



THE EDITOR'S GODZILLA

-by Lenard R. Roach

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!?

Hello to all the faithful users of Commodore machines and especially to those in the Fresno Commodore User Group:

As you have plainly seen, I seemed to have faded off the radar, gone LOS for quite a while, and only recently have I put fingers to the keyboard and began to type anew on what is Commodore from my standing on the subject; but that will have to wait for a future issue of "The Interface" as I think you all deserve an explanation of my sudden disappearance from the scene and my subsequent re-emerging from the proverbial dead.

First of all, let me apologize for not getting an issue of "The Interface" out to the general public for these last six months. Please believe me that I've tried sitting down at the word processor numerous times and even got as far as poising my fingers on the home row of the keyboard, but as sure as night follows day I could not squeeze so much as a letter onto the blank screen that loomed in front of me. I didn't know what was happening to me at the time, but I knew from past experience that when I cannot so much as produce a sentence on whatever medium I am using for writing, there is a problem about to manifest that is much worse than simple writer's block. Sadly, with each

manifestation of this unknown whatever it becomes harder and harder to shake off and get back into the swing of anything, and that includes using the Commodore.

At first I started to blame the FCUG contributors for not sending me material of any kind to put into the newsletter, but that was later revealed as a sham for what I was coming into as 2017 was coming to a close. Around Thanksgiving, I was brought to a better understanding about my bipolarism as it was explained to me by my new therapist. When it comes to the condition, what's actually happening is that the brain is not firing on all brain cells, especially when it comes to emotional control and stability. I finally understood that the brain is the electrical part of the human body while the heart is the engine. When a spark plug tends to misfire, the logical thing to do is locate the foul plug and replace it with a new one. Since we cannot just replace the misfiring brain cells with new ones, what therapist and psychiatrist try to do is find a way to make those inert cells to refire. This is not an easy task for either doctor or patient for out of the myriad of medicines and treatments there are in existence for bipolarism, the medical staff must search each one to find out which one or combination of several will work for that particular individual. In 2004, when the near fatal ailment of my son pushed me into an emotional flare up, I found that the drug Haldol worked best for me, so for the next decade and a half I used that drug faithfully everyday.

When 2017 started, my psychiatrists changed a couple of times with the retirement of the doctor who first prescribed me the Haldol. These new, younger, and less experienced physicians took me off of Haldol, citing that extreme long term use of the drug can cause uncontrollable tremors in the hands and lips, and suggested I try an improved formula of the drug Depakote. Depakote, in my opinion, is a lot more riskier medicine than Haldol, for Depakote has to be at a certain level in

the patient's bloodstream to be constantly effective. Too little in the patient does not serve any medicinal purpose; too much of Depakote is toxic to the user and can lead to problems. I have to constantly get a blood test to check my Depakote level to make sure it is in effective ranges. Yeah, thanks, Doc!

Back to the end of 2017: At around Christmas, and for some reason which I still don't understand at this writing, I started delving into something sinister that I'm so embarrassed to so much as think about that I won't mention what it was. At first it was alluring, but it quickly developed into an stronghold that enveloped me. I had enough scruples left to stop the practice cold turkey, but the surface damage was already done and I had to sweat myself back to sanity. What is sanity to a person dealing with bipolarism? That is defined by the individual. To compound matters, I volunteered to work several convenience stores in the chain I'm employed at over the Christmas and New Year's holidays well before this indulgence began, and I could not back out so I could have time to properly recover. I worked these insane hours, putting in about 120 hours over the week for them, plus my other jobs, all the while trying to shake off the effects of my sinful binge of stupidity.

During this time, I started to hear voices in my head, telling me to do rotten and despicable things to my friends, family, and co-workers. These voices started to get louder and more prominent as the weeks continued. I called the emergency services at the hospital and they recommended immediate entry into the Emergency Room for evaluation. Stupidly, I refused, citing that my departure from the workforce would be detrimental to my financial situation. The hospital was adamant, so much so that they sent the local police out to my house to bring me in for evaluation. If it wasn't for the timely arrival of my son to the house, I would have been taken away. My son promised the officers that he

would take care of whatever brought them to our place. The police conceded and left. After their departure my son and I had a lengthily discussion as to what dad has been really up to and why the police were at our front door, and it had nothing to do with work.

Let's flip the calendar over to 2018: As the year started, I went to the therapist's office to discuss in depth what exactly happened to me. What I indulged in over the holidays was perfectly legal in all 50 states, but they never heard of such a reaction from partaking in such things to produce voices and hallucinations. Dementia came up in the conversation, and I agreed to be tested for the condition. I know that in the McClanahan part of the Roach line, dementia was commonplace, while in the Roach descendants, it was cancer that was the prominent foe. Terrific. I can have cancer and never know it all over again. Two weeks after my meeting with the therapist, I sat in the psychiatrist's office for the testing. I didn't even get past the first round of questioning before it was considered that I was in no way suffering with any oncomings of dementia. I breathed a sigh of relief. I was going to be okay.

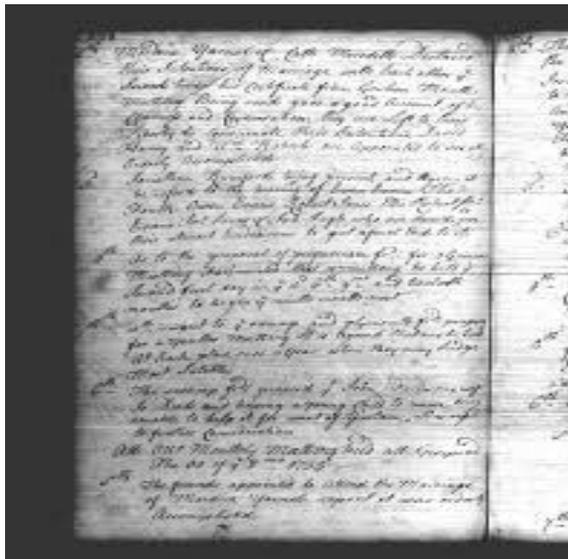
That brings me to now: After much therapy and self reflection, it was revealed that serious stress from the holiday's rigorous schedule accented my condition to a point of what would be best known in Commodore lingo as a "syntax error," and the indulgences I partook in earlier had nothing to do with it; but still, it seemed very real to me and on top of all this going on, I was frightened out of my mind. I've never experienced anything like this in my life and I pray I never have to face it again.

I know that you probably don't think that I should be airing out my dirty laundry in the pages of "The Interface," and this little episode has nothing to do with the Commodore computer, but I think that the faithful and ardent readers of FCUG's publication should know the complete truth as to

why they have not received an issue for the last six months. Now that I'm getting a better foothold on my life I'm looking forward to getting back on the keyboard and producing a quality newsletter for all. I'm not back to one hundred percent; in fact, I may never be again, but wherever I end up on the spectrum I hope to bloom where I am planted.

I want to thank you for your time and allowing me to bend your ear for these few pages. Next issue I am looking at turning a tide and writing a humorous piece about how I work the Commodore into the car wash at the job site.

Enjoy the rest of the newsletter...



MONTHLY MEETING REPORTS
-by Dick Estel & Robert Bernardo

SEPTEMBER 2017

Because Robert was traveling to Europe on September 13, the meeting was held on September 10, the second Sunday of the month. In attendance were Robert, Roger, David, Brad and his children, William and Charlotte; and new member Mike Fard. Under old/new business,

Robert reported on what occurred at the Commodore Vegas Expo. He was grateful that members of the Southern California Commodore & Amiga Network had come to support the show and that newcomers had come from the Defcon hacking show that was going on during the same CommVEx weekend. He reported that Roger's filmed presentations had done well with the CommVEx audience. He also had a date for CommVEx 2018 – August 11-12. All he was waiting for was confirmation from the Plaza Hotel, the CommVEx venue again.

He mentioned the October 21-22 Sacramento Amiwest Show and asked the members if they needed anything from Europe. No one needed anything, though Robert joked that Duncan, his friend from The Other Group of Amigoids, was urging him to buy British computers, like a Spectrum.

The Educator 64 and Commodore PC20-III, which had been exhibited at CommVEx, were shown at the meeting. Brad was most interested, and so, the E64's "hood" was opened and the PC20 was opened so that he could peek inside. The PC20 was not working, and Robert would visit repair tech Ray Carlsen in September to see if Ray could fix it. Robert showed the new Vampire 500 board for the Amiga, and he showed the new Vampire 500-to-Amiga 2000 CPU slot adapter board from Paul "Acill" Resendes. He remarked that now he has to install that hardware into an A2000 and get the blazing speed promised from that set-up.

Everyone at the meeting, especially William and Charlotte, tried out Computes' Gazette C64 Boxing game that was popular at CommVEx. In fact, it was hard to tear the kids away from the game. Even when the game was not running, William still liked to type on the keys and see his letters up on the screen.

As the meeting drew to a close, Robert tried to run VIC Doom as he had tried at the previous meeting. This time he used a PAL VIC-20 with the Final Expansion 3 cartridge set for full memory. As with the previous outing, he did not get it to run. A bit more successfully, he (with a lot of help from the ever-patient Roger) ran VIC Music Composer cartridge for the VIC-20. Certain keys did not work with the program, and Roger and Robert did not know if it was a fault with the cartridge or with the use of a PAL VIC-20.

OCTOBER 2017



Every October the club has its annual “picnic” lunch, in lieu of a regular meeting. This year the members went to the new Dave and Buster's Restaurant in north Fresno. Dave and Buster's is famous for having dining combined with a huge game arcade.

They were one of the first ones to show up when the doors opened that Sunday morning. Those who attended were David S., Mike F. and Sherry, and Robert B.. The first table that they were shown was near the arcade games, but because there was a great deal of noise, they moved to another table as far away from the arcade as

possible. They ordered off the well-stocked menu, but they did not go overboard in ordering food.



After lunch, they wandered through the vast arcade. They were most interested in the giant Space Invaders arcade game which stood 12 feet tall!

Though picnic lunches had not been known for being C= related, afterwards everybody wandered off to Robert's car to pick up some C= gear that he had brought in.





NASA AND AMIGA HISTORY

MEET IN AN EBAY LISTING

-by Guest Contributor Nathan Mattise
of Ars Technica

If our 11-part series on the history of the Amiga and our (in-progress) seven-part series on the history of the Apollo program don't give it away, we happen to be unabashed fans of a certain computing platform and a certain space program around the Ars Orbital HQ. So this week, a small post at HotHardware inevitably caught our eye; an old NASA-used Amiga evidently ended up for sale on eBay.

Seller vrus currently lists an Amiga 2500 used by NASA's Telemetry Lab for sale. How can anyone be certain this 1980s workhorse came from the US government? Well, the device is emblazoned with NASA property seals that seem to match tags found on other decommissioned NASA hardware. vrus also includes screenshots of programs on the computer that appear to be registered to a Dave Brown (HotHardware notes Brown was a principal programmer at Cape Canaveral's telemetry lab in the 1990s as per a 1999 Q&A with NASA retiree Hal Greenlee.

Ars sent a note to NASA asking about general Amiga usage and the decommissioning process for hardware, and we'll update this piece if we receive more details in the coming days.

For now, vrus sent Ars a bit of additional background on the acquisition. The user has been a fan of Commodore and Amiga since 1982, proudly starting with the C64 and fondly remembering time with the Amiga 1000 later on. vrus now collects and trades Amiga/Commodore equipment, so the user came across this particular machine by luck when purchasing several boxes of Amiga hardware and software in bulk.

"It had been in storage for several years so it was probably acquired when NASA decommissioned most of their Amigas in 2006," vrus wrote. "Normally I would keep something like this for my own collection because it is so unique and interesting, but I thought it would be better if it ended up somewhere that other people could see it / use it / etc... I am glad I was able to save it; I suspect all the equipment would've ended up in a recycling plant."

The Amiga 2500 was an iteration of the Amiga 2000 that simply came bundled with a Motorola 68020 or 68030-based accelerator card according to the archivists at Old-Computers.com. (The original Amiga 2000 debuted as a high-end machine for Commodore back in 1987, and it's perhaps most fondly remembered for enabling the famed Video Toaster.) vrus details programming files dating back to 1988 on the advertised Amiga 2500, so that would coincide well with the machine's heyday (Old-Computers.com lists the A2500 as a 1989 product).

Prices for an Amiga 2500 at the time seemed high—the Canadian PC Museum lists it as selling for \$3,800+ CAD (\$3,000+) in the late 1980s. Considering that, maybe this in-progress eBay auction's surge past \$5,000 isn't so absurd (both wear and tear and potentially unique history notwithstanding).

Here is the eBay description:

This is something you don't come across every

day. This is a workhorse Amiga 2500 that came from NASA's telemetry labs. It still has the NASA Asset tags and a 2005 Inventory sticker.

Everyone knows Amigas were great computers, as did NASA. They used them, amongst other things, to collect telemetry data from various space assets. There are 2 specialized cards that are installed in the machine to read & write all the telemetry data. One is called an Amiga 2000 Serial Interface, and the other is an Amiga 2000 Remote DMA Output Controller. They both have a set of what look like 50pin SCSI cables that I am assuming were connected to external drive arrays or other equipment to read/write massive amounts of data.

The computer has many battle scars so-to-speak. Lots of scratches and nicks all around the case. There is some faceplate discoloration and the floppy eject button is missing.

The computer has a GVP 68030 Accelerator card which is running @ 40Mhz from what I can see on the CPU card. I believe it has 16MB of RAM installed and everything appears to be working. I booted it up and went through the directories and found alot of interesting programs & data files referencing several NASA projects: AC.135, 141, 164, AURA, GP8, MS10, MS11, MS7, MS9, P91, TITAN, PEGASUS, TAURUS, and lots more. Each project has C source files which were the programs they used to interface with these various space assets.

There are project files that date back as far as January, 1988.

Some of the programs on the computer were coming up as: Registered to: Dave Brown.

I believe (but cannot confirm) that the computer was used by one of NASA's Astronaut heroes who died tragically on Space shuttle Columbia in 2003 when it disintegrated on reentry. I believe

this is the Dave Brown the computer is referencing.

The story behind NASA and Amigas in the Telemetry Lab can be found on Youtube under the title "Even NASA used Amiga's!"

Club Officers

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

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

-The Small Print-

The Fresno Commodore User Group is a club whose members share an interest in Commodore 8-bit and Amiga computers. Our mailing address is 185 W. Pilgrim Lane, Clovis, CA 93612. We meet monthly in the meeting room of Bobby Salazar's Restaurant, 2839 North Blackstone Ave., Fresno, CA. The meetings generally include demonstrations, discussion, and individual help.

Dues are \$12 for 12 months. New members receive a "New Member Disk" containing a number of useful Commodore 8-bit utilities. Members receive a subscription to The Interface newsletter, access to the public domain disk library, technical assistance, and reduced prices on selected software/hardware.

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

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.

