May 23rd Meeting!

The May 23rd meeting will feature the annual, widely popular GCACE Swap and Shop. Gather up all the hardware, software and books that you don't need and/or use anymore and bring it to the meeting to fill your pockets with filthy lucre. Don't dare miss this meeting, whether you are buying or selling!

Inside.

ATARI® NEWS AND RUMOURS

by Rowland Grant

*T*hings have been very quiet at Atari over the last two months. And it's just as well too. The financial report for the last three months of 1995 revealed a dismal return in spite of Ted Hoff's efforts. Net sales were only $2.8 million compared to $14.4 million for the same period last year. This added up to a net loss of $27.7 million. All reports seemed to indicate that the Jaguar was selling well in the holiday season. Of course the distribution was poor, however Atari did report that over 150 thousand Jaguar units were sold in 1995. Assuming this is true, the low net sales dollar figure can only be explained if the Jaguar consoles were selling far below cost. Also many Jaguar games, even fairly recent ones, were marked down. Atari can't stay in the video game business that way, and it's not.

The financial report for the whole year was no more encouraging. Net sales for 1995 were $14.6 million, compared to $38.7 million in 1994. The net loss for 1995 was $49.6 million. Part of the losses over the years has accumulated. While Atari brags that it has $50 million in cash, some of which it has loaned to JTS, there is an overhang of debt. I understand that Atari has issued $45 million in bonds which are due in 1998. Atari also owes about $20 million to various banks. There are other liabilities, such as litigation and potential litigation. Atari is suing Phillips, its CD-ROM supplier, for breach of contract etc. because Phillips failed to deliver. Atari is also suing Probe Entertainment and Acclaim Entertainment for breach of contract, possibly over the Jaguar version of Mortal Kombat III that never appeared. When the merger with JTS is completed, Atari's debt will be added to the debt of JTS. If Atari had persisted further with the Jaguar and video games, it would have faced bankruptcy before the end of 1996. The merger has avoided that, at least for the time being.

Ted Hoff left Atari in January. He has now joined Sega of America as senior vice president, sales and marketing services. He has his work cut out for him. The whole video game industry has experienced a severe decline, at least in North America. Revenue for the whole industry dropped 46 percent to around $3 billion. And much of that was earned by the older Sega and Nintendo consoles and games. Sega

GCACE EXECUTIVE

President: Gordon Hooper   475-0857
E-Mail: ua558@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

Vice President: John Picken   598-2386

Secretary: Rowland Grant   598-3661

Treasurer: John Towler   382-5083
E-Mail: j.towlerl@genie.geis.com

Editor: Gordon Hooper   475-0857

ST Librarian: Ted Skrecky   598-6173
E-Mail: ud264@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

8-Bit Librarian: Noel Black   388-4527
E-Mail: uy390@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

BBS Sysop: Bob Nex   642-6358

Director: George Rose   652-0572

Director: Craig Carmichael   384-0499
E-Mail: omen@islandnet.com

CREDITS

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 300 8-bit public domain disks and 190 ST disks and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (604) 642-6795.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

Some members have been phoning to ask when their membersips are due. Well, wonder no longer. The expiry date of your membership is found on the mailing label of the newsletter. Now there are no excuses for paying your dues late, Bob Nex.

Speaking of Sysop Bob, he tells me that William Moeller of the Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville Atari club, better known as Sysop Willy, has had to shut down his BBS. Willy unfortunately is out of work, hope he gets back to work soon. Bob will try to arrange for another board to replace it so as to keep the Pothole in the loop of message bases which are netted to the USA and Europe.

FOR HELP CALL:

General Information:	Gord Hooper	475-0857
8-Bit:	John Picken	598-2386
	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Bob Nex	642-6358
	Bob Etheridge	479-7271
Word Processing:	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Gord Hooper	475-0857
	John Picken	598-2386
Disk Compression:	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
	John Picken	598-2386
Printers:	John Picken	598-2386
Desktop Publishing:	Gord Hooper	475-0857
Telecommunication:	Bob Nex	642-6358
	John Picken	598-2386
Programming:	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Bob Nex (Action)	642-6358
	John Picken (Machine)	598-2386
MIDI:	John Towler (ST)	382-5083
Hardware, Repairs & Sales:	Steve Lemmen	595-7811
Games:	Ted Skrecky	598-6173

PEEKing Around

by Gordon F Hooper

I'M ALWAYS RIGHT AND EVERYBODY ELSE IS ALWAYS WRONG! WHATS TO ARGUE ABOUT ?!
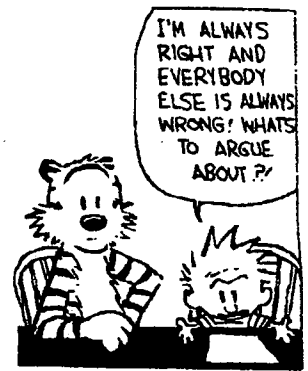
... JOHN TOWLER will receive a prize of a collection of empty vodka bottles for suggesting that I name this column PEEKing Through in honour of the holes in TED SKRECKY's running shoes that he wore at the April executive meeting. Ted mentioned that his brother DOUG recently brought him two more pair of used runners from Vancouver, so Ted figures that should last him the rest of his life. Ted will no doubt spend all the money he saves from not buying footwear on computer games. He now has the largest collection of orphan computers and game machines on Vancouver Island. His condo is overflowing with an 800 XL, 130 XE, ST, Mega ST, Amiga, Commodore 64 and a Jaguar ... I was gratified to see that people actuallu read this column. After subtly hinting last issue that I needed more articles from ALEX CHAMBERLAIN in Portland, he left me e-mail saying he would get right on it. He came through, too. His article is in this issue...John Towler also recently screwed Atari Corporation by only giving them $250 US for a TT030. After Atari recently invested in JTS, who manufacture hard drives, they moved their offices and conse-

quently cleaned out their storeroom, which was chock full of used equipment. The sale was announced on the Internet and received lots of attention from Atari aficionados around the world. I guess John shouldn't feel too bad. It wouldn't be the first time (or the last, either) that Atari lost money ... NOEL BLACK has had some health problems lately, but we were glad to see he felt well enough to come to the May executive meeting. Lucky for him, we had fascinating conversations about condos, tar and gravel roofing systems, abstract mathematics, cats and Big Brother watching all us citizens with computers. We did manage to fit some GCACE business into our ramblings ... DOMINIQUE THEVENIN managed to find enough money up in Qualicum Beach to send us $25 to renew. He mentioned in his letter that he has managed to get the Internet Web browser WW113 working. He is willing to help other members get this running so you can browse the Web and see all the colour graphics on it ... GEORGE DERESE has had to move to Vancouver for work. We hope all is going well with you, George ... STEVE LEMMEN bought a new condo in the development under construc-

tion that had fire damage recently. Unfortunately, the deal for his old house had been completed, so he has to move out. He will be staying with his brother until August, but don't worry. He will continue to do repairs for anyone that needs them ... CRAIG CARMICHAEL let slip that he doesn't spend all his time programming OASES (formerly OMEn). He also finds time to peruse the Monday Magazine personals ... If you can't get hold of me at 475-0857 to spill the beans on fellow GCACE members, try looking me up in the Monday personals under "Dirty Old Men Seeking Anything"

Comdex Pacrim Report

by Doug Skrecky

I showed up at Canada Place with my free pass to Comdex. Go downstairs young man they said and REGISTER! Half an hour later, after emerging from the long registration line up, I clutched my newly minted plastic pass and entered into the land of Comdex. I noticed that most people's passes seemed to indicate they were presidents and other high mucky mucks. With my own occupation being merely computer operator aka tape ape I felt fortunate that nobody asked me to carry their luggage.

*T*he first thing I noticed was a video displaying all of Soft Images greatest computer graphics hits from movies & commercials - totally mind blowing stuff - I wanted a copy. Another booth featured HD floppy disks on sale for just 36 cents a disk. This would have been a great deal

except my old computer only had a DD drive. I also saw CD software going for just $15/disk. Each of these CDs had 600 megabytes of software on them, which is more than all of the software I owned for my computer! This would have been a great deal too, except ... for the fact that I did not own a CD drive. I saw a giant computer monitor going for the low, low price of just $17,000. I could just see it replacing the couch in my living room. Reluctantly I had to pass this bargain up as well.

I had an opportunity to get down to business. One of my pet ideas was replacing tapes with CDs for data storage at work. A cartridge holding 10 CDs is the same size as a tape and holds 10 times as much data. All of my company's tape drives could be replaced by a single automated CD library, which I could then operate with little effort remotely from the Florida beaches. (sigh) I

found out this was not to be - all of the recordable CD drives used only one CD at a time and took over an hour to record on even this! I was stuck with tapes - bye, bye Florida beaches.

*P*erhaps the most interesting experience at Comdex for me was trying out a special pair of 3D glasses which added a third dimension when you looked at a monitor. I briefly played a shoot-em-up-game while wearing these and it was obvious that 3D games were going to be the wave of the future.

*T*he last thing I noticed was that Computer Associates was offering snazzy aluminum shopping bags for free. I did not leave Comdex empty handed.

has not fared too well with its new Saturn console or its 32X system upgrade. Over the last three years about 2.5 million new generation game consoles have been sold in North America. Spread over four companies, this has not yielded much profit. Nintendo is not one of the four. The release date of the new Nintendo game system, based on Silicon Graphics technology, has been postponed a couple of times already. While Nintendo is still making big profits selling software for its older systems, it can afford to wait. But not for long. One large developer of cartridge games on the older systems has seen its sales drop to almost half. It is reorganising to produce games on CD ROM for computers and the newer game systems.

Recent reports confirm that all brands of video game consoles are still not selling very well. Few stores are carrying the Jaguar and even fewer of these are bringing in the latest games. For two weeks in March, Atari dropped the price of a Jaguar console to $50 (US). One store was reported to be selling Jaguars at $35, and the Jaguar CD unit was $110. Many games were also marked down to as low as $5. Some games were bundled with the consoles. A Jaguar unit with two games (Doom and Alien vs Predator) was selling for $60. This is less that the original list price of either one of the games. From all reports, the marked down Jaguars sold well. This helped clear inventory. Someone reported that Atari's warehouse is full of Jaguar consoles, CD units and other hardware. The sale was supposed to "build our user base" according to Don Thomas at Atari. It is true that a new Jaguar owner is more likely to buy a few more games. And new Jaguar games are being released.

In March, Atari released Attack of the Mutant Penguins. In April, Fight for Life appeared. This game was to be released a year ago. But demos were strongly criticised as having poor graphics. So Fight for Life was redone, and almost dropped again. But at the last minute it was finished. The graphics have been reported as being very good, and the game is above average overall. These two games were among those that have been ready for some time. Atari is trying to keep a steady flow of games, averag-

ing one a month. New games under contract are also being completed. Eclipse has finished Iron Soldier 2 and has sent it to Atari for testing. Breakout 2000 has been completed also. There may be one or two other games, but it seems that all other development contracts are being cancelled. The latest game releases demonstrate the impressive power of the Jaguar. Game developers have finally mastered the Jaguar platform. Too late alas.

The much anticipated Jaguar game Phase Zero will not be completed. Atari requested that Hyper Image (the developer) stop development. Hyper Image report that they hadn't received any payment on the game since August 1995, but continued development until December. Hyper Image is considering reworking the Phase Zero game to run under Windows. JV Enterprises completed the role playing game Towers II. This game was submitted to Atari last year and received an outstanding evaluation. Then Atari decided not to publish the game. JV Enterprises found a financial backer and was getting ready to publish the game when Atari announced its merger with JTS. The backer decided that there was no more future in Atari games and withdrew. Now Telegames is interested in Towers II. Another popular game, Team 17's "Worms", is nearing completion for the Jaguar (that's what they say on the Worm Wide web). If all goes according to plan, Ocean will publish this game. BattleSphere is another game that does not need the support of Atari. The publisher 4Play has set up its own manufacturing plans. According to one of the programmers, BattleSphere is almost finished.

When Atari moved to its new offices it also moved to a new warehouse. A lot of used equipment had to be disposed of. This was advertised and sold over the internet. Among the surplus were ten Jaguar kiosks that normally turn up at trade shows. But Atari may not be attending any more of those. Atari will not participate in the E3 industry show this year. The E3 is now the main trade show for the video game in the US. Atari's Don Thomas says that "... it costs many hundreds of thousands to take part in it. We're opting to put that money in video game development ... " I gather that the money is needed to pay off games nearing completion. Don gives his address as "Atari Interactive", which I assume will be the name of the game division of JTS. It may be that games will dribble out of this division for awhile yet. It has been suggested that the maintenance of a games division may be a

legal requirement during the first two years of the merger. I don't think that they could make the Jaguar last that long, but they could make a few PC games. The PC version of Tempest 2000 has been released and has been seen in various outlets.

There are rumours that 3DO will cease to support its current M1 console. Sales have been poor. It will shift support to the M2 system which Matsushita has yet to release. And in spite of claims to the contrary, the Jaguar is being phased out too. Many dealers have sensed this, and some major outlets have decided to drop Atari products. For instance, there are rumours that Babbages and Elbows will stop selling the Jaguar this summer. Electronic Boutique seems to be in the process of dropping Atari products now. In Germany, the distributor for the Jaguar is ABC Spielspass/Funsoft, and it stopped carrying dropped Atari products a few weeks ago. German dealers will have to get stock from Britain. As with Atari computers, mail order may soon be the only source of Jaguar games and equipment. In our part of the world, this has been true for awhile.

I understand that Atari had to file an application for the merger with JTS. This is called Form 10-K and Atari filed it on April 11th. It outlined Atari's affairs for the last year. They had to tell the truth. The report confirmed most of the rumours and observations made over the last six months. For instance, Atari placed no manufacturing orders for Jaguar game consoles since mid-1995, and does not intend to manufacture any more. Atari has a substantial inventory for which there are no orders. So Atari is test marketing the Jaguar at various prices and packaging in an attempt to sell its inventory. Atari expects sales to continue to decline. In the report, Atari admitted that its competitors had greater engineering, marketing and financial resources, and some had more experience and expertise in game console technology. Seems like they had to give an excuse for getting out of the business. Atari will continue to develop a very limited number of Jaguar software titles, and will port some of the existing titles over to the PC platform. At the end of March, Atari had 25 employees in the U.S. There were five in product development, twelve in marketing, sales and distribution, two in purchasing and six in general management.

In the meantime Atari's stock has

continued to rise, going above $6 recently. That's a four-fold increase in as many months. Atari's share holders should be happy, especially the Tramiels. There are rumours that three of the Tramiels will sit on the JTS board when the merger is completed. While the original company name (JTS) meant Jugi Tandon Systems, it could also stand for Jack Tramiel and Sons. Watch out Jugi!

Watch out, Jugi!
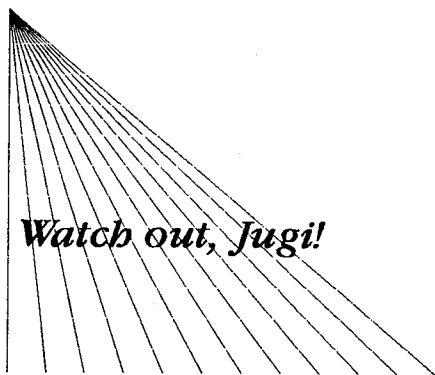
Skrecky Clippings

*D*oug Skrecky continues to clip amusing things from the Vancouver news media to send to brother Ted, who passes them on to your humble editor Doug works as a "tape ape". for the telephone company. His job consists of changing tapes when the mainframe computer tells him to. He took the time to write a poem describing his job and made the mistake of allowing it to end up in my hands. He also sent a clipping concerning vodka consumption in Russia, knowing I have been known to indulge occasionally in the products of the distillers art.. I would like to state for the record that I am only half Russian

Hard Workin'

It was a hard days night
much to our delight
We were sleeping a lot
there was not much work
A tape mount came up
So we couldn't sup
The autoloader worked
so the bottle uncorked
We sat on our chairs
munched our chocolate Eclairs
Only the stupid people rob banks
The smart ones mount tapes

Vodka Consumption In Russia

A recent presidential decree attempts to impose order in Russia's liquor market through higher prices and stiffer customs control.

A study by the independent Centre for Alcohol Policy found that Russian men are among the heaviest drinkers in the world. Russian men consume on average 170 half-litre bottles of vodka annually, the study said. Russian women drink about one-tenth as much vodka as men.

ST NEWS

MGI Buys Calamus

by Rowland Grant

*J*ust as it was completing its first year, Atari World was forced to suspend publication. The publisher, Specialist Magazines, has been placed in receivership. Compo UK, a major software and hardware distributor serving ST/Falcon users has also gone into receivership. Apparently Specialist Magazines is a subsidiary of Compo UK. So when Compo went down, it took Atari World with it. There has been talk of reviving Atari World. There are rumours that Karl Brandt of Systems Solutions, with other Atari dealers is considering the purchase of Atari World. But according to Andrew Wright, the ex-editor of Atari World, Specialist Magazines owes a lot of money, and writers haven't been paid. This might make the purchase of Atari World unattractive. So, for the time being, ST Format is the surviving glossy ST magazine in Britain, and maybe the world. Frank Charlton of ST Format says that the

magazine has received a budget for one year from the publisher, Future Publications. If ST Format is to continue beyond the year, it must prove to Future that it is still viable.

The Falcon computer is still a viable platform, thanks to C-Lab. The new C-Lab Falcon Mark X is housed in a case that allows considerable expansion. The internal SCSI circuitry allows for high capacity hard drives and CD ROM drives. All that is needed to bring the Falcon up to date is a faster CPU. These are available at a price. From Black Scorpion in Germany we have Afterburner040. This is a plug-in board for the Falcon that contains a Motorola 68040 running at 32/64MHz, along with 72 pin SIMM sockets for memory expansion up to 128MB of fast RAM. This is not cheap (about $970 US from Toad), although I notice that it is no more expensive than comparable upgrades for older Apple Mac-

intosh computers. Afterburner is available in Canada from Computer Direct in Edmonton and Pro-STar Computer Services in Winnipeg.

Now Wizztronics in the US is offering a similar product called the Barracuda 040. It is available in April they say. I hope that I'm not describing vapourware again. Anyway, the Barracuda uses a 33 MHz Motorola 68040, but the RAM expansion is on a separate board. The combination CPU and RAM board total $1100 (US). The Barracuda 040 had been held up because it needed a modified TOS 4.0x, and Atari was reluctant to allow Wizztronics to take liberties with TOS. Now there are rumours that Wizztronics has bought the rights to the whole line of Atari's TOS-GEM computers. Some time ago Wizztronics talked about making new TOS computers based on the Motorola Power PC. With the rights to TOS, it's possible. I understand that Wizztronics was

MagiCMac - Does It Work?

by Alex Chamberlain

*M*ore and more Atari users are interested in moving into the mainstream of the computing world by buying a Windows PC or a Macintosh, but are held back by the frustrating prospect of having to purchase and learn all new software. Atari software developers have responded by developing software which allows the use of ST programs on a new machine. One such program is MagiCMac from Application Systems Heidelberg. For US$219 it allows a Macintosh to run the majority of 16-bit Atari software.

Having used both the Macintosh and the Atari since their introductions in the mid-'80s, I feel I have a unique perspective on this exciting new product. I'll start with a technical explanation of the program; then describe my experiences using it on a Macintosh Quadra 630 for the past few months; and lastly consider whether it's worth the price.

The Gory Details

Programs that enable one computer to run software designed for another are commonly called "emulators." You may have heard the term but not understood quite what it meant. Basically, an emulator provides a means of translation between the instruction sets of different CPU chips. Like a human translator, it converts one form of machine language, the native language of the computer, into another. For example, Gemulator, a popular ST emulator for Windows PCs, converts the Motorola 68000 machine language in which ST software is written into the completely different language spoken by the Intel 80x86 chip family.

If you are familiar with the Macintosh hardware you may already be asking why this kind of translation is necessary to run ST software on a Macintosh. It's not! After all, Macintosh computers use the same 680x0-family CPUs as the ST, TT, and Falcon. This is exactly what the programmers of MagiCMac thought. The resulting program is __not__, strictly speaking, an emulator. Since no translation of CPU instructions is necessary, ST software runs much faster on a Macintosh under MagiCMac than on a PC clone of equivalent power. The MagiCMac pro-

gram provides simply an operating environment, compatible with TOS, within which ST programs can run without interference from the Macintosh Operating System or other Mac programs.

In Real Life

Enough techie talk. Does it work? The short answer is yes--it works, and it works very well. MagiCMac comes on one disk and installs in just a few minutes, taking up about 3 Mb of the Macintosh's hard drive. Starting the MagiCMac application causes the Mac desktop to disappear, replaced by the familiar parade of AUTO programs' startup messages up the left half of the screen. In a few more seconds the EASE desktop appears. This is a replacement desktop program similar to the NewDesk found in TOS 2.06 and later versions.

From here on you can use the Macintosh just like a very fast ST, with just a few differences due to the idiosyncracies of the Mac hardware: MagiCMac maps special ST keys to their closest equivalents on the Apple keyboard; emulates the right mouse button with a key combination, since most Mac mice have only one button; and provides another key combination to eject disks, since Mac floppy drives have no eject button.

As far as compatibility goes, any well-written Atari software should run fine on MagiCMac. What does "well-written" mean? Mostly, that the program uses the GEM interface--it puts all of its output in windows and uses ordinary drop-down menus and icons. So practically all Atari software written in the past few years should work. The big exception is software written specifically for the Falcon, using its special video modes or the DSP chip: neither of these things can be emulated by MagiCMac. Also, although MagiCMac provides a means to run character-based programs (those with a ".TOS" or ".TTP" extension) by isolating them in a special window, I have found that a number of older ".TOS" programs will not run properly in this way.

And, of course, most MIDI software will not run, since the Mac lacks the Atari's built-in MIDI ports. However, the majority of popular software __does__ run. I use PageStream, Everest, and IdeaList regularly

(all of which are good examples of well-behaved GEM-based programs, by the way). Other MagiCMac users on Usenet have reported good results with these popular programs: Da's Vector, Papyrus, AtariWorks, ImageCopy, Phoenix, TrueImage, and CalamusSL.

Like its sibling, the TOS replacement MagiC, MagiCMac provides a multitasking environment--meaning several Atari programs can be run simultaneously, as long as you have enough memory. MagiCMac is advertised as using an advanced form of "preemptive" multitasking, in which the operating system manages the distribution of RAM among the running programs, in order to minimize system crashes. Although I have no way of knowing exactly how MagiCMac works (nor would I understand it--I'm no OS designer!), it does seem more stable than most other multitasking OSs I have used.

As an informal test of its crashworthiness I tried to run a variety of old programs written specifically for the ST from the Suzy B's CD-ROM. The majority of these programs failed to run properly. In most cases, though, MagiCMac simply displayed a friendly dialog box allowing me to quit the malfunctioning program, and the other programs running at the same time continued without any problems. Occasionally a program would crash and become "stuck" in memory--in this case, I pressed Control-Alt-Escape, which brings up a list of currently running programs, and pressed Delete to "terminate" the stuck program cleanly. This last feature, called the Program Manager, is a definite advantage of MagiCMac over the Macintosh OS and Windows.

MagiCMac's advertising claims not only that it crashes less often than the Macintosh OS, but also that equivalent programs run more efficiently under MagiCMac. Again, my informal testing

bears out this claim. Modern Macintoshes are extremely fast from a hardware point of view, but are burdened by a huge, inefficient operating system, making heavy-duty software like page layout or photo retouching applications seem sluggish. MagiCMac, however, is small and efficient; also, most Atari programs are themselves written as efficiently as possible to maximize their speed on the ST's elderly 68000 CPU. The net result seems to be that equivalent software runs two to four times faster under MagiCMac than under the Mac OS. This translates into a big increase in usability--for example, the latest version of Page-Maker (the most popular Mac page-layout program) would be painfully slow on my Mac, but PageStream 2.2 (with almost all the features of PageMaker) zips along.

However, not everything is faster. Disk operations such as copying files from one folder to another are quite a bit slower with the EASE desktop than with the Macintosh Finder. A program called Kobold is supposed to speed things up, but I haven't tried it. Differences between Atari and Mac hardware create a few more potential pitfalls. Atari-formatted SCSI hard drives, such as those connected to the popular ICD AdSCSI host adapter, can be used easily with MagiCMac--you just plug them into the SCSI port on the Mac. However, there is no way to connect ASCI drives like the Megafile series (or a Mega ST's internal drive) to a Macintosh. Also, one of the strengths of MagiCMac is that you can access files on the Macintosh's hard drive with either Atari or Mac software; but Atari-formatted SCSI hard drives can only be accessed by Atari software.

Printing is another problem area. STs use a PC-type parallel interface for printers, while Macs use a serial interface much like the ST's modem port. And since Mac software must be written specifically to talk to the non-standard Mac printing system, most ST software will not work with ordinary Mac printers

-(without NVDI for MagiCMac, another extra-cost add on). The big exception is page layout programs (like PageStream and Calamus) that can output PostScript code, which most Mac laser printers can accept. The solution comes in the form of a serial-to-parallel interface cable called Power-Print--a product designed to let Mac users use cheap IBM-compatible printers, but also embraced by MagiC Mac's designers as a way to make common printers available to ST software on the Mac. I use Power-Print to connect a DECwriter 100i inkjet printer to my Mac with no problems at all. Most parallel printers will work with Pow-erPrint, except for Atari-brand laser printers (an important exception for anyone doing DTP on the Atari!).

Some would say that the number one criterion for evaluating an emulation product is its transparency--does the environment provide such a good imitation of the original that you forget you're not using the real thing? Most of the time, MagiCMac fulfills its promise of seamless Atari emulation. I am also impressed with its stable multitasking and with its integration with the Mac environment. With enough RAM, it's easy to run several Atari programs and several Mac programs at one time. MagiCMac encourages you to work in a best-of-both-worlds mixture of the Mac and Atari environments. You can work on your files with an Atari program, a Mac program, or both--using whatever tool is best for the job.

Problems and Pitfalls

I have had only a few problems with the software. The last feature mentioned, of mixing Mac and Atari programs, doesn't really work as well as it could. MagiCMac is supposed to share a clipboard between the Atari and Mac environments--for example, you should be able to open a Papyrus window, select some text, hit Control-C to copy it, switch to a Mac word processor, and hit Command-V to paste the text. In practice I found that this doesn't work consistently. (In fairness to MagiCMac,

however, the clipboard feature has never been implemented too well by Atari software.) Also, I have an odd problem with MagiCMac's mapping of the Mac's keyboard: pressing the ' (double-quote) key produces an @ (at sign). David Troy of Toad Computers suggested that my AUTO folder was missing the LOAD_KEY.PRG program, which loads a North American keyboard mapping into MagiCMac, but that wasn't the problem. Other MagiCMac users on Usenet haven't experienced the same glitch, which suggests that it's something specific to my Mac--but the problem never occurs when running Mac software, adding to the mystery.

Lastly, MagiCMac requires enormous amounts of RAM. The manual recommends 8 Mb minimum, but that's not really enough if you want to run several Macintosh and Atari applications simultaneously. Figure on at least 12 Mb, or 20 Mb on a Power Macintosh. (With RAM prices dropping so rapidly now, though, this isn't as bad as it sounds.)

My biggest complaint about MagiCMac is the totally inadequate documentation. The package includes two slim spiral-bound manuals. The first one isn't the problem--in 61 pages, it explains the EASE desktop, with a thorough description of each command and lots of screen shots. I wish the second manual, which explains MagiCMac itself, were half as good, but unfortunately it's half the size instead. The problems start right at the beginning, with the "Quick Start" section. Installing MagiCMac is easy, but fine-tuning the program to run well on any particular Macintosh requires fiddling with a dozen or so different options, the process of which is only superficially explained.

Also, there is a long list of "Possible Problems and Limitations", but it is remarkably unhelpful. In several places the manual says that MagiCMac has compatibility problems with certain Mac models and programs--as well as with certain Atari programs--but it rarely says which _specific_ things might be trou-

S'Tuff - The Catalogue Update

by Ted Skrecky

Contrary to popular opinion, I haven't been goofing-off for the past several months. I have actually been hard at work trying to complete the latest edition of the ST Catalogue. We now have 190 disks packed full of S'Tuff. The following is a complete list of all the new disks.

AV380.LZH 60K #179-Ascii-View Version 3.80. Good ASCII text viewer program. NOTE: Default maximum line length is 5000.

CLIPIFF1.LZH 282K #179-108 .IFF Amiga clipart files.

DOMAIN.LZH 69K #179-Platform game. Has really annoying music. Causes my neighbour's dog to howl piteously.

FREE_BOB.LZH 1K #179-Put this in your AUTO folder, boot disk and Bob will appear before you!

KEYBOARD.LZH 29K #179-Touch Typing Tutor program. Program only works from Drive A. Also, do not place files in a folder as the porgram will not be able to locate the folder called "DATA".

KIVI 137.LZH 104K #179-KIVI QWK Reader. Version 1.37. Offline reader for the ST.

PARALLAX.LZH 134K #179-Parallax Painter Demo. 1 or 2 player game. Worth looking at.

RECBASE.LZH 53K #179-RecBase Version 1.3b. Database for Record, Tape, CD, DAT & DCC information. Mono Only.

TOS206UP.LZH 9K #179-TOS 2.06 installation instructions for 1040ST (V2.0).

BOOT162.LZH 10K #180-Booter Version 1.62. Boot configuration program which manages accessories & programs in the AUTO folder.

COMA_310.LZH 417K #180-CoMa Voice/Pro 3.10 (COmmunication-MAnager). send/receive faxes. FTP-server, answering machine & Voice-Mail-System.

OFFICE.LZH 301K #180-Junior Office Version 3.04 Fax program. Class 1 & Class 2 fax-modems supported. NOTE: Read HELP.TXT for info on how to configure & run this program.

PYSGHAM.LZH 23K #180-Pysgham. Hard Drive Utility. Will allow you to create "virtual" drives. For example, you can turn the folder of your favourite word processor into DRIVE K:.

CLIPIFF2.LZH 340K #181-84 .IFF Amiga clipart files.

CLIPIFF3.LZH 360K #181-51 .IFF Amiga clipart files.

PICSW101.LZH 90K #181-Pic Switch Version 1.01. Allows you to load & display various picture formats.

CLIPIFF4.LZH 450K #182-50 .IFF Amiga clipart files.

WWW116.LZH 337K #182-STiK Version 1.16. Web Browser for the Atari ST. Works in all graphics modes.

CLIPIFF5.LZH 445K #183-47 .IFF Amiga clipart files.

CLIPIFF6.LZH 223K #183-36 .IFF Amiga clipart files.

FLUTTERA.LZH 58K #183-Animation demo with player.

IFFSPC.LZH 12K #183-Convert Amiga .IFF pictures to .SPC format.

NEWBELL.LZH 27K #183-Change your system bell to a digitized sound sample.

NEWFONT.LZH 3K #183-New font for your desktop. On command-line type "NICE.FED".

SM124BIG.LZH 6K #183-Article on how to enlarge the screen size on a SM124 Monochrome Monitor by Jack P. Durre.

SM124FIX.LZH 7K #183-Article about fixing the Atari SM124 Mono Monitor by Randy Constan, Elfin Magic Co.

ACCOMP25.LZH 176K #184-Version 2.5 of Hendry Cosh's MIDI sequencer (16 track).

CLUB70.LZH 115K #184-Crippled demo of patch editor/librarian for the Yamaha DTS70.

CRACKENG.LZH 35K #184-English docs for the German art program called Crack Art. See Disk #102 for CRACKART.LZH.

D110_MNG.LZH 198K #184-Librarian editor for the Roland D110.

METADOS2.LZH 12K #184-MetaDOS 2.0. Driver for the ST that will allow you to use a CDROM drive.

NOSCO.LZH 109K #184-Puzzle game from France.

ST_TOOLS.LZH 111K #184-Version 1.93 of ST Tools. Similar to PC Tools for MS-DOS computers.

AB204.LZH 38K #185-Driver for the Atari SH-204 hard disk.

DEPICT.LZH 10K #185-Degas to MacPaint picture converter.

DIY_POND.LZH 411K #185-A guide to making a water garden.

LIBRARY.LZH 30K #185-Library Creator. Tool for .GFA Basic programmers for constructing a single external file instead of lots of smaller external files.

OBSERVE1.LZH 47K #185-The Observer Version 2.0 Document displayer program.

OBSERVE2.LZH 51K #185-The Observer Menu System. Shell program for the Observer document displayer.

RAM_COPY.LZH 15K #185-Ram Copy. Automatic RAMdisk installer and file copier. Read docs for info on how to use this program.

TBALL.LZH 157K #185-Trackball. Puzzle game.

REALMS 1DSK #186-Realms of Reality. 2 levels. A rather impressive Dungeon Master type game.

STAR WARS 1DSK #187-Digitized animation & sound demo. May the Force be with you!

HERO 1DSK #188-Hero. Good platform game. This was a commerical game but has now been released into the public domain.

ALCHIMJR.LZH 127K #189-Alchimie Jr. Version 2.22. Gem based 48 track midi sequencer. Shareware. Mono Only.

ASTRO.LZH 397K #189-Asteroidia. Absolutely fantastic shareware asteroids game. Requires blitter chip.

DESKPIC5.LZH 84K #189-Displays .GIF pics as a desktop backdrop. Note: Do not put files in a folder.

IBMMOUSE.LZH 6K #189-Article on how to connect a PC mouse to an ST.

SKYDUEL.LZH 127K #189-Single or multi player air combat game, combining ballistic missile warfare with dogfighting & ground attack.

XYZ202B.LZH 25K #189-XYZ protocols. Version 2.02b.

XYZSHL34.LZH 16K #189-Graphical shell for xyz protocols. You will need file called XYZ202B.LZH.

DEADLAND.LZH 187K #190-Absolutely cool shareware Canon Fodder clone for the ST. Note: Do not place files in a folder.

DESKVID.LZH 261K #190-ST Desktop

founded by (and mainly staffed by) Steve Cohen. Apparently Wizztronics is now owned by a larger company. Steve is still developing new products, and with extra financial support (for a year at least), maybe some of these new products will get to market.

Computer Direct has been making custom versions of Atari TT and Falcon for some time. These are the DirecT30 TT030 compatible and the DirecT FX Falcon Compatible. They are mounted in tower cases with whatever hardware is specified. Now there is the DirecT Power PC Compatible. This model uses a PPC 601 or 603 running from 100MHz to 150MHz. The Power PC Compatible is said to run Atari, Macintosh and Windows software. I don't know how they do that, but the Power PC Compatible could be a Macintosh clone supplied with MagiCMac Pro! software and an Intel emulator (hardware or software).

Darek Mihocka is offering Gemulator version 4.15, complete with Gemulator card and TOS 2.06 ROMs. This will run under Windows 95 and Windows NT. The sale price is $199.95 (US). Also Darek is selling the Gemulator Gold CD-ROM for $49.95 (US). The CD ROM contains at least three different Gemulator systems so that any PC operating system can be used, from Windows 3.1, 95 and NT, to OS/2 and MS-DOS. Along with them are utilities and device drivers. PC Xformer 3.5, ST Xformer 3.0 and a number of Xformer utilities are also included. Many of these programs are supplied with online documentation. The Gemulator requires Atari ROM chips to run. However, MagiC is an alternate software replacement for TOS and much of GEM. It could be used in place of Atari ROM chips. Using MagiC, a completely software based ST emulator could be made to run on the PC. This has been done. It is called MagiC-PC. And it was demonstrated recently at the Berlin By Byte (Atari) show. Since MagiC-PC must emulate a ST on an Intel system, a fast PC will be required. MagiC-PC requires Windows 95, and will run ST software at double the speed of a TT using a 120MHz Pentium computer.

Some time ago PC-Ditto was released to enable a ST to run PC software. PC-Ditto worked quite well, however it ran PC software at about one third of the speed of the old IBM XT systems. Now there is SoftPC for the Falcon. This runs software at about twice the speed of the XT. It is limited to CGA graphics and will not handle some other device drivers. However SoftPC has been reported as being very stable and able to run all of the standard DOS applications such as Word Perfect. SoftPC is distributed along with many other programs on the "Compo Power CD", available from Toad and other sources for about $35 (US). MGI Software Corp, a Canadian company based in Ontario has bought up all the rights to the Calamus desk top publishing software. The main thrust of MGI is to enter the PC market. MGI is advertising a version of Calamus for Windows 95 that is available at a very competitive price. With careful marketing, Calamus for Windows has a good chance of establishing itself. MGI will do all the development for the PC market. However, DMC in Germany will continue to develop other versions for MCI. For instance they are updating the ST version of Calamus SL, at least for the German

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MagiCMac

some. Surely the programmers must have tested the program on different Mac configurations and with lots of different ST software while developing it--why didn't they share what they learned in the manual?

There are other strange inconsistencies and missing information. Several of the screenshots show different options in the menus and dialog boxes than those in the actual program. And the manual refers to supplementary programs that aren't on the disk, and doesn't explain some that are. There are some text files on the disk explaining these mystery programs, but they're in German (as are some of the error messages produced by MagiCMac and EASE). Lastly, the manual lacks an index. For more than two hundred bucks, I expect better.

So Is It Worth It? For most people the important thing will be that the program pretty much works as advertised. The next question: is it worth it? Well, the basic MagiCMac program costs US$219. If you want to use screen depths beyond 256 colours, or GDOS fonts, add US$100 for NVDI. And if you want to use your old printer, add US$150 for PowerPrint. It adds up, and only you can decide if it's worth it for _your_ particular purposes.

However, if you are considering buying a faster Atari machine to replace an aging ST, consider this. Right now a number of discontinued Macintosh Quadra models can be had for very low prices through liquidation companies (check the ads in the back pages of MacUser or Macworld magazines). All of these models use the 68040 CPU chip, which is about twice as fast as the 68030 found in the TT and Falcon. For example, a Quadra 605 can be had for US$500 or so with 4 Mb of RAM and a 230Mb hard drive. Add MagiCMac, NVDI, PowerPrint, and some more RAM and you come out at a bit over US$1000. This is at least twenty percent lower than the price of a new Falcon or TT, and less than half the reported price of the new 68040-based Atari-compatible machines now being produced in Germany. You also gain access to thousands of Macintosh programs that aren't available for the Atari, including superior Internet access tools (and who isn't interested in the Internet?).

I don't mean to demean the efforts of the few remaining Atari dealers who are still selling Falcons, TTs and Atari clones. Far from it--certainly there are some jobs for which a real Atari is still the best computer at any price, such as MIDI sequencing, video manipulation with the Falcon's DSP, direct digital audio recording, and so on. But for many Atari users, the future may well lie in running our Atari software on a PC clone or Macintosh by way of emulation. If you fall into this category, and can live with its problems, you could do worse than to take a look at MagiCMac.

market. DMC is also doing a version of Calamus for Macintosh computers. This seems to be the trend. Good software is moving onto all major computer platforms. Cybercube, another Canadian company, has left the Atari market. Cybercube made the CyRel line of products which included hardware upgrades and software. Most recently it published some software collections on CD ROM.

The author of the new alternate desktop, "Thing", has dropped support for the software. However, Thomas Binder has arranged to carry on support and development for Thing. His first objective is to correct all the bugs that have been reported. He has released an English language version of Thing. So much new ST software is developed in Germany by one or two persons. Usually they cannot afford to have instructions translated into other languages. Anglophone distributors of commercial software sometimes have to translate the German documentation. For instance, Computer Direct is having the latest version of Arabesque 2 translated into English. This drawing program is equal to anything available on other platforms, They say it's like the PC's Corel Draw, but on steroids.
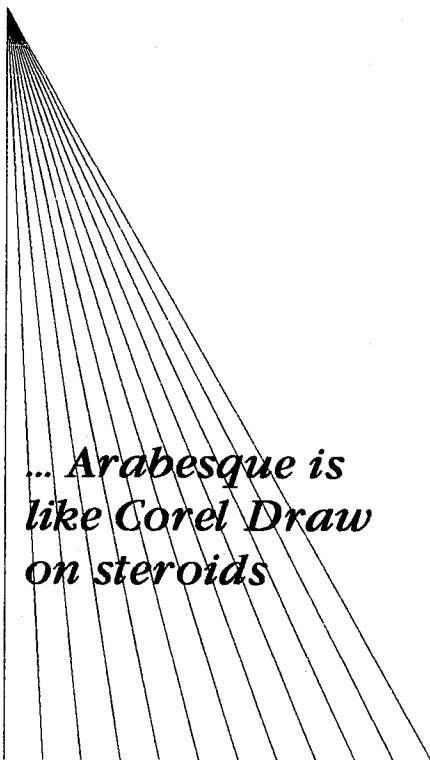
... Arabesque is like Corel Draw on steroids

Explosions!
by Rowland Grant

*T*he March General Meeting featured Bob Smith, who demonstrated his music system. Bob uses a 1040 ST as his computer along with the usual keyboard, sound handling module (DR.Synth DS320) and amplifier. This system looks simple, but it is surprisingly effective. Bob demonstrated the use of some popular software. First was Band in a Box. This program can produce chords and rhythm to suit a melody that is keyed in. Band in a Box will handle 6 instrumental sounds or sound groups at a time. Pianist was next. This displays a biography and images of the composer on the screen and plays examples of piano compositions. The system created very convincing piano. Finally Bob showed us Cubase which he uses extensively. He played a few tunes using Cubase, fun things like Frosty the Snowman. Then he showed how Cubase will convert the synthesized sounds into a musical score. Cubase will even print sheet music. He then loaded a musical score, Mussorgski's Flight of the Bumblebee. The program moved a vertical line through the score, and as it did so, the music under the line was played. Of course one could use the synthesized sound of any instrument. When all is said and done, the effectiveness of these MIDI sound systems is determined by the musical talents of the user. We thanked Bob for his very talented production.

In April we didn't have anything better for the General Meeting, so I showed how we keep the Club data base. Originally our data base was kept by the president. The president back in '86 used a mainframe at work, which printed out very nicely formatted, laser printed, membership lists. I was the next president, and all I had was an Atari 800XL with disk drive and dot matrix printer. At first I tried Synfile+. It is a well designed data base program, but the index file always became scrambled when data entries approached 100 members. A scrambled index made it impossible to retrieve the right data. Since we had about 130 members, Synfile+ was out. And anyway, Synfile+ wouldn't print the mem-

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bership list in closely tabbed columns like we had before. Now, I had made up a simple data base for other purposes as an exercise in using the BASIC programming language. I was able to modify and expanded this code to handle the club membership records. The advantage of BASIC is that one can incorporate directly the special code instructions that control printers. So I was able print membership lists that were in the proper format. Also I was able to expand the program to print mailing labels. BASIC can do all of this very simply. More recently I converted the Club data base to GFA BASIC so that it could run on ST computers too. For the fun of it I added some bells and whistles, like drop down menus and dialogue boxes. But essentially this data base is the same one that served us so well for the last nine years.

When I had finished, Craig Carmichael set up his Atari TT computer and proceeded to demonstrate the latest version of his OMEn operating system. OMEn has been renamed OASEs. While OASEs runs very well on a standard ST, somehow the high resolution colours of the TT or Falcon make OASEs seem like a different program, and far more attractive. Craig's latest project is a system of educational software, running under OASEs. I'm told that Craig took OASEs over to the VMUG (Macintosh users) club meeting and had OASEs running an Atari Falcon and a Macintosh IIci in colour. He demonstrated his building control system used by our local school district. This enables the school district to fine tune all the building temperatures from a central location. It saved $40,000 in fuel costs last year. This software runs under OASEs, and shows all the data graphically in brilliant colours. I guess the Mac users couldn't believe that Atari made computers that good, as their newsletter referred to Craig's Amiga.

In other activities, the Social SIG at George Rose's on March 31st attracted only two members plus George. I missed the event this time. However, I'm told that the three drank my share of the beer. They

German Pub Crawl!
by Rowland Grant

*E*mulating Atari 8-bit computers has almost become a fad. We have PC-Xformer on DOS/Windows systems. There is Rainbow, a public domain emulator for Macintosh systems. David Firth has published the code in C for an 8-bit emulator on Unix machines. Now I notice that Frank Barrus has also released the source code for ACE: the Atari Computer Emulator for Unix systems. It supports X-windows and SVGA graphics. The latest version, ACE v0.02, has support built in for reading XFD and ATR disk images. It can access Atari disk drives through parallel printer ports. ACE can also access directories and files on the disks. Frank Barrus has invited others to become involved with this project, particularly in adding features and fixing bugs.

I notice that Alternate Reality, both the City and the Dungeon, have been put into XFD format, and posted on the Alternate Reality web site. This has been done with the consent of Philip Price, the author. Unfortunately Alternate Reality will not run on the current version of PC-Xformer. The other emulators won't handle Alternate reality either. Ivan Macintosh has released a suite of utilities for managing ATR and XFD disk images. These utilities run on DOS systems. One program converts XFD images to ATR format. There are three programs for reading the directory of a disk image depending on the kind of Atari DOS that is used. The three utilities are for Atari DOS, RobC menus and Sparta-DOS.

Now there is a new Atari 800-XL emulator called XL-It!. The author, Markus Gietzen, has released XLIt! for free private use. The latest version runs on MS-DOS machines ('386 and better), Sun Sparc-Stations, Silicon Graphics and Linux based computers. Initially Markus concentrated on I/O and video features. Version 0.11 of this emulator can handle all graphics and text modes including GTIA, player/missile, fine scrolling (vertical and horizontal) and overscan. The 800XL memory management is emu-

lated. The program also supports reading from two 1050 drives as well as the standard format disk images. However XL-It! (ver .11) did not support sound. And it didn't run Alternate Reality. However Markus says that his next version should run the game. I notice that XL-It! version 0.12 has just been released. It does support sound, and will run a SoundBlaster card in a PC. The memory management has been extend to emulate the 130XE so that 128K of RAM can be used. A monitor has been built in and the speed of the emulation has been greatly increased. Even the earlier version of XL-It! has been reported to be able to run more 8-bit software than PC-Xformer.

Harmonic Research of Woodstock, New York has an interface that makes it possible to hook up an Atari 8-bit to a 15.75 KHz horizontal scan RGB monitor (like a Commodore 1084). This RGB video decoder will accept composite and S-Video output. The unit is not cheap at $239.95 (US). A new interface with double the scan rate is due soon. This would enable an Atari 8-bit computers to use an SVGA monitor.

I notice that the Stichting Pokey has requested 8-bit news via internet. This a Dutch Atari 8-bit user group. And they claim that it's the only one left in Holland. They publish a magazine and sell Atari 8-bit software. They say that they have thousands of cartridges and lots of disk titles too. Oh yes, the club name means Pokey Foundation. An Atari 8-bit show has just taken place in Hammau Germany. It was held in a large pub (or is it a beer hall?). The show was organised by Kemal Ezcan of KE-Soft. The advanced notice has Ke-Soft selling 8-bit software, lots of it, new and old. There are other dealers. AMC is expected to show some new hardware, such as an infrared mouse for 8-bit computers. Kaisersoft is expected to show its latest Polensoft games. In addition, space has been set aside for private sales of new and used equipment. And of course there are all the amenities of the pub.

A perplexing development has occurred regarding Turbo-BASIC-XL. Originally created by Frank Ostrowski, it was published by the Happy Computing magazine as a type-in

project. Subsequently, Turbo-BASIC has circulated widely as freeware. Turbo-BASIC appears in most public domain libraries. Now it seems that someone has claimed the copyright to Turbo-BASIC-XL and has registered it in Germany. The new copyright owners, Micro Computer Service in Mainz and Highlander Soft in Konz, have patched their names to the title screen. They are demanding that users register their copies of Turbo-BASIC, and pay a small fee. A patched version of Turbo-BASIC-XL 1.5 is on the back of ABBUC Magazin 44 disk. There are a number of questions. For instance, what is the status of TurboBASIC 1.4 for Atari 800 computers? This version is integrated with Atari DOS. Of course, they can't demand a fee from users who typed in the software from Happy Computing magazine. And how could they sort out who typed in the code and who received a copy? It seems to me that just slapping a copyright notice (and pretty labels) on something that has been lying around as freeware for years is not going to get much response. There might be more support if the new owners continue the development of Turbo-BASIC, and issue improved versions from time to time with complete documentation.

... John Picken Moving to Deutschland!

New Catalogue Disk!
by Ted Skrecky

On April 20th, 1996, work on Version 3.7 of the Garden City ACE Atari ST Public Domain & Shareware Software Catalogue was completed. We are now up to Disk #190. I am finding it is taking me a bit longer these days to get new stuff added to the catalogue. No, I haven't slowed-down because I am much older than I used to be when I first started updating the club's software collection. Unlike a few years ago, these days, I am getting most of the new ST programs from the Internet. Even though I have a 14.4 baud modem, the process involved in acquiring files from the Internet is rather time-consuming.

My access to the Internet is restricted to e-mail only so the only method I have of getting files is by using an ftp mail service such as the one provided by the University of Princeton. Basically, I send a message to Princeton in which I list the FTP site I want to pillage from, the directory I want to go into and then I list all of the files I want to get. Princeton reads this message and then directly connects to the FTP site, binary downloads the files and then converts each file into ASCII text which is then sent back to me as e-mail messages. I then download these ASCII messages to my hard drive, do a bit of editing with my favourite text editor, Everest, and then I must run a UUDecode program which will convert all the ASCII stuff back into its original format which is usually a .ARC, .LZH, .ZIP or .ZOO file.

Of course, I must then uncompress the archived files and then try to figure out what they do. If I somehow manage to understand what the purpose of the program is, I then have to decide if it is worth adding the program to the catalogue. There are many files I have picked-up from the Internet which have never made it into the library because of one of the following reasons: 1) I can't figure out what the program does. 2) The program likes to crash & burn. 3) We already have similar programs that do that particular task much better. 4) Only a methane-breathing creature from another galaxy would find the program even remotely useful. 5) The program

formats my hard drive without any previous warning.

Until a few months ago, GCACE had one other major source of ST PD & Shareware software. This was Bob Lussier, our Vancouver contact. Sadly, he has been seduced by the dark side of the force. He now owns an IBM machine! Over the years, he has supplied the library with lots of programs and his contributions in the past have been greatly appreciated. With Bob now gone, the Internet will play an even more important role with respect to new programs being added to the library. The only other sources of new programs are the odd copy of stuff from club members and sometimes I find useful goodies on ST Format disks. Unfortunately, acquiring new issues of ST Format is becoming a bit of a challenge these days. If you want the latest ST Format, I suggest you contact the team from Mission: Impossible!

Now that a new catalogue has been done, I will soon start the process of collecting new material. However, firstly, it is time to have some fun. I own four different computer platforms and one game machine called "Jaguar". On each platform, I own numerous games. Out of all my vast wealth of software, I have picked-out Elite II for the ST which I am now playing. I originally purchased this game from Tesseract in January of 1994 but have only now discovered that it is a really fantastic game. Elite II is the sequel to, shock and utter horror, a game called Elite. According to hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions of people, Elite was the best space exploration/space trading game during the 1980s so it shouldn't come as a big surprise that Elite II is quite impressive.

When I first got this game, my first impression was that I really needed to sit down and spend a significant amount of time reading the manual. I did a bit of this before I started playing it a couple of years ago. I quickly stopped playing it when I discovered a couple of nasty bugs. One is with respect to docking at space stations. The manual recommends using autopilot. The bad news is that the main computer cpu built into my ship must be from Intel since over 50% of the time the autopilot always slammed my ship into the side of the space station. This always caused a pretty big ex-

plosion! The other main problem is with respect to flying the ship in outer space. From time to time, the game would decide it would fly my ship in one direction only. No matter what I tried, it was impossible to alter course. When this happened, I always had to restart the game from the last saved position.

Well, on Disk #160, there is a big text file which contains numerous postings by Elite II enthusiasts. I have gone through the file and absorbed some important info. With respect to the autopilot problem, Elite II players usually switch over to manual control as the ship nears the station and then perform minor course corrections, if required, in order to avoid instant death. I have tried this and it has helped me to avoid total destruction many times. Also in this text file, people have talked about the other problem with the game forcing you to fly in one direction only. The theory is that some of the cheaper ships, such as the one everybody gets when first starting the game, are poorly constructed and have a habit of breaking-down. I personally don't think this flying in one direction problem is a special game feature. I think it is a bug, but, I have noticed, now that I have purchased some bigger and better ships, the problem doesn't occur as much.

All bugs aside, this game is really quite good. There is lots of exploring to do. There is lots of profits to make. There is also lots of trouble to get into. It is quite easy to acquire a criminal record that will impress all your friends, co-works and neighbours. As far as graphics go, this game is wocka wocka great! I have the graphics set on "high detail" so, as I fly around cities on various planets, I can see windows on some buildings. Some buildings also have signs posted on them. In outer space, the space stations actually rotate and that is rather cool. According to the back of the game box, there are approximately one-hundred million planets in Elite II so visiting every planet should keep me playing this game for the next fifty years.

Not long ago I purchased yet another

1040STf computer. The price was $10! The only problem with the computer was the fact that the built-in power supply was missing and the internal disk drive was also gone. This didn't bother me as my main interest in getting this machine was so that I would have some spare parts. As it turned-out, just today, I used one component from this machine to help bring my Mega ST4 back from the dead.

Ever since I got my Mega, I have had the odd problem with the computer crashing when trying to boot from my hard drive. This never bothered me much as I would just turn the computer off and on again. However, more recently, my Mega has been crashing and burning rather frequently. I have also had problems with using my modem. One other thing I have noticed is that, with a small percentage of games, such as Hard Nova by Electronic Arts, I would get weird, random dashes on the screen. The random dashes have been a special feature of my Mega since the beginning but I have never been too worried about it.

Anyways, today I decided I had to do something about my Mega. At first, I thought I might have a bad RAM chip so I ran a memory checker program. Everything checked-out as ok. My next thought was of the DMA (Direct Memory Access) chip. The good news about this chip is that it is socketed which means it is fairly easy to replace. I pulled the DMA chip out of my 1040STf, which, thankfully, is the same type as the Mega DMA chip, and put it into my Mega. I was a little bit worried about doing this because I didn't want to blow my Mega to smithereens. Well, after putting the Mega back together, I powered it on without it being connected to a monitor. I heard the disk drive spin so, obviously, something must have loaded into memory. My next step was to connect my SM125 monitor. I turned my Mega on and everything looked good. I then went one step further and connected my hard drive. I must say I was quite happy when it booted without any problems. I turned my Mega on and off a few times and each time it had absolutely no difficulty accessing the hard drive. I then connected my colour moni-

tor, powered-on my Mega and loaded Hard Nova. I was shocked with what I saw, or, I should say, what I didn't see. All those strange dashes were gone! Thanks to the DMA chip from my $10 1040STf, I now have a fully operational Mega. Technically, I haven't yet tried my modem but I expect I will not have any telecommunication problems.

So, if any club members have the opportunity to buy an ST for $10 or, even better, get one for free, I suggest not passing on the opportunity. Even if you are not a hardware tech, if your current computer starts to have a problem, you could take it to Steve Lemmen and, at the same time, let him know you have a spare computer. If you need something like a new DMA chip or a new video shifter chip, Steve could pull it from the other computer. As long as you paid next to nothing for the back-up computer, you are going to save yourself lots of money as something like a DMA chip costs around $50 from Best Electronics.

In other news, I have a copy of the Winter 95/96 Atari ST catalogue from an American company called "The Computer Dungeon". I got this catalogue from Steve Lemmen. I have looked at it and I am rather amazed at some of the software prices. Computer Dungeon has lots of used commercial software which is in the $5 to $15 price range. Computer Dungeon also sells public domain disks. If anybody is interested in having a look at this catalogue, I will be bringing it to the next club meeting. By the way, the next meeting is a Buy & Sell night so, if you have any old software or hardware for sale or, you might be interested in buying some new goodies for your ST, don't forget to come to the meeting!
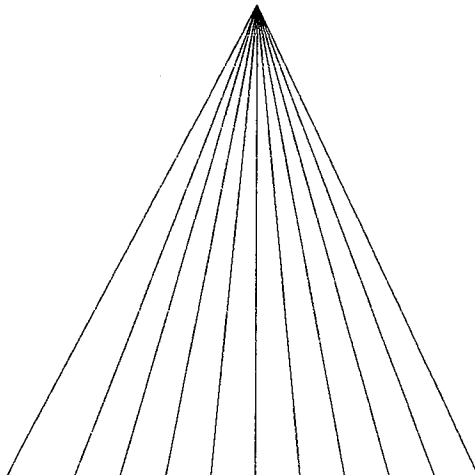
drank your share too.

A funny thing happened on the way to the May executive committee meeting. I went to pick up Ted first, and as we were walking to the car he said "Y'know, I suffered explosive decompression on Sunday". I stopped and looked at Ted. He seemed all right, not particularly decompressed. What was this all about? Then he continued. "Yeah, I traded my weapons so I could take on more cargo. I was just leaving the planetary system when I was attacked by a fleet of nasties." Ah! so that was it. Ted was into a game. Now Ted is no ordinary gamer. He follows the Stanislavsky school of game playing. Stanislavsky maintained that an actor must live the part. And Ted lives the game. The game in question is Elite 2 on the ST. Ted was still living it as we drove on. As I listened to his narrative, curiously the controls of my Nissan began to look strange, unfamiliar. We seemed to be moving smoothly, silently. I saw only darkness through the windshield and a few sharp points of light, stars. I felt a twinge of panic. Suddenly we were clattering down Quadra. I could see the headlights of oncoming traffic in the distance. With some effort I managed to hold onto this reality, until at last we arrived at John Towler's place.

The executive meeting was uneventful. It was carried out in the finest of parliamentary traditions. That is to say, we talked continuously for hours, and accomplished nothing of importance. The big moment came after the meeting when we assembled in front of John Towler's new computer, a TT030 with a 17 inch mono monitor. Atari held a sale of surplus equipment through the internet. There were a number of used TT030 computers complete with hard drives and 6MB of RAM for sale at $250 (US). There were also a small number of large monochrome monitors for (I think) $175. John sent in his order through the internet, not expecting that there would be anything left. To his surprise, a few days later, he got a call from an express delivery office saying that his equipment had arrived. John says that his TT seems to be new. It has a board for fast-RAM that uses SIMMs for easy expansion. The monitor is beautiful. Just the thing for desk top publishing. It will display as much as four regular screens at once. We were all green with envy. Later I returned Ted to his home, but that's another story.