

## ASK DR. ALBE

#### Q.

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Altos has released a version of the operating system 5.3as2 and 5.3AT2 for the Series 500 that allows me to use a terminal as my console. This helps in trying to sell this model as something other than a 386 clone. Are there any problems associated with this?

## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

My company - right or wrong. What a wonderful attitude some people bring to their work. I had an unproductive conversation with Altos' Richard Tung this morning and really found his approach unique. Being prone to making a lot of errors, I have grown used to accepting criticisms, to at least an almost tolerable level. His approach is somewhat different in that he feels that if Altos and I were going to be friends, I would never criticize them. Sorry, Richard, I just think that pretending problems don't exist doesn't serve anyone. Not your dealers, not Computer Support, and particularly not Altos, so I will go on saying whatever I think needs said.

Perhaps the oddest part of Richard's animosity is that I am developing a certain amount of renewed confidence in the Altos program, and he is certainly a major part of the new trends. I think sometimes a strongly opinionated guy like Richard is just what has been missing at Altos. Keep up the good work, Richard!

None of the following secrets came from Richard or any named source at San Jose, but there are some very substantial changes in the wind at Altos. Since they have three product lines (Series 2000, 1000, and 500), we will pass on the gossip on each one.

First, the Series 2000. The unit scheduled for introduction by the end of this year will be converted from ESDI hard drives to SCSI drives. Support for multiple tape drives including nine track reel to reel and HIGH capacity cartridge will

#### A.

Yes. Altos now ships a keyboard with each 500. The 500 corrupts the CMOS RAM when improperly shut down. (Turning the power switch off during the power on diagnostics can do it.) The system requires a monitor and keyboard to reconfigure the system.

#### Q.

My second question on the Series 500 involves the 8 port Comm Bd. I understand the Series 500 is capable of running SCO Xenix, but I cannot make my (8) port board work. Any tricks?

#### A.

No tricks. It just doesn't work. To utilize 8 ports under SCO you must remove the Altos board and install a board that includes SCO drivers (if it's an intelligent board).

#### Q.

I am upgrading my operating system on my 886 to 3.2FS7. I have a 190 meg hard disk installed which required 3.2FS2 or higher to run. Can I put 3.2FS7 on without a problem?

#### A.

You can upgrade an existing 190 meg hard disk to 3.2FS7, however, you cannot do a first-time install with it. If you do need to simply install with 3.2 FS2 or higher and then upgrade to 3.2FS7.

Continued on page 6 . . .

be built-in. The advantage to this approach is two-fold. Altos can be much more responsive to implementing bigger capacity drives, and they will then have two of their product lines (2000 and 1000) on a single operating system.

The Series 1000 is scheduled to get a release of 5.3D next month. This release will have support of nine-track tape included and will finally give Altos users access to good tape at an economical price. The release will be pretty much what the 2000 is headed for. Since the 1000 will be getting the new release first, and has the high speed processor available now, I think it will be a big item during the second half of the year.

Since the 500 is architecturally very different than the other two models, Altos is moving toward a different solution to the support problems on this box. Word is they will offer SCO-UNIX on the 500 as their product. I would expect that they could move some of their enhancements onto SCO, and the transition should be very smooth. I don't have a time frame, but I expect it to happen real soon now.

Continued on page 6 . . .

## THIS ISSUE . . .

- So You Want to Be A Salesman
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- Duke's Free Classifieds!

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## So You Want to be a Salesman . . .

A rose by any other name would never smell as sweet, but UNIX - XENIX - Altos System V, who gives a hoot any more? With the prospective announcement that Altos will be moving to Santa Cruz Operation UNIX (otherwise known as SCO) on the Series 500, it seems that there may finally be the hardware/software platform available to serve our needs.

While there is much to like about Altos System V, we have come to accept, as we believe that Altos has, that the AT bus based, 80386 computers should be running SCO. There is much support in the software community amongst developers for this package, and software drives the market. With numerous quality hardware systems to choose from, we can use SCO as the common link and have access to all the software we could ever require for applications. When combined with the DOS under UNIX packages (VPIX and DOS/Merge) the UNIX community has no excuses left for not dominating small computers for the next ten years.

Since we have now declared our hardware independence, I think we can expect to see a period of "shake-outs" much like those that afflicted the PC world for a time. We recently conducted a survey of the lines that dealers were betting their businesses on and found no real consensus. As is always true, there was a substantial impact from IBM, but it was based more on what they could do then on what they have done.

Computer Support has enjoyed a certain amount of success with both branded products and what we call "generic" stuff. The conservative institutions we support will buy the AT&T type of product, and AT&T has certainly gotten much more competitive. The people who are spending their own money seem to like the value of no-name stuff in high-end configurations and are trusting us to provide the support. This probably wouldn't work well with national companies, but it is something to think about within your service area.

We have been extremely impressed with SCO's operation and have found them to be a joy to work with. We have tried for three years to complete a device driver for the Altos system and have had nothing but obstacles from them. On the other hand, SCO has regular schools on their system, and we could accomplish our goal within thirty days after its start. What a difference in attitudes.

It seems odd to picture the American consumer accepting products without a solid brand name, but the part of the business that IBM doesn't capture may well go to a combination of SCO and off-the-shelf hardware that is supported by any reasonably knowledgeable service entity. We will do a write-up next month on how we package our generic system, and the approach we use with customers in this category.

## Tip of the Month from San Jose...



# SERVICING DEALERS WANTED

As a part of a national service contract, Computer Support needs to contract service support on a national basis. No parts investment is required, and we will pay your labor and travel charges as you bill them. Backup technical support is provided and no dispatch or follow-up is needed.

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## **Esprit Has Reached** Agreement in Principal

Major Terminal Manufacturer is Arranging \$6 Million In Equity Investment from Overseas Group and \$6.5 Million in Financing from Bank

MELVILLE, NY - March 28, 1989. Esprit Systems, Inc. (ASE:ETI), a major terminal manufacturer, announced today that it has reached a preliminary agreement to receive \$6,000,000 in working capital from an equity investment group led by ADI Corporation. Separately, Esprit and ADI are attempting to arrange a guaranteed bank loan to replace Esprit's "Trade Credit and Security Agreement" with ADI of Taiwan which is Esprit's supplier and principal stockholder.

In January, 1989, the company instituted a management change by appointing computer industry veteran Michael K.C. Tsai as president and CEO. Since that time, Mr. Tsai has recruited several top managers to develop and implement a comprehensive turnaround plan for Esprit.

"This significant investment is a strong endorsement of our management plans and represents another major step towards achieving goals of our corporate turnaround," said Mr. Tsai, "We've been successful in instilling a positive mindset in our employees, and have introduced several plans to bring our costs under control."

With this planned equity investment, Esprit intends to continue to introduce new products and provide greater marketing resources to support its resellers. The company also intends to be able to fund new business development.

"The investor group is casting a strong vote of confidence for Michael's team and the direction of the company. Individually, each member in the group has been associated with successful high-technology companies in Taiwan and, aside from providing this financing, will also be able to offer new business opportunities to Esprit," said Dennis Wu, president of ADI. "This planned equity investment will help Esprit to reach its full potential."

Under the terms of the agreement, a group of Taiwan-based investors will purchase 16 million newly-issued shares of Esprit's common stock for \$6,000,000. The proposed element is subject to completion of definitive agreements and the approval of Esprit's shareholders.

In addition, Esprit is arranging a bank loan for \$6,500,000 to replace the existing "Trade Credit and Security Agreement."

"We know that the terminal market has room for substantial growth, but that is still evolving," said Mr. Tsai. "That's why we're pursuing a dual product strategy to continue enhancing our ASCII/ANSI line while developing products to meet new growth areas including networking terminals. We're in a good situation now, and I am looking forward to establishing closer ties with our resellers."

Esprit recently signed a \$1 million agreement with Vitek for its ASCII/ANSI terminals and LANTerm, the first member of the company's networking terminals. For the first six months of fiscal year 1989, ending December 3, 1988, Esprit recorded sales of more than \$10 million with shipments of nearly 24,000 video display terminals.

Esprit Systems, Inc. headquartered in Melville, NY, is a leading independent supplier of video display terminals to a worldwide customer base of independent distributors, valueadded resellers (VARs), and original equipment manufacturers.



#### Dear Editor:

**TERMINALS** 

WYSE 50,75,100

TELEVIDEO 910,920,925

DATA PRODUCTS 8020

**TELEVIDEO 950,9220** 

ALTOS 2,3,4,5

**PRINTERS** 

NEC 7710, P5XL

NEC 55XX,77XX

SHEETFEED

DIABLO 630

FUJI M3313-A2

LEGEND 8080

**QUME SPRINT 5** 

TI810

POLO

Regarding your editorial comments in the last issue, I'm sure you've dumped that distributor by now.

Since you are obviously looking for a new distributor, let me tell you about mine, Responsive Computer Systems of Dallas and Chicago.

#### Sales Support:

Their saleslady (for our territory) specializes in Altos equipment and, therefore, knows her product. She follows up well, but does not swarm like locusts.

#### Tech Support:

They have spent hours on the phone helping us through system problems (stayed with us through lunch and after 5 p.m.).

Responsive Computer Systems has taken defective computers back and sent us new ones.

They have tested and replaced parts that "came in bad" from Altos.

They have tested the new UNIX Operating System extensively for us.

Responsive Computer Systems has communicated directly with Altos on problems they could not solve themselves and got back to us in a very reasonable amount of time with a solution.

They support us on our AOM Software very reliably and efficiently.

They stand behind what they tell us and are willing to go the extra mile.

Sincerely, Graham H. Browns President, Business Systems, Inc.

P.S. We are a small dealership, and yet, we still get this type of good support from Responsive Computer Systems.

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Continued on page 6 . .

Letters to the Editor, continued from page 5 . . .

#### Dear Harry,

I just wanted to take a few brief minutes to tell you how much we appreciated the excellent support you and your people gave us in solving the problems with the Altos 586 with the 80 meg hard drive. We have a great deal of expertise in-house for

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solving just about all of the problems we come up against, but you really helped us shorten the downtime by supplying the operating system data.

I'm sure you'll be happy to know that you contributed substantially to saving one lady's vacation. Our customer needed to have their system back by Saturday before one of their employees left on vacation. Our technician came in on Saturday and was able to get the system repaired; he was then backed up by CSSC on modifying the operating system. Our customer's employee worked Saturday and Sunday to recover lost system time, and I'm happy to say today she has "gone fishin'

I would like to see you print this in the Altogether just so others know the quality support CSSC is capable of.

Sincerely, John Overend Director of VAR Services, Interactive

Dr. Albert, continued from page 1 . . .

#### Q.

Do you know why the new Altos 1000 Running AT 33 Mhz only supports 64 users? Seems like the 1000 is stronger than the 2000.

Α.

The Series 2000 is really mini-computer Architecture while the 1000 would be much closer to a (micro) - or PC computer. Also, although the SCSI drives of the 1000 have as fast an access time as the ESDI drives of the 2000, the transfer rate is faster on the 2000. Sometimes a system is configured by marketing and this could be a part of it.

Editorial, continued from page 1 . . .

The end result of all this is that Altos would cut their operating system (UNIX variety) down from three versions to one. With SCSI devices on the high end models, adding new devices will be substantially simpler, and they can direct more of their attention to getting things like Adlantes (whatever name they are calling it now) to work. I am one of those that has \$8,000 worth of it on the shelf waiting for a cure. (No, Richard, I am not picking on Altos again. It is just a pretty big investment that I made 8 to 9 months ago that I haven't been able to use yet, not a real problem).

These moves that Altos is rumored to be making are some of the more logical steps they have taken recently. I am hopeful that they will continue this kind of thoughtful process and not go back to pretending that no problems (except those that Computer Support creates) exist in their tidy little world. There are some solutions to their most vexing problems on the horizon and having Jackson, Conway and other oldtimers back to work full-time is showing results. Long overdue, but results non-theless.



New terminal emulation software from CDI lets your customers incorporate their IBM-PC/ATs or compatibles into ALTOS UNIX/XENIX systems. In seconds. CDIterm<sup>™</sup> is surprisingly affordable. Easy to use. And offers complete print-through capability. Call or write for details.



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2500 +
3500 +
750 +
1000 +
1250 +
2700
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3000 +
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FOR SALE: Altos 2086T-2-80, 8 mhz, 2 Mb RAM, 80 Mb hard disk, 60 Mb tape drive. Best written offer before July 15, 1989. 3-D Computer Systems, 2055 Reading Road, #150, Cincinnati, OH 45202, (513) 421-4403.

ALTOS (and related) EQUIPMENT. (2) Altos 8000-14 computer systems. 8" drive, 40 Mb hard disk. Used right up to the day they were replaced by a Novell Network. \$1000. each. (1) Altos MTU-2 tape backup. Used to back up the above computers. Cable was destroyed by workmen when moving the equipment. \$350. (2) Altos 580-20 computer systems. 5.25" drives, one floppy and one hard disk. Worked up to the day they were replaced by an AT multi-user system. Customer says one of these "whines, but works OK". Probably the static dissipater on the hard drive. \$500 each. Numerous televideo terminals 910, 910+, 912, 912C, 920, 920C, 925 and 950's. Each terminal will be tested prior to shipment. 910/910+/912/912C/920/920C all \$125. 925 -\$150. 950 -\$200. (1) QUME QVT 102 terminal. Nice tilt/swivel, separate keyboard, buffered printer port, screen saver. \$150. All equipment as it was shipped from manufacturer. No modifications. Central Computer Company, (317)398-6268.

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WANTED: Used Altos equipment or excess inventory. Contact Ed Embree at (312) 860-5807.

**BUY AND SELL USED ALTOS EQUIPMENT.** Complete systems or parts. Call Peter Marcus, Marcus & Associates, (617) 655-7788.

FOR SALE: Altos 986, 80 Mb with multi user XENIX operating system, tape drive. \$2500.00. (816) 353-2242.

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The Altogether would like to apologize for a large error made with the dollar amount on the above ad. It should have been \$65.00. We are sorry for the inconvenience this has caused to the dealers and to Business BASIC Services.

#### ADVERTISING RATES\_

Advertising flyers (8-1/2" x 11") enclosed: \$200 - first page Plus \$50 each additional page in same issue Photo-ready advertisements: Quarter page (3-5/8" w x 5"h) - \$60.00 Half page (7-1/2" w x 4-1/2" h) - \$100.00 Full page (8-1/2" w x 11" h) - \$150.00 CLASSIFIEDS FREE! Call (712) 277-8639

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