

MICHIGAN ASTROBUGS NEWSLETTER

Secretary: Peggy Gladden * 59400 Nine Mile Road * South Lyon, Michigan 48178 * Phone (313) 437-3984 * October 1982
Board Members: Brett Bilbrey, George Moses, Marion Malepa, Don & Peggy Gladden, Chris Williams, Dave Ibach, Steve Walters
Newsletter by Peggy and Don Gladden, contributing articles by authors as listed.

WHERE WILL BUGS ATTACK?

As of our November 14, 1982 meeting, we now have a permanent meeting place. We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience of having our meetings at a new place every time, but now that has finally ended. We now have roots!

The starting time for the meeting is 2:00 P.M., and it will end...whenever. There is a map on the back to give you directions. Please keep it in a safe place, so eventually, we will not have to re-print it every newsletter.

Also, there is one parking problem. we'll be at a fire hall, and the trucks will be outside. PLEASE DO NOT park in front of a firetruck. They cannot be blocked in!!! THANKS!

MASTER PLAN

Here is the tentative line-up for our November meeting:

Time Activity

- 2:00-3:00 **GENERAL MEETING**
We urge all club members to attend this meeting. We have several items to discuss.
- 3:10-3:40 **BASIC CLASS**
Don Gladden will continue this class which seemed to be a hit at our last meeting. Bring any questions that you have.
- 3:50-4:20 **HARDWARE INTERFACING**
Marion Malepa will answer questions and show how to hook up your arcade to the "Outside World".

We may add more to the schedule, depending if anything new comes up. If you have something you want to show or tell, contact Peggy. (437-3984)

During the GENERAL MEETING (2-3 P.M.) we will not have any other activities going on. Brett will bring a ColecoVision, and Mike Toth an Atari 800 home computer. This will give us an idea of what the competition is doing. Also, George Moses will give a demonstration of new hardware and software.

Starting at 3:00, the 25 cent games will be running, as will the "Corner Store" and other activities.

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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
X      Newsletter, Editing and Typesetting      X
X      Done by Spectre Systems                  X
X      Mike Toth and Brett Bilbrey              X
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WINNERS AND SCORES FROM AUGUST 1982 MEETING:

WIZARD T-SHIRT WINNER:

Billy Zdan 2,920 (Level 3)

25 CENT GAME WINNERS:

SPACE FORTRESS LEVEL 9 BASES 3

1-Geoff Siembor 10,200
2-Billy Zdan 7,550
3-Jamie Brown 7,025

GALACTIC INVASION LEVEL 9 BASES 3

1-Darrell haines 406

THE WIZARD LEVEL 3 ONE PLAYER

1-Billy Zdan 4,340
2-Dave Devries 2,540
3-Shawn Williams 2,400

SPACE INVADERS LEVEL 4

1-Jamie Brown 2,360
2-Billy Zdan 1,560
3-Geoff Siembor 1,530

PINBALL GAME ONE

1-Dave Devries 21,650
2-Jamie Brown 5,120
3-Geoff Siembor 2,370

PIRATES CHASE LEVEL 9 TURNS 3

1-Peggy Gladden 9,923
2-Geoff Siembor 640

VIDEO BUGS

At our August meeting, we tried our new "FUN GAMES" category, and it was a hit! We held a 25 cent per game corner to see who could get the highest scores on the chosen cartridges. It was so much fun that we've decided to give buttons for the top three scores in each game. The people who had the top scores at our last meeting will get their buttons at this meeting, and the people who win from now on will get their buttons before they go home.

The cartridges we used at the last meeting, seemed popular enough. So we're going to carry them on to this meeting, with one exception: We want to add one cartridge. Since our board could not think of any one game, we've decided to hold a vote. However, there's one slight catch.... you can only vote if you do not live in Michigan!! Okay, out-of-staters, this is your chance for us to give you another high score to beat. So let us know by November 5, just which cartridge (no game tapes please) you want us to add to our contest. The cartridges we already use are shown in the list of winners above!

HAVE YOU HEARD?

This column will be dedicated to new club news and special events. We have several changes and additions to tell you about.

First of all, The board held a meeting and thoroughly discussed our financial status. As you know, we are non-profit, but WOW is it showing!! The only fees our group has coming in right now are our membership fees, which are very scattered. What funds we can raise are used to invite guest speakers to our meetings. Our club tape will hopefully bring in some profits, but we don't know how much, and will not know until our November meeting.

REFRESHMENTS:

In the meantime, we are trying to hold our meetings on a bare minimum. Our fees are barely covering our refreshment costs, which is why we have been running out of refreshments. We have had an unfortunate situation with an exceptional number of hungry teens, who spend most of the meeting at the snack table.

To be fair, and to have enough to go around, we've changed a few policies. From now on, our admission charges are for refreshment. The new admission fee will be \$1.00 for members, \$2.00 for non-members, and 50 cents each for family members. Please try to have your membership card with you if you can... It will help cut down a little on the time signing in.

As for refreshments, coffee and popcorn will be free, but there will be a minimal charge for pop, chips, pretzels, and other items. (Also any donations of refreshments will be appreciated greatly.)

WERE GOING BIMONTHLY:

Due to increased interest, the meetings will now be held every other month at the new meeting place. (See the section WHERE WILL BUGS ATTACK?).

SOME CHRISTMAS SPECIALS:

Since this is our last meeting before christmas, we've got a few extras:

CLUB TAPE:

First of all, our first club tape will be available. "YAY-AT LAST!!!!" In fact, I'll even give you a sneak preview of some of the programs. George Moses has offered his "HOME BUDGET KEEPER", Dave Ibach his "FROG LEAP", and Don Gladden's version four of "NAM-CAP". The rest you will find out later, but it is a great deal at \$4.00 for members, \$10 for non-members. (Add 50 cents for mailing cost).

WHAT A DEAL ! ! !

DOOR PRIZE:

Another special will be "Door Prizes" at our meeting. When you pay your admission, there will be

a number on your name tag. These will be the numbers use for the door prizes. We've had a few tapes donated already. So you may end up winning a little extra for your Christmas stocking.

CLASSES:

We have a sort of special interest group starting for those who are interested. It's a set of beginner classes. This set of classes will be six weeks long, one class a week, and the fee will be \$5.00 (TOTAL) for members, \$10.00 for non-members, with all proceeds going to the club.

The first three weeks of the class will be "BASIC" basic. Week four: Machine Language basics, week five: Hardware and Interfacing, and finally, week six: Music and Sound effects. This way, you can get a taste of just about everything. If you are interested in signing up, please fill out the form in the back of this newsletter, and mail it in. Do not send any money yet! Right now, we are just going to get a list of names, and then we'll set the classes up. As soon as they are ready to begin, you'll be notified. Please have your forms sent in by November 5. THANKS!!!

HALLOWEEN PARTY:

Last, but not least, we are pleased to announce our first annual halloween party!! We're having it not only as a fund raiser, but as a way for all of us to get together and have a good time.

It will be held on October 29 at 8:00 PM at the Green Oak Township Firehall. (Same place we will be holding our regular meetings — map on back.)

If you come in costume, (as most of us will). There will be prizes awarded for the best and most original. We will also have games, live entertainment, and lots of fun!! Please B.Y.O.B. (Complete with your own set-ups). We will have snack-type refreshments there.

Also, the party is just for the adult members this time. The kids will get their night when they go Trick-or-Treating.

CORNER STORE

As you know, we have several club members who offer their programs and accessories for sale at our meetings. Well, now we have a new twist! Everything sold at our "CORNER STORE" will be offered to club members for at least a 10% discount. The best part is that the discount starts at our November meeting, just in time for christmas shopping!

Don't forget, Alien Bugs, this applies to you too. Just send us a S.A.S.E. and we'll send you a list of items, with their discount prices. However, please hurry, as the discounts and quantities may be limited!

BUG COUNT

It has been suggested by one of our members to print everyone's high game scores (not only cartridges, but game tapes as well). That way we know how hard we have to work to "BEAT THE BEST". It's more fun playing sometimes if you have a high score to beat. It's more of a challenge! Now, if you should happen to be the proud owner of a good score, let us know. All you have to do is send us a picture of the screen with your high score, and let us know what game, level, number of bases, etc.. These scores will be printed in our newsletter, and posted at our meetings.

We realize that it is very possible to cheat, but we don't think anyone will want to. We haven't met a member that we couldn't trust yet!!

VIDEO THERAPY

As you all know, we gave the "WIZARD" game tournament one last chance. Well...it failed. It could not win the battle against the 25 cent games, even with the prospect of larger prizes. Needless to say, it's "GOODBYE TOURNAMENT!!!" Nice try, but you couldn't make it.

SPEAK OUT!

This month, our gripe has to do with incompatibility of cassette recorders!!! It seems to me that no matter what we do to try to load some peoples programs, we always have trouble with some. I don't know exactly what the problem is, it may be head alignment, bias, whatever, but it sure is frustrating!!! If anyone out there has any suggestions on correcting this problem short of everyone buying the same make & model tape recorder, let us know, PLEASE!!!

Speaking for myself, I'd like to make a list of the solutions everyone has, and compare them all, to come up with some good suggestions that we can print. So let us know if you have any good ideas.

WHAT BUGS YOU?

Just a reminder that we are always open to suggestions and ideas. Please feel free to write or call us any time. We would like to help you learn more about what you are interested in. If you have any comment or criticism, on or about our club or newsletter, please contact:

MICHIGAN ASTRO BUGS
PEGGY GLADDEN, SECRETARY
59400 NINE MILE RD.
SOUTH LYONS, MI 48178
HOME PHONE (313)437-3984

PUZZLE CONTEST: by Brett Bilbrey

Atari has started an enjoyable feature in their newsletter, a puzzle contest. I thought it would be fun to have one of our own. In each newsletter, a new puzzle will be presented with a review of the previous newsletters' puzzle.

The solutions will be judged in three categories: Date recieved, execution speed, and size efficiency. I would like to see a few comments about the program and how you solve the problem. No entries will be accepted after midnight November 10, 1982. To enter, send a complete program listing with comments and documentation separate to:

Bug Puzzle
14430 Barclay
Dearborn, MI 48126

The winner and the solution will be announced at the meeting and the next newsletter. The winner will receive a prize determined by the number of entries. The more that enter, the better the prize! So here goes!

BUG PUZZLE #1:

You are sitting in the middle of a circle of 1000 people, with a gun that has 1000 bullets. Starting with person number one, you shoot that person, then start shooting every other live person (3,5,7...) continuously around the circle until every person is dead.

BY NUMBER, WHO IS THE LAST ONE TO DIE?

SIG GROUPS: by Brett Bilbrey

We would like to find out who is interested in different Special Interest Groups. From this newsletter, and at the meeting, we will find out who is interested in what topics. In the next newsletter, we will report on what Special Interest Groups will be formed. After that, we will report on what activities the different groups are working on. Some suggested topics for SIG groups are: assembler, basic, games, new users, hardware/interfaces, graphics, music, utilities, and business/education. If you are interested in any of these, or have an interest of your own, send your NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE, and which groups you are interested in, to Peggy Gladden.

GROANERS: by Bart

Did you hear about the Astrocade that was ready for anything?

Yeah, it was GAME.

THE INSIDE CORNER: BY Brett Bilbrey

Some updates! We have changed the name of Missile Attack to Martian Outpost (who knows, it will probably change again). Some underground rumors report work on a high-res arcade unit, but it may be years before we see it. News on the add-under from Astrocade, suggest maybe January for a release date. (We will have to wait and see.)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN WRITE TO THE RAM IN THE ASTROCADE?

There are three different areas of memory that can be written to, to alter the RAM inside the Astrocade.

These include Magic RAM (0000 to 0FFF), normal screen RAM (4000 to 4FFF), and Basic program storage (A000 to AFFF)

First the Magic RAM: By setting the Magic register with the proper values, then writing (poking) to a location between 0000-0FFF, the data written is modified by the custom chips according to the value in the Magic register, and then placing it in normal screen RAM by adding 16K to the original location. If you use the shift function of the Magic register, you must clear the Magic register by writing byte extra at the end of each screen line. The usual Magic functions of shift, XOR, OR, expand, and flop apply. If expand is selected, then the expand register must also be loaded.

Second the normal screen RAM: In this range any write (poke) to memory is handled as a normal memory write. One byte values poked in are stored in one byte. No Magic functions are allowed.

Last Basic program storage: This only applies to writes to memory done through old Basic or AstroBasic cartridges. Writing or reading from this memory stores and retrieves Basic program statements. Every bit in one byte written is expanded into every other bit in two bytes stored. This is how the Basics can store programs on the screen, and why the Basics have trouble displaying more than two colors at a time.

WHAT IS THE PX(X,Y)?

This is a function both Basics provide you with to check the condition of any pixel on the screen. By using the standard Basic coordinate system, the values of X and Y determine which pixel is to be checked. (ie. using PX(0,0) would check the pixel at the center of the screen). The PX(X,Y) function can be read as a variable (although the function cannot be set like a variable), and would be checked using an IF or an assignment statement. Examples: IF PX(56,12)=1 GOTO 10 or A=PX(3,4). The value returned from the function will be a 1 if the pixel is set to the foreground or a 0 if the pixel is set to the

background. This function is useful in checking to see what the condition of the screen is in a certain area. Although this is a useful function, it is quite slow and should be used sparingly.

HOW CAN WE USE FOUR COLORS IN THE BASIC, AND WHAT ARE THE LIMITS?

Since both the old Basic and AstroBasic use the screen for memory storage, we are usually limited to two colors on the screen to hide the program. If we have a short program and don't mind seeing garbage at the top of the screen, we can display four color graphics in the lower portion of the screen. We can not allow a four color pattern to be written over any portion of the Basic program, or the Basic program will be destroyed. By using port 9, we can use two sets of color maps, one for the right side and one for the left side. This allows us four colors on the screen, while hiding the Basic program, by having two colors on the left and two colors on the right. (Simon, in the first volume of the Arcadian, is an example of this.) More complicated methods can be used (for example, machine interrupts) to have more colors on the screen at once. To try and cover this subject more completely, a few tutorials would be in order.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BASIC AND MACHINE LANGUAGE?

Machine language is the natural language of the microprocessor used in the computer. Since it is rather technical and difficult to understand; the Basic language is created (which is a machine language program). We can then use Basic to write programs in a non-technical and simple form. Since Basic is a program, it is slower, since it must interpret commands which we call a Basic program (a program IN Basic is a series of instructions which tell the Basic language [a machine language program] which machine language instructions to execute).

WHY DO SOME BASIC PROGRAMS USING MACHINE LANGUAGE SUBROUTINES CAUSE CRASHES?

Just as we can check for mistakes in our programs, Basic watches for errors and notifies us when we make them. (For example, when Basic asks us HOW, WHAT, or tells us SORRY.) When we write subroutines in machine language and call them, we are no longer using Basic to catch any errors. Therefore, one of our machine language subroutines that contains a mistake will cause the computer to function improperly, just like a bug in a Basic program will prevent the program from working.

WHY DO I SOMETIMES HAVE TROUBLE GOING TO A SUBROUTINE FROM INSIDE ANOTHER?

Nestled subroutine calls can cause stack overflows, and should not be used, unless used for a specific reason which the programmer is aware of.

ALIEN BUGS

Just a Reminder, fellow bugs, that we are trying hard to start user groups all over the U.S. and Canada. If you have any time at all to donate to a group, please contact us. For only \$2.00 donation, we'll send you a list of names in your area (of those that are available), and an outline of how to start your own group. The groups are a lot of fun as well as educational, and we can all benefit.

GROUP CORRESPONDENCE:

I know that our group would really like hearing from other groups. We are interested in sharing newsletters, notes, and ideas. If there are other groups with club tapes, we could exchange tapes, and get a chance to see what everyone else is doing. We are always on the lookout for new ideas and suggestions...maybe you have some!

OUR CLUB TAPE:

If you don't have a local group of your own, but you are a programmer, remember... our first club tape may be ready, but we want to start on tape two right away. We are always in need of programs. We'll accept any quality programs that you have written yourselves. Please, just be sure they are not programs which have been donated elsewhere, such as in the "Arcadian". They can be, however, games which you sell.

WAVEMAKER HIGHLIGHTS:

At our August meeting, we had the privilege of having a special guest. Mike Peace of "Wavemakers" took the time out of his schedule to drive up here from Chicago and be with us. He showed us some of the new games that he has been working on and they are very impressive!!

"Monkey Jump" was one of the games that he showed. This is loosely based on the "Donkey Kong" arcade game. You have to climb ladders, eating banana chips as you go for points, all the time avoiding the "Hunters Gondols" that is trying to run you down. If you make it to the top, having eaten all the chips, the action gets faster and harder with a new screen.

"Collision Course" is a game where you control a car moving clockwise on a multi-lane track, running over dots for points. The computer controls another car, moving counter clockwise, that is trying to hit you head-on. To avoid it, you can change lanes at the intersections. Bonus flags also pop up at random times that you can grab for extra points.

"Dungeons of Dracula" puts you in a castle where you have to maneuver through different rooms, boxing in different machine-graphic monsters to kill them. Then you grab the key to get to the next room, where you start all over again, racing against the clock all the time.

UNCLASSIFIED ADS

There is a \$1.00 per ad. All proceeds are going to the club treasury. (We need it!)

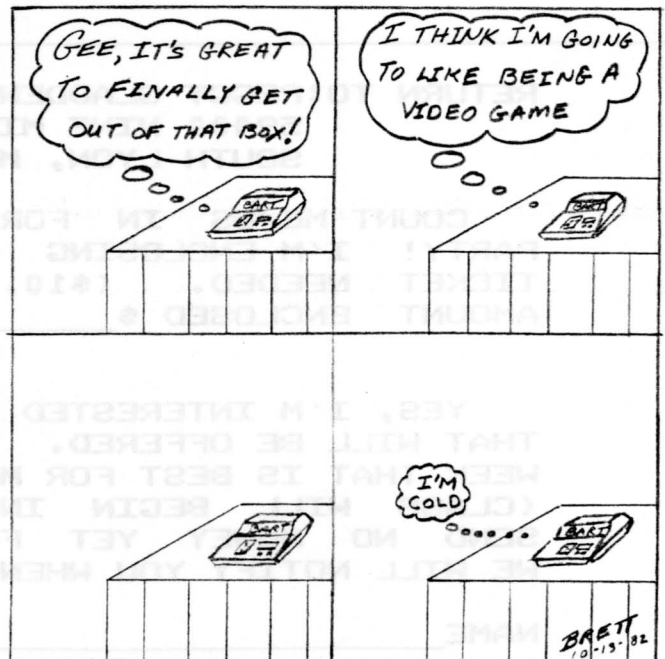
NEW IMAGE has 7 "WIZARD" cartridges left that are on sale to club members for the low, price of \$30.00 (\$5 OFF!). This is on a "First come-first serve" basis.

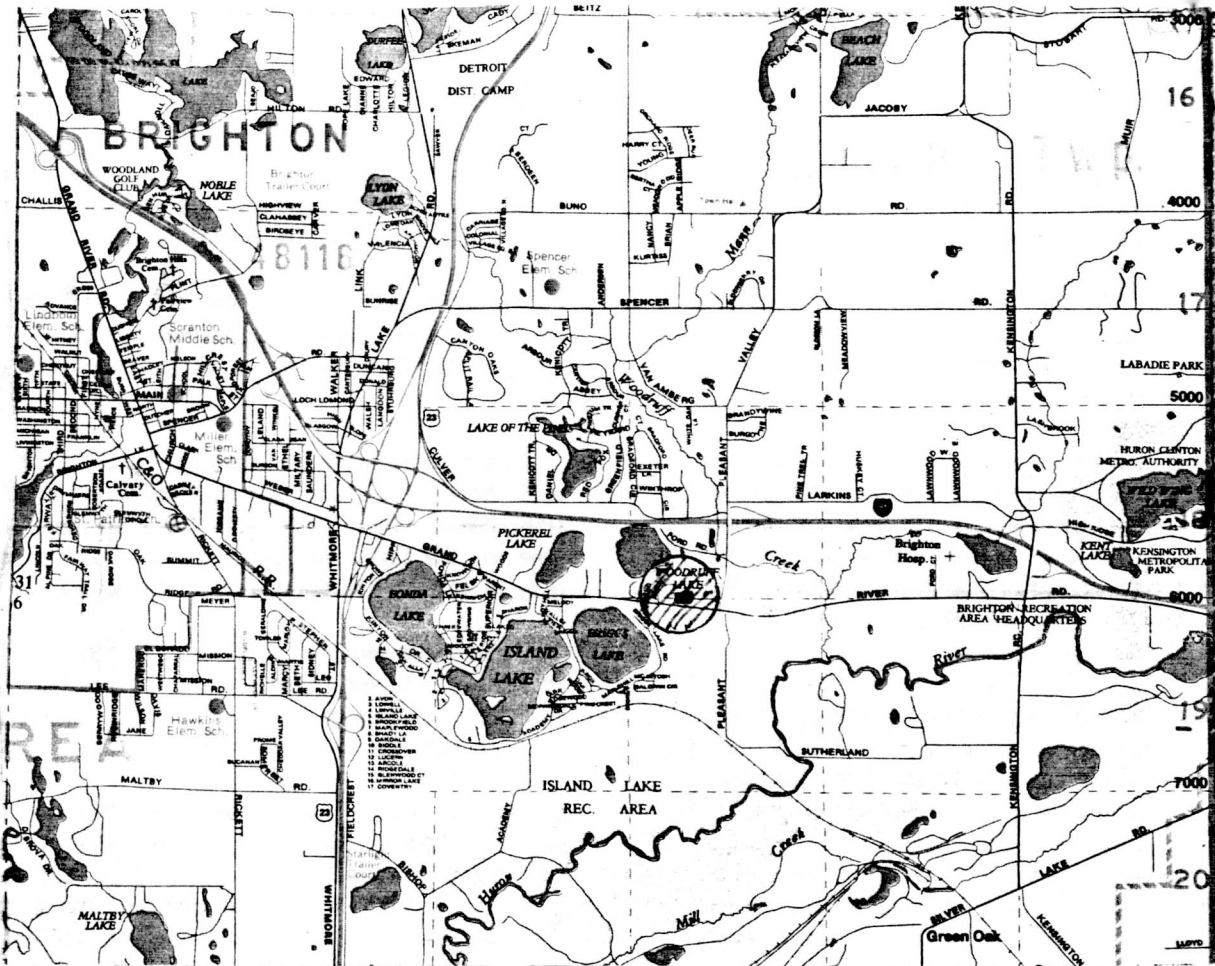
Christmas item: As of November 1, 1982 NEW IMAGE will have available a new tape.... "NAM-CAP" (PUKE-MAN). There are SIX crazy versions of this game on the tape, all lots of fun! Club price is only \$9.00 (Regular price is \$10.95) Postpaid.

Three-voice music software, screen ram word processor, screen ram music assembler, plus FREEBEEES!! Write for FREE catalog to: George Moses Co., P.o. Box 686, Brighton, MI 48116

General video assembler-program in machine mnemonics!! Requires at least 4K of ram, must be switchable between 2K & 6K. (ie. Blue Ram, Etc.). Includes custom keypad and overlay and operating instructions. \$30.00 for members, \$35.00 for non-members postpaid. Send to: Dave Ibach, 19553 Dartmouth Pl. , Northville, MI 48167

BART





GREEN OAKS TOWNSHIP FIREHALL, 11411 EAST GRANDRIVER, NEAR PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD.

RETURN TO: PEGGY GLADDEN
59400 NINE MILE ROAD
SOUTH LYON, MI 48178

COUNT ME/US IN FOR THE HALLOWEEN
PARTY! I'M ENCLOSING \$5.00 FOR EACH
TICKET NEEDED. (\$10.00 PER COUPLE).
AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

YES, I'M INTERESTED IN THE CLASSES
THAT WILL BE OFFERED. THE DAY OF THE
WEEK THAT IS BEST FOR ME IS _____
(CLASS WILL BEGIN IN JANUARY, 1983)
SEND NO MONEY YET FOR THE CLASSES
WE WILL NOTIFY YOU WHEN IT IS NEEDED!

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____