

-by Lenard R. Roach

Now that Ryte Bytes is no more I hope to be able to spend more time in getting magazines like The Interface done on time. It is already January and I have not begun to assemble the magazine yet due to work being so busy for the holidays. Now that they are over it should be easier to take care of things Commodore.

I still have a lot of finishing touches that has to be done to Ryte Bytes. Those who get the paper through standard mail have not received one since July 2011 so I have to get to a copy center and make ten copies of the last six months and mail them in a large package so get everyone caught up with the news.

My work on the Christmas Commodore story have come to slow crawl since I have been trying my best to keep things balanced between work and writing, but writing is losing out since, so far, there is little profit in writing books. Most of the people I talk to say that the subject

matter (Commodore computers) is outdated and I need to write more on what the public wants so to increase sales. I have thought about it and in my files is some writings I have done way back in the day that need to be converted out of Commodore (since the Commodore format is no longer supported by major publishers) and a new introduction written. I have been wrestling with this in my mind and so far can't come up with anything legitimate that would be helpful to the reader. I was told by my writing professor that if you cant catch the reader while he is at the bookstore skimming the first two pages of your book, then you might as well hang it up. I want to catch the reader at the first word of the first page. I really dont know how to do that except keep trying word combination after word combination until something clicks. So how did your Christmas turn out? Mine was awesome. I got to play gift giver to several family members and I myself got this awesome now HP All in One that does everything I need it to do in the way of at home publishing and faxing. It even scans files into .pdf format so I no longer have to go and pester the guys at work to do it for me. I know that FCUG needed some files rescanned and sent so if either Robert or Dick will send me an email and let me know those files, I can do them at home and hopefully get them done.

I have to confess as serious blunder or two in some of my programs that I sold at the last

CommVEx. It would seem that in the latest version of Check It Out (#11), the digital amount that is suppose to print in the white box on the center right of the check ends up outside of the box to the far right. This is due to the fact that checks are now being manufactured in a smaller paper format and the old settings are no longer valid. In Check it Out, please load the program and then type in the following corrected line:

```
1010 FORZ=1TO(35-ZZ)
```

Then resave the program by either using the @0: command or under a new filename. This should fix the problem in the program.

Still more problems: In the latest version of Checkmate the computer will syntax when run trying to save your inputted information. Please change the following line in Checkmate by loading the program and typing in the following:

```
720 IFLEN(ID$)<21THEN770
```

Then resave the program using the @0: command or under a new filename. This should fix the problem that this program is having.

Checkmate is a peculiar animal: When you hit RETURN after the last input the information is saved to disk under the name you previously chose, then it is immediately read off the disk and back into the computer to be shown on screen. This way the user can tell if the information inputted is the same information on disk. If there are any discrepancies the user can use the Delete a File function and try again using the Add a File feature, or try the Edit a File function to save hassle.

Please also remember that when using Check it Out and Checkmate together, to load Check it Out first, then remove the disk (the information needed to run Check it Out is all in the computer), then insert the Checkmate data disk into the drive and run the program that way. Any corrections needed to make to the saved Checkmate file

can be done in the Check it Out editor which shows on screen and no information on the Checkmate disk will be altered. All permanent alterations to Checkmate files must be done using the Checkmate program.

One more programming note: On Money Manager 2K, please remember to load the program using the ,8 feature and not use the suffix ,8,1, otherwise the program will not load properly. I found this out when I was trying to prepare my books for the 2012 calendar year on the Commodore.

I'm sorry for all these errors that I have found and they were not detected during the alpha phase of testing, but I was informed by people smarter than myself that if I wrote all these programs for the Commodore to help me make bill paying and tracking of bills easier, then why am I not using them. This will also help me to find errors in the programs like those aforementioned and I can report them back to users. If you are a purchaser of any of these programs and don't want to go through the hassle of fixing them yourself, then please send me an email to lenardroach@yahoo.com with your name and current address and I will mail you a copy of the corrected programs.

The good news is that there is so far no programming corrections needed for The Ledger and it seems to be running fine, but I havent been able to access the full use of the program. As 2012 progresses, I will be able to find these errors and either report a fix in upcoming issues of The Interface, or I will send off (to purchasers only) corrected copies. I will keep you informed if anything else happens.

I am looking forward to 2012 as I hope to attend the next CommVEx in July and hopefully spend more time at other Commodore conventions. However, restrictions at the job are making it difficult for anyone to take extra time off to make any new plans. So far I am approved at work to leave for the Commodore convention in July, but I would like to get to the other conventions as well. I am going to bring more writings and less

machinery with me to the July convention so attendees can see what it is that I do with the Commodore when it comes to putting things together like writings. Prices will vary based on the size of the manuscript, but all the papers I bring to the next convention will soon be available in book form from the publisher, but this is way down the road and if you want an early copy of the work, then they will be available for order at the FCUG/5Cs Commodore convention.

Thanks for letting me be your newsletter editor for the this year and lets look forward to a fun and prosperous 2012!

Monthly Meeting Report

- by Dick Estel



November Meeting Notes

-by Robert Bernardo

It had been weeks-in-the-planning. Commodore Business Machines engineer Bil Herd wanted to "virtually" attend our meeting. In order to accomplish that, we had to figure out the logistics. Would it be a telephone call-in? Possible but not very exciting. Would it be a video chat? Also possible but fraught with difficulties. With trepidation, we FCUGers decided on the video chat.

We didn't want a repeat of the Chuck Peddle-Bil Herd-Jeri Ellsworth video chat at CommVEx a few years ago; that connection was iffy and too much show time was spent on getting the chat going. So, Dick Estel, Bil, and I went through all the details from figuring DSL upload speeds to getting the correct webcam for our needs to determining the appropriate webcam software to struggling with screen-recording software to testing and retesting

video connections to gathering appropriate questions for Bil. This retesting continued up until meeting time. We decided that the November meeting would not be held at our usual venue, the Pizza Pit Restaurant, but at Dick's house where the atmosphere would be more peaceful, more conducive for such a chat with such an important guest.

Sunday, November 20, we FCUGers gathered at Dick's house. I was first to arrive, followed almost at the same time by Alfredo M. who lived 2 hours north in Manteca. Then regular attendees Brad S. and Roger V. joined up.

We found quite a set-up in Dick's small living room. He had connected his laptop to his huge, large-screen t.v., the webcam perched on top of the t.v. frame., electrical cables strewn on the rug. Dick told us where to sit for the best view of the screen and for the best angle of what the webcam would receive. Bil was a little bit late in calling in, but when he did, it was quite a wonder. us in California and him in New Jersey.

For the next 2 and 1/2 hours we chatted with Bil, and Bil told stories of the CBM back in the day and the hardware he and others created. With my prepared questions, he answered engineering trivia about the VIC-20, the Plus/4, the Commodore 128, and the Commodore LCD computers. For some of us non-engineering types, some of what he said went over our heads. However, what went over our heads could be replayed later for further review. Not only was Bil broadcasting and recording at his end of the chat, but I too was recording the chat by pointing my HD camcorder directly at the t.v.. Bil's version of the chat is at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/bilherd> and my version of the chat is at <http://blip.tv/file/5814094> and <http://blip.tv/file/5814249>.

Technically, the chat ran well. As Dick pointed out, if we moved too much, the live audio from Bil's side would cut out. So, we tried not to move (o.k., stop talking with your hands, Robert). Bil's live video was clear and had few glitches, and his audio was

clear with no lag. Little did we know that Bil's recording of the chat had significant audio problems coming from us, i.e., our comments/questions were hard to understand. For clearer audio, my chat recording was better.

About 1 p.m. we had a pizza delivery from the Pizza Pit, a large combination pie and a chicken garlic one. However, we were so engrossed with the chat that we didn't eat our pizza and soda until after the chat was over. Other than the time for food, the chat took up the majority of the meeting, and my other C128 items for discussion fell by the wayside. Oh, well, those items could be used for another meeting.

About 3:30 Roger, Alfredo, and I finally departed Dick's house, Brad having left earlier. My big thanks to Bil Herd for being such a great guest and to Dick Estel for setting up and letting us use his house.

December Meeting Notes -by Robert Bernardo

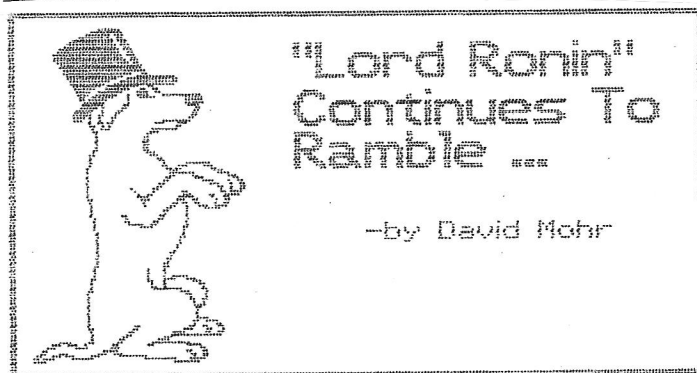
Stan Hankins, owner of the Pizza Pit Restaurant, greeted me as he walked by me sitting in my car. I had gotten to the restaurant about 10 minutes before it was to open on Sunday, December 18. He unlocked the door of the restaurant, and I followed in. It had been a couple of months since our last meeting there, but all was well. Stan was all smiles.

I warned Stan that the meeting was going to be a small one, with members having to bow out due to other commitments. However, I was prepared to spend the full time there, waiting to see if anybody would come. After 20 minutes on the laptop computer, I went to the counter to order food. In through the door walked Roger V., and with surprised relief, I enthusiastically welcomed him.

I ordered some food for Roger, and then both of us went to the task of unloading equipment out of my car. For the next 5 hours (yes, the meeting ran overtime, even though there were just two of us), we talked Commodore discussing next year's July 28-29 Commodore Vegas Expo, examining the website of the

new Rear Admiral ThunderDrive, a modern-day replica of the CMD hard drive; watching the November Bil Herd chat video filmed by me (of which I gave a disc of video files to Roger), playing with ArcadeRetroGaming.coms Multiple Classic Computer (MCC-216) with the latest cores and more games, copying a Bombjack.org DVD disc which was full of Commodore magazine scans (Roger got that one, too), and finally examining the modded PET 2001 computer which came from the Jason Ranheim Company and had a rare Expand-O-Mem board that gave another 32K of memory. Not on the agenda but good for discussion was the FB-512 Multicart, a proposed C64 cartridge that long-distance FCUG member Charles Gutman was planning to produce. During our time at the Pizza Pit, one customer came to us to talk about our Commodore computers, and I gave him our club business card.

Finally, at 4:30 the meeting came to an end, Roger to go home and me to pick up a sweater from a mens clothing store in north Fresno before heading off to Stockton for the Christmas holidays.



Newsletters

-by Dave "Lord Ronin" Mohr

The publication of the users group. But what is a newsletter and why have one? Lot of work and costs money.

Yeah, it is a lot of work. I do a 16-page one each month, for the local group. For the international group, I'm the managing editor and do one or two a year personally. Costs money as well. There is of course the cost for whatever writing programme you use. Cost of the ink, paper and

then if you are putting out several copies. Then the cost of paper in your printer, or the cost of photocopy work. I know as I said I do it for my group every month.

Why do it? There are several reasons for me at least. Constitution for the group says that we have to have one. Well, CBM isn't going to bitch at me if I don't put one out. But we do need something, for when we gain our non-profit status.

So to explain the why. Need to discuss first what goes into a newsletter. Just what should be there?

Hard to answer. I've been the editor in a few other groups. Not C= ones. We had to have the notes from the last meeting. List of the officers. Time and date with place of the next meeting. And around three months before the yearly elections. State that the elections for officers were open and print all those that were running for the offices. That is what I do with the newsletter for my group.

I also write about what we have done in the group. Between meetings, on the BBS, in the S.I.G.s, new items in the shop for members. That sort of thing. Also any tidbits I find on the inet C= lists. That will also go into the newsletter. The first group of stuff, about what is happening locally. That is in a section called Lord Ronin's Ramblings. Hey, I'm good at rambling. <G> The other is in a section termed Shadowland. A term I ripped from the FASA game Shadowrun. Sometimes there are adverts for things in the shop. Since the shop covers the expense of the newsletter.

Is mine a typical newsletter? No, that isn't the case at all. We exchange with several other groups. They range from 20 pages in booklet form. Covering articles on the C= and Amiga. All the way to a simple one sheet letter. But they all cover the interests of the respective groups in relation to the C=.

In answer as to why do a newsletter at all. I can look over to a cabinet here in the shop. There are several binders with plastic sleeves. Containing all the

newsletters for my group. Well, the ones that I could find before I took over as editor. Then all the ones that I have done. A record of our growth, interests, ups and downs. Plus tips and hints on things that I have forgotten. Or in short our history. That is the best reason I can think of, for having a newsletter. Recording what you are doing.

That takes us to the part about who needs a newsletter. Need is a strong word, fits though in this case. If you meet with other C= people. Then you 'need' to record/document what happens. At least to keep things straight and avoid future conflicts. Besides, we find it nice to look over our records and see what we have done, didn't do and forgot about doing. <G>

What do you really need to have to make a newsletter? Well, of course a something to put into it. This can just be what happened at your meeting. You can expand on that with things from other sources. Such as other newsletters from other groups. Most are quite willing to exchange with groups. No matter how large or small. Things that you find on the Inet in the newsgroups and lists. Things that your own group is doing or interested in at the moment. That really is the heart of the newsletter and what makes it stand out as your own. Rather than a reprint of other things.

On this point, I have been asked by my own members, the concept of 'interest'. As it applies to our group. When the discussion about demos in the group was brought up, a while back. Started me on the track of what I meant by 'interest' to them and the group. Flows right over to this topic as well.

What is your group interested in, for the C= use of the individual members? One of my members, wrote a simple programme to do the math for the experience points in the RPG Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. He is into the games and the C=. Used some simple skills in Basic to make a tool for himself. A tool that wasn't in our collection of RPG tools from Q-Link. He didn't

think that it was worth anything, save for his own use. Well, that is an interest and a C= use. So it is something to present to the group. Through the newsletter.

Geos is used by all the members of the group. We have collected hundreds of Geos files. As a member tries one of them out. How he uses it and what happens with it, that is for the newsletter.

Another member likes to play the games. Mainly the RPG theme ones. Is what he learns in the game worth anything in the newsletter? Absolutely, as it is an interest and a C= thing.

Ah but here is a point. Is it new? NO!!! Not to the C= world at large. There is probably someone out in the C= community that has found that trick in the game. Or used that Geos tool in that manner before. BUT!! it is new to the members of your group. Because it is new to that individual member that has just learned or discovered that aspect of the tool, programme, hardware, etc. Goes into your newsletter. All the things that your group is working upon with the C= goes into the newsletter. Showing the others in the group, and the exchanges just what interests you and your members.

What to use to make a newsletter? This may sound sarcastic. But my answer to this is 'what ever you have that is comfortable'. Personally, I use GeoWrite/GeoPub/GeoPaint/Wheels and Postscript. Making a 16-page newsletter, in booklet format. 4 pages are done by Lord Alberonn on the Amiga. But printed out through the Commodore with PostPrint.

But I started out with NewsRoom. Doing four pages. Three more than the page count before my time. Our original newsletter was one sheet. gave the minutes of the previous meeting. The officers, time, date and place of the next meeting. That was it, oh, yeah, didn't even have a name.

Newsletters that I have seen over the years. <Note we try to save all of our exchanges> Have been in NewsRoom, GeoPublish, GeoWrite, GeoPaint, Busy Bee's The

Write Stuff. Some I suspect were done in things like Pocket Writer. Or other SEQ writers. Doesn't matter what you use on the C=. If you have it and are comfortable with it, then use it. One man wrote to me saying that an early newsletter he did, was done on a SEQ writer. That he wrote up for just that task.

How many newsletters to print out? May sound a silly question. Not really though. A good rule of thumb is three extra than your membership and exchanges. One for your library. Couple others for those that want information on your group. One way to gain that is to post <with permission, of course> the newsletter at a local computer shop. Besides a few people being interested in your group. You have a side benefit. Getting free or low-cost C= items to your group. <SEG> Builds up your collection as well as having things for sale to new members.

OK, one question that I saved for last. How many members does it take to require a newsletter? I'd say just one. Though the usual answer is two. One can record what they are doing with the C=. Perhaps they wish to form a group and this is a start. Or they are just keeping track of what they are doing with the C=. Two allows for more interplay between the C= interests. Of course more is fine for members. Point is, keeping track of what is happening with the members and the C=.

There you have the brief of a newsletter. More can be said, of course. You have now the general idea of the need of a newsletter and what you can put into one. Sadly, too many groups meet now and don't record what they are doing or interested in doing <S>. A downward trend that I think we should curb. But I have been called very biased for the C= <VBG>

Next issue should be out
sometime around March 1st