

# PORTLAND

FEBRUARY 1987

# ATARI CLUB

## IN THIS ISSUE

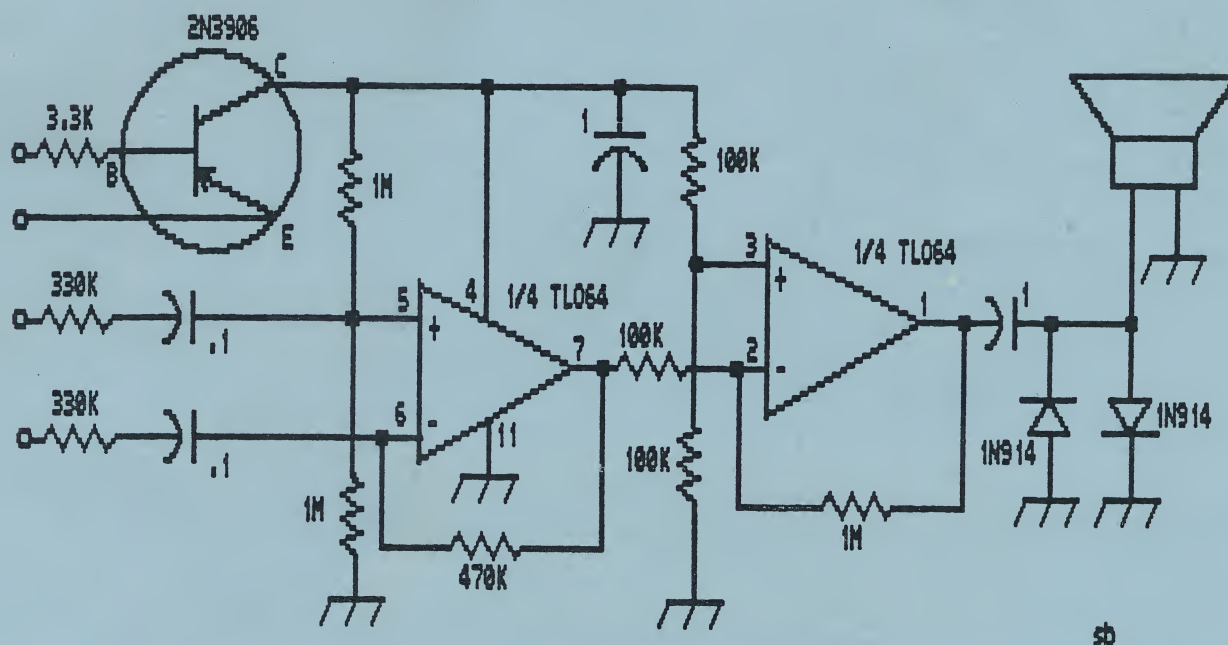
President's Column, Dave Holliday.....	1
Letters to the Editor.....	2
Membership Notes, Jim Miller.....	2
Board Meeting Notes, Dan Gibson.....	3
Ramblin'..., Chuck Hall.....	4
Adding A Speaker to the Avatex, John Purbrick..	5
Atari Announces New Products at CES.....	6
Atari's Small Miracles, Mark Brown.....	10
Something New for 8-Bit Computers, C. Cherry...	12
Review: Leader Board Vs Mean 18, D. Blakesly...	13
Review: Pawn, Jim Miller.....	13
ST SIG News, R. DeLoy Graham.....	14
PAC Help Hotlines.....	16
Review: Flash, Clyde Pritchard.....	17
Guide to ST Software, Buddy Hammerton.....	18
Unclassified Ads.....	20
Review: Little Computer People, Steve Bilings..	21
Review: Spell Checkers, Clyde Pritchard.....	22
Dealers Corner.....	BC

### NEXT GENERAL MEETING

Monday, February 2, 1987, at 6:30 p.m.  
Northwest Service Center  
1819 N.W. Everett St.

PAC Bulletin Board Systems  
24 Hours - 7 Days a Week

#1 - (503) 245-9405 - 300/1200 BPS  
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sb

ADD A SPEAKER  
TO YOUR AVATEX 1200 MODEM

# PORTLAND ATARI CLUB

(Not affiliated with ATARI, Inc.)

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**Membership** is \$20 per year and includes a subscription to this newsletter and access to members-only functions. Single copy price of the newsletter is \$1.50. General meetings are open to the public and start at 6:30 p.m. on the 1st Monday of each month (2nd Monday in the case of holidays) on the date and at the location listed on the cover of this newsletter.

Exchange newsletters, articles, correspondence and ads should be sent to the following address:

**Portland Atari Club, Attention:** (appropriate board member), P.O. Box 1692, Beaverton, OR 97005

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear DeLoy,

This is a letter in response to several articles in the January newsletter.

To start with, I like the publication and so far I have enjoyed the PAC. I am a new computer owner, and everything I hear or read is new to me. I don't know what to expect at the meetings; so far the two meetings I have been to have not disappointed me. I was out of town for the Atari Expo; consequently, I missed a big event.

I have been buying some computer magazines, and the thrust seems to be that people who copy software are thieves and at least should be hung. The January PAC articles appear to cover the response about as well as possible. Since I am new at this, I have little commercial software to copy, and so far nobody has offered to sell or give me any pirated material. This is not quite right -- I have been offered a lot of IBM PC material.

I would like to see some information in the magazine concerning the use of bulletin boards or have this covered at one of the meetings. I realize that this is old hat to a lot of people, but they had to start someplace when they got their first computers. Right now, I do not own a modem so I am just curious.

I bought the 1040 with three uses in mind. So far, I have made good use of the word processor. I need some better software to handle the other uses. I am primarily interested in getting some software for amateur radio use. There must be some out there if I could only find it. Someday, I may be able to write my own but that is a long way down the road.

Thank you for a good publication.

-- Bob Orr

Dear DeLoy,

I just received my latest issue of the PAC newsletter in the mail today. And I must say that I'm quite impressed with it! As a matter of fact, I usually just skim through the newsletter and that's it. This time, though, I couldn't help but begin reading most of the articles you had and over an hour was gone before I knew it! I appreciated the editorials on piracy in particular. They were \*very\* informative and interesting. Just think. With that article on boring meetings, I just might come to a meeting with more in mind than the raffle! I compliment you and your staff on a most high quality newsletter.

-- Ben Roth

## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Jim Miller

I wish to welcome the following new members and families to the PAC.

PETE ABRAHAM	GLEN COWAN
BERT BUTLER	KEN EISENHART
STEVE MICKEL	W.G. HOWARD
PAUL GITTINS	C.J. GUMM
STEVEN DEUTSCH	MARK WAGNER
PAUL FARNHAM	MICHAEL TIEMAN
HAROLD SCHLEET	JESSE PORTER
MICHAEL NELSON	GLEN PLAM
BOB LAIB	JAMES BLOOM
JIMMY JACKSON	JAMES BERNARD
NEAL WEINER	LAWRENCE LAURSEN
DAVID GANT	

Here's a summary of what I do. I keep a database of the PAC membership from which I produce mailing labels for the newsletter. I print these on or about the 17th of the month. If you join after the 17th, you probably will not get the next newsletter, but you should receive the following 12 newsletters. I also produce a list of the PAC membership for the board members.

If you do not receive a newsletter by the end of the first week of each month, don't let me know two months later. Check with me to see if you are on the list or if we have your correct address. If it isn't correct, then either I typed it wrong or I couldn't read your writing. If it is correct, then it probably isn't mine nor any of the newsletter staff's fault, but good ole Uncle Sam's (alias the post office).

If you are up for renewal say in January, you will receive the February issue, but you should come prepared to renew at the February Pac meeting or you probably will not get the March issue. I will be there by 6:30 p.m. to receive your renewals. So, come one, come all.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear DeLoy,

I agree with you about the job being done on Atari [What Are They Trying To Do To Atari? -- January issue] and can't help but wonder if this is the only way the competition can get at them.

-- Jack Van Nostrand



**BOARD MEETING NOTES**

Dan Gibson

The November Board Meeting was held at 7 p.m. on November 24th at IB Computers. Attending were Dan Gibson, Tom Addis, Tom Brown, Steve and Debbie Billings, Chuck Hall, Russell Schwartz, Jerry Andersen, Vern Vertrees, DeLoy Graham, and Dean Wagner.

**DECEMBER MEETING**

The December general meeting began at 6:30 at the Northwest Service Center with PAC software sales until 7:00 when the main meeting started. First off, the Board members gave a brief update on their respective areas. Then the SIG Group leaders told us what each of their groups are doing and when they are meeting. The business part of the meeting centered around election of PAC Board members for 1987. All but one office went uncontested. The rest of the meeting featured an auction of products received at the Atari Expo. The auction will continue next month and we will also have a raffle for the bigger items.

**NOVEMBER TREASURER'S REPORT**

As of this writing, the balance in our checking account stands at \$3,026. At the last meeting we received \$135 from software sales and \$400 for memberships.

**DECEMBER BOARD MEETING**

The December Board Meeting was held at 7 p.m. on December 29, 1986, at Pietros. Attending were members of last year's Board and members of the new Board for 1987.

**BUSINESS**

This meeting was used to get to know the new members and to thank outgoing members for their help. The day for future Board meetings was set as the third Wednesday of each month. The next meeting will be at I.B. Computers, but future meetings will be held at the Fulton Park Community Center. It was m/s/p to postpone all major purchases until the club's financial picture is clear and show expenses paid for.

**JANUARY MEETING**

The January general meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Northwest Service Center with PAC software sales and membership business until 7:00 p.m. when the main meeting will start. First off, the new Board members will introduce themselves and give the audience some of their background. New people at the meeting will be called upon to tell us about their interests. SIG group leaders will tell us about the club's special interest group activities. Dave Holliday will update us on Atari news and special deals for club members. Next, we will have a question and answer period. Finally we will have the second half of the auction that began last month.

**DECEMBER TREASURER'S REPORT**

As of this writing, the balance in our checking account stands at \$3,301.10. At the last meeting we received \$147 from software sales and \$600 from memberships.

## Easy-Draw Upgrade Available Now!

**Version 2.0 of Easy-Draw is now available. It includes these SUPER features:**

- \* Load ASCII
- \* Edit Polyline
- \* Flip & Mirror
- \* 7 and 28pt text
- \* New Arrange Commands
- \* Epson wide carriage driver
- \* Automatic copy between windows
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**and MORE!!!**

If you are a current Easy-Draw owner and would like to upgrade to 2.0, please follow these instructions:

1. Send BOTH master & picture disks to Migraph
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3. Enclose upgrade fee of \$40.00 + \$4 shipping.  
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Federal Way, WA 98003

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**(206) 838-4677**



**RAMBLIN...**

Chuck Hall

Yes, folks, it's back. The infamous 'Ramblin...' column is here once again. For those of you new to the club, this is where I come in and just start talking about my Atari(s) and the adventures I have with them. Nothing much is sacred and from time to time you will see my views on Atari Corp., PAC, and just about anyone involved.

I would like to start this month's column with a request. At the Atari Expo I had a small gray metal box which contained the weather map decoder as described in Antic back about July or August. We were going to set it up at the Expo, but we weren't able to get a tape with the right signal so we never got it going.

Anyway, it seems to have disappeared. I would really like to get it back. I paid to have it built and never got to use it. If anyone knows the whereabouts of this device, please contact me.

I never did write up the results of the Expo or express my thanks to all of those who helped. The first day of the show was a great success. I enjoyed it tremendously and was really looking forward to grabbing some bargains the next day. Unfortunately, when we got home that night, we had been robbed. I had to spend the next day repairing damage and replacing a door. Since that time we have been very reluctant to leave much and that's one of the reasons I kind of dropped out of sight from club functions.

We are still trying to get all of our money from some of the exhibitors and we still have some bills to pay, mainly to Atari. But I think in the long run, we will come out ahead and make a few dollars. In any respect, it was a lot of fun, and something we all can be proud of. It came off very well.

I saw in today's business section that IBM has dropped the price of their PC's by 15%. One of the reasons stated was that Atari was exhibiting a PC clone for \$499 at the winter CES show in Las Vegas. This was news to me. I knew they were working on an emulator so maybe our reporter got his words crossed. [No, it's for real. See Antic's articles. -- Editor] The Atari stock was at 15, so it is holding its value and slowly heading upward. Seems to be a good sign boding well for Atari.

One of the biggest changes in my life recently is that my 520ST has now been upgraded to 1 meg. What a difference! I was very reluctant to do this early on when the upgrades first became available. I usually ended up playing the devil's advocate during the ST meetings and general meetings when people first started talking about upgrades. I felt it was too early for someone to start messing around with a new machine. The upgrades were nearly 100% successful and I feel very comfortable with mine.

The upgrade has really helped me in two areas. The first is in developing programs. Whether I'm writing in Basic or C, I can now keep the editor, compiler, linker, and libraries on ramdisk. This makes everything much faster and easier to work with. That alone was enough justification. The second area I really enjoy using it is when I am downloading from a bulletin board. I download the files to ramdisk, saving all of that disk I/O, and it seems to make it faster. When I am done on the BBS, I just copy from my ramdisk to a floppy for storage.

If you are thinking about getting into C or having troubles understanding it, I highly recommend C Primer Plus by Waite, Prata & Martin. It is published by SAMS. If you will take the book, start reading on page 1, and enter all of the sample programs, you will find yourself well on the way to becoming comfortable with C. I recommend answering all of the questions and solving all of the problems also. It will teach you how to use C, and will help in putting you on the right road to learn how to program. I noticed a second book, apparently a sequel, at B. Dalton's today. I am still going through the first but will probably pick up the second one soon. C Primer Plus runs about \$23, but it is well worth the price if you want to learn C.

I am very discouraged about the lack of books on the ST. Compute has put out a few, but not up to the level that I am looking for. Abacus has a few out, but I still have trouble finding many answers to my programming problems. If you look at Amiga books, they offer a ton of information. But then they were far into production before the machine ever came out. I only hope that soon a good reference for our machine will be available.

(continued on page 9)



**ADDING A SPEAKER TO THE AVATEX 1200 MODEM**

John Purbrick

(Reprinted from A-Bug by way of SDACE, December 1986)

[See Circuit Diagram on front cover.]

OK, first thing to do is remove the cover from your Avatex 1200. Take out the 3 Phillips screws from the back. Complicated, huh? If you are no longer interested, replace the cover.

If you are feeling intrepid, orient the modem so the front faces you. Look to the left of the three control buttons; there will be 5 resistors there side by side. The leftmost one is labeled 'R21'. It is the series resistor for the MC light, and we will use it to obtain a signal with which to switch the sound apparatus. Note that at the end of R21 farthest from the front of the modem there is an area of metallization on the board which connects both R21 and its neighbor.

Get a small PNP transistor (2N2907 or 2N3906 are cheap and work fine). Make a short (.1 inch) bend in the end of the emitter lead and lay this part of the lead onto the above mentioned metallized area. Solder it in place. Now bend the base lead of the transistor slightly toward you. Using a similar technique to the one for the emitter, clip one wire of a 3.3K resistor to .5 inch length, and solder it to the other end of R21. Clip the other end of the resistor short, and cross it over the transistor base. Solder them together. Now, whenever current flows through R21, it will also pass through the 3.3K resistor and the emitter-base junction of the transistor, turning it on.

There are three more connections to make. Look at the far left hand corner of the board. Next to the transformer (red, in a metal frame) is a blue block, the relay. To the right of the relay are a large capacitor, a resistor, and two small diodes, D35 and D36. Using fine wires, solder two leads onto the ends of D35 and D36 closest to you. Work quickly, so as not to overheat these components. Don't let excess solder bridge between the diodes or to anything else. The last connection is a ground lead, and can go to any number of places, but one sure connection point is the center lead of one of the voltage regulators-- these sit on heat sinks at the right hand side of the board. Again, don't cook the regulator while soldering.

Finally, bring in the switched power supply to your circuit from the collector of the PNP transistor. That's it!

**Circuit notes:** Use as small a speaker as you can find: I used one I got at Eli's (Solid State Sales) and I think it came out of a set of ear-phones. Don't expect sound quality to be very good, but you should hear the busy signal and sound of dialing quite clearly. and also the roaring sound of the carrier, before the connection is established. You can test the setup by dialing your own number (always busy) of 1-(your number) which gives you boop-bup-beep and recorded sorrow. ("We are unable to complete your call.....etc.). All the components except the resistors are available at Solid State Sales (139 Hampshire St. Cambridge); you can substitute other op-amps, but the TL064 is a FET-input type that operates on a 5v supply--not many op-amps will do this. (The TL062 is a dual op-amp that is compatible with the TL064; it can be substituted without circuit changes.)

Note that the output is clipped to .6v from ground by the two 1N914's on the output. This is necessary because the tones used in dialing sound extremely loud if played at the same volume as received signals (because they've only stared their journey). The diodes limit the volume of these tones while allowing as much gain as possible for the other sounds.

**Mounting:** Look at the way the pushbuttons are mounted inside the modem. They fit inside a metal frame, and this has "ears" at each side with a hole in each. You can cut a long, narrow piece of perfboard which will fit vertically across the front of the modem and bolt it to these two holes for support. I used this arrangement. The board being .6 inches by 4.9 inches. Naturally there must be a large cutout in the board to clear the switches, but there is plenty of space left over for the circuit. My speaker hangs off the left hand end of the board, and I drilled a 3/16 diameter hole in the modem case to let the sound out; this works well because the speaker is just behind this hole, near the case's left front corner.

It would be possible, but not as easy, to run the device off the 12v supply which would allow more output power to the speaker. You can also connect the output to an external amplifier, which I have tried successfully.

(continued on page 9)



**ATARI ANNOUNCES NEW PRODUCTS AT CES**

**Las Vegas, NV, Jan. 8** -- In a dramatic press conference held this morning at the Consumer Electronics Show, spokesmen for the Atari Corporation introduced a panoply of new products for 1987.

Highlights included three significant new additions to Atari's flagship ST line of high-performance personal computers, a revolutionary low-cost laser printer, and an IBM PC-compatible personal computer of radically new design.

The new ST computers, dubbed "Mega STs 1, 2, and 4" incorporate one, two, and four megabytes of RAM, respectively.

Encased in a newly-designed system unit with integral 800K microfloppy drive and detachable, ergonomic keyboard, the new machines are visibly different from Atari's current 520ST and 1040ST models, while remaining 100% compatible with them.

Additional enhancements to the Mega machines include a battery-backed realtime clock, internal mounting space for an additional circuit board, and full external routing of the 68000 bus, making their architecture "wide open" for further enhancements. "We took all our customer's suggestions on how we could improve the ST, and incorporated them in this series," said Neil Harris, Atari's Director of Marketing Communications. Delivery of the new machines, via computer specialty stores, is expected to begin shortly at a price-point of "about \$1000."

The new Atari laser printer, shown in a prototype version, will match or exceed the performance of present laser printer systems while costing only about half as much -- about \$1500.

Atari has accomplished this enormous cost-saving by exploiting the power inherent in their ST computers. Coupled with a 2- or 4-megabyte Mega ST, the laser printer will form the output stage of a desktop publishing system costing less than \$3000 total.

Atari's new IBM PC-compatible machine, the Atari PC, is a radical departure from present "PC clone" designs, offering top-of-the-line compatibility and features at a record-breaking price of under \$500. Housed in a system unit similar to the Mega ST with integral 5-1/4" floppy drive and detachable XT-style keyboard, the PC/XT compatible Atari PC sports 512K RAM standard (expandable to 640K on the motherboard),

an additional 256K of graphics-dedicated RAM, a custom graphics chip providing enhanced EGA, CGA, IBM Monochrome, and Hercules graphics capabilities, and a Microsoft compatible mouse. It operates at the IBM standard 4.77 Mhz or at a high-speed 8 Mhz "turbo mode," and provides for the addition of an 8087 math coprocessor at either speed. A monochrome monitor designed for use with the Atari PC was also announced. Costing under \$200, the monitor supports all Atari PC graphics modes, including the high-resolution, multicolor EGA mode in grey-scale. Shipments of the Atari PC will begin in March.

The new products -- perceived by some as the fulfillment of promises made over a year ago by Atari CEO Jack Tramiel -- are universally hailed as milestones for the Atari Corporation. One informed onlooker commented: "It's as if Atari, in one fell swoop, had stepped to the leading edge in three markets: high-performance workstations, desktop publishing systems, and the lucrative PC-compatible game. They're going to be the company to watch in 1987."

With somewhat less fanfare, Atari also announced a new slimline 20-megabyte Winchester drive for its ST line, incorporating an extra port for daisy-chaining with other DMA-compatible peripherals, such as the new laser printer. At the same time, Atari announced price reductions on existing ST models. A 520ST CPU will now be available for under \$300 retail, a 1040ST with monochrome monitor for around \$799, and a 1040ST with color monitor for around \$999.

**Flagships of the Atari Line:  
New Mega ST Workstations  
Offer "Power Without the Price"  
for Desktop Publishing,  
Professional Applications.**

**Las Vegas, NV Jan. 8** -- Atari's new Mega ST 1, 2, and 4 computers, announced today at the Consumer Electronics Show, create new personal computer price/performance standards -- standards that the rest of the computer industry will be hard-pressed to meet or beat in 1987. Available starting at \$1000, the new machines will offer up to four megabytes of RAM memory: sixteen times that of most standard, high-end workstations.



The Mega ST is housed in an independent "system unit," about 22" square by 2" high, containing the CPU, a double-sided floppy drive and an internal power supply. The ST's normal complement of ports, including those for DMA, RS-232 serial, parallel, disk, video, cartridge, MIDI, mouse, and joystick, plus an additional port for connecting the detachable, ergonomic keyboard, are included. The Mega ST system unit is reinforced to support a monitor and can be stacked with other components -- notably the enhanced 20-megabyte hard disk drive. Even fully loaded, it will take up far less room than present ST configurations.

The sleek new Mega chassis contains a redesigned ST motherboard, sporting significant enhancements. A battery-backed clock/calendar is now standard equipment, eliminating the present need to set time manually on power-up. The clock runs off alkaline penlight batteries -- more easily obtainable and less expensive than "coin-type" lithium cells.

The Mega ST architecture is "wide open," permitting internal and external expansion with add-on circuit cards. The new design provides full access to the 68000 bus and power supply, and fixtures have been provided for installing a circuit board inside the case. Further expansion is possible by routing the bus outside to an external card-cage. RAM expansion up to 16 megabytes and networking capabilities will soon be available from Atari as low-cost add-ons.

The Mega ST's detachable keyboard is designed to the highest ergonomic standards for convenience and ease of use. Connected to the system unit by a coiled cable, the new keyboard can be held comfortably in the lap. When placed on the desktop, adjustable legs fold down to support the unit at the preferred typing angle.

Internally, the keyboard has been enhanced with high-quality key switches for improved tactile and auditory feedback, better "feel," and increased reliability.

Where does the Mega line stand in relation to other Atari products? "They're our flagships," says Atari spokesman Neil Harris. "The Mega STs represent Atari's continued strong support of the ST architecture." They are also physical proof that Atari has been listening to its users and taking their advice seriously.

"Most of the improvements we've made in the basic ST design have been taken from 'wish lists' that have come out of our dialogue with users over the past year," Harris says.

With vastly expanded memory, an open architecture, a more compact configuration with integrated peripherals, and an improved keyboard, the Mega machines are clearly intended as "professional" computers. Networking capabilities and sufficient memory for running multiple, co-resident applications, plus the promise of desktop publishing (in combination with the upcoming Atari laser printer) are sure to make the Mega ST an office favorite in the coming year.

### **Low-cost Atari Laser Printer Promises "Revolution" in Desktop Publishing**

**Las Vegas, NV Jan. 8** -- A prototype laser printer, being demonstrated by Atari here at CES, will form the basis for a full-featured desktop publishing system costing less than half the price of systems built around competing architectures. Designed to interface with Atari's ST line of high-performance personal computers, the new laser printer will be taken to market later this year at the astoundingly low price of around \$1500.

"Desktop publishing" -- the use of personal computers to produce high-quality printed matter -- has become a burgeoning industry over the past two years. Powerful, graphics-oriented personal computers such as the Atari ST are now routinely used in typesetting, page design, paste-up, and -- in combination with high-resolution laser printers -- for producing high-quality, "camera ready" output. However, largely because the price of laser printers has remained high, the cost of a desktop publishing system is still out of reach for many.

By redesigning the standard laser printer to take advantage of the power latent in the ST line -- particularly the new Mega STs -- Atari hopes to make full-featured desktop publishing a reality at less than \$3000 for a complete system; about what a conventional laser printer costs today. Designed to interface with the ST's high-speed DMA (Direct Memory Access) port and incorporating a standard laser "engine," the Atari laser printer will produce rapid throughput at 300 dots-per-inch resolution.



Though technical details have not yet been revealed, Shiraz Shivji, head of Atari's hardware engineering division, states that Atari "has designed an admirably flexible system that includes all the advantages and few of the disadvantages of present laser printer architectures. The printer will be able to handle multiple fonts and standard page-description languages at the discretion of software. Moreover, adapting present software to use the laser printer's full capabilities should be fairly simple, providing such software has been written in conformance with GEM standards."

### **The Atari PC**

**"More than just another pretty clone."**

**Las Vegas, NV Jan. 8** -- The audience at this morning's CES press conference was stunned to learn that Atari Corporation, long a manufacturer of proprietary, high-performance home and personal computers, is planning to market an IBM PC-compatible machine.

Industry insiders, however, were quick to note that Atari has always been known for bringing state-of-the-art products to market at low prices and for driving the industry by finding and staking out new turf. In this context, it is less surprising that Atari has chosen to bring their special brand of competition where, for the moment, the competition is hottest. "We saw no reason to ignore the fact that there are profits to be made in the IBM PC-compatible marketplace at this time." Says Neil Harris, Atari's Director of Marketing Communications, "especially since it is a different market than the one we are addressing with our high-end, flagship ST systems."

Presently, the PC-compatible industry is moving in two directions. At the low end, a group of more-or-less anonymous clone makers are packaging "bare bones" systems for the mail-order market. Buyers of such machines often find that they must add several hundred dollars worth of extra hardware before their "bargain systems" can accomplish useful work. At the high end, clone makers such as Leading Edge and Compaq are providing more complete systems than IBM itself. At prices starting at around \$1200 and up, however, these machines can only be considered bargains in comparison with the even higher cost of going with Big Blue.

In designing their PC, Atari management decided to run counter to both dominant trends. Instead, they reasoned that by applying new technology and old-fashioned manufacturing leverage, they could bring to market a fully-loaded, state-of-the-art system -- a "here's everything you'll ever need" PC -- at a price-point low enough to undercut even the "el cheapo" clone makers.

They appear to have succeeded. The Atari PC, which will retail for "around \$500," is a compact and elegant system loaded with features not found on systems costing literally thousands of dollars more. Measuring about 22" square by only 2" high, the Atari PC system unit includes a built-in, half-height 5-1/4" diskette drive and integral power supply. An XT-style keyboard attaches to the unit via a coiled cable. A second 5-1/4" drive or ST-style 3-1/2" drive, capable of reading disks in either ST or IBM format, can be attached externally. But that's just the beginning.

The Atari PC comes with 512K of RAM, expandable to 640K via sockets on the motherboard. Standard serial, parallel, and combination video ports, and an ST-style disk port, are all included. A mouse port, based on the Microsoft INPORT chip, is built in, and an ST-type mouse is included with the system. Thus, unlike competing PC-compatible systems, the Atari PC will be able to run PC GEM, Microsoft Windows, and mouse-based programs like Microsoft Word, right out of the box.

The Atari PC employs an Intel 8086 micro-processor which can run at 4.77 Mhz and in an enhanced, 8 Mhz, "turbo mode." An 8087 math co-processor, running at either speed, can be added via a socket on the motherboard.

As one would expect, Atari has paid special attention the Atari PC's graphics capabilities. Most low-cost PC compatibles support only the IBM Monochrome mode, and are thus text-only systems. A few of the more expensive clones include IBM Color Graphics Adapter (CGA) and/or Hercules monochrome graphics capabilities. IBM Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) 640 x 350 x 16-color graphics capabilities have, in the past, only been accessible via expensive upgrades to a system's display circuitry and the purchase of costly high-resolution monitors. Moreover, purchasers of the supposedly downward-compatible EGA enhancements have often been disappointed to discover that IBM-style EGA isn't as downward compatible as they hoped--some CGA software won't run.

(continued on page 9)



(Atari at CES, continued from page 8)

Yet, Atari has managed to shoehorn IBM Monochrome, CGA, EGA, and Hercules graphics capabilities into the Atari PC. Besides the fact that the Atari PC is the only PC-compatible to include EGA graphics as a standard feature, Atari's Shiraz Shivji notes: "our EGA is completely downward-compatible with CGA. As a result, users will experience no compatibility problems when using the lower graphics modes." What's more, Atari has announced a \$200 monochrome greenscreen monitor for use with the Atari PC that can display all its graphics modes; including the high resolution EGA color mode, using intensity gradients (gray scales) to represent colors. This is the first monitor that incorporates these capabilities. "The monitor is intelligent," says Shivji, "and recognizes the frequency of signals coming from the combination video port, adjusting itself appropriately to display whatever kind of text or graphics the machine produces."

The Atari PC is virtually 100% compatible with software available for the IBM PC and XT. While its slimline housing provides no room for mounting internal circuit cards, it is doubtful that more than a handful of users will require more capabilities than the machine provides in its off-the-shelf configuration. For those who do, Atari intends to provide an external expansion box in the near future.

\*\*\*\*\*

(Avatex Speaker, continued from page 5)

**Postscript:** Harry (Steele, BCS Atari sysop) came over to my house to see (and hear!) the converted modem, and pointed out that the audio signal is available at pin 1 of chip U27 on the modem board. Picking it up there, rather than at the D35/D36, would give a simpler circuit, and I intend to try this, but the circuit as described certainly works. Also, one limitation in the circuit: I claimed that it reproduces the busy signal well, but that's because I tested it by calling my own number. In fact the busy signal comes in very faintly from everywhere else except my own number, presumably because of losses in transmission. It is audible, though.

(Ramblin..., continued from page 4)

Those of you who access PAC BBS #1 know that we are now using the club ST for the BBS. After a few minor start up problems, the board is now working very well. Steve has done a very good job of making this board as good as it is. It is much faster, and can contain much more in the way of downloads. Steve has done an awful lot of work here. Don't forget to say thanks once in awhile.

I was very disappointed when I saw that only 67 ballots were cast at our last election. I have seen our meetings dwindle in attendance each month. You have to let us know what it is we can provide you to keep your interest up. Maybe the new administration can bring some new ideas to the club. We want to make it work for you, so let your officers know what it is you want. I feel that it is very important that we get the SIG groups going again. If a few of you have an idea about a special group you would like to get going please let your SIG coordinator know. He can put you in touch with others and help arrange a place to meet. When I was the SIG leader for the now defunct business SIG, we would meet at my home or at the office of one of our members. We never had a problem getting together and having not only fun, but a good learning experience. A lot of what we did is now being done by the Explorers group. If you are new to the Atari or just want to learn more, you should contact that group and get involved. Anyway, enough of the soapbox.

I was glad to see Dave (our President) make the announcements at the last meeting of offers from software firms, etc. I always felt that the major item we have to offer our members is information. I missed that in the past year. I have even approached Dave about starting up a section in the Newsletter for keeping track of these offers and ensuring that they are made available to everyone. They may not be for everyone, but who knows what might be interesting to one and not another.

After the last meeting I talked briefly with a couple from Longview, Washington. This was their first meeting, and they came based on the recommendation of a dealer in Longview. I thank him for letting people know about us. I know that we have several members or past members from Longview. They should try to get together to form a small group of their own. We don't want to lose them as members, of course, and we expect them to stay with us, but that has to be a long drive, especially this time of year.

As I get back into everything I will hopefully be bringing you issues of interest and news that will help you enjoy your systems even more. Until then, keep on computing.



## ATARI'S SMALL MIRACLES

Mark Brown

(Reprinted from the September 1986 Current Notes)

## READER SUBMISSIONS

Some people have the persistence, patience, and determination to write incredibly long programs that are complex and comprehensive. But these people are rare and you can probably count all the people you personally know like that on no hands. For the other part of the population there is this column, dedicated to the hard core ambivalents who want to get a working program in less time than it took to build Rome. Atari's Small Miracles: the column for the rest of us.

This month I've been deluged with mail. Let's put that in perspective; three letters, which almost doubled all previous correspondence. But industry considers that each letter it receives expresses the opinion of a thousand people, so that means I've already got twice the number of people subscribing to this magazine liking my column. Thanks for all your support!

I've decided to dedicate an entire column to programs people have sent in; all the programs you see this month were written by readers of this column. Actually the choice was made rather easy by George Humfeld of Reston, Virginia. He sent me **four** programs along with complete explanations, enough to make an entire column! So I'll just turn over most of the column to Mr. Humfeld!

"When you use the SAVE command, your program is stored in a 'tokenized' form which is impossible to read directly. On the other hand, if you use the LIST command instead, the contents of the file you LISTed to 'looks' just like what you see on the screen when you list the program. In fact, the file can be read by another BASIC program as string data, each numbered line being a separate statement. For example, try the following program:

```
10 DIM A$(120)
20 LIST "D:TRYFILE"
30 OPEN #1,4,0,"D:TRYFILE"
40 FOR I=10 TO 90 STEP 10
50 INPUT #1;A$
60 PRINT A$
70 NEXT I
80 CLOSE #1
90 XIO 33,#1,0,0,"D:TRYFILE"
```

"If you type LIST, you will see the above listing on your screen. If you type RUN, you will see the same thing on your screen, but your disk drive will run and it will take longer to happen. The reason is that the program LISTS itself into a file called "TRYFILE" on your disk and then reads the contents of "TRYFILE" back and prints them to the screen. If you change the upper limit on the FOR loop in line 40 to the number 70 rather than 90, the last two lines will not display when you RUN. Why? Because you only read the first 7 lines from TRYFILE. You get the same result if you replace line 20 with:

```
20 LIST "D:TRYFILE",10,70
```

But this time the reason is that 'TRYFILE' contains only lines 10 through 70.

"Of course, a program which will display itself on the screen has rather limited utility. However, the structure of a file formed by LISTing a program permits some useful utilities.

## COMPARE

"The first program will compare two program LISTings. I've found this particularly useful when trying to determine what changes I made last week when I updated that program I've been working on. To prepare to use the program, load in one version and LIST it to the disk under the name "D:FILE1". Load in the other version and list it as "D:FILE2". Finally, load in the COMPARE program and RUN. The program will read both files and (in line number order) display each line found on one file but not the other, display both version of lines which are not exactly the same, and tell you when it has reached the end of one (or both) files. Note that once it reaches the end of one file, the program quits. It does not display any remaining lines on the other file. It lets you know that FILE1 is "longer" than FILE2, for example, by telling you that it has reached the end of FILE2 but not the end of FILE1.

"A word of caution: COMPARE will only actually compare two lines if the line number is the same. So if you try to renumber the lines from one version to the other, the results of running COMPARE could be less than pleasant.



```

10 DIM A$(120),B$(120),C$(1),F(2):OPEN
#1,4,0,"D:FILE1":OPEN#2,4,0,"D:FILE2
":F(1)=1:F(2)=1
20 IF F(1)=1 THEN GOSUB 100
30 IF F(2)=1 THEN GOSUB 200
40 IF K1<K2 THEN F(2)=1: ? "EXTRA ON
FILE2": ? B$:INPUT C$:GOTO 30
50 IF K2<K1 THEN F(1)=1: ? "EXTRA ON
FILE1": ? A$:INPUT C$:GOTO 20
60 F(1)=1:F(2)=1:IF A$=B$ THEN 20
70 ? : ? "FROM FILE1": ? A$: ? "FROM FILE2":
? B$:INPUT C$:GOTO 20
100 J=1:F(1)=9:TRAP 300:INPUT
#1;A$:K1=VAL(A$):TRAP 40000:RETURN
200 J=2:F(2)=0:TRAP 300:INPUT
#2,B$:K2=VAL(B$):TRAP 40000:RETURN
300 ? : ? "END OF FILE";J:J=3-J:IF F(J)=1
THEN GOSUB J*100

```

### XCOMPARE

"I've used up my 10-line limit on the version of COMPARE listed above. But with just six more lines and the addition of 'GOSUB 230:' to the beginning of line 70, COMPARE will use the inverse video to highlight the differences between compare lines. Those six lines make up the first two-part program Atari's Small Miracles has ever had.

```

230 MAX=LEN(A$):IF MAX>LEN(B$) THEN
MAX=LEN(B$)
240 FOR J=1 TO MAX:IF A$(J,J)=B$(J,J)
THEN 280
250 X=ASC(A$(J))+128:IF X>255 THEN X=X-256
260 A$(J,J)=CHR$(X):X=ASC(B$(J))+128:IF
X>255 THEN X=X-256
270 B$(J,J)=CHR$(X)
280 NEXT J:RETURN

```

### SEARCH

"In the May issue we had a utility VARXREF which would search a program for all lines containing a given variable. With SEARCH you are not restricted to a variable name. SEARCH will look through the program LISTed in the file 'TTT' and display all lines containing any given character string. It will use inverse video to highlight every occurrence of the string. For example, you could specify 'GOSUB' as the search string to find all subroutine calls, or a line number to find all branches to that line.

"Unlike COMPARE, SEARCH can be used as an add-on to another program. Just change the line numbers to 32651-32658 (being careful to change the traps and branches in lines 120, 130 and 160) and add the line:

```
32650 CLR: LIST "D:TTT",0,32649
```

"When you want to run SEARCH, just type in GOTO 32650.

```

100 DIM A$(120),B$(20),C$(30)
110 ? CHR$(125):"STRING TO BE SEARCHED
FOR";:INPUT B$:FOR I=1 TO LEN(B$):C$(I) =
CHR$(ASC(B$(I))+128):NEXT I: ?
120 OPEN #1,4,0,"D:TTT":TRAP 240
130 R=0:INPUT #1;A$:IF LEN(A$)<LEN(B$)THEN
130
140 FOR J=1 TO LEN(A$)-LEN(B$)+1:IF
A$(J,J+LEN(B$)-1)=B$ THEN
A$(J,J+LEN(B$)-1)=C$:J=J+LEN(B$)-1:R=1
150 NEXT J:IF R=1 THEN ? A$;CHR$(253);
CHR$(253)
160 GOTO 130240 CLOSE #1

```

### LINEUP

"On your screen, programs are listed in 38 columns. This is a limitation of the screen. Printers, on the other hand, can print in many more columns than that, which can sometimes create confusion when you LIST a program to the printer. It would be much more convenient if you could just list a program to the printer exactly as it appeared on the screen. LINEUP is a utility to do just such a task. Let's suppose you have a 'Small Miracle' to make available for this column (we hope you do, and you will!) Simply LIST the program as 'TTT' and LINEUP will print it out in 38-character lines as you see in this article. (If you prefer longer or shorter lines, just change the value of Q in line 10).

"This is, of course, the basic program. The extra code to print out inverse and control characters is, as my old math prof used to say, an exercise left to the reader."

```

10 Q=38:DIM A$(120),B$(Q):OPEN #1,4,0,
"D:TTT":TRAP 60
20 INPUT #1;A$:FOR I=0 TO 3:IF LEN(A$)>I*Q
THEN GOSUB 40:NEXT I
30 GOTO 20
40 B$=A$(I*Q+1)
50 PRINT B$:RETURN
60 CLOSE #1

```



**SOMETHING NEW**  
**8-BIT ATARI COMPUTERS**  
 Charles Cherry, ABACUS  
 (Reprinted from Oct ABACUS)

**NOTEPAD**

Thank you Mr. Humfeld for your submissions, and now I'd like to thank Eugene Hagewood for his NOTEPAD. Mr. Hagewood lives in Darmstadt, Germany where, he says, the 520ST computers are "really selling well. Lots of third party support and user group programs available. Apple can't compete with the ST." Anyway, this program is used when one gets brilliant flashes of genius that never last very long. Quickly load up this program, give a drive and a note number and write your note so you won't forget it later on. The program is especially useful while programming in BASIC, since it can be listed to disk and entered back to write a note without destroying your program. "I'm often interrupted by my children or wife while deep in thought. This program gives me a fighting chance of recovering my idea...I have a disk with nothing but notes on it!" writes Mr. Hagewood. I find the program equally useful, and I hope you will too.

```
1 CLR :CLOSE #6:OPEN #6,12,0,"S":POKE
82,0:DIM A$(40):? "Input the drive and note
number";:INPUT D,N:GOSUB 9
2 CLOSE #1:TRAP 3:OPEN #1,4,0,A$:FOR A=1 TO
23:POSITION 0,A:INPUT #1,A$:?A$;:NEXT A?:
CHR$(29);CHR$(157)
3 POKE 752,0:CLOSE #1:OPEN #1,4,0,"K":
POSITION 0,0:?"DRIVE:";D; "Note:";N;"Press
ESC twice to end"
4 GET #1,A:IF (PEEK(84)=1 AND A=28) OR (PEEK
(84)=23 AND A=155) OR A=125 THEN GOTO 4
5 IF A=27 THEN GET #1,A: IF A<>27 THEN ?
CHR$(27)6 IF A<>27 THEN ? CHR$(A);:GOTO 4
7 TRAP 1:POKE 752,1:?"CHR$(31);:CLOSE
#1:GOSUB 9:OPEN #1,8,0,A$:FOR Y=1 TO 23:FOR
X=0 TO 39:LOCATE X,Y,A8 A$(X+1,X+1)=CHR$(A):
NEXT X:?"#1,A$:NEXT Y:CLOSE #1:GOTO 1
9 A$="D1:NOTE.000":A$(2,2)=CHR$(D+48):
A$(9)=STR$(N):RETURN
```

If you have any short programs you are especially proud of, send them to:

Atari's Small Miracles  
 c/o Mark A. Brown  
 7097 Game Lord Dr  
 Springfield, VA 22153

Thank you everybody for your letters and programs. Keep 'em coming and I'll see you next month.

Here is a MAJOR NEW APPLICATION for the 8-bit Atari's. A physician has started a company called **Mad Scientist Software** (2063 N. 820 W., Pleasant Grove, Utah 84062). The market an emergency room simulation which he has created. The program is called **Cardiac Arrest** and provides training in resuscitating heart attack victims. The top half of the screen is an emulation of the heart monitor E.K.G. trace (beep...beep...beep...beep). The rest of the screen is for typing in orders and getting reports back. Actually it's an adventure game. But with a serious purpose. I showed it to a friend who is a nurse and she was very enthusiastic. Her patient died four times because they could not get the IV needle into the collapsed veins. Then she remembered that the drugs could be administered through the trachea tube. The fifth time the patient lived. She won't forget that soon.

She lugged the whole system down to the hospital to show it around. Now it looks like the hospital will buy the program and an Atari to run it on.

By the way, somebody at the hospital stole the first 14 pages of the documentation just to get the list of protocols. It's that good.

It is gratifying to see new applications for the old machine. Now that the prices are so low, it's cost effective to buy a system just to run a single program. Actually, companies are quickly discovering that "one computer--one application" makes sense. It is not practical to interrupt the database to do some word processing. When a program is loaded in the morning, it should stay there all day. This opens the door for machines other than IBM clones. The trick is to put the right application on the right machine. I would not suggest that Bank of America should run its accounting on a 130XE (although they could hardly have done worse than they did), but -- as all the gamers out there know -- the 8-bits are great for simulations. Congratulations to Mad Scientist Software for a major contribution to the Atari world.

Incidentally, **Cardiac Arrest** was written in Basic. That in no way diminishes the quality of the program. I only mention it to point out that you can do the same thing. Find something for the Atari to do and write the software. Then sell the complete package, software and hardware. Mad Scientist Software is selling the whole package for less than the software alone would cost if it ran on an IBM. I think it looks like an attractive market.



**LEADER BOARD VS MEAN 18**  
**You Read It Here Second**  
Dave Blakesly, PAC

A recent issue of one of the Atari-specific magazines contained a very good review of three different golf games. At the time I read it I had purchased **Leader Board** but had not yet tried **Mean 18**. Inspired by the review, I ran out at lunch the next day and bought it. Now I am an expert at two different golf games, though I don't do very well at either of them.

In comparing my conclusions to those of the other reviewer I found that they were very different. The reason for the difference can be easily summarized: The two of us were approaching the game from different directions, different interest levels. He was looking for something which can emulate a serious game of golf. I was looking for something which was fun even if you didn't play golf.

**Leader Board** is a game with several things going for it. First, it has fantastic graphics, far superior to **Mean 18**. Second, it has 3 levels of play ranging from novice, (in which the ball goes straight toward the hole no matter how much you mess it up), to professional, in which you have to control the hook/slice of the ball as well as take the wind into account. As a result of these differing levels, **Leader Board** makes a great family game. In fact, it's the first game I've ever owned where I could play with all 3 of my kids at the same time without severely handicapping the youngest.

**Leader Board** is not, however, the game of golf, for several reasons. **Mean 18** nails you pretty well for hooking or slicing the ball; **Leader Board** does not. A bad slice in **Leader Board** will not affect how many shots it takes you to get to the green. It is also pretty easy to become an expert putter. My daughter Jennifer can one-putt anything up to 50 feet no matter what the ball's relation to the hole is. You can't do that stuff in real life, and you can't do it with **Mean 18**.

In fact, **Mean 18** is so much like real life that it's just as frustrating as the game of golf itself. I can shoot 5 to 10 under par for 18 holes of **Leader Board** while drinking a beer and watching TV. I have yet to shoot par in **Mean 18**. When I do (and believe me, I will), it will be as a result of a concentrated effort.

**REVIEW OF PAWN**  
(from Firebird)  
Jim Miller, PAC

This review of **Pawn** may surprise you! When **Pawn** first came out it look like the game of century. The graphics **are** great, but I feel they are the high point of the game. It is all down hill from there!

**Pawn** has a unique feature which lets you pull down pictures and you can turn the graphics on and off. I didn't because it was the only thing I was enjoying. **Pawn** can understand a great deal of what you say. You can type in entire sentences. **Pawn** also has on-line hints. You need to type in an encrypted message and it will give you a hint. Again some of the author's sarcasm sneaks in and the answer is sometimes worthless.

The game is protected so you cannot back it up without a copy program and there were no instructions on whether it goes on a hard drive? You can also turn on the printer -- **Pawn** has good buffer so the printer can keep up. The size of the text can be changed for those with poor eyesight. **Pawn** also works on monochrome monitor.

You're in a land called Kerovnia. You find yourself with a bracelet on and it will not come off. If you are looking for a plot in this game, the bracelet seems to be it. I even read the manual and it just a poorly-written story about a poor land that has been had by a wizard of sorts.

To the south is a red line that you can't cross. You spend the whole game trying to get rid of the nasty bracelet so that you can find out what is over the line.

What about the dying forest? Again another hole in the plot.

So what if you vote? Increase your points, but what does it have to with the story line.

You get the princess back home! So what? She just runs off and leaves you. As for the castle, don't plan to ever go in there. If you do, you will just get tossed out on your ear?

The story line is just a twist of sarcasm and slaughter. Yes, slaughter! Are you willing to kill off ten scared hobbits so you can save yourself to get to another room?

The above is just a list of holes in the plot. The solutions to the problems in this game are rarely logical and rarely do they help the solve real problem that is going on in this land.



**ST SIG NEWS**  
**Will PASTE Pull Us Apart?**  
R. DeLoy Graham

I would like to report on what happened at the last ST SIG meeting. A proposal was made that may well have far-reaching consequences for all members of the Portland Atari Club. I will try to report the feelings of the various members of the ST SIG without interjecting my own feelings and responses to what was said. I did not take an active part in the proceedings. I report only to make you aware of what took place.

At the ST SIG meeting held on January 8, 1987, Dave Skinner, author of *A Copier*, proposed that the ST SIG split off from the Portland Atari Club and form a new club. Vern Vertrees then reviewed the history of the 8-bit club and the evolution of the ST SIG. Several minutes of discussion followed.

Some are concerned that their dues are going to the general club, which ST owners are not getting much out of. Many members of the ST SIG are new to Atari computers, some having come from Commodore and Apple computers, and others having purchased the ST as their first computer. Many of these people have little interest in the 8-bit Atari line.

One member of the group questions the purpose of the general meeting, asking what board members are trying to accomplish at that meeting. Some complain that the general meetings are boring, but others feel the same about the ST SIG meetings. (As Chet Cox said in his article reprinted in the January 1987 issue of the PAC Newsletter, "If it weren't for my insufferable curiosity, I wouldn't go either.")

One pointed complaint is that the new board seems to be making no attempt to have ST demos available at the general meetings. In the past, board members who worked at IB Computers brought the necessary equipment to have both 8-bit and 16-bit demos. Of course, some members of the PAC complained about so many (four) of the board members working at IB Computers, but now we will see what happens without their support.

Some question if a split would not even be beneficial to the 8-bit segment of the club. The ST line is progressing--520ST, 1040ST, MegaST--and will continue to do so. The two lines are simply not going in the same direction. On the other hand, many ST owners are still taking an active part in helping new 8-bit members learn more about their computers. These longtime PAC members have had experience with many of the programs new members want to learn to use, and having benefitted from previous help from others, feel an obligation to return some of that help.

Others question whether the ST SIG can draw new people. The advanced group doesn't address new people. It is dominated by professional programmers who have a vested interest in making money with the ST. They are unwilling to share their secrets or to volunteer time teaching SIG classes to others. As a group, the ST SIG intimidates many newcomers who would like to learn more about how to get the most out of their new computers. It literally scares off a lot of people. There was no representation from the ST Explorers group, so we do not know what their feelings are in this regard.

Another opinion is that there is power in size and that such a split would weaken both groups. Could the ST SIG have put on the Atari Expo? Someone responded to this question by saying that most of those who helped at the Expo are ST owners.

There is precedence to the proposed split. The Amiga group split from Commodore; the Mac group separated from Apple. In the case of the Mac group, the split was very beneficial. It has become a very large and popular club.

A suggested name for a new ST club is PASTE (Portland Atari ST Enthusiasts). Future discussion of this split was postponed until the January 22nd meeting.

I asked bulletin board users to give their opinions of the proposed split:

**CHUCK HALL:** I for one have always been against this and was supported on this position by ongoing administrations. If the ST owners feel they are not getting the representation they wish, then it's their own fault for not stepping forward when they are asked. The Portland Atari Club has always been for all Atari owners. I do not believe this has changed at all. If there are problems then they should be addressed. I believe that separating the club is detrimental to both groups. After all, there are many of us who own and support both machines. I see no conflict in remaining as one organization to do so. To date I have failed to see any big differences in the attitude of the ST owners and the 8-bit owners. Some of them may be going through the same growing pains we felt when the club was struggling to establish itself just a few short years ago.

If the ST group was involved in major development or business applications or some other area which differed from the rest of the club, I could see some changes. But, all I hear is talk. That's my two cents worth. I say NO!



**BRIAN HUNT:** I feel that separating the two would only weaken the club. We seem to have a strong image as a force in Atari (i.e. sponsering the "All Atari" Show). If we separate and the two clubs can't work together on projects, etc., I think that would be a terrible loss to everybody. I cast a "NO" vote.

**CHUCK HALL:** Thanks, Brian. Your support is very welcome. That is a point that I forgot to mention. It was probably the main reason Atari came to us to offer to support our fair. Without the support of our 600+ members when I went to Atari, they would not have even listened to me. Our primary strength is in our members and the number of them. I am disappointed that the membership has not grown much in the past year. We should be around a thousand members by now, and its time we started attracting people to the club. And don't forget, that Atari did go out of their way to visit us a year ago last october. They have also been very supportive in other ways. And its our size and excitement about their products that gets their attention. Once again, thanks.

**BEN ROTH:** I don't have that much time to respond to this in detail, but I would think that for the ST SIG to separate and BECOME something would be a great idea. PAC is not and never has been even a good club. I've watched it from when it was an idea that the Atari reps were fondling way back and I joined up all enthusiastic. It STILL isn't much better than it was then. And I beg to differ from those who say that the two machines are alike. They are about as alike as the nameplates on the motherboards and that's about it. The ST user is completely different than the 8-bit user, at least one who bought the machine for what it is and not because of peer pressure. It would be nice to see a Portland club for Atari ST. Seattle sure has a large and decent one from what I gather (and see). That's my two cents worth.

**DAYE HOLLIDAY:** Ben, I've been trying to keep abreast of what is going on with this idea of some ST users forming their own club. I read your comments on the club not being very good and not meeting the needs of the ST group. I would like to hear some specific problems -- what you and the other people feel is not being done and how your forming your own group will solve these problems. I'm not out to make any judgments on the decision but I feel the officers and members deserve a chance to confront what you feel is so bad that forming a new club is the only way to solve it. I would like to hear from any other people that are in agreement with your statements. Hopefully we can resolve your problems if we know exactly what they are.

**CHUCK HALL:** Ben, I'm sorry to hear you have never cared about the club. Of course, the club cannot please everybody. It has to attempt to support all of its members, and as with any other organization the majority usually benefit the most. You seem to have a strong opinion about the club, but you haven't mentioned any specifics. I have found that the club is only as good or as strong as those that participate in it.

If you would spend your energies in trying to help the club or to resolve what you think are problems, you will end up saving a lot of time and effort in forming a new club.

I also believe you are in the minority in what you feel. I'm not saying that anyone is always right, or has always done the right thing for the club, but those of us who have worked with it feel damned good about it. You might even think about giving the new administration time to see how they want to handle things. Better yet, volunteer to help out some. (Bet I get mail on this, huh?)

**GEORGE D. COLE:** I just uploaded a text file into the general information data base, which I downloaded from the Atari Corp. board. It contains announcements of a number of new products and changes from Atari. These include:

- \* New models - Mega St's
- \* A laser printer for \$1500
- \* An IBM PC/XT clone for under \$500
- \* Much lower prices for ST's

As mentioned in the article, delivery dates are beginning in March. ST's for under \$300. Looks like the bell is tolling for the 8-bit. Maybe this will end the discussion of succession of the ST users from PAC. Looks like we'll all be using them soon.

**GARY WELLS:** My vote probably doesn't count for much, since I'm not (yet) a member of the PAC. However, my opinion is that the split should be made. I find I spend a LOT of time on this BBS waiting for non-pertinent messages to scroll by. I have an ST, & the 8-bit stuff is totally useless to me. This is not to say anything bad about the 8-bit machines, except that the only commonality between the 8 & 16-bit machines is the logo. You will destroy your club if you try to keep everyone together, because half the people will be bored all the time.

It's sad to break up, but if it can be done amicably, I think it should happen.



**GEORGE D. COLE:** Sorry to disagree, Gary, but I have an 8-Bit now, and manage to endure all the "non-pertinent" ST messages without a problem. I have been waiting to see who shook out of the market (Amiga, Atari, etc.), before investing in a better machine. I probably will purchase an ST within the next month or so, but my attitude towards the machine hasn't been enhanced by the division within the club. Why not educate the 8-bit users on the advantages of the ST and make a few converts. I'd hate to see the day when the same rivalry exists between 8-Bit users and ST users, which has traditionally existed between Atari and Commodore users.

ST users have their own base on this board and others. So do 8-bit users. Maybe the meetings should be divided up the same way. Hold them on different nights, or in different rooms. I don't see the advantage to dividing the club. The major source of new ST users will be Atari 8-bit users. Why cut your own throat? Nuff said!

**DAVID ROBERTS:** Well, George, now for my opinion. As I see it, our club has gone through this last year with little trouble but also not much interest on the part of our members. I see splitting our club in half as a bad way to solve a problem.

It seems to me that the people who want this are ST users. I don't see why, since most of our meetings hit primarily on ST stuff anyhow. Just look at our last meeting where everybody stood up and said they just got a new ST. It was embarrassing for the 130XE owner who stood up. Our club fully supports the ST user at the general meeting with news and other topics of interest.

The 8-bit person I'm sure feels a bit left out, but face it. There just isn't a lot of new things in development for the 8-bit. How long can we glory about an 80-column card which may or may not ever catch on or appear. I agree with Mr. Tramiel when he says that the majority of 8-bit users within the next two years or so will be trading up to ST's and other 16-bit machines. The 8-bit user has to see that you can't stop progress but you can enjoy the present.

By keeping the ST & 8-bit users together we get the best of both worlds. I have a friend who comes with me to each meeting and she has an 8-bit. What am I supposed to do? Say, "Buzz off, and go sit in the dark with your 8-bit club while I go to my ST meeting"? Come on. Unity is stronger. Numbers mean we are heard. Atari listens. Will they when we are cut in two?

**James Miller:** Chuck, since I am the one receiving the memberships and know who is joining, here are some interesting stats: We lost 39 8-bit owners in January. We gained about the same, but most are 16-bit owners. This has been happening for the past 8 months or so. We would have near 1000 members but due to the fact that most of the 8-bit owners have not been renewing and a lot of the new members are 16-bit owners, we have gained about 50 members.

If the ST owners leave the PAC and join a new club, the PAC will have a large decrease in membership unless the club can solve the problem of lost 8-bit membership.

Pac has changed. It has two different areas of interest--as different as Atari and Macintosh, let's say. This decreases the amount of time spent in each area at the meeting. Each equally feels it's losing something.

I don't have the answer but I feel this is the problem! I care about both areas but my time on the 8-bit decreases a great deal as more time goes by.

To David Roberts: The members already support what you're saying--give the club another year or so and it will be all or mostly ST's. The club is losing most of the 8-bit owners each month and the numbers are staying around 600 members because of the ST members joining. Once the loss of 8-bit owners levels off, the membership will begin to climb again.

That is if we can keep the ST members in the club!

#### PAC HELP HOTLINES

The following people have generously offered to take telephone queries in the areas indicated.

Adventure Games	Jim Miller	641-6356
	Zant Burdine	206-695-5604
Assembly Language	Leroy Baxter	653-1633
BASIC Programming	Nick Yost	981-0838
	Lee Gassaway	642-2455
BBS Usage	Steve Billings	246-1751
	Don Adams	245-7168
	Russell Schwartz	646-6418
C	Randal Schwartz	626-6907
Cassette Operation	Lee Gassaway	642-2455
DOS Operation	Wayne Winterbottom	669-1367
FORTH Programming	Ron Chaffer	283-5691
	Ricky Wooldridge	224-7163
Operating System	Nick Yost	981-0838
	Leroy Baxter	653-1633
Pascal	R. DeLoy Graham	649-6993
ST General	Chuck Hall	626-3717
ST Fundamentals	Richard Barhitte	206-573-0292
ST Logo	Randal Schwartz	626-6907



**REVIEW OF FLASH**  
(from Antic)  
Clyde Pritchard, PAC

**Flash**, by Joe Chiazese and Alan Page, is a telecommunications program that should meet the needs of any ST user. It is available through ANTIC's The Catalog (and local dealers) for a list price of \$39.95. The current version available is 1.1, but this review is of version 1.0 with patches applied to make it 1.1 compatible.

**Flash** comes on a copyable disk so that you can make working copies or install it on your hard disk. It also comes with a 50 page, pre-printed manual, unlike most ANTIC releases. The manual has seven sections: Overview of **Flash**, A Basic Guide to Telecommunications, File Transfer, The Dial Directory, The Translation Table, Automating **Flash**, The Capture Buffer, and The **Flash** Reference Guide.

After **Flash** finishes loading, you are presented with a "flashy" title screen that you exit from by pressing RETURN or clicking the mouse. Now you are in terminal mode, with a full 24 by 80 area for data display/entry and a 25th line that shows the status of various program options. The default colors are black text on a white background, but you can change them with the control panel from the desktop before or after loading the program. If you set your color preferences at the desktop level and save the desktop, **Flash** will come up with your color selections.

**Flash** gives you three ways to enter commands. In terminal mode you can press the INSERT key and the status line mentioned above will be replaced by a command entry line. You forgot what the command for setting up the RS-232C port is? Just press the HELP key, and page 1 of a 4 page command format summary will appear. Press RETURN or use the mouse to page through the help screens. Some commands just do their thing, others cause a dialog box to appear for you to complete the function.

The next method of command entry also works from terminal mode. This time you use ALTERNATE key functions to get the job done. Most of the frequently used commands can be called or executed via an ALTERNATE key function. Examples are: toggle capture on/off, toggle printer on/off, toggle linefeeds on/off, disk directory (A: => D:), duplex toggle and exit to desktop.

The last method for command entry is from the GEM menu/capture buffer screen. You get to this screen from terminal mode by using the right mouse button or entering the command "MENU" on

the command line. The capture buffer screen has a GEM menu bar with options for File, Edit, Upload, Download, Block and Options. These options let you do all of your terminal configuration, file uploads and downloads, and other **Flash** functions except communication from a simple, menu-based mode. Your GEM desk accessories are also available in menu mode.

The menu/capture buffer screen includes a "mini word processor" for editing data collected in the capture buffer during a communications session, or creating/editing other files for uploading. It includes block copy, delete and move functions, as well as functions to save a block, print a block or append a block to an existing disk file. You can also merge a disk file into text in the capture buffer. There is a find string function, but not a string search/replace function. Scrolling can be controlled with the mouse and standard GEM menu bars or the keyboard arrow (and shift-arrow) keys. Lines can be up to 95 characters long and the capture buffer length depends upon available memory.

You can customize and expand **Flash**'s command functions by defining command strings for the ST function keys or by developing script files of **Flash** commands and saving them to disk for execution with the D0 command. Function key definitions can only hold about 50 characters, but because you can include D0 commands in a FK definition, there is really no limitation except disk space.

Other **Flash** capabilities include VT52, VT100 and CompuServe VIDTEX terminal emulation, incoming and outgoing character translation tables, time of day and elapsed time clocks, X and Y Modem file transfers (Y Modem is the same as X Modem, except that it uses 1K vs 1/8K blocks.), both CRC (Cyclic Redundancy Check) and Check Sum, and ASCII text file transfers with several flow control options.

I have used **Flash** for several months now, and have tried almost all of its functions except some of the ASCII file transfer options and the VIDTEX emulation. I use it to communicate with BBS's, CompuServe, and the IBM mainframe that I use on the job. I have also used it to transfer files from my 800 or 130XE to my ST. The only thing **Flash** lacked was Kermit file transfers, but there is now an answer to that, the new **Flash** Kermit and Remote Control accessory, which I will cover in another review.



### SHOPPER'S GUIDE

#### How to Select the Best the ST Has to Offer

Buddy Hammerton, ACE

(Reprinted from the Dec/Jan 1987 ACE Newsletter)

The trickle of ST productivity software has become a torrent, so you probably feel flooded by promises from the dozens of programs on computer store shelves. As a consumer, your job is to sift through them and find the right data base, graphics, or financial-modeling solution to all your troubles. The question has changed from "Where is the ST software?" to "Which program should I buy?"

But ST software is often much more difficult to evaluate than software for other computers. To be truly productive, programs must not only produce the desired results, they must also be well integrated into the ST's GEM operating environment. By paying close attention to the details, you'll be able to distinguish useful tools from useless toys. Four key elements you should examine in a new program are: 1) how it adheres to ST editing conventions, 2) how mouse and keyboard movements flow together, 3) what shortcuts are provided for experienced users, and 4) how it reduces repetitive typing and having to remember all kinds of esoteric commands and procedures.

#### Editing Conventions

Conventions for editing, deleting and inserting text are built into the ST operating system. Editing procedures, such as backspacing, deleting, and inserting, should be consistent from program. Whether the software is a word processor, a spreadsheet, or a graphic program, you should have the same text editing features available.

Here's an editing features test to try out in the store, before you purchase new software:

1. Place the text cursor anywhere in a word and press the Backspace key. The letter to the left of the cursor should disappear, and the word should close up around that space.
2. Place the text cursor anywhere in another word and press the Delete key. The letter under the cursor should disappear, and the word should close up around the space.
3. The insert key should insert blank space under the text cursor. The letters to the right of the cursor should all shift to the right.
4. You should be able to restore the original word by using the Undo key or from the command in the Edit drop-down menu.

5. Finally, select a word by moving the mouse pointer to the beginning of the word, and while holding down the left mouse button, move to the end of the word and release the button.

A program passing this minimum test has editing commands consistent with programs like **1st Word**, **ST BASIC**, and others already on the market. But as we will see later, if a program features logical and practical extensions of these commands, you should study them closely to see if they make sense to you.

#### Mouse and Keyboard Work Flow

Evaluating new software based on how well the mouse and the keyboard work together may take some diligence, depending on the complexity of the program. The idea is to avoid hopping from the keyboard to the mouse and back again for frequently used operations. Instead, you should look for programs that use either a sequence of mouse maneuvers or a sequence of keyboard maneuvers for often-performed procedures.

Perhaps one of the worst instances of the mouse-and-keyboard gymnastics occurs in **1st Word**. The program places inordinate demands on your hands when you are editing text, as many of the commands are only available through the drop-down menus. There is no way around this problem in **1st Word**, but programs in other categories avoid such keyboard-and-mouse games.

My favorite programs are those which work almost entirely in a single entry mode, such as **Flash!** Except for entering text there is no practical need for the hand operating the mouse to move to the keyboard.

Occasionally you still need to press the Alternate key in conjunction with other keys, but for the most part all commands are accessible with the mouse and/or keyboard.

#### Keyboard Command Shortcuts

Another point to check in a new program is whether it contains keyboard alternatives to the commands in the drop-down menus.

Except for Cut, Copy, Paste, and Undo, keyboard commands are rarely consistent from one program to the next. One programmer's name for a particular function may be different than another's. In some cases, the programmer will



choose mnemonic keys--the command letter being the first letter of the keyword, and others use keys in alphabetical order. While I am more likely to remember the mnemonics, I could soon memorize the other commands if I used the program enough.

Do not feel pressured to master keyboard commands immediately. Once you have established a work pattern with a program, keep a lookout on the menus for keyboard commands. Slowly work the keyboard commands into your work habits, provided they improve your productivity. The goal, after all, is to accomplish more work in less time.

#### **Minimum Typing Requirement**

When you are working feverishly on a particular project, your train of thought is often interrupted with file maintenance chores, such as saving your work every 15 minutes. A useful software feature is one that spares you from recalling the document name and retyping it at each save. The in-store test on a program, should go something like this:

- \* Start up the program and enter data (numbers in a spreadsheet, words in a word processing program, or a data entry form in a data base program).

- \* Choose the Save as. . . command.

- \* Assign a document name (your name or "test," for example) and save the document.

- \* Make one more entry or edit something in the document currently on the screen.

- \* The dialog box should appear with your original file name. If so the program passes the minimum typing test.

- \* Try to rename the program by first pressing the Escape key then typing a new name. If the old one disappears and the new letters you type appear in the box, the program will probably pass the editing conventions test as well.

#### **Minimum Human Memory Requirement**

As long as you're using your ST's powers to help reduce your typing, you should expect the ST to help you rely less on your memory. Document names are pieces of information that a program should keep track of for you.

ST software from Atari does a good job of keeping track of document names. When you choose the Open. . . command from the File menu (from within a program), a dialog box appears on the screen, with a directory of documents that can be

opened from the program. To open a document, you just scroll the name into the window and double-click the pointer over it. (You can also select the name and click the OK box, but that takes more mouse movements than necessary.) Be on the lookout for sloppy programming in regards to dialog boxes.

#### **Other Evaluation Tips**

Beyond the special requirements for ST software, there are other principles to follow when shopping for software, regardless of the computer or program category. Of particular importance is the software's documentation.

It is difficult to judge a program manual while thumbing through it in a store. On quick perusal, a manual may seem to have everything a good manual should have: screen illustrations, a lengthy reference section for experienced users, and an index. But when a beginner tries to learn to use the program from the manual, there may be gaps and incomplete descriptions of key points. The way to avoid hardships is to pick a particular command and read the entire text from the manual, this way you will be able to tell if the documentation is understandable.

One thing you should search for in the documentation (or on the program disk) is a separate tutorial. The tutorial should not only lead you step-by-step through the basic operation of the program, but should also provide a real-world example. I understand a program much more quickly when I see precisely how the program works with examples of the kind of work I do.

Another thing to consider when you shop for software is the intuitiveness of the program's operation. Most people want to be able to sit down, turn on the computer, and start using the program without ever opening the manual. If you are familiar with the general category into which the program falls -- financial modeling, word processing, data base, or graphics -- a truly intuitive program should provide enough information on the screen and in the drop-down menus to lead you right away through a simple application of the program.

When you first try a program, take moment to look at the opening screen to make sure the visual environment suits the work you intend to do. Next, drop down each menu and study the options. Are they grouped logically according to the name of the menu? Do the options make sense to you in the context of the program? Are they right for the application? Or are they ambiguous?



Select menu items followed by dots (such as Save as. . ., Open. . .) to study the dialog boxes the menus call up. Not only should the dialog boxes offer you many choices (including the Cancel option), but the choices should be clearly labeled so you understand them.

Finally, try to work with the program without studying the documentation. You might not get too far, but the further you get, the more intuitive the program's operation will be for you. That means that even after you have studied the documentation, you will be able to find your way out of difficulties by searching for a menu choice, rather than tearing through the manual for help.

ST software is more diverse and plentiful than in the early days. It is very important for you to be critical and selective in your choices. Put a prospective purchase through its paces on precisely the kind of work you do, whether it be for college coursework or a board of directors presentation. Steer clear from programs that are more show than go. Embrace those that do the job elegantly and productively. The more you demand of software developers, the further they will advance the state of the art of ST programming.

And that's something we will all benefit from.

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#### UNCLASSIFIED ADS

##### FOR SALE:

Atari 800 / 48K	\$150
1050 Drive	\$120
Gemini Printer	\$100
Mura 300 baud Modem	\$ 25
Supra 1000E Modem	\$ 25
All prices FIRM.	
626-3717	

##### FOR SALE:

Atari 800 / 48K  
 410 tape drive and tapes  
 (including Speed Reading)  
 Percom Disk Drive  
 1025 printer and Okidata Color printer  
 Koala Pad  
 B&W 13" TV  
 game disks, books, paper  
 Price: taking offers  
 Call Bonnie Halmstad  
 Work: 255-4188 Home: 230-1837

(Leader Board Vs Mean 18, continued from page 13)

Both games have a practice range to give you a chance to become familiar with the method of hitting the ball. **Mean 18** also has a practice green, which, in view of the difficulty level of the putting, is essential. **Mean 18** also allows you to design your own course.

My one criticism of **Leader Board** is that there is no permanent record storage (hall of fame). Since beating our best score, or the best score in the family, club, etc., is one of the things that inspires us to our own levels of greatness, I'm always surprised when I see a new game come out without it.

Which one should you buy? It depends on what you're after. If want a challenge, **Mean 18** is for you. If you want something you can play with your kids then **Leader Board** is better. The two of them are so different that I'm glad I have both.

I know one thing: any time a new game comes out in which three or more people can play at the same time I'm going to buy it. We've had a lot of family fun.

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(Pawn, continued from page 13)

When you finally get the bracelet off and the wizard is out of the way, you are ready for the great finish. It never happens!

I wasted a whole lot of time getting rid of the the wrong characters in this game. It should have been the room full of writers and hackers in the room behind cream doors but all they do is run off to a party and leave you standing there in a messy room. That's all, folks.

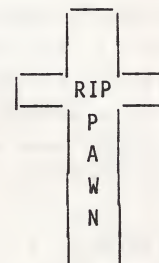
If I gave away any clues or ruined the finish, I am sorry, but I feel this is one of the worst adventure graphics game out there!

So, finally -- The Plot is terrible.

The Finish is worse.

The Graphics are great.

If you like great pictures, get **Degas** or **Neo**. You will be able to draw a better plot.





**REVIEW OF LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE**  
(from Activision)  
Steve Billings, PAC

Almost everyone has had a pet of some sort. Maybe it was an aquarium, or a gerbil, rat or some small animal that you kept in a small container. If so you know that this is an enjoyable pastime that can be fun and entertaining. Maybe you also discovered that if you neglected your pet it had a tendency to die. **Little Computer People** from Activision creates this same kind of relationship inside your computer. Their tongue-in-cheek claim is that there is a little person living inside every computer and if you give him a comfortable home he will make himself known and move in.

The **Little Computer People** program from Activision now available for the Atari ST series creates a little home for this tiny computer person and you can watch him move in and set up home.

Just like little pets, you have to take care of the little computer person. He needs water, food and attention. If he is happy he will entertain you with his music and other activities. If you do not feed and water him, he will get sick and croak.

The program creates a house on the screen with all the necessary rooms and equipment, like a kitchen with refrigerator, stove and sink. He has a computer room, work desk, living room, den, bedroom, and bathroom. He is constantly moving about his house doing things like watching TV, reading the paper, programming on his computer, playing his organ, eating, exercising and even sleeping at night. You can also interact with him by playing card games. If he is happy and you suggest playing a game, he will suggest several games that he knows how to play like blackjack, war, word scramble, and others. The games are not too sophisticated, but do offer a little bit of interaction in an otherwise spectator only program. The program is cute and interesting for a while, but I am not quite sure of its purpose (if it has one), nor of its intended audience. I enjoyed it a couple of times, but after a half hour or so it got pretty boring. The little computer person kept moving around doing things, but it got pretty repetitive and his letters and activities were predictable.

My nephews got a kick out of it, but they soon also decided to check out how long the little guy and his dog could go without water, or food. Fortunately one of my nephews had a little compassion and delivered water when his brother left the room for a minute.

For \$40 you can get a very nice goldfish bowl with real live fish in it or you can pick up a copy of **Little Computer People**. Each have their advantages, but essentially seem to serve the same purpose. Thanks to IB Computers for letting me borrow this software for this review.

## ATTENTION PROGRAMMERS

If you have written a program that is as good as, or better than, any of the commercially available software programs for the Atari, Microdaft may be interested in marketing it.

If you are interested, or would like more information, please call or write.

***microdaft***

19 Harbor Drive  
Lake Hopatcong, NJ 07849  
(201) 663-0202



**SPELLING CHECKERS**  
**A Comparison of Regent Spell and Thunder!**  
Clyde Pritchard, PAC

It took quite a while for the spelling checkers to come out for the original Atari computers, but they came out much sooner on the Atari ST computer. There are three kinds of spelling checkers available; stand alone, integrated or integrated desk accessory.

The stand alone spelling checker is the first kind that usually appears, because developing them is a "simple" programming task compared to the other types. It runs as a utility program completely separate from the program (word processor or text editor) that is used to create the document of which you want to check the spelling. This means that you must load the word processor, enter the text, save it, exit the word processor, load the spelling checker, select the file to be checked, go through the correction process, save the corrected file, exit the spelling checker and perhaps return to the word processor to do some reformatting in cases where the correction activity has disturbed the layout of your letter or newsletter review.

Sounds kind of boring, doesn't it? It sure can be time consuming, and a stand alone spelling checker would need to have a lot of nice features and options before I would choose one over an integrated program. An integrated spelling checker is one that is part of the word processor in one of two ways. The first type is almost like a stand alone program in that all you really do is load it from within the word processor. It is really a separate program, and sometimes even requires you to save the document before you call the spelling checker.

The other type is truly integrated, in that it is working as you type, and lets you know about errors as they occur. They can work in different ways -- some force you to respond to their error prompt, others let you continue with no correction, make your own correction, or call them for suggested corrections. The integrated spelling checker often comes with more expensive word processors, or is an optional feature (\$\$). They may or may not allow stand alone operation on files from their own or other word processors.

The desk accessory spelling checker is the latest incarnation available. It allows operation in stand alone or integrated mode, and is made to work with many kinds of programs, not just word processors. Its use in integrated mode requires that the "host" program be a GEM application, because desk accessories themselves require GEM.

This means that it won't work under a non-GEM (TOS-based) word processor like ST Writer, although you can use the stand alone option to check the files created by such TOS word processors. It does seem like a non-desk accessory integrated spelling checker could be developed for such programs, but I haven't seen one for the ST. The use of a spelling checker on non-word processing applications depends upon what the other application is and just how you are using it. It may also depend upon whether the spelling checker can do more than just check spelling. Some can do things like expand abbreviations into full words or short phrases, which can save time and keystrokes in data base applications as well as in word processing.

This leads us into a discussion of the features that we need in a spelling checker. First of all, we need it to do a good job checking our spelling of words. This means that it needs to have a good dictionary of words. What makes a good dictionary? Well, it's not just the number of words in it, especially when considering a computer based dictionary.

This is true for a couple of reasons. First is the disk and memory space requirements of a large dictionary. The more words, the more space and access time it will require, and that can slow things down too much.

Second, if the words aren't the right words, you will get more errors for correct words than you do for incorrect words. This is really boring. How do you determine if a spelling checker has a good dictionary? Try it out by using several samples of the kind of writing that you do, and see how many times words that you commonly use get flagged as errors. If this happens a lot, you may not want to pick the program.

Unless, of course, it has the capability to add words to its dictionary, or to create user defined dictionaries with words that you want it to accept (even if they aren't real words). This is another feature that I think any good spelling checker should have. Sometimes you have to be careful about adding words to the main dictionary, because in some cases they can't be removed, and entering a misspelled word can be a real problem. Most user defined dictionaries can be created and maintained with your word processor, so it is easy to add or delete words from them. Another good feature is to be able to define separate user dictionaries and select which one is active depending upon what you are writing.



Another nice feature of a spelling checker is the ability to produce statistics on the documents that you create. Personal word processing may not require this, but if you are in the word processing business and need to charge by character, word or line count, statistics are a must, and must be the ones you need.

The next feature is something even more esoteric than statistics. It is the calculation of a readability index for your writing. There are a couple of methods for doing this, and several stand alone programs exist (I haven't seen any for the ST) to do these calculations. The two methods I have heard of are Gunning's FOG index and Flesch's index. The first gives you a whole number that is equal to the number of years of schooling the reader will need to have to understand your writing. The second gives you a number to look up in a table for the same kind of analysis.

Ready for some specific information on spelling checkers for the ST? OK, here goes. I have been looking at spelling checkers for quite awhile, and finally decided to try **Thunder!** from Batteries Included. I checked out a copy from IB Computers in order to review it for the newsletter, and to see if I wanted to get it for my own use. They also asked me to take a copy of **Regent Spell** for review and comparison. Well, it's easy to review both of them, but there really is no way to compare them fairly because they are different types of spelling checkers.

**Regent Spell** (\$49.95) is a stand alone, TOS-based, program that just checks spelling. **Thunder!** (\$34.95 - \$39.95 list) checks spelling and a lot more. **Regent Spell** comes on a copy protected disk with TOS on it. It also has the old desk accessory files and its desk top shows only drive A. If you have TOS in ROM, the first thing that you must do is rename or delete TOS.IMG so you can boot the disk. You can also boot your system with another system disk and put in the **Regent Spell** disk to load the program and dictionary file before putting in your document disk to do the spelling check. You will not be able to put **Regent Spell** on your hard disk or even on your word processor program disk because of the copy protection. Another reason to delete the TOS.IMG, DESK1.ACC, DESK2.ACC and DESKTOP.INF files is to free up disk space for addition of words to the dictionary of 30,000 words that comes with **Regent Spell**. It does not support separate user-defined dictionaries, but you can delete words that you have added to the main dictionary.

**Regent Spell** displays your document in a window at the top of the screen, highlights the first misspelled word, and displays a selection window with ten suggested replacement words. It also displays the misspelled word in an edit window so you can make your own correction rather than selecting a word from the list of words in the selection window. The word list can be scrolled up and down through the dictionary, which is exactly all the suggestion list is. **Regent Spell** seems to just display the dictionary starting at the closest alphabetic spot to the incorrect word. Not too creative, but much better than **Letter Perfect**'s bizarre phonetic suggestions.

In any case, you can make a correction by editing the word from the keyboard, or by pressing the number key that corresponds to the correct word in the word list, and pressing the return key or mouse button to verify the correction. You can also add the word to the dictionary by pressing the insert key before you accept it by pressing return or clicking the mouse button. You can delete words from the dictionary by selecting them from the word list and then pressing the delete key while the word is in the edit window. After you reach the end of the document, you are prompted to save (or not) the document. Next you are prompted to choose another document for correction or to exit the program.

The documentation for **Regent Spell** is a single double-sided page that seems to tell you everything that you need to know about how to use the program.

That's about it for **Regent Spell**. It is a straightforward, fast, easy-to-use, stand alone spelling checker that seems to do that job quite well. If that's all you need in a spelling checker, it could be for you. However, note that it does cost more than **Thunder!** and does a lot less.

**Thunder!** in stand alone mode works a lot like **Regent Spell**; however, it is a GEM application even used this way. After the program is loaded, you have a GEM menu bar with Desk, File, Dictionaries, and Actions as choices. You select the file to be worked with from the File menu, and start the spelling check with the Action menu. The spelling check screen is similar to **Regent Spell**, with a window for display of the document at the top of the screen, and one for suggested replacements of the highlighted incorrect word on the left bottom quarter of the screen.



The big difference is in the correction options section of the screen. You have a line available to type your own correction, or you can select a word from the suggestion list on the left by pressing its number or using the mouse. You can choose to have all occurrences of the incorrect word replaced so they don't come up as incorrect later in the document. If a word is correct, but not in the dictionary, you can have all occurrences of the word ignored, again to prevent them from coming up as errors later in the document. These features actually apply to all documents in a session of using the program, unless you clear the list of words to be ignored and the list of changes between documents.

You can also add words to the main or supplementary (user defined) dictionaries from this screen, modify program options and defaults, or abandon the spelling check in progress (**Regent Spell** doesn't seem to have this feature, so if you select the wrong file, you have to go through it or re-boot). **Thunder!**'s suggested word list is much smarter than **Regent Spell**'s, because it generates it by doing letter replacements (and dictionary look ups?) to find real possibilities. This is very nice, and seems to work quite well. The list can be scrolled if there is more than one "page" of suggestions.

After you complete the corrections, you must save the corrected document, and save the dictionary files if you have added words to them. That about does it for the basic spelling checker functions of **Thunder!**, but there is more to come.

One not-so-basic feature of the spelling checker is that you can define a list of words or abbreviations with an associated list of replacement strings that the program will use to do automatic corrections or expansions. This means that you can list words that you often mistype such as "recieve" for "receive", and **Thunder!** will automatically fix them for you without bothering you about them. You can also use this feature to expand abbreviations like "PAC" into phrases like "Portland Atari Club". This is nice.

The other features of **Thunder!** in stand alone mode include the computation of statistics on your document files, and the generation of anagrams from letters that you enter. I don't think that I understand the need for the anagram function, but I guess someone wanted it, and it became available in version 1.3 of **Thunder!**. The statistics function can be used on a document even if you aren't running it through the spelling checker.

It tells you the number of characters, the number of words, the percentage of words with more than 3 syllables, the number of sentences, the average words per sentence, the number of paragraphs, and the readability scores from both the FOG and Flesch indexes.

Now for **Thunder!** in interactive mode under a GEM based word processor. I used **1st Word** for this review, and have used it for most of my newsletter reviews. In any case, with the **Thunder!** desk accessory loaded and set to automatically check spelling, you just type until you hear a beep indicating an error, then you call **Thunder!** from the desk accessory menu or with a alternate key stroke that you can define yourself. You can type up to 20 characters past the beep without causing a problem. When **Thunder!** is called, it displays a window in the center of the screen with the incorrect word at the top, a list of suggested corrections in the center, and actions at the bottom. As in the stand alone mode you can pick a word from the list by mouse or you can use the alternate key and the number key that corresponds to the suggested word that you want to use. You can also add the word to the main or user dictionaries, test an alternate replacement word, or "teach" **Thunder!** a replacement string for the word. You can also cancel the correction window and return to the word processor window. All of these functions can be done with the mouse or the keyboard (via alternate key commands), so no matter which method you prefer, you should be happy.

The documentation for **Thunder!** is a 60 page paperback book that covers everything you need to know about installation and operation of the program. It was written by Ian Chadwick. **Thunder!** itself was written by Mark Skapinker, Director of Product Development for Batteries Included.

**Thunder!** comes on a non-copyprotected disk, so you can install it on your hard disk or your word processor's program disk. The main dictionary contains 50,000 words. You cannot delete words that you add to the main dictionary.

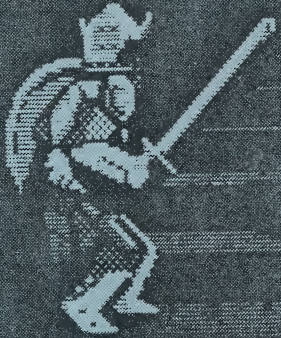
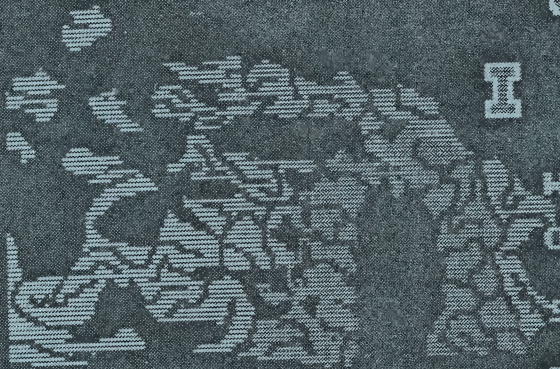
Well, I decided to buy **Thunder!** for myself, how about you?

[Editor's note: **Regent Spell** now comes included with **Regent Word II**. This version of the program does not check drive one for the master disk, so it can be run out of a ramdisk or on a hard disk. **Regent Word II** is a nice program which I plan to review next month. I have used it to format all the articles in this newsletter.]



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