

The Interface



Fresno, California

October/November 1999

Taking 8 Bits to the 21st Century

Annual Picnic

Sunday, October 10

3 p.m.

Main dish & drinks provided

Members bring salad, desert or snacks

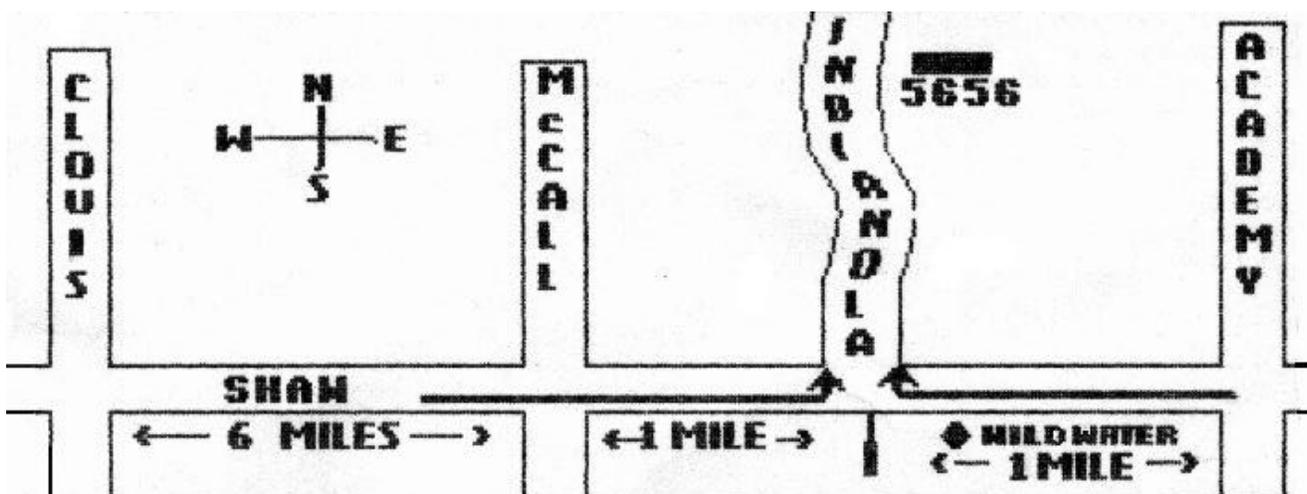
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(see map below)

Call Zella 291-2452 for reservations

Door prize -
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Shaky Future for Commodore Internet Access?



Recently a number of Commodore users have found themselves shut out of the Internet and even convenient Email usage, as a number of Internet Service Providers

(ISP-s) have discontinued their support for text-based systems. A member of the Oxnard Commodore club who uses the Los Angeles Freenet service was told that their software was not Y2K compliant and they would be stopping text based service by the end of the year. They also told him that this would probably be true of most other Freenets throughout the country; however there is at least a possibility that this is just a way to get rid of an unprofitable segment of the business.

This prompted an Email exchange on the subject on the Commodore MaiLink exchange list.

Three links were provided that supposedly list Internet Service Providers:

<http://www.primus.com/staff/peggy/provider.html> - This one produce a "siite not found" message.

<http://www.consumerworld.org> - This lists thousands of services, not just computer stuff; it includes the following "yellow pages" link): <http://www.superpages.com/> (This still requires a good deal of searching).

<http://duke.usask.ca/~scottp/free.html> - This one

lists Freenets around the world. It does produce an extensive world-wide list, but for many U.S. based providers there is no way to determine the location without linking to the service, a process that could prove tedious.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no Freenet service in the Fresno area. In some cases, a service that is not too far away may be cost-effective even with long-distance charges. The closest that can be identified from the list is in the San Jose area. We contacted Silicon Valley Public Access Link, where we found the following:

"Our Classic Internet Service is designed for users with limited incomes, older computers, or for those for whom pictures are of little value. This service works well with most any terminal or PC, and a modem. We recommend this service for those using DOS, or running a 286 (IBM PC/AT) or older computers."

The price is \$40 per year. By limiting one-s usage, and reading and preparing Email off-line, it should not be difficult to use a service like this from Fresno and stay well under the typical \$20 per month that most ISP-s charge for full service. (SV-PAL, 1777 Hamilton Ave, Suite 208A, San Jose, CA 95125;

Web site: <http://www.svpal.org/services/classic.html>

Email: support@svpal.org

Voice Mail: 408-448-3072

Two popular free Email services, hotmail.com and juno.com were reported to require a PC, but one user at least was able to access the sites with his Commodore by going through his state library. Commodore telecommunications expert Gaelyne R. Gasson of Australia provided this information:

Juno uses proprietary software that they give away free--and make up for it by showing advertising to

their users. In some ways they could be related to what AOL was to Qlink, as AOL still requires their own software, designed to run only on specific platforms. This by itself excludes Commodore. Juno made the decision that they would only create software to use their service for specific computer platforms. Unlike AOL/Q-Link, Juno didn't close doors to us, they simply didn't open any to begin with.

Not long ago, hotmail.com started using secure pages for access to keep people's passwords safe. This in turn caused problems for several Lynx/Commodore users as most ISPs don't as a rule set up Lynx so it can access secure web sites.

It CAN be done (ours is set up this way), but it requires that Lynx be patched and some systems administrators don't like taking this extra step. This is why a lot of Commodore users have assumed that it can only be accessed with Windows/IBM.

I don't really recommend hotmail.com though, as they really don't support text users in any way. At least friendlyemail.com uses alternative text, offers non-frames type pages, and best of all, they actually listened when I explained how they might improve their system so people who use Lynx can access their services.

The web is a part of the whole of the Internet. As in yes, you can make cheese from milk, and cheese is a dairy product, but cheese is not milk.

Over the years, we have heard various formats of:

"It won't work because I'm using a Commodore computer."

In place of the word "it," pick any of the following:
1. The modem; 2. The BBS; 3. The Internet Provider; 4. The download (ymodem, zmodem, xmodem); 5. The upload (ymodem, zmodem,

xmodem); 6. The fax machine on the other end of the phone line; 7. Some Web sites.

Actually, none of these things can tell what's connecting to it. There are times when there are some reasons why something won't work that might at first glance seem like it's related to the computer type in use, but when investigated or looked at logically, it turns out not the fault of using a Commodore. It's easy to blame the computer. And even easier to blame our beloved C= as they're such an easy (and often unfair) target.

For example, the problem with using Hotmail relates to an update they made to the way their web server works when accepting passwords. They now use encryption and this requires a web browser that can handle encryption. Lynx CAN handle this, but has to be specially set up to do so, and we need to ask our systems administrators if they would do this for us. The question to ask is "Can you please update Lynx so it uses SSL or Secure Socket Layers? The information about it is at: <http://www.slcc.edu/lynx/release2-8-2/ssl.html>."

To come to a point, I was just able, with my Commodore, to access my Hotmail account using Lynx--the one I've set up to handle secure connections. It wasn't at all easy; there were a dozen offers of cookies and such, but I did get to a mail box and I was able to read my mail. Oh, I also got a screen telling me that my browser wasn't very "good" and I should "update" to either Explorer or Netscape and was given a link to download Explorer (for those who don't know, Hotmail is owned by Microsoft). However, the next link was to access my mail and I used that one. To prove I could also reply to mail, I replied to one of the Spam messages (that's all I ever get at that account) but sent it to my Email address here. Unfortunately, some web designers have decided they don't want to deal with Lynx users at all and

so actually check to see what browser is being used and exclude us. I use it in the opposite way and make sure our pages are friendly for Lynx-- especially when using something that displays great for other users but not in Lynx; for instance side by side type table displays. I check if a user is visiting with Lynx, and if so, display the same information pre-formatted especially for Lynx but show it differently for other users.

But, Lynx can be used on many different computer types. If something won't work with Lynx, it's not the fault of our beloved Commodores, it's because Lynx either isn't set up, or the web master has decided to exclude us from their sites.

The other thing to note is that with Lynx and other browsers you can actually change what type of browser yours is logged as. For Lynx, this is in the options menu. It is not a good idea though, because for instance, my pages would look horrible with Lynx if you took out that identifier and believe it or not, I'm sure there are others out there too. There's even a list of Lynx friendly web sites at <http://www.crl.com/%7Esubir/lynx.html>

As to SLIP, this is software on both sides of the modem (at the Internet provider and on the home computer). SLIP is available for the Commodore but only in demo format at this point. It and probably PPP too is coming though. I just don't know how soon.

Contact Gaelyne at gaelyne@videocam.net.au or visit her Web site at <http://videocam.net.au/>

Diskcovery: 15 Years of Loadstar

by Fender Tucker

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I was skulking around down in the depths of the Tower dungeon last weekend when I came upon a pile of *INFO* magazines from the late 80's, including the Spring/Summer 1987 AProduct Roundup@ issue. On the cover was an Amiga screen with the following message emblazoned on it:

“Over 2000 Products Listed for the: Commodore 64, Commodore 128, & Amiga computers!!!”

As I was on my way to what we call the Porcelain Horror Chamber I picked up that particular issue for further perusal. It proved to be quite interesting...and cathartic.

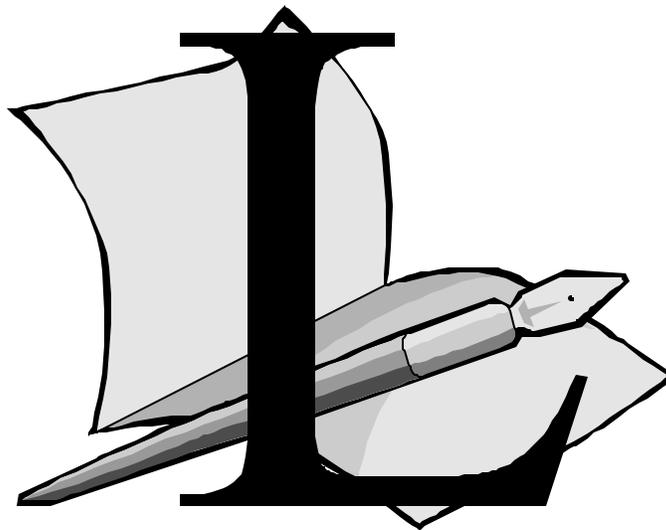
As you may or may not remember, *INFO* was the “Consumer Reports” magazine for Commodore computers. It wasn't produced by Commodore Business Machines, Inc. so, unlike just about all of the other C-64/128 magazines, it didn't follow the Commodore party line. It prided itself on being “The first personal computer magazine produced entirely with personal computers!” It was filled with reviews of products, articles about the business affairs of Commodore bigwigs, reports on Commodore shows, and a lot more.

I gave the issue my usual quick scan looking for any mention of LOADSTAR and didn't see it anywhere. I wasn't looking for my name because I didn't take over the Tower until August of 1987. Of course they never mentioned me in any of their subsequent issues either. In fact, *INFO*, even though it was the best Commodore magazine ever for users (Transactor was better for program-

mers), only mentioned LOADSTAR three or four times during the five years they co-existed, usually at the end of a small blurb about “Disk magazines.”

But that’s okay. We probably didn’t send them free review copies as we should have. Still, in the issue titled “Product Roundup” you’d think they’d have tracked us down as they did the other 810+ “manufacturers and vendors” in their six-page list. Of all of the Commodore supporting companies listed, none of them still support the C-64/128. I imagine 95% of them are completely out of business.

Yet the one company that started supporting the C-64/128 three years before the *INFO* issue, and continued for the duration of *INFO*’s life, and is now pledging to keep publishing through the year 2000 AD, is not even mentioned!!!



The litany of companies is both inspiring and depressing:

Abacus, Accolade, Activision, Aprotek, Avalon-Hill, Batteries Included, Berkeley, Briwall, Broderbund, Central Point, Compute, Cosmi, Creative Solutions, Datamost, Digital Solutions, Dr. Evil Labs, Electronic Arts, Epyx, Firebird, Free Spirit, HesWare, Infocom, Jason-Ranheim, Koala Technologies, Kracker Jax, Midnight Press, MSD Systems, Performance Peripherals, Polarware/Penguin, Protecto, Quantum-Link, Roger Wagner, Schnedler Systems, Sierra On-Line, Skyles Electric Works, Spinnaker, Springboard, Starpoint, Strategic Simulations, Sublogic, Timeworks, Transactor Publications,

Twin Cities 128, Tymac, Ultrabyte, Viking Technologies, WICO, Xetec.

These are some of the more memorable, and most of them were great while they lasted. Some are still big in the PC field.

In addition to the list of vendors, there are 42 pages of software titles with about 30 titles per page. Just the way that *INFO* categorized the software was informative --I never knew a C-64 could do so many things!

The C-128 had nine pages of products (115 titles) and there were 14 pages of interfaces, analog devices, buffers, cables, input devices, printers and other hardware.

The following “periodicals” were churning out the words back in 1987:

INFO, Commodore Microcomputers, Midnight Software Gazette, Transactor, Computer Shopper, COMAL Today, Ahoy!, Compute! = Gazette, Money Machine, RUN, Compute!, Computer, Entertainer, Twin Cities 128.

They are now long silent, except maybe Twin Cities. Ever since the infamous Jones/Brown feud of 1994 I’ve lost touch with Parsec and Twin Cities. It used to be quite good.

Under the heading Magnetic Information there are six listings, including Mystic Software Club (\$9.95 monthly), and UpTime (\$72/year monthly). Strangely enough, LOADSTAR took over UpTime’s subscriber liability when the Rhode

Island-based disk magazine crapped out in 1988. Not long afterwards, the former CEO of UpTime tried to trademark the name, LOADSTAR. Since we had prior use of the name, common sense, fairness and LOADSTAR prevailed.

I imagine there are a lot of current C-64/128 users who don't know much about the days when Commodore ruled the world. It was a wonderful time. People would write little BASIC algorithms and actually try to patent them! A guy would buy a C-64 in the morning and start a software company that night! Computer users were looked down upon and ridiculed by everybody! It was a grand year!

Fifteen years ago, Judi and Jim Mangham and Al Vekovious decided to expand their Apple monthly disk experiment, Softdisk, to include a Commodore 64 magazine. They called it LOADSTAR, a name that every managing editor who's ever worked for Softdisk (and there have been dozens) agrees is the best damn name ever for a disk magazine. It's so perfect. LOAD@*@!

The early LOADSTARs were the work of Donna Woody, Jim Weiler, Alan Gardner, Mike Maynard, Jim Row, Joel Rea, and yes, Dan Tobias, names that speckle the first 40 issues of LOADSTAR like sesame seeds on hot, buttered buns. They rode the wave of Commodore enthusiasm, invigorated by the friendly competition from other 8-bit entrepreneurs. There was money to be made, computer shows to attend, new products to release to awe-struck consumers.

Then, in September 1987, Softdisk hired a down and out guitar picker from Stinkin=Desert New Mexico to take over the reins of LOADSTAR. Little did they know that he was a man of such small ambition, such meager imagination and such puny financial skills that he would not only slash the number of subscribers from a high of a whole

buncha thousands in the 80s to around 900 today, he would take damn near 12 years to do it! Then, as he forces his wife (who used to own Softdisk!) to join him in solemn vows of poverty, they decide to continue to publish LOADSTAR until at least the end of the year 2000.

It's all quite a saga how all of those brilliant engineers, businessmen and conmen started those deadend companies back in the early 80s and how the unmentionables of 1987 are the only ones to greet the millennium with a current catalog. Tom Wolfe should write the story.

Over a year ago we pledged to continue publishing LOADSTAR into the new millennium. We were leery about the prospects for going beyond January 2000 and so we started accepting subscription money only through issue #187, our December 1999 issue. Many of you took that as a bad omen, and that's understandable. What red-blooded American company is going to turn down offered moolah?

I don't really know why we did it. We were being cautious and surely "irrational exuberance" is the mood of the day. But we've recovered from our bout with caution and Judi and I have decided that spending another year cranking out LOADSTARs is not the worst way to spend the year 2000. In fact, it could be a lot of fun. So here's the scoop for the future of LOADSTAR:

LOADSTAR will continue publishing through its December 2000 issue (#199), guaranteed. The price of a subscription is \$69.95 per 12 issues, or \$5.83 per issue. After December 31, 1999, the price will be \$80 for 12 issues, or \$6.67 per issue. International prices are: for 1999, \$79.95 or \$6.67 per issue; in 2000, \$90.00 for 12 issues, or \$7.50 an issue.

We'd like everybody to subscribe this year, if

possible. It's cheaper for you, and better for us, tax-wise. We will continue to offer back issues for sale and will keep coming up with new products. You can really help us out by buying those.

One thing that struck me as I waded through all those pages of products and software, was that LOADSTAR had published something similar to most of them, and for the past few years, has published many programs [better] than most of them. Very few of those thousands of programs support the mouse, the SuperCPU, the CMD devices and directories. And none of the programs have somebody you can write to or call if you have a problem.

LOADSTAR is old and has a crackpot editor with dangerous mood swings but it just may be old and dangerous enough to survive **two** millennium bashes (the fun one and the real one). LOADSTAR's programmers are increasingly eccentric but they are dedicated and loyal. The next 18 LOADSTAR's could very well be the best ever. I think anyone who doesn't ride the LOADSTAR roller coaster this next year is a fool.

How to Paste GEOS Photo Scraps

by Dick Estel

In a recent issue of LOADSTAR, a reader asked how to put photo scraps into an album. The response explained how to get them out. In case anyone needs this information, here's a quick outline:

Be sure you have the Photo Manager on the disk you're working on. You need to have an image in a geoPaint file that you want to make into a Scrap. Open (or create) the geoPaint file. Select the edit tool (upper right in the tool box). Place the pointer at one corner of the image you want to make into a scrap and click once. Move the pointer to the

opposite corner, and click again. A dotted line will appear around the image. In the top menu bar, click on EDIT, then on COPY or CUT (cut erases the image inside the dotted line). This creates a file called Photo Scrap on the current drive. If a Photo Scrap file already exists on that disk, it will be replaced by the new one.

In the top menu bar, click on GEOS, then on Photo Manager. If there is an album on the disk, you will see the first scrap in the album. If there is no album, you will see a dialog box allowing you to create a new album. If there is more than one album on the disk, you can close the first one and open another. (GEOS always displays the **first** album on the disk.) Once you have opened the desired photo album, click on EDIT, then on PASTE. Your scrap will become the first scrap in the album. (There is a limit of 60 scraps per album in GEOS 2.0.) At this point you can click on RENAME and give your scrap a descriptive name. This allows you to use the SEARCH option under EDIT to scroll through a list of the scraps in an album.

The above applies primarily to GEOS 2.0, but the procedure is essentially the same for older versions. There are 3rd party programs that allow the creation of photo scraps from various sources and in other ways. One, for example, is GeoFetch, which appeared on LOADSTAR 65. This is a desk accessory that lets you make a scrap from any place in GEOS...for example, you could copy a part of the desk top into a scrap.

And the Earth Shook

Email from Fender Tucker, 10 August 1999:

Last night I bought a 366 MHz Windows 98 PC. May gawd have mercy on my soul. So far I like it fine. I'll probably be online a lot more in the future. I'll start slow, but eventually I'll be seeing you on

Scape

by Robert Bernardo



By the time this is read, two yearly events will have happened. The Chicago Commodore Expo in Lansing, Illinois, and the Vintage Computer Festival 3.0 in Santa Clara, California. The Chicago Expo is a Commodore-only celebration at the Day's Inn (formerly, Holiday Inn) on September 25. The Vintage Computer Festival is a celebration of all vintage computers, held at the Santa Clara Convention Center on October 2-3. These two autumn shows, along with the Lansing Area Commodore Club Expo (Okemos, Michigan) in May, comprise the best-known events which we Commodorians can attend here in the states.

All three shows have a different flavor, a different style, and each complements the other. The LACC Expo seems very local, like a big club activity. The Chicago Expo gathers more people from afar, due to its more central location. VCF is very California, Silicon Valley-based, and caters to archivists, historians, and collectors interested in the computer industry. There is something in each which would please a Commodore fan.

Need to feel a closeness and a personal touch in all the C= activities going on at a show? The LACC Expo I attended last year had about 50 people show up. Though the number was small in comparison to other computer shows (or large in comparison to other C= meetings), the attendees could really focus on the demonstrations and luminaries who appeared, such as Dale Sidebottom (president of Louisville Users of Commodore, Kentucky club) and Maurice Randall, GEOS programmer extraordinaire. Dale showed what could be done with a Commodore and a Postscript printer, and Maurice officially introduced Wheels

64, the replacement/updated operating system for GEOS 64. At this year's LACC Expo, Maurice introduced the beta version of GeoShell 3.0. Size doesn't matter; the LACC Expo makes up for it by having big C= releases.

Need a bigger C= Expo? The Chicago Expo I attended last year had about double the number of attendees with even more C= stars, Jason Comp-ton (writer for CU Amiga magazine and Commodore World), Steve Judd, Mark Seelye, Nate Dannenberg, Todd Elliott, and Robin Harbron (programmers), Fender Tucker (LOADSTAR disk magazine and newsletter), Jim Butterfield (programmer/writer), Roger Lawhorn (GEOS programmer), Scott Parker (Centsible Software) and Dale Sidebottom and Maurice Randall again. At that Chicago show, Maurice introduced Wheels 128, the replacement/updated operating system for GEOS 128. Nate Dannenberg showed off his C128 Tower and Quickcam interface/program. Roger Lawhorn and Dale Sidebottom promoted their GEOS applications. Jim Butterfield reminisced about Commodore programming in the 1980's. Three Commodore C65's were shown; less than 200 of these prototypes were ever made by CBM. Like the LACC Expo, these are the two shows to go to if you want your fill of Commodore.

Need a show that's more general in nature? The Vintage Computer Festival may be the ticket. At last year's VCF 2.0, many computer platforms from the 1980's and earlier were represented there, anything from parts for 1950's behemoths to IMSAI 8080's to Commodore PET's to Timex/Sinclair's to Apple II's to Tandy Color Computers to obscure, unknown computers. The Computer Museum History Center had a large exhibit of historical computers, including many different Commodores. These were usually hands-on displays; you actually got to work the computers.

Larry Anderson, one of the exhibit docents and also SYSOP to the Silicon Realms BBS (209 754-1363), was showing his collection of PET computers. Larry's 15 minutes of fame came when Desmond Crisis, TV reporter for the Sci-Fi cable show, CNet Central, interviewed him in front of the cameras. In fact, Desmond's entire report was on how people still used their vintage computers and attended a show such as VCF.

(Unfortunately, I did not ever videotape the report from the program. Desmond can be contacted at: CNet, 150 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA 94111. Phone: 415 395-7805 ext. 1554. FAX: 415 395-9205. E-mail: desmondc@cnet.com)

The VCF flea market had a wide variety of items for a wide variety of computers. Commodore items were there for sale; from various vendors I was able to buy some Warpspeed and FastLoad cartridges, a Commodore Magic Voice cartridge; the programs, World Cup Soccer, Wizard of Oz, Alice in Wonderland, and Totl.Infomaster 3.6; an Animation Station drawing pad, a carrying bag for SX-64 cables (the bag in mint condition!), and a few 1541 and 1571 disk drives (given for free, though I did make a donation).

The featured speakers gave their talks in conference rooms, separate from the large flea market room. At VCF 2.0 a lot of their talk went over my head as they spoke about the computing industry and programming in the 1960's or the 1970's. Their insiders' jokes drew appreciative laughter from the programmers in the crowd, but because it was before my time in computers, I could only wonder.

As you can see from the above, there is a type of show for most any Commodore fan. To find out information about next year's shows, contact the following people:

LACC Expo -Tim Lewis, president of LACC

(lewist@arq.net), LACC, P.O. Box 1065, East Lansing, MI 48826, U.S.A.

Chicago Commodore Expo -Randy Harris, president of the SouthWest Regional Association of Programmers (rgharris@aol.com), SWRAP User Group, Inc., P.O. Box 528232, Chicago, IL 60652-8232, U.S.A.. Phone: 773 375-9017

Vintage Computer Festival -Sam "Sellam" Ismail, organizer of VCF (siconic@jasmine.psyber.com), Vintage Computer Festival, 4275 Rosewood Dr. #29-161, Pleasanton, CA 94588, U.S.A. Phone: 888 SICONIC ext. 823.

Without these people and their partners, we wouldn't have these fine shows in which we could celebrate Commodore.

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

We have a record jackpot! If there is a lucky winner in November, he or she will go home with \$20.

In September we drew five names without a winner: Ben Briscoe, Marie Terry, John Weaver, Keith Sohm, and Virgil Leisure (surely it's worth a 150 mile drive for the \$20 prize, Virgil).

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. We seem to have a new unwritten rule that if the pot goes over \$10, we draw five names.

Our 1999 winners have been Ben, Jack Fisetto, Pat Spears, Helen Silvas, and Jim Kirby.

Absentee names drawn in 1999 include Pat Spears, George Savaros, Art Gumprecht, John Weaver Doug Cunningham, Zella Mallard, and Bill Clark, Les Crites, Virgil Leisure, Art Gumprecht, and the Marquez family.

The Last Commodore

by Dick Estel

In the March 1998 issue of the *Commodore Mailink*, Managing Editor Jean Nance asked, when will the last Commodore die?

In June, 1990, Lee Pasborg, editor of *The Town Cryer*, Heartland Users Group, Cape Girardeau MO, wrote an article titled The Orphan Computer, pointing out that while Commodores were about to become orphans, they would be vital, healthy orphans that could survive for years with the right care and planning. He correctly predicted that we would see Amigas sold at yard sales by 1995.

Also in the early 90's, I wrote a similar article for The Interface. My theme was that while the sunset of Commodore was in view, it would be a long and glowing sunset.

While Lee and I both realized that a working Commodore 15 years hence would do everything it could do back then, we both were concerned that a Commodore of 1990 would not be satisfactory for most users in 1995. Indeed, many Commodore users have abandoned their machines for PC's, Mac's and Amigas, but many continue to use the older machine along side a new one.

What we did not foresee was that a few talented programmers and engineers saw opportunity where we saw limits. They put their brains and skill and effort to the task of making Commodore nearly equal to many other newer and faster machines. Because of this, Commodore has survived in a more vital form than Lee and I expected.

Thanks to these often unsung heroes, we have large hard drives, improved 3.5" drives, and add-on equipment to increase not only disk access, but operating speed. Its true that many users are satis-

fied with their machine just as it was in 1990. Others felt that these improvements were still not enough. But enough Commodore users to support several dozen small companies and individuals have taken advantage of these new products to keep their machines at an acceptable level into the 21st century.

The last Commodore will die only when no one is willing and able to make repairs, because as long as they work, there will be people who will keep them running. With a few million around for spare parts, there's no reason why we can't have a small but world-wide group of Commodore devotees a dozen years into the next millennium.

A Short History of Medicine

I have an earache...

2000 BC - Here, eat this root.

1000 AD - That root is heathen. Here, say this prayer.

1850 AD - That prayer is superstition. Here, drink this potion.

1940 AD - That potion is snake oil. Here, swallow this pill.

1985 AD - That pill is ineffective. Here, take this antibiotic.

2000 AD - That antibiotic is artificial. Here, eat this root.

(Reprinted from *Input/Output*, newsletter of the Arizona

Fresno PC Users Group

Meetings 1st Monday of each month, 7:30 p.m. at
Ramada Inn, Shaw & Fresno.

Recorded information phone: 496 3974

Membership: 434 0941 or 225 8824

6751 N Blackstone # 395

Fresno CA 93710