



# The Reflection

January 1991

Volume 2 Issue 2

## The Chief Sez

More evidence that we are in a declining market and people are losing interest in the C64, and telecommunications in general. Many of the calls that I get these days lead to discussions of board activity and number of calls per day, many, many people are noticing sharp declines. Of significance this month is the loss of a couple of boards, TWZ (Twilight Zone) and ASN (Atlanta System's Net). Both have been with IMAGE for a long time and both sysops are knowledgeable in IMAGE programming and have been very helpful toward other IMAGE sysops.

Rod Serling from TWZ has done a lot to help others, he has written pfiles, converted files and made many "mods" that have been well received. TWZ released a pfile disk that did very well. He is moving on to the Amiga, and will be missed.

N4CER from ASN has been a real asset to IMAGE, providing a high level of support to those in the Atlanta area as well as to many other parts of the country. He has been

an IMAGE dealer and has accounted for many sales of IMAGE and associated products. He has often provided the kind of support that can only be found from someone that is really dedicated, we thank him for his devotion and will miss him as well. He is moving on to the IBM market. (See article on page 2)

With the passing of each board we lose a lot. Many users will not have a local IMAGE to call, or will not make the effort to call an alternative board. The decrease in available boards merely speeds the decline of the C64 and hastens its eventual demise.

Just as other "fads" have preceded the BBS fad, so will others follow, it is sad to see one that has been so well received decline.

Enough about that. Let's discuss another potential dying product. This newsletter.

I have about run out of things to write about. I don't know what you, the sysops, want to hear about and I am getting less and less support from others. Several of the contributors from the past have not contributed lately, leaving the burden of writing the newsletter to me. I know I have a lot to say but I am not sure you all want to hear it.

Some of the things that I know people like are "mods" but I don't know WHAT "mods" people want to see. I've about used all of mine. Many people have commented on how well they like the newsletter, but few have made any comment about what they would like to see in it. How about some ideas? Articles? Help? Anything?

-R-

### The Death of a BBS

Well, the word is out. As December passes, so does Atlanta's System Net BBS. Another BBS bites the dust, joining the ranks of others to 'toss it in' and cease to exist. To prevent rumors and possibly, just possibly, prevent what I see as a bleak future, I've decided to share the true reasons with you.

As all of you know, being a SysOp is not an easy task. Running a BBS is possibly the hardest 'hobby' anyone would volunteer to undertake. So it is easy to see how one could become 'burned out' with a BBS and retire to being just another user. But the causes are deeper and more far-reaching.

I have no valid statistics, but in the greater Atlanta area alone, fourteen (14) Commodore BBSes have died in the last 12 months. Included in that total are several that have been in existence for more than 3 years each. That fact alone should set alarms off in any user's mind. Why are these boards going down? Some went IBM, some

Amiga, but most just pulled the plug. Through interviews and conversations, a pattern has emerged.

The pattern is not, as one would initially think, one of money. While it is true that Commodore BBS users are not known for their generosity, that fact is taken for granted by most SysOp's. Rather, the pattern seems to be: ABUSE. Yes, abuse. Of the system, of the SysOp, and of the other users. A common theme, and one I am a victim of, is that the users begin to take a system for granted, feeling that no matter what they do, the system will still be there tomorrow. A feeling persists that the SysOp runs his/her BBS full-time, with no consideration for family, outside interests, or employment. The user often becomes angry or irate when the SysOp does not personally see to the users feedback or mail, even when there are SubOps capable of handling the item in question. And if the user is one of the fortunate few to have a VOICE number for the SysOp, it becomes worse. I cannot tell you how many times I have been called at ungodly hours, awakened, then asked 'Were you asleep? Oh, well, I'm gonna wake you up!' and the user then launched into a discussion of IMAGE programming, expecting a clear and coherent answer. It becomes unbearable. So sooner or later, the SysOp rebels. As

easily as his/her board went up, it comes down.

In summation, I have joined others in becoming 'tired', and am in need of rest. School, family, job, just plain fun, have become important again. There has been no strife with IMAGE: Ray, John, and Fred are doing a great job and (I expect) will continue to do so. The network, while still having a problem or two, is well on the way to becoming a major information net. But if the average user does not wake up and remember the SysOp is a person, not just part of the computer, then one day, Commodore users will wake to find few (if any) BBSes for them to call.

A last note: IMAGE and the owners thereof are to be commended. Never before have I been associated with such a group effort. Most seem to go above and beyond mere co-operation to help another SysOp. Got a question? Ask any of hundreds of people and you either get an answer, or get sent to someone WITH an answer. And there is good ol' Fred Dart, often the butt of complaint, but let something happen to a system, and who is always there by that phone? You got it. Where would IMAGE be without him? As I leave the ranks of active boards, I am glad to have met some of the best in the world. Thanks Fred, and Muff, Al, Andy, Bill Cunningham, Bill

Jansen, Dave MacMillian, Ron Gray, and the many others whom I will miss.

Larry Cody  
(N4CER)

Atlanta's System Net BBS  
Ed Note: Thank you Larry, for all you have done. You will be missed.

-R-

*Files, Files,  
and more Files*

After you have been running a BBS for a while, especially if you have updated your software a time or two, you may find yourself with an accumulation of files that you no longer know whether you need or not. Such is the case with many IMAGE owners and we were requested to provide a listing of the files that are currently needed to run IMAGE.

It is not an easy task to determine just what files are needed and which ones are not. The best we can do is to check the current release disks and see what files they contain. That should be a pretty good start. Doubtless there are many other files, on all IMAGE boards, that are desired, but may not be required. Here are the files that appear on the IMAGE 1.2A master disk:

image 1.2  
ml 1.2  
screen 1.2  
ml.extra  
ml.editor.loader  
ml.editor

ml.rs232  
ml.pmodes  
setup  
im

These files are identified as the "boot disk files" and should be on the boot disk, or boot partition of your drive. They are followed by the screen files, which must be on the plus file partition.

scn.c1  
scn.c2  
scn.c3  
scn.c4  
scn.t1  
scn.t2  
scn.t3  
scn.t4

***Lt. Kernal owners note:***

One way to clean up your LU would be to use AUTOMOVE to move all of the required files to a different USER number, then use AUTODEL to delete those files that are no longer needed, then a quick AUTOMOBE to finish up.

I have

spoken to several people that did not know where the "scn" files were supposed to be, so they had them on the boot disk, the plus file disk and the system disk just to be sure. It works, but takes up some extra space.

The "proto" files contain the protocols, among other things. They are identified by "++" and go on the plus file disk.

++ 0 (Punter)  
++ 1 (Xmodem)  
++ 2 (Copier)  
++ 3 (Relaxed Punter)  
++ 4 (indexer)  
++ 5 (large clock at idle)

The "subsystems" are next, and consist of:

+.f (files, PF, TF, RF, MF all in one)  
+.n (news)  
+.t (terminal)  
+.BE  
+.EM  
+.SE

+.UD  
+.UL  
+.UX  
+.VE

All self explanatory.

They are followed by the "system files", files the system uses for various functions:

+.am (automaintenance)  
+.er (writes error log)

+.lo (log-on/off)  
+.nu (new user)  
+.on (during log-on)  
+.modem  
(what else?)

And

the following "command" files;

+.AT (translation toggle)  
+.BA (BAR graph)  
+.CD (change device)  
+.ED (edit user)  
+.EP (edit parameters)  
+.EX (exchange credit)  
+.LD (change last call date)  
+.LG (read log)  
+.NL (new log for those not using +.am)  
+.OR (the commercial)  
+.PC (password change for non Turbo-Rel systems)  
+.QM (quick mail)  
+.RS (set up reserved account)  
+.SM (system maintenance in subs/ud)  
+.ST (user status)  
+.VF (view feedback)  
+.WF (write a file)

Also the following sysop utilities are provided with IMAGE 1.2A:

+.alpha/ind (to maintain the index)  
+.access (to edit access groups)

- + .diredit (subs/ud directory edit for non Turbo-Rel)
- + .file count (to count files on drives with limited directory space)
- + .mail weed (weeds mail of users that have not called)
- + .reconfig (on-line configuration editor)
- + .text msg editor (to edit "e.text")
- + .weed (to weed inactive users)

That is all of the stock IMAGE files. Those running the network and/or Turbo-Rel's have a whole list of other files that are included, they will be covered at a later date, along with the current dates in the files.

Any other plus files you have on your plus file disk are added extras that you have added for one reason or another. The additional files that the system MUST have to operate are:

- bd.data (boot disk)
- e.data (etcetera disk)
- u.config (user disk)
- u.index (user disk)

These files are created by the "config" program when you configure your board. There can be a HUGE number of other files, the "s." files can grow to a very large number if entry screens are added for all the subboards, UD's, etc., etcetera files ("e.") can multiply as on-line games are added, plus files for on-line games and additional commands and so on.

-eR-

Have you renewed  
your subscription to  
The Reflection?

1.2A? What is  
1.2A? Quite simply it  
is another free update  
from New Image. We  
felt that the upgrade  
was minor in nature  
and did not feel that it warranted a  
separate version number, nor did we  
feel that we should sell it, hence, a  
free update.

1.2A is the incorporation of the "CMD Mods", a series of changes that will allow those with CMD hard drives to address all 254 partitions on that drive. It has also been incorporated into the latest FREE update to the Turbo-rels, which means that anyone running the Turbo-rels will need the updated files.

All new shipments of IMAGE are now the 1.2A version so no conversion is necessary on those systems. Anyone getting the Turbo-rel updates will only need to install the changes on the update disk. Those that are not running the Turbo-rels can obtain the "CMD Mods" (or 1.2A enhancements, which ever way you prefer to look at them) from any of the support boards. We will also be making these available on Qlink.

The Turbo-rels cannot be made available on Qlink because a new, serialized, "++ post" is required and can only be obtained from one of the four support boards. (PCM, GJ2, LDE, EFB)

Basically, the "CMD Mods" incorporate changes in any file that addresses a device/drive. Many files simply use routines in the "im" file, but there are those that make individual calls to specific de-

vice/drives. These had to be modified to allow for drive designations higher than nine which was the maximum allowed previously. Further, changes had to be made to prevent the huge drain on memory should someone choose to have all 254 partitions defined.

These changes have been through an extensive beta test stage. We were prevented from releasing them sooner due to the complexity of interfacing them with the new Turbo-rels. Had we released them sooner we would have had to release specific changes to the Turbo-rels, then when the Turbo-rel enhancements were finished we would have had to release yet another set of files. Confusing to say the least. Even so, it is still going to be very confusing to a lot of people.

We will be posting a list of current dates of files either in this issue or the next.

*And the hits keep rolling!*

-R-

***CMD owners note:***

By removing the REM in line 117 of "setup" the CMD clock is read during boot up and the time is set automatically.

***Lt. Kernal owners note:***

By removing the REM in line 93 of "setup" the boot files can be "hidden on a different LU/USER. Define that as the default LU/USER and the boot files are not accesible from the board. Also note that the fast LK blocks free read routine for 7.1 DOS and higher is in line 1081.

## Port Commodore The History

The Port Commodore BBS began life very simply as a very small, message only, BBS in June of 1984. The original name of the board was the SALEM BBS, running at 300 baud on a VIC-20 (fully expanded to 29K) and a 1540 (yes, that is not a typo, 1540) disk drive.

At it's inception it was the ONLY BBS in the local dialing area. Further, it was the ONLY way to use a MODEM in the local area. One of the reason I started it in the first place was due to the \$700.00 phone/VISA charge I had run up calling CompUserve LONG DISTANCE. I had the VIC and the extra disk drive that were doing me no good at all.

300 baud was not to be sneezed at in those days. There were very few people with modems at all, and a typical 300 baud modem cost over one hundred dollars. I managed to find a "deal" on some where we could get them for \$70.00, which we passed along to several of the users in the local user group. Some are still with us, though they have long since abandoned the 300 baud modem.

The SALEM BBS underwent about three "updates" to the software in the next six months, then the program outgrew the VIC. It was either shut down or change computers. We moved to a C64, a compiled program, and introduced SIGS, still no file transfers.

In early 1985 they introduced

Continued on page 9



Welcome to *The Crossroads*.

Again, another fine example of an IMAGE BBS making all the right moves. The Crossroads has a wide selection of software for the IMAGE SysOp and the non-SysOp alike. His board has made excellent use of the SIG's in the way he has everything distributed. There is also an active message base here.

I sent Roadmaster a list of

questions via the network and then called later to check the place out. Here are the questions along with his answers.

Q. What is your board activity percentage?

A. 43%

Q. How long have you been running a BBS?

A. About 4 years.

Q. How long have you been running IMAGE?

A. Three and a half years.

Q. What kind of equipment do you use to run *The Crossroads*?

A. A C-64, Lt Kernal 20 meg, 1541,

multiplexer, 1701 monitor, Supra 2400 modem, and a Peak Peripherals RS232 interface.

Q. Why did you choose the name for your board?

A. I chose Crossroads because my BBS is a place for different people and different computers to meet via the modem.

Q. Have you ever used any other BBS program other than IMAGE?

A. I ran a couple PD BBS's but only a short time. I've been with C-Net and IMAGE the longest. When I put 3.5 years with IMAGE that really means C-Net and IMAGE. Started with C-Net 12.0 went to 12.1 and then stayed with IMAGE.

Q. What would you like to do that you haven't done yet?

A. I would like to expand the available UD space to allow UD space for other types of computers.

Q. Why haven't you done that

yet?

A. Because of the cost.

(I guess that figures, if it weren't for cost most of us would have BBS's that would make NASA proud)

Q. Other than the name What do you think is unique about your board?

A. I have installed the NEWSWRITER plus file so it can be used by users to write articles for the local Commodore user group. So they use it to get articles from their members (and from other Crossroad users) to be published in their monthly

*"The Crossroads"*  
 Sysop: ROADMASTER  
 714-944-8665

newsletter. The user group is called ASCI (Association for Sharing Commodore Information).

Q. What advice would you give to someone just starting out that has never run a BBS before?

A. To be patient, start modestly (size wise), and build from there. Offer users friendly, courteous, service and the word will spread about how great the board is.

Q. How many users do you have on your board?

A. 268 users.

Q. What is the highest number of calls your board has had without a re-boot?

A. 350+

Q. What is your favorite way to deal with a problem user?

A. To treat them fairly, explain what they are doing wrong, and offer to help. If the problem continues, access may be lowered or in extreme cases they may be deleted.

Q. What would you most like to see IMAGE do next?

A. I'm not really sure. Continued quality of service to it's registered owners and maybe some more UD protocols supported.

Well that's about it. Remember if you want your BBS featured in this article then send in your ad to *The Reflection*. If you are looking for a good BBS to call for IMAGE support then try *The Crossroads*. It is a NISSA SSE BBS.

Next month we will have a SPECIAL feature from *The Bluegrass State* so don't miss it.

'Til next month, See Ya.

(Interview by SIR COBRA, Sport of Kings, 407-383-7785)

-eR-

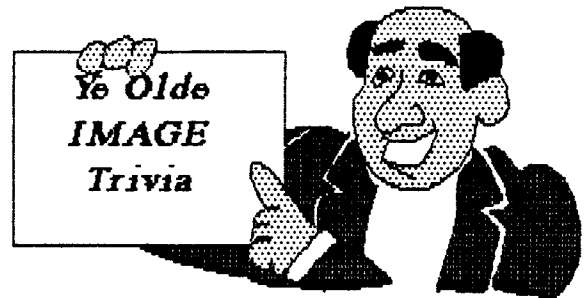


IMAGE Trivia, from the database.

State with the most IMAGE owners? California with 78  
#2, Michigan with 76.

Top ten states:

1. CA 78
2. MI 76
3. NY 63
4. IL 54
5. PA 50
6. OK 46
7. NJ 44
8. TX 39
9. FL 31
10. GA 26

There are four states with no IMAGE owners, Hawaii, Mississippi, Montana, and Vermont.

2 States have one owner each, Iowa and Rhode Island.

There are four states with two owners, three states with three owners and six states with four. The other states have between 5 and 25 each.

The most common first name for an IMAGE owner is John (39), Jon (2) or Johathan (1), followed by Rob or Robert (30) (there are also 16 Bobs and 1 Bobby). We have 24 Chris', and 3 Christophers.

The first first name is Aaron (3) the last is Zachary.

The most common last name is Smith (10) (somehow I'm most surprised), what is a bit surprising



is the second most common, King (6). We have 5 Johnsons and Campbells, 4 Browns, Thompsons, Thomases, and Woods, and 3 each of ten other names. Not everyone is unique it would seem.

The first name alphabetically is Agreen, the last is Zigrey. There are 21 Mc something or other... (But only one Dart, probably one too many)

The most common BBS name seems to be Twilight Zone with 5 of them. Also very popular are variations on the Star Trek theme with a couple of Star Treks, a couple Next Generations, a couple Star Fleets, and a couple Enterprises, plus some other variations from the TV series. There are 4 boards with Excalibur in the name, 4 with Underground, and 3 Ground Zeros and Commodore Connections.

The city with the most owners is Philadelphia with 14, followed by Chicago with 11. Houston and Columbus have 9 each, with Austin, Brooklyn and San Diego with 8, Franklin has 7 and the rest have 6 or less. The first city alphabetically is Abington, the last is Yukon with 2.

There are 20 area codes with more than ten owners in each, the 313 area code is number one with 38, 201 is second with 24, followed by: 216 (22), 215 (19), 312 (19), 206 (18), 714 (18), 303 (17), and 12 areas with 15 or less.

The first IMAGE owner is Al DeRosa with serial number G0001, the highest to date is Steve Seman with G1044. The Australians have the G2000 series so don't count. :)

-R-

Continued from page 6

a very rudimentary file transfer using their own protocol. It was terrible. Basically they had a short BASIC program that people could type in that would allow them to download a file that contained the protocol. Ughhh.

We stayed with that software, adding a disk drive, until about May of 1986, at which time they decided that they were not going to update the software any more due to the fact that there was superior public domain software available.

While looking around for another BBS program we had come across a copy of C-Net 10.0. I had attempted to configure it a couple of times, but given up, feeling it was too complicated and fearing that my users would not like it. When I had to convert to another BBS program I broke out the 10.0, and in June of 1986 I converted to an illegal copy of 10.0, went 1200 baud, and added an SFD 1001. We re-named the board at that time and Port Commodore was born. I also ordered C-Net so I did not feel too badly about running the copy. Alas, like most illegal copies it was "bug" ridden and crashed a lot.

In due time I got C-Net 11.0. I felt I was really on the right track now...alas, 11.0 was a DISASTER, with so many "bugs" that it was difficult to keep it running for a day at a time. We (several other sysops and myself) de-bugged the program, posted "fixes" on Future World, uploaded "fixed" files, and generally, made the program work. I was very surprised when I got a FREE disk

from Perspective, WOW, 11.1A. The new "version" was supposed to contain NO new features or files, just the "fixed" files for 11.0. HA, 11.1a was worse than 11.0. It, too, was bug ridden and did not work. Further, it had an annoying habit of crashing to a "blue screen" at least once a day. Never, in the time I ran 11.0/1a was I able to get more than a day or two on my system without a re-boot.

In February of 1987 I got one of the first Lt. Kernal hard drives. Wow, wonderful! Alas, it would not work, and nothing I could do would get it to work. Neither could Fiscal, and Perspective was not interested. Eventually I wound up sending a copy of my 11.1a to Fiscal and Lloyd Sponenburgh was able to determine the problem and make a "patch" that would enable the 11.1a to run on the Lt. Kernal. Port Commodore went 20 meg and was one of the largest boards in the country.

At that time Fiscal did not have a BES, so the patch was uploaded to Port Commodore and was distributed from there to anyone that had the Lt. Kernal and 11.1a.

Perspective now became much more interested in the Lt. Kernal and Future World soon started running on one.

About six months later we added a second 20 meg Lt. Kernal, the 40 meg system was one of only three that I was aware of. There may have been others but they were not listed on Future World, Kernal's Kommand, or any other board I was aware of.


A couple months passed and Perspective announced a NEW ver-

sion, 12.0. Since I had "modded" my 11.1a very highly and since it did RUN, I hesitated for a couple of months before ordering 12.0. I had hoped that all of the "bugs" would be out of the program before I got it. Unfortunately, that did not happen either, and when I got my 12.0 it was, again, infected with insects.

Once more several of us set out to establish working versions of 12.0. We got no help from Perspective so our own support organization grew. The CSSC (C-Net Sysop Support Center) started by Little John, was the nucleus and a Lt. Kernal was the required drive. We set about to make sure that 12.0 would work with our LKs. It was no easy task, but we managed to get it working. After enough calls to Future World and enough messages and feedback I was finally able to get SOME support. Not from Future World, but rather from Don Gladden at Lyon's Den.

After contacting Don things got somewhat better, and we were able to get many "fixes" put in to the main program. We established a close relationship with Don and when he started to work on the 12.1 version for Perspective in early 1988 he asked me to beta test it for him. We were going to insure that the 12.1a would work on the Lt. Kernal, which Don did not have at that time.

(To be continued should anyone be interested and probably whether anyone wants to see it or not. It continues with the start of IMAGE)



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