ACE ABE'S LOG

AUGUST 1985

(PHOTO BY BETSY JOHN)

ALLENTOWN SUMMER CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 1985
LEFT TO RIGHT: MIKE STOLIKER, DENNIS JOHN,
JIM FINLEY, THOM GELLER, DR. BOB LOUX.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Proposed by Clinton Holder
Amended by Earl Kurtz

"Approval of the majority of the members present at the monthly meetings will be required for expenditures in excess of the funds in the treasury."

This amendment will be voted on at the September 14th general meeting.

June 8th Meeting Highlights
-=Jim Finley=-

President Paul Grover announced that Atari has given to the ACE user groups the option to buy the 520 ST complete with 3 1/2" disk drive and monochrome monitor for $799.00. This offer had a deadline of June 25th.

The club had received Atari DOS 2.5 which is now available in the library. Discussion about making the documentation for DOS 2.5 available came up and it is now probably available in the library.

Dennis John announced he wanted to start a 130XE special interest group. A raise of hands showed there were 14 members out of approximately 70 present who own 130XE's.

Membership Chairman Karl Loessl reported that the club's membership is presently at 162 members with 10 new members joining at this meeting.

Treasurer Mike Stoliker reported the club's bank balance at $2153 and suggested the club take into consideration purchasing a 520ST for use at the club.

Since this meetings major purpose was to elect the next executive committee, Paul Grover asked all the members running for positions on the Executive committee to stand and identify themselves. They were Dennis John, Thom Geller, Ralph Fenner, John Slaby, Jim Finley, Julia Piatt, John Chay, and Clayton Wagner.

Since a few of the members requested a secret ballot, the voting proceeded by putting the names of the 7 members you voted for on a slip of paper. The papers were collected by Paul Grover and Mike Stoliker, who also counted the ballots. The results are as follows:

President	- Dennis John
Vice President	- Thom Geller
Treasurer	- Ralph Fenner
Membership	- John Chay
Librarian	- John Slaby
Newsletter	- Julia Piatt
Secretary	- Jim Finley

After the announcement of the elected officials were made, Clinton Holder proposed an addition to the bylaws of the constitution. After a lengthy discussion of the proposal, Earl Kurtz made an amendment to the proposal. Mike Stoliker made a motion to table the proposal until the new executive committee has completed its transfer of responsibilities. The motion was voted on by the membership and accepted by a majority vote. The membership broke up into its traditional chatting session and the new and old executive committees continued with the transfer of offices.

July 13th Meeting Highlights
-=Julia Piatt=-

Unlike past meetings, the general membership was kept out of the meeting hall until everything was setup. Only the E-board, vendors and the presentation were allowed inside before 1:30. New membership information folders (containing the new club handbook) were distributed to current and new memberships as they entered the room.

The following announcements were made:
1) ABE's ACEs now has a 24 hour HOTLINE - 759-2683;
2) We also have a new bulletin board standing outside of the auditorium - a place to post press releases, advertisements, etc.;
3) There is a new cross-index for the magazines in our paper library - the data disk (SynFile+) will be available in the disk library;
4) New disk prices -
>   Specials $3.00   Regular $4.00
>   Archives $4.00 (includes postage)

and 5) NO COPYING AT THE MEETING! This rule will be enforced! A system will be available for submissions to the library and the newsletter.

Treasurer Ralph Fenner announced that the treasury stood at $125.92 when the doors opened. The club received $320 from memberships, $130 from disk sales and $100 from Dennis John's donation of the profits from the sales of Atari 1020 printer/plotters for a total of $550 received before the start of the meeting.

The proposed amendment to the club's constitution was read to the membership present. It was also announced that Thom Geller was working on re-writing the club's constitution and was interested in input from anyone interested in making changes to it.

Input/output session: Thom Geller announced that MPP was out-of-business. Their phones are being answered by SupraCorp. As of now there is no warranty of any kind on MPP products. Before you buy an MPP product, you should ask what kind of return/repair policy the store is willing to offer.

50/50 drawing yields $25.00 for the treasury. The drawing was followed by a videotape of the Trenton Computer Festival showing 520ST graphics in lo-res (Dennis' camera couldn't handle the medium-res and hi-res graphics). Next, the disk-of-the-month was demoed by Thom Geller.

The main presentation was given by Gardner Pomper, the President of Games Computers Play, Inc. GCP is a new Atari-only telecommunications service which capitalizes on the graphic strength of the Atari computer. This new multi-user network allows interactive game-playing with other users as well as providing the standard BBS services.

FINANCIAL REPORT

CHECKBOOK AUDIT

Current checkbook balance = $870.70
Beginning year balance   = $1532.18

	+ DEP	- EXP	= END BAL
Month #1	674.50	651.28	1555.40
Month #2	543.50	320.84	1778.06
Month #3	684.50	496.64	1965.92
Month #4	476.00	330.00	2111.92
Month #5	310.00	258.44	2163.48
Month #6	254.50	512.28	1905.70
Month #7	866.00	1901.00	870.70
Month #8	0.00	0.00	870.70
Month #9	0.00	0.00	870.70
Month #10	0.00	0.00	870.70
Month #11	0.00	0.00	870.70
Month #12	0.00	0.00	870.70

YEAR THRU JUL	EXP	BUD	+/-	%
A.President	29	35	6	1
B.Vice Pres	7	18	11	0
C.Treasurer	5	14	9	0
D.Secretary	31	14	-17	1
E.Library	737	871	134	16
F.Membershp	55	105	50	1
G.Newslettr	413	581	168	9
H.Programs	35	105	70	1
I.Equipment	2927	175	-2752	65
J.Mics.Exp.	53	35	-18	1
K.Promotion	144	204	60	3
L.Club BBS	35	70	35	1
M.SIG'S	0	70	70	0
N.	0	0	0	0
O.	0	0	0	0
P.	0	0	0	0
Q.	0	0	0	0
R.	0	0	0	0
S.	0	0	0	0
T.	0	0	0	0
U.	0	0	0	0
TOTALS->	4470	2297	-2173	100

CLUB OVERVIEW

Response to the July 13th meeting has been overwhelming. We've heard from members thru the HELP KEY and NAK-ACK bulletin board systems, on the HOTLINE and in person. On behalf of the entire Executive Committee, thanks for your support.

After our somewhat stormy reception at the June meeting and with our decision to move ahead with the projection TV system, the E-Board was crossing its fingers for this, its first meeting. Attendance was one-hundred and twenty-eight, unheard of for a summer meeting. Club income was even better. $866.00 for the month, an all-time record for the club.

With the bulk of our July meeting allocated to Games Computers Play, Inc. and most of August's meeting turned over to Enhanced Technology Associates, Inc. we find ourselves in a unique position. We have a backlog of presentation ideas that we simply have not had time for. Beginning with the September meeting, expect to see a much faster paced meeting.

The plan is to have five or six presentations, reviews or demos at each meeting. These will last only five to ten minutes each. That's just enough time to cover the main points of any subject. After each meeting, members will have an opportunity to talk with the various presenters on those subjects that they found particularly interesting. It will be something completely new for our club and we're anxious to see how it works out.

Thom Geller is planning a hardware theme for the September meeting. Thom will give a presentation on power-line protection for your computer system. This is something that could save you hundreds of dollars in repair bills. We will also have a live demo of COMPUTEREYES. This is a hardware/software system for capturing real-world images on your Atari computer. September is also the meeting when we will announce the programming contest winner and award the 130XE computer.

In the months to come we will have the latest software and hardware on display at our meetings. Of course special guest speakers are part of our plan. Broderbund/Synapse software is at the top of our list of outside speakers we'd like to see. They will be promoting their soon to be released program LETTERHEAD. This is an integrated word processing, address file and graphic program by the author of SynCalc.

All-in-all it looks like a banner year for ABE's ACEs. We hope most of you will try to attend as many meetings as you can and by all means, keep those cards and letters coming.

-Dennis John-

MPP REORGANIZES AS SUPRA CORP

by GIGI BISSON Antic Assistant Editor

7/11- Antic got the news that Microbits Peripheral Products was going into a reorganization just as our August issue with the story about the company was about to go on the press.

Frankly, we had time to pull out the story although it might have made the issue a day or two late. But Antic publisher Jim Capparell made the decision to let the MPP article ride, for the following two reasons:

First, our information made it seem likely that the widely used MPP product line would continue to be produced -- even if perhaps under a different corporate name.

Second, even if MPP did shut its doors permanently, the existing product inventory will be available in stores for a year or more. And MPP printer buffers, interfaces, memory expanders and modems are still among the best buys for the Atari.

Now that the dust has settled, here is what happened to the Albany, Oregon third-party Atari peripherals manufacturer: Microbits Peripheral Products, Inc. was purchased by Supra Corp. -- which is owned by the 22-year-old co-owners of MPP, Alan Ackerman and John Wiley. Legally, MPP is out of business, but Supra says that the Microbits product line and even the brand name will live on.

According to Supra Vice President Ackerman, MPP's bank -- worried about the current computer industry slump -- shut down Microbits in May and threatened to liquidate their assets.

Ackerman says this has been a tough time for some third-party Atari manufacturers. "No stores were ordering anything for the old Atari computers," he says. "They're all waiting for the 520ST to come out."

Supra Corp. managed to purchase the bank's share of MPP -- essentially just the brand name. Microbits is now a subsidiary of Supra and the partners have swapped titles. Wiley, formerly Microbits V.P., is now President of Supra Corp.

"I'm not sure exactly how much the MPP warranty will have to be changed," Ackerman says. "Some warranty work that used to be free will now have a handling charge."

It will also be harder for users to get through to the Customer Service Department. "Be patient," Ackerman says, "There aren't as many phone lines as before." As of now, the MPP phone number remains (503) 967-9075, but Ackerman says Supra will be moving to another building this summer.

Supra Corp. still plans to release the new line of MPP products described in the August Antic. Supra is currently taking orders for the MPP 1200A plug-in 1200 baud modem and the MicroNet system that enables as many as eight Ataris to share printers and disk drives.

Anticipated for September is the MicroPort, an expansion port that will enable hobbyists and experimenters to build clocks, power supplies and other add-ons for their Ataris.

The 10-megabyte $800 hard disk is delayed, but still on the way, according to Ackerman.

Dealers and distribution networks will be most affected by the reorganization. "Hopefully the end user won't see noticable changes," says Ackerman.

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VICE-PRESIDENT'S INFO-LINE

It seems that every time a storm passes over the Valley, somebody's equipment gets nailed. If your equipment is still under warranty, all you have to do is exchange it at the place of purchase, but if it isn't you're going to need some factory authorized repair service. I called ATARI to get the latest prices on repair costs.

ATARI's repair policy is: If it can't be repaired they will replace it, with an average repair time of 4 weeks. The following prices were quoted as of 7/85.

400 - $35.00	810 - $ 90.00
800 - $50.00	1050 - $ 90.00
1200XL - $50.00	820 - $ 30.00
600XL - $35.00	822 - $ 30.00
800XL - $50.00	825 - $100.00
410 - $10.00	1020 - $ 30.00
1010 - $20.00	1025 - $ 75.00
850 - $50.00	1027 - $ 75.00
All Modems $30.00	16K RAM $35.00
10K ROM $35.00	RAM CRAM $130.00

The address is: ATARI Corp.
                  390 Caribbean Drive
                  Sunnyvale, CA 94089
        PHONE: (408) 745-2000

If you plan to send anything back you should call first to inquire if any changes have taken place.

-Thom Geller-

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MODEM SIG

The June 30th meeting started with a short question and answer session. Then, Dennis John showed the group some photo slides he had taken of Games Computers Play.

The hottest modem program right now seems to be a public domain program, Trent Dudley's 'Amodem 7'. This 190+ sector BASIC program has everyone talking. 'Amodem 7' has a few minor bugs, but there are some members of the group who are willing to see if they can work the bugs out. Meanwhile, Thom Geller has contacted Trent Dudley, who was more than happy to discuss the problems with the program. Since he was so willing to help, Thom thought it would be nice to give Trent a donation for his work and the hat was passed around. Later into the month, Thom called Trent to talk about Amodem 7. Trent thanked Thom for the donations and informed him that he was working on different versions of Amodem 7 which would be specially made for each brand name modem. Trent went on to say that when he was finished with the different versions, he would be glad to send copies of the programs to the SIG.

Ralph Fenner informed the group of a new system for the Atari called Delphi sponsored by Antic Magazine. He explained how much this new service would cost and what the system would contain. All-in-all, the Delphi system sounds much like Compuserve. Ralph has contacted Delphi and arranged a free demo for the next SIG meeting. It should make it much easier for members of the SIG to see for themselves if they would like to subscribe to this new service.

Don't forget, the next Modem SIG meeting will be held 2:00 PM, July 28th at the East Catasauqua Firehall on Race St., between 11th and 12th, in Catasauqua. Newcomers are welcome, just walk in and go down the stairs, we'll be there. How about you?

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130XE SIG

The first SIG meeting for 130XE owners was held on Saturday, July 20th. The seven members present saw a computer "slide show" displayed with a modified version of FADER II. It was set-up to pull all pictures off of the RAM DISK drive #8. With this set-up, an all day show would require no disk drive. It would be perfect for trade shows, business displays and so on.

Modified versions of the RAM DISK were shown which changed the drive number from D8: to D4: or D2: for those programs that require them. For example, printing long chained documents with Atariwriter and a RAM DISK as D4: would save wear-and-tear on your drives. All chained files would be loaded into the RAM drive so that they could be pulled from memory for printing.

The public domain disk copy program COPYMATE XE was given to those members who did not already have it. This program, from CompuServe, lets you make a one-pass copy of a full disk with the 130XE.

Tom Reichard gave a demo of PAPER CLIP. This word processor has so many features it's hard to believe. The inclusion of all these "bells and whistles" cuts down on the size of the documents that the program will hold. With a 48K Atari it would seem to be about six pages. When used with a 130XE, PAPER CLIP checks for the extra memory and the allowable document size is about doubled.

There was some discussion among those present about programming with the extra RAM in the 130XE. Most members expressed little interest in going any deeper into that area of the computer. We decided to wait to schedule the next 130XE SIG meeting until some of the long promised software (SynFile+, SynCalc, Atariwriter Plus) was released.

So what's wrong with the programs I gave you in the last LOG? Quite a few things, but we'll concentrate on only the most obvious.

It should be noted that these are two of the first sound programs I wrote in Atari BASIC, and are marked by the expectations of an analog music synthesist. In the first program, having decided that static tones were not suffient for expressiveness, the tyro tries out dynamic envelopes in the Atari system. Wuzzat? In this case, that's when we try to make our pitches more expressive by turning them on at a fairly high volume, then ramping them down in a decreasing loop to provide a percussive sound: Sudden onset, longer decay of each tone or group of tones (FOR L=HI TO LO STEP -Z: SOUND 0,X,10,L: NEXT L). The standard approach uses 4 definitions of a sound event: Attack, Decay, Sustain, and Release (ADSR). A more simple approach is reflected here: Attack and Release only (AR). The problem lies in the fact that without external filtering, the ramped releases created by the negative-going loop (FROM 6 TO 0) can create noise all by themselves. That is what causes the "grainy" sound of the notes. If the loop is allowed to decrease more quickly, the sound might improve. Also, when the loop is sufficiently longer, the sound is also improved as the brain reacts differently to long-term volume changes.

Perhaps we should just use the turn-em-on, turn-em-off method as in the second example. This one also has its quirks. As written, some repeated tones are heard as one long chord. Separation could be achieved by adding a line (675 SOUND 0,0,0,0: SOUND 1,0,0,0: SOUND 2,0,0,0: SOUND 3,0,0,0) but in fast moving music or longer programs the four oscillators shutting down in turn may add objectionable noise to the sound or delay the notes. Another alternative would be to shut down only one oscillator by adding the statement SOUND 0,0,0,0 to the end of line 670. It is rather surprising to hear how much definition this one oscillator shutoff can give to a four sound construction.

Another problem is in line 240 (both programs) where we feed two oscillators the same pitch value (123). The theoretical synthesist might think, "this will five me greater volume on that pitch with the oscillators in phase". The problem is that the software oscillators will be out of phase more often than in, due (among other things) to the fact that instructions are given successively and may therfore give less or no volume to pitch 123. Solutions? Substituting one of those duplicated pitches for a 0 is a good, safe practice. The overall volume of the chord produced may be lower than desired, but at least all the three pitches called will be audible. A more interesting solution lies in offsetting one of the pitches by one unit. Tone 10, the one we are using, is nice and stable: Every pitch value requested with sufficient volume (except for 0 thru 3) will give an audible sound - not true in some of the other "tones". But the pitch is in an exponentially decreasing series. In other words, lower pitches (nearer 255) change less per unit than higher ones (nearer 0). There is much less difference in pitch between 200 and 201 than between 10 and 11 because of the Atari's "divide-by" system. So, make one of those 123's a 124 and you get a nice, fat, phase shifting sound for one note.

One final complaint about these programs: They are graphically dull. The tv generation wants something to watch, and the text could be made less static by string manipulation (128 added to each character produces its "inverse") or by a "bouncing ball" effect (use PM Graphics).

Next time, more efficient ways to make music: POKEing your Atari. Get your memory maps ready!
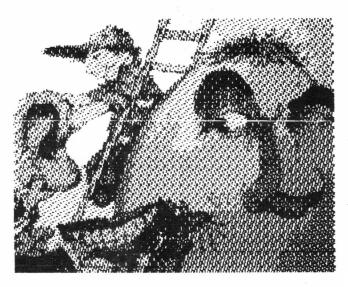
Worldwide Users Network

"WHERE'S MY PAPER?"
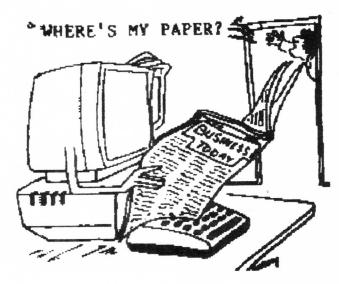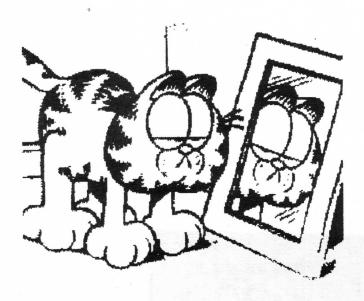
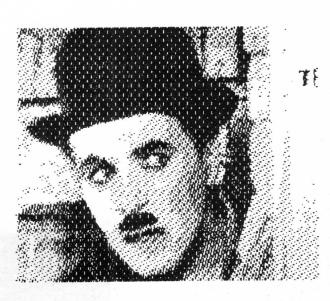   All pictures on this page were digitized on the Atari with COMPUTEREYES™ Video Acquisition System. All of the original material was in the form of artwork or photographs in books, newsletters, etc. The system also works with live subjects input thru a video camera. The images that result can be stored on disk, transmitted via phone lines, printed out and modified with a number of graphic programs. See a live demo of this product at our September 14th meeting.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT:	Dennis John	(215) 759-8151
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Thom Geller	(215) 437-3761
SECRETARY:	Jim Finley	(215) 837-1677
TREASURER:	Ralph Fenner	(215) 868-6459
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:	John Chay	(215) 866-3338
LIBRARIAN:	John Slaby	(215) 252-1991
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ABE'S ACES

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