SPACE

NEWSLETTER September, 1998 *October*

Treasurer's Report

by Greg Leitner
September, 1998
oct

Another warm evening for our September Meeting. This is the kind of weather you would expect in July or August. It's the kind of weather that would make it easy to have an excuse to find something better to do than go to a SPACE Meeting. Next month I would hope that we would have most members attend the meeting. The summer is officially over by then and the Elections are looming for the November Meeting. Our October Meeting is very important in that we will have nominations for the Officers of SPACE for the upcoming 1999 calendar year.

As for our treasury, at the end of September we are once again looking very strong. We had a deposit of $105.00 based on one membership renewal, eleven DOM sales and $41.00 collected from the Auction at the August meeting. We had no expenses paid out in September, so our ending balance for September 30th, 1998 now stands at $950.23.

I would like to say a few words about the BBS. The reason we did not have a BBS expense in September is that someone circumvented the system and deliberately destroyed the BBS. Lance indicated that it would take a few weeks to get everything back in order and it sounded like the BBS's harddrive may have to be re-formatted from scratch. Lance waived the BBS monthly bill to SPACE because of this problem. I can't believe there are still hackers out there who want to cause this damage to small BBS's like ours when they have the whole Internet to screw around with. It's too bad that these guys if they are so smart aren't writing some worthwhile programs for us ATARI 8-bitters instead of wasting their talent on mischievous code. Come on guys, we are lucky to still have a BBS for ATARI, don't ruin it for all of us.

Don't forget to plan ahead for the October Meeting. Elections are coming in November and we need candidates for President and Vice President and of course all other positions are open for nominations. See you all in October.

Secretary's Report

by Brian Little
September, 1998   *oct*

No Minutes From The Secretary This Month.

Subj: Always Check the Mirror Before You Start the Car
Date: 98-09-26 17:53:38 EDT

Always Check the Mirror
Before You Start the Car
Keynote speech by Donald A. Thomas Jr.
August 22, 1998 - 10:30 a.m.
World of Atari '98 - Las Vegas, Nevada
©1998 may be reprinted in entirety and with byline

It was about six weeks ago or so that my family hopped a plane from the Sacramento to San Diego for a couple of days. It was a trip we had promised our son for years. -- Actually for about three years now. -- At twelve, Kyle, was very much into skateboarding and inline skating. When we finally connected cable television to the house, it seemed whenever Kyle was not outside our house devising new tricks with his skateboard, he was inside watching the pro-skaters compete in ESPN2 X-treme game competitions.

I don't know if you have watched a lot of the X-treme games like my son has, but Kyle has learned two major lessons in life by watching professional skateboard competitions. First, there are desirable careers to be had in that sport. Secondly, all the nation's skateboard pros live in San Diego, California. Hence, he has had an eager desire to visit that city. Kyle just knew that professional skaters were all over the streets in San Diego and he just had to see and mingle with them.

So now Kyle is fifteen. He is in his early years of high school and a trip to San Diego is an opportunity to tour San Diego State University, a renowned venue for a respectable college education. Of course, now, Kyle isn't into skateboarding any more it's definitely BMX trick cycling.

We hit San Diego during a very warm, but still pleasant weekend. We visited the Zoo on a Sunday and toured the SDSU campus on the Monday before flying back home. On the evening of that Sunday, we were touring the area in our rental car and comparing differences between San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Area. At some point, Kyle told Lynn and me, "One thing is for sure, There aren't all the professional skaters on every street corner like I thought there would be!"

How nice it was to see my son mature and get a better grasp of what the world is really like. Just as I was about to congratulate him on his astute observation, he added, "They must all be on tour."

I guess he still has a little more maturing yet. <g>

Good morning. My name is Don Thomas. I worked at Tramiel's Atari between November 1989 through August 1996. Many Atari users once knew me as a spokesperson for Atari offering feedback and support on CompuServe and the Genie on-line services. I have been an Atari computer user and game player since the early eighties and founded a small software publishing company I called Artisan Software in the late eighties. I have been profiled in publications such as Start Magazine and have had my articles printed in many prominent trade journals and throughout the Internet over the years. I currently work in the video game industry and am responsible for the Web Domain of "I.C.When.COM". "I.C When" is a comprehensive chronological history of video games and home computers.

In a few minutes I will offer an opportunity to answer questions you may have about me, my experiences at Atari or in the industry. But first, I'd like to share some thoughts I have with regard to the impact classic gaming and computing SHOULD have on us all . . . particularly the decision makers and the trend setters.

So my son, Kyle, is convinced that he understands the skateboard industry. He'll be the first to admit that he doesn't know everything, but that is not really the point. The point is more related to the integrity of the information he does know. For instance, he is convinced that skateboarders and BMX riders and inline skaters can earn a respectable living by touring the country and winning competitions. "All it takes is finding the right sponsors," he says.

In most respects, Kyle is simply wrong and he is in for an awakening when he learns that life is most probably going to be made up of flipping hamburgers, going to school and landing a series of traditional jobs throughout his career. On the other hand, Kyle may very well become the Ralph Baer or Nolan Bushnell in some aspect of the X-Games industry. His determination may well persevere and he could be in the right place at the right time as the world adopts a new billion-dollar devotion to world league network of skateboard teams and competitions. If Nolan had listened to his critics, then he may well be an unknown engineer at Lockheed and the world may have never known the same "Pong" that we now know.

But, while we popularize the stories that beat the odds, we often forget to check the mirror in life and see all the mistakes to avoid new failures. The gambles that lost. The bets that may have won if the gamblers looked at all the angles and examined all the risks before starting the machine that failed so unceremoniously.

Now, let's fast-forward away from Baer's Odyssey and Bushnell's "Pong" to a world of PlayStation, Dreamcast, N64 and Color Game Boy. Dare I forget to mention Project X? I think we can all agree that the video game industry has changed in a quarter century. Companies make systems that are MIPS ahead of a time that power was evaluated by how many sprites and colors could be on a screen simultaneously. Technology includes terms related to texture mapping and full motion video instead of bank switching and vertical blanks. Gaming magazines tend to allocate more space to well endowed polygons named Lara. Publishers select games that spatter oceans of blood-red pixels across the screen and replay digitized screams of real-time animated monsters being ripped apart to terrorize more than just our imaginations.

This weekend's World of Atari '98 show is indicative of an old trend that is re-emerging. It is one that explores the value of updating and republishing classic video games. Most recent examples include Activision's libraries of Atari 2600 and Commodore 64 compilations for the PC, Hasbro's release of "Frogger", Namco's series of "Namco Museum" titles for PlayStation, other releases such as "Centipede", "Asteroids" and so many more. I think it is exciting that companies are putting back in to my hands easy access to the games we loved playing so fondly in years gone by.

In my opinion, this trend is not a step backward by any stretch of the imagination and I feel it has been way too slow in coming. I believe that the video game industry has successfully established a new market of game players in the last decade. By doing so, they have abandoned the original phenomenon that built the industry twenty years ago and, thus they have abandoned those who loved it so. I guess it could be similar as if the music industry gave up on classical, swing, blues or jazz just because most of the world seems to appreciate some form of rock.

So what is it exactly that built the industry? What is this phenomenon that differentiates the games of the nineties from those introduced in the seventies and eighties?

Many of us at Atari had a name for the formula that makes classic games so great. I don't know if anyone else ever tried to define it like I have, but it is three simple words, "The. Fun. Factor.".

I define the fun factor as a phenomenon that includes five primary components: I can remember them more easily because the parts spell out the word PRESS as in "Press the Fire Button".

1. high score Potential
2. Repetition
3. Ease of learning
4. Strategy
5. Secrets

All games, past and present, have to have some mixture of these components to survive very long on the marketplace. But only the original classic games consistently maintain a balance of all of them.

Let's look at them quickly. First, I mentioned "high score Potential". (I am cheating a little bit to steal the P from potential to make the anagram, but it is a very serious component.)

You might remember "Pong" had scoring. It had to. It was the only measure of how one did when playing the game. A higher score than your opponent meant that you won the game. A higher score than the computer player meant that you beat the game. But, by today's standard, the scores were awfully unimpressive. A good game might conclude with a score of 11, maybe 15 depending on the version of "Pong" being played.

Then there were games like "Warlords", "Breakout" and "Missile Command". Suddenly games allowed players to score as high into the hundreds, maybe thousands. Then along came "Galaxian" and "Phoenix" which doused players with scores in the tens and hundreds of thousands.

Eventually, next generation games took over and high scores have been fading fast. Games are too complicated to score anymore. Racing games give lap times. R.P.G.'s reward players with new levels and fulfilled objectives. Arcades no longer publish player high scores over each machine and we never hear about a game that revealed something unusual simply because a determined player hit a new high score.

There is an article I found in the most recent September 1998 issue of Next Generation magazine. The article starts on page 10 and is titled: "When was the last time you scored?" The piece concludes and I quote, "Will score ever come back? Probably not. As technology evolves, games will become even more complex, and current titles that still employ a high score, such as 'N20', 'Einhander', and 'Incoming', are in an ever-smaller minority."

The article sheds some rays of hope however and I quote further, "But classic games are making something of a comeback; titles like 'Centipede' and 'Asteroids' are being retrofitted for the 90's, with score intact."

Sadly the author concludes, "Still, it's safe to say that score will never play the pivotal role it once did in gaming history."

If nothing else, I am not the only one that believes that high score potential is an elementary difference between games of today and yesterday.

Let's look at the second element of the fun factor. Repetition.

When I say Repetition, I am describing the ability to identify a way that a game is played within the first few seconds of pressing the start button and depend on that overall premise to stay the same throughout the game. "Pitfall" is a game that includes climbing, swinging and jumping in a horizontal scrolling format. The obstacles may change their positions, the ladders may not always be on the left or on the right, but the game never ends up being different than how it started. Each new wave, each new level predictably resembles the one prior.

Someone might say, ah, but "Gorf" deviated from that formula and "Donkey Kong" had a series of different virtual game venues that had a lot of changes from one level to the next. Well, not really.

It may have taken more than a few seconds to learn the new looks of each level, but they eventually recycled and the series of levels fit the definition of repetition that I am describing here.

Okay, let's look at ease of learning the E in the anagram that defines the fun factor.

Many people tell me that ease of learning is not at all missing from games today. They bring up games like "Unreal", "Gran Turismo" or "Crash Bandicoot". Yes, those are relatively easy games to learn, but are still far more complex than walking up to a machine, dropping a quarter and driving a circle through a maze to eat dots and avoid ghosts. I've played "Unreal". It's fun, but there are a lot complexities too. A lot of passages to discover. A lot of items to recover. A very difficult game to sit down and compete against your previous high score.

I have played "Gran Turismo". It is undeniably a phenomenal racing game. Of course I have to be concerned with a lot more than I did when I played "Night Driver" or even "Pole Position". There's tire tread, engine capabilities, car handling. Not much instant plug-and-play here.

I have enjoyed many hours of "Crash Bandicoot" and "Crash Bandicoot 2". I know I will rush out and buy "Crash Bandicoot 3". But it is more complex of a game to learn and accomplish than "Space Invaders" or "Missile Command".

Games from yesteryear, games that were filled with the fun factor, were never hard to learn. Often hard to master, but never hard to learn.

All games require the gamer to learn and apply a strategy to master the gameplay. Whether it is "Checkers" or "Othello", "Boxing" or "Street Fighter", there are one or more strategic moves that enable competitors to score better with experience.

Finally, the fun factor is unleashed in any specific game when there are Secrets in or about the game to be discovered. A secret may be a hidden level or character. Maybe it is a code to add lives or weapons. Maybe it is a way to see the programmer's initials such in Atari's "Adventure" or "Yar's Revenge". Or, perhaps it is a fascinating story on how the game was developed or marketed.

So why does an understanding of the fun factor and the appealing aspects of video games from yesterday have significance to you and me today?

Because we are approaching a new fork in the road. An opportunity to go in new directions. New generations of video game systems such as Dreamcast and Project X as well as whatever competing products designed to knock the socks off of the mass market. And before we embark on a journey to new next-next-generation technology, let's check the rear view mirror. Let us begin to recognize the market that wants to play classic favorites or new games that instill the fun factor into them. Let's put high score back into the game.

I applaud what companies such as Hasbro for what they appear to be doing. Their focus on reintroducing some of the world's greatest software titles on up-to-date platforms is cutting edge. Hasbro has tasted the success with "Frogger" selling over a million copies in less than six months since its launch last November. "Centipede" will undoubtedly do similarly as well. I believe that they will do equally as well with each new title as long as they look back and enhance them using the same formula that made them great in the first place.

Thankfully, companies like Hasbro and Activision and Namco and nYko are beginning to adjust the mirror before moving forward on new projects. They may not always make the greatest decisions based on what they have seen behind them, but they are pulling out into the proverbial traffic of progress while being more informed.

I'd like to suggest to forward thinking companies in this business two things. It's wise to check the mirror and apply the good things from the past into the things they do in our future. And, secondly, it would be smart to look for more ways to work together to solidify a plan to help legitimize the gaming industry completely. Let's find more opportunities to recognize all the better games and to put the people who create them in the spotlight.

END

Subj: The AfterMath
Date: 98-09-26 18:08:32 EDT
From: mcurrent@carleton.edu (Michael Current)
To: xx004@cleveland.freenet.edu, kirscheg@juno.com, mschm65612@aol.com, stirrell@portland.com, john_davison@compuserve.com, mcurrent@carleton.edu

- The AfterMath -
by Donald A. Thomas, Jr.
©1997-1998 - Donald A. Thomas, Jr.
all rights reserved - http://www.icwhen.com
May be reprinted in entirety with byline.
(Revised 08/26/98)
(WINDOW DRESSING: Mr. Mark Santora is producing a quality video documentary of WOA '98. For information and ordering, visit, Mark's homepage at: http://home.earthlink.net/~santora.)

Suddenly, a Vegas weekend has passed me by and I find myself on a plane chasing a Sunday sunset toward the western horizon. The first annual Classic Video Game and Home Computer Show, otherwise touted as World of Atari '98, had come to a close. The people and the memories have bid me a fond farewell. While mere hours before I was saturated in a sea of camaraderie I now find myself heading home in an airship of anonymity. I did not win the "Asteroids" cocktail table raffled by Mr. Tim Arnold to benefit the Las Vegas Salvation Army, but I did carry with me a few small boxes of memorabilia that I consider just as priceless. And I carry a camcorder crammed with a few hours of video. And I carry a few chocolates for my wife and son as they stay up at home to ask me if I had a nice time.

I now feel inspired to share, with those who honored us by attending and for those who so desperately wanted to go, a report of the show from my unique perspective. It was an interesting change of pace for me. After so many years of attending Comdex, CES, E3 and a number of Atari-specific shows over the years as one of the crew, I am suddenly bestowed the title of Distinguished Guest. This time, I am not responsible to help set up walls of a booth, components of a kiosk or crates of literature. Instead, I am invited to verbalize my experiences at Atari, shake friends of old and new and sign an occasional request for an autograph.

Mr. Keita Iida and Mr. Don Rogers greeted me at McCarran International Airport around noon on Friday, August 21, 1998. Both gentlemen were anxious to help carry my bags. In spite of my insistence to carry them myself, Keita managed to grab one away as I put one down to switch hands. They took me to the Holiday Inn Boardwalk Hotel and Casino (http://www.hiboardwalk.com) located right on the world famous Vegas strip. The hotel required me to wait a couple hours to register so we checked my bags and a group of us drove over to TGI Friday's (http://www.tgifridays.com) for lunch.

In the earliest hours of my arrival I met all the core promoters. Mr Rich Tsukiji has one of those last names that I can spell, but just cannot learn to pronounce. I feel redeemed, however, since I later learned he once misspelled my last name in the official program. Payback maybe? <g> In reality I have always known Rich as Rich and he has always known me as Don. We have always been on a

first name basis from the first time we met. In fact, those years go back almost a decade when World of Atari was held at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California. It was at that show that Rich helped me to introduce Artisan Software in its first ever public exhibition. Rich filled the role of producer at WOA '98. The event is ultimately to his credit just like we owe him for the experiences at so many Atari-specific events over the years. It was good to see Rich again and to meet Rich Tsukiji II, the proud offspring of his father.

Mr. John Hardie was rubbing his tired eyes but still found plenty of energy to smile and welcome the guests as they arrived. John and Keita co-produce the Atari Headquarters web domain (http://www.atarihq.com). The two gentlemen actually coordinated most of the events at the show, helped solicit sponsors and arrange keynotes. By this time on Friday they have already spent a great deal of time keeping promises and schedules on track. Before it would be over, they would see it get much worse before it would get better.

Mr. Brad Kota, was an inspiration for this year's show. As a long time friend and colleague of Mr. Tsukiji, Brad helped to persuade him that there would be interest in a classic video game show. Brad's Best Electronics has always been a formidable icon in the industry with the world's most unique selection of hard-to-find components and parts for Atari video games and computers.

I soon caught up with Mr. Randy Stoller, a memorable young man who has a rare collection of classic game and computer products. Mr. Jerry Jessop worked at Atari in the late seventies and early eighties. Jerry did a variety of engineering projects at Atari. Mr. Dan Kramer is renowned for his work on the track ball at Atari in the early years. Mr. Leonard Herman, author of "Pheonix: The Fall and Rise of Videogames" and the "ABC to the VCS" (Rolenta Press, http://www.atarihq.com/features/phoenix.html), was setting up to offer autographed copies of his books. Mr. Sean Kelly, of Digital Press, set up next to Leonard to offer his Classic Videogame Commercial Archive on VHS tapes (http://www.xnet.com/~skelly/video.htm). Amidst all the hustle and bustle, mammoth crates were moved carefully into the vender area. Each one was marked "Atari Historical Society" (http://www.atari.nu) and followed closely by a Mr. Curt Vendel.

By 3 p.m. on Friday, the show appeared to be coming together quite well. (I was happy. I finally received my key to room number 463.) Anyone in the know, however, knew things were not going as well as hoped. There were problems. Throughout the afternoon, Rich Tsukiji had to run around Las Vegas city offices to accommodate a variety of exhibition permits that had previously not been required. WOA '98 was becoming a much bigger show than some people had anticipated and an entirely new plateau of permits and licenses were suddenly required. With a lot of hot Vegas sweat and a heavy dose of Tsukiji finesse, Rich pulled everything together just as the city was locking the business office doors closed for the weekend.

Meanwhile, back at the not-so-okay coral, Keita sat next to a pair of gold plated pay phones in the foyer of the convention floor. He had long run out of quarters to feed the phones and was now typing out the same numbers into his cellular phone that Don Rogers pointed out in a thick edition of the Las Vegas yellow pages. The mission: get between six to eight 19-inch color televisions to the show at a reasonable price before the rental stores closed and WOA '98 commenced. The long awaited "Battlesphere" tournaments must go on, but no televisions had shown up as originally planned.

Ultimately, Keita and Rich resolved their emergencies to everyone's satisfaction, but the energy was building and the pressure was mounting. Mr. Bruce Carso and his wife and family arrived with their 15-foot box truck direct from B&C ComputerVisions (http://www.myatari.com). Mr. Tim Arnold had his classic coin-ops

to unload. Mr. Jerry Jessop and Mr. Dan Kramer had a large rental van full of artifacts for the Classic Game Museum. Artifacts that included the very first "Computer Space" ever manufactured and an original coin-op "Pong". Mr. Steve Kipker and his crew from Steve's Software (http://www.atarionline.com) set up countless boxes of computer and gaming software featuring notable mentions such as "Air Cars" ($75) for the Atari Jaguar and "Visicalc" ($1) for Atari computers. All new in originally shrink-wrapped packaging of course.

Keita and John would not get much sleep again this long and anxious day. Even at late night hours, they had yet to set up their own contributions to the museum that required a painstaking system to catalog and arrange all of the displays and exhibits. Much of this time I didn't feel right just standing around. Everyone was working so hard. I did my best to document the course of events with my camcorder, but I did set it aside for a while to help Bruce and Cathy unload their truck.

At 6:30 p.m., the doors opened across the hall of the main convention hall to the formal reception area. Persons connected directly to the production of the show took a well-deserved break and pre-ticketed attendees were all invited. There were two cash bars, a great sound system playing the soundtrack from "Tempest 2000" and wall-to-wall people. Rich asked me to make a few opening remarks. People who know me do not think I am much capable of making just a few remarks, but I managed to prove them wrong this time around. I thanked Rich, Brad, John and Keita. I urged others to find them and thank them all as well. Rich asked me to tell them how to get their programs for the show and I closed with a formal welcome to each and everyone in attendance.

Not too long after the reception, activities began to settle down to a realistic pace. Most of the venders had found time to sigh and only John and Keita were still in a mode that some say resembles panic. In spite of it all, Rich, John, Keita and a few others including myself broke away to get some dinner at Applebee's Neighborhood Grille and Bar (http://www.applebees.com). I am familiar with the Applebee's chain, but I have no idea where Keita took us that night to get there. The trip allowed me to renew a friendship with Rich and we filled in a lot of blanks for a number of old Atari anecdotes from days gone by.

Immediately after dinner, we returned to the Boardwalk and Rich, Keita and John returned to work as if they had never yet started. The appeal of the slot machines overcame me and I began to throw money away into as many of them as I could. Ouch. By around 2:30 a.m. I returned to room 463 and reread my keynote speech one more time. Well, two more times. Hmmm, a few typos. Maybe it turned out being several times before I actually turned out the lights around 4 a.m.

Lynn, my wife, refused to bear the Las Vegas heat with me. She knew I would be pre-occupied and decided playing mom was a most important role at home. As always, she turned out being the wise woman I know and adore. Saturday was hot long before anyone had a chance to complain about it. Staying at the same hotel as the show was wonderful and the uncomfortable heat was felt only near the windows. I arose at 8:40 a.m. By 10 o'clock I walked past a long, long line of attendees who clearly wanted the doors to open sooner rather than later. At approximately, 10:07 a.m. the doors pushed back the crowd as they opened and the crowd calmly funneled themselves into the exhibition floor.

I took a lot of videotape and will need to dedicate a day to review it all. But from recollection, there were items for sale and items for display. There were displays for display and displays for sale. There were mint condition Ms. Pac-Man dolls offered by Jack Berg Sales Company, a firm based in El Paso, Texas. There were hard-to-find coin-op art panels available from the Atari Historical Society. There

were mint copies of "Metorite" ($75) for the Atari 5200 game system offered by Atari Headquarters. Mr. David Naghi and Mr. Robert Rienick introduce nYko Technologies' (http://www.nyko.com) new Classic Track Ball for the PlayStation (http://www.playstation.com) game console.

In a center aisle, Tim Arnold kept track of the raffle total with a makeshift tally redesigned from an old pinball game. Each of his targeted $1,500 rung out with a loud bell and Tim would make hourly announcements of small prize winners using a handheld megaphone.

At 10:30 a.m., I entered the keynote hall (a.k.a. the reception area from the night before). There was a small number of people there awaiting my arrival for my keynote. "Phew", I thought to myself as I knew speaking to just a few people would be a stress-less task. At that moment, Keita Iida saw I was ready and ran across the hall to announce my speech. In an instant, the crowd from the venders area swarmed to the keynote area and left only the rearmost group of chairs unclaimed.

I enjoy speaking. I have performed in some amateur theater in my younger days and I know no shame to admit that I enjoy a little notoriety from time to time. This was different. People were seated before me truly interested in what I was about to say. (http://www.icwhen.com/articles/keynote_82298.html) Was my talk too short? Would it be too long? Would it be meaningful or sound like rambling? I decided the best thing to do was do it. I had 19 (very small) pages of script and I tried hard to refer to it as little as possible while looking at my audience as much as possible. It must have not been too bad. People asked a number of great questions after the talk and followed me into the corridor to ask more. One very attractive young lady wanted to know if I was the founder of Atari. I said "no".

Now that my keynote was over, the pressure of the weekend had been lifted from my shoulders and I was free to do nothing more except enjoy the show. And I did. Big time. I met with Mr. Rob Fulop, designer of "Demon Attack" for the Atari 2600. I saw the rare Cosmos, the holographic game system, designed by Atari before Mr. Jack Tramiel sold holograph technology to American Banknote (http://www.abnh.com). I saw rare prototypes such as "Dukes of Hazard" for the Atari 2600. I saw an early mold of the Atari Portfolio computer. I saw mint condition still-packaged Colecovision carts. There were photocopies of rare internal Atari documents. One collector showed me an entire box of badges for Atari employees from many, many years ago. At 5 p.m., the exhibit hall for the first day came to a close, but a swap meet commenced in the keynote area that lasted a couple hours.

That evening, I met David Naghi and Robert Rienick in the hotel lobby at 7 p.m. Robert's wife, Betty, also caught up with us and the trio escorted me to Gordon Biersch (http://www.gordonbiersch.com) for dinner. David and Robert shared a number of great things they have planned for their product lines. Meanwhile I enjoyed a tremendous garlic-rubbed hanger steak and an unusually decadent slice of cheesecake.

There was no rush for me to get up terribly early on Sunday. I wanted to be there when the doors opened at 10 a.m. and I was. My new camcorder also takes digital stills and I exploited some of the pre-show inactivity to take pictures of the coin-ops scattered throughout the hall. When the doors opened, a steady stream of aficionados came and left throughout the day.

On this day, I had a greater opportunity to sit in on some of the other keynotes. First, was a presentation from Dan Kramer and Jerry Jessop. They told a number of stories from their days at Atari as renegade engineers. If the audience was not spellbound, they were laughing at an intentional quip or waving their hands to ask a new question. Also this day, I sat in on a talk by Mr. Bill Kunkel, co-founder of Electronic Games Magazine. Bill spoke of the early trade

shows and the horrific videogame industry crash that tore many of the companies apart. Dave Staugas was WOA '98's surprise speaker during mid-afternoon. Dave spoke how he survived the Tramiel takeover and created a number of games and applications for Atari over the years. The keynotes, as well as the other events at World of Atari '98 are being documented by Mr. Mark Santora's video. For information on ordering this video visit http://home.earthlink.net/~santora.

In late afternoon, I introduced myself to Mr. Derek Mihocka of Gemulators Inc. (http://www.emulators.com) who was demonstrating Gemulator '98. This incredible device allows Atari ST, STe and TT software or Apple Macintosh, Mac SE or Mac II software to run at lightning speeds in a Windows environment for prices way under $200.

Also intriguing at the show was the new Lynx TV converter by Wizztronics (http://www.wizztronics.com) shown by founder, Mr. Steve Cohen. The device enables users to play Atari handheld Lynx games directly on a standard televisionŠ even a big screen! The resolution looked fantastic and the picture was incredibly stable. For under $150 users can finally see and play Lynx games on a full size screen.

Nearing the end of the day, the Auction was held and nearly one hundred items were put up for bid. Mr. Alan Miller, certified, licensed and bonded auctioneer, U.S.A. Auctions, conducted the auction. A number of one-of-a-kind and unusual artifacts and products were shown and blocked. Rich Tsukiji whispered to me that this was undoubtedly the world's first professional auction of Atari products.

Around 4 p.m., Tim Arnold picked the last few winners of the raffle. (Darn, I did not win the "Asteroids" game.) Activities in the main hall had died down and venders had already begun to pack things up. In the far corner, Jerry Jessop and friends were doing their best to sell off items still on the table. I wanted to spend some time filming the "Battlesphere" tournament, but it was always so crowded in that corner of the hall. Mr. Scott Le Grand and Ms. Stephanie Wukovitz of 4Play (http://www.best.com/~sebab/dvidgames/dsphere/sphere.shtml) had the crowd captive, but by the time I got back over to there following the auction, the winner was declared and gone.

There is no way to explain the pleasures that come to us at events such as these. Those of us in the industry love it. We remember unpacking trainloads of boxes and crates for the Winter or Summer Consumer Electronics Shows or a Comdex. We remember working late at night wondering all the while if the booth would be completed by the time the show started. We remember gathering late at night to fulfill traditions at a local pub or restaurant. We remember new product launches and all those times that something was supposed to work and didn't. World of Atari '98 serves as a forum for us to recall those memories and to relive them through the stories we tell.

For those who love the industry, but are not employed as a part of it, I know it is equally fun to be a part of WOA '98. I know because I am uniquely a part of that crowd too. I got into the business as a happenstance and as an outsider who swore to myself that I would never forget how it felt to press my nose against the glass looking in. I don't believe I have ever failed that personal promise. Some said at WOA '98 that I started a trend to get the programs autographed. I managed to get almost everyone although I missed a few. There was Rob Fulop who I did miss in spite of intentions otherwise, but I did get Mr. Michael Mika of Next Generation Magazine (http://www.next-generation.com). I missed Marshall Rosenthal of the LA Times (http://www.latimes.com), but I did get Ms. Van Burnham of Wired Magazine (http://www.wired.com). I got most all of the venders that I have known over the years to sign my programs and of course the likes of Sean Kelly, Leonard Herman, Jerry

Jessop, Arnie Katz, David Staugas and the rest of the World of Atari '98.

I am not certain why I did not see representation from Hasbro InterActive (http://www.hasbro-interactive.com) A lot of people would like to know what their plans are with their new acquisition. A lot of people want to know why ATARI.COM seems to have been abandoned since JTS (http://www.jtscorp.com) shut it down (especially me since I produced the original site for Atari). People like Mr. Nolan Bushnell would have been nice to see one day. Other names that would have fit in well with the atmosphere would have been Activision and Williams.

Just the same, I had one heck of a great time.

Do I have any regrets at all? Yup. I regret losing as much as I did in the slots.

END

Subj: Pooldisk TOO double cdrom
Date: 98-09-26 16:56:10 EDT
From: mcurrent@carleton.edu (Michael Current)

Hi Atarian,

We're about to release the "out of this world" experience of the year. It's our upcoming POOLDISK TOO cdrom with mostly Atari 8bit stuff on it. The release date is October 24th on the ABBUC's Jahres Haupt Versammlung (JHV) in Herten in Germany.

So, you still have 1 month to contribute to this project if you want to. Did you write a nifty Atari 8 bit program and want to put it in the Public Domain, or is it shareware, send it to us, and we'll put it on the CD. Besides helping the Atari 8bit community, you get a nice backup of your software as well ;)

We're also interested in pd from Page 6. We miss a lot of disks there, so if you've got a Page 6 pd disk, it would be nice if you could email us a disk image of it.
The closing date of sending software to us will be October 21st, because we will be burning disks on October 22nd and 23rd all day... Besides software you can email nice pictures of Atari artifacts as well, as long as it has to do with our beloved 8bit computer it's OK. On the new Pooldisk, we've also included some Internet homepages. If you've got a nice homepage, send us the URL and we'll include it on our CD. You probably guessed it, if you've got something interesting concerning the Atari 8bit, and want to share it with the rest of the Atari community, send it to us, and we'll put it on the CD.
The new POOLDISK cdrom will consist of 2 CD's.

It seems like one cdrom will only contain .ATR disk images (650 MB or so). We removed the .XFD disk images because of the limit in disk space <grin>, and one can transform an .ATR disk into a .XFD image using ATR2XFD anyway. Some nice people and clubs already contributed to our new project, like ABBUC, SCAT, BELLCOM (Bob Wooley), Thunderdome BBS, just to name a few.

The other cdrom will contain movies, internet homepages, Atari 8bit pc programs, Mapping the Atari in electronic format, pictures of covers, hardware and other Atari related stuff. The double disk cdrom can be ordered through the ABBUC. Prices and such will be announced on the Internet after the ABBUC's JHV on October the 25th (all dates are in GMT).

Sincerely,
Bo and Ernest Schreurs
Email your disks, software, scans to: ernest@wxs.nl

Subj: Atari800Win 2.4
Date: 98-09-18 16:14:55 EDT
From: mcurrent@carleton.edu (Michael Current)
Date: Wed, 9 Sep 1998 06:59:33 CST

I have updated Atari800win at the usual home page,

http://www.cris.com/~Twist/atari800win

Atari800Win is an Atari 8-bit emulator for the Win9X/NT environment. It emulates the Atari800, 800XL, XE series, and 5200 systems.

Here is what is new in version 2.4:

09-08-98   Ver 2.4 - large update, some beta features
   * A request: I am looking for an image of the 8-bit Epyx game "Hellfire Warrior". I'm not sure if it was available for the Atari, but it was for the Apple][. I own this game, but only have the TRS-80 disk image. If you can help, please e-mail rich@cstone.net
   * Big feature: support for save states (also known as "snapshots"). You must have ZLIB working (the DLL supplied with Atari800Win must be in the path) to use this. Saved states saves _everything_ about your Atari itself, the entire contents of memory, where you are in a program, etc. A save state does NOT save your display, input, or sound settings. When you load a state save, the Atari will be paused on a black screen. Hit F9 to start the saved state. Saved state file sizes will vary based on the machine type and what it was doing / had loaded. Use the File menu to access the Load/Save state features. There are two types of save: normal and verbose. Verbose is ONLY necessary if you have patched ROMS that somebody else wouldn't have. Verbose saves are larger.

Save states should be considered a somewhat beta feature. Changes might affect the format as other Atari800 ports adopt it, making the current format obsolete. Keep in mind that even if you snapshot a program it may still want to access the disk later; and save states do NOT save disks. If you know a program accesses the disk, you will have to keep the disk handy with your save state to resume later. Save state are machine independent; they will be useable on other ports of Atari800.
   * Machine language routines here and there; small speed difference. I spent considerable time rewriting some large sections in assembly, and found there was little speed increase in them even when heavily optimized. I'll continue investigating asm for things like Antic though.
   * Atari crashes are much less dramatic now, as you don't have to exit Atari800Win. The screen will simply go black, you then have the opportunity to change settings, and there is a new Atari/Restart menu option to fire the machine up again (Ctrl-F5 will also work).
   * Added 512x384 mode. Should help those on slow machines without 320 modes. Shows full overscan and on most cards has that "scanline" feel.
   * Completely rewrote the keyboard handler, many changes include:
     - A few layout changes; see README.TXT
     - Insert/Delete work correctly (char normally, line when shifted)
     - Clear character now on the Windows Home key
     - Option/Select/Start can be held down in combinations, fixes some demos
     - When holding a regular key, pressing then releasing a second key will have no effect (the first key will stay held).
     - Hold down a regular key, hold down a second. Release the first key. The Atari will register the second key as being held down after exactly 1 frame of no keys.
     - F1-F4 exist only for XL, returns no keyboard code for other machines.

- Help returns no code for non XL/XE machine
- With CTRL + SHIFT held, the following keys do NOT work on purpose: J K L ; + * Z X C V B F1 F2 F3 F4 and HELP

In many cases the new behavior my seem more limiting than before; but it is now highly accurate compared to the real hardware. Many hours in testing with a real XE back this up. Since there is considerable new code there may be an errant key here or there; please e-mail me if you find keyboard oddities (or if you find things fixed!)

* Keyboard templates option added (Options/Keyboard.. menu). This is a complicated feature for expert users, consult the README for details. Do not mess with it if you don't understand the purpose. Briefly, It allows you to remap almost the entire keyboard to anything you wish to define. Helpful for games that use whacked out directional keys like the Ultima series or if you want to exactly duplicate the Atari layout.

* Keyboard joystick reworked. Now handles combination keys (numpad4 + numpad8 = diagonal up/right). Ignores your Windows key delay / repeat settings and works right off the keystroke (instant feedback).

* Checkbox for "use AGP memory", which controls whether a surface is allocated as "local video memory" in Ddraw terms. This is basically for DDraw windowed modes, and could be faster, much slower, or no change on any particular card - you'll just have to try it and compare.

* Fixed a problem with small graphics selector dialog used in 320 modes.

* All full screen modes clear their backgrounds.

* Bolder, more ambitious icons, less filling but taste great. Any icon artists out there?

* Machine type and speed shown in window title (status bar in full screen)

* Finally remembered to add keyboard click. You will notice a slight delay between the keystroke and sound, can't be helped at present.

* Fixed a display bug that had crept in when in windowed mode with the display partially off the desktop

* If you exit while running full speed, the next time you launch sound will be (correctly) disabled until you switch back to normal speed

* Pause shows paused text on Atari screen (for full screen modes)

* Fixed crash bug that sometimes occurred changing artifacting modes.

The Following are a couple of E-Mail's I've received. (EDITOR)

Subj: Atari System For Sale
Date: 98-09-09 16:52:59 EDT
From: MWillia142

Hello,
    I have an Atari 1040 ST with monitor and a Syquest 2 Cartridge Hard Drive (40 mbs. each) with the Link for sale. I also have a Mega file 30 computer/hard drive with an SLM 804 Atari Laser Printer. Recently, due to graphics limitations (I do much layout work), I switched platforms. The Atari systems have been wonderful to me; I've used them in my music business for several years.
    If you know of any one who might be interested in purchasing some Atari hard ware please refer them to me. I have know idea what the current value is but will consider all reasonable offers. Calumus Desk Top Publishing is loaded on the Mega file system along with the musical sequencer-Cubase (Steinburg Jones) which is quite sophisticated.   Thanks for your consideration.
Mike W.
My web site: http://members.aol.com/MWillia142/index.html

Subj: Atari and Linux
Date: 98-09-06 19:57:24 EDT
From: floyd@novia.net (Matt Mullin)
To: MSchm65612@aol.com

I've recently been experimenting with Linux on a PC and a friend told me there is a version for the ST. I have had an ST since they first came out. The idea of having my 520 ST on a network with my PCs is prompting me to ask for some advice. I need info on installing a hard drive in my ST, and obtaining Linux for the 520 (I've seen it only for the Falcon) or perhaps you could even suggest alternatives. I've run the emulators, and my PC does ST very well, but it's just not the same. Please help me make my Atari live again.

Subj: Atari
Date: 98-09-26 09:25:02 EDT
From: the-womble@geocities.com (Pete Williams)
To: kirscheg@juno.com, MSchm65612@aol.com,
pac@pacifier.com, acaoc@imagiware.com

Hi, I need to know the answers of some Atari questions for a competition, can you help? the questions are;
1) what does the Atari symbol represent
2) Who Owns Atari
3) What does Atari mean in Japanese
Thanks
--
From Pete Williams
(The Womble)
Surrey, England
the-womble@geocities.com
Motor Madness: http://surf.to/cars
The MotorSport Webring: http://surf.to/MotorSports
1001 Resources for Webmasters http://come.to/resources

Subj: atari equipment
Date: 98-09-24 15:23:22 EDT
From: rjanzal@up.net (Robert Anzalone)
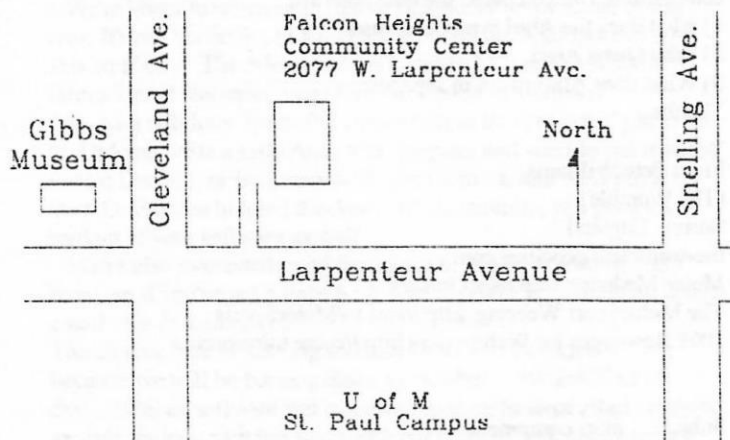To: MSchm65612@aol.com

    I have some Atari computer equipment that is just gathering dust and I was hoping you could help me find a home for them. I have 2 800XLs, 2 disk drives, 1 data recorder, 1 printer interface, many game cartridges and disks, some programs, and some dust covers. If you know anybody interested please contact me via my e-mail address. Thanks in advance for your help.

Bob.
(906)466-2628

CLUB OFFICIALS

President:	Greg Leitner (Temp)	455-6550
Vice President:	Greg Leitner	XXX-XXXX
Secretary:	Brian C. Little	XXX-XXXX
DOM Librarian:	Vacant	XXX-XXXX
Paper Librarian:	Vacant	XXX-XXXX
Software Librarian:	Vacant	XXX-XXXX
Membership Chairman:	Glen Kirschenmann	786-4790
SPACE Treasurer	Greg Leitner	455-6550
SPACE Newsletter Editor:	Michael Schmidt	757-4192

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.

DISCLAIMER

Falcon Heights
Community Center
2077 W. Larpenteur Ave.

Gibbs Museum

Cleveland Ave.

Snelling Ave.

North

Larpenteur Avenue

U of M
St. Paul Campus

S.P.A.C.E.
P.O. Box 120016
New Brighton, MN 55112

SPACE BBS

BBS Phone: (612)-462-3680

Sysop: None

Co-sysop: Open Position

Supporting:

ATARI 8-Bit Computers

ATARI ST Computers

MPLS MN 554 10/06/98 21:10

MINNEAPOLIS MN 554
PM
6 OCT
1998

USA 32

55057X3119 07