



THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

-by Lenard R. Roach

Ladies and gentlemen of FCUG, I'm tired; but it's not the tired that means I'm exhausted, it's the tired that says more on the lines of, "I've had enough." I'm tired of putzing around trying to find something to do with my Commodore! She is a great machine and all, but I can't seem to go anywhere with her anymore. It seems that (and let's take writing as an example) in order for me to do anything on the Commodore anymore I literally have to stop my spiraling out-of-control universe and hatchet a hunk of time out just to sit at the Commodore, boot "TEA 4 2," and access a couple of addresses that I now hand write onto the envelope. Other than that, the Commodore sits dormant on the computer stand that was bought for it over 15 years ago. The last major thing I did with the Commodore was clean out all the repetitive software and disks I wasn't using and put them on the curb, and I did that about January of this year. Yup, as the need progresses while developments arise, I am slowly being forced further and further away from my Commodore and more towards smaller and smaller computer devices to make the grade, even working on Commodore related functions.

As you may have noticed that since the beginning of the year, "The Interface" newsletter has been produced on my Compaq laptop, formatted in Microsoft Word, with my articles and pieces written and sometimes produced on my iPhone 4. Do you know where I am writing this article at this very minute? I am at work, waiting for customers to come in, and punching the letters in with my thumb on my iPhone using Notepad. Back in the day I used to bring my Commodore SX-64 with me to the mall and compose the stuffing out of it. Now computing is as easy as an app away by simply reaching for your portable communications device.

Now don't get the Fat Man wrong, I'm not ranting anti-development sayings and I am all for the advancement of digital devices to make our lives easier, but as I have said before, if you're going to hobby with a specific computer, then do all that you possibly can with said computer. It's been difficult to keep my hands on the Commodore to do a function like bill paying when I can just whip out my cell phone, tap an app, and pay a bill all while I'm sitting at a traffic light at some busy corner in Kansas City.

I'm sorry. I'm all over the map here. Hence the bipolarism that lives in me. I can never keep a straight thought. I guess that's why screen writer Syd Field created the writer's paradigm to keep your thoughts focused on the plot of the story. Like I said, I'm tired. Maybe someday I'll get my life in some sort of order and not need a paradigm. We were talking about the frustration of not working on the Commodore and having to substitute other devices like laptops and cell

phones to get the work done that is wished for the Commodore. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm at a loss. The more I do away from the Commodore, the less it seems I need to use a Commodore. This seems to be anti-climatic solution to what I'm trying to accomplish. When I published "Run/Stop-Restore" I involved the Commodore in as many aspects of the work as I could. The greatest point of the book was that the final product was done in Commodore. When it came time to publish "Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition" I had to abandon the Commodore format and put the manuscript into Microsoft Word. The only publisher that would have even considered using the original Commodore format was Vantage Press, but a quick Google search revealed that Vantage had several lawsuits pending on the terms of bilking customers of money and producing no product, or producing a poor quality product. Vantage asked \$10,000 for a completed project; Authorhouse was asking only \$3,000 so I naturally went with Authorhouse, but like I've said in previous issues, I should have re-thought that decision and still searched for a company that at least knew what a Commodore was instead of allowing them (and myself) to hurry through the process.

"We'll, old man, you've done enough complaining about your situation--what are you going to do about it?"

Ah! Thank you for your kind words. The answer to my dilemma can be found in both the Bible and in my book, "Run/Stop-Restore." The idea has always been a simple one. Carve (or in my case, chainsaw) a small hunk of time out of each day and spend some of that hunk working, little by little, on various

Commodore endeavors. That's Proverbs 13:11, people. Over the course of time I will end up logging in several hours while still getting things done that I hope to do. My goal now is to work 15 minutes a day on my hobbies so I won't go nuts working all the time.

Hey, thanks for reading my spiel. Maybe next issue I can actually make sense.



A HISTORY OF THE AMIGA

Part 2

The birth of Amiga

-by Jeremy Reimer

Born as a Console, but with the Heart of a Computer

Game consoles and personal computers are not all that different on the inside. Both use a central processing unit as their main engine (the Apple II, Commodore 64, and the Atari 400/800 all used the same 6502 CPU that powered the original Nintendo and Sega consoles). [The C64 used a variant called the 6510.] Both allow user input (keyboards and mice on computers, joysticks and game pads on consoles),

and both output to a graphical display device (either a monitor or a TV). The main difference is in user interaction. Gaming consoles do one thing only — play games — whereas personal computers also allow users to write letters, balance finances, and even enter their own customized programs. Computers cost more, but they also do more. It was not too much of a stretch to imagine the new Hi-Toro console being optionally expandable to a full computer.

However, the investors weren't likely to see things that way. They wanted to make money, and at the time the money in video games dwarfed the money in personal computers. Jay and his colleagues agreed that they would design the new piece of hardware to look like a games unit, with the option of expansion into a full computer cleverly hidden.

This was one of those decisions that, in retrospect, seems incredibly prescient. At the time, it was merely practical — the investors wanted a game console, the new company needed Jay Miner, and Jay wanted to design a new computer. This compromise allowed everyone to get what they wanted. But events were transpiring that would make this decision not only beneficial but necessary for the survival of the company.

The Video Game Crash

The great video game crash of 1983 was, like all great crashes, easy to predict after it had already happened. With sales of home consoles and video games rising exponentially, companies started to think that the potential for earning money was unlimited. Marketing executives at Atari bragged that they could "sh*t in a box

and sell it." And inevitably, that's exactly what happened.

There were too many software companies producing too many games for the Atari VCS and other competing consoles. The quality of games began to suffer, and the technological limitations of the first generation of video game machines were starting to become insurmountable. Clever programming could only take you so far. Today, it is understood that each new generation of game consoles has a limited life cycle, and new hardware platforms are scheduled for release just as the old ones are starting to wane. Back then, however, the industry was so new that the sinusoidal-like demand for a game platform was not understood at all. People just expected sales to keep going up forever.

Just like the dot-com bubble in the late 1990s, a point was reached where the initial enthusiasm was left behind and replaced with sheer insanity. This point can be traced precisely to the release of a new game for the Atari VCS in late 1982, timed to coincide with the release of a new blockbuster movie: "E.T. The Extra Terrestrial."

Atari paid millions of dollars for the license to make the game, but marketing executives demanded that it be developed and sent to manufacturing in six weeks. Good software is like good wine — it cannot be rushed. The game that Atari programmers managed to produce turned out to be a very nasty bottle of vinegar. It was repetitive, frustrating, and not much fun. Atari executives, however, did not realize this. They compounded their mistake by ordering the manufacture of five million

cartridges, which was nearly the number of VCS consoles existing at the time. But the insanity didn't stop there. For the release of the game, Pac-Man, Atari actually manufactured more cartridges than there were VCS consoles to run them!

An Atari marketing manager was actually asked about this disparity, and his response clearly expressed his total disconnect from reality. He said that people might like to buy two copies: one for home and one for a vacation cottage!

Instead of two copies, most people decided to buy zero. Atari (and thus Warner) posted huge losses for the year and were forced to write off most of its unsold inventory of VCS cartridges. In a famous ceremony, tens of thousands of E.T., Pac-Man, and other carts were buried and bulldozed in an industrial waste dump.

The E.T. debacle was the exact moment when the bubble burst. Millions of kids around the world decided that Atari, and by extension, all console video games weren't "cool" anymore. Sales of all game systems and software plummeted. Suddenly, venture funding for new game companies vanished.

Personal computer sales, however, were still climbing steadily. Systems like the Apple II, the Commodore 64, and even the new IBM PC were becoming more popular in the home. Parents could justify paying a little more money for a system that was educational, while the kids rejoiced in the fact that these little computers could also play games.

This set the stage for a fateful meeting. The nervous Hi-Toro investors,

watching the video game market crumble before their eyes, anxiously asked Jay Miner if it might be possible to convert the new console into a full-blown personal computer. Imagine their relief as he told them he had been planning this all along!

There was only one problem remaining - - the company's name. Someone had done a cursory check and found out that the name Hi-Toro was already owned by a Japanese lawnmower company. Jay wanted his new computer to both friendly and sexy. He suggested "Amiga," the Spanish word for female friend. Perhaps not coincidentally, Amiga would also come before Atari in the phone book! Jay wasn't terribly pleased with the name initially. However, as none of the other employees could think of anything better, the name stuck.

Now everything was in place. The players were set; the game was under way. The dream was becoming a reality.

Early Days at Amiga

Jay Miner once described the feeling of being involved in the young Amiga company as being like Mickey Mouse in the movie Fantasia, creating magical broomsticks to help carry buckets of water, then being unable to stop his runaway creations as they multiplied beyond control. He immediately hired four engineers to help him with the hardware design, and a chief of software design, Bob Pariseau. Bob then quickly hired four more software engineers to help him. The young company quickly became an unruly beast, devouring money at an insatiable pace. But it was

necessary.

In high technology, even more so than in other industries, speed is always important, and there is never enough time. Things change so quickly that this year's hot new design looks stale and dated next year. The only way to overcome this problem is to apply massive amounts of concentrated brainpower and come up with a very clever design, then rush as quickly as possible to get the design through the initial prototype and into an actual product. Even the inelegant, unimaginative and graphically inept IBM PC, introduced in 1981, was the result of an unprecedented one-year crash building program. Not even the mighty IBM, with resources greater than those of small nations, was immune to the pressures of time.

A tiny company like Amiga had even greater problems. On top of the maddening rush to ramp up staffing and develop a new product, Jay and his team had to worry about much larger corporations and their industrial espionage teams stealing their new ideas and applying much greater resources to beat them to market. Nobody knew what Amiga, Inc. was up to, and the company's founders liked it that way. So an elaborate two-pronged attack was devised to ensure that nobody got wise to Amiga's ambitions before they were ready to show them to the world.

Firstly, the company would create a deceptive business front. This had to be something simple enough that it would not take away too many resources from the actual work, yet still deliver actual products and generate some revenue. The company decided to stick to its

video game roots and produce hardware and software add-ons for the Atari VCS. One of the first products, a collector's item today, was the Amiga Joyboard, a kind of joystick that was used by sitting or standing on top of it and leaning back and forth, left and right. The company also wrote some simple games for it that involved skiing and skateboarding. While income from these games and peripherals helped sustain the company in its early days, it was also affected by the video game crash of '83 and sales quickly dwindled.

This short-lived era of the young company's history had one long-lasting impact on the Amiga computer. R.J. Mical, a programmer writing some of the complicated routines that would bring the Amiga to life, developed a simple game that used the Joyboard and was designed to try and help him to relax. The game was called "Zen Meditation," and the object was to try and sit absolutely still. The game was a kind of running joke in the Amiga offices, and when the time came to write the text for a serious error message for the Amiga operating system, a programmer came up with the term "Guru Meditation Error." This would remain in the operating system for years to come, until a nameless and unimaginative Commodore executive insisted on removing the Guru and making the message into "Software Failure."

The second front of deception against industrial espionage involved codenames for the powerful new custom chips the team was designing for the Amiga computer. Dave Morse decided that henceforth all these chips would be referred to by women's names. The idea was that if anyone intercepted telephone

conversations between Amiga people, they would be unable to figure out that they were discussing parts of a computer. The idea of "Agnus" being temperamental or "Denise" not living up to expectations also appealed to the engineers' sense of humor. The computer itself was codenamed "Lorraine," the name of Dave's wife.

Jay Miner may have been leading the team, but the details of the new computer were hammered out at team design meetings, held in a seminar-like room that had whiteboards covering the walls. Everyone could pitch for inclusion in the machine, and the small group would have to come to a consensus about which features to include and which to leave out. Engineering is all about trade-offs, and you can't just decide to include "the best of everything" and have it all work. Cost, speed, time to develop, and complexity are just some of the factors that must be taken into account at this crucial stage of a new computer. The way the Amiga team came to a consensus was with foam rubber baseball bats.

It isn't known who first came up with the idea, but the foam bats became an essential part of all design meetings. A person would pitch an idea, and if other engineers felt they were stupid or unnecessary, they would hit the person over the head with a bat. As Jay said, "it didn't hurt, but the humiliation of being beaten with the bat was unbearable." It was a light-hearted yet still serious approach, and it worked. Slowly the Amiga design began to take shape.

Hold And Modify

Jay had always had a passion for flight

simulators, and it was something that would stay with him for the rest of his life. A friend of his took him on a field trip to Link, a company that made multimillion-dollar flight simulators for the military. Jay was enthralled by the realistic sights and sounds and vowed that he would make the Amiga computer capable of playing the best flight simulators possible.

Two major design decisions came out of this trip – the blitter and HAM mode. Jay had already read about blitters in electronic design magazines and had taken a course at Stanford on their use, so they were not a new idea for him. However, the flight simulator experience had made him determined to create the best possible blitter for the Amiga.

A blitter is a dedicated chip that can move large chunks of graphics around on the screen around very quickly without having to involve the CPU. All modern video cards have what is essentially an advanced descendant of a blitter inside them. Again, Jay was ahead of his time.

HAM mode, which stood for Hold And Modify, was a way of getting more colors to display on the screen than could normally fit into the display memory. At the time, memory chips were very expensive, and the cost for displaying millions of colors at once was too high even for military applications like the Link simulator. So instead of storing all the color information for each dot (or pixel) on the display, the hardware could be programmed to start with one color and then change only one component of it (Hue, Saturation or Luminosity) for each subsequent pixel along each line. Jay decided to put this

into the Amiga.

Later on in the design process, Jay would become concerned that HAM mode was too slow and even asked his chip layout artist if he could take it out. The chip designer replied that it would take many months and leave an aesthetically unappealing "hole" in the middle of the chip. Jay decided to keep the feature in and later admitted that this was a good decision. The Amiga shipped with the ability to display 4096 colors in this mode, far more than any of its competitors, with clever programmers squeezing even more colors out of future Amiga chipset revisions. Despite HAM being suitable only for displaying pre-calculated images, a software company would even develop a graphics editor that operated in HAM mode. Like the chess game on the Atari 2600 before it, programmers would make the impossible possible on the Amiga.

Screens Like No Other

Another new invention for the Amiga computer was the "copper" chip. This was essentially a special-purpose CPU designed specifically for direct manipulation of the display. It had only three instructions, but it could directly access any part of the other display chips at any time. What's more, it could turn amazing tricks in the fraction of a second that it took for the monitor to refresh the display. This allowed a trick that no other computer has ever reproduced -- the ability to view multiple different screens, opened at different resolutions, at the same time. These "pull-down" screens would amaze anyone who saw them. Modern computers can open different screens at different resolutions (say, for example,

to open a full-screen game at a lower resolution than the desktop is displaying, in order to play the game faster or at a higher frame rate), but they can only switch between these modes, not display multiple modes at once.

The design eventually coalesced down to three chips named Agnus, Denise, and Paula. Agnus handled direct access to memory and contained both the blitter and copper chips. Denise ran the display and supported "sprites," or graphical objects that could be displayed and moved over a complex background without having to redraw it. Finally, Paula handled sound generation using digitally-sampled waveforms and was capable of playing back four channels at once: two on the left stereo channel and two on the right. It would be years before competing computer sound capabilities came anywhere close to this ability. Paula also controlled the Amiga's floppy disk drive.

These chips formed the core of what would be referred to as the Amiga's "custom chipset." However, they did not yet exist except on paper. While the software development team was able to get started planning and writing programs that would support the chipset's features, the hardware team needed some way to test that their chips would actually work before committing to the expense of manufacturing them. In addition, the operating software could not be fully tested without having real Amiga hardware to run it on.

Come back for Part 3 -- The First Prototype.



SO WHAT'S UP WITH COMMVEX?

Interviewer - Forrest Nettles of the Clark County Commodore Computer Club (of Las Vegas)

[The following is an interview for Forrest Nettles' blog.]

For those unfamiliar with CommVex, 5C's conducted an online/email interview with Robert Bernardo, one of the original organizers and president of the Fresno Commodore User Group.

5C's: So start out by telling me how many years Commvex has been going...

RB: The Commodore Vegas Expo, a.k.a. CommVEx, is in its ninth year, which means it started in 2005.

5C's: ...and who started it? Has it always been in Vegas? Always up to now has it been at the Las Vegas Club? Did it start before Comdex bit the dust and if so was there any conflict with the 2 names?

RB: Back in early 2004 I received word from Jeri Ellsworth, Commodore hacker, that people at the mid-West Commodore shows (probably the Cincinnati Commodore Computer Club Expo or the Louisville Users of Commodore Kentucky Expo) wanted a show out in the western United States. Jeri and I talked on the phone for quite awhile; I had never organized a show before, though I had attended many shows in the past, anything from the giant World of Commodore Shows in California in the

1980's to the Lansing Area Commodore Club Expo of the late 1990's to the Chicago SWRAP Commodore Expo of the early 2000's. Then Bruce Thomas of the Commodore Users of Edmonton contacted me, saying that there should be a western C= show. Later that summer, I met up with Bruce in Edmonton, and we planned what would be CommVex. Because the old COMDEX (Computer Dealers' Exhibition) was gone, I thought a play on its name would be good, so I thought of the name of CommVEx. Bruce would be the organizer from faraway; I would be the on-the-ground organizer. We needed a city that was easily accessible to all, i.e., with plenty of transportation options. A city that was centrally located for attendees to come. A city which would have the resources for our classic computers. San Francisco was out; the C= users and their clubs there were fragmented and/or disbanded. So was Los Angeles. Fresno, the city of our little club, was not centrally located. Nothing in Arizona or Oregon. I finally hit upon the idea of Las Vegas. Las Vegas was easily accessible by car, by bus, or by plane (though Amtrak trains did not go there). It had plenty of hotels for attendees. And it had a strong C= club, the Clark County Commodore Computer Club.

During my Spring Break, I went to Las Vegas to find a venue and talk to the 5C's. Al Jackson, president of the 5C's, was very cordial and open to the idea of CommVEx. For a venue, he offered his meeting room at Nevada Power Company, a free public room. He also offered the resources of his club, hardware and manpower. I met with the members, and they were agreeable to such a show. We from the Fresno club

would bring in the software and presentations, and his Las Vegas club would provide us the computer set ups. Via telephone, Bruce Thomas searched for near-to-the-venue, affordable hotels for the attendees. Almost at the last minute, he found one, a kind of dumpy one with only one working elevator and rooms that needed maintenance (it closed the next year and hasn't reopened since).

That first CommVEx had excellent attendance, probably due to the free entrance and the curiosity factor. That encouraged me to continue with CommVEx. Bruce would not participate in the organizing of future shows, so it was all left to me. The second CommVEx seemed tougher to organize. Though the 5C's would join us again, the Nevada Power venue was gone; NP would not agree to a two-day event for their public room, just a one-day show. If people were to come from far and wide to attend CommVEx, it had to be a two-day show. My job was now to find a new venue. After phoning and personally visiting several hotels, I decided on the Plaza Hotel & Casino in downtown Las Vegas. The pricing of the conference room was less expensive than the other competing hotels, the hotel was centrally located, it had plenty of parking, and it had affordable, relatively comfortable rooms. Because we had to pay for a venue, we now to charge an admission price - \$10 whether the attendee stayed for 1 or 2 days of the show. That price has not changed since then, though the price for our venue has gone up.

The 5C's have been our partner all these years, and the Plaza has been our de facto venue for all this time, except for the last few years. Starting in 2011 the Plaza Hotel went under

refurbishment, and we had to move CommVEx to the sister hotel across the street, the Las Vegas Club Hotel.

This year CommVEx returns to the Plaza Hotel as the Las Vegas Club gets its turn to be refurbished.

With the demise of the C4 Expo in Cincinnati and the merging of the Emergency Chicagoland Commodore Convention with the Vintage Computer Festival Midwest, it seems that CommVEx is the last Commodore and Amiga-only show left in the states.

5C's: What is the history of the Fresno group? How long have you been president? What kind of resources (equipment, libraries, etc) does your group have?

RB: The Fresno Commodore User Group has been in existence since 1981. I joined the club in 1995, and I've been president of the club since 1997. We have a disk library of over 3,000 programs, and we have two storage facilities full of Commodore and Amiga software and hardware, not to mention my house which is full of Commodore and Amiga items.

5C's: What is your background? How did you get involved with Commodore?

RB: I'm a middle-school English teacher, and I bought my first Commodore, a C64, in August, 1983. In 1985 I graduated to a flat C128 and 1571 drive and a SX-64 computer. In 1986 I bought the C128D (and its built-in disk drive) when my 1571 died. I didn't get my first Amiga, an A500, until 1995, when Dick Estel of the Fresno Commodore User Group handed one to me. Later from people donating their collections, I got an A1000, an A2000,

an A1200, an A600, and an A4000. I bought an A3000 for \$25 from a member of The Other Group of Amigoids in San Jose. I also bought an Amiga CD32 for about \$100 and an Amiga CDTV for about the same price.

In the 1980's, I only knew of one club, the Stockton Commodore User Group which was 3 hours from me and which met on a weeknight. It was thus impossible for me to get to 99% of their meetings. I did buy plenty of Commodore software from storefronts, like Gemco and B. Dalton Bookstores. I avidly bought most of the Commodore magazines from the newsstands. In the early 1990's I started buying the Amiga magazines, even though I didn't have an Amiga computer until years later.

5C's: Does your group do any activities or shows outside of your meetings?

RB: Most of our membership is out-of-town, but a few members and I make the long trip to Las Vegas every year for CommVEx. Representing FCUG, I've set up a Commodore/Amiga table at the Classic Gaming Expo, the Vintage Computer Festival, the Vintage Computer Festival East, Notacon, the SC3 Arcade Party in the Los Angeles area, most recently at Maker Faire in San Mateo, California, and this July at the Atari Party 2013 in Davis, California. Joining me at times would be members of The Other Group of Amigoids and the Southern California Commodore & Amiga Network, the latter of which I co-founded.

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Be sure and make it to this year's CommVEx, bring your family and friends and join in the fun and support

what is probably the biggest Commodore event in the US! Help us make it a success!



MEMORY LANE

-by Dick Estel

INTRODUCTION

This is number three 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.

BEN & WILMA BRISCOE

Ben Briscoe joined the club several years after I did, although he had been a Commodore user for a while at the time. Over the next few years he became probably my closest friend in the club.

Ben had a wide variety of interests, but our relationship away from meetings began when he asked if I could give him

some help using GEOS. I agreed to visit him in Avenal, about 60 miles from Fresno, and he invited me to have dinner and spend the night.

I accepted and made the acquaintance of his wife Wilma. Whatever I was able to teach Ben was more than repaid by getting to know him and Wilma. During my first visit Ben showed me a flight simulator program/game he was using on his Commodore. However, it was not till later that I learned he was actually a licensed pilot.

In fact, although Ben had a long career in a highly respected profession, if you just listed the various jobs he held, you would think he was a drifter who couldn't hold a job!

Ben was born in Indianapolis in 1921 and attended Indiana University until he was drafted in 1942 for service in World War II. In 1944 he married Wilma Bussey, also from Indiana, and they moved to California, where he received a B.S. degree in Education from the University of Southern California in 1950.

They moved to Avenal in Kings County, a town that owed its existence to the Standard Oil Company. Ben taught in schools there for 30 years, while Wilma worked for Standard Oil.

During his college years and then in Avenal he played saxophone in dance bands, performing at cowboy dances in nearby Parkfield. He also worked weekends as a cowboy for a local rancher. During summer vacations he worked as a seasonal ranger in Yosemite National Park, being involved in a confrontation between park officers and

a group of "hippies" who were attempting to occupy a large meadow in Yosemite Valley.

After retirement Ben went into the real estate business. It was during this time that he acquired his first Commodore computer for use in his work. He also became a pilot, with his own air taxi business, as well as serving in the Civil Air Patrol doing search and rescue.

He was also pressed into service as a substitute teacher, and in his final involvement in the field of education, worked with a university, teaching graduate students who were in the process of qualifying for a California Teaching Credential.

Ben was also active in his community, participating in the Shriner's organization for many years, and serving on an advisory board for the local Avenal State Prison.

Over the years I visited Ben and Wilma a number of times, including a stop one year at their travel trailer in Lee Vining on the eastern side of the Sierra, where they spent their summers for several seasons.

As he transitioned into using a Windows PC and age began to be a factor, Ben and Wilma made fewer trips to Fresno, and he left the club, but I kept in touch to the end of their lives. Ben fought a difficult battle against cancer, finally succumbing in 2007 at the age of 86. I visited Wilma several times after that, until her passing in 2011 at age 89.

I will always miss and remember the teacher, pilot, cowboy, ranger, musician,

civic leader, and most of all, my friend, Ben Briscoe.



May 2013 Meeting Notes

-by Dick Estel & Robert Bernardo

The May meeting once again brought full attendance - Robert, Louis, Vincent, Roger, Dick, and Brad, plus Brad's daughter Katelyn. While we were eating, Katelyn entertained with a dance she would be performing later at a recital.

Louis reported that he has been in touch with a friend who has a storage facility full of Commodore stuff, some of which will be donated to the club.

Robert reported that his engineer is still working on the C128 VGA adapter, which Robert hopes to show at CommVEx. Currently he is waiting for the engineer to return to work on the project in early July.

Everything is on schedule for CommVEx, coming up July 27 and 28. Vincent announced that he will bring his near-mint VIC 20 (which he won at last year's event). Dick's attendance is uncertain, but Larry Anderson is

expected to attend. Louis will be prepared to man the registration desk if Larry and Dick are not able to do so.

Roger brought a TPUG disk, and we explored it using VICE for the Mac. Vincent served as chief gamer as we checked out a number of games on the disk. It took a while to figure out which keys to use to emulate a Commodore keyboard, but once this issue was resolved, game play went well for most games.

The PETdisk for the Robert's PET 4032 was uncooperative, but Brad enjoyed keying some BASIC lines into the computer.

June 2013 Meeting Notes

-by Dick Estel & Robert Bernardo

For June, our meeting place was graced by the presence of all local members except Brad; in other words, Robert Bernardo, Louis and Vincent Mazzei, Roger Van Pelt, and Dick Estel.

Dick announced that he will not be attending CommVEx this year, and after the meeting it was learned that Larry Anderson will also be absent. Louis agreed to be the registrar, seller of raffle tickets, keeper of the attendance list, and other duties as needed. Dick and Louis got together later to look at the spreadsheet program we've been using to keep track of CommVEx finances, and Louis will either borrow Dick's laptop, or see if the file will work on his wife's Apple laptop.

In other CommVEx news, Robert had announced earlier that the show has been

moved back to the Plaza Hotel, across the street from our location the last two years. Robert has been unable to get to Las Vegas to check out the room, so he will see it for the first time when he arrives there in late July.

The latest guest scheduled for CommVEx is Kent Sullivan, who will discuss how he helped build the Stereo SID Symphony cartridge.

Robert reported on his trip to the Pacific Northwest, where he visited several Commodore users. First was Jim Scaberry, who operates one of the last Commodore software businesses out of his home. Since Jim is in his 80s, he has decided to close out all his merchandise, mostly at 40% off. Robert brought back a number of items which will be sold on Jim's behalf at CommVEx. After the meeting, Robert and Roger went over that merchandise as it sat in Robert's car.

Next was Ray Carlsen, one of the last Commodore repairmen. Robert picked up items he had left on his last visit and dropped off more. Ray's web site is at <http://personalpages.tds.net/~rcarlsen/>

Finally Robert met with Greg Alekel of the Portland Commodore Users Group (<http://pdxcug.org/>). Greg discussed the latest progress on the Comet BBS and other ongoing projects that the club is involved with. Greg advised Robert about a classic computer show that will be held August 18 at Microsoft headquarters (!) in Redmond, WA, involving some C= enthusiasts who work for the 800-pound gorilla of the PC world. On the spot Greg and Robert came up with a name for the show, MACCS (Most Awesome Classic Computer Show).

Robert also filled us in on his attendance at Maker Faire 2013 in Santa Clara. As spokesman for a classic vintage computer, Robert was given a table at no cost, where he displayed a C64 and Amiga A2000. During the two days, over 100 thousand people visited this show that focuses on creativity in arts and electronics, where Robert shared space with such big name players as Industrial Light and Magic (<http://www.ilm.com/>). He received many comments on his display, mostly along the lines of “Oh, I remember the Commodore,” “Oh, I have one of those in my closet,” and “Oh, I learned to program on one of those.” To all such comments Robert briefly responded that people can and do still do those things and more on those “obsolete” machines. He has photos from the event at <http://retro-link.blogspot.com/>.

After the show Robert spoke briefly with Jeri Ellsworth, hacker extraordinaire, whose latest project is “augmented reality glasses,” intended for gaming.

And a final note on shows, Robert will have a display at Atari Party 2013 in Davis, CA, July 6 (<http://www.newbreedsoftware.com/atari-party/2013/>).

Moving on to hardware and software demos, Robert showed us a pile of cool-looking devices that developers have recently released. They included:

1. Two rebuilt, upgraded C64 power supplies from Duncan, the repair tech for The Other Group of Amigoids (TOGA), based in San Jose (<http://www.calweb.com/~rabel1/>). These have better quality, modern

components, and are very light in weight compared to the original CBM products.

2. Two SD2IEC card drives from England . One of them is designed so that the front edge looks like a tiny 1541 drive (see photo at www.dickestel.com/images/fcug316.jpg) and another looks like a tiny 1551 drive. Because of problems with the transaction of these items, Robert does not want to promote the developer.

3. The Computer Saver from Ray Carlsen, a protective device that goes between the computer and the power supply to prevent damage if the PS goes bad, i.e., goes high on the 5 VDC line and/or drops out the 9VAC line.

4. The production model of the Multicart 64 from 8-Bit Designs (operated by our member in Fontana , Charles Gutman). The first prototype was shown at CommVEx in 2007, and the final product includes 63 Commodore games, utilities, and productivity programs. Robert has done some promotion for the device, including a video that he showed us. Vincent served ably as official game tester with the device.