NACC

SNACC MEETING

Sunday, February 5, 1989
4:00 to 6:00 pm

Pizza Palace
Boulder Highway and Nellis
across from SAMS TOWN

Formerly Piper Pizza
Peter Piper Pizza

SOUTHERN
NEVADA
ATARI
COMPUTER
CLUB

2/89

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President:	James Marker	451-7631
Vice Presidents:		
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16-Bit	David Scheller	641-8191
Secretary:		
Treasurer:	Harvey Cannon	459-4089
Librarians:		
8-Bit	Dan Wess	458-2035
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BBS Sysop:	Kelly Hall	453-5562
Newsletter:	Harvey Cannon	459-4089

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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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DRIVE FACTS

Bob Woolley
I would like to clarify some points on the XF551 disk drive.

The drive IS double sided and can read and write in single, enhanced or double density. The "book" that comes with the drive is incorrect. MyDOS, SuperDOS and SpartaDOS can all format the drive as double sided and double density.

Previous Atari drives did not use the INDEX hole on the diskette, which allowed us to flip the disk over and format the back of the media. The XF551 uses a standard, bone stock, IBM style drive. It uses INDEX. It will not FORMAT the back of a diskette unless the disk jacket has two index holes. It WILL read and write to the back of any disk. Guaranteed!

On side one, the tracks on the disk are written from the outer edge in, from 0 to 39. On side two, the tracks are written from the inner edge out. This allows us to read the first 40 tracks of a DSDD diskette on a SSDD drive. The second side is not backwards nor could it be read on a SS drive even if you changed it.

The speed of the drive is NOT 288 RPM, the speed you are used to seeing, but 300 RPM, the industry standard. The XF551 compensates for the difference by using a clock frquency 4% (.33mhz) higher than it should be. This will read and write the data in exactly the same place on the disk as your 288 RPM drive, although programs that measure the speed of the drive will read 300 RPM.

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EDITOR
I recently talked with Guy the repair technician at Wisners Electronics, Las Vegas's only Authorized ATARI dealer repair/station, and he told me about a problem he's seen on the new XF 551 Disk Drives. It involves the SIO port and could be already causing problems that you haven't been able to identify.

It appears that when the SIO cable is plugged and uplugged a lot, it's possible to break the connection between the circuit board and the plug itself. When this happens you can have all sorts of problems, the computer may not recognize your drive is on line, refuse to format. Also other drives or components in the SIO dasiy chain may not be recognized.

So before trashing the whole system check to see if you have a bad SIO connection at the XF551 drive, if that is the problem a trip to the repair shop should fix things up in short order, tell them about this article it could help. Or if your into "Do It Your Selfing" a hot soldering iron and a dab of solder should cure the problem in less time time it takes toread this article, although if you get that far into your new drive the factory warrenty maybe voided.

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FOR SALE

Blank 5 1/4 in floppy disks. These are new disks and are available in quanity. See Harvey or Dan at the next meeting or leave E-mail on the SNACC BBs.

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NEW ATARI DOS RELEASED

Harvey Cannon, SNACC Editor

At last, the long awaited new DOS from ATARI, written to support the XF551 Double Sided Double Sided disk drive, is here. Originally called ADOS the final release is called DOS XE and is now available from ATARI at a cost of $13.50 per copy.

Although written expressly to support the XF551 disk drive, DOS XE will work with all ATARI compatiable drives up to 16 Megabytes. Although larger drives may be be used if partitioned so logical drives do not exceed 16 megs. ATARI has made every effort to make DOS XE usable with existing programs and any legal CIO call should work. Memory conflicts should not be a problem, unless the RAM under the operating system is used, sorry 400/800 users, and all ATARI BASIC commands will work.

Provisions for using DOS XE with DOS 2.x are made by including a utility called DOS2.SYS. Once loaded, you access the 2.x disk by calling it A: instead of D: and all DOS read functions, except Initalize Disk, can be preformed on the 2.x disks. Provisions have also been made for converting DOS 3.0 files to the new format.

New features with DOS XE are batch files, date stamping, sub-directories, Double Density and command line entry. Also new is the use of multiple screen menus and the ability to customise certain operating features for use with your particular system, using SETUP.COM. Features that can be configured are:

* The number and types of drives.
* The number of file buffers.
* Installation of 130XE RAM disk.
* Whether the RS-232 handler should be loaded automatically.
* Whether a BASIC program should run automatically.

Although I haven't had much time to try out this new DOS I have made a couple notes as to what I've seen so far. First there is a very definate feel of SpartaDos by ICD when using DOS XE, because of the use of pathnames, sub-directories and date stamping. The screen menus while perfectly functional did not impress me and look for all the world like a menu from a BASIC program and not like something you would expect from a finished commercial produce. I guess this could be put down to memory restraints I don't know. From my first attempt to read a 2.x disk I think that DOS XE is a little input intensive, lots of key strokes for not much output, could this be a way to get you to use the Command line feature? Also I did not find any mention of the high speed data transfer the XF551 is capable of in the manual. When I tried out the DOS I didn't have a XF551 available so I don't know if this is a valid point or not.

Something I noticed while reading the DOS XE manual, actually a manual for the XF 551 disk drive, there is very little information about the ablilty of DOS XE to utilize the double sided feature of the XF551 drive.

SNACC BBS

SYSOP

Another year is gone! And SNACC is still going strong. Providing help and support to all our friends who enjoy THE BEST computers made. And I know '89 will be just as wild as '88. I know!, because at a couple of our officers meetings, the imaginative ideas for the coming year from our new officers has made me dizzy and I had to be carried out! Just kidding guys! But, seriously folks!, HaHa, We all enjoy the positions we hold in the club, and hopefully can help out with any questions or problems that come up in '89 also. As long as you are there, we will be too.

BBS News!

One of the new features on the BBS, is the ability to set your parameters to display all lowercase letters. This is to make reading messages alittle easier on the eyes. Reading those messages that are entirely in upper-case can get rough when you have been computing for awhile. So, if you want to implement this, just hit P at the main menu and edit as you like.

Reminder:
Your password is deleted if you haven't called in 90 days.

To stop text from scrolling off the screen before you read it, Just hit Control S to stop any key press after that will resume the display.

To abort the text, Just hit Control C or X and you will return to the menu.

New Stuff!

A New game been added, Arena! A 20 player DnD combat simulator. With over 35 monsters, healing flowers, pits of hell, an aggravating gambler, exotic weapons, a town square and More!. Hit (!) and signup.

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(Continued from page 2)

This has been one of the biggest features of this drive, due to the encreased storage capacity, and the only real mention of it is in the section on initializing a disk. For my money a little more information could have been included as not everyone understands just what is ment when you say double sided.

As for the extended compatiability with DOS 2.x, only time will tell if this is an improvement or not. The need for an operating system to use the full features of the XF 551 disk drive is undeniable. But was if really necessary to write a totally new DOS? Would it not have been easier and maybe more to the point to modify the existing DOS 2.x? Thus maintaining total compatiability with existing software and saving what could have only been a considerable investment in not only time but money as well? I only hope that this investment is justified by the acceptance of this new DOS by the ATARI community.

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A Look at ARC

by Marty Albert (Copyright 1988)
from Zmag

OK, I know that the last time I did this, I said it would be the last. Well, I lied. So sue me! <grin> The reason for another look at ARC programs for the Atari 8-bit is the arrival of two new programs for us to use!

Editor: The previous articles Marty refers to, were comprehensive comparisons of different compression programs. These articles were available from the Zmag and been printed in many user group newsletters. Included were timing and size tables designed to give the reader a graphic picture of the effectiveness of the programs being compared. Also included were cost figures when downloading from the various pay services. As Marty is one of the sysops of GEnie he is very concious of program size versus cost to download.

The first is the SpartaDOS X cartridge from ICD, Inc. with its built-in ARC program. Next, we have the new Super ARC and Super Un-ARC from Bob Puff, the author of Disk Communicator and other fine programs.

Those who have read the older articles that I have done on this subject will note the absence of Disk Communicator, SCOPY, and other "boot-disk" programs. The reason that I have dropped those is that comparing them to ARC is like comparing apples and oranges <or IBMs>.

Just What is ARC, Anyway?

ARC is short for ARChive. It is, basically, a way to reduce the size of a file, or group of files, so that they may be more efficiently stored or transfered by modem.

The original ARC was written for the IBM by SEA <System Enhancement Associates> and has been around in various versions for quite a number of years. It has since been ported to the ST, Amiga, Macintosh, Tandy, CP/M, and other machines. ARC is very efficient, reasonably fast, and extremely reliable. <note that Commodore, Apple, and a few other machines have "ARC" programs, but they are +not+ compatable with the SEA ARC> The mark of the "real" ARC is compatability from one machine to another, that is, the ability of, say, an ST to recover a file ARC'd on an IBM. <note that all three of the ARC programs for the Atari 8-bit pass this test perfectly> ARC, when compressing files, will use one of five compression routines. These routines are:

STORED   --   No compression used. This is seen mostly with small files.

PACKED   --   Strings of repeated values are collapsed and replaced with "tags" that tell where what string goes on recovery. Note that all files are packed before the heavier compression routines are called.

SQUEEZED   -- This method uses what's called the Huffman system. Usually only beneficial for large binary files.

DIAMOND UPDATE

Press Release: Diamond OS SuperCart
From: Alan Reeve/Reeve Software

Attention Atarians,

It has been a little over six months since our first press release for our Diamond OS. Since then a lot has changed. We initially intended to ship Diamond as a disk based product and it was to require at least 64K.

In August of 1988 we were contacted by Shelly Merrill of Merrill Ward & Associates. Originally Diamond was going to compete against their product, however, things fell apart with the developer and Shelly has been assisting us with the marketing of Diamond. We elected to unite as I felt that his marketing knowledge could greatly boost the sales of our product, and also create a resurgence of interest in the Atari computer. Shelly has since moved on, formed USA Media, and has been very helpful in the marketing of Diamond.

We shipped our disk based version of Diamond at the end of September. It did much of what we said that it would, however we have received many comments and criticisms regarding some areas. The most common complaint was that the disk version functioned solely with Atari DOS 2.0.

Since the release of our disk based version of Diamond we have spent the last ten weeks adding to it in order to create our much more powerful cartridge version of Diamond. The cartridge version adds a lot of power over our initial disk version:

‡ Supports two windows on the DeskTop
‡ Supports Quit to Basic and direct return to the DeskTop
‡ Supports most DOS types (Atari DOS 2.X, DOS XE, and SpartaDOS)
‡ Supports folders (subdirectories) and time/date stamping
‡ Windows have sliders, and fullers that support full reversing
‡ It's on cartridge and consumes minimal system memory to function
‡ Much more...

Diamond is also completely programmable. We initially intended to have a separate Programmer's Kit, however, along with the cartridge will come complete documentation for programming the environment...it can even be programmed in Atari Basic.

The disk version was also to have memory drivers and be followed up by many external applications. Due to our continued work on creating such a powerful environment we have delayed the applications until the cartridge was completed. We will now be releasing the applications and they will support the cartridge, however, Diamond Paint and Diamond Write will also include versions that support the 64K disk version.

We are now pleased to announce that the cartridge version of Diamond is 100% done and will be shipping very soon as we produce the cartridges. It will first be available to users that wish to upgrade from the 64K disk version, and will then be available in stores nationwide.

MYDOS VERSION 4.50

MYDOS Version 4.50 for the ATARI home computer is now released and placed in the Public Domain! MYDOS is Copyright (C) 1988 by WORDMARK Systems and the authors, but may be freely used and distributed provided that the copyright notice is left intact, and certain provisions found on the original ARCed program disk are complied with:

MYDOS is modeled after the ATARI (trademark of ATARI Corp.) disk operating system (DOS 2), and may be considered an extension of the very "user friendly" concepts introduced with this operating system. The ATARI 810 and 1050 disk drives are well supported by DOS 2 and DOS 2.5, but have very limited provision for higher capacity double density drives (such as the XF-551), and large RAMdisks.

MYDOS 4.50 is intended to function as nearly as possible like ATARI DOS 2. This means it occupies as little memory as possible, supports all the system calls supported by DOS 2, and in most cases uses exactly the same parameters to the system calls. This means compatibility, yet MYDOS goes far beyond this. On a standard single-sided, single density disk, MYDOS will read and write to a DOS 2.0 or 2.5 format, and vice versa. There are a few programs that will not run under MYDOS because of one or both of the following reasons: direct "illegal" calls into the main DOS or FMS code, and relying upon exact directory data (i.e., 3 digit sector counts).

MYDOS will run on any 8-bit Atari computer with at least one disk drive (that is compatible with DOS 2). MYDOS

4.50 has full READ compatibility with the DOS 2.5 format, but will only write to the first 720 sectors of the disk. (MYDOS has its own format for enhanced density disks that allow full access.)

Up to eight disk drives (or nine if the ninth is a RAMdisk) may be accessed, but only one is required. The resident part of the operating system (DOS.SYS) supports all documented functions of the DOS 2 operating system, so MYDOS supports most available software for the ATARI home computers.

The memory available to a program is affected only by the number of files to be open concurrently: each disk file that may be open at the same time requires 256 bytes of buffer space. Unlike Atari DOS 2, memory requirements are independent of the number of disk drives or the sector size and density. The need for a 256 byte buffer for each concurrently open file means that programs that keep large numbers of files open will have less memory available than under DOS 2 and as a result some programs (mostly older versions of compilers and language interpreters) will not have enough memory to run. With three file buffers (which is the default) and no resident drivers (such as for RS232 support), MYDOS 4.50 permits binary programs to load as low as $1F00.

MYDOS 4.50 also contains a very versatile RAMdisk driver than can handle upgrades up to 1 megabyte that follow the guidelines of the expanded memory on the 130XE, or the Axlon upgrade for the 800.

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DATAQUE UPDATE

Chuck Steinman/DataQue
A status breakdown on the Turbo-816:

1) We are currently running behind schedule because one of the main people originally working on the project, is no longer working for DataQue.

2) Beta units should be shipping, we have determined the people which we are going to be using, and information to those people will be mailed out Tuesday the 27th of December.

3) There are two items at this point that are a supply problem, and could affect the schedule if I cannot find stock, but at at this time it looks as if that should clear up before 1/89.

4) The Turbo-OS is in the debugging stages, and is the only thing from our end remaining to to do.

5) The price at this point, factory direct, is what was published in the last mailing.... that is $119.95 + $4.05 shipping. Also, the same user group discounts still apply, and all registered people will receive the 10% discount coupon.

6) We are still communicating with Atari on several license options going both directions.

7) It looks at this point that if an outside graphical OS is supported that it will be GOE, The makers of Diamond have not provided me with requested information, and the working product I need to evaluate it. Also Reevesoft implies I would have to finance any 16-bit version of Diamond. This is not acceptable. TCS on the other hand has been very cooperative, and also has the advantage of being more readily available. We are still looking at an in-house GOS, so that is yet a third possibility.

8) If you have requested info on the Turbo-816, you will receive notice as soon as we have product available. I realize many have been waiting since November for the T816, and I know it is difficult to wait for such a significant product, but I refuse to ship before I personally feel it is bug free. A wait of a few weeks, is insignificant compared to the many years that there was not even a hope of such a product. I had not planned on even making the public aware of the T816 until mid-November to begin with, for that reason, I felt releasing dates in mid-September was foolish, but the info leaked out and I had to make the best of it, I did not count on some of the problems, legalities, and misleading information I have been delt.   ‡ ‡ ‡

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Its that time of year and Membership dues are due for the new year. Fill out the application on the back page of the news letter and run do not walk with your money to Harvey at the meeting. Member who have not renewed prior to the MARCH 1989 meeting will be considered delinquent and dropped from the membership rolls.
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CRUNCHED -- This is the famous Lempel-Ziv compression. It is the most effective of all compression routines in general. There are some files that MAY do better with Squeezed, but most will be Crunched.

SQUASHED -- This is a modified LZ compression and is used by the PKARC program for the various 16 bit machines. Because of the size of the needed buffers, it may not be possible to ever do this type on the Atari 8-bits.

ARC 1.2 uses only the first three methods of compaction, but ARCX 1.2 can indeed recover Crunched files. The only disadvantage to this is that ARC 1.2 could not make the smallest possible files.

AlfCrunch uses a modified Crunch system as its only method of compaction. Because of this modification to the LZ routines, ALF files can not be recovered with ARCX 1.2 nor can ARC'd files be recovered with AlfCrunch.

Super ARC uses STORING, PACKING, and CRUNCHING. Just as with SEA ARC 5.21, the SQUEEZED routine was dropped because it was so seldom used and not checking for SQUEEZED files increased the speed of ARC. I have yet to see Super ARC STORE a file.

SDXARC uses all four routines. You could easily have one file in an ARC that is done in each of the routines.

ARC 1.2, Super ARC and SDXARC will test each file before compacting it to see what routine will result in the smallest possible file with the least chance of error. This all takes time to do. Super ARC does have an option that allows you to force it to a Crunch Only mode where all files are Crunched and no testing is done. This option greatly increases the speed of Super ARC.

All this talk about Packing and Crunching is really moot -- It is not really needed to use ARC but may help you to understand what is really going on when you ARC a file or recover one that you have downloaded.

So, the bottom line is that ARC is intended to save you time in transferring files, and space when storing files.

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Separate applications will be arriving shortly as Diamond acts as a very solid foundation for external programs. The first Diamond based program will be Diamond Paint. Diamond Write, News Station, Diamond Publish and more will follow. The first three are almost complete.

Lastly, we'd like to thank those of you that have been supportive of our efforts to revitalize the Atari community. I believe that Diamond is the most powerful program written for any 8-bit computer and will lead the Atari 8-bits into the 1990's.

We hope that you will join us and Diamond as your Atari 8-bit soars to new heights. ‡ ‡ ‡

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
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_____

Special skills or knowledge:
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How did you learn about S.N.A.C.C.:
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S.N.A.C.C
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