THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA
by Lenard R. Roach

LEAVING FOR LAS VEGAS –

Unlike the previous years in which I went to Commodore Vegas Expo, the preparation to leave for the 2019 CommVEx computer show didn't take as long as it usually did. Mainly, this could be because I was the only one going from the Kansas City area. Everyone that I invited couldn't make it for various reasons or canceled at the last minute due to unexpected and unforeseen complications. I have to admit that I was a little apprehensive of traveling by myself since I have never been alone on a major trip before, and I was afraid of some unknown disaster happening to either the vehicle or myself. I was careful to get the full-coverage insurance plan on the car I got from the car rental place, but even that wasn't enough to soothe my jittery nerves. Like any fool, I wanted full assurance that I would make it to and from Las Vegas without a hitch, which everyone knows depends on the driver of the vehicle and less on the maintenance of same. I got my luggage and gear packed into the rental on the same day that I picked it up, and at 12:30 pm I hit the street and headed out for the 1,139 mile trek from my home in Kansas City to the bright lights of the city of Las Vegas. My stops were basically set on the Love's Fuel Depots for the simple reason they were set on being traveler-friendly and have parking so I could catch a cat nap on my way to Nevada. I did have some trouble with my cellphone as it refused to find the towers that were located along the I-70 corridor. So, in Green River, Utah, I stopped by a Burger King which

had WiFi and called my cellphone provider to find out what the problem was. They quickly fixed my connection problem by doing a refresh on their end, and before I was out of city limits, I had the cellphone working again, and my family could stay in contact with me. I can testify that having someone keep track of you electronically is better than no communications at all, and every time my phone chimed with a call or text requesting an update on my progress, that was a great comfort. Thanks to the time zone changes that I went through, I made it to Las Vegas 2 hours before check-in at my hotel.

IN LAS VEGAS –

After being told I couldn't check in until 4 pm, I left my hotel for the CommVEx venue, the Plaza Hotel, where in the third floor Desert Inn Salon room I found Robert setting up his computers and getting his displays ready for the show. We exchanged pleasantries, and he directed me to a corner of the room closest to the north exit where I could set up my Commodore SX64 and printer, my new Run-Stop/Restore books, and disks which had a compilation of Check It Out, Checkmate, TEA 4.2, The Ledger, and the Money Manager. It wasn't long before I was ready to begin my show. I had brought 3 other SX64s that needed repair; Robert said that he would take them to get fixed when he visits repair tech Ray Carlsen in Washington State. This proved to be a hidden blessing for me since the keyboard to my SX64 (which was working when I left Kansas City) quit functioning when I set up my machine. Robert quickly thought of just substituting a SX keyboard from one of the broken SX's, and I was quickly back in business. I left everything plugged in to make sure I didn't lose any signal with the keyboard and computer, but then a new problem arose as I had brought a video cable instead of a serial cable to hook up my printer with the computer. Again, Robert to the rescue with a serial bus cable. Before I could collect the bus cable from him, I had to check into my hotel and get unpacked. After getting to my hotel, I took a shower and went instantly to

bed. I was still on Kansas City time, so I crashed early.

DAY ONE –

I got to the Plaza early (still on Kansas City time) and went to eat at McDonald's in the hotel, then bode my time until the Desert Inn Salon at about 8:30 am. Both my computer and printer booted fine, and I was ready to go. A gentleman by the name of Joeri visited my table first and was interested. People were already set up, and I saw a CommVEx t-shirt and cap combo being vended by a gentleman named Tim Waite; I bought the combo and was styling on Sunday but more on that later. The show started off slow but quickly picked up with many visitors. The biggest spenders at my table that day were the 3 amigos from Mexico who claimed they heard about CommVEx from the DefCon show. They came by my table, and each bought my book and a compilation disk. Some even asked for a photo with me posing with the book. They made me feel like a real celebrity, and one of them even showed me a fix for the garbage collection that had been happening with the disk. I was much appreciative for his help, and I made corrections to all the compilation disks that I brought, which didn't take very long. Sadly, some lookie loos who came to my table were interested only in the Money Manager program and not in anything I wrote, but those are the breaks in the programming business.

At the show we had Justin Pope and his family who couldn't get his Amiga 1000 to start, so Justin spent the whole show time working on it. Some other exhibitors tried to help him and found one problem, but even after fixing this snafu, more problems came up. The gentleman went home without a presentation, but he did get to show off the inner workings of his A1000 along with its advanced boards, a Rejuvenator and an accelerator board. Joeri had the Ultimate 64 Elite running Gigi-CAD, but the C64 CAD program was still in German. Robert showed me his work in translating the manual for Gigi-CAD into

English, but even with the Google translate, the work was tedious and very time consuming to get it into American English. One gentleman, Saj Awan, had a crazy set-up of many 64s that were displaying SID demos that turned 3.5 inch disks into drums, a Koalapad into a Theramin synthesizer, and a keyboard overlay that turned the C64 breadbox into a piano. His demo was the draw of the show and with good reason. His demo was way out there and showed the versatility of the SID chip in the C64. Another gentleman from the Southern California Commodore & Amiga Network, Matt Brewster, had two presentations – one on the Amiga Video Toaster and the other on the MiST FPGA box – that showed many ways the Amiga VT and LightWave can be used to create special effects for personal or professional use. This Amiga VT was very versatile, and it was great to watch as he demoed as many functions as he could in such a short amount of time. All of the presentations were done over a two-day span and not done in the sequence listed in this article.

DAY TWO –

On the final day of the show, everyone seemed to go from table to table and show off everything they had. Just to keep making sales, I had to get used to talking about my programs and books over and over again to different patrons. Even though I talk for a living, for some reason it's harder to do when it's your stuff you're showing. It's like bragging or something, and I really don't like to do that, so this is something that I'm going to have to get over if I want to win in this business. I have to learn to talk with confidence and assurance.

The big highlight on Sunday was the drawing for the PET 2001 computer which Eduardo Gallardo, a gentleman from Mexico, won. It will have to be shipped to Eduardo's home in Florida where he now resides. I was blessed to sell out of books; Joeri bought the last two copies, so I didn't have to haul those back. T-shirt vendor Tim wanted a copy, so I presold him a book and mailed it when I got back to Kansas City on Tuesday. I sported

my CommVEx t-shirt and cap, so I looked the part of a true fan boy. During the last few minutes of the show, there was the Street Fighter 2 Turbo tournament that I wanted to get in on for the simple reason that I hadn't sat down behind a console in over 20 years. The game was loaded onto an Amiga CD32, and I played against youngest show attendee, Alex, son of Justin Pope. I was sure he was going to beat me down hard because of his years of playing games, but for some crazy reason I pulled off the victory by winning two out of three matches. Robert presented me with a crisp Yankee $10 bill, and we had a photo shot of Robert handing me the money. After a camera shot of Robert concluding the show, we all packed up; some, like myself, packed up for home, while others packed up for their hotel rooms and would leave on Monday. I was glad to leave Sunday evening, because traffic was light on I-15.

GOING HOME –

Just as I had done on the trip to Vegas, I stayed on the main interstates of I-15 and I-70, stopping at the Love's gas stations for refuel and rest, while traveling back to Kansas City. I especially stopped at the Love's which had Carl's Jr., a chain of restaurants which we have in Kansas City, but in KC those restaurants are called Hardee's. In order to catch some sleep, I stopped in a small Utah Love's just before I hit the big 110-mile stretch that had no services. In my rental Toyota, I reclined completely so I could stretch out and sleep, but I still needed to run the engine to keep the heater running. The desert night in Utah was 65 degrees, so opening windows was out of the question. Too cold. I got into that stop at midnight and slept until 3 am; then I was up and back on the road. I got to another Love's in Bennet, Colorado where I tried to sleep again, but the noise and traffic made it impossible. Sleeping during the day was a bad idea, so I bluffed my way all the way back to Kansas City, making it home about 9 pm Monday night. That was a super dumb idea, and if I ever do that again, I will fight for a good place to sleep. I unloaded the car, did
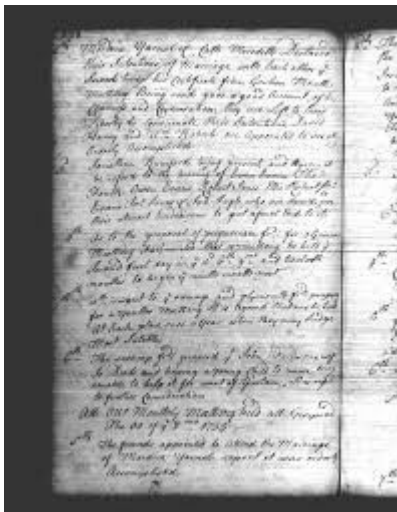
my laundry, got all the news from the boys living in my house, and then went to bed.

AFTERMATH –

On Tuesday I tried to return the rental, but because I had prepaid for the car, the company could not refund me a day. So, I just kept it and drove it to Nevada, Missouri, with a load of Commodore gear for a person who was interested in the equipment. I didn't expect any money for the gear... just cleaning out my closets so I can make room for more equipment. After a long 1,139 mile trip to Las Vegas, Nevada, the 110 miles to Nevada, Missouri, was a short jaunt, and I was happy to do it. Hopefully, he can use the machine and enjoy the fun of owning his own Commodore.

I also found out that I can't stay still; I have to keep moving. So, if I ever retire, I'm not going to be happy. I'll have to volunteer for several things just to keep me busy. If you ever have a chance, dear reader, try a trip to a Commodore show or a local Commodore meeting. Since we don't have anything like that here in Kansas City, I always look forward to reading and editing the monthly Meeting Reports found in this publication. This, the last CommVEx, showed that there is still a great interest in Commodore, and this computer is still a fun device just to toy with. Now that Commodore events are moving directly to the West Coast, it's going to be hard for me to get to the shows being offered, but I will try to go and sell some more books and programs to those users in that region of the country.

MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS
by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

JULY 2019

Once again we invaded the Panera Bread restaurant at Shaw and Marty for the monthly meeting of the Fresno Commodore User Group. Present were Robert, Roger, Dave, and Dick.

Dick dug out some stuff from the bottom of his "FCUG Briefcase," including a flier for The Write Stuff Companion, a collection of articles and tutorials on The Write Stuff word processor, which the club sold years ago (we can still find a copy if you're interested). In fact, Robert had many of the Write Stuff packages with him in a box that came from the collection of Rolf Miller, former editor of the CIVIC 64/128 Gazette newsletter.

Also in the pile was an August 1997 copy of the Commodore Product Source List, a comprehensive listing compiled by Roger Long. We speculated that not 5% of the items listed were still available. Recently, Roger Long put out the list on Internet, editable by anyone. However, Robert found out that it was not easy to edit the list to include new resources and to delete the many old resources. Robert gave up in updating it.

During lunch we discussed the vast number of old and very old TV shows now available in our multi-channel, multi-streaming service world. Some of the classics that have caught members' attention recently include The Cisco Kid, The Danny Thomas Show, and The Jimmy Dean Show (where the Muppets made their first appearance). My grandchildren were surprised when I told them Jimmy was known for more than just sausage.

That "other" Commodore show in Las Vegas recently announced that admission will be increased from zero to $35 this year. Apparently their business model of table rental only did not work out. CommVEx continues to charge admission and provide free tables.

Robert reported that he has signed up for the Downtown LA Maker Faire, to be held December 7. That show will continue, even though the Maker Faire parent organization was going through reorganization.

He also gave us a look at the 2019 CommVEx commercial going up on YouTube and featuring some famous Commodore names saying goodbye to the show for its final appearance.

Robert has been cleaning out his storage house in Stockton and moving the items to Visalia. He ran across CAD 3D, which we loaded up on the club C128 to look at, with Roger at the controls. It will require a bit of study at home by Roger before we can enjoy this program to the fullest.

Robert connected the Ultimate 64 and ran the latest 2019 C64 games – Crystal Caverns, Death Weapon, Run Demon Run, Super Goatron, Stercore XD, Super Galax-I-Birds, Robots Rumble, and the silly Royal Hunt (the wild pigs of the forest hunt naked humans!). However, immediately there was a problem. None of the games had any sound! Robert couldn't figure out the solution. The audio settings in U64 were all correct. Were there bad speakers in the monitor? Robert connected external speakers and still

didn't get any audio. Was it a bad HDMI cable from the U64 to the monitor? Unlikely.

Roger did some cross-checking. He took the SD card out of the U64 and put it in Robert's external SD2IEC drive. He connected that to the club C128 and ran the programs. The sound was perfect coming out of the C128! Were the U64 and its internal UltiSIDs faulty? Robert ran some SID music out of the U64, and the sound was all right.

Everybody was ready to give up when Roger came upon the solution; how about reverting the U64 back to its older firmware? Instead of using the current v1.21, go back to the v1.18. Robert took a few minutes to reinstall the older version. Voila! Audio problems solved! The new games played back their audio correctly. Robert said that he would e-mail Gideon Zweijtzer, developer of the U64, and tell him about the v1.21 audio incompatibilities.

AUGUST 2019

We had a good turnout for our mid-summer meeting at the Panera Bread restaurant that is our new gathering place. On hand were Robert Bernardo, Roger Van Pelt, Dave Smith, Randy Stoller, Mike Fard, and Dick Estel. Long-time member Keith Sohm, who has not been active in the club the last few years, stopped in and was introduced to the newer members.

Dick announced his resignation as librarian effective August 31. Roger volunteered to take over the task. It was noted that there is virtually no demand for access to the library, but the disks need to be maintained for historical purposes.

Robert reported that CommVEx V15 was a big success, with an increase in attendance over last year, and the return of several long-time supporters who had been missing in recent years. The event attained a substantial profit. This was the final CommVEx, so by consensus, the funds

will be used to add more hours to the 2020 Commodore Los Angeles Super Show (CLASS).

The annual club lunch is scheduled for October 20, with the Black Bear Diner the tentative locations. Fresno's version of this popular chain is located right across the street from our meeting location. A final decision will be made at the September meeting.

Demos began with video from CommVEx, with Saj Awan of Las Vegas demonstrating Koalamin, in which the Koala Pad is used with software to simulate the sound of a Theremin. In the same video, Saj demonstrates the PETpix 2.1, a specialized board connected to the C64 user port and has a Raspberrry PI which is streaming .MP4 video of any length into the C64.

Then we watched Roger's presentation on video of Digi-Cad, a German CAD program that Roger has been exploring for several months. The video was shown at CommVEx.

To wrap up the meeting, Robert brought out his steering wheel (flight controller) for the C64 and a few car-racing games were played.

Koalamin:
https://www.lemon64.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=37729&sid=779d0a679528bac30aac0515b64f3393

CONFESSONS OF A COMMODORE APOSTATE
by Dick Estel

Many months ago (maybe years), Lenard asked me to write something relating to no longer being a Commodore user. So much time went by without me carrying out the assignment that we both forgot the original subject description, so a couple of months ago I asked him to outline what was wanted once again. He came up with the following questions, which I will attempt to answer to the best of my ability to recall events and thoughts going back over 30 years.

1. In the beginning, what made you choose Commodore over all the other home computers on the market in that day?

I did not really have any knowledge of what was available. I had fooled around briefly with a computer at Radio Shack (probably a TR80), but couldn't make it do anything, and the sales staff were all busy with real customers. I wasn't really ready to spend that much at that time. However, I had known for some time that I wanted a computer. In 1987 I saw an ad for a Commodore 64 for $199 at Sears, went into the store, and bought it, along with a Blue Chip disk drive for about $170. The drive did not work correctly, and Sears gave me a 1581 in exchange at no additional cost.

2 What was Commodore's biggest selling point that made you go "all in"?

It started off at a very reasonable price, although I soon realized I needed to spend another $200 each for a monitor and a printer. I soon learned about the local Commodore club, and finally got the support and advice that allowed me to make full use of my machine.

3. Did you use any other systems during that era? If so, which machines were they?

I never had any other brand, but after a year or two, I bought C128 from a club member. I wished I had known at the start what I knew then, and would have started off with the 128.

4. What were the big "turn offs" to those other machines?

Nothing really, just had no familiarity or knowledge. Of course, these were the days when Commodore users took every opportunity to bad mouth IBM. This was pre-Windows, when the IBM and compatible PCs could not match Commodore in sound or video.

5. Would you have considered yourself a coder or a user of the Commodore back then? Please explain your answer.

I was a user only. I wrote a couple of simple programs, just "cute" video displays, nothing that really did anything.

6. During the decline of single board computers, did you try to stay "die hard" to the Commodore? Why or why not?

After I bought a Windows PC, I continued to use my Commodore 128 for at least a couple of years. I was doing a lot of scanning into GEOS with the Handyscanner. The first PC hand scanner I bought was very unsatisfactory and bed scanners were out of reach. However, with the Commodore I was scanning mostly line drawings such as clip art from newspaper ads and the like.

7. What made you finally put your Commodore into cold storage?

I had a lot of family photos, many dating back to the 1920s and a few before, as well as many more recent ones. When I started scanning those, it was obvious the Commodore would never give satisfactory results. I had continued to use my Commodore word processor and spread sheet, but eventually found Windows versions that were just faster, better and more flexible.

8. What put "the nail in coffin" for you so as to never pull a Commodore out to use again?

Space more than anything. I would have kept a Commodore system set up if it had not required desk space that I just didn't have. My older grandson played games on the Commodore a lot, and I think most kids still get a kick out of fooling around with them once in a while.

9. Looking back over all these decades, what do you think that Commodore could have done to stay competitive?

They would probably have needed a completely different business model. They seemed to stick with the old "standbys" after their time was up, and by the time they attempted to compete in the Windows world, the industry had passed them by.

10. Do you think all the new hardware and software coming out for Commodore now is "too little too late?" Why or why not?

I think it's like the dog that can walk on its hind legs. It does not do it well, but it's amazing that it can do it at all. And it's a great hobby that provides a little income for a few dedicated developers.

11. What was the final outcome of all your Commodore equipment? Sales, donation, or what?

I sold some, and gave some to the club and other users. My final piece of Commodore hardware was the CMD hard drive that I donated as a major raffle prize at CommVEx a few years ago.

In a further step away from Commodore, I recently turned our library disks over to Roger Van Pelt, and gave Robert Bernardo a box of Write Stuff disks plus miscellaneous software. The only Commodore thing I now have in my possession is the club's petty cash box.

Club Officers

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

President …............................... Robert Bernardo
Vice-president .... Roger Van Pelt
Secretary/Treasurer …......................... Dick Estel
The Interface Editor …................... Lenard Roach
Librarian …................................... Roger Van Pelt
Club equipment …....................... Roger Van Pelt
Meeting place reservation …............... Dick Estel

-**The Small Print-**

The Fresno Commodore User Group is a club whose members share an interest in Commodore 8-bit and Amiga computers. Our mailing address is 185 W. Pilgrim Lane, Clovis, CA 93612. We meet monthly in the meeting room of 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.

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.