

The Interface



Fresno, California

April/May 1999

Taking 8 Bits to the 21st Century

THE FIVE CENT REVIEW:

A Nickel's Worth of Opinion on Every Program
I've Ever Used (Part 1 of a series)

"Man is the best
computer we
can put aboard a
spacecraft... and
the only one that
can be mass pro-
duced with un-
skilled labor."

- Werner
von Braun

by Dick Estel

A title like this obviously has to contain a certain percentage of hyperbole. My actual goal in writing this article was to present a capsule review of every program I've ever used enough to form a fair opinion. Where I feel comfortable doing so, I've provided a rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being best. It should be noted that I started this article around three years ago. In some cases I don't use the program any more because I use a PC program; but my assessment of the Commodore programs is still valid.

My first word processor was **Word Pro**. I don't recall much about it, but it left a lot to be desired. I rented **Pocket Writer** from a local software rental store, and was highly impressed. It had WYSIWYG display, sorting capabilities, and a lot of other features. I ordered it in a package along with Pocket Planner and Pocket Filer, and used it for several months until it was displaced by **The Write Stuff**.

The immediate advantage of TWS over Pocket Writer was the simple word macro feature, faster input (WYSIWYG displays are naturally slower than straight screen font displays), and much simpler command structure. I kept Pocket Writer for years before selling it; and it's an excellent program, but I never used it again after I got TWS. Write Stuff 2, Pocket 4.

I had an earlier data base, possibly **File Pro**, that had very tedious data input. I originally set up my address file on **Pocket Filer**, which works great and is very flexible, but I've never updated it.

In fact, this program offers a lot more power than the average user needs unless you are setting up a business-type data base. I finally just put my address list in TWS.

Pocket Planner is used to keep track of my bank balance, my rental property, my budget, and to do my income tax computations. Like all the Pocket programs, it is a complex program with lots of features, and I don't use it enough to be familiar with most of what it can do. For the few files I do maintain, it is easy to use and has never given me any problems. A rating of 3.

I bought **SuperCat** to catalog my growing disk collection, but ended up using the shareware program **DCMR**. SuperCat is about three times as much work to enter data, and offers fewer features. DCMR reads the filenames from the disk, then lets you delete or modify them, type in names from the keyboard, or eliminate a whole page

of file names (useful when the disk has a lot of subordinate files that work with the main program but don't need to be listed). DCMR has the fastest sort routine I've seen in ANY Commodore program. There's a lot of flexibility in how you print out the lists. Rated 3.

With all those catalogued disks, a label maker is a must. I tried **Label Wizard**, a favorite of many users. It's pretty simple to use, lets you save text (such as addresses), and uses Print Shop graphics.

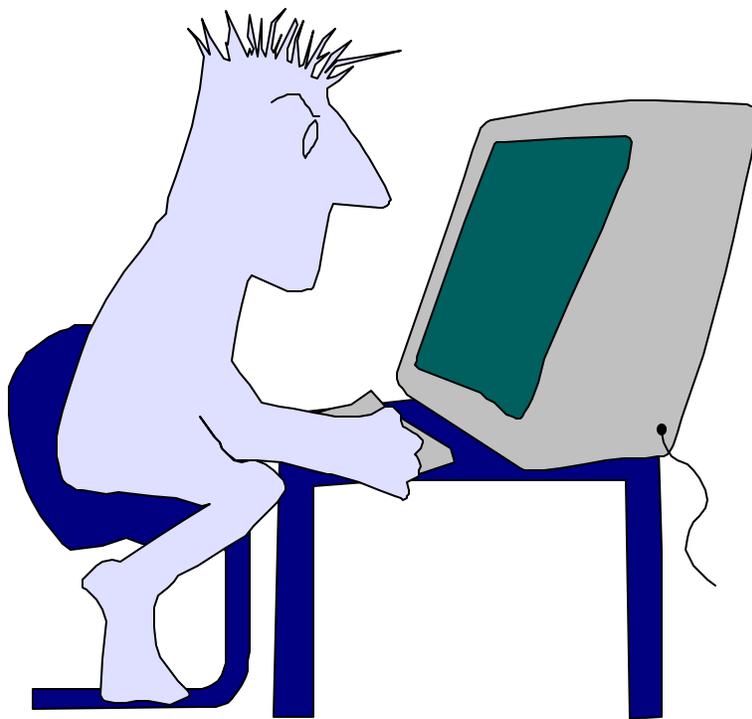
However, I ended up using **geoLabel**, which offers a lot more control over what the label looks like. GeoLabel is not nearly as easy to use as Label Wizard, but for a regular, experienced GEOS user, it doesn't matter.

I'm not a computer artist but everyone usually ends up with a drawing program of some sort. I use GEOS almost exclusively, although I have dabbled with the drawing feature of Print Shop. I bought the **OCP Art Studio/Advanced Art Studio** package, which is very highly rated, primarily with the hope that my daughter, a talented artist,

would use it. She's more comfortable with traditional materials, however; so I can't really report on this program. **GeoPaint** is fair for original creation (something I do very little of); very difficult for color drawing, and excellent for manipulating and modifying existing graphics. GeoPaint alone has a lot of limitations, but the various programs that have

been created to augment and support it, make it the most flexible and versatile text and graphics system available.

GeoPaint and **geoWrite** can be used together as a poor man's desk top publishing program, but the real star of this segment of the Commodore world is **geoPublish**. Although I created the club's newsletter using geoPublish for several years, it has numerous features that I never used regularly. It is not particularly intuitive, but the old fash-



ioned technique of reading the manual and just sitting down and trying things allowed me to become very comfortable with the program after a few weeks of use.

Before geoPublish there was **Paperclip Publisher**, a program that aspired to greatness and fell short. The basic operation of the program was fine, but it did not allow use of two drives or a RAM expander, making it the dead turtle of Commodore desktop publishing. Rated 8.

Even before Paperclip, I tried out **Outrageous Pages**. On my scale of 1 to 10, I rate it a 12. Hard to use, strange on-screen interface, and just a dog in general.

In the area of combining text and graphics, there are several programs that really don't have the features or power to qualify as desk top publishing programs, but do have their uses. These include **Newsroom**, **Print Shop** and **PrintMaster**. Although people have used Newsroom to create newsletters, it is very time consuming and in my opinion the printed output is not acceptable (rated 8). Print Shop (5) and PrintMaster (3.5) are very similar, with PrintMaster taking the prize because it lets you see what your creation looks like and you can save your file, two features Print Shop lacks. For signs, greeting cards, flyers, and the like, I always use GEOS, but Print Shop or PrintMaster come out of the box when I need a banner.

I've used two pretty good directory organizers. My first choice is called **Directory Assistance**. After it loads the directory into memory, you can sort the entire list, sort a range of file names, move file names around, and insert divider lines. Only when everything is arranged as desired do you give the command to re-write the directory. **Davis Directory Designer** accomplishes the same task, and is also easy to use; I just happened to get a

copy of Directory Assistance before I saw DDD. Though both rate a 3, neither will recognize a second drive, or my CMD hard drive. This led me to **DEdit 7.1**, available in both 64 and 128 versions. Written to deal with hard drive native partitions, this program lets you select the drive, partition and subdirectory you want to work with. It is not actually as flexible in use as the older programs, but it accomplishes the job adequately. I give it a 4.5. (When I started using the hard drive, I had to switch to newer programs in several categories, because many of the older disk utilities don't recognize the HD.)

For disk copying on Commodore 15x1 drives, it's hard to beat **Maverick** (rated 2). **Fast Hack 'Em** also works fine (rated 3), and offers the added benefit of a 128 version that will copy double-sided 1571 disks. Neither one likes the hard drive, but the drive came with disk and file copy programs that are every bit as good as the old standbys.

For pre-hard drive file copying, I like the copier that is included in the **Super Snapshot V5** cartridge. Although Maverick and Fast Hack'Em both have file copy capability, the SSV5 menu system just seems to be a little more logically organized. Once I put the hard drive into my system, I needed a file copier that would work with it (SSV5 does not get along well with the HD at all). The program included with the drive, **FCopy**, works fine for all file copying. Its whole disk counterpart is **MCopy**, which copies to and from disks or partitions (both source and target must be the same format; i.e. a 1541 emulation partition can be copied only to a 1541 disk or similar parti-

April Demos: At the April meeting we'll have short demos of some of the recent additions to our library. There will also be a chance to get hands-on help with The Write Stuff. And if the weather is nice, maybe we'll take a long break and eat doughnuts on the sidewalk.

What the Editor Said



A Look at Our Financial Future

We've been discussing finances at the last couple of meetings. The annual treasurer's report, which appeared in the last issue, may appear bleak at first glance. However, the following aspects need to be considered: Our present meeting location is free (avoiding a potential annual cost of \$240). Because we can't bring food into the room, we have eliminated refreshments, a savings of over \$150. We have eliminated all advertising (unless free), since it has not proved productive (about \$80). We are unlikely to make any further hardware purchases (\$50 in 1998).

The cost of producing the newsletter is our biggest expense. A penny postage increase January 10 won't make much difference, and hopefully printing costs will not increase (they went up about 30% in 1998). All in all, the cost of the newsletter is not likely to change much, unless we eliminate all exchanges, which could produce a savings of about \$45 for the year.

A savings of over \$100 would result from closing the PO Box, as long as someone will volunteer their address for club mail. This is a common situation with other clubs, but if the member moves or leaves, it disrupts receipt of mail. At our board meeting on March 6 we decided to do this at the end of the year, and I have offered my address until further notice.

On the income side, we have about 25 dues-paying members. Income from dues will probably not drop, though it is unlikely to increase signifi-

cantly. Disk and other product and service sales are stagnant, and are unlikely to approach even the \$100+ mark of 1998. Raffle ticket sales have been adequate to finance the member drawing and provide a small profit, but have not exceeded \$12 recently.

If we limit expenses to the newsletter, member drawing, and picnic, we can anticipate total expenses for the year of \$405. Income is conservatively estimated at \$390 (dues the same, raffle \$100, and \$50 in sales).

With the same deficit we had in 1998, we could finance the club from reserves for about two and a half years. With income and expenses as outlined and without the post office box, income and expenses are close enough to keep going as long as there are members to carry on. —DE

Commodores Still Doing Significant Work

A University of Arizona research astronomer is aboard an aged C-141 jet, soaring 41,000 feet above Nevada. Sticking out a forward compartment is a 1 meter telescope aimed at a battered piece of rock called Mercury—50 million miles away. A Commodore 64, an old computer made originally for electronic games, controls and fine-tunes data collected from the telescope. Fred Witteneborne, who directs the operation of the instruments connected to the telescope, says, "It works."

And here's more proof our old standby is still in there pitching: A year or so ago, several members of RVUG (Rancocoas Valley Users Group, NJ) visited a local radio station and saw the old C-64 controlling several remote transmitters via telephone lines for the station extended transmitting points. The station also used a 1541 drive and a 1702 monitor. The station manager wrote all the programs he uses for control and data input commands.

Edible Characters and Shifty Spaces

by Dick Estel

I maintain my list of compact discs in a Write Stuff file, with two columns, artist and title (i.e.):

Gin Blossoms New Miserable Experience
Condo, Ray Door to Door Maniac

When I set up the file several years ago, I did not allow enough room for long artist names, but I realized I had a little extra room on the right margin. I could improve the file by moving all the titles over about 10 spaces.

There are several ways to accomplish this in TWS. The most tedious is to cursor to each line and type in 10 spaces while in insert mode. Since I have around a thousand titles, this idea did not appeal to me.

I could also tab to the beginning of each title, and press [SHIFT][RUN/STOP], which would insert three blank lines. I could then set another tab at the desired position 10 spaces further, tab there, and press [CONTROL] [SPACE], which would pull the text back to the cursor position. This also seemed to be a formidable task.

I could also do a SEARCH and REPLACE, which would be partially successful. I could SEARCH for 10 spaces (or any other reasonable number), and REPLACE with 20 spaces. This would correct all lines where there were 10 or more spaces between the end of the artist name and the beginning of the title. Following this, I could use any of the other methods to shift the lines that had not been moved (those with less than 10 spaces). In retrospect, this would have been my best choice.

As the words “in retrospect” imply, before I thought of method three, I implemented method four, as follows:

I used the program's EAT and RESTORE capability to insert 10 spaces on each line. First I typed a number of spaces at the bottom of the file, then I pressed [CONTROL] E followed by pressing C 10 times. This placed 10 spaces in the buffer.

I then went to each line, tabbed to the beginning of the title, and pressed [CONTROL]R. This inserted ten spaces, shifting the following text over. As you can guess, even this was not a fast or pleasant task, and I accomplished it in several sessions spread over a couple of weeks.

The actual sequence of key presses in this procedure was as follows:

F5 Moves the cursor to the beginning of the next paragraph
[TAB] Tabs to the pre-set position at the beginning of the title
[CONTROL] R Inserts the 10 spaces

(Repeat as needed until brain fatigue sets in or the job is finished.)

The point of all this, besides giving the appearance of an informative article on TW Stuff, is to discuss the EAT CHARACTER feature, which is mentioned in the manual, but which does not appear on the command line in TWS 64.

It has one useful feature that eating words, sentences and paragraphs lacks: When you use any of those, a return character which follows the block of text will be “eaten” along with the text. The period at the end of a sentence will also be picked up. (The paragraph, of course, is always followed by a return.) This may cause remaining paragraphs to be run together, and you will have to remember

to add a return if needed. And the return character will be restored wherever you dump the text, which may or may not be what you want.

If you want to “eat” a word that's at the end of a sentence and restore it elsewhere without the period or return character, you can use the EAT CHARACTER feature to capture only the letters of the word.

Notice that I also slipped in instructions on the use of [SHIFT][RUN/STOP] to insert blank lines, and [CONTROL][SPACE] to bring the text back to cursor position. I use these features with virtually every text file I create, other than perhaps a quick letter. Here's an example of how and when:

When you insert into an existing file at a point where there is a lot of text below the insert point, text entry slows down (due to the computer having to move all following text one character ahead). If I am going to insert several sentences, I press [SHIFT][RUN/STOP] several times to insert a dozen or so blank lines. I then turn insert mode off (by tapping [CONTROL] i). The new text is typed over the blank space that I have inserted, and the existing text does not have to be shifted down. When I'm done I press [CONTROL][SPACE] to bring the old text back to the cursor position.

Another interesting note: In TW Stuff, when you tab from the beginning of an existing line, the cursor moves PAST the existing text to the tab setting, which is just what I needed for method 4. In a PC word processor a tab in front of existing text is INSERTED, and the text moves over. Another situation where the Commodore is actually better suited for the job than the high priced spreads.

Product News



The following information is provided as a service to read-

ers. No guarantee is made as to the suitability, availability or quality of products mentioned. Readers should be aware that many products come and go quickly, and other planned products are never actually marketed.

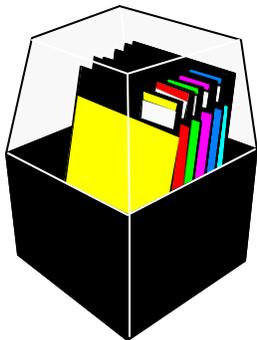
The mother of all product news reports, Roger Long's Commodore Products Source List, is undergoing revision 7, expected in May. Anyone who sells or provides any type of Commodore product or service should contact Roger at his new address, 1815 97th Street S, Apt V7, Tacoma WA 98444; or send Email to longrj2@gte.net. Clubs should also confirm to Roger that they are still active and still support Commodore. You can check out the latest version of the list on the net at <http://home1.gte.net/longrj2/cpsl/>

When Xetec closed down, Commodore user and electronics engineer Ron Fick acquired most of the remaining Lt. Kernel hard drive parts. He has the ability and materials to build and set up new drives. These are particularly useful for clubs wanting to have a Bulletin Board system. He also does repairs and provides Sysgen disks for the drive. Contact Ron via the CommNet Commodore BBS network as Caped Crusader at Batcave or by calling direct to Batcave BBS at 805-349-8448 and leaving email to SYSOP. Ron is also accessible by Email at rfick@nyx.net.

There's been a lot of talk on the Internet, newsletters and elsewhere about a “new Commodore computer,” Web-It. The best summary of the facts

is found in the latest issue of *Commodore World*. This is a 100 MHz 486 Windows 3.1 computer, with built-in Commodore emulation, designed to connect to a TV set. It comes with the web browser, Netscape Navigator, as well as a word processor and spread sheet from Lotus, a long-time PC software company. It's a low-cost machine with the operating system and software in ROM, in the spirit of the original Commodore 64. Although no price information has been seen, it is going to have to be competitive with the \$600 that will now get you a Pentium Windows 95 or 98 machine. (We've heard \$250 but have no confirmation.) Check it out on the web at <http://www.commodore64.com/webit.htm>

The March issue of the Commodore MailLink reports on a company that will re-ink or re-build printer ribbons: Inky Dew, 7297 University Ave, La Mesa CA 91941-5927; phone 619 INKY-DEW. (Isn't that a Jimmy Durante song?)



Library Lines

The addition of new disks to the library is a rare event—but not entirely unheard of. The latest is a collection of borders and sounds that can be added to your own programs. For example, you might choose a colorful border of Commodore graphic characters as a title screen.

If you think you have no use for this because you don't know the first thing about programming, I urge you to get the disk and play around with it. It's an interesting and educational exercise to create a title screen or simple menu. Just load the small routines on the disk and list them to see how

the borders are placed on the screen. Then play around with the print statement to add your own text; for example, something as simple as 100 PRINT "Greetings from Fresno."

Side 2 of the disk contains sound effects which are a bit more demanding...but you could easily combine a border, your own text and a sound to create a small program "just for fun."

The new disk is Music/Graphics 87/88.

Another recent addition is Education Disk 71/72. Side 1 contains a challenging quiz on the capitals of various countries, states and provinces. Challenge yourself to name 5 of the 13 Canadian provincial capitals. On the other side is a children's number and color recognition game, written by one of our former members. As correct answers are given, a picture appears, and a song plays.

GEOS disk 113 was distributed at the last GEOS class, and contains templates and instructions for creating "published" documents without using geoPublish. Side two, #114, had not been completed at that time; it is now available, and contains the complete alternate paint program, geoCanvas. This program allows you to have up to three geoPaint files open at once, to facilitate cutting and pasting, combining, etc. If you have 113 without 114, you can just get a new copy; no need to bring in your old disk.

Copies of these new disks will be available at the next few meetings with no exchange disk required.



Time marches on. The old gets older. The new replaces the old. The newer, the better...that's how it's supposed to be. Well, that's true to a certain point. Our Commodore computers are becoming older all the time, and unless a person counts the new stock remaining in the Creative Micro Designs inventory, there are no newer, better Commodores coming. Is newer better? I have a relatively-new Canon BJC-4100 Bubblejet printer, but after light use, it has failed. The comforting sound of ink being pumped through its veins is not there anymore. Fortunately, I have a service plan for it, and so, it's off to the repair shop. In its place are the good, old, reliable Citizen 200GX and Epson EX-1000 9-pin printers.

Is newer better...or does it just bring on a different set of problems? Ever since I bought my SuperCPU 128 20-mhz. accelerator cartridge last October, I've had trouble with it recognizing 128 mode. For the C-128 to recognize the SCPU in 128 mode, I had to install the included MMU SuperAdapter daughterboard within the computer and attach 5 color-coded wires to the 8502 chip. The MMU SuperAdapter was installed correctly in my C-128D (metal-case model). However, the SCPU didn't always initialize correctly in 128 mode...black screen in 80-columns...that pale screen in 40-columns...no SuperCPU logo nor animation. C-64 mode was no problem.

When these troubles first occurred, I would power

the system on and off several times. No luck. I would reattach the SCPU several times (of course, without power to the system), thinking that the connection was bad. Not that one. I would hit the SCPU reset switch over and over. Nope. Finally, I noticed that sometimes I would get a message on the 40-column screen that said: INITIALIZATION ERROR 06. 06 is not listed in the manual. I telephoned CMD and spoke to the hardware technician (who sounded like Doug Cotton). He advised me that 06 meant the SCPU was not getting sufficient power from the computer...a bad power supply. The SCPU demanded a lot of power at a strict number of volts. The SCPU instruction manual warned about the unit's power requirements.

Troubled at the news, I made do for the next few weeks, not even trying 128 mode with the SCPU. Finally, I disassembled the C-128D, removed the

“IS NEWER BETTER...OR
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power supply, and gave it to one of our members who was handy with hardware. He said that he would diagnose the power supply and bring it up to specifications. In the meantime, I received a new power supply from Jim Sutherland at Applied Computer Systems in Fair

Oaks, California (he gave it to me free, because he was clearing out his Commodore materials in order to concentrate more on Amiga). I installed the new one in the C-128D.

The problem of the SCPU initializing in C-128 mode, 40 or 80-columns, has lessened, but it's still there. Every once in a while I still get the 06 error message, but I've found out that at least with a C-128D I can force the computer to recognize the SCPU. Though the SCPU reset button is unsuc-

cessful at getting it to initialize, the C-128D reset button is much more reliable. If I get a screen with no SCPU logo, then I press the C-128D reset button and that usually (but not always) runs the SCPU in 128 mode.

It doesn't seem right to have that 06 error message popping up now and then. Is the new power supply bad, too? Should I get rid of the wire clips on the MMU SuperAdapter and solder the wires directly to the 8502 chip (as Randy Harris, president of the Chicago SWRAP club, has done)? Should I just live with the SCPU not being 100% perfect?

Fortunately, there is help via the Internet. An owner can subscribe to one of the SuperCPU mail-lists. He would then be able to send and receive e-mail from all of the other like-minded subscribers. I subscribe to the super-cpu@giga.or.at mail-list, and sympathetic comrades have sent advice and solutions. It's nice to know that there are those who have the same problems as you do.

Before he obtained a more powerful power supply, Arndt Dettke of GoDot fame told me how he couldn't run a RAMLink and a SCPU together. Another person advised that I mount the SCPU away from the cartridge port and connect with an Arotek port extension cable. Another advised that I check the power switch on the C-128D. Of course, there's the advice that I should send it back to CMD.

I expect this saga to continue. When the SCPU is working properly, it's a marvel with compliant programs. When it balks, then it's frustrating. I suppose that if I want to drive in the 20-mhz. fast lane, I'll have to allow for a bumpy road at times.

Who Sues Who

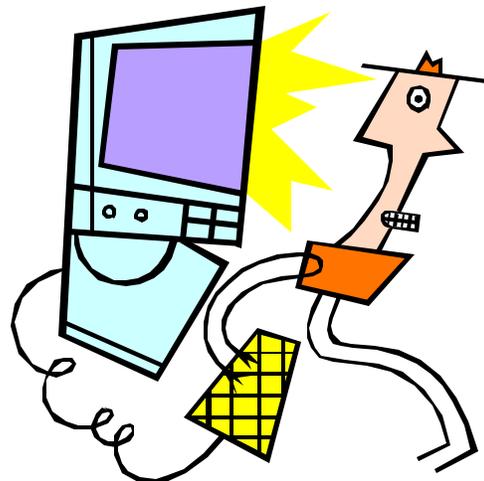
(With the government busily suing Microsoft and Intel (the latter recently settled), it might be a good time to look back at this article that appeared in The Interface several years ago:)

According to an article distributed by the Associated Press, Apple Computer's long standing lawsuit against Microsoft Corporation and Hewlett-Packard over the use of "point and click" displays such as those used on the Macintosh has been dismissed.

U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker ruled that most of the screen symbols were covered by a 1985 license Apple granted to Microsoft, were generic ideas that could not be copyrighted, or were derived from previous displays invented by Xerox Corporation and others.

Observers have long questioned the wisdom of the suit when it was generally acknowledged that the Xerox Star computer system was the first with the "point and click" display. Xerox never fully developed and marketed the system.

Similar displays are used by the Commodore Amiga and by the GEOS operating systems developed by GeoWorks for Commodore 64 and 128, Apple, and PC.



More Graphics for GEOS

by Randy Hams

Once you begin to get a handle on GEOS, you begin to look for more clip art to add to your creations. If I remember correctly, geoPublish is the only GEOS application that came with any Photo Albums of clip art to use with GEOS. Some commercially available clip art was produced over the years, but is hard to find these days. There are a lot of geoPaint files that can be downloaded from BBS's and networks, but converting them to clip art is not always easy or possible.

First of all what is GEOS clip art? GEOS clip art is Photo Scraps that have been pasted into GEOS Photo Albums. Artwork in this format can be cut, copied, and pasted into and out of GEOS Application Data Files (e.g. geoWrite, geoPaint, geoPublish files, etc.).

Thankfully, GEOS came out with an application (program) called GRAPHICS GRABBER, available on the Desk Pack Plus disk. I already wrote an article about GRAPHICS GRABBER. I won't repeat everything in that article, but in a nutshell, it lets you convert Print Shop, Print Master, and Newsroom graphics into GEOS clip art! While there are literally thousands of the Print Shop and Print Master graphics available, they are very small. While that is perfectly fine for some uses, when you want to stretch them to a larger size, they lose a lot of resolution. I find that the Newsroom clip art is an excellent source of GEOS clip art mainly because it comes in all different sizes! There is everything from tiny to large graphics for use as clip art. And by using GRAPHICS GRABBER, you can easily copy each individual graphic in GEOS Photo Albums.

What is available? First, the Newsroom Program came with an entire disk of Newsroom clip art.

This was followed by three volumes of Clip Art Collection disks, each sold separately. Thankfully, the manual that comes with each disk provides a hard copy of each graphic. The program clip art disk and the Volume I disk, provide 600+ graphics each in a wide variety of topics. Volume 2 contains 800+ business-related graphics. Volume 3 contains 600+ Sports and Recreation graphics. These were available from Software Support International. Occasionally, they may be found on the used market.

Newsroom graphics are stored in categories, much like GEOS Photo Albums. Also, for copy protection reasons, the graphic files are hidden on the disk. So importing Newsroom graphics into GEOS Photo Albums requires the GRAPHICS GRABBER.

The bottom line? By using the GRAPHICS GRABBER to import Newsroom graphics to GEOS Photo Albums, you will have a large library of medium to high quality graphics for use as clip art.

(From The *Commodore Compendium*, newsletter of Ba-

I've Got Five Dollars and It's Saturday Night

At the February meeting Zella Mallard left too early, and Bill Clark never showed at all, allowing the third name called, Jim Kirby, to walk out with the \$10 member prize. In March, Pat Spears name came up on the first try, helping fund some of the purchases she made during the equipment auction.

We draw names till there's a winner, stopping after the third name, and if none of them is present, the pot goes up to \$10 the next meeting.

Absentee names drawn in 1999 include Art Gumprecht, John Weaver and Doug Cunningham.