

ABE'S ACE'S
OCTOBER 1986
NEWSLETTER



**More Scary Computer News
Than You Can Shake A Joystick At!**

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

Dear Members,

RE: Who's In Charge??

I am sure that by now most of you are aware that there have been some changes in the E-board. Thom Geller and Mike Stoliker have both resigned their positions in protest of various events that have taken place anywhere from last week to 5 years ago. It is the feeling of the remaining E-board and of many of the members at last months meeting, that there is little or nothing which can be done about past events.

We were able to find someone willing to take on the responsibility of Vice-President. Therefore Shirley Bickert has been elected by the E-board to finish the balance of Thom Geller's presidential term. The E-board is looking for someone to finish the balance of Michael Stoliker's term as Librarian.

This is the current status of the E-board:

President	Shirley Bickert
Vice-President	Leon Bonam
Recording Secretary	Tom Burke
Membership	Frank McGrath
Librarian	position open
Treasurer	John Slaby
Newsletter Editor	Dennis John

These changes conform to the rules of the club as set forth in the constitution (ref. 4.2.1, 7.6, 7.7).

The new E-board asks your help in getting the club back on track and moving in the right direction. We request that all members try to put behind them the differences of opinions which we have experienced in the past.

Very truly yours,
Shirley Bickert
President

TEMPLE OF APSHAI

An 8-bit review by Joe Souder

Adventure games are nothing new, but the Temple of Apschal trilogy is an impressive new adventure game from Epyx.

Old game made new?

The Temple of Apschal trilogy is actually three games, made a couple of years ago, that were put in one game. Actually you are getting three games in one! The way the designer(s) put all three games together was good. The game is made so that you can enter one of the three at any point in the game. You do so by going out of one of the games (still keeping earned experience points, and treasure) and into the Inn (where your character's score is kept) and then going into a different game. The three games included are Temple of Apschal, Upper Reaches of Apschal, and The Curse of Ra.

Game Play

At the start of the game, you can load a saved character, roll one at random, or make your own. Then you may buy equipment and enter one of the games. In each of the games there are monsters, treasure, traps, and miscellaneous items. The graphic layout is different in each game, and the monsters are different, but those are the only noticeable difference. In some situations, a strategy helps, and thus makes the game a little more interesting. The game is also played in turns, if you are near a monster, the monster and player alternate turns. The only thing that makes it slow is that there are many keyboard commands that must be memorized to make the game go faster.

Epyx Computer Software
1043 Kiel Court
Sunnyvale, CA 94089



Eastern Pennsylvania ATARI EXPO

P.O. Box 2830 Lehigh Valley, PA 18001

Mark your calendars! This is an event that you will not want to miss. Atari is coming to ALLENTOWN!!!! Not only that but, we are currently working on getting a variety of the companies which support the Atari community to be at our event. The event is an Atari Expo and this will be the first one in our area. This is your opportunity to speak with company representatives. To rub shoulders with those in the know.

Where: The Allentown Hilton
When: March 14th & 15th (Saturday and Sunday)
What: A "trade Show" for the Atari
How: This is an ABE's Aces & Atari sponsored event, and you can help.

How can you help?? We will need people to collect tickets, patrol the floor, work our booth and maybe work company booths, and gofers. If you are interested please sign up at any future club meeting.

We'll keep you posted as things develop. So watch this column for future updates.

Shirley Bickert

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Supertex 3000	\$99
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SOUND PROGRAMMING

SOUND PROGRAMMING - J.D. Craig
LISTEN TO THE BBS

As of last July, about 22 of the 161 8 bit files in the Help Key II (HK2) download section were music or sound related. In the next few editions of this column, we will review these programs and see what we can learn from them.

This will not be a review in the usual sense of an arts column: We are not interested in the artistic worth of a piece. You'll find no snide or cutesy remarks about these works as we treat them as springboards for discussion. Even if something seems worthless or offensive (applicable to NONE of these programs), the alert can learn something from it. This writer will take a benign view of anything uploaded or programmed in good faith - I consider all of these programs worth your downloading time. The contributions of FREE software and the time to upload them is reason enough to applaud. To all the unknown authors of these programs, thank you. We hope you'll send us even more.

Let's begin with BOINK - "the bouncing ball". This an example of what is usually called a sound/graphic demo, and it's a binary file. Binary files come in many flavors - this kind is called an "executable", or "load and go" file. It's a specific type of COM file that is loaded and run from DOS, using the "L" command. Some programs require that no cartridges be present, or that an onboard BASIC be disabled. BOINK can be loaded with or without BASIC installed.

We are already encountering a few problems here. When we look at a filename on the download list, it may or may not tell us anything about the program. Some binary files require a cartridge, others don't. Some are only parts of other programs, incomplete in themselves. And BASIC programs may be LISTed or SAVED, something also often unreflected in the filename. While some kind of standardization of file extenders might be nice, the HK2 SysOp feels that more confusion might be caused by "correcting" uploaded filenames. Some filenames cannot be changed and still work, while others would not correlate to magazine articles or other documentation.

And what about DOS - which to use? I do think that we 8 bit Atarians should unify around some form of DOS 2, with 2.0 as the standard from which to deviate. While many love 2.5, I most often use 2.6 more than 1.0 or 2.0, but still keep others handy for special occasions. My DOS 3 disks are buried in the archives, and none of the programs discussed use it.

But back to BOINK - what's it supposed to do? It was originally intended to show that the Atari 16 bit machines could blow the Commodores out of the water. While the 8 bit version isn't quite as clean, it is still impressive. With the sound off, this kind of thing makes a nice "moving picture" - something for your tv to do in between data processing and The 3 Stooges. BOINK is usually seen at computer faires, and the sound turned on from time to time. With the sound on continually, one could go bonkers.

And how about that sound - what's so great about that? Well, it's actually pretty impressive if your tv's audio is clean and run through a decent amplifier and speakers: The bounce sound gives the ball a nice illusion of mass, to match it's ponderous movement.

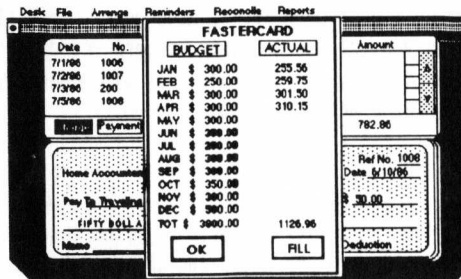
Speaking of illusions, let's take a look at WILDSND.DMO, another binary executable file with or without BASIC in. Originally titled WOOFER by Pirate Punk and Scooter (the dog), this is an interactive program. Unlike the noisy "wallpaper" of BOINK, this program invites hands onto the keyboard to play. Most keypresses produce a bark, and the ones that don't are silent. The screen display changes with each bark, but the main point of this program is the keyboard full of woofing. Pitch is arranged descending from 1 - INSERT, Q - RETURN, A - *, and Z - /. The highest pitches are appreciably faster than the low ones, revealing the constant structure of the sound routine. In other words, within those 26 sectors there is only one bark routine with a capacity for being slowed logarithmically: Notice the wider jumps between the high pitch keys compared to the low ones. Another of the program's more interesting features is the use of a keycode that steps regularly from one adjacent key to the next following the same pattern on each successive keyrow - this could be useful for other things.

Well, shall we take these programs apart and see what makes them tick? No. When it comes to binary files, I'll leave that to the reader unless someone can provide me with the the source code or an appropriate disassembler. But we can still learn a lot by listening, and even BASIC is usually fast enough for the kind of control we need over (up to 4) oscillators to produce these sounds. BOINK and WILDSOUND.DMO are in fact rather simple programs from the standpoint that each essentially deals with one sound effect at a time. BOINK's bounce sound was originally a careful audio synthesis, but I'll bet that some clever hacker found the WILDSND bark by accident while experimenting with POKEY, and was then diligent enough to adapt it further.

If anyone knows more about these programs, send info to this newsletter or put it on HK2 - I'll pass it along in future articles with credit where due.

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PLAYER MISSILE GRAPHICS SIMPLIFIED

By: Eric Brodeur

PM graphics are not all that hard to program once you find the right tutorials and information to aid you. In this article I won't show you how to program PMs but I will give you some hints at programming them and where to find good info on them.

WHERE TO FIND TUTORIALS

Magazine articles from either Antic or Analog often have valuable information; lately, however, the articles have been demonstrating quite complex techniques. For down-to-earth tutorials the best place to look is at the Compute! series of books. I haven't that much experience with any books from Dr. Wacko or Chris Crawford so I can't comment on them.

Compute! has many books for the Atari 8-bit PC's, and the ones to check are the "Compute's! First, Second, Third, Book of Atari". This set of books has general information about the Atari covering a large span. Compute's "First Book of Atari" has PM info in it; the article covers PMs in general, the "no-frills, standard way". If you want the fundamentals of PM programming, this article should be read. The routines presented, however, are in BASIC and perform very slowly.

The other book to check out is: Compute's! "Second Book of Atari Graphics". The article is easy to read and understandable for the beginner, yet the routines presented are more advanced than the standard BASIC code. The neat thing, though, is that it shows you a way to quickly move PMs both horizontally and vertically (the latter is very slow using standard BASIC code). It isn't easy to explain here, but once you read the articles your confusion should be cleared up.

TIPS

I presume you've read the two articles from the Compute! books, if you haven't then I suggest you do so. (If you do not own the books I'm sure the club library has them available.)

In the standard way of PM programming you must POKE in the values of the player/missile shape. This is extremely slow and tedious (as seen in the first article you read). In the article from Compute's! "Atari Graphics" book a technique of moving players using strings is presented. This lets you quickly move PMs, but reading the data into the strings is once again slow.

All the program is doing, however, is READING the values from a DATA statement and putting the CHR\$ of it into the string. To see this, PRINT the PM string onto the screen (i.e.: PRINT PM\$(Return)); you should see ATASCII characters. What you could do is assign those characters into the string by surrounding them with quotes.

Eg: 10 MAN\$="AgRhu"

would substitute:

```
10 FOR I=1 TO 5:READ A:MAN$(I,I)=CHR$(A):NEXT I
20 DATA 65,103,82,104,117
```

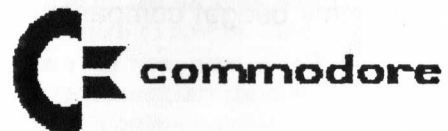
The first method is compact, saves memory space and fast. The second method uses more memory, is quite long, and is very slow. A way to compare speed is to use each of these methods on a long list of PM data (you won't even need a stop-watch to compare speed).

If you can't understand any of what I've said, don't worry. You'll pick it up; just sit down and re-read the articles (especially the one in the "Second Book of Atari Graphics") and my own (which you are now reading). If you're still confused then get in touch with me through the club's BBS or see me in person at a meeting. If you're one of the lucky persons who have understood what I've said then great! Now take that new-found knowledge and put it to good use!

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PANASONIC KX-P1091

Hardware Review by Robert MacGregor

First I would like to express thanks to Tom Geller for the excellent work he did on compiling the information on the various types of printers several months ago. But to my disappointment he left out what I think is one of the best printers for the home and office: the Panasonic KX-1091.

When I sold my Epson RX-80 I wanted a printer with a good near letter quality mode which would do graphics. I had seen the Epson LX-80 and had liked what I saw. Impressive printing and impressive graphics. I determined to purchase one of these printers. About that time there was a computer fair in Willow Grove. I went there with the intent to buy the LX. At the show one of the vendors had both the LX and the 1091. I told him I wanted to buy the LX and he said for the \$10 extra the 1091 was a better buy. After getting his promise that I could return the 1091 if it wasn't comparable to the LX for the LX (and my \$10) I took my new printer home. Upon the unveiling I was glad I had made my choice.

ADVANTAGES

- 1 It comes with a standard adjustable tractor and friction drive.
- 2 Three fonts selectable from the printer. Standard, Near Letter Quality and Proportional.
- 3 A 1K buffer standard.
- 4 Cartridge based printer ribbon easily changeable (it is available in different colors) priced between \$5 to \$12. The cartridge has a "second life tab" which will add more ink to the ribbon when the print is fading. (One problem is that the ink tends to smear on multi-striking after the tab has been pushed.) It still is great for those listing.
- 5 Good speed for the price. It is rated at 120 cps in both draft-pica and draft-elite. (NLQ 22 cps)
- 6 Bi-directional printing
- 7 Eight international character sets plus the IBM character sets. Also can do screen dumps, works well with the Print Shop, and other graphics programs.

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- 8 Easy access to the dip switches. You do not need to remove the cover to set your switches.
- 9 Reasonable priced. The printer is sold from \$230-\$280.

DISADVANTAGES

- 1 It is not 100% Epson compatible. However, I have not run a program which has not worked yet.
- 2 The documentation is adequate but should have a tutorial.

Needless to say I did not take my 1091 back an am pleased the salesman talked me into bringing home the Panasonic KX-P1091.

--> HELP WANTED <--

Our club needs a librarian. This is an E-Board position. We're also in need of a person to help with the paper library. Please call the HOTLINE at 837-1046 if you want more information.

D.E.G.A.S.

A 16-bit review by Gunther Kurrash

DEGAS (Design Entertainment Graphics Art System) is a very fine drawing program for the ST line of computers.

First of all it will run on STs with either a monochrome or color monitor. With an RGB color monitor drawings can be made in both low or medium resolution modes (resolution must be selected from the gem desktop before the program is loaded). A palette of 4 or 16 colors is available depending upon the resolution.

Everything is mouse driven, for example clicking on a certain color highlights that color or clicking on a menu option performs that function. Drawing is done with the mouse using the current drawing tip. There is a selection of 16 tips plus you can make your own. There are over 30 fill patterns to choose from plus you can design your own and save them to disk for future use.

Several different text fonts make it very simple to add text to your picture. All you have to do is decide which font you want to use and type your message, then drag the text to any part of the screen you wish. It's that simple! A circle function produces any circular or elliptical shape. BOX creates any square or rectangle. With FILL any open area can be filled in with the current fill pattern. LINE draws a straight line between any two points. An option to draw rays allows the artist to draw many lines with one common end point. MOVE will move a section of the screen to any other section of the screen. COPY will copy a section of your work to another part of the screen.

All in all DEGAS is an excellent program to work with and is well worth the investment.

P.S. Keep an eye out for DEGAS Elite, it will have many new features and will be available soon.

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ST COMMUNICATIONS PART 2

16-bit Software Review
by Ralph Fenner

ST-Talk 1.1

Quantum Microsystems Inc. - \$17.95

At \$17.95 ST-Talk is probably one of the best bargains in telecommunications software for the ST computer. But don't let the low list price fool you. This program is anything but bare bones. It's powerful enough to handle most BBS and Service communications. It's a must for beginning modem users.

The program is easy to use. Most of its major functions are activated from the function keys.

The main window has a status line at the top showing time, baud rate, printer status, and capture buffer status. Underneath this is a message and prompt line. This line prompts you from within the various functions. Next is the main terminal screen which consists of 21 lines. On the bottom is the type ahead line. If turned on, it allows you to type a whole line before it's sent.

Now for some features. The program supports the two most popular terminal translations for an Atari user. VT-52 and Atari XE. These will allow you to access both 16 bit and 8 bit BBS's. The XE mode will display inverse but no control characters.

Xmodem upload and download, as well as ASCII capture and upload are supported. Also included are DOS commands, a fine scrolling mode, 26 number autodial menu, and a help screen which displays all commands by pressing help. The only feature this program lacks is macro capabilities.

Sound like a lot for \$17.95 list? You're right it is!

MI-Term 4.0
MichTron Inc. - \$49.95

The only thing I like better than receiving a really great piece of software to review, is to see a horrible piece of software, that I had fed to the circular software monster on the floor, make a complete turnaround in a new revision.

MI-Term is just such a piece of software. I don't want to dwell too long on the old version. Its biggest problem was receiving at 1200 baud and displaying at about half that speed. This coupled with a bizarre dialing setup and some other problems put this program on my low^&* list.

Well I'm happy to report that all is now well in MichTron land. The new 4.0 revision not only fixes all the above problems but includes one of the easiest to use macro systems I've seen to date. As an added bonus to users of the old version. They have included a conversion program that converts your old macros to the new format. If you have the old version of MI-Term and haven't yet sent in for the new version 4.0, do yourself a favor, put this newsletter down and do it now! I'll wait.

Now lets take a closer look. The program functions from one main GEM screen. The top line holds all the drop down menus. These include:

File - Options for Capture Buffer Filenames.

Presets - Holds functions for Macros

Upload - Upload Functions

Download - Download Functions

Options - Holds RS 232 & Program settings

Moving down the screen, the next line is the Status Line. This displays current RS 232 settings, shows on/off for Printer, Echo, Filter, and Buffer, Line Feed status, and finally a connect time clock.

After the Status Line is the main screen which consists of 21 lines. And finally the last line is a sliding bar graph showing the amount of information currently received into the Capture Buffer. It also shows the current capture filename.

The programs features include 26 Macro Keys (Alt A to Z) This is one of the easiest macros to setup I've seen to date! File Transfers supported are Xmodem, DFT, and five different types of ASCII uploading. The ASCII uploading protocols are fully editable. While transferring in Xmodem and DFT the program tracks and displays percentage of error sectors. The main screen can be used with a typeahead window, nice for chatting or conferences.

The program works well. I personally like their transfer section. Before buying make sure you're getting version 4.0.

→ MEETING DATES ←

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TO PIRATE OR NOT TO PIRATE

By Eric Brodeur

No, this isn't an article about the morals of pirating such as the many we've seen over the years. Instead I intend to present to you a side of pirating that you may or may not have thought of. Before I continue: Anything I present to you is true but I don't presume anyone (or myself) to be a pirate, physically own pirated software, or encourage/condone pirates.

I'm sure we all have our opinion of pirating and have read countless essays about passing around copied software (which IS illegal) and its harms. The latest of these essays is both in Antic and ANALOG from a few months ago. Both writers bring up a good point: If we continue to pirate software we will eventually kill the 8-bit software market. I think what they say is honest and truthful and is good advice to follow; however, the question that immediately pops into my head is this: what software market?

Yes, there IS a lot of software out for the Atari 8-bits but where is it? There isn't much of it in the Allentown area, we have to go to Stroudsburg and see the Gemini Enterprises store to see a good Atari selection. I don't know if any of you readers have noticed but how many stores do you know of with a GOOD software selection? (No, Commodore doesn't count.)

I recently went to Electronics Boutique in Montgomeryville; don't waste your time on a trip up there. The Atari software they have there is an embarrassment. Sure, they have Atari Writer Plus, Print Shop, Planetarium, and Silent Butler but that's the extent of current software they stock. Now I walk on over to the Commodore side and I find the whole wall covered with software (compared to a small corner of Atari stuff). Here is any game you could possibly want, even the very new programs (and then some); to name a few: Commando, World Championship Karate, Hacker II, AcroJet, Top Gunner, Kung-Fu Master, Flight Simulator Scenery disks, etc. The latest in utility programs is here also such as the Print Shop Companion. Rather disgusted, I walk out and go home.

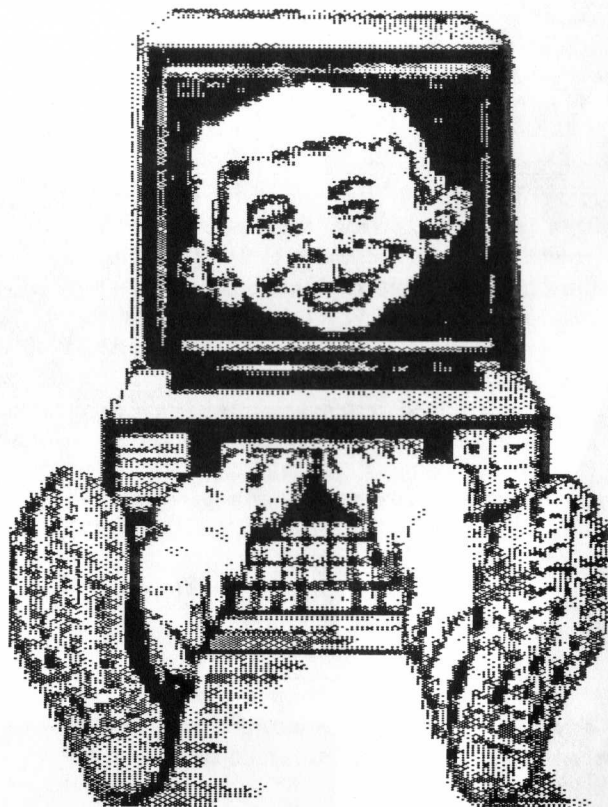
On the way home I realize: at least half of that "Commodore Only" software I've seen for the Atari. Do you know where? BBS's, that's where. If BBSs sold software we would have EVERY new title out. Here's some examples of Atari software you didn't think was out but is (on a BBS though): Commando, Raid Over Moscow, numerous karate/kung-fu games, Xevious, Alleycat, Countdown, etc., just to name a few. All that software you've ever seen advertised is here for the taking, but you'll never see it in stores; why? I don't know.

Did you know that Ball Blazer and Rescue On Fractalus were out even before the public knew about them? I did. I was one of the first people to actually see them, and too bad they were pirated.

But, following the good advice of ANALOG and Antic, I went out to look for a game I wanted to buy. Into the store I went with cash in-hand; out of the store I went with cash in-hand (needless to say, the game wasn't there for the Atari). Here's the kicker: I couldn't BUY the game, but I could go onto a BBS and download the silly thing for nothing. Tell me, does that make any sense?

Maybe a reason why people are pirating is because the software they want isn't out in the stores; when the person does see it he takes the first chance he can to get it (whether it be legal or not). Otherwise, he can wait and wait with money in hand to buy it, but the product never gets released or hits the stores. So then he logs onto a BBS and downloads the game like he should have three months ago when he first saw it.

Once again, I totally agree with Antic's and ANALOG's ideas to buy software instead of pirating it, but I can't do that until I see it in a store to buy. Take for example the helicopter simulation called Super Huey. ANALOG said an Atari version was out months ago; I have yet to see it. If I do happen to see it in the very, very near future I'll buy it. But then again, if I see it on a BBS sooner, who knows...



THE 1050 DUPLICATOR

An 8-bit Hardware Review
by Bob Tune

What It Is:

The 1050 Duplicator is a printed circuit board containing a 6502 microprocessor, 4K of RAM and various support chips. There is a gold-plated connector on the bottom of the board which plugs into the chip socket you remove the 6507 chip from. You also have to remove the OS chip.

What It does:

If you read the bright yellow ads, you'll see that it's "The only disk based backup system you'll ever need." as well as "The most powerful... on the market today".

If you phone Duplication Technology as I did prior to purchasing my "Dup", you may get the same information I did. On talking to Mr. Gardner (the founder of D.T. and creator of the "Dup") I "learned" that the 1050 "Dup" can now copy anything on the market except those few programs on the market which use "weak sectoring". They do however have a modification one could make to their 1050 which will let it do those also. In short, I will be able to back up all my software.

Upon receiving my duplicator I found that in reality, the 1050 Duplicator can copy very little. They sent no "weak sector" mod as promised. The "slow mod" which comes with the unit and slows down the drive to copy track which has more than 19 sectors works, but the software I have which uses it (Silent Service) also uses "Skew Alignment" which the Duplicator does NOT do, hence the backup doesn't work. There's a little blurb in the manual which admits the software is weak, so what happened to the "Right now can copy anything except..."??? You also will find that if your 1050 like many 1050's makes a grinding noise on powerup, it will turn into a much longer, worse sounding noise. Even after a ROM & software change I still have to "Deprogram" my drive to run most software. Also I will occasionally get a "BOOT ERROR" message while trying to load in some software (for no apparent reason). I have called many times since my purchase about the software upgrade I was to receive "in 30 days" and each time have gotten the same line... "give us three more weeks". It's been a long time.

My Recommendations:

DO NOT BUY THIS PRODUCT I At least not until you hear from myself or another owner that the problems have been

fixed. Do not trust someone trying to sell you a product to tell you the truth. He will lie to make the sale. If you order something which doesn't work as advertised, RETURN IT IMMEDIATELY.



TREASURER'S REPORT

INCOME

JUNE 1986 -- AUGUST 1986

AUCTION (ST)-----	150.00
DISK SALES-----	474.00
MEMBERSHIP-----	475.00
NEWSLETTER ADS-----	232.50
RAFFLE-----	301.00
VENDOR FEE-----	8.00
	<u>\$1640.50</u>

EXPENSES

JUNE 1986 -- AUGUST 1986

CHECKING ACCOUNT----	18.33
CLUB BBS'S-----	107.17
HOT LINE-----	67.00
LIBRARY-----	284.18
MEETING EXPENSES----	34.65
MEETING HALL-----	250.00
MEMBERSHIP-----	23.19
MISC. EXPENSES-----	64.00
NEWSLETTER POSTAGE--	223.75
NEWSLETTER-----	382.80
PRESIDENT-----	15.43
PROMOTION-----	10.00
RAFLE-----	47.59
SPECIAL PROJECTS---	45.43
VICE PRESIDENT-----	9.53
	<u>\$1583.05</u>

ABE's ACEs

Allentown Bethlehem Easton's Atari Computer Enthusiasts is an independent user group organized and run by owners of Atari Computers. Atari is a trademark of Atari Corp.; all references should be so noted.

If you would like more information about ABE's ACEs, write us at the club's address or call the club HOTLINE at the number listed on this page.

NEWSLETTER

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Submissions to the newsletter may be made via the HELP KEY II, at the general meetings, or transmitted directly to the editor at 300 or 1200 baud. Call the editor for more information.

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GENE CELEBUSKI and BOB BICKERT

SPECIAL PROJECTS

RALPH FENNER------(215) 868-6459

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(215) 837-6799

VICE-PRESIDENT-----LEON BONAM
(215) 266-1521

SECRETARY-----TOM BURKE
(215) 368-9339

TREASURER-----JOHN SLABY
(215) 252-1991

MEMBERSHIP-----FRANK McGRATH
(215) 258-4572

LIBRARIAN-----Position Open

NEWSLETTER-----DENNIS JOHN
(215) 759-8151

LIBRARY STAFF

8-BIT DISKS-----JOHN DOUGLAS
16-BIT DISKS-----FRED HAWKINS

IMPORTANT CLUB PHONE NUMBERS

HELP KEY II BBS------(215) 759-2683
HOTLINE (VOICE)------(215) 837-1046

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