AO and Blue Dot subscribers;

    Big news was unveiled on Saturday morning at the Western Consumer Electronics Show when Bally announced to their dealers/distributors that Fidelity Electronics, Ltd. had signed a 'letter of intent' on Friday afternoon, to purchase the Bally Consumer Products Division (assets only, I guess). Fidelity makes the Challenger games - Bridge,Checkers, Chess,etc., all using the Z-80 chip, giving them some expertise in that area. Tom Wood and I talked with their Engineering Manager,and had a good discussion with him about ourselves, my plans, and their plans.

    It must be noted that this is all quite new between Fidelity and Bally (altho I understand Bally has been looking for a 'deal' for the last 6 months or so), and it will take Fidelity a while to sort out the situation and their options. An approach that was discussed would be for them to market the ARCADE for the next 4-6 months and to consider the Add-On later this year. They are quite a dynamic company and move rapidly once they decide what to do.. Plans include 10 or more Videocades for the coming year, plus modifying the basic machine to be compatible with foreign TV standards.

    As a result, some of the ARCADIAN-proposed projects are being restructured. The scheme I have been working on for a replacement ADD On is being put on a back burner for a while until Fidelity looks the situation over.

    In the meanwhile, the following project is underway, with people and funds committed.This will give us some memory capability with room for expansion.

    PROJECT ONE An S-100 interface card.

      At the moment, a prototype has been constructed using the wirewrap technique. The layout is being converted to a printed circuit board format. The cost of the bare board (that is, without chips but with all sockets and minor components soldered in place) is programmed to not exceed $75., with a target date of mid-year. Features of the card include:

   1) 33K of RAM
      a) 1 K of static RAM to talk between S-100 and Bally
      b) 32 K of Dynamic RAM for use by the Bally only
   2) Four parallel ports
      a) Two are dedicated to internal workings of the interface
      b) Two are available thru 50-pin edge connectors
   3) One serial port (RS232,RS324A, or TTL) thru a 26-pin edge connector
   4) Three timers, of which two are dedicated to the Bally/S-100

Requirements are that the S-100 device have a Z-80 and memory
      Operation with this card can be in either of two modes:
   1) Stand Alone (without S-100 support)
      a) Provision for external power supply module
      b) May use total 1K static RAM for Bally
      c) May connect printer and keyboard
      d) Minimum of 1 K static RAM (8000H)
      e) Minimum of 16 K Dynamic RAM (4000H)
      f) May use all three timers for interrupt routines
   2) Interface Between Bally and S-100
      a) Power to be provided by S-100
      b) Minimum of 1 K Static RAM to interface to S-100
      c) 1 K static RAM (Bally 8000H; S-100 FE00H)
      d)Requires a host program in both Bally (BASIC or Assembly) and
        S-100 (Assembly). This program for the Bally would have to be either
        tape loaded or supplied via a 2K EPROM. The program for the S-100
        would be on tape in KC format or via an EPROM.

PROJECTS TO BE (maybe)

The following items are listed as a wish list, compiled from a few subscriber's inputs. I would appreciate feedback as to your personal priorities, and also if you can help write the specifications for one or another of them. I will allow 4 weeks for responses and then evaluate the results of this popularity poll to determine the next items to pursue.

Plug in cartridges of languages other than Tiny BASIC

Data processing - inventories, indexes, keeping track

Word processing

Modem access to telephone circuits, originate/receive

Self diagnostic cartridge

Computer control of external devices - broad spectrum

Remote readouts, without using the TV screen

Continuous real time clock, readable by computer

Bally - Bally interconnection by cables

Power control of tape drive including locating files, adding/removing data

Light Pen

Digital Plotter

Prom Burner

Vocal communication

I recognize that some of the above are achievable by software as opposed to hardware 'things', but I think that they should be included.

I expect to have more news in the next issues as the situation develops.

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