The Zero Page

The newsletter of the Commodore Users of Wichita

"For the sharing, learning, and love of Commodore computers"
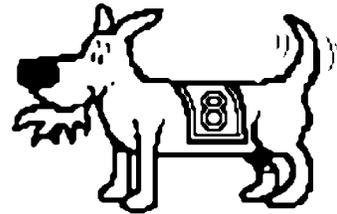
Number 42, April 1997
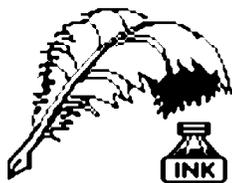
Don's Digest
by Don McManamey

I have quite a selection of *Compute!* and *Compute!'s Gazette* going all the way back to the very early '80s. In fact I've got an issue where they investigate the brand-new VIC-20. Since it's hard to find anybody who knows anything about an 8032, these magazines are just about the only way that I can gain information on these old machines.

Now one of the rules that we have been taught and have continued to teach over the years, was that there was nothing that a body could do to at the keyboard short of pouring a Coke in it or dropping a pizza on it that would damage their computer. And other than those abusive things, there really isn't anything that you can do to your computer through the keyboard that is going to damage it. Although there are some things that, left unattended, would possibly cause some damage down the road. For example, if you give a command to your disk drive that causes it to run endlessly and then you let it sit there for hours on end, it could damage your disk drive. But that's not really what we're talking about. There are no commands that you can put in through ignorance that will cause damage to your computer.

Interestingly enough, though, in a 1981 issue of *Compute!,* there was an article that dealt with just such a thing. And they told something that I never would have believed. If it weren't for *Compute!* I wouldn't believe it now. And even then, I kind of wonder... Just because something is in type doesn't mean it's true. And in fact, just because it's written by someone authoritative doesn't mean it's true either, though they probably believe it to be true or they wouldn't write it. According to *Compute!* magazine, there was a command that you could type in on an 8032 which actually caused the machine to speed up. Apparently it put it into some sort of an endless acceleration which eventually caused overheating of a chip. This subject was talked about in more than

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Next CUW Meeting:
Saturday, April 12
1:00 - 5:00 pm
1411 South Oliver

Join us for a look at two special features of the *Write Stuff:* Arlen Gould will show us how to use the outliner and Jerry Shook will demonstrate the BB Talker.

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one issue and one even gave the SYS that was necessary to send this machine into "meltdown." As valueless as my 8032 is, I just don't have the nerve to test this out and find out if it was true or not, so I guess we'll just have to take their word for it.

Jack Tramiel was a kind of a seat of the pants sort of fellow and it was reported that he had a meeting one day where he announced that they were going to put together a color computer and offer it to the general public for under $200. When those who were in attendance stopped laughing, they realized that he was serious. Believe it or not, the VIC-20 did not utilize any new technology. The team at Commodore, taking existing pieces, put together this computer in record time. The result changed the world forever. Other companies jumped on the bandwagon trying to cash in on the obvious interest from the general public in these computers.

The war that Commodore started was responsible for Commodore's success and, in large part, was also responsible for Commodore's demise. Mr. Tramiel sold Commodore long before its death, and it is my opinion that the people who were at the helm of Commodore the last several years were very short-sighted. They did very little to develop new technology or new equipment and they didn't do well in customer service --- a lesson that many companies today are learning the hard way or *have* learned the hard way. Customer service is the key to the success of businesses which deal to the general public.

These short-sighted individuals tried many times to halt the production of the Commodore 64, only to find the demand was so high that they had to start back up again. But eventually, here in the United States, they stopped producing them. Those of us who have been fans of the Commodore 64 for many years have seen a lot of changes, a lot of improvements, a lot of pushing the envelope to see just how much could be gotten out of these limited machines. And just when it appeared there was no more that could be got, someone squeezed a little bit harder and found even more.

Don's Digest (continued from page 1)

I have stressed a number of times that machines are not obsolete as long as they serve a purpose for you. They may be archaic and they may be old, but they are not obsolete. I once worked for a company that had a milling machine, and this machine dated back before World War I. It wasn't as fancy as some of the machines, and they didn't use it for the most intricate work, but they still used this machine for many tasks. I suppose, eventually, the day will come when each of us moves on to something else and the Commodore 64 is put on the shelf and is thought of much like the 8032. But hold your head high. Be proud of the fact that you are a Commodore user. Don't listen to the ridicule of others, for if we listened to them, this machine would have been dead a long time ago.

The hot item these days is the Internet and we can access the Internet with our Commodores. Now, admittedly we have a few shortcomings when it comes to Internet access, but it can be done and it can be done well. And interestingly enough, you will find a large number of programs out there on the Internet for other machines to allow them to run Commodore software. It seems with all this technology and all the speed and all the memory, that there's just something about the programs that we ran years ago on the Commodores that is so inviting. People go out and spend thousands of dollars on big, powerful, fancy machines and they're overwhelmed. They long for the simplicity and they long for the friendliness that the Commodore had.

My sons require the speed and the power and the versatility of their expensive machines for their work. But they still like the Commodore. My oldest son has been collecting parts to assemble his Commodore system. Shopping at the thrift stores, he's picked up everything from Koala Pads, to disk drives, to computers and power supplies. My suggestion is that if you come across Commodore related equipment that you can get for a song, Sing! Don't worry about whether or not it works, there may be a day when there'll be a part on that machine that you want.

I guess the time has come for me to cease my ramblings, but before I do that, let me talk for just a little bit about our attendance. The attendance at the last few meetings has been down a little bit. I'm not exactly sure why that's been, although the weather has been pretty good. As always, we have tried very hard to make the meetings interesting and fun to be at. And if you haven't been with us in a while, be assured that you have missed some good meetings! Last month, Dale and I showed the programs on the Disk O'Quarter, and as has been the case so many times, there are programs on that disk that you can get nowhere else. We enjoy hearing from you, the things that you like and don't like about the club, and how you think things ought to be different.

Looking back, we see that the VIC has gone the way of the dinosaur, that Commodore as a company is no longer with us, that *Compute!* and *Compute!'s Gazette* who rode high on the highest wave are no longer around. But the Commodore 64 and user groups like the Commodore Users of Wichita will remain around as long as people like you stay active and participate. We'll see you the second Saturday of April. Until next time, have fun!

Tips and Bits
by Dwayne Howard
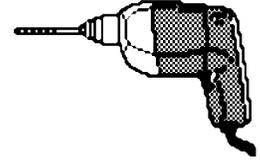
Well, here we are, another month and we get to read our news. I would like to say thanks to Dale for putting out a great newsletter.

Now what should I write this month? I know that our club is about the oldest computer club and we are die hards. I would like to tell the new members that this club will help you out if you lost a disk or cannot find a program that you've been looking for. For just $15 a year, this is the place to be.

I'm going to try to list some tips on what you can do with your Commodore:

1. We can read the King James Bible on disk - we have it in the library.
2. We can run windows like the big boys if we have GEOS.
3. We can get on the Internet if we want to.
4. We can set up a spreadsheet to keep track of what we spend or what stock is doing.
5. We can write letters of good news.
6. We can check out the States through the library.
7. We can help our kids do math.

Please check out the Library to find the answers to your needs. By the way, if you have a problem, call one of the members listed in the *Helping Hand* in this newsletter. We will try our best to get the problem worked out.

Random Access
by Dale Lutes

Surviving Water Damage

We had a near-disaster at my house this week when a washing machine hose split, causing a small flood. Luckily, my wife was at home and able to shut the water off before too much damage was caused. Unfortunately, some of the water seeped through to the basement over my computer desk, then dripped into my 128, my monitor, and one of my printers.

How does one handle this kind of accident? The number one rule (and this applies to water inside of *any* electrical equipment) is to NOT turn anything on regardless of the temptation to "see if it still works." The best course of action is to unplug everything and move it out of harms way to a dry place. If a lot of water is involved, open the cases and get some air blowing across the components to hasten the drying process. You might want to employ a fan or hair dryer. If you are recovering from a bona fide flood, there may be some dirt or mineral deposits on the circuit boards. Try blowing this out with compressed air. You may want to use a soft brush to gently loosen any foreign material. Once you are sure the parts are dry, wait an extra day just to be extra sure! OK, now it's time to close up the cases, cross your fingers, and apply power. Try out each item separately, just to see if they power up normally. If anything fails at this step, set it aside for replacement or professional repair. Now you can begin reconnecting the individual parts of your system back together. Start with the monitor, then the disk drives, printers and the rest, adding them back in one at a time. Test each before you hook up the next. It may seem laborious, but this step by step method will help you identify any remaining trouble and could prevent further damage.

You may be interested to know that I am producing this issue of The Zero Page using all of the equipment that got wet.

Notes on Programming

At the January and February meetings, I gave a brief introduction to programming. I want to re-emphasize a few of the key points that I covered in those sessions. These apply to programming in general, not specifically to programming on the 64 or even to programming in BASIC:

☞ Plan ahead!! You should spend almost as much time designing your program as you do coding it. A well-designed program is easier to write, easier to modify, and therefore more likely to be bug-free.

☞ Use a modular approach. A small main program which calls several self-contained sub programs (or functions or procedures) is easier to write, test, and maintain than one big hunk of code.

☞ Readability is key. After all, *you* have to maintain it! Comment liberally. Parenthesize liberally. Use plenty of spaces - don't crowd. If you are writing in BASIC, avoid using

abbreviations for keywords. Use program "crunchers" and compilers to increase speed.

☞ Keep backup copies of earlier working versions. You never know when the change you are making will totally screw everything up.

Command Computer Surplus

A couple of meetings ago, one of our members mentioned a computer surplus store on Kellogg (highway 54) west of the airport. This isn't far from where I live, so I thought I would check it out myself. Command Computer Surplus, owned by Rick Dunbar, is located about 5 miles west of the airport at 151st Street West. If you've ever been out that way you've probably noticed a sign for an exotic pet shop on the north side of the highway. CCS is right next to the pet shop. Another landmark is West Side RV Sales on the south side of the highway.

Command Computer Surplus has an amazing collection of computer equipment. I didn't see anything specifically Commodore related during my visit, but Rick has printers, cables, modems, switch boxes, and other items that can be used with our systems. He has mice, disk drives, keyboards, monitors, terminals, video equipment, stuff that I didn't recognize, and stuff that I was surprised to find.

When I got there, Rick had just finished setting up a complete PC system for another customer. Prices aren't marked on any of the equipment, but I'm sure you can dicker if you see something you want. I picked up a printer A/B switch box for $5 which seemed like a fair price. Command Computer Surplus is a fascinating place, certainly worth a visit. I know I'll be dropping in from time to time to see what's new.

Sign Language

Our local humane society had an overabundance of cats, and to deal with the surplus they posted a notice: "Laptops Available. Mouse Not Included."

From Reader's Digest, *January 1997, contributed by Betsy C. Parker. Reprinted without permission.*

Your CUW Steering Committee members are:

Dale Lutes   Chair, Newsletter Editor
Jerry Shook   Vice-Chair
Marie Both   Financial Officer
Robert Bales   BBS Representative
Arlen Gould   Member at-large
Shaun Halstead   Internet Representative
Dwayne Howard   Public Domain Librarian
Don McManamey   Disk Editor
Morris Shouse   Member at-large

Ask Dr. Dumbkopf
by Erik Von Der Blauen PpD, HD, LSMFT

From the Digital Equipment Computer Uusers Society RSX/IAS newsletter, date unknown, reprinted without permission.

Today ve vill talk about Elektricity. Here iss a zimple egsperiment dat vill teach you about elektricity. On a cool, dry day, scuff your feedt along a karpet, den reach into your friend's mouth and touch von of his dental fillings. Notice how your friend tviched und cried. How did dis vork? Ven you scuffed your feedt, you picked up a batch ov elektrons, vich are very schmall obchects dat karpet makers put into der karpets to attract der dirt. Der electrons vent thruough your blodtstream and kollected in your finger vere dey form a spark that chumps to your friend's fillings, und den travels down to his feedt und back into der karpet, thus kompleting der circuit. If you hadt scuffed your feedt long enough, you would have made enough elektrons dat you finger would have egsploded, (bud nodt to vorry, unless you have der thick karpets.)

Ve take appliances vor granted, but many years ago ve did not have them, vich vas chust as vell, since der vere no oudtlets. Und den along came der first elektrical pioneer, Benchamin Franklin, who flew der kite in der dundersturm und got it der bad elektrical shock, but proved dat der lightening vas powered by der same ting as der karpet. (Dis alzo damaged Franklin's brain, und eventually he got zo bad he had to be given a chob running der Post Office.)

After Franklin along came a bunch of pioneers whose names have become part of der elektrical terminology: Chames Watt, Myron Volt, Mary Louise Amp, Bob Transformer to name chust a few. As der egsample, in 1780 Luigi Galvani discovered zat if he konnected diverdent metals to a frog's legs, der legs kicked, even though der frog vas no longer connekted to der legs. Today skilled veterinarians can take a seriously inchured frog, and after implanting bits of metal vach der frog chump back into der pond, egcept der frog sinks like der stone.

But der greadest pioneer of all vas Thomas Edison, who vas der vunderful inventor despite der fact dat he lived in New Chersey. His first invention, der phonograph in 1877, vas zoon in thousands of American homes. Unfortunately it chust sat dere untill 1923, ven der Phonograph record vas invented. But Thomas Edison's greadest invention vas der Elektric company. Dis vas der brilliant adaptation of a simple circuit. Der electric company sends you elektricity along von vire, und takes it back along anodder, und den (und dis is der brilliant part,) send der same elektricity out again. Dis means dat der kompany can sell der zame elektricity over und over again, since few users look very closely at der elektricity. Dis is vy der elektric companies have so much time to apply for der rate increases.

Today, thanks to men like Franklin und Edison, scientists can dewelope things like der lazer, an elektric appliance vich emits der beam of light zo powerfull dat it can vaporize a bulldozer 2000 yards avay, yet zo precize dat doctors can use it vor eye surgery, (dat is if dey remember to change der zetting from ''Vaporize Bulldozer'' to ''Eye Surgery.'')

Nominations Open for Club Officers
by Dale Lutes

Nominations for the positions of CUW Chair and Vice Chair are open and will be accepted through the close of the April Meeting. Nominatinos may be made in person or in writing to the Chair:

Dale Lutes
11102 W. 17th Street N.
Wichita, KS 67212-1187

Members may nominate themselves. Nominees are required to submit a short position statement for inclusion in the May newsletter. Elections will be held at the May meeting. The new officers will assume their posts on June 1.

Don McManamey has an Epson LX-810 dot matrix printer for sale. This printer has a sheet feeder, draft and letter-quality modes. The price is $50 or best offer. If you are interested, please call Don at 265-2560.

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Bob Frisbie is offering a Commodore 128D computer for sale. The 128D has a detached keyboard and built-in 1571 disk drive. This one is equipped with JiffyDOS and additional configuration switches on the front panel. Bob is asking $150. Phone him at 943-6725.

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Dale Lutes has the following Commodore 128 system for sale:

✗ Commodore 128 computer
✗ Commodore 1571 disk drive
✗ Commodore C2N cassette drive
✗ Seikosha SP-1000 VC dot matrix printer
✗ Smith-Corona TP-II daisy wheel printer w/interface
✗ 2 Epyx 500XJ joysticks
✗ Reference books & manuals
✗ Some games
✗ The following business software: Fleet System 2 word processor/spell checker; SwiftCalc 128 spreadsheet; Visastar 128 spreadsheet/database/graphics; Partner 128 desktop accessories; Jane 128 word processor/spreadsheet/filer; Receivables 64; Codewriter; Commodore Easy Script, Easy Spell, Easy Quiz/Easy Lesson, and General Ledger.

The price is $150 or best offer. Call Dale at 721-0835 if you are interested.

The Helping Hand

This column lists those users willing to share their experiences and knowledge with other club members.
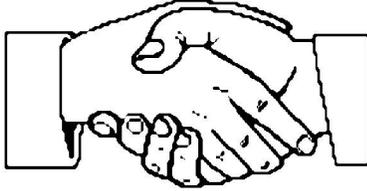
Astrology, Biorhythm
Marie Both

Cards, Posters & Signs
Fred Earley

Family Roots
Maxine Ulrich

GEOS
Fred Earley   Dale Lutes

Internet Access
Shaun Halstead

Labels
Jerry Shook

Telecommunications
Robert Bales

Printing in Color
Don McManamey   Jerry Shook

Programming
Dale Lutes

Word Processing & Desktop Publishing
Fred Earley   Don McManamey
Jerry Shook   Dale Lutes

Helping Hand Volunteers
Robert Bales   744-2580
Marie Both   262-2338
Fred Earley   722-4044
Shaun Halstead   942-5809
Dale Lutes   721-0835
Don McManamey   265-2560
Jerry Shook   776-2683
Maxine Ulrich   838-8606

Let us know if we may include your name in future Helping Hand listings. If we don't have a category for you already, we'll add one!

The Commodore Users of Wichita is a club dedicated to "the sharing, learning, and love of Commodore computers." Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 1-5pm at 1411 S. Oliver, one block north of the corner of Harry & Oliver. Anyone who owns or uses a Commodore computer system is welcome to attend.

Family memberships cost $15 per year. Members receive a monthly newsletter, a quarterly disk publication, access to an extensive library of public-domain software, and the right to vote on matters of club policy. Other membership options are also available. Contact any of the officers (listed elsewhere in this newsletter) for more information. We are looking forward to seeing **you** at our next meeting!
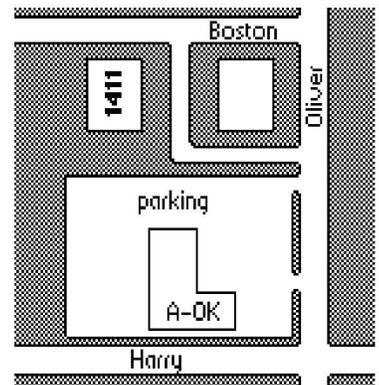
You may join or renew your membership by mail.
Complete this form and mail with a check payable to:

Commodore Users of Wichita
c/o Marie Both
351 E Marion CT, #2
Wichita, KS 67216

Type of membership:
❏ Family - includes Newsletter & Disk O'Quarter ($15 per year)
❏ Newsletter-only ($5 for 12 issues)
❏ Disk O'Quarter by mail ($12 for 4 issues)
❏ Disk O'Quarter by mail plus Newsletter ($15)

Name: _____
Address: _____
_____
City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____

List additional family members who are interested in participating:
_____
_____

What Commodore systems do you use? (please check all that apply)
❏ C-128   ❏ C-64   ❏ SX-64   ❏ VIC-20   ❏ C-16   ❏ Plus/4
❏ Other (specify) _____