

SNACC

SOUTHERN
NEVADA
ATARI
COMPUTER
CLUB

SNACC MEETING

Sunday, MARCH 5, 1988
4:00 to 6:00 pm

PIZZA PALACE

Boulder Highway and Nellis
across from SAMS TOWN

3/89

SNACC OFFICERS

President:	James Marker	451-7631
Vice Presidents:		
8-Bit	Doug Thompson	254-5024
16-Bit	David Scheller	641-8191
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Librarians:		
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SOUTHERN NEVADA ATARI COMPUTER CLUB BBS

----- 20 MEGS ON LINE -----

ZMag-ST Report, 8 Msg-Bases, Mods,
Reviews, Library/Database, Hints,
Fantasy Football and Lot's of D/L's

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PREZ SAYS

JIM MARKER
SNACC president

I'd personally like to welcome all the new members to SNACC the greatest user's group in Nevada.

We have lots of public domain software, a newsletter plus a pretty fair amount of general Atari knowledge and as a member you have access to it all!!

Anyone with ideas for future funds generation for "OUR" club your suggestions and inputs will be gladly accepted.

Atari seems to have taken renewed interest in user groups across the country and seem to be paying attention to the B bitters for the moment.

As anyone who saw last months newsletter or attended the meeting we recieved copies of DOSXE which supports the XF551 drive from Atari. We still don't know its full capabilities, but we intend to find out and pass them along to you the SNACC members. Any regular member wishing a copy can get it at regular monthly meeting.

Try and attend the monthly meeting, we need your input to help the club succeed and you could learn something or maybe teach something to someone else.

If you haven't payed up for the new year do it now. SNACC is back, now get online in "89".

JUST FOR FUN

SCOTT WOODFORD
SNACC

For anyone who's interested here's a little brain teaser I guarantee to be a challenge!

Given twelve balls that look identical, only one is weighted differently than the others. Using a simple balancing scale only three times, show how to find the odd-ball and tell if it is heavier or lighter than the others.

HINT:

How many balls to place on either side of the scale is part of the problem. To help keep track of each ball the use of a label is advised.

This puzzle was given to a former roommate on a twenty dollar bet that it couldn't be solved in twenty-four hours. He did it in an hour, and I did it slightly faster. So it can be done!!! I'll put the solution in the next months newsletter.

*** Good luck! ***

LIGHT GUN

Anyone can now own an Atari light gun. It comes with the Bug Hunt cartridge and is more accurate than the original version which came with the XEGS. Wiser had some but has sold out, they were priced at \$35.00.

DOUG

64K PRINT BUFFER

Harvey Cannon
SNACC

Do you ever get tired of waiting for your printer to finish that long text file or program list you worked so hard on and wished you could use your computer while the printing was going on? Well, so did I, that is until I got my MICROSTUFFER. Yes, I know there are quite a few print spoolers available, but they all seem to have the same bad point, they use too much memory. So I decided a hardware solution was in order. With the MICROSTUFFER no system memory is used and the buffer can't cause system crashes.

The MICROSTUFFER by Supra Corporation works with most Centronics compatible parallel printers and costs around \$70.00, although it can be found discounted at times. For your money, you get 64K of memory in a sturdy plastic case, a wall plug type power supply and a short Operator's Manual.

Inside the case is an NCR 6500 microprocessor, two 41464 RAM chips and 6 support chips. On the front panel are 3 led status indicators, labeled PWR, FULL and REPEAT. 2 push buttons, labeled REPEAT and CLEAR and a rocker type on-off switch. Although the push buttons do the job they don't work very smoothly causing the MICROSTUFFER to walk all over if not held down when pressed. On the back is a coax power connector a female centronics connector and a ribbon cable with a male centronics connector.

Setting up the MICROSTUFFER is very

simple and takes longer to explain than to do. The output cable from your computer or interface, is plugged into the input socket and the ribbon cable connector is plugged into the printer. The power supply is plugged into a 110v wall outlet and the power lead is plugged into the jack marked 7VDC.

When the MICROSTUFFER is first turned on the built-in SELF-TEST is activated. This test verifies the RAM chips, microprocessor, and other circuitry is all functioning correctly. While the test is running, about 8 seconds, all the LEDs will be lit up. When complete the LEDs will go off indicating a successful test. If ANY of the LEDs start blinking an error has been detected and you should try the EXTENDED SELF-TEST as outlined in the operator's manual.

Printing with the MICROBUFFER is simplicity itself, because nothing special is required on the operator's part. When your file is ready to print, it takes only a few moments to transfer the data to the MICROSTUFFER, at transfer rates of up to 8200 cps. While the data is being transferred the printer starts printing at its own rate, leaving the computer free to return to any operation you want, PAC-MAN anyone.

Up to 45 pages of double spaced text may be in RAM at any one time. If multiple copies of a document are

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needed, pressing the repeat button after each copy will allow the buffer to send everything to the printer again. No formatting of the data file is available with the MICROSTUFFER but if your printer has its own controls or print enhancement switches it's possible to reset them before printing the next copy, as long as the CLR button hasn't been pressed. If the current file is not to be repeated the buffer may be cleared by pressing the CLR button.

When printing long files it's possible to completely fill the buffer. This is indicated by the FULL led blinking faster and faster as the buffer fills up. When it stays on constantly "no memory left" is indicated. The blinking LED indicates how much memory is filled. The faster the blinking the less available memory. With a little practice it should be possible to estimate the memory remaining.

Supra Corporation offers a 90 day warranty on the MICROSTUFFER but as it is so well built its surprising that a warranty of a year or more isn't offered.

In conclusion the MICROSTUFFER is a well built reasonably priced accessory which can make printing much more enjoyable, and has many advantages over software type print spooler. In particular no interference with your software, will not cause crashes, and no computer memory requirements.

The one major problem I have is. When it's necessary to abort a print operation before it was completed, I

have to clear the buffer and in most cases reset the printer to clear the internal buffer before starting to print again. Otherwise I get the last couple of characters from the aborted file printed before the new file is started. A pass thru switch would be handy for testing print layouts and formatting without putting large chunks of data file in memory. Maybe someday when it's raining and I don't have anything else to do. Until then I'll just use clear and reset the printer.

SNACC MEETING

Kelly Hall
SNACC Sysop

At the Feb, club meeting, we demoed the DER cartridge. The Disk Emulator Routine cart is for those with 2 Ataris. It lets you connect the second computer to the first and emulates a disk drive (Randisk). You can boot DOS right off the second one like a MID. Pretty fast.

We also showed the New DOSXE from Atari, which supports sub-directories, Date stamping and direct command line entries, plus batch-file support. DOSXE can also initialize any Atari compatible drive. Created mainly for the XF551 drives, it can be used with any drive. Utilities for accessing Dos 2.x and Dos 3.0 disks are included.

Dan had the 8bit disks of the month and Sid had the 16bit.

And 'I' won the raffle! A copy of Data Manager XL from Antic Software.

B-BIT MIDI

DOUG THOMPSON
SNACC V.P.

For those of you who may want to buy an ST just for MIDI, hold your horses. Wizztronics is bringing you MIDIMAX, a Midi interface for the 8-bit Atari. MIDIMAX is American built and works with all Ataris from the 800 to the 130XE they ensure it will work with all 8-bits.

MIDIMAX features, a sturdy metal casing, high quality Midi in and out ports, an extra I/O port for daisy chaining. Six foot Midi cables, Midi Music System software, AMS to MMS converter program, an easy to understand manual, sample music and a full one year warranty. The system requires 48K and disk drive. The software is very easy to use and you can use the Atari keyboard or a synthsiser. The cost is \$225.00 or you can order just the MMS software for \$75.00.

MMS has been carefully designed for clarity and flexibility. Enter and edit musical notes, send Midi commands, transpose, create phrases, change tempo, and much much more. Three voices are displayed simultaneously and other voices can be accessed with ease and speed.

Note entry with the MMS is very easy, with the note sounded through the monitor (or TV) speaker. The display shows two keyboards, and up to 16 voices can be displayed on screen at any one time. All 99 voices are assignable to Midi channels 1 through

16 and the MMS program has a capacity of 8000 notes. Wizztronics recomends using the Yamaha DX-7 with the system for fullest effect.

The MMS program will handle the following: Velocity, Pitch wheel, Program select (voice or sound selection), Parameter change (control change), and Midi control (such as omni, poly and mono modes).

The system is currently compatable with all 8-bit Midi software produced by Hybrid Arts, as far as they know no other company has produced Midi software for the 8-bit Atari, although there may be public domain software floating around out there already.

ATARI IN EUROPE

Radio-Electronics 2/89

The Atari ST is a top-selling computer in West Germany, and is consistantly in the top three in England, France and the Scandanavian countries. In all of those places, the ST is viewed as a professional system; it enjoys widespread use in businesses and universities. In fact, the number of ST computers sold in West Germany (400,000+) pales the USA market significantly. Atari is now, however, making a concentrated effort at seriously penetrating the USA market.

§ § §

SHAREWHAT? - SHAREWARE!

by Harvey Cannon
From an item by R.F.Mariano
in ST Report.

This is directed to the unsung heroes in the programming arena, who use the shareware concept to distribute the software we all use and take so much for granted.

Contrary to popular belief, programmers do not survive on little bits or small bytes and morsels. They need funds (money) to provide the things we all find so necessary, computers need maintenance too. So fellow users, let's "get with the program" and "hit the hip" shell out a few bucks and participate in the shareware concept.

Donations, are how we pay homage to those programmers whos work we so freely use. These Bastians of the BYTE are slowly going the way of the DoDo Bird. Why? that's easy. The users who enjoy the fruits of the programmers labor are not responding with the offerings. Only a small contribution to offset expenses is normally requested.

Many times I reflect how greatfull I am for the programs brought to us via the shareware channel and yet these programs, which everyone use, generate only "small" dollar amounts compared to their popularity. Maybe the users would rather have the dongles, dingles, dollups, bad sectors and other nonsense associated with many \$commercial\$ programs. "You'll need a special driver for an additional fee" or you'll need this and that and oh yes the ever present ninety day upgrades.

"Send your fifteen bucks and we'll send you the new upgrade, we may have corrected a few obscure bugs"!!!

The facts are simple, if the Shareware programmer goes commercial or just stops writing we all lose. So, in the future let's not forget the shareware concept, as more programs come from this small niche in the computer community. We can all do our bit by showing support for the honest to goodness programmers who are always trying to satisfy our software wants and needs while at the same time trying to earn a living.

EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The Atari Exchange program has been in place for some time now, and we want all Atarians to be aware of it's existence and how to take advantage of the program.

Diana Goralczyk of Atari Customer Relations is the person to contact about any problems you maybe having with any Atari hardware, in or out of warranty. Call 408-745-2000 for further info and exchange rates. It's really quite simple. Send in your defective item and Atari will, for a small fee, exchange it for a similar unit in good working order. Do NOT send any upgrades as they will not be reinstalled. Remove them and reinstall them yourself when or have it done.

HOW'S YER DONGLE?

by R.F.Mariano

DONGLE aka P.S.K. (Program Security Key)

There sat John Q. User, in front of his Mega4 ST with the SLM804 Atari Laser Printer on the right and his 24 pin Dot Matrix printer on the left. On it's own stand off to the left stood the Korg Midi keyboard and directly in front of him on top of the Mega4 were his GTS 100 and his HST modem, of course, under the Mega4 was the customized Hard Disk in a Megafile cabinet with 132mb of storage. Impressive system? Dream System? Nope! Not a dream system, this is a real system and not too unlike many of the ST systems out there in use by serious users.

The entire point of the graphic description is to show just how involved the back panel of the Mega4 can become. Also, it all sits on a lowboy riser so the Monitor Master and the Mouse Master are easily accessible then, there are two possibly three midi cables, an RS232 cable, Printer cable, DMA cable, Tweety cables, Floppy Drive cable, monitor cable and of course, all the transversing wiring associated with this equipment.

John Q. readily points out that he OWNS all the previous releases from this company, in fact, two copies of Easy Draw and the documentation are on the shelf. He also has Touchup in it's IBM type box, grey in color etc....(he OWNS it too.) He bought this one on blind faith because of previous product satisfaction. When he SAW the dongle, his heart sank, after he went through the "installation of same" the decision to repack the P.S.K. and program in

it's original packing and wait for a P.S.K.-less revision to come along. Citing piracy as a reason for the P.S.K. is like saying an Eskimo needs a freezer. All of Migraph's fine products are documentation dependant and therefore, preclude the wholesale piracy so hinted at with the P.S.K. We respectfully submit that the P.S.K. is for the "honest and legit" business user who has more than one work station in the same location. It puts the honest user in a position of "get the special license and hardware keys" or buy more than one complete package. What about the casual user? In the next few months we shall find out how they feel seeing their computer begin to look like it is growing quills of dongles in series, each a key, for some future program. A keen observation would be that if Migraph realizes a decent amount of sales over the next few months and receives a squawk call from just about every private (noncommercial or school) user. It could spell the end of the P.S.K. in time for future releases of a higher magnitude. Actually, Touch-Up HAS to be the most documentation sensitive program yet released by Migraph.

Dongles are NOTHING more than a CHALLENGE to the hackers. Migraph's best interests would be served if they concentrated on the users instead of P.S.K.s etc....put simply, the users do not want P.S.K.s or any other inane dollups to keep track of....just ask some of the folks who had to mess with the dongles of programs in the past.

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Or, check out the sales records for those same programs.

Please, do not, under any circumstances, misunderstand our position relating to commercial software marketplace, support of commercial software houses is vital to the survival of the ST as a viable home computer. What we are alarmed at (quite strenuously) is the commercial software house who simply disregards or, fails to take into consideration the wants, likes and dislikes of the userbase and forces "their way" upon all of us. Somewhere along the line someone forgot to ask the customer how they felt about EXPENSIVE P.S.K.s.

Saving the best for last is usually something one does when one has something great to enjoy. Oh, how I wish that were the case now, however, it isn't...The Dongle we have been talking about is shipped with the new, and by the majority of opinions, excellent image editor Touch-Up, by Migraph. This is the part that really saddens the entire situation about this confounded Dongle. IT'S BATTERY POWERED! To me, that translates to (a) guaranteed renewable built in expense, (who changes this battery when needed) (b) loss of data when the battery needs replacement. Also, this goodie costs approximately twenty five dollars to manufacture. Migraph wants us to believe they absorbed the cost and that the price of Touch-Up does not reflect this jewel's expensive price tag, is this believable? It appears the P.S.K. is totally aimed at the business and scholastic communities. Therefore, it must be applicable to them and not the "little guy" involved in the cottage computer DTP areas.

Please, Migraph reconsider your position on this P.S.K. issue, you really must because of the gross inconvenience placed upon the users with this "thing". If only it were not Migraph involved here, in plain language, you have presented the ST community with such fine programs in the past that it is VERY difficult to even be slightly upset over the P.S.K...but at this time we must sincerely ask that an end be put to this noble but unwarranted effort. Come now, piracy among the users is not the issue here ..how many pacman enthusiasts want to rework an image file?

The real issue is the folks who are using your software to earn handsome profits. They should purchase a special license allowing them to install the program in more than one work station. Also, the schools should be sold under a separate program where the consideration paid to Migraph is sufficient to cover the inevitable that occurs in schools with the supervision's blessings (in most cases).

The bottom line is that protection of application and productivity software is deplorable. Most of the userbase will not copy or exchange high quality programs under any circumstances. Since your programs actually require the documentation, is the P.S.K. really necessary. Remember how most of the users felt about "Final Word" and it's goofy protection scheme?

"SOFTWARE PROTECTION SCHEMES HAVE NO PLACE IN PRODUCTIVE SOFTWARE"

psstt, Touch-Up is quite good! Ed..

!!!

NEW RELEASES

Doug Thompson
SNACC 8-bit VP

Many Atari users like utilities more than games, and if you do go on and turn the page, but if you like games check this out. I recently received a new catalogue from Atari, listing some new releases for the 2600, 7800, and XEGS. For now I'll only tell you about the XEGS cartridges.

Crystal Castles has been redone with more color and improved 3-D graphics, also released on cartridge is Star Raiders II.

Thunderfox by Aztec design, for one player using a joystick, sounds great. Your mission is to keep the Phalon war machine from being energized by stopping the transporters carrying the energy crystals. Skill and your trusty crossbow are the only things keeping you and five companions from an untimely demise in the middle of this deep space shoot-em-up.

Crossbow by Exidy, for one player with a light gun. Nine action screens to test your metal or whats left of it.

Crime Buster, finally a two player game for the light gun. Set in old Chi-town in 1930, and you are the chosen one. With only a city map to help you find your way you have to rub out the mob before they rub you out.

In Tower Toppler, for one or two player with joystick. A deadly poisonous water is stopping all attempts to colonize the planet Nebulus. You must

climb the tower and convert the water into a harmless form.

Impossible Mission, one player with joystick. Evil Elvin Atom Bender is betting that you'll crack up before escaping his sinister robots, crack the code and save the world.

Coming Soon

Flight Simulator II on cartridge is just around the corner as are several others, desert Falcon, Barnyard Blaster, Final Legacy, Fight Night, Battle Zone, Dark Chambers, Hat Trick, Commando, Crack'ed and Gato. With many more promised for later this year.

Several companies are producing cartridges for the XEGS that should be out by April. Activision, as a deterrent to piracy, will be bringing out some new items on cartridge this year.

For anyone thats interested, I hear via the grapevine that lots of new games will be released for the 2600 and 7800 game machines.

A new joystick for the 7800 and XEGS should be available from Atari soon. They look alot like the Nintendo controller with a stick and two separte fire buttons.

SNACC MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Individual membership, \$20.00 annually plus one time initiation fee of \$10.00.

Family membership, \$30.00 annually plus one time initiation fee of \$10.00.

Members have full use of the club BBS, disk and printed Libraries and receive a monthly newsletter.

Associated membership is available to those living outside Clark County, Nevada for an annual fee of \$12.00.

Direct all membership applications and fees, CHECKS PAYABLE to HARVEY CANNON at the monthly meeting or mail to:

SNACC

P.O. Box 43628

Las Vegas, Nevada, 89116

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION SOUTHERN NEVADA ATARI COMPUTER CLUB

Date: _____

Full Name: _____ AGE: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone #: (____) _____

Type Membership: Single ____ Family ____ Associated ____

New or experienced Atari use : _____

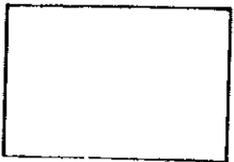
Describe your system:

Special skills or knowledge: _____

How did you learn about S.N.A.C.C.: _____

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