



ABE'S LOG

FEBRUARY 1985

CORRINE'S PERSONAL DISKS (Fiction)

by J.D. Craig

Tuck Billy and Mike into bed, take time to relax with William and review our respective days. Later, he sleeps and the house is quiet except for the nocturnal ramblings of the pets. I turn on the disk drive, find the current personal project disk, turn on and load the data into the computer.

After a little loading sound, the monitor screen flashes an alternating red and blue background while inch-high letters proclaim, "SHUT OFF DRIVE! MAJOR CRASH IMMINENT!" Ignoring this, I type in an entry code known only to me.

Any other action (or inaction) would delete the resident program and start all on-board oscillators wailing at top volume for 45 seconds, after which the system would indeed crash spectacularly. This is my cute method of keeping the non-hacking members of my family from finding the real contents of the project disks.

Not that I have anything to worry about - they have always shown a wooden disinterest in any program that can't be learned in five minutes. And why would anyone in her right mind (they feel that excludes me) want to program in any language or dialect other than the manufacturer's BASIC? What has a custom language got that the original hasn't? They could care less.

I looked at the boys' disks about a month ago, and they are still firmly locked into the simple routines that they learned last year - graphics and sound control with the same old machine locations accessed. And William doesn't program at all. He just plays an occasional game of GALACTIC POLICE once in a while, enough to keep his ultra-high score up.

Next, type in the code to bring in the main program and the most current data. Finally, the screen shows the main menu: "Select (a)Man's name, (b)Sexual level 0-9, (c)Turn-ons, (d)Turn-offs, (e)Return to this menu." I select (a), type in "Damon", and begin a process that often keeps me up for half the night adding to the ever growing game.

(CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE)

OF INTEREST

CONTEST WINNER

The winner of the Name-The-Newsletter Contest is Jim Finley, SysOp of the NAK-ACK BBS.

ROM MAGAZINE

ROM Magazine, the only Canadian Atari magazine, has extended a special offer to our club. Each of our members will be receiving three FREE issues in the mail.

GHOSTBUSTERS EXCHANGE

In response to complaints about the quality of the Atari version of GhostBusters (see review inside), Activision will be replacing version 1 with version 2 at no charge. If you purchased version 1 and want the 'fixed' game, mail your disk to Activision, c/o Atari Ghostbusters Exchange, and they will send you version 2.

NEW FROM SWP

SWP has announced a new version of their ATR 8000 (the premier disk drive controller - printer buffer for the Atari). The new machine, the ATR 8500, comes in several versions priced from \$250 to over \$1000. The new ATR will control 5 1/4 inch drives and hard drives and will allow your Atari to run CPM programs.

FROM SIG*ATARI

A message left on CompuServe by a major software vendor indicates that they have received a new 16-bit Atari ST to aid in software development.

POOR COMMODORE!

Commodore International, Ltd. seems to be stuck with a \$400 million inventory, which helped reduce earnings by 94% for last quarter; sales fell 21% compared with the year before. Apparently Commodore underestimated the impact of Atari in the Christmas rush.

THE MODEM S.I.G.

--Jim Finley--

The group had it's first meeting Jan. 5th. The turnout was very good, about 25 people. I never expected such a response. The group started off by discussing the local BBS's and the commands of the function menu from each type of board. Hopefully, this discussion helped the beginners get familiar with the boards and make their sessions more enjoyable.

Next, the group had a real treat. John Douglas was kind enough to bring his freshly purchased copy of HomeTerm, the long awaited terminal program that is supposed to run on most smart modems, the ATARI 1030 and the MPP modem. Since John had not gotten familiar with the program, Dennis John, who had HomeTerm for a week or two, was asked to give a demonstration of this new terminal program. Dennis pointed out, while HomeTerm worked fine with the smart modems, such as the Hayes, it was lacking in full compatibility towards the ATARI modems and the MPP. Dennis also showed the group how to use the customizer program, which allows a user who had purchased HomeTerm, to alter it to their particular liking.

After the demo of HomeTerm, the group started to discuss other terminal programs, such as: the MPP smart terminal, Amodem, and SuperTerm for the ATARI modems. Nearing the end of the meeting John Chay booted up a BBS program which could be run on the ATARI 1030 or B35 modem. The program is supported with a ring detector box which, when you purchase the program, comes with schematics to build the detector box.

Many of the members helped each other and I feel the group is starting off in the right direction. There are experienced users who are willing to help the new users and this will make the SIG very interesting in the future. There are vast amounts of topics which the group can cover in the up-coming meetings. The SIG will do it's best to keep the club informed on how the SIG is developing.

JANUARY PRESENTATION

The presentation at the January meeting was about how our club newsletter is made. It featured slides of the system and programs used. Artwork for the newsletter is created using Graphics Master, MicroPainter and the Atari Touch Tablet. Text is prepared on AtariWriter. The mailing labels are printed using SynFile+. The use of each program was explained. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period. Some of the members commented that they had no idea that putting the newsletter together still involved 'cutting and pasting'.

NEW MEMBERS

A lot of new members are having problems with the DOS 3 packed with their 1050 disk drives. A modified version of DOS 2 is available in the library. This version of DOS is titled 1050 Enhanced Density and has the increased storage of DOS 3 with the easy to use DOS 2 format.

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800XL BASIC DISABLER

The following set of instructions will help 800XL owners create an AUTORUN.SYS file which will automatically disable BASIC:

- 1) Boot DOS with the OPTION key (i.e. without BASIC);
- 2) Put a disk containing DOS in the drive;
- 3) Using 'K. BINARY SAVE', respond to the prompt with 'AUTORUN.SYS,D301,D301'.

If you already have an AUTORUN.SYS file on the disk, rename it 'AUTORUN.OLD' before creating this file, then append it to this file using 'C. COPY FILE' and responding to the prompt with 'AUTORUN.OLD,AUTORUN.SYS/A'.

HIGH SCORES

THE PILL

by John Slaby

GAME	HIGH SCORE	RECORDHOLDER(S)
Asteroids	666,250	Rob Dress
Avalanch	8,475	David Lugg
Bacterion (1 player)	7,100	Rob Dress
Bacterion (2 player)	16,030	David Lugg & Mark Syslo
Blue Max	14,440	Rob Dress
Boulder Dash	5,909	Rob Dress
Bricklayer's Nightmare	41,355	Jeff Fenner
Bruce Lee	108,000	Jeff Fenner
Buck Rogers	234,491	David Lugg
Caverns of Mars	285,700	Rob Dress
Centipede	1,265,805	Rob Dress
Defender	1,552,100	Mark Bray
Donkey Kong	155,800	Rob Dress
Donkey Kong Jr	104,600	Rob Dress
Drol	14,855	Rob Dress
Frogger	26,735	Rob Dress
Frogger II	31,763	Rob Dress
Gorf	45,940	Rob Dress
Gyruss	285,600	Rob Dress
Joust	91,450	David Lugg
Jumpman	109,831	Rob Dress
Jumpman Jr	93,000	Rob Dress
Kangaroo	247,000	Rob Dress
Lode Runner	238,300	Rob Dress
Miner 2049'er	128,610	Rob Dress
Mr. Robot	480,850	Mark Bray
Necromancer	159,090	Rob Dress
Pengo	167,190	Rob Dress
Pitfall	48,800	Rob Dress
Pitfall II	183,094	Mark Bray
Planetary Defense	9,720	Rob Dress
Pogo Joe	161,300	Rob Dress
Pole Position	97,950	Rob Dress
Pooyan	235,700	Rob Dress
Popeye	132,360	Rob Dress
Preppie II	28,180	Rob Dress
Q*Bert	97,610	Rob Dress
Qix	130,243	Rob Dress
Rainbow Walker	105,945	Rob Dress
River Raid	58,310	Rob Dress
Robotron 2084	4,410,450	Mark Bray
Roundup	625	David Lugg
Scrolls of Abaddon	25,700	Rob Dress
Sea Dragon	32,700	Rob Dress
Spy Hunter	206,800	Rob Dress
Up 'N Down	54,760	Rob Dress
Vanguard	89,940	Rob Dress
Wizard of Wor	250,800	Rob Dress
Zaxxon	72,500	Rob Dress
Zenji	14,110	Rob Dress

The PILL is the tradename for Computer Software Services cartridge backup device. Other manufacturers are Gardner Computing with its Cart-Clone and Fronrunner Computer Industries with its Super Cart. All three work the same. The differences being mainly with the software that comes with the device. As far as price goes the lowest is Cart-Clone at \$59.95. The other two are \$69.95. There is also a SuperPill that eliminates the switch of the other three, but it costs \$10 more and the only person I know of that tried it had no success with it working. The only advantage of the switchless Pill is for users of an Atari 800 or 400 which have a door that has to be open to get to the switch.

As far as software goes, the PILL menu and copier seem to be better, but all do work. The PILL does have a cassette version; the others don't. I opted for the price. Also, note that the instructions state you need 48K.

With these backup devices you can make a copy of any 8K or 16K cartridge. The only exceptions are the Supercartridges of OSS that use bank switching. Other vendors may come out with bank switching but OSS is the only one at this time. Two future unbackupable cartridges will be Ballblazer and Rescue on Fractalus. These are 32K cartridges (if they ever get released).

One final point, all Languages like Basic or LOGO and all cartridges that would use DOS do require special treatment. Once you load the program into the "PILL" and turn it on, DO NOT hit RETURN until you remove the Menu disk and replace it with a disk with DOS on it. This is because when you coldstart the cartridge by hitting RETURN the Operating System looks at byte \$BFFD to see if it should do a boot and, of course, all languages (actually, everything except games) will want DOS and therefore want a boot. If you don't remove the Menu disk, it will just reboot, and you will be back to the menu and under the impression that the "PILL" didn't work for that cartridge. Your other option would be to turn your drive off, but then you couldn't save anything to disk.

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GHOSTBUSTERS

Mark

By Mark Bray & Thom Geller

This is the first of a series of Dual Reviews that we will be doing bi-monthly. We hope to be able to cover Games, Utilities, Applications, and Entertainment programs for the Atari computer line. We will base our reviews on Graphics, Playability, Sound, and Documentation. We will try to be unbiased in our opinions. We also won't give a rating of overall value because what one values the most may be different.

* * * * *

HEY, ANYBODY SEEN A GHOST? Yes, Activision finally decided to release a disk version of Ghost Busters for the Atari. This game is based on the popular movie. Both Thom and I were very anxious to see this game because we had seen the original version for another system.

The object of the game is to save the city. You do this by opening up an account and going into business as Ghost Busters. The bank is generous enough to forward you \$10,000 to get started. To begin, you must purchase a Vehicle, you are given 4 choices from a compact economy car to a high price sports car. You must furnish yourself with the necessary items for GhostBusting (i.e. ghost traps, image intensifiers, marshmallow sensors, etc.). You then go hit the streets in search of those meanies, the slimers! You are awarded so much money for capturing ghosts and Marshmallow men.

Unlike other games where you are constantly fighting to be alive, you aren't going to be hitting the start button every 2 minutes; but there is a time limit. You must earn more money than you started with before the Gatekeeper and Keymaster meet at Zuul. If you earn more money than you start with, you are given an 'account number'. Next time you restart the game, you simply re-enter your acct. # and start from where you left off. This is a very unique addition to this type of game. On most adventure games, you must save your current status to a disk if you wish to continue where you left off.

Ghost Busters -- Activision

G S P D

Mark

6	6	5	6
5	6	6	7

Thom

Graphics

Sound

Playability

Documentation

My opinion of GhostBusters is 2 sided. On the one hand, I'm glad to see that it came out, but... on the other hand, I'm a little disappointed in the graphics area. I think they could have chosen a better color for the GhostBusters, many have phrased the term SmurfBusters after seeing the colors of their men--blue & white. The music's nice, although they could have used slightly more bass. I miss the voice. I believe that more memory could have been used in the Marshmallow Man areas; I'd even settle for a less than perfect title screen, if the memory was used elsewhere.

I will admit that I think the game plays quite well in spite of it's shortcomings. It can't hurt to take a look and decide for yourself.

I'd like to take this space to thank all the users across the country who responded to my comments on Activision from the last newsletter. Once in a while Software companies DO listen. Things are starting to look better for Atari again, let's hope that the software support holds out for the great new hardware.

Thom

Yes, even Murphy's Law prevails at Activision. If they could ruin a good program, they probably would (and did). This game lacks the professional quality that Activision should have developed by now! In comparison to the Commodore version, I feel that they have insulted the Atari with this one.

Well, here are my complaints. Let's start with color. I don't think I've ever seen so many shades of gray in a game before, and the other colors aren't much better, dark red, dark green, blue and a few shades of each. Dull, very dull. For a machine with 256 colors they picked the absolutely worst possible. Your Ghostbusters have only 2 colors, a powder blue top and a lily white bottom. This makes them almost impossible to see on a gray background.

Resolution: good and very bad i.e. Ghosts are low resolution with square heads and the giant Marshmallow man looks like he's left over from the 2600 days.

Music: The ATARI is capable of better than this but, I just don't think that Activision is capable of programming with it yet. Activision could have made this the hit of the year, if they would have done it right.

All in all, would I buy this game? Yes, I did and my kids love it. I'd love it too if they only could have foreseen what the difference is between a mediocre game and a hit game.

SPY HUNTER

Review and hints by Rob Dress

SPY HUNTER, by Bally/Midway, is one of the greatest arcade games, and now it's a great computer game. Your mission is to destroy enemy spies. The situation is life or death. The spies are everywhere. They are in the water, the air, and on the road. But don't worry, you've got the most powerful machine on Earth. It has machine guns, guided missiles, oil slicks, and smoke screens. It also has the power to change into a speedboat and back into a car. Your enemies are:

1) Switchblade - This car is the meanest of the road spies. He either comes from the top or bottom of the road and cuts your car's tires and makes you crash.

2) The Bulletproof Bully - This car is the toughest spy on the road. He tries to run your car off the road. The only way to destroy him is to bump him off the road, because you can't shoot him with your machine guns.

3) The Mobster - I don't know this one's real name, but he is easy to get away from. He rides up and stays in line with your car and takes shots at your tires. If he hits you, you will slide off the road.

4) The Mad Bomber - This is the spy that drives me crazy. He is a helicopter who tries to destroy your car by dropping grenades from the air. Your missiles will take care of him. He can get you in the water or on the road.

5) Dr. Torpedo - This guy is the most dangerous spy of the water. He attacks from the top and the bottom by firing torpedos at your boat.

6) The Mine Boat - I don't know the real name of this spy, but he drops mines in front of your boat and tries to bump you off the river.

Here are some helpful hints on how to survive on Spy Hunter:

1) If the helicopter is trying to bomb you, pull over to the side of the road or water. Let the helicopter run out of grenades and go away. Sometimes, if you're not all the way on the edge of the water or road, Switchblade will come from the bottom and kill you. Also, on expert level, the helicopter has a large supply of grenades and it takes a while for him to run out.

2) In the water, as soon as you go in, follow the edge of the right side and you don't have to worry about running into pieces of land. Hold your machine guns on and go full speed, so nothing has a chance to destroy your boat from the top and nothing will come from the bottom.

3) When you die on the road and the van drops off a new car for you, if you're on a section that you don't like, like the icy road, you can ride on the side until you get out of it. As soon as you start, pull your car all the way to the right; you can drive there without getting killed. To get back on, just move to the road and your points will start increasing again.

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UP 'N DOWN (and all around)
from SEGA

HELPFUL HINTS by Scott Subeck

In UP 'N DOWN, you are a small Volkswagen bug. The object of the game is to collect all of the flags on the race course without succumbing to any of the evil nasties along the way.

While this sounds easy enough, it is not. There are large, brightly colored trucks and lively motorcycles running in opposite directions all over the track (trying) to stop you from your quest.

Here are some hints to help you win in your day at the track:

1. to get a bonus for the best time possible, jump from road to road on the turns.

2. Fear not if it takes you longer to complete your mission. As long as you spend ample time jumping on the trucks and bikes in your path, you will still get a generous score.

3. Jumping up the hills will speed you up and increase your score.

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CES-ATARI FINAL WRAP-UP

by NAT FRIEDLAND, Antic Editor

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LAS VEGAS - The January 1985 CES show looked like the arrival of vindication for those who believed in the Atari Computer. The spectacular hardware and software shown at the crowded Atari exhibit was clearly superior and dramatically lower priced than anything brought by Commodore or the Japanese MSX contingent.

Model numbers - and to some extent, prices - still seem to be in a state of flux. But here is the best information ANTIC has as of now.

16-BIT COMPUTERS - The 130ST (128K) is \$399. A suddenly announced 260ST (256K) will be \$499. And the top of the line 520ST (512K) is \$599. The ST operating environment, GEM by Digital Research, will make it easy for software developers to transport programs originally written for the Macintosh and IBM PC environments.

8-BIT COMPUTERS - The 65XE which replaces the 800XL will continue at under \$120. The 130XE is "well under \$200" - or approaching \$150. We also had our first look at the 65XEP luggable, under \$400, including a 3 1/2" disk drive and a very clear 5" green monitor. These computers are all compatible with Atari's earlier 8-bits. When the polyphonic AMIE sound chip is finished around March, it's supposed to go into an alternate 64K machine to be called the 65XEM.

DELIVERY DATES for everything in this story is supposed to fall between 30 days and the start of the second quarter.

PRINTERS - \$150 for the slow (12 cps) but true letter-quality daisywheel, \$150 for the 80 cps dot matrix that produces graphics virtually as sharp as the Apple Imagewriter. \$150 for the 50 cps non-impact color printer that produces very clear text, and \$99 for a black-only 20-cps non-impact model. All of these printers seem much sturdier and more professional than any printer that has ever carried the Atari name. They all work with both the 8-bit and the 16-bit lines, under different interfaces and model numbers. In fact, Atari printers and monitors will now be marketed for IBM, Apple and Commodore computers, under the AtariSoft name.

MONITORS - The XC1411 composite color 14" is under \$200. The XM128, about \$150, is the crisp 12" green monitor with built-in 80-column card that works with the new Atari software on XE computers. Specifically for the 16-bit ST line is the very impressive 12" RGB analog color monitor, SC1224 under \$300, that's capable of showing 512 colors

onscreen. You can also get this model with a built-in 3 1/2" disk drive attachment. And there's an extra high resolution monochrome monitor, the SM124, for the ST's at under \$200. The Atari exhibit area featured a wall of color monitors, which often displayed the spectacular graphics demos which Atari has been making available to users groups. Doug Crockford's BALL1 has been put on CompuServe by ANTIC. And Jim St. Louis' & Russ Karas' animated high-res robot and rocket ship are starting to be seen nationwide.

DISK DRIVES - The 500K SF354 3 1/2" drive is under \$200. And they are now also talking about a 250K 3 1/2" drive, the SF324, for around \$150. Not yet shown was the under-\$600 SH317 hard disk with 10MB, and there's also some discussion of a 15MB hard disk. Speed of all these new drives is announced as a phenomenal 1.3 megabytes per second for the STs. For the XEs they're hoping to boost the speed to 30,000 from the current 19,200. The 1050 disk drive will be gradually replaced for 5 1/4" floppies by the compatible XF521, around \$150, which has true double density and matches the new XE look. The new compatible Disk Operating System 2.5 was developed by Bill Wilkinson of OSS, the father of Atari DOS.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS - The \$49.95 XM301 direct-connect 300-baud modem is slightly larger than a cigarette pack and comes bundled with software for uploading and downloading. The long-awaited Learning Phone cartridge for accessing Plato was featured, in-store availability should begin in February and the price may be as low as \$25. The Plato cartridge was also being demonstrated with MPP's new low-cost 1,200-baud modem.

* * * * *

SOFTWARE BREAKTHROUGHS

LAS VEGAS - Atari's CES software was in its own right as spectacular as the hardware breakthroughs on display. The star attraction was undoubtedly INFINITY - which is the next generation of sleek, powerful integrated programs.

Infinity has specs that are more than a match for Lotus 1-2-3 and Symphony. Yet it can run in as little as 64K (even on the old 800) with only the loss of a few extra features. And incredibly, it will be sold at only \$49.95 for 8-bit Ataris, the 16-bit version will be about \$70.

The Tramiel Atari Corp. has shown that it is serious about holding software prices to \$49.95, which is what virtually all the advanced productivity software described in this article will cost.

I realize that Infinity sounds almost too good to be true. But Antic has seen it in operation. On one disk it contains a spreadsheet, relational database, a word processor that looks like MacWrite, a telecommunications package, graphics, icons and pull-down menus, and integrated printing.

It runs in virtual memory, which means that file size is more dependent on disk capacity than on RAM.

Infinity will support the upcoming Atari local area networking (LAN) capability. And it includes multitasking -- up to 6 simultaneous operations on the ST series, 3 on the 130 XE and 2 on the 65XE.

Vincent Garafolo of Cambridge's Matrix Software, developers of Infinity, explained that they were able to get so much into a 64K memory program by two-step "optimizing" of the assembly language compilation. This procedure is usually only used in advanced military and government software.

"Most software companies don't do optimization because it's so tedious, even though it's possible to drastically reduce the size of most programs," explained Garafolo. "You don't have to be a programming genius to optimize. You just have to be willing to put in a few hundred hours of boring, painstaking line-by-line analysis."

Other impressive new software from Atari includes Silent Butler, a personal finance program that balances multiple checking and credit card accounts, and tracks tax deductions. It's most unique feature is the ability to print on your own personalized checks, using a plastic check-holder that fits into your printer.

Shopkeeper is an easy-to-use small business accounting package that also tracks inventory and generally emulates an electronic cash register. It also compiles daily reports which will be automatically transferable to the upcoming (2nd quarter) general ledger module. There will be six modules in the series.

Song Painter is a very user-friendly music construction program that replaces standard musical notation with self-explanatory colored line patterns and icons. Its three instrumental voices can be controlled almost entirely from the joystick.

In another Atari musical development, the in/out MIDI ports on the ST computers were being demonstrated driving the new Casio CZ101 \$499 synthesizer.

ULTIMA III

The correct way to make the scenario disk for ULTIMA III with an 800XL is:

- 1) Insert disk,
- 2) Hold down OPTION-C,
- 3) Turn on Computer,
- and 4) Release keys after a few seconds.

This tip compliments of Bob at Software City.

Software City

2882 MacArthur Rd.
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