## THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

-by Lenard R. Roach

Eleven more months and I should be able to attend the 2015 CommVEx in Las Vegas.

One thing about being on the wounded list is that, even though you are down, things still need to be done: The money still needs to come in, bills still need to be paid, the house still needs to be cleaned, the pets still need their daily maintenance, and on it goes. I never knew how busy I really was until I got Sciatica in my lower back and down my right leg. It never occurred to me that I write for two magazines, two churches, and the newsletter; it never once crossed my mind that I work full time days and alternate my nights between two jobs; and I never thought that I have my own home to attend to. When you hurt this bad all you can think about is relief from the pain, which, when it happens, is accompanied by unconsciousness. I'm trying to get my Workman's Comp. to take on the burden of paying for the doctor's visit and medicines, but it's like pulling rusty nails with a rubber hammer; it just doesn't work so well. The next step is getting an attorney and making them pay.

Now that I've cried a little bit on your copy of the newsletter, let's get down to some serious Commodore talk...

First let me apologize. I haven't done much in the way of working on the Commodore except for booting GeoWrite 128 and word processing my articles and skits. I was given to opportunity to serve a person who needed some Commodore disks converted to PC sent me the disks and, with the help of Dick Estel, got them converted. All I need to do now is send the disks and files (now in .txt format) to the user. He paid good money for this and I need to get the transfer complete.

With my injury I haven't had a chance to boot any game creation programs and start working on making something for the 2015 CommVEx to display. I've got a couple of ideas that I would love to try out on the creation programs and I would like to start on them before the start of the 2014 Christmas season; all it takes is for me to quit overbooking myself and start focusing on getting things done as they should be. I've written about this subject of pacing myself before but it seems like every time I start on a time regimen, factors change and I have to recalibrate everything, which usually takes several months as the dust clears from the atomic bomb that blew up in my lap and I get back onto some sort of track.

The good thing about all that has occurred with me is that I get to sit at my Commodore and start doing something on it, even if it is mostly word processing. I can always count on my Commodore to boot every time with whatever program I am loading.

I watched my son as he built another PC tower. With so many cards and boards inside, it's surprising that he doesn't lose his place in what he is doing. Then after he has properly installed the hardware he has to take time on either the CD drive or on the Internet and find the drivers that makes each piece of hardware work properly. One small mix up in any download and he's got a whole new set of problems; the worst of which is finding which driver has caused a malfunction, deleting said drivers, scanning the Internet for a

new driver, upload and install the new driver, and pray to heaven that this little thing will fix the problem. When completed he has a fine and dandy computer, but all that hassle and time wasted. With Commodore it's as simple as plug in and you're set to go. An easy command in BASIC like LOAD"*",8,1 and hitting the RETURN key creates a whole new world of whatever the user chose. It seems that the more a user needs in the way of power, memory, or speed, the more complicated each PC computer becomes. I know that Commodore, with it's new innovations coming from all corners of the globe, can be just as complicated, but those of us who still use stock Commodore machines are just as happy to run those machines without the burden of any extra add-ons.

Going back to converting the Commodore disks for our client: Man, you should have seen how retarded I was when I started the project. I thought that everything I did had to run through GeoWrite before it could be converted into PC. I was transferring each of the customer's files over to a blank disk, using Text Grabber to change the files into GeoWrite, exiting Geos, loading Wrong is Write, and finally making the final conversion to .txt files using Big Blue Reader. Thank heaven for Dick's advice. He told me to use selection 1 on Big Blue Reader to convert SEQ files and selection 2 to convert PRG files. The only hassle I had with that is I had to change the user's file name from 16 characters to 8 because of the way Big Blue Reader saves its files. I tried to save everything to the same file name as I could, but for most of the time that couldn't happen. Now my problem is getting my personal PC to transfer the customer's converted files over the Internet to his email. It could be the fact that I am running on an outdated OS but it seems to be compatible with everything out today. Yahoo Mail says all I have to do is "drag and drop" any file I want transferred into the paperclip icon on the screen and it will upload it. HA! I left my PC on all night as the upload "wheel" spun around thinking

that maybe the one file is just too big and it needed extra time to upload. By morning all I had on my screen was a message saying that the computer lost contact with the Internet. I'm telling you, you just can't trust all these new fangled machines. When they built computers in the 80s they built them with as few problems as possible; either that or else we who have grown up with the systems have worked with them long enough to work all the errors out.

For those of you who don't know it, I work with a stock Commodore 128 with a second Commodore 64 in my closet as a back up. I don't have any fancy attachments or Jiffy DOS chips to make the system work faster or better. I have tried Jiffy DOS before but could never use the chips correctly as to the lack of instructions on how to use them. I would like to try using the old Warp Speed cartridges to see if I can get more speed out of my C128, but I only use my computer (presently) as a word processor. I'm looking to do more with my machine but I either don't have time or, when I do have time, I'm usually doing something else that needs to be done. Work is never done when you're a home owner.

I'm also trying to find something that was advertised in one of the Commodore magazines years ago. There was a programmable Commodore cartridge where a person can upload their favorite game (or games) to the cartridge and make it an instant plug and play, being sold. When the user gets tired of the game on the cartridge, he can erase the game loaded and upload a new game. I would like to do that with some of the software I've written and make it a quick access to the computer. If anyone within eye shot of reading this knows of where I can find such an animal, please contact this newsletter.

I've said all that needs to be said for this issue of "The Interface." Please feel free to comment about anything you've read to the FCUG website, Dick Estel's personal website

(www.dickestel.com) or even my website (www.lenardroach.com).  We would like to hear from you.

**This article was written on a stock Commodore 128 using GeoWrite 2.1 and converted to PC using the Big Blue Reader conversion package**
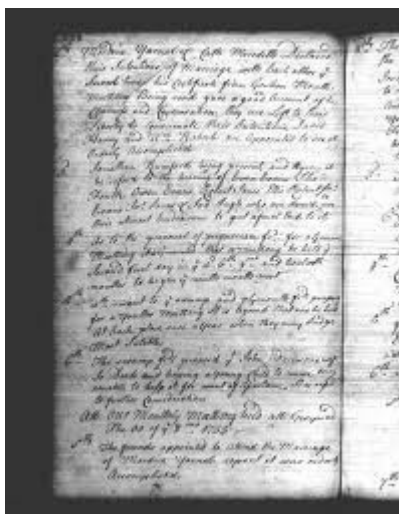


**MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS**

**July, 2014**

-by Robert Bernardo

On Sunday, July 20, I arrived at Bobby Salazar's Restaurant at 10:25 a.m.—very early because I had come 3 hours from Castaic where I had spent the night after Saturday's meeting of the Southern California Commodore & Amiga Network.  I immediately started setting the equipment up. Vice-president Roger was the first to show up, and I asked him whether or not my CD of photos had been given to Dick Estel for posting on-line. No, the CD was not delivered to Dick, and Dick would not be present for this meeting.

Louis and Greg showed up, and Greg reported that he had been having hard drive problems with the Amiga 2000 that had been refurbished.  I told him that I would trade a working A2000 for his

broken A2000 (how many times had we already done that?!)  Louis showed me an interesting C64 road sign in Colorado which Dick had sent.

I talked more about my recent Commodore/Amiga European travels to the United Kingdom (AmigaKit, Psytronik/Binary Zone Interactive, Lincolnshire Amiga Group, Tim Harris, Peter Hanson), Switzerland (Rob Clarke), the Netherlands (Netherlands C= Show), Germany (Dienstagstreff C= Meeting), and Italy/Austria (Mike Battilana of Cloanto).  Before I could get to show any photos or video of my travels, we had a surprise visit from Richard Ciula, former worker at Software, Etc..  Several months ago, he had brought a load of Amiga hardware and disks to give to everyone.  This time he brought more Amiga disks, many of them software copies of demos, games, and  copiers. We were very grateful and talked some time with him.

Because of his surprise visit, we had no time to try out the updates to Jeff Jones' FIFA World Cup 2014 and Ice Hockey 2014 for the VIC-20, nor did we have time to try out some programs to control the Quickshot SVI 2000 robot arm via the special C64 user port interface cartridge.

However, we did have time to play around with several of the C64 games I had obtained from Psytronik -- Souless, Darkness, Wooley Jumper, Guns 'N Ghosts, Flubble & Squij, and Wanted: the Wild Bunch.  They all worked with the club's NTSC C64, though there were a few PAL video artifacts and Wanted was only partially JiffyDOS-compatible.  These games and more were going to be run at the Commodore Vegas Expo the next weekend.  Roger and Louis would not be able to go to CommVEx, due to money issues, and Greg would not be able to come, due to his schedule. Previously, I had known that Dick would not be able to attend CommVEx.  So, it seemed that I would be the only one to go to CommVEx out of our local group.

**August, 2014**

-by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

The August meeting had a lot of lively discussion of all kinds of things, some of them even related to Commodore computers. Participating were Robert Bernardo, Louis and Vincent Mazzei, Roger Van Pelt, Greg Dodd, and Dick Estel.

There was considerable interest in the offer of an Atari Falcon from 1992, Atari's final computer product and a machine that is highly admired by our two fans of that line of products, Louis and Greg. It was agreed that Greg will be the lucky beneficiary of this gift. At a future meeting, the rest of the membership looks forward to getting a look at it and comparing its features to Amiga computers of that time. See more about this machine at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atari_Falcon.

Robert reported on this year's CommVEx in Las Vegas. There were 38 people in attendance, and we took in a little over $900 in admission and raffle sales. With previous receipts during the year, this gives us enough to pay for next year's event. There had been a suggestion from some attendees to rent an additional room or a bigger room, but after discussion it was felt that we could not support this past one year, and it would be best to keep expenses to the level that we have been able to easily cover the last few years.

Robert had made a trip to Maple Falls, Washington, just a few miles from the Canadian border, to pick up a bunch of Commodore equipment. This included Waveform Colortone keyboards, which work with the C64 (see photo at http://dickestel.com/images/fcug387.jpg), Commodore and Amiga mice, a 1750 RAM expansion unit, 3 1581 drives, 3 Amiga 500's, 2 C128D's, a flat C128, a 1541-II drive, and other items. There was also a CMD RAMLink

expansion device which will be a major raffle prize at the 2015 CommVEx. The larger, more complicated hardware was left to Ray Carlsen for him to check out their functions. As for the rest of the hardware and software, the members at the meeting helped themselves to the items which interested them.

There was also the Kinney Image-izer, C64 software for video digitizer you had to build; we could not fully test since we didn't have the necessary hardware on hand. However, we did show the demo pictures that were on the disk.

Having recently visited Ray Carlsen in the Pacific Northwest, Robert brought in a complete collection of the products Ray is selling. These included the heavy-duty C64 power supply, the C128 adapter for it, a Plus/4 adapter, and a power supply that works with both 1581 and 1541-II disk drives, and 3 different versions of the Computer Saver. See more about these products at Ray's web page
http://personalpages.tds.net/~rcarlsen/ and a photo of the items at
http://dickestel.com/images/fcug388.jpg.

On his recent trip to Europe, Robert bought a large number of new commercial games from Psytronik/Binary Zone in England. We tested four of these last month and another four this time. Some of them were based on arcade games with which various members were familiar.

## THE HISTORY OF THE AMIGA-EPILOGUE

### The Video Toaster

-by Chris Higgins

[The final article in the History of the Amiga was supposed to be on the Video Toaster, the hardware device and its accompanying software which turned the Amiga computer into a machine used in professional video production. That article was never written. However, in its place, here is an article by Chris Higgins who gives his thoughts on the VT.]

Did you know that [Star Trek: the Next Generation] actor Wil Wheaton helped develop a video editing system in the early 1990s? Read on for some deep nerd trivia.

If I told you there was a serious computer system named the Video Toaster 4000, you might think that was a joke. Unless, of course, you did any video editing in the 90s. Dear friends, the 90s were a special time for video -- camcorders were common, VCRs were common, but in order to edit that raw tape into a hip skating video with over-the-top 3D effects and purple-and-green checkerboard backgrounds, your options were limited. The Video Toaster [2000 and] 4000 was a Commodore Amiga-based system offering a huge library of special effects (many cheesy, some very tasteful, and all frankly amazing) for "only" five thousand bucks (compared, seriously, to hundreds of thousands for other setups). And my high school had one.

In the back room of my school's Media Center, we had a TV studio. In the heart of the control room was the Toaster. I learned to use the system and worked on my school's morning announcements' TV show for years, often running the Toaster live during the show, switching between cameras, B-roll from a VCR, and running live credits typed into the character generator. After our first year on the air, certain transition effects were banned due to overuse (one involved a spaceship flying into frame and then a flash of light, transitioning to the next shot; another featured a woman in either a maid outfit or an overly minimal witch costume walking into the frame and tapping a magic wand to switch scenes). But, I'll admit it, occasionally a banned transition effect (3D CUBE WIPE!) would make its way into the morning news due to "operator error."

[There is] a promotional video introducing the system, including brief appearances by actual Video Toaster owners Wil Wheaton, Penn Jillette, and Tony Hawk. In this video, you see most of the effects generated by the Toaster, and you may recognize them from 90s TV -- these things were in use in lots of TV studios. The Lightwave 3D software (part of the Toaster suite, later sold separately) was used for special effects on seaQuest [DSV] and Babylon 5, among others. [If you] check out the video, pay special attention to the segment at 1:52, introducing Wheaton as "Actor / Toaster Punk."

For more on Wheaton's involvement in the Toaster's development, read his interview with "Geeks of Doom". Wheaton said, in part:

"When I worked for NewTek and worked on the Video Toaster 4000, I didn't do any of the actual programming. I did a ton of product testing and quality control, and worked in the marketing department and then I was sort of one of their technology evangelists…"

"…I'm really proud to have been part of the very beginning [of home video editing]. We were the tip of the spear in Personal Video Production — which is what we called it back in '94. I think it was '94 when we were doing that. Y'know, I think you can draw almost a straight line between iMovie and Final Cut to the Toaster."



### HISTORY OF THE FRESNO COMMODORE USER GROUP NEWSLETTER

-by Dick Estel

The earliest history of the club newsletter is lost in the mists of history, except for two facts, one known and one assumed.

We know what the first issue looked like and that the editor was one Chuck Yruligi. We have a copy of this one page publication, and there is a scanned version on line at:

http://www.dickestel.com/fcug1stnl.pdf.

We assume that the date was November, 1981. We also have the second issue, which had two pages, and the third, which doubled again, to four pages. We have several other issues from the first year. The first issue with a date on it is December 1983, so we calculated the date of the inaugural issue by counting back from there.

The newsletter was called *Tips, Pokes, Peeks and Jokes*, a name it retained until July, 1989 (the circumstances of the change are covered later in this article). The name was appropriate at that time, because the first few issues were literally a bunch of tips and some of the various Peeks and Pokes, which were not documented by Commodore, but which were being learned and shared by users across the country.

From 1981 until I joined there were six editors, some of whom were known to me, and some of which were just names on the masthead. I know nothing about our founding editor, Chuck, but the second editor, Deb Christensen, was still in the club when I joined. At that time she was the BBS SYSOP, and was otherwise not active, so I never met her in person.

The next two were Randy Dodds and George Beardon, also unknown to me. They were followed by Randy Smith, who has not been active in the club for a decade or so, but who has been in touch with us now and then.

Then there was Mark Miller, who held the job when I joined, and was my immediate predecessor in the job.

The issues from that first year appear to have been printed with a daisy wheel printer, or maybe even done on a typewriter and photocopied. Beginning with that December 1983 issue, the printing is obviously from a dot matrix printer, no doubt an early Commodore product, based on the

fact that it did not correctly produce letters with descending parts (g, p and y). Next we have a couple of letter quality issues, then in January 1984, what looks like a much-improved dot matrix printer that produces the descenders.

Various changes are visible over the next three years, but when we get to March, 1987, we have the format that was in use when I joined (although there are some variations in a few issues). The printing was being done on a daisy wheel printer, with the text cut up and pasted on to a master page, with graphics printed on a dot matrix printer and pasted in where desired.

The January, 1988 issue was co-edited by Mark Miller and Randy Clays, who was the equipment manager and is still around, but this was his only appearance in that job; Mark took over in February and continued until I accepted the job in July (I am only now realizing that Mark did the job for just six months before passing it off on me. For shame, Mark.)

Mark had been president of the club and remained a member for several more years, taking care of the printing as well as other tasks in the club, notably vice president.

When I took the job, it was my desire and intention to switch the production of the newsletter to a desktop publishing program, so that all the elements of a page would be part of a single file, and cutting and pasting would no longer be required. The conversion began in October, 1988, when two pages were produced with Paperclip Publisher, which was a reasonably good program at the time, but very tedious to work with.

Meanwhile, I acquired geoPublish and the mandatory RAM expansion unit needed to make it usable, and did four pages with it in November, and the following month, the entire newsletter was done with geoPublish.

There were some complaints about the readability of the dot matrix type, especially by our older members (believe it or not, I was not one of those at that time). With GEOS programs, the font is printed as a graphic, so the quality of the printer driver was key. I got in touch with a programmer who belonged to a club in Eureka, and he wrote a two-pass driver for us, which improved the type somewhat. Other programmers were working on improved drivers, and eventually I found a three-pass driver on Quantum Link that gave us a very acceptable printout.

In addition to wanting to do the newsletter with a desktop publishing program, I desperately wanted to change the name, which I thought had outlived its meaning. It took some work to convince some of the long-time members, but eventually we held a contest which produced three finalists: Keep the existing name, "*Comm-Pute*," and "*The Interface*." The latter was my favorite and I'm happy to say it was chosen and continues to grace the masthead, 25 years after it was first introduced.

Like most club newsletter editors, I eventually reached a point where I needed a break. I will not try to research the dates of the later editors, but will list them with a few comments.

First was Dennis Fithian, who bravely agreed to produce the newsletter with geoPublish, despite never having used GEOS before. I gave him some training, but the steep learning curve of the system, and his personal schedule contributed to the newsletter being late and not quite up to par, and he wisely decided to step down after a few issues.

His replacement was Juanita Eroles, who had moved to Fresno from Sacramento, where she had edited the local Commodore group newsletter. With this experience, she was able to do a fine job.

Next up was Sandy Dippolet, who had already made many contributions to the club. He did the newsletter using The Write Stuff word processor, which produced excellent results. When he needed a break, I agreed to take over again, with one provision – I would do the newsletter using Microsoft Publisher on my PC. Although there were a few negative comments about not using Commodore equipment, my thought was that content was the important thing, and there were certainly no problems with readability.

My next successor was our illustrious president, Robert Bernardo. He handled the job for a few issues spread out over quite a few months, but his busy schedule prevented him from devoting the necessary time to the project. At this point we were afraid we might have to discontinue publication, which often also leads to the end of a club.

Fortunately a hero stepped in to save the day – he who continues to carry the mantle, our long-distance savior, Lenard Roach of Kansas City. Although there are some challenges in being 1700 miles from the club's base of operations, Lenard has come through in good times and bad, and kept the newsletter and possibly the club from becoming history.





**The Long Drive to Rescue C= Equipment - Part 1**
                                        -by Robert Bernardo

Though I had mentioned it to the Pacific Northwest Commodore clubs, nobody took up Mike Powell's offer to pick up his C= equipment in Maple Falls, Washington, just south of the Canadian border. His initial e-mails just mentioned a flat C128, a C128DCR, and a couple of Amiga 500's. After several months, Mike was ready to throw the equipment in the trash. I offered to rescue the equipment, even though Maple Falls was over 1,000 miles away from me.

I had returned to California on August 4, after being a week and a half in Las Vegas for the Commodore Vegas Expo and the Creation Star Trek Convention. I departed for the Pacific NW on August 6, my objectives being to get that equipment in Maple Falls, to visit Stephen Jones at the Living Computer Museum in Seattle, to deliver broken equipment and pick up repaired C= hardware from technician Ray Carlsen in southern Washington, and to meet with officers of the Portland Commodore User Group (and to go to a Quarterflash concert in Portland, too). An ambitious schedule, especially since I was to be back in Stockton, California on August 10 for the Filipino Barrio Fiesta celebration!

I actually arrived in Portland, Oregon at about 1:30 a.m. on August 7, but I didn't have much

restful sleep at the Motel 6, due to the traffic noise from the nearby freeway. By 10 that morning, I was back on the road and heading north. So, the 10+ hours of driving the previous night was added to another 6 hours of driving to get to uppermost Washington. Traffic through Olympia-Tacoma-Seattle was less troublesome than I thought it would be, i.e., no traffic jams and just a few slow-downs. I entered the city of Bellingham and then turned east toward Maple Falls. No freeway now... it was a rural highway winding through the hilly Washington countryside with mountains in the distance. After an hour and a half driving through the hills and trees, I found Mike's modest house in a small housing development.

I pulled into the gravel driveway and shut off the car's ignition. From within the house, I heard the bark of a big dog. Uh-oh, would I have to contend with a dog?!

**(to be continued)...**



-by Dick Estel

### INTRODUCTION

This is number 10 of a limited series of articles saluting some of our past members, people who have made a significant contribution to the club. Our more recent members did not have the pleasure of knowing these men and women, many of whom have passed on. However, they made a

lasting impression on the club and the author.

Questions and comments to our web address, info@dickestel.com, are welcome.

### DOUG CUNNINGHAM

Doug was one of the two main technical experts who provided their expertise to the club over the years, the other being Del Contreras, who we profiled previously.

Doug was already a member when I joined in 1988, and I soon got to know him and appreciate his skills. A visit to Doug's house was sort of like going to a computer museum, with Commodores and PCs in various states of repair and disassembly in the house and on the patio.

Doug's profession also involved computer-related equipment, working with a company that installed and serviced large scales. I don't know if it was "the weight" of this profession that contributed to a heart attack a number of years ago, but I'm happy to say that Doug made a complete recovery.

We had the pleasure of his company at our annual lunch several years ago, and hope that he will join us again some year.