

CURRENT NOTES

For ATARI Users

DECEMBER, 1984



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Editor's Notes

1984 marks the fourth year this newsletter has been produced. As editor, I have the luxury of having a complete archive of past issues of Current Notes. I recently went through this archive and prepared a brief chronology of Current Notes history. I thought some of our new members might be interested in how we got where we are today.

On the first Sunday in May, 1981, a small group of Atari enthusiasts in northern Virginia decided to get together regularly on Sunday evenings and to produce a monthly newsletter. Paul Chapin took on the job of newsletter editor publishing Vol. 1, No. 1 that month. In August of that year, another Atari Users Group formed in the District of Columbia, in the very building where our esteemed editor worked. Paul suggested that both groups join in sharing the newsletter and the September issue marked the first joint publication.

In November, the name Current Notes first appeared. It was derived by combining the column headings of each group's monthly announcements (AC/DC Currents and NOVATARI Notes). By the end of the first year, both clubs had 25 members, and the first annual dues were set to \$15 (\$12 to cover the cost of the newsletter and \$3 for general club expenses).

By the end of the second year, both clubs had adopted their current meeting schedules. NOVATARI membership had grown to 97 members, and DC to 62. Dues were once more set at \$15.

In September of 1983, Paul Chapin, after two and a half years of dedicated service, stepped down as newsletter editor. Staffan Sandberg began his editorial career with

the October issue. His first step was to increase the size of the newsletter to its current 8.5 x 11 inches. By the end of the year NOVATARI had grown to 177 members and the DC group 128 members. Dues were once more kept to \$15.

Now we're up to 1984. AURA joined the Current Notes family with the January issue as Bob Kelly started his ATARI SCUTTLEBITS column. The February issue, the first to go out at 2nd-class mailing rates, saw the first column from the Secret Sunnyvale Correspondent. Staffan, however, found the demands of publishing a larger newsletter and being a full-time student too great as the March issue slipped and had to be combined in a March/April issue.

In May, I agreed to take over the task of newsletter editor but, also being leery of the work involved, changed the periodicity to ten times a year. Jay Gerber started his MUSICAL NOTES column that month. In July, M. Evan Brooks began his BATTLE BYTES column. And last month, Barry Burke and Jim Stevenson started their TIPS 'N TRAPS column. In October, the Woodbridge Atari Users Group joined the Current Notes family and brought our membership circulation up to around 450.

Once more, we arrive at the end of a year. As you have undoubtedly noticed, Current Notes continues to evolve. Several new features are introduced in this issue. Jay Gerber is starting COMPUTER CAVERNS and ARCADE'S ALLEY. I have introduced two new regular features, IN THE NEWS and the RUMOR MILL, and have redesigned the format for club news and information. I think you will also enjoy the special features this month provided by Bob Kelly, Tim Kilby, Bruce Blake, Bob Danson, and Peter Kilcullen. Our membership circulation is now close to 500. And once again, dues are set to \$15.

Joe Waters

Current Notes

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The editor of Current Notes is Joe Waters, 122 N. Johnson Rd., Sterling, VA. 22170, (703) 430-1215. News items, short articles, original programs, product reviews, classified ads (free to members), and any other material of interest to the membership are eagerly solicited. Commercial advertising rates: full page, \$60; half page, \$35; quarter page, \$20. Discounts are available for multiple ads. Submit photo-ready copy to the editor. Deadline date for both articles and advertisements is the 14th day of the preceeding month.

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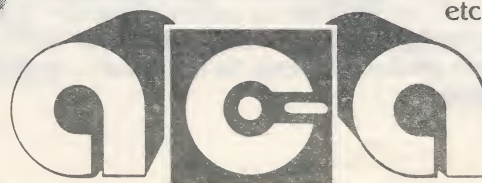
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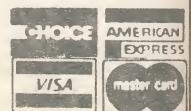


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In the News

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* Atari Pays Off Some Creditors *

[Infoworld, November 12, 1984]. Atari Corp., facing some 15 lawsuits filed since Warner Communications Inc. sold the floundering company for \$240 million to Jack Tramiel in July, is moving to settle with at least some of its 50 creditors.

In the past two months, the Tramiel sons, Sam, president, and Gary, vice president of finance, have responded to several suppliers with either oral promises, personal meetings, or checks in the mail.

James L. Copland, vice president of marketing at the new Atari Corp., acknowledges that the firm is working to settle its debts but would not give exact details. "Jack Tramiel does not screw people," he says, responding to vendor complaints that Atari has been dodging debts to smaller, more vulnerable vendors. "He's a very astute business manager. He's firm but fair."

* Watch Out For Falling Prices *

[Infoworld, November 19, 1984] Sirius Software, now in Chapter 11, sold a whole warehouse full of game programs to an outfit called Campbell Communications in Peterborough, New Hampshire, which will sell the programs by direct mail. Yes, there will be a price break: down from the \$39 that used to be common for such games before the summer's market crash to the \$9 to \$11 that seems to be the new standard. At these prices, dealers are buying them for promotional giveaways. Sirius used to make such literary classics as Wavy Navy, Bandits, Snake Byte, and Squish 'Em.

* The Second Time Around *

[Forbes, October 8, 1984] On Sept. 13, behind the closed doors of an elegant suite of San Francisco's Mark Hopkins Hotel, Tramiel told a select group of venture capitalists he would build Atari's sales from \$500 million now to "\$1.2 billion to \$1.5 billion" by next year, according to an attendee. So, Tramiel told his audience, he intends to raise \$50 million through the sale of debentures by year's end. Nothing final, mind you. But he went on to suggest that, in exchange for "competitive" rates on the debentures, backers would be able to convert \$10 million of the debentures into between 2% and 4% of Atari common when Tramiel takes the company public.

Tramiel said he intends to make one \$50 million public offering next year, another for the same amount in 1986...

Will the venture capitalists pony up? Probably. If Tramiel can rebuild Atari into what \$1.2 billion [sales] Commodore now is, 4% of the company would be worth \$40 million. As one money man who listened to Tramiel's pitch told FORBES: "Hundreds of little startups with negative

earnings and nobody special in management get financing every year. But this is a startup with \$500 million in sales and Jack Tramiel, for God's sake. I have no doubt he'll get financing. ..."

It was clear at Tramiel's Mark Hopkins meeting that he intends to rebuild Atari exactly as he build Commodore--by buying low-cost, high-quality components from suppliers eager to build a market presence, building computers cheaply and getting mass retailers like Sears to pick up promotion costs. ...

Early next year, assuming he makes it through Christmas and gets his financing in place, Tramiel said he will bring out a full line of low-priced home computer products. An industry source says the line will include a \$59 printer, a 16-bit home computer priced above the 800XL and a home graphics computer with three-dimensional design capability to be priced at under \$1,000. ...

* ATARI Cuts Price of 800XL *

[Washington Post, 14 November]. Declaring that "business is war," the chairman of Atari Corp. said yesterday that his company is reducing prices on Atari's 800XL home computer by \$50 because competitors have become "greedy."

"I came back in business in May because I felt that this business was becoming very dull," said Jack Tramiel, who resigned as chairman of Commodore International Ltd. last January. "Everybody was sitting and trying to get as much money as they could. There was no reduction in prices and no improvements in technology."

The current price of the 800XL, \$179, will be reduced to "under \$120," said James L. Copland, vice president of marketing. "This cost reduction will now make the 800XL the least expensive, full-featured 64K personal computer in America," he said.

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The Rumor Mill

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* MPP is developing a 10MB hard disk for the 800XL parallel bus (OS by Bud Wilkinson of OSS) as well as a 1200B modem. Price as yet unknown.

* AXLON will be releasing the "Expansion Box" for the 800XL and is developing an 800XL RANDISK.

* BATTERIES INCLUDED is developing an 80-column card for the AXLON expansion box.

* SWP may be introducing a new product, the ATR8500, said to include a hard disk interface, control up to 4 drives and run a 256K version of CPM.

* ATARI will introduce an Apple-compatible OS for the 800XL by January CES. OS being offered will not infringe on Apple's copyright.

ATARI SCUTTLEBITS**Bob Kelly**

Atari's New Computers. At the consumer electronics show in January, Atari will re-emerge as a major factor in the home computer market with the introduction of two new computers:

A 128K bank selectable 8-bit computer. The new machine will be partially compatible with the 800/800XL series. Current disk drives will be fully compatible with this machine. Atari Basic will remain structured as presently configured. (At minimum, I was hoping for some changes in string handling and arrays. It would have been even nicer if Atari was to adopt Basic XL in all their new machines.) As for other features and the suggested list price, no information is yet available. However, the existing 800XL will not be capable of being upgraded to 128K as things now stand.

A Macintosh-like machine based on the 68000 (16 bit) Motorola chip. The machine will come with a 3 1/2 inch floppy disk drive and a hard disk is in the works as an option. The new operating system for this, yet unnamed, computer has been developed by Digital Research. This is the same firm that created the widely used CP/M operating system. The list price for the basic computer and drive is rumored to be under \$800. This machine will not be compatible with any existing software for the Atari nor will it be compatible with IBM. As for compatibility with other computers which are currently in the market, no information is available.

800XL Developments. Atari has no immediate plans for discontinuing the 800XL. Atari has cut prices again on the 800XL. The list price is now \$120 retail. These price reductions are a result of slashing overhead and a 50 percent decline in the costs of dynamic RAM chips. According to Atari, 800XL sales are expected to increase significantly and in anticipation of this, both factories are producing at full capacity.

Although the expansion box rumored to be produced for the 800XL is dead, another of my sources, Deep Disk, has reported that in January a major manufacturer will introduce an 80-column board for the 800XL which will be connected to the bus on the back.

Coleco - the end? A lot of technical movements by speculators have been affecting Coleco stock. For a review of the situation, read John Gantz's article in InfoWorld (26 November issue). In any event, optimists are saying it's "do or die" for Coleco's Adam this Christmas season. Pessimists are saying it's all over and Coleco is getting out of the home computer market. The gloomy predictions, from Coleco's view, are more or less based on the following set of facts and/or circumstances:

- Coleco has reduced the wholesale price of the Adam from \$650 to \$475. Retailers have been supplied free software to compensate for the difference. Retail customers will be able to purchase the Adam for \$499. This is viewed by

many market analysts as an attempt to clear inventory prior to departure from the market.

- Eric Bromely, credited with designing the Adam system, has resigned. No reasons were offered for the resignation of Mr. Bromely.
- Coleco has terminated its printer supply contract with Chinon Industries. Coleco would not comment on whether it would begin producing printers itself. Other Japanese firms which make parts for Coleco's Adam are reported to be in the final stages of a negotiated termination of their contracts.
- Coleco took a write-down on Adam computer assets which helped reduced third quarter pre-tax earnings by roughly \$30 million. In other words, Coleco said it's computer/electronics assets were worth less than what originally thought.

My own view is that the longevity of Coleco's Adam computer is somewhat akin to what happens to Atari memory after you press system reset with the translator disk resident. This is most likely to be the T.I. of 1985. If you know anyone who is buying a Coleco system because it is cheaper than an "Atari system configuration", be a friend and tell him to think again. You have to have software to run a computer and Coleco presently has a limited base of "quality" software. What would it be like if Coleco ceased production?

Nibblebits. - Consumer Reports has selected the 800XL as the best buy in the home computer category.

- According to the Wall Street Journal, Tramiel expects 800XL sales to exceed 500,000 units between July and December. Currently, the plant in Taiwan produces 150,000 XLs/month and by June of next year, output from this plant should be near capacity of 500,000 units per month. My question, of course, is 500,000 units of what?

- Sig Hartmann, formerly V.P. for software at Commodore, has joined Atari. Hartmann reportedly resigned from Commodore after a dispute with Marshall Smith, President, over the development of Commodore software for other computers via 3rd party developers. Mr. Hartmann called his move to Atari "the best move of my life." The obvious implication is that Atari will continue to be a major force in the software market for all computers (Atarisoft).

- Atari has announced that it intends to raise \$150 million over the next 18 months through public and private offerings. The funds will be used for operating capital and possible acquisitions.

It is nice to have all this good news about Atari to report after the dark clouds of the past two years. Atari still has a way to go. However, 1985 promises to very interesting to say the least. It will be a good Christmas from this narrow perspective.

My promised recommendations for hardware and software purchases over this Christmas season can be found on page 14 of this issue of Current Notes. See you next year!



Commodore vs Atari: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly By Tim Kilby



It's the duty of a software developer, given the task of producing software products for the two most popular graphics computers, to try to be objective in assessing the quality of the two hardware systems in question. Having had experience programming Atari computers and being spoiled to certain of its features, I didn't take lightly the request to transport several commercial programs to the Commodore-64. The argument was made that since both used versions of the 6502 microprocessor, reprogramming couldn't be that difficult. But, I remembered conversations with other software developers about the horrors of Commodore programming. Nine months and four conversions later, I'll evaluate for you both systems from a programmer's point of view.

First, let me reiterate a well known fact. More Commodore-64 computers are sold than all other home computers combined. Yet very few home computers are used for programming even though most buyers have that as an objective. If one were buying either of the two computers, Atari 800XL or Commodore-64, based on commercially available programs, it's just about a toss up. Word processors, data base managers, spreadsheets, communications programs, and lots of games are available for each. However, if one's objective is to learn programming by programming, to use BASIC language and perhaps assembly language, to learn and utilize the system's many features in original programs, then one system far exceeds the other.

Screen Editors. Let me start with a direct comparison of BASIC screen editors. The Atari editor is a full screen editor just made for programming. Move the cursor past the right margin and it wraps around to the left. Move the cursor past the bottom edge and the cursor appears at the top. There's SHIFT-INSERT to make room between lines for new lines. And SHIFT-DELETE for taking up slack. CTRL-DELETE scrolls a statement backwards, eating up characters as it goes. And TABs and automatically repeating keys speed the editing process. Write statements with or without spaces between words and the screen editor automatically inserts them in the proper places. Perhaps the most important thing for BASIC programmers is instant syntax checking as a program line is entered. The COMMODORE-64 has none of these features. There is cursor movement in all four directions, but it's not as complete as with Atari. And it is very annoying to not notice syntax errors until a program crashes.

Graphics. Commodore BASIC is very similar to Microsoft BASIC and it is built into the system in the form of ROM—just like the 800XL. Commodore BASIC, however, does not have any graphics or sound commands! The hardware supports extraordinary screen displays and sound, but all graphics and sounds are done through PEEKs and POKEs. Imagine trying to program the equivalent of Atari's DRAWTO command in Commodore BASIC. There are only four Commodore graphic

modes; they are equivalent to Atari's GRAPHICS 0, 8, 12, and 15. The palette of colors is limited to 16 or less, far from Atari's 128.

Sprites vs Players. The one outstanding graphics feature which makes Commodore worthwhile is sprites—known on the Atari as players. Commodore can have eight simultaneous sprites, each either single or multi-colored, each 24 bits wide by 21 bytes tall, and each single or double size in both X and Y scales. Sprites are also moved easily in both X and Y directions by a simple POKE. They are limited to the 40 X 25 line screen area and may not appear to move into the screen from the outside edges. There can be an almost unlimited number of shapes stored in memory, pointers being changed rapidly for animation effects. Atari, by comparison, is very limited. One nice feature of Atari, however, is that players can be the full height of the screen.

Sound. Sound is good on both machines but really very limited to the BASIC programmer. Atari does have the SOUND command which is usable for certain beeps and buzzes. Commodore has a much more sophisticated sound chip which is capable of extraordinary synthesized music. Both machines require machine language speed for anything other than simple sounds.

Display Lists. Commodore-64s do not have display lists or display list interrupts, although this type of interrupt can be simulated using raster scan interrupts. Mixed modes can be achieved, multiple character sets used, and dynamic color switches incorporated. Vertical blank interrupts are about the same on both machines, although Atari gives one the choice of two stages for the VBI to occur.

Scrolling. One drawback from Commodore's lack of a display list structure is the inability to easily scroll horizontally. Both machines have fine horizontal and vertical scrolling. But since there is no display list in the Commodore, mode lines cannot exceed the standard 40 characters. Thus, it's hard to have objects from a virtual screen scroll into the visible screen. Atari makes that easy by being able to redefine screen memory on any mode line. As with most machines, where there is a will, there is a way. Whatever can be done on the Atari can probably be simulated on the 64, but probably with a lot of extra programming.

D.O.S. The disk operating system of the Commodore-64 is adequate but has some design flaws. First, files must be scratched (deleted) before an updated version can be written to the disk with the same filename. And if one is not careful with disk IDs, other valuable files can be overwritten unexpectedly.

(Continued on Page 8)

Commodore vs Atari (Continued)

A command driven structure--vs. Atari's menu driven DOS--means trying to remember all the commands; they're not displayed on screen. Syntax is not that easy either.

OPEN 3,8,3,"0:filename,S,W":CMD3:LIST 10-90

is the same as Atari's

LIST "D:filename",10,90

By the way, there have been at least two different operating systems that weren't entirely compatible with each other. And Commodore-64s are not compatible with previous Commodore models or their new PLUS model.

Binary Files. One good feature is that binary files can be loaded directly from BASIC. On the other hand, one unforgivable design flaw is the lack of anything like an AUTORUN.SYS file. Programs cannot be booted directly from the disk. There's always the LOAD "filename",8 command that must be typed to get a program booted. And for a designer of children's software that believes in total friendliness, this is a definite handicap.

Copying Disks. Lastly, there's no disk duplication command and the fastest commercial copiers take about four minutes and four disk swaps to copy a disk. Multiple disk drives apparently were not considered desirable.

Memory Management. Hats off to Commodore for excellent memory management. All 64K of RAM is available for programming. BASIC and the operating system (the Kernal) are in ROM and are "transparent" to certain hardware features. For example, character sets and screen data can occupy the same address space as the operating system. And the system can be using both simultaneously! Furthermore, BASIC and the operating system can be switched off and replaced by a user written operating system. Some of these features are in the 800XL but not quite as flexible as with the 64.

Quality Control. Hardware reliability is certainly worth considering. At my office we have four Commodore-64 computers and three 1541 disk drives. All of the computers have something wrong: from non-working keys to shorting connectors to outdated video circuits. The disk drives are much slower than even Atari's, if you can believe it.

Summary. All in all, do I like Commodore-64? No. Would I buy one for myself? No. Will I continue to program the 64? Yes. After all, I do listen to the market. It's amazing what shrewd, aggressive marketing will do for a product. Atari really missed the boat with what I think is a more "user usable" machine.

TIPS 'N TRAPS

Barry Burke and Jim Stevenson

Welcome to the second installment of "Tips 'N Traps". Last month we put in some hints for you adventurers out there to solve the ON-LINE adventure *Wizard and the Princess*. We haven't gotten any replies on BBS, mail, or telephone. We are DESPERATELY and patiently waiting for some problems or answers to turn up. Without them, this column will soon run out of ideas. We'll first be printing the different problems and answers St. Game originally put out, but since they have gone bankrupt, there is no way we can keep putting in new information to this column without your help.

Also, last month, we told you we were going to give you some addresses to write to. Here they are:

Jim Stevenson-4408 Manor Hall Lane, Fairfax, VA 22033 (703) 378-4093

Barry Burke-12411 Ramrod Court, Fairfax, VA 22030 (703) 830-1978

You can also send us messages on the new ARMUDIC message board, "Adventures Q & A." [See the article on the Upgraded ARMUDIC elsewhere in this issue. Ed.]

Next month, we'll have some questions, and semi-answers to problems from *The Dark Crystal* and *Mask of the Sun*, and probably some problems and semi-answers from you, the reader/adventurer. Keep those notes and letters coming!

ULYSSES AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE

Q. How do I get the Harpies to let me free the man in the cage?

A. Many men have died in at least one of the Seven seas to find that answer.

Q. How do I get past Pluto?

A. Another one bites the dust!

Q. How do I get past the wall of fire?

A. The rich aren't the only ones who can bathe in wine.

-or-

A. Quit your whining, you may get wet.

Q. How do I get past the fjord in the cavern?

A. If you remember your mythology, do as Daedalus and Icarus did!

Q. How do I handle the skeletons?

A. If I could save time in a bottle

The first thing that I'd like to do
Is say the ancient phrases with reversible meanings
And chop up a skeleton or two.

Q. How do I get past the dragon?

A. Diamonds are a dragon's best friend.



Ultima III: A Character Editor By Peter Kilcullen



After you have purchased for Christmas the best adventure game ever designed for your Atari as recommended elsewhere this month, you may soon become weary of the constant death inflicted upon your party and wonder if there isn't a better way to survive. **HELP** is just a few lines away. *Ultima III* by Lord British is a terrific game once your players obtain a decent level of experience; and the information below can help you reach that level. It is not meant as a "cheat" as too much fun would be lost by too great a reliance on this information. So use your discretion and enjoy the many hours of entertainment which our family has had playing *Ultima III*.

To use this character editor, a disk utility program is needed. "DosWiz" is a disk edit program which can be purchased from the National Capital Atari Users' Group library or there are several commercial programs such as *Disk Wizard II* by C.A.P. Software. Simply "bootup" the sector edit program and get ready to create, modify, resurrect, enrich, or save your party of characters.

The "character register" (which holds up to 20 characters) is contained in Sectors 545-554 (\$221-22A). There are two characters per sector for a total of 20 characters. While these characters may be edited, it is a lot easier to edit the "current" party (four characters).

The current party is located in Sectors 555 and 556 (\$22B-22C), two persons in each sector. These sectors are constantly updated during the game. When the "Q" (=QUIT) or "D" (=Disperse) commands are entered, the data in these two sectors are written to the appropriate sectors in 545-554. Therefore, if changes have been entered in sectors 545-554, they will be overwritten by the later data in sectors 555 and 556.

Therefore, it is advisable to make changes only to the current party in sectors 555 and 556. The information listed below is the order of data for each character, regardless of which sectors (555-556 or 545-554) it is listed in.

Hex	Byte	Decimal	Description
0-0D	1-13		Character name in inverse ATASCII
0E	14		Marks and cards (?!)
0F	15		# of torches
10	16		FF - Header
11	17		Condition: C1=ashes; C4=dead; C7=good; D0=poison
12	18		Strength
13	19		Dexterity
14	20		Wisdom
15	21		Intelligence
16	22		Race: C2=bobbit; C4=dwarf; C5=elf; C6=fuzzy; C8=human
17	23		Class: C1=alchemist; C2=barbarian; C3=cleric; C4=druid; C6=fighter; C9=illusionist; CC=lark; D0=paladin; D2=ranger; D4=thief; D7=wizard
18	24		???
19	25		Actual # of magic points
1A-1B	26-27		Actual # of hit points
1C-1D	28-29		Maximum # of hit points
1E-1F	30-31		Experience points
20-21	32-33		Amount of food
22	34		???
23-24	35-36		Amount of gold
25	37		# of gems
26	38		# of keys
27	39		# of powder
28	40		Armor in use: 1=skin; 2=cloth; etc.
29-2F	41-47		Armor owned & amount: cloth, leather, chain, etc.
30	48		Weapon in use: 1=hands; 2=dagger; etc.
31-3F	49-63		Weapon types & amounts: (dagger, axe, sling, bow, sword, 2Hsword)



Have fun and let us know how many turns it took you to defeat EXODUS!!!

Letters to the Editor

I recently purchased a copy of SYNFILE+ and found that it would not work on my 800, the keyboard locking up when I tried to format a disk or create a file. When a replacement disk failed to work also, I loaned it to a friend who reported no problems. After some experimenting, I disconnected my MPP 1000C modem from the #2 game port whereupon SYNFILE+ worked perfectly.

Arthur B. Corte

Classified Ads

FOR SALE -- ATARI 800 w/basic cartridge, ATARI 1010 cassette. Both like new. First \$225 takes both. Call Bill at (301) 469-8701 evenings.

MUSICAL NOTES

Jay Gerber

I hope you found last month's dissertation on music history of interest. This month, I will review and explain the workings of, along with some tips on getting the most out of, *Advanced Music System II*, from LotsaBytes.

A much respected institution among Atari computer owners was the Atari Program Exchange, or APX. This company thought up an ingenious idea: to let the 'common folk' who use the Atari, design and program software and market it at prices substantially less than commercial retail. Out of this effort came an abundance of high-quality, low-cost programs dealing with entertainment, home management, education, and, with the work of the very talented Lee Actor, *Advanced Music System (ANS)*.

The program that Lee designed was a remarkable package that would edit and play virtually any piece of sheet music on the Atari computer. Up until that time, the only music editor for the Atari was the *Music Composer* cartridge, put out by Atari, Inc., at the same time they introduced their 400/800 computers. *ANS* was far better than *Music Composer*, as it allowed a full 6 octave note range, compared to *Music Composer's* 3. It could also deal with complexities not possible in Atari's cartridge like triplets, notes faster than 64ths, and accents. In fact, it was the most advanced music package for any computer under \$2000.

Since then, the *Advanced Music System* has become the most-used music package on the Atari computer. You will be hard-pressed to find an Atari User Group anywhere that does not have some *ANS* song files in its library. With the advent of Actor's *Advanced Music System II (ANS II)*, creating music on the Atari is easier than ever. Editing commands have been speeded up, and you can now enter a piece as large as an entire movement from a symphony.

To give you an idea of how easy and extensive *ANS II's* capabilities are, I'll go through a sample session of using it, explaining and pointing out the best features of the program.

First, we pick out a piece of sheet music we really like, say Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. We then boot up *ANS II*, and see the main menu. From this menu, we select 'B' for entering music. Then *ANS II* asks us which of the four voices to edit. Let's choose 1, to type in the main melody. A window appears on top of the screen, telling us:

- The voice number (out of four),
- The measure number (1, since we are just starting),
- The number of beats in the measure currently being edited,
- The meter, or time signature,
- The tempo, which can be changed anywhere in the entire piece!

- The key signature (Cmaj=0#, Dmaj=2#, Fmaj= 1b where #=sharp and b=flat),
- The octave number of the current note being edited, from 1 to 6,
- The duration of the current note (w=whole, h=half, q=quarter, etc.),
- The envelope (more on this later),
- The dynamic from ppp to fff and the accent from F1 to F7,
- And the amount of notes that can be added until there is no more memory.

At the bottom of the screen, there is a message that looks like this:

Note[Oct][Dur][Env][Dyn]?

This is the prompt for you to enter the next note. It is also the format in which you enter the notes into *ANS II*. The first note of *Eine Kleine* is a G-natural quarter note in the 5th octave. The dynamic marking is fortissimo, or loud. The way you would enter this note is: G5Q/F

So, the pattern in which you enter notes is: name of note, octave number, note duration, envelope, /dynamic marking. A C-sharp sixteenth note in the 3rd octave played double pianissimo (very soft) would be entered: C#3S/PP.

If your next note is: in the same octave, of the same duration, or has the same envelope and/or dynamic marking as the previous one, then these commands can be deleted from your entry. For example, the second note (not counting rests) is a D eighth note. Since it is also played fortissimo, and also resides in octave 5, the entry for this note would be simply DE.

By now, you might be wondering about the mysterious "envelope" command I keep mentioning. The envelope tells the computer how to play the note. The default is ">" which is regular length notes. If you want to slur or tie the note to another one, then you would use the envelope ">". There are also commands for staccato (short) and double staccato (very short) notes. These appear in music as a little dot over (not next to) the note.

After you finish entering all the notes in a measure, just type "M" to go on. If you entered too many or too few notes, then the computer will buzz and tell you that you don't have the correct number of beats in the measure. You may take this feature off if you want, in case you are working with irregular measures. You can also change the time signature, or meter, any time you want. However, this does not affect playback, and is only used for editing (i.e. if you started in 4/4 and switched over to 2/2, which is double-time, or twice as fast, you could enter in the notes correctly, but the piece would still play at the original tempo, unless you used the change tempo command.

Like I mentioned before, you may change the tempo anywhere in the piece by entering in "T" followed by the

new tempo number. *AMS II* treats the tempo command like a note that can be edited at any time. Also, you can put the tempo command in any voice, and as many times as you like.

After you finish entering in voice one, then type "Q", and the program again displays the main menu. You can either type "B" to continue editing any voice, or choose "A" to listen to what you have typed in. If you don't want to hear the entire piece, then you can choose option "D" to hear any portion or section you desire.

Although you can change the tempo at any time within a piece, you must select a starting tempo with option "H". The tempo number directly matches the standard metronome markings of a piece. Usually you will find the markings just above the first line of music. It will read: (picture of quarter note)=XXX. The XXX is the number which you enter in for the tempo command.

The rest of the options deal with input/output functions such as: disk directory, load file, save file, delete file, format disk, and, when you want to get rid of a piece in memory to start another, the "C" or erase voices option, which will clear all memory, and reset the tempo to the default value (100).

The best features of *AMS II* are its editing features. As I mentioned before, *AMS II* will accept any duration of note that exists in music. Triplets are handled with a "3" after the duration, as in E3 for a eighth note triplet or S3 for a sixteenth note triplet. A septuplet or any n-tuplet for that matter is handled in the same way. If these conventional durations fail to please you, you can enter any note that you can possibly imagine by using a ratio of "play x many notes in the time it takes to play y notes".

The measure and note editing commands are just as extensive in scope. To repeat a note or series of notes, you use the command REPx,y. This will repeat the first x notes y times. The command for measures is REPMx,y or repeat measures x thru y and place them in either the current measure (if empty), or the following measures. To insert a measure, just type in 1. Also, if you want to move a block of measures from one place in a piece to another, you can use the REPM command on the measure right before you want the block inserted.

As you can see, *AMS II* is a remarkably well-designed music package. With all its features and ease of entering, I would have to say that *Advanced Music System II*, by Lee Actor, is the best music package for any computer, bar none.

Advanced Music System II, by Lee Actor. Marketed by LotsaBytes, 15445 Ventura Blvd., Suite 106; Sherman Oaks, CA 91413 for \$14.95 plus \$1.95 shipping/handling on 24K disk and 16K cassette.



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Visualizer File Converter

By Tim Kilby

Quite a few people have asked me about using Visualizer files with Micropainter, Paint, the graphics tablet programs, and other graphics utilities. Picture files from one program can be converted to work with another. The accompanying program takes care of some of these conversions. It would be very useful for converting your Micropainter files, for example, to Visualizer format. Then text could be added, the pictures animated, hardcopy print-outs made, or the pictures used in the jigsaw game or voice-narrated slide show.

Graphics table format (Koala Pad's Micro Illustrator, Atari Touch Tablet's Artist, and Power Pad) is non-standard. Normally pictures are saved in a complex compacted format. The simpler 62 sector format is required by this converted. Pictures should be saved directly to disk using the INSERT key option. The same pictures -- named D:PICTURE on your disk -- can be retrieved by pressing CLEAR. Once sent to the disk, then run this conversion program which automatically looks for the D:PICTURE filename.

I have not been able to test the new Atari light pen picture format. But if anyone has this product and wishes help in converting files to Visualizer (or visa versa), I'll be glad to help.



```
3010 GOSUB 240:GOTO 1010
4000 GOSUB 220:GOSUB 250
4010 GOSUB 230:GOTO 270
5000 GOSUB 220:GOSUB 230
5002 FOR I=0 TO 11
5004 PUT #2,0
5006 NEXT I
5010 FOR I=0 TO 3159
5012 GET #1,X
5014 PUT #2,X
5016 NEXT I:GOTO 270
6000 FOR I=0 TO 4
6002 GET #1,X
6004 NEXT X
6010 GOSUB 250:GOTO 270
```

```
10 GRAPHICS 0:?"==== VISUALIZER FILE
CONVERTER =====":?
20 DIM A$(15),B$(15),Q(4)
30 ? "CHOOSE":? "1> MICROPainter to VI
SUALIZER":? "2> PAINT to VISUALIZER"
40 ? "3> Graphics tablets to VISUALIZE
R":? "4> VISUALIZER to MICROPainter"
50 ? "5> VISUALIZER to PAINT":? "6> VI
SUALIZER to Graphics tablets":?
60 TRAP 60:INPUT T:IF T<1 OR T>6 THEN
60
70 IF T=1 THEN A$="MICROPainter":B$="V
ISUALIZER"
80 IF T=2 THEN A$="PAINT":B$="VISUALIZ
ER"
90 IF T=3 THEN A$="D:PICTURE":B$="VISU
ALIZER"
100 IF T=4 THEN A$="VISUALIZER":B$="MI
CROPainter"
110 IF T=5 THEN A$="VISUALIZER":B$="PA
INT"
120 IF T=6 THEN A$="VISUALIZER":B$="D:
PICTURE":?
130 ? :IF T<>3 THEN ? "Enter ";A$;" fi
lename:":INPUT A$
140 IF T<>6 THEN ? "Enter ";B$;" file n
ame:":INPUT B$
150 TRAP 160:OPEN #1,4,0,A$:OPEN #2,8,
0,B$:GOTO 170
160 ? "ERROR ";PEEK(195):GOTO 270
170 M=(PEEK(145)+1)*256
180 ? :? "CONVERTING - PLEASE WAIT":;
GOTO 1000*1
190 GET #1,X:Q(4)=X:FOR I=0 TO 2:GET #
1,X:Q(I)=X:NEXT I:Q(3)=0:RETURN
200 FOR I=0 TO 4:PUT #2,Q(I):NEXT I:RE
TURN
210 FOR I=0 TO 159:PUT #2,0:NEXT I:RE
TURN
220 FOR I=1 TO 3:GET #1,X:Q(I)=X:NEXT
I:GET #1,X:GET #1,X:Q(0)=X:RETURN
230 FOR I=0 TO 3:PUT #2,Q(I):NEXT I:RE
TURN
240 FOR I=0 TO 7679:GET #1,X:POKE M+I,
X:NEXT I:RETURN
250 FOR I=0 TO 78:FOR N=0 TO 39:GET #1
,X:POKE M+N,X:POKE M+N+40,X:NEXT N
260 FOR N=0 TO 79:PUT #2,PEEK(M+N):NEX
T N:NEXT I:FOR I=0 TO 1359:PUT #2,0:NE
XT I:RETURN
270 CLOSE #1:CLOSE #2:END
280 DATA 40,202,148,0,0
1000 GOSUB 240:GOSUB 190:GOSUB 200
1010 FOR I=0 TO 156 STEP 2:FOR N=0 TO
39:PUT #2,PEEK(M+I*40+N):NEXT N:NEXT I
1020 GOSUB 210:GOTO 270
2000 GOSUB 190:FOR I=0 TO 11:GET #1,X:
NEXT I:GOSUB 200
2010 FOR I=0 TO 3159:GET #1,X:PUT #2,X
:NEXT I:GOTO 270
3000 RESTORE :FOR I=0 TO 4:READ X:PUT
#2,X:NEXT I
```


Computer Caverns

Jay Gerber

Hello, fellow Atari computer owner! Are you the type of person who craves adventure? Do you lust for battle, and yearn for faraway places? Would you kill, not just seriously injure, but KILL for the last Infocom on your dealer's shelves?? Then, my friend, venture into the world of computerized fantasy, as we journey into the realm of Computer Caverns!

In this monthly column, we will take a look at all the latest adventure games. We will probe into some of the popular old ones. We will discuss techniques (not hints) of becoming a better adventurer, and we will actually write our own adventure game. In short, we will journey where no man has gone before.

First, let us look at a brief history of computer adventuring. Legend has it that the very first room to be explored on a computer was in *Colossal Caves*. This program, that has since been put on almost every mainframe in the world and is truly a legacy among bored programmers, was entitled, simply, *Adventure*. It contained many puzzles like magic bridges, labyrinths, and how to get in in the first place. This adventure was to set the standards of all adventures to follow. Scott Adams used the same format when writing his 13 text adventures, later to become graphic (SAGAs).

The premise of these games is simple. You are an adventurer (good generic term, huh) who must explore a multi-roomed environment (another great generic term) in order to find certain items, solve a puzzle, or, in some cases, just get out alive. You tell the computer what you want to do by entering two word commands consisting of an action and an object. For example, if you want to climb up a wall, you would type: CLIMB WALL. If you wanted to talk to a guard, you would say: TALK GUARD, and so on.

The Scott Adams series led a group of (they-must-be-geniuses) people called Infocom, to make the best selling computer program of all time: *Zork I*. In this complex adventure, you explore the dungeon and surrounding area of a white house in order to return 20 items to a trophy case within the house's living room. The extra-ordinary feature of *Zork* is that you can type in complex whole sentences, and the computer will recognize them. If you want to pick up the red ball and eat the striped chair, that is exactly what you type!

Since then, Infocom has released a slew more, with topics ranging from undersea diving (*Seastalker* and *Cutthroats*) to Interstellar travel (*Starcross*, *Planetfall*, and the soon to be released *Nitchhiker's* guide to the galaxy). The complexity or difficulty of the Infocoms range from hard to nearly impossible, and take at least 40 or 50 hours of actual play time.

For those who want more of an arcade or graphic challenge, there has been a lot of adventures with those of you in mind. The *Temple of Apshai* is a prime example of a challenging adventure all in graphics and action on

screen. There have been arcade games that have adventure in them, too. *Lode Runner* is a fast-paced game in which you explore 150 different rooms in search of gold. There are many more, each with their own merits, which we will discuss in later columns.

Now, for those of you who would rather make your own adventures rather than buy them, we will attempt to do just that. I will go over the making of an adventure game from start to finish, letting you customize it to your interests. For now, think of a theme and setting for your adventure. It can be outerspace exploration, or an Indiana Jones race-for-your-life situation. Think of what puzzles and treasure you want to put in. Think of the traps and monsters that will occupy your world. Next month, we start using them to write your own customized adventure in BASIC.

Before I leave you to your adventurous lives, let me impart some wisdom on you. Before you begin any journey, always state, "I should like to know about risks, out-of-pocket expenses, time required and remuneration, and so forth." This may not get you out of trouble, but it will prove you have excellent literary taste!

Well, until next month, happy travels! [In case you want to know, the above quote was from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.]

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ATARI SCUTTLEBITS

* Special Edition *

Bob Kelly

Along with this article, read the regular edition of ATARI SCUTTLEBITS (on page 6) which focuses upon the new line of Atari computers to be shown at the consumer electronics show in January. It provides additional information for your Christmas decisions.

As I indicated last month, we will look at some of the best buys in both hardware and software for the Atari during the Christmas season. However, before getting down to the individual items, let's look at the market environment affecting the availability of Atari computer products.

Software sales overall are below what was expected to be another banner year. As a result, firms have been cautious regarding the introduction of new products as well as cutting back on development costs. This attitude by software firms particularly applies to Atari-related products for three reasons: (1) Under Jack Tramiel's leadership, minimal advertising has been conducted to date, as a consequence, public recognition of the 800XL as a viable home computer has suffered; (2) payment of some creditors has been delayed or cancelled by Atari resulting in a few law suits and a reluctance on the part of some third party vendors to be involved with Atari; and (3) new products are scheduled for introduction by Atari in early 1985, casting some doubt on the future of the 800/800XL software sales base.

In addition to the above, the supply of top quality software may be more constrained since the 800XL will sell for roughly \$120 during Christmas and sales will probably be brisk. Many software houses appear not to have taken this possibility into consideration when projecting Atari Christmas requirements.

Based on the foregoing, I project that retail outlets will not have large inventories of "quality" Atari-related software for the holidays relative to potential demand. The best buys are likely to be gone early. Only a little more than three weeks remain - so get with it.

My recommendations concentrate on a variety of products for various uses that I either purchased or plan to purchase. My "Holiday Hit" is at the end of this article.

SOFTWARE

The Print Shop (Broderbund). This program does everything from printing your own greeting cards to custom letterheads. I have not seen it in operation on the Atari, only the up-beat reviews. It is scheduled for introduction in mid November and, by the way, I have ordered the program. The list price is \$49.95 but I bought it for \$29.95 - shop carefully. Demand for this product is already very heavy according to the retail outlets.

CompuServe Starter Kit (CompuServe). Purchaser receives five hours of free on-line time plus detailed user manual. The Atari S16 on CompuServe has a message board that is unbelievable (over a thousand messages per week as best I can determine and many are actually informative!). I purchased this product and found it to be an above average value. Package can generally be obtained for roughly \$25 which is \$5 less than the cost of the connect time alone.

Movie Maker (Reston). If you want animation and graphics, this is the program. I have it and it is worth the price. Extensive documentation is included. Retail price is \$49.95 but it can be found for around \$40.00

B-Graph (Batteries Included). This is simply the best business graphing and statistical package for the Atari. I have an older version and it is excellent. The new version incorporates many useful additions. List price will be in \$50 to \$60 range when the updated version is released (mid November).

Disk Wizard II (C.A.P. Software). This is a utility program that will help repair those disk errors, etc. (single/double density). I have it and find it extremely helpful. Excellent documentation is included which will help you learn something about your computer and disk structure. The retail price is only \$29.95 (advertised in Analog). Shop around.

Letter Perfect (LJK). As you have heard before, this is the best word processor for the Atari. A new version (6.0) came out this year and the revised documentation makes it easy to learn. Without Letter Perfect and the Bit-3 80-column board, I would have serious doubts about continuing this column given other demands on my time. The retail price is \$79.95 but it can be purchased in the range of \$65. This is a must for serious word processing on the Atari.

Electronic Arts (Strategy games/Home computer programs). This software house has a special promotion going - buy two programs and get one free. As you know, Electronic Arts has made quite a name for itself in the last year with quality products. Almost all their programs rate as average or above, but best buys in terms of quality and/or home utility are *Seven Cities of Gold*, *Financial Cook Book* (Analog Review - Dec. 1984), and *Pinball Construction Set*. Discounted prices for the three programs mentioned are \$30, \$38, and \$30 respectively.

InfoCom (Adventure games). Almost everyone has heard of the *Zork* series and this software firm has earned a reputation for excellence. Three new titles are now available. If you are a "thinker", these games will appeal to you. Some retail outlets are offering a bonus if you purchase three InfoCom programs. Discounted prices range from high twenties to mid thirties.

EXODUS: Ultima III (Origin Systems). This program sets a new standard for excellence in fantasy role-playing games. Continuing the tradition of innovation established by Lord British, *EXODUS* features new animated graphic

techniques, full sound effects, and multi-character interplay. Discounted price: \$39.

Millionaire Tycoon (HesWare). The reviews have been excellent. The basic premise of the game is that you are the speculator and implement investment strategies playing the stock market. I have not played this game (too new). The retail price is \$39.95 - discounted \$34 or less.

ARCADE GAMES: This area is not my forte'. Fortunately, I have many close expert advisors on this topic. Their recommendations are:

Lode Runner (Broderbund). Retail \$34.95: Discounted - \$22. Don't play this game during the week. I have heard too many complaints about 4 A.M. sessions (1983's best computer game).

Boulder Dash (First Star). Retail \$34.95: Discounted - \$19. Very enjoyable game. Worth the money and is the best example of non-shoot-them-up type action game.

Necromancer (Synapse). Retail \$29.95: Discounted \$21. This is perhaps the most unique game on the market and to advance does require skill.

Star League Baseball (Gamestar). Retail \$29.95: Discounted \$21. This is the best sport game on the market due to excellent graphics.

HARDWARE

It is a fact, quality hardware items are expensive. With this in mind, let's examine the equipment that I believe to have the greatest value/utility ratios:

64K ATR-8000 (SWP Inc.) This is probably the "best" equipment buy I made. In the Atari mode, it permits you to hook up standard disk drives (two DS/DD drives can be purchased for slightly more than the cost of one SS/DD discounted Atari drive). It has a 48K printer buffer - no more 10 minute wait to use the computer while printing out my correspondence. Finally, it has a standard RS232 modem interface - no joystick ports or 850 interface module required.

On top of all this, the ATR-8000 is a 64K CP/M machine for business use. I keep all my records on dBase II. The cost is listed at \$600 but it can be obtained at a 10 to 15% discount. When considering the cost of the equivalent Atari capability, excluding consideration of CP/M, the ATR-8000 is cheaper option. Although, it is the most expensive item on the recommended list.

Ramrod XL (Newell Industries). This add-on gives the 800XL owner the following enhanced capabilities: (1) Twice as fast keyboard response - no more dropping letters for the fast typist, (2) permits via a toggle switch to go between the XL operating system (OS) and an OS that is 99% compatible with the old Revision B operating system of the 800, "bye-bye" translator disk, (3) cassette interface speed is increased by 2.5 times, (4) a fast chip to increase the Atari's slow math computational capability, and (5) for the hacker, Omnimon XL is included - a machine

language monitor. The list price of Ramrod XL is \$119.95 but it is generally discounted to less than \$100.

Bit-3 80 Column Board (Bit-3 Corporation). This gives the 800 owner (can't use on 800XL) 80 column capability for word processing. Used in conjunction with Letter Perfect, your home computer now becomes a sophisticated word processor. If you plan on keeping your 800, now is the time to buy. List price is \$300 but I have seen it advertised for roughly \$225. Expensive, yes, but if you do lots of writing, it is worth the investment.

Indus 8T Disk Drive (Indus Systems). If you don't have a disk drive, this is now the best-available solely Atari drive on the market. It supports both single and double density and comes with software (word processor and spread sheet). List price is \$499.95 but I have seen it for \$275.

Genini 10X (Star Micronics, Inc.). If you are in the market for a dot-matrix printer, not letter quality, this is the printer for you. It is compatible with most Epson FX80 control codes, which is more important than the first-time buyer initially realizes. The 10X has a wide range of features - friction and tractor feed, prints at 120 characters per second, foreign character sets, etc. The list price on this gem is in the area of \$350 but it can be found for \$249.

Atari Touch Tablet (Atari, Inc.). Everyone knows how to use a touch tablet. What most people do not realize is that you may have to pay extra for either the drawing pen and/or the program. With the Atari, they are included in the price. The original list was \$89.95 but without any difficulty, you can find it discounted for \$50 or less - about 50% less than what you would pay for the competitors' product. A great buy for both adults' and kids' use.

My Pick as the "Holiday Hit"

HomePak (Batteries Included). Three programs in one: Word processor, Database Manager, and Telecommunications program (Hometerm). I spent the better part of two evenings on CompuServe reading messages on the capabilities of the telecommunications program as well as the three-page review in the December Analog. Here's a few of Hometerm's major features:

- Automatically detects 835 and 1030 modems permitting uploading and downloading and "true" XMODEM transfer with major informational services.
- Has four transmission modes (ASCII, ATASCII, XModem, and a special mode for CompuServe graphics).
- Permits redirection of output to screen, disk or printer.
- Ten different macro command files (auto dial) of 80 characters each and they can be linked.
- Three line edit window for preparing messages, e.g. interacting on a BBS system.

(Continued on Page 16)

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\$ How to be Rich and Famous \$

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[Reprinted from OSS Newsletter, October, 1984]

Well, maybe a little bit famous at least. You may have noted from other announcements in this newsletter that we at OSS are making an effort to encourage more widespread use of our products. For example, we have decided to eliminate charges for the RunTime version of Basic XL.

In a related move, we have decided to allow all Atari-related magazines that publish disk or cassette versions (including ROM, ANALOG, ANTIC, and others if they ask) to distribute runnable programs written in either ACTION! or BASIC XL.

What does that mean to you? Now you can write programs in ACTION! or BASIC XL, submit them to your favorite magazine, and (presuming your article is accepted) see your program both printed and distributed in runnable form to thousands of people. And why should you write such an article? Well, the magazines usually pay a nominal per page rate for articles and programs, and we at OSS are going to sweeten that rate just a bit:

If you write an article which either uses an OSS product or shows how to do so, OSS will pay you an amount equal to what the magazine pays you.

Restrictions: (1) Your article must be accepted and paid for by a recognized national magazine (any magazine with 20,000 paid circulation automatically qualifies--ask about others). (2) The article cannot be construed to be a review. We do not want to be accused of influencing the outcomes of reviews. (3) We pay only for the first printing of an article, not for any reprints. Exception: an article which appears unpaid in a user group publication which is later paid for by a national magazine. (4) We match payments only for the publication of the article, not for any royalties, etc., which result from sale of programs based in whole or in part on an article. (5) No one may earn more than \$500 per year under this plan. (6) We reserve the right to make other future restrictions if, in our sole opinion, they become necessary.

Also, since our license agreements already allow disk publication of ACTION! and BASIC XL programs by user groups (RunTime code only, remember!), those of you not ready to write for national magazines may write for your local users' group newsletter. And, even though most newsletters don't pay for articles, we will! A minimum of \$25. Again, though, there are some rules:

(1) through (6), same as above, except that there is no restriction on the circulation of the newsletter. (7) The newsletter must be a bonafide production of a recognized user's group. Generally, the newsletter must be at least four pages in length and have articles, etc., by at least three different people. (8) The article must be a minimum of a page

(8 by 11 inches) in length, or equivalent. (9) No more than two payments per year will be made to any one individual. (10) The article and any accompanying program(s) must be in the public domain. OSS must have the right to reprint either the article or program or both in its own newsletter. If OSS chooses to so reprint, a second payment (also a minimum of \$25) will be made. (These reprint payments are not subject to rule 9.)

You must enter to win! You have to send a copy of the published article to us before we can make payment.

Exceptions to any and all of the above rules are at the sole discretion of OSS. Similarly, awards greater than \$25 for articles in user group publications will be made only when, in our sole judgment, the quality of an article is outstanding enough to warrant it.

Finally, in addition to all the above, OSS will annually make a cash award of \$200 for the best printed article in either a commercial or user publication. The decision as to what constitutes "best" shall be (once again, what else) at the sole discretion of OSS. The "contest" for this award will run from July through June (publication dates) and the award will be made by August 31st.

Is that enough incentive? We certainly hope so. Start writing!



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ATARI SCUTTLEBITS (Continued)

- On-screen clock, 300/1200 baud operation, unlimited capture mode, and a word wrap feature (no split text on screen).

The word processor and database manager which come with this program are untested at this time. The list price is \$49.95; the discounted price is in the \$35 range. The disk is unprotected. Given the low price and documentation that comes with the program, which is an absolute must to take advantage of the capabilities, HomePak represents an investment in the low-priced quality software we have all been looking for so long. They deserve your dollar as does all the other software firms presented in this article. In fact, I gave the discounted prices for just this reason.

If you desire more detailed information prior to Christmas on any of the programs, contact me on ARMUDIC with your questions addressed to Bob Kelly. I will get back to you as quickly as possible.

Best wishes for the holiday season and a happy New Year!

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Atariwriter Underground: The Form Letter By Frank Pazel

The good folks at the former ATARI, Inc. gave us what is probably the best word processor for any PC, bar none. It is easy to learn, handles just about any kind of request, is loaded with features, and is absolutely dirt cheap. With the advent of the *APX Printer Driver*, almost any printer works with it and the use of *Atspell* is a godsend to those less lexical. It is, in short, superb.

Now, these very same departed programmers had a few tricks up their collective sleeves when they put this ROM together. They weren't entirely honest in reporting all the swell surprises packaged inside this 5-cubic-inch marvel. Or perhaps they told all but between technical writer and manufacturing much was lost. In any event, in two parts I am going to try to report what I have gathered from various sources and have discovered through experimentation about the oft-demeaned *Atariwriter*. (Who can forget the slap in the face from *Time* magazines "Man-Computer of the Year" issue when they said "Atari's word processor is not for the serious user." Shame. Stupidity.

Hidden inside the cartridge lies the latent ability to create form letters automatically with a mail merge, block copy text from one file to another, and unleash a resident modem handler. This month, the mail merge.

A form letter, for definition purposes, is a document which will have certain parts of it contain personalized information. The bulk of the letter is the same for each addressee. You get these things in the mail every week telling you how you might just have won 10 billion dollars. Suppose you have the need to produce such a letter. Perhaps your club needs to send out a mailing which would be nice to look personalized, or might attract more attention if the receiver's name appears inside the text. Using normal *Atariwriter* functions write the letter. However, wherever you want to personalize the text hold down the **OPTION** key and press the **INSERT** key at the same time. An inverse **ESCAPE** character will be printed on the screen in that position. Later on, when you ask *Atariwriter* to **PRINT** your document the program and printer would normally halt and allow you to type in the missing information. This procedure is detailed on page 39 of the *Atariwriter* manual. As the manual says, "...leave blanks in a text file ... and fill them in each time you print the file." The underlining is mine. This is exactly what we want to avoid. We want to create a file which will automatically merge with our letter file and insert the missing information for us.

When you are sure your letter is exactly like you want it, **SAVE** it. Make accurate notes of how many blank items you need to fill in and what the information needs to be. For example, the first three **ESCAPE** characters might represent name, street address, and town and state. Create a new file in the following manner.

1. Enter the Editor and delete the entire format line. Yes. You should now be looking at a blank blue page which used to have inverse letters with numbers after them. This is the absolutely crucial step in making this process work.

2. Using your notes about the empty blanks in your letter, type in the missing information with a **RETURN** at the end of each piece of information. Use no blank lines and continue typing in your repeating series of data. You are creating a "sort of" database for the letter. Hopefully, you will design it so it can be used for other things. The addresses, for example, can be used to make-up labels later on.

3. **SAVE** this file. I use the name **MERGE** but you use your favorite. Count the number of records in this file. A record is all of the information you need to print one letter. It might be something like name, street, and city-state. The number of records will equal the number of different documents you are going to print. You have ten different names with addresses in your **MERGE** file; you are going to print ten different personalized letters.

4. **LOAD** your letter into *Atariwriter*. Turn on your printer. Position your paper. Begin the **PRINT** series. At the prompt "**PRINT WHOLE DOCUMENT?**", answer **Y**.

5. At the prompt "**NUMBER OF COPIES**", type in the number of letters you are going to print. This number should equal the number of records in your **MERGE** file. The maximum is 99.

6. At the prompt "**MAKE ENTRY, PRESS RETURN**", hold down the **CONTROL** key and press **V** (**CTRL-V**) and you should hear the one key click. Now type in the specifications of your data file, e.g., **D:MERGE**. Make sure your **MERGE** file disk is in your active drive.

7. As soon as you press **RETURN** the printer should come to life and begin churning out your form letters. If you have specified right-hand justification (**J1**), each letter will be printed with the personalized information properly justified. It's near magic!

Some of this information comes by the way of the San Leandro (CA) Computer Club which reports a mysterious interoffice memo at ATARI which briefly outlined its existence and use. Who knows? I collected bits and pieces here and there, from newsletters, talking to people, and just plain dead-end trying. The procedure works. And it makes what is the most versatile and valuable PC glitter on another facet of its diamond-studded personality.

[Reprinted from *JACG Newsletter*, October, 1984.]





ARMUDIC Upgrade: Why, What, When, & How to Use By Bruce Blake and Bob Kelly

Background. The Bulletin Board Committee was convened in October to consider upgrading the current 300 baud system. The meeting was held in response to inquiries on the part of the membership as to whether it was feasible to initiate a 300/1200 baud capability and at the same time to upgrade the quality and quantity of programs and services offered on ARMUDIC. The committee consisted of Joe Waters, John Brophy, Bruce Blake, and Bob Kelly. The committee's deliberations resulted in the following recommendations:

- Purchase the FOREN/Xmodem software system at a cost of \$80.00. The cost will be equally shared between Novatari and the National Capital Atari Users Group. This system will permit 300/1200 baud operation, error checking in transmission, expanded upload capabilities, enhanced message files, multiple levels of access, and numerous other technical and non-technical advantages.

- Access to the Bulletin Board for members will be 45 minutes and non-members will be limited to 14 minutes per day. There will be no restrictions placed upon non-members governing their activities on the BBS.

- Clubs wishing to join as a full participating member of the BBS system must make a one-time capital expenditure of \$250.00 or a fee of \$5.00 per member, whichever is

less. The fee's will be utilized to fund system expansion and maintenance.

- A Co-Sysop was appointed by the committee. The Co-Sysop is Bruce Blake.

- The download files will be published monthly in Current Notes and member recommendations on program selection are welcome.

- The question of expansion of the system was deferred (i.e. the purchase of additional disk drives). This question will be considered again in the first quarter of 1985. In the interim, a disk drive has been loaned to ARMUDIC which will permit expansion of system offerings by approximately 176K. This was considered appropriate in light of the heavy usage expected over the holiday season.

What is Xmodem. Xmodem is a handshaking technique used to obtain better accuracy in file transfers. Basically, it breaks the files into 128 byte sections, sending them one at a time, and asking the receiver if the section was received correctly. If it was not, the system tries to send the section again. If at the end of 9 tries, there has been no success, the system aborts the transfer. Xmodem will also automatically save the file for you so you don't have to worry about extra prompt characters at

(Continued on Page 20)

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ARMUDIC Upgrade (Continued)

the end of the file. This is very useful for non-listed Basic programs. In order to use this, you must have some version of the program *Anodem* which is available for download on this system. To upload, use "Send" and to download, use "Receive"; or for Atari to Atari, use Z transfer on your terminal program if it is so equipped.

System Use. The enhanced ARMUDIC BBS started operation as of 20 November. Below is a listing and explanation of the available commands on the ARMUDIC BBS.

***** ARMUDIC Command Menu *****

[A]-ASCII/ATASCII	[P]-User Profile
[D]-Download	[R]-Read/Scan Msgs
[E]-Enter Message	[U]-Upload
[F]-Download Menu	[Y]-Yell for Sysop
[G]-Logoff	[Z]-Change Boards
[K]-Delete Message	[M]-E-Mail
[L]-Message to Sysop	

[*]-ARMUDIC Data Bases/Help
 [+]-Add new BBS to General List
 [?]-Command Menu

A - the Ascii/Atascii toggle. If you are using an Atari computer and are not running "Teletalk" (like most users), then you should be in Atascii translation mode to get the most of this system. If for some reason, you are not in Atascii mode when you log on to the system you can switch to it by using option A (you will be prompted as you log on ARMUDIC). If at anytime you change translation modes without using option A, the system will no longer recognize commands. The use of Atascii translation allows you to send/receive Atari inverse video characters (such as in prompts) and is a must when downloading ATASCII files.

D - the download command. This is to be used only when you already know the list of available download files. This way, you avoid a delay in waiting for the file directory to display the list prior to each download.

E - the command to enter a message. The system will default to the general message file, *Public Opinion*, if you press E from the main command menu. If you want to leave a message on another board, first select Z on the main command menu, next select the desired message board, press return until the command prompt appears. At this point enter E + [RETURN] and follow the instructions.

F - the directory of download files. The directory will tell you what type of program the file is, its length, language and translation mode. Both Atascii and Ascii files can be downloaded in Atascii mode, however only Ascii files can be downloaded in Ascii mode. If you are using Xmodem protocol, the system will automatically switch to Atascii and then back to Ascii at the end of the download. Note, option F will initially prompt you for a subgroup of file categories (e.g. games, utilities, etc.) You can bypass this prompt by pre-selecting at the command

prompt. For example to get the download menu for games: Press F G or for all files Press F A.

G - the sign-off command. The system will ask "are you sure" before disconnecting your signal.

M - for person to person messages. Files are locked and can only be read if appropriate user password is known.

P - determine your status on the system. Tells you the number of uploads and downloads you have conducted, time remaining on the system display, user access level, etc.

R - read or scan messages. Allows you to pre-select a range or sequence of messages to be read. For example:

R 100-1 [Read all messages in reverse order from #100 to #1 inclusive.]

R 10-20 [Read all messages from #10 to #20.]

R 1;3;9;5 [Read message 1 then 3 then 9 and finally #5. You can selectively read messages in any order forward or backwards.]

Z - Select a message board. The message boards are:

1. **Public Opinion** - General/informal message board. John Brophy will assist users on this board.

2. **Want Ads** - Equipment/software sales or needs and computer services.

3. **Personal Messages** - Communicate with other users on short term topical issues (e.g. for month of December, leave questions here for Bob Kelly on Christmas computer hardware/software buying relating to his ATARI SCUTTLEBITS column in *Current Notes*).

4. **Technical Korner** - Designed to answer user hardware or software questions. This is a trouble-shooting forum, it is not intended to provide advice on the purchase of equipment. Bruce Blake is the technical expert who will answer your questions.

5. **Adventures Q & A** - Relates to adventure gaming. Readers of the *Tips 'N Traps* column in *Current Notes* by Barry Burke and Jim Stevenson are welcome to exchange information here. Problems and solutions (if there are any) are presented on this board.

6. **Club Corner** - Messages pertaining to individual clubs (National Capital Atari Users Group and Northern Virginia Atari Users Group).

The remaining command prompts are self-explanatory. If further help is required, contact Sysop (Command L).

Hope this has been of some assistance in gaining a better understanding of the new ARMUDIC BBS - Good luck!

ARMUDIC BBS... (703) 425-6698
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The DT-80 Cartridge

For the ATARI/ATR System

By Bob Danson



The SWP ATR8000 is a 64K Z80 computer that attaches to an ATARI computer via the ATARI serial data bus. The ATR provides connections for the attachment of generic 5 1/4 and 8-inch disk drives, a parallel printer, and a serial device (which is usually a modem). Code resides in the ATR so that whenever the ATARI computer is being used the ATR functions as a disk drive controller and a peripheral controller (ATARI 850 replacement). But the roles can be reversed with the ATR being the primary computer. In that case the ATR becomes a CP/M system and the ATARI with its attached TV or monitor becomes a terminal from which the ATR is run. In order to do this, a program must first be loaded into the ATARI that will cause it to emulate an ASCII keyboard and a CRT display device. The ATARI keyboard is more than adequate for this function and the TV or monitor can provide the required CRT display - so long as the 40-column by 24-line ATARI Graphics 0 mode is adequate. Unfortunately most CP/M applications such as WordStar, dBase, and SuperCalc were not intended to be used with a 40-column display. They work best with an 80-column display. This means that the ATARI must either have an 80-column board and monitor (the best way to go, but expensive) or the ATARI must generate an 80-column display through a software driven Graphics 8 screen. SWP supplies such a Graphics 8 terminal program for the ATARI - AutoTerm80. It is a disk-based (a protected un-back-upable disk) that emulates a Lear Siegler ADM-3A terminal. This program does not come with the ATR - it must be purchased for an additional \$29.95 plus \$3.00 shipping. Up to now it was the only such commercially available program.

The DT-80 Cartridge. The DT-80 is a cartridge for the ATARI computer that turns the ATARI into a ASCII terminal with an 80-column by 24-line display and allows the ATARI to be used as a terminal for the SWP ATR8000 CP/M system. It provides all the functions of the SWP AutoTerm80 program plus it has the following additional features:

- The cursor has three modes: flashing, steady, and invisible.
- The background luminance can be changed to one of eight levels.
- The character luminance can be changed to one of eight levels.
- The screen color can be changed.
- The screen display can be set to normal coarse scrolling or to fine smooth scrolling.
- A joystick or trackball can be used as a cursor positioning device and the speed of the cursor movement can be regulated.
- The ASCII codes generated by the keyboard and the joystick can be changed.
- Support for some CRT escape control sequences not provided by AutoTerm80.

- A menu from which to select and control the DT-80 functions.

The DT-80 program is written by Claus Buchholz and is distributed by ACE - Amiable Computer Enhancements, P.O. Box 10233, Lansing, MI 48901. The telephone number is 517-351-3092. The cost of the DT-80 is \$39.95, plus \$3.00 for shipping, with an additional \$2.00 for C.O.D.

The 80-column Display. Before further discussing the DT-80 a few words must be said about an 80-column display generated in software via an ATARI Graphics 8 screen.

An 80-column Graphics 8 display represents individual characters with a 4 by 8 character dot matrix. A 4 by 8 dot matrix is just barely adequate for good character definition. It can produce a readable display on a black and white TV, a monochrome monitor, or on a color monitor such as the Commodore 1702 when the monitor is used with the ATARI 800 chroma/luminance signals. All these devices work because they don't produce or display artifacting, which is a distortion in the color signal when it is modulated with the luminance signal to produce composite output. Artifacting can be a crippling blow against a Graphics 8 display when the highest possible image quality is required. Because of artifacting an 80-column Graphics 8 display on a composite monitor is less readable, but can be marginally acceptable if the color controls are turned down to minimize the effects of artifacting. A normal color TV ususally does not produce an acceptable display.

The Hardware. The DT-80 I received came in a grey plastic case. The rear of the case was damaged, as if an old product name or label had been pried off.

The DT-80 cartridge would not fit into my ATARI 800. A careful examination found that the printed circuit board was too wide to fit into the ATARI cartridge slot. After disassembling the case and applying a file to the edges of the circuit board it fit.

It must also be noted that the circuit board has tinned leads, not the better quality and performance gold leads found on the great majority of ATARI cartridges.

All-in-all I found the quality of the DT-80 case and circuit board disappointing.

The Software. The software is what the DT-80 was purchased for and there are fewer disappointments here.

The DT-80 produces a typical Graphics 8 80-column display. There are differences in the character set compared to the SWP AutoTerm80 program, but whether the DT-80 display is overall better or worse is up to the user.

The advantage of the DT-80 is that the user can change the display luminance and color. The display can be light with dark characters or dark with light characters. This also allows control of screen contrast without having to adjust the TV or monitor controls. The ability to change the screen color is not quite as useful as the luminance controls, but it can help to produce a more pleasing display when used with a composite color monitor.

The ability to redefine the keyboard is interesting but its use can become tedious: there is no way to save new definitions; they must be entered whenever the DT-80 program is reloaded. One place the keyboard redefinition function is necessary is with the use of a joystick as a cursor positioning device. By default, the DT-80 defines the cursor positioning codes as those used by the ATARI - the CTRL arrow keys. But the DT-80 is not currently used as an ATARI control program; it's used as a CP/M terminal control program. While there are no standard cursor positioning keys for CP/M, some of the most frequently used keys are those used by programs such as WordStar and dBase - the CTRL-E, S, D, and X keys. Therefore the joystick cannot be used with WordStar unless the cursor positioning codes are redefined. It would be much better if you could save and reinstate alternate cursor positioning codes. Or even better, the WordStar cursor control codes should have been provided as a menu option or for a joystick plugged into the second joystick port.

Another useful DT-80 feature is that many of the display escape control sequences shown in the SWP CP/M Supplement, section V.3, are implemented by the DT-80. Section V.3 has, up to now, been somewhat a work of fantasy, since many of the codes are not ADM-3A codes and were not implemented in AutoTerm80. Two such codes are the Line Insert (ESC E) and the Line Delete (ESC R). When they are installed in WordStar they allow WordStar better control over the screen, producing a better display as lines of text are inserted or deleted. I have found that when installing CP/M software, if the install program has the Lear Siegler ADM-31 as a choice, the DT-80 will provide the proper terminal characteristics.

The smooth scrolling option of the DT-80 produces a very pleasing effect. As lines are added to the bottom of the screen the display appears to just glide smoothly upward. (But note - this only happens if the CP/M application program treats the ATARI as a dumb terminal and allows the DT-80 screen editor to scroll the display. If an application program uses the Line Insert and Line Delete control codes to manage the screen display then the DT-80 smooth scrolling may not work.)

Performance. The use of a terminal emulator program from a cartridge is a vast improvement over one on a disk. It is no longer necessary to insert the disk, boot the system, wait for the program to load, and in the case of AutoTerm80, hear that loud annoying bee..eep sound. Just plug in the cartridge and you're ready to boot CP/M. If the ATARI SYSTEM RESET is pressed there's no need to reload the terminal program - the DT-80 just restarts.

The speed of the DT-80 code is adequate for all its functions. This means that when using the DT-80 no CP/M

software install tricks are needed to get features such as inverse video to work properly.

In Summary. It is unfortunate that ACE uses poor quality hardware to package its product. Also, the lack of built-in joystick CTRL-E, S, D, and X cursor positioning codes puts a damper on the usefulness of using a joystick for cursor positioning with CP/M programs such as WordStar. But the DT-80 does provide a useful cartridge-based 80-column terminal emulator for the ATARI/ATR system. It has a number of good features and performs well. For those ATR users whose ATARI does not contain an 80-column board the DT-80 is a good choice.



Arcader's Alley

By Jay Gerber

Arcader's Alley is the place for all you game players to show off your talents. Each month the highest game scores will be published, along with hints on how to play them, all submitted by you, the readers. To submit scores and hints, send them to me in a message on Armudic, call me, or mail them to me before the 1st of each month. Remember that if you don't contribute, then you can't have your name published in the newsletter. Send all scores & hints to: Jay Gerber, 3639 N. 36th Road, Arlington, VA 22207.

Below are just a few games to start out with. If you want to add a game you are particularly good at, feel free to.

Top Game Scores for December, 1984

(please try not to laugh to hard)

Game	Player	Score
Pacman	Jay Gerber	56,420
Ms. Pacman	" "	71,290
Donkey Kong	" "	120,400
Don.Kong Jr	" "	50,600
Miner 2049er	" "	37,815
Jumpman	" "	54,700
Jumpman Jr.	" "	39,000
Lode Runner	" "	Lvl 97
Seven Cities	" "	1529

Conventions for scores are as follows: Pacman, Ms. Pacman, Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr are all played on the default difficulty level. Miner 2049er is started on Zone 1, Level 1. Jumpman is played as Grand Loop, not Randomizer option. Jumpman Jr. is played at speed 4. Lode Runner is played with the default number of lives and is recorded as highest level achieved out of 150 possible. Seven Cities of Gold is the year in which you attain a rating of Viceroy.

An Evening with Leonard Tramiel

[On October 2, Leonard Tramiel met with the San Leandro California Atari User Group. Minutes of that meeting were placed on Compuserve. I first saw them in the North Texas Atari Computer Team's newsletter, Iceberg, (November 1984) and thought Current Notes readers would also be interested in the report. Ed.]

As I sit down to write this, I have a feeling it will turn into quite a long file. Please take the time to read it through. There was quite a lot of fascinating information passed along during the meeting and I feel it will be useful to all Atari users. You may want to take some of it with a grain of salt -- if you know what I mean...

The long awaited appearance of Mr. Leonard Tramiel, V.P. of the new Atari Corp. and head of the Software Division, was our main speaker for the evening. I say main because we also had another very important speaker that was not scheduled.

The president of the club, Trey Pitruzzello introduced Mr. Tramiel, stating that Mr. Tramiel started his computer career when in Junior High School by taking a Fortran class. This led to an interest in Radio Astronomy and the electronics needed in the field. He later was part of the design team of the Pet computer.

He confessed straight off that he did not have a speech ready and so took questions from the floor the entire time he was at the podium.

The first round of questions centered around the rumored 16-bit machine Atari was supposed to have in the works. Mr. Tramiel stated that the machine is indeed real and told us to look to the CES in January. He did not want to answer questions relating to the specifics of the machine. He did indicate that Atari will sell the computer separately. No screen, disk drive(s) or printer will be included.

Atari wants to keep the price as low as possible. He said the machine would be made available through large retail chains like Sears, Penney's and Ward's. He said it would not be compatible with the older Atari machines nor would it be an IBM look-a-like. He claimed it would take the "next step" in high-end and personal computers, including the new MAC.

Members were wondering what type of software the new machine would be capable of running. Mr. Tramiel felt he could not answer this fully because it would lead to an idea about the amount of memory the machine had, but he did say that the hardware of the machine would be able to handle Lotus 1-2-3, Symphony, Framework and so on, but that all new programs would have to be written because of the new OS the machine has. He also stated that machines currently running this sort of complex software were being very wasteful of memory and were extremely disk intensive. About the only thing Mr. Tramiel would say for sure about the hardware was that the Amiga chips would not be part of the new machine. He did say that Atari was pursuing the rights to the chips through the courts.

Another area of concern by the members was the fate of the 800 and 800 XL machines. Mr. Tramiel said that the 800 XL would still be produced after the current stock was

sold out. He said that there would be internal changes made to the machine so that it would be more reliable and cheaper to produce. He said Atari still plans to market new software for the XL. The new software would be compatible with the old 800 as far as the old 800 is compatible with the XL.

Who will be producing the new computer and the 800 XL? And what about keeping up with the (hopefully) large demand considering the number of layoffs? The old Atari had a huge amount of waste. The lay-offs were done not by simply striking names randomly from a list but by careful consideration of what was needed to bring the company back to a profitable state. Atari plans to do all its own manufacturing.

In the area of education, Mr. Tramiel said there were no special plans to offer reduced price packages. He felt the price was so low that an institution would be hard pressed to find a better price-performance ratio. The same was true for users groups. He said that if a group buy were made through a retail outlet, then maybe something could be arranged, but that nothing could be had from Atari direct. There were no plans for a special education division in the software department either, but the area would not be neglected. One item of software Mr. Tramiel did confirm was the Plato Package. He said it should be out sometime near Christmas.

In the area of service, Mr. Tramiel said that there would still be the 1,500 or so authorized service centers but no "open door" policy would exist like the old Atari had. He did not want people to go out and buy parts and make their own machines. He did say that all information needed by third-party manufacturers would be made available to them as soon as the new machine is released.

Mr. Tramiel stated that there was currently a problem in warranty service, especially for machines purchased in the past three months, but the problems were being looked at and there will be a solution (hopefully) soon. He did take down the names and phone numbers of several members that were having problems.

In the area of user support, Mr. Tramiel stated that the current plans are to organize the larger Atari user groups into a sort of "clearing house" and to distribute information and public domain programs through them. He also said a newsletter from Atari was in the works. One member remarked that if the new machine was so exotic, wouldn't it be necessary for Atari to have a direct line of communication for the end user, perhaps in the form of an 800 number. Mr. Tramiel replied that this type of thing was extremely expensive and was not planned. He felt that vastly improved documentation was one answer, in addition to using the user groups as he already stated. He also felt that a truly advanced machine did not need such a line. If a person needed to have someone hold his hand to get the machine turned on, then the user groups

were the best way to go. A one-on-one tutoring session could be had in this way and this was something only user groups could provide. He said Atari was planning an extremely active user group support policy.

In the area of games and game machines, Mr. Tramiel did not know if the 7800 prosystem would ever be produced. He felt the thrust of the new Atari Corp. would be in the area of computers and not toys. He did say that arrangements were being made so Atari Coin-Op games could be made available to the computer owner. (The Coin-Op division still belongs to Warner.) He also said that contracts were being renegotiated with third party publishers so there would be continued support for both the new machine and the 800 XL. Lucasfilm was specifically mentioned and the answer was that conversations were going on with Lucasfilm.

One bold member stated near the end of the discussion that it seemed that the new Atari had plans of packaging the new machines as if they were toasters and that there would be many problems as far as user support and service. "How could refrigerator salesman effectively sell a computer?" Mr. Tramiel replied that Atari was trying to get the new machines out as cost effectively as possible and to this end they felt the large retail outlets were the best way to go. He said that user support, as currently planned, would be through a sort of "clearing house of information" with the current user groups, and that Atari would support these fully.

Our second speaker was from OSS. Mr. Bill Wilkinson was attending the meeting to hear what Mr. Tramiel had to

say, and after Mr. Tramiel left, Bill gave a short demonstration of some of the routines available in the new BASIC XL TOOL KIT.

One of the most interesting things available in it was a run-time package for BASIC XL. If you write a program using the more advanced commands in BASIC XL, then your program will not work with Atari 8K BASIC. With this new run-time package, you can give (or sell) your BASIC XL programs to someone and they will be able to run the program even if they don't have the BASIC XL cartridge.

Another file in the Tool Kit adds commands to BASIC XL. Such key words as PROCEDURE, EXIT, LOCAL, SORT and CALL are added. It looks like it works somewhat like the extension diskette that comes with the Atari MICROSOFT BASIC II cartridge. With these commands, Bill showed a short program that demonstrated recursion to figure the factorial of an integer. All in all, quite an interesting talk for the BASIC programmer.

Bill noted some concern by several 800/800 XL owners that their computers were now obsolete. He mentioned that OSS has been doing some testing with the 800 XL and the parallel bus. They have been able to get a data transmission rate to a hard disk of about 30K bytes per second. This means that the RAM available to a user with the proper configuration of hardware and software is as large as the hard disk storage area -- up to around 20M bytes!

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* * * CLUB NEWS * * *

===== AURA

Atari Users Regional Association
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AURA Minutes: November 7

By Rochelle Follender

Demonstrations: 1) EPYX preview disk lets you play short versions of six popular games. 2) Public domain program which demonstrates sound digitizer technique. 3) RELAX from SYNAPSE (\$79) which monitors user's muscle tension. 4) PARTY QUIX (\$65), a four-player multiple choice trivia game. 5) INFOCOM sample pack (\$7.95) which shows four programs and has money back offer. 6) WRISTREST (\$30), an appliance which is added to computer to alleviate wrist fatigue when doing a lot of typing.

Discussion: NOVATARI seminars will be held at Fairfax H.S. as well as Sterling Park. ZAYRES has excellent prices for the 1050 and Atariwriter. Suggest you may be able to prolong life of printer ribbons by using a stamp pad re-inker. Relative advantages of Textwizard and Letterwizard. Summary of articles from current Byte, including Soviet computer and EPSON JX-80 color printer. Prices of disks are falling dramatically. Various screen dump programs which enable dumping of graphics are available. ComputerKids open house for ATARI users is November 12 from 6:30 - 8:00.

President's Report

By Bruce McLendon

Our December meeting is December 5 and, like November's, will feature spontaneous demonstrations from members in the audience and retail distributors.

I am still in need of a nominating committee to select officers for next year. If you would like to serve on the committee or be an officer (no officers, no club), please contact me. If we do not get candidates in time, we may have to postpone the elections a month.

Dues for next year are being set at \$15 which will include a subscription to Current Notes. Make your checks payable to AURA. You can fill in the membership form provided in this issue of Current Notes.

Mail your checks to AURA, P.O. Box 7761, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Note that this address is AURA's general correspondence address. Anyone who wishes to contact me or any AURA officer may do so through this PO box number.



===== CPM

Capital ATR Peripheral Micro-Users Group
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The next ATR meeting is scheduled for January 22, 1985, at 6:30 p.m. (the fourth Tuesday of the month). There will be no meeting in December 1984. Notice of ATR meetings will appear monthly in the Washington Post Business Computer Calendar published in the Monday Business Section.

November Meeting

The main topic of the November ATR meeting was Telecommunications and Bulletin Board Systems, presented by Frank Jones and Frank Huband. This was to provide members with information about the initiation of our own bulletin board - the Capital ATR BBS. (See the discussion below for more information.)

ATR Micro-Users dues for the 1985 year (\$3) were collected as well as subscriptions for Current Notes (\$12). Also discussed was the current financial status of the Group. Essentially we go into 1985 with a very small surplus. It is intended to keep on hand only enough money to cover essential needs, such as monthly mailings and BBS expenses.

DT-80 cartridges were distributed to those members who participated in the initial group buy. Others who are interested in obtaining a DT-80 cartridge should contact Bob Kelly. A second group buy will be sent in when enough orders have been received, probably mid-December.

Capital ATR BBS

The ATR Users Group now has a complete inventory (97 disks) of CP/M public domain programs. The disks were obtained courtesy of SWP, Inc. This library will form the basis of a CP/M Bulletin Board system to be run for the ATR Users by Frank Huband (Sysop), the originator of the ATARI ARMUDIC BBS. The CP/M BBS was downloaded by Bob Kelly and Frank Jones from the Austin ATR Special Interest Group, courtesy of Marc Newman. Frank Jones is currently reviewing the BBS documentation and making some improvements and enhancements to the system. It is hoped that the BBS will be on the air by mid-December. The Capital ATR BBS should be available 24 hours a day, less short periods for maintenance. More details about the system configuration, storage capacity, modem baud rate, and telephone number will be provided to ATR members in a special mailing.

Other Items

ATR800 owners interested in the SWP CoPower MS/DOS add-on board should be aware that it now comes in two flavors: the standard model using 64K chips and a new version that uses 256K chips. The advantage of the 256K chip version

(Continued on Page 28)

* * * CLUB NEWS * * *

NOVATARI

Northern Virginia Atari Users Group

Novatari Minutes (Nov 11)

Jim Stevenson

Reports. NPX: Gene Schimpf reported that two disk submissions were going through the review cycle and at least four more were about to be submitted. Given the competition from the latest releases from the Novatari Library and the seasonal sales on commercial software, there is a fair amount of pressure that the first NPX releases be of comparable quality.

Novatari Library: Evan Brooks introduced the six new disk releases for the Library: four are games and two are music. (See library listings below). Evan demonstrated one of the game disks (#3 Simulations) and a music disk which used the Advanced Music System (AMS) autoplacer to play several selections, including the theme from Knight Rider. He also showed how the menu (supplied by Tim Kilby) lets you access documentation on how to run the games and programs on each disk. To kick off the new releases, one of the Library disks was offered as a door prize. It was won by John Marible.

Novatari Seminar Series: Marty Vallery reported on a successful launching of the seminar series with Tim Kilby's course on assembly language. (See report below.) More people were interested in the course than could attend last Saturday, so Tim has offered to repeat the session at a later date. Marty announced upcoming seminars: Telecommunications (next week), Spreadsheets, Intro to Basic (based on text, Inside Atari Basic), Intro to Disk Drives and DOS, Word Processing, Basic Sound and Basic Graphics. Convey your interest to her about these topics, or the courses will have to be canceled for lack of enrollment.

Education: Diana Burdt discussed the continuing need for parents to try to contact schools about setting up computer clubs. They can offer support to teachers or parent aids. Any software the club might want to give to the schools would have to go through a newly formed Fairfax County Software Evaluation Committee. Hopefully at the February Novatari meeting there will be a representative of Fairfax County Schools to discuss the role of computers in the school system.

President's Report: Joe Waters discussed how the club dues of \$15 for next year would be partitioned between Current Notes and club expenses (such as the rental for the meeting place). He also announced that Synapse was offering clubs special discounts on the Syn... series. Finally the BBS ARMUDIC would be revived by next month.

Door prizes: The membership-list prize of *Niner 2049er* went to Terry White (a new member this meeting!), and the
(Continued on Page 28)

WACUG

Woodbridge Atari Users' Group

President's Report

Jack Holtzhauer

During the November meeting WACUG's membership elected a new board of directors (identified above). And, more importantly, made several decisions regarding the group's fiscal prospects for the forthcoming year.

First of all, the membership expressed a most positive response to this publication - Current Notes, and overwhelmingly adopted a motion to continue our support of this endeavor.

Secondly, we adopted a new dues structure. New members will continue to be admitted at last year's membership fee of \$10.00, plus \$1.00 monthly dues. New members under the age of nineteen may continue to join at half-rate (\$7.50 + 50 cents dues), but because of the costs involved, will not receive the newsletter.

Current members may extend their membership for the forthcoming year at a cost of \$25.00, with a \$1.00 rebate for each meeting attended (max of \$5.00 rebate). Current junior members may extend at a cost of \$7.50, but without the newsletter.

Members now on the rolls but not wishing to extend membership for the next year may elect one of two other options - continued access to the group's library at a fee of \$10.00 or library access and newsletter subscription at a cost of \$17.00.

Even though nearly half of our last meeting was devoted to the above business considerations, we still had time for that which is closest to our hearts - software and hardware demos.

John Linton of L&Y Electronics showed off Newell Industries new *RAMRODXL* board for the 800XL which provides a new switchable operating system, a FASTCHIP floating-point math sub-routine, and the OMNIMONXL resident monitor for assembly language programmers. John's board was also equipped with the extra-cost OMNIVIEW chip which provides an outstanding 80-column monitor display and, with some patches, is said to be compatible with *Data Perfect* and *Letter Perfect*.

And, speaking of *Data Perfect*, Cecil Alton demonstrated this database program and compared its features with *SYNFILE+*'s, demoed by Joe Waters of NOVATARI at our October meeting.

Finally, we demoed a new computer trivia game (*PG - PARTY QUIZ*), sent to WACUG unsolicited by SUNCOM Software. This was the hit of the evening, especially when one of our
(Continued on Page 28)

* * * CLUB NEWS * * *

MACUS (Continued)

young half-price junior members tripled the scores of three adult trivia experts (who shall forever go un-named). This system, which retails at \$79.95, might prove to be a nifty Christmas gift. In any case, we successfully raffled it off and made thirty-eight bucks for the group's kitty. Unfortunately, I won. So we'll raffle it off again next month. This, I hope, could go on and on.

Next months agenda - - our delayed video-tape presentation on flight simulators; another video-tape on the PLATO system by our group's founder - Dave Stott; and some new two-to-a-disk games from SYNAPSE just in time for Santa. Why not drop by. We might even have some egg-nog, or whatever!

CPM (Continued)

is that it can accommodate approximately one megabyte of central memory storage. The 256K version cost about \$650, a premium of about \$150 more than the standard version. Call SWP for more information.

If you obtain new CP/M public domain software for the ATR please send it to Bob Kelly or Bob Danson for inclusion in our disk library.

Finally, The ATR Micro Users extend wishes to everyone for a Happy Holiday season and we hope to see you at the January meeting.

Novatari (Continued)

attendees list prize of *Rainbow Walker* went to Harry Newman.

Program. Jay Gerber presented this month's program with a tutorial on the use of *Atari's Music Composer System (MCS)*. He showed how efforts on MCS could be enhanced by running them through Ken Collier's *Music Synthesizer* program published in *Analog #15* (January 1984). Jay also demonstrated *Music Construction Set* and the new *Advanced Music System II*. In each case, Jay showed the versatility offered by the programs by playing some of his own arrangements all of which were truly outstanding. Many thanks to Jay for offering one of the finer Novatari programs this year!

Novatari Seminar Series

Marty Vallery

After a bit of a slow start, the Novatari seminar series seems to have caught fire with the class presented by Tim

Kilby. We'd like to thank tim for his excellent presentation on November 10th on the subject of Assembly Language. We thank tim for taking the time to develop the manual and creating an assembly language disk which he offered to the students who attended the session. I am especially grateful to him for presenting this complex subject in such an understandable way. Those of us who attended gained much and look forward to other classes taught by Tim in the future.

There were many people who initially expressed interest in the assembly language seminar who were unable to attend. Tim is willing to repeat this class at a later date, perhaps in February or March.

Bruce Blake also did a first-rate job in the Telecommunications Seminar offered at Fairfax HS on November 17. Bruce, who is the new co-sysop on *ARNUDIC*, prepared the communications programs for the Novatari telecom disk and explained the use of the programs in detail. Reports of the spread sheet seminar presented by Joe Waters in November will be in the next issue of *Current Notes* as this seminar was scheduled after the deadline for this newsletter.

Several new seminars will be offered in January and February. The instructors, times, and places for these seminars will be announced at the January Novatari meeting in January. Six-hour courses cost \$20 for members and \$30 for non-members. Two-hour seminars cost \$5 for members and \$8 for non-members. If you are interested in attending one, you can reserve a spot by sending your check to Marty Vallery, 5002 De Quincey Dr., Fairfax, VA 22032.

Intro to ATARI BASIC, 3 2-hr sessions, Jan 17, 24, 31.

Intro to Disk Drives, 2-hrs, 19 Jan

Word Processing, 2-hrs, 16 Feb

SOUND in ATARI BASIC, 2-hrs, 20 Feb

BASIC Graphics, 2-hrs, 27 Feb

Intro to Assembly Language, 2 3-hr sessions, date TBA.

Have a safe and happy holiday season. See you again in the New Year - 1985!

NOVATARI PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Gene Schimpf

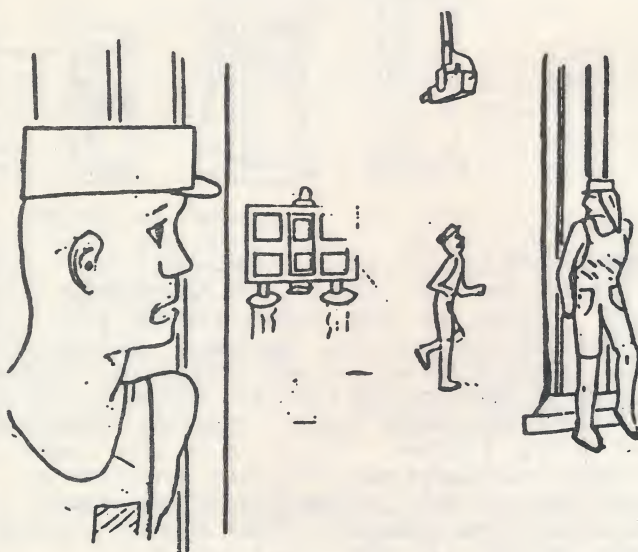
DECEMBER 9: What to Buy for Christmas. Users are encouraged to share their recommendations.

JANUARY 13: Debbie Bunch, a representative from the *RESTON COMPUTER GROUP*, will talk about their new ATARI books and software and also demonstrate their popular *MOVIE MAKER* and *PAINT* programs.

FEBRUARY 10: ATARI in the Schools. A Progress Report.



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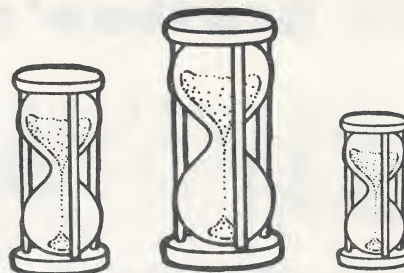
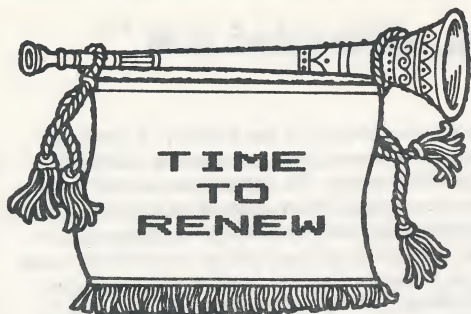
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For most Current Notes readers, membership in your respective ATARI User Group expires in December. Your subscription to Current Notes expires with your club membership. **This is the last issue you will receive.** If you would like to continue receiving Current Notes, you will have to renew your membership. Membership in any of the clubs associated with Current Notes may include a subscription to this newsletter. Information on club dues and where to send your renewal checks is provided on the inside back cover of this issue. Fill out the form below and send your check to the club representative of your choice. (Note: if you do not want to cut-up your issue of Current Notes, feel free to make a copy of the form and send in the copy.) The first issue of Volume 5 will be in February (Current Notes is not published in January or August). If you want to receive the February issue, your renewal must be in before mid-January! By the way, the February issue will present first-hand accounts of the new ATARI computers since at least two Current Notes writers will be on the scene.

Individuals who live outside of the Washington Metropolitan area may subscribe to Current Notes for \$12.00 per year. Send checks, payable to Current Notes, to Joe Waters, 122 N. Johnson Road, Sterling, VA 22170.



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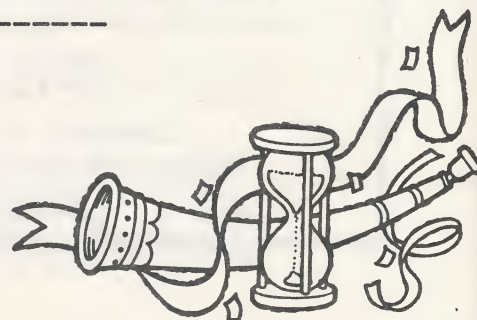
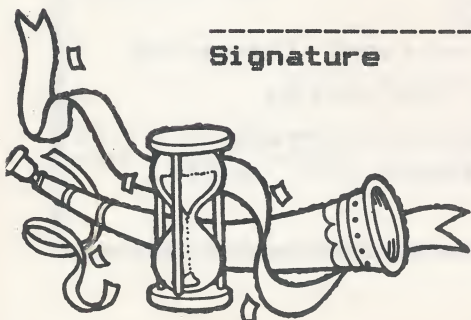
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Washington Area ATARI USER GROUPS

A.U.R.A.

Atari Users' Regional Association

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Meetings: 1st Wednesday of every month, 7:00 pm, Room One, Long Branch Public Library, Garland Avenue, East Silver Spring, MD. Take the Beltway (I-495) to Exit 29-B, South University Blvd. East, (Route 193). Follow University Blvd. East to 2nd light (Piney Branch Road), turn right on Piney Branch Road, continue to 2nd light (Arless Street), turn right on Arless past the apartments to Garland Avenue, turn right on Garland. The Long Branch Library is on the corner. Park in the library's lot.

New Members: Dues are \$15/year (includes subscription to Current Notes). Mail check, payable to AURA, to Treasurer, AURA, P.O. Box 7761, Silver Spring, MD 20907.

CPM: Capital ATR

Peripheral Micro-Users Group

President..... Bob Kelly. 301/839-7377
 Programs..... John Lauer 703/698-1243
 Communications Bob Danson 703/780-0758

Meetings: (NOTE: No meeting in December) 4th Tuesday of every month, 6:30 pm, Author Room, Public Library, Oxon Hill, Maryland. The Library is located near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge just off the Washington beltway. Take the beltway to Maryland exit #4 East (St. Barnabas Road). St. Barnabas Road merges with Oxon Hill Rd.; proceed 1/4 mile and Library will be on your left. The Library telephone number is 301-839-2400.

New Members: Dues are \$15/year (includes a subscription to Current Notes) or \$3/year (no subscription). Send check, payable to John Lauer, to John Lauer, 8127 Heatherton Lane, Apt. 204, Vienna, VA 22180.

DC GROUP:

National Capital Atari Users' Group

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 Disk Lib... Jay Gerber..... 703/525-9715
 Tape Lib... Bruce Ingalls.. 703/430-3287

Meetings. 3rd Tuesday of every month, 5:30-8:30, Room 543, National Science Foundation offices, 1800 G. Street NW, Washington, DC. The closest subway stop is Farragut West, on the Blue and Orange lines. Take the 18th Street exit, and walk south (against the flow of traffic) down 18th Street for three blocks to G street. The building, on the corner of 18th and G, can be identified by a sign for the Madison National Bank on the corner. Parking is

available in the building for a fee. The front entrance is on the west side of 18th street, between F and G.

New Members: Dues are \$15 (includes subscription to Current Notes) or \$5 (no subscription). Send checks, payable to National Capital Atari Users Group, to Allen Lerman, 14905 Waterway Drive, Rockville, MD 20853.

NOVATARI:

Northern Virginia Atari Users Group

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 Treasurer..... Curtis Sandler. 734-9533
 Secretary..... Jim Stevenson.. 378-4093
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 Training..... Marty Vallery.. 425-6832
 Education..... Diana Burdt.... 425-5073
 Disk Librarian. M. Evan Brooks. 354-4482
 Asst. Disk Lib. Frank Budelman. 750-0079

Meetings: 2nd Sunday of each month, 5:30-8:30, Greenbriar Community Center, 4615 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly, VA. Stringfellow Road, (Route 645), runs south from US 50 about 2 1/2 miles west of Fair Oaks Shopping Mall (I-66 and 50). The Greenbriar Community Center is 1.4 miles south of 50. Small parking lot in front, larger one just north of Center. 5 to 6:30: general discussion, product sales, ad hoc demos; 6:30 -7:00 business meeting; 7:00-7:30 product demos, door prizes; 7:30-8:30 program.

New Members: Dues are \$15 (includes subscription to Current Notes) or \$5 (no subscription). Send checks, payable to Novatari, to Curtis Sandler, 7213 Idylwood Ct., Falls Church, VA 22043.

W.A.C.U.G.:

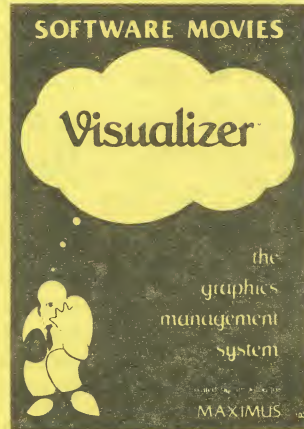
Woodbridge Atari Users Group

President.... Jack Holtzhauer. 670-6475
 First VP..... Marc Hubbard.... 371-9561
 VP-Education. Tim Mitchell.... 221-7722
 VP-Liaison... Cecil Alton..... 670-4842
 Secretary.... Mike Stringer... 786-8755
 Treasurer.... John Thomas..... 670-8645
 Librarian.... Arnie Turk..... 670-2547

Meetings: Monthly, 7 - 10 pm, Community Room, Potomac Branch, Prince William County Library, Optiz Blvd., Woodbridge, VA. Meeting dates: Tue, DEC 18; Mon, JAN 14; Wed, FEB 27; Wed, MAR 27; Wed, APR 24; Wed, MAY 15; and Wed, JUN 19. Entering Woodbridge from either North or South on Route #1, proceed to the intersection of Route #1 and Optiz Blvd. (adjacent to Woodbridge Lincoln-Mercury). Turn West onto Optiz and take first left turn into the library's parking lot. The Community Room is located to your left immediately upon entering the main building.

New Members: Dues are \$10/year plus \$1 monthly dues (includes subscription to Current Notes). Send checks, payable to WACUG, to Mike Stringer, 709 Rutherford Dr., Fredericksburg, VA 22401.

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