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CURRENT NOTES

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Dear Editor,

I wish to extend a special thanks to Jack Holthzhauer for his very favorable review of ***Visualizer*** and also to Joe Waters and Jim Stevenson jr. for their excellent demo at the October Novatari meeting. Thanks guys.

Visualizer can be ordered directly from MAXIMUS or obtained at my McLean office. Call me at 734-4200 for directions. If you get your program from us and you need help learning to use ***Visualizer's*** many features, I'll be glad to sit down with you and show you the ropes. Call in advance to make sure I'll be there the day you need a demo.

Visualizer has two extraordinary built-in features not mentioned in the manual and not ordinarily activated: a player animation driver and a real-time music driver. Individual slides can have players dancing around on the screen and full 16-bit real-time music playing, all this in addition to any color animation and graphics displays. Data for player animation and/or music is simply appended to the slide file.

Creating the data is the tough part, though. ***Visualizer*** was designed to be easy enough for kids, and it is. It takes at least an intermediate level BASIC programmer, however, to understand the player/missile file formats and incorporate them into slides. I am working on editor programs that will help the user create these files and then append them to the slides. I'll publish those editors here in Current Notes in future issues if space permits.

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Current Notes

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SynFile+

BY SYNAPSE, DISK, $69.95

Rviewed by Joe Waters

Summary. SYNAPSE describes *SynFile+* as "the most powerful and advanced database management system ever created for ATARI Home Computers." This claim may, indeed, be true. But, before you run out and plop down your money, let me caution you that the first part of the phrase "most powerful and advanced database management system ever created" is qualified by the second part "for ATARI Home Computers." *SynFile+* does not compete with mainframe database management packages or with the more powerful 16-bit microcomputer packages like *dBASE III*. It is, however, functionally very competitive with any other product available for the ATARI, and, indeed, can compete favorably with many of the "filing manager" programs currently available for the IBM PC (excluding, of course, speed and data storage advantages provided by a 16-bit machine.) Bottom line: this is the system NOVATARI, and Current Notes, will use to maintain club records.

SynFile+ Packaging: IBM Compatible?. The first thing one notices about *SynFile+* is the packaging -- which is similar for all the SYNAPSE series. The program is delivered in a format which IBM has made popular: an attractive cardboard box encasing a three-ring notebook binder which holds the documentation and the program diskettes. The documentation is first class. It not only looks good, but is also well written. Two disks are included. One is the Program Disk, it contains all the code needed to run *SynFile+*. The second disk is a Tutorial, written in BASIC, that covers everything you need to know to use *SynFile+*. The binder, the documentation, the provision of the tutorial -- all are indications of a quality product. Only the flimsy nature of the outside cardboard box hints at the fact that this is a "poor man's" DBMS.

Learning SynFile+. The authors have structured the manual in the form of a tutorial that gently walks the user through the step-by-step creation of a demonstration database. In spite of the fact that the manual is quite good, most users will never read it. Most users never read any manual. The tutorial disk, however, will be used. Stick it in, turn on your ATARI, and there you have your own private course. An initial menu lets you choose between Database Introduction, Creating and Editing Forms, Entering and Retrieving Records, and Listing and Labeling Reports. As you work through the tutorial, the system simulates the operation of *SYNFILE+*. Instead of entering commands or data however, you press the space bar and the tutorial does all the typing for you.

SynFile+ is not difficult to learn. By the time you finish the tutorial, you'll be ready to go. After you create one, or perhaps, two databases, input some data and produce some reports, you will be an accomplished *SynFile+* user. When you learn how to create new databases from old descriptions and merge data from one file to another, you will be a *SynFile+* expert.

Learning *SynFile+* is certainly facilitated by the fact that *SynFile+* is a simple program to use. The system is menu driven: you're presented with various choices; use the cursor keys and select one. If that choice leads to another menu, it "pops-up" immediately and you make another selection. If the choice requires you to provide information, such as the number of characters to reserve for a particular item, you are prompted appropriately. If you don't like any of your choices and want to step back to the previous menu, simply press the ESC key.

I do want to leave the impression that *SynFile+* is easy to learn and easy to use. However, let me provide a small caution here. It's not perfect. ESC doesn't back you out of a choice in every instance. There are times when you have to throw in some garbage answers to get to a screen where ESC works. Similarly, there are other instances where I have run into little annoyances that I wish had been handled differently. I will point them out as I go along.

Using SynFile+. I want to give you a feeling of how *SynFile+* works by using it to create a simple database, for example, one that keeps track of your check-writing activities. Put in the Program Disk (no BASIC, *SynFile+* is written in FORTH), and turn on your ATARI. When you finally see the initial *SynFile+* screen (70 seconds), the bottom line of the screen presents you with three choices:

```
FILES    RECORDS    REPORTS
```

The MAIN MENU. There are only three initial choices. FILES deals with choosing the file you want to work with and includes many of the standard file handling commands (copy, rename, format, etc). RECORDS is used to maintain your database (insert, delete, and change records). REPORTS is used when you want to generate a list of information or preparing mailing labels.

When you start, the **FILES** option is highlighted. Press RETURN and a "pop-up menu" detailing the available FILE options appears:

```
Open          Subfile      Density
Close         Merge        Format
Copy          Rename       Delete
DIF->SynFile  SynFile->DIF
```

File Options. The **OPEN** option is highlighted. Before you press return once more, let's look briefly at the file options. The meaning of **Copy**, **Rename**, **Delete**, and **Format** should be familiar to anyone who has worked with disk files. **Density**. Yes, *SynFile+* does work on either single or double density disks (although if you have two or more drives, all must use the same density. ????? What a pity! I can't use an old 810 (SD) with a new INDUS.(DD)

The "DIF" (Data Interchange Format) options are used to send data to another program (**SYNFILE->DIF**) or to input data from another program (**DIF->SYNFILE**). *SynFile+* allows transfer of data. How fast is another matter. I wrote a program to convert a FileManager 800 database of 150 records (with twelve fields) to DIF format. I then used

the *SynFile+* option to convert this DIF file into a *SynFile+* file. Although it worked, it took one hour to complete the conversion. In the time it took to write my conversion program and then run it successfully, I may very well have been able to get the task done quicker by just rekeying in all the data.

[Note: I had planned to include my conversion program in *Current Notes*. However, I discovered that SYNAPSE will have a conversion utility to move *FileManager 800* files directly to *SynFile+* files by the time you read this. They will make that disk available free to ATARI User Groups.]

Subfile is used to create a subset of an existing database and **Merge** is used to combine one database with another (similarly structured) database. Before anything can be done to a database, it must be "opened"; you would use the OPEN option. When you are done using a database, you use the CLOSE option.

Creating a Database. The first step in creating a database, therefore, would be to use the OPEN option under FILES. Press RETURN and, normally, a list of all the files on your data disk appears. Initially, there are no files on your data disk. In fact, the Program Disk is still in the disk drive. The only thing that appears on the screen is:

* CREATE *

If you had placed a data disk in the drive before you tried the OPEN option, all the data files on your disk, as well as the CREATE option, would have been listed. You would move the cursor to the file you wanted to open and press RETURN. To create a new file, you choose the CREATE option.

Unfortunately, the CREATE PROGRAM is not in the main SYNFILE program. Therefore, if you have a data disk in the drive and you want to create a new file, you have to remove the data disk and insert the Program Disk to load **Create**. Once it is loaded, you remove the Program Disk and put your data disk back in. After you "create" the structure for your new database, you save it to your data disk, remove that disk, put in the Program Disk, and reload *SynFile+*. All the other features in *SynFile+* are in the main program. If only SYNAPSE could have fit CREATE in as well, the user could have avoided all this disk swapping. Unfortunately, 48K does have its limits.

Why not put the data disk in drive 2 and keep the program disk in drive 1? Another "unfortunately." *SynFile+* will only open data disks on drive number 1. This is one of those little annoyances.

The Create Menu. Once CREATE is loaded, another sub-menu appears above the FILES option:

Create form	Edit form	SynFile+

The names of all files on your data disk are listed above the menu (in this case nothing is listed since nothing is there). **Create form** is highlighted. Press RETURN and a prompt appears in the menu window asking you to supply a name for your database. Enter a name and press RETURN. Now you are greeted with an essentially blank screen. It's time to define the form you would like your database to take.

Designing a Database Form. Imagine your database as a sheet of paper with one row of information for every check you write. You have six columns labeled "Check No.", "Date", "To:", "Amount", "Item", and "Code." Everytime you write a check you would fill in another row on your paper. Each row represents a separate **RECORD**. The column headings are called **FIELDS**. Each field represents some item of information, pertaining to a specific check, that you wish to record. Some items are dollar amounts (Amount), some are textual information (To, Item, Code), some represent integer numbers (Check No.), and some may be dates (Date). The first step in creating a database is nothing more than specifying the number and type of items (FIELDS) we want to keep in our database. This is what the CREATE option does in *SynFile+*.

Positioning the Fields. A form is used to define a database. You start with a blank screen of 21 rows and 80 columns (the screen scrolls left or right as needed showing you 40 of the possible 80 columns at any one time). Use the cursor keys to move wherever you want the first item in your database to be displayed on this form. When you are at the position you want, type in a name for this first field (*SynFile+* allows up to 64 fields). The name can be anything you want (up to 31 characters) and will be the name you use to refer to this item later for creating reports. Press RETURN and another sub-menu appears:

Text	Numeric	Cumulative
Look-Up	Dollar	Record #
Date	Integer	Counter
Conditional	Computed	

SynFile+ Field Types. You may use any of eleven different field types to characterize your data. The meaning of **Text** is obvious. SynFile+ allows up to 255 characters in a text field. That's over three lines on an 80-column page. Plenty of space if you'd like to keep free-form comments in your records.

Numbers can be stored as dollar amounts (**Dollar**), integers (**Integer**), decimal numbers (**Numeric**), or computed values (**Computed**). This last type lets you define one item in your database as a function of other items. The definition can include the usual arithmetic operators (+ - * /) as well as six *SynFile+* functions (ABS, SQRT, LOG, LOG10, EXP, and EXP10).

The **Conditional** field lets you define a text field as being conditional on another field in the form. For example, you might have a field called BALANCE which could display as either "Profit" or "Loss" depending on whether the value in some other field was greater than or less than zero.

The **Date** field type will automatically format as __/__/__ to hold the month, day, and year. In addition, when you are entering data, the contents of the date field will remain constant with each new record as new records are entered. Thus, you can enter today's date on the first record you insert and that date will automatically be carried forward for every record you enter until you explicitly change it.

The **Look-Up** field can be particularly useful. It represents a text field where you specify, in advance, all of the allowable entries. For example, if you are recording student schedules, the number of possible courses is fixed and known beforehand. You could record all the course titles in a look-up table. When records are being inserted, only values in the look-up table would be accepted for this field. In fact, if you press the ATARI key (normally gives you inverse video), the permissible values for the look-up field are automatically displayed. When you see the one you want, hit RETURN and it is entered! If you do not enter anything into this type of field, the first value in the look-up table (the default) is automatically entered.

The **Record #** and the **Counter** field types are also useful. With **Record #**, *SynFile+* will automatically insert an integer (starting with 1 and increasing by 1 up to a maximum of 32,767) for every new record you insert into the database. The **Counter** field type allows you to specify the starting number (between 0 and 999) and the increment (1-100).

A completed input form for our checkbook database might take this appearance:

```
CHECK NO.: _______  DATE: __/__/__

TO: ________________________________

AMOUNT:$__________   CODE: ___

ITEM: ____________________________
```

Changing Your Mind. A very useful feature of forms design in *SynFile+* is that you are not stuck with your initial layout. If you want to move any particular item, just move the cursor to the first letter in the item name and press RETURN. Another sub-menu pops up. This one lets you either **MOVE** the item, give it a **NEW NAME**, a **NEW TYPE**, a **NEW LENGTH**, or just **DELETE** it. If you choose to move it, the item name and it's field are changed to inverse video. You use the cursor keys to move this field. When you are happy with your new position, simply press RETURN and the field is moved permanently.

Note: even after you have created your form and inserted records into your database, you can change the form by using the **EDIT FORM** option. Moving a field or changing its name or changing the length of a numeric field can be accomplished without making any changes in the database. Other changes, such as changing field length or changing the type of field will require you to save your "revised" form under a new database name. The information in your original database can then be transferred to the revised database by using the *SynFile+* **MERGE** option.

Indexing Your Database. When you return to *SynFile+* and open your newly created database, the first thing *SynFile+* requires is that you choose one or more indexes. *SynFile+* keeps track of your records by creating an index on one (or more up to a maximum of 16) of your fields. If you try and retrieve a record based on the contents of a field in your index, the retrieval is very quick -- *SynFile+* knows exactly where the record is stored on disk. If you retrieve a record based on a non-indexed field, *SynFile+* has to search through every record in your database to determine whether the record meets the search criteria or not. Index on the fields you will later be searching on.

When you list your data, it will appear sorted (ascending or descending, whichever you prefer) on the index field(s). If you want your data sorted by some other field, it is a simple matter to re-index the file on whatever new field(s) you want.

Entering Records. Entering data is simplicity itself. Open the appropriate file, move to the RECORDS option, and press RETURN. You will see the following sub-menu:

```
Retrieve     Update all    Re-index
Enter        Delete all

FILES      RECORDS      REPORTS
```

Select **Enter** and the form you just finished designing appears on the screen. Fill it in. You can use the cursor control keys to jump from field to field making whatever changes you like until you are satisfied you have the correct data entered. Press START and the record is automatically inserted into your database and a new blank form appears. Enter as many records as you like.

Retrieving a Record. Choose the **Retrieve** option and, once again, your blank form appears. You specify the records to retrieve using this blank form. For example, if you wanted to recall check number 123, you would enter "123" in the "CHECK NO." field. Only the record that had a value of "123" under check number would be retrieved. If you wanted to retrieve all checks that were greater than $100, you could move to the AMOUNT field, press the ">" symbol and then enter then number 100; only checks with amounts greater than (or equal to) $100 would be retrieved.

Search Criteria. If you want an exact match, enter the match you want in the appropriate field. You can also request items less than or equal to "<", greater than or equal to ">", or not equal to "#". Note: you cannot specify a range as a search criteria, e.g. "greater than 50 but less than 100".

On text fields you can use the asterisk (*) as a wild character. Thus, "A*" would mean anything that begins

with the letter A, "*MD." would mean anything that ends with the letters "MD.", "*ATARI*" would mean anything that has the letters "ATARI" anywhere in the text field. Ranges are similarly not available in text field searches, e.g. you can not request items "greater than B and less than D."

You can search on two fields at once, for example, find all checks > $100 AND code = "CL". In fact, *SynFile+* allows you to search on up to 16 different fields at once. When multiple fields are used, you specify whether to use AND or OR in satisfying the search criteria.

Updating a Record. When you retrieve a record, the form you designed is displayed on the screen with the data relevant to that record. "Update" is the default mode. If you want to make a change, move the cursor to the appropriate field and change it. When you go on to the next record, the changes you made are automatically stored on the diskette.

A particularly nice feature of *SynFile+* is the multiple update capability. Suppose you had recorded LWC in the "To" field on a number of different checks. Now you want to go through your database and change "LWC" to be "Local Water Company". You would use the UPDATE-ALL option. Enter a search criteria that would identify all records with a "To" field value of "LWC". Another blank form would then appear in which you would enter any changes you wanted to make. Enter the new expression in the "To" field. Press RETURN and all the relevant records in the database are updated.

A multiple delete capability is also included. If you specify a search criteria "Date" < "12/30/84", every entry with a date prior to 1985 would be deleted. This could be an incredible time saving feature. Of course, if you make a mistake and forget to put in any search criteria, every record in your database is deleted. But since you made a back-up of your data disk, there is no real harm done. You do make back-ups, don't you?

Reports in SynFile+. I'd love to be able to say that *SynFile+* gives you any kind of report you'd like to have. But flexibility in report formatting is one of the features that comes only with the higher-priced DBMSs. There are only three different ways to look at your data using *SynFile+*. You can examine (and print) an individual record, you can print a "list" where every line corresponds to a record, or you can make up "labels" where the positioning of items is up to you.

Individual Records. The printed version of your individual records will look exactly like the form you designed. Field names as well as the data in the field are printed on paper in the precise locations you designed into your form. To print a record, you first retrieve it. When it is displayed on your terminal screen, press the OPTION key and a sub-menu appears offering you a choice of printing the record, calculating the record, or deleting it. If you choose PRINT, the record is printed on your printer. (The calculate option is used to force *SynFile+* to calculate "computed" fields and allow you to view the results before the record is saved.)

Printing a List. Both the list and label reports are found under the REPORTS option of the Main Menu. To produce a list, you enter the name of the field you want listed on a "print format line.". You may include up to 40 field names (columns) up to a total of 232 characters. The field names become the column headings. If you append a "+" to numeric field names, *SynFile+* will calculate a column total and print it at the bottom of your list.

SynFile+ will automatically determine the amount of spaced needed for each field (the greater of the field length or field name). However, you can change this default setting by repositioning the field name on the print format line. For example, if you wanted to leave an additional five spaces between the first and second fields in your list, you would move the cursor to the beginning of the second field name and use the CNTRL - INSERT key combination to insert five blanks.

You can send your list (or labels) to the screen, to a disk, or to the printer. If you send your list to the screen, however, you will only be able to see the first 40 columns. The screen does not scroll to allow you to see any data beyond column 40.

If you choose to send the list to printer or disk, you can specify the total page length and include a report title. The page length feature will print the number of lines you request and then eject to a new page, print the column headings again, and continue on with your list. The report title only appears at the beginning of your list and is not repeated on every page. You can use the report title to send any desired printer codes (for example, to turn on condensed print) to your printer.

The Labels Option. When you select the labels option, *SynFile+* gives you a screen very similar to your initial create form screen. Move the cursor anywhere on the screen and position fields wherever you like. This function is used primarily for generating mailing labels but can have other uses as well. You are allowed any arrangement of fields on an 80 column by 21 line form. The left margin, lines between labels, and the columns between labels can all be set from 0 to 999. Up to 32 such forms can be printed across the page.

SynFile+ allows up to 32 fields to be displayed in a label. A trailing "," concatenates adjacent field data and prints a comma and a space. A trailing "<" concatenates adjacent field data and puts a space between the data.

After you define your label placement, and indicate the number of labels on a page and the desired column and line spacing, you are allowed to indicate any desired search criteria. Finally, you select **PRINTER**, **DISK**, or **SCREEN** to receive the output. You come back to this choice after your report is finished in case you want to send it to another device.

If your initial label design was not quite correct, that's too bad. Because *SynFile+* does not remember what you specified for your list or label entries. If you go

back, the print format line for lists and the screen for labels is blank. This is another major annoyance. You seldom get things right the first time. If *SynFile+* remembered your last selections, all you would have to do is edit it to make any desired changes.

SynFile+ Utilities. This review has already gone longer than I would have liked. So I will not dwell on the various utilities. I will say that it is possible to use the DIF option to move data from other systems into SynFile. The data comes in with fields named "A", "B", "C", etc. and with a minimum text field length of 16 characters after conversion. You can use the edit form option to change field names. If you want to change field lengths as well, you have to define a new database with the same names as that in your original DIF conversion and then use the MERGE option to combine the two. Although it all can be done, it will take a good deal of time and lots of patience.

You send *SynFile+* reports to *ATARIWRITER* by sending your report to a disk file and then later using the merge option in *ATARIWRITER* to include that disk file in your *ATARIWRITER* program. I have not tried this option.

Conclusion. I have covered the use of *SynFile+* in great detail. If you were already familiar with File Manager 800 or Data Perfect, this review should give you a good idea of the relative merits of *SynFile+*. If you never used any DBMS, you should by now have a pretty good idea of just what one does. Is *SynFile+* worth it? To some people, YES; to others, NO. I do know that with the recent reduction in prices, the proportion of people who will conclude "YES" will certainly increase substantially.

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SYNCALC

BY SYNAPSE, DISK, $69.95

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Reviewed by Jack Holtzhauer

SynCalc, one of several integrated applications prorams recently developed for the ATARI by SYNAPSE, is an "advanced electronic spreadsheet". So what's an electronic spreadsheet and why do I need one?

Electronic Spreadsheets. Very simplisticly, I guess a spreadsheet might be compared to a large piece of graph paper, each square (or cell) of which can contain text, numerical data, or a formala used to calculate a numerical result. The 128 columns on the *SynCalc* spreadsheet are identifed by letters running from A to DX. The rows are identified numerically and run from 1 to 255, providing a matrix of 32,640 cells. Individual cells are identified by their column/row coordinates. The cell at the intersection of column A and row 1 is cell A1. The cell at the intersection of column W and row 42 is cell W42, ad infinitum.

A simple use of a spreadsheet might be to calculate the area of a circle by inputing the radius (R) in cell A1 and the formula PI*((A1)^2), or $PI*R^2$, in cell A2. Upon calculation, the area of a circle with the given radius would appear in cell A2. Admittedly, not many of us would use a spreadsheet for such a purpose, but suppose this was just the first step in a series of complex engineering calculations you wished to perform for a wide range of radii. By merely entering your complete series of formulae on the spreadsheet, you can perform your repetitive calculations by merely changing the single value in cell A1.

Personally, I have found spreadsheets to be an invalable aid in handling family finances. Several days after I retired back in '79, my wife stormed out of the house muttering the old gag line "for better or for worse, but, dammit - not for lunch!" I had been under her feet "systemzing" her kitchen by alphabetizing all the little spice cans, etc. To keep me at arm's length, she promptly got a job selling new homes for a major builder. She now earns both salary and commission income, part of which is invested in company stock, employer sponsored mutual funds, and a couple of tax dodges. Projecting tax liability with all the employee expense deductions, auto costs, 401K income exclusions, investment fund earnings, capital gains (and losses), etc., was a real hassle. I solved the problem by dumping all the applicable IRS forms onto *SynCalc* spreadsheets. Now, once a month, I merely enter our newly projected annual income and related data on the applicable sheets, and all the calculations are updated for me.

In short, to quote from the first page of its manual, *SynCalc* ". . . can function like a business or scientific worksheet, combining the convenience of a pocket calculator with the powerful memory and electronic screen capabilities of the personal computer." As illustrated in the simple example given above, it's great for "what if" types of forecasting or planning analysis and there are a number of books on the market describing a wide variety of possible ways by which the home computerist can make use of a spreadsheet program. More on these later, but first - - -

Documentation. The one-disk *SynCalc* program comes packaged in a 9x7 three-ring vinyl covered looseleaf binder with a rigid cardboard dust cover. The documentation, consisting of over 140 pages, includes a folding command guide which can be removed from the binder for ready reference. The instruction manual itself is divided into three parts (no intent to plagarize the first sentence from Ceasar's Gallic Wars). A general introduction is followed by a two-part tutorial which steps the new user thru the intricacies of the program. The final section, some fifty pages in length, provides a detailed description of *SynCalc* commands, functions, error messages, etc., and offers a few hints on saving space and improving speed of calculation. An index is also included.

Hardware. System requirements include 48K and at least one disk drive (will support two). If booted on a non-XL ATARI, you'll have 25K free RAM for program use, but only

21K if using an XL (increased to 25K if Translator Disk used). The program will also recognize the presence of an Axlon Rampower 128K or Mosaic 64K Select board, giving you the extra RAM to play with. (Available at L&Y Electronics, Woodbridge, VA., at $49.95 with an additional 5% discount for users' group members presenting ID cards. Incidently, John Linton of L&Y reports SYNAPSE will provide a back-up disk for $20.00 upon receipt of your warranty card and proof of purchase.)

A couple of major features of the *SynCalc*, *SynFile+*, and *SynTrend/Graph* programs before we go any further. All three can produce data interchange format files (DIF files) for use by its sister programs. In addition, *SynCalc* and *SynFile+* can produce text files for use with *ATARIWRITER*. This mutual compatibility provides the user with a fairly powerful package of integrated word-processing, spreadsheet, database, statistical and graphing applications programs.

SynCalc vs VisiCalc. The only other major spreadsheet program currently available for the ATARI is *VisiCalc*, and it might be best to describe *SynCalc* with this in mind. How does it compare to the ATARI version of the *VisiCalc*, the godfather of all spreadsheets? Very well, indeed. It has all the features of my first-generation ATARI *VisiCalc*, with some added ingredients. *SynCalc* includes the statistical functions sample mean, sample standard deviation, sample variance and range (difference between the minimum and maximum values within a range), all features missing from *VisiCalc* for the ATARI. Unlike *VisiCalc*, *SynCalc* also includes the logical function IF/THEN/ELSE and the financial functions needed to compute the future value of an annuity or a loan payment, given the principal, interest and term of the loan. *SynCalc* will even sort alpha or numeric data for you and, if you wish, duplicate it in its new configuration elsewhere on the sheet, or merely replace it from whence it came. Text entry is also easier. *VisiCalc* permits text entry only cell by cell. If you're in a six space cell and wish to use a nine letter heading (label), you've got to toggle to the next cell to enter the last three characters. *SynCalc* permits text entry to overflow to the next cell, and the next, as necessary. The list goes on and on! Is Synapse confident their product beats the ATARI version of *VisiCalc*? Could be. They've included a routine for those of you with *VisiCalc* files you'd like to convert to *SynCalc* format.

SynCalc is compatible with most printers and, if desired, will generate condensed or compressed type with the ATARI 825 & 1025, EPSON, GEMINI and NEC/C.ITOH products.

Working with SynCalc. Mastering program execution is not difficult. The user has three choices as to how he might wish to execute most formatting controls or "DOS" functions. Two involve use of the menu tree. The third is the "expert user's mode". For example, if you wish to change the width of column X to twelve spaces from the default value of eight, you can use the menu tree to accomplish your purpose. You first hit the OPTION key to display the four sub-menu selections on the bottom of your screen, then the arrow keys and return to make your selection - COMMAND in this instance. The 16-item COMMAND sub-menu is then displayed. You again use your arrow keys to toggle to **WIDTH** and hit return. You are then asked how many spaces you wish in the column in question, 12 in this instance. After responding to this query, you're asked to identify the first column in the range of columns you wish to change. You can then merely enter the column letter, X in this instance (menu/keyboard entry mode), or toggle your screen cursor to column X and hit return (menu/cursor point mode). You identify the last column in the range in a similar fashion, and your mission is accomplished.

Does that sound complex and time consuming? Maybe so. But you can accomplish the same purpose with only six keystrokes using the expert user's mode - **"/FW12X"**, slash for expert user's mode, F for format, W for width, 12 for value and X for column involved. Incidently, as you toggle through either of the menu command modes, the appropriate expert user's command is displayed in the upper left-hand corner of the screen - a feature most helpful to the new user.

Function Summary. Inasmuch as this article is meant to be an overview, not a tutorial, I'm going to close by merely providing you with a listing of most features, functions, and formating controls *SynCalc* makes available to the user. (See accompanying table.) Readers generally familiar with spreadsheet programs may find this helpful in analyzing the completness of the package.

References. But others may still be wondering whether a spreadsheet program might be worth an outlay of fifty-bucks. If so, your local public library is probably stocked with several of the scores of books written on this subject. One such tome, written by Donald H. Bell and published by RESTON ($14.95), is *The VisiCalc Book, Atari Edition* - - - an in-depth tutorial on the use of *VisiCalc*. It includes a sixteen-page bibliography on spreadsheet publications. Stanley R. Trost's *Doing Business with VisiCalc*, published by SYBEX at $11.95, offers a compendium of uses for spreadsheet programs ranging from a simple checkbook register to a seasonal forecast of retail sales. *VisiCalc Home and Office Companion*, written by Castlewitz, Chisausky and Kronberg and published by OSBORNE/MCGRAW-HILL at $12.95, offers templates on such varied spreadsheet uses as cash flow analysis and EEO personnel reports. All of these publications can be easily adapted to *SynCalc* use.

Your needs may be simpler or much more complex than mine. But why not give it a try. What's fifty-bucks. Who are we kiddin' anyway. We all need somethin' to keep us off the street. And aren't our little computers just like electric trains - toys for big boys!

Table 1:
SynCalc Features, Functions, and Formatting Controls

DOS FUNCTIONS

LOAD..... worksheet or data (DIF)
SAVE..... worksheet, data or text (ATARIWRITER)
FORMAT DISK
DELETE DISK FILE
RENAME DISK FILE
CONVERT VISICAL TO SYNCALC

FORMATTING CONTROLS

Formatting controls may be used globally, or confined to a specific cell or series of cells:

NUMERICAL AND TEXT

JUSTIFY.. left, right or centered
MARGIN... fix margin at left of cell
COLUMN WIDTH can be individually set from 1 to 36 characters
PROTECT.. protect cell or range of cell from further formatting commands or recalculations
UNPROTECT reverses action of above command
UNFORMAT delete formating controls from cell or range of cells

NUMERICAL

Numerical data may be presented in four general formats - FIXED (integer), FLOATING, SCIENTIFIC or ENGINEERING. In addition, FIXED and FLOATING numbers may be further formatted by:

SETTING SPACES TO RIGHT OF DECIMAL POINT
PRECEDE WITH DOLLAR SIGN
INCLUDE COMMAS TO LEFT OF DECIMAL POINT
TRAILING PERCENT SIGN
EXPRESS NEGATIVES as: -, ( ), OR CR

MATHEMATICAL FUNCTIONS

ABS	ATAN	INT	PI
ACOS	COS	LN	SIN
ASIN	EXP	LOG	SQRT
			TAN

STATISTICAL FUNCTIONS

AVG..... averages a range of values
CNT..... counts the number of numeric entries within a range
MAX..... maximum value
MEAN..... sample mean
MIN..... minimum value
RNG..... range (between min & max)
SD..... sample standard deviation
SUM..... sum of values
VAR..... sample variance

FINANCIAL FUNCTIONS

FV..... future value of an annuity
NPV..... net present value of a range of investments
PMT..... loan payment

CELL MANIPULATION

COPY..... copy contents, format and formulas of a cell or range of cells to another cell or range of cells.
MOVE..... cell or block of cellS to another position
INSERT... row or column
DELETE... row or column
ERASE.... cell or range of cells

MODE OF CALCULATION

Calculation may be set for either column or row priority and, in addition, may be either:

AUTOMATIC recalculates after each entry, except PROTECTED cells
MANUAL... recalculates by pressing START key, except PROTECTED cells
FORCED... recalculates all cells, including PROTECTED cells

SCREEN PRESENTATION

WINDOWS.. vertical or horizontal with snynchronized or independent scrolling
TITLES... fix vertical
fix horizontal
fix both
HEADINGS toggle on or off

MISCELLANEOUS FUNCTIONS

LOOKUP... allows user to set up table of values to determine a second value (e.g., tax table)
SORT..... sort rows in selected range in either ascending or descending order based on selected sort column, and place at selected position on sheet
PRINT.... dump any portion of sheet to most printers; compressed font on ATARI 825/1025, EPSON, GEMINI and NEC/C.ITOH

COMMAND WILD CARDS

#..... entire worksheet
!..... bottom-right cell
;..... current cursor position

SynTrend

BY SYNAPSE, DISK, $69.95

Reviewed by Allen Hart

SynTrend was developed exclusively for Atari by SYNAPSE. It comes on two disks and requires 48K of memory and BASIC. ***SynTrend*** actually consists of two packages, ***SynGraph***, a flexible graphics package authored by Brian Lee, and ***SynStat***, a statistics package authored by Randy Lert and Ron Conley.

SynStat

Introduction. ***SynStat*** is a menu driven statistics package that allows you to perform descriptive analysis or regression analysis on data that you may enter via the ***SynStat*** editor, or that you may have created with ***SynFile***, ***SynCalc***, ***SynGraph***, or any program that allows you to store data in Data Interchange Format (DIF) files.

If you are a statistician, that introduction may mean something to you, but if you are not, an attempt is made later in this review to briefly explain what descriptive analysis and regression analysis can do for you.

Data Manipulation. In order to do any statistical analysis, you must first have data to analyze. ***SynStat*** provides two ways to enter the data. The first way is with an editor that operates like a spreadsheet (e.g. ***VisiCalc***, ***SynCalc***). The spreadsheet may contain up to 12 columns of numeric data and a total of 1000 cells. The ***SynStat*** editor displays three columns at a time with 15 rows in each column, and allows you to change the columns and rows that are being displayed, by moving around through the spreadsheet with the arrow keys. You enter data into the spreadsheet by simply moving to the desired cell with the arrow keys, and typing in the number you want.

The second way to enter data for statistical analysis is by loading data that are stored in DIF files. DIF files can be created by ***SynCalc***, ***SynFile***, ***SynGraph***, and software available from other manufacturers. If you have data in DIF files, ***SynStat*** provides a command that allows you to load that data directly into a ***SynStat*** spreadsheet.

Column Calculations. Besides the ability to simply enter or load data, ***SynStat*** allows you to perform calcuations on the columns in a spreadsheet. You can add, subtract, multiply, or divide two columns, and store the result in a third column. You can also add a constant to a column, multiply a column by a constant, or take the natural logarithm of all the numbers in a column.

Descriptive Analysis. Once you have a spreadsheet filled with data, you are ready to perform a descriptive analysis. ***SynStat*** performs a descriptive analysis on a single variable (column of data) in a spreadsheet. After you select the desired variable, the results of the analysis are provided in a display which contains:

- The Number of Observations
- The Average of all the numbers in the column
- The Standard Deviation (The average amount that all numbers deviated from the average)
- The Variance (The Standard Deviation Squared.)
- The Standard Error
- The Maximum
- The Minimum
- The Range (Maximum - Minimum)

Once the results of the descriptive analysis are displayed, you have the option of printing them by simply pressing the OPTION key.

Regression Analysis. Before I describe the ***SynStat*** Regression Analysis capabilities, I must make an admission to all you non-statisticians. I am not going to try to explain in much detail what regression analysis is, because it has been over ten years since I studied statistics. I will briefly describe what capabilities ***SynStat*** has, and when possible I will explain what the analysis can be used for. If you want to know more, I recommend (as does the ***SynStat*** documentation) that you refer to a statistics textbook.

To quote the ***SynStat*** users manual, "Regression is the most common statistical technique utilized to confirm or deny a hypothesis concerning the relationship that exists between two or more variables". The tutorial on regression in the users manual provides an example that utilizes data on a salesmans telephone expenses, automobile expenses, and total sales in each month. Using regression analysis, the tutorial shows that it is possible to decide whether the amount of automobile expenses (travel to see customers), or phone expenses (calls to customers) are having a major impact on the amount of sales each month.

Data for regression analysis by ***SynStat*** is entered in the same way as data for descriptive analysis, that is via the ***SynStat*** editor. In order to perform the regression analysis, you simply select the variables that you want to analyze. ***SynStat*** presents a menu with the variables you currently have stored in your spreadsheet. First you select a single dependent variable (in the example: sales for the month). Then you may select from one to 11 independent variables. You select the variables by using the arrow keys to move the cursor to the desired variable on the menu, thus highlighting the variable name, and pressing the RETURN key. When you have selected all the desired variables, pressing the START key causes ***SynStat*** to run the regression analysis.

After ***SynStat*** has run the regresson analysis, it allows you to view the results on a set of five different displays:

1) Regression Coefficients
2) Analysis of Variance
3) Partial Correlation Coefficients Squared
   Dependent Variable with Independent Variables
4) Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables
5) Residual Analysis

The **Regression Analysis** calculates the equation of a curve that fits the data points you have entered for analysis. The **Coefficient** display shows the coefficients of the calculated equation as well as a measure of how well the equation fits the data. The **Analysis of Variance** provides measures of how well the regression explains the process under study (e.g., the effect of the salesman's travel on his sales). The **Partial Correlation Coefficients** are meaningful only when a multiple regression analysis is done, and show how each independent variable correlates with the dependent variable when the other independent variables are held constant. The **Residual Analysis** shows a side by side comparison of the actual dependent variable values, and the predicted values based upon the independent variables. The **Correlation Matrix** of Independent variables shows how the independent variables correlate to each other, which is another useful analysis tool when doing multiple regressions.

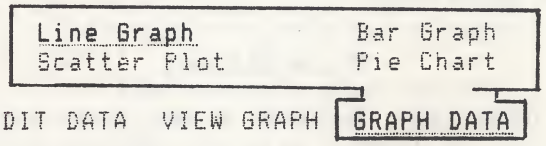
The ***SynStat*** software is very easy to use, and the tutorial provides a nice introduction to the software. For the more serious statistician, there is one drawback that I noticed. The documentation does not provide any mathematical basis for the results that are displayed. I believe the equations for regression analysis are reasonably standard, but a section of the manual for advanced users that showed the equations that are used in the ***SynStat*** analysis would have been a nice addition.

SynGraph

Introduction. ***SynGraph*** is a very useful and versatile graphics package that allows you to produce line graphs, bar graphs, pie charts, and scatter plots. ***SynGraph*** allows you to define many different characteristics of each of the graphs. It produces the graphs first on the computer screen in GRAPHICS 8. It then allows you to print the graph (to and Epson or a Prowriter), save the graph in a file on disk, or revise some of the characteristics, and have a new graph displayed.

Editor. The editor in ***SynGraph*** is much simpler than the one in ***SynStat***. The ***SynGraph*** editor simply allows you to create (or edit) a DIF file. It displays a menu on the screen that allows you to enter numeric data for a single variable. You may enter up to 15 values on each screen, and may then advance to another screen via the START key. The editor allows you to store up to 100 values in a single DIF file.

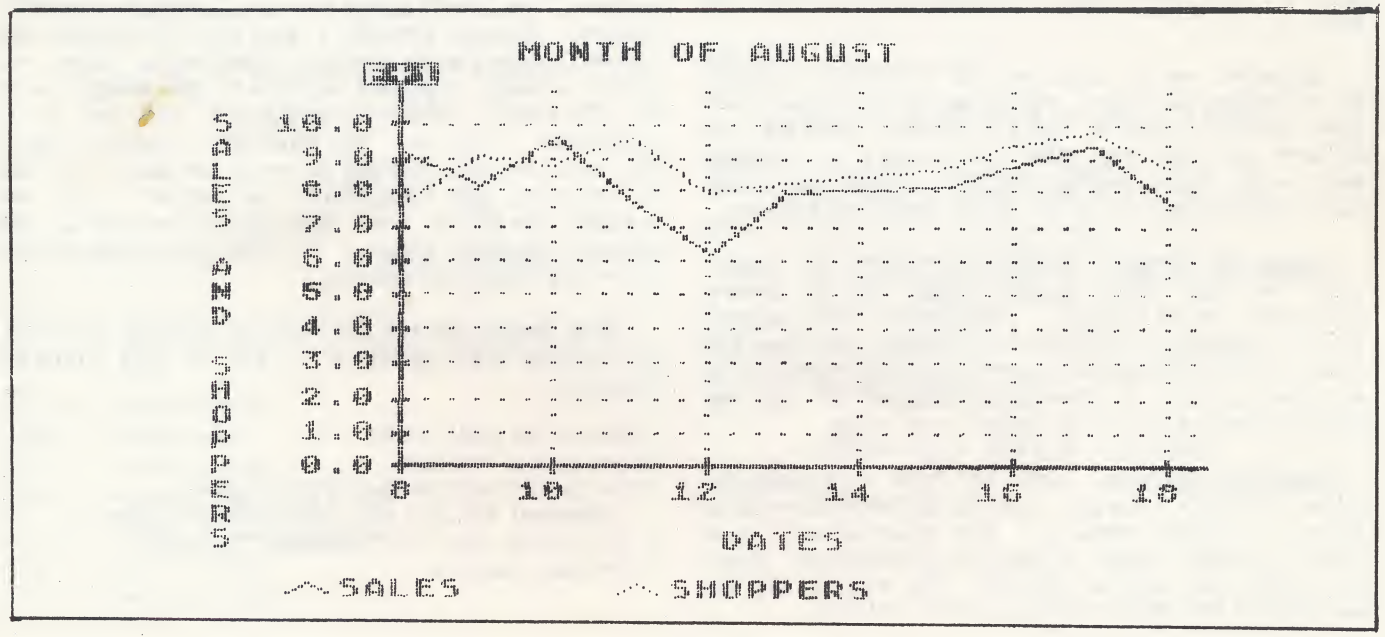
Selection of Graph Type. In order to select the type of graph you want to produce, you first select the GRAPH DATA option on the main menu. ***SynGraph*** then displays a selection menu on the bottom of the screen as shown below:



The highlighted entries in the menu are actually in reverse video on the screen. Using the arrow keys you may move around on the menu. When the desired type of graph is highlighted, you simply press RETURN. ***SynGraph*** then loads the correct program for that type of graph.

After you select a type of graph, you are shown a sequence of parameter entry screens that allow you to define the characteristics of the graph you want to produce. The types of characteristics you may specify include the title, the number of variables (factors) to be graphed, the labels to be used on the graph, the files to be used as a data source, the type of grid to be used on the graph, scaling information, and a file name to save the display in.

Line Graphs. A line graph is a graph of two variables on an x-y chart, with lines connecting each of the points. ***SynGraph*** allows you to graph up to three pairs of variables on one graph. Each pair of variables may consist



of up to 100 values each. A set of example graphs, produced by the *SynGraph* software are shown with this review. The first example is a sample line graph showing the number of shoppers and the number of sales in a hypothetical store, from the 8th through the 18th of August.

SynGraph allows you to define a line graph with a sequence of three parameter entry displays. A sample of the first display is shown below:

```
                LINE GRAPH
=====================================
DISK DRIVE NUMBER: _

    TITLE OF GRAPH: ----------------
                    ----------------

 NUMBER OF FACTORS: _

  NAMES OF FACTORS: --------
                    --------
                    --------

      Y-AXIS LABEL: ----------------
      X-AXIS LABEL: ----------------

    GRID (H,V,B,N): _

   FILE FOR SAVING: ---------
=====================================
  OPTION=MAIN MENU  START=CONTINUE
```

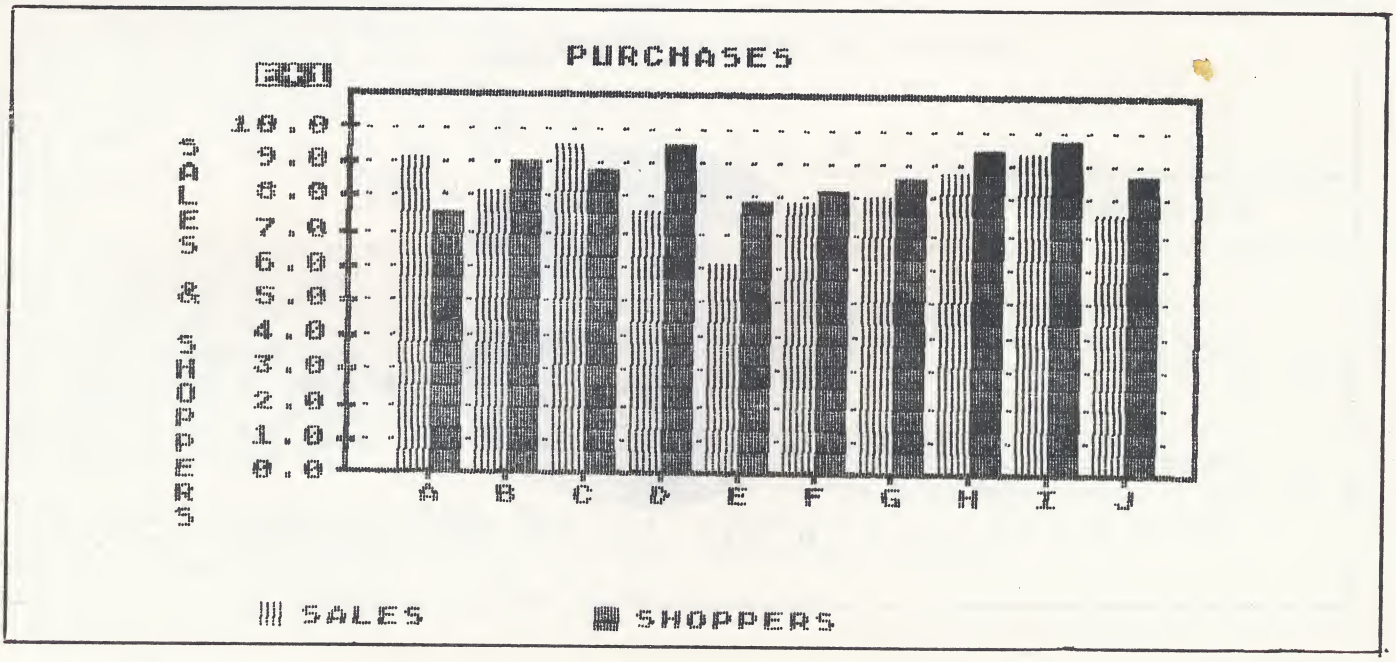
After you fill in the fields in the first display and press START, *SynGraph* displays a menu which lists all the DIF files on your data disk. You are then prompted to enter two file names for each factor you have named in the first parameter entry display. You must enter a file name for the x variable, and a file name for the y variable.

SynGraph next reads the data files you have specified, and displays a new parameter entry screen which allows you to scale your graph. The format of the display is shown below:

```
                LINE GRAPH
                SCALING
=====================================
 AXIS   CURRENT MIN   CURRENT MAX
 ----   -----------   -----------
  Y        xx.xx         xx.xx
  X        xx.xx         xx.xx
-------------------------------------

  REVISED MIN Y: --------------
  REVISED MAX Y: --------------

  REVISED MIN X: --------------
  REVISED MAX X: --------------

 Y DIVISIONS (1-15): --
  X DIVISIONS (1-6): _

  INTEGER (X,Y,B,N): _

=====================================
OPT=ABORT SLCT=AUTOSCALE START=CONT
```

You have the option of revising the minimum and maximum scale values that are to be used on the graph, specifying the number of divisions you want annotated on each axis, and indicating if you want the annotations on the x and/or y axes to be integers rather that real numbers. If you want, you can have *SynGraph* automatically scale the graph for you by simply hitting the SELECT key.

Scatter Plots. Scatter plots are almost identical to line plots, with the single exception that the data points



that are plotted on the x-y graph are not connected by lines. Scatter plots are created in exactly the same way as line graphs. The menus displayed by *SynGraph* for scatter plots are identical to those for line graphs, with the single exception of the title line on the menu.

Bar Graphs. Bar graphs are very useful graphs that allow the comparison of the magnitudes of two or three variables, or the illustration of a trend in a single variable. The example graph contains the same data that was used in the line graph example. The example demonstrates one of the two types of bar charts supported by the *SynGraph* package, stacked bar graphs, and clustered bar graphs.

SynGraph allows you to produce bar graphs containing up to 32 single-factor bars, 24 two-factor bars, or 16 three-factor bars. Clustered bar graphs can display both positive and negative values, but stacked bar graphs can display only positive values.

Bar graphs are defined to *SynGraph* in almost the same way as line graphs. The only difference in the first menu is that bar graphs allow only horizontal grids, so the menu does not allow for vertical grids or grids in both directions. The data selection menu and scaling menu are similar too, except that you only scale data in the y direction for bar graphs. One big difference for bar graphs, is the addition of a menu to define labels for each of the bars (or clusters of bars). One useful application of the labelling is to specify the months of the year under each bar.

Pie Charts. Pie charts are a useful graphing technique to show the percentage that each major component makes up in a total package. They are used very frequently to show how the money in a budget is divided among the different components of the budget. A pie chart is shown in the set of example graphs.

SynGraph will handle pie charts with up to 12 slices. It calculates the percentages to be displayed beside each slice, and allows you to enter a label of up to seven characters to be displayed by each slice.

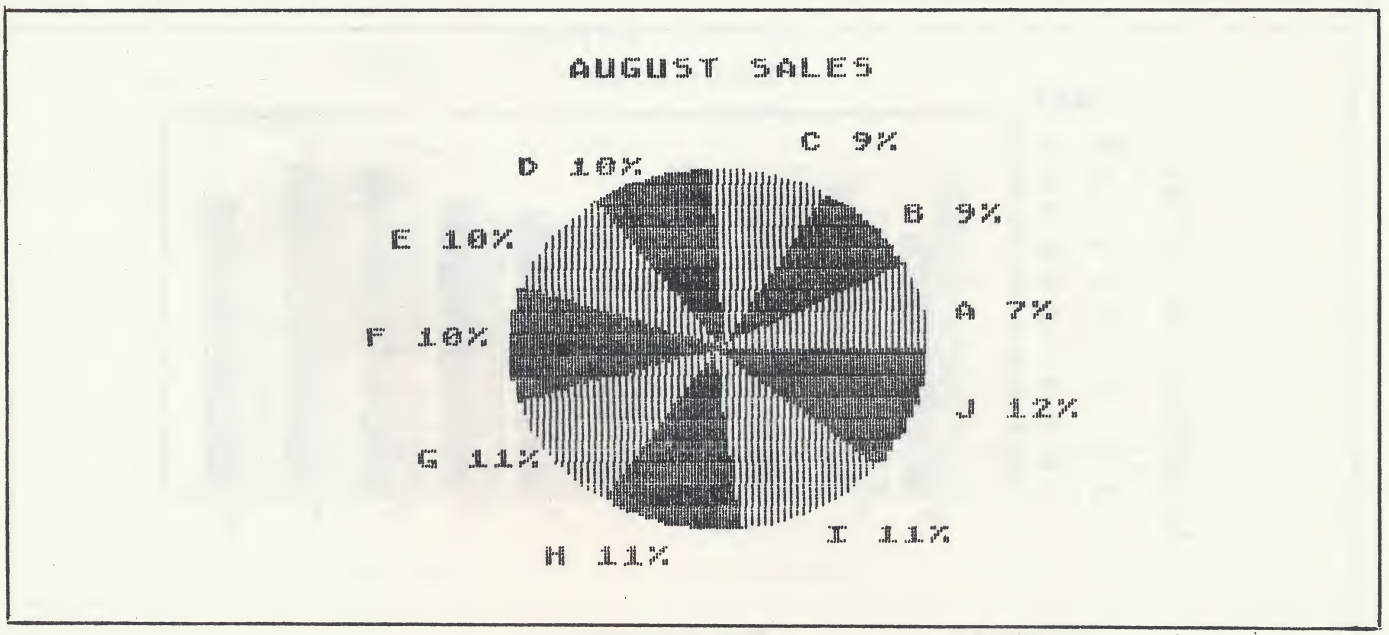
There are only three menus for the generation of pie charts. The first menu allows you to specify a disk drive, a graph title, and a file to save the display in. The second menu allows you to select the data file to be used as the data source. The last menu allows you to specify the labels to be used on each slice of the pie.

Printing. In addition to displaying the graphs on the screen, *SynGraph* will print the graphs on an EPSON, or a PROWRITER. All that is required to print the displays is to hit the OPTION key, use the arrow keys to select the printer type, and hit the RETURN key. If you are like me, and you don't have an EPSON, or a PROWRITER, you can still get printed copies of the displays, as long as you have a printer with graphics capability, and a BASIC program that will dump a GRAPHICS 8 screen to your printer.

Saving. In addition to the ability to print your graphs, *SynGraph* allows you to save a copy of the graph in a disk file, and call the graph back up for later viewing.

The user manual contains the listing of a program that will generate a slide show of graphs by reading a set of saved graphs from the disk and displaying them on the screen. If you have a BASIC routine to dump a GRAPHICS 8 screen to your printer, you can modify the slide show program to first load the displays from the disk, and then print them on your printer. I really am sure you can, because that is how the example graphs in this article were produced.

Conclusions. The *SynTrend* software package is a professionally produced product. It is easy to use, and flexible. Both the statistics package and the graphics package should prove to be valuable tools for anyone who is interested in data trend analysis.



Battle Bytes

M. Evan Brooks

Before beginning with the review of ***50 Mission Crush*** this month, I would like to add a point of order concerning these reviews. Numerous friends have told me that they feel that last month's review of ***Carrier Force*** was unduly harsh. In reviewing that game and most others, I am looking at the solitary aspects of the game as well as its historicity and teaching lessons. Since most difficult war games require hours of intensive play, finding an opponent can be a difficult endeavor (most wives refer to themselves as "wargaming widows" and are not overly enthralled with discovering the penetrating ability of an anti-tank missile or the maneuverings of an infantry battalion). Therefore, I choose to review a game based on its playability against the computer itself -- an opponent who is always available.

But this month's game does not even present the option of a face-to-face opponent. ***50 Mission Crush*** recreates the United States bomber offensive against Germany in the Second World War. A board game also exists on the subject (***B-17: Queen of the Skies***, by AVALON HILL); the board game suffers from the same defects as the computer simulation.

At first blush, this SSI game is an interesting opportunity -- how would you fare in bringing the war home to the Third Reich. Imagine yourself high above the skies of Nazi Germany dealing "Death from Above" (apologies to the Airborne). But what this game recreates is a single plane in an entire mission. You are, in effect, the pilot of a B-17; your superiors give you the mission and altitude at which it should be carried out. Therefore, in effect, you are at the mercy of these superiors. Having received a mission, you fly to the target (choosing an easier target will probably give you a longer life, but your promotions and medals will be puny, at best. In fact, hitting a target other than that assigned reduces your potential score by a factor of five.

At any rate, the missions usually start out with "milk runs". These easy missions gradually develop into longer bombing runs in which the German Luftwaffe and the target's anti-aircraft defenses become truly formidable. But the problem inherent with a game on this subject is that there is literally no game; your impact is negligible, and in fact, the computer could do the runs on automatic mode.

This occurs because you get randomly attacked by enemy aircraft; your fighter escort may drive some of the bandits away. But we are discussing random numbers. The enemy planes attack one at a time and you can choose to fire up to a maximum of 7 times at the enemy plane. Fire too much too early and you become a free target; ignore the enemy and you may go down in flames. As a single aircraft on a much larger mission, you are a "bus driver"; your discretion is exactly zero.

The program is relatively easy to learn. Input is via keyboard, and a frustrating detail is that the program uses BASIC, thereby running slowly at times. Even more frustrating is enemy flak; while enemy flak may fire up to 40 times, if a fire is ever started on board the plane, you must wait in the same area while you try to extinguish the flames. Naturally the following turn, the flak fires again. Nothing is more frustrating than getting hit on shot #40, and having to try to put out the flames, knowing that another 40 shots will have to be endured. While the realism may not be all that horrible, the interminable delay in resolving the flak shot-by-shot does become tedious.

In terms of maximizing your bomber, there is nothing to do aside from utilizing common sense. Determine fuel requirements (not overly difficult), and try to fly in a direct path to the target at the proper attitude (minor course deviations should be made to avoid enemy flak). Generally fly at the assigned attitude; there is safety in numbers. But if you are killed, it's back to square 1. But if you really want to win, ... Well, it's unethical and it's cheating, but the computer won't know about it and you aren't going to tell your friends, right? The solution -- after a successful mission, the program allows you to save your game on a blank disk. Fine, but after you save to the blank disk, copy the disk so that you now have 2 saved disks. Therefore, if you fly a mission with terrible results, ignore it and reboot the prior mission. WARNING: do not confuse disks; this writer accidentally copied his unsuccessful mission onto his disk with the Oak Leave Cluster to the Distinguished Service Cross, instead of vice versa.

Overall, the simulation is interesting for a few playings. But I doubt the sustained endurance playability of this simulation. When the board game version first appeared (at ORIGINS, the national wargaming convention in 1978), consumer sales were sparse; yet other game designers were effusive in their compliments. The same criticism applies here; a nice effort which does recreate the feel of the period, but a recreation which truthfully becomes as much fun as Russian Roulette in the long run.

NEXT MONTH: ***After Pearl***

* * * * *

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[Classified Ads are free to members of any of the Current Notes clubs. Send your ad to the editor by the 14th of the preceeding month.]

ATARI SCUTTLEBITS

Bob Kelly

This month's column will focus on a number of topics. First, some gripes concerning magazine policy voicing my own views as well as those of readers who have contacted me. In addition, I will update market developments affecting ATARI as well as other items of interest impacting the computer industry. ATARI, in particular, has made a number of pronouncements which are positive and lead one to think that there may be light at the end of the tunnel.

The policy of most computer magazines is for you, the author, to send in an unsolicited manuscript. The article must conform to a usually bewildering set of editorial criteria which in many instances ends up discouraging would-be authors. Those that give up frequently upload their programs to BBS's without any documentation. Those that do follow through must wait several months while the publisher decides whether the article is acceptable (on what basis remains a mystery). Most authors fail to survive the cut. Some rejected programs find their way to the BBS's around the country, with minimal documentation. There is nothing wrong with this system. It has served the public well in general. However, mistakes are made by the magazines and some of the best public domain software fails to get into the national computer media. As a result, the programs do not gain wide public acceptance (ATARI does not have a central user run clearing house for public domain programs as does CP/M) and recognition for the contribution by the authors is minimal.

What I would like to suggest to **Analog**, **Antic**, and **Compute** is that they should survey some of the BBS's around the country and publish the best programs. What could result from this effort is not only better user knowledge of the capabilities of their computer but also an upgrade in the documentation which many of these programs require. Also, it could supply a much deserved monetary reward for the authors and perhaps entice some new people to write programs and upload them to their local BBS. By the way, it would probably increase circulation if handled correctly.

While on this topic, let's stop this silly policy of publishing programs that can only be crammed into 16K. How many people who buy these magazines have only 16K and no disk drive - maybe 15%? Instead of publishing for the lowest common denominator, how about the majority of the public who have 48K 800's or all those new 64K 800XL's. At least, a program or two a month could be published to take full advantage of Atari's memory capacity.

Almost always, when suggestions such as these are offered to the "big" magazines, they are ignored. On rare occasions they are not. In the belief that this article will be ignored, I will offer two programs that deserve further recognition by Washington D.C. members and both can be obtained locally:

DosWIZ - written by Gary Crider. If you bought a disk analysis program, you could have saved your money. This program does more than most commerical programs. I bet you don't even know it is on a library disk of the National Capital Atari Users group. The problem is that the documentation is weak and does not support double density.

AMODPLUS 2.5 - written by numerous authors. This is latest version of the full blown communications program with time clock, super transfer, autodial, etc., not the rinky-dink version published in **Antic** a few issues ago. This program is available on several BBSs in the area.

I welcome other program suggestions (ATARI and ATR-8000 programs) and will include them in my next column.

ATARI

ATARI continues to make news. It seems at times that the major financial newspapers and magazines must have a reporter to cover only Atari and that other computer ??? (the name of a naval rank). The major items are:

New Atari Computers. James Copland, ATARI VP for marketing, confirmed that Atari will produce 8, 16, and 32 bit computers. The 16 and 32 bit computers are scheduled to be introduced at the Consumer Electronics show in Chicago in January. According to Copland, these computers are being developed by ATARI and will not be purchased from another manufacturer and remarketed. The 32 bit computer most likely will be based on MOTOROLA'S 68000 microprocessor. No prices were given but it is known that ATARI is going after the $1000 or less market. According to ATARI, the computer will be available in quantity within 45 days after the Chicago show. (Well, there goes my week's winter vacation in Jamaica).

600/800 Developments. The 600XL computer has been put to rest in computer heaven. ATARI will sell its inventory at reduced prices. **InfoWorld** has published a rumor that the 800XL will be selling for $99 by Christmas. According to several sources, ATARI may upgrade the 800XL via an expansion box which will permit 128K, 80 column screen, etc. If ATARI follows through and does market such a box, it will knock the wind out of COMMODORE's sails (play on words - pardon me) and be a sure hit considering the installed 800XL customer base.- Rumors continue to persist that ATARI is talking to the MINDSET COMPUTER CORPORATION concerning a licensing agreement covering its 16 bit computer.

Warner Pays Up. ATARI has had difficulty in collecting $300 million in debts from dealers and distributors. As a result it went to WARNER COMMUNICATIONS to seek some short-term assistance to alleviate a cash crunch. According to reports, WARNER's response was positive and ATARI has since obtained the necessary bank financing.

ATARI Profits. ATARI has stated that it has commitments for its entire inventory and production between now and Christmas. With this news, ATARI stated that it expects to show a "profit" by the end of this year.

Industry News

Amtype, a service which types programs from an APPLE computer magazine and then distributed copies to users for a fee, has had a permanent injunction slapped on them. In addition, the court assessed a fine. It appears that typing the programs was OK but making copies infringed on

the magazines' limited copyright license. AMTYPE has indicated that they will appeal the decision.

This case is of interest to ATARI users since several members subscribe to a service which supplies programs monthly from Antic, Analog, and Compute. If anyone has some legal insights to offer - drop a line.

COLECO's ADAM has been enhanced by the addition of several new accessories - modem, external disk drive, and new software. Market observers are saying that this Christmas is do or die for COLECO'S Adam Computer. If sales don't pick up given the availability of these new peripherals and the $500 college scholarship offered to purchases prior to December 31, it may leave only ATARI and COMMODORE in the low to middle-end home computer market. As for my own view, I would not buy COLECO stock at present.

IBM PCjr sales have reportedly picked up since the enhancements to the machine were introduced a month ago. However, the last magazine solely devoted to the PCjr. has folded. The likelihood of the PCjr. being a force in the educational or home market without a magazine devoted solely to its applications is remote. I know some will say it's made by IBM and therefore it has to succeed. I say "baloney!" Its primary market is now small business and then what happens to the PC?

Well next month is the Christmas issue and I will offer some suggestions for your list as well as who has the best prices....have a happy Turkey.

Tips 'N Traps

Barry Burke and Jim Stevenson

Welcome to the first installment of "Tips 'N Traps"! In this column, you, the reader, will call/write in the problems (traps) that you are having with a particular adventure game. Your problem will then be published in this column, and if any other readers know the answer to the problem, they will call/write in hints (tips).

This idea of adventure solving was originally started by Softline magazine -- which later became St. Game. Unfortunately, this magazine went out of publication in April of 1984. This section of Current Notes is a continuation of this column previously seen in St. Game. We would like to keep this section alike for both beginner and advanced adventurers. We will reprint a few of the tips and traps that were published in St. Game until we get support from you, the reader.

Please don't hesitate to call any of us at:

Barry Burke..... (703) 830-1978
Jim Stevenson... (703) 378-4093
Steve Francese.. (703) 830-2291

Also, if you have a modem, leave us a message on the user's group BBS at (703) 425-6698. Address all messages to "#594" and we'll get back to you.

Please call/write to us with ANY adventure problems you may have. After our first issue, we will have an address for you to send your questions and/or solutions to. Thank you. We are looking for your support.

Wizard and the Princess

Q. How do I cross the rickety bridge?

A. It's not useful, that 'LUCKY' locket? You'd better keep it in your Pocket! Sooner or later you will see, it will be needed to enlighten thee! -- Lyle N. Benson

Q. How do I get past the rattlesnake? -- Bill Jewett

A. Somewhere, you will find a rock without a wicked scorpion under it! -- Bear Braumoeller

Q. What's the door in the tree for? How do I get in it?

A. Your best bet is to put your money in the bank. Hope this helps. -- Kyle Naydo

Q. Got the harp in the chest, now what?

A. Back to the start. In where it is dark. Find what Polly wants. Back to the forest to have a good munch. He'll thank you indeed. But don't have greed. Back to the island, find the two trees. Down the vial. Northward you go. Into the breeze. -- Bill Brown & Barry Spencer

Q. How do I get across the chasm?

A. Crossing the chasm may make your back break, but don't feel down and blue. If the two notes gave you a splitting headache, why don't you try some glue? -- Mary Folz

Musical Notes

Jay Gerber

Before we go on to a review of all the ATARI music packages, let's digress to a discussion of music and its history.

Music is the art of controlling and organizing sounds into intelligible patterns. The origin of music is unknown, and it is as mysterious as the origin of mathematics, art, or other abstract subjects. One might suppose that the first intelligible pattern of sounds may have been made by primitive man, banging wooden clubs to a rhythmic beat. Perhaps in accompianiment of this banging, the caveman started grunting on selected beats. Then another one started scraping the wall of the cave, and so this primitive form of noise would eventually become music as we know it today.

The first theories about music were developed by the ancient Greeks. They developed the present day musical scale of the related frequencies which I presented earlier. Pythagoras, the Greek mathematician whose triangle theorem is widely used, is believed to be the first person to devise a instrument to play the tones of the set musical scale.

Pythagoras found that the frequency of a note depends on the number of vibrations an object makes. By taking a metal wire and stretching it between two nails embedded in wood, he created what is known as a monochord. By plucking the wire, a tone is produced. Pythagoras learned that if he shortened the vibrating length of wire by pressing the wire down on the monochord, a higher pitch was created. By moving his finger up and down on the wire he shortened or elongated the wire, thus producing higher or lower tones.

Pythagoras soon discovered that certain tones are related to one another, and that when these notes were played in a certain progression, different moods could be created. For instance, a certain set of notes played in sequence could create a funeral dirge, another a happy, celebratory song.

The Greeks developed music into an art form, and devised many theories that are still used today. (We will be getting into the basics of these theories in later columns.) The Romans, being more interested in killing each other, did little with music. The next development of music took place in the middle ages with the coming of the Crusades. Church music developed from a series of chants to hymns, played with, in the later part of the period, an organ.

It is during this period when music was first recorded on paper. Before, melodies and harmonies were memorized and handed down from generation to generation through the years. The memorization process was not an easy one. Choir members had to remember both the words and notes associated with them to all the psalms in the Bible. In order to make the task easier, Guido d'Arezzo, an 11th century Italian Choirmaster, deveoped a system to write and read the musical notes in order to save time. He developed what would eventually become the musical staff.

He sung the lowest and highest notes that were used by his choir. Then he wrote out a set of seven lines placed parallel to one another. He dipped the square end of his pen into ink, and marked the bottom line with a square. Then he sung the lowest note again. He then sung the next higest note he knew of. He placed this mark in the space between the 7th and 6th lines. He kept adding notes until he got to the mark on the top line, which was the highest note that was sung in the Psalms.

It was not until the late 17th century that the staff developed into the one used today. It was at this time that harmonic theory was developed. It was also the time of the great clasiical composers. All of the music we hear today, including rock, country, march, western, or whatever, contains techniques developed by Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and the other composers in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Well I hoped you liked this dissertaion. Next month, I will discuss the ATARI music packages just in time for Christmas. Hope to see you Bach next month!!!

* * * * *

C.P.M. = Capital ATR Peripheral Micro-Users Group

Oxon Hill Public Library -- Oxon Hill, Maryland

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

CP/M Meetings

ATR Micro-Users meeetings are held at the Public Library in Oxon Hill, Maryland. The Library is located near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge just off the Washington beltway. Take the beltway to Maryland exit #4 East (St. Barnabas Road). St. Barnabas Road merges with Oxon Hill Rd.; proceed 1/4 mile and the Library will be on your left. The meeting will be held in the Author Room. The Library telephone number is 301-839-2400.

The next ATR meeting is scheduled for November 27, 1984, at 6:30 p.m. (the 4th Tuesday of the month). There will be no meeting in December. The January 1985 meeting will be on the 22nd.

Past Events

At the October meeting Craig Smith gave an overview for novices on ***dBase II*** as well as demonstrating the Austin-Franklin 80-column board. The Austin-Franklin provides RGB color and is usable with release 3.3 of ***Wordstar***, which Craig demonstrated.

Also demonstrated was the DT-80 cartridge. The DT-80 is a substitute for the SWP AUTOTERM programs that provides several features, such as 80-columns, eight different background screen luminaces, use of the joystick for cursor positioning or games, and cursor control (blinking, nonblinking, and no cursor). A full review of the DT-80 will appear in a later issue of Current Notes.

Technical Notes

Information about the use and maintenance of the ATR can be very useful. For example, in the March 1984 issue of the Austin Texas ATRSIG Newsletter Marc Newman described problems with CRC errors 8 and 16 under CP/M. Marc writes:

> I remembered talking to someone about his disk errors, and he told me that the Z80 CTC chip (counter timer circuit) was very important to disk I/Os. He mentioned that he had replaced the CTC chip and that fixed some disk errors he was having.
>
> So, in a fit of desperation, I went out and found a CTC chip. It was only $5, so I was just basically taking a wild shot, but it fixed the problem.
>
> When I told SWP about the problem, they told me that problems with the chip can also cause problems in ATARI mode. They said that error 140, serial bus framing error, can be caused by that.

There are many little "goodies" that a manufacturer will never tell owners. The Capital ATR Micro-Users hope to fill this void by collecting information, such as Marc's experience, and compiling a set of Technical Notes. The first edition will (hopefully) be ready by the November meeting. All contributions, big and small, are sought. Particularly useful would be items on the installation and use of particular software packages, solutions to hardware compatibility problems, and tips on the use and maintenance of the ATR system. Let others benefit from your experience! For example, you can help by providing a list of all the commercial software packages you have successfully used or found unusable on the ATR. Write down the package name, the version number, which operating system you are using (CP/M, MS/DOS, etc) and the OS level or release. Bring this list to the next Group meeting or mail it, or other items for the Technical Notes, to Bob Danson, 2102 Basset St., Alexandria, VA 22308.

Executive Positions Available

There are currently a number of vacant vice-presidential executive positions available with the ATR Micro-Users. These positions are in the fields of finance, and computer program management. Rotten pay and no executive washroom key, but opportunities to make important contributions. Call Bob Kelly for additional information.

* * * * *

DOS III BUG

Harold Blevins

The earlier versions of DOS III have some errors that need to be corrected to make it work properly. To check your version, boot DOS III with BASIC, go to BASIC and do a PRINT PEEK(3889). If the answer is 78 you are o.k., if the answer is 76, you have the old version. To fix the errors, do the following POKEs from BASIC: POKE 3889,78: POKE 3923,78: POKE 3943,78: POKE 3895,76: POKE 3929,76: POKE 3949,76: POKE 3901,77: POKE 3935,77: POKE 3955,77: POKE 2117,240

Then go to DOS and choose the "Initialize Disk" option. Format a new disk and answer "Yes" to the prompt "Write FMS.SYS?" prompt. This will write the corrected version out to the new disk, which can then be copied in the normal manner. If you have a 1050 Disk Drive and have not received your copy of DOS III, call the Atari Customer Service number and give them your name and address and they will mail you a copy, plus documentation. They may also ask for the serial number of your drive, so have it ready just in case.

[Reprinted from Huntsville ATARI Users Group (HAUG), August, 1984.]

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

As you can clearly see from the various reports listed below, there is little left for me to say other than to express my appreciation to all the volunteers who are doing such a great job. There are still many areas that Novatari -- and also Current Notes -- could use some help. Don't be afraid to give me, or any of the Novatari chairmen/women, a call, if you'd like to help out. The greatest resource NOVATARI has is its membership. Working together, we can all contribute in some way to making Novatari a club we can all be proud of.

Novatari Minutes (October 14)

Jim Stevenson

Announcements. Jim Stevenson announced that NPX was off and running and already had its first submission. Contracts and submission forms are now available. Some folks have volunteered to be reviewers but more are needed. Contact Gene Schimpf or Jim Stevenson for more information. Diana Burdt reported on developments with the Education Committee (see below) and Marty Vallery talked about the new Seminar Program (see below). The door prize this meeting was ***Encounter*** by SYNAPSE which was won by Palmer Pyle and ***Exodus, Ultima III***, won by John Brophy.

Program. This month's program featured graphics generation tools. Joe Waters, with an assist from his three-year-old daughter Rebecca, demonstrated the ***ATARI Touch Tablet*** showing how even a child could easily use the pad. Joe next demonstrated MAXIMUS' ***Visualizer*** program written by Tim Kilby, a charter Novatari member. The emphasis in ***Visualizer*** was on its slide show capability, presenting colorful animated slides with both text and graphics accompanied by music and voice on a cassette player. Jim Stevenson jr. assisted Joe in demonstrating ***Visualizer*** and treated us to some of his artistic creations. Finally, David Beifeld demonstrated his modifications to the graphics program ***DraW7*** which will soon be appearing in the Novatari Library.

Novatari Seminar Series

Marty Vallery

The NOVATARI Seminar Series was launched in October 27 when Marty Vallery offered a two-hour program on Word-Processing on the ATARI. At the moment three seminars are scheduled for November and one for December. The two-hour seminars cost $5 for Novatari members and $8 for others. The six-hour seminars cost $20 for Novatari Members and $30 for others. (Membership forms will be available at the door and new members can pay the discount rate.)

Some members have asked what the requirements for various seminars might be. Do you need to own any specific programs before coming? The answer is NO. If you do own a particular program, such as ***VisiCalc*** or ***SynCalc***, the seminar will help you use it more effectively. However, one of the major purposes of the seminars is to tell you enough about the functions provided by various products to help you decide whether or not such a product would be worthwhile to you.

All the seminars are being offered in the Library Meeting Room in the Sterling Park Community Center Building (SPCC). [Rt. 7 west to Sterling Blvd., left 1.5 miles to light, left on Holly Ave. one block to Commerce St., right one block to Enterprise, left one block to Community Center.]

Sterling Park is located near Dulles airport and, although convenient for members in the Sterling - Reston - Herndon area, is a good distance for members in other areas. We are currently searching for additional sites in which to hold our seminars. Ultimately, our goal is to offer these seminars periodically at various sites in Northern Virginia so we can minimize the traveling distances.

I am pleased to announce that Jim Bean (975-5757) and Henry Adams (273-8348) have volunteered to help serve on our Seminar Committee. If you have any suggestions for sites, or would like to offer your services as a teacher,

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

or have any suggestions at all, please call myself or Jim or Henry.

Seminar Schedule:

Nov. 10: Introduction to Assembly Language. 9 am - 3 pm (SPCC) $20/$30. Instructor: Tim Kilby. Description: Introduction to Assembly Language is a day-long, **intensive**, course for ATARI programers wishing to enter the world of assembly language. It is designed for users with intermediate level BASIC programming experience but no assembly language experience. Assembly language is the fastest executing and most concise language available for any machine. No equipment need be brought to class. Some reference material and program listings wil be provided to all attendees. Topics to be covered include: (1) Atari Assembler/Editor and Mac/65 assemblers; (2) Numbering Systems, (3) 6502 Instruction Set, (4) Interrupts, (5) Input/Output, (6) Player/Missile Graphics, (7) Integration of Machine Code into BASIC, and (8) Development Software and References.

Nov. 17: Telecommunications. 7-9 pm (SPCC) $5/$8. Instructor: TBA.

Nov. 28: Spreadsheets. 7-9 pm (SPCC) $5/$8. Instructor: Joe Waters. Description: Discussion of the nature and uses of a spreadsheet program. The first spreadsheet program, ***VisiCalc***, helped launch APPLE on its road to success. Emphasis will be on ***SynCalc***, the latest generation spreadsheet program available for the ATARI. We will design and build several applications. A disk with various ***SynCalc*** templates will be available for purchase.

Dec. 5: LOGO. 7-9 pm (SPCC) $5/$8. Instructor: TBA.

Education Report

Diana Burdt

Last month the Educational Liason Committee was set up to give assistance to the Fairfax County Public School System. We are presently working on specific ways in which Novatari members can be of help. In the meantime, the club is providing several copies of the October issue of Current Notes to administrators in the school system. This will give the administrators an opportunity to determine the type of information available through the newsletter. If this newsletter can be of assistance to the schools, then Novatari may provide copies at cost or on a complimentary basis (to be determined by the membership).

I have found that there is a definite need to find people willing to help in individual schools. Several elementary schools have already contact Marily Borkowski at the Fairfax County Adult Education Office to request help in locating a teacher or someone knowledgeable about computers to set up and run a computer club in the school. I will try and find out if there are any Fairfax County guidelines available for establishing a computer club. If anyone is willing to help the kids in setting up a school computer club, please contact me, Diana Burdt, (425-5073) between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Novatari Disk Library

M. Evan Brooks

The NOVATARI disk library will now be attempting to switch into high gear. Although user submissions are few, we now have enough public domain disks to release Club Disks by Topical Subject. The goal is to release 4 disks per club meeting; while much of this material may be older, let's face it: the library is mainly used by those new to the computer scene. At any rate, during October, two music disks were released (#1 covering **TV/Movie Themes**; #2 being **Rock Music**) as well as 2 game disks (#1 being **Text Adventures** and #2 being **Gambling**).

Next month, game disk #3 (**Simulations**) will be released, as well as an **Education** disk, a **Utility** disk and a **Telecommunications** disk.

Each disk includes a new disk menu program (courtesy of Tim Kilby) and documentation for all programs. When you select a program from the menu, the first of one or more pages of instructions for that program appear. You may continue reading through the instructions or skip right to running the program.

Your entries and suggestions would be appreciated; also, HELP - does anyone know how the depth charge attacks in Convoy can be maximized?

NOVATARI PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Gene Schimpf

Below is the current schedule for upcoming NOVATARI meetings. Note that although the topics are selected, the speaker is generally TBA (To Be Announced). If you are knowledgable in one of these areas and would like to share your experience with the membership, please give me a call.

NOVEMBER 11: Music on the ATARI: What the market has to offer. Speaker: Jay Gerber.

DECEMBER 9: New Educational Games for the ATARI. Speaker: TBA.

JANUARY 13: Telecommunications -- or What Can You, Your ATARI, and a Telephone Accomplish? Speaker: TBA.

FEBRUARY 10: ATARI in the Schools -- A Progress Report. Speaker: TBA.

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 Jassett...	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: 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 Opitz Blvd. (adjacent to Woodbridge Lincoln-Mercury). Turn West onto Opitz 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 members are reminded that our annual election of officers will be held during the November meeting. Because editorial deadlines require that this be written prior to our October meeting, I regret I am unable to publish for your consideration the names of those candidates presented by our nominating committee, or the names of those nominated from the floor during the October meeting. If you want to have a voice in WACUG's future - be there and cast your ballot. And, if you've just decided you'd like to run for office yourself, all is not lost. Nominations from the floor will be accepted during the November meeting.

Our by-laws also require us to set our dues structure for the forthcoming year each November. Is this important to you? Could be. One of the group's benefits which might possibly be affected by the membership's decision in this regard is your continued receipt of this fine publication - CURRENT NOTES. And how 'bout your continued free access to the sixty-odd disks in the group's library. Maybe I've got your attention now. It just might be worthwhile for you to attend and make your cogent opinions known. If you don't, somebody else's views might prevail - and you know how the uninformed masses usually handle things.

Besides all the tacky business items on the agenda for November, we'll also be demonstrating a potpourri of game and educational programs which will make fine Christmas gifts for the youngsters. We'll also show a video tape presentation on several of the flight simulator programs available for the ATARI - - - JUMBO JET, SOLO FLIGHT, MIG ALLEY ACE, FINAL FLITE and FLIGHT SIMULATOR II.

Finally, I've received a nice letter from the Coordinator of Youth Services, Prince William County, expressing her appreciation for WACUG's participation in the Family Festival the county Office on Youth and Youth Services Board recently sponsored at the Woodbridge campus of NVCC. Our thanks to Al Rauchut and Tim Mitchell for carrying WACUG's banner at this affair.

FIRST STAR Software Launches SPY VS. SPY Promotion

New York, New York -- Oct. 4 -- MAD Magazine enthusiasts can get a crack at stardom with the likes of Alfred E. Neuman by entering First Star Software's contest -- "Go Mad! For Spy vs Spy". First Star Software, Inc., an affiliate of Warner Software, Inc., is sponsoring a massive national promotion to kick off its newest computer game, "MAD Magazine's Official SPY VS. SPY".

The grand prize winner will be flown with a parent or companion to New York City for three days and two-nights, with all expenses paid. In addition, they will meet the staff of MAD Magazine for dinner -- and the winner will have his or her caricature drawn to appear in MAD Magazine!

The contest begins October 22 and will end December 31, 1984. The grand prize drawing is scheduled for January 31, 1985. To register to win, participants must mail in an entry blank available from participating dealers. In addition, the first 1,000 customers returning warranty cards for SPY VS. SPY to First Star will be given a free, one-year subscription to MAD Magazine, and will automatically become eligible for the grand prize.

The fully animated SPY VS. SPY game introduces several technical innovations in computer gaming, including SIMULPLAY™ and SIMULVISION™, split-screen features which allow both players to be active at the same time, as well as observe what booby traps the other might be setting. The game has 36 different three-dimensional rooms in which the elements that each spy needs to escape the embassy are hidden -- a key, top-secret plans, travelling money, a passport -- and finally, the briefcase to hold them all. Opponents race against time collecting all the necessary items while setting and avoiding five different types of booby traps. The rooms also contain separate "remedies" to foil each booby trap.

SPY VS. SPY is a one or two-player game; the one player version features five separate levels of computerized intelligence -- a unique opponent!

Washington DC Atari Users Group

1800 G. Street NW, Washington, DC

President.....	Frank Huband.....	(703) 527-4770
Treasurer.....	Allen H. Lerman...	(301) 460-0289
Membership.....	Gerald Whitmore...	(301) 459-6164
Program Chairman	Art Corte.....	(703) 437-7860
V Prog Chairman.	Jim Campbell.....	(703) 425-1440
Disk Librarian..	Jay Gerber.....	(703) 525-9715
Tape Librarian..	Bruce Ingalls.....	(703) 430-3287
ANALOG Disk.....	Jay Gerber.....	(703) 525-9715

ARMUDIC BBS

ARMUDIC BBS.....	(703)	425-6698
SYSOP (John Brophy).....	(703)	425-7169
BBS PASSWORDS		
Al Lerman (DC).....	(301)	430-1215
Earl Lilley (Novatari).	(703)	281-9017

DC Meetings

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.

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

Longbranch Public Library -- Takoma Park, Maryland

President..... Bruce McLendon 587-7890
Vice President. Dave Haseman.. 681-5776
Treasurer..... David Curry... 384-5514
Rec. Secretary. R. Follender.. 530-0243
Membership..... Richard Stoll. 946-8435

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 (Arliss Street), turn right on Arliss 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: October 3

By Rochelle Follender

Announcements: The club treasury is in good shape with approximately $400. Library disks 35 and 36 and the AMS disks are now available from the lending library which is housed at ACA in Gaithersburg. The next meeting will be on November 7.

Presentations: Bruce demonstrated three new programs: *Synchron* from Synapse, a versatile calendar that can hold up to two years worth of daily data, *Flight Simulator II*; *Financial Cookbook* from ECA, a user-friendly program with specialized formulas which help evaluate 32 common consumer problems. Becky, from ComputerKids, which is located in Wintergreen Plaza in Rockville, discussed her firm's offerings and invited AURA members and their friends to a hands-on Open House on Monday, Nov. 12 from 8-10 p.m. Debbie Jenkins, from SWP Microcomputer Products gave an extensive talk and demonstration of the ATR8000 and offered the group special prices on disk drives and other hardware.

President's Report

By Bruce McLendon

The next meeting will be Wednesday, the 7th at 7:30 pm at the Long Branch Public Library in meeting room #1, upstairs. Our November meeting will feature graphics and music plus spontaneous demonstrations from members in the audience and retail distributors.

In keeping with the "news" element of "newsletter", I've compiled a list of computer-related news items that the membership might find interesting:

MODEM NEWS (from BYTE 10/84). Some listings from BYTE articles are available on a bulletin board called, "Baby BYTEnet". This is sponsored by BYTE magazine and, for the present, there is only one line and the users must bear their own long-distance charges. The number in New Hampshire is: (603) 924-9820

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Hayes Microcomputer Products released its software upgrade for its popular Smartmodem. SMARTCOM II 2.0 offers extended telecommunications capabilities including XMODEM protocol, VT52 and VT102/100 terminal emulation and batch commands for automatic data transmission at specified times. Smartcom II 2.0 gives users the ability to switch from voice to data transmission during one phone call. Password protection and automatic test is also offered. The modem software is available in versions for the IBM PC and XT, TI pro-fessional, Wang PC, HP 150 and DECRainbow 100 microcomputers. HAYES MICROCOMPUTER PRODUCTS, INC 5923 Peachtree Industrial Blvd. Norcross, Georgia 30092 (404) 449-8791.

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The BBS Log Book is a new software package that keeps track of calls to computer bulletin board systems (BBS). The software contains a log of long-distance calls, keeps track of your passwords, time on, time off, access numbers, dates, upload and download information and messaging details. There is a special section for tracking which long-distance company was used for which call. This information can be used to determine which carrier best meets your needs. The BBS Log Book is available now! It sells for $5.95 plus $2 shipping and handling. Order from: ATMOSPHERES BBS LOG BOOK, 1207 Eighth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, 11215.

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The online Software Library from Searchmart Corp. provides listings and detailed descriptions of thousands of software programs, all for the price of a telephone call to North Palm Beach, FL. Software in this free-access database is categorized extensively, by size of computer (micro, mini, mainframe), manufacturer, general application - data communications, general busines, etc. and specific application: e.g., communications, electronic mail, emulation, networking, etc. within the data communications category. The Software Library is NOT a critical review of all this software; manufacturers provide the product descriptions. But the descriptions are extensive; applicable systems, prices, and company contacts are all given. One helpful feature sends a request to specific manufacturers for more information. The Software Library can be accessed by calling: (305) 845-6466. Modems should be set for 8 bits, 1 stopbit, no parity. SEARCHMART CORPORATION, 745 US Highway One, North Palm Beach, FL. 33408 (305) 845-2996.

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The Attorney Referral Network is a free access service available through MCI: computer to computer, through MCI electronic mail, or by telephone. Lawyers are categorized by specialization (insurance, tax, real estate, etc), and geographically for the United States, Canada and major foreign cities. ATTORNEY REFERRAL NETWORK, INC., PO Box 1776, Cape Coral, FL. 33910 (813) 772-0742. MCI ID 215-5748.

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COMMODORE VS ATARI (from BYTE 10/84). Commodore has purchased AMIGA CORP, which has developed a 68000-based microcomputer with a custom graphics co-processor. Amiga had planned to sell the machine for less than $1500. Shortly before the sale was announced, ATARI sued Amiga, charging that the sale to Commodore violates agreements between ATARI and Amiga through which ATARI would have licensed the Amiga computer technology.

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Electronic 'Access Key' for Security. Startup company GORDIAN SYSTEMS, INC of Palo Alto, CA. has developed what it considers to be a practical, low cost solution to system security. The company's first product, to be introduced this month, is a thumb-sized 'access key' that must be held up to a CRT screen in order for a user to gain system access. The key consists of custom circuitry, optical sensors, a 5-year lithium battery, a clock and a calendar. When the key is held up to a screen, it optically reads certain information, combines it with other preprogrammed information in its own circuitry and generates a unique password. The password is then displayed on the key's LCD and the user types the password into the system on the keyboard. Volume price is less than $10 per key.

SECRET SUNNYVALE CORRESPONDENT

CNR: You mentioned 'royalties' last month. What's the 'change' here?

SSC: The entire *SYNCALC*, *SYNGRAPH* Lotus 1-2-3 emulator package by SYNAPSE was negotiated under different circumstances, and is no longer favorable to ATARI. With some re-negotiation, the royalties can be restructured to allow ATARI to recover some of the (literally!) millions of dollars invested in that project. The product IS available, however. Remember the "LAST STARFIGHTER" game I told you about last month? That will be released when all parties concerned reach an agreement on the royalites. The catch is we'd like to release that game for $20 keeping our new price strategy in mind and, with the present royalty talks, we can't sell it for $20. So, for the moment, it's back to the negotiation table.

CNR: Since ATARI is alive and well, can we find some of the older software still on the shelves?

SSC: Yes, especially the language programs. We've had a constant demand for those and many other products are still on our price list.

CNR: Christmas is right around the corner. What can we see under our tree this season?

SSC: ATARI lab no. 2, the light module, an excellent product, will be available for Christmas. In addition, ATARI owners will be treated to another Christmas present. ATARI software will be back, in quantity, and at about **one-half** the level of past prices!

CNR: What's ahead for next year?

SSC: In January, the *Learning Phone* will be available. This is a cartridge, that will sell for $30 to $40, that converts the ATARI into a Plato terminal emulator. As you know, Plato is an educational network that has a tremenduous variety of courseware and information available. The *Learning Phone* will allow you to look at graphics and upload and download pictures as well as text. Many ATARI owners may find the Plato system far more useful than CompuServe for their information needs.

CNR: What about the new ATARI computers?

SSC: You'll be pleased to know that ATARI will be producing an 8, 16 and 32-bit computer. They will be introduced at the January CES show in Chicago.

CNR: Where does Amiga fit in here?

SSC: We wish Amiga all the luck in the world. But the new machines are not Amiga, they are ATARI. If you think the graphic capability of the IBM PCs or of the new AT&T PC is impressive, understand that these computers are primitive when compared to the standards of the new machines ATARI will introduce. As I have been saying right along, "Keep the faith, you won't be disappointed!"

CNR: Will the new machines be compatible with the 6502 chip?

SSC: Why put Volkswagon parts into a Ferrari? Owners of the new ATARI won't worry about 6502 campatibility. Hang in there until the January CES. All the details will be released then.

Review of the Koala Pad Touch Tablet
by Gary Pruitt

Over the holidays I sprung for a ***Koala Pad graphics tablet*** for the Atari 800. This little gem cost $100, but I love it. The pad itself is a smooth surface about 4 inches square that you activate with a plastic stylus (or anything else). The stylus pressure compressed two membranes that form a resistor network. There are also two large buttons on the top of the pad. The pad simulates a pair of paddles plugged into Port 1, with one paddle input representing horizontal movement and the other vertical movement. The resolution is therefore the same as for paddles (228 points in each direction). Although used primarily for graphics, the tablet can be used for any game that uses paddles, or for menu selection, etc. It appears to be well made, but it is light and need to be held down while in use.

With the tablet comes the ***Micro Illustrator Design Package*** that allows you to:

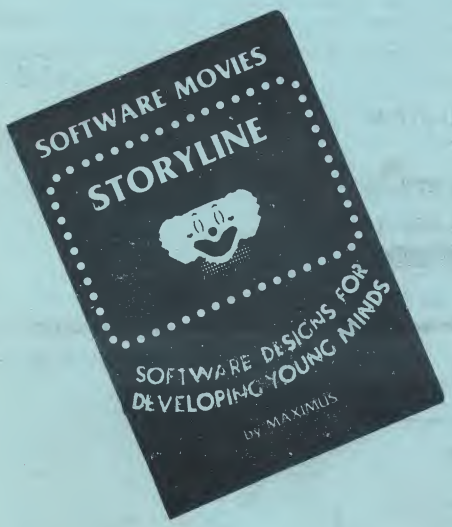
- Draw freehand with a variety of colors and "brushes" (points, lines, symbols)
- Draw open or filled in boxes and circles
- Draw connected lines
- Do mirror-image drawings
- Change colors or rainbow a selected color
- Fill closed areas with colors or patterns
- Erase the screen
- Magnify the picture for detailed work or corrections
- Save or load pictures from disk or cassette

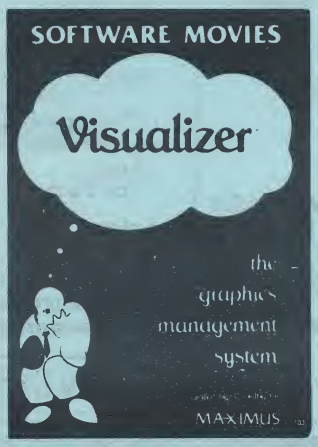
The software is available on disk of cartridge. There are several sample pictures on the disk. The software is totally menu driven with a master screen that uses icons to identify functions, colors, or options. Selection is made by putting the stylus on the pad, moving to the appropriate icon, and pressing on of the buttons on the top of the pad. It is similar to LisaDraw, but has no capability to add text to the picture (except by free-hand lettering). The system is very easy to use, and it is simple to correct mistakes by drawing or filling over them with the background color. You can select from 256 colors through the color menu screen; colors can be changed at any time. Only four colors are available at one time, but there are also 12 color patterns, which are checkerboard combinations of the four basic colors selected.

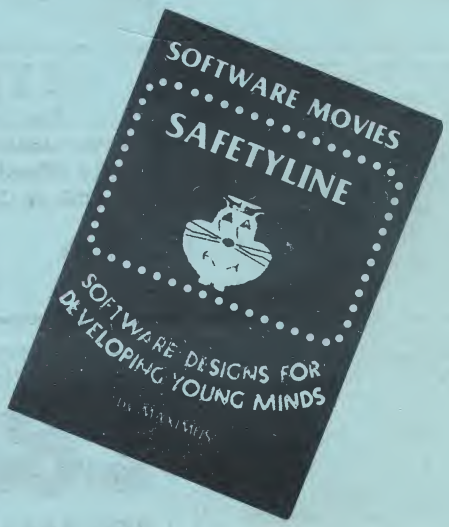
If you enjoy graphics design, you've got to see a demo of this software. The kids and I have created a number of pictures, everything from Garfield to a snowman to a house. The ***Micro Illustrator*** is not suitable for business graphics, but it's great for personal play. There are also educational packages and other graphics packages available for the tablet, as well as a programmer's guide for creating your own software.

[Reprinted from ARINC Newsletter, January, 1984.]

What do you call a software line that combines education, recreation & innovation?







How about a sensation!

STORYLINE makes bedtime, or anytime, funtime. Clover the Clown narrates two fairytale favorites, RUMPELSTILTSKIN and THE UGLY DUCKLING, accompanied by four games that reinforce the morals of the stories: Promises, Promises, Guess My Name, Pick the Twins, and Duck Puzzle.

Retail: $39.95
Ages 4 to 10

VISUALIZER turns your Atari computer into a full-featured slide projector, allowing you to create audio-visual presentations in just minutes! It's a low-cost way to produce animated color graphics and text WITH SOUND, letting you create everything from charts to arts.

Retail: $49.95
Audio Option: $19.95
Ages 5 to Adult

SAFETYLINE combines fun with important lessons about safety. Narrated by Max the Cat, SAFETYLINE shows your child how to cross streets safely and what to do when lost. Four intriguing games reinforce the safety tips presented in the safety stories: Streetcross, Hidden Tips, Tipmatch and Zoomaze.

Retail: $39.95
Ages 4 to 8

Software Movies by MAXIMUS. It's the exciting, stimulating, interactive, educational entertainment system for the entire family that's way ahead of its class!

What exactly is a Software Movie? It's a computer generated story with high resolution animated graphics, CompuSync™ soundtrack narration, original music, and interactive play that takes computer learning into a whole new dimension!

Software Movies are compatible with any 48K Atari computer system with disk drive and cassette program recorder. (Recorder optional with VISUALIZER.)

Call toll-free
(800) 368-2152.

Virginia call
(703) 734-4200.

Additional dealer/distributor inquiries are invited.