



## THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

### Looking Again At A Familiar World

-by Lenard R. Roach

Greetings to all who read my articles here in The Interface newsletter! Things have been going slow over the summer months here in the Midwest portion of the United States, but sometimes slow is good when it comes to some things. Most of our membership here in the club are over fifty so you know what it is like to take things a little on the easy side. I've even been taking some time off from work to just sit around the house and do nothing but listen to the computer, play movies, and sleep.

I haven't been doing much writing lately since time seems to get away from me while I'm sitting in my recliner and listening to either the sounds of nature or the purr of the air conditioners, but the wheels of article writing have been turning and I've been trying to piece together some sort of idea to make these articles into actual works. I would like to drop a hint for you who do like to write, or plan to write something for a magazine or newsletter in the future – everything is publishable, you just have to find the right market that handles your material, and with well over twenty five thousand magazines in print each month in the United States, you should be able to find a genre that fits your writing. So please, use that wonderful thing called the Internet and

research magazines that will take what you have written, Commodore related or not.

With all the opening felgercarb out of the way, it's time to get down to what has been going on in the way of Commodore here at the Roach Center for BASIC Commodore Studies: This issue's topic will be on finances and the Commodore 64, which, as you all know, I'm a big fan of budgeting and keeping money under control – NOT! Oh, heck, I'm just like every teenager in America; I just want to keep spending and not worry about the balance in the bank because I always know that Mommy and Daddy will make sure that there is money in the account. Well, I'm **not** a teenager and I **do** have to worry about what that balance is, and quite frequently since I am spending money on a daily basis as a courier for a small “mom and pop” delivery company in Kansas City. Every expenditure has to be recorded and every receipt saved so I can have an exact number of deductions to write down on January 31<sup>st</sup> of every year.

When you do your own record keeping, you have to keep a tight tally on everything, which means you have to have some great hardware and software to keep it all up. Thankfully, I use some **free** programs that allow me to do just that. Naturally, I'm referring to the collection of software I have in the “Five Bonus Program Collection” I've written and collected over the years for the Commodore 64. The two programs I will be focusing on in this article will be “The Ledger,” written by Yours Truly, and “Money Manager with EZ Budget” written by Rex Day (with some updates to the BASIC code written by me) and published back in 1989 in the now defunct, “Run” magazine.

Both of these programs have been a big help in my keeping a tabulation on what I do on a day to day, week to week, and month to month basis, but before anyone goes spastic over thinking that, since you can start writing off things that you

have inputted into either program, please consult with a tax preparer, or a tax attorney, for the validity of some of the claims I'm about to make in the article. Your state that you live in may have a different way of dealing with the data that you have to transpose into your Schedule C form of your 1040 Long Form and your state tax return. I may be a little off in my data.

First thing you might want to do is set up your information as written down on your receipt or bill as received by the institution you're dealing with. "The Ledger" has the settings necessary to do this, especially when it comes to dealing with bills that you can write off. I usually pay everything on my debit card or gas card so I can have a statement of account that I can enter into the Commodore 64 and save to either a 5.25 or a 3.5 disk. I prefer a 5.25 disk since the files are relatively small (about one block of data) and they are easily listed in the order of input and can be read by using either the encoded directory reader or exiting to BASIC and using the LOAD"\$",8 <Return>, LIST <Return> commands.

The building up of information using "The Ledger" takes you through the steps of each bill or receipt and allows you to keep that data on permanent record. Yes, "The Ledger" is usually a bill tracking program, but if you treat a receipt as a bill, you can create a running total on the disk, making the need to keep a paper trail a little less necessary, but hey, we're dealing with the government here; it wouldn't hurt to keep those little pieces of paper around just as a precautionary measure. I have an old shoe box where I throw most of my paper in, then, at the end of the month, organize them by category (fuel, meals, oil, etc.), write the total down on the front of the first slip, then stapling them together and dating them before moving on. This little method gives me just a few minutes of work at the beginning of the year instead of spending hours on a day off putting the data together. Also, the number I write down on the front of each

monthly stack should match the number as found on the Commodore 64.

Also, a little side note here, if you have more than one bill or receipt from the same place, but for something different than it is usually used for (example: you buy fuel from the same place that you have your car fixed), then create an extra file for the new category on the Commodore 64 using "The Ledger." As many of you know, you cannot have two files of the same name on a Commodore disk so be sure to change the name a little by adding, say, a number at the end of the file name for the information. If you are tracking a bill and want to keep a running progress on what you have done, when you go to save the data, the program will allow you to save under a different name, transposing all the data to the new file name without deleting the old file name, kind of like modern machines do now, only you have to change the name at the name change input found in the SAVE DATA AS input line. I'm finding out that, the more I use my Commodore, the more versatile it is; you as the programmer just have to code it right to make it run, but let's give credit where credit is due. Commodore hardware creators like Bil Herd made the Commodore do that before even the first coder sat down at the keyboard and started messing around with the machine.

After you have done all your inputting into "The Ledger," don't put all your papers in the files just yet; now it is time for the monetary data to be inputted into "Money Manager." Exit "The Ledger" but either shutting off the machine and turning it back on, or you can use the handy reboot option found in the exit menu of "The Ledger," which takes you back to the main book screen of the "Five Bonus Program Disk," but, before the computer does that, there's a little clean up process that the Commodore 64 and disk drive does. Depending on how much information is on the disk you are using, this process can take about thirty seconds up to several minutes to execute.

Even though going through the reboot program on the disk takes longer, I advise those using the “Five Bonus Program Disk” to use it just in case there is some floating data wedged somewhere within the several files on the disk. This makes sure that the disk will always boot correctly and no data will cause the disk drive to error out and you have to use a data nibbler to recover all your files. Believe me, I've had to do that several times before I decided to add the VALIDATE command and clean out any of the old straggling data.

After loading “Money Manager” into the Commodore 64, and, if it's your first input into the program, you'll have to set up all your labels and category codes and put the beginning balance into the computer. This process takes up to about a minute and will prove to be helpful. Please print out the list of category codes you've inputted so you'll know what you're inputting into each file; you'll need the references for later.

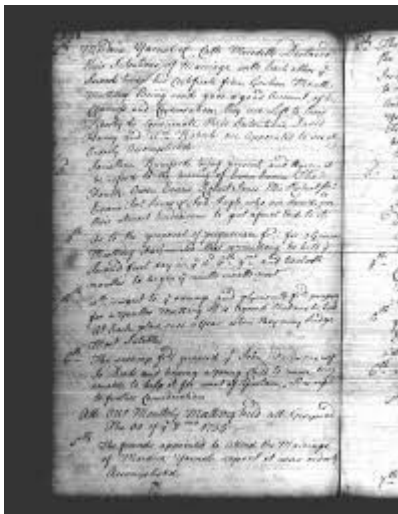
Back to the stack of bills and receipts. Once all the questions are answered and inputted into the Commodore 64, the disk drive will save all that information into a numerical file on disk. Choose 1 to start inputting each transaction into the Commodore 64 from the Main Menu. The machine will retain all data in a buffer until you decide to end the process, but I have found out after several years of using the program that too much data in the buffer will cause the computer to crash and all your work will be lost. I recommend saving data every five to ten inputs. The computer will save the data and go back to main menu, where you can select 1 again and pick up where you left off. Also, please validate your disk by using the VALIDATE command found in the Commodore User's Guide, or you can exit “Money Manager,” load “The Ledger,” then exit “The Ledger” through the main menu and “The Ledger” will validate the disk for you. If you do use “Money Manager” and you want to input a debit card transaction, then be sure to delete the Check Number by using the space bar before you

move on to the next input.

“Money Manager” has lots of functions, especially combined with using the “EZ Budget” subroutine that it would take pages to describe in detail what the program is capable of doing. The article describing all the uses for “Money Manager” in “Run” took several pages and was quite a descriptive read. Some of the functions Mr. Day put into the program will rarely hold in this day and age, like split check input (for those who will allow cash back on a check written to an institution other than a bank, like a grocery or convenience store), but for the most part “Money Manager with EZ Budget” is a highly capable program and will definitely hold useful in this modern age. I consider it part of my “Five Program Bonus Disk” because it proved to be a great asset to the theme of the disk, which, if you haven't guessed, is bookkeeping. Some have told me the programs I have coded, like “The Ledger,” prove useless since “Money Manager” does the same thing, but I argue that it is but only to a point. “The Ledger” tracks how much you have left on an outstanding debt while “Money Manager” keeps track of what is happening in your bank account at the time of the input of each piece of data from your daily receipts. I consider them companion programs since, when used properly, compliment each other. Also, “Money Manager” deals with several inputs of information as a whole; “The Ledger” deals with each debt as a separate file and is even saved that way on the Commodore's disk drive to avoid complications and for easier search.

I hope this little tour of financial information will prove useful as you boot your own copy of the “Five Program Bonus Disk” and start using it. I'm always looking for ways to make the programs on the disk more user friendly, so, while using the programs, if you see anything that might help a future user of the disk out then please contact the Fresno Commodore User Group and have them forward me your idea. I code in a very

simple BASIC that should be easy to read and decipher in case you want to try some coding magic of your own. I'm not a major coder like many of our Commodore colleagues, but I'm finding that sometimes simple things are the best things.



## MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS

-by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

### July 2017

### August 2017

Although we lost some long-time members this year, we have added at least as many new ones, and several of them joined the other “old-timers” for the August gathering at Bobby Salazar’s Mexican restaurant.

Brad Strait was present with both his daughters, Katelyn (9) and Charlotte (5). Katelyn had attended meetings now and then since she was five. Charlotte was born after Brad became a member, and made her first visit while still an infant, so the club has sort of watched them, as

well as brother William, as they have grown (part way) up.

Also on hand were Robert Bernardo, Roger Van Pelt, Dick Estel, fairly new member Dave Smith, and Mike Fard, who joined the club before the meeting ended.

Robert gave a report on Commodore Vegas Expo, held in Las Vegas at the end of July. Although attendance was down, those who were there had a great time, and the show will continue next year. We didn’t quite cover expenses, and the room rates have increased, so we will return to one of the smaller rooms for 2018. We may also consider moving to a different city in the future.

Michael Battilana from Italy was in town for DefCon and visited during the off-hours of CommVEx. He gave a C64 Forever package and an Amiga Forever package for the raffle and also a web address which allowed CommVEx attendees and FCUG members to receive a free download of Amiga Forever and C64 Forever.

The September meeting date was moved to the tenth, since Robert will be leaving for Europe shortly after that. He will visit Germany, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Wales, and England, attending Commodore and Amiga events and meeting with international friends from years past. In Bensheim, Germany he'll search for the Mega65 computer (C65 clone) at Maker Faire. In Stockholm and Gothenburg, Sweden he'll meet with Commodore and Amiga programmers. In Cardiff, Wales he'll visit AmigaKit. In England he'll attend the meetings of the Lincoln Amiga Group (in Lincoln) and the Amiga North Thames group (in Enfield).

Entering the wonderful world of hardware and software, Robert had on display a Commodore PC20-III, a MS-DOS computer. The computer came from the Sacramento Amiga Computer Club, and Robert was warned not to power it up

until it had its internal power supply thoroughly cleaned of dust. Mike opened up the machine and discovered that it came from 1987.

Robert loaded up a C64 Forever 2017 CD on his Windows XP laptop, and we explored its Commodore emulation capabilities. The same process was followed with Amiga Forever 2017 DVDs.

Meanwhile at the club C128, Katelyn took on all comers in Ringside Boxing, the two-player, two-joystick Compute!'s Gazette C64 game that was used in competition at CommVEx.

Later, Robert and Roger tried to run VIC Doom with its stiff memory requirements on the VIC-20; unfortunately, they only got to the opening screens and were not able to enter the game proper. They had more success with the simple but fun VIC-20 game, Meteor Wave, which required use of a lightpen to stop the falling meteors.



Due to the intense lateness of this issue, the September/October issue of The Interface will be out as soon as possible. Thank you for your undying patience.



## THE CULT OF AMIGA:

### Bringing an Obsolete Computer Into the 21st Century

-by John Wenz  
(from PopularMechanics.com)  
Oct 3, 2017

Meet the dedicated few who are working in the shadows to keep an ancient suite of software alive, waiting for it to thrive again.

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The IBM and Apple machines were better known among the legends of 80s computer. But perhaps no computer was more beloved by its users than the Amiga.

In the mid-1980s, Commodore released the Amiga 1000, a beast of a machine whose specs blew away the hardware of its day, and which became a cult favorite. But by 1995, after several iterations of Amiga and years of questionable decisions by the Commodore company, the Amiga brand closed up shop. In the two decades since then, the rights to the computer and its software suite have been sold off and stuck in legal purgatory. And yet now, a group of hardware enthusiasts are trying to bring the revered 1980s computer into the 21st century.

"I'm nearly dumping \$1,000 into a 30-year-old computer"

On an early June day, I watched one of those new old machines come to life. It might just resurrect the Amiga name—if anybody finds out it exists, that is.

### THE FERRARI OF COMPUTERS

Jamie Krueger is one of the Amiga's 21st century apostles. Today he is hosting the demo in his apartment in Janesville, Wisc., where a machine from Amiga's alternate future roars to life. Standing in his living room, Krueger relates the strange story of Amiga's first birth and death.

The Amiga was first born at company called Hi-Toro, run by staffers who had recently cut ties with Atari to strike out on their own. There they began an ambitious project reinvent the computer, basing their new device on the Motorola 68000 microprocessor and code-naming it "Lorraine."

Their work did not go unnoticed. After a messy bit of litigation, the company—now renamed to Amiga—was purchased by home computing giant Commodore. It was an odd pairing.

The Commodore 64, released in 1982, had established itself as one of the most popular home computers. With a low price of \$595 (equivalent to some \$1,500 today), the C64 had saturated the market like none other, but at the cost of using cheap components that caused headaches for plenty of unlucky owners. Still, the Commodore 64 trudged on.

The Amiga 1000, released in 1985, was quite the opposite. It had a sleek quick-load OS that could boot almost instantly. It rocked 256 kilobytes of RAM to the C64's mere 64. It had a 256-color display at a time when the NES could support only 64 and most home computers, including the C64, couldn't juggle more than 16. Amiga brought

arcade-quality visuals into your living room. And so it became the computer geek's computer, but not only for its top-tier specs.

"I think the attraction in the programming community was the complete openness of the architecture and the ability to get as much performance out of the hardware as possible," says Dale Luck, who worked on the Amiga graphics library prior to the release of the 1000 and is now a senior software architect at Roku. "It allowed for the development of truly revolutionary games and colorful and easy to use UI."

Amiga's visuals were arcade-quality, in your living room.

But the Amiga 1000 was more than just a pretty face. "The Amiga was decades ahead of its time—look no further than preemptive multitasking," says Perry Kivolowitz, a professor of computer science at Carthage College. "The Mac, until OS X, was a cooperative multitasking machine—you've experienced the handicap of this if you've ever seen the Spinning Beach Ball of Death. In a cooperative environment if any task hangs, the computer hangs. On a preemptive system, any hung task slows the machine a small bit but doesn't kill it."

Unsurprisingly, this dream machine did not come cheap. A fully kitted-out Amiga 1000 would set you back \$1,790 in 1985. That's more than \$4,000 today. It was expensive, but not preposterously so. A basic IBM PC from 1981, despite being considerably less capable, would cost you around \$1,600. Lower-end options like the C64, meanwhile, cornered a more casual market with sub-\$1,000 prices.

And the Amiga sold. Sales for the entire fleet of Amiga systems, which grew to around a dozen models, reached 4 million by the time Commodore closed its doors in 1994. That's

pittance next to the C64's 17 million, but the Amiga was a premium machine. And while the Commodore 64 still holds its retro appeal, the Amiga ascended to a higher plane of nerd. "The Amiga is in the rarified space occupied by old Ferraris, tube-based MacIntosh audio gear and frankly, great old wine," Kivolowitz says.

That loyalty it inspired may not have been enough to save Amiga in the 1990s. But it was more than enough to resurrect it for a second life today.

### ACROSS GENERATIONS

As I watched Jamie Krueger's AmigaONE X5000 in his living room, I was joined by 19-year-old Jacob Niemuth, a game design student at University of Whitewater. Niemuth wasn't even born until years after Commodore shuttered, but his connection to Amiga is strong.

A self-described retro gamer, Niemuth got his start in Facebook groups by buying and selling old-school hardware, including cathode ray tube monitors and, of course, Amigas. He has an Amiga 2000—a 1987 model that's older than he is—that he uses to write chiptunes and to explore the games of the past in their natural habitat.

"There are a lot of games for it, and the music's awesome too," he tells me. His favorites are Battle Squadron, Ork, and a port of Galaga. One of his current projects is backing up Krueger's software library to a home server. There are more than 2,000 Amiga discs in his collection.

Niemuth's Amiga 2000 isn't an off-the-shelf model straight out of an 80s catalog. It's souped-up, with an ethernet port—though the machine's built-in browser that can barely handle the modern web—and has hardware tweaks as well, such as a video card to push resolutions past the limits of yesteryear. His goal is to build a machine that might even be cable of Twitch stream editing, someday. "I'm nearly dumping \$1,000 into a 30-

year-old computer," Niemuth says with a smile and a sigh.

When you do so much custom tinkering, setting up the system can require a little troubleshooting. During the process, Niemuth and Krueger try out a series of monitors from a collection in Krueger's basement, a stockpile of some 20 or so machines built up during his years working as a computer repairman. Many of those machines, unsurprisingly, are Amigas.

"My first Amiga was an Amiga 500, and that just opened my world," Krueger says. It wasn't just the computer itself he loved, but also its potential. One of the Amiga's most appreciated features was built-in room for hardware enhancements that could operate almost entirely independently of the Amiga's main computational brain.

"A great deal of what you could do on the Amiga were things you could do without the CPU at all," Krueger says. This was thanks to the Amiga operating system that could handle various processes simultaneously. One of these chips, the Video Toaster, became one of the most famous video hardware devices, providing capabilities that Krueger compares to "taking a TV station and put it on a card."

That unique power is what has kept enthusiasts like Krueger from abandoning the Amiga dream, despite the how rocky the road has gotten.

### FROM THE ASHES

The path from Commodore's demise in 1994 to the AmigaONE X5000 today is a winding one, full of the arcane twists and turns of intellectual property law. The basics go a little something like this.

After Commodore folded, the Amiga name went to a company called Escom, which put out two new computers with leftover parts before being

acquired by Gateway. There, the Amiga name languished for two years before two of Gateway's own engineers bought the rights for \$5 million and incorporated Amiga Inc. in 1999. In the early 2000s they strove to bring back the classic name with "Amiga Anywhere," a bid to create a multi-platform software environment that could run on the lion's share of mobile and desktop operating systems of the day, enabling a sort of universal app store long before Android or iOS ever existed.

Krueger, who worked on the project, sums up its fate with no sugarcoating. "Amiga Anywhere went nowhere. It was a fantastic idea that could have dominated the emerging mobile device market if Amiga Inc. had been able to pull it off. Unfortunately, they ultimately did not have the resources to make it happen."

Meanwhile, Amiga's attempts to update its traditional desktop software was met with legal complications. When Amiga hired a company called Hyperion to port the AmigaOS to PowerPC processors, which would allow Amiga's OS to expand to non-Amiga hardware—the two got tangled in a lawsuit that saw Hyperion emerge with exclusive rights to both the Amiga logo and the next generation of Amiga software—versions 4.0 and beyond.

Outside of emulation, the only way to run AmigaOS 4.0 or 4.1 is to get new Amiga hardware, now produced chiefly by a company called A-EON, run by Trevor Dickinson. He produces new hardware under the name AmigaONE, with two models called the X1000 and X5000, and works closely with Hyperion. Neither of those machines are cheap, though. The X1000 is \$2,300, while the X5000 will run you \$1,900.

"The single biggest problem with the Amiga computer system today is the cost," Krueger says.

"The next biggest challenge is software." That's because, well, there isn't much.

There are somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 of these neo-Amiga machines out there. So the developer community is small, though Krueger prefers to characterize the situation as an "open market." After all, there is high demand among the otherwise small fanbase, but low supply. The machines are in desperate need of basic digital amenities like an office suite or a modern web browser. It's not as easy as just making an Amiga port of Firefox either. The DNA of the Amiga's operating system necessitates that its software be built from the ground up, and the community is small enough that creating new applications from scratch is a real challenge.

And yet, Krueger says, the modern Amiga community is fractured by infighting. The small coterie of retailers selling motherboards, cases, peripherals, and other Amiga hardware are prone to falling into petty feuds. Amiga on the Lake, the only online retailer for Amiga in North America, recently stopped carrying A-EON devices and anything sold by the European store AmigaKit over an undisclosed disagreement. "We are still here and 'WILL' be carrying more stuff soon. However no more X5000 or A1222 or, frankly anything produced from either company," Amiga on the Lake said in a statement on its website. However, a month or so after this disagreement, it seems to be resolved.

"It comes to a breakdown in communication," Krueger said. He wouldn't elaborate further when asked about the root of the problem, not wanting to upset delicate negotiations.

## THE NEW NEW FUTURE

The resolution paves the way for what some in the community hope will be a game changer: the A1222. Also known as the "Tabor" this new model is designed to be the first "entry level" A-



EON computer. The board will be priced around \$500—much, much less than that of the X1000 or X5000. The tradeoff is that it will have a slightly less powerful processor than the X5000, the current "budget" option.

"I think we will sell quite a few of them," Krueger says, framing the A-EON's success as a boon for the community as a whole and emphasizing its collective urge to grow. "That's the goal anyway."

If anyone finds out, that is. The modern church of Amiga is small, but every bit of news is a change to gain a few converts. A review of the X5000 showed up on Ars Technica, but more important than the generally favorable review was the mention it exists at all.

"It's tough," Krueger said. "It's really tough to make a living as a developer exclusively for the AmigaOS."

But there might just be a silent market for these resurrected retro computers, full of folks who just haven't yet heard the news. I texted a picture of one of the new Amiga rigs to my own uncle, who had gotten his start on an Amiga word processor so many decades ago. His Amiga was the second computer I ever saw up close, after my brother's Commodore. Before I knew it, we were on the phone and chatting for only the second or third time in my life.

"Bizarre it's still kicking," he said, tying up some 20 minutes of enthusiastic reminiscing, a heartfelt and off-the-cuff endorsement of the aging tech that I could tell surprised him as much as it surprised me. He hadn't heard about the new rigs. Now that he has, he certainly won't forget.

# Club Officers

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

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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.

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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.