The Interface

"Taking 8-Bits Into The 21st Century"

CLASS 2025 Is Coming!
Be Ready!

In This Issue:

The Editor's Godzilla (Part 2 of a look into the book that started it all.)

Monthly Meeting Reports (We share with those who couldn't attend.)

The Commodore Thermostat (Needed innovation for the times.)

Active Commodore Clubs (Most of them visited by Robert)

©2023 TOHO CO., LTD.

THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

- by Lenard R. Roach

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY
Part 2

Raiders at Midnight

Every story usually has a back story, a point where something happened in the background before the first word on the first page was written. I attempted to do this in my book, "Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition," by providing very short descriptions, "facades," of what brought the stories to life, more background explanations as to where the ideas came from and how they ended up in the book. In this article I will expound on the story entitled, "Raiders At Midnight."

Anyone who knows me well enough knows that I love cats. Cats seem to have the power to act innocently even when they are being mischievous. For example, in the case of a dog, it accidentally makes a small piddle in the middle of the living room carpet, and before the owner discovers it, the dog would hang its head in guilt like it committed an unpardonable sin. The dog wouldn't have even been considered a suspect of the mess at the time.

A cat is totally the opposite. If it had the power, a cat would totally obliterate the living room furniture, pile the furniture up in the middle of the room, climb to the top of the pile, and start cleaning itself. When the owner of the cat comes into the room, the cat would stop cleaning itself and stare at its owner with a look on its face that seemed to say, "I didn't do this. It was this way when I came into the room. When's dinner?" A cat can be sly and conniving and yet still seem to be in control of its surroundings.

Ever since I could remember, I have always had at least one cat in every home I have lived in. Dad would sometimes bring a stray cat home from the Argentine GATX Railroad Depot where he worked as a boiler technician. It was always fun to have a new cat around the house as we tried to learn its mannerisms, likes, and dislikes. One of these cats was a yellow domestic tabby that Dad named Mayberry after his favorite Kansas City Royals baseball player, John Mayberry.

Mayberry became Dad's constant companion. Wherever Dad was, Mayberry was right there making a nuisance of herself. Sometimes Dad had to get a little rough with her to let her know that her presence was not welcome at that moment. She would take the hint and go somewhere to lay down and wait until Dad was finished with what he was working on. When Dad was done, Mayberry went right back to him following him around.

When Dad came down with terminal cancer in 1972, Mayberry would stay with him in his sick bed every day. When Dad was sent to the VA Hospital in Leavenworth for treatments, Mayberry would stay in his bed until he got home. Mayberry had nothing to do with me until Dad succumbed to his illness around Christmas 1974.

I was devastated at Dad's passing, crying myself to sleep many times. Mayberry would jump into my bed with me and lay down on me like she did when Dad was alive. She became my constant companion like she was with Dad. Mayberry treated me like her own kitten by constantly licking my hair and keeping an eye on me. With her help, I began to emotionally heal, and soon life was as normal as could be expected. I owed a debt to that cat, and I try to pay it forward by taking care of at least three cats at a time in my home as well as feed strays that live in our neighborhood.

This brings me to 1993. In our rented home on Central Avenue in Kansas City, Kansas, we had two mischievous cats named Thor and Hananiah. These cats wandered into the family home and into the family's hearts on that cold day in December of that year. They were great companions and tried to be surrogate brother and sister to my son Gabriel who was just born to Alana and me in 1992. Like Mayberry before them, they wanted to be in everything I did. It was difficult to get anything done with a cat constantly demanding attention. Even working on my Commodore 64 became a chore. When I sat down at the computer desk located in the living room and poised my fingers on the keyboard, either Thor or Hananiah (sometimes both) would jump onto the desk and try to stop my work and demand petting. It would take several minutes to load any software into the Commodore, because the cats were all over the computer desk. Rather than fight constantly with the cats, I took a plank of wood I got from a pallet at work and placed it as a walking board between the desk and the cat tree which occupied the corner nearest the computer desk. The cats enjoyed the freedom of walking on the board to be with me, rather than leaping onto the desk from the floor.

One night while Alana and I were sleeping, I heard a crash come from the living room. Thinking it was an intruder, I grabbed my baseball bat that I had beside my bed and stealthily left the bedroom towards the living room. The dim moonlight shining through

3

the windows revealed nothing at first glance. I thought I would take a chance and turn on the living room light to help me see what happened. I stepped towards the wall and flipped the switch. What I saw was amusing as well as partially upsetting.

On the floor in front of the computer stand were Thor and Hananiah sitting in a mess containing the Commodore 64, 1541 disk drive, MPS- 802 printer, and a plethora of 5.25 disks. The cats sat there cleaning themselves, acting like nothing had happened. They both looked up at me, then approached me only to rub their furry bodies all over my legs. I surveyed the damage done by the animals, going over piece by piece of the Commodore 64 set-up to make sure it wasn't damaged and then putting each piece back where it belonged. In about thirty minutes, I had the Commodore put back on the desk and all the disks from my various disk file boxes back into their cases. I then turned off the living room light and went back to bed.

The next morning I was preparing for work. I glanced a lot at the Commodore computer stand to make sure that everything was still in place and that Thor and Hananiah were nowhere near it. Trusting that things would stay where they were when I got back home, I left for work. While at work, I was thinking of how much the incident of last night would make an interesting story to put into the Commodore User's Group of Kansas City's newsletter, "Ryte Bytes," but I needed an angle, something to make the people want to read it. While driving the forklift around the lot looking for more pallet racks to load onto the delivery truck, I mulled about in my mind a way to approach the previous night's little home fiasco in a catchy story style that would grab the reader. By quitting time at five o'clock, I had decided. I was going to write an espionage-type story starring my cats as agents bent on destruction.

Getting home and kissing my wife hello, I put away my work clothes, got into some evening clothes, and sat down in front of the Commodore computer that had been pushed off the desk the previous night. I knew that this story had to be gripping in order to keep the reader in suspense until the very end where the cats are revealed as the culprits. My usual redneck style of writing wasn't going to work in this story. I needed something else. I grabbed my thesaurus off the top of the computer stand, and with Speedscript loaded into the computer, I began to write the story. I would go along, putting words to computer until I came across a word that seemed to be needing a little pizzazz to give the story the impact I was seeking. It took several days of writing, rewriting, and rewriting some more, all the while flipping the pages of my thesaurus as I went through the document over and over again, making several changes along the way, before I got the story where I wanted it. Titling the story "Raiders At Midnight," it was now ready for the alpha read.
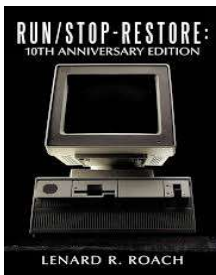
I made a few paper copies of the story and gave them to people who I knew would give me their honest opinion with no sugar-coating it. One copy went each to my best friend Jon while another went to his sister GeAnn, both amateur writers in their own rights. A third copy went to Pastor Dan of the church I attended. Each individual took their copies promising to give me their honest opinion after they read it. Since the story was so short, each person got back to me the very next day. Both Jon and GeAnn said that the story

was the best I had ever written and wished I would write more in that style. Pastor Dan admitted that he was no longer familiar with the Commodore computer, even though he used one in his early pastoral years. However, he did enjoy the style and was surprised to read that the criminals were actually cats who destroyed the computer stand. Right then I decided to turn the story in to "Ryte Bytes" editor Jack and let him give it the final "jack-acid" test. The story appeared in the next issue of the newsletter, just as it was written. I was pleased with my accomplishment, but unknown to me, that was not the end.

A few Commodore meetings later, Jack came up to me afterwards and told me that he had received word from various Commodore groups around the United States and Canada that these clubs each reprinted "Raiders At Midnight" in their own newsletters, and it was widely enjoyed by all of those who read it. I was a Commodore celebrity only for a short time.

I've asked myself several times after the release of the story, "How am I going to top this?" I may never know if I could have made a better story than that one. "Raiders At Midnight" still remains a Commodore fan favorite to this day.

"Raiders At Midnight" is one of the many stories in my book, "Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition." If I understand rumors correctly, "Raiders At Midnight" is the best story in the book. This may have pushed sales of the book to the level that it has reached. The story and the book are still on sale over the internet as well as from local sellers of new and used books.

MONTHLY MEETING
REPORTS

March 2025

Robert arrived early in order to set up the computer equipment. Soon members Roger and David appeared with Bruce appearing around noon.

Before everybody ordered lunch, Robert showed off the Craig 212 portable reel-to-reel tape recorder he had bought from eBay. This tape recorder, which was produced in the mid-to-late 1960's, was made popular as one of the self-destructing tape recorders seen on the t.v. show, Mission: Impossible. More on the Craig further in this article.

In old business, Robert reminded everybody about the Los Angeles Maker Faire happening on April 12. Under the exhibit name of Classic Los Angeles Computers! (CLAC!), he had decided to exhibit the Ultimate 64, the Amiga 3000, the AmigaOne A1222+, with one other make of computer undecided. Filmmaker Jerold Kress will join him at the table in order to show off chiptune music created on the Commodore 64 and other game machines, like the Nintendo Entertainment System and the Sega Genesis.

The April 26-27 Commodore Los Angeles Super Show was getting so near! Robert spoke of the upcoming CLASS presentations and asked Roger if his C128 CP/M-SD2IEC presentation was ready. Roger responded that he had been unable to run CP/M off the SD2IEC, but he was to continue working on it.

Robert was going to reopen Bernardo Studios so that CLASS-related videos could be filmed. In the past, that meant going to a local hotel room and using the room's quietness as the soundstage. Robert asked whether Roger wanted his presentation filmed for CLASS, but Roger said that it would be better that he do the presentation live in front of the show attendees. Robert agreed but said that there would be no do-over's, no further takes to cover mistakes. Robert was going to do further filming, though, for the annual CLASS commercial. The Craig 212 tape recorder was going to play a part in that commercial, Robert saying that it would be in his planned Mission: Impossible parody.

With the Revision 2025 demoparty coming in mid-April in Germany, Robert's plan was to show off various, amazing C64 and Amiga demos from Revision 2024. However, he only showed the Amiga demos, saving the C64 demos for a future meeting.

A user had mailed a 5.25" GEOS disk for Robert to open and to convert the graphics files to .PNG's. For the rest of the meeting time, Roger and Robert tried to open up the GEOS graphics files. They tried several methods to open the files for resaving as .PNG's, but they weren't successful. However, there were a few graphics files saved in the multi-color format (Koalas). Robert was able to open those up (they were in the shape of Mayan pyramids) which he converted and later e-mailed the conversions to the user. The user didn't remember that those were on the disk.

After an hour or so, Roger and Robert gave up on trying to open the other graphics files. Roger said that would try to open them with another computer he had back at his apartment.

April 2025

Four members of the club came together for the April meeting – Robert, Roger, Dave and Dick. The main topic of discussion was the Commodore LA Super Show (CLASS), coming up on April 26 and 27. Since it's the 40th anniversary of both Amiga and the Commodore 128, many examples of those units will be on display, including variations like the 128D and the different Amiga models.

A seller in used Amiga equipment will set up a consignment sale at the event, with 2% of the sales going to help fund future CLASS events.

Robert had put in many hours to produce a two-minute commercial for CLASS, with filming in various places in California, most notably Hollywood and northern California. We were treated to a sneak preview of the commercial, which Robert made live immediately after our viewing. It can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElhM3M4-lqk.

In our discussion, Robert spoke about the E-Recycle and Solar Recycle business in Union City, California. A few months ago he had visited the place, and Duncan MacDougall, leader of RELICS (formerly known as The Other Group of Amigoids) had invited him to visit it again, because there was now a huge cache of Apple and Commodore items in storage there, ready to be bought very inexpensively. Robert would have to visit again.

Vice-president Roger had a presentation about running CP/M from a SD2IEC on the Commodore 128. This was in preparation for his full presentation on the subject at CLASS. He was first to admit that he had not figured out all the bugs of trying to get other applications to run on the CP/M-SD2IEC combination. However, he was able to show what he had learned so far; he had figured out the process of how to boot CP/M off the SD2IEC. It took time to boot, but we were veteran Commodore enthusiasts… we

were used to waiting. And it worked! There was the CP/M screen, and Roger took us through the directory on the disk and ran a few utilities. Not exciting but Roger promised he would get a CP/M game working on it by the time of CLASS.

On the A600GS, Robert showed a slew of classic Amiga games that had been downloaded from the A600GS webserver. These games worked under AROS, the alternative to Amiga OS. AROS was a factory install on the A600GS, whereas Amiga OS was an optional install. Robert went through every one of the games -- Assimilation, Biplanes, Blitz Bombers, Deluxe Galaga, Furball, Movem, Rocketz, Rollerpede, Santatron, Super Obliteration, Tanx, and T-Racer. Some games were cute and very playable (Deluxe Galaga). Others were hard to control (Biplanes). And others were incomprehensible, which meant that the instructions needed to be found on-line (Rocketz).

THE COMMODORE PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT

-by Dave McMurtrie

One of the lesser-known, non-computer items that Commodore put to market was a programmable thermostat, released by Commodore's consumer products division. It was intended to provide increased energy efficiency for home heating and cooling by adjusting temperature levels to maximize comfort while people were at home, and reduce power consumption while people were away at work during the day. Like many Commodore products, the programmable thermostat was not originally created by Commodore.

History of the C= Programmable Thermostat

This thermostat was created by a company out of Dallas, TX named Micro Display Systems, Inc. MDSI was founded on March 27, 1973 by Tom Hyltin, Bob Schnurr and Charlie Ristagno who all worked together at Texas Instruments' LCD watch division. The company was initially financed by Seiko out of Japan, with the President of Seiko, Ichiro Hattori being listed as one of the original directors of Micro Display Systems, Inc. In 1978, MDSI was primarily selling LCD watches when, according to Howard Upchurch who was the 8th employee hired by MDSI, Tom Hyltin called a meeting in his executive suite one morning. Howard Upchurch, Red Schneider (from the Engineering Department), and Neal Moat (Mechanical Design) were in attendance. Hyltin opened the meeting with, "We've got the watches up and running, and there's not going to be much change there. Watch sales aren't what we wanted them to be, and we are losing money with every LCD we make. To bring in money, we're trying to sell displays to other watch companies. What we need to come up with this morning is a new

product that will use all the knowledge and expertise we have. That means it will use an LCD, will have to use MOS chips, will have have to require very low voltage and power, and a few other requirements. I've done a lot of thinking, and I think a thermostat will do."

Scott Jamieson demonstrating the thermostat.

LSI chip secured to the board with blob of epoxy.

MDSI hired a consultant named Scott Jamieson, who was eventually hired full-time, to do the design. A prototype was built by American Microsystems, Inc. The prototype was a large wire-wrapped board, and once it was debugged, AMI created an LSI chip for their design. If you disassemble a Commodore thermostat, you'll notice the LSI chip is secured to the PCB using a blob of epoxy with traces connected directly to it. MDSI did not have the silicon encased in a

traditional ceramic or plastic package.

Tom Hyltin and Scott Jamieson secured a US patent for their thermostat design in 1981.

Release of the programmable thermostat

L-R: Richard Rainbolt, Frank Hughes and Ned
Whatley of Commodore's Cash Register Team

Commodore purchased MDSI in 1979 and their Consumer Products Division put the completed thermostat to market in 1980. Scott Jamieson became Commodore staff as part of this purchase. The MDSI facility at 4350 Beltwood Parkway South, in Dallas, Texas was renamed "Commodore Optoelectronics" and housed the MDSI LCD line, Commodore's Speech Technology Division (headed by Dr. Richard Wiggins who developed the Texas Instruments Speak and Spell), and Commodore's Cash Register team. The building was still unfinished at this point and had a dirt floor in some parts. Micro Display Systems, Inc was legally merged into Commodore Business Machines, Inc, along with MOS Technology, Inc and Frontier Manufacturing, Inc on December 23, 1980, at which point it ceased to exist as a legal entity unto itself.

End of the C= Consumer Product Division

The thermostat was a short-lived product. I haven't been able to find any sales data for the thermostats, but by 1981 Irving Gould was publicly lamenting the poor performance of the Consumer Products division, and suggested that if things didn't turn around, Commodore would not only discontinue the thermostat product line, but the entire Consumer Products division. It's key to note that when the Commodore VIC-20 computer started to take off, by 1981 Commodore's Computer System Sales division accounted for 71% of total revenue ($132,500,000), the Semiconductor Components Division accounted for 19% of total revenue ($34,900,000), the Office Equipment Division (metal office furniture) brought in 6% of total revenue, and the Consumer Products division

only brought in 4% of total revenue. By 1984, Commodore's Consumer Products division was gone, and Commodore's metal office products division was sold in 1985. When you're selling a million VIC-20s, it's difficult to get excited about selling a few thousand watches, thermostats, and filing cabinets.

[Robert Bernardo has shown his Commodore thermostat at a FCUG meeting, but he admits it has never been installed.]

ACTIVE COMMODORE CLUBS AS OF EARLY 2025

-Compiled by Robert Bernardo

CALIFORNIA

Fresno Commodore User Group (FCUG)

http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm

Monthly meetings

Retro Equipment Lovers International Computer Society (RELICS)

https://www.meetup.com/toga-the-other-group-of-amigoids/

Formerly known as The Other Group of Amigoids (TOGA). Monthly meetings
----

Sacramento Amiga Computer Club (SACC)

http://www.sacc.org

Monthly meetings

Southern California Commodore & Amiga Network (SCCAN)

http://www.portcommodore.com/sccan

Bi-monthly meetings

NEW ENGLAND

New England Commodore Enthusiasts

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1200103756669187/

No regular meetings -- only a Facebook presence.

NEW YORK

Westchester Amiga User Group (WAUG)

http://www.westchesteramigausergroup.org/

Monthly meetings, though some are on-line and others are in-person.

OREGON

Portland Commodore User Group (PDXCUG)

http://pdxcug.org

Monthly meetings

TEXAS

Central Texas Commodore User Group (CTCUG)

http://coffeemud.net:8080/ctcug/index.php?title=Main_Page

Monthly meetings

WASHINGTON

Puget Sound Commodore User Group (PSCUG)

http://pscug.org

No regular in-person meetings being held -- just on-line meetings.

Seattle Commodore Computer Club (SCCC)

http://www.sea-ccc.org/

Monthly meetings

CANADA

Commodore 64 Enthusiasts of Greater Victoria (VIC 64)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/308217172577036/

No regular meetings -- only a Facebook presence. So, I say they are not really active.

Toronto PET Users Group (TPUG)

http://www.sea-ccc.org/

Monthly meetings except during the summer

AUSTRALIA

Amiga Retro Brisbane

https://www.amigaretro.com/

Monthly meetings

Amiga Users Group (AUG) of Victoria (Melbourne)

https://www.amiga.net.au/

Monthly meetings

Melbourne Amiga User Group (MAUG)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/MAUGr/

Monthly meetings

Sydney Amiga Users Group (SAUG)

https://www.saug.net.au/

Monthly meetings

GERMANY

Dienstagstreff Commodore Club

http://dienstagstreff.de/

Weekly meetings

NETHERLANDS

Netherlands Commodore Club

https://commodore.hcc.nl/

Bi-monthly meetings/shows

UNITED KINGDOM

Lincs Amiga Group (LAG)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/929767783738360/

Bi-monthly meetings

Amiga North Thames (ANT)

http://www.amiganorththames.co.uk/main.shtml

Monthly meetings

Though the Australian and British clubs say Amiga in their names, they still accept those with 8-bit Commodores. I have not verified new clubs that have sprung up in the last few years in the England/Ireland. I will do so when I try to visit them in late 2025.

ON THE COVER

CLASS 2025 is slated for the end of April, This year is the celebration of 40 years of the Amiga computer. Be sure to mark your calendars to attend this spectacular event for the incredible machines that make up the Commodore family of computers.

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.

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.