



## THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

### In The Days Of Yore

- by Lenard R. Roach

As I leaned back in my office chair and watched the Commodore 128 on my desk go through the shutdown mode I put into a program I was using (a little idea I "borrowed" from GEOS), I stared blankly into the monitor and thought to myself, "I never planned on doing what I've been doing with the Commodore." Seriously. I thought I would be content with just being a user of productivity software and an 8-bit gamer, never to expand my horizons any further than that, but God and curiosity had other plans...

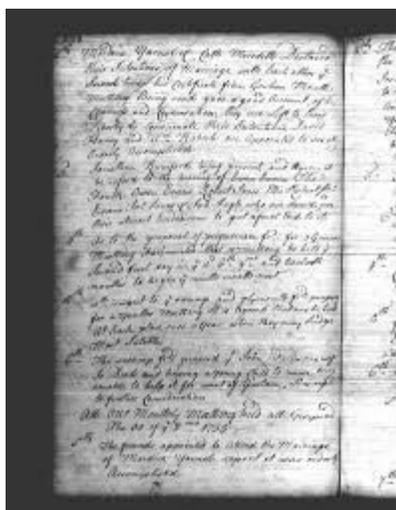
My very first time I went to the keyboard of a Commodore I was never at the keyboard. My then wife Alana was going to be master of ceremonies at this particular input of Commodore data which we found in a multi platform book. The game we were typing in was a labyrinth style setup. The object of the game was to escape the labyrinth without getting killed by the goblins who resided there. It was a text adventure with no pictures or an image of the tunnels in the labyrinth so we only had data to go on. It was 1984, and "Ghostbusters" just hit the big screen, so, I decided to revamp the Print Statements to reflect the theme of the movie.

I quickly found out that Print Statements were the

easiest thing to change in any Commodore programming venture. They change only what is shown on screen without changing the rest and threatening to compromise the whole program. Instead of the Print Statement "Want instructions?" we changed it to "Want the file?" Instead of "goblins" we called them "free floating apparitions." Another change was from "you feel a breeze" to "you smell a fart." The last thing we changed was "a goblin has you" to "you've been slimed!"

Our first attempt at this didn't go so well as, for some reason, the instructions came out fine, our game modifications didn't take. Our program investigation showed us that we needed to change the String Designation to reflect what we wanted to say. The easy part of fixing this was every String Input was surrounded by quotation marks and each Input was designated by its own value marker. So, to change goblins (valued with a G\$) to "free floating apparitions" you just type it in and voila! The game finally worked. We saved the game onto disk under the title "Ghostbusters" feeling like we've written our first game piece with that title. We were proud of ourselves until later on a much more sophisticated production of the game came out from Activision.

Alana and I did several type in programs like that as we saw what we were working on either too generic or just plain boring. As we did, we learn ever so slowly how BASIC programs were structured and placed. I've always seemed, since then, to enjoy taking the empty screen and filling it with all the commands that make Commodore BASIC work. One day, I will learn to take programming further and speak to the Commodore in other languages as well, but for now, this old redneck enjoys plugging away in the language that started it all...



### MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

September 2016

-by Robert Bernardo and Dick Estel

With the temperature close to 100 degrees, only the calendar told us it was fall as we gathered for the September meeting. We had full attendance, plus two guests. Members included Robert Bernardo, Roger Van Pelt, Vincent Mazzei, Louis Mazzei, Greg Dodd, and Dick Estel. Chris Brenner drove the three hours from Sacramento to show us some very exciting hardware, and Roger and his equipment were brought by his brother Aaron, who stayed for lunch and the meeting.

Louis passed around his Raspberry Pi, which is described on a web site as “a tiny and affordable computer that you can use to learn programming through fun, practical projects.” It’s about the size of a deck of cards. The Pi recently reached the 10 million unit mark in sales, and the news said that it would be challenging the C64’s 17-30 million record in sales.

Robert announced that the website for the Pacific Commodore Expo NW (PaCommEx) was now live. The event will be held at the Living Computer Museum in Seattle

on June 10 and 11, 2017. Our sister club, the Southern California Commodore & Amiga Network, also had a new website.

In Commodore Vegas Expo matters, Robert reported that a Plaza Hotel contract for next year still had not been signed; the hotel had been waiting for the ballrooms to be refurbished and could not confirm any reservation dates until they were finished. However, the hotel’s sales manager assured Robert that the contract terms would be the same with the use of Ballroom 9, and if no one was using Ballroom 8, that would be included for free.

Greg talked about his dream arcade room that he hopes to set up at his place in Patterson. If it gets done, it will be a large, insulated building with blacklight carpet and his collection of classic arcade game consoles.

Louis offered free of charge some new HD 3.5” floppy disks which he rescued from being thrown in the trash at his workplace. He had about eight boxes of 20 disks each.

When we moved to the hardware area, Chris showed us his pride and joy, an Atari 2600 recreated as a Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA). He had been working on it for a decade and recently came up with his idea for the box to put it in. It’s designed to look like a Walkman cassette player but accepts Atari cartridges, as well as some original hardware Chris designed for various purposes that fit in the port. It all fed into an HDMI monitor that allowed the selection of various resolutions.

Among the things he showed us, in addition to Atari games, were perfect renditions of the PacMan and Ms. PacMan arcade games (vertical layout), and a NTSC Commodore 64 complete with FastLoad. With the C64 core loaded into the FPGA, Chris showed how accurately his 1990’s Digimaster audio-capturing application worked.

Then he loaded in a C64 game to show how it replicated sprites and music. One thing that he had not tested on the FPGA was whether it could handle the complicated effects of a C64 demo.

Chris could not make it to CommVEx this year, and he had a standing invitation for next year. His more immediate need was whether he could exhibit his device at the Amiwest Show 2016 on October 9-10. The president of the Sacramento Amiga Computer Club, the club which runs Amiwest, had not responded to any of Chris' e-mails. Robert thought there might be a way for Chris to contact another Amiwest attendee and have the exhibit on his table.

Robert brought in a composite/s-video-to-VGA converter, borrowed from Al Jackson of the Clark County Commodore Computer Club of Las Vegas. He tested its composite output to the BenQ BL912 VGA monitor he brought, but with the club's C128 in 40-column C128 mode or in C64 mode, the VGA picture bloomed too much, and there was ghosting around the on-screen characters and borders. He theorized that with an s-video cable connection, the picture would look better, but he didn't bring that cable with him. He also tried an eBay composite/s-video-to-HDMI converter with Chris' HDMI monitor. The results were much better with a more accurate picture, though the picture was always displayed as widescreen instead of the Commodore's original square screen.

In software, Robert showed off two C64 games revamped for 2015, Commando Arcade SE and Ghosts'n Goblins Arcade, both improved versions of the 1980's originals. An enthusiastic Greg played with both of them, verified that they were better, and wanted disk copies of both.

Meanwhile, Vincent took photographs of the various Amiga screen modes outputted by Robert's Amiga 1200 to the BenQ VGA monitor. A forum member from Amiga.org wanted to

know how that particular BenQ dealt with the different screen mode resolutions, and the photographs would help him decide if the BenQ was a worthy monitor to buy.

At the very end of the meeting, Louis tested Greg's newly-bought, very clean VIC-20. After checking that it worked properly, Louis opened it up and attached a heatsink to the computer's CPU. Then he tested the machine again to determine that all was well.

#### RELATED LINKS:

Raspberry Pi: <https://www.raspberrypi.org>;  
[https://www.adafruit.com/category/105?gclid=CjwKEAjqO\\_BRDribyJpc\\_mzHgSJABdnsFWtFx67lg9d-Y5RHxK73JXLFTHstGEhKz5mAjmvVt6ChoCEbLw\\_wcB](https://www.adafruit.com/category/105?gclid=CjwKEAjqO_BRDribyJpc_mzHgSJABdnsFWtFx67lg9d-Y5RHxK73JXLFTHstGEhKz5mAjmvVt6ChoCEbLw_wcB)

#### PaCommEx

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

#### SCANN

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

#### FPGA

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field-programmable\\_gate\\_array](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field-programmable_gate_array)

### October 2016

**-by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel**

Once upon a time the Fresno Commodore User Group had an outdoor picnic in the beautiful backyard of the late Sandy and Ingrid Dipplet. After their passing, at least one picnic was held in the little, somewhat scuzzy backyard of Dick Estel. As our membership declined, we came in

from the outdoors and turned this annual event into a restaurant lunch.

However, it's NOT a regular meeting, because:

1. No official business is discussed.
2. There are no hardware or software demonstrations, and no Commodore computers.
3. Families are invited.
4. The club pays for lunch.
5. We go to a different restaurant from the one at which we regularly meet.

This year Robert Bernardo, Dick Estel, Roger Van Pelt, Aaron Van Pelt, Louis and son Vincent Mazzei, Greg and Krysta Dodd and sons Gregory and Kristopher gathered at the Mad Duck, a popular restaurant near the state university in Fresno.

Everyone enjoyed their choices, with one member declaring his meal the best hamburger he had ever had. Dick could only eat half his French dip beef sandwich and was heading out of town right from lunch, so he offered the leftovers to the group. Louis claimed the goodies, stating that Vincent (age 14) would be hungry before they got home. In fairness to Vincent, it's at least an hour's drive.

We had a fun discussion of various topics, naturally including computers.

Robert was dismayed when he realized that he had forgotten another tradition of the lunch; he failed to bring the gift grab bags he always hands out to all the members. He promised to remedy this oversight at the next regular meeting.

Throughout the years, these events have always brought good food and good company, and we hope they continue for many years.



### Let's Make "Obsolete" Obsolete

-by Dick Estel

Maybe it's time to strike the word "obsolete" from the human vocabulary.

My hardbound paper 1985 edition Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary defines "obsolete" as follows: "1. Gone out of fashion; out-of-date. 2. No longer used or practiced."

Our Commodores have been "obsolete" for at least 20 years now, but they still work, people still use them, new hardware and software come on the scene on a regular basis. We even still sell a C64 now and then, although it's for one percent of the original retail price.

I suppose definition #1 could be said to apply, but definitely not #2.

The C64 made the VIC20 obsolete – but don't tell that to Vincent, the club's Grand Poohbah of the VIC20. Even the earliest computers made still have their devotees.

Or consider the evolution of recorded music, from the Edison cylinder to streaming services. Cylinders, 78's, vinyl LPs and 45s, cassettes, and 8-tracks are all "obsolete." CDs and even MP3s aren't far behind.

And yet, every format is still usable, with the vinyl LP probably the most common out-of-date format still in use. But a cylinder, properly cared for and played on a still-functioning machine, will sound as good as it did originally, which is not to claim that it sounds great. I have 30 year old cassettes, well cared for, that still play as good as the day I made them, and of course, CD's should last at least as long as their owners do.

“Obsolete” cars, though lacking modern safety and convenience features, can be driven. They are expensive to maintain, and no one expects a 1928 Model A to take him down the freeway at 80 MPH, but they will perform they way the did originally. And if they are in great condition, they have resale value far beyond their original cost.

Even my hardbound dictionary is considered obsolete by some – but it worked just fine to launch this article. Now the only challenge is for us, as we age, to make sure WE do not become “obsolete”!



### Calendar Madness

-by Dick Estel

I'm a calendar nut. I'm not sure why, but I've been interested in calendars for a long time. In my teenage years I made a few of my own calendars, typing them out on a Royal portable.

When I started using computers, I made calendars in various ways, mostly with dedicated calendar

programs. However, when I wanted more control over the design of the calendar, I made some using Microsoft Publisher. These were mostly calendars that had the entire year on a single page, an option not usually found in dedicated programs.

After retirement, I had no real use for the single page calendars, and eventually retired from this activity.

During the course of my obsessive calendar adventures, I realized that every calendar repeats a few years later. I started saving my commercial calendars and reusing them. This was mostly to see how people would react to noticing that I had a 2009 calendar on the wall in 2015. Be warned: phases of the moon and Easter do not reliably repeat.

My mother was one of those people who save EVERYTHING, and I found some old calendars when cleaning out her house, so recently I was able to hang a 1963 calendar on my wall.

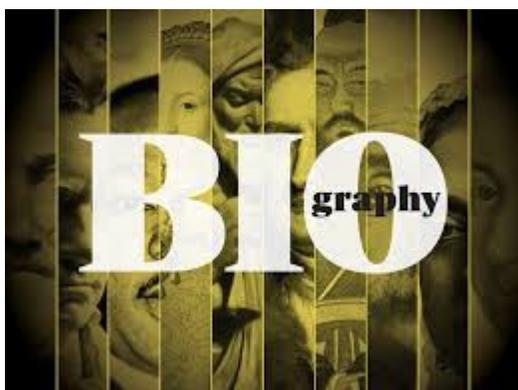
When my first grandson was born in 1984, I decided to save the calendar from that year and give it to him when it was usable again. It was at this time that I realized that leap year calendars don't repeat for 28 years. So I presented the calendar to him just before the start of 2012.

Then he had the nerve to produce a son that year. That boy's calendar is saved in an envelope, but since I will be 101 when he reaches age 28, it will probably be up to my daughter, his grandmother, to give it to him.

Eventually I observed that non leap year calendars mostly repeat after either six or eleven years. I decided there must be some pattern to this, for example 6-6-11 or maybe 11-6-6-11-6. I also decided I was too lazy to figure this out, but the idea would not leave my head. (I told you I'm a calendar nut.)

I did do some research, using the web site <http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/repeating.html?year=1984&country=1>, and also did some work with a spread sheet. It turns out that the repeat pattern for non leap year calendars is 11-11-6, more or less. The exceptions come about when the period between matching calendars contains a year ending in 00. If it's time for an 11 year delay, it will become 12 years. But not always. It appears that if it's time for a 6 year delay, there is no change.

So it gets complicated, and as I mentioned, I am a nut, but a lazy nut, and I would probably need to lay out a spread sheet with 1,000 years to discern all the patterns. I'll leave that to someone else. It's certainly something you could do with a computer, and this sentence is intended to justify publishing this article in a computer club newsletter.



### Member Biographies – Greg Dodd

“Memory Lane,” our series of articles honoring former members, is complete, so we move 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 Greg.

**The Interface:** Please provide brief biographical

data: Place of birth, family status, occupation, current place of residence.

**Greg:** I was born and raised in Long Beach, California. I am married to Krysta with two sons, Gregory, who used to be a member, and Kristopher. I reside in Patterson, CA where I have lived for the past 11 years. As of September 26, 2016 I became unemployed. I have recently been reminded however, that when God closes one door, he opens a better one. I hope to have “new business” information for our next meeting...

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

**Greg:** I recall seeing them in movies and in the news. Later, I remember seeing the Atari 400 and 800 computers in the Sears Catalogs at Christmas Time. Side note: I have very fond memories of getting my hands on the Sears Christmas Catalog every year. I have found images of the electronics sections of these catalogs online and have compiled a booklet with these wonderful images. They bring back fond memories of the 70's and early 80's.

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

**Greg:** Definitely! Growing up in the 70's, I remember hearing how only companies and extremely wealthy individuals owned computers.

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

**Greg:** I recall using the Radio Shack (Tandy) TRS-80 computers in school. Later, I recall using

the Apple ][C computers in junior high. I even remember using an IBM 5150 in a CAD (computer-aided drafting) class, during the brief period my family spent in Albuquerque, NM.

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

**Greg:** Around 1983, I got my first computer...a Commodore 64!

**TI:** What computers have you owned?

**Greg:** (Get ready for a long answer) I had my C64, a C128, an Atari 520STfm, an IBM XT clone, a Mac Performa (I think it was a 66mhz) and I may have had an Aquarius with my Intellivision II, but I can't recall for sure. Unfortunately, all of these (along with ALL of my video game systems, games, etc.) were stolen after I moved out in 1998!

**TI:** How often do you use a Commodore computer - daily, weekly, monthly, rarely?

**Greg:** Now, rarely (usually at the FCUG Meetings). I would love to have time to mess around with them and I actually may, someday soon (when I am able to set up my "Computer Museum").

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

**Greg:** Nope

**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/not working answer based on

your final year or two of work).

**Greg:** On a daily basis, I used a Windows 7 Dell laptop. In the past I had also been able to use iMac (i5 processors) 27" computers for iBook documents and photo (Photoshop 6) and video (Premiere Pro 6) editing.

**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?

**Greg:** iPad, horrible LG G4 phone (soon to be replaced by an iPhone 7+) and Microsoft Surface. In the past, I had a Blackberry phone and somewhere I think we still have a Palm device. I recall using that for contraction timing, when my wife was pregnant with Gregory!

**TI:** If you have a spouse or children, what is their computer use? Do they have their own computer or device?

**Greg:** Yes, Gregory, Iphone 7+, Ipad Pro 15, Windows Laptop. Kris, Iphone 5. Both use their devices daily

**TI:** Which person in your family uses a computer at home the most?

**Greg:** Probably my mom, she's on it quite frequently. When I was working in the bay area, I was constantly on my laptop throughout the day. Now I use mine occasionally, mainly for video editing.

**TI:** What Commodore magazines did you subscribe to or read, and which did you find most helpful?

**Greg:** I forget the name of it, but I do recall reading a Commodore magazine back in the early 80's.

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

**Greg:** Unfortunately, the future for most of the classic companies from the 80's is quite bleak. Many namesakes (Commodore included) are now owned by LLC companies that license the name to whoever pays them for it.

**TI:** When did you join FCUG?

**Greg:** About 3 years ago I met Robert Bernardo at the Maker Faire my son and I attended a few years ago. Robert told me about the club, and a few months later we ended up driving out to Fresno to check it out. The rest is history...

**TI:** Any final thoughts?

**Greg:** I am constantly adding to my collection of vintage computers, retro and modern gaming systems and of course arcade games and pinball machines. I am always looking for space around the house to have my collections out on display. Sadly, I don't have nearly enough space, and a large percentage of my computers are now in storage. Some day, I still plan to set up a personal "museum" housing all of my computers, as well as my "retro" game systems and accessories. :)

I also have 2 Youtube Channels:  
"My" primary channel: Arcade Dude 44  
The new channel that Gregory, my friend and myself are putting together:  
Network of Gaming

# Club Officers

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

President .....	Robert Bernardo
Vice-president .....	Roger Van Pelt
Secretary/Treasurer .....	Dick Estel
The Interface Editor .....	Lenard Roach
Librarian .....	Dick Estel
Club equipment .....	Roger Van Pelt
Meeting place reservation .....	Dick Estel
Grand poobah of the VIC-20 .....	Vincent Mazzei

### -The Small Print-

The Fresno Commodore User Group is a club whose members share an interest in Commodore 8-bit and Amiga computers. Our mailing address is 185 W. Pilgrim Lane, Clovis, CA 93612. We meet monthly in the meeting room of Bobby Salazar's Restaurant, 2839 North Blackstone Ave., Fresno, CA. The meetings generally include demonstrations, discussion, and individual help.

Dues are \$12 for 12 months. New members receive a "New Member Disk" containing a number of useful Commodore 8-bit utilities. Members receive a subscription to The Interface newsletter, access to the public domain disk library, technical assistance, and reduced prices on selected software/hardware.

Permission to reproduce content of The Interface is granted provided credit is given to the source, and when identified, the author. Club members are encouraged to submit articles, tips, or ideas for articles.

Disclaimer – The club, its officers, members, and authors are not responsible for the accuracy of the contents of The Interface or the results of actions based on its contents.

Our disk library contains over 3,000 public domain programs for the C64 and C128.

Members are entitled to copies of these disks at no cost if a blank disk is provided. We do not deal with pirated, copyrighted, violent, or obscene programs. Please call our attention to any programs found in our library which may violate these standards.