

The Interface

"Taking Commodore Computing Into The 21st Century"

- January/February 2015 -



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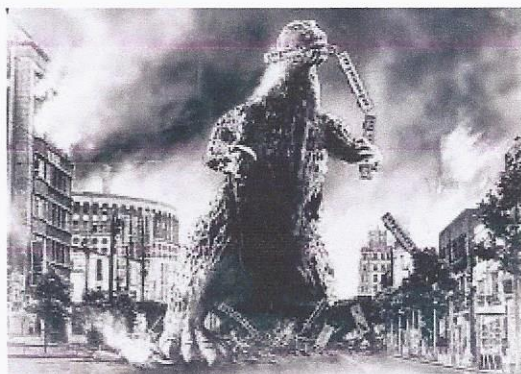
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Newsletter of the Fresno Commodore User Group - Fresno, California

www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm



THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

And The Beat Goes On ...

-by Lenard R. Roach

Five more months and Lenard should be able to attend the 2015 CommVEx in Las Vegas...

And believe me I've been working on some material to take to the convention.

When you sit down and look at some of the things you've haven't worked on over the past several months, you begin to see places where an improvement could be made. I've made some adjustments to all my programs except "Tea 4 2" which appears to be the only program that seems to be all right just the way it is. I did create a boot screen for it that will allow the user to run the program without having to actually type "RUN" and press RETURN.

There is a little string of POKE commands that helped me create the boot command, but first the programmer needs to find the quotient for "X". To do this, the programmer loads the program he wants to make a boot for, then, without running the program, type on an empty line the following command:

```
PRINTPEEK(46)
```

A number will appear below the command line. The programmer will take this total given by the PEEK command and add 1. For the sake of argument let's say that PRINTPEEK(46) equals 75; add 1 to this number (76). SYS out the program using the line SYS64738 or just reboot the Commodore, whichever is easier, then load the boot program. You can either LIST the program code lines or just make your command line number 1. Type the following BASIC line (still using 76 as our sample number):

```
POKE46,76:POKE48,76:POKE50,76:POKE52,76
```

...and press RETURN. Resave the boot program using Commodore's "@0:" command for replace and save. To test to see if your boot program works make sure you have a LOAD"[program name]",DN (device number) somewhere within your boot program that the program can reference to boot the main program. I usually put the [program name] and DN at the end of my boot program so there will be no confusion for the Commodore reading the program. Load your boot program and see if your boot loads your main program. If not, then recheck your PEEKS, POKES, and your LOAD commands.

The reason for the POKE commands is to make sure the Commodore loads the entire program. Booting a program from a stand alone subroutine usually causes either the boot program or the main program to fail to load completely, thus causing an "ERROR IN LINE X" message when ran. I hoping to make a master boot program that will boot the separate boot programs, that will in turn boot the main program. I have a type in program from "Run" magazine that creates a LOAD and RUN command so all a user has to is type LOAD"[boot program]",8,1 and the program will boot without having to type in the RUN command.

The Master Boot program I've written using the "Screen Gem" low res graphics program by Billy Godfrey allows a user to load any of the 5

programs I've either written or updated on my own. By selecting numbers 1 through 5 the user can boot either "Check It Out," "Checkmate," "The Ledger," "TEA 4 2," or "Money Manager 2K." Adjustments have been made to some of the programs so all the data from each program can be saved to the master disk and accessed without causing any crossing of data between programs. "TEA 4 2" uses either a "T/" or an "F/" prefix on each data file name, and now "The Ledger" uses the British Pound sign as a prefix for its data files. This way a user can have the same data file name for each program thus saving the problem of memorizing all those different data file names. Only "Checkmate" uses the standard data file format while "Money Manager 2K" only uses two data file names; one called "Budget" and the other is the number of the month and year of the electronic check book.

Hopefully, I have not caused any confusion to those reading the above comments, but if I get to go to the 2015 CommVEx, I will be able to show during a demonstration exactly how this programming idea works.

I was looking online at one of the hotel finding websites and found no rooms available near the Plaza Hotel where the convention is being held; even the Plaza Hotel is booked during that weekend for the show. The Roach Center team may have to stay off Fremont Street and drive in to the convention and hopefully find parking. I was told to try Expedia.com and see if there are hotels on that website.

I'm still trying to decide if I should bring with me some books other than "Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition," just to show what I have been working on over the years. I'm finding out that those writers who publish books every few months have a team of editors and stenographers working for them so they can get this done. My team is staffed at three with myself being the main writer, editor, and book format expert. I shouldn't

be so hard on myself when I can't get a book out at least once a year; also, I have to work regular jobs to maintain my lifestyle and the lifestyles of those who stay with me.

I have yet to learn how to use some of the software for game creation and, in fact, I'm a little hesitant in working with them. Until I learn the ins and outs of gaming (which I am trying to learn on my own time from watching games being played on today's consoles) I may have to live with just the confines of Commodore gaming and forget the knowledge I got from gaming. Today's games are more interactive stories than they are games and I don't know if I can come up with something that will be of interest for Commodore users. However, I will never know unless I sit down and try. Finding minutes between jobs is becoming a new challenge for me, but there is time if I (like I've said a million times before) just take a minute and work on what I want to.

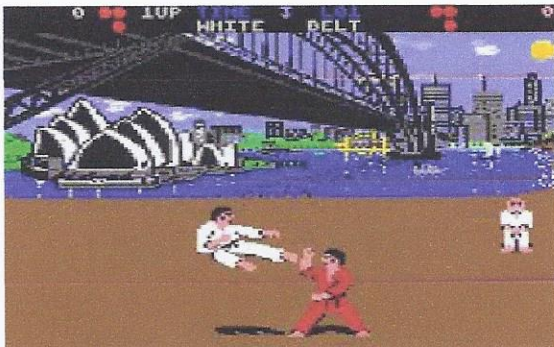
The collection of Commodore equipment I got over Christmas is slowly finding homes but those who have received the machines are looking for software and turning to me to provide it. So far all the software I got with the collection will not boot on the collective Commodores but any software I've written or got from FCUG will boot fine. I do not know the difference between the disks for both the CUGKC collection and mine were stored in environmentally controlled areas. I've even had a 1571 disk drive go down due to this malicious software. I am looking for someone who knows how to align the precarious 1571 with its dual heads. My former Commodore repairman here in Kansas City has suggested that the software from the CUGKC may just be dirty from just sitting and, in turn, transferring the dirt to the heads of all my machines. I'll have to check for dirt when it comes to booting the given software.

FCUG's famous Dick Estel and informed me via email that, if I get to go to CommVEx, he will have waiting for me a decently working

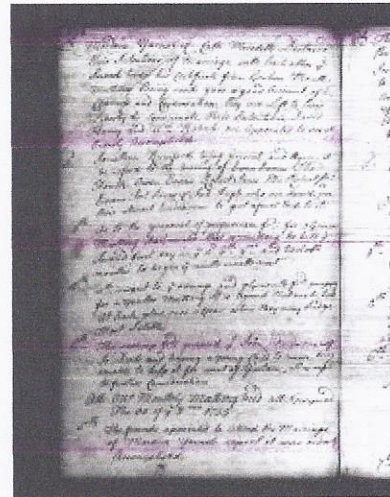
Commodore SX64. The SX64 is my favorite Commodore computer to use because of its portability and the two I have presently in my collection are non functional; one because of a faulty disk drive and the other (acquired from the CUGKC collection) is in need of keyboard repair and other serious maintenance. If it's okay with Robert, I may pawn these two machines off onto him to take to Ray Carlson for repair and pick them up at the 2016 CommVEx. I don't know if either USPS or UPS will ship the big Commodore SX64 for a reasonable price from the West Coast to my home in Redneckville, USA but I can always investigate.

In closing, I would personally like to congratulate the Fresno Commodore User Group for achieving 33 years of Commodore computing. Newsletters like "The Interface" and other Commodore publications throughout the world help keep the Commodore spirit alive and, if you're not careful, will produce something new that will be of benefit to the Commodore user and the world in general. I am thankful that I get to be a part of that genre that helps make Commodore the best in the computer world.

Till next issue, adieu....



Commodore – The Best Computer
To Ever Own!



MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS

-January 2015-

-by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

The first meeting of the New Year started on a good note, with Robert, Dick and Roger arriving simultaneously, Dick having picked up Roger and the equipment. Robert came in from Stockton, and was worried about being delayed in the tule fog that plagues the San Joaquin Valley each winter, but he encountered only a few short patches during his 130 mile drive. We were soon joined by Brad Strait and Greg Dodd. Louis Mazzei had already informed us that he and his son Vincent would be absent.

Dick attached his CMD hard drive to the club C128, intending to do some quick copies of the new member and library disks, but to no avail. Whether it was disks or equipment we never learned, but we switched over to the Warspeed 2.0 cartridge and made copies the old, slow way with three disk swaps required for each side (the hard drive, if everything works right, allows copying a disk side in a single pass).

We had our usual pre-meeting discussion with a

Celebrating 33 Years Of Heart Stopping, Muscle Flexing Commodore Action!!!

wide range of topics. During the Christmas break from his teaching duties, Robert met with two members from the northern part of the valley, who re-joined the club. Welcome back Alfredo Mijango and Steve Dubois.

Robert had also organized the jumble of equipment normally found in the trunk of his Crown Victoria, putting most items into labeled boxes.

Dick presented the annual financial report. During the year, our treasury had decreased by over \$250, with the club lunch being the biggest expense. In the past, much of our income came from equipment sales, but over the last few years these funds had gone to CommVEx. With this event now pretty much self-supporting, we will apply future software and hardware sales to rebuilding the treasury.

Turning to the hardware part of the meeting, Robert talked about the Amiga 1200 sitting on display at our tables. He mentioned that he had an extra Blizzard 68030 accelerator for the Amiga 1200 and perhaps that could be sold to raise funds for the treasury. He guessed that it could bring in about \$100 to \$200.

From Duncan MacDougall, our Amiga repairman in the Bay Area, Robert received an Atari 5200, a cartridge-based game machine. This was met with great interest and excitement by Greg Dodd, whose email name says it all - ArcadeDude. The device can be connected to a TV or a monitor, and we tested several of the games, like Pac-Man and Breakout.

Dick gave a short demonstration of the CMD Hard Drive, especially the menu system that can be programmed to load programs from any partition on the drive or from an external drive.

Robert had a disk of file conversion utilities that had been compiled by Al Jackson of Las Vegas,

and he demonstrated the D64 converter. It converts a full disk side to or from a D64 file, which can be transferred via most any computer. There were modules for 1571 and 1581 disks, and for individual files or groups of files. The disk also included several programs to transfer files between Commodore and Windows or MS-DOS PCs, including Big Blue Reader, Little Red Reader, and Tiny Yellow Brother.

-February 2015-

-by Robert Bernardo

I arrived a few minutes before our appointed meeting time and started setting up my hardware immediately. Vice-president Roger came in a few minutes later and started unloading and setting up the club equipment. A bit later Louis and Grand Poobah of the VIC 20, Vincent, showed up.

As we ordered lunch, talk centered on websites from which to download C64 software -- CSDB.dk, C64.com, and Pokefinder.org. From master programmer Jim Butterfield, we saw a few minutes of the beginning of his C64 Training Video, which formerly was on VHS tape and now has been archived at Youtube.com. Though outsiders think the video to be dry and uninteresting, we found it to be very informative.

Vincent informed us that he was going to display his classic VIC-20 set-up at the Commodore Vegas Expo this year, and I thought it was a good idea, because I wouldn't have to bring that set-up in my crowded car. Roger told of a specific VIC-20 joystick that was marketed back in the day by CBM; because I had never heard of that, we had to look for an image of it on Google.

This month was the "catch-up" meeting, that is, we were to catch up on the VIC-20, C64, Plus/4, and Amiga hardware and software that we had not reviewed in previous meetings due to lack of time. One of the bits of hardware was a Ray Carlsen-

refurbished Sony GVM-1311Q monitor, and we were going to try Commodores and Amigas with it.

We got to the new VIC-20 game, Super Starship Attack from Flnale. It required 16K of RAM expansion, which Roger thoughtfully provided. With all that extra RAM, we were treated to a very nice shoot-em up game, very C64-like in quality. The Sony's display was extra sharp and made the game experience extra special.

We had the C16 up and running. We didn't have any software to run with it, but it was still a treat to see this VIC-20 successor. The number 3 key was broken, and its remaining shaft would fall back into the board, thus touching off dozens of 3's across its 40-column screen. Vincent had a cure for that; hold the C16 upside down, and it would work properly! The C16 ran through the spare Magnavox LCD monitor.

Next up was some Plus/4 software to try, the newly-released SVS-Calc 2.0 spreadsheet. Unfortunately, both NTSC Plus/4's that I brought did not want to cooperate -- one worked for a second before the screen went black and the other did not work at all. I should have brought the more reliable, modded, PAL Plus/4.

Roger had brought the new C64 game, Donkey Kong Jr. 2014. He remarked that it was supposed to be a more accurate representation of the arcade game. It played very smoothly, and the graphics were more detailed than previous C64 Donkey Kongs.

Finally, we tried the Amiga 600 through the Sony monitor. Repaired once before for its video, the A600 video problem was back. Its RGB signal was not being outputted into the Sony monitor, so we tried the new Amiga RGB-to-S-video board. The S-video board worked, but the A600 colors were wrong. Going through the board's composite video output did not cure the wrong colors.

Finally, I hauled out the old Amiga 500 with Kickstart 1.2 and tried the S-video board. Success! A nice sharp picture whether going through S-video or through its composite output. We were only able to test still images and not a moving game image, because the old Kickstart 1.2 did not like the game disks which wanted 1.3. Lesson learned? Replace the old Kickstart chip with the newer version.

Overall, it was a productive meeting, and the Sony monitor was superb. I wonder how good the picture is on its big brother, the Sony GVM-2020, which is for sale at eBay.com.



More Backyard Hardware Than Ever Before

-by Steve Hertz
(Contributor to The Interface)

It seems like every time we think we've reached the peak, the upper limit of what a single backyard can contain, we're proven wrong. The latest meeting of the Southern California Classic Collectors (SC3), held November 15, 2014, was another backyard blowout, straining the capacity of the premises and, doubtlessly, the electrical grid. Over 200 attendees streamed into the yard this time, threading their way through over 30 full and over-sized arcade machines, over one dozen vintage consoles, two pinball machines, and endless tall stacks of video game items up for trade. It was another memorable SC3 party!

We knew this was going to be a big event when we received 78 "definitely going" and 28 "maybe going" responses within just 12 hours of announcing it. The responses surprised us, but we weren't overwhelmed. We've finally put on enough of these things to have some idea of what needs to be done. And we knew we can always count on our friends to come through. Mike K. from GameGavel never lets us down, and he brought yet another great spread of raffle items despite being busy helping out Classic Gaming Expo and RETRO Magazine. William showed up with the Turbo Duo and Neo Geo AES with studio monitor setup he's brought before, but also brought along a huge Tournament Neo Geo sit-down arcade unit. Mike M. brought the Star Trek: TNG and Terminator 2 pinball machines, and the very impressive two-player sit-down Virtual On machine.

We were particularly excited by the oversized machines, like Virtual On and the Neo Geo Tournament console. These don't turn up at SC3 events very often, because they are tough to move around. (Ever try to fit Virtual On through a doorway?) Having two-player beasts like this at SC3 has long been a daydream of ours, and we owe a lot of thanks to the folks that brought them. Being able to set them up next to pinball tables – another relative SC3 rarity – was all the sweeter.

That's not to give the smaller machines short shrift. Mike M. continued the two-player vibe by bringing along Mario Bros., a cabinet that's been at SC3 events before but not very often. Midway's trackball classic Kick-Man was a new addition; as far as we can remember it's never been at an SC3 event before. Console-wise, this party marked the SC3 debut of the Nintendo Virtual Boy (courtesy of Steven from Pop Culture Maven), which proved to be somewhat of a surprise hit. It seemed that the Virtual Boy was continually occupied, attracting players eager to experience the system's unique blend of 3D effects and headache-inducing, blood-

red visuals. This is one machine that truly furthers SC3's goal of making you enjoy video games so much that you leave feeling vaguely uncomfortable.

Next to Virtual Boy was the usual complement of vintage '80s tabletop games, courtesy of Rik from Handheld Museum. Beyond those were over one dozen other vintage home machines, from the Atari 2600 to Sega Dreamcast with just about everything in between. Robert B. from FCUG supplied an Amiga setup and a replacement Commodore SX-64 when ours developed sound trouble. Jason B. lent us some multicarts for the night. Thanks to a truly team effort, this event was overflowing with hardware!

The sharing didn't end with hardware. A few attendees showed up with drinks and food, including a big pan of brownies decorated like a Pac-Man screen and a platter of mini-cupcakes frosted to look like Pac-Man and Kirby. These snacks were a great compliment to all the cookies, chips, and over 55 pizzas consumed during the course of the night. The stack of spent pizza boxes left over in the morning was truly monumental.

Thanks again to everyone who helped out (with a special shout-out to Chris N. and Ian), and THANK YOU to everyone who attended and chipped in a donation to keep us going. Your support is always appreciated!

The next SC3 arcade party has yet to be announced, but if our normal schedule holds, it should be around the spring of 2015. We're scoping out possible new locations for the next event. As always, keep an eye on this site, [sc3videogames.com], and our Facebook page for announcements. Until then, keep gaming!



I Can Still Do Commodore Stuff!

-by Dick Estel

It's been quite a few years since I was discussing the fact that I rarely used my Commodore any more, and one of the guys in the group commented, "You're in danger of becoming a Commodore user in name only."

That time has long since arrived. I donated all my equipment except one CMD hard drive to the Fresno Commodore Group years ago. A couple of years after that I came into possession of an SX64. It sits in a corner, and has been opened up for use maybe five times in the three years or so since I acquired it.

Other than helping launch a program at our user group meetings, the only thing I do now with a Commodore is make copies of our library and new member disks. Usually I do that at the meetings, while we're eating lunch. My CMD hard drive has all the software needed for this project, including 1541 disk images of the four sides of those disks. This allows each side to be copied to a 1541 or 1571 in a single pass.

I had used up all but one set of disks, so a few months ago I took the hard drive to a meeting, set it up, and happily started copying. Except that nothing would copy. I tried some different blank disks, with no success. Finally it got to be time for

the meeting, so I abandoned the project.

In January I tried again, and again, no luck. Robert Bernardo plugged in a cartridge with a copy program, and I made a couple of copies using our single 1571 drive, which requires three disk swaps. Because of the length of time needed to copy each side, I ended up with only one copy of each disk.

All the disks I use are recycled, and by this time I had decided that the problem was that some of these disks were not actually compatible with Commodore, although they were double density. Fortunately I had some other disks.

Back at home a week or two later, I decided to bite the bullet and dragged out the SX and loaded up Maverick. This program has a lot going for it, not least of which is a visual display that shows when disks have errors. I can no longer recall if the program is supposed to be able to correct the errors when copying, but one disk displayed bad places on about a third of the sectors, on both the master disk and the copy.

I did not want to risk sending bad disks out to our new members, so I finally set up the CMD hard drive, which I knew had good copies of the original disk sides. Back in the day, the next steps would have been quick and easy, but no more. In my setup, as well as at the club meetings, the drive was connected to a flat C128 with Jiffy-DOS. The hard drive has a menu program which is set up so that once I assign the proper drives numbers to the hard drive and the floppy drive, I have only to press the C128 reset button to boot the menu.

From here it's a simple process to select the copy program, which loads quickly, and is so well designed I can still remember how to use it.

Well, there's no Jiffy-DOS on my SX64. This meant I would have to type in a lengthy DOS command to get to the partition containing the menu program. I never learned these commands,

since one of the best features of Jiffy-DOS is that it does the dirty work for you.

I now had to find my hard drive manual, dust it off, and locate the commands, not easily found because the idea of an index entry that says “DOS commands” seems to have escaped the writers of all Commodore drive manuals.

Finally I located it in Section 9, with the not exactly obvious title of “Command Reference.” I had a general idea of the command string, but the location of commas, quotes, and colons is critical, and only with the help of the manual was I able to type

```
OPEN15,8,15:PRINT#15,“CP15”:CLOSE15
```

This opened up partition number 15, where the relatively simple command of

```
LOAD“MENU”,8,1
```

brought up the menu, and the rest was easy.

I made a half dozen copies of each disk, wisely put a paperclip in the manual at the crucial location, labeled the disks, and felt the satisfaction of still being able to do “Commodore stuff” after all these years in “retirement.”

Club Officers

Officers and Keypersons

President: Robert Bernardo 627-2438
 Vice-president: Roger Van Pelt 291-1507
 Secretary/Treasurer: Dick Estel 298-4163
 The Interface Editor: Lenard Roach 913-304-1238
 Librarian: Dick Estel
 Club equipment: Roger Van Pelt
 Meeting place reservation: Dick Estel
 Grand poobah of the VIC-20: Vincent Mazzei

-The Small Print-

The Fresno Commodore User Group is a club whose members share an interest in Commodore 8-bit and Amiga computers. Our mailing address is 185 W. Pilgrim Lane, Clovis, CA 93612. We meet monthly in the meeting room of Bobby Salazar's Restaurant, 2839 North Blackstone Ave., Fresno, CA. The meetings generally include demonstrations, discussion, and individual help.

Dues are \$12 for 12 months. New members receive a “New Member Disk” containing a number of useful Commodore 8-bit utilities. Members receive a subscription to The Interface newsletter, access to the public domain disk library, technical assistance, and reduced prices on selected software/hardware.

Permission to reproduce content of The Interface is granted provided credit is given to the source, and when identified, the author. Club members are encouraged to submit articles, tips, or ideas for articles.

Disclaimer – The club, its officers, members, and authors are not responsible for the accuracy of the contents of The Interface or the results of actions based on its contents.

Our disk library contains over 3,000 public domain programs for the C64 and C128. Members are entitled to copies of these disks at no cost if a blank disk is provided. We do not deal with pirated, copyrighted, violent, or obscene programs. Please call our attention to any programs found in our library which may violate these standards.