

Volume 4, Number 8

October, 1984

CURRENT NOTES

The Magazine of the Washington Area

Northern Virginia
ATARI Users Group

Atari Users
Regional Association



Woodbridge
ATARI Users Group

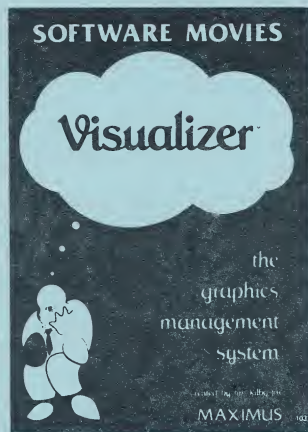
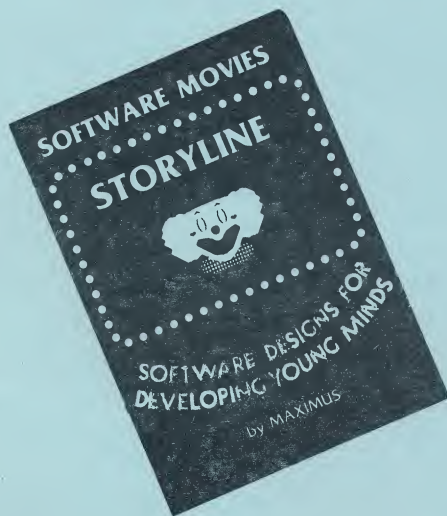
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EDITORIAL:

I am delighted to welcome the Woodbridge Atari Users Group to the Current Notes family. They have helped to boost the Current Notes distribution this month to well over 400 club members. With consignment sales and exchanges with other user groups, our total distribution will exceed 700 copies -- a record number.

The size of this issue of Current Notes also represents a record 32 pages. Indeed, I had such a large number of excellent contributions (two from the new Woodbridge Group) that I had no room for a review of SynFile+ that I had hoped to put in this issue. That will appear next month.

We also have a record number of advertisers. We could not produce Current Notes in its present form without help from advertising. Support our advertisers and mention that you saw their ad in Current Notes.

One final note. In two more months, the Current Notes distribution list will drop back down to zero. All memberships in DC, NOVATARI, and AURA end with December. It's time for each club to start thinking about next year's dues and whether or not they want to continue with this publication. Proposals should be ready for the November issue so the membership will know what it costs to renew and how to do it.


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, \$40; half page, \$25; quarter page, \$15; 1/6 page, \$10. Discounts are available for multiple ads. Submit photo-ready copy to the editor. Deadline date for both articles and advertisements is the 12th day of the preceeding month.

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ATARI SCUTTLEBITS

Bob Kelly

Well, the summer is over and everyone has brought their computers back from the beach. Now we can complete those programs we thought of finishing during vacation. It is also the time of year when new hardware and software purchases are given serious consideration. Prior to this prime buying season, let's take a look at what's going on in the electronics industry since some of us probably lost touch over the last several months.

ATARI. ATARI under Jack Tramiel has been making headlines. Three items in particular deserve discussion:

A. ATARI's Vice President for marketing, James Copland, stated that ATARI plans to introduce new computers. Copland was also quoted as saying that ATARI intends to keep making the 800XL. The new computers will have from two to four times the computing power of the 800XL. Simply put, 16 and 32 bit machines are in the works. According to reports in the Wall Street Journal, ATARI is likely to follow one of two options. First, ATARI may distribute, under license, another 16 bit machine. ATARI is evidently talking to a number of Japanese computer firms as well as the Mindset Computer Corporation (a great graphics machine). The second option under consideration is the introduction of a 32 bit machine and the upgrading of the 800XL to a 16 bit machine via an expansion box. ATARI is currently experiencing cash flow problems and reportedly has asked Warner Communications for some financial assistance. Improved cash flow is critical at this juncture if ATARI is to develop and market new products. In my opinion, the latter option would seem to be the preferred course for ATARI given the installed customer base willing to upgrade their 800XL's which in turn generates the immediate cash flow required for R&D (remember an expansion box was shown at the summer electronics show).

B. ATARI has filed a rather straight forward lawsuit against the AMIGA CORPORATION whose new computer was the "hit" of the summer electronics show. ATARI claims that earlier in the year they advanced \$500,000 to AMIGA to develop three integrated circuits. AMIGA then broke off talks with ATARI prior to ATARI's planned purchase of stock in AMIGA and returned the \$500,000. At that time AMIGA reportedly informed ATARI that it "would not be able to complete development of the circuits" (Electronic News, 8/20/84). Upon learning that AMIGA

was talking to its competitors, ATARI filed suit for \$50 million plus other damages. The suit requests that the three chips in question be transferred to ATARI and to enjoin AMIGA from delivering the chips to a third party. Guess what happens next? Less than one week later, COMMODORE bought AMIGA. COMMODORE is not named in ATARI's suit. As you are probably aware, COMMODORE earlier filed suit against several former employees who now work for ATARI, claiming they stole secrets related to the design of new computers.

It should be interesting to see what ensues from this suit. If COMMODORE wins outright and quickly, they certainly will have an edge over ATARI. If, on the other hand, ATARI prevails, a new computer based upon the chips in question is in the cards. The minimum strategy from ATARI's perspective is quite frankly to delay and frustrate early introduction of any machine based on these chips by COMMODORE. As of early September, no injunction delaying COMMODORE has been issued by the court.

C. A very interesting item was a short news flash in InfoWorld. It simply stated that ATARI has agreed to buy up to \$130.5 million in disk drives from TANDON Corporation. According to the report, rumor has it that ATARI bought the drives to compensate TANDON for a warehouse full of computers they no longer want. Are these the MS-DOS 1450XL's which were to be introduced in the fall? An interesting puzzle, no? Deep-Disk has been brought in to investigate.

IBM PC AT and PCjr. IBM recently introduced several new products and networking concepts. I will concentrate only upon the new IBM PC AT 5170 and the PCjr. in this article.

PC AT (Advanced Technology). The new IBM PCs are available in two models. The basic system (Model 68) lists for \$4,000 and an enhanced version (Model 99) is \$5,800. Both models include: a high performance 16/24-bit Intel 80286 microprocessor that, at 6.0 MHz, operates two to three times faster than the 8088 used in other PCs; a floppy disk drive with storage of 1.2Mb (megabytes) (versus current 360K); a clock/calendar with battery backup; an improved keyboard; a keylock to prevent unauthorized use of the system; and seven additional expansion slots. The basic system comes with 256Kb and may be expanded to 640Kb. The enhanced model comes with 512K of RAM - expandable to 3Mb RAM, yes megabytes, and includes a 20Mb hard disk drive and a combination Serial/Parallel adapter. An additional 20Mb hard disk can be added for a total storage capacity of 41.2 Mb. (that's nearly 450 ATARI single density diskettes).

The monitor and PC DOS 3.0 operating system add about another \$600.00 to total cost. IBM with this equipment has significantly advanced its capabilities and the remainder of the market will have to play catch-up.

While the enhanced system is expensive, it is a professional system that appears destined to dominate the market for the next several years. However, programs that are sensitive to different clock speeds and run on 8088 chip will not run on the PC AT, e.g. Flight Simulator. Another shortcoming besides compatibility is display characteristics. With only the monochrome adaptor board, the PC AT will not display graphs at all.

PCjr. The PCjr. received an overdue facelifting with improved keyboard, expanded RAM memory, and the provision for additional disk drives.

The technical nature of the improvements is not, however, what I wish to discuss. With the introduction of the PC AT and IBM already marketing the XT, PC, and PCjr., the field is rather crowded. The price differential and capabilities of the PC versus the PCjr. have narrowed as the jr. has been improved and the PC has dropped in price. IBM has slanted its advertising for the jr. even more to the business market, so direct competition has increased. Personally, I don't know why anyone would want to buy a jr. for business purposes when the PC is available for a couple of hundred dollars extra. Well, the poor consumer who is always maligned and never makes the right choice, may have figured it out in this instance. At the beginning of 1984, the jr. was projected to sell upwards of 500,000 units. Currently, market analysts believe IBM will be lucky to sell 175,000 units. In my opinion, the IBM pricing policy is wrong in that the PCjr. and the PC lead to customer confusion. Many buyers "vote with their feet" by going to another manufacturer. Look for IBM to correct this flaw. They should only have a maximum of three machines below \$4,500. Currently, they have four. One or two machines will be dropped or even combined in order to more clearly target various market segments and income groups.

I hate to say "I told you" the market was overreacting to the introduction of the PCjr., but look at my article last February in Current Notes.

Computer Magazine Drop-outs. Several additional magazines have ceased publication or curtailed operations. Last month I pointed out two that were ATARI-related. This month all are non-ATARI:

1. Softalk: All operations have ceased. Softalk published magazines for the IBM PC, Apple II, and

MacIntosh Computers. Subscribers to these magazines totalled 55,000, 150,000, and 30,000 respectively.

2. Color Computer: Radio Shack color computer publication with 60,000 readers. October is its last issue.

3. PC/PCjr and jr.: C.W. Communications cited the shift in market emphasis by IBM to business use as the reason for folding jr. Compute's decision to drop PC and PCjr. is unknown. (I bet we won't see an editorial on this. I get tired of reading Compute! editorials that constantly point out circulation growth).

4. List: Cut back publication to a quarterly basis.

Software Sales. Software sales are down. Projections for business software sales have been reduced by 20 percent for 1984 and for home sales by up to 50 percent. Some analysts believe this is a temporary phenomena and that sales will pick up later in the year. My own judgement is that while the Christmas season will spur sales, the industry once again overestimated customer demand. Further, let's put it bluntly, there is a lot of junk passing for commercial products on the shelves.

If you shop carefully, good buys on the best software can be had now. If you wait till November, inventories are most likely to be drawn down on the most desirable selections and prices will rise significantly towards full list price. See you next month with hopefully some very interesting information on ATARI's future plans.

=====

Damaged Keyboards?

=====

Atari 800 Keyboards damaged by too much Defender playing (Inoperative spacebar or any other key) do not have to be replaced.

STS Video, an Atari Service Center, can repair them. The charge for this is \$25 which includes testing and shipping. Customers should remove the keyboard and send them with a check or money order for \$25.00 to STS Video, 1073 W. Broad St., Falls Church, VA 22046. Customers should not try to fix keyboards themselves, it will make the repair job more difficult.

STS Video will be happy to sell any parts for Atari Computers or games. Customers should call (703) 237-0558 to place orders. Parts will be shipped UPS C.O.D.

Battle Bytes:**War At Sea - Part II****By M. Evan Brooks**

Carrier Force is SSI's opus covering four separate and distinct naval (i.e. carrier) battles of World War II -- Midway, Coral Sea, Santa Cruz and the Solomons. This review will in no way attempt to review any scenario other than that of Midway; this reviewer has spent over one hundred hours analyzing the simulation herein, and very truthfully, time constraints prohibit analysis into the other campaigns.

FIRST, this game is not for the beginner or intermediate player. It is designed for the advanced player; the multiple actions and strategic considerations virtually mandate a deep knowledge or desire to learn about World War II carrier battles. The game is on an operational scale, with ships and aircraft being represented individually.

Having stated that this game is not for the beginner or intermediate player, I will further state that the Midway teaches the wrong lessons wrongly applied. Discussions with the design staff at SSI have revealed that Midway is not a balanced scenario; the Japanese (when played by the computer) have a tremendous advantage. The SSI staff feels that Santa Cruz is a much better balanced scenario; numerous friends who have played the game swear by Coral Sea. However, most gamers will buy this product because Midway is the naval battle of WWII. My hesitation in recommending this game is the purely incorrect tactical decisions that the computer requires for one to achieve success. While my conclusions apply only to Midway, if the decision making process is in error there, can the rest of the program be different?

My conclusions are based on historical readings (cf. Prange, Miracle at Midway; Fuller, Military History of the Western World, Vol. 3; Toland, But Not in Shame) and discussions with naval experts (including one naval captain [ret.] who was physically present at Midway).

To begin the scenario, and more important, to win, one is dependent on the weather. Carriers must launch their planes into the wind to maximize launch strength. Therefore, when the scenario opens at 0500, the wind is NE. If the wind does not switch to SW by 0600, my strong recommendation is to reboot the game; any future chance of victory has been literally blown to the winds. This wind shift in the proper direction (which did occur historically) occurs c. 40% of the time. Thus, CRITICISM #1: the scenario is dependent upon *deus ex machina*.

After preparing CAP (combat air patrols) and various search missions (by the way, documentation is skimpy, and even a veteran wargamer will have to experiment with landing planes and learning by hard experience when they will ditch into the ocean), one seeks to close with the Japanese main carrier force (but not too close; if a naval gun battle occurs, the Americans do as they would have historically, i.e. they lose). It is important to remember what actually happened: the Japanese launched their first strike at Midway; needing a second strike to reduce the island, the second wave was rearmed and on deck when the American force struck, seemingly out of nowhere. A basic reason for the Japanese lack of information about the American fleet was that a search plane was late in taking off from its ship; by fortuitous chance, this plane had the sector in which the American task force was located. Lucky? Obviously, but the Miracle at Midway was dependent upon luck. Carrier Force does not have that luck. In discussions with the SSI staff, they stated that the Japanese search planes will find the American task force 90% of the time (this writer thinks that this may be an underestimate); historically, the Japanese search planes were literally blasted into launch status by black powder charge. When black powder is wet (which can happen quite often at sea), its efficiency is reduced. While Japanese search was normally good, the propulsion method often did fail. The simulation does not recognize this, thereby allowing the Japanese to strike both Midway and the carriers. Furthermore, the Japanese search is incredibly effective; as each dawn occurs, Japanese search planes will ALWAYS find the American task forces.

Usually, Midway is hit at 0800; insure that your fighter aircraft are waiting, and that the runways are clear. The following hour, a task force is hit, with the usual result being the loss of at least one carrier. Again, discussions with the SSI staff revealed that the Japanese strike is one massive strike. They can only attack one task force, usually the largest. Therefore, the simulation solution is to split each carrier into a separate task force, thereby minimizing the risk (I recommend one carrier, two cruisers and three destroyers per task force; send the surplus south to attempt interception of the transports). This solution works in game terms; however, it has the historical accuracy of George Custer at the Little Big Horn. One does not split carrier forces into penny packets. Historically, the Yorktown was a separate task force only because it was undergoing repairs and could not sail timely. Even more important, with at least two carriers per task force, one carrier can drop out temporarily to launch planes and then catch up to the force; with only one carrier, every time a launch dictated a change in direction, the entire

force would have to shift, with an even greater loss of time. Thus, the simulation rewards tactical incompetence.

How can one win? With difficulty, and enough luck to insure your winning of the Irish Sweepstakes. Launch early at the Japanese. At 0600, launch torpedo planes at the Japanese carrier force; the strike is a one-way trip, but the TBFs are so inferior that they literally take up more room than their destruction costs. Since one of the American carriers is going to be reduced to scrap metal anyway, the Americans do not have sufficient landing capacity to store these planes. Besides, they might even get a hit (hardly; but this is accurate -- the TBFs were magnificent in courage and deficient in damage done to the enemy). The simulation does not recognize the impact of the TBFs. Their sacrifice herein is in vain. Historically, they served a major purpose. Although one reads that the TBFs drew the CAP down so that the dive bombers (SBDs) could strike, the truth is that while the TBFs were attacking, the Japanese carriers were forced into evasive maneuvers which prevented their launching additional planes. No such result here; the Japanese strikes always launch.

To maximize game success, launch dive bombers at 0700 (multiple strikes, composed of three fighter escorts and 11 dive bombers each). At the same time Midway Island is being hit, hopefully the Japanese carrier force will be undergoing the same treatment. Again, a flaw exists in strike resolution. After saving and replaying the strike c. 15 times, this reviewer feels that the multiple strike option causes more damage. However, in reality, one large strike would have caused more damage because of the coordination effect the various squadrons would have had on one another. This strike maximization does not appear to exist in this simulation.

If the Japanese have been damaged, the remainder of the game is easy. Keep hitting the carriers, and insure that the American task force remains clear of a naval gun battle. The only naval gun battle that is beneficial for the American force is to attack the Japanese transports; it is sometimes difficult to both attack them and avoid the bigger surface vessels. If such be the case, avoid naval gun battles entirely. The risk is too great.

Mechanically, Carrier Force is in basic. Yes, it does require a cartridge. When the computer is deciding upon the Japanese move, it takes enough time so that you think it is literally radioing Tokyo for instructions. Read a book, have dinner, go out for the evening. When you get back, the computer will have just finished (NOTE: SSI has stated that a new edition of Carrier

Force will be released next year with total machine language; hopefully, this will alleviate the delay loop). Also, graphics of the actual attacks are primitive at best. Additional hint for the unethical: if you want to analyze what is happening, simply save each game turn. The computer will begin the next turn, at which time you tell it to end the game; it will then display the Japanese taskforce locations and current postures. One may regard this as the ultimate in ULTRA, or Purple Code Squared.

Thus, in summary, the Midway scenario of Carrier Force is complex, lengthy and seemingly accurate. In reality, the third criterion (accuracy) is strongly missing. I cannot recommend the game for that reason; the investment of time and the historical fallacies prohibit a recommendation. Again, to be fair, I have only considered Midway. But if the general design theory is consistent, the other scenarios may also be flawed. A good "beer and pretzels" wargame may be historically inaccurate but fun; a simulation advertising itself as definitive with the inherent complexities ceases to be fun with the same flaws.

Next Month: War in the Air -- 50 Mission Crush (the Allied Bomber Offensive)

Letters to the Editor

First, congratulations to Editor Joe Waters and to all the contributing authors of the September 1984 issue of Current Notes. Current Notes is becoming one of the best ATARI publications available.

Unfortunately, the article "DOS Comparison" by Stan Stubeck, reprinted in the September Current Notes, contains inaccurate statements about the TOP-DOS operating system. A more accurate appraisal of TOP-DOS can be found in a software review by Charles Bachand in the October 1984 issue of Analog Computing (Issue 23).

If Current Notes readers have any questions about TOP-DOS or would like to see a demonstration of it, I would be more than happy to provide whatever information I can. I have been a user of TOP-DOS since its first release and would enthusiastically encourage any ATARI user with double density disk drives to consider switching to TOP DOS.

Bob Danson, 780-0758

Musical Notes

By Jay Gerber

Hello, fellow music enthusiasts, and welcome back to Musical Notes! This month we are going to finish up a few more points which will help you to transfer sheet music directly to your computer. We will also discuss how to make a limited Basic program that plays sheet music. And as always, We shall have a great time!

Last month I was explaining the concept of chords in music. As I stated last month, you can think of a chord as a series of notes, one atop another, that are played at the same time. These notes must have the same duration. Instead of going into some more theory about chords, it is safe to say that you will see alot of chords in all types of sheet music, so you should learn to recognize and use them.

One interesting aspect about chords (especially to the Atari owner with only 4 voices) is that the top note of the chord always (unless seperated from the melody line) contains the melody of the piece. For example, look at figure 1. This is a piece of sheet music that you might find in any music store. Notice that all of the notes are arranged in chords. If you were to play this on a piano, or similar instrument, you would hear the Cantina theme from the movie Starwars. If you were to play only the top note of each chord, you would still hear the Cantina theme. The lower two notes of each chord are just accompaniment, or harmony notes.

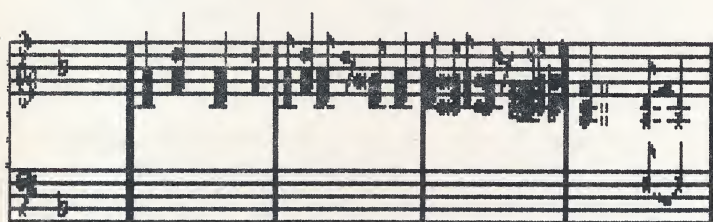


Figure 1

This is useful for typing sheet music that has more than four voices into the computer. If you just wanted to put down the melody line, and arrange or forget the chords, look for the single notes in (usually) the Treble staff, and take the tops off of all chords in that staff.

Well, I think you all should applaud yourselves! You should, finally, be able to read any piece of sheet music! Now, how to make the Atari computer play it.

There are several ways in which you can make the Atari play sheet music. One is to buy one of the several commercially available music pacakages on the market, such as AMS II, and Music Construction Set. (These and others will be reviewed, along with tips and sample sessions, in later columns). Another way is to program a music player. In 6502 Assembly, or machine language, this can get very hectic, or tedious at best. You can try Logo, except it only plays in two voices, and is hard to work with musically. I never figured out Forth, Pascal, or those scientific languages, so the only logical choice would be the one that most of us are familiar with: Basic.

Before I discuss the Basic music program, let me say that although the easiest to use, Basic is also verrry slow! It is impossible, without the help of machine language routines, to have all four voices playing different rhythms at the same time in Basic. In fact, getting two voices to play different rhythms is tricky enough! For simplicity's sake, I have two programs that will let you play either a melody line, or a melody line with chords, provided that all the notes have the same durations.

Figure 2 is a one-voice Basic player. Let's figure out how it works by taking it apart line by line.

```

1 REM *****
2 REM * ONE-VOICE BASIC MUSIC PLYR *
3 REM * BY JAY GERBER *
4 REM * MUSICAL NOTES, OCT. 1984 *
5 REM *****
10 DIM M(20,2)
19 REM ***READ IN MUSIC DATA***
20 RESTORE 10000
30 FOR I=1 TO 20:READ
  X,Y:M(I,1)=X:M(I,2)=Y:NEXT I
40 REM ***PUT BASIC PROGRAM HERE***
50 GOSUB 1000
60 END
999 REM *MUSIC PLAYING SUBROUTINE*
1000 FOR I=1 TO 20
1010 SOUND 0,M(I,1),10,10
1020 DUR=200/M(I,2)
1030 FOR DELAY=1 TO DUR:NEXT DELAY
1040 SOUND 0,0,0,0
1050 NEXT I:RETURN
9999 REM ***MUSIC DATA FOLLOWS***
10000 DATA 72,4,53,4,72,4,53,4,72,8
10001 DATA 53,4,72,8,0,8,76,8,72,4
10002 DATA 72,8,76,8,72,8,81,8,0,8
10003 DATA 85,8,81,8,85,8,91,3,108,2

```

Line 10 is a dimension statement. The first dimension in the two-dimensional array named M is 20. This is the number of notes that is in the piece. The second dimension, 2, is the number of values for each note to be played. This must remain constant because every note has two playing factors: frequency and duration.

Line 20 tells the subroutine which reads in the music data (frequencies and durations of each note) to start at line 10000. Line 30 reads in two values, with X being the frequency for note I, and Y being the duration for that same note I. Then it stores it into our array called M, so it can be recalled instantly at any time.

Starting at Line 40, you can put in your own Basic program, and make a subroutine call (GOSUB 1000) anytime you want the music played. Line 1000 starts the playing routine. For pieces longer than 20 notes, you should change the second variable to whatever number of notes you are playing. (This is also the first dimension in the DIM statement in line 10). Line 1010 plays the frequency of the note that the FOR/NEXT statement is currently on. Line 1020 figures out a close approximation of the musical duration of the current note. (If the duration number in the DATA statement is 1 then note = whole; 2 = half, 4 = quarter ...).

Line 1030 is what is called in Basic a wait loop. It will do absolutely nothing for the number specified by DUR, or the approximated musical duration of the current note. Line 1040 turns off the sound. Otherwise, notes with the same frequency would slur together like tied notes. Remember that once you execute a SOUND statement, the sound is on until you execute you turn it off with this statement, or hit SYSTEM RESET. Line 1050 tells the computer to go on to the next note, and when it hits the 20th, or last note, it will RETURN back to the point after GOSUB was called.

Line 10000 starts the music data. The first number in each pair is the frequency value; the second, the duration. Obviously the order of the pairs has to correspond directly to the piece of music. The statements are arranged in no particular fashion, except that all DATA statements fit on one 38-column line.

Figure 3 plays the same song with three note chords instead of single notes. It works the exact same way that figure 2 does, except it has to handle three frequencies to each duration. One thing you might notice is that it is slightly slower than figure 1. This

is because that it takes time to execute each SOUND statement separately.

```

1 REM *****
2 REM *THREE-VOICE BASIC MUSIC PLYR*
3 REM *          BY JAY GERBER          *
4 REM *   MUSICAL NOTES, OCT. 1984   *
5 REM *****
10 DIM M(20,4)
19 REM ***READ IN MUSIC DATA***
20 RESTORE 10000
30 FOR I=1 TO 20:READ
  V1,V2,V3,D:M(I,1)=V1:M(I,2)=V2:M(I,3)=V
  3:M(I,4)=D:NEXT I
40 REM ***PUT BASIC PROGRAM HERE***
50 GOSUB 1000
60 END
999 REM *MUSIC PLAYING SUBROUTINE*
1000 FOR I=1 TO 20
1005 FOR J=1 TO 3
1010 SOUND J,M(I,J),10,5
1015 NEXT J
1020 DUR=200/M(I,4)
1030 FOR DELAY=1 TO DUR:NEXT DELAY
1035 FOR K=1 TO 3
1040 SOUND K,0,0,0
1045 NEXT K
1050 NEXT I:RETURN
9999 REM ***MUSIC DATA FOLLOWS***
10000 DATA 72,91,108,4,53,72,91,4
10001 DATA 72,91,108,4,53,72,91,4
10002 DATA 72,91,108,8,53,72,91,4
10003 DATA 72,91,108,8,0,0,0,8
10004 DATA 76,96,108,8,72,91,108,4
10005 DATA 72,91,108,8,76,96,114,8
10006 DATA 72,91,108,8,81,96,121,8
10007 DATA 0,0,0,8,85,102,128,8
10008 DATA 81,96,121,8,85,114,136,8
10009 DATA 91,121,144,3,108,144,182,
  291,108,8,81,96,121,8
10007 DATA 0,0,0,8,85,102,128,8
10008 DATA 81,96,121,8,85,11

```

These two programs will help you add music into almost any Basic program. They were kept simple so you could easily modify and incorporate them into your programs. One last thing about the second program, though: it is uneven at times. This is due, again to the time it takes Basic to operate all three voices at the same time. This can be corrected by changing the durations or modifying the approximation routine.

Well, that's just about it for this month. In the coming months I will review, with actual examples of

usage, the three major music packages for the Atari: Atari's Music Composer; APX's AMS I and LotsaBytes' AMS II; and ELECTRONIC ARTS' Music Construction Set. I will also, after thoroughly explaining the music packages, get into some hard-core music theory, and show how you can improve your music to make it sound better, especially from sheet music.

To all you aspiring musicians: keep those music files coming. To those of you who have not sent or given to me (at meetings) your favorite music files -- why not? Send them to: Jay Gerber, 3639 N. 36th Road, Arlington, Va. 22207. You can also drop them off at either the Novatari or DC meetings.

Oh, before I forget Here are the answers to last month's chord-finding quiz:

G (G/D/B); G (B/D/G); C (C/G/E); G (G/D/B); G (D/B/G); C (C/G/E); G (G/D/B); G (D/B/G); F (C/A/F); D (A/F#/D)

It was pretty tricky since I put all of the chords in the Bass clef, and figure 3 (last month) was in the Treble!! Well, this month you can practice entering sheet music into the Basic programs, and as always, HAVE FUN!

=====

SECRET SUNNYDALE CORRESPONDENT

=====

CNR: OK, it's 'next month'. What's going on with the company these days?

SSC: ATARI is going thru some shuffling these days to reorganize for the new year. Currently, the hardware is being manufactured in Ireland, Hong Kong and Thailand; much of the software shipped from El Paso, TX. This is how it's been for some time. We're still straightening out our priorities and getting a new perspective on how to approach the WHOLE computer market these days. For next year, we have to plan NOW for the new products; both software and hardware.

CNR: Does this mean we won't see anything at Christmas?

SSC: Not at all! There are BIG plans in effect right now. And, you'll see ATARI products at realistic prices.

CNR: What are these 'big plans'? We've heard rumors again about ATARI going under or ready for imminent collapse.

SSC: First, I should point out that just because Jack Tramiel has taken over the helm at ATARI, you should not be concerned about ATARI products becoming infused with Commodore! Second, ATARI is NOT selling anything at 'close-out' prices. Our new strategy is simply to sell the best for less. You'll see 'rock-bottom' prices and new low prices on existing software AND hardware. Go out and pick up that cartridge or disk you've always wanted -- and pay \$20!!

CNR: Our dealers have all but dried up and those 'mass merchandisers' never seem to carry the new stuff. Where will we see the new stuff for ATARI?

SSC: Look for everything at dealers and at places like K-Mart, Toys-R-Us and larger department stores. With new low prices, sales have already picked up very nicely out here. The same will be true there. Within a few more months, the pipelines will fill.

CNR: WHAT ABOUT THE NEW PRODUCTS? What can we see for Christmas. You still haven't answered that one! Surprises?

SSC: Just wanted to keep you with me for another moment. ATARI now has an internal games development group. Their focus is on original games that use the computer to its MAXIMUM. We get people dropping by here several times a week trying to sell us their software. We don't care if it's in BASIC or machine code, just as long as it uses ALL possible resources that are practical for that idea. We see a lot of junk and a few good ideas, too. We've seen software-driven speech synthesizers that do NOT turn the screen off and can even mimic famous people; we've seen a rocket ship done with GTIA modes that looks like its 3-D; you can even see the rivets in the aluminum! It was done with Player-Missile graphics! THIS is the caliber of product we're looking for!

The products filling the pipe-line include the MILLIPEDE game converted from the Coin-op arcade machine and an original from our development team called, "FINAL LEGACY", a land-air-sea battle game with spectacular graphics and new effects with display lists. You've seen "THE LAST STARFIGHTER" movie? We've got the game ready for the computer -- an accurate version of the Coin-op game that was the focus of the film. All that's needed is to settle the royalty arrangements and you'd see this in the next few months!

CNR: W O W !! That was GREAT!

SSC: More good news next month!

SYNAPSE SYN SERIES

By Joe Waters

Besides being a great game machine, your ATARI, like most other computers, is capable of a diverse range of activities. In the business arena, computers have made great strides because of their capacity to improve productivity. Similarly, your ATARI can be used to improve productivity in various home "business" activities.

The range of available productivity software for the ATARI has been increased recently by SYNAPSE. These products let you use your ATARI for filing, calculating, graphing and charting, stock analysis, appointment management, telecommunications, and even tax preparation. The SYNAPSE series, which includes SynFile+, SynCalc, SynTrend, SynComm, SynChron, SynStock, and SynTax, is notable for a remarkable degree of compatibility. Not only do the programs have similar exterior packaging, but internally they present the user with a common menu system, which facilitates learning, and also allow data transfer from one application program to another.

The new series certainly looks attractive. But what exactly do these programs do? What function is each meant to accomplish? How could you use these capabilities? How well does the program perform in practice? To help our readers answer these and other questions, Current Notes will provide a series of in-depth reviews of the new SYNAPSE home productivity software.

To start things rolling, I planned to start the series with SynFile+. In preparing the review, however, I decided that a general introduction to databases and database management systems would help a number of our readers understand precisely what SynFile+ is designed to do. Unfortunately, because of space limitations, I found I couldn't fit both the introduction and the review itself, which turned out to be quite lengthy, into this issue. So, we start with the introduction and save the review for November. Oh well, at least I have one article ready for the November Current Notes.

A Note on Prices: When these programs first appeared, the three main programs, SynFile+, SynCalc, and SynTrend listed for \$99.00. The list price has been reduced to \$69.95. SYNAPSE has informed me that the programs can be directly ordered from SYNAPSE for \$59.95 (+\$2.00 shipping and handling) or all three for \$150.00 (+\$5).

Introduction to Databases

By Joe Waters

Using a computer to maintain a database and produce reports from that database can often generate enough productivity improvements to justify the purchase price of the entire computer system. This is true in a lot of business environments. Is it also true in a home environment? To help you answer that question for yourself, I have written this brief introduction to databases and database management systems. I am assuming that the entire subject is new to you.

What is a Database? If you have ever attempted to keep a set of records, whether on 3x5 cards, in a notebook, or on accounting paper, you created a database. A database, therefore, is nothing more than a collection of related information.

Let's use a concrete example. Suppose you are keeping a record of your household expenditures. For every check you write, you record (1) the check number, (2) the date, (3) the amount, (4) who the check was written to, (5) what it was for, and (6) a category code you use to distinguish among types of expenditure. You use this information to help maintain a budget and, at the end of the year, to help with your income tax returns. The sum total of this information is your database.

You maintain your database using a pencil and paper and store your data in a filing cabinet. If you make a mistake entering data, you turn your pencil around and erase it. If you want to retrieve information, you open your filing cabinet and look through your records. If you want to prepare a report indicating how well you are doing on your budget, you get out your files, your calculator, pencil and paper, and make whatever summary calculations you want. You then stick a sheet of paper in the typewriter and write your report.

What is a Database Management System? If you have an appropriate program for your computer, you can use your computer to record this data, store the information on diskettes, retrieve the data whenever you want, and (if you have a printer) print out reports based on your data. Instead of a pencil and paper, you record information using the keyboard and TV screen. The information is stored in "files" on your diskettes. The computer files correspond to your paper files. The diskette corresponds to your filing cabinet.

Let me emphasize once more that you will need a program, in conjunction with your computer, to change your paper files to electronic files. The computer program must allow you to define the kind of information you want to record. It must provide the capability of inserting new information, deleting old information, and changing (updating) information already recorded. Finally, the program should allow you to query your database. If you are going to all the trouble of recording and storing information, it must be because that information can provide answers to questions you have. The program, then, should be capable of answering your questions and sending the results off to a printed report if desired. A program that provides these capabilities lets you manage your database and is called a database management system. (DBMS)

Why Use a Database Management System? As my example illustrates, you can maintain a database without using a computer. So why use a computer? If you are keeping track of only a small number of items, there is very little advantage in using a computer. Indeed, it may take far more time to "automate" your system than it does to keep your pencil & paper records. However, as the amount of information you are storing increases, the advantages of using a DBMS on a computer become more obvious.

The greatest advantage is your ability to produce accurate, detailed, listings of your information quickly and easily. If you never need to list or examine information in your database, then a DBMS is of limited value. However, if, like Current Notes, you maintain a list of subscribers and periodically produce hundreds of mailing labels, a DBMS is essential.

Another important advantage of using a DBMS is that it is much easier to maintain accurate, up-to-date records. A computer can retrieve and change information far faster than you could if you were maintaining records by hand. In addition, facilities provided in some DBMSs allow built-in data checking for accuracy. For example, if you were recording a category code that could only be one of, say, 12 possible alternatives, the DBMS could check your input and reject any changes that did not conform to the 12 allowable codes.

Another advantage of using a DBMS comes into play if you expect to regularly query your database. For example, you might use the check database described above to answer a variety of questions. How much did I spend on entertainment last month? What checks, and for what amounts, were written to the telephone company so

far this year? How much money did I spend in February? Where did check number 256 go? How much money did I give to charitable organizations last year? You could answer every one of these questions by going through your paper files (with a calculator handy of course). However, with the possible exception of finding the destination of check number 256, you will spend far more time with a pencil and paper trying to answer these questions than you would if you had your data in a DBMS.

Accomplishing any task in less time represents an increase in your productivity. How much? That depends on how often you would be querying the database and how valuable your time is.

Do I Need a DBMS? If there is a database you want to maintain, a DBMS may be just what you need. However, in the normal home environment, not many people find a crying need to maintain a "database." The check example may be appropriate, but not everybody bothers with the discipline required to maintain a budget. Keep your recipes in a database? 3x5 cards may be far more efficient. Make an inventory of your household goods? Sure, but how often do you change your household goods and how often do you need to produce reports? Keep a database of names and phone numbers? Rolodex cards work fine. Put your library holdings in a database? If you want to find a book, look on the bookshelf.

Although not everyone needs a DBMS, there are people who would find one extremely useful. If you are engaged in any kind of home business (Mary Kay, Avon, manuscript typing, furniture repair, etc), you will want to maintain detailed, accurate records. If you like to volunteer your services to your local church group, civic group, school, or various social organizations, you may find yourself charged with maintaining a variety of records (membership lists, cub scout records, club expenditures, etc). If you are a hobbyist, you may have a large database of information relevant to your hobby that you would like to keep organized. If you are a professional, you may want to keep a record of the articles available in your collection of technical papers, books or journals.

I hope I have conveyed some idea of what a database is and whether or not you need a DBMS. If you have concluded that you do not need a DBMS, you can skip the rest of this article. If you still think you might profitably use one, read on!

Are All DBMSs the Same? No. For the ATARI, your choice is somewhat limited. However, if you have a real need for a DBMS you might want to consider the

capabilities available in bigger systems as well as what you can do on the ATARI. Therefore, let me explain briefly some of the factors that distinguish one DBMS from another.

Every DBMS will allow you to create a database and enter information into that database. DBMSs will differ on (1) the flexibility they allow in defining the type of information stored, (2) the limits placed on the size of data elements, (3) the limits placed on the size of the database as a whole, and (4) the ease with which database creation and data input are accomplished.

Every DBMS will allow you to maintain the database, i.e. add new records, delete old records, and modify existing records. DBMSs will differ on (1) the speed with which these changes can be accomplished, (2) the degree to which new data entries can be checked for accuracy or appropriateness, (3) whether or not more than one record can be changed in a single operation, (4) how much the update process can be automated, and (5) the degree of difficulty involved in changing some of your original database specifications.

Every DBMS will allow you to retrieve records. DBMSs will differ on (1) how quickly information can be retrieved, (2) the number and kind of fields that can be used for retrieval, and (3) the kind of constraints that can be imposed on the search process (less than, greater than, equal to, not equal to, in a specific range, including specific characters, etc.).

Every DBMS will allow you to create reports based on the information in the database. DBMSs will differ on (1) the degree of control the user has in formatting the report, (2) the ease with which information can be sorted and the number of items that can be included in a sort, (3) the degree to which mathematical calculations (min, max, sum, average, percent, etc.) can be built into the reports, and (4) the number of files that can be referenced in a report.

Every DBMS will perform the basic operations listed above on one file at a time. More sophisticated DBMSs can link together information from more than one file at a time. For example, given a file containing teachers and their room numbers and another file containing students and room numbers, some DBMSs can produce a report relating students and their teacher by using the common element "room number." Such programs are often called relational DBMSs. These more powerful DBMSs often also include a complete programming language that allows the user to build complex update or report

generation procedures. These routines can be stored for later use just like you store your BASIC programs.

What Should I Buy? None of the database packages for the ATARI fall into the category of "sophisticated" DBMSs referred to above. Indeed, the majority of DBMSs available in the 16-bit market do not fall into the sophisticated category. Most casual users, however, do not need all the power and flexibility inherent in the top-of-the-line micro packages. Indeed, the more powerful the package, the more difficult it is likely to be to learn to use it. And all that power comes at a price. For the list price of dBASE III (and perhaps a few books to help you learn how to use it), you could buy an ATARI 800XL, a disk drive, a (cheap) printer, and have enough money left over to buy SynFile+, the latest DBMS available for the ATARI. (See review elsewhere in this issue.) And remember with dBASE III you still need to spend an additional several thousand dollars to buy the equipment needed to run the program.

Let me conclude by saying that a database management system can be of enormous benefit. It provides a general record-keeping capability that you can use for a wide variety of applications. However, in a home environment, if you aren't keeping paper records now, you probably don't need to keep electronic records.

If you think you could use a DBMS, then answer these questions:

- What information do you want to keep?
- How large might your final database be?
- What questions would you like to be able to answer?
- What kind of reports would you like to produce?
- How often do you intend to query your database?

When you have answered these questions, you will be in a better position to judge whether or not the capabilities offered by various DBMS will satisfy your needs. In addition, when you have a clear understanding of just what you would like to do, you can judge whether the features available on more powerful DBMSs are worth the extra you would have to spend to get them. And finally, if this is all very new to you, it may very well be worthwhile to start with something simple and inexpensive. Learn to use the simple system. Learn what features you like. Learn what you don't like. Gain some experience building and using a database. This experience will prove quite useful when, and if, you decide to move on to the higher-priced alternatives.

NOVATARI: Northern Virginia Atari Users Group Greenbriar Community Center -- Chantilly, Virginia

President..... Joe Waters..... 430-1215
 Vice President. Steve Steinberg 435-2962
 Treasurer..... Curtis Sandler. 734-9533
 Secretary..... Jim Stevenson.. 378-4093
 Programs..... Gene Schimpf... 378-7807
 Membership..... Earl Lilley.... 281-9017
 Training..... Marty Vallery.. 425-6832
 Education..... Diana Burdt.... 425-5073
 NPX..... Gene Schimpf... 378-4093
 Disk Librarian. M. Evan Brooks. 354-4482

Novatari Meetings are on the 2nd Sunday of each month in the Greenbriar Community Center on 4615 Stringfellow Road in Chantilly, Virginia. Stringfellow Road, (Route 645), runs south from US 50 a little more than two miles west of the Fair Oaks Shopping Mall (I-66 and 50). The Greenbriar Community Center is on the left-hand side of Stringfellow Road, 1.4 miles south of 50. There is a small parking lot in front and a larger one just north of the center. The meeting room is available from 5-9 PM. A BASIC tutorial is offered starting at 6 pm. The business meeting starts at 7 pm and is followed by software demonstrations. The formal presentation, highlighting a specific software or hardware product, begins at about 7:30. Door prizes are offered each month.

President's Report

Joe Waters

Our September meeting was one of the more exciting meetings of the year for me. We launched three separate initiatives, each of which will, hopefully, take Novatari in new directions that will benefit both our membership and the community. We split the area of "education" into two positions: one "Training Coordinator" will handle training for club members (see "Novatari College" below), the other, "Educational Liaison" will concentrate on our interaction with local school systems ("Education Report"). The final initiative will provide club members with an opportunity to try "marketing" their programs while at the same time providing useful and economical software to the membership ("Novatari Program Exchange").

I was very pleased with the response of the membership and the enthusiastic reception to our new initiatives. If you like the direction the club is taking and would like to lend your support, don't hesitate to give me a call. It doesn't matter one bit whether you know anything at all about "programming" on an ATARI. There are many tasks involved in making Novatari an institution of value to its

membership as well as to the community. Any help you could give would be greatly appreciated.

ATARI OPEN HOUSE. Do you remember when you first brought home your ATARI? Everything was GREEK! Many new ATARI owners are faced with the same questions you had when you started. What's a disk? Do I need a disk drive? What kind of printers does the ATARI use? To help new ATARI owners over these initial hurdles, Novatari in conjunction with Future Tech, is sponsoring an "ATARI Open House" on Wednesday evenings at Future Tech starting September 26. Club members are invited to stop in and just be available to answer any ATARI-type questions that come up. Note: although Future Tech is supplying the facility, Novatari is supplying the personnel and the expertise. You may answer any question freely and need not base your advice on whether or not Future Tech happens to carry or support a particular software or hardware product. Indeed, one of the major advantages of having club members to talk to is the change of getting an "unbiased" answer.

One final note. Although final arrangements have not been completed as of this writing, it does appear that it would be in your interest to bring your checkbook to the October meeting. Those of you who volunteered to help out with this project, please give me a call.

Novatari College!

By Marty Vallery

Although the tutorials at the Novatari meetings are useful, the arrangement is certainly not ideal. It is simply too difficult to provide training on an ad-hoc basis to a regularly changing audience in a basically social environment.

A better solution would be to provide, at a minimal cost, structured seminars and courses that would teach our membership various aspects relating to using your ATARI effectively. We asked those at the September meeting if they would be interested in taking, or teaching, formal seminars. The response was quite favorable so we have decided to go forward and establish "Novatari College."

Assembly Language. The first courses will be offered in October. At this writing, explicit dates have not yet been scheduled. We do know that the demand for assembly language was very strong so we will be offering an "Introduction to Assembly Language" as one of our first courses. The course will be taught by Tim Kilby, the

NOVATARI: Northern Virginia Atari Users Group Greenbriar Community Center -- Chantilly, Virginia

author of the Visualizer program reviewed elsewhere in this issue. The course will be a one-day (six hour) seminar and will cost \$20. It will be scheduled for a Saturday late in October (27?).

Others. We anticipate that many of the courses will be shorter (two-hour) seminars, costing \$5, and covering topics such as AtariWriter, Databases, Spread Sheets, Introduction to Telecommunications, etc.

Registration. Income from the courses will be used to pay any related costs such as room rentals and instructor fees. If you are interested in registering for any of these courses, suggesting other seminars we might offer, or think you could teach one of the courses, call Marty Vallery, (703) 425-6832. Given sufficient demand, we will find an appropriate instructor and schedule the course.

TV Training. A series of television programs from the Virginia Department of Education will be airing on your local educational TV stations most Tuesdays at 3 p.m. The first program, Impact of Computers on Society, is scheduled for September 25. Other programs (and their dates) are:

- OCT 2 Computer Skills for Education and Employment
 - 16 Computer Components and Terminology
 - 23 Running Software and Keyboarding Skills
 - 30 Word processing
- NOV 13 Electronic Spreadsheets and Graphics Tools
 - 27 Database Management
- DEC 4 Computer Assisted Instruction No. 1
 - 11 Computer Assisted Instruction No. 2
- JAN 8 Computer Managed Instruction
 - 22 Software Evaluation No. 1
 - 29 Software Evaluation No. 2
- FEB 5 Programming and Problem Solving - BASIC
 - 12 Programming and Problem Solving -- LOGO
 - 26 Electronic Database
- MAR 5 Ethical, Social and Economic Issues
 - 12 Computers in Administration
 - 26 Courseware Review: the Criteria
- APR 16 Courseware Review: the Process
 - 23 Managing Microcomputers: the Microcomputer Game
 - 30 Administrative Management in Schools: Software
- MAY 7 Administrative Management in Schools: Case Studies
 - 15 Micros and the Arts
 - 22 Micros and the Writing Process

Education Report

Diana Burdt

As many of you may know, Fairfax County has ATARI computers throughout the school system. Joe Waters, wanting Novatari to provide some measure of assistance to the school system, asked me to serve as Education Liaison. The concept was first presented to the membership at the September meeting and was met with enthusiastic support. So, we are going to see what we can do.

I have contacted Jerry Berry, one of the Fairfax County Public School computer coordinators, regarding Novatari's interest in providing the expertise and services of its members to the school system as a whole as well as to individual schools on the basis of their needs. Several ideas were presented:

1. Providing copies of the Current Notes newsletter to schools on a cost or complimentary basis (to be determined by the membership at a later date),
2. Helping Fairfax county expand their public domain educational software library, possibly to include software reviews of these educational programs,
3. Providing members who are interested in establishing and directing a computer club in an individual school.

Several people at the September meeting expressed an interest in getting this worthwhile program off the ground. If you have any ideas and would like to help, please contact Diana Burdt, 425-5073.

Announcing: N P X Novatari Program Exchange By Jim Stevenson

Like its former namesake NPX will provide a means for Novatari members to sell their own software. Hopefully, this will avoid the difficulty of getting free submissions for the club library. Besides, it is only proper that authors be rewarded for their work. Since these efforts are not anticipated to be of commercial quality, the prices will be commensurately low, ranging between \$4 and \$6. Each disk accepted will be demonstrated at a Novatari meeting and given away as one of the door prizes. NPX will handle all production and advertising costs.

NPX will withhold \$3 production cost for each disk; the rest goes to the author. These arrangements will be formalized in a written contract between NPX and the

NOVATARI: Northern Virginia Atari Users Group **Greenbriar Community Center -- Chantilly, Virginia**

author. Disks will be produced in editions of 10. If they do not sell, the remainder will be recycled for other releases (unless the author wishes to buy them from NPX.)

In order to maintain some quality control, NPX will review each submission and negotiate a price with the author. Any submission not deemed worth \$4 will be rejected. To aid in the evaluation, NPX will use reviewers from the club. Anyone interested in being a reviewer should contact NPX (see below), indicating one (or more) of the following areas of interest: Action Games, War Games, Adventures, Programming Languages and Utilities, Graphics, Sound/Music, Financial, Education, Word Processing, Databases.

The minimal requirements for a submitted disk will be (1) error-proof user input, and (2) documentation file of instructions on the disk.

Anyone interested in submitting programs or finding out more about NPX should contact Gene Schiopf (378-7807) or Jim Stevenson (378-4093). This is just the opportunity

you needed to finish off that masterpiece! We would hope that NPX could carry a wide variety of useful applications. Some members have already expressed an interest obtaining:

- * AMS, MCS, etc. music files.
- * A Disk of vocabulary words for various local school system language courses (foreign or English).
- * Micropainter, Visualizer, etc. graphics files.
- * Math drills.

Note: reworked magazine programs (non-public domain) are acceptable if you obtain written permission from the original author.

NOVATARI FALL SCHEDULE:

OCTOBER 14: Visualizer, Koalapad, and other Graphics Tools for the ATARI.

NOVEMBER 11: Music Construction Set, Atari Music Composer and other Musical Tools for the ATARI.

DECEMBER 9: This topic may be changed on the basis of our survey, but for the moment we are thinking about TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

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ATARI OPEN HOUSE

Wednesday evenings 7-9

Representatives from NOVATARI will be on hand to answer questions for ATARI novices.

W.A.C.U.G.: Woodbridge Atari Users' Group
Potomac Public Library -- Woodbridge, Virginia

President.... Jack Holtzhauer. 670-6475
First VP..... Marc Hubbard.... 371-9561
VP-Education. Charles Stringer 786-8755
VP-Liaison... Cecil Alton..... 670-4842
Secretary.... Frank Bassett... 670-8780
Treasurer.... Jim Poling..... 590-9117

WACUG Meetings are held one evening each month, between the hours of 7:00 pm and 10:00 pm, in the Community Room of the Potomac Branch of the Prince William County Library on Optiz Blvd. in Woodbridge, VA. Meeting dates thru next June are: Monday, OCT 22; Wednesday, NOV 28; Tuesday, DEC 18; Monday, JAN 14; Wednesday, FEB 27; Wednesday, MAR 27; Wednesday, APR 24; Wednesday, MAY 15; and Wednesday, 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.

President's Report

By Jack Holtzhauer

WACUG is most pleased to join with the other Washington-area ATARI users' groups in supporting Current Notes. From a selfish standpoint, I'm even more pleased that our members will be receiving this ever-improving newsletter on a continuing basis. I'm certain WACUGians will find it as useful and as informative as members of other groups have found it to be in months past. Although we are a relatively small group when compared in numbers to our sister organizations, we will endeavor to make our contributions meaningful ones.

On the agenda for our October meeting are demos of SYNFILE, SYNTREND and other assorted goodies. Our nominating committee will also present its report offering two slates of officers for our board elections scheduled for November. All members are urged to attend! Give us your feedback on Current Notes.

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DC Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month in Room 543 of the 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. Meetings begin at 5:30 pm and usually last until 8 or 9.

Coming Events

By Art Corte

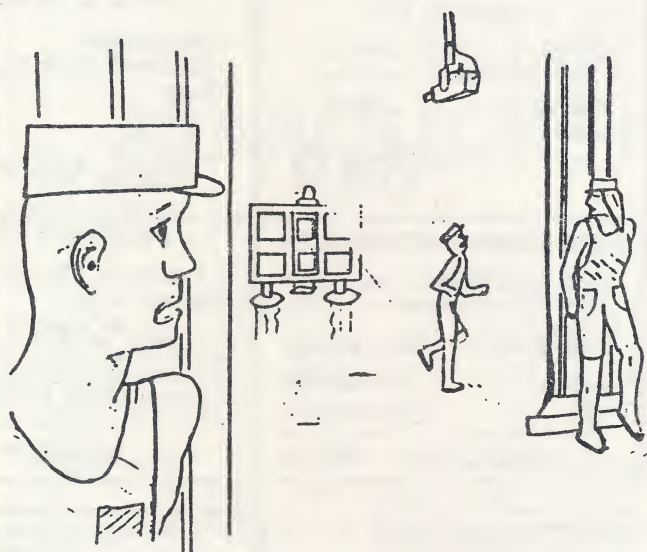
October 16: Our October meeting will feature a demonstration of the capabilities of the latest version of the ATR 8000. The program will be presented by a representative of the manufacturer, SHP.

* * * * *

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Disk Librarian's Update

By Jay Gerber

October will see the release of lots of new disks. First is a complete home accounting program submitted by Dick Gallagher of Vienna. This is a moderately good series of programs for balancing checkbooks, and keeping track of budgets, etc., and the \$4 price is certainly right! The first all-Compute and all-Antic disks will be released this month, also. I have chosen only the best programs from these magazines, dated Feb, 1984 to present. Please note: The Compute, Antic, and Analog disks will not be sold unless you provide adequate proof of purchase of the magazines of most of the programs on the disk. A current mailing label is fine, as is bringing in the covers to the actual magazines. Sorry for the inconvenience, but I have received letters from both Compute and Analog concerning this, and I must oblige, or forfeit our reduced club rates.

Bob Danson's new and improved Basic variable reference program along with other useful programs, will make

up disk #27. Also, the long-awaited Storymaker disk will be released (I promise) this month, raising the club library to 28 numbered disks.

Ok, people, time for some more lecturing. The DC library is yours, not mine, not Frank's, not Atari's, but YOURS!!!! You should donate to it to help it grow. I can't find every public-domain program myself, and I sure don't have the time to sit down and program them. It is up to you, dear reader, to find me programs to put in YOUR library. Whether you make them yourself, or download them from a BBS is not my concern as long as you send or give them to me.

Enough for now. The also-even-longer-awaited new, improved, stronger, faster, incredible disk catalog will also be released this month! It will cost approximately \$2 and consist of 20 pages. Don't let this incredible offer pass you by! Come in to the October meeting, pay the incredibly low price, and walk away with one of the finest bargains in the history of man!!!

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

AURA Minutes: September 5

By Rochelle Follender

Discussion: Everyone appreciates the timely arrival and excellent quality of Current Notes. The treasury has approximately \$200. The club library now has 37 disks, 20 cassettes and the XL translator. ATARI has lots of new things in the pipeline but will not make any announcements until they are available. The next meeting is October 3. Prices for ATARI hardware and software are being greatly discounted. Bob recommends "Easy Guide to the ATARI XL" as a good supplement for XL owners. Computer Software Services has an XL translator on cassette and hardware which will override BOOT ERROR. Marshall announced a swap meet at the Hyatt Regency on September 16.

Presentation: Brude demo'd the Panasonic KX-P1091 printer which is Epson compatible; the TAC-2 joystick; and the Cryptogram program on disk 37. Mike Kerwin demo'd the ATARI touch tablet. Mike demo'd Summer Games by Epyx. Bob showed the Advanced Music System program from the club library. Ted showed a video tape of his use of PLATO. Control Data Corporation's link to an extensive electronic information and communication utility. The software package will cost about \$50 and there is an hourly use charge.

President's Report

By Bruce McLendon

AURA AGENDA - OCTOBER 1984: The next meeting will be Wednesday, the 3rd at 7:30pm at the Long Branch Public

Library in meeting room #1, upstairs. Here's what is scheduled:

- 1) ComputerKids, Inc will discuss their educational services and programs. They would like to become more involved with local user groups, and offer assistance for parents with children and computers. Literature will be available.
- 2) Debbie Jenkins, Sales Manager from SOUTHWEST TECHNICAL PRODUCTS will present new products in software & hardware for the ATARI. Her company also offers a variety of computer supplies and will be prepared to make special arrangements for the D.C. area groups for quantity buys. Literature will also be available.
- 3) The usual spontaneous and last-minute demonstrations. Y'all come. Y'hear?

Attention: Cassette Users. A reminder ... the AURA CASSETTE LIBRARY is available for transfer to your own cassettes at no copying fee to any AURA library-card-carrying member.

To request AURA CASSETTES 1 THRU 18, bring one good-quality "C-60" 60 minute cassette to an AURA meeting for each AURA CASSETTE that you wish to be copied. Your completed cassettes will be returned to you at the following AURA meeting.

To obtain AURA LIBRARY CASSETTES 19 and 20, simply pick-up a finished dub at the October 3rd meeting. The cost of the cassette is \$1.00, plus a \$1.00 contribution to the AURA LIBRARY FUND.

(Members who wish to obtain CASSETTES 1 THRU 18 are urged to make their request by the November meeting. This offer may not be extended into the new year.)

Product Tips. As was mentioned at the last meeting, if you have either the Koala Pad or the new ATARI Touch Tablet (Some have been seen at BEST Co. for \$40), if you press the <INSERT> key while saving your work, the file will be saved in the MICRO-PAINTER 62-sector format. This means you can use COLORPRINT to copy the file to your printer! The 'colors' are printed using various dot-patterns, but if you have a color printer, apparently, COLORPRINT can handle it!

ATARI Purchase May Indicate New Direction (seen in "ADVERTISING AGE" 8/13/84). Sunnyvale, Cal.- Atari has

A.U.R.A.: Atari Users' Regional Association

Longbranch Public Library -- Takoma Park, Maryland

ordered \$130 million in disc drives from Tandon Corp., Chatsworth California. This is the first indication that new Atari Chief Executive Jack Tramiel is getting ready to make a massive push with new products in the home/personal computer market, said Peter Teige, an analyst at Dataquest, a market research company in San Jose, Cal. Disc drives had previously been accessory options for Atari home computers and have been sold in much lower volume, Mr. Teige noted.

Spare Parts & Kits! That's right! If you need spare parts for your 810 drive or would like to build an ATARI 400 or 800 from a kit then you should contact: CENTURIAN ENTERPRISES, P.O. Box 3233, San Luis Obispo, CA. 93403 (805) 544-6616 (Cash, Check, MO or COD - no cards!)

All merchandise is warranted for at least 100 days & they guarantee your satisfaction on any purchased item. Quantity discounts are available on most products at 6 and 11 pieces. Typical prices for the 400 kit are \$50 with 16k RAM and power supply (does not include the plastic case). The 800 with 16K is \$95 and does NOT include the case or keyboard. Mother boards, ROM boards, etc are also available separately for about \$25 to \$50. Disk drive mechanisms from \$100 and a complete 810 kit with power supply is available for \$250. Assembled: \$285.

Cartridges for BASIC, the Assembler, and games range from \$10 to \$20 with and without the plastic shell. Also, a variety of peripherals from various manufacturers are available. Believe it or not, many custom ATARI chips and special IC are also in stock! Service manuals are available from: ELECTRONIC DIMENSIONS, P.O. Box 56, Auburn, CA 95603 (916) 637-4630

Optical Disk Technology Creates a New Class of Peripheral (from Digital Design 8/84). With the capacity to store AT LEAST 1 GigaByte (1,000 MegaBytes) on a single 12" surface, the trend toward optical disk data storage has received significant attention and funding. Devices thus far announced include Write Once, Read Many times (WORM) and Optical Read Only Memory (OROM). Next year Matsushita will announce a rewritable optical disk! The announced drives all use a standard disk drive interface. Companies like Information Storage Inc, of Colorado Springs, CO have 5 1/4" OROM disks close to announcement! Though the density and environmental immunity of erasable optical recording may give it advantages over floppy drives and the

removeability should give it an edge on the Winchester drive, it probably will not replace magnetic storage altogether. The sheer quantity of data now on magnetic disks and tape will keep the market alive.

On-Line System Refines MOBIL'S Credit Card Operations (from Computerworld 8/20/84). Three years ago, when Mobil's credit card program was a paper-based system, it was, on the average, a 10-day trek for the sales tickets to arrive at the Mobil Oil Corp data processing center in Kansas City, Missouri. A year ago, following a successful pilot project, the company installed an online transaction processing system, designed to capture and send credit card purchase information electronically from its service stations to the DP center. At present, approximately 2500 stations are a part of Mobil's network. The station attendants enter the transaction into a Point-Of-Sale terminal. It is then transmitted to the DP center where the card is authorized and the sale registered. Then, it is uploaded to the firm's billing system for batch processing. According to John Rowerdink, who manages the POS system for Mobil, this has provided benefits to the company as well as the customer. It has decreased the number of bad credit sales, reduced the occurrence of credit card fraud and cut down on the firm's operating expenses by removing the necessity of processing millions of pieces of paper. But the primary advantage, Rowerdink said, has been the reduction of credit card "float"; the time period between purchase and payment. Whether the company broadens the network will depend primarily on the cost savings the system produces.

XL POKES. Here's a quick mini-reference to the new POKEs available to users of ATARI 600, 800 and 1200 XL operating systems:

POKE 621,0 (default) = Keyboard Disable
 POKE 622,0 (default) = Fine Scrolling
 POKE 729,48 (default) = Auto Key Delay
 POKE 730,6 (default) = Auto Key Rate
 POKE 731,0 (default) = Keyclick On/Off
 POKE 732,0 (default) = HELP Key Pressed
 POKE 756,204 = Activate INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER SET From ROM
 POKE 756,224 = De-activate INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER SET

POKE a value other than the default value into your ATARI XL and watch what happens! You can speed up/slow down the listing of your program. You can change the

(AURA continued)

rate of repeat of a key that is held down, and many other nifty parlour tricks.

New from Optimized Systems Software, Inc. is the MAC/65 Toolkit, an extensive collection of macros designed specifically for use with either the disk or cartridge version of OSS's MAC/65 macro assembler. The MAC/65 Toolkit provides both the beginner and the experienced programmer with debugged, precisely written macros that can be included into any user's program. Features include integer math, I/O operations, player-missile graphics, and random number generation. Also included are some macro equivalents of BASIC commands such as POKE, GOSUB, GET, SETCOLOR, PEEK, IF...THEN and FOR...NEXT loops. The MAC/65 Toolkit disk and manual are \$39.95.

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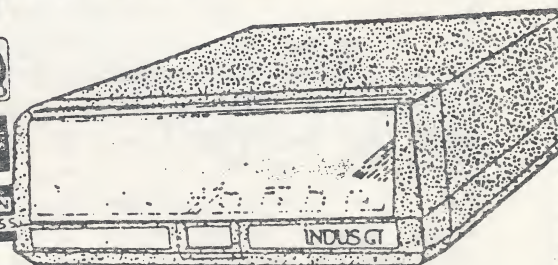
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CPM meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Public Library in Oxon Hill, MD. The site is located near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge just off the beltway. Take the beltway to Maryland exit #4 East, (St. Barnabas Road), St. Barnabas merges into Oxon Hill Rd.; proceed 1/4 mile and the library will be on your left. The meeting will be held in the Author Room at 6:00 pm. (Library phone # is 301-839-2400)

Coming Events

By John Lauer

NOTE--> The October meeting will be held on the fourth Monday of the month, 22 October 1984. This is due to scheduling problems with the Library.

October 22: Bob Kelly will present a brief introduction to dBase II. He will discuss the ZIP Programs which enhance and simplify the writing of dBase II code for output to the screen and/or printer. ZIP allows the operator to create a screen or form on the monitor and then ZIP will write the dBase II code that will allow you to run that Command (.CMD) or Format (.FMT) file from any other dBase II program.

Past Events. At the September meeting, 3 more CPM Library disks were introduced by Bob Kelly. There was one Utility disk and two Data Base Management disks added, bringing the library up to a total of 8 disks that are available for a nominal fee. The Utility disk introduced has several programs that permit examination of the disk. This is comparable to DISK TOOL under ATARI. Even in CPM we find we need a simple method for destroying our disks ... uh! ... a method for examining our disk. This Utility Disk is a must.

The TELECOM disk in the library now has a revised version of ATR Modem. This version defaults to 1200 baud and when booted comes up in the expert mode. There is now a file called ATOC. ATOC translates between ATARI DOS and CPM and vice versa. You can imagine the importance of this file.

The September meeting introduced for the first time MEMBERSHIP SELF-MANAGEMENT. The membership had the opportunity to add or edit his/her data record under the dBase II data management system created by Bob Kelly and myself. Though the initial development of this system was time consuming (creation by trial and error), the benefit is great. We will spend less time now in the actual management of membership data. We designed the system to be self-explanatory and user friendly.

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| Gorilla/Comm1525 | \$6.00 |
| Mansman 160 | \$11.00 |
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ROADO: AUTO-BINGO

By Marc Hubbard

If your family is like mine, you have some small children and they are holy-terrors while traveling. I have been pondering this problem during our quieter moments of travel. To pass the time, I first had my oldest daughter count the number of different state license plates we came across. She tired of this in about 15 minutes. Then I thought of playing BINGO, but using state license plates. But to use a card with 25 different state's plates is too difficult. I then thought of only using the states in the region through which we were traveling, only the Eastern states, for example, and allowing for multiple occurrences. For instance, inasmuch as we live in Virginia, it is highly probable we would see many more licenses from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, etc. Of course, all of this just HAD to be done by computer - my ATARI 800.

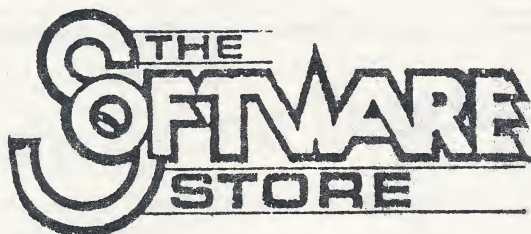
The program uses DATA statements which contain a two letter state abbreviation and a frequency count. The frequency count controls the number of occurrences of this state allowed on a single card. For example, the following statement allows three occurrences of Virginia on a card:

DATA VA,3

The program will randomly generate three ROADO cards for each set you request and dump them to a printer.

To add a different twist, you could let the youngsters use three occurrences of a state (after filling that state's spots on the card) as a wild card, which they could use to fill any other spot on their card.

GOOD TRAVELING!! (at least quieter)



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```

10 REM *****
11 REM *
12 REM *          ROAD0
13 REM *          ROAD BINGO
14 REM *
15 REM *
16 REM *          625 LANCASTER ST.
17 REM *          FREDERICKSBURG, VA
18 REM *          22405
19 REM *          WACUG
20 REM *          WOODBRIDGE, VA
21 REM *
22 REM *****
100 DIM TOP$(100),BLK$(100)
110 DIM S$(200),SP$(200),IN$(5),B$(150)
118 REM === DEFINE TOP OF CARD
119 REM === 26 "-", SPACE, 26 "-",
SPACE, 26 "-"
120 TOP$="-----
-----"
129 REM === DEFINE BLANK LINE WITH
VERTICAL BARS (SHIFT=")
130 BLK$="| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| |"
139 REM === SET EPSON TO 8 LINES/INCH
140 OPEN #1,8,0,"P:":? #1;CHR$(27);"0"
200 N=0
209 REM === READ STATES AND FORM
OCCURENCES STRING IN S$
210 READ IN$,X:IF IN$="END" THEN 230
220 FOR I=1 TO X:S$(LEN(S$)+1)=IN$:NEXT
I:N=N+X:GOTO 210
229 REM === HOW MANY SETS OF THREE
230 ? :? :? :? "ENTER NUMBER OF ROAD0
TO PRINT";:INPUT MAX
290 FOR LOOP=1 TO MAX
295 B$=""
299 REM === GENERATE 3 CARDS FOR EACH
SET
300 P=0:GOSUB 5000
310 P=50:GOSUB 5000
320 P=100:GOSUB 5000
399 REM === PRINT CARDS
400 ? #1: ? #1
410 FOR I=0 TO 40 STEP 10
415 ? #1;TOP$: ? #1;BLK$
417 FOR P=0 TO 100 STEP 50
418 ? #1;"|";
420 FOR J=1 TO 9 STEP 2
430 ? #1;" ";B$(P+J,P+J+1);"
|";:NEXT J:IF P<>100 THEN ? #1;" ";
435 NEXT P: ? #1
440 ? #1;BLK$:NEXT I
450 ? #1;TOP$: ? #1
800 FOR I=0 TO 0 STEP 25
810 FOR J=0 TO 40 STEP 10
820 FOR K=1 TO 9 STEP 2
830 PRINT B$(I+J+K,I+J+K+1);" ";
840 NEXT K:PRINT
850 NEXT J:PRINT
860 NEXT I
890 NEXT LOOP
895 END
899 REM === DEFINE STATES ===
900 DATA ME,1
902 DATA NH,1
904 DATA VT,1
906 DATA NY,3
908 DATA MA,1
910 DATA CN,1
912 DATA RI,1
914 DATA NJ,2
916 DATA PA,3
918 DATA DC,2
920 DATA MD,2
922 DATA WV,1
926 DATA VA,3
928 DATA NC,3
930 DATA SC,2
932 DATA TN,1
934 DATA GA,1
936 DATA AL,1
938 DATA FL,3
940 DATA END,0
999 PRINT CHR$(125)
4999 REM === GENERATES A RANDOM CARD
WITH P POINTING TO PLACE IN CARD BUFFER
B$
5000 M=N:SP$=S$
5010 FOR I=1 TO 49 STEP 2
5020 G=(INT(M*RND(0)+1)*2-1)
5025 B$(I+P,I+P+1)=SP$(G)
5030 IF G+2>LEN(SP$) THEN
SP$(G)="" :GOTO 5042
5040 SP$(G)=SP$(G+2)
5042 M=M-1
5050 NEXT I:RETURN

```

=====

VISUALIZER
By MAXIMUS SOFTWARE
6723 Whittier Avenue
McLean, VA 22101
\$49.95 LIST.

=====

Reviewed by Jack Holtzhauer

A couple of weeks ago while visiting our esteemed editor, Joe Waters, he offered to demo a new piece of software he had recently received from Maximus, a local Northern Virginia software firm. The packaging toggled my memory. I recalled receiving an advertising flyer in the mail describing the product in glowing terms. What piqued my interest at that time was the claim that the product could quickly produce text of several different styles on a graphics screen. If true, this feature certainly distinguished Maximus' product from the other dozen or so graphics programs currently on the market for the ATARI. Not only that, but the ad also claimed your graphics screens could be displayed in a "slide-show" format with accompanying audio from a tape deck. Well! That certainly deserved further inquiry. But as is often the case, I put the flyer in the "DO IT TOMORROW" stack - and tomorrow never came - until I found myself at Joe's. After Joe gave me a quick thirty-second demo, I was convinced that this was just what I had been looking for, and left Joe's home with the package under my arm. 'Course the price for his generosity was my promise to write a review on VISUALIZER for Current Notes hence this article.

Why was I interested in the first place? Well, for some time I had been toying with the idea of preparing tutorial video tapes on computer software products. I hoped to use the computer to generate the video signal and a mike to provide the audio track. One of my main hangups was my inability to easily produce eye-catching text/graphics screens for use as title frames, etc., for the video presentation. Was VISUALIZER the answer to my problem? You betcha!

But now comes the hard part. The review. I've done this sort of thing for the WACUG newsletter a number of times before, but how do you easily describe the visual impact of seeing your own name (or if you have less of an ego than mine, whatever else) on a four color graphics screen, with three of the colors quickly switching with one another, or with the myriad colors in ATARI's rainbow scrolling in the background. And you can't believe it took less than 15 seconds to do it! You're right. You can't really, to coin a word,

VISUALIZE it. But seein's believ'n - and you'll get a chance to see it at NOVATARI's October meeting.

Let's get to it and give the review a shot. VISUALIZER, written for MAXIMUS by Tim Kilby, comes packaged in a plastic book-style binder complete with a two-sided disk (program on one side and sample slide show on the other), a cassette tape for running the demo program, and a well written 40-page manual with, of all things, an 800 "consumer hotline" number you can use if you have questions regarding the program or would like to ask about other MAXIMUS products. Not a bad touch, that latter feature - maybe Jack Tramiel or one of his three sons (Moe, Curley and Larry???) should take note!! It also comes with a 90-day warranty promising free replacement of the program media if found to be defective within that time period. (L&Y Computers in Woodbridge is offering the package at \$39.95 with an additional 5% discount to users' group members presenting ID cards.)

Not counting the sample slide show, the VISUALIZER program has three main modules - CREATE slides, SHOW slides and PRINT-OUT slides. Yes, you CAN dump your slides to printer. (How do you think Joe Waters produced the new CURRENT NOTES logo first appearing on the cover of the September edition?) VIZUALIZER also provides one additional fillip - on side B of the disk. A game program that converts your slides to a jig-saw puzzle and allows you to try to properly arrange the pieces using your joystick.

Let's tackle the CREATE SLIDE module first. The Menu screen for this module provides the following functions:

| | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|----------------------------|
| A | ANIMATE COLORS | L | LOAD SLIDE |
| B | BORDER (DRAW) | M | MERGE SLIDE (WITH ANOTHER) |
| C | CIRCLE (DRAW) | N | NEW FONT (USER SUPPLIED) |
| D | DIAGONAL (DRAW) | O | OVAL (DRAW) |
| E | ERASE | P | PAINT (DRAW) |
| F | FILL (DRAW) | R | RECTANGLE (DRAW) |
| H | HELP SCREEN | S | SAVE SLIDE |
| K | NEW COLORS | T | TEXT |
| U | UTILITIES | Z | CAPTION (TEXT WINDOW) |
| D | DELETE FILE | F | FORMAT DISK |
| I | DISK INDEX | R | RENAME FILE |

As you can see, that's a pretty complete variety of menu selections - everything from graphics commands to disk utilities. Most are self-explanatory and many can be found in other graphics programs. The ability to draw circles, ovals or rectangles is certainly commonplace. However, the capabilities of animating your graphics screens, adding text, or even your own

character set (I've never had time for that!), are, I feel, unique to this program.

When first creating your graphics screen (GR. 7 with or w/o the text window) you are provided with four color pots. You can fill each of the pots with any of the sixteen color hues and seven luminances the ATARI computer makes available to you (K command). You can then use any of the graphics functions (PAINT, OVAL, etc) to produce your screen. The exciting feature, at least to me, comes next - adding text to your screen!

The TEXT command provides you with a menu of four sizes and four styles of type. The four sizes are NORMAL (a matrix of 19 horizontal by about 12.5 vertical characters), WIDE (9 x 12.5), TALL (19 x 6), and TALL & WIDE (9 x 6). The four styles include regular, italics, shaded and striped (requires tall size). You can, of course, mix all sizes and styles on the same screen. After making your selection, you enter your text in the frame provided for your use. Using your joystick you then position the frame in the area of the screen where you wish your text to be positioned and hit the fire button. VIOLA!! There it is!! You can even employ the GR.7 text window for caption information using ATARI's standard-size characters.

As I mentioned before, designing my own character sets is not my cup of tea. Even so, I learned there were other character sets available to me. The MODERN, COMPUTER and SCRIPT fonts contained in ALLEN MACROWARE's PRINTWIZ printer-utility program can be used. Just change the filename extenders from FNT to SET and they can be loaded by VISUALIZER using the NEW FONT command. The next question is obvious. The answer is - - - yes! You can mix different fonts on the same screen, as many as you'd like. By the way, I found you can also load the character sets from XLENT SOFTWARE's MEGAFONT program. Unfortunately, the characters are displayed sideways. I thought of one solution to that problem, but turning my monitor on it's side didn't seem to be worth the effort.

In any case, your next move, if you wish, is to ANIMATE your screen using one of the six choices available to you. Command A1 switches all elements of your screen composed of the color in pot #1 on and off producing a neon sign effect. A2 switches color pots 1 and 2 back and forth while A3 rotates the colors in pots 1, 2 and 3. A4 (MARQUEE) replaces the area occupied by pot #1 with the familiar scrolling horizontal cylinders of the ATARI's rainbow of colors. A5 (SPARKLE) you've got to see to appreciate, while A5 (RAINBOW) is a more subtle version of the MARQUEE effect. You can, of

course, save any animation effect you might select with your graphics screen. Further, you can merge slides with one another, although you can't merge animation effects - only one effect can be employed at a time.

Your only restrictions in the use of the CREATE module of VISUALIZER are the limitations of your own imagination. The effects you can create with the use of the graphics drawing functions, text insertion, use of both upper and lower case lettering (even graphics keys), inverse video and animation effects are nearly infinite.

The SHOW SLIDES module allows you to select from and sort "slides" from your screen library and load them. You can set the automatic timer to control the length of time each of your slides will appear on the screen before the next screen is loaded and displayed. Or, if you chose, you can toggle the next load with the spacebar or fire button. You can hold the current slide on the screen beyond it's allotted time, or even reverse the feed to the last screen loaded. Shades of the KODAK Carousel projector!

The PRINT SLIDES module is straight-forward and really requires no specific comment. I really should mention, however, that the manual includes a handy section showing how each of your color pots or fill areas will look once dumped. Another nice touch.

Well, as a former Redskin owner once said of George Allen - "I gave him an unlimited budget, and he exceeded it!", Joe said I could make this review as long as I'd like and I think I'm already on installment six. So just a few additional comments before I close out.

First, let us suppose you want to show a series of "slides" to your local computer group and that you want to accompany the slides with your own narrative comments. Unfortunately, you can't stand near enough to the computer to use the spacebar or fire button to cue your loads. Also, you can't use the automatic timing feature 'cause you may want to spend 30 seconds discussing slide #1 and six minutes discussing slide #8. The VISUALIZER manual has an easy solution for this problem using your 410 or 1010 program recorder.

Secondly, let's take the first problem one step further. You actually want to accompany your slide show with taped narrative comments. The VISUALIZER manual contains a schematic for wiring your own cable to connect your stereo tape-recorder, computer and disk drive. Or, at additional cost, you can purchase such a

cable direct from MAXIMUS with complete instructions for producing synchronized narration tapes.

Almost finally, suppose you'd like to include a VISUALIZER screen in one of your own BASIC programs. All is not lost. There's a short 8-line routine in the manual for just this purpose. Unfortunately, animation effects cannot be handled in this manner.

Finally, let me mention one other advantage of using the VISUALIZER program to which I have previously alluded and which I think MAXIMUS should have featured in their advertising. You say you're into home video. You take lots of tape of the local high school football team or your daughter's cheerleader squad. How 'bout Aunt Tillie's 50th wedding anniversary or your trip to the Grand Tetons. You say you've got one of those fancy cameras. It lets you add titles to your tape by punching on those little keys on its side. But, god-darn it, by the time you've got the title positioned correctly, your son's 100 yard dash is long over. And he's back in the locker room taking a shower. Tell you what, Bunky. Forget those little title keys. Punch-up your title screens with your VISUALIZER program. Add some class and FLASH to those home movies!

I guess by this time you've concluded that on a one to ten scale I'd rate this program a 10. You're wrong! It's a sure-bet 12!! MAXIMUS should offer a satisfaction-promised, money-back guarantee. They wouldn't lose a dime. There's only one problem VISUALIZER hasn't been able to solve for me. How to avoid giving the package back to Joe! [Problem solved, Jack. It's yours. Ed.]

=====

Strip Poker

by ARTWORX, disk \$29.95

=====

Reviewed by Jay Gerber

Strip Poker is a poker simulation unlike any you may have seen on computer. The game lives up to its title by presenting strikingly realistic pictures of either of two rather pretty girls in the process of playing a game of that all time adult favorite, strip poker.

Upon booting the game, you are asked to pick between two opponents: Susie, who is not that hot of a poker player, and Melissa, who could possibly bankrupt the casinos at Atlantic City.

I would recommend Suzy to those who aren't that great at poker. So the opening screen shows Suzy dressed in

jeans and a blouse. Under the graphics screen is your hand. Five very well drawn playing cards show you your hand. The computer automatically takes \$5 for ante, then asks you for your first bet. You may bet any amount between \$5 and \$25, but be careful, or you'll lose your money, and Suzy will remain fully dressed!

After your initial bet, Suzy will decide whether to stay, raise, or drop. Always remember that Suzy is not too adept at bluffing. Then, after the bets are made, you can discard and pick up to 5 new cards. After seeing them, you can decide whether to bet again or fold. After Suzy bets, the computer shows you her hand. If you have a higher hand, Suzy loses her money. After her initial \$100 is gone, she will offer her blouse. This item of clothing is worth \$100. If you lose the next round, she regains her blouse, on the other hand, if you win ... well ...!

The game continues until Suzy is completely stripped (Vanessa Williams, eat your heart out!), or until you lose all your money. (By the way, when you lose \$100, you are supposed to take off an article of your clothing too, but if you cheat, who will know?!!)

The poker program in itself is excellent. You have all the options someone at any of the world's major casinos would. You choose all your options through the joystick, moving it to point, then hitting the fire button to make your choice. When playing Melissa, you must use all the poker skills you can in order to beat her. This is great practice for a weekend in Los Vegas, or even a night with the guys. The incentive for winning is more than adequate, as both female opponents are more than amply endowed! And for our female readers, ... you can order an alternative picture disk from ARTWORX with male counterparts for Suzi and Melissa.

All in all, Strip Poker is a really good product, both in terms of the playability of the poker game as well as in the quality of the stunning graphics.

=====

The Seven Cities of Gold

by Electronic Arts, Disk \$40.

=====

Reviewed by Jay Gerber

Everything ELECTRONIC ARTS has released has been high quality entertainment with precise attention to detail and very few, if any flaws. Their newest release, The Seven Cities of Gold, is no exception. Ozark

Softscape's team of four have, if nothing else, topped their previous mega-hit, M.U.L.E., also by EA.

Seven Cities is an action/adventure game like none I've ever played. You are a Spanish conquistador out in search of fame, glory, and gold. The crown has granted you four ships and 500 men to discover the New World, and bring back its treasures.

You set sail for the New World in 1492. You have until 1540 to entirely discover the natives, rivers, land, forests, jungles, swamps, etc., of this land. You must plan your expedition carefully, choosing the number of men, and keeping an ever-running-out supply of food. You must decide how to deal with the natives. Some are anxious to trade for your goods, while some are hostile, and would rather see you dead. You can set up missions and forts to keep surplus gold and men, but you must make sure they always have enough food. You can return home to buy more ships, men, food, and goods, and be promoted (or humiliated) by the queen. Then set sail once again to find fame and fortune.

The gameplay of Seven Cities is very simplistic. You choose all options from menus that differ depending on your situation. When traveling, you can opt to see a map of the area you have already traveled, and your latitude (very useful for trying to find your ship on land). Whenever you want to drop off or pick up supplies, whether in Europe, a village, or a fort, you use your joystick to select the item to transfer, and then to select how many of that item.

All movement is controlled by joystick. Direction of travel corresponds to the position of the joystick. Speed can be chosen through a menu option. To enter cities, mines, forts, etc., just position your cursor (always in the center of a fine-scrolling landscape), on top of them.

Although the program is easy to use, the actual game is not. When you enter a village, you must decide what type of attitude you want to express. You can cautiously walk in and engage the leader in trade, or recklessly storm in and kill the whole lot of them. If you trade, you are limited to the number of goods you have on hand. If you decide to conquer the natives, you get what you want free, but they won't take to kindly to you the next time you decide to visit. Also, neighboring villages will hear about your ruthless tactics and refuse to trade with you. And rumor has it that the queen doesn't like explorers who can do nothing but kill and destroy. On the other hand, it is much easier than trying to deal with those simple natives.

When you have explored all of North and South America, or just get tired of seeing the same old sights, you can have the computer make up an entirely new world. The disk has a program called World Maker. When you run it, it will create an entire world using plate tectonics and social factors, so you know it won't create some rinky-dink, non-realistic map.

After every expedition to the New World, the queen will rate you from poor to excellent, with good being the median. If you consistently get high ratings, she will promote you to Captain General, or even, if you're good enough, Viceroy. The main factor the queen considers in her ratings is the amount of gold you bring back. The queen will be understanding if you kill all the natives and almost starve to death, if you bring back enough gold!

In conclusion, Seven Cities is a well-designed, intricately detailed, and all around fun game to play.

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=====

ACTION! Runtime Library
OSS Precision Software Tools
Disk \$30.

=====

Reviewed by Ed Seward

Do you wish you could use that favorite ACTION! program without the cartridge or share it with a friend who doesn't have ACTION! (the language to make the stepup from BASIC). Then the Runtime Library is for you.

First let's consider the documentation provided in/with this package. Whereas the ACTION! Programmer's Aid Disk came with all it's documentation on the disk, the Runtime Library comes with a 23 page printed expansion to the manual and five or six pages in disk document files. The printed information covers all one needs to know to get started and more.

The code to be substituted for the ACTION! cartridge is provided in two formats. The first "SYS.ACT" contains all the code required to replace the cartridge. This is fine for bigger programs but what about those small ones such as adding a command to DOSXL. There are six other files which contain portions of "SYS.ACT". The first of these, "SYSLIB.ACT", is primarily internal procedures. The other files containing runtime code are:

"SYSIO.ACT" - IO routines
 "SYSGR.ACT" - graphic routines
 "SYSMISC.ACT" - the paddle, joystick, sound, peek and poke routines
 "SYSBLK.ACT" - block memory routines
 "SYSSTR.ACT" - the string handling routines.

Also on the disk are three very useful collections of routines. The first, "ST.ACT", provides a means to output the symbol table to a specified device during the compilation of the source code. This is helpful in making sure that one includes all the proper runtime code blocks and in defining variables in the proper places in large programs. The second, "BIGST.ACT", alters the symbol table to allow for more global variables. Lastly there is "CATCH.ACT". The purpose of this module is to allow the user to control the flow of the program when an error condition is encountered. This allows one to recover from most errors. This is also helpful in debugging a program being compiled with the Runtime Library.

Did someone say the ACTION! source code should be running properly before using the Runtime Library?

You're right. However, there is a possibility of the runtime code performing in a different manner than the code produced by the cartridge. I would say the code generated by the ACTION! Runtime Library is not unique in having this problem to the slight degree I encountered it. This may, in fact, have been due to my bending the ACTION! rules slightly. The cartridge permitted the bending but the runtime code does not. I found it best to copy the compiled code to a spare disk before executing the program.

Included on the disk are three sample programs to help the user get started. Two of these are just routine. The third is the Kaleidoscope Demo from the Programmer's Aid Disk but modified to be compiled to ROM. Although most people won't use this capability, it reminds one of just how versatile ACTION! is.

Now we come to an unexpected bonus on the Runtime Library Disk - the DOS file is actually DOSXL. There is no documentation nor menu provided but the commands can be found in sector 37 as follows: REM, CARtridge, RENAME, END, SCR, NOS, RENAME, PROtect, UNProtect, SAVE, LOAD, RUN, ERASE, DIRectory, and TYPE. There is no write DOS nor format commands, but these and other useful commands can be compiled using the Runtime Library and placed on disks as "COM" files.

Below is an example to serve two purposes. First it contains a module to access CIO that was found on CompuServe. Secondly, it writes DOS to disk.

MODULE ; BLKIO.ACT

```

INCLUDE "D:SYSLIB.ACT"
; (c) 1983 ACS
; Copyright (c) 1983
; by Action Computer Services (ACS)
;
; This software may be incorporated in
; other software packages providing
; that this copyright notice is also
; incorporated as well.

; version 1.0
; last modified August 25, 1983

BYTE CIO_status
CHAR FUNC CIO=*(BYTE dev, CARD addr,
                size, BYTE cmd, aux1, aux2)
; see hardware manual for description
; of CIOV.
; IOCB# = dev
; ICCOM = cmd

```

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