



## THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA COMMODORE SNOWSTORM DESCENDS ON CHURCH

-by Lenard R. Roach

At the 2021 Commodore Los Angeles Super Show (CLASS), I made an announcement that there was very little, in fact almost next to nothing, when it came to Commodore 64 software that had a Christian theme. At that show I demonstrated what little software that I had found for the C64, which turned out to be from a small, 200-page book with type-in code that was supposedly universal and would work on any platform that was made in the 1980s. Little did I know of the snowstorm that I was about to set off ...

The reason for the search of Christian Commodore software? I had volunteered to help as a children's worker at my church and was looking for software that would help the kids in the quizzing department. The children were getting ready for the big national quiz showdown in Indianapolis, and the coordinator of the class was looking for a way to help them with the answers to the questions that would be presented at the quiz show, for a way to have them learn in a more familiar format, like that presented on a computer. Somehow I opened my big mouth and said that I could code something up on the Commodore 64 that would possibly help. To

make a long story short, when I brought the matter up to Robert Bernardo, he hit the Internet and began the search for more Christian material designated for the Commodore. Robert made some progress, but when he brought up my situation to his cohorts in Europe, that's when the felger really hit the fan.

With Robert Bernardo as my "go-between" guy, we got a response almost immediately on his BIOSJERBIL YouTube channel from a viewer who listed two books of code that I needed to investigate. I already possessed one of the books and had demonstrated the programs written from the code provided in said book. I had purchased the other book, "Bible Basic: Bible Games For Personal Computers," from Amazon for the ridiculous low price of five dollars (it cost more to ship it than to buy it), and I am currently looking through the text to find something that might be useful for the present studies at the church. This YouTube viewer's info was the start of more clues that slowly began to snowball in intensity as it went from a flake of information to an avalanche of C64 programs all about the Bible and the Christian life.

Robert located a cracked version of the commercial game, Wheel of Fortune, the cracking having come from Denmark. This version of the popular TV game show seriously overshadowed the BASIC-coded version of the game that I had on a disk from the Commodore North User's Group (CNUG). Robert didn't waste any time but recoded all two hundred plus clues in the Danish WoF to match up with Bible events, quotations, places, and phrases. He worked hours, modifying the database of this WoF version, but he got the entire project done and immediately sent me a .D64 image of the game. I showed this major upgrade to the children's pastor, and she was overjoyed. I quickly added it to the C64 software that I had in my .D64 collection.

Robert continued his search for what I had declared to be "next to non-existent" Christian

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C64 software. His next attempt to locate Christian software struck immediate pay dirt as he turned up a series of three .D64's containing different games that were focused on the Bible, including a personal favorite, "Bible Hangman," in which the player got 10 chances to apply letters to a word. A wrong guess put a part of a character on the gallows. A right answer placed the letter in the correct location on the clue line. A box labeled "Used Letters" was in the upper left hand side of the screen, displaying the letters of the alphabet that had been used.

Robert had sent me some games that did not work completely on my personal Commodore 64, but a user must take that risk with downloaded games. One offending program was entitled, "Paul's Letters"; otherwise, the programs were excellent and were a help in educating young minds on the Bible. One of the good things about these downloads was that some of the games were coded in BASIC, so it would be (hopefully!) easy to correct any errors.

Members from the Atariage.com forum got involved and added even more software to the mix. The biggest discovery was a software series entitled "The Baker Street Kids." This series of programs hit some major highlights of the Scriptures and was tremendously helpful in educating the children at church. Surprisingly, some of the kids were still learning to read, and therefore I got to help them in sounding out words that they didn't recognize. When it came to some of the bizarre biblical names, like Zadok and Abiathar, I went ahead and read the name for them. I considered that helping the children learn to read as an added bonus. As of this writing, most of The Baker Street Kids educational software had been located, converted to .D64 image, and sent to me via Robert, but there were a few that so far have been elusive.

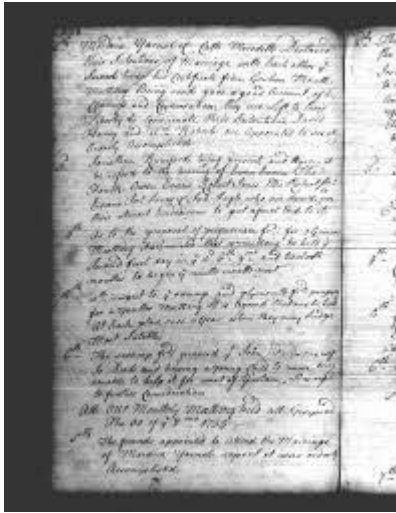
Due to the tenacity of the people in the

Commodore universe and the power of the Internet, the Christian software items had been found relatively quickly, and soon I had a small library of software dedicated to the education of the younger crowd on most things biblical. I took all that was collected and put them on a flash drive which I took to the children's pastor for her approval. She viewed them and even allowed her grandsons to play the games. She was very impressed with the find and allowed the programs to become part of the ministry's arsenal to educate the youngsters, along with the software quizzes that I had written that dealt with the events that happened in the Bible books of 1st and 2nd Samuel.

With everybody's efforts, I hope that the remaining Christian software that so far has eluded the Commodore community can be located, software aimed directly at the 6 to 12 year old range. Somehow, I know that word of this search will reach the eyes and ears of someone who may still have such software stored in a long forgotten place in the house, someone who can put the software on the Internet for download or send it via the local postal service.



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## MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS

– by Dick Estel & Robert Bernardo  
**January 2023**

The third Sunday of the year was cold, with dark, cloudy skies, and rain expected any time. This was on the heels of weeks of record rain that brought deadly flooding to California. However, it was warm and welcoming inside the Panera Bread restaurant at Shaw and Marty in Fresno, as members of the Fresno Commodore User Group gathered for lunch, conversation, and computer stuff. On hand were Robert Bernardo, Roger Van Pelt, Bruce Nieman, Dick Estel, and Michael Calkin.

Pre-meeting conversation during lunch touched on the variety of drones now available and a comparison of the movie theater seat technology of today (like 4DX) compared to the much older technology of theater seats that shook (Sensurround) during the Charlton Heston disaster epic, “Earthquake,” from 1974.

Plans are pretty well set for the 2023 edition of the Commodore L.A. Super Show (CLASS) in April. A generous donation from Lenard Roach covers the last \$121 of the 2022 deficit, as well as providing \$20 toward 2023 rental costs. The show will feature a class on using BASIC 7.0 to create a simple game and perhaps a Zoom visit from the owner of the Commodore name, based in Italy.

Also in April, Robert will show various vintage computers at the Los Angeles Maker Faire.

Robert is looking forward to receiving a Mega65 from Trenz Electronics in Germany. This update of the almost legendary C65 (fewer than 200 prototypes were produced) comes in at \$831, including shipping and the wire transfer fee (no other payment options are offered).

Robert let us know that among the jillions of things available on the Internet, there is now an archive of Radio Shack catalogs from 1939 to 2011, the prime of this iconic chain until it slowly faded out of existence several years later. The site is at <https://radioshackcatalogs.com/index.htm>

Our attention next turned to a demonstration of THEC64 (none dare call it a Commodore), with the newly acquired C64 Enhancer flash drive containing over 900 Commodore games. From Retro8BitShop, another flash drive offered the top 100 games.

Next, Roger’s venerable VIC-20 was powered up, using the Triangle MicroOS. This upgrade required use of a 24K expander. Another variation of the Triangle MicroOS for the C128 was also presented.

Roger loaded up a ham radio program on his laptop PC that accessed weather stations in Germany and the Netherlands. Incoming data was then fed through a device to translate it into plain text on the Commodore. This was a fairly

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specialized version of “plain text,” much of it consisting of radio shorthand comprehensible only to Roger.

The end of the meeting had Michael playing several of the games on THEC64.

## February 2023

For a while it looked as if the February meeting might have only Robert and Dick. However, two more of our regulars soon arrived, Roger and Bruce. Being Super Bowl Sunday probably did not affect our attendance; the game would not start till well after the end of the meeting, and most of us are not major football fanatics.

Robert announced that we have recently received a total donation of \$60 from Editor Lenard Roach toward the room rental for the Commodore LA Super Show (CLASS), coming up in April.

In March Robert will be filming a commercial for CLASS and a presentation by Roger on the use of Commodore with ham radio. This triggered a discussion of how radio waves are bounced off the ionosphere and variations in signal strength caused by the lowering of the ionosphere after dark.

Robert informed us that there may be a demonstration of ChatGPT at CLASS. This is a chatbot that interacts in a conversational way and is able “to answer follow up questions, admit its mistakes, challenge incorrect premises, and reject inappropriate requests.”  
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ChatGPT>)

Robert brought a number of print magazines, which were passed around. They included C64 Gaming from Australia, Retro Gamer from the United Kingdom but also distributed in the U.S., too, Amiga Addict from the U.K. And Amiga Future, published in Germany but available in an English edition. C64 Gaming was a download,

but a real print version would cost over \$40 US to have it shipped here. Amiga Addict was primarily a British magazine and generally only available at British newsstands (Robert had bought it when he was in Europe in late 2022.) Amiga Future was a magazine only available by postal mail; Robert had a subscription to that one. It even came with a cover CD of Amiga programs.

Hardware/software explorations started off with the Mega65, the enhanced replica of the never-produced Commodore 65 of the late 1980's. Robert had received the computer just a few days before the meeting. Included in the box was the comprehensive Mega65 User's Guide, designed to look exactly like a classic Commodore guide right down to the spiral binding. Robert also had printed out the Mega65 specifications from the C64-Wiki, the Mega65 Welcome Guide by Dan Sanderson, and the List of Alternative Cores for the Mega65 (cores being Apple II, Commodore 64 (more compatible than the C64 mode built into the Mega65), GameBoy and GameBoy Color, and ZX Spectrum).

Robert showed that the first time the Mega65 is powered up the user must set the time and select the video mode (PAL or NTSC). Once this is done, it would power up with the correct settings until they are changed. Then he went into showing what programs came in “Demo Disk #1,” the .D81 image which came pre-installed on the internal SD card of the Mega65.

Staying in Mega65 mode (the computer came with two modes – Mega65 mode and C64 mode), he demonstrated several programs through the Demo Disk menu. The splash screen of the Demo Disk had animation running around the circumference of the screen. Ordinarily, the Mega65 booted into 40 MHz.. With the use of computer's built-in freeze menu (accessed by pressing RESTORE for a second and then releasing it), Robert slowed the computer to 1

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MHz. (C64 speed) and showed the effect that it had on the animation. Needless to say, the animation was very slow! Then he sped the computer to 2 MHz. (C128 Fast speed), and the animation was faster. Then he ran the computer at 3.5 MHz. (original C65 speed), and the animation was faster. Finally, back to 40 MHz. and the animation was back to full speed.

The Demo Disk menu was coded in BASIC 65, the Mega65's enhanced version of BASIC 10 which came with the Commodore 65. In fact, a majority of the programs on the Demo Disk was coded in BASIC 65. The Demo Disk menu was divided into 4 categories – 1. Demos, 2. Game, 3. Music, and 4. Utility. The rest of the meeting was devoted to running programs off the Demo Disk.

Under the Demos category, the club members saw such demos as 2 Bitplane Cube (a rotating cube spinning quickly), Mand65 (a mandelbrot graphic generated quickly), and Snow (a Christmas demo). Under the Game category, they played with games, such as Tetris, Poopie, and Blaster. Under the Music category, they listened to Cheek2Cheek and the DualSIDCompo which included five compositions including X-Files, Black Adder, and M. Impossible. Under Utility, they looked at Vector Clock and saw the sub-menu option of GO64.

In fact, GO64 was a direct command on the Mega65 screen. Just type GO64, the computer would respond with “Are you sure?”, and then by pressing “y” and then ENTER, the user would be brought into C64 mode. For the next meeting, Robert promised that the members would investigate more of the C64 mode of the Mega65.



## CHATGPT DESCRIBES C64

-by Guest Contributor Brett E. Eden

I asked [the] ChatGPT AI (Artificial Intelligence), “Please write me a two-page essay on the Commodore 64”.

This is what it wrote...

“The Commodore 64 is one of the most iconic and influential computers in the history of computing. Released in 1982, it quickly became one of the most popular home computers of its time and helped to revolutionize the computer industry.

The Commodore 64 was designed by a team of engineers at Commodore International led by Jack Tramiel. At the time, the company was primarily known for producing calculators, but Tramiel recognized the potential of the emerging home computer market and set out to create a powerful yet affordable computer that could appeal to a broad audience.

The result was the Commodore 64, a machine that boasted impressive specifications for its time. It featured a 1MHz MOS Technology 6510 microprocessor, 64 kilobytes of RAM, and a

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custom video chip that could display graphics in a resolution of 320x200 pixels with up to 16 colors. The Commodore 64 was also notable for its sound capabilities. It included a dedicated sound chip that could produce three channels of sound and offered a unique and distinctive audio experience that set it apart from other computers of the time.

One of the reasons for the Commodore 64's success was its affordability. At launch, it was priced at just \$595, which was significantly cheaper than many of its competitors. This made it accessible to a wide audience and helped to make it one of the most popular computers of the 1980s.

The Commodore 64 quickly gained a reputation as a versatile and powerful machine, capable of running a wide range of software. It was particularly popular for gaming, with many classic games like "The Bard's Tale," "Ghostbusters," and "Pitfall II" available for the platform. In fact, the Commodore 64 remains one of the most popular machines for retro gaming enthusiasts today.

Another factor that contributed to the Commodore 64's success was its user-friendly design. It featured a built-in keyboard, which made it easy for users to type in commands and interact with software. It also included a cartridge port that allowed users to quickly load games and other software without the need for complex installation procedures.

Despite its success, the Commodore 64 was not without its flaws. Its custom design meant that it was not fully compatible with other computers and peripherals of the time, which could be a disadvantage for some users. It was also limited in terms of its memory and processing power compared to later computers, which could make it difficult to run more advanced software.

Nevertheless, the Commodore 64 remains a beloved and influential machine today. Its impact on the home computing market cannot be overstated, and its legacy continues to be felt in the gaming and computer industries. For many people, the Commodore 64 is not just a computer but a cherished part of their personal computing history.

In conclusion, the Commodore 64 was a groundbreaking and influential computer that played a key role in the development of the home computing market. Its affordability, versatility, and user-friendly design helped to make it one of the most popular machines of its time, and its impact can still be felt in the retro gaming and computer industries today. While it may not be as powerful or sophisticated as modern computers, the Commodore 64 remains a beloved and iconic piece of computing history."

I fed that back to ChatGPT and asked it to turn it into a poem...

Oh Commodore 64, how we adore  
The impact you made, forevermore  
Released in '82, a revolution begun  
An affordable machine, for everyone

Jack Tramiel led the team of great minds  
Designing a computer, for all kinds  
Calculators once made, now a new feat  
A powerful machine, that couldn't be beat

64 kilobytes of RAM, and a 1MHz  
microprocessor  
A custom video chip, a graphics possessor  
320x200 pixels, with 16 colors galore  
Oh Commodore 64, we couldn't ask for more

The sound chip impressed, a unique feature  
Three channels of sound, a new creature  
Games like "The Bard's Tale" and "Ghostbusters"

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to play

The Commodore 64 still reigns today

Affordability made it accessible to all  
A built-in keyboard, easy to install  
Cartridge port for games, no need for fuss  
Oh Commodore 64, we just love your user-  
friendly trust

With flaws and limitations, it was not without  
But its legacy endures, there is no doubt  
Beloved and influential, its impact abounds  
In the gaming and computer worlds, it still  
astounds

The Commodore 64, an iconic machine  
A cherished part of computing history, serene  
Its impact on the home computing market is clear  
Oh Commodore 64, forever we hold dear.

When [I] asked [ChatGPT] to rewrite it in the  
style of Shakespeare...

Oh, gentle folk, give ear unto my tale,  
A legend of a machine most fair and hale,  
The Commodore 64, a computer rare,  
Iconic, influential, beyond compare.

In the year of our Lord, 1982,  
This wondrous device was born anew,  
From Commodore's engineers, led with great  
might,  
By Jack Tramiel, to whom we owe much delight.

Once known for calculators and the like,  
They turned their gaze to home computers, so  
bright,  
And set about to make a powerful machine,  
Yet affordable, that all could use, it did seem.

Thus came to be, the Commodore 64,  
A device with specs that did amaze and awe,  
A 1MHz MOS Technology 6510,  
64 kilobytes of RAM, and a custom video chip.

But its sound, oh its sound, was most divine,  
A dedicated chip, three channels did it shine,  
Offering a unique audio experience, oh so fine,  
Setting it apart from other machines in its line.

A reason for its success, was affordability,  
Priced at just \$595, for all to see,  
It was accessible, to a great degree,  
And helped to make it a popular commodity.

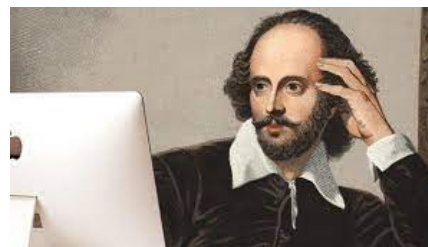
Versatile and powerful, it soon gained acclaim,  
Running software, gaming, it won great fame,  
Games like "The Bard's Tale" and "Pitfall II",  
Thrilled users, with excitement anew.

Its design, too, was user-friendly, with ease,  
A built-in keyboard, simple to please,  
And with a cartridge port, loading games was a  
breeze,  
A joy to use, with great comfort and great ease.

Alas, it was not perfect, without its flaw,  
Compatibility, with other machines, was a flaw,  
And memory, processing power, it did draw,  
But its impact on computing, one can't ignore.

Even today, it remains beloved and dear,  
A cherished part of many a user's personal career,  
Its impact on computing, one can't overestimate,  
A legend, a treasure, a device great.

Thus, in conclusion, the Commodore 64,  
A computer beyond compare, forevermore,  
A groundbreaking, influential device,  
Whose legacy, still shines, bright and nice.



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## REPURPOSING FAILED COMPUTERS

-by Guest Contributor Bart of the Home Computer Museum



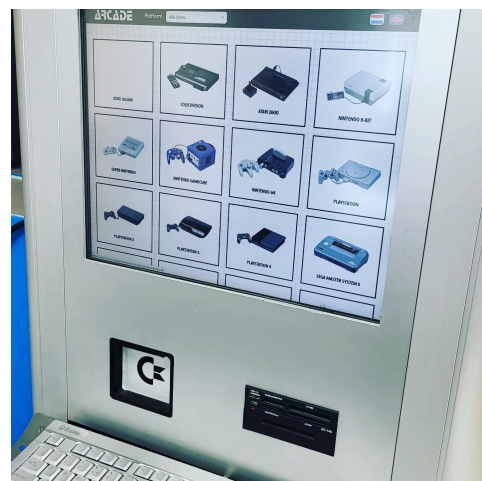
This huge tower is called the Commodore Media Tower. It's part of the Commodore Gravel series from around 2008. The Gravel-series was one of the last tries to use the Commodore brand as a sort of home entertainment. Consisting of the Gravel In-home as the stand-alone player (to be connected to TV) and the multiple handhelds, the Media Tower was intended to be in shops where you could buy multimedia content to be put on your storage device (hopefully your other Gravel product). Not many were made (we've heard 9) or were ever placed in actual shops.

So, this is VERY rare to have, and of course, we don't have the original computer either. But, it's simply a tower with 2x 19" TFT screens (bottom one is touch), a small amp with speakers, and any computer fits in the bottom part.

And we use it! We put in a relatively modern computer that starts up our console game selection. We have around 20 consoles ready to be played, and every console has a lot of games. We cannot put these games next to the consoles, because some people don't know how to change these cartridges or CD-R's, and they can be

valuable and easy to take. So if you want to play a game, make a selection on our Media Tower, and the staff will be notified that someone wants to change game. We'll grab it for you and start it. Everybody happy... and now this pretty much failed Commodore system still has a very good purpose!

(When Robert Bernardo visited the Netherlands' HomeComputerMuseum in October 2023, he was able to examine the rare Commodore Media Tower. His reaction... wow!)



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## Find Everything Commodore on FCUG's Web Site

-by Dick Estel

The Fresno Commodore User Group (FCUG) has had a web site for many years. Many of you know this, but do you know about all the different resources available on the web site? Just in case, here is a summary of the various pages available. Technically I am the webmaster, but keeping up with everything makes it seem more like I am the web slave.

FCUG's main page is found at <http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm>, and contains a wealth of information. At the top of the page, the material that first shows up on a computer screen includes over 30 links. Some of them link to stuff farther down the page, and some to separate pages.

Below the heading there are links to the latest information about the three exhibitions the club has sponsored over the years. Currently only the Commodore LA Super Show (CLASS) is active, but we have high hopes for a return to Seattle and the Pacific Commodore Expo Northwest (PaCommEx). The Commodore Vegas Expo

(CommVEx) ran from 2006 to 2019 and then came to an end.

CLASS:

<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm#class>

PaCommEx:

<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm#pacomm>

CommVEx:

<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm#commvex>

Two other major sections on the home page will be of interest to FCUG members and others. First is a list of links to many issues of the club newsletter, The Interface (<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm#newsletter>). The first two issues of the publication from 1981 and '82 have been scanned to a .PDF document. Beyond that, virtually every issue from 2010 to the present is available, to take you on a tour of the world of Commodore as it changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

My favorite part of the page is the photo gallery (<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm#photo>). The first part contains mainly informal portrait shots of members current and past. At one time I moved photos of deceased members to a section at the bottom headed In Memoriam, but we have lost contact with many former members and don't know their status. Many would be close to 100 years old, so an educated guess is possible.

Other photos are of equipment, guests at meetings, demos, program screen shots, a few t-shirts, and that old standby, "miscellaneous."

At the bottom of the page is a table of links to all kinds of Commodore related matters, especially the various shows and expos that President Robert Bernardo has attended and photographed. Not least of these are photos from every CommVEx, from 2008 to 2019. This listing of links is standard at the bottom of most of our pages.

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There are several pages that will be useful and important to members and potential members. There is a map showing the location of our meetings, with driving directions ([http://www.dickestel.com/meet\\_loc.htm](http://www.dickestel.com/meet_loc.htm)). Linked from this page and elsewhere are pages containing notes from most of our meetings starting in 2010. There are three pages, and the latest one always lists all the dates for the current year (<http://www.dickestel.com/fcugmeetingreports3.htm>). The club bylaws are found at <http://www.dickestel.com/fcugbylaws.htm>.

I've mentioned the links to newsletters since 2010. But what about the preceding three decades? There are a number of pages containing newsletter articles from The Interface as well as other sources. Originally this material was linked from the Articles Index (<http://www.dickestel.com/articleindex.htm>), which has dozens of links, sorted by subject. More recently we posted articles on a series of pages starting with Commodore Newsletter Articles Page 1 (<http://www.dickestel.com/articles.htm>). There is a total of seven of these pages. Since we started posting the newsletters on-line, we have not added to these pages in recent years.

When I joined the club in 1988, we were exchanging newsletters with at least 40 clubs throughout the country. A few years ago we put together a page listing known active Commodore clubs (<http://www.dickestel.com/commactive.htm>). There are still 14 clubs listed, some of them outside the US, and some Amiga only. To the best of our knowledge, FCUG is the only US club still publishing a newsletter (shout out to Lenard!)

Finally, check out the Commodore Information Center (<http://www.dickestel.com/commodore.htm>),

wherein we attempt to provide links to as many subjects and as many Commodore-related pages as possible. There are links to Products & Services, Clubs and Organizations, Publications, Commodore users' Individual Pages, Video Links, Exhibitions, and a catch-all category, "Everything Else." I'll let you explore this on your own instead of attempting further description.

As you can see, we've done our best to use our share of the Internet's jillion megabytes of data. As you explore these pages, if you find a link that does not work, please send email to [DickEstel@gmail.com](mailto:DickEstel@gmail.com). Please identify the page you were viewing, and the specific destination that did not work, and we'll get it corrected as quick as you can say LOAD"FCUG",8.

## Club Officers

### >>--> Officers and Keypersons <--<<

President .....	Robert Bernardo
Vice-president .....	Roger Van Pelt
Secretary/Treasurer .....	Dick Estel
The Interface Editor .....	Lenard Roach
Librarian .....	Roger Van Pelt
Club equipment .....	Roger Van Pelt
Meeting place reservation .....	Dick Estel

### -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 Panera Bread, 3590 West Shaw, Fresno, CA. The meetings generally include demonstrations, discussion, and individual help.

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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.

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