The Editor's Godzilla

by Lenard R Roach

SITTING DOWN TO TALK?

We once again sat down with Lenard at his home in midtown Kansas City, Kansas (via computer) and asked him about a Commodore work he did from days gone by. Here is the gist of that conversation:

TI: Hello, Lenard. It's great to talk with you again.

LENARD: Good day to you, sir. I'm blessed that you decided to have another chit chat with me especially so soon after my last talk over my newest book, "Shift-Clr/Home."

TI: The blessings are all ours, sir. In this conversation we want to focus on two of your Commodore 64 productivity programs that are seemingly parallel to each other. One was called "The Envelope Addressor," which was released in the early 2000s in Loadstar disk-zene, and the other is called "The Envelope Addressor V4.2" which was released on private sale. Both seem to do the same thing. Why was there a need for two separate programs?

LENARD: "The Envelope Addressor" was released to Loadstar not too long after several successful alpha and beta tests when I was editor and distributor of the Commodore Users Group of Kansas City's newsletter, "Ryte Bytes." Each page of the paper was written using The Newsroom Commodore software and each sheet was your standard 8 1/2" x 11" piece of track paper, which was then copied at the local photocopy company. "The Envelope Addressor" was restricted to that format of the #10 size envelope. We had enough members of our club back then that all the data from each sequential file got very close to filling one side of a 5 1/4" disk.

When The Commodore Users Group of Kansas City closed down in the early 2010s, I refocused my attentions back onto "The Envelope Addressor" and tried to think of a new way to make it more diverse. The first thing I did was delete all the functions associated with creating the ATTN: command. I also added two extra print functions. One was to print onto a #7, or smaller size envelope, and the second was to print out on one 8 1/2" x 11" piece of track paper the FROM address and the TO address to be folded and and put into a double window, or payroll style, of envelope.

With all these changes done to "The Envelope Addressor," I needed a new name for the program. Since "The Envelope Addressor" was working so well as a name and the initials TEA also spelled another word, I decided just to jump all the programming formalities and called the new version "The Envelope Addressor V4.2, or in a shortened term, TEA 4 2 (Tea for two). The second version of "The Envelope Addressor" is more used on a broader spectrum than it's predecessor.

TI: What do you, as a user of TEA 4 2, get most from the program now in this, the 21st century?

LENARD: As a user, I basically send checks in the mail to pay my monthly bills. My kids declare that I am stuck in a bygone era but with collections companies getting more clever in their dealings with paying over the Internet I prefer to

stay in control of my finances and not let them have electronic access to my account.

TI: We take it that you use online bill pay very infrequently. Most people enjoy the convenience of avoiding the work of check and envelope preparing by just using the Internet. Do you enjoy spending hours on end stuffing envelopes and using such a method to still pay bills and do your business?

LENARD: Don't get me wrong. There are some bills, like my house payment, that must be done online. Most bill collectors are hard to comprehend because they want only to get the entire amount and get it now and they appear to and cheat to get that money. If any of them get ahold of your personal banking information then you have lost control. This is a game of who gets what of your money when. Usually a collector gives me a list of options to pay and half of that list involves them getting my personal banking information. When I tell them that I will pay so much a week by check, they baulk at my antiquated ways but will usually submit to my way since they know I will pay them what they need and will get their ledger cleared of my account. Then, with the program "Check It Out" and a well functioning Commodore 9-pin printer, I make everything out so that it cannot be forged due to the print on the check, stuff the pre-addressed envelope (printed on the same Commodore printer), stamp them, and mail them.

TI: You've had some bad experiences we take it?

LENARD: A few. Most of the time I was left with no money to buy food for my family because some criminal at a bill agency drained my account. I sold a prize van I bought to a salvage yard for junk because I needed cash now. I will not put myself or my family through that horror again. Since then I've gone through teachings and training to make me a better manager of finance and am slowly doing better.

TI: It seems like you're as passionate about money management as you are about the Commodore but let's get back onto your programs. How do you think "The Envelope Addressor" will work for today's user?

LENARD: Okay, now you're going to get a lecture so sit back and relax. Using envelopes, checks, and programs like "The Envelope Addressor" and "Check It Out," I feel, puts a person back in control. So many people do not wish to be hassled with a bill or invoice so they pay on the Internet or, even worse, sign up for automatic bill pay. You can call me paranoid if you want, but all it takes is one cyber criminal to hack your personal information on a website where your bank card or bank data is stored and BAM! You're broke. Most people are not afraid because they feel their data is safe. Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes once said in a movie that electricity was "the high priest of false security." I believe the Internet, which started out as a force for free speech and good, has become a place where both good and bad users can either help or hinder a person from dealing with a situation. Like I said earlier, even I'm trapped sometimes into using the Internet to make a payment but I do my utmost to make sure that I use snail mail and "The Envelope Addressor" along with other programs to make payments and control as well as manage my money. When people get burned by a bill collector or account holder, and in the 2020s it's no longer a question of "if" it's a question of "when," they will wish that they used the mail and "The Envelope Addressor" to have dealt with the unscrupulous organization. Since I've been in control I've had more financial successes than set backs. Please consider my warning and start using snail mail pay and "The Envelope Addressor" to stay on top. Some people feel the security on the website containing their bank information is safe. Fine, but keep a book of checks, a Commodore 64, a 9-pin printer, and a program like "The Envelope Addressor" on hand for a moment where Internet
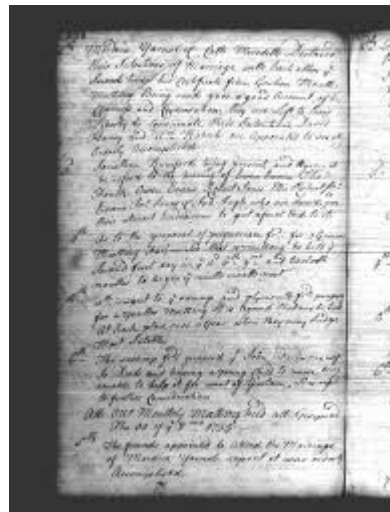
pay is not an option. I personally deal with one organization that does not have the option of Internet pay so I must, at least, write them a check each payday and print off an envelope for them. Also, read your statements you get in the mail. Some, like my electric and heating bill prefer snail mail checks over online bill pay even though they have an online option which I have had to use from time time. It could be that we're too redneck here in the Midwest unlike the coastal areas; I'm not sure, but what I do know is that since the inception of "The Envelope Addressor" and TEA 4 2, this task is a lot easier and that's the job of having a computer in the first place is to make things easier for those who use them.

TI: That is a lot. Where can a person get a copy of "The Envelope Addressor" or "The Envelope Addressor V4.2?"

LENARD: These programs should be free on almost any website dealing in Commodore software or you can ask for a copy from me by contacting me through this magazine. I do ask for a donation of one dollar ($1.00) plus postage and handling if you order from me.

TI: Lenard, thank you for expressing your feelings and sharing with us the need that you see for having these programs in a user's personal Commodore arsenal.

LENARD: I did get a little over zealous about this subject but I do appreciate your interest in making all things Commodore and for granting me the platform to speak about what I have been able to do with the machine.

Monthly Meeting Reports

by Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

March & April 2020

Due to the crisis of COVID-19, both the March and April 2020 FCUG meetings were cancelled therefore there will be no reports for these months. We apologize for this inconvenience and we will be reconvening as soon as possible.

Trevor's Amiga Blog

by Trevor Dickinson of A-EON

An Unexpected Journey

Apologies to Peter Jackson for using the film title to the first movie in his Hobbit triology, but with Robert Bernardo shortly arriving in New Zealand I thought it was fitting. As many of you will know Robert is the President of FCUG, (Fresno Commodore Users Group), and every year attends AmiWest in Sacramento to capture videos of the Devcon sessions along with the AmiWest presentations and speeches which he posts online

during and after the show. Although I used Jackson's film title, Robert's journey was not totally unexpected.

Commodore Pentium Laptops

Robert retired from his teaching job a few years back and made the first of his round the world trips in 2016 to attend as many Amiga and Commodore user events he could find. He visited me in New Zealand, and of course, he wanted to see my Commodore and Amiga computer collection. He was very surprised to discover I had a couple of Commodore-branded Intel Pentium 75 laptops which he and his fellow FCUG members did not know even existed.

Robert with Jane - Adelaide Retro Computing meeting

After his short stay in New Zealand we both traveled to Australia to attend the Adelaide Retro Computing meeting coordinated by Epsilon of Epsilon's Amiga Blog fame. If you want to read Epsilon's excellent report of the event – http://amigax1000.blogspot.com/2016/09/adelaide-retro-computing-meeting.html Robert also produced a video of my presentation at the meeting which should be available online.

Safe travels, Robert; see you soon in Wellington.

(This was written before Robert Bernardo arrived into Wellington, NZ, on February 27, 2020.)

by Bo Zimmerman

Here's What You Missed

The last decade or so has seen a bit of a revival in the Commodore 8-bit branch of the retro-gaming and retro-computing realm. Prices have been rising, new hardware and software has exploded, and the chatter in all kinds of social media has multiplied. For me, it's been fantastic.

However, I've observed a kind of awareness gap

in the prodigal sons who've been returning to the fold. I decided, therefore, to write a little essay to get everyone who was absent from the 8-bit community during the 1990s and 2000s caught up.

For fellow die-hards: if I neglected anything, ...this will understandably be written with a U.S. bias, though I did my best to overcome it.

And with that, let's get started.

Part 1: Hardware

For the Commodore 8-bit scene, the 1990s cannot be understood at all without talking about a little company founded by Doug Cotton and Mark Fellows in Massachusetts called [Creative Micro Designs](). From 1987 - 2001, CMD made us feel like our machines were more a lifestyle choice than clinging to obsolescence. Their products included the Kernal upgrade JiffyDOS, the SuperCPU 20mhz accelerator, HD-Series hard

drives, FD-Series high density and enhanced density 3.5" floppy drives, the RAMLink, the RAMDrive, Smart-series mice and trackball controllers, gamepads, 1750 RAM expander clones (with 2MB!), the SID Symphony sound expander, and the SwiftLink and Turbo232 high speed serial/UART cartridges.

While CMD towered over the 90s, they weren't entirely alone in their efforts to give Commodore power users new capacity. Tomas Pribyl and Jan Vorlicek developed the [IDE-64]() in 1994, a cartridge-based IDE controller that bragged better performance and a lower price, at the expense of compatibility, for mass storage.

Another option that emerged in the 90s was [64NET]() from Paul Gardner-Stephen, which allowed a PC to be used as a storage device for a C64. Around 2000, a similar solution called [64HDD](), was devised by Nick Coplin.

As the internet began to take off in the mid-90s, new products began to emerge to solve the most pressing and important problem of the day – how to get software from the internet onto floppy disks. This led to various cables and solutions for connecting Commodore floppy drives to internet-enabled PCs in order to transfer software, primarily using Joe Forster's Star Commander software. These cables began with Leopoldo Ghielmetti's X1541 cable in 1992, which eventually expanded to include the XM1541, XE1541, and so forth.
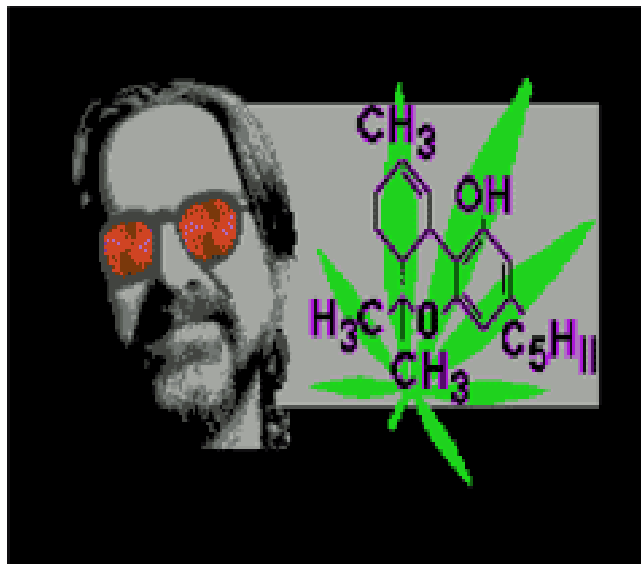
Not to be left out, however, these dark ages also saw the first devices for getting 8-bits onto the internet directly. Initially this was through dial-up modems, often involving the aforementioned SwiftLink cartridge. Eventually, the wired-ethernet solution RR-Net was introduced by Jens Schoenfeld as an add-on for the Retro-Reply cartridge, although software support has always been somewhat slim for this device. An even stranger solution was the Palm Pilot ethernet cradle, which, when combined with the SwiftLink cartridge, also allowed wired ethernet capability.

At the beginning of the new millennium, though, the scene's attention was turned to a young self-taught engineer named Jeri Ellsworth, who promised to bring us something previously un-imagined – a new hardware reproduction of the Commodore 64. By re-implementing each of the computer's custom chips in FPGA technology, this culminated in the [CommodoreOne](#) (C-One) computer. Not many years later, this same technology was scaled back in the form of the C64 DTV game. The DTV was famously designed to be hacked in such a way as to include ports for a keyboard and second joystick, and a serial port for disk drives, allowing it to be turned into a useful computer.

Part II: Software

Above is a screen shot of the Weekend World demo by Outcast. The interregnum Commodore demo scene saw a decline in the number of releases, though not in their quality. By the year 2000, the scene was producing 10% of what it had in 1990, but all of it building on the technological achievements of their predecessors. Output remained steady through 2009 before finally dying off in the last 10 years. The demo scene, especially in Europe, was the social center of Commodore 8-bit fandom. "The Scene" as it was called, was organizing itself into yearly and bi-annual "Parties" all over the continent.

Meanwhile, the same period saw intense interest among die-hard 8-bitters in new operating systems and platforms to take advantage of new hardware, new innovations in user interfaces, and, of course to access the internet. Chief amongst these was the graphical user interface GEOS and its Trinity of Successors.

Although Creative Micro Designs often released patches and utilities to help users of Berkeley Softwork's GEOS 2.0 enjoy their new hardware, it became quickly apparent, even to CMD themselves, that a more integrated solution was required. First out of the gate with such a solution was CMD themselves, with gateWay. Written by Jim Collette, gateWay featured integral support for CMD hardware, a task switcher, and a highly customizable (albeit unattractive) deskTop.

The next leg of the trinity to arrive was Maurice Randall's "Wheels" (GEOS 4.0) OS. Wheels sported movable and re-sizable windows, and support for CMD native partitions and sub directories in its beautiful "Dashboard" replacement for deskTop. This was quickly followed by GEOS MegaPatch3 by Markus Kanet in Germany, which included TopDesk 64, and, like gateWay, included integrated task switching.

While the GEOS patches remained a popular platform, UNIX clones for the 8-bits began arriving as well. First up was LUNIX in 1993 by Daniel Dallmann, which featured pre-emptive multitasking, pipes, and support for SLIP, PPP, and featured several network clients. The same year, Craig Bruce released his own ACE r9 for the C64 and C128, along with ZED-128 text editor, capable of handling enormous text files. Greg Reidel's UNIX-128 for the Commodore 128 rounds out our list.

As the year 2000 rolled around, Jolse Maginnis brought us an OS for the CMD SuperCPU, called [WiNGs](). It's object was to give the C64 support for the latest audio and video encodings, as well as extensive support for internet connectivity.
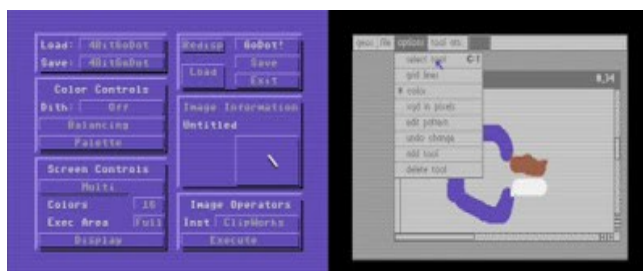

Our final entry in the OS bundle came in 2003, when Adam Dunkels released Contiki OS for all manner of Commodore 8-bits, as well as other platforms. Another GUI OS, Contiki was significant as a vehicle for RR-Net cartridges, by including a native tcp/ip stack as well as several internet servers and clients. Every 8-bitter wanted to run a web server on their C64 that year.

Software which ran on the standard Commodore kernal was also plentiful during this period, and helped us stay tentatively connected with advances in the PC world. This included Pasi Ojala's "gunzip" in 2002 and "puzip" in 2004, Errol Smith's "UnZip64 v2" for handling pkzipped archives in 1998, and David DeSimone's "uuxfer" for decoding programs off of USENET.
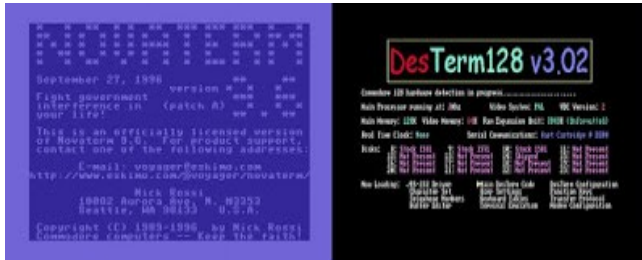

New graphic formats popularized in the 90s also got support on our little 8-bits, include JPEG with JPX viewer by Stephen Judd in 1999, GIF files with VGIF viewer by David Jansen in 1990, and geoGIF by Randy Weems for GEOS the same year. Photos became a particular fascination with C64 users with the invention/discovery of dozens of new video modes one could achieve with the VIC-II chip, such as FLI, IFLI, and all the derivatives that emerged between 1990 and 2010.

There were also amazing advances in image creating and editing software for the 8-bits as well. This includes the amazing [GoDot]() system for the C64 released in 1996 by Arndt Dettke, as well as IPaint for the Commodore 128 in 1993 by Rick Kane. And of course, there is no way GEOS would be outdone on image editing, which made

the release of geoCanvas by Nate Fiedler in 1993 quite an event.

And lastly, as the BBS scene gave way to the internet, serial terminal programs capable of 80 column display and ANSI grew in importance for 8-bit computer users using dial-up shell accounts. This made the release of Novaterm 9.6 by Nick Rossi in 1997 an extremely welcome development for C64 users. On the Commodore 128, we all swore by DesTerm by Mathew Desmond in 1998.

Part III: Magazines

Magazines and other bundles of periodical content continued to play an important role in the interregnum, especially during the early 1990s when it was still our only way to find out what was going on in the Commodore world.

At first, the glossy magazines, especially those hanging in from the 1980s, continued to keep us in the loop.

In the U.S., these would include RUN Magazine which continued until 1993, and COMPUTE! magazine, which included an internal "Gazette" section for 8-bitters until 1994. In their waning years, the content shifted a bit towards GEOS and the new CMD hardware, but otherwise kept their original focus.

Believe it or not, new glossy magazines also appeared after the old 1980s magazines vanished, although many of them didn't last very long.
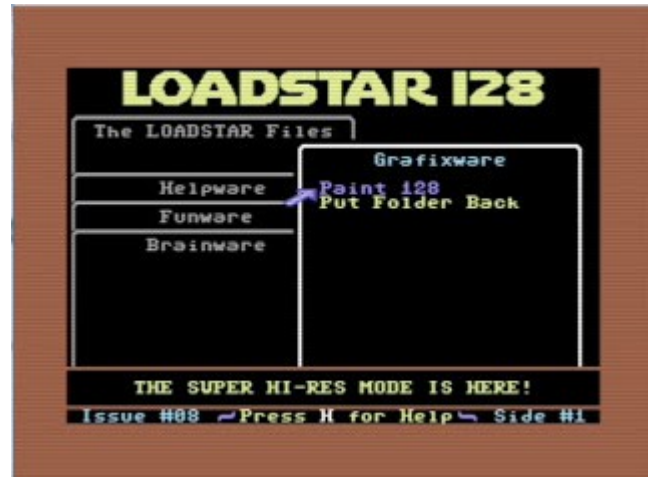

Creative Micro Design's own Commodore World, which ran from 1994-1999, picked up where RUN magazine left off and focused almost entirely on GEOS and their other products. Meanwhile, GO64!, a German language

Magazine, was published by CSW Verlag from 1997-2000. GO64! also began publishing an English edition in 1999, and picked up the remainder of Commodore World's subscribers. [The English edition was later stopped.]

Also in Europe, the gaming magazine Commodore Format held strong from 1990 all the way through Commodore's bankruptcy in 1995. It remained intensely focused on cheat codes and strategies and tons of colorful screenshots all the way.

And of course, the magazine Die Hard ran for 20 issues, from 1992 to 1994, and started out as a monochrome newsletter to quickly build into a nice glossy magazine. It was published by LynnCarthy Industries in Idaho.
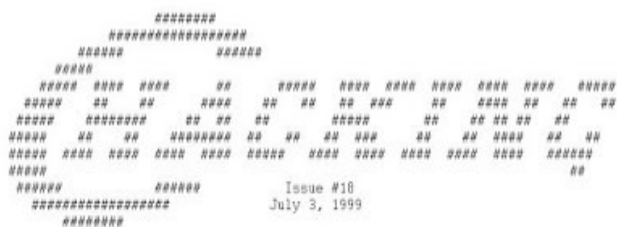

Magazines based entirely on disk have been around since the 1980s, and chief among those was the mighty LoadStar by Fender Tucker of SoftDisk Publishing, and later Dave Moorman. Known for publishing digital articles and original Commodore 64 programs, pictures, and music from independent contributors, LoadStar managed to hang on far longer than most. In 1990, LoadStar 128 joined its older brother as a Commodore 128 only publication, and they ran until 2007. The disk magazine was also accompanied by a paper magazine called the LoadStar Letter, which spawned another paper publication called The Underground by S. Eggleston of California.

Launched in 2001 by Joerg "Nafcom" Droege, Scene World has been publishing their interviews, articles, and software for both NTSC and PAL users ever since.

Another important disk magazines from this period is Commodore Gazette published by Christopher Ryan of Michigan, which ran from 1995 - 2004. It focused primarily on articles and public domain software.

Of course, its impossible to discuss periodicals from this period without discussing the several online newsletters published during this time. First and foremost among these was the mighty C= Hacking Magazine published by Craig Taylor between 1992 and 2002. It focused on community innovations, programming techniques, and the hidden capabilities of our little 8-bits.

And lastly, although you've probably already heard of it, the online magazine Commodore Free was started back in 2006 by Nigel Parker, and didn't cease publishing new issues until 2017.

Part IV: Early Internet

The early days of the internet for Commodore 8-bit users could be summed up by USENET and FTP. Web sites did exist, but tended to be more like picture galleries and references than social media.

USENET was the early internet's standard Forums protocol, and allowed for networked computers to share plain-ascii text under group categories. It was THE social media of the 1990s for Commodore users.

The popular USENET groups for C= 8-bitters were called "comp.sys.cbm" and "comp.binaries.cbm".

The former was for announcements, conversation, trolling, and the occasional Speccy vs C64 flame war. It would be pretty familiar to any modern user browsing the old discussions, which you can absolutely do right now through Google groups. Common refrains there include the FAQ postings by Cameron Kaiser, and few old timers will forget the ramblings of WildStar.

"comp.binaries.cbm" is a odd medium for sharing software, but that's what it was. Although on casual inspection it appeared to be another discussion forum, instead you'd find most of the messages were UUencoded ascii of various commodore related binaries, often broken up into several parts spanning several messages. An early unix shell account user would download the parts of the message, combine them, and translate them back from ascii -> binary before moving it over to a floppy for execution.

FTP sites constituted a more straight-forward method for sharing binary files on the internet, and several FTP sites sprang up during the 90s to serve the 8-bit community.
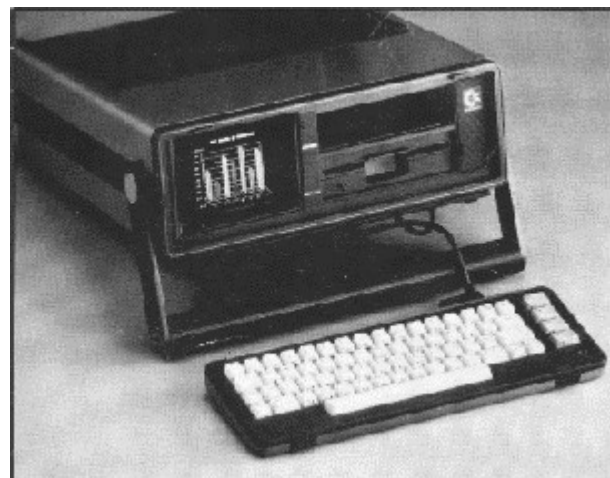
One early important site was the FUNET archives at ftp://ftp.funet.fi/pub/cbm. Maintained by Marko Mäkelä until 2005, funet was invaluable as a source of firmware for computers with dead roms, schematics for troubleshooting, as well as all the latest utilities and project documents to keep any 8-bit user busy. Since 2005, the archive has been at ftp://ftp.zimmers.net/pub/cbm

Videocam.net.au, run by the Australians Rod and Gaelyne Gasson, was another popular general purpose file area that seemed to have a little bit of everything.

When it comes to games, however, nothing beat arnold.c64.org and arnold.niof.no. So popular were these enormous collections of disk images that they were known simply as "The Arnold Archives".

Copyright 1998 Cameron Kaiser

Web sites, while not as important early on, were still seen as artistic monuments on a hill -- discussed when they changed, and little more. Many of these monuments remain to this day, while some have faded into memory. The Secret Weapons of Commodore has always been one of my personal favorites, as was the Commodore 8-Bit Server, the Commodore Knowledge Base, VIC-20 Digital Archaeology, Snakeman's page, Project 64, Zimmers.net, and the CBM-II Page -- but these are just a sample.

Part V: Sunset, or Sunrise?

The last decade has seen impressive leaps of renewed interest in Commodore 8-bit computing. New storage devices, new networking solutions, new display options, new computers, and piles of new games and software that seems to have come out of nowhere. It's almost like the 1980s are completely back again.

But between 1990 and 2010, the 8-bit community marched onward, even as we watched former comrades fall away. I think it's useful to remember that period, both to reflect on the problems we faced, and on all that was built as a foundation for what we would all enjoy today in our little 8-bit hobby.

News On Maurice Randall

by Jim Brain

(For years and years, software and hardware developer Maurice Randall has held onto the rights to produce Creative Micro Designs goods, such as the CMD Hard Drive, the CMD RAMLink, and the CMD FD floppy drive series. He has not sold any of these products since the early 2000's. Jim Brain, himself a hardware developer, has addressed that situation which provides some clarification. Here is what Jim has said.)

OK, so here's the details, like them or not:

* Yes, I have (and continue to) tried to buy out [Maurice Randall's] remaining product stock (even just buy the unmade stock, PCs used to create the units, etc.). I inquired on getting some help with some equations in December 2019 (Ray Carlsen asked me to help, since he gets units to repair, but no PLD files to assist), but I have not been able to convince MR to chat on the topic.

* MR does not "own" the licensing/IP. He was supposed to pay licensing to Mark Fellows [of CMD], which he did for a while, but then got behind and stopped.

* He *DOES* own the PCs used to write the CPLDs, raw materials, stuff like that.

* He also owns copies of the schematics and such. Again, he does not own the IP, but he has the copies in his possession.
* Mark has truly moved on. I'm sure you could find him, but I keep trying to get the files from him as well. The masters are in his parent's attic, and he's just not motivated enough to go dig through them to get me the details. Don't be too harsh on him. Try to remember something you did (or some code you wrote) 30+ years ago and see what you'd think if someone called and asked for copies of the source (or help).

* Doug Cotton [of CMD] is not associated with this anymore. Last I remember, he works at a library. Don't call him for sure.

* I think there was a Christianson Sr. and Jr. who were part of CMD (I forget their first names). Again, they'd be no help. When CMD got out of the CBM business, all copyrights and IP [were] re-assigned (or reverted) to Mark.

* If the situation presented itself, my business has made enough money to fund the purchase, no crowdfunding required. And, given how the last financial transaction ended, I would HIGHLY discourage such a thing. When MR bought the rights to produce, he borrowed from lots of CBM enthusiasts, none of whom ever saw that money again. If *I* was involved in buying the rights, my plan would be to self fund, make up enough units of the original designs (or as close as possible) as 'legacy' or "continuation" units, like

they do today for cars, sell those to helpfully pay the tab on the funding (or get close), and then try to upload as much of the material as I can get, so at least it will be available for research (you'd still need to license parts of it, like the DOS and some of the Verilog/ABEL) ifyou wanted to reproduce, but having the designs online would make repairs easier and smart folks can always work around some of the more egregious concerns (the PCB artwork is copyrighted, but the schematic cannot be, and not all ABEL/Verilog/VHDL is novel enough to get copyright protection)

Ever so slowly, I make progress reverse engineering these things (reverse engineering itself is a learned art), and I always welcome help, but I really doubt the original plans will materialize. I *do* have tentative permission to reproduce the units from Mark if I can get such a thing to fruition, so the legal issues are not my main stumbling block.

Hope that helps clear things up.

Jim

(P.S. Above, Jim speaks that Maurice Randall "borrowed from lots of CBM enthusiasts, none of whom ever saw that money again." Robert Bernardo is one of those enthusiasts who never saw his money again nor did he receive any products.)

Club Officers

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

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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 Panera Bread, 3590 West Shaw, 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.

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no cost if a blank disk is provided. We do not
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programs. Please call our attention to any
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… What Kind Of Chip You Got In There? …