



THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

Looking Back

by Lenard R. Roach

I've been thinking lately (a dangerous past time) about how we live in such an amazing time in history. I'm sure that every one says that about every point in time, but we have a lot to be thankful for in this time frame.

I don't know much about the history of computers, but I think it was a Charles Babbage who came up with the first calculating machine in the 1880s using a vacuum principle. Fast forward 100 years and we have the most successful computing machine in history sitting in our homes, but computers didn't stop there...

Technicians and engineers added more memory, faster processors, and detailed software; and after that, they did it all over again. As long as people continue to achieve, there's no limit to where computers will end up by the end of the ages.

But this is supposed to be a publication about the Commodore brand of computers; that amazing machine that just about singlehandedly revolutionized the personal computer industry by offering (at the time) more memory, more color, and a user friendly BASIC all for a nominal price that even the average working person could afford. Now we have more advancements and attachments for every computer in the Commodore line than we could imagine. But

why fiddle with making what seems to be such an archaic piece of machine more flexible with today's computers?

I've argued the point for both sides for as long as I've been writing about Commodore. If there was any point where one can fall in the middle, then the computer issue is it. I run both the Commodore and some more modern machines in my work, but when push comes to shove I default to the Commodore for most of my computing needs.

I watch the people in my house scrambling to the big computer store to pick up the latest upgrade for their PCs so they can continue gaming at optimum level while I'm living with no upgrades for any of my computers and I still get done what I want. My son, an avid gamer and video watcher, got so sick of my then XP based desktop lagging when I watched a video that, one day while I was at work, he tore down the XP tower and gave me his Mac Mini to view videos on. I use it almost every day and it is nice to view items without the glitchy image on the screen.

I've observed over the Internet that, in order to use most of the Commodore compatible software and hardware for the PC, the PC must be a Windows 98 or older setup. Ever since PC went to building Windows on NT technology, popular Commodore programs like Star Commander will not work. I think that the excuse might be that the developers of PC to Commodore software have abandoned the Commodore platform in search of bigger money and higher prestige that might be found in the PC format. As a BASIC programmer of Commodore, I personally get sick of the gripes that come in that anything I've developed for the machine doesn't work right. I know that is the reason for alpha and beta testing but I know how to get around any glitches and don't think of the idea that a first time user of the software doesn't know, thus, the software errors. Contacting me via email or Facebook makes it hard for both of us since the disappointed user is trying to describe to me how the software is crashing while I can't make my alpha copy to crash at all. It's nobody's fault; it's my view versus theirs, but I am thankful

for the feedback, nonetheless.

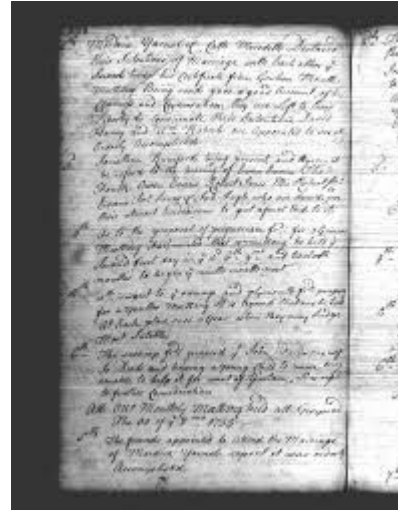
Have you noticed our cars lately? Because of technological advances through computers (which I believe Commodore played a major factor) these things are computers on wheels. I still remember when four barrel carburetors was the big advancement of the day. Now cars can do everything except make you a cup of coffee, but I'm sure some IT guru is working on that concept right now.

I could go on about our homes, our recreational vehicles, and even our telephones have morphed into incredible contraptions that only those raised in this era of time can operate fully. I'm still trying to figure out how an Xbox controller works all those toggles and buttons. Let me use my simple Slick Stick and an 8 bit game anytime.

Like I said at the beginning, we live in an amazing time. Heh, I bet that every prior generations before me has said the same thing about their time, but with the invention of the computer, and then making the machine affordable to the general public, I think us baby boomers have seen the best. None of us will live long to see when this advancement in technology will end; we can only hope and pray that our advancements won't surpass our wisdom and thus destroying ourselves.

If Everything Goes Well, And
No Other Problems Occur,
Then The Next Issue Of “The
Interface” Should Be In Your
Inbox Sometime On Or
Around

June 30, 2017



MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS

March, 2017

by Robert Bernardo

For the March meeting, Robert and Roger were joined by Brad and two of his children, William and Charlotte. The last time we saw William was back in 2013, and back then Charlotte was just born. The older sister, Katelyn, was not present at the meeting, because she was at dance class, according to Brad. Robert reminded the family of the SX-64 commercial that he had filmed, starring Katelyn and William. Brad hadn't remembered that it was posted to YouTube, and Robert showed him where it was. Brad popped up the video on his cellphone, and the family enjoyed the commercial. Robert reminded William that he was now famous.

Robert and Roger had their usual two-item combination lunches, while Brad ordered the easy-to-eat and fun cheese quesadillas for himself and the kids. As lunch neared the end, Robert started with club old and new business. He talked about the upcoming shows – the May Maker Faire, the June Pacific Commodore Expo NW, and the July Commodore Vegas Expo. Just as he finished his summary of the shows, a visitor came in – Alex Lewandowski.

We tried to view part 3 of the newly-released film, "Viva Amiga: The Story of a Beautiful Machine, " but Robert couldn't find the external speakers for the laptop which was to play the movie, and so, the movie was delayed until the next meeting.

In hardware, Robert showed the Final Expansion 3, Rev. 11, for the VIC-20 – this time with the board and 3D-printed case all assembled. However, he was without his usual VIC-20, because it was under repair by Ray Carlsen. In a few days, he was to go to the Washington state and pick up the VIC from Ray. Robert then showed the new SwinSID Ultimate. For about \$34 from Austria, the SwinSID U was advertised as a very proficient replacement for the SID chip. Robert couldn't decide which Commodore computer would receive the SwinSID U. Though he had a few PAL C64's with burned-out SID chips, he was leaning toward installing it in his B128 which runs its SID chip at 2 MHz. With the chip running that fast, the SID would run hotter (than its usual hot temperature) and be prone to failure.

Brad borrowed Robert's Kim Uno (KIM-1 replica), and he actually knew how to use it, except for discovering how to use its built-in Chessmate.

At the February meeting, Robert and Roger flailed around with the Bear Essentials and the Chalkboard Powerpad for the C64; they had no instructions nor the Powerpad overlay for the Bear Essentials, and so, they were just poking at the Powerpad without knowing what they were doing. This month Robert brought back the Bear Essentials and Powerpad, but this time he had the instructions and a color printout of what the overlay was supposed to show. Roger had more success in finding the particular pressure points on the Powerpad and had the Bear Essentials respond a bit more. However, without the exact-fitting overlay, Roger was still estimating where the points were and was not able to find all of them. All in all, getting to use the program was partially successful. Robert had the idea that the color printout of the overlay would have to be

enlarged and proportioned to the size of the overlay and be printed on something like acetate.

Robert had brought in the A2000 which will be at the May Maker Faire and at the July CommVEx. Refurbished by Duncan MacDougall, this one was loaded with a Blizzard 2060 50 MHz. board, 128 megs of Fast RAM, 2 megs of Chip RAM due to MegaChip, SCSI controller board with 8 megs of RAM, NewTek Video Toaster, Digital Processing Systems Personal TBC, A2065 Ethernet card, Digital Processing Systems Personal Animation Recorder (PAR), OS 3.1, SCSI CD-ROM drive, 4 gig SCSI main hard drive, 500 meg SCSI hard drive for the PAR. Robert brought up a few windows to show what was in the computer, but mainly he had brought it to show how Duncan redid the cabling and cards inside the computer. With Alex's help, he then tried to install more memory onto the Blizzard, but the eBay SIMMs he had bought were too thick and wouldn't fit the SIMM slots. He would have to buy thin-line SIMMs. At the end of the meeting, when all other members had departed, he and Alex carried on with a far-ranging discussion about classic Amiga and Amiga NG issues.

April, 2017

by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

We started small but finished big as far as attendance was concerned. Robert, Roger and Dick were present for the opening of the meeting. Robert noted that a free condo room is available in Las Vegas for the CommVEx weekend, to be used by a club member or a special guest.

Robert also reported on his trip to the Pacific Northwest, where he visited repair guru Ray Carlsen, and checked out our location for the Pacific Commodore Expo Northwest, scheduled for June 10 and 11 at the Living Computer Museum in Seattle.

There was preliminary discussion of the future of CommVEx. This year's show will go on as planned, on July 29 and 30 at the Plaza Hotel in

Las Vegas. With the increased room cost and the movement of a number of regular attendees to another show, it's not certain that we can continue with the show in Las Vegas. A small room is now about \$1,900 for two days, and the large rooms that we have become used to the last two years are over \$3,700. A final decision will not be made until we see how things go at this year's event.

As he has done for several years, Robert will be attending Maker Faire on May 19-21. He will be displaying a collection of vintage Commodore machines. Due to the conflict with our meeting date, the May FCUG meeting will be May 7.

We started watching the next segment of the film "Viva Amiga: The Story of a Beautiful Machine." During this time we had an infusion of guests, in the form of Roger's parents, Mary and David Van Pelt, and his brother Aaron. During the early years, David made use of computers in his work, and he was interested to see the new hardware that has been developed for Commodore.

For the second time, Robert brought the new Final Expansion 3, Rev. 11, the cartridge for the VIC-20, with custom-made 3D-printed case. With the help of its manual, he and Roger figured out its RAM options and DOS wedge. Then they tried to run a new program, the "CGA emulator" which needs 35K RAM, the maximum attainable on the Final Expansion. They did see a high-resolution, 320x200 screen, but the graphic was corrupted, probably due to the fact that the picture was for PAL video and not for NTSC. Then they tried to run Doom for the VIC, a program which also needed 35K RAM. The opening title screen ran, but then when the next part of the program was called, it crashed, probably due to the fact that the SD card in the FE was not a real disk drive and the program expected to load from a real disk. Robert and Roger decided that next time a real disk with Doom would have to be used.

Five programs from OS4Depot.com were installed in the AmigaOne G4, but the two games - Tux Football and Fighter - would not run. The successful programs that did run were the demos,

Ballfield and Etch-a-Sketch, and the emulator, ViCE (Virtual Commodore Emulator).

In C64 software, the newly-made Bruce Lee II was tested. In this part-platformer, part-fighting game, movement was smooth and the music was nice, but both Robert and Roger couldn't figure out how to escape out one of the beginning levels. Then they turned their attention to which two-player game would be used in this year's CommVEx game competition -- Way of the Exploding Fist or World Karate Championship. After looking at both of them, Robert and Roger decided that neither of the games had the smoothness or the responsiveness required of a karate game. The search would have to continue.

LINKS:

Pacific Commodore Expo:

<http://www.portcommodore.com/pacommex>

CommVEx:

<http://www.portcommodore.com/commvex>

Maker Faire: <http://makerfaire.com/bay-area/>



Member Biographies Robert Bernardo

by Dick Estel

"Memory Lane," our series of articles honoring former members, is complete, and we have now moved on to current members. The interviewer is

Dick Estel and he is responsible for any errors or misunderstandings that get printed.

Now let's get to know President Robert.

The Interface: Please provide brief biographical data: Place of birth, family status, occupation, current place of residence.

Robert: I was born in Stockton, California. I'm single, and I'm a retired English teacher, having served 37 years in the same middle school. I live in Visalia, California. I'm 62 with a Bachelor of Arts in English, emphasis in Linguistics, from the University of California, Davis. I have a lifetime Single Subject teaching credential in English.

TI: What is your first memory of being aware of home computers (not necessarily using one; just any knowledge of their existence).

RB: Oh, that's an easy one...My first memory of computers in general was when I was a little kid watching 1950's and 60's science fiction movies and television shows.

My first awareness of home computers came from the magazines, Popular Science and Popular Mechanics. My father had subscriptions to the magazines, and in the latter half of the 1970's, PS and PM had articles and advertisements about Commodore PET's, Apples, Tandy's, Heathkit's, and more.

TI: Do you recall a time when computers were not a common fixture in most homes? Elaborate to your heart's content.

RB: In the 1950's to early 1970's, I grew up with tube-type televisions and radios. I was so proud when as a teenager I was able to fix (or somewhat fix) my parents' and grandparents' TVs by removing tubes, bringing the tubes to Radio Shack for testing on their tube tester (the VU meter saying Good, Bad, or ?), and then installing new, replacement tubes in those TVs.

As gifts, in the 1960's my parents gave me a 10-transistor pocket radio (the more transistors, the

better, I always thought), a portable tape deck with 3-inch reels and T-bar control, and later on, a portable cassette recorder. It was quite an event when my aunt brought over her General Electric portable stereo phonograph, and we would play her LP's. It was quite an event when we went from black-and-white television to color television – color being so new to us that when the first Star Trek episode, the Man Trap, showed up on TV, I fiddled around with the color controls, trying to make the alien planet's sky blue (little knowing that the sky was supposed to be orange-red). In the early 1970's, it was quite an event when my father bought a solid-state stereo receiver with turntable and speakers from Radio Shack (which he still has).

In the 1970's, we kids were entranced with Pong (so entranced that a permanent image was burned on the TV's CRT) and just as entranced with the later Colecovision (because Colecovision was superior to the Atari 2600).

TI: What is your earliest memory of using (or trying to use) a computer – your own, a friend's, at work, in a store.

RB: In the late 1960's I bought a plastic board from the Edmund Scientific catalog. That board was Mr. Nim. It had marbles going through pathways and moving through mechanical gates, representing the flip-flops of a computer. It was supposed to show how a computer dealt with binary language. After a few minutes of playing with it, I became bored. After all these years, I finally gave it, minus its long-lost box, to Roger Van Pelt of our club.

Before I left for the university in 1973, my mother bought me a Smith Corona portable typewriter from J.C. Penney's for the price of \$129. That was the height of technology...that and typing correction tape. It was far smaller than the full-size Underwood typewriter my parents had. I still have that typewriter.

In 1976 or 1977, I remember an acquaintance inviting me to get onto the terminal to the mainframe computer at the university. He had

some time on the terminal and said that I could play Star Trek on it. Unfortunately, I had something else going on that afternoon/night and had to bow out. I was never invited again.

In 1978-1979 I was a teacher's aide at San Joaquin Delta Junior College in Stockton. A friend worked in the printing department at the college and invited me into the shop. It was full of printing presses and something very new to me, a Compugraphic typesetting machine. In essence, it was an electronic word processor. My friend told me to type on the keyboard as I regularly did; however, he instructed me that I could go back and delete, insert, and correct before any final print-out. What a new way of thinking! It was totally foreign to me that I could delete, insert, and correct before printing.

In 1982 we teachers were invited to a voluntary workshop on how to use personal computers. I went to it and sat with other teachers in a room of Tandy TRS-80 Model 3 computers with dual disk drives. We were then taught our first steps in the use of a computer – how to load the disk, how the screen shows us what we are doing with our key presses, how to run a program, and how to save to the disk. It was all very basic stuff, but very new to us uninitiated in computers.

TI: When did you get your first computer and what was it?

RB: It was a Commodore 64 bought from Federated Electronics in Stockton on August 4, 1983. The price had dropped to \$199.95, and I had to buy it, even though my paycheck was about \$500 net per month. I brought it to the parents' home, eagerly opened the box, read through the instructions, and hooked it into the antenna connection of my parents' television. Wow, I actually had a computer being displayed on the TV screen! Next I had to make the C64 do something. I typed in the BASIC listings from the Commodore 64 user's guide and watched what they did on the screen. Nice! But I wanted more. There were no other listings, and the programs I keyed in would disappear as soon as I turned off the computer; I had no program storage device. A

Commodore 1541 disk drive was too expensive, but a cassette drive was within my price range. One month later with the arrival of my paycheck, I bought an aftermarket cassette drive for \$30, not the Commodore 1530 Datasette for \$35.

I used that C64 and cassette drive combination with a black-and-white portable TV for the next two years. It wasn't until 1985 that I got a SX-64 (a disk drive!) and a color portable TV. In between 1983 and 1984 I bought my first printer – a Royal daisywheel typewriter which had a Centronics port – perfect for connecting with parallel cable to the user port of the C64. By running a driver program before running Totl. Text 2.6 (my first real word processor), I was able to get letter-quality text with different font styles and font sizes by changing daisywheels. It wasn't until years later that I got my first dot-matrix printer, a C. Itoh 8510 printer.

TI: What computers have you owned?

RB: I started with the C64. Then in 1985, it was the SX-64, followed by the C128 in that same year. In 1986 I went to the C128DCR. In 1995 I received my first Amiga 500 from Dick Estel. After that, everything escalated to where I have now many different Commodores and Amigas. In fact, I am receiving items (as gifts or as discards) that are not CBM – an Apple IIGS, Tandy 100 and its NEC near-twin, Atari 800XL, and Texas Instruments TI-99/4A.

TI: How often do you use a Commodore computer?

RB: That varies every month.

TI: Did you ever use a Commodore of any kind at work or for work purposes?

RB: I brought my C64 to the classroom in 1984. When the students finished their work early, they used educational programs on the Commodore, like Hangman and Sea Route to India from Compute!'s Gazette magazine and the Cave of the Word Wizard spelling program from Timeworks. When I bought the C128 (and then the

C128DCR), I did my grades, record-keeping, and word processing on that system. For the grades, I used the expensive but powerful Vizastar. For record-keeping, I used the simple and quick Dfile 128. For word processing, I used Speedscript 128 and later the Write Stuff 128.

TI: Do you use a computer at work, and if so what type? How do you use it or what do you use it for? (If retired, answer based on your final year or two of work).

RB: For many years I used Commodore at school. At one time I had as many as three C64 systems in the classroom. Then in 1998 the school put a Windows PC in the classroom. I kept the Commodores in the classroom, but the writing was on the wall. By 2003 or so, the school put 15 PC's in my room, forcing out any Commodores. Also around that time, I had to start putting final grades onto the PC in my classroom, though I still calculated the everyday grades on my C128DCR. Finally, all grade calculation and final grades had to be done on the school system, making any grade calculation on the Commodore superfluous. Documents had to be exchanged with administrators and other teachers with the use of Microsoft Word. Keeping a personal database was no longer necessary now that all record-keeping was kept on-line in the school system.

TI: What computer-type devices that are not specifically a laptop or desktop do you use (iPad or other tablet, smart phone, other). Have you used any in the past that you no longer have or use?

RB: Eventually, the bank of PC desktops in my class was replaced by students having a few classroom laptop computers. Eventually, the few laptops were replaced by every student having the use of a laptop in the room. And eventually, the laptops were replaced by every student using an iPad or Chromebook.

The desktop PC on my teacher's desk was eventually replaced by a Windows XP laptop which was replaced by a MacBook Pro and iPad which were replaced by a newer MacBook Pro

and iPad. In my school district, it seemed that change kept coming faster and faster as new technology kept coming faster and faster.

TI: What computer magazine or magazines did you subscribe to or read regularly, and which one give you the most help or was your favorite?

Back in the 1980's I eagerly bought Commodore magazines in order to improve my understanding of my systems and their capabilities. Some of the magazines were Commander, Compute!, Compute!'s Gazette, Run, Info 64, Commodore magazine, and Loadstar disk magazine. In the early 1990's, even before I had an Amiga, I started buying Amiga magazines with cover disks, like CU Amiga. Nowadays, there are the on-line magazines, like Commodore Free and Reset.

TI: What are your predictions or expectations for the future of Commodore brand computers?

RB: I expect homebrew Commodore software and hardware projects to continue. As for Amiga, there will be homebrew software and hardware for classic Amiga systems. However for Amiga, there are companies spending millions of dollars on "official" development; A-EON built the AmigaOne X1000 desktop, is building the new AmigaOne X5000 desktop, and will build the A1222 board and the A.L.I.C.E. laptop; Hyperion continues development on AmigaOS 4.1 Final Edition with the goal of OS 4.2.

TI: When did you join FCUG?

RB: That was in January, 1995. I remember being warmly welcomed by everybody.

TI: Any final words or thoughts?

For several years I've been the moderator at two forums at <http://www.commodore.ca/forum> and <http://forum.retro-link.com> and the owner of two inherited mailing lists – homestead@robertbernardo.com and commodor@robertbernardo.com (formerly, homestead@vcsweb.com and commodor@vcsweb.com which used to be

commodor@listserv.buffalo.edu). I also co-own the blog at <http://blog.retro-link.com>. If my haters out there in the world expect me to retire anytime soon from my Commodore/Amiga activities, I intend to still be active for another 28 years! So don't be haters; be lovers! :)

Club Officers

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-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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