

## SPACE Newsletter December 1994

Newz From The Prez  
by Nathan Block

Nathan has failed again to submit his article in time for this publication!

The Editor

DOM Info by Terry Streeter

Terry has failed to submit DOM info to me in time for the newsletter.

The Editor

Treasurer's Report by Greg Leitner

Greg has failed to submit a report to me in time for this publication. This is the first time I have not received one from him since he took over this position.

The Editor

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Here are some posts I picked off of Flightline. I thought this might be more interesting than blank spaces.

The Editor

Date: 11-26-94                      Msg  
# 179

To: ALL                      Conf: (107) ATARI8-INTER  
From: JEFF COON                      Stat: Public  
Subj: Atari 8-bit still useable

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Subject: Atari 8-bit still useable?  
Organization: Oklahoma State University  
Computer Center

After reading the article on the Atari 8-bit, it touched my heart. I remember the days of my 8-bit, sitting there with my grandmother, her teaching me how to program

and make my name bounce around the screen. I remember writing letters with the "Desktop Publisher" to all my friends who lived out of state. I remember the hours upon hours I spent playing M.U.L.E. and the Cosmic Balance, and Wizard's Crown, my first computer RPG.

And then I thought. "I miss that." So I took a pilgrimage to the garage to dig up the Atari 800. I began to go through some software. I used Bobterm and my old Atari 300 baud modem to call (or try to call) one of my favorite bulletin boards. They wouldn't accept such a slow speed, so I connected the 2400 baud. I waded around the messages for a while and soon got bored.

So I began to play games. I played on that Atari 800 for hours, just like I was 12 again. I played all my old arcade favorites, including a sparkling game of Pac-Man, where I actually beat my all time high score, even though I haven't played Pac-Man in years. (I guess it's like riding a bike.)

And then I began to get bored. I fiddled a little more, and probably went through half my old software, just trying it out. And I realized "Gosh this is primitive."

To all you 8-bit users out there, I respect your dedication to such a machine, but the simple fact remains: In today's world, the 8-bit is just not powerful enough to handle what is needed.

Sure, the Print Shop prints out the cute little Christmas cards and Flyers for the weekend car wash, and you don't need anything fancy to write letters, or even reports for that matter.

But the Atari 800 can not begin to compare to the sheer amounts of sparkle that today's clones can handle. You're thinking "But all that glitter isn't necessary."

True. We could save lots of money by doing away with air conditioning and using fans. Or banning light bulbs, vowing never

to buy one again because you're partial to candles. Candles get the job done. Why waste money on a light bulb, and the lamp to use it with, and the fixtures to plug it into, and the electricity to use it? A candle illuminates still the same, doesn't it?

Yes, I love my old 8-bit. And I have left it set up in my house now so that I can use it for those odd days when I'm in the mood for a good rousing game of M.U.L.E., but when I need something typed, why go back to it? Why not buy an IBM to suit my needs? I already have. You don't have to spend \$2000 on an IBM 486 DX/2 with 8 Meg RAM and a 17 inch SVGA monitor.

For under 800 dollars, you can purchase a 386 SX 33mhz machine with VGA graphics that will run most of today's software fast enough.

Why live in the dark ages and refuse to use light bulbs because you've used candles all your life and don't see why anyone needs to change. If we all had that mentality, I think we'd all be dead of polio by now.

Jeff

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Date: 11-26-94                      Msg # 181  
To: ALL                      Conf: (107) ATARI8-INTER  
Stat: Public  
Subj: Re: Atari 8-bit still use

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> Jeff

I think you are making a big generalization here. Not everyone who reads this group believes the 8-bit is the ultimate piece of hardware. Many of us also use other computers for the things the 8-bit isn't very good at.

I am also an OS/2 user/programmer because yes, the computer world does move forward, but would you approach a classic car buff and tell him his car is worthless because it has no air conditioning, fuel injection, power options, etc..? Sometimes it's nice just to enjoy a hobby in a controlled environment. The Atari 8-bit is hardware that is accessible, well documented, and not in danger of becoming any more devalued by external forces. Just as someone might sit down at a table for hours with an old-fashioned jig-saw puzzle,

the 8-bit offers hobbyists a way to truly understand and control their hardware. I use a PC, but I don't pretend to control or really understand how everything works, and that's the point of the modern computer, to isolate the user from the hardware, and make him/her interact with a high level metaphor, which may help you get more done, but doesn't satisfy those who want to really master the machine.

The home mechanic may understand every part of his classic 'relic', but the modern car he drives to work goes right over his head with its computerized driveline and all.

The sensible 8-bitter doesn't try to take on the world, just defend his love for an old design, a lost way of thinking, which was probably what attracted him to computers in the first place.

-Bry

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Date: 11-26-94                      Msg # 183  
To: ALL                      Conf: (107) ATARI8-INTER  
From: RICHARD A LINK                      Stat: Public  
Subj: Re: Atari 8-bit still use

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Jeff

I have kept all of my old computers, including several TI-99/4As, and Apple II+, Laser 128, 800xl, 600xl, and recently picked up 2 1200xls and an 800.

I also have a 486 that I use for 90% of my computing. But the old stuff still intrigues me. Just this past week, I used my 800xl to log into the Internet at 9600 bps in 80col mode, downloaded a few files from the UK, just to show a few of our ST users that "it can be done". Granted, using MOSAIC is a bit easier on the eyes, but still it can be done if necessary.

If I had never hacked the power supply in my TIs and Ataris, never handwired memory upgrades into them, never hacked dual disk drives into a TI p-box, or used a sector editor to fix blown directories on a disk, then I probably wouldn't be willing to open up a PC, change motherboards, add memory and new hard drives, and pick around in a Windows INI file. As it is, I used the machines for learning, and that alone was probably a lot cheaper than if I had

gone to school and paid tuition. Plus I still have my machines!

I won't be teary-eyed when my old computers finally stop booting up, I'll just go down to the thrift and buy another one for \$10 and take up where I left off.

Rich Link

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Date: 11-26-94                      Msg # 190  
To: ALL                      Conf: (107) ATARI8-INTER  
From: VINCE GRIENTI                      Stat: Public  
Subj: Re: Atari 8-bit still use

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Jeff, I'm an IBM platform computer programmer, I use C, Clipper, dBase IV and Foxpro. I use a Compaq Prosignia 486DX2/66 server with 16 meg memory and 4 gig hard drives. It is not used as a server, but a DOS/Windows workstation. Believe me, it gets the hell kicked out of it in terms of use.

At home I have a clone, and also an Atari 800, 800XL and 130 XE. I play Doom, Duke Nukem etc.. on the clone, as well as run database, spreadsheets, desktop publishers, etc... The Atari machines are used for games and certain utilities.

Using the Atari is fun, but you are correct, some of the games for your 800 are primitive. The new stuff for the 130 XE is pretty good though. Draconus and Armarote rival Nintendo games. Even now Germany is cranking out some very impressive software.

However this software is no way as intricate as Doom for the IBM. However there are some very talented developers out there and you can be sure that they will continue to stretch the boundaries of the 8 bit.

Regards, Vince

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Date: 11-26-94                      Msg # 192  
To: ALL                      Conf: (107) ATARI8-INTER  
From: JOE WALSH                      Stat: Public  
Subj: Re: Atari 8-bit still use

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Jeff, The sensible 8-bitter doesn't try to take on the world, just defend his love for an old design, a lost way of thinking, which was probably what attracted him to computers in the first place.

This message, and the one it is replying to, (as well as others who wrote with

similar themes) capture the truth of the idea I introduced:

1) You don't need a \$2000 computer to do what you need done. A cheap, "old" computer (whether a 386SX-16, a Mac Classic, or an Atari 8-bit) will do the job just as well. Essentially, "if it does the job, there's no reason to upgrade".

2) The pleasure is the thing. If you enjoy your computer, it doesn't matter what type it is. There is equal honor in loving to use any type of computer. (Yep, even Commies[G])

These can be boiled down further into: Don't upgrade just because the new stuff is out and you feel left behind.

I'm glad we all explored the idea together. I certainly learned a lot, and even enjoyed doing it. :) -Joe

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Be sure to attend this month's meeting. It is our annual Christmas meeting. I was to have included a list of what the people are bringing to this meeting, but I have not received this list from the person who took it after the meeting last month. I can only tell you I will be bringing cookies. So, bring what you can, it will really be a Pot Luck Dinner this Year.

This may well be the last newsletter I publish. I have not been getting the articles from the people mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter. I have a standing deadline of two weeks before the next meeting each month for me to have these articles available to me. This gives me a week to compile, copy, fold, staple and lick all those stamps (although it seems to be getting fewer and fewer to lick each time), then mail them in time for members to start receiving them on the Monday before the meeting.

If you, as members have a story to tell, read an article you feel you would like to share with the other members, thoughts about what you would like to see in the newsletter, let me know. My number is listed on the back of this newsletter.

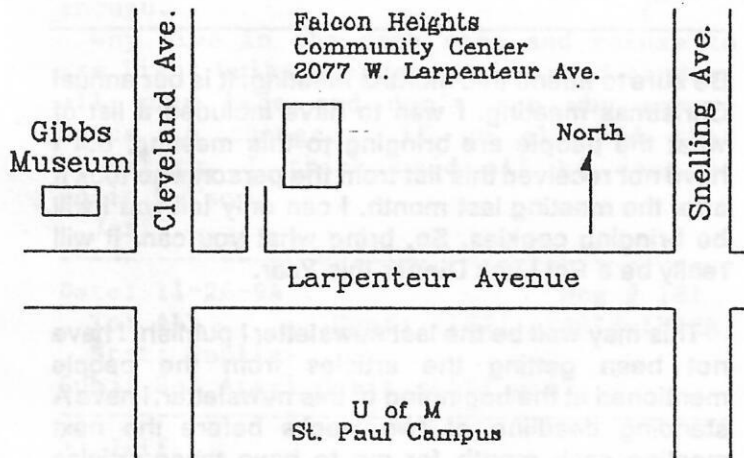
I believe it will be a waste of the Club's money to send out a newsletter that doesn't contain anything but blank spaces where there should be useful and or interesting information for our members. I can not do it alone. I am going to have to have more support in the form of submissions from our members to continue to publish this newsletter.

The Editor

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Saint Paul Atari Computer Enthusiasts (SPACE) meets on the second Friday of each month at 7:30 PM in the Falcon Heights Community Center at 2077 West Larpenteur Ave. Doors open at 7:00 PM.



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