

The Interface

"Taking 8-Bits Into The 21st Century"

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Winter Time!

With A Commodore Winter Comes Commodore Winter Sports. Play Today!

In This Issue:

The Editor's Godzilla (Amazing command of BASIC with one keystroke.)

Monthly Meeting Reports (Sharing with those who couldn't attend.)

The Latest Chapter In My Computer Adventures (Sir Richard speaks!)

Newsletter of the Fresno Commodore User Group – Fresno, California
www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm

THE EDI TOR 'S GO DZI LLA



- By Lenard R. Roach

BASIC: ONE KEYSTROKE CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING

One day I was reading a book on how to teach other people to use a computer. The title of the book and its author escaped my memory, but I did remember the title to the first chapter—You Are The Expert Among Novices. I never thought of myself as “the expert among novices.”; however, I’d always considered myself the novice when compared with other Commodore users who had a greater knowledge of the computer.

Looking over my twenty-plus years of using the Commodore, there have been moments when I did appear to be the expert. Several times while attending a monthly Commodore meeting in Kansas City, some of the members who were also interested in BASIC programming would corner me before I could leave, and they would ask for suggestions to help them with their projects. They would drill me about which formulas or which expressions in BASIC would work best in the programs they were working on. Some of their questions were well over my head, so I had to fake it by telling them to refer to either the

Commodore 64 User’s Guide or the Commodore 64 Programmer’s Guide, “where I got my information” I would say to them. With that, I would squeak out of the conversation, but occasionally I would have to be honest and tell the person quizzing me that I had no idea what they could do.

If anyone reading this has ever used any of the programs that I have written, I’m sure you noticed that all my programs are really simple BASIC with expressions mostly made up of PRINT statements along with the occasional command line that actually makes the Commodore execute a function either within the computer’s memory or onto disk, in most cases to make the disk drive create a sequential file. Also, most of my programs are in a database style, but each program executes a different function. I deal mostly in financial software, because personal money management has been a weakness of mine ever since I was a boy when I got my first dollar from mowing yards in my old Olathe, Kansas neighborhood. When it comes to showing anybody born after 2000 or later the functions of a computer like the Commodore 64, even the simplest of code would send their minds into a whirl. Allow me to provide an example:

Sometime ago, I was at church, using my Commodore 64 to help with the lesson of the day. I spent lots of free time, coding a program that hopefully would be of help in the presentation. The kids barely got the point of the lesson, and my program was mainly at fault. I focused too much on humor and less on the application of the lesson when I was writing it. You can’t win them all.

After the presentation, I was starting to pack up my Commodore computer and head home when a slender, dark-haired youth, who we will call John, stepped up to me and asked what else this forty-year old antique of a computer could do. I

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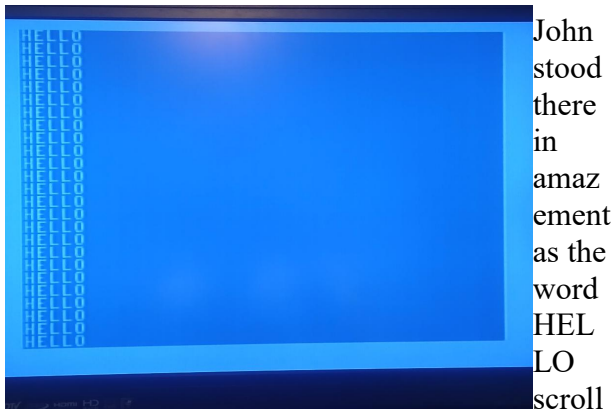
related to him that over the years, I've used the Commodore for some things, like writing and gaming. He seemed unimpressed, since his PC at home could do the same thing. I sensed that the young person wanted to know something unique about the Commodore that would completely set it apart from the PC. I started to lecture him on the various ways the Commodore could be made to do incredible stuff that his PC could not. John simply raised one eyebrow, looked at me straight in the eye, and said ...

"Show me."

Though Kansas was not the "Show Me" state, I still wanted to help John understand the differences between the Commodore 64 and the modern PC, but what could I do? I was on the spot. I had to be the expert among novices, or else I would make a fool of myself. I thought hard and fast as to the best way to impress John. It quickly hit that I should go back to the very foundation, the rudimentary coding, that all Commodore users learned. I took the keyboard in hand and typed the following lines:

```
10 PRINT"HELLO."
20 GOTO10
```

I then typed RUN and hit RETURN:



ed down the screen. I pressed the RUN/STOP key, and the procession of words halted. Looking

at me, John stared with wide eyes which seemed to say to me, "What else can it do?"

I explained that though it is simple to understand the functions of BASIC, one simple keystroke could change the whole dynamic of what was being displayed on screen. I turned back to the Commodore and wrote the same command again but with a very small twist--

```
10 PRINT"HELLO";
20 GOTO10
```

I quickly explained to John that the little semicolon at the end of line 10 would change everything. I typed RUN, pressed RETURN, and the following was displayed on the screen:



John couldn't believe his eyes as he saw the word HELLO all over the screen. In John's mind, this was something that his PC could not do. He looked at me with a big smile on his face.

"Can I try?"

I got up from the chair and allowed John to work with the Commodore's BASIC. I explained to him how the two-line program worked, and he went right to it writing his own PRINT command for the computer to loop back. He tried it with the semicolon and without the semicolon. As I watched, I told him about other keys on the Commodore keyboard and their functions. Soon

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he was changing font colors and creating reverse images of his texts. The poor boy was having so much fun that he didn't realize his parents were waiting right in front of him. When dad cleared his throat, John looked up. John got up from the chair, rushed around the table, and spoke excitedly about what he had learned. He pointed to the Commodore on the table.

"Can we get one of those?" John asked.

Dad looked at the Commodore for a second and then refocused his eyes on John.

"It all depends on what it is, how much it is, and where to find it," dad said.

"It's a really old computer called a Commodore 64," John began.

Now it was John's turn to become the expert among novices, as he tried to explain to his parents what he got the computer to do for him and how he could change everything by the stroke of one key on the keyboard. I spoke up and told John's dad that you can find a Commodore 64 anywhere on the Internet. John's dad thanked me for giving extra attention to his son. Then mom, dad, and John strolled out of the classroom and into the main hall. I went back to unhooking the Commodore from the overhead projector and picking up all the bus cables and hardware that I had brought to run the computer for the class.

I wasn't meaning to proselytize John in any way to get a Commodore computer, but I did want him to understand how different the Commodore was from the PC.

When it comes to the Commodore, it's all about having fun with the machine. Commodore is not only a fun computer but an educational computer as well. The user can control the machine instead of having to follow the rules of prepackaged

software. I like the fact that I can write my own software. Nothing is more satisfying to me than to have a computer do what *I* want, when *I* want it to, and Commodore has fit that mold perfectly for over four decades.



MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS

- By Robert Bernardo & Dick Estel

November 2025

President Robert arrived first to the meeting, followed by member David S. and shortly thereafter, vice-president Roger. Robert set up his Ultimate 64 while Roger set up the club's Commodore 128 system including the datasette that Robert had requested. During the set-up time, Dave and Roger conversed on a variety of subjects.

They ordered lunch, and after they finished eating, they began the meeting proper. In old business, they reminisced about the October club picnic lunch held at El Rodeo Mexican Restaurant. Everyone agreed that the food was good and at the right price. That brought Robert to bring up his experience with Mexican food that he ate during his recent European trip to Taby, Sweden. On the Friday set-up day before the annual Swedish Commodore Meeting, his Swedish hosts brought him to the nearby

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Westfield Mall and its food court. They went to a vendor there who was cooking up Mexican food. His friends ordered burritos; Robert ordered street tacos, 2 chicken and 2 pork. Robert's immediate reaction to the food – very unauthentic because they were covered in gravy! Robert's bodily reaction to the food the next morning was even worse!

Hinted at the September meeting, Roger explained about his work on a connecting two C64's via a null-modem cable so that he could do software debugging.

In new business, Robert talked about website updates for the Commodore 64 Ultimate, Amiga developments, and the new commercial for the Commodore Los Angeles Super Show 2026. The C64 Ultimate's release was moved to December, and there were new C64 Ultimate production videos from the factory. In Amiga news, the full-sized THEA1200 from Retro Games, Ltd., was to be released in early 2026; the A4000NG from AmigaKit was to be released in 2026, too; and overdrive acceleration was to be released for the current AmigaKit products, the A600GS and the A1200NG. As for CLASS 2026, Robert reported that he had already filmed clips for the show's commercial when he visited the Interim Computer Museum a few weeks earlier. Later he showed a few of those clips straight from his videocamera.

In presentations, Robert first started with a look into the C64/128 TeensyROM cartridge which had been updated to 0.6.8. With the new update, there had been additional programs placed into its non-volatile memory – a term program, another diagnostic, another music tracker – among other improvements. He ran those programs and also showed off the OneLoad game collection which was on the TeensyROM's micro-SD card. Roger and David particularly favored the game, Pinball Arcade Simulator.

Robert was supposed to show off a European, plastic Commodore 128D which had been modded by Ray Carlsen to have a North American power supply; however, he had forgotten to bring the separate keyboard. Instead, on the Ultimate 64 he ran Neos Cheese Paint, a classic program which he recently discovered, a program that originally came with the Neos Mouse. Roger and Robert eventually figured out its icons which represented various paint and disk functions. They loaded up the pictures that came with the program, the pictures looking as if they had been done by a child. All in all, Roger and Robert found it to be an adequate, multi-color paint program.

Having been in Europe in August and September, Robert had received a gift from Peter Hanson, the former self-proclaimed Amigaking. The gift was a used package of the C64 game, England Championship Special, a soccer game on cassette. Not wanting to wait for a cassette to load, Robert found the .D64 of the game on the Internet and loaded that on the Ultimate 64. ECS was a top-down game, i.e., you looked straight down onto the heads of the soccer players. Robert didn't prefer top-down games, and ECS seemed to lack enough sound effects. Instead, he then ran his favorite soccer game, International Soccer from Commodore. That soccer game gave a horizontal view of the playfield, which made it more playable for Robert (and his students who had played it when Robert was a teacher).

Moving to the C128, Robert tried to run the latest version of the C128 microOS, but as usual, it crashed when being run from the SD2IEC. Reportedly, it would run from a floppy disk, but Robert hadn't transferred it to disk yet. Then in C64 mode of the C128, Robert tried to load and run StripStream from the datasette. He had been given this tape from the developer, Jan Derogee, at the August Netherlands Commodore Show. StripStream was a comic strip of a sea captain's

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adventures, transferred to the C64 and made to run sequentially from each comic frame to the next frame. However, after multiple tries from Robert and Roger, the tape would not run program (darn, tapes!), not on the C128 nor on the Ultimate 64. Fortunately, the .T64 file was available on the Internet; Robert downloaded that and ran it on the Ultimate 64. Ah, much better! As the program ran, the comic strip went from frame to frame, complete with captions in English or in Dutch. But with about 100 frames to see, Robert and Roger decided that it was best just to see the first few frames of the comic strip.

The download of StripStream also came with a Windows program in which you could build your own comic strip, convert it, and then run it on a C64.

Also on the Ultimate 64, Robert ran the latest revision of the very cute game, Quod Init Exit II, a platformer in which you control a pig in search of good food to eat while avoiding various bad food.

Finally to end the meeting, Robert brought out the AmigaOne A1222+, talked about downloading OS 4.1 Final Edition Update 3 and installing it, showed the changelog which detailed all the many improvements in Update 3, showed how window movement across the desktop seemed smoother, and by running an .MP4 video clip from the t.v. show, Babylon 5, demonstrated how video playback flowed better.

December 2025

The Fresno Commodore User Group's final meeting of the year brought together four club members, and one very special guest. Sanjiv

Kapoor joined the club in the 1980's and left some time around the beginning of the 21st century (neither he nor Dick could recall exactly when). Although currently a Linux PC user, he still had some Commodore equipment stashed away out of sight.

Regular members who were meeting Sanjiv or getting re-acquainted were Robert Bernardo, Dave Smith, Bruce Nieman, and Dick Estel.

The pre-meeting discussion centered around film and digital still cameras. It should not be surprising that a group interested in one major type of technology was also involved in others, and all the members present had more than one camera. However, no one had more than Dave, who we thought had actually lost track of how many he had. Several members complimented Dave on photos which he took earlier this year on local hiking trails and which had been posted online.

Robert's usual pocket Nikon S9500 was literally falling apart, but a long-time friend had gifted him a very nice, equivalent replacement – a pocket Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS35 – and Robert showed that camera to us.

In official business, we voted to donate \$50 to Wings Advocacy Fresno, an organization providing support to the un-housed community, with a focus on providing needed items for those who were transitioning into housing, and of course who had virtually no furniture, towels, or other typical household items. The organization accepted donations of gently used items as well as cash. Information could be found at <https://www.wingsfresno.org/>

Continuing the business meeting, the members voted to re-elect the current slate of officers for

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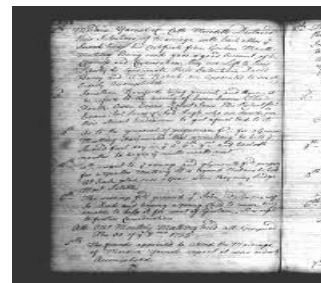
another year, their names being found at the end of this newsletter. Robert reported that the websites for the Commodore Los Angeles Super Show and the Pacific Commodore Expo NW were to be updated soon with 2026 information on the shows.

Robert brought the latest issue of Compute!'s Gazette. Although the issue price had risen to \$12.95 in comparison to its price in the 1990's, those present expressed happiness that the iconic magazine had returned with its coverage of computers, including an Amiga section. In the magazine's club listing, the Fresno Commodore User Group was listed first!

In software presentations, Robert first showed 64GUI, version 1.81, on his Ultimate 64. 64GUI was to be the new desktop environment for the Commodore 64 Ultimate which had begun being delivered to users in December. The 64GUI version that Robert demonstrated kept crashing, and hopefully v1.95 which will come with the C64U will not crash. Then Robert showed some of the 40+ games which will come with the C64U. After the games, Robert demonstrated two, new applications – the full-featured word processor, JasWord 64, and the text editor, Whisper64.

Robert then moved onto Amiga computer software. On his AmigaOne A1222+, he first presented the OS 4.1 games, Amibrix and Connect4. With the computer still in 4.1 mode, he showed the updated Grafx2 paint program and the updated 3D Converter. To show the smoothness of the new 4.1 Final Edition Update 3 in the system, he ran an .MP4 video of a space battle from the t.v. show, Babylon 5. With the computer in 1.3/3.1 mode, he showed the updated game,

Battle Squadron. During his demonstrations, he was having difficulty with the set-up, i.e., the computer kept crashing/locking up with on-screen garbage, necessitating warm or cold restarts. He had never had this difficulty at home. Was it the Dell U2410 multi-scan monitor he was using? The HDMI cable? The Radeon RX580 video card in the A1222+? He would have to try to replicate the troubles at home and try to diagnose them.



THE LATEST CHAPTER IN MY COMPUTER ADVENTURES

- By Dick Estel

I bought my first computer in 1987, probably in the summer. I had known for a long time that I wanted a computer, although I had not yet convinced myself that I needed one. An advertisement in the local paper for a Commodore 64 for only \$200 at Sears was the final push that I needed.

I came home from the store with a C64 and a Blue Chip disk drive (another \$200). The drive did not work right, and they replaced it with a Commodore 1541 at no additional cost. I soon realized I needed to spend another \$200 each on a printer and a monitor. My computer adventures were underway!

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My only regret related to this initial purchase was that I did not get a C128 right from the start. I had no one to consult with or to advise me, and I was a year away from joining the Fresno Commodore User Group. I expected my main use of the machine would be for word processing, and I bought a program that was pretty unsatisfactory, bought another that was much better after discovering the advice available in magazines, and finished up my Commodore era with The Write Stuff, a superior program that FCUG sold under a sort of royalty scheme devised by TWS author Eric Lee.

Over the years, like quite a few members of the club, I owned a number of Commodores and drives. My final, ultimate set-up was a C128, two Creative Micro Designs hard drives, two 1571's, a 1084 monitor and a Star color printer (I think it was an NX10).

Eventually I decided I needed (wanted?) a Windows PC, and probably in the mid 1990's I bought an Acer at Best Buy. As far as I can recall, the price was a little over \$2,000, the most I would ever pay. Over the years I owned a series of PC's, including one that was custom-designed by a friend in 1999. Until 2025, my last purchase was a Dell Windows 10 machine, once again from Best Buy for just over \$1,000.

My transition was gradual. I continued to use the Commodore for some tasks even after I had had a PC. However, it has now been at least ten years since I have owned any Commodore equipment.

The Dell machine was still working fine in September 2025, and I expected to continue using it even after Microsoft stopped supporting Windows 10. However, I soon learned that the Turbo Tax program for 2025 would only work on Windows 11. I could use Intuit's on-line version of the program, but I explored it and found it

unsatisfactory. I was now forced to buy what was at least my 8th Windows PC.

After discussion with a computer savvy friend, who recommended one of the new mini-PC's, I ordered a Beelink AMD for just under \$370 from Amazon. This cute little item measures about 4.5 x 5 x 1.75 inches, yet has 932 GB of storage; a 4 GB graphics card; 32 GB of RAM and an AMD processor.

As you might guess from my reluctance to "upgrade" my computer, I also like to keep on using the same old software as much as possible. I am writing this article in a Microsoft Office 2002 version of Word, and the majority of my most-used programs are of a similar vintage. In fact, the only important program that does not run on the Beeline is an early 21st century version of Family Tree Maker, a genealogy program. The new version costs around \$90, but in the meantime, I have a Windows 98 machine connected to my living room TV set that gets limited use and has FTM installed. The keyboard sits on a high shelf and must be used standing up, but I don't do much with the genealogy program these days. Will I buy the upgrade? Probably. Maybe. Who knows?

Overall I am very happy with my diminutive Windows 11 machine, which sits in an otherwise useless space between my monitor and printer. And I freed up space on my desk which I use for a couple of decorative but useless items.

Hopefully there will be no further chapters in my Computer Adventure story.

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ON THE COVER -

With 2026 being the year of the XXV Winter Olympic Games, what better way to end the 2025 newsletter year than with an image from Epyx's Winter Games program for the Commodore 64? This image shows the great graphics of the C64 along with great game play during the ski jump event.

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 at Panera Bread Restaurant, 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.

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

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

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

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

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