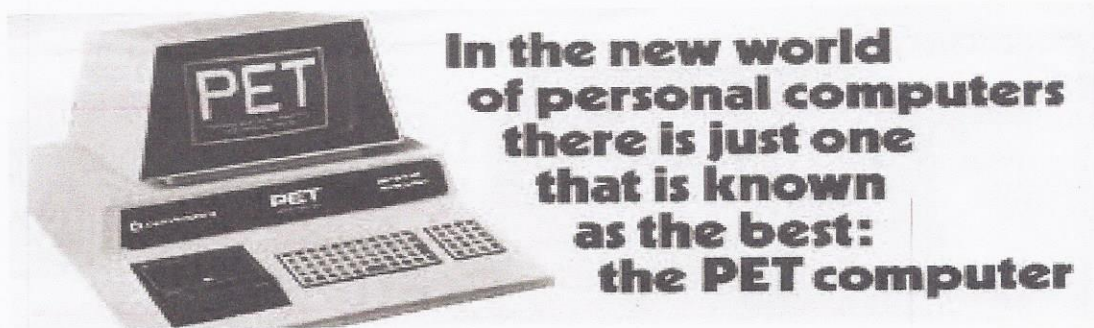


# The Interface

**"Taking Commodore Computing Into The 21<sup>st</sup> Century"**

- March/April 2015 -



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Newsletter of the Fresno Commodore User Group - Fresno, California

[www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm](http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm)



### THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

**Come Sit Right Back And You'll Hear A Tale ...**

**-by Lenard R. Roach**

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

To begin this piece, I would like to ask everyone who reads this and still own and/or uses a Commodore computer to think about writing an article about what their Commodore looks like, how many drives you use and what kind(s), the style of monitor used for video display, any other peripherals you use, and where in your home/office/club it sits. To start the series, let me tell you about my personal Commodore machine...

In a spare bedroom on the south wall of The Roach Center For BASIC Commodore Studies sits my Commodore 128 computer on one of those prefabricated computer stands that you get from Walmart. Back in the day (the desk is about 15 years old) the desk ran for \$99.99. I remember putting this unit together with my youngest son. He got to handle the hammer and screw driver and send the nails and screws into the unit, but not until I have hammered the nail half way in and screwed the screw half way in; Gabriel got to finish it off and tighten everything down. This desk has a pull out drawer in front where the

keyboard sits. This desk also has three cabinets and one file drawer built in; everything is filled with various Commodore disk files, paperwork, and other Commodore projects. This desk is also where I do my paying of bills since I use various Commodore programs to help me keep tally on what I spend, where it went, and how much is left in my check book; another program keeps track on how much I owe on each bill and when it is due next and how much is due upon the next payment. I also use a program that prints on the face of an envelope what I need so I can mail the check off. As for the check itself, I'm still making adjustments to the check printing program so it will work on my new printer I got from FCUG. The printer works great, but with each printer comes new margins, font settings, and other adjustments. I have to get into the check writing program and make PRINT #3 changes by either adding or deleting PRINT #3 statements. This is a long and tedious process and is best to do when you have actual checks to write, otherwise you'll be wasting checks in order to make your check print perfect. With each PRINT #3 adjustment I save and try to print again. Big fun and good times.

On the left lower side of the desk is a door that is suppose to hold one of those old tower hard drives that stood about three feet tall. My son Robert came up with the idea of adding boards and supports for those boards so I could put all three of my drives – a 1541, a 1571, and a 1581 – into that space. This worked real well except of dealing with all the cables and cords that come with activating and using these drives. After building the shelves, my inventive son Robert started developing in his mind an idea of making a Commodore disk tower that would have all three disk drives built in and the ability to change the disk drive's designation on the front of the unit by a simple push of a button. Unfortunately, before Robert could start on the project, someone on Homestead built this very same thing and was offering it over the Internet for a nominal price. I



never got this unit on Homestead since at the time it would be an insult and a slap in the face to my son, so in the desk is the three tier shelving unit he built to hold each one of my Commodore drives.

On the desk itself, well, we might call it a mess. Papers are strewn everywhere. As a writer, I have lots of projects started and never finished, projects that I have yet to find a publisher for, and ideas that need to be expanded into a full size stories or articles. If those who read this remember when I brought an uninterruptable power source to be auctioned off for the CommVEx, I have one of these units running my entire Commodore set up. A flick of one switch and my entire Commodore set up is booted. This UPS unit has saved my Commodore work several times during severe weather here in Kansas. All these units are designed to give you enough time to finish your work and save to disk. Most units are small and have about fifteen minutes of power; bigger units can go as long as four to eight hours. We have a big unit that takes two motorcycle size batteries that is used to run our router, one more to run any desktops, and one running the Mac Mini found in the office. As you can probably guess, we love our computers and other electronic gaming devices.

On the top of the desk to the left is where the Commodore 1902 monitor resides. Underneath it is one of those selective power strips so a user doesn't have to bend down and switch off devices individually; just toggle one of the switches to turn off that particular device. It is very handy when you are fat like me and can't bend over like I used to.

This particular desk comes with a cabinet on the right that is under lock and key for those items you wish no one else to get in their possession. I'm sure this was designed to put in things like OS disks and other boot programs that a user spends hundreds of dollars to procure. I leave the door

unlocked because I want anyone who sits at the Commodore to use what I have. Here is where I keep my GEOS and other word processing packages so I won't have to search my disk files to find.

Two shelves occupy the center rear of the desk where I keep programs that I am currently using or creating. The bottom shelf is separated into four pockets that I keep my small Commodore tools in or disks I plan to use soon. One pocket is just the right size to hold a 3.5" disk file comfortably. These 3.5's I use to transfer information between my PC and the Commodore and back again, if necessary. The file also contains everything I am looking for in the way of anything to use on my 1581 disk drive. The top shelf usually contains items like a disk notcher for the 5.25" disks and other Commodore related items.

Now, to finish the tour of my desk off, we get to the very top where the Star NX1000-C printer resides along with two stereo speakers for good sound coming from the Commodore's SID chip. The printers have changed over the years as I use more and more Commodore printing programs. When I had my first Commodore 64 and I was working as a custodian for a major department store chain here in the metro, I was the pimp of computers. If anyone needed something printed off or a program to do a certain thing, I was the "go to" guy. I made plenty of banners to announce upcoming special events and found programs that would help those who needed special things done that, at the time, only Commodore could do. I even made videos for the Junior's Department that showed me playing games (and losing) or creating music videos using Swinith or other music displaying programs. These were popular among the teen crowd at the time and would create a draw to that department, which meant sales for the area. Commodore was king to the entire store and they loved it when I came up with another program or video to help



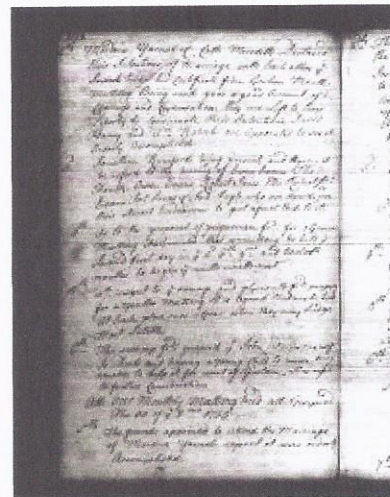
the store along. I didn't get paid extra for this but it was fun to do and getting to use the Commodore any day of the week was awesome.

And please, don't let me forget the most important item of my Commodore set up other than the Commodore itself, and that is "The Commodore Cat," Hennessy. He was a "throw away" cat that someone begged me to take in and care for. It took him a while to adjust to my other three cats that already occupy most of the space in the Roach Center, but everyone got to deal with him and give him the proper respect that is due each animal here. Hennessy is a "tuxedo" tabby with white "boots" and a large white "emblem" on his chest and underside. Hennessy would, when I am working on the Commodore, jump onto the desk, prance around with what little space was available, and lay down right smack dab in the middle of the desk, usually on some work I was doing, whether it be disks that I am using or papers I am working on, demanding that I spend a couple of moments with him. I used to take him off the desk and go back to my work, but he would jump back up and take the same spot he formerly occupied. Over the couple of years that Hennessy has been here, we have worked out a compromise where he gets to lay down anywhere he wants on the desk, and I throw whatever work I am doing on top of him. He doesn't mind this; he just stretches out, purrs, and lets me do my thing. This could be why I have so many disks that no longer load into the Commodore's memory; the static electricity stored in Hennessy's fur is causing data corruption on the disk and thus failure to load. I've lost plenty of data this way, but I am learning that, when I have done a major work, like the Five Pack Bonus Disk I'm working on for the upcoming CommVEx, I make a second copy and put it away – far away from Hennessy.

So, that is the boring and tedious set up where I have my Commodore make home. Of course, the entire room is strewn with Commodore computers and other Commodore related items that have yet

to find permanent homes. Most of these units will be donated to the local Goodwill; other non-functioning machines will be stripped of chips and set out onto the curb for recycling. Out of all this Commodore equipment, I don't have one SuperCPU or other Commodore related accelerators; just stock Commodore units.

Be here again for more boring commentation from The Commodore Redneck.



## MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS

- March 2015 -

- by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

We had a small group this time, just Robert, Roger and Dick, but we still covered a lot of topics and tried a bunch of software and hardware.

Robert reported that he had purchased a used C64 game disk, Jump Jet, for \$23 on eBay. He had previously picked up a copy on cassette tape in a small, dingy shop in London in the late 1990's or early 2000's, but it did not load. He will demonstrate the program at the April meeting.

Somehow we got on the topic of dishwasher



technology, which was of interest to all three of us present, all having worked in restaurants where the job was partially or completely manual. Dick had also served on KP in the Army, where machinery took care of the “regular” dishes, but big pots and pans had to be scrubbed by hand. We agreed that this experience helped build character.

Robert went over a list of coming shows of interest to computer hobbyists:

Vintage Computer Festival East in New Jersey the week after Easter (Bill Herd will speak)  
Atari Party in Davis, CA on May 2  
Maker Faire in San Mateo, CA on May 15-17  
CommVEx v11 in Las Vegas on July 18 and 19  
Amiga 30th Anniversary at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, CA a week after CommVEx.

Robert will be attending Maker Faire, and of course, CommVEx.

Robert also told us about a project by Dallas Moore, who has acquired the molds used to make Commodore computer cases, each mold weighing about 5,000 pounds. He is running a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to make a run of C64C cases in red, white, blue, clear, and beige, which will be available to contributors. More information can be found at <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1670214687/original-commodore-64c-computer-housing-in-new-coo>.

We had a show-and-tell session with some hardware items and on-line previews of new software. This included a new C64 game, Hyperion, with excellent graphics. You can see it here on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mi5ie55zGM>. Looking at it, the opening was reminiscent of the high quality Commodore demos that were popular in the 1990s.

We also looked at an advance preview of a new C64 basketball game, Stick It, coming soon.

From Sweden, Robert showed us the new Amiga S-video board, a device for the Amiga to convert its RGB video output to S-Video or composite (<http://electronics.chroma.se/svideo.php>), as well as the latest HV SwinSID chip which is meant to replace the original 6581 or 8580 chip in the C64. Though the HV SwinSID is more accurate in sound quality when compared to older SwinSID chips, it still cannot be used with input devices; thus, Koalapads, Commodore 1351 mice, and paddles will not work with it.

Moving on to demos, we focused on the Commodore 128, celebrating its 30th anniversary, with the usual mixture of success and failure. GEOS 128 refused to boot from Robert's CMD Hard Drive connected to his C128D, so that will have to wait for another time.

However, Robert did show the 128 version of Fast Hack 'Em 6.0, one of the first quick copying programs for Commodore; Big Blue Reader 128, and the text editing program Zed 0.77, which Robert used in lieu of a word processor for a number of years.

Noticing Write Stuff 128 on the hard drive, we also took a brief look at that program and even read some archived e-mail messages that Robert sent to Dick back in 2004!

- April 2015 -

-by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

After missing a few meetings, Greg Dodd and the Mazzei Boys (Dad Louis and son Vincent) were present, along with Roger Van Pelt, Robert Bernardo, and Dick Estel.

For Show-and-Tell, Dick brought volume 1 of the newsletter archives, which includes the [very first](#)



[issue](#), dating from November, 1981. It was single page which apparently was created with a typewriter and photocopied, and contained eight practical tips for the Commodore user. This was the focus of the first few issues -- no "articles" as such.

The members were very interested in the colorful Reset magazine, issue #06, which came from Australia. It came with a disk full of C64 programs. Also In the magazine Robert had an On the Road article about his trip to the Pacific Northwest last summer in order to rescue Commodore equipment.

Robert reported on the Kickstarter campaign to provide funding for the [Amiga 30<sup>th</sup>](#) anniversary observation, July 25 and 26. The project achieved its funding goal, and will move forward.

That reminded some of those present of other Kickstarter or similar fund-raising campaigns which had been successful, often unexpectedly so.

In other show news, Vintage Computer Festival East was going on as we met. Our friend from Canada, Leif Bloomquist, has posted [photos](#) on Facebook.

Everything is on track for [CommVEx](#), July 18 and 19 in Las Vegas. Major raffle prizes include a C128D, 1581 floppy drive, and a CMD RAMLink. The biggest news was that C128 engineer Bil Herd will be present and will speak. Robert, Dick and the Mazzeis are all planning to attend. Vince will bring his complete, original, chocolate brown VIC-20 system, including a joystick and VICModem.

Robert will be participating in the 2015 [Maker Faire](#), May 15, 16, and 17 in San Mateo. Since this date conflicts with our meeting date, the May meeting will be held on the 24th.

Last year at CommVEx Louis rebuilt an Atari

CX40 joystick, using modern parts to give a better feel to the stick movement and fire button (action on the original was "mushy"). He reported that the required parts are either no longer available or are in very limited supply, and a rebuild such as he did would no longer be possible.

Dick was going to a conference in southern California and had to leave after lunch and the business meeting, but he wanted to see the GEOS 128 presentation. We agreed to delay that until the next meeting. Robert carried on with the hardware/software part of the meeting.

First up was Jump Jet for the C64. Having had a non-working cassette version of the program for years, Robert recently had bought the disk version from eBay, and the disk worked. With very little practice, he and the other club members tried to fly the Harrier jump jet off the deck of the aircraft carrier. Time and time again, they crashed the plane, but with each practice they became better with the computer controls and stayed in the air longer. Probably after a good deal of practice, they would have had no problem flying the plane and would be able to hunt the enemy airplanes in the game.

Afterwards, Roger gave a brief presentation of the MMC64 cartridge with add-on MP3@64 board. The MMC64 came out in 2005 and was developed in Germany. Because Roger had it for a month, he was familiar with its functions, and he had updated it to the latest firmware and had installed some typical software -- games, music, and animation/movies. He showed how to navigate through its file browser and how to use its function buttons. Because the MMC64 used a SD card, loading programs was very fast. Not really meant for multi-file loading, the MMC64 loaded single files just fine. He ran a few files, the most impressive being the SID music compositions and the demonstration .AVF movie clip which ran at 10 frames a second.



Unfortunately, Roger was not able to demonstrate the MP3@64 board which plays MP3 sound files; no MP3 files were on the SD card. Perhaps by the next meeting, some nice music could be found so that we could test out its abilities (maybe some Star Trek music!). Roger was amenable to creating a video presentation of the MMC64 for CommVEx.

Finally, Robert explored issues 34 and 35 of Loadstar 128 disk magazine, a quarterly disk magazine which was last published many years ago. The disk had articles with commentary, reviews of hardware and software, and software programs to run. The Loadstar 128 programs would run in 40 or 80 columns, but Robert was looking for 80-column games. He found one, Boxman, which was akin to those woodblock puzzles that a person would play, except instead of blocks of wood, on the computer screen the user would move squares forward through the puzzle; the trick was that the user could not move the squares backward. Though Robert was frustrated with this game and all woodblock puzzles, Louis enjoyed the mental challenge and was able to proceed from level 1 and almost complete level 2.

#### RELATED LINKS:

First newsletter:

<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug1stnl.pdf>

Amiga 30th: <http://amiga30.com>

Vintage East Photos:

[https://www.facebook.com/leif.bloomquist/media\\_set?set=a.10152749494461087.1073741838.693881086&type=1](https://www.facebook.com/leif.bloomquist/media_set?set=a.10152749494461087.1073741838.693881086&type=1)

CommVEx:

<http://www.portcommodore.com/dokuwiki/doku.php?id=commvex:start>

Maker Faire: <http://makerfaire.com>



**RadioShack®**

#### RADIO SHACK AVOIDS SHUTDOWN

-by various authors including The New York Times

##### Introduction by Robert Bernardo

(It's been years in the making but on February 5<sup>th</sup>, I saw the news that Radio Shack was declaring bankruptcy. Its many stores were going to close.

I've been going to R.S. since the 1970's but less and less as the years progressed. In the 70's and 80's, I would go there for the audio equipment --mics, speakers, and cabling. Then in the late 80's and 90's, I went for the floppy disks for my Commodores and Amigas and blank videotapes for my Beta videocassette recorder. Of course in 2005, it was for the Hummer DTV (off-shoot of the C64 DTV). In these last years, it would be for an audio adapter, patch cord, switch, even computer speakers. But I was not a regular customer... I would just pop in every once in awhile, whereas in the early years, I would regularly visit to see what they would have. In the early years, it was a must-have to get the Radio Shack catalog; I would drool over the stereo equipment, even the Tandy 100 a.k.a. their portable, laptop computer.

The catalog was discontinued a few years ago, and it wasn't the same to browse through their



Radio Shack will become an electronics convenience store of sorts, focusing on things like Bluetooth headsets, chargers and other accessories that shoppers may need immediately rather than waiting a day or two for shipment of a web order.

One thing that remains unsettled is the operation's name. Salus Capital Partners, the largest creditor, owns the rights to the name, but Standard General will try to buy it. If they are unsuccessful, look for new signage in about six months.



## Remember This?





## MEMORY LANE

-by Dick Estel

### Introduction

This is number 12 of a limited series of articles saluting some of our past members, people who have made a significant contribution to the club. Our more recent members did not have the pleasure of knowing these men and women, many of whom have passed on. However, they made a lasting impression on the club and the author.

Questions and comments to our web address, [info@dickestel.com](mailto:info@dickestel.com), are welcome.

### BARBARA MONIS, BOB LOVING, and BILL GILBERT

There are several former members that I don't know a lot about, or don't have much to say about. This is a reflection on me, not them. For these folks, I will devote a paragraph to each and combine several in one article.

Barbara Monis was the president of the group when I joined in 1988. She was a teacher and later I believe she held a position with the local school system involving computers (IT). Because of her contacts with Fresno Unified School District, she was able to get approval for us to hold our meetings at the Fresno Adult School Computer

Lab, giving us a room with about 15 Commodore 64 systems available for our use. I last spoke with her at the time of our reunion lunch in 2006.

Bob Loving joined a number of years after I did, and made significant contributions with his enthusiasm and knowledge. He served as vice president for a time, and attended our 2006 reunion. He was employed in sales at the time of his membership, and later worked for the local workforce development agency.

Bill Gilbert was a long-time employee of the local newspaper, working in the press room with another FCUG member, the late Ralph Parrott. Bill's interest in graphic technology was helpful to the club on a number of occasions. Bill and his wife Jackie always enjoyed our annual picnics. She passed away about a year ago, but Bill is doing well, and I had a nice talk with him a few months ago.

## Club Officers

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

President .....	Robert Bernardo
Vice-president .....	Roger Van Pelt
Secretary/Treasurer .....	Dick Estel
The Interface Editor .....	Lenard Roach
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.