The Zero Page

Number 18, April 1995

Eight-bit keeps takin' a byte
out of Commodore computing

The Commodore "Dream Machine"

The March *Zero Page* included an article covering the negotiations for the purchase of Commodore's 8-bit technology by Creative Micro Designs (CMD). The possibility of Commodore compatible systems being manufactured once again has several of our members thinking about what a new 8-bit "Dream Machine" might be like. Don McManamey, Jerry Shook, and Dale Lutes offer their visions of the next generation systems in this month's *Don's Digest, Jerry's Corner* and *Random Access*.

Don's Digest
by Don McManamey

The word is out! CMD is trying to obtain the 8 bit portion of the now defunct Commodore Business Machines who made the Commodore 64 and 128 computers. I won't go into details of the acquisition as there are many who know considerably more than I. It does conjure up all kinds of ideas though.

Not long ago I told Dale Lutes that CMD was going to make a C64 compatible machine with among other things, a built in 1581 drive and 512K base memory. He bought it hook, line and sinker. Or was that stinker? It didn't take long for me to fess up and admit the fabrication, but, just how far fetched was it? Let's put together a "dream machine" and then consider it from a practical stand point.

First, lets go 128 compatible. In that way we can run both 64 and 128 programs. Now we need some extra memory. 512K would be ok but with the price of chips these days why not a meg? If you have all that memory then you would surely want it battery backed.

Next CUW Meeting:
Saturday, April 8
1:00 - 5:00 pm
1411 South Oliver

Learn how you can enhance the appearance of your *Wrute Stuff* documents. Don McManamey will be giving us a demonstration of the *Write Stuff Illustrator.*

We could build in a 1581 drive and add Jiffy-Dos or better still just put in a CMD drive! Since CMD owns Geos how 'bout a Geos bundle? No, wait, Geos on a chip!! That's it. Put Geos, desk top, geoPaint, geoWrite, and a few other Geos essentials on a chip that would plug into the open socket on the 128. This would make up grades easy as well. Again, with today's technology we could have Geos and extra memory on that one chip. We can have it boot up in Geos with a exit to basic icon for non Geos fans. All this and an 80 column monitor for only $250.00! Of course we could go on with things like a hard drive and so forth but realistically speaking a system like that could easily cost $800 or more. With the price and power of other machines what they are today there is no way it would fly. The price will have to be kept down.

Dale really liked the idea of a Geos chip and we should have no problem adding a fair amount of memory to boot. I still think the 128 is the way to go which would give you 80 column capability as well as a numeric keypad. This for say under $200 just might work. You would definitely have to advertise and not just in Commodore specific print. I also feel one would have to rename it using a name which does not even hint at a memory limitation. The IBM PC ran from a 64K memory base up until the time the 286 was introduced (and may still for all I know) using bank switching to get to the extra memory. We can too. With all that extra memory we really could use a faster clock. Remember, the clock speed is only part of the story. We do so well because of our outstanding board speed. Extra memory will slow that down so we need a faster clock. Finally, if we can get some of the top software companies writing for our machine again we could be viable through the end of the millennium.

We've done a lot of iffing and dreaming but great things start with a dream. JFK dreamed of going to the moon. To do this they needed small computers. Jack Tramiel dreamed of making a color computer for under $200 and all of these dreams came true. Perhaps ours will too. Keep dreaming C=

Jerry's Corner
by Jerry Shook

When Dale called to remind me that it was time for an article for our club I had no idea what to write about. He later called to share an idea that he got after talking to Don about his article on what his 8 bit dream machine would be like. Dale thought it would be neat to get more than one view on the 8 bit dream, so here is what I think would be the Ideal 8 bit:

To start with I want it to be known that I have an MS/DOS computer and it does influence what I think would be desirable in a computer, but I also want it known that I still love my 8 bit computers. I will say to all that might ask that if you want a computer that you have to tweak quit often to keep it working up to snuff then MS/DOS is the way to go, but if you want a computer that all you have to do is turn on and load up your program then the 64/128 is hard to beat.

The first thing that I would love to see is a built in hard drive. The hard drive is probable the biggest reason that the MS/DOS seems so fast, and I do like not having to look all over for that special disk with the program that I want to run on it. This is not a hard one to do since we already have a hard drive for our Commodores. Hard drives come in a size that is smaller than the 3-1/2 disk drive and the 128D already has a built in 5-1/4 disk drive as well as a detached key board which I do like.

The next change that I would like to see is an EGA or VGA monitor. The first monitor I had was an old black and white TV. It worked but that was about it, no excitment. After Commodore came out with its first monitor, the 1701 composite monitor, I was in second heaven because I now had color and a sharper picture than I could get on an TV. But even that was not as good as the screen I get with my RGB monitor in 80 columns. As nice as the RGB is, it still does not compare to some of the newer EGA & VGA monitors. I really don't think that it would be asking for to much to have that compatibility on a new 8 bit.

Oh, to have more on board memory! I have been talking to a couple of our members and they have said to me (as far I remember, and my memory is not always great) that the 128 is capable of addressing up to 4 banks of 64K each of RAM, but at this time is only using 2 of those banks. So it may not be such a big stretch to have an 8 bit computer with 256K of on board memory.

A lot of the things that I would like to see done have been made and are already being sold as add ons, such as JiffyDOS which is probable the best and first of the upgrades that you can make on your Commodore be it a 64 or 128. Of course there are the REUs which can go as high as 16 megabytes and do for GEOS what the MAC did for Apple.

As a final word, I want to say that I fully believe that there never has been and may never be a more friendly and easy to use machine for home use than the Commodore 8 bits. I do believe that it is not beyond reason that they can be brought up to date enough to have all the bells and whistles that are being shown on the newest up to date computers today.

Special Club Price on 3-$^{1}/_{2}$" and 5-$^{1}/_{4}$" Disks

The CUW has made a bulk purchase of floppy disks. We are able to offer them to our members at these special prices:
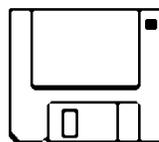
3-1/2 inch double density (DD)
$8.00 per pack of 25
These are perfect for use in Commodore 1581 disk drives.

5-1/4 inch double sided/double density (DS/DD)
$6.00 per pack of 25
These are great for Commodore 1541, 1571, and other compatible disk drives.

See Jerry Shook at our next monthly meeting to purchase your disks. Our last order went fast, so don't delay!

Nominations Open for Club Officers
by Dale Lutes

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

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

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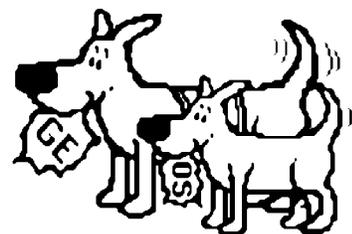
Random Access
by Dale Lutes

Before I get into the "meat" of this month's *Random Access,* I want to say a couple of words about the coming elections for Chair and Vice Chair. It has given me great pleasure to oversee the operations of the CUW for the last year. The club has improved with each passing month thanks to you and especially to my partners and good friends on the Steering Committee.

With the club on good, solid ground, I think that the time is right for me to step down and allow someone else the opportunity to lead. Therefore, I will not be running for the chairmanship. I **do** want to remain on the Committee as *Zero Page* editor and Marie Both has expressed her desire to stay on as Vice Chair, so we won't be leaving the new Chairperson out in the cold. I'm willing to bet that most of the other Steering Committee members are looking to hold on to their posts as well. So how about it? Have **you** got what it takes to lead the CUW? I betcha do! ;-)

The Dream Machine:
As reported in the March *Zero Page,* Creative Micro Designs is looking to purchase the rights to Commodore's 8-bit technology. Now, it may be that CMD just wants to manufacture the same ol' C-64 and/or C-128 machines that we all know and love. I've got a hunch, though, that the company which brought us the excellent HD and FD series disk drives, RAMDrive, RAMLink, and resurrected GEOS has something more in mind. So, if you will permit me to ramble a bit, I'll try to outguess the folks at CMD. This is my Commodore "dream machine":

The one thing I'd like to see most in the Commodore world is a true laptop machine. Sure, we've had the SX-64 for years and it's a good system! But the latest advances in technology have brought portable computers down to the size of a notebook, weighing in at just a couple of pounds! So how about a 128-compatible laptop? I'm willing to bet that today's chip manufacturers can put the entire C-128 motherboard on just one or two chips. I've heard rumors of an extremely fast 65xx compatible CPU, so as long as we're dreaming, let's crank the dream machine's clock speed up to a minimum of 20 MHz.

A laptop wouldn't be complete without a floppy disk drive. The small size of CMD's FD-2000 and its 1581 compatibility make it a natural choice for my dream machine. A factory upgrade to an FD-4000 could be optional. Who knows, maybe there would still be enough room in the case for an optional hard drive.

Today's LCD screens ought to be able to handle the 200x640 resolution of the 128 easily in 16 colors. Actually, since I do most of my work with GEOS, I wouldn't say no to a lower cost model with 16 shades of grey.

Speaking of GEOS, I'm going to steal Don McManamey's idea of GEOS-on-a-chip for my dream machine. We are likely to find JiffyDOS (another CMD product) in there as well! Of course, separate switches will let us disable these features on demand.

What else would I like to see inside? How about some slots for memory SIMMs - a built-in RAMLink making my dream machine expandable to 16 Megabytes!

Hmmm, I was going to ask for an internal modem, but it's getting crowded inside, so I'll settle for hooking up my trusty Aprotek to the user port. My dream machine is going to have to have all of the familiar external ports. Some of the larger ones, like the user, expansion, and cassette ports may need to go in a separate "docking station" while serial and video ports remain in the laptop. Even the joystick ports could be moved to the docking station if we augment our 128-style keyboard with a built-in trackball!

Of course, the number one priority in designing the dream machine would be backward compatibility with the C-64 and C-128. That's a lesson our friends at Commodore learned the hard way when they introduced the C-16 and Plus/4...

...SNXXX! Huh? What? I smell coffee brewing. Must be time to wake up. And I was having such a good dream, too! Well, it's been said that dreams sometimes come true...

Your CUW Steering Committee members are:

Dale Lutes	Chair & Newsletter Editor
Marie Both	Vice-Chair
Robert Bales	BBS Representative
Francis Catudal	Public Domain Librarian
Nate Dannenberg	BBS Representative
Arlen Gould	Commercial Librarian
Dwayne Howard	Assistant PD Librarian
Don McManamey	Disk Editor
Jerry Shook	Quartermaster

The Helping Hand
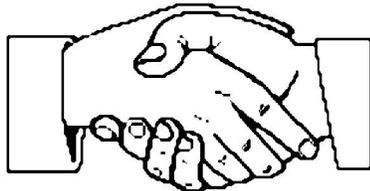
This page lists those users willing to share their experiences and knowledge with other members of the club.

Music
Robert Bales   Nate Dannenberg

Telecommunications
Robert Bales   Nate Dannenberg

Programming
Nate Dannenberg   Dale Lutes

Astrology, Biorhythm
Marie Both

Printing in Color
Don McManamey   Jerry Shook

Labels
Jerry Shook

Titling Home Videos
Sue Harber

Cards, Posters & Signs
Fred Earley

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

GEOS
Nate Dannenberg   Fred Earley
Dale Lutes

Family Roots
Maxine Ulrich

Helping Hand Volunteers
Robert Bales   744-2580
Marie Both   652-7783
Nate Dannenberg   777-1037
Fred Earley   722-4044
Sue Harber   942-4884
Dale Lutes   721-0835
Don McManamey   265-2560
Jerry Shook   776-2683
Maxine Ulrich   838-8606

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

The Commodore Users of Wichita is a club dedicated to "the sharing, learning, and love of Commodore computers." Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 1-5pm. Anyone who owns or uses a Commodore computer system is welcome to attend. Family memberships cost $15 per year. Members receive a monthly newsletter, a quarterly disk publication, access to an extensive library of public-domain software, and the right to vote on matters of club policy. A newsletter-only membership is available for $5 per year. Contact any of the officers (listed elsewhere in this newsletter) for more information. We are looking forward to seeing **you** at our next meeting!

If you own an Amiga computer system, be sure to visit our sister club, the C&AUGW. Contact Board of Directors Chairman, Pete Hein at 943-5215 for information regarding their meeting time and location.
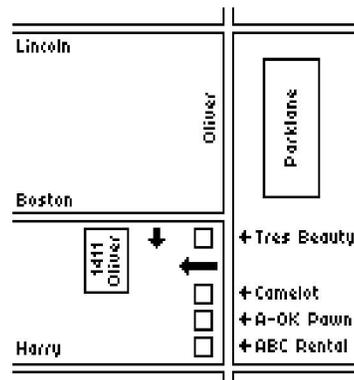
You may join or renew your membership by mail.
Complete this form and mail with a check payable to:

Marie Both
Commodore Users of Wichita
6606 Cottonwood
Wichita, KS 67207

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

Type of membership: ❏ Family ($15)   ❏ Newsletter-only ($5)

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

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