



THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

Commodore Therapy

-by Lenard R. Roach

Usually and for the most part I am on time with most of the things I plan to do throughout the week and month, but when that stinking disorder that lives within my head decides to flare up, I start falling behind. I start letting both regular as well as important things fall behind to a point where services are threatened to be disconnected and I have to fight through the disorder and get things done. Once in a while a friend or family member will step in and help me play catch up and, for a while, I will do fine, but if this disorder is still running its course through my head, I fall behind again within the next few weeks. I hate the thing, but it is a part of me, and the doctors say there is no cure for it, but it can be managed with proper medication and therapy, and since the disorder is hereditary, I'm afraid that I have spread it on to both of my sons. Maybe somewhere down the line either the medical field will find a cure for this disorder or some future family member will have it bred out of the family line. In either case, it leaves me behind on what is important, for both myself and the Fresno Commodore Users Group.

My name is Lenard and I suffer from bipolar disorder.

Basically, there is a good trade off with this thing: Because of it I am a lot more creative than most of my counterparts with limitless imagination. I can usually stare at a blank screen or piece of paper and within just a few short minutes begin to fill same with text of some crazy adventures with little to no effort on my part. Thus, I started chronicling my writings and save them to either Commodore disk, hard drive, or flash drive. I've even become brave and sent my writings off to publishers for possible print in a future magazine or book, and many times I have found my name on the masthead of some article in a publication. This is a great feeling to see my work making it out into the public arena even when I'm just doing it because the mental exercise is good for me. I've come across a few folk who write or draw, and have pages upon pages of material saved to a hard drive or in a drawer somewhere, but they never see the light of publication. When asked, "Why not?" most of those I quizzed are afraid of the critic's pen; others fear unwanted exposure; and still others fear that what they have done is not "good enough" for the printing press. To all of them, and I speak as one who thought in all these ways before: It is cow cookies! I have never had so much fun in the game of writing than dealing with critics, dealing with people who enjoy (or hate) my work, and dealing with my own inner demons as to where my work is not "good enough."

What got me to this point was the faithful people who own and use Commodore computers.

When I was asked to do a feature on my BBS back in 1995, I sat down at my Commodore 64 with Speedscript 3.0 booted and went nuts writing and writing about every feature available on my BBS. The article must have taken about five to six pages out of the Commodore Users Group of Kansas City's newsletter and it was a big hit, especially since our newsletter was in trade with several Commodore groups across the country. Gee, I thought this article was only going to go

out to the fifteen or so members of the CUGKC. Boy, what a response! Notes were coming in from all over the US and Canada saying how much the readers enjoyed my style of writing. In case you were wondering, yes, this all went to my head! From there on after came a series of articles based on anything I could think of that would tie into the Commodore line of computing. Maybe FCUG has some of these articles in their original format somewhere in the newsletter swap archives. If not, you can find a majority of them reprinted in my collage of a book entitled “Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition.” The article about my BBS is not included in the book, however, so unless the article is preserved somewhere, I don't think a copy will exist, but I can check around in my old CUGKC files and see if I can find it.

But I'm getting off track here... another trap of my condition.

With the CUGKC still asking me for more material from my warped mind about using the Commodore and programming (I published “Check It Out” in 1992), it wasn't long before I was being printed in other magazines, but guess what? That d*mn disorder kicked in and I went into a seemingly ten year hiatus right after the release of the original “Run/Stop-Restore.” I wrote very little between 2000 and 2010 until the Fresno Commodore Users Group got me re-interested in Commodore writing. Please understand, between 2000 and 2010 the CUGKC failed; my own attempt to start a Commodore newsletter failed (“The Secret Organization of Commodore Users”); my first book failed; and my marriage failed. It was a tough decade. You may say, “With all that happening, I'd get depressed, too.” Thank you, but with bipolar disorder, the depression is due to a lack of serotonin in the brain and does not necessarily need an event to trigger it. My pills balance the mood and fight the depression, but little else. These events just added to the battle. Sometimes

you just don't want to fight anymore and death looks like a logical way out. I know from several attempts at suicide that death is not the way out; combating your emotional attitude is the best defense.

Believe it or not, Commodore was a great friend during those moments of depression. The members of FCUG have been very understanding and they always check on me via email to make sure I am doing okay. The doctors have been trying to keep me working at the jobs and the computer to keep me from losing too much serotonin. I also need to exercise daily because work and exercise builds serotonin. This could explain why I feel like poop in the mornings but do better in the afternoons, then to work at either night job (the convenience store or the cleaning job) in the evenings, then do a little typing on the Commodore to wind down before bed keeps the semi-fat man in a balance, but this last round of depression kept me down for the month of August and I've been playing catch up ever since, and now the holidays are fast approaching! What a way to close out 2014!

But again, thank God for Commodore! Whenever a funk grabs me I know that I can go to the Commodore 128 sitting in my computer room and boot a piece of software that will be entertaining or challenge my mind. With both “Commodore Free” and “Reset” magazines kind enough to accept some of my writings I know that my copy of GeoWrite will always be getting some sort of workout as I try to come up with something for either magazine. I've told my doctors about my work and many of them like to read what I have put down on paper.

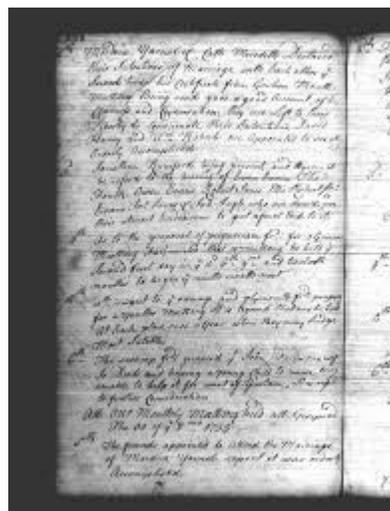
Please understand that my writings don't just stay with Commodore. I have one book of skits available on Amazon that I am making sales on; I have another skit book ready for publication; and I have a third skit book going through the editing process. I also have flashes of insight that just

won't wait too long for me to sit down at the C128 and start typing. I was told by writing teachers that if you can crank out ten pages in two hours then you have hit the apex of a writing groove. I look forward to those days, but don't think that this little rule applies to Commodore programming. As a software programmer I can tell you that if you can get down about one hundred lines of code that are without bugs or need of updating in two hours then you've hit an apex.

So to sum up everything that I've rattled on about in print, let me just say that in order to beat “the blues” whether they be a disorder or just something that comes upon every person now and then, let it be known that sitting down at a great machine like the Commodore is a healthy way to break down the barriers and give you a lift in the areas needed in your emotional life. My son has asked me several times to tear down my Commodore and put it away, but there it sits in the computer room always waiting and always ready to help me fight another injustice of evil as, now and forever, I will be in combat with this thing called bipolarism.

However, let me conclude by giving my apologies to you as a reader of “The Interface” for having the last few issues coming out late. This falls completely on my back and, since I am a big boy, I can take it. I am hoping that I will have my stuff in order by the end of the year. But don't feel like the Lone Ranger in this, reader. I'm a year behind on books and a year behind on plays that I have promised to groups that have almost given up on me. I need to burn out another Commodore keyboard and get these things done.

Next issue: Lenard's incredible Commodore find.



MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2014

-by Dick Estel & Robert Bernardo

September's meeting brought a rare visit by Brad Strait, along with four-year old William. In fact, all the “regulars” were in attendance – Robert Bernardo, Dick Estel, Roger Van Pelt, Louis and Vincent Mazzei, and Greg Dodd.

Before we did anything else, we all admired a piece of Commodore equipment we had heard of but never had seen -- a Commodore typewriter that Robert bought via Craig's List in Las Vegas. It is a very sleek-looking machine, made in Spain, and is in excellent working condition. There are photos on-line, including one of William trying to figure out where the touch screen is.

<http://www.dickestel.com/fcug.htm>

In a final note from CommVEx, Robert showed us a souvenir poker chip that was printed on a 3-D printer, and given to everyone attending the show. There's a photo on line at

<http://www.dickestel.com/images/fcug390a.jpg>

Roger had claimed a Mach 128 cartridge from the

material Robert brought down from Washington (see the August report), and reported that it is very fast – one of the best carts he has used, providing “instant on” performance from the C64.

Next month we will skip our regular meeting and enjoy our annual club dinner, open to spouses and children. The location chosen is Logan’s Roadhouse in the River Park area, at the regular meeting time.

Robert and Greg both attended the Classic Gaming Expo in Las Vegas, along with hundreds of others. Robert's photos are on-line at <http://blog.retro-link.com/2014/09/first-photos-from-cge-2014.html> and <http://blog.retro-link.com/2014/09/more-photos-from-classic-gaming-expo.html>. Robert's video is on-line at http://youtu.be/L_1Mz2vUWQk

The next computer event of interest is the AmiWest Show, October 24 – 26 in Sacramento. Robert will attend the show and videotape the presentations.

Roger reported that he is having problems with his Commodore mouse. Dick recalled that we had published an article on one possible fix a number of years ago. We were able to find it on the club’s Newsletter Articles Archive page (<http://www.dickestel.com/articleindex.htm>), and email the link to Roger. Although it may not be the answer, it gives him something to try before paying for repairs or a new one.

After lunch and discussion, we tried out a C64 educational program which consisted of the player trying to match jigsaw puzzle pieces on-screen.

Robert tested the three Amiga 500’s he had picked up in Washington, including two power supplies. Opening the units up first revealed an amazing collection of dirt, crud, and spider webs, which we cleaned up a little. As it turned out, only one

power supply and one computer worked, the one with the sun-yellowed keys. Robert hopes to create one really nice unit, by installing the clean keyboard from one of the non-working machines.

OCTOBER 2014

-by Dick Estel & Robert Bernardo

Our October meeting was actually our annual club lunch, which evolved from a picnic that was held for several years at the home of a former member.

The rules for this event are different, and are as follows:

1. No official business is discussed.
2. There are no hardware or software demonstrations (I was about to say there are no computers allowed, but let's face it, everyone has their smart phone with them).
3. Families are invited.
4. The club pays for lunch.
5. We go to a different restaurant from the one at which we regularly meet.

This year we chose Logan's Roadhouse, a good barbecue place in the far northern reaches of the city. We had a good turn-out, including Robert Bernardo, Roger Van Pelt and his brother Aaron, Louis and Vincent Mazzei, and the entire Dodd clan -- Greg, wife Krysta, and sons Gregory and Kristopher.

We had a wide ranging discussion on many topics (computer stuff included) and an excellent meal -- preceded by appetizer bags of peanuts, whose shells we threw on the floor -- ending with the traditional distribution of gift bags provided by President Bernardo. Everyone is looking forward

to doing the picnic lunch again in 2015.

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**KEEP
CALM
AND
PAY YOUR
DUES**

PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES!

Back in the day, the club was pretty strict about dues payment. If you didn't pay, you got a two or three month grace period, then you were off the mailing list.

We've become a lot more lenient in recent years. In fact, not much short of death will get you off the list now.

Even so, the club still needs you to pay your dues if it's within your ability to do so. Our expenses have decreased over the last few years, but our income has also virtually disappeared.

Our only regular expenses are the club lunch and a donation to St. Jude's Children's Hospital. We used to take in quite a bit from equipment sales, but we've had to divert this money to CommVEx, so dues provide the bulk of our revenue.

It should be noted that Robert Bernardo and Lenard Roach incur some personal expenses with what they do for the club, and have not asked for reimbursement. If they ever sue for back pay, we are REALLY in trouble!



THE WORD PROCESSOR

-by Paul Quirk

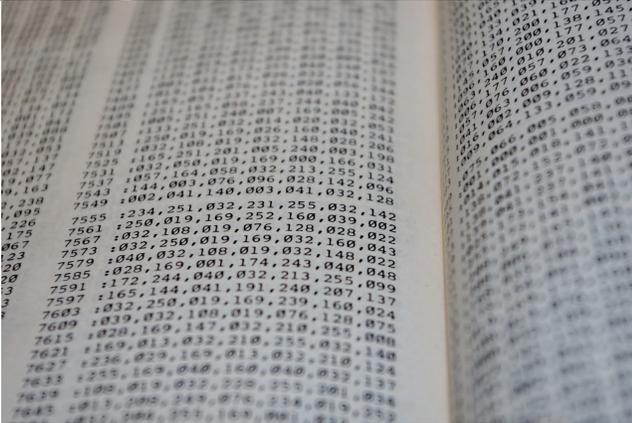
[Written by Canadian friend Paul Quirk, this is a brief look into his history with word processors.]

As you may have noticed, I like to write. You could probably surmise from that fact that I have a lot to say about word processors, which I do, and so I decided to dedicate this blog post to my own history with the word processor.

My first computer was a Commodore Vic-20, which I got for Christmas morning in the early 80's. This post-dated the first commercially word processor by three or four years, but, to my credit, I was only seven and a half years old when Wordstar made its debut.

I wanted the Vic-20 for three reasons, but the one most relevant for this conversation was the fact that it came with a full keyboard. Most other computers in the Vic's price range had bubble membrane keyboards (like the buttons on a microwave oven), or rubber chicklet keys (like those of a pocket calculator or remote control). It was obvious to me at the time that the greatest use for a home computer was as a word processor, so a good keyboard was important. The great

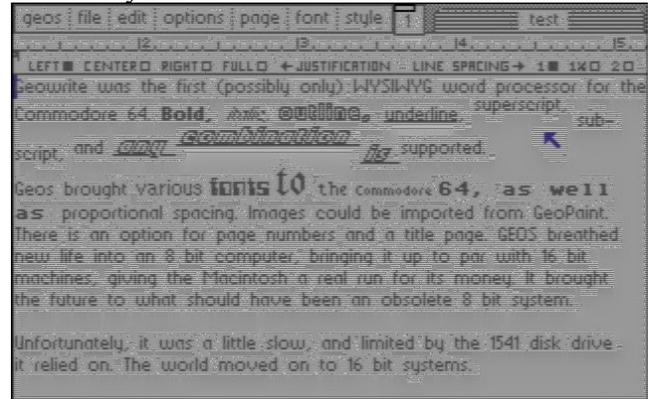
keyboard on the Vic more than made up for the lousy 22-column display and minuscule 3.5k of RAM. When everyone dumped their Vic's for C64's, I scored Vic cartridges for cheap and introduced myself to the world of word processing.



Eventually, I succumbed to Commodore 64 mania, fueled by dropping C64 prices and hardware problems with my Vic. Meanwhile, I had been buying Compute! And Compute!'s Gazette magazines from the local corner store like crazy since even before I got a computer. These magazines featured computer programs I could type in, both in BASIC and machine language. They had clever utilities that would "Proofread" each line as I typed them in. The concept is quite remarkable when you think about it; some of the programs were rather unremarkable, but others were quite excellent. Speedscript was one of the excellent. After just over a week of sleepless nights, I managed to type in the entire Speedscript word processing program onto my Commodore 64 and saved it on cassette tape.

Saving documents to tape involved a great deal of estimating and using the counter on the tape. I would reset the counter before loading in Speedscript. After writing a page or so, I would save it to tape, noting the counter number when it finished. Based on this, I could estimate how much tape I needed to save the finished document and make note of it on an index card I kept with the tape. It was simple and efficient, though I

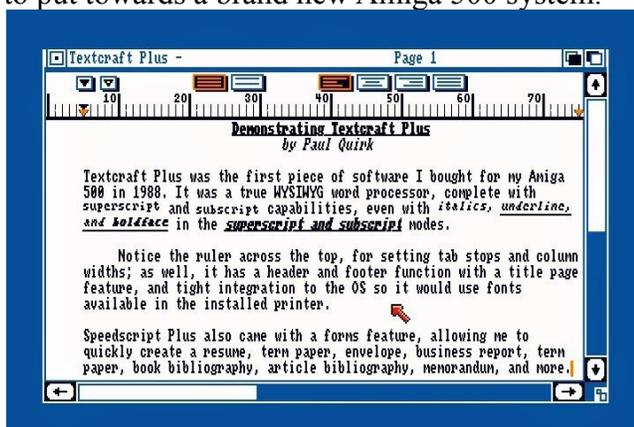
eventually succumbed to disk drive mania as well.



Word processing on the 64 (and the Vic) required special key combinations to accomplish anything other than writing text. CTRL-P to print, F7 and F8 to load and save. This was par for the course back in the day and added a level of complexity that explained the continued popularity of typewriters, in spite of low priced home computers, but made the patient learner a more efficient writer. I had an MPS 802 printer, so none of the special printer commands worked; forget about italics, and underlining something meant using up the entire next line of text to accomplish. Nevertheless, it beat a typewriter. I could make as many mistakes as I wanted for free, and I could write something very long by writing in sessions, changing my mind as much as I wanted before committing the text to paper. I could let words flow effortlessly from my fingers as I developed the art of writing. Spell checkers were made available as separate programs, but I never bothered to type that code in.

When GEOS came out with GeoWrite, I got my first taste of WYSIWYG word processing. I fell in love. Unfortunately, it didn't work with my MPS 802, and the file format was only compatible with GeoWrite. Not to mention, I only had one disk drive by this time, and given that this was one of the slowest disk drives in the industry, GeoWrite performed slowly. And so, in 1988, I sold my entire C64 outfit to have money

to put towards a brand new Amiga 500 system.



WordPerfect on the PC. It felt like a giant step backwards, but it was very powerful, and I memorized the keyboard shortcuts. When Windows 3.1 became the standard on computers everywhere, I tried out the Windows version of Word. The first software package I bought for my Amiga was Textcraft Plus, which really turned me on to writing even more. This was a WYSIWYG word processor, which was a big deal at the time. There was still no built in spell checker, but it was a solid and capable word processor. Combined with the Amiga's excellent keyboard, I felt like I could write forever. At this time, spell checkers were still available as separate programs. Meanwhile, a couple of years later, I found myself learning WordPerfect and the (then) new Microsoft Word. I preferred Word, hands down, because WordPerfect had become overly complicated.

Just over six years after buying my Amiga, Commodore was done for, and I realized the only path forward was with PC.