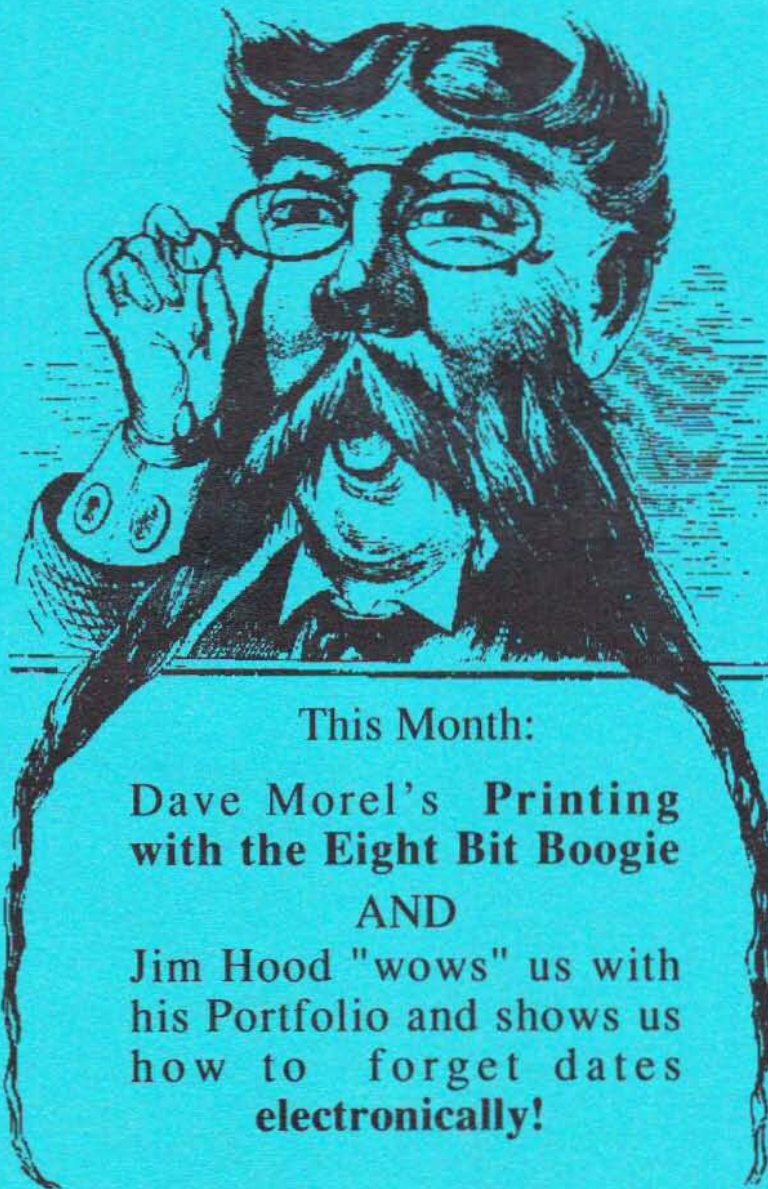# SLCC JOURNAL

San Leandro Computer Club   APRIL , 1990

This Month:

Dave Morel's **Printing with the Eight Bit Boogie**

AND

Jim Hood "wows" us with his Portfolio and shows us how to forget dates **electronically!**

WRITE
Jack!

MICROWORLD
COMPUTERS
BILL YERGER

1514 UNIVERSITY
BERKELEY
845-2000

The ST/TT line is America's best value for an all around business/graphics and fun machine. We all know it's not getting the support it deserves in this country. So, I suggest we write Jack, the Chairman of the Board of Atari. Tell him to get Atari off its seat. Atari's address is:

Atari (U.S.) Corporation
1196 Borregas Ave.
Sunnyvale, Ca. 94086

Incidentally, you can tell 'em to hire me for their marketing, Bill Yerger.

Attention: Jack Tramiel Chairman of the Board
Sam Tramiel, President
Garry Tramiel, Vice President:
Leonard Tramiel, Vice President
What else can we do: Tell a friend. If you help me (Microworld) sell an ST you can have any $40 program of your choice.
2nd: Come on in and BUY stuff. We've got 20 meg hard drives at $429. 4 meg upgrades for $625. Atari Laser Printers for $1200. Calamus and Outline at 25% off for SLCC! We've got it all, and we LOVE the ST and the ST community, so show us you care, if you do!

Editors: Frank and
      Jennie Kliewer

Laser Printing: Jim Hood

Many thanks to those who take the time and effort to contribute to this publication!

San Leandro Computer Club
P.O. Box 1506
San Leandro, CA 94577-0374

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Printing the 8-Bit Beginner Boogie

Vintage Dave telling us howse and whys ......

by Dave Morel SLCC

Hi, Bunky. Yes, I understand. You're in telepathic communication with wise beings from another dimension and they've beamed you the plans for a simple machine which will alleviate world hunger, ease the population crisis, stop pollution, and bring peace and joy to all mankind. This amazing device is also a perpetual motion machine, can be made from biodegradable plastic in three decorator colors, and will be priced to move at $19.95 plus tax.

Other people think you're crazy, but I know you're as sane as me. Your only problem is you need to write all this down in a letter and send it and the diagrams to the President of the United States and you can't get your printer to work. Cheer up, Bunky. Just because I'm a nice guy, I'm gonna take a few minutes from my busy schedule and teach you how to get it all on paper. Just because I'm a nice guy and for 20% of the royalties, that is.

Let's get started, 'cause I know the President is eager to hear from you.

The first thing we need to do is get your printer hooked up and the DIP switches set. This being the case, we'll skip that for now and do something else which is impossible without doing what we just talked about. This convolution is necessary to meet the computer article confusion quotient required by law.

One way to get something on paper is to use the line print command, like this: LPRINT "Whee." You can abbreviate LPRINT like so: LP."Another whee." Notice there is a period after the LP. A period is required after all BASIC abbreviations.

LPRINT works well enough with 40-column printers, but problems arise with other printers. It would take several long paragraphs to explain all the ways LPRINT can goof up and I'm not going to bother. If you're really interested you can experiment by making LPRINT statements (what you're trying to print) in lengths of less than 38 characters and more than 41 characters long, and ending them with commas and semicolons and putting them on the same and on different lines.

Fortunately, we have a way around these LPRINT problems. What we can do is open a channel to the printer. Let's give ourselves a BASIC line number and open our channel like this:

10 OPEN #3,8,0,"P:"

That wasn't so hard, was it? Now that we've done it, let's figure out what it is we've done. Starting at the far right is a capital P and a colon, both in quotation marks. This tells us that the device we're opening a channel to is the printer. If we wanted to we could open channels to other devices, but right now let's restrict ourselves to the printer.

To the left of the "P:" is a zero. If you own an Atari 820 printer you can put an 83 here and print sideways. If you want to print normally or if you own any other printer, use a zero in this place.

To the left of the zero is an eight. The number eight in this position means we're going to output to our device. Depending on what we're trying to do, we might put different numbers here for other devices, but when working with the printer the number will always be eight.

To the left of the eight is OPEN #3. This tells us which channel we'll be using. The Atari has a total of eight channels, numbered from zero to seven (and I have no idea why these computer freaks can't begin a count from one like us normal folk). Channel #0 is reserved for the keyboard, so it's never available for us. Channel #6 is used for graphics, so it may not be available. Channel #7 is automatically opened if you are using LPRINT statements in your program, so you won't be able to OPEN it again without an error. My advice is to stay with channels one through five. I use channel #3 because the # and 3 are on the same key and I'm too lazy to move my finger.

Now that we have an open channel to the printer we can use it like this:

20 ? #3;"Hot diggety."

The next thing we are going to cover are the function codes. These are the codes which control italics, underlining, margins, paper length, and a bunch of other functions which vary from printer to printer. Function codes are not standard (not even from model to model by the same manufacturer), so you must make sure any program you run is using the codes for your printer.

If you'll turn to your manual you'll find a listing of function codes that will look something like this:

CODE	<ESC>	"4"
ASCII	27	52
HEX	1B	34

This will be followed by an explanation of what the particular codes do. In the example above, on a Star NX10 this code turns on the italic set. It can be sent like this:

```
30 ? #3;"Esc";"4"
40 ? #3;"Gosh": REM this is in italics
```

The way to get the "Esc" is to open the quote, hit the ESC key twice, and close the quote. Another way to send the function code is to use the decimal (ASCII) codes with the CHR$ function:

```
30 ? #3;CHR$(27);CHR$(52)
40 ? #3;"Golly": REM this is also in italics
```

Both methods do exactly the same thing.

In the examples above, there will be a line feed (the paper will advance one line) before line 40 is printed. If we did not want that line feed, we would place a semicolon after the function code:

```
30 ?#3;CHR$(27);CHR$(52);
```

You cannot send the HEX codes, so just ignore them. As a rule, any function you enable will stay enabled until you turn it off. There are exceptions, though, so check your manual.

When we are done with our program we need to close the channel:

```
50 ? #3
60 CLOSE #3
```

The ? #3 in line 50 forces out anything that's still in the print buffer, and the CLOSE #3 in line 60 actually shuts down the channel. If we did not close the channel and then tried to reopen it (by, for example, running our program again) we would get an error.

And now we come to DIP switches. I forget what the DIP (Dual Inline Plastic .. ed.) stands for, but they are a series of switches that control character font, page length, bottom margin, and other features which vary from printer to printer. Some of these functions can also be set with the function codes, while others cannot.

Some printers have the DIP switches on the side or back where they're easily accessible, while other machines have them buried inside. In any case, the printer must be off before a DIP switch is changed or the change will not take effect. Look in your manual to find their location and set them as it suits you. Regardless of how the manual tells you

to set the DIP switches for your Atari, you must set the switch that controls line feeds so that it gives you an automatic line feed with each carriage return. Failure to do this will cause all your printing to be done on the same line because the paper won't move.

And, finally, here we are, ready to learn how to hook the thing up so we can skip back to the DIP switch section and set it up to print so we can skip back to the beginning that we skipped through and learn how to print. Ain't computer articles grand?

If you own an Atari printer, you've probably already figured out that all you have to do is plug it into the serial port on your computer or other peripheral. If you own another brand of printer, life is a little harder. Your options are (1)buy an expensive interface cable that plugs into the printer and serial port, or (2)buy an expensive interface (such as the Atari 850 interface or the ICD P:R: Connection) that plugs into the computer and buy an expensive printer cable that plugs into the interface and your printer. The advantage of (2) is that later you'll be able to buy an expensive modem cable and plug in a modem. And, too, some years back I saw reports that at least some interface cables don't work with all software.

Well, there's more I could write, but this will get you started. Here's a nice PS for you. If you want to list a program to the printer you merely:

```
LIST "P:"
```

And if you only want to list a certain range of lines (say, 30 to 100) to the printer you:

```
LIST "P:",30,100
```

whee

Pounding on the 8-Bits

Buy your own / Share what you know / 8 bits are plenty

by Bob Woolley SLCC

Bummer.

It looks like Atari has dropped support for the 8-bit line as of 2/26/90. I guess the torrent of software and hardware was just too much strain on their resources.

That may sound a little sour grapes, but I really can't quite get excited about the performance of a company that continues to make 2600s "because they still sell". Sure, they sell. Until someone comes along that you have to compete with for your customers.

Customers? You know what a customer is, don't you? He's the guy who wants something - the guy that will trade you dollars for donuts. The problem is: just what kind of donuts does he want? Maybe he really wants breakfast. Or lunch. Or a snack. Maybe he wants to make his own donuts - are you going to sell him a donut factory? Who knows? You might sell a few factories to people that need them. You might also sell a few factories to people who don't need them and don't know it (that end up in the closet, unused).

This is not about something simple like donuts, though. Everyone already knows about donuts from their own experiences with them as they grew up. This is about computers. Most people know less than nothing about them - like negative. Nobody grew up with them, hardly. All their first experiences were bad. Horrible. Is it any wonder that most people will have nothing to do with them? Most people believe that they can NEVER learn computers. Too complicated. Too expensive. Most people believe that they don't NEED a computer. Got along fine without them before. Yup...

Do they need one?

My wife (bless her understanding little heart) is not exactly a participant in the computer revolution, more like a spectator. She works part-time in a doctor's office (where they use a Klone for billing) and one of her duties is to send reminder notices to their patients. She mentioned to me the other day that they have a problem centering things when they type them on the page (we're talking a manual system, here). Their solution is to pop the output into their copier a little off-center and make a properly centered duplicate. This was a lot better than re-typing the whole thing or doing a cut and paste. I guess so.... Good thing they have an easily understood device like a copier. No matter that the computer sitting there would make their job a whole lot easier.

So, should I tell her that? How much trouble would it be to set up the Klone to do all that simple, word-processing stuff? Well, for me, it would be some trouble since I don't know Klone stuff. I could do an 8-bit in my sleep. No hands. If it were my office, I would do an 8-bit. Their best choice is probably do the Klone. But, THEY don't know that. They have no experience to base an opinion on even though they use the Klone every day. Even though all my experience is 8-bit, I KNOW that the effort to set up the system will be worth it. I KNOW that great stuff can be done on their computer without ever having used it. They know zip even though they use it everyday. Yet, they "learned" the copier!

Granted, the copier is a handy little thing, but any computer is a lot more adaptable. Many companies recognize the problem here and try to make the man-computer interface intuitive, masking the true operation of a computer under a "desktop". Good idea if you're making toasters. Or copiers (there is a computer in that copier, probably). Not so good if you go too far. Look at what happens if you design a document feeder on your copier and eliminate the manual placement of the original. Now, my wife can't center her typing unless you specifically design that capability into your document feeder somehow. On a computer, masking the basic operations is even less desirable - particularly if the user is going to learn how to actually use the computer as a tool instead as a toaster.

Back to the Question. Do they need a computer? Well, they certainly do better with one.

Next question. How much does it cost?

They already have the hardware, I imagine. The software would be maybe a couple of hundred dollars. No problem? How are they going to ever look to the computer for a solution? What is it going to cost them to "learn" a computer's capabilities? Read a book? Ask a friend? The millions of non-computing customers out there are never going to "learn" computers unless we make it easier for them. Not with desktops. Not with 33 mhz, 32 bit systems. Not with 128K operating systems. Not with 2048x400, 256 color screens. Easier. Smaller. Simpler.

To the new user, the cost of learning "computers" is enormous. Your boss is not interested in you learning computers. He has an application in mind and a gaggle of professionals to put something together. They will design it so YOU need to learn as little as possible. Good for your boss - not so good for you. The professionals have very

good reasons to learn computers. They'll make a huge investment. You won't. You can't in some cases - their machines are real rocket - scientist stuff. Even with a cheap, simple computer like the 8-bit, the average person is looking at years of learning to produce a real return. The harder it is to learn, the greater the incentive must be. Why would anyone spend years learning how to use a tool without a clear idea of what it would do for him?

I could argue that computers will be of more daily use to people than algebra and maybe we should make it required in our schools. That's what school is into, isn't it? What kid would go to school on his own? Twelve years out of your life just when you're least likely to get anything out of it. Take some 30 year old dropout and offer him a place to stay, food, clothes, spending money, and an education....

But, that's not the way.

How about offering a simple device that you plug a cartridge into and play a game? No learning curve. Not much bucks. Hooks to the TV. Once in the door, maybe a cartridge - based word processor? Now the customer is in a little deeper. Later, more complex games and productivity programs can be run using a disk drive. Deeper and deeper. A modem. One day, shazam! A computer language! 80 columns! A hard drive! Sweet Young Things stop you on the street to ask for your advice on computers!

I think you get the idea. Currently, the 8-bits will do the job. Problem is: the choices include such things as STs, MSDOS, MACs, and like that. No casual user is ever going to get past the surface of such a machine. Programmers, hackers, technonuts - maybe. But, they don't need any incentive. They've been in since the beginning. In fact, they've been driving the whole field. That is not to say that everyone that got into computers in the beginning is jumping into the Bigger and Better. Not me. Not a bunch of guys. I got an ST (one). It is a nice toaster. No way I'm going to learn how anything works inside that guy. I spent too much time learning the 8-bit. I can do everything I need on my 8-bit, and, more importantly, I know enough about computers to KNOW that the ST is not something I need to learn.

Pity the poor guy who starts out with an ST. Look at his learning curve. One look at the source code for the OS and he's out of the program. A schematic? You gotta be kidding. Is there a "Mapping the ST"? How about a PS2? A MAC?

What are the requirements for the customers that were left behind? In the turmoil of Birth, we had mass confusion, high prices, poor quality software, and no help from the experienced users (weren't any, right?). No wonder we blew away 75% of our market. Imagine how they react now that we say "get a new 40mhz, mouse driven Next computer! It will overcome all your objections!" You could never learn that machine. People don't need the next step, they want the last step. A nice, simple machine that is expandable as needs expand. Lots of varied software, cheap. Lots of User Group type help. Lots of accessories and simple gadgets for THEM to use.

And, most important of all, guaranteed immortality by the manufacturer - if the newcomer is going to spend three or four years fooling around with the thing before he really learns how to make it useful, it better be around for a long time afterwards. It's amazing how many 8-bitters have stock-piled spares for their systems (I got enough to keep me going 'till I die). Did you ever consider the fact that most software is sold in the 90 days after someone buys a computer? How much of that is due to the added learning curve of new software? Doesn't that also apply to hardware?

Somehow, the computer companies think they got all the users on-board during the Birth. I guess they think they can get those left behind by making their machines more complicated, expensive and short-lived. Maybe Atari will sell the rights to the 8-bit and let someone else try something different? Something for the Others.

uh-oh..... I am almost out of room! Soapbox overrun.

How about the DOM this month. Yep, it's gonna be great.

How about the IBM keyboard? We may have some finished units for sale at the meeting this month. No keyboards, just controllers.

$58.00

Anyone get AdventureWriter at the last meeting? I'd sure like to buy one.

Oh, yeah. The West Coast Computer Faire? I went to the indicated place at the listed times. Must have been cancelled.... Some computer types were milling around, but it wasn't WCCF. Maybe they were lost too.

(now, if you can't say anything nice....)

Et Tu, Atari?

Article by Mike Bryant, from the ST ACE Newsletter of Sonoma County.

Is your mouse getting old? Do you often embarrass yourself when you try to show someone how wonderfully easy it is to run a program from the desktop, only to find yourself double-clicking five or six times to get it to run? After months of such frustrations, I was even beginning to have visions of shelling out fifty dollars for a new mouse some day soon. The buttons simply didn't have that quick response that they had when the mouse was new.

Fortunately, I overheard someone at a recent SBACE (South Bay Atari Computer Enthusiasts) meeting mention having fixed a mouse with a similar problem by disassembling it and filing a bit from a plastic tab. I decided to give it a try and found it to be ridiculously easy. Best of all, after about five minutes of effort I now have a mouse that clicks like new! I had forgotten just HOW quick and easy a double-click can be.

When you press a mouse button, the actual switch that is activated is in the bottom of the mouse. A long plastic post is attached to the underside of the button and presses the switch when the button is pressed. Over time (years), this button wears very slightly and simply doesn't reach the switch like it should.

What I discovered on my mouse was that a small plastic tab, visible from the outside of the mouse, was the thing stopping the button from being depressed further to compensate for the worn post. If your mouse buttons are getting unresponsive, take a look at the tab just above the cord as you press the mouse button. If the button strikes the tab before it hits the rest of the mouse case, you can probably fix it with this easy procedure.

Open the mouse case by removing the two screws on the bottom of the case. Also remove the two small screws on the underside of the mouse top cover, in the strip of black plastic covering the button hinges. Remove the black strip and then remove the two buttons from the mouse cover. Either file or shave the plastic tab on the mouse cover by a small amount. Don't worry, you really can't shave too much off. That's all there is to it! Reassemble the mouse, and, if you're lucky as I was, it will work like new again.

Hacker in Heaven: William Gibsons' **Neuromancer** *(Review by David Schreiber, Phoenix Newsletter of Toronto Atari Federation in Canada.*

Many of us know what it is to switch on a modem, dial into a BBS and read messages or look at files. In our present state of technology, the experience is almost entirely character-based, consisting of little more than staring at text appearing on our monitor screen. In the future, however, it might all become somewhat jazzier. Imagine that, instead of sitting in front of a monitor, you strap a set of electrodes onto your forehead; that the computer you dial into doesn't send mere alphabetic codes to your computer but transmits electrical impulses directly into your brain; and that these impulses are sophisticated enough to generate mental images of locales and characters which appear in your mind as vivid as 'real' life.

An interesting idea? Good, now let's add curlicues to it. Sometimes these mental images of people and places are entirely manufactured by the transmitting computer, that is, made up out of thin air; but at other times, the computer creates them from the memories of actual humans, which have been digitized and stored in its databanks. So, instead of reading messages on a BBS the way we do today, you stroll along a sun-drenched beach, scrunching your toes in the warm sand, tasting the salt spray on your lips--and everything is based on the
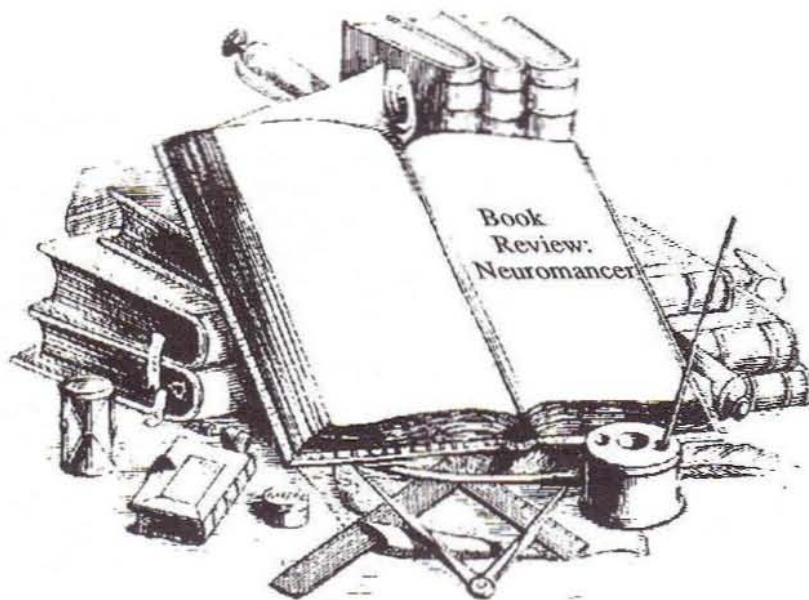
memories of a friend of yours who died two years ago. You eat, drink, sleep, feel cold; and you meet people, strangers as well as people you know, you talk with them, fight with them, make love to them--but they are "constructs", fully functioning illusions of real people, formed out of the digitized experiences of their counterparts in the real world. And since human experiences can be put into a computer-readable format, you can carry a cassette in your pocket which, when fed into a computer, becomes a 'person' in what is called "cyberspace".

These are some of the premises of a very popular sci-fi novel, **Neuromancer** by William Gibson. I am told that this book represents the peak achievement, to date, of sci-fi's treatment of computers; and that it is absolutely required reading for computer users interested in BBS's, modems and telecommunications. It certainly drew great praise for the author when it first appeared in 1985: "one of the most brilliant debuts in the science fiction field for many years", etc.

What is it like? **Neuromancer** is the story of a computer hacker who, as a result of being caught trying to penetrate a forbidden database, has been punished with neurological mutilation. After searching fruitlessly for reconstructive surgery in the seedy demi-monde of black-market biotechnology, he starts living recklessly, suicidally, dealing drugs in the underworld of a major city in Japan. Before he succeeds in getting himself killed, however, a mysterious stranger offers to repair his damaged nervous system. In exchange, the hacker promises to use his computer skills on a dangerous mission involving the

penetration of an enormously powerful artificial intelligence system. A beautiful woman with implanted eyeglasses and retractable razors under her fingernails, working for the mysterious stranger as a hired thug, takes a liking to our hero and goes along with him on the dangerous mission.

If the story sounds a little adolescent, that's because it is. There are punch-ups, chases, cliff-hangers, hair's-breadth escapes, etc. The characters are a standard assortment of toughs, terminators, evil geniuses and comic sidekicks--all cut out of low grade cardboard. We are not talking literature here, boys.

Yet the book is interesting not because of the substance but because of the flash--the settings, the style, the technology. In the crucial sections, for example, the hero is flipping back and forth among three kinds of reality: first, he is with a sidekick, Maelcum, a Rastafarian, in a battered old spaceship painted with Rastafarian symbols, listening to Jamaican dub music. Physically, that's where he is. Mentally he will be somewhere else for his supremely dangerous mission; and since such a mission can take as much as 8 real time hours, he has to strap on some tubing so that he can pee into a bottle (I'm not kidding). Next, he plugs his computer in ("jacks in") and straps on the electrodes ("trodes"); and now his mind is dealing with another world, cyberspace, what we know today as telecommunications. Cyberspace is a very graphics-based telecom-munications. Databanks tower like cities of glass, artificial intelligences glow in the distance like sinister planets, virus programs appear like green shrouds of spider

webs, and characters, created by programs from the stored memories of real humans, speak, react, kill and make love. Is this enough to make a story? Say, No; because at the same time his gal Molly, she of the eyeglasses, is wearing a "simstim unit"' and by flipping a switch on his computer, his trusty Onko- Sendai (maybe it was the Hidaka), he can be with her, seeing what she sees, hearing what she hears, feeling what she feels, completely sharing the sensory part of her consciousness.

You might sense that I don't think this was the best book ever written. In fact, I don't think it was the best book written that week. However, on a certain level, **Neuramancer** was exciting. The author set a powerful imagination to work on some very interesting areas of technology, and he took the trouble to work out his ideas in reasonable satisfying detail. I think most computer users who know their way around a BBS, and E-mail system, a database or even a mainframe, will get plenty of enjoyment from reading it. Pounding away at your keyboard, it make you think of yourself a little more dramatically, in romantic, even swashbuckling terms. If you also happen to be a computer user who generally enjoys science fiction, and who feels at home within the limited scope of adventure tales, then I can say with confidence that **Neuro-mancer**--and probably it sequels, **Count Zero** and **Mona Lisa Overdrive**--are must-reads for you.

Be prepared to put some effort into the reading. Gibson is no slouch with language, and he enjoys rushing forward with the narrative without explaining everything along the way, so that you have to piece together the details yourself.

Review: Part 1
CHAOS STRIKES BACK (FTL)
Review by Paul Gittins of the Portland Atari Club

When I heard there would be a new Dungeon Master game I could hardly wait. I enjoyed the original DM game probably more than any other computer game I have ever played. I probably played the original DM through about 6 times. As you can see my anticipation was great. I even took a set of characters and exercised them deliberately to increase their levels as much as possible. (In the DM game you start with very low level characters and the more time they spend using their skills the more they develop.)

The target date for release of Chaos Strikes Back (CSB) was to be in time for Christmas 1988. As that time came and went I constantly looked for the release but it just was not to be. Now here it is, Dec. 1989 and only two weeks before Christmas. As always the rumors are flying but still I had seen nothing. This was to be a different day for me however. I walked into the software store and there it was in all it's glory. It didn't take long for me to make the purchase and head straight for my trusty old ST.

I had heard that you got into trouble almost immediately when this game started so I was ready. My special characters were strong, Master or Expert in nearly all skills. I sat down to the computer and began the process. First you are required to boot the Chaos Utility Disk and use this to import you characters from you DM save game. Once this is done a new CSB save game disk is required for all your CSB saves. After making these preparations we are ready for the Dungeon.

My palms were sweating and my throat was constricted from the excitement. My adrenaline levels were skyrocketing and little crinklings of nervous tension were running up and down my back muscles. Into the ST went the CSB disk and then in drive B goes the save game. The screen comes up with the familiar FTL logo and then goes to a huge slab of stone with a map roughly etched out on it. You may at this time either enter the prison where several characters have been frozen and left for you to select or you may resume your previous game. Since I had already made up my character set I selected the resume option and after a long wait I was greeted with the familiar "game loaded" screen.

As my audience watched from the rear I pressed the button and popped into the game. Immediately I was confronted by 3 of the ugliest golden brown worms I have ever seen. They are like the purple worms in DM with the addition of armored plates over their heads and a little red flag on the end of their tails. As any DM afficionado knows worms are poison and attack with gusto. Unfortunately all my characters were naked as jay birds and the only things they brought with them were their levels of skill and of course my knowledge and experience. Naturally I figured the poor worms didn't have a chance. Within 10 minutes I was rebooting the game because I had gotten my but thoroughly kicked. All my people were dead and I was hopelessly addicted.

I resumed my game from the beginning and with a little fore knowledge was ready for those old worms. I made a mad dash for the sword on the floor in the center of the room and while avoiding the worms prepared a light spell and then a couple of poison cloud spells and some fireballs. The room is square or nearly so and there is a chest in the center. There are coin slots in the walls and small cubby holes which are opened when a coin is inserted. There is one obvious exit which requires the killing of a couple of worms to get to.

These FTL people are devious. To get to the exit you must pass through a door and go down a corridor. Even highly skilled people don't do too well fighting worms while naked so you have some poisoned wounds and are hurting a bit while running towards the door. Wouldn't you know there would be a hidden floor switch which immediately causes the generation of a new pair of worms.

After about 11 minutes I was beginning my third game and was a little wiser. This time I knew about the worm regeneration switch and avoided it as much as possible. I got the sword and from the chest in the room I was able to partially clothe my heroes. I ran down the corridor the there was a pit trap on the floor. A worm was pursuing me, but there was also a floor switch in front of me which momentarily closed the pit. If the timing was just right I could run from the floor switch down the corridor and across the closed pit. When I woke up and dusted myself off, my heroes were hurt a bit but all were alive. They had to sleep a while to regain strength and let the poison from the worms wear off but were otherwise ok. As I looked around I saw there was a regeneration area in front of me and some writing on the wall to my right.

(Continued next month)

IT SAID ATARI, SO I BOUGHT IT

Jim Hood

DeWayne Stuart, keeper of Stu's Place and hardware aficionado, bought the first Portfolio outfit he could find thereby maintaining his "First Kid on the Block" title. He played around with it for awhile, then decided his shop needed new stairs more than he needed the Portfolio, so he sold it to me. (By the way, his shop appears on TV in a Computer Chronicles segment every couple of weeks.)

Unlike DeWayne, I bought it to fulfill legitimate business functions, like replacing the $4.00 "Week At A Glance" appointment book where I kept track of my business mileage.

And besides, he gave me a really good deal on it.

And besides, it says "ATARI" on the front.

So Tell Us! Is It Working Out?

Yeah, it's alright.

I assume you've already read enough reviews to know its basic setup.

I use the built in applications; an Address Book, Calculator, Diary, Text Editor and Worksheet; which are nice, menu driven programs. Without those, it would be useless to me.

The applications use similar menu structures, except for the calculator which is not file based, so it is easy to pick up on the operating neccessities.

ADDRESS BOOK

I like the setup of the Address Book, which I use to store phone numbers and such. It has two modes, line and page.

Page mode has a separate "page" for each entry. A name and phone number are generally put on the top line. Other information goes on succeeding lines of the page, which can continue off screen.

Line mode alphabetically lists names and phone numbers from the first line of each page.

Searches can be done for names, numbers, or any little chunk of text.

The Portfolio produces dial tones on its built in speaker, so phone numbers can be dialed by holding the computer speaker against the phone mouthpiece. The mouthpiece must be centered over the speaker to ensure the tones are transmitted.

More than one phone number can be on the first line. In that case a dialog box lets you choose which to dial.

For travelers, phone numbers can be entered so that dialing the area code is optional.

Numbers can be temporarily edited before dialing.

Groups of entries can be defined using some common entry, such as "SLCC". These can be saved as individual files, or shown as a subset of the larger file.

Other than the dialing information in each entry's top row, format is unrestricted. A search will scan each record so any of the information can be used as a search tag.

DIARY

Some reviewers have listed the Diary as their favorite application. Like the Address Book, it has two modes, a calendar mode and an appointment list mode.

I like the calendar mode which shows up to seven weeks on the screen and indicates which dates have appointments or other information in them. I don't care as much for the layout of the appointment mode. Times are entered and shown in 24 hour "military" format. I prefer 12 hour AM, PM format. Also, when a day is selected for checking appointments, enough other days' appointments are shown to fill the screen. I would prefer to be able to see one day at a time.

CALCULATOR

The Calculator mode has five memory sections and a running list of entries which can be edited. It handles roots, powers, factorials and percentages.

In calculator mode the keyboard defaults to a numeric keypad setup where some of the keys are remapped as a numerical keypad. The 0 key is remapped as + and M becomes 0. I have a tendency to hit the 0 key when I want to enter a zero which causes an addition to be performed. Other than that we get along OK.

Some operations give rounding error. For example, the Abacus *Guide to the Portfolio* notes that calculating 7^8 gives 5,764,8000.99995 instead of the correct 5,764,801.

WORKSHEET

The Worksheet uses a file format compatible with Lotus 1-2-3 and displays data and menus headings in Lotus fashion. Files can be exchanged with other spreadsheets which handle Lotus format files, including, I am most happy to say, LDW Power on the ST.

As you might imagine, the 250K ROM and 128K RAM of the Portfolio can't handle all operations of some of these other spreadsheets, but it does have a good complement available. As examples, no macro facility exists and no Move function is provided. There are Copy and Erase functions, which combined can accomplish the same things as a Move. Forty-four "@" functions are provided.

I use the Worksheet for recording business trips, gasoline mileage, West Coast Computer Faire work schedules (if the club hasn't paid you for parking, etc. contact me), job hours and so forth. Files that I want to keep are eventually transferred to the ST.

TEXT EDITOR

The Text Editor provides basic text editing functions (what else?) including deleting letters, words or lines, and search or replace functions. A Goto feature allows you to go to any line number or scan through a document by jumping a set number of lines.

A separate feature of the Portfolio is a Clipboard which allows copying and moving data from one application or file to another or from one area to another within a file. This adds to the versatility of the Text editor and is a nice feature.

The text editor can be used in either an Insert or Overwrite mode. The right margin can be set from 5 to 250 characters and word wrap can be enabled or disabled.

Whenever a text file is loaded into the editor, word wrap is turned off. I would like to be able to change this so "word wrap on" would be the default condition.

PHYSICAL, ETC.

The Portfolio is big enough not to fit in my smaller pockets but small enough to fit in my bigger pockets. The weight is enough to give a sport coat an off balanced hang, but contributes to the machine's solid feel.

When opened, the cover can be securely positioned at any angle up to a bit more than 180°. This is a great feature.

A public domain program is available which communicates RS-232 data in XMODEM protocol. Thus talking to an ST at up to 9600 baud is easy as long as you don't use the wiring diagram shown in the manual for the RS-232 interface. Instead make sure that RDs connect to TDs and run a jumper between the Portfolio RTS and CTS.

April 1990

SLCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Main Meeting 8:00 P.M. San Leandro Library	4	5	6	7
8	9 ST Meeting 8:00 P.M. San Leandro Library	10 Telecomm Sig 8 P.M.	11	12	13	14
15 Easter	16 Midi Sig 8 PM	17	18 Journal Deadline	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 ST Beginner's Sig 7:30 P.M.	26	27	28
29	30					

Special Interest Group (SIG) leaders and their phone numbers are in the Table of Contents.

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Membership Application for the San Leandro Computer Club

Yes! I would like to receive 12 months of the SLCC JOURNAL along with other membership benefits, including software discounts, training, technical assistance and much, much more - all for the low, low price of $20.00 (or $40.00 if I am outside the US or Canada).

Name:_____ Date:_____

Address:_____
(Street) (City) (State) (ZIP)

Home Phone:_____ Membership No.
(Optional)

Computer(s)_____

Software Interests: ❑ Business ❑ Word Processing ❑ Educational ❑ Music ❑ Art
❑ Home Finance ❑ Desktop Publishing ❑ Games ❑ Scientific

Some interesting ways I use my computer:

M RAN'S MINUTES

GENERAL MEETING 3/06/90

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM by President Sammons. Roll Call of Officers; all present except Jim Hood who was reported celebrating his 64th birthday at one of the areas better (?) houses.

ANNOUNCEMENTS,

Several members reported on the West Coast Computer Faire which was held this past week. The overall impression was that the show had turned into little more than an oversized swap meet.

The club purchased a used 1050 Happy drive for use by our 8 Bit disk librarian, Glenn Fowler. The 810 drive he has been using is as old as Jim Hood and almost as ugly.

The reports of troubles with PC DITTO II emulator are continuing, but there seem to be at least partial fix's on the way.

DISK OF THE MONTH (8 Bit)

Bob Woolley showed some programs from this months disk which include - APACVIEW v1.2 - This is All Points All Color - Multi Colors & Multi Shapes - a combination of grey scales and color mix. MYDOS 4.5 - a good DOS with lots of abilities that gives the simple look of DOS 2.0. BOBTERM - A telecommunication program that works well on compuserve. Comes with many handlers - works with the EXP 80. There will also be a new TETRIS like game on the disk.

The newest goody for an 8 Bit ATARI has to be the TRANSKEY which was Woolley's next demonstration. With the TRANSKEY installed any IBM keyboard may be plugged in and used. Bob said the keyboard, which can be bought at swap meets for $40/50 dollars works great just like it's supposed to. The IBM function keys are used to produce predefined macros. TRANSKEY costs $50/70 dollars.

Joe Castro reported that Moniterm Monitors has a refurbished monitor available to developers for $700. This monitor shows two full pages at a time when using Pagestream. The setup does have problems with some software but Pagestream seems to work well.

After a short break, BERKELY MICROSYSTEMS demonstrated the SUPERCHARGER IBM emulator. This emulator which is awaiting FCC license is a self contained box that plugs into any ST through the DMA port. It's speed is 4 times an IBM XT. The emulator works in all the different ST systems they have tried it on, with no problems. The cost of this new toy $399.

BERKELY MICROSYSTEMS reported they still have some good deals on hard drives. $225/300 dollars for 20 megabytes depending on type of case.

Being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted - Jim Moran - Secretary

From the PREZ:

I would like to thank all the people who did such a fine job at the ComputerFaire and I wish to apologize for, with no notice, having to dump everything on Jim, Jim, Bob, Bob, Dave, Glenn, DeWayne, Ken and those I've forgotten to mention.

While acknowledging gratitude, I know that I speak for the whole membership in thanking Frank and Jennie Kliewer for the outstanding, but unrequited work they have done in editing the Journal the past few years. I just wish they would show up at a meeting soon, so we could give them the standing ovation they so richly deserve. I doubt that they will be in attendance at the next meeting because Jennie has contracted the Chicken Pox - A flimsy excuse at best! (Editor's note-it turned out to be measles.)

It appears that we have a few volunteers for taking over this task, so tread gently thus not to scare them off!
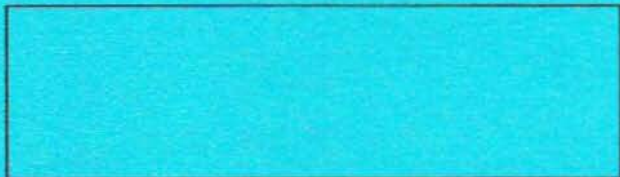
Question: Is there any interest in a beginners class in C programming, trying the same format we used in the four night CAD-3D sessions with Charles Cherry? If so, please contact me.

Another Question: Is there any objection to auctioning off one of the Club's Mega-2s and the PC Emulator to the membership in order to help provide funds for the acquisition of a Stacy and a Moniterm? If so, again, please contact me.

For the next meeting I'm attempting to get a speaker from ANTIC to explain the virtues of the latest version of PHA$AR.

That's it for now.

San Leandro Computer Club
P.O.Box 1506
San Leandro, Ca. 94577-0374

General Meeting:
April 3, 1990