic list in the Games category will see the Computer Ambush topic and check it out (at least I do - once a month or so I capture a list of all the topics in the various categories I'm interested in, to see what new things people are talking about that I might be interested in).

This, to me, makes meeting and discussing specific topics of interest much easier and less time-consuming for me. And as you said GEnie is quite a bit looser than CIS - my own term for it is "homey" - it's more like a local BBS where you can meet people and discuss subjects of common interest. Not quite the monolithic presence that CIS frequently seems to show to the average user.

Ah, well, don't want to waste your online money reading an excessively long note. Hopefully this will be properly formatted, since I'm writing it in the Deskcart notepad and will be sending it from the notepad into the modem (something I learned in reading the Deskcart Topic here-heh heh).

Anyway, as always, I enjoy Fuji Facts, and wish you, your newsletter, and the Columbus club all the greatest success in the future.

Regards and all that,
Ken

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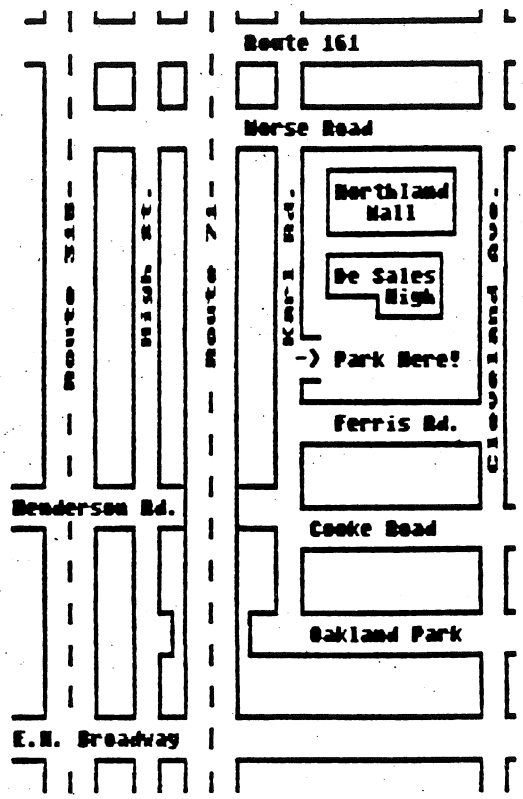

An official Users' Group, the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus meets on the SECOND MONDAY of each month. The meetings are held at 7:15 p.m., at De Sales High School on Karl Road. Meetings are open to the public, and consist of demonstrations and short tutorials of products for the Atari Home Computer Systems. Dues for ACEC are $12.00 per year, and include a subscription to Fuji Facts, and more!

WGL '87

Fuji Facts Newsletter
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TO:

MEETING: Jan. 11th, 7:15 pm