

FC=UG

"Taking Commodore Computing Into The Twenty First Century And Beyond ..."

January/February '10



-by Lenard R. Roach

I have been pestering the good men and women of FCUG to come up with a list of Commodore games that were gender specific aimed at girls and so far no one in FCUG has come up with anything for me, so, in my usual calm and controlled manner, I set out on my own to look up what could be found for this subject.

My journey to find this information came to one stop, where all my questions were answered and even, in some cases, described in detail as to how the programs work. This stop was to our local Commodore guru of the past who shall be known in this article as The Commodore Man. I knew that if anyone would have the information about the subject at hand, it would be him, and he delivered quickly with some he snapped off in a quick email to me.

According to CM, there were very few Commodore 64 games made with girls in mind, but two really stand out - Barbie's Dream Date and Barbie's Dream House. In Barbie's Dream Date, Barbie receives a call from Ken. There is even a few 8

bit images of Barbie answering the phone and talking to Ken. Ken asks Barbie out to whatever place is selected by the randomness of the game. It could be to the prom, on a picnic, to hang out at the swimming pool, a casual dinner, or whatever. The next step in the game is that Barbie has to go shopping for all the necessary items needed for whatever date has been selected by Ken. So, its into the car and into town she goes to find the right store to shop at for the right date. For example, if Ken asked Barbie to go to the prom, then she would have to stop at a bridal and gown shop for the right dress and the proper purse. If the pool is selected, then Barbie has to go to the swim shop and get items like a swim suit, some flip flops, and maybe even a sun hat, and on it goes. The fun thing about the game is that Barbie is on a time limit and has to pick up the items needed before the timer runs out. If the player does not get all the items necessary for the date selected, then Ken calls again and tells Barbie that plans have changed and if she would like to go to whatever Ken says it is. This means that the player has to start all over again and shop for the right items to match the date. However, if Barbie gets all the items necessary within the allotted time, then there is a picture of her and Ken on the date. Whoopie! Also, as another quirk, if Barbie picks up the wrong item, like a pair of flip flops for a prom dress, then Ken calls and changes plans also. CM points out that

there seems to be no limit to how much money Barbie can spend at all the stores, like Barbie is the US Congress or something.

In Barbie's Dream House, the player basically gets to design a home for her Barbie complete with room design and probably some furniture placing. The game is set up so that a user can use the game to design their own home, if one so wishes.

CM also pointed to a few other games that would best fit girls, like Mall Madness, where the user gets to go and buy things for their new home, which also includes getting a new car which I don't understand what that has to do with home decor. The Dating Game, which if anyone can remember how the TV show went, you already have what this game is about. Don't ask me, I didn't watch the show much - it interfered with my Star Trek watching. There is also The Love Boat, which is something I did watch because I was always interested in comedy, but the show was so mushy that I went back to watching my sci-fi programs, so I would guess that this game is about winning the heart of someone on the ship. There is My Pretty Pony, where the user is a pony and plays through a couple of simple adventures, or can even play dress up with their pony. This sounds more like a game for younger players who would be just discovering how to use the Commodore or any other computer of the time. Finally, there is My Dream Pet, where the user adopts a virtual pet and takes care of it, came out sometime in the late 90s. I remember watching people play these Tamagotchis while I was cleaning Metcalf South Mall back in the day. Even the mall manager had his own virtual pet and would spend hours at his desk playing with it. It's kind of neat to think that such a device was first started on a Commodore 64. My Dream Pet is the only iffy game that the Commodore Man mentions, since it could be gender neutral in its design, but this game is possibly too cutesy for boys, so he added it to the list of girls games.

There are probably more Commodore games for girls, but these are the ones that CM could remember for me right off the top of his head and give me a decent description. I sure there are more within the confines of type in games and games to be found across the sea in countries like England and Germany, where Commodore stayed the top gaming system during the big Nintendo 8 bit bang that hit the United States, but they weren't in the great mind of the Commodore Man. To be honest, I was surprised to find that there were this many games for the Commodore 64 aimed specifically for girls. I did expect more, since Commodore was such a big system back in the day, but I guess that back then, to be market specific was not thought of at the time. Nowadays, such product is all over the place and divided into so many categories and sub-categories that they cannot be counted. However, when I walk into a game shop, like an EB Games or a Game Stop, I find things more focus for adults than kids, let alone girls. I guess that all of us who were gamers back in the 80s and 90s have grown up but we have not grown out of our love for video games. Now that I think about it, it is usually the guys in the game store while the girl friends wait outside the store and wither talk on the cell phone or spend that time texting other friends. Maybe I'm retarded, but I think that Commodore had the right idea of making something more gender specific, aiming at girls, than those who make video games now. I mean, there are few girls I know of that want to get into Modern Warfare 2 or Assassins Creed 2, when they would rather be doing what girls like to do most - and don't ask me what that is, for I think that will remain a mystery to the mind of man forever and ever.

This month's Feature writer about the E64 is our own club president Robert Bernardo. Sorry I didn't credit him at the top of his article. My too too

- Editor



The Denial Collection 3 for the VIC-20

-by Vic20-lan

This is a fantastic collection. I would have happily paid for games like this when I had my Vic-20 all those years ago. The coding and presentation is way beyond some games I regretfully purchased that some folks shamefully published.

Right from the start there is a unique high quality feel of care and attention to detail in the presentation. The windowed presentation tin holds the tape in place like a small museum display case and begs to be opened.

Inside is a single cassette with inlay and content listing, 3 sheets of instructions and a board game sheet, 6 counters, a die and 2 Denial pin badges of the Vic screen and Denial logo. Underneath the contents is a label indicating the individual production number out of 45 limited edition units signed by the author.

The cassette is unusual in that it has been hand assembled from 2 cassettes to have a black and white side. Two sides of the album like Side Black and Side White on Queen II.

Side White ...As it Began

Game 1 is The Improbable War a steampunk-themed, turn-based wargame. Fire, earth, and water tanks battle it out. You know which resources you have but not those of the enemy until you actually engage in battle. Earth soaks up Water, Fire scorches Earth and Water

douses Fire. Great fun, like rock scissors paper meets command and conquer - an expanded version is crying out to be made with resources and tank building and Vic network play!

Game 2 is Ten Ten - a great strategy puzzle game in parallel worlds. This one messes with your head as you try to steer two players to the goals in 2 different mazes at the same time. Use the walls to stop one player moving while adjusting the other against the clock. Very nicely put together. A little like Sokoban, a lot more fun.

Game 3 is Go Left - a frenetic game of race the bunny from right to left by completing the joystick sequence. Good fun but that bunny gets very fast very quickly. I only gave this one a quick go but will be coming back to beat that level 3 bunny. I wonder does the reverse title screen indicate that the controls will flip at some point so up becomes down? If not a sequel is requested to spice this gem up further.

Game 4 is Two Two - the "Analogue" board game played in the real world. Throw the die and move and set a hot zone. If you are in the hot zone then its back to the start. e.g. if you throw a 2 and move from zone 1 to 2 you go back to the start. Even those at the finish are sent back to the start if zone 6 goes hot! My ten year old and I love this fast-paced batter version of Ludo. +Author! Jeff - you should contact Parker Bros.

Side Black

Game 5 is Night of the Ninja - Very slick title screen with flashing highlights before a compelling game where you play the black ninja trying to steal 8 lamps in the correct order A-H from the Japanese buildings while avoiding the white Ninja (plural - is the plural of Ninja, Ninja like with Sheep?) Gameplay is a bit like Amidar / Traxx or PacMan but without the painting or dot-gobbling. The difficult bit is knowing which lamp to get first as they can only be examined close up. Higher levels offer rooms with

multiple chambers and limited tunnels between them.

Game 6 is You Count - a great brain training game. Questions like how many numbers can you see? are odd? are less than 4? are fired out against a time limit. Very playable with a high one more go factor. I like the limited time span challenge to beat the high score.

Game 7 is Pillow Fight - I don't understand the title as the game refers to elements to collect that are good and some which are bad. The screen border colour determines which colour to collect. Bounce around the screen or move the joystick. A bit like Deflex by Jeff Minter with lots more twists. Bonus items such as level Warp and Prize rounds mix of the fun. The prize round allows a gamble for Nothing, Extra Life, Level warp or Death. I really enjoyed this one and cannot wait to get to level 12.

Summary -

I do not recall any Vic-20 multigame collection being this good. This would easily stand up as a best of 3.5k Basic. It is more playable than many of my more modern games and the whole feel is of something very carefully crafted.

I feel privileged to have a copy of this collection and wish I had that kind of creativity to offer.



-by Dick Estel

FCUG Budget Commentary:

The figure shown under the INCOME line item for Donations is not actually income to FCUG. This figure breaks down as follows:

\$100 donation earmarked for

CommVEx from TW

\$180 donation earmarked for CommVEx from CK

\$100 repayment of FCUG donation for CommVEx 2009*

The figure shown under EXPENSES for Miscellaneous Outgo breaks down as follows:

\$100 donation for CommVEx from TW (offsets the donation listed above as income)

\$180 donation for CommVEx from CK (offsets the donation listed above as income)

\$100 donation for CommVEx 2009 from FCUG (repaid and listed above as income)

\$100 donation for CommVEx 2010 from FCUG

\$100 donation to St. Jude Hospital

Only the \$100 donation to St. Jude is an actual expense. The \$100 donation to CommVEx may or may not turn out to be an expense, since it will be repaid in 2010 if the event is profitable.

The net result is that the club had no income in 2009 other than dues. True expenses included the 2010 CommVEx donation (potentially), the cost of the annual club dinner, and the St. Jude donation. For the first time in many years, our total assets decreased for the year.

One of my goals for 2010 is to create a new spreadsheet for club accounting. The present format was started in 2001 and served well at first, but as our circumstances and finances have changed, it has become difficult to understand and explain. Next year - clarity!

*Each year FCUG makes a \$100 donation to CommVEx, with the understanding that it will be repaid if the event has a surplus. In 2008, CommVEx had a net income of \$2, so there was no repayment. In 2009 the repayment was possible thanks to the generous donation from a long-time Commodore supporter.

Dick Estel, treasurer

FCUG Financial Report - 2009

Cash Jan 2009 139.77
 Checking Jan 09 1,893.15
 Total Assets 2,032.92

Income

Dues 72.00
 VCR & DVD Sales 0.00
 Raffle 0.00
 Cash check Donation 380.00
 Misc Sales 0.00
 Miscellaneous Total Income . 452.00

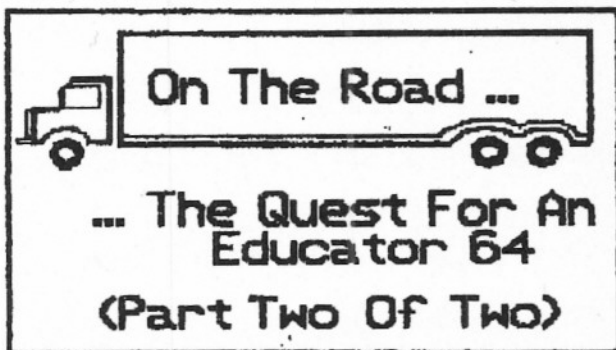
Expenses

Picnic/Dinner -59.75
 Newsletter
 Postage
 New Tickets
 Member drawing
 Misc Outgo -580.00
 Expo Fees 0.00
 Total Expenses -639.75

Ending Assets 1,845.17

Cash Dec 2009 187.77
 Checking Dec 09 1,657.40
 Total 1,845.17

Change for Year -187.75



(In the Sept./Oct. Issue of the Interface, Robert Bernardo described how he traveled all the way from California up to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada so that he could pick up an Educator 64, CBM's school version of the Commodore 64 computer which competed against the Apple II. Now, Robert has to get it back to California.)

I took far too long in the hobby shop, looking for an appropriate birthday gift for Jeri. At last, I bought a "Honda" for her, quickly returned to the car,

and drove away from cold and windy Port Angeles. Going through the Olympic National Forest, I realized that I should have filled up the gas tank while I was back in populated areas. Mile after mile, I crossed through the wilderness, the fuel gauge level moving lower and lower until it hit empty. On fuel reserve now, the car had only about 66 miles left, and I was far away from civilization. Various scenarios raced through my mind, what if I were to run out of gas, what if my mobile phone did not work out here, how long would it be before help came? I'd pass by settlement after hamlet after village. No gasoline station.

What was that? I spied a convenience store open with gas pumps in front the only refueling spot in hundreds of square miles. Relieved, I pulled in, not caring that the gas prices were high. I walked into the store, noting that it was stocked with all kinds of goods for days when locals would be cut off from the rest of the world. The locals in the store eyed me, immediately sizing me up as a stranger. I had to wait awhile; the attendant behind the counter was in no hurry and talked at length with each regular who stood in front of me. Finally, I paid for the gas, tanked up the car, and drove out, the GPS leading the way.

Perhaps I shouldn't have followed the GPS device so religiously. Instead of taking me on the route back to Portland which I had used in going north to Port Angeles, it directed me south along the roads which hugged the waterways, roads with slower traffic and more villages in which I had to slow down.

I had decided to make a brief visit to master Commodore repair technician Ray Carlsen, but it was getting later and later. I had not warned him beforehand, and I didn't have his phone number with me. No phoning him now. By the time I made it to his place, it was past 9 p.m.. The dogs barking behind the fence, I drove into Ray's gravel driveway. I hoped he had heard the commotion and realized who had come in.

I knocked on the screen door. Ray opened it, a serious look on his face.

"Can I help you?"

"Ray," I blurted. "Sorry to come at this late hour and without warning. I came to show you some Commodore stuff I picked up when I was in Victoria, B.C. today."

He perked up; the regular smile that I had known him to have returning to his face.

"Hurry in. I'm in the middle of recording something."

I sat down on the sofa while he concentrated on video-recording the last few minutes of the James Bond movie, Dr. No, from a television channel. After the movie finished, I was free to tell him of my adventures in the Pacific Northwest. He wanted to examine the Educator 64, having seen one many years ago. I pulled the E64 out of the car and placed it on his living room sofa. I lifted the hood of the E64, and Ray eagerly scanned its hardware contents. As I described what I understood of the hardware, he immediately noted that the refurbished motherboard had all its chips soldered in, except the SID chip which had a socket. He surmised that this was replaced/repaired. He also saw that at the bottom of the monitor, on the monitor's circuit board, there were scorch marks. "High heat," as he explained to me. Was that the cause of the monitor being so dim? He thought the monitor tube was very tired, due to its constant use in the past.

I couldn't stay too long; I wanted to get to Jeri Ellsworth's place in Portland and have her look at the E64, too. I promised Ray that I would see him in the spring and bring more C= hardware for him to fix. With that good-bye, I headed the car south to Portland.

I got to Jeri's place at about midnight. She was in her workshop, video-chatting with those members of fatmanandcircuitgirl.com. Using the same story I had related to Ray, I told her about my adventures in the Pacific Northwest. I also mentioned how the E64 seller, Jennifer Ross, had met her before

and that the E64 that Jeri didn't want sold was sold to me. We placed the E64 on a chair in the middle of the workshop and trained a videocamera on it for all the chatters to see. Like Ray had observed earlier, Jeri pointed out the the burn marks on the monitor's circuit board.

Not everything was about the Commodore. I presented Jeri her birthday gifts - the "Honda" and the latest music CD from the band, Warp 11 while I sang, Happy early birthday to you.... Then after an hour of talking to Jeri about her projects and fielding questions from the video-chatters, I felt it was time to call it a day. It would be nice to have many hours of rest after such a busy day.

Sunday... the drive from Portland back to Central California was luckily uneventful. What a relief! Nine and a half hours of driving with stopovers for gasoline and food. The highlight of the day... the all-you-can-eat fish-and-chips dinner at Skippers Seafood Restaurant in Grants Pass, Oregon. It wasn't until late evening that I arrived at the parents' house in Stockton, California.

A few days later on August 5, I met up with Larry Anderson in San Andreas. I had brought the Educator 64 in order to compare it with his E64. After his workday finished, we drove up to his storage unit tucked away in the foothills there. I had never seen his storage, and when he rolled up the garage-type door to it, I was amazed at the orderly arrangement of everything. Compared to the haphazard nature of my storage, his was a wonder.

From the heavy-duty shelving, he pulled down a few PETs for me to examine. Would a monitor from a PET fit into an E64? Then he pulled out his E64 and set it on the pavement. I took my E64 out of the car and placed mine next to his.

First, we looked at both machines' exteriors. The name of the school district where he had obtained his was stamped on the left side; mine had the social

security number of the first owner inscribed in the lower left of the thick, plastic, keyboard casing. His computer's original labeling had gone through a bit too much cleaning; mine hadn't. He had no other labeling stuck on the outside of the machine; on mine the first owner had stuck hand-written paper labels identifying each port. His tape drive ground screw had 2 nuts and 2 lock-washers; mine had one nut and one lock-washer. Surprisingly, his and mine were only 66 apart in their serial numbers.

When we opened up both machines, his had a date stamped on the inside of the casing - Dec. 25, 1982; mine had Dec. 15, 1982. His had a x-ray warning label inside the casing; mine didn't. His had a blue power supply capacitor; mine was black. His internal speaker bracket was straight; mine was warped at the corners. His monitor video board had no scorch marks while mine had those marks. Of course, his video tube was in much better condition than mine. Otherwise, they were twins!

Later over dinner at Good Friends Chinese Restaurant in the nearby community of Valley Springs, his wife, Diane, asked if we had taken any photos of the two machines together. Sheepishly, Larry and I admitted we had not thought of that. The two E64s together... that would have been a picture!

For the next few days, I searched and inquired about a video tube for the E64. There was one place in South Carolina that said it rebuilt CRTs. Whether they would rebuild a green-screen CRT from the Educator was the question. Duncan MacDougall, technician for The Other Group of Amalgams inquired about CRT replacement but found nothing. Jennifer Rose, the previous owner of the E64 and

herself an expert in PET computers, saw no reason why a PET 8032 CRT wouldn't work for the E64. Ray Carlsen looked through his PET service manuals, but information was missing in some of them; he wrote that there were lots of different logic boards in the various models from 4016 to SuperPET, and it looked as if they used the same monitor, but that was more of an educated guess based on the limited information he had. He said that there would be a number on the E64 picture tube that would help in identifying what it was. He also mentioned that there might be a video adjustment knob/screw that may coarsely adjust the tube's brightness. He rued the fact that he didn't work on the Educator 64 the night I brought it to him. (Though Ray said he would never work on a PET again, he didn't rule out the E64 since it really wasn't a PET.)

With my summer vacation quickly ending, there was no time to work on the Educator 64 any more. Reluctantly, I put it into storage with the other PETs the 2001s, 4016, 4032a, and 8032.

Thus, the Educator 64 odyssey ends for now. However, the E64 won't sit in storage indefinitely. I intend to see Ray Carlsen on March 29 this year, and I'll bring him various machines to diagnose and repair - a couple of SX-64s, some 1571 drives, and the Educator 64. Ray does have a non-repairable PET 8032 from me; I wonder if he can scavenge the CRT from that machine for the E64. Sometime this year, my hope is that the E64 will be up and fully running, perhaps in time for the July Commodore Vegas Expo (CommVEx). Then my journey of over 2,000 miles to get and bring back the machine will not have been in vain.