LUCKY REPORT

The Wall-Buster Issue

The ACS: The Commodore of the Future?

On Genie: An Interview with Jim Brain

**Hitting the WALL
Trouble Down the Road!**

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TREASURER'S REPORT
by Bill Bunch
---January 1997---

Beginning Balance	**$ 745.76**
INCOME:	**$ 173.39**
Library	0.00
Raffle	72.00
Dues (5)	100.00
Interest	1.39
EXPENSES:	**$ 108.76**
Newsletter Postage	50.51
BBS	30.00
Copy Ballots	2.65
Postage for Ballots	19.20
Postage for Treasure	6.40
Ending Balance	**$ 810.39**
Variance	+$64.63

An itemized statement of the above is posted at each monthly meeting.

LUCKY, INC. is a Non-Profit Organization whose pupose is to unite and educate users of Commodore computers and related equipment.

LUCKY in no way condones nor allows copying of copyrighted materials at any group function. Guilty parties will be subject to dismissal.

GENERAL MEETINGS are held the second Tuesday of every month at the Beechmont Community Center from 6:30 to 9:00 pm. Demonstrations are given on both hardware and software at these functions, with occasional guest speakers and a regular question and answer session. Also available to Members Only are Public Domain Program Disks from the Club's Library for a small copying fee.

BOARD MEETINGS are held at the Central Jefferson County Government Center, 7210 Outer Loop, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. on the Wednesday of the week following the General Meeting.

MEMBERSHIP is $20.00 a year, per family, which includes access to the LUCKY BBS, the LUCKY Library, a monthly newsletter, and special drawings.

The *LUCKY REPORT* is published monthly and is available at the General Meetings. DEADLINE for submissions to the newsletter is two weeks prior to the General Meeting. It is "published" from a C128 assisted by a 40MB CMD HardDrive, an FD-2000, and a 1571disk drive. Occasionally graphics are captured by a Handy-Scanner 64. Printing is done using PostScript on a Hewlett-Packard LaserJet IIP.

The LUCKY BBS is operated 24 hours a day and is designed with Commodore users in mind. Special access is granted to LUCKY members, but all callers are welcome. The phone number is: (502) 993-5397. You can also E-mail us at 3050@iglou.com or luckykds@otherside.com

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the officers or membership of LUCKY, Inc.

DISK LIBRARY
by Steve Grassman

To avoid confusion, please direct all questions to the Library Assistants at the other end of the table. **PLEASE DO NOT BOTHER THE COMPUTER OPERATOR!!!** This will minimize mistakes on backups being made. *Thank you.*

To order diskettes, fill in the order forms provided by the Library Assistants. Make sure you **PRINT** clearly the information requested on the form. This will speed up the filling of orders.orders.

FROM THE ROOM DOWN UNDER

Report from The President

1997 is here and we are ready to go. For those of you who just tuned in, we have a New Administration. Who these people are and what positions they hold will be listed in this newsletter. Better yet, come to the next LUCKY Meeting at The Beachmont Community Center (meeting room downstairs) and you will see and get to meet them personally. You will also have a chance to meet your brother and sister members, as well as to sense the direction your LUCKY Club is headed.

We had a great turn out at our last E-Board Meeting. Some new and exciting changes are coming to our Computer Club. We have a great group of new officers and *they need to be*, because we have big shoes to fill following the last administration. Thanks Lady and Gentlemen for doing a great job for us. Our gratitude goes out to you. May what you have accomplished in the past keep our club alive in the future. Your contributions to our club are much appreciated.

We have a new SIG Group for the IBM Users. This will be a great addition to our club. There is someone already working on a meeting place. More to come on this group. May they grow and prosper!

We once had a SIG of members who worked with GEOS. It has been a part of the Commodore Platform. More power to you who are addressing this technology. There is also a group who has been working with those who are desirous of learning more about their Commodores and its programs. They have been doing a great job and we know that there is a lot more to be done with the advent of the influx of new members coming to LUCKY.

The Club and new Staff has a new rule that I am implementing as of now. **There will be no negative talking about anyone in our Club.** If you have a problem, go to the person and discuss it. Do not discuss it with me. The only time I want to hear about a problem is when it may be DETRIMENTAL to our Club. Then, this matter should be brought before the E-Board, discussed, and resolved.

All changes for the better do not happen overnight. It takes time. Be Patient. Some of these changes, you or I may not like, but if it is good for the club, so be it. I am always here to discuss your ideas and concerns about our club in a positive way.

Please support your club. We have a lot of work to do to continue to keep our club healthy and to be one of the best in the country. We have the people and the know-how to do this. See you at the next meeting! MAY THE PEOPLE OF "THE COMMODORE WORLD" LIVE FOREVER!

Larry J. Bailey----President of "LUCKY"

The Commodore 64/128 RoundTable on Genie

An Interview with Jim Brain

(This article appeared in THE FOUR "C"ER, Dec.96 issue. It was "captured" by the editor, David Witner, AKA Snogpitch, who is also the Saturday Night host on Genie. Editor's comments are in square brackets. Minor editing has been done for clarity. <Jim Brain> is used instead of <brain> for the same reason.)

This transcript is brought to you by The Commodore 64/128 RoundTable on Genie. This file may be published or excerpted in User Group newsletters providing credit is given in this manner:

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All the Commodore you can eat!
Saturday, November 16th at 10 PM
Starring Jim Brain
Special Guest Host: CMD's Doug Cotton
And Your Favorite Saturday Night Host:
Snogpitch!

<Doug Cotton> Good evening and welcome! Our special guest for tonight is Jim Brain.....As many of you know, Jim is a Commodore activist....He produces the Commodore Trivia seen in *Commodore World* and on the Internet....Jim also produces the comp.sys.cbm FAQ, and a host of other things....So without further ado, heeeeeeeeeeres JIM!

<Jim Brain>Thanks, Doug....Anyway, as many of you know, I sponsor the Commodore Trivia Contest that is held each month on the Internet/FIDONet, and now CommNet. This month it is at #34. **Commodore World** is just a BIT behind me. [*CW's next issue will be #18.*]---- :-)

HITTING THE WALL

An Open Letter to a New User...

Dear Bill,

In one of his finest poem, Robert Frost declared, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall!"[1] In fact, we hate walls when they are obstacles to our progress. But how would you feel about a wall that was specifically designed to diminish or destroy your dedication to the Commodore?

As one of the LUCKY's new users, you may never have heard about the Wall. Truthfully, we don't talk about it much; yet it is nearly impossible to understand the "Commodore experience" without knowing who built it and why.

The Wall represents the furthest point that a Commodore equipped with CBM products can take you. I have smashed into this wall so often that I feel like I know it "up close and personal." Because you are a new user, the two of you haven't met. I feel that it is my job to prepare you for the experience! So fasten your seatbelt, Bill, and I shall continue!

When CBM, Commodore Business Machine, Inc., produced the Commodore back in the 1980's, they were, themselves, surprised by its success. When they turned their attenions to the Amiga, they kind of expected all the 8-bit users of the 64 and 128 to upgrade to the Amiga. They were disappointed that so many 8-bitters liked their Commodores better and had no desire to "upgrade" to the Amiga or anything else.

Apparently, CBM's marketing department decided that by withholding from them the kind of support that users normally expect, they could "starve these people out." CBM gave us enough to whet our appetites without providing enough to satisfy a "serious" hunger.

For instance, the very first IBM PC for the home market had a compatible hard drive available. CBM gave us nothing of the sort! The Apple computer had several highly compatible speed chips. We had only the Turbomaster for the 64, and it had significant compatiblity problems. The C128 has yet to receive *any* speed chip! Hopefully, the SuperCPU for the 128 will be completed sometime in April. Most recently, we discovered that CBM had been working on a C65. It had an Amiga video chip which can create 4096 colors! But CBM scrapped it; so we're still stuck with sixteen!

I hope you are getting the picture, Bill. CBM decided that, if they could discourage Commodore users from keeping their 8-bit machines, they could probably make TWO sales, instead of one! To this end, they gave us just enough to keep new users and intermediate users happy. Anyone advancing beyond that stage too often discovered that the "Commodore of the 80's" couldn't get them where they needed to go. Old timers like the Bill and Phyllis Bunch, Calvin Schindler, and myself have seen it happen again and again. The more experienced a member becomes, the more they demand from their Commodores. Finally, they hit the Wall, veer off to some other platform, and they're gone!
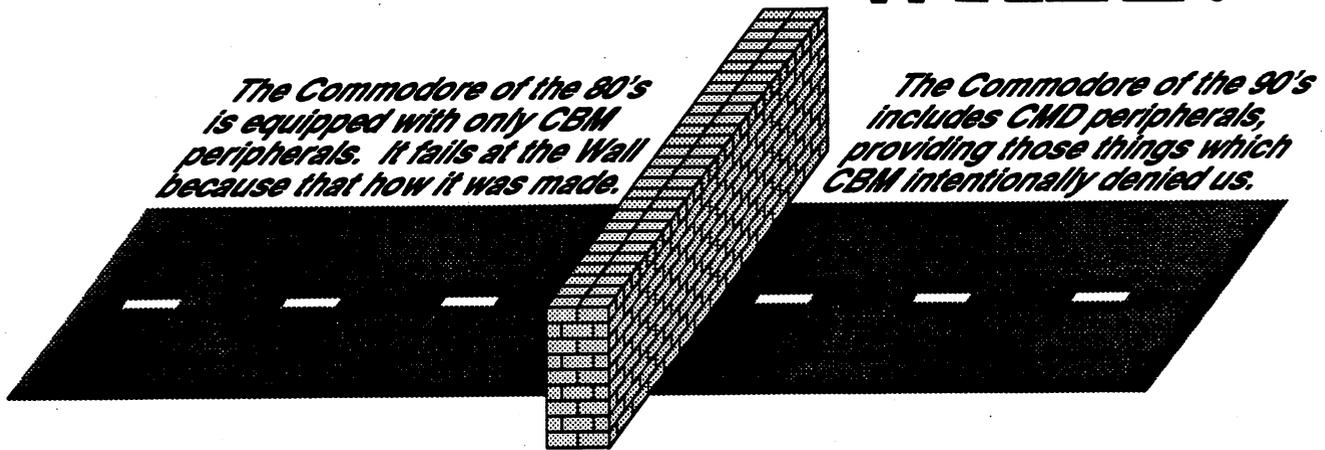
For instance, a bachelor acquaintance of mine decided that he wanted to be able to store pictures of pretty women in his computer. Unfortunately, the Commodore's low resolution and 16-color limit made this unsatisfying. He was forced to sell his Commodore and purchase another computer which allowed him better "visibility."

On a serious note, nearly every experienced user eventually hits the wall for a variety of reasons. They discover that a 64 (or 128) using CBM peripherals alone simply cannot take them what they want or need to go!

I remember when I published the *LUCKY LINE* several years ago, the Commodore's limited screen resolution (80 dpi across and 72 dpi vertically) caused me serious problems because my GEOS program printed exactly what was on the screen. I sort of "hit the Wall" when members repeatedly told me they couldn't read my

[1] THE ROAD NOT TAKEN: AN INTRODUCTION TO ROBERT FROST, p. 112, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, copyright 1962.

When Traveling on Commodore's Information Highway: Beware of the WALL!

The Commodore of the 80's is equipped with only CBM peripherals. It fails at the Wall because that how it was made.

The Commodore of the 90's includes CMD peripherals, providing those things which CBM intentionally denied us.

newsletters. Too poor and too stubborn to switch to another platform, I discovered a way to solve the problem within the Commodore environment. By using GEOS in combination with PostScript, I am able to produce the kind of copy that you now hold in your hands.

Color is still a problem. We live in a colorful world, but our Commodores only see sixteen of them! Our retiring president tired of hitting *this* Wall so he put around $3000 into a computer system which allows him to veiw and print colors into the millions! I think he's enjoying it!

Bill, you must be wondering by now, *"Why does anybody care?* If a company creates a great computer and then intentionally sabotages it to produce higher sales, *why do we bother to promote it!"*

I am not sure that I can answer your question fully, but I find two main threads that tie us together. First, many of us feel that the Commodore has a special "magic." For a car buff, it might be Model T Ford or a '58 Chevy. To many computer users, its a Commodore. Even those who have moved on to other machines still remember it fondly. It seems blessed with a sense of serendipity. As such, it is special and many users simply want to keep it alive as long as possible.

The second thread running through all of this is that some users to take the wall personally. It makes them angry that the company that created their computers also tried to kill it! They share a fiercely stubborn independence that views the Wall the way George Bush viewed the Kuwait crisis: "This shall not stand!"

It is important here, Bill, to remind ourselves that beating the Wall is not a religion or anything, and those who fight it

are not "more righteous" than those who don't. Not everyone takes the wall personally. Some people say to themselves, "I've enjoyed this for awhile. Now I want to try something else." For them, the Wall is a *convenience* instead of a *curse!* Certainly, we rejoice when a friend achieves a personal victory, but it is also sobering to see that the wall is still winning!

So, Bill, if you decide that you would rather "fight than switch," you must acquire those things which CBM intenionally denied us...such as a hard drive, a faster processor, and MEGA-memory. I describe this all in more detail in the article, **"The ACS: The Commodore of the 90's."**

Being insightful and intelligent, you have probably noticed that not only can individuals "hit a Wall," but so can clubs and organizations. Our own may be a good example. For whatever reason, I think we have spent too much time idealizing the "Commodore of the Past" and ignoring the "Commodore of the Future." The Commodore of the 80's was the best of its day, and we still love it. But nostalgia can only carry us so far. Eventually, we must all reconcile the past and the future. Many of our members now have two computer systems. Which of these systems do you feel represents the past, and which represents the future? In other words, is the Wall still winning?

We cannot maintain our integrity as a Commodore entity unless a significant number of members are willing to *challenge the Wall!* This is the reason, I am always promoting the "Commodore of the Future!" You have cautioned me several times that this can leave new users feeling "left out" or discouraged. Certainly, you must know

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that I <u>never</u> try to make a <u>happy</u> Commodore user <u>unhappy</u>. Please help me to understand how I should prepare them for what they will find down to road!

After all, Bill, that new user is only a temporary tenant. Soon he will mature and become more demanding of his machine. I guarantee you that when he finally *hits the Wall*, he "ain't gonna be happy!" He will reach for an answer with a resolve that rivals a drowning man grasping for a lifeline. He may choose a $6000 solution or a $600 solution, or anything in between. I don't feel that any decision he makes will be *wrong*, but I am concerned that it may be *uninformed*!

That's our job, Bill, to make certain that when today's new user becomes tomorrow's "wall-banger" and his CBM equipped Commodore has left him sitting in the dust beside the Wall, that he knows as much about the "Commodore of the 90's" as any alternative system on the face of the planet. Considering our proud Commodore heritage, that seems only fair!

Your friend and Commodore enthusiast,

K. Dale Sidebottom

He Made My Month!

by K. Dale Sidebottom

I received a phone call two weeks ago that not only made my day, it made my entire month! Steve Murphy called to ask for information about buying products from CMD. Now Steve is no novice, but neither does he consider himself to be a heavily experienced user. I was surprised that he was asking about how much he would need to buy a SuperCPU, etc., when he was probably not going to be "hitting the wall" anytime soon.

He explained to me that he would be receiving his tax return soon, and he was thinking he could either fully upgrade his Commodore or buy a motorbike. I reminded him that one of the endearing qualities of the Commodore is the option of starting small and building slowly. For instance, I cannot recall making more that one major purchase ($200 to $400) in a single year. I recommended that he buy both. Get one item for the Commodore now, and have enough left over for a sizable payment on the motorbike, as well.

He mentioned to me how pleased he was with his first upgrade, JiffyDOS (also from CMD)! He explained that a program he enjoys using, called **OMEGA Q,** seemed to take a couple of minutes to load. Now with JiffyDOS, he only waits 15 seconds! He wondered that if he gained this kind of advantage with JiffyDOS, what more might be available?

What his final decision remains uncertain, but it pleased me to hear someone seriously considering a '64' upgrade even before they "hit the wall." I was stunned to realize that if he carries out this plan to purchase these items now, he will one day fly right through the wall without ever even knowing it was there!

"Gosh, now that's new and different!" I thought. "Perhaps, Steve has read one of my articles and is responding positively to it! Now that's also new and different. This just makes my MONTH!"

Interview with Jim Brain continued...

As well, I take care of editing the "humongous" **COMP. SYS.CBM FAQ** file. At present, it encompasses 9 sections of 32 kB of text each. I update it once a month and try to keep it current....Along with that, I try to mantain at list of all Commodore User Groups, Current Suppliers, and Current Repair/Parts Support Facitities.

Some of you may know me from my *Commodore World* technical articles, while some may know me from my Commodore World Wide Web Site that has been in existence since 1994....Recently, I have taken over as editor of *Commodore Hacking*, and am now starting on my second year of editorship. Issue #14 just rolled off the "presses" a week or two ago. So, that is what is currently happening, but I stand still not very long.

Out of necessity, (since the E-mail load of fielding CBM questions is getting heavy even by itself) I have begun automating and improving things to make my life easier. There's not much I can do to make Trivia easier, but the other stuff is being revamped as I type this. For those who have made my Commodore WWW sites in the past, I have introduced "CaBooM!". It is completely automated meta-index system for Commodore WWW sites. It is divided into categories and sub-categories like Yahoo, for those who surf the Web. At the moment, I have completed version 1.0.0 of the engine, and am asking folks to try it out and tell me what needs work.

Also, a much larger project is being worked on here in Nebraska at present. Starting around January 1997, **www.jbrain.com** will become active. Since my WWW site has been around from 1994, it has become somewhat dated. The WWW moves on and leaves sites to become obsolete very quickly. Mine has done just that...So, to introduce the new site, I will be bring The Virtual Internet Commodore User's Group Online. The site will be completely revamped, and will gather all of my previous works (Trivia, C=Hacking, FAQ...) all together under one roof in a way that will make it easy for me to manage...(Ater all, this is just a hobby of mine.)

I've got some folks ready to beta test it, and the timing is a little behind, but I hope to make it public by January 1997. The system

The ACS:
The Commodore of the 90's
by K. Dale Sidebottom

An Advanced Commodore System (ACS) is something that we have needed for many years. Although no one ever spoke of it, anyone spending any length of time in the Commodore community knew that something was wrong. We had a great computer for new users and even for those who might be considered on the intermediate level. But until August of 1996, anyone wanting an advanced home computer system had three choices...MS-DOS, Macintosh, or Amiga.

It is the opinion of this author that the wait is now over and that the ACS is here! However, it is a little early to break out the champagne and caviar. As I stated earlier, we may have an advanced home computer system, but we not yet able to take advantage full of it. However, this is a good time for us to begin to familiarize ourselves with it, to find out what it is, and how is it different from anything Commodore has ever had before?

An ACS is a system based on the C64 or the C128. It requires three additional components: the CMD HardDrive, the SuperCPU, and the RAMLink. (*Editor's Note: The SuperCPU for the 128 is still under development.*) Notice that except for the Commodore itself, everything else comes from CMD.

Why? Because CBM, in its fatal wisdom, decided to prevent our Commodores from competing with their Amigas and Colt PC's. Thus, they intentionally blocked its progress. I was sad to see them file for bankruptcy, but it is comforting to know that they no longer hang like an albatross around our necks.

It was not until 1990, when CMD developed their CMD HardDrive, that we began to receive the kind of support we needed to carry us to the next level. Some of you may ask, "Why does the ACS need a hard drive? Why does it need to be from CMD?"

I had a Commodore friend a few years ago who lived on the east coast. He complained to me about how slow his 1581 disk drive was. I suggested that he buy a Commodore compatible hard drive to speed things up, but he swore it was too expensive. He called it a "needless luxury."

A couple months later, I called him up to check on his progress. He admitted to me that he had purchased a PC system for $2000. I was flabbergasted! "Why did you spend a couple thousand when you told me you thought a couple hundred was too much?"

He defended himself by saying, "You don't understand. This is an investment!"

"Well," I returned, "when you made this *investment*, did you tell your salesman that you wanted *no* hard drive because it was a needless luxury?"

"I tried to, but he swore that these days you can't do any serious computing without a hard drive!"

The salesman was right. I doubt that there is a MS-DOS, Macintosch, or Amiga sytem sold today that doesn't include a hard drive. I have personally used a hard drive with my Commodore for five years, and I would feel lost without it! It loads and saves programs two and a half times as fast as a 1581 disk drive. It allows me to move from one project to another quickly and easily.

Why buy a hard drive from CMD? One of the limitations that we accept as Commodore users is that the Commodore's memory is too small to tell a disk drive how to handle each command. Therefore, the instruction set must be stored on the drive, be it a 1541, 1581 or CMD HardDrive. CMD has created a disk operating system (CMD DOS) which has at least two benefits that are very advantageous to Commodore users. The first one is the "CMD native mode partition," which will allow you to format as much as 4.4 gigabytes on a single drive. Try doing that with any other Commodore capatible hard drive!

Secondly, CMD DOS automatically checks to see if a disk or partition is GEOS or non-GEOS. This can be important because you can destroy the programs on a disk if, for example, you use the non-GEOS "validate" command on a GEOS disk or partition. That cannot happen on a CMD HardDrive, or on any other CMD storage device.

The SuperCPU is the central processor for the ACS. I remember being the editor of the *LUCKY LINE* several years ago. I felt so proud to represent you, but I had to quit because "time took its toll." I estimated that it required at least 40 hours to put together one issue of the newsletter. I figured that 30 hours of that time was spent processing. Because the SuperCPU is 20 times faster, I expect the processing time to diminish to six hours or less. Think of it, each time I do a newsletter for LUCKY, my SuperCPU will save me an entire day of my life!!!

Maurice Randall uses geoProgrammer to link his new GEOS project for testing. It must process nearly 2MB of code each and every time he tries to test the smallest modification. It used to take his C64 about fifteen minutes just to link his program together before testing. Now with the SuperCPU, the entire task takes less than one minute.

Let's pretend that he will have to reassemble Project GEOS for testing at least one thousand times before he has perfected it. (This is not an unreasonable assumption.) His SuperCPU will save him 14000 minutes which translates into five weeks and four days on any 40 hr/wk job.

Is your time important to you? No doubt, some wag will warble, "Yes, that's why I'm gonna buy a 100 megahertz PC!" Hey, to each his own. It is not my purpose to say what is right for

you. But the SuperCPU is right for me because it allows me to continue using the computer I love without losing an inordinant amount of time in the process(ing).

The third component of an ACS is the RAMLink. One of the Commodore's limitations which I have mentioned is its limited memory, usually 64K. Imagine using this memory to operate an application like geoPublish which tips the "scale" at 99K. How do you use a 64K computer to run a 99K program? Easy, you simply switch blocks of memory in and out of the computer as they are needed. The ability to do this at the "speed of light" is an important feature of any ACS.

To the best of my knowledge, there are only two ways this may be done. The best known is the REU or Ram Expansion Unit. The largest REU which CBM made was 512K in size which is small compared to the 1581 drive (800K). For this reason I had my REU boosted to 1MB. This way it could at least equal the capacity of a 1581 drive. I know others who have boosted it to 2MB, but too often the electrical system becomes overburdened at that level, causing it to burn out. Obviously, at 1MB or even a 2MB, the REU may be insufficient at advanced levels.

The second option for boosting the Commodore's memory is the RAMLink. It is the best option because it has the highest storage capacity, up to 16MB. Considering that chip prices are at rock bottom, this would be a great time to buy a RAMLink and "fill 'er up." I paid $160 for my first 4MB Simm chip. Today that amount will by you 16 Megs!

Another RAMLink feature is that it can plug into the back of your CMD HardDrive with a parallel cable. This is the only way your CMD HardDrive can communicate with your Commodore in parallel mode, which is faster than serial.

Last, but not least, the RAMLink is *non-volatile*. In other words, it keeps its memory even when you turn off your computer. The REU can use a product like a BBU Battery-backup, but the manufacturer (PPI) has stopped supporting Commodore and is not repairing those that have gone bad, *like mine!* The RAMLink also has a battery backup, and it can keep your programs warm for up to 12 hours, even when power is interrupted.

Right now, the ACS may exist, but it will be some time before we can utilize it fully. For instance, it may seem a well-kept secret, but the SuperCPU is actually a 16-bit processor! It only masquerades as an 8-bit processor when you tell it to. There is discussion that one day we may see a 16-bit GEOS or 16-bit games on our SuperCPU-equipped Commodores. So much to do and so little time! It makes Commodore users wonder where it will all end, even as they hope that it never does!

Interview with Jim Brain continued...

will both look to dazzling to our "beemer" friends and be just as pleasant to navigate with text mode browsers. Also, for those with only E-mail access, all the texts online will be indexed into a database and will be available from E-mail. On the "who know what I'll do" front, I am playing around with the new SuperCPU. After I finish the BUDDY compatible assembler, I am writing for under contract to CMD, I will take my knowledge of the new system and see whether I can get my mulit-tasking kernal up and running on it. My goal (as always) is to put my machine on the internet.

Anyway, I've left stuff out I'm sure, but ask away, as I'll remember...

<Doug Cotton> Jim, if I may, I'd like to start off with a few questions for you. With all the various things you do, do you ever worry that you'll experience 'burn-out?'

<Jim Brain> Yes. That's why I am seeking to make all of my projects as automated as possible. At present, I feel like it takes me too much time to manage all of the various Commodore things I do, and it's basically because I am still manually doing everything. Each WWW page gets updated manually, each issue of C=Hacking gets put into HTML format manually, every issue of Trivia gets posted manually (to three networks).

Take the Links site, for instance. Before, when a site wanted to be added, I had to manually enter their info in every age [*stage?*] that corresponded to the category their site fit in. How, I just click on the site, enter my login, update their site info online, and it takes care of the rest. It makes minutes out of a job that used to take hours every week.

<Doug Cotton> Well, I for one can say that your efforts are much appreciated, and I'm sure that many others echo that opinion. You mantioned your new site, CaBooM!, and referred to it as a sort of "Yahoo" for Commodore users....Is there a chance that it may eventually contain a search engine?

<Jim Brain> If I had one wish in Commodore Land, it would be for more comments....Yes...The capability is there to make it searchable. All I need for site owners of the co-admins to fill in the "Keywords" field for the sites. All new sites do it by default, but there are still a lot of old sites that don't have that info. However, sometime in the near future, you'll be able to search for any site you want.

<Doug Cotton> That's great! I'm sure everyone in the community will be grateful to see this!

<Howie> An off-the-wall question: Why did you seem to invite crackers to "test" CaBooM!?

<Jim Brain> Well, one of the things the new site does is allow people who add a site to the system to come back and update it later...That involves some security concerns and so forth. I invited folks "whatever you call them...I call them people with a good knowledge of UNIX and an hour to kill at a 1AM" to see if

How to Get Novaterm 9.6, Patch "A"

(reprinted from the October 96 CUG Newsletter of the University of Washington)

(The following message, in bold-italics, was printed in the UWCCUG newsletter and is being included as an introduction.)

"We complained bitterly last month, that Nick Rossi had come out with a patch for his Novaterm 9.6 but gave no instructions for getting it. In this new posting from his Website, Rossi tells what the patch does and doesn't do, and provides instructions for obtaining an upgraded disk. His mailing address and Web address appear on the Novaterm's opening screen......Tiger."

Novaterm 9.6, Patch "A" Has been Released

by Nick Rossi

Inevitably, shorly after the release of new software, users begin to uncover bugs that were not revealed during beta-testing. This upgrade fixes a number of the bugs that have been discovered. If you have already purchased a copy of Novaterm 9.6, you can receive the upgrade for free by doing the following:

* Make a backup copy of your original disk for your own use
* Send your original disk back to the author. The original disk is your proof-of-purchase. The upgrade will be copied onto the disk. **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE REMOVED ANY PERSONAL DATA FIRST!**

The Upgrade Contains the Following Fixes:

* Estimated file length omitted from Zmodem upload, to avoid confusing BBS's.
* The "funny ASCII" problem when capturing to the buffer in ANSI or VT102 mode has been fixed.
* Due to the above, you should remove the "opt ansi" line from all your scripts, and recompile them.
* A bug in the script function that checks for incoming strings was fixed.
* The "Save buffer when full" option now works properly with hardware flow control.
* A bug in the recovery function of the BBGRam driver was fixed.
* A bug in one ANSI screen clearing function was fixed.
* Several errors in the font81.ANSI character set were fixed: ASCII 160 was changed to 'A', and the fractions were put in their proper order.
* Typing a shift-space now sends a space, rather than the 'A' character.
* Color was added to the VT102 terminal emulation.
* A real-time clock driver was added to read from the CMD SmartMouse.
* Functions in the text editor were fixed; loading/saving in the buffer and changing the device number.

There are a couple of other bugs that have not yet been fixed in this upgrade, but which are known. One is that Ymodem batch will not upload properly to a Maximus BBS. Also, Zmodem still seems to be incompatible with some systems. These problems are known and are being worked on.

(A *LUCKY* "Thank You" goes to *RANDOM BITS* Dec.96/Jan.97 for this article.)

Falling Prices on "SCSI's" and Modems

by Roger Lawhorn

Computer equipment prices are falling at an astronomical rate! With the introduction of better PCs and MACs, what used to be top dollar add-ons are now nearly worthless. You can't give away a 14.4k modem when 33.6k modems sell for next to nothing. This overall trend has created a permanent glut of hi-tech options and add-ons for your C64/128 computer that everyone should be aware of.

SCSI

All of CMDs harddrives are 3 1/2" SCSI (pronounced SCUZZY) drives. This SCSI technology allows CMD harddrives to be daisy chained to other SCSI drives just like we now daisy chain our disk drives and printers together using serial cables.

SCSI gives a drive intelligence. Commodore drives have their own form of 'SCSI' interface known as CMD DOS. This DOS allows computer programs with very little memory to perform major tasks with disk drives. A CMD harddrive has both DOS and SCSI built in.

I took a little trip through the Computer Shopper recently, and to my amazement SCSI drives are now less than 1/4 their original price! Now is THE time to get some serious drive memory for your Commodore. If you buy the smallest CMD HardDrive which is currently the CMD-40 (sporting 48MB of space) for $249, you will have half of the puzzle which is SCSI daisy chain capability. Now, purchase an equal sized SCSI drive for as little as ... drum roll please ... $50!

You didn't pass out did you? I hope not. You'll miss my list of hot new prices:

{Any supplier}
External IOMEGA ZIP Drive SCSI-2 $179
      ($129 with $50 rebate)
Uses Removable 100 meg disks {$15 per disk}

AA Computech Inc.   1-800-360-6801
External SCSI 105 MB $85
External SCSI 540 MB $199

This paticular company sells refurbished items also. Make sure you ask which you will be getting, new or used. Make sure it is an external drive also.

Modems

With the introduction of the internet, modem prices have plummeted as the demand for more and faster modems has gone off the scale, creating multiple new modem companies and fierce competition. With the introduction of cable modems,

standard modems will become a thing of the past. This will force the price of modems so low even the best of technology will be affordable to anyone. As I stated above "You can't give away a 14.4k modem when 33.6k modems sell for next to nothing".

As you may know, CMD has been selling a product called the SwiftLink cartridge. This cartridge allows a C64/128 to communicate at speeds up to 38k. However, CMD has decided to create their own fast UART cartridge called the **Turbo232**. It is reported that this new cartridge can be used with a 33.6k modem and can reach speeds up to 230k using a SupercCPU and compression. The current 14.4k moden can transfer a speed equivalent to 56.7k.

With this in mind, here are some modem prices for Commodore owners:

{Any supplier}
14.4k $49
33.6k $99-$139

Interview with Jim Brain continued...
they could bypass the security...

<Snogpitch> My local user's group was at a local Computer Swap Meet at the beginning of this month. Several people asked me if there was any Commodore Stuff on the Web. Of course, I mentioned Jim Brain's Web Site. Are there any equally good sites you'd recommend.

<Jim Brain> Well, for technical information, of course, Marko Makela's site is a good one. I'd quote the URL, but I remember it not off my head. It's on the opening page on CaBooM! (not a plug, just a statement).

Marko's and my site have been around for about the same amount of time...From there, it depends on your interest. I know QT here has a good demo site, and IRV COBB has some GEOS stuff...That's why I started my links site...Everyone seems to have a links page, but they are usually narrow in focus. I wanted one that I could use whenever I was researching something. For your comment...I would be most pleased if CaBooM! gets a workout. That's the only reason I do all this stuff. If people don't utilize it, I would quit doing it.

<Mike> Can we fit C=Hacking in our mailboxes here on Genie?

<Jim Brain> Dunno. How much will a Genie Mailbox hold? Typically C=Hacking is 260-300 kB an issue. However, if you box isn't that big...You can grab the archive, which is a PKZIP 1.01 archive...It is usually much smaller, and all the articles are already separated into individual files. The binaries in the publication are also predecoded and ready to run in the archive. All I need now is someone to write me a small BASIC program that will allow folks who get the archive to print out a paper copy

of the mag as it was originally published. The archive contains an ordering of the articles, but so far, no program exists. I could make one, but I figure surely there is someone who would just jump at the chance to write a program that converts the articles to PET-ASCII from ASCII and prints them out in order...

<Doug Cotton> I'll intervene...I'm quite certain that you can grab any version of it. I don't know what the limit is here on Genie, but I've never hit it...and I've gotten some might big E-mail messages.

<Greg> The engine you wrote for CaBooM!, what platform is it on? Would it be possible to adapt it for other material?....

<Jim Brain> Well, it is currently running on Linux (UNIX) and it can be used for any type of URL content.

However, instead of trying to make it work with a magazine, I chose another approach. I am going to database all the C=Hacking articles and then folks will be able to search all the articles for specific content.

<Brenda> How do you recommend that Commodore users access the Internet? (i.e.: what programs).

<Jim Brain> Well, for 64 users, walk to your checkbook, grab a check, and mail it after you've filled it out to Nick Rossi or one of the other Novaterm distributers.

If using a 128, get into the religious war between Dialogue and Desterm. I've heard it banetered about for 3 years, and no winner has arisen. They are both good...The last piece is an Internet Service Provider or Commercial Provider (GENIE) that provides shell access. We can't do PPP or SLIP (Yet).

You know...You hear the Windows and Mac folds claiming the GUI is the only way to do the WWW, but I use an IBM and UNIX all day, and I prefer a good lynx session.

Graphics slow me down at times. Now, mind you, I like graphics, but you can't have it all. Graphics or speed...You choose.

Also, it is best to get a good modem...9600 or 14400 or better. Downloading stuff at 300 bps is just time consuming, even for CBM stuff.

<Doug Cotton> Ah...we've temporarily run out of hand-raisers...

<Jim Brain> Well, let me stuff this in:

CaBooM! is at

http://www.msen.com/~brain/cbm links/

<Jim Brain> Last year, I did link my 64 and my UNIX system via SLIP while beginning the development of some SLIP drivers...It is worth the effort, as doing the SLIP/PPP drivers would allow folks who only have access to SLIP/PPP providers to get on the Internet.

<Doug Cotton> Jim, speaking of the SLIPP/PPP, we've all seen that it is do-able in some fashion...Could you give us your opinions on why a full browser hasn't been done yet, and perhaps what kind of limitations you think there would need to be?

<Jim Brain> Yes, Daniel Dallmann has a complete SLIP system out there...Well, as for me, time is my problem...I'd love to do a WWW browser and SLIP/PPP, as I know intimately how it all works, but I haven't the time.....

<Doug Cotton> Oh...I wasn't pointing any fingers! Just wanted your opinions on the subject!

<Jim Brain> As for others, I am not sure the exact details, but I suspect that it seems a smaller task than it is...To do a WWW browser, one must learn the names of all of the following and how each works:

IP/UDP/TCP/ICMP/PPP/SLIP/HTTP/FTP/SMTP/GIF.

That's a mouthful...See, the browser hides all that from the user and makes it appear to be a simple thing. It's not quite that simple.

I would say graphics are going to be a limitation. Sound isn't that bad, but we just don't have 256 colors on a normal basis. (VIC trickery is even trickier when doing SLIP/PPP, cause you got someone talking to you over the serial line).

<Howie> About how much time would I expect to spend on a WWW page, if I make up a sample one?

<Jim Brain> Well, if you can believe it, all of my Commodore WWW site costs me nothing...The ISP I use gives us WWW creation privileges for up to 10 MB of stuff.

<Howie> Sorry, I meant time to set up and maintain.

<Jim Brain> So, I would shop around, as it shouldn't cost any more. Setting up a single page is easy....The first CBM page at my site was a simple ASCII file. Maintainance depends on how "current" you want to keep your site. If you need to update your info every day, then you'll be working on it every day.

It also depends on the number of pages you have...However, I wouldn't worry too much...My site is still pretty manageable, and I don't spend all that much time on it...

<Sgt Pap> With the advent of the SuperCPU--Is a graphical browser somewhere on our horiaon? (Even a basic one)??

<Jim Brain> I would say yes...I would look for one in the next year or so...However, I would be very patient...Last year, Maurice Randall hinted that his WAVE terminal program for GEOS might end up having WWW access, but not only is the WWW part stalled, the whole WAVE is...Now, folks are upset that it's not done...I know more than the average Joe at times, but I say expect it to be here when it arrives, and not a day before...People only get themselves in trouble when they speculate on a new piece of software!

<Greg> Your mulit-tasking kernal...I am curious seeing how I haven't throughtly understood the hacking article yet. Are you trying for virtual 64k chunks each with DOS similar to what Windows 95 does for DOS? Do you and Maurice have day jobs? I am grateful for both your efforts.

<Jim Brain> Well, at present, my OS [operating system] has a problem suspending and waking up tasks, so I am standing still right now...However, it could be done that way. I would like to see the OS be able to use a bank in the SCPU for more than one task, if they are both small...For compatibility, I'd like to see original programs run on the SCPU under the OS within a single bank, but
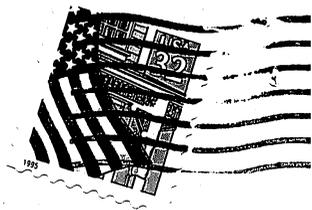
I'M not anywhere near there yet. (Walk before you run, wife says...) Thanks for the pat on the back...

<Howie> I am just curious...When did your fingers first touch a Commodore keyboard? Are there any other programs on the burner for the new SuperCPU that you are doing?

<Jim Brain> Hmm, I was in the 5th grade...I was born in 1971, graduated 12th in 1989, so must have been in 1984.

Anyway, its the VIC I am holding in the USA Today article picture.

For those who want the neat story behind me getting the VIC, I encourage you to read the editor comments in C=Hacking #14...I wanted an Atari 2600...

As for the SCPU, at present I tinker with a lot of things...However, you have to understand my position...Sometimes, it's my job to be the "prodder." I tinker with a technology long enough to verify if it is feasible or not on the platform...I announce my results, and usually others puck up the ball and go. The SLIP things started that way, and my initial work on my OS caused me to start a mailing list which is pretty lively at present.

Andre Fachat and Daniel Dallmann are hashing out relocatable code formats and such. I like to be in the front. My time is limited, so I doubt anyone will ever see too many big programs from me...Except the OS...I love my OS...

<Doug Cotton> Let me take this opportunity to say THANK YOU, Jim, not just for coming here, but for everything you have done and continue to do for the Commodore community.

<Jim Brain> Thanks for having me, Doug...