

CURSOR

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NEWSLETTER of the COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD) INC.

MENU

Meetings - Where and When	2
Editor's Notes	3
Random Bits	5
Goods & Services	8
Commodore's New Printer Range	9
Cursory Notes	18
To Upgrade or Not	11
Upgrading? Think Again!	12
Reviews: All About the C-64 Vol.2	14
Programmer's Desk Reference	15
Graphics Pirate	16
Superbase Tips	18
Games Corner	21
Bytes	22
Financial Report 1986 - 1987	23
Mail Box	24
Directory	27

MEETINGS - WHERE & WHEN

MAIN MEETING: Tuesday 6th October 1987 in the *Bardon Prof. Dev. Ctr. 390 Simpsons Rd. Bardon*. Entrance through Car Park in Carwoola St. Doors open 7pm (library), Meeting starts at 8pm sharp

*** BRING & BUY SALE ***

WORKSHOP: Sunday 18th October 1987 (1pm - 5pm) in the *Guidance Officers Training Ctr., Bayswater St. Milton*. Bring your own computer equipment! Opportunity to copy our Public Domain Disks.
NOTE... MEMBERS ONLY! Ph. Colin Shipley - 366 2511 a.h.

AMIGA MEETING: Sunday 4th October 1987 (1pm - 5pm) in the *Playground & Recr. Assn. H.Q. Bldng., 10 Love St., Spring Hill*. Library open from 1.30pm - 2.30pm. Public Domain Disks available for copying. - Ph. Steve McNamee - 262 1127 a.h.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

CANNON HILL: 4th Saturday of the month (12noon - 12pm) in the Cannon Hill State School. Ph. Barry Wilson - 3996204 a.h.

CAPALABA: 3rd Sat. of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Capalaba State Primary School (Redl. Educ. Ctr.) Ph. David Adams - 3968501 a.h.

KINGSTON: 2nd Friday of the month (7pm - 10pm) in the Kingston State School. Ph. Peter Harker - 8004929 a.h.

PINE RIVERS: 2nd Sunday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Strathpine High School. (rear entrance). Ph. Bruce Wylie - 359 9779 a.h.

SHERWOOD: 2nd Friday of the month (7.30pm) in the Graceville State Sch. Ph. Leigh Winsor - 3792405 a.h. / Philip Parkin - 8181172 a.h.

WAVELL HEIGHTS: 2nd Tuesday of the month (7.15pm - 9.45pm) in the Wavell Heights High School, at right of far end Brae St. entrance. Ph. Cor Geels - 2632839

SUNSHINE COAST meets regularly. For meeting times, dates, places: Ph. Harvey Riddle - 071 / 421036 or Ph. Vic Mobbs - 071 / 941330

MARYBOROUGH/HERVEY BAY: 4th Mon. of the month (7pm - 10 pm) in the Sunbury St. School, Alice St. Ph. Terry Baade - 071 / 215059 a.h.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

PRIMARY EDUCATION SUB-GROUP: 3rd Tuesday of the month (7.30pm) in the Aspley State School. Ph. Bill Weeks - 3412823 a.h.

PROGRAMMING SUB-GROUP meets during the Main Meeting in our Club Rooms. Ph. Jim Vick - 3451878 a.h.

CP/M SUB-GROUP meets during the Main Meeting in our Club Rooms. Ph. Steinar Johansen - 2073065 a.h.

PLUS/4 SUPPORT GROUP: - Clarence Stock is acting as support coordinator for Plus/4 owners. Ph. 397 8894 a.h.

NOTE: COPYING OF COMMERCIAL SOFTWARE
IS NOT ALLOWED AT OUR MEETINGS!!!

Do you want to form a Sub-Group in your District?
Contact Terry Steer (Ph. 808 2424 a.h.) for details.

EDITOR'S NOTES

NEW BLOOD

Jon Kalkman and Jim Vick are two names which will feature fairly prominently in future issues of CURSOR. These two gentlemen are our new associate editors for the 8 - BIT edition of CURSOR.

For the last four odd years our newsletter has been my baby. Back in 1983 I produced a six-page roneo effort which, thanks to our ever increasing membership, has now grown to the current two issues, averaging some 60 odd pages per month. However, certain facts have to be faced. For far too long now CURSOR has been my pride and joy, but with our very large membership we cannot have the situation where the group's newsletter is dependant on one man - after all I could be run over by a bus tomorrow, and this could mean no CURSOR in your mailbox next month. However, by withdrawing my nomination for the position of newsletter editor at the recently held A.G.M, I have stirred a sufficient amount of members into action to obtain the kind of support I have long since looked for. A bit drastic, I will admit, but the result sanctifies the means!

With two new associate editors I can afford to be ill or go on an overseas holiday when I win the lottery, but more important it means *NEW BLOOD* which means *NEW IDEAS*.

Both Jon and Jim are well known to a lot of our members. Perhaps Jim a little bit more so, because he is a co-lecturer with Greg Perry at the Ithaca TAFE college, as well as a sysop of the group's bulletin board. However, Jon in his quiet way isn't a slouch either, so we expect great things from them! [Some members may well wonder if there's a Dutch conspiracy at hand. With names like Van Staveren, Geels, Kalkman, Van Der Vliet, and De Vries all starting to crop up, it makes you wonder doesn't it???

Anyway Jim and Jon make a very good team and should be a real asset to our newsletter.

Fortunately we have also been able to obtain the services of Paul Gunther and André Marino who will act as my associate editors on the Amiga edition of CURSOR.

A NEW AMIGA CONVERT

It had to happen at last - Greg Perry has bought an Amiga 2000! For quite some time now quite a few of us have been ticking him off about his conservatism in sticking with the 8-bit machines and told him that he'll miss the boat if he didn't make the change-over to the new generation of computers in the near future. But I'm not so sure now. Perhaps there was method in his madness by sitting back for a while and letting all the others get their fingers burnt first! Having been in close touch with him during his first weeks of Amiga ownership, I can vouch for the fact that he has absorbed more Amiga know-how in this week than most Amiga users have in the first three months! My guess is that by the end of 1988 we will see an Amiga version of his GP Terminal program!!!

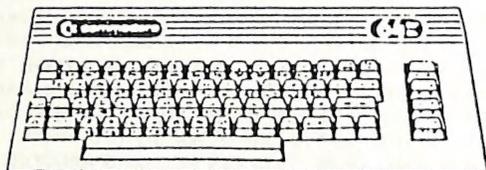
Ralph De Vries

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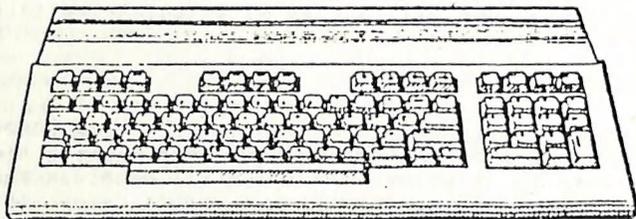
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R A N D O M B I T S

MAIN MEETING (1st September)

After the introductory remarks by the president, treasurer, secretary and newsletter editor, it was the turn of the "terrible twins", better known as Jon Kalkman and Jim Vick, to carry on with last month's talk on modems and tele-communications. For this purpose they had rigged up two C-128 outfits which were able to 'talk' to each other via modems. This had the advantage that members could see what was happening at both the sending- and receiving end of the modem chain. This talk was attended by a large group of our members and was very well received.

AMIGA MEETING (6th September)

This was one of our most heavily attended meetings. In fact, because of the very large crowds we were forced to cancel the planned talks, because we had run out of chairs and tables!

There were several A500 computers at this meeting. The A500 is now officially released and thus we can expect to see a rapid increase in numbers of this machine. Colin Canfield acted as our librarian at this meeting, but was forced to close the library when all books and magazines had been loaned to our members! Another senior member and former Pet, C-64, C-128 and Plus/4 owner, Lex Hinckley looked after our disk sales. Imagine - we sold some 800 3,5" disks at one meeting!

YOUR NEWSLETTER

We hope that you approve of our new printer for CURSOR. Terry Steer has certainly made our life easier by stapling the newsletter! After due deliberation we have decided to sacrifice quantity for legibility. By using a slightly larger type face you will no longer need a magnifying glass to read CURSOR!

FOR NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS: The current page size of this news letter is now set at 58 lines of 66 characters each.

ABOUT SPELLING

Do you know which computer-related words are most often wrongly spelled?

They are the following:

PROGRAMME instead of PROGRAM - a programme you buy when you go to the theatre, but you run a computer program.

COMPUTOR instead of COMPUTER - self explanatory.

DISC instead of DISK - A disc is a circular plate or object like a compact disc - computers use floppy or hard disks. (And why use that awful term 'diskette'? - perhaps we should call the C-64 a 'computerette'???)

CHOICE & COMPUTERS

By courtesy of Angus Norrie we received a copy of the computer survey which appeared in the August issue of Choice magazine - it makes interesting reading! 1777 People partook in this survey,

conducted last October, with Commodore having the largest share (445), followed by Apple (378), Microbee (119) and Amstrad (107), etc. etc.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this survey was what people used their computers for. Nearly 80% indicated that word processing was the prime use, with playing games (64%) as the second most popular alternative.

As for the level of repairs required, the largest percentage who had problems with disk drives were Atari, IBM, Kaypro, Dick Smith and Osborne! So perhaps the good ol' faithful 1541 ain't so bad after all. But now comes the real eye-opener - 16% of hard disk drive owners had problems, with Chendaí, Commodore and Hewlett Packard the worst offenders! Hard disks on Commodore? Well perhaps on a PET or maybe even an Amiga, but as only a total of perhaps 40 such computers partook in the survey, I would treat this sort of figures with a lot of caution!

THE EDITOR REGRETS

Oh dear, Norm Chambers has ticked me off! In last month's editors notes I wrote that John Van Staveren was our new secretary. Definitely not so! John is our treasurer and Norm carries on as secretary! Sorry, gentlemen - I just wanted to make sure that you read our newsletter!

My second boo-boo was in my notes on Jim Vick's article on Library files, where I said that the files were compressed - not so. However in the near future we'll be using ARC'ed files on the BBS, and these are compressed files.

NEW LINE OF RIBBONS

We have added printer ribbons for the MPS-1200/1250 and the Citizen 120-D printers to our range at \$12.00 each.

SUB-GROUP NEWS

Both the KENMORE and THE GAP sub-groups have gone into recess because of falling attendances. In the near future a meeting of sub-group coordinators is to be held to review the position of our sub-groups in Brisbane and near Brisbane areas.

Cor Geels has advised us that the meetings of the WAVELL HEIGHTS subgroup are no longer held in the library of the High School. Entrance to the meeting is now at the right side, at the far end of the Brae Street entrance.

GOODBYE AND WELCOME

Because of study commitments Anthony Thyssen (also known as the 'Reset Switch King') will no longer be in attendance at the Milton Workshop meetings to fit reset switches, turbo-roms etc.

On behalf of the group's members the management committee would like to thank Anthony for the sterling work he has done over the last couple of years.

Fortunately for our members Anthony's services will carry on under 'new management'. Gary MacMinn and Philip Van Der Vliet will take over the regular fitting services during our Milton Workshop meetings, so business will be as usual.

ANOTHER GOODBYE

In this issue you will find the last edition of Phil Guerney's "CURSOR NOTES". Yes, Phil has 'done the evil deed', and purchased (dare I mention that dirty word?) an IBM clone.

Our sincere thanks to Phil for his many contributions to CURSOR during the last few years.

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

Last August our group's membership was as follows:

C-64 Owners	= 563	(66%)
C-128/128D Owners	= 153	(18%)
Amiga Owners	= 104	(12%)
Others (PET, VIC, +/4 etc.)	= 36	(4%)

It will be interesting to see these figures again in 12 months.



HELLO?... ACME SOFTWARE?.....

THE ORPHAN COMPUTER

Yes, there she sits, lost in her little corner. We're talking about the PLUS/4, Commodore's forgotten child. Released too late in the market place, she ended up at being sold for a mere \$100.00 recently. Software support pretty woeful. In fact virtually nobody wants to know "poor ol' orphan Anny". But don't despair yet Plus/4 owners - Clarence Stock is coming to the rescue!

Clarry has decided to form an unofficial Plus/4 support group, so owners of our little girl should contact Clarry with the object of collecting both literature and public domain software support for this computer. You can ring Clarry (a.h.) at 397 8894.

A tip - the Plus/4 was/is a very popular machine in the UK. Quite a bit of software is available over there although most of it is only available in cassette format. Most English computer magazines carry regular articles and adverts for the Plus/4.

--oo0oo--

COMMODORE'S NEW PRINTER RANGE

Following on last month's announcement of CBM's agreement with IPL-Datron on their distribution arrangements of OKI printers, we hereby have details of Commodore's new range of printers:

MPS 1250: Commodore's update of the MPS 1200. There seems to be only one major difference with its predecessor, namely the provision of both a Commodore Serial- and a Centronics interface, thus making it suitable for use with all Commodore computers.

DPS 1101: Commodore's "chaff cutter", the good old faithful and noisy daisywheel, built like a tank and will probably go forever. Commodore serial interface, only suitable for use with C-64/C-128.

MCS 810 & 820: Previously better known as the Okimate 10 (for use with C-64/ C-128) and the Okimate 20 (for use with PC's and Amiga). This is the (relatively) cheap thermal colour printer. Previously well documented.

MPS 1280: A 15" Dot Matrix printer, running at 120CPS (draft mode) and 20CPS (NLQ mode). Standard 9-pin head, with both Friction and Tractor Feed. Suitable for use with Amiga and PC's. (One would need a separate interface to be able to use it with a C-64/C-128 computer). This printer doesn't seem to offer any advantages according to the specs over the MPS 1250, apart from the wider carriage. Mainly for business usage (spreadsheets etc.).

MPS 2020: A high speed dual 9-pin dot matrix printer. The character matrix is a standard 9 x 9 pin configuration (like the MPS 1250), but this one will run at either 300 CPS (superdraft) or 240 CPS (draft) speeds and at 100 CPS in NLQ mode. This printer can apparently also be used for colour output. Tractor feed and Cut Sheet feeders are optional extras. Centronic interface, thus suitable for use with Amiga's and PC's.

LP 806: Commodore's first Laser Printer. This OKI printer is HP LaserJet Plus compatible and can print up to 300 dots per inch. Printing speed is up to 6 pages per minute - the unit has 113K of user memory, but this is expandable. There are 15 inbuilt fonts and it will do all the usual printing features like **BOLD**, Underline, *Italics* and "upperscripts" etc. It is interfaced to be used with the Amiga and PC clones.

Well, that's Commodore's new (?) range of printers. Regrettably we have no details on prices as yet, and it may well be quite some time before the full range of printers will be available. Most 'ordinary' computer owners will still buy the 'standard' dot matrix printers such as the new MPS 1250. Hopefully the listing bug of the MPS 1200 will be cured in the MPS 1250. As for colour printers we have mixed feelings on the Okimate thermal colour printers (now the MCS810 & 820), and at this stage we have no details as yet on the colour capabilities of the MPS 2020, but reading the specs this printer isn't going to be a cheap one. A strange omission from the above range is the availability of a 24 Pin dot matrix printer. On the other hand a Laser printer will always give far superior results than any dot matrix printer can, so perhaps this was a wise decision on Commodore's part.

C U R S O R Y N O T E S

by Phil Guerney

Well I've gone and done it. Yesterday I put a deposit on an IBM-clone and tomorrow I'll be picking it up. When I came home and announced this my wife said "But I thought your next computer was going to be an AMIGA?". I could have strangled her on the spot! I sure would have liked an AMIGA, and it would have cost less than I'm paying for the clone, but after much agonising it just seemed that application software comparable to that available for the IBM family was still two years away for the AMIGA's. My clone will have a fast 20MB hard disk and 640K memory. It will also have only monochrome graphics, under which almost no games at all will run, and a pitiful sound output. But it will run amazingly powerful wordprocessors, databases, spreadsheets, languages and graphics packages (at least in two colours). Of course I still will not be able to play with colour graphics and sound, and the basic technology is about seven years and it comes with a disk operating system that is at least as difficult as the Commodore DOS. So I'm still saying that my NEXT computer is going to be an AMIGA!

I found a good way to pay for this new computer - I just changed jobs! After working for the same employer for nearly seven years, all that previously inaccessible superannuation money etc. was suddenly pushed into my hands. Most of it is now invested of course, but some of it managed to find its way into the form of a present for the breadwinner.

It may not then be surprising that this will be my last edition of "Cursory Notes". After I've finished tapping out these words, and then finished the review of the Graphics Pirate, I will move all this Commodore gear onto a table set up in my eldest daughter's room. A new job AND a new non-Commodore computer is just too much to be able to keep this column going, especially in combination with the two subjects per semester I'm doing in a part-time uni course (and three kids' activities, house, garden, car ... whew!). We decided not to sell the C64, but to pass it down the family, as this great computer looks set for a long life yet in the market place and much more good software should become available for it. I'll also stay in the CCUGQ for the foreseeable future.

As a final C64 note - have you seen any of the amazing demo programs showing full screen displays generated by the C64 which is only supposed to be able to show pictures with top, bottom and two side borders? Some games now have sprites in the top or side borders, but at least one group, calling themselves the "1001 Crew", have managed to trick the VIC chip into displaying a picture that extends from top to bottom and from edge to edge of the screen! They say these are composed of 112 sprites and, sure enough, if you use the Graphics Pirate you indeed capture the particular sequence of eight sprites that were active at the moment the Pirate button was pressed. The programmers promise a utility that will allow anyone to define the sprites and generate such a picture, at least the parts that lay within the normal borders. The only trouble with these demos is that the only

people who are the slightest bit impressed are the few souls who actually have played around with graphics programming and really appreciate the ordinary limits of the machine which some others have now learned how to beat. Show anyone else, and they say "That's a nice picture", but how do you try to get through to them that it is really amazing???

--ooOoo--

T O U P G R A D E O R N O T ?

by Jon Kalkman

I read with interest the letter by Phil Guerney regarding the quandary he is in about sticking with Commodore computing gear. I was asked the same question by a dedicated clone user the other day and my reply was "Would you buy a semi-trailer to do your grocery shopping?" For me the answer is simple. If you have so much data to manipulate that you need 640k or even 20meg of memory then do yourself a favour, don't buy a Commodore 64. That was never its purpose. To say that it seemed the best and cheapest way to play with your own word processor or spreadsheet is like saying you are buying a small sedan to do the work of a truck because it is cheaper.

The C64 was designed for family use. That is why it has the color and sound capabilities. That is why it is so attractive to young children and indeed many family spreadsheets and word processing requirements would not stretch beyond the capabilities of this humble machine. That is why the first data storage system was the datasette. It used the everyday audio cassette which most households would have. That Phil wants the resolution of a monitor rather than a standard TV and that he wants the convenience of a disk drive is not really the point. The point is the C64 with the basic peripherals represents very cheap access to computing power for any family. It really is horses for courses.

If Mr Guerney has invested more heavily in computing than the basics just outlined it is probably because, like so many of us in the club, computing is his hobby. He probably enjoys the ease of BASIC, the thrill of getting a program to run correctly after the umpteenth attempt, seeing the enjoyment his children get out of simple games using sprites and the built-in synthesiser. Justifying the cost of a hobby like this is as difficult as explaining the cost of a new mast for your boat to the spouse. How much you spend is entirely up to you. However the thing that gives the Commodore User Group its vitality is that it is made up of hobbyists rather than simply users, just like a yacht club. Maybe Phil has been seduced by his hobby to the point that, after all this expenditure, he is disappointed that he still only has hobbyist equipment. In this way the Commodore computer hacker is in a similar position to the Amateur Radio operator. Maybe what Phil is saying is that he is beginning to question the reasons why he got into the business. That is fine, but it is not a reason for the rest of us to sell up our C64's and buy IBM clones.

As far as I can see Commodore has always catered to the hobby market and if the C64 is a hobby machine then the deluxe model

must surely be the C128. It is really what the C64 should have been in the first place. Basic 7 is just great after the peeks and pokes of Basic 2. The built-in machine language monitor is very convenient. A double sided drive (with ROM upgrade) is not hard to live with and, if the budget will stretch to an 80 column monitor, you get access to software which is as good, in terms of ease of use, as that available on the clones; (although you are limited to 120k on a 8 bit machine) i.e. the ubiquitous business software of databases, spreadsheets and wordprocessors.

Jim McCarthy of Townsville is quite right when he says there has not been a lot of software developed for the C128. The thing in our favour is that it is C64 compatible. By that I do not mean programs running in C64 mode, but C64 programs which load into the C128 and work with little modification. The hobbyist finds the translation, where necessary, quite a challenge. Maybe as a club we should be looking to translate some of the public domain software developed for the C64 into C128 format. It gets into the public domain precisely by hobbyist programmers doing their thing. The C128 is really a modern day PET. It is built for the hobbyist to expand inside and out, hang things off the back of, program in Basic if you must, use machine language if you like, choose between 40 and 80 columns, use the Z80 chip if you want. In short it is ideal if you want to experiment. As an added bonus it has C64 mode and CP/M 3.0 built-in. Given all that, do we really need C128 games when with the flick of a switch we have as many as you like in C64 mode?

If you must use commercial software rather than develop or translate your own then you should select the computer hardware to do the things you want. As a user you will probably not need a machine which offers a lot of options for experimentation. Those workaholics who want to continue at home on the files they started at work probably wouldn't have time for a hobby anyway. For me, my hobby is computing and I have not regretted for one moment my decision to buy, what I consider to be the the Cadillac of hobby machines, the C128. I can see the time when there will be a clone in my house, but it won't be in place of my Commodore and it won't be to tinker with. It will be to do homework, not for fun.

U P G R A D I N G ? T H I N K A G A I N !

by Ralph De Vries

Last month's bit of soul searching by Phil Gurney in his CURSORY NOTES column, combined with Jon Kalkman's thoughts on the same subject in this issue started me thinking about upgrading. However I'm really more concerned with the C64/C128 versus Amiga upgrade saga.

Some days ago I was shown this new super-duper Amiga game you couldn't live without. It started most impressively with a fantastic opening screen accompanied by equally impressive stereo sound effects. So far so good, but now the game itself started. The graphics would be marginally better than on a C-64, but when the character reached the right side of the screen I expected a smooth scrolling continuation of the background screen. Instead there was a one second or so hiccup before the screen started to

scroll. As the game proceeded I started to wonder if this game was all that much better than a good C-64 game and I had to reluctantly admit to myself that it wasn't. Another Amiga adventure type game has the most beautiful graphics - far better than anything ever seen on a 64 - but the game itself was so simple that my son worked it all out in a couple of hours. He has now lost interest in the game.

Conclusion? If your scene is computer games first and foremost, stick with your C-64, because you have both a far wider range and considerably lower prices.

So why buy an Amiga? Well, if you are SERIOUSLY interested in either Graphics, Graphic Design, Video Graphics, Sound Generation and Sound Synthesis, then the Amiga might be for you, but beware..... the emphasis is on SERIOUS. If you cannot draw a straight line or play a bar of music the Amiga isn't going to turn you in an instant expert. If however you do have this type of serious interest in these aspects of the Amiga be warned that the expense doesn't end with the purchase of the machine. Both graphics and sound require huge amounts of memory, as well as large data storage devices. That means memory expansion (say from \$500 to \$2000), as well as a hard disk (say \$2000). And there are other expenses such as the Genlock for graphics (\$1500), or a MIDI interface and external synthesizer (\$1000 and up) etc. etc.

So you think I'm exaggerating? Try using Deluxe Paint II (one of the most popular graphics programs for Ami) in the so-called hi-res mode with 16 colours. The program tells the 512K machine owners that they can only have a maximum of 8 colours, because you don't have enough memory. One high resolution picture in 16 colours consumes 128K of memory!

But maybe you want to use Ami for business purposes? Fair enough, there's by now a reasonable range of business software available, but I'd rather follow Phil's advice and buy a PC clone, not only because there's a huge software base, but also because it is CHEAPER to own and run.

Desktop Publishing? Regrettably (and I speak with some experience), to be really viable, desktop publishing requires a laser printer (\$5000 and up), and currently available DTP software on the Amiga is only so-so. Using it with dot matrix printers will at best produce results such as the front cover of this news letter, and one could hardly call that a professional effort!

"But no", you say, "I want an Amiga for programming". Good for you, but again ask yourself how many programs have you written for your C64/C128 which you are proud to show to your friends? If the answer is in the negative you're again better off to stick with your existing equipment. Ami may have a better Basic, but she's sure one hell of a girl to get to know her "innards".

Now I know perfectly well that I am wasting my time writing the above lines. But remember, I do own an Amiga and every word that I have written is TRUE. I am equally well aware that quite a few of you out there will ignore my advice and buy an A500 or even an A2000. After all, the combined weight of advertising- and peer pressure will make me lose this argument, but at least I've tried to present you with some down-to-earth facts.

Yes, I honestly believe that the Amiga is one of the best personal computers available with an immense potential which at present has barely been tapped. But, by considering the REAL facts, rather than the advertising hype, and ignoring the advice of your Amiga-owning friends (just ask them to show you something that they have created themselves on their Amiga, not the efforts of somebody else!), you should be in a better position to judge if it's worth your while to do the upgrade at this stage.

R E V I E W S

"All About the Commodore 64" - Vol.2

Published by Compute! Publications
Our copy from B.C.F. Book Shops

by Clarence Stock

This publication would be quite informative for someone wanting to make their C-64 operate in areas of ADVANCED BASIC, BITMAPPED GRAPHICS, SIDPLAYER and SPRITE CONTROL SYSTEMS. Volume 1 is not required to understand this book.

ADVANCED BASIC explores, defines and illustrates features of numbers, user defined functions, file input/output, WAIT, SYS, Machine Language and commands within programs. The problem that the C-64 (and most other computers) have when calculating certain numeric values is described. Two examples that come to mind are: PRINT 1.01 - 1, which shows the (incorrect) result as 0.100000002, and PRINT 6017/1000, which shows the result as being 6.0170001. This section of the book has many other useful bits of information which could fill in areas not covered by the owners manual. One more comment on this part of the book, regarding the SAVE WITH REPLACE procedure - the advice is DO NOT USE IT, or if you MUST use it, do specify the drive number. However even this will not always guarantee a 100% result.

BITMAPPED GRAPHICS is a collection of machine language routines which let you work with high resolution and multicolor graphics. The routines can plot points, draw lines, fill in areas and draw whole shapes. The new Basic statements created are GRAPHICS, CLS, FILL, SHAPE, DRAW, MODE, LFILL, PEN, SETPEN, TEXT and RFILL. The new Basic function is LOOK, and the new Basic command is KILL.

SIDPLAYER includes a music editing program capable of emulating a wide variety of instruments, helps you to create instruments, or allows you to enter a song from sheet music. One feature shown is how to have music playing while the program is doing something else - this could add a bit of mood music during the blank silence of most home made programs. Several demonstration tunes are provided.

SPRITE CONTROL SYSTEM consist of a group of programs and machine language routines which make sprite animation easier than one would think possible. The first part is a Sprite Editor which, by using a joystick, allows you to plot points on a 24 x 21 grid to define a sprite shape. The definitions can be saved to a disk- or tape file, or can be converted into DATA statements and merged with a BASIC program. No more calculating bits and bytes. The second part of the Control System is a set of machine language routines which can be called from Basic to make a sprite change

its shape, colour, size or position. Other features of controlling sprites are available and all without using a single poke.

In summary I will have to admit that I didn't type in the 5000 memory locations, and that's only the machine code utilities! Based on the detailed information within each section and looking at the Basic programs provided, I feel that this book would be of value to anyone who wants to produce hi-res pictures, create music and/or design sprites. If I was interested in any of the above aspects and didn't have the time to type in these programs, I would send for the disk with these programs from Compute!. Another way to obtain similar results is by using add-ons like the Super Expander- or Simons Basic cartridge, or some of the several GEOS packages. You just take your pick!

Programmer's Desk Reference for Commodore 64 Basic
by Mona Rienhardt - Published by Brady Communications

by Clarence Stock

This publication is a very useful addition to any C-64 owner's library. It assumes that the reader has already read and gained some understanding of the C-64 from their user manual. The manual tells you what to do, whereas this book is designed to tell you why to do it and how it actually works - or why it doesn't work!

The main chapters are COMMODORE BASIC, PROGRAMMING and DEBUGGING, MEMORY STORAGE DEVICES, USEFUL APPLICATIONS, ADVANCED COMMANDS and APPLICATIONS, and Appendices A to N.

COMMODORE BASIC covers the inputting of Basic commands which make the C-64 actually do something. The on-screen editor is detailed quite well. I was surprised to find an operation which I could have used many times to get me out of trouble when I am stuck in the middle of a quote mode condition. Pressing SHIFTED RETURN will exit the quote mode and the line without entering the line/ corrections into memort - a very handy escape.

PROGRAMMING and DEBUGGING describes the use of the STOP and CONT commands for locating bugs in a program. An explanation of the fact that variables lose their value during line editing, I feel, should have been in bold print. The usage of the Basic commands is shown along with math functions, error messages explained with examples, and logical file commands explained in depth. The section on regaining control indicates that one method is to hold RUN/STOP and tap the RESTORE key as it tends to be stiff. I wonder about this reason.

MEMORY STORAGE DEVICES details the Datasette usage, and then goes into a detailed description of the 1541 disk drive. One item of importance indicated is why you should never use the same ID numbers on disks. The reason is that when performing a SAVE on a disk which has the same ID as the previous disk, the drive will save using the old disk's BAM onto the new disk, and thus possibly writing over information on the new disk it doesn't know is there, because it didn't consult the new disk's BAM. The drive assumes that no change of disks has taken place if the ID of the new disk is the same as the old disk. The SAVE WITH REPLACE command is

listed, but is indicated to have a bug. It actually shows the command using the DRIVE NUMBER, which is slightly safer than to use this command without this parameter. However it is better not to use it at all.

USEFUL APPLICATIONS deals with usage of the RANDOM feature, sorting in alphabetic or numeric order, and filing in general.

ADVANCED COMMANDS and APPLICATIONS delves deeper into the mysteries of the commands WAIT, specific POKES, PEEK, and SYS. Also listed is a handy routine showing how to merge two programs or routines.

The APPENDIX has the usual listing of various codes, abbreviations of commands, DOS error messages, and a very practical routine for formatting columns on a printer.

In summary, this book could provide the next stage in learning after the User Manual. The Programmer's Desk Reference is a book to be kept within easy reach as a first-aid for ailing programs, cassette- and disk drive confusion and command amnesia.

GRAPHICS PIRATE

(from Cockroach Software)

by Phil Guerney

The Graphics Pirate cartridge was demonstrated by the authors of the program themselves to a fascinated audience at a CCUGQ meeting a few months ago. Like everyone else I thought it looked like great fun to play with, but I also wondered whether it was actually useful for anything. Well after having been loaned one for a few weeks I can confirm that it is great fun, but I'm still not sure if it's useful!

For those who don't know what I'm talking about, the Graphics Pirate is a cartridge that does absolutely nothing while it is plugged in ... until at some point in a game when a hi-res graphics screen is full of flying sprites, you press the little red button on the Pirate. Immediately the Pirate takes control and saves to disk several files containing all the screen data (in DOODLE format if two-colour, KOALA PAD format if multicolour) and the sprite data (in SPRITE MAGIC format - the Compute! sprite editor) and redefined character sets (in ULTRAFONT+ format - also from Compute!). You now have a completely "broken" version of that game's screen at that moment. The sprites and character sets can now be used in your own programs and you can modify the screen or print it out using DOODLE or KOALA PAD. Even if you don't have these other programs, you can print out the screens, including the sprites, with programs on the accompanying Pirate disk.

The Pirate can however do much more than this. If you now run the DISPLAY EDITOR program provided on the disk that comes with the cartridge you can reload the original screen just as it was at the point the button was pressed, and now the fun really starts. Each sprite can be identified, moved, changed in size and colour.

Just how many sprites do you think go to make up the golfer in Leaderboard? Find out what objects in your game are sprites, or what are just redefined characters. Further, the screen colours can be changed and the screen itself flipped left/right. You can edit the screen by picking up the pattern in any one character block and dropping it over another character block of the screen. For a weird result, you can load the sprites that were saved as a result of using the cartridge for one game onto the screen of another game! How about the Leaderboard golfer playing on the Wintergames snowfields?

All these saved moments of a game, whether edited or not, can be saved to a specially prepared ROACHSHOW disk. When this disk is booted, each screen is displayed for a preset time before moving to the next on the disk, a sort of game slideshow. The whole process of capturing a screen and saving it, then converting it into the compressed format used for the ROACHSHOW disk and resaving it onto that disk, is quite short and I had no trouble filling a complete Roachshow disk side with 41 screens in a few evenings. By far the longest part was loading the game and playing up to the point where I wanted to press the Pirate button.

Note that not all games are captured successfully with the Pirate. For example, if the game uses a split screen with hi-res at the top for the action and text only at the bottom for the score, then either the hires screen or the text screen will save correctly depending where the raster was at the moment of pressing the pirate button. Also many games use more than eight sprites at once by switching to a second or third group of sprite definitions during display of each frame. Only the sprites (up to eight) that were active at the moment the button was pressed are captured. Repeat a few times to get the others. Using the Pirate for games like this was very good instruction on just how these games are constructed even if they couldn't be made part of a Roachshow.

The Pirate disk comes loaded with some extra goodies. One program lets you load Printshop and Printmaster graphics, overlaying them if you want, and saving the result in DOODLE, KOALA PAD, PRINTSHOP SCREEN MAGIC or compressed (ROACHSHOW) forms. This screen can even be loaded into the display editor and combined with a set of game sprites. A Newsroom editor allows single graphics to be picked directly off Clipart disks. As the instructions note, these graphics when resaved in Koala Pad format make excellent on-screen colouring-in pictures for kids with a Koala Pad. Best of all in my opinion is a (public domain) program that allows any Printshop, Printmaster or Newsroom graphic to be converted into the form of one of the others. A generally useful 17 second fast disk format program is provided for those without Cockroach Turbo Roms.

The Graphics Pirate costs about \$65. In comparison to some other programs on the market, I think that it is outstanding value. Of course, you will have to make up your own mind whether you think playing around with graphics like this is worth anything at all!

--oo0oo--

S U P E R B A S E T I P S

by Jim Kennedy (from the I.C.P.U.G. Newsletter)

8 Bit Superbase Programming Tips

When editing a Superbase program you can get back to the line before by pressing the backarrow key. This will save lots of cursor key activity especially on long program lines. Another tip is when you want to get to a line in the middle of a large program clear the screen by SHIFT CLR/HOME and then type PROG 2340, for example, to call up program lines starting with 2340 at the top of the screen. These two tips save lots of program development time.

Superbase: The Book - Errata Sheet

Below are some errors to correct if you have this really good book.

1. pg 30-31 missing words:

...output or other processing. You can copy, rename, or delete lists.

Memos

These are created with the memo option. They...

2. pg 154 line 20: File 'data'

3. pg 149 line 60: Insert after file 'old' and before select n:

:select a\$;

4. pg 101-102 missing words:

...update the invoice file to make the new invoices show a status...

5. pg 136 bottom: 10 PRINT CHR\$(27);CHR\$(14)... not 10 PRINT = CHR\$...

6. pg 102 & 103: Line 80 appears twice.

7. pg 23 add following:

Illegal characters list = # - @ < > / & " [] () for both field names and contents.

8. pg 29: Several lines are repeated on pg 30.

9. pg 138: Program has CR\$ = CHR\$(13) missing.

10. pg 27 & 28: Renumber second guideline #3 and all subsequent ones.

Dates as Key Fields by Month and Day

Sometimes one wishes to store records by date but irrespective of the year for things such as birthdays. For example, one file with a key field of [lastname] could have birthdates in the usual Superbase format of 13Jun87. Suppose one wants to make another file with the records stored (keyed) in the order 12 Jan 45, 14 Jan 36, 23 Jan 65 etc and, of course, we wish the key to be unique to avoid the problems which duplicate keys lead to. Also assume the birthdate is a field titled [birthdate]. We must convert this date, which is stored as a number, to the new format and store various other bits of information in the new file.

```
10 file "inamelist"
20 select f:goto 100
30 ln$=[lastname]
100 x = 65:rem set for ASCII no for letter A
120 dt = [birthdate]:rem read in birthdate as stored in numerical form
130 convert dt,dt$:rem convert the date to string form
140 da$ = left$(dt$,2): rem extract day of month numbers
150 mo$ = mid$(dt$,3,3): rem extract month abrev
160 date dt$,m:rem find out which month by number ie xx=m
170 if m<10 then mn$="0"+right$(str$(m),1):else mn$ = right$(str$(m),2)
180 yy$ = right$(dt$,2):yr$ = "19"+yy$:rem extract year abrev number
190 file "bdaylist":rem call new file
200 ky$ = mn$+da$+yy$+chr$(x):rem build key string eg 012254a for 22 Jan
210 select ky$: rem see if key already exists
220 pmat goto 300: rem if partial match then ok to store
230 nmat goto 300:rem if no match then ok to store
240 x=x+1:goto 200:if match then increment to 012254b and try again
300 clear:rem create blank record
310 calc [lname]=ln$:[day]=da$:[month]=mo$:[year]=yr$:[key]=ky$
320 store rem store the new record
330 file "inamelist":select ln$:rem go back to same record in old file
340 select n:eof menu:rem move to next record
350 goto 30:rem repeat process for next record
```

POKE'ing in 8 bit Superbase

Paul Blair from Australia (we seem to have a lot of 'Sports' involved in this issue) contributed some information about the POKE command in Superbase.

Although the manuals says that POKE is not allowed, Paul found a use for it. This came about because one of his friends backs-up his Superbase data disks on his 64/8250 combination using a purpose written program which transposes files for him - today's summary becomes tomorrow's starting balance, and so on. But in doing so the system waits for him to answer 'Y' at just enough places to be tiresome.

The 'fix' is simple, before (note - before) the line that requests confirmation as part of the internal process, POKE 'Y' and a carriage return into the keyboard buffer. How? Use PERFORM (or DO in the earlier versions) and there is no need for the program to pause. Paul's example program is

```
10 rem Demo of POKE in Superbase with DO/PERFORM
20 rem this example answers 'y' (ascii 89)
30 rem note that REM can be used on same line as PERFORM
40 rem for C128 (with C64 use values shown in REM statement)
50 rem by Paul Blair, May 87
60 perform "poke 842,89": rem 631 in c64
70 perform "poke 843,13": rem 632 in c64
80 perform "poke 208,2": rem 198 in c64
90 ask @2,2"Which one ";a$
100 display @2,4a$:wait
```

Of course, there are probably thousands of other ways of using POKE. But be careful - unless you know every little last thing about how Superbase stores things you could clobber some vital location. Test first.

GAMES CORNER

by Daniel & Reuben Phillips & Mark Walterfang

REVIEWS

*** WIZBALL (Sensible software)

Those sensible (and almost as hairy as Jeff Minter), people from Sensible Software, Jops and Krix, have produced yet another fantastic game. A wizard, who is completely out of his element (ie. it is set in a futuristic space type scenario), must restore colour to an otherwise drab landscape. With the help of his cat, he collects and mixes the chemicals needed to paint the eight levels. More advanced weapons can be obtained Nemesis/ Delta/ Slapfight style, that is shoot a particular brand of alien, pick up the pearl it leaves behind, and select your new weapon (if you can afford it!). A brilliant game featuring great sound, music and graphics, and a simultaneous two-player option. Most importantly, it is eminently playable. Wizard!

***KICKSTART II (Mastertronic)

Released originally on the 128, this game is now available on the 64. The follow up to Kickstart, where you rode a dirt bike over a series of obstacle courses in the least possible time, optionally racing a friend at the same time. Kickstart is much the same thing, but with 24 (as opposed to eight in the original Kickstart) courses, improved graphics, computer opponent, and a course designer. Great two player game and, since it's a budget game, it is well worth buying.

HINTS & TIPS

A few of the following POKE's require a reset re-enable. This gadget allows you to reset (in conjunction with a regular reset switch), 'reset-proof' programs. You can buy one from the club - check the Goods and Services page. Or, if you don't have one, you could probably achieve the same result by resetting with a fastload cartridge plugged in.

COPS 'n' ROBBERS

POKE 14614,0: POKE 14615,234 to create an invincible robber.
POKE 7667,234: POKE 7668,234: POKE 7669,234: POKE 11294,234:
POKE 11295,234: POKE 11296,234: POKE 53281,15 for the ability to see in the dark!
SYS 6080 to restart.

PAINTER BOY

While the game is running, hit RUN/STOP RESTORE, then SYS 49152 to hear the music in a slightly sped up form.

INTO THE EAGLE'S NEST

If you're sick of your antiquated old flintlock, reset the computer (with reset re-enable), POKE 17876,189 then SYS 32817 for a weapon that would do Rambo proud!

Reset Computer (with re-enable), POKE 33732,169: POKE 33733,0: POKE 33734,234: SYS 32777 to make the evil, nasty-type bad guys completely harmless.

REVS

Load the game, then after playing it for awhile, stick your head out the window and quack like a duck three times. This doesn't exactly help your lap times, but it is very calming after spinning off the track for the nth time! [The above tips by Dan.]

KRACKOUT

Load it, Reset it, POKE it (POKE 35220,200), SYS it (SYS 16035), then play it with a permanent back wall. Shame about the lame ending. [This tip by Mark Walterfang.]

If you have any suggestions or tips send them to us and we'll publish them. Remember, this column is under new management, so we need your suggestions and ideas.

GAMES COLUMN - 11 Coultis Street, Sunnybank, Qld, 4109

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B Y T E S

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FOR SALE

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COMPUTE! MAGAZINES - 14 copies (Jan '86 - Apr '87) \$25.00 the lot.

Contact Ralph De Vries on (07) 300 3477

OCEANIC DRIVE - 100% 1541 Compatible - \$250.00
XETEC SUPER GRAPHICS INTERFACE, w. Manual & Disk - \$80.00
PLUS/4 COMPUTER - \$80.00
1201 AMBER MONITOR - \$120.00

Contact Lex Hinckley on (07) 3933140

C-64 COMPUTER, 1541 DRIVE, ASSORTED SOFTWARE (incl. PrintShop, Easy Script, Logo - all originals). Free delivery in Brisbane area.

Contact Alex Robertson on (076) 965172 for details

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"BYTES" are computer-related adverts and are free of charge to all financial members of our group.

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FINANCIAL REPORT 1986 - 1987

COMMODORE COMPUTER USER GROUP (QLD) INC.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 1987

1986		1987	
\$	\$	\$	\$
MEMBERS EQUITY			
3,659.80	Opening Equity		9,223.65
5,543.85	Net Profit		9,390.00
20.00	BBS Membership Fees 86-87		-
<u>9,223.65</u>	TOTAL EQUITY		<u>18,613.65</u>
=====			=====
REPRESENTED BY CURRENT ASSETS			
170.00	Petty Cash	170.00	
192.24	Bank - CTB Sth Brisbane	6,988.18	
372.00	Sundry Debtors	207.85	
3,953.56	Stock on Hand	<u>4,402.00</u>	
4,687.80	TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	11,768.03	
FIXED ASSETS			
613.34	Book Library	987.04	
209.59	Magazine Library	219.42	
2,413.48	Software Library	3,069.89	
2,582.38	Equipment	3,157.41	
1,398.00	BBS Equipment	<u>2,549.37</u>	
7,216.79	TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	9,983.13	
11,904.59	TOTAL ASSETS		21,751.16
LIABILITIES			
1,295.94	Membership in Advance	947.51	
1,385.00	Library Bonds	<u>2,190.00</u>	
2,680.94	TOTAL LIABILITIES		3,137.51
<u>9,223.65</u>	TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u>\$ 18,613.65</u>
=====			=====

H A I L B O X

I have been a country member of the club for some years now and I find CURSOR very informative and wish to contribute the following problem.

I own a C-64, a Xetec Super Graphics interface and a Star DP-515 15" printer. I have no problems with getting my printer to dump graphics with any of my programs, but I can only get the standard 10" dumps. I am wondering whether anybody knows of an interface which would give me 15" graphic dumps.

The interface is set up on the Gemini SG-10 setting. If more information about the printer is needed I would be only too happy to forward these.

Justin Lohmann (Broken Hill)

As 99% of all home computer users own 8" printers (8" being the useable width of the paper), all Graphics Programs are based on this standard. Their printer drivers send the graphics information (stored in the form of Pixels) to the printer, where this information is translated into DOTS, produced by the pins of your printer. Note that your interface only translates the Commodore Serial Port information to be acceptable by your Centronics interfaced printer - it does not control directly the width of your printout. Some graphics programs do allow a side-ways printout, which usually results in a slightly larger printout, albeit that usually a certain amount of dimensional distortion takes place.

I really don't know of any Graphics Program which supports printouts wider than the standard 8 inches - even on the Amiga all Graphics programs (including the ones that print out in colour) are based on the standard 8" printers, so it looks as if you will only be able to use your extra width for printing out text.

If any of our readers know about a program or a solution to Justin's problem, we would like to hear from them.

About a year ago I started experiencing occasions when the characters on the screen would change into all available C-64 colours, mostly, but not always the moment the text started to scroll when listing. RUN STOP / RESTORE would restore to the start-up colours, but the slightest movement of text on the screen would re-introduce the coloured letters.

Repair after repair made my wallet lighter, but failed to arrest the problem. Discussions with other club members and service technicians were no help - I even tried different electrical outlets. The problem was that it was a bit like a tooth ache - if I wanted to show it to somebody the unit would behave like a brand new C-64 under warranty. So, on occasions when I got fed up, I just switched it off for the night.

Just lately I thought that the feel of the C-64's ON/OFF switch was getting very slack and sometimes after a short period my screen would return to the start-up picture with here and there the character @ appearing without any reason. I phoned Denis Cheshire who suggested I bring it over for him to have a look at.

Would you believe that within an hour I was back on the way home with a new, albeit non - Commodore main switch installed, and not a coloured letter has dared to show on my screen without being instructed to do so. I again love my C-64.

Cor Geels

Many thanks for this valuable tip, Cor!

We received a very extensive epistle from Lindsay Vardy of Wynnun which is too long to reproduce in its entirety. Following are some extracts of his letter, with our comments if so required:

After some introductory remarks about earlier problems with repairs of equipment he goes on to sing the praises of the Epyx Fast Load cartridge, but follows it with a listing of its faults and the things it won't do, like: "The COPY a file won't work, Edit a disk doesn't work and the FORMAT Disk option sometimes crashes and needs to be repeated."

Can one truly recommend a product on which several features are so badly implemented? I feel that Cockroach's Turbo-Rom (sold through the club) is a far better, and more reliable product (just ask the many users of same).

He then goes on to describe the use of an disk alignment program from AHQY magazine which he uses apparently quite successfully. This is fine, if you know what you are doing, but I have heard of many home disk alignment efforts which ended up on the service desks of the local Commodore repair man.

Lindsay follows this with some thoughts on speech synthesis for use by handicapped people. My question to him is "how many of these speech synthesizers have you heard?" From my own experience the results leave usually a lot to be desired. The Amiga has a built-in speech device, but to make it speak in an intelligible fashion requires a good deal of knowledge of phonetics - not something that many of us possess. I feel that this field is really for the experts, but I'm prepared to stand corrected.

"Mention has to be made of the service from 3M who are servicing Epson printers. Fitting a new print head, clean printer, lubricate same and supply a multi page test printout of all printer functions for about half the cost quoted by another Brisbane firm."

Yes, we have heard from several of our members who praise 3M for their good and reasonably priced service on Epson printers - a welcome change these days!

Lindsay goes on to praise his Epson printer which has behaved in an exemplary fashion. He also mentions the fact that BROTHER fabric ribbons will fit an EPSON ribbon cartridge. However the procedure to open up the cartridges to change the ribbons from one cartridge to another seems to be fairly messy, and I doubt if many people could be bothered to do so, particularly in view of the availability of reasonably priced replacement ribbon services.

He is currently engaged in the design of a multi slot games cartridge holder (one of those items that nobody could be bothered to design or market in Australia), and we hope that, once the cartridge holder is finished, he may be able to show it at one of our meetings.

"The articles in *CURSOR* are great, the user reports on products are generally good - how else are we to know what to buy, how easy it is to buy something and then find that the salesperson neglected to tell us what the product would not do.

Enclosed are a couple of programs I wrote when I first got my C128."

Lindsay's graphic routines will be published in next month's edition of *Cursor*. Many thanks Lindsay!

Nothing is impossible in the world of computers if you have a little perseverance.

My first computer was a TRS80 model 1 with a Tandy green screen monitor. After seeing the light I purchased a C-64 and all the in-store experts from Tandy and Commodore said I couldn't possibly connect up the Tandy monitor to the C-64. Well, not to take no for an answer, I had a friend put a new plug on the monitor to suit the C-64 connection and I ran the sound of a tape recorder using it as an amplifier. That worked fine until I later bought a colour TV as a monitor. Next I bought a second hand Sendata 1000 modem with a 5 Pin DIN plug connection. Many phone calls later to Sendata in Melbourne and other referrals in Sydney, they told me it wouldn't be possible to make a suitable connection. It was then that I joined the Users Group and, thanks to the help of the executive members, especially Lester Bennett, who made up the connection with no real dramas, I was away.

I brought a 16K Microbee from Ipswich Grammar School for my son to do his projects and computer keyboarding and went through the same dramas in hooking up a Centronics printer. Many thanks to Greg Perry - I connected it up to the Microbee and as a bonus it works well with the 64.

These three instances involved many phone calls and hours chasing up leads and many blind alleys. Like probably many club members we are limited financially and have to scrounge around for the cheapy peripheral gear and thus run into problems of integrating non-standard equipment to our computers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the club executive for the marvellous job they all do in helping out us non-technical end users. In my experience no task has been too much trouble for them.

Well, I'm off to Tassie in a few weeks, but I will continue my membership and hopefully become more of a contributor, having broken the ice into the land of "guru 64 journalism".

Ralph Crabtree

Many thanks for your kind words of praise, Ralph. We wish you all the best in your new home state.

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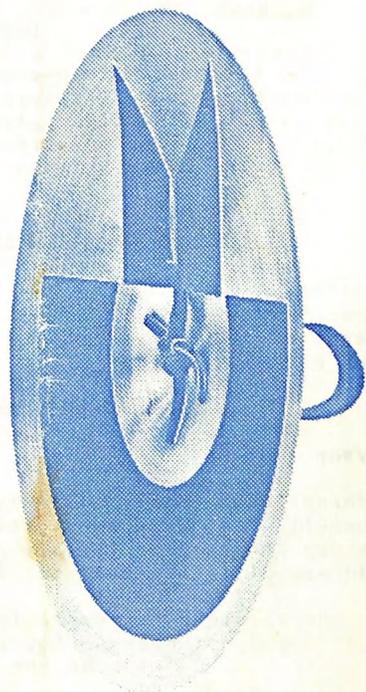
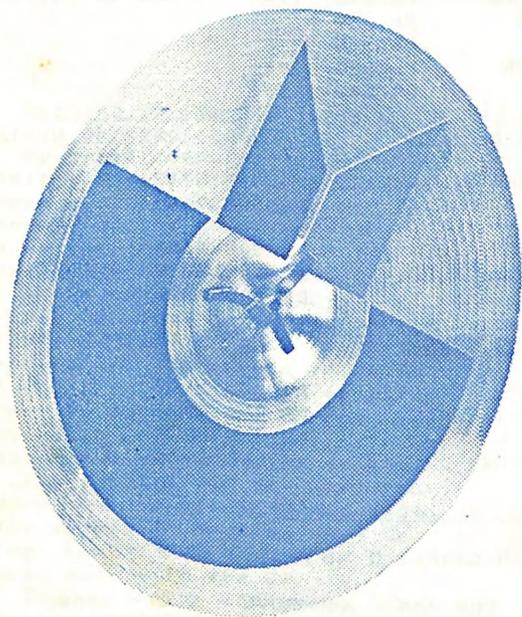
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