# FC=UG

## "Taking Commodore Computing Into The Twenty First Century And Beyond ..."

### The Interface

### May/June 2011



The Editor's Godzilla

-by Lenard R. Roach

The final stages for us to depart for the CommVEx are falling into place. We had a struggle getting together the final four projects to make the trip complete: Hotel, product, finances, and transportation. This is a little story on how all of these hurdles were met and subsequently conquered.

First let's look at transportation. I have been told many times that the cheapest route to go was to fly from Kansas City to Las Vegas International and then take a rented vehicle to the convention, but when you are carrying twenty books, Commodore hardware and software, luggage, and yourself, this becomes quite an expense. It was suggested to me that I ship all these items to the hotel I was going to stay at via UPS and then have the hotel keep them until I get there, then ship them back home the same way after the show. Even with gas prices nearing $4/gallon we decided the best way to go was to drive down I-70 through the Rockies again and

make I-15 in Utah and go into Las Vegas from there. The new problem was finding a reliable car for the trip. The '97 Plymouth Neon just had the head gasket replaced and a check up, so it was ready to go, but Gabriel in his cautiousness felt that was not enough. Since he got himself a 2011 Mini Cooper recently, he has volunteered for us to travel in it, thus saving us any travel embarassment of a vehicle overheating or breaking down in some other fashion. Hurdle One: Conquered.

Next came hotel. The search for hotel fell under God's providence as we did what research we could for the time we had free to find the best deal. It wasn't until recently when I heard an advertisement on the radio that Hotels.com was having a 48 hour sale -- 50% off all hotel reservations no matter what hotel you chose. That evening I logged into the website and found the El Cortez Hotel again and discovered they were also running a special -- 2 nights stay for the price of 1, and with the room price of $29 per person there was no way we could pass this up. I quickly click the BOOK NOW button, entered the credit card information and dates we would stay, and I was done. With room, taxes, and Hotels.com's fees I spent only a little of $65 for a two night stay in Las Vegas. All in all, a great set up. Hurdle Two: Conquered.

Now we move on to product. Going to CommVEx as just an observer would have been fun, but it is even more fun when you are a vendor; dealing with the public,

making sales, and getting the chance to speak once in a while about the wares you are peddling. I don't write books and programs much anymore just to have them sit on a shelf or in a disk file box and say to myself, "Gee, what a good boy am I." My teacher back in children's book writing class has always said that everything a writer writes should be seen as if it was good enough for publication. This works well with the material I put into print, but what about the material I put on disk to use as a program? So far I have been the only one monopolizing on what I have done so I will be using CommVEx as my launching pad for the beginning of some software sales. Those on the purchasing block will be: TEA 4 2, the enveloping writing program; Check It Out v1.5, the upgraded check writing program; CheckMate, the Check It Out companion program that saves Check It Out data to either a 5.25 or 3.5 disk, The Ledger, a program that allows the user to keep track of bills on a month to month basis; and Money Manager, a program written by Rex Day for RUN magazine that I made useful with Y2K updates. Actually, Money Manager will be a freebie, since I don't own the work, to anyone who asks and I am hoping to have The Ledger up to selling par before the convention. Right now the product is still in alpha testing stages and I still have to send it out for beta testing. More than likely what I will do is offer the work for beta test at the CommVEx and let the visitors give me the pros and cons and make adjustments when I get home, then I will offer the program for sale at the 2012 convention.

Let's not forget the book! The long awaited launch of Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition will be done at the 2011 CommVEx. I will be bringing about 20 copies with me, most of them will be soft bound for easier transport, but there might be a hardbound copy or two in the mix. The copies can be ordered off of Amazon.com for those not wishing to wait until CommVEx for $9.99

softbound, but I am having a special for CommVEx attendees: $7.25 for softbound and $12.95 for hardbound, but ONLY if you attend the convention. Please be sure to have me autograph your book before you leave the convention Sunday.
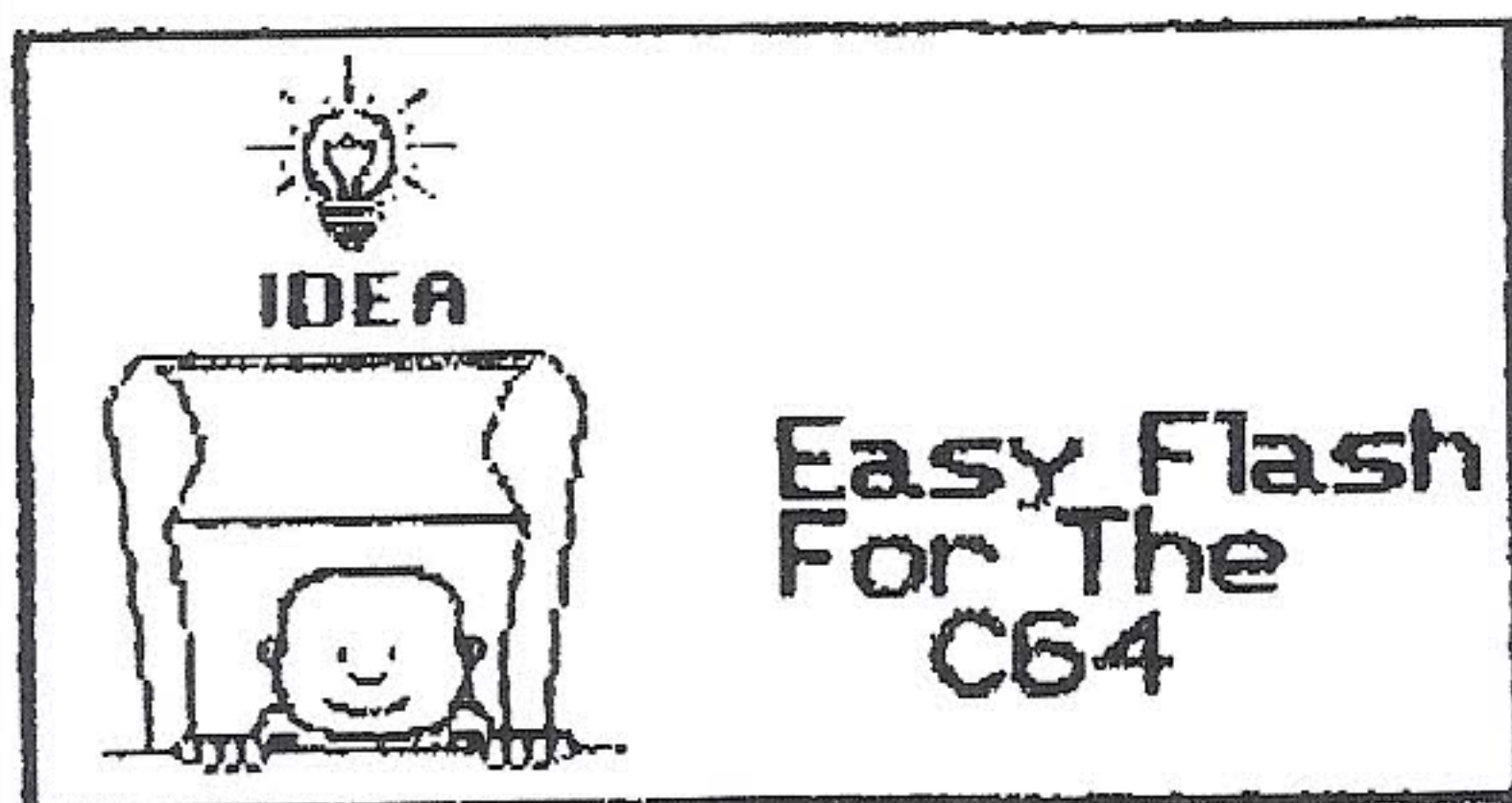
At first I was not going to have the book since for some reason the publisher never sent me any copies, so when I contacted book sales, they told me it was going to be $522.76 for 50 copies of the book for me. When I told him that was ridiculous since I wrote the book, he miraculously showed up with 30 free copies for me to be delivered to my doorstep by the end of June. It's amazing what one can accomplish by just by letting people know where you stand. Hurdle Three: Conquered.

Lastly came finances. Even with all the above completed we still need money for fuel, eating, souveniers, and a little gambling. This was going to be hard to find with all my income going out to bills, especially when it comes to the summer with cooling costs being so high in the Midwest. Again, God's providence showed. It came about that some stores at my second job were looking for fill in help with people leaving for home from college or employees going on vacation, so I got to step up to the challenge and actually got my income to go up. With the overtime I have gathered I gained an extra $100 to $150 per paycheck for the months of May and June, and with July having three paydays in it due to the way the weeks fall, I should have extra money for the trip, so it looks like that all will be set up on that end. Hurdle Four: Conquered.

Just because these items have been taken care of doesn't mean the Roach Hotel is in the clear for takeoff to Las Vegas in July. We still need to find someone to watch the house, feed the cats and fish, and clean out the litter once or twice while were gone. I know a simple bulletin board ad at the church with a $50 payment plan should attract some good help for such a simple task.

We hope to meet a lot of new

faces at the CommVEx as well as renew some acquaitances we have made in our last visit. We also hope to make this a yearly event unless circumstances otherwise apply so look for a very fat Kansan riding shotgun in a pepperwhite 2011 Mini Cooper. I will see you at the convention.



-by Robert Bernardo

On May 12 I received an EasyFlash cartridge from Mike Betz of Antelope, California. He's building these carts and selling them on eBay for $35 plus $5+ in shipping plus sales tax for those who live in California. Arriving a few days after placing my order, the cart came in a small, padded mailing bag with just about $1.34 in postage, not even close to the $5+ charged for shipping. No other materials (like instructions) came with the cartridge.

EasyFlash is a C64 cartridge in which you can save various, downloaded cartridge images and programs and then use without the need of a disk drive or cassette drive. The cartridge casing is solid to the touch, blue in color, has a nice label, and has an LED, a slideswitch that selects normal or flash mode, and a reset pushbutton. The casing is embossed with the name of its German manufacturer. The holes in the casing for the switches and the LED look to be hand-drilled or cut open with an Exacto knife. After removal of the center screw, the casing comes apart fairly easily, exposing its board with all the components taking up nearly all of the board space. The components all seemed to be well-soldered onto the board.

At the May FCUG meeting, I brought the EasyFlash and as many instructions as I could print from the inventors' website at:

http://skoe.de/easyflash/

We plugged it into the club's flat C128. Upon power-up, there is an EasyFlash title screen with a little bit of animation. A nice touch! Then it presents you with a menu of what there is on the cartridge. To go up and down the menu, you can use the cursor keys, a joystick, or the F keys. To our surprise, there were a number of game titles already on the cart -- no need to immediately learn how to flash a new cartridge image into it. We tried a few games. Several of them presented just a blue screen, no cursor, no other activity. I attributed that to the games being PAL versions, and we were using an NTSC Commodore. Some games ran just fine, like Frogger.

I have not yet tried to flash a game into the cartridge. To flash a game with the use of a C64, you download the program, EasyProg, from the above website, and then run the program. The site advises that you should have a large device, like the FD-2000 disk drive or a uIEC card drive, in order to hold large cartridge images. When I followed the site's links to where the images were, I was presented Google pages from which to grab the images; the problem was that Google had hundreds of hits, and you'd have to look through every one so that you could get the image you wanted.
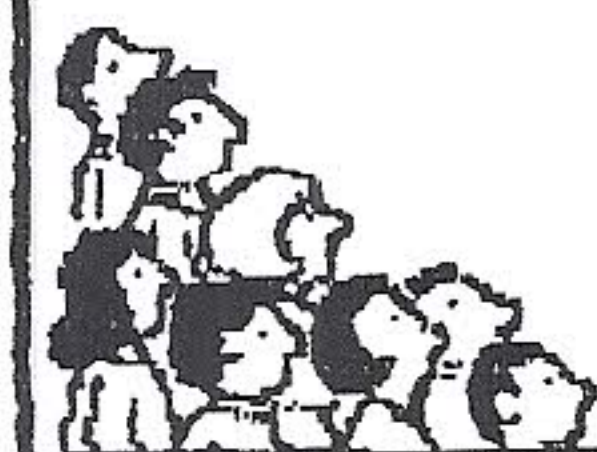
All-in-all, it seems that EasyFlash is a modern version of the venerable Quick Brown Box cartridge, except that EasyFlash has much more memory in which to store images and programs.

CommVEx

July 23 & 24

## Monthly Meeting Report

— by Dick Estel

—by Robert Bernardo and Dick Estel

### May 2011

To add excitement to this month's meeting, Dick ordered a side of hot wings for all to share. After eating his sandwich, Brad Strait was too full to have any. Robert Bernardo found them a bit hotter than he prefers but managed to eat a couple anyway. Dick ate one and took home the leftovers.

Under leftover business, Robert provided an update on CommVex prizes, which will include an Amiga A2000 Video Toaster system. All prizes currently planned, as well as lots of other information, can be seen at http://www.portcommodore.com/commvex.

Robert had been given the opportunity to share in a bonanza of Commodore equipment; the owners of a large storage warehouse in the San Francisco Bay Area were clearing out the building, and everything was free. Robert brought home a couple of Pet 2001's, a 2031 drive and other odds and ends. He also took pictures inside the building, and we hope to have a couple on the club website in the near future.

Once lunch was over, Robert passed around the EasyFlash cartridge, which allows the capture of programs from the Internet. They can then be run directly from the cartridge, which was developed in 2010. The cartridge came pre-loaded with several games, but some of them would not run, possibly due their being PAL European games instead of NTSC North American games.

We also opened up the two Pet's, finding a few interesting and unexpected things inside. One of the machines was outfitted with a Skyles 32K ram expansion board

but also had a number of loose wires inside, and it did not run; the other blue-labeled one worked stubbornly, i.e., it took several power off and on's for it to show a screen and even when it did that, the return key did not respond well to any keypress. It also showed less than 4K of memory rather than the usual 8K of a Pet 2001. Inside there were strange, white, half-height chips in four of the sockets.

Murphy was also present, causing the club's C128 to lose its C64 section halfway through the meeting, and causing the umpteenth postponement of the unofficial Loadstar #250 and the DotBasic+ presentations. DotBasic+ documentation came on a CD-ROM, and we used Robert's Mac Powerbook to read that CD. The C128 will be replaced for the next meeting, and the broken C128 will eventually go to Ray Carlsen for repair.

### June 2011

The June meeting was attended by a very select few, namely Robert and Dick.

Robert reported that he has started ordering parts for the SUX 6400 audio digitizer. This involves very careful attention to exact parts numbers, since an error in one digit would result in the wrong parts being delivered. Robert expects to show a production model at CommVEx in July. You can learn more about this event at http://www.portcommodore.com/commvex.

Creation of this device is further complicated by rules in Europe that require such hardware to be "RoHS-compliant", meaning it can contain no lead or other poisonous metals.

We looked at a package donated by former Loadstar editor Fender Tucker, which includes the Loadstar Compleat CD-ROM, a Loadstar catalog, and 24 covers from the days when the disk was distributed on newsstands in a shrink-wrapped package including a cardboard backing, the disk, and the cover. Four sets of six covers each will be included as door prizes at CommVEx, as will the CD and

catalog. Robert went on-line with his school Windows laptop to instantly add these to the list of prizes.

For the demonstration part of the program, we looked at Robert's Turbomaster CPU, a 4 MHz. accelerator for the C64, developed in the early 1990s by Schnedler Systems. We also reviewed an issue of the Loadstar 128 disk magazine, which included a database of information on the Star Trek series and several of its later spin-offs. Those who know Robert are aware that he is a true, classic Star Trek fanatic, while Dick prefers the Next Generation series (but appreciates many of the original series episodes also).

Robert also entertained us during lunch with the challenge of meeting the requests of a Commodore user who wanted to buy a C64. We have lots of these, and it's usually a simple matter to pull one from one of Robert's storage facilities. However, this person wanted a complete C64 package, with every item present including manuals, in the original box, with the serial number on the box matching the number on the machine.
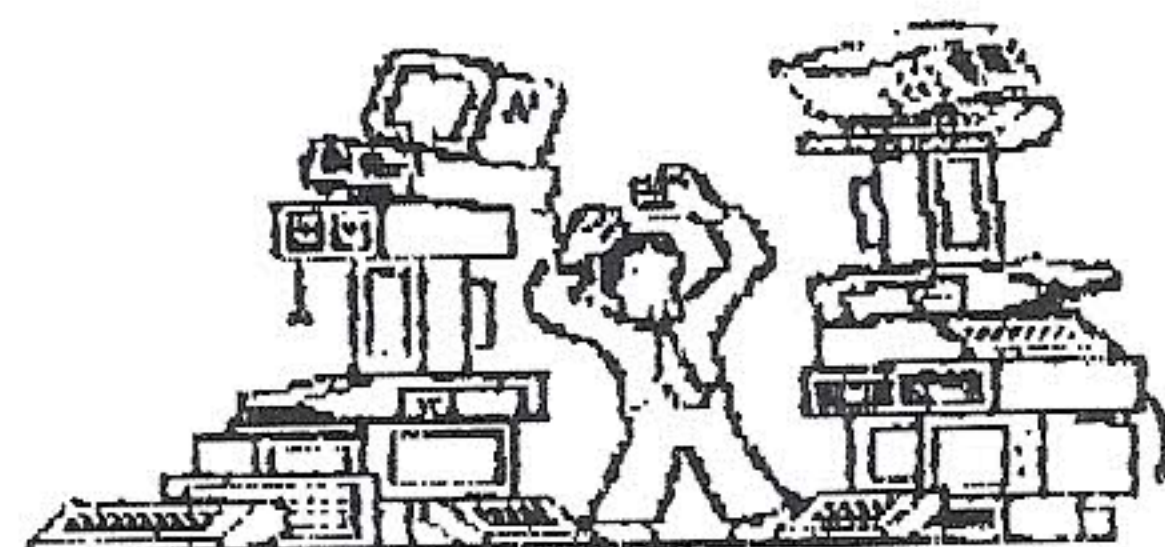
Although we both agreed that Commodore did not display the serial number on the cartons, Robert was able to meet the rest of this request, as well as providing two additional C64s and a 1541 drive with the same requirements.

Dick's brand new C64 purchased at Sears in 1987 included the GEOS program. Fortunately, in the case of the above-mentioned user, Robert is not selling later C64s which include that GEOS 1.5 disk; finding those disks would be more difficult to do. Please don't ask us to repeat this service again - it's pretty close to impossible to provide every single item that you would have received buying a C64 new for $300 or more in 1984, and far too much work for the amount we are charging.

Last meeting Robert reported on his acquisition of a number of items that were being given away at a Bay Area warehouse. Robert's full report on this event is on line at http://www.commodore128.org/index.php?topic=3697.msg19355#msg19355. If

you create a free account, you can also view his photos. There are also a couple of photos at http://retro-link.blogspot.com

## Massive PET Collection Disbursed

-by Robert Bernardo

On May 2, Larry Anderson informed all on the Usenet group, comp.sys.cbm, that there was a Craigslist ad which said there was going to be a East Bay area giveaway of PET computers... free! In that ad, it was stated that there were 140+ PETs and more! All that you had to do was send an e-mail, and then you would be given the address and the number in line which you needed to enter the location. On May 7, I drove the hours to get to the locale in Albany, California. Below is my initial report, sent out on comp.sys.cbm:

I just got back from Albany a few hours ago. Wow! I was amazed at seeing over 140+ PETs and more stored in a dusty warehouse-type building. I met several fellow Commodorians, like Mike Naberezny and Eric Smith, and plugged San Jose's The Other Group of Amigoids, ostensibly an Amiga club but also with a deep interest in Commodore 8-bit computers and others. During the preview time, we were allowed to roam around the warehouse and look and poke at the goods. I had never seen so many PETs in one place before, other than the massive Bob Kadylo collection in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Someone said that there was a Teacher's PET in the batch, but I didn't see it. Also the MSD drive that was supposed to be there was really a different dual-drive unit.

I was giddy with excitement, taking photos of the many PETs

stacked on shelves and on the floor, and I talked incessantly to my newfound friends there and to Alan Nishioka, the person who had opened up the warehouse to us.

The back story - Alan had worked for the owner of Albany Microcomputers, but when the owner and then his wife died, it was time to clear the building. Albany Microcomputers had repaired and maintained PET computers for all the school districts in the San Francisco area which used PETs. In fact, several machines and peripherals were marked R.U.S.D, which Mike surmised was the Richmond Unified School District. I spotted one PET 2001 with the University of California tag on it (probably from U.C. Berkeley).

Soon, the preview time that had started at 12:30 p.m. was over, and we piled outside to wait until our names were called in order. As soon as each name was announced, that person rushed inside to seize an armload or cartload of goods. My name was finally announced, and I had previously scouted out a pair of 2031 disk drives... but which one? The 2031 or the 2031LP? My friends said that there was no difference really. I picked up the 2031. I also picked up a PET 2001 with blue labels. And by picked up, I mean picked up, because I had not brought a cart. What a ton those machines weighed, stacked in my arms!

After each person took a load of goods, he/she would be permitted to reenter and take more. There was just so much! I wasn't planning to get more, until Mike noticed another PET 2001 had a Skyles ram expander hanging off the side of one. O.K., I grabbed that one.

People were grabbing 2001s, 4016s, 4032s (I didn't really notice any 8032s but see below), and there were still more machines to go, some of them inaccessible unless much metal shelving was pushed aside or unless you had a very tall ladder to get to them. They took spare boards, spare cables, manuals, books, 4040 and 8050 drives, and cassette drives...

Mike and others obtained dozens and dozens of PET program cassettes, promising that they would get the software on-line. With just a bit of C64 materials there, I grabbed an educational C64 package and a printer interface, foregoing a VIC-1541 drive. Originally, because I already had many items, I wasn't really to pick up much, but then I couldn't pass up the BASIC 4.0 manuals which originally came with the PETs or a beige cassette drive or a PET drive cable and printer cable. Finally, I grabbed a heavy box of MOS Commodore-labeled plastic bags with the name of different computer store printed at the bottom. I reasoned that these could be given away at the July 23-24 Commodore Vegas Expo. At the last moment, I saw an original 8032 packing box, but I let that go to another person who needed it for shipping... what else?... an 8032. I had to be satisfied with a photograph of it.

Emerging from the warehouse, we were dirty with the years of dust which had covered the machines, but happy with our loot. It had been organized chaos, but I think most everybody got what they wanted. There was so much that time and time again, I heard, "Here, you have it," or "It's right over there. I'll show you." Yes, people were good-natured and generous, not greedy in obtaining the goods. And there was still more in the warehouse! Dozens and dozens of PETs still remained! Mike and the others convinced Alan not to immediately trash remaining PETs; however, the several IBM PCs were going bye-bye. There were a few oddball computers there, names of which I had never heard, and those were taken by those who had an interest in the historic nature of them.

It was now after 2 p.m.. I wanted to stay longer, but I had to fight the horrendous North Bay traffic and return to the valley to treat my father and mother to dinner. Most people had left, and the few who remained were packing their cars or trucks. I loaded my computer treasures into the car. Then I thanked Alan and said good-bye to my friends.